



CERDEP Guidelines 2026-27

Act 284

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State Superintendent of Education

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SECTION ONE: Legislative Mandate

Section 59-156-110

The South Carolina Child Development Education “Pilot” Program, (CDEPP) began under Proviso 1.75 of the 2006–07 Appropriations Act for the trial and plaintiff districts in the *Abbeville v. State of South Carolina* lawsuit. Since that time the South Carolina General Assembly has expanded the authorization and funding for many of the state’s at-risk 4-year-olds to have an opportunity to attend a full-day educational program.

Appropriations Act-Statute	Provisos-Statute	Expansion
2009-10	1.62	Poverty 90% or higher
2013-14	1.83 and 1A.34	Poverty 75% or higher
2014-15	1.78 and 1A.33	Poverty 70% or higher
Act 284 of 2014	S.C. Code § 59-156-120(A)(3)	With any funds remaining after <i>Abbeville</i> and 90% poverty districts, the program must be expanded statewide, with priority set in proviso.
2020-21	1.56	Poverty 60% or higher (schools in nonCERDEP districts)
2022-23	1.55	Poverty 60% or higher (schools in nonCERDEP districts)
2023-24	1.48	Eligibility to all districts (based on school level poverty)
2024-25	1.47	Eligibility to all districts (based on school level poverty)
2025-26	1.47	Eligibility to all districts (based on school level poverty)

The annual CERDEP proviso language was codified with the approval of the Read to Succeed legislation, Act 284, as the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP), which was signed into law by the Governor on June 11, 2014. The CERDEP participating districts are listed in [Appendix A](#). As of 2023-24, eligibility

was expanded to all districts based on school level poverty and availability of space and funding.

Section 59-156-110 mandates that in CERDEP classrooms districts will provide (1) a comprehensive, systemic approach to reading that follows the State Reading Proficiency Plan and the district's comprehensive annual reading proficiency plan, (2) successful administration of the readiness assessment; (3) the developmental and learning support that children must have to be ready for school; (4) parenting education, including educating the parents as to methods that may assist the child; and (5) identification of community and civic organizations that can support early literacy efforts.

SECTION TWO: Introduction to the CERDEP Requirements

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist coordinators and district preschool providers to be able to meet statutory requirements for CERDEP implementation and to provide high quality services to young children and their families.

CERDEP Student Eligibility

To be eligible for CERDEP funding, a district must document in PowerSchool that the student:

- Has a unique student identifier or SUNS number;
- Is coded CDEP01 in the Special Programs area of PowerSchool;
- Either
 - Meets one of the risk criteria creating CERDEP eligibility (documented family income 185 percent or less of federal poverty or Medicaid eligibility) or
 - Both of these criteria are met:
 - By July 1, at least 75 percent of the eligible children are projected to be enrolled in public or private CERDEP, Head Start, or an ABC Child Care Program, and
 - the student scores below the twenty-fifth percentile on two of three subscales in DIAL-3 or DIAL-4;
- Has data entered for Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Third (DIAL-3) or Fourth (DIAL-4) Edition scores;
- Has an enrollment date; and
- Has reached age four on or before September 1.

For a district to avoid being charged for transportation at the permit rate, the SCDE also requests that the students' transportation information be entered into PowerSchool for financial tracking purposes.

CERDEP continues to be administered by the SCDE, which oversees participating public school district programs and South Carolina First Steps for School Readiness, which oversees private child care programs and other non-district providers. This partnership helps to offer families choices of pre-kindergarten within both school district and eligible non-district settings.

Pro Rata

Proviso 1.47 states, "Eligible students enrolling during the school year or withdrawing during the school year shall be funded on a pro rata basis determined by the length of their

enrollment.” In addition, “The Department of Education shall only provide funding for public school students whose complete records have been entered into PowerSchool based on the one hundred and thirty-five day student average daily membership.”

CERDEP programs **must** supply student enrollment information by the 45th day of the district specific calendar in the format required by the Office of Instructional Supports (OIS). The SCDE data calendar is set to allow for collections to cover all possible 45th days. Districts must submit their [data](#) on their 45th day specific to the district calendar.

CERDEP Student Waiting List

Proviso 1.47 states, On or before November 15, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps shall share data that identifies the total number of children enrolled in CERDEP in both public and private providers. If available appropriations exceed the instructional costs of serving children enrolled in the program and if a waiting list of eligible children can be documented by the Department of Education and by the Office of First Steps, then the Executive Budget Office may authorize the transfer of funds between the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps.

According to Section 59-156-140, enrollment for the CERDEP program must be open and non-discriminatory. In the event the number of eligible children exceeds the number of spaces available, children will be placed on a waiting list maintained at the school level. Children on the waiting list will be enrolled based on eligible student’s educational need (as determined by DIAL-3 or DIAL-4 screening) at the time the vacancy occurs. Families with children on the waiting list will be notified of other CERDEP providers in the area. If by **July first** of the school year at least seventy-five percent of the total number of children eligible for the CERDEP in a district or county are projected to be enrolled in that program, Head Start, or ABC Child Care Program as determined by the SCDE and the Office of First Steps, CERDEP providers may then enroll children whose families do not meet the income eligibility requirements but who score at or below the twenty-fifth national percentile on two of the three DIAL-3 or DIAL-4 subscales. The law states providers “may receive reimbursement for these children if funds are available;” if these enrollments create a program expansion, the public provider must apply to, and be approved by, the SCDE prior to receiving CERDEP funds.

All CERDEP schools must maintain the [student waiting list](#). All student waiting lists must be submitted to the SCDE by September 1, 2026, at noon. South Carolina has a statewide partnership between public and private 4K providers. The private domain of this partnership is the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. In an effort to ensure that as many four-year-old students are served as possible, waiting list numbers will be shared with the Office of First Steps to Readiness. [Palmetto Pre-K](#) leads will be extracted by SCDE

and be shared with district early childhood coordinators as part of recruitment and enrollment process.

Other CERDEP and 4K Resources

The CERDEP Guidelines outline the requirements, standards, and expectations to guide school districts in the implementation of the CERDEP program. The OIS provides resources for public schools at the following link: <http://ed.sc.gov/instruction/early-learning-and-literacy/>, Questions about CERDEP guidelines may be directed to the OIS at 803-734-0325.

SECTION THREE: Provider Eligibility

Residency

For the 2026-27 school year, with funds appropriated by the General Assembly, the South Carolina CERDEP shall first be made available to eligible children from the trial and plaintiff school districts in the *Abbeville County School District et. al. vs. South Carolina* litigation. Beginning in 2020-2021, CERDEP funding was expanded to all districts based on school level Pupils in Poverty.

Eligible public schools provide full-day 4K services to eligible children living within the participating CERDEP districts first. In addition, according to proviso 1.47, for CERDEP eligible children residing in districts that do not participate in CERDEP, may be placed on student waiting list in CERDEP participating districts. CERDEP districts will prioritize and serve students who reside in their local district and then to students who live in nonCERDEP districts.

Legal Operation, Capacity, and Regulations

Eligible providers must:

- Maintain classrooms with at least ten four-year-old children, but no more than twenty, four-year-old children, with an adult-to-child ratio of 1:10. With classrooms having a minimum of ten children, the 1:10 ratio must be a lead teacher-to-child child ratio. Waivers of the minimum class size requirement may be granted by the SCDE (S.C. Code § 59-156-160(B)(3)) and
- Comply with all state and local health and safety laws and codes (S.C. Code § 59-156-140(B)(2)).

Anti-Discrimination Requirements

Approved providers must comply with constitutional provisions and all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability or need for special education services (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997), race, color, creed or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964), gender (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Title II of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976), and religion. (S.C. Code § 59-156-140(B)(1))

Annual Application (Letter of Intent) Process

New eligible public school districts choosing to participate in CERDEP are required to submit an application to the SCDE. (S.C. Code § 59-156-140(A)) This application will be sent out by the CERDEP office to districts for completion after the district has qualified for CERDEP funding based on district eligibility guidelines. Continuing CERDEP districts seeking to expand are required to submit a letter of intent to the SCDE with their [documented waiting list](#). The CERDEP office will send the letter of intent to be completed via memo and submitted to the SCDE for waiting list submission. Continuing CERDEP districts selecting not to expand are not required to submit an annual application.

Documentation

CERDEP providers must maintain the following documentation:

- (1) Records of reporting at least quarterly to the parent or guardian the student's progress (S.C. Code § 59-156-140(B)(4));
- (2) "Individual student records including, but not limited to, assessment data, health data, records of teacher observations, and records of parent or guardian and teacher conferences" (S.C. Code § 59-156-140(B)(6)); and
- (3) Accurate PowerSchool data entry so that the student:
 - Has a unique student identifier or SUNS number;
 - Is coded CDEP01 in the Special Programs area of PowerSchool;
 - Either
 - Meets one of the risk criteria creating CERDEP eligibility (documented family income 185 percent or less of federal poverty or Medicaid eligibility) or
 - Both of these criteria are met:
 - By July 1 at least 75 percent of the eligible children are projected to be enrolled in public or private CERDEP, Head Start, or an ABC Child Care Program, and
 - the student scores below the twenty-fifth percentile on two of three subscales in DIAL-3 or DIAL-4;
 - Has data entered for DIAL-3 or DIAL-4 scores;
 - Has reached age four on or before September 1;
 - Has accurate enrollment (and if relevant, withdrawal) dates; and
 - Has an identified mode of transportation ([See transportation section for PowerSchool codes](#)).

Examples of students whose PowerSchool records excluded them from funding include:

- Students not coded CDEP01. It is not sufficient to provide a spreadsheet with

student names and enrollment dates. The data must be in PowerSchool with enrollment dates.

- Students whose four-year-old birthday occurs after September 1.
- Students without a SUNS identifier.

Pro Rata Payments

The proviso indicates the SCDE should adjust pro rata based on the student's length of enrollment. The SCDE will utilize PowerSchool data extractions to determine whether and when a CERDEP student was enrolled or withdrew after the start of the school year. Payments for students continuously enrolled since the start of the school year will be calculated at the minimum funding of \$5,100 for the maximum number of authorized students, as adjusted for the pro rata enrollment. The pro rata enrollment will be calculated based upon complete PowerSchool records and the 135-day student counts.

Districts should take care that the CERDEP program accurately records enrollment and withdrawal dates by the reporting deadlines. If the total days of student enrollments divided by 135 equals more than the authorized number of students/classrooms for the district, the SCDE will adjust payments downward to the authorized amount, and may institute an audit of the district's enrollment, withdrawal, and data entry procedures.

SECTION FOUR: Child/Family Eligibility

Child's Age

To be eligible a child must be four years of age on or before September 1 based on acceptable documentation, such as a birth certificate or official document from other countries. Proof-of-age eligibility must be on file no later than the day the child begins CERDEP. (S.C. Code § 59-156-130(A)).

Age Exception

Children are eligible to enroll in CERDEP for one year only. A [waiver](#) of this requirement may be sought from the SCDE in the rare event that a child is deemed unable to advance to kindergarten for developmental or other reasons. Waiver requests should be accompanied by detailed documentation from the current teacher, parents(s)/guardian(s), and/or medical provider. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) issued by the child's school district of residence stating that "an additional year of pre-kindergarten is necessary" shall be deemed an acceptable form of evidence to support the waiver.

Family Income Eligibility

Family income eligibility must be shown for enrollment: an annual family income of 185 percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; or Medicaid eligibility. Acceptable forms of verification include the following: a completed free and reduced lunch form with verification of family income, or a copy of current Medicaid card. Verification of family income may include pay stubs, tax returns, or W-2 forms. (See [Appendix B](#) for the *Family Income Eligibility Table*.)

Application Process

The parent or guardian enrolling a child must complete and submit a CERDEP application. The application must be accompanied by a copy of the child's proof-of-age eligibility (2.1), documentation of the family income eligibility (2.2) and immunization documentation (3.2). Individual school districts may require additional documentation as deemed necessary. (S.C. Code § 59-156-130(B)(2))

Children with Special Needs

CERDEP providers must comply with all state and federal laws and requirements, including those prohibiting discrimination based on need for special education services. (S.C. Code § 59-156-140(B)(1), (9)) Children with disabilities who have an IEP are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) between the ages of 3 and 21 inclusively, as outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and by the South Carolina State Board of Education Regulation 43-243. As such, a child with an IEP may not be denied access to participation in public school services, which include participation in CERDEP programs. As required by federal and state statutes and regulations, each child's IEP team determines the appropriate placement in the least restrictive environment and determines all decisions relative to a student's special education and related service needs. Because the goal of the CERDEP program is to ensure children entering kindergarten are prepared to access the general education curriculum, children in poverty and children with disabilities are granted priority entrance into the CERDEP class. For children with disabilities, such placement should be determined by and in coordination with the child's IEP team to ensure that such placement provides the child a FAPE. In such instances, CERDEP funds may provide the costs for early childhood education, while federal IDEA funds may cover the excess costs, as allowed by the permissible use of funds. All placements, including in CERDEP programs, must ensure that the child is provided with the necessary accommodations, special education and related services consistent with the child's IEP and with federal and state statutes, regulations, policies and procedures.

SECTION FIVE: Enrollment/Disenrollment

Enrollment

Enrollment for CERDEP must be open and non-discriminatory. In the event the number of eligible children exceeds the number of spaces available, children will be placed on a waiting list maintained at the school level. Children on the waiting list will be enrolled based on eligible student's educational need (as determined by DIAL-3 or DIAL-4 screening) at the time the vacancy occurs. Families with children on the waiting list will be notified of other CERDEP providers in the area.

If by **July first** of the school year, at least seventy-five percent of the total number of children eligible for the CERDEP in a district or county are projected to be enrolled in that program, Head Start, or ABC Child Care Program as determined by the SCDE and the Office of First Steps, CERDEP providers may then enroll children whose families do not meet the income eligibility requirements but who score at or below the twenty-fifth national percentile on two of the three DIAL-3 or DIAL-4 subscales. If these enrollments create a program expansion, the public provider must apply to, and be approved by, the SCDE prior to receiving CERDEP funds.

Health Records and Screening

The CERDEP school shall maintain a health record for each CERDEP student. (S.C. Code § 59-156-140(B)(6)) Each record shall include the following information:

1. A current copy of the child's immunization record signed by a physician or other health official. (S.C. Code § 59-156-130(B)(2)) This record should indicate that all required immunizations are complete as recommended by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) or that the appropriate official has provided written proof that the child meets either medical or religious exemption requirements.
2. Other health information deemed necessary by the program director and/or by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

If CERDEP schools have resources for health screenings available, it is recommended that they should arrange for basic health screenings (vision, hearing, and dental) during the first 90 days of school. Children should be referred to an appropriate health-care provider or the local health department when a health problem is suspected or detected. All health-related referrals will be noted in the child's health file on site and the results of all screenings should be shared with parent(s)/guardian(s).

Attendance

Act 284 Section 59-156-130 states,

In submitting an application for enrollment, the parent agrees to comply with provider attendance policies during the school year. The attendance policy must state that the program consists of six and one-half hours of instructional time daily and operates for a period of not less than one hundred eighty days a year. Pursuant to program guidelines, noncompliance with attendance policies may result in removal from the program.

Attendance requirements should be explained and provided in writing to parent(s)/guardian(s) during enrollment and orientation. Classroom attendance shall be recorded daily and maintained. Students' enrollment must be ended when the number of "unlawful" (Reg. 43-274) absences exceeds ten consecutive days, or when the student leaves due to "transfer, death, expulsion, ... legal withdrawal, or for any other reason." S.C. Reg. 43-172.I.A.6. Issues regarding children's attendance should first be addressed by the school administrator. The child's parent(s)/guardian(s) should be contacted to determine the reasons for the chronic absenteeism, tardiness, or early departure and to identify ways of resolving any underlying factors that might be preventing the child's consistent attendance.

Revocation of Enrollment

Developmentally appropriate guidance and behavior management techniques should be utilized at all times. In accordance with [Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies In Early Childhood Settings \(ed.gov\)](#), CERDEP programs should ensure all students' social skills, emotional development, and behavioral health are nurtured in high quality programs working towards eliminating expulsion and suspension practices (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings). The [South Carolina Pyramid PIECES](#) provides a Pyramid framework with other related promotion, prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts in the state to promote executive function of infants, young children, and their families beginning at birth to foster lifelong success.

Should a child engage in behavior that is harmful to him/herself or others and the learning environment, appropriate data will be collected to support reducing unwanted behavior and teaching desired. Appropriate supports including but not limited to school psychologists, evaluations, etc. will be utilized. Documentation of both the circumstances surrounding the request for revocation and the provider's sustained and

active efforts to resolve these issues in partnership with the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) are required before revocation can occur. The school administrator shall contact the district Early Childhood/CERDEP Coordinator who shall request permission from the SCDE to revoke a student. The request must be presented in writing with appropriate documentation, and before revocation, the SCDE may provide technical assistance or referrals for additional support. Refer to the following procedures for disenrollment of a child from a CERDEP class:

- Provide the reason(s) why disenrollment is being requested;
- Provide the progress monitoring data, timeline(s), and interventions used to help the child benefit from the class;
- Provide written correspondences and meeting notes showing the ongoing involvement with the child's support team and parent(s) or guardian(s);
- Provide behavioral and learning environment observations of the child that support the reasons for the requested disenrollment;
- If the child has special needs, provide recommendation(s) and consultation notes from the district's Director of Special Services and documentation of the most recent IEP team meeting recommendation(s); and
- Submit all documentation to the director or team lead of the OIS. No state-funded students may be disenrolled without the express written permission of the OIS.

SECTION SIX: Program Requirements

Class Size and Adult-to-Child Ratio

Providers maintain classrooms with at least ten four-year-old children, but no more than twenty children, with an adult-to-child ratio of 1:10. With classrooms having a minimum of ten children, the 1:10 ratio must be a lead teacher-to-child ratio. Waivers of the minimum class size requirement may be granted by the SCDE. Waivers of the minimum – but not the maximum – class size may be sought from the SCDE.

General Programmatic Requirements

CERDEP programs must comply with all programmatic, reporting, and assessment criteria, to include the following:

Per Act 284 Section 59-156-110, the program must focus on: a comprehensive, systemic approach to reading that follows the State Reading Proficiency Plan and the district's comprehensive annual reading proficiency plan, both adopted pursuant to Chapter 155, Title 59.

Per Act 284 Section 59-156-140. (B) Providers shall: (1) comply with all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services; (2) comply with all state and local health and safety laws and codes; (3) comply with all state laws that apply regarding criminal background checks for employees and exclude from employment any individual not permitted by state law to work with children; (4) be accountable for meeting the educational needs of the child and report at least quarterly to the parent or guardian on his progress; (5) comply with all program, reporting, and assessment criteria required of providers; (6) maintain individual student records for each child enrolled in the program, including, but not limited to, assessment data, health data, records of teacher observations, and records of parent or guardian and teacher conferences; (7) designate whether extended day services will be offered to the parents and guardians of children participating in the program; (8) be approved, registered, or licensed by the Department of Social Services; and (9) comply with all state and federal laws and requirements specific to program providers.

- Adequate training in and adherence to an approved, research-based preschool curriculum supporting the South Carolina Early Learning Standards for four-year-olds,
- Employment of qualified staff and the provision of substitute teachers as necessary,

- Maintenance (and data entry as required) of CERDEP required individual student records,
- Maintenance of student ID or SUNS number coded CDEP01 in the Special Programs area of PowerSchool, and
- Maintenance of DIAL-3 or DIAL-4 data.

CERDEP schools shall maintain all program records on site for a period of at least five years.

Classroom Environment

The CERDEP school must maintain appropriate classroom space, equipment, materials and supplies. All classrooms will be fully equipped to serve the designated number of children per class that promote children’s development across all domains.

Outdoor Equipment

Outdoor playground equipment must be age-appropriate and comply with all state and local health and safety laws and codes. The playground and equipment must be accessible to all enrolled children including those with special needs.

Reporting to Parents or Guardians

Providers are accountable for meeting the educational needs of the child and report at least quarterly to the parent(s)/guardian(s) on the child’s progress.

1. Communication with parent(s)/guardian(s) with an orientation to CERDEP with reporting of initial assessment results.
2. Quarterly parent(s)/guardian(s) teacher conference and communication about student progress.
3. Quarterly parent (s)/guardian(s) teacher conference and communication about student progress.
4. Communication with parent(s)/guardian(s) with information including student progress on the readiness assessment and a final assessment report on the child’s progress is provided for the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Under Read to Succeed, Act 284, CERDEP providers will ensure parent(s)/guardian(s) is/are continuously informed in writing of the following:

1. the student’s reading proficiency needs, progress, and ability to comprehend and write grade-level texts;
2. specific actions the classroom teacher and other reading professionals have taken and will take to help the student comprehend and write grade-level texts; and
3. specific actions that the parent or guardian can take to help the student comprehend grade-level texts by providing access to books, assuring time for the student to read independently, reading to students, and talking with the student about books.

Parent Education and Involvement

All CERDEP schools must incorporate parenting education that promotes the school readiness of preschool children by strengthening parent involvement with an emphasis on interactive literacy and numeracy. Section 59-156-110 mandates, “incorporating parenting education, including educating the parents as to methods that may assist the child pursuant to Section 59-155-110, 59-155-130, and 59-155-140.” The CERDEP providers must offer family workshops, materials, and resources that include information on how family members can help the child at home. CERDEP schools are strongly encouraged to coordinate with local district parent education programs and First Steps County Partnerships. CERDEP schools must also identify community and civic organizations that can support early learning efforts. Providers are encouraged to maintain documentation of family workshops and resources, as well as, community and civic partnerships that promote early learning.

SECTION SEVEN: Program Operations

Days of Service

CERDEP programs shall operate educational programs for children five days a week, for at least 180 instructional days.

Hours of Service

The educational program shall operate for a minimum of six and one-half (6.5) hours daily, which includes instructional hours, center time, outdoor play, meal time, and quiet/rest time. Reach out to the OIS for a recommended schedule for hours of service.

Tuition and Fees

Eligible students may not be charged an enrollment fee, tuition, or any other fees for any portion of the required instructional day, CERDEP extended day, CERDEP extended year, or CERDEP summer program.

Tuition and fees may be charged for wrap around care above and beyond the required 6.5-hour instructional day if the district is not participating in the one of the CERDEP extended program options.

Transportation

Public school transportation services will be provided by the district. If transportation is offered, eligible students living within established provider routes must be afforded an equal opportunity to receive this service. All transportation services provided must adhere with the requirements detailed in South Carolina Section 56-5-195 (Jacob's Law). See below for PowerSchool Codes for CERDEP students:

PowerSchool: South Carolina Student Information:

- Are transported to school by bus in the morning or afternoon
- Are transported to school by car in the morning or afternoon
- The number that identifies which bus the student rides in the morning or afternoon

<p>Transportation Mode AM</p> <p><i>(Trans_Mode_AM)</i></p> <p><i>[S_SC_STU_X]</i></p>	<p>Select the mode of transportation the student generally uses to come to school in the morning:</p> <p>N – Not Applicable A – AM Bus C – POV (Car Rider) D – Daycare Provides P – PM Bus Only W – Walker Y – Bicycle</p>
<p>Transportation Mode PM</p> <p><i>(Trans_Mode_PM)</i></p> <p><i>[S_SC_STU_X]</i></p>	<p>Select the mode of transportation the student generally uses to return home in the afternoon.</p> <p>N – Not Applicable P – PM Bus F – Bus to Different Address G – Bus to Day Care C – POV (Car Rider) D – Daycare Provides W – Walker Y – Bicycle S – After school program at school</p>

<p>Bus 1</p> <p><i>(BusInfo1)</i></p> <p><i>[S_SC_STU_X]</i></p>	<p>Key in and VERIFY carefully the number that identifies which bus the student rides to school if selection A – AM Bus Only or B – AM&PM Bus for the bus transportation needed field (above).</p> <p>Use numbers as indicated below or use other names for the buses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The bus number assigned by your district; for example, 18. 2. The last 6 characters in the SCDE bus identification number; for example, 7-0001 if that number is 57-0001 <p>The district may request the appropriate bus number from the local district transportation office. <u>This number must be thirty or fewer alphanumeric characters.</u></p>
<p>Bus 2</p> <p><i>(BusInfo2)</i></p> <p><i>[S_SC_STU_X]</i></p>	<p>Key in and VERIFY carefully the number that identifies which bus the student rides from school to his/her home in the afternoon if selection B – AM&PM Bus or P – PM Bus Only for the bus transportation needed field (above).</p> <p>Use numbers as indicated below or use other names for the buses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The bus number assigned by your district; for example, 18. 2. The last 6 characters in the SCDE Bus Identification Number; for example, 7-0001 if that number is 57-0001. <p>You can request the appropriate bus number from your local District Transportation Office. <u>This number must be thirty or fewer alphanumeric characters.</u></p>

Rest Time

[South Carolina Child Care Licensing Regulation](#) 114-504 states that napping expectations and time periods shall be developmentally appropriate and meet the needs of the individual child and withholding, forcing, or threatening to withhold or force food, sleep, or toileting is prohibited. Additionally, childcare centers are required to have a written, planned, daily program of activities for all children which includes nap times as stated in Regulation 114-504(3). Therefore, currently the regulations are not age specific for napping but childcare centers are required to have developmentally appropriate nap times and centers are prohibited from forcing or withholding napping for the children. Rest time may not exceed one hour per day, except, in rare cases, to address the specific individual needs of children. Children unable to sleep during the rest period should be allowed to read or participate in another quiet activity. Teachers may use this time with non-sleepers for individual or small group instruction.

Potty Training

CERDEP students may not be denied access or removed due to potty training issues. Districts are responsible for providing assistance. Additionally, if there is a child who wants to attend an aftercare program the assistance extends to that program as well. Since bodily fluids are involved, universal precautions should be followed accordingly. Challenging behavior.org offers a resource that might assist in [classroom strategies](#).

Discipline

Providers will make use of developmentally appropriate guidance techniques and may not allow the use of corporal punishment or severe discipline. In accordance with [nonregulatory federal guidance](#), exclusionary practices should not be used to reduce unwanted behavior. Resources on appropriate strategies to reduce unwanted, and teach desired, behavior can be found here: <http://www.pyramidmodel.org/>. CERDEP programs should provide appropriate interventions working towards eliminating suspension and expulsion practices. Developmentally appropriate guidance and behavior management techniques should be utilized at all times.

Student Retention

The student retention policy as determined by the SCDE OIS includes a formal submission of a [student retention form](#) by the school's leadership team. The decision team should include the student's family, school administration, current teacher, early childhood coordinator, and medical provider. This waiver request must be accompanied by multiple forms of detailed documentation from the current teacher,

parents(s)/guardian(s), and/or medical provider documenting the child is deemed unable to advance to kindergarten for developmental or other reasons.

Summer Expansion Options

Summer program expansion options are available to CERDEP districts and schools. Funds for the expansion are allocated on a per pupil basis, first to districts that have a documented waiting list for the purpose of adding additional 4K classes, then to districts that want to increase the length of the program to a maximum of eight and a half hours per day (extended day services), extend the year from 220 days (extended year services), or fund a summer program which is limited to no more than ten weeks in length and no more than eight and a half hours per day (summer program service). Summer program classrooms should serve as an extension of the regular school year, providing students with consistent instruction experiences. The classroom set up, materials, and supplies must mirror those used during the academic year to ensure continuity and support high-quality learning environments. Communication regarding these expansion options for summer 2027 will be sent from the OIS in January 2027.

SECTION EIGHT: Personnel and Training

Classroom Staffing

Each classroom of eleven or more students shall be staffed at all times by a lead teacher and an instructional assistant. Classrooms enrolling ten students (the program's minimum class size unless the SCDE grants a waiver) may elect to employ a single lead teacher.

Lead Teacher Qualifications

CERDEP public school classrooms must be led by teachers who have South Carolina certification in early childhood education for the school to be in compliance with state accreditation requirements. Additionally, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has reporting provisions to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, ineffective, or out-of-field teachers. Information can be located [here](#).

Programs electing to use Montessori as a curriculum model must have a Montessori-credentialed lead teacher. This credential should come from one of the following teacher education program affiliations: American Montessori Society (AMS), Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), Montessori Education Programs International (MEPI), or other Montessori teacher education programs accredited by Montessori Accreditation Council of Teacher Education (MACTE).

Instructional Assistant Qualifications

Public school classrooms must be staffed by instructional assistants meeting the state requirements with a minimum of a high school diploma or the equivalent. In addition, instructional assistants must have a minimum of two years of experience working with children under five years old.

Substitute Teachers

A substitute teacher and/or substitute teaching assistant must be present and working in the CERDEP classroom for each day that a teacher and/or instructional assistant is absent.

Professional Development to Meet CERDEP Requirements

To improve educational outcomes, participating CERDEP legislation requires all personnel providing instruction and classroom support to participate annually in a minimum of fifteen hours of professional development including the following:

- Topics related to teaching children from poverty; and
- Strategies and techniques to address the age-appropriate progress of emergent literacy (oral communication, knowledge of print and letters, phonemic and phonological awareness, vocabulary and comprehension development).

These topics should be embedded into your district's annual professional development plan reading plan, and/or a component of the district's professional learning community for your PK teachers. These hours could also be part of reading coach cycles. A district or school may request PLO support [here](#).

SECTION NINE: Curriculum

Approved Curricula

Each CERDEP school must offer a complete educational program in accordance with age-appropriate instructional practices and a research-based preschool curriculum aligned with school success. The program must provide an approved research-based preschool curriculum that focuses on critical child development skills, especially early literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional development. The South Carolina approved curricula list includes the following:

- *Creative Curriculum*, 6th Edition, by Teaching Strategies;
- *Frog Street Pre-K* by Frog Street Press LLC
- *High Scope* by High Scope;
- *InvestiGator Club* by Robert Leslie;
- *PreK on My Way* by Scholastic Inc.; and
- *World of Wonders* by McGraw Hill.

In addition, the curriculum review panel determined that Montessori education is an approved curriculum. Montessori education is supported through work in the SCDE Office of Personalized Learning around personalized and innovative learning.

SECTION TEN: Assessment

Readiness Assessments

A readiness assessment must be administered by the forty-fifth day of the school year to gather information about each child’s growth and skill development in early language and literacy competencies. Assessments approved by the SCDE include the following:

- Individual Growth and Development Indicators (myIGDIs™); and
- Teaching Strategies® GOLD™.

S.C. Code § 59-156-110 states that the program must focus on successfully completing the readiness assessment administered pursuant to Section 59-155-150. That statute requires that students entering publicly funded prekindergarten and kindergarten beginning in Fiscal Year 2014–15 must be administered a readiness assessment by the forty-fifth day of the school year. The results of the assessment and the developmental intervention strategies recommended to address the child’s identified needs must be provided, in writing, to the parent or guardian. Reading instructional strategies and developmental activities for children whose oral language skills are assessed to be below the norm of peers in the state must be aligned with the district’s reading proficiency plan for addressing the readiness needs of each student. The results of each assessment also must be reported to the SCDE.

South Carolina Proviso 1A.62 (Kindergarten and Pre-K Start Dates) states, “A district superintendent or charter school authorizer may submit a request to the department to waive the minimum one hundred eighty day school attendance requirement for CERDEP and kindergarten students for the purpose of scheduling assessments. Upon approval of the waiver request, the approved school may stagger administering the assessments to CERDEP and kindergarten students during the first five days of the academic year.” CERDEP staggered start waivers should be submitted by the superintendent [here](#).

For additional information regarding the readiness assessment options, visit the Office of Assessment and Standards [website](#).

Formative Assessment

Each district must also administer an end-of-the-year formative assessment during the last forty-five days of the school year to gather information about each child’s growth. Assessments approved by the SCDE include the following:

- Individual Growth and Development Indicators (myIGDIs™); and
- Teaching Strategies® GOLD™.

Proviso 1A.49 states, “Each school district and private provider participating in a publicly funded prekindergarten program will administer one of the formative assessments selected by the department to each child eligible for and enrolled in a publicly funded prekindergarten program during the first forty-five days of the school year and during the last forty-five days of the school year. Accommodations that do not invalidate the results of these assessments must be provided in the manner set forth by the student's Individualized Education Program or 504 Accommodations Plan and for students who are Limited English Proficient according to their LEP Plan. The department will provide the assessment data to the Education Oversight Committee. The results of the assessment and the developmental intervention strategies recommended, or services needed to address the child's identified needs must also be provided, in writing, to the parent or guardian. The assessment may not be used to deny a student to admission to prekindergarten.

Instructional Assessments

CERDEP teachers must monitor progress in all domains. Instructional assessment used for progress monitoring may include the following options:

- Individual Growth and Development Indicators (myIGDIs™);
- Teaching Strategies® GOLD
- HighScope Preschool Child Observation Record (COR) (second edition); and
- Montessori assessment (only approved for Montessori classrooms).

Documentation of Assessment

Teachers will observe and maintain documentation of student performance in all domains. Maintaining a locally developed portfolio is a strategy to provide evidence of a student’s progress in the areas of language and literacy and math. Portfolios are a way to collect data that informs teachers, parents, and administrators in determining instructional and intervention decisions. The portfolio should include documentation such as results of assessments, writing samples, anecdotal notes, and evidence of student work. CERDEP teachers are accountable for meeting the educational needs of the child and report at least quarterly to the parent or guardian on his progress. The student’s portfolio should follow the student from teacher to teacher, school to school, and district to district.

SECTION ELEVEN: Technical Assistance

The OIS supports the SCDE mission to have all students in South Carolina become college- and career-ready as proficient readers and writers. To assist districts and schools in achieving this goal, the OIS staff will provide technical assistance. In addition, CERDEP legislation requires monitoring visits to CERDEP classrooms.

Please submit requests for technical assistance at the following [link](#). Additional support to CERDEP teachers and administrators will be given in the form of South Carolina teacher recertification hours. The schedule and location of the professional development will be available and communicated via SCDE memoranda.

Other resources to support professional development include the following:

[South Caroline Early Learning Standards](#) (SC-ELS)

South Carolina's [Profile of a Ready Kindergartener](#) (English version)

South Carolina's [Profile of a Ready Kindergartener](#) (Spanish version)

[Ready for Kindergarten: A Guide for South Carolina Families](#)

[Virtual SC Family Resources](#)

[Supporting Early Literacy at Home: A Parent's Guide](#) Modules

ELLCO Checklist

The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool helps build better literacy programs by assessing the quality of the classroom environment and teachers' practices. With ELLCO, educators gather the essential data needed for professional development and program improvement that lead to better literacy outcomes for young children. ELLCO Pre-K is designed specifically for early childhood settings, focusing on important pre-literacy activities like storybook reading, circle time conversations, and child-originated story writing. ELLCO Pre-K examines 19 items in 5 critical areas: classroom structure, curriculum, language environment, books and book reading, and print and early writing. CERDEP classrooms must be supplied and set up according to ELLCO requirements. The requirements of the ELLCO checklist include a schedule that supports students in all areas of emergent literacy skills. To support students with emergent literacy skills, schedules should reflect at least sixty minutes of free choice centers, which include purposeful activities that are an extension of the state approved High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM).

SECTION TWELVE: Funding and Financial Assistance

Per Student Funding

CERDEP schools shall receive a minimum of \$5,100 per eligible student served during the 2024-25 school year. Students enrolled for less than the full school year will be funded on a pro-rated basis based on the one hundred and thirty-five day student average daily membership. If allocations for the prior fiscal year were not accurate, the SCDE must adjust allocations in the current fiscal year. Section 59-156-120(B) authorizes unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year to be carried forward and remain in the program. The Department of Education shall only provide funding for public school students whose complete records have been entered into PowerSchool.

Equipment and Materials

New providers participating for the first time in the current fiscal year will be funded up to \$10,000 per classroom for supplies and materials. New CERDEP classrooms enrolling between one and six eligible children shall be eligible to receive up to \$1,000 per child in materials and equipment funding, with classrooms enrolling seven or more such children eligible for funds not to exceed \$10,000. Eligible schools must submit the SCDE Supply/Material application for approval. Providers receiving equipment funding are expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs for a minimum of three years. Continuing CERDEP districts are highly encouraged to use any carryover funds from the previous school year into the current school year for supplies and materials.

Transportation Funds

The SCDE provides state-maintained buses and fuel for transportation of CERDEP students. The SCDE may retain funds per student.

Fiscal Procedures

Funding to providers is contingent upon receipt of data as requested by the SCDE. All students must be coded correctly into PowerSchool for the district to receive funding. Public school districts shall be funded directly by the SCDE. School districts are asked to please note:

- Payments for students continuously enrolled since the start of the school year will be calculated at the minimum funding of \$5,100 and the proviso indicates the SCDE should adjust pro rata based on the student's length of enrollment based upon the 135th average daily membership. Spending guidelines are

available in the [SCDE Funding Manual](#);

- Schools participating in the CERDEP program do not receive EIA Early Childhood funding.
- Districts will continue receiving CERDEP funds under revenue 3134 sub-fund 924 or revenue 3541 sub-fund 341. If this changes the Office of Finance will notify districts as soon as possible.
- Please submit the [CERDEP Supply and Materials Application](#) for each new classroom.
- Districts can view monthly district payments at the [link](#).

Additional Public School Data Collection Requirements

Funding to providers is contingent upon receipt of data as requested by the SCDE. Teachers and instructional assistants should be coded in the [Professional Certified Staff \(PCS\) System](#):

- Teachers for CERDEP must be recorded in position code 04-Pre-kindergarten (Child Development).
- Instructional Assistants must be recorded in position code 91-Child Development Aide.

Classroom Closure Requirements

Providers receiving equipment funding are expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs for a minimum of three years. Failure to comply will require the provider to return a portion of the equipment allocation at a level determined by SCDE. CERDEP districts must submit a classroom closure form to OIS prior to closing a CERDEP classroom. The form is found [here](#).

SECTION Thirteen: PowerSchool

All CERDEP districts must enroll CERDEP students into the correct PowerSchool program and accurately code students in order to receive funding. More information on CERDEP PowerSchool processes may be found in the [Program Setup Guide](#), and information about the Early Childhood page may be found in the [Student Information Manual](#).

- Data must be completely entered by the 45th day of school and updated by the 90th, 135th, and 180th days. Incomplete data will result in the nonpayment or loss of CERDEP funds.
- A separate document will be available listing those fields required for student reporting purposes.

References

Act 284 S.C. Code § 59-155-110 et seq. (2014). (South Carolina Read to Succeed Act).

Act 284 S.C. Code § 59-156-110 et seq. (2014). (Child Early Reading Development and Education Program).

Proviso 1.47, 1A.20, 1A.49, 1A.62.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Service Poverty. (2025). *Annual Poverty Guidelines*. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. (2020). Policy statement on expulsion and suspension policies in early childhood settings. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/07/policy-statement-ece-expulsions-suspensions.pdf>.

Appendix A: List of CERDEP Participating Districts (by year of participation)

2006-2007	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2019-2020	2021-2022	2022-2023	2025-2026
Abbeville	Calhoun	Aiken	Anderson 2	Kershaw	Anderson 1	Anderson 4	Beaufort
Allendale	Cherokee	Anderson 3	Anderson 5		Charleston	Charter Institute at Erskine	Horry
Bamberg	Chester	Edgefield	Barnwell 45		Dorchester 2	Spartanburg 1	York 2
Barnwell	Colleton	Greenwood 50	Greenwood 52		Lancaster	Union	
Berkeley	Darlington	Horry (Academy of Hope Charter)			Lexington 1	York 4	
Chesterfield	Dorchester 4	Lexington 2			Lexington-Richland 5		
Clarendon	Fairfield	Oconee			Pickens		
Dillon 3	Georgetown	Spartanburg 3			Richland 2		
Dillon 4	Greenwood 51	Spartanburg 4			Spartanburg 2		
Florence 1	Lexington 3	Spartanburg 6			Spartanburg 5		
Florence 2	Newberry	York 1			York 3		
Florence 3	Richland 1						
Florence 5	Spartanburg 7						
Hampton	Sumter						
Jasper							
Laurens 55							
Laurens 56							
Lee							
Lexington 4							
Marion							
Marlboro							
McCormick							
Orangeburg							
Saluda							
Williamsburg							

Appendix B: Family Income Eligibility Table 2026-2027

Students eligible for the South Carolina Child Early Reading and Development Education Program (CERDEP) must provide evidence of either Medicaid eligibility or a documented family income at or below 185 percent of the [Federal Poverty](#) definition promulgated annually by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Number of Persons in Family or Household	100% of Federal Poverty	185% of Federal Poverty
2	\$21,640.00	\$40,034.00
3	\$27,320.00	\$50,542.00
4	\$33,000.00	\$61,050.00
5	\$38,680.00	\$71,558.00
6	\$44,360.00	\$82,066.00
7	\$50,040.00	\$92,574.00
8	\$55,720.00	\$103,082.00

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$5,680 for each additional person.

Adapted from the [2025 US Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines](#).

Appendix D: Sample Communication Log

Schools are to report at least **quarterly** to the parent(s)/guardian(s) on his/her child's progress.

It is highly recommended that an **orientation** to Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) be conducted as the first of these quarterly contacts to complete the parent/family orientation checklist.

Contact #1:

Date:

Type of contact:

Comments/Notes:

Two of the quarterly contacts must include **documented parent-teacher conferences** during the school year that provide information including student progress as recorded on the assessment instrument. Please sign below as documentation.

Contact #2:

Date:

Parent Signature:

Comments:

Contact #3:

Date:

Parent Signature:

Comments:

The **final child assessment report** must be provided at the end of the school year. This report may be sent home, reviewed at a conference, or home visit.

Contact #4

Date:

Appendix E: Child Early Reading Development and Education Program Legislation

SECTION 2. Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

CHAPTER 156

Child Early Reading Development and Education Program

Section 59-156-110. There is created the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program which is a full day, four-year-old kindergarten program for at-risk children which must be made available to qualified children in all public school districts within the State. The program must focus on:

- (1) a comprehensive, systemic approach to reading that follows the State Reading Proficiency Plan and the district's comprehensive annual reading proficiency plan, both adopted pursuant to Chapter 155, Title 59;
- (2) successfully completing the readiness assessment administered pursuant to Section 59-155-150;
- (3) the developmental and learning support that children must have in order to be ready for school;
- (4) incorporating parenting education, including educating the parents as to methods that may assist the child pursuant to Section 59-155-110, 59-155-130, and 59-155-140; and
- (5) identifying community and civic organizations that can support early literacy efforts.

Section 59-156-120. (A)(1) The South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program first must be made available to eligible children from the following eight trial districts in Abbeville County School District et al vs. South Carolina: Allendale, Dillon 2, Florence 4, Hampton 2, Jasper, Lee, Marion 7, and Orangeburg 3.

(2) With any funds remaining after funding the eight trial districts, the program must be expanded to the remaining plaintiff school districts in Abbeville County School District et al vs. South Carolina and then expanded to eligible children residing in school districts with a poverty index of ninety percent or greater. Priority must be given to implementing the program first in those of the plaintiff districts which participated in the pilot program during the 2006-2007 School Year, then in the plaintiff districts having proportionally the largest population of underserved at-risk four-year-old children.

(3) With any funds remaining after funding the school districts delineated in items (1) and (2), the program must be expanded statewide. The General Assembly, in the annual general appropriations bill, shall set forth the priority schedule, the funding, and the manner in which the program is expanded.

(B) Unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year for this program shall be carried forward and shall remain in the program. In rare instances, students with documented kindergarten readiness barriers, especially reading barriers, may be permitted to enroll for

a second year, or at age five, at the discretion of the Department of Education for students being served by a public provider or at the discretion of the Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness for students being served by a private provider.

Section 59-156-130. (A) Each child residing in the program's district, who has attained the age of four years on or before September first of the school year and meets the at-risk criteria, is eligible for enrollment in the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program for one year.

(B)(1) The parent of each eligible child may enroll the child in one of the following programs:

(a) a school-year four-year-old kindergarten program delivered by an approved public provider; or

(b) a school-year four-year-old kindergarten program delivered by an approved private provider.

(2) The parent enrolling a child must complete and submit an application to the approved provider of choice. The application must be submitted on forms and must be accompanied by a copy of the child's birth certificate, immunization documentation, and documentation of the student's eligibility as evidenced by family income documentation showing an annual family income of one hundred eighty-five percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or a statement of Medicaid eligibility.

(3) In submitting an application for enrollment, the parent agrees to comply with provider attendance policies during the school year. The attendance policy must state that the program consists of six and one-half hours of instructional time daily and operates for a period of not less than one hundred eighty days a year. Pursuant to program guidelines, noncompliance with attendance policies may result in removal from the program.

(C)(1) No parent is required to pay tuition or fees solely for the purpose of enrolling in or attending the program established under this chapter. Nothing in this chapter prohibits charging fees for childcare that may be provided outside the times of the instructional day provided in these programs.

(2) If by October first of the school year at least seventy-five percent of the total number of children eligible for the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program in a district or county are projected to be enrolled in that program, Head Start, or ABC Child Care Program as determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps, Child Early Reading Development and Education Program providers may then enroll pay-lunch children who score at or below the twenty-fifth national percentile on two of the three DIAL-3 subscales and may receive reimbursement for these children if funds are available.

Section 59-156-140. (A) Public school providers participating in the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program must submit an application to the Department of Education. Private providers participating in the South Carolina Child Early

Reading Development and Education Program must submit an application to the Office of First Steps. The application must be submitted on the forms prescribed, contain assurances that the provider meets all program criteria set forth in this section, and will comply with all reporting and assessment requirements.

(B) Providers shall:

- (1) comply with all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services;
- (2) comply with all state and local health and safety laws and codes;
- (3) comply with all state laws that apply regarding criminal background checks for employees and exclude from employment any individual not permitted by state law to work with children;
- (4) be accountable for meeting the educational needs of the child and report at least quarterly to the parent or guardian on his progress;
- (5) comply with all program, reporting, and assessment criteria required of providers;
- (6) maintain individual student records for each child enrolled in the program, including, but not limited to, assessment data, health data, records of teacher observations, and records of parent or guardian and teacher conferences;
- (7) designate whether extended day services will be offered to the parents and guardians of children participating in the program;
- (8) be approved, registered, or licensed by the Department of Social Services; and
- (9) comply with all state and federal laws and requirements specific to program providers.

(C) Providers may limit student enrollment based upon space available, but, if enrollment exceeds available space, providers shall enroll children with first priority given to children with the lowest scores on an approved prekindergarten readiness assessment. Private providers must not be required to expand their programs to accommodate all children desiring enrollment, but are encouraged to keep a waiting list for students they are unable to serve because of space limitations.

Section 59-156-150. The Department of Education, the Read to Succeed Office, and the Office of First Steps to School Readiness shall:

- (1) develop the provider application form;
- (2) develop the child enrollment application form;
- (3) develop a list of approved research-based preschool curricula for use in the program based upon the South Carolina Content Standards, and provide training and technical assistance to support its effective use in approved classrooms serving children;
- (4) develop a list of approved prekindergarten readiness assessments to be used in conjunction with the program, and provide assessments and technical assistance to support assessment administration in approved classrooms serving children;
- (5) establish criteria for awarding new classroom equipping grants;
- (6) establish criteria for the parenting education program providers must offer;

- (7) establish a list of early childhood related fields that may be used in meeting the lead teacher qualifications;
- (8) develop a list of data-collection needs to be used in implementation and evaluation of the program;
- (9) identify teacher preparation program options and assist lead teachers in meeting teacher program requirements;
- (10) establish criteria for granting student retention waivers; and
- (11) establish criteria for granting classroom-size requirements waivers.

Section 59-156-160. (A) Providers of the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program shall offer a complete educational program in accordance with age-appropriate instructional practice and a research-based preschool curriculum aligned with school success. The program must focus on:

- (1) a comprehensive, systemic approach to reading that follows the State Reading Proficiency Plan and the district's comprehensive annual reading proficiency plan, both adopted pursuant to Chapter 155, Title 59;
- (2) successfully completing the readiness assessment administered pursuant to Section 59-155-150;
- (3) the developmental and learning support that children must have in order to be ready for school;
- (4) incorporating parenting education, including educating the parents as to methods that may assist the child pursuant to Section 59-155-110, 59-155-130, and 59-155-140, including strengthening parent involvement in the learning process with an emphasis on interactive literacy; and
- (5) identifying community and civic organizations that can support early literacy efforts.

(B) Providers shall offer high-quality, center-based programs, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (1) employ a lead teacher with a two-year degree in early childhood education or related field or be granted a waiver of this requirement from the Department of Education for public schools or from the Office of First Steps to School Readiness for private centers;
- (2) employ an education assistant with pre-service or in-service training in early childhood education;
- (3) maintain classrooms with at least ten four-year-old children, but no more than twenty four-year-old children, with an adult to child ratio of 1:10. With classrooms having a minimum of ten children, the 1:10 ratio must be a lead teacher to child ratio. Waivers of the minimum class size requirement may be granted by the South Carolina Department of Education for public providers or by the Office of First Steps to School Readiness for private providers on a case-by-case basis;
- (4) offer a full day, center-based program with six and one-half hours of instruction daily for one hundred eighty school days;

- (5) provide an approved research-based preschool curriculum that focuses on critical child development skills, especially early literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional development;
- (6) engage parents' participation in their child's educational experience that shall include a minimum of two documented conferences for each year; and
- (7) adhere to professional development requirements outlined in this chapter.

Section 59-156-170. (A) Every classroom providing services to four-year-old children established pursuant to this chapter must have a qualified lead teacher and an education assistant as needed to maintain an adult to child ratio of 1:10.

(B)(1) In classrooms in private centers, the lead teacher must have at least a two-year degree in early childhood education or a related field and who is enrolled and is demonstrating progress toward the completion of a teacher education program within four years.

(2) In classrooms in public schools, the lead teacher must meet state requirements pertaining to certification.

(C) All education assistants in private centers and public schools must have the minimum of a high school diploma or the equivalent, and at least two years of experience working with children under five years old. The assistant must have completed the Early Childhood Development Credential (ECD) 101 or enroll and complete this course within twelve months of hire. Providers may request waivers to the ECD 101 requirement for those assistants who have demonstrated sufficient experience in teaching children five years old and younger. The providers must request this waiver in writing to First Steps or the Department of Education, as applicable, and provide appropriate documentation as to the qualifications of the teaching assistant.

Section 59-156-180. The General Assembly recognizes there is a strong relationship between the skills and preparation of prekindergarten instructors and the educational outcomes of students. To improve these educational outcomes, participating providers shall require all personnel providing instruction and classroom support to students participating in the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program to participate annually in a minimum of fifteen hours of professional development, including, teaching children from poverty. Professional development should provide instruction in strategies and techniques to address the age-appropriate progress of prekindergarten students in developing emergent literacy skills, including, but not limited to, oral communication, knowledge of print and letters, phonemic and phonological awareness, and vocabulary and comprehension development.

Section 59-156-190. Both public and private providers are eligible for transportation funds for the transportation of children to and from school. Nothing in this section prohibits providers from contracting with another entity to provide transportation services provided the entities adhere to the requirements of Section 56-5-195. Providers must not be

responsible for transporting students attending programs outside the district lines. Parents choosing program providers located outside of their resident district shall be responsible for transportation. When transporting four-year-old child development students, providers shall make every effort to transport them with students of similar ages attending the same school. Of the amount appropriated for the program, not more than one hundred eighty-five dollars for each student may be retained by the Department of Education for the purposes of transporting four-year-old students. This amount annually must be increased by the same projected rate of inflation as determined by the Office of Research and Statistics of the State Budget and Control Board for the Education Finance Act.

Appendix F: Proviso (Full Day 4K)

1.47. (SDE: Full-Day 4K)

(A) Eligible students residing in any school district or attending any charter school authorized by the South Carolina Public Charter School District or an approved institution of higher education may participate in the South Carolina Early Reading Development and Education program (CERDEP) pending the availability of space and funding. Student eligibility as defined by Section 59-156-130 of the 1976 Code is an annual family income of one hundred eighty-five percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or a statement of Medicaid eligibility.

(B) A parent or guardian may choose to enroll their child in a public school participating in the program and approved by the Department of Education pursuant to Section 59-156-210 or in a private provider participating in the program and approved by the Office of First Steps pursuant to Section 59-156-200. A private provider includes, but is not limited to, a child care center, a military child care facility regulated by the United States Department of Defense, or a non-profit independent school. State funds appropriated for the provision of CERDEP services in military child care facilities may not be used to supplant existing federal child care funds. No school district can be denied participation in CERDEP or be denied CERDEP funding pursuant to the terms of this provision.

(C) 4K programs in public schools and non-profit independent schools participating in CERDEP are not required to be approved, registered, or licensed by the Department of Social Services in order to participate in CERDEP. Instead, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps are responsible for ensuring that providers deliver high-quality educational programs pursuant to Section 59-156-160.

(D) Public and private providers shall be funded for instructional costs at a minimum rate of \$5,100 per student enrolled. Eligible students enrolling during the school year or withdrawing during the school year shall be funded on a pro rata basis determined by the length of their enrollment. Private providers transporting eligible children to and from school shall also be eligible for reimbursement at a minimum of \$620 per eligible child transported. First Steps and the Department of Education must provide an equitable distribution above the minimum between public and private providers. First Steps and the Department of Education must provide a quarterly report beginning October 1 detailing funding above the minimum made to any provider to the Governor, the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. All providers who are reimbursed are required to retain records as required by their fiscal agent. New providers participating for the first time in the current fiscal year and enrolling between one and six eligible children shall be eligible to receive at a minimum of \$1,000 per child in materials and equipment funding, with providers enrolling seven or more such children eligible for funding at a minimum of \$10,000. The Department of Education and the Office of First Steps Readiness are authorized to utilize carry forward funds and federal

funds to supplement the amount expended for materials and equipment. Providers receiving equipment funding are expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs as defined herein for a minimum of three years. Failure to participate for three years will require the provider to return a portion of the equipment allocation at a level determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. Funding to providers is contingent upon receipt of data as requested by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps. The Department of Education shall only provide funding for public school students whose complete records have been entered into PowerSchool based on the one hundred and thirty-five day student average daily membership. For the current fiscal year, providers may enroll pay-lunch children who score at or below the twenty-fifth national percentile on two of the three DIAL-3 subscales by July 1 if at least seventy-five percent of the total number of children eligible or the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program in a district or county are projected to be enrolled in that program, Head Start, or ABC Child Care Program as determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps, Child Early Reading Development and Education Program. Providers may receive reimbursement for these children if funds are available. By September 1, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps must collect the documented waiting lists, share the lists, and determine a process to notify parents of eligible students of available slots in all approved providers. The Department of Education is required to offer waivers allowing students with disabilities to be served in multi-categorical classroom settings based on similar cognition and abilities. Funding appropriated for CERDEP may be carried forward and expended for the same purpose.

(E) Annually, the Department of Education is directed to audit the annual allocations to public providers to ensure that allocations are accurate and aligned to the appropriate pro rata per student allocation, materials, and equipment funding. In the event the department, during the audit process determines that the annual allocations of the prior fiscal year are not accurate, the department must adjust the allocations for the current fiscal year to account for the audit findings. The department must provide the results of the annual audit findings to the General Assembly no later than December first. Likewise, in the event the Office of First Steps determines that the annual allocations of the prior fiscal year to private providers are not accurate, the Office of First Steps must adjust the allocations for the current fiscal year to account for the findings.

(F) Of the funds appropriated, \$300,000 shall be allocated to the Education Oversight Committee to conduct an annual evaluation of the South Carolina Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) and to issue findings in a report to the General Assembly by March first of each year. To aid in this evaluation, the Education Oversight Committee shall determine and obtain the data necessary and both public and private providers are required to submit the necessary data as a condition of continued participation in and funding of the program, including average daily attendance data, so that consistent enrollment may be determined. This data shall include developmentally appropriate measures of student progress. Additionally, the Department of Education shall

issue a unique student identifier for each child receiving services from a public or private provider including those funded by CERDEP, Head Start, SC Child Care Scholarships, EIA, Title I, district-funded, and all other federal, state, or local public sources. The Department of Education shall be responsible for the collection and maintenance of data on the public state funded full day and half-day four-year-old kindergarten programs. The Office of First Steps to School Readiness shall be responsible for the collection and maintenance of data on the state funded programs provided through private providers. The Education Oversight Committee shall use this data and all other collected and maintained data necessary to conduct a research based review of the program's implementation and assessment of student success in the early elementary grades along with information, recommendations, and a timeline for how the state can increase the number of students served in high-quality programs. To aid in the accurate reporting of four-year-olds in poverty served in formal education programs in public schools in South Carolina, the Department of Education must provide to the EOC data related to four-year-olds served in formal education programs funded with other state, local, or federal funds, including Title 1 and EIA-District-funded programs, denoting full- or partial-day status.

(G) For eligible children residing in school districts that do not participate in CERDEP, the Department of Education is required to develop and implement inter-district transfer policies that give parents or guardians the option of their eligible child attending an out-of-district school that participates in CERDEP.

(H) For the current fiscal year, the Office of First Steps may expend: (1) up to \$2,000,000 to pilot a program to provide higher reimbursement rates to high-quality providers. The reimbursement rate for students enrolled by child care providers rated B or higher in the ABC Quality System operated by the Department of Social Services may be increased by up to 10% of the per-student base following guidelines developed by the Office of First Steps; and (2) up to \$250,000 to provide one-time supplemental, needs-based incentive grants in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for newly created and/or newly approved private providers proposing to expand service to ten or more CERDEP eligible children in communities unable to enroll all eligible students in a public, private, or Head Start setting during the prior fiscal year. These grants are designed to address building renovations, documented as necessary to bring proposed classrooms into compliance with licensing regulations, materials and staffing costs, and/or other obstacles currently preventing their participation in the program. The First Steps Board of Trustees shall develop and approve an application process that incorporates formal review and fiscal safeguards designed to ensure grant funds are used solely to address documented barriers to program participation. Providers receiving this one-time supplement shall be expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs as defined herein for a minimum of three years. Failure to participate for three years shall require the provider to return a portion of the supplemental allocation at a level determined by the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. First Steps shall submit a report detailing its process, expenditures and expanded enrollment to the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee by March 15.

(I) If by August first, the Department of Education or the Office of First Steps determines that appropriations will exceed expenditures, available funds may be used to fund an extended program and to increase the length of the program to a maximum of eight and a half hours per day or two hundred and twenty days per year or to fund summer programs. If a district chooses to fund summer enrollment, the program funding shall conform to the funding in this act for full year programs; however, it shall be reduced on a pro rata basis to conform with the length of the program. A summer program shall be no more than eight and a half hours per day and shall be not more than ten weeks in length. The per pupil allocation and classroom grant must conform with the appropriated amount contained in this act and end of year adjustments shall be based on the one hundred and thirty-five-day student average daily membership or later student average daily membership for districts choosing to extend the program past one hundred and eighty days. Funds may also be used to provide parent engagement, professional development, and quality evaluations of programs. No later than April first, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps shall report to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee on the expenditure of these funds to include the following information: the amount of money used and specific steps and measures taken to enhance the quality of the 4K program and the amount of money used for professional development as well as the types of professional development offered and the number of participants. The Office of First Steps is directed to determine if the provision of extended programs in private centers improves the ability of parents to enter the workforce or to pursue postsecondary training or industry credentials.

(J) On or before November 15, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps shall share data that identifies the total number of children enrolled in CERDEP in both public and private providers. If available appropriations exceed the instructional costs of serving children enrolled in the program and if a waiting list of eligible children can be documented by the Department of Education and by the Office of First Steps, then the Executive Budget Office may authorize the transfer of funds between the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps.

(K) The Office of First Steps and the Department of Education shall collaborate with the South Carolina Head Start State Collaboration Office to inform parents of all publicly funded full-day 4K programs including Head Start by participating in PalmettoPreK and First5SC.

Appendix G: Proviso 1A.20 (SDE-EIA: 4K Testing)

EIA funds allocated for the provision of four-year-old kindergarten shall be utilized for the provision of services to age-eligible children in poverty, as defined in Proviso 1.3 of this act. Children with developmental delays documented through state approved screening assessments or children with medically documented disabilities who do not already qualify for special need services should also be considered for enrollment. In the event that more students seek to enroll than available space permits, districts shall prioritize students (at the time of acceptance) on the basis of family income expressed as a percentage of the federal poverty guidelines, with the lowest family incomes given the highest enrollment priority.

Appendix H: Proviso 1A.49 (SDE-EIA 4K Early Literacy Competencies Assessments)

Of the funds carried forward from the full-day 4K program from the previous fiscal year, the Department of Education is authorized to expend up to \$800,000 on assessments and professional development to analyze the early literacy competencies of children in publicly funded prekindergarten. If these funds are not available, funds appropriated and/or authorized for assessment shall be used to administer the prekindergarten assessments. The department shall manage the administration of assessments that analyze the early literacy and language development of children in publicly funded prekindergarten as done in the prior fiscal year. Each school district and private provider participating in a publicly funded prekindergarten program will administer one of the formative assessments selected by the department to each child eligible for and enrolled in a publicly funded prekindergarten program during the first forty-five days of the school year and during the last forty-five days of the school year. Accommodations that do not invalidate the results of these assessments must be provided in the manner set forth by the student's Individualized Education Program or 504 Accommodations Plan and for students who are Limited English Proficient according to their LEP Plan. The department will provide the assessment data to the Education Oversight Committee. The results of the assessment and the developmental intervention strategies recommended or services needed to address the child's identified needs must also be provided, in writing, to the parent or guardian. The assessment may not be used to deny a student to admission to prekindergarten. Furthermore, up to \$2,000,000 of the funds appropriated for half-day programs for four-year-olds and funds carried forward from assessment must be expended by the Department of Education to administer the KRA to each child entering kindergarten in the public schools. The assessment of kindergarten students must be administered at a minimum of once during the first forty-five days of the school year with the results collected by the department. The results of the assessments and the developmental intervention strategies recommended or services needed to address each child's identified needs must also be provided, in writing, to the parent or guardian. The assessment may not be used to deny a student admission to kindergarten. Accommodations that do not invalidate the results of these assessments must be provided in the manner set forth by the student's Individualized Education Program, 504 Accommodations Plan, or LEP Plan. Districts are given the option of designating up to two days of the one hundred eighty day school calendar to administer the assessment to kindergarten students. The department will also provide the results of the assessment of kindergarten students to the Education Oversight Committee. With available funds, the department will also provide or secure training for appropriate educators in how to administer the assessment. For all students assessed with the KRA, the Department of Education is required to collect data from schools and school districts on the prior early learning experience of each student. The data would include whether the kindergartener

had attended in the prior school year a Head Start program, a South Carolina Early Reading Development and Education Program in a public school or a private center, a half-day 4K program in a public school, a full-day 4K program in a public school, a child care center (registered faith-based, registered family home, group home, or exempt provider), or informal child care.

Appendix I: Proviso 1A.62 (SDE-EIA: Kindergarten Start Dates)

A district superintendent or charter school authorizer may submit a request to the department to waive the minimum one hundred eighty-day school attendance requirement for CERDEP and kindergarten students for the purpose of scheduling assessments. Upon approval of the waiver request, the approved school may stagger administering the assessments to CERDEP and kindergarten students during the first five days of the academic year.

Appendix J: Proviso 1A.74. (SDE-EIA: CERDEP Foundational Literacy Skill Training)

(A) Beginning in the 2025-26 Fiscal Year, with funds available, the Department of Education will train public school educators and class aides working with children in the South Carolina Early Reading Development and Education program (CERDEP) and staff the Office of First Steps to School Readiness in foundational literacy skills. Each school district with CERDEP classrooms shall participate in the implementation of this foundational literacy skills training. (B) Selected educators shall participate in foundational literacy skills training provided and paid for by the Department of Education. Successful completion of this training shall satisfy the requirements of the literacy teacher endorsement. Educators who successfully complete the training, as determined by the department, shall receive a monetary stipend. (C) The Department of Education is authorized to carry forward and expend any balance of funds authorized in the prior fiscal year for training for the same purposes in the current fiscal year.

Appendix K: Read to Succeed Implementation Guidelines for Endorsements And Course Approval

3.6 R2S Child Early Reading Development Education Program (CERDEP) Literacy Teacher Endorsement

Pursuant to Proviso 1A.74 of the South Carolina General Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2025-2026, the Department of Education will train public school educators and class aides working with children in CERDEP and staff the Office of First Steps to School Readiness in foundational literacy skills. Each school district with CERDEP classrooms shall participate in the implementation of this foundational literacy skills training.

Literacy Endorsement Requirements for Teachers in CERDEP

A teacher working in a CERDEP classroom is required to earn an appropriate literacy endorsement. Options for doing so are indicated below.

Option 1: R2S Literacy Teacher Endorsement

A CERDEP teacher required to earn a literacy endorsement may meet this requirement by earning the R2S Literacy Teacher endorsement through one of the options detailed earlier in these guidelines. Upon successful completion of LETRS (Volume 1 and Volume 2), the administrator must submit the endorsement request and LETRS documentation to the SCDE Office of Educator Services through My SC Educator Portal.

Option 2: R2S CERDEP Literacy Teacher Endorsement

A CERDEP teacher required to earn a literacy endorsement may do so by earning the R2S CERDEP Literacy Teacher Endorsement by successful completion of the following professional development course focused on implementing systems and supports for effective foundational literacy instruction at the school level.

1. Lexia LETRS for Early Childhood Educator

