



South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees

May 29, 2015, 10:30am
The Garden Room
St. Martin's-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church

Meeting Minutes

Members Present (13):

Ken Wingate, Chair
Superintendent Molly Spearman
Senator Mike Fair
Representative Jerry Govan
Julie Hussey, Vice-Chair
Lisa Van Riper, Secretary
Julia-Ellen Davis
Walter Fleming
Rick Noble
Mary Lynne Diggs
Sue Williams
Tim Holt
Roger Pryor

Members Absent (12):

Representative Rita Allison - Excused
Senator Gerald Malloy- Excused
Lisa Van Riper, Secretary - Excused
Judith Aughtry - Excused
Reece Yandle - Excused
Susan Alford - Excused
Evelyn Patterson - Excused
Alexia Newman - Excused
Christian Soura - Excused
Tracy Lamb - Excused
Beverly Buscemi - Excused
Jennifer McConnell - Excused

Others Present:

Bryan Kost- SC DHHS
Amber Gillum - SC DSS
David Goodell - SC DDSN
Rosemary Wilson - SC DHEC

Lisa Dial –Senate Fair’s Office
Pierce McNair – House Education Committee
Bunnie Ward – Education Oversight Committee
Joseph Saunders – SC Department of Education
Candi Lalonde – Edgefield County First Steps
Deb Padgett – Saluda County First Steps
Amy Breault – Horry County First Steps
Dave Wilson – McAlister Communications
Susan DeVenny – SC First Steps
Dan Wuori – SC First Steps
Mark Barnes – SC First Steps
Debbie Robertson - SC First Steps
Betty Gardiner – SC First Steps
Samantha Ingram – SC First Steps
Christine Willis – SC First Steps

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Wingate welcomed the Board and called the meeting to order at 10:41 a.m. He reminded those gathered that the meeting was being held in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act. Because a quorum was not present as the meeting opened, Mr. Wingate noted action on prior board minutes would be deferred until June 18, 2015.

Mr. Wingate informed the board of Senator Gerald Malloy’s recent appointment to the board.

Mr. Wingate provided a brief chairman’s report, noting that the Study Committee and the House Legislative Oversight Committee are still actively reviewing First Steps. Senator Fair spoke about the work of the Study Committee and the strengths of the First Steps organization. Mr. Wingate gave remarks regarding the committee’s work and noted that the Committee will provide recommendations to the General Assembly, including whether First Steps should become a stand-alone agency, remain within the budget structure of the Department of Education, be relocated to another agency, or any alternative structure the study committee may deem fit.

Mr. Wingate gave a brief overview of the upcoming county partnership site visits. Ms. Susan DeVenny introduced Ms. Candi Lalonde and Ms. Deborah Padgett, who provided a brief presentation to the Board on “reflective practice.” The Board then discussed the goals of the partnership site visits, which are to: 1) Identify each partnership’s greatest achievements and challenges, 2) strengthen state and local relationships, and 3) identify specific partnership needs, and 4) inform the strategic plan. Ms. Lalonde and other board and staff members described the first site visit in Edgefield County, and noted the engaged conversation between all participants. Mr. Wingate strongly encouraged each board member to plan to attend one or more local site visits, scheduled throughout June and July.

Mr. Wingate noted the prospect of hosting a fall 2015 Summit for the Child with the Governor's Office as a collaborative effort between public and private agencies serving children, those represented on the First Steps Board of Trustees, other partners, national speakers, and potential corporate sponsors.

School Readiness Trends 2014-15

Ms. DeVenny introduced Dr. Joe Saunders, SC Department of Education (SCDE), to provide results of the Circle early literacy assessment. Superintendent Molly Spearman addressed challenges experienced with the Circle's 2014-2015 implementation, including errors in files provided by the vendor. Because of concerns over the vendor's establishment of cut-points within the data, only raw score data will be reported by the Department of Education.

Superintendent Spearman noted that Senate proviso language recommends a different assessment tool, the DRA+, for use in five-year-old kindergarten during 2015-2016. The same proviso would permit districts a choice of three assessment tools for four-year-old kindergarten. Ms. Bunnie Ward stated that the Education Oversight Committee will include assessment recommendations from the SCDE and SC First Steps in their report to the General Assembly.

Dr. Dan Wuori provided a brief report on First Steps' use of the Circle, noting that despite concerns shared with the Department, raw data indicated substantial gains for First Steps' 4K students. Dr. Wuori noted that First Steps classrooms utilized the Circle at beginning, middle and end of the school year, and that the tool was provided to tuition-based students on a voluntary basis. In regards to students failing to reach proficiency by the end of the 4K year, Dr. Wuori reported that First Steps was considering a number of options, including a transition program, similar to Countdown to Kindergarten. First Steps is also piloting use of JumpStart, a computer-based learning tool in collaboration with the Waterford Institute.

Ms. DeVenny shared the preliminary results from the survey, "How Are the Children." According to survey results, the greatest needs of SC families include: quality childcare, increased parental involvement, a need for information and resources including medical care and nutrition, food security, employment and safe neighborhoods.

First Steps' 2015 Strategic Planning Process

Ms. DeVenny gave a presentation of the Strategic Planning Process and showed the "Draft Strategic Plan and Timeline" to the board.

Director's Report

Ms. DeVenny provided a written Director's Report. Mr. Mark Barnes briefed the group on the FY16 Budget and reported that the legislative process is nearing conclusion, with increases for both local partnerships and BabyNet. Mr. David Goodell spoke to the group about an autism initiative supported by SC DHHS.

Ms. Mary Lynne Diggs noted key details pertaining to Early Head Start and Head Start governance, the "Final Rule 1305" and the federal requirements of a Head Start board. Mr. Walt Fleming informed the group of the number of certified Head Start trainers in SC and encouraged First Steps to look within the state when searching for qualified trainers.

The Board entertained a motion by Mr. Ken Wingate to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. A second was made by Mr. Walt Fleming and the board went into Executive Session at 2:25 p.m. The Board exited executive session at 3:20pm.

No action was taken. There being no further business the Board adjourned at 3:20pm.