

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

Short Summary

South Carolina First Steps is a state legislated program whose focuses are school readiness for all of South Carolina's children and ensuring that each child is prepared to reach his or her full potential. Working with many partners, First Steps uses data to identify children most at-risk for school failure, and works to provide them with early learning supports that make the difference for school and life success.

There are many programs and innovations in public policy found under the umbrella of First Steps. Below are taken from the SC First Steps web site:

--Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) 4-Year-Old Kindergarten: Created in 2006 in response to the court ruling in South Carolina's school equity funding lawsuit, the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) provides high-quality pre-kindergarten to children in the plaintiff communities. During the 2007-2008 school year, First Steps has expanded 4K access to nearly 500 South Carolina children through a network of more than 40 private providers who meet high quality standards.

--Centers of Excellence: Providing comprehensive services to at-risk children aged 0-4, the First Steps Centers of Excellence (COE) model provides scholarships, parenting and health services within early care settings receiving ongoing technical assistance and intensive professional development. Expanded by the South Carolina General Assembly in June of 2006, the Centers of Excellence model currently operates with dedicated funding in 17 centers across 11 counties, and with County Partnership and/or philanthropic funds supporting nine additional sites.

--Early Reading First: In July 2007, First Steps launched The South Carolina Early Reading Collaborative with the support of a highly-competitive Early Reading First grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Designed to enhance early literacy practices throughout Lee and Darlington Counties, First Steps' project is currently providing enhanced services and intensive classroom coaching within six public and private sites.

--Nurse-Family Partnership: During 2008, First Steps played an integral role in enabling the pending launch of six Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) sites across South Carolina. Braiding First Steps' own \$1 million public investment with additional support from The Duke Endowment and other partners, these projects are projected to provide as much as \$21 million in service to low-income, first time mothers across South Carolina.

--Child Care Workforce Development Pilot: Advancing the Early Care and Education Workforce: An innovative project unique to South Carolina, this project uses U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Investment Act funds to increase the enrollment of child care teachers -- particularly those in high-need, rural areas -- in post-secondary courses designed to increase their early childhood credentials. This pilot project is a companion to S.C. First Steps' [Centers of Excellence](#) (COE) initiative, targeting the 180 staff members of the 17 COE sites.

--Early Steps to School Success: South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness and Save the Children -- an international non-profit working to improve the odds for children in poverty around the world -- have entered into a partnership to implement the nationally-acclaimed literacy program, Early Steps for School Success (ESSS). The program provides education and literacy services to families with children under 5 years old, including regular visits by literacy specialists to families at home-instilling critical

building blocks for reading in their young children. Recognizing the shared goal of promoting school readiness for children most at risk, South Carolina First Steps and Save the Children provided matching grant opportunities for First Steps County Partnerships and partner rural school districts.

Demographics

- *Target Settings:* SC 340,000 children under the age of six
- *Target Groups Served:* At Risk preschool children
- *Schools/Districts Served:* Each county in SC is served and has their own program

Research and Evaluation

The development of program/initiative is based on/grounded in what research? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works. Description of data collection and analysis should be included.

See <http://www.scfirststeps.org/fy08annualreport/fy08fam.htm>

Program Resources

- *Annual Cost:* <http://www.scfirststeps.org/fy08annualreport/financials.htm> - see also the link on this page to each individual county
- *Funding Sources:* Set up as a 501c status - State allocated dollars; private and public funds; federal grants; planned gifts
- *Staffing Needs:* Varies by site/program
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* Varies by site/program
- *Partner Organizations:* Community and business organizations, faith based organizations, early education professionals, parents

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