



**Parents as Teachers**

**Countdown to Kindergarten**

**Child Care Quality  
Enhancement**

**Child Care Training**

**Child Care Scholarships**

**Family Literacy**

# Annual Report

2014-15



## OUR VISION:

**Every South Carolina child  
will arrive at kindergarten  
ready to succeed.**

**First Steps WORKS for the children of LAURENS COUNTY.**

### Who We Serve

First Steps serves South Carolina's young children and their families, with the goal of ensuring each is prepared for school success.

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

Number of Laurens County children under 5:  
**4,065**

Number of Laurens County children living in poverty:  
**5,145**

Babies born each year in Laurens County to a mother with less than a high school diploma:  
**22.8%**

### Our Programs

Parents as Teachers

Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK)

Child Care Quality Enhancement

Child Care Training

Child Care Scholarships (CCS)

Family Literacy

### Our Results

- Served 22 families with 435 visits in PAT
- Served 22 children with CC Scholarships
- Provided 28.5 hours of training for 142 child care providers
- Provided 175 home visits to 30 CTK children

### CHANGES: THEY HAPPEN

Sometimes change is desired; sometimes change is required. It can be a means to move forward and improve programs. It can be a means to eliminate strategies that are not working to the full potential.

In FY15, Laurens County First Steps experienced some major changes. At the end of June 2014, we found out that one of our experienced Parent Educators had made the decision to return to teaching in the public schools. This was a great loss for LCFS, but a great addition for the school district. Her record of hard work and dedication to the families of Laurens County through our PAT program was exemplary. We were not able to replace her, but the dedication of our two remaining PE's (Parent Educators) enables our PAT (Parents as Teachers) program to continue uninterrupted.

In September 2014, the decision was made by our partner, LCSD 55, to end the Family Literacy program at the LCFS site, and move their resources to their Adult Ed program at another site. Attendance at our site had diminished greatly.

In October 2014, our director for Quality Enhancement and Child Care Provider Training suddenly retired, so we had to suspend the QE program and I had to take over the Child Care Provider Training program.

These changes occurred swiftly and rather suddenly, but thanks to the remaining LCFS staff, a supportive local Board of Directors, a supportive state office staff, and our continued partnership and collaboration with LCSD 55, we have been able to move forward and make improvements. These changes have not altered our mission to serve the most at risk families of Laurens County; these changes have strengthened our resolve to serve.

*Rosemary C. Patterson, Executive Director*



BJ will age out with us at the end of FY15. He has been with us since birth!

**Board Chair**  
Linda Wessel

**Executive Director**  
Rosemary Patterson

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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**, 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, Laurens County First Steps focuses its investments in Quality Childcare, Family Strengthening, and School Transition.**

**Parents play a critical role in their child's development.**

## Program Description

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an evidence-based home visiting program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed. PAT services include:

1. **Personal Visits** at least twice monthly
2. **Monthly Group Connections** with other PAT families
3. **Screenings and Assessments** to identify developmental concerns
4. **Connections to Outside Resources** that families may need to succeed

**Laurens County First Steps serves families in greatest need. We provide PAT for all of our CC Scholarship families. Among our PAT families:**

**100%** ... live in poverty & have 2 or more risk factors  
**55%** ... didn't graduate from high school  
**70%** ... were teen parents



This little one is building a bright future with her family through PAT!

*"Our parent educator has become someone we can turn to for help with so many things. The books and things she gives us is something we probably wouldn't get any other way."*

*Alexis*

## PAT by the Numbers 2014-15

Families Served	22	
Children Served	22	
Total Home Visits	435	
Hours Spent Serving Families	476.99	
Average gain, Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (pre-to-post):	3.49	4.06

## This year, our Parents as Teachers program:

- ✓ Averaged 2.53 home visits per family
- ✓ Identified and addressed 4 potential developmental delays ; connecting two families with BabyNet services
- ✓ Expanded our services for pre-natal and teen mothers
- ✓ Distributed 673 books through home visits and group meetings

## Thank you to our partners!

Laurens County School Districts 55 & 56  
Tender Loving Childcare  
Big Blue Marble Academy  
Stepping Stones Learning Academy

## Laurens County First Steps

1029 West Main Street

Laurens, SC 29360

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**Parents are their child's first and best teachers.**

## Program Description

Family literacy programs offer an integrated and family-friendly approach, helping both parents and children to improve their literacy skills. Family literacy services integrate all of the following:

1. Adult Education
2. Child Education
3. Parent Education
4. Interactive Parent/Child Activities

Our family literacy program:

- Helps parents of young children increase their education levels
- Teaches parents how to support their child's literacy and overall development
- Provides quality early learning experiences for children 0-5 while their parents attend adult education

Laurens County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our family literacy program families:

100% ... live in poverty

100% ... didn't graduate high school

0% ... enrolled in our program with less than an eighth grade education



## Family Literacy by the Numbers 2014-15

Adults Served	6
Children Served	7
Adult Education Hours Offered	100
Early Childhood Education Hours Offered	24
Parenting Education Hours Offered	24
Number of adults that achieved their HS diploma or GED	0

**This year, our Family Literacy program:**

**Our Family Literacy Program was closed as of September 30, 2014.**

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

Laurens County School District 55

**Laurens County First Steps**

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# Child Care Quality Enhancement

In order to thrive, children need nurturing, responsive relationships and a supportive learning environment, both within and outside the home.

## Program Description

The quality of care they received by young children is crucial to their healthy development and school readiness. Child care providers strive to provide high quality care, but may lack the resources that are commonly available to publicly-funded early childhood programs, such as educational materials, on-site professional development, and other support.

**First Steps' Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) is intended to produce measurable improvements in the quality of care provided to young children.** Participating child care providers must serve a high percentage of at-risk children, and are selected through a competitive process that requires a strong level of commitment to the QE process.

### Program Components

1. On-site Technical Assistance (TA) at least twice monthly
2. Equipment and materials funding
3. Integration with locally available training, provided by First Steps and other partners
4. Workforce Development
5. Coordination with community partners
6. Pre/post assessments of the classroom environment and teacher-child interaction, using nationally-recognized observational tools for infant/toddler and preschool settings (ITERS, ECERS, FCCERS)

## QE by the Numbers, 2014-15

Child Care Providers Served	4
Number of TA Visits Provided	28
Number of Children 0-5 Enrolled in Provider Classrooms	353

### Congratulations to our QE participants for 2014-15!

Child Care Provider	Pre/Post Improvement
Big Blue Marble, toddler/ones	N/A
Stepping Stones, three's	N/A
Tender Loving Childcare, two's	N/A
YMCA @ First Baptist, toddler/ones	N/A

**This year, our Quality Enhancement program:**

**Our QE program was suspended October 31, 2014. All TA activities and ERS assessments were not completed.**

## Thank you to our partners!

Big Blue Marble Academy  
Stepping Stones Learning Academy  
Tender Loving Childcare  
Laurens Family YMCA

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# Child Care Training

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

## Program Description

High-quality child care hinges on high-quality professional development that meets the needs of the local child care workforce.

First Steps-sponsored training is certified through the SC 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 itself, but follow-up in the classroom.

*One of the best sessions I have attended. I can actually use this information in my classroom!*

*Jennifer D.*

### Child Care Training Sponsored by Laurens County First Steps, 2014-15

<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Sessions:</u>
Health & Safety	4 sessions-8.5 hrs
Special Needs	1 session-2 hrs
Curriculum	3 sessions-6 hrs
Growth & Development	2 sessions- 5 hrs
Child Guidance	1 session- 2 hrs
Program Administration	1 session-5 hrs



We sponsored a training session about "Conscious Discipline" with Jessica Flowers. It was our largest training event ever with 100 participants!

## Training by the Numbers, 2014-15

Total Training Attendance	318
Child Care Teachers and Directors Served	142
Number of Training Sessions Offered	12

## This year, our Training program provided:

- ✓ 142 early childhood staff with high quality training
- ✓ 21 hours of certified training and 7.5 hours of registered training for staff to meet annual re-certification requirements

## Thank you to our partners who participated in our training!

The United Way of Laurens County (Funding)

### Participants:

Big Blue Marble Academy	Thornwell
Stepping Stones Learning Academy	MS Bailey CDC
Tender Loving Childcare	New Prospect Baptist Church CDC
Young World	
Laurens Family YMCA	Carrot Stew CDC

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# Child Care Scholarships

Too many families in Laurens County cannot afford quality care for their children.

## Program Description

Access to quality child care is essential for children while away from their primary caregivers. Yet, of those families income-eligible for child care assistance in South Carolina, only a small fraction receive it due to lack of funds. In the absence of nurturing and consistently available family, friends or neighbors, parents are faced with few - or no - affordable care options.

Laurens County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our scholarship families:

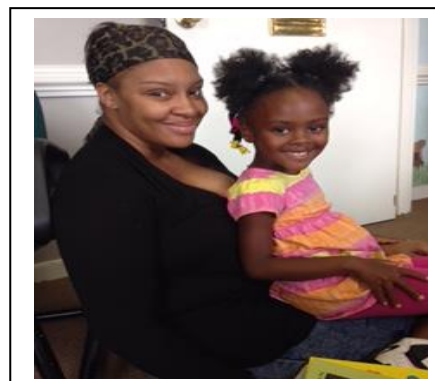
- 100%** ... live in poverty & have 2 or more risk factors
- 55 %** ... didn't graduate from high school
- 70%** ... were teen parents
- 1 child** ... had developmental delays

In addition to regular monitoring of child care providers that receive First Steps scholarships, First Steps conducts at least one developmental screening each year with scholarship children and connects families to needed services within the community.

**ALL LCFS scholarship families are required to participate in our Parents As Teachers program.**

*I would not have been able to finish high school without this scholarship. My mother had to work and there was no one else to keep my child.*

*Lori*



De'Ziah and her mom have been with us since birth!

## Scholarships by the Numbers, 2014-15

Children Served	18
Providers Served	3

## This year, our Scholarship program:

- ✓ Provided 18 children with scholarship assistance so their parents could work or attend school
- ✓ Identified and addressed 4 potential developmental delays among scholarship children
- ✓ Made 2 connections for families to services such as BabyNet
- ✓ Supported 3 small businesses in Laurens County by subsidizing child care tuition for families who would not otherwise be able to afford quality care
- ✓ Provided 25 hours of training for scholarship parents in topics such as "What is Quality child Care?"

## Thank you to our partners!

Big Blue Marble Academy  
Stepping Stones Learning Academy  
Tender Loving Childcare

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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 summer home visitation model connecting rising kindergartners and their families with their future teachers. The program is designed:

- ✓ to forge strong and lasting home-school relationships,
- ✓ to acquaint children and families with the state and classroom expectations to increase the likelihood of school success,
- ✓ to increase parent involvement in the early grades (particularly in hard-to-reach communities), when children's learning is foundational for life success; and
- ✓ to increase public awareness of the importance of school readiness and provide ways for parents and communities to impact children's early school success.

Countdown to Kindergarten integrates all of the following:

**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.

**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, First Steps releases tips to media to help parents and caregivers get children ready for kindergarten.

## \*CTK by the Numbers, Summer 2014

Children Served	30
Families Served	28
Home/School Visits	175

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



Katrina's grandmother says "Thank goodness for Mr. Jeremy this summer-he helped us so much to get ready for school!"

## This year, our Countdown to Kindergarten program:

- ✓ 65% of CTK parents will increase the number of times they read to their child each week
- ✓ 100% of CTK families had 2+ risk factors
- ✓ 50 % of CTK children had a documented developmental delay
- ✓ 36% of CTK children had an older sibling retained in or before 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- ✓ 39% of CTK children were recommended for service because of social/emotional behavioral difficulties
- ✓ 7% had never attended any pre-school program

## Thank you to our partners!

Laurens County School Districts 55 & 56  
The United Way of Laurens County  
GLEAMNS Head Start  
Stepping Stones Learning Academy  
Big Blue Marble Academy  
Tender Loving Child Care  
Young World

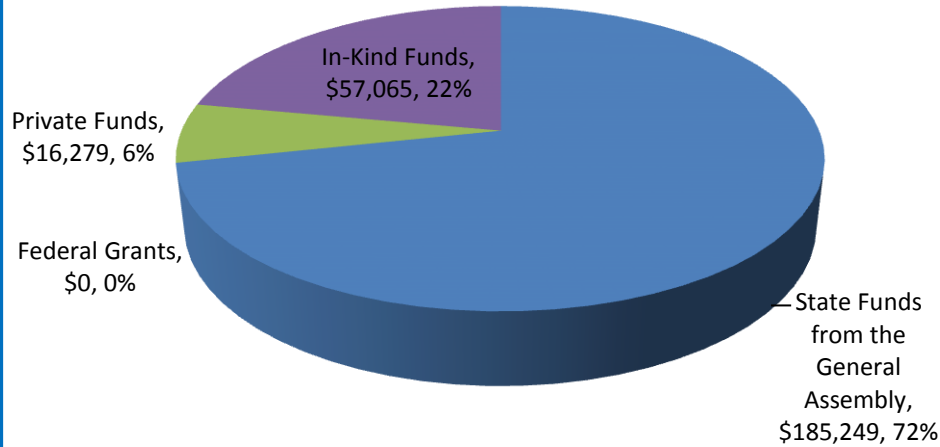
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## Laurens County First Steps 2014-15 Expenditures by Funding Source



**Total 2014-15 Expenditures: \$258,594**

**State Funds Leveraged in 2014-15\*: 40%**

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

## 2014-15 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Federal \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2014-15 Expenditures
Parents as Teachers	\$51,881		\$847	\$34,360	\$87,088	34%
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$3,133	\$0	\$6,968	\$1,232	\$11,333	4%
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$7,285	\$0	\$0	\$250	\$7,535	3%
Child Care Training	\$13,651	\$0	\$3,493	\$8,261	\$25,405	10%
Child Care Scholarships	\$71,777	\$0	\$2,975	\$0	\$74,752	29%
Family Literacy	\$1,705		\$1,372	\$10,316	\$13,393	5%
Program Support	\$20,958	\$0	\$0	\$1,985	\$22,943	9%
Administrative Support	\$14,859	\$0	\$624	\$662	\$16,145	6%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$185,249</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$16,279</b>	<b>\$57,066</b>	<b>\$258,594</b>	

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

Since inception Laurens County First Steps has leveraged \$2,318,518 from sources outside of state government. That's 52 cents for every state dollar.

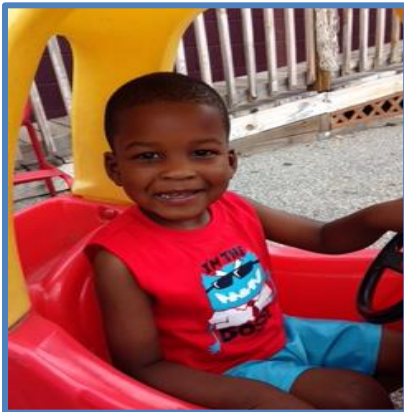
## Child Care Providers Learn about Conscious Discipline

In the summer of 2014, the state First Steps office hosted the first Summer Academy for private FS 4K providers and 4K teachers. One of the most popular sessions during the week was the session on “Conscious Discipline” presented by Master Trainer, Jessica Flowers of The Ripple Effect. When planning for our FY15 Child Care Training calendar, we decided to do a follow-up session about “Conscious Discipline” that would be open to all child care provider staff.

We were able to make arrangements for Jessica to come to Laurens in January 2015 to conduct a session. We secured a venue that could accommodate a large audience and planned for a 5 hour presentation with many handouts, a catered lunch, and door prizes.

On January 16, 2015, we hosted 100 participants at Chestnut Ridge Baptist Church in Laurens. It was our largest Child Care Provider training session since our inception. We had participants from 8 Laurens County child care centers, 1 public school district, our state office, our local First Steps office staff, and a private child therapist from out of county.

There was a large group that remained after the session ended to talk with Jessica and ask questions. We actually had to ask them to leave when the crew came in to clean up. We are also planning another session with Jessica in FY16.



Titan is one scholarship student that will benefit from his teacher’s knowledge of “Conscious Discipline”.



Jessica F. leads the group in an activity at “Conscious Discipline” training in January 2015.

## Thank you to our partners!

### Funding Support

State of South Carolina: \$185,249  
(through South Carolina First Steps)

The United Way of Laurens County: \$5,800

Dollar General Literacy Foundation: \$8,000

### In-Kind Support

Laurens County School Districts 55 & 56

Laurens Family YMCA

## Parents As Teachers (PAT) Makes an Impact with Pre-natal & Teen Moms

Laurens county First Steps has been able to expand our scholarship and parenting program with teenage mothers at our local high schools. After our first scholarship for a teen mom in FY14 we have added 6 more scholarships for teen aged mothers. Two of these mothers graduated in June 2014. One mother graduated in June 2015. They are working and/or going to school, so they will remain on scholarship. We have 3 mothers still in high school. Our goal is to see them earn a high school diploma within the next 2 years.

Parent group meetings are provided once per month for the scholarship parents and also 10 other pre-natal teens at the high schools. All of the scholarship families are enrolled in our Parents As Teachers program and meet with a Parent Educator twice each month. Our clients are connected to resources such as the Goodwill job resources network. The Parent Educators work closely with the coordinator of at risk programs to identify students who may need parenting services. Our purpose is to help these young women finish high school and pursue further education or gain skills to join the work force.



Gio's mom is able to stay in school because of the LCFS Scholarship.



Andrew's mom graduated from high school with the help of a CC Scholarship.

# First Steps Partnership Board

## Supportive Board

In FY15 the Board was very supportive of staff, program, and board changes that needed to be made. They were helpful in suggesting replacements that were prepared to fill those vacant positions. They are looking forward to filling new positions in accordance with the revised by-laws.

The Board is very involved in participating in fundraising efforts. The Belk Charity Day Ticket Sales is offered twice each year (spring and fall) and the majority of the Board finds this an easy fundraiser to participate in. Our goal is for 100% of Board Members to participate. Money from all tickets sold is kept by Laurens County First Steps. We also receive a portion of the proceeds for the day of the sale.

A committee is also working on putting together a Laurens County First Steps Cookbook which should be ready for sale before Christmas.

## Laurens County First Steps Partnership Board, 2014-15

Name	Position	Board Category
Frances Kennedy	Retired Teacher	Pre-K Primary Education
Elizabeth Franklin	Director Children's Ministries & 4K First Baptist Laurens	Pre-K Education
Connie Parker, Secretary	USC Union; Laurens Campus Community Outreach	Family Education
Kim Shiflet	Director Big Blue Marble Academy	CC Provider & EC Education
Shirley Clark	LCSD 55	Transportation
Shawn Brown	Guardian Ad Litem	Non-Profit
Michelle Penland	Director Children's Ministries Chestnut Ridge Baptist	Faith
Nadine Groves	Special Needs Teacher LCSD 55	EC Education
Kena Cox	Primary Montessori Teacher LCSD 55	EC Education
Jennifer Abercrombie	Assist. Principal, EB Morse Elem LCSD 55	EC Education
Patti Owings	Lead Nurse LCSD 55	Healthcare
Karen Green	DHEC	Appointee by DHEC
Laura Houck	Lawyer DSS	Appointee by DSS
Gwen Moore	Case Worker	Appointee by GLEAMNS Head Start
Ann Szypulski	Director of Laurens County Public Library System	Appointee by LCPL
Linda Wessel, Board Chair	Technology/EC Coord. LCSD 55	Appointee by LCSD 55
Melodie Edwards	Director for Curriculum & Instruction LCSD 56	Appointee by LCSD 56
Michelle Ellis	Nurse; Hospice Simpsonville	Appointee by Laurens County Delegation

# Getting children ready for school.

## The Goals of First Steps

- (1) To 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) To increase comprehensive services** so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
- (3) To promote high quality preschool programs** that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
- (4) to 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) To 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



Interested parents can contact any participating 4K providers to complete an application. To view a list of participating First Steps 4K providers, visit:

<http://scfirststeps.org/4k>



**BabyNet**  
South Carolina's Early Intervention System

BabyNet in Laurens County:  
864-225-6465

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