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Smart Start Presents: The Basics NC and The Basics Insights to Support Families During the First Five Years

Bringing science-backed, everyday strategies, and free text message support to families with young children across North Carolina

[Raleigh, NC] — June 26, 2026—The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), through the Smart Start Network, is proud to announce The Basics North Carolina (The Basics NC). The Basics NC is a statewide effort to use a public health approach to share Five Basics Principles that nurture healthy brain development in the first 2000 days.

The Basics NC shares five simple, research-backed principles with families, caregivers, and communities that help turn everyday moments into opportunities for learning, connection, and growth.

The Basics NC helps families build on what they are already doing by reinforcing simple interactions that support healthy development during everyday routines and experiences.

“The first five years of life are a critical window for growth and development,” said Amy Cabbage, President of the North Carolina Partnership for Children. “By reinforcing simple, research-backed practices in everyday moments, we can help ensure that every child enters school healthy, supported, and ready to succeed.”

The Basics NC helps families build on what they are already doing by reinforcing simple interactions that support healthy development during everyday routines and experiences.

The Basics Principles are:

- Maximize Love, Manage Stress
- Talk, Sing, and Point

The North Carolina Partnership for Children

1100 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh, NC 27604 – info@smartstart.org – 919.821.7999

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- Count, Group, and Compare
- Explore Through Movement and Play
- Read and Discuss Stories

“The Basics NC is built around an important idea: small moments build big futures,” said Carey Ann Watkins, Basics NC Director. “Parents and caregivers are already creating meaningful opportunities for learning through conversations, play, reading, and connection. The Basics NC helps strengthen those everyday interactions and creates a shared language for communities to support families.”

The Basics NC is designed as a community-wide movement and public health strategy that integrates into spaces families already visit and trust. Libraries, healthcare providers, child care centers, schools, employers, businesses, faith organizations, and community partners all have a role to play in supporting children and families.

“Children’s brains are built in relationships and environments,” said Watkins. “When communities consistently reinforce these messages and support families where they are, children have stronger opportunities to thrive.”

The initiative includes a public awareness campaign and also includes **The Basics Insights**, a free text-message resource for families with children from birth to age five. Families enrolled in The Basics Insights receive age-based messages each week with practical activities and information designed to help turn everyday interactions into opportunities for growth and connection.

The Basics Insights provides:

- Science-based tips tailored to a child’s age and developmental stage
- Practical ideas families can use immediately
- North Carolina-specific resources and supports
- Ongoing guidance from birth through age five

Research from The Basics Insights participants found:

- 97% of parents reported the messages helped them think more about supporting their child's learning
- 84% reported using most or all messages they received

Families and organizations interested in learning more about The Basics NC or bringing the initiative to their communities can visit

<http://www.smartstart.org/the-basics>

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About The Basics NC

The Basics NC is a statewide initiative and public health approach designed to equip families, caregivers, and communities with simple, science-based strategies that nurture healthy brain development in young children.

Through five powerful principles, The Basics NC supports strong relationships, early learning, and lifelong success. This initiative was made possible through [Invest Early NC](#). Families and caregivers can explore [The Basics NC here](#). Families can sign up for [The Basics Insights NC here](#).

About Smart Start and NCPC

Smart Start is a statewide network of 75 local partnerships serving all 100 North Carolina counties with a mission to advance a high-quality, comprehensive, accountable early childhood system that benefits each child in North Carolina beginning with a healthy birth. Led by NCPC, this network ensures fiscal and programmatic accountability. For more information, visit www.smartstart.org.