



# SMART START FACT SHEET

The earliest years of childhood are critical. Experiences during this time literally shape the structure of the brain. For young children to thrive they need their physical, emotional and social needs met. Because today's children are tomorrow's leaders, parents and workers, everyone has a stake in making sure all children have the experiences they need to succeed. Smart Start is the system that brings together all the people involved in a young child's life—families, teachers, doctors, caregivers, social workers, and many others—to ensure every child has all they need for healthy growth and development.

With 77 partnerships serving all 100 North Carolina counties, Smart Start is the convener in every community across the state.

## Raising the Quality of Early Care & Education

Forty years of early education research show that programs which positively impact children are those with highly skilled teachers, age-appropriate activities, stimulating materials, and a safe environment. Since its inception, Smart Start has raised the quality of the state's early childhood programs—helping our children develop the social, emotional, and academic foundations that will serve them throughout life.

### In FY 2008-09:

- **3,880 child care providers** received support to improve the quality of care for approximately **116,040 children**.
- **6,790 teachers** received assistance so they could attend early childhood college courses impacting approximately **86,149 children**.
- **11,700 teachers** received support through WAGE\$<sup>®</sup> and other programs that enabled them to stay in the profession and provide stable care to approximately **148,413 children**.
- **60% of children** in child care were in **4 and 5** star centers (compared to 30% in 2001).
- **73% of children** whose families receive help paying for early childhood care and education attended **4 and 5** star centers in 2009 (compared to 30% in 2001).
- **92% of children** with special needs were in high quality care in 2009 (compared to 61% in 2001).
- **27 school systems** and **62 elementary schools** participated in Ready Schools activities. A ready school provides a seamless continuum of learning for children ages 3 through 8 between elementary schools, families, communities, and children's early care and educational experiences.

## Supporting Families

Research on brain development is changing how we think about the early years, and in turn influencing our views of parenting. It has produced new insights on interacting with a child, managing behavior and preparing children to enter school healthy and ready to learn. Smart Start offers family-focused programs that improve parenting, promote parent involvement and impact the environment in which parenting takes place. These include:

- Home visiting programs to help new parents and parents-to-be by providing education, information and resources.
- Parent education programs that empower parents by increasing their knowledge of early childhood development and positive parenting practices.
- Early literacy programs that encourage book sharing, storytelling, singing, talking, and drawing to help children develop early literacy skills and prepare them to learn to read to write.

### In FY 2008-09:

- **18,270 families** participated in Smart Start-funded family support programs.
- **96% of adults** in Smart Start parenting skills programs improved their competence and confidence in their parenting abilities.
- **82% of parents** in Smart Start literacy programs increased the time they spent on literacy activities with their child.



# SMART START FACT SHEET CONTINUED

## Helping Parents Afford High Quality Care

Per legislation, Smart Start must use at least 30% of its funding to help low-income families afford child care. As a public/private nonprofit, Smart Start has greater flexibility than state agencies to provide subsidy. Local partnerships have the freedom to make subsidy decisions strategically, based on community needs.

### In FY 2008-09:

- **47,796 children** received subsidy assistance from Smart Start.
- **A five-year analysis** of children who receive Smart Start subsidy showed:
  - » Children receiving *Smart Start subsidy were in higher-quality programs compared to children* receiving subsidy from other sources.
  - » When Smart Start funds were added to other subsidy funds, the overall quality for children increased.
  - » Children for whom Smart Start subsidy was the only funding source were in higher quality programs than children with other single-source subsidy.

## Advancing Child Health

Healthy child development is supported by regular access to health care, such as well-child visits. Smart Start works with providers, health departments, families, and communities to improve the health care systems that serve children.

### In FY 2008-09:

- **7,270 children** with special needs or at-risk for developmental delay received Smart Start health-related enhanced services.
- **98% of children** received recommended developmental screening at their most recent well-child visit after Smart Start launched Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) program (compared to 81% before ABCD).
- **Child care providers at 89 centers** across the state learned how to incorporate healthy eating and exercise into their programs to prevent childhood obesity. As a result, 4,112 children in 10 counties now receive healthier food options and more active play time in child care.

## Building State Systems

Created with the generous support of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Smart Start's National Technical Assistance Center is a network of the nation's leading early childhood experts that provides technical assistance to individuals, organizations, communities and states, guiding them through the process of developing a high-quality, comprehensive early childhood system. States turn to Smart Start for assistance in systems development, collaboration, governance, standards, monitoring, finance, programming, provider support, and evaluation. Every state in the nation has requested assistance and resources from Smart Start.

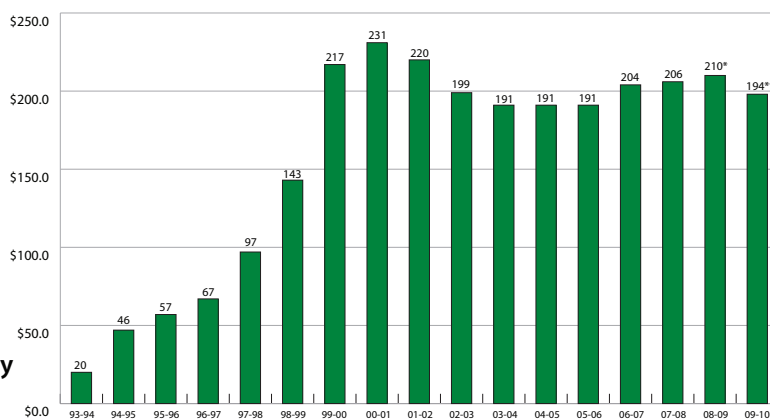
## Leveraging Funding

Since 1994, Smart Start has brought more than \$382 million into North Carolina's early childhood system in cash and in-kind contributions.

### Smart Start Appropriation History

Fiscal Years 1993-1994 through 2009-2010

(Rounded to millions)



\*One-time budget reduction of \$16M reduced available 08-09 budget to \$194M

\*\*One-time budget reduction of \$7M reduced available 09-10 budget to \$187M

