



Marion County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report*

Board Chair:
Victoria Belin

Executive Director:
Spencer R. Scott

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**Total children in county under
age 6: 2,903**

**Children under age 6 living in
poverty: 13.4%**

Marion County Highlights

- 4K Expansion Programs continue to grow.
- Nearly 1000 children received books from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
- 100% of children participating in this year's Countdown to Kindergarten received all 8 visits.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The 4K Expansion Program has truly been an asset to children, their families and childcare providers in Marion County.

For many years private Childcare providers have expressed great interest in expanding their 4K services, but due to lack of funding and resources they had very little success. The availability of the 4K Expansion Program in our county since 2006 has made a significant difference in the local childcare programs and in the lives of the children and the families we serve.

The 4K Expansion program has made childcare services more affordable for families who would otherwise have seek other services. This program has also provided much needed materials and supplies for childcare centers. These materials and supplies, along with the availability of technical assistance have helped childcare providers to further enhance their facilities and better prepare our children to succeed in school.

The implementation of the 4K Expansion Program has helped participating facilities to improve their ECERS scores an average of two points in the 4K rooms. The number of children participating in the 4K Expansion Programs provided by privately-owned providers continues to increase each year and private childcare providers look forward to serving them.

Children in Marion County have truly benefited from the implementation of the 4K Expansion Program.

Sincerely,

Spencer R. Scott

Spencer R. Scott
Executive Director
Marion County First Steps

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Parent Child Home

The goal of Parent Child Home is to increase the number of children who develop a love of learning/reading with their parents by partnering with Marion County First Steps and the School Districts who provide highly qualified and trained home visitors who meet with the parent(s) and the child(ren) at least twice a week. During some of the visits, the child is given incentives to motivate/encourage them to learn.

Program results:

Marion County First Steps continued to partner with school Districts One, Two, and Seven to implement Parent Child Home (PCH). District One served 84 children and their families, District Two served 22 children and their families and District Seven served 36 children and their families. Collectively, 142 children and their families were served in the Parent Child Home Program in Marion County.

Marion County First Steps has made significant strides with its parenting programs. 98% of participating parents strongly agree that overall they are satisfied with this program (2% improvement from last year).

100% of participating parents strongly agreed that their interaction with their children increased as a result of being in the PCH program.

97% of participating parents strongly agreed that they have learned more about age appropriate activities with their children.

43% of the children in the PCH program were read to or listened to as they read from a book at least 5 or more times a week. A significant increase from 11% BEFORE participating in the PCH program.

Family Literacy

District 2 currently administers the Family Literacy Program.

Approximately 11 adults have been served again this fiscal year.

92% of the participants strongly agree that overall they are satisfied with this program.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library provides books to children 0-5 years old.

Marion County First Steps has successfully implemented the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program in the Marion County community by collaborating with local agencies (Pee Dee Electric Cooperative and The Brittani Foundation).

Since its inception in 2005, 609 children are registered in the program and 565 families are being served.

QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Daycare Provider Training

The goal of this program is to provide quality trainings to local daycare providers at an affordable cost. These trainings help providers increase their knowledge, enhance their facilities and provide a better learning environment for the children they serve.

Program results:

- Approximately 17 childcare providers received training during the 2007-08 Fiscal Year.
- Combined, they have received 153 DSS Credit Hours.
- 98% of childcare training participants agree that childcare training is beneficial and effective.

EARLY EDUCATION.

S.C. Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) Program description:

CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4-year-old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff school districts involved in the school funding equity lawsuit, *Abbeville et al. vs. South Carolina*. First Steps oversees CDEPP 4K classes offered in non-public school environments. To qualify for state-paid tuition, a student's family must qualify for TANF or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

Program results:

- During the 2007-08 Fiscal Year, approximately 45 children were served in Marion County.
- Four providers offered CDEPP 4K classes in Marion County.
- Agapeland Daycare Center, Kids Konnection Childcare Facility, McGill's Bundles of Joy and Troy Johnson Learning Korner were the facilities that participated in this year's 4K Program.

SCHOOL TRANSITION.

Countdown to Kindergarten

Program description: Countdown to Kindergarten is the 8 week summer program that helps prepare children and their parents for school. During the eight weeks, a teacher serves as a home visitor by visiting the home and working with the parent and the child to help them get ready for the upcoming school year. At the end of the summer, the home visitor, the parent and the child attend the program celebration in Columbia at EdVenture.

Program results:

- 10 children were served in the Countdown to Kindergarten program in Marion County.
- The notable percent positive change for Countdown to Kindergarten shows an overall average 20% positive change in the behavior of the child and the parent from the Pre Test to the Post Test. The Pre and Post Tests pertain to the number of conversations the parents had with the child, the number of toys the parents played with the child, the number of books the parents reads to the child, the number of songs the participants sang to the child and more.

Financial Summary

<u>Expenditures by Funding Source</u>			
State Appropriation.	\$200,841		State Private
E.I.A. Appropriation	\$14,618		Local Private
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation	\$161,440		In-Kind

<u>Expenditures by Program/Strategy Name</u>	
Administrative Functions	\$26,798
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$36,712
Parent Child Home MSD#1	\$49,672
Parent As Teachers MSD #2	\$6,923
Parent Child Home MSD#2	\$22,432
Parent Child Home MSD#7	\$31,553
Family Literacy Model MSD#2	\$12,707
Imagination Library	\$17,748
4K – Agapeland Daycare	\$26,635
4K – Kids Konnection	\$23,573
4K – McGill’s Bundle of Joy	\$53,199
4K – Troy Johnson Learning Korner	\$54,760
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$4,381
Child Care Quality Enhancement Grants	\$27,483
Child Care Training and Professional Dev.	\$15,587
GRAND TOTAL	\$

NOTE: “Total” should equal above funding source “Total”. If totals are different, please provide clarification below. (click+spacebar to delete this note)

CLARIFICATION(s)
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 17.17%

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
LeTracey Davis	\$10.00
Cynthia Edge	\$10.00
Debbie Faulk	\$10.00
Tarsha Alford	\$10.00
Candace Duncan	\$10.00
Betty Evans	\$10.00
Angie Gause	\$10.00
Shelanner McNeil	\$10.00
Erica Morris	\$10.00
Jackie Troy Johnson	\$10.00
Loretta McGill	\$10.00
Scheniko Davis	\$10.00
Ann Grant	\$10.00
Diane Raeford	\$10.00
Danielle Stanley	\$10.00
Leresa Tart	\$10.00
Annette Gerald	\$10.00
Joyce James	\$10.00
Eartha Edwards	\$10.00
Shellion Lewis	\$10.00
Barbara Smith	\$10.00
Debra Robinson	\$10.00
Agapeland Childcare Center	\$50.00
Kathy McCray	\$51.00
Little Promises	\$40.00
Marion County School District #2	\$3,975.00
Marion County School District #1	\$200.00
Marion County School District #7	\$3,610.00
Patricia A. Lytch	\$100.00
Spencer R. Scott	\$90.00
Sugar Bears Day Care	\$110.00
Wee Care Day Care	\$66.00
TOTAL:	\$8,512.00

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Name	Category
Victoria Belin	Member of Early Childhood
Howard Blakeney	Faith Based Community
Vara Risinger	Member of Early Childhood Education
Melissa McCloud	Member of Early Childhood Education
Angela Slagle	Member of Early Childhood Education
Michael Lupo	School District 1
Dr. Nathaniel Miller	School District 2
Dr. Everette Dean	School District 7
Cathy Pruett	Marion County Library
Fikera Carroll	Parents of Pre-School Children
Jane Ward	DHEC
Anita Reaves – Legette	Headstart
Mae Frances Davis	Pre-K thru Primary Teacher
Esther Richardson	Pre-K thru Primary Teacher
Helen Smith	Family Educator
Joyce James	Family Educator
Pat Gibson	Childcare Provider
Rachel Mason	Healthcare Provider
Lula Coleman	Transportation Provider
Jackie Curry	Non-Profit
Terry O'Connor	Non-Profit
Yolanda Moore	Parents of Pre-School Children
Vernetta McNeil	Parents of Pre-School Children
Susie Hill	Member of Early Childhood Education

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Marion County

Total Children Under Six: 2,903

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

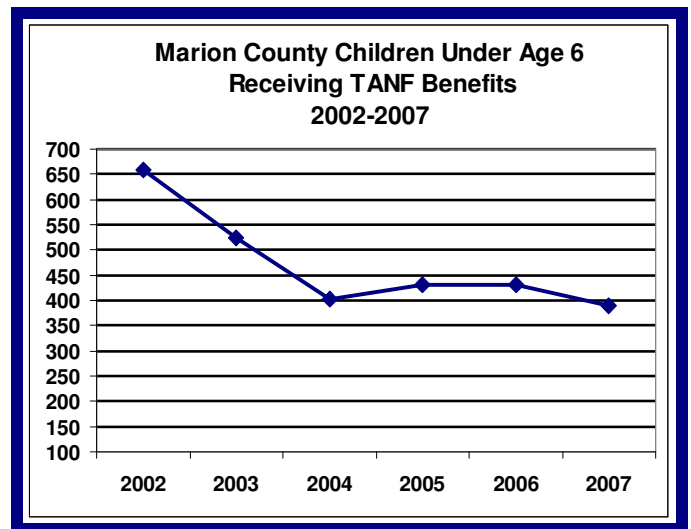
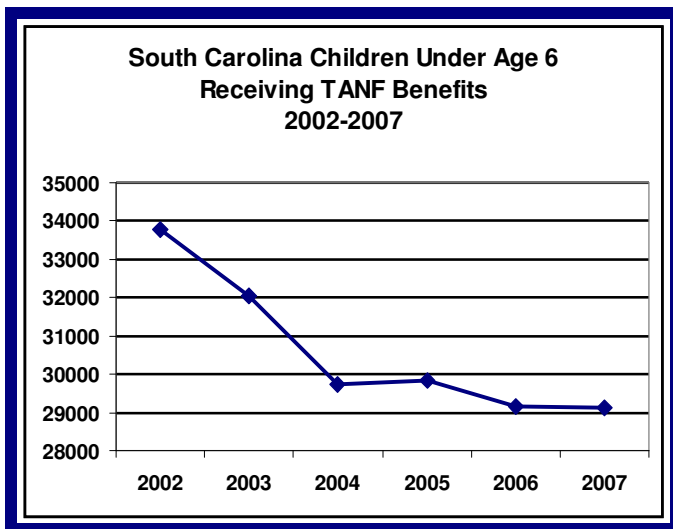
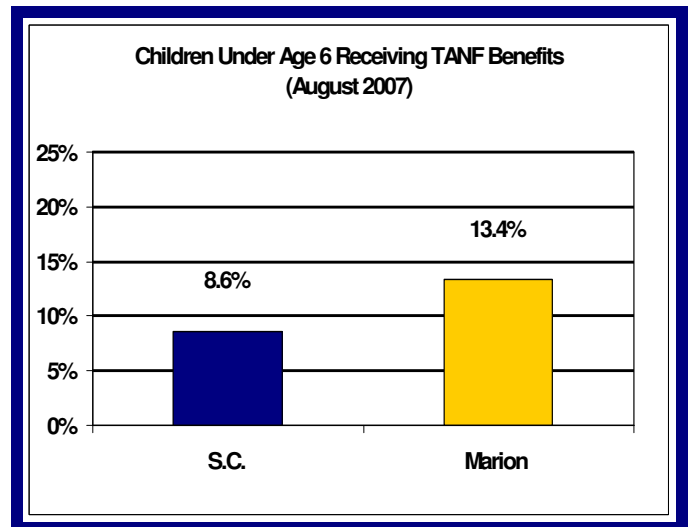
Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

Marion County (2007): 13.4%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 8 Marion County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the "below basic" level (PACT) by third grade.

Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

389 of Marion County's 2,903 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Marion County

Total Children Under Six: 2,903

CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

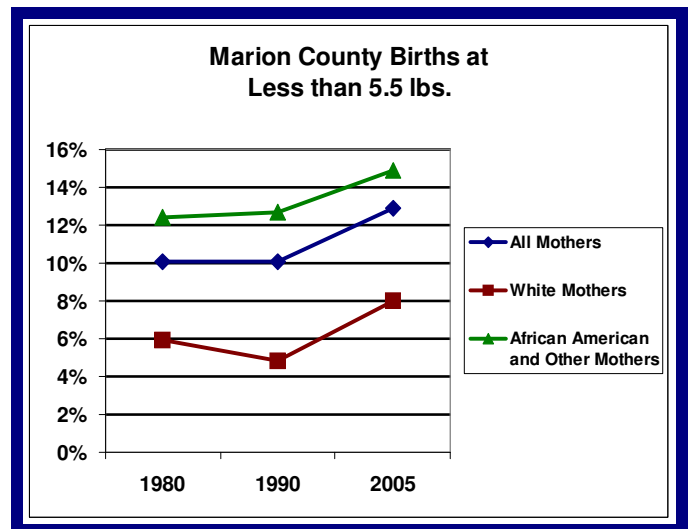
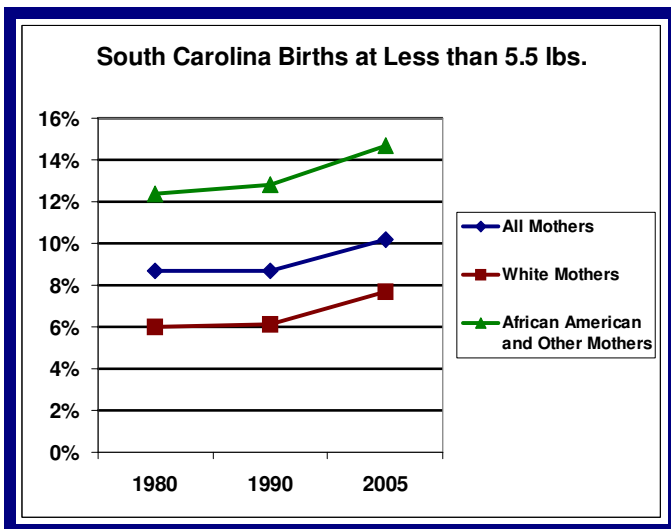
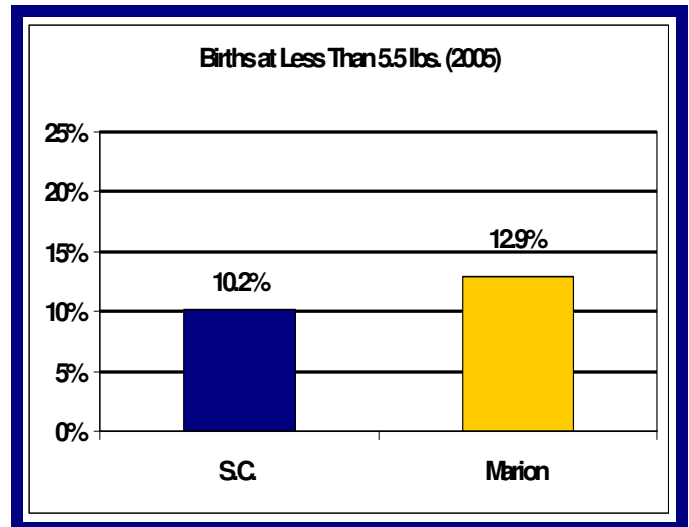
Statewide Average (2005): 10.2% Marion County (2005): 12.9%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 8 Marion County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

56 of the 434 children born in Marion County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Marion County

Total Children Under Six: 2,903

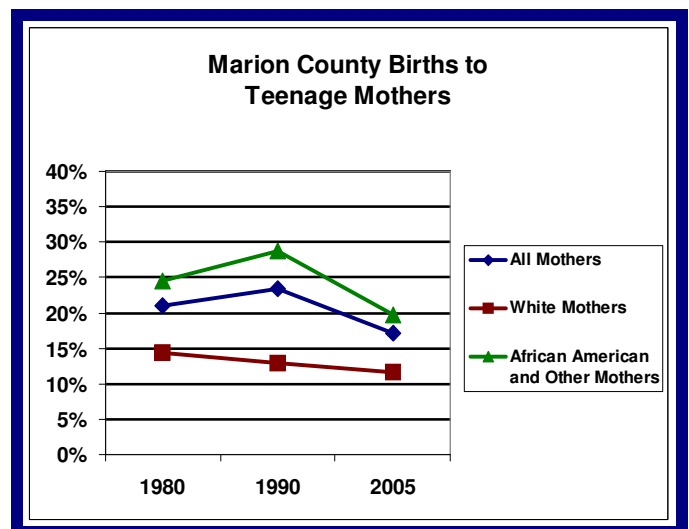
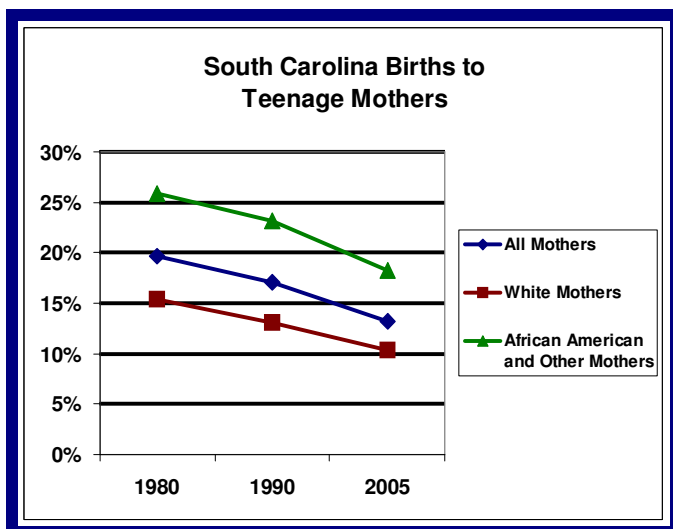
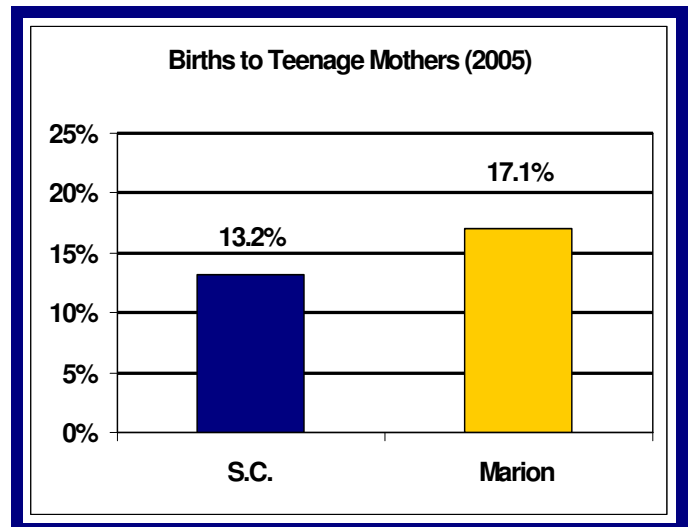
BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Marion County (2005): 17.1%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 6 Marion County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

74 of the 434 children born in Marion County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Marion County

Total Children Under Six: 2,903

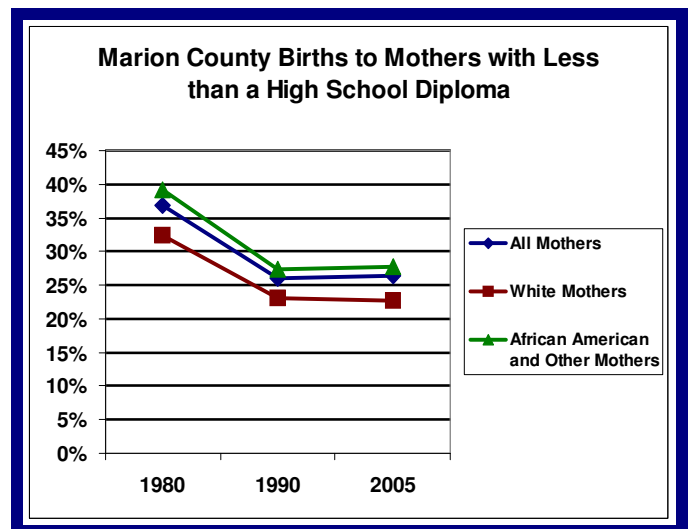
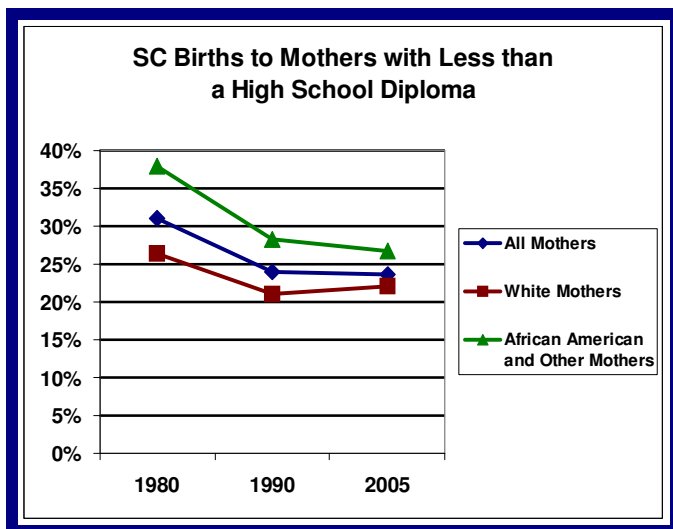
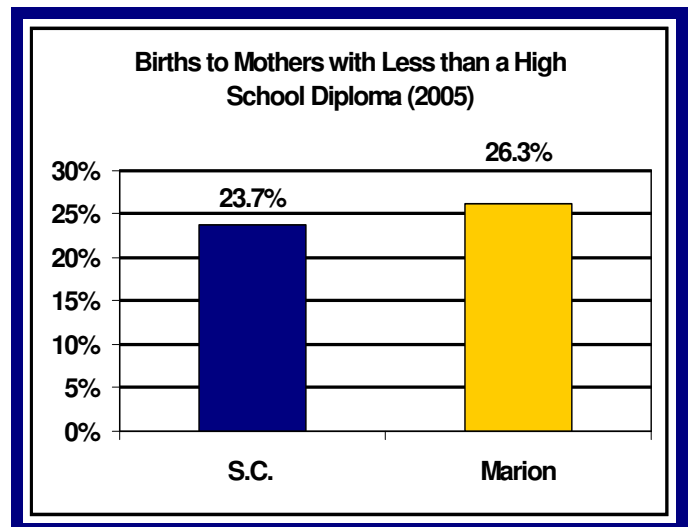
BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Marion County (2005): 26.3%

Fast Fact: 1 in 4 children in Marion County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

114 of the 434 children born in Marion County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



Testimonials 1:

Dear Ms. Harrison:

If was not for these books, many young children would not have any books. Plus, it has been a wonderful message to the parents each month, "please read to your young child". Thank you and your organization for everything.

Katherine Duguay, Nurse Home Visitor for Safe School – Healthy Students

Testimonials 2:

Dear Mr. Scott:

Thank you and S. C. First Steps for allowing Troy-Johnson Learning Korner to be a part of the 4K Pilot Program. It has truly been a rewarding experience for us. I knew the importance of an early educational program, but could not afford the supplies and materials that were needed to implement such a program. Thanks to you and SC First Steps, my dream has come to reality.

The first year that we were selected to become an active participant of the 4K Pilot Program, the parents were overwhelmed by the materials, furniture, and supplies that were given to us. They were pleased and excited about the investment of time and educational supplies that it would take in order to facilitate a comprehensive learning environment. As a result of these much needed resources, we immediately saw an improvement in the student's social, physical, and cognitive development. The classroom, fully equipped, made learning fun for the students and the job easier for the teachers.

The training program for the teachers has been an asset as well. It has allowed the teachers to receive the latest information in early childhood education. This has resulted in our students being well prepared to enter kindergarten at a skill set level that is above other children.

The parents like the idea of having a 4K Program within our setting. The students come to Troy-Johnson Learning Korner at the age of six weeks. They grow up here with us. They know us. They feel safe and secure with us. Therefore, learning flows continuously. Thanks to SC First Steps.

I cannot thank you enough for allowing Troy-Johnson Learning Korner to be a part of SC First Steps Pilot Program. I sincerely hope that the 4K Program continues.

Sincerely,

Jackie Troy-Johnson

Jackie Troy-Johnson