

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
A SOUTH CAROLINA NONPROFIT CORPORATION**

October 20, 2005

Voting Directors Present: Senator Michael L. Fair  
Representative Shirley R. Hinson  
Mr. Lewis Smoak  
Ms. Lisa Van Riper  
Mr. Lee Cory  
Mr. Walt Miller  
Mr. Henry Parr, Jr.  
Ms. Doris Ballard  
Ms. Kristin Hook  
Ms. Judith Aughtry  
Ms. Sabine Lang  
Dr. Thaddeus Bell  
Ms. Katherine Davis  
Ms. Marileen Chapman  
Ms. Robin Snipes (designee for Ms. Inez Tennenbaum)

Voting Members Absent: Governor Mark Sanford (excused)  
Senator John W. Matthews, Jr. (excused)  
Representative Bessie Moody-Lawrence (excused)  
Ms. Linda O'Quinn (excused)

Non-Voting Directors Present: Ms. Jennifer Buster (designee for Stanley J. Butkus)  
Ms. Beth Freeman (designee for John J. Connery) DMH  
Ms. Patti Butcher, SC State Library  
Ms. Shirley Jeffcoat (designee for Ms. Elizabeth Mabry, DOT)

Non-Voting Directors Absent: Ms. Kim Aydlette, DSS  
Mr. C. Earl Hunter, DHEC  
Mr. Bobby Bowers, SC B&CB  
Mr. Lee Catoe, DAODAS  
Mr. Jim Griffith, Transportation Assn. of S.C.  
Ms. Mary Lynne Diggs, Head Start  
Dr. Conrad Festa, SC Comm. on Higher Education  
Dr. Paul Krohne, SC School Board Association  
Mr. Bob Staton, United Way of S.C.  
Mr. David Potter, SC Education Oversight Comm.  
Dr. Nancy Freeman, Regulatory Advisory Committee

Others Present: Ms. Susan DeVenny, Director, SC First Steps  
Mr. Dan Wuori, SC First Steps  
Mr. Rodney Jenkins, SC First Steps  
Mr. Leon Love, SC First Steps  
Mr. Russell Brown, SC First Steps  
Mr. Jason Gilbert, SC First Steps  
Ms. Melissa McGrath, SC First Steps  
Ms. Deborah Padgett, Saluda Cty. FS Partnership

Mr. Jim Riddle, Lexington Cty. FS Partnership  
Mr. Rick Noble, Richland Cty. FS Partnership  
Ms. Debbie Robertson, SC First Steps  
Ms. Gladys Carter, SC First Steps  
Ms. Debra Session, SC First Steps/DSS  
Ms. Tamala Toney, SC First Steps  
Ms. Nikki West, SC First Steps  
Ms. Mary Payson, SC B&CB, Office of Research & Statistics

### **Call to Order**

Mr. Lewis Smoak, Vice Chair, advised the board that the first order of business coming out of the Executive Committee would be to elect a new board secretary to replace Mr. Dan Wuori. Mr. Walt Miller nominated Ms. Lisa Van Riper to serve as secretary of the First Steps Board of Trustees. Ms. Van Riper was unanimously elected to fill this position.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Upon a motion by Mr. Walt Miller and a second to the motion, the minutes of the September 15, 2005 meeting were approved as written.

### **Strategic Planning and Administration Committee**

Mr. Lee Cory, Chair, reported that with the assistance of insurance professionals and the state staff, the committee recommends First Steps require each Regional Finance Manager to carry \$250,000 employee dishonesty insurance. After a short discussion, the recommendation to require each Regional Finance Manager to carry \$250,000 employee dishonesty insurance was approved by the board.

Mr. Cory advised that the committee (as previously reported) recommends annual demographic updates to the First Steps' funding formula, subject to the most recent SC Budget and Control Board data available by December 31 of each calendar year.

Mr. Cory reported that projected county partnership allocations would be provided to counties by the end of January to allow greater planning among the partnership, with final budget numbers subject to legislative budget action each June. Mr. Cory also reported that in the past the counties have been asked to submit their renewal plans on April 30, however, in the future counties will be required to submit their renewal plans by March 31.

### **Program and Grants Committee**

Ms. Doris Ballard, Chair, reported as information the results of the May 19<sup>th</sup> Program and Grants Committee, previously granted authority by the board to approve county revised 2006 plans submitted by Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Darlington, Georgetown counties, up to the approved allocation amount, to minimize any interruption in services to children and families at the county level. She reported that the committee held a conference call September 26<sup>th</sup> to review the resubmitted strategies for Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Darlington, and Georgetown Counties. With input from the state

office staff, the committee approved each county's revised 2006 plans.

#### **Evaluation and Accountability Committee**

Mr. Walt Miller, Chair, reported that high-level findings from the High/Scope report would not be available in November as originally estimated. He also reported that the School Readiness Index instrumentation protocol, pre-pilot test has begun in 4 Columbia-area schools and would be forwarding the results back to the sub-committee. The board of trustees should receive a full index update early in 2006.

Mr. Dan Wuori gave a brief description of the School Readiness Index, proposed by the ad hoc committee on measuring and monitoring school readiness. Designed to be the public policy measure of readiness trending for SC, as opposed to SC Readiness Assessment (a classroom-based assessment used in public schools to determine preparedness for first and second grades).

Mr. Dan Wuori reported that as portions of the High/Scope report are completed, High/Scope will be sending these to him and the information will be shared with the External Panel on or about December 16.

Mr. Lewis Smoak recognized three County Partnership Executive Directors attending the Board meeting: Ms. Deborah Padgett, Saluda County, Mr. Jim Riddle, Lexington, Mr. Rick Noble, Richland, and thanked them for their attendance. Mr. Smoak also recognized and welcomed Ms. Robin Snipes, new Director of SC Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education.

#### **Executive Committee**

Mr. Lewis Smoak reported that the Executive Committee had been busy. He reported that the Executive Committee had met with representatives of the PSARAS Foundation, Inc., on Wednesday, October 19, 2005, and today had met with members of the House and Senate Education Committees for direction on reauthorization. He reported that the First Steps Legislation has a sunset clause, which is effective in 2007.

Mr. Smoak reported that several business groups had requested meetings with First Steps stating renewed interest in early childhood education and reported preliminary discussions were occurring regarding action steps needed. Mr. Smoak asked all board members to please attend the November Board meeting as plans are in place to have a thorough discussion regarding First Steps' recommendations to policy makers, if asked by the legislature what should the state be doing to promote early childhood education outcomes at the highest level. He also, reported that there would be a Board-to-Board statewide leadership meeting at the Riverbanks Zoo, November 18, 2005 to discuss the same with all local leaders.

### **Director's Report**

Ms. Susan DeVenny reiterated that two foundations had approached First Steps with inquiries as to potential strategic alliances to extend philanthropic support to impoverished areas of the state. She reported on a draft proposal from the PSARAS Foundation, Inc., to complete a 30-month pilot project between First Steps and PSARAS offering grant assistance in high need/ rural areas of South Carolina. The other organization that has approached the state First Steps staff is the Duke Endowment. Board members have provided input to the proposal they have for consideration to support increased synergy in parent support among partners in the faith community.

Ms. DeVenny recognized Ms. Patti Butcher, Director, South Carolina State Library and thanked her for her leadership in the state's new initiative to eradicate illiteracy, of which First Steps has been asked to be a partner. Ms. DeVenny informed the board that the University of South Carolina launched in September a \$6 million statewide literacy initiative designed to positively impact childhood and family literacy in South Carolina. Known as Children, Libraries and Literacy Initiative, this collaborative initiative is led by USC's School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) and local libraries, and involves a wide range of university departments, state agencies, and literacy advocacy groups. The goal is to ultimately play a major role in significantly reducing illiteracy in South Carolina, with the focus at the outset on early literacy and groups serving children under 6.

Upon request, Ms. DeVenny introduced for discussion the pilot proposal from the PSARAS Foundation, Inc., proposing an agreement with First Steps for a two-year pilot project designed to assist PSARAS in making financial grants to entities in at least two rural counties per year in South Carolina.

Mr. Lewis Smoak distributed the draft proposal from PSARAS Foundation, Inc. for the Board's review. Mr. Cory reported that the PSARAS Foundation proposal was a 2-½ year pilot program with the first six months at a suggested funding amount of \$30,000 followed by \$70,000 annually –for a total pilot commitment of \$170,000. PSARAS Foundation has been achieving results with this program since 1999 (“Rural Initiative Project”). Executive Committee member had met with representatives from the PSARAS Foundation for overview of conceptual agreement and found very favorable synergy.

After a lengthy discussion, including concerns expressed by Rep. Shirley Hinson as to the particulars of the proposal, it was determined that the board would wait until November's board meeting to vote on the PSARAS Foundation, Inc., draft proposal, giving board members time to read and research the proposal and having foundation and First Steps legal staff a chance to review it closely. Ms. Lisa Van Riper suggested that the legal staff review and possibly add an exit clause allowing First Steps to withdraw.

### **Operations and Accountability Report**

Mr. Rodney Jenkins reported that First Steps remains within budget and reviewed the Budget Summary and Financial Statement for FY 05-06. Mr. Jenkins directed the

board's attention to the FY06 Education Improvement Act (EIA) fund of \$2 million dollars, which is a separate line item in the state budget, which is a recurring amount in the state budget at the state level. He reported that these monies have been allocated in three ways for 2006: (1) to supplement rural counties, bringing them to the minimum \$195,000 county allocation level, (2) to support the regional expansion of public-private 4k, and (3) to support county and regional lottery strategies which provide direct educational services to at-risk children. Mr. Jenkins also pointed out the Lottery Carry Forward FY04-05 line item of \$1,978,690, which has been entirely committed through 2005-2006 for board-approved lottery strategies.

Ms. DeVenny welcomed Melissa McGrath to the SC First Steps staff and informed the board that she would be working as a fiscal analyst in the state office. Ms. DeVenny also reported to the board that Chesterfield County First Steps had received a US Dept of Health and Human Services grant in the amount of \$50,000.

Ms. DeVenny directed the board's attention to the "Tentative First Steps Board Meetings 2006" notice, and flyer detailing the November 18, 2005 **Board-to-Board Leadership Meeting** to be held at the Riverbanks Zoo for information and review.

There being no other business before the board, the meeting was adjourned.

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Lisa Van Riper, Secretary  
South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Board of Trustees, a South Carolina Non-Profit  
Corporation

APPROVED this the \_\_\_\_\_ day of December, 2005

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Lewis Smoak, Vice Chair  
South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Board of Trustees, a South Carolina Non-Profit  
Corporation