

**Early Steps to School  
Success**

**Imagination Library**

**Countdown to Kindergarten**

**Child Care Training**

# **Annual Report**

**2015-16**



**OUR VISION:**

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

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Union County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,497
Children In Poverty	26.4%	29.2%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	19.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	19.1%

KIDS COUNT data provided by



- **61 children were served through Early Steps to School Success (with a total of 429 home visits)**
- **15 children received Countdown to Kindergarten services**
- **Childcare professionals received 21 hours of classroom training**
- **9,313 books were distributed to children in Union County through Imagination Library, home visits, and community events**

### Union County First Steps

120 Lakeside Dr.  
 Union, SC 29379  
 (864)429-1478

[lwade@union.k12.sc.us](mailto:lwade@union.k12.sc.us)

Board Chair

Connie Springs

### Union County First Steps

**Laura Wade**  
**Executive Director**

Exciting things are happening in Union County for our youngest citizens and their families! Children and their families are receiving services and support that will help them be ready to enter school and be successful.

### Programs Serving Children 0-5 and Their Families:

The Early Steps to School Success home visitation program continues to grow and provide resources to children and families in Union. This past year, 61 children and their families received these valuable services. An additional 117 children were served through the Book Bag Exchange program. Child care workers were able to complete training courses to better prepare preschoolers for entering kindergarten. Countdown to Kindergarten provided quality early learning experiences for 15 children and their families this year. Through our partnership with United Way of the Piedmont, Imagination Library served over 700 children who received books delivered to their homes.

### Public and Private Partnerships:

Thanks to our partners and support of the community, additional funding and resources have been added to our state funds to allow us to serve children and families. Through working together, our goals are being met!



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

### County Programs

Early Steps  
 Child Care Training  
 Countdown to Kindergarten  
 Imagination Library

### State Programs

Baby Net  
 First Steps 4K

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



# Early Steps to School Success

Parents are their child's first and best teachers.

## Program Description

Early Steps to School Success (ESSS) is a language and pre-literacy development program operated by Save the Children, a leading international nonprofit helping children in need. ESSS is the birth-to-five component of a continuum of Save the Children programs which focus on literacy and language development, physical fitness and nutrition programs for children birth to age 12. ESSS provides early childhood education services to pregnant women and children birth to five years of age, education services to their parents, and ongoing staff training to the community early childhood educators involved with the program.



### Program Components

1. Home visits at least twice monthly from a trained early childhood educator
2. Parent/child education groups in school and community settings
3. Child play groups and story book hours
4. Book Bag lending program to promote reading
5. Transition to school activities
6. Community referrals and follow-up

### ESSS by the Numbers 2015-16

Children Served	61
Families Served	55
Total Home Visits	429

Union County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our ESSS families:

82% live in poverty

18% didn't graduate from high school

### Program Outcomes:

- Increasing children's language and pre-literacy skills essential for school success
- Increasing parent knowledge of how to support their child's language development and pre-literacy education
- Fostering positive home/school connections early in the child's life
- Transitioning children successfully to preschool or kindergarten

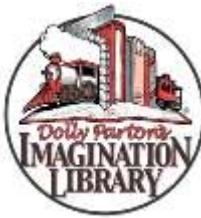
**Thank you to our partners!**

Union County Schools

Save the Children

Union County First Steps  
120 Lakeside Dr.  
Union, SC 29379  
864-429-1748, ext. 722  
lwade@union.k12.sc.us

# Imagination Library



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 brain development related to language is around **nine months of age**. **One of the easiest and most effective ways to build this capacity in young children's brains is to read to them.**

Union County First Steps is the local sponsor of Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides free, age-appropriate books to children age birth to 5 years. Operated by the Dollywood Foundation, Imagination Library is currently in more than 1,600 communities internationally and mails books to about 700,000 children each month.

Children who register with Union County First Steps receive one book per month by mail through the month of their fifth birthday. Each book is carefully selected by a committee of educational specialists.



## Imagination Library by the Numbers, 2015-16

Children Served	727
Books Given to Children 0-5	8724

Sponsor a child  
today for just \$30!



Thank you to our partners!

Dollywood Foundation

United Way of the Piedmont

Union County First Steps  
120 Lakeside Dr.  
Union, SC 29379  
864-429-1748, ext. 722  
lwade@union.k12.sc.us

# 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.

*First Steps has been a blessing to us. They not only offer the classes we need, but they keep us from having to go out of town to take them. These classes are very educational and help us to have a better child care center. We have been able to use what we have learned to become better teachers to our children.*

*Pat Hendrix (Bethel Childcare Center)*

### Child Care Training Sponsored by Union County First Steps, 2015-16

Topic:	Sessions:
The Importance of Relationships	Growth & Development
Early Language & Literacy Development	Growth & Development
Follow-up Instruction for Growth & Development	Growth & Development
Creating a Dream Team	Administration
Blood Borne Pathogens	BBP
Stress Management for Child Care Providers	Professional Development
Strategies for Supporting Early Language & Literacy	Curriculum
Environment for Nurturing Early Language & Literacy	Curriculum
Follow-up on Instruction for Curriculum Training	Curriculum
Helping Children Make Healthy Choices	Nutrition & Physical Activity
Outdoor & Indoor Safety	Health & Safety
Guiding Children's Behavior	Child Guidance



### Training by the Numbers, 2015-16

Total Training Attendance	156
Child Care Teachers and Directors Served	38
Number of Training Sessions Offered	12

**Thank you to our partners!**

**City of Union**

**Spartanburg Community College**

**Union County Schools**

Union County First Steps  
 120 Lakeside Dr.  
 Union, SC 29379  
 864-429-1748, ext. 722  
 lwade@union.k12.sc.us

# Countdown to Kindergarten



**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.

"The children benefitted from having a relationship with me prior to beginning kindergarten. Children don't perform well for teachers they don't trust. We already had that trust in place; so they are willing to take risks where other children held back a little. The students who participated in the CTK program just jumped right in and served as leaders in the classroom. " (CTK teacher)

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.

Children are referred to the program by a 4K teacher, or are identified during the registration process in the spring as a potential student for the CTK program. Union County schools place as many CTK children as possible in their home visitor's classroom for kindergarten, thereby building upon the teacher-child and parent-teacher relationships built over the summer.

## \*CTK by the Numbers, Summer 2015

Children Served	15
Families Served	15
Home/School Visits	90

\*CTK program data is for June-August 2015, whereas CTK fiscal data includes expenditures from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016.

## Participating schools:

Buffalo Elementary

Foster Park Elementary

Monarch Elementary

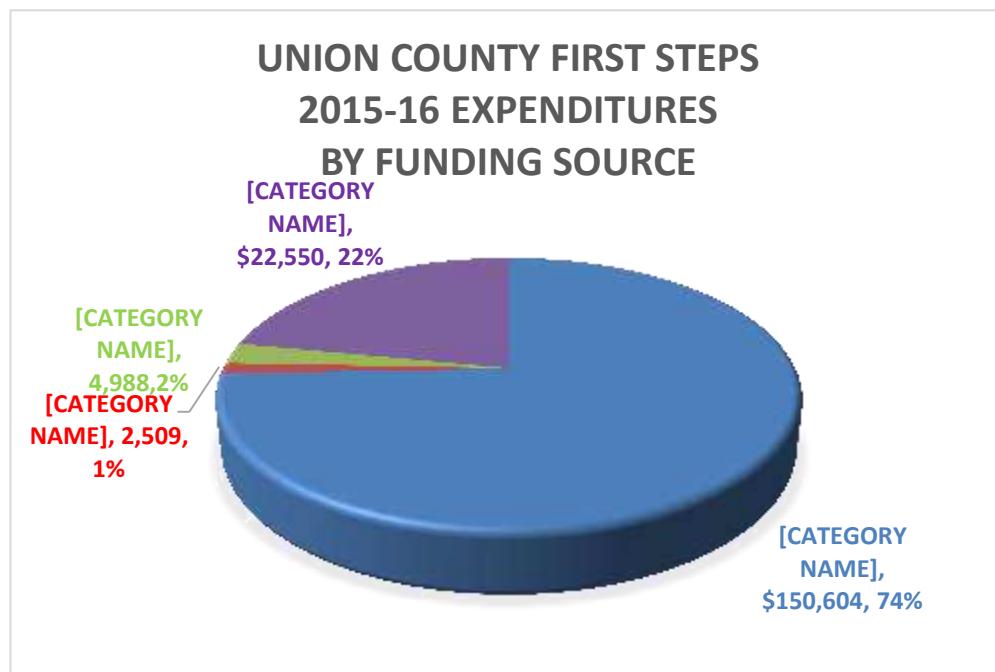
**Thank you to our partners!**

Union County School District

Kaplan Early Learning Company

Union County First Steps  
 120 Lakeside Dr.  
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 864-429-1748, ext.

## Financial Impact



**Total 2015-16 Expenditures: \$180,651**

**State Funds Leveraged in 2015-16\*: 20%**

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

### 2015-16 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Federal \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2015-16 Expenditures
Early Steps to School Success	\$64,273	\$0	\$3,834	\$10,000	\$78,107	43%
Imagination Library	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$3,561	\$2,509	\$0	\$0	\$6,070	3%
Child Care Training	\$17,872	\$0	\$0	\$3,138	\$21,010	12%
Program Support	\$47,954	\$0	\$582	\$7,058	\$55,594	31%
Administrative Support	\$16,944	\$0	\$572	\$2,354	\$19,870	11%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$150,604</b>	<b>\$2,509</b>	<b>\$4,988</b>	<b>\$22,550</b>	<b>\$180,651</b>	

Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016

Since inception, Union County First Steps has leveraged \$1,046,806 from sources outside of state government. That's 39 cents for every state dollar.

## Community Impact

First Steps leads Preschool Story Times in Union County throughout the year. The public is invited to bring their preschoolers to the Community Center in Union for a time of reading and making crafts. Child care centers often use this as a type of “field trip” for their classes also. Each child leaves with a book and a craft to take home!

Preschoolers  
planted seeds at  
Springtime Story  
Time



Santa reads a  
book at Story  
Time

### Thank you to our partners!

#### Funding Support

State of South Carolina  
(through South Carolina First Steps)  
  
Union County Schools  
  
Union City Council  
  
United Way of the Piedmont  
Community Impact Grant

#### In-Kind Support

Save the Children  
  
Union County Housing Authority  
  
Union County Schools  
  
United Way of the Piedmont

Support Union County First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or volunteer.

# First Steps Partnership Board

Union County First Steps Partnership Board works together to provide services to the children and families of Union County. We appreciate the time and energy that they commit to meeting together to plan, and also serving at various community events!

## Union County First Steps Partnership Board, 2015-16

Name	Position	Board Category
Connie Springs	Board Chair, retired educator	Legislative Appointee
Margie Boyd, Vice Chair	Retired educator	Early Childhood Education
Margie Ruff, Secretary	Save the Children Teacher	Pre-Kindergarten through Primary Educator
Rieta Drinkwine	Library Director/Union Carnegie Library	County Library
Terrez Henderson	Program Coordinator/Union DSS	DSS
Barbara Glenn Jeter	Center Director/Head Start	Head Start
Anita Maness	Principal/Monarch Elementary	Early Childhood Education
Cathey Parker	Volunteer	Grandparent of Preschool Aged Child Served by First Steps
Page Rogers	Community Health Educator/SCDHEC	DHEC/Public Health
Lou Stackhouse	Retired Director of DDSN	Nonprofit Organization that Provides Services to Families & Children
Jeff Stribble	Director of Personnel/Union County Schools	Business Community
Ashley Turner	Insurance Agent/State Farm	Business Community

- (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



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>



(864) 591-8642

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

