



South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness  
Annual Meeting  
December 3, 2015

**MINUTES**

**Members Present (20):**

Ken Wingate, Chair  
Julie Hussey, Vice Chair  
Lisa Van Riper, Secretary  
Senator Mike Fair  
Rep. Jerry Govan  
Superintendent Molly Spearman  
Roger Pryor  
Dr. Beverly Buscemi  
Susan Alford  
Rick Noble  
Tim Holt  
Julia-Ellen Davis  
Mary Lynn Diggs  
Alexia Newman  
Sue Williams  
Judith Aughtry  
Walter Fleming  
Jennifer McConnell  
Dr. Amy Williams  
Christian Soura

**Members Absent (5):**

Senator Gerald Malloy  
Rep. Rita Allison  
Katherine Heigel  
Tracy Lamb  
Evelyn Patterson

**Others Present:**

Susan DeVenny  
Dr. Dan Wuori  
Mark Barnes  
Debbie Robertson  
Samantha Ingram  
Ginger Ryall  
Deborah Padgett  
Carletta Isreal  
Kristie Musick  
LaMyra Sanders  
Craig King

Martha Strickland  
Jim Riddle  
Lisa Dial  
Dr. Cassandra Johnson  
Dorothy Priester  
Rosemary Wilson  
Megan Branham

### **Welcome and Introductions, Quorum Call and Adoption of Minutes**

Mr. Wingate called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm, noted the presence of a quorum and reminded those in attendance that the meeting was being held in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act. **Upon a motion by Ms. Aughtry and a second by Mr. Pryor the Board unanimously adopted the meeting agenda.**

**Mr. Noble noted a correction to the draft November 2, 2015 minutes, requesting that he be reflected as having abstained from the Board's vote to adopt an Early Head Start Governance Council Charter. Upon a motion by Ms. Hussey and a second by Ms. McConnell the Board unanimously adopted the meeting minutes of November 2, 2015 as amended.**

### **Annual Report**

Dr. Wuori provided an overview of the agency's 2015 Annual Report, noting the presence of individual pages dedicated to each local partnership and highlighting selected data points.

### **Strategic Plan**

Ms. Van Riper provided an overview of the Board's draft Vision 2020 Strategic Planning document, reviewing the Board's process and changes made since the November meeting. Ms. Van Riper introduced the report's three strategic themes and their seven associated priorities:

1. Increase access to quality early childhood programs and resources.
  - a. Further expand access to high-quality early care, education, and early literacy services, particularly in the Abbeville plaintiff districts.
  - b. Enhance comprehensive services to children 0-5 and the families/caregivers who support them, recognizing families as the first and best teachers of their children.
  - c. Increase understanding of school readiness domains and assessment, and "what works" to help young children succeed. Make information easily accessible in all communities and for all families.
2. Enhance leadership development and capacity building.
  - a. Build state and local capacity by strengthening interagency collaboration, public-private partnerships, strengthening technical assistance and leadership development for early childhood partners statewide.
  - b. Enhance systems of support for local partnerships, BabyNet providers, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and 4K families.
3. Strengthen interagency accountability and public-private collaboration.
  - a. Examine and strengthen early childhood transitions for children among SC's early childhood system partners to ensure continuity of care and healthy development.
  - b. Develop a system of shared, interagency accountability (state and local, public and private) by developing a shared data system, an inventory of services to children 0-5, and an interagency children's budget.

Ms. Van Riper noted that the Board's work over the coming months will be to operationalize the plan's themes and priorities. Ms. Hussey thanked Ms. Van Riper and the Strategic Planning and

Evaluation Committee for their hard work, noting that the plan will guide the Board as it considers the next steps in the agency's work. Mr. Wingate expressed his excitement that the plan would provide an opportunity to incorporate the priorities of each First Steps partner agency.

After discussion Mr. Wingate called for a vote on the recommendation of the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee. The Board unanimously adopted the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan.

### **Director's Report**

Ms. DeVenny expressed her thanks to all Trustees and staff participating in the summer 2015 site visits, noting that the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan was meaningfully informed by the priorities of local partnerships.

Ms. DeVenny thanked Susan Alford of the SC Department of Social Services for the agencies' recent collaborative work. She noted both the work of an interagency child care work team and DSS' recent assistance in the procurement of technology for First Steps' 4K classrooms.

Mr. Barnes provided the Board with an update on the recent BabyNet Think Tank meetings, in which approximately 50 system stakeholders have been working to craft a comprehensive plan to address the interagency system's longstanding history of underperformance. An associated report will be submitted to the SC General Assembly by January 1, 2016 along with a prioritized budget request. Mr. Barnes reviewed recent improvements to the BabyNet data and payment systems, and noted recent increases in the program's caseload and rapidly rising service costs. He reviewed plans to deploy 23 new FTE positions.

Ms. DeVenny noted that the meeting would be her last after a 16-year tenure as both a founding trustee (4 years) and Director (12 years). Effective December 16, 2015, Ms. DeVenny will assume the role of President at Lancaster's J. Marion Sims Foundation. She offered reflections on the growth of First Steps and pledged her ongoing support as a volunteer for the agency.

Mr. Wingate thanked Ms. DeVenny for her leadership and recognized Ms. Davis, who will assume the role of Interim Director on December 16, 2015. He noted that he, Ms. Davis and Dr. Wuori had held a number of planning meetings and expressed confidence in the continuity of all agency operations.

### **Early Childhood Common Agenda**

Ms. DeVenny recognized Ms. Williams of the Children's Trust, who in turn recognized Ms. Megan Branham who provided a brief overview of the Early Childhood Common Agenda. Ms. Branham described the agenda as containing 9 recommendations in two categories: Child Care/Early Childhood Education and Financing/Economic Stability. Ms. Branham explained that the draft Agenda was currently undergoing revision and it was agreed that the Trust would provide the proposed final document to First Steps staff for distribution to the Board in advance of the January 27, 2016 meeting. The Board will have additional discussion of the Agenda at that time.

### **Greenville Early Childhood Event**

Senator Fair called the Board's attention to an upcoming early childhood symposium to be sponsored by the Greenville Children's Hospital and noted the opportunity for First Steps to serve as a co-sponsor at no cost. **After discussion, Senator Fair made a motion to have First Steps co-**

**sponsor of the February 2016 event at no cost to the agency. After a second by Ms. Van Riper, the Board unanimously adopted the motion.**

Mr. Noble requested additional information on the cost of the 2015 Chairmen's Summit and [I Can] campaign. Mr. Barnes and Ms. DeVenny noted that both are being underwritten by private funds and Mr. Barnes agreed to provide additional information in January.

There being no additional business, the Board adjourned at 2:55pm.