



South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Board of Trustees  
November 2, 2015

**MINUTES**

**Members Present (22):**

Ken Wingate, Chair  
Julie Hussey, Vice Chair  
Lisa Van Riper, Secretary  
Senator Gerald Malloy  
Rep. Rita Allison  
Rep. Jerry Govan  
Superintendent Molly Spearman  
Roger Pryor  
Dr. Beverly Buscemi  
Susan Alford  
Rick Noble  
Tim Holt  
Julia-Ellen Davis  
Mary Lynn Diggs  
Alexia Newman  
Sue Williams  
Judith Aughtry  
Walter Fleming  
Evelyn Patterson  
Jennifer McConnell  
Dr. Amy Williams  
Tracy Lamb

**Members Absent (3):**

Senator Mike Fair  
Katherine Heigel  
Christian Soura

**Others Present:**

Susan DeVenny  
Dr. Dan Wuori  
Mark Barnes  
Debbie Robertson  
Karen Ponder  
David Phillips  
Rosemary Wilson  
Rebecca Brown  
Russell Brown  
Roy Laney  
Lisa Dial

### **Welcome and Introductions, Quorum Call and Adoption of Minutes**

Mr. Wingate called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm, noted the presence of a quorum and reminded those in attendance that the meeting was being held in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act. **Upon a motion by Mr. Fleming and a second by Ms. Aughtry the Board unanimously adopted the meeting agenda. Upon a motion by Ms. Aughtry and a second by Ms. Hussey the Board unanimously adopted the meeting minutes of August 20, 2015.**

Mr. Wingate called the Trustees attention to a draft set of 2016 meeting dates, noting that staff are investigating locations with more parking than the Statehouse grounds. **Upon a motion by Mr. Noble and a second by Ms. Hussey, the Board unanimously adopted the 2016 meeting calendar.**

Mr. Wingate called on Ms. Aughtry to deliver the Finance and Administration Committee report.

### **Finance and Administration Committee Report**

Ms. Aughtry noted that the Committee's first item would be a review of the FY15 audited financial statement and asked Mr. Brown to introduce Mr. David Phillips of Greene, Finney and Horton, CPAs. Mr. Phillips provided an overview of the audit, noting both the absence of findings and the fact that the Board was receiving an "unmodified opinion" – which he described as an audit's most desirable outcome.

Mr. Phillips reviewed a recent change implemented by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (BASB) requiring each agency of state government to reflect a proportionate share of the liability of the SC Retirement System, which has increased First Steps' entity-wide liability by \$5.3M.

After discussion, **the Board unanimously voted to accept the FY15 audit as information.**

Mr. Barnes reviewed the monthly financial report and expressed thanks to the SC Department of Social Services for a recent technology grant to the First Steps 4K program and to the Head Start Collaboration Office for underwriting a keynote speaker at the agency's recent parenting conference.

### **Program and Grants Committee**

Ms. Davis reviewed the committee's recommendation to approve new strategy requests from Lexington County (Raising a Reader), Oconee County (Nurse Family Partnership), and Marion County (Early Literacy Program). After discussion, **the Board voted unanimously to approve the committee recommendation.**

Ms. Davis noted that First Steps' Parents as Teachers Program was recently named as a finalist for the WhatWorksSC award by The Riley Institute and SC Future Minds. This is the second time in three years that Parents as Teachers earned this distinction.

Ms. Davis reviewed changes to the school readiness description required under Act 287 of 2014, originally adopted by the Board on June 18, 2015. The document was subsequently reviewed by an interagency work team in advance of review by the State Board of Education. The modifications were approved by the Executive Committee on October 14, 2015 and approved by the State Board of Education that same day. After discussion **the Board voted unanimously to ratify the action of the Executive Committee.**

### **Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee**

Ms. Van Riper reminded the Board of its recent approval of a request for proposals to evaluate the Parents as Teachers program and called the Board's attention to the presence of the final RFP in their packets.

Ms. Van Riper provided a detailed review of the strategic planning process, with an emphasis on seven draft strategic priorities, which she described as the synthesis of feedback to date. These seven draft priorities are:

1. Increase understanding of school readiness, assessment and "what works" to help young children succeed. Make information easily accessible in all communities and for all families.
2. Further expand access to high-quality early care, education, and literacy services, particularly in the Abbeville plaintiff communities.
3. Build state and local capacity by strengthening interagency collaboration, public-private partnerships, strengthening technical assistance and leadership development for early childhood partners statewide.
4. Develop a system of shared, interagency accountability (state and local, public and private) by developing a shared data system, an inventory of services to children 0-5, and an interagency children's budget.
5. Enhance comprehensive services to children 0-5 and the families/caregivers who support them, recognizing families as the first and best teachers of their children.
6. Examine and strengthen early childhood transitions for children among SC's system partners to ensure continuity of care and development.
7. Enhance support for local partnerships in their roles as service portals and conveners, to include connections with BabyNet providers, EHS and 4K providers/families and other public/private community resources.

After discussion of these priorities, Ms. Van Riper asked Trustees to consider them over the coming days and provide any additional feedback to Dr. Wuori by the close of business on Friday, November 6, 2015. The committee will meet again during the week of November 9, 2015 to review and incorporate feedback prior to the creation of a written report for planned adoption on December 3, 2015. Trustees will receive a draft of this report for review and consideration by the end of November.

### **Executive Committee**

Mr. Wingate noted that the Executive Committee had met earlier in the day to consider a proposal to create an Early Head Start Governance Council and called on Ms. DeVenny to provide additional details.

Ms. DeVenny introduced Ms. Rebecca Brown, recently hired to oversee the agency's Early Head Start program. Ms. Brown provided a brief introduction and thanked the Board for their welcome.

Ms. DeVenny called the Board's attention to draft charter language designed to create an Early Head Start Governance Council as a support to the Board in its capacity as the grant's governing body. Dr. Wuori noted that the language of the charter has been previously approved by the Office of Head Start for use by other grantees. After discussion, **the Board unanimously approved the recommendation of the Executive Committee, contingent on approval by the Office of Head Start and with Ms. Diggs and Mr. Noble abstaining.**

### **Director's Report**

Ms. DeVenny called the Board's attention to her written Director's Report. She thanked DSS Director Susan Alford for the provision of a technology grant designed to support private First Steps 4K classrooms in the completion of the Teaching Strategies GOLD, the state's required early literacy assessment for 2015-2016. Grant funds have been used to provide iPads for use in collecting and entering required student data and to support classroom learning objectives.

Ms. DeVenny noted that the Board will hold its first-ever annual meeting on December 3, 2015, per the requirements of Act 287 of 2014. The meeting will be held at Brookland Baptist Church in West Columbia and will be preceded by a press event launching both the interagency school readiness description and the "I Can" public awareness campaign.

Ms. DeVenny noted that the December meeting will be her last after more than 16 years of service to First Steps, including four as a founding trustee and twelve as Executive Director. Effective December 16, 2015 she will assume the role of President of the J. Marion Sims Foundation in Lancaster, SC. She described the opportunity to work for First Steps as a privilege and expressed her intent to continue advocating for the agency and its work as a volunteer and citizen. The Board expressed their thanks for her longstanding service.

### **Chairman's Report**

Mr. Wingate called the Board's attention to the agency's written response to the First Steps Study Committee, including his testimony at the body's final meeting on October 26, 2015. He noted that the work of the House Legislative Oversight Committee is ongoing.

He thanked the Board members for their participation in the day's meeting, noting record participation since he assumed chairmanship. He asked trustees to continue providing feedback on what they desired to see covered during Board meetings and reminded them of the 2015 Chairmen's Early Childhood Summit to be held Tuesday, November 3, 2015 at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

**At 4:58 pm, upon a motion from Rep. Govan and a second by Superintendent Spearman, the Board voted unanimously to enter executive session to discuss a personnel matter.** The Board exited executive session at 5:53 pm.

No additional action was taken. There being no additional business, the Board adjourned.