



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

Board Chair:
Ivey Staley

Executive Director:
Spencer R. Scott

Contact Information:

658 South Coit Street
Florence, SC 29501

Phone: (843) 629-0202

Fax: (843)629-0054

E-mail:

srscott@scfirststeps.org

Web site: www.fcfs.org

**Total children in county under
age 6: 11,693**

**Total Children in county
living in poverty %: 27.9%**

Florence County Highlights

- 104 children were served through PCHP, which exceed the projected 100.
- 670.5 DSS hours were awarded to childcare providers.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

At the end of difficult year, multiple budget cuts, talk of a recession, higher prices, and families having less to provide for their children. Florence County First Steps (FCFS) has and will continue to be accountable of all funds, seek partnerships and collaboration to expand serves to reach the most at-risk children throughout the county.

FCFS partnered with Department of Social Services to award a total of fifty-eight (58) ABC scholarships to families who were identified with at least one of the First Steps risk factors.

We made considerable strides in the area of **Family Strengthening**. All five of Florence county school districts partnered to implement the Parent Child Home Program. During the Fiscal Year 2009, Florence County served a total of 104 children, which exceed the projected 100. KIPS data showed a gain for Florence County of .36%. The ACIRI showed similar improvement results (adults -.36%, children - .50%).

In the area of **Quality Child Care**, the Center of Excellence initiative continued for a second year at Zion Canaan Child Development Center (Timmons ville) and Excellent Learning Preschool, Incorporated (Florence). Twenty-six children were served during FY09. This initiative included a partnership with Francis Marion University's School of Nursing and Florence Darlington Technical College Dental Department to provide health and dental screenings.

Also in the area of **Quality Child Care**, monthly Child Care Provider workshops were offered. One hundred thirty providers from 34 facilities participated in training sessions. These providers impacted the lives of 2,921 children and earned a total of 670.5 DSS credit hours. We partnered with Marion County First Steps and Florence-Darlington Technical College to conduct our very "First" Team Flo-Mar Early Childhood Conference with approximately 80 providers in attendance, 10 presenters, and totaling 400 DSS Credit hours.

Florence County First Steps partnered with Florence County School District 3 to implement the Countdown to Kindergarten program. This program helped children to transition into kindergarten successfully. Twenty families participated in this program.

In the area of **Early Education**, Florence County continued to implement the 4 K Pilot Programs, known as CDEPP. Eighty-four (84) at-risk students participated in the program at six facilities. 98 hours of technical assistance was provided resulting in improved environmental rating scores in four of the six CDEPP classrooms.

Although these areas are easy to write about and seemingly difficult to accomplish, the results and rewards were accomplished by a dedicated board of directors, devoted staff, and willing participants. Florence County First Steps looks forward to an excellent 10th Anniversary year!

Sincerely,

Spencer R. Scott

Spencer R. Scott
Executive Director
Florence 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.

2008-09 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Parent Child Home Program

Program Description:

Florence County First Steps collaborated with the five school districts within the county to implement the Parent Child Home Program. The Parent Child Home Program is an innovative two-year home based program which focuses on stimulating parent-child verbal interaction and developing critical language and literacy skills. The goal of the PCHP is to increase verbal interaction between parent and child. This verbal interaction has both cognitive and affective components.

This PCHP is open to families who have children ages 2-4 who are at-risk for school failure. The families whom we seek to serve are often challenged by poverty, low levels of education, language barriers, or other obstacles to educational success. During two 30-minute weekly home visits, home visitors model verbal interaction, parenting techniques, and educational play using educational books and toys. These books and toys are given to the family to work with their child. The family receives a minimum of 46 visits per year. The Home Visitor may make additional visits to administer test and surveys. The expected outcomes are an increase in parent – child interactions, increase in language skills, and improvement in parenting skills.

Program results:

- Florence County First Steps served ninety-six (96) families during FY09. This consisted of ninety-nine (99) adults and one hundred and four (104) children.
- Two assessment tools were used to measure client growth. These tools were the KIPS (Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale) and ACIRI (Adult Child Interactive Reading Inventory).

KIPS is a tool for assessing key parenting behaviors and evaluating program outcomes. It assesses 12 key parenting behaviors that are meaningful for intervention. These behaviors are: 1) sensitivity of responses, 2) response to emotions, 3) encouragement, 4) promotion of exploration/curiosity, 5) involvement in the child’s activities, 6) language experiences, 7) touch/physical interaction, 8) limits and consequences, 9) openness to the child’s agenda, 10) reasonable expectations, 11) adaptation of strategies to child, and 12) supportive directions.

The KIPS assessment utilizes a recorded observation of a parent playing with his or her child for 20 minutes. It is used to evaluate parents of children ages 2 months old up to 5 years of age. The evaluation is based on a 5-point rating scale. The ACIRI is an interactive reading inventory for parents and children ages 2.5 years old to 5 years old. The ACIRI is a literacy-specific evaluation based on the observation of a parent and child reading together. Three major categories divide the adult-child literacy behaviors. These categories are Enhancing Attention to Text, Promoting Interactive Reading and Supporting Comprehension, and Using Literacy Strategies. The ACIRI evaluates the interactions between parents and children relating to literacy acquisition, utilizing a 3-point scoring scale.

Statistics

- The PCHP was used to serve 99 adults in Florence County during FY09. this was 99% of the projected adults.
- 104 children were served. This exceeded the 100 projected children.
- 92.71% of the cases served possessed one or more of the First Steps Board of Trustees’ priority risk factors.
- 4,162 successful home visits were conducted. The average number of home visits per family was 5.9 per month.

Data Analysis (Analysis shows difference between baseline and current assessment.)

• KIPS

- Florence District 1 – .25%
- Florence District 2 – .37%
- Florence District 3 – 0.4%
- Florence District 4 – .49%
- Florence District 5 – (-0.12%)
- Overall for Florence County – .28%

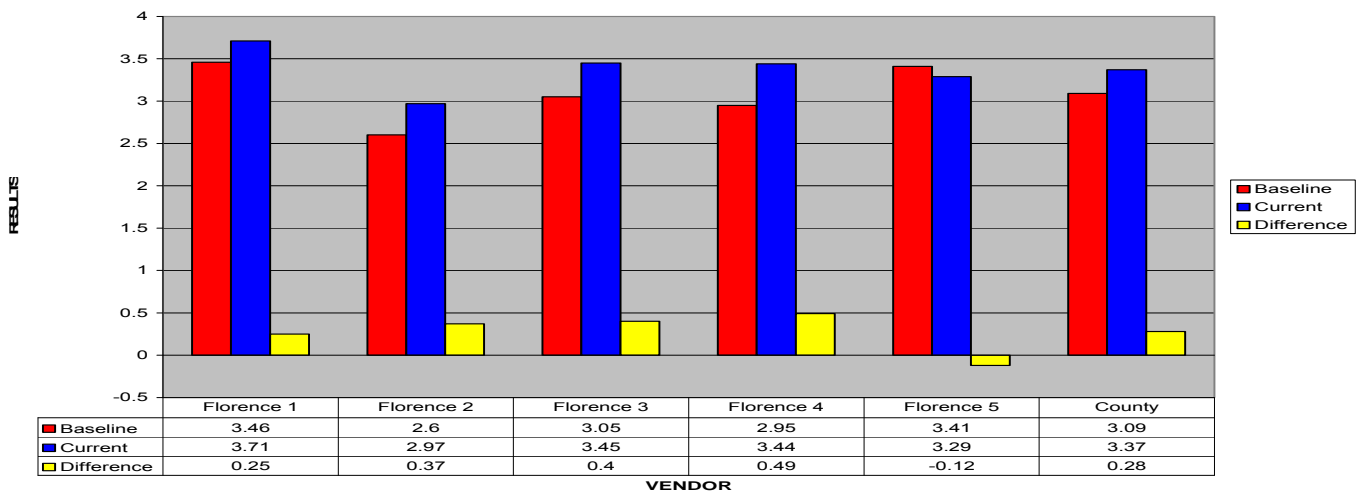
• ACIRI - Adults

- Florence District 1 – .27%
- Florence District 2 – .44%
- Florence District 3 – .46%
- Florence District 4 – .51%
- Florence District 5 - .05%
- Overall for Florence County – .36%

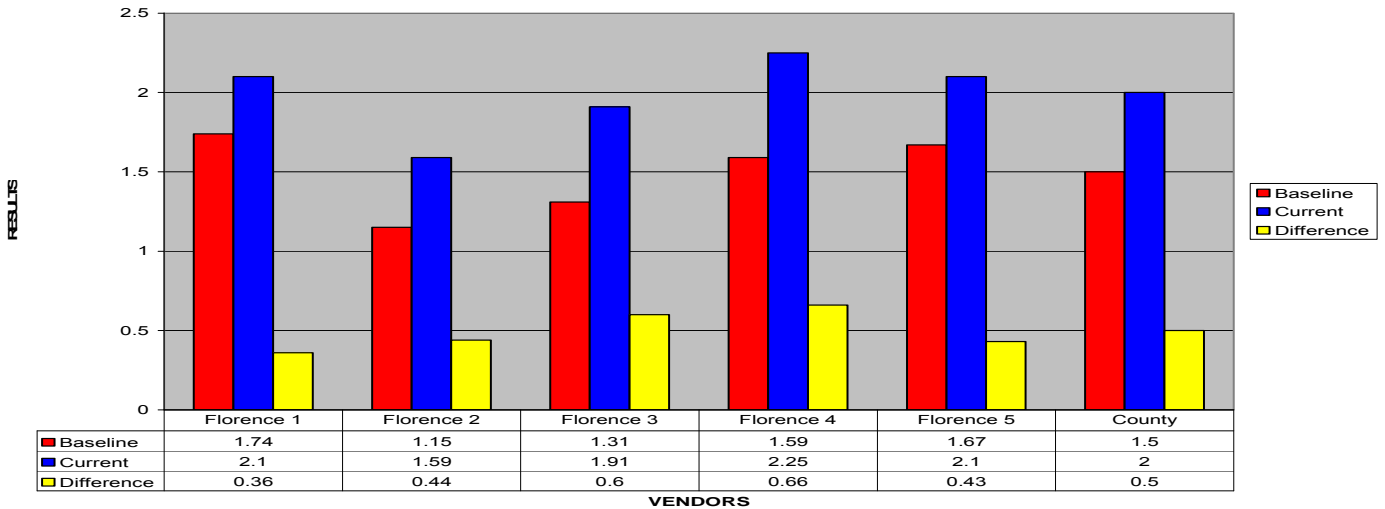
• ACIRI - Children

- Florence District 1 – .36%
- Florence District 2 – .44%
- Florence District 3 – .60%
- Florence District 4 – .66%
- Florence District 5 – .43%
- Overall for Florence County – .50%

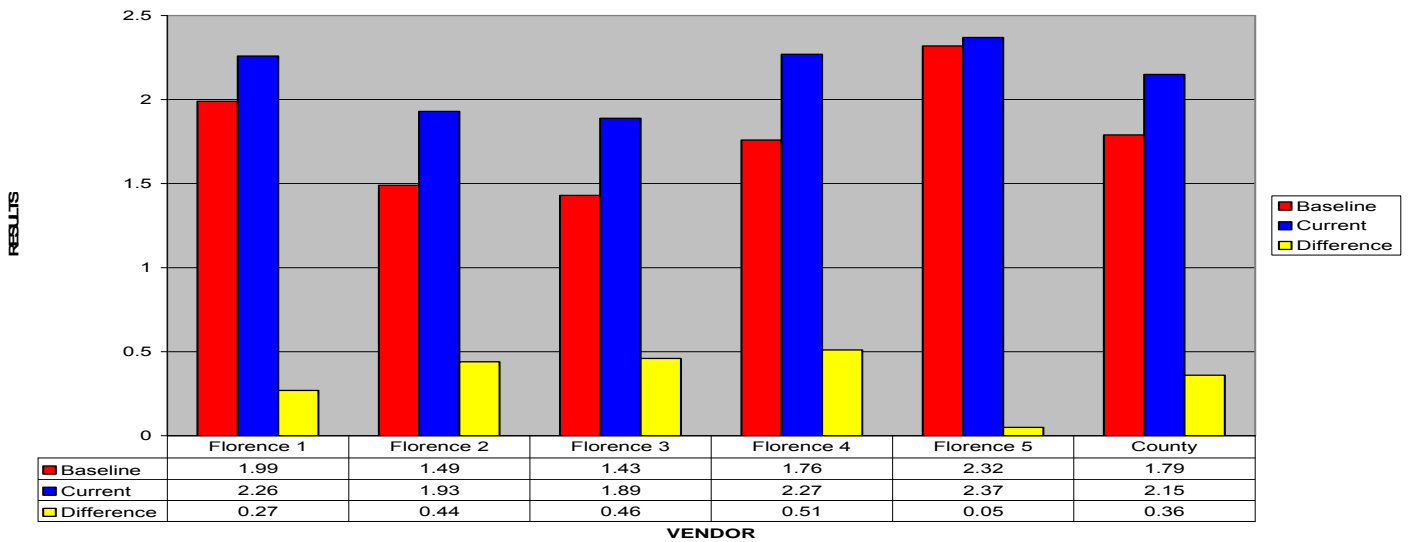
Assessment Data Graphs
KIPS FY09



ACIRI - Child



ACIRI - Adult



QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Child Care Facility Quality Enhancement

Program Description: The goal of Child Care Facility Quality Enhancement is to provide technical assistance to identified child care providers. The environmental rating scales (ECERS, ITERS, and FCCERS) were used to pre- and post assess centers. This assessment served as the basis for the development of an improvement plan. The Technical Assistance Provider and Center staff worked collaboratively to develop the improvement plan. Technical assistance site visits were made on a biweekly basis. Based on environmental rating scales pre-assessments and Center input, Florence County First Steps funds were used to purchase needed equipment and supplies for classrooms and/or playgrounds.

Program results:

- Seventy-five percent of the selected facilities were served. Two facilities (Carolina Kids and Ruby’s Child Care) were selected to participate in the program but were not served. Both of the aforementioned facilities were in the process of moving to center-based settings. Both facilities ran into problems and were not able to get into the centers at the projected time (12/01/08). These center delays and subsequent budget cuts led us to make the decision to continue serving the three centers we initially identified and delay the addition of the other centers until FY10. Technical assistance has been provided to Carolina Kids in an unofficial advisory capacity only.

Measures of Success:

- Total TA visits equaled 59.
- Average TA visits per month were 1.96.
- Total TA hours equaled 113.50
- Average TA duration per visit was 115.14 minutes.

Assessment Results:

Primary focus of technical assistance was on the two-year-old room at each Center. The ITERS-R was administered. The results are as follows:

CENTER	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment	Overall Gain/Loss
MonDae Morning Childcare Center	2.28	3.76	1.48
Precious Ones Learning Center II	3.13	4.28	1.15
Stepping Stones Child Care Center	3.21	4.24	1.03

Child Care Provider Training

Program Description: The Child Care Staff Training and Development strategy for Florence County First Steps provides DSS training opportunities for all child care facilities within the county. The trainings areas include: Curriculum, Growth and Development, Health and Safety, and all others needed for DSS certification. Other topics are included based on suggestions made by providers. All trainings are conducted by trainers certified or registered through the South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development. Trainings take place at a time and location that is convenient to participants across the county.

Program results:

- Personnel (130 providers) from 34 child care facilities participated in 21 hours of training.
- Trainings impacted the lives of 2,921 children (duplicated).
- A total of 670.5 DSS credit hours were awarded to providers.

Child Care Scholarships

Program Description: Florence County First Steps partners with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to implement the Scholarship Initiative. Florence County First Steps provided scholarships for children in families needing assistance with child care. Applications are completed by parent(s) and a preliminary screening occurred in the Partnership office. Applications were ranked according to First Steps risk factors. Applications are then sent to DSS for approval. Parents were strongly recommended to place their approved children in child care facilities that participate in First Steps Quality Enhancement to ensure that the children are receiving quality care.

Program Results:

- Fifty-eight Child Care Scholarships were awarded to Florence County residents.

Centers of Excellence

Program Description: The Centers of Excellence model is a comprehensive, multi-component strategy designed to connect low-income children (ages zero to 3) and their families with access to superior early education programming and parenting supports.

Program results:

- Twenty-two families (26 children) were served through the COE Program. Families who were awarded the COE Scholarship for a second year were given the opportunity to continue to work full-time, earn a college degree, complete a GED and succeed above the TANF assistance program. Those families who were awarded a scholarship for FY09 for the first time were able to join the workforce and enroll in college part-time. The awarded children whether continuing or first year, entered into a facility with a curriculum that will help prepare them for school. Through the assessments of ELAP/LAP3 and health screenings, parents were able to receive services for their child if a delay was found.
- The 26 children/22 families who were served during FY 09 had at least one of the state identified recognizable risk factors.
- Six teachers continued working on their Early Childhood Degree at Florence Darlington Technical College, while three teachers began a Master's Degree in Early Childhood at South Carolina State University.

Measures of Success:

- Total TA visits for Excellent Learning Preschool was 72 and the total TA visits for Zion Canaan CDC was 82.
- Average TA visits per month for Excellent Learning Preschool was 6 and the average TA visit per month for Zion Canaan was 7.6.
- The total TA hours equaled 129.5 hours.

- Average TA duration per visit for Excellent Learning Preschool was 4.9 hours and for Zion Canaan was 5.70 hours.
- The Environmental Rating Scales are used in classrooms to measure how well a program is meeting the children’s needs-to see whether children are receiving protection, learning opportunities, and positive relationships they need for successful development. The Pre-Assessments took place during the first three months of the COE program in 2007, and the Post-Assessments took place three months before COE funding ended in 2009.
- The ITERS-R scale was used to assess the infant/toddler and K2 classrooms. The results are as followed:

Infant/Toddler Classroom	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment	Overall Gain/Loss
Excellent Learning Preschool	3.9	3.91	0.01
Zion Canaan CDC	2.5	3.31	0.81

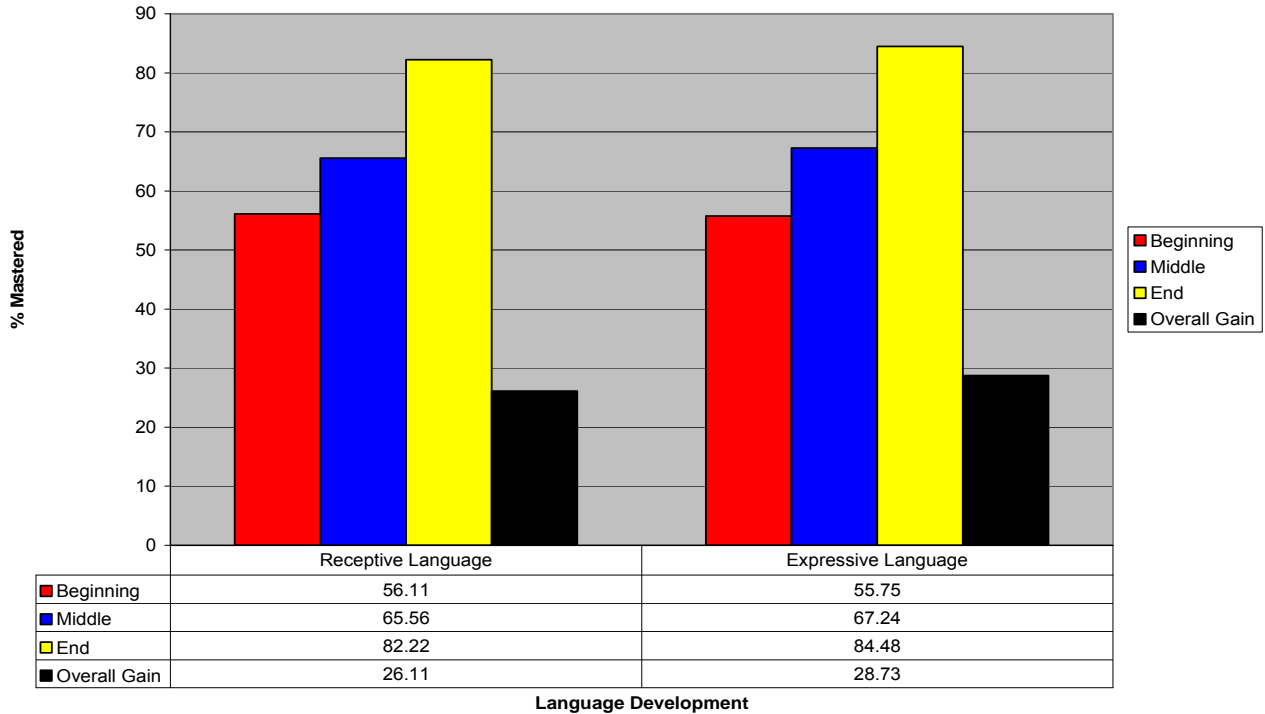
K2 Classroom	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment	Overall Gain/Loss
Excellent Learning Preschool	4.1	3.92	-0.18
Zion Canaan CDC	2.83	3.80	0.97

- The ECERS-R scale was used to assess the K3 classroom at Zion Canaan CDC. The results are as followed:

3K Classroom	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment	Overall Gain/Loss
Zion Canaan	3.58	3.81	0.23

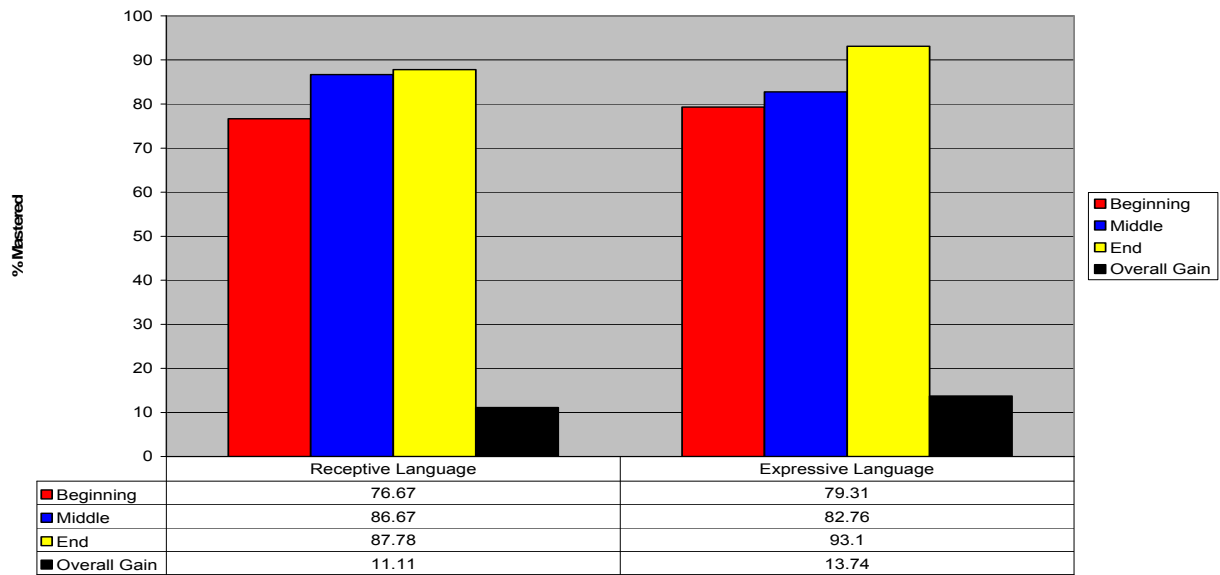
- Early LAP was used to assess the progress of children birth to 2 years of age in two different categories of language development: Receptive language which includes abilities in the area of understanding or comprehension; and Expressive Language, which includes abilities in the area of appropriate speaking and responding. The following graphs show the results from both COE sites:

Excellent Learning ELAP FY09



Language Development

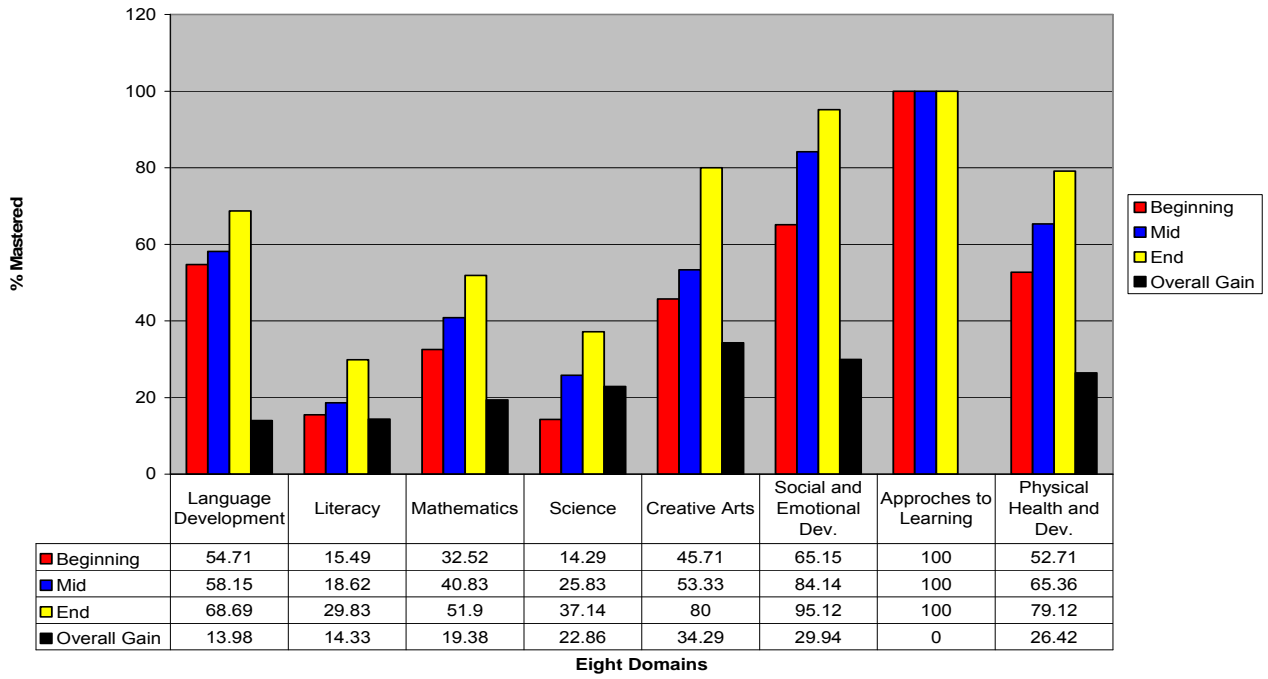
Zion Canaan ELAP FY09



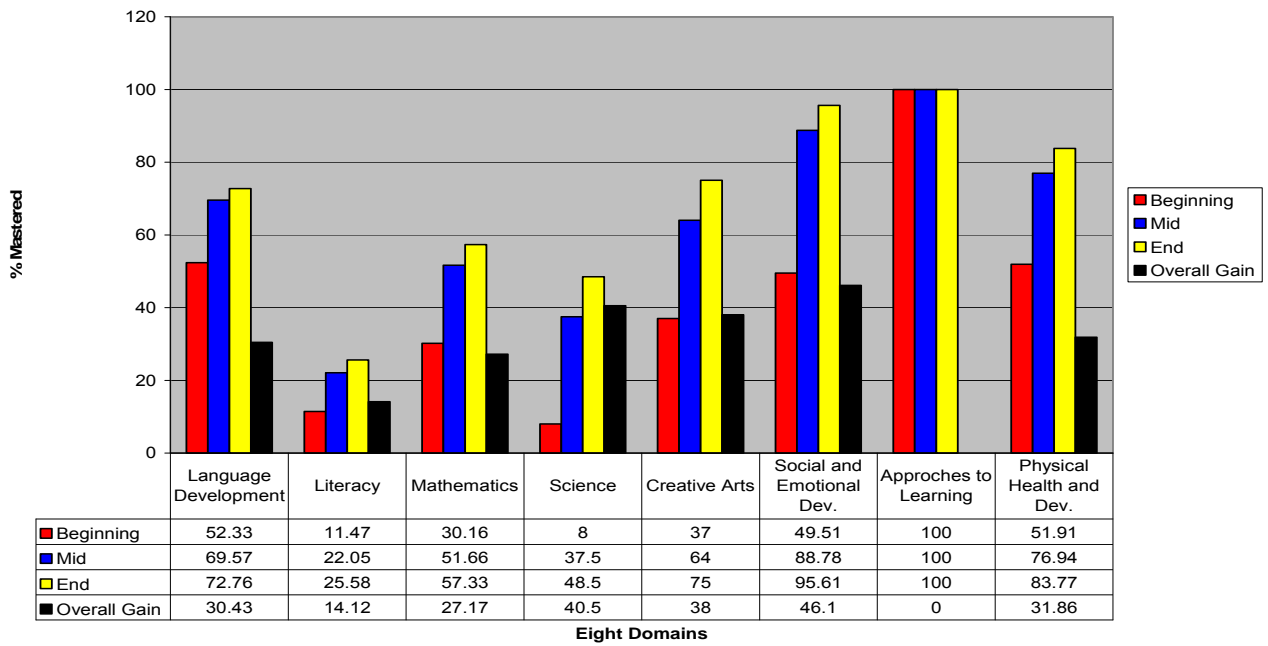
Language Development

- The LAP-3 was used to assess the progress of 3year-olds in both of the COE sites. LAP-3 assesses the progress in 8 domains (language, literacy, mathematics, science, creative arts, social/emotional development, approaches to learning and physical and health development. The graphs below show the progress of each COE site from beginning to the end of the year and the overall percent mastered:

Excellent Learning LAP3 FY09



Zion Canaan LAP3 FY09



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:

- Eighty-four (84) students were served in the Florence County 4K CDEPP classes.
- Six (6) Florence County child care providers offered CDEPP 4K classes.
- 98 hours of Technical Assistance was provided to CDEPP teachers and classrooms.
- The following CDEPP classrooms showed an increase in their ECERS-R scores:

Center	2008 ECERS-R Assessment	2009 ECERS-R Assessment	Overall Gain
Sunshine House #30	3.27	5.19	1.92
Zion Canaan CDC	4.50	4.66	0.16
Thelma Brown Head Start	5.41	6.22	0.81
Angels Inn CDC	3.9	5.80	1.9

SCHOOL TRANSITION

Countdown To Kindergarten

Program description: Countdown To Kindergarten is a school transition strategy designed to successfully bridge at-risk students into the K-12 school environment. Preschool children with little or no formal preschool education and other risk factors are chosen to participate in the program. Certified kindergarten teachers make six (6) one hour home visits to identified families/students during the summer prior to the student beginning kindergarten. Participants are identified by a community partnership (local schools, First Steps, DSS, Head Start, faith partner, etc.). Students are screened for participation, and parent participation is required. During the home visits, children and families are introduced to actual materials used in kindergarten classrooms, and are given a Kindergarten Transition Toolkit (books, puzzles, clay, blocks, floor mats, etc.) to keep. The final visit is a “field trip” to the school where the child will attend classes in the fall.

Program results:

- Twenty families were served in the program.
- 100% of participating families received 6 home visits.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$335,974
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 11</i>)	\$45,945
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$38,599
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 56</i>)	\$14,203
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$347,826
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	\$171,454
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$5,507
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$4,697
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$81,810
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$74,805
TOTAL:	\$1,120,821

<u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name	
Parenting Programs	\$189,562
CDEPP 4K Programs	\$341,708
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$8,116
Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$58,099
Childcare Training and Professional Development	\$86,570
Childcare Scholarship Initiative (SCDSS)	\$125,800
Childcare Scholarship Initiative (In-house)	\$119,219
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$81,694
Administrative Functions	\$110,053
TOTAL:	\$1,120,821

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Alicestine Timmons	\$35
Anise McWhite	\$10
Antioch Kidz Center	\$25
BAC Daycare Center	\$70
Candice Heyward	\$10
Care-A-Lot Daycare	\$35
Carolina Kids	\$110
Christian Assembly Daycare	\$260
Corine Gaskins	\$10
Elaine Carolina	\$20
Eleanor Backus	\$25
Florence School District #3	\$5,490
Gail Horton	\$25
Gracie McLeod	\$60
Immanuel Baptist Church Daycare	\$520
Jannie Dickson	\$20
Jasmine Emmanuel	\$25
Kara Lemaster	\$30
Kare Bear Daycare	\$20
Kisha Brooks	\$5
Lakeisha Kirkland	\$5
LaShawn Scott	\$15
Lendora Nowlin	\$10
Lillian D. Grant	\$15
Margaret Echols	\$5
Margie Edwards	\$10
Maria Hudson	\$5
Maria May	\$5
Marion County First Steps	\$920
Merrinell Taylor	\$200
Mon-Dae Morning	\$30
Percilla Wilson	\$5
Precious Moments Daycare	\$10
Precious Ones-Robinson	\$10
Rains-Centenary Elementary	\$30
Rhonda Williams	\$120

Shirley Burgess	\$35
Spencer Scott	\$650
Stephanie Waiters	\$5
Stepping Out on Faith	\$20
Stepping Stones	\$40
Sue Byron	\$25
Sugar Bears Daycare	\$10
Sunshine Daycare	\$100
Sunshine House #30	\$125
Tamela Stacks	\$35
Thursday's Child	\$60
Tinker Bell Nursery	\$100
Traci Moore	\$25
Zion Canaan Child Development Center	\$415
TOTAL: \$9,845	

Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 38.4%
(at least 15% Legislative requirement)

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Category	Name
Pre-K thru Primary Teacher Pamplico Elementary School	Linda Rankin Lk349@aol.com
Family Educator Provider Florence	Ivey Staley, Board Chairman instaley@yahoo.com
Family Educator Provider	Shondra Johnson
Child Care Provider Zion Canaan Child Development Center	Linda Hearon HLindaFaye@cs.com
Health Care Provider McLeod	Tracy Stanton tstanton@mcleodhealth.org
Business Community	Atty. Charlie Blake cblake@finklealaw.com
Parents of Pre-School Children Florence	Windy Bird wendybir@bellsouth.net
Parents of Pre-School Children Florence	Ticey Fleming

Parents of Pre-School Children Florence	Jean Marie Graham jmgramham@flo2.k12.sc.us
Member of Early Childhood Ed Pee Dee Healthy Start, Inc.	Madie Robinson madie@pdhs.org
Member of Early Childhood Ed. Johnsonville	Craton G. Dicks Stayg2@yahoo.com
Member of Early Childhood Ed. Florence	Ernestine Weisner Weisner7erni@yahoo.com
Member of Early Childhood Ed. Francis Marion University	Dr. Dorothy Harris dharris@fmarion.edu
Florence School District 1 Florence	Thurmond Becote thurmondbecote@yahoo.com
Florence School District 2 Pamplico	Merrinell Taylor mtaylor@flo2.k12.sc.us
Florence School District 3 Lake City	Vacant
Florence School District 4 Timmonsville	Vacant
Florence School District 5 Johnsonville	Vacant
Florence County Library Children's Librarian	Debbie Quesada, Treasurer debquesada@yahoo.com
DHEC	Michelline Cooper cooperm@dhec.sc.gov
Head Start	Maebelle Alston Mb_alston@yahoo.com
Florence County DSS	Nadine Livingston nlivingston@dss.state.sc.us
Senate Appointment	Kendra Fling
House Appointment	James E. Byrd, III JByrd7795@sc.rr.com
House Appointment	Monroe Friday, Vice Chairman

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.

Success Stories

PCHP Coordinators

"The Parent Child Home Program has shown significant growth over the recent years in Florence Public School District 1. Florence County First Steps has played a major role in this growth process.

Florence County First Steps continues to provide funding for services to identified at-risk families. Families are provided books and toys to help promote language interaction between parents and children. Home visitors use toys and books to model strategies to promote language development in children.

*Parents are encouraged to participate in Adult Education classes at our Parent Center. Two PCHP parents (Joanne Wade and Charlotte Pippin) received their GED during FY09. Ms. Wade scored very high on the exam and was invited into the National Adult Education Honor Society." --- **Diana Bailey (Florence 1 PCHP Coordinator)***

"On behalf of the Florence County School District Four Parent-Child Home Program, let me thank you for your partnership. You are to be commended for exercising this kind of commitment to the education of our young babies.

You have had a profound impact on the lives of our families. Your diligence, dedication, and sensitivity have helped countless families to become better parents through verbal interaction with their child through books and toys funded through your agency. We are fortunate to have such wonderful caring people as Florence County First Steps.

*We appreciate your efforts not only during the Parent-Child Home Program but also throughout the many years of your partnership with Florence County School District Four."—**Gloria Bracey (Florence 4 Family and Community Coordinator)***

Childcare Directors

“The owners, staff, and children at Stepping Stone Childcare Center would like to express our gratitude for the positive effects the First Steps Program has had on our center. Their staff came in and accessed our facility and was able to discover several ways we could better utilize our space, inside and outside. Several things were brought to our attention that we were doing improperly, as well as things we just did not know. The First Steps Program has provided us funding, guidance, resources, techniques, input, and most of all the ability to better meet our children’s needs. The improvements to our center have had a positive overall effect on their day to day activities. We are most grateful.”

–Glennis McElveen, Gwendolyn Williams, and Deborah Mitchell (Director and Owners of Stepping Stones Childcare)

“Florence County First Steps has been greatly instrumental in providing childcare provider training. During FY09, Immanuel Baptist Childcare had 12 staff members to participate in staff trainings. We earned a total of 68.5 DSS credit hours in the areas of Growth and Development and Curriculum. Trainings were mostly on Saturday mornings which made it easier for staff to attend. The staff brought back ideas from the trainings and implemented them into the program. FCFS is to be commended for the great job they do in providing childcare provider training.”--Lisa Hobbs (Immanuel Baptist Childcare)

ABC Scholarship Parents

“I am a single mother of a beautiful girl. The childcare scholarship I received from Florence County First Steps has enabled me to continue my post-high school education with the knowledge that my child is receiving quality care at a First Steps supported facility.”-----Tenaé McDowell

“I am a single father. I got a child care scholarship from First Steps for my little boy to go to daycare. He is learning a lot at the Center. If I had not received the scholarship, his grandma would have to take care of him. I am glad he can go to daycare so that he can be ready for school.”---Ahmad Smith

Centers of Excellence Scholarship Parents

“I am a mother of eight children and through the COE Initiative; I was given the opportunity to put my youngest two children in childcare while I completed my GED. During the second year of the scholarship I was able to find a job during the day while my children were at school.”---Zion Canaan COE Parent

“The Centers of Excellence Scholarship program gave my daughter and son the opportunity to attend a quality childcare facility, while I attended classes at Francis Marion University. The scholarship gave me a chance to take more classes in the morning and was able to graduate on time. I graduated in the Spring of 2009 and started a masters degree online. I appreciate the past two years of service that my children were given.”--- **Zion Canaan COE Parent**

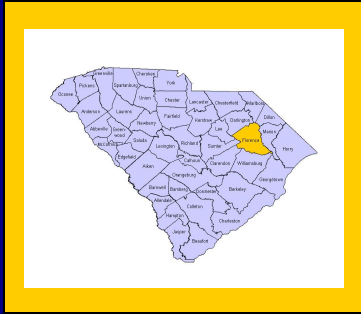
“I would like to thank everyone that made the Centers of Excellence Scholarship possible. I would not have been able to afford childcare at a high quality center without the assistance. This year my child is enrolled in the 4K CDEPP Program. First Steps has been a blessing to my family over the past two years.” ----**Excellent Learning Preschool COE Parent**

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:

First Steps Strategy Areas	Notable Moments
Family Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 5 Florence County School Districts increased their numbers of families by 20 totaling 100 families a year. • Offers monthly Parenting Classes for more than 100 parents participating in PCH and Centers of Excellence. • Each year the KIPS and ACIRI scores have continued to increase significantly.

Healthy Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since our inception until 2007-2008, over 1,000 children and their families received home health visits and assessments using Ages and Stages. • Administered 1000's of health screening to children
Quality Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On an average, 50 Scholarships per year were used throughout the county to get children birth to age 4 out of the home into an educational environment. • Twenty-one Centers of Excellence teachers were trained in Creative Curriculum to use in their prospective classrooms. • Seven Centers of Excellence teachers were trained in Program for Infant Toddler Care (PITC). • Grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year were/is used to assist childcare facilities to enhance the quality of care. • On a yearly basis, FCFS offers 20 DSS Credit Childcare Hours; est. 200 credit hours.
Early Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with local school districts to create 4 new 4K classrooms to reach eighty (80) four year olds not enrolled in school. • All 4K CDEPP teachers are trained in Preschool Creative Curriculum with refresher courses each school year.
School Transition Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing Countdown to Kindergarten in Florence 3 has allowed children to enter 5K ready for school.

**Created one of the first Public Private 4K classrooms partnering with Florence School District #2 (Hanna Pamplico) who provided the classroom space, PD CAA Head Start provided the teacher, and Florence County First Steps purchased the classroom furniture, materials, and paid the teacher salary.*



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Florence County

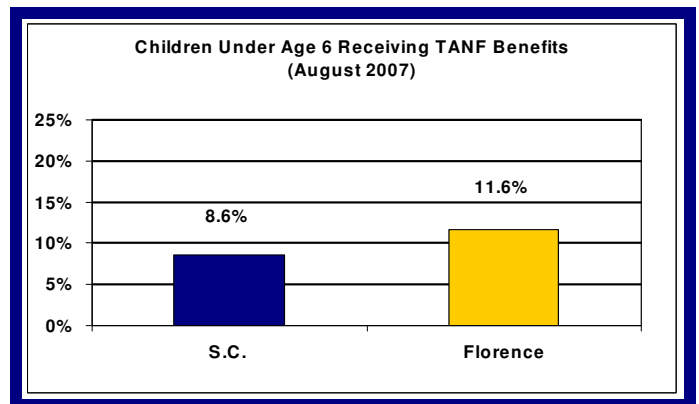
Total Children Under Six: 11,096

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4% Florence County (2007): 11.6%

Fast Fact: 1 in 9 Florence 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.
- 1,290 of Florence County’s 11,096 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.

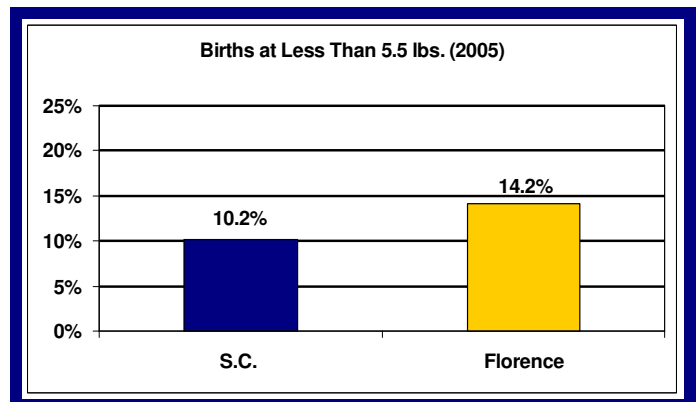


CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2% Florence County (2005): 14.2%

Fast Fact: 1 in 7 Florence 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.
- 277 of the 1,952 children born in Florence County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



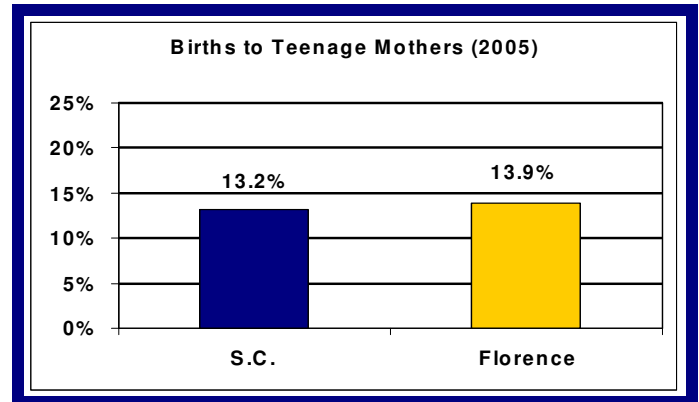
BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

Florence County (2005): 13.9%

Fast Fact: 1 in 7 Florence 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.
- 271 of the 1,952 children born in Florence County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



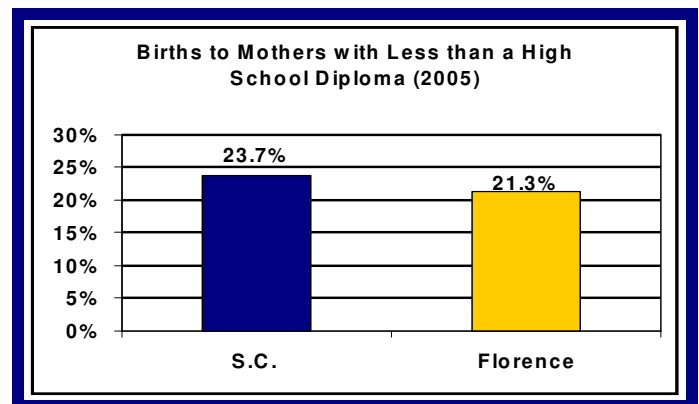
BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

Florence County (2005): 21.3%

Fast Fact: Just over 1 in 5 children in Florence 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.
- 416 of the 1,952 children born in Florence 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