



The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.

2012 Toolkit for Educating Political Candidates and Elected Representatives

Political candidates and elected leaders are public employees working on behalf of their constituents. They want to hear from you. They need your help to be well informed and make decisions that are in the best interest of their communities. When they don't hear from people about a particular issue, they often conclude that it is not important.

The needs of children are non-partisan. It is critical that we educate all candidates and elected leaders about early childhood issues in a thoroughly non-partisan environment.

The following four goals informed the development of this toolkit.

- ❖ Candidates understand the value of early education and the roles of Smart Start and NC PreK.
- ❖ Members of the General Assembly understand the value of early education and the roles of Smart Start and NC PreK.
- ❖ Voters are engaged in early education as an issue.
- ❖ Early education supporters go to the polls.

Please note this toolkit does not encompass NCPC's entire comprehensive plan, nor is it exhaustive. It provides a baseline of activities for local partnerships. We have created a group on the Online Learning Community named, "Educating Political Candidates." Please join the group to share your experiences, successes and expertise with your colleagues.

Key Dates

Smart Start Executive Director Roundtable.....	September 12, 2012
National Voter Registration Day	September 25, 2012
Gubernatorial Debate	October 3, 2012
Deadline to Register to Vote.....	October 12, 2012
Gubernatorial Debate	October 16, 2012
Gubernatorial Debate	October 24, 2012
Election Day	November 6, 2012
Regional Business Forums.....	Mid November 2012*
General Assembly Convenes.....	January 9, 2013

** Part of our Z. Smith Reynolds's grant focuses on business outreach, including hosting four forums across the state for business leaders. These will be small gatherings to make the business case for supporting early education and encourage active support. We are very fortunate that Bill Shore has agreed to serve as honorary chair of this effort and will be attending each of the four forums, which will be held in Asheville, Charlotte, Fayetteville, and Greenville.*

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Messaging

The “First 2,000 Days” messaging has proven to be simple to grasp and appealing to a wide range of audiences. Key points include:

- We have only 2,000 days between the time a baby is born and when that child begins kindergarten.
- Experiences during these 2,000 days have a lasting impact on later learning, health and success.
- Children’s earliest experiences determine how their brains are wired; lay the groundwork for future health; and form the foundation of the social and emotional skills needed for academic and workplace success.
- With quality early childhood education, children will be school ready; have higher graduation rates and grow into productive citizens and valuable employees.
- A child’s quality of life and the contributions he or she will make to society can be directly traced to the first few years of life.
- Early childhood investments produced sustained results at the local, state, and national level and are critical to keeping the United States competitive in a global market.

Please refer to the website, www.first2000days.org, for more information and encourage others to use it as a resource. NCPC will be developing a fact sheet using this messaging and The First 2,000 brand, and will let you know when it is available.

Pre-Election Activity

Host a Meet-the-Candidate Event

This section includes the following:

- Guidelines for Hosting Events
- Overview of Tasks to Complete in Advance of the Event
- Additional Resources
- Sample Candidate Email Invitation
- Sample Confirmation Letter
- Sample Invitation
- Sample Agenda
- Sample Alert

Guidelines for Hosting Events

Candidate forums must be non-partisan. Therefore, be certain to:

- Only use private funds! You may **not** use state funds to pay for the event.
- Invite all candidates and treat them alike. This includes invitation and follow-up, the information you provide in advance, the questions they are asked, and the opportunities they have to respond.
- Do not intervene, directly or indirectly, in the campaign on behalf of a particular candidate or party. Nothing you do at the event can show preference for one candidate over another.
- Provide equal time. All candidates should be given equal time unless the format specifically states that equal time is not guaranteed. The candidates should be aware of the format and document their consent.
- Review the IRS rules at <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=154712,00.html>
- Avoid partisan literature. Do not hand out any candidate literature.
- Do not make the event a fund-raiser.

Overview of Tasks to Complete in Advance of the Event

1) **Identify your candidates.**

Smart Start has posted a list of all candidates running for the North Carolina General Assembly. It is available at <http://learn.smartstartinc.net/groups/profile/5913/educating-political-candidates>.

2) **Select a date and time.**

Most candidate events are held between Labor Day and Election Day [November 6, 2012]. The event should last no more than 90 minutes, and the candidates may or may not stay for the entire time.

3) **Invite the candidates.**

Begin by calling each candidate's campaign headquarters. Note the name of the person you speak with for follow-up purposes. Provide the date, time, probable audience for the event, and outline the format. Emphasize why you believe it is important for the candidate to attend the event.

Follow up your call with an email invitation that goes to all candidates [*see sample candidate email invitation*]. This is important so you can document that you invited all candidates to participate.

4) Send confirmation.

Once you've gotten an agreement to attend [which may take several calls], confirm the commitment with a letter that details the format [*see sample letter*]. It's also wise to place a reminder call a day or two before the event. Please note the *sample confirmation letter* references the document *The Science of Early Childhood Development*. This can be downloaded online at http://developingchild.harvard.edu/download_file/-/view/64/. And it references *Unfinished Business: Continued Investment in Child Care and Early Education is Critical to Business and America's Future*. This can be downloaded online at http://www.ced.org/images/content/issues/earlyeducation/UnfinishedBusiness_ExecSumLO.pdf.

5) Recruit a facilitator.

Find a business person to serve as the forum facilitator. This could be someone in the community or a business person who serves on your board. The business community has the ear of candidates and elected officials and is viewed as a credible messenger on early childhood issues.

6) Pick a location.

If possible, host the event at your partnership. Other options include a community center, school, library or town hall.

7) Invite guests.

Candidates will be most interested in meeting potential constituents — especially if those constituents also are opinion leaders. Opinion leaders are people who are active in community affairs and are thus in a position to influence the opinions of others. For example, many of you have relationships with your Chambers of Commerce and your local newspaper. Invite the Chamber President and the paper's editor.

After you have set the date and finalized your guest list, send invitations as early as possible [*see sample invitation*]. Also, announce publicly so that anyone in the community may attend. If you have email addresses for many of your guests, consider using www.evite.com. It will simplify the RSVP process. Also, consider creating a Facebook event page to generate publicity.

8) Put together an agenda.

Keep control of the proceedings by having an agenda that outlines who will speak, when, and what they will cover. Give everyone a chance to mingle and then introduce the candidates to your guests. The candidates' campaign office will provide you with the candidate's biography. [*See sample agenda.*]

9) Remind your guests to attend.

Never assume that someone will attend an event just because they said so. To ensure the best turnout possible, phone your list of invitees the week before, remind them of the event, and stress that their attendance is important.

10) Invite the media.

Candidates want as much media coverage as possible. Likewise, we want the media paying attention to early childhood issues. Send a media alert [*see sample alert*] out to local press a few days prior to the event. After the event, send a press release.

11) Arrange to photograph and videotape the event.

Appoint someone on staff to videotape the event. This will allow you to post the video online and share the candidates' positions with more people. Someone else should take photographs.

12) Make nametags.

Facilitate conversation and introductions by providing attendees with printed nametags. Be sure to have blank tags and a marker for others who show up.

13) Provide informational materials.

These events are the perfect venue to share information about The First 2,000 Days. You also may wish to share information about young children in your county.

Follow up

After the event, send written thank-you notes to each candidate.

Additional Resources

- A Nonprofit Guide to Hosting a Candidate Forum: <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/download-document/hosting-a-candidate-forum-english.html>
- Hosting a Candidate Forum Webinar: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYJR26NHaWE&feature=plcp&context=C3c4238aUDOEgsToPDskJPPQUhsv0mtCCMJ4W0iMU>
- FAQs: Candidate Forums-Debates: <http://www.lwv.org/content/faqs-candidate-forums-debates>

Sample Candidate Email Invitation

Dear [Name of Candidate]:

On behalf of the [Name of Partnership], I would like to invite you to attend our “Meet-the-Candidates” Event on [date] at [time] at [place].

Our community cares deeply about our young children and wants all of them to have the opportunity to succeed.

As I mentioned on the phone, we have invited all of the candidates running to represent our district in the General Assembly to this event. Each candidate will have approximately 5 minutes to speak about his/her perspective on early childhood priorities followed by a brief question and answer session with attendees. There will be plenty of opportunity for candidates to mingle with guests.

As a reminder, this event is being paid for with private funding.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Partnership]

Sample Confirmation Letter

Dear [Name of Campaign Manager]:

I am delighted that [candidate's name] has agreed to attend the "Meet-the-Candidates" Event hosted by [Name of Partnership]. The event will take place on [date] at [time] at [place]. Directions to [place] are enclosed.

As we discussed, we have invited all of the candidates running to represent our district in the General Assembly to this event. Each candidate will have approximately 5 minutes to speak about his/her perspective on early childhood priorities followed by a brief question and answer session with attendees. There will be plenty of opportunity for candidates to mingle with guests.

To assist [name of candidate] in preparing for the event, I have enclosed the following documents:

- *The Science of Early Childhood Development*
- *Unfinished Business: Continued Investment in Child Care and Early Education is Critical to Business and America's Future*
- List other materials you plan to include. Keep it to a minimum so as not to overwhelm the candidate.

As a reminder, this event is being paid for with private funding.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you should have questions or suggestions. We look forward to a very enjoyable and successful event.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Partnership]

Sample Invitation

Meet the Candidates Early Childhood Forum

Come meet the people who may be making decisions for your future.
Candidates will share their perspectives on early childhood priorities.

[Day, Date]

[Times]

[Place]

Hosted by the [Name of the Partnership]

Invited attendees include:

House of Representatives Candidates

List Names

Senate Candidates

List Names

This event is being paid for with private funding.

Sample Agenda

- I. Networking
- II. Welcome, Opening Comments and Introduction of Candidates
 - a. This should be done by the facilitator, preferably a business person. [5 minutes]
- III. Candidate Presentations [5 minutes each]
 - a. Each candidate should talk about his/her perspective on early childhood priorities.
 - b. Use a fair method to determine the order of presentations (e.g., flip a coin).
- IV. Q& A with Candidates [10 minutes]
 - a. Use a fair method to determine the order candidates answer the first question (e.g., flip a coin) and then rotate the order for each question.
- V. Wrap-up by Facilitator
 - a. Remember, the wrap-up may not appear in anyway to endorse a candidate.
- VI. Meet and Greets between Candidates and Guests

This event is being paid for with private funding.

Sample Alert

MEDIA ALERT

General Assembly Candidates to Attend Forum to Discuss Early Childhood Priorities

On [DATE] candidates running to represent [name of county] in the North Carolina General Assembly will attend an early childhood forum hosted by [Name of Partnership]. Candidates have been asked to share their perspectives on early childhood priorities.

WHAT: [Name of Partnership]'s Hosts Meet the Candidates Early Childhood Forum

WHEN: [Date]
[Time]

WHERE: [Location]

WHO: [List Names of Candidates to Attend]

This event is being paid for with private funding.

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Pre-Election Activity

Ask Gubernatorial Candidates to Include Early Childhood in Debate

Out of more than 1,000 questions asked during 20 primary presidential debates there was not one on early childhood education. We want to do better in North Carolina. NCPC will continue to reach out to debate hosts and the campaigns to ask them to address early childhood. **You can:**

- **Sign the petition.** The First 2,000 Days website features a petition challenging our gubernatorial candidates to speak to early childhood education issues as part of their campaigns and to devote a portion of at least one debate to the topic. Be sure to sign it!
http://action.first2000days.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=7937

- **Post the following on Facebook.** Zero. Out of more than 1,000 questions asked during 20 primary presidential debates there was not one on early childhood education. We in North Carolina can do better. Sign the petition challenging our gubernatorial candidates to speak to early childhood education issues as part of their campaigns and to devote a portion of at least one debate to the topic.

- **Email your network.** Sample language follows.

Zero. Out of more than 1,000 questions asked during 20 primary presidential debates there was not one on early childhood education. We in North Carolina can do better. We challenge our gubernatorial candidates to speak to early childhood education issues as part of their campaigns and to devote a portion of at least one debate to the topic.

There is urgency to the issue. There are only 2,000 days between the time a baby is born and when that child shows up for the first day of kindergarten. Children's experiences during these 2,000 days have a lasting impact on later learning, health and success. These experiences determine how children's brains are wired; lay the groundwork for future health; and form the foundation of the social and emotional skills needed for academic and workplace success.

Join us in asking all candidates to share their plan to ensure that children start school prepared for success; succeed in school; and have the opportunity to reach their full potential?

Sign the petition!

Pre-Election Activity

Share Voter Registration Information

Registering to vote is the first step toward becoming an active and engaged voter, and is a gateway to other forms of civic participation. Nonprofits are trusted and respected community institutions with frequent face-to-face contact with clients and constituents, allowing them to individuals who are often overlooked by campaigns and political parties.

—Nonprofit Vote

- **Order FREE posters from Nonprofit Vote to display in the public areas of your office.**
http://www.nonprofitvote.org/index.php?option=com_civicrm&view=Profiles&Itemid=166
- **Share voter registration information with your network.** Two online resources are:
 - <https://ssl.capwiz.com/greybird/e4/nvra/?language=en&action=form&state=NC>
 - <http://first2000days.org/meet-candidates>.

Pre-Election Activity

Post Early Childhood Questions on Candidate Facebook Pages

Because Facebook Pages are open to the public, candidates often feel compelled to respond to comments. In addition, it catches people's attention when numerous comments are posted on the same topic.

Two lists of NC Candidates Facebook Pages are posted in the online learning community at <http://learn.smartstartinc.net/file/group/5913/all>. They are titled *Facebook Pages for 2012 Candidates for NC Senate* and *Facebook Pages for 2012 NC House of Representatives*.

Guidelines for Posting

- As with all education efforts, be certain that you post on each candidate that has a page.
- The goal is to educate, not to be confrontational or political.
- If others post negative responses to your post, do not engage in arguing. Continue to educate and provide facts only.

Sample Posts

- What is your plan to ensure that children start school prepared for success; succeed in school; and have the opportunity to reach their full potential?
- Did you know that there are only 2,000 days from the time a baby is born to when that child begins kindergarten? Learn more about why early care and learning are so important at www.first2000days.org.

- Children’s earliest experiences determine how their brains are wired; lay the groundwork for future health; and form the foundation of the social and emotional skills needed for academic and workplace success. What are your priorities for our young children?
- With quality early childhood education, children will be school ready; have higher graduation rates and grow into productive citizens and valuable employees. Will you support efforts to ensure high quality early learning?

Ongoing Activity

Host a Tour

A tour of a Smart Start local partnership provides policymakers with an experience that they can take with them when they head to Raleigh that is much more meaningful than a fact sheet. The advantage of hosting a tour prior to the election is that candidates are seeking opportunities to engage with voters and therefore tend to be more responsive. Whether it's before or after the election, imagine the impact Smart Start could have if every Member of the General Assembly had a better understanding of our work.

This section includes the following:

- Description of Tour
- Guidelines for Hosting Events
- Overview of Tasks to Complete in Advance of the Event
- Sample Candidate Email Invitation
- Sample Confirmation Letter

Additional Resources

- Candidate Appearances at Your Nonprofit Event: <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/download-document/candidate-appearances-at-your-nonprofit-event.html>
- How to Plan a Site Visit: <http://zttcfncnvio.net/site/DocServer/SiteVisitFinal.pdf?docID=3521>

Description of Tour

If possible, the tour should include the Local Partnership office and a 4- or 5-star child care program that has received Smart Start services. If time permits for only one venue, limit the tour to the partnership.

Participants will vary by circumstances. If you host the tour before the election, include the Executive Director, Board Chair, and one or two board members with a business background.

If you host the tour for a candidate that is running unopposed or after the election, include the Executive Director, Board Chair, and two or three people close to the representative or candidate.

When the candidates or representative arrive at the office, walk them around the building. Introduce them to each staff person and explain what he/she does and what it actually means for children and the community. Show them the different functions of the partnership and emphasize how the work is coordinated within Smart Start and across different community entities.

Following the tour of the building, spend about 20 minutes describing the work of the partnership and its impact on the local community.

If you plan to tour a child care program, make sure that the director and any teachers you might interact with have a good understanding of how their program has benefited from Smart Start. Use this opportunity to provide tangible evidence of Smart Start's work.

Overview of Tasks to Complete in Advance of the Event

1) Identify your candidates.

Smart Start has posted a list of all candidates running for the North Carolina General Assembly. It is available at <http://learn.smartstartinc.net/groups/profile/5913/educating-political-candidates>.

2) Select a date and time.

If including a tour of a child care program, coordinate with the program to ensure that you will arrive at a time when children will be awake and engaged in an activity. In addition, confirm that the program has photo release forms for the children so that pictures of the candidates or representatives may be taken.

3) Invite the candidates or policymakers.

Begin by calling each candidate's campaign headquarters or representative's office. Note the name of the person you speak with for follow-up purposes. Provide the date, time, and probable participants, and outline the agenda. Emphasize why you believe it is important for the candidate or representative to tour a Smart Start local partnership.

If doing the tour prior to the election, follow up your call with an email invitation that goes to all candidates [see *sample candidate email invitation*]. This is important so that you can document that you invited all candidates to participate.

4) Send confirmation.

Once you've gotten an agreement to attend [which may take several calls], confirm the commitment with a letter [see *sample letter*]. It's also wise to place a reminder call a day or two before the event.

5) Invite guests.

Keep it to a small group of people. Participants will vary by circumstances. If you host the tour before the election, include the Executive Director, Board Chair, and one or two board members with a business background. If you host the tour for a candidate that is running unopposed or after the election, include the Executive Director, Board Chair, and two or three people close to the representative or candidate.

6) Put together an internal agenda.

See content above under Description of Tour.

7) Remind your guests to attend.

Never assume that someone will attend an event just because they said so. Phone your list of invitees the week before, remind them of the event, and stress that their attendance is important.

8) Arrange to photograph the event.

Appoint someone on staff to photograph the candidates or representatives at your offices. This will allow you to post photos online and share them with the candidates or representatives. Remember to have photo release forms if you go to a child care program.

9) Make nametags.

Facilitate conversation and introductions by providing attendees with printed nametags.

10) Provide informational materials.

These events are the perfect venue to share information about The First 2,000 Days. You also should share information about young children in your county, including your annual report.

Follow up

After the event, send written thank-you notes to each candidate or representative. Be sure to address any questions raised during the tour.

Sample Candidate Email Invitation

Dear [Name of Candidate/Representative]:

On behalf of the [Name of Partnership], I would like to invite you learn more about Smart Start and why early learning is so important to the future of our community. Please join [Name of Participants] on [date] at [time] at [place]. [Following our meeting at [place] , we will tour [Name of Child Care Program].]

We have only 2,000 days between the time a baby is born and when that child begins kindergarten. Experiences during these 2,000 days have a lasting impact on later learning, health and success. With quality early childhood education, children will be school ready; have higher graduation rates and grow into productive citizens and valuable employees. Our community cares deeply about our young children and wants all of them to have the opportunity to succeed.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Partnership]

Sample Confirmation Letter

Dear [Name of Candidate/Representative]:

I am delighted that you will join us to learn more about Smart Start [and tour Name of Child Care Program] on [date] at [time] at [place]. Directions to [place] are enclosed.

I have enclosed the following documents that may be of interest:

- *The Science of Early Childhood Development*
- *Unfinished Business: Continued Investment in Child Care and Early Education is Critical to Business and America's Future*
- List other materials you plan to include. Keep it to a minimum so as not to overwhelm the candidate.

As a reminder, this meeting is being paid for with private funding.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you should have questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Partnership]

Ongoing Activity

Collect Postcards

Our goal is to constantly remind candidates and elected officials that their constituents care about early childhood issues and want young children to be a policy priority. NCPC has updated the First 2,000 Days postcard (see image below). Ask parents, child care providers, business leaders, and others in your community to fill them out. Then mail one a day to your candidates and elected representatives. Remember to capture the contact information for future engagement.



Ongoing Activity

Host Introductory Meetings

Call and congratulate your elected officials. Schedule meetings with each of your representatives (new and old) before Christmas. These meetings should be used to get a sense of where members stand and provide an initial opportunity for educating them. If you met with your representative-elect before the election this meeting will provide a great opportunity to refresh the representative-elect on previous lessons and take his or her level of knowledge about early childhood education to the next level.

Ongoing Activity

Build Relationships

Launch your own speaking tour. Make the case for early childhood to as many groups as possible and encourage people to contact their representatives and ask them to support early learning. Groups to target include:

- Civic groups (Rotary Club, Junior League, Jaycees, etc.)
- League of Women Voters
- Faith Communities
- Education Sororities such as Delta Kappa Gamma- retired educators
- Colleges/Universities- sororities such as Kappa Delta Pi-
- Pediatricians
- Kindergarten teachers
- Dentists
- Hospitals
- Librarians

Ongoing Activity

Work with Local Chambers of Commerce

Ask your local Chamber of Commerce to include early learning funding for Smart Start and NC PreK on their legislative agenda. Meet with your local Chamber of Commerce as early as possible as they are working on these agendas now.

Ongoing Activity

Meet with Editorial Boards

Meet with the editorial board of your local paper. Present the First 2,000 days messaging. The goal is to have as many editorials as possible calling for support of early learning.