



# Laurens County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report*

## Board Chair:

Hal Milam

Executive Director: Edith  
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Total children in county under  
age 6: 4939

Children under age 6 living in  
poverty: 10.8%

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## Laurens County Highlights

- Established a FS to School Readiness Endowment Fund with the Laurens County Community Foundation
- Implemented Center of Excellence Program
- Dollar General Literacy Grant for \$15,000

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The board sought to expand opportunities for child care scholarships so families could access quality care while they went to school or work. Thirteen scholarships were provided to children at centers consistently scoring highest on assessments. Thornwell Child Development Center (TCDC) was granted a Center of Excellence (COE) Grant (\$150,000), and a 4K CDEPP program. When the TCDC site was closed by the Trustees, the board agreed to follow those children to other quality centers, as the new Center of Excellence site was moved more than 20 miles away. The move created a lot of work, displaced 15 workers, but resulted in a new beginning in a new underserved area.

The child care initiative promotes quality training for workers, quality care for children, with expanded opportunities for parental involvement. Technical assistance is provided to fewer sites, but with greater results, such as a higher % of participation of workers, a higher rate of Directors joining the Laurens County Early Childhood Network, and positive participation in the Laurens spring Early Childhood Conference.

Family Literacy programs in both school districts were expanded to offer the 32.3% of birth mothers w/o a high school diploma, more intense services that include child care, if needed, a GED class, and home visits utilizing trained Parent Mentors with a research-based Born to Learn Curriculum. Literacy is also a strong element in the Countdown to Kindergarten transition program for four-year-olds.

Health issues are dealt with within every strategy with positive results, but lack of transportation in the county is by far the greatest gap and barrier.

Edith M. Davis  
Executive Director  
Laurens 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 works 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 quality public and private settings for 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten children.

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

## **2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy**

### **FAMILY STRENGTHENING.**

#### **Family Literacy**

**Program description:** A GED class, child care, if needed; plus home visits and group meetings are provided to parents whose children are between the ages of birth and five, are likely to experience significant school readiness problems because of family literacy, parenting, and/or other barriers to successful development. Two visits per month per child or more based upon family needs are provided. Services are provided to those families under 150% poverty who also meet at least two of the targeting requirements such as: ESOL, teen mother, single parent, special need families, and families facing critical issues. A strong referral system has been developed to ensure that families receive services that meet their needs. The research-based *Born To Learn* Curriculum is used. In addition, mentors will fully implement the Dollar General Literacy Tool Kits (Dollar General Grant). Books are distributed at every visit, a lending library will be available, and eligible children will be enrolled in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program. Group meetings, focusing upon literacy, complete the four required components of the Family Literacy program.

**Program results:**

- Both school districts served fewer than projected; District 55 projected 60 and served 86%; District 56 projected 20 and served 87.5%
- The KIPS is an evaluation of parenting behaviors related to interactions between parents and children. It involves an observation of a parent playing with his or her child for 20 minutes to examine 12 different behaviors. The KIPS is used to evaluate parents of children ages 2 months old up to 5 years of age. KIPS is an evaluation based on a 5-point scoring scale.

School District 55 completed 11 out of 40 KIPS with an average pre-score of 3.39 and a post of 3.7. District 56 completed 13 KIPS with a pre and only 2 with a Post with an average pre-score of 2.95. The average post score is 3.79. Both school districts strategies received conditional approval for FY09 because they did not meet the FY08 threshold of average visits per month (1.5 for PAT) and fewer than 75% of FY08 clients received a pre-assessment using the KIPS. A plan of improvement has been put into action for the coming year. All clients shall receive a KIPS during the first 30 days of service and post KIPS must be completed as required. Further, the average visits per month will be monitored as well as the total number of families/children to be served.

- 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 evaluating based on the observation of a parent and child reading together and is scored on a 3-point scale. It evaluates the interactions between parents and children relating to literacy acquisition.

District 55 completed 25 pre- ACIRI and 8 post, while District 56 completed 12 pre and 2 post. In both school districts the ACIRI was not begun until after January 1, so giving the recommended time for growth did not result in post assessments in most cases. Those carried over to FY09 will be assessed after a minimum of four months time in the program.

- Both school districts had difficulty maintaining the enrollment. District 55 had turn-over in supervision and mentors and a change of philosophy. District 56 had almost a complete turn-over of clients in the middle of the year making it difficult to assess with the proper length of time given for growth.
- Both school districts have been contracted to maintain a minimum of 15 families for this fiscal year. Staff changes and location changes have been made. Programs are to be monitored for fidelity during the middle of the second quarter. Plans for action will be created to ensure that services contracted are being provided.
- The program standard changes and the addition of the KIPS and ACIRI assessments in FY08 were given with short notice, but each provider is aware of the FY09 program standards and requirements.

**HEALTHY START.**

Laurens County First Steps embeds health care/referrals into every strategy.

## **QUALITY CHILD CARE.**

### **Facility Quality Enhancement**

**Program description:** This initiative is designed to increase the knowledge and skill sets of child care providers. It enhances their program capacity through direct observation of program practices and program enhancement plans. Technical assistance, on-site visits, and work with the Director/teachers to prepare an action plan for improving the quality of care is provided. The goal is to increase the number of child care centers moving from one level to the next, with the ultimate goal of becoming Level A or above. Participating childcare centers receive supplies based on their compliance with program criteria and documented needs. No funds are given directly to centers. Small incentive grants are used to assist with curriculum training and implementation in one or more model sites.

Program results:

- Six sites were served affecting 280 children
- Two sites were assessed using the ITERS with an average pre-score of 3.5.
- The Child Care Enhancement Director spent the majority of her time helping new centers/new directors and the decision was made to withhold assessment until after extensive TA was provided.
- The CCED works directly with the Laurens County Director's Forum to ensure that information, new ideas, new standards, and scholarship information is received and passed on to workers.
- During the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, unused funds from Child Care Scholarships were approved by the board to be spent at the PVCDC Center to accommodate the Family Literacy program that will relocate at the Pleasant View Community Center in a rural area.
- The board is holding funds to partner with the Child Care Advisory Committee, a group whose mission is to establish a new model child care center working with the Duke Foundation.
- The time of the Child Care Enhancement Director assigned to this strategy has been set at nine hours per week for FY09.

### **Centers of Excellence (COE)**

**Program description:** LCFS received approved two-year funding for the Thornwell Child Development Center in Clinton. Their Board of Trustees notified LCFS that the center would be closed permanently June 2008 and that they would not take advantage of the second year of funding for 2009. The board offered a new RFQ and Pleasant View Child Development Center (PVCDC) in Gray Court was selected for FY09. All COE materials were moved to PVCDC. Other materials donated by Thornwell were moved to the First Steps Office and are being disseminated to other centers following fall assessments.

Program results:

- One Center of Excellence site was served; 25 children
- The KIPS is an evaluation of parenting behaviors related to interactions between parents and children. It involves an observation of a parent playing with his or her

child for 20 minutes to examine 12 different behaviors. The KIPS is used to evaluate parents of children ages 2 months old up to 5 years of age. KIPS is an evaluation based on a 5-point scoring scale.

- Pre and Post KIPS resulted on average 1.05 % improvement on the KIPS. Since the center closed and the children cannot be followed no further results will be available.
- 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 evaluating based on the observation of a parent and child reading together and is scored on a 3-point scale. It evaluates the interactions between parents and children relating to literacy acquisition.
- On average participants with both pre-and post-scores on ACIRI showed a 21% gain for adults and 37.7% gain for the child.
- All children, scholarship and non-scholarship, at the COE site were observed using ELAP & LAP three times during the year. The purpose of this criterion-reference assessment is to assist teachers, clinicians, and parents in assessing individual skill development in six domains: gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, language, self-help, and social emotional. The results can be used to generate a complete picture of a child's developmental progress in six domains so that individualized, developmentally appropriate activities can be planned and implemented.
- The COE Coordinator's time has been increased from 5 hours per week to 10 hours per week.

### **Child Care Training & Professional Development**

**Program description:** The purpose is to raise the quality of childcare in center, home providers, and family group providers by aiding each site to move from one level to another. Childcare providers are given information regarding child development, safety/health issues, appropriate discipline practices, and developmentally appropriate learning activities based on the standards. The Child Care Enhancement Director provides all sites in Laurens County with information and a training schedule. She can assist Directors in preparing an action plan based upon an assessment using the ITERS, and ECERS. Training for all workers/directors is offered to enable them to maintain their certification and raise their level of education. These are provided through the Laurens County Early Childhood Network for a nominal fee. The number of sites with on-going visits is limited, generally from two to four. ECD101 classes through Piedmont Technical College at Laurens are conducted each semester and the TEACH Scholarship program is promoted. The sites are chosen through an application process in collaboration with the ABC Monitor's recommendations, which are then approved by the Child Care Task Force composed of board members who work with the CCE Director.

- 120 adults received training, unduplicated, that resulted in 337 children having instructors with increased knowledge and training
- 71% of staff from our child care facilities participated in 8 or more hours of Child Care Quality Training. One of the faith-based centers had 100% participation.

### **Child Care Scholarships**

LCFS provides funds for child care scholarships using a sliding scale. Parents pay from \$10 - \$13 per week. In addition, an endowment fund using donations from individual

contributors has been established with the Laurens County Community Foundation that will produce income for future children. The fund stands at \$ 11,399.34 including pledges. These are provided to individuals not eligible for ABC vouchers, or other resources. The initial target is 50% of poverty. New applicants will be accepted and assigned in priority order taking into account the number of spaces available. Placement occurs in the highest quality level center possible.

**Program Results:**

The funds set aside for this strategy were not used because the site selected did not receive a clear license until the end of the fiscal year. The board committee is working on a proposal to offer scholarships to hardship cases that do not “fit” all of the present Center of Excellence rules. For example: a teen mother who is pregnant seeking child care so she can stay in high school and live at home. Present guidelines may exclude this mother if both parents are working.

**EARLY EDUCATION.**

**South Carolina 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 Medicaid or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

The 4K CDEPP program at Thornwell Child Development Center served children for 180 days during the FY08 school year. This program was funded by the state with on-site coordination for the Office of First Steps.

**Program results:**

- Seven students in a 4K class of ten qualified for and were served by CDEPP.
- Thornwell Child Development Center offered one CDEPP 4K class; no other center applicants were noted

The Thornwell Board of Trustees announced closure of the Child Development Center in March, so arrangements were made to offer other providers the opportunity. Thornwell Child Development Center and the 4K officially closed its doors in June 2008.

An informal survey indicated the need for additional 4K classes when the number of students in 5K is compared with the number enrolled in GLEAMNS Head Start, public and private schools, and other known sites.

This fall there exists a waiting list in both public school districts; however Head Start is full and there are some children being served in private schools.

## **SCHOOL TRANSITION.**

### **Countdown to Kindergarten**

**Program description:** CTK serves 30 children with three certified teachers in a transition program designed to successfully bridge at-risk students into the 5K environments. There are three components:

- Public awareness: Practical tools and articles distributed through SC media and other community locations to help parents and communities prepare children for kindergarten.
- Kindergarten home visitation: a certified teacher makes 8 home visits to identified families/children during the summer prior to the student beginning 5K. Participants are identified by a community partnership (LCFS with Head Start, 4K teachers and child care referrals).
- Parent participation is required because during the visits families are introduced to actual materials used in Kindergarten classrooms, and are given a Kindergarten Transition ToolKits ( books, puzzles, clay, blocks, crayons, scissors, and manipulative etc) to keep.
- The final celebration was a field trip on a school bus to the EdVenture Museum in Columbia on August 8. The Clinton Rotary Club and the Laurens Rotary Club helped to underwrite the cost of the field trip.

For the past two years, most of LCFS's United Way allocation has been devoted to this strategy. It has great appeal to the committee who reviews our application. They are very supportive in the hearing process, ask good questions, and support our work publicly.

### **Program results:**

- 30 children enrolled
- 93.10345% of the participants received all 8 visits
- 58.62% were male; 41.38% female
- 65.52% were African-American; 34.48% Caucasian
- The majority, (75.86%) were referred by 4K teachers in public school; 20.69% were referred or attended Head Start.
- The largest number of children/parents to date, joined in the EdVenture Museum Trip because two air-conditioned buses were paid for by local civic clubs; however, one broke down, so the high heat problems still existed causing the local board to investigate possible ways of collaborating with local agencies for an in-county celebration for FY09. The cost of the trip becomes prohibitive.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source	
State Appropriation ( <i>Fund 10</i> )	\$227,361
E.I.A. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 55</i> )	\$21,958
Lottery Appropriation ( <i>Fund 35</i> )	\$ 1
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 60</i> )	\$29,273
C.O.E. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 65</i> )	\$126,855
N.F.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 70</i> )	\$ -0-
State Private ( <i>Fund 15</i> )	\$ -0-
Local Private ( <i>Fund 20</i> )	\$22,778
Federal ( <i>Fund 30</i> )	\$ 997
In-Kind ( <i>Fund 25</i> )	\$ 160,593
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$589,816</b>

<u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name	
2011 Parents As Teacher (Public)	\$208,525
2012 Parents As Teacher (In-House)	\$31,039
2111 Family Literacy	\$71,194
3140 Full Day 4-K (Private)	\$29,273
4062 Countdown to Kindergarten ( In-House)	\$8432
6012 Childcare Quality Enhancement 9 In-House)	\$92,725
6050 Childcare Training & Prof. Dev. ( Private)	\$27,706
6052 Childcare Training & Prof. Dev. ( In-House)	\$15,096
7032 Scholarship initiatives ( In-House)	\$56,818
9012 Public Health-Based Services (In-House)	\$
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$15,444
Administrative Functions	\$ 33,563
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$589,815</b>

### CLARIFICATION(s)

1. \$.54 was carried over in Lottery Fund 35 – Countdown to Kindergarten

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_



## NOTABLE DONORS

<i><b>DONOR'S NAME</b></i>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Belk Charity Day/Donations	\$ 454.10
First Presbyterian Church	\$ 407.84
United Way	\$ 6300.00
LCFS Shirt Order	\$ 144.00
Child Care Fees	\$ 2030.00
Pace Butler	\$ 81.50
Rotary Bucks for Books	\$ 157.00
Dollar General Family Literacy Foundation	\$ 15,000.00
Bi-Lo Boosters	\$ 161.19
Clinton Rotary & Laurens Rotary for CTK	\$ 450.00
Interest Income	\$ 6828.20
Ronald McDonald House	\$ 3000.00
Individual Contributions	\$ 710.00
Rotary Family Lit. D55 Wal-Mart grant	\$ 500.00
<b>TOTAL: \$36,223.63</b>	

### **Endowment Fund:**

The board has collaborated with the Laurens County Community Foundation to establish the FS to School Readiness Fund to be used for child care scholarships for families who need child care so that mother/father can go to school/work. This fund needed to reach \$10,000 within three years to be fully implemented. In less than 12 months the fund reached the \$10,000 mark and has surpassed it. The funds will remain in perpetuity so the income can be used by the FS Board to award scholarships. The fund stands at \$11,399, September 2008.

**Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 82.28%**

*(at least 15% Legislative requirement)*

## **COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Frances Kennedy	Pre-K/Primary Education	Karen Coker	Elementary Ed.
Robin Stimman	Pre-K/Primary Education	Charmaine Wright	Elementary Ed.
Connie Parker	Family Education	Geoffrey Stephens	Transportation
Dr. Ken Alexander	Family Education	Beth Hodges	Non-Profit
Rev. Tony Crouch	Faith	Amy Blakely	Faith
Melissa Patton	Business	Lisa McDonald	Business
Holley Darden	Parent	Amy Avery	Parent
Jennifer	Early Childhood Ed.	Prondolyn Copeland	Early Childhood Ed.

Abercrombie			
Alicia Gagin	Early Childhood Ed.	Sharon Longshore	DHEC
Carolyn Smith	DSS	Gwendolyn Moore	Head Start
Ann Szypulski	Library	Tara Dean	District 55
Dr. Laura Koskela	District 56	Anne Sheppard	Leg. Appointee
Frances Davenport	Leg. Appointee	John Young	Leg. Appointee
Hal Milam	Board Chair		

## COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

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

The Laurens County First Steps Board is disappointed that data from the Center of Excellence Program and Data from the 4K CDEPP programs will not be able to be viewed from one year to the next because the sites, teachers, and children have changed. However, the pre/post data from both of these funded programs from this year shows that positive results can be obtained in a relatively short period of time. The attitude of parents who placed their children in these two programs, in particular show that they now know "what quality care" and "quality instruction" looks like.

***Message from the Executive Director:***

I have served in this capacity since the inception of First Steps. Only after years of putting the message out do I see that there is a beginning of collaboration between and among more and more agencies. There is still a lack of understanding about First Steps being a public/private partnership that can serve as a catalyst to raise the awareness of the need for early education for our young children, but as we continue to share stories of our success, publish our work in the newspapers, conduct interviews on radio stations, and mail out information to groups such as retired teachers, partnership members, and other possible business and contributors, we are making significant progress in letting people know that our “sole mission” is to “get children ready for school, healthy and ready to learn.”

There are significant barriers in Laurens County. Transportation is one of the biggest barriers, but the lack of knowledge among our leaders concerning the “real picture” of poverty in Laurens County remains. If we continue to collaborate, share information, and forget “turf” we can and will make a significant contribution to the success of families and children. We must and can help to break the cycle of poverty that exists.

When the data is reviewed and studied, we are not like our neighbors in Greenville and Spartanburg, although many travel to and from these cities for work every day. More than 15,000 leave the county to go their jobs daily. In the recent words of one of our pastors, “it is a different world once we cross the county line.” The Risk Profile included here helps to point out the significant factors and we must share this information. Read and study it carefully.

Edith M. Davis, Executive Director



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

# Laurens County

Total Children Under Six: 4,939

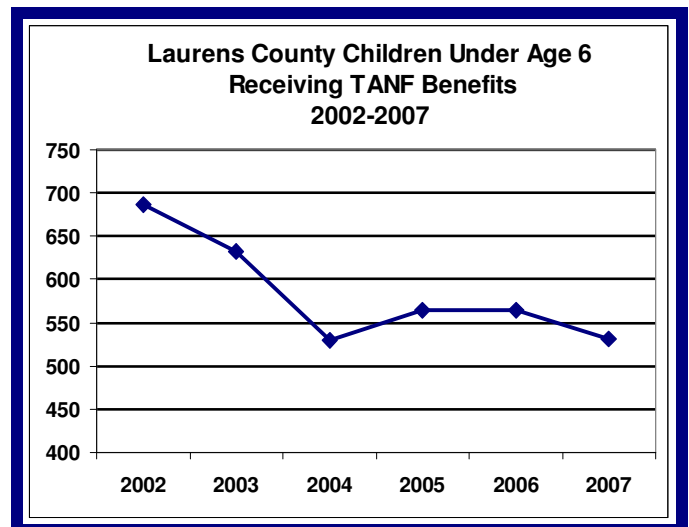
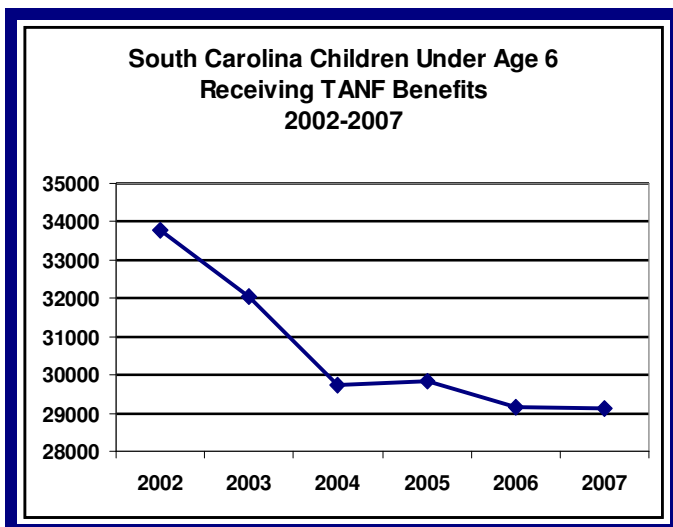
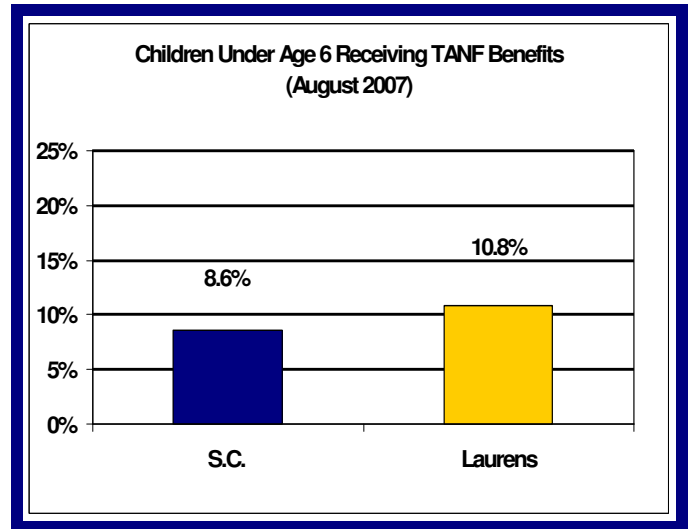
## CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%      Laurens County (2007): 10.8%

***Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 10 Laurens 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.

531 of Laurens County's 4,939 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.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Laurens County

Total Children Under Six: 4,939

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

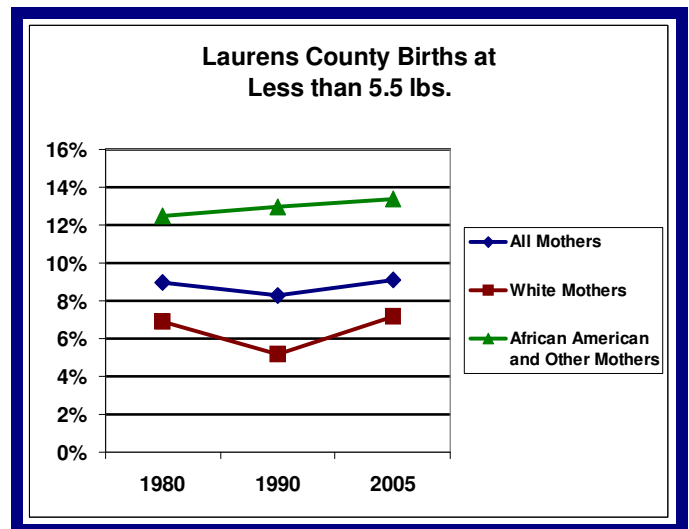
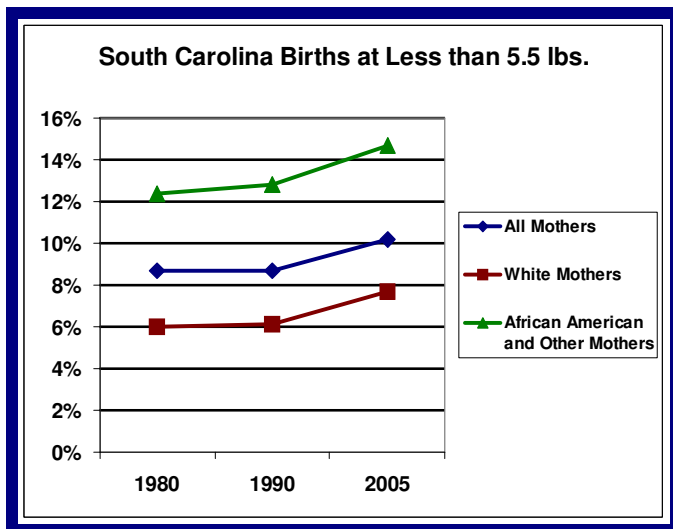
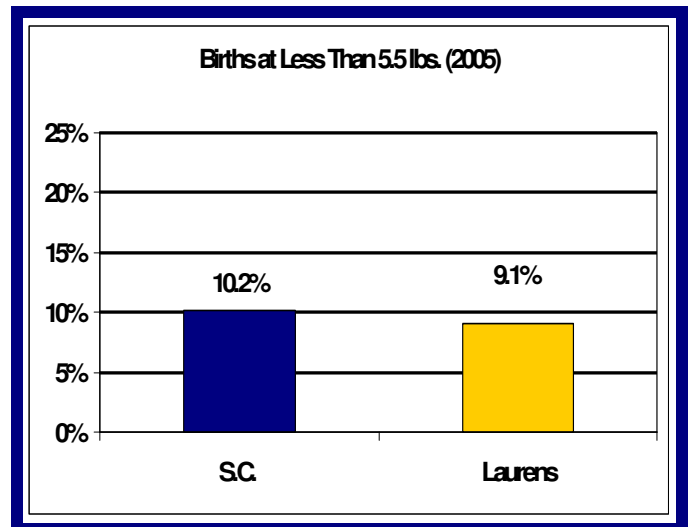
Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%      Laurens County (2005): 9.1%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 10 Laurens 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.

70 of the 770 children born in Laurens County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Laurens County

Total Children Under Six: 4,939

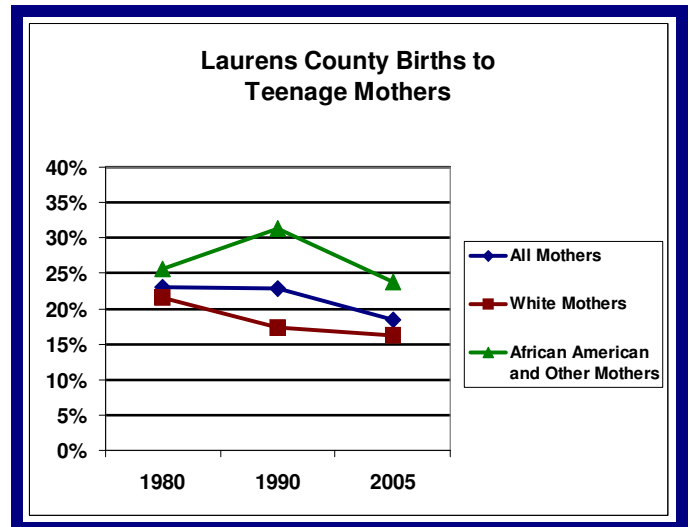
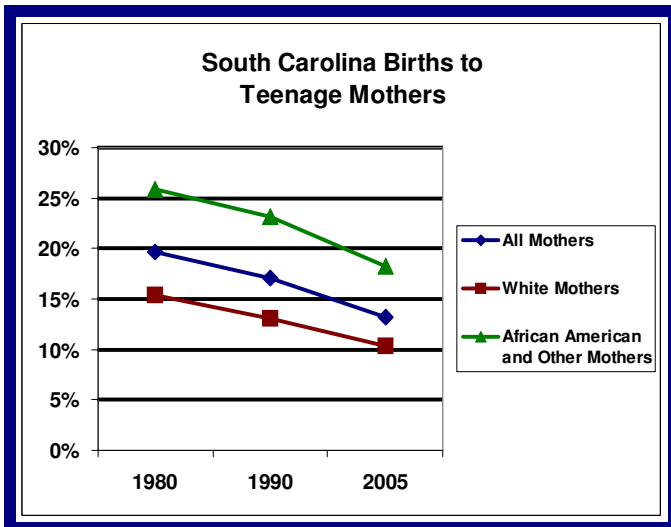
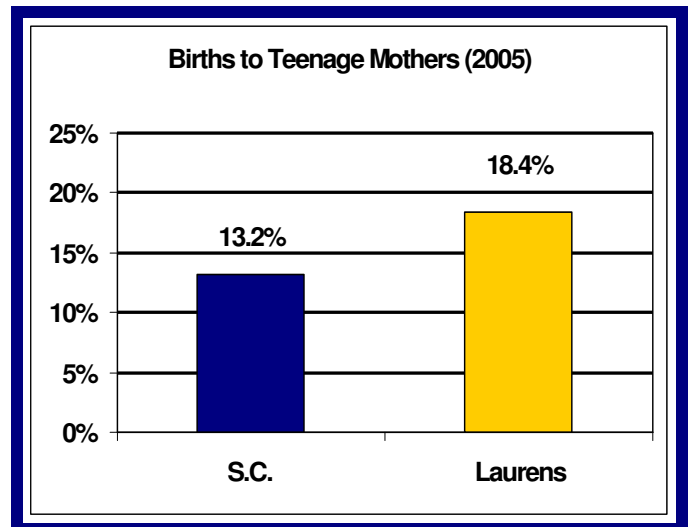
## BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%      Laurens County (2005): 18.4%

*Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 5 Laurens 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.

142 of the 770 children born in Laurens County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Laurens County

Total Children Under Six: 4,939

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

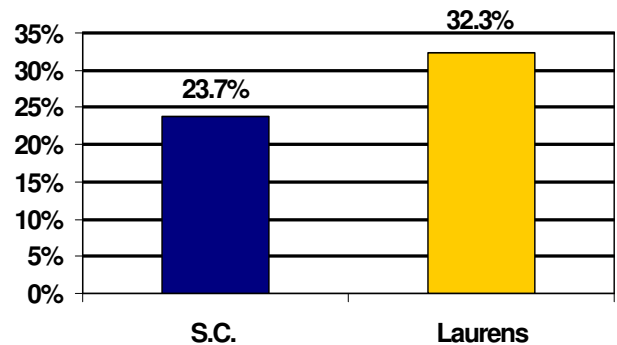
Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%      Laurens County (2005): 32.3%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 3 children in Laurens 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.

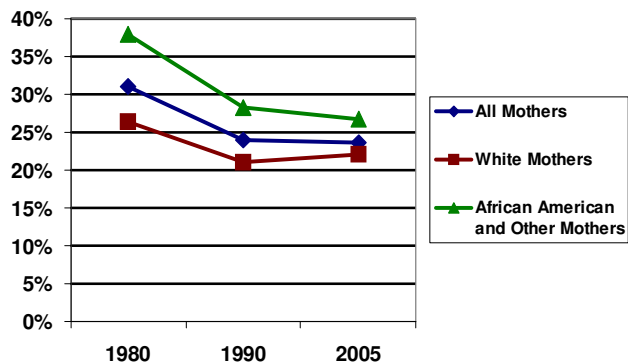
Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

249 of the 770 children born in Laurens County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma (2005)



SC Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



Laurens County Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma

