



To: Members of the First Steps Board of Trustees
From: Lisa Van Riper, Chair, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee
Date: June 25, 2014

RE: Early Literacy Assessment

The Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee met on Wednesday, June 25 to review and discuss a pair of important agenda items that will be part of our report to the Board tomorrow. In order to make the most of our limited time at the Board table, we felt it might be useful to send out a small set of materials in advance.

In addition to receiving a short report from Compass Evaluation, our external evaluation contractor, the **Board will be asked to provide feedback tomorrow** pursuant to Proviso 1A.76 – which calls for the procurement of an early literacy assessment for use in all publicly funded 4K and 5K classrooms during the first 45 days of 2014-2015. As part of this pending procurement, First Steps has been asked – via the EOC - to provide feedback to the State Board of Education **on the desirable characteristics of such an assessment.**

I'm pleased to tell you that First Steps has been an integral part of this discussion throughout the legislative session and (as detailed in the attached materials) convened a public-private stakeholder group throughout the spring to develop recommendations on just this point. **The First Steps Early Literacy Working Group developed a set of 10 recommendations provided to the SC Department of Education in May** pursuant to a similar joint resolution (H.4749) introduced by the SC House in February.

Subsequently the EOC, directed by a Proviso 1A.76, adopted a very similar set of recommendations in early June on which they now seek our feedback.

The committee is pleased to note significant overlap between the two sets of recommendations, detailed in the materials attached. We look forward to discussing these with you tomorrow.



To: Members of the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee
From: Susan DeVenny
Dr. Dan Wuori
Date: June 22, 2014

RE: Early Literacy Assessment Background and Recommendations

As you know, both S.516 (Read to Succeed) and Proviso 1A.76 of the FY15 General Appropriations Act – both passed into law earlier this month – call for implementation of a new readiness assessment, to launch in 2014-2015. This instrument will focus initially on early literacy and expand in 2016-2017 to include the assessment of mathematical thinking, physical well-being, and social-emotional development.

The absence of a statewide readiness measure has been a concern for First Steps since 2008 when the General Assembly eliminated the South Carolina Readiness Assessment, based largely on teacher concerns related to the instrument's burdensome workload. First Steps has been an active participant in this conversation since inception and has played a direct role in shaping this statewide policy during the 2014 legislative session.

The purpose of this memo is to place in context the attached recommendations of the First Steps Early Literacy Working Group, which convened on three occasions during March and April pursuant to an joint resolution (H.4749) passed by the SC House in March. To do so, we have included both a timeline of key dates and a set of corresponding attachments.

School Readiness Assessment Timeline

1977-2002: Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB) administered to incoming first graders statewide.

1998: **Education Accountability Act** calls for establishment of new readiness assessment tool.

2002-2008: **SC Readiness Assessment** administered to all kindergarten and first grade students

2008: Reauthorization of the Education Accountability Act includes **elimination of statewide readiness assessment**, perceived by districts as **excessively time consuming** and **under-supported**.

2012: ECAC/BOT identify readiness assessment as key focus, USC commissioned to bring recommendations.

September 2013 - SC named as collaborating partner in **US DOE-funded kindergarten entry assessment consortium** (10 states, \$6.1M)

December 2013 – Recommendations received from USC, including description of common district assessment practices.

January 2014 – KEA Steering Committee (including representatives from SCFS, State Board of Ed, SCASA, Mary Black Foundation, USC) meets, attends BUILD meeting in Raleigh, offers Ways and Means testimony re: proposed readiness assessment.

February 2014 – House files joint resolution (H.4749) directing State Board of Ed to begin considering early literacy assessment with feedback from SCFS, EOC.

March/April 2014 – Pursuant to H.4749, First Steps convenes **26 member, public-private Early Literacy Working Group**. Group meetings March 12, 29 and April 17 to develop **proposed assessment characteristics** provided to SC Department of Education on May 5.

June 2014 – **Ratification of Read to Succeed and FY15 General Appropriations Act**, which calls for EOC – with feedback from First Steps BOT – to provide **proposed assessment characteristics by June 30**.

June 9 – EOC adopts draft recommendations, seeks SCFS feedback

Kindergarten Entry Assessment Consortia: South Carolina

South Carolina is proud to serve as a collaborating member of a ten-state consortium - led by the North Carolina Department of Education and research partners SRI International, Child Trends, and the BUILD Initiative – recently awarded a \$6.1M grant from the US Department of Education to develop a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). The KEA will:

- Measure essential indicators of what ***children should know or be able to do upon entering kindergarten, across all major domains of development: language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development***;
- Have the significant input of South Carolina stakeholders in its design and implementation, including parents, classroom teachers, administrators, early learning providers, higher education faculty and state agency personnel;
- Provide appropriate accommodations and supports for children with disabilities or developmental delays and English learners;
- Incorporate technology in the collection of student data;
- Be cost-effective to administer;
- Be consistent with nationally recognized professional and technical standards for assessment;
- Produce information that can guide individualized instruction for children throughout the kindergarten year;
- Be reported and easily understood and used by various stakeholders, including families, teachers, administrators, early learning providers, and policy makers; and
- Be incorporated into South Carolina's longitudinal data systems.

The KEA **will not**:

- Be used to prevent children's entry into kindergarten.

What are the Benefits to South Carolina from the National KEA Consortia?

South Carolina's policymakers want a Kindergarten Entry Assessment for South Carolina, as evidenced by significant legislative sponsorship and support for the **Read to Succeed Act** (S.516, H. 3994, H. 3926) and the **South Carolina First Steps to Readiness Reauthorization Act** (S.291, H.3428), both of which call for the implementation of a comprehensive assessment at kindergarten entry. No such assessment is currently in use within the state's public schools; therefore, to implement the above legislation would require the state to develop its own assessment or contract with one or more assessment vendors, at significant expense to taxpayers.

By entering into this KEA multi-state consortium, ***South Carolina can complete the assessment development, field testing, training and implementation process at a substantial cost savings compared to working as a single state.*** As an unfunded partner in the consortia, South Carolina is responsible for the costs of participating in stakeholder meetings and, if desired, the costs for field testing the assessment in South Carolina. Moreover, the resulting KEA will reflect the collective experience and expertise of early childhood and K-12 stakeholders from across the country.

A total of \$15.1M in federal, one-time competitive Enhanced Assessment Grant (EAG) funding has been awarded to three states by the US Department of Education. In addition to North Carolina, Maryland and Texas have also received grant awards. Other states included in the North Carolina-led consortia include Arizona, Delaware, Iowa, Maine, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. Nine states will share a federal grant of \$6.1M over four years to complete the assessment design, field testing, and training phases. South Carolina will not receive federal funds. The EAG program is administered by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. For additional information on the program and these new awards, visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/eag>.

What is the cost to South Carolina?

The US Department of Education will fund the work of the consortium over a four-year period, including the cost of assessment development, stakeholder input, field testing and initial training, all of which South Carolina stakeholders will be participating in. The resulting product will be a free license for the state to use the KEA assessment instrument and the technological tools with which to collect and analyze results.

Because South Carolina declined to receive grant funds, the state is **not** obligated to adopt the resulting KEA as a condition of participation in the consortia.

January 24, 2014

Dear Representatives Bingham, Allison, Anthony, Hayes and Patrick,

Thank you for your support of South Carolina's youngest learners.

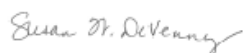
You may be aware that South Carolina was recently named by the U.S. Department of Education as part of a ten state consortium developing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) measure. Led by North Carolina and supported by national research partners including SRI International and the BUILD Initiative, the \$6.1M collaboration (within which South Carolina is participating as an unfunded "collaborating partner") is designed to produce an assessment methodology that will:

- Measure essential indicators of what *children should know or be able to do upon entering kindergarten, across all major domains of development: language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development*;
- Have the significant input of South Carolina stakeholders in its design and implementation, including parents, classroom teachers, administrators, early learning providers, higher education faculty and state agency personnel;
- Provide appropriate accommodations and supports for children with disabilities or developmental delays and English learners;
- Incorporate technology in the collection of student data;
- Be cost-effective to administer;
- Be consistent with nationally recognized professional and technical standards for assessment;
- Produce information that can guide individualized instruction for children throughout the kindergarten year; Be reported and easily understood and used by various stakeholders, including families, teachers, administrators, early learning providers, and policy makers; and
- Be incorporated into South Carolina's longitudinal data systems.

We are aware that joint resolution language is being drafted that would direct the State Board of Education to adopt an off-the-shelf school readiness measure for implementation in August 2014. Though we are strongly supportive of the notion of measuring readiness, *we are writing in our capacity as South Carolina's KEA steering committee to request an opportunity to meet with you on this important topic prior to the introduction of any resolution language.*

In doing so, we would hope to develop a better understanding of the General Assembly's intent and proposed timeline – as well as meaningfully support your deliberations on this important topic. Because we understand resolution language to be imminent, we are willing to make ourselves available to you as your schedules may permit during the weeks of January 27 and February 3. Dr. Dan Wuori is serving as staff to our committee's work and will happily coordinate meeting details (dwuori@scfirststeps.org or 803-734-0100).

Thank you in advance for considering our request.



Susan DeVenny
Director
South Carolina First Steps




Dr. Scott Turner
Superintendent, Spartanburg 5
SCASA Superintendents Division



Dr. David Blackmon
Past Chair
South Carolina Board of Education



Molly Talbot Metz
Vice President of Programs
Mary Black Foundation



Dr. Bill Brown
Professor
University of South Carolina



Dr. Leigh D'Amico
Research Assistant Professor
University of South Carolina

cc: Lewis Smoak, Vice-Chair, SC First Steps Board of Trustees
Lisa Van Riper, Chair, Strategic Planning/Evaluation Committee, First Steps Board of Trustees
Barry Bolen, Chair, SC Board of Education
Neil Robinson, Chair, SC Education Oversight Committee
Melanie Barton, Director, SC Education Oversight Committee
Molly Spearman, SC Association of School Administrators
Emily Heatwole, House Ways and Means Committee



H.4749 (As passed by the SC House, March 2014)
A JOINT RESOLUTION

TO REQUIRE THAT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION IMMEDIATELY SHALL, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE OFFICE OF FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS, THE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS AS APPROPRIATE, BEGIN TO CONSIDER WHICH ASSESSMENT MUST BE USED TO ANALYZE THE EARLY LITERACY COMPETENCIES OF CHILDREN IN STATE-FUNDED FULL-DAY AND HALF-DAY FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS AND OF ALL CHILDREN ENTERING KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS DURING THE 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR; TO PROVIDE THE ASSESSMENT MUST BE THE SAME OR ALIGNED TO ASSESSMENTS INTENDED TO PROVIDE DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION TO TEACHERS AND MEASURE STUDENT GROWTH OVER TIME; TO REQUIRE THE BOARD TO PROVIDE A REPORT SUMMARIZING THE ASSESSMENT IT HAS SELECTED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BEFORE JUNE 1, 2015; AND TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EARLY LITERACY MEASURE SELECTED BY THE BOARD.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) The State Board of Education immediately shall, in consultation with the Department of Education, the Office of First Steps to School Readiness, the Education Oversight Committee and other stakeholders as appropriate, begin to consider which assessment must be used to analyze the early literacy competencies of children in state-funded full-day and half-day four-year-old kindergarten programs and of all children entering kindergarten programs in public schools during the 2014-2015 school year. The assessment must be the same or aligned to assessments intended to provide diagnostic information to teachers and measure student growth over time. Before June 1, 2015, the board shall submit to the General Assembly a report summarizing the assessment that it has selected.

(B) The early literacy measure selected by the board pursuant to subsection (A) must continue to be used until the board chooses a comprehensive kindergarten readiness assessment standard compatible with the requirements of subsection (A); provided, however, that the board may not choose another such assessment without submitting a report summarizing the replacement kindergarten readiness assessment that it has selected to the General Assembly and the Governor before June first immediately preceding the school year in which the board intends for the replacement assessment to be used.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.



First Steps Early Literacy Working Group
Convened Pursuant to H.4749 (Passed by SC House – March 2014)

Meeting Dates:
March 12, 2014
March 29, 2014
April 17, 2014

Members

Dr. Dan Wuori, South Carolina First Steps
Dr. Bill Brown, University of South Carolina
Dr. Leigh D'Amico, University of South Carolina
Martha Strickland, South Carolina First Steps
Mary Anne Mathews, South Carolina First Steps
Kelli Boniecki, South Carolina First Steps
Penny Danielson, SC Department of Education
Liz Jones, SC Department of Education
Susan Creighton, SC Department of Education
Beverly Hunter, SC Department of Social Services
Noelle McInerney, SC Department of Social Services
Leigh Bolick, SC Department of Social Services
Pam Wills, Literacy Consultant
Ashley Hutchison, Beaufort County School District
Baron Holmes, USC Children's Law Center
Melanie Barton, Education Oversight Committee
Carol Daly, Georgetown County First Steps
Dr. Gisela Rentas, Migrant Head Start
Kimberly Foxworth, Charleston County School District
James Ella Collins, Charleston County First Steps
Katie Gavin, Charleston County First Steps
Katy Sides, Institute for Child Success
Dr. Floyd Creech, Florence County School District 1
Tricia Sheldon, SC Childcare Association
Jeff Thordahl, SC Childcare Association
Tracey Ely, Private Literacy Coach



To: Liz Jones
Susan Creighton
Penny Danielson
Nancy Busbee
Dino Teppara
From: Dan Wuori
Date: May 5, 2014

RE: Early Literacy Assessment Feedback from Working Group

As you know, South Carolina First Steps convened a working group during March and April of 2014 to gather feedback on the early literacy assessment contemplated by both H.4749 and S.516. Over a series of three meetings, this interagency group discussed the attributes of high quality assessments. I am pleased to provide the following summary of the group's feedback and recommendations.

In developing an RFP, the work group urges the Department of Education to seek an assessment which:

- Has been demonstrated as reliable and valid with the student population(s) in question
- Is instructionally diagnostic (capable of meaningfully informing classroom instruction)
- Provides for progress monitoring via multiple administrations
- Is respectful of teachers' existing workloads in terms of administration time and necessary professional development
- Provides useful and timely reporting, including reporting to parents.
- Incorporates ongoing professional development
- Is aligned with state standards
- Measures key literacy components
- Is culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate
- Is curriculum neutral (does not require the use of any specific early childhood curriculum model)

The group advises that the assessment should measure, at minimum, *oral language, phonemic awareness and letter knowledge/phonics*.

Further, the group recommends that the publishers of the following assessments be notified by the state Materials Management Office of the opportunity to bid:

- Lexia Core 5 (Lexia)
- Teaching Strategies Gold (Teaching Strategies)
- Early Learning Scale (ELS - Lakeshore)
- Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA – High/Scope)
- PALS Pre-K
- AimsWeb
- Work Sampling (Pearson)
- Children's Progress Academic Assessment (NWEA)
- Waterford Institute
- MyIGDIS (University of MN)
- iStation



Proviso 1A.76 (Adopted as part of the FY15 General Appropriations Act)

1A.76. (SDE-EIA: Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Assessments) For the current fiscal year, all students entering a publicly funded prekindergarten or public kindergarten must be administered a readiness assessment that shall focus on early language and literacy development no later than the forty fifth day of the school year. The readiness assessment must be approved by the State Board of Education. The approved readiness assessment must be aligned with kindergarten and first grade standards for English/language arts and mathematics. The results of the assessment and the developmental intervention strategies recommended or services needed to address the child's identified needs must be provided, in writing, to the parent or guardian. The readiness assessment may not be used to deny a student admission or to progress to kindergarten or first grade.

The Education Oversight Committee shall recommend the characteristics of the readiness assessment for children in prekindergarten and kindergarten, focused on early language and literacy development, to the State Board of Education no later than July 30. Prior to submitting the recommendation to the State Board, the Education Oversight Committee shall seek input from the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees and other early childhood advocates. The State Board must move expeditiously to approve or modify the criteria submitted by the committee. Once approved, with the assistance of the Education Oversight Committee, the board shall develop a solicitation to be used in procuring the assessment. The solicitation must be forwarded to the Executive Director of the Budget and Control Board who must immediately move to procure the readiness assessment in order to meet the forty-five day requirement. The Executive Director is authorized to make changes to the solicitation with the consent of the Chairman of the State Board of Education and the Chairman of the Education Oversight Committee. The Department of Education must bear the costs of the procurement.

June 9, 2014

Mr. Lewis T. Smoak
Vice-Chair
Office of First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees
1300 Sumter Street
Suite 100
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Mr. Smoak:

The General Assembly adopted proviso 1A.76. of the 2014-15 General Appropriations Act as ratified on June 5, 2014. The proviso requires that the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) recommend "no later than July 30" to the State Board of Education the characteristics of a readiness assessment focused on early language and literacy development for children entering publicly funded prekindergarten (four-year-old kindergarten) and kindergarten (five-year-old kindergarten by the 45th day of the school year. Prior to submitting its recommendations, the EOC is required to seek input from the Office of First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees and other early childhood advocates.

Because time is of the essence in procuring an assessment, the EOC at its June 9, 2014 meeting voted to adopt the nine characteristics of a readiness assessment documented in the attached and to forward them immediately to the Office of First Steps Board of Trustees for its consideration and input. The EOC will then amend, as needed, the characteristics and then vote, via an online system, to forward the final characteristics to the State Board of Education by July 1, 2014.

I understand that the Board of Trustees will meet on June 26. Therefore, the EOC requests that the Board provide written feedback on the nine characteristics to the EOC staff no later than close of business on June 27, 2014. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Melanie D. Barton

c: The Honorable Nikki Haley, Governor and Chair of Office of First Steps Board of Trustees
Ms. Susan DeVenny
Dr. Dan Wouri

Copy to Mr. Lewis T. Smoak's Greenville office

Attachment

David Whittemore
CHAIR

Daniel B. Merck
VICE CHAIR

J. Phillip Bowers

Anne H. Bull

Mike Fair

Margaret Anne Gaffney

Barbara B. Hairfield

Nikki Haley

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J. Roland Smith

Patti J. Tate

John Warner

Mick Zais

Melanie D. Barton
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Proviso 1A.76. of the 2014-15 General Appropriation Act as ratified by the General Assembly on June 5, 2014 contains the following proviso:

1A.76. (SDE-EIA: Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Assessments) For the current fiscal year, all students entering a publicly funded prekindergarten or public kindergarten must be administered a readiness assessment that shall focus on early language and literacy development no later than the forty fifth day of the school year. The readiness assessment must be approved by the State Board of Education. The approved readiness assessment must be aligned with kindergarten and first grade standards for English/language arts and mathematics. The results of the assessment and the developmental intervention strategies recommended or services needed to address the child's identified needs must be provided, in writing, to the parent or guardian. The readiness assessment may not be used to deny a student admission or to progress to kindergarten or first grade.

The Education Oversight Committee shall recommend the characteristics of the readiness assessment for children in prekindergarten and kindergarten, focused on early language and literacy development, to the State Board of Education no later than July 30. Prior to submitting the recommendation to the State Board, the Education Oversight Committee shall seek input from the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees and other early childhood advocates. The State Board must move expeditiously to approve or modify the criteria submitted by the committee. Once approved, with the assistance of the Education Oversight Committee, the board shall develop a solicitation to be used in procuring the assessment. The solicitation must be forwarded to the Executive Director of the Budget and Control Board who must immediately move to procure the readiness assessment in order to meet the forty-five day requirement. The Executive Director is authorized to make changes to the solicitation with the consent of the Chairman of the State Board of Education and the Chairman of the Education Oversight Committee. The Department of Education must bear the costs of the procurement.

The proviso specifically requires that the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) recommend "no later than July 30" to the State Board of Education the characteristics of a readiness assessment for children entering publicly funded prekindergarten (four-year-old kindergarten) and kindergarten (five-year-old kindergarten by the 45th day of the school year, which equates to the first nine weeks of school. Prior to submitting its

recommendations, the EOC is required to seek input from the Office of First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees and other early childhood advocates.

Background

The General Assembly focused several of its key public education initiatives on improving reading achievement. The General Assembly this session enacted the Read to Succeed legislation that addresses the importance of early identification and intervention of struggling readers, of teacher preparation and training, and of parental involvement and community support to systemically improve reading achievement. Furthermore, the General Assembly expanded the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP). Any four-year-old who qualifies for the free or reduced price Federal lunch program and/or Medicaid and who resides in a school district where at a poverty index of least 70 percent or more is eligible to participate in a full-day education program in a public or private center at no cost. The legislature also addressed the importance of a readiness assessment focused on early literacy based on evidence that:

The assessment of emergent literacy skills can serve to identify those children who may be at risk for later reading difficulties. Furthermore, assessment can guide the content and delivery of early literacy instruction. Failure to identify children early and provide appropriate intervention to promote emergent literacy skills is likely to have serious repercussions for later development of conventional reading skills.¹

In the fall of 2013 the EOC contacted Dr. William H. Brown, leader of the previous CDEPP evaluations to assist the agency in planning and implementing an evaluation of the CDEPP Expansion. Dr. Brown and colleagues from the University of South Carolina convened a well-informed task force of individuals familiar with CDEPP and early childhood services including:²

- Dr. Lorin Anderson, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of South Carolina
- Dr Kevin Andrews, EOC
- Lillian Atkins, Lexington School District 4, early Childhood Center
- Melanie Barton, EOC
- Leigh Bollick, DSS Early Care and Education

¹ Spencer, E., Spencer, T., Goldstein, H., & Scheider, N. (2013). Identifying early literacy learning needs: Implications for child outcome standards and assessment systems. In T. Shanahan & C. Lonigan (Eds.), *Literacy in preschool and kindergarten children: The National Early Literacy Panel and beyond* (pp. 45-70). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

² 2013-14 Expansion of the SC Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) Report. Appendix I. SC Education Oversight Committee. January 21, 2014. “2013-14

- Dr. Bill Brown, University of South Carolina
- Floyd Creech, Florence School District 1
- Dr. Leigh D'Amico, Office of Program Evaluation, University of South Carolina
- Penny Danielson, SC Department of Education
- Mary Lynn Diggs, Head Start Collaboration
- Pam Dinkins, Central Carolina Technical College
- Dr. Christine DiStefano, University of South Carolina
- Dewayen Frederick, Beaufort Jasper EOC Head Start
- Rachael Fulmer, State Budget Division
- Dr. Susan Gehlmann, Berkeley County Schools, Director of Elementary Education
- Betty Harrington, Clarendon School District 2, Manning Early Childhood Center
- Ashley Hutchinson, Beaufort County Schools
- Debbie Hyler, The School Foundation, Florence School District 1
- Mellanie Jinnette, SC Department of Education
- Kassie Mae Miller, Office of Program Evaluation, University of South Carolina
- Jenny May, Children's Law Center, University of South Carolina
- Katy Sides, Institute for Child Success
- Dr. Reginald Williams, South Carolina State University
- Dr. Dan Wuori, Office of First Steps to School Readiness
- Dana Yow, EOC

The stakeholders met on November 1, 2013 in Columbia and began working on a framework and glossary. The framework and glossary were recommended and published in the EOC's annual evaluation of CDEPP.³ The framework identifies key academic and social accomplishments that must be addressed if children are to succeed in kindergarten. Included in these accomplishments are language and literacy skills defined as:

Critical language and literacy skills included but are not necessarily limited to communication of needs and preferences, listening, receptive and expressive vocabulary, phonological awareness, alphabetic principal and knowledge, print and book knowledge, prewriting and writing skills, and reading comprehension.

In addition the EOC has been working all year with officials from the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University and from the Florida Just Read! Office and with early childhood experts in South Carolina at the school, district, higher education and state levels on the P-20 reading initiative. EOC staff has also participated in focus group discussions with the Institute for Child Success on identifying key readiness indicators.

³ 2013-14 Expansion of the SC Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) Report. Section V. SC Education Oversight Committee. January 21, 2014.

Recommendation:

Consequently, per the requirements of Proviso 1A.76. the EOC staff recommends to the Committee, the following characteristics of an early language and literacy assessment for students entering four-year-old and five-year-old kindergarten programs during the 2014-15 school year.

A readiness assessment administered to children in four-year-old and five-year-old kindergarten in school year 2014-15 and focused on early language and literacy development should have the following characteristics:

1. The assessment should measure critical language and literacy skills including, but not limited to communication of needs and preferences, listening, receptive and expressive vocabulary, phonological awareness, alphabetic principal and knowledge, print and book knowledge, prewriting and writing skills, and reading comprehension.
2. The assessment must be supported by empirical data or evidence documenting that it measures these critical language and literacy skills and that these competencies are predictive of later reading and writing success.
3. The assessment should provide student-level results that can then inform individual literacy instruction by teachers.
4. The assessment should provide student-level results that can assist parents or guardians in providing appropriate support to assist their child's language development.
5. The assessment should be able to measure student growth from one year to the next, from 4K to 5K, at a minimum.
6. The assessment should provide accommodations for children with disabilities and children who are English language learners.
7. The assessment should give timely, student-level feedback and reports to parents, teachers, schools and the state.
8. The assessment should demonstrate alignment with South Carolina English language arts standards.
9. The assessment should have a well-documented and detailed description of its development and history, including what states use the assessment to guarantee the assessment's reliability and validity.