

2024 Together for Beaufort County Early Childhood Report



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Introduction

Project Purpose

In 2021, Together for Beaufort County (T4BC) published an Indicators Report that presented the status and environment of health, social well-being, economy, environment, and education in Beaufort County, SC. Following the creation of the 2021 Indicators Report, T4BC decided to solicit specific investigations into each indicator to address gaps in the original report and to pursue recommendations made in the report. This report serves as the first indicator-specific investigation and presents qualitative and quantitative information regarding the state of Early Childhood in Beaufort County.

Overview of the 2021 T4BC Indicators Report

The 2021 Indicators Report examined education in Beaufort County on a wide scale, including an analysis of test scores of students from preschool through graduate school. The 2021 report stated that in the 2018-2019 school year:

“There were 1,153 children screened for Pre-Kindergarten Qualification. The two qualifications for Pre-Kindergarten include falling below the 50th percentile based on the DIAL 4 (Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning) screening and/or a risk factor score of 40 or higher based upon the County’s list of at-risk indicators. Out of the 1,153 children screened, 954 students qualified for Pre-Kindergarten.” (Together For Beaufort County, n.d.)

Additionally, the report indicated that in the 2018-2019 school year, 94.9% of Hispanic children, 92.6% of Black children, and 65.5% of White children screened for Pre-Kindergarten qualified. In the 2019-2020 school year, 31.6% of Beaufort County students demonstrated readiness for kindergarten, compared to 39.2% of students statewide. Beaufort County students scored lower across all domains of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment when compared to the statewide average.

In this report, we analyze birth outcomes, childhood preventive care access, Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores from 2017-2022, and Grade 3 English Language Arts achievement to comprehensively describe Early Childhood outcomes in Beaufort County.

We provide demographic and geographic context to better characterize the early childhood landscape. We will also present information on critical childcare services and facilitators that support children and their families during early childhood. Finally, we share qualitative results from Beaufort County educators and families, capturing perceptions of early childhood education from the perspectives of those most affected by early childhood efforts.

Project Partners

T4BC is a volunteer-based collaborative, multidisciplinary group that contributes to Beaufort County's community's capacity to address specific societal needs. T4BC operates as a framework that organizes work through key performance indicators related to focus areas of health, environment, education, economy, and social wellbeing. Each indicator area is related to a T4BC Coalition, coalitions engage diverse stakeholders to address community needs.

The Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities (Riley Center) is an interdisciplinary initiative of the College of Charleston whose mission is to leverage the intellectual resources of the College to support the economic and cultural vibrancy of the City of Charleston and other communities throughout South Carolina, the United States, and around the world. The Riley Center provides capacity-building support and research guidance to a variety of public organizations and entities.

The Child Care Research Team at Yvonne and Schuyler Moore Child Development Research Center at the University of South Carolina, funded by SC Department of Social Services, works to support healthy child development and the quality of child and family-serving systems by collaborating with affected parties, providing professional development, and conducting research to enhance the lives of children and families. Faculty and collaborators carry out and disseminate applied research with the intent of supporting children, families, policymakers, practitioners, and other relevant parties.

Interested Parties

In this project, we curated and engaged with public data, as well as Beaufort County School District (BCSD) Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data (in collaboration with BCSD), to present a factual, accessible portrait of the early childhood landscape and needs in the county. Interested parties include the Beaufort County School District, parents of early childhood-aged children, early childhood educators and service providers, and organizations that serve young children and families in Beaufort County.

Early Childhood

Early childhood is a critical period of human development. Constant interactions between children and their many environments result in growing language and communication skills, social foundations for relationships, culture, and emotional lives, sophisticated cognitive foundations for literacy, numeracy, and thinking, and physical development to support movement, strength, and mobility. Development in one area can, and often does, affect development in the others. These foundations have lasting effects on health, education, and relationships across the lifespan.

The most rapid brain development occurs from birth to three years old, and the American Academy of Pediatrics considers the period of Early Childhood to be from birth to age 8 (about second grade). Developmental plasticity, that is the ability to easily change, is greatest during early childhood. It is critical that communities invest in protective factors that promote healthy development in young children and minimize harmful risk factors.

The first and most important support is a child's immediate caregivers. In this report, we will share data on some key risk and protective factors that community and human service support systems can look to for guidance on supporting child and family quality of life and healthy development during this all-important period.

General Population and Early Childhood Population in Beaufort County

The following section presents information regarding the population in Beaufort County by breaking down demographic information in different parts of the county. Information is based on publicly available data from the United States (US) Census. Based on the previous T4BC Indicators Report and academic literature related to disparities in early childhood, several indicators were used to address the following:

- What are the characteristics of the population of Beaufort County?
- Where does Beaufort County fall on public data indicators of poverty?
 - Median household income
 - Insurance status
 - Renter vs. owner-occupied homes
 - US Census Poverty Status
- Who in Beaufort County is facing poverty, and where in the county do they live?
- How many children under 5 years old are living in poverty status?

Beaufort County General Demographics

Beaufort County is located on the Southeast coast of South Carolina and is the 26th largest county in the state based on land area(US Census Bureau, n.d.).

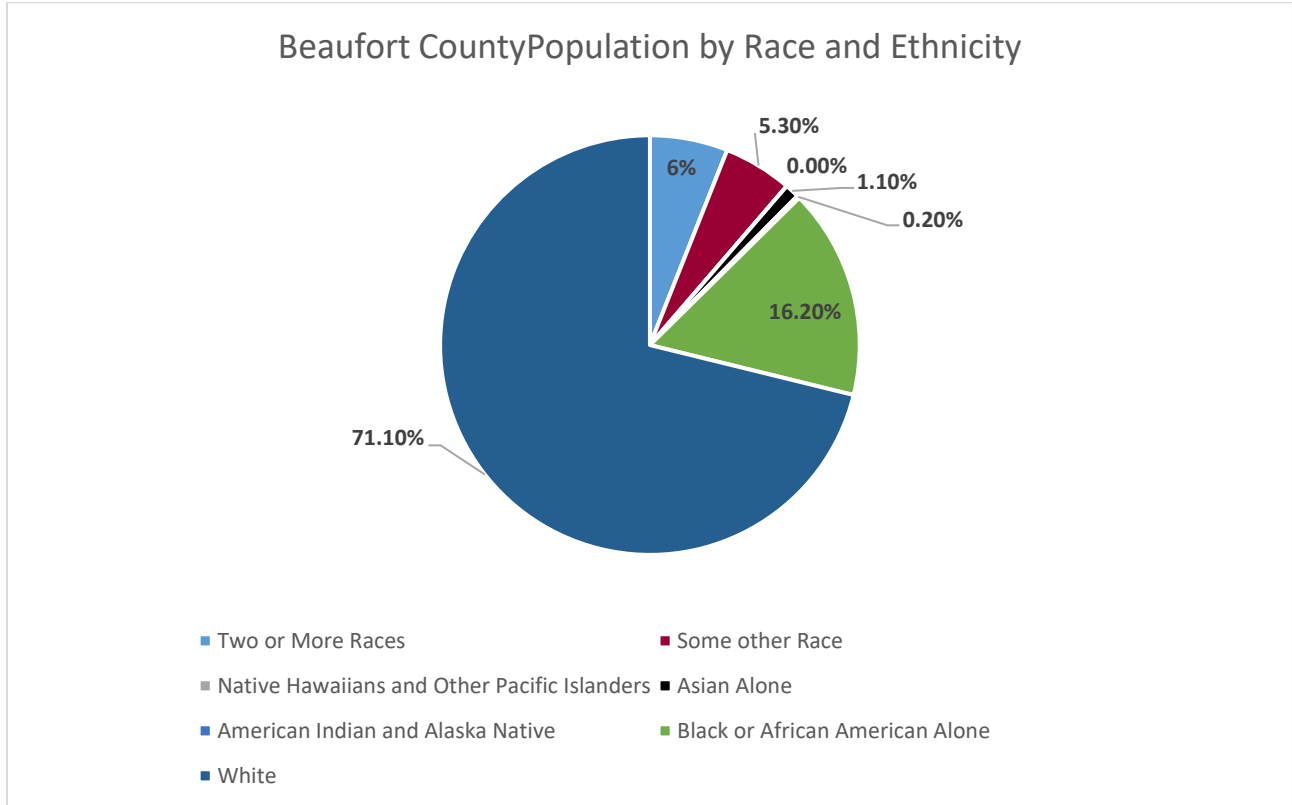


Figure 1: Beaufort County Race and Ethnicity

According to the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate, Beaufort County has an estimated population of 189,017 people. Of Beaufort’s estimated population, 71.07% of the population was White, 16.24% of the population was Black or African American, 0.18% of the population was American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.13% of the population was Asian, 0.03% of the population was Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 5.34% of the population was ‘some other race’, and 6.01% of the population was two or more races.

Median household incomes vary by municipality, race, and ethnicity as shown below in Table 1, using 2021-2022 data.

Zip Code/ Municipality	Median HH Income	White	White alone, not Hisp. or Latino	Black or African American	Asian	Some other race	Two or more races	Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)
29902 Beaufort	\$73,228	\$85,669	\$87,189	\$28,962	---	\$70,912	---	\$46,470
29906 Beaufort	\$60,041	\$69,771	\$71,842	\$40,823	---	\$59,659	\$54,826	\$52,733
29907 Beaufort	\$85,203	\$93,308	\$93,327	\$37,200	---	---	---	\$250,000+
29909 Okatie	\$86,159	\$86,690	\$86,564	\$89,550	\$60,714	\$80,426	\$79,102	\$86,429
29910 Bluffton	\$92,421	\$94,358	\$95,091	\$72,482	\$66,369	\$47,972	\$103,886	\$68,516
29920 St. Helena	\$69,025	\$82,021	\$81,292	\$53,109	---	---	\$133,214	---
29926 Hilton Head	\$95,090	\$105,490	\$106,938	\$46,250	---	\$32,336	\$68,491	\$48,809
29928/Hilt on Head	\$95,070	\$96,116	\$96,384	\$29,154	---	---	\$133,611	\$50,990
29935/Port Royal	\$71,364	\$58,676	\$59,044	\$94,539	---	\$80,948	---	\$80,740
29940/Sea brook	\$48,226	\$87,019	\$85,673	\$33,542	---	---	\$81,111	---

Table 1: Beaufort County Race and Ethnicity by Zip Code

Median Household Income & Race/Ethnicity

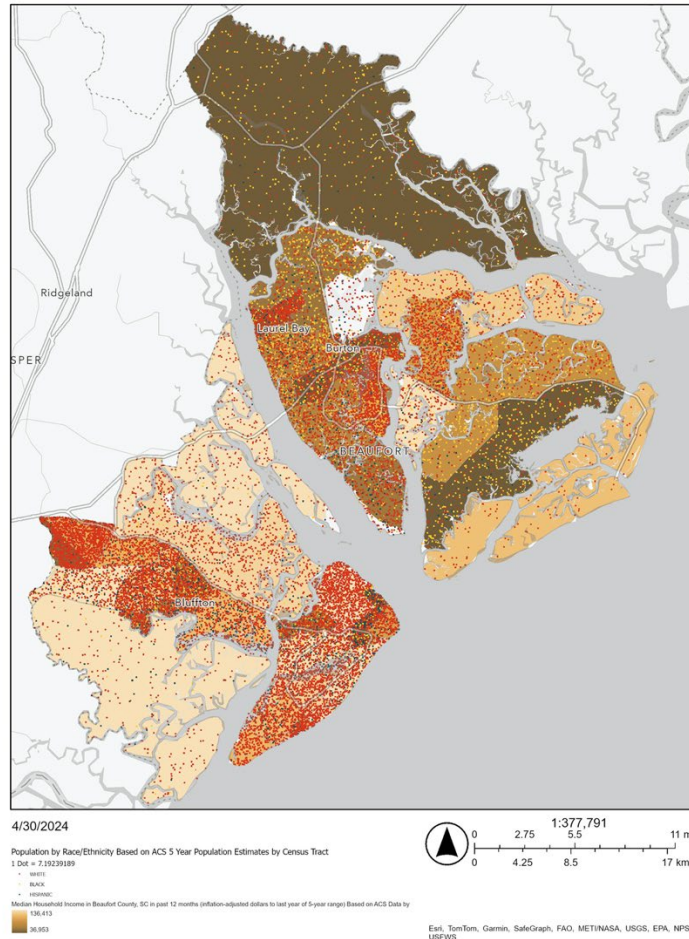


Figure 2: Beaufort County Median Household Income and Race and Ethnicity

ACS 2022 5-Year Estimate data estimated that 75.5% of homes in Beaufort County are owner-occupied while 24.5% are renter occupied. Of the owner-occupied homes in Beaufort County, an estimated 77% are owned by the White population, 10.9% are owned by the Black or African American Population, and 5.25% are owned by the Hispanic or Latino population. Of the renter-occupied homes in Beaufort County, an estimated 50% are owned by the White population, 24% by the Black or African American population, and 12.83 percent by the Hispanic or Latino population.

Beaufort County Housing Characteristics (by Race)		
Race or Ethnicity	Total owner-occupied	Total renter-occupied
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	46,369	10,466
Black or African American alone	6,508	5,071
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	53	32
Asian alone	374	138
Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders alone	0	22
Some other races alone	1,280	1,414
Two or more races	1,991	761
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	3,132	2,634
Total	59,707	20,538

Table 2: Beaufort County Housing Characteristics by Race

Early Childhood Indicators of Health, Well-being, and Concern

Overview of Indicators

Early childhood indicators of health, well-being, and concern were selected based on the extensive research available on their impact on child development, as well as the availability of data from public sources. The US Census Bureau’s American Communities Survey provides an estimate of the number of children under the age of five living below the federal poverty line. Counts of babies born with low birth weight are available from birth data made available by the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). This provides county-wide information on healthy pregnancies and risk factors for developmental delays or difficulties. Adverse childhood experiences and placement in foster care present significant developmental risks for young children, while access to Early Care and Education programs supports children and families on their developmental journey. Kindergarten Readiness scores and Grade 3 English Language Arts scores offer a way to monitor the collective impacts of public health and human service efforts.

Children under 5 Living Below the Federal Poverty Line

The ACS 2022 1-Year Estimate shows for whom the poverty was determined by Race and Ethnicity.

Beaufort County Children Under 5 (by Race and Ethnicity)	Total
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	2,255
Black or African American alone	954
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	---
Asian alone	3
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	---
Some other race alone	255
Two or more races	799
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	1,101
Total	5,367

Table 3: Beaufort County Children Under 5 by Race and Ethnicity

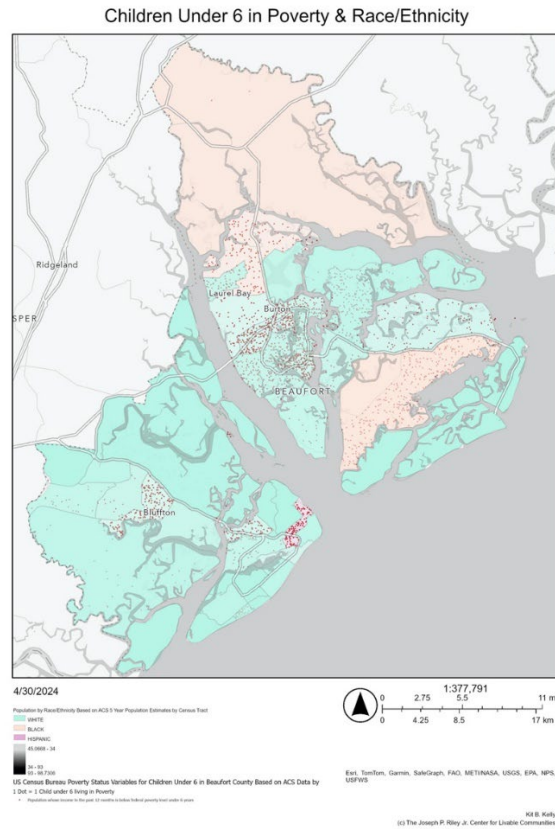


Figure 3: Beaufort County Children Under 6 and Race and Ethnicity

Babies with Low Birthweight

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), low birthweight is defined as a birth where the weight is less than 2,500 grams (5 pounds, 8 ounces) regardless of the period of gestation. Premature birth, low birth weight, and small for gestational age are all risk factors for developing metabolic and cardiovascular conditions, as well as developmental delays. Early Intervention is very important.

Medical Risk factors for giving birth to babies with low birthweight include:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Heart, lung, and kidney problems
- Air pollution and lead
- Social exclusion and discrimination
- Age (younger than 15 and older than 35)

- Infections

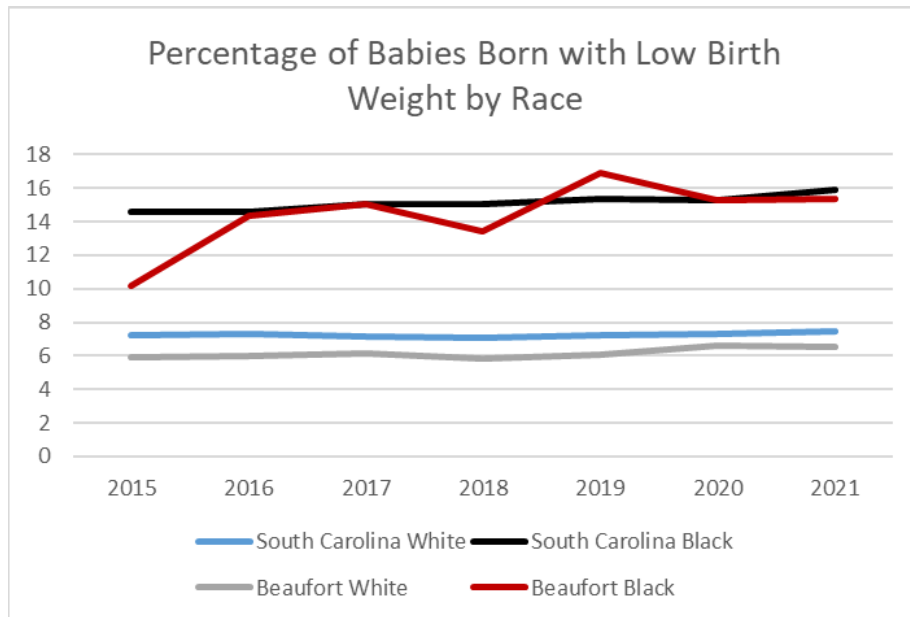


Figure 4: Percentage of Babies Born with Low Birth Weight by Race

DATA SOURCE

[South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control - Division of Biostatistics and Health GIS: South Carolina Community Assessment Network \(SCAN\) Birth Tables.](#)

Preventative Care

Preventive care supports healthy child development for all children but can significantly improve outcomes for low birthweight children; however, as seen by the data on preventive care visits below, many appear to face barriers to accessing these services.

- 43.6% of uninsured children in South Carolina have not had a preventive care visit in the past year
- 26.8% of children with public insurance only in South Carolina have not had a preventive care visit in the past year

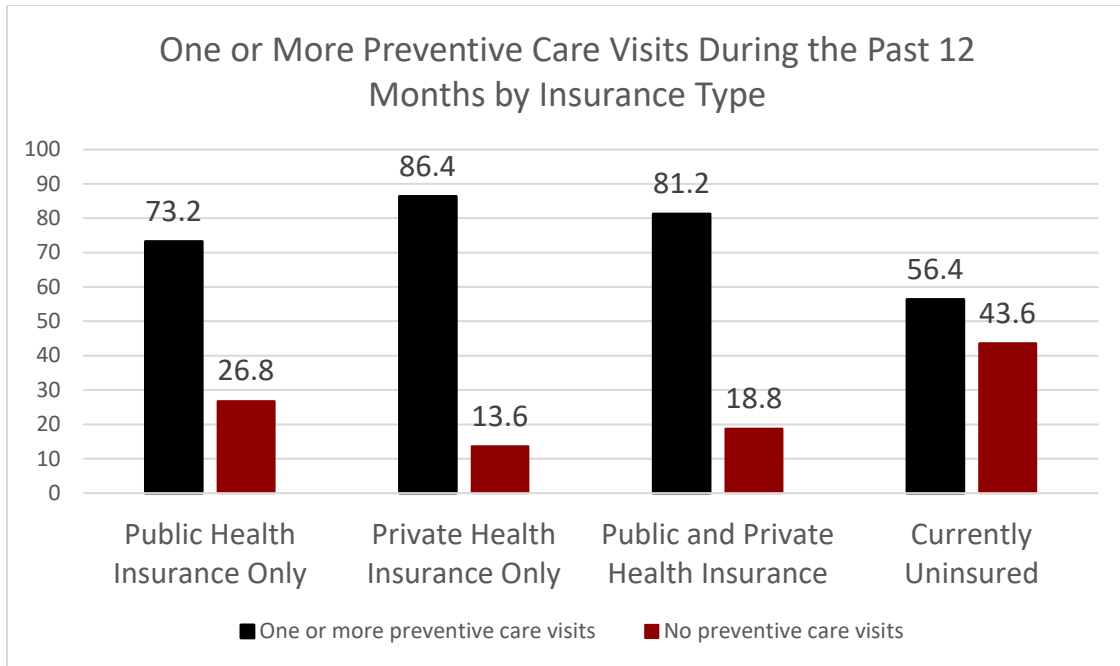


Figure 5: One or More Preventative Care Visits During the Past 12 Months by Insurance Type

The lowest-income families in South Carolina are the least likely to have had a preventive care visit in the past year.

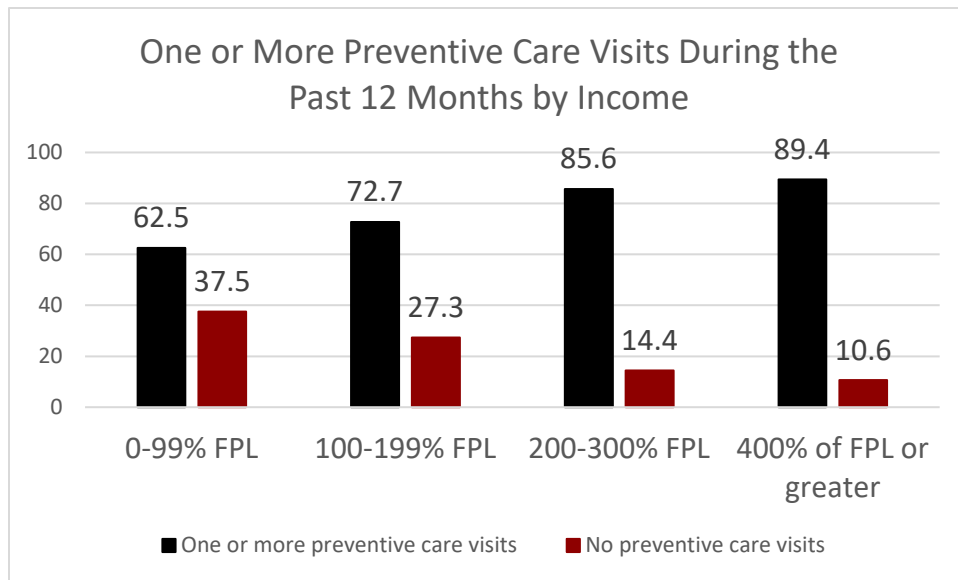


Figure 6: One or More Preventative Care Visits During the Past 12 Months by Income

Black and Hispanic children in South Carolina were less likely to have had a preventive care visit in the past year than White children.

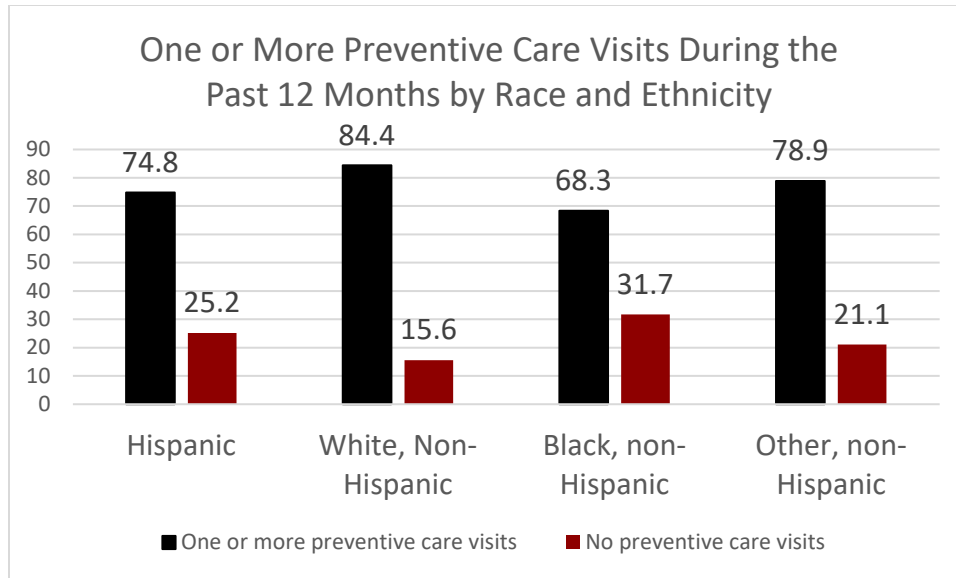


Figure 7: One or More Preventive Care Visits During the Past 12 Months by Race and Ethnicity

Data Source: National Survey of Children’s Health, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/data/national-surveys>

Citation: Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2022 National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) data query. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Retrieved [01/29/24] from [www.childhealthdata.org].

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences have been studied extensively since the 1990s in relation to child development and later life outcomes. Exposure to the adversities listed below have been shown to alter genetic expression and metabolic, immune, and neurological functioning. Scientists recognize these experiences as a grave public health concern, associated with poor health and mental health long-term (e.g., Boullier & Blair, 2018).

ACE items on the National Survey of Children's Health include:

- Hard to cover basics on family's income (ACE1)
- Parent or guardian divorced or separated (ACE3)
- Parent or guardian died (ACE4).
- Parent or guardian served time in jail (ACE5).
- Saw or heard parents or adults slap, hit, kick punch one another in the home (ACE6)
- Was a victim of violence or witnessed violence in their neighborhood (ACE7)
- Lived with anyone who was mentally ill, suicidal, or severely depressed (ACE8).
- Lived with anyone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs (ACE9)
- Treated or judged unfairly due to race/ethnicity (ACE10)
- Treated or judged unfairly due to sexual orientation or gender identity (ACE12).

- According to survey research, about 33.8% of children 0-17 years old in South Carolina has experienced one or more Adverse Childhood Experience (National Survey of Children’s Health, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, 2021-2022)

Data Citation: Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2021-2022 National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) data query. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Retrieved [05/22/24] from [\[www.childhealthdata.org\]](http://www.childhealthdata.org).

- 1 in 10 children (about 106,000) in South Carolina will lose a parent or sibling by age 18 (The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model, 2022).

Young Children in Foster Care

Prevalence rates for developmental delays, mental health problems, and insecure attachment are about 40% for preschool children in foster care. Nearly half experience a mental disorder between ages 6 and 12.

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) keeps up-to date counts of children and youth in foster care on dashboards that can be accessed here: [Foster Care Dashboard](#)

Age Range	South Carolina	Beaufort County
Total in Care	3462	42
0-3 years	827	9
4-6 years	513	3
7-12 years	951	9
13-17 years	1171	21

Table 4: Young Children in Foster Care

Access to Early Care and Education

The early care and education system is a mixed-delivery system of publicly and privately funded programs and services, including federally funded Head Start, state-funded Pre-K Programs, and privately run childcare programs. Private childcare programs may be accessed through federal, state, and private funding options provided to families in need of financial assistance. The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SC DSS) funds programs and services to improve access to and quality of childcare in the state of South Carolina, as the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agency (LA). These programs and services include childcare licensing (<https://www.scchildcare.org/programs/child-care-licensing/>), the Child Care Scholarship Program (<https://www.scchildcare.org/programs/child-care-scholarship-program/>), a quality rating and improvement system called ABC Quality (<https://abcquality.org/>), and service, training, coaching, and technical assistance organizations.

SC DSS maintains a public directory of childcare programs (<https://www.scchildcare.org/>), which includes ABC Quality ratings for those who voluntarily participate in the program. Public information includes the name, address, contact information, license/regulation number, hours, ABC Quality rating of childcare programs, complaints, and inspection reports. These public records can be sorted based on location, program type, and other options. The Child Care Research Team at the Yvonne and Schuyler Moore Child Development Research Center at the University of South Carolina have partnered with SC Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) to provide an annually updated map and information on the numbers of children served by program type in each county across the state (<https://www.sc-ccrr.org/community-services/data/child-care-at-a-glance-child-care-business-analysis-map/>).

Children Under 6 in Poverty & Childcare Facilities

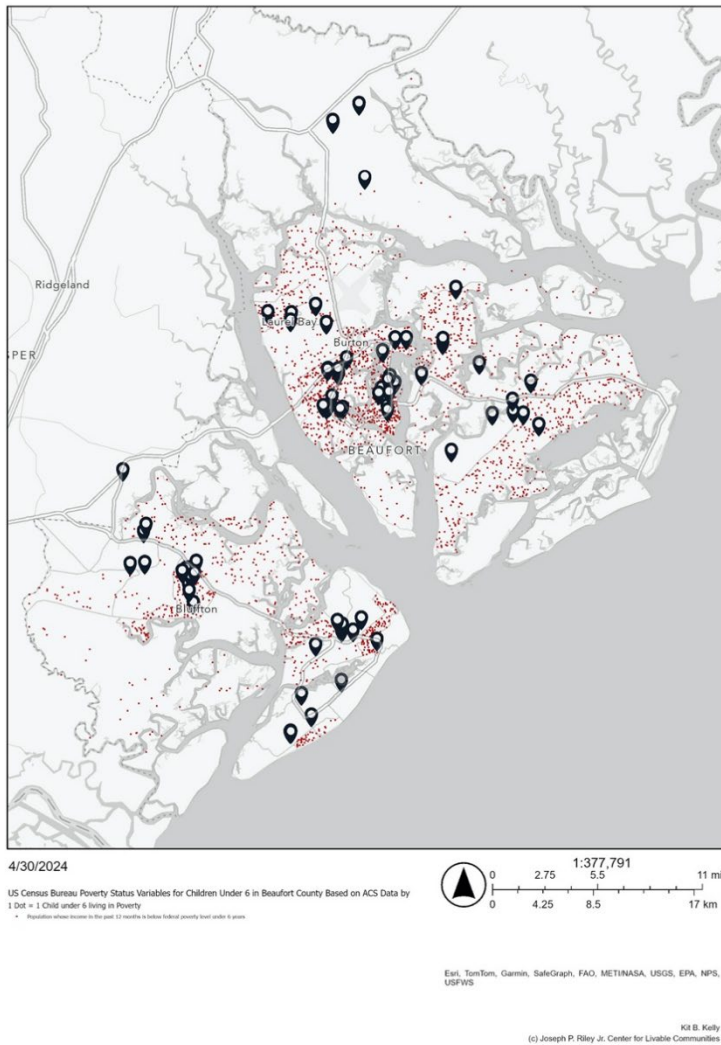


Figure 8: Children Under 6 in Poverty and Childcare Facilities

SC Child Care data for Beaufort County was used to develop an understanding of 1) where early care and education programs are located within Beaufort County, 2) what types of early care and education programs are available in Beaufort County, including their quality ratings, and 3) how many First Steps and Head Start programs are available in Beaufort County

According to DSS ABC Quality Rating data, as of February of 2024, there are 73 childcare providers and facilities in Beaufort County. Of those 73

, 12 are rated with a 'B' or 'B+', 16 are rated with a 'C', and the remaining 40 do not have an ABC Quality Rating. Thirty-eight are categorized as 'No Rating' and the remaining 2 as 'P' for pending a quality rating.

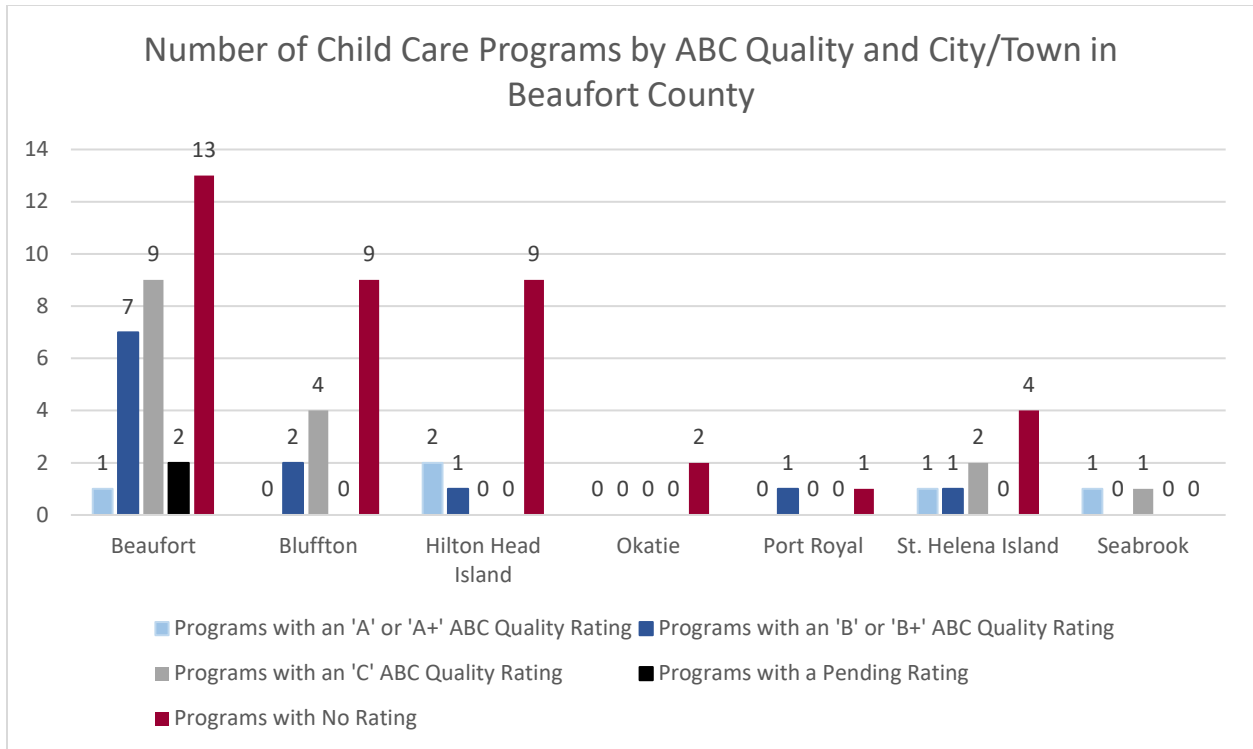


Figure 9: Child Care Programs by ABC Quality Rating and City or Towns in Beaufort County

Of the 73 providers and facilities in Beaufort County, 6 are First Steps programs and 4 are Head Start programs. As of February 2024, 2 of the 73 providers and facilities are categorized as a ‘Group Child Care Home’, 13 are categorized as a ‘Family Child Care Home’, 46 are categorized as a ‘Child Care Center’, and 1 is categorized as ‘Exempt’ (exempt from licensing because they operate for less than 4 hours a day). Thirty-two of the 73 total childhood programs are in the city of Beaufort, 15 are Bluffton, 12 are in Hilton Head Island, 2 are in Okatie, 2 are in Port Royal, 8 are in Saint Helena Island, and 2 are in Seabrook.

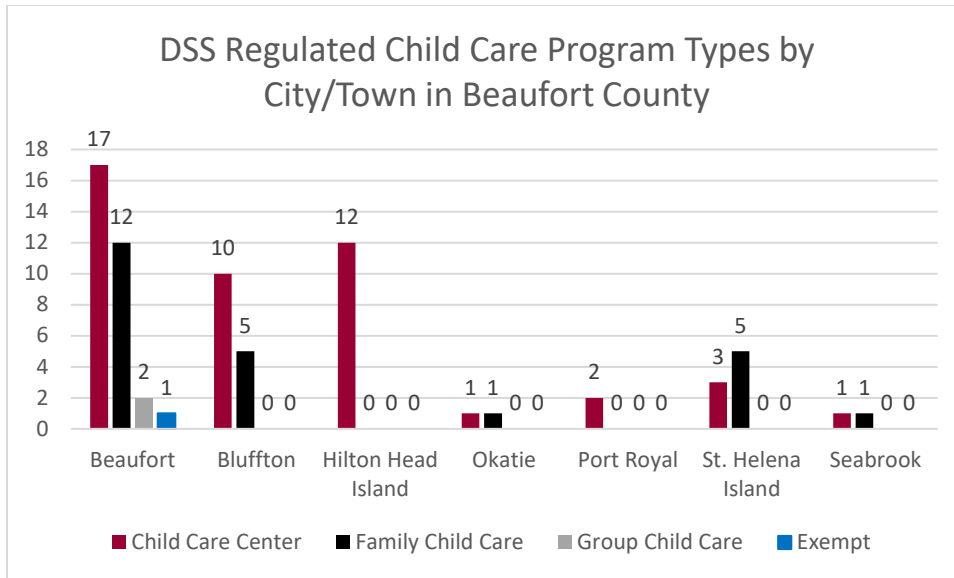


Figure 10: Child Care Program Categorization by Cities and Towns in Beaufort County

Of the 5 childcare programs with an ‘A’ or ‘A+’ ABC Quality Rating, 1 is in Beaufort, 2 are in Hilton Head, 1 is in Saint Helena Island, and 1 is in Seabrook. For the 12 ‘B’ or ‘B+’ ABC Quality Rating, 58% are in Beaufort, 17% are in Bluffton, 8% are in Hilton Head Island, and 8% are in Saint Helena Island. Of the 16 programs with a ‘C’ ABC Quality Rating, 56% are in Beaufort, 25% are in Bluffton, 13% are in Saint Helena Island, and 6% are in Seabrook. All 2 ‘P’ ABC Quality Rating programs were in Beaufort. Of the 38 ‘No Rating’ ABC Quality Rating programs, 34% were in Beaufort, 24% were in Bluffton, 24% were in Hilton Head, 5% were in Okatie, and 11% were in Saint Helena Island.

Percent of ABC Quality Rating by City/Town								
ABC Quality Rating	Beaufort	Bluffton	Hilton Head Island	Okatie	Port Royal	Saint Helena Island	Seabrook	Total
A' or 'A+'	20%	0%	40%	0%	0%	20%	20%	100%
B' or 'B+'	58%	17%	8%	0%	8%	8%	0%	100%
'C'	56%	25%	0%	0%	0%	13%	6%	100%
'P'	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
No Rating	34%	24%	24%	5%	3%	11%	0%	100%

Table 5: Percent of ABC Quality Rating by City/Town

For the 46 total of Child Care Centers in Beaufort County, 37% are in Beaufort, 22% are in Bluffton, 26% are in Hilton Head, 2% are in Okatie, 4% are in Port Royal, 7% are in Saint Helena Island, and 2% are in Seabrook.

Of the 24 total Family Child Care Homes in Beaufort County, 50% are in Beaufort, 21% are in Bluffton, 4% are in Okatie, 4% are in Port Royal, 21% are in Saint Helena Island, and 4% are in Seabrook. The only Exempt program is in Beaufort, and the 2 Group Child Care Homes are in Beaufort.

Percent of Childhood Program Categorization by City/Town								
Childhood Program Categorization	Beaufort	Bluffton	Hilton Head Island	Okatie	Port Royal	Saint Helena Island	Seabrook	Total
Childcare Center	37%	22%	26%	2%	4%	7%	2%	100%
Family Childcare Home	50%	21%	0%	4%	0%	21%	4%	100%
Group Childcare Home	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Exempt	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Table 6: Percent of Childhood Program Categorization by City/Town

Kindergarten Readiness

Within the first 45 days of school, the KRA is used to assess "kindergarten readiness", a snapshot of kindergarten children’s’ abilities in the areas of Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Well-being. The KRA was developed and tested by the WestEd Standards, Assessment, and Accountability Services program, in partnership with the Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education. Their technical analysis shows content validity and construct validity. Researchers across the state and the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) are monitoring student KRA scores and continue to evaluate its technical properties and alignment with the state's Early Learning Standards.

BCSD Elementary Schools and Centers



Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METINASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS

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Figure 11: Beaufort County School District Schools and Centers

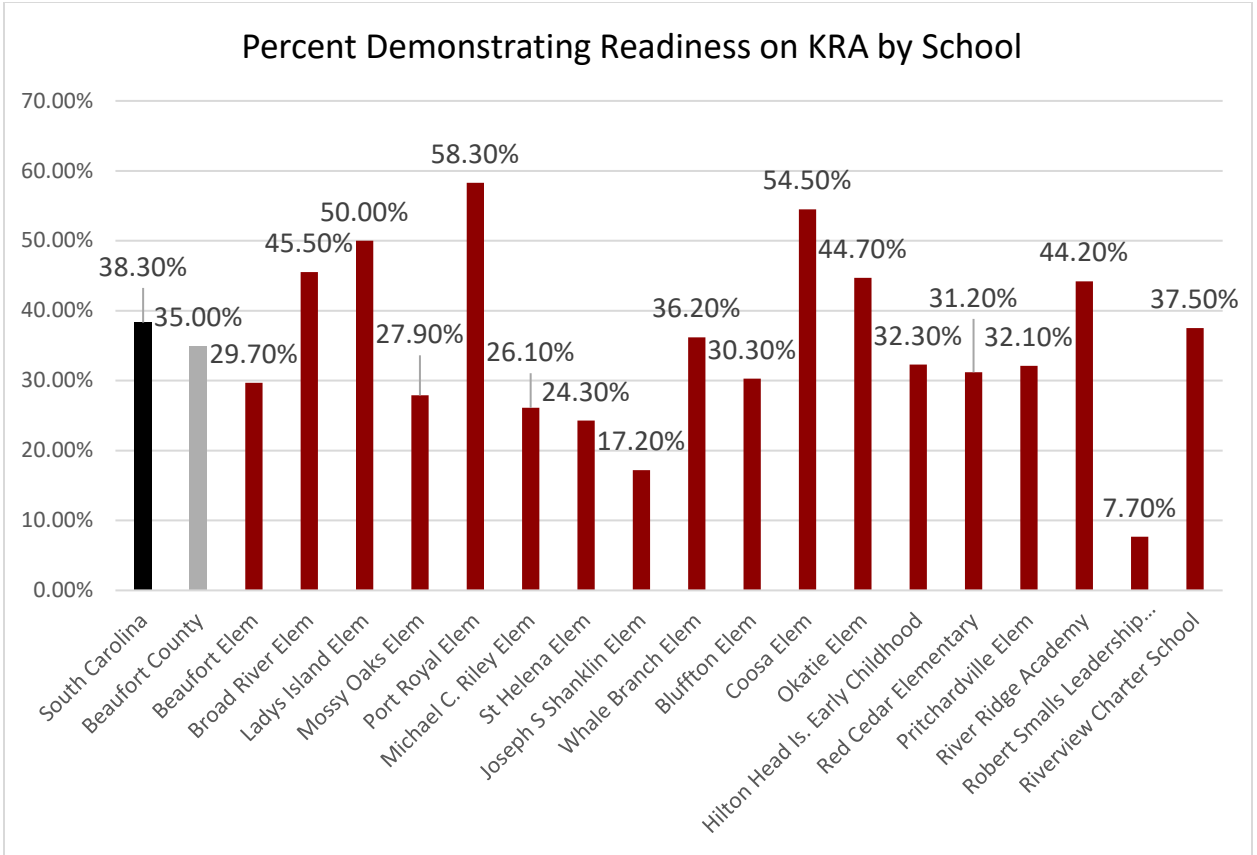


Figure 12: Percent Demonstrating Readiness on KRA by School

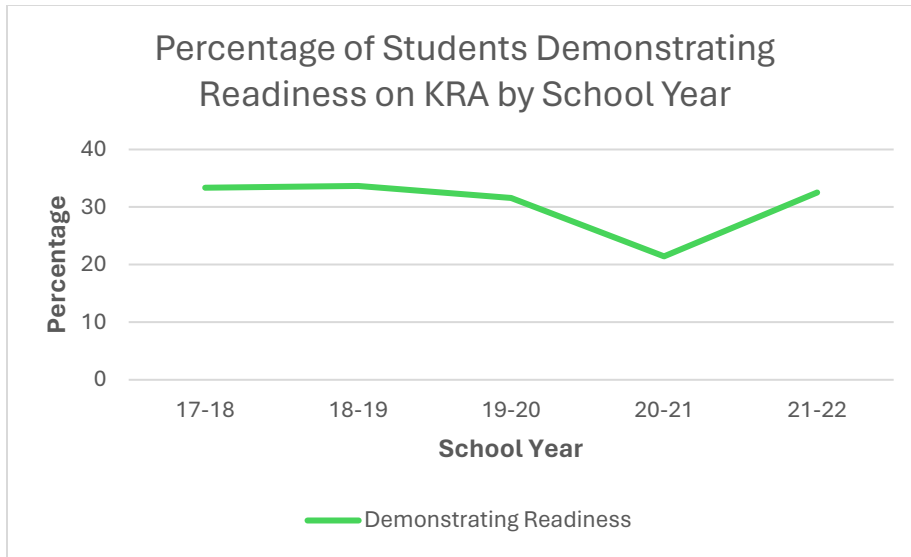


Figure 13: Percentage of Students Demonstrating Readiness on KRA by School Year

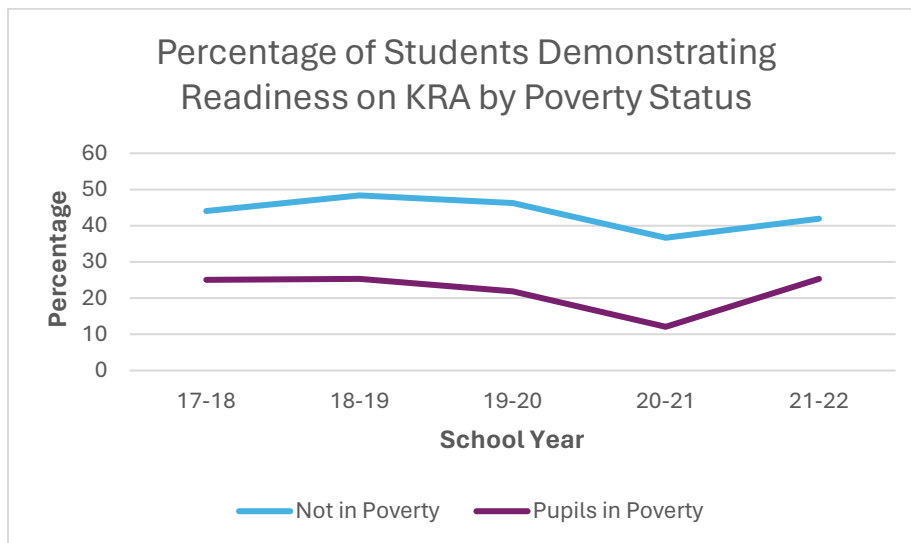


Figure 14: Percentage of Students Demonstrating Readiness on KRA by Poverty Status

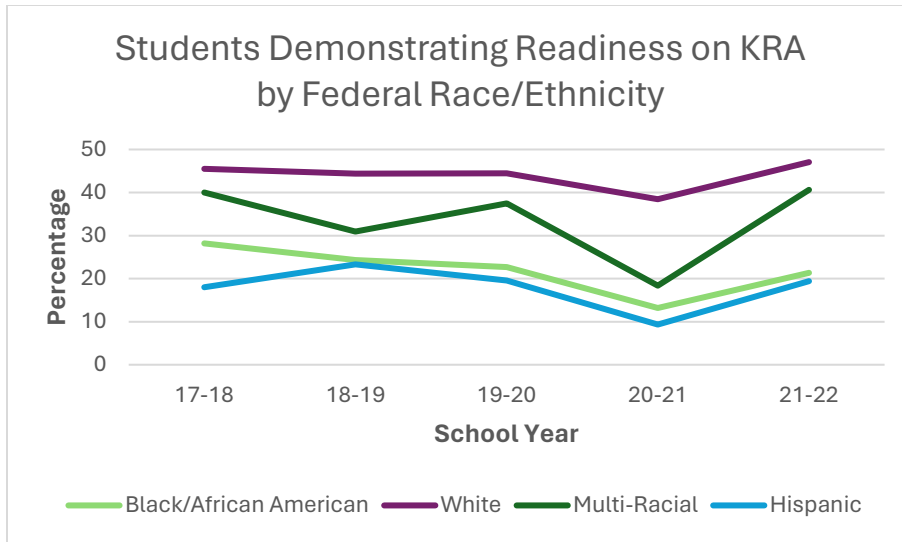


Figure 15: Students Demonstrating Readiness on KRA by Federal Race/Ethnicity

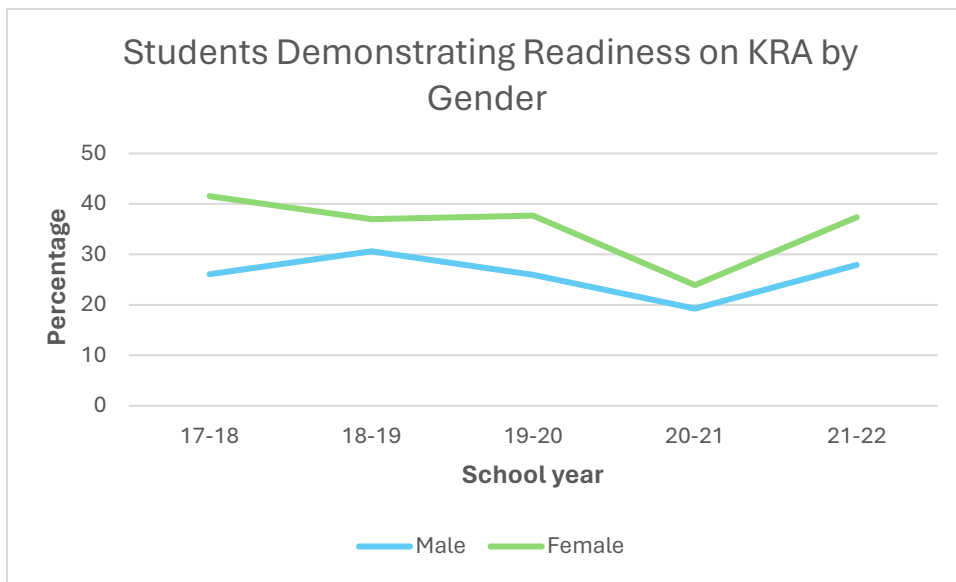


Figure 16: Students Demonstrating Readiness on KRA by Gender

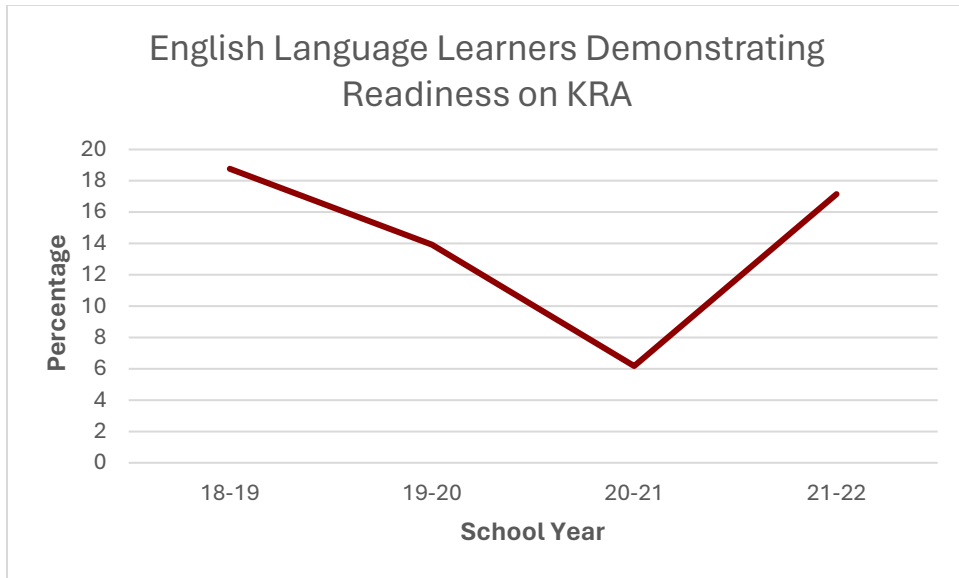


Figure 17: English Language Learners Demonstrating Readiness on KRA

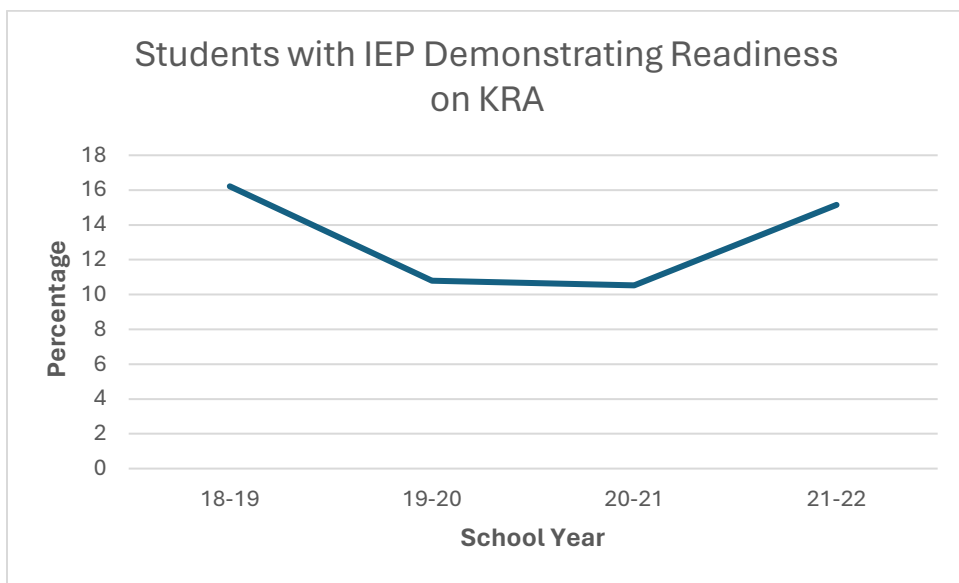


Figure 18: Students with IEP Demonstrating Readiness on KRA

Grade 3 English Language Arts

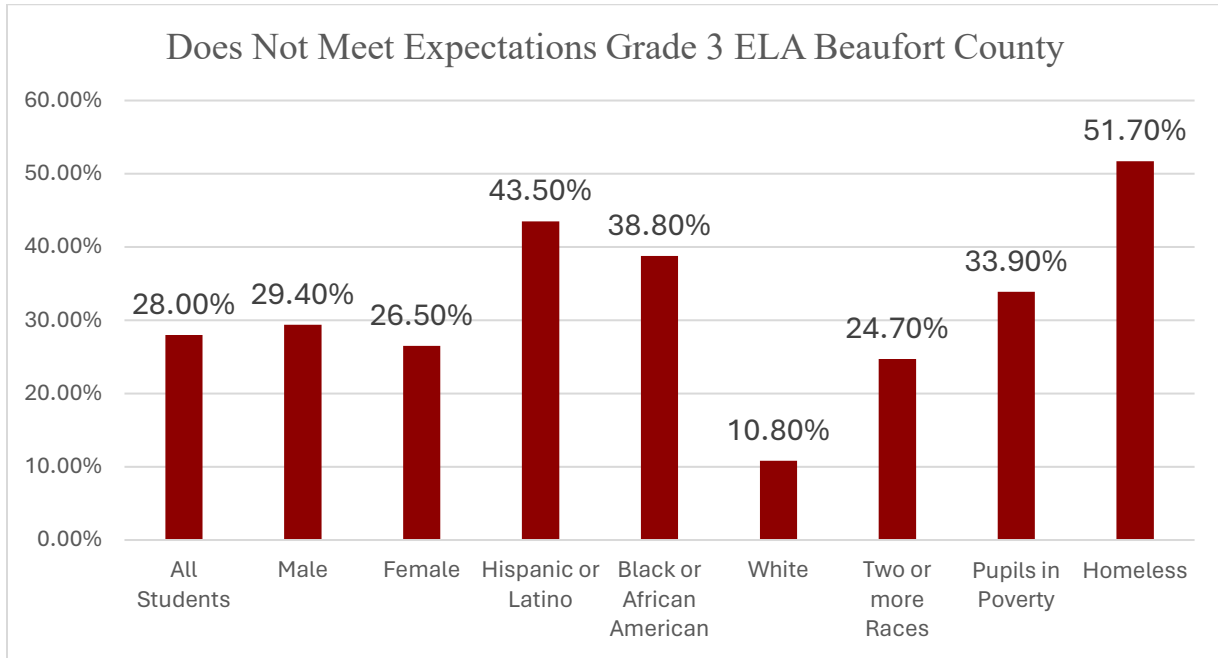


Figure 19: Does Not Meet Expectations Grade 3 ELA Beaufort County

Community Voices

In 2023, to better understand the context of early childhood in Beaufort County, Riley Center staff members conducted semi-structured interviews with seven professionals working with young children and their families in Beaufort County. The following list summarizes key themes that were raised by multiple interview participants.

- There is consensus around the importance of focusing on the early childhood experiences of children under the age of five. This is due to a shared belief that a child's foundation is laid long before they enter kindergarten.
- There is a need for parent education focused on the stages of early childhood development and caring for children from ages 0-5. Beaufort County has several parent education programs that are seen as an asset.
- There is a need for increased interaction between children and their parents.
- Due to several factors, including population growth in Beaufort County, demand for 4-year-old kindergarten has increased and, in some areas of the county, threatens to surpass the Beaufort County School District's capacity.
- Childcare centers need adequate staffing. Low wages have resulted in staffing shortages and fewer childcare workers who are trained to provide high-quality care and education.
- Beaufort County needs more affordable, quality childcare options, particularly for infants and toddlers.
- Cost of living and living wage are issues in Beaufort County.
- Poverty is an underlying cause of many issues affecting young children and their families.
- Socioeconomic issues like affordable housing, transportation access, and family literacy/education levels affect outcomes in early childhood.
- Spanish-speaking families are growing in number in Beaufort County, and services are often out of reach due to language barriers. Organizations like PASOS are an asset when it comes to reaching these families.

- Coalitions are a strength in Beaufort County and possess the potential to generate collective impact and meaningful improvements for young children and their families.

Focus Groups

To understand the perceptions and experiences of early childhood education in Beaufort County, semi-structured four focus groups for parents of children aged 0-5 years old and early childhood educators were held in partnership with The Children’s Center in Southern Beaufort County. Focus groups engaged in questions designed to ask about participant’s experiences, challenges, supports, and understandings of early childhood education in Beaufort County. Four focus groups were held in the fall 2023 and spring of 2024.

Overall, a total of two parents and six educators participated in focus groups, two of which were held in person at The Children’s Center on Hilton Head Island and two of which were held virtually in partnership with The Children’s Center.

Primary themes from the parents’ focus group included a high degree of gratitude for The Children’s Center, the only high-quality center providing care to infants on Hilton Head Island. Both participants noted that they feel their children will be ready for kindergarten because of the highly structured nature of the care they are receiving. One participant shared that her child who attends The Children’s Center will be more prepared for kindergarten than her older child was (her older child did not attend structured preschool). Both parents shared that having access to quality childcare has shaped their knowledge of child development and improved their parenting skills. Both parents expressed that they did not know what they would do without this resource and shared concerns for families that are unable to access such high-quality care for their infants and young children. Both participants in this focus group noted a wide wealth disparity in Southern Beaufort County. While they both mentioned that The Children’s Center is socioeconomically diverse, both

participants observed that many families must go without services due to limited affordable resources.

The teachers' focus groups illuminated several common themes, including a strong sense of community in Beaufort County, which participants perceived as an asset of early childhood. Teachers also shared mutual appreciation for the diversity of the children and families they serve as well as the collaborative, supportive environment of The Children's Center. Participants in these focus groups noted that parental participation is an asset among the families with whom they work, despite sharing that they, at times, confront language barriers and other challenges in working with parents.

Teachers unanimously expressed concerns over staffing shortages, low wages across their field, and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining individuals who are willing to take on such a challenging role in a field characterized by low pay and lack of recognition.

Like the parent participants, teachers see the value in structure and believe that their students will be ready for kindergarten largely due to their familiarity with structured learning. Additionally, teachers highlighted that their students are gaining social-emotional skills (e.g., emotional regulation), which will make them resilient to the transition to kindergarten.

The Appendix includes a full copy of the focus group script with probes.

Mapping Dashboard

To present early childhood data for Beaufort County in a dynamic and interactive way, this report resulted in the creation of a Mapping Dashboard. The dashboard is hosted in ArcGIS Online and includes map layers of 2017-2021 American Community Survey Data (ACS), Childcare Provider and Facilities information, and Childcare Support Networks. ACS map layers are hosted by a public mapping entity that automatically updates the data in the

layer as new Census data is made available by the U.S Census Bureau. The Childcare Provider and Facilities exist as ‘pop-ups’ that map users can click on to learn more about the ABC Quality Rating system in addition to the location and contact information for a childhood program. Childcare Support Networks are also pop-ups and present map viewers with information about this project’s partners, stakeholders, and other organizations or programs that provide early childhood services in Beaufort County.

To view the dashboard, follow this link:

<https://scgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/b7b5c81f58c64f28ab28dbb169418320>

Recommendations

- Continue to monitor public health data contained in this report on a regular basis, as well as in response to natural disasters and other events likely to pose risks to families with young children.
- Build cross-system relationships to provide convenient, comprehensive, non-stigmatizing service delivery for families (health, mental health, education, housing, social services)
- Consider families with young children in the design of public settings and activities
- Invest in evidence-based programs and services that support young children and families
- Support state and national efforts to improve training, pay, benefits, and professionalization of the Early Care and Education workforce

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Appendix

Focus Group Questions

For Parents:

1. *When you think about raising and caring for kids (0-5 y/o) in Beaufort County, what do you think is going well? What are the highlights?*
2. *What worries or concerns come to mind when you think about raising young kids in Beaufort County?*
3. *Do/did you feel like your young kids are/were ready for kindergarten?*
4. *Do you feel that there are supports (programs, organizations) in Beaufort County that can help you raise your young kids?*
 - i. *Do you use these supports? Do you have access to these supports?*
5. *Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about raising a young child in your community?*

For Educators:

6. *When you think about teaching and caring for kids (0-5 y/o) in Beaufort County, what do you think is going well? What are the highlights?*
7. *What worries or concerns come to mind when you think about your role as a teacher?*
8. *In your experience, do you feel that your students are prepared to enter kindergarten?*
9. *Do you feel that there are supports (programs, organizations) in Beaufort County that are helpful for preparing kids and parents for kindergarten?*
 - ii. *What are they?*
 - iii. *Do you think parents are using these supports? Which ones?*
10. *How confident are you in working with families? What are some of the struggles? Is there anything that might help you in this part of your role?*
11. *Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?*