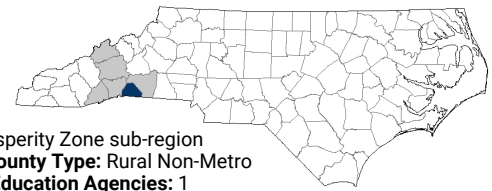


Polk County

NC goal: 2 million by 2030
2020 County Attainment Profile



Updated: Aug 12 2020

INTRODUCTION

From birth to career, there are many opportunities to develop strategies and interventions to increase attainment and improve workforce alignment. Below are some key areas and indicators that highlight where interventions may be possible to improve overall educational attainment outcomes.

COUNTY OVERVIEW

Polk County is in the **Asheville** Prosperity Zone sub-region. It's one of 50 rural non-metro counties in NC.

Overall, 8% of 25-44-year-olds in Polk County have earned a master's degree or higher as their highest degree; 18% have a bachelor's degree; 14% have an associate degree; 23% have some college, no degree; 30% have a high school diploma; and 7% have less than a high school diploma.

2018 Population	21,535
2030 Population	23,299
K-12 Students (2019)	
Traditional Schools	2,100
Charter/Private/Home	456
Median Household Income	\$50,467
Child Poverty Rate	20%
Households with Broadband	76%

Building the Foundation: Pre-K to 8

High-quality early learning and strong academic progress in early years helps prepare children for future success.



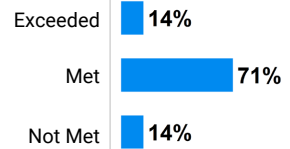
Polk County has 6 public schools with performance grades. Of these schools, none were classified as low performing in 2019.

How students in Polk County traditional public schools are currently doing:

To meet state goals, Polk County needs:

- **Polk County has met the goal for eligible 4-year-olds** enrolled in NC Pre-K program (goal: 75% vs. 88%).
- **96 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73% vs. 63%).
- **289 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86% vs. 57%).

Percent of Polk County schools by academic growth status, 2019



Ready for College & Career

High school completion is a crucial step on the pathway to postsecondary success or the beginnings of a career. Activities that prepare students to navigate the transition to postsecondary include gaining experience in college-level coursework and applying for financial assistance.

To meet state goals, Polk County needs:

- **8 more 9th graders** to graduate within four years (goal: 95% vs. 91%).
- **4 more seniors** to complete the FAFSA (goal: 80% vs. 78%).
- **26 more students** to attend school regularly (goal: 11% chronic absenteeism vs. 12%).



77 students took at least one AP course (12%) versus 9% of peer counties.



173 students participated in Career & College Promise programs (26%) versus 22% of peer counties.

Students in Polk County completed **135 Career & Technical Education concentrations** in 2019. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources; Architecture and Construction; and Health Science.

Postsecondary Access and Success

These metrics capture student progression and educational attainment from high school graduation to postsecondary completion. They indicate relative strengths and weaknesses of Polk County at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline.



Polk County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 300:1.

Among Polk County high school graduates:

- **65% of graduates** enroll in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 57% of peer counties.
- **72% of students** who enroll persist to their second year versus 73% of peer counties.
- **60% of students** who enroll earn a degree or credential within 6 years versus 49% of peer counties.

In your Prosperity Zone sub-region, 2018-19:

553	individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program.
3,207	Basic Skills enrollments at NC community colleges.
22,514	Continuing Education enrollments at NC community colleges.

Labor Market Outcomes

Lack of technical skills and lack of education are among the primary reasons why NC employers struggle to fill vacancies. These metrics capture labor market outcomes among recent graduates, the alignment between postsecondary degree production and labor market demand, and future job demands.



1.8% of teens ages 16-19 are not working and not in school versus 8.9% of peer counties.

In your Prosperity Zone sub-region:

Public postsecondary institutions graduate **2,836 students per year**. After 5 years, 69% of 2013 graduates were employed in NC, earning an annual average wage of \$33,116.

71% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs. The top gaps are: **Health Science** (all levels); **Transportation, Distribution & Logistics** (below bachelor's); and **Finance** (bachelor's).

There are **255,306 job openings** projected between 2017-2026. The top 3 in demand jobs with median wages of \$50,000 or more are: 1) **Registered Nurses**; 2) **General and Operations Managers**; 3) **Sales Representatives, Services, All Other**.

Opportunities for Growth

Compared to rural non-metro counties and the state, these three areas represent the biggest opportunities for Polk County to improve future attainment outcomes.



First-Year Persistence

72% of Polk County high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary persist to their second year, below the rural non-metro county average of 73%.



AP Participation

12% of Polk County high school students took at least one Advanced Placement exam, below the state average of 17%.



Math Performance

57% of Polk County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Math, below the state goal of 86%.

Largest postsecondary institutions in your Prosperity Zone sub-region		
Institution Name	Undergraduate Enrollments 2017-18	Graduate or Transfer in 8 Years
Total Enrollments	23,862	65%
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	10,492	53%
University of North Carolina at Asheville	4,366	89%
Blue Ridge Community College	2,812	48%
Isothermal Community College	2,662	58%
Mars Hill University	1,343	82%
Montreat College	845	71%
Brevard College	698	87%
Warren Wilson College	644	84%

Notes:

Enrollments reflect degree- or credential-seeking undergraduate enrollments. The graduate or transfer rate is drawn from IPEDS and represents the share of students who either graduate with a degree or credential from the institution or transfer to another institution within 8 years. The 8-year outcome is the only measure that includes information on transfer out. Detailed data guidance is provided at <http://go.unc.edu/countydata>

Local Cross-Sector Promising Practice: Polk Vocational Services (PVS)

Polk Vocational Services (PVS) provides rehabilitation, development and employment services to people with barriers to employment, while providing quality products and services to our customers on time and error free. PVS is an economic development social enterprise demonstrating the Abilities behind disabilities in rural Polk County, North Carolina.




We identified this example of an emerging cross-sector promising practice in partnership with local leaders. If you have additional examples you'd like to share with myFutureNC, please respond to this short survey.

For more information about each indicator, including data sources and methodology, visit:

dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/




ABOUT CAROLINA DEMOGRAPHY

Located within the Carolina Population Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, we use data and other available research to help you put a face or a story on the population-level changes facing your community. Our analysts provide a full array of demographic data and research services to inform decision making, evaluation, and policy across North Carolina, where we serve organizations and people in all 100 counties.

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ABOUT MYFUTURENC

MyFutureNC is a statewide nonprofit organization focused on educational attainment and is the result of cross-sector collaboration between North Carolina leaders in education, business, and government. Our mission is to prepare North Carolina for the future by empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and ensuring our economic viability in a global economy.

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