AGENDA

SC Education Oversight Full Committee Meeting

Monday, April 8, 2024
1:00 p.m.
Room 433, Blatt Building

I.   Welcome..April Allen

II.   Approval of Full Committee Minutes
        or February 12, 2024 ....April Allen

III.   Special Guest Presentation
        Status of Broadband Connectivity for South Carolinians .... Jim Stritzinger
                                                                              Director
                                                                              SC Broadband Office
                                                                              SC Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS)

IV.   Subcommittee Report
        Academic Standards & Assessments Subcommittee ....Dr. Patty Tate

        For Information:
        State Funded Full-Day 4K Report for FY 2022-23 and 2023-24

        EOC Data Trailblazer Award

V.   Accountability Updates ....Dr. Matthew Lavery

VI.   Education Analytics Level-Linking Study Results ....Dr. Matthew Lavery

VII.   Beating the Odds Investigative Study Update .... Dana Yow

VIII.   Executive Director Update .... Dana Yow

IX.   Adjournment

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Full Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

February 12, 2024

Members Present (in-person or remote): April Allen, Dr. Brian Newsome, Rep. Neal Collins, Dr. Bob Couch, Rep. Bill Hager, Barbara Hairfield, Sidney Locke, Sen. Dwight Loftis, Neil Robinson, Dr. Patty Tate, Sen. Ross Turner, Russell Baxley, Melissa Pender, Rep. Terry Alexandar, Melanie Barton, Kevin L. Johnson

EOC Staff Present: Dana Yow, Dr. Rainey Knight, Riley Dixon, Dr. Matthew Lavery, Dr. Jenny May, Hope Johnson-Jones, Gabrielle Fulton, Tenell Felder

Guest(s) Present: Matthew Ferguson, SCDE

EOC Chair April Allen welcomed the committee and introduced newly appointed committee members Melissa Pender and Russell Baxley. Tenell Felder was then introduced as the EOC's new Communications Manager.

Next, Ms. Allen requested to move up the agenda item to discuss merging the Academic Standards and Assessments & Public Awareness subcommittees into the Academic Standards and Assessments (ASA) subcommittee. She informed the committee of her request to merge the two subcommittees since they have met jointly for the past three years. Dr. Patty Tate would remain as chair of the ASA and Ms. Barbara Hairfield will be the Vice Chair of ASA.

After this request, Chairperson Allen presented an action item to approve the minutes from the December 11 full committee meeting. Rep. Terry Alexander moved to approve the committee minutes which was accepted by the committee.

Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Director of Strategic Accounts Victoria Brioc was then introduced to present PLTW's impact in South Carolina.

During her presentation, Brioc outlined the PLTW curriculum and shared that PLTW is in approximately 67 school districts with more than 568 programs in South Carolina. PLTW also has more than 2,000 teachers trained throughout the state. Brioc shared that 87% of PLTW's gateway students report that their PLTW course made them more interested in a career in STEM, and that the same was true for 92% of PLTW high school students.

During the question-and-answer period, Rep. Bill Hager asked if PLTW works with charter schools, private schools, or just traditional schools. Brioc clarified that they work with all schools.

Rep. Alexander then asked about the fee and accessibility of the program. Brioc stated that the participation fee was annual and that teachers and students throughout the school would have access to all PLTW digital curriculum.

Ms. Pender stated that her school, Coosa Elementary, uses the PLTW curriculum from Pre-K to fifth grade. She described the program as phenomenal and said that she and her teachers were

trained in the program. Pender also said the program develops problem solving skills in students, and that they purchased the curriculum that targeted South Carolina learning standards.

Ms. Hairfield stated that Charleston County School District was heavily involved in Project Lead the Way and that it was very successful at middle and high school levels. She then asked if lessons were available in Spanish. Brioc clarified that units and modules were available in Spanish.

Senator Dwight Loftis then stated that a key component of the PLTW program was that it teaches students to be problem solvers and develops skills that can be used in any industry. He then asked about teacher certification for the program.

Brioc responded that PLTW offers training throughout the school year, as well as the summer when it is taught by PLTW master teachers.

With no further questions, Ms. Allen called Dr. Lee D'Andrea to present her report on the Landscape of Alternative Methods of Instruction.

Dr. D'Andrea addressed the committee and stated she was delighted to be able to present her findings after four years of work. She then provided the background that led to researching alternative methods of instruction – specifically the eLearning Pilot Project and the landscape that has emerged post-COVID. Following COVID, EOC and General Assembly members expressed interest in learning about the effectiveness of virtual learning programs which school districts around the state were offering.

Dr. D'Andrea then discussed the elements needed for a successful virtual environment which included technology infrastructure and professional learning for teachers to develop effective digital teaching strategies.

She also clarified that eLearning was a term used to describe when face-to-face teaching needed to change to a virtual environment for emergency situations such as power outages or inclement weather. South Carolina school districts are allowed five eLearning days.

Next, Dr. D'Andrea went over the report's evaluation questions which included determining the number of students participating in a State Board Approved Virtual Program and the reason that students were enrolling in the program.

On-site visits were made to 12 locations including 18 districts. The student information categories were Instructor led, SC Virtual School, Online in-state, Distance learning, Online out-of-state, and Hybrid. A main observation was that virtual instruction required high quality digital ecosystems and financial resources.

Main findings included that school district data entry and quality were a challenge, virtual teaching strategies are necessary, and that it is essential to develop or purchase virtual courses for use.

Next, Dr. D'Andrea presented End of Course assessments comparing students who received instruction through the SC Virtual School Program, Online in-state, Distance Learning, Online out-of-state, Hybrid or Instructor Led.

Main findings were that the data quality was severely lacking – such that the instruction type was not coded in many classes. The second main finding was that face-to-face instruction had higher mean scores on average.

It was recommended that professional development opportunities in virtual instruction and data collection be provided for districts and that the EOC and SCDE establish a list of data fields needed for reporting. Dr. D'Andrea also recommended that school and district level reports be verified and to require that reports be submitted with 45-day and 135-day reports.

This concluded the presentation and questions were taken.

Rep. Alexander asked how the districts could better manage data quality.

Dr. D'Andrea responded the data needed to be examined from the people who are entering it, and that the data's student information system should be able to minimize human error.

Ms. Barton commented there would need to be accountability for not following through with the data requests – citing data of this nature was especially needed due to the nationwide chronic absenteeism data which is showing disturbing trends in student absenteeism.

Dr. D'Andrea agreed, reiterating the need for data to be gathered correctly at the district level.

Next, Ms. Allen called on Dr. Tate to give the ASA subcommittee meeting report.

Dr. Tate reported that Dr. Lavery presented an action item to the subcommittee on adjusting the student Climate Survey participation requirements for 12th grade students. She then asked Dr. Lavery to present the details of his presentation.

Dr. Lavery reviewed that the School Climate Survey was currently administered to all third to twelfth grade students. He then stated the EOC staff recommendation was that all students enrolled in third to twelfth grade be administered the School Climate Survey, and that only surveys from continuously enrolled students in third to eleventh grade be included in the calculation of the school climate indicator. All survey responses collected would be provided to school and district leaders for the purposes of continuous improvement.

Rep. Collins expressed his general disapproval of the school survey requirement for the school report card. He asked Dr. Lavery if the test would still need to be administered to twelfth graders at all.

Dr. Lavery responded that leaving out a group and asking them not to complete a survey could be perceived as denying that group the opportunity to provide feedback.

Ms. Yow also responded, stating that some school officials still expressed wanting to receive 12th grade feedback about their experience at the school.

Ms. Hairfield then expressed concern about the wording of some of the survey responses – that a negative response might be interpreted as positive particularly for middle schoolers.

Ms. Pender stated third graders at her elementary school have a difficult time with the survey responses as well. She also stated that some questions were confusing to students, yet teachers are not allowed to provide clarification. She recommended that survey questions be read to elementary students.

After discussion, the chair received a motion to accept the EOC staff recommendation to adjust the Student Climate Survey participation requirements. The motion was seconded and the motion carried.

Dr. Lavery then gave an update on the Added Value Growth Model stating that EOC staff proposed to federal stakeholders using a weighted average of RPT, RPP and VAM.

Following this, Ms. Felder gave an overview of the 2024 Annual Report. This year's annual report highlighted the Education Data Dashboard, the 2023 CERDEP Report, the 2023 Report Card Summary and the 2024-25 EIA Budget Recommendations.

Next, Ms. Yow gave the Executive Director update. The first item she discussed was the EOC staff Beating the Odds Investigative Study. She presented to members the criteria for the schools that were included in the study and clarified that the first investigative stage would be followed by a confirmatory stage with a separate focus on elementary, middle and high schools. The next point of information was the SC Military Task Force. The committee was updated that the task force met on February 6 and would have a follow up meeting this Spring. Recommendations would be made on defining academic and physical characteristics of a military-ready student in K-12 public schools. A report to the EOC will be given in June 2024.

With no further questions, the meeting was adjourned.

State-Funded, Full-Day 4K
CERDEP Annual Report Summary

SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

https://eoc.sc.gov

The Education Oversight Committee (EOC) annually evaluates CERDEP in accordance with Provisos 1.48 and 1A.26 of the 2023-24 General Appropriations Act.

CERDEP

Inclusive term for State-Funded, Full-Day 4K. Includes CERDEP 4K and First Steps 4K

CERDEP 4K

- CERDEP in public schools
- State-funded
- Oversight: School District/ SCDE

First Steps 4K

- CERDEP in non-public school settings
- State-funded
- Oversight: SC First Steps

What is CERDEP?

The General Assembly first created and funded the Child Development Education Pilot Program by a budget proviso in Fiscal Year 2006-07. In 2014 the General Assembly codified the program in Act 284 and renamed it the **South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP)**

CERDEP is 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.*
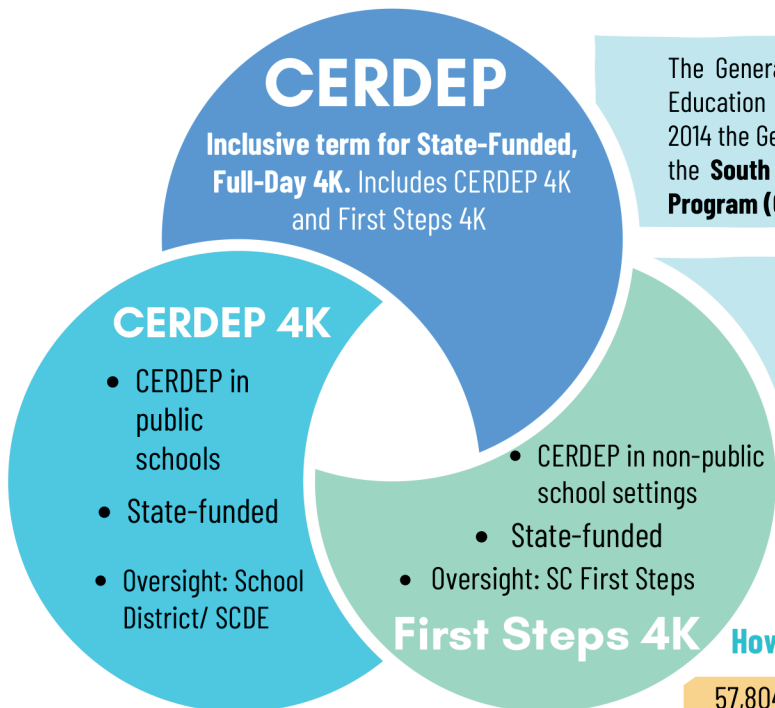
CERDEP Key Findings

How many four-year-old children in SC are in poverty?

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.

What impact does CERDEP investment have on kindergarten readiness for participants?

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%).

Does CERDEP benefit students with disabilities?

Students with disabilities who participated in CERDEP scored Demonstrating Readiness at higher percentages (19%) that the average of students with disabilities (17%) demonstrating readiness.

How many children are served by CERDEP? How many potentially eligible children are not served by CERDEP?

In the 2022-23 school year, **17,070** children participated in CERDEP (85% of these participants were pupils in poverty). In the same school year, **21,385** potentially eligible students did not participate in CERDEP.
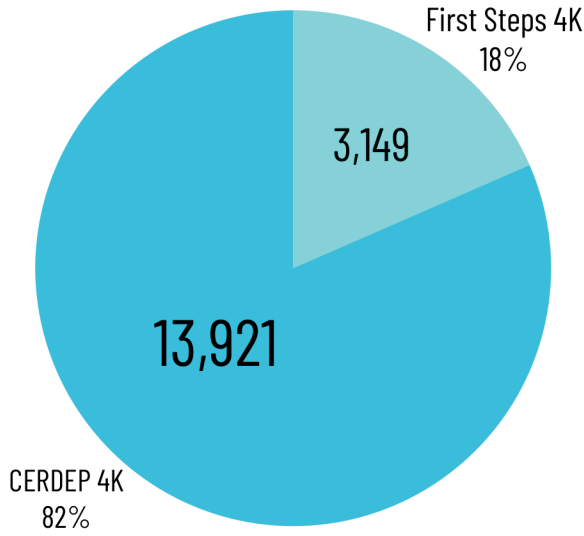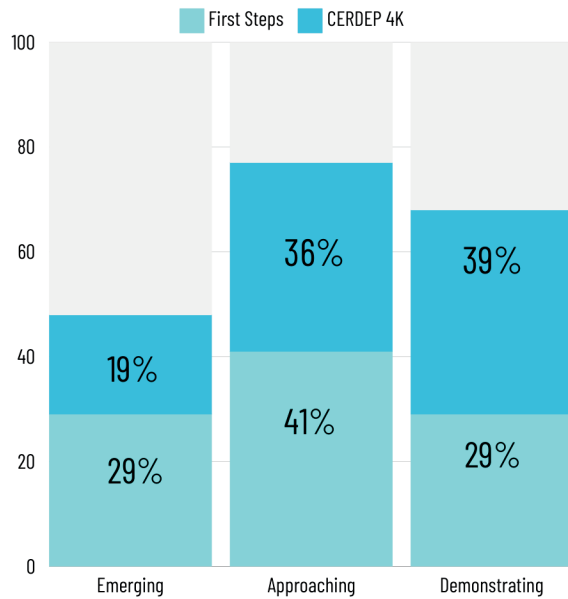
What is the financial investment in CERDEP?

$106,698,962 was spent on 4K for the 20022-23 Fiscal Year, which is the largest investment to date.

CERDEP Participants and KRA Performance

CERDEP Participants 2022-23

First Steps 4K
18%
3,149

13,921

CERDEP 4K
82%

KRA Performance by CERDEP Setting

First Steps / CERDEP 4K

	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating
CERDEP 4K	19%	36%	39%
First Steps	29%	41%	29%

EOC Recommendations

Expand Opportunities for CERDEP Access and Participation:

According to Rutgers University's National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) in May 2023, South Carolina ranked 11th nationally in access to 4K. While this national comparison is relatively high, there are still **more than 11,000 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:

Fund Additional CERDEP 4K Programs

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.

Incentivize CERDEP Participation for Private Childcare Providers

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.

Use Waitlists Differently to Increase Enrollment Efficiency

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.

Scan to access full report

SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

bitly

Date: April 8, 2024

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

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
Provisos 1.48 and 1A.26 of the 2022-23 General Appropriations Act

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 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 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 of students served in high-quality programs.

CRITICAL FACTS
The report seeks to answer the following questions:

- How many four-year-old children live in SC and are in poverty?
- How many children are served by CERDEP? How many potentially eligible children are not served by CERDEP?
- What is the financial investment in CERDEP?
- What is the impact of the 4K investment on kindergarten readiness and school success experienced by children participating?

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
The State-Funded Full-Day 4K Annual Report 2022-23 & 2023-24 was submitted to the General Assembly on March 1, 2024 for information and later submission to the EOC website.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC
There is no economic impact to the EOC producing this report.

ACTION REQUEST

☐ **For approval**   ☒ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved**   ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved**   ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

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

Prepared by
Dr. Jenny May, Dana Yow,
Riley Dixon and Tenell Felder

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

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 11,000[1] 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 PreK[1] 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 5[2] portal was launched in February 2022 and is designed to be to 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 videos[3], 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 4KSC[4] 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

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

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.

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.
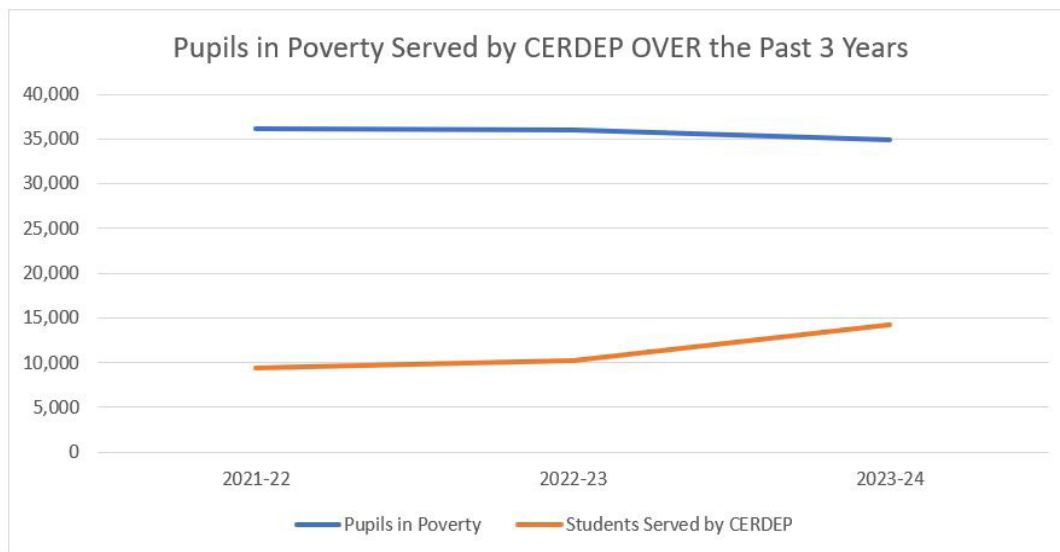

Pupils in Poverty Served by CERDEP OVER the Past 3 Years

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.

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 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

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.

KRA Performance Levels

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.

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:

	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%**

Header spanning row: "Pupils in Poverty Kindergarten Readiness by 4K Experience"

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:

CERDEP	Teaching Strategies GOLD ®	My IGDIS	PALS
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

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.

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

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%) that 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
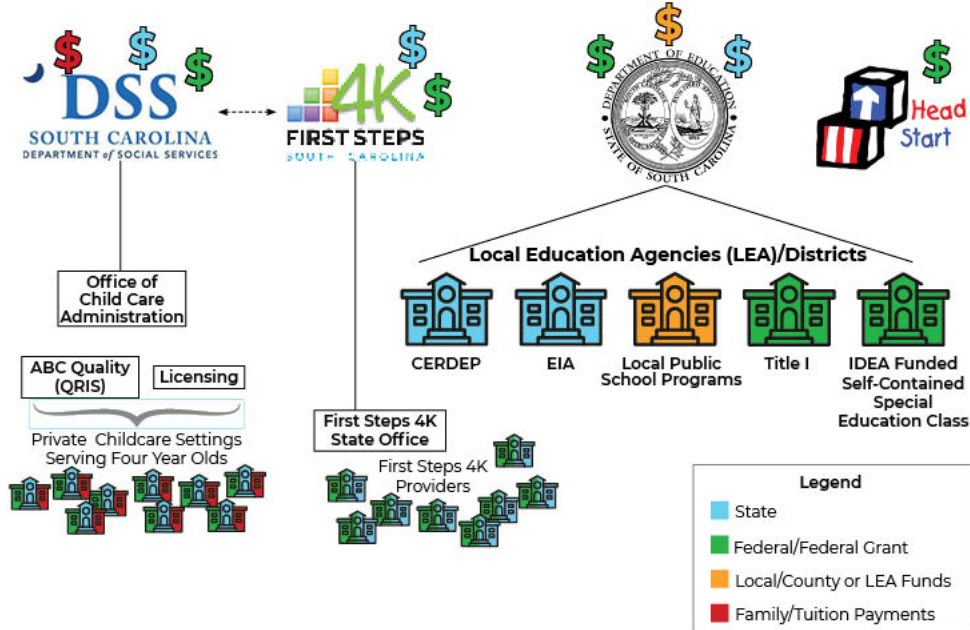
Appendix B: Data Differences in the 2024 4K Report

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	-	-

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-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,	Colleton	1	29	*	*	-	-	3	*	-
and # of Classrooms are included in December 1, 2023 totals)	Saluda (Campus under construction)	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
				-	-					
	Edgefield	1	30	*	*	-	-	2	-	-
	Laurens	1	40	*	22	-	-	2	*	-

21

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
	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	*	*

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	-	-

23

Appendix D: The number and type of communications to recruit students, and FS centers.
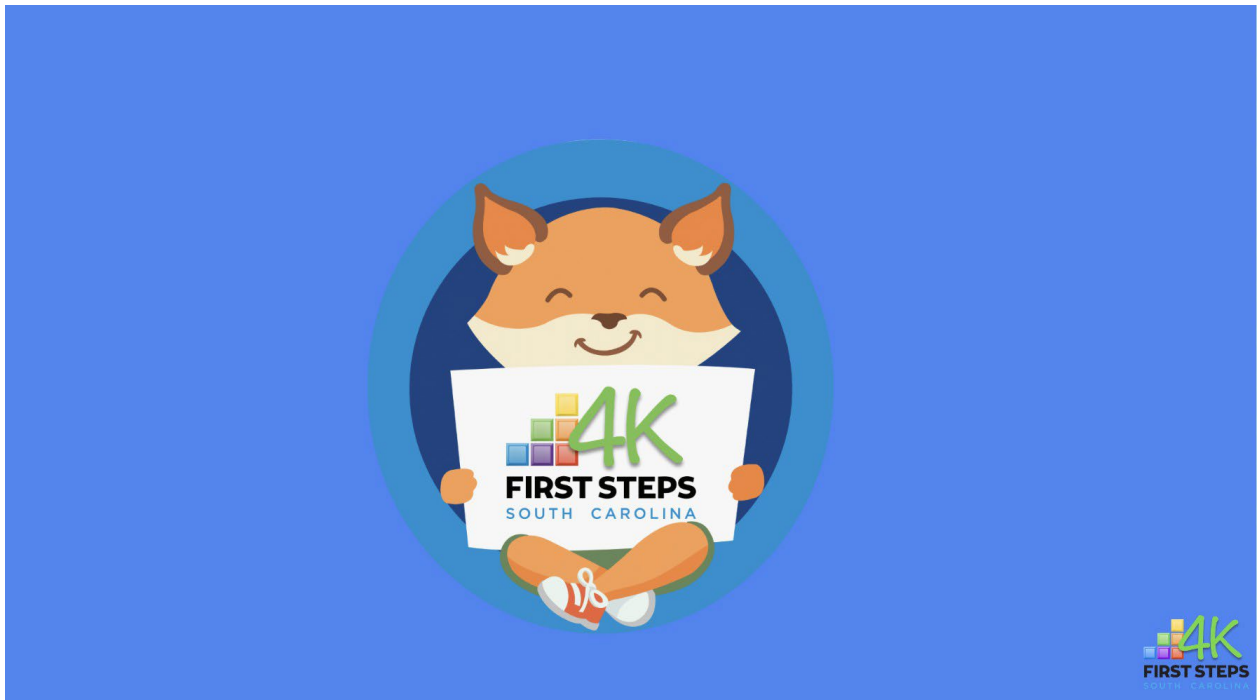
In 2022, First Steps 4K focused on several marketing objectives related to student and partner recruitment, retention, and family engagement in our charge to get children ready for school.

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.
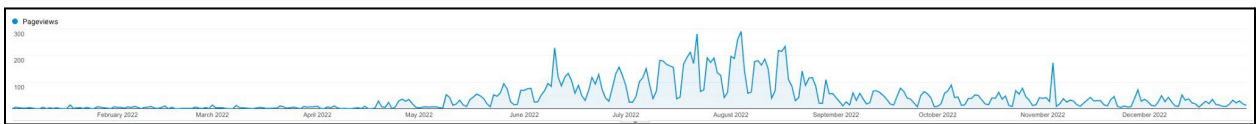
To strengthen our partnership and collaboration with Palmetto Pre-K and ABC Quality, we enhanced our provider detail web pages by incorporating their program logos. This visible display of our partnership serves as a testament to our commitment to providing families with comprehensive support and resources. 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.
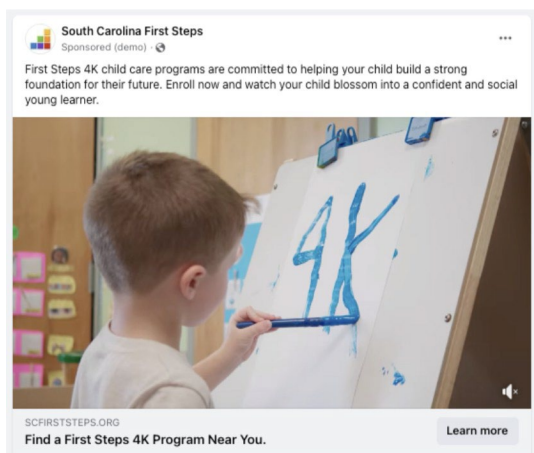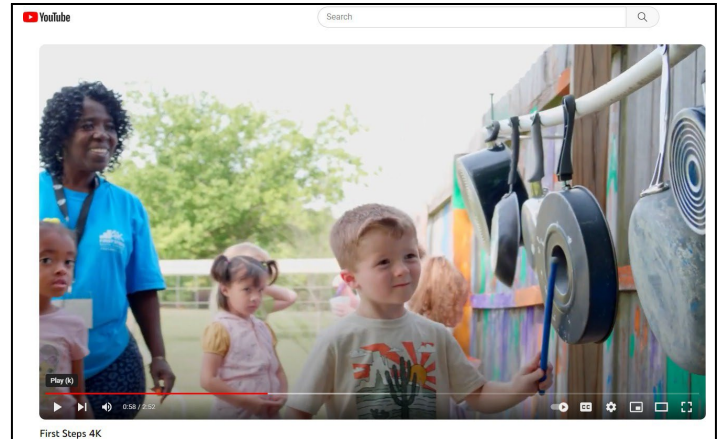
The video was filmed at MEGA Child Development Center Center in Gilbert, SC. The family and all children in the video were enrolled in First Steps 4K at the time of the video shoot. Since posting the video on First Steps YouTube channel, it has received 861 views.

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.
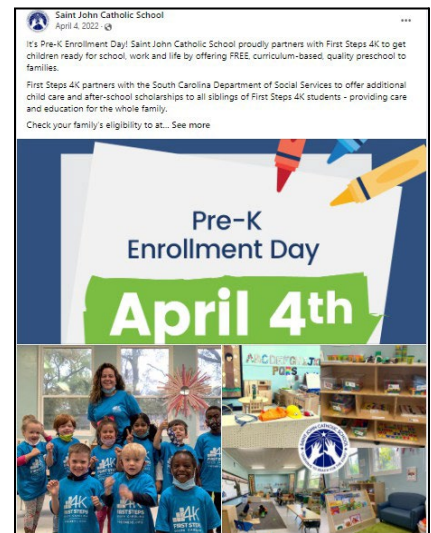
Carolina Carillon Holiday Parade

- 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.
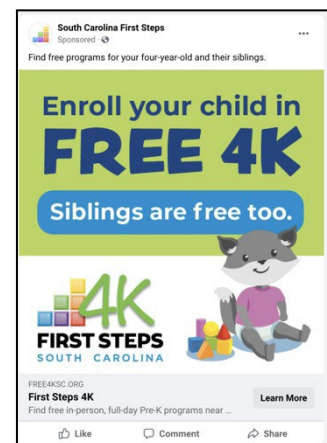
Women, Infant and Children Nutrition Program (WIC) Texting Program Partnership — Many of the eligibility parameters of WIC are also true for participating in First Steps 4K. By partnering with WIC, we were able to leverage the existing marketing efforts of WIC and send messages to a look-alike audience 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.
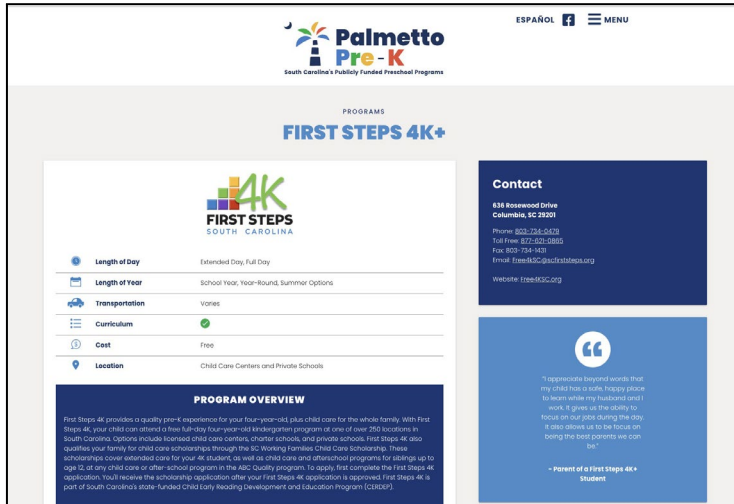
## Palmetto Pre-K - A Leading Tool to Reach Families

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.
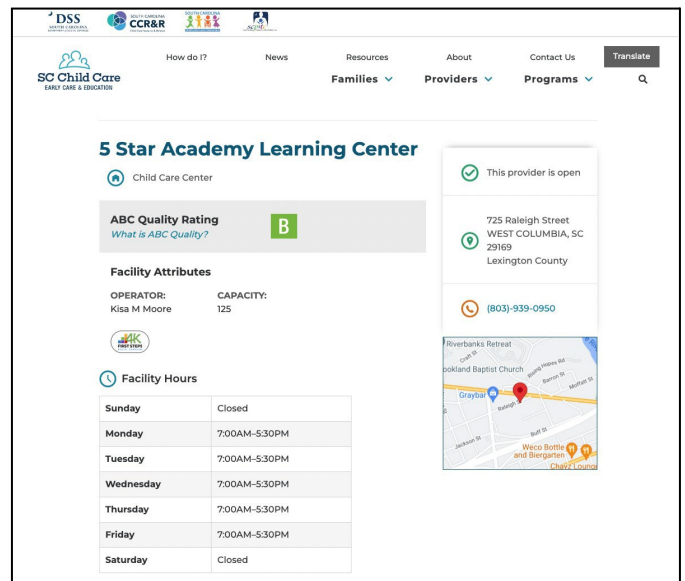
Traditional & Digital Marketing Efforts

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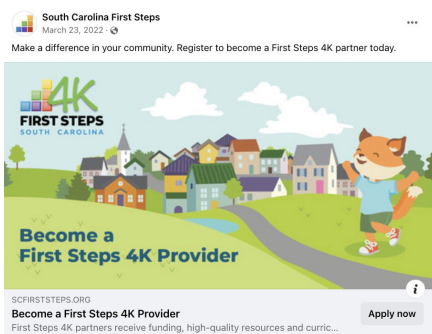
Facebook/Instagram Ads running on Facebook and Instagram generated 24M impressions and over 150K clicks.

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
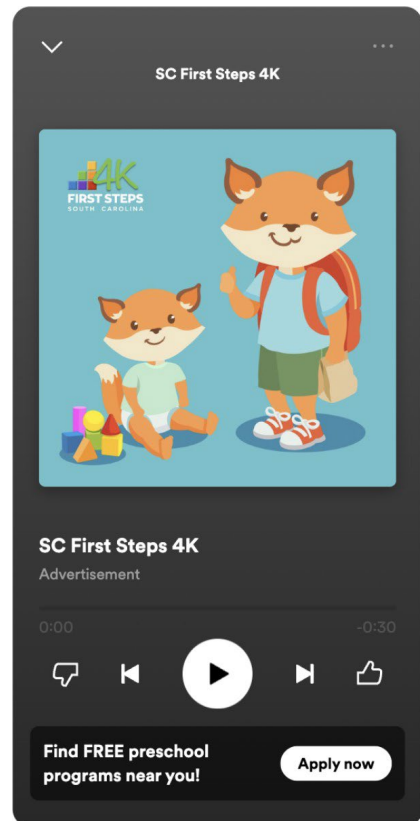
Family Communications & Feedback Loops

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.

South Carolina First Steps
Sponsored (demo) ·

"First Steps 4K allows us to serve students in our community who otherwise would not be able to attend a 4K program." – Mega Child Development Center, Gilbert, SC

SCFIRSTSTEPS.ORG
Become a First Steps 4K Provider
First Steps 4K partners receive funding, high-quality resources and curric...
Apply now

33

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.

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 Conferring (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, 4th 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 CurriculumTM 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

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

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	
Transfers:	
Portion of EOC Evaluation $105,000	$105,000
Subtotal Transfers:	*$105,000*
OFS Administrative Expenditures:	
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
Subtotal:	$3,811,428
Payments to Providers:	
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
Subtotal:	$23,859,719
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)	1,350,008
TOTAL Carry Forward	**15,129,490**

30-Nov-23

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	
Transfers:	
Portion of EOC Evaluation $105,000	$105,000
Subtotal Transfers:	*$105,000*
OFS Administrative Expenditures:	
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
Subtotal:	$5,901,456
Payments to Providers:	
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
Subtotal:	$31,934,259
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 reimbursements)	1,350,008
TOTAL Projected Carry Forward	**10,578,093**

30-Nov-23

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)

2024 Data Trailblazer Awards

Recognizing schools that demonstrate use of creative data visualization and data storytelling that have resulted in improved student achievement.

What is a Data Trailblazer?

A Data Trailblazer school:

- **Assists** educators in accessing, interpreting, and communicating data while demonstrating improved student outcomes.
- **Helps** families and caregivers interpret their student's grades and assessment scores – and use that knowledge to help their student achieve academic success.
- **Establishes** and maintains a culture of school wide data informed decision making with a goal of improved student outcomes.
- **Incorporates** practices and policies that prioritize data privacy and ensures school staff are adequately trained in data security and privacy standards.

- **To date, approximately 15 schools have submitted nominations.**

- **Submissions will be judged by a team of educators and practitioners in early April.**

- **Winners will be presented with their award at the EOC retreat in August.**

- **Winners will also receive a congratulatory letter from Governor McMaster, and will be recognized by the EOC at a district board meeting.**

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Date: April 8, 2024

INFORMATION ITEM:
SC READY-Interim Assessment Linking Study

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY

Section 59-18-310 (D) The State Board of Education shall create a statewide adoption list of formative assessments for grades kindergarten through nine aligned with the state content standards in English/language arts and mathematics that satisfies professional measurement standards in accordance with criteria jointly determined by the Education Oversight Committee and the State Department of Education. The formative assessments must provide diagnostic information in a timely manner to all school districts for each student during the course of the school year. For use beginning with the 2009-2010 School Year, and subject to appropriations by the General Assembly for the assessments, local districts must be allocated resources to select and administer formative assessments from the statewide adoption list to use to improve student performance in accordance with district improvement plans. However, if a local district already administers formative assessments, the district may continue to use the assessments if they meet the state standards and criteria pursuant to this subsection.

Section 59-18-320 (D) Any new standards and assessments required to be developed and adopted by the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education for use as an accountability measure, must be developed and adopted upon the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee.

CRITICAL FACTS
In the spring of 2023, the EOC, in collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), contracted with Education Analytics (EA) to complete a linking study between the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY) in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) and three of the interim benchmark assessments used in the state: Curriculum Associates' i-Ready Growth assessment in Mathematics and Reading, NWEA MAP Growth Assessment in Mathematics and Reading, and Renaissance Learning's STAR Growth assessment in Mathematics and Reading. The linking studies are designed to statistically connect state summative test scores and interim test scores within the same grade level to facilitate comparisons of proficiency status on the two tests.

The EOC enlisted EA to provide updated linked results based on the most current assessment data available (Spring 2023) and validate the results provided by interim assessment vendors, offering an *independent* evaluation of the alignment between interim assessments and state-level assessments. This approach ensures that educators and policymakers have access to the most up-to-date and aligned data and resources for making informed decisions regarding student learning and achievement. This approach also aligns with the EOC's changes to the growth model for elementary and middle schools, better aligning the data from interim benchmark assessments to the summative SC READY tests – allowing for more informed decision making.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
The EOC intends to build upon this work to better understand how interim benchmark assessments can help educators understand the rates of academic growth and instructional adjustments necessary to support them.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC

The EOC has invested $109,500 to date on this study.

ACTION REQUEST

☐ **For approval**   ☒ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved**   ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved**   ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

education
analytics

UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION ANALYTICS' LINKING STUDY BETWEEN SC READY AND I-READY ASSESSMENT, GRADES 3-8

// March 2024

edanalytics.org

OVERVIEW

In the spring of 2023, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (SC EOC), in collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), partnered with Education Analytics (EA) to complete a linking study between the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY) in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) and Curriculum Associates' i-Ready Growth assessment in Mathematics and Reading, respectively. Linking studies are used to statistically connect state summative test scores and interim test scores within the same grade level to facilitate comparisons of proficiency status on the two tests. Such linking studies help to answer the question, *what would my students' proficiency status on the spring state test likely be based on how they performed on the i-Ready assessment?*

The SC EOC enlisted EA to provide updated linked results based on the most current assessment data available (Spring 2023) and validate the results provided by interim assessment vendors, offering an independent evaluation of the alignment between interim assessments and state-level assessments. In cases where an interim vendor's studies are more recent than those presented here or utilize the same assessment year as our own results, **we recommend prioritizing the use of the vendor's results.** This approach ensures that educators and policymakers have access to the most up-to-date and aligned data and resources for making informed decisions regarding student learning and achievement.

In the following sections, we will provide a general overview of the linking study results and guidance on their interpretation, including limitations and cautions associated with linking studies. By providing an overview of EA's linking study results, methods, and considerations, this document aims to facilitate informed decision-making and promote transparency in assessment practices.

LINKING STUDIES

Data & Methods

Data from students who took both the SC READY and Curriculum Associate's i-Ready Mathematics and ELA/Reading assessments in Spring 2023 were included in the linking study. Furthermore, only matched students who took the i-Ready assessments within 30 days of SC READY[1] in Spring 2023 were included. This ensures more comparability in students' exposure to the curriculum when they were tested.

---

[1] The SC READY data do not include the actual test administration dates, so this is an approximation based on SCDE's 2022–23 Assessment Schedule.

Linking studies establish the relationship between the two assessments by identifying corresponding percentile ranks across the test scores. Through this process we obtain scores on the spring i-Ready assessment that correspond to the three SC READY achievement level cut scores (i.e., cut score between Does Not Meet Expectations and Approaches Expectations, cut score between Approaches Expectations and Meets Expectations, and cut score between Meets Expectations and Exceeds Expectations) for mathematics and ELA at grades 3-8.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 present the linking results between SC READY and i-Ready spring tests for mathematics and ELA, respectively. The top panel shows the ranges of SC READY scale scores at each proficiency level and grade level in 2023. The bottom panel shows the corresponding i-Ready scores.

Table 1. SC READY and i-Ready Cut Score Equivalents (Spring): Mathematics

	SC READY			
Grade	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100–359	360-437	438-542	543-825
4	100-400	401-480	481-562	563-850
5	100-447	448-534	535-621	622-875
6	100-452	453-542	543-626	627-900
7	100-487	488-576	577-648	649-925
8	100-526	527-614	615-682	683-950
	Curriculum Associates i-Ready			
	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100-426	427-446	447-468	469-800
4	100-447	448-468	469-485	486-800
5	100-453	454-483	484-505	506-800
6	100-464	465-497	498-519	520-800
7	100-474	475-508	509-527	528-800
8	100-486	487-520	521-540	541-800

Table 2. SC READY and i-Ready Cut Score Equivalents (Spring): ELA

	SC READY			
Grade	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100-358	359-451	452-539	540-825
4	100-418	419-508	509-591	592-850
5	100-448	449-556	557-652	653-875
6	100-454	455-574	576-666	667-900
7	100-511	512-614	615-703	704-925
8	100-536	537-641	642-736	737-950
	Curriculum Associates i-Ready			
	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100-488	489-525	526-555	556-800
4	100-508	509-547	548-576	577-800
5	100-527	528-569	570-602	603-800
6	100-530	531-580	581-613	614-800
7	100-548	549-595	596-627	628-800
8	100-560	561-604	605-638	639-800

Linked i-Ready test scores were also extended from the spring to the fall and winter terms for the scores reaching the "Meets Expectations" performance level. These scores are summarized in Table 3. Note that these linked scores were calculated based on the mean i-Ready scores within each term among all South Carolina students who took the i-Ready test. Therefore, they reflect expected score equivalents **on average** among these students and **should not** be interpreted as accurate estimations for every individual student. The level of error around the fall and the winter scores will be larger than those around the spring scores as a result of extending these analyses to the fall and winter when SC READY is not administered.

Table 3. i-Ready Cut Score Equivalents

Grade	Mathematics			ELA		
	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring
3	420	435	447	493	513	526
4	447	458	469	522	537	548
5	465	475	484	549	561	570
6	483	491	498	567	575	581
7	496	503	509	583	590	596
8	507	514	521	590	598	605

Interpretation & Limitations

Classification accuracy statistics are used to evaluate the degree to which the linked scores from the spring i-Ready assessment to the SC READY achievement level cut scores can be used to accurately classify students' proficiency status. An evaluation of these diagnostics provides strong evidence of good classification accuracy for using the linked i-Ready scores to estimate students' proficiency status on the SC READY assessments at grades 3-8.

While we do see this high level of classification accuracy, it is still important to consider the appropriate uses and limitations of these results. Figure 1 displays a scatterplot of scores for all grade 8 students who took the SC READY ELA and i-Ready Reading tests in Spring 2023. The black dashed line represents the best-fitting curve, which signifies how i-Ready Reading scores correspond to the SC READY ELA scores for students **on average**. For example, a score of 642 on the SC READY ELA test is the cut score for "Meets Expectations" at grade 3; this corresponds to a i-Ready Reading score of 605. Yet as with any statistical methods, there is a level of error associated with the results. The narrow black bands plotted around the dashed curve show the 95% confidence intervals around the average, which represent the range of values within which the linked scores could fall.

We see from this narrow band and the strong classification accuracy diagnostics that our statistical model is strong. However, it is important to keep in mind that the linked scores are based on a 50% likelihood estimation. This means that not all students who reach a

proficiency cut score on i-Ready will necessarily reach the associated score on SC READY. The results are more accurate for students on average than as associated with individual students.

Take the example of the SC READY 642 cut score for "Meets Expectations" in grade 8 and the corresponding i-Ready Reading score of 605. This represents how students performed on average. In reality, there is a wide range of i-Ready scores among students who reached a 642 on SC READY. Not all students who scored 605 and above on the i-Ready Reading test also scored 642 or higher on the SC READY ELA test in Spring 2023. Specifically, students in the bottom right box in Figure 1 (i.e., Quadrant IV) scored lower than 642. Similarly, students who met or exceeded expectations (i.e., scored 642 or above) on the SC READY ELA test had a wide range of scores on the i-Ready Reading test. Students in the top left box on the graph (i.e., students in Quadrant II) scored below a 605 on i-Ready Reading.

The interpretation of this estimated average is: 3rd grade students who scored 605 on i-Ready Reading have a 50% chance of scoring 642 or higher (i.e., reaching "Meets Expectations") on the SC READY ELA test. We recommend thinking about this scatterplot of the real student test scores when using and interpreting the linking results. Knowing the associated limitations of the results will allow educators to take the appropriate caution when using the results to answer the question, *what would my students' proficiency status on the spring state test likely be based on how they performed on the i-Ready assessment?*

Figure 1. Scatterplot of the SC READY ELA and i-Ready Reading Scores, Grade 8, Spring 2023
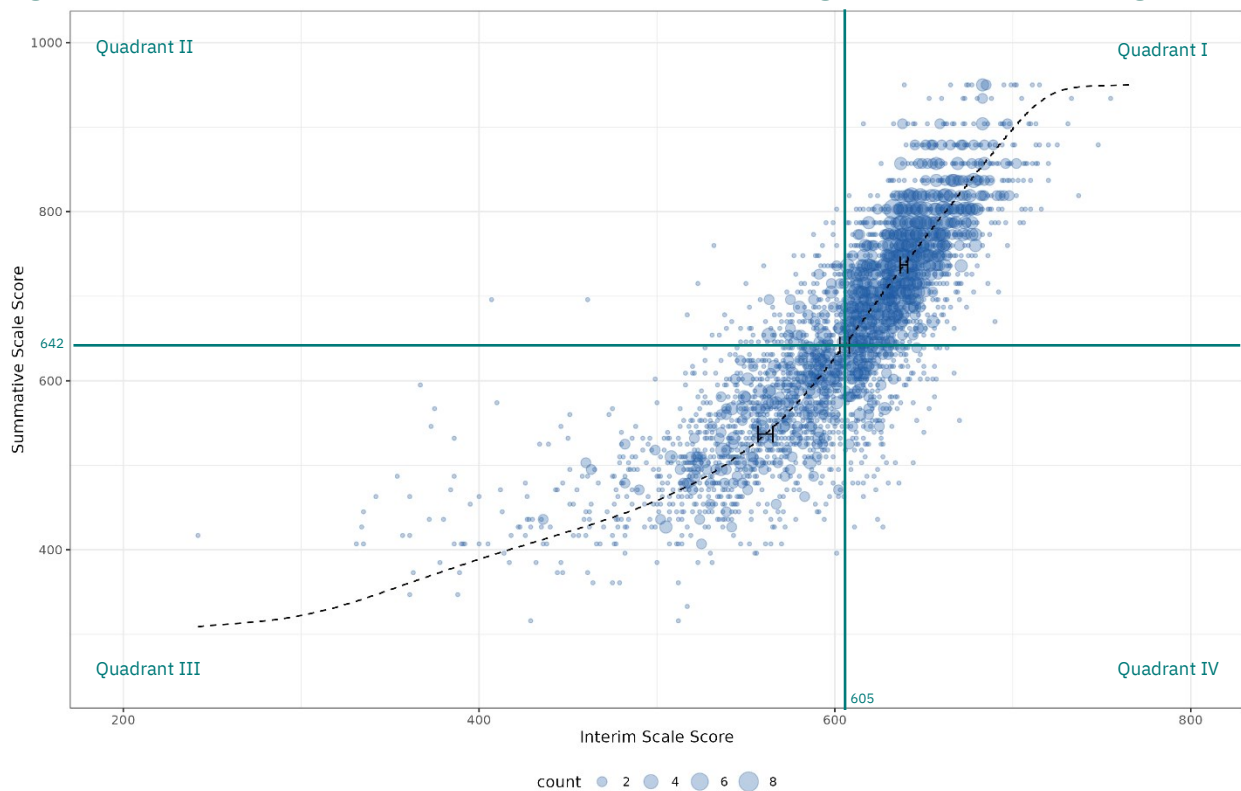
CONCLUSIONS

EA conducted linking studies between the spring 2023 SC READY Mathematics and ELA assessments and the Curriculum Associates i-Ready Mathematics and Reading assessments for the purpose of providing updated results based on the most current assessment data available in order to facilitate interpretation of scores between the two assessments. Once again, we recommend that in cases where interim vendors' studies are more recent or utilize the same assessment year as our own results, that educators prioritize the use of the vendors' results and resources.

Despite good classification accuracy results from this study, there are still important notes of caution to call out when interpreting and using the linked scores. As with any statistical procedure, there is associated error and limitations of the results. Additionally, the two tests are constructed differently with regard to test content, design, and purpose. For example, the i-Ready Diagnostic Reading test measures students' reading strategies and skills in the following domains – "High-Frequency Words, Phonics, Phonological Awareness, Reading Comprehension: Literature, Reading Comprehension: Informational Text, and Vocabulary" (Curriculum Associates, 2019, p.11). The SC READY ELA assessment is composed of two subtests – writing and reading, and measures student performance on Reading – Literary Text, Reading – Informational Text, Inquiry, and Writing (SCDE, 2022). The statistical adjustments in linking do not adjust for differences in content.

Therefore, scores on the SC READY and Curriculum Associates i-Ready assessments should not be used interchangeably. The linked scores facilitate comparisons of proficiency status between two assessments, but do not imply equivalence.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More information about this study can be found in Education Analytics' February 2024 technical report titled "Linking Study Between South Carolina College- And Career-Ready Assessment (SC Ready) and i-Ready Assessment, Grades 3-8". That report can be found at the following link:

SC READY and i-Ready Linking Study Technical Report Final - February 2024 (PDF)

ABOUT EDUCATION ANALYTICS

Professor Robert Meyer formed EA in late 2012 with the objective of conducting research and developing policy and management analytics to support reform and continuous improvement in American education. This institutional mission—to identify ways that analytics can make education systems better—has been central to our work with the federal government, school districts, states, non-profits, and policymakers. EA serves as a partner, and not just a vendor, by engaging in hands-on analytics support and thought partnership around how to address potential shifts in the policy landscape.

EA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, and employs approximately one hundred research scientists, programmers, data engineers, data strategists, and support staff. EA's areas of expertise include student growth metrics, human capital analytics, predictive analytics, technical assistance, data preparation and reporting services, and more. Our deeply knowledgeable and experienced team not only offers a full range of education analytics knowledge to our partners to support new systems, but also strives to co-build each system with stakeholders to match the available data and meet the desired policy requirements.

REFERENCES

Curriculum Associates. (2019). *i-Ready Assessments Technical Manual*. North Billerica, MA: Author.

South Carolina Department of Education. (2022). *SC READY and SCPASS Score Report User's Guide: For Use with Spring 2022 Score Reports*. Columbia, SC: Author.

education analytics

UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION ANALYTICS' LINKING STUDY BETWEEN SC READY AND NWEA MAP GROWTH ASSESSMENT, GRADES 3-8

110 E Main Street, Ste. 1000
Madison, WI 53703

608.466.4966

edanalytics.org

OVERVIEW

In the spring of 2023, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (SC EOC), in collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), partnered with Education Analytics (EA) to complete a linking study between the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY) in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) and the NWEA MAP Growth assessment in Mathematics and Reading, respectively. Linking studies are used to statistically connect state summative test scores and interim test scores within the same grade level to facilitate comparisons of proficiency status on the two tests. Such linking studies help to answer the question, *what would my students' proficiency status on the spring state test likely be based on how they performed on the MAP assessment?*

The SC EOC enlisted EA to provide updated linked results based on the most current assessment data available (Spring 2023) and validate the results provided by interim assessment vendors, offering an independent evaluation of the alignment between interim assessments and state-level assessments. In cases where an interim vendor's studies are more recent than those presented here or utilize the same assessment year as our own results, **we recommend prioritizing the use of the vendor's results.** This approach ensures that educators and policymakers have access to the most up-to-date and aligned data and resources for making informed decisions regarding student learning and achievement.

In the following sections, we will provide a general overview of the linking study results and guidance on their interpretation, including limitations and cautions associated with linking studies. By providing an overview of EA's linking study results, methods, and considerations, this document aims to facilitate informed decision-making and promote transparency in assessment practices.

LINKING STUDIES

Data & Methods

Data from students who took both the SC READY and NWEA MAP Mathematics and ELA/Reading assessments in Spring 2023 were included in the linking study. Furthermore, only matched students who took the MAP assessments within 30 days of SC READY[1] in Spring 2023 were included. This ensures more comparability in students' exposure to the curriculum when they were tested.

---

[1] The SC READY data do not include the actual test administration dates, so this is an approximation based on SCDE's 2022–23 Assessment Schedule.

Linking studies establish the relationship between the two assessments by identifying corresponding percentile ranks across the test scores. Through this process we obtain scores on the spring MAP assessment that correspond to the three SC READY achievement level cut scores (i.e., cut score between Does Not Meet Expectations and Approaches Expectations, cut score between Approaches Expectations and Meets Expectations, and cut score between Meets Expectations and Exceeds Expectations) for mathematics and ELA at grades 3-8.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 present the linking results between SC READY and MAP spring tests for mathematics and ELA, respectively. The top panel shows the ranges of SC READY scale scores at each proficiency level and grade level in 2023. The bottom panel shows the corresponding MAP scores.

Table 1. SC READY and MAP Cut Score Equivalents (Spring): Mathematics

| | SC READY | | | |
Grade	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100–359	360-437	438-542	543-825
4	100-400	401-480	481-562	563-850
5	100-447	448-534	535-621	622-875
6	100-452	453-542	543-626	627-900
7	100-487	488-576	577-648	649-925
8	100-526	527-614	615-682	683-950
	NWEA MAP			
	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100-189	190-199	200-210	211-350
4	100-200	201-210	211-218	219-350
5	100-203	204-218	219-230	231-350
6	100-209	210-224	225-235	236-350
7	100-215	216-231	232-241	242-350
8	100-220	221-236	237-246	247-350

Table 2. SC READY and MAP Cut Score Equivalents (Spring): ELA

| | SC READY | | | |
Grade	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100-358	359-451	452-539	540-825
4	100-418	419-508	509-591	592-850
5	100-448	449-556	557-652	653-875
6	100-454	455-574	576-666	667-900
7	100-511	512-614	615-703	704-925
8	100-536	537-641	642-736	737-950
	NWEA MAP			
	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100-185	186-197	198-207	208-350
4	100-193	193-204	205-212	213-350
5	100-198	199-210	211-219	220-350
6	100-200	201-213	214-222	223-350
7	100-205	206-217	218-226	227-350
8	100-208	209-220	221-229	230-350

Linked MAP test scores were also extended from the spring to the fall and winter terms for the scores reaching the "Meets Expectations" performance level. These scores are summarized in Table 3. Note that these linked scores were calculated based on the mean MAP scores within each term among all South Carolina students who took the MAP test. Therefore, they reflect expected score equivalents **on average** among these students and **should not** be interpreted as accurate estimations for every individual student. The level of error around the fall and the winter scores will be larger than those around the spring scores as a result of extending these analyses to the fall and winter when SC READY is not administered.

Table 3. MAP Cut Score Equivalents

Grade	Mathematics			ELA		
	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring
3	187	194	200	187	194	198
4	200	206	211	197	202	205
5	210	215	219	204	209	211
6	218	222	225	210	212	214
7	226	229	232	214	216	218
8	231	234	237	217	219	221

Interpretation & Limitations

Classification accuracy statistics are used to evaluate the degree to which the linked scores from the spring MAP assessment to the SC READY achievement level cut scores can be used to accurately classify students' proficiency status. An evaluation of these diagnostics provides strong evidence of good classification accuracy for using the linked MAP scores to estimate students' proficiency status on the SC READY assessments at grades 3-8.

While we do see this high level of classification accuracy, it is still important to consider the appropriate uses and limitations of these results. Figure 1 displays a scatterplot of scores for all grade 3 students who took the SC READY ELA and MAP Reading tests in Spring 2023. The black dashed line represents the best-fitting curve, which signifies how MAP Reading scores correspond to the SC READY ELA scores for students **on average**. For example, a score of 452 on the SC READY ELA test is the cut score for "Meets Expectations" at grade 3; this corresponds to a MAP Reading score of 198. Yet as with any statistical methods, there is a level of error associated with the results. The narrow black bands plotted around the dashed curve show the 95% confidence intervals around the average, which represent the range of values within which the linked scores could fall.

We see from this narrow band and the strong classification accuracy diagnostics that our statistical model is strong. However, it is important to keep in mind that the linked scores are based on a 50% likelihood estimation. This means that not all students who reach a

proficiency cut score on MAP will necessarily reach the associated score on SC READY. The results are more accurate for students on average than as associated with individual students.

Take the example of the SC READY 452 cut score for "Meets Expectations" in grade 3 and the corresponding MAP Reading score of 198. This represents how students performed on average. In reality, there is a wide range of MAP scores among students who reached a 452 on SC READY. Not all students who scored 198 and above on the MAP Reading test also scored 452 or higher on the SC READY ELA test in Spring 2023. Specifically, students in the bottom right box in Figure 1 (i.e., Quadrant IV) scored lower than 452. Similarly, students who met or exceeded expectations (i.e., scored 452 or above) on the SC READY ELA test had a wide range of scores on the MAP Reading test. Students in the top left box on the graph (i.e., students in Quadrant II) scored below a 198 on MAP Reading.

The interpretation of this estimated average is: 3rd grade students who scored 198 on MAP Reading have a 50% chance of scoring 452 or higher (i.e., reaching "Meets Expectations") on the SC READY ELA test. We recommend thinking about this scatterplot of the real student test scores when using and interpreting the linking results. Knowing the associated limitations of the results will allow educators to take the appropriate caution when using the results to answer the question, *what would my students' proficiency status on the spring state test likely be based on how they performed on the MAP assessment?*

Figure 1. Scatterplot of the SC READY ELA and MAP Reading Scores, Grade 3, Spring 2023
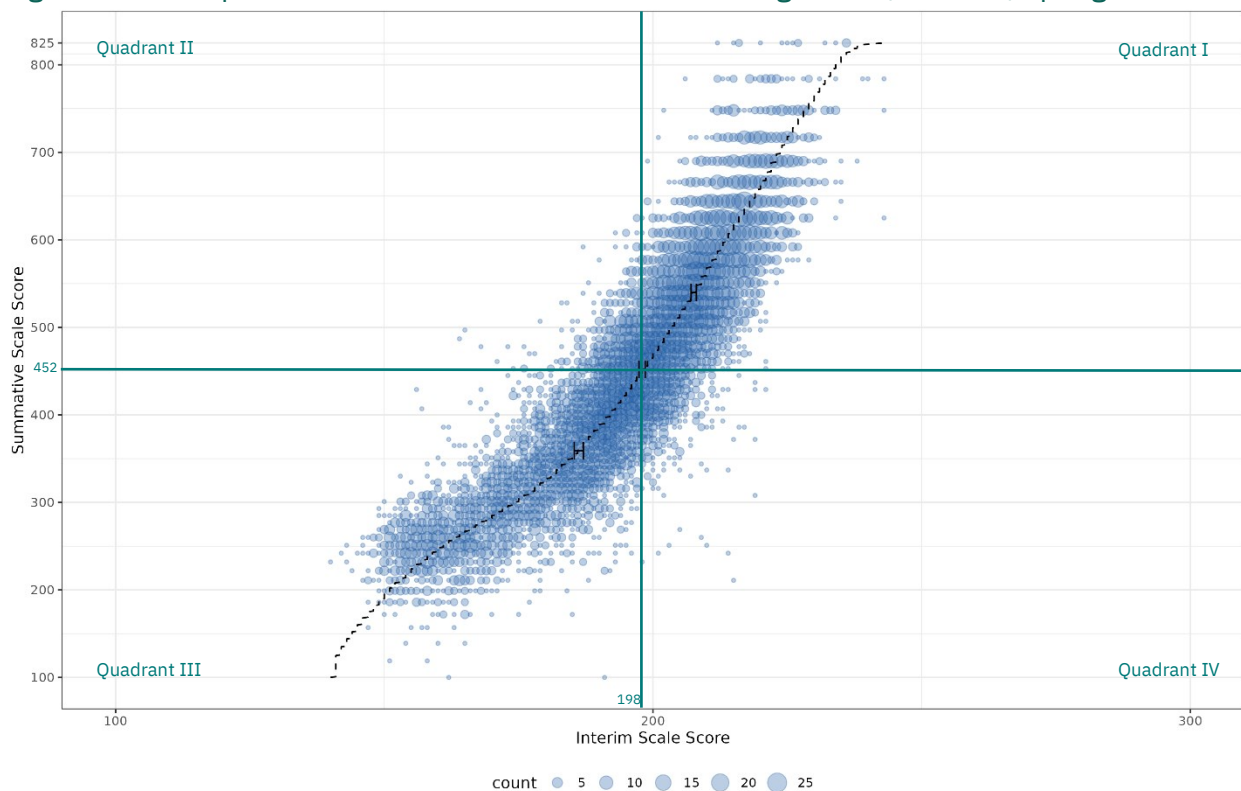
CONCLUSIONS

EA conducted linking studies between the spring 2023 SC READY Mathematics and ELA assessments and the NWEA MAP Growth Mathematics and Reading assessments for the purpose of providing updated results based on the most current assessment data available in order to facilitate interpretation of scores between the two assessments. Once again, we recommend that in cases where interim vendors' studies are more recent or utilize the same assessment year as our own results, that educators prioritize the use of the vendors' results and resources.

Despite good classification accuracy results from this study, there are still important notes of caution to call out when interpreting and using the linked scores. As with any statistical procedure, there is associated error and limitations of the results. Additionally, the two tests are constructed differently with regard to test content, design, and purpose. For example, the MAP Growth Reading assessment is one of two MAP assessments used to assess students' ELA skills (Language Usage is the other assessment), and focuses on "reading comprehension, understanding of genres and text, and vocabulary" (NWEA, 2019, p.11). The SC READY ELA assessment is composed of two subtests—writing and reading—and measures student performance on Reading – Literary Text, Reading – Informational Text, Inquiry, and Writing (SCDE, 2022). The statistical adjustments in linking do not adjust for differences in test content.

Therefore, scores on the SC READY and NWEA MAP assessments should not be used interchangeably. The linked scores facilitate comparisons of proficiency status between two assessments, but do not imply equivalence.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More information about this study can be found in Education Analytics' February 2024 technical report titled "Linking Study Between South Carolina College- And Career-Ready Assessment (SC Ready) and NWEA MAP Growth Assessment, Grades 3-8". That report can be found at the following link:

[SC READY and MAP Linking Study Technical Report Final - February 2024 (PDF)](#)

ABOUT EDUCATION ANALYTICS

Professor Robert Meyer formed EA in late 2012 with the objective of conducting research and developing policy and management analytics to support reform and continuous improvement in American education. This institutional mission—to identify ways that analytics can make education systems better—has been central to our work with the federal government, school districts, states, non-profits, and policymakers. EA serves as a partner, and not just a vendor, by engaging in hands-on analytics support and thought partnership around how to address potential shifts in the policy landscape.

EA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, and employs approximately one hundred research scientists, programmers, data engineers, data strategists, and support staff. EA's areas of expertise include student growth metrics, human capital analytics, predictive analytics, technical assistance, data preparation and reporting services, and more. Our deeply knowledgeable and experienced team not only offers a full range of education analytics knowledge to our partners to support new systems, but also strives to co-build each system with stakeholders to match the available data and meet the desired policy requirements.

REFERENCES

NWEA. (2019). *MAP® Growth™ technical report*. Portland, OR: Author.

South Carolina Department of Education. (2022). *SC READY and SCPASS Score Report User's Guide: For Use with Spring 2022 Score Reports*. Columbia, SC: Author.

education
analytics

UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION ANALYTICS' LINKING STUDY BETWEEN SC READY AND RENNAISSANCE LEARNING STAR ASSESSMENT, GRADES 3-8

// March 2024

110 E Main Street, Ste. 1000
Madison, WI 53703

608.466.4966

edanalytics.org

OVERVIEW

In the spring of 2023, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (SC EOC), in collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), partnered with Education Analytics (EA) to complete a linking study between the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY) in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) and the Renaissance Learning's STAR Growth assessment in Mathematics and Reading, respectively. Linking studies are used to statistically connect state summative test scores and interim test scores within the same grade level to facilitate comparisons of proficiency status on the two tests. Such linking studies help to answer the question, *what would my students' proficiency status on the spring state test likely be based on how they performed on the STAR assessment?*

The SC EOC enlisted EA to provide updated linked results based on the most current assessment data available (Spring 2023) and validate the results provided by interim assessment vendors, offering an independent evaluation of the alignment between interim assessments and state-level assessments. In cases where an interim vendor's studies are more recent than those presented here or utilize the same assessment year as our own results, **we recommend prioritizing the use of the vendor's results.** This approach ensures that educators and policymakers have access to the most up-to-date and aligned data and resources for making informed decisions regarding student learning and achievement.

In the following sections, we will provide a general overview of the linking study results and guidance on their interpretation, including limitations and cautions associated with linking studies. By providing an overview of EA's linking study results, methods, and considerations, this document aims to facilitate informed decision-making and promote transparency in assessment practices.

LINKING STUDIES

Data & Methods

Data from students who took both the SC READY and STAR Mathematics and ELA/Reading assessments in Spring 2023 were included in the linking study. Furthermore, only matched students who took the STAR assessments within 30 days of SC READY[1] in Spring 2023 were included. This ensures more comparability in students' exposure to the curriculum when they were tested.

---

[1] The SC READY data do not include the actual test administration dates, so this is an approximation based on SCDE's 2022–23 Assessment Schedule.

Linking studies establish the relationship between the two assessments by identifying corresponding percentile ranks across the test scores. Through this process we obtain scores on the spring STAR assessment that correspond to the three SC READY achievement level cut scores (i.e., cut score between Does Not Meet Expectations and Approaches Expectations, cut score between Approaches Expectations and Meets Expectations, and cut score between Meets Expectations and Exceeds Expectations) for mathematics and ELA at grades 3-8.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 present the linking results between SC READY and STAR spring tests for mathematics and ELA, respectively. The top panel shows the ranges of SC READY scale scores at each proficiency level and grade level in 2023. The bottom panel shows the corresponding STAR scores.

Table 8. SC READY and STAR Cut Score Equivalents (Spring): Mathematics

Grade	SC READY			
	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100–359	360-437	438-542	543-825
4	100-400	401-480	481-562	563-850
5	100-447	448-534	535-621	622-875
6	100-452	453-542	543-626	627-900
7	100-487	488-576	577-648	649-925
8	100-526	527-614	615-682	683-950
	Renaissance STAR			
	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	0-515	516-589	590-664	665-1400
4	0-606	607-677	678-733	734-1400
5	0-625	626-734	735-803	804-1400
6	0-673	674-783	784-847	848-1400
7	0-711	712-822	823-878	879-1400
8	0-738	739-835	836-892	893-1400

Table 9. SC READY and STAR Cut Score Equivalents (Spring): ELA

Grade	SC READY			
	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	100-358	359-451	452-539	540-825
4	100-418	419-508	509-591	592-850
5	100-448	449-556	557-652	653-875
6	100-454	455-574	576-666	667-900
7	100-511	512-614	615-703	704-925
8	100-536	537-641	642-736	737-950
	Renaissance STAR			
	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
3	0-268	269-398	399-514	515-1400
4	0-331	332-470	471-589	590-1400
5	0-397	398-549	550-703	704-1400
6	0-423	424-621	622-815	816-1400
7	0-500	501-719	720-924	925-1400
8	0-524	525-753	754-1040	1041-1400

Linked STAR test scores were also extended from the spring to the fall and winter terms for the scores reaching the "Meets Expectations" performance level. These scores are summarized in Table 3. Note that these linked scores were calculated based on the mean STAR scores within each term among all South Carolina students who took the STAR test. Therefore, they reflect expected score equivalents **on average** among these students and **should not** be interpreted as accurate estimations for every individual student. The level of error around the fall and the winter scores will be larger than those around the spring scores as a result of extending these analyses to the fall and winter when SC READY is not administered.

Table 12. STAR Cut Score Equivalents

Grade	Mathematics			ELA		
	Fall	**Winter**	**Spring**	**Fall**	**Winter**	**Spring**
3	511	555	590	308	359	399
4	604	644	678	385	436	471
5	679	711	735	470	519	550
6	747	770	784	561	598	622
7	784	805	823	646	685	720
8	800	822	836	684	724	754

Interpretation & Limitations

Classification accuracy statistics are used to evaluate the degree to which the linked scores from the spring STAR assessment to the SC READY achievement level cut scores can be used to accurately classify students' proficiency status. An evaluation of these diagnostics provides strong evidence of good classification accuracy for using the linked STAR scores to estimate students' proficiency status on the SC READY assessments at grades 3-8.

While we do see this high level of classification accuracy, it is still important to consider the appropriate uses and limitations of these results. Figure 1 displays a scatterplot of scores for all grade 3 students who took the SC READY and STAR Mathematics tests in Spring 2023. The black dashed line represents the best-fitting curve, which signifies how STAR Mathematics scores correspond to the SC READY Mathematics scores for students **on average**. For example, a score of 438 on the SC READY Mathematics test is the cut score for "Meets Expectations" at grade 3; this corresponds to a STAR Reading score of 590. Yet as with any statistical methods, there is a level of error associated with the results. The narrow black bands plotted around the dashed curve show the 95% confidence intervals around the average, which represent the range of values within which the linked scores could fall.

We see from this narrow band and the strong classification accuracy diagnostics that our statistical model is strong. However, it is important to keep in mind that the linked scores are based on a 50% likelihood estimation. This means that not all students who reach a

proficiency cut score on STAR will necessarily reach the associated score on SC READY. The results are more accurate for students on average than as associated with individual students.

Take the example of the SC READY 438 cut score for "Meets Expectations" in grade 3 and the corresponding STAR Mathematics score of 590. This represents how students performed on average. In reality, there is a wide range of STAR scores among students who reached a 438 on SC READY. Not all students who scored 590 and above on the STAR Reading test also scored 438 or higher on the SC READY Mathematics test in Spring 2023. Specifically, students in the bottom right box in Figure 1 (i.e., Quadrant IV) scored lower than 438. Similarly, students who met or exceeded expectations (i.e., scored 438 or above) on the SC READY Mathematics test had a wide range of scores on the STAR Mathematics test. Students in the top left box on the graph (i.e., students in Quadrant II) scored below a 590 on STAR Mathematics.

The interpretation of this estimated average is: 3rd grade students who scored 590 on STAR Mathematics have a 50% chance of scoring 438 or higher (i.e., reaching "Meets Expectations") on the SC READY Mathematics test. We recommend thinking about this scatterplot of the real student test scores when using and interpreting the linking results. Knowing the associated limitations of the results will allow educators to take the appropriate caution when using the results to answer the question, *what would my students' proficiency status on the spring state test likely be based on how they performed on the STAR assessment?*

Figure 1. Scatterplot of the SC READY and STAR Mathematics, Grade 3, Spring 2023
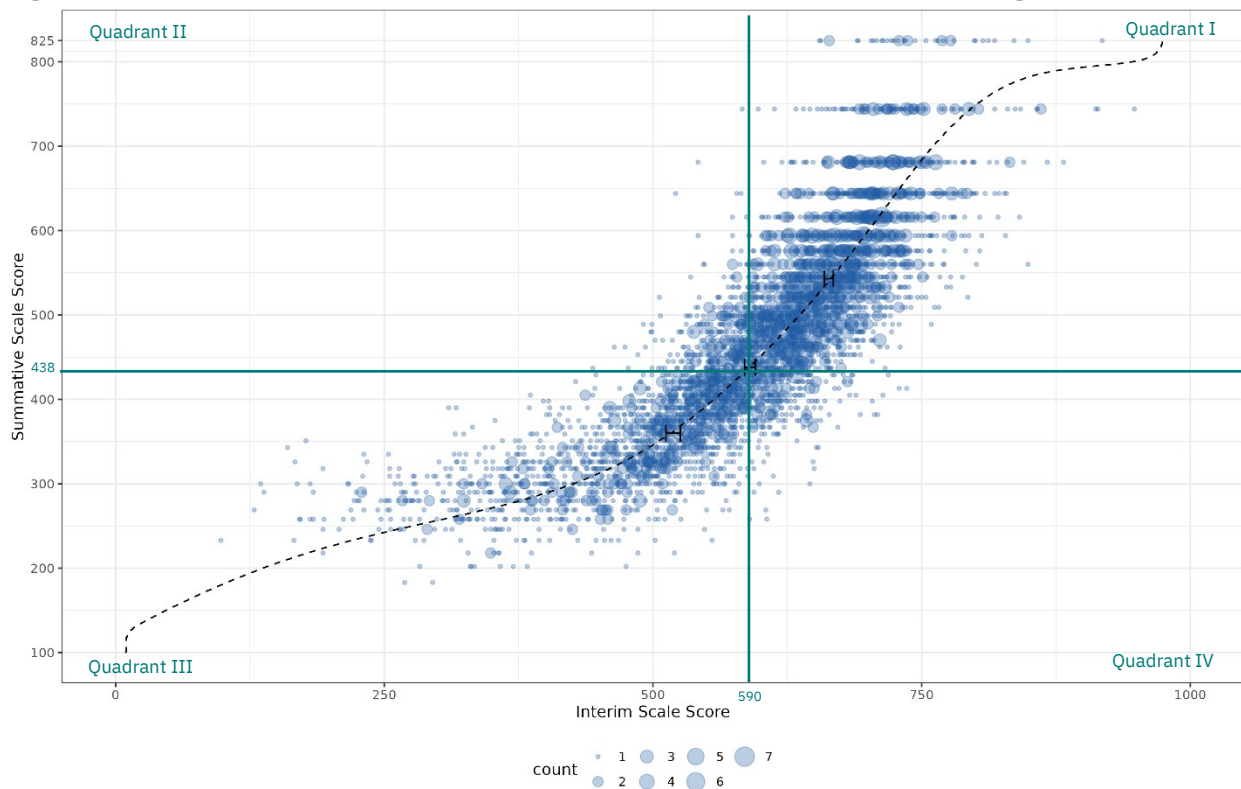
CONCLUSIONS

EA conducted linking studies between the spring 2023 SC READY Mathematics and ELA assessments and the Renaissance STAR Mathematics and Reading assessments for the purpose of providing updated results based on the most current assessment data available in order to facilitate interpretation of scores between the two assessments. Once again, we recommend that in cases where interim vendors' studies are more recent or utilize the same assessment year as our own results, that educators prioritize the use of the vendors' results and resources.

Despite good classification accuracy results from this study, there are still important notes of caution to call out when interpreting and using the linked scores. As with any statistical procedure, there is associated error and limitations of the results. Additionally, the two tests are constructed differently with regard to test content, design, and purpose. For example, the STAR Reading test measures students' reading strategies and skills in five domains – "Word Knowledge and Skills, Comprehension Strategies and Constructing Meaning, Analyzing Literary Text, Understanding Author's Craft, and Analyzing Argument and Evaluating Text" (Renaissance Learning, 2023, p.16). The SC READY ELA assessment is composed of two subtests – writing and reading, and measures student performance on Reading – Literary Text, Reading – Informational Text, Inquiry, and Writing (SCDE, 2022). The statistical adjustments in linking do not adjust for differences in test content.

Therefore, scores on the SC READY and Renaissance STAR assessments should not be used interchangeably. The linked scores facilitate comparisons of proficiency status between two assessments, but do not imply equivalence.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More information about this study can be found in Education Analytics' February 2024 technical report titled "Linking Study Between South Carolina College- And Career-Ready Assessment (SC Ready) and STAR Assessment, Grades 3-8". That report can be found at the following link:

SC READY and STAR Linking Study Technical Report Final - February 2024 (PDF)

ABOUT EDUCATION ANALYTICS

Professor Robert Meyer formed EA in late 2012 with the objective of conducting research and developing policy and management analytics to support reform and continuous improvement in American education. This institutional mission—to identify ways that analytics can make education systems better—has been central to our work with the federal government, school districts, states, non-profits, and policymakers. EA serves as a partner, and not just a vendor, by engaging in hands-on analytics support and thought partnership around how to address potential shifts in the policy landscape.

EA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, and employs approximately one hundred research scientists, programmers, data engineers, data strategists, and support staff. EA's areas of expertise include student growth metrics, human capital analytics, predictive analytics, technical assistance, data preparation and reporting services, and more. Our deeply knowledgeable and experienced team not only offers a full range of education analytics knowledge to our partners to support new systems, but also strives to co-build each system with stakeholders to match the available data and meet the desired policy requirements.

REFERENCES

Renaissance Learning. (2023). *Renaissance Star Assessments™ for Reading Technical Manual*. Wisconsin Rapids, WI: Author.

South Carolina Department of Education. (2022). *SC READY and SCPASS Score Report User's Guide: For Use with Spring 2022 Score Reports*. Columbia, SC: Author.