



ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

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.

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Families will learn to **maximize love, manage stress.**
2. Children will **talk, sing and point.**
3. Children will **count, group and compare.**
4. Children can **explore through movement and play.**
5. Families will **read and discuss stories.**

OUR APPROACH



High quality programs and services for children and families



Intensive training, resources and support for childcare providers



Strategic partnerships and community education



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.

OUR VALUES

Your values Pickens County First Steps Board of Directors and staff recognize the importance of the following values in helping us to achieve our goals:

- Operational and Fiscal Transparency
- Delivering Research Based Initiatives
- Convening Collaborative Partners
- Engaging the Community
- Supporting Parents as their child's first teachers

OUR OVERARCHING MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Increase the reach of first steps services

By FY25, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by Pickens County First Steps will increase from 37% to 40%.

Increase the number of children enrolled in high intensity programs funded by first steps

By FY25, the percentage of children directly served in high intensity programs funded by Pickens County First Steps will increase from 4% to 6%.

JOIN US



AmeriCorps

Gain valuable experience and give back to your community through service with First Steps AmeriCorps. Our AmeriCorps members **engage directly with families and communities**, helping to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential. Apply at scfirststeps.org/AmeriCorps.



FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Pickens County First Steps:



808 children
directly served



1,345 parents & caregivers

received direct services and support to be their child's first and most important teacher



900+ books
delivered to families with young children



\$1 = \$2.59

Allendale County First Steps leveraged \$330,846 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.59 for every state dollar invested

PROVEN RESULTS

A 2019 study found that children who received First Steps local partnership services were:



74% more likely

to score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment



34% less likely

to be chronically absent in kindergarten

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Amity Buckner
Executive Director
Pickens County First Steps

Pickens County First Steps continues as an organization rooted in collaboration, partnership, and innovation. Existing strong relationships with community partners have allowed us to link arms and work toward solutions for young children and families, particularly through the ongoing ripple effects of the Covid-19 crisis.

Likewise, we are grateful for our board's forward-thinking commitment to the young children in Pickens County, for a spirit of openness as we have sought to meet families through technology and program expansion, and for an experienced staff willing to adapt to changing needs.

Most importantly, we are grateful for the children and families who allow us to step into their lives and offer support. Each family has a unique story and we seek to honor the experiences of others in our language, attitudes, and services. May our efforts always reflect the present needs of Pickens County families.

My team and I remain grateful for the opportunity to serve the children and families of Pickens County.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amity RB", written in a cursive style.

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 VISION

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



FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN



an evidence-based program

First Steps 4K provides eligible children with free enrollment in full-day four-year-old kindergarten. In coordination with First Steps local partnerships and more than 250 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
- ✓ Be a South Carolina resident

44

children enrolled

2

First Steps 4K providers

With First Steps 4K, families are in the driver's seat. They choose the school that best meets their needs. Families can enroll in any participating private, non-profit, or faith-based preschool provider. The majority of First Steps 4K providers offer an 8 hour instructional day with a year-round calendar, including summers. Through a partnership with SC Voucher, First Steps 4K families can also enroll in the First Steps 4K + Siblings scholarship program which provides whole care and education for all children, ages 0-12, in the household.





EARLY IDENTIFICATION & REFERRAL



an evidence-based program

First Steps' Early Identification and Referral (EI&R) programs serve families with young children with suspected delays in development, 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:



Screenings for children ages 0-5 with suspected delays in development



Referrals, based on screening results, to appropriate resources and support services



Patient information including strategies to monitor growth and development

EI&R BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

6

children served

3

referrals to BabyNet or other local services



Early detection of delay is essential to the growing brains of our county's youngest learners. Early Intervention services can change the trajectory of a child's developmental path and improve outcomes for children, families and communities.



NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP



an evidence-based program

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) helps transform the lives of first-time mothers and their babies. Through ongoing home visits from registered nurses, moms receive the care and support they need to have a healthy pregnancy, provide responsible and competent care for their children, and become more economically self-sufficient. From pregnancy until the child turns two years old, Nurse-Family Partnership Nurse Home Visitors form a much-needed, trusting relationship with their clients, instilling confidence and empowering them to achieve a better life for their children – and themselves.

NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

56

families served

708

total home visits





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 BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

34

families served

778

total home visits

31

total group sessions



The program has changed by life. I have never had so much help and support given to me and my children.



PAT MOM



Parents as Teachers®



RAISING A READER



an evidence-informed program

Raising a Reader helps families develop, practice, and maintain home literacy habits. The program includes a weekly book rotation, parent engagement, literacy experiences, and library connections.

RAISING A READER BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

230

families served

230

children served

10

providers served





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 2021-2022

7

schools served

16

kindergarten teachers
trained as home visitors

72

children served

425

total home and school
visits



CTK was the best program. I loved meeting the children and families in my class over the summer. It is the best program I have participated in all my years in education.



G. MC COY, 5K TEACHER





BOOK FLOOD PROGRAM



an evidence-informed program

Book Flood is a program that fosters a love of reading in both children and parents. Children self-select a high quality, multi-genre book to take home four days a week. This year due to COVID books were only sent home once a week. Each book provides the opportunity for the child and a caregiver to cuddle up and read.

BOOK FLOOD BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

660

Caregivers served

413

Children served



PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Palmetto Basics are five fun, simple, powerful ways 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 youngest learners they love a great start in life!

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



Bright by Text Bright is a free service that texts age-specific tips, resources, and community events to families with children, prenatal-age 8.

434

children enrolled



PICKENS COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS 2021-2022

3905

materials distributed

40

events held

3277

Families served



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Addressing the needs of our county's youngest learners is not done alone. In addition to providing services to families and support for childcare providers, Pickens County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Pickens County begin school ready for life. We serve as:

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 2021-2022

20

Community convenings



OUR SUPPORTERS

Addressing the needs of our county's youngest learners is not done alone. In addition to providing services to families and support for childcare providers, Pickens County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Pickens County begin school ready for life. We could not impact the lives of our youngest learners and their families without the collaborative partner.

FUNDING SUPPORT

United Way of Pickens County

Duke Endowment

Doris Duke Foundation

IN-KIND SUPPORT

City of Easley

Prisma Health Upstate

Pickens County Library System

School District of Pickens County

JOIN US

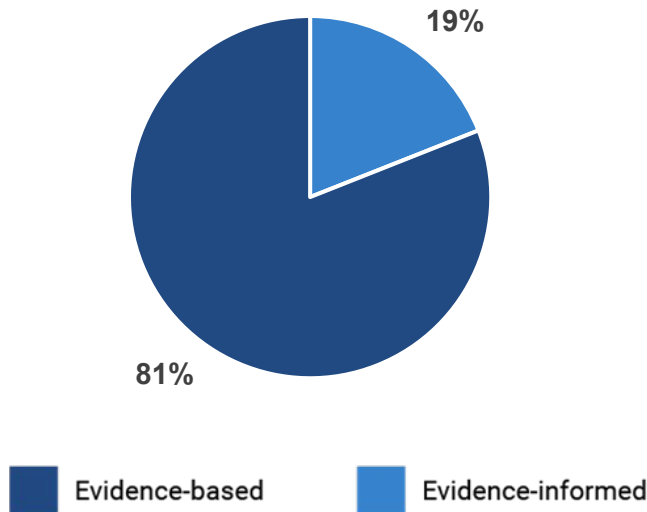
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at PickensCountyFirstSteps.org



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Pickens County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,534,570** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.36** for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$106,041	\$2,400	\$75,962	\$109,058	\$293,462
Book Flood	\$12,860				\$12,860
Raising A Reader	\$12,622				\$12,622
Nurse Family Partnership	\$30,000	\$78,500		\$16,275	\$124,775
Countdown to Kindergarten		\$22,517			\$22,516
Early Steps Identification	\$39,987				\$39,987
Partnerships & Community Education	\$2,2590	\$3,307	\$6,983		\$32,881
Administrative Support	\$18,07		\$7,118		\$25,189
Total Expenses	\$242,173	\$106,724	\$90,063	\$125,333	\$564,293



LEADERSHIP

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