



# SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

*Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.*

## State-Funded Full-Day 4K Annual Report 2024-25 & 2025-26

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# Introduction

## & Enabling Legislation

The following is a report from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) pursuant to Provisos 1.47 and 1A.26 of the 2025-26 General Appropriations Act to report on the Child Early Reading and Development Education Program (CERDEP).

### Pursuant to Proviso 1.47, 2025-26 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 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 program's 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 child care 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 Appendix A.

## 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 child care centers that 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 students is considered Potentially Unserved by CERDEP. Head Start students are not counted as CERDEP or Potentially Unserved.*

# Summary of Key Findings

## Key Findings

This report, and key findings and research questions are organized into three interrelated categories: access, quality, and impact.

Pupils in Poverty (PIP) defines students 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, and in this report uses the designation provided by the SCDE.

### Access:

- 54,037 students enrolled in kindergarten in the 2025-26 school year; of those students, 30,004 (56%) are pupils in poverty.
  - 17,910 four-year-olds were served by CERDEP programming in the 2024-25 school year and are enrolled in public kindergarten in the 2025-26 school year. Of these 17,910 children, 14,143 were in CERDEP 4K (79% of CERDEP participants) and 3,767 children were in First Steps 4K (21% of CERDEP participants).
  - In 2024-25, there were 2,890 (77%) students enrolled in First Steps 4K programming for at least 120 days of instruction or the length of time that is considered a “full dose” of 4K by the First Steps State Office. There were 90 (2%) students in First Steps 4K absent 10 days or more.
  - In 2024-25, 13,839 students in CERDEP 4K were absent less than 10 days in accordance with the CERDEP guiding practices attendance policy. There were 304 (2%) students in CERDEP 4K absent 10 days or more.
  - In the 2024-25 school year, there were 8,855 students potentially eligible for CERDEP programming who did not participate in CERDEP or Head Start.
  - Based on data received from the parent/caregiver kindergarten enrollment surveys for students enrolled in kindergarten during school year 2025-26, 1,312 four-year-olds in poverty were served in Head Start 4K during the previous school year 2024-25. In the 2025-26 school year 2,412 students are enrolled in Head Start 4K, based on the data from the enrollment survey given to parents and caregivers.
  - Of 52,433 kindergarten students who took the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) in school year 2025-26, 38% demonstrated readiness.
  - In the 2025-26 school year there were 30,004 kindergarten students identified as pupils in poverty who took the KRA, and 8,811 29% demonstrated readiness.
- **Of all 14,433 pupils in poverty served by CERDEP in 2024-25, 35% demonstrated readiness (36% CERDEP 4K, 28% First Steps 4K) on the KRA in 2025-26.**
  - **Of all 15,571 pupils in poverty who did not participate in CERDEP in 2024-25, 25% demonstrated readiness on the KRA in 2025-26.**
  - For all 8,811 pupils in poverty who demonstrated readiness on the KRA in 2025-26, 57% participated in CERDEP and 43% did not.
  - In the 2024-25 school year, \$73,629,158 state expenditures were spent to serve 14,143 CERDEP 4K students who enrolled in kindergarten in SC public schools in the 2025-26 school year. There were \$40,617,912 actual state expenditures used to fund 3,767 First Steps 4K students later enrolled in public school kindergarten during the same time period.

# 4K Experience Breakdown: School Year 2024-25



## CERDEP 4K 2024-25

**14,143 children**

(26% of kindergartners,  
SY 25-26)

Pupils in Poverty	non-PiP
<b>11,890</b> (84%)	<b>2,253</b> (16%)

Actual state expenditures  
2024-25  
**\$73,629,158**



## Head Start 2024-25

**1,312 children**

(2% of kindergartners,  
SY 25-26)

Pupils in Poverty	non-PiP
<b>775</b> (59%)	<b>537</b> (41%)



## Private 4K 2024-25

**8,537 children**

(16% of kindergartners,  
SY 25-26)

PiP	non-PiP
<b>1,450</b> (17%)	<b>7087</b> (83%)

## State-Funded Full-day 4K



### First Steps 4K 2024-25

**3,767 children**

(7% of kindergartners,  
SY 25-26)

Pupils in Poverty	non-PiP
<b>2,543</b> (68%)	<b>1,224</b> (32%)

Actual state expenditures  
2024-25  
**\$40,617,912**



## Other Public 4K 2024-25

**8,216 children**

(15% of kindergartners,  
SY 25-26)

Pupils in Poverty	non-PiP
<b>4,491</b> (55%)	<b>3,725</b> (45%)

Pupils in Poverty (PIP) defines students 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, and in this report uses the designation provided by the SCDE.

## Children with Unknown 4K Experience 2024-25

**18,062 children**

Pupils in Poverty	non-PiP
<b>8,855</b> (49%)	<b>9,207</b> (51%)

Recruitment Focus →

**848**  
Open Seats  
First Steps 4K  
2024-25

# Readiness Levels on Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) School Year 2025-26

**Pupils in Poverty**  
**30,004**  
*(56%)*

**54,037**  
total test takers

**non-PiP**  
**24,033**  
*(44%)*

KRA Performance of the 30,004  
Kindergartners Identified as  
Pupils in Poverty



**Demonstrating**  
**8,811 (29%)**

**Approaching**  
**10,939 (36%)**

**Emerging**  
**9,467 (32%)**

**Did Not Test 787 (3%)**

KRA Performance of the 24,033  
Kindergartners Identified as  
Non-Pupils in Poverty



**Demonstrating**  
**11,353 (47%)**

**Approaching**  
**7,247 (30%)**

**Emerging**  
**4,616 (19%)**

**Did Not Test 817 (3%)**

# State-Funded Full-Day 4K Enrollment, SY 25-26

## Child Early Reading and Development Program (CERDEP) 2025-26 Enrollment

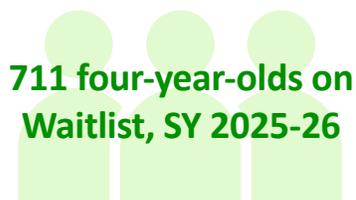


### 4-year olds enrolled:

16,034 on 45th day  
43 average days enrolled  
3.5 average days absent

72 Districts  
960 Classrooms

\$91,455,273 State funding  
allocated



711 four-year-olds on  
Waitlist, SY 2025-26

Unknown Open Seats



### 4-year olds enrolled:

3,980 four-year-olds enrolled for  
at least one day on 45th day  
24 average days absent

309 Providers  
368 Classrooms

\$52,526,803 State funding  
allocated



1,739 First Steps 4K  
Open Seats  
2025-26

Unknown Waitlist

## ▶ State Investment:

South Carolina invested \$114,247,070 in fiscal year 2024-25, from the State’s General fund and Education Improvement Act (EIA) allocated funds. This amount is on par with the previous year’s amount, which was the largest amount invested in state-funded 4K to date.

## ▶ Quality:

South Carolina is assessed in the State of Preschool Yearbook, released by Rutgers University’s National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) each May. In the most recently available, [2024 State of Preschool Report](#), South Carolina ranked 15th nationally in access to 4K, 38th in state financial investment in early childhood education, which is down one in each category from the previous year. When other funds are considered in addition to state funds, South Carolina ranks 42nd, which is also down from the previous year. Like the past two years, South Carolina met 7 out of 10 benchmarks of quality (NIEER, 2025).

## ▶ Impact of Access to High Quality 4K:

**Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Results:** As in years past, a considerable benefit to kindergarten readiness was found between pupils in poverty who did and did not access CERDEP programming through either CERDEP 4K or First Steps 4K. This school year (2025-26), 4,989 (35% of all CERDEP PIP) pupils in poverty who participated in CERDEP in the 2024-25 school year were demonstrating readiness on the KRA as compared to 3,822 (25% of all Non-CERDEP PIP) who did not participate in CERDEP and performed at the same level. Of all the pupils in poverty who demonstrated readiness, 8,811 or 57% did participate in CERDEP programming.

### *Changes to CERDEP Over Time:*

CERDEP Changes to the 2024-25 Fiscal Year:	CERDEP Changes to the 2025-26 Fiscal Year	Proposed CERDEP Changes to the 2025-26 Fiscal Year:
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.	The required date for school districts to share students on a CERDEP 4K waitlist with First Steps 4K and SCDE changed from November 15 <sup>th</sup> to September 1 <sup>st</sup> .	A proposed proviso amendment would relieve school districts that participate in EOC waitlist pilot activities from submitting waitlist numbers annually using the SCDE Formstack survey. These numbers will be reported to SCDE and in the annual CERDEP report to the General Assembly by EOC staff.
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.	At the request of EOC, a revised proviso was approved in the 2024-25 Appropriation Act that SCDE will provide a Sun ID number to all children receiving services from a public or private provider.	<p><a href="#">CERDEP expansion for FY 2026-27</a> would allow for districts to expand CERDEP by: 1. Extend the number of days up to 220 or offer a summer program, 2. Add CERDEP classrooms or extend the length of CERDEP class from 6.5 to 8.5 hours, 3. Elect to participate in CERDEP for the 2026-27 school year for non-participating districts.</p> <p>The Governor’s proposed budget would allow for First Steps 4K to serve students at or below 300% of poverty, an expansion from the current threshold of 185% of poverty or Medicaid eligible.</p>

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 visualizations of these data, the EOC proposed amendments in 2024 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 Child Care Scholarships, EIA, Title I, district-funded, and all other federal, state, or local public sources. The revised proviso was adopted as part of the 2024-25 Appropriation Act.

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. SC Child Care 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, provides the EOC Head Start Census Data that shows the number of children served in the program by county. 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 during their 4K year. Head Start students are not counted as CERDEP, nor are they counted as potentially unserved students as it would skew the representation and lead to incomplete conclusions. Students noted as served by Head Start in this report were noted as such in the parent enrollment survey, given to parents and caregivers before the 2025-26 kindergarten year. When percentages are given in this report, Head Start pupils in poverty are not counted as CERDEP students and are subtracted from the total number of pupils in poverty to avoid skewed percentages.*

## Forthcoming Reports and Dashboards

In April 2025, the EOC issued a report about the number of children on a waitlist for a 4K placement. EOC staff developed a pilot communication program and implemented this pilot in partnership with SCDE and First Steps State Office in Aiken and Lexington 1 school districts. The pilot required the districts to send contact information for CERDEP-eligible students on the waitlist to First Steps Enrollment Specialists at the state office once per week from June first through September first. The legislative requirement is for districts to share this information via Formstack survey with SCDE who will then share with First Steps State office once per year. Traditionally, there are few, if any children enrolled from the waitlist in First Steps 4K classes statewide. Using this pilot process, 23 students in two districts were enrolled in First Steps 4K. EOC staff will expand this pilot process, called “Filling the Seats” by First Steps State Office, to include more districts and Head Start programming, and results will be reported for stakeholders.

Proviso 1.84 in the 2025-26 Appropriations Act, enables the EOC to “maintain an interactive Education Data Dashboard.” The dashboard can be located at [dashboardsc.gov/prek](https://dashboardsc.gov/prek); data included in this report will be updated on the dashboard in Spring 2026.



# 2026 Recommendations and Updates to 2025 Recommendations:

## 1) Pilot Efforts and Innovations to Ensure CERDEP Eligible Children Are Not Waiting for 4K:

As of September 1, 2025 there are 711 students on a CERDEP 4K waitlist and 1,462 open seats in First Steps 4K. Data describing where these open seats are is included later in this report. It is recommended that the communication process piloted in 2025 be expanded to additional districts and that Head Start programs be invited to participate as well. As the communication pilot continues, it is recommended that mechanisms to automate sharing of contact information for eligible families on a waitlist securely with consent be explored so that real time information can be shared between state-funded early childhood sectors without additional staff time.

### 2025 Update

Success was met in Lexington 1 and Aiken through piloting a more fluid communication process to share First Steps 4K options with families and connect First Steps Enrollment Specialists with families. Lessons learned from this pilot in year 1 will be used to improve success in year 2.

## 2) Increase CERDEP Infrastructure Using Data to Prioritize Focused Recruitment of Families and/or Providers:

A great deal of research has been completed to understand and capture students on a 4K waitlist, and how they might access this opportunity; however, less is known about open seats and existing capacity to serve children. First Steps 4K shares data on the open seats at the provider level, and similar data should be collected from CERDEP 4K at the school and district level and from Head Start grantees. This will support clarity on where gaps in state-funded 4K exist and drive focused recruitment of potentially eligible students or providers where needed.

## 3) Continue to Increase Quality by Meeting the NIEER Benchmarks Related to Screening and Teacher Qualifications:

Over the past three years, this report has used the NIEER benchmarks of quality to measure quality in CERDEP opportunities in South Carolina. There has not been a change in the number of benchmarks South Carolina has met and the same three remain in need of attention. Progress has been made; however, this work remains a recommendation. Nationally, South Carolina rankings on access to 4K have slipped, while investment in 4K has remained relatively stable.

### A. Teacher and Assistant Teacher Qualifications:

Two of these benchmarks are related to teacher and assistant teacher qualifications, and South Carolina has begun researching career ladders, and mechanisms needed to phase in requirements that teachers of 4K have a bachelor's degree and assistant teachers have a Child Development Associate (CDA). A CDA is a nationally recognized credential that demonstrates ability to provide high quality care and educational opportunity to a young child. In 2025, a group of early childhood leaders at the state and local level were convened with the stated purpose to collaborate on this and other recommendations in this report. While a plan is not yet developed for implementation, knowledge has been shared around potential opportunities and leaders will meet again to complete a cross-sector plan to support meeting the benchmarks for teacher and teacher assistant qualifications.



### B. Hearing, Vision and Developmental Screening and Referral When Appropriate:

EOC staff has successfully identified necessary stakeholders, learned about inhibitors to universal screening practices, and developed a draft plan that has been shared with experts for feedback. Stakeholders will reconvene to specifically discuss universal hearing, vision, and developmental screeners at agreed upon timelines and referral processes. When plans are approved by all stakeholders, piloting and data collection will begin. The next collaborative convening to meet this goal will occur in Spring 2026 and updates will be reported in the annual report on state funded 4K.

#### 4) Recruit Families for Available Seats using Focused Marketing Strategies:

A number of recruitment strategies have been deployed to recruit First Steps 4K students to fill the available seats in existing First Steps 4K classrooms. Still, approximately 31% of all capacity remains to be filled by eligible students. It is recommended that additional family recruitment strategies be identified, and First Steps 4K centers engage in additional marketing programs to fill available seats, while continuing to participate in the “Filling the Seats” pilot program facilitated by the EOC. Some focused recruitment innovations suggested for consideration include: recruitment postcards in libraries and children’s museums or zoos where families check out, recruitment brochures in grocery stores, and advertisements on billboards or buses near locations with high numbers of open seats in First Steps 4K programs such as Richland 1, Florence 1, Charleston and/or Sumter.

#### 5) Focus on Access, Quality and Support for Teachers and Administrators in CERDEP classes:

Evaluations of the impact of CERDEP programming on kindergarten readiness consistently show that pupils in poverty demonstrate readiness more than similarly situated students who do not. Still, statewide SCDE and First Steps state office share a goal that 75% of students will enter kindergarten demonstrating readiness to access the kindergarten standards and learning activities. Statewide, only 38% of students enter kindergarten demonstrating readiness across all previous 4K experiences, regardless of PIP status. CERDEP is the early childhood sector where quality and procedural outcomes can be most consistently monitored at the state level and where pilots and innovations can be considered within the confines of enabling legislation. It is the recommendation of staff that meeting NIEER benchmarks of quality by piloting innovations that promote quality in CERDEP classrooms be implemented to meet the stated goal of 75% kindergarten students demonstrating readiness.

Innovations must be developed from sound data on 4K and its effect of supporting children’s learning. CERDEP programs use 4K assessments but little is known about how these assessments are used, the reliability of findings, and if these practices benefit young learners in our state. In the Cyclical Review of the Accountability System, conducted in 2025, a recommendation was adopted to conduct a statewide assessment audit, to evaluate the scale and utility of existing assessments. It is recommended that 4K assessments be included in this audit and the findings be used to develop innovations to pilot in 4K as is appropriate.

## SC Child Early Reading and Development Education Pilot Program (CERDEP) Report:

Annually, this report seeks to answer several research questions that fall into three interrelated categories: access, quality, and impact. Access to 4K is the first step in ensuring participation in programs that support kindergarten readiness. Quality of programming influences a family’s decision to participate in 4K and ensures that all participants enter kindergarten ready to learn. The impact of CERDEP on academic achievement is examined in this report by looking at CERDEP participants’ kindergarten readiness. For purposes of this report, kindergarten readiness is determined by the performance level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). Particular attention is focused on pupils in poverty, as that is the primary qualifying characteristic for CERDEP eligibility.

### 1) Access to state-funded, full-day 4K

- How many CERDEP programs are in South Carolina?
- How many four-year-old children in South Carolina are in poverty and eligible for CERDEP programming?
- How many children are served by CERDEP in South Carolina?
- What is the financial investment in 4K?

### 2) Quality of state-funded, full-day 4K programming

- On National benchmarks of quality how does South Carolina fare when considering quality preschool programming?
- How is quality measured in SC? What is the quality of CERDEP programming?

### 3) Impact of state-funded 4K on academic achievement

- Are students who participate in state-funded 4K ready for kindergarten?



## Access to State-Funded, Full-Day 4K:

### NIEER Access Ranking:

Each year the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) of Rutgers University, publishes a [State of Preschool Yearbook](#) and [rankings for access and resource allocation](#). In the 2022 Yearbook, South Carolina was ranked 11th nationally in access to 4K and in 2023 rankings, South Carolina fell to 14th. In the most recently available data in 2024 rankings, South Carolina slipped again and ranked 15th nationally for access to 4K. This report is an evaluation of 4K, however NIEER does rank access to 3K as well and most recently South Carolina ranked 35th in access to 3K.

### Infrastructure to Offer CERDEP Opportunities:

In the 2024-25 school year, CERDEP 4K programming was available in all school districts except: Beaufort, Greenville, Horry, and York 2. In the 2025-26 school year, 72 school districts participate in CERDEP with 960 CERDEP 4K classrooms across all districts in the state. In the 2025-26 school year, there are 93 more 4K classes and three new districts (Beaufort, Horry, and York 2) than in 2024-25. This means that all school districts except Greenville participate in CERDEP 4K this year. School districts that do not participate in CERDEP do offer 4K classes funded through district, Education Improvement Act (EIA) or Title 1 funds. Throughout this report, students served in these programs are referred to as students in Other Public 4K (non-CERDEP) programs.

First Steps 4K is present in every county in the state except Abbeville, Allendale, Calhoun, Clarendon, Edgefield, Fairfield, and McCormick for the 2025-26 school year; these counties did not have a First Steps 4K Center during the 2024-25 school year either. The gap in counties translates to 16 school districts without a First Steps 4K Center in their zone in 2025-26, but families can participate in any First Steps 4K in the state regardless of what county they live in or what school district they are zoned for.



#### School Districts without a First Steps 4K Center in the District Service Area: 2025-26

Abbeville
Allendale
Anderson 1
Anderson 3
Anderson 4
Calhoun
Clarendon 6
Dorchester 4
Fairfield
Florence 2
Florence 3
Florence 5
Greenwood 52
Lexington 4
McCormick
York 2 (Clover)

#### 2025-26

First Steps Center ABC Quality Rating	
A+	12
A	13
B+	42
B	119
C	75
Pending	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>

Each school district that does not participate in CERDEP 4K does have a First Steps 4K in the county of service, meaning there is a CERDEP option in every SC county.

In school year 2025-26, there are 309 Centers operating the 368 First Steps classrooms. Of these centers, 303 are licensed by DSS (five are SCISA and one is a federally licensed military center) with 267 (88%) participating in ABC Quality. Of the 368 First Steps 4K Classrooms in the 2025-26 school year, 249 (68%) offered an 8-hour instructional day, and 279 (76%) offered an extended year program that ran 220 days, which is an increase for both extended day and year round options. Of the 355 First Steps 4K classrooms serving children in the 2024-25 school year, 227 (64%) offered an 8-hour instructional day and 260 (73%) offered an extended year program that runs 220 days. See Table A for a more detailed comparison of First Steps 4K access over the past three years.

Table A: First Steps 4K Classroom School Year Comparison of Access:

2023-24 School Year		2024-25 School Year		2025-26 School Year	
Number of classrooms	327	Number of classrooms	355	Number of classrooms	368
Classrooms that offer 8-hour instructional day	214 (65%)	Classrooms that offer 8-hour instructional day	227 (64%)	Classrooms that offer 8-hour instructional day	249 (68%)
Classrooms that offer 6.5-hour instructional days	113 (35%)	Classrooms that offer 6.5-hour instructional days	128 (36%)	Classrooms that offer 6.5-hour instructional days	119 (32%)

2023-24 School Year		2024-25 School Year		2025-26 School Year	
Number of classrooms	327	Number of classrooms	355	Number of classrooms	368
220 instructional days	258 (79%)	220 instructional days	260 (73%)	220 instructional days	279 (76%)
180 instructional days	69 (21%)	180 instructional days	95 (27%)	180 instructional days	89 (24%)
Total Capacity	5,534	Total Capacity	5,948	Total Capacity	5,544

\*Data from the Office of First Steps received November 2025

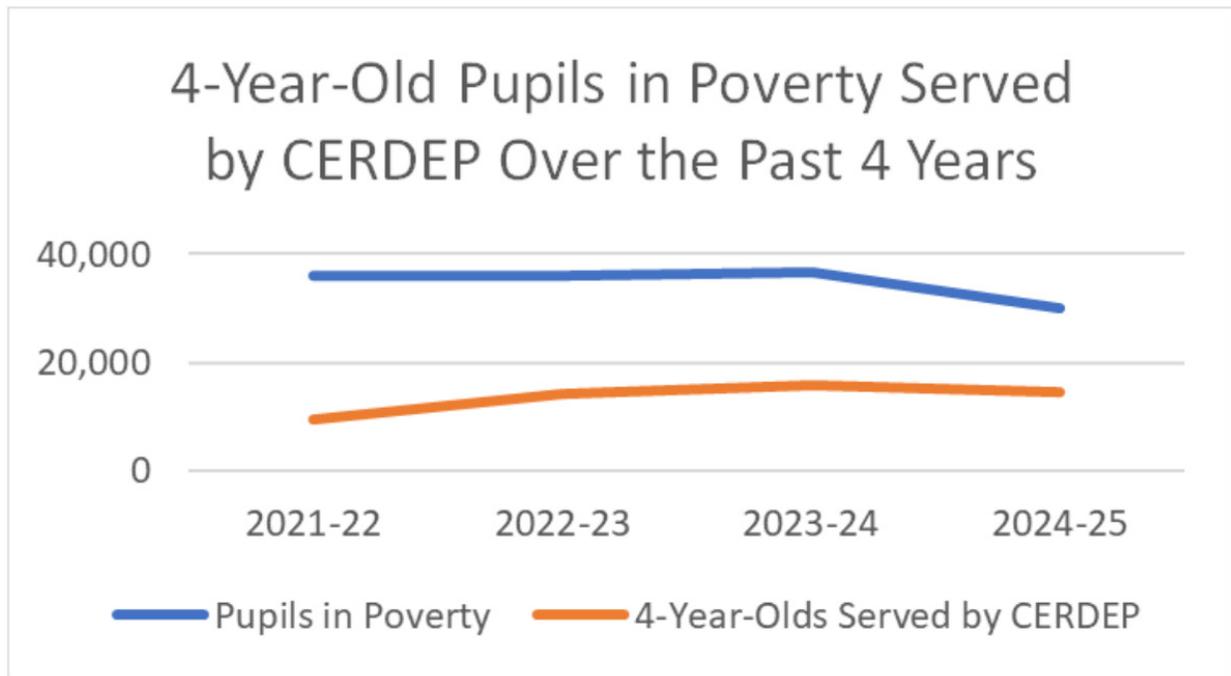


Table B: Students' 4K Experience (SY 2024-25) and PIP Status in 5K (SY 2025-26):

4 K Experience	Pupils in Poverty 5K (2025-26) Served in 4K Experience (2024-25)	Percent of all Pupils in Poverty Served in 4K Experience (2024-25)	Pupils NOT in Poverty 5K (2025-26) Served in 4K Experience (2024-25)	Percent of Pupils NOT in Poverty Served in 4K Experience (2024-25)	Total	Percent of Total Enrolled in 5K by 4K Experience in 2024-25
CERDEP 4K	11,890	84%	2,253	16%	<b>14,143</b>	26%
First Steps 4K	2,543	68%	1,224	32%	<b>3,767</b>	7%
HeadStart	775	59%	537	41%	<b>1,312</b>	2%
Other Public 4K	4,491	55%	3,725	45%	<b>8,216</b>	15%
Private 4K	1,450	17%	7,087	83%	<b>8,537</b>	16%
Unknown	8,855	49%	9,207	51%	<b>18,062</b>	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,004</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>24,033</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>54,037</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Data received from the SCDE and SCFS November 2025.

\*\*When PIP status data was missing, students were counted in total 4K experience only. In some cases totals may not match as a result.

Per Section 59-156-130 (C)(2) students who do not meet the poverty threshold may be enrolled and costs reimbursed for these students under two conditions: 1. If by October 1st of the school year at least 75% of eligible students in the county or district are served by CERDEP, Head Start, or ABC Quality through SC Child Care Scholarships, and 2. If students score at or below the 25th national percentile on two of the three DIAL subscales. This may account for students who do not meet the poverty threshold being served in CERDEP classes. At this time, there is limited information regarding how school districts are able to determine the total number of financially eligible four-year-olds, as opposed to those who express interest in being enrolled in the CERDEP 4K program.

Enrollment in First Steps 4K, Head Start, and accessing SC Child Care Scholarship are also unknown variables. To navigate the challenge of filling all available spots and serving only financially eligible children, a number of practices to honor Section 59-156-130 (C) (2) have been established in local districts. While local control is valuable to meet the needs of individual communities across the state, additional guidance from SCDE on how to determine when 75% of financially eligible children are served will increase consistency of a state-funded program and may increase consistency of access for eligible children across the state. Should Governor McMaster's budget request for the 2026-27 fiscal year be enacted to expand CERDEP eligibility to 300% of poverty, particular attention will be required to ensure that students originally eligible for CERDEP options under the law are still prioritized for enrollment in programs.



## Students Not Served and Waiting for CERDEP:

In the 2024-25 school year, there were 18,062 children whose 4K experience was unknown. Of those children, 8,855 (49%) qualified as pupils in poverty and were potentially eligible for CERDEP programming. Some of these students may have been counted in the 402 students who were on a waitlist for CERDEP 4K. During the 2024-25 school year, there were 848 open First Steps 4K seats that could have been utilized by these students if there was a statewide system to match eligible 4K students with a state-funded or Head Start spot. In the 2025-26 school year, there were 711 students on a waitlist for CERDEP 4K, and First Steps 4K has 1,739 open spots.

Some success has been realized matching children on a CERDEP 4K waitlist with a First Steps 4K spot through a pilot effort that will be expanded this year. Existing data at the school district level is used to invite participants. Data on children enrolled and reasons families decline an open spot will be reported in future reports. Table C shows waitlists and potential open First Steps 4K spots.

*Table C: 2025-26 CERDEP 4K Waitlist Numbers with First Steps 4K Capacity and Open Seats by School District:*

District	Number of Students on Waitlist	First Steps 4K Open seats
Abbeville	2	No FS 4K
Aiken*	17	76
Anderson 1	1	No FS 4K
Anderson 2	7	10
Anderson 3	no waitlist	No FS 4K
Anderson 4	no waitlist	No FS 4K
Anderson 5	11	38
Bamberg	1	4
Barnwell	11	25
Beaufort	no waitlist	23
Berkeley	66	31
Calhoun	no waitlist	No FS 4K
Charleston	27	89
Cherokee	15	0
Chester	8	21
Chesterfield	18	6

District	Number of Students on Waitlist	First Steps 4K Open seats
Clarendon 6	7	No FS 4K
Colleton	no waitlist	7
Darlington	4	29
Dillon 3	no waitlist	22
Dillon 4	11	22
Dorchester 2	15	22
Dorchester 4	no waitlist	No FS 4K
Edgefield	2	No FS 4K
Fairfield	9	No FS 4K
Florence 1	7	95
Florence 2	no waitlist	No FS 4K
Florence 3	2	No FS 4K
Florence 5	no waitlist	No FS 4K
Georgetown	no waitlist	44
Greenwood 50	no waitlist	42
Greenwood 51	2	No FS 4K

District	Number of Students on Waitlist	First Steps 4K Open seats
Greenwood 52	no waitlist	No FS 4K
Hampton	no waitlist	10
Horry County Schools	179	69
Jasper	24	9
Kershaw	37	6
Lancaster		25
Laurens 55	no waitlist	14
Laurens 56	no waitlist	17
Lee	no waitlist	3
Lexington 1*	35	55
Lexington 2	10	19
Lexington 3	4	1
Lexington 4	no waitlist	No FS 4k
Lexington/Richland and 5	no waitlist	16
Marion	11	25
Marlboro	6	8
McCormick	no waitlist	No FS 4k
Newberry	48	4
Oconee	no waitlist	7
Orangeburg	no waitlist	45
Pickens	9	32

District	Number of Students on Waitlist	First Steps 4K Open seats
Richland 1	no waitlist	122
Richland 2	18	37
Saluda	15	9
Spartanburg 1	no waitlist	6
Spartanburg 2	36	35
Spartanburg 3	no waitlist	2
Spartanburg 4	no waitlist	13
Spartanburg 5	9	8
Spartanburg 6	no waitlist	51
Spartanburg 7	no waitlist	48
Sumter	no waitlist	87
Union	9	1
Williamsburg	no waitlist	8
York 1	no waitlist	11
York 2 (Clover)	no waitlist	No FS 4k
York 3 (Rock Hill)	11	25
York 3 (Palmetto School)	5	
York 4	2	28
Total	711	1,739*

\*Total includes open spots in charter districts. Aiken and Lexington 1 School Districts enrolled 10 and 13 students respectively off the waitlist in a First Steps 4K placement using an innovative communication piloted by the EOC with district and state level partners.

While there has been focused recruitment of districts and First Steps 4K providers and a focus on the population of students intended to be served, there remains approximately 30% of four-year-olds in poverty who could participate in CERDEP, but do not. This year approximately 8% (711) of those attempted to access a CERDEP class but are on a waitlist, while 30% (5,544) of First Steps 4K funded seats remain empty. Understanding the reason why is imperative as there are available seats across the state, children waiting for CERDEP opportunities, and participation in CERDEP programming consistently demonstrates improved kindergarten readiness.



**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 First Steps 4K considers 120 days a “full dose”, or enough time for the program to be implemented with fidelity for the desired effects. There were 2,890 (77%) students in First Steps 4K who were present for 120 days or more in the 2024-25 school year. Students present for 120 days or more of First Steps 4K were more likely to demonstrate or approach readiness than those who did not receive a full dose of First Steps 4K.

*Table D: KRA Results in First Steps 4K Comparing a Full Dose to Less than 120 Days of Attendance:*

	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Approaching</b>	<b>Demonstrating</b>	<b>Not Tested</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Full Dose First Steps 4K</b>	698 (24%)	1,237 (43%)	906 (31%)	49 (2%)	2,890 (77%)
<b>Less than 120 days</b>	355 (40%)	294 (34%)	189 (22%)	39 (4%)	877 (23%)
<b>Total</b>	1,053 (28%)	1,531 (41%)	1,095 (29%)	88 (2%)	3,767 (100%)

Currently SCDE requires attendance as described in the [CERDEP 4K guidelines for 2024-25](#). The state policy states that students who are absent more than 10 days are considered chronically absent, and administrators must “identify ways of resolving underlying factors that might be preventing consistent attendance.” The small number of children missing 10 days or more suggests that this policy is being implemented with fidelity; however, this does not provide information about days present which is more powerful in understanding the most effective dosage of CERDEP 4K.

Table E: KRA Results by CERDEP 4K Absence Policy Data:

	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating	Not Tested	Total
<b>Absent More than 10 Days</b>	127 (42%)	97 (32%)	60 (20%)	20 (7%)	304 (2%)
<b>Absent 10 Days or Less</b>	3,041 (22%)	5,255 (38%)	5,291 (38%)	252 (2%)	13,839 (98%)
<b>Total</b>	3,168 (22%)	5,352 (38%)	5,351 (38%)	272 (2%)	14,143 (100%)

Table F: KRA Results in First Steps 4K by 10 or More Days Absent:

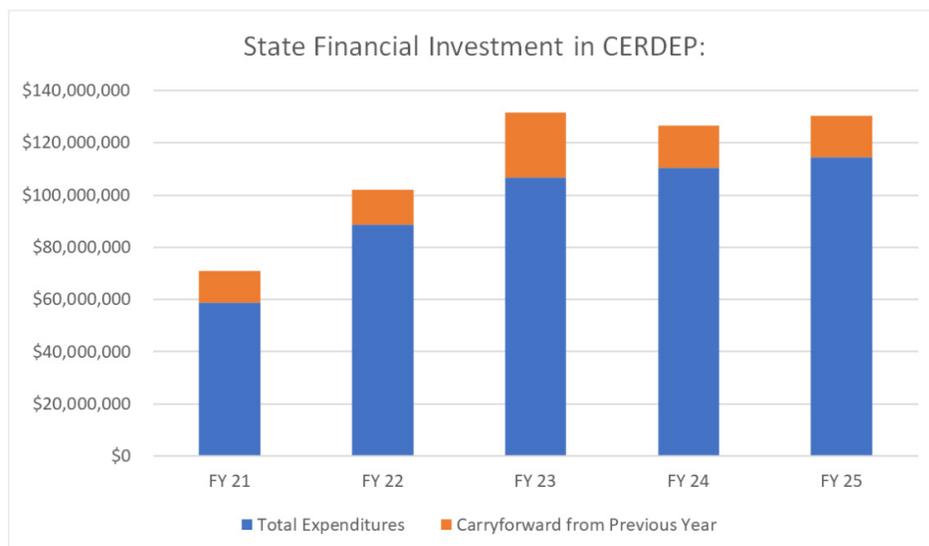
	Emerging	Approaching	Demonstrating	Not Tested	Total
<b>Absent More than 10 Days</b>	52 (58%)	22 (24%)	11 (12%)	5 (6%)	90 (7%)
<b>Absent 10 Days or Less</b>	326 (27%)	488 (41%)	350 (29%)	34 (3%)	1,198 (93%)
<b>Total</b>	378 (29%)	510 (40%)	361 (28%)	39 (3%)	1,288 (100%)

Data from both CERDEP 4K and First Steps 4K shows that attendance matters and it is important to [Be Present](#) for 4K as it impacts Kindergarten readiness and suggests a trajectory for better attendance in Kindergarten on testing days.

### Financial Investment in 4K:

In fiscal year 2024-25, CERDEP 4K \$114,247,070 was invested from the General Fund and EIA recurring appropriations. The amount carried forward to FY 2024-25 from the previous fiscal year is \$4,766,223 for CERDEP 4K and \$11,207,120 for First Steps 4K for a total of \$15,973,343.

Table G: State Investment in CERDEP 4K Over Time:



Source: SCDE and SCFS Data Requests 2021 through 2025. Data received from SCFS November 2025, and from SCDE February 2025

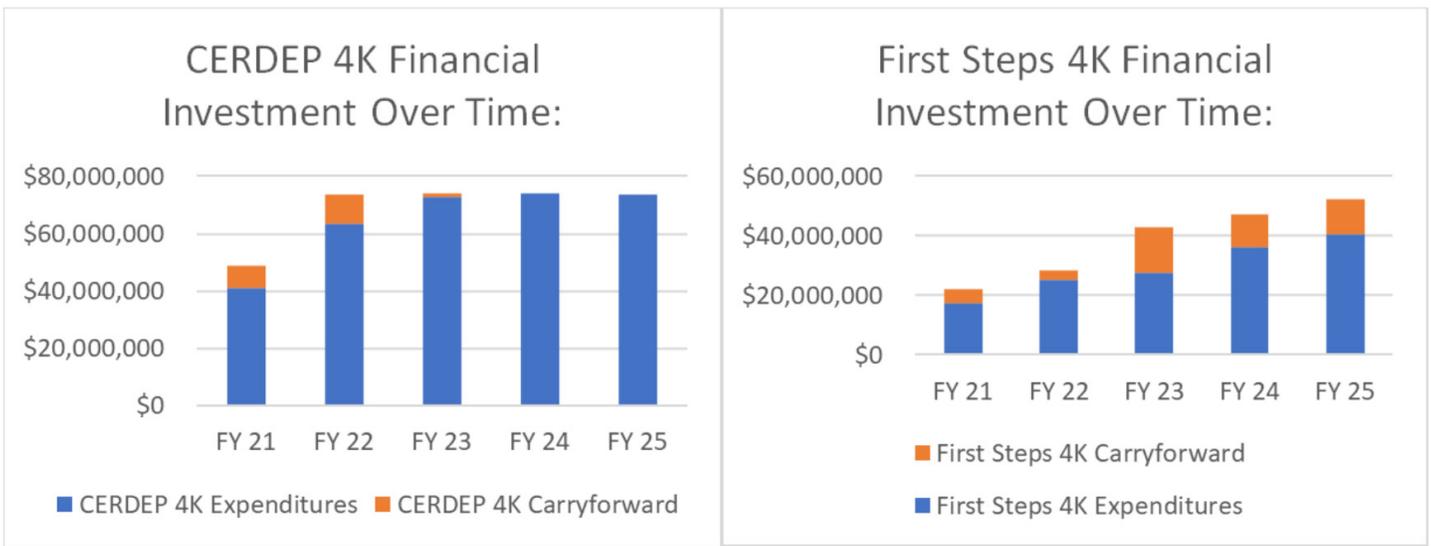
Table H: Carryforward Over Time:

Fiscal Year	Fiscal Year 2020-21	Fiscal Year 2021-22	Fiscal Year 2022-23	Fiscal Year 2023-24	Fiscal Year 2024-25
Total	\$12,028,297	\$13,238,453	\$24,829,690	\$16,453,061	\$15,973,343

\*Source SCDE and SCFS Data Requests 2021 through 2024. Data received from SCFS November 2024 and from SCDE February 2025

There is a slight decrease in carryforward from FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25. This decrease and the increasing number of students served demonstrate that funds are being used to serve children and support teachers. In the 2024-25 school year, \$73,629,158 state expenditures were spent to serve 14,143 CERDEP 4K students who enrolled in kindergarten in SC public school in the 2025-26 school year. There were \$40,617,912 actual state expenditures used to fund 3,767 First Steps 4K students later enrolled in public school kindergarten during the same time period.

Table I: CERDEP Investment Over Time by Program:



\*Current Data received from SCDE and SCFS November 2025 respectively. Previous data reported by EOC from historic data requests.



## Quality of State-Funded 4K Programming:

Quality of early childhood education is equally as important as access when considering the impact of state-funded 4K. South Carolina has placed a priority on high quality 4K as evidenced by the amount of coaching supports, and required curriculum and assessment for progress monitoring.

## NIEER Benchmarks of Quality:

South Carolina has met seven of the ten benchmarks over the past three reporting years, and it remains a recommendation that EOC staff work with NIEER stakeholders to develop a strategy to meet the remaining three.

Policy	Requirement	Benchmark	Meets Benchmark
Early Learning & Development Standards	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	Yes
Curriculum Supports	Approval process and supports	Approval process and supports	Yes
Teacher Degree	BA (public), AA (non-public)	BA	Not Yet
Teacher Specialized Training	Early Childhood Education	Specializing in pre-K	Yes
Assistant Teacher Degree	High School Diploma	CDA or equivalent	Not Yet
Staff Professional Development (PD)	15 hours/year, PD plans and coaching	For teachers and assistants: at least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching	Yes
Maximum Class Size	20 (4-year-olds)	20 or lower	Yes
Staff to Child Ratio	1:10 (4-year-olds)	1:10 or better	Yes
Screening and Referral	Immunizations, developmental; vision, hearing, health and more	Vision, hearing, health screenings and referral	Not Yet
Continuous Quality Improvement System	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	Yes

South Carolina has [Early Learning Standards \(ELS\)](#) that function similarly to the elementary, middle and high school standards, to guide learning activities in support of growth and professional development topics for teachers. The ELS have six domains of development: approaches to play and learning, emotional and social development, health and physical development, language development and communication, mathematical thinking and expression, and cognitive development.

To meet the benchmark of offering curriculum supports and approval, CERDEP 4K and First Steps 4K have a different process. CERDEP 4K has a curriculum review panel which determines approved curricula and makes a recommendation to the State Board of Education. Approved CERDEP 4K curricula include: Frog Street PreK, Pre-K on My Way, The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Worlds of Wonders, High Scope, and InvestiGators. Frog Street Pre-K and PreK on My Way were newly added in school year 2022-23. Additionally in 2025, the curriculum review panel determined that Montessori education is approved. First Steps 4K engages in a process to approve curriculum and programs may choose from: High Scope, Creative Curriculum, or Montessori Method. First Steps 4K also uses the Conscious Discipline model to support children’s behavior.

South Carolina does have a policy that teachers serving as lead teachers have specialized training in early childhood, and all CERDEP programming offer professional development aligned with curricula, early learning standards, and strategies and programs being implemented by each CERDEP model. Appendix B shows the number of attendees, and the professional development opportunity provided by CERDEP 4K and First Steps 4K. South Carolina does not have a policy about teacher and assistant teacher degrees that satisfied the NIEER benchmark, but it is a current recommendation that stakeholders begin to study teacher qualifications and begin to work towards both requirements that meet the NIEER benchmark of quality and build a career ladder for 4K SC teachers who do not meet that benchmark. While work has begun to meet this benchmark, it will continue in 2026.

### Teacher Qualifications in State-Funded 4K 2025-26:

For the 2025-26 School Year, First Steps 4K has 368 lead teachers that hold a variety of degrees.

First Steps 4K Teacher Qualifications		
Associates Degree	137	37%
Bachelors	176	48%
Masters	53	14%
EdD/PhD	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Data received by SCFS, November 2025*

For the 2025-26 School Year, there were 1,143 certified CERDEP 4K lead teachers with 669 having certifications in multiple areas. The degrees held by CERDEP 4K Teachers can be found in the table below:

CERDEP 4K Teacher Degrees		
Bachelors	377	33%
Bachelors + 18	67	6%
Masters	524	46%
Masters + 30	160	14%
Doctorate	15	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,143</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Data received by SCDE, November 2025*

Because more than half of the First Steps 4K lead teachers hold a Bachelors degree or higher, it is worth considering changing the requirement to align with NIEER benchmarks while allowing these teachers to continue in their position while they earn a Bachelor’s degree utilizing existing scholarship dollars. Additionally, a First Steps 4K teacher loan program could be created where loans are forgiven after specified number of years of service as a First Steps 4K teacher.

There are requirements that state staff-to-child ratios and maximum class sizes in both the CERDEP 4K and First Steps 4K program guidelines. Additionally, any First Steps 4K program that is licensed through DSS must adhere to this ratio. The ratio is also included in [ABC Quality](#).

South Carolina does not currently have a policy requiring screening for hearing, vision, and other health screenings in all state-funded 4K at this time; however, it was a recommendation in the previous report to investigate needed stakeholders and begin to develop a plan to ensure that all preschool students in state-funded 4K are screened for hearing, vision, and developmental health. A draft plan has been developed by EOC staff to complete screening for hearing, vision, and one other developmental screening in state funded sectors, appropriate referral criteria, and build needed infrastructure for evaluation and treatment when required. This plan has been shared with state leaders in the field when all feedback is shared, it will be adjusted as needed, reviewed by stakeholders and then initial implementation efforts will begin.

South Carolina has a Continuous Quality Improvement System (CQIS) called ABC Quality. First Steps 4K programs can elect to participate in ABC Quality but CERDEP 4K classes are governed by the school building and district quality standards and strategic plan. Because programs must be licensed unless they are exempt to participate in ABC Quality and CERDEP 4K programs are exempt from licensing requirements, it is rare to see a CERDEP 4K participate in ABC Quality ratings. It is for this reason that more detail on First Steps 4K is reported in this section of the report.

**ABC Quality**

*ABC Quality is South Carolina’s statewide quality rating and improvement system (CQIS) for child care and early childhood education; private child care 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. A rating of B+ and B score higher with A+ and A score the highest on the quality standards scale. 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 J: First Steps 4K Classrooms 3-Year Comparison of Quality:*

2023-24 School Year		2024-25 School Year		2025-26 School Year	
A+ Quality Rating	14	A+ Quality Rating	16	A+ Quality Rating	12
A Quality Rating	14	A Quality Rating	15	A Quality Rating	13
B+ Quality Rating	41	B+ Quality Rating	43	B+ Quality Rating	42
B Quality Rating	111	B Quality Rating	121	B Quality Rating	119
C Quality Rating	56	C Quality Rating	103	C Quality Rating	75
Pending Quality Rating	27	Pending Quality Rating	2	Pending Quality Rating	6
No Quality Rating	64	No Quality Rating	55	No Quality Rating	42

After comparing the ABC Quality ratings over the past three school years, we can see that quality levels are comparable and there are fewer centers not participating in ABC Quality. There are more pending quality ratings than in years past meaning that more centers are seeking to participate in the ABC Quality program. In First Steps 4K, there is a quality rating increase in reimbursement that more centers are able to benefit from as a result of quality expectations and coaching supports.

## Growth in 4K:

There are two 4K assessments given in CERDEP classrooms: [Teaching Strategies GOLD](#) and [My Individual Growth and Development Indicators](#) or My IGDIS by Renaissance. All First Steps 4K classes use the GOLD, while CERDEP 4K classes have a choice between GOLD and My IGDIS. Preliminary analysis of 4K assessment data offered insight into the need for a more complete understanding of the training and administration procedures and use of 4K assessment data as formative assessment. It is recommended that GOLD and MyIGDIS assessments be included in the full assessment audit that is to be completed in 2026. Questions of data quality, reliability and assessment use answered through this audit process will enable sound decisions and recommendations to be made about the impact of CERDEP programming.

## CERDEP Impact on Kindergarten Readiness:

### Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Performance Levels

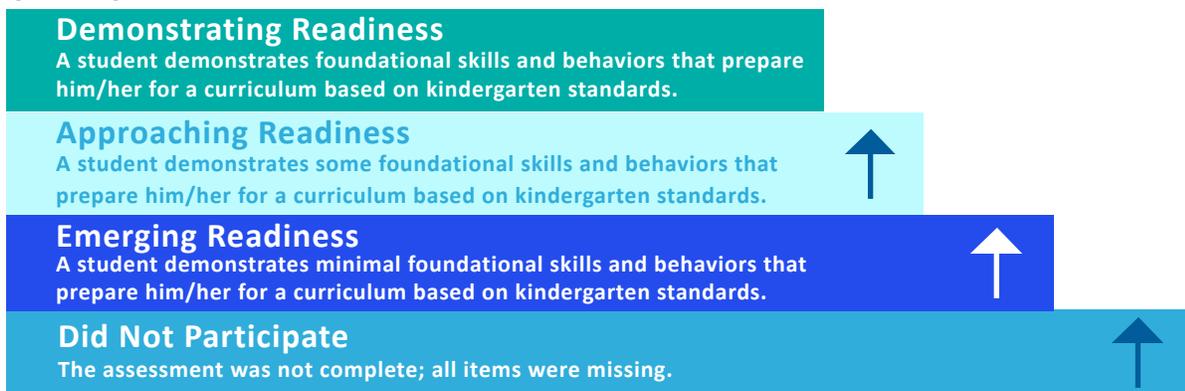


Table K: KRA Performance by Pupils in Poverty Status, SY 2025-26

KRA Performance Level	Emerging Readiness		Approaching Readiness		Demonstrating Readiness		Did Not Participate		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
PIP	9,467	32%	10,939	36%	8,811	29%	787	3%	30,004
Non-PIP	4,616	19%	7,247	30%	11,353	47%	817	3%	24,033
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,083</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>18,186</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>20,164</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>1,604</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>54,037</b>



Pupils in poverty are almost twice as likely to score *Emerging Readiness* on the KRA as those not in poverty, while almost half of students not in poverty scored *Demonstrating Readiness*. When prior 4K experience is linked to KRA performance, it becomes clear that 35% of pupils in poverty who participated in CERDEP programming demonstrated kindergarten readiness. When 4K experience is unknown, only 21% of pupils in poverty demonstrated readiness. Consistently over time, CERDEP programming has contributed to Kindergarten Readiness in a meaningful way for Pupils in Poverty. Additional data for all students who took the KRA in fall 2025 and their 4K experience can be found in Appendix C.

Table L: Kindergarten Readiness 2025-26 by 4K Sector in 2024-25, Pupils in Poverty

KRA Performance Level	Emerging Readiness		Approaching Readiness		Demonstrating Readiness		Did Not Participate		Total
CERDEP 4K	2,776	23%	4,617	39%	4,281	36%	216	2%	11,890
First Steps 4K	738	29%	1,046	41%	708	28%	51	2%	2,543
<b>Subtotal All CERDEP</b>	<b>3,514</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>5,663</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>4,989</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>14,433</b>
Head Start	276	36%	305	39%	175	23%	19	2%	775
Other Public 4K	1,501	33%	1,570	35%	1,291	29%	129	3%	4,491
Private 4K	343	24%	548	38%	532	37%	27	2%	1,450
Unknown	3,833	43%	2,853	32%	1,824	21%	345	4%	8,855
<b>Subtotal non-CERDEP</b>	<b>5,953</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>5,276</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>15,571</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,467</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>10,939</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>8,811</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>30,004</b>

\*Data received from SCDE December, 2025.

## Conclusion:

While more children have access to state-funded 4K with increased state investment, the number of four-year-olds on a waitlist to access a program has increased. With substantial state investment, it is imperative to consider different strategies that can ensure efficient enrollment and programmatic decisions that will allow more eligible children can access high quality 4K that has a demonstrated impact on kindergarten readiness. The recommendations made in this report will improve access to, quality, and impact of CERDEP 4K.

### Future Directions & Next Steps:

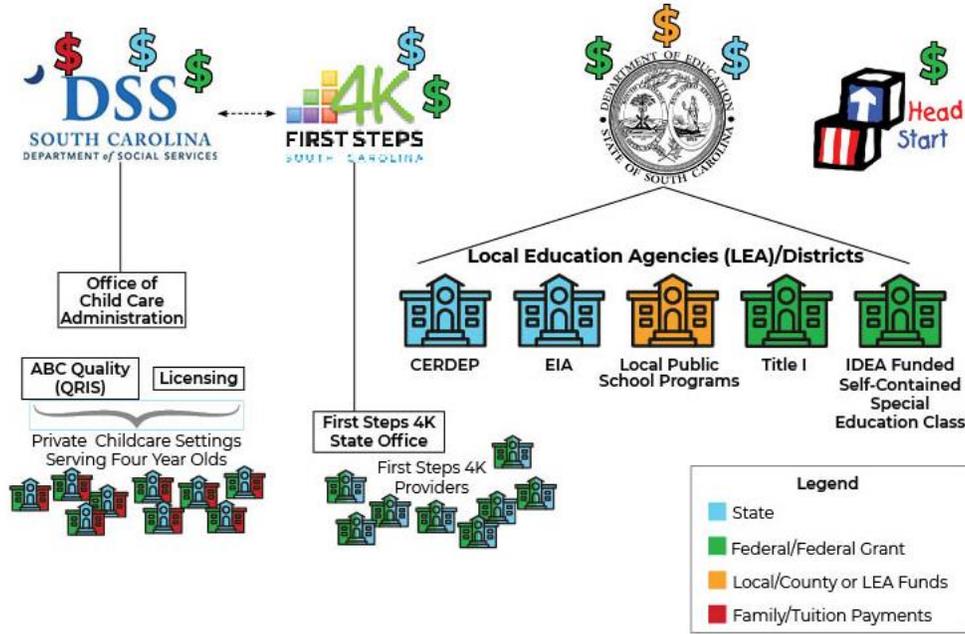
This year marks the 20th year of CERDEP programming in South Carolina. Research this year will be completed to develop a longitudinal analysis of the impact of CERDEP programming on children as they grow into adults and become citizens of South Carolina. This research will be provided in the 2027 CERDEP Report.



# Appendices

Appendix A: Landscape of 4K in South Carolina and Funding Streams:

# Funding Streams for 4K



**Appendix B: Professional Development:**

Offered by SCDE:

<b>Title/Topic of PLO</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Platform (Virtual/F2F)</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Pyramid Model Strategies	1/2/24	F2F	33
EC MTSS Session 1	1/5/24	F2F	25
Purposeful, Playful Math Regional	1/16/24	F2F	3
Elevating Purposeful Play-Based Learning	1/18/24	F2F	25
EC MTSS Session 1	1/23/2024	F2F	33
EC MTSS Session 1	1/25/2024	F2F	21
EC MTSS Session 1	1/30/2024	F2F	45
SCECA Session: Cultivating Purposeful Play Using Rhymes	2/2/2024	F2F	40
EC MTSS Session 3	2/16/2024	F2F	10
Developing Emergent Writing Skills Session 1	2/16/2024	F2F	20
Developing Emergent Writing Skills Session 1	2/22/2024	F2F	28
Palmetto State Literacy Teacher Association Conference Session: Mining the Hidden Gems of Emergent Literacy with Rhymes through Play	2/22- 23/2024	F2F	50
EC MTSS Session 2	3/5/2024	F2F	45
EC MTSS Session 2	3/7/2024	F2F	21
Assessment Regional PLO	3/19/2024	F2F	5
Developing Emergent Writing Skills Session 1	3/22/2024	F2F	28
EC MTSS Session 1	4/1/2024	F2F	35
EC MTSS Session 3 Midlands	4/2/2024	F2F	21
EC MTSS Session 3 Upstate	4/9/2024	F2F	45
Elevating Purposeful Play-Based Learning	5/28/2024	F2F	35
Pyramid Model with Assistant Principals & Behavior Interventionists	6/4/2024	F2F	32
Elevating Purposeful Play-Based Learning	6/6/2024	F2F	40
REL PLC Emergent Literacy Module 1: Print Knowledge	6/25/2024	F2F	15
REL PLC Emergent Literacy Module 2: Phonological Awareness	6/26/2024	F2F	15
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK	7/17/2024	F2F	15
Joyful Center Based Learning in PreK: The What, Why, & How	7/18/2024	F2F	10
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK	7/18/2024	F2F	12

I Am a Teacher Too!	7/22/2024	F2F	3
I Am a Teacher Too!	7/23/2024	F2F	3
I Am a Teacher Too!	7/23/2024	F2F	3
Promoting Emotional and Social Competence (Unpacking the Kit)	7/25/2024	F2F	10
EC MTSS Session 2	7/26/2024	F2F	35
SC Early Childhood MTSS (Session 2)	7/26/2024	F2F	27
EC MTSS Session 1	7/29/2024	F2F	23
Igniting the Power of Nursery Rhymes	8/5/2024	F2F	28
I Am a Teacher Too!	8/5/2024	F2F	18
I Am a Teacher Too!	8/7/2024	Virtual	199
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK	8/11/2024	F2F	1
CERDEP High-Quality Environment Support	8/22/2024	F2F	21
I Am a Teacher Too!	9/3/2024	F2F	30
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK	9/4/2024	F2F	5
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK	9/6/2024	F2F	3
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK: The What, Why, & How	9/8/2024	F2F	1
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK	9/11/2024	F2F	5
Joyful Center-Based Learning	9/23/2024	F2F	5
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK	9/23/2024	F2F	29
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK: The What, Why, & How	9/23/2024	F2F	1
Purposeful Play	10/11/2024	F2F	25
Purposeful Playful Math	10/11/2024	F2F	2
I Am a Teacher Too!	10/11/2024	F2F	1
Developing Emergent Writing Session 2	10/14/2024	F2F	28
Inclusion Conference: CERDEP Presentation	10/17/2024	F2F	25
Challenging Behaviors (EC-MTSS)	10/29/2024	F2F	21
EC-MTSS Session 2	11/4/2024	F2F	23

MTSS – Teaching for Executive Functions	11/13/2024	F2F	60
Challenging Behaviors (EC-MTSS)	11/19/2024	F2F	35
Unpacking the Pyramid Model Kit (EC-MTSS)	1/3/2025	F2F	30
Joyful Center-Based Learning in PreK	1/3/2025	F2F	1
Challenging Behaviors (EC-MTSS)	1/23/2025	F2F	17
Challenging Behaviors (EC-MTSS)	1/29/2025	Virtual	62
SC Early Childhood MTSS Session Three	1/29/2025	Virtual	1
Addressing Challenging Behavior (Pyramid)	1/29/2025	Virtual	3

**First Steps 4K Professional Development Offerings/Events, 2024-2025 and 2025-2026**

<b>Topic of PLO/Professional Development Opportunities</b>	<b>Platform/Date(s)</b>	<b>2024-25 participants</b>	<b>2025-26 participants</b>	<b>Notes</b>
New Teacher Training	July 2024 (virtual) July 2025 Also offered in January 2026	125	198-July Expected 100-January	3 day training for teachers new to First Steps 4K, learning the basics of Conscious Discipline, Creative Curriculum, and setting up and maintaining classroom environment
Winter New Teacher Training	(virtual) January 2026	75	Expected 60	3 day training for teachers new to First Steps 4K, learning the basics of Conscious Discipline, Creative Curriculum, and setting up and maintaining classroom environment
New Leader Training	(virtual) July 2024 (2 sessions) July 2025	221	407	Leaders learn FS4K policies and procedures for important day to day tasks like managing attendance, submitting documents, etc.
All Leader Training	(virtual) July (2 sessions)	x	382	This special session was held to introduce to leaders the new attendance policy for FS4K.
Leadership Academy	October 2025 (in person)	250	288	This 2 day, in-person event had different sessions for leaders to learn more about the 4K program, CLASS implementation, and refine practices
Teacher Academy	October 2025 (in person)		522	2.5 days Adventures in 4K
Leadership Forums-Certified Trainings	(virtual) Sept. 2025-June 2026	Sept.- 50 Oct.-42 Nov.-124 Dec.- 22 Jan.-41 Feb.-40 March-65 April-20 May-50 June- 91	Sept. 18-62 Oct. 16-25 Nov. 20-68 Jan. 22- Feb. 19- March 19- April 16- May 21- June 18-	Each month, there is a different topic that leaders gather to learn about.

AIM4K National Directors Credential	(virtual) Oct-July, monthly training opportunities	21	18	Through National Louis University, a cohort of directors led by First Steps 4K to build knowledge, competency, and quality practices.
GOLD New Teacher Assessment Training	(virtual) August	246	110	
GOLD Checkpoint Trainings	(virtual) October 2025	X	57	
Gold Finch Training	(virtual) Sept. 2025	X	517	
Fall Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree	(virtual) July and September	572	997	15 sessions offered in July 2024, September had 2 keynotes and a town hall
Spring Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree	(virtual) March 2025 (virtual) March 2026	914	Estimate-1000	
Getting Started with ASQ Online	(virtual) August 2025	X	261	
Tips for Successful Family Conferences	(virtual) October 2025, February 2026	X	October- 7 February-TBD	
Teacher PD Day- Formula for Success	(in person) July 31	X	520	
Curriculum Planning Meetings	(virtual) July 2025- May 2026	September-Balls-312 October-Trees-146 November-Clothes-105 December-88 January-111 February-153 March-107 April-123 May-55	September 10, 11-155 October 9, 10- 400 November 5, 6-84 January 7, 8-TBD February 4, 5-TBD March 4, 5-TBD April 8, 16-TBD May 6, 7-TBD June10, 11-TBD	These monthly meetings support the Creative Curriculum as teachers meet to go through each study and plan and share ideas of what instruction throughout the study could look like
Conscious Discipline Lunch and Learn Series	(virtual) Self-regulation skills-offered monthly August-June	October-55 November-24 December-12 January-38 February-61 March-14 April-37 May-25 June-17	TBD	Monthly sessions held to dive deeper into Conscious Discipline
4K Family Orientation Review	(virtual) July	X	131	

Preparing for Ready Rosie Family Engagement Workshop	(virtual) October, March	X	October-33 March – TBD	
CLASS Training- Language Modeling	(virtual) January 2026	X	TBD	
CLASS Training- Concept Development	(virtual) February 2026	X	TBD	
CLASS Training- Quality of Feedback	(virtual) March 2026	X	TBD	
Spring Palmetto PreK Jamboree	(virtual) March 6 2026	X	TBD	
LETRS EC Enrollment	Hybrid December 2024-May 20025  December 2025- June 2026	90 lead teachers completed with mastery 3 FS4K coaches completed with mastery	30 lead teachers and 3 FS4K coaches enrolled to begin coursework	
Literacy Labs- Intermediate Teacher Meetings	(virtual)	October-29 November-25 December-28 January-23 February-25 March-28	X	
Literacy Labs- Veteran Group Meetings	(virtual)	September- 18 October- November-19 December-16 January-14 February-12 March-14	x	
Literacy Labs- New Teacher Meetings and Support	(virtual)	October-59 November- 50 November Office Hours-46 December meeting-49 January meeting-53 Jan. office hours- 23 Feb. meeting-47 Feb. office hours-33 March-44 April-68	x	
Fall Palmetto PreK Keep Jammin’	(virtual) October 2025	x	61	Laying the Literacy Foundation: Emergent Reading in 4K

WolfTrap Writing, SC Arts Commission	April	43	X	
CLASS observation training and certification	(in person) May, June	X	25 First Steps 4K staff certified	
Ready for Kindergarten LIVE	(virtual) April 2024	118	X	Beyond the ABCs: Preparing the Whole Child for Success
Spring Palmetto Pre-K Keep Jammin'	(virtual) May 2024 April 2026	168	Estimated: 150	
Teacher Training/Coaching Support	Twice/month-ongoing (in person)	17 FS4K coaches to approximately 330 classrooms	19 FS4K coaches for approximately 360 classrooms	In person coaching visits by First Steps coaches to each classroom, twice per month for 1.5-3 hours. Visits provided monitoring, technical assistance, and coaching to the funded 4K classrooms throughout the school year. Emails, calls, texts, and follow-up visits to document and build goals.
CLASS coaching pilot-	Hybrid		100 teachers/assistants	CLASS pilot

Parent/Family Offerings 2025-26

<b>Event</b>	<b>Offering</b>		<b># of participants</b>
Preschool Power Hour for Parents (virtual)	July	This event gets parents ready for what to expect in our 4K classrooms and answers questions that family pay has	July 2024-356 July 2025-396
Open House for all classrooms	July/August	Each site holds an open house to explain 4K and go over First Steps 4K	Approximately 350 classrooms
Drop-in Day-Meet the Teacher	August	Each classroom holds a drop-in day to see the classroom and meet the teacher	Approximately 350 classrooms

Fall Parent-teacher conferences	November	Each teacher invites families in to discuss their child's progress and review report card	Approximately 350 classrooms
Fall Family Engagement Night-Literacy Focus	October/November	Each classroom holds a Family Engagement Night where families learn the importance of literacy and play	Approximately 350 classrooms
Winter Family Conferences	January	Each teacher invites families in to discuss their child's progress and review report card	Approximately 350 classrooms
Winter Family Engagement Night-Math Matters	February/March	Each classroom holds a Family Engagement Night where families learn the importance of math and play	Approximately 350 classrooms
Spring Family Conferences	May	Each teacher invites families in to discuss their child's progress and review report card	Approximately 350 classrooms
Ready Rosie	Ongoing throughout the year	A research-based early education program that uses video modeling to help parents and caregivers engage with young children	Approximately 350 classrooms

**Appendix C: Kindergarten Readiness 2025-26 by 4K Sector in 2024-25 For All Students:**

Kindergarten Readiness by 4K Experience									
KRA Performance Level	Emerging Readiness		Approaching Readiness		Demonstrating Readiness		Did Not Participate		Total
CERDEP 4K	3,168	22%	5,352	38%	5,351	38%	272	2%	14,143
First Steps 4K	1,053	28%	1,531	41%	1,095	29%	88	2%	3,767
Subtotal All CERDEP	4,221	24%	6,883	38%	6,446	36%	360	2%	17,910
Head Start	460	35%	521	40%	284	22%	47	4%	1,312
Other Public 4K	2,099	26%	2,666	32%	3,171	39%	280	3%	8,216
Private 4K	847	10%	2,508	29%	5,050	59%	132	2%	8,537
Unknown	6,456	36%	5,608	31%	5,213	29%	785	4%	18,062
Subtotal non-CERDEP	9,862	27%	11,303	31%	13,718	38%	1,244	3%	36,127
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,083</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>18,186</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>20,164</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>1,604</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>54,037</b>

## Appendix D: South Carolina Head Start Census

### December 1, 2024

Head Start Cluster Area	County Service Area	# of Centers	# of Children Enrolled as of December 1, 2024	# of 3 Year Olds	# of 4 Year Olds	Pregnant Women	Home Based	# of Classrooms by County	# of Homeless Children	# of Foster Children by County
Acelero-Aiken/Barnwell Head Start	Aiken	2	86	45	41	-	-	4	-	-
	Barnwell	2	28	14	15	-	-	2	-	-
Acelero-Aiken/Barnwell Early Head Start	Aiken	2	16	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Barnwell	1	16	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Beaufort-Jasper Head Start	Beaufort	4	211	124	85	-	-	12	8	1
	Jasper	2	68	36	34	-	-	4	4	1
Beaufort-Jasper Early Head Start	Beaufort	3	88	24	-	8	-	13	8	1
	Jasper	1	8	1	-	-	-	1	1	-
Berkeley School District Head Start	Berkeley	9	435	292	143	-	-	24	-	-
	Dorchester	2	34	29	5	-	-	2	18	3
Carolina CAA Head Start	Chester	2	91	36	46	-	-	6	-	-
	York	4	169	60	77	-	-	13	-	6
	Union	1	53	18	30	-	-	5	-	2
Carolina CAA Early Head Start	Chester	1	8	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	York	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
	Union	1	32	4	-	-	-	4	-	-
Charleston County School District	Charleston	11	459	459	-	-	-	32	3	1
Charleston County School District Early Head Start	Charleston	10	217	112	-	12	205	28	3	1
Chesterfield/Marlboro Head Start	Chesterfield	4	149	62	77	-	-	10	-	3
	Marlboro	2	112	50	49	-	-	6	-	1
Darlington County Head Start	Darlington	2	242	85	112	-	-	16	12	30
Darlington County Early Head Start	Darlington	1	15	-	-	-	-	2	-	-

## South Carolina Head Start Census

### December 1, 2024

Head Start Cluster Area	County Service Area	# of Centers	# of Children Enrolled as of December 1, 2024	# 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 12, 2024 – November 2024) (Only # of Centers, Homeless and # of Classrooms are included in December 1, 2024 totals)	Clarendon	1	33	5	9	-	-	4	5	1
	Colleton	1	37	9	7	-	-	3	19	-
	Saluda	1	17	4	4	-	-	2	5	-
				-		-				
<b>GLEAMNS Head Start</b>	Abbeville	1	51	41	10	-	-	3	11	-
	Edgefield	1	35	31	4	-	-	2	5	-
	Greenwood	1	177	127	50	-	-	9	19	-
	Laurens	1	50	38	12	-	-	3	8	-
	Lexington	2	116	75	41	-	-	7	24	-
	McCormick	1	27	16	11	-	-	7	24	-
	Newberry	1	74	45	29	-	-	4	1	-
	Richland	2	181	126	55	-	-	10	20	2
	Saluda	1	40	27	13	-	-	2	9	-
<b>GLEAMNS Early Head Start</b>	Edgefield	1	8	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
	Greenwood	1	22	-	-	-	-	3	7	-
	Saluda	1	16	-	-	-	-	2	4	-
<b>GLEAMNS Early Head Start Partnership</b>	Abbeville	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Laurens	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Greenwood	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>ISWA Development Corp- Catawba Indian Nation</b>	Catawba Indian Nation (York County)	1	53	21	24	-	-	4	2	2
<b>ISWA Development Corp-Catawba Indian Nation Early Head Start</b>	Catawba Indian Nation (York)	1	24	1	-	1	-	4	7	1
<b>Lancaster Head Start</b>	Lancaster	1	128	26	69	-	-	7	3	8
<b>Lancaster Early Head Start</b>	Lancaster	1	72	13	-	2	22	6	0	3

# South Carolina Head Start Census

## December 1, 2024

Head Start Cluster Area	County Service Area	# of Centers	# of Children Enrolled as of December 1, 2024	# of 3 Year Olds	# of 4 Year Olds	Pregnant Women	Home Based	# of Classrooms by County	# of Homeless Children	# of Foster Children by County	
Lancaster County First Steps Early Head Start Partnership	Lancaster	3	69	6	-	-	-	9	14	6	
	<b>Lowcountry CAA Head Start</b>										
	Colleton	4	173	116	54	-	-	7	6	3	
	Hampton	2	74	55	16	-	-	7	8	1	
Lowcountry Early Head Start	Colleton	2	48	3	-	4	-	6	8	2	
	Hampton	1	40	6	-	4	4	5	2	-	
	<b>OCAB CAA Head Start</b>										
	Allendale	1	23	11	12	-	-	2	-	-	
	Bamberg	2	47	34	13	-	-	4	-	-	
	Calhoun	1	27	4	-	-	-	2	-	-	
	Orangeburg	6	258	203	55	-	-	17	5	2	
<b>OCAB Early Head Start</b>	Bamberg	1	40	-	-	-	13	4	-	-	
<b>Pee Dee CAA Head Start</b>											
	Dillon	2	122	74	41	-	-	8	2	2	
	Florence	8	267	210	148	-	-	16	2	12	
	Marion	2	107	34	18	-	-	7	-	1	
<b>Pee Dee CAA Early Head Start</b>	Dillon	2	16	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	
	Florence	6	124	-	-	3	28	13	1	4	
	Marion	2	16	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	
<b>Piedmont CAA Head Start</b>											
	Cherokee	1	59	25	26	-	-	4	2	-	
	Spartanburg	4	283	125	129	-	-	13	45	4	
<b>Piedmont CAA Early Head Start</b>	Cherokee	1	16	4	-	-	12	2	4	-	
	Spartanburg	3	48	16	-	3	52	6	4	-	
<b>Richland County First Steps Head Start</b>											
	Richland County	2	105	-	-	1	35	9	6	-	

# South Carolina Head Start Census

## December 1, 2024

Head Start Cluster Area	County Service Area	# of Centers	# of Children Enrolled as of December 1, 2024	# of 3 Year Olds	# of 4 Year Olds	Pregnant Women	Home Based	# of Classrooms by County	# of Homeless Children	# of Foster Children by County
<b>SHARE Head Start</b>	Anderson	5	177	64	87	-	-	12	1	1
	Greenville	8	303	84	154	-	-	21	3	-
	Oconee	1	30	8	20	-	-	3	1	-
	Pickens	4	117	37	58	-	-	8	9	2
<b>SHARE Early Head Start</b>	Anderson	3	81	23	-	-	-	11	1	1
	Greenville	9	180	64	-	7	-	24	-	-
	Oconee	1	29	6	-	-	-	4	-	2
	Pickens	1	23	14	-	-	-	3	-	-
<b>South Carolina Association of Community Action Partnership- Early Head Start Child Care Partnership</b>	Anderson	1	16	5	-	-	-	4	-	-
	Bamberg	1	32	4	-	-	-	4	-	-
	Berkeley	2	40	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
	Charleston County	2	19	-	-	-	-	6	-	-
	Georgetown	3	60	7	-	-	-	8	3	1
	Horry	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Laurens	1	48	16	-	-	-	6	1	2
	Orangeburg	2	46	7	-	-	-	6	-	-
	Newberry	1	34	2	-	-	-	5	-	-
	Richland	2	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
<b>Spartanburg County First Steps Early Head Start</b>	Spartanburg	9	116	-	-	5	45	9	16	1
<b>Waccamaw EOC Head Start</b>	Horry	3	174	77	69	-	-	14	2	4
	Georgetown	3	145	79	61	-	-	11	-	-
	Williamsburg	2	121	56	48	-	-	10	-	4
<b>Waccamaw EOC Early Head Start</b>	Williamsburg	1	45	8	-	3	-	6	-	2

# South Carolina Head Start Census

## December 1, 2024

Head Start Cluster Area	County Service Area	# of Centers	# of Children Enrolled as of December 1, 2024	# of 3 Year Olds	# of 4 Year Olds	Pregnant Women	Home Based	# of Classrooms by County	# Homeless Children	# of Foster Children by County
<b>Wateree CAA Head Start</b>	Clarendon	2	133	52	63	-	-	9	-	4
	Kershaw	1	88	46	28	-	-	4	3	2
	Lee	1	56	21	25	-	-	4	4	-
	Sumter	5	343	136	175	-	-	20	5	1
<b>Wateree CAA Early Head Start</b>	Clarendon	1	40	9	-	-	16	5	-	-
	Kershaw	1	32	-	-	-	16	4	-	-
	Lee	1	16	-	-	-	8	2	1	-
	Sumter	3	80	6	-	3	8	3	-	-
<b>Vital Connections of the Midlands Early Head Start</b>	East Richland (Arthurtown)	1	21	3	-	3	-	3	4	2
	Columbia (Children's Garden)	1	14	3	-	2	-	2	2	2
	Lower Richland (Tender Years)	1	36	7	-	4	-	5	5	2
<b>Totals as of December 1, 2024</b>		<b>231</b>	<b>7,409</b>	<b>3,808</b>	<b>2,332</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>138</b>

South Carolina Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) - Serving 4-year olds

**Piedmont**

- Spartanburg - 20

Prepared by:  
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*The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) is an independent, nonpartisan group of 18 educators, business people, and elected officials appointed by the legislature and governor. The EOC enacts the South Carolina Education Accountability Act of 1998, which sets standards for improving the state's K-12 educational system. The EOC reviews the state's education improvement process, assesses how schools are doing, and evaluates the standards schools must meet to build the education system needed to compete in this century.*