

Annual Report

2019-2020



THE NEED

IN UNION COUNTY:

1,545

children under age 5

59.8%

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

61%

of kindergartners are considered "not ready" for school



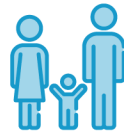
THREE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS:

1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Free School Lunches eligibility
2. Single parent household
3. TANF Eligibility (50% of Federal Poverty or below)

OUR MISSION

To connect families to the resources they need for their children to be safe, healthy and ready for school.

OUR APPROACH



High quality programs and services for children and families



Intensive training, resources and support for childcare providers



Strategic partnerships and community education

OUR IMPACT

1,373

number of children and adults served by ABC County First Steps in 2019-2020

JOIN US

We rely on a community of partners, donors, and volunteers – **people like you** – who believe in a brighter future for children and families in our community.

GETTING CHILDREN READY FOR SCHOOL

All children are ready to benefit from a quality kindergarten experience when they are five years old by September 1 of that school year. But kindergarten readiness—the critical stage at which children are prepared for learning and success—is more than a matter of age. For a strong start in school, children need positive relationships and supportive learning environments beginning at birth. At First Steps, we partner with families, caregivers, and communities to ensure that all children are prepared for success.

South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner

Developed by SC First Steps and the SC Department of Education, the state's description of school readiness includes 60 developmental milestones across 5 categories:



Approaches to learning & inquiry



Emotional & social development



Physical development, self-help & motor skills



Mathematical thinking



Language & literacy development

OUR GOALS

In support of the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner, our approach is focused on advancing Union County toward the following strategic goals:

- Goal 1: Improve access to quality childcare
- Goal 2: Continue to build communication and collaboration with businesses, inter-agencies, and the community
- Goal 3: Improve access and delivery of service to Parents as Teachers participants

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When the coronavirus pandemic forced South Carolina to shut down in March 2020, Union County First Steps quickly pivoted to provide much-needed support to young children, their families and child care providers.

Our work has never been more critical. While children are at low risk for the serious health effects of the virus, the crisis is having a profound impact on their wellbeing and development. For children of color and low-income communities, these impacts are expected to be even more damaging. That is why Union County First Steps is enhancing our efforts to provide parents and caregivers with the services and resources they need to weather this storm.

IMPACT ON UNION COUNTY

HEALTH

Through June 30, Union County had a total of **93** confirmed COVID-19 cases and **0** COVID-19 deaths.

JOB LOSS

235%

increase in unemployment, 2019-2020

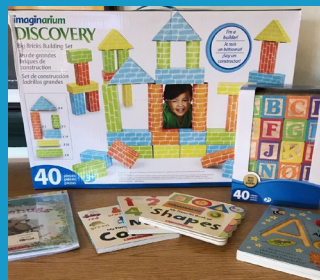
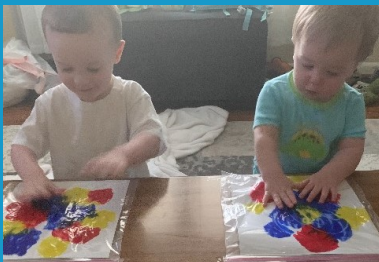
CHILD CARE

46.3%

children under 5 in Union County lived in a child care desert* before COVID-19

98.3%

children under 5 in Union County lived in a child care desert as of May 28, 2020



During COVID 19, UCFS Parent Educators did “porch drop-offs” to deliver books and activities to children enrolled in the Parents as Teachers Program. Facebook was also used as a way to communicate with families to offer resources, activities, and even prizes for participation.

*The Center for American Progress defines a child care desert as a ZIP code with at least 30 children under the age of 5 and either no child care centers or so few centers that there are more than three times as many children under age 5 as there are spaces in centers.



PARENTS AS TEACHERS



an evidence-based program

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



Personal visits from a parent educator at least twice monthly



Monthly group connections with other PAT families



Screenings and assessments to identify developmental concerns



Connections to outside resources that families may need to succeed

PAT GOES VIRTUAL

Due to COVID-19, Parents as Teachers (PAT) National provided guidance for affiliates to deliver virtual services via interactive video conferencing and phone calls. South Carolina PAT affiliates rose to the occasion by engaging families in creative and meaningful ways while continuing to meet the Essential Requirements of implementing a quality PAT program during the pandemic.

PAT IN UNION COUNTY 2019-2020

19

families served

322

total home visits

One parent described her Parent Educator as “that once in a lifetime someone who walks into your life when you least expect it and makes a huge impact on you....She has made such an impact on my child’s life, and mine as well.”





IMAGINATION LIBRARY



an evidence-based program

As the local affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, we provide free, high-quality books to children from birth until age five, no matter their family's income.

Children enrolled in our Imagination Library program receive one book per month by mail. Each title is selected by a panel of early childhood literacy experts, who are responsible for choosing books that meet the age-specific developmental needs of young children.

IMAGINATION LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

926

children served

10,076

books distributed

Books are 100% free to children in Union County because Union County First Steps secures the funds to cover the cost of books and shipping fees through our partnership with United Way of the Piedmont.

Sponsor a child for just \$30 a year.





COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN



an evidence-informed program

Developed by South Carolina First Steps – and identified as a promising state practice by the National Governor’s Association in 2005 – Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a home visitation program pairing the families of rising kindergartners with their future teachers during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each family, establishing strong connections during the summer that facilitate classroom learning throughout the year.

CTK BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

4

kindergarten teachers
trained as home visitors

27

children served

162

total home and school
visits

When asked what was the best part of your Countdown to Kindergarten Experience, responses were:

“ Getting to know the teacher.”

“The walk through of the school.”

“All of it”

“EVERYTHING”





CHILD CARE TRAINING



an evidence-based program

High-quality child care hinges on high-quality professional development that meets the needs of the local child care workforce. Our training programs are certified through SC Endeavors and include topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Our 2019-2020 trainings included:

The Leader in Me

Pyramid Model: Setting the Stage for Social/Emotional Development

Understanding Behavior

Forming and Sustaining Relationships With Children and Families

Social/Emotional Climate in Child Care

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

70

total training attendance

15

child care teachers and
directors served

7

number of training
sessions offered



4K

FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN



an evidence-based program

South Carolina First Steps provides eligible children with free enrollment in full-day four-year-old kindergarten. In coordination with First Steps local partnerships and more than 230 private, community and faith-based preschool providers, First Steps 4K expands access to quality early education across the state.



ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for enrollment, a child must be:

- ✓ 4 years old on or before September 1
- ✓ Eligible for Medicaid, SNAP or TANF, experiencing homelessness or transiency, or in foster care

FIRST STEPS 4K IN UNION COUNTY 2019-2020

38

children enrolled

1

First Steps 4K providers

PIVOTING FOR COVID-19

When schools closed due to COVID-19, First Steps 4K classroom converted to distance-learning, with teachers creatively supporting their young learners through video chat, take-home materials, and hands-on projects that caregivers could facilitate at home.





COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for child care providers, Union County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Union County begin school ready to succeed. We serve as

a:

LOCAL PORTAL

connecting preschool children and their families to services

CONVENER

of community stakeholders to develop an effective and comprehensive early childhood system

CHAMPION

of the importance of school readiness to our children's future

OUR PARTNERSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2019-2020

***Partnering with United Way of the Piedmont provided over 10,000 books to the children of Union County (Imagination Library)**

***Partnering with the Union County Library provided programs and activities for the children of Union County**



OUR SUPPORTERS

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

FUNDING SUPPORT

United Way of the Piedmont
\$4,800

City of Union
\$750

IN-KIND SUPPORT

United Way of the Piedmont
\$24,540

Union County School District
\$45,132

JOIN US

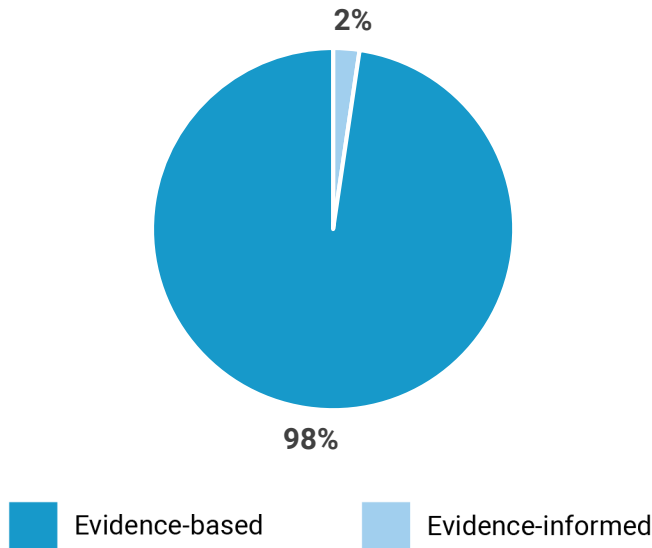
For more information on partnership opportunities, contact us at 864-466-7647, or by email at lwade@union.k12.sc.us



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Union County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,384,832** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.40** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Core Functions	\$14,696	\$0	\$0	\$5,026	\$19,722
Parents as Teachers	\$130,334	\$0	\$2,690	\$30,556	\$163,580
Dolly Parton Imagination Library	\$651	\$0	\$0	\$24,792	\$25,443
Child Care Training	\$4,911	\$0	\$1,312	\$1,506	\$7,729
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$3,260	\$2,217	\$0	\$1,257	\$6,734
Total Expenses	\$153,852	\$2,217	\$4,002	\$63,137	\$223,478



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Margie Ruff, Secretary	Karl Pendergrass
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Mickey Connolly	Page Rogers
Wyshell Garrett	Connie Springs

STAFF

Laura Wade, Executive Director
Joni Whisenant, Parent Educator

CONTACT US

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Union County First Steps