

# Parenting Education Network

**T**he North Carolina Parenting Education Network (NCPEN) is working to build the field of parenting education in the state with a focus on partnerships between parents and child care providers, teachers, and parent educators. Working together, we can help each child reach his or her potential. NCPEN is an unfunded collaboration of parenting education organizations and agencies. For more information about NCPEN, see our web site at [www.ncpen.org](http://www.ncpen.org).

## Ready for School! New Hope and Promise for North Carolina's Children entering Kindergarten

by Sally Sloop—Family Support Specialist, N.C. Partnership for Children, NCPEN member,

Catherine Woodall—Early Childhood Specialist, N.C. Partnership for Children, Ready for School Goal Team member

Parents, educators and providers across North Carolina are united in an important initiative to help our state's children enter kindergarten "Ready for School." This effort has called for establishing new priorities to better prepare young children for school success. The initiative began with growing concern across the state and the nation that children are experiencing school failure at a higher rate than ever before. North Carolina is taking significant steps to respond, by asking "What does 'kindergarten readiness' mean, why has it become such a priority, how is school readiness fostered and how will we know we have been successful in our efforts?"

These questions and others have recently been addressed by North Carolina's Ready for School Goal Team, a broad-based, statewide collaboration that has worked energetically to create a vision for school readiness, foundation principles and an action plan. The action plan includes an assessment system for measuring both children's readiness for school and school's readiness for children. By accepting the challenge to increase the readiness of all

children for school and to improve the readiness of all schools for all children, the Ready for Schools Goal Team developed and adopted the following statement of philosophy:

### We believe:

- Each child can succeed in school and reach his/her potential.
- The needs of the children come first.
- Parent(s)/guardians are the child's first and most important teachers and are valued partners with teachers and caregivers throughout the child's education.
- Schools should be prepared to respond to each child's strengths and needs.
- The readiness of a child should be viewed from a holistic perspective.
- Individual and cultural differences are to be valued and supported.
- A variety of developmentally appropriate assessment tools/approaches that encompass a range of readiness domains/elements is needed.
- Communication, training, resources

and support are critical areas for successful achievement of "ready kids" and "ready schools".

- The community should be a partner in helping parents and schools meet these needs.
- There should be a systemic approach to ensuring that all children are ready to benefit from school.

### The five domains of school readiness as identified by the goal team are:

- Health and physical development
- Social and emotional development
- Approaches toward learning
- Language development and communication
- Cognition and general knowledge

To be ready for children, schools themselves must have the capacity to serve all children effectively. To achieve this capacity, schools must have highly qualified personnel, effective policies, standards of excellence for buildings, positive environments and quality, developmentally appropriate materials. Ready schools are

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schools that willingly accept and address the learning needs of all children who are old enough to enter kindergarten.

**To accomplish this, the Ready for School Goal Team has identified four cornerstones to assure ready schools:**

- Knowledge of growth and development of typically and atypically developing children
- Knowledge of the strengths, interests and needs of each child
- Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which each child and family lives
- Ability to translate developmental knowledge into developmentally appropriate practices

To fully embrace school readiness, efforts involve recognizing the crucial roles of ready families and ready communities. Each is considered an equal and vital partner in the effort to promote such change in our state. Children who enter school prepared to experience success hold the future progress and stability of each local community. This is a long-term commitment. Investment in children begins at the earliest stages of life, their prenatal care and each step of development following birth.

A recent report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "A Good Beginning" cites that current factors linked to school failure include low birth rate, poor day care, abuse, neglect, poor parenting and early behavioral problems. Solving these problems requires collaborative work among systems, communities and families. As parents are nurtured and encouraged to believe and accept that they are their child's first and most significant teachers, they stand the chance of becoming more empowered to better understand their essential role in this effort. Community involvement in literacy programs, parent education, mentoring opportunities and other family support services are some examples of ways to help families achieve this goal.

**How can families and community members work together to create the changes that will help prepare young children be ready to experience school success? Consider a few possibilities:**

- Strive to develop quality child care programs with competitive teacher salaries and benefits.
- Create within the workplace flexible, family friendly policies to help parents better guide and nurture their children.
- Encourage families and community members to get involved in their local schools early on by volunteering, joining parent/teacher organizations, participating in fundraising efforts or seeking ways to support the needs of classroom teachers.
- Listen to the valuable information families have to share about their own needs and desires for their children.

When North Carolina's ready schools, ready communities and ready families work together to embrace and celebrate ready children, we will see a day when the frightening statistics of early school failure begin to change.

*Find out what you as an individual or organization can be doing to contribute to the "Ready for School" effort in North Carolina by contacting your local child care center or local school. Your support will greatly enhance North Carolina's efforts to be "First in America" by 2010.*



## Parent Involvement Grants

by William T. Newkirk—Interim Executive Director, North Carolina Foundation for Public School Children; Associate Executive Director, North Carolina Association of Educators, NCPEN member

The North Carolina Foundation for Public School Children will again award a limited number of grants to low wealth schools or school districts to enhance parent involvement in their children's education. Any North Carolina Association for Education member may request such assistance for a school or district interested in working with improving the skills and/or knowledge of parents. All activities must be completed during the current fiscal year (July 1, 2000 - June 30, 2001). A short proposal explaining what is to be done, along with a projected budget showing how funds are to be used and the type of evaluation to be employed at the end, should be submitted to: William T. Newkirk, North Carolina Foundation for Public School Children, P.O. Box 27347, Raleigh, N.C. 27611.

## Membership

North Carolina Parenting Education Network is in the process of becoming an official nonprofit organization. If you or your organization is interested in promoting a professional level of parent education and enhancing parenting skills then you are eligible for membership. Membership dues are paid annually. There are two ways to become a member: 1) Individual: You can pay \$10 for an individual membership and receive voting privileges and 4 issues of the NCPEN newsletter each year or 2) Organizational: You submit \$25 for your local organization and receive one voting benefit plus 200 issues of the NCPEN newsletter (more will be available for a fee). Please visit the NCPEN website at [www.ncpen.org](http://www.ncpen.org) to view a copy of the NCPEN bylaws and read more information on membership.

*NCPEN Newsletter Coordinator: Stephanie Moore. To share your comments, please e-mail Stephanie at: [ncpennews@ivillage.com](mailto:ncpennews@ivillage.com).*

# North Carolina's Rated License: What Does Compliance History Mean?

by Janice Fain—

N.C. Division of Child Development

When parents take their children to child care every morning, they expect their children will be safe while they are there. They expect the teachers to supervise and take care of their children. They assume that their children will play, rest and be served healthy food. Certainly every child care program should be doing these things each day, and most do more.

Your provider must follow health and safety requirements in order to operate a child care center or family child care home. Child care centers must pass building, safety and health inspections. Child care teachers must have training in child development and may only take care of a certain number of children. These are some of the child care licensing requirements that are checked in the compliance history of the new star-rated license.

(The other areas evaluated in the rated license are staff education and program standards.)

Child care consultants from the Division of Child Development visit child care centers at least once a year to check whether they are following licensing requirements.

They do not have to tell the centers when they are coming for this visit. Consultants also visit centers when they receive complaints that programs are not meeting licensing regulations or when there are complaints of child abuse or neglect. During these visits, the consultants document any failure to meet requirements.

The results of the consultants' visits, including outcomes of complaint investigations, are summarized and kept in public files at the Division's

office in Raleigh. Anyone may visit the Division to see these files, or may call the Division at 1-800-859-0829 (in-state calls only) to ask for copies of this information. You can also e-mail your request for this information at [www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/search/rrform.htm](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/search/rrform.htm). (There is no charge for up to 150 copied pages.)

The Division uses the results of the consultants' visits to child care centers to calculate compliance history scores. This is done by reviewing the number and types of requirements that were not met over the past three years. If centers have been open for three years, their compliance is checked for the length of time they have been operating. Compliance with supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications and health and safety requirements are included in the review, and a percentage is calculated showing the rate of compliance. A higher percentage means a higher rate of compliance. Centers earn one to five points in the rated license for maintaining a history of compliance ranging from 60 percent to 80 percent.

The compliance histories of family child care homes are considered differently. Instead of calculating a percentage of compliance, the number of substantiated complaints, complaints that have been investigated and found to be true, will be counted. The

fewer substantiated complaints over the past three years, the more points homes can earn for their compliance histories.

Most child care programs do a great job of following licensing requirements, and most centers have compliance history scores that are well over 80 percent. When your center or family child care home gets its star license, check to see how many points were earned for compliance history. Earning more points in this area means that your child care



## Upcoming Events

**Limit Setting & Anger Management with Children and Adolescents**, October 13, Greenville, N.C., *For more information call: 252-816-8214*

**Our Children in a Global World Making the Connection**, The National Black Child Development Institute, October 10-13, Washington, D.C., *For more information call 202-387-1281 or 1-800-556-2234 or email: [moreinfo@nbcdi.org](mailto:moreinfo@nbcdi.org)*

**9th Annual Healthy Carolinians Conference**, October 17- 18, Raleigh, N.C., *For information call (919) 715- 0423*


**North Carolina Center for Non-profits**, October 19-20, Raleigh, N.C., *For more information visit: [www.ncnonprofits.org](http://www.ncnonprofits.org)*

**School Readiness Conference**, October 21, Winston-Salem, N.C., *For more information contact: Remona Ramsey-Brooks at: 333-725-6011*

**10th Annual NC Assistive Technology Expo**, November 30- December 1, Raleigh, N.C., *For more information call: (919) 872-2298*

**Regional Fatherhood Summits, Governor's Commission on Responsible Fatherhood**, 6 sites across the state during October and December, *For more information and details please contact Sally Sloop at 919-821-9576*

provider has worked hard to keep children safe and healthy.

Maintaining good compliance is one part of the new star-rated license. The program standards and staff education of child care programs are also assessed. Up to five points can be earned in each of these areas. The total number of points a program earns determines its star rating. 

*For more information on the star rated license, visit the Division of Child Development website at [www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd)*


## FAST Training Expands to Seven Counties, Families and Schools Together boosts school success, reduces risk

In the midst of rising concerns about barriers to academic achievement, 150 families in seven North Carolina counties have an opportunity to boost school success and strengthen family connections through FAST: Families and Schools Together. FAST, a research-based family support program, is successful in helping TANF families develop protective practices against potential violence, delinquency and substance use. National groups including the U.S. Department of Education, the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services acclaim FAST as an effective prevention program.

In North Carolina, FAST will be implemented in Buncombe, Durham, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, McDowell, Rowan and Wayne counties. FAST is delivered through Communities In Schools of North Carolina, a statewide non-profit group that supports local CIS efforts to bring needed community resources into schools to help students stay in school, learn and prepare for life.

Support for FAST comes through the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, part of the federal block grants. CISNC has hired Jennifer Shaw as the FAST project director. Training for local FAST teams was held August 28 through 30 in Raleigh. Local FAST teams include a parent partner, a school partner, a substance use professional, a mental health worker and a social worker.

This fall, FAST team members will make home visits to invite school-identified families to participate in eight weekly sessions of carefully crafted, structured family activities. Following graduation, the families join an on-

going, school-based community group of 30 to 50 interdependent families that meet once a month for two years. Expected outcomes for the program include enhanced cognitive development activities for pre-school age children, reduction of dangers to child and family safety, and increased evidence of self-discipline, responsibility and personal motivation. 

*If you would like more information about the FAST program, please call Jennifer Straw at 919-832-2700.*

## North Carolina Public Schools Receive High Marks

by Dr. Michael Ward—State Superintendent, Public Schools of North Carolina

Your children were not the only ones who were graded this year. North Carolina's public schools also received grades, and according to the Carolina Poll, most of our state's citizens give the public schools high marks for the job they are doing.

North Carolina residents were asked to grade their schools and more than 50 percent (52.3) said they would give the public schools in their communities a grade of A or B. Another 26 percent would give the grade of C. In total, more than three-fourths of those polled (78 percent) would give public schools in their communities a C or above. According to the Carolina Poll analysts, "North Carolinians appear to be generally satisfied with the public schools in this state."

This question and four other education-related questions were included in the Carolina Poll, a semi-annual poll of North Carolina residents conducted by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Odum Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The responses to these questions provide invaluable feedback to us regarding how public schools are perceived and whether the community supports the direction the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction have chosen to improve public schools. The

direction includes an emphasis on accountability for districts, schools and students. This year's results are compared to 1997, the last time these education questions were asked.

I am especially pleased that North Carolinians recognize the fact that standards are being raised in our state and that our schools are safe places for children.

When asked if student achievement standards were too high, about right, or too low, 44 percent of respondents said that student achievement standards were about right.

Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of North Carolinians said that school violence is not very serious or is not a problem. I am encouraged by these numbers, particularly in light of all the media attention brought by the Columbine tragedy and the other school shootings. I know that schools are some of the safest places for children, and citizens increasingly appear to share this belief.

Once again, citizens were asked if they supported using public funds to help students pay for private schools. A majority of North Carolinians continues to oppose such a measure (55 percent). Thirty-three percent favor such use of public funds—a decrease of five percent since 1997.

The final question related to how North Carolina's public school system should be improved either by reforming the existing system or by considering an alternative system. Respondents could also state that no major changes were necessary. The majority (62 percent) supported reforming the existing system while only 19 percent suggested finding an alternative system. Thirteen percent felt that no major changes were necessary.

All of these numbers show that North Carolina public schools are on the right track, and that citizens recognize what we already know: We have good public schools that are only getting better.

Thank you for your support of the schools and for the many ways in which PTA members are enriching the learning experiences of our children. 