



Darlington County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

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**Total children in county under
age 6: 5,230 or 7.8% of total
population**

**Total Children in county
living in poverty %: 28%**

Darlington County Highlights

- Year 2 of Early Reading First Collaborative served over 225 three and four year olds
- Provided over 1000 hours of certified professional development
- Increase in CDEPP enrollment by 50%

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

The Board of Directors and staff of Darlington County engaged in joint planning, budget summits, and numerous strategy sessions to ensure each source of revenue was maximized thereby provided our most vulnerable citizens with opportunities which would result in increased readiness for entry into school.

During FY09 we were able to expand our summer transition program, “Countdown-to-Kindergarten” by enrolling twenty additional preschoolers from un-served communities within our county.

As a site for the Early Reading First collaborative, 72 three and four year olds participated in a summer enrichment program while their teachers participated in a two week teacher institute led by nationally known experts in the field of early childhood education.

The challenge before us is to become better advocates while engaging the total community in our mission to ensure every child has a healthy start and every parent is provided the tools needed to provide a nurturing environment for their child. As an organization, we will continue to strategize with others to promote early education as a mean of growing our economy grows and stabilizing the lives of our children while reducing the dropout rate, teen pregnancy rate, and the prison population.

On behalf of young children,
Darnell Byrd-McPherson
Executive Director
Darlington County First Steps

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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

Program description: Parents as Teachers in the leading early childhood parent education and family support model which serves families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten. In its second year of operation in Darlington County and therefore considered a “new” program by the Parents as Teachers National Center, the program employed one full time parent educator and one part-time educator. In an effort to increase the number of at-risk families served, an agreement was reached which resulted in referrals of parents who were also clients of the Darlington County Department of Social Services. The Partnership supported an effort by the Darlington County School District to secure funding for an Even Start program which would increase the number of families served by this strategy.

Program results:

- Number served: Thirty-three (33) adults and forty-one (41) children.
- Outcomes data indicated that all families were assessed using the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scales (KIPS). This tool measures, among other things, the Caregiver’s words and actions, how actively the Caregiver engages the child in language experiences, and how well the Caregiver adapts strategies to the child’s interest levels.
- Based on the level of intensity of services provided in the PAT program, the KIPS results indicate the quality of parenting to children improved from moderate to high levels in families who had participated for at least fifteen months
- At least 75% of our families were identified as “at-risk”; however, 100% of the families served completed an Individual Family Service Plan which is designed to encourage goal setting and goal attainment.
- Limited transportation resulted in the Partnership providing this service in order to facilitate participation by families in regularly scheduled group meetings...
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EARLY EDUCATION.

Full Day 4 Year Old-Kindergarten

Program description: The strategy is a partnership with the Darlington County School District’s Southside Early Childhood Center where full day early education services are provided. Southside is NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accredited. Classes are taught by a certified early childhood teacher and one assistant.

Program results:

- Nineteen (19) four year old children were enrolled; four of nineteen were non-English speaking children.
- Health screening were completed on 18 of the 19 children enrolled
- Four (4) families were referred and received needed social services assistance
- Seventeen (17) of nineteen (19) families received a home visit from the child's teacher
- Sixteen (16) of the nineteen (19) families participated in conferences held at the school
- Six (6) families were represented at school-based training sessions for parents
- Fifteen (15) families participated in other school based activities, including American Education week
- Nine (9) children were represented by their grandparents during Grandparents Day
- Results of the ECERS (Early childhood Environmental Rating Scale) indicate high quality services were provided; however, there was need to provide some improvement to the outdoor play area.

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, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

Program results:

- Ten (10) students served
- One (1) provider offering CDEPP 4K classes
- Classroom teachers participated in professional development offered through the BRIDGES project while obtaining certified training to meet requirements for state licensure.
- Transportation services were offered by the provider
- Parents expressed a great deal of satisfaction in the educational achievement of their children and were involved in activities which supported their children's participation.

SCHOOL TRANSITION.

Name of program/strategy: Countdown to Kindergarten

Program description: This strategy ensures a level of continuity of services to four-year old children who have participated in Project Head Start. Parents and children are engaged in a home visitation program where kindergarten skills are practiced and enhanced. A "transition" curriculum allows the certified kindergarten teacher to ensure all key concepts and ideas are covered during the six weeks program. Children are taken

to their local library and parents are encouraged to read to their children. This strategy was expanded based on additional funding from the Early Reading First Collaborative

Program results:

- Thirty-nine (39) children were served by four (4) certified kindergarten teachers
- All children met the criteria for at-risk
- All children receive a backpack with books, school supplies, and other materials
- All parents were administered a satisfaction survey.

Child Care Quality Training

The goal of this strategy is to facilitate training opportunities for family and day care providers registered and/or licensed by the Department of Social Services. All training is CCCCDC certified and/or provides college credit.

- Over 716 hours of professional development were provided through intensive study group settings of 3 hours per session
- 372 hours were provided through participation at state and national conferences such as the National Conference of Family Literacy, International Reading Conference, Early Care and Educational Rural Leadership Conference, to name a few.
- 734 hours were provided through other training events such as those sponsored by Francis Marion University’ Center of Excellence.
- Supported six (6) staff of three (6) child care owners’ participation in the “No Place Like Home” training

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Expenditures By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (Fund 10)	\$ 188,327.00
E.I.A. Appropriation (Fund 55)	\$ 18,471.00
Lottery Appropriation (Fund 35)	\$ -0-
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (Fund 60)	\$ 48,473.00
C.O.E. Appropriation (Fund 65)	\$.....-0-
N.F.P. Appropriation (Fund 70)	\$.....-0-
State Private (Fund 15)	\$ 1,687.00
Local Private (Fund 20)	\$ 3,496.00
Federal (Fund 30)	\$ 294,661.00
In-Kind (Fund 25)	\$ 376.00
TOTAL:	\$ 555,491.00

<u>Expenditures by Program / Strategy Name</u>	
Parents as Teachers	\$125,647.00
Childcare Training	\$ 41,366.00
Full Day 4-K Public	\$ 64,043.00
Full Day 4-K –CDEPP-Private	\$ 48,060.00
Summer Program	\$..93,569.00
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$..15,896.00
Dolly Parton Imagination Library	\$ 3,332.00
Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$ 31,633.00
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$ 94,994.00
Administrative Functions	\$ 36,951.00
TOTAL: \$555,491.00	

Local Match Percentage for FY 2009:129.1%

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Edward Arthur, Transportation provider
- Sandi Campbell, Early Education
- Carl M. Days, Legislative Appointee
- Linda Graham, School District
- Winfred Herrington, Department of Social Services
- Audrey Hogan, School District Representative
- Lurline Jerry, Family education, training, and support provider
- Ella Johnson, Legislative Appointee
- Jacqueline Moore, Early Education
- Evelyn Patterson, Head Start
- Georgia Robinson, Department of Health and Environmental Control
- Monica Roots, Nonprofit organization that provides services to families and children
- Vanessa Sansbury, Family education, training, and support provider
- Shari Stokes, Childcare and early childhood development/education provider
- Autistine R. Sutton, Childcare and early childhood development provider
- Patricia Toney, Pre-kindergarten through primary educator
- Audrey Tripp, County Library

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

We are very proud of the progress our parents are making as they learn new strategies to help them become better parents. We are encouraged by the interest in this program by the community and will be partnering with Adult Education's Even Start program to expand enrollment in Parents as Teachers. We believe parents are the child's first and best teacher and if we are able to impact the home environment, the community will gain a more productive citizen.

The SC General Assembly created in 1999 the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative as a "comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through county partnerships, public and private funds and support for high quality early childhood development and education services for children by providing support for their families' efforts toward enabling their children to reach school ready to learn"...here's what happened next:

- *Increased the number of children by 60 who received full day pre-K full day services through Darlington County School District at Southside Early Childhood Center*
- *Recipient of U. S. Department of Education's Early Reading First Literacy Collaborative*
- *Established partnerships with faith-based community to provide training in the child abuse prevention curriculum "Triple P" Positive Parenting Program*
- *Sponsored summer enrichment program for Project Head Start*
- *Child care staff professional development benchmarks*

First Steps Strategy Areas	Notable Moments
Family Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established Parents as Teachers program
Healthy Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated training for child care providers on the Color Me Healthy Curriculum
Quality Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided supplies and materials to child care providers to include facilitating the licensure of one
Early Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established full day public school program for four year olds
School Transition Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established Countdown to Kindergarten and expanded to un-served communities in the county



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Darlington County

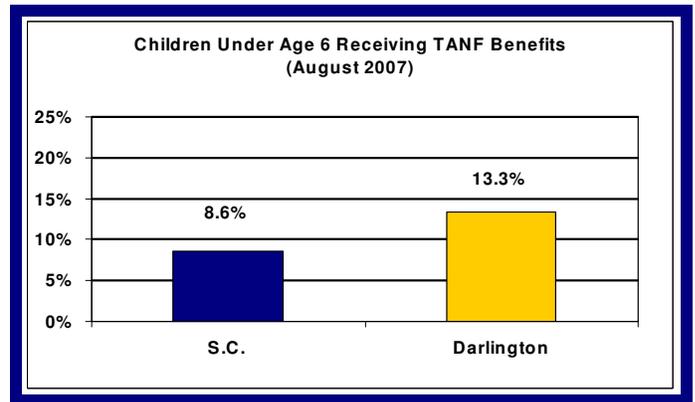
Total Children Under Six: 5,306

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4% Darlington County (2007): 13.3%

Fast Fact: 1 in 8 Darlington 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.
- 706 of Darlington County’s 5,306 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.

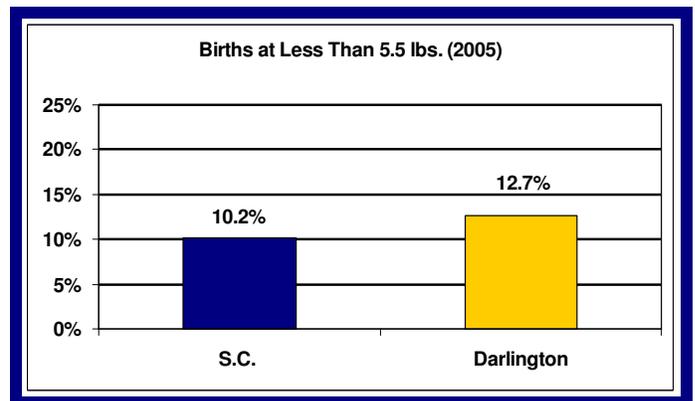


CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2% Darlington County (2005): 12.7%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 8 Darlington 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.
- 107 of the 841 children born in Darlington County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



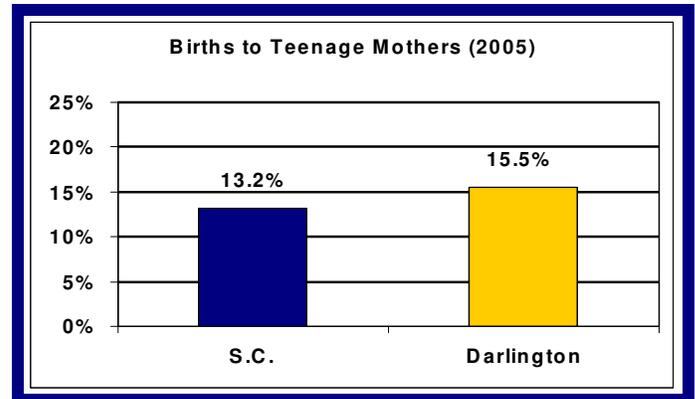
BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

Darlington County (2005): 15.5%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 6 Darlington 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.
- 130 of the 841 children born in Darlington County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



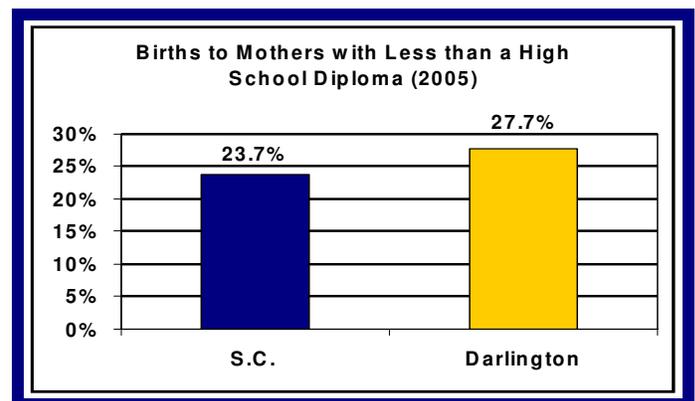
BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

Darlington County (2005): 27.7%

Fast Fact: Just over 1 in 4 children in Darlington 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.
- 233 of the 841 children born in Darlington 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