

LANCASTER COUNTY



Getting children ready for school.



Child Care Training

*Countdown to Kindergarten*

Early Head Start – Child Care  
Partnership Program

*Early Identification & Referral*

Full Day 4-K

*Imagination Library*

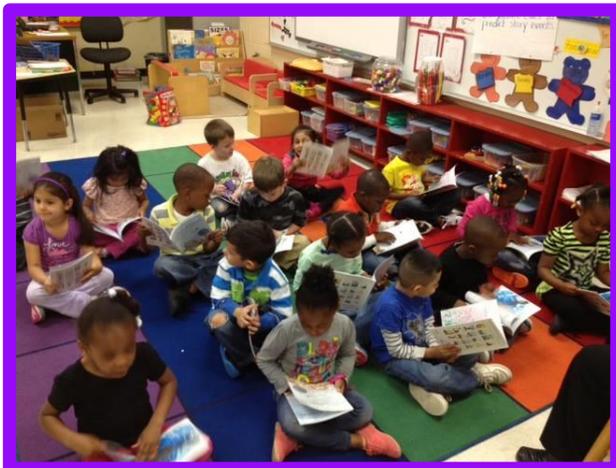
Incredible Years Parenting

*Step By Step Resource Center*

Weekend Backpack  
Feeding Program

# Annual Report

2014-2015



## OUR VISION:

Every Lancaster County child  
will enter kindergarten  
ready to succeed.

*First Steps WORKS for the children of Lancaster County.*



# Annual Report

## 2014-2015

### Who We Serve

First Steps serves children from birth to 5 years old and their families who are at risk of not being ready for school.

Number of Lancaster County children under 5:

**5,018**

Population of Lancaster County children living in poverty:

**29.2%**

Babies born each year Lancaster County to a mother without a high school diploma:

**17.5%**

### Our Programs

Child Care Training

Countdown to Kindergarten

EHS – CCP Program

Early Identification & Referral

Full Day 4-K

Imagination Library

Incredible Years Parenting

Step By Step Resource Center

Weekend Backpack Feeding Program

### Our Results

- ✓ Lancaster County leveraged \$1.76 for every state dollar received during FY15.
- ✓ Lancaster County First Steps received a \$6 million grant to implement the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Grant.
- ✓ Lancaster County First Steps uses resources wisely. In 2014-2015, there was only a 4.87 % administrative cost.

## Early Education Matters

**Brian Bass, Board Chair and Lora P. Bryson, Executive Director**

*“The first 5 years of life have so much to do with how the next 80 turn out.”*

*-Bill Gates*

From the day they are born, children are learning. Their early experiences are critical to their long-term development. Yet studies show that children living in poverty can be a full academic year behind their peers when they enter kindergarten – a gap that grows wider as school progresses.

**Excellent early education can change that, making the earliest and longest-lasting impact on a child’s life.**

In this report, you will see the many ways we provide excellent early education opportunities that offer a continuum of comprehensive programs, services and initiatives so that children and families thrive in Lancaster County. This year, we are especially proud to report that for every state dollar we have received we have **raised an additional \$1.76**. In April 2015, we received approximately **6 million dollars** to implement a federally-funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers. We have partnered with local child care centers to provide children ages 6 weeks to 3 years with a quality **Early Head Start** education designed to enhance the development in infants and toddlers. The Springs Close Foundation provided funds to serve 210 children with the Weekend Backpack Program at Clinton Elementary and provided partial funds to serve 100 Countdown to Kindergarten children across the county. Our local United Way provided the additional funds for this program. United Way also provided funds for us to continue serving children with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program which provides developmentally appropriate books each month.

Lancaster County First Steps serves as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services that may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. We act as a community convener serving the needs of preschool children and their families; a county-wide needs assessment is conducted every 3 years to assure that our goals are meeting the needs of the most at-risk families in Lancaster County.

*Lancaster County  
First Steps*

**Board Chair  
Brian Bass**

**Executive Director  
Lora P. Bryson**

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# What We Do

Each of the six color blocks of the First Steps logo represents a core area of service, outlining our comprehensive strategy to prepare children for long-term school success.

**With measurable outcomes across each of its six school readiness strategy areas, Lancaster County First Steps is getting results.**



### Healthy Start

We begin with a focus on providing a healthy start to life. This includes prenatal and post-partum services for both mother and baby. In 2007, First Steps collaborated with key philanthropic and agency partners to bring Nurse-Family Partnership to SC having a significant impact on reducing premature births and Medicaid costs.



### Quality Childcare

Quality childcare starts with quality childcare providers. Our quality enhancement and training strategies lead to improved teacher-student interaction, which research shows has a significant impact on a child’s development and success in school.



### Family Strengthening

Our home visitation strategies, such as Parents as Teachers, Parent-Child Home and Early Steps to School Success, are helping parents understand their responsibilities to care for and be positive models for their children. As a result of First Steps’ intervention and parenting support, 66% of clients initially assessed at “low” levels of parenting have achieved moderate or high levels of parenting skill.



### Early Education

Private-public partnerships through First Steps 4K have led to significant cost efficiencies in the delivery of publicly funded 4K. One recent analysis suggests First Steps is achieving comparable results, without the need for costly capital construction, for 80 cents on the dollar.



### Early Intervention

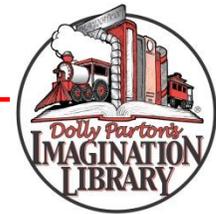
According to recent federal evaluations, outcomes for clients participating in BabyNet early intervention programs are above national averages. BabyNet matches the special needs of infants and toddlers who have disabilities and/or developmental delays with customized, community-based resources.



### School Transition

Each of the corresponding blocks of services leads ultimately to the goal of transitioning children successfully to school. Programs like Countdown to Kindergarten and From Day One to Grade One are ultimately preparing children for school success.

**Based on the needs of our community, Lancaster County First Steps focuses its investments in all six strategy areas to best serve at-risk children and their families. The initiatives operating in Lancaster County include: Countdown to Kindergarten, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, Early Identification and Referral, Full Day 4K, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, Child Care Training, Incredible Years Parenting, Step By Step Resource Center and Weekend Backpack Feeding Program.**



**Children's reading scores improve dramatically when parents are involved in helping them learn to read.**

## Program Description

According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, the peak period for children developing neural connections related to language is around **nine months of age**. **One of the easiest and most effective ways to build the language neural connections in a young child's brain is to read to them.** Lancaster County First Steps is the local sponsor of Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides free age-appropriate books to children from birth to 5 years. Operated by the Dollywood Foundation, Imagination Library is currently active in more than 1,600 local communities and mails books to about 750,000 children each and every month.

Children who register with Lancaster County First Steps receive one book per month by mail through the month of their fifth birthday. All books are quality, age-appropriate books carefully selected for each age group by a committee of educational specialists.

A major benefit of the Imagination Library program is that it requires very little overhead or administrative obligation. Since the Dollywood Foundation in Tennessee administers the operation of the program and book distribution, the cost to local communities is as low as \$30 per child per year.

**Here's great feedback from a parent!**

*My daughter and I appreciate the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program so much! She loves going to the mailbox each month to get her new book. The books are always age-appropriate for her, and we are building a library in our home that we will use for years to come. Our thanks to Lancaster County First Steps and Dolly Parton!*

## Imagination Library by the Numbers, 2014-2015

Children Served	572
Books Given to Children 0-5	6,867

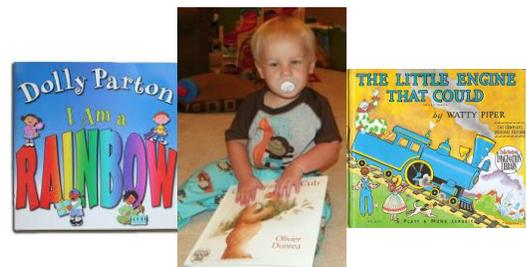
### This year, our Dolly Parton Imagination Library program:

- ✓ Reports 97% of participants are extremely satisfied with the program.
- ✓ Increased literacy materials provided in every home served by this program.
- ✓ Served 79% greatest at-risk children.



### *Thank you to our partners!*

The Dollywood Foundation  
 United Way of Lancaster County  
 Indian Land Rotary Club  
 Literacy Review Club  
 Individual Donors & Community Partners



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Bringing parents and teachers together as partners sets the foundation for success in school.

## Program Description

Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a First Steps program based on other successful school transition models from around the country. Its goals are:

- to increase the successful transition of South Carolina's most at-risk children into the K-12 school system
- to increase parent involvement in the early grades (particularly in hard-to-reach communities), when children's learning is foundational for life success
- to increase public awareness of the importance of school readiness and provide ways for parents and communities to impact children's early school success

### The Countdown to Kindergarten initiative integrates all of the following components:

**Home Visitation:** Teachers make six visits over the summer to the homes of participating students and families. Children and families are introduced to actual materials used in kindergarten and are given a Kindergarten Transition Toolkit to keep and use throughout the school year.

**Learning Celebration:** The last visit is a "field trip" to the school where the child will attend class in the fall.

**Public Awareness:** Throughout the summer, Lancaster County First Steps releases tips to the media to help parents and caregivers get children ready for kindergarten.

The Lancaster County School District places as many CTK children as possible in their home visitor's classroom for kindergarten, thereby building upon the teacher-child and parent-teacher relationships created during the summer.

### Here's a great quote from a client!

Countdown to Kindergarten helped my daughter to enjoy learning even more than she did. It taught me that Kindergarten's needed to know a lot more than I thought. We really looked forward to every session with Ms. Bowers this summer.

*-Tamika Mobley, Mother of Brooklyn Springs CTK Participant*

Lancaster County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our Countdown to Kindergarten families:

2.58	... risk factors per child (i.e., low maternal education, teen custodial parent, low birth weight, etc.)
86%	... live in poverty and/or receive free lunches
82%	... have never attended a full-time preschool outside of the home

### \*CTK by the Numbers, Summer 2014

Children Served	101
Families Served	100
Home/School Visits	602

\*CTK program data is for June-August 2014, whereas CTK fiscal data includes expenditures from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015.

### This year, our Countdown to Kindergarten program:

- ✓ Increased the amount of time parents spent reading to children by 53%.
- ✓ 73% of parents reported a significant, positive impact for their entire family.
- ✓ All eight (8) of the teachers that participated in the CTK program reported stronger relationships with the children and families that they served.
- ✓ 28 % of parents planned to be more involved in their child's school experience.

### Thank you to our partners!

The Springs Close Foundation  
United Way of Lancaster County  
Kaplan Early Learning Company

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# Child Care Training

**Those who care for young children need high-quality, accessible, and affordable professional development**

## Program Description

Efforts to improve the quality of child care must include providing affordable, high-quality training that meets the needs of the local child care workforce.

Training sponsored by Lancaster County First Steps is certified through the South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development and includes topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Best practices in training include not only the training, but also follow-up with supported practice in the classroom.

*Our partnership with Lancaster County First Steps has been on-going and valuable. We appreciate the quality trainings with knowledgeable instructors that have been offered to us and hope they continue!*

*Brenda Legg, Owner  
 A Step Above Child Development Center*

**Child Care Training Sponsored by  
 Lancaster County First Steps (2014-2015)**

**Some of the topics offered:**

- I Am An Individual (*Growth and Development*)
- Bloodborne Pathogens (*Health and Safety*)
- Parenting Partnerships and Hardships (*Program Administration*)
- Taking Anecdotal Notes (*Curriculum*)
- Building a Caring Classroom (*Child Guidance*)
- Brain Rules: Moral Baby (*Growth and Development*)
- The Power of Reflection (*Program Administration*)
- Playground Adventures (*Curriculum*)
- Communicating Effectively During Emergencies (*Program Admin*)
- The Forgotten Centers: Math & Music (*Curriculum*)



## Training by the Numbers, 2014-2015

Total Training Attendance	201
Child Care Teachers and Directors Served	63
Number of Training Sessions Offered	11

## This year, our Training program provided:

- ✓ 63 Child Care Teachers and Directors with high quality training.
- ✓ 22.0 hours of certified training for staff to meet annual re-certification requirements.
- ✓ 11 follow-up visits with training participants to help put training into practice.
- ✓ 99% reported an excellent partnership with Lancaster County First Steps.

## *Thank you to our partners!*

S.C. Center for Child Care Career Development  
 S.C. Child Care Resource and Referral  
 York County First Steps  
 Participating Child Care Centers

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# Early Education

**Children involved in high-quality preschool are more likely to have better academic outcomes.**

## Program Description

Lancaster County First Steps partnered with the Lancaster County School District and Erwin Elementary School to provide scholarships for 10 children in a high-quality model 4K classroom. All students were targeted for participation on the basis of compounded school readiness risk factors (Dial-4 screening score in the bottom 25%, free and reduced lunch status, mother’s education, etc.). The High Scope Curriculum is implemented and the program includes a pre-assessment and post-assessment.



## WHY IT WORKS

Well-designed preschool education programs produce long term improvements in school success, including:

- Higher achievement test scores
- Lower rates of grade repetition and special education, and higher educational attainment
- Reduced delinquency and crime in childhood and adulthood.

### Early Education by the Numbers, 2014-2015

Children Served	10
Providers Served	1

### This year, our Early Education program:

- ✓ Improved pre-reading skills by 81%.
- ✓ Increased children’s interest in reading. *For example, the children are now able to recognize letters and numbers. Children were engaged in learning tasks that directed their attention to the sounds in words through activities such as rhyming and alliteration games.*
- ✓ Improved gross motor skills. *For example, the children’s gross motor skills were developed through planned movement activities such as moving to music, running, jumping and hopping.*
- ✓ Ten (10) children received the Dolly Parton Imagination Library books each month.
- ✓ Home visits were implemented by the teachers.

***Thank you to our partners!***

Lancaster County School District  
 Erwin Elementary School

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# Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership Initiative

Learning begins at birth and an 'early head start' is essential for success later in life.

Parents learn and grow along with their children in the EHS-CCP Program.

## Program Description

Lancaster County First Steps Early Head Start-Child Care Program a federally-funded community-based program. Our organization has partnered with local child care centers to provide infants and toddlers from 6 weeks to 3 years of age with a quality Early Head Start (EHS) education designed to enhance the development in infants and very young children. To be eligible for this program, parents must be employed, enrolled in school, or enrolled in an employment training program.



## WHY IT WORKS

Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships provide and promote comprehensive early childhood development, support families and encourage growth in all members of the family. The program offers support in the following areas:

- Individualized Services
- Health and Dental Screenings
- Family Support
- Parent Involvement
- Services to Meet Special Needs
- Full Nutrition Program
- Community Resources



## This year, our Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership initiative:

- ✓ Received a \$6 million federally-funded EHS-CC Partnership Grant.
- ✓ Is partnering with nine (9) local child care centers to provide infants and toddlers ages 6 weeks to 3 years with a quality Early Head Start education designed to enhance the children's development.
- ✓ Hired an Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Director.
- ✓ Attended the Region IV Annual Meeting in Atlanta, GA.
- ✓ Created an EHS-CCP Policy Council.
- ✓ Trained the Lancaster County First Steps Board on the Governance of the Early Head Start Program.

*Thank you to our partners!*

Buford Child Development Center  
 Communication Station  
 A Brighter Future Child Development

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# Early Identification & Referral

Helping vulnerable first-time parents empowers them to achieve a better life for themselves and their children.

## Program Description

The Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) Program began in April 2014 and continues to operate successfully in Lancaster County. This initiative serves as a community liaison between Lancaster County First Steps, BabyNet, local families and various community resources. All parents are encouraged to utilize this service should their child display potential developmental delays.

Lancaster County First Steps manages the success of EI&R in four areas:

- **Public Awareness:** One of the integral factors to the program's success is through public awareness. By demystifying the concerns regarding financial and insurance barriers, the EIR program can serve more families seeking resources for their children.
- **Screenings:** The EIR Strategy uses two screening tools to identify potential developmental delays and determine the need for a follow up evaluation or referral to BabyNet: The Ages and Stages 3 (ASQ3) and The Ages and Stages Social Emotional (ASQ-SE). Once a child has been observed and screened, support services are identified if needed and referred to Lancaster County First Steps community resource partners or BabyNet.
- **Community Referral Partnerships:** Once a potential delay is identified with a child, it's imperative that proper follow-up care and referrals are established. For this reason, Lancaster County First Steps has a strong network of resource partners and collaborations within the community.
- **Follow-Up:** Many parents are overwhelmed with the news of possible developmental delay with their child. For this reason, the EI&R program offers continuous follow-up to families and encourages parents to be the first advocate for their children.



### EIR by the Numbers, 2014-2015

Children Served	56
Materials Distributed	1,877

### This year, our Early Identification and Referral initiative:

- ✓ Operated an Early Identification and Referral Program in Lancaster County.
- ✓ Chaired and coordinated the Lancaster County Early Identification and Referral Task Force.
- ✓ Increased public awareness in the importance of early identification and developmental delays.
- ✓ Matched the needs of 56 children with the appropriate resources.

### Thank you to our partners!

- BabyNet
- Lancaster County Child Care Centers
- Lancaster County School District
- Local Pediatricians
- The Children's Council
- Springs Memorial Hospital
- DSS, DHEC, Disabilities and Special Needs Board

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# Incredible Years Parenting & Step By Step Resource Center

**Responsive and nurturing parenting sets the stage for children's social, emotional and academic development.**

## Program Description

In an effort to support positive social and behavioral development in young children, Lancaster County First Steps implemented the Incredible Years Program at Southside Early Childhood Center. Incredible Years has been effective in reducing children's aggression and behavioral problems in early childhood classrooms and at home. The Incredible Years program provides 10 weeks of group training for parents, with an emphasis on positive parenting strategies that promote children's social skills.

The following has been proven through research:

- Increases in parent positive affect such as praise and reduced use of criticism and negative commands
- Increases parental use of effective limit-setting by replacing spanking and harsh discipline with non-violent discipline techniques and increased monitoring of children
- Reductions in parental depression and increases in parental self-confidence
- Increases in positive family communication and problem solving
- Reduced conduct problems in children's interactions with parents and increases in their positive affect and compliance to parental commands.

*Here's a great quote from a parent!*  
*The parenting classes were so helpful and opened my eyes to how to work with my children. The sessions taught me how to read to my children and how to create handmade crafts/activities with them. We obtained a library card and will continue to read and participate in various scheduled activities at the library. Thank you First Steps!*

## Incredible Years Parenting & Step By Step Resource Center by the Numbers, 2014-2015

Children Served	200
Families Served	133
Training Sessions Offered	8



**This year, our Incredible Years program had the following program results:**

- ✓ 80% parents reported an increase in effective limit setting vs. spanking and harsh discipline.
- ✓ 70% parents reported an increase in praising instead of criticism and negative commands.
- ✓ 89% parents reported increasing the number of hours spent interacting with their children.
- ✓ 200 at-risk children and 133 families were directly impacted by the Step By Step Resource Center and Incredible Years Parenting Sessions.

## *Thank you to our partners!*

**Southside Early Childhood Center  
 Lancaster County School District  
 Lancaster County Early Head Start  
 Community Investment Partners**

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# Weekend Backpack Feeding Program

Children are more equipped to learn when their nutritional needs are met.

## Program Description

Through our collaboration with Clinton Elementary School, it has become apparent to Lancaster County First Steps that many of the children that participate in the free and reduced lunch program have no way for their nutritional needs to be met on the weekends. In response to this need, the Weekend Backpack Feeding Program has been implemented at Clinton Elementary School.

Each week during the school year, Lancaster County First Steps will ensure that at-risk elementary students will receive a Weekend Backpack designed to supplement meals for children, who depend on school breakfasts and lunches, during the week. The Second Harvest Food Bank delivers packs of nutritious, child-friendly, nonperishable, easily consumed and vitamin fortified food packed in backpacks each Thursday. Several volunteers tag and distribute these backpacks to each classroom on Thursday afternoons.

On Friday, Clinton Elementary discreetly distributes these bags to children to carry home for the weekend. Lancaster County First Steps also includes newsletters, lists of helpful resources for parents, developmentally appropriate fact sheets, nutrition, health and fitness tips, fun and informational education materials with the backpacks each week. If interested in volunteering to assist with this program, please call the Lancaster County First Steps office at (803) 286-8000.



## Weekend Backpack Feeding Program by the Numbers, 2014-2015

Children Served	210
Total Backpacks Distributed	6,807



### This year, our Weekend Backpack Feeding Program:

- ✓ Delivered 6,807 total backpacks to children at Clinton Elementary School. Backpacks included non-perishable food items such as macaroni and cheese, canned goods, peanut butter, etc.
- ✓ On average 210 children were served each week.
- ✓ Seven (7) volunteers from the community assisted and made the program possible.
- ✓ Received funding from The Springs Close Foundation in conjunction with Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina.
- ✓ Served children in 4-K, Kindergarten, First Grade & Special Needs classrooms.

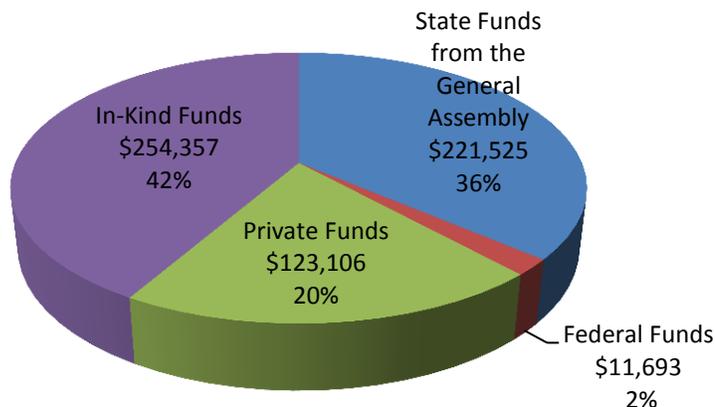
### Thank you to our partners!

The Springs Close Foundation  
 Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina  
 Clinton Elementary School  
 Community Volunteers

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# Financial Impact

## Lancaster County First Steps 2014-2015 Expenditures by Funding Source



**Total 2014-2015 Expenditures: \$610,681**

**State Funds Leveraged in 2014-2015\*: 175.7%**

*\*Percentage of state dollars matched by additional federal, private, and/or in-kind funds*

## 2014-2015 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Federal \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2014-15 Expenditures
Family Literacy / Parenting	\$43,732	\$0	\$26,629	\$4,250	<b>\$74,611</b>	<b>12%</b>
Imagination Library	\$0	\$0	\$15,151	\$77,913	<b>\$93,064</b>	<b>15%</b>
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$4,256	\$0	\$27,951	\$7,979	<b>\$40,186</b>	<b>7%</b>
Child Care Training	\$44,392	\$0	\$1,603	\$0	<b>\$45,995</b>	<b>8%</b>
Full Day 4-K	\$15,185	\$0	\$4,815	\$73,886	<b>\$93,886</b>	<b>15%</b>
EHS-Child Care Partnership Grant	\$6,167	\$11,693	\$0	\$0	<b>\$17,860</b>	<b>3%</b>
Backpack Feeding Program	\$5,333	\$0	\$40,770	\$4,000	<b>\$50,103</b>	<b>8%</b>
Early Identification & Referral	\$46,474	\$0	\$5,046	\$3,000	<b>\$54,520</b>	<b>9%</b>
Program Support	\$25,303	\$0	\$1,142	\$83,328	<b>\$109,773</b>	<b>18%</b>
Administrative Support	\$30,683	\$0	\$0	\$0	<b>\$30,683</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$221,525</b>	<b>\$11,693</b>	<b>\$123,106</b>	<b>\$254,357</b>	<b>\$610,681</b>	

*Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015*

**Since inception, Lancaster County First Steps has leveraged \$4,344,678 from sources outside of state government. That's \$1.07 for every state dollar!**

## COUNTING DOWN TO SUCCESS IN KINDERGARTEN *Countdown to Kindergarten*

Countdown to Kindergarten allows children and their parents/caregivers to become familiar with the learning standards for Kindergarten and to feel comfortable with their very own Kindergarten teacher and classroom. Lancaster County elementary school principals believe that it is vital to begin working with incoming students as soon as possible and welcome Countdown to Kindergarten in their schools year after year.

Casandra Gonzalez, mother of Kindergartener-to-be Riqui at North Elementary School, has nothing but praise for the Countdown to Kindergarten program and her son’s Kindergarten teacher. Here are her own words to describe the wonderful experience she and her son shared while participating in the program. ***“My son really enjoyed visiting with his teacher and her assistant every week. The program helped us to know what to expect this year and it really helped Riqui overcome some of his fears about starting school and leaving Mommy. I also liked that I got to meet them myself and the tips that I got every week.”***

Sherry Blankenship, 4-K Teacher at Brooklyn Springs Elementary School, had this to say about Countdown to Kindergarten: ***“It is great knowing that at least half of my class already knows me and the children and their families are comfortable with me. It makes the school year start off on a better note. We have already formed the foundation for a great relationship with the parent or caregivers.”***



### **Thank You to Our Partners!**

#### **Funding Support**

State of South Carolina: \$221,525  
*(through South Carolina First Steps)*

The Springs Close Foundation: \$21,296  
*(For Weekend Backpack Feeding Program)*

The Springs Close Foundation: \$22,800  
*(For Countdown to Kindergarten Summer 2015)*

United Way of Lancaster County: \$4,000  
*(For Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library)*

United Way of Lancaster County: \$8,500  
*(For Countdown to Kindergarten)*

#### **In-Kind Support for 2014-2015**

*Learn TV: \$83,328*

*Dollywood Foundation: \$77,913*

*Southside Early Childhood Center: \$73,886*

*Clinton Elementary: \$11,250*

*Kaplan Early Learning Company: \$7,979*



**Support Lancaster County First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or become a volunteer!**

## **PROVIDING FUEL FOR EDUCATION** *Weekend Backpack Feeding Program*

Clinton Elementary School has the most at-risk and neediest elementary students in Lancaster County. To that end, the Weekend Backpack Feeding Program has been in operation at the school since September 2012. According to Ms. Shirnetha Stinson, Assistant Principal, ***“The Weekend Backpack Program has had a wonderful impact of the students of Clinton Elementary School. Each Friday, students receive a backpack of items that ensures a healthy meal is provided in their homes over the course of the weekend. The students and parents of Clinton are very grateful as beneficiaries of such an awesome program. Parents and students look forward to receiving the backpack and many have called to show their appreciation.”***



## **GIVING INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN A STEP UP** *Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership*



Babies throughout Lancaster County are going to get a step up, even before they can walk.

Lancaster County First Steps was named the recipient of a \$6 million grant to establish an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership to ensure that children in Lancaster County, from infancy to age 3, receive a healthy and enriching start in life. Awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the funding marks an effort to expand the reach of Head Start programming by 25 percent nationwide. Lancaster County First Steps will continue to receive funding for this program through 2019.

In addition to this grant providing high-quality child care, the partnership would move families toward the important role of self-sufficiency. There will be intense work with the parents to best meet their needs, whether it is job training, medical care, nutrition education or other services.

Another component of the Early Head Start grant is professional development and coaching to improve caregivers' ability to provide early learning experiences that will promote the children's readiness to enter kindergarten.

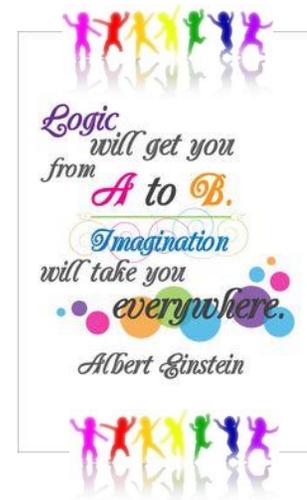
Professional training will involve nine (9) licensed child care centers, but will also be open to all child care centers operating in Lancaster County.

Comprehensive services will include mental health counseling if needed, medical exams and screening, nutrition education, early diagnosis of developmental delays or disabilities, adult education and job training, and efforts to support family stability.

## IMAGINING A BRIGHTER TOMORROW FOR OUR CHILDREN

The Lancaster County First Steps Partnership Board Members are innovative individuals who join together to form a creative and imaginative entity. The Board is made up of gifted local leaders who are strong advocates for the most at-risk children in Lancaster County. This diverse body has served unselfishly, empowered staff members, engaged with local business leaders and policy makers in the Lancaster community, and managed resources purposefully to provide for the needs of young children. Each Board Member serves with dedication to make a compelling case for investing in early childhood education and helping our children imagine and achieve a better tomorrow.

***First Steps makes a difference in the lives of children in Lancaster County!!!***



## Lancaster County First Steps Partnership Board, 2014-2015

Name	Position	Board Category
Brian Bass ( <i>Board Chair</i> )	Founders Federal Credit Union	Parent of Pre-School Children
Dr. Paul N. McKenzie ( <i>Vice Chair</i> )	Lancaster County School District ( <i>Office of R &amp; D</i> )	Family Ed, Training & Support Provider
Diane Harrell ( <i>Board Secretary</i> )	Nurse Practitioner ( <i>CVS Minute Clinic</i> )	Healthcare Provider
Denise Pettit ( <i>Board Treasurer</i> )	Keller Williams Realty	Transportation Provider
Fred Witherspoon ( <i>Past Chair</i> )	Steele Hill AME Zion Church	Non-Profit Organization
Charlene McGriff	Palmetto Citizens Against Sexual Assault ( <i>PCASA</i> )	Non-Profit Organization
Dean Casey	Springdell Baptist Church	Faith Community
Jan Blackwell	DHEC Region Immunization Coordinator	Healthcare Provider
Janet Ellis	Lancaster County DHEC	DHEC Representative
Jeffrey Chandler	Chandler's Collision Center	Business Community
Jennifer Hammond	Comporium Communications	Business Community
Kathryn Plyler	Key Benefit Administrators	Business Community
Kerri Baker	Lynches River Electric Cooperative	Parent of Pre-School Child
LaVilla Brevard	Lancaster County School District ( <i>Southside Early Childhood</i> )	School District / Head Start Representative
Lisa Willis	Retired Elementary Teacher	Early Childhood Education
Lori Snipes	Tender Hearts Academy ( <i>Owner</i> )	Child Care & Early Ed Provider
Narcizo Gonzalez Alvarez	Lancaster County DSS	DSS Representative
Nicole Trull	Comporium Communications	Business Community
Reo King	Retired Kindergarten Teacher	Early Childhood Education
Sandra Meadows Jowers	Lancaster County School District ( <i>Clinton Elementary School</i> )	Pre-Kindergarten thru Primary Educator

# Getting children ready for school.

## What is First Steps?

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness was created in 1999 by the South Carolina General Assembly for the purpose of **having every child in South Carolina arrive at kindergarten ready to learn**. Sadly, many South Carolina children possess one or more risk factors that put them at **high risk** (greater than a 1 in 3 chance) for **“early school failure”** – either being retained or scoring below grade level in reading or math – by third grade.

First Steps works to accomplish its mission through a state coordinating office and a network of county partnerships (46), each a private non-profit organization led by a board of early childhood stakeholders. With a modest recurring appropriation of state funding, First Steps leverages cash and in-kind resources at the federal, state and local level to improve services for young children in five strategy areas:

### **Family Strengthening**

A parent is a child’s first and best teacher.

### **Healthy Start**

Children’s development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health.

### **Quality Child Care**

Access to high-quality child care is a critical component of a child’s healthy development.

### **Early Education**

Quality preschool opportunities set the stage for success in school.

### **Early Intervention**

Addressing disabilities and developmental delays early for positive outcomes.

### **School Transition**

Preparing children and parents for a successful transition into kindergarten.

Each First Steps county partnership determines how to spend its funds based on a needs and resources assessment and collaboration with community partners to fill gaps in local services for young children and their families. First Steps has proven its impact through strong program and fiscal accountability and independent evaluations - a requirement of its enabling legislation.

All programs that receive First Steps funding must adhere to standards that require programs to be research-based and operated with fidelity; staff who have appropriate qualifications, training, and supervision; services to be comprehensive and coordinated with available community resources; standard assessment instruments that document client outcomes; and programs that target services to children most at-risk for not being developmentally ready for school.



## BabyNet

South Carolina’s Early Intervention System

First Steps is the lead agency for BabyNet, South Carolina’s early intervention system for children under 3. Parents of children 0-2 years old with disabilities or suspected developmental delays should contact their local BabyNet office to schedule an evaluation.

BabyNet in Lancaster County:  
(803) 222-5360

<http://scfirststeps.org/babynet/>

## The Goals of First Steps

- (1) **Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want** to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
- (2) **Increase comprehensive services** so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
- (3) **Promote high-quality preschool programs** that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
- (4) **Provide services** so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
- (5) **Mobilize communities** to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.

-- Section 59-152-30

*Lancaster County  
First Steps*

**Board Chair**  
**Brian Bass**

**Executive Director**  
**Lora P. Bryson**

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