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Chester County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2007 Annual Report*

Summary

Numbers Served:

408 children; 328 adults/families; 12 child care facilities with 415 children total at those facilities; 0 child care centers achieved an official higher quality status; 80 higher adult education levels achieved; 3 health assessments and screenings; 278 home visits; 55 staff trained; 160 4-K slots and 4,932 books distributed.

Total Budget:

\$341,683

Chester School Readiness Profile

Population Characteristics	Figure
Population of Young Children (Ages 0-5)	2,672 8 %
Children Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch (5K)*	63 %
Average Per Capita Personal Income	23,415
Children in Poverty (Ages 0-5)***	24 %
Children Who Are Over Age in Third Grade**	36 %
Children in Third Grade Performing below Basic on PACT Reading **	21%
Children in Third Grade Performing below Basic on PACT Math**	30%
Low Birth Weight Infants	10 %
Births to Mothers with Less than High School Education	31%
Less than Adequate Prenatal Care	52%

*Note: Data is for 2005 except where noted (*2006, **2004, ***2000).*

Profile Comments:

The status of children and families in Chester County reveal areas of deficient resources where support to families can yield desirable dividends. Results of varying studies and in-depth research tells us that growing up in poverty is more likely for children born into single parent households. Births to single mothers have continually increased as indicated by 2003 statistics reflecting 228 babies were born. Federal policies have substantially improved the economic status of older persons, but not for children. In 1999, 37.1% of children in single-parent families lived in poverty, but only 9.4% of children in married-couple families were poor. Children in single-parent families made up 63% of all the county's children living in poverty. The poverty threshold is considered by some as an arbitrary number, but people can still be poor and may be just above the poverty level. Federal programs utilize varying thresholds. In 1999 there were 4,433 children ages 0-17 who were less than

200 percent of poverty; thus an additional 2,495 children were above the poverty level but could still be considered poor or near-poor with incomes below \$32,180 and \$38,700 respectively for 3 and 4 person families in 2005.

Economic pressures on households compel parents to work. For parents of young children, fulfilling childcare needs are imperative. Overall, there are 639 spaces in state-regulated childcare facilities in the county; 89.2% of these are in licensed programs and 10.8% are in registered programs. The homes and centers are severely constrained by the limited ability of parents to pay. Consequently, center wages were low: 33.3% of centers with pre-school staff and 0% of centers with assistant pre-school staff reported paying these staff under \$6 per hour. Paying \$6-\$8 per hour were 66.7% of centers with pre-school staff and 0% of centers with assistants. Low wages attract workers with limited education. In 66.7% of centers, most pre-school staff and in 0% of centers most assistants had only a high school degree.

When teen pregnancy is added to the population of families struggling with the pressures of parenting and providing for the well being of the family, factors influencing poverty and the risk of children increase. Teen pregnancy has negative consequences for both the mother and the child.¹ The vast majority of teen pregnancies (78 percent) are unintended.² Data from the mid-1990s indicate that 43 percent of pregnancies to teens aged 15-19 ended in unintended births and another 35 percent ended in abortions.³ These percentages are even higher for younger teens. Mothers who do have a teen birth are more disadvantaged, on average, than are other teens and have children who face negative health, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes.

School readiness and dropout data have parallel effects for escaping poverty. Effective remedies construct learning foundations for pathways that lead to preparedness to compete for jobs in a global job market. Alarming, 35.1% of students were assessed as not ready for 1st grade, 32.4% over age in grade 3, and 12.9% of eight and nine year olds were placed in special education. When reviewing 2000-2003 dropout data 49.4% of 8th graders failed to graduate from county schools four years later. Fortunately, adult education has been a means for capturing the education certification missed in earlier years while attending school.

An appreciation for literacy and parental involvement at the earliest stages of child development are at the root of halting the disturbing rise in dropout and poor school readiness trends.

SCHOOL READINESS STRATEGIES

Family Strengthening

Statewide Goal – South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness will work collaboratively with its agency partners, the faith community and private sector to support parents and families in their own efforts to maximize the school readiness, well-being and long-term academic success of the state's young children.

FY 2007 Results: Parents As Teachers Program

Partnership Goal – Increase the abilities of parent to be their child's first and most important teacher by providing home visitation services.

- 100 % of children received developmental screenings
- 98% of parents demonstrated knowledge of age appropriate activities with their children
- 100% teen parents enrolled in high school

- 100% of participating parents enrolled child into the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program
- conducted 278 home visits to 34 adults and 43 children
- 269 books were loaned through lending library service
- 55 books were given to participating families
- 60 parents participated in group meetings/parent workshops
- 3 teen parents secured independent housing
- 5 teen parents secured employment
- 2 teen parents continued education at a post secondary level
- 1 teen parent maintains honor roll status while participating in sporting activities

FY 2007 Results: Family Literacy and Supportive Programs at the Fort Lawn Community Center

Partnership Goal – Support the Fort Lawn Community Center’s effort to provide programs and activities that promote literacy and school readiness for rural families in Fort Lawn and surrounding communities. A Spring and Fall festival are held each year during which Literacy Bags are distributed to all children attending. Childcare is provided for all parents attending literacy and computer classes including activities and storytelling.

- 387 adults have attended classes in the past fiscal year
- 108 individuals attended GED classes
- 73 attended pre-GED
- 7 attained a GED and graduated from program
- 14 persons participated in ESL instruction
- 120 people attended Basic classes
- Computer skills were taught to 294 adults
- 17 adults in the diploma program advanced to a higher grade
- 51 adults advanced to a higher educational functioning level
- Other programs served 12 children
- 452 books were distributed to children/families

FY 2007 Results: Learning and Reading Program- Chester County Library

Partnership Goal – To promote family literacy through teaching parents how to select age-appropriate books for their children.

- Conducted storybook related activities during monthly forums with children and parents in order to guide parents in how to incorporate book themes into a parent-child activity.
- 27 adults participated
- 42 children participated

Child Care

Statewide Goal – South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness recognizes quality child care as a research-based determinant of school readiness. As such, First Steps will collaborate with parents, the child care community and its agency and community partners to maximize child care quality throughout the state. Particular emphasis will be placed on assisting parents in their efforts to identify those settings most likely to maximize developmental outcomes, and assisting providers in their own efforts to maximize the learning environments they provide for young children.

FY 2007 Results:

Chester Partnership Goal – Improve the quality of childcare through professional development, technical assistance, and training to increase knowledge of early childhood professionals and enhance the quality of early care settings. Center staff training and development efforts yielded:

Regional Partnership Goal - The Region II Childcare Enhancement Strategy will promote new approaches to enhancing the environment in all (40) centers involved in this program. It is our goal to improve early childhood developmental opportunities in our facilities, which will allow more children to start school ready to learn and be successful in school.

- On site technical assistance was provided by five certified technical assistants and quality learning materials were provided to child care providers.
- The program promoted and built strong relationships between technical assistants and caregivers/teachers and between caregivers/teachers and children.
- Provided on-going, individualized research based training and technical assistance program impacted 13 child care sites.
- Selected child care centers received a pre and post ECERS assessment or ABC assessment.
- Training topics were created from ECERS pre-assessment reports in areas that scored low in the rating scale.
- 5 different training sessions were provided for child care staff covering the following topics: Music and Movement, Math and Manipulatives, Domestic Violence and Child Abuse, Bloodborne Pathogens and Nutrition.
- 2 training sessions were provided for technical assistants (mentors)
- 12 childcare providers were provided with 13 workshop training hours.
- Centers received \$2000.00 worth of materials to support the training sessions and technical assistance.
- Certified Technical Assistants or mentors worked closely with child care staff on the appropriate use of resource materials.
- 55 staff members were trained over the course of this training period.
- Pre ECERS scores averaged 4.13 and post ECERS scores averaged 4.20 which reflect a 1.7% gain in improvement.
- ABC assessments reflect a 7% improvement.
- 269 hours of Technical assistance provided to centers throughout Chester County.
- 144 children were impacted by the TA program.
- Increased networking opportunities among center staff..
- Annual Children’s Celebration in April, 2006 served over 350 children and 150 parents.

SCHOOL READINESS STRATEGIES FOR 2007-2008

The focus of the Partnership is to build upon lessons learned while implementing programs, conducting community events, working in concert with regional First Steps programs, collaborating with other agencies and especially while responding to needs of parents. Looking ahead to 2007-2008, efforts will concentrate on enhancing and supporting strategies that offer intense intervention to off-set adverse influences facing at-risk families. Parent Educators in the **Parents As Teachers** program will add to their existing pool of families providing support to each parents’ invested interest in their child’s future. The home visits conducted by the parenting team empower parents through proactive early childhood understanding of growth and development. Families are systematically linked to services and other programs for identified and unidentified needs. Additional support to

children and families from the Chester Healthcare Foundation will augment resources to permit community workshops to enhance parenting skills in community families. Projected to serve 80 adults and 90 children. Assisting with the funding cost of a Program Coordinator at the Fort Lawn Community Center allows for planning to develop traditional and non-traditional approaches to activities and services to advance the **Other Family Literacy** strategy. These ideas support programs, activities, family literacy, special projects and events for Fort Lawn and other communities situated in rural Chester County. Expect to serve 140 children and 220 adults. The deployment of best practices in early care classrooms will continue to grow in scope and impact with the continuation of Center **Staff Training and Development**. The crux of this strategy is that we must provide training and early learning tools to childcare professionals that promote optimum readiness outcomes for children. Funding from the Chester Healthcare Foundation will increase abilities to advance health and safety behavior at all early care sites throughout the county. Moreover, integrating practices lead by current research for preventing childhood obesity affects the quality of life for all children. We anticipate serving 710 children and 45 adults.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

State Appropriation	State-Private	In-kind	Local-Private	Lottery Appropriation	Federal	EIA Appropriation	TOTAL
199,122	2984	115,372	11,975	\$-0-	\$-0-	12,229	341,682

NOTE: The above State Appropriation amount leveraged all state-private, in-kind, local-private, lottery and federal dollars.

READINESS STRATEGIES	BUDGET	ACTUAL EXPENDITURES	DIFFERENCE
County Administrative	\$23,846	\$22,649	\$1,197
County Programming	\$68,635	\$65,768	\$2,867
Parents As Teachers	\$106,345	\$104,865	\$1,480
Other Family Literacy/Learning	\$82,600	\$82,600	\$0
Library Based Programs	\$924	\$924	\$0
Partial 4K	\$20,499	\$20,499	\$0
Child Care Training/Prof. Dev.	\$38,833	\$33,228	\$5,605
TOTAL	\$ 341,682	\$330,533	\$11,149

*Note: Underspent private funds are reflected in the difference between budget and actual expenditures under Child Care Training and Professional Development. Cost saving measures have resulted in monies remaining in County Administrative, Programming and PAT programs.

NOTABLE DONORS

Walmart, Chester, SC	\$1,361.28
Alex Oliphant	100.00
Robert Wylie	15.00
Jerry Robertson	20.00
Dr. Stauffer	50.00
Summit Restaurant	20.00

Farmers Furniture	25.00
Sams Home Center	25.00
AC Rentals	25.00
Leah Church	10.00

Total Cash Gifts for 2007: \$1,651.28

Local Match Percentage for 2007: 57.81% (At least 15% required)

BOARD INFORMATION

During FY07, the Chester County partnership board members volunteered 40 hours.

Value of Volunteer Time: $\$17.55 \times 40 = \702.00

CHESTER COUNTY FIRST STEPS BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Dr. Cynthia P. Roddey, Business Community, Mr. Tally Johnson, Board Chair, Library Appointee, Ms. Rhonda Garris, Vice Chair, Healthcare, Ms. Stephanie Barber, Secretary, Primary Education, Ms. Katherine Beaty, Non-Profit, Ms. Julie Dotson, Parent of Pre-School Child, Ms. Liz Freeman, SCDHEC, Ms. Lydia Hall, Adult Education, Ms. Erica Murphy, DSS Appointee, Ms. Mabel Reddick, Non-Profit, Ms. Charlotte Shannon, Primary Education, Ms. Tiara Suber, Parent of Preschool Child, Ms. Nancy Taylor, Early Childhood, Ms. Daisy Wiley, Faith Community, Mr. Larry Heath, County School Superintendent

SUCCESS STORIES

PARENTS AS TEACHERS PROGRAM

Letter from Teen Parent Participant

“My name is Reginique Harris. I am a fifteen year old single mother. I have a “B” grade point average and do extra curriculum activities. I am a former cheerleader (I cheered my eighth grade at Chester Middle School). I now attend Chester Senior High School. I run track and am a member of the step team that is called Chester Community Steppers. Being a single mother I struggle to maintain my after school activities. Sometime I have to miss practice if I don’t have a baby sitter or miss class if my baby is sick. I try my best to make good grades and do as much in school activities that I can because I want to go to college. I do all this to set a good example for my baby. I refuse to be a dropout, unlike most teenage girls. If I drop out then once my baby starts school she will feel like it is alright to drop out and I want to set the best example for her that I possible can. I am planning on becoming a pharmacist. When I became pregnant I enrolled in the Chester County First Steps’ Parents As Teachers program as a teen mother. This program has given me the opportunity to meet other teen mothers who have the same hopes, ideas and problems that I have. It has encouraged me to stay in school and believe that anything is possible. I have been taken on a

college tour with the program and now I too will hopefully become a college graduate. Through this program I am guided in parenting and life skills. It has helped me become the best mom I can possibly be”.

CHILDCARE PROGRAM

Letter from Childcare Provider:

“Four years ago The Learning Tree became partners with First Steps. When I was first approached with becoming a partner I was hesitant to do so. I thought, ‘Gee, someone else to tell me what to do’. But I decided to jump in and have not regretted it one bit. I have been in childcare for 35 years and have learned a lot during that time. But, First Steps has really been a blessing. They have helped with materials and training for staff. We have a Mentor who comes in the classroom and works with the teachers. First Steps has been good with giving advice on room arrangement and materials needed in each center. They give us a lot of materials and the children enjoy them. They can’t wait to see the new ‘stuff’ we get. I feel that First Steps has really helped all the centers in Chester County to upgrade the quality of care provided for the care and learning of the children we are entrusted with. We have also been taught the proper way to wash hands and sanitize equipment so there are less sick children in day care. I hope First Steps will be around for a long time for the children of Chester County.” Sincerely, Nancy L. Taylor, Director, The Learning Tree.

Childcare Provider Scores Increase

Two childcare providers improved significantly in scoring due to the Technical Assistance received from their mentors. One had a Language-Reasoning score rise from 3.25 to 6.25 and the other went from an ABC score of 56 to a 93.