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Durham's Partnership for Children expands access to child care with new slots in NC Pre-Kindergarten and Durham Early Head Start

Durham, NC – **Durham's Partnership for Children (the Partnership)**, a *Smart Start Initiative*, will serve 105 additional children in the 2015-16 school year through the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) and Durham Early Head Start (DEHS) programs. Funding for the increase in slots comes from the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Administration for Children and Families, respectively.

The NC Pre-K program provides high-quality early educational experiences to prepare 4-year-olds for school. Durham's program model provides services in both public and private settings, serving children in pre-k classrooms within Durham Public Schools, Durham Head Start classrooms, and private child care centers.

This year's budget allowed for a state-wide increase of \$5 million in recurring funds for NC Pre-K. In Durham, this funding expands the number of NC Pre-K slots to 488, serving an additional 41 children. Children eligible for enrollment in the expansion slots are those who applied for the program during the 2015 application period; no new applicants are eligible at this time. The new students have been enrolled and are now attending school in classrooms at Durham Public Schools, Durham Head Start, and private child care centers.

Early Head Start is a comprehensive child development and family support program for low-income expectant women and families with infants and toddlers ages birth to three. The Partnership is the grantee for DEHS, which offers both home-based and center-based care programs and is a collaboration between the Partnership, Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project, Inc., the Center for Child & Family Health, and local five-star child care centers.

This year, the Partnership received a \$1.77 million Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant to serve an additional 64 infants and toddlers in high-quality child care centers, a 59% increase in the number of children served through the program. Three new DEHS classrooms are now open at Primary Colors Early Learning Center on Dowd Street, and an additional three classrooms will open at Toddlers Academy in December.

"We know that there is a critical need to expand access to high-quality child care in Durham," said Laura Benson, Partnership Executive Director. "We are thrilled to be able to serve more children and families through both of these programs, thanks to the collaboration and support of many community partners who share our mission of preparing children to succeed."

Applications for the 2016-17 program year for both NC Pre-K and DEHS will be accepted beginning in February 2016. For more information, visit www.dpfc.net.

About Durham's Partnership for Children - Making young children a priority.

Founded in 1994 and first funded in 1995 to administer the Smart Start grant in Durham County, the Partnership works as an independent, local nonprofit that serves young children birth to age 5 and their families to ensure that all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. For 20 years, the Partnership has helped parents pay for child care, improved the quality of child care and provided health and family support services to thousands of Durham County families with young children. The Partnership leverages the public and private sectors to achieve its mission: *To ensure every child in Durham enters school ready to succeed, we lead community strategies for children birth to 5 and their families that promote healthy development and learning and enhance access to high quality care.* The Partnership administers Smart Start, NC Pre-K, and Early Head Start in Durham County. For more information about the Partnership, visit www.dpfc.net or call 919-403-6960, ext. 221.

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