



# News Release

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## Wake County SmartStart Releases FY2016-17 Annual Report

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RALEIGH, NC – **What does it take to connect potential to opportunity? Vision.** In its newly released [FY2016-17 Annual Report](#), Wake County SmartStart (WCSS) highlights progress made, with a view on what's possible ahead. The agency used its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year to reflect on the past and chart a bold course for the future.

"The 20 year mark allowed us to take stock of our impact and set forth our boldest vision yet for improving our system of care and education," said Pam Dowdy, Executive Director of WCSS. "Together with our community and funded partners, we are reaching children and families, we are transforming futures, and we are reshaping outcomes for education. Early childhood investments are being widely supported as a means to build a stronger workforce and more economically viable communities."

Key Highlights from WCSS's FY2016-17 Annual Report:

- 95% of NC Pre-K graduates met "ready for school" measures in reading.
- 77% of young children are in high quality child care.
- Almost 7,000 home visits were made to strengthen families.
- Over half of all licensed child care centers received WCSS support, including 70% of centers serving families receiving subsidy.
- Wake County Commissioners awarded a \$100,000 matching grant to fund NC Pre-K, marking a new step into public-private partnerships and hybrid funding for the future of our young children.

"The alignment of our goals within larger community efforts creates leverage that expands our reach," said WCSS Board Chair, Angie Welsh. "Envisioning potential is what WCSS is all about – connecting children and opportunity with helpers along every path. Connecting these resources across diverse fields and industries in our county must be done to turn that potential into realized success."

For detailed information on our funded partners' program performance, please refer to WCSS's [Program Evaluation Report](#), a companion report to the Annual Report. To visit an NC Pre-Kindergarten classroom, learn about one of our funded programs, or obtain an interview to discuss the compelling research around success for all children, please contact Elizabeth Weichel, Communications Coordinator, at (919) 723-9282 or email at [eweichel@wakesmartstart.org](mailto:eweichel@wakesmartstart.org).

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[Wake County SmartStart](http://www.wakesmartstart.org) 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](http://www.wakesmartstart.org).