

AIKEN COUNTY



Getting children ready for school.



Parents as Teachers

Countdown to Kindergarten

Child Care Quality  
Enhancement

Child Care Training

Child Care Scholarships

# Annual Report

2017-18



## OUR VISION:

Every Aiken County child will  
be prepared for success in  
school.

[www.scfirststeps.org](http://www.scfirststeps.org)

105 Gator Lane, Aiken, SC 29801 ♦ (803)- 306-1343 ♦ email: [mnash@acpsd.net](mailto:mnash@acpsd.net)

# Director Message

## SERVICE:

### Contributing to something **GREATER** than yourself.

Aiken County First Steps (ACFS) completed its most recent needs and resources assessment in December 2016. This intense assessment, comprised of two components – **identification of existing community resources and determination of county-wide needs**, helped us to identify the following unmet needs for programs, services and collaborations in our county that promote school readiness: Community awareness – families don't know what services are available, Mental Health Services, barriers to access transportation, particularly in rural areas, and Early Learning Services for underserved populations.



Reflection is one of the most underused yet powerful tools for success. Our intense reflective process drives our **Vision** of every Aiken County child being prepared for success in school, and our **Mission** of collaborating with other early care and education agencies to empower families and caregivers to **prepare their children for school success** by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance, and expand high-quality early childhood programs. Our vision and mission continue to allow us to serve and contribute to something greater than ourselves.

Our continuous support of early care and education, family strengthening, and school transition programs will positively affect our County's **KRA (Kindergarten Readiness Assessment)** scores. Our children **will be able to** read, write, count, follow rules, ask for help, and demonstrate other skills necessary to function within the kindergarten classroom.

Marca L. Nash, M.Ed., Executive Director

## OUR MISSION:

Through collaboration, Aiken County First Steps empowers families and caregivers to **prepare their children for school success** by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance, and expand high-quality early childhood services.

# We get children ready.

## THE NEED

School readiness **depends on the capacity of caregivers** to provide children with consistent, nurturing, and responsive relationships in safe, stimulating learning environments, **continuously**, starting at birth. Unfortunately, these quality early childhood experiences happen for too few children in Aiken County.

How are Aiken County's children doing?	What early learning programs are available for children in our county? Last year:	Where can families access child care in our county?
<b>9,727</b> are under age 5	<b>Not Available</b> attended Early Head Start as infants and toddlers	<b>58</b> licensed child care centers
<b>26.1%</b> live in poverty	<b>164</b> attended free preschool or Head Start as 3-year-olds	<b>22</b> licensed group/family homes
<b>15.2%</b> of babies born in 2016 were to moms without a HS diploma	<b>286</b> 4-year-olds attended free full-day public school 4K or Head Start	<b>26%</b> participate in the state's Quality Rating System (ABC Quality)
<b>30.6%</b> Babies born to mothers with less than adequate prenatal care	<b>586</b> 0-5 year olds received early intervention or special ed.	<b>10</b> providers are rated B or higher by  Quality
<b>33.4%</b> of last year's kindergartners demonstrated readiness	<b>190</b> were served by	<b>717</b> families received assistance with affording child care last year
<i>Kids Count data provided by:</i>	<i>Data provided by:</i>	and

## THE GOALS

Our partnership's work, in collaboration with state and local partners, is focused on advancing Aiken County towards these strategic goals in support of the *Profile of the Ready Kindergartner*, South Carolina's description of school readiness:

- Goal 1:** Increase numbers served from rural areas of the county by engaging local communities and asking community members what they need, not just telling them (all programs).
- Goal 2:** Increase community engagement (involvement in First Steps) – in terms of time, money, clients, collaborations, and in-kind support.
- Goal 3:** Support the early childhood workforce through quality training, incentives, and working with administrators and child care directors.
- Goal 4:** Empower families using a strengths-based/asset-based approach, not a deficit approach. Build trust.
- Goal 5:** Engage and mobilize the community to promote early childhood education programs county-wide.

## THE IMPACT

**In 2017-18, Aiken County First Steps provided:**

- ✓ **27 children and 26 adults with intensive support** to equip parents and caregivers with the confidence and competence to be a child's first and best teacher, and strengthen their family's health, economic, and overall well-being through the Parents as Teachers program.
- ✓ **90 staff** working in **7** child care providers, Head Start centers and preschool classrooms with training, technical assistance, resources and support, **helping them better meet the needs of 350 children ages 0-5 in their care (Freedman ELC, Tiny Treasures, Great Creations, Sunshine House 5, Sunshine House 59, Faith Academy, Betty's Creative Corner).**
- ✓ Financial assistance to help **42 children 0-5 attend quality child care** so their parents can work or attend school (**Child Care Scholarships**).
- ✓ **857 books** to **spark the love of reading for 707 children (Child Care Centers, Schools, Head Start, Babies First Teacher, CTK, Read Across Aiken).**
- ✓ A total of **2007 children and 834 adults** were impacted by Aiken County First Steps programs, resources, activities and events.

# School Readiness Outcomes

## What is the KRA?

In 2017-18, kindergartners across the state were given for the first time South Carolina’s newest assessment of school readiness: the **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment**, or KRA. The KRA provides a snapshot of students’ abilities at the beginning of the school year, in four domains: Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Development and Well-Being. Here are the results locally and for the state:

Aiken County School District (1,838 children)			
Domain	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
Social Foundations	25%	28%	47%
Language&Literacy	28%	41%	31%
Mathematics	39%	39%	21%
Physical Dev&WB	23%	22%	55%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33%</b>

SOUTH CAROLINA (54,927 children)			
Domain	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
Social Foundations	28%	27%	45%
Language&Literacy	23%	43%	34%
Mathematics	31%	38%	31%
Physical Dev&WB	28%	24%	48%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>36%</b>

- 1. Language and Literacy:** reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- 2. Mathematics:** counting, comparison, and sorting
- 3. Physical Well-Being & Motor Development:** dexterity, muscular coordination, and balance
- 4. Social Foundations:** following rules, asking for help, task persistence and other skills necessary to function within the kindergarten classroom

**Demonstrating Readiness:** student demonstrates foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards.

**Approaching Readiness:** student demonstrates some foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards

**Emerging Readiness:** student demonstrates limited foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for instruction based on kindergarten standards

## What is Aiken County First Steps doing to improve KRA results?

Aiken County’s results for the first year of KRA shows that overall, our students are not consistently showing complete readiness, as it relates to their abilities at the beginning of the school year. As a community convener, Aiken County First Steps is partnering with several agencies to provide early literacy materials to new parents and additional literacy services to rising five-year olds. Early Care and Education providers and teachers will receive additional training in the areas of Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Development and Well-Being.

Parents play a critical role in their child's development.

## Program Description

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an evidence-based home visiting program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed. PAT services include:

1. **Personal Visits** at least twice monthly
2. **Monthly Group Connections** with other PAT families
3. **Screenings and Assessments** to identify developmental concerns
4. **Connections to Outside Resources** that families may need to succeed

**Aiken First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our PAT families:**

92% ... live in poverty

38% ... didn't graduate from high school

11% ... were teen parents



Ms. T. Pope and her daughter Christianna enjoy arts and crafts during the Week of the Young Child 2018.

*I really appreciate all the help I am receiving through the PAT and Scholarship program!*

Mya Ross

## PAT by the Numbers 2017-18

Families Served	26	
Children Served	27	
Total Home Visits	377	
Hours Spent Serving Families	451	
Average gain, Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (pre-to-post):	KIPS: Pre:3.45 Post:4.49	ACIRI: A:Pre:2.11 A:Post:2.92 C: Pre: 1.68 C: Post: 2.5

## This year, our Parents as Teachers program:

- ✓ Averaged 14.5 home visits per family
- ✓ Identified and addressed 3 potential developmental delays, and made 3 connections for families to services such as BabyNet and Child Find.
- ✓ Improved parenting practices with a .04 difference from pre-to post (KIPS)
- ✓ Improved literacy skills with an Adult difference of .29 and a Child difference of .37 from pre-to post.

## Thank you to our PAT partners!

Parents as Teachers National Office	Clemson Extension	Great Creations CDC
Freedman Early Learning Center	Sunshine House #5	First Providence LDC
Molina Healthcare	Sunshine House #59	Teachers
Parents & Community	Tiny Treasures	

## Evidence of Effectiveness:

Parents as Teachers meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-based** program.



# Child Care Quality Enhancement

In order to thrive, children need nurturing, responsive relationships and a supportive learning environment, both within and outside the home.

## Program Description

The quality of care they received by young children is crucial to their healthy development and school readiness. Child care providers strive to provide high quality care, but may lack the resources that are commonly available to publicly-funded early childhood programs, such as educational materials, on-site professional development, and other support.

**First Steps' Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) is intended to produce measurable improvements in the quality of care provided to young children.** Participating child care providers must serve a high percentage of at-risk children, and are selected through a competitive process that requires a strong level of commitment to the QE process.

### Program Components

1. On-site Technical Assistance (TA) at least twice monthly
2. Equipment and materials funding
3. Integration with locally available training, provided by First Steps and other partners
4. Workforce Development
5. Coordination with community partners
6. Pre/post assessments of the classroom environment and teacher-child interaction, using nationally-recognized observational tools for infant/toddler and preschool settings (ITERS, ECERS, FCCERS)

## QE by the Numbers, 2017-18

Child Care Providers Served	7
Number of TA Visits Provided	189
Number of Children 0-5 Enrolled in Provider Classrooms	350

### Congratulations to our QE participants for 2017-18!

Child Care Provider	Pre/Post Improvement
Faith Academy	Average Pre: 3.08 Average Post: 4.24
First Providence	Average Pre: 3.69 Average Post: 4.95
Freedman	Average Pre: 4.13 Average Post: 4.67
Great Creations	Average Pre: 3.54 Average Post: 4.27
Sunshine House 5	Average Pre: 3.45 Average Post: 4.39
Sunshine House 59	Average Pre: 3.68 Average Post: 4.1
Tiny Treasures	Average Pre: 3.84 Average Post: 5.46

## This year, our Quality Enhancement program:

- ✓ Improved quality, on average, by 0.95 based on pre/post Environment Rating Scale assessments.
- ✓ Provided 312.25 hours of technical assistance to child care providers 7 contributing to the professional growth of 90 child care teachers and directors
- ✓ Funded scholarships for 42 children within participating child care providers

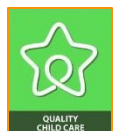
## Thank you to our Quality Enhancement partners!

### FQE Quality Matters Initiative Centers:

Faith Academy, First Providence, Great Creations, Sunshine House 5, Sunshine House 59, Tiny Treasures and Freedman Early Learning Center

### Evidence of Effectiveness:

Child Care Quality Enhancement meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an *evidence-based* program.



# Child Care Training

Those who care for young children need high-quality, accessible, and affordable professional development.

## Program Description

High-quality child care hinges on high-quality professional development that meets the needs of the local child care workforce.

First Steps-sponsored training is certified through the SC Center for Child Care Career Development and includes topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Best practices in training include not only the training itself, but follow-up in the classroom.

### Training Sponsored by Aiken First Steps, 2017-18

<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Sessions:</u>
CPR/First Aid	One Session
Blood-Borne Pathogens	One Session
Assessing Children (ASQ#)	One Session
Intro to ITERS	One Session
Intro to ECERS	One Session
Grant Writing	One Session



## Training by the Numbers, 2017-18

Total Training Attendance	173
Child Care Teachers and Directors Served	40
Number of Training Sessions Offered	21

**This year, our Training program provided:**

- ✓ 40 early childhood staff with high quality training, impacting 13 providers and 950 children
- ✓ 25.5 hours of certified training and 9.5 hours of registered training for staff to meet annual re-certification requirements

### Thank you to our Training partners!

- SC Center for Child Care Career Development
- Aiken County Public School District
- Child Care Resource and Referral of the Midlands
- SC Inclusion Collaborative
- ABC Quality    Edgefield CFS    Saluda CFS
- CSRA Trauma Society    Aiken County School District (BLC)

**Evidence of Effectiveness:**

Child Care Training and Professional Development meets the First Steps legislation’s definition of an *evidence-based* program.

# Child Care Scholarships

Too many families in Aiken County cannot afford quality care for their children.

## Program Description

Access to quality child care is essential for children while away from their primary caregivers. Yet, of those families income-eligible for child care assistance in South Carolina, only a small fraction receive it due to lack of funds. In the absence of nurturing and consistently available family, friends or neighbors, parents are faced with few - or no - affordable care options.

**Aiken First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our scholarship families:**

- 66% ... live in poverty
- 66% ... single aren't household in need of other services



In addition to regular monitoring of child care providers that receive First Steps scholarships, First Steps conducts at least one developmental screening each year with scholarship children and connects families to needed services within the community.

Aiken County First Steps also integrates scholarships with the Parents as Teachers voluntary home visitation program, which has proven to be very effective. We will continue to offer PAT services to scholarship families interested in receiving them.

### Scholarships by the Numbers, 2017-18

Children Served	42
Providers Served	7

### This year, our Scholarship program:

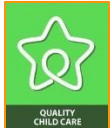
- ✓ Provided 42 children with scholarship assistance so their parents could work or attend school
- ✓ Identified and addressed 2 potential developmental delays among scholarship children
- ✓ Made 2 connections for families to services such as Parents as teachers and BabyNet
- ✓ Supported 7 small businesses in Aiken County by subsidizing child care tuition for families who would not otherwise be able to afford quality care
- ✓ Provided 12 hours of training for scholarship parents in topics such as What Is Quality Childcare

### Thank you to our Scholarship partners!

- Aiken County First Steps FQE Quality Matters Centers
- Aiken County First Steps Families
- ABC Quality

### Evidence of Effectiveness:

Our partnership's Child Care Scholarship strategy is considered **evidence-based** because it is connected to the following evidence-based programs: Parents as Teachers.







**Bringing parents and teachers together as partners sets the foundation for success in school.**

## Program Description

Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a summer home visitation model connecting rising kindergartners and their families with their future teachers. The program is designed:

- ✓ to forge strong and lasting home-school relationships,
- ✓ to acquaint children and families with the state and classroom expectations to increase the likelihood of school success,
- ✓ to increase parent involvement in the early grades (particularly in hard-to-reach communities), when children's learning is foundational for life success; and
- ✓ to increase public awareness of the importance of school readiness and provide ways for parents and communities to impact children's early school success.

Countdown to Kindergarten integrates all of the following:

**Home Visitation.** Teachers make six visits over the summer to the homes of participating students and families. Children and families are introduced to actual materials used in kindergarten and are given a Kindergarten Transition Toolkit to keep.

**Learning Celebration.** The last visit is a "field trip" to the school where the child will attend class in the fall.

**Public Awareness.** Throughout the summer, First Steps releases tips to media to help parents and caregivers get children ready for kindergarten.

## \*CTK by the Numbers, Summer 2017

Children Served	34
Families Served	34
Home/School Visits	6

*\*CTK program data is for June-August 2017, whereas CTK fiscal data includes expenditures from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018.*



**Thank You McDonalds  
 Frontage Road, Aiken SC!**

## This year, our Countdown to Kindergarten program:

- ✓ 100% of parents were satisfied with their CTK Teacher and the materials provided.
- ✓ According to kindergarten teachers, 100% of CTK parents were more involved than other parents in their child's education in the areas of attending parent/teacher conferences, maintaining contact with the teacher, volunteering in the classroom,

## Thank you to our CTK partners!

Aiken County School District  
 Kaplan Early Learning Company  
 McDonalds, Frontage Road Aiken SC  
 CTK 2017 Teachers, Children and Parents

Like us on Facebook!  
 Countdown to Kindergarten-South Carolina

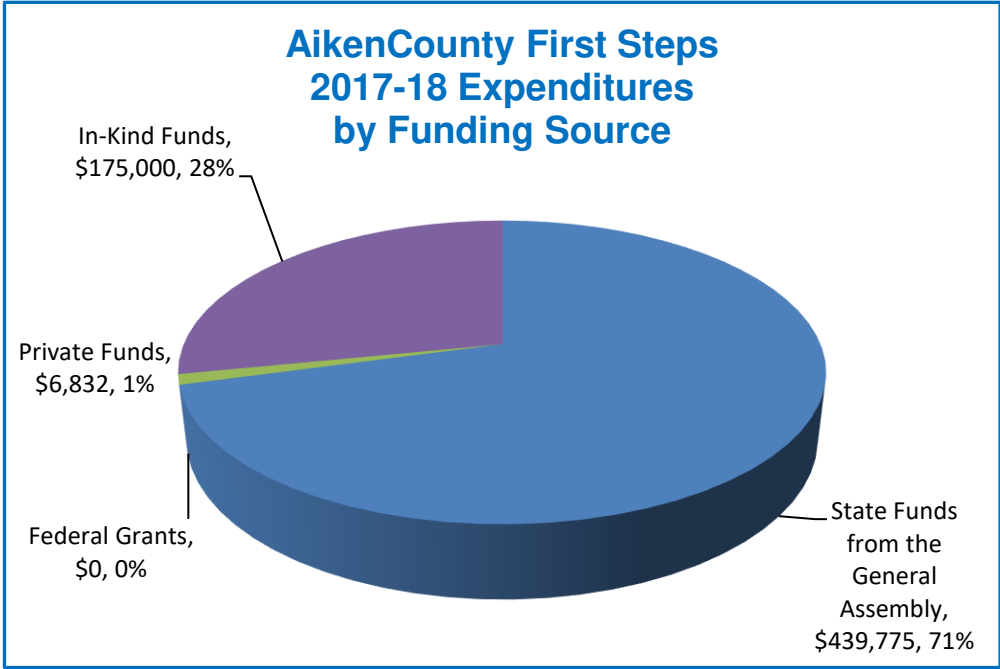


### Evidence of Effectiveness:

Our partnership's Countdown to Kindergarten program meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-informed** program.



# Financial Impact



**Total 2017-18 Expenditures: \$621,606**

**State Funds Leveraged in 2017-18\*: 41%**

\*Percentage of state dollars matched by additional federal, private, and/or in-kind funds

### 2017-18 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Federal \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2017-18 Expenditures
Parents as Teachers	\$115,387	\$0	\$230	\$0	\$115,617	19%
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$8,301	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$8,301	1%
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$79,356	\$0	\$349	\$0	\$79,705	13%
Child Care Training	\$30,644	\$0	\$610	\$165,000	\$196,254	32%
Child Care Scholarships	\$104,526	\$0	\$1,842	\$10,000	\$116,368	19%
Program Support	\$66,123	\$0	\$136	\$0	\$66,259	11%
Administrative Support	\$35,439	\$0	\$3,664	\$0	\$39,103	6%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$439,775</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$6,832</b>	<b>\$175,000</b>	<b>\$621,606</b>	

*Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018*

**Since inception, Aiken County First Steps has leveraged \$2,756,035 from sources outside of state government. That's 33 cents for every state dollar.**



# Thank you supporters!

Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Aiken First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

## Funding Support

State of South Carolina: \$439,775  
*(through South Carolina First Steps)*

Center for Child Care Career  
Development: \$2,000

## In-Kind Support

Aiken County Public School District  
Child Care Resource and Referral  
SC Inclusion Collaborative  
ACFS Board Members and Staff  
Sunshine House #5  
Sunshine House #59  
Children's Place, Inc.

**You can help ensure that children are prepared for school by helping to create a home environment that supports important pre-literacy skills.**

### Support Early Literacy Today!

#### How your support helps children in Aiken County:

- ✓ \$25 provides a young child a book per month for one year!
- ✓ \$250 feeds dinner to low-income families attending a parenting workshop!
- ✓ \$400 helps a low-income family afford quality child care for one month!

**HOW TO GIVE: To submit contributions to Aiken County First Steps  
Call (803)-306-1343 or mail your contributions to P.O. Box 2091, Aiken, SC 29802.**

**Support Aiken First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or volunteer!**

## Aiken County First Steps Partnership Board, 2017-18

Name	Position	Board Category
Barbara Sanders, Chair	Aiken County Government	Business
Tracy Brown, Vice Chair	Teacher Aide, ACPSD	Transportation
Shirley von Beck Treasurer	Training Specialist, CB&I AREVA MOX Services, LLC	Business
David Walker, NP Chair	Retired	Faith Community
Joe Bacote	Supervisor	DSS Representative
Jennie Beck	Children's Librarian	Library Representative
Kiki Bennett	Early Interventionist	Legislative Appointee
Marlea Bodie	Director of Social Services, Aurora Pavilion	Healthcare
Stephanie Brown	Supervisor	DHEC Representative
Ronald Burton	Director	Head Start
Jamie Creasy	Pre-kindergarten/ School Readiness, ACPSD	School District Representative
Margaret Ford	Director, Children's Place, Inc.	Legislative Appointee
Shadie Hall	Head Start Consultant	Legislative Appointee
William James	Retired	Parent of a First Steps Child
Rebecca Jowers	Store Clerk	Parent of a First Steps Child
Tamisha Lawrence	Supervisor, MOX Services, LLC	Parent of a First Steps Child
Teresa Lilly	Nurse, Aiken Regional Medical Centers	Healthcare
Chalma Lindler	Retired	Pre-Kindergarten-Primary Educator
Rhonda Mitchell	Administrative Manager, Best Friend Express	Transportation (LSCOG)
Charlene Moore-Peterson	Teaches Aide, ACPSD	Early Childhood Education
William Price	Retired	Early Childhood Education
Patricia Randolph	Supervisor	Early Childhood Education
Mary Stone	Director, Sunshine House #59	Early Childhood Education

***"There is nothing new about poverty. What is new, however, is that we have the resources to get rid of it." -Martin Luther King, Jr.***

# What is First Steps?

**At the state level and in every county**, First Steps leverages state funding with other public and private resources to help South Carolina’s children enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. First Steps programs and services support families as their child’s first and most important teacher and are customized to meet the unique needs of local communities, grounded in strong evidence, fueled by stakeholder collaboration, and accountable for results.

## First Steps Goals

- (1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want** to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
- (2) increase comprehensive services** so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
- (3) promote high-quality preschool programs** that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
- (4) provide services** so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
- (5) mobilize communities** to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.

### First Steps Building Blocks of Quality Early Childhood Programs and Services



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

From Greenville to Charleston, Abbeville to York, First Steps local partnerships serve as ...

**Local portals** connecting preschool children and families to services

**Conveners** of community stakeholders to address the needs of young children and their families

**Champions** of the importance of school readiness to our children’s future.



[I CAN] is First Steps’ public awareness campaign for school readiness, in support of the state’s Profile of the Ready Kindergartener. Includes resources for parents, providers and communities to learn what they can do to support school readiness.

Visit: [ican.sc](http://ican.sc)

Like us on Facebook: [icansc](https://www.facebook.com/icansc)