

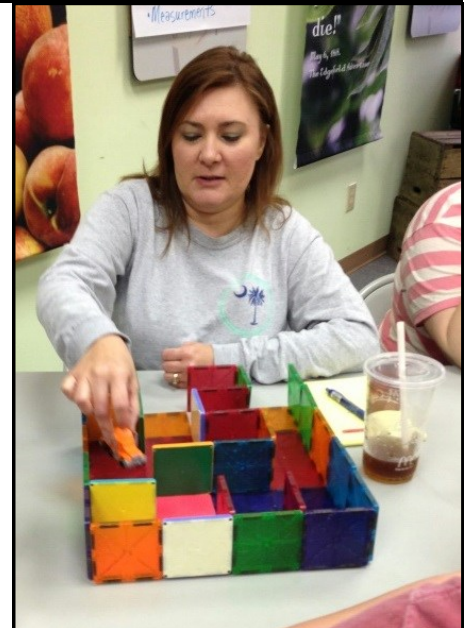
South Carolina First Steps e-Spotlight

May 27, 2016



Edgefield and Saluda County First Steps: A Collaborative Approach to Child Care Training and Coaching

Research shows that high-quality child care can boost children's learning and social skills when they enter school. For children to be in the best possible early learning environments, it is imperative that child care staff be provided with opportunities for continuing education and training. First Steps (FS)-sponsored child care training exists to ensure that these opportunities are available to child care center directors and teachers who serve children in most need. All FS-sponsored training is certified through the SC Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD) and includes topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration.



A training attendee participates in an activity as part of the "Active Learning Series" training delivered by ECFS and SCFS.



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Over the past six years, Edgefield and Saluda County First Steps have collaborated in developing and implementing an innovative child care training and coaching model for teachers, directors, and staff in their counties. The partnership began when the two counties were awarded a three year grant in 2010 from Zero to Three for, "Promoting Responsive Relationships." Given the success of their partnership through the grant, Saluda and Edgefield County First Steps decided to continue with their collaborative child care training model when the grant ended.

Delivered to four centers, two in Saluda County and two in Edgefield County, their child care training not only includes the required elements, but is tailored to the assessed and self-identified needs of the center staff. Each summer since they began their work together on child care training, Candi Lalonde, Executive Director of Edgefield County First Steps (ECFS), and Deborah Padgett, Executive Director of Saluda County First Steps (SCFS), plan their training for the year based on surveys completed by child care staff and directors and by what they have observed in centers the previous year.

In 2015-2016, their training focused on the "Active Learning Series" and showed teachers and directors how to incorporate "active" learning into the curriculum by a combination of information and activities that help children develop their minds and bodies. Ms. Padgett is a Certified Master Trainer and Ms. Lalonde is a Certified Trainer and, together, they deliver the child care training during three Saturday sessions, each lasting approximately five and a half hours. The SC Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R) and the SC Department of Social Service (DSS) have also been partners in the work, helping to deliver training and technical assistance to the participants. Typically about 35-40 staff from the four participating centers attend. With space permitting, the trainings are also opened, without cost to child care staff in surrounding counties, including Early Head Start and Head Start centers.

Best practices in child care training include not only the training itself, but purposeful follow-up in the centers. Ms. Lalonde and Ms. Padgett ensure that this follow-up is done in the form of reflective coaching, a coaching model that

(This e-Spotlight on ECFS and SCFS is continued on the next page.)

"I love that we have quality training right here in Edgefield. We also get many opportunities for hands-on training that we can take right back to the classroom."

- Carolyn Ramsey, 4K Teacher, Little Folks Day Care

requires the coach to be non-judgmental, to encourage reflective thinking, and to guide participants to self-directed learning. After each training session, informal and formal coaching sessions are completed to ensure that teachers and directors are implementing what they've learned. In addition, training attendees are assigned homework to check up on how that they are utilizing the strategies gained from the training. For example, at a recent training, participants were given materials designed to stimulate children's physical activity in the classroom. For their homework, over the next 30 days the teachers had to document how children were using the materials.

ECFS and SCFS' joint training model allows child care center staff from each county to come together to share ideas, best practices, and lessons-learned with their professional peers. With both Ms. Lalonde and Ms. Padgett creating and facilitating trainings, attendees are able to experience two different approaches to training and ways of presenting information. Not only do the trainings fulfill the requirements for CCCCD and DSS credit, they also thoughtfully incorporate the specified needs and goals of the attendees. With purposeful follow-up after each training session, attendees are supported as they work to improve their practice in order to provide the best possible learning environment for children.

For more information on Edgefield and Saluda County First Steps Child Care Training and Coaching, please contact Candi Lalonde, Executive Director of ECFS at 803-275-0800, or Deb Padgett, Executive Director of SCFS at 864-993-0610.