



# Clarendon County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

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Marilyn Tsirigotis

## Executive Director:

Sharon P. Williams

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Total children in county under  
age 6: 7.6%

Total Children in county  
living in poverty %: 34.4%

## Clarendon County Highlights

- Over 1,000 children in Clarendon County impacted;
- 162 adults impacted through parenting programs and/or training programs;
- Over 5,000 books distributed through the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library;
- Received over \$10,000 in cash donations from the community.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Fiscal year 2009 had to have been without a doubt one of the most financially difficult fiscal years I have experienced since I began my career in the nonprofit sector. Fortunately, I work with people who are so passionate about our mission, our work and the people we serve, that no amount of difficulties, financial or otherwise, could keep us from doing all we can to make a difference in the lives of our young children and their families.

This past fiscal year, the Clarendon County First Steps Partnership (CCFSP) continued with the same school readiness strategies as in FY 2008: Parents As Teachers, the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Countdown to Kindergarten, Child Care Center Staff Training and Development, and the Child Development Education Pilot Program. We continued to focus on process and quality to ensure the best possible outcomes for program participants, formed new collaborative partnerships within the community, strengthened existing collaborative partnerships, and secured additional funding to support the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

This report details our work over the past fiscal year. I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish, and look forward to the next leg of our journey to prepare children for success in school and in life.

Sincerely,

Sharon P. Williams,  
Executive Director  
Clarendon County First Steps Partnership

## **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.

# **2008-09 County Partnership Programs by Strategy**

## **FAMILY STRENGTHENING**

### **Parents As Teachers (P. A. T.)**

Program description: Parents As Teachers (P. A. T.) is a nationally recognized, research-based model of home visitation designed to equip parents/primary caregivers with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote school readiness, healthy development, and the long-term success of their preschool-age children. The program is voluntary and serves parents prenatally and parents of children under age six. To maximize limited resources the Clarendon County First Steps Partnership has partnered with Clarendon County School Districts One, Two, and Three to expand services to reach more families.

The P. A. T. model consists of four service delivery components:

1. **Personal Visits**—Personal visits (at least twice per month per SC First Steps program standards) are the primary service delivery component. During these visits, parent educators share age appropriate child development information with parents, help parents learn to observe their child’s development, address parenting concerns, and engage the family in activities that provide meaningful parent-child interaction.
2. **Group Meetings**—Parent group meetings (at least one must be offered monthly per SC First Steps program standards) provide opportunities to discuss information about parenting issues and child development. Parents learn from and support each other, observe their children with other children and practice parenting skills.
3. **Screening**—Parent educators conduct periodic screenings/assessments to assist in identifying potential delays and/or health, hearing or vision problems. Regular review of each child’s developmental progress identifies strengths, as well as areas of concern that may require referral for follow-up services in the community.
4. **Resource Network**—Parent educators help families identify and connect with needed resources and overcome barriers to accessing services. Programs take an active role in establishing on-going collaborative relationships with community agencies and organizations that offer additional support and family services.

### **Program results:**

- 86 adults and 102 children served in the program;
- 969 personal visits conducted;
- 52% of families received at least 2 visits per month;
- The average family had an increase of 0.43 on the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scales (KIPS<sup>1</sup>); the average adult had an increase of 0.67 on the Adult Child

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<sup>1</sup> KIPS is a convenient, reliable, evidence-based tool used to measure 12 parenting behaviors linked to child development. By assessing parenting behaviors, we are able to tailor services to individual families, track parenting progress and document program outcomes. For more information on the KIPS, visit [www.comfortconsults.com](http://www.comfortconsults.com).

Interactive Parenting Scales (ACIRI<sup>2</sup>), and the average child had an increase of 0.66. These results demonstrate that parents are making improvements in the areas being measured.

### **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**

Program Description: The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) is an early literacy program designed to: (1) Remove barriers to early literacy development in young children by increasing the number of age-appropriate books in the home environment (a child's first classroom); (2) Increase the amount of shared reading between parents and their children; and (3) Foster a love of books and reading in young children. Children enrolled in the DPIL receive one free, carefully-selected, age-appropriate book each month from the time they enroll in the program until they either become five years old or move out of the county. Books are delivered to each child's home by the United States Postal Service.

### **Program Results:**

- 530 children in Clarendon County received books through the program;
- 5,434 books covering a wide variety of themes and concepts were gifted;
- In a March 2009 survey of parents of participant children:
  - 97% of respondents reported that as a result of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), they spend more time reading with their child/children;
  - 92% of respondents reported that as a result of the DPIL, they spend more time talking with their child/children about the books they read to them;
  - 96% of respondents reported that as a result of the DPIL, they are more aware of good books to share with their child/children.
  - 71% of respondents reported that as a result of the DPIL, they spend more time playing rhyming games with their child/children; and
  - 63% of respondents reported that as a result of the DPIL, they are more likely to use the library to check out books.

## **QUALITY CHILD CARE.**

### **Child Care Center Staff Training and Development**

Program description: The Child Care Center Staff Training & Development program is a training program designed to: (1) provide child care professionals with the training and support they need in order to deliver higher quality services to the children in their care; and (2) assist child care providers in securing on-going training in order to meet South Carolina Department of Social Services child care regulatory standards. Training sessions are delivered by highly qualified consultants who provide instruction in the areas of nutrition, child growth and development, child guidance, health and safety, and other topic areas. Trainings are delivered at no cost to Clarendon County child care professionals.

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<sup>2</sup> The ACIRI is a research-based tool used to measure the quality of adult and child interactions during shared book reading. The adult and child are assessed on 12 key reading behaviors.

**Program results:**

- 20.5 hours of training were delivered between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009;
- 67 child care professionals and 9 foster parents (unduplicated counts); and
- 436 children were impacted.

**EARLY EDUCATION.**

**S.C. Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)**

**Program description:** CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4-year-old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff school districts involved in the school funding equity lawsuit, *Abbeville et al. vs. South Carolina*. First Steps oversees CDEPP 4K classes offered in non-public school environments. To qualify for state-paid tuition, a student's family must qualify for TANF or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2008, and live in an eligible school district.

**Program results:**

- 1 CDEPP 4-K class at the Wee Academy Learning Center in Manning, SC;
- 15 children served;

**SCHOOL TRANSITION**

**Countdown to Kindergarten**

**Program description:** Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a school transition program for rising kindergarten children and their families. The program is designed (1) to instill confidence in children who are about to enter kindergarten and the world of school; (2) to create awareness and knowledge for parents about the importance of home activities relating to literacy and hands-on learning leading up to kindergarten; (3) to bridge the gap between home and school; and (4) to engage families, educators and community members in a community-wide effort to celebrate and support the transition into kindergarten as a significant educational and developmental milestone for children and their families.

A major component of the Countdown to Kindergarten program is the teacher home visits. The Partnership Board contracts with several certified kindergarten teachers who teach in Clarendon School Districts One, Two and Three. Each teacher is given a caseload of 10 children that they visit at home once per week for 7 weeks. An eighth visit is conducted at the school where the child will be attending kindergarten in the fall.

Each child is provided a transition tool-kit that consists of construction paper, pencils, makers, crayons, lacing beads, counting beads, blocks, books, a writing journal, a large floor puzzle and other materials children may encounter in the K-5 classroom. Each week, teachers present a lesson using an item from the transition tool-kit as the content for the home visit. CTK teachers also model for parents ways in which they can use the materials with their children so that the learning continues long after the program has ended.

**Impact:**

- Due to limited funding, no children were served in the Countdown to Kindergarten program during the summer of 2009.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures By Funding Source</u>	
State Appropriation ( <i>Fund 10</i> )	\$129,808.00
E.I.A. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 55</i> )	\$17,181.00
Lottery Appropriation ( <i>Fund 35</i> )	\$0.00
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 60</i> )	\$69,308.00
C.O.E. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 65</i> )	\$0.00
N.F.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 70</i> )	\$0.00
State Private ( <i>Fund 15</i> )	\$1,165.00
Local Private ( <i>Fund 20</i> )	\$11,675.00
Federal ( <i>Fund 30</i> )	\$33,885.00
In-Kind ( <i>Fund 25</i> )	\$79,042.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$342,064.00</b>

<u>Expenditures By Program / Strategy Name</u>	
Parents As Teachers	\$175,024.00
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library	\$12,517.00
Countdown to Kindergarten <sup>3</sup>	\$3,215.00
Child Care Training & Professional Development	\$19,220.00
Child Development Education Pilot Program (Private Full-Day Four-year-old Kindergarten)	\$68,328.00
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$41,536.00
Administrative Functions	\$22,224.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$342,064.00</b>

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<sup>3</sup> The Clarendon County First Steps Partnership did not implement the Countdown to Kindergarten program during the summer of 2009. The amount included in this chart represents expenditures for Countdown to Kindergarten programming during the summer of 2008 (June and July 2008).

**NOTABLE DONORS**

<i><b>DONOR'S NAME</b></i>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Clarendon County Council	\$9,500.00
Harvin Clarendon County Library	\$500.00
Wal-Mart	\$450.00
<b>TOTAL: \$10,450.00</b>	

*Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 24%*  
*(at least 15% Legislative requirement)*

**COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

- Marilyn Tsirigotis, Board Chair, Representative Local Public Library
- O. J. Papucci, Vice-Chair, Transportation
- Jennifer Howard-Kelley, Secretary, Family Education
- Stacy Bell, Parent of Pre-school Child
- Mary Cooper, Legislative Appointee
- Dr. Connie Dennis, Representative Clarendon School District Three
- Marie Gibbons, Representative Clarendon School District Two
- Kathleen Gibson, Early Childhood Education
- Pressley Harvin, Jr., Transportation
- Helen M. James, Child Care
- Vera Dell Kennedy, Early Childhood Education
- Catherine Kirkpatrick, Clarendon County DSS
- Amy Land, Legislative Appointee
- Georgia Mance, Wateree Head Start
- Ernestine Oliver, Representative Clarendon School District One
- Dr. Myra Pearson, Faith (Jehovah-Jireh Outreach Ministry)
- Tamika Riley, Early Childhood Education
- Rev. David Thurlow, Faith (St. Matthias Episcopal Church)
- Margaret Walker, Health Care
- Deborah Anderson, Clarendon County DHEC
- Kathy F. Wright, Early Childhood Education

## COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY09, 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.

*Your 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile will be inserted by OFS after this section. For your reference, a PDF of this risk profile was sent to you along with your Annual Report Template*

### ***In their own words...***

*This letter is just to let you know how much I appreciate everything that you have done for my son, as well as myself. By having access to all of the books, games, VHS and DVDs, he is really accelerating. I have seen a great improvement in him. Thank you so much for making yourself accessible to us parents at all times. You have truly been a lifesaver. Each and every week you encourage us to try a variety of new and different strategies with our children. Thank you so much for your kindness and support.*

*~G. S.*

*It is this type of treatment that my husband and I feel is just wonderful for us, as well as the other children in the [Parents As Teachers] program. We feel fortunate to be involved in such a great program. Our son has greatly benefited from the resources from the program.*

*~T. S.*

*The First Steps program is very important to me and helpful to me and my children because getting them ready for school is a good thing.*

*~L. J.*

*[The most helpful thing about the Parents As Teachers program to me and my child is] the fact that the parent educator can do home visits and is very patient with the child as well as myself. She is very explanatory when asked a question. We do appreciate all that*

*this program has done and the excitement it leaves in our children for reading, learning, and the patience that our home educator shows in the many steps of learning.*

*~R. B.*

*[As a result of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library], I read to my children every night, something I didn't use to do. Thank you.*

*~Anonymous*

*[The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library] helped me have more mommy and me time with my child. It showed me how interested she was in spending time with her parents. It also got her dad reading to her.*

*~Anonymous*

*As a result of the Imagination Library program, I have been reading more instead of letting my child watch T.V.*

*~Anonymous*

*[As a result of the of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library], we have read a wider variety of books and [my child's] learned about the mail system. She loves to check the mail, and she's always hoping for a book.*

*~Anonymous*

*My children are excited about receiving the Imagination Library books. They really look forward to getting the books in the mail. Most important, they are learning more and more words every day, and they really are beginning to love books and reading.*

*L. R.*



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Clarendon County

Total Children Under Six: 2,525

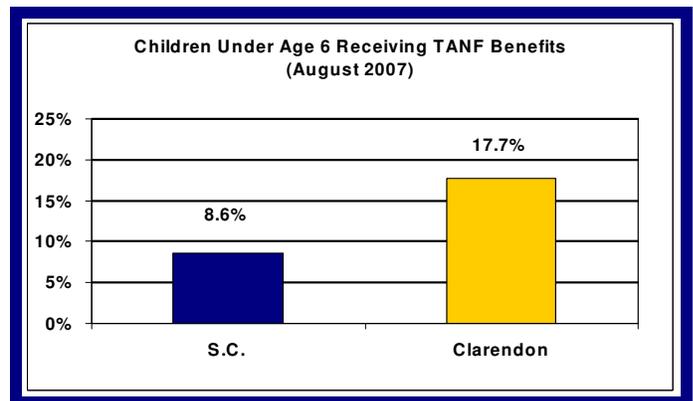
## CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

Clarendon County (2007): 17.7%

**Fast Fact:** Roughly 1 in 6 Clarendon 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.
- 447 of Clarendon County’s 2,525 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.



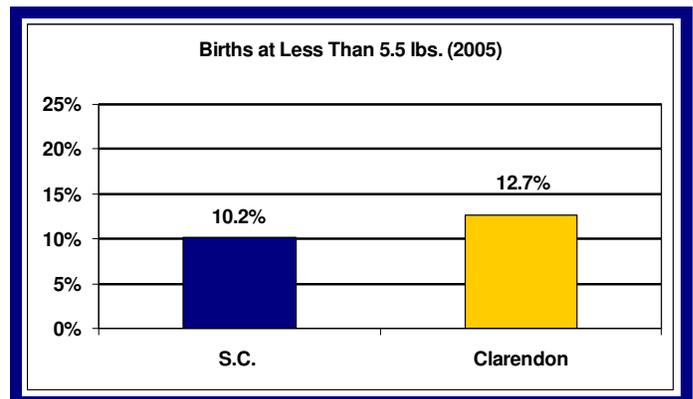
## CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

Clarendon County (2005): 12.7%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 8 Clarendon 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.
- 49 of the 387 children born in Clarendon County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



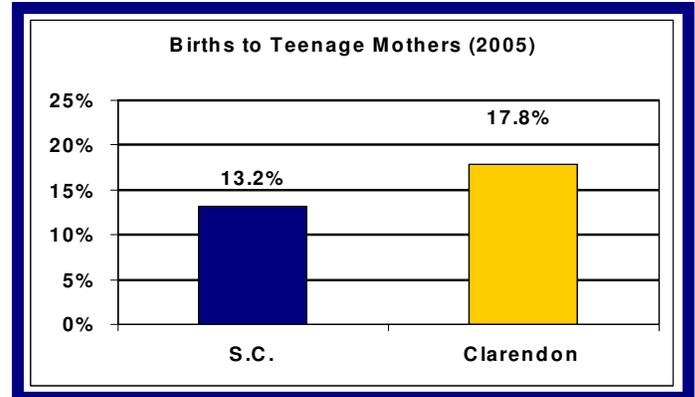
## BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

Clarendon County (2005): 17.8%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 6 Clarendon 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.
- 69 of the 387 children born in Clarendon County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



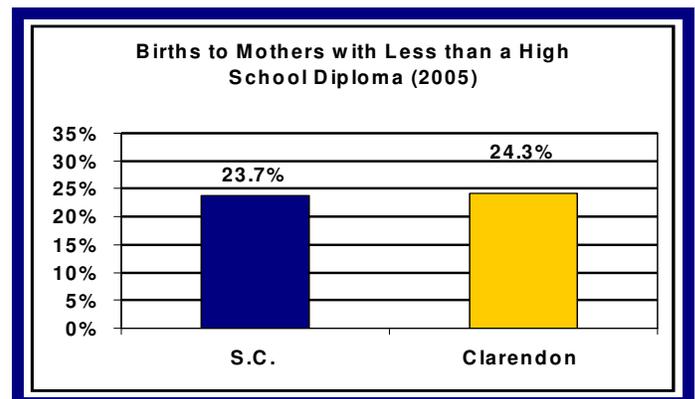
## BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

Clarendon County (2005): 24.3%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 4 children in Clarendon 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.
- 94 of the 387 children born in Clarendon County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



All data provided by the SC Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics