



School Readiness Assessment in SC



SC Education Oversight
Readiness Subcommittee

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- Created in 1999, SC First Steps is the state's **comprehensive early childhood education initiative.**
- First Steps is the state's only entity solely focused on the **school readiness** needs of the state's children.
- **State-Local; Public-Private:**
 - 46 local non-profit **partnerships**
 - Administer **4K in private settings** statewide (2006)
 - Lead agency for **BabyNet** (IDEA, Part C, 2010)
 - **SC Early Childhood Advisory Council** (2010)
 - **Early Head Start** (2015)

A Brief History of School Readiness Assessment in SC

1977-2001: Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery

(At first grade entry)

2002-2008: South Carolina Readiness Assessment (SCRA)

(Yearlong assessments in 5K and first grade)

2008: General Assembly **deletes SCRA** as part of the reauthorization of the Education Accountability Act. (Loss of policy- and classroom-level measure.)

Measuring Outcomes in the Absence of a Policy-Level Metric

Measuring First Steps' Progress:

- **Triennial external evaluation** requirement (by law)
- **Fidelity standards** and **common outcome measures** (by state board)
 - *Improvements in **parenting quality***
 - *Improvements in **interactive literacy behaviors***
 - *Improvements in **childcare quality***
 - *Equivalent **4K outcomes**, at 20% lower cost*
 - **Countdown to Kindergarten**
 - **Nurse-Family Partnership**

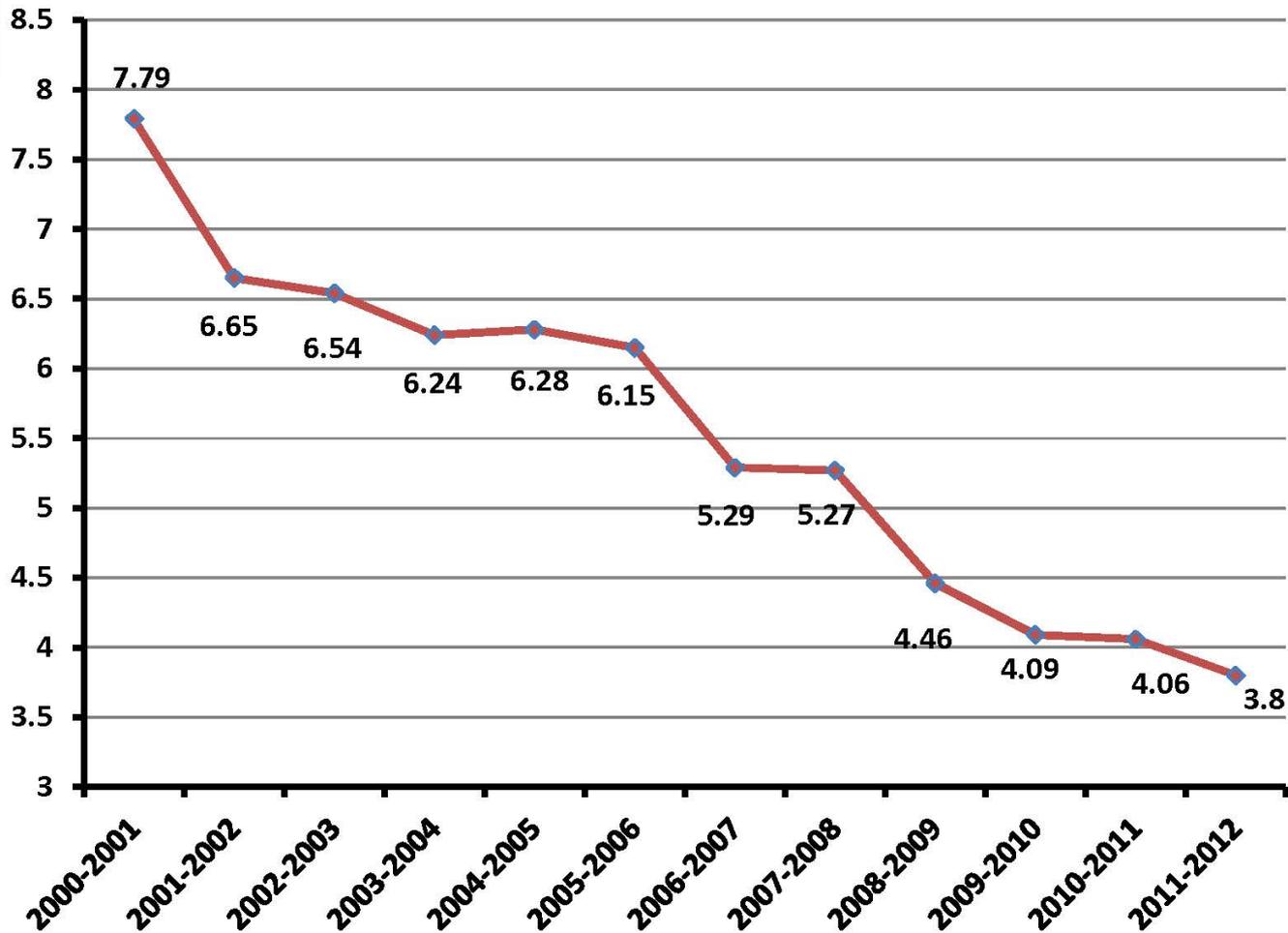
Measuring Outcomes in the Absence of a Policy-Level Metric

- SC First Grade Retention tracked by the state board **as policy-level indicator of the state's collective success** in improving the school readiness of young children (not as a measure of First Steps programs).
- Use **widely misrepresented**.
- **Imperfect** – but **available and universal**.

Statewide First Grade Retention (Percent Retained by Year 2000/01-2011/12)

51.22% Reduction

**4,202 or
1 in 12**



**2,103 or
1 in 26**

Increased Focus on Early Childhood Education

2006-2007: Creation of the **CDEPP 4K Pilot Program**
(37 districts, public and private 4k model)

2013-14: Expansion to 17 additional districts *(51 total)*

2014-2015: Expansion to 10 more districts *(61 total)*

Kindergarten Entry Assessment Consortium

Summer 2013: U.S. Department of Education opens grant competition to support the development of state-of-the-art Kindergarten Entry Assessments.

- **South Carolina enters 10-state consortium** led by NC Department of Education as a “collaborating state” under the leadership of SC First Steps.
(Includes North Carolina, Arizona, Delaware, Iowa, Maine, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, D.C, and **South Carolina**)
- **SC KEA Steering Committee** includes First Steps, SDE, Board of Education, SCASA, SC Superintendents Roundtable, Molly Black Foundation, USC. DSS, EOC and ICS, other key stakeholders invited to participate.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment Consortium

- Researchers have completed the analysis of **10 states' common readiness indicators** and **domain-specific standards**
- Each state “voted” to identify local priority readiness indicators
 - Assessment will be informed by common state priorities, not creation of national content/priorities.
 - Analysis to be published for all states by research team
- Ten states meeting regularly to review progress and next steps, piloting formative assessment designed to support instruction.
- **FEBRUARY 18: SC STAKEHOLDER BRIEFING**

Joint Resolution: H.4749

February 2014

- “The State Board of Education immediately shall, **in consultation with the Department of Education, the Office of First Steps to School Readiness, the Education Oversight Committee** and other stakeholders as appropriate, begin to consider **which assessment must be used to analyze the early literacy competencies of children** in state-funded full-day and half-day four-year-old kindergarten programs and of all children entering kindergarten programs in public schools during the 2014 - 2015 school year.”
- **First Steps seats interagency work team**, provides recommendations on attributes to **State Board of Education and SCDE** in May 2014, input to EOC in June 2014.

June 2014: Act 287

First Steps Reauthorization

- Creates first-ever **legal definition of school readiness:**

*“School readiness’ means the level of child development necessary to ensure early school success as measured in the following domains: **physical health and motor skills; emotional and social competence; language and literacy development; and mathematical thinking and cognitive skills.** School readiness is supported by the knowledge and practices of families, caregivers, healthcare providers, educators, and communities.”*

First Steps Reauthorization

- **Charges First Steps Board of Trustees with:**

Adopting a description of school readiness (by July 1, 2015) that includes specific:

“(a) **characteristics and development levels of a ready child** that must include, but are not limited to, emerging literacy, numeracy, and physical, social, and emotional competencies;

(b) **characteristics of school, educators, and caregivers** that the board considers necessary to create an optimal learning environment for the early years of students’ lives; and

(c) **characteristics of the optimal environment** which would lead to the readiness of students and their continued success;

(2) establish specific **benchmarks and objectives for use by the board of trustees, local partnership boards, and any agency that administers a program to benefit preschool children;** “

First Steps Reauthorization

- **Charges the Education Oversight Committee with:**
“Recommending (by July 1, 2015) an assessment to evaluate and measure the school readiness of students prior to their entrance into a prekindergarten or kindergarten program to the State Board of Education. Prior to submitting the recommendation to the State Board, the Education Oversight Committee shall **seek input from the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees** and other early childhood advocates. EOC shall consider assessments that are **research-based, reliable, and appropriate for measuring readiness.”**

June 2014: Act 284

Read to Succeed

- Codified 4K pilot as statewide program.
- Created new readiness assessment.

*“Every student entering publically funded prekindergarten and kindergarten **beginning in Fiscal Year 2014-2015 will be administered a readiness assessment by the forty-fifth day of the school year.** Initially the assessment shall focus on early **language and literacy development.** Beginning in Fiscal Year 2016-2017, the assessment must assess each child’s early language and literacy development, **mathematical thinking, physical well-being, and social-emotional development.** The assessment may include multiple assessments, all of which must be approved by the board.”*

FY15 Appropriations Act

1A.76. (SDE-EIA: Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Assessments) For the current fiscal year, all students entering a publicly funded prekindergarten or public kindergarten must be administered a readiness assessment that shall focus on **early language and literacy** development no later than **the forty fifth day** of the school year. The readiness assessment must be approved by the State Board of Education.

The **Education Oversight Committee shall recommend the characteristics of the readiness assessment for children in prekindergarten and kindergarten, focused on early language and literacy development, to the State Board of Education no later than July thirtieth.** Prior to submitting the recommendation to the State Board, the Education Oversight Committee shall seek input from the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees and other early childhood advocates.

The State Board must move expeditiously to approve or modify the criteria submitted by the committee. Once approved, with the assistance of the Education Oversight Committee, the board shall develop a solicitation to be used in procuring the assessment.

mCLASS:CIRCLE

mClass Circle is a **computer-administered, early literacy assessment** given to all publicly-funded **4- and 5-year-old kindergartners** in South Carolina in 2014-2015.

LETTER NAMING

VOCABULARY

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

WRITING



mCLASS:CIRCLE – Fall 2014 Administration

First Steps administered the Circle to **1,818 students enrolled in its private, four-year-old kindergarten programs** in September and October 2014, successfully assessing **more than 99% of enrolled students** within the required 45-day testing window.

In Summary:

- Multiple, **overlapping/complementary efforts**.
- **Need for intentional coordination** between EOC, First Steps, and SC Department of Education in 2015.
- **Baseline Circle data** now available.
- **February 18, 2015**
 - ◆ **10-State KEA Briefing – Save the Date**