



*from* the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee  
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### **For Immediate Release**

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## **More students served in 4K child development program**

### ***EOC releases annual report on the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)***

Editor's Note: Copies of the "*Report on the Implementation and Expansion of the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)*," as well as an Executive Briefing of the report, can be found online at [www.eoc.sc.gov](http://www.eoc.sc.gov).

**Columbia** – The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) released a report Monday evaluating the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP), a pilot full-day educational pre-kindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds residing in the 37 plaintiff districts in the school funding lawsuit, *Abbeville County School District et al. vs. SC*. The program is currently in its third year of implementation in both public and private centers.

According to the report, which was prepared by a team of University of South Carolina researchers and EOC staff at the request of the South Carolina General Assembly, the total number of four-year-old students served has increased by 29 percent since the first year of the pilot. More than three-fourths (77.5 percent) of 4-year-olds at-risk for school failure due to poverty are being served with a publicly-funded pre-kindergarten program in CDEPP districts as compared to 52.5 percent of four-year-olds at-risk for school failure due to poverty being served in non-CDEPP districts.

Additionally, more providers are participating in CDEPP. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is responsible for implementation of CDEPP in public schools; Office of First Steps (OFS) implements the program among private providers. Significant gains in providers have been made in Berkeley, Florence 1, Florence 3, and Laurens 56 school districts as well as in private centers in Florence County.

According to Melanie Barton, EOC Evaluation Specialist, the data in the report show that the program is identifying and serving children who are developmentally at greatest need and is demonstrating positive developmental and academic gains for these children. Census projections published in the report indicate that the number of 4-year-olds statewide will increase by 5.6 percent by school year 2010-11; however, the number of 4-year-olds in poverty will increase by 9.1 percent.

"The program has made an impact over the two pilot years," stated Barton, "however, as the program expands, there is a need to maximize regional professional development to teachers and providers and

minimize administrative costs at the state level through greater collaboration between public and private sectors, SCDE, OFS, and higher education including the South Carolina Technical College System.”

Highlights of the 2009 report include:

- **Demonstrated initial academic gains**  
Initial findings show children meeting CDEPP criteria (family income and Medicaid status) have significant developmental needs upon entering the program. Follow-up assessments show children in CDEPP have made modest and meaningful progress in school readiness skills.
- **Positive parent perceptions**  
Spring 2008 survey of parents showed parents of children in the program are overwhelmingly positive about the program. The most popular reasons for participating in CDEPP were related to trust, such as parent comfort with the CDEPP personnel and parents' perception that their child would be kept safe.
- **Significant variations in expenditures between public and private centers**  
Per child administrative costs vary significantly between \$1,040 per child at OFS to \$160 per child at SCDE.
- **Facilities available for growth of program**  
A facilities survey shows space availability highest in the private sector.
- **Continued research**  
The 2010 CDEPP evaluation will determine factors that influence the continuity of CDEPP student enrollment across the year, in addition to examining the long-term educational impact of CDEPP on student academic achievement.

Nine recommendations are included in the report for “improving the implementation and administration of CDEPP and for expanding the program statewide in the future.” The recommendations follow:

#### *SC General Assembly*

- The General Assembly either should consolidate administration of CDEPP into one entity providing services in the public and private sectors or establish a shared services model for the administration of CDEPP in the public and private sectors.
- The General Assembly should expand CDEPP statewide to serve all 4-year-olds at-risk due to poverty by serving children in school districts according to the level of poverty and providing that, when at least 75% of the total number of eligible CDEPP children in the district/county are served pay-lunch children who score at or below the 25<sup>th</sup> national percentile on two of the three *DIAL-3* subscales.
- The General Assembly should fund expansion of the program accompanied by the reallocation of EIA half-day child development funding into CDEPP.
- The General Assembly should establish and SCDE and OFS should enforce minimum class size requirements of at least 6 students and minimum provider participation commitments of at least three years.
- The General Assembly should maintain the current CDEPP teacher qualifications.
- The General Assembly should require that the EOC provide a facilities study for CDEPP on a triennial rather than annual basis.

#### *Education Oversight Committee*

- The EOC should expand the CDEPP evaluation to include the following:
  - A financial audit of CDEPP as administered by OFS and SCDE to reveal areas of cost-savings and to establish a reasonable administrative cost structure;

- A determination of the factors including policy issues, leadership characteristics and community concerns that led to substantial increases in the number of CDEPP participants served in specific districts and counties;
- A determination of how many private center teachers are pursuing a four-year degree and the barriers incurred in obtaining the higher educational attainment;
- A determination of the factors that influence the continuity of CDEPP student enrollment across the full 180-day program and policy or programmatic changes needed to assure that CDEPP participants fully benefit from the program; and
- A review of any formalized plan or evaluation data to assess the quality and impact of professional development and training provided by OFS and SCDE to CDEPP teachers.

*Other*

- The SCDE and OFS should institute incentives and penalties to facilitate the improvement of CDEPP data quality and completeness.
- The Commission on Higher Education should fund a Center of Excellence for preschool technical assistance and professional development.

*The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina's education system.*

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