



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: APRIL 28, 2015

Contact: Phyllis Barbour, Director of Community Relations
919.723.9271 pbarbour@wakesmartstart.org

Wake County SmartStart Celebrates Month of the Young Child; Releases Annual Report with Stories of Impact from Families

RALEIGH, NC – Wake County SmartStart joins partners in a statewide celebration of Month of the Young Child and releases its 2013-2014 [Annual Report](#), which pairs family stories of impact with WCSS goals. The report also highlights partners, programs and collaborations that are shaping the learning and development of children in their earliest years.

Early childhood education provides the underpinning to achieve Wake County goals. WCSS is positioned as a leader in preparing children, birth to 5, to succeed in school and life with investments in early childhood education and family support. From increasing graduation rates to the Healthiest Capital County top ranking, the impact and correlation of WCSS work with Wake County goals is intentional and deliberate.

The WCSS Annual Report highlights sustained progress and growth despite reduced budgets. Through deeper collaboration with community partners, WCSS is focused on a coordinated response to leverage limited resources, nurture best practices and create broader community understanding of early childhood education as the foundation to future success. Program highlights from the 2013-2014 Annual Report include the following:

- **Nearly 66%** of children, birth to 5, in Wake County attended facilities that received WCSS funded services.
- **2,090 developmental screenings were provided**; up nearly 10% from previous year.
- WCSS provided funding for **6,488 home visits**, which include parent education, assessments, and referrals.
Read the [Parents as Teachers success story](#) of a young mother whose daughter was born seven weeks early.

“We are proud of our role in supporting young children and building tomorrow’s future, but even greater results are possible with further investments,” said Pam Dowdy, executive director of Wake County SmartStart. “WCSS is at the forefront of major changes for children in our community. Increased support is essential for us to do more in the face of population growth and rising numbers of children in poverty.”

A snapshot of Wake County and young children shows the following for 2013-2014:

- There were an estimated **76,340 children between birth and age 5** living in Wake County in 2013.
- In 2013, **nearly 18% of young children in Wake County were living in poverty**. This number continues to rise.
- As of January 2014, 5,491 children, birth to 5, received child care subsidies, **an increase of 2.7%** from the prior year; **more than 2,100 children remained on the waiting list and were not served**.

WCSS identifies needs and creates solutions for the future through the collaboration and convening of community partners. Two significant, new collaborations of the past year include Farm to Child Care and Preventing Obesity by Design, which focus on healthy weight and environments for learning that encourage active play and nutritious food choices.

To visit an NC Pre-Kindergarten classroom or outdoor learning environment, schedule a family or expert interview, learn more about home visits or other funded programs, please contact Phyllis Barbour (pbarbour@wakesmartstart.org or 919.723.9271).

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 through four goal areas; safe and supportive home environments, accessible and available high quality child care, kindergarten readiness and a strong, integrated early childhood system. Through community collaborations and funding of local partners, we expand the support available to children and their families.

###