



  
Smart Start™  
Mecklenburg Partnership  
for Children

2019  
2020

IMPACT REPORT

# JOIN OUR MISSION

## ABOUT SMART START OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Smart Start of Mecklenburg County mobilizes resources, forges partnerships, and supports families to improve early childhood health, education and development and ensure children are prepared for kindergarten. Our four areas of focus are early care and education quality and accessibility, family support, health, and early literacy for children birth to five. Smart Start of Mecklenburg County is committed to standing as a reliable source of support for our county's families. We thank you for being a champion for our children, and supporting our vision of all local children entering kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed.



**Education is the foundation for all we do in life, it shapes who we are and what we aspire to be. Creativity fuels innovation, and it's what all states should strive to instill in the next generations.**

**~ Governor Jim Hunt  
Founder of Smart Start**

# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

A tale of two years. That is the only way to describe what Smart Start, like most of the world, experienced during this the last fiscal year. A year that began with promise was quickly altered by the most unpredictable and devastating occurrence in our organization's history.

And yet we persevered.

With a laser focus on our vision of ensuring that **every child enters kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed**, we accomplished much in conjunction with our partners. Some highlights include...

- The Smart Start budget is \$12MM, which is allocated to nearly 30 programs led by partner agencies that serve children ages 0-5 in our community
- Funding WAGE\$, a salary supplement program impacting the economic security and education attainment for over 700 qualified childcare teachers and directors.
- Administering MECK Pre-K on behalf of Mecklenburg County to 1,200 children in 69 classrooms across 37 locations. In addition, the MECK Pre-K program continues its growth aligned to Mecklenburg County's Action Plan for Early Childhood Education.
- Providing Smart Start's Guiding Parents to Services, an intensive navigation and support service for families experiencing the often stressful and confusing early days of their child's autism diagnosis. GPS served over 50 families and provided training in autism support techniques to approximately 200 childcare providers and other service providers.
- Additionally, approximately 200 childcare providers and other agency service providers are trained in autism support techniques.
- Expanding the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to over 27,000 Mecklenburg children who receive free, age appropriate books delivered to their homes each month. That is over 324,000 books!
- The parents enrolled in DPIL reported an increase in children reading daily from 50% to 72%.
- Contributing to the creation of a trauma-informed community through Resilience screening and training sessions for Mecklenburg home visiting staff, Early Head Start staff, and early education teachers.

- Working with eight area Head Start sites, Healthy Futures Starting in the Kitchen program implemented healthy and sustainable menus.
- Partnering with four local pediatricians (through Atrium & Novant) that have integrated The Basics Mecklenburg into well-child visits for children from birth to 3 years.
- Speaking on behalf of parents, caregivers, and early education professionals to inform and influence North Carolina's early education plans.

As the pandemic hit, we altered how we operated, but not what we did for our children and families. We also used the crisis as an opportunity to ensure our internal structure was well suited for what we were seeing not as a temporary change, but as a true paradigm shift for the community at large. In close coordination with the Smart Start Board of Directors, we made systemic changes that included the hiring of a new leader and the formation of a leadership team passionate about building something great with our partners and the community at large. Everything we do, whether it be in conjunction with the other Smart Start affiliates around the state, or with our vast network of partners here in Mecklenburg County, happens through collaboration. Thank you for your support of early childhood, the belief that **equity begins at birth**, and Smart Start of Mecklenburg County.



*Jake House*

Jake House  
CEO



*Cheryl Richards*

Cheryl Richards, Ph.D.  
Board Chair

# CONTENTS

EACH CHILD. EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD.

01

Financial Report

02

Family Support

03

Program Highlight: *The Basics Mecklenburg*

04

Health

05

Program Highlight: *Guiding Parents to Services*

06

Early Care & Education

07

Program Highlight: *MECK Pre-K*

08

Literacy

09

Program Highlight: *Dolly Parton's Imagination Library*

10

Community Engagement

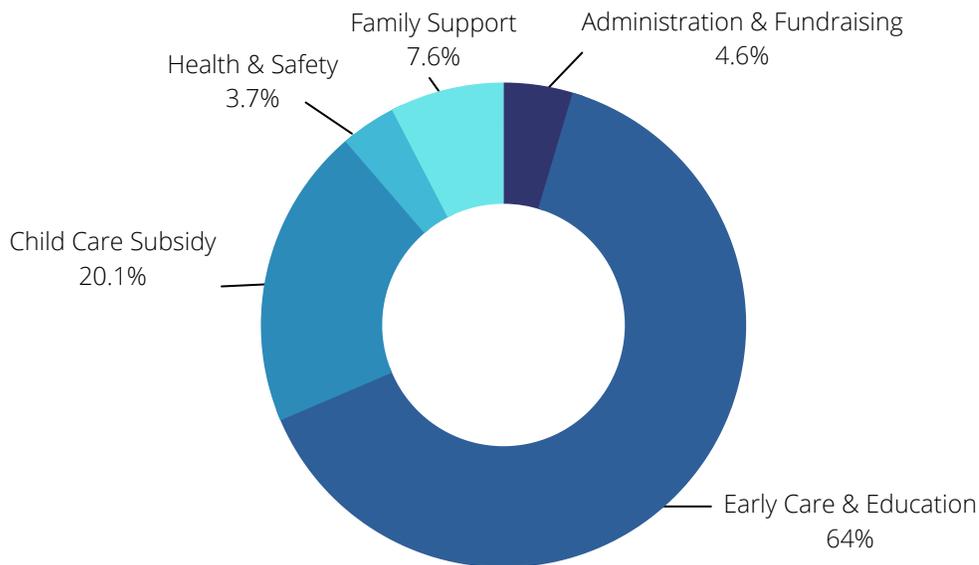
# FINANCIAL REPORT

Smart Start of Mecklenburg County distributes both public and private dollars to fund evidence-based & evidence-informed programs that support children from birth to 5 years old. All funded programs work toward the mission of preparing every child to be ready for kindergarten.

## FISCAL YEAR 2019-20 REVENUE

State Awards and Contracts	\$12,323,593
Local Awards	\$14,447,303
Private Contributions	\$432,013
Special Fund Raising Events	\$34,920
Other Receipts	\$180,967
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$27,418,796</b>

## FISCAL YEAR 2019-20 FUNCTIONAL EXPENDITURES



# FAMILY SUPPORT



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Some families lack the necessary support and resources to optimally raise their young children. Adolescent parents, adults with limited English literacy and first-time parents have specific needs for support and information to help them prepare their children for school success. The following programs offer encouragement and support, empowering parents to be confident leaders in their children's lives.

## PROGRAMS

- *Nurse-Family Partnership*
- *Safe Alliance*
- *Safe Journey's Parents as Teachers*
- ***The Basics Mecklenburg***
- *YMCA - Parents as Teachers Program*

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT



Smart Start of Mecklenburg County launched **The Basics Mecklenburg**, a community-wide early brain development campaign, in October 2018. The campaign is part of a network of Basics initiatives, designed to ensure that all children start school with the skills they need to learn and to thrive. The Achievement Gap Initiative (AGI) at Harvard University created The Basics to address skill gaps between children from different backgrounds that begin developing during the earliest years, before a child even enrolls in kindergarten



## BY THE NUMBERS

- **89%** of partners said it was likely or extremely likely that they would use something they learned at the Basics Forum
- **90%** of partners are satisfied with the overall Basics Initiative
- "Reading or looking at books together" increased **from 42% to 95%** for caregivers/parents that attended a Basics workshop.
- "Play games that involve counting" increased from **47% to 100%** for caregivers/parents that attended a Basics workshop.

*"I really look forward to The Basics email every week as it provides me with really good tips I get to implement with my one-year-old daughter. Knowing that these simple, yet powerful techniques impacts my daughters learning capacity in a positive way makes it worthwhile to research and use."*

~ A **Basics Mecklenburg** parent

# HEALTH

Supporting a young child's growth, education and development is critical to kindergarten readiness. Smart Start of Mecklenburg County funds programs to enhance children's health and well-being and provide access to community resources and services.

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## PROGRAMS

- *Charlotte Speech & Hearing*
- *Child Care Health Consultants*
- ***Guiding Parents to Services***
- *Healthy Futures Starting in the Kitchen*
- *Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center Early Childhood Intervention*
- *Polliwog Project*



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT



## Guiding Parents to Services

**Guiding Parents to Services (GPS)** is designed for Mecklenburg County parents with children 0-5 who are part of the complex, sometime frightening world of autism. The Autism Coordinator offers a range of services including; parent education, support, and referrals to early intervention services and other community agencies, weekly parent discussion groups addressing topics of interest, training to professionals in the field, and collaborations with agencies to enhance services to families.



### BY THE NUMBERS

- **100%** of parents who attended a workshop reported learning something new about the topic
- **98%** of child care teachers receiving training reported learning skills they can immediately apply to their job
- **60%** of parents received at least one home visit

*"I appreciate the Autism Coordinator for calling me immediately, for giving me such good information, for giving me peace of mind and better ideas how to deal with this new situation around with my kids with autism."*

~ A **GPS** parent

# EARLY CARE & EDUCATION



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67% of children under 5 in Mecklenburg County live in families where all parents or care givers work outside the home. This fact drives Smart Start's investment in quality enhancement initiatives designed to improve the quality of child care countywide.

## PROGRAMS

- *Charlotte Bilingual Preschool*
- *Charlotte- Mecklenburg NC Pre-K*
- *Early Childhood Teacher Education*
- *Lakewood Preschool Cooperative*
- **MECK-Pre K**
- *Quality Every Day*
- *Resource and Referral*
- *The Learning Collaborative*
- *Thompson Child Development Center-TANF/CCDF Non-TANF/CCDF*
- **WAGE\$**

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT



Decades of research have shown that Pre-K makes a difference in the school readiness of children. Not just in the short-term to get children ready to succeed in school, but in the long-term as children grow up, become employed, and contribute to the strength of the economy. Our newest program, **MECK Pre-K**, is a Mecklenburg County-funded program that offers **FREE**, quality pre-kindergarten to all of the County's four-year-old children. It is funded by the County and managed by Smart Start of Mecklenburg County.



## BY THE NUMBERS

- Received over **1,900** applications
- Opened **69** classrooms at **37** four and five star locations across Mecklenburg County
- Served families at or below **300%** of the federal poverty level

*"It's like he's gone from a baby to a responsible little boy. MECK Pre-K has made a difference for our family, and I know my son will be ready for kindergarten. I think he knows it too."*

~ A **MECK Pre-K** parent

# LITERACY

Developing language and literacy skills begins at birth through everyday loving interactions, such as sharing books, telling stories, singing songs and talking to one another. Parents, grandparents and teachers play a very important role in preparing young children for future school success and helping them become self-confident and motivated learners.

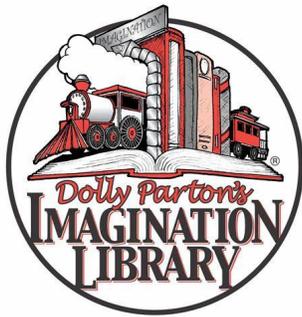


## PROGRAMS

- [\*Dolly Parton's Imagination Library\*](#)
- *Raising A Reader*



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT



**Dolly Parton's Imagination Library** (DPIL) is a book gifting program for children from birth to age five. The mission of the program is to foster a love of reading in preschool children and ensure that every child born has books, regardless of their family's income. Under Smart Start of Mecklenburg, DPIL has grown to become the largest DPIL in North Carolina, serving 28,000 Mecklenburg children. These children receive **FREE**, age appropriate books delivered to their homes each month. That is over **324,000** books!



## BY THE NUMBERS

- **37%** of the children birth-4yrs old living in Mecklenburg County receive books in the mail
- Over **13,000** new children joined the Imagination Library
- **72%** of our participants read to their child daily

*"Best book gift giveaway ever! Every month since birth, my grand-daughter gets a quality book in the mail with beautiful illustrations, and excellent stories for her age. Thank You."*

*~ A Dolly Parton's Imagination Library recipient*

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



*"North Carolina's future depends on our children today. We know that the foundation for future learning, health and well-being is built during early childhood. When we commit to giving every child a strong foundation in their first years of life, we create healthy and vibrant communities for all of us."*

~ Governor Roy Cooper



**2,932** FOLLOWERS



**1,156** FOLLOWERS



**4,367** FOLLOWERS



**25,931** SUBSCRIBERS



*Each Child. Every Neighborhood.*

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Smart Start of Mecklenburg County is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.