



Media Contact:

Stacy Shelp, Public Information Officer
Phone: (919) 245-2462 or Cell: (919) 636-8842
Email: sshelp@orangecountync.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kindergarten Readiness Camps Bring Significant Learning Gains

Orange County, NC (November 1, 2016) – Students in the Family Success Alliance’s Kindergarten Readiness Camp have shown significant gains in fundamental cognitive and literacy skills. A team of researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill evaluated the program, which addresses the effects of generational poverty at four elementary schools in Orange County Schools and Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools.

“The Kindergarten Readiness Camp had a positive effect on attention and basic literacy skills for all children in English and on language and literacy skills in Spanish,” said Margaret Burchinal, Senior Research Scientist at UNC’s Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG). “And the children entering with the lowest skills benefited the most from the program.”

The summer program for low-income children focuses on developing the skills that help students improve their transitions into school. According to Burchinal, these skills can enable children to start school on a more equitable playing field with their more affluent counterparts, helping to close “the achievement gap.”

Previous research has shown that children’s first five years of life are critical to overall success in school and beyond. Programs for low-income families that improve family economic security, parental involvement in children’s development, or access to high-quality child care can substantially reduce the achievement gap.

“By giving kids a leg-up, we believe we can do our part to not only help close the achievement gap but provide the opportunity for these kids to reach their full potential as members and leaders of our vibrant community,” said Coby Jansen Austin, Director of Programs and Policy for the Family Success Alliance. “The Family Success Alliance has prioritized the need for equity from the onset of a child’s academic career in helping children feel successful and be successful throughout their educational journey and into college and career.”

Burchinal said this was the second straight year that students in the Family Success Alliance’s Kindergarten Readiness Camp continued to show significant gains in school readiness skills. During the 4-week program, 72 students were exposed to the routines and procedures of kindergarten in a typical school day to help them develop a positive outlook and a love of learning.

Participating schools included New Hope Elementary, Carrboro Elementary, Northside Elementary, and Frank Porter Graham Bilingüe Elementary. The evaluation team asked teachers to rate social skills, and they tested children on attention and academic skills.

The UNC evaluation team includes a partnership with UNC's Department of Pediatrics, which will look at health in children in the program and health relationships to FSA support. The team will continue to assess these children during their kindergarten year, comparing them to groups of low-income children not involved in Family Success Alliance, in order to help the program continue to improve.

Background on the [Family Success Alliance](#) Pipeline Approach to Student and Family Success

Research shows that continued intervention and support can sustain the growth and progress made from early childhood interventions, such as kindergarten readiness. This is why the Kindergarten Readiness Camp was the first program offered as part of the Family Success Alliance. New programs are being launched, existing programs expanded, and partnerships strengthened to build on the opportunities and support children and their families need. Our Zone Navigator program pairs families with community members trained to provide peer coaching and support for accessing additional support services within Orange County. This year the program hopes to focus on adding access to before/after school and summer enrichment programs for students as they enter, and move through, the pipeline.

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