



# REPORT

## NOT ABOUT ME, WITHOUT ME

### RAISING PARENT VOICE TO GUIDE EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY

*To achieve large-scale progress on measures of child well-being and improved third grade reading outcomes, programs and policies need to be informed by the perspectives of those who are most important in helping children succeed—parents.*

This report is a small first step. It is intended to elevate parent voice by providing a meta-analysis of 18 parent surveys, focus groups, and meetings from across North Carolina, conducted by a wide range of organizations that support children and families. As such it has limitations and should not be viewed as the final word on parent perspectives. It can serve as a starting point for more in-depth conversations.

It is our hope that this report reminds us to listen first. Many organizations, ours included, recognize the importance of engaging parents. At the same time, we struggle with how to do so in an authentic and meaningful manner. At the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, we are in the first stages of this journey. To date we:

- Have engaged parents as members of each phase of our NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative, working with partner organizations to recruit parent participants and covering costs associated with missed wages, travel and child care.
- Have partnered with EdNC to conduct a digital survey of North Carolina parents, to better understand the resources they rely on and obstacles they face as they support their young children's success.
- Have partnered with Book Harvest in Durham to better understand parents' perspectives on summer reading. We surveyed and conducted focus groups with parents whose children attended three high-poverty schools in Durham County. We then supported the creation of a Parent Action Team to

drive how to help parents understand the importance of summer reading and how to support their children's learning.

- Are leading an effort to build capacity among Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Communities to engage families to produce the best outcomes for children and the community. We are hosting regional trainings led by Dr. Pennie Foster-Fishman of Michigan State University. The trainings are based on her five-stage continuum to move an organization from ignoring parents to supporting parents as change agents. Dr. Foster-Fishman continues to support communities with coaching.

It's a starting point. Engaging parents as true change agents is complex work.

We hope that you find this report informative and use it as a springboard for considering the role parents play in your work. We are grateful to the partner organizations (listed on page 7) that contributed data and information for this report.

Sincerely,

Tracy Zimmerman, NCECF Executive Director

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**The North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation is driven by a bold vision that each North Carolina child has a strong foundation for lifelong health, education, and well-being supported by a premiere birth-to-age-eight system of supports.**

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**NCECF's approach recognizes that:**

- Together we can realize greater outcomes for young children than any one organization can produce on its own.
- Sustainable change requires intentional and ongoing public will building.
- Complementary state and local approaches leverage the strengths of each.

**We advance our vision by:**

1. Promoting Understanding: We engage business, faith, law enforcement, economic development and other community leaders as early childhood champions to effectively communicate the broad societal impact of policies that affect early development and learning.
2. Spearheading Collaboration: We lead and support state and local collaborations—bringing together health, family support, early learning and education leaders across government, policy, private, nonprofit, philanthropic and research sectors—that are advancing a shared vision and coordinated strategies for maximum impact for children and families.
3. Advancing Policies: We provide policymakers, advocates, business leaders and the public with research and analysis about the impact of current and proposed federal and state birth-to-eight policy and innovations proven to achieve results for young children.

**Each child can have the opportunity to be on track by third grade with aligned state and local policies and practices rooted in child development, including:**

- Health and Development on Track, Beginning at Birth
- Supported and Supportive Families and Communities
- High Quality Birth-through-age-eight Learning Environments, with Regular Attendance

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 2,000 parent and caregiver voices are represented in this meta-analysis, which summarizes high-level themes from 18 different parent surveys, focus groups, and meetings across North Carolina. The themes align with the NC Pathways to Grade Level Reading Initiative Framework—Health, Family and Community, Education, and Children’s Living Conditions. While there are data limitations of the findings due to unscientific sampling, the information can be used as a starting point to solicit further detail from parents to enhance or clarify identified themes and responses.

### Health and Development on Track, Beginning at Birth

Children’s development during the first eight years of life is strongly affected by their health. Experiences during this time are hardwired into their brains and bodies, forming the foundation for all subsequent development. Good health in utero and good birth outcomes, access to needed health services, and families and communities that support health outcomes all increase the chances of good physical and social-emotional health and on-track development during childhood and throughout life. Good physical and emotional health helps ensure that children are successful learners from their earliest years, putting them on the pathway to becoming proficient readers.

#### Parents report that they:

- Routinely take their children to the doctor, that their doctors help keep their children healthy in multiple ways, and that they access federal health-related aid.
- Need more information about specific health issues, including child development, nutrition, mental health, and supports for parents.
- Need easier access to medical services, due to transportation challenges, having to take time away from work, paperwork requirements, and cost of services.
- Need help with self-care, like stress management, balancing work/home demands, and caring for children with disabilities.
- Are concerned about social-emotional development, including feelings, getting along with others, and development of other self-regulation behaviors.

### Supported and Supportive Families and Communities

Supportive families and communities play a critical role in building strong foundations for learning. A stable, secure, nurturing relationship with a competent, caring adult helps young children be ready for school and read on grade level. Both formal family support services and informal support networks can help buffer the negative

effects of living conditions like poverty and family stress, which can negatively impact the developing brain. Positive parent and child interactions, such as talking, playing, eating meals, and reading together help children grow stronger emotionally, develop larger vocabularies, and learn to read more easily.

#### Parents report that they:

- Make use of community supports when they can access them, but that they have unmet needs that could be met in the community, such as information about resources, informal social supports, affordable programs (including supports for new parents and parent education), resources and services for families of color and immigrants, and services for children with disabilities and developmental delays.
- Have barriers to accessing community supports, such as time, transportation, lack of trust, waitlists and eligibility, and cultural bias and stigma.
- Have preferred methods of communication, such as word-of-mouth from friends, family, doctors, teachers, schools, and community organizations as well as flyers, brochures, internet, and text messages.

### High Quality Birth-to-Eight Learning Environments, with Regular Attendance

Children’s first eight years are a developmental continuum that lay the foundation for all of the years that follow. High-quality child care, prekindergarten programs, and elementary school environments help prepare children for school and life success. High-quality programs are culturally competent, work to fully understand and adapt to the home cultures of the children in their care, and use effective, developmentally-appropriate curricula to build their students’ foundational learning skills.

#### Parents report that:

- They believe that education is important for their children’s long-term happiness, career and life success, and they are struggling with living conditions that are impacting their children’s school success.

- Those who choose to keep their young children home or with family rather than in formal child care do so either as a preference or because of obstacles to formal care like cost, quality, availability, parent knowledge and transportation.
- Barriers to kindergarten readiness include lack of parent awareness, insufficient communication with parents, and lack of access to formal early learning opportunities.
- They are unclear about what specific skills children need to be ready for school.
- They have a wide range of ideas about what schools can do to best support their children's success, which are sometimes at odds.
- They need more time at home, more books at home, and tips about reading with children to best support their children's learning during the summer months.

## Children's Living Conditions

Children living in safe and economically viable families and neighborhoods, with stable housing and limited environmental health hazards, are more likely to be successful in school and in life. Living conditions such as poverty, housing instability, environmental toxins and neighborhood crime can compromise children's school success and healthy development. These conditions can limit opportunities for stimulating and responsive interactions, provision of emotional support, and exposure to activities that can enrich children's health, knowledge and skills.

### Parents report that they:

- Struggle with job training and availability of jobs, affordable housing, neighborhood safety, and wages that influence their abilities to adequately provide for their families.

## INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF) commissioned The Evaluation Group to complete a meta-analysis of 18 parent surveys, focus groups, and meetings from across North Carolina, conducted by a wide range of organizations that support children and families.

NCECF's strategic plan seeks to gain first-hand knowledge of what those who are closest to children—the adults who interact with them and shape the environments in which they live and learn—want and need to support their growth toward literacy and well-being. Over the past four years, NCECF and partner organizations have intentionally sought parent feedback through surveys, interviews, meetings and focus groups to understand the needs of parents and children relative to living conditions, health and development, family and community supports, and childcare and educational services. This report analyzes across that feedback.

The report is organized to align with the North Carolina Pathways to Grade-Level Reading (Pathways) Measures of Success Framework, including:

- Health and Development on Track, Beginning at Birth
- Supported and Supportive Families and Communities
- High Quality Birth-through-Age-Eight Learning Environments, with Regular Attendance
- Children's Living Conditions

### NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative

Pathways brings diverse state and local stakeholders and leaders together, across health, family support, and early learning and education disciplines; across government, policy, private sector and nonprofit actors; across birth-through-age-five and kindergarten-through-third-grade systems; and across political identities. These stakeholders are co-creating a common vision, shared measures of success, and coordinated strategies that support children's optimal development beginning at birth.

Dovetailing on NCECF's strategic plan to "gain first-hand knowledge of what those closest to children—the adults who shape the environments in which they interact—want and need in order to contribute to the measures of success," one of Pathways' core principles is that "We will be informed by and hold ourselves accountable to families and communities."

NCECF conducted a parent survey during Spring 2017 to better understand the experiences of North Carolina parents of young children and provide that understanding to the Pathways Design Teams as they work to determine what policies, practices, and capacity-building are needed to move the needle on prioritized areas of focus.

More than 2,000 parent voices are represented in this meta-analysis, which summarizes high level themes across 18 different parent surveys, focus groups, and meetings across North Carolina, including the NCECF Parent Voices Survey. Examples from individual reports are offered under each theme to illuminate the supports parents have and the obstacles they face as their children grow and learn.

Pathways is an initiative of the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation in collaboration with NC Child, The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., and BEST NC.

## Summary of Reports

This table shares the organization conducting the research, the county or counties represented in the report, the methodology for collecting data, the published report date, and a brief description of the participants.

*In some reports, sample sizes are small and do not necessarily reflect the demographics of the specific county or of North Carolina, limiting generalizability. Qualitative themes and quantitative data selected from these reports should be interpreted cautiously.*

ORGANIZATION	COUNTY(IES)	METHODOLOGY	DATE	PARTICIPANTS
Chowan/Perquimans Smart Start	Chowan	Focus groups and parent survey	June 2015	8 focus groups with 60 participants from various sectors including parents; 278 parent surveys collected from 8 agencies
East Durham Children's Initiative	Durham	Survey	Spring 2014	78 parent surveys
Great Expectations (MDC/Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust)	Forsyth	Great Expectations Survey and Focus Group	Summer 2016	307 parents from 12 agencies, 50 parents in six focus groups
NCECF and Book Harvest Parent Perspectives Summer Reading	Durham	Survey and Focus groups	Spring 2016	246 parent surveys (46 percent completed in Spanish); 6 focus groups at 3 schools (39 participants)
NCECF Parent Voices Survey	58 NC Counties, 5 other states	Survey	March-June 2017	348 parent surveys
Smart Start of Mecklenburg County	Mecklenburg	Community cafés	2015-2016	150 individuals at 11 cafés and 350 at 3 screenings
Read Charlotte	Mecklenburg	Survey about reading and education	Spring 2016	1,640 family surveys; 1,107 student surveys (grades 3-12); 333 educators
Ready for School, Ready for Life	Guilford	Focus groups	September 2015	Service provider and family meeting data
Smart Start of Transylvania County	Transylvania	Conversation	April 2016	119 people, including some children
Western Region Smart Start Local Partnerships	Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Henderson, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Transylvania, Yancey	Survey and Focus groups	September - October 2015	727 parent surveys, 12 English and 6 Spanish focus groups, 4 English interviews (See Appendix A for more information)

## Diversity of Sampling and Data Limitations

Partner organizations that conducted the surveys and focus groups made every effort to ensure that the racial/ethnic demographics of the respondents and participants reflected those of the counties. Of the 16 reports for which demographic data is available, African Americans were oversampled in 13, Hispanics/Latinos were oversampled in 11, and Whites were oversampled in three. The vast majority of respondents were female. See Appendix B for specific demographics for each report.

Themes and responses may not reflect the values and beliefs of those not sampled. Information from this report should be used as a starting point to solicit further information to enhance or clarify identified themes and responses.

For this meta-analysis, specific notes and parent quotes are pulled from individual reports to highlight the broader themes. A designation of rural (R) or urban/suburban (U) is cited after each county name. Using the NC Rural Center's definitions, North Carolina includes 80 rural, 6 urban, and 14 regional city or suburban counties. Those designations are determined by the population density per square mile and were last assessed using the 2014 U.S. Census population.

# PATHWAYS TO GRADE-LEVEL READING MEASURES OF SUCCESS FRAMEWORK

The Measures of Success Framework was developed by the Pathways Data Action Team – comprising 30 experts from North Carolina’s leading universities, research institutes, government agencies, businesses and think tanks – in partnership with the Pathways to Grade-Level Reading stakeholders. The framework evolved with input from the Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Learning Teams. It is important to note that the framework does not include everything that moves the needle on grade-level reading, nor does it capture everything that impacts individual outcomes. It presents what the Data Action Team and Learning Teams recommend as the best framework that, if addressed, would significantly improve outcomes for young children in North Carolina. The format of this report aligns with the Framework.



**PATHWAYS  
BIRTH-THROUGH-AGE-EIGHT  
LITERACY DEVELOPMENT  
MILESTONES**

Language Skills on Track at 24, 36 and 48 Months → Developmentally Ready at Kindergarten Entry → Meeting Expected Growth in Reading (K-3) → Reading at Grade-Level by the End of Third Grade

All children with disabilities achieve expressive and receptive communication skills commensurate with their developmental ages.



# HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT ON TRACK, BEGINNING AT BIRTH

For children’s health and development to be on track, beginning at birth, they need healthy birthweight, physical and social-emotional health, oral health, and effective early intervention services, if appropriate. These measures of children’s health and development are influenced by access to pre-natal care, adult, parent and child access to health insurance, maternal behaviors during pregnancy (i.e., smoking), developmental and behavioral screenings and immunizations, food security and breastfeeding, healthy weight and exercise, and routine doctor and dental visits.

## Parents Identify Health as Key to Lifelong Success and Happiness

Parents want their children to be healthy and identify physical and social-emotional health as critical to lifelong success and happiness. The NCECF Parent Voices Survey (324 participants from 28 NC counties) provides examples of parent voice around the importance of lifelong health.

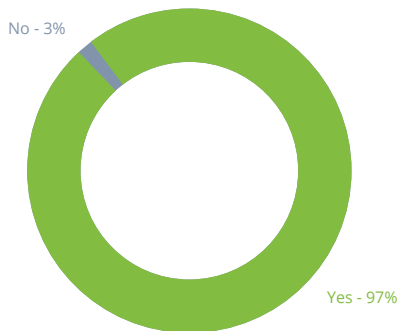
**When asked, “What are your dreams for your children?” some responses included:**

- To grow up healthy. — *Buncombe County-U*
- To have healthy relationships, emotional intelligence, and resiliency. To be able to find the happiness in everyday life and help others, have interesting and fulfilling work to do. — *Buncombe County-U*
- To be healthy, happy, interactive, kind (to self and others) and have a career that both fulfills them and provides enough money for their needs plus a little so they can provide well for their offspring and their retirement. — *Wake County-U*
- Hope everyone stays healthy. — *Yancey County-R*
- To be happy, healthy, and self-sufficient with work-family life balance and a career they are passionate about. — *Unknown*
- I want my kids to grow up kind and healthy. I want them to have satisfying careers that provide financial security. — *Wake County-U*
- To live a better life than I had! To be happy and healthy! — *Johnston County-R*

## Children Have Access to Routine Medical Care and Federal Health-Related Aid

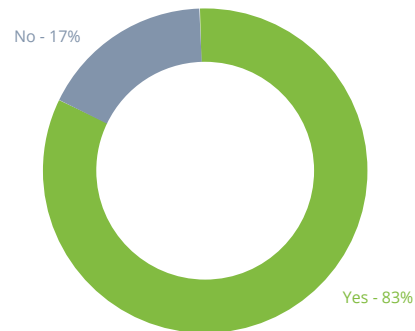
Regular preventive medical care is essential for healthy growth and development. In the surveys that asked about this topic, parents reported that they have regular medical care for their children, shared ways that their doctors help support their children’s health, and reported accessing federal health-related aid.

**NCECF Parent Voices Survey**  
Does your child have regular medical care?



Nearly all respondents to the NCECF Parent Voices survey (121 parents representing 17 NC counties) indicated that their children have regular medical care.

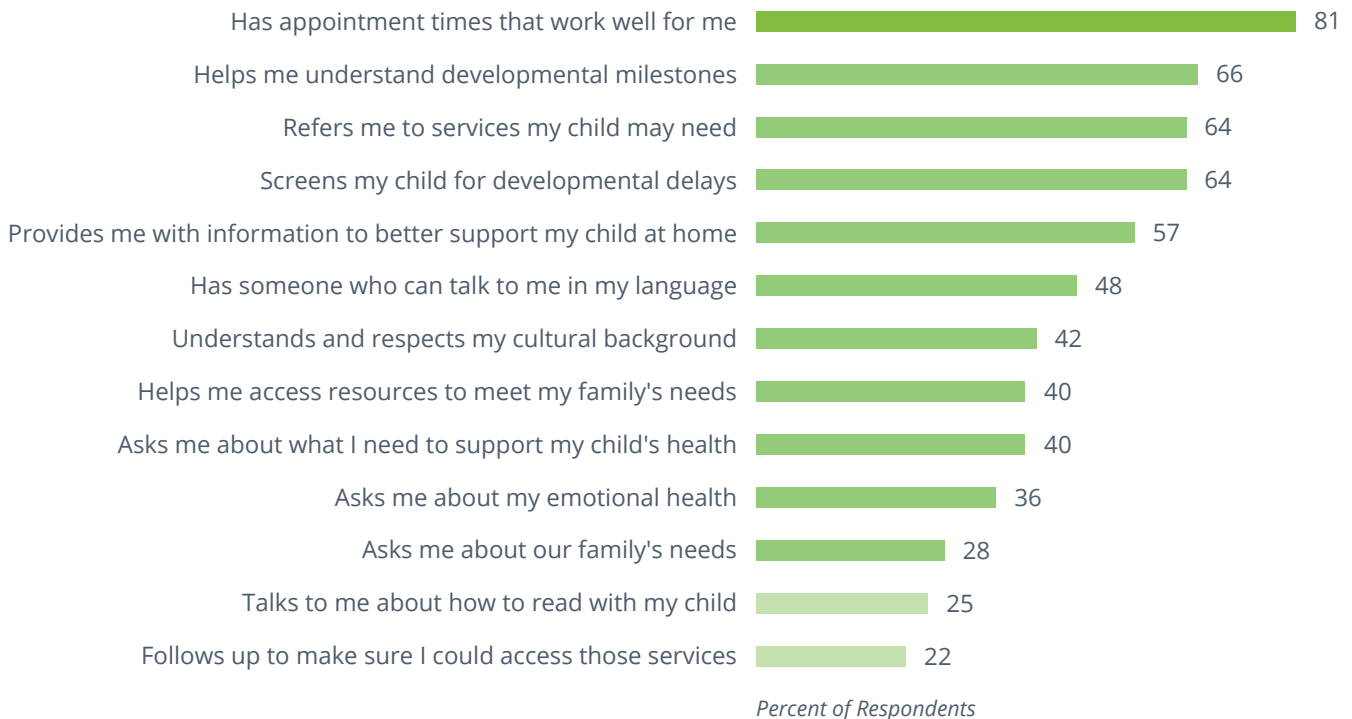
**Durham EDCI Parent Survey**  
Do you take your child for routine care or check-ups?



The majority of respondents from Durham County (78 parents) reported taking their children for routine care or check-ups.

Respondents to the NCECF Parent Voices Survey shared how their children's doctors help them stay healthy by marking all that applied from the list included in the following graphic. A total of 67 parents completed the item, and top responses included offering convenient appointment times, helping parents understand developmental milestones, referring children for services, and screening for developmental delays. Much lower percentages of parents reported that their doctors ask about the families' broader needs or the parents' emotional health, talk about the importance of reading, or follow up with them to ensure receipt of services.

### HOW DOES YOUR CHILD'S DOCTOR HELP YOUR CHILD STAY HEALTHY?



Respondents from the Chowan County survey (278 parents) reported accessing federal health-related aid:

- 57 percent of respondents used Medicaid
- 37 percent qualified for free- and reduced-price lunch
- 28 percent received services from Women, Infant, and Children (WIC)
- Just over 20 percent of respondents did not access any of these services

*While these results suggest that NC parents have access to medical care and federal health-related aid for their children, the small sample sizes should be noted.*

## Parents Need More Information and Access to Support Healthy Development

Eleven surveys or focus groups—evenly divided between rural and urban/suburban counties—asked more than 1,800 parents about their children’s health and development, specific health-related concerns and health information needed. The text below lists the needs parents identified, organized into three broad themes: Information requested related to specific health topics, ease of access to medical care within the community and across agencies, and parent needs for self-care.

### Information Requests

- Nutrition/Obesity
- Food vouchers
- Breastfeeding
- Mental health
- Normal child development and milestones
- Parenting resources for new parents

### Medical Access

- Continuity and accessibility
- Coordination of services
- Disability services
- Transportation in rural areas
- Social services
- Medicaid

### Parent Needs

- Stress management
- Work/life balance
- Respite when caring for children with special needs

*Data from Avery (R), Burke (R), Chowan (R), Durham (U), Forsyth (U), Guilford (U), Henderson (U), Mecklenburg (U), Transylvania (R), Yancey (R) counties, and NCECF Parent Survey (58 counties).*

In addition, Durham families shared their top concerns for their children’s health: childhood obesity/poor nutrition, mental health, violence in the community, and substance abuse.

The following parent quotes give voice to the themes in the lists above.

### Parents need more information about specific health topics:

- Access to info about what’s normal with development, emotions. Resources you can access when things are coming up. Some days, it’s like: ‘my kid is doing this.’ You want to know if it’s normal or what to do right then. — *Transylvania County-R*

- We need a community information session with new mothers about area programs and advice. — *Burke County-R*
- Services that help you recognize learning delays/normal expectations and help connect you with services. — *Mitchell County-R*

### Parents face challenges accessing needed care and services for diverse needs:

- I have a baby (with Down’s Syndrome) who has a lot of medical appointments and therapy— I would like to have care for her so I can spend 1-on-1 time with my other children, someone to trade off childcare with so I can have time with my kids 1-on-1. — *Transylvania County-R*
- It would be nice if there were more resources for kids that are slightly older than three, because...both my girls had speech therapy until they aged out at three. Three is when it cuts off and supposedly that’s where the school system picks them up, but they don’t really pick them up at three. And I homeschool them, so we don’t really know what to do. I talked to their doctor recently, but she didn’t know what to do. Who do we talk to now? Something like that would be great. — *Avery County-R*
- My grandson who is in kindergarten just started taking speech classes for delays he is experiencing. I wish we had been directed to resources for this before he entered kindergarten. — *Guilford County-U*
- My 6-year-old was just diagnosed with type one diabetes. The school doesn’t know what to do with my son because of all the issues that he’s had. — *Guilford County-U*
- Eating healthier is more expensive which makes it difficult to make healthier choices because junk food is less expensive. — *Guilford County-U*

### In addition:

- About half of respondents in Forsyth County felt that access to health care was a problem or a serious problem in their community. — *Forsyth County-U*
- Parents want additional support for children who have physical and developmental disabilities once they reach kindergarten. — *Guilford County-U*

### Parents need strategies for self-care:

- Everyone needs time to yourself to just be a better person. To be a better mother. Time to reflect on yourself. — *Avery County-R*
- When I feel stressed around my children, I feel terrible thinking about what impact it has on them. — *Mecklenburg County-U*

## Parent are Concerned about Social-Emotional Development

Four parent reports, representing more than 700 families, specifically addressed parents' concerns about their children's social-emotional development, including development of social skills necessary for school. The following examples highlight the overall findings.

Some lack the understanding of the serious opportunity of investing now. For example, the social and emotional growth needs to happen before school starts. We do not have the social and emotional development focus in kindergarten. Early childhood education would like school to go back to that purpose (supporting the social and emotional development of children) but it is too late. — *Forsyth County-U*

Just under a third of Durham's 78 parent respondents on this topic indicated concerns about their children's feelings and behavior or development. — *Durham County-U*

Half of Chowan County parents (N=278) felt that handling emotions positively or calming oneself was a necessary skill prior to starting kindergarten, and more than 60 percent identified other key social-emotional skills such as sharing, cooperating, and listening to others. — *Chowan County-R*

The Guilford report also found that some parents want help with social-emotional development for their children and social supports to help get their children ready for kindergarten.

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## Health and Development Summary

Parents reported that they routinely take their children to the doctor, that their doctors help keep their children healthy in multiple ways, and that they access federal health-related aid. They also reported needing more information about specific health issues, easier access to needed medical services and help with self-care. Specifically, parents identified needing information about child development, nutrition, mental health, and supports for parents; needing easier access to medical services, due to transportation challenges, having to take time away from work, paperwork requirements, and cost of services; and needing help with self-care, like stress management, balancing work/home demands, and caring for children with disabilities. Families also expressed concerns regarding social-emotional development, including feelings, getting along with others, and development of other self-regulation behaviors.

## SUPPORTED AND SUPPORTIVE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Families and communities are supported and supportive when children are safe at home (free from child abuse and neglect) and have positive interactions with their parents, families have social supports, parents are skilled and knowledgeable, and families are able to read to their children. Factors that influence those measures include parents' adverse childhood experiences, parental depression and substance abuse, access to paid family leave, having books in the home, eating family meals, being screened for poverty, and parent access to education supports and treatment for mental health issues, substance abuse, and domestic violence.

Survey and focus group data from 16 reports and the voices of more than 1,800 parents found that parents make use of community resources when they know about them and can access them, but that parents have unmet needs that could be addressed in the community. Parents also identified barriers to accessing the community services they need and shared the best ways to communicate with them about available community resources.

### Parents Value Strong Families and Engagement in the Community

Parents want their children to have happy and successful family lives. They also want their children to be actively engaged in their communities, making positive change and helping to build supportive communities. The NCECF Parent Voices Survey (324 participants from 28 NC counties) provides examples of parent voice around the importance of strong family life and community and civic engagement.

#### When asked, "What are your dreams for your children?" responses included:

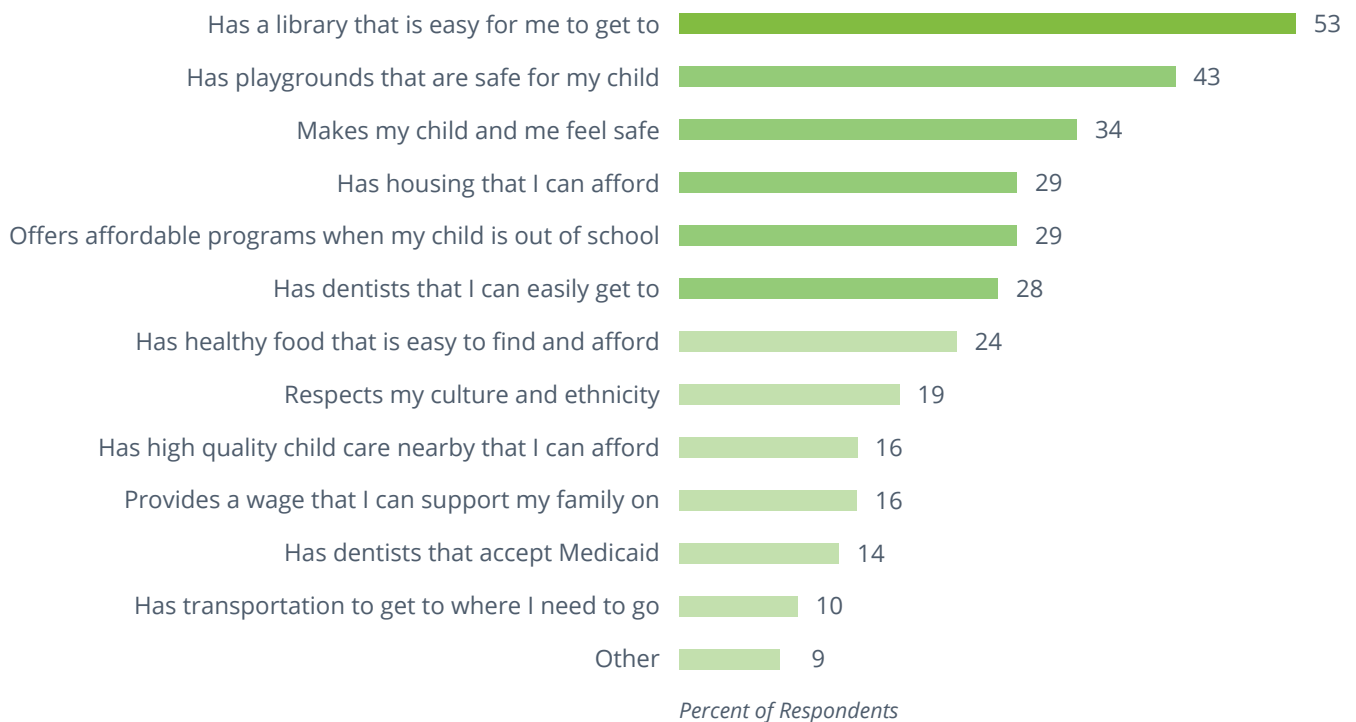
- Success in career and family. — *Wayne County-R*
- That she is always healthy and happy with strong self-esteem, follows her dreams with drive and intention, and is an active, kind, understanding and caring member of her community. — *Buncombe County-U*
- I want my children to do even better than me and the generations before me: To love themselves and other and be loved by many, happiness, to be content, to be spiritual, great health, be a homeowner, have a career that contributes to making the world better, have a family of their own, and to feel secure about their future. — *Duplin County-R*
- I hope for my children to not be successful in all she does, so as to learn grace in the face of failure, resilience, and compassion for those struggling with failure. To lead a thoughtful, kind and impactful life. — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- A balanced life; happiness and success in whatever field or endeavor they choose; happiness and balance in their personal lives too (just as important as career). — *Orange County-U*
- To love and be loved. To learn from others and become a productive member of society. To make our world a better place. To find happiness in the little things and to embrace people for their merits. — *Wake County-U*
- I hope that my 15-year-old son continues to show respect, honor and compassion for ALL mankind as he's been taught regardless of physical, social or economic differences. — *Durham County-U*
- I want them to have had a childhood full of experiences with the world that leads them to being productive members of society and independent world thinkers. — *Unknown*
- To have joy and to be contributing members of society. — *Wayne County-R*
- My dream is for my children to use their gifts and abilities and follow their dreams and passions. In turn, they will live happy, productive lives and help create a better community, a better world. — *Johnston County-R*

## Parents Report Using Accessible Community Services

Parents report using community services when they know about them and they are accessible. For example, parents in the Western Region Smart Start (727 parents) and Durham EDCI (78 parents) reports identified what community resources or services they use on a regular basis. The primary response from seven of the ten counties was the library or other reading program. The other three counties indicated a parenting class or a 'play and learn' group as the top service used. Other community resources mentioned included Nurse Family Partnership, The Incredible Years, Triple P, MY Healthy Families and other parenting classes. Additionally, some communities offered art, music, or recreation programs, or church programs for preschool children.

In another example, parent respondents to the NCECF survey were asked, "How does your community support your child's success?" and invited to check all that apply (N=58). The library and playgrounds were cited most frequently.

### HOW DOES YOUR COMMUNITY SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS?



## Parents Have Unmet Needs that Could be Addressed in the Community

Though parents report using available services when they know about them and can access them, they also report that they have unmet needs that could be addressed in the community to help them support their children's success. The following list provides the salient themes across all the reports, followed by selected quotes to illustrate the need.

### Parents identified resources or community services needed to support their children.

#### Information about resources available within the community:

- The location is important for where resources are in a community – you need to be in the center of the community to let people know you're there and what you do. — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- "I did not know about the service" was the top response when asked why parents did not use a community service. — *Western Region Smart Start counties-R/U*
- Families AND professionals are often unaware of resources that support school readiness and as a result many children and families do not benefit from those services and enter school without necessary skills. — *Chowan County-R*
- There's no "one-stop shop" website or phone resource with what's available that people in the community trust. — *Guilford County-U*
- I have worked at Burke County for 7 years and had no idea about [Parents as Teachers]. I don't think we know all the resources in this county. — *Burke County-R*
- 68 percent of parents selected "need more or need a lot more information about services available for my child." — *Forsyth County-U*
- Some families report not knowing how to get support with food. — *Guilford-U*

#### Informal social support, trust among neighbors, and emergency support:

- I do have my mom and dad...but some people don't have that. — *Henderson County-U*
- I like being a stay at home mom—but it is hard not having family or everyone around here. — *Yancey County-R*
- Knowing your neighbors, having people watching your back, watching out for your kids. — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- In terms of social support, 16 percent of participants indicated that they had no one that they could rely

on in an emergency, and slightly over 50 percent indicated that they could rely on one to three people in the case of an emergency. — *Durham County-U*

- I need a community that will support me as a parent and my children as they grow and learn. Good quality education; safe community; child-friendly parks, restaurants, neighborhoods, etc. — *Guilford County-U*

#### Affordable programs and supports for parents and children, including for new parents and parent education:

- Programs that aren't so expensive so children will have the opportunity to be with other children until they get in school. — *Henderson County-U*
- Showing parents how to teach their children—not only would we know but we could pass that along to other parents. — *Henderson County-U*
- As a single mom and teenager, various stepping stones to help me become independent as a mom and gain confidence: Shelters, daycare vouchers, Section 8, parenting classes. — *Madison County-R*
- New parents need more support and for support to start earlier in process. — *Guilford County-U*
- Clear and consistent messages about importance of first five years. — *Guilford County-U*
- More parent education is needed at all stages. — *Guilford County-U*
- I need resources for a good in-home curriculum for my kids. — *Western Region Smart Start counties - R/U*
- Play and learn group with other moms that teaches children's activities to parents. — *Western Region Smart Start counties - R/U*
- We need available activities that are free and have air conditioning. — *Western Region Smart Start counties - R/U*
- [My child] needs socialization rather than him just being around me. — *Western Region Smart Start counties - R/U*
- Competent, family-friendly pediatricians; free parent-education classes to help support families in teaching their children on every grade level what it takes to be successful and well-mannered/behaved in schools. — *Guilford-U*
- I have an issue with food because my food stamps don't last the entire month or I don't receive them when I am scheduled to. — *Guilford County-U*

#### Resources and services for people of color and immigrants:

- Language barriers prevent our participation in many activities. — *Buncombe County-U*
- Immigration status, not having papers. Even if a service is available, our work asks for our social

security and we can't get jobs, so we don't have money to take advantage of things that exist. — *Buncombe County-U*

- There is no way to make a complaint or voice how you feel. — *Henderson County-U*
- Support parents by encouraging them to continue speaking native language at home, valuing native culture (music, dance, art, etc.). — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- They used to do Spanish-speaking [Parents As Teachers] (...) now they don't have that anymore. All these moms stay home. They don't drive. And they want some resources. They want a way to come [to] a place like this... They can't come walking when it's raining or when it's cold, because they can't drive. A lot of moms...they need that. — *Burke County-R*

#### **Services for children with disabilities or developmental delays:**

- My child was born premature and we needed a lot of help with her learning how to talk. — *Henderson County-U*
- Teachers need more training about how to manage disabled children. Many don't seem to know what they're doing when it comes to disabilities. — *Guilford County-U*
- Parents say it's difficult to connect with resources to address speech delays. — *Guilford County-U*

### **Parents Identify Barriers to Accessing Supports**

Parents were also clear about the barriers that are preventing them from accessing needed services in their communities. Guilford County (U) compiled a report that summarizes the top issues for families and reflects themes about barriers to accessing services found in other reports as well. Themes are below, with more detail in bullets. There are a handful of parent quotes included that are not from the Guilford report, and their sources are noted.

#### **It's daunting and time consuming for families to access services.**

- Families from all backgrounds don't know what services exist.
- Families can't easily find programs for which they are eligible.
- For some, trust can be a barrier to accessing services.
- Parents complete numerous applications and provide a lot of supporting documentation to get services and supports.
- Time spent to get services hinders progress in becoming self-sufficient.

#### **Lack of reliable transportation is a primary barrier.**

- Services and supports are located in places that aren't accessible for families without personal transportation, i.e. those who depend on public transportation.
- People get frustrated by referrals that are all over town, and you don't have the transportation to get there. — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- Bus is limited by where you can go and the hours (6:30 AM – 6:30 PM, M-F. No weekends). — *Henderson County-U*
- Until I can afford insurance, I can't get a license. — *Madison County-R*
- [Lack of transportation] cuts you off from the world. — *Burke County-R*
- I don't have a reliable car...and gas is expensive. — *Buncombe County-U*
- Parents from rural counties indicated that they must drive to neighboring counties to access some resources, or that resources are unavailable to them because they cannot drive to another county.
- In western North Carolina, inclement weather limits transportation or participation in available resources. Many parents indicated a lack of activities when home-bound or limited social exposure for their children. — *Western Smart Start counties-U/R*
- These transportation challenges were shared by a Spanish-language focus group. — *Western NC counties - R/U*
- It is hard to get transportation to activities or programs.
- I drive, but without a license. If my child is sick and my husband is not there and we can't find people to take us.
- I can't drive and my husband is working and I have to walk everywhere.

- I used [public transportation] but I arrived 15 minutes late to my appointment.
- I waited two hours for [public transportation] to pick me up one time from my appointment.
- I can't afford \$15 or \$20 for a ride to the clinic.

#### **It's difficult for agencies to make referrals.**

- The most trusted resources in our community are confused about what programs exist, who's eligible, and what spots are open.
- Service providers aren't confident making referrals because the "catchers" on the other end of the referral sometimes drop the ball.
- Some service providers may not have the skills needed to work with parents/caregivers.



**Services and supports aren't always available to the people who want or need them.**

- Long waitlists and inflexible caps on programs mean families often do not get what they need during the critical time when their children need to be ready for kindergarten.
- Eligibility policies prevent families from getting what they need.
- It's difficult for families to get what they need until they face a crisis.

**Cultural influences and stigma can be significant barriers to access.**

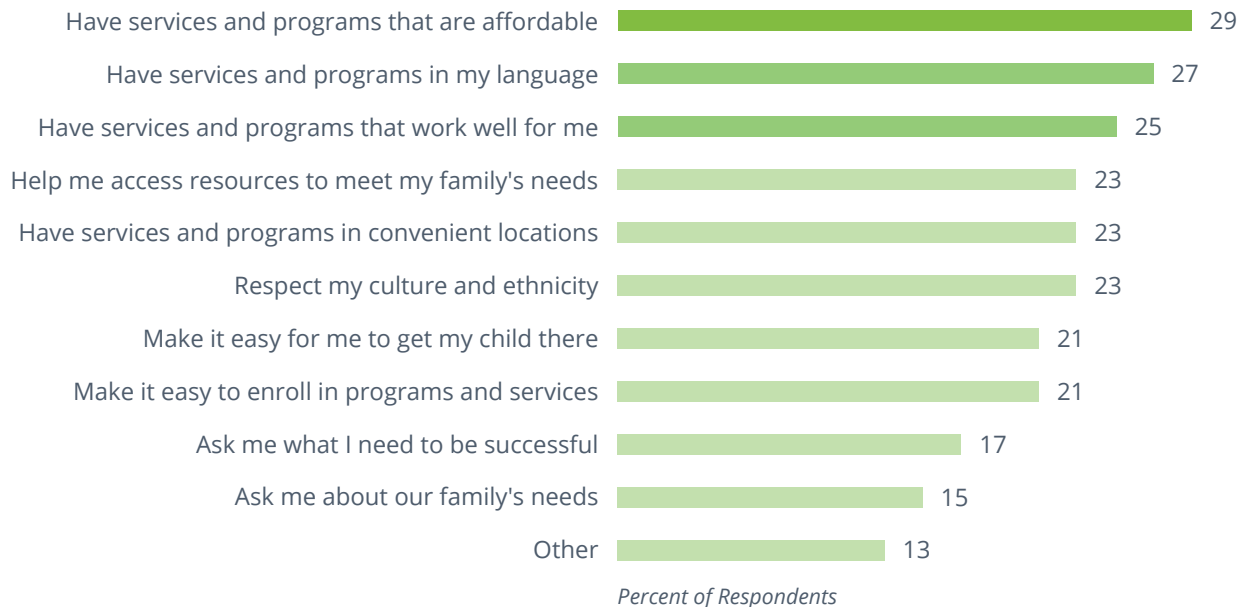
- Unconscious (or conscious) bias by providers is a barrier to access.

- Safety concerns prevent parents from seeking and/or utilizing some services and community resources.
- Teen mothers' challenges are exacerbated by our community's attitudes about young parents.
- Parents with criminal records face many barriers to accessing what they need to get children ready for school.
- There's a stigma for children who are held back in school.

In answering a question about how services and program providers in their communities support their children's success, parent respondents to the NCECF Parent Voices Survey highlighted many of the same barriers. Only 30 percent of respondents reported that services and programs are affordable—the top answer—and the percentages go down from there.

Respondents were invited to check all that apply (N=52).

**HOW DO SERVICE & PROGRAM PROVIDERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS?**



Parents in the Western Region Smart Start focus groups (both rural and urban/suburban counties) shared what would increase their participation in community programs and services. Their responses serve to reinforce themes mentioned above:

- Provide programs in Spanish and/or provide interpretation
- Offer multiple times and after-work hours (e.g., mornings, afternoons, and evenings)
- Provide child care
- Don't request personal information

## Parents Recognize the Importance of Books and Reading with Children

Parents recognize the importance of books and reading to their children. In the Read Charlotte survey, parents were as likely as educators to say that using and appreciating books is a critical skill for kindergarten readiness. Parents in Durham specifically mentioned needing books at home to read to their children. Not having books in the home or time to read with their children was described as a barrier to school readiness in several surveys, and books were noted by parents as one of the resources that would most help them

prepare their children for school. Finally, parents noted the importance of having books and reading to their children to keep up their learning during the summer months (see Summer Learning, in the Education section, below).

## Parents Share Best Ways to Communicate with Them

Parent respondents to 16 different reports answered questions about their preferred channels for communication about resources and supports. Word of mouth, schools, child's teacher, Facebook, local library, family or friends, doctor's office, newspaper or flyers, internet, text messages, community organizations, and churches resonated with most parents. Few parents rely on the radio, magazines, or Twitter to access information. Additionally, three counties that disaggregated data by low income and non-low income found that low income families prefer word of mouth referrals, community agency referrals, friends and family, and flyers/brochures while higher income parents prefer word of mouth and online resources.

*Sources: NCECF Parent Survey (8 counties and 4 states), Western Region Smart Start counties (8 rural, 2 suburban), Durham (U), Mecklenburg (U), Chowan (R), Guilford (U), and Forsyth (U).*

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## Supported and Supportive Families and Communities Summary

Parents report making use of community supports when they can access them, but that they have unmet needs that could be met in the community, such as information about resources, informal social supports, affordable programs, including supports for new parents and parent education, resources and services for families of color and immigrants, and services for children with disabilities and developmental delays. Families identify barriers to accessing community supports, such as time, transportation, lack of trust, waitlists and eligibility, and cultural bias and stigma. Finally, parents reported on their preferred methods of communication, such as word-of-mouth from friends, family, doctors, teachers, schools, and community organizations as well as flyers, brochures, internet, and text messages.

Responses within this section represent primarily rural or suburban counties from western North Carolina, with limited data from a few urban counties. Data gathered from additional counties across the state would confirm the degree to which all NC parents experience these challenges.

## HIGH QUALITY BIRTH-THROUGH-AGE EIGHT LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS WITH REGULAR ATTENDANCE

High quality early learning happens when children have high-quality early care and education, positive school climates, summer learning, regular school attendance, and achieve promotion to the next grade. Key influencers of these measures include childcare subsidies for low-income families, pre-K programs for four-year-olds, supported transitions, suspension and expulsion policies, teacher and administrator education and qualifications with an emphasis on early childhood and child development, trauma-informed education, school stability, high quality summer learning programs, special education services, native language support, and diverse schools.

Parent voice on education was collected in each of the 18 surveys considered for this meta-analysis. Across the surveys, parent feedback on education was mostly focused on children aged birth through five, the transition to kindergarten, and summer learning. Some parent voice around the K-12 system and higher education was offered in the open-ended response questions in the NCECF Parent Survey.

In this section, parents share their dreams for their children's educational success. They discuss their preferences and the opportunities they see for accessing high-quality, affordable early care and the barriers that stand in the way. They also share the obstacles that prevent their children from being ready for kindergarten, the resources that would most help them support their children's school readiness, and the skills they believe their children need to have in place when they start school. Finally, parents share what schools can do to best support their children's success and what they need to support their children's learning during the summer months.

### Parents Believe that Education is Critical for Career and Life Success

When asked about their dreams for their children's futures, parents report that they want their children to be well-educated, and that a good education is what will lead to career and life success. Two surveys, for a total of 400 parents, and one focus group asked about this topic.

The Durham County (U) EDCI Survey found most of the 78 respondents (81 percent) listed education as the most important goal for their children, and 91 percent believe it is very important for their children to go to college. All parents expect their children to graduate high school, and most expect them to graduate college. Most parents are also hopeful their children will do well in school this year.

Also from Durham, the Summer Reading focus group asked about parents' dreams for their children. Results found English-speaking parents want their children to be happy and successful adults and be the "best that they can be." They indicate that education and reading will help their children achieve those dreams. Spanish-speaking parents want their children to be educated and have a professional career and/or career they love.

They say hard work and parental encouragement will help their children achieve those dreams.

The NCECF Parent Voices Survey (324 participants from 28 NC counties) provides examples of parent voice around the importance of education for life success.

#### When asked, "What are your dreams for your children?" responses included:

##### Early literacy and school readiness:

- To build a love of reading and imagination thru books. Be responsible, respectable, and successful in the future. — *Wayne County-R*
- It is imperative that my children grow and develop into strong, literate, self-sufficient individuals that can contribute heartily to the best interests of their community as adults. Early literacy and school readiness will be the key to this success! — *Wake County-U*

##### Love of learning, curiosity and critical thinkers:

- That they grow into kind, intelligent, thoughtful individuals armed with the skills to navigate this ever-changing environment. I want my children to be able to learn continually, make good decisions, and think critically. — *Wake County-U*

- To reach her fullest potential with a love of lifelong learning, an insatiable curiosity for growth, and a vision of herself as an educated, empathetic, grounded person who contributes great things to her community and her world. — *Wake County-U*

#### Equity in education:

- To get a great education, with equal opportunities and little or no debt due. To be able to study and work in a field that he/she enjoys without worry of opportunity, making a fair salary, etc. *Unknown*
- Most every parent wants their children to have an opportunity to have a future and become a productive citizen. Children should be given equal opportunities in education regardless of race or income. — *Guilford County-U*

#### Well-educated:

- To become a well-educated and successful individual thriving in his/her community making a lasting impact. — *Jackson County-R*
- That they have better education that I did, that they reach their dreams so that they have a future, and that I can continue to be a better mother so that I can keep educating them and motivating them. — *Henderson County-U*
- That my kids to grow and be strong beautiful women, make it through elementary, high school, and college, and not go through the same situations I went through. — *Henderson County-U*
- To work hard at school and graduate, to study as long as she wants to. — *Buncombe County-U*

#### Education leading to career and life success:

- Graduate from college, attend graduate school, pursue a successful career in field of interest. — *Rowan County-U*
- To get through college and make sure that she is a successful, independent, strong woman. — *Durham County-U*
- For each of our three children to graduate from college and pursue a career that interests them. Hopefully, it will be an exciting and challenging career that makes our world a better place! — *Wake County-U*
- College educated and content with his profession and life. — *Wayne County-R*
- I want them to study and have a career. — *Burke County-R*
- To graduate high school with a clear understanding of what jobs are available and of interest to them, prepared to do what is required to prepare and obtain their chosen career and to do it within the framework of a well-rounded person with a solid moral compass under-girding their decisions. — *Onslow County-R*

- I want them to study and get good jobs. — *Durham County-U*
- Finding a good paying job. Get educated. — *Durham County-U*
- To graduate high school, go to college, get a degree that gets them a decent job so they can take care of their families. — *Durham County-U*
- To be able to compete in a global market for jobs and opportunities. — *Guilford County-U*
- To graduate high school and attend college to obtain a good job in their chosen career field. — *Guilford County-U*

#### Education leading to happiness, achieving their own dreams:

- I would like my children to be kind, patient, and loving, and have a good education that leads them to pursue their own dreams. — *Yancey County-R*
- To fulfill God's calling for his/her life and to successfully complete the education required to do that. — *Chatham County-R*
- To go to college and have a great career. Whatever makes her happy. — *Durham County-U*

### Parents Report that Children's Living Conditions Impact School Success

Data from Durham County found that half of all parents reported that their child's education worried them on a daily basis. Parents across the board also report that the conditions children and families live in, resulting from low-income or poverty, impact children's school success.

Durham participants were asked to describe the things in the community that both impede and support children in maintaining good grades in school and reaching high school graduation. Respondents tended to focus more on the obstacles: nearly 60 percent of the comments offered were coded as "impediments to school success," while only 30 percent of comments were coded as "supports contributing to school success."

Participants specifically mentioned financial stresses and challenges, crime, violence, and safety as factors impeding the success of children in the community. Other themes centered on a lack of educational supports (tutoring, mentoring), and too few after school activities available for children.

#### Examples of some of the comments include:

- The crime and negativity that is in the atmosphere all the time.
- Community does not have a focus on school or academics.

- Gangs, drugs, violence.
- The economy- sometimes there is a lack of work and it is not easy to give the kids the schooling or other things they need.
- It is harder for kids because they don't have tutors.
- The kids need more activities and things to do after school.

Respondents also reported needing help with books, diapers and other supplies.

## Parents Report on their Options and Preferences for Child Care

Parents often choose to stay home with their children or use a relative to care for their young children, rather than enrolling them in formal child care. The state has very little data on the large percentage of young children who are not enrolled in formal care. Responses in several of the surveys give some insight into parents' rationale for opting out of formal care. In addition to wanting to remain the primary influencer in their children's lives, parents shared concerns about availability, cost, quality of care, and location and convenience.

At least 80 percent of parents from the 10 Western North Carolina counties prefer to stay home or use a relative to care for their birth through age five children. A follow-up survey asked parents why they made that choice, inviting them to select from a list of responses. Over 700 parents answered, "this is my preferred choice," followed by "quality of care," "cost," and "convenient location."

The Durham EDCl survey found similar child care arrangements and reasons for not enrolling a child in childcare. A minority of respondents with a child age birth through four used formal child care. When asked why, respondents said that a parent was able to stay home, there were long waitlists for child care, or that child care was not affordable. (Small sample size: N=19)

The following list includes parent remarks from the Western Region Smart Start reports, as well as Forsyth, Chowan, Guilford, and Mecklenburg Counties, representing more than 1,800 parent voices.

### Concerns about quality; Trust:

- I feel I can trust my children to my family but not a child care center. — *Buncombe County-U*
- I don't trust anyone with my child. — *Rutherford County-R*
- Scary some of the things you see on the news happening in daycare. — *Yancey County-R*

### Desire to remain the key influencer:

- I don't want the whole rest of the world raising my children. I want to have that influence. — *Avery*

### County-R

- I like to stay at home with them, I teach them about God, things that they can't teach them at school. — *Henderson County-U*

### Cost

- Lack of quality, affordable childcare with flexible hours. — *Multiple counties*
- Daycare [with vouchers] allows me to work and take care of my children. — *Henderson County-U*
- It's cheaper for him to stay home. He will be at home until I get vouchers or a job that can pay for daycare. — *Buncombe County-U*
- To provide for children, parents have to work, and daycare is necessary as well as expensive. — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- Then all you are working for is to pay daycare. — *Yancey County-R*
- Waiting lists for Child Care Subsidy, Head Start, and NC Pre-K may be getting in the way of children being ready for school; or eligibility policies preventing qualification of some families in need. — *Chowan County-R*
- Only 20 percent of parents in Forsyth County reported that it was 'easy' or 'very easy' to get free early childhood education. — *Forsyth County-U*

### Availability:

- No day care for 2nd or 3rd shift. — *Transylvania County-R*
- More Head Start spaces and bilingual care. — *Transylvania County-R*
- Need for more Five Star centers. — *Transylvania County-R*
- I would like to work but I can't find a place for my kids to be. I don't have family here. — *Buncombe County-U*
- Waitlist for child care. — *Multiple counties*
- Distance to child care center/ no transportation. — *Multiple counties*
- Do not know what child care options are available. — *Multiple counties*

## Parents Report on Barriers to Accessing High Quality Early Learning Opportunities

Parents' decisions about whether to use formal child care are also impacted by the barriers to accessing high quality, affordable care. Barriers to access reported by parents include lack of knowledge about options, cost, quality, availability, lack of coordination of resources within the community, transportation, location, hours of operation, and need for bilingual services. Responses

were similar for parents in rural and urban/suburban counties as well as families from low-income and middle-income families.

Guilford County (U) parents identified barriers to using formal child care. The Guilford themes reported were reflected in many of the other reports as well:

- Available childcare vouchers do not adequately meet the needs of our community.
- Middle class (and upper-middle class) families struggle with costs of childcare.
- Parents who receive subsidies report having limited options (not highest quality care).
- Lack of transportation to and from childcare makes it difficult for children to be in a childcare program unless their parents have personal transportation.
- Parents don't know what to look for when seeking high-quality childcare.

In the Forsyth County (U) report, parents indicated a need for more knowledge. From this study of 307 parents, most want information about options for early childhood education programs and information about how to get the services their children need in early childhood programs.

The Durham County (U) EDCl survey asked 78 parents to identify the three most important concerns when considering childcare/preschool for their children. Parents identified "knowing who is caring for their child and staff-teacher qualifications" as the most important consideration, followed by "cost," then "location to home." The majority of Durham County parents also indicated they were interested in a full-day program—95 percent of Durham parents said they would be interested in sending their child to preschool if it were available free or at low cost.

## Parents Share Barriers to Children Being Ready for Kindergarten and Resources Needed

Parents shared barriers to children being ready for kindergarten and what resources would most support them as they help their children prepare for school. Reported barriers to kindergarten readiness included lack of parent knowledge, communication between agencies and with parents, including Spanish-speaking parents, and formal early learning opportunities. The following list shares themes and examples from the Western Region Smart Start reports, as well as Forsyth, Chowan, Guilford, and Mecklenburg Counties, representing more than 1,800 parent voices.

### Parents lack awareness of how to prepare their children for kindergarten:

- The families who are more privileged, they're learning at a facility at a young age. With families like us, we

don't have that. We have to try to teach our children day by day by day what we think they need to know. My son is six years old...By the grace of God, he starts kindergarten and there were so many struggles. When he went in, he didn't know how to write his name. He didn't know how to read. He still struggled in the first grade how to read. He just doesn't get that one-on-one attention that he needs in the school. So, a program more for younger children...not an everyday thing, but something for them to get a head start before they even go into Head Start or even before they go to school would be nice. — *Yancey County-R*

- Lack of understanding of what is needed and what defines school readiness by parents, child care providers, and the community is preventing families from having their child ready for school. — *Chowan County-R*
- Many adults are unaware of what kids need to know to be ready to learn to read in Kindergarten. — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- The need to train parents to become more active and more critical of the education and programs. — *Forsyth County-U*
- Many parents do not know the right practices to be parents or to teach children. — *Forsyth County-U*

### Communication between agencies and with parents:

- Concern about the communication between the school system and other agencies – some parents don't know where to start to get information about preparing their child for school – and parents feel that agencies don't seem to want to share information about other services that might help them do so. — *Chowan County-R*

### Formal Early Learning Opportunities:

- Chowan County lacks the money resources (population based state budget fund or large corporations that fund programs locally) that some wealthier counties might have to develop or expand programs for families. This lack of funds prevents some families from accessing the supports they need to have their child ready for school. — *Chowan County-R*

Five surveys asked about preparing children for school, with information from over 1,900 parents. Parents identified the following as resources that would be most useful to them for helping prepare their children for school: summer programs, help with reading/literacy, help with math, afterschool and weekend programs, mentoring, help managing their children's behavior, and books to read at home.

## Parents are Unclear About Skills Children Need to be Ready for Kindergarten

Surveys show that some parents are not knowledgeable about the skills children need to be prepared for kindergarten. For example, a survey in Chowan County (R) of 278 parents found that while most respondents knew that children need to be able to recite the alphabet and identify letters and their sounds, fewer than half of respondents understood the importance of being able to retell a story or have a large vocabulary. The Read Charlotte Survey (*Mecklenburg County-U*) found that a similar percentage of parents (N=1,204) did not recognize the importance of having a large vocabulary (32 percent).

Income matters for parent knowledge about school readiness. The same Chowan survey disaggregated parent responses by income ('low income' and 'not low income') and found 10 to 15 percentage point

differences—in other words, 10 to 15 percent more 'not low income' parents knew that critical skills were important for kindergarten readiness than did 'low income' parents. Other critical skills parents were asked about included ability to follow rules and directions, listen and pay attention, get along with other children, self-calm, count, have letter-sound knowledge, and have a large vocabulary.

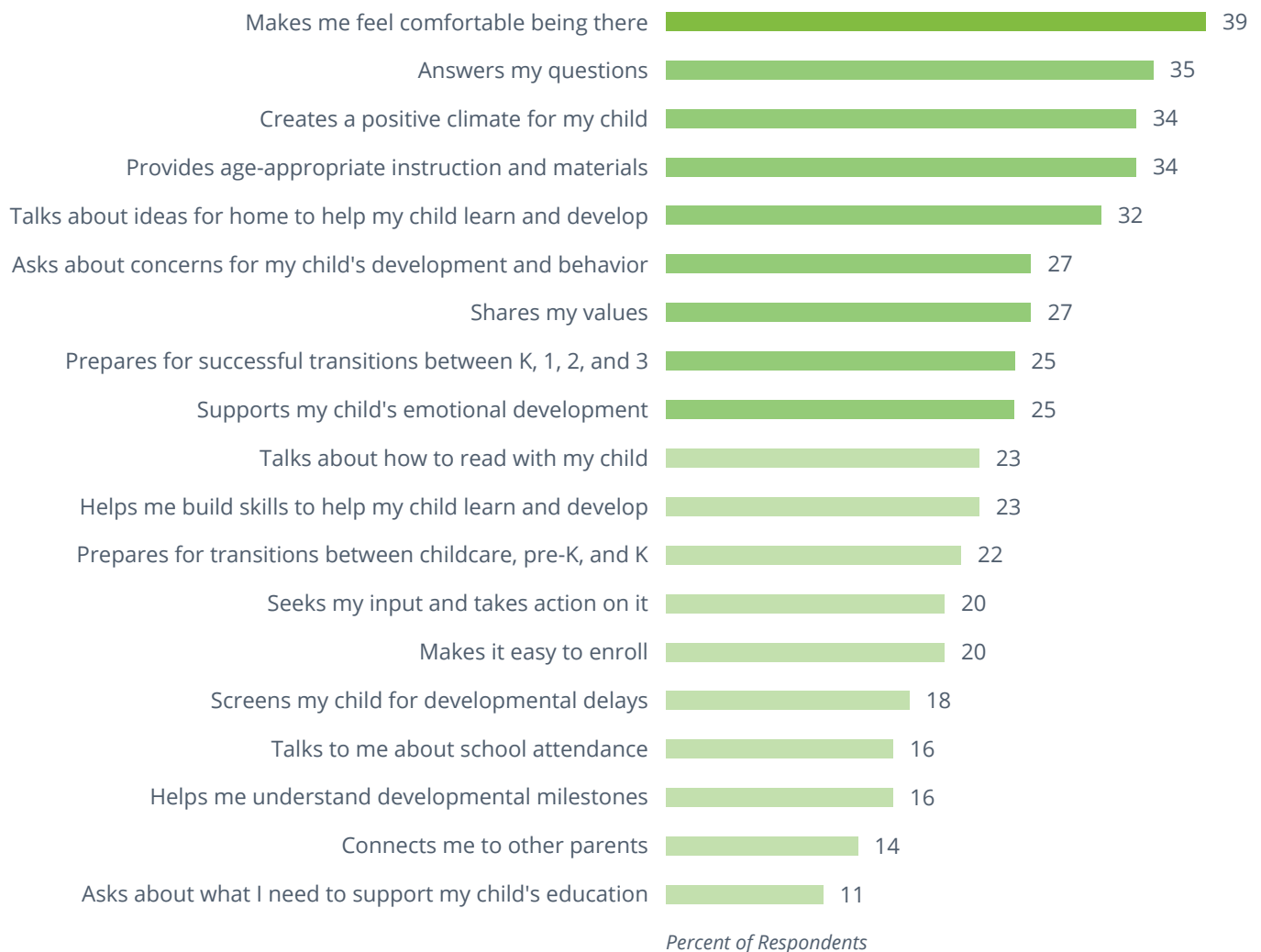
Read Charlotte took the approach of comparing family responses to educators' responses, who presumably are very familiar with what children need to be ready for kindergarten. Though the small sample size should be noted (N=89), the question illuminated the gaps in parent knowledge. While parents were *more likely* than educators to say that traditional academic indicators like knowing the alphabet and identifying letters and their sounds were important, parents were *less likely* than educators to believe that skills like retelling stories, recognizing rhyming words, having a large vocabulary, and listening and understanding complex language were critical skills for kindergarten readiness.

## Parents Share How Schools Can Best Support Their Children's Success

Surveys asked parents how schools and formal child care help their children to be successful, and what those institutions could do to better support children's success.

The following figure from the NCECF Family Voices report shows ways that childcare and schools help children be successful, according to parents. Respondents were invited to check all that apply. Percentages are very low, suggesting that parents feel schools and child care could be doing more. *Note the very small sample size. (N=79)*

### HOW DO SCHOOL AND FORMAL CHILD CARE HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED?





Parents from Forsyth County (U, N=307) reported that they are “quite” or “extremely” confident in their ability to make choices about their children’s schooling and support their learning at home, but are somewhat less confident that their children’s schools are preparing them for school success in the future and that, given their children’s cultural backgrounds, their schools value and appreciate them.

Parents also identified ways that schools can help support their children’s success. Parents did not necessarily agree with each other—responses ranged from more academic rigor to more play time and creativity. Most of the quotes below are pulled from the NCECF Parent Survey (115 respondents).

#### High standards and academic focus:

- Schools that teach life skills and do not promote children just because they think that is what no child left behind means. Schools that do not reward students for not doing homework, or classwork thus teaching children that they do not have to follow the rules and that their parents do not know what they are talking about!! — *Lee County-R*
- The majority of caregivers identified the need for tutoring, mentoring, and out of school programs that have an academic focus. — *Durham-U*

#### Support for children with disabilities:

- Several of the parents had children with a disability and they expressed that many teachers lack the knowledge and understanding to work and support their children. — *Forsyth County-U*
- A full continuum of academic and behavior supports at school. My son has mild autism, and right now it seems that there’s a huge gap between what’s offered in a regular class and what’s offered in an EC class (with very little in between). — *Unknown*
- Teachers need more training about how to manage disabled children. Many don’t seem to know what they’re doing when it comes to disabilities. — *Guilford County-R*
- Teachers who can scaffold and differentiate lessons, training for all teachers for working with kids with autism. — *Unknown*

#### Access to wide range of opportunities:

- My children need intrinsic motivation. Awareness about opportunities that are available for them to be successful. — *Unknown*
- They need practical experiences to grow in many areas and experience many aspects of life. — *Wayne County-R*
- To have many opportunities for my child to learn. — *Buncombe County-U*

#### Well trained and prepared educators:

- Lack of qualified teachers due to low teacher pay, lack of mentoring, and professional development for teachers. — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- Educated educators, who are dedicated to their work and willing to go above and beyond for each individual child regardless of any barriers. — *Unknown*
- Family support and caring teachers. — *Forsyth County-U*
- Quality schools with quality educators. — *Chatham County-R*

#### Positive climate; Opportunities to take risks and build skills:

- A positive supported school community that engages students and staff. — *Johnston County-R*
- Asset-building skills are a strong need personally and within our community. Far too many parents don’t understand what their children need to be successful as adults in our complex society. — *Wake County-U*
- Not so much negativity and schools that encourage students to try new things and get out of their comfort zone at times. — *Wake County-U*

#### Less testing, more creativity and play:

- Schools with less emphasis on an end goal (testing... always with the testing) and more opportunities for creativity and play. — *Yancey County-R*
- More accountability. Less testing and more application for problem solving and social experience to prepare them for the real world. — *Wayne County-R*
- Access to books, and an end to excessive and unscientific standardized testing that child development experts have stated repeatedly is bad for young children and fosters an aversion to learning, rather than a love of lifetime learning. — *Forsyth County-U*
- Classrooms that honor a child’s need to be active and creative. Curriculum that supports their growth but doesn’t dictate everything. Teachers that are free to be creative and work outside the box to engage their students. More activity. More arts. More time in the library. Time spent building life-long skills, not just doing worksheets. Opportunities to engage with the community. Funding that whole-heartedly supports more than “core academics” and testing. — *Wake County-U*
- Play and nature based educational opportunities that are based in respectful caregiving and teaching. — *Durham County-U*
- Less testing and more reading in school — *Wake County-U*

- Unscheduled time with children to give them time to actually be children! — *Wake County-U*
- Educators who are engaged, creative, and enthusiastic about inspiring learning. — *Unknown*

## Parents Need Supports to Encourage Summer Learning

Summer learning was directly addressed in only one of the reports. The Durham Summer Reading report includes data from Spanish-speaking and English-speaking focus groups (39 parents). The following comments indicate parents' willingness to support their children's education as well as factors that limit their involvement or ability to offer support.

- Parents want to support their children's learning during the summer, but feel constrained by limited time and limited access to books.
- Parents may be aware of summer learning loss, but less so about the role of reading in learning loss prevention.
- Parents say more information about the benefits of summer reading, tips on how to read with children and access to more books would most help them support their children reading regularly during the summer.
- Spanish-speaking parents want greater access to books in Spanish. They also want specific help with supporting bilingual children as some parents may not be able to read in English.
- The messenger matters. English-speaking parents said information coming from their peers would be more credible than information coming from program professionals.
- "Parents, you are your child's first and most important

teacher," is not an effective message. Some of the English-speaking parents found it offensive and said that they did not relate to it. In addition, Spanish and English-speaking parents interpret the meaning of this phrase differently.

- Parents preferred positively-framed messages about the importance of summer reading combined with information about summer learning loss.
- While English- and Spanish-speaking parents have much in common, they also interpret messages differently and have differing needs.

The Durham Summer Reading Survey of 246 parents identified several barriers that prevent their children from reading regularly during the summer. The top barrier was time—many identified themselves as single parents and/or noted that their work hours interfered. Spanish-speaking parents (39 percent) were more likely to identify time as a barrier than English-speaking parents (22 percent). Eighteen percent of parents said access to appropriate books was a barrier. English-speaking parents identified book access as a greater barrier (23 percent) than Spanish-speaking parents (13 percent). However, book access for Spanish-speaking parents was at the heart of the most significant distinction: 17 percent of Spanish-speaking parents said that they could not read English and wanted access to books in Spanish as well as English.

Parents were asked what would help them support their children reading regularly during the summer. Access to books was the top response (44 percent), followed by tips about how to read with children (27 percent), and then by more information about the benefits of summer reading (22 percent). Spanish-speaking parents were most interested in reading tips, with one-third indicating tips would be helpful, as compared to 20 percent of English-speaking parents.

## High Quality Birth-Through-Age-Eight Learning Environments with Regular Attendance Summary

Parents report that education is important for their children's long-term happiness, career and life success, and that families are struggling with living conditions that are impacting their children's school success. Many parents choose to keep their children home or with family rather than in formal child care—either as a preference or because of obstacles to formal care like cost, quality, availability, parent knowledge and transportation. Parent-reported barriers to kindergarten readiness include lack of parent awareness, insufficient communication with parents, and lack of access to formal early learning opportunities. Survey data indicate that parents are unclear about what specific skills children need to be ready for school. Parents have a wide range of ideas about what schools can do to best support their children's success, which are sometimes at odds. Finally, parents report needing more time at home, more books at home, and tips about reading with children to best support their children's learning during the summer months.

## CHILDREN'S LIVING CONDITIONS

Children living in safe and economically viable families and neighborhoods, with stable housing and limited environmental health hazards, are more likely to be successful in school and in life. Living conditions such as poverty, housing instability, environmental toxins and neighborhood crime can compromise children's school success and healthy development. These conditions can limit opportunities for stimulating and responsive interactions, provision of emotional support, and exposure to activities that can enrich children's health, knowledge and skills. Neighborhoods that have few resources or are unsafe limit children's development by affecting parents' willingness to engage with community resources, exposing children to violence and physical hazards such as lead poisoning, and contributing to the level of stress that children experience.

Parent input on children's living conditions was collected in 13 of the 18 surveys, representing more than 1,500 parent voices.

### Parents Place High Value on Improving Children's Living Conditions

The NCECF Parent Voices Survey (324 participants from 28 NC counties) provides examples of parent voice around the importance of elevating their children's financial security and living conditions.

#### When asked, "What are your dreams for your children?" some responses included:

- To live with very little debt, no credit cards, and go to college without having to worry about paying school loans. — *Wake County-U*
- To find meaningful work that makes them happy and financially secure. — *Lincoln County-R*
- To never struggle for anything. — *Buncombe County-U*
- Finding a successful career. — *Durham County-U*
- Income/no financial struggles. — *Yancey County-R*
- My dream for my daughter is for her to grow up and have a better life than I didn't for her to do good in life and not have to go through the things I had to. I want her to be herself and have no worries in the world. — *Unknown*
- To have a better future than we do. — *Buncombe County-U*
- To achieve more than I was able to. — *Buncombe County-U*
- I hope he will strive for the best, be better than me, have more than me. — *Burke County-R*
- Financial stability. Being paid a living wage! More paid time-off to spend with my children so I can help them learn. — *Unknown*
- Safe communities, strong schools, and opportunities to discover the world. — *Mecklenburg County-U*

- Kids need to feel safe at home and school. They need to have food and shelter so they can learn. Making sure each child has the basics goes a long way toward helping them be engaged in school. — *Wake County-U*

### Living Conditions Impact Parents' Ability to Support their Children's Success

The Western Region Smart Start counties, Guilford County and Mecklenburg County reports, representing more than 1,200 parent voices, identified many needs relevant to jobs, sustainable wages, housing and safe neighborhoods. Themes and examples are noted below.

#### Job training and availability:

- You can't get help until you're working, but you can't work until you have help. — *Madison County-R*
- Can't get a voucher if you're not working or in school; I can't go to school because I don't have a voucher. — *Transylvania County-R*
- Lack of available jobs — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- Find ways to help us find jobs and not just tell us not to get a job. For example, if you don't have experience, you don't get the job. How do I get a job without experience, or get the experience for the job? — *Guilford County-U*
- It's like a ripple effect when benefits are taken away just because you can't find a job in the amount of time specified. I was cut from the WorkFirst program long before I found a job. — *Guilford County-U*
- Lack of income and job prospects get in the way. — *Guilford County-U*

**Affordable housing:**

- 28 percent of Forsyth parents surveyed could not pay the rent. — *Forsyth County-U*
- [I am a] two-time convicted felon so I don't qualify for Section 8 housing or Housing Assistance. I can only stay in transitional housing for one year. I don't know what I'll do in one year. I think there should be options for convicted felons. Section 8 housing shouldn't have a three-year rule for convicted felons... Would be a whole lot better if they could help people more who are trying to help themselves. — *Henderson County-U*
- About 5 percent of our clients (lower income families) are dealing with huge bedbug issues. Low-income families either get bedbugs from hotels where they stay or because they can't throw everything away when they get bedbugs in their current home. They pass them along to the next place they stay, and the cycle continues. — *Guilford County-U*
- Limited affordable, safe and healthy housing hinders parents' ability to access and utilize services to get children ready for school. — *Guilford County-U*

**Safe neighborhoods:**

- Just over half of the participants indicated feeling safe or very safe in the neighborhood, while 12 percent indicated feeling unsafe or very unsafe. — *Durham County-U*

- 11 percent reported wanting to move from the neighborhood in the next year due to safety concerns. — *Durham County-U*
- When asked what they would want someone to know about living in East Durham, the majority of survey participants referenced positive change in the neighborhood, including improved safety. — *Durham County-U*

**Sustainable wages to cover the basics:**

- Many low-income/middle class parents report working multiple jobs (or working/going to school) to make ends meet, which limits time available for getting children ready for [kindergarten]. — *Guilford-U*
- 40 percent of parents in Forsyth County reported needing to see a dentist but not having the money to do so. — *Forsyth County-U*
- 38 percent needed to buy medicine but did not have the money. — *Forsyth County-U*
- 36 percent needed to see the doctor but did not have the money. — *Forsyth County-U*
- 28 percent needed food but did not have the money to buy. — *Forsyth County-U*
- Even with food stamps, some families struggle to eat. — *Guilford-U*

## Children's Living Conditions Summary

Children's living conditions impact their health and development, whether their families and communities are supported and supportive, and the degree to which they are able to access and benefit from high quality learning environments. Parents noted struggles with job training and availability of jobs, affordable housing, neighborhood safety, and wages that influence their abilities to adequately provide for their families.

## PARENTS WANT ELECTED OFFICIALS TO BE INVESTED IN THE FUTURE

The NCECF Parent Voices Survey asked parents about elected officials and then an open-ended response about what elected officials, teachers, or schools need to know about their children. Seventy-one parents responded to the close-ended item, while 108 parents provided feedback on the open-ended question.

### Parents Identified Factors Important for Elected Officials, Teachers, and Community Leaders to Know

The following themes emerged from the 108 respondents that identified key factors that impact the child and family: uniqueness of children and their needs, balance education and other areas including decreasing the amount of testing, financial concerns of parents supporting their children's education, equitable education, and support from family and others to invest in children's future.

#### Parents want elected officials, teachers, and community leaders to know:

##### Children have unique needs and learning styles:

- That each child is an individual and that the "canned" classroom material and standardized testing does not always allow students to maximize their potential. — *Mecklenburg County-U*
- My kids are each individuals, and their experience means more than aggregate scores or numbers — *Wake County-U*
- That each child learns differently at their own rate and their own way. They should be identified by growth in more than one form of assessment. — *Johnston County-R*
- We want to freedom to express our Christian beliefs in all parts of our life. I want my child to learn the truth about history, not just the part that someone decides is politically correct. I wish teachers were given the opportunity to really learn who my child is so that her educational experience could better fit her learning. — *Durham County-U*
- Kids with autism learn differently than neurotypical kids. They want to succeed like all other kids. They want social interactions with peers and need to learn from peers. — *Unknown*
- We are a family with many resources, but we need a government willing to support our public schools so that not only our children, but everyone's children, have the opportunity to thrive. — *Mecklenburg County-U*

##### Academics need to be balanced with other areas of education:

- That you don't have a lot of time for homework once you get home, eat supper, let your child play and then go to bed. — *Forsyth County-U*
- This one goes for my community—I wish they knew that kids need to be kids early in school and give them more recess time (then there may be less kids on ADD/ADHD drugs). This one goes to the Legislature—My kids are being "tested" way too much. There needs to be fewer tests and more time for teachers to teach my children because they crave learning. My children enjoy the outdoors and enjoy personal positive attention. I wish people knew how much time our family spends on homework. Our family is very involved in ensuring our children are learning the material as intended. I wish people in power knew how frustrating some common core "problems" are especially when teachers, administrators, and local politicians cannot answer the questions. I wish the people in power knew how frustrating it is to our family when we see basics skills (writing) being taken from our children. (How are our children going to know how to sign important documents later in life when they have no basic fundamentals of writing in their background?) — *Wake County-U*
- I wish they knew that we DON'T want our kids to be overworked machines. I truly don't care if my child is smarter than a kid in Japan. I just care that they are given the opportunity to experience as much as possible that life has to offer and that they grow into kind, caring individuals. Our kids don't need MORE TIME in school studying math and writing. They need better focused time, surrounded by LOTS of time to explore, create, build, run, sing, make friends, interact with elders, and appreciate their surroundings. — *Wake County-U*
- Asking my kids to do the same things but at an earlier age has no chance of working. Instead—provide the environment (infused with nature and simple materials, with adults who have been trained in respectful caregiving) and the learning will take care of itself. — *Durham County-U*

- That my children need teachers to have more time to teach and less time assessing. So much time seems to be lost because there are hoops teachers have to jump through instead of teaching. — *Wake County-U*
- That we want our children to obtain empathy, kindness, respect and self-confidence/love. That they will learn their greatest lessons through failing and trying again. — *Unknown*

#### Families have financial challenges:

- I wish they knew what it really means to struggle day in and day out to provide as much for your kids as you possibly can, rather it be to pay for your children's school experiences, or material needs for your children, or food in the home, or missing a bill payment to make sure your children have the things they need to get ready for the school year. I think many people in power have not had to experience these situations and they are not able to truly meet the needs of the common family to learn the true meaning of humility and sacrifice. — *Guilford County-U*
- My family has sacrificed to be able to send our children to preschool before entering Kindergarten. Preschool should be available to ALL children! — *Guilford County-U*
- I wish that those in power better understood the role of adverse childhood experiences and poverty on the long-term trajectory of children. — *Unknown*
- I wish the General Assembly knew how much their decisions affect my child and other special needs children. Every funding cut, every program that funnels funds away from public schools...they have a negative impact on what resources and supports are made to my son and other children with special needs. — *Unknown*
- It's hard to be a single mom with a special needs child. I wish I had help or a mentor for him. — *Unknown*

#### Parents support education at home:

- I would like our leaders to know that all parents are concerned and invested in their children, and that parents have different ways of expressing that concern. Continue helping parents learn how to be effective advocates for their children, especially for those children who may seem to be lagging or struggling. — *Wake County-U*
- That just like they are different than their colleagues, each child in their classroom is unique and requires different ways to be engaged. That I support them and am trying to be on their team, but I need information. What can I be doing at home with my child to support your classroom work? — *Unknown*

- We place a very high value on education and work together at home to ensure that they will be proficient readers and problem solvers. It is important to make learning relevant and fun. — *Unknown*
- The incredible support that is provided within but the lack of support/opportunity that is offered outside of family. Especially when a family transfers from out-of-state! — *Unknown*

#### Investing in children is an investment in our future:

- I feel like people in power already know that my children and my family are valuable, precious people who are essential to the success and future of North Carolina. — *Duplin County-R*
- Elected Officials--that investing in our youngest members of society is a beneficial investment in all of our futures. — *Durham County-U*
- Our children's success is our future and should be a priority. — *Durham County-U*
- We are individuals that desire the same thing for our family as they do. And to ask the question: who am I leaving out? when making decisions about policies, etc. — *Wake County-U*

#### Parents want adequate resources and funding for education:

- Properly funding public education, a commitment from lawmakers to invest in and believe in public education and ALL students. — *Guilford County-U*
- High quality early education experience - child care is not affordable but needed in order to support my children. — *Durham County-U*
- Quality education, access to health care, economic security. — *Durham County-U*
- Money into our school system for teachers and flexibility for each system - not a one size all approach. — *Wake County-U*
- Properly funding public education, a commitment from lawmakers to invest in and believe in public education and ALL students. — *Guilford County-U*
- Schools need more resources and funding. These institutions take on a bigger societal role than we all acknowledge. — *Wake County-U*
- Fair wages so we can support ourselves. Fully funded public education. — *Forsyth County-U*

## CONCLUSION—NOT ABOUT ME, WITHOUT ME

State policy can only be effective if it is based on an understanding of child, family and community needs, and implemented in a way that works for parents and caregivers. This meta-analysis of 18 parent focus groups, meetings and surveys is intended to educate policymakers and state and community leaders about parents' needs, constraints, options, and preferences as they strive to support their children's success. The analysis found overlapping themes that align with the three goals of the Pathways to Grade Level Reading Measures of Success Framework: Health and Development on Track from Birth, Supported and Supportive Families and Communities, and High-Quality Birth-through-Age-Eight Learning Environments with Regular Attendance. Themes around children's living conditions were also highlighted.

The themes and examples—many in parents' own words—presented in this meta-analysis may not fully reflect the opinions of the diverse families living in North Carolina, as data from just over half of North Carolina's 100 counties are included and, to the degree that demographics were identifiable, the parents surveyed skewed female and English-speaking. Sample sizes were large enough, however, to indicate that the topics included here have relevance for many parents in the participating communities. Additional surveys, interviews, and focus groups that add to these findings may confirm or expand our understanding of what parents need to support their children's success.

The Pathways Initiative aims to serve as a vehicle for parent voices to be heard and acted upon, as state leaders and policymakers use this information to develop state policy and invest in families and children to further the Pathways to Grade Level Reading vision that *all North Carolina children, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade, and all children with disabilities achieve expressive and receptive communication skills commensurate with their developmental ages, so that they have the greatest opportunity for life success.*

## Appendix A

Smart Start conducted surveys and focus groups in 17 counties and the Qualla Boundary in western North Carolina. Nine of those reports were available for this analysis. The following table includes the number of respondents to surveys, the number of focus groups held in each county by language, and the number of interviews. Data from these reports were identified by the reporting county. Each county that collected surveys, except for Polk, reported survey and focus group findings. A regional report includes summary findings across all the counties and may include data from counties that did not have their own report.

DATA COLLECTION BY PARTNERSHIP & COUNTY	SURVEYS	FOCUS GROUPS ENGLISH	FOCUS GROUPS SPANISH	INTERVIEWS
Blue Ridge Partnership for Children				
Avery County	39	1		1
Mitchell County	26	1		
Yancey County	35	1		
Buncombe County Partnership for Children				
Buncombe County	92	1	3	
Burke County Smart Start				
Burke County	242	1	1	1
Smart Start of Henderson County				
Henderson County	58	1	1	
Madison County Partnership for Children and Families				
Madison County	70	2		
Partnership for Children of the Foothills				
Polk County	6			
Smart Start of Transylvania County				
Transylvania County	50	1		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

### Data Source: Regional Smart Start Report

The Smart Start Western Region project also included Rutherford County and the Region A Partnership (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain counties, and the Qualla Boundary). Reports from those counties were not available for this report. A regional report was available, which may include feedback from participants in these counties.



# Appendix B

This Appendix presents demographic data for the respondents/participants for each report. Two reports did not include demographic information.

For many of the reports above, “Hispanic/Latino(a)” is not necessarily an exclusive category (i.e., participants may have marked “Hispanic/Latino(a)” and a race).

AA: African-American A: Asian H: Hispanic/Latino(a) O: Other race T: Two or more races W: White

ORGANIZATION	COUNTY(IES)	DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS/PARTICIPANTS	COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS	GENDER BREAKDOWN
Chowan/Perquimans Smart Start	Chowan	AA: 46% A: 1% H: 7% O: 2% W: 44%	AA: 44% H: 3% A: 0% W: 61%	92% female
East Durham Children’s Initiative	Durham	AA: 58% H: 38% O: 1% W: 3%  English: 63% Spanish: 37%	“Similar to the demographics of the EDCI Zone.”	79% female
Great Expectations (MDC/Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust)	Forsyth	AA: 53% H: 24% O: 1% T: 3% W: 19%  English: 77% Spanish: 18% English/Spanish: 4% Arabic: <1% Nepali: <1% Sign language: <1%	AA: 27% A: 3% H: 13% O: 1% T: 2% W: 57%	91% female
NCECF and Book Harvest Parent Perspectives Summer Reading	Durham	More than 90% of students at the schools surveyed are African-American or Hispanic.  Surveys: English: 46% Spanish: 54%  Focus Groups: 50% English, 50% Spanish	AA: 38% A: 5% H: 13% O: 1% T: 2% W: 42%	No gender information available
NCECF Parent Voices Survey	58 counties	AA: 5% A: 1% H: 1% W: 11% Didn’t answer: 83%	NC demographics: AA: 22% A: 3% H: 9% O: 2% T: 2% W: 64%	21% female 6% male 73% didn’t answer
Smart Start of Mecklenburg County	Mecklenburg	No demographic data available, but diversity of respondents was an intentional goal of the project. Trusted community leaders for each targeted demographic were identified to host the conversations.		
Read Charlotte	Mecklenburg	AA: 34% A: 6% H: 16% O: 4% W: 40%	AA: 32% H: 13% A: 5% W: 49%	88% female
Ready for School, Ready for Life	Guilford	AA: 47% A: 12% H: 13% T: 1% W: 18% Didn’t answer: 9%	AA: 35% H: 8% A: 5% O: <1% T: 2% W: 51%	96% female
Smart Start of Transylvania County	Transylvania	No demographic data available.		

ORGANIZATION	COUNTY(IES)	DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS/ PARTICIPANTS	COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS	GENDER BREAKDOWN
Western Region Smart Start Local Partnerships	Avery	Surveys: AA: 0% H: 11% O: 10% T: 3% W: 87%  Focus Groups: No demographics available	AA: 4% H: 5% T: 1% W: 94%	No gender information available
	Buncombe	Surveys: AA: 0% H: 4% O: 3% T: 3% W: 93%  Focus Groups: 1 English group, 3 Spanish groups	AA: 6% H: 6% O: 2% T: 2% W: 84%	No gender information available
	Burke	Surveys: AA: 2% H: 13% O: 13% T: 0% W: 85%  Focus Groups: 2 English groups, 1 Spanish group	AA: 7% H: 6% W: 87%	No gender information available
	Henderson	Surveys: AA: 2% H: 5% T: 5% O: 2% W: 91%  Focus Groups: 1 English group, 1 Spanish group	AA: 3% H: 10% T: 2% W: 93%	No gender information available
	Madison	Surveys: AA: 0% H: 0% O: 0% T: 1% W: 99%  Focus Groups: 2 English groups	AA: 2% H: 3% T: 1% W: 96%	No gender information available
	Mitchell	Surveys: AA: 0% H: 12% O: 0% T: 4% W: 96%  Focus Groups: 1 English group	AA: 1% H: 5% T: 1% W: 97%	No gender information available
	Polk	Surveys: AA: 0% H: 17% O: 0% W: 100%	AA: 5% H: 6% W: 93%	No gender information available
	Transylvania	Surveys: AA: 23% H: 21% O: 15% T: 8% W: 54%  Focus Groups: 1 English group	AA: 4% H: 3% T: 2% W: 93%	No gender information available
	Yancey	Surveys: AA: 0% H: 3% O: 3% T: 3% W: 94%  Focus Groups: 1 English group	AA: 1% H: 5% T: 1% W: 97%	No gender information available



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