

# Community Progress

Brief #1 September 2010

Ready for Kindergarten:

The State of Local School Readiness in Charlottesville and Albemarle



In 2009, Smart Beginnings released its inaugural report, *Ready for Kindergarten: The State of Local School Readiness in Charlottesville and Albemarle*, with data on early childhood education and its impact on families, education, workforce and the economy of Charlottesville and Albemarle. The wide-ranging positive responses and sustained attention to the report's recommendations, from business leaders to grassroots organizations, reflect our community's commitment to high-quality education, healthy families and economic vitality.

## Successes - One Year Later

*In spite of economic challenges, our community has moved forward.*

### INCREASED QUALITY AND ACCESS TO CHILD CARE

- ✓ 3 new public preschool classrooms serve 40 additional children in Charlottesville and Albemarle County public school systems.
- ✓ 83% of Charlottesville's economically disadvantaged 4 year-olds are in public preschool.
- ✓ 14 child care centers participate in the state's new Virginia Star Quality Initiative that establishes rigorous standards for child care providers.

### ENHANCED ABILITY TO MEASURE LOCAL SCHOOL READINESS

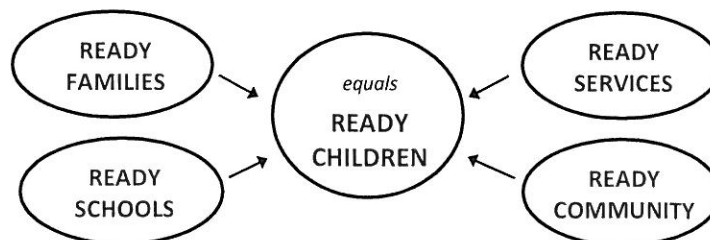
- ✓ 78% of economically disadvantaged kindergarteners who attended preschool or early learning programs were ready for kindergarten.
- ✓ In contrast, only 53% of economically disadvantaged kindergarteners without preschool or early learning programs were ready for kindergarten.
- ✓ Local public preschool programs' analysis of language and literacy skills indicates that 79% of students were within developmental range by spring.

### INCREASED PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- ✓ Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce states that investment in child care quality and early childhood development is critical to economic vitality.
- ✓ Community organizations and businesses collaborate to ensure that more parents have user-friendly parenting and school readiness booklets, brochures and toolkits.
- ✓ Businesses develop Star Quality Awards and brochures to promote quality child care programs.



*Smart Beginnings is a comprehensive private/public approach to make our community...*



*a place where all children grow up healthy and arrive at school prepared to succeed.*

Virginia's School Readiness Model

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*With widespread private and public sector engagement, our youngest citizens can live in safe and nurturing homes, benefit from quality early learning experiences, and grow up in a community that understands that early childhood education is key to economic vitality.*

*The long-term effects of early gaps in achievement and social development are so pronounced that early education interventions are essential, not only to the developmental success of children, but to the overall health of communities.*

Robert C. Pianta, Dean  
Curry School of Education  
University of Virginia

## The building blocks...

- Increase the quality of local child care.
- Expand access to quality early care and education for economically disadvantaged 3 and 4 year-olds.
- Ensure that current supports and resources for families of young children are maintained.
- Improve the community's ability to measure local school readiness through enhanced data collection and reporting.
- Increase coordination and alignment of school readiness practices between direct services, child care providers and public schools.

*Quality, affordable child care is critical to economic vitality in our community – for both our current and future workforce.*

W. Rod Gentry, Chairman  
Charlottesville Regional  
Chamber of Commerce,  
Regional Retail Executive  
Union First Market Bank

*For me, this is an economic growth issue. My position is that if government is going to invest in education at all, it should invest in enhancing early childhood development.*

Jeffrey M. Lacker, President  
Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond

