

A young child with brown hair and a joyful expression is the central focus. Their face is adorned with colorful paint smudges, and their red sweater is also covered in paint. They are holding two paintbrushes, one with a yellow handle and the other with a wooden handle. The background is softly blurred, showing hints of a colorful environment. The overall mood is creative and positive.

brigit future

Working to Ensure a Healthy Community

early childhood development

high quality care and education



**Early childhood development
is a community responsibility.**

If Spartanburg County is to continue to prosper in the future, we need to ensure that all of our children have the opportunity to develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Parents, employers, faith community leaders, the child care industry, policymakers, and individual community residents all have a responsibility to create a community that nurtures our children.

A young child's developing brain is like a plant's immature root system; it requires a nurturing environment to grow and develop in a healthy way. Genes establish the child's basic brain architecture, while relationships and experiences supply the conditions that guide how brain cells grow and form connections with each other. The quality of interaction with others and the environments in which young children spend time are critical to healthy brain development. This early brain development, most of which takes place before age 5, is essential to a child's intellectual and socio-emotional growth and, ultimately, lifelong success. Recent science demonstrates that many children's futures are undermined when stress damages the early architecture of the brain. The stress may come from family tensions, hunger, overcrowded classrooms, lack of developmentally appropriate activities, lack of one-to-one interaction with a caregiver, or even interaction with an adult who is under stress. Chronic stress experienced by young children can cause the release of chemicals in the brain that weaken brain architecture and hinder development.¹

When a community invests in high quality care and education for its youngest children, it helps to ensure that every child will be given the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential. These early investments yield dividends as child development translates into economic development. A person's quality of life and the contributions she makes to society can be traced back to the first few years of her life. Several longitudinal studies have followed children enrolled in high quality child care programs into adulthood and have found significant results.² These children were *more likely* than their peers to:

- Perform better in middle school,
- Graduate from high school on time,
- Attend a four-year college,
- Earn more than \$20,000 a year, and
- Own a home.

Also, the participants were *less likely* than their peers to:

- Need special education,
- Repeat a grade,
- Receive public assistance as an adult, and
- Be arrested.



The research is clear – if a child's early years support the development of language, motor skills, adaptive skills, and social-emotional functioning, the child is more likely to succeed in school and later contribute to society. When a community invests in early care and education, it creates a system that catches children before they fall.



IN SPARTANBURG COUNTY

AVERAGE TIME

CHILDREN SPEND

IN CHILD CARE IS

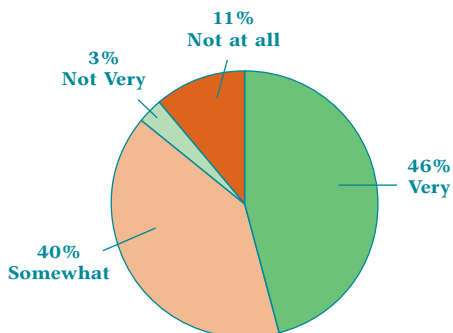
27 HOURS/WEEK

- 55% of families use child care
- Parents pay an average of \$80/week for center-based child care
- On average, child care providers make \$7/hour or \$14,000/year with no benefits³
- 52% of center-based child care providers have no early childhood credentials³

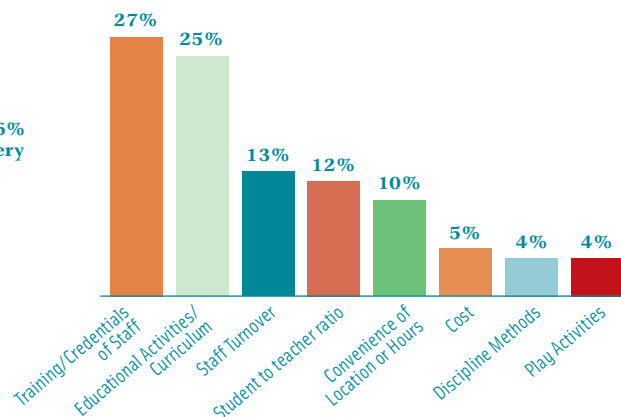
The fact that over half of the families in Spartanburg County use child care is an important reminder that relationships outside the home are critical to healthy brain development. The data above demonstrate that, as a community, we need to be concerned with the quality of care and education our young children receive outside of the home.

We know that the training, knowledge, and skills of a consistent child care provider are essential to a child's healthy development. But, currently, the state standard for the education of providers is low, the pay is low and, consequently, the turnover rate is very high. Science would suggest that our community's lack of investment in early care and education will have long-term consequences on its economic stability and vitality. According to James Heckman, Nobel Prize winning economist, "if we don't provide young children [especially children from disadvantaged backgrounds] with the proper environments to foster cognitive and noncognitive skills, we'll create a class of people without such skills, without motivation, without the ability to contribute to the larger society nearly as much as they could if they'd been properly nurtured from an early age. Neglecting the early years creates an underclass that is arguably growing in the United States."

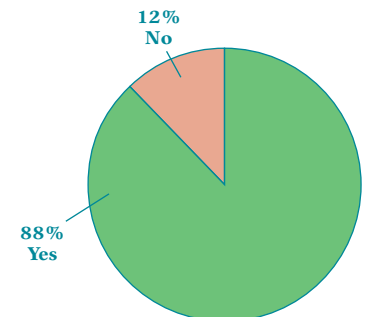
IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL ACCREDITATION TO PARENTS



MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS IN SELECTING CHILD CARE



PARENTS WILLING TO PAY MORE FOR HIGH QUALITY CARE



In Spartanburg County, parents recognize the importance of quality and, in many cases, are willing to pay more for higher quality care. When selecting child care, parents are more concerned about the training of providers and educational activities than convenience and cost. While 86 percent of parents believe national accreditation is somewhat or very important, few parents have access to nationally accredited programs for their children.

Only four child care centers have been recognized by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the gold standard in care for children. We applaud **Middle Tyger Community Center**, **Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System's Ida Thompson Child Development Center**, **USC Upstate's Burroughs Child Development Center**, and **Westminster Presbyterian Church's Day School** for reaching the highest level of care and education for our children. As a community, we must urge other child care centers to strive for national accreditation, and we must support these centers in their efforts to provide the highest standard of care for our children. High quality child care is good for our children, and it is good for the future of Spartanburg County.



The long-term outcome of a community investment in our young children will be a healthier, more educated, and prosperous society.

There is much work to be done to make sure that all children receive a solid foundation in life; however, there are reasons to be optimistic. Many people in Spartanburg County are beginning to recognize the importance of early childhood development – not only for the good of children, but for the good of our community. For example, Smith Barney, which was named the Mary Black Foundation 2006 Business Champion in Early Childhood Development, has implemented policies that support healthy early childhood development by supporting families with young children. The United Way of the Piedmont and Spartanburg County First Steps have identified early childhood development as community priorities. The United Way of the Piedmont promotes early literacy through its Community Impact Agenda and initiatives like Imagination Library. Spartanburg County First Steps works directly with the child care industry to improve the quality of early care and education. Other businesses and community leaders are thinking about early childhood development in terms of its effect on the economic vitality of our community. Individuals are asking about the quality of care available in our community, and parents are beginning to demand higher quality standards from their child care providers. The long-term outcome of a community investment in our young children will be a healthier, more educated, and prosperous society.

brighthouse

Working to Ensure a Healthy Community

Data Methodology

¹ Frameworks Institute, www.frameworksinstitute.org

² Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, www.minneapolisfed.org

³ 2003 Spartanburg County Kids Count Report,
www.sckidscount.org/kc03.asp?COUNTYID=42#Summary

All other data included in this report were collected by Priority Metrics Group (Spartanburg, SC) for the Mary Black Foundation. Priority Metrics Group conducted a telephone survey of Spartanburg County households with at least one child under the age of 6 from October 2005 to September 2006. Interviews were conducted throughout the day and evening to reach individuals who might be working or otherwise unavailable during normal business hours. Average survey time was approximately 19 minutes. Survey results presented in this report are weighted using age and income of respondents.

The sample size ($n = 253$) results in a confidence interval of ± 0.12 ($\alpha = 0.05$, $\sigma = 1.0$) around an average response and $\pm 5.4\%$ ($\alpha = 0.05$, est. proportion = 25%/75%) around a percentage response.

Please contact the Foundation for more information about this report or the data collection process.

Using this Report

Please acknowledge the Mary Black Foundation when using this report to improve the public's understanding of the importance of positive early childhood development. Additional copies are available by calling the Mary Black Foundation or may be downloaded from the Foundation's website, www.maryblackfoundation.org.

Photo Credits: Deborah Farr and Mark Olenki



349 East Main Street Suite 100 Spartanburg, SC 29302

T 864-573-9500 www.maryblackfoundation.org