



To: The Honorable Harvey S. Peeler, Jr., Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Bruce W. Bannister, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee

From: Mark Barnes, Interim Executive Director, SC First Steps

Date: September 9, 2024

**RE: First Steps 4K Report Pursuant to Proviso 1.48**

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Proviso 1.48 of the General Appropriations Act for FY 2023-2024 states:

*No later than April first, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps shall report to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee on the expenditure of these funds to include the following information: the amount of money used and specific steps and measures taken to enhance the quality of the 4K program and the amount of money used for professional development as well as the types of professional development offered and the number of participants. The Office of First Steps is directed to determine if the provision of extended programs in private centers improves the ability of parents to enter the workforce or to pursue postsecondary training or industry credentials.*

It has come to our attention that the following report was not adequately filed with the Legislative Services Agency. In the interest of transparency, we now submit the following. South Carolina First Steps 4K spent or encumbered \$2.8 million in total quality enhancement funding during FY 24. We are deeply grateful for the General Assembly's commitment to 4K quality and please to provide the attached table, detailing First Steps' spending on quality enhancement efforts within South Carolina.

We are committed to raising quality in our classrooms through teacher excellence. LearnERS is an individualized teacher growth and development system. Along with the completion of specific training and assessment requirements established by First Steps 4K, teachers work closely with their First Steps 4K Coach to set professional development goals and document their attainment throughout the school year. Additional expenditures have refurbished aged classroom materials, supplied consumables, provided literacy and math-based curriculum materials, and provided for staff and teacher professional development.

We are particularly proud to disclose that, according to the Spring 2024 First Steps 4K Family Engagement Survey, 79% of parents/caregivers whose children were in extended day or extended year programs report being able to work or attend school full-time because of their child's enrollment in First Steps 4K.

We are most grateful for the General Assembly's enabling of extended 4K service models, which our private providers have enthusiastically embraced. Of our 331 classrooms in 280 centers/schools, 86% of our programs chose an option that extended the traditional school year for the 2023-2024 term.



SC First Steps 4K Quality Enhancement Plan for 2022-2023		
Subject	Notes for FY 24	2023-24 Amount
Encumbered and Expended		
The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Guided Edition with ReadyRosie and Online Professional Development and Family Engagement Portal	Additional licenses for 65 classrooms to connect instructional levels with lesson planning tools, Ready Rosie subscriptions, video modeling with mobile technology in English and Spanish that model everyday interactions in familiar environments with real parents	\$175,494.27
Classroom enhancements - Science, Math, Language and Literacy, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, and Diversity	Materials for 31 classrooms to develop inquiry and investigation skills of prekindergartners through engaging and interactive materials	\$465,000
New classrooms set up for high quality interaction and engagement	48 new classrooms	\$720,000
Consumable kits	300 classroom sets, consumable Kits	\$543,944.16
Expanded Resource Curriculum kits & Kindergarten	49 additional sets of curriculum materials for summer instruction	\$81,531.10
Scholastic Transition books for students	4,400 Scholastic books for kindergarten transition	\$9,988
Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3) kits	50 ASQ-3 English, 60 ASQ-SE, and 5 ASQ-Spanish kits for classroom use for screening stages of student development and accompanying parent licenses	\$31,834.93
Lakeshore Learning	350 classroom library sets	\$336,458
Letter Links	125 additional classroom licenses, Letter Links for phonemic awareness	\$2,500
August New Teacher Academy 2023	113 New Lead Teachers, virtual training	\$23,750
August All Teacher Academy 2023	453 Lead Teachers and Instructional Assistants	\$213,240.00
Winter New Teacher Academy 2024	66 Lead Teachers	\$0.00
Leadership Academy 2023	233 directors/principals	\$66,370
AIM 4 Excellence National Directors Credential, Cohort #6	27 directors/principals through National Louis University, cohort led by FS 4K - to build knowledge, competency, and quality practices	\$33,345
Professional Development Day for Teachers, September 25, 2023 Building On Creative Curriculum™ Study Units and the new SC Early Learning Standards	323 Teachers: Assertiveness and Empathy sessions, GOLD training, Parent Engagement info, online modules	\$40,500

Stipends for November 3, 2023, PD day for teachers	390 lead teachers and instructional assistants	\$42,625
SC Early Childhood Association (SCECA)	155 scholarships for PD conference attendance for teachers	\$24,160
SC Association for the Education of Young Children (SCAEYC)	11 scholarships for PD conference attendance for teachers	\$2,470
SC Association for Early Care and Education (SCAECE)	19 scholarships for PD conference attendees for leaders and teachers	\$2,755
Fall Palmetto PreK Jamboree	Virtual PD day for teachers and assistants, stipends for 339	\$16,450
Early Childhood Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (EC LETRS) coursework	Professional Development course on the Science of Reading for our 4K Coaching Team - 18 staff members	\$13,850.00
		\$2,812,920.26

cc: David Morley, Chair, SC First Steps Board of Trustees  
Martha Strickland, 4K State Director, SC First Steps  
Kaitlyn Richards, Government Affairs Liaison, SC First Steps  
Grant Gibson, Senate Finance Committee  
Marc Truesdale, House Ways and Means Committee