

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

March 16, 2006

Voting Directors Present:

Mr. Lewis Smoak, Vice Chair
Senator Michael L. Fair
Representative Shirley Hinson
Supt. Inez Tenenbaum
Mr. Lee Cory
Mr. Henry Parr, Jr.
Ms. Doris Ballard
Ms. Judith Aughtry
Dr. Thaddeus Bell
Rev. Reece Yandle
Ms. Kristin Hook
Ms. Lisa Van Riper
Ms. Linda O'Quinn
Ms. Sabine Lang

Voting Directors Absent:

Senator John W. Matthews (excused)
Representative Bessie Moody-Lawrence (excused)
Ms. Katherine Davis (excused)
Mr. Walt Miller (excused)
Ms. Marileen Chapman (excused)

Non-Voting Directors Present:

Ms. Cindy Sweigart, (designee for C. Earl Hunter
SC DHEC)
Ms. Leigh Bolick (designee for Kim Aydlette, S.C.
DSS)
Ms. Mary Ann Perry (designee for Stan Butkus
S.C. DDSN)
Ms. Shirley Jeffcoat (designee for Elizabeth Mabry
S.C. DOT)
Ms. Angela Flowers (designee for John Connery,
S.C. DMH)
Ms. Patti Butcher, S.C. State Library
Mr. David Potter, S.C. Education Oversight
Committee

Non-Voting Directors Absent:

Mr. Bobby Bowers, S.C. B & CB
Ms. Lee Catoe, DAODAS
Mr. Jim Griffith, Transportation Assn. Of S.C.

Mr. Robert Kerr, S.C. DHHS
Mr. Lee Catoe, DAODAS
Dr. Barry Russell, S.C. Tech College System
Dr. Nancy Freeman, Regulatory Advisory Comm.
Dr. Conrad Festa, S.C. Comm. On Higher
Education
Dr. Paul Krohne, S.C. School Board Assoc.

Others Present:

Ms. JoAnne Anderson, Education Oversight Comm.
Dr. Bill Brown, USC School of Education
Ms. Melanie Barton, Education Oversight Comm.
Ms. Charmeka Bosket, Governor's Office
Mr. Rick Noble, Richland County First Steps
Mr. Jim Riddle, Lexington County First Steps
Ms. Mary Payson, S.C Office Research & Statistics
Ms. Susan DeVenny, S.C. First Steps
Ms. Dan Wuori, S.C. First Steps
Mr. Rodney Jenkins, S.C. First Steps
Mr. Russell Brown, S. C. First Steps
Mr. Jason Gilbert, S.C. First Steps
Ms. Tamala Toney, S.C. First Steps
Ms. Wendy Homeyer, S.C. First Steps
Ms. Debbie Robertson, S.C. First Steps
Ms. Meghan McGuire, S.C. First Steps
Ms. Gladys Carter, S.C. First Steps
Ms. Nikki West, S.C. First Steps

Call to Order

Mr. Lewis Smoak, Vice Chair, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion by Mr. Lee Cory and a second to the motion, the minutes of the December 13, 2005 meeting were approved as written.

Strategic Planning and Administration Committee

Mr. Cory reported that the committee had reviewed the FY 07 Budget items along with county allocations and reported that all county allocations with the exception of the 13 subsidized counties are receiving more funds than in the past. He reported that the committee had reviewed the staffing levels along with future staffing requirements, which would be presented to the board as necessary.

Program/Grants Committee

Ms. Doris Ballard, Chair, reported that the committee had approved the request to reallocate funds for Anderson, Charleston and York Counties. She reported that the state office approved the request to reallocate funds for Lexington County to use \$589 in Local

and Private Pending to pay for advertisements in the local media and for membership dues.

Mr. Ballard directed the board's attention to a new section to the Reallocation Summary Page titled "New Local Funds", added to provide the Board with additional information regarding the use of new local funds at the county level. She reported that Richland, Clarendon and Lexington County have added new funds to their already approved strategies.

Ms. Ballard informed the Board that FY 2006 Reallocation of Funds Greater than 15% Charts for January and February 2006, included in their board packets, were presented to and approved by the committee during two conference calls and presented as information only.

Mr. Rodney Jenkins updated the board on the PSARAS Foundation proposal. He reported that this is a rural initiative with two counties chosen by the PSARAS Foundation. The counties are Dillon and Marlboro County. Mr. Jenkins reported representatives from the two counties had met with members of the PSARAS Foundation where they went over the details of the program and later members of the PSARAS Foundation and First Steps staff visited the two county partnerships. At this time more specific information was reviewed as to how the program would be initiated. Mr. Jenkins reported that this initiative was on schedule.

Evaluation & Accountability Committee

Ms. Kristin Hook presented the committee report. She advised, that at the request of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation and approval of the three-member external evaluation panel, an extension of the planned High Scope report release had been granted. The Evaluation and Accountability Committee anticipates the report's release upon resolution of final data issues.

Director's Report

Ms. DeVenny introduced Ms. Meghan McGuire, Ms. Debbie Robertson and Ms. Wendy Homeyer, of the First Steps staff for a presentation on the Countdown to Kindergarten program, which is going into its third summer.

Ms. Meghan McGuire reported that Countdown to Kindergarten is a program providing eight weeks of intensive, family and community-based learning for the state's youngest students as they prepare for kindergarten. She went over the program's three goals: 1) to increase successful transition of SC's most at-risk children into the K-12 school environment; 2) to increase parent involvement in the early grades (particularly among at-risk students) and; 3) To build greater public awareness of the importance of school readiness and to provide simple ways for parents, caregivers, and communities to impact children's early school success. Ms. Meghan McGuire reported that in 2005, 34 of 46 SC counties participated in Countdown to Kindergarten serving nearly 1,200 children and their families.

Ms. Debbie Robertson reported that the 2005 Countdown to Kindergarten's program increased the scope of evaluation efforts. Through coordinated efforts with research partner University of South Carolina, and through the creation of a Countdown evaluation database (designed by SC's Chief Information Officer Division), we are tabulating program impact and targeting efforts extensively across the entire state. She reported that the database stores in-depth program information and enables reporting on children's progress for years to come, as it is transportable to other data sets at the state level. Ms. Robertson reported that from pre and post assessment surveys Countdown has long-term, maintained effects on children who are entering kindergarten and their parents. Of nearly 1,200 children and their families who participated in 2005, immediate results included: 38% improvement in families visiting a library w/their children; 27% improvement in families reading to their children; and 18% increase in families teaching their children letters, words and numbers.

Ms. Wendy Homeyer gave a brief presentation on the database developed to track children participating in Countdown to Kindergarten. She explained that with the database First Steps could keep track of children's birthdates, social security numbers, addresses, and status during the program to county of participation, parent's information, etc. She explained that with the database the children could be located when their first PACT test are administered and determine if children participating in Countdown to Kindergarten were more advanced than children that did not participate.

Ms. DeVenny then introduced Dr. JoAnne Anderson, Executive Director, and Mr. David Potter of the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and Dr. Bill Brown, USC School of Education to update the board on a report from the Education Oversight Committee prepared at the request of the General Assembly of South Carolina pursuant to the provisions of Concurrent Resolution 4484.

Ms. Anderson reported that the report titled: Results and Related Recommendations of the Inventory and Study of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Programs in South Carolina, was conducted as a part of the continuing research of the SC EOC and data used to develop the inventory and as a basis for the recommendations were provided by colleagues serving in district, state and federal programs, including SC First Steps.

Mr. David Potter reported that the Concurrent Resolution 4484 of 2206 had required the Education Oversight Committee to accomplish the following three requests:

1. To inventory and study all four-year-old kindergarten programs in the State funded in whole or in part with federal, state, or local public funds.
2. To determine the necessary requirements to implement a full day four-year-old kindergarten program in each of the eight plaintiff school districts in the case of Abbeville County School District, et al., v. State of South Carolina, et. al. for all children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch; and
3. To determine the necessary requirements to implement a statewide full day four-year-old kindergarten program for all children who quality for free or reduced-price lunches.

Dr. Bill Brown, USC School of Education, reported on the program model proposed by the EOC.

Ms. Melanie Barton updated the board on the cost to implement the recommendations of the EOC.

The meeting was adjourned.

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

Lewis Smoak, Vice-Chair
South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
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