



To: SC First Steps Board of Trustees Program and Grants Committee  
From: Dr. Dan Wuori, Deputy Director  
Date: June 4, 2015

**RE: Readiness Description Required Pursuant to Act 287 of 2014**

---

As you are aware, Act 287 of 2014 (First Steps Reauthorization) contains the state's first-ever legal definition of "school readiness."

*'School readiness' means the level of child development necessary to ensure early school success as measured in the following domains: physical health and motor skills; emotional and social competence; language and literacy development; and mathematical thinking and cognitive skills. School readiness is supported by the knowledge and practices of families, caregivers, healthcare providers, educators, and communities." SC Section 59-152-25*

Section 59-152-32 requires that the Board elaborate upon this brief definition, requiring that it do the following by July 1, 2015:

*In consultation with the State Board of Education, and with the advice and consent of that board, adopt a description of school readiness that includes specific:*

- (a) characteristics and development levels of a ready child that must include, but are not limited to, emerging literacy, numeracy, and physical, social, and emotional competencies;*
- (b) characteristics of school, educators, and caregivers that the board considers necessary to create an optimal learning environment for the early years of students' lives; and*
- (c) characteristics of the optimal environment which would lead to the readiness of students and their continued success;*

The Program and Grants Committee has been working throughout the spring to craft a parent-friendly description of readiness, informed by key partners. Meeting for a full-day work session on Monday, April 20, the committee welcomed the participation of representatives from:

- The State Board of Education
- The State Department of Education
- The SC Education Oversight Committee
- The SC Council on Competitiveness
- The Institute for Child Success, and
- Parents as Teachers.

During this meeting the committee agreed on three major deliverables:

- 1) A parent-friendly description of the "ready five-year-old" (to be aligned with and informed by key state and national works)
- 2) A "Profile of the Preschool Graduate" designed to align with Transform SC's Profile of the Ready (High School) Graduate.
- 3) A supplemental document, detailing the characteristics of "ready schools, educators, caregivers and communities/environments"

On Monday, May 4 the committee met to review working drafts of the above – including an alignment document comparing recent works from Parents as Teachers, SC's voluntary preschool standards, the EOC and Institute for Child Success. At this time the committee endorsed a survey of SC kindergarten teachers designed to assist in the prioritization of the readiness description's key indicators.

In your packet today, you will find proposed final drafts of each of the three documents above for your review and approval during the committee meeting on Tuesday, June 9. Please feel free to contact me at 803-312-4532 or [dwuori@scfirststeps.org](mailto:dwuori@scfirststeps.org) should you have any questions.

1300 Sumter Street • Concord Bldg., Suite 100 • Columbia, South Carolina 29201  
Phone 803-734-0479 • Fax 803-734-1431 • Web site [www.scfirststeps.org](http://www.scfirststeps.org)

## **Preparing for Kindergarten Success A Parent's Guide to the School Ready Five-Year-Old**

From the time their children are born, parents are surrounded by messages about the importance of “school readiness.” But what does it mean to be ready for school in South Carolina? This short guide is designed to help parents and caregivers prepare their children for success in kindergarten and beyond.

School readiness involves not only a combination of academic knowledge and skills, but your child’s development across a number of key domains. Luckily, South Carolina has developed detailed guides to help you in your important role as your child’s first – and most important - teacher. The state’s *voluntary preschool standards* outline developmentally appropriate expectations for children from birth through age four.

You may also find it helpful to explore the state’s academic expectations for the kindergarten year itself. As you review these standards, keep in mind that these are the skills your child will be expected to develop *during the kindergarten year*. If he or she is able to demonstrate some or all of these skills in advance of school entry, then he or she may have a head start on learning – but this is not the expectation.

You can find links to all of these documents by visiting: [scfirststeps.org/readyforschool](http://scfirststeps.org/readyforschool)

The snapshot below is intended as a quick guide to the most important skills for the incoming five-year-old kindergartner, with the items highlighted in red identified as “most important” in a survey of SC kindergarten teachers.

### **Emotional and Social Development**

**The ready five-year-old has developed skills in many areas. Perhaps most importantly, he or she is beginning to master the tools needed to interact positively with both adults and children in a shared classroom setting.**

- **I can work and play cooperatively with others.**
- **I express my emotions through appropriate actions and words.**
- **I follow simple rules/directions and change my behavior.**
- **I can adjust to changes in my routine and environments.**
- **I can show self-control.**
- I show caring and understanding of the feelings of others.
- I can take turns.
- I can share toys and equipment with other children without being asked.
- I show respect for the property of others.
- I can interact easily with familiar adults.
- I can regain my calm in a changing or disappointing situation.
- I recognize authority and will change my behavior as directed by my teacher or parent.
- I solve my problems without resorting to violence – by using words and seeking the help of trusted adults.
- I can make friends.

### **Physical Health and Motor Skills**

**The ready five-year-old is in good physical health and has developed age-appropriate motor skills - both those involving large muscle groups (gross motor activities such as walking, running, jumping and swimming) and smaller muscle movements (the fine motor skills involved in writing, drawing, cutting and the manipulation of small objects).**

### *Health*

- **I use self-care skills to do things like use the bathroom, wash my hands, button my clothes, and brush my teeth.**
- **I get 8-10 hours of sleep each night.**
- **I have enough strength and stamina to make it through daily activities.**
- I have access to regular pediatric health and dental care.
- I follow basic health rules most of the time.

### *Gross Motor Skills*

- **I can move with control and with balance while walking, running, jumping, marching, hopping and galloping.**
- **I can bounce, throw, kick and catch a large ball.**
- I can run and change directions without stopping.
- I can balance on one foot for ten seconds.

### *Fine Motor Skills*

- **I can grasp a pencil or crayon and use it with some control and purpose.**
- **I can use scissors to cut a piece of paper.**
- **I use hand-eye coordination to perform simple tasks, like putting together a puzzle.**
- I can use my fingers to pick up and manipulate small objects.
- I can eat with a spoon or fork without spilling.
- I can manipulate fasteners on my clothes, such as buttons, snaps and hooks.
- I can draw a person with four parts.

## **Language and Literacy Development**

**As the basis of much future learning, the language and literacy of early childhood lay the foundations for later success.**

### *Listening, Speaking and Understanding*

- **I can follow directions that have several steps.**
- **I can carry on a conversation, taking turns speaking, listening.**
- **I can speak clearly and express my ideas and questions.**
- **I can listen to stories and understand their meaning.**
- **I can use words to seek help and solve problems.**
- I can answer questions that others ask of me.
- I can remember details and retell stories.
- I have a growing vocabulary and speak in sentences of at least six to eight words.
- I can recognize and name rhyming words.

### *Early Reading*

- **I know that letters represent spoken sounds and know many of them – especially the ones in my name.**
- **I know that printed text has a meaning.**
- **I can recognize my written name and maybe some other familiar words.**
- **I can use the pictures in a book to help me.**
- I recognize and understand the meaning of familiar signs and logos in the world around me. (STOP, McDonalds, etc.).
- I have an interest in books and reading.
- I can make predictions about the things that will happen next in a story being read to me.
- I know how books work and can show you the front and back and turn the pages in correct order.
- I can fill in a word that is missing from a rhyme, chant or song. (e.g. "Jack and Jill went up the \_\_\_\_.")

### *Early Writing*

- **I can draw a picture and tell about it.**
- **I know that print carries a meaning and can “read” you what I have written.**
- **I can print – or am learning to print - my name.**
- I can write by combining some letters with other kinds of pretend writing (scribbles, letter-like shapes, symbols).
- I sometimes write as a part of my play. (I might make a sign or a “grocery list” for example.)

### **Mathematical Thinking**

**The groundwork for more complex mathematical thinking is also developed during the years of early childhood.**

### *Numbers and Counting*

- **I can count a group of up to 10 objects accurately.**
- **I understand that there is a connection between a printed number and a quantity of objects.**
- **I recognize some printed numbers.**
- **I can count out loud to 20.**
- I use words to compare quantity (more and less), size (big and small) and weight (light and heavy).
- I can compare small sets of objects and accurately describe those sets using words like “more than” and “same as.”
- I can count backward from three.

### *Matching, Sorting, Classifying*

- **I can tell why an item or items does not belong in a group.**
- **I can sort objects into groups that are “the same.”**
- **I can create simple patterns using real objects.**
- I can point out simple patterns in the world around me.
- I recognize basic shapes like a circle, square and triangle.

### **Cognitive and General Knowledge**

**The ready five-year-old has developed attention, the ability to reason and possesses other general knowledge.**

### *Attention and Memory*

- **I am able to pay attention to a single task for a period of several minutes.**
- **I can maintain my attention to a story being read or through a short conversation with a friend or grown up.**
- **When I start something simple, I can maintain my attention long enough to finish it.**
- When I am interrupted from a task I can go right back to it and pick up where I left off.
- As I play and go about my day, I am able to identify problems and change my plans to solve them.
- I use things I have learned previously and apply them in new situations.

### *Reasoning*

- **I can complete tasks that take several steps to accomplish.**
- **I ask “how” and “why” questions.**
- **I show creativity and imagination in a variety of settings.**
- I can predict the results of an action and test my idea.

- I can overcome challenges and use materials to solve problems.

*Scientific Knowledge*

- **I am curious about the world around me and ask questions to gain greater understanding.**
- **I use my senses to learn about the world around me and make observations about the things I experience.**
- I ask for help when needed.
- I seek out new challenges and experiences. I want to try new things.

# Profile of the South Carolina Graduate



## World Class Knowledge

- Rigorous standards in language arts and math for career and college readiness
- Multiple languages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), arts and social sciences

## World Class Skills

- Creativity and innovation
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Communication, information, media and technology
- Knowing how to learn

## Life and Career Characteristics

- Integrity
- Self-direction
- Global perspective
- Perseverance
- Work ethic
- Interpersonal skills

Whether from preschool or high school, Transform SC's *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* depicts the world class knowledge, skills and characteristics necessary for success in a changing, global economy.

# World Class Knowledge and the Ready Preschool Graduate:



South Carolina is home to rigorous, voluntary learning guidelines for children birth to five. These guidelines are current split across two documents:

- The **South Carolina Infant-Toddler Guidelines** (ages birth-3)
- The **South Carolina Good Start, Grow Smart Early Learning Standards** (ages 3-5)

An interagency workgroup is currently working to merge these documents, aligning them simultaneously with SC's new K-12 content standards.

# World Class Knowledge and the Ready Preschool Graduate:



High-quality early childhood education programs are designed to integrate multiple domains of learning and development, including **language and literacy, science, mathematics, arts and the social sciences.**

They incorporate age-appropriate technology and are home to the precursors to **engineering** and other **highly-valued knowledge sets.**

**World class skills find their roots  
in the years of early childhood.**

# World Class Skills and the Ready Preschool Graduate:



The ready preschool graduate demonstrates **creativity and innovation** by:

- Participating in dramatic play.
- Creating a "city" from blocks.
- Drawing pictures and writing about them.

# World Class Skills and the Ready Preschool Graduate:



The ready preschool graduate demonstrates **critical thinking and problem solving** by:

- Making predictions about stories read aloud.
- Using additional blocks to stabilize a tower.
- Mixing two colors of paint to create a third.
- Digging a “moat” to reroute water away from a sandcastle .
- Using words to resolve their problems.

# **World Class Skills and the Ready Preschool Graduate:**



**The ready preschool graduate demonstrates  
collaboration and teamwork by:**

- **Sharing and taking turns with a friend.**
- **Taking on a classroom job.**
- **Working with a classmate to assemble a puzzle.**
- **Showing a friend how to do something new.**

# World Class Skills and the Ready Preschool Graduate:



The ready preschool graduate is **developing communication skills and the ability to integrate information, media and technology** by:

- **Listening to and retelling stories read aloud.**
- **Growing as readers and writers.**
- **Using age-appropriate technology and online learning games.**

# World Class Skills and the Ready Preschool Graduate:



The ready preschool graduate is **learning how to learn** by:

- **Asking questions of teachers and peers.**
- **Making and testing predictions.**
- **Persisting in tasks.**

# Life and Career Characteristics and the **Ready Preschool Graduate:**



- **Integrity:** Following classroom rules and demonstrating honesty.
- **Self-direction:** Selecting a classroom interest area.
- **Global perspective:** Learning about other cultures and traditions.
- **Perseverance:** Maintaining interest in an activity even when there are interruptions and/or challenges.
- **Work ethic:** Demonstrating satisfaction when completing a task, solving a problem, or making a new discovery.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Making new friends, playing cooperatively, sharing and taking turns.

School readiness is often discussed in terms of the child's own readiness for school. In recent years, however, there is growing recognition that the "ready child" must be supported by ready schools, caregivers and communities – each critical in ensuring the long-term academic and life success of South Carolina's children.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF READY SCHOOLS, EDUCATORS AND CAREGIVERS

- First and foremost, "ready schools" are grounded in the understanding that the years of early childhood are a time of fluid – and sometimes uneven - development. Each child develops on a unique timeline and may develop rapidly in certain domains, while lagging in one or more others. Accordingly "ready schools" are those prepared to meet the unique, individual needs of their students.
- "Ready educators" are highly knowledgeable in both child development and the progression of early learning. These teachers are prepared to meet young children "where they are" developmentally, providing the social, emotional and academic scaffolding needed to support children within areas of learning and development just beyond their current abilities.
- In recognition that learning occurs best in environments free of threat, high-quality early childhood classrooms are emotionally safe and nurturing of all young learners.
- Because parents are children's first and most important teachers, "ready schools" are equipped (on at least a limited basis) to support the needs of their students' parents – guiding them in the development of their own understanding of early childhood development, age-appropriate expectations and the ways they can support their child's success at home.
- Finally, "ready parents and caregivers" are those equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to provide their children with a safe, nurturing and developmentally stimulating childhood.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF READY COMMUNITIES (OPTIMAL ENVIRONMENTS):

- "Ready communities" are those in which young children and their families have access to the resources necessary to ensure good health and optimal physical, social/emotional and cognitive development. It is important to note that these resources need not be extensive and elaborate. Indeed South Carolina's communities vary significantly in their geography, populations and resource bases. "Ready communities" are those in which young children:
  - Are able to grow and develop in the absence of fear, stress, danger and hunger.
  - Have access to needed pediatric, dental and mental health resources.
  - Spend their days in nurturing, language-rich, and developmentally supportive environments (whether a loving home, a high-quality early education setting or both).
  - Are cared for by loving adults attentive to their physical, emotional and developmental needs.