

South Carolina First Steps e-Spotlight

June 17, 2016



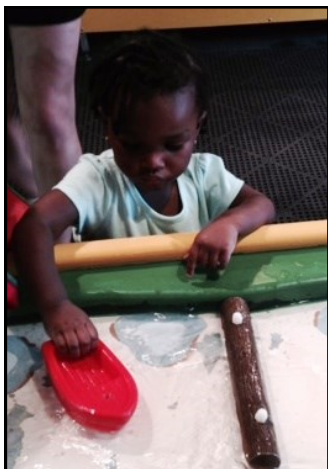
Charleston County First Steps' Parents as Teachers Program Prepares Children for School Success

Dillian is a very happy and easy-going three year old from Charleston County who loves music and dancing. However, at two and a half years old, he was not communicating like other children his age. He relied heavily on pointing and making sounds instead of using vocabulary words. Through Charleston County First Steps' (CCFS) Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, Dillian's mother expressed her concerns to Crystal Davis, Program Director of CCFS PAT and the parent educator for Dillian's family. Shortly after, Crystal offered her support by completing the necessary assessments for Dillian and connecting him to the appropriate early intervention services.

Fast forward a year, Dillian attends school 5 days a week with his peers and is receiving speech services once a week. He has made excellent progress and gets less frustrated when trying to communicate with his mother. Dillian is currently learning sign language and practices during his PAT home visits every chance that he gets. "I can see the excitement on his face as well as mom's every time they share a new accomplishment," says Crystal. "It's an incredible thing to witness." Through early childhood parent education, intervention services, and family support offered by the CCFS PAT program, Dillian will enter school ready to learn.



A father and child who participate in CCFS' PAT program.



A CCFS PAT client child at the program's "End of the Year Celebration."

Parents as Teachers is a national, evidence-based home visitation model designed to ensure young children like Dillian are healthy, safe, and prepared to enter school. Services are delivered by model-certified parent educators who emphasize parent-child interaction, development-centered parenting and family well-being. Charleston County First Steps' PAT program has an established and well-known presence throughout the local area. As a result of CCFS' strong community ties, the PAT program receives referrals from partner community agencies and actively recruits families to participate at child care centers, elementary schools, Head Start and Early Head Start, libraries, and various other organizations. In 2015-16, CCFS PAT served 112 children from 88 families, exceeding their program goals for the year.

All CCFS' parent educators are required to attend intensive training before serving families, and during the year they attend monthly parent educator meetings, monthly staff meetings, receive two hours of reflective supervision per month, and regularly complete self-assessments to gauge progress. The CCFS PAT program consists of parent educators

and Early Head Start (EHS) home visitors, who are also parent educators and partnered with Charleston County School District's EHS program. This program year, CCFS' six parent educators completed a total of 1448 home visits and averaged 2.64 visits per family per month, surpassing the program requirement of two visits. The CCFS PAT program is also making sure to serve children and families who are most in need, with 100% of families served identified as living in poverty and 100% of children served possessing two or more high-needs characteristics.

"I can see the excitement on his face as well as mom's every time they share a new accomplishment."

- Crystal Davis, CCFS Parent Educator, speaking about her PAT client, Dillian, and his mother

CCFS has achieved national recognition for their program quality. Recently, the national PAT office developed the Quality Endorsement and Improvement Process to help ensure that PAT affiliates throughout the country are achieving fidelity to the PAT model and facilitating continuous quality improvements. To earn the Quality Endorsement, affiliates must complete a comprehensive self-study and review process that demonstrates they are meeting or

(The e-Spotlight on CCFS is continued on the next page)

exceeding the national PAT Essential Requirements. In 2015, Charleston County First Steps became one of only three affiliates in South Carolina (along with Beaufort County First Steps and the Beaufort County School District) to earn the Quality Endorsement, and, as a result, has been recognized by the national office as an exemplary **Blue Ribbon Affiliate**.

At the conclusion of program year, PAT families and parent educators participate in an “End of the Year Celebration”. For this year’s festivities, CCFS partnered with Children’s Museum of the Lowcountry and families came to explore the library, have a picnic lunch, and join in fun activities with other PAT families. With a successful program year behind them, CCFS certainly has a lot to celebrate, and they look forward to continuing to equip Charleston county parents with knowledge and resources to prepare their children for a stronger start in life and greater success in school.



CCFS PAT client children at the program's "End of the Year Celebration."

For more information on Charleston County First Steps' PAT program, please contact Program Director, Crystal Davis, at cdavis@charlestonfirststeps.org or CCFS Executive Director, James Ella Collins, at jecollins@charlestonfirststeps.org