

UNION COUNTY



Getting children ready for school.



**Early Steps to School Success**

**Imagination Library**

**Countdown to Kindergarten**

**Childcare Training**

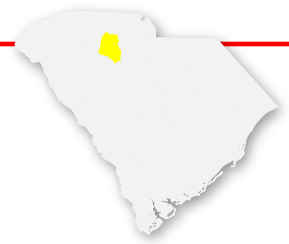
# Annual Report

2016-17



## OUR VISION:

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



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Union County
Children Under Five	293,134	1,561
Children In Poverty	24.4%	33.8%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Graders Scoring "Does Not Meet" Standard in Reading	22.2%	23.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.0%	18.5%

KIDS COUNT data provided by



- Since inception, Union County First Steps has leveraged \$1,144,580 from sources outside state government.
- **959 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 65 families in our Early Steps to School Success program
- **Childcare professionals received** 13 hours of instruction for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through **12 Parent/Child Group Activities**
- **Total Children Served in FY17: 994**

### Union County First Steps

120 Lakeside Dr.

Union, SC 29379

Phone: (864) 429-1748

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**Board Chair**

Connie Springs

**Executive Director:** Laura Wade

lwade@union.k12.sc.us

Union County First Steps

**Laura Wade**

**Executive Director**

Lots of exciting things are happening at Union County First Steps! Our partnership added another parent educator during the 2016-17 year. Thanks to our partnership with Union County Schools, Parent Educators are now located in three elementary schools in Union (Buffalo, Foster Park, and Monarch Elementary). This has allowed our services to be offered to 20 more families in the county!

Countdown to Kindergarten served 20 children through our partnership with Union County Schools. This program is designed to strengthen the transition to kindergarten for children and their families.

Our partnership with United Way of the Piedmont has allowed us to register 895 children in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program. This program allows children to receive a free book in the mail every month until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday!

Union County First Steps is very appreciative of our partnership with the Union County Carnegie Library. The two agencies have collaborated on projects (such as summer reading events and weekly story times) to further the reach of children and families receiving our services.

Our partnership with Spartanburg Community College and the City of Union have allowed us to offer quality instruction to local childcare workers at no cost to them.

Again, lots of exciting things are happening through Union County First Steps, and we look forward for lots more to come!



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

### County Programs

Early Steps to School Success

Child Care Training

Imagination Library

Countdown to Kindergarten

### State Programs

Head Start

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 Head Start expands quality early learning and family support to infants and toddlers.



**Early Intervention**

Children’s school readiness depends on their healthy growth and development. First Steps helps identify potential delays early through developmental screenings and referring children to BabyNet and other early intervention 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 are ultimately preparing children for school success.

**Based on the needs of our community, Union County First focuses its investments in.... Family Strengthening, Quality Childcare, and School Transition**

# Early Steps to School Success

**Parents play a critical role in their child's development.**

## 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.

1. **Personal Visits** at least twice monthly
2. **Monthly Group Connections** with other ESSS families
3. **Screenings and Assessments** to identify developmental concerns
4. **Connections to Outside Resources** that families may need to succeed

**Union County First Steps serves families in greatest need.**

64% ... live in poverty  
 20% ... didn't graduate from high school  
 4% ... were teen parents

## ESSS by the Numbers 2016-17

Families Served	65
Children Served	79
Parent/Child Groups	12
Number of Home Visits	959



**This year, our Early Steps program:**

- Averaged 15 home visits per family
- Gave out 1,212 books at home visits
- Completed screenings on all children enrolled
- Added another home visitor (with a total of 3 now serving Union County)

## Thank you to our partners!

**Union County Schools**  
**Save the Children**

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

**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.



Children age birth to 5 receive a free book in the mail every month!.

## Imagination Library by the Numbers, 2016-17

Children Served	895
Books Given to Children 0-5	9688



**Thank you to our partners!**

**Dollywood Foundation**  
**United Way of the Piedmont**

**Union County First Steps**  
120 Lakeside Dr.  
Union, SC 29379  
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# 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.

“Great class and great instructor! Very informative about autism and ADHD. Class should help all teachers be able to recognize the symptoms of these conditions in a child and be more understanding.”

Pat Hendrix (Bethel Child Care Director)

**Child Care Training Sponsored by  
 Union County First Steps, 2016-17**

Topics:

- \*Emergent Literacy in Two Languages
- \*Effective Teaching Strategies
- \*Block Play
- \*Physical Activity (Sing & Dance for Fun & Fitness)
- \*Environmental Safety



Local childcare training class on the topic of “More than a Label”: Autism and ADHD (instructor: Joni Whisenant)

## Training by the Numbers, 2016-17

Total Training Attendance	113
Child Care Teachers and Directors Served	26
Number of Training Sessions Offered	6

**This year, our Training program provided:**

- ✓ 26 early childhood staff with high quality training
- ✓ 13 hours of registered training for staff to meet annual re-certification requirements

***Thank you to our partners!***

- City of Union
- Spartanburg Community College
- Union County Schools

**Union County First Steps**  
 120 Lakeside Dr.  
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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 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.

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.

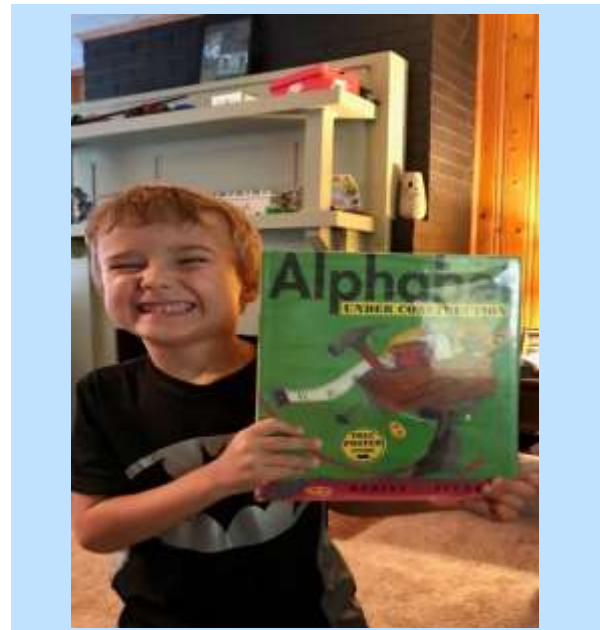
**Learning Celebration.** The last visit is a "field trip" to the school where the child will attend class in the fall.

**Public Awareness.** Throughout the summer, First Steps releases tips to media to help parents and caregivers get children ready for kindergarten.

## \*CTK by the Numbers, Summer 2016

Children Served	20
Families Served	19
Home/School Visits	119

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



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.

When asked about the best part of the CTK experience, one parent said: "Her getting to know her teacher so well before school so she won't be so scared."

**Thank you to our partners!**

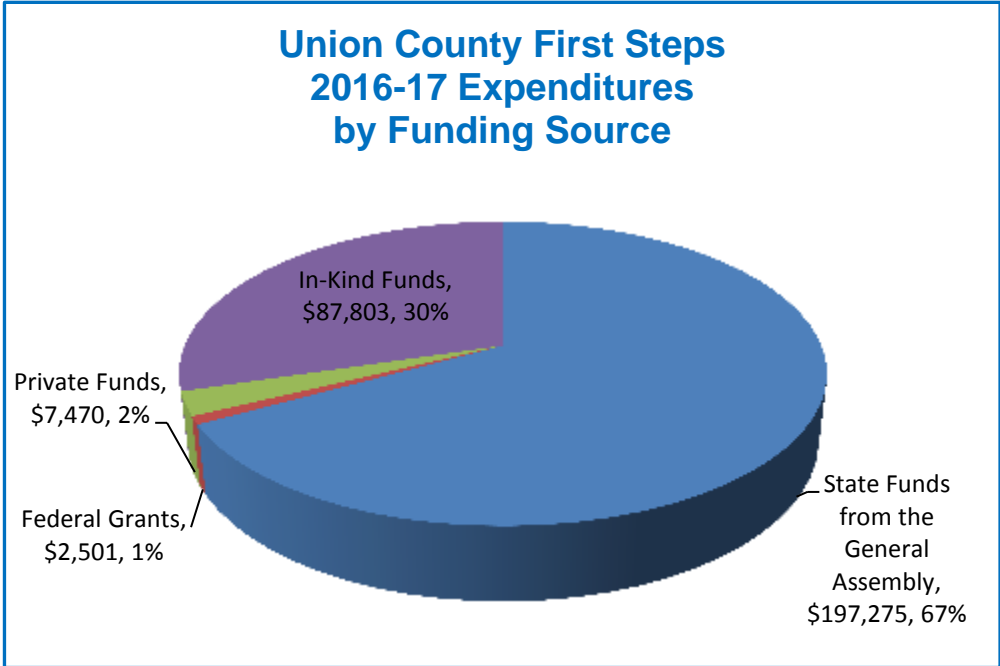
**Union County School District**  
**Kaplan Early Learning Company**

Like us on Facebook!  
Countdown to Kindergarten-South Carolina:



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# Financial Impact



**Total 2016-17 Expenditures: \$295,049**

**State Funds Leveraged in 2016-17\*: 50%**

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

<b>2016-17 Expenditures by Strategy</b>						
	<b>State \$</b>	<b>Federal \$</b>	<b>Private \$</b>	<b>In-Kind \$</b>	<b>Total \$</b>	<b>% of 2016-17 Expenditures</b>
Early Steps to School Success	\$120,288	\$0	\$5,460	\$35,821	<b>\$161,569</b>	<b>55%</b>
Imagination Library	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$26,850	<b>\$26,850</b>	<b>9%</b>
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$2,694	\$2,501	\$0	\$0	<b>\$5,195</b>	<b>2%</b>
Child Care Training	\$16,194	\$0	\$1,000	\$6,283	<b>\$23,477</b>	<b>8%</b>
Program Support	\$42,178	\$0	\$875	\$14,137	<b>\$57,190</b>	<b>19%</b>
Administrative Support	\$15,921	\$0	\$135	\$4,712	<b>\$20,768</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$197,275</b>	<b>\$2,501</b>	<b>\$7,470</b>	<b>\$87,803</b>	<b>\$295,049</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

**Since inception, Union County First Steps has leveraged \$1,144,580 from sources outside of state government.**



# Thank you supporters!

Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Union County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

## Funding Support

State of South Carolina: \$200,000 (*through South Carolina First Steps*)

United Way of the Piedmont: \$6,200

City of Union: \$1,000

## In-Kind Support

Save the Children

Union County School District

United Way of the Piedmont



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



Thanks to all who assisted in making this year's Touch-A Truck event a success!

Special thanks for cash donations from:

\*Lockhart Power

\*State Farm (Brian Tolbert)

## Union County First Steps Partners with Union County Carnegie Library

Union County First Steps provided funds for the purchase of “learning kits” for child care centers and for individual families. The larger kits contain various learning tools centered around a particular topic (such as emotions, colors, etc) These kits can be checked out by local childcare workers to use in their classroom settings. Smaller kits are available in bookbags to be checked out by families to be used at home. These have been a popular item at Union Carnegie Library!



Union County First Steps  
provides Story Times  
Throughout the Community

Union County First Steps offers various Story Time opportunities throughout the year, and throughout the community. During the summer, Story Times are offered at a local childcare facility and at a local community center. There are also seasonal Story Times offered at another local community center. Through a partnership with the Union Carnegie Library, Story Times are offered throughout the year at the Library. These opportunities are advertised through local media and at the Union Carnegie Library.





# Getting children 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;
- (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 with Medicaid-eligible children who live in eligible school districts can contact any participating provider to complete an application for free, full-day 4K. To view a list of participating First Steps 4K providers, visit:

<http://scfirststeps.org/4k>



### EARLY HEAD START – CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP

Low income families with children 0-36 months, and families with infants or toddlers with special needs, are invited to apply for this year-round, comprehensive program. Available in the following counties: Allendale, Anderson, Bamberg, Berkeley, Dillon, Georgetown, Laurens, Lexington, Newberry, Orangeburg, Saluda and York, and coming soon to Fairfield and McCormick counties. To apply, visit:

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



[I CAN] is First Steps' public awareness campaign for school readiness, in support of the state's Profile of the Ready Kindergartener. Includes resources for parents, providers and communities to learn what they can do to support school readiness.

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