



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 27, 2006

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First Steps Extends Deadline for Private 4K Provider Applications

Columbia, S.C. – S.C. First Steps to School Readiness announced today that it will extend its application deadline for private preschool providers seeking to participate in the South Carolina Child Development Education Pilot Program. To ensure that all eligible children and child care providers can participate, the original application deadline of September 29, 2006 has been extended to November 1, 2006 to accommodate additional providers in year-round operation.

“The General Assembly mandated that students receive 180 days of 4K,” said Dan Wuori, S.C. First Steps deputy director. “With the state’s adoption of a uniform start date for public schools in August 2007, that means we can begin service to children as late as Thanksgiving and still accomplish this goal. We aren’t bound to a traditional school calendar, which means that more centers operating year-round can be accommodated.”

First Steps has already approved 31 of its 110 private, faith-based and Head Start applicants to date. The approval of many additional centers is imminent.

Private for-profit, private non-profit, faith-based, Head Start and other non-school district settings may apply if they meet the following qualifications:

- be licensed, registered OR approved by the SC Department of Social Services;
- use an approved, research-based curriculum;
- offer 180, 6.5-hour instructional days per year; and
- employ a teacher who has at least a two-year degree in early childhood education and is working toward a four-year teacher education degree.

“The level of interest has been very gratifying,” Wuori noted. “We think this pilot is groundbreaking, and it’s obvious that many providers agree. We are committed to expanding access to every eligible program and child.”

For more information on the program, including instruction for providers and parents seeking additional guidance, visit the First Steps website at 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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