



# Columbus County Partnership for Children



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Winter 2012

## The ELF is Open!

After months of anticipation, the Smart Start Early Learning Facility (ELF) opened in downtown Whiteville to the excitement of more than 200 children, parents, caregivers and pre-kindergarten teachers.

The ELF is a one-of-a-kind resource in the county and is accessible to early educators in pre-K programs and child care facilities as well as to families needing educational materials and resources for teaching their young children in the home.

A variety of children's books, videos, prop boxes, resource kits, toys and materials on specific topics related to children is available through a check-out/check-in loaner program. Access to a laminating machine, comb binder, Ellison Die-Cut machine, art supplies, copier and access to online resources may be available to ELF members at a nominal fee.

ELF staff will offer training on all equipment and demonstrate its appropriate use. Consumer awareness materials on subjects such as early care and education, health, family support and child wellness are available in English and Spanish.

"I think it's wonderful," said Vickie Long, a grandmother who has been coming to the facility for the past 10 years. "We would go to play group and story time. My granddaughter missed it all summer," she continued. "It's a very important part of our community for our children. We are glad it's back!"

"I was so impressed," said Terry Gore, a Pre-K teacher from Williams Township School. "It is just a wonderful place! More preschool parents should take advantage of these resources we have right here in the area. The children had a great time," she concluded.

To reach the ELF, call 910-640-3663 during the posted hours of operation. To learn about the other activities of the Columbus County Partnership for Children, call 910-642-8226, visit the office at 109 W. Main St. or the website at [www.columbusmartstart.org](http://www.columbusmartstart.org). Like us on Facebook to keep up with the special events and other information about the Partnership.



### EARLY LEARNING FACILITY

#### Hours of Operation

Monday	10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Tuesday	10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Wednesday	10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Thursday	10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Friday	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Saturday	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

#### ELF Story and Activity Time

Story and Activity time is held each 3rd Tuesday of the month at 10 :30 a.m.

Special story time can be scheduled for pre-K programs by calling the ELF and speaking with the staff.



*Children, their teachers, caregivers and parents who visit the Early Learning Facility (ELF) can listen to a story, play in the special centers or engage in interactive learning games in the child-sized computer center!*



## Child Care Quality

When families need to use child care, it is important that their children are enrolled in the highest quality care possible. Children who have spent time in high quality child care environments have lasting benefits from the experience. Research indicates that children who receive a high quality early childhood education have better math, language and social skills as they enter school, and as they grow older require less special education, progress further in school, have fewer interactions with the justice system and have higher earnings as adults (Barnett, 1995).

### *What are the indicators of high quality child care?*

Several research studies have found that high quality child care programs have certain characteristics in common. These characteristics can help parents make better child care choices for their children because they indicate a much greater likelihood of high quality care. Quality indicators measure the conditions that generally foster a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment for children. They are:

- Low child/teacher ratios
- Low teacher turnover
- Staff with higher education
- Prior experience and education of the director
- Well-compensated teachers who receive good benefits
- Accreditation or a higher-than-minimum license

Low ratios and low turnover allow teachers to respond to the individual needs of children, to give each child ample attention and to create a strong bond, adding to the child's security. Higher education helps staff and directors understand the needs and development of young children, which helps teachers plan activities for children and interact with them in developmentally appropriate ways. Well-compensated teachers with good benefits change jobs with less frequency, lowering turnover and increasing opportunities for children to create attachments and build relationships. Finally, child care programs with a national accreditation or higher-than-minimum license demonstrate an intent to provide high quality care and have met higher-than-minimum standards to receive the accreditation or license.

When you visit a child care program, use a **child care checklist** to determine how many quality indicators the program has. If you can answer yes to most or all of the questions on the checklist, your child will have a greater chance of having a successful child care experience.

*This information was reprinted with permission from the Child Care Services Association. For a child care quality checklist, visit [www.childcareservices.org](http://www.childcareservices.org) or contact Puzzles at 910-642-8189, ext. 12.*

## Owners and Directors of One- and Two-Star Child Care Homes and Centers

***If you are interested in continuing to receive subsidy payments in the future, the following apply:***

- You must indicate your intent to increase your star license level by submitting an application for a Three to Five Star License to your child care consultant by January 15, 2012. Please contact the DCDEE Customer Service Unit at 1-800-859-0829 to obtain an application for a Three to Five Star Rated License.
- Once notified of your intent to increase your star license level, your child care consultant will work with you to develop a plan of action to determine your next steps for achieving a Three to Five Star Rated License.
- If you have applied for a Three to Five Star License by January 15, 2012, and are making progress to increase your star license level, subsidy payments will continue to be paid for children already enrolled and receiving care in your facility at your current subsidy rate. Children newly approved to receive subsidy can be accepted and served by your facility provided you continue making progress to increase your star license level.
- If you stop making progress to increase your star license level, you will no longer be eligible to participate in the Subsidized Child Care Services Program.

***If you are not interested in pursuing a Three to Five Star Rated License, the following applies:***

- Effective January 16, 2012, you will no longer be eligible to enroll new children approved for subsidized child care.
- Subsidy payments will continue to be paid for children already enrolled and receiving care in your facility until June 30, 2012.
- After June 30, 2012, all children approved for subsidized child care will be removed from your One or Two Star child care facility and you will no longer be eligible to participate in the Subsidized Child Care Services Program.

*Please contact DCDEE at 1-800-859-0829 or your child care consultant with questions or concerns.*

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## Does Your Child Have Health Insurance?

Your child may be eligible for Health Check (Medicaid) or NC Health Choice - free or low-cost health insurance for children and teens under 19 years of age.

*The benefits include:*

Well child Checkups	Lab Tests
Medicines	Counseling
Sick visits	Surgeries
Dental Care	Medical Equipment & supplies
Immunizations (shots)	Vision & Hearing Care
Hospital Care	Therapies

For more information about Health Check (Medicaid) or NC Health Choice, call the Columbus County Health Department at 910-640-6615, ext. 372.

## Columbus County Partnership Activities for 2011-2012

### **Bilingual Health Check**

This activity helps to coordinate and support the use of Health Check insurance for Spanish speaking families with children ages birth to five. The coordinator also serves as a preventive health education outreach worker. For assistance, call Gabriela Maggioli at 910-640-6615, ext. 372.

### **Family Focused Inclusion**

This activity provides early identification of special needs and enhances the provision of early intervention services to ensure positive outcomes for all children ages birth to five in child care settings. For assistance, call 1-866-320-7003 or 910-392-7003.

### **Community Health Awareness**

This activity helps to create awareness concerning young children's health issues, especially the importance of preventive health care. For more information, call Selena Rowell at 910-642-8226.

### **Parents As Teachers**

This activity uses the Parents As Teachers home visitation model to help families prepare their children, ages birth to 5, for school success. For assistance call 910-642-8226.

### **Quality Enhancement Project**

This project helps licensed child care programs increase the level of star rated licensure and the level of provider education. For assistance, call LaTonya Brown at 910-642-8226.

### **Raising A Reader**

This activity partners with licensed child care centers to promote daily book sharing between parents and their young children. Each child will receive a bright red bag filled with high quality, age appropriate books that will be rotated on a weekly schedule. For assistance, call LaTonya Brown at 910-642-8226.

### **Smart Start Early Learning Facility (ELF)**

The Early Learning Facility provides child development resources which parents and providers can use to enhance the early care and education of young children. A variety of children's books, videos, topic resource books, resource kits and toys, a computer with Internet access and other resources are available to library members at a nominal fee. Training and workshops are offered as well as consumer materials in Spanish. For assistance, call 910-640-3663.

### **Smart Start Subsidy**

This scholarship program provides assistance with the cost of child care to qualified parents with children ages birth to five. For assistance, call Algernon McKenzie at 910-642-3178.

### **Transportation**

Expectant mothers and children ages birth to five who are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursable transportation can be transported to and from medical appointments. For assistance, call Charles Patton at 910-642-3929.

### **WAGES**

This project provides child care professionals with education-based salary supplements and addresses teacher turnover and increased teacher educational levels. For assistance, call Allison Miller at 919-967-3272.



### **Parents As Teachers**

In January of 2012, CCPC will resume offering the PAT program through a collaboration with Robeson County Partnership for Children and the Robeson County Health Department.

Through PAT, parents receive research-based information, guidance and assistance in being successful as their child's first teacher.

The components of PAT include home visits, group meetings, developmental screenings and a referral network of resources.

PAT seeks to strengthen and empower families and the community to foster the optimal development of children and family members.

For more information or to make referrals, call the Columbus County Partnership for Children at 910-642-8226.

### **CCPC Staff**

Wilbur Smith - Executive Director

LaTonya Brown - Program Coordinator

Barbara Hamme - Admin. Officer

Selena Rowell - Outreach Coordinator

Tonya Yarusinsky - ELF Activity Coordinator

Clemenza Brooks - ELF Activity Coordinator

**910-642-8226**  
[www.columbusstart.org](http://www.columbusstart.org)

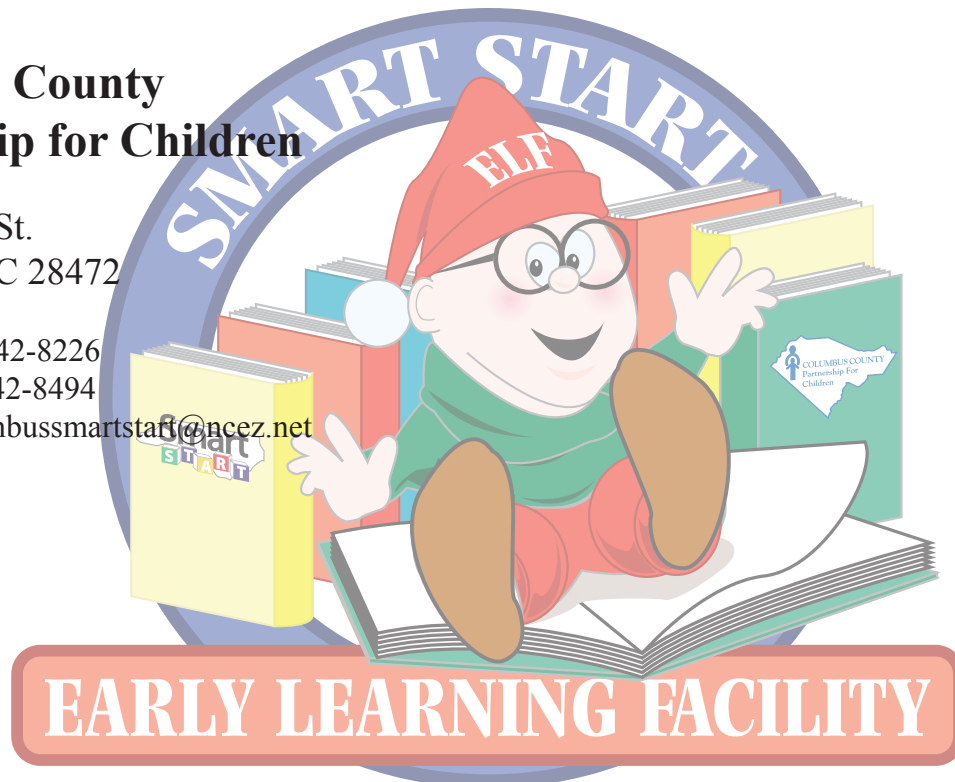
# Columbus County Partnership for Children

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*Guaranteeing the future of Columbus County  
by investing in its children*

## LaTonya Brown is Quality Enhancement Specialist

LaTonya Brown is the new Quality Enhancement Specialist (QES) for the Columbus Partnership. She holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Winston-Salem State University. She has worked with the Columbus County Partnership for Children for 12 years and has served as the Program Evaluation Coordinator. She also served as the Program Specialist at the Robeson County Partnership for Children for a brief period of time. Currently, LaTonya serves as the Coordinator for the Raising A Reader project in addition to her role as the Quality Enhancement Specialist.

The QES works one-on-one with child care providers, staff members, and directors on-site in temporary licensed and 1-5 star licensed child care facilities (includes centers, family child care homes, and Pre-K school sites in Columbus County). Facilities with high enrollment with low program points and low education points; facilities that are committed to increasing their star rating and those up for star rating license renewal within 9-12 months are eligible for participation.

After a Quality Enhancement Project Agreement is signed by the facility, the QES will develop a Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) and an Educational Facility Plan (EFP) in collaboration with the staff of the child care facility. The TAP will be based on facility/classroom assessment using the appropriate Environment Rating Scale. Technical Assistance methods may include, but are not limited to, assessing teacher education, use of the rating scales, modeling techniques, and general observation.

Licensed child care providers or individuals interested in opening a child care facility should contact LaTonya at 910-642-8226.

**Visit us on the Web: [www.columbusmartstart.org](http://www.columbusmartstart.org)**

## CCPC Board of Directors

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