

LANCASTER COUNTY



Getting children ready for school.



Community Education

Countdown to Kindergarten

Early Head Start – Child
Care Partnership Program

*Early Identification
and Referral*

Imagination Library

Incredible Years Parenting

Step By Step
Resource Center

*Weekend Backpack
Feeding Program*

Annual Report

2016-2017



OUR VISION:

**Every Lancaster County child
will enter kindergarten
ready to succeed.**

First Steps WORKS for the children of Lancaster County.



Lancaster County First Steps

Lora P. Bryson
Executive Director

By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Lancaster County
Children Under Five	291,026	5,426
Children In Poverty	24.4%	21.0%
3 rd Graders Scoring "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	22.2%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.0%	11.4%

KIDS COUNT data provided by:



- ✓ Since inception, Lancaster County First Steps has leveraged \$7,362,827 from sources outside state government. **That's an additional \$1.65 for every dollar received.**
- ✓ Lancaster County First Steps continued extensive work on a \$6 million grant to implement the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership initiative which will provide nine (9) high-quality classrooms at three (3) local child care centers.
- ✓ Lancaster County First Steps always strives to use resources wisely. In 2016-2017, our organization reported an administrative cost of only 1.48%.
- ✓ Over 16,000 books were provided to children all across Lancaster County during FY17.

Lancaster County First Steps

Board Chair
Dr. Paul N. McKenzie
Executive Director
Lora P. Bryson

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"There are only 2,000 days between the time a baby is born and when that child begins kindergarten. Experiences during that time have a lasting impact on later learning, health and success." (<http://www.first2000days.org>)

It is remarkable to consider that before birth, a child's brain grows more significantly in size and function than at any later stage of development. Even with that growth, the brain is one of the only organs not fully developed at birth. During the first years of life, amazing things happen in the brain; seven hundred new neural connections are made every second as the mind integrates the vast range of a child's experiences. Much like lumber is the raw material for framing a house, neurons are the raw material of the brain. A child's earliest experiences and interactions help build the frame and foundation for all that will come in the future. That is why Lancaster County First Steps invests in children from birth to the age of five and their families. High-quality early learning experiences in the very first years of life have long lasting impacts on later learning and health.

In this report, you will see the diverse ways we provide excellent early education opportunities that offer a continuum of comprehensive programs, services and initiatives so that children and families thrive in Lancaster County. For FY17, we are especially proud to report that for every state dollar we have received we have raised an additional \$9.79. In April 2015, we received approximately 6 million dollars to implement a federally-funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers. We have partnered with three (3) local child care centers to provide children from ages 6 weeks through their third year with a high-quality Early Head Start education designed to enhance growth and development. The Springs Close Foundation provided funds to serve 425 children with the Weekend Backpack Program at Clinton Elementary and Brooklyn Springs Elementary and provided partial funding to serve 100 Countdown to Kindergarten children across the county. Our local United Way provided the additional funds for this program as well as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program which provides developmentally appropriate books each month.

Lancaster County First Steps serves as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. We act as a community convener serving the needs of our youngest citizens and their families; a county-wide needs assessment is conducted every three (3) years to assure that our goals are meeting the needs of the most at-risk families in Lancaster County.

In the scheme of things, 2,000 days is a very short time to accomplish so much important work for early childhood education and school readiness.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

County Programs

Countdown to Kindergarten
 Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership
 Early Identification & Referral
 Dolly Parton Imagination Library
 Incredible Years Parenting
 Step by Step Resource Center
 Weekend Backpack Feeding Program

State Programs

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, Lancaster County 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, Lancaster County First Steps focuses its investments in all six strategy areas to best serve at-risk children and their families. The initiatives operating in Lancaster County include: Community Education, Countdown to Kindergarten, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, Early Identification and Referral, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, Incredible Years Parenting, Step By Step Resource Center and Weekend Backpack Feeding Program.

Community Education

Play, learn & grow together. Dream Big...you'll be amazed at all you can accomplish!

Program Description

The Community Education initiative involves interventions targeted at the entire community to build awareness about the importance of early childhood education through live performances and expert speakers for parents and children. Our organization is reaching out to the families of Lancaster County, community partners and business leaders to increase access to print and electronic resources embracing the value of early childhood education and the needs of the children in our community.

Our presence in the local newspaper has been increased with more articles covering our programs and successes. Since social media is the wave of the future, our Facebook page has been enhanced and a Twitter account has been created with new postings an average of three times per week. Billboards are being used as an additional method to bring the message of early childhood education to the Lancaster community.



Community Education by the Numbers, 2016-2017

Materials Distributed	3,099
Activities & Events Held	14
Total Attendance at Activities & Events	784

This year, our Community Education initiative:

- ✓ Participated in the Christmas in the City event on December 3, 2016 with readings of *The Polar Express*. Each participant was given their own copy of the book along with an ornament to take home.
- ✓ Participated in the Give Local Lancaster event on May 2, 2017 to raise funds for our Dolly Parton Imagination Library program.
- ✓ Sponsored a Family Concert with Roger Day called *Dream Big* at USC-Lancaster on May 6, 2017 for the community.

Thank you to our partners!

Give Local Lancaster
 The City of Lancaster
 The Lancaster News
 USC-Lancaster

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Bringing parents and teachers together as partners sets the foundation for success in school.

Program Description

Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a First Steps program based on other successful school transition models from around the country. Its goals are:

- to increase the successful transition of South Carolina's most at-risk children into the K-12 school system
- to increase parent involvement in the early grades (particularly in hard-to-reach communities), when children's learning is foundational for life success
- 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 Countdown to Kindergarten initiative integrates all of the following components:

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 and use throughout the school year.

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, Lancaster County First Steps releases tips to the media to help parents and caregivers get children ready for kindergarten.

The Lancaster County School District places as many CTK children as possible in their home visitor's classroom for kindergarten, thereby building upon the teacher-child and parent-teacher relationships created during the summer.

Here's a great quote from a CTK Parent!

"Brenden was always excited about school, but not too excited to find out that I couldn't come with him. After meeting his teacher, he has not asked me again about coming with him. He and Mrs. Coley learned together and he saw that it was fun. He doesn't feel like his teacher is a stranger and neither do I. He is so excited and we think that Mrs. Coley is such an amazing teacher. THANK YOU!"

Victoria Garner, Mother of Brenden Hall at Clinton

Lancaster County First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our Countdown to Kindergarten families:

- 2.65 ... risk factors per child (i.e., low maternal education, teen custodial parent, low birth weight, etc.)
- 84% ... live in poverty and/or receive free lunches
- 50% ... have never attended a full-time preschool outside of the home

*CTK by the Numbers, Summer 2016

Children Served	94
Families Served	91
Home/School Visits	556

*CTK program data is for June-August 2016, whereas CTK fiscal data includes expenditures from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017.

This year, our Countdown to Kindergarten program:

- ✓ 80% increase in children who knew, liked and trusted their teacher.
- ✓ 52% increase in parents understanding the expectations for Kindergarten.
- ✓ 37% of parents reported reading daily to their children at the completion of the program.
- ✓ All nine (9) of the teachers that participated in the CTK program reported stronger relationships with the children and families that they served.

Thank you to our partners!

The Springs Close Foundation
 United Way of Lancaster County
 Kaplan Early Learning Company

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Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership Initiative

The goal of the program is to improve child and family outcomes, including school readiness, by providing a continuum of comprehensive services that support children's development and family functioning.

Program Description

Lancaster County First Steps Early Head Start-Child Care Program a federally-funded community-based program. Our organization has partnered with local child care centers to provide infants and toddlers from 6 weeks through their 3rd year with a quality Early Head Start (EHS) education designed to enhance the development in infants and very young children. To be eligible for this program, parents must live in Lancaster County, meet income guidelines and have a child under 3 years of age.



WHY IT WORKS

Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships provide and promote comprehensive early childhood development, support families and encourage growth in all members of the family. The program offers support in the following areas:

- Individualized Services
- Health and Dental Screenings
- Family Support
- Parent Involvement
- Services to Meet Special Needs
- Full Nutrition Program
- Community Resources

Early Education by the Numbers, 2016-2017

Children Served	64
Providers Served	3



This year, our Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership initiative:

- ✓ Received \$1.5 million annually to fund EHS-CCP Partnership.
- ✓ Is partnering with three (3) local child care centers to provide infants and toddlers ages 6 weeks through their 3rd year with a quality Early Head Start education designed to enhance the children's development.
- ✓ Assured children at our partnering centers had all necessary screening.
- ✓ Implemented research-based curriculum and assessment system.
- ✓ Worked with center teachers to complete their Infant/Toddler CDA certification.
- ✓ Conducted two (2) weeks of intensive teacher training.



Thank you to our partners!

Buford Child Development Center
 Greater New Hope Child Development Center
 Southside Early Childhood Center

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Early Identification & Referral

Helping vulnerable first-time parents empowers them to achieve a better life for themselves and their children.

Program Description

The Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) Program began in April 2014 and continues to operate successfully in Lancaster County. This initiative serves as a community liaison between Lancaster County First Steps, BabyNet, local families, and various community resources. All parents are encouraged to utilize this service should their child display potential developmental delays.

Lancaster County First Steps manages the success of EI&R in four areas:

- **Public Awareness:** One of the integral factors to the program's success is through public awareness. By demystifying the concerns regarding financial and insurance barriers, the EIR program can serve more families seeking resources for their children.
- **Screenings:** The EIR Strategy uses two screening tools to identify potential developmental delays and determine the need for a follow up evaluation or referral to BabyNet: The Ages and Stages 3 (ASQ-3) and The Ages and Stages Social Emotional (ASQ-SE). Once a child has been observed and screened, support services are identified if needed and referred to Lancaster County First Steps community resource partners or BabyNet.
- **Community Referral Partnerships:** Once a potential delay is identified with a child, it's imperative that proper follow-up care and referrals are established. For this reason, Lancaster County First Steps has a strong network of resource partners and collaborations within the community.
- **Follow-Up:** Many parents are overwhelmed with the news of possible developmental delay with their child. For this reason, the EI&R program offers continuous follow-up to families and encourages parents to be the first advocate for their children.



EIR by the Numbers, 2016-2017

Children Served	67
Materials Distributed	1,278
Children Referred to BabyNet, Local School or Other Services	41

This year, our Early Identification and Referral initiative:

- ✓ Operated an Early Identification and Referral Program in Lancaster County.
- ✓ Chaired and coordinated the Lancaster County Early Identification and Referral Task Force.
- ✓ Increased public awareness in the importance of early identification and developmental delays.
- ✓ Matched the needs of 67 children with the appropriate resources.

Thank you to our partners!

- BabyNet
- Lancaster County Child Care Centers
- Lancaster County School District
- Local Pediatricians
- The Children's Council
- Springs Memorial Hospital
- DSS, DHEC, Disabilities and Special Needs Board

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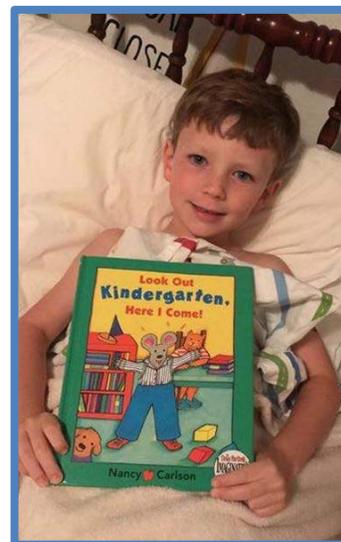
Children's reading scores improve dramatically when parents are involved in helping them learn to read.

Program Description

According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, the peak period for children developing neural connections related to language is around **nine months of age**. **One of the easiest and most effective ways to build the language neural connections in a young child's brain is to read to them.** Lancaster County First Steps is the local sponsor of Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides free age-appropriate books to children from birth to 5 years. Operated by the Dollywood Foundation, Imagination Library is currently active in more than 1,600 local communities and mails books to about 750,000 children each and every month.

Children who register with Lancaster County First Steps receive one book per month by mail through the month of their fifth birthday. All books are quality, age-appropriate books carefully selected for each age group by a committee of educational specialists.

A major benefit of the Imagination Library program is that it requires very little overhead or administrative obligation. Since the Dollywood Foundation in Tennessee administers the operation of the program and book distribution, the cost to local communities is as low as \$30 per child per year.



Imagination Library by the Numbers, 2016-2017

Children Served	1,209
Books Given to Children 0-5	14,511

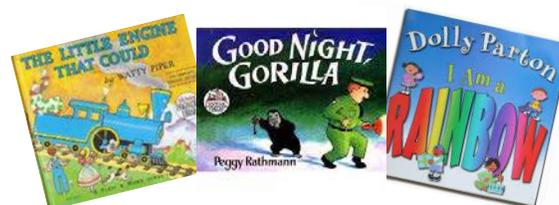
This year, our Dolly Parton Imagination Library program:

- ✓ Reports 97% of participants are extremely satisfied with the program.
- ✓ Increased literacy materials provided in every home served by this program.
- ✓ Served 75% greatest at-risk children.



Thank you to our partners!

- The Dollywood Foundation
- United Way of Lancaster County
- Indian Land Rotary Club
- Literacy Review Club
- Community Partners
- Individual Donors



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Incredible Years Parenting & Step By Step Resource Center

Responsive and nurturing parenting sets the stage for children's social, emotional and academic development.

Program Description

In an effort to support positive social and behavioral development in young children, Lancaster County First Steps implemented the Incredible Years Program at Southside Early Childhood Center. Incredible Years has been effective in reducing children's aggression and behavioral problems in early childhood classrooms and at home. The Incredible Years program provides 10 weeks of group training for parents, with an emphasis on positive parenting strategies that promote children's social skills.

The following has been proven:

- Increases in parent positive affect such as praise and reduced use of criticism and negative commands
- Increases in parental use of effective limit-setting by replacing spanking and harsh discipline with non-violent discipline techniques and increased monitoring of children
- Reductions in parental depression and increases in parental self-confidence
- Increases in positive family communication and problem solving
- Reduced conduct problems in children's interactions with parents and increases in their positive affect and compliance to parental commands.
- Increased access to books and educational items for use in the home through the use of the Step by Step Resource Center.

Here's a quote from a parent!
I really loved the session that taught us how to make fun & healthy snacks and our trip to the Lancaster County Library to get library cards. The parenting classes helped me and my family so much. I learned how to prepare my children for school.
Thank you Lancaster County First Steps!

Incredible Years Parenting & Step By Step Resource Center by the Numbers, 2016-2017

Children Served	111
Families Served	77
Training Sessions Offered	8



This year, our Family Literacy & Learning initiatives had the following results:

- ✓ 80% parents reported an increase in effective limit setting vs. spanking and harsh discipline.
- ✓ 75% parents reported an increase in praising instead of criticism and negative commands.
- ✓ 90% parents reported increasing the number of hours spent interacting with their children.
- ✓ 700 high-quality books were distributed to 100 children in local child care centers through collaboration with the BEE literacy program.

Thank you to our partners!

Southside Early Childhood Center
Lancaster County Early Head Start
Comporium Communications
Community Investment Partners

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Weekend Backpack Feeding Program

Children are more equipped to learn when their nutritional needs are met.

Program Description

Through our collaboration with Clinton Elementary School and Brooklyn Springs Elementary, it has become apparent to Lancaster County First Steps that many of the children that participate in the free and reduced lunch program have no way for their nutritional needs to be met on the weekends. In response to this need, the Weekend Backpack Feeding Program has been implemented at both schools.

Each week during the school year, Lancaster County First Steps will ensure that at-risk elementary students will receive a Weekend Backpack designed to supplement meals for children, who depend on school breakfasts and lunches, during the week. The Second Harvest Food Bank delivers packs of nutritious, child-friendly, nonperishable, easily consumed and vitamin fortified food packed in backpacks each Thursday. Several volunteers tag and distribute these backpacks to each classroom on Thursday afternoons.

On Friday, both schools discreetly distribute these bags to children to carry home for the weekend. Lancaster County First Steps also includes newsletters, lists of helpful resources for parents, developmentally appropriate fact sheets, nutrition, health and fitness tips, fun and informational education materials with the backpacks each week. If interested in volunteering to assist with this program, please call the Lancaster County First Steps office at (803) 286-8000.



Weekend Backpack Feeding Program by the Numbers, 2016-2017

Children Served	425
Total Backpacks Distributed	12,365



This year, our Weekend Backpack Feeding Program:

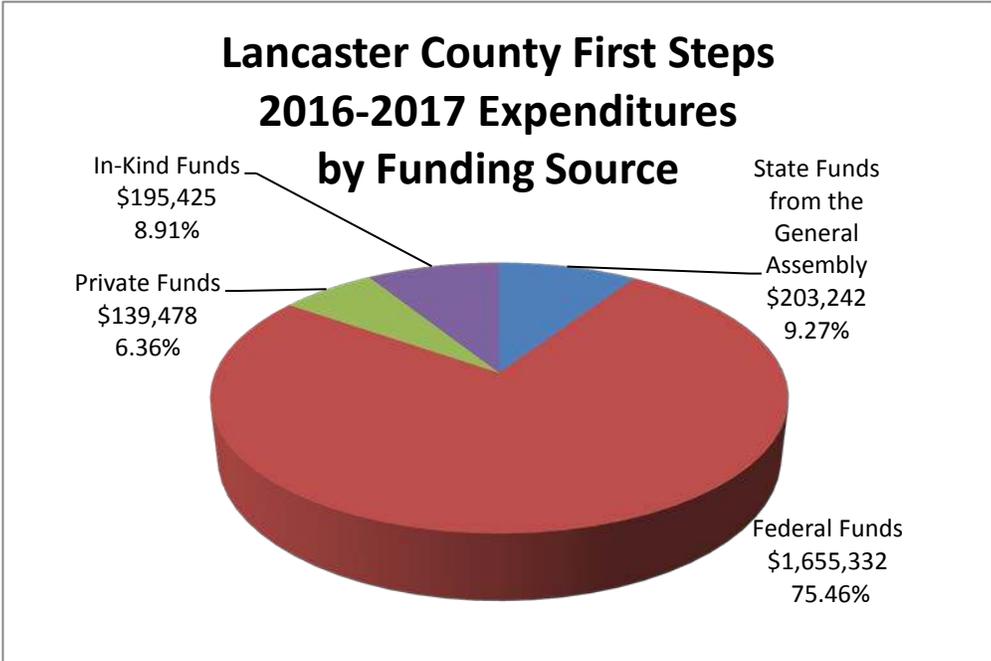
- ✓ Delivered 12,365 total backpacks to children at Clinton Elementary School and Brooklyn Springs Elementary School. Backpacks included non-perishable food items such as macaroni and cheese, canned goods, peanut butter, etc.
- ✓ On average 425 children were served each week.
- ✓ Ten (10) volunteers from the community assisted and made the program possible.
- ✓ Received funding from The Springs Close Foundation in conjunction with Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina.
- ✓ Served children in 4-K, Kindergarten, First Grade & Special Needs classrooms.

Thank you to our partners!

- The Springs Close Foundation
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina
- Christian Services
- Clinton Elementary School
- Brooklyn Springs Elementary School
- Community Volunteers

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Financial Impact



Total 2016-2017 Expenditures: \$2,193,478

State Funds Leveraged in 2016-2017*: 979.25%

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

2016-2017 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Federal \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2016-17 Expenditures
Family Literacy / Parenting	\$66,708	\$0	\$3,938	\$0	\$70,646	3.2%
Imagination Library	\$0	\$0	\$27,439	\$146,825	\$174,264	7.9%
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$8,706	\$0	\$30,223	\$6,161	\$45,089	2.1%
EHS-Child Care Partnership Grant	\$11,893	\$1,652,932	\$0	\$42,440	\$1,707,266	77.8%
Community Education	\$5,539	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,539	0.3%
Backpack Feeding Program	\$15,876	\$0	\$77,690	\$0	\$93,566	4.3%
Early Identification & Referral	\$38,071	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$38,071	1.7%
Program Support	\$24,491	\$0	\$189	\$0	\$24,680	1.1%
Administrative Support	\$31,958	\$2,400	\$0	\$0	\$34,358	1.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$203,242	\$1,655,332	\$139,478	\$195,425	\$2,193,478	

Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017

Since inception, Lancaster County First Steps has leveraged \$7,362,827 from sources outside of state government. That's \$1.65 for every state dollar!

COUNTING DOWN TO SUCCESS IN KINDERGARTEN *Countdown to Kindergarten*

Countdown to Kindergarten allows children and their parents/caregivers to become familiar with the learning standards for Kindergarten and to feel comfortable with their very own Kindergarten teacher and classroom. Lancaster County elementary school principals believe that it is vital to begin working with incoming students as soon as possible and welcome Countdown to Kindergarten in their schools year after year.

Tasha Fant, mother of an Erwin Elementary CTK participant, said: **“The Countdown to Kindergarten program has helped us through making the transition to school. It has made it a more comfortable one. I enjoyed getting to know Mrs. Bowers, and there was a trust built through the visits. Trinity looked forward to each and every visit. She would always say how fun and exciting it was to be given new things. My child has never been to a day care or in any functions that have taken her out of my sight. I say that to say my nerves were shot knowing that I would have to trust others to protect and guide her. This was an exciting experience, and I hope to enroll my two sons in the program in the upcoming years.”**



Sherry Bowers, a Kindergarten Teacher at Erwin Elementary, said: **“This is my 4th year with Countdown to Kindergarten. The reason that I choose to do this summer program is that I feel that forming a relationship with students and parents is the single most important aspect of beginning Kindergarten. For some students, this is the first time they have been in a formal school setting and they are extremely nervous and scared; however, once they get to know the teacher, the fear is often eliminated from the equation. This makes room for the student to enter kindergarten excited and eager to learn. I wish that all students had the opportunity to take advantage of this program!”**

Thank You to Our Partners!

Funding Support

State of South Carolina: \$220,020
(through South Carolina First Steps)

The Springs Close Foundation: \$86,700
(For Weekend Backpack Feeding Program)

The Springs Close Foundation: \$25,800
(For Countdown to Kindergarten Summer 2017)

United Way of Lancaster County: \$13,500
*(For Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and
 Countdown to Kindergarten)*

In-Kind Support for 2016-2017

Dollywood Foundation: \$146,825

Kaplan Early Learning Company: \$17,579

Lakeshore Learning Materials: \$3,032

Various EHS-CCP Consultants: \$25,242

Kids First Dental LLC: \$2,747

TOTAL IN-KIND FOR 2016-2017: \$195,425



Support Lancaster County First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or become a volunteer!

NUTRITION AND LEARNING GO HAND-IN-HAND *Weekend Backpack Feeding Program*

Brooklyn Springs Elementary and Clinton Elementary have the most at-risk elementary students in Lancaster County. To that end, the Weekend Backpack Feeding Program has been in operation at Clinton since September 2012 and at Brooklyn Springs since September 2015.

According to Ms. Shirnetha Stinson, Principal of Brooklyn Springs, ***“Each Friday, students receive a backpack of items that ensures a healthy meal is provided in their homes over the course of the weekend. Parents and students look forward to receiving the backpack, and many have called to show their appreciation. The students and parents are very grateful as beneficiaries of such an awesome program. The Weekend Backpack Program has had a wonderful impact on the students of both schools.”***



GIVING A HELPING HAND TO THOSE WHO NEED IT *Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership*

Babies throughout Lancaster County are getting a helping hand that will continue through their third year of life and will benefit the entire family.

Lancaster County First Steps was named the recipient of a \$6 million grant to establish an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership in 2015 to ensure that children in Lancaster County, from infancy to age 3, receive a healthy and enriching start in life. Awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the funding marks an effort to expand Head Start programming by 25 percent nationwide. Lancaster County First Steps will continue to receive funding for this program through 2019.

In addition to this grant providing high-quality child care, the partnership is moving families toward the important role of self-sufficiency. There is intense collaboration with the parents to best meet their needs, whether it is job training, medical care, nutrition education or other services.

Another component of the Early Head Start grant is professional development and coaching to improve caregivers' ability to provide early learning experiences that will promote the children's readiness to enter kindergarten. Three (3) local child care sites are partnering with Lancaster County First Steps in an effort to greatly improve the level of child care in Lancaster County. Two (2) teachers are assigned to each individual classroom serving eight (8) children.

Comprehensive services include mental health counseling if needed, medical exams and screening, nutrition education, dental screenings, early diagnosis of developmental delays or disabilities, adult education and job training, and efforts to support family stability.



Community Leadership in Early Childhood

OUR BOARD IS A STEP ABOVE THE REST

The Lancaster County First Steps Partnership Board is made up of talented local leaders who are strong advocates for the most at-risk children in Lancaster County. Our Board Members are creative individuals who join together to form an imaginative and innovative entity. This diverse body has served unselfishly, empowered staff members, engaged with the business leaders and policy makers in the Lancaster community, and managed resources purposefully to provide for the needs of young children. Each Board Member serves with dedication to make a compelling case for investing in early childhood education and helping our children imagine and achieve a better tomorrow.



First Steps makes a difference in the lives of children and families in Lancaster County!!!

Lancaster County First Steps Partnership Board, 2016-2017

Name	Position	Board Category
Dr. Paul N McKenzie <i>(Chairman)</i>	Lancaster County School District <i>(Office of R & D)</i>	Family Ed, Training & Support Provider
Denise Pettit <i>(Vice Chairman)</i>	Keller Williams Realty	Transportation Provider
Jackie Harris <i>(Secretary)</i>	Lancaster Children's Home / Lancaster City Council	Early Childhood Provider
Luke Knight <i>(Treasurer)</i>	F. Craig Wilkerson Law Offices	Lawyer <i>(As required by EHS Grant)</i>
Brian Bass	Founders Federal Credit Union	Parent of Pre-School Child
Dr. Carlton Rucker	Rucker Dentistry	Business Community
Celeste Graham	Southside Early Childhood Center	School District Representative
Charlene McGriff	Palmetto Citizens Against Sexual Assault <i>(PCASA)</i>	Non-Profit Organization
Crystal Adams	Lancaster County DSS	DSS Board Representative
Diane Harrell	CVS Minute Clinic	Healthcare Provider
Jan Blackwell	DHEC Region Immunization Coordinator	Healthcare Provider
Janet Ellis	Lancaster County DHEC	DHEC Board Representative
Jeffrey Chandler	Chandler's Collision Center	Business Community
Jennifer Wright	Lancaster County DHEC	DHEC Board Representative
LaVilla Brevard	Lancaster County School District @ Southside ECC	Faith Community / LCSD
Lisa Willis	Retired Elementary Teacher	Early Childhood Provider
Reo King	Retired Kindergarten Teacher	Early Childhood Provider
Sandra Meadows Jowers	Lancaster County School District <i>(South Special Needs)</i>	Pre-K thru Primary Educator
Unique Cunningham	Sunbelt Rental	Parent Rep <i>(As required by EHS)</i>
Veronica Thompson	Lancaster County Chief Financial Officer	Accountant <i>(As required by EHS)</i>

Getting children ready for school.

What is First Steps?

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness was created in 1999 by the South Carolina General Assembly for the purpose of **having every child in South Carolina arrive at kindergarten ready to learn**. Sadly, many South Carolina children possess one or more risk factors that put them at **high risk** (greater than a 1 in 3 chance) for **“early school failure”** – either being retained or scoring below grade level in reading or math – by third grade.

First Steps works to accomplish its mission through a state coordinating office and a network of county partnerships (46), each a private non-profit organization led by a board of early childhood stakeholders. With a modest recurring appropriation of state funding, First Steps leverages cash and in-kind resources at the federal, state and local level to improve services for young children in five strategy areas:

Family Strengthening

A parent is a child’s first and best teacher.

Healthy Start

Children’s development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health.

Quality Child Care

Access to high-quality child care is a critical component of a child’s healthy development.

Early Education

Quality preschool opportunities set the stage for success in school.

Early Intervention

Addressing disabilities and developmental delays early for positive outcomes.

School Transition

Preparing children and parents for a successful transition into kindergarten.

Each First Steps county partnership determines how to spend its funds based on a needs and resources assessment and collaboration with community partners to fill gaps in local services for young children and their families. First Steps has proven its impact through strong program and fiscal accountability and independent evaluations - a requirement of its enabling legislation.

All programs that receive First Steps funding must adhere to standards that require programs to be research-based and operated with fidelity; staff who have appropriate qualifications, training, and supervision; services to be comprehensive and coordinated with available community resources; standard assessment instruments that document client outcomes; and programs that target services to children most at-risk for not being developmentally ready for school.

The Goals of First Steps

- (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



EARLY HEAD START-CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP

Low-income families with children from birth to 36 months and families with infants or toddlers with special needs are invited to apply for this year-round, comprehensive program. Please call (803) 286-8068 or visit our office at 117 South Wylie Street.

Lancaster County
 First Steps

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