



## **SC Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting**

October 16, 2014  
The Inn at USC, Columbia

### **Minutes**

#### **Trustees present:**

Ken Wingate, Chairman, Chair  
Mellanie Jinnette (Designee for Supt. Mick Zais)  
Representative Rita Allison  
Lisa Van Riper, Secretary  
Julia Ellen Davis  
Mary Lynn Diggs  
Walter Fleming  
Amber Gillum  
Timothy Holt  
Julie Hussey  
Tracy Lamb  
Jennifer McConnell  
Alexia Newman  
Rick Noble  
Roger Pryor  
Sue Williams  
Reece Yandle

#### **Trustees absent:**

Senator Mike Fair (excused)  
Senator Joel Lourie (excused, Lisa Dial represented)  
Representative Jerry Govan (excused)  
Judith Aughtry (excused)  
Beverly Buscemi (excused, David Goodell and Jennifer Buster represented)  
Tony Keck (Bryan Kost represented)  
Catherine Templeton (Beth DeSantis represented)

#### **Others Present:**

David Goodell, SC DDSN  
Jennifer Buster, SC DDSN  
Bryan Kost, SC DHHS  
Beth DeSantis, SC DHEC  
Lisa Dial, Senator Fair's Office  
Norman Dover, Thornwell Home for Children  
Brooke Robinette, Thornwell Home for Children  
Carol Daly, Georgetown County First Steps  
Brooke Harpine, Georgetown County First Steps  
Baron Holmes, USC Children's Law Center  
Dave Wilson, McAlister Communications  
Susan DeVenny, SCFS  
Dan Wuori, SCFS  
Debbie Robertson, SCFS  
Betty Gardiner, SCFS  
Linda Leonard, SCFS

Mary Anne Mathews, SCFS  
Russell Brown, SCFS  
Samantha Ingram, SCFS  
Ginger Ryall, SCFS  
Martha Strickland, SCFS

Mr. Ken Wingate called the Council meeting to order and gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda. He called on Ms. Susan DeVenny to introduce the agency directors present and the agency roundtable presentation. Ms. DeVenny thanked each agency director for meeting with her in advance of the retreat, in order to establish the SC ECAC Agency Priorities 2015-16 to be delivered to the Council today.

The Council then heard key priorities from all agencies represented on the Council. As noted by Mr. Wingate and Ms. DeVenny, and by other Council members, the goal for the session was to hear the key public agency priorities as a first step in identifying Council priorities for future work in the strategic planning process.

The following staff and agencies reported to the Council, as Council members or those designated to make presentations in the Agency Director's absence: Children's Trust of SC (Sue Williams, CEO), SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (Jennifer Buster and David Goodell, for Agency Director Buscemi), SC Department of Education (Mellanie Jinnette, for Superintendent Zais), SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (Beth DeSantis), SC Department of Health and Human Services (Bryan Kost), SC Department of Social Services (Susan DeVenny reported on behalf of Amber Gillum, who was called away during the meeting), SC First Steps to School Readiness (Susan DeVenny) and the SC Head Start Collaboration Office (Mary Lynne Diggs). The Agency Head Priorities 2015-2016 summary is attached.

Next, the legislative panel made up of Rep. Rita Allison and Ms. Lisa Dial (on behalf of Sen. Mike Fair), spoke to the Council on legislative priorities for 2015. Rep. Allison stated the importance of focusing on the whole child, she challenged the Council to look for opportunities as an ECAC, especially with the "movers and shakers" at the table. Rep. Allison also emphasized the need for focusing on services for children 0-3 now that four-year-old kindergarten for at-risk children is expanding. Ms. Lisa Dial then read a statement from Sen. Mike Fair (attached).

Next, Mr. Dave Wilson and Dr. Baron Holmes facilitated a discussion around two questions:

1. *What do you believe will be the most important external forces affecting young children in South Carolina in 2020?*
2. *As we begin the strategic planning process, from your perspective what are the top 3 priorities the Early Childhood Advisory Council should consider over the next 5 years?*

The discussion notes from the brainstorming session are attached.

With no further business, Mr. Wingate adjourned the meeting.



### **“Looking Ahead”**

***Board brainstorming session facilitated by Dave Wilson and Baron Holmes to inform the strategic planning process for 2015.***

#### **1. What do you believe will be the most important external forces affecting young children in South Carolina in 2020?**

- Need to adapt to changing technology
- Using technology to deal with increasing diversity of children/backgrounds (individualizing education)
- Technology may cause different kinds of deficits. Wise use of technology with young children.
- Reliability of assessment
- Who is storing/controlling data?
- Technology doesn't replace traditional, hand-on experience, interactions, etc.
- Need for multiple tools, multiple experiences, parent/community friendly resources
- Economics of high-quality care
- Needs of children being met – meals, play, nap, education. Poverty's negative impact.
- Policies for families in poverty have a long way to go. Correlation between neglect and poverty...families often lack the resources they need to care for children.
- Getting the state's children ready to succeed is key to state's success. Empower parents. Parents cannot assist their children without livable wages, steady employment.
- Need to get good information to decision-makers from across sectors.
- State doesn't need to parent our children...teach moms and dads how to do their important jobs. Parenting supports...mentoring to couples...partner with faith-based ministries. Help them to find jobs. Help them find quality child care. Importance of fathers...teach dads to be dads.
- Population shifts, links between education and pregnancy rates. Help communities to understand what it means to raise children.
- Raising of American documentary series to be promoted by PBS, TLC/Discovery
- New Carolina/TransformSC – what needs to be done to address K-12 system needs. FS an adaptor that helps families plug into K-12. May include workplace policies/flexibility.
- Who are the key informants...Access and equity. How do people move economically? Learning about diversity important.
- Boeing an example in Charleston. We bring in companies who sometimes need to recruit from elsewhere. Sometimes these newcomers have different/higher expectations re access.
- Family literacy and parenting... literacy development, including to non-English speakers. Helping families understand the importance of reading.
- Are we meeting the physical needs (initially)...then family becomes the environmental context. Helping parents to have success. How can we help mobilize communities to help make families as strong as possible? There are stresses on families that make families unstable. How can we help to incubate families against these stresses? Need to develop on FS goals #5: Mobilizing communities. Can't put the whole burden on government.

- Competition for scarce budget resources over the coming years. EC will be in competition with road, infrastructure, increasing health care costs. Fighting for a smaller slice of the pie.
- Early childhood education in zero-three range has as much to do with the lives of the parents as with the child.
- Experiences of the child lays foundation...reduction of experiences of young children. With introduction of technology we are seeing a reduction of hands-on experience. Idea of education may be shifting away from what science tells us that young children need to develop optimally.
- International competition...people at the bottom are going to have a more difficult time enhancing their lives/opportunities in an increasingly global economy/workforce.
- Need for entrepreneurs. How do we build ourselves to be adaptable?

**2. As we begin the strategic planning process, from your perspective what are the top 3 priorities the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council should consider over the next 5 years?**

- Enrollment of churches as a resource to support family strengthening (parenting classes, financial, English as a second language...) No state money involved. Chance to support families is a win-win for churches. State could supply syllabus...chance to train many more by utilizing existing networks.
- Continued strengthening of private resources (churches, civic clubs, chambers of commerce) would allow state to focus limited resources on those in greatest need.
- Collaboration and sharing/support of best practices
- Communication and community outreach...helping families access the services/resources they need.
- Raising public awareness of the importance of ECE and available resources...in a focused pithy way that communicates who we are. Needs to be succinct, easily understandable.
- Breaking down silos
- Training of system
- Coordination of services... cooperation vs. collaboration. Needs to happen on frontlines as well.
- Building relationships with frontline service providers.
- Convener role vs service provider role

Comments for First Steps Board Retreat  
By: Senator Mike Fair

First Steps is an amazing organization and I am grateful to the Governor for appointing me to serve. Initially, I had reservations about moving into this territory, but my concerns were without merit. Mandatory universal 4k was not a possibility then and is not a possibility now.

It is too expensive, counterproductive and is a prescription that SC would not embrace. First Steps serves at the pleasure of the Governor and the General Assembly and neither the Governor nor the GA wanted to go in the direction of Mandatory 4k.

Stay at home mothers will always be a child's best teacher. Yet, many moms must work outside the home. My wife, for example, could not 'stay at home' and our child went to a very fine center in our neighborhood where she learned and took naps each day at noon.

Many if not most families today also look forward to placing their preschool children in a quality learning environment. There is a role for private and public pre-school care.

So, I think First Steps is entering a phase in which we will be facing our biggest challenge and our 'finest hour.'

I believe that First Steps is the preeminent organization serving children in the Palmetto State.

I say that for several reasons.

1. First Steps has led the way in securing new partners from the business and private sector foundations and our partners, both local and national, are stronger than ever.

The Nurse Family Partnership funded by a private foundation is but one example.

2. Our Former Chairman, Lewis Smoak, was adamant about our role to reach the neediest and that has been our focus and I believe should continue to be our Focus. We will certainly miss Lewis and thank him for his many years of dedicated service to First Steps.

3. We have a new Chairman whom I have known for at least 20 years and know him to also have a 'servants heart.' Ken has strong ties to both private and public sectors. So I welcome our new Chair, Ken Wingate, with great enthusiasm about his capabilities to lead and we can say with assurance that First Steps is positioned to provide our kids with their finest hour as well.

4. As we serve our youngest children, our encounter with them comes at a critical time in their lives which offers us a wonderful opportunity. We have the opportunity to teach principles of character that other educational entities seem not to have. We must not allow that opportunity to slip past us at the state and local levels.

5. First Steps understands that we do not ever stand in the place of the child's family. Rather we assist the family to help the child achieve what the family wants for them...the beginnings of a good education in a safe place.

I would also like to welcome the new state trustees and thank them and the local partners for the sacrifices they make each and every day for SC's children.

We must do our part to equip our kids with the educational and moral basics in partnership with their families. That foundation properly built will serve them not just for k-12 but will serve them for their entire lives.