



Carolina Family Engagement Center

# Family Engagement **VOICE**

November 2020

Equity,  
Opportunity  
& Excellence  
in Education



## Greetings from Our Director!



Parents, teachers, community members and students need to adopt that same level of urgency when it comes to participating in school decision making during the pandemic. One way to do this is by serving as a member of a local School Improvement Council (SIC). A primary purpose of these advisory councils is to ensure that representatives of all education stakeholders have a seat at the table when schools make decisions aimed at improving

student achievement and school climate. CFEC is working collaboratively with the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) to ensure that all local SICs have access to the tools, training, and technical assistance they need to function effectively in this role.

Be a part of the solution. Volunteer to serve as a parent, teacher, or community member representative on your local SIC this year!

Stay healthy and carry on!

Karen Utter, JD  
Project Director, CFEC

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# NNPS (National Network of Partnership Schools)



## NNPS Best Practices

Last year CFEC was invited to participate in Parent Super Saturday at Hand Middle School. This “Parent University” program was hosted in collaboration with the University of South Carolina Parent Advocacy group, local schools and community organizations. Parent Super Saturday was created to inform, empower, and inspire parents to take an active role in their children’s education. Due to the incredible collaborative work of our team and partner organizations, this event was featured in the [NNPS Best Practices 2020 issue](#). Thank you to Dr. Yasha Becton and her team for all their hard work.

## NNPS 2020 Partnership Award Winners

Congratulations to the programs that earned a 2020 Partnership Award in recognition of excellent programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Eight schools, one district, and three organizations are recognized this year for going beyond a good “activity” to systematically building research-based programs of family and community engagement. Examples of their work are included in the new book of [Promising Partnership Practices 2020](#).



### Partnership School Awards

Delmae Heights Elementary School,  
Florence School District One, SC

Orchard Elementary School,  
Richland County School District One, SC

### Partnership Organization Awards

Francis Marion University-Center of Excellence,  
Florence, SC

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## New Learning Opportunities



The IDRA EAC-South (Inter-cultural Development Research Association Equity Assistance Center - South) is one of four federally-funded regional centers which seek to help school districts build capacity to confront educational problems occasioned by race, sex and gender, national origin, and religion.

The Center builds bridges among administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members so that all stakeholders can find that common higher ground where all students will benefit regardless of race, sex, or national origin.

The IDRA EAC-South provides technical assistance and training at the request of school districts and other responsible governmental agencies to build capacity of local educators to ensure a more equitable learning environment for all students.

For more information on their FREE services, visit <https://www.idraeacsouth.org/>

# Notes from the Field

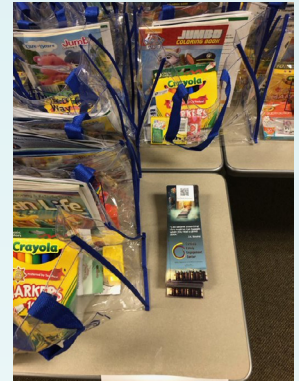
## Regional Spotlight: Lorelei Swanson, LMFT, LPC, PhD



In my roll as the Upstate Regional Family Engagement Liaison, I seek to promote community partnerships that support families and student development. I recently became involved with Empower Oconee SC (EOSC). This group partners with the United Way of Oconee (UWO) and is funded by Children’s Trust of SC to empower community members to collaboratively build health, well-being, and resilience for all children and families in Oconee County.

We created [resiliency kits](#) for families with children in elementary school and distributed 400 kits in five neighborhoods in Oconee County. Included was a guide for families to engage in fun activities with their child using the items in the kit to foster academic achievement and development. We created a QR code to place on our CFEC bookmarks, which linked directly to the [EOSC family engagement activities](#). UWO was pleased with the response and requested 200 additional bookmarks for their Back to School Give Away the following week.

Building on this success, I partnered with Teresa Phillips, Anderson School District Two (ASD2) District Contact and Director of Project AWARE - a five-million-dollar, five-year federal grant funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. ASD2 and CFEC are teaming together to create resiliency kits that focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) and family engagement. ASD2 purchased supplies and [SEL books from the list developed by Tamara Cox](#), librarian at Wren High School in ASD1. This booklist features SEL books for all grade levels representing diverse backgrounds in all five competencies identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. In addition to creating family engagement activities that foster SEL, CFEC purchased sidewalk chalk and Playdoh to be included in the kits.



Over 400 SEL kits will be distributed in the Belton and Honea Path communities in the fall and spring of the 2020-21 school year. We are scheduling the distribution of the kits to coincide with existing community events and inviting area schools to participate. We want to communicate to families the crucial role they play in supporting and promoting the social and emotional growth of their children, while emphasizing that social and emotional growth and development lays a firm foundation for academic achievement and ensures the success for students in college and career readiness.



These resiliency kits are aligned with CFEC’s mission and demonstrate the power of forming school-family-community partnerships to foster the academic and developmental growth of ALL students.

# Teacher Partners & CFEC Specialist Partnerships

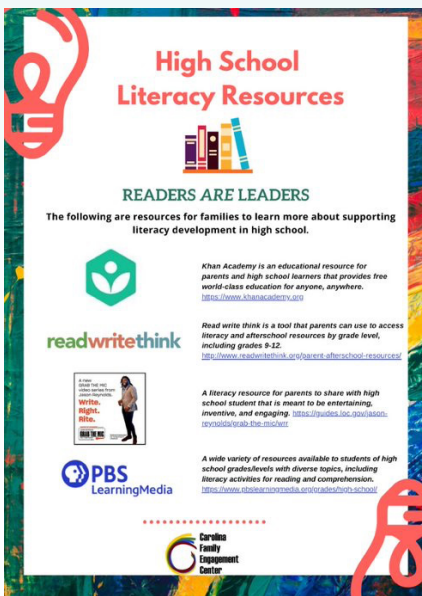
CFEC Teacher Partner María del Rocío Herron at Jackson Creek Elementary School and CFEC Specialist Juliá Lopez-Robertson detail their chance meeting that turned into a fortuitous school partnership. They tell their story in “Learning through Engagements with Multicultural and Global Literature” published in [Worlds of Words- WOW Stories Vol. VII, Issue 1](#). WOW Stories is a regular on-line peer-reviewed publication of WOW containing vignettes written by educators about children’s experiences reading and responding to literature.



## CFEC Commitment to Social and Emotional Learning

In a series of three issues, our CFEC team have put together tools and resources to help teachers, families and communities improve the SEL of children across South Carolina. In our first issue, we examine the importance of teacher self-care: highlighting practical tools teachers can use during these uncertain times. In our second issue, “Family-School Partnerships,” our team looks to parents as the first teachers of SEL to children, providing important insight and practical activities for families. Our newest issue, “Equity-Centered SEL,” focuses on CFEC’s commitment to educational equity. In concert with community partners and University of South Carolina faculty and staff, we have compiled resources, critical analyses, and stories of encouragement as we all work to promote equity in South Carolina. These issues and more resources can be found [here](#).

## CFEC Literacy Project



Our CFEC team has also created two resources for families and students seeking to diversify their at-home library and to learn more about online assistance available to strengthen literacy skills. The “Readers Are Leaders” literacy resource is a collection of online tools for families to learn more about supporting the literacy development of early and elementary readers, as well as students in middle and high school. Our “Embracing Diversity in Literature” resource suggests books for a range of reading levels that feature characters and authors representative of student and family diversity. These stories include those for and about African American and Black, Indigenous and Native, and Latino/a and Latinx readers, as well as readers with special needs and disabilities.

## Countdown to Kindergarten



Do you remember your first day of kindergarten? Do you remember the first day of kindergarten for your child/children? Most parents/caregivers tell you that entry into kindergarten is an important developmental milestone to be taken seriously. Research agrees! Almost half of all children have some difficulty adjusting to school at kindergarten entry, with 16% having serious problems, school experiences and adjustment have

Implications for success beyond school entry.

Research has shown that - to be effective - kindergarten transition programs must be intensive, thoughtful, and intentionally include parents/caregivers. Very few kindergarten transition programs meet this level of rigor.

Enter South Carolina First Steps' Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) Program. CTK is a high-intensity home visitation program that is relationship-based. It pairs families of rising kindergartners at-risk for school challenges with their future kindergarten teachers during the summer before school entry. The goals of CTK are to increase family awareness of kindergarten expectations, ensure a smooth transition to school, and create a positive relationship between the school and the family.

[Here](#) is a short video about the program.

We are excited to announce that there is additional funding through the Preschool Development Grant for up to 600 more children/families throughout South Carolina in Summer 2021! Extra support will be in place for children of Hispanic communities and for children with special needs.

CTK programs are coalitions between local First Steps partnerships and schools to identify and recruit children and Countdown teachers.

This program allows flexibility with scheduling and caseload, and provides a stipend and mileage reimbursement for CTK teachers. Most importantly, CTK teachers like the program because it eases the transition to kindergarten for children and parents/caregivers. Key benefits from teachers' perspectives are knowing the child and family better which aids instruction; building trust and working relationships; and helping families understand kindergarten expectations.



Want more information? Please contact Dr. Janice Kilburn at South Carolina First Steps, [jkilburn@scfirststeps.org](mailto:jkilburn@scfirststeps.org)

# Welcome Staff Members!



**Jennifer Dever**  
**Digital & Web Coordinator**

Jennifer is a Jane Austen fan who does social media marketing, in that order. She serves as the Digital & Web Coordinator for CFEC and is responsible for coordinating content among all social media platforms and CFEC website, as well as managing CFEC's "Septima Speaks" podcast and editing video content.



**Aida Rogers**  
**Marketing & Communications  
Coordinator**

Aida Rogers is a veteran journalist who loves a great story and a salty quote. She serves as the Marketing & Communications Coordinator for CFEC and is responsible for identifying, interviewing, and curating CFEC stories from across the state for dissemination across various media outlets.

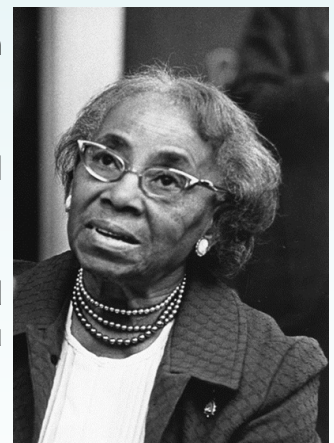
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## CFEC's "Septima Speaks" Podcast

Listen to stories of family engagement from cradle to career while you are on the go with CFEC's new "Septima Speaks" podcast.

The podcast is named as a salute to the pioneering black educator and social justice advocate, South Carolinian Septima Poinsette Clark (1898-1987).

Tune in for conversations with students, families, school personnel, and community partners on happenings around the state of South Carolina. You can [listen here](#).



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More information about the Carolina Engagement Center staff and CFEC's work can be found on its website. CFEC can also be followed on Facebook (@CFECatUofSC), Twitter (@CarolinaFamily2), and Instagram (@UofSCCFEC).