

I.E. ii.
Addressing Specific Student Groups
Early Learning

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

Table 10.1: Percentage of All Kindergarten Students at Readiness Stages

Domain	% Fully Ready			% Approaching Readiness			% Developing Readiness		
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Social and Personal	81%	76%	73%	18%	20%	18%	4%	4%	9%
Language & Literacy	72%	68%	71%	18%	23%	20%	10%	9%	9%
Mathematical Thinking	72%	76%	85%	21%	19%	11%	7%	5%	4%
Scientific Thinking	66%	59%	79%	23%	29%	17%	12%	12%	4%
Social Studies	75%	72%	75%	14%	20%	17%	11%	8%	8%
The Arts	82%	83%	80%	16%	14%	17%	2%	3%	3%
Physical Development	90%	87%	82%	6%	12%	14%	4%	1%	3%
COMPOSITE	85%	77%	79%	13%	18%	16%	3%	5%	5%

2006-2007 MMSR Work Sampling System™ WSS Data for Language & Literacy and Mathematics

Table 10.2: Percentage of Kindergarten Students with Previous Prekindergarten Experience

Domain	% Fully Ready			% Approaching Readiness			% Developing Readiness		
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Language & Literacy	81%	74%	80%	11%	19%	13%	8%	7%	7%
Mathematical Thinking	81%	81%	90%	18%	15%	7%	3%	4%	3%

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

School Readiness Composite Score by Sub-Group				
Subgroup	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
African American	56%	79%	75%	67%
White	74%	92%	84%	90%
Hispanic	100%	90%	63%	85%
Male	61%	81%	69%	79%
Female	74%	88%	86%	79%
Special Education	44%	50%	33%	62%
LEP	Fewer than 5	83%	50%	73%
FARMS	79%	59%	68%	72%

School Readiness by Prior Care			
Prior Care	% Fully Ready	% Approaching Readiness	% Developing Readiness
Somerset Pre-Kindergarten	86%	11%	3%
Informal or Home Care	77%	23%	0%
Somerset's Head Start	71%	19%	10%

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

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

Somerset County's composite score of 79% has again exceeded the state standard of 75% of children fully ready for school. Two contributing factors are strong prior care and critical professional development. Further examination of the data shows that Somerset County Public Schools met or exceeded the statewide target 5 out of the last 6 years and increased 2% from 2006. In five of the seven "Domains of Learning," performance exceeded the standard, including: Mathematical Thinking (85%), The Arts (80%), Scientific Thinking (79%), Social Studies (75%), and Physical Development (82%). Scientific Thinking, which had the largest percentage increase (20%), was emphasized during 2006-2007 due to previous low scores. Mathematical Thinking and Social Studies also increased from last year. The areas where Somerset County did not meet the standard were Language and Literacy and Social and Personal. Although, Language and Literacy did increase 3% this year from 68% in 2006 to 71%, this domain did not meet the 75% target.

In reviewing the composite scores for the eight (8) represented subgroups, the data shows the White (90%), Hispanic (85%), Male (79%), and Female (79%) students exceeded the state standard. Although the largest increase was the percentage of special education students that are fully ready to learn, with a 29% increase, the subgroup did not meet the state standard. Other increases were shown by the LEP (23%), Hispanic (22%), Male (10%), White (6%), and FARMS (4%) subgroups.

The significant gains made by the Hispanic subgroup (85%) this year decreased the gap with their white peers to only 5 points this year. In the past the gap between males and females was between 7 and 13 point, this year these subgroups were equal. Disparities continue to exist however, between other subgroups. The gap between the White subgroup and the African American subgroup is the largest it has been in 4 years.

2. Students enrolled in Somerset's Pre-Kindergarten program are fully ready to learn.

86% of the students enrolled in Somerset's Pre-Kindergarten program were fully ready to learn. This is a 6% increase over the percentage reported in 2006. Only 66% of the students who had attended Head Start and 67% of students who were in Informal or Home Care were fully ready to learn.

B. PRACTICES, PROGRAMS, OR STRATEGIES AND THE RELATED RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS THAT APPEAR RELATED TO THE PROGRESS:

1. 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 shows 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. Data also shows that children, who are enrolled in an early educational environment prior to kindergarten, are more ready for school than their peers.

Somerset County’s Pre-Kindergarten program is structured 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 the area were:

- 1.1.24 Continue to reaffirm the effectiveness of Kindergarten screening process to evaluate students’ readiness to learn.
- 1.1.59 Assure that Full day Kindergarten is in place for all students.
- 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.
- 3.1.5 Hire and maintain only Highly Qualified Staff for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten.

2. Strong School Improvement Teams

SIT teams and parent coordinators will be working with the Early Childhood staff on outreach and building partnerships. Early Childhood staffs are key participants on the School Improvement Teams (SIT), and are guiding their work on ways to increase awareness for parents. Sending out information to the community on readiness is just one of the essential strategies that are being employed. Putting transitioning strategies in place is another. SIT teams will also be working on including Head Start as part of their process of community involvement and parent awareness.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in the area were:

- 1.2.6.1.1 Implement School Improvement Team initiatives to assure reflection of school diversity in ALL educational programs.
- 2.1.25.1.1 Promote family and community involvement through professional development strategies for staff.

3. Critical Professional Development

Somerset County’s pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and special education teachers receive a variety of professional development along with the regular education teachers. *Reading First*

is guiding our literacy training with various offerings in the summer and throughout the year on the 5 essential ideas of reading. Math strategies, spiral reviews, portfolios, assessments, and using math data to guide instruction are some of the continuing practice all teachers have been trained to use. Instructional workshops have and will continue to be offered as a way to incorporate new strategies, dissect data from assessments, and make changes to improve classroom instruction.

Somerset’s MMSR grant provides funding for both materials and supplies, as well as professional development. First and second year staff received intensive training in the Language & Literacy Modular. Year 3 and beyond staff are receiving professional development in the area of needed strands such as Science and Social Studies. These funds have also allowed Somerset County’s experienced teachers to undergo additional training in implementing new strategies to increase performance in all areas of readiness.

The Coalition of Essential Schools also offers a variety of professional development such as: higher level thinking skills, questioning practices, portfolio use, and differentiated instruction for Somerset teachers in all of the Elementary Schools.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in the area were:

- 1.1.32.1.1 Continue to provide targeted professional development for the most effective implementation of the selected core reading series.
- 1.161.1 Maintain and validate the use of the MSDE Work Sampling System to monitor student performance in Pre-K and K classrooms.
- 1.1.10.1.1 Implement systematic professional development related to target achievement gain.
- 1.1.55.1.1 Continue to make necessary instruction revisions based on quarterly math assessments.
- 3.6.9 Continue to provide ongoing MMSR training for all Pre-K and Kindergarten staff.

RELATED RESOURCES FOR EARLY LEARNING	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added an additional .5 Pre-K teacher in order to reduce class size in one school. 	Cost: \$31,200 Source: Thornton
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added an additional 30 minutes of instructional time to classes. 	Cost: \$215,433 Source: Thornton <i>*Duplicate Reference</i>
Materials, Supplies & Equipment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented software from Case Consulting used by teachers for collection and analysis of data. 	Cost: \$1,505 Source: MMSR Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplied Pre-K/Kindergarten readiness materials. 	Cost: \$12,498 Source: Local (\$8,621) Title 1 (\$1,878) MMSR(\$1,998)

RELATED RESOURCES FOR EARLY LEARNING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased Science leveled readers. 	Cost: \$5,600 Source: Thornton
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained all Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers in the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) on Work Sampling System (WSS) Kindergarten Checklist; Performance Indicators for School Readiness. 	Cost: \$8,141 Source: MMSR Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained teachers on the use of MMSR Software for electronic collection and analysis of data through consultants, Case Consulting 	Cost: \$2,000 Source: MMSR Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in “Ready at 5” and “Early Learning” Conferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building Blocks of Early Math (5 teachers) - Strategies for Pre-K & K (4 teachers) - Collaboration (1 teacher) - Dr. Shelton (2 teachers) - Target Reading & Math (2 teachers) 	Cost: \$1,484 Source: MMSR Grant
Community Involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use SIT team to enhance for community connections, parent involvement, and county Head Start agency. 	Cost: \$0 Source: Staff Time

C. 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-one 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 of 75% for the year 2006-2007 were: Language and Literacy (71%) and Social and Personal (73%). In addition to the areas not meeting the standard, the percentage of students fully ready to learn decreased in the Arts (by 3%) and Physical Development (by a 5%).

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 Language and Literacy.

B. Somerset County consists of a diverse population and all subgroups must enter kindergarten fully ready to learn.

Disparities continue to exist and there is a need to keep pace with the expanding diverse population. The number of at-risk children is increasing and these students possess many risk factors for compromised academic performance. Seventy-two percent of low-income children as indicated by the Free and Reduced Price Meal Status (FARMS) were fully ready for school, compared with 88% of their middle and high income peers. Only 63% of Hispanic, 62% of Special Education, 67% of African American, and 73% of ELL students were fully ready, compared with 90% of White students.

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

D. CHANGES OR ADJUSTMENTS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES, ALONG WITH THE RELATED RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS AND TIMELINES:

We are challenged to increase the percentage of all students who enter Kindergarten fully ready to learn.

In order to meet this challenge, the system will increase instructional time, purchase new materials, keep class sizes low, and make needed changes in the curriculum to help meet the needs of all kindergartners. Somerset County Public Schools will be ordering needed materials in the coming school year and looking forward to making improvements. Highly Qualified educators are a key to success. Somerset is working in a partnership through a grant with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to ensure that ALL our educators are prepared and certified with the highest credentials. All teachers and para-professionals will be highly qualified from this year forward.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE	
Materials, Supplies & Equipment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use MMSR software to collect and analyze data 	Amount Budgeted: \$1,030 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: Fall 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add additional writing program, <i>Handwriting without Tears</i>, for all Kindergarten classrooms 	Cost: \$3,200 Source: Title I Timeline: Fall 2007
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicate math in-service activities to aligning curriculum to MD standards, incorporate strategies, dissect data from benchmark assessments, and make changes to assessments to improve classroom instruction. (10 teachers) 	Amount Budgeted: \$5,460 Source: Local (\$460) Title I(\$5,000) Timeline: June 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Year 1-Year 2 & Year 3- PD MMSR Electronic Version Training 	Amount Budgeted: \$4,680 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: Fall 2007

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide professional development opportunities on early educational programs that provide prevention and intervention, promote family literacy activities, target fostering and increasing parent involvement, and enhancing cultural understanding 	Amount Budgeted: \$2,485 Source: MMSR Timeline: 2007-2008
Community Involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build parent involvement through Title I activities and outreach initiatives at each school. 	Amount Budgeted: \$11,688 Source: Title I Timeline: 2007-2008

We are challenged to increase the percentage of students at the readiness stage for Language and Literacy.

In order to meet this challenge, the system will increase instructional time for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes, purchase new Reading and Writing materials, and develop curriculum and assessment materials aligned to VSC. Somerset County Public Schools have been implementing the *Reading First* program in all elementary schools through a *Reading First* Grant with the state. The *Reading First* program is researched based and has proven to show substantial gains in the area of language & literacy, a key predictor of academic success. This program has offered additional funding for staffing with a Reading Coach, as well as needed materials. Also, professional development will continue throughout the year on the following topics: implementation of the CORE reading series, differentiation of instruction, using reading data to guide instruction, and LETRS training. Somerset County is adding in a stronger intervention component to instruction that will help support this reading initiative and the respond to the diverse needs of at-risk students.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE	
Materials, Supplies & Equipment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and implement center activities with leveled and diverse materials selected to meet student needs and increase their knowledge Apply brain based research to centers' design and functions 	Amount Budgeted: \$8,000 Source: <i>Reading First</i> Grant Timeline: July 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Readiness Materials 	Amount Budgeted: \$1,600 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: Fall 2007
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train in the LETRS Module 	Amount Budgeted: \$12,000 Source: <i>Reading First</i> Grant Timeline: July 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train staff in questioning practice, critical analysis of performance, e and differentiating instruction. 	Amount Budgeted: \$5,000 Source: CES Timeline: 2007-2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train staff in "Author Studies" for Reading and Language Arts block to enhance student's writing and 	Amount Budgeted: \$840 Source: CES Grant

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE	
learning performance.	Timeline: June 2007

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

In order to meet this challenge, the system will coordinate professional development geared towards targeting subgroup needs. Also, it is important to incorporate different programs and services with all Somerset County organizations and agencies providing care and instruction to students in this age group. Students' needs extend beyond the regular school day and are frequently met by partner organizations providing academic, social, and emotional student and family support. The established Memorandum of Understanding between the Lower Eastern Shore Public Schools and Shore-Up Head Start is also in effect to increase the percentage of children that are fully ready from low income families.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE	
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train all pre-kindergarten, kindergarten teachers, instructional aides, ELL and special education teachers in MMSR 	Amount Budgeted: \$2,000 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: September – December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in conferences specializing on sub-group strategies. 	Amount Budgeted: \$2,485 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: 2007-2008
Community Involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with Shore-Up, Seton Center and other community organizations that provide school care and instruction. 	Amount Budgeted: \$0 Source: Staff time Timeline: 2007-2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include community in SIT team planning, programs, events, and activities. 	Cost: \$0 Source: Staff time Timeline: 2007-2008

