



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: Ann Vandervliet, Agency Director, SC First Steps

Date: April 1, 2025

**RE: First Steps 4K Report Pursuant to Proviso 1.47**

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Proviso 1.47 of the General Appropriations Act for FY2024-2025 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.*

Pursuant to the terms of the proviso, I am writing to provide an update on First Steps 4K on the implementation of this to date. Thus far, South Carolina First Steps has spent or encumbered \$2.9 million in total quality enhancement funding during FY25. We have provided 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 by adopting the use of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). CLASS will focus and measure teacher-child interactions and improve teaching practices through individualized professional development. 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 2025 First Steps 4K Family Engagement Survey, 79% of parents 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 360 classrooms in 296 centers/schools, 85% of our programs chose an option that extended the traditional school year for the 2024-25 term.

**SC First Steps 4K Quality Enhancement Plan for 2024-2025**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Notes for FY 25</b>	<b>2024-2025 Amount</b>
	<b>Encumbered and Expended</b>	
The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Guided Edition with ReadyRosie and Online Professional Development and Family Engagement Portal	Additional licenses and print curriculum for new 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	\$111,158.33
Teachstone- tools to measure and improve interactions for data-driven quality in classrooms	My Teachstone licenses for 675 users, assessor certification for 30 CLASS observers, and CLASS materials	\$106,208.50
Classroom enhancements - Science, Math, Language and Literacy, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, and Diversity	Materials for seven classrooms to develop inquiry and investigation skills of prekindergartners through engaging and interactive materials	\$44,736.62
New classrooms set up for high quality interaction and engagement	47 new classrooms	\$855,905.70
Consumable kits	375 classroom sets of consumable materials	\$581,750.10
Expanded Resource Curriculum kits & Kindergarten	48 additional sets of curriculum materials for summer instruction	\$81,906.98
Scholastic Transition books for students	6,150 Scholastic books for kindergarten transition	\$14,493.47
Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 and ASQ Social Emotional) kits	40 ASQ-3 English, 40 ASQ-SE, and 5 ASQ-3 Spanish, 5 ASQ-SE Spanish for screening stages of student development.	\$26,742.43
Lakeshore Learning	25 classroom library sets	\$24,032.70
Language and Literacy manipulatives for 4K classrooms	School Specialty, additional 25 sets	\$18,400.60
Oral Language development kits	375 classroom sets, oral language activities-Kaplan	\$127,129.50
Community Playthings	Set of 2 ergonomic stools per classroom, 365 sets	\$62,050.00

Parent Engagement Event materials	6,149 children's books for families at Winter and Spring engagement events	\$41,240.11
Scholastic book library sets	375 sets to support Science of Reading early literacy	633,415.35
Scholastic Big Books sets	25 additional sets of classroom big books	\$21,263.16
Classroom library sets, Kaplan	25 additional sets of classroom library books	\$22,434.84
Cosolidated Mailing and the Puppet Store	375 sets of alphabet charts, alphabet cards, and classroom puppets	\$6,509.11
Read In books for each classroom	Clifford the Big Red Dog Makes a Friend	\$2,100.00
Letter Links	375 classroom licenses, Letter Links for phonemic awareness	\$2,500.00
August New Teacher Academy 2024	130 New Lead Teachers, virtual training	\$0.00
August All Teacher Academy 2024	543 Lead Teachers and Instructional Assistants, stipends	\$239,270.00
August New & All Teacher Academies 2024	Pre-service in person professional development conference for 673 lead teachers and instructional assistants	\$195,333.22
Winter New Teacher Academy 2025	42 Lead Teachers, virtual	\$0.00
Leadership Academy 2024	Presenter fees: Early Childhood Policy Solutions, Clemson University ThinkShops; Conscious Discipline	\$16,430.00
Leadership Academy 2024	Pre-service in person professional development conference for 438 directors/principals	\$99,824.46
Leadership Academy 2024	438 directors/principals, stipends	\$67,745.00
Leadership and Teacher Academies 2024	Engineerica conference tracker	\$6,100.00
Leadership Academy 2024	Conscious Discipline presenters	\$7,010.00
AIM 4 Excellence National Directors Credential, Cohort #7	20 directors/principals through National Louis University, cohort led by FS 4K - to build knowledge, competency, and quality practices	\$22,777.75

Professional Development Day for Teachers, September 23, 2024-- Assessing student growth in 4K	502 Teachers: Training on Phonological awareness, GOLD assessment use including reports and informing instruction	\$35,625.00
Stipends for November 4, 2024, PD day for teachers	559 lead teachers and instructional assistants trained in Writing in 4K	\$62,250.00
SC Early Childhood Association (SCECA)	126 scholarships for PD conference attendance for teachers, leaders and 17 state employees	\$24,840.00
SC Association for the Education of Young Children (SCAEYC)	5 scholarships for PD conference attendance for teachers	\$1,150.00
SC Association for Early Care and Education (SCAECE)	10 scholarships for PD conference attendees for leaders and teachers	\$1,650.00
Spring 2025 Palmetto PreK Jamboree	Virtual PD day for teachers and assistants, stipends for 438 attendees	\$32,850.00
Early Childhood Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (EC LETRS) coursework- support for 130 lead teachers	Cohort leaders for the course on the Science of Reading by our 4K Coaching Team - 4 staff members	\$21,000.00
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 - 5 staff members	\$594.00
		<b>\$2,985,011.58</b>

cc: David Morley, Chair, SC First Steps Board of Trustees  
Martha Strickland, 4K State Director, SC First Steps  
Mark Barnes, Director of Administration, SC First Steps  
Grant Gibson, Senate Finance Committee  
Stephanie Meetze, House Ways and Means Committee