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SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS NEWSLETTER

First-Graders Earn Record Scores in Readiness

South Carolina first-graders continued their record-breaking improvement on school readiness tests last fall, setting a fourth consecutive record, State Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum announced. As in previous years, the biggest improvements were made by minority students and students from low-income families.

More than 52,000 first-graders took the *Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery* (CSAB) at the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, Tenenbaum said. More than 44,000 of those first-graders—a record 83.9 percent—met the state's readiness standard. That's a 2.7 percentage point improvement from 1998 and a whopping 12 percentage point improvement from 1995, the year before the state began a three-year phase-in of full-day kindergarten.

Tenenbaum said the steady improvement of first-grade readiness scores over the past four years should erase any lingering doubts about the value of early childhood education.

"We know from research that students who come to school ready to learn have a much better chance of being successful throughout their academic careers," Tenenbaum said. "The remarkable increases in CSAB scores reflect a lot of dedication and hard work, but we can't be satisfied with 83.9 percent scoring ready. We will redouble our efforts to ensure that ***all*** first-graders, 100 percent of them, come to school prepared. More improvements are ahead."

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First Steps Training Conference

Enthusiasm and spirit were in the air when over 800 First Steps county partnership board members assembled at the Palmetto Expo Center in Greenville for the First Steps Training Conference February 29 and March 1. The primary purpose of the two-day conference was to provide First Steps county partnership boards with the knowledge and skills needed to complete the Level Two application and begin the implementation phase of the First Steps initiative. Members of the First Steps State Board of Trustees and Community Advisory Board and representatives from partner agencies also attended the conference.

Each day there were nationally known speakers and training sessions. Keynote addresses were delivered by Dr. Joan Lombardi, a national leading expert on child care and other early childhood issues; Dr. Wil Blechman, a founder of the worldwide program *Young Children: Priority One,* which focuses on children from before birth through age five; Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan, Senior Associate at Yale University's Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy; and Wally Amos, board member for the National Center for Family Literacy and Communities in Schools and inventor of "Famous Amos" cookies.

Concurrent training sessions were held each day and included best practices in early education, children's health, parenting and child care; creating the right environment for families; non-profit board development; and fiscal management and accountability.

Governor Hodges and Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum also addressed conference attendees. "In five years, we have scored 12 percent higher in school readiness. These steady improvements ought to be the proof that early childhood education is necessary. We've made marvelous strides but we have so far to go," said Governor Hodges.

"We thought the conference was very informative," said Greenwood County First Steps Partnership Chair Thessa Smith. "Our group attended the non-profit board development workshop and it was excellent. I think it is a must for all board members to receive."

"I really enjoyed the conference," said Lee County First Steps Partnership Board Chair Cody Carlton. "Everything was wonderful. It was full of so much information, I just wished it lasted another day."

The Office of First Steps thanks its agency sponsors for their support of the conference: Center for Child Care Career Development, S.C. Department of Education, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, S.C. Department of Health and Human Services, and S.C. Department of Social Services.

Additionally, a big thank you goes to Krista Kustra and her staff at the Center for Child Care Career Development for their hard work in organizing the conference. We could not have done it without you.

[2] Special thanks to those people who worked so hard to make the First Steps Training Conference a huge success.

Governor Hodges always reads to children at First Steps funding announcements.

In the News

State Survey Focuses on Child Care Providers

A survey of all child care providers in South Carolina who are registered, licensed, or enrolled in the ABC Child Care Voucher Program will be conducted during spring 2000. Providers will receive a phone call from a person representing the ABC Child Care Program of the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services asking them to take 10 minutes to answer some questions about the work that they do.

The answers that child care providers give to the survey questions are particularly important, as they will help state policymakers consider how to better prepare young children for school, and how to help families who work and need quality child care. Additionally, the answers will help policymakers consider how to attract and retain caregivers to the child care field.

Please let child care providers in your area know about the survey, and ask them to pass the word on to other providers. It is important that providers take some time to talk with the phone interviewer. Any questions about the survey should be directed to the ABC Child Care Program at 800/763-ABCD.

Announced Corporate Contributions Top $4 Million

Corporations across South Carolina continue to show their support for the First Steps initiative. The most recent commitment of $500,000 from the SCANA Corporation brings the total announced corporate donations to $4.45 million.

"We are honored that these corporations have chosen to make these generous contributions to the First Steps initiative," Governor Jim Hodges said. "Their generosity will enable the children of South Carolina to begin school healthy and ready to learn."

The General Assembly appropriated $20 million in start-up funding last spring. As of this printing, announced corporate contributions to First Steps are as follows:

Bank of America | $1 Million
Carolina Power & Light | $500,000
Duke Energy Foundation | $550,000
SCANA Corporation | $500,000
Springs Foundation | $300,000
Springs Industries | $500,000
Springs Company | $200,000
Wachovia | $500,000
Westinghouse Savannah River Company | $400,000

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it is the *only* thing that ever has."
—Margaret Mead

Staff Spotlight

Rita Paul

Office of First Steps | Director of Technical Assistance

Rita Paul came on board the Office of First Steps as Director of Technical Assistance in August 1999. Rita has worked in state government for the last 26 years. Prior to coming to First Steps, she worked at SC Department of Health & Human Services, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, and SC Department of Social Services. Most recently, Rita managed program planning activities in the area of child care and developed and implemented a statewide quality child care public awareness campaign at SC DHHS.

Rita directed and managed the design and implementation of a statewide plan for responding to the training, consultation and technical assistance needs of communities at SC DHEC. She has also worked on issues effecting statewide primary prevention and community development at SC DHEC.

Rita has been a trainer for the Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE), Leadership for Collaboration; Healthy Communities Training from 1995 - 1997; and Planning Effectively for Resource Collaboration.

"I believe strongly in the wisdom of communities and that the most effective resources any community has can be found within that community," Rita said.

"First Steps offers communities an opportunity to truly collaborate toward the common goal — that all of South Carolina's children arrive at first grade ready to be successful. I am excited to be a part of such an important movement."

Rita has a two-year-old grandson in Anderson.

First Steps Georgetown County Partnership Liaison Tressa Devlin and Board Chair Desmond Phillips accept Level One grant award from Governor Jim Hodges.

Level One Planning Grants Awarded to First Steps County Partnerships

The First Steps Board of Trustees announced its first round of Level One planning grants in December to First Steps county partnership boards in Anderson, Clarendon, and Greenville counties. Since then eight additional county partnerships have been awarded Level One planning grants of up to $50,000 each. As of this printing, additional counties receiving Level One planning grants are: Allendale, Barnwell, Beaufort, Georgetown, Greenwood, Lancaster, McCormick, and Richland. Planning grants for the remaining counties will be awarded in the upcoming months.

The funds are being used by First Steps county partnership boards for development of the collaborative effort, needs and resources assessment, and strategic plan for the First Steps early childhood education initiative in each county.

"We are extremely pleased with the quality of the applications and the continuing enthusiasm we are seeing for First Steps," said First Steps Director Marie-Louise Ramsdale.

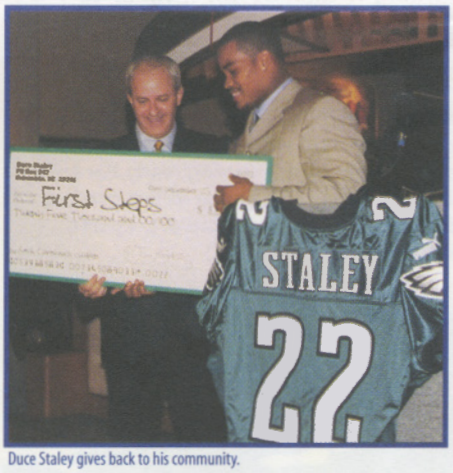
"We're thrilled to receive this grant award and to be able to begin our work to help children birth through five prepare to be successful in school," said First Steps Anderson County Partnership Board Chair Diane Mizzell. "It has been a lifelong dream for me to be able to help children and working with First Steps is a wonderful opportunity to do so."

Level Two implementation grants for early childhood initiatives will be awarded beginning in the late spring of 2000.

NFL's Staley Gives $25,000 to First Steps

Duce Staley, a former University of South Carolina running back now with the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, gave a substantial contribution to the First Steps initiative. Staley said his inspiration to give $25,000 back to the community through First Steps came from those who have helped him along his own educational path.

"Growing up in South Carolina, so many people touched my life in a positive way," Staley said. "Now that I'm able, I want to give back to South Carolina, to honor all the people who have given so much to me."



Duce Staley gives back to his community.

First Steps
County Forums "Round up"

UPDATED FROM LAST ISSUE

ABBEVILLE | Rep. Harry Stille welcomed about 50 Abbeville residents to the first countywide meeting.

BAMBERG | About 80 people attended the initial county meeting. Rep. Thomas Rhode was in attendance.

BARNWELL | 150 people attended the county forum. Sen. Brad Hutto and Rep. Lonnie Hosey were also present.

BERKELEY | Rep. Shirley Hinson convened the initial county meeting. Approximately 126 people were in attendance including Sen. William Mescher and Rep. James Law.

CALHOUN | Rep. Harry Ott convened the meeting of about 50 residents.

CHARLESTON | Approximately 200 people attended the county forum and elected the partnership board.

CHEROKEE | 100 people were in attendance at the initial meeting. Also in attendance were Sen. Harvey Peeler and Reps. Olin Phillips and Dewitt McCraw.

CHESTER | Sen. Linda Short welcomed about 50 people to the first county meeting. Rep. Greg Delleney was also in attendance.

CHESTERFIELD | Approximately 75 residents attended the meeting. Reps. C. Anthony Harris and Denny Neilson were in attendance.

DARLINGTON | 70 people attended the countywide meeting. Reps. Denny Neilson and Jay Lucas participated.

DILLON | The meeting was convened by Rep. Jackie Hayes and was attended by approximately 130 people.

DORCHESTER | Over 100 people attended the three organizational meetings held throughout the county.

FAIRFIELD | Rep. Tim Wilkes and Sen. Greg Gregory attended the meeting of 65 people.

FLORENCE | About 95 county residents attended the county meeting to elect a county board. Sen. Maggie Glover was in attendance. Nominations were taken from the floor and the board was elected.

GEORGETOWN | 100 people attended the meeting. In attendance were Reps. Ted Brown and Vida Miller.

GREENVILLE | Rep. Lewis Vaughn convened a meeting of approximately 120 people. Sen. Ralph Anderson was also in attendance.

GREENWOOD | Sen. John Drummond convened the meeting of about 150 residents of the county. Also in attendance were Reps. Anne Parks and Marion Carnell.

HAMPTON | 135 people attended the initial county meeting. Sen. Brad Hutto and Rep. Bill Bowers were in attendance.

KERSHAW | Approximately 35 people attended the first county meeting. Sen. Warren Giese made remarks.

LANCASTER | 320 people turned out for the first county meeting, convened by Sen. Greg Gregory. Reps. Eldridge Emory and Jimmy Neal were also in attendance.

LEXINGTON | 80 people were in attendance. Rep. Margaret Gamble gave remarks. Sen. Joe Wilson and Rep. Bill Riser were in attendance.

MARION | Rep. Jim Battle convened a meeting of approximately 300 people. The board was elected and Sen. Maggie Glover and Rep. Mack Hines were in attendance.

MARLBORO | Rep. Doug Jennings convened the first county meeting that was attended by 90 residents.

NEWBERRY | Rep. Walt McLeod made remarks at the meeting of approximately 75 people.

OCONEE | Sen. Tom Alexander convened a meeting of 100 people. Reps. Gresham Barrett and Bill Sandifer also attended.

ORANGEBURG | 60 people were in attendance. Sen. John Matthews convened the meeting.

RICHLAND | 155 people attended the county meeting. Sen. Kay Patterson along with Reps. James Smith, John Scott, Joe Brown and Bill Cotty were in attendance.

SALUDA | 60 people were in attendance. Reps. Anne Parks and Marion Frye gave the welcome and remarks.

SPARTANBURG | Rep. Rita Allison convened a meeting of 120 people. The meeting was also attended by Reps. Brenda Lee and Bob Walker.

UNION | Approximately 80 people attended a meeting convened by Rep. Ron Flemming. The group elected their partnership board that evening.

WILLIAMSBURG | About 140 people attended a meeting convened by Sen. Yancey McGill. Rep. Kenneth Kennedy attended as well.

YORK | Approximately 150 people attended the meeting. Reps. Herbert Kirsh and Bessie Moody-Lawrence were present.

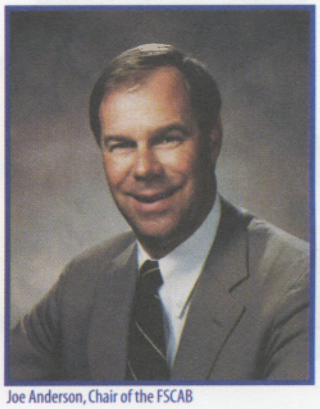
SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

Getting children ready for school.

Thanks to First Steps Community Advisory Board

The Office of First Steps commends the First Steps Community Advisory Board members for their continued support.

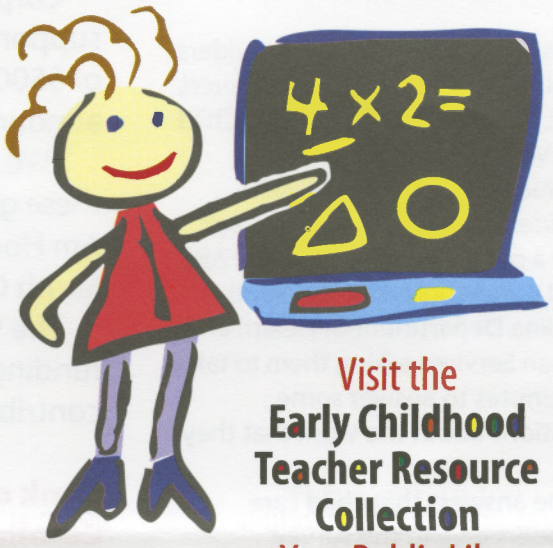
Governor Jim Hodges created the First Steps Community Advisory Board (FSCAB) to support and advise his innovative, results-oriented school readiness initiative. Members of the FSCAB include representatives of the business, not-for-profit, education and volunteer communities throughout South Carolina. The FSCAB is chaired by Joe Anderson, President, BellSouth (South Carolina).



Joe Anderson, Chair of the FSCAB

First Steps Community Advisory Board members are as follows:

Dolly Deselle Adams | Community volunteer, retired educator
Joe M. Anderson, Jr. | President, BellSouth
Betty Bagley | Superintendent, Bamberg School District One
James Bennett | Senior Vice President, First Citizens Bank & Trust
Evelyn Berry | Executive Director, SC School Boards Association
Charlotte Berry | Board Chair, United Way of SC
Myrna Bolden | Project Director, Beaufort Jasper Head Start
Crandall Bowles | Chair, President & CEO, Springs Industries
JoAnn Boyd-Scotland | President, Denmark Tech.
Zandra Cook | Principal, Easterling Primary School
Floyd Creech | Coordinator, Early Childhood, Florence School District One
Claudia Davant-DeLoach | Attorney-State Director, SC AT&T
Mary Lynne Diggs | Director, SC Head Start Collaboration Office
C. Morrison Farish | Chapter President, SC-American Academy of Pediatrics
Clente Flemming | President, Flemming Group, Inc.
Herman Gaither | Superintendent, Beaufort County School District
Beverly Gist | Infection Control Nurse, AME Zion Rep.
W.E. Givens | President, SC Baptist Church Association
Michelle Renee Green | Parent of young child
Jackie B. Hicks | President, SCEA
Anna Kate Hipp | Community volunteer
Clare Hodge | Coordinator, Early Childhood, Lexington School District One
Frank Holleman | Deputy Director, US Dept. of Education
Pamela F. Kahl | Director, Bethany Child Development Center
Walter H. Kellogg | Executive Director, Carolina Community Actions, Inc.
Helen Lafitte | Junior League-Columbia
Hugh Lane, Jr. | President & CEO, The Bank of SC
John Lomax | VP Business & Community Relations, Duke Power Company
Sarah D. McMaster | Director, Fairfield County Library
Freida Mitchell | Community volunteer
Maceo Nance | President Emeritus, SCSU
Cindy Nord | Vice President, Nord Family Foundation
Pat Raynor | President, SC PTA
Joe Riley | Mayor, City of Charleston
Francis Rushton | Pediatrician, SC Chapter of Pediatrics
Claude Scarborough | Attorney, Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough, L.L.P.
Minor Shaw | Community Volunteer, President, Micco Corporation
Susan Shi | Chair, Greenville Success by 6 Board
Roger Shrum | General Manager Public Affairs, SCANA Corporation
Will Spence | President & CEO, Wachovia Bank, N.A.
Julie Swanson | Professor-School of Education, College of Charleston
Bill Timmerman | Chair & CEO, SCANA
Gloria Washington | NASW Representative, DSS
William B. Whitney | President/CEO, Urban League of the Upstate, Inc.
Frank Wideman | President, The Self Foundation
Edna Youmans | Early Childhood Teacher, Allendale Primary School



Visit the Early Childhood Teacher Resource Collection at Your Public Library

Make your child care program come alive with creative and fun learning activities. The Early Childhood Teacher Resource Collection is a selection of books on early childhood education. Using this collection, both teachers and administrators of children's programs can easily find information about topics such as creative learning activities, teaching skills and curriculum. Books in the collection are available at public libraries across South Carolina.

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Child Care Check List

The child care center or home where you leave your child should:

- Be licensed, approved, certified or registered by the State of South Carolina.
- Provide nutritious snacks and well-balanced hot meals.
- Have a fenced outside play area with outside toys, swings, and climbing cubes that are securely attached to the ground.
- Have a daily schedule that includes nap and inside and outside activity times.
- Let you visit whenever you want.
- Require an application form for each child with spaces for name, any medical conditions, and addresses and telephone numbers for parents and doctor.
- Remove dirty diapers and food scraps and throw away garbage every day.
- Have some workers who have worked at the center six months or longer.
- Give workers a small number of children to tend.
- Tell you the rules for how children should act. Have rules that "fit" the children's ages.
- Plan activities that use blocks, measuring cups, dolls, trucks, art materials, and other creative toys.
- Encourage children to play together and share.
- Allow children to play alone some of the time.
- Teach children about the world through field trips, poems, songs and books.
- Always require seat belts or car seats when they take field trips.
- Require workers to keep learning about child care.

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County Partnership Board Members show their spirit at the recent First Steps Training Conference.

Did You Know?

Research shows that every $1 invested in quality early childhood education yields $7 in savings to the public from higher graduation rates and reduced costs of remedial education, welfare and crime.

Your tax deductible contribution to First Steps will be invested in early childhood initiatives designed by local partnerships with families to help children enter first grade healthy and ready to succeed.

Remember to check-off a portion of your 1999 income tax refund as a tax-deductible contribution to First Steps.

Contact Us

Please return this form to:
First Steps/1205 Pendleton Street/Columbia, SC 29201

Or contact us via phone, fax or e-mail:
Toll Free: (877) 621-0865
Telephone: (803) 734-0479 • Fax: (803) 734-1431
E-mail: 1ststeps@govoepp.state.sc.us

Yes! Please add my name to your mailing list:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ E-MAIL _____