



Chester County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report*

Board Chair: Tally Johnson
Executive Director: Centuria S. Watson

Contact Information:

100 Center Street
PO Box 1728
Chester, SC 29706

Phone: 803.385.6174

Fax: 803.385.6265

E-mail: firststepsc@truvista.net

Total children in county under age 6:
2,578

Children under age 6 living in poverty:
16.3%

Chester County Highlights

- 2,535 children participated in program activities
- 643 adults attended workshops and events
- 100% of eligible teen parents graduated from high school
- 100% of teen parents enrolled in college are still in school

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Bringing key elements of the community together has been rewarding and challenging. Collaboration created a network of resources that play a pivotal role in the ability of parents to be vigilant supporters of their child's school readiness status. In other words, when needs exist there must be systems in place to bring remedies so progress can occur.

Collaborative relationships allow families to have the support they need to equip their children with tools necessary for learning to take place. Research repeatedly tells us the window of opportunity for capitalizing on brain growth and development is before age four. We would be remiss to sit by while this window closes and not seize every moment possible to advance learning.

Our Parents As Teachers program grooms parents to be their child's most fervent advocate. Notably, the Child Care Quality Enhancement program outfits early care teachers with research based information, age appropriate materials and techniques to promote optimum cognitive growth and development of children in their classrooms. Programming at the Fort Lawn Community Center is well attended by residents from the surrounding towns. There are few services available in this rural sector of the county which stresses the significance of the center. Funding from the Chester Healthcare Foundation was instrumental for increasing our capacity to provide community workshops to parents and certified workshops for childcare professionals. All forums co-sponsored by the Healthcare Foundation have focused on topics important for the health and safety of young children. Additionally, workshops featured topics critical for developing safety conscious behaviors that affect the well-being of each family member.

The Partnership Board believes each child starting school healthy and ready to succeed is imperative; *we must invest today in the children who will lead us tomorrow.*

Continuing the mission,

Centuria S. Watson, Executive Director
Chester County First Steps

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Parents as Teachers

Program Description: Empowers parents to be their child's first teacher by providing a solid foundation for success in school. This is achieved through home visits and parent workshops or group meetings. Parents are faced with many challenges and stresses that can, if conditions are right, interfere with appreciating the important role they have in their child's success in school. At least twice a month, during the home visit, a Parent Educator provides guidance and developmental information to parents or other care givers in the home. Assessments are conducted when program services begin so progress can be measured as parents learn more about their child's growth and development milestones. The data from the assessments will then permit concentrated support where improvement is needed for the parent and child's relationship to thrive.

Program Results:

- 42 adults received services
- 36 children were impacted by home visits
- 100% of eligible teen mothers graduated from high school
- 100% of program high school graduates are enrolled in post secondary institutions
- 100% of PAT families received Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) assessment
- KIPS average gain for families: 1.14
- Parents showed improvement for literacy skills with their child during joint book reading, average increase of .61 for Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI)

Other Family Literacy (Fort Lawn Community Center)

Program Description: The Fort Lawn Center (FLCC) is a beacon for access to Diploma, GED opportunities, computer literacy and public awareness activities. It serves as a major provider of family literacy programs for families in the Great Falls, Fort Lawn and Richburg communities. These families would otherwise have to travel to the city of Chester in order to participate in a program to assist with acquiring a GED, diploma or learning basic computer skills. The Center has been a site for community awareness activities addressing issues vital to parents and others responsible for the wellbeing of children. Child safety forums and car seat safety checks offered the communities important information to safeguard that family's have data on file pertaining to unique characteristics for their child are available.

Program Results:

- 416 adults received services
- 350 books distributed to children
- 44 GED participants
- 14 Completed GED Program
- 271 Computer skills students

QUALITY CHILD CARE**Center Quality Enhancement**

Program Description: Improve the quality of childcare by providing quality professional training, materials, and technical assistance. A team of Technical Assistants (TA) worked with 13 childcare sites to provide help for achieving quality early learning environments in early care classrooms. While training was provided to all Chester childcare professionals, anyone could attend the professional development classes. TAs fostered strong working relationships with childcare teachers. The primary goal is to create child-focused learning environments that promote optimal cognitive, small motor, large motor, social and emotional development of preschool-aged children. Staff only conducted approved training for re-certification and followed

up with teachers to encourage newly learned practices and techniques. Pre and post assessments were performed to measure the level of improvement for each classroom. Age appropriate learning materials were provided for classrooms according to pre-assessment indicators identifying where improvement should be done.

Program Results:

- 16 facilities had staff that participated in training
- 2499 children were impacted
- 185 staff participated in training
- 25 re-certification hours were earned
- 775 hours of technical assistance was executed
- 100% of participating centers receive pre Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) assessment or Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) assessment.

Financial Summary

Expenditures by Funding Source			
State Appropriation.	\$197,032	State Private	\$1769
E.I.A. Appropriation	\$11,958	Local Private	\$10,000
Lottery Appropriation	\$-0-	Federal	\$-0-
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation	\$N/A	In-Kind	\$108,216
C.O.E. Appropriation	\$N/A		

Expenditures by Program/Strategy Name	
Parents As Teachers	\$104,832
Other Family Literacy	\$76,900
Childcare Training & Professional Development	\$54,085
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$69,658
Administrative Functions	\$25,797
GRAND TOTAL	\$331,272

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Chester Healthcare Foundation	\$10,000
	\$
TOTAL:	\$10,000

Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 63.6%
(at least 15% Legislative requirement)

CHESTER COUNTY FIRST STEPS PARTNERSHIP **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Sue Cauthen	School District
Jenny Davis	Transportation
Janet Ellis	DHEC
Ronda Garris	Healthcare
Tally Johnson	Library
Erica Murphy	Chester DSS
Mable Reddick	Non-Profit Representative
Tiara Suber	Parent of Preschool Child
Nancy Taylor	Childcare Provider
Daisy Wylie	Faith Representative

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships, statewide, made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

Parents are compelled to work because of economic pressures to meet essential needs. Overall, there are 639 spaces in state-regulated childcare facilities in Chester County; 89.2% of these are in licensed programs and 10.8% are in registered programs. Childcare homes and centers are severely constrained by the limited ability of parents to pay. Consequently, wages and earnings of providers were low: 33.3% of centers with pre-school staff reported paying staff under \$6 per hour. Also, paying \$6-\$8 per hour were 66.7% of centers with pre-school staff; low wages attract workers with limited education. Most pre-school staff had only a high school degree in 66.7% of centers.

Factors influencing poverty and its risks to children increase when teen pregnancy is added to the population of families struggling with the pressures of parenting and

providing for the well being of the family. Teen pregnancy has negative consequences for both the mother and the child.¹ The vast majority of teen pregnancies (78 percent) are unintended.² Data from the mid-1990s indicate that 43 percent of pregnancies to teens aged 15-19 ended in unintended births and another 35 percent ended in abortions.³ These percentages are even higher for younger teens. Mothers who do have a teen birth are more disadvantaged, on average, than are other teens that have children who face negative health, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes.

SUCCESS STORIES:

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

The PAT program is seeing good results for young mothers still on a journey to find their path to success. The journey may be led by the teen mother, but she doesn't walk alone. Her steps will have a profound affect on the quality of life she and her child will have. If she chooses not to complete her high school education the statistics are clear, she will most likely be locked in a cycle of poverty with hardly any chance of her condition improving without more education or market driven job skills. There are bright stories of hope tempered with making sound decisions as in the case of Tierra Suber and the life-changing path to building her American dream.

Tierra Suber is an 18 year-old single mother of two children, age 4 and 6 months. She has been a participant of the Chester County First Steps Parents as Teachers Program since her oldest child was thirteen months old. Tierra gave birth to her first child when at age 14 and was in the eighth grade. She was given support by her parents as well as her parent educator while she pursued her high school diploma. She graduated in 2008 and received a scholarship to further her education at York Technical College in Rock Hill. Tierra accomplished this while not only taking care of her children but while maintaining employment. She also shares her struggles with other teen parents to motivate and encourage them to strive to make and attain goals. Tierra is truly a dynamic young lady with great potential and the drive to achieve her dreams.

Childcare Training & Professional Development

One of the centers taking to heart achieving child-focused results of pre-assessments was Horizon Christian Academy. The staff at Horizon saw tremendous potential in the assessment process for moving their early education program agenda to new heights. Horizons Christian Academy is a participant of the Chester County First Steps' Childcare Center Enhancement Initiative. Initially, Horizons utilized a curriculum called ABEKA, which is a stringent program that does embrace the proven best practices for early childhood. After participating in various training and receiving technical assistant from a mentor, Horizons has now included ECERS-R in their mission statement as well as implementing best practices learned from workshops. They attend all trainings, even after reaching the required recertification hours for DSS licensing. All teachers and assistants have taken the ECD 101 credential class with York Technical College. Horizons Christian Academy is one of the leaders in early childhood education in Chester County.

2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Chester County

Total Children Under Six: 2,578

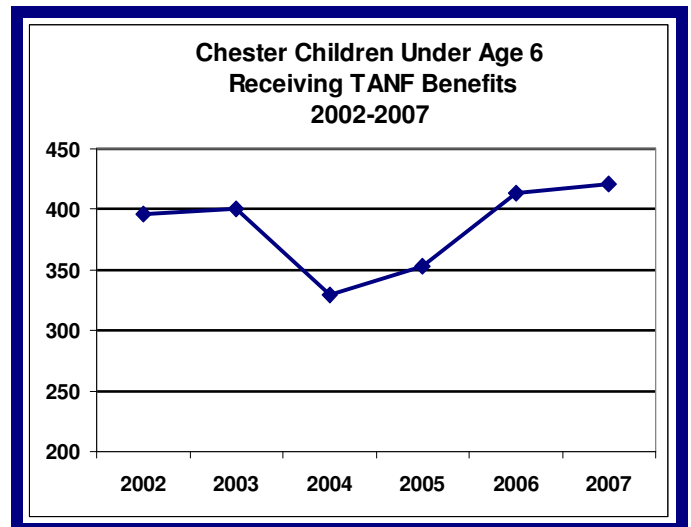
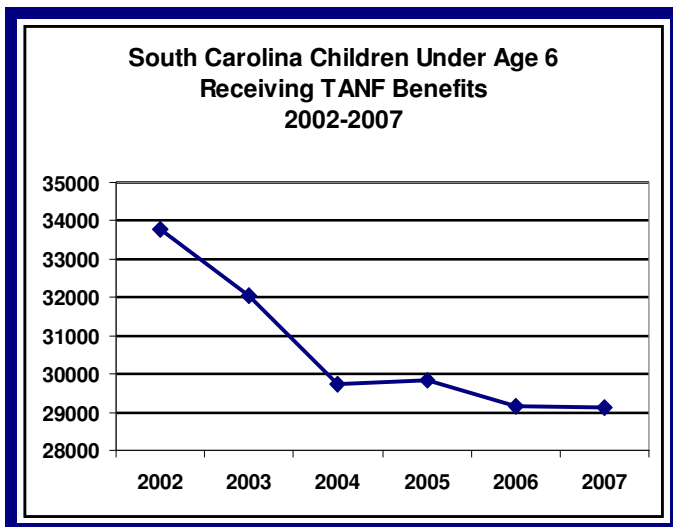
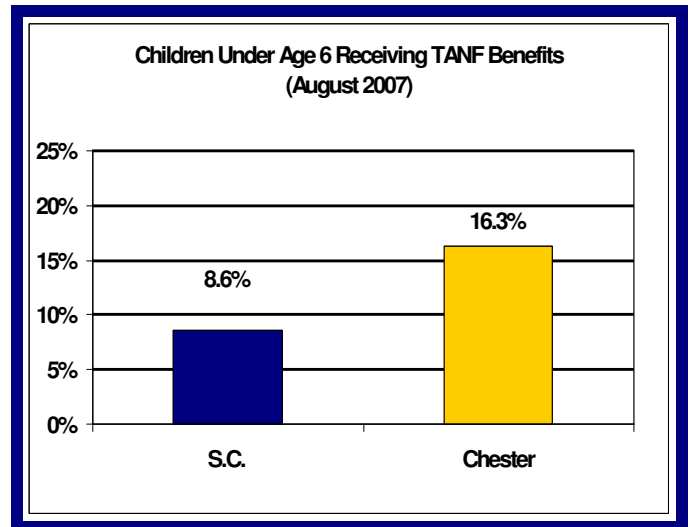
CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4% Chester County (2007): 16.3%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 6 Chester County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the "below basic" level (PACT) by third grade.

Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

421 of Chester County's 2,578 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.



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Chester County

Total Children Under Six: 2,578

CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

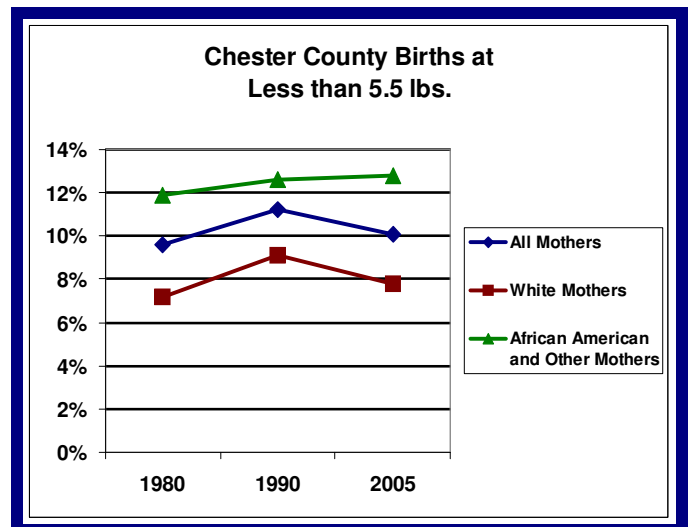
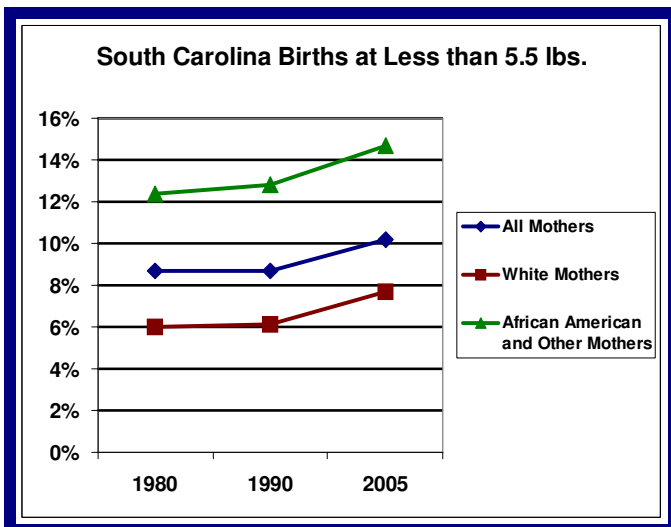
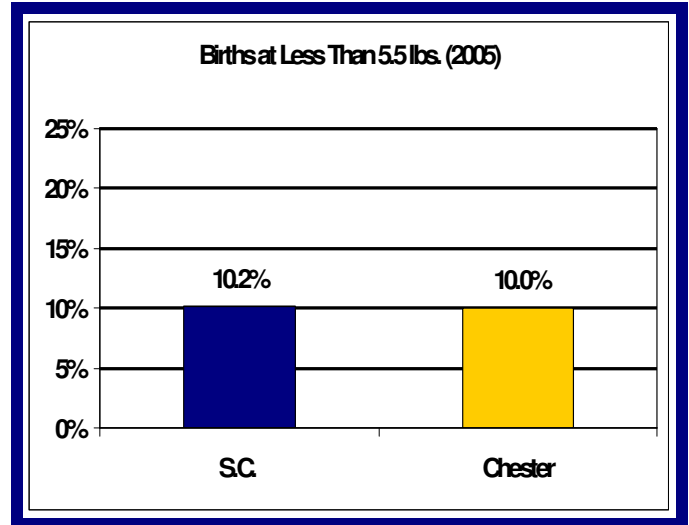
Chester County (2005): 10.0%

Fast Fact: 1 in 10 Chester County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the "below basic" level (PACT) by third grade.

Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

43 of the 427 children born in Chester County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Chester County

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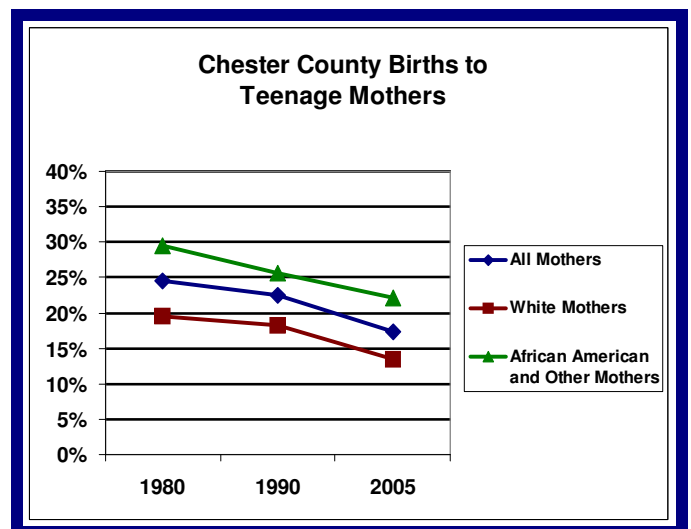
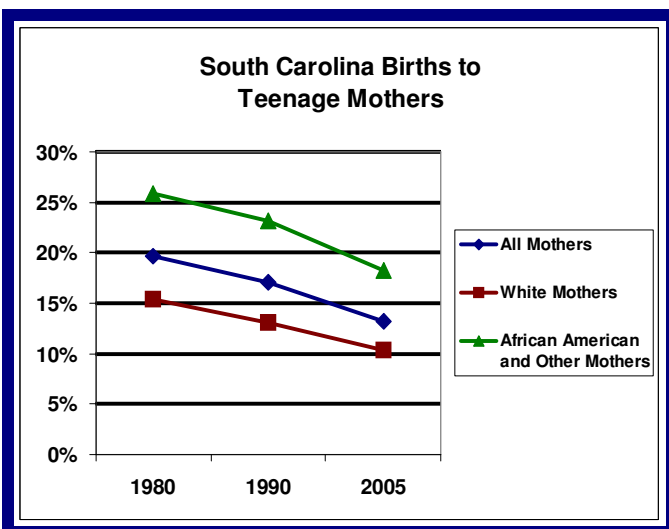
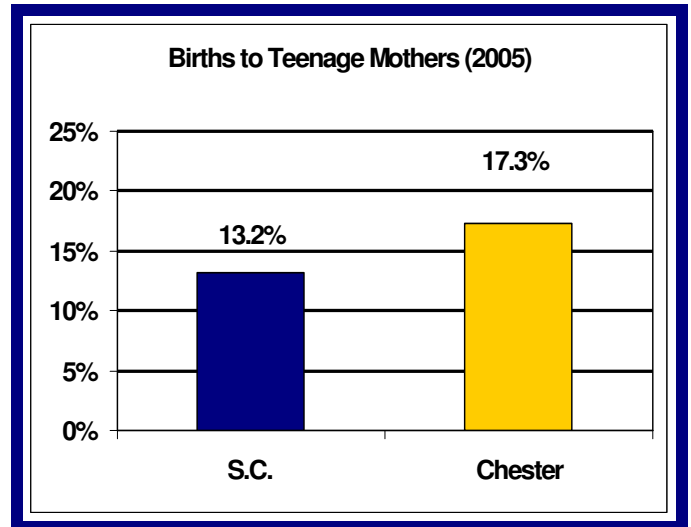
BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Chester County (2005): 17.3%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 6 Chester County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

74 of the 427 children born in Chester County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



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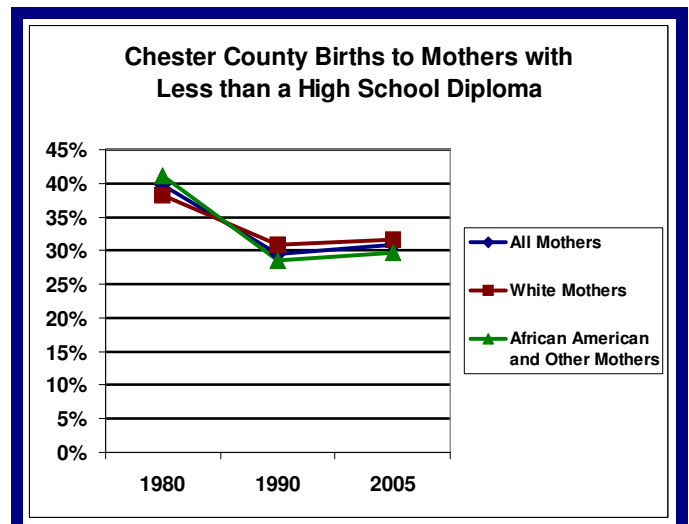
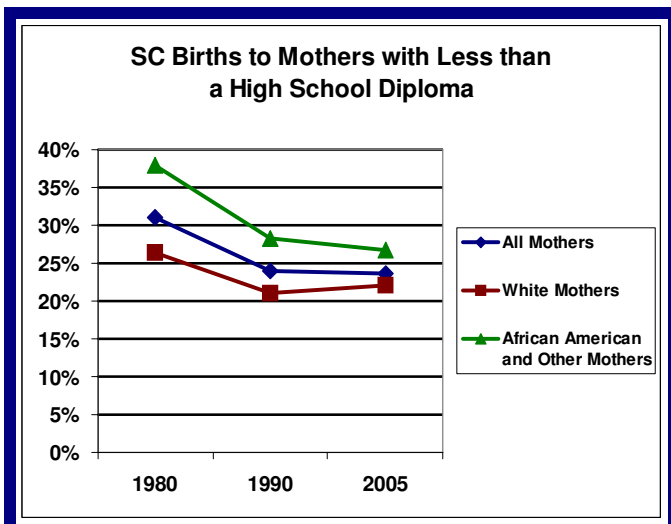
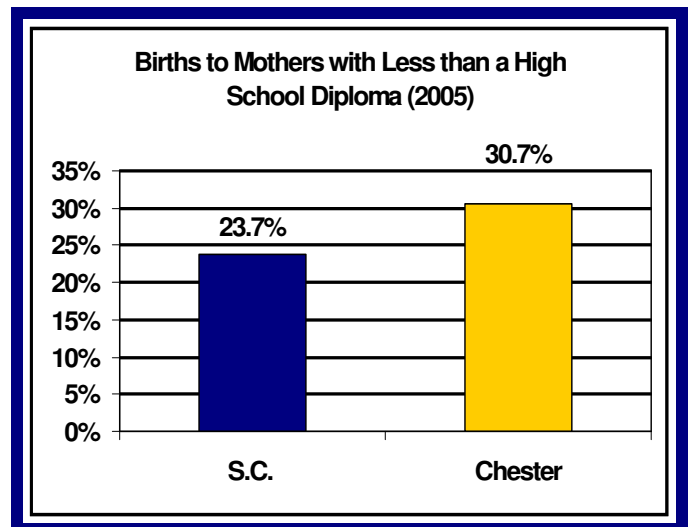
BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Chester County (2005): 30.7%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 3 children in Chester County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

131 of the 427 children born in Chester County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



Telling the stories of our programs' impacts:

Parents As Teachers

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