

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
A SOUTH CAROLINA NONPROFIT CORPORATION
MARCH 17, 2005

Voting Directors Present: (14) Mr. Lewis Smoak, Vice Chair
Mr. Dan Wuori, Secretary
Ms. Doris Ballard
Rep. Bessie Moody-Lawrence
Ms. Katherine Davis
Ms. Kristin Hook
Ms. Sabine Lang
Senator John W. Matthews, Jr.
Mr. Walter Miller
Ms. Linda M. O'Quinn
Mr. Henry Parr, Jr.
Senator Michael L. Fair
Supt. Inez Tenenbaum (represented by Dr. Linda Mims)
Ms. Lisa Van Riper

Voting Directors Absent: (5) Ms. Judith Aughtry
Dr. Thaddeus Bell
Ms. Marileen Chapman
Ms. Claudia T. Cordray
Mr. Lee Cory

Non-Voting Directors Present: Ms. Kim Aydlette, DSS, represented by Mr. Leigh Bolick
Mr. George Gintoli, Director SC Department of Mental Health
Ms. Susan Jones, designee for Ms. Elizabeth Mabry, DOT
Dr. Nancy Freeman, Professor USC

Others Present: Ms. Mary Payson, SC Budget and Control Board, ORS
Mr. Jim Riddle, Executive Director Lexington County First Steps
Mr. Russell Brown, SC Office of First Steps
Mr. Jason Gilbert, SC Office of First Steps
Mr. Leon Love, SC Office of First Steps
Mr. Rick Noble, Executive Director Richland County First Steps
Ms. Dorothy Priester, SC Office of First Steps
Ms. Debbie Robertson, SC Office of First Steps
Dr. Baron Holmes, SC Budget and Control Board
Ms. Angela LeVan, SC Office of First Steps
Ms. Susan DeVenny, Director, SC Office of First Steps
Ms. Gladys Carter, SC Office of First Steps
Ms. Tamala Toney, SC Office of First Steps

Welcome and Call to Order

Mr. Lewis Smoak, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance. Mr. Smoak issued a special welcome to new board members, Senator Mike Fair of Greenville and Representative Bessie Moody-Lawrence of York County. He then asked board members to give a brief introduction of themselves and their positions for new board members.

The minutes of the February 17, 2005 Board of Trustees meeting were seconded and approved.

Committee Reports

Strategic Planning and Administration Committee

In the absence of Mr. Lee Cory, Chair, Mr. Dan Wuori reported for the Executive Committee and Strategic Planning and Administration Committee. Mr. Wuori advised trustees that the first Board-to-Board meeting between First Steps Board of Trustees members and County Partnership Board Chairs was held in Columbia, at Saluda Shoals on March 16, 2005. He stated that he and Mr. Lee Cory had met with approximately 30 County Board Chairs. This meeting was initiated out of ongoing discussion regarding the update of the First Steps funding formula, including focused discussions on subsidies for smaller counties. In the past, the First Steps Board of Trustees subsidized counties to a minimum of \$200,000.00 with private funds, or with slight reductions in larger county allocations. Participants also addressed the possibility of considering regionalizing administrative functions in the future. Mr. Wuori reported that Beaufort County Board Chair designee suggested he would like to collaborate with neighboring counties to do a pilot study of administrative consolidation. Mr. Wuori advised that Lexington and Saluda County First Steps are now co-located to share administrative costs. Mr. Wuori reported that the meeting was a huge success and they would consider continuing Board-to-Board meetings in the future.

Mr. Wuori gave an update regarding the discovery of a Regional Finance Managers finding that an employee had embezzled First Steps Partnership funds. He reported that our system caught the problem, and that the RFM was being cooperative, with a commitment in place to repay of all funds involved. He reported that SLED was involved and the employee had been arrested. Mr. Wuori reported that the Executive Committee has approved a repayment plan whereby the RFM will be repaying all funds outstanding within the next three months. Mr. Wuori reported that the RFM had submitted a letter of withdrawal from the contract and it had been accepted. He reported that First Steps would be advertising for a new RFM soon.

Program and Grants Committee

Ms. Doris Ballard, Chair, reported as information only, that the state office had approved Chesterfield County's reallocation of funds to provide Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) training to 8 child care facilities. She stated that a mentoring program will be developed by Chesterfield County to provide technical assistance to child care providers to ensure the proper use of age-appropriate materials/supplies and early learning best practices, following ECERS training.

Evaluation and Accountability Committee

Mr. Walt Miller, Chair, passed out the 2006 Evaluation Plan abstract from High/Scope Education Research Foundation for review. He directed the board's attention to item number 4, which asks if First Steps provided services impact the outcomes of participants. He reported that First Steps has convened a South Carolina School Readiness Assessment team of research experts and practitioners to develop the state's readiness trending plan, to include child outcomes and some use of objective instrumentation.

Ms. Mary Payson gave a brief overview of how information collected by the data warehouse would give an example of how the outcomes will show up. Mr. Smoak asked Susan DeVenny to give a brief explanation of the Evaluation Plan and what First Steps is required to do per the legislation. Ms. DeVenny advised that the legislation requires an evaluation by an external evaluator every three years beginning with 2003. Ms. DeVenny explained that Child Trends, a national child development research group, did the 2003 evaluation and High/Scope Educational Research Foundation was performing that this year's evaluation, selected through the RFP process last summer. She reported that the three primary areas to be included in the evaluation are family skills and literacy/parenting, early education, and child care quality enhancement. Ms. DeVenny reported that the evaluation is to be completed and presented to the General Assembly, January 1, 2006.

Director's Report

Ms. Susan DeVenny reported that the South Carolina School Readiness Assessment Team had been organized and convened to determine a recommendation for trending school readiness outcomes, focused on three words: indicator, process/program and child outcome levels. She advised there are approximately 30 people on the assessment team and that trustees can expect preliminary recommendations from the team by May.

Ms. DeVenny also reported on South Carolina First Steps board reorganization. She advised that there are two new program committees of the First Steps Board, Early Childhood Education co-chaired by Sabine Lang and Linda O'Quinn and Health/Parenting/Family Strengthening, with co-chairs Dr. Thaddeus Bell and another trustee who has not yet been contacted. Ms. DeVenny invited any board member not participating on a board committee to please volunteer to serve on a program committee.

Ms. DeVenny advised that Katherine Davis serves on the Ad Hoc Team on funds development and reminded the board that 1 penny of every dollar of lottery revenues expected in 2005 is targeted to First Steps as a challenge grant from the South Carolina General Assembly. Ms. Davis reported to the board that 35 private corporations have been targeted, many of who have made contributions to First Steps in the past. She invited any board member that may know someone from the corporations and would feel comfortable writing a follow-up letter soliciting their continued support to First Steps. Ms. Davis circulated the potential contribution lists.

Ms. DeVenny asked Leigh Bolick, DSS to give a brief update on child care and child care regulations in South Carolina. Ms. Bolick reported DSS had been asked to withdraw the child care regulations and make changes regarding group size. She advised the changes had been made and resubmitted and passed through the committee at the house level and would be presented as early as next week. She reported that the Senate would review amended version and make a decision on March 23.

Ms. DeVenny called on Debbie Robertson to give a brief update on the Family Friendly Workplace Award. Ms. Robertson reported that the deadline for applications was March 16, 2005 and at this time they have received 17 applications. The event is planned for April 15, 2005 at Myrtle Beach, SC, in conjunction with Georgetown/Horry County Child Care Conference scheduled to begin April 16, 2005. Ms. DeVenny stated that South Carolina First Steps implemented the South Carolina Family Friendly Workplace Awards in 2002 to encourage strong workplace practices within South Carolina industries of all sizes. The Governor's Office, the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and the South Carolina Commerce Department sponsor the award.

Ms. DeVenny directed the board's attention to a flow chart included in the board packets as information regarding the county renewal process. She explained that for the first time there would be expert review teams and county presentations to accompany renewal applications.

Partnership and Collaboration Report

Mr. Leon Love gave a brief update on the 6 devised lottery strategies. He reported that Lottery Strategy 4E is placing foster children in quality child care centers in addition to training to care givers and workers. Mr. Love reported that Lottery 4K expansion is proceeding through a regional grants process to fund 14 new classrooms in 7 state regions. Mr. Love thanked Tamala Toney for the work she did in developing the RFP. He stated that Lottery Strategy Family Literacy is up a running, effective February 1, 2005, and targeting 550 families in 11 sites with comprehensive family literacy support. Mr. Love also reported that Lottery Strategy Countdown to Kindergarten about to begin, with counties raising their own match in order to maximize lottery dollars.

Mr. Love explained that these 2005 lottery strategies are one-time pilot programs developed to help counties understand the importance of early education.

Mr. Smoak discussed the importance of improving quality child care on the private side. Mr. Smoak stated that one of the most important things First Steps can do is to come up with a way to significantly improve quality child care on the private side. Mr. Smoak reported that according to various records, private citizens are spending \$300 - \$400,000,000.00 dollars per year on private child care. He asserted that if we could, First Steps should come up with a way to improve the quality across the board in that area as much as possible. He suggested that quality care does exist, but if we could make those vast private dollars buy quality child care that would be the most significant and important change we could make in South Carolina.

Senator Fair asked if it was Mr. Miller's committee that deals with evaluation and accountability? Mr. Miller confirmed. Senator Fair stated that for the legislature to deal with the child care problems being undertaken by First Steps it is important to understand what the target is. Senator Fair stated that before we could move forward we must have information on evaluation of what is happening across the board and it's effectiveness to determine what works. Mr. Miller stated that he believes High/Scope Evaluation will produce this information.

Operations and Accountability Report

On behalf of Mr. Rodney Jenkins, Mr. Russell Brown directed the board's attention to the Budget Summary and Finance Statement enclosed in their board packets. Mr. Brown reported that under OTHER PERSONAL SERVICE (Temporary Positions) it shows a negative \$9,624.00 balance and advised the board not to be alarmed as they had spent more money than budgeted for in this area due to temporary employees working more time than anticipated, per staff attrition. Mr. Brown reported that Mr. Jenkins would be doing a budget revision within the next month, which would reallocate personnel budget. Mr. Brown reported that First Steps is well under the year-to-date budget; projections show that First Steps is well within the FY 2005 annual budget at this time.

Ms. DeVenny reported that First Steps did come out of the House budget with \$18.1 M, which was the recurring line from last year and with an additional \$2 million in EIA funds for FY 2006. Ms. DeVenny thanked the legislators for their work. And dedication to young children.

Ms. Susan Jones, SC Department of Transportation displayed a bag which the Department of Transportation distributes to children and school teachers when they go out to schools and speak about work zone safety and being careful on the roads.

Mr. Smoak reminded the board that the next board meeting, scheduled for April 21, 2005, would be held at Lang-Mekra North America, Ridgeway, South Carolina. Ms. Sabine Lang, Managing Director and South Carolina First Steps Trustee, spoke briefly regarding the tour of Lang Mekra Montessori School and welcomed board members to Lang-Mekra.

Meeting adjourned.

Daniel F. Wuori, Secretary
South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
Board of Trustees, a South Carolina Nonprofit
Corporation

APPROVED this the ____ of April, 2005

Lewis Smoak, Vice-Chair
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