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Statewide Poll Says Voters Favor Education Spending Over “No New Taxes”

While North Carolinians don't want higher taxes, a recent poll reveals that they are in favor of tax increases to support education initiatives for the state's pre-kindergarten children.

The poll released in May found bi-partisan support by North Carolina's voters to increase Smart Start to it's full funding level of \$300 million. This was the first poll conducted in the state focusing on attitudes toward early childhood care and education by registered voters. Pre-K Now paid for the poll.

Conducted over four days in April, the poll surveyed 609 registered voters who were randomly selected and has a margin of error of plus/minus 4.1%. Some of the insights into the mindset of Tar Heel voters include support for the Smart Start program by 81% of respondents and 77% seeing state funded pre-kindergarten as important for low-

income families. With politicians opposing new taxes to maintain funding levels and cutting programs to balance budgets, maybe one of the more important findings was that 66% of voters favor ensuring that there is sufficient funding for needs such as education versus 27% that favored holding the line on taxes. "North Carolinians have always valued young children and have supported Smart Start because the work we do helps children and the people who love and teach them," said Karen Ponder, President of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., the state Smart Start office.

The poll also gave insight into the priorities or complaints of North Carolina's voters. Of those surveyed, 60 % believe children begin to learn at birth, 76% believe half or fewer children enter kindergarten with the skills they need and 57% believe the

state is doing too little to make sure children enter kindergarten ready. Maybe more telling for legislators facing re-election was the attitude of 59% of respondents who said they were MORE likely to support a legislator who votes to expand early education programs.

Ashley Thrift, Board Chair of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., said that he hoped these numbers would encourage members of the General Assembly to expand Smart Start funding.

"Smart Start has seen significant cuts three of the past four years. Local Smart Start partnerships need additional funds to meet the increasing demand. The children in our state and the working families who care for them depend on Smart Start," he added.

In the past four budget cycles, Smart Start has received three years of cuts, followed by one year of steady funding.

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Prevent the Spread of E. coli with Safety Measures

There have been several cases of E. coli confirmed in North Carolina recently. Child care providers can prevent the spread of this bacteria by following simple tips for prevention.

There are hundreds of strains of E. coli in existence. Most are harmless, but there is one strain that is a powerful toxin and can cause severe illness.

E. coli is spread

through water and food that has been contaminated. Some of the likely foods are ground beef, sprouts, lettuce, unpasteurized milk and juice.

Young toddlers with E. coli can easily spread the infection if they experience diarrhea. Other symptoms include abdominal cramps, but usually no fever.

Most people infected with E. coli recover in 5-10 days.

The spread of E. coli can be prevented by storing raw meat separate from ready-to-eat food. Cook raw food, especially ground beef, thoroughly. Drink pasteurized milk and juice. Wash hands thoroughly after toileting or diapering and before eating.

In a child care facility, hands should be thoroughly washed and diapers and soiled clothes should be kept out of chil-

dren's reach.

Everyone should wash their hands upon entering a child care facility to avoid bringing the bacteria in from outside.

For more information, contact the North Carolina Child Care Safety and Resource Center at 1-800-367-2229 or visit the Web site at the following URL: www.healthychildcarenc.org.

SuperSTARS

The following child care centers or homes in Gaston and Lincoln counties have recently increased their STAR ratings:



- Cline Learning Center of Dallas #IV
- Lincoln Park Head Start, Lincoln
- Mrs. Peg's Care for God's Precious Gifts
- Brown's Little Shepherds
- Kennedy's Kids Kare
- Little Angel's Preschool
- Sandy Anderson's Day Care Home
- Step By Step Development Child Care
- Willie's Development Home for Kids



- Angie's Special Child Care, Bessemer City
- Mini Academy @ Denver



- Ashbrook Bows and Arrows Child Development Center, Gastonia
- Expressions in Learning, Gastonia
- Friday Memorial Christian Child Development, Dallas
- It's All About Children, Gastonia
- Sharon's Child Care, Gastonia
- Tiny Tot Afterschool, Belmont
- Kimberly Rhodes FCCH

To learn more about programs that can help increase the quality of care and earn higher star ratings for your child care center or family child care home, call Diane Hines at the Partnership at (704) 922-0900 or (704) 736-9008.

IN THE NEWS

Run for the Money Yields \$1,400 for Partnership

Another *Run for the Money* has passed, and the Partnership ran away with \$1,436.40 in May from the Community Foundation of Gaston County.

Board member Billy Marsh raced off after the money for the Partnership and staff members manned a booth that provided information about our organization to the community. A little girl representing the Partnership also participated in the karaoke contest.

This year marked the third year that the Community Foundation

of Gaston County sponsored the event for the third year. Plans are already underway for what adventures lie ahead for Buck, the event mascot, next year. The Partnership thanks everyone that participated or made a donation in our behalf.



Childcare Providers, Partnership Staff and Board Member Visit

Executive Director Sherry Browning, a board member and local childcare providers attended key childhood lobbying events this spring in Raleigh.

On April 19 Browning, board chair Martha Burris, Kenlin Academy Director Annie Geerken and Christy Tomberlin and Cline Learning Centers Scott Cline participated in *Keep the Promise Day*. On May 3

Browning and Ashbrook Bows and Arrows Center Director Allesia Audrey attended *Tuesday for Tots* day. Both events provided opportunities to visit with legislative members and express concern about early childhood education funding. Currently, the Senate has passed a bill maintaining Smart Start funding at last year's level. A similar bill is still pending in the House.

Need help finding child

We can help you in your search!

The Partnership, with support from Smart Start and the North Carolina Division of Child Development, offers a free child care referral service to parents and guardians.

We can advise you of any open slots in legally operating facilities in Lincoln or Gaston counties that may have your preferred rating, location, hours of operation and

other features.

To find out which providers may have openings for your child, call Rebecca Powell, parent information assistant, at 704-922-0900 (Gaston) or 704-736-9008 (Lincoln). She may be reached via e-mail at parentinfo@pfclg.com.

For more information, visit the Partnership Web site at www.pfclg.com/parentinfo.asp.

Children... a wise investment.

The Partnership for Children of Lincoln & Gaston Counties is working every day to make a difference in the lives of local children. Your support makes that difference possible. If you want to invest in the future of children in Lincoln and Gaston counties, please volunteer or make a tax-deductible donation.

Name _____

Address _____

Daytime phone _(____) _____

Amount enclosed: \$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 Other

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Please make checks payable to Partnership for Children of Lincoln & Gaston Counties. Return check with this form in person or via U.S. mail to Partnership for Children, 1012 Philadelphia Church Road, Dallas, NC 28034.

Partnership for Children of Lincoln & Gaston Counties

1012 Philadelphia Church Road
Dallas, NC 28034
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fax: (704) 922-0996
On the Web: www.pfclg.com
E-mail: pfclg@pfclg.com

Our vision: A community where young children will reach their full health and educational potential.

Our mission: To serve as a leading advocate and financial resource, in collaboration with other community agencies, to provide affordable access to high quality services for young children.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **June 16— Board Orientation, 11 a.m.- 1 p.m., Partnership Office**
- **June 17 — Board Meeting, noon, Partnership office**
- **July 15 — Board Meeting, noon, Partnership office**
- **August 19 — Board Meeting, noon, Partnership office**

DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER?

If you would like to receive the Partnership's newsletter by mail, call Charla Parton at (704) 922-0900 or (704) 736-9008 or e-mail her at publicinfo@pfclg.com.

Please include the following information:
Name

Organization, if applicable

Complete preferred mailing address (*Note whether address is home or work.*)

Daytime phone number (*if we have any questions*)

STAFF

- **Sherry L. Browning, Executive Director**
 - **Tory L. Borne, Program Manager**
- **Charla Parton, Public Information Coordinator**
- **Diane Hines, Early Childhood Education Director**
 - **Marnita Leigh, Office Assistant**
- **Rebecca Powell, Parent Information Assistant**
 - **Dawn Rippy, Contracts Manager**
 - **Elizabeth Sisk, Office Manager**
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