



Getting children ready for school.

SOUTH CAROLINA

MEASURING OUTCOMES
for SOUTH CAROLINA'S CHILDREN

December 2014



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MEASURING OUTCOMES for SOUTH CAROLINA'S CHILDREN

South Carolina First Steps is preparing the state's young children for school success.

With measurable outcomes across each of its six school readiness strategy areas, First Steps is getting results.

This report includes a summary of key outcomes in each of those six strategy areas.





School readiness starts with healthy children. First Steps is the state sponsor of **Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)**, an evidence-based home visitation program matching nurse home visitors with first-time, low-income mothers. A recent birth-outcome analysis conducted by DHEC's Bureau of Maternal Child Health showed that low-income mothers receiving this evidence-based nurse home visitation program were:

- **63% less likely** to require admission to a **neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)**
- **Half as likely** to be **born pre-term** (less than 37 weeks)
- **Half as likely** to be born at a **low birth weight**

Independent research suggests that 52% of SC children born at an extremely low birth weight fall into one or more categories of school failure (retention, achievement) by the third grade, making preventative programs such as NFP critical to improving early school success.

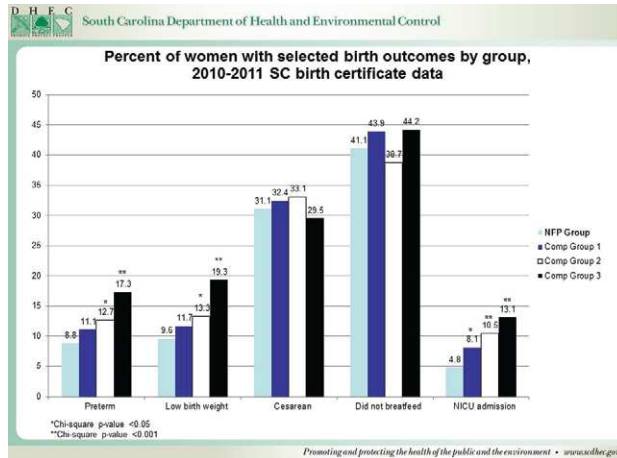
Brought to South Carolina by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees and The Duke Endowment in 2008, Nurse Family Partnership has a large collaborative footprint in 2014, serving South Carolina mothers in more than 20 counties from nine regionally-based hubs. Since inception, South Carolina NFP has:

- Served **more than 2,700 low-income mothers** and their babies
- Delivered **more than 55,000 nurse home visits**
- Grown from an original client capacity of 600 to **more than 1,200 slots**.



HEALTHY START

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF NFP OUTCOMES: Birth Outcomes for SC NFP Clients Delivering Live Births in 2010-2011 (SC DHEC, Maternal Child Health Bureau - February 2013)



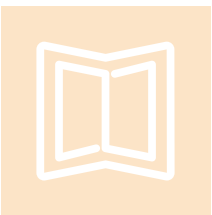
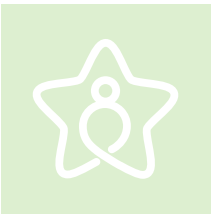
- NFP Group
- Comparison Group 1: All Medicaid Births
- Comparison Group 2: Medicaid Births at Hospitals Where NFP Clients Delivered
- Comparison Group 3: Medicaid Births at Hospitals Where NFP Clients Delivered
- with Clients Matched on Mother's Race,
Mother's Education and WIC Status

D H E C South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

Conclusions

- NFP participants differ substantially in terms of risk factors compared to potentially eligible non-participants, even in the same geographic areas.
- DHEC sites, live births in 2010-2011
- After accounting for these differences, these NFP participants have significantly lower prevalence of LBW, PTB, and NICU admissions.

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Families are a child's first and best teachers. First Steps supports parents statewide as they prepare their children for school success. First Steps is the state sponsor of **Parents as Teachers**, South Carolina's largest evidence-based parent education program. The state First Steps office serves as the PAT statewide technical assistance structure to all PAT programs at no cost to schools or communities. In addition, First Steps underwrites additional parenting models including **Parent-Child Home** and **Early Steps to School Success**. Since inception, First Steps has delivered **more than half a million parent education home visits** to help parents prepare children for school.

- In 2007, the SC First Steps Board of Trustees created **comprehensive, statewide program fidelity standards** that often exceed those of the national, evidence-based models on which they are based.
- **Evaluation Notes Significant Improvements in Parenting:** In a recent external evaluation, **66% of parents** who initially scored at a low level of parenting skill **improved their abilities to moderate or high levels** after participation in a First Steps parent education program. (HighScope, Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale Analysis, 2010)

"Under First Steps' leadership, Parents as Teachers in South Carolina has set the national example in fidelity and accountability. We hold you up to other states doing home visitation as an example of how it can be done right."

- Scott Hippert, CEO, Parents as Teachers National Office

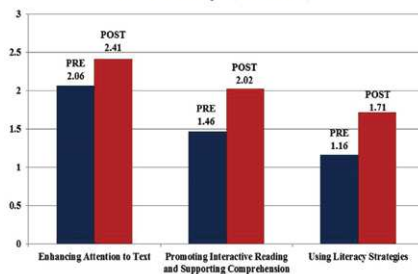
FAMILY STRENGTHENING

- **Evaluation Notes Significant Improvements in Interactive Literacy:** Both parents and children participating in First Steps family strengthening programs demonstrate improvements in early literacy, with parents increasing their use/demonstration of key early literacy strategies by 32% (pre to post) and children increasing their own demonstration of these behaviors by 33%. (HighScope, Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory Analysis, 2010)

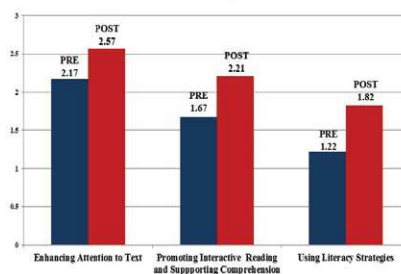
In October 2013, First Steps' *Parents as Teachers* program was honored by *The Riley Institute* at Furman University as one of three finalists for the *WhatWorksSC Award*.

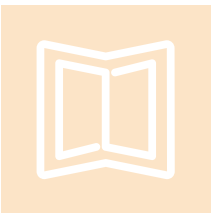
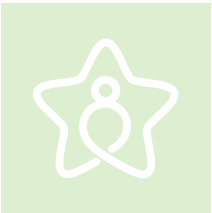
The Riley Institute
AT FURMAN

Child Literacy Outcomes as Measured by the Adult Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI)



Adult Literacy Outcomes as Measured by the Adult Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI)





Finding and serving children with developmental delays as early as possible can

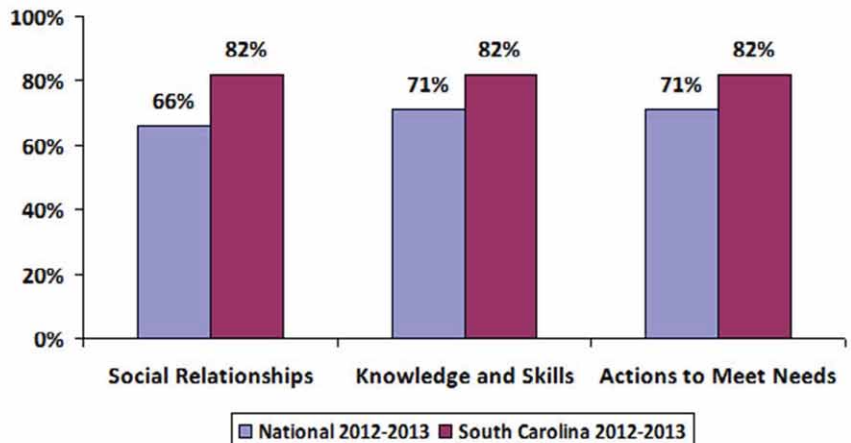


BabyNet

South Carolina's
Early Intervention System

reduce later remediation and can help children prepare for school success along with their typically developing peers. South Carolina's BabyNet Early Intervention System provides special education services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. The program's outcomes consistently meet or exceed national averages on measures of key school readiness skills.

Part C Early Intervention National and State Percentages
for Summary Statement 1



EARLY INTERVENTION

During SC FY13:

- 82% of enrolled children increased their **demonstration of positive social emotional skills** (16% above the national average of 66%)
- 82% increased their **acquisition and use of knowledge and skills** including **early language** (11% above the national average of 71%)
- 82% of BabyNet clients **increased their ability to use actions to meet their personal needs** (11% above the national average of 71%)
- 59% of children were **functioning within age expectations** by the time they exited BabyNet in the **use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs and demonstrating positive social-emotional skills** - both key prerequisites to school success.



Two-thirds of SC mothers with young children depend on child care providers to help care for their children during the work day. A child’s brain is forming rapidly during these early years so SC child care teachers are significant partners to families in helping children develop to be successful in school.

According to an independent analysis by the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, **child care providers** participating in First Steps’ quality improvement programs made **statistically significant gains in each of seven domains quality measured.**

Table 35. Pre and Post Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) Scores for Child Care Centers Participating in First Steps Child Care Quality Enhancement

ECERS Scale		Length of Participation (Months)							
		Overall		3 – 5		6 – 12 s		> 12	
		Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N
Overall Score	Pre	3.74	146	3.98	9	3.90	69	3.55	68
	Post	4.55		4.91		4.68		4.38	
		**		*		**		**	
Space and Furnishings	Pre	3.84	125	3.92	9	4.08	61	3.57	55
	Post	4.67		4.68		4.77		4.56	
		**		†		**		**	
Personal Care Routines	Pre	3.50	124	3.31	8	3.37	61	3.66	55
	Post	4.00		4.68		3.95		3.95	
		**		*		**		—	
Language- Reasoning	Pre	3.97	124	4.24	9	4.16	60	3.72	55
	Post	4.77		4.72		4.93		4.62	
		**		—		**		**	
Activities	Pre	3.06	125	3.70	9	3.21	61	2.79	55
	Post	4.21		4.68		4.40		3.93	
		**		*		**		**	
Interaction	Pre	4.64	125	4.96	9	4.69	61	4.54	55
	Post	5.26		5.37		5.22		5.29	
		**		—		*		**	
Program Structure	Pre	3.93	125	4.76	9	4.28	61	3.41	55
	Post	4.70		5.44		4.97		4.27	
		**		—		**		**	
Parents and Staff	Pre	4.67	66	5.0	4	4.71	37	4.57	25
	Post	5.16		5.9		5.07		5.18	
		**		—		*		*	

Note. **: $p < .01$; *: $p < .05$; †: $.05 > p < .10$; —: $p > .10$

QUALITY CHILDCARE

During FY14, First Steps:

- Provided quality-enhancement programming in 152 SC child care settings, enrolling 7,164 children.
- Made 3,370 on-site, provider visits.
- Provided 1,408 accredited child care training hours to 5,137 child care teachers, directors and staff.
- Provided preschool scholarships to 596 children, in 148 qualified private settings.

To enhance school readiness outcomes, First Steps works with partners in support of QUALITY CHILD CARE at state and local levels.





Research shows that quality prekindergarten can improve a child's success in school, particularly for low-income or disadvantaged students. Since the creation of the public-private CDEPP 4K model in 2006-2007, First Steps has **served more than 6,700 four-year-olds in private, community- and faith-based preschool settings**. A 2011 analysis of audited financial data suggests that **First Steps' private providers are serving children at a cost 20% lower** than that of their school district peers. The program has yielded consistently positive results:



- In 2010 the HighScope Educational Research Foundation highlighted CDEPP as one of a number of key outcomes, noting that private CDEPP students “were not significantly different in the odds of scoring on a higher level on every SCRA scale compared to full-day 4K and non-4K children. They also had significantly lower speech impairment and learning disability diagnoses. **This may demonstrate the potential for implementing public programs in private settings in a less expensive manner with similar results.** (Further Steps to School Readiness- High-Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2010)
- In 2011 the SC Education Oversight Committee’s initial evaluation of CDEPP concluded that: “Children’s findings for the cross-year sample indicate **modest and meaningful progress in language, achievement, and social and behavioral development.** Children’s retention of important educational skills also shows that the **competencies learned in pre-kindergarten were maintained through their kindergarten year.**” [Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP): 2009-10 Student and Classroom Assessment Report, 2011]

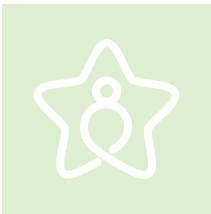
EARLY EDUCATION

- A 2013 analysis by the SC Education Oversight Committee suggests that students participating in the CDEPP 4K program - when matched against non-participating students with similar risk factors - were 7% more likely to score "Exemplary in Reading" as 3rd graders. These same students were 6% less likely to score "Not Met in Reading." (Report on PASS Performance of 2006-2007 & 2007-2008 CDEPP Cohorts, 2013)

Assessing Early Literacy in FY14

- During August and September of 2014, First Steps provided professional development to more than 300 teachers and center directors on the use of mClass Circle, the state's new school readiness assessment focused on early literacy.
- More than 99% of First Steps private 4K students were successfully assessed during the first 45 days of the 2014-2015 school year.
- All First Steps 4K students will participate in pre- and post-testing, exceeding the minimum requirement established by the SC Department of Education.



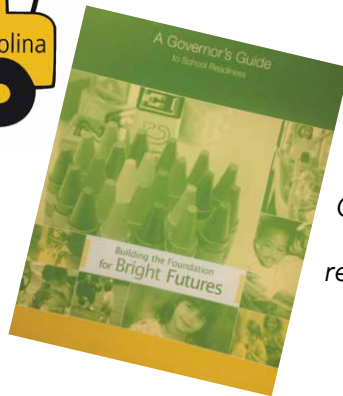


In 2003, SC communities reported a lack of school transition services for children. In collaboration with local and state agency partners, and funded by area philanthropies during the pilot year, SC First Steps created a model program to support this gap for families, schools, and communities. **Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a home visitation program** which matches families of **high-risk rising kindergartners with their upcoming 5K teachers** during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each family, centered on classroom and curriculum expectations.

- In 2009 the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation completed an external review of Countdown to Kindergarten, noting the strategy's potential to powerfully shape both subsequent interaction and classroom practice. Researchers noted that:
 - *"Over 75% of home visitors reported making **some or a great deal of change in their instruction, experiences, practices, activities on the first day of school and the methods by which they communicate with parents** as a direct result of their CTK experience."* And concluded that:
 - *"All participants, whether home visitor or parents, report the **significant impact this strategy has on professional practice, parent-teacher relationships, and parent participation in and child attitudes toward kindergarten.**"* (Further Steps to School Readiness- HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2010)

SCHOOL TRANSITION

- In 2013, 100% of participating teachers reported that Countdown to Kindergarten parents were as or more involved than non-participating parents. This included involvement in activities such as parent/teacher conferences, attending school events and activities, maintaining contact with teachers, and volunteering in classroom or school activities.
- During the summer of 2014, First Steps served 867 children and delivered 5,079 Countdown to Kindergarten home visits.



*In 2007, First Steps' Countdown to Kindergarten program was recognized as a promising state practice by the National Governor's Association in their report, Building the **Foundation for Bright Futures**.*

"Countdown is the greatest thing that's ever happened to children in South Carolina. The relationships built over the summer between the teacher and families created a trust and support that has helped the children blossom in kindergarten. The only way to break the cycle is to model for parents how effectively they can work with their own children through reading and playing and learning with hands on materials."

-Gayle Troutman, Kindergarten Teacher, Burnside Elementary School

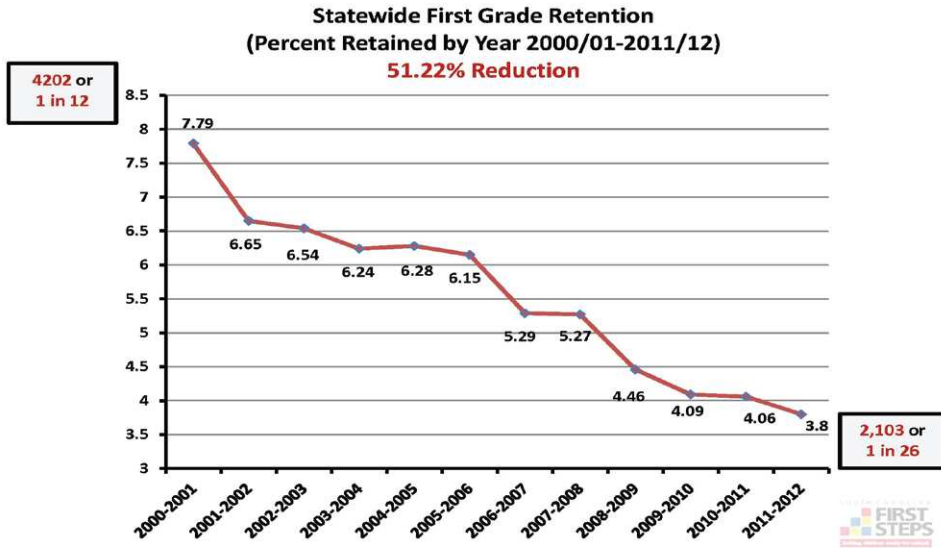
TRACKING SCHOOL READINESS at the POLICY LEVEL

In 2008 the General Assembly **eliminated the South Carolina Readiness Assessment**, our state's only common school readiness metric.

Since then, the First Steps Board of Trustees has tracked **1st grade retention** - not as a measure of First Steps' programs, which are themselves independently evaluated - but **as a measure of the state's collective success** in preparing young children for school.

Between 2000 and 2012, **first grade retention has decreased by 51% - resulting in an estimated, annual savings of \$23M to taxpayers.**

These figures are cause for celebration and attributable to parents, school districts, childcare, Head Start, agency partners, the faith and business communities - **all partners in policy making within First Steps' unique public-private, state-local structure.**



With passage of the SC Read to Succeed Act in June of 2014, the state has **reinstated a statewide readiness assessment (none has existed since 2008)**, which began in the 2014-2015 school year with the assessment of **early literacy competencies for all publicly-funded 4K and 5K students in SC.**

Mathematical thinking, social emotional development and physical development/health domains will all be assessed beginning no later than the 2016-2017 school year.

TARGETING CHILDREN AT RISK OF EARLY SCHOOL FAILURE

A January 2007 analysis by Dr. Baron Holmes of the SC Budget and Control Board explored the attributes of South Carolina children experiencing school failure by the 3rd grade (those children scoring in the Below-Basic category of the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test or who had been retained at least once). Dr. Holmes findings **suggest that a handful of predisposing risk factors are associated with particularly high rates of early school failure.**

Risk Factor	Percentage Failing by 3rd Grade	SC Children (Birth-6) Processing Risk Factor
Abuse, Neglect, Foster Care	53%	3% (10,171)
Very Low Birth Weight (<3.3 lbs)	52%	2.11% (7,170)
Low Maternal Education (< 12th)	48%	24.1% (81,852)
T.A.N.F. (50% Federal Poverty)	45%	8.4% (28,690)
Low Birth Weight (3.3-4.4 lbs)	43%	2.77% (9,390)
Teen Mother (<18)	43%	4.6% (15,618)
Food Stamps (130% Federal Poverty)	42%	20% (67,897)
Teenage Mother (18- 20)	37%	8.83% (29,946)
Low Birth Weight (4.4-5.5lbs)	36%	5.53% (18,780)

Using this risk data, the First Steps Accountability Standards require that local programming be targeted at children and families most at-risk - **with most First Steps clients possessing two or more risk factors.**



LEGISLATIVE GOALS

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.



Getting children ready for school.

SOUTH CAROLINA

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