

Smart
ALBEMARLE START PARTNERSHIP

Serving Northeastern North Carolina

www.albemarlessp.org

January 5, 2012

House Select Committee on Early
Childhood Education Improvement
North Carolina House of Representatives
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-1096

Dear Committee Members:

It is my pleasure and privilege to tell you about the work of Smart Start in my community, just as it is my privilege to serve the children in northeastern North Carolina. The Albemarle Smart Start Partnership's office is located in Elizabeth City and provides programs to some of the most poverty stricken, low wealth counties in our state.

We believe that all children and families deserve the best of whatever they need to be successful. We know that high quality child care is critical to children's development and later success. Quality cannot be viewed a luxury for those who can afford it, quality child care can and must be the norm for all children from all backgrounds and incomes.

We know that the quality of childcare services will improve when parents both expect and demand it. Smart Start is able to educate parents about the components of quality child care and help child care providers achieve the high standards children deserve.

In 1994, Pasquotank County Partnership for Children was created to serve the children, families and the childcare community in Pasquotank County. Camden and Currituck counties decided that their communities would be best served by partnering with an established Smart Start program. In 1998, when those counties received the necessary funding, the partnership became the Albemarle Smart Start Partnership, serving a three county region.

Finding a balance between meeting local needs and having the capacity to provide effective services can sometimes be difficult. In 2006, Gates County's local advisory committee approached our Partnership about how their children and families might be served by our programs and made the decision to merge with us that July. Also in 2006, the Bertie County Partnership requested assistance with leadership and administrative functions. They too determined that their community would be best served by being part of a regional system of services and merged with our Partnership in 2007. In each instance of expansion, the local community made the decision to join with Albemarle Smart Start Partnership based on the needs of their children, families, and child care programs.

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Currently we have 23 professionals that serve a five county region. Our allocation for FY11-12 is \$1,727,932.00. To date, our region contains 135 child care facilities that serve over 2,500 children. Last year, our staff provided training workshops for over 400 teachers, technical assistance in over 250 classrooms in 120 childcare facilities, and assisted over 300 parents in finding child care. In our region, 78 percent of children are cared for in three, four, and five-star childcare programs.

Our family support programs have reached over 400 families with parenting support, postpartum home visits from a registered nurse and support for children with special needs.

We have a Child Care Scholarship Coordinator who administers child care subsidies and has office space inside the Department of Social Services in four of the five counties we serve. The Coordinator works out of the Partnership's main office in the fifth county.

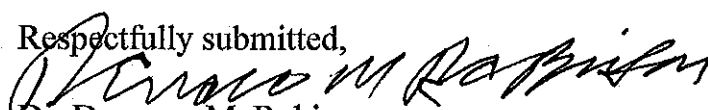
We serve on NC Pre-K committees in each of our five counties. In four of our counties NC Pre-K is managed by the school system. A nonprofit organization manages the other county.

Albemarle Smart Start Partnership has been able to bring additional services to our community by serving as the lead agency for regional Child Care Resource & Referral services, funded directly from the Division of Child Care and Early Education, for five additional counties. We have been awarded grants from the Department of Health and Human Services allowing for more programs to serve teens and teen parents. We also assist five other Partnerships with their daily fiscal responsibilities.

Smart Start must have a real presence in every county in the state. There is no substitute for local involvement and the strong personal relationships that are established between people who work together to achieve common goals around increasing young children's health, development and school readiness.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the important work, indeed critical work, conducted by the Albemarle Smart Start Partnership. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Denauvo M. Robinson
President & CEO

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