



To: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees
From: Julia-Ellen C. Davis, Interim Director
Date: August 18, 2017

RE: Interim Director's Report

This is a time of celebration as SC First Steps continues to create partnerships with other non-profits and state organizations as we focus on our mission which is “collaborating with other entities, First Steps helps South Carolina families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.” With both our preservice for Early Head Start and the 4K Academies complete, staff are ready for school as we begin the Early Head Start year on August 17 and 4K on August 22.

Another cause for celebration is that we received a positive report on our first Federal Monitoring visit of the EHS-CCP Program in February. A copy is included in the packet for your review.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The SC General Assembly will reconvene on January 9, 2018. In the meantime, we are involved in several related activities:

- The agency's annual accountability report and FY19 Executive Budget Request are both due to the Executive Budget Office on September 15.
- The annual Education Improvement Act Program Report is due to the Education Oversight Committee on September 29.
- The Senate has seated a study committee on the Abbeville School Equity Funding lawsuit. Staff have been invited to suggest potential options for improving outcomes in these districts on August 23 and plan to share information on outcomes related to First Steps' evidence-based home visitation and prekindergarten programs, and preview an emerging early childhood STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Collaboration between First Steps, South Carolina ETV, EdVenture Children's Museum, the SC Coalition for Math and Science, Spectrum, and others.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

- The First Steps Executive Director Leadership Council met on August 15 in Columbia. At this meeting they were introduced the full team at Manley Garvin, which has assumed statewide responsibility for the First Steps finance system. In addition, Executive Directors broke into discussion groups by region to discuss with their Partnership Consultants (TAs) plans for

the coming year, issues that they would like the state office to address, as well as, successes and challenges that they would like to share.

- Several Partnership Consultants/TAs attended Parents as Teachers training in both Program Fundamentals and Implementation, which they will complete by the end of September. As our largest program in terms of investment and clients served, it is important that TAs are deeply knowledgeable about this evidenced-based program in order to support local partnerships with implementation fidelity.
- The Partnership TAs are playing key roles in planning of the December Chairmen’s Summit on Early Childhood.
- The Partnership TAs are actively involved in First Steps’ Diversity and Equity Workgroup and have recently participated in a webinar series – *Advancing Race Equity and Inclusion* – which was sponsored by a collaborative which also includes The Children’s Trust, Sisters of Charity, the Alliance for a Healthier South Carolina, Eat Smart-Move More, the Palmetto Association for Children and Families. These webinars are providing a base of knowledge and resources to guide the future work of the committee.
- Next steps for the Diversity and Equity Workgroup include attending a regional series of “Community Gatherings on Race, Equity and Inclusion.” These gatherings are expected to provide a safe place for expression, increase awareness of child well-being racial disparities, increase awareness about South Carolina’s civil rights history, and allow for discussions about public and private systems that perpetuate inequities. Trained *Speaking Down Barriers* facilitators will host these conversations. The Diversity and Equity Workgroup is planning to reconvene in October to begin discussions regarding the focus for work within our organization.
- First Steps’ Chief Partnership Officer continues to participate actively in the South Carolina BUILD Team, which is looking at improving our state’s Early Childhood Systems. The team consists of a representative from the Department of Social Services, Department of Health and Environmental Control, Department of Education, Department of Mental Health, and the Head Start Collaboration Office. The SC BUILD Team will attend a BUILD national meeting in October.
- Monthly First Steps Webinars are held on the third Tuesday of each month to share information with local partnerships about all First Steps programs and to provide updates regarding legislative activity and key community events. The next monthly leadership webinar for First Steps Executive Directors and Local Board Chairs will be on September 19 at 10:00 AM.

FIRST STEPS 4K

The 2017-2018 4K school term will begin on Tuesday, August 22 with enrollment of approximately 2,100 students in 219 classrooms at 204 centers.

Recent highlights of the program include:

- 25 new centers have been approved for the 2017-2018 school term including:
 - Our first Department of Defense center, Shaw Air Force Base Daycare
 - Our first Catholic schools, St. Anthony's in Florence and St. Martin de Porres in Columbia
 - Our first Early Head Start center, Richland County First Steps
- Centers have the ability to choose from 4 model options, enabled by proviso for 2017-2018. Option A: Standard School Year, 6.5 hours x 180 days, Option B: Extended School Day 8.5 hours x 180 days, Option C: Extended School Year 6.5 hours x 220 days, or Option D: Standard School Year + 8 weeks of summer instruction for 8.5 hours daily.
- Continued with representation by the State 4K Director, Martha Strickland, on the Preschool Curriculum Review Panel with the SC Department of Education this summer.
- Maintained participation on the "Homeless No More" SC team and on the SC Pyramid Model State Leadership Team, which is coordinated by the SDE's Office of Special Education Services.
- Scheduled to finish the AIM4X SC Cohort (AIM 4 Excellence) Online Director's Credential through National Louis University's McCormick Center via SCFS. The project with nineteen 4K Center Directors is led by two 4K Regional Coordinators, Kristine Jenkins and Sharon Bruton.
- Completed the 4K Summer Academies with the theme of "Construction!"
 - New 4K Teachers, August 7-9
 - New Center Directors, August 9
 - All Directors, August 10-11
 - All 4K Teachers and Assistants, August 14-17

EARLY HEAD START- CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP (EHS-CCP)

Our current EHS-CCP enrollment is 254 students in 15 centers with a total of 32 classrooms. Program highlights in the fourth quarter include:

Governance

- Held Policy Council Meeting on July 14.
- Received Notice of Award for 2017-2018 program year.
- Conducted conference calls with EHS-CCP Directors on July 12, July 26, and August 9; and
- Ranked Child Care Partnership applications and visited centers for the expansion grant. Identified six current partners for additional classrooms and eight new child care centers for prospective expansion. We expect to be adding twenty more EHS-CCP classrooms to the partnership in 2017-2018.

Personnel

- Hired five staff members as part of the expansion grant (two Parents As Teachers Supervisors, an ERSEA Specialist, an Administrative Assistant, and a Quality Assurance Coordinator).
- Provided a three-day Pre-Service Training to EHS-CCP staff and Child Care Partnership Teachers in early July.

- Held Teacher trainings in Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum and Gold (an ongoing child assessment program) this summer.
- Education staff received Teaching Strategies *Coaching to Fidelity* training to assist with curriculum fidelity and coaching strategies; and

Family and Community Partnerships/Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance (ERSEA)

- Completed ERSEA Certification (Levels I-IV) training with H.G. Jones and Associates in May through July. Sixteen Family Advocates, other EHS-CCP staff, child care partnership directors, and one local partnership director received the ERSEA Certificate.
- Maintained a waiting list of 409 children with a funded enrollment of 254 infants and toddlers. This represents 32% infants, 36% one year olds; and 32% two year olds.
- Enrolled 79% of the EHS-CCP families who are living below the Federal Poverty Guidelines. 18.5% of the EHS-CCP families were eligible based on other factors such as public assistance, foster care or homeless status.
- Maintained a monthly Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of 83.56% in July 2017. Family events in early July accounted for some of the absences. The goal is to be at 85% or above.
- Enrolled 36.6% of children with SC Vouchers. This exceeds the 25% grant requirement; and
- Began the initial PAT training in June for the Family Services staff.

Health and Disability Services

- Served 27 children with IFSPs or IEPs in this program year (10.6%).
- Identified and prepared health plans for children with the following conditions in our program: Anemia (6) Asthma (24) Hearing Difficulties (3) Vision (11) Diabetes (2); and
- Referred eight children for mental health services.

SC PARENTS AS TEACHERS (PAT)

South Carolina First Steps is the state sponsor agency for Parents as Teachers, a nationally recognized, evidence-based home visitation model, which is widely implemented by local partnerships. Since the June Meeting, PAT has been involved in South Carolina in the following ways.

- Added five new PAT Affiliates starting in September which were funded through MIECHV/Children's Trust Fund.
- Added EHS-CCP as a PAT Affiliate to begin operation in October of this year.
- Added a new PAT Affiliate at Union County First Steps and expanded Fairfield and Dillon County Affiliates with one Parent Educator each through the Rural Home Visiting Grant to SC First Steps. These seven new sites and two new expansions will serve approximately 544 new high needs families in the state.
- Held the PAT National Foundational and Model Implementation Training on August 7-11 in Columbia. There were approximately forty-three participants from SC and other states. Children's Trust of SC hosted the training.

- Prepared for a PAT Teen Curriculum Training that is to be on Sept. 13-14 in Beaufort SC, hosted by the Beaufort County School District and Beaufort County First Steps.
- Scheduled another PAT National Foundational and Model Implementation, which will be held the September 18-22 in Columbia and will be hosted by SC First Steps.
- Reviewed Annual Performance Reports of forty-four affiliates for submission to the national PAT office.
- Participated as a member of the Parenting Conference Planning Team on the upcoming *Strengthening Families through Collaboration Conference* that will be on October 10-11 at the Brookland Conference Center in Columbia.

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Baby Net

Transitioned BabyNet from SC First Steps to the SC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on July 1, 2017. SC First Steps has not received the initial written draft of a Memorandum of Agreement for the current fiscal year describing transition activities for this fiscal year. There are a number of expenses (including leases) that are still being billed to SC First Steps. Work continues to support DHHS's efforts to move these expenses to their accounts and ensure reimbursement.

8% Administrative Cap on Local Partnerships

Met with the ED Finance and Administration Committee along with Senate and House staff members to develop plans to implement the changes approved by the Board in the June meeting. Plans are being developed to update the accounting system so that tracking methods will be in place to implement the changes.

Child Care Partner Tax Credits

As part of a collaborative effort that includes The Children's Trust, the Institute for Child Success, Save the Children, and the United Way Association of SC, First Steps is supporting an effort to explore child care partners needs and opinions regarding potential legislation regarding school readiness tax credits. This effort was begun collaboratively by First Steps and the United Way Association as part of a proviso-driven report to the General Assembly on early childhood quality standards.

Employee Training

Held Active Shooter Training in July.

Partnership Finance Manager

Worked with Manley Garvin LLC, the CPA Firm that won the RFP for the Finance Manager for the Local Partnerships, on a transition plan from two financial managers to one. They took over all counties in the state effective July 1. Overall the transition has been smooth, with only a few minor bumps.

Facility Improvements

Continued to improve the security of the building and the technology in our conference rooms. Work in progress should be complete by early September.