



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

First Steps to Recognize First Private Preschool Provider in 4K Expansion Pilot

Columbia, S.C. – First Steps announced today that it will formally recognize Bishopville-Lee Child Care Center in Lee County as the first private preschool provider approved in the state's 4K expansion pilot. The event will be tomorrow (September 1st) at 10:30 a.m. at Bishopville-Lee Child Care Center. The center is located at 118 East College Street, Bishopville, SC 29010.

Invited guests include members of the General Assembly, county council, city council, school board, and other local leaders. Representing First Steps will be S.C. First Steps Deputy Director Dan Wuori and Lee County First Steps Executive Director Alexis Pipkins, Sr.

Created by the S.C. General Assembly in June, the pilot will expand high quality 4-year-old kindergarten in both public and private settings. A total of 14 private preschools have now been approved by S.C. First Steps for participation in the pilot program. These private preschools can now identify and approve income eligible 4-year-olds to enroll at their centers.

The pilot targets children from plaintiff school districts named in the state's recent equity funding lawsuit. In the four weeks since launching the program, First Steps has received applications from more than 80 private, faith-based, and Head Start providers in 23 South Carolina counties and over 300 preschool providers have attended informational meetings to learn more about the program. The final deadline for applications is September 29, 2006.

A full list of approved providers and application materials can be found on the S.C. First Steps webpage (www.scfirststeps.org/4K.htm).

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South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness is a comprehensive, results-oriented statewide education initiative to help prepare children to reach school healthy and ready to succeed. Public and private support is combined through county partnerships to enable individual communities to address the unmet needs of young children and their families.

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