

Early Years Are Learning Years



Celebrating the Month of **THE YOUNG CHILD**

April 2020



In celebration of the “Week of the Young Child” and to bring attention to April as “Child Abuse Prevention Month,” Smart Start is pleased to present this special section focusing on the care, health and development of young children.



A Word from the Director

April is the Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month as well as Autism Awareness Month. Historically, the Columbus County Partnership for Children (Smart Start) staff has joined other local partnerships in the Smart Start network to celebrate the Month and Week of the Young Child, a national recognition spearheaded by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Due to COVID-19, the celebrations that our local Partnership had planned have been postponed.

During the Month of the Young Child, we take time to recognize and appreciate the importance of early care and education and our early childhood teachers who promote children's strengths through nurturing relationships and creative educational experiences.

We acknowledge the accomplishments of early childhood programs in our local communities as well as nationwide, including home-based childcare, Head Start programs, preschools and elementary schools.

We celebrate the accomplishments of our community's youngest citizens, and the benefits of our community's quality early education programs. These programs create opportunities for each child's optimal development.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), "High-quality early childhood programs help children – especially those from families with low-incomes – develop the skills they need to succeed in school."

Research confirms that early experiences grounded in positive interactions between a child and his or her caregivers provide the foundation for lifelong healthy physical, cognitive and emotional development.

During these uncertain times, we want to assure the families in Columbus County that Smart Start and local agencies such as Columbus Regional Healthcare System, Columbus County Health Department, Columbus County Emergency Management, the Department of Social Services, Columbus County Schools, Whiteville City Schools, child care facilities, local merchants and other essential businesses are here for you.

While we are practicing physical distancing and proper hand-washing techniques and other routines to keep us safe, we remind each of you to operate based on the facts, not fear. This special section of the News Reporter will offer information and resources to help during COVID-19 and beyond.

Remember, we are all in this together!
Stay well!

Selena B. Rowell, Executive Director
Columbus County Partnership for Children (Smart Start)

Columbus County WIC Really Goes High Tech!



Since October, 2018, the Columbus County WIC Program has been providing food and nutrition benefits to our WIC families by using electronic benefit cards (known as **eWIC**) thus replacing the old paper system that was used for forty years. The switch to eWIC has given clients more options on when they can shop and how much they have to get at one time.

The e-WIC program has opened many opportunities to streamline the services WIC provides and to make access easier. For example, Columbus County WIC is currently collecting the majority of our client intake information over the phone so young families do not have to come to the Health Department to have their cards loaded and we can also provide their nutrition education over the phone. Then we can load their food benefits directly on to their cards.

Remember that WIC program is much more than a food give-away. WIC clients receive physical assessment, nutrition education and tailored food packages. The goal is to promote healthy life-styles that support better outcomes for some our at-risk neighbors.

The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children** (WIC) is a public health nutrition program designed to influence lifetime nutrition and health behaviors. The program is federally funded to serve low to moderate-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, infants and

children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. WIC serves over 1500 clients who receive assessment, nutrition education and approved healthy foods in Columbus County each month.

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audio-tape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they can apply for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information is available in languages other than English.

For more information about WIC in Columbus County, call 910-641-3904 or visit the Columbus County Website (www.Columbusco.org) For the latest general information about the WIC program benefits and requirements, visit: www.nutritionnc.com or come see us at the Columbus County Health Department.

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We Offer 5 Day Programs

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Experience
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Children**

Coronavirus Resources & Tips for Parents, Children & Others

Tips for Staying Connected

For our collective health and well-being, we must adhere to the requirements of social distancing. Physical distance, however, does not mean we need to remain socially disconnected or isolated. In fact, individuals, families, and communities can maintain the one thing we all need right now... social connection! Here are some clear, concrete tips for physically distancing while staying emotionally and socially connected:

Connect with family—right now is a great time to connect with family members near and far.

- Call/Skype/FaceTime/Zoom with family members
- Look at photo albums and discuss family heritage
- Create a family tree
- Write letters to/create cards for relatives (Perhaps an overdue thank you note for that really nifty gift you received?)

Connect with friends and neighbors—our social circles often serve as our greatest system of support, and there's plenty to do in lieu of play dates, shared meals, and group gatherings.

- Go outside and greet and talk to neighbors and passersby from a safe distance
- Host a virtual meal
- Attend a virtual concert ("cloud clubbing"), church service, or exercise or yoga class
- Play an online game together

Connect with culture—with many schools closed and parents working from home, this is a great time for you and your children to connect with your culture, as well as cultural institutions.

- Read books about your culture
- Cook a meal together that reflects your cultural heritage
- Virtually visit more than 1,200 museums around the world via Google Arts & Culture

Connect with yourself—confronted with the constant barrage of information, uncertainty, and day-to-day realities of caring for children, family, and loved ones, it is critical to find ways to connect with yourself.

- Meditate or do yoga
- Journal or read
- Exercise
- Take a bath

Tips for Staying Active & Engaged as a Family

With the cancellation of play dates, birthday parties, and sleep overs/unders, your household calendar is likely wide open—this is a great time

to do the following as a family:

- Play card and board games
- Make art or do crafts together
- Cook and bake together—talk about math as you prepare the recipe
- Build forts, design a marble run, or devise another fun STEM project
- Sort through bookshelves, revisit favorite titles and make a pile to donate
- Change family picture frames and revisit memories as you change photos
- Make a photo book together
- Perform a readers theater together—make up a play or production
- Sing, play piano or other instruments
- Make puppets and put on a puppet show
- Have a dance party, do fitness activities together, and play in the yard as a family
- Write letters or make cards for a local senior center, the RFPD, or RFFD
- Do puzzles—make up number puzzles or riddles
- Write stories and poetry and read them aloud (lots of encouraging applause, please)
- Download and complete our Pin-wheels for Prevention coloring sheet
- Establish routines—it is more important now than ever to create a sense of structure at home with device-free meal times, physical movement, and a balance between academics/work and enjoyable activities that can reduce stress, as well as time provide opportunities to connect with family and friends.

Also, eating healthy meals, exercising, and getting adequate sleep are essential to physical and emotional health.

Tips to Manage Stress & Anxiety

Common Sense Media has an abundance of resources for de-stressing, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests numerous ways to manage stress and anxiety. Knowing the facts and the actual risks can help reduce stress in yourself and others. Take time to have conversations with your kids about their questions, concerns, or fears. Follow healthcare guidelines to model preventative care, and follow these tips and strategies to help structure your day:

Temper your expectations, and be kind to yourself—Remember, most of us were not prepared for this. Anxiety, fear, worry, and grief—these are all normal reactions to abnormal circumstances. Laundry piles, dirty

dishes, messy rooms—do what you can. And while we always suggest monitoring the use of children's screen time, both how much and what they are watching, this may be a time where children have more screen time than they are accustomed to. Just make sure that your children are practicing safe online behavior. Here are some tips.

Embrace a rigid state of flexibility—Most children of all ages thrive when they have predictable routines. If your children are pre-school age or older, have them participate in the development of a daily schedule. When (not "if") the schedule gets derailed, see Tip 1 above!

Find ways to stay informed—There is a constant barrage of information regarding COVID-19, and it is challenging to know what to think. Find trusted sources and limit your exposure to this material. Social media can be a major source of social support, but can also create feelings of fear, panic, and, for some, feelings of inadequacy. If seeing pictures of well-organized kitchen tables, Pinterest boards of fun activities, from those who you perceive "have it all put together," are causing you distress, reconsider your relationship with social media for the time being. Talk with people you trust about your concerns about how you are feeling.

See the world through your children's eyes—Do you remember what it was like to be a kid? Do you remember how boring it was to watch the news? Do you remember how cool it was when your parents did spontaneous things with you?

- Roast marshmallows on the bbq
 - Go "camping" in the living room
 - Make a pillow fort
 - Create a nature scavenger hunt
- Learning can be fun—With uncertainty about the return to school, many parents are fretting about the potential loss of academics for their children. Fortunately, daily activities carry immense opportunity for learning:

- Cooking teaches science and math
- Yard work teaches about nature and can inspire creative art projects
- Reading together enriches vocabulary and listening skills

Take care of your body—Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs. Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy. Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

<https://preventchildabuse.org/coronavirus-resources/>

At Opening Doors Preschool...



We pride ourselves in bringing the community quality child care for infants through twelve year olds.

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Rhonda & Robert Creech, Owners/Operator
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SOUTHEAST PEDIATRICS CELEBRATES WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Even during these trying times, **Southeast Pediatrics** is committed to providing more than quality pediatric healthcare to the children of Columbus County and surrounding communities. We realize that our role goes beyond providing checkups, flu shots or treating children when they feel under the weather. We are here to make sure that children are healthy, so that early learning can happen in their lives.

This week we salute the teachers, families and communities that are still making early learning possible. Thank you.

Southeast Pediatrics 
Columbus Regional Healthcare System

Elizabeth DeLouise, DO
Jugta Kahai, MD, FAAP
Ashlee Pinion-Raby, FNP-C
Cassandra Schimmoeller, PNP-C

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crhealthcare.org/pediatrics



*Children are like seeds...
they need help to
grow up well.*

Being specialists in agriculture for Columbus County farmers, we feel a real investment in the future. We believe in investing in our children as well. Programs like Smart Start give Columbus County children a definite edge in reaching their full potential. If it helps our children, it helps our community. And we all prosper!

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• Al Davis • Jerry Turner • Mike Bianchini • Matthew Simmons • Nathan Sellers

Like a good neighbor

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WILLIAMSON
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642-8682 Home



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April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. This month and throughout the year, the Columbus County Partnership for Children (Smart Start) encourages all individuals and organizations to play a role in making Columbus County a better place for children and families.

By ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can help prevent child abuse and neglect by creating strong and thriving children, youth, and families in our communities. Research shows that protective factors are present in healthy families. Promoting these factors is among the most effective ways to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. The factors are:

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development
- Parental resilience

- Social connections
- Concrete supports for parents
- Social and emotional competence of children

April is a time to celebrate the important role that communities play in protecting children and strengthening families. In support of these efforts, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, its Child Welfare Information Gateway, the FRIENDS National Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention and over 30 national prevention partners have created 2019/2020 Prevention Resource Guide: Strong and Thriving Families.

The resource guide, designed for service providers who work throughout the community to support families, is available online at <https://childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/resource-guide/>.

Why Early Childhood Matters

A child's early years can have lifelong physical, social, and emotional impacts. While positive experiences and environments can set up a young child on a stronger life-long path, traumatic experiences or environments during those formative years can have long-lasting, detrimental impact.

Early childhood experiences from birth to age 8 affect the development of the brain's architecture, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health. A strong foundation helps children develop the skills they need to become well-functioning adults.

In particular, the time between birth and age 3 is a period of rapid brain development when billions of connections between individual neurons are established. Mechanisms and interventions to support that development must be available beginning at birth.

The experiences children have early in life play a crucial role in the development of the brain. Exposure to positive factors, especially stable and responsive relationships with parents and other adults, and safe and supportive environments promote positive development.

When brain development in infants and young children is fully supported, they are more likely to reach milestones critical to future individual and community success. These include:

- Third-grade reading proficiency
- High school graduation and postsecondary education
- Gainful employment
- Lifetime physical and mental health and well-being
- Avoidance of substance use disorder and crime

<https://www.ncdhs.gov/about/department-initiatives/early-childhood/why-early-childhood-matters>.

Doing Our Part To Help Children & Families In Columbus County...



Columbus County Transportation

... providing Columbus County with "transportation you can count on" since 1995.

Call 642-7201

General Public Transportation

- Work Transportation
- Medicaid Transportation
- Child Care (5 Years & Under Free)
- Veterans' Transportation
- Department of Aging
- Health Department

Partnering with Smart Start...

Expectant mothers and children less than 6 years old who are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursable transportation can be transported to and from medical appointments free.

To learn more about this Smart Start activity, call 642-7201 (Columbus County Transportation).

Columbus County Partnership for Children Activities 2019-2020

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library provides books to children living in Columbus County. Each month, children ages birth to five, who are registered for the program receive a brand new book mailed directly to their homes. The books are free of charge to the family. For more information, call 910-212-6352.

Quality Enhancement Project

This project helps licensed child care programs increase the level of star rated licensure and the level of provider education. Professional Development services are also available for facilities that complete an Educational Facility Plan. Teachers in these facilities who are attending school may be eligible for Educational Awards. For assistance, call 910-642-8226.

Raising A Reader

Raising A Reader helps child care providers work with families to build and maintain the home-based language and literacy experiences young children need for later school success. By rotating high quality children's literature into homes each week, Raising A Reader's research-based program helps children and parents develop the habit of "book cuddling." Families also build the connections to libraries that result in lasting family literacy habits and improved outcomes for children. For assistance, call 910-642-8226.

Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read prepares America's youngest children to succeed by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourages families to read together. At each well child visit, children between the age of six months and five years receive brand new, age and developmentally appropriate books to keep and their parents receive guidance on the importance of reading aloud to their children. For assistance, call 910-642-8226.

Ready, Set, Go!

This activity provides early identification of special needs

and enhances the provision of early intervention services to ensure positive outcomes for all children ages birth to five in child care settings. For assistance, call 910-618-9260.

Smart Start Early Learning Facility (ELF)

The Early Learning Facility provides child development resources which parents and providers can use to enhance the early care and education of young children. A variety of children's books, videos, topic resource books, resource kits and toys, a computer with Internet access and other resources are available to library members at a nominal fee. Training and workshops are offered as well as consumer materials in Spanish. For assistance, call 910-212-6352.

Smart Start Subsidy

This scholarship program provides assistance with the cost of child care to qualified parents with children ages birth to five. For assistance, call 910-642-3178.

Transportation

Expectant mothers and children ages birth to five who are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursable transportation can be transported to and from medical appointments. For assistance, call Joy Jacobs at 910-642-7201.

WAGES

This project provides child care professionals with education-based salary supplements and addresses teacher turnover and increased teacher educational levels. For assistance, call Allison Miller at 919-967-3272.

Biblioteca de imaginación de Dolly Parton

La Biblioteca de Imaginación de Dolly Parton ofrece libros para niños que viven en el Condado de Columbus. Cada mes, los niños de entre 5 y 5 años de edad, que están registrados en el programa, reciben un libro nuevo enviado directamente a sus hogares. Los libros son gratuitos para la familia. Para más información, llame al 910-212-6352.

Proyecto del realce de calidad

Este proyecto ayuda a los programas de cuidado infantil certificados a incrementar el nivel de rendimiento y el nivel de educación provehida. Servicios profesionales del desarrollo están disponibles para facilidades que completan un Plan Educativo. Maestros en estas facilidades que asisten a las escuelas pueden ser elegibles para recibir un Premio Educativo. Llame 910-642-8226.

Creando un lector

Esta actividad con los centros de cuidado infantil o guarderías con licencias promueve el intercambio diario de libros entre los padres y sus hijos. Cada niño recibirá una brillante bolsa roja llena de libros de alta calidad, libros apropiados para la edad de sus hijos que se rotarán semanalmente. Llame 910-642-8226.

Lee y Alcanzaras

Lee y alcanzaras prepara a los niños más pequeños de Estados Unidos a tener éxito en su futuro, esto lo hacen asociándose con los medicos que prescriben libros a sus pacientes para alentar a las familias a leer juntos. En cada visita para su chequeo físico anual, los niños entre la edad de seis meses y cinco años reciben libros nuevos apropiados para su desarrollo y los padres reciben también orientación sobre la importancia de leerle a sus hijos. Para más información llame 910-642-8226

¡En sus marcas, listos, fuera!

Esta actividad provee temprana identificación de las necesidades especiales y mejora la temprana intervención en los servicios y asegurar resultados positivos para todos los niños desde la edad del nacimiento hasta los cinco años en los centros de cuidado infantil o guarderías. Llame 910-618-9260.

Smart Start Centro de Aprendizaje Temprano

La centro de aprendizaje temprano provee recursos de desarrollo infantil que padres y proveedores pueden usar para

el crecimiento del cuidado y la educación temprana para los bebés y niños. La variedad de libros para niños, videos, libros con temas de recursos, artículos y juguetes, computadora con acceso al internet y otros recursos que están disponibles para los miembros de la centro a un mínimo pago. Entrenamientos y cursos como también materiales en español. Llame 910-212-6352.

Smart Start Subsidio

Este programa de becas provee asistencia con los costos para el cuidado de niños para calificar padres con niños desde la edad del nacimiento hasta los

cinco años. Llame 910-642-3178.

Transportacion

Madres embarazadas y con niños recién nacidos hasta la edad de cinco años que no son elegibles para el reembolso del Medicaid también pueden ser transportadas, y para sus citas medicas. Llame Joy Jacobs en 910-640-7201.

Pagos

Este proyecto provee de profesionales del cuidado infantil, suplementos educación-basada del sueldo y trata volumen de ventas del profesor y niveles de enseñanza, crecimientos del profesor. Llame Allison Miller en 919-967-3272.

CCPC Staff Telephone Numbers

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Selena Rowell – Executive Director | 910-499-4548 |
| Charmaine Blue-Singleton – Program Coord. | 910-499-4545 |
| Sandra Newkirk – QE Specialist | 910-499-4547 |
| Lydia Faison – Outreach Coordinator | 910-212-4689 |
| Jennifer Wallace – ELF Coordinator | 910-212-6352 |
| Gloria Riddick - Imagination Library | 910-499-4549 |
| Kathy Robson - YWCA Early Parenthood Program | 910-520-4819 |

Columbus County Partnership for Children
910-642-8226

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*Kid Care Academy will mail applications to you. Contact for details.



“The single most significant factor influencing a child’s early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school.”

National Commission on Reading, 1985

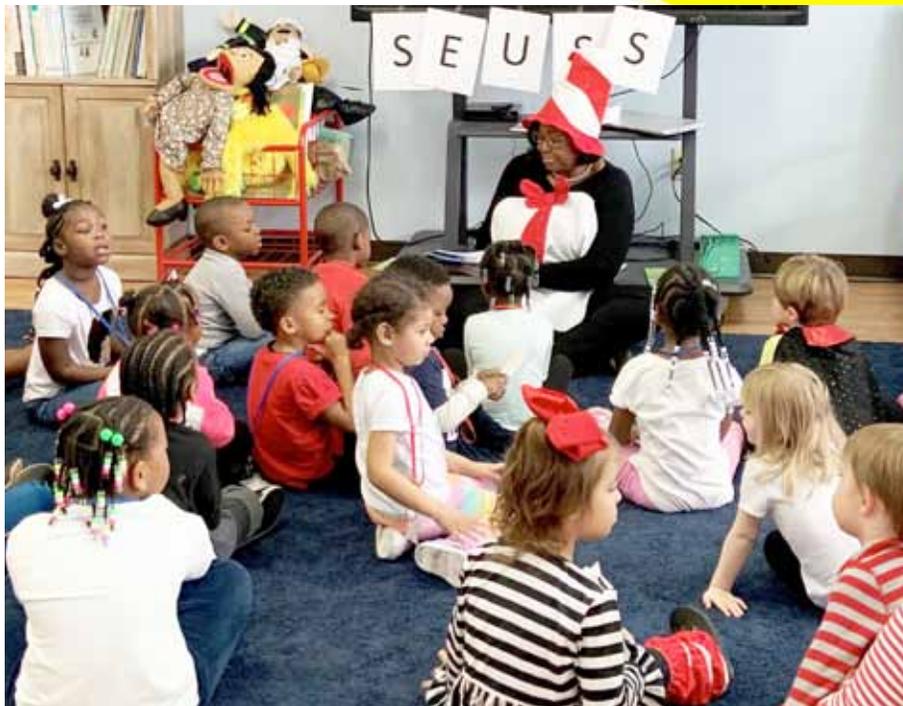
Smart Start

Focus on Literacy

Raising A Reader helps child care providers work with families to build and maintain the home-based language and literacy experiences young children need for later school success. By rotating high quality children’s literature into homes each week, Raising A Reader’s research-based program helps children and parents develop the habit of “book cuddling.” Families also build the connections to libraries that result in lasting family literacy habits and improved outcomes for children. For more information, call 910-642-8226.

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Smart Start Early Learning Facility is an interactive learning environment for young children, early childhood professionals, caregivers and parents. This on-site learning and lending library model has much to offer. Resource materials which address a variety of topics including working with children with special needs are available to parents, care givers and early childhood educators. Books, puzzles, games, DVDs, videos, resource kits and toys for the early learning environment are available for checkout to teachers, parents and other community members. A workroom area is designed to help early childhood professionals develop lesson plans and produce theme-based resources for the classroom environment. For more information, call the ELF at 910-212-6352.

Let’s Read! Columbus is a new literacy effort spearheaded by Columbus County Partnership for Children (Smart Start) and Whiteville City Schools in collaboration with other local school systems and community agencies to ensure that young children have access to age and developmentally appropriate books in their homes. The project

will also serve to encourage families to visit local libraries and access books via the Little Free Library locations. Initial funding and support for this project was provided by Walmart, International Paper Foundation, Whiteville City Schools and the Columbus County Partnership for Children. For more information, call the Columbus County Partnership for Children at 910-642-8226 or Beverly Turner at Whiteville City Schools, 910-642-4116.

Early Literacy Facts

- Early literacy is a mix of experiences that involves the senses.
- The brain grows through sound, sight, touch and talk.
- Brains are built, not born. The cells are there but the connections are not.
- What a child experiences in the world determines how connections are formed.
- Early literacy tactics focus on a child’s developmental abilities and preparedness to acquire literacy skills.
- The home is the child’s first school.
- The parent is the child’s first teacher.
- The more you read and speak to your child, the better he or she will do in school.

Did you know?

Given the course of brain development, it is not surprising that young children who are exposed to certain early language and literacy experiences usually prove to be good readers later. Just as a child develops language skills long before being able to speak, the child also develops literacy skills long before being able to read. National Research Council. (1998). Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Find this and 49 other interesting facts about literacy at <https://www.ferstfoundation.org/resources/fifty-top-literacy-statistics>



For additional information about the Columbus County Partnership for Children and its various activities, call 910-642-8226. www.columbusmartstart.org and www.columbusmartstart.com