

Greenville County First Steps Supports Teen Mothers & Helps Reduce Barriers to High School Graduation through BabySteps



Participating BabySteps mothers on a summer field trip sponsored by the program.

BabySteps is a seven-week summer enrichment program launched in 2009 as a partnership between Little Steps, the Greenville County School District, and Greenville First Steps. The purpose of BabySteps is to provide mentoring/social connections between teenage mothers (expectant moms and new mothers) who are currently enrolled in Greenville County Schools. BabySteps sessions include: parenting, positive discipline, how to identify quality childcare, early literacy, safe sleep, nutrition. BabySteps also provides opportunities for students to make-up lost seat time from the previous year, helping to keep them on track to graduate.

Originally funded with a 21st Century Learning Center grant, BabySteps is the summer component to Little Steps, a comprehensive parenting program that provides classes, mentoring, and support for young parents. BabySteps' collaboration with Little Steps helped develop a 12-month mentoring program providing education, social, and community resources for teens who are either pregnant or new

mothers. Throughout the year, program participants rotate through classes featuring educational tutoring, labor and delivery, infant care, nutrition, peer group counseling, and parenting. In addition, teens are provided with the opportunity to go on field trips in Greenville County. Teens earn baby bucks during classes and are able to "shop" in the Little Steps baby boutique to receive essential items such as diapers, baby and maternity clothes, strollers, high chairs, and toys.

*Greenville County School District singled out integration of BabySteps' work with Little Steps and Childcare Scholarships as **THE most successful teen mom drop-out prevention effort the District has undertaken in 20+ years.***



Leslie Latimer, Operations Director of Greenville County First Steps, receives a thank you gift from a BabySteps participant.

BabySteps clients are identified by Greenville County School District and referred to Little Steps. Clients who complete BabySteps are eligible for 40 weeks of high quality childcare scholarships- as long as the mother remains actively enrolled in school, participates in Little Steps mentoring programs, and the family remains in good standing with a pre-approved quality childcare center. For the past three summers, BabySteps has provided an opportunity for participants to earn class credit through the Greenville County Schools Distance Learning program. This summer, participants took an online Life Skills course and received a free computer if they completed the course, received high grades, and had perfect attendance throughout the program.

This year, BabySteps became a grant program award recipient of the Junior League of Greenville. Along with providing matching funds, the Junior League of Greenville also provided BabySteps with volunteers throughout the summer. Funding for the program also includes resources to convene a group of community partners to identify what further barriers to high school graduation and early child success the community can address.

Through eight successful years of implementation, BabySteps boasts a **97% graduation rate** for teens who have enrolled in the program. Greenville County School District singled out integration of BabySteps' work with Little Steps and Childcare Scholarships as

THE most successful teen mom drop-out prevention effort the District has undertaken in 20+ years. Not only has BabySteps given participants the resources and support to stay in school and graduate, it has also enabled them to become better parents and raise happy, healthy, and ready to learn children.

For more information on the work being done in Greenville County to support teen mothers and reduce barriers to high school graduation, contact Leslie Latimer at

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