



# Chester County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

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**Total children in county under age 6: 2523**

**Total Children in county living poverty %: 24.5%**

**Total Children NOT ready for 1<sup>st</sup> Grade: 21.2%**

**Total Children fail 1<sup>st</sup> Grade: 10.5%**

## County Highlights

- PAT participant completed HS in 3 yrs. and received full college scholarship
- Childcare Provider increased ITERS Score by 5.08

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

When reviewing dropout data indicating 49.4% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders failed to graduate from county schools, the imperative for influencing success in school comes into sharp focus. This imperative drives us to connect with all agencies and programs that can assist with ensuring each child reaches school ready to succeed.

Sponsoring an array of parental and preschool programs and projects has enabled us to improve all the facets of early childhood environments that touch a child's life. Information and training for parents, family members and childcare providers is provided during all these events. First steps begin when a child enters the lives of its family. Their fingerprints leave an indelible mark that is replicated everywhere they go and with every one they come into contact with forever. Grooming and guiding parents occurs in the Parents As Teachers program. The training of childcare professionals in innovative and meaningful approaches and early care classroom arrangement is conveyed in the strategy for Childcare Training. Delivering research-based information, age appropriate materials and techniques to teachers promote optimum cognitive growth and development of children in their classrooms. Programming at the Fort Lawn Community Center was cancelled due to budget constraint, but efforts will continue to support their programs. Although many challenges were caused by several budget reductions, sustaining programs to support families, local partners and enabling early care teachers to continually perfect classroom practices has remained first and foremost.

No other agency in our county or state is solely designed to bolster learning and success for children before they begin school as we do. Our mission is to ensure that each child begins school ready to learn. The approach of harnessing resources to empower all persons and practitioners who touch children's lives with rich knowledge to affect their growth controls the logic of all programs and collaborative relationships.

Centuria S. Watson  
Executive Director,  
Chester County First Steps

## **First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas**

*The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:*

**Family Strengthening:** A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

**Healthy Start:** Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

**Quality Child Care:** Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

**Early Education:** Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

**School Transition:** The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

## **2008-09 County Partnership Programs by Strategy**

### **FAMILY STRENGTHENING**

#### **FY 2009 Results: Parents As Teachers Program**

**Program Description:** The Parents As Teachers Program increases the abilities of parents to be their child's first and most influential teacher by providing home visits, developmental screenings, group meetings, and community resource referrals.

#### **Program Results:**

- Conducted 211 home visits to 36 adults and 41 children
- 278 books were loaned through lending library service
- 80 books were given to participating families
- 50 parents participated in group meetings/parent workshops
- 3 teen parents obtained high school diplomas
- 1 teen parent obtained a full scholarship to a post secondary school
- 2 teen parents secured summer employment through the WIA summer youth program
- 100% of children received developmental screenings
- 2 children were referred to BabyNet and are receiving early intervention speech therapy through Easter Seal
- 3 community group meetings conducted in addition to monthly group meetings for program participants

### **QUALITY CHILD CARE**

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness recognizes quality child care as a research-based determinant of school readiness. Chester County First Steps addresses quality child care by providing technical assistance and educational materials directly to childcare centers as well as quality professional training for directors and staff. Due to budget restraints, we reduced from eight participating centers to three during this fiscal year. Marked improvements were exhibited by all three providers and age-appropriate materials were provided to their classrooms based on assessments of the classroom. Certified workshops continue to be attended by centers that are not receiving intense technical assistance as well as child care providers from other counties. Directors-only workshops are also offered throughout the year.

#### **Program Results:**

- 774 children impacted
- 15 centers were represented at trainings
- 17 training sessions offered

- 67 non-repetitive staff attended, 356 cumulative attendees
- 37 credit hours
- 96.5 technical assistance hours
- \$1,100 educational materials provided to classrooms

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<b>Expenditures By Funding Source</b>	
State Appropriation ( <i>Fund 10</i> )	\$ 159,744
E.I.A. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 55</i> )	\$ 13,883
E.I.A. Appropriation Carry Forward ( <i>Fund 56</i> )	\$ 114
State Appropriation Carry Forward ( <i>Fund 11</i> )	\$ 3,743
C.O.E. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 65</i> )	\$
N.F.P. Appropriation ( <i>Fund 70</i> )	\$
State Private ( <i>Fund 15</i> )	\$ 3,685
Local Private ( <i>Fund 20</i> )	\$ 16,046
Federal ( <i>Fund 30</i> )	\$
In-Kind ( <i>Fund 25</i> )	\$ 71,866
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 269,081</b>

<b>Expenditures By Program / Strategy Name</b>	
2012 – Parents As Teachers	\$ 91,437
2041 – Other Family Literacy/Learning	\$ 40,491
6012 – Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$ 22,323
6052 – Child Care Training & Professional Dev.	\$ 15,252
	\$
Indirect Programmatic Functions	<b>\$ 77,049</b>
Administrative Functions	\$ 22,529
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 269,081</b>

## **COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Tally Johnson	Chester County Library
Sandra Davie	Head Start
Janet Ellis	SCDHEC
Erica Murphy	DSS
Mabel Reddick	Non-Profit
Nancy Taylor	Childcare Provider
Daisy Wylie	Faith Community
Mike Wessinger	Transportation
Rhonda Garris	Healthcare
Sue Cauthen	Chester County School District
Tiara Suber	Parent of Preschool Child

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## **COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT**

In FY09, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

## **Success Stories**

### **PAT Success Story**

Regjinique Harris participated in the Parents As Teachers Program for four years. She became pregnant as an eighth grade student. She maintained good grades in high school, ran track, and participated on a local step team. Reginique graduated early (in three years instead of four) as an honor student and received a full scholarship to Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, NC. Reginique's accomplishments were due to the support and encouragement of her great-aunt along with her First Steps parent educator, Candy Gore. Ms. Gore continues to conduct home visits with Reginique's daughter, Sarayah and her aunt who is providing childcare while Reginique pursues her education.

### **Childcare Success Story**

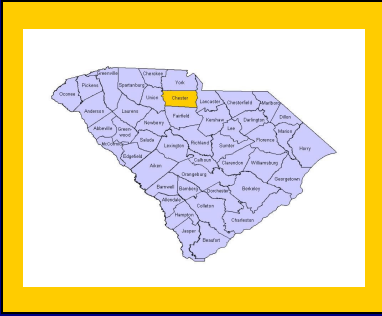
Tendercare Childcare Center has been a partner with Chester County First Steps (CCFS) for six years. CCFS provided quality materials to the infant room as well as technical assistance to staff. The pre-ITERS score was 2.03. The director and staff worked diligently and cooperatively with their TA to improve the score. They re-arranged furnishings/equipment, purchased materials, improved health and safety practices, added appropriate display items, and attended workshops provided by CCFS. Due to their dedication and desire to provide the best possible early learning environment for their children, their post ITERS score increased to 5.08.

*The SC General Assembly created in 1999 the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative as a "comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through county partnerships, public and private funds and support for high quality early childhood development and education services for children by providing support for their families' efforts toward enabling their children to reach school ready to learn"...here's what happened next:*

*The following program snapshots and data indicate the how much improvement has occurred during ten years of services, and is a building block for continued growth.*

- 100% of eligible teen mothers graduated from high school.
- 100% of program high school graduates are enrolled in post secondary institutions.
- 100% of Parents As Teachers (PAT) families received Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) assessment.
- 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.
- 5290 books were distributed to families during program activities and community events.
- 260 parents participated in group meetings/parent workshops.
- 12 teen parents found jobs.
- 6 teen parents secured independent housing.
- A collaboration with seven counties focused on providing technical assistance for centers with where Environmental Rating Scale indicators showed the greatest opportunity for improvement.
- 16 child care mentors (2 Cherokee County, 2 Chesterfield County, 4 Chester County, 1 Fairfield County, 5 Lancaster County, and 2 Union County) are trained to teach and develop mentoring relationships with their assigned child care centers.
- 4 training sessions (25 hours) focused intensively on mentoring and technical assistance skills before mentors were allowed to begin working with the child care providers.
- All trainings for the child care centers were planned and designed to improve their ECERS/ABC scores and to enhance the learning environment. (Enhancement includes promoting health and safety issues).
- A pre-assessment (ECERS and/or ABC Assessment) was done before mentoring and trainings began and a post-assessment was be done at the end of the training period.
- 3500 Early Educators/Child Care Staff used the information and technology to enhance their access to early childhood information.
- Child care centers decreased the use of television as a teaching tool by more than 28%.
- Increased knowledge of ECERS and ABC environmental assessments.
- Enhanced the quality of resources and materials used by child care providers.
- Created high quality trainers in each community.



# 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Chester County

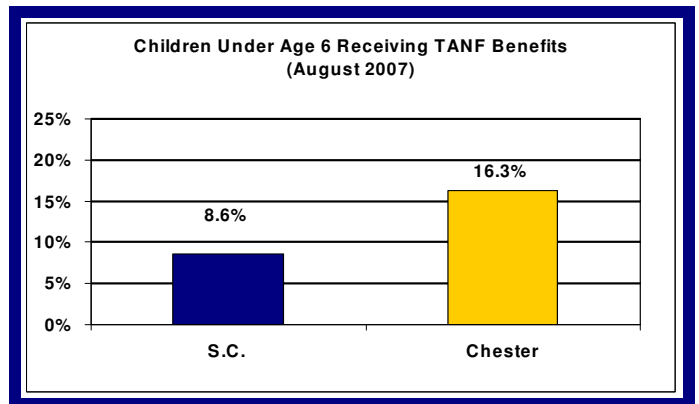
Total Children Under Six: 2,578

## CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%      Chester County (2007): 16.3%

**Fast Fact:** Roughly 1 in 6 Chester County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.
- 421 of Chester County’s 2,578 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

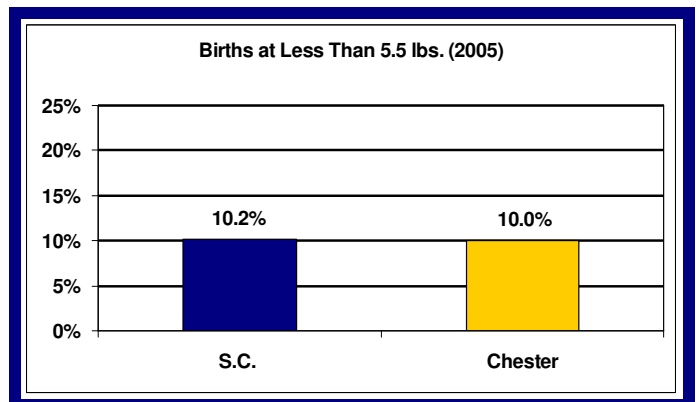


## CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%      Chester County (2005): 10.0%

**Fast Fact:** 1 in 10 Chester County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.
- Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.
- 43 of the 427 children born in Chester County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



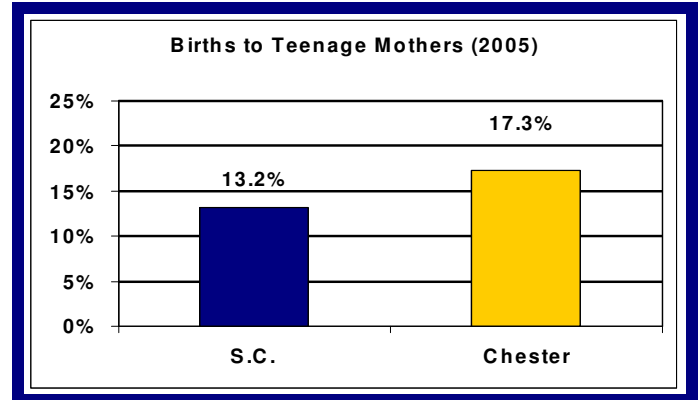
## BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

Chester County (2005): 17.3%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 6 Chester County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.
- 74 of the 427 children born in Chester County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



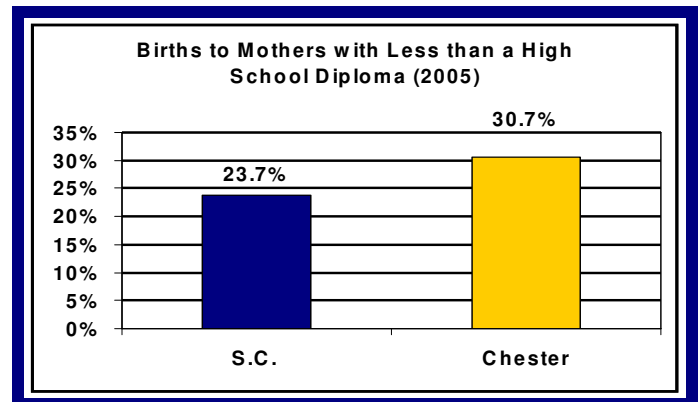
## BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

Chester County (2005): 30.7%

**Fast Fact:** Nearly 1 in 3 children in Chester County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.
- 131 of the 427 children born in Chester County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



All data provided by the SC Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics