
SC Education Oversight EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee Meeting

November 4, 2024

**Approval of
EIA and Improvement
Mechanisms Subcommittee
Minutes
September 16, 2024**

Dr. Bob Couch



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OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**
Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.

Information Item: EIA 2023-24 Reports and 2025-26 Budget Requests



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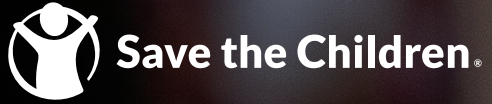
Save the Children

Sharonda Burison-Harris, State Director



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Save the Children in South Carolina



Save the Children in South Carolina



South Carolina Highlights

Save the Children **currently** partners with **22 schools in 8 counties** to provide educational programs.



186,171 meals distributed by Save the Children and partners in 2023 in South Carolina



Over 44,000 children directly reached in 2023 in South Carolina



Save the Children and partners reached **over 10,000** children through early learning initiatives



Save the Children and partners reached **over 3,000** children using our reading & feeding mobile units

Programs supporting **Kindergarten Readiness** in South Carolina

How Save the Children supports Kindergarten Readiness

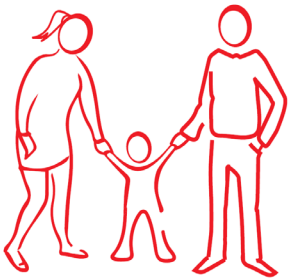


- **Home Visits**

- For ages 0-3, early childhood coordinators nurture parent/child relationships, provide caregivers with parenting information and age-appropriate activities for their children, help monitor developmental progress and offer suggestions on how to interact with young children to promote early literacy and early numeracy.

- **Book Bag Exchange**

- Coordinators continue to foster a love of learning in children ages 0-5 by supplying families with children's books to encourage regular book sharing, introduce children to new words and experiences, nurture parent-child interaction, and help prepare children to read.



- **Parent / Child Groups**

- To support a positive parent-school relationship for children prior to entering school, parent-child groups are held at local schools to acquaint parents/caregivers and children with school staff, familiarize them to the preschool and school environment, provide opportunities to learn about development, and play
- Parent child groups are offered to both 0-3 and 3-5 children enrolled in the program

Programs supporting **Kindergarten Readiness** in South Carolina

Assessments used by Save the Children



- **PPVT / PLS – Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test / Preschool Language Test**

- **What does it measure?** Receptive Vocabulary.

- Receptive language refers to the ability to understand and comprehend language, while receptive vocabulary refers to the words that a child can understand when they hear or read them.
- There is a significant body of research that has explored the relationship between receptive language skills in children and academic achievement, including kindergarten readiness.
 - Morgan et al. (2015) found that children as young as 24 months with larger vocabularies displayed greater reading and mathematics achievement, increased behavioral self-regulation and fewer externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors at kindergarten entry.
 - Dickinson & Porche, (2011) and Peterson et. al (2013) found that preschoolers' language skills predict several aspects of school functioning including academic achievement and self-regulation.

- **How is it used in the program?**

- The Early Steps program administers the PPVT or PLS to children who participated in the home visiting component of the program for at least one year. The tests are administered during the child's 3rd and 5th year. The PPVT and PLS are not used as a pre/post-test or to measure growth, but as standardized, norm-referenced assessments, as a child's standard score on either of these tests reflects their performance in relation to other children of the same age who have taken the test

Programs supporting **Kindergarten Readiness** in South Carolina

Assessments used by Save the Children



- **PICCOLO – Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes**
 - **What does it measure? Parent Child Interactions**
 - The PICCOLO consists of measures of 29 positive parenting behaviors that support early child development and predict positive child outcomes across 4 domains (affection, encouragement, responsiveness and teaching).
 - These 29 positive parenting behaviors included in the tool have been studied rigorously and have shown statistically significant correlations with children’s development outcomes and kindergarten readiness¹
 - It consists of the home visitor observing the caregiver & child interacting (often playing or reading together) and taking note of which positive behaviors the caregiver is displaying, tallying up a total score of all the positive behaviors seen. It is a strengths-based tool.
 - **How is it used in the program?**
 - In the Early Steps program, the PICCOLO is used with caregivers of children 36 months and younger. The observations are video-recorded to ensure reliable and accurate scoring and are completed every 6 months to note overall growth as well as by domain.
 - The PICCOLO scores also support home visitors in providing targeted support to caregivers, by identifying domains and behaviors that can be strengthened and offering activities that can build and improve upon those behaviors.

Programs supporting 3rd Grade Literacy & 5th Grade Math in South Carolina

How Save the Children supports Grade Level Proficiency

- **Guided Independent Reading Practice (GIRP).** Working with school staff members, children in grades 2-6 are carefully selected to participate in a daily guided independent reading practice program for 30 minutes of uninterrupted time, four to five days a week, using Accelerated Reader™ (AR) (a reading management software program by Renaissance Learning)
- **Read-aloud/Vocabulary/Fluency (RAvFL).** Children participate in reading text aloud, practicing vocabulary, and fluency-building activities for 30 minutes.
- **Emergent Reader.** The Emergent Reader Literacy Block, for small groups of up to ten children in kindergarten and grade 1, incorporates three core activities: phonemic awareness activity, reading together activities, and a choice of emergent reader modules. There is also an extended read-aloud addition to the program that is very similar to our RAvFL program, where we incorporate age-appropriate read-alouds, vocabulary practice, and other extension activities.
- **Mathematics.** Save the Children's trained staff oversee small group math instruction for grades kindergarten through grade 6. The instruction increases children's mathematics efficiency by addressing a conceptual understanding of mathematics concepts, fluency with mathematics procedures, and problem solving.

Programs supporting 3rd Grade Literacy & 5th Grade Math in South Carolina

Assessments used by Save the Children

- **STAR Reading Assessment**

- This comprehensive literacy assessment allows us to understand if a child (Grades 2-6) is reading on grade-level and gives us valuable information on how they compare to their peers nationally and those who have similar prior performance. It also tells us which skills would be useful for them to learn next and recommends resources to address weaknesses.

- **STAR Early Literacy Assessment**

- This literacy assessment is designed for younger children (Grades K-1) and allows us to understand if they are reading on grade-level. Like STAR Reading, it tells us how they compare to their national peers and those with similar prior performance. It also tells us specific metrics for several areas of potential improvement (e.g. Word recognition, vocabulary, and more).

- **STAR Math Assessment**

- This math assessment is designed to capture student numeracy for a wide range of children (Grades K-6) and allows us to see if they are performing on grade-level, as well as providing national context. Like STAR Reading, it tells recommends which skills they are ready to learn next.

- **Accelerated Reader Quizzes**

- These short quizzes are completed by participating students after they finish a book. The quiz completion rate and scores give us both an understanding of how many books students are completing over time and how well they understand the text and content

Program Successes



Impact in South Carolina



64% of children who regularly participated in literacy programming had typical or high growth



60% of children who regularly participated in math had typical or high growth



Over 93% of caregivers in Early Steps reported reading to their child at least 3 days per week



90% of 3-year-olds enrolled in Early Steps for one year had vocabulary development scores at or above the normal range

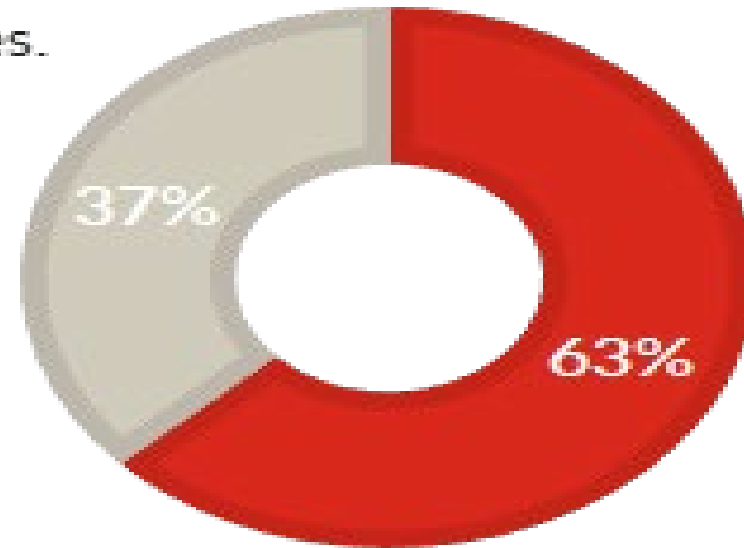
Program Challenges



Program Expansion

Annual match investment

In 2023, Save the Children brought an additional \$1.70 for every \$1 of state funding--\$3,500,000* in additional investments in under-resourced communities.



■ Save the Children Match ■ State Funding

*\$2,350,000 private contributions and \$1,152,725 in contributions-in-kind

Thank You for Your Continued Support!

Superintendent Weaver Visits Save the Children

We hosted Superintendent Weaver at our programs in Dillon County. Superintendent Weaver observed our Emergent and Developing Readers in action. She listened to children read and participated as they worked on mastering reading skills.



Thank You for Your Continued Support!

Mobile Early Learning Classrooms

These units serve children ages birth to 3, helps foster a love for learning, and gives children a strong healthy start for school





Questions?

Contact Information

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THANK YOU!



SC Department of Education

*Matthew Ferguson, EdD, Esq. Deputy
Superintendent & Chief Academic Officer*



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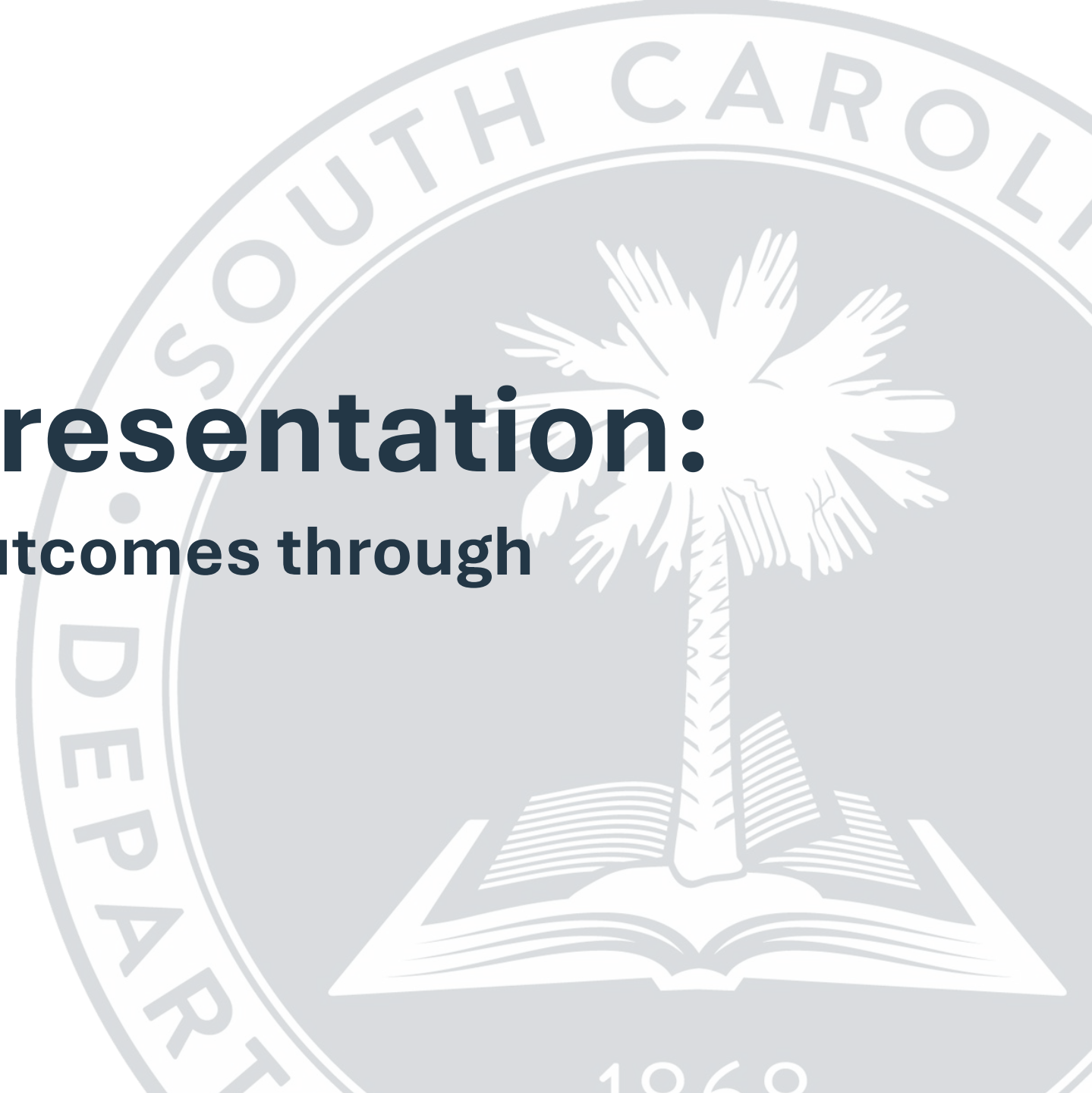
EIA Budget Presentation:

Supporting Student Outcomes through Strategic Investment

Matthew Ferguson, Ed.D, Esq.
Deputy Superintendent
November 4, 2024



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



SCDE Mission & Vision

SCDE'S **Mission:**

The mission of the South Carolina Department of Education is to serve students, support teachers, empower parents, and engage the community so that every student graduates prepared to reach their full potential.

SCDE'S **Vision:**

Every South Carolina student graduates college-, career-, or military-ready. By 2030, at least 75% of students perform at or above grade level.

SCDE'S **Tagline:**

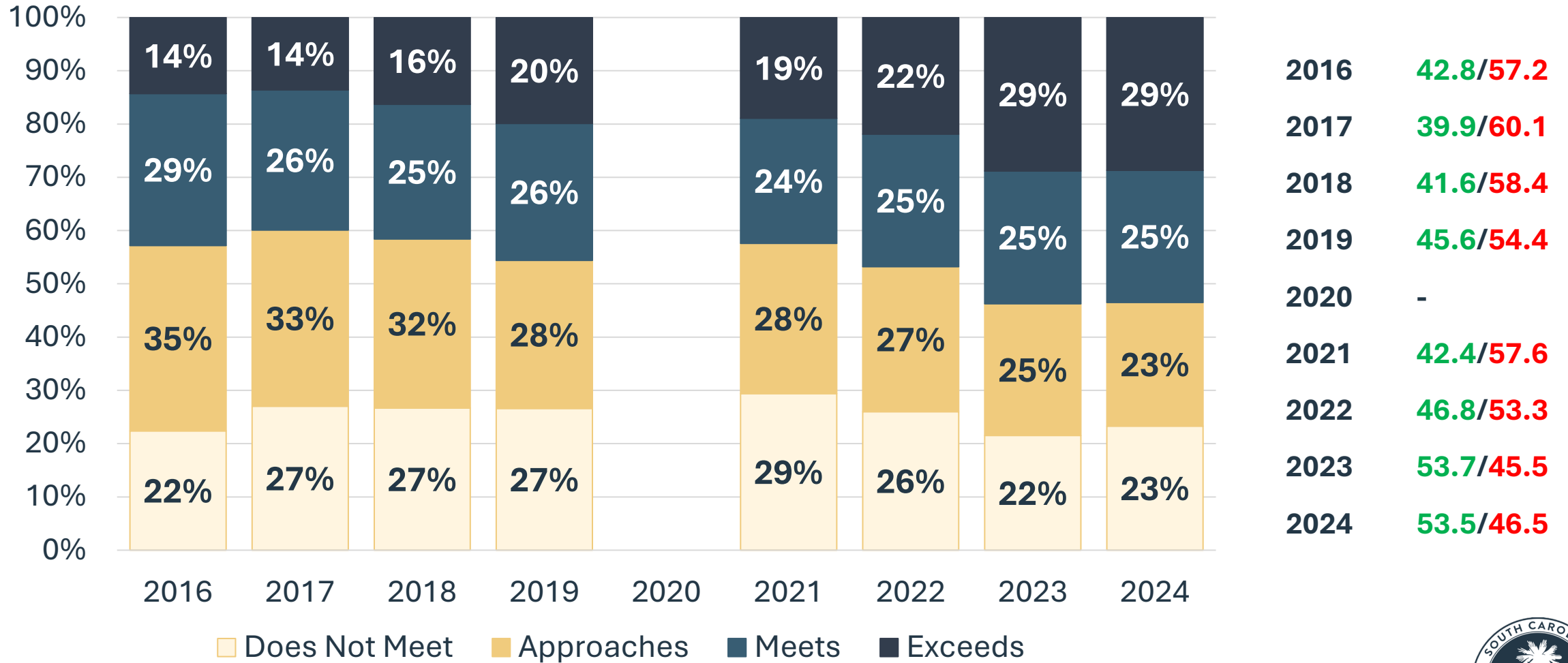
An excellent education for every child.

We will accomplish our Mission and Vision by:

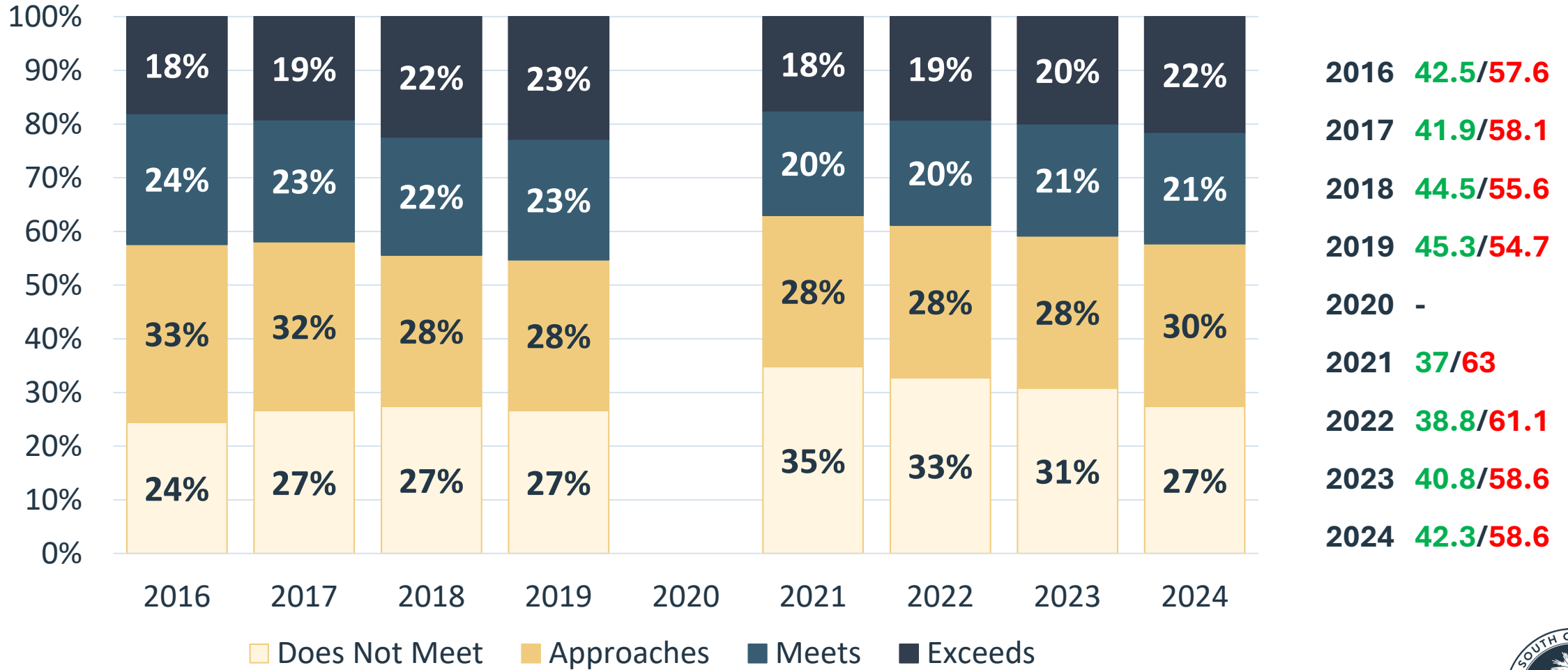
- Increasing student achievement (at least 75% or more of students at or above grade level in reading and math by 2030).
- Recruiting and retaining the highest quality teachers in the profession and investing in teacher knowledge.
- Ensuring a safe learning environment in all classrooms and campuses across our state.
- Preparing students with the leadership and life skills that will build productive citizens who are workforce and/or military ready.
- Engaging the community in creative, sustainable partnerships to serve and support our state's public schools.



54% of SC Students are proficient in ELA



42% of SC Students are proficient in Math



Advance evidence-based instruction of foundational skills



Science of Reading

Read to Succeed

- Oct SBE - updated certification assessments

Support to the Field

- Foundational skills training - 900+ educators
- LETRS Virtual Support - 200+ admin/coaches
- Regional Reading Coach Support - 447 coaches

HQPL (LETRS)

- Enrolled educators Fall 2021-current = 19,962
- Certified Facilitators = V1-90/V2-44/EC-29
- IHE = 42 professors /16 EPPs complete Dec '24
- CERDEP and First Steps teachers enrolled in EC LETRS = 800+



Palmetto Math Project

Five math specialists and one team lead are:

- Supporting HQIM selection (EdReports)
- Conducting school visits
- Identifying PMP schools
- Piloting support model in 10 sites
- Collaborating with OAS on standards rollout

How do we come together to focus on the math crisis?

A panel event on November 6 with and for:

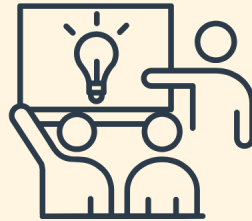
- School district superintendents
- Member of the SC Chamber
- EPP professors, and
- Education Oversight Committee

By 2030, at least 75% of students perform at or above grade level.

Budget Priorities



Student Success



Teacher Support



Safe Schools

Key Actions



**High Quality
Professional Learning**



**High Quality
Instructional Materials**



System Alignment



HOPE Network



Continuous Improvement

Student Success

Our commitment to “Student Success” ensures every child gains foundational skills for lifelong achievement. Through evidence-based programs like the Science of Reading and Palmetto Math Project, we strive to equip all students to excel in school and life.

Summer Reading Camps - (4) - \$30,571,200 (recurring)

Significant increases to number of students who must be served

HQIM - (5) - \$20,000,000 (recurring)

HQIM (Math) - (6) - \$95,000,000 (non-recurring)

Current assessments show **low student achievement in math**. Investing in high-quality, aligned instructional materials is a target strategy to **enhance math proficiency** across the state.

CTE Rural Renaissance - (7) - \$13,000,000 (recurring)

Additional investment in programming for **rural** regions; Cutting edge **pathway development**

Education Scholarship Trust Fund – (10) - \$30,000,000 (recurring)

Funding for year 2 of ESTF program



Teacher Support

Our commitment to "Teacher Support" recognizes that a quality educator is the #1 in-school indicator of student success. By focusing on competitive salaries, enhancing professional growth opportunities, and cultivating strong leadership, we aim to retain high-quality educators and foster a supportive, growth-oriented environment across South Carolina schools.

State Aid to Classrooms (Teacher Salaries) - (2) - \$200,000,000 (recurring)

Increase starting teacher salary to \$50,000

Strategic Compensation Pilot (Phase 2) - (3) - \$5,000,000 (non-recurring)

Continued funding will allow participating districts to **continue pilots**

School Leadership Accelerator - (8) - \$6,725,000 (recurring)

Pilot program to enhance the effectiveness of school leaders to drive **academic excellence** and improve **student outcomes** across the state

High-Quality Charter School Leadership - (9) - \$272,750 (recurring)

Cultivate the growth of high-quality charter authorizers and charter schools

State Aid to Classrooms (Special Schools) - (14) - \$2,169,984 (recurring)

Teacher Salary increases in special schools



Safe Schools

Our commitment to "Safe Schools" prioritizes investments in infrastructure, transportation, and security, ensuring students have access to a safe, well-maintained environment conducive to learning. These initiatives support modern facilities, safety upgrades, and reliable transportation, all of which are essential to promoting access to an excellent education.

New Building Costs - (1) - \$5,854,898 (recurring)

Additional recurring funding is required for new, increased costs associated with the legislatively mandated relocation

School Facilities Safety Upgrades - (11) - \$20,000,000 (non-recurring)

Requests have outpaced appropriated funding

Bus Lease/Purchase - (12) - \$35,000,000 (recurring)

Fifteen-year replacement cycle

SC Education Infrastructure Bank - (13) - \$100,000,000 (recurring)

Establish a permanent, **comprehensive solution** to provide sustainable funding for rural public and public charter school facility construction, renovation, and modernization



THANK YOU



**SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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Reach Out & Read

Emily Bartels, State Director



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Reach
Out
& Read®



Relationships, Reading Ready to Learn: Building Healthy Families

Emily Bartels, State Director

Reach Out and Read –SC





Guiding our work

Vision: A world where every child has the relationships essential to learn and thrive.

Mission: Strengthen all families with young children through guidance from medical clinicians about nurturing relationships through shared reading.

Evidence Based Model

At routine well child visits, from birth through 5 years, Reach Out and Read-trained physicians, nurse practitioners, and other primary care clinicians:



Talk with parents about the benefits of reading aloud and engaging with their young children

Show them how to look at books and talk about the stories with their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers



Encourage them to cuddle up, read together at home, and build routines around books

Give the child a new book to take home and keep

During the exam, providers also use the book for **developmental surveillance**, observing how the child and caregiver interact with the book and each other

Reach Out and Read in Action





The Evidence

Reach Out and Read's effectiveness is consistently supported by independent, peer-reviewed research. **The body of independent, peer-reviewed, and published research supporting the efficacy of the Reach Out and Read model is more extensive than for any other psychosocial intervention in general pediatrics.**

Reach Out and Read works.

More than 20 studies show:

- Parents are 2.5X more likely to read with their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Parents are 2X more likely to read with their children three or more times per week.
- Children's language development improves with increased exposure to Reach Out and Read.
- Clinic culture and clinician well-being is improved.
- Participating families demonstrated higher attendance rates for well visits.

As study done in North and South Carolina showed returning parents are 27% more likely to read to their children daily than those have never experienced the ROR intervention.

We are helping clinicians promote behavior change in parents!



Reach Out and Read model maximizes the impact of shared reading

Clinician Modeling Enhances Home Literacy Environment

- Reach Out and Read, a multi-component literacy promotion intervention, leverages primary care to promote equity in children's early language experiences. However, few studies link Reach Out and Read components to outcomes. Among Latino parent-infant dyads, we found that implementation of two and three components, compared to none, was associated with enhanced home literacy environments, following a dose response pattern.
- Parent report of clinician modeling was associated with enhanced home literacy environments.
- Literacy promotion programs seeking to enhance equity by promoting enhanced home literacy environments should utilize strategies in addition to book distribution, including anticipatory guidance and modeling, to maximize impact.

Maximizing the impact of reach out and read literacy promotion: anticipatory guidance and modeling Manuel E. Jimenez, Nila Uthirasamy, Jennifer R. Hemler, Alicia Bator, Keanaan Malke, Daniel Lima, Pamela Ohman Strickland, Usha Ramachandran, Benjamin Crabtree, Shawna Hudson, Thomas Mackie and Alan Mendelsohn



Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice

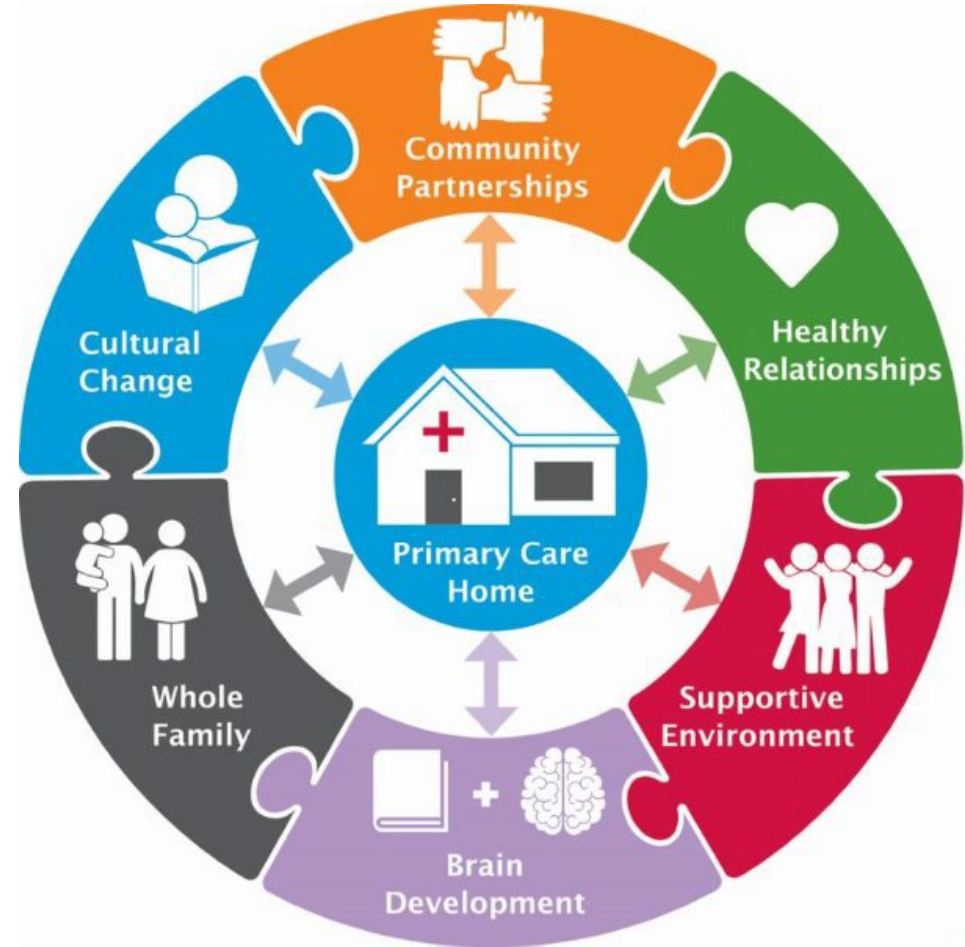
2024 AAP Policy Statement on Literacy Promotion

“Pediatricians have always understood that for children to thrive, you have to support their families and that the threats to their health include those infectious diseases, but they also include the social factors that can get in the way of learning, growing and flourishing,” Dr. Perri Klass, ROR National Medical Director

This statement further codifies the **crucial role** that **medical home** plays in the **healthy development** of a child and their ability to be **ready for school**.



Flourishing Families



SOUTH CAROLINA



803 TRAINED
CLINICIANS



335,488 CHILD
TOUCHPOINTS

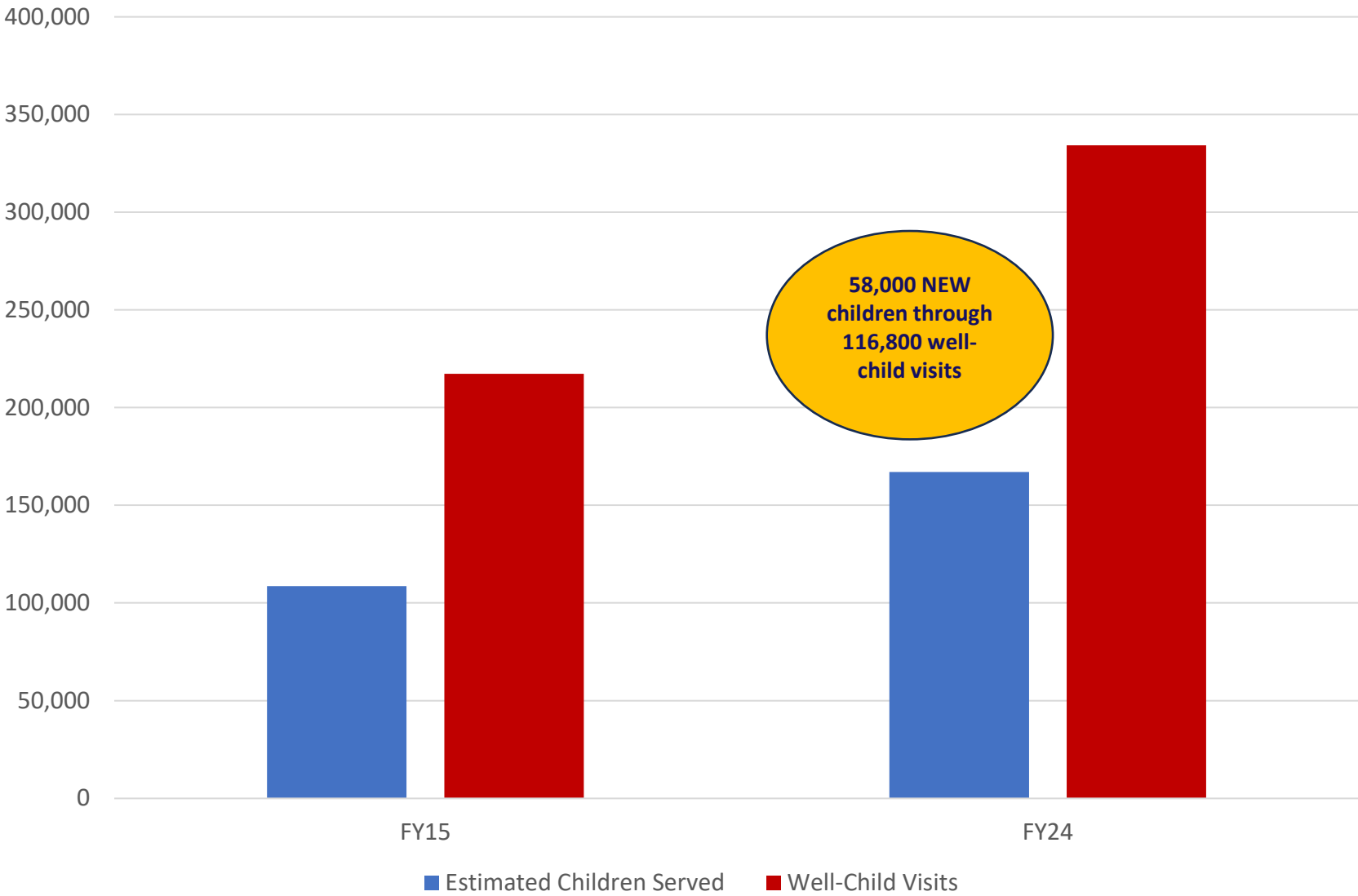


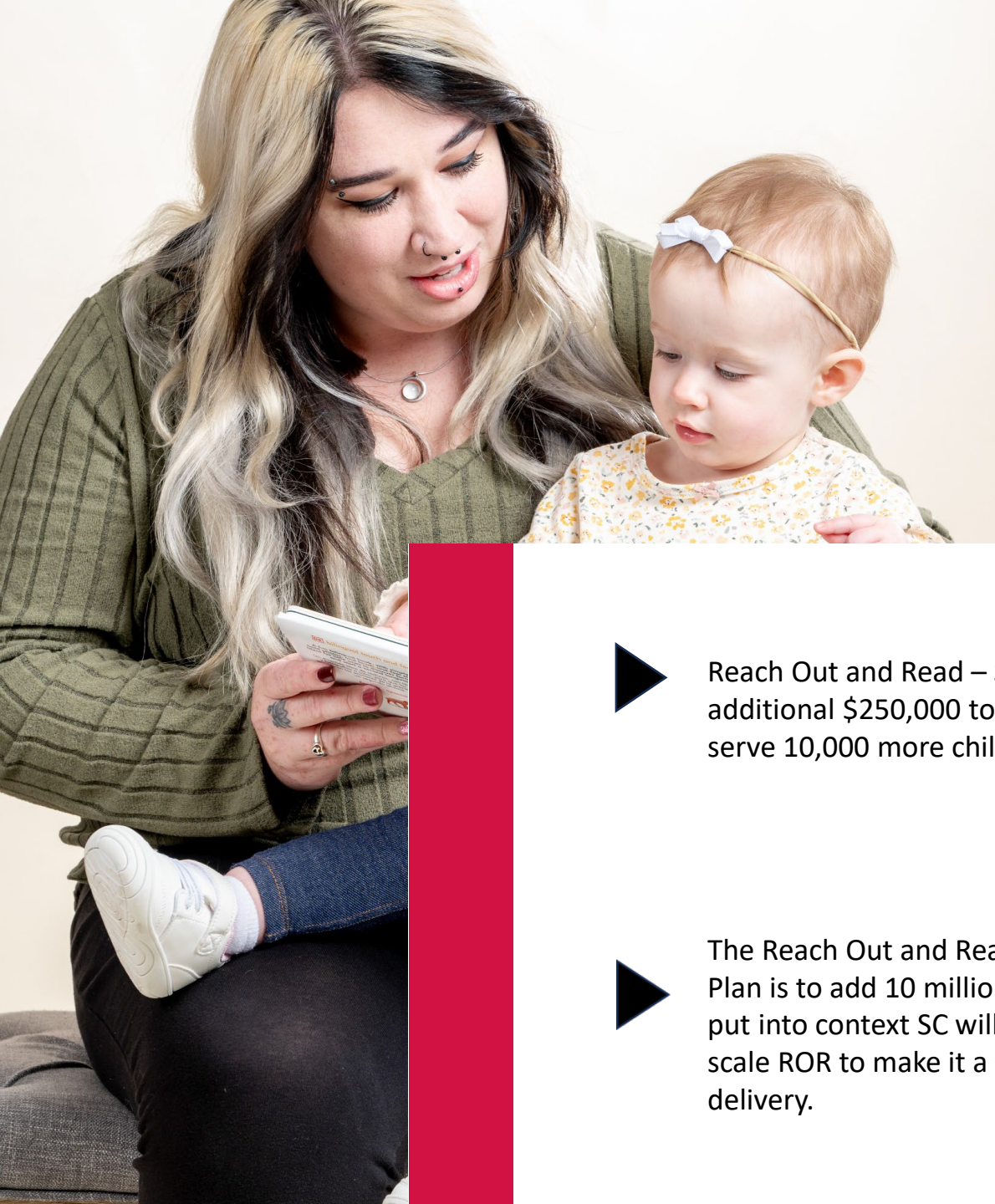
205 CLINICAL
LOCATIONS

“Encouraging parents to engage with their children in a world that has so many distractions can be tough. Screen time continues to be a large factor that can negatively impact development and caregivers’ connection with their children. I am grateful to have the ROR book to share as a way to “break the ice”. It allows me to encourage the parent to interact with their children away from screens and share with them how important it is to talk, communicate, and spend time with their child. Reading a book together is one of the best ways to do all of those things at once!” –
Maureen Burke, MD – Charleston, SC



Reach Out and Read Growth since EOC investment





How and Where to go **GROW** from here?



Reach Out and Read – SC is requesting an additional \$250,000 to expand our work to serve 10,000 more children in South Carolina



The Reach Out and Read National Strategic Plan is to add 10 million children by 2030. To put into context SC will continue to work to scale ROR to make it a true population-level delivery.



Recently finished researching our baseline saturation of FQHC locations in SC. We are currently in 76% of all FQHC clinics that serve pediatric primary care. We will prioritize expansion to those in rural and underserved areas in the state.



Additionally, with these funds ROR-SC will begin to scale the best practices from our implementation science credentialing statewide ensuring that sites are supported by evidence-based implementation processes.



Reach Out and Read – SC Team



Anna McBee

Sr. Program Manager
Upstate Region



Andre' Woods

Program Manager
Midlands Region



Deb Laroche

Program Manager
Low Country Region



Gail Phillips

Program Manager
Coastal/Pee Dee
Region



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& Read[®]



www.reachoutandread.org

Thank you!

Emily Bartels, State Director

Reach Out and Read, South Carolina

Emily.bartels@reachoutandread.org | reachoutandread.org

Science P.L.U.S.

Robin Walsh, Coordinator



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Science PLUS Institute

Participatory Learning, Understanding, & Sharing



Robin Walsh, Science PLUS Coordinator
Lorraine Taylor, Science PLUS Assistant Coordinator
Michael Weeks, Director of Roper Mountain Science Center

Roper Mountain

Roper Mountain Science Center in Greenville, SC is a unique, 62-acre location featuring:

- The Environmental Science Building housing multiple interactive exhibits as well as traveling museum-quality summer exhibits
- The Harrison Hall of Natural Science with over 100 different animals and a Marine Touch Tank
- The Symmes Hall of Science with exciting physical science demonstrations and exhibits
- The Hooper Planetarium
- The Daniel Observatory with a 23" refractor telescope (the 8th largest in the US)
- The Living History Farm, offering a glimpse into early 1800s farm life
- The Dinosaur Adventure Trail with life-sized and animatronic prehistoric creatures
- A Butterfly Garden teeming with pollinators and nectar plants.



What is the Science PLUS Institute?

- A Professional development program for SC public and public charter school teachers of science
- Founded in 1993, over 7,200 educators have been served in the program to date
- 20+ courses offered annually, taught by master teachers
- **FREE** to participants (includes materials, lesson plans, housing, breakfast/lunch, and recertification credit)
- Supports the 2021 SC College and Career-Ready Science Standards using innovative, hands-on methods



Current Science PLUS Institute Offerings

- Mini PLUS (Saturday courses held in the spring and fall):
 - Half-day Courses (4 hours recertification credit) with \$150 in supplies
 - Full-day Courses (8 hours recertification credit) with \$300 in supplies
 - Courses held at Roper Mountain Science Center
- Summer Institute:
 - Four-Day Courses (30 hours recertification credit) with \$1000 in supplies
 - Two-Day Courses (15 hours recertification credit) with \$500 in supplies
 - Courses held at Roper Mountain Science Center and Furman University
 - Optional Furman University graduate credit offered at a discounted rate to participants

Science PLUS Courses Offered in FY 2024

- Cornwell Collaborative Cohort B (K-5th Grades)
- Kindergarten Science Activities
- 1st Grade Science Activities
- 3rd Grade Weather & Forces
- 4th Grade Life Science
- 4th Grade Physical Science
- 5th Grade Life Science
- 5th Grade Earth & Space Science
- 6th Grade Life & Earth Science
- 7th Grade Ecology
- 8th Grade Physical Science
- 9th-12th Grade Chemistry
- 9th-12th Grade Biology



2024 FY in Review

165

Participants
in
attendance

63

Districts & Public
Charter Systems
represented

4,823

Recertification
credit hours
earned

11,025

Projected SC student impact

54%

of participants
teach in Title 1
Schools

15%

of participants
represent SC
Priority Schools

2024 FY in Review

100%

of participants felt more confident in their ability to teach science

100%

of participants are likely to strongly recommend Science PLUS to peers

100%

of participants felt the course provided them with new skills or increased their content knowledge of the new science standards

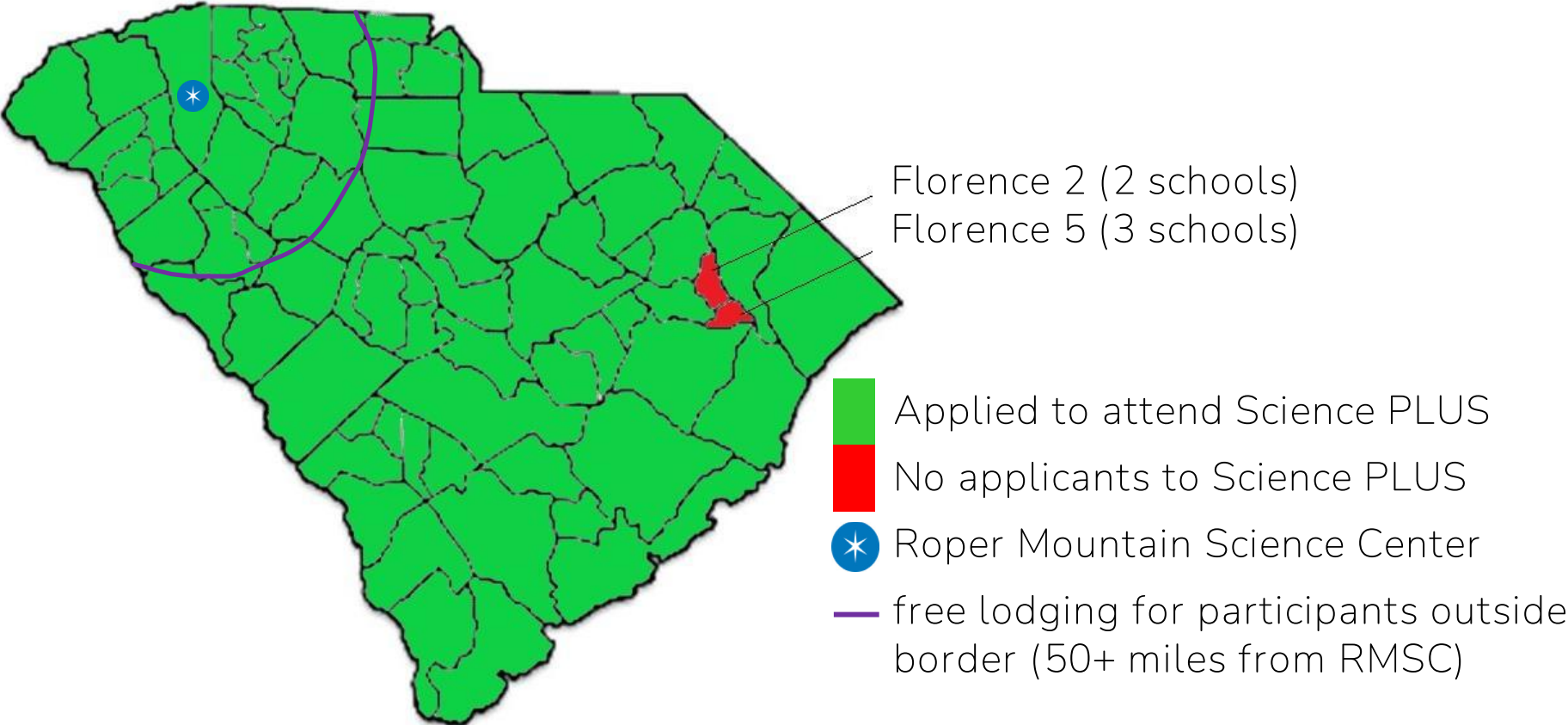
100%

of participants felt their Science PLUS Instructor met or exceeded expectations

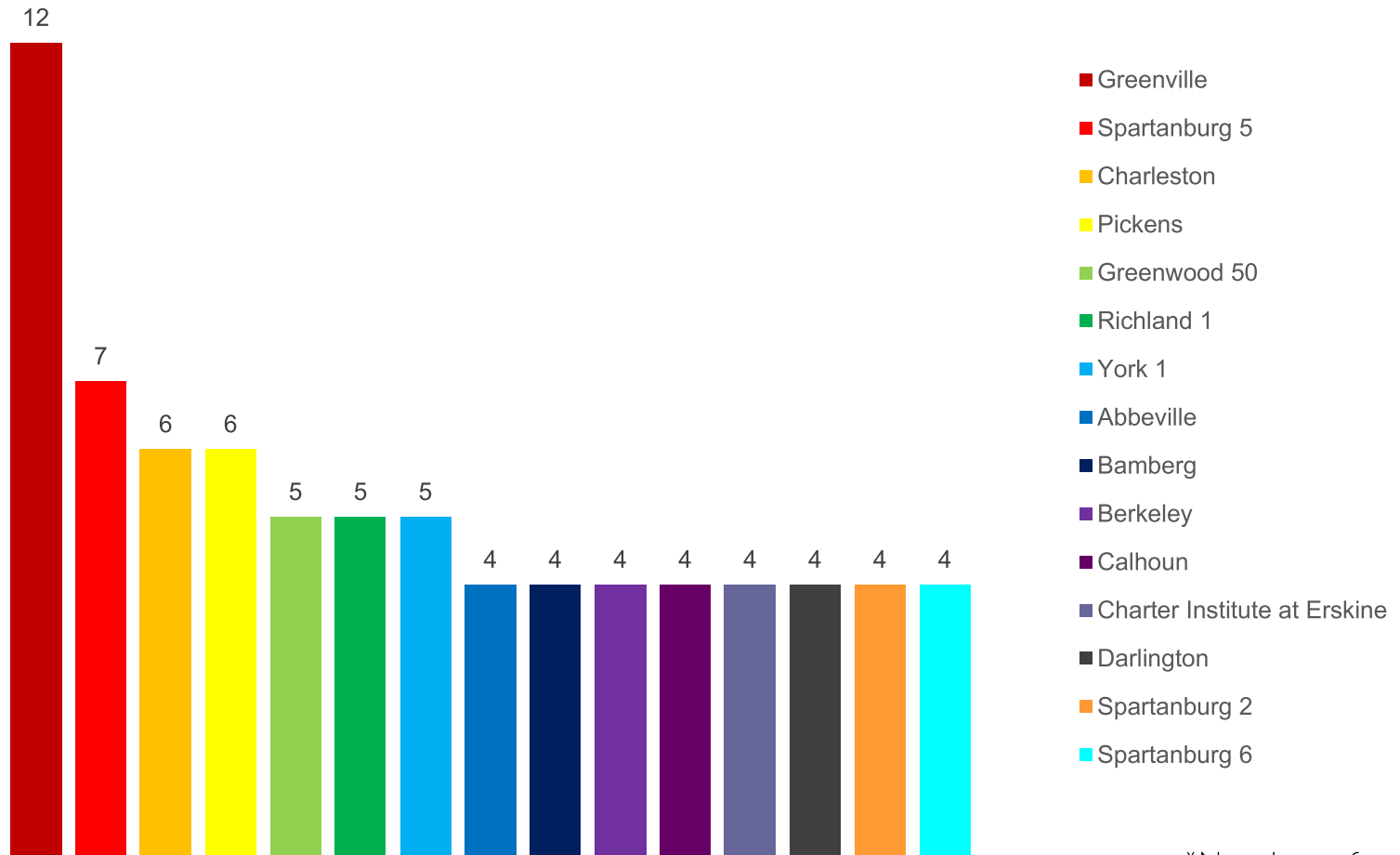
97%

of participants' pre-post course test data showed improved scores

Science PLUS Participation by District Fiscal Years 2022-24



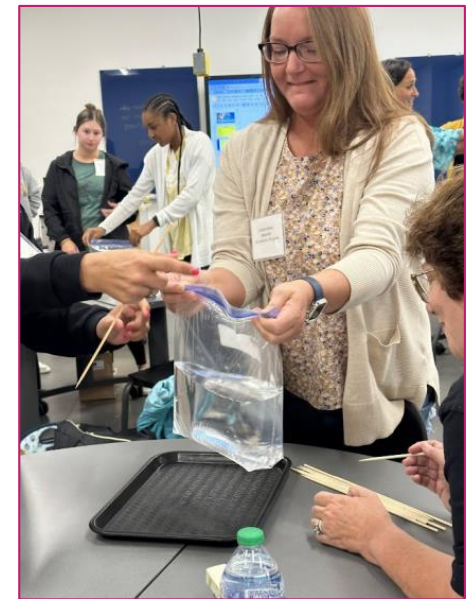
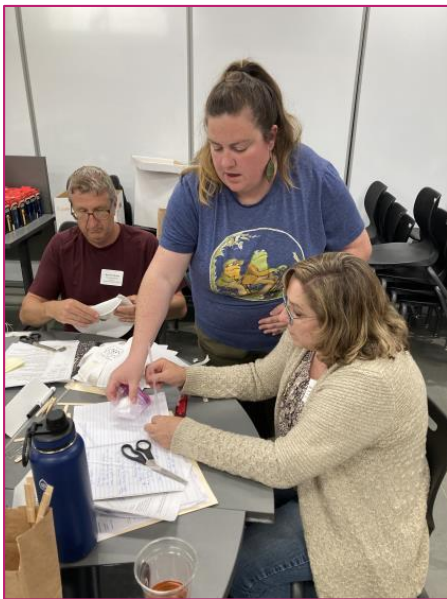
Top 15 Participating Districts in 2024



*Number of participants

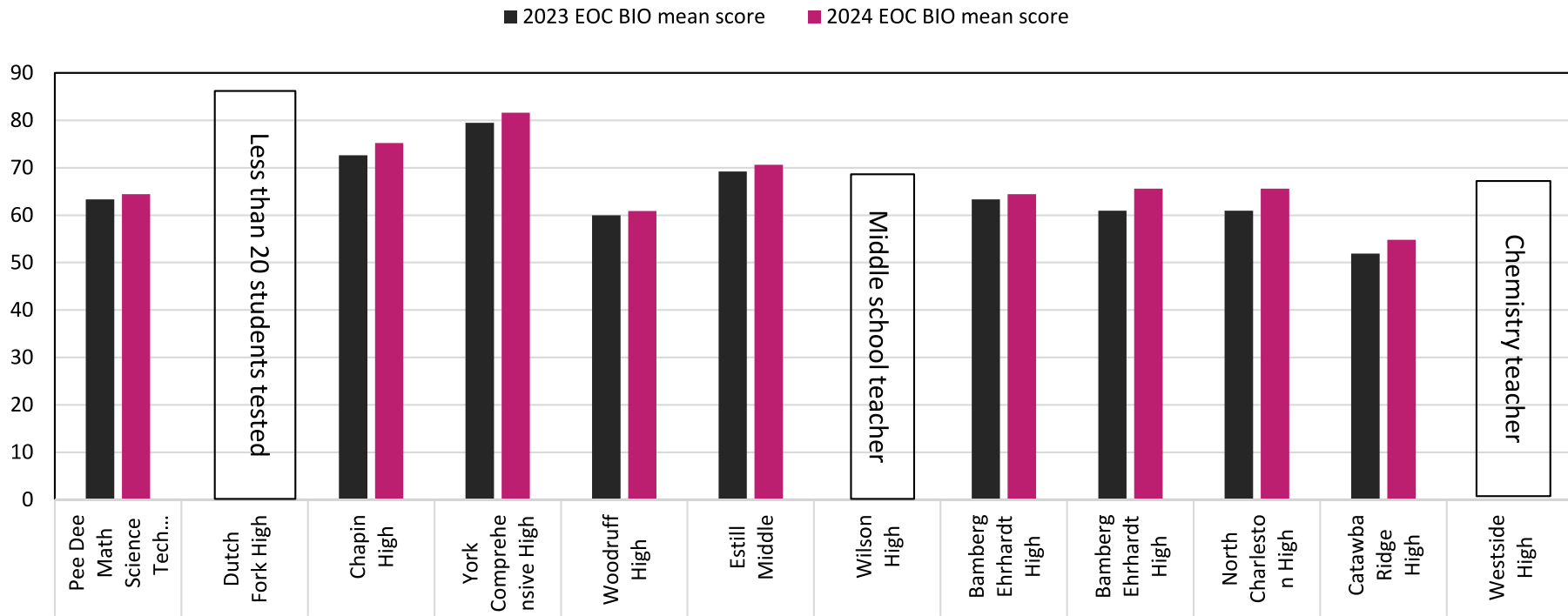
Reflections on 2024

- Due to the mandatory ELA professional developmental (LETRS) training, many applicants from grades K-3 were unable to attend Science PLUS sessions during the summer.
- Housing costs (awarded via bid solicitation) have increased up to 44% in the past two years.



Impact of Science PLUS on Student Achievement: 2023 Biology Participants' End of Course Data

100% of participants saw growth in their students' EOC exam scores



Looking to the Future

FY 25-26 funding increase of \$16,594 is requested. This will enable Science PLUS to offer:

- Competitive pay rates for our instructors and institute assistants.
- Continued free housing to participants living 50+ miles from course location.
- More funds for science materials to offset inflation and rising shipping costs.

Thank you from our participants:

- “I had the best days and learned so much. After years of our EOC scores being at 23% passing, I was so stoked to have had my very first EOC pass rate of 67% after my first semester. I was in awe.” A. Miles, Bamberg County School District
- “The time I gave this summer will greatly reduce my planning time this year and the resources provided will cut out of pocket expenses! Greatest benefit, the learning experiences I can offer my students this year!!! Thank you for making this possible!” C. Allison, School District of Newberry County
- “Science Plus was absolutely amazing! Everything was so well thought out and organized. The lessons and supplies provided were incredibly helpful and fun. I cannot wait to use the lessons and materials in class with my students. This was the best professional development experience I have ever been to in my 25 years of teaching! Thank you! Thank you!” J. Lintner, Limestone Charter Association
- “I absolutely needed this. I am the only one teaching science at my grade levels. We have no curriculum. I needed to know what I was doing well and how I can improve and I was able to do both. I am so excited!” M. Boggs, South Carolina Public Charter Schools

Thank you from our participants:

- “This was probably the best professional training/workshop I have attended in all my 25 years of teaching. You could tell that my instructor loved science and wanted to share that with us. He made a comment that stood out to me about how we don't need to just wow our students with science, but have them understand the why too.”
A. Coleman, Dillon School District 3
- “I have really and truly valued all of my time at the PLUS meetings. I came in not knowing anything about Biology (since I took it 20+ years ago in high school). The sharing of ideas, the sharing of drives, is what every teacher yearns for. Ideas and lessons to take back and actually use in the classroom. As for the materials, you guys rock with that too. We are so very blessed to have received so many needed materials to have at our fingertips. I just love the PLUS Institute. I can't say enough about how amazing my time has been here. Thank you all so very much for all you do.” H. Palmer, Bamberg County School District
- “Science PLUS is a gift and every teacher should experience it!” T. Swiger, Greenville County Schools

Lunch



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SC First Steps to School Readiness

*Ann Vandervliet, Executive Director &
Mark Barnes, Director of Administration*



**SC EDUCATION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

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South Carolina First Steps FY 2025 – 2026 Budget Request

Presentation to the Education
Oversight Committee

November 4, 2024





Agency Attendees

Ann Vandervliet, Executive Director

Mark Barnes, Director of Administration

Kaitlyn Richards, Government Affairs Liaison

Derek Cromwell, Chief Partnership Officer

Martha Strickland, 4K State Director

SC First Steps *in partnership with other agencies participating in its Early Childhood Advisory Council* will continue to build a data driven early childhood system resulting in significantly more children who achieve school readiness.



- **Active collaboration** between agencies will yield higher utilization of existing services and supports for children birth to five, parents and early educators.
- **Data** will help us to understand where additional services may be needed to achieve high levels of school readiness, and the strategies that will have the most impact over time.
- A **focused early childhood system** is needed to support K-12 and to achieve economic stability and family well-being across SC.

What We Do



Through a network of 46 **local partnerships**, we provide direct services and serve as local hubs for early childhood resources and referrals.



First Steps 4K provides free full-day **four-year-old kindergarten** to qualifying children to over 300 licensed child care centers, private schools, and charter schools across the state.



We convene and operate the **Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)**, a collaborative body representing the state's early childhood system.

Our Impact: 2023-2024



64,678

infants, toddlers, and preschoolers directly served

80,000+

children reached in child care settings and classrooms

First Steps works

but not enough children are benefitting

334,324 children birth through five in South Carolina
→ **141,906** at risk for early school failure



45%
served by First
Steps last year



55%
will be
left behind

Total: 64,678
Local partnerships: 60,559
First Steps 4K: 4,119

Children who received **First Steps' Local Partnership services** were...

74%
more likely

to score at the highest level on the
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

34%
less likely

to be chronically absent in
kindergarten

...than their like peers who did
not receive these services.



Budget Requests

Unfunded Personnel Cost Increases

Priority 1

83% of SC First Steps' workforce is funded by Education Improvement Act funds.

In FY 2024-25, the General Assembly passed increases in health insurance and mandated across-the-board increases for staff, but did not increase Education Improvement Act allocations.

Request: \$192,108 in recurring Education Improvement Act funds to cover the costs of these increases

Recruitment and Retention Costs Based on OHR Study

Priority 2

The Office of Human Resources Classification, Compensation, and Capacity Study conducted in 2023 found that 11 positions were misclassified and/or underpaid. This request includes funds to cover those needed reclassifications and salary adjustments.

In addition, since that evaluation was completed, in order to recruit and retain highly trained and competent staff, we have had to implement increases to starting pay for an additional 5 positions and increases to current salaries for another 10 positions.

Request: \$264,401 in recurring funds

First Steps Local Partnerships

Priority 3

Prior to the pandemic, First Steps was serving, on average, 30,000 children directly each year. In 2023-24, this has increased to 60,727 children served directly - an increase of 102%.

Total Request: \$3,531,500 in recurring funds

Direct Support to Local Partnerships:

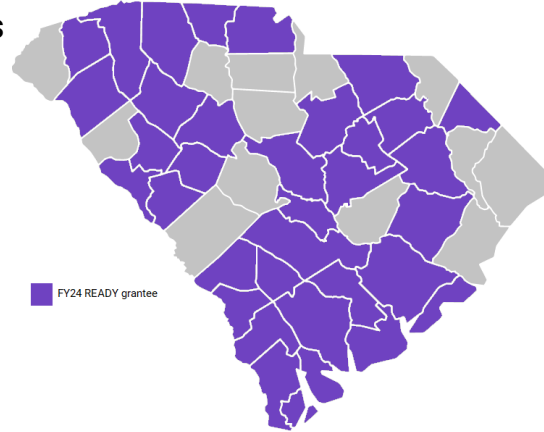
- **\$75,000** to cover increases in the annual financial audits;
- **\$56,500** to integrate a Payroll and Grants system into the existing financial management system;
- **\$150,000** to cover the increased cost for payroll and benefits administration.

Increase in Services provided through READY Grants:

- **\$2,500,000** for evidence-based parenting and home visiting programs;
- **\$500,000** for transition programs such as Countdown to Kindergarten and Countdown to 4K;
- **\$250,000** to support public-private partnerships, in conjunction with other state and local entities, to increase child care capacity in underserved areas.

Recent Local Partnership Accomplishments

SC First Steps awarded Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) grants across 33 counties, prioritizing programs for children ages 0-3, rural communities, and counties where Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores are consistently below the state average.



Through FY 2023-24 READY Grants:

7 Counties expanded child care quality support to 33 underserved providers;

15 Counties expanded parenting, health, and early education programs to 4,817 children 0-5;

29 Counties increased staff retention, maintained a physical presence in the community, and made needed technology and facility upgrades to better serve families.

In FY2024-25, **\$2,000,000** in new funds were allocated to support **First Steps Local Partnerships...**

\$1.6 million

was used to increase the local partnership formula funding for the first time since 2016 and were greatly needed.

\$400,000

went to support local partnership operations and replace federal funds that are no longer available.

Early Childhood Advisory Council

Priority 4

The SC Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) is the statutorily required structure for coordinating South Carolina's public investments in early childhood services, ensuring efficient use of state and federal funds, and building a cohesive system that ensures young children are healthy and safe, ready for school, and actively supported by their families and communities.

Resources are needed to cover one additional position and associated operating costs to provide additional support for coordinating partners' use and referrals of the public online portals and providing data governance for the multiple systems.

Request: \$87,189 in recurring funds
1 FTE

Full-Day 4K (CERDEP)

Priority 5

Over 3,900 students are actively enrolled in the First Steps Full-Day 4K Program for the 2024-25 school year, which is an increase of more than 13% over last year.

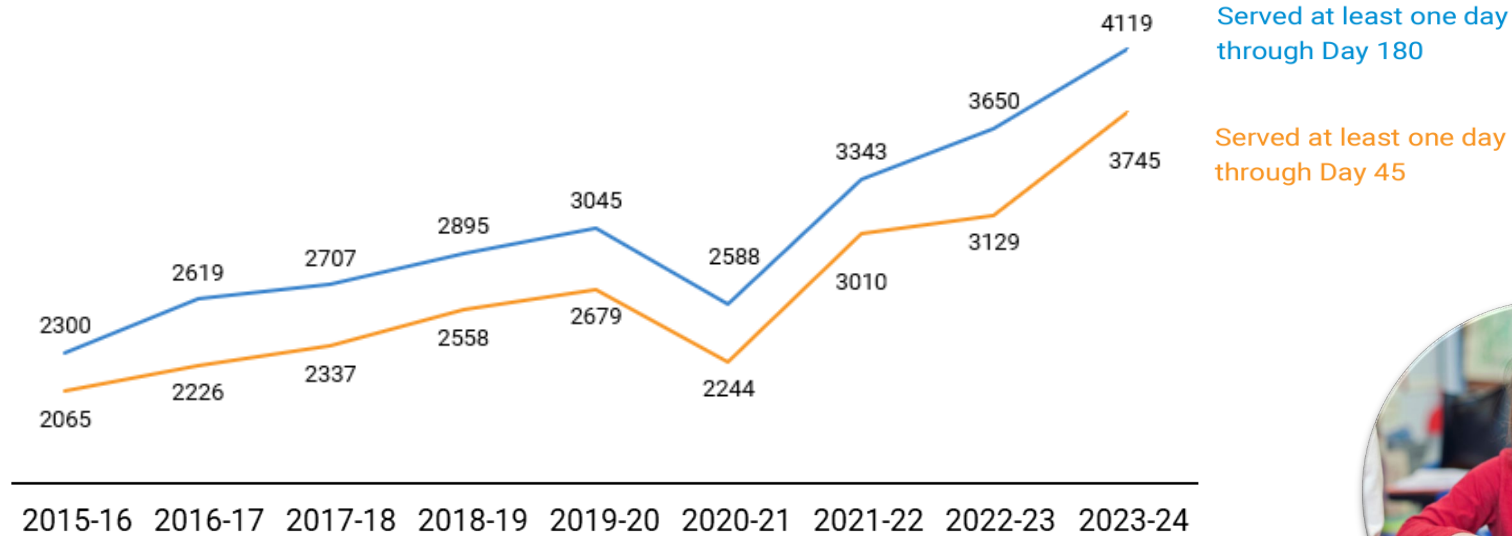
Request: \$5,783,835 in recurring funds and 4 FTEs

- **\$1,953,220** to cover the expected 7% increase in students for 2025-26;
- **\$823,900** to cover a \$200 increase per student in tuition rate;
- **\$469,576** for 3 additional FTEs to provide oversight, training, support and accountability for the projected growth in classrooms for FY 25-26 and 1 additional FTE to handle increasing administrative responsibilities;

Subtotal: \$3,246,696

- **\$2,537,139** to cover an additional 341 students based on the requested eligibility change to 300% of the federal poverty guidelines.

First Steps 4K is reaching more children than ever before while enabling parents to go to work or school.



29%+ Increase in Year One of Statewide Expansion (21-22)

9%+ Increase in Year Two of Statewide Expansion (22-23)

13%+ Increase in Year Three of Statewide Expansion (23-24)

First Steps 4K empowers parents to work.

93% credit their ability to work or go to school to their child's participation in First Steps 4K.

Budget Authorization Request

Priority 6

SC First Steps has received several private and federal grants and contracts that will be in place for FY 2025-2026. In addition, we have cash balances and are active in fundraising, and these funds will need to be used to pay for services for the fiscal year.

	Federal	Earmarked	Total
Total	\$2,911,212	\$10,800,528	\$13,711,740
Classified	\$855,473	\$330,215	\$1,185,688
Employer Contributions	\$260,567	\$137,941	\$398,508
Other Operating	\$1,795,172	\$10,332,372	\$12,127,544

Total Authorization Request: \$13,711,740

Proviso Requests

Proviso Revision Request: 1.47 and 1A.26

SDE EIA: Full Day 4K (CERDEP)

- Reinforces and documents the understanding that both the State Department of Education and SC First Steps will collect and share any waiting lists for CERDEP at the school and child care center level by September 1st of the fiscal year.

Proviso Deletion Request: 1.103

SDE: First Steps Division

- The separation of SC First Steps from the State Dept. of Education, which this proviso authorized, has taken place.

Adjournment



**SC EDUCATION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.