



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **First Steps Now Accepting Private 4K Provider Applications for the 2007-2008 School Year**

**Columbia, S.C.** – S.C. First Steps to School Readiness has begun accepting applications for Year Two of the South Carolina Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP). The two-year pilot was established by the 2006 General Assembly in response to Circuit Court Judge Thomas W. Cooper’s ruling that the state must do more to meet the early education needs of low-income children. The CDEPP program operates in public school districts under the supervision of the S.C. Department of Education, and in approved private settings monitored by First Steps.

“The state’s private, faith- and community-based preschool providers not only have a longstanding history of excellence, but enable more than 76,000 South Carolina parents to participate in the workforce. We applaud the General Assembly for recognizing the importance of a strong private sector and look forward to continuing our efforts to ensure top-notch programs for South Carolina children and their families,” said First Steps’ Deputy Director Dan Wuori.

Private for-profit, private non-profit, faith-based, and Head Start providers seeking to participate during the 2007-2008 school year must meet the following qualifications:

- be licensed, registered OR approved by the SC Department of Social Services;
- use an approved, research-based preschool curriculum;
- offer 180, 6.5-hour instructional days per year; and
- employ a lead teacher who has at least a two-year degree in early childhood education and is working toward the advancement of his/her early childhood credentials.

The CDEPP pilot program allows students to cross district and county lines at their parents’ discretion. While only income eligible children from the 37 districts involved in the state’s recent school equity funding suit qualify to participate, eligible providers need not be located within a plaintiff district.

While the program’s final details cannot be determined until passage of the State Budget, both the SC House and Senate have approved a per-student reimbursement of up to \$3,931 for each eligible child enrolled, with additional funding possible for both classroom equipment and transportation. Eligible children must reside in a plaintiff school district, be four years old by September 1, 2007, and qualify for Medicaid or free- or reduced-price lunch.

Providers seeking more information about the CDEPP program should visit the First Steps website at <http://www.scfirststeps.org/4K.htm> Providers may also request a mailed or faxed application by calling toll-free to (877) 621-0865.

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*South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness is a comprehensive, results-oriented statewide education initiative to help prepare children to reach school healthy and ready to succeed. Public and private support is combined through county partnerships to enable individual communities to address the unmet needs of young children and their families.*

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