

**AGENDA**

**Early Readiness Assessment Subcommittee**

Monday, March 23, 2015  
10:00 am  
Blatt Building, Room 433

- I. Welcome & Introductions..... Mrs. Barbara Hairfield
- II. Action: Approval of Minutes – January 26, 2015
- III. Local Early Education Systems ..... Dr. Floyd Creech  
*Director of School Readiness  
Florence School District One*
- IV. Physical Health & Motor Skills Development..... Dr. Becky White  
*Pediatrics of Newberry*
- V. Status of Early Childhood Assessment in SC ..... Ms. Penny Danielson  
*Program Manager, Early Learning & Literacy  
& Education Associate, CDEP, SCDE*
- VI. Discussion and Next Steps
- VII. Adjournment

David Whittemore  
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Joseph H. Neal

Neil C. Robinson, Jr.

Molly Spearman

Patti J. Tate

Early Readiness Assessment Subcommittee Members:

Mrs. Barbara Hairfield, Chairwoman  
Mrs. Margaret Anne Gaffney, Co-Chair  
Mrs. Anne Bull  
Sen. Mike Fair  
Ms. Deb Marks  
Ms. Patti Tate

## **Minutes**

Early Readiness Assessment Subcommittee

January 26, 2015

2:00 p.m., Brown Building 415

Subcommittee Members Present: Mrs. Barbara Hairfield (Chair); Senator Mike Fair; Mrs. Anne Bull; Ms. Deb Marks;

EOC Member Present: Senator John Matthews

EOC Staff Present: Melanie Barton; Hope Johnson-Jones; Bunnie Ward; Kevin Andrews; Dana Yow

### Welcome and Introductions

Mrs. Hairfield opened the meeting by providing an overview of the mission and timelines of the Early Readiness Assessment Subcommittee. She also introduced guests in attendance from the State Office of First Steps and the SC Department of Education. Anne Bull moved to approve November 17, 2014 meeting minutes and Senator Fair seconded. The minutes as distributed were approved.

### Progress Update and Discussion

Dr. Dan Wuori provided an overview of school readiness assessment in South Carolina. He also noted the increased focus on early childhood education from 2006 through 2015. Now, 61 total school districts provide four-year-old kindergarten. Dr. Wuori clarified that the expansion reflects service to additional districts with the same eligibility requirements. Based upon the conversation, Senator Matthews requested information about the status of poverty in the state. He asked if expansion districts have increased poverty since CDEPP was first established in 2006.

Dr. Wuori provided an update on South Carolina's participation in the Kindergarten Entry Assessment Consortium. During the summer of 2013 US Department of Education became interested in KEAs. A \$6.1 million grant was awarded to 10 state consortium. South Carolina participates in the consortium as a collaborative partner but not a funded partner. The expectation was funded partners would implement an assessment when it was developed. South Carolina wanted to take more of a "wait and see" approach. During the fall of 2013, a Steering Committee developed to explore KEA. The Steering Committee has looked at early learning standards to identify commonalities across multiple states. A state-initiated effort, the Consortium has considered state early childhood priorities and the process for development an assessment that reflects state priorities. SC First Steps Office plans to hold a stakeholder briefing on KEA February 18.

Legislative interest in early readiness assessment resulted in an EOC Memo to State Board of Education in June 2014. Act 287 provided for First Steps reauthorization and created first ever legal definition of readiness, including five domains. First Steps was also asked to adopt a description of school readiness (ready child, school, educators and caregivers, optimal environment, benchmarks and objectives). Act 287 also requires the EOC to recommend characteristics of readiness assessment. Recommendation will be provided to State Board of Education no later than July 30, 2015. Act 284 (Read to Succeed) required the administration of a readiness assessment with a focus on early language and literacy development. In FY 2016-17 the assessment will be expanded to include math, social emotional, physical well-being.

Melanie Barton inquired about the profile of a “ready child” and what the profile would address. Mrs. Barton also requested State Office of First Steps to provide the profile to EOC prior to July 1 so it can be included in the EOC readiness report to the State Board of Education in a timely manner. Senator Fair expressed concerns about children being assessed and expected to achieve specific milestones.

### Cognitive Skills

Dr. Sandra Linder of Clemson discussed the role of cognitive and math skill development in young children. Cognitive and math skills are often combined because they are tied to one another. Cognitive includes (representational thought, problem-solving, math knowledge, social knowledge, abstract thought and imagination). Math is not measured around a set of skills. She suggested the state consider math as part of the larger cognitive domain for school readiness.

There is fairly limited research on cognitive domain’s impact for school readiness (playing board games, focus on counting and number sense, engaging in block building). However, the state should consider assessments that are not just skill-based (able to count to 10, etc.) and need to measure the right things that go beyond skills (representational thought, problem solving, abstract thought and imagination, social knowledge). Characteristics of cognitive domain are not skill based.

Dr. Linder noted the SC Early Learning Standards are very similar to National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. There are process standards and content standards. Content is what children should know. Process is how students should learn the content. If children are not grasping the “how”, then they are not mastering the cognitive domain. National process standards include problem solving, reasoning and proof and communication, connections and representation. SC includes both process and content standards. It is important to keep these coupled for both assessment and teaching purposes.

Dr. Linder provided several recommendations including:

- Consider teacher’s perspective as a priority
- Consider an assessment triangulated with ongoing observation and artifact collection
- Assessment include performance-based as well as process standards

### Language and Literacy

Dr. Bill Brown provided an overview of language and literacy. He suggested there are three critical areas of assessment: language and literacy, mathematical thinking and social-emotional development.

Critical language and literacy skills include: communication, listening, phonological awareness, vocab, alphabetic principle, print and book knowledge, prewriting and writing, and reading comprehension. The CIRCLE assessment measures: book and print, early writing, letter naming, letter sound, phonological awareness, story retell and comp, vocab. Dr. Brown recommended a primary consideration for readiness assessment is the feasibility of implementation.

Senator Fair motioned to adjourn. Anne Bull seconded the motion. Adjourned at 3:30.