

**Addressing Specific Student Groups
Early Learning**

**III. EARLY LEARNING PROGRESS IN INCREASING THE PERCENTAGE OF
CHILDREN FULLY READY TO LEARN**

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

Table 10.1: Percentage of <u>All</u> Kindergarten Students at Readiness Stages												
Domain	% Fully Ready				% Approaching Readiness				% Developing Readiness			
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Social and Personal	81%	76%	73%	70%	18%	20%	18%	22%	4%	4%	9%	8%
Language & Literacy	72%	68%	71%	68%	18%	23%	20%	24%	10%	9%	9%	8%
Mathematical Thinking	72%	76%	85%	81%	21%	19%	11%	14%	7%	5%	4%	5%
Scientific Thinking	66%	59%	79%	74%	23%	29%	17%	21%	12%	12%	4%	5%
Social Studies	75%	72%	75%	74%	14%	20%	17%	21%	11%	8%	8%	5%
The Arts	82%	83%	80%	76%	16%	14%	17%	22%	2%	3%	3%	2%
Physical Development	90%	87%	82%	88%	6%	12%	14%	12%	4%	1%	3%	1%
COMPOSITE	85%	77%	79%	78%	13%	18%	16%	19%	3%	5%	5%	3%

School Readiness Composite Score by Sub-Group

Subgroup	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
African American	56%	79%	75%	67%	75%
White	74%	92%	84%	90%	86%
Hispanic	100%	90%	63%	85%	93%
Male	61%	81%	69%	79%	77%
Female	74%	88%	86%	79%	83%
Special Education	44%	50%	33%	62%	57%
LEP	Fewer than 5	83%	50%	73%	88%
FARMS	79%	59%	68%	72%	77%

School Readiness by Prior Care

Prior Care	% Fully Ready		% Approaching Readiness		% Developing Readiness	
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2006-2007	2007-2008	2006-2007	2007-2008
Somerset Pre-K	86%	88%	11%	11%	3%	1%
Informal/ Home Care	77%	50%	23%	38%	0%	12%
Somerset's Head Start	71%	62%	19%	35%	10%	4%

A. FINDINGS

1. The 2007-2008 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 Public Schools (SCPS) *Maryland Model for School Readiness* composite score of 78% 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 6 out of the last 7 years. SCPS met or exceeded the 75% target in 3 out of 7 domains of learning: Mathematical Thinking (81%) which had a small decrease from last year by 4 percentage points, The Arts (76%) which also had a 4 percentage point decrease, and Physical Development (88%), which showed a 6 percentage point increase over last year. Two areas in which SCPS did not make the statewide target percentage of 75% was in Scientific Thinking (74%) and Social Studies (74%), each by 1 percentage point.

All sub-groups, except Special Education, met or exceeded the 75% statewide target, including the Female (83%), Male (77%), Hispanic (93%), African-American (75%), Limited English Proficient (88%), FARMS (77%), and White (86%) subgroups. The FARMS sub-group showed 77% of students scoring fully ready this year, 72% last year, and 68% scoring fully ready in the year 2005-2006. This represents a 5 percentage point increase over last year and a 9 percentage point increase since 2005-2006 for this low income group.

Although some disparities continue to exist between subgroups, significant gains were made by Hispanics and Limited English Proficient students who had higher rates of students fully ready to learn than the White subgroup. The African American and FARMS subgroups also made progress in closing the gap between their performances in comparison with the White subgroup in 2008.

2. Somerset County Public Schools Pre-Kindergarten Program is significantly more successful in preparing students to be fully ready for kindergarten.

A full 88% of children enrolled in Somerset County Public Schools Pre-Kindergarten program that were fully ready for school. This is higher than the statewide average and 2 percentage points higher than last year. A significant gap still exists between students from different prior care backgrounds entering Kindergarten ready to learn. Children that were at home or in informal care the year prior to school were only at a 50% ready measure, a 27 percentage point drop from last year and a 36 percentage point decrease over the past two years. This represents a 38 percentage point difference between students who were in informal care and the students who were enrolled in the SCPS Pre-Kindergarten Program. Students who attended the Head Start program were at 62% fully ready, a 26 percentage point difference compared to the 88% fully ready to learn from this SCPS Pre-K program. The Head Start students' progress has decreased by 9 percentage points since 2006-2007.

B. PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTED 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. Quality prior care increases readiness for kindergarten. 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.

SCPS Pre-Kindergarten program is structured to support growth in all seven developmental dimensions of learning: Personal and Social Development, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Thinking, Social Studies, The Arts, and Physical Development/Health. Instruction in the area of Language and Literacy is a major focus of the Pre-Kindergarten program. SCPS has been fortunate to be able to serve all students who have enrolled for Pre-Kindergarten.

SCPS attributes a strong Pre-Kindergarten program, funded through a blend and variety of funds, such as MMSR and Title I grants, and local allocated money, as a major reason for successful kindergarten students and for the steady increase in the county's MMSR data. These funds are used for staffing, materials, equipment, professional development, and supplies, which has allowed SCPS to meet the requirements to serve economically disadvantaged and homeless students, as well as moving towards the goal of Pre-K for all.

2. Strong School Improvement Teams

All Somerset County Schools have successful School Improvement Planning Teams (SIP Teams) in which the Early Childhood staffs are key participants. The SIP Teams are consistently working on ways to increase parent and community awareness of 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 to increase awareness. Another key component of the SIP Teams is incorporating transition 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. Continually improving communication with parents and community members by collaborating on ways to move forward in the future is imperative. The County Family/Parent Coordinator and the volunteer coordinators at each of the schools are actively increasing family and community connections. SIP teams and parent coordinators will be working with the early childhood staffs on outreach strategies and strengthening partnerships. SIP teams will be working on including Somerset County Head Start staff, students, and parents, as a stronger part of their process of increasing community involvement.

3. Critical Professional Development

SCPS Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Special Education teachers, and all instructional assistants, receive a variety of professional development. Professional development opportunities are being funded through local, state, and federal initiatives; *Reading First* is guides literacy training, MMSR training offers various

module trainings, Title I offers parent and community involvement training, and local training in the summer and throughout the year, is focused on the SCPS curriculum and benchmarking process. Math strategies, spiral reviews, portfolios, differentiating instruction, assessments, and using math data to guide instruction are some of the continuing practices all teachers have been trained to use. Instructional workshops have and will continue to be offered as a way to incorporate new strategies, analyze data from assessments, and make changes to improve classroom instruction.

Somerset County’s MMSR grant has allowed both funding for materials, supplies, and professional development along with guidance on the critical seven domains of learning for early childhood staff. First and second year staff receive intensive training in the area of the Language & Literacy Module, while third year staff and beyond receive 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 participate in additional training in implementing new strategies to aid in fostering student engagement for student learning.

The *Coalition of Essential Schools* will continue to offer additional varieties 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.

C. RELATED RESOURCES

RELATED RESOURCES FOR EARLY LEARNING	
Core Program	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased Consumables and Textbooks. 	Cost: \$36,110 Source: Local (\$15,394) <i>Reading First</i> (\$20,716)
Materials, Supplies & Equipment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased Early Childhood Materials 	Cost: \$16,630 Source: MMSR Grant (\$1600) Title I (\$5163) Local (\$8025)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used Case Consulting Software for MMSR Assessment. 	Cost: \$1,030 Source: MMSR Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased Additional Handwriting Program, 	Cost: \$3,200 Source: Local/State
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained all Pre-kindergarten, Kindergarten, ELL, Special Education Teachers, and Instructional Aides in MMSR 	Cost: \$6,978 Source: MMSR Grant

RELATED RESOURCES FOR EARLY LEARNING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained Staffs in “Author Studies” 	Cost: \$0 – Staff Time Source: Local/State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended Early Childhood Conferences (Dr. Jean, Ready at Five, Reading First, Parent Involvement, etc.) 	Cost: \$4,238 Source: MMSR Grant (\$2485) & Title 1 (\$1753)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added Training in LETRS Modules for <i>Reading First</i>. 	Cost: \$12,000 Source: <i>Reading First</i> Grant <i>*Duplicated Reference</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained Staff in Questioning Practice, Critical Analysis of Performance, and Differentiating Instruction with <i>Coalition of Essential Schools</i>. 	Cost: \$5,000 Source: Local/State <i>*Duplicated Reference</i>
Community Involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated with Community Organizations that Provide School Care and Instruction. 	Cost: \$0 – Staff Time Source: Local/State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included Community as Part of SIT Teams in Planning, Programs, Events, and Activities. 	Cost: \$11,688 Source: Title 1 <i>*Duplicated Reference</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built Parent Involvement through Title I Strategies. 	Cost: \$11,688 Source: Title 1 <i>*Duplicated Reference</i>

IV. CHALLENGES TO INCREASING THE PERCENT OF CHILDREN FULLY READY TO LEARN

A. FINDINGS

1. The percentage of students entering kindergarten fully ready to learn is not increasing at a sufficient rate to reach the goal of 100%.

Twenty-two percent of Somerset’s kindergarten students were assessed in critical need of further development. Particular areas that did not meet the statewide target of 75% for the year 2007-2008 were: Language and Literacy (68% with 3 percentage point decrease from last year) and Scientific Thinking and Social Studies (both at 74% which represents a 1 percentage point decrease). Although the Arts exceeded the state wide target at 76%, this represents a 4 percentage point decrease over last year and a 7 point decrease in the last 2 years. There has been a steady decline with an 11 percentage point decrease in the domain of Social & Personal over the past 4 years dropping from 81% in 2004 to 70% in 2007

There is an 11 point gap (closing from 23 points in 2007-2008) between African American and White Kindergartners performance. Only 75% of the African American students, compared with 86% of White students, and 93% of Hispanic students were “fully ready to learn.” It is also important that SCPS pay attention to the gender gap that exists with 83% of the female students “fully ready to learn” and

only 77% of the Male students. Seventy-seven percent of low-income (FARMS status) students were “fully ready” for school, compared with 88% of their middle and high income peers.

2. The special education subgroup of preschoolers is the only represented subgroup that did not reach the statewide target of 75%.

Disparities continue to exist among subgroups 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. Only 57% of Special Education students were fully ready to learn. This was a 5 percentage point decrease from the 2007 results. The Special Education sub-group is missing the statewide target of 75% by 18 percentage points and has the lowest percent fully ready to learn of all subgroups.

3. There is a significant gap between the Somerset County Public Schools students’ readiness and other groups’ readiness creating an immediate disparity upon entering kindergarten.

There is still a gap between the students entering Kindergarten ready to learn from different prior care backgrounds. Only 50% of children who were at home or in informal care the year prior to school were “fully ready to learn.” This represents a 27 percentage point drop from last year and a 36 percentage point decrease over the past two years. A 38 percentage point gap now exists between students who were in informal care and students that were enrolled in SCPS Pre-Kindergarten Program. The Head Start program also showed a lower percent at 62% of students fully ready, this represents a 26 percentage point difference compared with the 88% fully ready to learn from SCPS Pre-K program. The Head Start students’ progress has decreased by 9 percentage points since 2006-2007.

B. PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES IN INCREASING THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN FULLY READY TO LEARN

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

In order to meet this challenge, SCPS has increased Pre-kindergarten instructional time, purchased new materials, continues to keep class sizes low, made needed changes in the curriculum, and offered continued professional development in areas based on data. For the coming school year SCPS has also added an additional Kindergarten teacher to continue to keep class sizes more manageable and in order to focus on the varied needs of early childhood children. SCPS will be adding needed supplies and materials in the coming school year specifically targeting the modules for the domains of learning where data indicated a weakness. The early childhood staff continues to move forward in making improvements in the curriculum and their teaching styles. Highly Qualified educators are a key to this success. SCPS is working in a partnership through a grant with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to ensure that all SCPS educators are prepared and certified with the highest credentials. All teachers and paraprofessionals will be highly qualified from this year forward.

In addition to increasing instructional time for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes, new Reading and Writing materials (*Little Treasures* and *Ready for School Writing*) will be purchased this year. SCPS has also developed curriculum and assessment materials aligned to the VSC that will be used at the Pre-K and Kindergarten level. 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 offered additional funding for staffing with a Reading Coach, as well as needed materials. Also, continuing through the program is professional development with the implementation of the CORE reading series, differentiation of instruction, using reading data to guide instruction, and LETRS training. SCPS is adding a stronger intervention component to help support this reading initiative and the diversity of the at-risk students by targeting individual needs.

All early childhood staff will be involved in intensive “Year 3 and Beyond” training for MMSR in the area of Language and Literacy this coming school year.

2. We are challenged to more fully meet the individualized needs of special education preschoolers in readiness for kindergarten.

In order to meet this challenge, the system is in the process of forming a task force to focus on special education needs and outcomes. The system will coordinate professional development geared toward targeting subgroup needs. The *Coalition of Essential Schools* is offering a variety of professional development for the teachers such as: higher-level thinking skills, questioning practices, portfolio usage, and differentiated instruction.

Teachers will be trained in the strongest new practices for selecting accommodations for students. Staff will be focusing on instructional, environmental, organizational, and motivational accommodations. Implementation of the accommodations will be applied in a co-teaching fashion for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students.

3. We are challenged to develop partnerships with individuals providing informal preschool homecare and with Somerset’s Head Start Program

It is extremely important to align different programs and service organizations with the SCPS program. SCPS and these organizations and agencies which provide 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 or year would further strengthen students’ performances. Partner organizations often provide academic, social, and emotional support for student and families that could be enhanced through a collaborative focus on best strategies. One example is the established Memorandum of Understanding between the Lower Eastern Shore Public Schools and Shore-Up Head Start which is in effect to increase the percentage of children that are fully ready from low income families. Title I SIP Teams are making extra efforts to include outside agencies into SCPS professional development, events and activities for the students and their families.

C. RELATED RESOURCES

PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, & STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Pre-K (4.5 FTE) & K (12 FTE) Teachers at the Elementary Sites 	Amount Budgeted: \$ 856,735 Source: Local/State Timeline: 2008-2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Assistants K (8.5 FTE) & Pre-K (4.5 FTE) at the Elementary Sites 	Amount Budgeted: \$ 284,406 Source: Local (\$83,668) Title I (\$117,070) Timeline: 2008-2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add Additional Kindergarten Teacher to One Site 	Amount Budgeted: \$42,000 Source: Local/State Timeline: August 2008 <i>*Duplicated Reference</i>
Materials, Supplies & Equipment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Computer Software for MMSR and Increase Readiness Materials in Early Childhood Classrooms 	Amount Budgeted: \$3203 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: 2008-2009
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Instructional Staff Development on MMSR Year 3 and Beyond 	Amount Budgeted: \$750 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: 2008-2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Instructional staff with MMSR in “Year One” 	Amount Budgeted: \$450 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: 2008-2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Instructional Staff Development with MMSR in Year Two 	Amount Budgeted: \$675 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: 2008-2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold Transition Meetings 	Amount Budgeted: \$750 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: 2008-2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Ready at Five and Dr. Jean Strategies Trainings 	Amount Budgeted: \$3210 Source: MMSR Grant Timeline: 2008-2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Task Force Focusing on Special Education Needs and Desired Outcomes 	Amount Budgeted: \$0- Staff Time Source: Local/State Timeline: 2008-2009

D. CORRELATION OF PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND STRATEGIES WITH MASTER PLAN EXTENSION 2008-2010

Number of Action Step	Action Step Description
1.1.6- Benchmark Assessments: Benchmark assessments are designed and revised for classroom instructional use.	1.1.6.3- Design or revise benchmarks to align with content scope and sequence and to match standardized test formats
1.10.1- Social and Personal: All students enter Kindergarten meeting or exceeding the minimum State	1.1.6.4.-Store all benchmark results in Performance Matters for data analysis and planning 1.10.1.1. - Model and reinforce appropriate social skills necessary to enter kindergarten through center and circle time activities.

Standard in the Domain of Social and Personal skills.

- 1.10.1.2- Incorporate character education training.
- 1.10.1.3- Use walk-through checklist for procedures in Pre-K and MMSR checklist to monitor social and personal skill development.
- 1.10.2- Language & Literacy: All students enter Kindergarten meeting or exceeding the minimum State Standard in the Domain of Language & Literacy.
 - 1.10.2.2- Plan and implement standards checklist through Read with me books, Treasures, and Portfolio Usage.
 - 1.10.2.3- Use walk-through checklist for Pre-K and MMSR checklist to monitor language and literacy activities and development.
- 1.10.3- Mathematical Thinking: All students enter Kindergarten meeting or exceeding the minimum State Standard in the Domain of Mathematical Thinking.
 - 1.10.3.2- Orient teachers to a variety of Pre K hands on math strategies
 - 1.10.3.3- Use walk-through checklist for procedures in Pre-K and MMSR checklist to monitor mathematical thinking activities and development.
- 1.10.4- Scientific Thinking: All students enter Kindergarten meeting or exceeding the minimum State Standard in the Domain of Scientific Thinking.
 - 1.10.4.1. - Implement added Pre-K/kindergarten curriculum and materials for Science activities.
 - 1.10.4.3- Use walk-through checklist for Pre-K and MMSR checklist to monitor scientific thinking activities and development.
- 1.10.5- Social Studies: All students enter Kindergarten meeting or exceeding the minimum State Standard in the Domain of Social Studies.
 - 1.10.5.1. - Implement new Pre-K materials for Social Studies activities incorporated with Little Treasures.
 - 1.10.5.3- Use walk-through checklist for Pre-K and MMSR checklist to monitor social studies activities and development.
- 1.10.6- The Arts: All students enter Kindergarten meeting or exceeding the minimum State Standard in the Domain of The Arts.
 - 1.10.6.1.-Develop an understanding and appreciation of the arts through the use of expression and representation strategies.
 - 1.10.6.3- Use walk-through checklist for Pre-K and MMSR checklist to monitor arts activities and development.
- 1.10.7- Physical Development: All students enter Kindergarten meeting or exceeding the minimum State Standard in the Domain of Physical Development.
 - 1.10.7.1.-Increase students' fine and gross motor skills development, and personal health and safety practices through health and safety lessons.
 - 1.10.7.2- Improve fine motor skills with Get Set for School program.
 - 1.10.7.3- Use walk-through checklist for procedure Pre-K and MMSR checklist to monitor physical development activities and

development.

1.10.8- Early Admission: All students entering Kindergarten on Early Admission are successful in the primary Grades.

1.10.8.1. - Monitor quarterly progress of early admission students.

1.10.9- Partnerships: All students benefit from partnerships and collaborations with external Pre K programs

1.10.9.1 -Develop partnerships with private, public, and community agencies providing Pre K services to Somerset children.

1.10.9.2 -Collaborate with outside agencies to align readiness strategies for Kindergarten entry.

2.2.7- Head Start: SCPS maintains an active partnership with Head Start

2.2.7.1. -Initiate contact with Head Start teachers and administration to plan strategies to strengthen communication and collaboration between Head Start and SCPS.

2.2.7.3-Conduct interchange visits between Head Start and SCPS staff

2.3.8- Coordinators with Title I Requirements: All requirements of the Parental Involvement Component of Title I are fulfilled annually

2.3.8.6- Conduct site level staff faculty meetings, trainings and team meetings on the value of parental involvement in the schools as promoted in the Family and Community Involvement Policy

4.1.5- Elementary Early Dismissal: Elementary teachers engage in 150 minutes of high quality, relevant professional development with their site colleagues each marking period.

4.1.5.5- Analyze feedback and correlate with collected performance data (4.1.4.1) for year to draw conclusions regarding Early Dismissal PD value and impact.

