

## Caring for Our Children: What North Carolina Thinks

### *The North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development*

#### *About the Institute*

The North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development was established in 1993 by the Division of Child Development.

Members of the Institute serve as an advisory group to the Division in matters related to developing an educated workforce to care for children who are in group care.

Institute members represent stakeholders from across the state with different areas of interest in the child care industry.

The Institute has been instrumental in raising quality of child care through professional development of the child care workforce through such actions as:

- accessible teacher education
- leadership and professional development opportunities
- strengthening articulation agreements between institutions of higher education
- initiating a professional development awards program
- supporting and monitoring the progress of the rated license program
- reviewing policies pertaining to professional development

Number of completed surveys from Lee County: 26

Total number of surveys completed statewide: 939

Over 900 parents, child care providers, community educators and employers responded to an online survey asking the citizens of North Carolina how quality child care impacts their lives. The results emphasize the importance of the strides North Carolina is making in raising the quality of child care through teacher education and professional development opportunities.

Some of the key findings include the following:

- Parents say that child care helps their children learn new skills but without dependable child care, they would have to quit work or school or leave their child home alone.
- Ninety-seven percent of the responding parents and 94% of responding teachers said children are better prepared to be successful in Kindergarten because of high quality child care experiences.
- Smart Start child care projects top the list as the most helpful to building quality child care followed closely by higher child care teacher education requirements and better child care licensing rules or star ratings.
- Employers say that without dependable child care employees are absent more and have difficulty concentrating when their children are not well cared for.
- Employers are concerned with the lack of child care for sick children and no back-up plans for loss of child care.
- Teachers listed Smart Start Programs, T.E.A.C.H., Wage\$, and salary bonuses as playing an important role increasing their formal educational and child development knowledge.

#### Comments from Lee County Residents:

"As we assist child care providers in becoming more professional and as they seek greater levels of education, we are seeing that the quality of child care is rising. We need assistance in the effort to increase professionalism and in helping families."  
-Community Educator

"I am able to work feeling confident my child is in a place that she and I both like."