



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Access to Quality Child Care and Parent Education Voted Among Top Priorities for Young Children in Central North Carolina**

*Davidson County Delegation helped determine priorities as part of Smart Investing summit on March 9*

DURHAM- Access to high-quality child care, parent education programs, availability of programs and services to meet basic needs, and exposure to enriching experiences outside of child care settings were voted the top priorities that would make the greatest, lasting impact on the lives of young children in central North Carolina. The voting took place at the **Smart Investing: Communities Thrive When Children Thrive** summit in Durham on March 9. More than 200 community members from central North Carolina, including a delegation from Davidson County, determined that these are the primary issues community groups and policymakers should focus on to improve the lives of young children. The group also brainstormed action steps to make the priorities a reality locally.

Tuesday's summit reconvened delegates from central counties who are part of the Smart Investing public engagement initiative. Funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and with support from Lt. Governor Walter Dalton and Smart Start, **Smart Investing: Communities Thrive When Children Thrive**, brings together a diverse mix of citizens in communities throughout the state to determine how best to invest in children birth to five, and thereby the state as a whole.

The final votes reflect work that began last fall when Smart Start's 77 partnerships leveraged their networks to assemble delegations of local parents, business leaders, health care providers, education professionals and policy makers representing every county. The delegations created a list of top priorities at local forums held across the state. Tuesday, participants were asked to narrow down the list to the top four priorities that if given time, attention, and resources by individuals, community, and government, would make the greatest lasting impact on preparing young children to become productive, healthy, and fully-engaged adults.

"These priorities really reflect the needs in our community because higher unemployment rates have translated into young children who don't have access to basic needs such as health care, stable homes, and nutritional meals" says Leonard Leonard, Executive Director of Smart Start of Davidson County.

The Davidson County delegation included Linda Leonard, Jennifer Brown, Bleasha Carroll, Warren MacKinstry, Vicki West, Edna Amos, Melissa Ingram, Erin Hinton, and Tami Holtzmann.

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[www.smartinvestingnc.org](http://www.smartinvestingnc.org)

Smart Start is North Carolina's early childhood leadership network dedicated to assuring that every child reaches his or her potential and is prepared for success in a global community. For more information, visit [www.ncsmartstart.org](http://www.ncsmartstart.org).