



NC Listening Tour Key Themes

Initial findings from the NC Listening Tour Pilots

NC Child & CANDL | May 2022

Program Objective:

CANDL and NC Child would like to move towards a publicly funded system in NC, where early childhood education (ECE) is a public good and is equitable, culturally responsive, and relevant to parents, teachers, and providers.

To ensure that the voices and needs of parents, teachers, and providers are heard, a listening tour will be conducted of focus groups among these stakeholders across the state. The goal of the listening tour is to listen to and more fully understand the wants and needs of stakeholders when it comes to ECE.

Methodology | Pilot Groups

Before rolling out the listening tours throughout the state, pilot listening sessions were conducted by four different organizations in NC. These groups were facilitated by members of the organization or by a third-party moderator. Groups were conducted February 2022.

The groups which participated are:

Charlotte Black Child Development Institute (BCDI)

2 groups, conducted in-person

Each group was a mix of caregivers and ECE professionals

- Group 1: n=3
- Group 2: n=3

Charlotte Bilingual Preschool

2 groups, conducted virtually and in Spanish

Each group consisted of caregivers.

- Group 1: n=8
- Group 2: n=7

Equity Before Birth, Durham

1 group, conducted virtually

Group consisted of caregivers

- Group 1: n=13

Peletah Ministries, New Bern

1 group, conducted virtually

Group consisted of caregivers

- Group 1: n=15



Discussion Flow | Parent Pilot Groups

While each organization tailored the discussion flow to their audience, all discussions followed a similar flow.



Section Objective: get respondents comfortable with the conversation flow and group members and to understand what respondents value and need to help their children grow and develop.

Section Objective: understand respondents' current childcare situation, to understand what they like or value about their current situation, and to identify barriers to their current situation. Understand what might help them – or prevent them from – accessing other childcare services.

Section Objective: understand how childcare services may be improved on a more systemic level to better meet the needs of the community.

Section Objective: bring closure to the discussion and allow participants to reflect back on previous comments. Identify ideas and opportunities for improving early care and education in NC. Characterize parents' vision for their children and for effective partnerships with service providers.

Discussion Flow | Provider Pilot Groups

While each organization tailored the discussion flow to their audience, all discussions followed a similar flow.



Section Objective: get respondents comfortable with the conversation flow and group members and to understand what respondents value and need to help their community's children grow and develop.

Section Objective: understand respondents' current childcare situation, to understand what they like or value about their current situation, and to identify barriers to their current situation.

Section Objective: bring closure to the discussion and allow participants to reflect back on previous comments. Identify ideas and opportunities for improving early care and education in NC. Characterize providers' vision for their industry and for an effective partnership with parents.

Key Themes and Findings

Emerging themes from the first six focus groups

“I was working at the beginning of the year, trying to get childcare. I went to try to get a voucher and got put on waitlist. But then I lost my job because I still hadn't found childcare...but they require you to have a job to get childcare. So it's like, *how am I supposed to get a job when I lost mine due to not having childcare?*”

“My current childcare option is adequate, which makes me feel content. It’s OK, but it’s not perfect. *I wish there was affordable, quality, childcare close by.* Even if it wasn't everyday of the week. Even if it was half a day.”

The current childcare system does not work for everyone.

Based on the pilot focus groups, it appears that the current childcare system may work best for those who:

- Have time and mental bandwidth to advocate for child
- Speak English fluently
- Have access to social networks and resources
- Work traditional 9-5 hours
- Are middle class, White, employed

The system works well for those who don't have cultural or financial barriers, who have flexible work schedules, and who know where and how to access resources (either informational or financial resources).

This leaves many people (primarily parents and children of color) without access to affordable and high-quality childcare options.

And it puts additional strain on those providers who fall outside of the traditional childcare system (i.e., family members who provide in-home care).



This means the primary barriers to childcare are **accessibility** and **trust**.

Accessibility

Parents cannot always afford childcare, which leaves them with limited options (options which may not be equipped to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of children).

Affordable childcare options may not be nearby, which means they are not viable options if a parent doesn't have reliable or consistent transportation.

Traditional childcare options may not be available to parents depending on legal status, employment status, work hours, or child age restrictions.

Trust

Parents don't always trust that childcare providers are adequately trained to provide social, emotional, and academic support to children.

And because these are often children of color, or families with a variety of cultural backgrounds, parents don't always feel that their children are seen and respected, or their cultural identities recognized and celebrated. Parents themselves sometimes feel discriminated against or judged, which leads to further feelings of mistrust.

The biggest need: Access to high-quality childcare options.

“Access” can be achieved through...

AFFORDABILITY	Providing options for parents to afford childcare, including vouchers without strict stipulations or that can also work for both traditional and in-home / kin care, options for shorter-term care, and grants.
AVAILABILITY	Find ways to reduce wait times / wait lists and remove “proof of employment” or legal status barriers. Help providers provide more flexible or variable childcare hours and help parents with transportation / travel distance barriers.
AWARENESS	Help connect parents with resources about childcare and affordability options. Connect parents with facilitators who they trust (i.e., are part of their cultural community or speak their language).

The biggest need: Access to high-quality childcare options.

“High-quality” can be achieved through...

TRUST

Trust can be built by creating stronger relationships between parents and providers, ensuring that providers are part of the same community as parents / children (i.e., speak the same language, value each others’ culture and customers, are known within the community), and ensuring that children are seen and valued to create psychological safety for both children and parents.

TRAINING

Ensuring providers are well-trained (teaching academic, developmental, and life skills). Ensuring consistency of providers and well-paid providers.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Involving families in parent coaching, offering mental health services to parents when needed, and ensuring providers and parents work together towards common values and child needs (i.e., homework, communicating effectively, whole child, etc.)

CONSISTENCY

Ensuring programs do not close excessively often due to COVID/other illnesses or maintenance.



Laura Bayzle | Partner
lbayzle@tlg.com | 919-599-3629

Dylan McCue | Research Director
dylan@tlg.com | 919-537-6141

Grant Morgan | Associate Project Manager
grant@tlg.com | 704-699-8132

