



South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
Board of Trustees
August 20, 2015

MINUTES

Members Present (17):

Ken Wingate, Chair
Julie Hussey, Vice Chair
Lisa Van Riper, Secretary
Senator Mike Fair
Rep. Rita Allison
Representative Jerry Govan
Rick Noble
Julia-Ellen Davis
Mary Lynn Diggs
Alexia Newman
Sue Williams
Christian Soura
Judith Aughtry
Walter Fleming
Evelyn Patterson
Jennifer McConnell
Dr. Amy Williams

Members Absent (7):

Superintendent Molly Spearman
Senator Gerald Malloy
Roger Pryor
Dr. Beverly Buscemi
Susan Alford
Katherine Heigel
Tracy Lamb

Others Present:

Susan DeVenny
Dr. Dan Wuori
Mark Barnes
Debbie Robertson
Amber Gillum
Rosemary Wilson
Pierce McNair
Janice Kilburn
Martha Strickland
Kristine Jenkins
Barbara Black
Betty Gardiner
Jim Riddle

Samantha Ingram
Kristie Musick
Pauletta Plowden
Ricky Kears
Derek Lewis
Roy Laney
LaDrica Christian
Beverly Mills
Russell Brown
Sally Cauthen
Dave Wilson
Tekethia Burrell
Dorothy Priester
Cassandra Johnson
Marc Drews
Karen Coltrane
Nikki Williams
Joy Mazur
Marley Via
Bunnie Ward
Christie Duke
Whitney Tipton
Paola Atetortua
Sheri Stewart

Welcome and Introductions, Quorum Call and Adoption of Minutes

Mr. Wingate called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm and reminded those in attendance that the meeting was being held in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act. **The Board unanimously adopted the minutes of June 18, 2015 with two corrections: removal of DHEC Chief Counsel Marshall Taylor as a Trustee and the correction of the spelling of visitor Rosemary Wilson's name.**

Chairman's Report

Mr. Wingate reminded the Trustees of the Principles of Engagement document approved in June and asked that each sign and return a copy before leaving. Mr. Wingate introduced Dr. Amy Williams of MUSC, a new Trustee. Dr. Williams introduced herself to the Board.

Mr. Wingate recognized local directors in the room and invited comment. Mr. Jim Riddle (Lexington County First Steps), Mr. Derek Lewis (Greenville County First Steps) and Pauletta Plowden (Bamberg County First Steps) were each recognized. Ms. Plowden introduced Bamberg County First Steps Board Chair Ricky Kears of Bamberg 1. Ms. Plowden made comments to the Board about the importance of the work of First Steps and the importance of quality early childhood education.

Mr. Wingate and Ms. DeVenny reviewed the agenda for the upcoming Board Retreat, to be held in Charleston on October 15-16. Mr. Wingate reminded the Board of plans for a tentative November 2015 Early Childhood Summit.

Strategic Planning Update

Mr. Wingate called on Ms. Van Riper to review progress on the strategic plan and introduce presentations related to First Steps' 2015 site visits. Ms. Van Riper reminded the Board of First Steps' history of internal and external reflection and evaluation, including four external evaluations and multiple reviews, each of which informs the current strategic planning process.

Ms. Van Riper reviewed the four strands of data informing the Board's planning process:

- 1) The How are the Children? Public opinion survey
- 2) Themes from 46 local site visits, conducted during summer 2015
- 3) SC data including KidsCOUNT and DSS Child Care reports
- 4) A fiscal review currently underway within Governor Haley's office.

Site Visit Reports

Mr. Wingate asked the Board for reflection on the local site visit process. Ms. Davis reported attending three visits and participating in the theme synthesis. She described herself as impressed with the visits she attended, citing specific examples of partnership collaborations that have resulted in expanded service to children and families. She noted a theme of needing increased service to the Latino community. Mr. Noble reported attending 8 visits, noting local passion, innovation and a desire for additional supports from the state office.

Mr. Wingate noted differences between the partnerships, with each possessing unique strengths and contextual challenges. He noted that a "one size fits all" approach to partnerships is unwise. Mr. Fleming reported having received a different impression from each visit and noted a theme of using a little bit of funding to leverage a lot of funding. Senator Fair praised the partnerships for their care and concern for the families served. Ms. Hussey highlighted Beaufort County as an example of outstanding community collaboration and cited the community as a model for the Board. Ms. Van Riper reported having been overwhelmed by the partnerships' hospitality and impressed by the uniqueness of each. Ms. McConnell noted the level of gratitude she observed from partnerships. Ms. Newman expressed her appreciation for the passion of the partnership staff, noting that each wants the best for the children and families served and praised the facilitation of the state office staff. She described the site visits as the "best training possible" for a new Trustee.

Ms. Plowden expressed her thanks to the Board for taking the time to visit each community, noting that it allowed both staff/boards and clients to have firsthand exposure to Trustees. She expressed her excitement that the Bamberg visit was an opportunity to highlight the partnership's collaboration with local school districts. Mr. Wingate, who attended the Bamberg meeting, noted that the session was one which highlighted the absence of private/corporate funding in rural communities.

Ms. Kilburn introduced herself to the Board and described the site visits as a wonderful opportunity to get to know partnerships in depth. She described one theme across her visits as an inability to reach all of the children in need (lack of access to services due to limited resources), describing in particular a need to expand home visitation and child care programming. She also noted that a lack of transportation. She also noted a desire to see more support from the state office to partnerships in the areas of board training, technical assistance and resource development.

Ms. Johnson introduced herself and described her experience as one that enabled her to see the partnerships outside of the context of her work in 4K. She described the visits as important opportunities for learning and collaboration between state and local offices.

Ms. Tipton described the visits as beneficial in terms of both learning and relationship building. She noted commonalities between the challenges faced by partnerships and BabyNet staff.

Mr. Barnes described the visits as an incredible experience. He described the great work of partnerships and the need to ensure we are telling their stories effectively. Mr. Barnes described opportunities to enhance cross-county training and planning.

Ms. DeVenny described three major themes resulting from the 251 pages of site visit notes:

- A need to continue building on the First Steps structure and system;
- A desire to improve systemic collaboration and partnership; and
- The importance of getting other stakeholders “on the bus” and building a message for all to join.

Ms. Van Riper described the site visits as an example of the strength of interagency coordinating councils such as the First Steps state and local boards. This state and local, public/private structure is able to identify untapped resources in the community.

Ms. DeVenny recapped several major themes resulting from the public *How are the Children?* survey, which revealed the following as top needs of families with children under five:

- Increased Parent Education/Involvement
- Child Care Access, Quality and Affordability
- Access to Healthcare
- Expanded Early Childhood Education
- Transportation
- Employment/Financial Assistance
- Early Intervention

Ms. DeVenny introduced Mr. Derek Lewis for a spotlight on the Read Greenville initiative. Read Greenville is a messaging campaign designed to unite a coalition of local interagency partners in support of daily reading. The initiative distributed 40,000 copies of a literacy insert in the Greenville Journal. The Partnership sold ad space in the circular to help support its community awareness strategy and plans a “4K for 4K” family walk in 2016. Along the walk families will be able to stop and visit booths and vendors highlighting the things they need to be doing to get their children ready for school.

Ms. DeVenny introduced Jim Riddle to discuss the Lexington’s Countdown to Kindergarten strategy, which this year incorporated additional services to Latino children and families. Due to funds leveraged, the partnership is able to provide \$75,000 in service using only \$7,500 in partnership funding. Based on assessment with the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), 95% of participating children in one local school district are reading on grade level.

Mr. Riddle introduced Sheri Stewart and Paola Atetortua of Lexington School District Two. Paola described her experience as a bilingual parent educator participating in the Countdown to Kindergarten program during the summer of 2015, connecting non-English speaking families to their kindergarten classrooms. She reported that the five families she served – and their teachers - continue to call her for advice in navigating communication issues between home and school. Mr. Riddle reported plans to expand the program in 2016, given its success.

Ms. DeVenny introduced Marc Drews of EdVenture Children’s Museum, which has partnered with First Steps on Countdown to Kindergarten for twelve years. Mr. Drews introduced Karen Coltrane, the new EdVenture Director and Vice President Nikki Williams. Mr. Drews thanked the Board and noted the “leadership, ownership and partnership” evident in the room. Ms. Coltrane thanked the Board for its longstanding partnership with the museum and offered EdVenture as a continuing resource to First Steps.

Ms. Strickland described the 2015 First Steps 4K Academy, which was attended by more than 500 teachers, assistants and directors. Ms. McConnell thanked the 4K staff for their work on the Academy and noted its importance in helping her teaching staff see themselves as professionals. She noted that Brookland Baptist Academy continues to receive referrals from Lexington School District Two for 4K enrollment.

Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee:

Ms. Van Riper reviewed a committee recommendation to issue an RFP for the evaluation of the Parents as Teachers program, including a draft scope of work. The study will be completed by April 1, 2016 with a maximum cost of \$40,000.

The Board unanimously approved the committee recommendation.

Program and Grants Committee:

Ms. Davis reported that the Department of Education has requested additional time to review the Description of the Ready Five-Year-Old. A stakeholder review meeting will be held on August 26 in advance of consideration by the State Board of Education on September 9, 2015.

Ms. Davis provided an update on the Early Head Start grant. A bidders’ conference was held in late July with provider applications due August 31. Director candidates were interviewed earlier in the week.

Ms. Diggs reported that the Head Start Collaboration Office will be hosting an upcoming training.

Finance and Administration Committee:

Mr. Barnes reviewed the monthly financial report and noted the cash-flow challenge presented by EIA funding (which is generated and disbursed throughout the year, as opposed to being provided up front). The agency will again request that some or all of its funding be provided in the form of General Fund budget.

After conversation, Mr. Wingate asked staff to include additional lines on the monthly finance report including Head Start in—kind funds and private funding budgeted/authorized.

Ms. DeVenny introduced Roy Laney, First Steps’ General Counsel. Mr. Laney reviewed an Attorney General’s opinion requested by First Steps re: the applicability of the state’s Administrative Procedures Act, which governs the process of promulgating regulations.

Mr. Laney identified two items: the promulgation of regulations and grant qualification requirements as applicable to the APA, which governs rules of public applicability (as opposed to

internal processes and procedures). At Mr. Laney's suggestion, Mr. Wingate directed staff to begin drafting applicable regulations for review by the Board.

Director's Report:

Ms. DeVenny called the Board's attention to her written Director's Report. She asked Trustees to let staff know if they will be unable to attend the October Board Retreat. She called the Board's attention to a written update related to the initial findings of the *How Are the Children?* survey.

Ms. Robertson presented an update on a recent meeting of the House of Representatives' Abbeville School Equity Lawsuit early childhood subcommittee.

Responding to a question from Ms. Williams, Ms. Musick provided a brief update on BabyNet and a new proviso permitting First Steps to use funds flexibly to ensure federal compliance. A report to the General Assembly is due December 31.

Ms. Diggs recognized Mary Anne Mathews to speak about the 3rd Annual Parenting Conference in September 16 at Brookland Baptist Conference Center. Parents as Teachers, sponsored by SC First Steps, will mark its 25th anniversary in SC this year.

Senator Fair announced that the First Steps Legislative Committee will be reconvening at the request of Mr. Wingate, with dates to be announced.

There being no additional business, the Board adjourned at 4:45 pm.