



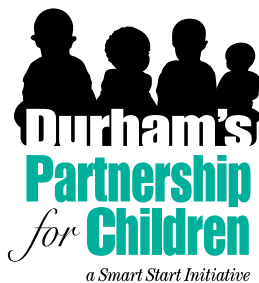
Taking Action for Durham's Children and Families by Promoting Early Childhood Success

Early Childhood Plan for the City of Durham

FULL REPORT

Durham's Partnership for Children, a Smart Start Initiative

June 2009



Taking Action for Durham's Children and Families By Promoting Early Childhood Success

Durham's children and families are in need of powerful friends who can help them succeed in school and in life. With more than 20 percent of its young children growing up in poverty, the odds are against too many children in Durham. The achievement gap reported in every school can be seen especially in kindergarten, and when children start behind, they stay behind. It is vital for the future of Durham that we promote the health and well-being of the next generation. Today's children are depending on it.

Cities and towns across America are developing multiyear early childhood plans for their communities as part of the *City Challenge for Early Childhood Success* promoted by the National League of Cities. Each one is now working to create a long-term, strategic agenda for addressing the key needs of that municipality's youngest residents in areas such as early learning, health care, and parent education and support. When city leaders focus attention on early childhood issues, mobilize support for action, and lead by example, they can help build and support a local infrastructure that promotes high-quality early care and education and strengthens families. Results from these efforts have increased children's opportunities for success and enhanced the social and economic vitality of cities and communities.

To improve outcomes for young children, early childhood success must be a community and government-wide priority.

Durham's Partnership for Children encourages Mayor Bill Bell to take action for Durham's children by creating an early childhood campaign that focuses on young children's health and education. The Partnership stands ready to provide support. This campaign has multiple components:

- 1) We recommend that Mayor Bell use the "bully pulpit" of the city manager's office to raise awareness and build support for childhood success by designating the year 2010 as The Year of The Young Child and inviting all city agencies, businesses, faith leaders, schools, community agencies, neighborhoods, and parents to join the effort.
- 2) We encourage Mayor Bell to create a special taskforce to identify opportunities for expanding early childhood resources throughout the City of Durham and to neighborhoods in which children and families face the greatest challenges because of poverty and crime.

- 3) We recommend that the Mayor designate an early childhood advisor or coordinator within the city manager's office to keep visibility high and momentum moving forward.
- 4) We also encourage the Mayor to launch his own signature early childhood initiative. This briefing paper includes information on three possible initiatives for the Mayor's consideration that build upon the current priorities and plans of various city departments and community agencies. These initiatives focus on children's health and safety, early childhood literacy and family economic security—the most important areas for a child's positive development and educational success. In addition, each initiative involves multiple partners to leverage additional collaboration and resources. Mindful of the current economic climate, we have included low-cost options for getting started as well as more ambitious strategies that may require additional revenue.

Benefits to Cities When Young Children Succeed

How well children learn and grow during their early years has long-lasting consequences for them, their families, and the communities in which they live. Efforts to promote the full and healthy development of young children pay multiple dividends for cities and towns. In fact, studies have found that every \$1 invested in early childhood yields \$12 or more in long-term benefits to society.

Municipal early childhood initiatives to support parents, promote child health and safety, and improve access to high-quality child care can help cities in five key ways¹:

- *Positive experiences between birth and school entry boost a child's healthy development and future prospects.* Research clearly demonstrates that the “hard wiring” of a child's brain occurs during these early years. Children who get off to a good start are less likely to be held back or to get into trouble in school. Studies have even shown that early childhood success can lead to higher college graduation rates, lower crime rates, and reduced need for emergency services many years later.
- *Families are more stable when the needs of their young children are met.* When children are healthy and in quality early childhood care, their parents are more likely to maintain steady employment and are typically more productive workers.

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Research Project demonstrated a \$12 return on investment for every \$1 invested in high quality early childhood education. Young children with early learning experience are more likely to finish school and attend college, and are less likely to be unemployed, commit crimes or need remedial education or training.

- *When children enter school ready to learn, schools are better able to meet high standards and student needs.* Successful schools benefit all students, improve a city's livability, and help develop a strong future workforce.
- *Strong early childhood programs are a valuable asset for local economic development.* In the short term, these programs can help attract better workers and support working parents. In the longer term, a city that has made the necessary investments to maintain a quality workforce over time is likely to be more appealing to businesses looking for a stable location.
- *Early childhood initiatives that expand access to quality services help "level the playing field."* Economic, racial, and ethnic disparities are too often perpetuated from one generation to the next unless children from disadvantaged households have the kinds of early childhood opportunities that are commonplace among their more advantaged peers.

Making Early Childhood Success a Top Priority in Durham

To improve outcomes for young children, early childhood success must be a community and government-wide priority. Further, targeted programs that are based on best practices and engage multiple stakeholders hold the best promise of success.

Investing in early childhood education offers Durham the best possible return on investment. The basic science of early childhood development and the underlying neurobiology (which documents how the brain develops) provides irrefutable evidence that the foundations of learning, behavior, and health are formed at a very young age.

We hope that this paper provides Mayor Bell and the City of Durham guidance on effective strategies for meeting the needs of its youngest citizens by making early childhood experiences successful. Durham's Partnership for Children stands ready and willing to assist with this important campaign for early childhood success.

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We are proposing three possible initiatives based on community needs and priorities: health, early literacy, and economic security.

Play to Succeed: Combating Childhood Obesity

Across the nation and here in North Carolina, childhood obesity rates have more than tripled among children of all ages in recent decades. Durham is no exception in this national trend: in 2007, 65 percent of people in Durham were overweight or obese; and nearly 41 percent of low-income young children ages 2 to 4 years are considered at-risk for overweight or overweight.ⁱⁱ

Health experts have warned that increasing rates of obesity may make this generation of children the first in American history that will be less healthy and have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. Obese children are increasingly developing serious medical conditions, such as type 2 diabetes – a condition associated with obesity that was once referred to as “adult onset” diabetes. Obese children also have a greater risk for developing health problems later in life, including heart attack, stroke, and hypertension. In addition, they face mental health risks, as teasing about weight and personal appearance may lead to isolation and depression.

The National Institutes of Health has estimated that increases in childhood obesity will cost families, businesses, and governments nearly \$100 billion per year in future health costs alone. A recent report by the North Carolina Division of Health estimated that medical costs related to obesity among children ages 6 to 13 years of age increased to \$127 million annually. If unchecked, the growing problem of childhood obesity will undermine the long-term health and economic vitality of every community.

The rise in childhood obesity has been fueled by many factors. Children today often lead unhealthy lifestyles with greater reliance upon fast foods and increased television, computer, and video game time. Researchers suggest that the decline in children’s health is linked, in part, to their growing disconnect from nature and outdoor activity. Fewer kids today walk to school, spend significant time simply playing outside, or regularly enjoy the great outdoors.

By promoting active living and healthy eating in child care facilities, schools, and communities, mayors, city council members, and other municipal leaders can take practical steps now to help reverse this epidemic facing children today.

What the City of Durham Can Do: Expanding Parks and Playgrounds in Underserved Areas

According to the National League of Cities, one way for city leaders to start is by focusing on the built environment and the safety of neighborhoods – two areas in which municipal governments play a major role.ⁱⁱⁱ Researchers have found that the level of physical activity among children is directly related to the design and quality of the neighborhoods in which they live. Special interventions for high-risk populations, particularly minority and low-income children, are particularly important: concerns about safety, social isolation, and limited access to healthy foods, and opportunities for regular physical activity all pose potential barriers to developing healthy lifestyles among these children.

Mayors and other city officials can encourage children to be more active by building more parks and playgrounds in underserved areas while also taking steps to reduce the crime and violence that lead many parents in low-income neighborhoods to keep their children indoors.

Across Durham, numerous parks and playgrounds await rediscovery by young kids. But in Durham’s inner city neighborhoods, the parks and playgrounds are too often empty and considered unsafe by parents and residents. This issue has been noted by public officials. According to City of Durham’s Department of Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2003-2013, playground maintenance and renovation are high priorities with plans to develop playgrounds that are co-located with public schools and neighborhoods. These playgrounds will not only increase neighborhood stability, but will provide much needed recreational opportunities for children.

Program Recommendation: The “Play to Succeed”

Project

The ultimate goal of this project is to improve children’s health and development by making inner-city neighborhood playgrounds child and nature friendly. Our recommendation is that the City of Durham, under Mayor Bell’s leadership, pledge to support public playgrounds that are suitable for children of various ages, including for infants and toddlers. Further, these playgrounds should meet national safety standards and provide opportunities for both natural play and structured special programs for young children designed and implemented by the Parks and Recreation Department and other community agencies. It might be necessary for the City to support public transportation for families to get to these multi-age, larger parks.

During planning for the Durham Master Plan for Parks and Recreation, children were asked to draw their ideal park.

From their drawings, it is evident that the ideal park for children would contain play equipment; plenty of grass, trees, and flowers; and natural water features like ponds and streams.

Many types of animals would live there. There would always be lots of smiling people and possibly a swimming pool to play in.

Phase One: Expand Access

During the planning phase, information from the Department of Parks and Recreation Master Plan could be used to identify existing park and playground sites and school facilities within selected inner-city neighborhoods.

Where appropriate, the city could work with local school districts to expand access to athletic fields and recreational facilities by creating joint use agreements. Such agreements can help transform schools into centers of community; they also often yield significant budget savings over time. City leaders can work with school officials and early childhood system leaders to expand access to school facilities during non-school hours, negotiating terms for sharing costs and addressing staffing and liability concerns. Similarly, mayors and other municipal officials can make city-owned recreational facilities available for school use when feasible.

Designs for the playground sites could be developed pro-bono or at low-cost by area horticulture programs or other landscape architects familiar with early childhood learning environments that meet both safety recommendations and early childhood education standards. To ensure local support and buy-in, neighborhood groups and associations, faith groups, and volunteers should be involved in the design and development of the renovated or new play spaces.

Creating playgrounds and natural spaces for children is vital to children's developmental learning about the environment. When children are outside in nature, they gain an appreciation for their environment and the world around them. Neighborhoods in which the playgrounds are established can be encouraged and supported to establish safety and clean-up days and crime watch activities as well. The City is encouraged to pilot this with selected playgrounds.

Phase Two: Create New Playgrounds and Connect Programs

For the development phase of the project, the city could look to its traditional sources for expanding parks and recreational opportunities, including grants and user fees. In addition, this project may be particularly suited for economic stimulus projects funded by the federal or state government. The Office of Community Development which works on neighborhood revitalization efforts could recommend playground projects well suited to high risk neighborhoods.

In St. Petersburg, Florida, Mayor Rick Baker pledged to locate a public playground within one half mile of every resident in the city as part of a "Play 'n' Close to Home" program.

A key part of the city's strategy has been to develop joint use agreements with the Pinellas County School Board, which removed longstanding barriers – such as concerns about legal liability, insurance, maintenance, security, and vandalism – to public use of elementary school playgrounds during non-school hours.

With substantial new investments in play equipment, the city has opened 14 new playgrounds, including seven at local elementary schools.

Local sponsorships by Durham’s business community and civic groups could be another avenue for funding with leadership by the major’s office and the newly formed Parks and Recreation Foundation. Modeled after Habitat for Humanity’s efforts to build housing for low-income families, the Durham Chamber of Commerce and other groups could be encouraged to come together to build or renovate playgrounds.

Once sites are established, the city’s own Parks and Recreation Department and area nonprofits should be encouraged to develop on-site programming to encourage public use and safety, increase structured recreational programs and opportunities, and engage child care sites in programs. Already trained Durham Parks & Recreation staff in collaboration with Durham’s Partnership for Children could provide classes on First Aid, Working with Young Children, and others. Having on-site programs for young children will increase public use of the playgrounds and in turn increase neighborhood involvement in caring for these sites.

Potential Partners:

- **Durham Parks and Recreation Department**
- **Durham Chamber of Commerce**
- **Local Schools**
- **Neighborhood Associations**
- **Durham Health Department**
- **YMCA**
- **SEEDS Community Garden**
- **Cooperative Extension**
- **Duke University Community Garden Project**

Many communities are now developing community gardens in public parks and school grounds, including child care sites, as a way to increase opportunities for children and families to eat healthy by growing fresh produce.^{iv} Community gardens not only increase access to healthy foods for low-income families, but also improve student self-esteem, social skills, and environmental awareness and often are a deterrent to vandalism.^v The SEEDS Community Garden program, which is located in Northeast Central Durham, is a national model of youth gardening and an excellent potential partner. Inner-city youth manage their own garden and sell the produce at the Durham Farmer’s market, which is an economic development strategy for these young people. The Cooperative Extension’s master gardener program provides training and guidance in gardening and is another excellent resource. It is an opportunity to partner with child care sites and the many churches in Durham.

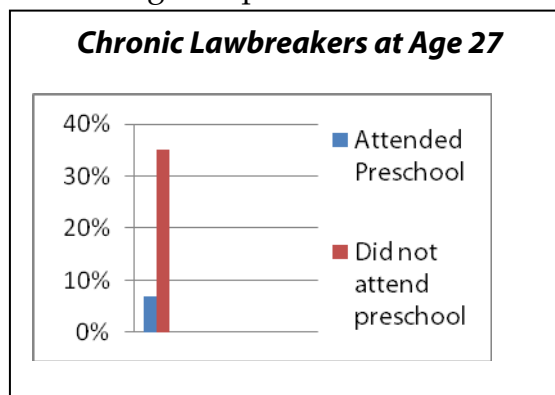
Promoting Early Literacy

What does early childhood literacy and education have to do with fighting crime? Almost everything, according to Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national, nonprofit anti-crime organization founded by police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders.

The law enforcement members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids are first and foremost determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. But, they believe that locking up criminals is not enough to win the fight against crime; rather, they believe that large reductions in crime will require that serious measures are taken before – not only after – crimes occur. According to a national survey of law enforcement leaders, 71 percent chose providing more educational programs for young children as the most effective strategy for reducing youth violence and crime.^{vi}

The connections between crime and low education and low literacy levels are well established in the criminal justice and education research literature. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, up to 70 percent of the incarcerated population is illiterate (1999). In North Carolina prisons, the reading score for the typical inmate entering prison in 2004 was barely 9th grade, and only 53 percent reported having a high school education.^{vii}

Studies show that at-risk kids who attend high-quality early education programs are less likely to commit crimes as adults than similar children who do not attend high-quality early education programs. Evidence from the High Scope Educational Research Foundation, which studied at-risk preschool-age children attending the Perry Preschool Program, showed that by age 27, children who did not attend the program were five times more likely to become chronic offenders with five or more arrests. By age 40, those who did not attend the Perry Preschool Program were more than twice as likely to become career offenders with more than 10 arrests, twice as likely to be arrested for violent crimes, four times more likely to be arrested for drug felonies, and seven times more likely to be arrested for possession of dangerous drugs.^{viii}



Other studies have shown that low-income, at-risk children who participate in high quality early childhood programs have stronger social, emotional, and cognitive skills when entering school. These programs prepare children for school success by fostering literacy and language development. Research consistently demonstrates that the more children know about language and literacy before they begin formal schooling, the

better equipped they are to succeed in reading. Children who are not readers by the end of third grade may never achieve grade level reading proficiency and are very likely to have lifelong struggles in school and in life.

Unfortunately, children who live in poverty, such as those living in subsidized housing in Durham’s inner city neighborhoods, have less access to books and early childhood programs that promote reading and early literacy. These children are often at even greater risk because their own parents tend to have low literacy skills and smaller vocabularies. Children that grow up in homes with limited experience of being spoken to or read aloud to generally hear fewer words, and when they start kindergarten, these children are often behind their peers. This literacy gap may widen as years pass.

Developing early literacy programs provides the real opportunity of reaching both children and their parents at once and creating immediate impact among two generations. Sustained engagement activities that focus on reaching parents as well as children also allows the larger community to find its voice about its values, to comprehend the importance of early literacy, and to celebrate early reading in ways that really lift it up.

What Mayor Bell Can Do: Promote Early Literacy and Reading

Local cities and municipalities have little influence over the educational system since it is funded primarily at the state level and guided by federal and state policy and local school boards. However, what a municipal government can do is help young children become ready to succeed in school and, in doing so, help deliver a better quality student to the school board and the kindergarten classroom.

Across the nation, mayors are launching special reading efforts to promote children’s literacy as the cornerstone of early childhood success. Through public awareness, special events, and innovative programs, cities have the power to reach children and families and convey the importance of reading and increase access to books.

Durham County has promoted “Durham Reads Together,” which encourages county residents over the age of 13 to read the same book as a way to celebrate reading. Although this is an important spotlight on reading, we encourage Mayor Bell to launch

“We know early literacy is the No. 1 predictor of how far kids go in school, what kind of job they get and even if they commit a crime,” says Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton, who is at the forefront of the latest mayoral reading efforts.

• Charleston, S.C., started its Born to Read program, which gives parents a reading kit when their baby is born, and a book-of-the-month club for kids ages 4 to 6.

• Longmont, Colo., a city of 85,000 people north of Denver, started the mayor's book club with the mayor reading *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Joffe Numeroff. It reaches out to every 3 and 4 year old. Books are in English and Spanish.

the city's own literacy initiative by reaching out to young children and their families where reading skills are first learned.

Program Recommendation: The Mayor's Family Book Club

The underlying premise of the Mayor's Book Club is to expose young children and their parents to the importance of early reading so that all families live in an environment where books and literacy are highly valued and a household norm. These clubs have been launched in dozens of cities across the nation and vary in scope but typically involve membership drives of some sort where parents sign up on-line or at schools and libraries. ^{ix}

We recommend that Mayor Bell consider starting the Mayor's Book Club in the inner city neighborhoods of Durham and expand it to the general public as resources permit. Mayor Bell's Book Club would offer children from low-income neighborhoods backpacks with their book and fun things that promote reading like a t-shirt and a bookmark. Parents would receive a guide to the book so they know what it is the children are learning and what kinds of things the parents should emphasize when they read to the children or help the children read the books, like beginning and ending sounds or rhyming words.

Phase One: Creating the Program and Partnerships

During the first phase of the Book Club, the Mayor would convene community partners to design and implement the program. Potential partners include the Durham Literacy Center, local law enforcement leaders, the public school system, private pediatric practices, area bookstores, and Durham's Partnership for Children. These partners could determine how the program would be designed and conducted.

Membership is an important component, and determining the rewards would be an important function of this planning committee. In Jacksonville, Florida, the Mayor's Book Club offers a few different things for the book club members, such a museum hop where the book club members and their families can get into all museums for free and the museum offers special book club activities. Another example is the Mayor's Book Club Passport where families get additional books for their children when they participate in area reading program activities. In Longmont, Colorado, the Mayor's Book Club provides a special library card and one book each month to every participating child.

Mayor Bell could launch his own public awareness early literacy campaign through existing channels, such as placing bus transit ads, posters in public buildings, inserts in water bills, and PSAs on television, to promote the importance of reading. Local community leaders – elected officials including the mayor, sports stars, law enforcement leaders, and news anchors—could be recruited to read award-winning children's books to children at community sites and centers and perhaps even on one of

the local television affiliates which might agree to host a Book Club show. All of this could be done at low or no-cost to the city.

Phase Two: Launching the Mayor's Club

The greatest expense for the Mayor's Book Club will come in purchasing books and the accompanying backpacks for the children or for parents of babies. The Mayor's office can invite local bookstores and corporate sponsorship of the program to help offset these costs. For example, Durham's Partnership for Children already has a partnership with Bookstore at Durham for an annual book drive, and drive is operated by the Barnes & Nobel Southpoint Mall in annual book drive, and drive is operated by These efforts could be supported the Mayor's clubs, such as the Rotary Club, can be sponsored the program funds to support bulk-purchasing of books through the library system, which could also coordinate this program with the many events it offers to the community's families and children. Sporting stores may be willing to help purchase the backpacks as long as their company logo is included. These activities could be promoted and advertised through the Mayor's Office and other community venues.

Potential Partners:

- **Public Schools**
- **Neighborhood Associations**
- **Durham's Partnership for Children**
- **Durham Literacy Center**
- **Durham Public Library**
- **Law Enforcement**

The Mayor's Book Club should focus on high crime and poor neighborhoods where neighborhood literacy hubs could be created to support on-site activities like book lending libraries or parent literacy classes. At these sites, early childhood experts and literacy specialists could support ongoing and sustainable reading programs to boost child and family literacy. Durham's Partnership for Children will be glad to provide information on these resources.

Supporting Working Families

In today's world, working families with young children have become the norm, and most families need the income from both parents to make ends meet. But, in order to work, most families rely on some type of child care which gives parents peace of mind and their young children a quality early childhood preschool experience.

Paying for child care is one of the biggest challenges faced by working families. In most cities, a patchwork of various federal, state, and local investments supports the delivery of early childhood programs. But, by and large, child care and early education services are funded by the parents who use them. Parents directly pay a child care center, family home care provider, or nanny for the hours their children are in care.

An estimated 62.5 percent of children under the age of 6 live in homes in Durham where both parents or a single head of household are employed. Therefore, there are more than 13,500 children birth to age 5 in need of some kind of child care arrangement.^x

However, for many low-income working families the average cost of child care (at \$789 per month for a two-year old at a 5-star center in Durham) strains the family budget.^{xi} These families often seek help in the form of child care subsidies to cover all or a portion of the costs. In Durham, child care subsidies (funded with federal and state dollars) are available through the Department of Social Services and Durham's Partnership for Children which provides state Smart Start funds to support working families. In 2007, more than 2,600 low-income families received child care financial assistance. Unfortunately, too many eligible children never receive support: only 24.8 percent of all eligible children birth to age 12 living in low-income families participated in these programs. In addition, specialized programs like Head Start (operated by Operation Breakthrough) and the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten program (administered by Durham's Partnership for Children) serve low-income children in part-day programs. Approximately 678 at-risk 4 year olds were served through these programs in 2007-08.^{xii}

Some may view supporting young children and their families as a social services or education initiative. Yet, it is important to recognize that working families are a vital component of the economic vitality of the city of Durham. In Durham, one out of nine parents who are working has a young child under the age of six. Together, these working families who depend on child care pay more than \$93 million in taxes each year and earn more than \$310 million in gross income.

In 2007, Nobel Prize winning economist James Heckman from the University of Chicago testified before Congress that investing in disadvantaged young children is good economics and good policy and offers a much higher rate of return than other programs in later years of life.

Investing in early childhood education offers a significant, 12:1 return on investment that is above the return on most other investments made today in any sector.^{xiii}

What Mayor Bell Can Do: Expand Support for Working Families

Although funding for early care and education is complex and often not under municipal control, there are a number of ways municipal leaders can increase and coordinate financial resources for early childhood initiatives.^{xiv} Even in these difficult economic times, cities are demonstrating that creative financing options for early childhood initiatives do exist. By employing a combination of strategies, city leaders can make a significant impact on the availability and quality of early childhood programs and services in their community while investing in the economic development of their towns as well.

Phase One: Improving Awareness and Access to Early Childhood Resources

The Mayor's office can serve as the organizing vehicle for increasing awareness about the importance of child care subsidies and the contribution working families make to the local economy. Convening a task force of state and local officials, business leaders, service providers, and the faith community to start a dialogue is an important first step in developing a local plan of action for increasing early childhood education support for working families.

Letting working parents know that the city supports them by improving information about child care and health resources is one low-cost strategy. The city could add a section to its website with links to local resources such as Durham's Partnership for Children and Child Care Services Association which provides child care information and referral services. Included on this site could be information about available tax credits for child care which the city could advertise during tax season. Many cities, including Durham, offer detailed information at libraries, city agencies, or community centers, and a growing number help coordinate volunteer income tax preparation sites to provide free assistance to low-income tax filers.

According to the National League of Cities, among larger cities, nearly two-thirds of local officials report allocating city resources to early childhood development.

Among all cities, one in six provide some child care services for children under three, and a similar percentage offer some health and prenatal care to young residents.

Municipal governments can also link parents to this early education financial help through outreach campaigns by advertising benefits information at city offices, through transit or public service ads, or by creating and distributing a family resource guide.

In addition, the City of Durham itself can model its support for working families by:

- Adding goals and objectives for early childhood success throughout municipal government and into the mission of all city departments, including the

Community Development Department, Police, and Parks and Recreation Department;

- Ensuring that the city offers family-friendly work place policies, including access to parent leave for all employees and helping working parents pay for quality care by allowing allow employees to put pre-tax money into a “dependent care account” for child care expenses.

Phase Two: Leveraging New Resources for Working Families

Creating and leveraging new early childhood education resources for working families will take time and dedication, but innovative options have been developed by cities across the nation.

Durham’s Partnership for Children recommends that the Mayor’s office create the “Invest in Kids Fund,” a special fund to support child care subsidies for working families. Across the nation, cities are creating a dedicated source of revenue for early learning programs through a local sales or property tax or earmarking a portion of existing taxes. With leadership from the city, this fund could be developed through several financing mechanisms that leverage partnerships and generate new resources. For example:

- **Support working families through City revenues**
Cities and towns have identified that their own low-income employees are participating in publicly funded child care subsidies. Some towns, including Carrboro, North Carolina, annually reimburse the county’s social services department for the full cost of child care subsidies to their employees through the public system. Another option would be for the city to directly pay all or a portion of the cost of child care subsidies for its own employees or contribute an annual amount to the new Invest in Kids fund to support working parents on the waiting list for child care subsidies.
- **Create a dedicated local tax**
Although this option may require special legislative approval and may be controversial especially in these economic times, it has been used in several cities to support early childhood education (see sidebar). Some cities have used property tax add-ons or established new dedicated taxes to create special funds or even special tax districts as in Florida.

In Seattle, Washington the city’s Families and Education Levy generates roughly \$9.5 million per year. Through this property tax levy, the city provides a variety of programs to ensure that Seattle’s children are “safe, healthy and ready to learn.” Over 10% of this funding has been used to support early childhood programs run through the city’s Human Services Department, including child care subsidies for families.

The city of Aspen, Colorado has created an Affordable Housing/Day Care Sales Tax that funds the “Kids First” Childcare Resource Department, which administers a financial aid program to help defray the costs of child care to eligible families enrolled with licensed child care providers.

- **Redirect a percentage of gross tax receipts**
Dedicating a percentage of tax receipts, typically sales tax receipts, is used by many cities and towns, including Chapel Hill and Carrboro, to fund a variety of nonprofit services. A portion of these funds could be set aside for child care subsidies for working families and children’s savings accounts to be used for college.
- **Add fees to new development**
Fees for new businesses can also be dedicated to early childhood education. One model is to require that any new or renovated office or hotel building larger than a certain size must include space for a child care center. If the developer chooses not to include this space, they may opt to pay a fee to the city’s Invest in Kids Fund, to support child care costs of working families.
- **Encourage Business to set up special child care benefit plans**
Businesses often focus their spending efforts on programs which directly benefit only their own employees. Business located in Durham, particularly those in the downtown area, could be encouraged to set up Dependent Care Assistance Plan (DCAP) as a tax-free benefit following standard Internal Revenue Service regulations. As IRS regulations specify, families may use any licensed or registered child care provider, as well as “informal” child care.

Businesses that currently have employees that benefit from the publicly funded child care systems could also be encouraged to make charitable contributions into the city’s Invest in Kids funds if they are not able to set up a program for their own employees.

Potential Partners:

- **Durham’s Partnership for Children**
- **Durham’s Business Champions for Children**
- **Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce**
- **Durham City Council**
- **Downtown Durham, Inc.**
- **Child Care Services Association**

Acknowledgements

We express our appreciation to the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families of the National League of Cities which provided extensive research and background papers which were used to formulate this briefing paper.

We also express appreciation to Michele Rivest for her efforts on this document.

End Notes

ⁱ This information is adapted from *Supporting Early Childhood Success, Early Childhood Toolkit*, produced by The National League of Cities, 2005.

ⁱⁱ North Carolina Nutrition and Physical Activity Surveillance System (NC-NPASS), 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Action Kit for Municipal Leaders on Combating Childhood Obesity*, National League of Cities, 2006.

^{iv} In North Carolina, community gardens have been supported by various Cities and Towns including Carrboro, Fayetteville, Black Mountain, and others. The Cooperative Extension office at NC State University has created a website to promote community gardening.

^v Campbell, A.N., T.M. Waliczek, J.C., Bradley, J.M. Zajicek, and C.D. Townsend. 1997. *The influence of activity -based environmental instruction on high school students' environmental attitudes*. HortTechnology 7(3): p. 309; Alexander, J. & D. Hendren. 1998. Bexar County Master Gardener Classroom Garden Research Project: Final Report. San Antonio, Texas; Robinson, C.W. and J.M. Zajicek. 2005. *Growing minds: the effects of a one-year school garden program on six constructs of life skills of elementary school children*. HortTechnology. 15(3): 453-457.

^{vi} Mason-Dixon Polling and Research. (2002, August). *National law enforcement leadership survey*. Retrieved from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids web site: <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/nationalkidspoll2002.pdf>

^{vii} *Educational Attainment of Inmates Entering North Carolina's Prisons*, Office of Research and Planning, Department of Corrections, July 2005.

^{viii} Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., & Weikart, D. P. (1993). *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

^{ix} *It Takes a Village: Using Mayor's Book Clubs to Promote Early Literacy*, National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, April 15, 2008.

^x U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 Community Survey.

^{xi} Child Care Services Association, (2007).

^{xii} Information abstracted from *Getting Ready: Indicators of School Readiness in Durham County*, Durham's Partnership for Children.

^{xiii} Barnett, W.S. & Masse, Leonard n. (2007). Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and its policy implications. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(1):113-125. For additional citations, see *Getting Ready: Indicators of School Readiness in Durham County*, Durham's Partnership for Children.

^{xiv} *Financing Early Care and Education: A Strategy Guide For Municipal Leaders*, Nation League of Cities, 2003.