

Wake ThreeSchool (WTS)
Operational Procedures/Program Requirements
SY2026-2027

Effective July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

These guidelines will be reviewed annually to reflect current poverty levels and updated requirements.

Wake ThreeSchool (WTS) Program Requirements

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Section 1: Introduction

The Wake ThreeSchool program (WTS) is a program of Wake County Smart Start (WCSS).

The Wake ThreeSchool program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible three-year-old's. Programs participating in the Wake ThreeSchool program are required to meet high-quality standards as defined by the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE). The Wake ThreeSchool program requirements are built on the premise that to be successful academically in school and later in life, children need to be prepared in all five areas of the developmental domains outlined by the National Education Goals Panel. Each of these domains is critical to children's well-being and for their success in reading and math as they come to school. The five domains, as reflected in *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success* are:

- Approaches to learning
- Emotional and social development
- Health and physical development
- Language development and communication
- Cognitive development

The requirements are designed to ensure that a high-quality preschool classroom experience is provided for eligible three-year-old's in each Wake ThreeSchool Program and that, to the extent possible, consistency exists across classrooms.

Wake ThreeSchool Program sites must comply with these requirements. Requests for exceptions to the standards and requirements as specified in this document must be made in writing by the Site Administrator to Wake County Smart Start. Contact information can be found below:

Wake ThreeSchool
4901 Waters Edge Dr, #101
Raleigh, NC 27606
Phone: (919) 851-9550

Wake ThreeSchool program requirements may be obtained from Wake County Smart Start.

Section 2: The Advisory Committee

A. Purpose of the Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee will act as the advisory group for the Wake ThreeSchool program.

The purpose of the committee is to:

1. Assist in developing operational procedures and policies.
2. Ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for developing, approving, and implementing the plan for delivering Wake ThreeSchool program services at the community level.
3. Ensure that services are built on the existing early childhood service delivery system and that service providers in the community have the capacity to provide Wake ThreeSchool services and have the opportunity to express interest and be considered.
4. Provide ongoing, collaborative advice about local policies and procedures in the implementation of Wake ThreeSchool Program services; and
5. Provide oversight for the program.

B. Additional Functions – Committee and Partnership for Children

The Community Advisory group will provide oversight to Wake County Smart Start in the development and implementation of policies and procedures for implementing the Wake ThreeSchool program along with developing and implementing a coordinated process for recruiting, identifying, and placing three-year-old children who are at-risk.

C. Reporting Program Progress

Wake County Smart Start will report to the Wake County Smart Start Board of Directors, Wake County Board of Commissioners, and the Community Advisory group throughout the year on implementation of the Plan including:

1. Program progress (recruiting, child identification and eligibility, enrollment, etc.).
2. Site updates (slot allotment and use; star license progress).
3. Update the group on processes that are in place to assure that sites meet all requirements, including education level.
4. Efforts to collaborate with other agencies; and
5. Strengths and barriers to service delivery.

D. Wake ThreeSchool Site Selection Process

The Wake ThreeSchool Site Application is accessible to all 4- and 5-star Wake County Child Care Sites. WTS application must be completed by any Wake County sites ThreeSchool site interested in being considered to be a WTS site. All existing WTS Sites must complete an Intent to Serve form. Consideration will be given to 5 stars existing and or applying NC Pre K sites that demonstrate high quality childcare and service to at risk children.

The WTS Site Selection Rubric is designed to be used by the Wake ThreeSchool Team as a comparative tool to help standardize the site selection process. These standards and indicators are designed to guide the Wake ThreeSchool Team's and Wake ThreeSchool Advisory Committee decision in recommending sites for participation in the Wake ThreeSchool Program. The Wake ThreeSchool Advisory Committee is taken site recommendation for feedback and discussion on approval of new sites for the WTS program. The Wake ThreeSchool Team is required to complete a Rubric for each site applicant using the information from the Wake ThreeSchool application and supporting documentation submitted by the applicants.

The Wake ThreeSchool team will conduct site observations for new site applicants using the Wake ThreeSchool Observation Rubric. The following components will be observed, Welcoming, Space/Materials, Adult/Child Interactions, Classroom Activities, Lesson Plan/Curriculum, Outdoor Environment, Diversity, and Inclusion. The sites continued participation in the WTS program will be determined by using a Modified Site Rubric. Modified Site observation will be conducted with emphasis on observing the following areas: Social Emotional, Lesson Planning/Curriculum, Classroom Activities, Diversity & Inclusion.

The Wake ThreeSchool Team with guidance from the WTS Advisory Committee will make final recommendations based on the Site Application, Site Observation Rubric and DCDEE compliance history. Final funding slots are contingent upon approval of the Wake County's budget, data from the Community Needs Assessment and WTS Application Eligibility Tends.

Sites found in non-compliance with contractual agreements may be required to undergo the full site selection process for the upcoming school year. This includes failing to maintain high-quality program standards or neglecting to resolve concerns and action items identified by WTS and WCSS staff.

Section 3: The Wake ThreeSchool Child

A. Wake ThreeSchool Child Enrollment Eligibility

Children served in a Wake ThreeSchool slot must meet age requirements, eligibility beyond age requirements, **and** service priority criteria as defined in this section.

1. Age Requirements

- a. Children to be enrolled must be three years of age on or before August 31st of the program year.
- b. Children that are age eligible for NC Pre-K cannot be served with WTS funds.

2. Eligibility Beyond Age Requirements

- a. The family unit's gross income is at or below the 75% State Median Income **OR**
- b. The child's family unit's gross income is in excess of the 75% State Median Income (See Table 1) **AND** has at least one of the risk factors identified below:
 - 1) Has an identified disability as indicated by the child having a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
 - 2) Has a limited English proficiency (LEP) as indicated by the family and/or child speaking limited or no English in the home.
 - 3) Has a developmental or educational need as indicated by the child's performance results on approved developmental screening.
 - 4) Has a chronic health condition as indicated by a health care provider diagnosis.
 - 5) Is a child of (i) an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, the North Carolina National Guard or other state military force or a reserve component of the Armed Forces, and who is ordered to active duty by the proper authority within the last 18 months, or expected to be ordered within the next 18 months or (ii) a member of the armed forces of the United States, the North Carolina National Guard or other state military force or a reserve component of the Armed Forces, who was injured or killed while serving active duty.
 - 6) Experiencing homelessness or is in transition/foster care.

Table 1: 75% STATE MEDIAN INCOME	
Family Size	Maximum Gross Annual Income
1	\$44,360
2	\$58,009
3	\$71,659
4	\$85,308
5	\$98,957
6	\$112,607
7	\$115,166
8	\$117,725
9	\$120,284
10	\$122,844
11	\$125,403
12	\$127,962
Effective: January 1, 2026 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce (Census Bureau) Communities Survey (ACS) 1-year Estimates-Released October 19, 2023	

B. Service Priority Status

All applications that have been submitted and completed by May 31st of the application year will be considered (***not*** guaranteed) for the first round of placement. After a pool of eligible children is determined (for those that have submitted a complete application by May 31st of the application year), service priority status should be used to prioritize children for Wake ThreeSchool services. After this initial pool of children that submitted a complete application by May 31st of the application year, have been offered seats and placed, the Wake ThreeSchool application and enrollment process becomes a rolling enrollment for those that qualify. Ongoing Wake ThreeSchool applications will be accepted, and enrollment will be based on space and need.

Rolling Enrollment is a process used by Wake ThreeSchool staff to stagger student enrollment from June through August of the current school year. Enrollment and application data from the previous year are used to guide and determine enrollment decisions.

Ongoing Enrollment is a process that occurs from September to March of the current school year. WTS sites should anticipate that any available slots are to be filled on a weekly basis.

If there are more eligible applicants than available spaces, Wake ThreeSchool staff will proceed with placement through a lottery.

1. **Service Categories and Priority Status**

Eligible children will be prioritized for service in the following order:

- a) Children that qualify for McKinney-Vento (children experiencing homelessness).

- b) Children in foster care.
- c) Children who are unserved (have never been served in any preschool or childcare setting).
- d) Children who are underserved (have previously been served in a preschool or childcare setting but currently are not).

C. Definitions and Recommended Documentation for Verification

During the application, at a minimum, the following elements and appropriate documentation identified in the chart below must be collected for each child and family. This information will serve to determine Wake ThreeSchool eligibility.

Wake ThreeSchool Application Requirements	
Data Element	Recommended Documentation*
	*Parent/Guardian/Caregiver statement substantiated by a parent/guardian/caregiver signature is required for: income; family size; kinship; child's race, ethnicity, US citizenship
Child's Name	Parent, guardian, or caregiver statement
Date of Birth	Copy of one of the following: child's birth certificate; medical records; immunization records; or follow McKinney Vento approval process
County	County of child's residence as documented on child's signed application
Military Status	Military member's leave and earnings statement
Kinship (signature required)	Kinship is established when the child in care lives with an adult blood relative or with a non-relative who has legal custody or guardianship. If child is living with non-relatives or other adults that have legal custody or guardianship, guardian must present a <u>legal document</u> verifying they have <u>legal custody</u> or <u>guardianship</u> presented at the time of application. 1. A parent that includes a biological mother or father, a legal mother or father, or adoptive parent(s) after issuance of the final order of adoption. 2. Alleged mother or father or other alleged maternal or paternal relative. 3. A blood or half-blood relative or adoptive relative limited to brother, sister, grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent, uncle or aunt, great-uncle or aunt, great-great uncle or aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin. Spouses of anyone in the above groups, even after the marriage has been terminated by death or divorce. 4. A step relative limited to stepparent, stepbrother, and stepsister. 5. Spouses of anyone in the above groups, even after the marriage has been terminated by death or divorce. Other adults who have court ordered legal custody or guardianship of a child. Foster parents do not have legal custody or guardianship. Custody remains with the Department of Social Services.

Family Size (signature required) Number in family: parents, stepparents, all siblings 18 years of age and under	Include the following individuals living in the child's home: 1. The Wake ThreeSchool child plus all minor brothers and sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, stepbrothers, and stepsisters. 2. Parents and stepparents of these children. Minor siblings include anyone up to age 18 and still attending high school when the application is submitted. 3. Incarcerated or institutionalized individuals are <u>not</u> included. 4. If a child is living with a relative like a grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc., or another individual and these adult(s) are caregivers or have legal custody, then the family size consists of the Wake ThreeSchool child, plus all minor brothers and sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, stepbrothers, and stepsisters living in the same household. The adults are not included, nor are the children of these adults counted. 5. If a child is living with a relative like a grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc., or another individual and these adult(s) have legal guardianship, then the family size consists of the Wake ThreeSchool child, plus all minor brothers and sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, stepbrothers, and stepsisters living in the same household. The adults and children of these adults are counted as well.
Family Income Frequency of pay: If weekly, multiply by 52 If biweekly, multiply by 26 If twice monthly, multiply by 24 If monthly, multiply by 12	Count parent or stepparent's regular gross income (documentation required). Regular gross income may include regular employment, income earned through sales commissions averaged over several months, regular employment through a temporary employment agency, temporary unemployment pay, child support payments, alimony payments, workman's compensation, and retirement/disability benefit income. Excluded from regular gross income are parent, stepparent and child Supplemental Security Income, adoptive assistance, foster care payments, Pell grants/scholarships and irregular income (e.g., over-time, Work First, Food Stamps, student loans). If legal custodian, or other caregiver, only count the child's income including Social Security Income and Child Support Payments. Do not count Supplemental Security Income. If legal guardian, count the adult's income and child's income including Social Security Income and Child Support Payments. Do not count Supplemental Security Income.
Income Documentation	Income verification must take place using one or more of the following documents:

	1. Paystubs (weekly pay- submit 4 consecutive paystubs; biweekly pay- submit 2 consecutive paystubs; twice monthly pay- submit 2 consecutive paystubs; monthly pay- submit 2 consecutive paystubs) 2. Self employed individuals: • Schedule C Profit or Loss from Business (use line 7 (Gross Income) minus 20%) or • Schedule F (Farm Income; use line 9 minus 20%) or • Total income from 1099s, bank statements, etc. minus 20% 3. Award letters from the Social Security Administration 4. Award letters from the Employment Security Commission 5. Employer written statements signed by the employer (on letterhead if/when available) 6. Signed statements when the individual claims to have no verifiable countable income Best practice: if a family member has started a new job, the agency should request additional paystubs to determine eligibility accuracy. *WTS has created a form for families to take to their employers to support income verification documentation.
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D. Eligibility/Enrollment Scorecard

Wake ThreeSchool Eligibility Scorecard

Applicant Child Name: _____ DOB: _____

1. Will the child be site sold on or before August 31st of the program year?
 - ☐ Yes (move to question 2)
 - ☐ No (**stop here**; child is not eligible)
2. Gross annual household income: _____
Number of people in the household: _____
3. Does the gross annual household income fall within the 75% State Median Income?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
4. Does the child meet the criteria for any of the eligibility factors in Table A? (Indicate within Table A)

Table A: Eligibility Factors		
Eligibility Factor	Points Awarded	Check All that Apply
Limited English Proficiency	1 point	☐
Identified Disability (IEP)	1 point	☐
Chronic Health Condition(s)	1 point	☐
Developmental/Educational Need	1 point	☐

Child of eligible military family	2 points	☐
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5. Does the household family income fall above 75% State Median Income **and** the child meets the criteria for at least one eligibility factor within Table B?

☐ Yes (move to question 6)

☐ No (**stop here; child is ineligible**)

6. Where does the gross annual household income fall within the Federal Poverty Level? (*Indicate within Table B*)

Table B: Federal Poverty Level		
Federal Poverty Level	Points Awarded	Check One
Above 200% FPL	0 points	☐
At or below 200% FPL	1 point	☐
At or below 185% FPL	2 points	☐
At or below 150% FPL	3 points	☐
At or below 133% FPL	4 points	☐
At or below FPL	5 points	☐

7. Does the child meet the criteria for any of the prioritization factors in Table C? (*Indicate within Table C*)

Table C: Prioritization Factors		
Prioritization Factor	Points Awarded	Check One
Underserved	2 points	☐
In Foster Care	2 points	☐
McKinney Vento/Experiencing homelessness	3 points	☐
Unserved	3 points	☐

E. Children with Unique Needs/Dysregulated Behaviors

Dysregulated behavior shall mean any repeated pattern of behavior, or perception of behavior, that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults, that interferes with children's learning, development, and success at play, is harmful to the other child, other children, or adults, or that puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure (<http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/explore/glossary.htm>).

When a child demonstrates dysregulated behaviors that prevent his or her progress in any developmental domain, as referenced in the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development / Pyramid Model*, impeding the child's access to and participation in the assigned Wake ThreeSchool classroom learning activities, the following shall apply:

- The Site Administrator shall notify WCSS and the local school system's Preschool Exceptional Children Program for assistance if a child's cognitive, language and communication, emotional, social, health, and physical needs exceed the program's capacity to address as indicated by one or more of the following:
 - developmental needs assessments.

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- b) home visits.
 - c) consultations with family members.
 - d) daily recorded classroom teacher observations; and
 - e) modified instructional plans and differentiated lessons based on the child's individual goals.
 2. WCSS, Site Administrator, teacher(s), and family members in consultation with the available community and state resources such as Advance Community Health, the Preschool Services Program, Community Partnerships, Healthy Social Behavioral Specialists, childcare health consultants, mental health specialists, social workers, and other local child developmental experts, shall develop a coordinated support plan to support the Wake ThreeSchool child's placement and participation in the program.
 3. WCSS shall be notified when support plans recommended by any of the resources mentioned in subparagraph (2) above require an alternative placement and support services for a child.
 4. A site administrator must not suspend or expel a child from a Wake ThreeSchool classroom until the site administrator has completed the requirement of subparagraphs (1), (2), and (3) of this paragraph.
 5. Unless the operator determines the child poses a risk of harm to himself or herself or others and has completed the requirements of subparagraphs (1), (2), and (3) of this paragraph, no child shall receive less than the 6.5 hour day. Risk of harm to oneself or others includes:
 - a) Physical aggression such as hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, throwing objects, pinching, pushing, and biting.
 - b) Destroying property.
 - c) Continual physical behaviors that might include behaviors such as kicking, screaming, pushing an object or person, stomping feet, or head banging.
 - d) Verbal aggression including yelling, threats, screaming, or the use of profanity.
 - e) Persistent or prolonged crying that is loud or disruptive or crying that interferes with the child's engagement in activities; and
 - f) Touching other children's private areas and removing clothing from themselves or others.
 - o <https://inclusioninstitute.fpg.unc.edu/sites/inclusioninstitute.fpg.unc.edu/files/handouts/WP-Discipline-Final.pdf>
 - o https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/2/2021-2022_NC_Pre-K_Program_Requirements_and_GuidanceSEP20rev.pdf?ver=0s745oPYe5F-cQgWWmiNHw%3d%3d – Appendix 9
 6. In addition to the information in the Site's Family Handbook, it is the expectation that the Site Administrator and Teachers provide specific information to families during
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orientation regarding how to address dysregulated behaviors. Sites should stress the importance of the partnership that will be developed between the family, the site, and partner agencies to support the Wake ThreeSchool child's needs. The Site Director should have all information shared with the family available to be reviewed during Wake ThreeSchool Site Monitoring. This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) Process of initiating, developing, implementing, and analyzing an individual behavior support plan
- b) Observation by WTS Staff or Partner Agency (e.g. Project Enlightenment, WCPSS, etc.)
- c) Evaluation process by Partner Agencies
- d) Consistent, timely communication between teachers, family, site administrators, partner agencies, etc.
- e) Partner Agencies: Community Partnerships, Project Enlightenment, Preschool Services/Child Find, CCSA, Lucy Daniels/SecurePath

Section 4: The Wake ThreeSchool Site

A. Facility Requirements

All nonprofit organizations and for-profit childcare centers must meet North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education regulatory standards and maintain a 4- or 5-star license.

B. Service Delivery

1. Official Wake ThreeSchool Day and Year

Wake ThreeSchool sites must meet the following requirements:

- a. Wake ThreeSchool sites Must ensure that each site delivers a minimum of 180 instructional days or follows the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) traditional calendar, offering the same number of instructional days as WCPSS for that year. The calendar must reflect no fewer than the number of instructional days offered by WCPSS for the corresponding school year. Instructional days must consist of child-directed and teacher-directed instructional learning activities and must exclude time allocated for transportation or professional development.
- b. The program year must cover at least 10 calendar months and should provide a minimum of 32.5 instructional hours per week.

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- c. Instructional time refers to the portion of the day that includes teacher-directed and child-directed learning activities. Transportation time is not included in this calculation.
 - d. Wake ThreeSchool lead and assistant teachers are expected to work 40 hours per week with a minimum of 32.5 hours of direct child contact time. The remaining hours each week may be used for planning, documentation, and related instructional activities.
 - e. Wake ThreeSchool sites should generally follow the traditional calendar and hours of operation of WCPSS. Calendars must specify start and end dates, school closures, holidays, and teacher workdays.
 - f. Home visits and staggered entry days count toward the instructional calendar.
 - g. The Wake ThreeSchool provider must have a daily and annual schedule available to be reviewed by WCSS staff upon request.
 - h. Days set aside for home visits and for staggered entry at the beginning of the school year may be included as part of the school calendar year.
 - i. Staggered entry can also be used to help a child gradually adjust to the classroom environment after enrollment in the Wake ThreeSchool Program
 - j. WTS staff will use the WCPSS Traditional School year calendar as guidance to determine the WTS professional development days for the current school year. Professional development days may not be used as optional attendance workdays. Documentation of professional development contact hours, objectives, and dates should be maintained by staff and Site Administrators and made available to WCSS staff upon request.
 - k. Wake ThreeSchool programs must attend any required professional development activities and Technical Assistance provided by Wake ThreeSchool staff, including but not limited to classroom support visits made by the Wake ThreeSchool Specialist and the Wake ThreeSchool Social Emotional Learning Specialist.

2. Program Attendance Policy *UPDATED*

- a. Child attendance must be taken daily, completed weekly in the Wake ThreeSchool application database, and submitted to WCSS monthly.
 - Attendance must be submitted by 12pm on the last school day of the month.
- b. For SY23-24, WTS will use a contracted flat rate for classrooms/spaces for reimbursement. This is subject to change if there is a change in policy.
 - The Wake ThreeSchool team will fill slots through March of the applicable school year. If a child exits the program for any reason after

March, the site will continue to receive their full reimbursement. Wake ThreeSchool will continue to use a contracted flat rate for classrooms/spaces through the school year, regardless of attrition.

- c. A child may be considered in attendance and recorded as present when:
- All children are expected to attend a 6.5 hour school day.
 - A child will be counted as present if they attend a minimum of 3.5 hours of the school day.
 - A home/community setting visit is conducted to meet with the child/family for initial program orientation and or/educational purposes (written documentation required).

3. WTS Weekly Excused Absence Form *Updated*

- a. This form is used to track and document all excused absences for each child on a weekly basis, as needed. Completed forms must be submitted weekly through the BridgeCare system. Responsibility for completing and submitting the form may be assigned to either the WTS Site Administrator or the classroom teacher.

4. Child Absences *UPDATED*

- a. When a child enrolled in the Wake ThreeSchool Program is absent for three (3) or more days within a week:
- The Site Administrator must contact the family to discuss the absences and determine the child's participation status in the program. Every effort should be made to support and maintain the child's placement and continued participation in the Wake ThreeSchool Program. The Site Administrator must notify the Wake ThreeSchool Enrollment Coordinator when a child has been absent for three (3) or more days within the same week.
 - If a child is absent for five (5) or more days and the Site Administrator has made reasonable attempts to contact the family without receiving a response, the Site Administrator must make a final contact attempt informing the family that they must provide an update regarding the child's continued participation within 24 hours. The family should be notified that the child's placement is at risk of forfeiture if a response is not received within the required timeframe. The Site Administrator must inform the Wake ThreeSchool Enrollment Coordinator once the child has reached five (5) days of absence.
 - If the family does not respond within 24 hours of the final contact attempt, the child's placement in the Wake ThreeSchool Program may be forfeited.

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- *If your child has a consistent pattern of unexcused absences, unfortunately, he or she will be disenrolled from the Wake ThreeSchool program.*
 - If we notice that your child has a consistent pattern of unexcused absences, their attendance will go under extensive review, and they will be in jeopardy of being disenrolled from the program.

Attendance Patterns

- Attendance will be reviewed for unexcused absences on a monthly basis. When a child has a recurring unexcused absence their enrollment status will be at risk.
 - If a child accumulates five or more unexcused absences each month within any three-month period, their enrollment in the program will be at risk.
- b. The site administrator must document each attempt to contact the family and maintain the child's placement in the program, including any written communication, phone calls, texts, and/or any resources provided to the family.
 - c. The Site Administrator must not terminate a child's participation in the Wake ThreeSchool program without approval from WCSS staff.
 - The Site Administrator must not terminate a child's participation in the program before determining if barriers to the child's attendance exist and can be remedied through assistance (*i.e., access to additional activities in the case of a child's illness or disability*).
 - d. If a child must be exited from the program, the child should be placed back on the wait list for future re-enrollment.
 - e. When your child is sick. The best thing you can do is to keep your children home when sick. This will help stop the spread of illnesses to other children and teachers. Keep them home when they show any symptom of illness.

Symptoms

- Fever of 100.4 or higher
 - Diarrhea
 - Nausea and Vomiting
 - Severe headache
 - Red, watery eyes with yellow discharge
 - Undiagnosed rash
 - Inability to attend learning activities
 - Change in student's typical medical status
- **If symptoms persist for 3 or more days a doctors note must be provided.**

5. **Attendance Exceptions**

- a. Exceptions for an individual child's attendance can be requested for certain conditions such as:
 - Illness, hospitalization, military leave, a family +, crisis requiring family travel, **or**
 - For natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, **or**
 - Other conditions that require the Wake ThreeSchool site to close due to damages (*i.e., fire, water, damage, loss of heating/air, etc.*).
 - Extended family vacation
 - Each WTS child is eligible for excused absences for up to five (5) consecutive school days for an extended vacation. Each child is eligible for one (1) extended family vacation per WTS school year. Written notice should be provided to the WTS site at least one week in advance, noting the beginning and end dates of the child's vacation-related absences.
 - Any vacation-related absences that persist longer than five days will jeopardize the child's continued enrollment in the Wake ThreeSchool classroom.
 - WTS Site Directors are expected to communicate this information to families during orientation.
- b. Wake ThreeSchool Enrollment Coordinator should be informed of any attendance exceptions in writing.
- c. Wake ThreeSchool Site Administrators and Program Staff shall work with families and make every effort to support a child's attendance and maintain the child's placement and participation in the Wake ThreeSchool program.
- d. If the Wake ThreeSchool classroom must close for any reason (including but not limited to those listed above), the Site Administrator must inform the Wake ThreeSchool Enrollment Coordinator as soon as the decision has been made to close the classroom.

6. **Remote Learning *UPDATED***

- a. **WTS Remote Learning Request Form:** Emergency Closing will be used if your site closes due to an emergency. Please complete this form as soon as the situation is identified. This includes scenarios such as power, heat, or water loss; widespread illness; or any other condition that makes it unsafe for staff and families to go or to remain in the building.
 - Prior approval for remote learning is **NOT** required in these cases. Entire-class instruction should occur twice per day, with live sessions

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- offered. Teachers and administrators can refer to the current lesson plan to assist in integrating live instruction.
- WTS teachers or administrators should provide short direct instruction and provide activities and learning opportunities for children and families to engage independently, which total approximately 6.5 hours of available material daily for a remote learner/family.
 - For attendance reporting purposes, only children who participate in the live virtual instructional session(s) should be marked present.
- b. Individual Child: Learning instructions should be provided to the child via Teaching Strategies Family Portal. Activities should be provided to the child based on the current lesson being received in the classroom environment.
- c. Emergency Closure Attendance
- a. Any site that offers remote learning for Emergency closures should be marked as as “RL” on the attendance grid in BridgeCare.
 - b. Any site that does not offer remote learning for Emergency closures should be marked as “E” on the attendance grid in BridgeCare.
- d. WTS Remote Learning Log
- a. This form will be used to track the Remote Learning activities provided, family check in times and child progress or family comments.
 - b. This form will be used for attendance and monitoring purposes for the Wake ThreeSchool Program.
 - Any child that is not present for live instruction for remote learning should be marked absent “A” on the attendance grid in BridgeCare.

7. Inclement Weather/Make- Up Days *Change Added*

- Wake ThreeSchool sites in Wake County will follow Wake County Public Schools (WCPSS) Inclement Weather Policy regarding delays and school closures, when possible. All sites will follow WCPSS make-up schedule unless there are clear barriers that prevent this. Programs that are not able to follow the WCPSS schedule will make up for any lost time of instruction by providing opportunities for children to attend on days that were originally scheduled for teacher workdays, vacation days, or the weekend.

Attendance: Inclement Weather

- Inclement weather days should be marked as “I” on the attendance grid in BridgeCare for all enrolled children.

8. Attendance Requirements for Payment Process

- a. When WTS begins the payment process based on attendance, the following attendance requirements for payment purposes will be followed**:

*(**This will not be followed for SY26-27; payments will be completed based on contracted slots as outlined in Section 2 above)*

- Payment will be made at 100% of the monthly rate when a child attends at least 10 days or 50% of the operating days during the month.
 - Payments will be made at 50% of the monthly rate when a child attends between 25% - 50% of the operating days of the month.
 - Payment will not be made when a child attends less than 25% of the operating days during the month.
 - Payment will be made at 100% of the monthly rate for children attending one day:
 - For the first and last month of classroom operations
 - For a new child enrolling in any Wake ThreeSchool classroom during the year due to the Contractor receiving expansion or reallocated funds.
 - Payment will be made at 100% of the monthly rate for any children filling existing vacant Wake ThreeSchool spaces during the year if they start attending mid-month when limited attendance days are available.
 - Payment will be made at 100% of the monthly rate for children with special circumstances that warrant an exception (*i.e., child involved in debilitating accident or has prolonged illness limiting on-site Wake ThreeSchool participation*). Exception requests must be made in writing by the Site Administrator and submitted to the Wake ThreeSchool Enrollment Coordinator for consideration and approval. **Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.**
- b. Note: If a child is served at two different sites within the same month and meets the attendance requirement for payment purposes for both, payment may be made to each site serving the child. However, two payments will not be made for the same child who moves from classroom to classroom within a site during the month.
- c. Sites receive monthly payments for filled slots by submitting a **Request for Payment**. WCSS will review the Site's request verifying accuracy and conformance to the Plan before payment is made.

C. Program Fees/Services

The only fees that may be charged to Wake ThreeSchool families for services are nominal fees for wrap around childcare services. Transportation for Wake ThreeSchool children to/from the Wake ThreeSchool site, or to cover the partial/full costs of meals when families do not qualify for free/reduced priced meals. When issues of non-payment arise, this is between the parent/guardian and the Wake ThreeSchool site, not WCSS. Families must be informed in writing of the site's intention to charge fees and that failure to pay **will not** result

in expulsion from the Wake ThreeSchool Program.

1. Wrap Around Services

Wake ThreeSchool dollars may be used to pay for wrap around services (time periods before or after the regular school day). When wraparound services are provided before and/or after the regular school day, during holidays, or in the summer months, the provider may charge a fee for that service, accept a subsidy voucher from a participating family, or use Wake ThreeSchool funds, if available. A family who needs wrap around services will be responsible for arranging these services for their child. Providers are required to provide WTS staff with their current wraparound service fee schedule. Families may not be prevented from attending the WTS program due to outstanding balances or nonpayment of wraparound service fees. It is strongly recommended that Wake ThreeSchool providers charge a reasonable wrap around service fee to the Wake ThreeSchool families. This amount reflects the difference in the current subsidized market rate for childcare for 3–5-year-olds attending a 5-star child care center and the WTS reimbursement rate.

2. Transportation

Wake ThreeSchool Program will not provide transportation to/from the facility through Wake ThreeSchool Program funding although individual sites are strongly encouraged, but not required, to provide transportation for Wake ThreeSchool children who are enrolled at their site. Transportation standards of sites must meet the N.C. Child Care Licensing Requirements for childcare settings and/or the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) requirements. Sites must provide written transportation policies to the parents/guardians of transported Wake ThreeSchool children. Children must arrive at the classroom site before the beginning of the school day and leave the classroom site after the school day has concluded.

Expenses incurred due to transporting Wake ThreeSchool children to/from the facility will be the responsibility of the individual site. Program sites are allowed to collect transportation fees from the parent/guardian not to exceed the per-pupil-per-year refund rate for school buses set by NC Department of Public Instruction. If a facility receives reimbursement/payment from any source that covers the cost of transportation, then that facility may not charge parents/guardians a transportation fee. Sites are not allowed to charge parents/guardians for field trips.

Staff from the site will inform the family in writing of the site's intention to charge transportation fees. The notification must include the amount to be charged and that failure to pay will not result in expulsion from Wake ThreeSchool Program. Staff from the site will make every effort to work with each family when issues of

non-payment arise. Wake ThreeSchool children shall not be denied services based on the family's inability to pay for transportation services.

3. Nutrition

Programs must provide breakfast and/or snacks and lunch meeting DCDEE licensed/ USDA requirements during the regular school day. The full/partial costs of meals may be charged when families do not qualify for free/reduced priced lunch. Wake ThreeSchool sites are allowed to collect meal fees from the parent/ guardian at the same rate charged by the local public schools for breakfast and lunch. If a facility receives reimbursement/payment from any source that covers the cost of meals, then that facility may not charge parents/guardians a meal fee. Sites are not allowed to charge parents/guardians for snacks.

D. Religious Activities

During Wake ThreeSchool Program portion of the day, no provider may use its Wake ThreeSchool funding to pay for any of the following:

1. Religious worship, instruction, or proselytization.
2. Equipment or supplies to be used for any of the activities specified in paragraph 1 of this section.

Section 5: The Wake ThreeSchool Classroom

A. Child Health Assessments

A health assessment is required to be on file at the Wake ThreeSchool site within 30 days after a child enters the Wake ThreeSchool Program and must have been conducted within 12 months of Program entry. The health provider is responsible for making appropriate referrals as indicated by the health assessment. The health assessment must include:

- Physical examination
- Updated immunizations
- Hearing screening (*must be attempted*)
- Vision screening (*must be attempted*)
- *Dental Screening (must be attempted)*

Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC) staff will be available to provide technical assistance to the Wake ThreeSchool sites in relation to health-related needs. The CCHC staff will help Wake ThreeSchool sites with promotion of healthy childcare practices and prevention of infection

and injury.

- If a child's health assessment is not completed within 30 calendar days, the WTS site administrator will notify the family that the child will lose his/her WTS placement unless there are extenuating circumstances. The site administrator will copy Local Partnership (Wake County Smart Start) on this communication. Sites must report to the WTS specialist and WTS Enrollment Coordinator on the completion of health assessment during mid-year monitoring.

B. Developmental Screenings

All children enrolled in Wake ThreeSchool shall receive a developmental screening using The Brigance Developmental Screening Tool unless the child has an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP). Children shall be screened within 90 days after the first day of attendance in the Program or within 6 months prior to the first day of attendance.

Screening should be used to assist with finding any concerns and creating a baseline to help assist teachers and administrators on how to determine the overall growth and development of the enrolled child.

Other screening instruments may be used if requested by the Site and approved by WCSS.

C. Early Learning Standards and Curricula

Wake ThreeSchool sites shall be knowledgeable about *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success* and use these early learning standards to guide their planning of developmentally appropriate, high-quality prekindergarten experiences for children. *Foundations* is available at https://www.ncchildcare.nc.gov//PDF_forms/NC_Foundations.pdf.

In addition, each Wake ThreeSchool classroom shall use the *Creative Curriculum® for Preschool*, 6th Edition as well as use of the Pyramid Model to address the social emotional health of the young children in the program. Information on the Pyramid Model is available at <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Pyramid/overview/index.html>. Wake ThreeSchool classrooms will use My Teaching Strategies to input weekly lesson plans. Interrater Reliability Certification is required for all NEW Lead Teachers and Teacher Assistants. Interrater Reliability Certification is due to the WTS Specialist by the last Friday of October of the current school year. If a teacher begins employment after the school year has already started, the new lead teacher/teacher assistant will be required to complete the Interrater Reliability Certification "within 90 days of their first day of employment."

D. Formative Assessment

Classrooms are required to conduct ongoing formative assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, as well as inform instruction. It is expected that Wake ThreeSchool children will have evidence of their growth and skill development in Teaching Strategies Gold, as shown by documentation notes, photos, videos, etc. Wake ThreeSchool classrooms will use a formative assessment instrument that is approved by WCSS, such as Teaching Strategies Gold.

E. Staff-to-Child Ratio, Class Size and Classroom Reassignment

The class size shall not exceed a maximum staff-to-child ratio of one to eight with a maximum class size of 16 children, with one teacher and one assistant teacher per classroom. Classrooms that provide inclusive settings for children with disabilities may require an adult to child ratio smaller than 1 to 8. For LEA administered public school exceptional children's preschool classrooms, ratios must be in compliance with the NC Policies for Governing Services for Children with Disabilities, Section 1508-Class Size: School Age and Preschool at: <https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/nc-policies-governing-services-for-children-with-disabilities>.

Classroom Reassignment Form-

- This form will be used for sites that will need to transition a Wake ThreeSchool child from one Wake ThreeSchool classroom to another Wake ThreeSchool Classroom within that site.
- Prior to completing this form, the Site Administrator must notify the Wake ThreeSchool Social Emotional Learning Specialist to determine if this classroom reassignment is in the best interest of the child(ren) in the Wake ThreeSchool program.

F. Rest Time

A rest/quiet period is required for each child every day, the length of which shall be determined according to the individual needs of each child.

During rest time, the staff/child ratio is considered in compliance if at least one staff is in the classroom with children while resting or is visually supervising all children. The second person needed to meet the 1 to 8 ratio must be on the premises, within calling distance of the classroom, to remain in compliance.

At least one alert staff member is always in the classroom, actively supervising the children with no lapses. Additional staff must be onsite and can be called to assist in the event a need arises.

G. Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments

Classrooms shall provide high-quality indoor and outdoor learning environments that support the implementation of *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*, as well as the chosen curriculum (Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold). The outdoor classroom is considered an extension of the learning environment. Both indoor and outdoor environments shall address curricular objectives by encouraging child-initiated, teacher-supported, active learning experiences. During the Wake ThreeSchool day, classrooms shall provide outdoor time, either as part of a small group, whole group, or individual activity. 60 minutes is recommended per day but no less than 45 minutes per day when weather conditions permit.

H. Transitioning the Wake ThreeSchool Child to WTS Classroom

Wake ThreeSchool sites will be given the names and enrollment information by WCSS staff for eligible children to enroll in Wake ThreeSchool classrooms. Staff from the site will contact the family of the Wake ThreeSchool child to complete the enrollment process and provide orientation to the classroom/site to the parent/guardian and child before the child begins class. At the beginning of the school year, children will begin class through a staggered enrollment process developed by each site and approved by WCSS. The transition plan into Wake ThreeSchool should also include components such as home visits, family conferences, communication plan with families, etc.

Wake ThreeSchool Transition Form

A. Family Engagement

Wake ThreeSchool classrooms shall provide meaningful and culturally and linguistically responsive opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education and implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making. Parents/Guardians sign a Rights and Responsibilities document at the time of application which explains how critical parental involvement is to the success of their child and in signing agrees to be involved with their child to the extent possible.

Sites will be required to:

- a. Orient each family to the program when a child is assigned to their site.
- b. Offer at least four (4) additional family engagement opportunities during the program year, which may include but are not limited to:
- c. Home/community setting visit(s).
 1. Open house/orientation.
 2. Classroom visits and options for parents and families to participate in classroom activities (classroom volunteering, class parties/programs, etc.).

3. Parent education and/or workshops.
 4. Family events, festivals, and/or celebrations.
 5. Parent/family volunteering opportunities outside of the classroom that families can do on their own time.
- d. Provide updates on activities and objectives to families through newsletters, texting system, emails, informational pamphlets, etc. at least 1x per month. Provide two-way communication opportunities with families inclusive of regular telephone, email, or mail correspondence.
 - e. Conduct no less than two (2) family/guardian teacher conferences and/or meetings per school year to share developmental screening/ongoing assessment results. During these meetings, families should be invited to support the development of goal setting for their child. Family/guardian meetings are encouraged throughout the year as needed.
 - f. All family engagement activities must be documented in writing and kept on file at the site. Documentation should include the following:
 1. Home/community setting visit: where visit occurred, date of visit, who was present, what occurred during the visit, and signed by the visiting staff and the family member that was present during the visit.
 2. Classroom volunteers, parties/programs, etc.: sign-in sheet with date/activity.
 3. Parent/Family education: sign-in sheet with date/activity.
 4. Newsletters: copy of newsletter with date distributed.
 5. Parent/Family meetings: date of meeting, who attended, what occurred, signature of staff members.
 6. Regular telephone, email, or mail correspondence: contact logs including the date of contact, who was contacted, what was discussed and/or copies of correspondence if applicable.
 7. Orientation: parent/guardian signature with date of orientation.
 8. Family/Guardian Teacher Conference: date of meeting, who attended, what occurred, signature of staff.
 - g. Develop a Family Engagement Plan in collaboration with their Wake ThreeSchool families. The Family Engagement Plan should reflect a similar format to the example below:

<u>Name of site</u> It is the intent of Wake ThreeSchool (WTS) to welcome and develop strong partnerships with all families. To build and enhance these essential relationships, members of our staff will: • Visit children's families in home environment or neutral setting to gather information from the family about their hopes and aspirations for their child and to share information about the child's new classroom. Families may request a neutral setting for initial visit. • Welcome each child and family individually – Programs will use enrollment opportunities (i.e., staggered entry) that allow for introductions and smooth transitions. Opportunities such as parent orientation, home visits and open house will provide focused and individualized attention for each child and family. • <i>As COVID-19 health conditions improve and in accordance with school security policies</i>, extend an open invitation to all families. Family members and volunteers will be welcomed to the classroom. Programs will also provide opportunities for families to visit the classroom at mutually convenient times outside of the school

hours. Programs will engage and include families when making decisions about their child and their child's early education program.

- Hold at least two-family conferences each year. During the conference, teachers will share their observations of children's strengths and opportunities for growth. Programs will engage families to share in planning and assessing their child's next steps.
- Establish on-going two-way communication between schools and families. This communication exchange will include at least three of the following:
 - Family representation in center decision making
 - Center and Family agreements -such as center's operational procedures
 - Creating joint plans for finding solutions when challenges occur
 - List other examples of communication not listed here
 - Newsletters
 - Family Information Boards
 - Weekly and/or daily reports
 - Family workshops/education

Section 6: The Wake ThreeSchool Staff

A. Administrator Licensure and Credentials

1. **Public Schools:** Principal licensure or North Carolina Early Childhood Administrative Credential (NCECAC) Level III is required. A copy of the administrator's DCDEE Verification Letter must be kept on file at the site and be made available upon request by WCSS staff.
2. **Nonpublic Schools (Private Childcare/Wake ThreeSchool Settings):** Directors/administrators of nonpublic schools must have or be working toward a North Carolina Early Childhood Administrative Credential (NCECAC) Level III. A copy of the administrator's DCDEE Verification Letter must be kept on file at the site and be made available upon request by WCSS staff. No flexibility will be offered for Interim Site Administrators for the 2024-2025 school year.
3. **For a director/administrator working towards the required credential:**
 - a. The director/administrator must request an exception in writing in the format provided by WCSS.
 - b. Provisional approval may be granted by WCSS Board of Directors for the director/administrator to obtain a license or NCECAC Level II not to exceed four years.
 - i. Progress toward the required credential will be considered a minimum of twelve (12) documented semester hours per year. The Wake ThreeSchool site will maintain documentation of progress towards the required standard.
 - ii. Administrators showing good faith effort towards meeting the credential requirement may be granted an extension to the four-year timeline. Sites must request extension in writing directed to WCSS.
4. Administrators of Wake ThreeSchool sites shall not serve as the Wake ThreeSchool

teacher or assistant. An assurance statement must be kept on file at the site and be made available upon request by WCSS staff.

B. Lead Teacher Education and Credentials

All lead teachers must hold at a minimum a BA/BS degree in Early Childhood Education/ Child Development (ECE/CD) or a related field. Related fields include Human Development, Family Studies, and Psychology. **In-progress degrees cannot be considered.** A copy of the lead teacher's DCDEE Verification Letter must be kept on file at the site and be made available upon request by WCSS staff.

Wake ThreeSchool Site Administrators must submit the appropriate required paperwork to verify Teacher credentials and compensation information. In the event of a teacher change, the Site Administrator must:

- Notify the Wake ThreeSchool Specialist of the teacher change within two (2) business days of the change occurring.
- Submit the appropriate required paperwork to the Wake ThreeSchool Specialist within five (5) business days of the change occurring.

Teachers in the Wake ThreeSchool classrooms shall not serve as the administrator of the childcare center while assigned to a Wake ThreeSchool classroom. An assurance statement must be kept on file at the site and be made available upon request by WCSS staff.

Lead Teacher Years of Experience

- Years of experience are defined as the number of years of experience working with preschool children (3- and 4-year-olds), not specific to only the number of years of experience working directly at your site
- Years of experience should reflect the teacher's experience working with preschool children prior to working at your WTS site AND years of experience working with preschool children at your WTS site

C. Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials

All teacher assistants shall hold at a minimum an AA degree in Early Childhood Education/ Child Development (ECE/CD) or a related field. Related fields include Human Development, Family Studies, and Psychology, **In-progress degrees cannot be considered.** A copy of the teacher assistant's DCDEE Verification Letter must be kept on file at the site and be made available upon request by WCSS staff. No flexibility will be offered for Teacher Assistants that do not meet the requirements to serve in the 2025-2026 school year.

Wake ThreeSchool Site Administrators must submit the appropriate required paperwork to verify Teacher Assistant education credentials and compensation information. In the event of a teacher change, the Site Administrator must:

- Notify the Wake ThreeSchool Specialist of the teacher change within two (2) business days of the change occurring.
- Submit the appropriate required paperwork to the Wake ThreeSchool Specialist within five (5) business days of the change occurring.

Teacher Assistant Years of Experience

- Years of experience are defined as the number of years of experience working with preschool children (3- and 4-year-olds), not specific to only the number of years of experience working directly at your site
- Years of experience should reflect the teacher's experience working with preschool children prior to working at your WTS site AND years of experience working with preschool children at your WTS site

D. Substitute Staff

When a member of the Wake ThreeSchool staff is unable to work, a substitute staff person must be provided to maintain the staff-to-child ratio (1:8 or 2:16), and to implement the program in accordance with Wake ThreeSchool requirements. No flexibility will be offered to waive the 12-week limitations for Long-term Substitute Teachers. Additional approval will be needed if a substitute is needed longer than a 12-week period. Substitute staff must be at least 18 years of age and meet the minimum qualifications as defined as below:

1. **Teacher Substitutes for Short-Term Vacancies:** Requirements for short-term vacancies, when teachers are absent from the Wake ThreeSchool classroom for 15 or fewer attendance days, include the following:
 - a. **Nonpublic Schools (Private Childcare/ThreeSchool Settings):** Substitutes must have at least a high school diploma or a GED, and *some* coursework in early childhood education or child development, such as the NC Early Childhood Credential.
 - b. **Public School Settings:** Substitutes must meet the requirements of the substitute policy consistent with the local education agency (LEA).
2. **Teacher Substitutes for Long-Term Vacancies:** Requirements for long-term vacancies, when teachers are absent from the Wake ThreeSchool for 16 or more attendance days, include the following:
 - a. **Regardless of the program setting:** long-term substitutes must have a minimum of an AA degree with at least five (5) years in early childhood education/child development or a BA/BS in a related field. Any substitute staff that does not meet the minimum requirement must be approved by Wake ThreeSchool program staff.

3. Teacher Assistant Substitutes

Substitutes for teacher assistants must be at least 18 years of age and have at minimum of a high school diploma or a GED.

E. Instructional Staff Standards

1. Staff Time

Instructional staff shall work in direct contact with children in the Wake ThreeSchool classroom for a minimum of 32.5 hours per week. In addition to these direct, day-to-day instructional activities, instructional staff will require additional time for related instructional activities, including at least 7.5 hours per week for planning, conducting home visits, meeting with families, communicating with families (goal setting) on a consistent basis, and/or attending required professional development activities and provide internet capacity for teachers to access Teaching Strategies. These related activities should take place outside the 6.5-hour day and should not exceed 40 hours per week. It is the expectation that time is given to both the lead and assistant Wake ThreeSchool teachers to plan together. The teachers who have been identified during classroom visits must match the information that has previously been submitted in BridgeCare and approved by the Wake ThreeSchool Specialist. Teachers must remain in their assigned Wake ThreeSchool classroom during Wake ThreeSchool classroom hours of operation.

2. Work Week Requirements

During the 40-hour WTS work week lead teachers and teacher assistants must not:

- Provide coverage for staff in other classrooms (as floaters or substitutes)
- Provide transportation services (this includes driving as well as monitoring)
- Provide wraparound care services for children
- Provide administrative services (front desk coverage, providing tours, managing center/site needs, etc.)
- Any other duties not directly related to the delivery of WTS classroom services.

*If the WTS administrator requires the WTS Lead Teacher or Teacher Assistant to perform the stated duties above an additional contract outside of the WTS contract must be provided to the LT or TA. These duties must be performed outside of their WTS-required 40-hour work week.

3. Administrator Standards

- Director's and/or designee are required to attend scheduled Director's Meetings
- Complete observations of the WTS classroom (informal and formal)
 - Ensure the appropriate implementation of the Teaching Strategies Gold system for documenting and assessing children's progress

- Provide direct support to Lead Teachers and Teacher Assistants
- Participate in the Local Partnership’s process for evaluation of the services, including but not limited to sharing child-level and family-level data, and participating in family, teacher, and administrative surveys.
- Directors cannot serve as Wake ThreeSchool Lead Teachers

4. Professional Development Requirements

Licensed Personnel: Licensed Principals, Teachers, and Teacher Assistants in public schools will participate in professional development as consistent with the State Board of Education Policy.

It is the expectation that Teachers, Teacher Assistants, and Administrators participating in the Wake ThreeSchool program will be supported around following topics (please note this is not a comprehensive list and may be updated as needs arise): The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Teaching Strategies GOLD, the Brigance Developmental Screening Tool, and more. Wake ThreeSchool Program Staff will partner with local organizations to facilitate professional development sessions when possible.

F. Compensation for Instructional Staff

Compensation includes employee salary only paid to eligible Wake ThreeSchool teachers and teacher assistants working in public and non-public school Wake ThreeSchool sites as defined in this section. The Wake ThreeSchool Site Administrator will sign a Contractual Assurance Statement acknowledging their agreement to fully compensate both the Teacher and Teacher Assistant according to the Wake ThreeSchool Compensation Plan.

1. Teacher Eligibility

- Teachers who work in **public school** Wake ThreeSchool sites who are licensed will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Salary Schedule for Certified Staff and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.
- Teachers who work in nonpublic school ThreeSchool classrooms who hold a BA/BS degree in ECE/CD or a related field are eligible to receive a compensation package as defined in Table 2. Eligible degree accepted can be found on page 32.

Fully qualified lead teachers will be compensated according to the following chart:

Table 2: Wake ThreeSchool Compensation Chart for Lead Teachers

Wake County Smart Start ThreeSchool Compensation Chart for Lead Teacher 2026-2027

BA/BS in ECE or related field		
Years of Experience	SY26-27 Monthly Salary	SY26-27 Annual Salary
0	\$4,212	\$42,115
1	\$4,314	\$43,136
2	\$4,434	\$44,336
3	\$4,541	\$45,409
4	\$4,672	\$46,717
5	\$4,774	\$47,738
6	\$4,894	\$48,940
7	\$4,997	\$49,970
8	\$5,117	\$51,175
9	\$5,230	\$52,297
10	\$5,356	\$53,558
11	\$5,458	\$54,580
12	\$5,588	\$55,877
13	\$5,690	\$56,897
14	\$5,843	\$58,431
15+	\$5,945	\$59,452

2. Teacher Assistant Eligibility

- Teacher assistants working in **public school** ThreeSchool programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Salary Schedule for Non-Certified Staff and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.
- Teacher assistants working in nonpublic school ThreeSchool classrooms who hold an AA degree in ECE/CD or a related field are eligible to receive a compensation package as defined in Table 3. Eligible degree accepted can be found on page 32.

Fully qualified teacher assistants will be compensated according to the following chart:

Table 3: Wake ThreeSchool Compensation Chart for Teacher Assistants

Wake County Smart Start ThreeSchool Compensation Chart for Teacher Assistants 2026-2027		
Teacher Assistant with AAS in ECE or related field		
Years of Experience	Monthly Salary	SY 26-27 Annual Salary
0	\$3,433	\$34,332
1	\$3,517	\$35,165
2	\$3,614	\$36,144
3	\$3,702	\$37,019
4	\$3,808	\$38,085
5	\$3,892	\$38,917

6	\$3,990	\$39,898
7	\$4,074	\$40,737
8	\$4,172	\$41,718
9	\$4,263	\$42,634
10	\$4,366	\$43,661
11	\$4,449	\$44,494
12	\$4,555	\$45,553
13	\$4,638	\$46,384
14	\$4,763	\$47,634
15	\$4,847	\$48,467

Updated WTS Lead Teacher Education Requirements

To be eligible for participation in the Wake ThreeSchool program, all lead teachers must meet one of the following minimum education requirements outlined below. Program sites are strongly encouraged to hire and retain fully qualified lead teachers, as higher levels of teacher preparation are consistently associated with higher classroom quality, more effective instructional practices, and better outcomes for children.

1. Tier 1 – Fully Qualified (Highly Recommended)

- a. Lead teacher holds a BA/BS degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development (ECE/CD), or a related field (including Human Development, Family Studies, Human Growth and Development, or Psychology).
- b. In-progress degrees will not be considered for this tier.
- c. A copy of the lead teacher's DCDEE Verification Letter must be kept on file at the site and made available upon request by WCSS staff.
- d. Sites employing a fully qualified lead teacher are eligible for the highest reimbursement rate.

2. Tier 2 – Long-Term Substitute

- a. An AAS degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or a related field with at least five (5) years of experience in ECE/CD
- b. These educators qualify as long-term substitutes and are eligible for the mid-tier reimbursement rate.
- c. The use of long-term substitute staff is limited to a maximum of 12 weeks. For complete guidelines regarding substitute staff, please refer to section 4D of the WTS Operational Procedures.

3. Tier 3 – Other/Entry-Level (Not Recommended)

This tier is intended only as a short-term measure in response to ongoing hiring challenges in the early education workforce. It includes educators who:

- a. Hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential.
OR
- b. Are currently enrolled and actively pursuing a degree (BA/BS) in ECE/CD or a related field.
- c. Use of this tier is not recommended and should only be considered when other options have been exhausted. Less-qualified lead teachers can negatively impact classroom quality and child outcomes.
- d. Lead Teachers classified in Tier 3 may only serve in that capacity for up to 12 weeks. If a teacher in this tier is expected to remain in place beyond 12 weeks, additional approval must be requested.
- e. Sites must receive approval from WCSS program staff prior to assigning a Lead Teacher who falls into this category.
- f. This option will be re-evaluated annually to determine if its continued use is necessary.

Wake ThreeSchool Tier	26-27 Monthly Reimbursement per Slot
Tier 1-Fully Qualified BA/BS degree in early childhood, child development, or a related field (human development and family studies, human growth and development, or psychology)	\$1347
Tier 2-Long- Term Substitute AAS degree with at least five years of experience in ECE	\$1097
Tier 3-Other/Entry Level CDA Credentials or currently enrolled and actively pursuing a degree (BA/BS) in ECE/CD or a related field	\$848

Eligible Degree in Wake ThreeSchool Program

<u>BA/BS or higher in:</u> • Birth-Kindergarten • Child Care Administration • Child Development • Child and Family Development • Child and Family Studies • Child Psychology • Early Childhood Education • ECE-Special Education • ECE-Teacher Associate • Elementary Education • Human Development and Family Studies • Human Growth and Development • Human Growth and Family Studies • Psychology • School Age Children • Sociology • Special Education	<u>AA/AAS in:</u> • Child Care Administration • Child Development • Early Childhood Education • ECE-Special Education • ECE-Teacher Associate • Human Growth and Development • School Age Children • Special Education
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Section 7: Evaluation and Monitoring

A. ECERS-R and CLASS Assessments

All Wake ThreeSchool sites shall have an assessment completed every three years using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3) assessment tool as part of the rated license reassessment process and in accordance with the site's selected NC QRIS Pathway. This will be conducted at the time of the star rated license reassessment. At least one Wake ThreeSchool classroom shall be selected for an assessment during the reassessment process.

- Pathway #1: Wake ThreeSchool classrooms shall participate in the ECERS-3 assessment conducted as part of the state's three-year rated license reassessment cycle. If a Wake ThreeSchool classroom is not selected during the state's assessment, the site must request an ECERS-3 assessment for a Wake ThreeSchool classroom. If the assessment is conducted outside of the state's scheduled reassessment cycle, the site will be responsible for the cost of the reassessment.
- Pathway #2: Although ECERS-3 is not required for licensure under this pathway, sites must complete an ECERS-3 assessment on at least one Wake ThreeSchool classroom to maintain participation in the Wake ThreeSchool program.
- Pathway #3: Sites licensed through NAEYC or Head Start accreditation are not required to complete an ECERS-3 assessment for licensure purposes. However, they must continue to meet all quality standards required by their accrediting organization.

Classrooms must score **a minimum of 5.0** for ECERS-3. Classrooms that receive less than 5.0 are required to submit a Quality Improvement Plan to WCSS which demonstrates how the minimum rating will be accomplished by the following year of operation. Classrooms have no more than one year to improve quality to meet a minimum score of 5.0. If a classroom receives less than a score of 5.0 on the ECERS-3 assessment, the Wake ThreeSchool site **will** be responsible for the cost of the ECERS-3 reassessment.

Wake ThreeSchool is currently evaluating how CLASS will be incorporated into the program's continuous quality improvement system. Expectations regarding observations, scoring, and the use of CLASS data will be communicated to participating sites before implementation. Until that guidance is issued, no CLASS-specific compliance requirements are in effect.

B. Child Maltreatment Investigations

The Wake ThreeSchool site must immediately notify WCSS (within two (2) business) of an open Child Maltreatment investigation occurring in a Wake ThreeSchool site. The Wake ThreeSchool site must also notify WCSS (within two (2) business days) of any administrative action issued at the Wake ThreeSchool site.

The Wake ThreeSchool site in question may continue operating the Wake ThreeSchool classroom until the investigation and resolution are complete. Wake ThreeSchool funds may be terminated where there is substantiation of child maltreatment that jeopardized the health and safety of children enrolled in the program. Wake ThreeSchool Non-Cash Grant funds will be suspended while the child maltreatment investigation is ongoing.

In some cases, Wake ThreeSchool Program payments will continue through any appeals process. However, Wake ThreeSchool funds will be terminated when the participating Wake ThreeSchool site childcare facility license has been suspended or revoked. Any substantiation of child maltreatment, or any administrative action resulting in a change of the license status, may impact future participation in the Wake ThreeSchool Program.

C. Program and Fiscal Monitoring of Wake ThreeSchool Programs

WCSS and Site Administrators are required to monitor for compliance with Wake ThreeSchool program requirements.

1. Monitoring by WCSS

WCSS staff will monitor for compliance with specific Wake ThreeSchool program requirements.

2. Monitoring Tool

Monitoring tool(s) developed by WCSS must be used at the site level for self-review

and verification of compliance with the operating requirements. **The Wake ThreeSchool Site Monitoring Tool (Site Tool), completed by the local site administrator or designee**, is designed to provide checklists of those components of the program that must be reviewed for compliance annually at the site and classroom level.

The Site Monitoring Tool shall be submitted to WCSS and maintained on file at the site. It is expected that a hard copy of the completed Monitoring Tool and hard copies of all required requested documents are readily available at the site during Site Monitoring visits.

3. Site Administrator Responsibility

Each Site Administrator must monitor the WTS classroom during the 6.5-hour instructional day quarterly. A WTS Site Monitoring Tool must be completed for each WTS site and all WTS classrooms.

When a particular standard or requirement has not been met based on monitoring with the Site Tool, each site should establish a written plan to meet compliance. The plan should define who is responsible for accomplishing the task, a timeline, and information to indicate progress toward meeting the requirement.

By October 31st of the program year, the Site Administrator or designee should complete the WTS Site Monitoring Tool, sign/date the Assurance Statement, and send an original OR scanned copy of the completed WTS Site Monitoring Tool, to include attaching the Action Plan for items not met, to the local WTS Contract Administrator. NOTE: If a site or classroom becomes a WTS site or classroom after October 1st, a Site Tool should be completed and submitted to the local Contractor within 90 days of the first attendance day at that site/classroom.

A copy of the Site Monitoring Tool should be available at each WTS site and shared with the WTS Specialist and WTS Manager as requested, during technical assistance visits/calls with the contracting agency

D. Monitoring Timeline

Monitoring activities should begin with the start of each program year and continue throughout the year to ensure that program requirements are met. The timeline outlined below is subject to change based on program needs.

When	What	Who
By September 21	An original copy of the Site Tool is completed and plans for items that require an Action Plan must be submitted to WCSS. (Site or classroom new after October 1, should complete and submit within 90 days of the first attendance day.)	Site Administrator or designee *All child developmental screenings not completed by 10/31 should be noted in the Action Plan.
November - February	Conduct site visits to review and discuss Site Tool and results. Schedule follow-up visits as needed.	WCSS (or designee)
February - May	WCSS staff discuss/review Site Tools and monitoring results with site director and/or designee. If a particular standard or requirement has not been met based on monitoring, a written plan to meet compliance must be completed.	WCSS
By June 30	Monitoring results reported to the Board of Directors annually.	WCSS (or designee)

E. Confirmation of Compensation Plan

WTS Staff will monitor for compliance for all Wake ThreeSchool Sites regarding adherence to contract requirements, specifically regarding teacher compensation. The compensation plan will be reviewed at the end of each school year. Each site must complete a Confirmation of Compensation Plan for each WTS Lead Teacher and Teacher Assistant. The salary listed should include income earned solely for services provided to children and families enrolled in the Wake ThreeSchool Program. Site Administrators must provide proof of salary compensation received for the current school year. The Site Administrator is responsible for providing that information, along with a copy of the Confirmation of Compensation Plan, during End of the Year Monitoring visits in BridgeCare. The information must be submitted on the last day of the teacher's employment date. If the actual paid salary is less than the original reported salary, the site is responsible for compensating the teacher for the difference.

Glossary of Terms (Frequently Used Words)

Attendance Status Definitions		
P	Present	Child has attended for at least 3.5 hours
A	Absent	Child did not attend program for school day
D	Disenrolled	Child is no longer enrolled in the program
OR	Orientation	Family enrollment is completed before the child's first day
S	Staggered Entry	Used at the beginning of the school to allow for smaller classroom settings and child acclimation
V	Home Visit	Used at the beginning of the school for family and teacher introductions
N	Null	When a child starts in the middle of the month (filler) before the child's first day
FD	First Day of School	First days of school for all enrolled WTS children
RL	Remote Learning	Used when RL is offered to the entire classroom or to an individual child
ER	Early Release/Half Day	Use this status when a site is offering an early release/half day
LD	Last day of School	Use this status when a site's last day of school
Operating Status Definitions		
C	Closed	Program is not in operation
W	Teacher Workday	No WTS children are present
H	Holiday	Program is closed/ federal/state holiday
O	Open	Program is in operation
I	Inclement Weather	Program is closed due to unsafe weather conditions
E	Emergency Closing	Site is unable to operate due to unforeseen circumstances, unsafe school environment