



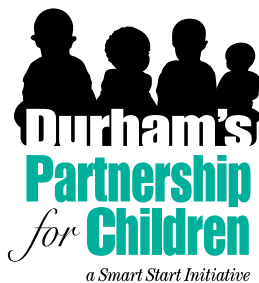
# Taking Action for Durham's Children and Families by Promoting Early Childhood Success

## Early Childhood Plan for the City of Durham

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Durham's Partnership for Children, a Smart Start Initiative

June 2009



# Executive Summary

## Mission:

*To mobilize and unify the Durham community to create and support innovative and successful collaborative approaches to serving the needs of young children birth to age 5 and their families.*

Durham's children and families are in need of powerful friends who can help them succeed in school and in life. With more than 20 percent of its young children growing up in poverty, the odds are against too many children in Durham. It is vital for the future of Durham that we promote the health and well-being of the next generation. Today's children are depending on it.

Cities and towns across America are developing multiyear early childhood plans for their communities as part of the City Challenge for Early Childhood Success promoted by the National League of Cities. When city leaders focus attention on early childhood issues, mobilize support for action, and lead by example, they can help build and support a local infrastructure that promotes high-quality early care and education and strengthens families. These initiatives are a sound economic investment which offer both short-term and long-term returns.

Durham's Partnership for Children encourages Mayor William "Bill" Bell to take action for Durham's children by creating an early childhood campaign that focuses on young children's health and education. We recommend that Mayor Bell designate the year 2010 as "The Year of The Young Child" to build support for childhood success and invite all city agencies, businesses, faith leaders, schools, community agencies, neighborhoods, and parents to join the effort. In addition, we recommend that the Mayor create a special taskforce to identify opportunities for expanding early childhood resources throughout Durham, but in particular to neighborhoods in which children and families face the greatest challenges because of poverty and crime. This task force should be supported by a designated early childhood advisor or coordinator within the Mayor's office to keep visibility high and momentum moving forward.

In addition, we encourage the Mayor to launch his own signature early childhood initiative which would serve as a model for North Carolina. This briefing paper includes information on three possible initiatives to advance children's health and safety, early childhood literacy and family economic security – all of which build upon the current priorities and plans of various city departments and community agencies.

We believe that the Mayor's leadership is critically needed to improve the educational opportunities and life circumstances for Durham's children and families. Durham's Partnership for Children stands ready and willing to assist with this important campaign for early childhood success.