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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Family Success Alliance Kindergarten Readiness Program Shows Promising Results in First Year**

**Orange County, NC** (October, 19, 2015) – Numerous research studies point to the importance of the first five years of a child’s life in setting the stage for success in school and life. Other research points to the fact that children from families that are economically secure are more likely to succeed in school. Infants and young children thrive and grow when they are surrounded with support and opportunities to learn and explore their world. Low-income and minority children are at a disadvantage and often score lower in cognitive and non-cognitive skills prior to entering kindergarten, and subsequently, are likely to do less well in school ([Pathways Mapping Initiative, Harvard University](#)).

The [Family Success Alliance](#) identified the community desire and need for increased kindergarten readiness programs for children from low-income families in Orange County to provide them with the opportunity to enter school on a more level playing field with their more economically advantaged counterparts. In April 2015, the Family Success Alliance Advisory Council, through funding allocated by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners, allocated \$75,000 to implement new kindergarten readiness programs to be piloted in three schools located within our two zones. The purpose of the programs was to provide additional opportunities to focus on school readiness consistent with the Family Success goal that “children and youth are healthy and prepared for school”.

The three major objectives were:

- 1) Students develop social, emotional, and academic skills needed for success in kindergarten
- 2) Students develop a positive outlook on learning and a love of learning
- 3) Expose students to the routines and procedures of kindergarten in a typical school day

The Family Success Alliance partnered with both school districts in Orange County, the [Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School System](#) and [Orange County Schools](#). The schools that developed kindergarten readiness programs and implemented them in the summer of 2015 were New Hope Elementary (Orange County Schools), Carrboro Elementary and Frank Porter Graham Elementary (both in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School District).

A total of 66 families were served in the first year of the program. Students enrolled in the kindergarten readiness programs were evaluated pre and post program utilizing the North Carolina Kindergarten Entrance Assessment and other tools to assess children in literacy, math, and social and emotional skills.

“We are thrilled to report that we saw significant improvement in the children that participated in the first year of the kindergarten readiness program. This is just the start of multiple interventions that will provide opportunities and support for children and families along the pipeline that will ultimately ensure the success of these children” said Dr. Michael Steiner, Chair of the Family Success Alliance Advisory Council and Chief of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine for UNC Health Care.

Major outcomes from the kindergarten readiness program evaluation report include:

- Children enrolled in the program moved from 9% to 67% proficiency by the conclusion of the summer program.
  - At New Hope Elementary, students went from 0% to 63% proficiency.
  - At Carrboro Elementary, students went from 33% to 61% proficiency.
  - At Frank Porter Graham Elementary, students went from 0% to 74% proficiency.
- All teachers involved in the program reported moderate to substantial gains for students.
- 100% of families reported satisfaction with the program.
- 84% of parents with children participating in the program reported feeling that their child was ready for kindergarten after the program.

Demographics of the children enrolled in the Family Success Alliance kindergarten readiness programs included:

- 48% of participants came into the program with no prior education experience.
- 70% of participants qualified for free or reduced lunch.
- 75% of participants were a race other than white, with 62% identifying as Hispanic

“We were thrilled to be a part of the pilot year of the kindergarten readiness program. Ultimately it is our goal is to develop lifelong learners who feel successful and can be successful. This program has already proven itself in doing that” said Ambra Wilson, Associate Principal of New Hope Elementary School.

“This is a great start” said Dr. Colleen Bridger, Orange County Health Director. “We know from emerging research, however, that these early gains can quickly be lost without a comprehensive set of interventions that provide continual support and resources for these at-risk children all the way through highschool.”

### **Background on the Family Success Alliance Pipeline Approach to Student and Family Success**

Research shows that continued intervention and support is critical to sustaining the growth and progress made from early childhood interventions such as kindergarten readiness. Studies indicate, for example, that low income students are at risk for summer reading loss and that this loss is greatest in the elementary years (Hanover Research, 2013). This is why the kindergarten readiness program is only the first program offered as part of the Family Success Alliance collaboration. New programs are being launched, existing programs expanded, and partnerships strengthened to provide the opportunities and support for children and their families. Our Zone Navigator program utilizes community members trained to provide support and resources to our families. Our parent literacy program, offered by the Orange County Literacy Council, is specifically tailored to help Family Success Alliance parents navigate the educational system. Future programming proposals include out-of-school time and summer enrichment for students as they enter, and move through, the pipeline.

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