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December 5, 2012

Governor Nikki Haley  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

Please find attached information involving South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness.

We look forward to discussing the enclosed information at your convenience.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lewis".

Lewis T. Smoak

LTS:cag  
Enclosure



Governor Nikki R. Haley  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, SC 29201

December 5, 2012

Dear Governor Haley:

I have been honored to serve as Vice Chairman of the SC First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees since 2003. On behalf of our Board and our 46 local partnerships, I am pleased to submit two important packets of information for your review and consideration.

First, we enclose **First Steps Works**, a brief overview of our programs and work since 1999. You will be pleased to see important accomplishments, including:

1. Retention in Grade 1 is down 48% from 2001 to 2010.
2. The resulting 1,952 children not repeating Grade 1 saves South Carolina \$21 million yearly. If strong early childhood programming is maintained, we envision these savings increasing in the next 5 years.
3. First Steps' current budget is \$17.9 million. Since inception, our local partnerships have leveraged 46 cents on every state dollar to make the state's early childhood investment go further.
4. Independent audits have shown that our local partnerships find the state's most at-risk kids, are significantly improving parenting skills and child care quality.

Many state, federal, private, and local organizations have collaborated to achieve these important improvements. Much more can be accomplished as we work across public and private sectors to reach kids in need at the time the brain develops fastest. We have the infrastructure in place to locate needy kids and connect families to existing services from a host of private, local, state and federal providers.

Secondly, we enclose **Reauthorization and Reform of South Carolina First Steps**, draft revisions to our current legislation, which have been recommended by a broadly-based Reauthorization Panel, and are being supported by numerous early childhood experts and

organizations, as well as business and philanthropic groups. We will review these recommendations with our board tomorrow.

The bill, as drafted:

- Strengthens public-private partnerships and accountability through increased oversight and competition for funds;*
- Specifies statewide funding requirements related to evidence-based models and promising programs;*
- Adds school readiness definition, assessment, and benchmarks to align public and community efforts;*
- Increases flexibility and adds key stakeholders to local boards.*

I look forward to reviewing this information with you and will be in Columbia for the SC First Steps Board of Trustees' meeting Thursday, December 6, 2012. I would be happy to stop by or set up a time to visit that works best for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lewis T. Smoak". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lewis T. Smoak

Attachments

cc: SC First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees



## First Steps Works

### 1. First Steps works for parents, children, and taxpayers.

- From 2001 to 2010, first grade retention in South Carolina has dropped by 48%, saving taxpayers \$21M annually and demonstrating without question that South Carolina's investment in early childhood is working. (Attachment A)
- By providing targeted interventions for children during the early years when it matters most, First Steps services support brain development and build foundations for later language, literacy, and mathematical thinking. (Attachment B)
- By supporting parents, First Steps is helping South Carolina's children arrive ready to succeed, graduate, and become part of a competitive workforce. Using evidence-based strategies and adhering to highest standards, First Steps programs align with national early childhood strategies that return over \$16 for every \$1 invested. (Attachment C)
- First Steps connects families with quality early learning services in public, private, and faith-based settings. By focusing on early intervention, home visitation (Attachment D), child care quality (Attachment E), preschool (Attachment F) and school transition (Attachment G), First Steps provides for the comprehensive needs of high-risk children aged 0-5.

### 2. First Steps has improved quality in SC programs serving at-risk children through its focus on research-based programs and data collection.

- To get better results for children and families, First Steps maintains program standards that consistently meet or exceed those of national models. Through the SC Budget and Control Board's Office of Research and Statistics, programs and results are tracked longitudinally.
- Independent reviews show First Steps' programs work:
  - 65.9% of parents who initially scored at a low level of parenting skill improved their abilities to moderate or high levels after participation in a First Steps parent education program. (Attachment H)
  - Child care providers participating in First Steps' quality enhancement efforts to increase their teaching and classroom skills, *significantly improved* in each of seven measured domains of quality. (Attachment H)
- First Steps is finding and serving children in need. In 2006, First Steps commissioned an Office of Research and Statistics study to determine which SC children are at highest risk of school failure by grade 3. Using this data, First Steps targets resources to support these children and their families statewide. (Attachment I)
- In its role as the state's required Early Childhood Advisory Council, First Steps has worked to examine all public data about SC's young children, in order to better identify trends, results, and areas in need of additional focus.

### 3. First Steps has leveraged proven services through public-private partnerships.

- First Steps local partnerships have far exceeded the 15% non-state match required by legislation, leveraging \$97M from sources outside of state government since inception (46 cents for every state dollar appropriated).
  - Since inception, county partnerships have, respectively, matched from 12% - 179% of the state dollars allocated to them. (County by county details on Attachment J)
- First Steps is successfully delivering 4K in the private sector, providing parental choice in preschool and capitalizing on existing community infrastructure. Working with private, faith- and community-based providers, First Steps has served more than 3,400 children in CDEPP since 2006-2007, with a per child cost 20% below that of public schools.

- First Steps leverages additional resources for South Carolina's children, expanding high quality services for families as a result. In one example, First Steps partnered with the philanthropic community to bring Nurse-Family Partnership services to SC. Following an initial investment of \$1M by the General Assembly in 2008, 36 partner organizations have committed more than \$20M to make NFP available in 19 SC counties in 2012 (Attachment K).

#### **4. First Steps is a national model of state-local collaboration that works.**

- First Steps leads the state's home visitation efforts. In 2009, The Pew Charitable Trusts identified First Steps' parenting standards as a model for the nation. First Steps' partnerships implement evidence-based practices in ways that connect and improve existing community resources for children and families.
- Parents as Teachers (PAT), a national evidence-based home visiting model, has used First Steps' standards and implementation to inform their work with other states (Attachment D).
- Zero to Three, the leading national organization promoting quality infant and toddler care, recognized First Steps' child care quality project, *"Promoting Responsive Relationships: Impacting Practice in Child Care,"* as the top performer nationally among states participating since 2010.
- First Steps was selected by the US government in 2010 to lead one of four research and demonstration projects in the country for reducing child maltreatment among infants and toddlers with disabilities, creating synergies between BabyNet, parent education and quality training.

#### **5. First Steps works with public and private partners to maximize existing early childhood resources.**

- With a focus on the comprehensive needs of high-risk children aged 0-5, First Steps local partnerships serve as interagency service portals for families, maximizing resources and reducing duplication of effort among child-serving agencies. FY12 local partnership administrative costs: 6.9%.
- Since 2009, First Steps data toolkits have been produced by every county partnership, to inventory services available to high-risk children and families and identify gaps and synergy opportunities.
- First Steps has brought new levels of accountability to the BabyNet early intervention system. Since inheriting the program in 2010, First Steps has enhanced BabyNet's system of general supervision, instituted provider audits and issued the state's first-ever provider-level findings of non-compliance.
- First Steps has retrained the interagency BabyNet workforce to enhance child assessment practices, add provider accountability, and increase parental involvement.

#### **6. Between 2001-2010, these and other programs and agencies have helped to reduce first grade retention by 48%.**

- It can be reduced in half again over the next five years by targeting discrete additional resources to the state's early education partners for the delivery of proven services to high-risk families. We are ready to lead those efforts.

# QUICK FACTS – FIRST STEPS

4

Independent Audits of Performance – 2003, 2006, 2009 (LAC – 2012 pending).

14

Years in existence – 1999-2012

**\$6.05 million**

Federal BabyNet dollars administered annually through First Steps.

**\$17.9 million**

Current state appropriation.

**\$21 million**

Saved each year by reduced Grade 1 retention.

48%

Reduction in first grade retention – 2001-2010.

65.9%

Percentage of parents with low parenting skills who improved to moderate or high levels of skill after parent education home visits.

**\$311**

Costs per child for 6 summer home visits from kindergarten teachers.

1,939

Reduction in number of children repeating first grade – 2001 vs. 2010.

**\$10,974**

Average costs for one student to repeat first grade.

**\$97 million**

Private, philanthropic and other funds leveraged by First Steps partnerships since inception

75%

Percentage of teachers changing their instruction and method of communication with parents after Countdown to Kindergarten home visits.

35,071

Hours of technical assistance delivered to child care centers.

45,600

Visits by Countdown to Kindergarten teachers to students' homes.

58,088

Child care training attendees.

532,007

Parent home visits completed



County Name	Number Repeating 1st Grade 2001-2002	Percentage Repeating 1st Grade 2001-2002	Number Repeating 1st Grade 2009-2010	Percentage Repeating 1st Grade 2009-2010	Reduction in 1st Grade Retention Expressed as Percentage
Abbeville County	32	10.4%	13	4.9%	52.9%
Aiken County	161	8.1%	81	4.2%	48.1%
Allendale County	25	14.1%	18	12.0%	14.8%
Anderson County	169	7.7%	84	3.5%	54.5%
Bamberg County	29	12.4%	15	8.5%	31.4%
Barnwell County	140	35.2%	29	8.3%	76.4%
Beaufort County	50	4.0%	46	3.0%	25.0%
Berkeley County	208	10.0%	226	9.4%	6.0%
Calhoun County	20	10.9%	10	7.2%	33.9%
Charleston County	300	8.2%	93	2.7%	67.0%
Cherokee County	27	3.7%	18	2.5%	32.4%
Chester County	85	14.0%	45	9.5%	32.1%
Chesterfield County	38	5.9%	10	1.8%	69.4%
Clarendon County	32	7.2%	34	7.6%	+ 5.5%
Colleton County	57	9.9%	50	10.0%	+ 1%
Darlington County	86	8.8%	67	7.5%	14.8%
Dillon County	46	9.7%	32	6.4%	34.0%
Dorchester County	47	3.5%	57	3.2%	8.0%
Edgefield County	25	7.2%	18	5.9%	18.0%
Fairfield County	18	5.5%	3	1.2%	78.1%
Florence County	142	8.5%	82	4.6%	45.8%
Georgetown County	69	8.7%	27	3.6%	58.6%
Greenville County	450	8.9%	274	4.8%	46.0%
Greenwood County	108	11.1%	23	2.6%	76.5%
Hampton County	48	14.9%	16	5.4%	63.7%
Horry County	132	5.9%	59	2.0%	66.1%
Jasper County	23	8.9%	4	1.4%	84.2%
Kershaw County	53	6.8%	32	3.9%	42.6%
Lancaster County	64	7.6%	47	5.1%	32.8%
Laurens County	54	7.0%	29	4.4%	37.1%
Lee County	40	16.7%	12	5.7%	65.8%
Lexington County	163	4.5%	53	1.3%	71.1%
Marion County	54	10.2%	28	6.6%	35.2%
Marlboro County	56	11.9%	30	9.0%	24.3%
McCormick County	6	6.8%	8	11.6%	+ 70%
Newberry County	38	7.8%	27	5.9%	24.3%
Oconee County	70	7.8%	27	3.3%	57.6%
Orangeburg County	156	12.7%	56	5.4%	57.4%
Pickens County	82	6.2%	38	3.0%	51.6%
Richland County	227	6.5%	122	3.3%	49.2%
Saluda County	7	4.3%	17	8.6%	+ 100%
Spartanburg County	131	3.8%	89	2.5%	34.2%
Sumter County	134	8.7%	80	6.1%	29.8%
Union County	55	12.9%	10	2.9%	77.5%
Williamsburg County	157	24.8%	45	9.9%	60.0%
York County	88	3.8%	72	2.3%	39.4%
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>4202</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>2263</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>48.1%</b>

1939 fewer children @  
\$10,974\* =

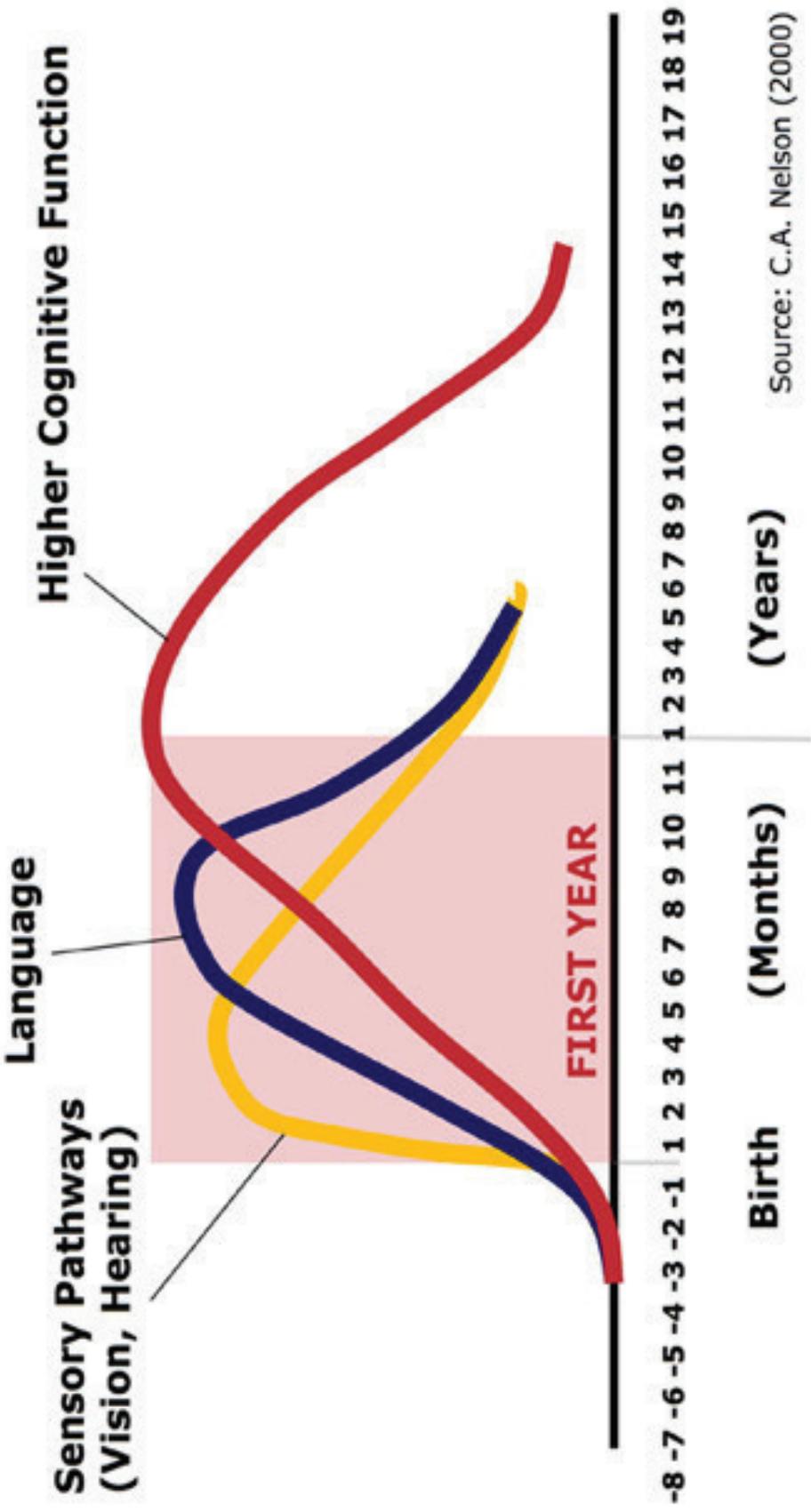
\$21,278,586

\*SC Budget and Control Board Revenue Per Pupil  
Report by School District for FY 2012-13  
<http://ors.sc.gov/economics/revperpupil.html>



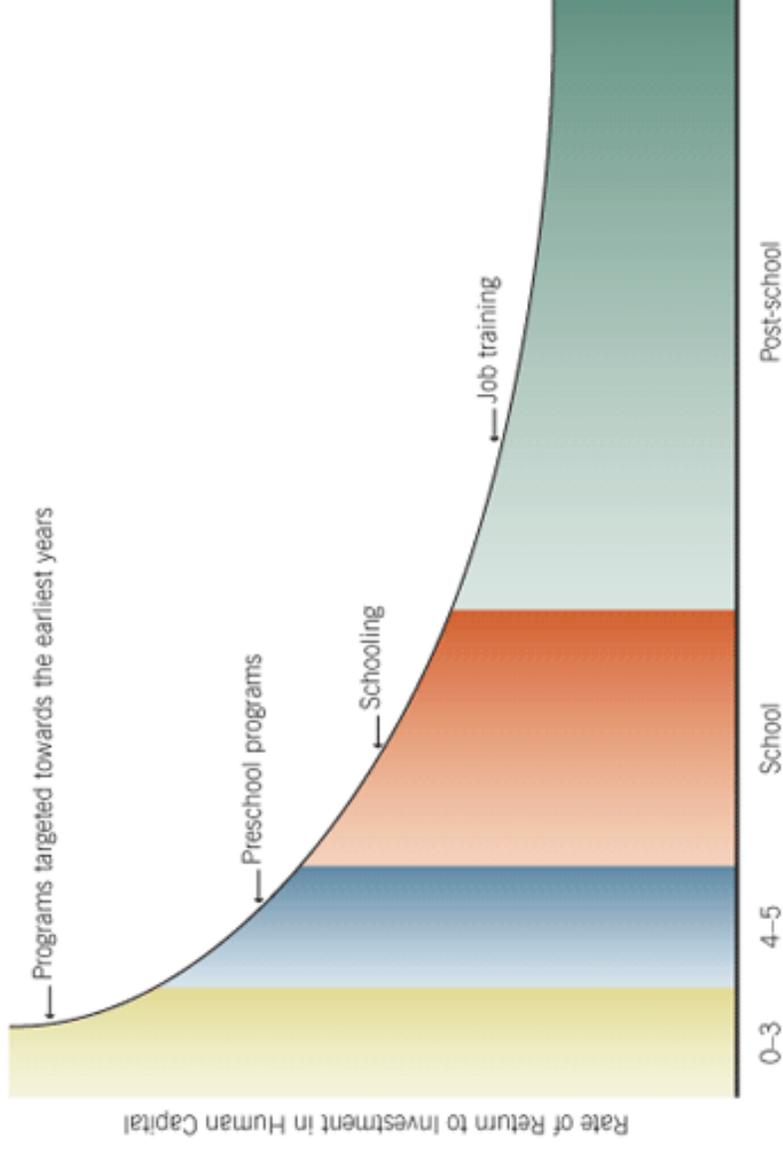
# Human Brain Development

## Neural Connections for Different Functions Develop Sequentially



Source: C.A. Nelson (2000)

**Figure 1: Rates of Return to Human Capital Investment at Different Ages: Return to an Extra Dollar at Various Ages**



**“Policy makers should invest in young children, where the return on investment is stronger than in low-skill adults.”**

- James Heckman  
2000 Nobel Laureate in Economics

## Parent Home Visitation

“Under First Steps’ leadership, Parents as Teachers in South Carolina has set the national example in fidelity and accountability. We hold you up to other states doing home visitation as an example of how it can be done right.”

- Scott Hippert, CEO, Parents as Teachers National Office

### First Steps’ Home Visitation Impact:

- ✓ 58,770 families served since 2001
- ✓ 532,007 home visits since 2001

### High/Scope Evaluation:

“Parents in First Steps’ home visitation programs saw **significant increases in their pre- and post-assessments**. Overall, **54%** of participants who scored at a low quality of parenting improved to a moderate quality of parenting, **44%** who had moderate parenting skills moved to high quality, and **11.9%** who had low quality parenting at pre-test increased their skills to high quality.”

First Steps Evaluation  
High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2009

# Child Care Quality Enhancement and Training

## High/Scope Evaluation

Universally, child care centers and providers who participated in First Steps Quality Enhancement strategies showed significant increases in pre/post scores of assessed child care quality.

First Steps Evaluation  
 High Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2009

<b>2001 to 2012</b>		<b>Average per year</b>	
Providers served	3,856		350
Children enrolled in centers served by First Steps	167,198		15,200
Staff attending First Steps child care training	58,088		5,281
<b>FY 2008 to FY 2012</b>		<b>Average per year</b>	
Child care quality assessments administered	1,488		298
Assessment improvement pre- to post (7 point scale)	-		10 % (.68)
Technical assistance visits to providers by First Steps	17,066		3,401
Technical assistance hours	35,071		7,014

Through this project, we have been able to provide more information to the parents. I have also seen my staff interact more with parents, helping them to understand their child's development. The ability to reward staff has been wonderful, and helps us to let them know how much they are appreciated.

Judy Layman, Director  
 Creative Learning Center  
 Edgefield, SC

## South Carolina Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)

“Despite negative economic conditions, the General Assembly should continue funding CDEPP and similar pre-kindergarten programs and when funds are available, expand the program in both public schools and private centers statewide. The across year modest yet meaningful gains made by students in CDEPP provide evidence of the program’s success in better preparing young children who are at-risk for school failure for kindergarten.”

Education Oversight Committee  
Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP):  
2009-10 Student and Classroom Assessment Report

### First Steps’ CDEPP Impact:

- 3,441 children served in private CDEPP settings since 2006-07.
- Parental choice amongst approved providers
- 20% lower cost than public school 4K (\$4,690 vs. \$5,812 per child)
- Announced and unannounced monitoring

### High Scope Evaluation:

“With only one year of data, [private] CDEPP children were not significantly different... on every SCRA scale compared to [public school] full-day 4K and non-4K children. They also had significantly lower speech impairment and learning disability diagnoses. This may demonstrate the potential for implementing public programs in private settings in a less expensive manner with similar results.” pp. 148-149

*Further Steps to School Readiness: 2009 Evaluation of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiatives, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.*

# Countdown to Kindergarten

“Countdown is the greatest thing that’s ever happened to children in South Carolina. The relationships built over the summer between the teacher and families created a trust and support that has helped the children blossom in kindergarten. The only way to break the cycle is to model for parents how effectively they can work with their own children through reading and playing and learning with hands on materials.”

*Gayle Troutman, Kindergarten Teacher, Burnside Elementary School*

## First Steps’ School Transition Impact:

- ✓ 7,600 families served since 2004
- ✓ 45,600 teacher visits since 2004

During the summer of 2012, Countdown to Kindergarten served 756 children at an estimated cost of \$311 per child.

## High Scope Evaluation:

*“Over 75% of home visitors reported making some or a great deal of change in their instruction, experiences, practices, activities on the first day of school and the methods by which they communicate with parents as a direct result of their CTK experience.” (p.93)*

*“All participants, whether home visitor or parents, report the significant impact this strategy has on professional practice, parent-teacher relationships, and parent participation in and child attitudes toward kindergarten.” (p.148)*

2009 First Steps Evaluation  
High/Scope Educational Research Foundation



## Further Steps to School Readiness

2009 Evaluation of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiatives

### Conclusions and Recommendations Excerpt (Pages 148-149)

It is in data collect during the most recent fiscal years (2006-07 and 2007-08) that First Steps is able to demonstrate that funds are being spent on productive returns on investment. **The ability to match outcomes to detailed, specific intervention data is extraordinary and non-existent in most state data systems.** In these two years of data these specific findings stand out:

- 1. The impact of home visitation interventions to change parenting skills.** Participants saw significant increases in their pre- and post-assessments. **Overall, 54% of participants who scored low quality of parenting improved to a moderate quality of parenting.** Forty four percent who scored moderate parenting skills moved to a high-quality of parenting, and 11.9% who had low quality parenting at pre-test increased their skills to high quality.
- 2. The impact of First Steps on child care quality through its child care quality enhancement strategy. Universally, child care centers and providers who participated showed significant increases in pre/post scores of assessed child care quality.** Gains were seen for all scales on ECERS, ITERS and FDCERS as a result of quality enhancement strategies.
- 3. The impact of Countdown to Kindergarten.** Through self-report data, **all participants whether home visitor or parents report the significant impact this strategy has on professional practice, parent-teacher relationships, and parent participation in and child attitudes toward kindergarten.**
- 4. The potential demonstrated in combined strategies.** Except for one scale, child outcomes in FY 2006-07 indicated increased odds of scoring on a higher level on every SCRA scale when PAT is combined with 4K compared to full-day 4K only.
- 5. The potential demonstrated in the CDEPP initiative.** With only one year of data, CDEPP children were not significantly different in the odds of scoring on a higher level on every SCRA scale compared to full-day 4K and non-4K children. They also had significantly lower speech impairment and learning disability diagnoses. **This may demonstrate the potential for implementing public programs in private settings in a less expensive manner with similar results.**

# SC Children Experiencing Early School Failure:

Characteristics of Young Children Subsequently Retained or Scoring "Below Basic" by 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Percentage of Children Possessing <i>This Risk Factor</i> "Not Succeeding by 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade"	<u>Readiness Risk Factors</u>	Percentage (and Estimate) of 0-6 Child Population Possessing <i>This Risk Factor</i>
53%	Abused, Neglected, or in Foster Care	3% (10,173)
52%	Extremely Low Birth Weight (under 3.3 lbs./1500 g.)	2.11% (7170)
48%	Low Maternal Education (Less than High School)	24.13% (81,852)
45%	Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) (50% of Federal Poverty)	8.4% (28,690)
43%	Very Low Birth Weight (3.3-4.4 lbs/1500 - 2000 g.)	2.77% (9,390)
43%	Teen Mother (Under 18)	4.6% (15,618)
42%	Food Stamps (130% of Federal Poverty)	20% (67,897)
37%	Mother (age 18 - 20)	8.83% (29,946)
36%	Low Birth Weight (4.4-5.5lbs./2000 - 2500 grams)	5.53% (18,780)



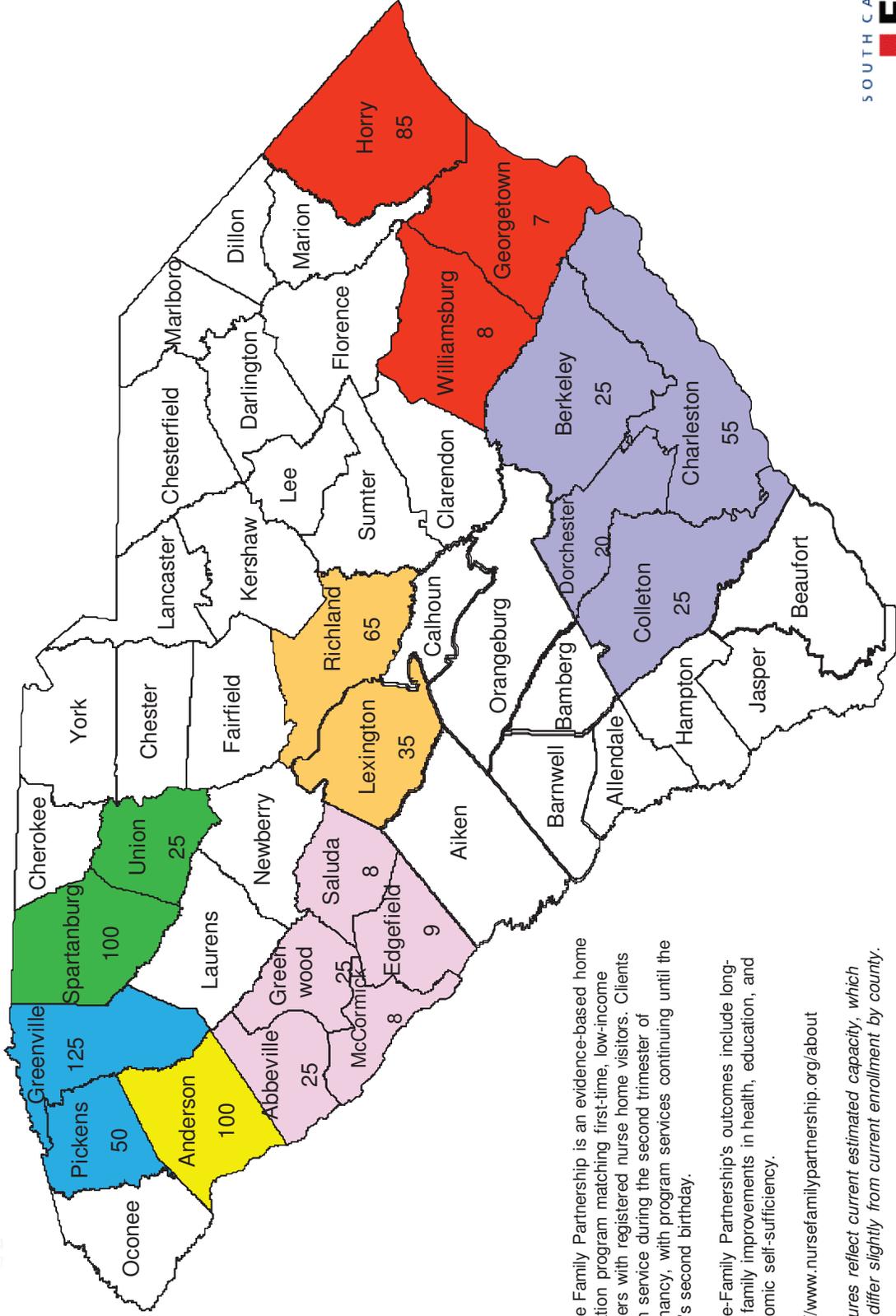
**LOCAL PARTNERSHIP LEVERAGE REPORT  
2001-2012**

County Name	Total Amount by State	Total Local Leverage	Percent Leveraged
1. Abbeville	\$2,673,582	\$751,829	28%
2. Aiken	\$6,377,352	\$1,643,697	26%
3. Allendale	\$2,457,501	\$718,362	29%
4. Anderson	\$7,145,172	\$2,770,625	39%
5. Bamberg	\$2,194,859	\$1,344,597	61%
6. Barnwell	\$3,215,720	\$1,192,831	37%
7. Beaufort	\$5,469,338	\$1,254,885	23%
8. Berkeley	\$7,427,589	\$1,151,846	16%
9. Calhoun	\$2,010,177	\$485,766	24%
10. Charleston	\$11,647,322	\$4,049,443	35%
11. Cherokee	\$3,292,212	\$859,058	26%
12. Chester	\$2,404,898	\$905,513	38%
13. Chesterfield	\$2,609,301	\$1,364,766	52%
14. Clarendon	\$2,747,172	\$805,586	29%
15. Colleton	\$2,616,868	\$1,213,460	46%
16. Darlington	\$3,672,502	\$1,510,550	41%
17. Dillon	\$3,844,329	\$641,312	17%
18. Dorchester	\$3,781,124	\$673,660	18%
19. Edgefield	\$2,073,429	\$1,002,353	48%
20. Fairfield	\$2,195,860	\$840,642	38%
21. Florence	\$7,989,706	\$1,407,103	18%
22. Georgetown	\$4,307,841	\$2,678,299	62%
23. Greenville	\$16,531,301	\$6,452,100	39%
24. Greenwood	\$3,376,159	\$650,107	19%
25. Hampton	\$2,724,960	\$523,198	19%
26. Horry	\$6,782,059	\$3,285,151	48%
27. Jasper	\$2,422,001	\$593,237	24%
28. Kershaw	\$2,863,807	\$956,298	33%
29. Lancaster	\$3,598,411	\$3,102,911	86%
30. Laurens	\$4,101,316	\$1,841,197	45%
31. Lee	\$3,596,310	\$1,998,891	56%
32. Lexington	\$9,277,080	\$4,927,511	53%
33. Marion	\$3,593,814	\$437,993	12%
34. Marlboro	\$2,463,825	\$614,762	25%
35. McCormick	\$2,148,466	\$1,378,956	64%
36. Newberry	\$3,477,480	\$642,020	26%
37. Oconee	\$2,736,799	\$2,922,264	107%
38. Orangeburg	\$5,090,938	\$887,065	17%
39. Pickens	\$4,851,998	\$1,326,588	27%
40. Richland	\$12,147,682	\$8,406,798	69%
41. Saluda	\$2,552,284	\$881,177	35%
42. Spartanburg	\$10,915,465	\$19,508,628	179%
43. Sumter	\$5,068,548	\$1,191,889	24%
44. Union	\$2,266,094	\$706,079	31%
45. Williamsburg	\$4,402,381	\$1,520,254	35%
46. York	\$5,288,932	\$3,308,162	63%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$213,431,977</b>	<b>\$97,329,428</b>	<b>46%</b>

## **South Carolina Nurse Family Partnership State and Local Funding Partners**

**Duke Endowment**  
**Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of South Carolina**  
**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness**  
**Children's Trust of South Carolina**  
**Department of Health and Environmental Control**  
**Colleton County First Steps**  
**Saluda County First Steps**  
**McCormick County First Steps**  
**Edgefield County First Steps**  
**Anderson County First Steps**  
**Berkeley County First Steps**  
**Charleston County First Steps**  
**Greenville County First Steps**  
**Horry County First Steps**  
**Lexington County First Steps**  
**Richland County First Steps**  
**Spartanburg County First Steps**  
**Carolina Health Centers, Inc.**  
**Greenville Hospital System**  
**Spartanburg Regional Medical Center**  
**DHEC Region 1 (Anderson)**  
**DHEC Region 5 (Columbia)**  
**DHEC Region 6 (Conway)**  
**DHEC Region 7 (Charleston)**  
**Self Family Foundation**  
**Bunnelle Foundation**  
**United Way of Greenville County**  
**United Way of the Piedmont**  
**Congregational Nursing Program**  
**Spartanburg Regional Home Care**  
**SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**  
**Greenville Women Giving**  
**Community Foundation of Greenville**  
**Hollingsworth Fund**  
**Stevenson Trust**  
**Walmart**

**Nurse Family Partnership Capacity: \* 800  
 September 2012**



Nurse Family Partnership is an evidence-based home visitation program matching first-time, low-income mothers with registered nurse home visitors. Clients begin service during the second trimester of pregnancy, with program services continuing until the child's second birthday.

Nurse-Family Partnership's outcomes include long-term family improvements in health, education, and economic self-sufficiency.

<http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/about>

\* Figures reflect current estimated capacity, which may differ slightly from current enrollment by county.

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CHAPTER 152.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS

**SECTION 59-152-10. First Steps to School Readiness initiative established.**

There is established South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness, a comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through ~~county~~ local 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~~ succeed.

HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

**SECTION 59-152-~~20~~ 15. Purpose.**

The purpose of the First Steps initiative is to develop, promote, and assist efforts of agencies, private providers, and public and private organizations and entities, at the state level and the community level, to collaborate and cooperate in order to focus and intensify services, assure the most efficient use of all available resources, and eliminate duplication of efforts to serve the needs of young children and their families. First Steps funds must not be used to supplant or replace any other funds being spent on services but must be used to expand, extend, improve, or increase access to services or to enable a community to begin to offer new or previously unavailable services in their community. The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, Office of First Steps to School Readiness, and the ~~County Local~~ County Local First Steps Partnerships shall ~~assure that collaboration, the development of partnerships, and the sharing and maximizing of resources are occurring before funding for the implementation/management grants, as provided for in this chapter, are made available.~~ ensure that collaboration, the existence and continued development of partnerships, and the sharing and maximizing of resources are occurring in order for the funding of grants, as provided for in this chapter, to continue.

HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

**59-152-20. Definitions.**

(A) 'School readiness' means the level of child development necessary to ensure early school success as measured in the following domains: physical health and motor skills; emotional and social competence; language and literacy development; and mathematical thinking and cognition skills. School readiness is supported by the knowledge and practices of families, caregivers, healthcare providers, educators, and communities.

(B) 'Pre-School Child' means a child prenatal through age five.

1 (C) 'Partnership' refers to a local First Steps organization designated as such by the South  
2 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, organized under Section  
3 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as a nonprofit corporation, and formed to further,  
4 within the coverage area, the purpose and goals of the First Steps initiative as stated in  
5 Section 59-152-15 and Section 59-152-25.

6 (D) 'Evidence-based program' means one that is based on a clear, consistent program model that  
7 either:

8 (1) is designated as such by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
9 Board of Trustees because it

10 (a) is grounded in published, peer reviewed research;  
11 linked to program determined outcomes;

12 (b) employs well trained and competent staff along with  
13 continual professional development, relevant to the  
14 specific model being delivered;

15 (c) demonstrates strong linkages to other community-  
16 based services; and

17 (d) is operated to ensure program fidelity;

18 (2) Or is designated as such by the South Carolina First Steps to School  
19 Readiness Board of Trustees because it is commonly recognized by experts  
20 in the field as such a program.

21 (E) 'Promising program' means a program that does not satisfy the criteria of an evidenced-based  
22 program model but that the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of  
23 Trustees determines is supported by research indicating its potential effectiveness.

24  
25 **SECTION 59-152-3025. Goals.**  
26

27 The goals for South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness are to:

28 (1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their  
29 families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;

30 (2) increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical,  
31 developmental, and learning problems;

32 (3) promote high quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will  
33 promote normal growth and development;

34 (4) provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to  
35 thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to ~~learn~~ succeed; and

1 (5) mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and  
2 their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed  
3 learn.

4 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

5  
6 **59-152-30. School Readiness Comprehensive Long-range Initiative and Strategy.**

7  
8 (A) In Section 63-11-1720, the South Carolina State First Steps to School Readiness Board of  
9 Trustees is given the authority to carry out its assigned functions by, among others,  
10 developing a comprehensive long-range initiative for improving early childhood  
11 developments and increasing school readiness and establishing results oriented measures  
12 and objectives and assessing whether services provided by First Steps Partnerships to  
13 children and families are meeting the goals and achieving the results established for the First  
14 Steps initiative pursuant to Chapter 152, Title 59. In order to fulfill these duties, on or  
15 before July 1, 2014, the State Board shall do the following:

16 (1) adopt a description of school readiness, which shall contain specific  
17 details as to the characteristics and development levels of a ready  
18 child in South Carolina, include any specific requirements of school,  
19 educators, and caregivers that the State Board feels is necessary to  
20 create an optimal learning environment for the early years of  
21 students' lives, and describe characteristics of the optimal  
22 environment which would lead to the readiness of students and their  
23 continued success; and

24 (2) establish specific benchmarks and objectives for use by the South  
25 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, local  
26 Partnership Boards, and any agency administering programs for the  
27 benefit of pre-school children, as defined by Section 59-152-20 (B)  
28 of this Chapter, to determine whether state and local programs and  
29 activities are effective and contributing toward progress in achieving  
30 the goals established in Section 59-152-25 of this Chapter.

31  
32 (B) On or before July 1, 2019, and on or before January 1 every five years thereafter, the state  
33 board shall review the school readiness description and the benchmarks and objectives and  
34 adopt any appropriate revisions

35  
36  
37 **59-152-35. School Readiness Assessment.**

38  
39  
40 (A) On or before July 1, 2015, the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of  
41 Trustees, in consultation with the South Carolina Board of Education, local school districts,  
42 and others as appropriate, shall recommend to the General Assembly one or more  
43 assessments that are aligned with the definition of school readiness as it applies to children,  
44 defined in Section 59-152-20, the description of school readiness, and the goal in Section

1 59-152-25(1) in order to evaluate and measure students' levels of school readiness. In  
2 recommending assessments of students' school readiness, the state board shall consider  
3 assessments that are research-based; recognized nationwide as reliable instruments for  
4 measuring school readiness; and suitable for determining the instruction and interventions  
5 students need to improve their readiness to succeed in school. School readiness assessments  
6 shall not be used to deny a student admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade.

7  
8 (B) If and when a school readiness assessment is adopted as a result of the recommendation  
9 made pursuant to part (A) of this Section, results shall not be publicly reported for individual  
10 students. Following adoption of the school readiness assessment, the South Carolina First  
11 Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall adopt a system for reporting population-  
12 level results that provides baseline data for measuring overall change and improvement in  
13 students' skills and knowledge over time.

14  
15 **SECTION 59-152-40. Board of Trustees to oversee initiative.**

16  
17 The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees established in Section  
18 63-11-1720 shall oversee and be accountable for the South Carolina First Steps to School  
19 Readiness initiative.

20  
21 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

22  
23  
24 **SECTION 59-152-50. Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness established;**  
25 **duties.**

26  
27 Within the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, an Office of South  
28 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness shall be established. The office shall:

- 29  
30 (1) provide to the board information on best practice, successful strategies, model  
31 programs, and financing mechanisms;  
32 (2) review the ~~county~~ partnerships' plans and budgets in order to provide technical  
33 assistance and recommendations regarding local grant proposals and improvement in  
34 meeting statewide and local goals;  
35 (3) provide technical assistance, consultation, support, and oversight to ~~county~~  
36 partnerships to facilitate their success including, but not limited to, model programs,  
37 strategic planning, leadership development, best practice, successful strategies,  
38 collaboration, financing, and evaluation;  
39 (4) recommend to the board the applicants meeting the criteria for First Steps  
40 partnerships and the grants to be awarded;  
41 (5) submit an annual report to the board by December first which includes, but is not  
42 limited to, the statewide needs and resources available to meet the goals and purposes of  
43 the First Steps to School Readiness initiative, the ongoing progress and results of the  
44 First Steps to School Readiness initiative statewide and locally, fiscal information on the

1 expenditure of funds, and recommendations and legislative proposals to further  
2 implement the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative statewide;  
3 (6) provide for on-going data collection and contract for an in-depth performance audit  
4 due ~~January 1, 2003, and every three~~ five years thereafter, to ensure that statewide goals  
5 and requirements of the First Steps to School Readiness initiative are being met; and  
6 (7) coordinate the First Steps to School Readiness initiative with all other state, federal,  
7 and local public and private efforts to promote good health and school readiness of  
8 young children and support for their families.  
9

10 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

11  
12 **SECTION 59-152-60. County Local First Steps Partnerships; selection of board members;**  
13 **election and term of chairman; records of meetings; abstention from voting.**  
14

15 (A) Each South Carolina county shall be represented by a local First Steps Partnership Board,  
16 comprised of individuals with resources, skills, knowledge and interest in improving the  
17 readiness of young children for school.  
18

19 (B) ~~(A) The Office of First Steps to School Readiness, in collaboration with each county~~  
20 ~~legislative delegation, shall initiate county forums for the purpose of bringing together~~  
21 ~~stakeholders who are actively involved or interested in early childhood development and~~  
22 ~~education so as to initiate a County First Steps Partnership~~ As stated in the bylaws  
23 established by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, Local  
24 Partnership Board meetings and elections must be in compliance with all Freedom of  
25 Information Act and IRS disclosure requirements. The times and locations of these forums  
26 and county wide meetings Local Partnership Board meetings and elections must be  
27 publicized in the local print and broadcast media.  
28

29 (C) ~~(B) At a countywide meeting the participants~~ In accordance with the bylaws established by the  
30 South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, each local Partnership  
31 Board shall begin to select, to the extent possible within the area covered by the partnership,  
32 consist of the following:  
33

34 (1) A minimum of twelve and a maximum of twenty-four persons, with not  
35 more than four from any one of the following categories, shall be  
36 elected from the following categories to sit on the First Steps  
37 Partnership Board: Not more than two members from each of these  
38 categories to sit on the First Steps partnership board:

- 39 (a) ~~pre-kindergarten through primary~~ educator;  
40 (b) family education, training, and support provider;  
41 (c) childcare and or early childhood  
42 development/education provider;  
43 (d) healthcare provider;  
44 (e) ~~transportation provider;~~

- 1                   (e) local government;
- 2                   (f) nonprofit organization that provides services to
- 3                         families and children;
- 4                   (g) faith community; ~~and~~
- 5                   (h) business community;
- 6                   (i) members of the philanthropic community; and
- 7                   (j) ~~(2) three~~ parents of pre-school children. ~~After~~
- 8                         the first year of the implementation of the First
- 9                         Steps to School Readiness initiative, parents
- 10                         servicing on the County First Steps Partnership
- 11                         Board must have pre-school children being
- 12                         served by First Steps programs; and.
- 13                   ~~(3) Four members from early childhood education.~~

14

15                   (2) ~~(C)~~ After the county partnership board has been formed, ~~i~~ If necessary to

16                         assure that all areas of the county or multi-county region are adequately

17                         represented and reflect the diversity of the ~~county~~ coverage area, each

18                         county legislative delegation may appoint up to four additional members

19                         to a local Partnership Board. Of these members, two are appointed by

20                         the Senate members and two by the House of Representative members

21                         of the delegation from persons with resources, skills, or knowledge that

22                         have specific interests in improving the readiness of young children for

23                         school.

24

25                   (3) ~~(D)~~ Each of the following located within a particular First Steps Partnership

26                         coverage area, shall designate one member to serve as a member of the its County

27                         Local First Steps Partnership Board:

28                         (a) county department of social services;

29                         (b) county department of health and environmental control;

30                         (c) Head Start or Early Head Start;

31                         (d) county library; and

32                         (e) each of the school districts in the county.

33

34                   (D) In conjunction with the independent external program evaluation as established Section 59-

35                         152-160, the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall conduct

36                         a formal review of the membership categories for local First Steps Partnership Board

37                         composition as established in Section 59-152-60. Upon completion of the review, the South

38                         Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall submit to the General

39                         Assembly a statement either verifying the continued applicability and appropriateness of the

40                         composition categories for local First Steps Partnership Boards in place at that time, or

41                         recommending any appropriate and necessary changes.

42

43                   (E) ~~(E)~~ Members who miss more than three consecutive meetings without excuse or members

44                         who resign must be replaced from the same categories as their predecessor. The terms of

1 the members of a ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership Board are for two years; however,  
2 membership on the board may not exceed six consecutive years.

3  
4 ~~(F)~~ (F) The chairman of a ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership Board must be elected by majority vote  
5 of the board. The chairman shall serve a one-year term; however, the chairman may be  
6 elected to subsequent terms not to exceed a total of four consecutive years.

7  
8 ~~(G)~~ (G) ~~County~~ First Steps Partnerships must have policies and procedures for conducting  
9 meetings and disclosing records comparable to those provided for in the Freedom of  
10 Information Act. Prior to every vote taken by the board, members must abstain from voting  
11 if the issue being considered would result in a conflict of interest. The abstention must be  
12 noted in the minutes of the meeting.

13  
14 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

15  
16  
17 **SECTION 59-152-70. First Steps Partnership Board; powers and duties.**

18  
19 (A) A First Steps Partnership Board shall, among other powers and duties:

- 20  
21 (1) adopt by-laws as established by the First Steps to School Readiness Board to  
22 effectuate the provisions of this chapter which must include the creation of a periodic  
23 meeting schedule;
- 24 (2) coordinate a collaborative effort at the county or multi-county level which will bring  
25 the community together to identify the area needs related to the goals of First Steps to  
26 School Readiness; develop a strategic long-term plan for meeting those needs;  
27 develop specific initiatives to implement the elements of the plan; and integrating  
28 service delivery where possible;
- 29 (3) coordinate and oversee the implementation of the comprehensive strategic plan  
30 including, but not limited to, direct service provision, contracting for service  
31 provision, and organization and management of volunteer programs;
- 32 (4) ~~create and~~ update a county needs assessment every three years ~~annually revise a~~  
33 ~~county needs assessment~~;
- 34 (5) implement fiscal policies and procedures as required by the First Steps office and as  
35 needed to ensure fiscal accountability of all funds appropriated to the partnership;
- 36 (6) keep accurate records of the partnership's board meetings, board member attendance,  
37 programs, and activities for annual submission to the First Steps to School Readiness  
38 Board of Trustees;
- 39 (7) collect information and submit an annual report by October 1 to the First Steps to  
40 School Readiness Board of Trustees, and otherwise participate in the annual review  
41 and the three-year evaluation of operations and programs. ~~The first annual report must~~  
42 ~~be submitted October 1, 2000.~~ Reports must include but not be limited to:
- 43 (a) determination of the current level and effectiveness of  
44 services for young children and their families;

- (b) strategic goals for increased availability, accessibility, quality, and efficiency of activities and services for young children and their families which will enable children to reach school ready to succeed learn;
- (c) monitoring of progress toward strategic goals;
- (d) report on implementation activities;
- (e) recommendations for changes to the strategic plan which may include new areas of implementation;
- (f) evaluation and report of program effectiveness and client satisfaction before, during, and after the implementation of the strategic plan, where available; and
- (g) estimation of cost savings attributable to increased efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of services to young children and their families, where available.

(B) Each ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership may, in the performance of its duties, employ or acquire staff pursuant to the local partnership bylaws established by the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees administrative, clerical, stenographic, and other personnel as may be necessary to effectuate the provisions of this section. ~~However, o~~Overhead costs of the First Steps partnership's operations may not exceed eight percent of the total budget. its implementation/management grant allocation unless prior approval is received from the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees.

(C) Each ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership may apply for, receive, and expend federal, state, and local funds, grants, and other funding in order to improve school readiness as defined in Section 59-152-20(A).

~~(D)(E)~~ To be designated a ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership, the ~~county or multi-county partnership must~~ the local partnership shall be a ~~private~~ nonprofit corporation organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. ~~However, developing partnerships which have not yet received 501(c)(3) status may qualify for grants if they have received a state charter for incorporation and meet other criteria as established by the board.~~

HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

**SECTION 59-152-80. First Steps grants.**

~~(A) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the First Steps to School Readiness initiative be implemented as soon as county partnerships are ready to utilize the funds efficiently and effectively to improve services.~~

~~(B) Two levels of First Steps grants may be awarded as follows:~~

1 ~~(1) Level One for the development of the collaborative effort, needs assessment, and strategic~~  
2 ~~planning; and~~

3 ~~(2) Level Two for implementation/management of activities and programs.~~

4 ~~The level of grant awarded to a county partnership must be based on the readiness of the county~~  
5 ~~partnership to implement the First Steps initiative. The First Steps Board shall establish the~~  
6 ~~criteria for qualifying for each grant level. The allocations for the grants shall take into~~  
7 ~~consideration the quality of the grant proposal.~~

8 ~~(C) Implementation/management grants must be funded annually by the First Steps to School~~  
9 ~~Readiness Board and may be awarded for up to three years. Implementation grants are~~  
10 ~~renewable based upon criteria established by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness~~  
11 ~~Board of Trustees, including the results of performance audits.~~

12  
13 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

14  
15  
16 **SECTION 59-152-90. Grant applications; criteria for allocations.**

17  
18 (A) Local Partnership grants may be funded annually by the First Steps to School Readiness  
19 Board and shall be contingent on the General Assembly appropriating funds for the offering  
20 of grants.

21  
22 ~~(B) To receive a Level One development of the collaborative effort, needs assessment, and~~  
23 ~~strategic planning grant, the County First Steps Partnership must meet the criteria established by~~  
24 ~~the First Steps to School Readiness Board including, but not limited to, total population covered~~  
25 ~~by the partnership and quality of any pre-existing needs assessment and/or strategic plans for that~~  
26 ~~geographic area.~~

27  
28 ~~(C) To receive a Level Two implementation/management grant for First Steps to School~~  
29 ~~Readiness, a County First Steps Partnership must have completed a needs assessment and review~~  
30 ~~by the First Steps to School Readiness Board and develop a comprehensive, long-range plan to~~  
31 ~~provide high quality early childhood development and education services. The plan must~~  
32 ~~identify the needs of children and their families in the local area; assets and resources available;~~  
33 ~~explain how supports and services are to be organized and delivered; establish measurable~~  
34 ~~objectives and interim goals for meeting the local and state goals for First Steps; and an~~  
35 ~~evaluation plan.~~

36  
37 ~~(D) In developing these plans, the First Steps Partnership must be given sufficient flexibility, but~~  
38 ~~they must be accountable to the First Steps to School Readiness Board for fiscal management,~~  
39 ~~program management, and program results.~~

40  
41  
42 (B) (A) To obtain a grant, a County First Steps Partnership or developing partnership shall  
43 submit an application to the Office of First Steps in a format specified by the First Steps to  
44 School Readiness Board. The application shall include, as appropriate to the level of grant

1 ~~applied for~~, the level of funding requested, a description of needs of children and families;  
2 assets and resources available; and the proposed strategies to address needs as they relate to  
3 the goals of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness.  
4

5 (C) Effective July 1, 2014, of the funds allocated to First Steps Partnerships by the South  
6 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, the first 60% of funds shall be  
7 distributed as base funding to local partnerships whose applications were approved by the  
8 Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness.

9 ~~(E) The grant allocations for the grants shall take into consideration the quality of the grant~~  
10 ~~proposal; the population of children birth to age five contained in the area served by the~~  
11 ~~partnership; the percentage of students in grades 1-3 who are eligible for the free and~~  
12 ~~reduced price lunch program; average per capita income; and the area's ability to support the~~  
13 ~~strategic plan initiative. The criteria also shall take into account the standing of the~~  
14 ~~geographical area covered by a county partnership in relation to the statewide Kids Count~~  
15 ~~indicators. Priority must be given to strategic plans that incorporate models with~~  
16 ~~demonstrated success.~~

17  
18  
19 (D) The remaining 40% of the funds allocated to First Steps Partnerships by the South Carolina  
20 First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall be distributed to the local  
21 partnerships whose applications were approved by the Office of South Carolina First Steps  
22 to School Readiness, based on the following factors (1)-(3). The State Office of First Steps  
23 will determine and establish criteria and procedures for the evaluation of the factors to be  
24 weighted as follows:

25 (1) 25% of the 40% shall be distributed based on the quality of the grant  
26 proposal.

27 (2) 25% of the 40% shall be distributed based on the adherence to the First  
28 Steps Accountability Standards, and

29 (3) 50% of the 40% shall be distributed based on the level of interagency,  
30 cross county, and cross organization collaboration with more weight  
31 being given to proposals which indicate the maximization of resources  
32 for early childhood education.

33  
34  
35 (E) In conjunction with the independent external program evaluation as established Section 59-  
36 152-160, the South Carolina State Board of First Steps to School Readiness shall conduct a  
37 formal review of the funding process in Parts (C) and (D) of this section. Upon completion  
38 of the review, the South Carolina State Board of First Steps to School Readiness shall  
39 submit to the General Assembly a statement either verifying the continued applicability and  
40 appropriateness of the funding process in use at that time or recommending any appropriate  
41 and necessary changes.

42  
43 (F) In the event of a multi-county Partnership, funding shall reflect the combined total  
44 allocations of the coverage area.

1  
2  
3 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

9 **SECTION 59-152-100. Use of grant funds; Focus of activities and services.**  
10

11 (A) Implementation/management All grants funds expended by provided to County First Steps  
12 Partnerships must be used to address the needs of young children and their families as  
13 identified in the partnerships' comprehensive plans. The funds must be used to expand,  
14 extend, or improve the quality of provided services if there is evidence as to existing  
15 programs' effectiveness; offer new or previously unavailable services in the area; or  
16 increase access to services. Grant funds may not supplant comparable current expenditures  
17 by counties or state agencies on behalf of young children and their families, and may not be  
18 used where other state or federal funding sources are available ~~or could be made available.~~

19 (B) At least seventy-five percent of state funds appropriated for programs and services must be  
20 used by the local partnership for evidence-based programs as defined in Section 59-152-20.  
21 Not more than twenty-five percent of state funds appropriated for programs and services to a  
22 local partnership may be used for 'promising programs' as defined in Section 59-152-20 of  
23 this Chapter.

24 (C) ~~(A)~~ All activities and services provided by a First Steps Partnership must be made available  
25 to young children and families on a voluntary basis and must focus on the following: solely  
26 on 'school readiness' as defined in Section 59-152-20 by implementing programs geared  
27 specifically toward the achievement of the First Steps goals pursuant to Section 59-152-25.

28 (1) lifelong learning:

29 (a) school readiness;

30 (b) parenting skills;

31 (c) family literacy; and

32 (d) adult and continuing education.

33 (2) health care:

34 (a) nutrition;

35 (b) affordable access to quality age-appropriate health care;

36 (c) early and periodic screenings;

37 (d) required immunizations;

38 (e) initiatives to reduce injuries to infants and toddlers; and

39 (f) technical assistance and consultation for parents and child care providers on health and safety  
40 issues.

41 (3) quality child care:

42 (a) staff training and professional development incentives;  
43

- ~~(b) quality cognitive learning programs;~~
- ~~(c) voluntary accreditation standards;~~
- ~~(d) accessibility to quality child care and development resources; and~~
- ~~(e) affordability.~~
- ~~(4) transportation:~~
  - ~~(a) coordinated service;~~
  - ~~(b) accessibility;~~
  - ~~(c) increased utilization efficiency; and~~
  - ~~(d) affordability.~~

(D) ~~(B)~~ Any part of the initiative within the county partnership's strategic plan using local district resources within a school district must be conducted only with approval of the district's board of trustees.

HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

**SECTION 59-152-110. Use of grant funds.**

~~Implementation/management grants provided to County First Steps Partnerships must be used to address the needs of young children and their families as identified in the partnerships' comprehensive plans. The funds must be used to expand, extend, or improve the quality of provided services if there is evidence as to existing programs' effectiveness; offer new or previously unavailable services in the area; or increase access to services. Grant funds may not supplant current expenditures by counties or state agencies on behalf of young children and their families, and may not be used where other state or federal funding sources are available or could be made available.~~

~~HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.~~

**SECTION 59-152-120. Use of grant funds for capital expenditures.**

~~Funds received for implementation of a county by local First Steps Partnerships partnership's implementation/management grant may not be used for capital expenses, for new construction, or to renovate, refurbish or upgrade existing facilities without prior approval by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees. However, funds may be made available for renovating, refurbishing, or upgrading of existing facilities used to support First Steps to School Readiness activities and services for children, families, and providers from funds made available to the partnerships in Section 59-152-150(C) and Section 63-11-1750(A). The county partnership must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the First Steps to School Readiness Board that the capital expenditure is:~~

- ~~(1) a priority need for the local initiative and other state or federal funds for such projects are insufficient; and~~
- ~~(2) necessary to provide services to under-served children and families.~~

1 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.  
2  
3

4 **SECTION 59-152-130. Partnership matches; annual report.**  
5

6 (A) ~~The County~~ Local First Steps Partnerships shall provide an annual match of at least fifteen  
7 percent. The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees may  
8 decrease this percentage requirement for a partnership based on their capacity to provide  
9 that match. The First Steps Partnerships should encourage ~~P~~private individuals and groups  
10 ~~must be encouraged~~ to contribute to a partnership's efforts to meet its match. The match  
11 required of individual partnerships by the First Steps Board should take into consideration  
12 such factors as:

- 13 (1) local wealth, using such indicators as the number and percentage of  
14 children eligible for free and reduced lunches in grades 1-3; and  
15 (2) in-kind donated resources.

16 Only in-kind donations, as defined by the standard fiscal  
17 accountability system provided for in Section 59-152-140, which  
18 meet the criteria established by the South Carolina First Steps to  
19 School Readiness Board of Trustees and that are quantifiable may be  
20 applied to the in-kind match requirement. ~~Expenses, including those~~  
21 ~~paid both by cash and through in-kind contributions, incurred by~~  
22 ~~other nonstate entities participating in county partnerships may be~~  
23 ~~included in determining matching funds.~~

24 (B) The Office of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness shall establish guidelines  
25 and reporting formats for ~~county~~ partnerships to document expenses to ensure they meet  
26 matching fund requirements. The office shall compile a report annually on the private cash  
27 and in-kind contributions received by the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
28 Board of Trustees and ~~County~~ First Steps Partnerships.  
29

30 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.  
31  
32

33 **SECTION 59-152-140. Carrying funds forward into subsequent years.**  
34

35 To ensure effective use of funds, awards under contract for ~~County~~ First Steps Partnerships, with  
36 the approval of the Office of First Steps to School Readiness, may be carried forward and used in  
37 the following fiscal year. Funds appropriated to South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
38 may also be carried forward into subsequent years.  
39

40 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.  
41  
42

43 **SECTION 59-152-150. Development and adoption of standard fiscal accountability system;**  
44 **private funds to be held separate; disbursements; applicable offenses.**

1  
2 (A) The Office of First Steps to School Readiness shall develop and require partnerships to adopt  
3 and implement a standard fiscal accountability system including, but not limited to, a uniform,  
4 standardized system of accounting, internal controls, payroll, fidelity bonding, chart of accounts,  
5 and contract management and monitoring. Additionally, the accountability system shall require  
6 competitive bids for the purchase or procurement of goods and services of ten thousand dollars  
7 or more. A bid other than the lowest bid may be accepted by a majority vote of the ~~county~~  
8 partnership board if other considerations outweigh the cost factor; however, written justification  
9 must be filed with the Office of First Steps. The Office of First Steps may contract with outside  
10 firms to develop and ensure implementation of this standard fiscal accountability system, and the  
11 Office of First Steps may inspect fiscal and program records of ~~county~~ partnerships and  
12 developing partnerships to ensure their compliance with the required system. The Office of First  
13 Steps may contract with a state entity with existing means for developing contracts and  
14 disbursing funds in order to make use of the existing infrastructure, if it is efficient and not  
15 administratively burdensome to partnerships.

16  
17 (B) Each County First Steps Partnership shall expend funds through the South Carolina First  
18 Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees or its fiscal designees until the capacity of the  
19 County First Steps Partnership to manage its fiscal and administrative responsibilities in  
20 compliance with the standard accountability system has been reviewed and certified by the South  
21 Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees or its designee.

22  
23 (C) Private funds received by a ~~County~~ First Steps Partnership must be deposited in a separate  
24 fund.

25  
26 (D) Disbursements may be made only on the written authorization of the individual designated  
27 by the ~~county~~ partnership board and only for the purposes specified. A person violating this  
28 section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined five thousand dollars or  
29 imprisoned for six months, or both.

30  
31 (E) The offenses of misuse, misappropriation, and embezzlement of public funds, apply to this  
32 chapter.

33  
34 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

35  
36 **SECTION 59-152-160. Evaluation of progress.**

37  
38 (A) The South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees shall establish  
39 internal evaluation policies and procedures for ~~County~~ First Steps Partnerships for an annual  
40 review of the functioning of the partnership, implementation of strategies, and progress toward  
41 the interim goals and benchmarks. In instances where no progress has been made, the Office of  
42 First Steps to School Readiness shall provide targeted assistance and/or the South Carolina First  
43 Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees may terminate the grant. In addition, a program  
44 evaluation of the First Steps to School Readiness initiatives at the state and local levels must be

1 conducted every ~~three~~ five years by an independent, external evaluator under contract with the  
2 South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees. However, the selected  
3 evaluator shall be approved, and the evaluation overseen, by a committee consisting of three  
4 members, one appointed by the First Steps Board, one appointed by the President Pro Tempore  
5 of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House. These committee members must  
6 be professionally recognized as proficient in child development, early childhood education, or a  
7 closely related field. The first report shall be provided no later than January 1, 2003.

8  
9 (B) ~~County~~ First Steps Partnerships must agree to participate in such an evaluation in order to  
10 receive a First Steps grant. Subsequent grant approval and grant allocations must be dependent,  
11 in part, on the results of the evaluations. If an evaluation finds no progress has been made in  
12 meeting local goals or implementing strategies as agreed to in the First Steps grant, the grant  
13 ~~must~~ may be terminated.

14  
15 (C) The purpose of the evaluation is to assess progress toward achieving the First Steps goals  
16 and to determine the impact of the initiative on children and families at the state and local levels.  
17 The impact assessment shall include, but is not limited to, school readiness measures; benefits  
18 from child development services; immunization status; low birth-weight rates; parent literacy;  
19 parenting skills; parental involvement; transportation; and developmental screening results.  
20 During the course of the evaluation, if an evaluator determines that any state agency has failed to  
21 comply with the coordination and collaboration provisions as required in this chapter, the final  
22 report must reflect that information. Program evaluation reports must be reported to the General  
23 Assembly no later than three months after conclusion of the evaluation. All ~~County~~ First Steps  
24 Partnerships shall cooperate fully in collecting and providing data and information for the  
25 evaluation.

26  
27 HISTORY: 1999 Act No. 99, Section 2.

28  
29  
30  
31 ARTICLE 17.

32  
33 FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

34  
35  
36 **SECTION 63-11-1720. Board members.**

37  
38 (A) There is created the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees which  
39 must be chaired by the Governor and must include the State Superintendent of Education  
40 who shall serve as ex officio voting members of the board. ~~The board is composed of the~~  
41 ~~twenty appointed, voting members as follows:~~

42  
43 (B) In making the appointments specified in Sections 63-11-1720(C)(1-3) of this Chapter, the  
44 Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the South Carolina  
45 House of Representatives shall consult each other working toward the goal of geographical

1 representation on the board by appointing individuals from the following categories to ensure  
2 that each congressional district is represented.

3  
4 (C) The board is composed of the twenty appointed, voting members as follows:

5  
6 (1) The Governor shall appoint two members from each of the following sectors:

7  
8 (a) parents of young children;

9  
10 (b) business community;

11  
12 (c) early childhood educators;

13  
14 (d) medical ~~or~~ and child care and development providers, one member from  
15 each profession; and

16  
17 (e) the General Assembly, one member from the Senate and one member from  
18 the House of Representatives.

19  
20  
21 (2) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appoint one member from each of the  
22 following sectors:

23  
24 (a) parents of young children;

25  
26 (b) business community;

27  
28 (c) early childhood educators; and

29  
30 (d) medical or child care and development providers.

31  
32 (3) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint one member from each of  
33 the following sectors:

34  
35 (a) parents of young children;

36  
37 (b) business community;

38  
39 (c) early childhood educators; and

40  
41 (d) medical or child care and development.

42  
43  
44 (4) The chairman of the Senate Education Committee or his designee.

1  
2 (5) The chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee or his designee.

3  
4 (6) The chief executive officer of each of the following shall serve as an ex officio  
5 nonvoting member:

6  
7 (a) Department of Social Services or his designee;

8  
9 (b) Department of Health and Environmental Control or his designee;

10  
11 (c) Department of Health and Human Services or his designee;

12  
13 (d) Department of Mental Health or his designee;

14  
15 (e) Department of Disabilities and Special Needs or his designee;

16  
17 (f) Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services or his designee;

18  
19 (g) Department of Transportation or his designee;

20  
21 (h) Department of Commerce or his designee;

22  
23 (i) Department of Employment and Workforce or his designee;

24  
25 (j) ~~(h)~~ State Budget and Control Board, Division of Research and Statistics or  
26 his designee; and

27  
28 (k) ~~(i)~~ State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education;

29  
30 (l) State Commission on Higher Education;

31  
32 (m) State Head Start Collaboration Officer; and

33  
34 (n) Children's Trust of South Carolina.

35  
36  
37 (7) The following organizations shall designate one member to serve as an ex officio  
38 nonvoting member:

39  
40 (a) South Carolina State Library; and

41  
42 ~~(b) Transportation Association of South Carolina; and~~

43  
44 ~~(c)~~ (b) State Advisory Committee on the Regulation of Childcare Facilities.

1  
2 (8) There shall be two Executive Directors of Local Partnerships serving as ex officio  
3 nonvoting members; they shall be elected by their peers with one Executive Director  
4 representing the rural regions of South Carolina and one Executive Director representing  
5 the urban regions of South Carolina.  
6  
7

8 (B) The terms of the members are for four years and until their successors are appointed and  
9 qualify, except of those first appointed. ~~When making the initial appointments, the Governor, the~~  
10 ~~President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall~~  
11 ~~designate half of their appointments to serve two year terms only.~~ The appointments of the  
12 members from the General Assembly shall be coterminous with their terms of office.  
13

14 (C) Vacancies for any reason must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the  
15 unexpired term. A member may not serve more than two terms or eight years, whichever is  
16 longer. A member who misses more than three consecutive meetings without excuse or a  
17 member who resigns must be replaced in the same manner as his predecessor. Members may be  
18 paid per diem, mileage, and subsistence as established by the board not to exceed standards  
19 provided by law for boards, committees, and commissions. A complete report of the activities of  
20 the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees must be made annually to the General  
21 Assembly.  
22

23 HISTORY: 2008 Act No. 361, Section 2.  
24  
25  
26

27 **SECTION 63-11-1725. Early Childhood Advisory Council.**  
28

29 (A) Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b), and as designated in Executive Order Number 2010-06,  
30 the members of the First Steps Board of Trustees shall serve as South Carolina's Advisory  
31 Council. Each member of the First Steps Board of Trustees (both voting and non-voting) shall be  
32 considered a voting member of the Advisory Council. Each Advisory Council member's term  
33 shall be concurrent with his/her service to the First Steps Board of Trustees.  
34

35 (B) While parallel in membership, the Advisory Council shall act as a distinct entity  
36 for the purpose of fulfilling the responsibilities outlined in 42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b)(1)(D)(i) and  
37 shall keep separate minutes that shall explicitly distinguish actions and votes of the Advisory  
38 Council. The Advisory Council must officially adjourn prior to acting as the First Steps Board.  
39

40 (C) Furthermore, the State Director of First Steps shall coordinate the activities of the Advisory  
41 Council, and pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b)(1)(D)(i), the Advisory Council shall:  
42

- 43 (1) conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of  
44 early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth

- 1 to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-  
2 kindergarten services for low-income children in the state;  
3 (2) identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among  
4 federally funded and state-funded child development, child care, and early childhood  
5 education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among state  
6 agencies responsible for administering such programs;  
7 (3) develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing  
8 federal, state, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including  
9 outreach to underrepresented and special populations;  
10 (4) develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection  
11 system for public early childhood education and development programs and services  
12 throughout the state;  
13 (5) develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career  
14 advancement plans for early childhood educators in the state;  
15 (6) assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of  
16 higher education in the state toward supporting the development of early childhood  
17 educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation  
18 agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or  
19 internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or pre-kindergarten program;  
20 (7) make recommendation for improvements in state early learning standards and undertake  
21 efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate;  
22 (8) develop and publish, using available demographic data, an indicators-based measure of  
23 school readiness at the state and community level;  
24 (9) incorporate, within its periodic statewide needs assessments required in 42 U.S.C. §  
25 9837b, data related to the capacity and efforts of private sector providers, Head Start  
26 providers, and local school districts to serve children aged birth to four, which shall  
27 include fiscal, enrollment, and capacity data to the extent feasible; and  
28 (10) perform all other functions, as permitted under federal and state law, to improve  
29 coordination and delivery of early childhood education and development to children in  
30 South Carolina.

31  
32 (D) The Advisory Council shall designate one of the Early Childhood Advisory Council  
33 meetings as its annual meeting, and all of the Chief Executive Officers of the State agencies  
34 represented on the Early Childhood Advisory Council, shall be required to attend in person.

35  
36 (E) The Early Childhood Advisory Council shall prepare an annual report of its activities for  
37 presentation to the Governor and General Assembly of South Carolina.

38  
39  
40 **SECTION 63-11-1735. BabyNet.**

41  
42 (A) Pursuant to Subchapter VIII, Chapter 33, Title 20, U. S. Code Annotated, the South Carolina  
43 First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees is designated by Executive Order 2009-12 as

1 the department or lead agency as defined in South Carolina Code Section 44-7-2520 and used in  
2 Title 44, Chapter 7, Article 21 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.

3  
4 (B) Pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq., in  
5 Executive Order 2009-12, the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees  
6 is designated as the responsible lead agency through which Part C Program will be administered.

7  
8 (C) In order to establish South Carolina’s maintenance of effort under the Individuals with  
9 Disabilities Education Act, Part C, each agency providing early intervention services shall  
10 coordinate with South Carolina First Steps to ensure the documentation of all Individuals with  
11 Disabilities Education Act, Part C expenditures on an annual basis.