

Overview of East Durham Children's Initiative

a pipeline of services from cradle to career

Vision: To develop the support and resources for children and families to provide a pathway or pipeline from birth through high school graduation ready for college or career.

Perspective: This initiative is modeled after the highly successful Harlem Children's Zone. In the book, "Whatever It Takes" about the Harlem Children's Zone, President Obama is quoted during a speech on urban poverty in Washington DC in July, 2007 saying: "the first part of my plan to combat urban poverty will be to replicate the Harlem Children's Zone in twenty cities across the country." In fact, the president's proposed budget for FY 2010 includes funding to pilot this initiative in communities around the country.

Shared Principles:

1. Engage the residents of the focus area to develop and support programs that meet their needs
2. Reduce poverty by focusing on education, health and wellness, literacy, and job training along with community and economic development
3. Establish a continuum of services using evidence-based practices for children and families from birth to high school graduation and beyond
4. Create a culture of high expectations for success within the area
5. Focus on initiatives that have a track record of working for children and families
6. Build on established programs and resources such as the award winning System of Care, Durham Connects, Smart Start, More at Four, and the Encore After School Program
7. Use the Holton Career and Resource Center which includes a career center, community center, and health clinic, as a hub for the initiative

Background

The East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI) is focused on a 120 block area (893 acres/ 1.2 square miles) east of downtown Durham bounded by Alston Avenue on the west, Holloway Street on the north, Miami on the East, and Hoover and 147 on the South. It is largely consistent with the YE Smith Elementary School attendance zone. According to the 2000 Census, the focus area had a population of 7,133 with 71% African American and 18% Hispanic. The estimated population for January, 2009 was 7,888.

The per capita income in 2000 was \$11,184, 50% of the citywide per capita income. The median household income was \$25,616, 62% of the median for the City of Durham. Of the 2,636 housing units, 669 (25%) were owner occupied, 1,698 (64%) were renter occupied, and 269 (10%) were vacant. The Hoover Road Community run by the Durham Housing Authority, which has 54 units, is in the EDCI. There have been a number of housing initiatives by the City of Durham and Habitat for Humanity in the past eight years that

According to the 2000 Census, there were 690 children 0 – 4 and approximately 1,600 - 1,700 school aged children (some of the 5 year olds are not school age) in the area. 2008 – 2009 data from the Durham Public Schools indicate that 1039 students from the area attend the public schools. Unfortunately, there is a fall off in the numbers after 9th grade indicating a high dropout rate for students living in the area. Some students may also attend private or charter schools.

There are 14 child care/preschool programs with a capacity of 372 children (98 infants and toddlers) in the area. 4 programs serving 220 children have 4 or 5 stars (higher quality), 6 programs serving 102 children have 3 stars, 4 day care homes serving 21 children have only 1 or 2 stars. There is a need for more high quality early child care in the focus area.

According to the North Carolina Report Card data for 2007-2008, YE Smith Elementary school, which serves most of the students in the EDCI, is the second lowest performing elementary school in the school district. The average percentage of 3rd – 5th graders performing at or above grade level was 16.2% for reading and 38.5% for math. That compares to district-wide percentages of 41.4% for reading and 56.1% for math and state-wide percentages of 55.6% for reading and 69.9% for math.

The students from YE Smith largely attend Neal Middle School, the lowest performing middle school in the district, and Southern High School, the lowest performing high school in 2007-2008. Of the 109 students at Neal from the EDCI, 90 students (83%) are below grade in reading and 78 students (72%) are below grade in math. Also, 47 students (43%) from the area have poor attendance (under 94%). Of the 166 students from the area attending Southern, 71 students (42%) have low grades and credits earned. These students also generally have a low attendance rate. Given the number of credits earned, these students will have difficulty graduating on time and would be more likely to drop out of school. A large number of students at these schools are on free and reduced lunch – 83% at YE Smith, 69% at Neal, and 61% at Southern.

Plan

Working with residents of the community and other key stakeholders and partners, we are developing a plan to create a continuum of services from birth through high school ready for college or career . Key elements of the plan will include:

1. Community Involvement and Empowerment
2. Early Childhood Services – parenting classes, home visiting, high quality, affordable child care
3. Elementary School Improvements/Enhancements at YE Smith
4. Secondary School Improvements/Enhancements at Neal Middle School and Southern High School
5. After School and Summer School Services
6. Family Support – system of care, library services, housing assistance, financial literacy, social services, etc.
7. Health and Wellness – expand on the programming provided at the Holton Wellness Center
8. Adult Literacy and Job Training – use Holton Career and Resource Center in the evenings and on weekends
9. Documentation and Evaluation – led by the Child and Family Policy Center

Support and Funding

Honorary co-chairs include Mayor Bill Bell, County Chairman Michael Page, Cindy Brodhead, and Janetta Nelms. Steering Committee co-chairs are Minnie Forte Brown, Chair, Durham Public Schools and Ellen Reckhow, Vice Chair, Durham County Commissioners. PAC 1 has adopted a resolution of support.

Existing services that can be strengthened and focused in the area are being identified. In addition, we will actively seek public and private grant funding. The use of volunteer services will also be sought and