



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Smart Start Unveils New Name for Community-Wide Early Brain Development Campaign

[Charlotte, NC, February 6, 2020] - Smart Start of Mecklenburg County launched Meck Basics, a community-wide early brain development campaign, in October 2018. With rapid growth of the initiative locally, and nationally, they are rolling out a new name and a new website.

The campaign is part of a network of Basics initiatives, designed to ensure that all children start school with the skills they need to learn and to thrive. The Achievement Gap Initiative (AGI) at Harvard University created The Basics to address skill gaps between children from different backgrounds that begin developing during the earliest years, before a child even enrolls in kindergarten.

Baby's brains grow very rapidly, with the first three years providing a critical window for development and the opportunity to build a strong foundation for future learning and success. Drawing from research on early brain development and the impact of early relationships and experiences, the AGI identified 5 caregiving practices that are critical for healthy cognitive, language and social-emotional development in children birth to three years.

These caregiving behaviors, or "Basics," are fun, simple, and powerful:

1. Maximize Love, Manage Stress
2. Talk, Sing and Point
3. Count, Group and Compare
4. Explore Through Movement and Play
5. Read and Discuss Stories

The Basics are accessible to all parents and caregivers of young children and include interactions that can be incorporated into everyday routines. The goal of the initiative is to saturate the community with information about the importance of early brain development, to provide examples of activities and interactions caregivers can practice daily, and to provide support through partners parents already trust.



The Basics campaign has grown rapidly, spreading across the country and throughout Mecklenburg County. Locally, Smart Start has developed partnerships with healthcare providers, public and private organizations serving families and young children, early childhood educators and the faith community. Nationally, The Basics has been adopted by more than 35 communities, including several in South Carolina (The Basics Palmetto) and in Guilford and Randolph counties in North Carolina.

To better align with fellow Basics' initiatives across the country, Smart Start will be adopting a new title: The Basics Mecklenburg. A new website has been launched at TheBasics-Mecklenburg.org. The site includes videos and other resources in both English and Spanish. The Basics Mecklenburg is administered by Smart Start of Mecklenburg County, which funds over 20 local early childhood, health and family support programs across the county.

To learn more about The Basics Mecklenburg please visit TheBasics-Mecklenburg.org. For information on training or how to become a community partner, please email Janet Harmon at meckbasics@smartstartofmeck.org.