



News Release

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Historic Funding Step Expands Opportunity for Young Children in Wake County

The door of opportunity has just opened for 144 young children, provided by a historic vote to expand funding of Wake County SmartStart (WCSS) through the county budget. County Commissioners included \$325,728 to the local agency to partially fund eight new NC Pre-K classrooms. NC Pre-K is a statewide high quality early education program administered by WCSS, proven to enhance learning and narrow the skills gap. **The step will reduce the number of eligible children on the wait list, but more importantly will provide a life changing learning opportunity for many.**

County Commissioners voted this week on a budget that increased public school funding for needed services and reached further to ensure those entering public schools are better prepared for success. **Children attending NC Pre-K exhibited significant growth in all areas of learning:**

- **language and literacy skills**
- **math skills**
- **general knowledge, and**
- **social skills**

County Manager Jim Hartmann submitted a budget that included funding for four new preschool classrooms, a request that was doubled by the commissioners in their budget. With key leadership from Commissioners Holmes and Sullivan, this move is an example of the growing support for early childhood investments as a strategy to improve educational outcomes. **In a Duke study, counties that made significant investments in Smart Start and NC Pre-K showed higher math and language skills with all children, not just the children that participated in the program.**

County Commissioners are making the investment with expectations of future returns. For every \$1 spent now, the county will save upwards of \$7 in future spending. **Participants in high quality early childhood education have higher earnings, pay more taxes and are less likely to rely on governmental assistance.** This forward thinking vote ensures opportunity now, and creates investment benefits for children, families and Wake County taxpayers in the future.

This year's NC Pre-K students just celebrated their graduation. If you are interested in interviewing a parent about the difference the program made in their child's life, please contact Phyllis Barbour, Director of Community Relations, at (919) 723-9271 or email at pbarbour@wakesmartstart.org.

About Wake County SmartStart

Wake County SmartStart works to ensure children, birth to five, are prepared for success in school and in life. This mission is carried out in four goal areas; children are in safe supportive home environments, are in high quality care that contributes to positive child outcomes, are healthy and ready for school and that children and their families are supported by a strong, diverse integrated early childhood system. Through community collaborations and funding of local partners, we expand the support available to children and their families. To learn more about our mission, visit www.wakesmartstart.org.

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