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**Total children in county under age 6: 4,767**

**Total Children in county living in poverty : 25.3%**

### Lancaster County Highlights

- Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program serves approximately 1200 children. This program has provided over 115,200 books to children in Lancaster County over the past 9 years. Private donations and grants have provided the funds for this program.

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

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**

Ten years ago Lancaster County First Steps set forth on a great quest to lead the county in an early education initiative. Community engagement was the largest in the State. The county was one of the first seven to receive funds due to the diligence of an engaged board and because of their passion to serve the needs of children and families in Lancaster County.

A strategic planning process involved thirty nine business leaders and fifty community partners to study the needs and gaps in services for children under six years of age. The study reported the need of 4.4 million dollars to meet the needs of every child less than six years of age in Lancaster County. The initial annual state allocation was \$737,000 and \$200,000 in private funds provided by local foundations. A drop in the bucket for what was needed to truly make a difference.

The board formed a grants and fundraising committee and lead the state over the past ten years in obtaining additional funds. To date approximately 1.5 million dollars of additional funds have been obtained by the County Partnership. The board is committed to the mission "Every Child will enter school ready to succeed" but we have a long way to go.

As you review the various activities and programs in this annual report for 2008-2009, please know that we are only scratching the surface of need in the lives of children in our community. I invite you to bring your gifts and discover renewed purpose for your own life, as you give a part of yourself away in service to our youngest children and their families.

Contribute to Lancaster County First Steps with a donation of your time, talent and resources.

***Make the best investment in the future of our community, our children!***

Lora P Bryson  
Executive Director  
Lancaster 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:** This program is a nationally recognized PCHP (Parent Child Home Program). The home visitation program builds upon the successful components of existing organizations', increases the number of parents engaged in home visitation services and enhances the best practices curricula with additional best practice parenting information. This program is federally funded.

#### **Program Results:**

- *2295 home visits were made-an average of 30 adults per month and 30 children per month.*
- *56.78% of families received more than 8 visits per month, 19.39% received 8 visits per month, 8.03% received 7 visits per month, 5.54% received 6 visits per month, 3.60% received 5 visits per month, 3.04% received 4 visits per month, and 3.60 % received less than 4 visits per month.*
- *618 books were provided for the families.*
- *19 families graduated from the program.*
- *Increased the capacity of parents to be their child's best and most important teacher by expanding home visitation services.*
- *Increased parents' knowledge of good developmental books and toys. Indicator: 100% of families responding to a survey listed good books and toys.*
- *Increased school readiness through parent/child verbal interaction of reading and conversational play. Indicator: Parents reported spending an increased time reading and playing with their children (5 or more hours per week). Changes were also observed by Home Visitor. 11 graduates are attending the Head Start Program.*
- *National program recommends 23 weeks of home visits during the year, but Lancaster County's PCHP visited families 37 weeks each year.*
- *Served families of two and three year old children referred by schools, human service agencies, and other program families.*
- *All families were targeted for participation on the basis of compounded school readiness risk factors.*
- *Trained home visitor visited families twice a week bringing a new book or toy each week. Each visit lasted thirty minutes or longer.*
- *100% of parents reported that their opinion of the program was good.*
- *100% of parents reported that they were pleased with their Home Visitor.*

The South Carolina Readiness Assessment is used to monitor school readiness and contains thirteen sub-scores. Only two years of data have been released to date – 2004 and 2006. Lancaster County data reveals an increase in all thirteen sub-scores, with an average of 7% increase per scale comparing 2004 and 2006. In 2004, overall 71% of children tested ready for school. Two years later, the percentage of children testing ready increased to 78%. Although the

Parent – Child Home Program cannot take full credit for this improvement, it is likely that advances in school readiness may be in part due to participation in program services.

### **Lancaster County First Steps Resource Center**

**Program Description:** Lancaster County First Steps Resource Center serves Lancaster County families with children birth-Kindergarten. The focus of the program is “at-risk” families, but others are not turned away. This center allows families, teachers, child care providers, etc. to “check out” items by a process similar to a public library. Materials are kept for a two week period. Items vary and cover many areas such as math, infant/toddler development, school readiness, reading, language development, health and safety, parenting, teachers/child care staff, science, and social studies. Items contain instructions for working with children on particular skills. 4K and Kindergarten teachers refer children to the center with particular needs. Further efforts are being made to reach other interest groups. Targeted groups include home school agencies, child care centers, speech and occupational therapists, and other families within the community. This program began during Fiscal Year 09.

#### **Program Results:**

- *Over 2,000 items were in stock at the close of FY 09.*
- *3 Open House events had been held in order to familiarize staff/teachers with the referral process.*
- *58 families are benefitting from this program.*

### **Raising A Thinking Child**

**Program Description:** Lancaster County First Steps provided Lancaster County parents with an effective Parenting curriculum that will improve their parenting skills and competency. Early Reading First grant funds were used to implement the Raising A Thinking Child initiative.

#### **Program Results:**

- *A total of 9 parents were trained in the Raising A Thinking Child curriculum.*
- *4 group meetings were held for parents.*
- *12 group meeting hours were recorded.*
- *18 children were impacted by the RATC program.*
- *Increased parental exposure to a best practice parenting curriculum*
- *This program focused on meeting the needs of at-risk families without turning away any interested parents.*

## **HEALTHY START**

### **Public Health Based Services**

**Program Description:** Lancaster County First Steps provided child care facilities with on-site technical assistance in the area of health and safety. First Steps used funds from the J. Marion Sims Foundation to contract with the Lancaster County Department of Health and Environmental Control in order to hire a nurse that served 15 child care centers.

### **Program Results:**

- *134 child care staff were directly impacted twice a month by the nurse visits.*
- *847 children were directly impacted bi-weekly by the nurse visits.*
- *6 group training sessions were held.*
- *7 centers received Infant Care training (1hour educational credit)*
- *30 providers have received “hand washing” taught to children and received a video from ETV/DHEC “Wash Hands”.*
- *Activities were performed at each visit including: Classroom, playground/outdoor, dining/food preparation, drop-off/pick-up, and director/consultation. Averages of 177 were in attendance during activities.*
- *40 children’s books on health and safety were given to participants with this program. 30 books were issued to staff.*
- *2 families received referrals for speech services.*
- *Increased availability of health resources to the child care community: A full time registered nurse visited 15 child care centers bi-weekly.*
- *The nurse concentrated health and safety improvement efforts on the infant and toddler areas of each center. However, the nurse addressed any health and safety concerns throughout each center.*
- *Provider training was conducted for the following programs: Mastering the Administration of Medications and Special Medical Procedures within Childcare Facilities /1.5 credit hrs./ Health & Safety; Protecting The Youngest- Infant Care/ 1.0 credit hrs./ Health & Safety; Dare To Prepare-Disaster Preparedness Training/ 2.0 credit hrs./ Program Admin. Director Training; Reviewing the Standards- Staying Above the Curve for Health & Safety/ 2.5 credit hrs.*
- *Training for children ages 3-5 was provided in the following areas: Hand Washing/243 children; Healthy Habits/56 children. All children received educational hand-outs on the topic areas to take home.*
- *Bi-monthly health and safety information sheets were issued to daycare providers. Each center was given a notebook to use in order to keep all information sheets together for use as a resource manual.*
- *Other training provided to staff included: Biting Policy/Procedure Review and Development; Breathing Treatment Policy/Procedure Review(parents also received informational material on this topic); Portable Emergency Information Procedures(Emergency Information cards were created and issued for each center to place in portable emergency packs, vans, etc. This included Emergency Information on each child.)*
- *Health and safety information was distributed bi-monthly on topics impacting community health. This included topics such as H1N1 (swine flu) information, school immunizations, exclusion list for 2009-2010, nutrition, seatbelt safety, etc.*
- *The Nurse viewed certain activities at each visit. These included classroom time, playground/outdoor time, rest time, dining and food preparation, diapering/toileting, drop off and pick up, and Director Consultation. By observing all aspects of the center, the Nurse was able to concentrate efforts to the areas of most need for each individual center.*

## **QUALITY CHILD CARE**

### **Child Care Training and Professional Development**

**Program Description:** Lancaster County First Steps educated Lancaster County child care providers on appropriate early childhood education, health and safety topics.

#### **Program Results:**

- *An average of 86 child care providers were trained each month in the areas of curriculum, growth and development, health and safety and program administration.*
- *729 children were directly impacted by the training sessions for child care providers.*
- *Increased appropriate education opportunities for child care providers in Lancaster County: An average of 15 center/home/faith based centers in Lancaster County participated in each session.*
- *23 training sessions were held offering a total of 49.5 certified training hours for each of the child care providers.*
- *Training Topics included:*
  - Mandated Reporting/Child Abuse;*
  - Early Learning Standards-Video Series 1;*
  - The Journey Home-Caring for Homeless Children;*
  - Bloodborne Pathogen;*
  - Early Learning Standards Video Series 2;*
  - Mastering the Administration of Medicines/Proper Health Procedures in Child Care*
  - Guidance and Discipline with Infants and Toddlers;*
  - Disaster Preparedness;*
  - Early Learning Standards Video Series 3;*
  - Early Learning Standards Video Series 4;*
  - Disability Overview;*
  - Getting In Tune; ABC Enhancement;*
  - Reviewing the Standards of Health and Safety.*

### **Child Care Quality Enhancements**

**Program Description:** A research based professional high quality early childcare technical assistance program implemented with master's level early education specialist teaching best practices to child care staff. On-site technical assistance and appropriate quality learning materials are provided to each center.

#### **Program Results:**

- *Children Served: 524 children were impacted by the technical assistance program.*
- *131 caregivers were impacted by the technical assistance program.*
- *Pre- ERS scores averaged 3.25 . ECERS-R pre-scores averaged 3.26 and ITERS pre scores averaged 3.22. Post assessment scores increased to an average of 4.32 on the ECERS-R and to an average of 5 on the ITERS assessments.*
- *Increases on Environmental Rating post-assessments increased an average of 1.27 points overall and by 18 percent.*

- *An average of 421 dollars was spent on materials per classroom participating in the QE program. These materials supported the technical assistance and training sessions that were provided.*
- *On site technical assistance was provided by 1 certified master's level early education technical assistant.*
- *Training needs were diagnosed and addressed from Environmental Rating Scale reports.*
- *The program promoted and built strong relationships between technical assistant and caregivers/teachers and between caregivers/teacher and children.*
- *Individualized research based training and technical assistance program impacted 10 centers in Lancaster County.*
- *The 10 selected child care participating centers received a pre- and post- ERS assessment.*
- *Trainings were held locally and on site technical assistance and quality learning materials were provided to child care providers in targeted pre-school classrooms.*
- *Certified technical assistant worked closely with child care staff on the appropriate use of resource materials.*
- *Networking opportunities were increased among center staff.*
- *205 hours of Technical Assistance were provided to centers throughout Lancaster County.*
- *All participating QE centers averaged 2 technical assistance visits per month.*
- *A 10% increase in ABC level status among centers, with 1 participating center moving from B level to BB level. The center received \$2,000 from the ABC Program for improving their status.*

## **EARLY EDUCATION**

### **4K Model Classroom-Southside Child Development Center**

**Program Description:** Provide 10 Pre-K Early Childhood Education slots. First Steps contracts with Lancaster County School District, Southside Child Development Program to serve three, four and five year old children.

#### **Program Results:**

- *Site served 10 children –all 10 slots served the greatest at risk children.*
- *Open Court curricula was implemented.*
- *Lancaster County School District provided resources and classroom space.*
- *Free and reduced lunch was provided for eligible children.*
- *100% of parents reported being extremely satisfied with this program.*
- *Children were prepared for kindergarten. Ex: The children are now able to recognize letters and numbers. Children were engaged in activities that directed their attention to the sounds in words through activities such as rhyming and alliteration games.*
- *Children were more interested in reading. Ex: The children developed a strong interest in reading by being exposed to literature and informal activities that involve children in conscious recognition and use of sound pattern thru the use of nursery rhyme books, poetry books, and storybooks with patterned rhymes; recorded music, song books and books with finger plays.*

- *Pre-reading skills were improved. Ex: Emergent reading skills were developed. The children learned to match shapes, patterns, letters and words. They understand rhyming words; what sounds the letters can make and print goes from left to right.*
- *Children were excited about learning. Ex: The children showed excitement each day when they came to the center. Children learned through play and varied methods of fun teaching in literacy, math, science and art.*
- *Gross motor skills were improved. Ex: The children's gross motor skills were developed through planned movement activities such as moving to music; running, jumping and hopping etc.*
- *Facility operated daily Monday-Friday from 7:20 am until 2:00 pm.*
- *All participating students were targeted for participation on the basis of compounded school readiness risk factors (Dial-3 screening score in the bottom 25%, free and reduced lunch status, mother's education, etc. )*
- *All 10 children enrolled received the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Books.*
- *Volunteers periodically helped out in the classroom and joined us on field trips averaging around 2 volunteers a month.*
- *Twenty home visits were conducted for 45 min. per visit.*
- *480 books were lent to the children and 50 books were given to the children through the program.*

## **SCHOOL TRANSITION**

**Program Description:** Ensure an educationally beneficial school transition by serving 94 at-risk children in the Countdown to Kindergarten program. Countdown to Kindergarten is a school transition strategy, designed to successfully bridge at-risk students into the K-12 school environment.

Countdown to Kindergarten was implemented in the summer of 2009. CTK was funded by Early Reading First Grant and a portion of funds from SCFS.

There are three components to the strategy:

- 1) Public Awareness
- 2) Kindergarten Home Visitation
- 3) Countdown Celebration

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 class in the fall. Change in student and parent interaction is measured before and after participation. First Steps builds ongoing relationships with the Countdown teachers, children, schools, and families in order to measure longer-term impact of student success and parent involvement.

***Program Results:***

- 94 identified children completed the Countdown program during summer 2009.
- 100% percent of the children received all eight visits.
- 100% percent of the children were placed in their Countdown home visitor's kindergarten class.
- 68.87% percent of the children qualified for free lunch.
- 12.26% percent of the children qualified for reduced lunch.
- Countdown to Kindergarten resulted in improvements in parent-child interactions, including:
  - 18% report increasing conversation with the participating child @ least 5 or more times a week
  - 22% report increasing the time played with toys, games and sports @ least 5 or more time a week
  - 32% report increasing the time read to/listen to child read from a book @ least 5 or more times a week
  - 27% report increasing talked about letters, words or numbers with participant/child @ least 5 or more times a week
  - 25% report increasing praising participant/child for accomplishments or doing things that you want him/her to do.
  - 12% report increasing singing songs or dancing with the child/participant
  - 32% report decreasing the overall hours per day participant/child watches TV, played video games or played on the computer.
  - 17% report a decrease from more than 5 hours per day participant/child watches TV, played video games or played on the computer

## **FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures By Funding Source</b>	
State Appropriation ( <i>Fund 10</i> )	\$ 171,190
E.I.A. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 55</i> )	\$ 22,510
E.I.A. Carry Forward ( <i>Fund 56</i> )	\$ 15,749
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 60</i> )	\$ 0
C.O.E. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 65</i> )	\$ 0
N.F.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 70</i> )	\$ 0
State Private ( <i>Fund 15</i> )	\$ 26,769
Local Private ( <i>Fund 20</i> )	\$ 98,589
Federal ( <i>Fund 30</i> )	\$ 180,217
In-Kind ( <i>Fund 25</i> )	\$ 100,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 615,024</b>

<b>Expenditures By Program / Strategy Name</b>	
Other Family Literacy/Learning	\$ 90,175
Parent-Child Home	\$ 95,771
Imagination Library	\$ 32,866
Full Day 4-K	\$ 57,090
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$ 27,380
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$ 35,707
Child Care Training & Professional Development	\$ 25,668
Public Health-Based Services	\$ 61,646
Programmatic Functions	\$ 147,960
Administrative Functions	\$ 40,761
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 615,024</b>

**NOTABLE DONORS**

<b><i>DONOR'S NAME</i></b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Lancaster County Partners for Youth (Early	

Reading First Grant)	\$ 73,372
Lancaster County School District (Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant	\$ 71,501
J. Marion Sims Foundation Grant	\$ 48,629
Springs Close Foundation, Inc.	\$ 28,400
Fundraisers	\$ 10,500
Donations for Dolly Parton Imagination Library	\$ 3,200
Other Cash Donations	\$ 1,920
Palmetto Tri-County Holdings, LLC	\$ 1,000
Proctor & Gamble Grant	\$ 1,000
Randolph O. Potts	\$ 600
Perception Builders	\$ 500
Indian Land Rotary Club	\$ 300
Tender Hearts Academy	\$ 170
John Bundy	\$ 100
Literary Review Club	\$ 50
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 241,242</b>

*Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 148%*

## **COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Kathy Adams, *Legislative Appointment*

Jane Alford, *Non-Profit Organization*

Bobby Bailey, *Non-Profit Organization*

Richard Band, *Lancaster County Library*

Shirnetha Belk, *Family Education, Training and Support Provider*

Harold Blackmon, *Lancaster County Library*

Jan Blackwell, *Health Care Provider*

John Bundy, *Parent of Pre-School Child*  
Janice Chapman, *Lancaster County Department of Social Services*  
Terri Coats, *Early Childhood Educator*  
Tami Ethridge, *Family Education, Training and Support Provider*  
Cindy Garris, *Business Community*  
Vicki Hinson, *Lancaster County DHEC*  
Dr. Mike Kimbrell, *Health Care Provider*  
Katherine Kirchner, *Business Community*  
Doris Knapp, *Child Care and Early Childhood Development / Education Provider*  
Aisha Mackey, *Pre-K through Primary Educator*  
Dr. Paul McKenzie, *Family Education, Training and Support Provider*  
Dr. Gene Moore, *Lancaster County School District*  
Dr. Julie Percival, *Pre-K through Primary Educator*  
Denise Pettit, *Transportation*  
Jeffrey Phillips, *Early Childhood Educator*  
Lonnie Plyler, *Transportation*  
Pamela Trimnal, *Parent of Pre-School Child*  
Deborah Truesdale, *Head Start*  
Allison Wallace, *Child Care and Early Childhood Development / Education Provider*  
Kim West, *Parent of Pre-School Child*  
Fred Witherspoon, *Faith Community*  
Tomeiko Wright, *Early Childhood Educator*

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## **COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT**

## **2008 – 2009 Success Stories:**

### **Health Services:**

Hand washing.....the best way to prevent the spread of germs. Through working with First Steps & DHEC as a nurse consultant, I have had many opportunities to teach children in our child care centers about the importance of many health topics. One class that immediately comes to mind is hand washing. I frequently talk with 2-5 yr. olds about when and why to wash their hands, and then practice the technique with each child.

Each child also receives worksheets and handouts to take home. It is a very interactive teaching session; one everyone seems to enjoy. I also give out the DVD by ETV/ DHEC entitled "Wash Hands" that puts all the hand washing information to music. Both children and teachers really seem to enjoy this format.

Having teachers ask you to come back to teach other classes is wonderful in itself. But, the most rewarding aspect of working with these children is having them recognize you on your next visit and say to you, "I know you.....you showed us how to wash our hands", and be able to tell you the when's & whys of doing so. You know then that they 'got it'!

My hope is that by making that connection with the children in these child care centers, that they will use what they are learning, as well as take a little bit of it home to share.

Amy M. Jones RN/BSN  
First Steps/DHEC Nurse Consultant

#### **Full Day 4-K:**

This is a great program. Kudos to the teachers and the staff at Southside Child Development Center. They are doing a great job with our children. I see my son's teachers during the car-rider pick up almost everyday in the afternoon. That little window of time when they're putting him in my car, we discuss his day and where he is excelling and where he needs to work. It is similar to a daily progress report and I love it. Quentin can identify letters and numbers; he can identify colors, shapes and much more. I have also noticed that the pronunciation of his words is much better this year than last year. When Quentin first started in this program he was very shy. You would have to get really close in order to hear what he was saying when he spoke. This program has helped him blossom into an outgoing, friend making little fellow.

I love that my son loves his school. He is always bragging about things that go on there. He talks about Mrs. Donna, the lady who can speak and sing fun songs in Spanish. He talks about the library where he can go and check out books and Mrs. Stefanie reads stories to his class. Quentin also talks a lot about the cafeteria, where he is certain the cafeteria ladies live! He tells me how he has learned to open his own milk carton and how he can throw away his own trash once he's done. I especially enjoy seeing him demonstrate how boys and girls are suppose to walk in a straight line down the hallway or explain how he was just sitting there in ("Criss Cross Apple sauce with his hands in his lap being as quiet as a mouse!") he receives a sticker for waiting patiently and quietly for a story.

This program is awesome! It is helping my son grow intellectually and independently. Seeing the excitement in Quentin's face when I pick him up in the afternoon brings me joy in knowing that he enjoys his school.

### **Parent Child Home Program:**

The Stevens Family has three daughters ages newborn to age three. When the Parent-Child Home Program started making home visits to their home, the children would not sit down to look at the books, or play with the toys. The Home Visitor worked with the mother, by modeling ways to encourage the children to sit and read books, and play with the educational toys. Now when the Home Visitor comes, the program child is ready and waiting to receive her new book or educational toy. Both the child and mother are enjoying interacting with each other. The mother shared with the Home Visitor that before she enrolled in our program, she never picked up a book and read to her children. She said now she tries to read them a bedtime story at least two or three times a week.

Reshi Clyburn  
Home Visitation Coordinator  
Parent Child Home Program

### **Child Care:**

Buford Child Development Center  
Lancaster, South Carolina

“On behalf of myself and Buford Child Development Center, we would like to thank the board of Lancaster County First Steps for allowing First Steps to come out to our facility and help us improve our quality of child care. First Steps helped us improve our rating to a BB in the level B rating. This has inspired us to try to move to level A in our quality. We would also like to say a special thanks to Lori Short for all of her hard work and dedication to our facility. Thanks to all of you who had a part in helping our center.

Brenda Crook, Owner  
Wendy Snipes, Director

## **LANCASTER COUNTY FIRST STEPS**

### **“THE FIRST TEN YEARS”**

*The Lancaster County First Steps Partnership Board represents one of the strongest, most diverse entities in the community. The work of this partnership has been staggering. An exhaustive review of archival data is conducted annually targeting over 70 variables including demographics, health, education, crime, economics, and transportation. Numerous community forums have been sponsored to solicit input from individuals*

*throughout the county, with over 2,500 participants attending. Specialized surveys have been developed to access input from churches, medical providers, educators, and parents. To determine potential areas of concern, a survey is also conducted annually of the parents of every child in the county who failed to test ready for school on the state mandated entrance exam.*

*In addition to the needs assessment, a comprehensive resource assessment is also conducted to provide data on current programs or services available to promote school readiness. The survey protocol includes: 1) who is served, where, and at what times; 2) what services are provided; 3) number of units of service provided; 4) service gaps; 5) available evaluation data on effectiveness of services; and 6) specific models, curricula, or theories employed in the service.*

*Another component of the community assessment process involves a comprehensive review each year of the best practice literature with regards to children and family services correlated with school readiness. This process identifies state of the art programming with demonstrated effectiveness from the empirical literature.*

*A final component of the 2007 assessment process involved an assessment report conducted by Spaulding & Associates. Personal interviews were conducted by the following groups; Child Care Owners/Directors, Grantees, Collaborating Partners, Consultants, Parents, LCFS Board Members and Staff. The purpose of the interviews was to : Identify and obtain input for the development of First Steps' annual renewal plan, Identify perceptions, successes, challenges, and recommendations for changes, as LCFS continues to sustain and increase the organizations effectiveness.*

*The past ten years for Lancaster County First Steps have been extremely successful. A few of the achievements are listed below:*

- Increased availability of quality childcare. In Lancaster there were 320 children on a waiting list for childcare. The goal was to create 50 new high quality childcare slots and 192 slots were created.
- Prior to First Steps there were 28 licensed/center based childcare centers. Today there are 25 childcare centers, 21 of those centers have become ABC Enhanced and 1 has become NAEYC Accredited.
- Received the SCFS Community Engagement Award in 2002.
- Created and implemented a professional high quality childcare training project that trains trainers to teach childcare staff best practices and to develop mentoring relationships. Eight brain-team members have become certified childcare teachers and are leaders in Lancaster County. An increase in community capacity. This strategy has increased the school readiness focus in childcare settings, increased the number of childcare workers earning an early education certificate, improved the quality of learning environments in childcare settings, and 22 childcare centers demonstrated a 52% increase in ECERS scores by 1.5 to 2.0 points.
- Received an ELOA (Early Learning Opportunities Grant) from Dept of Health and Human Services for \$485,636 to enhance school readiness strategies and to hire 2 nurses to work with 12 childcare centers to identify health and safety issues in childcare facilities.

- Provided a Summer Readiness program for 280 at-risk children. The program lasted 10 weeks and incorporated a parenting strategy (FAST – Families and Schools Together). 87% of parents reported an increase in parent-child interaction, 82% increase in parent knowledge in the area of child development and age-appropriate behavior and an 80% increase in use of community resources.
- Implement the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. An average of 1200 children receives this program. This program is funded exclusively by private funds/fundraisers.
- Created and provide leadership for a county-wide childcare association. Center Director's and/or owners are members. Monthly meetings provide networking opportunities and promotes childcare centers working together to improve the quality of childcare in Lancaster County.
- Implement the Parent Child-Home program. 200+ families have graduated from the program. (PCHP) is an intensive home visitation program for two and three year old children and their families. Through this program there have been improved parenting skills (increased scores on the HOME Inventory). Parents report an increased ability to interact appropriately with children, increase in positive parent-child interactions, increase in family access to needed services and programs, increase in number of children receiving all age appropriate immunizations, increase in the number of children receiving Well Baby Check-ups.
- During the summer of 2004, 2005, 2008 & 2009 Lancaster County participated in Countdown to Kindergarten. This program increased the percentage of children who entered kindergarten with the skills and support they need to experience success in the classroom, increased the involvement of families in their children's education, and assisted at-risk children as they transitioned into kindergarten.
- Received a second ELOA (Early Learning Opportunities Grant) from Dept of Health and Human Services for \$488,592 to enhance school readiness strategies, hire 1 nurse to work with child care centers, provide a summer readiness program for 180 children, and enhance the quality of child care settings. Grant awarded September 30, 2005.
- Received a Safe Communities Grant from Lancaster County School District for \$329,985 to implement the Parent Child Home Program over the next three years.
- Received Partners for Youth Grant to provide matching funds for 2007 Countdown to Kindergarten.
- Received 20 up to date computers from Springs Industries to be used in local child care centers.
- Received \$5,000 from Founders Federal Credit Union to provide funds for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program.
- Implemented three fundraisers with revenues of over \$11,000; Applebee's Pancake Breakfast, Shag the Night Away and Beach Bash and Boogie event.
- Successfully implemented the Early Care and Education Lottery Strategy with Region II Counties. Thirteen Child Care Centers in Lancaster County participated and raised their ECERS Scores by 2.0 points.
- Received \$5,000 from Comporium to provide educational kits for the Parent Resource Center.
- Received \$5,000 from Lancaster County United Way to provide educational kits and books for the Parent Resource Center.
- Received \$1,000 from Proctor and Gamble to provide educational kits and resources for the Parent Resource Center.
- Received \$28,000 from Springs Close Foundation to provide educational resources for the Parent Resource Center.
- Received \$3,000 from Target to provide educational kits for the Parent Resource Center.

- Received \$342,000 in Early Reading First funds from Lancaster County Partners for Youth. To fund Countdown to Kindergarten, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Raising A Thinking Child and to provide early education assessments to 4-K.
- Moved to a new location that provides training space for Child Care Teachers, Parenting classes and space for the Parent Resource Center.

Despite these considerable achievements, there is much that remains to be addressed in the community. While the previously implemented strategies continue to progress, there are significant service gaps and participation barriers that have not been ameliorated. Therefore Lancaster County First Steps continually applies for Federal, State and Local Grants. In the past six years approximately *1.5 million dollars* have been obtained to address additional school readiness needs in Lancaster County.

**Lancaster County wins Community Engagement Award - 2002**



**Lancaster County created a Childcare Quality Enhancement Strategy to Enhance, Expand or Develop new childcare in Lancaster County. 50 new slots were to be created, 196 new slots were the reality.**

**Creating Caring Spaces: 2003**

**Creating Caring Spaces was a project modeled after Trading Spaces on National TV. The Child Care Center with the lowest ITERS scores was chosen and the**

**Early Childhood Education Consultants designed the new space. Volunteers, Brain Team members and Consultants worked a long weekend to redo the infant and toddler space. Before and after pictures were taken and the Elgin Child Care staff as well as other child care workers in Lancaster County were trained on “How to Create Caring Spaces”. Businesses were involved and donated approximately \$5,000 worth of supplies and materials. Contractors also donated their time to install cabinets and electrical fixtures.**