



SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.



State-Funded Full-Day 4K Annual Report 2022-23 & 2023-24

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INTRODUCTION

& Enabling Legislation

The following is a report from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) pursuant to Provisos 1.48 and 1A.26 of the 2023-24 General Appropriations Act to report on the Child Early Reading and Development Education Program (CERDEP).

Pursuant to Proviso 1.48:

Of the funds appropriated, \$300,000 shall be allocated to the Education Oversight Committee to conduct an annual evaluation of the South Carolina Child Development Education Pilot Program and to issue findings in a report to the General Assembly by March first of each year. To aid in this evaluation, the Education Oversight Committee shall determine the data necessary and both public and private providers are required to submit the necessary data as a condition of the continued participation in and funding of the program. This data shall include developmentally appropriate measures of student progress... The Education Oversight Committee shall use this data and all other collected and maintained data necessary to conduct a research-based review of the programs implementation and assessment of student success in the early elementary grades along with information, recommendations, and a timeline for how the state can increase the number served in high-quality programs.



What to Know When Reading This Report:

The focus of this annual report is on state-funded, full-day four-year-old Kindergarten (4K) utilization; however, there are a variety of other 4K options in South Carolina available for families.

These alternative placement options for four-year-olds have a variety of different funding sources (e.g. state, federal, and private) which have been described in previous reports.

Given the specific legislative charge given to the EOC, this report focuses on CERDEP which is the inclusive term to refer to those state-funded, full-day programs administered by SC Department of Education (SCDE) and the South Carolina Office of First Steps (SCFS).

Public schools, non-profit independent schools and childcare centers, many of which participate in licensing and the continuous Quality Improvement Rating System (QRIS) operated by SC Department of Social Services (DSS), may all participate in CERDEP and serve eligible four-year-old children.

CERDEP 4K is the term used to refer to full-day CERDEP programs in public schools that are state-funded and run by the local school district with the SCDE as the reporting agency. Historically, these programs may have been referred to as Public CERDEP. First Steps 4K is the term for state-funded CERDEP in non-public school settings with SCFS as the oversight and reporting agency. In previous EOC reports, these programs were referred to as Non-Public CERDEP. For a more complete landscape of four-year-old Kindergarten options for families, characteristics of the programs, and funding streams, please see the attached Appendix.

Terms

➤ CERDEP

This is the inclusive term for full-day, programs for four-year-olds administered by the SC Department of Education (SCDE) and the Office of First Steps (SCFS) funded by the state of South Carolina. It includes public schools, non-profit independent schools and childcare centers who adhere to program and quality requirements for CERDEP funding and serve eligible four-year-olds.

➤ CERDEP 4K

This is the term for CERDEP in public schools that are state-funded and run by the local school district with the school district and SCDE as the reporting and oversight agency.

➤ First Steps 4K

This is the term for the state-funded CERDEP programs run in non-public school settings with SC First Steps as the oversight and reporting agency.

➤ Potentially Unserved

This refers to students eligible for, but not accessing CERDEP. Some of these students may be accessing district-funded or other programs, or it may not be known. If a student is a Pupil in Poverty (PIP) and their 4K experience is either Unknown, Other Public 4K (non CERDEP), or Private 4K, the student is considered Potentially Unserved by CERDEP. Head Start students do not count as CERDEP or Potentially Unserved.

Changes to the State-Funded Full Day 4K Annual Report:

As SCDE, SCFS, and EOC staff have developed and updated data sharing agreements to use and report more data efficiently, the reporting capacity has changed.

These ongoing efforts ensure that EOC staff has necessary data to satisfy the requirements of both budget provisos to evaluate CERDEP and Proviso 1.89 in the 2023-24 Appropriations Act, which requires the EOC “pilot and maintain an interactive Education Data Dashboard.” As such, the findings and recommendations found in this report are developed from the same data available on the Pre-K dashboard, located at dashboardsc.sc.gov/prek.

This change benefits state and local leaders as they can now use data from the same source to make decisions. Additionally, moving away from the use of estimates based on census data in the analyses will lead to more accurate and reliable information.

Nuanced consideration is required when comparing “four-year-olds in poverty” and “potentially unserved” in this report with those from previous years, as these terms are defined differently in this report. Currently, the data used in this report is from the cohort of kindergarten students in the 2023-24 school year, looking back at their 4K experience in the 2022-23 school year. Prior to this report, four-year-olds in poverty was an estimate; beginning with this report, data that measures poverty with a smaller margin of error can be reported using the designation of a Pupil in Poverty (PIP) as noted in the data sets received from SCDE. In this 2024 Report, “potentially unserved” students refer to those who were not served by CERDEP. Please see Appendix B for a more complete description of the data sources used in this report.

In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the full landscape of 4K opportunities in SC, particularly with the Education Data Dashboard providing clearer data visualization of these data, EOC staff has proposed amendments to the budget provisos that provide for the delivery of CERDEP. The EOC proposed that the SCDE issue a unique student identifier for each child receiving services from a public or private provider, including those funded by CERDEP, Head Start, SC Childcare Scholarships, EIA, Title I, district-funded, and all other federal, state, or local public sources. Currently, the expanded language has been recommended by the Public Education Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means to the Proviso Subcommittee.



Pupils in Poverty (PIP) refers to a student from a household that participates in one of the following federal programs: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Foster, Migrant, or Homeless.

The Pupil in Poverty (PIP) indicator is derived from a combination of data from Direct Certification and Medicaid. Data in this report uses the designation provided by the SCDE.

| 4K Experience | Definition and Data Source |
|------------------------------|--|
| CERDEP 4K | CERDEP in public schools: Data comes from SCDE using 5K data with CERDEP 4K designation. |
| First Steps 4K | CERDEP in non-public school settings: Data comes from First Steps enrollment for the current reporting year and is matched with 5K data from SCDE to ensure each student is counted once. |
| *Head Start | Head Start programming: data comes from SCDE 5K data where Head Start was listed as the 4K experience at enrollment in Kindergarten. |
| Other Public 4K (non-CERDEP) | 4K classes offered by public schools that are not funded by CERDEP (e.g. EIA or district funded): Data comes from SCDE using 5K data with other 4K designation. |
| Private 4K | 4K classes in non-public school settings that are not funded using state CERDEP dollars (e.g. DSS vouchers/childcare scholarships, private pay, etc.): Data in this category reported within comes from SCDE 5K data where private 4K was listed as the 4K experience at enrollment in Kindergarten. |

****Head Start**, a federally-funded program that serves children from birth to age 5, sends the EOC Head Start Census Data that shows the number of children served in Head Start by county. The EOC receives this annually and it can be found in Appendix XXX. These data from Head Start cannot be linked to specific academic outcomes, as additional identification is needed to do so; students served by Head Start currently do not receive a unique student identifier in their 4K year. It should be noted that the parent survey completed at enrollment in kindergarten for the 2023-24 school year classified students as participating in Head Start. Head Start students do not count as CERDEP, nor do they count as potentially unserved as it would skew the representation and lead to incomplete conclusions.*

Key Findings

Based on **57,804** enrolled kindergarten students during the 2023-24 school year ...



34,878 of those students were designated **Pupils in Poverty**.

Thirty-six percent of Pupils in Poverty, or **14,294** students, were served by CERDEP.



8,288 The number of **Pupils in Poverty known to be served in another 4K experience that is not CERDEP** (e.g. district funded or Head Start)



12,668 **Pupils in Poverty** whose four-year-old preschool experience during the 2022-23 school year is unknown.

The State's investment in full-day 4K programs has continued to increase.

\$106,698,962 was spent on 4K for the 2022-23 Fiscal Year, which is the largest investment to date.

Pupils in Poverty who participate in full-day, state-funded 4K via CERDEP programming are more likely to Demonstrate Readiness (37%) on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) than Pupils in Poverty who did not participate in CERDEP (27%).



State-funded 4K is beneficial for kindergarten readiness for pupils in poverty, which is the target population of students identified as at-risk pursuant to Section 59-156-110 of the SC Code of Laws.

In the 2023-24 school year, **5,384 pupils in poverty** (37%) who participated in full-day 4K in a CERDEP program during the 2022-23 school year were demonstrating readiness on the KRA, compared to **5,656 of pupils in poverty** not participating in CERDEP programming (27%) scoring at the same level of readiness. Nineteen percent of students with a disability who participated in CERDEP demonstrated readiness on the KRA, compared to 16% of students with disabilities who did **not** participate in CERDEP.

In 2023, The EOC produced an interactive dashboard showing educational outcomes of 4-year-olds as well as where there is still need.

Since then, EOC staff has engaged in an iterative process to expand the dashboard and produce one that satisfies and maintains the requirements of Proviso 1.85 in the 2024-25 Appropriations Act. This report is built from the data that is used in the dashboard, and as such is different than previous reports. Users can explore more detail about CERDEP utilization, student achievement, and more at the state and local level by visiting this [Pre-K dashboard](#). It should be noted that the dashboard does not, at time of publishing, have data from the 2023-24 school year. Complete data was received January 30, 2024 by EOC staff and priority was placed on meeting the statutory deadline of this report. The dashboard will be updated following publication.



To access the Pre-K Dashboard:

<https://dashboardsc.sc.gov/preK>



Recommendations

Expand Opportunities for CERDEP Access and Participation

According to the *State of Preschool 2022 Yearbook*, released by Rutgers University's National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) in May 2023, South Carolina ranked 11th nationally in access to 4K. The Yearbook and ranking system has been used since the 2001-02 school year to provide state-level monitoring of state-funded preschool program funding, access, and policies. NIEER rankings of access represent the number of children enrolled a point in time in state-funded 4K, in addition to the number of hours per day, days per week, and operating schedule. While this national comparison is relatively high, there are still more than 11,000¹ students in poverty unserved by CERDEP or any other 4K program at low or no cost to parents. Expanding access to CERDEP is recommended using the following steps:



1) Fund Additional CERDEP 4K Programs:

Nationally, South Carolina ranks 37th in state spending and 40th overall in all total PreK spending (state, federal, and local sources). Investing in additional classrooms will increase access and investment, and improve our national ranking. There are at least 12 school districts with students on waitlists for CERDEP 4K programming under the current eligibility criteria. There is a demonstrated need for additional programs in certain areas of South Carolina and a comparative benefit for the students who participate in these programs.

A follow-up to 2023 Recommendation: Following the 2023 publication for the CERDEP report which recommended an increase in funding to offset the cost of new curricula to replace Big Day by Houghton Mifflin, the 2023-24 Governor's budget request specified an increase in the levels of funding for full-day 4K. The General Assembly approved a budget which increased the minimum reimbursement rate for instructional costs from \$4,800 to \$5,100 and the minimum reimbursement rate for transportation from \$587 to \$620 per student. South Carolina's monetary commitment to CERDEP is described more fully in the Financial Investment in CERDEP section of this report on page 17.

2) Incentivize CERDEP Participation for Private Childcare Providers



First Steps 4K has expanded service options to include extended day and summer session programming. Additionally, they have added 24 new First Steps providers for a total of 248 providers with 279 First Steps 4K classrooms for the 2022-23 school year. This is an increase from the 2021-22 school year when 238 providers (40 new that school year) housed 265 classrooms. Despite this sustained growth, under the current eligibility criteria there are approximately 11,000 children who could access free full-day 4K and would benefit from increased opportunities. To facilitate provider recruitment efforts, it is recommended that a supplemental study be completed to identify potential incentives that would entice additional private providers to participate in First Steps 4K programming.

1 11,000 is the number of Kindergarten students in the 2023-24 school year who are pupils in poverty, and their 4K experience is unknown. This means they were not served in Head Start, Other Public 4K (non-CERDEP), Private 4K (non-CERDEP) or any CERDEP program.

3) Use Waitlists Differently to Increase Enrollment Efficiency

When space is available at a CERDEP 4K setting, families can provide information and enroll. Once openings in a CERDEP 4K class have been filled by eligible students, waitlists are maintained, serving two functions in our state. First, they measure the need and interest in state-funded 4K in an area, and second they provide a mechanism for alerting an interested family if a spot at that same CERDEP 4K program becomes available.

Measuring the need for CERDEP 4K is part of the classroom approval process which expands the program. A school district may not plan to add an additional CERDEP 4K class unless there is reason to believe that it could be filled, and a waitlist serves as evidence of that. Information about children waiting to access 4K programming is communicated in accordance with timelines outlined in the State budget. Proviso 1.48 of the 2023-24 Appropriation Act states that:

“On or before November 15, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps shall share data that identifies the total number of children enrolled in CERDEP in both public and private providers. If available appropriations exceed the instructional costs of serving children enrolled in the program and if a waiting list of eligible children can be documented by the Department of Education and by the Office of First Steps, then the Executive Budget Office may authorize the transfer of funds between the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps.

The Office of First Steps and the Department of Education shall collaborate with the South Carolina Head Start State Collaboration Office to inform parents of all publicly funded full-day 4K programs including Head Start by participating in PalmettoPreK and First5SC.”

To prepare for the 2023-24 school year, SCDE shared waitlist numbers with First Steps in order to identify a placement for 4-year-olds as soon as possible to the start of school on July 31, 2023 and August 8, 2023. On November 14, 2023 information from the table to the right was shared by SCDE to First Steps.

The total number of children on a waitlist reported to the SCDE during the 2022-23 school year was 308. For the 2023-24 school year, the number of children waiting to access CERDEP programming has decreased by 105, with 203 children on a waitlist. This decrease is positive as it reflects an increase in state capacity to serve eligible children in full-day 4K programming. Unfortunately, the waiting list also illustrates that more than 200 children who are at risk of not being ready for kindergarten, and tried to enroll in state-funded 4K were not yet enrolled in a CERDEP program in November.

Through South Carolina’s Preschool Development Grant (PDG) planning opportunity, EOC staff is conducting research to gain better understanding of the policies, procedures, and processes at the state, district, and school level for placing children on waitlists for pre-K programs. It is recommended that findings from this research be used for the EOC to convene all stakeholders to best determine the needed supports so that all eligible children can find 4K opportunities more efficiently.

| School District | Count of students on Waiting List sent by SCDE to First Steps |
|----------------------|---|
| Aiken | 62 |
| Anderson 04 | 6 |
| Bamberg 03 | 5 |
| Darlington | 52 |
| Greenwood 50 | 2 |
| Jasper | 22 |
| Lancaster | 16 |
| Lexington/Richland 5 | 3 |
| Newberry | 6 |
| Richland 02 | 8 |
| Spartanburg 01 | 10 |
| York 03 | 10 |
| TOTAL | 203** |

**Data Source SCDE waitlist number for the 2023-24 school year shared on 11/14/23.*

***1 student on the waitlist was referred by multiple/unknown districts and is reflected in the total, but not the district counts of students.*



Follow-up to 2023 Recommendations:

In the 2023 report, the EOC recommended that staff evaluate the current waitlist processes and procedures used in school districts and within SC First Steps to allow families access to all available options for State-funded, full-day 4K. EOC staff is currently completing a study of the waitlist process across all early childhood settings as part of South Carolina's Preschool Development Grant (PDG) planning opportunity. The EOC is also initiating a study to determine the true cost of 4-year-old preschool in South Carolina. These findings will be available in the 2025 State Funded 4K Report.

In the 2023 report, the EOC also recommended further examination of the impact of marketing efforts to expand knowledge of and access to four-year-old programs in SC. In addition to the waitlist, there are two web portals led by the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) to facilitate enrollment in Head Start, locally funded school district 4K programs, CERDEP 4K, First Steps 4K and SC Department of Social Services (DSS) vouchers for four-year old classrooms. The [Palmetto PreK¹](#) Portal identifies potential parents who would qualify and be interested in CERDEP 4K. First Steps shares parent "leads" with school districts to facilitate recruitment efforts. The [First 5²](#) portal was launched in February 2022 and is designed to be used as a universal application for families of children, five years of age and under, to access all programs they are eligible for with one common application. This portal is in progress and utilization rates and enrollment in 4K programs from this site are planned to be shared in the 2025 report.

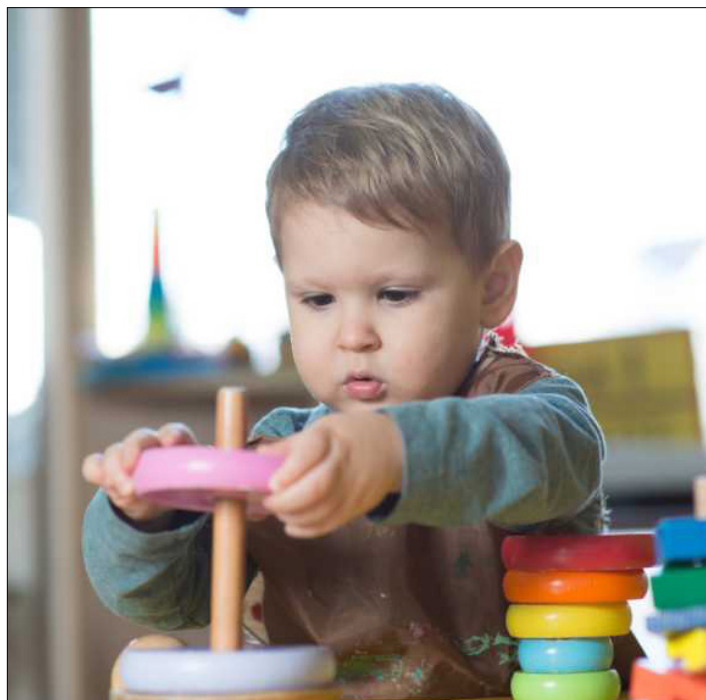
Table A: Palmetto PreK Portal Leads and Eligibility

| Year | Parent Leads | Head Start eligible | Public School eligible | First Steps 4K eligible | DSS Childcare Scholarship eligible |
|------|--------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2020 | 5,372 | 2,374 | 1,205 | 2,093 | 803 |
| 2021 | 8,500 | 3,347 | 4,606 | 2,285 | 1,124 |
| 2022 | 6,543 | 2,696 | 2,128 | 1,135 | 1,019 |
| 2023 | 7,183 | 2,780 | 1,636 | 1,633 | 1,057 |

*Source First Steps Data Request Palmetto PreK usage

In addition to the web portals to facilitate enrollment and increase awareness of programs, several outreach and marketing efforts have been made to alert families and caregivers of four-year olds about CERDEP. In the 2022 calendar year recruitment efforts by First Steps 4K supported the 2022-23 school year enrollment. These efforts included marketing activities using websites, [promotional videos³](#), presentations at conferences, live radio and Spotify ads, social media (Facebook and Instagram), community events like parades and Palmetto PreK enrollment day, texting outreach, and direct mail.

First Steps has an online student application where families can check eligibility, search for approved providers and apply for a program called [Free 4KSC⁴](#) that according to First Steps, had over 76,000 unique page views. For additional details on these recruitment efforts, please see Appendix D.



¹ <https://palmettoprek.org/>

² <https://first5sc.org/>

³ www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dQ4dK6ntg

⁴ www.scfirststeps.org/what-we-do/programs/first-steps-4k/

4) Continue to Evaluate Program Quality in Meaningful Ways

There are 10 quality standards used by NIEER to rank quality in state's early education systems. South Carolina meets the quality benchmark in 7 of the 10 standards.

Develop a plan to meet three NIEER unmet Benchmarks of Quality

It is recommended that EOC staff will work with all early childhood partners to develop an action plan and requisite cost of implementation to meet the three benchmarks of quality that have not yet been met in South Carolina. As part of this work, staff will convene relevant stakeholders together for feedback, and submit these plans to the EOC for consideration. These plans will be vetted by stakeholders and shared in the 2025 report and/or supplemental reports to facilitate continuous quality improvement in state-funded 4K. In South Carolina, the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children (JCLCC) and a Special Joint Committee to Study Childcare are currently exploring issues related to childcare. The deliberations and actions of both groups will most likely relate to workforce development and state-funded 4K. It is recommended that EOC staff remain informed about the work of the JCLCC and Special Joint Committee to Study Childcare and invite feedback and participation from these groups in planning efforts related to meeting the three unmet NIEER benchmarks of quality.

| Policy Standard | Benchmark of Quality | Meets Benchmark |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Early Learning & Development Standards | Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive | Yes |
| Curriculum Supports | Approval process & supports | Yes |
| Teacher Degree | BA | Not Yet |
| Teacher Specialized Training | Specialized in PreK | Yes |
| Assistant Teacher Degree | CDA or equivalent | Not Yet |
| Staff Professional Development | For teachers and assistants: at least 15 hours/year; individual professional development plans; coaching | Yes |
| Maximum Class Size | 20 or lower | Yes |
| Staff to Child Ratio | 1:10 or better | Yes |
| Screening and Referral Benchmark | Vision, hearing and health screenings with referral | Not Yet |
| Continuous Quality Improvement System | Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement | Yes |

Follow-up to 2023 Recommendations:

Beginning with the 2021-22 Appropriations Act, both CERDEP 4K programs and non-profit independent schools participating in CERDEP are "not required to be approved, registered, or licensed by the Department of Social Services in order to participate in CERDEP." The 2023 report included a recommendation to monitor non-licensed independent schools participating in CERDEP to prevent any issues that may compromise the quality of CERDEP programs or the health and safety of the children they serve. Since this change, seven programs do not have a license as they are not required to, and 30 licensed programs choose not to participate in ABC Quality. Because this is the first year for this change in policy, it is the continued recommendation that EOC staff continue to monitor the impact over time.

In 2023 the EOC recommended that a study be completed to evaluate instruments used in State-funded 4K programs. Researchers did evaluate assessment instruments, but findings were inconclusive and incomplete regarding benchmark assessments, progress monitoring and the predictive capacity of these assessments. As a result, alternative methods and data needed are being considered by EOC staff and relevant stakeholders.

5) Invest in supports to better understand access and attendance in CERDEP

To determine consistent enrollment across CERDEP 4K placements, attendance data at the local level must be made available to the SCDE and shared with EOC staff. While it is possible to determine the average number of school days enrolled, currently the impact of 160 days or "a full dose" of CERDEP 4K cannot fully be evaluated. The data from First Steps 4K programming is collected using a different system and days enrolled, present, absent can be determined. It is recommended that student level attendance data be collected at the state level for CERDEP 4K classrooms.

SC Child Early Reading and Development Education Pilot Program (CERDEP) 4K Report

This report seeks to answer four questions:

1. How many four-year-old children in South Carolina are in poverty?
2. How many children are served by CERDEP? How many potentially eligible children are not served by CERDEP?
3. What is the financial investment in CERDEP?
4. What is the impact of the CERDEP investment on kindergarten readiness and school success experienced by children participating?



Table B: Changes to CERDEP

| CERDEP Changes 2022-23 Fiscal Year: | CERDEP Changes 2023-24 Fiscal Year: | Proposed CERDEP Changes to the 2024-25 Fiscal Year: |
|---|---|---|
| For the fiscal year 2022-23, children who were eligible to participate in CERDEP in the 2021-22 fiscal year, but did not, are eligible to participate in the program this year subject to classroom availability and funding. Funding carried forward can be used for this purpose in response to the pandemic. | Proviso 1.48 specifies funding levels for public and private full-day 4K providers. The amendment increases the minimum reimbursement rate for instructional costs from \$4,800 to \$5,100 and increased the minimum reimbursement rate for transportation from \$587 to \$620 per student. | Data collected by the EOC from SCDE and SCFS will include average daily attendance data so that consistent enrollment may be determined. The SCDE shall also issue a unique student identifier for each child receiving services from public or private provider including CERDEP, Head Start, SC Child Care Scholarships, EIA, Title I, district-funded, and all other federal, state, and local public sources. |
| Beginning this fiscal year, public and non-public CERDEP 4K providers are exempt from being licensed, approved, or registered by the Department of Social Services (DSS). Instead, the SCDE and SCFS are responsible for ensuring providers deliver high-quality educational programs pursuant to Section 59-159-160. | At the request of the Office of First Steps, the amendment also eliminates the public private partnership program that allowed up to \$1 million to be expended on renovations. | 1A.73.(SDE-EIA: Foundational Literacy Skill Training) Beginning with the current 2023-24 fiscal year, this proviso directs the Department of Education to provide training in foundational literacy skills to public school educators in kindergarten through grade three. The amendment expands the training to educators in state-funded four-year-old programs and allows the Department to carry forward funds as needed to provide the training. |
| In accordance with Act 284, the curriculum review process has begun so that updates to the CERDEP approved curricula list can occur. | | |

Table B summarizes the changes over the 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years; however, there are some changes to CERDEP that are not the result of proviso. The Phonological Awareness Literacy Scale or PALS assessment has been retired, and after June 30, 2023, districts did not have access to this 4K assessment and must choose between Individual Growth and Developmental Indicators or My IGDIS and Teaching Strategies GOLD®. PALS is the 4K assessment used in the 2022-23 school year by 5,875 CERDEP 4K students in more than 40 CERDEP 4K Districts. Assessment data is further explored later in the report across all 4K assessments and CERDEP experiences.

Estimates of Four-Year-Olds in Poverty in South Carolina:



Historically, estimates of four-year-olds in poverty were calculated using a formula based on birth cohorts of four-year-olds and percentages of poverty in school districts provided by the SCDE. As the EOC, in partnership with SCDE and SC First Steps, has built interactive data dashboards to represent this data using the pupils in poverty designation instead of the estimate methodology, comparisons between data in this report and previous ones should not be made. A detailed description of differences in data can be found in Appendix B.

There were 57,804 Kindergarten students enrolled at the start of the 2023-24 school year. Of these students, 34,878 (60%) were considered Pupils in Poverty. Of the students identified as Pupils in Poverty, 14,294 (41%) were served in a CERDEP program during the 2022-23 school year. This represents an increase, over the past three years, in students served in any CERDEP program.

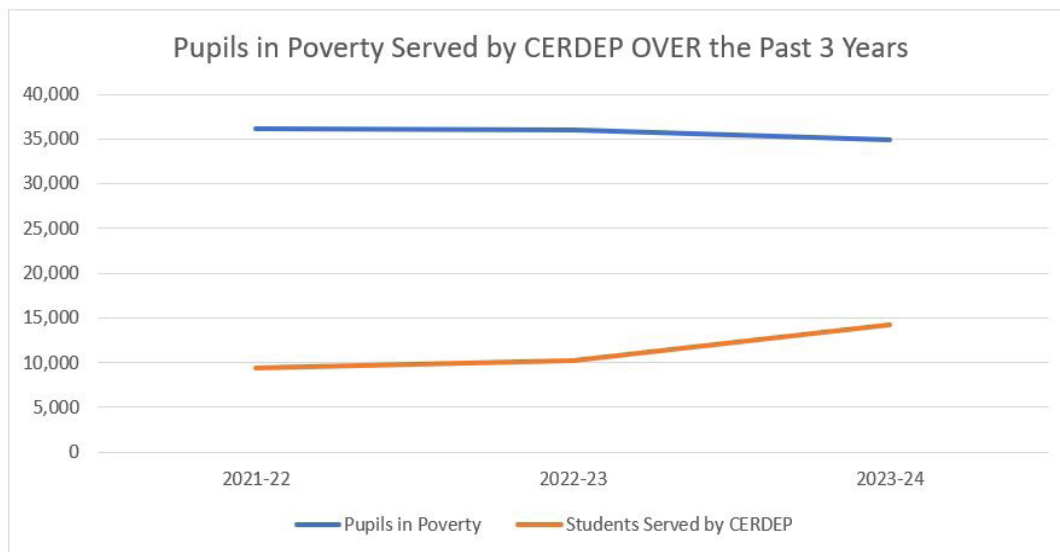


Table C: Students' 4K Experience (SY 2022-23) and PIP status in 5K during (SY 2023-24):

| 4K Experience | Pupils NOT in Poverty 5K 2023-24 | % of Pupils NOT in Poverty in 5K by 2022-23 4K Experience | Pupils in Poverty 5K 2023-24 | % of ALL Pupils in Poverty Served in this Setting 2022-23 4K Experience | Total |
|--------------------|---|--|------------------------------|--|---------------|
| CERDEP 4K | 1,920 | 8% | 12,001 | 33% | 13,921 |
| First Steps 4K | 603 | 3% | 2,546 | 7% | 3,149 |
| Head Start | 285 | 1% | 1,401 | 4% | 1,686 |
| Other Public Pre-K | 4,153 | 17% | 6,911 | 19% | 11,064 |
| Private 4K | 649 | 3% | 92 | 0% | 741 |
| Unknown | 16,202 | 68% | 12,981 | 36% | 29,183 |
| Total | 23,812 | 100% | 35,932 | 100% | 59,744 |

Table C illustrates all the 4K settings where pupils in poverty were served in the 2022-23 school year. Students not classified as pupils in poverty in kindergarten 2023-24 school year, may have been classified as pupils in poverty in 4K during the 2022-23 school year. Students may be duplicated if they moved schools or centers within the 2022-23 school year.

Children Served by CERDEP

In the 2022-23 school year, there were 17,070 children served in full-day, 4K classes through CERDEP. First Steps 4K served 3,149 and CERDEP 4K served 13,921. Of the children in 5K served by CERDEP, 14,547 (85% of all CERDEP) are pupils in poverty, and 2,523 are not considered pupils in poverty, but were considered at risk of not being ready for kindergarten without high quality 4K programming.

Children *Not* Served by CERDEP

In school year 2022-23, there were 21,385 students potentially eligible to access CERDEP programming, but did not access CERDEP. Of these students not served by CERDEP programming, 1,686 participated in Head Start, and 11,587 accessed DSS childcare scholarships for private childcare centers not participating in First Steps 4K.

Over the past three years, the number and percentage of 4-year-olds in poverty potentially not served by CERDEP has decreased. While this represents expansion of the program to serve the intended population, there remains opportunity for students to benefit from CERDEP.

| School Year | Pupils in Poverty Potentially Not Served | % Pupils in Poverty Potentially Not Served |
|-------------|--|--|
| 2020-21 | 26,721 | 74% |
| 2021-22 | 25,864 | 72% |
| 2022-23 | 21,385 | 60% |

Access and Attendance

Consistent attendance impacts the fidelity of CERDEP programming, quality of the 4K experience and students' academic outcomes in a similar way that lack of access does. The impact of CERDEP relies on students participating in the program and 160 days in a CERDEP program is generally agreed upon as a "full dose", or enough time for the program to be implemented with fidelity for the desired effects. The number of days students are enrolled in any CERDEP program, ranges from one to 221 with the average number of days enrolled being 170. The average number of days students are absent from any CERDEP program is 18. While increasing access to CERDEP should remain a priority, encouraging attendance for those participating should be considered so that state dollars used for 4K programming have the desired effect.

CERDEP 4K

CERDEP 4K is available to all school districts in South Carolina based on the current legislation for expansion and funding available. There are four districts who elect not to participate in CERDEP funded 4K: Beaufort, Horry, Greenville, York 2, and the SC Charter School District. These districts may offer different 4K experiences that are not funded by CERDEP. Students are enrolled an average of 167 days in CERDEP 4K.



First Steps 4K

First Steps 4K is available to eligible students living in every school district and county in South Carolina, and is available in 40 counties of the state. The six counties that do not have a First Steps 4K program include: Abbeville, Allendale, Calhoun, Edgefield, Fairfield and McCormick. Each of these counties has four-year-olds being served by the DSS vouchers/childcare scholarships system, in addition to Head Start and CERDEP 4K which alleviates children unable to access state-funded 4-year-old learning activities. [Table E](#) illustrates this by county.

During the 2022-23 school year First Steps reported serving 3,660 students. This report uses the data for 3,165 students who had at least one GOLD score and could be matched to the Kindergarten enrollment data from SCDE. Students are enrolled an average of 184 days in First Steps 4K and the average number of days students are absent from First Steps 4K is 18. On average, students in First Steps 4K are present for 166 days, or more than the “full dose” of 160 days in 4K.

First Steps 4K added 24 new providers since the 2021-22 school year, meaning there were 248 providers with 279 First Steps 4K classrooms for the 2022-23 school year. This is an increase from the 2021-22 school year when 238 providers (40 new that school year) housed 265 classrooms. The 24 new First Steps 4K classrooms added in the 2021-22 school year have the capacity to serve 280 children. [Table D](#) shows the approved classrooms and student capacity across the state for the 2022-23 school year by ABC Quality rating.

Table D: New First Steps 4K Classrooms by ABC Quality Rating, 2022-23 School Year

| ABC Quality Rating | Number of Approved Classrooms | Room Capacity for Students: |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A | 1 | 20 |
| B+ | 4 | 80 |
| B | 3 | 60 |
| C | 8 | 160 |
| Not Applicable or Not Participating | 8 | 160 |
| P (Pending) | 2 | 40 |
| Total | 26 | 520 |

*Source: SC First Steps data request received December 1, 2023

ABC Quality is SC’s statewide rating and improvement system for childcare and early childhood education; private childcare centers that are licensed or registered by DSS can voluntarily participate in the system. For First Steps 4K programs, there is a financial benefit for meeting standards of high quality. The ratings range from A+ to C based on 6 quality standards: Responsive and Sensitive Care, Language and Communication, Guidance, Program Structure, Early Learning and Environment. A rating of C meets quality standards beyond requirements for licensure. B+ and B are a quality score indicative of strategies to increase program quality beyond C rating. A+ and A are the highest quality scores for programs that consistently promote quality practices. NA means a quality score is not applicable, while P means the program is part of ABC Quality while awaiting a rating from DSS reviewers.

Table E: Pupils in Poverty in Counties without First Steps 4K Accessing DSS vouchers/childcare scholarships

| County | Pupils in Poverty | Pupils in Poverty Not Served by CERDEP or Head Start | Recipients of DSS vouchers/child care scholarships | ABC Rating of Centers Receiving Vouchers | DSS vouchers/child care scholarships Expenditures | Pupils in Poverty NOT Served |
|--------------|-------------------|--|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| Abbeville | 184 | 74 | ** | B, C, NA | \$32,497 | ** |
| Allendale | 57 | ** | ** | A+, A, B+, B | \$24,815 | 0 |
| Calhoun | 116 | 28 | ** | B,C,P | \$22,114 | ** |
| Edgefield | 144 | 50 | 38 | A, B+, B, C, P | \$152,111 | ** |
| Fairfield | 150 | 32 | 36 | A, B+, B, C, P | \$126,151 | 0 |
| McCormick | 39 | ** | ** | A+, C | \$17,170 | ** |
| Total | 690 | 209 | 110 | A+, A, B+, B, C, P, NA | \$374,858 | 107 |

*Data sources: SCDE and First Steps 4K data, plus data from DSS Child Care Vouchers.

**Any discrepancies in sums are the result of slightly different financial eligibility between DSS vouchers/childcare scholarships and CERDEP and point in time data or children maybe eligible for CERDEP and served out of county. Numbers are suppressed if they are less than 20 or provide information that could derive numbers of less than 20 in order to protect potentially personally identifiable data.

CERDEP Impact on Kindergarten Readiness

The **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)** is used to determine if a child entering an SC public Kindergarten/5K classroom has the knowledge, skills, and approaches to learning to participate fully in learning activities to meet the state academic standards in kindergarten. The KRA is used at the state level, along with 4K assessment data, to determine the impact of CERDEP programming. The KRA scores discussed in this section are from the 2023-24 school year and represent the 4K experiences for students during the 2022-23 school year. Approximately 38% of kindergarten students statewide demonstrated readiness at the start of this school year.



Demonstrating Readiness (270-298)

A student demonstrates foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for a curriculum based on kindergarten standards.

Approaching Readiness (258-269)

A student demonstrates some foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for a curriculum based on kindergarten standards.

KRA Performance Levels

Emerging Readiness (202-257)

A student demonstrates minimal foundational skills and behaviors that prepare him/her for a curriculum based on kindergarten standards.

Did Not Participate

The assessment was not complete; all items were missing

Data from South Carolina consistently shows that pupils in poverty who participate in CERDEP programming demonstrate readiness at higher percentages (37%) than all pupils in poverty who took the KRA (31%) this year. Additionally, a smaller percentage of pupils in poverty who did not attend a CERDEP program demonstrated readiness (27%) than those who participate in either First Steps 4K or CERDEP 4K programming (37%). The State's investment in full-day 4K for Pupils in Poverty is a worthwhile investment. [Table F](#) illustrates pupils in poverty and their KRA score by 4K experience. [Table G](#) shows all students who took the KRA by 4K experience.

Table F: Kindergarten Readiness by PIP Status

| Kindergarten Readiness by PIP Status | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| KRA Performance Level | PIP | (% PIP) | Not PIP | (% Not PIP) | All | (% of All) |
| Emerging Readiness | 10,386 | 30% | 3,073 | 13% | 13,459 | 23% |
| Approaching Readiness | 12,427 | 36% | 5,684 | 25% | 18,111 | 31% |
| Demonstrating Readiness | 10,907 | 31% | 10,877 | 47% | 21,784 | 38% |
| Did Not Participate | 1,158 | 3% | 3,292 | 14% | 4,450 | 8% |
| All | 34,878 | 100% | 22,926 | 100% | 57,804 | 100% |

**Data Source SCDE 45-day enrollment for Kindergarten and KRA scores.*

Table G: Pupils in Poverty by 4K Experience and KRA score:

| Pupils in Poverty Kindergarten Readiness by 4K Experience | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| | Emerging Readiness | | Approaching Readiness | | Demonstrating Readiness | | Did Not Participate | | Total | |
| KRA Performance Level | Number | % of 4k exp at level | Number | % of 4k exp at level | Number | % of 4k exp at level | Number | % of 4k exp at level | Number | % of 4k exp of total KRA Scores |
| CERDEP 4K | 2,298 | 19% | 4,285 | 36% | 4,636 | 39% | 593 | 5% | 11,812 | 33% |
| First Steps 4K | 734 | 29% | 1,049 | 41% | 748 | 29% | * | * | 2,546 | 7% |
| Subtotal All CERDEP | 3,032 | 21% | 5,334 | 37% | 5,384 | 37% | 593 | 4% | 14,358 | 41% |
| Head Start | 461 | 33% | 568 | 41% | 356 | 25% | 16 | 1% | 1,401 | 4% |
| Other Public 4K (non-CERDEP) | 1,929 | 28% | 2,316 | 34% | 2,211 | 33% | 339 | 5% | 6,795 | 19% |
| Private 4K | * | * | 33 | 36% | 44 | 48% | 0 | 0% | 92 | 0% |
| Unknown | 5,065 | 40% | 4,351 | 34% | 3,045 | 24% | 207 | 2% | 12,668 | 36% |
| Subtotal Non-CERDEP | 7,455 | 36% | 7,268 | 35% | 5,656 | 27% | 562 | 3% | 20,956 | 59% |
| Total | 10,502 | 30% | 12,602 | 36% | 11,040 | 31% | 1,155* | 3% | 35,314 | 100% |

Data Source: SCDE using a cohort of 5K students and data collected on the child's 4K experience from a Kindergarten Enrollment Survey. Totals may not calculate because cells smaller than 20 are suppressed and removed from the total(s) to protect students. An asterisk denotes when this suppression strategy is used.

4K Assessments:

Students in CERDEP programs participated in a 4K assessment at the beginning and end of their 4K year. These scores serve as pre- and post measures to help demonstrate the skills acquired during a child's 4K experience. During the 2022-23 school year, CERDEP programs could select the PALS, My IGDIS or Teaching Strategies Teaching Strategies GOLD® 4K assessment. The PALS assessment has retired with the 2022-23 school year being the last year CERDEP programs could use this assessment. First Steps 4K only uses Teaching Strategies GOLD® as the 4K assessment, and CERDEP 4K districts select which of the three approved assessments to use. Table H shows the number of students who took each assessment by CERDEP experience.

Table H: Students who Took 4K Assessment by CERDEP Experience:

| | Teaching Strategies GOLD® | My IGDIS | PALS |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------|-------|
| CERDEP | | | |
| CERDEP 4K | 735 | 3,529 | 5,875 |
| First Steps 4K | 3,149 | 0 | 0 |

4K Assessments: Phonological Awareness Literacy Scale (PALS)

The **Phonological Awareness Literacy Scale (PALS) PreK Assessment** includes a score of 125 possible points.

Scoring consists of the following measures:

Name Writing = 7 possible points

Upper Case = 26 possible points

Lower Case = 26 possible points

Letter Sounds = 26 possible points

Beginning Sound Awareness = 10 possible points

Print and Word Awareness = 10 possible points

Rhyme Awareness = 10 possible points

Nursery Rhyme Awareness = 10 possible points

The average PALS Score for students in CERDEP 4K in the first 45 days of the 2022-23 school year was 32. The average score for the same group of students in the last 45 days of school was 95. This shows a great deal of growth on the literacy items included in the [SC Profile of a Ready Kindergartner](#).¹

Table I: PALS and MyIGDIS Scores for CERDEP Students:

| | Average Beginning of SY 2022-23 Score | | Average End of SY 2022-23 Score | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|----------|
| | PALS | My IGDIS | PALS | My IGDIS |
| CERDEP 4K | 32 | 157 | 95 | 156 |

**Data Source: SCDE 4K Assessment Data*

4K Assessments: My Individual Growth and Developmental Indicators (My IGDIS)

The **My Individual Growth and Developmental Indicators or My IGDIS** assessment uses a Multiple Scale Score (MSS) to determine current functioning and progress towards mastery. MSS is used to rank students into three tiers or color groups. The highest a student can score on this assessment in the Fall is 218 and in the Spring is 279. An average MSS of 157 is between Tiers 1 and 2 and the scores of CERDEP 4K students in the 2023-24 school year suggest that students are generally maintaining their skills throughout the year while there are not considerable shifts in performance.

4K Assessments: Teaching Strategies GOLD®

Table J: Teaching Strategies GOLD® Language, Literacy and Math Scores for CERDEP Students:

| CERDEP Experience | Average Beginning of SY 2022-23 Language Score | | Average End of SY 2022-23 Language Score | |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| | Emerging | Accomplished | Emerging | Accomplished |
| CERDEP 4K | 531 (77%) | 162 (23%) | 174 (27%) | 482 (73%) |
| First Steps 4K | 1,421 (62%) | 861 (38%) | 794 (27%) | 2,129 (73%) |

**Data Source: SCDE 4K Assessment Data*

| CERDEP Experience | Average Beginning of SY 2022-23 Literacy Score | | Average End of SY 2022-23 Literacy Score | |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| | Emerging | Accomplished | Emerging | Accomplished |
| CERDEP 4K | 624 (93%) | 49 (7%) | 204 (31%) | 460 (69%) |
| First Steps 4K | 1,720 (76%) | 552 (24%) | 774 (26%) | 2,148 (74%) |

**Data Source: SCDE 4K Assessment Data*

| CERDEP Experience | Average Beginning of SY 2022-23 Math Score | | Average End of SY 2022-23 Math Score | |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| | Emerging | Accomplished | Emerging | Accomplished |
| CERDEP 4K | 279 (98%) | (2%) | 195 (64%) | 112 (36%) |
| First Steps 4K | 1,860 (82%) | 414 (18%) | 979 (33%) | 1,945 (67%) |

**Data Source: SCDE 4K Assessment Data*

¹ www.scfirststeps.org/news-resources/sc-profile-of-the-ready-kindergartner/

The percentages in the corresponding tables to the left represent the students who scored in a performance level of the students in that CERDEP experience who also took the Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment at the beginning or the end of the 2022-23 school year. While the Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment has 10 possible content areas assessed, they have not all been required so in this report Language, Literacy and Math are explored. Language, Literacy, Social-Emotional, Physical, Cognitive, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, Arts, and English Language Acquisitions.

Serving All Students At-Risk of Not Being Ready for Kindergarten:

Students with disabilities are also considered at risk of not being ready for kindergarten without intervention. South Carolina's publicly funded 4K experiences offer a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for four-year old students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that identifies the 4K classroom as the appropriate learning environment for the student. [Tables K and L](#) illustrate placements and KRA performance scores for 4K students with an IEP. It is possible that a student's IEP was not completed during the 4K year, but is in place during the kindergarten year. As a result, the 4K setting may not have record of serving this number of students with a disability, but the screening, referral and educational activities for a student with an IEP in kindergarten took place in the 4K setting.



Nineteen percent of students with a disability included in any CERDEP program demonstrated readiness on the KRA, compared to 16% of students with disabilities who did not. Students with disabilities who participated in CERDEP programming scored Demonstrating Readiness at higher percentages (19%) than the average of students with disabilities (17%) demonstrating readiness.

Table K: Students with an IEP in Kindergarten by 4K Experience

| 4K Experience during School Year 2022-23 | Students with Disabilities in 5k | Total Students | % of Students with Disabilities |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| CERDEP 4K | 1,369 | 13,679 | 10% |
| First Steps 4K | 93 | 2,859 | 3% |
| Head Start | 191 | 1,686 | 11% |
| Other Public Pre-K (Non-CERDEP) | 2,163 | 10,897 | 20% |
| Private 4K | 37 | 741 | 5% |
| Unknown | 1,611 | 28,426 | 6% |
| All | 5,464 | 58,288 | 9% |

**Data Source: SCDE 5K enrollment data*

Table L: Students with A Disability by CERDEP Experience and KRA Performance Level:

| KRA Performance Level | Number of Students with a Disability in CERDEP 4K | % of Students with a Disability in CERDEP 4K | Number of Students with a Disability in First Steps 4K | % of Students with a Disability in First Steps 4K | Number of Students with a Disability in any CERDEP | % of Students with a Disability in any CERDEP | Number of Students with a Disability in any Non-CERDEP | % of Students with a Disability in any Non-CERDEP | Total Students with a Disability in KRA Performance Level | % Total Students with a Disability in KRA Performance Level |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| Emerging Readiness | 546 | 40% | 55 | 59% | 601 | 41% | 1,936 | 48% | 2,537 | 46% |
| Approaching Readiness | 468 | 34% | 29 | 31% | 497 | 34% | 1,038 | 26% | 1,535 | 28% |
| Demonstrating Readiness | 281 | 21% | * | * | 281 | 19% | 657 | 16% | 944 | 17% |
| Did Not Participate | 74 | 5% | * | * | 74 | 5% | 371 | 9% | 448 | 8% |
| Total | 1,369 | 100% | 93 | 100% | 1,453 | 99% | 4,002 | 100% | 5,464 | 100% |

**Cells smaller than 20 are suppressed to protect student privacy.*

**Data Source: SCDE 5K enrollment and KRA data*

Financial Investment in CERDEP:

Over the past four years, the State's investment in CERDEP has consistently increased, with the exception of disruptions due to COVID 19 in FY 21. For a detailed report of financial data for CERDEP 4K and First Steps 4K, please see Appendix G.

Table M: All CERDEP Program Investments 2019-20 (FY20) through 2022-23 (FY 23)

| | 2019-20 (FY 20) | 2020-21 (FY 21) | 2021-22 (FY22) | 2022-23 (FY23) |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Number of New CERDEP Classrooms Funded/Approved | 69 | 30 | 113 | 101 |
| Total CERDEP classrooms | 888 | 881 | 1,059 | 1160 |
| Total Expenditures | \$75,873,168 | \$58,886,320 | \$88,653,568 | \$106,698,962 |
| Funds Carried Forward | \$2,641,918 | \$12,028,297 | \$13,238,453 | \$16,453,061 |

*Source: SC First Steps and SCDE

Table N: All CERDEP4K Program Investments 2019-20 (FY20) through 2022-23 (FY 23)

| | 2019-20 (FY 20) | 2020-21 (FY 21) | 2021-22 (FY22) | 2022-23 (FY23) |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Number of New CERDEP 4K Classrooms Funded/Approved | 47 | 1 | 69 | 75 |
| Total CERDEP 4K Classrooms | 647 | 648 | 793 | 868 |
| Total Expenditures | \$54,123,239 | \$41,322,136 | \$63,378,957 | \$72,927,188 |
| Funds Carried Forward | \$1,444,310 | \$7,546,276 | \$10,134,463 | \$1,323,571 |

*Source: SCDE. For the 2022-23 school year, CERDEP 4K spent \$71,288,462 and had no carry over.

Table O: All First Steps 4K Program Investments 2019-20 (FY20) through 2022-23 (FY 23)

| | 2019-20 (FY 20) | 2020-21 (FY 21) | 2021-22 (FY22) | 2022-23 (FY23) |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Number of New First Steps 4K Classrooms Funded/Approved | 22 | 29 | 44 | 26 |
| Total First Steps 4K Classrooms | 241 | 233 | 266 | 279 |
| Total Expenditures | \$21,749,929 | \$17,564,184 | \$25,274,611 | \$27,776,147 |
| Funds Carried Forward | \$1,197,608 | \$4,482,021 | \$3,103,990 | \$15,129,490 |

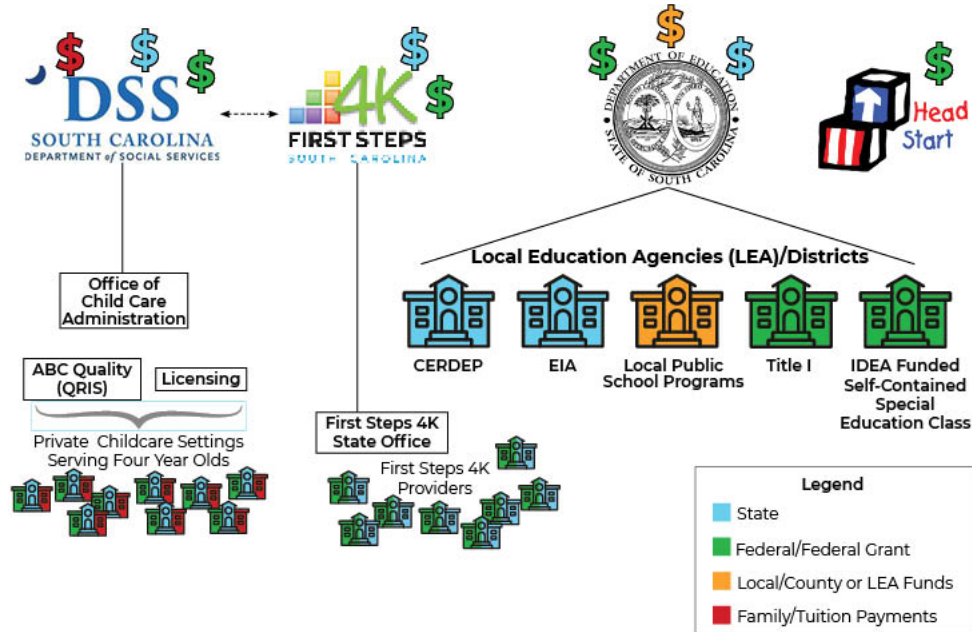
*Source: SC First Steps

Future Directions:

As CERDEP programming serves more students in poverty and data quality and reporting improves, EOC staff will remain informed on policy and procedural changes that can influence CERDEP. Research will be completed that offers action steps to increase access and quality to state funded 4K for all eligible 4-year-olds, and will improve the national ranking and academic outcomes for young learners in South Carolina.

Appendices

Funding Streams for 4K



Appendix B: Data Differences in the 2024 4K Report

2021-22 Potentially Unserved Four-Year-Olds in Poverty:

County birth rates reported by the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) provided the number of four-year-old children by county. For counties that are served by multiple schools districts the analysis allocates the number of four-year-old children to districts based on the student enrollment in school year 2021-22.

The 2021-22 poverty index in the poverty index created by SCDE in cooperation with the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs. The poverty index was developed because of the implementation of the United States Department of Agriculture's Community Eligibility Program. The index uses student data from the federal Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Medicaid. It also includes foster, homeless and migrant students. By multiplying the district poverty index by the number of projected four-year-old children, an approximate number of at-risk four-year-olds in poverty by district was estimated.

While a student must live in a district that is eligible to participate in CERDEP, a student may attend a First Steps 4K provider that is in any district. This may partially explain why some districts have more than 100% of estimated children in poverty being served. CERDEP enrollment in school district used the number of children funded in school year 2021-22. In previous reports, the CERDEP counts reflect 45-day student enrollment counts in public schools and First Steps 4K programs.

The Head Start Collaboration Office provided student information based on December Head Start Census data. The data reflect the number of Head Start 4K students served in each county, then were converted to district levels using the same allocation process as was used for county birth rates. SC Voucher data provided by SC Department of Social Services for all quality levels is also included, and the same process was utilized to convert county to district levels. These estimates include a degree of rounding error. These funded tuition vouchers can be used in private childcare and braided with First Steps funding or used in programs that are not First Steps affiliated for families who qualify. SC Voucher data was included in previous reports in an effort to accurately represent the number of students accessing some state funded formal early childhood setting at four-years-old.

2022-23 Potentially Unserved Four-Year-Olds in Poverty:

More complete data is now available through agreements between the EOC, SCDE and First Steps, and through the process of building an interactive 4K data dashboard more sophisticated data analysis and visualizations are possible. This allows for fewer estimates, as we can examine the utilization of the CERDEP program.

Data files came from 2 sources: SC First Steps offers information on the students who participate in First Steps 4K and then these students are matched to 5K students from the SCDE 45 day enrollment file. After this data from SCDE that includes Kindergarten enrollment information describing where a child spent their 4K year, PIP, KRA scores and other demographic data was matched to this set to obtain an accurate number of students served in each CERDEP setting by district. Additionally, we receive 4k test scores and the Kindergarten Enrollment Survey of 4k Experience from the SCDE that offer information regarding each student's 4k experience. Students described as "potentially unserved" describe students potentially unserved by CERDEP.

Appendix C: Head Start Census Data

| Head Start Cluster Area | County Service Area | # of Centers | # of Children Enrolled as of December 1, 2023 | # of 3 Year Olds | # of 4 Year Olds | Pregnant Women | Home Based | # of Classrooms by County | # of Homeless Children | # of Foster Children by County |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| CDI-Aiken County School District Head Start | Aiken | 2 | 80 | 35 | 38 | - | - | 5 | - | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| CDI-Aiken County District EH Start | Aiken | 2 | 23 | * | - | - | - | 3 | * | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beaufort-Jasper Early Head Start | Beaufort | 3 | 108 | 26 | - | * | - | 13 | * | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Berkeley School District Head Start | Berkeley | 9 | 380 | 150 | 192 | - | - | 32 | * | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | York | 4 | 144 | 64 | 62 | - | - | 13 | * | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Carolina CAA Early Head Start | Chester | 1 | * | - | - | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Union | 1 | 32 | * | - | - | - | 5 | - | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| CDI-Charleston County Early Head Start Child Care Partnership | Charleston | 3 | 22 | - | - | - | - | 3 | * | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Marlboro | 2 | 84 | 27 | 47 | - | - | 5 | - | * |
| Darlington County Head Start | Darlington | 2 | 202 | 68 | 104 | - | - | 16 | * | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Head Start Cluster Area | County Service Area | # of Centers | # of Children Enrolled as of December 1, 2023 | # of 3 Year Olds | # of 4 Year Olds | Pregnant Women | Home Based | # of Classrooms by County | # of Homeless Children | # of Foster Children by County |
| East Coast Migrant Head Start (June 2023 – November 2023) | Clarendon | 1 | 33 | * | * | - | - | 3 | * | - |
| (Only # of Centers, and # of Classrooms are included in December 1, 2023 totals) | Colleton | 1 | 29 | * | * | - | - | 3 | * | - |
| | Saluda (Campus under construction) | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | - | - |
| | | | | - | | - | | | | |
| | Edgefield | 1 | 30 | * | * | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| | Laurens | 1 | 40 | * | 22 | - | - | 2 | * | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| | McCormick | 1 | * | * | * | - | - | 1 | * | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Richland | 2 | 147 | 83 | 60 | - | - | 8 | 26 | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| GLEAMNS Early Head Start | Edgefield | 1 | 23 | * | - | - | - | 3 | * | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Saluda | 1 | * | * | - | - | - | 1 | * | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Laurens | 1 | * | - | - | - | * | 1 | - | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| ISWA Development Corp- Catawba Indian Nation Early Head Start | Catawba Indian Nation (York) | 1 | 24 | - | - | - | - | 4 | * | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lancaster Head Start | Lancaster | 1 | 123 | 41 | 66 | - | - | 7 | * | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Head Start Cluster Area | County Service Area | # of Centers | # of Children Enrolled as of December 1, 2023 | # of 3 Year Olds | # of 4 Year Olds | Pregnant Women | Home Based | # of Classrooms by County | # of Homeless Children | # of Foster Children by County |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

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|---|-----------------|---|-----|-----|-----|---|----|----|----|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| OCAB CAA Head Start | Allendale | 1 | 29 | * | * | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| | Calhoun | 1 | 24 | 22 | * | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| OCAB Early Head Start | Bamberg | 1 | 40 | * | - | - | * | 4 | - | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pee Dee CAA Head Start | Dillon | 2 | 151 | 100 | 51 | - | - | 10 | - | * |
| | Marion | 3 | 124 | 89 | 35 | - | - | 9 | - | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Florence | 4 | 92 | - | - | * | 26 | 8 | * | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Spartanburg | 4 | 267 | 137 | 130 | - | - | 16 | 32 | * |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Spartanburg | 2 | 78 | - | - | * | * | 6 | * | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Richland County First Steps Early Head Start | Richland County | 2 | 125 | - | - | * | 37 | 11 | - | - |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix D: The number and type of communications to recruit students, and FS centers.



In 2022, First Steps 4K focused on several marketing objectives related to student and partner recruitment, retention, and family engagement in our charge to get children ready for school.

1. Increase the enrollment of children served by a First Steps 4K provider
2. Increase the number of participating First Steps 4K providers to meet enrollment targets
3. Grow the overall student retention & acquisition (Day 45)
4. Increase the community/state partnerships to improve First Steps 4K awareness and visibility

These objectives were established to address the following audiences: -

1. Families/Caregivers
2. Internal (Current First Steps 4K Providers/Local Partnerships)
3. Stakeholders (ex. ECAC; EOC; DSS; SCDE)

Below are tactics executed in the 2022 calendar year to support the 2022-2023 school year.

I. Students & Families Recruitment

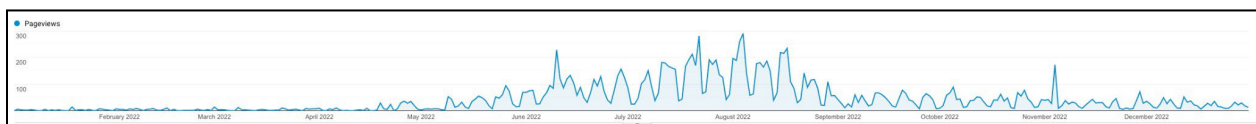
First Steps 4K continued the use of an online student application to meet families' needs. Families can check eligibility, search for approved providers, and apply with an application landing page - www.Free4KSC.org.

- From Jan. 1, 2022 - Dec. 31, 2022, <https://free4ksc.org> received 76,069 unique pageviews - representing the highest view page (21% of all total views) of the First Steps website.
- 75% of users view the application landing page (<https://enroll.free4ksc.org/>) on a mobile device.

- With access to this data about our website visitors, future questions can be added based on our observations of user behaviors. This metrics-driven decision-making has been vital to accommodating the real time needs of families and responding accordingly.

Website Enhancements

During the 2022-2023 school year, families continued to utilize the provider detail web pages to learn more about the available providers in their community. Historically, April/May and August/September serve as key times in the year when parents are looking for early child care programs. Now by tracking provider detail page views, we are able to see that in 2022 July & August were top times for provider pages being viewed. (image below of month-by-month website traffic in 2022). This level of user insights has informed our strategies for when and how to communicate with families.



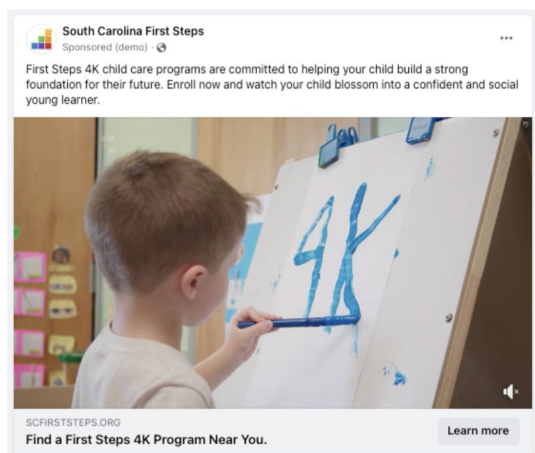
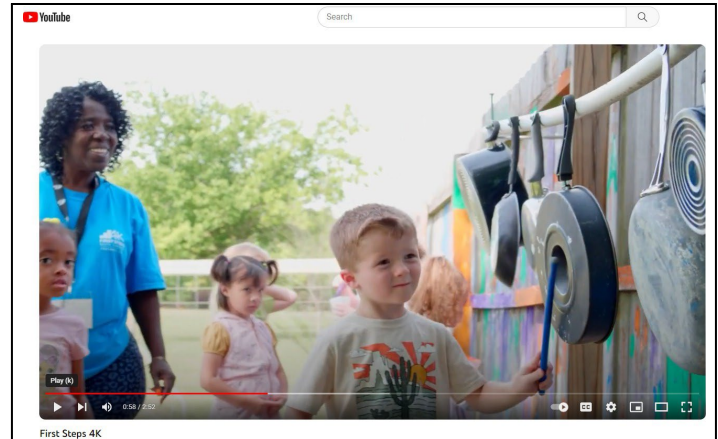
To strengthen our partnership and collaboration with Palmetto Pre-K and ABC Quality, we enhanced our provider detail web pages by incorporating their program logos. This visible display of our partnership serves as a testament to our commitment to providing families with comprehensive support and resources. In addition to integrating these logos, we have also added links to valuable family resources and respective local partnership offices. These links aim to inform families with choices to make informed decisions about their child's education. By incorporating these changes, we are fostering a collaborative environment where families, providers, and community organizations work together to support children's success.

Providers also receive data about the traffic their dedicated pages receive on the First Steps website. Since most providers do not have the funds to support a unique web property, these dedicated provider pages have served as a supportive marketing tool for our current and future First Steps 4K partners across the state.

On the First Steps 4K provider detail pages, parents can see detailed information about a facility such as, school hours, schedule, type, etc. In collaboration with DSS - SC Child Care, we also feature licensing information and provide parents with a direct link to a provider's detailed information on <https://www.scchildcare.org/>.

First Steps 4K Promotional Video

In an effort to expand reach and welcome more families into the First Steps 4K program, [a promotional video](#) showcases the program's offerings and highlights the transformative impact it has on children's early learning experiences. This visually engaging video invites viewers to step into a First Steps 4K classroom where children are engaged in activities that foster their academic, social, and emotional development.



The video was filmed at MEGA Child Development Center Center in Gilbert, SC. The family and all children in the video were enrolled in First Steps 4K at the time of the video shoot. Since posting the video on First Steps YouTube channel, it has received 861 views.

To maximize its impact and reach a wider audience, the full-length video was segmented into shorter clips designed for sharing across various social media platforms. The full video and short clips were made available for use in First Steps marketing efforts and for all First Steps 4K providers.

Greenville Provider Recruitment Event

After the statewide expansion of CERDEP in 2022, First Steps 4K focused on outreach and marketing to families and providers in counties newly added to the CERDEP legislation. In May 2022, First Steps 4K presented the benefits of partnering with the program to over 30 child care providers at an event hosted by Greenville County First Steps. An audio recording of the presentation was shared by Greenville County First Steps to all child care providers in Greenville County. First Steps 4K currently partners with 21 schools in Greenville County.

SC Independent School Association (SCISA) Presentations

First Steps 4K engaged in two collaborative meetings with leaders from the SC Independent School Association (SCISA). Recognizing the potential for a mutually beneficial partnership, First Steps 4K State Director, Martha Strickland, presented a special New Provider Interest Session at the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 SCISA Headmasters' Conferences. The presentation aimed to foster stronger connections between First Steps 4K and SCISA schools, with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of SCISA schools partnering with First Steps 4K. Ultimately, five additional SCISA schools became First Steps 4K providers for the 2022-2023 school year, increasing access to the program to 82 families.

Provider/Slot Availability Reports

In a step towards expanding access to high-quality early childhood education, First Steps 4K initiated the monthly distribution of enrollment and provider capacity (open slot data) to all Local Partnership Executive Directors and SC Department of Education staff. This strategic initiative aims to inform families about available First Steps 4K slots and provide our partners with valuable data to support enrollment efforts.

The comprehensive report provides detailed information on slot availability at the county and provider level. This data-driven approach shows First Steps 4K's commitment to fostering collaboration and transparency within the early childhood landscape.



Palmetto Pre-K Enrollment Day (April 4, 2022) was a social media campaign where partners across the state shared a graphic for the day on their social media accounts to show the state's solidarity in support of publicly-funded preschool. Palmetto Pre-K partners include First Steps 4K, Head Start, the SC Department of Education, and SC DSS. PalmettoPreK.org serves as a way for families to easily access free and subsidized federal, state, and local preschool programs.

The First Steps 4K Palmetto Pre-K Enrollment Day social media post had an 8.2K reach with 256 post engagements and 45 shares. First Steps 4K providers organically shared the post an additional 26 times on their school social media accounts.

On April 4th, 11% of the total site traffic to the First Steps website was from Facebook - the main social media platform used for announcing the PPK Enrollment Day.

The Palmetto Pre-K Enrollment Day campaign continued in 2023, including a proclamation from Governor Henry McMaster acknowledging the impact of quality early childhood education.



Carolina Carillon Holiday

Parade - First Steps 4K team members and AmeriCorps members marched in the 2022 Carolina Carillon Holiday Parade showcasing their dedication to early childhood education to an estimated 10,000 attendees. Information material was distributed to parade attendees. The parade's broadcast on WIS-TV extended the reach to over 40 counties across SC, amplifying the message about First Steps 4K opportunities for families.

Early Childhood State Agency Collaborations



The First Steps 4K + Child Care Scholarship program continues to provide whole family care and education — Year 2 of Implementation Families can apply for child care scholarships for all children in their household – completely online. Through a partnership with the SC Child Care Scholarship Program, First Steps 4K + covers wrap-around care for enrolled students and full-day and afterschool care for all siblings, ages 0-12.

Through a shared application database, families can upload information in one place and apply for all children in their household. This innovative collaboration between First Steps 4K and the SC Child Care Scholarship program was established in response to an enrollment barrier identified by families – the lack of access to affordable child care for siblings of First Steps 4K students. First Steps 4K + is an interagency, nationally-recognized innovation that braids state and federal funds. This has proven to be a model for other states in efficiently maximizing funds and increasing access to these programs intended to support children and families.

- Since the program’s inception in August 2020, 4,447 families have been approved for a First Steps 4K + Child Care Scholarship. Of those children, 3,723 (84%) have successfully connected with a child care provider. (note: Data provided by SC DSS on June 1, 2023) (reference - [First Steps 4K on Day 180 - May 26, 2023](#))
- 89% of families credit their ability to work or go to school to their child’s participation in First Steps 4K. 78% of families whose children are in an extended day or extended year program report being able to work or attend school full-time because their 4-year-old is enrolled in First Steps 4K. (reference - First Steps 4K Family Engagement Survey Results)
- The First Steps 4K + Child Care Scholarships partnership is referenced in the First Steps promotional video.



Women, Infant and Children Nutrition Program (WIC) Texting Program Partnership — Many of the eligibility parameters of WIC are also true for participating in First Steps 4K. By partnering with WIC, we were able to leverage the existing marketing efforts of WIC and send messages to a look-alike audience about the importance of school readiness and applying for First Steps 4K.

- From May-August of 2022, monthly direct text messages were sent to WIC clients with a message focused on student enrollment. 117 student applications noted WIC as the referral source.
- Support materials (posters, flyers, palm cards) were delivered to four WIC program managers located in N. Charleston, Spartanburg, Conway, and Columbia for distribution at WIC clinics statewide (15-18 clinics throughout the state).
- In the Fall of 2022, First Steps 4K sent three direct text messages to enrolled First Steps 4K families informing them of WIC resources.

First 5 SC - Online Application (launched in 2023)

In 2022, First Steps began work with the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) to participate in an online application for families on First5SC.org. This shared common application would allow families to apply to multiple programs, First Steps 4K included, for children birth through years old. The shared application launched in March 2023.

The screenshot shows the Palmetto Pre-K website with the First Steps 4K+ application form. The form includes sections for Length of Day, Length of Year, Transportation, Curriculum, Cost, and Location. A 'PROGRAM OVERVIEW' section provides details about the program. A 'Contact' box lists the address, phone, fax, email, and website. A quote from a parent of a First Steps 4K student is also featured.

Palmetto Pre-K
South Carolina's Publicly Funded Preschool Programs

ESPAÑOL MENU

PROGRAMS
FIRST STEPS 4K+

FIRST STEPS SOUTH CAROLINA

Length of Day Extended Day, Full Day

Length of Year School Year, Year-Round, Summer Options

Transportation Varies

Curriculum ✓

Cost Free

Location Child Care Centers and Private Schools

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

First Steps 4K provides a quality pre-K experience for your four-year-old plus child care for the whole family. With First Steps 4K, your child can attend a free full-day four-year-old kindergarten program at one of over 260 locations in South Carolina. Options include licensed child care centers, charter schools, and private schools. First Steps 4K also qualifies your family for child care scholarships through the SC Working Families Child Care Scholarship. These scholarships cover extended care for your 4K student, as well as child care and after-school programs for siblings up to age 12, at any child care or after-school program in the ABC Quality program. To apply, first complete the First Steps 4K application. You'll receive the scholarship application after your First Steps 4K application is approved. First Steps 4K is a part of South Carolina's state-funded Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP).

Contact

638 Rosewood Drive
Columbia, SC 29201

Phone: (803) 724-2479
Toll Free: 1-877-522-5855
Fax: (803) 724-1452
Email: First5SC@palmettopre-k.org
Website: First5SC.org

“

I appreciate beyond words that my child has a safe, happy place to learn while my husband and I work. It gives us the ability to focus on our jobs during the day. It was great to be able to focus on being the best parents we can be.”

—Parent of a First Steps 4K student

Palmetto Pre-K - A Leading Tool to Reach Families

As a partner of Palmetto Pre-K, First Steps 4K is featured on the search tool for families to find state-funded preschool options in their area.

Agency staff can access and contact interested families in their program each month who express interest in more information. Palmetto Pre-K is the number one source First Steps 4K uses to receive contact information from eligible families.

DSS SC Child Care - Indicating First Steps 4K providers

When families visit the DSS - SC Child Care website to search for child care providers, they are able to determine quickly whether they are a First Steps 4K partner.

This allows parents more choice when reviewing child care providers in their local area. This also has served as a way for other child care providers throughout the state exposure to the First Steps 4K program.

The screenshot shows the DSS SC Child Care website profile for the 5 Star Academy Learning Center. The profile includes the center's name, type, ABC Quality Rating (B), facility attributes, and facility hours. A map shows the center's location in Lexington County.

DSS
South Carolina
SC Child Care
EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

How to? News Resources About Contact Us Translate

Families Providers Programs

5 Star Academy Learning Center

Child Care Center

✓ This provider is open

ABC Quality Rating
What is ABC Quality? **B**

Facility Attributes

OPERATOR: Kisha M Moore CAPACITY: 125

Facility Hours

| Day | Hours |
|-----------|---------------|
| Sunday | Closed |
| Monday | 7:00AM-5:30PM |
| Tuesday | 7:00AM-5:30PM |
| Wednesday | 7:00AM-5:30PM |
| Thursday | 7:00AM-5:30PM |
| Friday | 7:00AM-5:30PM |
| Saturday | Closed |

725 Raleigh Street
WEST COLUMBIA, SC 29169
Lexington County

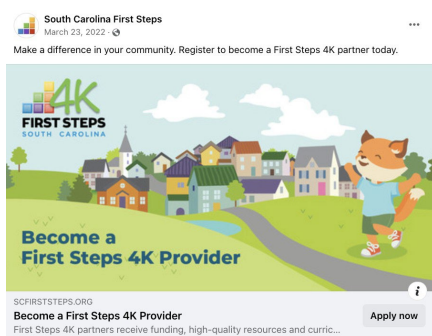
(803)-939-0950

Map showing location near Riverbanks Retreat, Oakland Baptist Church, Weico Bottle and Biergarten, and Chapel Lounge.

Traditional & Digital Marketing Efforts

Google Search & Mobile Display Ads ran exclusively on mobile devices to reach busy families on the go, and younger users who use desktop devices less frequently. With the smaller screen size of a mobile device comes less inventory for ads, but the ability to be more targeted and reach young parents on the move.

We served our target audience with over 445K impressions and generated a very strong click-through rate of 3.5%, well above the industry benchmark of 0.05%.



Facebook/Instagram Ads running on Facebook and Instagram generated 24M impressions and over 150K clicks.

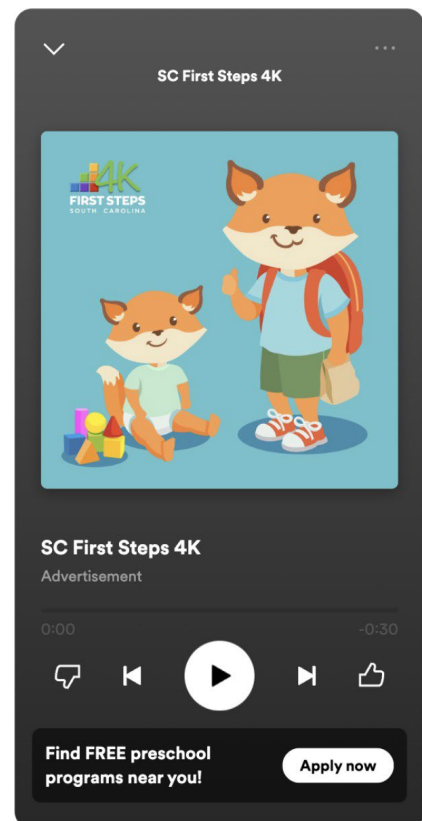
Live Radio Reads/Streaming Radio (Spotify) Ads

Live radio reads were aired in the following markets: Augusta, Columbia, Myrtle Beach, Florence, Greenville-Spartanburg, Savannah, and Charleston. Streaming ads on Pandora & Spotify received 375K impressions.

Direct Mail

Historically, direct mail has been a high-converting marketing tactic for student enrollment. This insight supported the strategic audience focus for mailings in 2022 to target all Medicaid-eligible or SNAP-eligible families with a four-year-old living in the home.

- Postcards were mailed two times during March - July 2022
- Reach was approximately 37,000 families per mailing
- An additional targeted postcard was mailed in October 2022 to Medicaid-eligible or SNAP-eligible families who lived in an area with a high number of openings in First Steps 4K classrooms
- Reach was approximately 27,000



Family Communications & Feedback Loops

Effective communication with families plays a critical role in enhancing parent's understanding of school readiness. First Steps 4K continues to use family-centric communication vehicles and feedback loops to listen, respond, and share with current First Steps 4K families.

Texting

A subscription to a texting service was procured in 2021 as our data has shown texting to be the preferred means of communication by parents. In texts sent in 2022, the average reach was 96%.

Family and Provider E-Newsletters - The Connection

Monthly e-newsletters were distributed and fostered stronger connections between families, providers, and the organization itself. This effective communication tool enables First Steps 4K to highlight other state agencies and organizations by sharing partner resources.

Your Voice Matters Surveys (Fall & Spring 2022/2023)

Fall - The First Steps 4K Family Engagement Survey was available in English and Spanish from November 9 to November 30, 2022 (Day 63 – Day 77 of the 2022-23 school year). The survey was sent via text message by the 4K Outreach Coordinator to 3,055 FS4K families. The survey reached 94.1% of the 3,050 recipients and bounced for the other 5.0%. The State Director of FS4K also emailed the survey link to FS4K providers, encouraging them to share the survey link with families at their centers. A reminder text message was sent by the 4K Outreach Coordinator halfway through the survey administration period. A reminder to complete the survey was also sent in the monthly FS4K Parent Connection e-newsletter (November 2022). The newsletter was emailed to 3,162 enrolled families. There were 195 respondents to the survey (6% response rate). (reference - [First Steps 4K Family 2021 Family Engagement Survey Results](#))

Spring - The First Steps 4K Spring Family Engagement Survey was available in English and Spanish from March 7th, 2022, to March 24th, 2023 (about 127-142 days into the 2022-2023 school year). The survey was sent via text message by the 4K Outreach Coordinator to 3,039 First Steps 4K families. The survey reached 95% of the 3,039 recipients and bounced for the other 5.0%. The 4K Outreach Coordinator also included the link to the survey in the monthly First Steps 4K Parent Connection e-newsletter. The 4K Outreach Coordinator also shared the survey link with First Steps 4K Coaches, encouraging Coaches to communicate with their providers about the importance of completing the survey. The 4K Outreach Coordinator also emailed the survey link to FS4K providers, encouraging them to share the survey link with families at their centers. There were 107 respondents to the survey (4% response rate). (reference - [First Steps 4K Spring 2023 Family Engagement Survey Results](#))

System Barrier Survey - On December 19, 2022, a brief survey was emailed and texted to 1,222 families that applied and were found eligible for First Steps 4K but either 1) never attended or 2) attended then “dropped out” during the 2022-2023 school year. There were a total of 88 responses to the survey (7% response rate). Common barriers to enrollment and/or retention included inaccurate information regarding whether a seat was available at a given provider and communication challenges between families and providers. Families stated that improvements in communication and having more options of providers may help families remain enrolled and engaged within a First Steps 4K classroom.

II. Providers

In 2022, First Steps 4K Providers continue to be the number one referral source by families on the First Steps 4K student application – so efforts were made to arm these providers with marketing materials and business growth tools to build up their centers and local community engagement. First Steps 4K and First Steps Local Partnerships work closely together to support child care providers statewide across 46 counties. First Steps Local Partnerships also serve as a referral source for new providers and for families, establishing connections at the local level for First Steps 4K.

SC Department of Education Waitlists

We received the waitlists from 29 school districts (Abbeville, Aiken, Anderson 02, Anderson 03, Anderson 05, Barnwell 45, Berkeley, Cherokee, Chesterfield, Colleton, Dillon 04, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence 03, Florence 05, Lancaster, Lexington 02, Lexington 03, McCormick, Newberry, Richland 02, Saluda, Spartanburg 02, Spartanburg 04, Spartanburg 05, Spartanburg 06, Williamsburg, York 01, York 03). Out of the list, 384 families could be eligible for First Steps 4K based on the family's documented income from the CERDEP application.



- First Steps 4K called each family using the phone number on the waitlist.
- First Steps 4K also mailed a student enrollment postcard to the families on the waitlists.
- Identified opportunity areas continue to include adding email addresses to the contact information sent to First Steps 4K and adding opt-in language on CERDEP student applications about communicating with families via text messaging.

- 4 waitlists were acquired in 2021 and in 2022, 29 waitlists were received.

Co-Branded Signage & Print Collateral for Providers Every First Steps 4K provider received a heavy-duty steel/aluminum branded road sign along with a 10-foot by 3-foot canvas banner. The road signs can be strategically placed in high-traffic areas to maximize visibility, while the banners can be used to create a welcoming and informative atmosphere at First Steps 4K provider locations.

Marketing and outreach templates for print ads, flyers, and posters were developed by First Steps 4K and made available on a First Steps 4K Resources webpage. These materials allowed providers to place their logo and/or name on co-branded marketing collateral and distribute it at a minimal cost. Every First Steps 4K provider received 500 custom palm cards for distribution throughout their community.

Digital Marketing & Search (Provider Testimonials)

In 2022, a provider testimonial campaign was developed to help recruit other providers by sharing the experience of being a First Steps 4K partner.





Virtual Provider Interest Sessions In 2022, First Steps 4K held interest sessions virtually twice a week from January – July 2022 to support statewide outreach to new providers.

This 1:1 session gave providers

direct access to Martha Strickland to hear about the expectations of providers interested in participating in First Steps 4K and benefits of partnership. This effort was continued in 2023 and expanded upon with an email marketing campaign that has served to re-engage participants identified as viable partners to apply.

Survey (Fall 2022) To continue improving our partnership with providers, a survey was administered to get their input on areas where they were feeling supported and opportunities where First Steps 4K could grow as a support system for providers. Insights gathered from this survey also gave us a profile of our providers (ex. education level; tenure; age; gender) and assisted with strategically focusing our recruitment efforts.

The First Steps 4K Teacher and Director Engagement Survey was administered to any director, lead teacher, or instructional assistant who participated in a First Steps 4K center or classroom during the 2022-2023 school year. First Steps 4K (FS4K) managers and Coaches were asked to send the survey link to the centers they work with. The survey was available from November 1 to November 23, 2022. There were 136 respondents to the survey: 33 center directors (29%), 63 lead teachers (55%), 19 instructional assistants (17%), and 21 did not provide their role as a First Steps 4K provider.

A few key learnings from the survey included:

- 3 out of 4 FS4K providers (76%) would HIGHLY RECOMMEND FS4K to other child care providers in their county.
- 85% of FS4K providers would HIGHLY RECOMMEND FS4K to families with eligible 4-year-olds in their county.
- What parts of FS4K are most valuable to you? (in order from most to least important based on weighted average) Relationship with my 4K coach, 4K Academy, What I learn during coaching sessions
- 3 out of 4 FS4K staff (73%) believe the FS state office has met their needs VERY or EXTREMELY well. First Steps 4K teachers and directors want more professional development opportunities with other First Steps 4K providers in the state and in their county.

First Steps 4K teachers and leadership indicated they wanted more information and support on how to engage families. A list of topics was provided to teachers and directors to determine which topics they would be interested in receiving more training on in the upcoming school year. Content ideas for family workshops and support in developing family engagement activities were primary areas of interest among providers.

First Steps 4K is grateful for the support of the South Carolina General Assembly, Education Oversight Committee, and the South Carolina Office of the Governor, for their continued support of South Carolina’s youngest learners.

Appendix E: Early Learning Professional Learning Opportunities 2022-23

Offered by SCDE:

| Title/Topic of PLO | Date(s) | Platform | Number of Participants |
|---|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Fall 2022 Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree: Developing Teamwork in a Child's Educational Experience | 8/3/2022 | Virtual | 1700 conference total |
| Fall 2022 Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree: Embracing the Whole Child Through Best Practices | 8/3/2022 | Virtual | 1700 conference total |
| Fall 2022 Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree: Inspiring and Empowering Our Youngest Writers | 8/3/2022 | Virtual | 1700 conference total |
| Fall 2022 Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree: Thriving Through Inquiry and Play in Preschool | 8/3/2022 | Virtual | 1700 conference total |
| New CERDEP Teacher Training | 8/4/2022 | Face to Face (F2F) | 30 |
| Thriving Through Inquiry and Play in PreK | 8/5/2022 | F2F | 15 |
| 2022 Champions for Young Children Symposium: Thriving Through Inquiry and Play in Preschool | 8/5/2022 | F2F | 15 |
| 2022 Champions for Young Children Symposium: Community to Classroom: Kindergarten Readiness Through Family Engagement | 8/5/2022 | F2F | 7 |
| 2022 Champions for Young Children Symposium: Learning Better Together Through Best Practices | 8/5/2022 | F2F | 12 |
| 2022 Champions for Young Children Symposium: Coordinating and Collaborating: The Educational Dream Team of Small Children | 8/5/2022 | F2F | 10 |
| Scaffolding Early Writing Skills through Bookmaking--Spartanburg 5 | 8/10/2022 | F2F | 75 |
| Purposeful Play Leads to School Readiness--Spartanburg 5 | 8/10/2022 | F2F | 27 |
| Purposeful Play Leads to School Readiness | 8/12/2022 | F2F | 40 |
| New CERDEP teacher training--Charleston | 8/18/2022 | F2F | 26 |
| Interactions Matter: How to Connect with Young Children to Extend Their Learning | 9/22/2022 | Virtual | 45 |
| Scaffolding Early Writing Skills--Session 2 (Goddard School) | 9/27/2022 | F2F | 8 |
| Scaffolding Early Writing Skills--Session 2 (Spartanburg 5) | 10/5/2022 | F2F | 76 |

| Title/Topic of PLO | Date(s) | Platform | Number of Participants |
|--|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Creating a High-Quality Environment that Promotes Emergent Literacy Skills (Spartanburg 7) | 10/5/2022 | F2F | 14 |
| Plugging PLCs into Emergent Literacy (3 one hour sessions)--SC Library Regional | 10/7/2022 | F2F | 40 |
| Pyramid Model Session 1 (Lancaster) | 10/17/2022 | F2F | 42 |
| Pyramid Model Session 2 (Lancaster) | 12/5/2022 | F2F | 27 |
| Pyramid Model Session 3 (Lancaster) | 1/3/2023 | F2F | 42 |
| Developing Emergent Writing Skills (Anderson 3) | 11/29/2022 | F2F | 11 |
| Developing Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Lexington Two | 12/7/2022 | F2F | 53 |
| High-Quality, Engaging Literacy Rich Environments (Spartanburg 7) Literacy Coaches | 1/5/2023 | F2F | 13 |
| Scaffolding Early Writing Skills through Bookmaking--Marlboro | 1/13/2023 | F2F | 16 |
| Developing Emergent Writing Skills (Anderson 5) | 1/13/2023 | F2F | 33 |
| Engaging Phonological and Phonemic Awareness: In Practice (Lexington 2: Part 2) | 1/25/2023 | F2F | 55 |
| Supporting High-Quality Environments that Promote Emergent Literacy Skills (Anderson 5 Principals) | 2/14/2023 | F2F | 30 |
| Developing Emergent Writing Skills Session 2 Conferencing (Anderson 5) | 2/17/2023 | F2F | 33 |
| Scaffolding Early Writing through Bookmaking--PSLA | 2/23/2023 | F2F | 21 |
| REL Plugging PLCs into Emergent Literacy-PSLA | 2/24/2023 | F2F | 26 |
| Developing Emergent Writing Skills Session Two (Anderson 3) | 2/28/2023 | F2F | 11 |
| Palmetto PreK Jamboree: Igniting the Power of Nursery Rhymes | 3/3/2023 | Virtual | 120 |
| Palmetto PreK Jamboree: Purposeful Play | 3/3/2023 | Virtual | 89 |
| Pyramid Model Webinar Tier 2: Responsive Practices for Supporting Positive Behavior | 7/13/2023 | Virtual | 37 |
| New CERDEP Teacher Training (Abbeville) | 7/14/2023 | F2F | 11 |
| Pyramid Model: Session One High Quality Supportive Environments/Nurturing Responsive Relationships (Abbeville) | 7/27/2023 | F2F | 12 |

| Title/Topic of PLO | Date(s) | Platform | Number of Participants |
|--|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Pyramid Model: Session One High Quality Supportive Environments/Nurturing Responsive Relationships (Pickens) | 7/28/2023 | F2F | 42 |
| Pyramid Model: Webinar Tier 1: Designing Supportive Environments and Building Nurturing Relationships | 7/11/2023 | Virtual | 39 |
| Pyramid Model Webinar Tier 3: Creating a Behavior Support Plan | 7/18/2023 | Virtual | 39 |
| I Am A Teacher Too | 7/25/2023 | F2F | 5 |

Offered by First Steps:

| Title/Topic of PLO | Date(s) | Platform | Number of Participants | Notes |
|--|----------------|-----------------|--|---|
| LearnERS online module subscriptions for 325 teachers and 20 coaches | | Virtual | 325 teachers and 20 coaches | Through teacher and Coach participation, LearnERS will challenge and develop teachers of every skill and experience level to develop individualized growth and development plans supported through coaching, mentoring, and technical assistance. |
| Conscious Discipline © | | F2F | 2 SC 4K Staff and 17 4K Lead Teachers | Hands on Conscious Discipline training for participants to internalize the powers, skills and structures of Conscious Discipline and the transformational powers of safety, connection and problem-solving. |
| August New Teacher Academy | August 3-5 | Virtual | 124 Teachers | |
| August All Teacher Academy | August 8-9 | F2F | 392 Lead Teachers and Instructional Assistants | |
| Winter New Teacher Academy | January 9-11 | Virtual | 57 Teachers | |
| New 4K Leader Academy | August 4 | Virtual | 57 Directors | |
| 4K Leadership Academy | August 10-11 | F2f | 242 Directors | |

| Title/Topic of PLO | Date(s) | Platform | Number of Participants | Notes |
|--|----------------|-----------------|---|--|
| AIM 4 Excellence National Directors Credential, 4 th cohort | | | 25 Directors | Through National Louis University, a cohort of learners led by First Steps 4K to build knowledge, competency, and quality practices. |
| Professional Development Day for Teachers | September 23 | F2F | 308 Teachers | Building on Creative Curriculum™ Study Units and the new SC Early Learning Standards: standards based instruction and student documentation, crosswalk 2 examples of documentation comparing the Creative Curriculum objectives of learning with the EC-ELS. |
| Professional Development Day for Teachers | November 4 | | 300 Lead Teachers and Instructional Assistants | Fine Motor Skills and Encouraging Writing Daily for 4K Students |
| Fall Palmetto PreK Jamboree | August 2-3 | Virtual | 354 Lead Teachers and Instructional Assistants | |
| Spring Palmetto PreK Jamboree | March 3 | Virtual | 331 Lead Teachers and Instructional Assistants | |
| GOLD® by Teaching Strategies User Trainings | | Virtual | 181 Lead Teachers | |
| ASQ-3 & ASQ-SE training | | Virtual | Train the Trainer for 1 4K manager, 50 Lead Teachers (training) | |
| Ready Rosie | | Virtual and F2F | 67 Teachers & Directors (virtual) 10 Directors F2F | Family Engagement tool training using Ready Rosie |
| SC Early Childhood Association Conference | February 1-3 | F2F | 130 Lead Teachers | First Steps provided 130 scholarships for Teachers and |

| Title/Topic of PLO | Date(s) | Platform | Number of Participants | Notes |
|--|----------------|-----------------|--|--|
| | | | and Directors | Administrators to attend a three-day early childhood professional conference. Scholarship recipients were required to attend at least 10 hours of training during this conference. |
| Teacher Training/Coaching Support | Twice/month | F2F | 17 coaches | In person coaching visits by 17 First Steps coaches to each classroom at a minimum of twice per month (for 1.5 to 3 hours each visit.) Classrooms received between five to eight hours of individualized and direct coaching support each month. Visits (both announced and unannounced) provided monitoring and technical assistance to the funded 4K classrooms throughout the school year. Emails, calls, texts and follow-up visits document and build goals. Peer Learning Groups are help virtually with Coaches leading their teacher teams to support curriculum fidelity. |
| Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale (POEMS) training | | | 6 4K Coaches | This training is to support outdoor learning environments (OLEs) |
| Natural Learning Initiative Train the Trainer course | | | 1 4K Manager and First Steps 4K state Director | Two educational leaders completed this train-the-trainer program to support the Coaching team and all interested programs. |

First steps is also piloting a Language and Literacy Boost program in selected First Steps 4K classrooms across the state. The goal of the pilot is to promote intentional teaching practices that develop and encourage high quality language and literacy environments and instruction, based on the Science of Reading, in First Steps 4K classrooms.

These intensive activities are accompanied by a pre and post assessment of the classroom environment (the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation or ELLCO), ongoing monthly trainings, parent engagement events every other month to enable parents to support children’s development at home

with ideas to extend learning, funding for teacher stipends and other literacy promoting materials, and holistic support from their First Steps 4K coach and a dedicated First Steps 4K language and Literacy Coach. Outcomes include ELLCO assessments, Teacher and Director participation, counties represented, students impacted and Family Engagement events and participation. This Language and Literacy Boost pilot is through ESSER III funds with SCDE's partnership.

Appendix F: All students who took the KRA in 2023-24 by Performance Level and 4K Experience

| Kindergarten Readiness For All Students by 4K Experience | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| KRA Performance Level | Emerging | | Approaching | | Demonstrating | | Missing | | Total | |
| | Number | (% at 4K exp at level) | Number | (% at 4K exp at level) | Number | (% at 4K exp at level) | Number | (% at 4K exp at level) | Number | (% at 4K exp at level) |
| CERDEP 4K | 2,510 | 18% | 4,830 | 35% | 5,621 | 41% | 718 | 5% | 13,679 | 23% |
| First Steps 4K | 772 | 27% | 1,120 | 39% | 820 | 29% | 147 | 5% | 2,859 | 5% |
| Subtotal All CERDEP | 3,282 | 20% | 5,950 | 36% | 6,441 | 39% | 865 | 5% | 16,538 | 28% |
| Head Start | 506 | 30% | 647 | 38% | 452 | 27% | 81 | 5% | 1,686 | 3% |
| Other Public Pre-K (Non-CERDEP) | 2,461 | 23% | 3,313 | 30% | 4,378 | 40% | 745 | 7% | 10,897 | 19% |
| Private 4K | 44 | 6% | 173 | 23% | 508 | 69% | 16 | 2% | 741 | 1% |
| Unknown | 7,284 | 26% | 8,220 | 29% | 10,148 | 36% | 2,774 | 10% | 28,426 | 49% |
| Subtotal Non-CERDEP | 10,295 | 25% | 12,353 | 30% | 15,486 | 37% | 3,616 | 9% | 41,750 | 72% |
| Total | 13,577 | 23% | 18,303 | 31% | 21,927 | 38% | 4,481 | 8% | 58,288 | 100% |

*Data Source: data from SCDE 5-year-old Kindergarten Readiness Scores and data collected via 4K Experience Parent Survey collected at Kindergarten enrollment. Totals may be different from number of students as children may have multiple 4K experiences.

Appendix G: Financial Data:**CERDEP 4K 2022 Actual Revenues and Expenditures**

| REVENUES | Total |
|---|------------------------|
| Carryforward from FY 21 to FY 22 | \$7,546,275.63 |
| FY 22 General Fund Appropriation | \$5,983,049.00 |
| FY 22 EIA Recurring Appropriation | \$53,225,118.00 |
| FY 22 EIA Non-Recurring Appropriation | \$6,758,978.00 |
| Total Revenues | \$73,513,420.63 |
| | |
| EXPENDITURES | Total |
| Portion of EOC Evaluation (EIA) | \$195,000.00 |
| Cost of Instruction (\$4,800 per child pro-rata) | \$55,085,973.34 |
| Supplies for New Classrooms (\$10,000 per classroom) | \$1,468,000.00 |
| Transportation | \$- |
| Assessment | \$440,815.24 |
| Professional Development and Curriculum | \$- |
| Other: Expansion | \$- |
| Extended Year | \$- |
| Summer Program | \$916,125.40 |
| Extended Day | \$459,043.59 |
| Parental Engagement | \$4,814,000.00 |
| Total Expenditures | \$63,378,957.57 |
| Amount Remaining to Carryforward to FY 23 | \$10,134,463.06 |

CERDEP 4K Projected Fiscal Year 2023 Expenditures and Revenues

| REVENUES | Total |
|--|------------------------|
| Carryforward from FY 22 to FY 23 | \$10,134,463.06 |
| FY 23 General Fund Appropriation | \$5,983,049.00 |
| FY 23 EIA Recurring Appropriation | \$53,225,118.00 |
| FY23 Transfer of Appropriation | \$4,908,129.00 |
| Total Revenues | \$74,250,759.06 |
| | |
| EXPENDITURES | Total |
| Portion of EOC Evaluation (EIA) | \$195,000.00 |
| Cost of Instruction (\$5,100 per child pro-rata) | \$66,690,131.10 |
| Supplies for New Classrooms (\$10,000 per classroom) | \$770,000.00 |
| Transportation | \$- |
| Assessment | \$600,000.00 |
| Professional Development and Curriculum | \$- |
| Other: Expansion | \$- |
| Extended Year | \$- |
| Summer Program (from FY 22) | \$665,132.54 |
| Extended Day | \$320,198.40 |
| Parental Engagement | \$1,988,000 |
| Curriculum | \$1,698,726 |
| Total Expenditures | \$72,927,188.01 |
| Amount Remaining to Carryforward to FY 24 | 1,323,571.05 |

Office of First Steps 4K Program Financial Report

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Fiscal Year 2022-23 Actual Revenues & Actual Expenditures | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| TOTAL Available Funds | |
| Carry forward from FY22 to FY23 | \$15,462,501 |
| Interest Earned and other | \$37,118 |
| EIA Appropriated Funds | \$19,983,799 |
| Appropriated General Funds | \$6,531,956 |
| Teacher Supply Funds | \$80,700 |
| ESSER Federal Funds | \$809,563 |
| TOTAL Available Funds: | \$42,905,637 |
| | |
| TOTAL Actual Transfers/Expenditures | |
| <i>Transfers:</i> | |
| Portion of EOC Evaluation \$105,000 | \$105,000 |
| | |
| <i>Subtotal Transfers:</i> | <i>\$105,000</i> |
| | |
| <i>OFS Administrative Expenditures:</i> | |
| Salaries | \$1,783,818 |
| Contractual Services | \$502,418 |
| Supplies and Materials | \$411,291 |
| Rental/Lease | \$67,683 |
| Travel | \$115,603 |
| Fringe Benefits | \$766,831 |
| GASB 87 Lease | \$63,200 |
| Parent Engagement (Proviso 1.55.) | \$0 |
| Other (Explain) Vehicles Purchase | \$100,584 |
| <i>Subtotal:</i> | <i>\$3,811,428</i> |
| | |
| <i>Payments to Providers:</i> | |
| Instruction (\$5,100 per child pro-rata) | \$16,207,193 |
| Extended Program (Extended day, Extended Year & Summer Programs) | \$4,537,166 |
| Curriculum/Equipment and Materials for New Classrooms (\$1,000 to \$10,000 per provider) | \$434,390 |
| Incentives and Miscellaneous | \$4,114 |
| Stipends(Not Including Teacher Supply Payments) | \$291,314 |
| Recruitment and Retention (ESSER Federal Grant Expenditures) | \$227,750 |
| Language and Literacy Boost (ESSER Federal Grant Expenditures) | \$581,813 |
| Teacher Supplies | \$79,800 |
| Transportation (\$587 per child) | \$71,965 |
| Higher Reimbursement Rates (Quality Payments 10%) | \$1,312,468 |
| Other: (Field Trips, office supplies, Center Grants) | \$111,747 |
| <i>Subtotal:</i> | <i>\$23,859,719</i> |
| TOTAL Transfers/Expenditures: | 27,776,147 |
| | |
| Funds Carried Forward to FY24 | 12,728,504 |
| Unreimbursed Federal Funds | 1,050,978 |
| State Funds Expended and On-Hold Locally (At Manley Garvin, for center reimbursements) | <u>1,350,008</u> |

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| TOTAL Carry Forward | 15,129,490 |
|----------------------------|-------------------|

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Office of First Steps 4K Program Financial Report

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Fiscal Year 2023-24 Projected Revenues & Expenditures | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| TOTAL Available Funds | |
| Carry forward from FY23 to FY24 | \$15,129,490 |
| Interest Earned and other | \$50,000 |
| EIA Appropriated Funds | \$19,983,799 |
| Appropriated General Funds | \$10,896,163 |
| Teacher Supply Funds | \$114,356 |
| ESSER Federal Funds | \$2,345,000 |
| TOTAL Available Funds: | \$48,518,808 |
| | |
| TOTAL Actual Transfers/Expenditures | |
| <i>Transfers:</i> | |
| Portion of EOC Evaluation \$105,000 | \$105,000 |
| | |
| <i>Subtotal Transfers:</i> | <i>\$105,000</i> |
| | |
| <i>OFS Administrative Expenditures:</i> | |
| Salaries | \$1,976,348 |
| Contractual Services | \$1,396,000 |
| Supplies and Materials | \$914,356 |
| Rental/Lease | \$201,110 |
| Travel | \$240,110 |
| Fringe Benefits | \$882,332 |
| GASB 87 Lease | \$63,200 |
| Parent Engagement (Proviso 1.48.) | \$0 |
| Other (Explain) Vehicles Purchase | \$228,000 |
| <i>Subtotal:</i> | <i>\$5,901,456</i> |
| | |
| <i>Payments to Providers:</i> | |
| Instruction (\$5,500 per child pro-rata) | \$20,900,000 |
| Extended Program (Extended day, Extended Year & Summer Programs) | \$4,958,017 |
| | |
| Curriculum/Equipment and Materials for New Classrooms (\$2,000 to \$20,000 per provider) | \$1,923,750 |
| Incentives and Miscellaneous | \$5,000 |
| Stipends(Not Including Teacher Supply Payments) | \$326,081 |
| Recruitment and Retention (ESSER Federal Grant Expenditures) | \$600,000 |
| Language and Literacy Boost (ESSER Federal Grant Expenditures) | \$1,285,000 |
| Teacher Supplies | \$114,356 |
| Transportation (\$620 per child) | \$71,965 |
| Higher Reimbursement Rates (Quality Payments 10%) | \$1,682,733 |
| Other: (Field Trips, office supplies, Center Grants) | \$67,357 |
| <i>Subtotal:</i> | <i>\$31,934,259</i> |
| TOTAL Transfers/Expenditures: | 37,940,715 |
| | |
| Funds Carried Forward to FY25 | 12,728,504 |
| Unreimbursed Federal Funds | 1,050,978 |
| State Funds Expended and On-Hold Locally (At Manley Garvin, for center reimbursments) | <u>1,350,008</u> |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| TOTAL Projected Carry Forward | 10,578,093 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|

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References:

[Distribution of South Carolina Population by Federal Poverty Level](#) (last visited 2/13/24)

[Federal Poverty Guidelines for Medicaid Planning 2024](#) (last visited 2/13/23)

[Governor's Budget 2023-24](#) (last visited 2/14/24)

National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Annual State of Preschool Report 2022. [South Carolina Profile](#). (last visited 2/13/24).

[Public Education Subcommittee Recommendations for FY 2024-25 to the Proviso Subcommittee](#) (last visited 2/14/24)

[SC DHEC birth cohorts interactive data](#) (last visited 2/13/24)