

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

2017-2018



OUR VISION:

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

www.lancastercountfirststeps.org

121 S Wylie St, Lancaster, SC 29720 ♦ (803 286-8000) ♦ LC1stSteps@comporium.net

Director/Board Chair Message

THE ROAD TO IMPROVEMENT BEGINS WITH THE FIRST STEP

Since the inception of Lancaster County First Steps, the roadmap for decision making and service planning has focused on three key elements: (1) the use of rigorous local data to drive interventions, (2) a strong and prolific partnership with local public, private, civic and faith-centered stakeholders, and (3) reliance on strong research-based practices. Lancaster County First Steps is proud of our work to improve school readiness, increase the quality of early child care services, and efforts to strengthen families. We are especially proud of the selfless dedication and tireless work of the agency's Executive Director and staff. Together with the board, we continue to strive to do what matters most to improve the quality of life for children and families in our community.



Dr. Paul N. McKenzie

Board Chair of Lancaster County First Steps



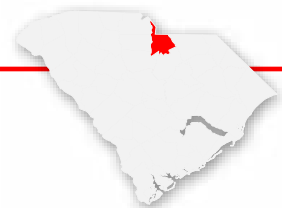
OUR MISSION:

Collaborating with other entities, Lancaster County First Steps helps Lancaster County families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance, and expand high-quality early childhood services.



Find Lancaster County First Steps:





THE NEED

School readiness **depends on the capacity of caregivers** to provide children with consistent, nurturing, and responsive relationships in safe, stimulating learning environments, **continuously**, starting at birth. Unfortunately, these quality early childhood experiences happen for too few children in Lancaster County.

How are Lancaster County's children doing?	What early learning programs are available for children in our county? Last year:	Where can families access child care in our county?
5,672 are under age 5	119 attended Early Head Start as infants and toddlers	20 licensed child care centers
20.5% live in poverty	63 attended free preschool or Head Start as 3-year-olds	4 licensed group/family homes
13.6% of babies born in 2016 were to moms without a HS diploma	148 4-year-olds attended free full-day public school 4K or Head Start	54.2% participate in the state's Quality Rating System (ABC Quality)
42.0% live in single parent homes	228 0-5 year olds received early intervention or special ed.	5 providers are rated B or higher by ABC Quality
34.3% of last year's kindergartners demonstrated readiness		370 families received assistance with affording child care last year
Kids Count data provided by:	Data provided by:	

THE GOALS

Our partnership's work, in collaboration with state and local partners, is focused on advancing Lancaster County towards these strategic goals in support of the **Profile of the Ready Kindergartner**, South Carolina's description of school readiness:

1. Increase efforts of working with county-wide partners to strengthen the early education initiatives in Lancaster County.
2. Integrate school readiness information within all Lancaster County partners.
3. Improve the capacity of staff, board and partners to carry out the mission, deliver and support evidence-based programs.
4. Increase revenue to build a sustainable and diversified funding stream.
5. Increase community awareness and support of Lancaster County First Steps' programs and services.

THE IMPACT

In 2017-18, Lancaster County First Steps provided:

- ✓ **1,674 children** and **1,263 adults** with **intensive support** to equip parents and caregivers with the confidence and competence to be a child's first and best teacher, and strengthen their family's health, economic, and overall well-being (*Incredible Years Parenting, Step By Step Resource Center, Imagination Library*)
- ✓ **46 staff** working in **15** child care providers, Head Start centers and preschool classrooms with training, technical assistance, resources and support, **helping them better meet the needs of 652 children ages 0-5 in their care** (*Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, BEE Program, Weekend Backpack Feeding Program*)
- ✓ **17,098 books** to **spark the love of reading** for **1,848 children** (*Imagination Library, BEE Program, Countdown to Kindergarten, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership*)
- ✓ a total of **4,511 children** and **2,541 adults** were impacted by Lancaster County First Steps programs, resources, activities and events.

School Readiness Outcomes

What is the KRA?

In 2017-18, kindergartners across the state were given for the first time South Carolina's newest assessment of school readiness: the **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment**, or KRA. The KRA provides a snapshot of students' abilities at the beginning of the school year, in four domains: Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Development and Well-Being. Here are the results locally and for the state:

LANCASTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT (1,018 children)			
Domain	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
Social Foundations	18%	21%	61%
Language&Literacy	26%	50%	24%
Mathematics	36%	41%	23%
Physical Dev&WB	20%	24%	56%
OVERALL	21%	45%	34%

SOUTH CAROLINA (54,927 children)			
Domain	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
Social Foundations	28%	27%	45%
Language&Literacy	23%	43%	34%
Mathematics	31%	38%	31%
Physical Dev&WB	28%	24%	48%
OVERALL	26%	38%	36%



- 1. Language and Literacy:** reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- 2. Mathematics:** counting, comparison, and sorting
- 3. Physical Well-Being & Motor Development:** dexterity, muscular coordination, and balance
- 4. Social Foundations:** following rules, asking for help, task persistence and other skills necessary to function within the kindergarten classroom

Demonstrating Readiness: student demonstrates foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards.

Approaching Readiness: student demonstrates some foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards

Emerging Readiness: student demonstrates limited foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards

What is Lancaster County First Steps doing to improve KRA results:

Lancaster County First Steps serves as the Early Education convener in Lancaster County. In this capacity, a community-wide needs assessment has been completed using the Analysis of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results. The KRA is a welcomed assessment of children entering kindergarten in the public schools. In the past, the lack of a reliable and valid measure of school readiness has been a significant obstacle facing First Steps and the network of early childhood education providers. Reviewing the 2017 report, the most recent data from the KRA reveals a dismal picture of school readiness for Lancaster County. The Clinton Elementary School attendance zone with 97% of children on free and reduced lunch, indicates that only 5.6% of the children meet the Math school readiness standard and 5.5% of the children meet the Literacy school readiness standard. While the county as a whole reports 34% overall scores in meeting the school readiness standards, it is evident that this area has the greatest need. First Steps has made a commitment to join "The Promise Neighborhood" initiative in the county, which targets this specific area. First Steps is leading the effort in working with other early childhood educators. Planning for specific programs to target the needs in the Clinton community is First Steps' priority. Presently, First Steps is applying for an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant to serve the children in the Clinton attendance zone in 2019. Incredible Years Parenting is being planned and will target parents of young children, Countdown to Kindergarten will serve all rising kindergarten children, and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program will serve additional children with a book a month for children under 5 living in the Clinton zone.

Community Education

Let's play, grow & learn together in Lancaster County!

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, 2017- 2018

Materials Distributed	1,111
Activities & Events Held	16
Total Attendance at Activities & Events	316

This year, our Community Education initiative:

- ✓ Invited the public to the Lancaster County First Steps Annual Meeting. 150+ individuals attended.
- ✓ Sponsored a Family Education Program, Mr. Popper's Penguins in collaboration with the Children's Theatre of Charlotte. This event was held at Lancaster High School; the entire community was invited.
- ✓ Sponsored a Family Educational Program, Winnie the Pooh at USC-Lancaster, for the community.
- ✓ Presented at the local Rotary Clubs.
- ✓ Served as the local Early Education convener for Promise Neighborhood Initiative.

Thank you to our partners!

Lancaster High School
The Children's Theatre of Charlotte
The Lancaster News
USC-Lancaster

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Phone: (803) 286-8000
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Website: www.lancastercountyfirststeps.org

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!

"Countdown to Kindergarten is a great program. My child got to meet her teacher and became very comfortable with her. Mrs. Robinson was so patient when she worked with Azayah. I loved seeing her face light up when she got the questions right! She learned so much this summer and so did I! Now I want to become more involved at her school.

Lakeisha Green, Mother of Azayah
(Erwin Elementary CTK Participant)

Lancaster County First Steps serves families in greatest need.

Among our Countdown to Kindergarten families:

- 2.68 ... risk factors per child (i.e., low maternal education, teen custodial parent, low birth weight, etc.)
- 77% ... live in poverty and/or receive free lunches
- 58% ... have never attended a full-time preschool outside of the home

*CTK by the Numbers, Summer 2017

Children Served	107
Families Served	105
Home/School Visits	642

*CTK program data is for June-August 2017, whereas CTK fiscal data includes expenditures from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018.

This year, our Countdown to Kindergarten program:

- ✓ 81% increase in children who knew, liked and trusted their teacher.
- ✓ 90% of parents understanding the expectations for Kindergarten.
- ✓ 47% increase in the amount of time parents spend reading to their children each week and 25% reported reading daily to their children at the completion of the program.
- ✓ All eleven (11) 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

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Our partnership's Countdown to Kindergarten program meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an *evidence-informed* program.



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 Partnership is 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, as well as, enhance local child care programs. LCFS EHS-CCP provides full day, full year services to the families we serve. 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, 2017-2018

Children Served	87
Providers Served	3
Funded Enrollment	72



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

- ✓ Received \$330,000 in supplemental funds to build three naturalized outdoor learning environments.
- ✓ Is partnering with three (3) local childcare 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 screenings.
- ✓ Implemented research-based curriculum and assessment system.
- ✓ Opened our 9th classroom to reach our full enrollment of 72 children.



Thank you to our partners!

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

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Our Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership program meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-based** program.



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, 2017-2018

Children Served	149
Materials Distributed	727
Children Referred to BabyNet, Local School or Other Services	6

This year, our Early Identification and Referral initiative:

- ✓ Chaired and acted as the community convener for the Lancaster County Early Identification and Referral Task Force.
- ✓ Increased public awareness in the importance of early identification of developmental delays and aided parents in navigating the sometimes complex referral process.
- ✓ Matched the needs of 36 children with the appropriate resources using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires as assessment tools. Eleven (11) children were also screened for autism with the MCHAT tool.

Thank you to our partners!

Early Head Start Child Care Partnership
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

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Early Identification and Referral meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-based** program.



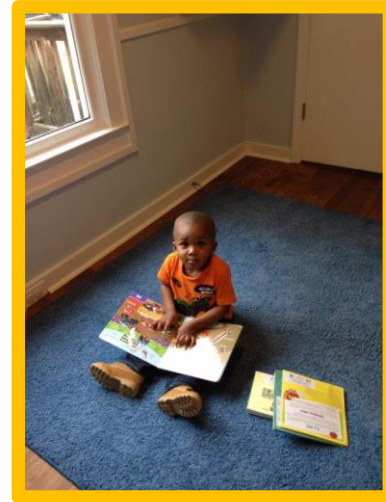
Children's reading scores improve dramatically when parents are involved in helping them learn to read.

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, the Imagination Library program has been active since 1995; currently books are mailed to over 1 million 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, 2017-2018

Children Served	1,554
Books Given to Children 0-5	14,244

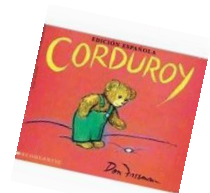
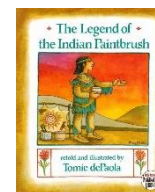
This year, our Dolly Parton Imagination Library program:

- ✓ Reports 96% of participants are extremely satisfied with the program.
- ✓ Increased literacy materials provided in every home served by this program.
- ✓ Served 82% greatest at-risk children.

Sponsor a child today for just \$30

Thank you to our partners!

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



Evidence of Effectiveness:

The Imagination Library program meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-based** program.



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.

Incredible Years Parenting & Step By Step Resource Center by the Numbers, 2017-2018

Children Served	120
Families Served	76
Training Sessions Offered	8



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

- ✓ 82% parents reported an increase in effective limit setting vs. spanking and harsh discipline.
- ✓ 73% parents reported an increase in praising instead of criticism and negative commands.
- ✓ 88% 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
Child Care Centers
Community Investment Partners**

Evidence of Effectiveness:

The Incredible Years Parenting program meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-based** program.



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, 2017-2018

Children Served	465
Total Backpacks Distributed	12,259



This year, our Weekend Backpack Feeding Program:

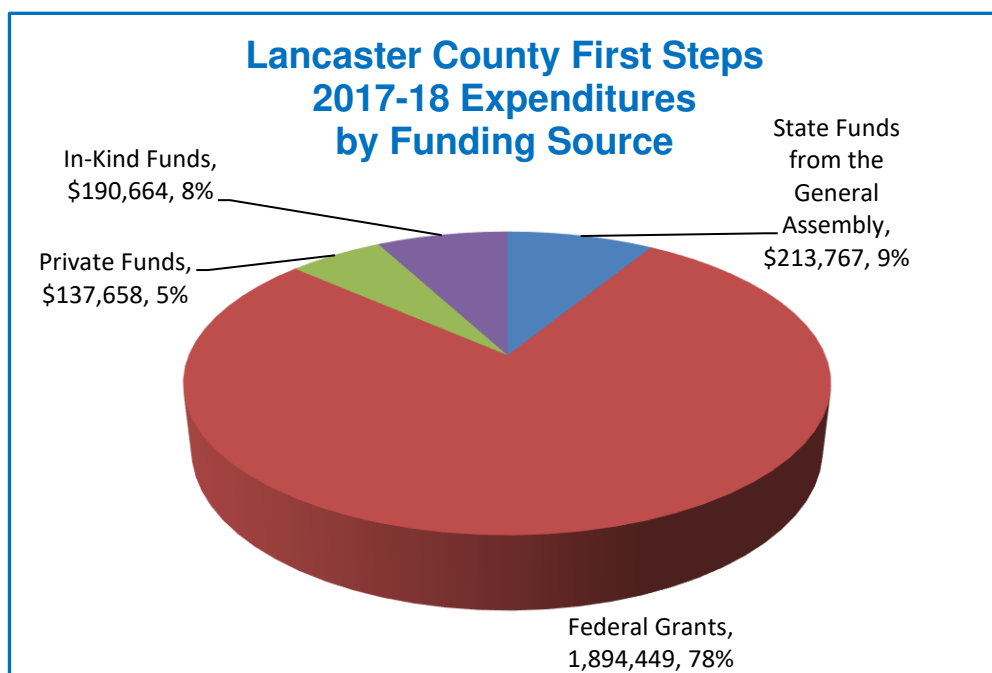
- ✓ Delivered 12,259 total backpacks to children at Clinton Elementary School and Brooklyn Springs Elementary School. Backpacks included non-perishable food items such as macaroni and cheese, canned goods, peanut butter, etc.
- ✓ On average 425 children were served each week during the school year.
- ✓ 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, Second & Third Grade & Special Needs classrooms.

Thank you to our partners!

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

Lancaster County First Steps
121 South Wylie St, Lancaster, SC 29720
Phone: (803) 286-8000
Email: LC1stSteps@comporium.net
Website: www.lancastercountyfirststeps.org

Financial Impact



Total 2017-18 Expenditures: \$2,436,538

State Funds Leveraged in 2017-18*: 1,040%

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

2017-18 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Federal \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2017-18 Expenditures
Family Literacy/Parenting	\$72,354	\$0	\$3,300	\$0	\$75,654	3%
Imagination Library	\$0	\$2,160	\$26,343	\$157,808	\$186,311	8%
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$4,724	\$0	\$30,810	\$2,950	\$38,485	2%
EHS-Child Care Partnership Grant	\$17,928	\$1,885,898	\$0	\$29,906	\$1,933,732	79%
Community Education	\$4,888	\$3,475	\$0	\$0	\$8,363	0%
Backpack Feeding Program	\$17,660	\$0	\$77,204	\$0	\$94,864	4%
Early Identification & Referral	\$41,851	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$41,851	2%
Program Support	\$33,042	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$33,042	1%
Administrative Support	\$21,321	\$2,916	\$0	\$0	\$24,237	1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$213,767	\$1,894,449	\$137,658	\$190,664	\$2,436,538	

Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018

Since inception, Lancaster County First Steps has leveraged \$9,585,598 from sources outside of state government. That's \$2.05 for every state dollar.

Thank you supporters!

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

Funding Support

EHS-CCP Grant: \$1,894,449

(To provide EHS-Child Care Partnership Program to Children 0-3)

State of South Carolina: \$216,158

(Through South Carolina First Steps)

The Springs Close Foundation: \$78,720

(For Weekend Backpack Feeding Program)

The Springs Close Foundation: \$18,000

(For Countdown to Kindergarten Summer 2018)

United Way of Lancaster County: \$13,500

(For Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and Countdown to Kindergarten)

In-Kind Support for 2017-2018

Dollywood Foundation: \$157,808

Kaplan Early Learning Company: \$2,950

Lakeshore Learning Materials: \$11,577

Various EHS-CCP Consultants: \$15,296

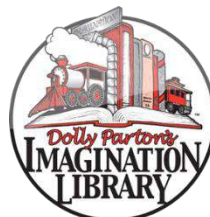
Kids First Dental LLC: \$3,034



How your support helps children in Lancaster County:

- ✓ \$30 provides a young child a book per month for one year!
- ✓ \$200 per year feeds a child during the school year on weekends. This is provided by our "Weekend Backpack Program" at two of the most at-risk elementary schools in our county.
- ✓ Countdown to Kindergarten provides children with the skills to begin school ready to succeed at a cost of \$7 a week.
- ✓ \$100 provides families with Incredible Years Parenting supplies for a 14 week session.

Thank You to Our Exceptional Community Partners and Collaborators!



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

COUNTING OUR SUCCESSES ON THE ROAD TO KINDERGARTEN

Countdown to Kindergarten

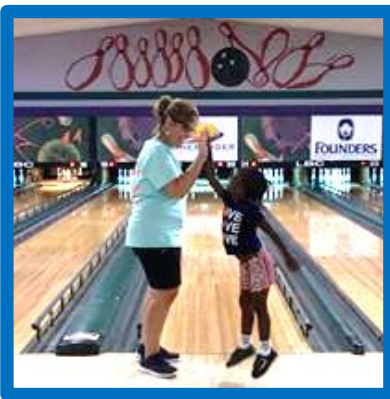
Countdown to Kindergarten allows children and their parents/caregivers to become familiar with the learning standards for Kindergarten and to feel comfortable with their assigned Kindergarten teacher and classroom. Lancaster County elementary school principals believe that it is vital to begin working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

Larisha Thompson, mother of an Erwin Elementary Countdown to Kindergarten participant, said: **"I love all of the different ways of learning that Mrs. Cynthia Robinson used with London, especially the pan with the magnetic numbers and letters. She learned to count and to spell her name and many other words. She would play with them even when Mrs. Robinson was not at our house. London thought she was playing with a new toy, and didn't realize how much she was really learning. Thank you for the nice backpack of materials. She will be able to use this all year at school."**



Dawn Bowers, a 4-K Teacher at Kershaw Elementary, said:

"We had a great 'First Day' of Kindergarten. The students that participated in the Countdown to Kindergarten program were well prepared and more comfortable in comparison to the ones that did not. They were familiar with the classroom setting: their seat, cubby, learning centers, and especially with me, their teacher. The positive results of the Countdown to Kindergarten program are worth the time and effort required of the teacher. I enjoyed getting to know each of my students and their families and am so proud of each one and what they learned and retained over the summer. I am glad that I was able to be for a part of the Countdown to Kindergarten program for Kershaw Elementary and am looking forward to a great school year."



Christy Haynes, mother of an Erwin Elementary Countdown to Kindergarten participant, said: **"Countdown to Kindergarten is a great program!!! Getting to know my child's teacher one on one before school starts is a major benefit. Watching Aubrey's face light up and become so excited when it was Countdown to Kindergarten day and she knew her teacher was coming to our home. It also helped her to be more comfortable and not as scared when school started. She was prepared and knew so much more than she did before Countdown to Kindergarten. I was not as nervous about her starting school, because I know her teacher now, too. I know Aubrey is in good hands and is going to do really well in kindergarten this year."**



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

GIVING A HELPING HAND TO THE YOUNGEST AND MOST AT-RISK

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 for years to come. 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. With this current grant, Lancaster County First Steps will continue to receive funding for the 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.



Here are some of the exciting accomplishments that occurred because of the EHS-CCP program:

- One parent got a job promotion
- Three sets of parents got married
- One parent graduated high school in 2018
- Multiple parents graduated college or finished job trainings
- Multiple parents obtained jobs that they did not have before due to not having child care
- Multiple parents started college classes
- One EHS parent/teacher promoted from within
- One mother completed 11th grade and began her senior year of high school (set to graduate in 2019)

Below are some quotes from parents who participated in the program:

- "I loved the Early Head Start program. My son loved his teachers and all the staff at Greater New Hope. I wish First Steps offered a Head Start program for my son now that he has transitioned out of Early Head Start!" – Parent of Greater New Hope Participant
- "We have LOVED the program and my son has learned so much. I am truly grateful for his teachers. He adores them both!" – Parent of Buford Child Development Center Participant
- "First Steps EHS-CCP has tremendously helped my children (and me!) by providing a safe, loving, nurturing environment to learn in. I can always count on Ms. Denise and Miss Haven whenever a crisis occurs. They have made the past two years in the program the best experience ever!" – Parent of Southside Participant



First Steps Partnership Board

OUR BOARD IS A STEP ABOVE THE REST



The Lancaster County First Steps Partnership Board is made up of exceptional individuals who are strong advocates for the most at-risk children in Lancaster County. Our Board Members Are Community Leaders, Business Owners, and Educators who join together to form an imaginative and innovative entity. This diverse group of dedicated individuals has worked beyond measures to empower staff members, engage with the business leaders and policy makers in the Lancaster community, and obtain resources purposefully used to provide for the needs of at-risk 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, 2017-2018

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>)
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
Jan Blackwell	DHEC Region Immunization Coordinator	Healthcare Provider
Shirnetha Belk	Retired Educator	Early Childhood Provider
Jeffrey Chandler	Chandler's Collision Center	Business Community
Jennifer Wright	Lancaster County DHEC	DHEC Board Representative
Reo King	Retired Kindergarten Teacher	Early Childhood Provider
Saundra Meadows Jowers	Lancaster County School District (<i>South Special Needs</i>)	Pre-K thru Primary Educator
Jawanna Massey	DHEC Region Immunization Coordinator	Parent Rep (<i>As required by EHS</i>)
Veronica Thompson	Lancaster County Chief Financial Officer	Accountant (<i>As required by EHS</i>)
Unique Cunningham	Sunbelt Rentals	Parent Rep (<i>As required by EHS</i>)

What is First Steps?

At the state level and in every county, First Steps leverages state funding with other public and private resources to help South Carolina's children enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. First Steps programs and services support families as their child's first and most important teacher and are customized to meet the unique needs of local communities, grounded in strong evidence, fueled by stakeholder collaboration, and accountable for results.

First Steps 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.

First Steps Building Blocks of Quality Early Childhood Programs and Services



Healthy
Start



Family
Strengthening



Early
Intervention



Quality
Child Care



Early
Education



School
Transition

From Greenville to Charleston, Abbeville to York, First Steps local partnerships serve as ...

Local portals connecting preschool children and families to services

Conveners of community stakeholders to address the needs of young children and their families

Champions of the importance of school readiness to our children's future.



for South Carolina First Steps:

scfirststeps.org

for Lancaster County First Steps:

lanastercountfirststeps.org



[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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