

EARLY LEARNING

1. **Somerset County Public Schools (SCPS) plans to ensure progress of students who enter Kindergarten not ready or approaching readiness as determined by the Maryland Model for School Readiness Kindergarten Assessment (MMSR).**
 - a. **SCPS composite score of 85% on the MMSR exceeded the statewide target of 75% of children fully ready for school.**

Two contributing factors are strong prior care and critical professional development. SCPS has met or exceeded the statewide target for 7 out of the last 8 years. SCPS trend data shows increasing composite scores on MMSR domains, which are: Personal and Social Development, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Thinking, Social Studies, The Arts, and Physical Development/Health. Fifteen percent of the students were still measured at a critical need for further improvement. There are 3 specific areas where students are not meeting the statewide target of 75% of students fully ready to learn and these are: Special Education (43%), Home/Informal Care (65%), and Language and Literacy (72%).

- b. **Prior Care Programs influence readiness for school.**

Data shows that children who are enrolled in an early educational environment prior to kindergarten are more ready for school than their peers. SCPS attributes a strong Pre-K program in reducing the number of students' not ready to enter kindergarten. SCPS will be adding a .5 section of Pre-K this school year, increasing the number of students able to attend. By having more students in the program ensures that a strong prior care background is in place, allows for lower class sizes, and moves towards the goal of Pre-K for all. There were 90% of children enrolled in SCPS pre-k program that were fully ready for school in 2009. A significant gap still exists between students from different prior care backgrounds. Children that were at home/informal care the year prior to school were only at 65% fully ready. This represents a 15 percentage point increase over the year before but still shows a 12 percentage point decrease over the past two years and a 25 percentage point difference between students that were enrolled in the SCPS Pre-K program.

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>STRATEGY, PROGRAM, OR PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</i>	<i>FUNDING SOURCE AND COST</i>
Maintain Pre-K (4.5 FTE) & K (12 FTE) Teachers at the elementary sites.	Staffing	Staffing Cost: \$836,097 Source: Local
Maintain Assistants K (12 FTE) & Pre-K (5 FTE) at the elementary sites.		Staffing Cost: \$371,548 Source: Title 1 & Local

<p>Add a .5 Pre-Kindergarten teacher TIMELINE: August 2009- June 2010</p> <p>Add a .5 Pre-Kindergarten assistant. TIMELINE: August 2009- June 2010</p>		<p>Staffing Cost: \$34,832 Source: Local</p> <p>Staffing Cost: \$9,981 Source: Local</p> <p><i>**Pre-Kindergarten is all locally funded. Local & Title 1 funding for all other early childhood staff.</i></p>
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c. Critical Professional Development impacts the readiness of students.

SCPS Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Special Education staff receive a variety of professional development. Instruction in the area of Language and Literacy is a major focus of the Pre-k program. Opportunities are being funded through local, state, and federal initiatives; *Reading First* is guiding our literacy training, MMSR training offers various module trainings and in building student engagement and increasing achievement, Title 1 offers parent and community involvement training, and local training focuses on curriculum, benchmarking process, and a variety of instructional strategies.

The MMSR grant offers funding for materials, supplies, professional development, and guidance on the critical domains of learning for early childhood staff. Both general and Special Education staff participate in regional MMSR training sessions provided by MSDE. Year 1 and 2 staffs receive intensive training in the area of the Work Sampling System performance data, using portfolios, and assessment of skills. While Year 3 and beyond staff receive targeted training on strands such as the Language and Literacy Module.

Disparities continue to exist among subgroups and the number of at-risk children is increasing. These students possess many risk factors for compromised academic performance. Only 43% of Special Education students were fully ready to learn, which was a 14 percentage point decrease from the 2008 results and a 19 percentage point decrease over two years. The Special Education sub-group missed the statewide target of 75% fully ready by 32 percentage points and is the lowest scoring subgroup.

In order to meet the challenge, SCPS has added staff and increased strategies to better meet Special Education needs and outcomes. SCPS has increased instructional time, purchased new materials, added Co-teaching initiatives, moved to make needed changes to curriculum and assessments, and offered coordinated professional development geared towards targeting data based needs.

d. Language and Literacy

The Language and literacy area also presents as an area of need for SCPS students. New Reading and Writing materials (*Little Treasures*) and (*Get Ready for School Writing*) were purchased this past year. The *Reading First* program has been implemented 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 provided additional funding for staffing a Reading Coach, and purchasing needed materials. Most importantly the program provides professional development for implementation of the CORE reading series, differentiation of instruction, using reading data to guide instruction, and LETRS training. A stronger intervention component is being added that will help support the initiative and address the diversity of the at-risk students by targeting individual needs.

e. **Elementary Early Dismissal for Professional Development**

Elementary teachers engage in 150 minutes of high quality, relevant professional development with their site colleagues each marking period. Analysis of feedback correlated with collected performance data for the year is used to draw conclusions regarding the Early Dismissal professional development value and impact. Increasing the number of sessions for 09-10 will help to ensure extra time is spent on areas of need. The Coalition of Essential Schools is offering a variety of professional development for the teachers including higher-level thinking skills, questioning practices, portfolio usage, and differentiated instruction.

f. **Mathematics**

The area of mathematical thinking was one area of focused training provided during the school year. As a result, the county experienced a 5 percentage point increase in student performance. The school system is expecting that this will continue as a result of additional training through math consultants to orient teachers to a variety of Pre-K/Kindergarten hands-on math strategies, building number sense, using spiral reviews and portfolios, implementing differentiated instruction, and using math data to guide instruction. Incorporating these changes will improve classroom instruction.

g. **Technology**

High quality professional development in the use and integration of technology is provided in a variety of formats. Added technology will help to build student engagement.

h. **Collaborating**

Staff at all levels are trained in the benefits of collaboration and provided multiple opportunities to collaborate on professional work within and beyond the instructional day. Teachers who currently work with students meet with teachers who will be receiving them the following year during articulation meetings to discuss the needs of the upcoming students.

i. **Assessments**

The progress of students is monitored throughout the year using county developed benchmark assessments and maintained in students' files that document year long progress on indicators. Benchmark assessments are designed and revised for classroom instructional use and aligned with content scope and sequence. Storing of all benchmark results in Performance Matters helps for data analysis and planning.

<i>ACTION AND TIMELINE</i>	<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>FUNDING SOURCE AND COST</i>
Enable Reading Coach and facilitator to increase expert training, real time coaching, facilitate collaboration, and provide feedback to teachers on student learning Timeline: August 2009-June 2010	Staffing and Job Assignments Reading Coaches & Instructional Facilitators PD: Effective Collaboration Strategies	Staffing Cost: \$0 Source: Staff Time
Incorporated in <i>Reading First</i> Strategies and Trainings for early childhood staff. Training in LETERS Modules for <i>Reading First</i> . Modules 1-2-3 --- Focusing On ELL Strategies Read Naturally Training in LETERS Modules for <i>Reading First</i> . Modules 7-8-9 TIMELINE: August 2009-June 2010	Professional Development	Cost: \$1,560 Source: <i>Reading First</i> Cost: \$480 Source: <i>Reading First</i> Cost: \$3,000 Source: <i>Reading First</i>

2. SCPS embraces partnerships with individuals providing informal preschool Homecare, with Somerset's Head Start Program, and other programs offering Early Childhood services to ensure children are entering school ready to learn.

a. Partnerships enhance student readiness.

It is extremely important to actively partner with service organizations and incorporate different programs and services available. SCPS and these organizations and agencies that are providing care and instruction to students in this age group should be working together. Aligning all programs, where students whose needs extend beyond the regular school day and are frequently met by partner organizations providing academic, social, and emotional support, as well as family support, will need to collaboratively work together and focus on best strategies.

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. Students who attended the Head

Start program were at 78% fully ready, a 12 percentage point difference compared to the 90% fully ready to learn from SCPS Pre-K program. The Head Start students' progress has increased though by 16 percentage points over the previous year's scores.

b. Strong School Improvement Teams are functioning in all schools.

All Somerset County Schools have successful School Improvement Planning Teams (SIP Teams) in which Early Childhood staffs are key participants. The SIP Teams are consistently working on ways to increase parent and community awareness on the need for students to be ready for Kindergarten. Ordering informational materials to send out to parents and the community is one of the essential strategies that is increasing awareness. Another key component of the SIP Teams is incorporating transitioning strategies for early childhood students to be more successful. Teams use data analysis to strategically plan lessons that help in meeting the needs of all students. Title 1 SIP Teams are making extra efforts to include outside agencies in SCPS professional development on events and activities for the students and their families as well as applying transition plans that are currently being set in place. Continually improving communication with parents and community members by collaborating on ways to move forward in the future is imperative. The countywide Family/Parent Coordinator works with school coordinators to develop programs for parents, design activities for parent involvement and increase volunteers. SIP teams and parent coordinators will be working with the early childhood staffs on outreach strategies and strengthening partnerships by increasing Somerset County Head Start staff, students, and parents in SCPS events.

<i>ACTION and TIMELINE</i>	<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>FUNDING SOURCE AND COST</i>
<p>Coordinate with community organizations that provide school care and instruction. Include community as part of SIT Teams in planning, programs, events, and activities. Build Parent Involvement through Title 1 Strategies.</p> <p>Timeline: August 2009-June 2010</p>	Community Involvement	<p>Staffing Cost: \$39,165 Source: ARRA (Stimulus Funds) Title I</p> <p>Materials Cost: \$26,831 Source: Title I</p>
<p>Collaborate with outside agencies to align readiness strategies for Kindergarten entry. Initiate contact with Head Start teachers and administration to plan strategies to strengthen communication and collaboration. Conduct interchange visits between Head Start and SCPS staff</p> <p>Timeline: August 2009-June 2010</p>	Community Involvement	<p>Staffing Cost: \$0 Source: Staff Time</p>
<p>Conduct site level staff faculty meetings, trainings and team meetings on the value of parental involvement in the schools as</p>	Professional Development	<p>Staffing Cost: \$0 Source: Staff Time</p>

<i>ACTION and TIMELINE</i>	<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>FUNDING SOURCE AND COST</i>
promoted in the Family and Community Involvement Policy Timeline: August 2009-June 2010		

Based on the examination of 2008-2009 Public Kindergarten Enrollment Data (Table 8.3)

Table 8.3: September 30 Prekindergarten Enrollment				
School Name	Half Day or Full Day	Total Number of Students Enrolled as of 9-30-08	Income Eligible Students	Students Enrolled Under Other Criteria
Deal Island	Half	9	3	6
Princess Anne Primary	Half	90	68	22
Woodson Elementary	Half	93	75	18
Ewell Elementary	Half	3	3	0
	Total	195	149	46

1. Somerset County Public Schools (SCPS) verifies the accuracy of the Public Prekindergarten Enrollment data for school year 2008-2009 based on income criteria forms and FARMS data.
2. Somerset County Public Schools (SCPS) has put specific practices in place to ensure the enrollment of all eligible children into the Prekindergarten program. SCPS has been fortunate to be able to not only meet the requirements of serving economically disadvantaged and homeless students, but with exception of one or two ineligible students who had registered for pre-kindergarten have been able to enroll.