

# The Herald-Sun

# SCHOOLS AND MORE

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## Encouraging development our responsibility

BY MARSHA BASLOE

Durham Partnership for Children

There is no question we all want our children be ready to learn and to achieve when they enter kindergarten. There is also no question we all want our children to lead healthy and happy lives.

Jack Shonkoff from Harvard's Center for the

Developing Child and other world-renowned researchers have been able to show that babies are wired to learn and that early experiences lay the foundation for later success.

From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, a child's brain develops at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life. In fact, 90 percent of

a child's brain is developed in the early years! Young children, regardless of economic standing, who are exposed to an educational environment that nurtures their social, emotional and cognitive skill continue to do better later.

The evidence is clear and we cannot and should not walk away from it.

Because we know how

much we can affect a child's development in the early years, we have worked hard to build a system that trains and supports an appropriately skilled early childhood workforce whose expertise matches the needs of the children and families it serves. Because we know the facts of

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### DEVELOP

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brain development, we invest in effective programs and develop innovative strategies to support young children and their families and we leverage the power of bipartisan support and public-private partnerships.

Expanding opportunities for children is a moral responsibility and a wise social and economic investment.

For 15 years, Durham's Partnership has administered public Smart Start and More at Four dollars and invested them in Durham's early childhood education, family support and health services for children birth to age 5. In addition, we function as the catalyst that mobilizes community agencies, parents, businesses, congregations, child care providers and policymakers to build sustained support for a comprehensive educa-

tion system that begins at birth.

As part of our celebration of Durham's Partnership for Children's 15th anniversary year, we will write a monthly column that will appear in the pages of this newspaper throughout this fiscal year. Our goal is to share important and relevant information on issues which affect our community's young children and ultimately our future.

To plug into the avail-

able programs and resources, or to read more on how a child's brain develops and why the early years of birth to 5 are important, visit our Web site [www.dpfc.net](http://www.dpfc.net). To support our advocacy efforts, please go to [www.champions4youngchildren.net](http://www.champions4youngchildren.net).

Marsha Basloe is the executive director of Durham's Partnership for Children. She can be reached at [marsha@dpfc.net](mailto:marsha@dpfc.net). This is the first of 12 articles that will appear in Schools and More on the fourth Tuesday in each month.