Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Meeting

Monday, January 24, 2022, 2-3 PM via Zoom (link to join)

Meeting ID: 873 0000 2784

Passcode: 064776

AGENDA

- Early Childhood Advisory Council
    - Discussion of Measuring Outcomes of Outreach/Community Engagement
    - Strategic Planning: Updates and Discussion
    - Early Childhood Integrated Data System: Updates and Discussion
- South Carolina First Steps
    - Research Agenda: Updates and Discussion
    - Evaluation: Updates and Discussion
        - Potential vote regarding next prevalent program evaluation
        - Your Voice Matters
    - Data System: Updates and Discussion
    - Strategic Planning: Updates and Discussion

ATTACHMENTS

- Prevalent program evaluation history
- Your Voice Matters Reports
    - Quality Enhancement Teacher Engagement Survey
    - Quality Enhancement Director Engagement Survey
    - First Steps 4K Family Engagement Survey

2022 COMMITTEE MEETING DATES: Mar 28, May 23, July 25, Sep 26, and Nov 28

Prevalent Program Evaluation History

OVERVIEW

Legislatively, South Carolina First Steps is required to evaluate prevalent programs on a five year schedule (SC State Code § 59-152-50). Prevalent programs are defined as >10% of total expenditure of Local Partnership formula funding. The legislation dictates that First Steps before June 30, 2015 shall:

> contract with an external evaluator to develop a schedule for an in-depth and independent performance audit designed to measure the success of each prevalent program in regard to its success in supporting the goals of the State Board and those set forth in Section 59-152-20 and Section 59-152-30. Results of all external performance audits must be published in the First Steps annual report.

HISTORY

On May 18, 2020, the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee voted "to adopt a flexible evaluation schedule for the next five years". This was adopted by the full board at their June 18, 2020 meeting.

Program (years)	Evaluator	Submitted/Deadline
Parents as Teachers (FY09-FY16)	Compass	December 4, 2017
5-Year Agency Evaluation: All local partnership programs with child-level data (FY14-FY18) – including specific research questions on child care technical assistance and scholarships (prevalent programs)	UofSC Institute for Families in Society	November 15, 2019
Parents as Teachers (FY17-FY19)	UofSC Institute for Families in Society and Pacific Research & Evaluation	October 29, 2021
Child care technical assistance (FY19-FY21)	UofSC Institute for Families in Society	November 1, 2022

FUTURE EVALUATION NEEDS

Program (years)	Deadline
Prevalent program	November 1, 2023
5-Year Agency Evaluation: All local partnership programs with child-level data (FY19-FY23)	November 1, 2024
Prevalent program	November 1, 2026
Prevalent program	November 1, 2027

FIRST STEPS SOUTH CAROLINA

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Quality Enhancement/Quality Counts Teacher Engagement Survey | December 2021

Survey Administration

The Quality Enhancement/Quality Counts (QE/QC) Teacher Engagement Survey was administered online from November 8th to December 1st, 2021 to QE/QC Teachers and Teacher Assistants who participated in the QE/QC program from July 1st, 2019 to the present. The Executive Directors of local partnerships participating in the QE/QC program sent an email with the survey link to their Teachers and Teacher Assistants. A reminder email was sent from the Executive Directors to their staff on November 15th, 2021. There were 101 responses from teachers representing 7 counties across the state (Spartanburg, Beaufort, Dorchester, York, Charleston, Edgefield, Kershaw).

59%
would highly recommend QE/QC programs to other child care providers in their county

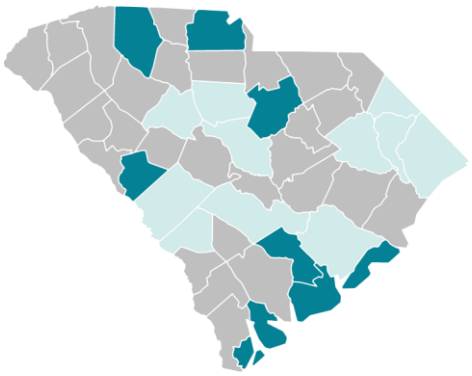


Figure 1. Map of Survey Respondents by County. The dark teal represents those counties who participated in the survey. The light teal represents those counties who were invited to participate, but did not participate in the survey.

Respondent Demographics

Most survey respondents were 25-34 years (23%) or 55-64 years old (23%) and identified as Black (43%) or white (53%). The sample of QE/QC Teachers had a similar demographic profile compared to the 2018 South Carolina Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce[1]. In the 2018 South Carolina ECE Workforce study, most respondents were female (97%) and identified as white (57%) or Black (40%)[1]. Of the 101 respondents, 28% had earned some college credits in early childhood education, 16% had a high school diploma or GED, and 13% had a two-year degree in early childhood education. Over half of the respondents have more than ten years of experience working in early care and education whereas 6% of respondents have less than one year of experience working in early care and education. When asked about their length of employment at their current child care provider there was considerable variability with nearly half of respondents working at their current provider for over 5 years.

100%
of respondents were females

54%
of respondents have post-secondary education experience in early childhood education

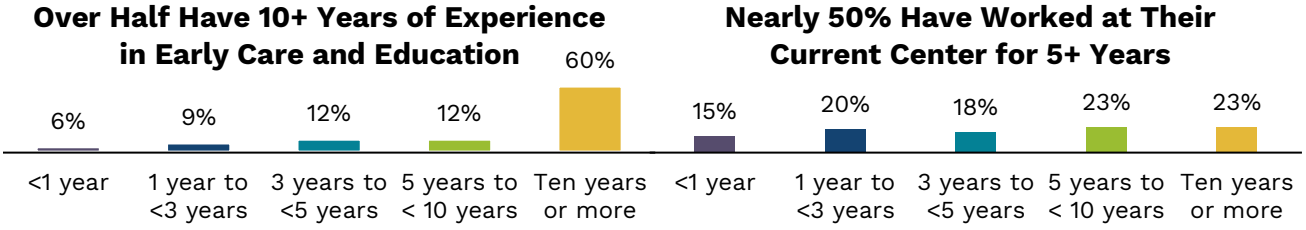


Figure 2. QE/QC Teacher Experience. Missing experience working in early care and education for 12 respondents and length of employment at current child care provider for 13 respondents. One respondent said they were unsure of their experience and length of employment.

QE/QC Program Experience

What is the First Steps QE/QC program good at?

- High-quality education and child care
- Training and guidance for teachers

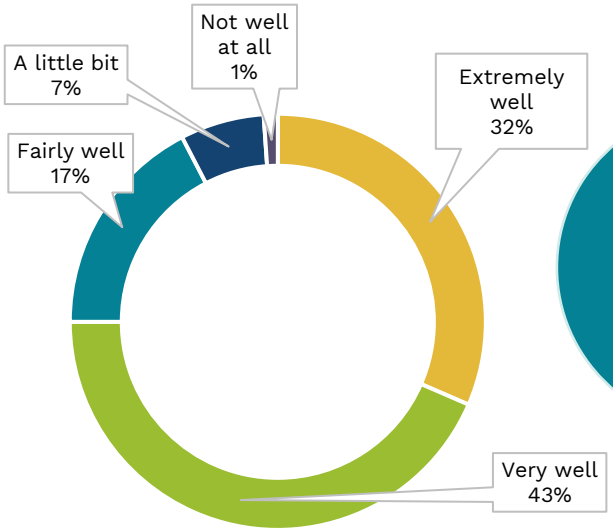
> Quality Counts is good at training teachers to better enhance their teaching skills and to better the classroom environment for children in a preschool or childcare setting.

What could the QE/QC program do better?

- More frequent training and hands-on coaching visits
- More financial support and incentives

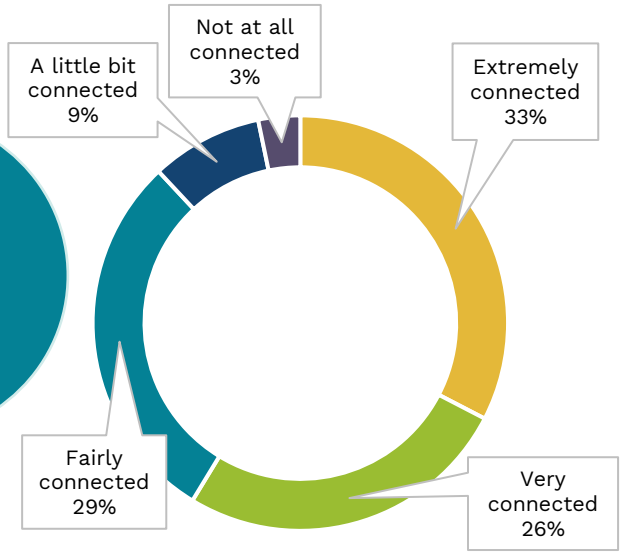
> More frequent on site observations and feedback/praise/ instruction.

75% of Teachers said First Steps' QE/QC Program met their needs very or extremely well



77% said their QE/QC coach ALWAYS treats them with respect

59% of Teachers said they feel very or extremely connected to their coach from the First Steps QE/QC Program



What parts of the First Steps' QE/QC program are most valuable to you?

1

50%
What I learn during coaching sessions

2

50%
The goals identified through the Quality Improvement Planning process

3

49%
Materials or equipment provided by my coach

Additional Needs

If resources were unlimited, what incentive(s) could the First Steps' QE/QC program provide you that would motivate you to stay at your current center or provider?

> "They need to add more financial support to their highly qualified teachers who go above and beyond to help educate the students."

73%
Reward for having met, achieved, or earned a certain level or certification in the early childhood field

67%
Longevity or retention bonuses

53%
Reward or recognition for meeting targets

> "Increase pay wages or provide more incentives for staff."

> "Quality Counts helps provide accurate accessible trainings that help keep early educators educated and informed. Quality Counts helps provide resources and materials to provide the best learning environments for children. Quality Counts excels in providing one on one technical assistance to help improve and p[e]rform."

Because of the First Steps' QE/QC Program, I now...

73%
See an improvement in my classroom environment

67%
Better understand what high-quality childcare looks like

59%
See an improvement in the quality of my teaching

> "Quality Counts is really the foundation of early childhood educators being able to reach their fullest potential! This has been a tough year on everyone and they have been by our sides every step of the way. They have [asked] what can we do, what kind of help do you need, they really care and it shows."

[1]Rao, V., Chen, R., Perkins, K., Sevoyan, M. (2018). Early Childhood Workforce Study Report – 2018. Columbia, SC.

FIRST STEPS SOUTH CAROLINA

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Quality Enhancement/Quality Counts Director Engagement Survey | December 2021

Survey Administration

The Quality Enhancement/Quality Counts (QE/QC) Director Engagement Survey was administered online from November 8th to December 1st, 2021, to QE/QC center directors who participated in the QE/QC program from July 1st, 2019 to the present. The Executive Directors of local partnerships participating in the QE/QC program sent an email with the survey link to their center Directors. A reminder email was sent from the Executive Directors to their center Directors on November 15th, 2021. There were 47 responses from directors representing 7 counties across the state (Spartanburg, Beaufort, Dorchester, York, Charleston, Edgefield, Kershaw).

77%
would highly recommend QE/QC programs to other child care providers in their county

33%
of directors were also the owner of the center

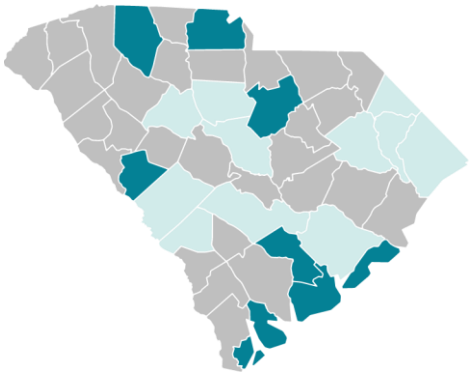


Figure 1. Map of Survey Respondents by County. The dark teal represents those counties who participated in the survey. The light teal represents those counties who were invited to participate, but did not participate in the survey.

Respondent Demographics

Most survey respondents were females (98%), 45-54 (29%) or 55-64 (31%) years old and identified as Black (55%) or white (45%). The sample of QE/QC Directors is similar to the 2018 South Carolina Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce which is primarily composed of females (97%). More QE/QC directors identified as Black compared to the 2018 South Carolina ECE workforce (40%). Over half of directors have at least a four-year degree. Nearly 20% of directors have a two-year degree in early childhood education and nearly 20% have completed some college credits.

Over Half of Directors Have at Least a Four-Year Degree

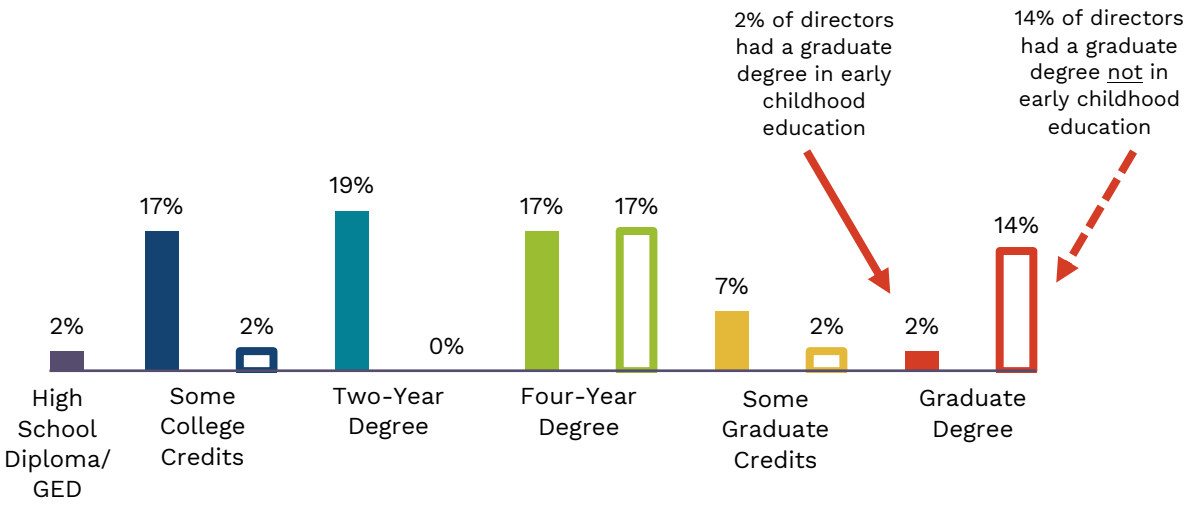
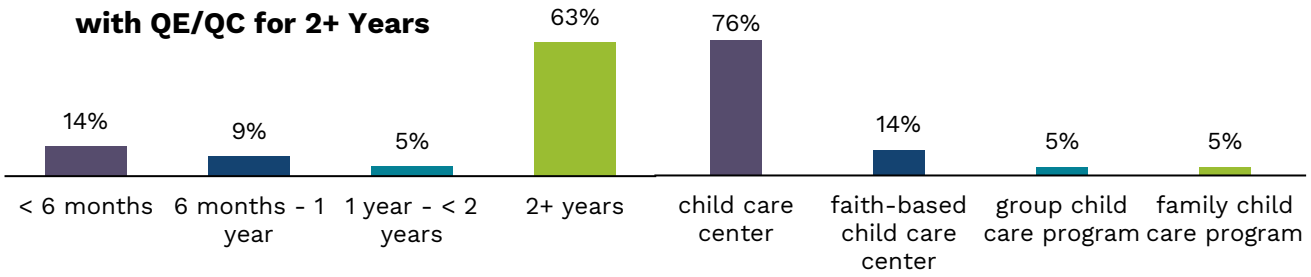


Figure 2. Respondent Demographic Characteristics. Missing educational experience from 5 respondents. The shaded bars represent educational experience in early childhood education. The outlined bars represent experience not in early childhood education.

Center Characteristics

Over half of survey respondents have been involved with the QE/QC program for at least two years (63%). The QE/QC Program has been primarily implemented in childcare centers (76%) across the state of South Carolina.

Over 50% of Directors Have Been Involved with QE/QC for 2+ Years



QE/QC Primarily Serves Child Care Centers

Figure 3. Characteristics of the Centers Served. Missing length of involvement for 4 respondents and center type for 5 respondents.

QE/QC Program Experience

What is the First Steps QE/QC program good at?

- Providing training and technical assistance
- Enhancing high-quality education for children

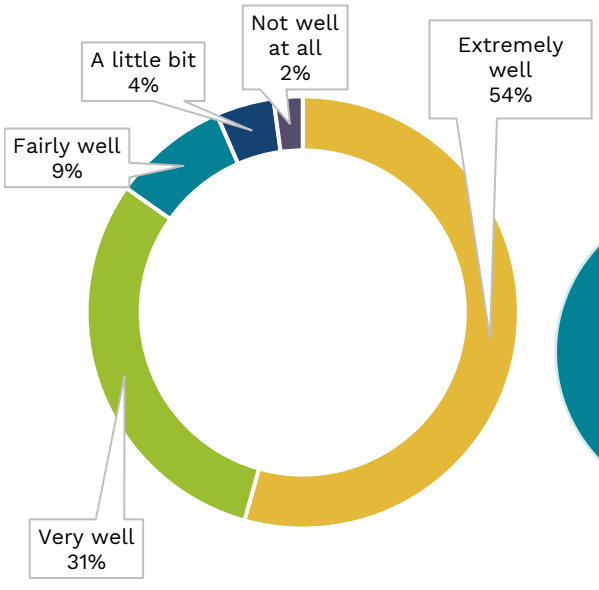
> They are good at being there to help with ways for our center to grow in ways that will truly benefit the children. The trainings are the BEST!

What could the QE/QC program do better?

- More focus on curriculum (e.g., child behavior, classroom set-up, handwashing)
- Communication and feedback

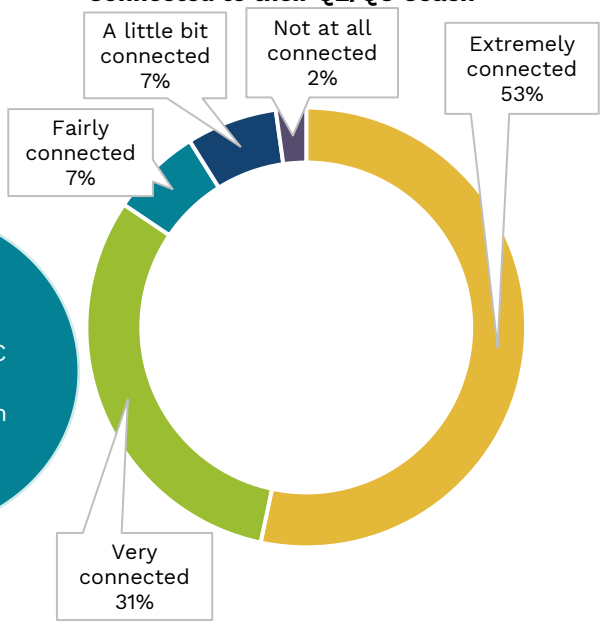
> Weekly updates on what is working and what needs work from the quality coaches. This will have directors support the work of the quality coaches between visits.

85% of Directors Said the QE/QC Program Has Met Their Needs Very or Extremely Well



90% said their QE/QC coach ALWAYS treats them with respect

84% of Directors Said they feel Very or Extremely Connected to their QE/QC Coach



What parts of the First Steps' QE/QC program are most valuable to you?

1

60%
Joint professional development/networking opportunities with other directors

2

50%
The Quality Improvement Planning process

3

50%
What I learn during coaching sessions

Additional Services & Resources

What additional services would you benefit from that the First Steps' QE/QC program could provide?

58%
Help with recruitment and retention of staff

51%
Training on how to apply for grants

49%
Support for the educaional side of child care

49%
Support for the business side of child care

> "The First Steps' Quality Enhancement or Quality Counts program can maybe look at the education and degrees in which their workers have achieved and try to match their income to be as close to the salaries as most of the certified teachers or public school teachers in the state of SC. Also continue to work towards providing training courses to meet the needs of the educators."

> "Providing the Technical assistance for one and the knowledge that they share. They help to clarify the requirements and explain things in a [way] that makes sense to the teachers. The enrichment opportunities are great incentives to improve quality and to help support retention of staff."

If resources were unlimited, what could the First Steps' QE/QC program provide that you would utilize?

78%
Funding for retention stipends for staff

76%
Funding for an outdoor learning environment

66%
Funding for recruitment stipends for staff

66%
Funding to improve our current facility

[1]Rao, V., Chen, R., Perkins, K., Sevoyan, M. (2018). Early Childhood Workforce Study Report – 2018. Columbia, SC.

4K FIRST STEPS SOUTH CAROLINA

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

First Steps 4K Family Engagement Survey | January 2022

Survey Administration

The First Steps 4K Family Engagement Survey was administered online from November 15th to December 8th, 2021 (Day 63 - Day 77 of the 2021-22 school year). A text message was sent on November 15th, 2021 to 2,706 parents/caregivers of 4K students with a link to complete the online survey. A reminder to complete the survey was sent via email in the December 1st, 2021 monthly 4K newsletter. There were 383 total respondents (response rate 14%), of which 1 (<1%) completed it in Spanish.

> "My child [has] flourished since he started 4K. Speaking clearer & writing were huge steps."

88% would highly recommend First Steps 4K to a friend or family member.

> "It's the best thing that could ever happen to me and my child."

Respondent Demographics

Nearly half of survey respondents were 25-34 years old (44%). Most survey respondents were women (89%) and self-identified as Black (54%) or white (31%). Almost all respondents were the parent of the 4K student (86%); however, grandparents (7%) and foster parents and guardians (2%) also completed the survey.

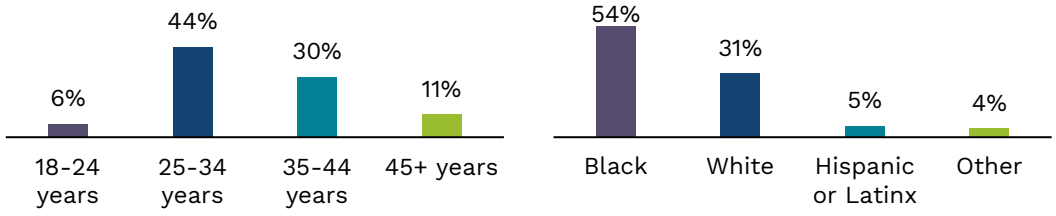
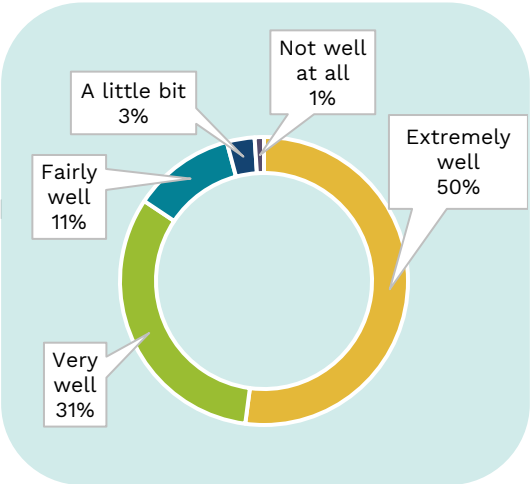


Figure 1. Demographics of survey respondents. Missing age for 31 respondents and race/ethnicity for 38 respondents. *For ethnicity*, "Other" includes Asian/Asian American (1%), Middle Eastern/North African (<1%), and Native American or Alaska Native (2%).

First Steps 4K Experience

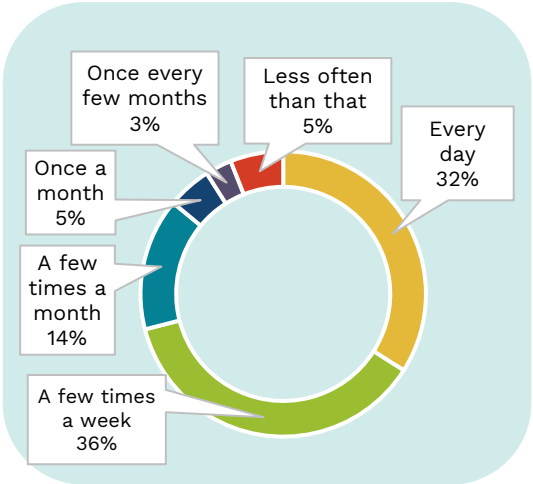
Half of respondents said First Steps 4K has met their 4-year-old's needs extremely well



66% are more aware of developmental milestones for their 4K student because of First Steps 4K.

47% said their 4K student is ready for kindergarten.

One in three respondents interact with their First Steps 4K classroom teacher every day

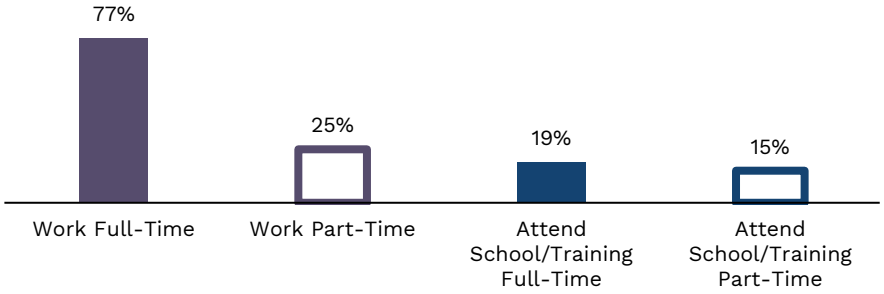


First Steps 4K empowers parents to work

64%
credit their ability to work or go to school to their child's participation in First Steps 4K

> This is a wonderful program for children to have the opportunity to go to school and help struggling parents find a job.

Among those who credit their ability to go to work or school to their child's enrollment in First Steps 4K, more than three out of four of them report being able to work full-time



Because my 4K student is enrolled in First Steps 4K, they...

73%
know some letters of the alphabet

72%
have improved social interaction with other children

65%
are excited about books

64%
are beginning to write their first name

62%
can count to twenty

52%
have improved self-regulation/skills for coping with stress

> [First Steps 4K is good at] teaching life skills to young children and helping them learn how to write their names, and alphabet and learning to be creative.

What is First Steps 4K good at?

- Teaching and preparing kids for school
- Helping children learn
- Interacting with children and parents

What could First Steps 4K do better?

- Communicate more with parents on student progress
- Provide more activities for parent engagement
- Improve curriculum for children who are bilingual or children with disabilities
- Increase 4K availability across state, offer after-school care, and provide transportation