

## **A Resolution in Support of Universal Access to Pre-Kindergarten and Other Appropriate Strategies to Improve Early Literacy in Durham County**

WHEREAS, there is recognition of the need to better prepare our children to be successful in school and the Duke University Office of Durham and Regional Affairs is developing a *Grown in Durham* prenatal to grade 3 continuum of enrichment activities and support services; and

WHEREAS, the *Grown in Durham* educational continuum provides a visual inventory of all current preschool and early literacy programs and initiatives, and focuses on better alignment and leveraging of existing community resources through greater collaboration; and

WHEREAS, to achieve optimal student outcomes, the *Grown in Durham* educational continuum emphasizes strengthening and making additional investments in the three distinct and essential continuum phases of: Preparation (birth to age 3), Preschool (ages 3 & 4), and Reinforcing and Sustaining Growth (K through 3rd grade); and

WHEREAS, the *Grown in Durham* educational continuum further emphasizes a critical first step of developing, implementing and evaluating a pilot model for expanded access to pre-kindergarten (pre-K) based on current capacity, and incorporating proven concepts of quality and consistency; and

WHEREAS, the Duke University Office of Durham and Regional Affairs and The Durham Partnership for Children are planning to co-convene a community stakeholder summit in Spring 2016 to begin building community support for universal pre-K by using the *Grown in Durham* educational continuum to explain a progressive pathway from expanded access to universal access to quality Pre-K services; and

WHEREAS, The County, City and School System leaders believe in the power of high quality pre-K to support the goals of the County's *My Brother's Keeper*, the Mayor's *Poverty Reduction Initiative*, and Durham Public School's *Graduate Durham*; and

WHEREAS, scientific studies show that high quality early childhood education and support services benefit all groups of children and bring significant benefits to groups that could otherwise not afford it; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that the fastest rate of brain development occurs in the early years, that high quality early childhood programs improve children's cognitive and social skills, and that there is a rate of return of \$4 for every \$1 spent on high quality early childhood programs;

WHEREAS, universal access to high quality pre-K in Durham will help decrease the achievement gap, decrease generational poverty, and increase graduation rates of students in Durham Public Schools; and

WHEREAS, universal pre-K is a proven, nonpartisan policy and North Carolina should join states like Oklahoma, Georgia and Florida who fund statewide universal pre-K programs; and

WHEREAS, ensuring access to high quality preschool for children whose parents choose to send them has proven to be one of the soundest educational investments the public can make, providing demonstrated, significant, long-term savings in the costs of special education, grade retention, welfare, and crime; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Durham Board of County Commissioners do hereby support development of the *Grown in Durham* Continuum of Prenatal to Age 8 educational enrichment activities and support services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, as a centerpiece of this continuum, the three elected bodies commission a Community Early Education Task Force to lead our community in crafting a plan that begins with expanded access and leads to universal access to high quality pre-K for all of Durham's low and moderate income children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force plan should include:

- a) Assessment of Durham's current capacity for providing high quality preschool (identifying what we have and what we need)*
- b) Methods other communities have used to create broader preschool participation*
- c) Financial models for supporting universal preschool*
- d) Ways of cooperating with private or community-based providers of high quality preschools*
- e) Outreach to Durham parents to provide input and feedback*
- f) Evidence-based practices of high quality preschool*
- g) Capacity for increasing professional development opportunities for preschool teachers*
- h) Recommendations for universal preschool in Durham informed by research*
- i) Short and long term evaluation plans to assess the effects of Durham pre-K programs on kindergarten readiness, performance on third grade end of year tests, and other key benchmarks such as high school graduation.*
- j) Timeline for implementation, including a pilot program*
- k) Integration of the preschool programs with the Grown in Durham Continuum*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that approximately 12 – 15 Task Force members will be identified by the County Manager, City Manager, and Superintendent of Schools by February 1, 2016. Membership on the Task Force will represent our academic institutions, the business community, important stakeholder groups and will reflect the demographic makeup of our community.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Task Force will report on its progress to the elected bodies quarterly and deliver by October 1, 2016 a plan for moving first to expanded access and then on to universal access with a goal of implementing a significant pilot model for expanded access in the Fall of 2017.