

PICKENS COUNTY



Getting children ready for school.



Book Flood

Childcare Scholarships

Early Identification and Referral

Razor Readers

Palmetto Basics

# Annual Report

2017-18



## OUR VISION:

Families and early childhood educators are equipped with tools and resources needed to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

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

PO Box 1113, Central SC ♦ 864-654-3000 ♦ [pickeninfo@gmail.com](mailto:pickeninfo@gmail.com)

# Director's Message

We are more optimistic than ever about our impact on Pickens County over the next three years. Our mission remains the same but we will increasingly target all entities with *The Palmetto Basics* messaging, equipping them to serve the young children and families within their spheres of influence. This includes, but is not limited to: social service agencies, child care centers, the school district, faith communities, local community partners, and most importantly, families. Using social media, local gatherings, toolkits, and one-on-one relationships, we will work to equip all *Palmetto Basics* partners and "Champions for Children" with the resources they need to do the Basics with the children and families they serve.

Finding affordable, stable, high-quality childcare continues to be a challenge, particularly for families who are seeking work and education as a means of financial stability. We will help this need as we enhance our childcare assistance scholarship program. We will equip parents through more frequent home visitation, continuing to use *Ready Rosie* and *The Palmetto Basics* as parenting resources. Participating childcare centers will become *Raising a Reader* sites, thereby providing quality early literacy instruction for scholarship children, as well as the other children they serve.

"Creating a community where children are ready for school" - this remains our central mission. We plan to increase knowledge and parenting skills necessary to promote school readiness throughout our community. While community events such as *Week of the Young Child*, resource fairs, and 4K registration remain an effective way of engaging with families, we will also increase our efforts to meet parents right where they are - on their mobile devices. Using the growing influence of social media, we will equip parents, caregivers, and community members with relevant and engaging early education resources. Tools such as *Ready Rosie* and *The Palmetto Basics* will further enable us to reach families in relevant ways.

We are grateful for the relational atmosphere that exists within Pickens County. Awareness of this unique culture informs everything that we do. We thank the children and families who allow us to step into their lives and offer our support. Each family has a unique story and we want to honor the experiences of others in our language, attitudes, actions, and services. May all of our efforts reflect the real and present needs of Pickens County families.

Together for Children,



Amity Buckner, Executive Director

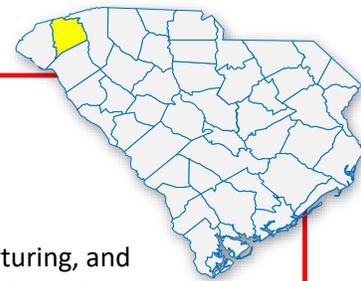
## OUR MISSION:

We will continue to serve as a convener of early childhood champions to coordinate services to measurably improve the early childhood development of all children in Pickens County.

Find Pickens First Steps:



# 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 Pickens County.

How are Pickens 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>6357</b> are under age 5	<b>16</b> attended Early Head Start as infants and toddlers	<b>22</b> licensed child care centers
<b>17.9%</b> live in poverty	<b>102</b> attended free preschool or Head Start as 3-year-olds	<b>3</b> licensed group/family homes
<b>16.7%</b> of babies born in 2016 were to moms without a HS diploma	<b>103</b> 4-year-olds attended free full-day public school 4K or Head Start	<b>38%</b> participate in the state's Quality Rating System (ABC Quality)
<b>6.7%</b> of babies born in 2016 of low birth rate	<b>348</b> 0-5 year olds received early intervention or special ed.	<b>8</b> providers are rated B or higher by <b>ABC</b> Quality
<b>27%</b> of last year's kindergartners demonstrated readiness		<b>465</b> families received assistance with affording child care last year
<small>Kids Count data provided by:  Children's Trust OF SOUTH CAROLINA</small>	<small>Data provided by:  SC Profile Early Childhood</small>	<small> SC Profile Early Childhood and <b>ABC</b> Quality</small>

## THE GOALS

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

1. Integrate the *Palmetto Basics* messaging into all programs.
2. Increase access to high quality, stable childcare environments.
3. Increase knowledge and parenting skills necessary to promote school readiness.
4. Improve literacy outcomes for children 0-5.

## THE IMPACT

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

- ✓ **69 children** and **45 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 (**Parents as Teachers, Childcare Scholarships**)
- ✓ financial assistance to help **19 children** 0-5 **attend quality child care** so their parents can work or attend school (**Childcare Scholarships**)
- ✓ **1854 books** to spark the love of reading for **over 1500 children** (**Book Flood, Razor Readers, Palmetto Basics**)
- ✓ A total of **1744 children** and **2636 adults** were impacted by Pickens 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:

NAME OF DISTRICT (1177 children)			
Domain	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
Social Foundations	36%	26%	37%
Language&Literacy	27%	45%	28%
Mathematics	36%	26%	27%
Physical Dev&WB	40%	22%	38%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>27%</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

Pickens County First Steps (PCFS) is working with the School District of Pickens County (SDPC), United Way of Pickens County and the YMCA to identify cross-sector concerns as well as local community assets that can be tapped into. We are working with the SDPC to break the data down even further by school and community. We, along with other stakeholders, are committed to addressing these needs head-on in a systematic, culturally responsive way.

# Early Steps Identification

Identifying and referring children with possible developmental delays can help assure school readiness.

## Program Description

First Steps' Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) programs serve families with young children with suspected delays in development and coordinates public awareness for BabyNet services, acting as a local portal to connect families to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children

### EI&R services include:

1. **Screenings** (developmental, vision, hearing) for children ages birth to 5 years with suspected delays in development
2. **Referrals**, based upon the screening results, to appropriate community resources. This could include the local BabyNet System Point of Entry Office, the local school district, and/or support services such as speech therapy, physical therapy, and programs in libraries and other community resources.
3. **Parent information**, including strategies to monitor growth and development.

Our EI&R program:

- ✓ Provides early detection of developmental delays and health issues
- ✓ Promotes services and activities that promote child development
- ✓ Increases children's school readiness and school success

*I knew my child needed help but I wasn't sure where to turn!*  
**-A's Mom**



### EI&R by the Numbers 2017-18

Children Served	15
Children Referred to BabyNet, Local School, or Other Services	7

### This year, our Early Identification and Referral program:

- ✓ Screened 15 children using Ages and Stages Questionnaire and/or other developmental screening tool
- ✓ Referred 100% of families to community resources after screening indicated need

**Thank you to our EI&R partners!**

- School District of Pickens County
- BabyNet
- Pickens County childcare providers

Evidence of Effectiveness:  
 Early Identification and Referral meets the First Steps legislation's definition of an **evidence-based**.



**This year our PAT program was awarded National Blue Ribbon status!**

## 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

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

100% ... live in poverty  
 50% ... didn't graduate from high school  
 15% ... were teen parents



These sweet girls have "graduated" the PAT program and are ready to go to 4K!

*"I looked forward to my homevisit every week. I knew that I would learn something that would help me be a better Mom and I was also able to talk to another adult!"*

-T

## PAT by the Numbers 2017-18

Families Served	35
Children Served	50
Total Home Visits	708
Hours Spent Serving Families	770

## This year, our Parents as Teachers program:

- ✓ Averaged 3.0 home visits per month (Parenting Home Visit Intensity Report, Avg. Number of Visits)
- ✓ Identified and addressed 35 potential developmental delays, and made connections for families to services such as BabyNet, Child Find, Ready Rosie
- ✓ Improved parenting practices according to KIPS and ACIRI pre/post scores
- ✓ Improved literacy skills according to KIPS and ACIRI pre/post scores

## Thank you to our PAT partners!

SafeKids Upstate  
 Dream Center  
 Pickens County Library System  
 School District of Pickens County

## Evidence of Effectiveness:

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



# Book Flood

**Children's reading scores improve dramatically when parents are involved in helping them learn to read.**

## Program Description

According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, the peak period for brain development related to language is around nine months of age. One of the easiest and most effective ways to build this capacity in young children's brains is to read to them.

Book Flood is a literacy model designed to enhance book exposure and increase shared reading time at home. It also develops, enhances, and increases literacy awareness skills in a home / school collaboration while fostering a love of reading. It is implemented in the public 4K classrooms in the School District of Pickens County as well as private child care centers.

Age-appropriate books are distributed by rotation among 4K teachers/providers in the county. Students take home a different book each school night to read with a family member.



**Pickens First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our family literacy program families:**

- 95% ... considered at-risk
- 70% ... literacy deficient homes
- 10% ... documented developmental delay

## Book Flood by the Numbers 2017-18

Children Served	727
Number of Books Read	80,319
Hours Spent Reading	40,159
Number of Classrooms	41

### This year, the Book Flood program:

- ✓ Provided each participating child the opportunity to read an average of 20 different books a month
- ✓ Received donations of books from multiple community members and organizations in support of children's literacy
- ✓ Provided a literacy-rich home-school connection

### Thank you to our Book Flood partners!

- School District of Pickens County
- Pickens County Library System
- Pickens County Childcare Providers

### Evidence of Effectiveness:

The Family Literacy components of Book Flood early childhood education meet the First Steps legislation's definition of an *evidence-informed* program.



# Child Care Scholarships

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

## Program Description

Access to quality childcare 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.

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

- 100% ... live in poverty
- 25% ... parent didn't graduate from high school
- 75% ... were single parent homes
- 100% ... working to become financially stable

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.

Our scholarship program also provided quarterly home visits that verify residency, monitor environment, pursue relationships with parents and provides helpful parenting strategies.

*Tyla taught me how to read to and play with my children! I am a better mother because of her!*

-Gloria



Each child in our CCS program receives quarterly home visits. At these home visits, PCFS talk with parents about the *Palmetto Basics*, provide a quality book and a hands-on activity.

### Scholarships by the Numbers, 2017-18

Children Served	19
Providers Served	4
Home Visits	43

**This year, our scholarship program:**

- ✓ Provided 19 children with scholarship assistance so their parents could work or attend school
- ✓ Identified and addressed 3 potential developmental delays among scholarship children (ASQ Report)
- ✓ Made 25 connections for families to services such as Ready Rosie, PAT, Palmetto Basics
- ✓ Supported 4 small businesses in Pickens County by subsidizing child care tuition for families who would not otherwise be able to afford quality care

### Thank you to our Scholarship partners!

- United Way of Pickens County
- Clemson Child Development Center
- Small World Easley
- Little Lights Learning Center
- Pickens Presbyterian CDC

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Our partnership's Child Care Scholarship strategy is considered *evidence-informed*.



# Palmetto Basics

**80% of brain development happens in the first 3 years of life!**

## Program Description

The Palmetto Basics are five fun, simple, powerful way to help all children become the happiest and most successful they can be. The Palmetto Basics Campaign is working to make sure that every parent and caregiver knows what they can do to make the most of every opportunity to give the infants and toddlers they love a great start in life!

The Five Basics are:

1. Maximize Love, Manage Stress
2. Talk, Sing, Point
3. Count, Group and Compare
4. Explore through Movement and Play
5. Read and Discuss Stories

***"We know that early experiences shape the architecture of the brain! We must work together to provide the best for our youngest learners."***

-M. Dickens, TCTC Technical College

### Palmetto Basics

Children Served	933
Families Served	841
Materials Distributed	3662
Social Media Subscribers	400



At our February Basics gathering, we painted rocks to place around the county to promote each of the five Basics.

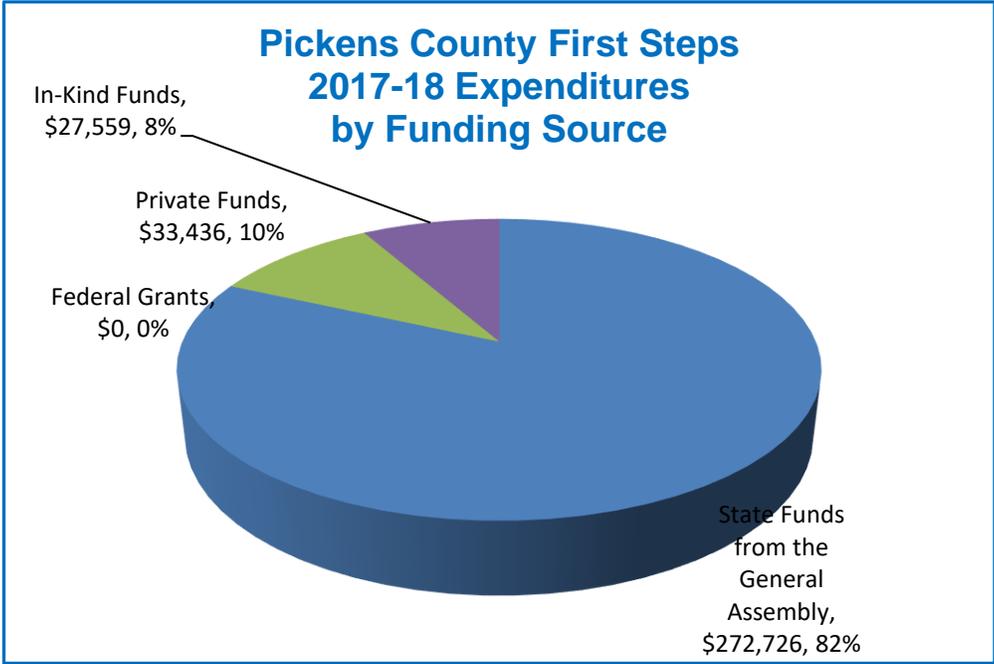
**Palmetto Basics are:**

- ✓ **Common messaging for all agencies that serve children and families**
- ✓ **Fun, simple, powerful**
- ✓ **For everyone to know and share**

Visit [www.palmettobasics.org](http://www.palmettobasics.org) for information on the campaign, opportunities in your community, tips and videos.

***Thank you to our Pickens County Palmetto Basics Champions!***

# Financial Impact



**Total 2017-18 Expenditures: \$333,722**

**State Funds Leveraged in 2017-18\*: 22%**

\*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	\$111,214	\$0	\$0	\$27,559	\$138,773	42%
Book Flood	\$21,912	\$0	\$3,281	\$0	\$25,193	8%
Childcare Scholarships	\$24,451	\$0	\$18,666	\$0	\$43,117	13%
Community Education	\$75,112	\$0	\$7,115	\$0	\$82,227	25%
Early Steps Identification	\$12,653	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$12,653	4%
Program Support	\$11,009	\$0	\$134	\$0	\$11,143	3%
Administrative Support	\$16,376	\$0	\$4,241	\$0	\$20,616	6%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$272,726</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$33,436</b>	<b>\$27,559</b>	<b>\$333,722</b>	

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

**Since inception, Pickens County First Steps has leveraged \$1,934,783.37 from sources outside of state government. That's 32 cents for every state dollar.**

# Thank you supporters!

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

## Funding Support

State of South Carolina: \$260, 506  
(through South Carolina First Steps)

United Way of Pickens County: \$36,000

PCFS Board Members: \$225

Other Donations: \$100

## In-Kind Support

School District of Pickens County

Pickens YMCA



Clemson Tigers love to Read and  
Discuss Stories!

## How your support helps children in Pickens County:

- ✓ \$25 allows a child to participate in Raising A Reader!
- ✓ \$50 stocks the shelves of a Razor Readers library
- ✓ \$75 helps a low-income family afford quality child care for one week
- ✓ \$100 pays for an additional Little Free Library

**HOW TO GIVE:** Mail your tax deductible donation to PCFS, PO Box 1113, Central SC 29630

**Support Pickens CountyFirst Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or volunteer!**

## Connecting in meaningful ways with our community!

### Week of the Young Child

Our capstone week focused on The Palmetto Basics. We attended multiple events at local library branches in order to meet families with young children and share about The Basics. The big event of the week was a community-wide park day - "Basics Day at the Park" - complete with local heroes, a petting zoo, free books, parenting resources, and sensory play stations. Community partners - Pickens County Library, a preschool storytime program, and the police and fire departments - helped create an interactive, free, fun-filled morning for childcare centers, families, and their children.



We used social media in a more targeted way for this year's Week of the Young Child. Many families told us that social media was how they found out about our events! This exposure also helped to expand our social media reach.

### Razor Readers

Taking place in local barber shops, Razor Readers is a community-wide literacy program for boys 0-10 years old.



We partner with United Way of Pickens County and the Call Me Mister program. The "Misters" offer on-site support to participating barbershops on Friday afternoons or Saturday mornings. "As a kid, I remember the barber shop as a place where adults talked about football and kids would listen to them; we might as well give them something productive to do," said Deavin Rencher, a student in the Call Me Mister program.

Relationships are a powerful vehicle for providing resources and programs to the children and communities that need them most. Razor Readers promotes literacy in a way that's fun, in a setting that's familiar, and with young men who are educational role models. This program has received media attention from

*The Clemson Newsstand, the Sentinel-Progress, and the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education.*

### Community Events

Pickens County is a relationship community. We have therefore been intentional and strategic with community events throughout the year. Connecting with families, educators, caregivers, and other organizations has enabled us to stay in touch with the needs of our population, link arms with others who serve young children and families, and provide increasing familiarity with Pickens County First Steps and *The Palmetto Basics* message.



# First Steps Partnership Board

Over the last several years, our board has continually assessed our current programs to ensure that they are functioning properly and meeting the needs of young children and their families in Pickens County. As a convener of the Children's Services Council, we receive monthly feedback from council members on current programs in our county, their needs, and how we can come alongside these programs to equip them with best practices and promote their efforts.

Name	Position	Board Category
Bowling, Mandy		Parent of Preschooler
Brock, Christinia		Family Educator
Brown, Diane		Legislative Appointment
Hays, Erika		Family Training/Support
Hicks, George		Head Start Designee
Hopkins, Sheryl		DHEC designee
Hunnicut, Patti	Chair	Family Training/support
Jacks, Lyle		Healthcare Provider
Nichols, Faye		Healthcare Provider
Vickery, Gayle		DSS designee
Walters, Erica		Philanthropic
Ward, Heath	Vice-Chair	Library designee
Wiley, Carol		Legislative Appointment
Young, Greta		Non-Profit

# What is First Steps?

## 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.

*South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 59-152-30*

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



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

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.

