

Williamsburg County First Steps' Parent-Child Home Program Educates Parents & Strengthens Community

Williamsburg County First Steps (WCFS) has been implementing the home visiting strategy, Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP), since 1999. The PCHP model provides two years of intensive home visits to families in Williamsburg County with children between the ages of 16 months – 4 years. Through the visits, PCHP home visitors educate parents on the importance of parent-child interaction and give them the tools, skills, and encouragement to engage their children. The visits are a half-hour, twice-a-week over a two-year period, and are scheduled at a time that is convenient for the family.

Currently, WCFS has one full time and three part time home visitors who complete a minimum of 46 home visits during the year for each participating family. This program year, WCFS is serving 33 families throughout the county. Through a partnership with Williamsburg County School District, and as a result of the district being awarded Race to the Top funding, WCFS will soon be adding two additional home visitors in order to meet the increasing demand for the program in the community.

Over the course of the two years in PCHP, and 92 home visits, participating families acquire a library of 46 high quality books and educational toys and 46 curricular guide sheets with tips for verbal interaction; skill development; and additional engagement, literacy, music, and art activities. The home visitors, who through their twice-weekly visits build strong relationships with participants, also connect families to a wide-range of community resources including food, housing, health, and educational services. As families complete PCHP, staff work with them to ensure their children are enrolled in high-quality center-based preschool (pre-k, Head Start or kindergarten) as the critical next educational step.



Mr. Christopher Burroughs, a PCHP participant, speaks of the impact of the program on his family at the WCFS Annual Meeting.



Over 200 community members participated in WCFS' Annual Meeting on Nov. 15th.

On November 15th WCFS held its annual meeting at Hemingway Elementary School in Hemingway, SC. With over 200 attendees, including WCFS board members, Hemingway school faculty, staff, and school board members, children and families who participate in WCFS programs, city and county council members, and members of the local community, the event was a resounding success. Multiple community members and organizations sponsored the event, including: The Law Offices of Ronnie A. Sabb, L.L.C. (Senator Ronnie A. Sabb); the Honorable Stanley S. Pasley and Williamsburg County Council; FTC; Lambda Theta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; Haselden Brothers, Inc.; ABC Office Supply; Redmond-Richardson Funeral Home, Inc.; Williamsburg County Development Board; Williamsburg County HomeTown Chamber; Big Country Chevrolet, Inc.; Williamsburg Technical College; South Carolina Healthy Connections; Hemingway Elementary School; and Hemingway Elementary Parenting Department and Junior Beta Club.

At the Annual Meeting, Christopher Burroughs, a parent who participates in PCHP, spoke about the impact that the program has had on both his child and his parenting. Mr. Burroughs said, **"I can see the difference in my daughter who participates in the program in comparison to my daughter who did not participate in the program. My daughter who participates in the program communicates more than the daughter who did not participate at this age."** Also, Mr. Burroughs shared how his home visitor emphasized that he is his child's first teacher. As the home visitor, she was there to support and assist him with techniques and strategies to prepare his daughter for school success. Mr. Burroughs also shared that if he had funding, he would invest those funds into the Parent-Child Home Program for more children and families to have this experience.

In Williamsburg County, First Steps Parent-Child Home Program is bridging the achievement gap for children by strengthening the parent-child relationship and, ultimately, increasing the language, literacy, and cognitive skills, and the social-emotional development critical to school success.

For more information on Williamsburg County First Steps' Parent-Child Home Program, please contact Executive Director Carletta Scott Israel at CIsrael@WCSD.K12.SC.US.