

# ADVOCATE FOR SCHOOL READINESS

## THE VISION:

**ALL CHILDREN ENTER SCHOOL  
READY TO SUCCEED**



## The Problem

Too many of our young children begin school already behind the curve.

According to recent statistics, 18.6 percent of first-graders in Greenville County start school failing to meet the standards for school readiness in English/language arts, math and personal/social development. And, tragically, if children start out behind, it can lead to an uphill battle for the rest of their lives.

When compared to children who do enter the first grade properly equipped to learn, we know that those not meeting developmental standards are more likely to repeat a grade, drop out of high school, become a teen-aged parent, earn a lower wage, require public assistance or be incarcerated. These issues not only stunt an individual's potential for growth, but also create a costly burden for families and the community, now and in the future.

Addressing the needs of our young children and providing them and their families with the support needed to ensure school readiness is of critical importance to the future of our community.

To solve any problem, you must first identify the causes. We know key risk factors contributing to the problem of school readiness vary from family income and education level to the number of parents at home and whether or not English is the student's first language.

Knowing that, consider these Greenville County facts:

- 21.6 percent of children under 5 years old live in poverty.
- 40.7 percent of babies are born to single mothers.
- 24.5 percent of babies are born to mothers who didn't graduate from high school.
- 11 percent of children use English as a second language.

## The Solution

The first three years of a child's life is a time of enormous social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth. Research indicates that nearly 90 percent of brain growth occurs during these early years. The pace of this growth depends on whether the child's eagerness to learn is appropriately stimulated by her/his environment.

For this reason, it is essential that all families have access to a coordinated system of resources that support healthy child development and education, and that high quality, affordable child care programs are available to working parents.

Robust community investment in children now can save higher taxpayer expenses in the future. According to the 40-year High Scope/Perry Preschool Study, the economic impact of investment in high quality early care and education may generate returns to taxpayers as high as \$17 per every \$1 invested.

By investing in early education and associated support services for our youngest children, we can lay the foundation for their future success, which will then positively impact the other key target issues in our community – increasing the high school graduation rate and creating greater financial stability.

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## The Goal

As a community, we will decrease the percentage of Greenville County first-graders “not consistently demonstrating readiness” for first grade from 22.9 percent in 2008 to 12.9 percent by 2018.

To realize our vision that all children enter school ready to succeed, we must ensure:

- Quality programs for all levels of early childhood development, education, intervention and health services.
- Voluntary, public pre-K education is available to all children.
- A Quality Rating Improvement System for child care centers and family caregivers that will help families determine the best program for their children is established.

## How We Get There

United Way of Greenville County will:

- Concentrate funding and volunteer efforts on work supporting early childhood development.
- Identify the early childhood development programs that work best and provide support with a focus on serving at-risk populations.
- Facilitate the development of the South Carolina Institute for Child Success, a planned institute for research and demonstration of best practices.
- Expand the work of Child Care Resource & Referral, connecting families with quality child care programs and education.
- Advocate for legislation, policies and community practices that support the vision.

## How You Can Help

Contact your local, state and national elected officials. Explain the problem. Ask them to support and promote policies and programs that ensure students begin school on track: developmentally ready in literacy, social skills, emotional ability, physical development and health.

### One Voice, Your Voice, Makes a Difference.

Elected officials love to hear from constituents. Reach out and contact:

#### Members of Congress:

[www.capwiz.com/unitedway/dbq/officials](http://www.capwiz.com/unitedway/dbq/officials)

#### Governor's Office

[www.scgovernor.com](http://www.scgovernor.com)

#### SC State Representative or Senator

[www.scstatehouse.gov](http://www.scstatehouse.gov)

*For additional information, watch  
“In Brief: The Science of Early  
Childhood Development.”*

*You can find it here:*

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN6wpwZzpzE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN6wpwZzpzE)

## For More Information

- Call 864.467.4804
- E-mail [advocate@unitedwaygc.org](mailto:advocate@unitedwaygc.org)
- Visit [www.unitedwaygc.org/advocate](http://www.unitedwaygc.org/advocate)

# LIVE UNITED™



United Way  
of Greenville County