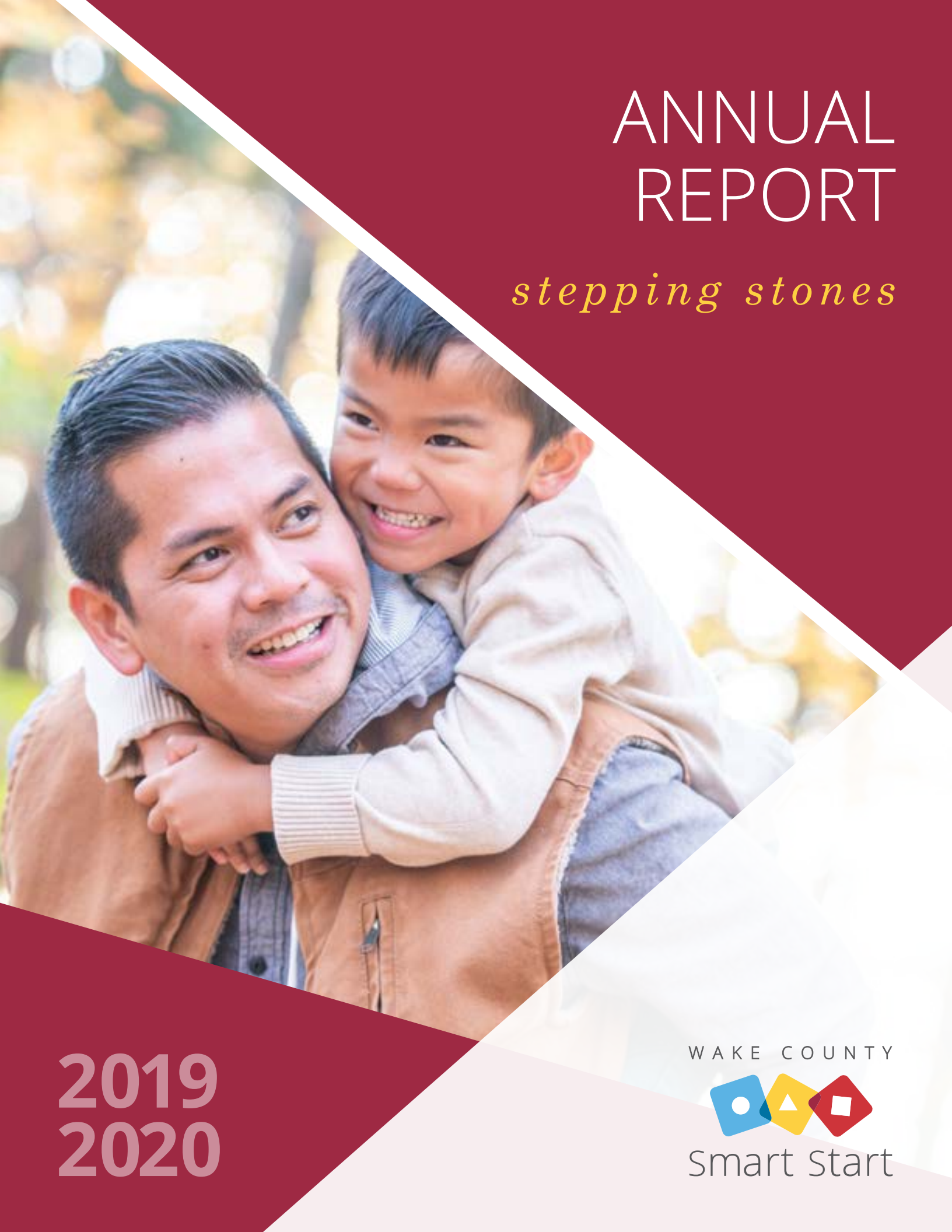


# ANNUAL REPORT

*stepping stones*




2019  
2020

WAKE COUNTY



Smart Start





Lots of Love and Learning

*Our  
Mission:*

Wake County  
Smart Start works  
to ensure children, birth  
to five, are prepared for  
success in school and in life.

# Stepping Stones and Adapting for a New Path



In November 2019, Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) invited its funded partners, child care providers, elected officials, and other community stakeholders to gather in celebration of all they have done for early childhood in Wake County the prior year. This inaugural event focused on the interconnectedness of our work, recognizing important people whose contributions are essential to our daily lives as well as the future, and showing gratitude joyfully. “Better Together” was both what we named the event and a description of our community.

In the following months, the Wake early childhood family, along with the rest of the world, would begin to deal with the reality of a global pandemic. While many were sheltering in place in their homes, others were continuing their daily lives as essential workers in service of others. This included many of our child care centers and homes, that were continuing to care for the children of health care workers and emergency personnel while also being essential workers themselves. Our funded family support services pivoted as well, seeking innovative ways to support our most vulnerable families virtually. These organizations and their staff were among the first to adjust and adapt to our new way of operating. I am in awe of their resilience and proud of how they have represented the early childhood community.

As the rest of us also began adapting to new circumstances, working remotely or behind masks and protective shields from at least six feet away, WCSS, too, adapted our old routines to meet the ongoing needs of families with young children. WCSS staff have shared some words that come to their minds in reflecting upon this time: **resilience, creativity, problem-solving, adaptation, endurance, and hope**. Together, we began to build the **stepping stones** of new systems and make new connections to continue supporting families.

Amid the societal reorganization caused by COVID-19, another upheaval was taking place concurrently. The killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, two individuals in an achingly long list of Black and other people of color whose lives have been unacceptably taken, ignited nationwide protests and demands for racial justice. The community that WCSS serves has not been spared the feelings of anger, sadness, frustration, bitterness, and fear that have been undercurrents in our society for so long; nor has it been immune to the real-life impacts of inequity. In response, we began to formalize a process of intentional acknowledgement and improvement, in the hopes that elevating equity as a lens with which to actively assess our progress and thoughtfully reflect on our impact will bring us closer together and closer to an equitable world.

During these months navigating and adapting to the challenges the coronavirus has brought, my thoughts have often returned to that appreciation event last fall. It seems to have been a portent - foreshadowing while also providing a guide for our path ahead. We truly are — and must continue working to be — **Better Together**.

**BARBARA MORALES BURKE**

*Wake County Smart Start Board Chair*





# Donors 2019-20

*The work of WCSS would not be possible without the support of our donors. It is with great appreciation that we recognize our community of Champions for Children:*

## AbbVie

Richard Adelman	Bob & Karen Fletcher		
Almac Clinical Services	Meagan & Grant Gill	North Carolina	
Christine Alvarado	Liz Hamner	Department of Health and	Union Special
Cynthia Ball	Katie King	Human Services, Division	United Way of the Greater
Bank of America	David & Kella Hatcher	of Child Development and	Triangle
Phyllis Barbour	Gayle E. and Sean Headen	Early Education	
Carrie Becker	Sherry Heuser	North Carolina Partnership	Julie von Haefen
Blue Cross Blue Shield	Linda Hickman	for Children	Wake County Government
of NC	Lindsay Holcombe	Nancy Peck	Michael and Rosemary
Sue Bush	Jessica Holmes	Joanna Perry	Wasilick
Kelly Caldwell	Chris Locascio &	Regina Petteway	Elizabeth Weichel
Citrix	Leslie Ann Jackson	William D. Poe	Angie Welsh
Sharon Clauss	Joe John	Principled Technologies	Joe White
Mitchell & Jean Cohen	John Rex Endowment	RBC Foundation	Katherine Williams
Dale Cousins	Maryana &	Anita Robinson-Christmas	Ann & Ron Wooten
Creative Schools	Will Johnson Family	Kimberly Shaw	Smedes & Rosemary York
L'Teisha Curtis	Charles Kronberg	Mike & Joleen Smith	
Lucy Daniels	Catherine Lassiter	Kristi Tally	
Heather Drennan	Mary Martorella	TLC	
Environmental	Ryan McAward	Teachstone	
Federation of NC	Cathy Moore	The Learning Experience	
Duke Energy Foundation	Barbara Morales Burke	Craig & Anna Troutman	
Karen Ferguson	Jenna & Steve Nelson	Charlotte Turpin	
	Jack Nichols	Andrew Ullom	
		UNC Healthcare	

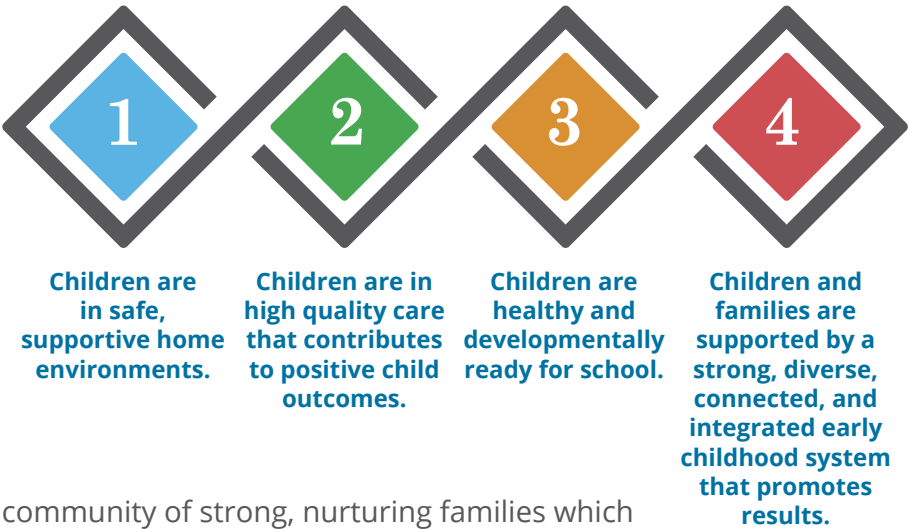


Carol Orji and young donor

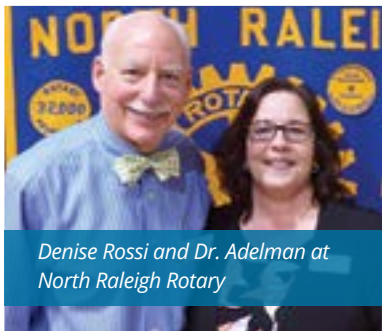


Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) is a proud member of the Smart Start network of local early childhood partnerships across the state of North Carolina. Here in Wake County, WCSS focuses on increasing the capacity of programs, projects, and initiatives to ensure the success of children birth to five and their families across our 12 municipalities.

How does WCSS fund and evaluate these programs and services for young children? By using four guiding Goal Areas:



Our vision is that Wake County will be a community of strong, nurturing families which respects and values its young children and ensures that each child is happy, healthy, safe, and prepared for success in school and in life. This report highlights the partners, funders, volunteers, stakeholders, staff, and community members who have supported this vision over the past year, through all its ups and downs.





## GOAL AREA #1



Children are in safe, supportive home environments.

The direct, one-on-one support a home visit can bring a family is invaluable. **FY2019-20 saw a 17% increase in home visits, resulting in over 8,800 personal moments of connection with a family raising their young children.**

*“Thanks to Crianza con Cariño, my children are not afraid of me anymore. They do not hide from me anymore; instead, they run to me for protection and affection. We now have a lot of quality time together, we are closer and happier, and we hug each other a lot. I am so happy that I do not scream or yell at them anymore and I am patient with them. ”*

- Karen, mother of three and Crianza con Cariño participant. **Crianza con Cariño, a Spanish-language parent education program, helps families break cycles of abuse and disfunction and improve their parenting skills.**





“Hopeful teachers teach hopeful kids. That hope turns into skill, ability, independence, security, and confidence. All of these things combined help to foster a long-term love for learning.”

- Director of Kiddie Academy of West Cary who utilized the Advancing School Readiness (ASR) program to offer professional development for several of their teachers. **ASR provides regular training and on-site technical assistance to assist child care centers seeking to improve program quality.**

## GOAL AREA #2



### Children are in high quality care that contributes to positive child outcomes.

A single teacher can impact a child for a lifetime; however, that teacher cannot create the environment for success by themselves. When a child care center commits to pursuing the highest standards for themselves and their children and families, the results increase exponentially. **In Wake County, nearly 17,000 children benefit from quality-enhancing programs funded by WCSS, representing 71% of all children in licensed care.**







## Children are healthy and developmentally ready for school.

Envisioning their child succeeding in school and wondering if they are doing enough to prepare them for that success are two of the top thoughts on many parents' minds. Luckily, programs like NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K), which is recognized nationally for quality and is managed locally by WCSS, have proven results of preparing 4-year-olds for success in Kindergarten and beyond. This track record can comfort the parents and caregivers of the over 69,000 children birth to five living in Wake as they consider their child's future. **In reporting done prior to the pandemic, 91% of NC Pre-K graduates were "ready for school" using early literacy measures upon completing their year of instruction before entering Kindergarten.**



Apple tasting at Lots of Love and Learning

*“I have been honored to be a participant of the NC Pre-K program. Being able to have my child in a good quality program that promotes education and healthy interaction with others has been a strong cornerstone in the foundation of life and character that I hope to instill in her. Because of the quality of education my child has received through this program, she has gained an intense thirst for knowledge that I know will propel her to excel leaps and bounds throughout life.”*

- Tiffany Ford, NC Pre-K parent in letter to Wake County Commissioners.

## GOAL AREA #4



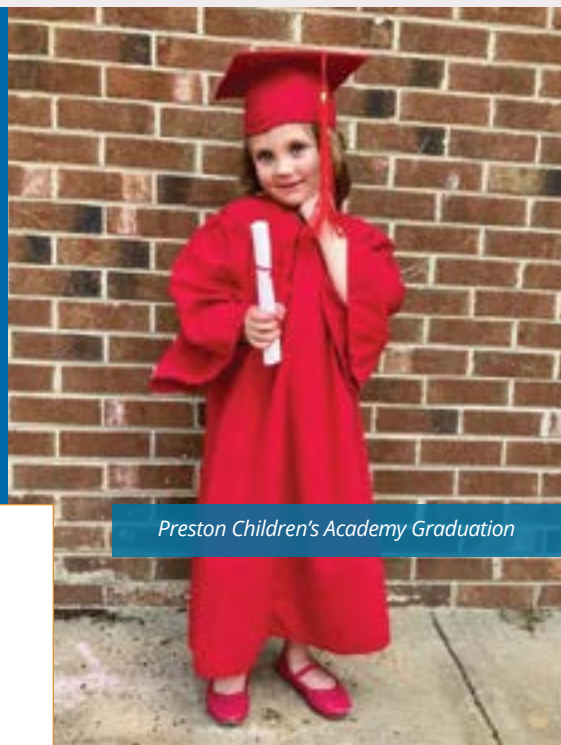
Children and families are supported by a strong, diverse, connected, and integrated early childhood system that promotes results.

How many times in the last several months have we heard the words “pivot”, “adjust”, “adapt”, and “new normal”? When the pandemic hit the US and NC in March, we were in lockdown at home, thrust into remotely navigating an unfamiliar landscape, without much direction, all while knowing children and families were desperate for leadership and support as well. Our “new normal” still required previously-normal activities, like fostering success in our child care centers, cheering on our Pre-K graduates, and supporting families. but they had to be reconsidered in a new and often creative light.

WCSS answered the call when Governor Cooper charged the Smart Start system of local partnerships to serve as a hub of resources for child care centers to ensure they could remain open and serve essential workers. COVID-19 initially drove closures of nearly 30% of licensed facilities in our county that already had “child care deserts.” The lack of cleaning supplies threatened even more closures.

“We at Taylor’s Daycare Home (Center in Home) would like to thank Smart Start for your support during this COVID-19 pandemic. The supplies that you all provided for us were much needed since we could not find or get hand sanitizer nor disinfect anywhere. We appreciate all you do for us as professional providers. Your support is so valuable to our community. Hats off to you and your leadership and the Smart Start network.”

- Taylor’s Daycare Home (Center in Home), a Wake child care site affected by the pandemic.

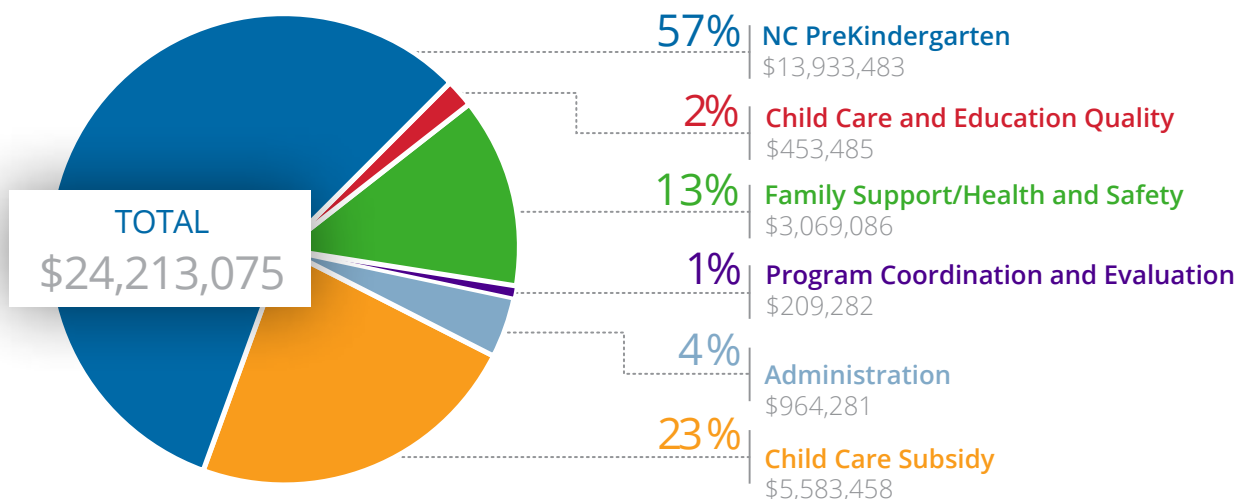


Preston Children’s Academy Graduation





# Wake County Smart Start Functional Expenditures FY 19/20



Loading supplies at WCSS curbside event



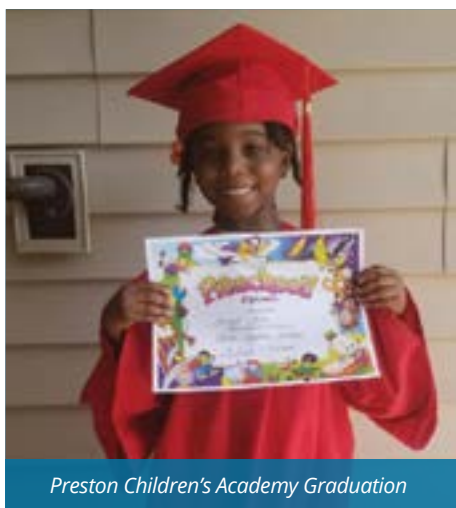
ECI Staff with supplies for curbside pick-up



Kiddie Academy of Holly Springs Drive-Thru Graduation



WCSS Curbside Supply Pick-Up



Preston Children's Academy Graduation

The WCSS Early Childhood Initiatives team reached out to warehouse distributor FreshPoint (a division of Sysco) and requested they pivot supplies normally sent to restaurants – closed due to COVID-19 – to child care centers serving essential workers. Staff surveyed all 500+ licensed child care facilities in the community to identify what items they needed to stay open but were unable to find. They organized multiple curbside pickups for providers, loading bags and boxes of hard-to-find hand sanitizer, paper towels, and cleaning wipes into trunks. Private donors also stepped forward, providing \$37,000 in donations to support supply purchases not covered by program dollars. Additionally, WCSS organized Financial Literacy webinars regarding accessing governmental supports such as PPP loans. As a system level entity we deployed the learnings of our network interactions to inform how best to distribute resources and close gaps not covered by public investment.

# Partners, Programs, & Collaborative Projects 2019-20

## CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE DIOCESE OF RALEIGH

- Language is the Key
- School Readiness Services for Hispanic Children & Families

## CHILD CARE SERVICES ASSOCIATION

- Advancing School Readiness

## FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER SOUTH ATLANTIC

- Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

## HOPE SERVICES

- Hope at Home

## LUCY DANIELS CENTER

- SecurePath

## SAFECHILD

- Crianza con Cariño

## WAKE COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

- Child Care Health Consultant Program
- Child Care Subsidy Program
- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)

## WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

- Parents as Teachers Program (PAT)

## WAKE COUNTY SMART START

- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
- Farm to Child Care\*
- Improving and Sustaining Quality Child Care
- NC Pre-Kindergarten
- Program Coordination & Evaluation (PCE)
- Shape NC: Healthy Starts for Young Children, an Initiative of Smart Start and BCBSNC Foundation\*\*
- Systems Improvement and Public Engagement (SIPE)
- Wake Connections\*

## Collaborative Projects

**WCSS is involved in over 20 collaboratives in Wake County. Below are examples of key collaborative engagement by goal area:**

- Goal 1: Wake Connections Advisory
- Goal 2: Technical Assistance Collaborative
- Goal 3: Wake Pre-K Application Collaborative
- Goal 4: Wake Child Abuse Prevention Plan

\* funded by John Rex Endowment

\*\* funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, Social Innovation Fund



Community Partner Kevin Bobbitt, Executive Director Gayle Headen, and Past WCSS Board Chair Dr. Mike Smith



Governor Cooper at Bright Beginnings

Directing traffic at WCSS curbside event



## Staff 2019-20

Gayle E. Headen  
*Executive Director*

Gwen Adair

Phyllis Barbour

Gabrielle Barnard

Sue Bush

Gary Carr

Sharon Clauss

Irma Concepcion

Joan Crutchfield

Gloria Daniels

Amanda Flater

Sasha Gomez

Jennifer Hoch

Shalonda Holley

Caroline Janes

Stephanie Jenkins

Kashama Leo-Henry

Bryce McClamroch

Nikki McDougald

Sabrina McKennies

Carol Orji

Maggie Ortiz

Taty Padilla

Nancy Peck

Lynn Policastro

Denise Rossi

Melinda Schlesinger

Alex Setzer

Gina Soceanu

Anna Troutman

Elizabeth Weichel

Taushau Wilkinson



WCSS Staff on NC Crunch Day

## Board of Directors 2019-20

Christine Alvarado, East Coast Migrant Head Start Project

Kelly Caldwell, Sonaya Properties

Dale Cousins, Community Volunteer

L'Teisha Curtis, Telamon Corporation

Heather Drennan, Wake County Government

James S. Greene, City of Raleigh

Liz Hamner, SAS

Sherry Heuser, Capability Company

Jessica Holmes, Wake County Board of Commissioners

Leslie Ann Jackson, NC Community Foundation

Katie King, Wake Family Law Group

Catherine Lassiter, Wake Technical Community College

Cathy Moore, Wake County Public School System

Barbara Morales Burke, *Chair*, BlueCross and BlueShield of NC

Antonia Pedroza, Wake County Human Services

Regina Petteway, Wake County Human Services

Patricia Ruppert, Parent

Kimberly Shaw, A Safe Place Child Enrichment Center

Kristi Tally, KD7 Enterprises, Inc.

Charlotte Turpin, Community Volunteer

Michael Wasilick, Wake County Public Libraries

Angie Welsh, The Kaleidoscope Project

Joe White, NCSU Libraries

Katherine Williams, NC Cooperative Extension – Wake County



WCSS Board member  
Catherine Lassiter and WCSS  
staff member Gloria Daniels



WCSS Board member Sherry Heuser with  
staff members Lynn and Stephanie



WCSS Board members Kim Shaw,  
L'Teisha Curtis, and Kristi Tally

# Volunteers 2019-20

**Total Volunteer Hours: 1,077**

<b>A</b>	Christine Alvarado Cecilia Alvarez Toribio Mary Ellen Anderson Scott Arnold Dinah Arthur	<b>C</b>	Kelly Caldwell Jessica Carter Anne (Daisy) Clemmons Shea Cleveland Kellie Cook Karla Cooper Dale Cousins L'Teisha Curtis	<b>H</b>	Liz Hamner Jim Hansen Allison Hau Sean Headen Holli Hemby Ana Maria Hernandez Sherry Heuser Michele Hirsch Jessica Holmes Maty Ferrer Hoppmann Lisa Horton-Burt	<b>M</b>	Jen MacPherson Jessie Maxwell Tarkisha Poole Benita Mavhura Kerry McCarthy-Adams Paula McGee Ricky McLamb Maggie Medina Stephany Mejia Susan Mewkill Meena Mohan Cathy Moore Christa Moore Barbara Morales Burke		
<b>B</b>	Sanford Bailey Stacey Barbee Krista Barbour Ja'mei Bess Connie Batten Alicia Bennett Greg Berg Dumisha Binns Stephanie Black Deanna Bledsoe Nicole Boone Katrece Boyd Latasha Boyles Cassandra Brooks Deborah Brown Marvin Brown Audrey Bunch Melissa Butler Nicole Butters	<b>D</b>	Dawn Dawson Heather Drennan Belinda Dunston	<b>E</b>	Melissa Edwards Jeana Ellis Ginger Espino Michelle Ezzell	<b>J</b>	Leslie Ann Jackson Aisha Jenkins Robin Johnson David Juarez	<b>N</b>	NetApp Heather Noe Brandi Norris
		<b>F</b>	Mike Flater Shoshana Funk	<b>K</b>	Katie King Sharon Klingenmaier Kimberly Knight	<b>P</b>	Harrison Peatross, Jr. Regina Petteway Tarkisha Poole Jane Pope Wendy Price Ferali Puerta Michelle Putterman		
		<b>G</b>	Matthew Glova Laura Gouliau	<b>L</b>	Shirley Lacy Mark Langford Catherine Lassiter Hilary Leja Rosita Lugo				

May and June are normally filled with celebrating new Pre-K grads headed into Kindergarten, but the spread of coronavirus meant that gathering in large groups indoors was not an option. The creativity and pride of Wake teachers and families shone through to meet this challenge and provide **socially-distanced**, curbside and drive-thru graduation events. This way, each child still got to feel that special sense of accomplishment on their momentous day, carrying with them everything they'd learned in an unforgettable year and on to their next adventure in Kindergarten.







COVID-19 Curbside  
Supply Pick-Up



Representative Julie von Haefen & Pre-K Valentine

**R** Jenna Ramsey  
Seanyea Rains  
Deanna Randle  
Waltye Rasulala  
Pam Ray  
Megan Roberts  
Sara Rubin

**S** Stephannie Senegal  
Kimberly Shaw  
Sharon Shefte  
Leanne Simpkins  
Mike Smith  
Cheryl Stephenson

**W** Swanda Warren  
Michael Wasilick  
Erin Wells  
Angie Welsh  
Claudette West  
Joe White  
Shannon White  
Shantel White  
Beverly Williams  
Katherine Williams  
Rhonda Williams  
Kim Wimberly

**Y** Sherry Young

**T** Kristi Tally  
Shonda Tamez  
Lidia Tiller  
Mahala Turner  
Charlotte Turpin

**Z** Hilda Zimmer

Between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, we shared in experiencing more drastic change in our personal and professional lives than most of us had ever been through before – and, together, we have adjusted and adapted along the way. Change is hard in any circumstance, but the sudden onset of a pandemic that forced us into our homes and away from our support networks was unprecedented. Though this Annual Report is a look back at the year that was, the ongoing effects of the pandemic are still very real for our Wake community. While we celebrate the **successes** we've found along the way, we know a lot of work remains in building a better world for our children. Thank you to all who are committed to this goal.



Preston Children's Academy Graduation





Pre-K friends at Lots of Love and Learning

4901 Waters Edge Drive, Suite 101  
Raleigh, NC 27606

919-851-9550  
[wakesmartstart.org](http://wakesmartstart.org)

Wake County Smart Start is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Writing/Editing: Elizabeth Weichel

Design: Winnow Creative



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