

Early Learning

The *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act* requires the establishment of performance goals, objectives, and strategies for prekindergarten and kindergarten.

Table 6.1: Percentage of All Kindergarten Students at Readiness Stages

Domain	% Fully Ready	% Approaching Readiness	% Developing Readiness
Social and Personal	76%	20%	4%
Language & Literacy	68%	23%	9%
Mathematical Thinking	76%	19%	5%
Scientific Thinking	59%	29%	12%
Social Studies	72%	20%	8%
The Arts	83%	14%	3%
Physical Development	87%	12%	1%
COMPOSITE	77%	18%	5%

2005-2006 MMSR Work Sampling System™ WSS Data for Language & Literacy and Mathematics

Table 6.2: Percentage of Kindergarten Students with Previous Prekindergarten Experience

Domain	% Fully Ready	% Approaching Readiness	% Developing Readiness
Language & Literacy	74%	19%	7%
Mathematical Thinking	81%	15%	4%

MMSR Work Sampling System™ (WSS) Data for Somerset County Public Schools.

School Readiness Percentages by Year

AREAS	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Composite Score	67%	85%	77%
Social & Personal	67%	81%	76%
Language & Literacy	50%	72%	68%
Mathematical Thinking	59%	72%	76%
Scientific Thinking	34%	66%	59%
Social Studies	47%	75%	72%
The Arts	78%	82%	83%
Physical Development	80%	90%	87%

School Readiness Composite Score by Sub-Group

Subgroup	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
African American	56%	79%	75%
White	74%	92%	84%
Hispanic	100%	90%	63%
Male	61%	81%	69%
Female	74%	88%	86%
Special Education	44%	50%	33%
LEP	Fewer than 5	83%	50%
FARMS	79%	59%	68%

School Readiness by Prior Care

Prior Care	% Fully Ready	% Approaching Readiness	% Developing Readiness
Somerset Pre-Kindergarten	82%	14%	4%
Informal or Home Care	67%	20%	13%
Somerset's Head Start	66%	27%	7%

1. PROGRESS IN INCREASING THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN FULLY READY TO LEARN:

A. MMSR data indicates that the percentage of children in Somerset County Public Schools who enter kindergarten fully ready to learn exceeds the state standard.

An examination of the MMSR data reveals that the composite score of 77% for Somerset County kindergarten students exceeded the state standard of 75% for the second year in a row and is a 10% increase over 2003. Specific Domains of Learning that exceeded the standard were Physical Development (87%), The Arts (83%), Social and Personal (76%) and Mathematical Thinking (76%). Trend data indicates that both Mathematical Thinking and The Arts have steadily increased since 2003. The Arts increased from 78% in 2003 to 83% in 2005 and Mathematical Thinking increased from 59% in 2003 to 76% in 2005. This represents a 15% increase in the area of Mathematical Thinking.

In reviewing the composite scores for the eight (8) subgroups represented, the data showed the African American (75%), White (84%) and Female (86%) students met the standard. FARMS students showed an increase of 9% from 2004 (59%) to 2005 (68%).

Data also indicates that children who are enrolled in an educational environment prior to kindergarten are more ready for school than their peers. 82% of the students who attended the Somerset County Public School pre-kindergarten program were fully ready for school which is 22% higher than the statewide average of 60%. It is also 16% higher than the composite score for students in other prior care settings.

2. IDENTIFY PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, OR STRATEGIES AND THE RELATED RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS THAT APPEAR TO BE RELATED TO THE PROGRESS.

A. Prior Care Programs

Becoming school ready at age 4 is vital because it is a child's beginning stage for doing well in school and throughout life. Data from MSDE show that children who enter kindergarten with low levels of school readiness are at a greater risk for falling progressively behind in the years to come, even into high school. Giving young children a strong start has positive implications for a lifetime.

Somerset County's Pre-kindergarten program is organized to support children's growth in the seven developmental dimensions of early learning: personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development/health. Instruction in language and literacy is a major focus of the pre-kindergarten program.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area were:

- 1.1.24 Monitor the effectiveness of the kindergarten screening process to evaluate students readiness to learn.
- 1.1.59.1 Implement the Early Admission policy for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students.
- 1.1.59.2 Implement the established Memorandum of Understanding between the Lower Eastern Shore Public Schools and Shore Up Head Start.
- 1.1.61 Maintain and validate the use of the MSDE Work Sampling System to monitor student performance in Pre-K and K classrooms.

B. Targeted Professional Development

Somerset County's pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and special education teachers receive a variety of professional development along with the regular education teachers. Math workshops are continuously offered as a way to incorporate new strategies, analyze assessment data, and make changes to improve classroom instruction. Math strategies, spiral reviews, portfolios, assessments, and using math data to guide instruction are just some of the continuing practice all elementary teachers have been trained to use.

Somerset's MMSR grant has allowed both funds for materials and supplies, as well as professional development. First and second year teachers received intensive training in the Language & literacy modular. These funds have also allowed Somerset County's experienced teachers to undergo additional training in implementing new strategies related to the MMSR program.

The Coalition of Essential Schools also offers a variety of professional development on higher level thinking skills, questioning practices, portfolio use, and differentiated instruction for Somerset teachers, including early childhood teachers, in three out of four of our Elementary Schools.

- Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area were:
- 3.6.9 Continue to provide ongoing MMSR training for all Pre-K and K staff.
 - 1.1.32 Continue to provide targeted professional development for the most effective implementation of the selected core reading series.

RELATED RESOURCES FOR EARLY LEARNING	
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers participated in Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) training. Teachers were paid a stipend to attend in the summer. 	Cost: \$ 4,340 Source: MMSR Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Consulting was hired as the consultants to conduct the MMSR training. 	Cost: \$ 3,206 Source: MMSR Grant
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCPS contracted with Case Consulting to use their website for data input and analysis. 	Cost: \$ 2,178 Source: MMSR Grant

3. CHALLENGES IN INCREASING THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN FULLY READY TO LEARN:

A. The percentage of students entering kindergarten fully ready to learn has increased but not at a sufficient rate to reach the goal of 100%.

Twenty-three percent of Somerset’s kindergarten students were still measured at a critical need for further improvement. Particular areas that did not meet the statewide target for the year 2005-2006 were in the areas of: Language and Literacy (68%), Scientific Thinking (59%), and Social Studies (72%).

1. We are challenged to increase the percentage of all students who enter kindergarten fully ready to learn.
2. We are challenged to increase the percentage of students at the readiness stage for Scientific Thinking.

B. The school system consists of a diverse population and all subgroups must enter kindergarten fully ready to learn.

Disparities continue to exist among the various subgroups represented in our school system. There is a need to keep pace with the expanding diversity as the number of at-risk children increases. These students possess many risk factors for compromised academic performance. Sixty-Eight percent of low-income children (FARMS status) were fully ready for school, compared with 83% of their middle and high income peers. Only 63% of Hispanic students, 33% of our Special Education students, and

50% of our ELL students were fully ready, compared with 75% of the African American Students and 84% of white students. In addition, the difference between genders needs our attention. 86% of the female students were fully ready compared with only 69% of the male students.

1. We are challenged to increase the percentage of all subgroups of students to enter kindergarten fully ready to learn.

4. CHANGES OR ADJUSTMENTS TOWARD INCREASING THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ENTERING KINDERGARTEN FULLY READY TO LEARN:

Challenge 3A1: Increase the percentage of students who enter kindergarten fully ready to learn.

In order to meet this challenge, the system will decrease class size, increase instructional time, purchase new materials for the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A1	
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a Pre-K class in order to reduce class size in one school by adding a .5 teaching position. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 31,200 Source: Thornton (\$ 19,787) Local (\$ 11,413) Timeline: Fall 2006</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add an additional 30 minutes of instructional time to Pre-K and K classes. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 215,433* Source: Thornton (repeated) Timeline: Fall 2006 * <i>Duplicated Reference</i></p>

Challenge 3A2: Increase the percentage of students who are at the readiness stage in Scientific Thinking.

In order to meet this challenge, the system will increase instructional time for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes, purchase new science materials, develop curriculum materials aligned to the VSC.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A2	
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase Science Leveled Readers for use with Pre-K and K classes. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 5,600 Source: Thornton Timeline: Fall 2006</p>

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase a new writing program, <i>Writing Strategies</i> from Zaner-Bloser for use in kindergarten 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 1,029 Source: Local Timeline: Fall 2006</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscribe to the National Geographic <i>Young Explorer, Pioneer Edition</i> magazine for use in Pre-K and K classes. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 1,548 Source: Local Timeline: Fall 2006</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A committee of teachers and supervisors met to align the elementary science curriculum to the VSC, develop pacing guides, and a scope and sequence. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 4,410 Source: Local Timeline: Summer 2006</p>

Challenge 3A1: Increase the percentage of all subgroups that are fully ready to learn.

In order to meet this challenge, the system will coordinate programs and services with all Somerset County organizations and agencies providing care and instruction to students in this age group.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A1	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize services of “Family Navigator” position to more fully meet the needs of the Pre-K students. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 49,129 Source: Local Management Board Staff Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide “40 Developmental Assets” training to SCPS and community agency staffs. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Local Management Board Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
Core Program	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Shore-Up, Seton Center and other community organizations that provide school care and instruction. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Supervisors Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>

Facilities to Support Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Programs

The *Bridge to Excellence* legislation requires school systems to address capital improvements needed to implement the plans and the impact that strategies in the plans will have on public school facilities. The Act also requires school systems to track the implementation of required full day kindergarten for all students and prekindergarten for four-year-old children from economically disadvantaged families by school year 2007. Any changes from the initial plan to the school system's overall plan for facilities in support of Bridge to Excellence strategies must be updated annually.

In recognition of the concerns that many jurisdictions expressed about providing sufficient space to meet the full day kindergarten mandate in the Bridge to Excellence Act, the General Assembly passed legislation in 2004 to designate the costs of purchasing relocatable classrooms. Based on that legislation, local school systems are eligible for State funding using a shared cost formula through the Public School Construction Program from fiscal year 2006 through 2008. The law also requires the Governor to include \$1 million to fund the State share of the cost in the fiscal 2006, 2007, and 2008 capital budgets.

Instructions:

The purpose of this section is to track the implementation of mandated prekindergarten (PK) and full-day kindergarten (FDK) programs and to identify any major changes to each school system's overall plan for facilities in support of Bridge to Excellence Master Plan strategies. Capital projects should be the same as those identified in the *Educational Facilities Master Plan*, dated July 1, 2006, and the *FY 2008-13, Capital Improvement Program Request*, dated October , 2006. Detailed project descriptions and schedules are **not** required in this update.

A. Overall Facilities Plan: Provide a brief narrative description of any **major** facilities needs, processes, participants, and/or timelines in the Master Plan that have changed **substantially** since the last update due to actual State and local government capital budget allocations.

N/A

B. Full-day Kindergarten for All Students and Full or Half-Day Prekindergarten Programs: Complete the attached table.

