

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

December 13, 2005

Voting Directors Present: Senator Michael L. Fair
 Mr. Lewis Smoak, Vice Chair
 Supt. Inez Tenenbaum
 Ms. Marileen Chapman
 Mr. Lee Cory
 Ms. Kristin Hook
 Ms. Sabine Lang
 Mr. Walt Miller
 Ms. Lisa Van Riper

Voting Members Absent: Governor Mark Sanford, Chair (excused)
 Senator John W. Matthews, Jr. (excused)
 Representative Shirley Hinson (excused)
 Representative Bessie Moody-Lawrence (excused)
 Ms. Judith Aughtry (excused)
 Ms. Doris Ballard (excused)
 Dr. Thaddeus John Bell (excused)
 Ms. Katherine Davis (excused)
 Ms. Linda O'Quinn (excused)
 Mr. Henry Parr, Jr. (excused)

Non-Voting Directors Present: Ms. Leigh Bolick (designee for Kim Aydlette, DSS)
 Ms. Susan Jones (designee for Elizabeth Mabry, DOT)
 Ms. Mary Lynne Diggs, SC Head Start Collaboration Office)

Non-Voting Directors Absent: Mr. C. Earl Hunter, DHEC
 Mr. Bobby Bowers, SC B&CB
 Mr. Lee Catoe, DAODAS
 Mr. Jim Griffith, Trans. Assn. of S.C.
 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
 Ms. Patti Butcher, SC State Library

Others Present: Ms. Rita Allison, Governor's Office
 Ms. Charmeka Bosket, Governor's Office
 Ms. Clara Heinsohn, Senate Education Committee
 Ms. Harriette Jenrette, SC Early Child Education
 Dr. Baron Holmes, SC Office of Research & Statistics
 Ms. Mary Payson, SC Office of Research & Statistics
 Ms. Jeanne Anderson, Ex.Dir., Anderson County First Steps
 Mr. Jim Riddle, Ex. Dir., Lexington County First Steps.
 Mr. Rick Noble, Ex. Dir., Richland County First Steps
 Mr. Rujon Williams, Chair, Darlington County First Steps

Ms. Centuria Watson, Ex. Dir., Chester County First Steps
Ms. Mamie Bostic, Ex. Dir., Darlington County First Steps
Ms. Deborah Padgett, Ex. Dir., Saluda County First Steps
Mr. Rodney Jenkins, SC First Steps
Mr. Leon Love, SC First Steps
Ms. Debbie Robertson, SC First Steps
Mr. Russell Brown, SC First Steps
Ms. Dorothy Priester, SC First Steps
Ms. Tamala Toney, SC First Steps
Ms. Wendy Homeyer, SC First Steps
Ms. Meghan McGuire, SC First Steps
Ms. Nikki West, SC First Steps

Call to Order

Mr. Lewis Smoak, Vice Chair, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Mr. Smoak thanked the Brookland Baptist Church for the use of their facility.

Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion by Mr. Lee Cory and a second to the motion, the minutes of the October 20, 2005 meeting were approved as written.

Mr. Smoak recognized Ms. Rita Allison and Ms. Charmeka Bostic of the Governor's Office along with First Steps Executive Directors, and members of the SC Childcare association and thanked them for their attendance.

Program and Grants Committee

Mr. Jason Gilbert, SC First Steps Staff reported that the Program and Grants Committee held a conference call on November 14, 2005. Mr. Gilbert reported as information only the FY 2006 reallocation of funds greater than 15% to Kershaw, Abbeville, Laurens and Dillon Counties to purchase additional office supplies. In addition to information items, the committee approved a request from Berkeley County to use \$4,000.00 of State Private funds in its Facility Quality Enhancements programs. The funds will be used to provide program renovation for local childcare providers.

Mr. Gilbert passed along the committee's motion to approve Berkeley County's request to use \$4,000 of State Private funds to provide program renovations in its Facility Enhancement program. The motion was approved as presented.

Executive Committee

Mr. Smoak reported a considerable amount of time was spent discussing the PSARAS Pilot Program Grant proposal during the October 20, Board meeting. He reported that there had been questions raised by Representative Hinson regarding the proposal. Mr. Smoak reported that legal staff representing both First Steps and PSARAS had reviewed the proposal and changes were made to resolve Representative Hinson's concerns. He reported that staff in the House Education Committee had also been consulted. After a thorough review of the final proposal via a conference call on November 21, 2005, the

Executive Committee agreed to move forward with the PSARAS Pilot Program Grant Agreement.

Mr. Smoak reported that the executive committee also discussed and accepted a framework document titled *Publicly Funded Pre-Kindergarten in South Carolina: Coordinating Resources for Greater Impact*. He described the document as a set of policy recommendations to guide discussions of early childhood education in the next session.

Discussion was halted to welcome Mr. Allen Campbell, Events Coordinator, with the Brookland Baptist Church. Mr. Campbell welcomed First Steps to the Brookland Baptist Church Convention and Conference Center. He reported that the center opened on September 11, 2005 and were available for both public and private events.

Ms. Susan DeVenny thanked Mr. Campbell and then called upon Mr. Dan Wuori, School Readiness Officer, to outline the pre-kindergarten recommendations.

Mr. Wuori described the document as being centered around four sequential policy steps shown on its cover. These are 1) clearly defining the intended scope and target populations (to be served by the state's publicly funded Pre-K programs); 2) coordinating public funding streams around this common definition; 3) working to incent and improve quality in all early education settings; and 4) pursuing targeted expansion in accordance with documented needs and with fidelity to proven models.

Mr. Wuori explained that each action step was linked to one or more of the document's 13 specific recommendations. He then outlined the recommendations as follows:

1. Establish an *evidence-based legal definition* of “at risk,” to include the requirement that state dollars be used - first and foremost - to serve children whose demographic and/or developmental characteristics fall within its parameters.
2. Conduct a demographic audit and matched cohort analysis comparing the attributes of and outcomes derived by students participating in half-day and full-day 4K programs.
3. Establish *an initial goal of “universal public access” for high risk four-year-olds* (across funding streams and service delivery models).
4. Resist the temptation to base important public policy decisions upon *over-generalizations of early childhood research findings*.
5. Utilize the existing legal structure of First Steps – at both the state and county levels – to *convene* the state’s pre-kindergarten providers and *assist in coordinating* their efforts across public funding streams.
6. Use state funds to enhance Head Start, not supplant it.
7. Redouble efforts to establish common ground with the state’s private providers and develop quality enhancement initiatives and/or incentives around areas of broad consensus.

8. Examine teacher licensure requirements in an effort to reduce and/or eliminate barriers to the employment of certified early childhood teachers within non-traditional settings.
9. Explore the provision of funding (or other) incentives to school districts opting to provide pre-kindergarten programming in private and community-based settings.
10. Continue refining the First Steps Public-Private Partnership Model.
11. Explore flexible approaches to expansion (as necessary) to avoid both “one size fits all” solutions and minimize the risk to private providers.
12. Give careful consideration to providing expanded services to high-risk students before devoting public dollars to universal access for all four-year-olds.
13. Explore income tax deductions as a means through which to assist families who choose and can afford to pursue pre-kindergarten services through non-public means.

Discussion of the recommendations ensued. Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum outlined the State Department of Education’s 21 year history of 4K provision, offered a number of clarifying points and raised questions about First Steps potential role in any 4K expansion. Mr. Wuori responded that special efforts had been made to avoid confusion on this matter, noting that the document outlines First Steps role as a coordinating body and “neutral convener,” and discussing its possible role in program expansion, as opposed to asserting any oversight or administrative role over existing programs, especially those provided by the state’s public school districts and Head Start grantees.

Mr. Smoak and other board members thanked Mr. Wuori for his time and talents in preparing and presenting a complex proposal. He encouraged the staff’s continued work on this important issue.

Mr. Smoak then introduced Clara Heinsohn, South Carolina Senate Education Committee, representing Senator John Courson, who has agreed to be a lead sponsor for the First Steps Reauthorization Bill that comes up in the legislation 2006. Mr. Smoak asked Ms. Heinsohn to thank Senator Courson for his support. Ms. Heinsohn reported that the reauthorization of First Steps had been pre-filed on November 29, 2005 with 12 co-sponsors. She reported that the bill has the support of the leadership of the Senate Education Committee, is co-sponsored by almost 1/3 of all Senators, and that she is aware of no objections in the Senate. She stated that Senator Courson appreciates First Steps work.

Mr. Smoak thanked Senator Fair, a Senate Education Committee member and reauthorization co-sponsor, and asked him to pass along First Steps' sincere appreciation.

Mr. Smoak reported that Representative Ronnie Townsend, Chairman, Education and Public Works Committee, has agreed to sponsor First Steps Reauthorization Bill in the House and thanked everyone present who had contacted their legislators.

Ms. Rita Allison reported that First Steps had received a letter from the Governor for the reauthorization of First Steps. She reported that it is essential that First Steps expand

their work with private providers to further strengthen and increase early childhood education opportunities. While public facilities serve as an option for many parents, there are also quality private providers who can offer high-quality educational opportunities that may better meet the needs of an individual child. She stated that everyone must come to the table unified and challenged all parties to develop a statewide perspective on early childhood education and provide leadership to further expand education choices available to parents. She reported that 4K is one of the tools to prepare children for the K-12 experience and in order to obtain this everyone must work together. Ms. Allison thanked everyone for participating in the board meeting and for the work they are doing.

Mr. Smoak thanked Rita Allison for her remarks.

Director's Report

Ms. DeVenny directed the board's attention to information in their board packets regarding the South Carolina NIEER report on the outcomes derived by four-year-old programs funded through both the SDE and First Steps, along with newspaper articles and information regarding what First Steps has funded in four-year-old kindergarten since inception. She reported that Mr. Jenkins would be giving a brief report regarding demographics and the Strategic Planning and Administration Committee was moving on the demographic formula update in the January board meeting.

Mr. Jenkins directed the board's attention to a document in their packets titled *Factors for Calculation of the Funding Formula*. He reported that the board had agreed that First Steps would update the funding formula demographics annually and stated that each year new numbers would be included for calculating the funding formula. He reported that the current formula is located to the left and the formula for FY 06 is the approved change. Mr. Jenkins advised that the date in the left margin is when the information comes into First Steps from the Budget and Control Board and the Office of Research and Statistics get this information in September/October. He reported that the last information is obtained in December and will be used in January to put out allocations to county partnerships.

Ms. DeVenny briefed the board on the High/Scope Report. She reported that High/Scope Evaluation is underway and is expected within the next several weeks and asked Mr. Wuori to give a brief report regarding the next step.

Mr. Wuori reported that the High/Scope Evaluation report is scheduled to be presented at the January board meeting by members of the High/Scope staff. He reported that on January 5th, Ms. Kim Browning, High/Scope Research would be in Columbia to brief First Steps County Directors and Board Chairs with more details on location and times to come.

The next meeting is January 19, 2006. Mr. Smoak thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned.

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 January, 2006

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