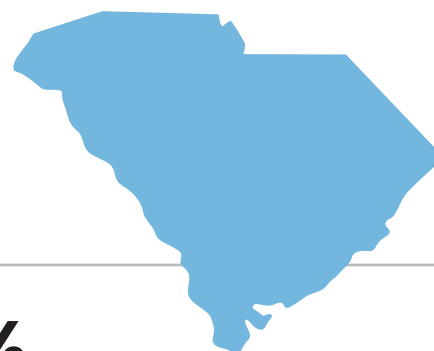


FIRST STEPS 4K

PREPARING FOR STATEWIDE EXPANSION



57,337

FOUR YEAR OLDS

62%

ARE AT RISK

41%

OF AT-RISK 4-YEAR-OLDS LIVE IN
EXPANSION DISTRICTS

First Steps 4K is prepared to serve children and families in all 46 counties.

South Carolina First Steps provides free, high-quality four-year-old kindergarten in private child care settings through First Steps 4K, part of the state's Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP).

As of July 14, 2021, First Steps 4K has 245 centers (281 classrooms) for the 2021-22 year with a goal of 250 centers by the start of the school year. In the 2020-21 school year, 83% of the First Steps 4K programs were open year round (including summer programs), and 66% provided 8 hours of instruction a day.

Governor Henry McMaster's allocation of \$5 million from the Governor's Education Emergency Relief (GEER) Fund to South Carolina First Steps supports the expansion of First Steps 4K programs offering full-day and summer options. South Carolina's General Assembly has allocated an additional \$15.4M (\$31.6M total for 2021-22) to First Steps supporting Governor Henry McMaster's and the legislature's vision for 4K statewide expansion. This increase in funding will allow over 4,000 children to enroll in First Steps 4K in the 2021-22 school year.

The cost of early education is unaffordable for most SC families.

Because of First Steps 4K...

48%

OF PARENTS CAN
WORK MORE
THAN 15 HOURS
PER WEEK

61%

OF PARENTS ARE
MORE CONFIDENT
AS A PARENT

Among the state's estimated 57,337 four-year-olds, about 35,516 (62%) children are considered at-risk, meaning they live in a household with an income of 185% or less of the Federal Poverty Level, are Medicaid eligible, experiencing homelessness or transiency, or in foster care.

Increased access to the full-day, four year-old kindergarten program, coupled with a new program, First Steps 4K + Siblings, will ensure care and education for the whole family. When a family enrolls in a First Steps 4K classroom, all children in the home, ages 0-12, receive a full-time child care or after-school scholarship for up to 52 weeks. The expansion of 4K statewide and the additional support for siblings ensure children are ready for school success and their parents have what they need to return to work.

Additional opportunities for whole family support will be available as the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Program expands to serve families in nine counties across the state. HIPPY is a home visiting program that supports parents in their role as their child's first and most important teacher, supported by AmeriCorps HIPPY Parent Educators.

When families experiencing financial hardship have access to safe, reliable, full-day child care, they are better able to enter the workforce, pursue education and job training, and boost their earnings.

[First Steps 4K Family Survey](#)
May 2021

LAST UPDATED: JULY 14, 2021

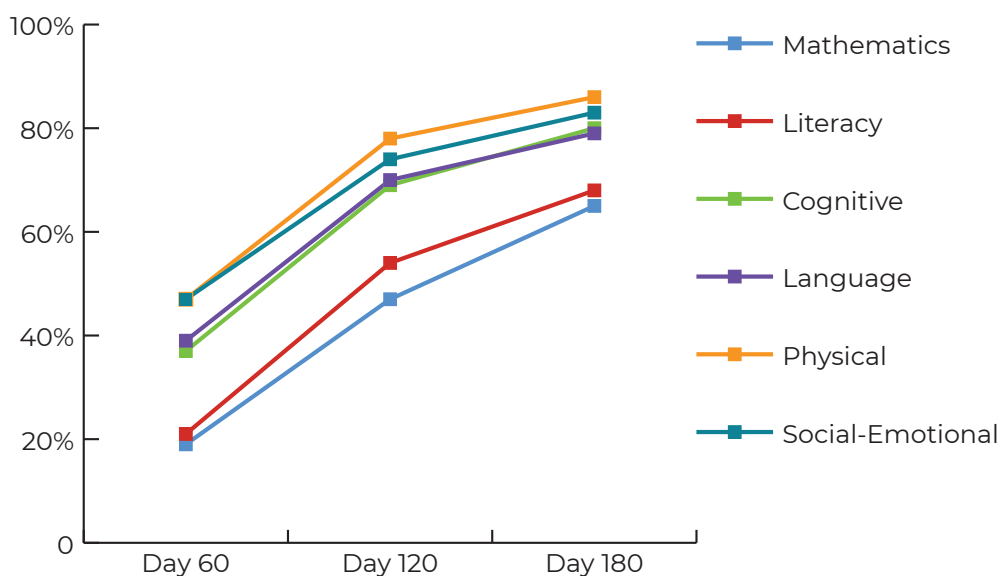


First Steps 4K gets children ready for school.

Research shows that children who attend a high-quality preschool program are more successful in kindergarten and beyond.

To ensure the quality of our programs, First Steps 4K maintains rigorous program standards, including the use of evidence-based curriculum. To support their success, First Steps provides quality assessments, on-site coaching, funding for equipment and materials, parent education opportunities, and high-level professional development.

First Steps 4K measures student progress using the Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment. During the 2020-21 school year, our students demonstrated gains in all areas of development and learning.



Of the child care centers with at least one First Steps 4K classroom...

83%
PARTICIPATE IN THE ABC QUALITY RATING SYSTEM

76%
AMONG THOSE ENROLLED IN ABC QUALITY ARE RATED B OR HIGHER



“The expansion of 4K statewide will have a transformational impact on South Carolina’s children and their parents – on the workforce of today and tomorrow. Because of this investment, parents will be able to work full-time jobs, and their children will receive the highest quality early education in a curriculum-driven program proven to get them ready for school success.”

Georgia Mjartan
Executive Director, South Carolina First Steps