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.

Building the Foundation: Pre-K to 8
High-quality early learning and strong academic progress in early years helps prepare children for future success.

Watauga County has 10 public schools with performance grades. Of these schools, none were classified as low performing in 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.

How students in Watauga County traditional public schools are currently doing:
To meet state goals, Watauga County needs:
• 4 more eligible 4-year-olds enrolled in NC Pre-K program (goal: 75% vs. 72%).
• 317 more 3-8 graders earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73% vs. 58%).
• 742 more 3-8 graders earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86% vs. 52%).

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 Watauga County at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline.

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.

Opportunities for Growth
Compared to rural non-metro counties and the state, these three areas represent the biggest opportunities for Watauga County to improve future attainment outcomes.
### Local Cross-Sector Promising Practice: Appalachian GEAR UP Partnership

The Appalachian GEAR UP Partnership grant serves approximately 15,000 students from 11 school districts in the following Western North Carolina counties: Alleghany, Ashe, Burke, Clay, Graham, Madison, Rutherford, Swain, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey. Appalachian GEAR UP strives to create capacity in the districts that changes mindsets around college access and college goingness in a sustainable way.

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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