

Advancing Student Success and Narrowing the Achievement Gap of Low Income Children by Aligning Educational Experiences to Create a Seamless Learning Continuum from Preschool to 3rd Grade

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Grant P0130893 Year 1 Pilot – School Year 2017/2018 Evaluation Report

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I. Project Overview

A high quality early education provides the foundation for student success in school. Having a seamless learning continuum from Pre-K to 3rd grade will align and integrate a comprehensive educational approach to student learning during the years when children have the greatest growth potential and ensure that children enter classrooms that promote their ongoing educational progress by building on what they have previously learned.

Governor Kay Ivey's Strong Start, Strong Finish education initiative focuses on three stages of education: early childhood education, computer science in middle and high school, and workforce preparedness. With Governor Ivey's strong support for extending the First Class Pre-K (FCPK) principles and approaches into the K-3rd grade education system, the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education and the Alabama State Department of Education are working collaboratively to develop a Pre-K-3rd Strong Start Early Learning Collaborative. This initiative focuses on establishing a strong early learning foundation for the children of Alabama and will be accomplished through a comprehensive, systematic approach to high quality learning opportunities using the Pre-K-3rd framework and early learning continuum. The P-3 continuum surpasses the boundaries of preschool into the first few years of elementary school in order to produce a seamless learning experience for children from age four through third grade. The basic framework and three focus areas of the continuum are based on leadership, instruction, and assessment.

1. Leadership
 - a. Leaders embrace the Pre-K-3rd early learning continuum
 - b. Leaders ensure developmentally appropriate practices
 - c. Leaders provide personalized, blended learning environments
 - d. Leaders use measures to guide growth in student learning
 - e. Leaders build professional capacity across the early learning community
 - f. Leaders make schools a hub for Pre-K-3rd learning for families and communities
2. Instruction
 - a. Align and coordinate standards, curriculum, instructional practices, assessment, environments and professional development creating an incremental alignment plan for Pre-K-3rd
 - b. Use consistent, yet developmentally appropriate, instructional approaches across grades
 - c. Require horizontal and vertical team meetings
 - d. Use instructional coaches with early childhood learning experiences and credentials

e. Communicate proactively and involve parents, families, and the community

3. Assessment

- a. Ongoing comprehensive system to include diagnostic, formative/progress monitoring, and summative assessments
- b. Include all domains of development and learning: social, language, physical, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science and technology, and the arts

Two main strategies were undertaken to achieve grant goals:

- 1. Developing and delivering a Leadership Academy for elementary school principals and leaders serving children ages 3-8 years (Pre-K to 3rd Grade)
- 2. Providing grants to a subgroup of schools whose principals participated in the Leadership Academy to support the delivery of a coordinated and comprehensive high-quality early childhood continuum

The Department of Early Childhood Education awarded funds received from the Kellogg grant to the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) to support an Alabama Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy: Excelling Innovation in Leadership of Pre-K-3 Learning Communities. CLAS, in collaboration with the Department of Early Childhood Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), developed a high quality professional learning and resource program to meet the needs of elementary principals serving children from ages 3 to 8, or Pre-K-3 in Alabama. The purpose of the Leadership Academy is to improve attitudes and knowledge regarding early childhood practices in education to assure incorporation of best practices.

Participants in the inaugural Leadership Academy were invited to submit applications for the 2017-2018 school year for grants that support the delivery of a coordinated and comprehensive high-quality early childhood continuum. In June 2017, pilot year 1 Alabama P-3 Initiative Grants were awarded 35 classrooms in 7 schools in 5 school districts. Through these grants, 636 Alabama Kindergarten through 2nd grade children had opportunities to learn in classrooms enhanced with high quality, early childhood learning materials, coaching for teachers, and local leadership support to establish a strong foundation of early learning experiences that promote student achievement and success. In addition, another 199 4-year-olds received a high quality preschool experience through First Class Pre-K classrooms located in these schools.

2017-2018 Alabama P-3 Initiative Grantees

County	District (5)	School (7)	Number of Classrooms - Grade
Jackson	Jackson County School District	Skyline Elementary School	2 - Kindergarten
Morgan	Hartselle City Schools	Barkley Bridge Elementary School	3 - Kindergarten 4 - First
Elmore	Elmore County Schools	Wetumpka Elementary School	2 - Kindergarten
Cleburne	Cleburne County Schools	Pleasant Grove Elementary School	2 – Kindergarten 2 – First
Coffee	Coffee County Schools	Zion Chapel School	4 – Kindergarten 3 – First 3– Second
		New Brocton Elementary School	3 – Kindergarten 3 – First
		Kinston Elementary School	1 – Kindergarten 3 – First

The overarching goal of the project is to develop a seamless learning continuum from Pre-K through 3rd grade that will align and integrate a comprehensive educational approach to student learning.

Targeted goals focus on the three main areas of concentration: leadership, instruction, and assessment.

Goal 1. Provide the Early Childhood Education Leadership Academy annually (2018-2019) to an additional two cohorts of 35 administrators and 12 state advisors (70 total administrators, 24 total state advisors).

Goal 2. Provide annual funding (2018-2019) for 30 (60 total) pilot classrooms to support full and authentic implementation of the Integrated Approach to Early Learning continuum.

Goal 3. Provide 600 children annually (1,200 total) with a research-based, developmentally appropriate assessment (Teaching Strategies GOLD) to measure student achievement and success, and to guide instructional practices.

II. Evaluation Results

A. Evaluation Plan

Evaluation of the Preschool to 3rd Grade Continuum is being completed by a subgroup of the First Class Pre-K Research Evaluation Team (led by the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health, along with and the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Education, the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, and ThinkData Solutions). The research evaluation plan is a mixed methods approach that aligns strategies according to the three focus areas:

1. **Assessment:** Primary measure quantitative measure = Teaching Strategies GOLD
Primary qualitative method = Surveys with teachers and families
2. **Instruction:** Primary measure quantitative measure = Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
Primary qualitative method = Surveys with teachers
3. **Leadership:** Primary quantitative measure = Pre/post data from leadership academy
Primary qualitative method = Surveys with principal/director

Research evaluation aims are presented below.

Research Evaluation Aims

1. To describe the pilot development and implementation of a Pre-K to 3rd grade continuum in selected school systems in Alabama.
2. To gain knowledge and lessons learned to inform expansion of the Pre-K to 3rd grade continuum model to additional school systems in Alabama.
3. To describe perceived benefits and challenges to implementing the Pre-K to 3rd grade continuum model as experienced by project participants.
4. To assess academic outcomes and performance of children in Pre-K to 3rd grade continuum classrooms (standardized assessment, school system data, parent perception, teacher perception).
5. To assess classroom instructional practice for teachers in classrooms participating in the Pre-K to 3rd grade continuum (quality; implementation of active participatory learning approaches; teacher perception).

6. To describe perceived changes in leadership skills and approaches related to implementing the Pre-K to 3rd grade continuum model as experienced by project participants.
7. To assess subsequent differences in student academic outcomes between groups of children who attended school in Pre-K to 3rd grade continuum classrooms and those who attended schools implementing traditional approaches to learning.

B. Progress Toward Project Goals

Progress	Goal	Comments/ Activities
Mostly Met	<p>Goal 1. Provide the Early Childhood Education Leadership Academy annually (2018-2019) to an additional two cohorts of 35 administrators and 12 state advisors (70 total administrators, 24 total state advisors).</p>	<p>The Department of Early Childhood Education awarded funds to the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) to support an Alabama Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy: Excelling Innovation in Leadership of Pre-K-3 Learning Communities. CLAS, in collaboration with DECE and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), developed a high quality professional learning and resource program to meet the needs of elementary principals serving children from ages 3 to 8, or Pre-K-3rd Grade in Alabama. The purpose of Leadership Academy is to improve the attitudes and knowledge regarding early childhood practices in education to assure incorporation of best practices. The first cohort of the pilot year 1 Leadership Academy included 29 participants, 21 of whom completed the program.</p>
Exceeded	<p>Goal 2. Provide annual funding (2018-2019) for 30 (60 total) pilot classrooms to support full and authentic implementation of the Integrated Approach to Early Learning continuum.</p>	<p>During pilot year one, 35 classrooms in 7 schools in 5 school districts were provided with funding to support full and authentic implementation of the Integrated Approach to Early Learning continuum.</p>
Exceeded	<p>Goal 3. Provide 600 children annually (1,200 total) with a research-based, developmentally appropriate assessment (Teaching Strategies GOLD) to measure student achievement and success, and to guide instructional practices.</p>	<p>During pilot year one, 636 children (K-2nd grade; additional 199 4-year-olds were served in First Class Pre-K classrooms) were provided with a research-based, developmentally appropriate assessment (Teaching Strategies GOLD) to measure student achievement and success, and to guide instructional practices.</p>

C. Results and Outcomes

A total of 636 student in Kindergarten through 2nd grades and 199 4-year-olds in First Class Pre-K were in classrooms participating in the P-3 Pilot during the 2017-2018 school year. As shown in the table below, demographics were similar across the group with slightly higher percentages of Black and Other race children and slightly lower percentages of White race children in First Class Pre-K classrooms compared to K-2nd grade classrooms. Larger differences were noted in percentages of children who had Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and who received free or reduced lunch, a proxy measure for low income. First Class Pre-K classrooms had more than twice the percentage of children with IEPs and nearly double the percentage of children receiving free or reduced lunch. Only one school (Zion Chapel Elementary) included 2nd grade classrooms in P-3 Pilot year 1. No schools included 3rd grade classrooms.

Students in P-3 Classrooms: First Class Pre-K and K-2nd Grade

Characteristic	First Class Pre-K (n=199)		K-2 nd Grade (n=636)	
	n	%	n	%
Grade				
Kindergarten			319	50.2
1 st Grade	--	--	257	40.4
2 nd Grade*			60	9.4
Gender				
Male	108	54.3	318	50.2
Female	91	45.7	315	49.8
Race				
Black	12	6.1	27	4.5
White	171	87.2	565	93.2
Other	13	6.6	14	2.3
Ethnicity**				
Hispanic	11	5.6	22	4.2
Not Hispanic	184	94.4	504	95.8
Has IEP	22	11.1	28	4.6
Gets Free or Reduced Lunch	32	16.1	52	8.5

*Only one school included 2nd grade classrooms in pilot year 1

**Missing = 17.7% for K-2nd Grade

Quantitative Results

1. Assessment

Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD)¹ is an ongoing, observation-based, research-validated assessment system. Grounded in current research related to child development and learning, the assessment includes 38 objectives across six domains of development (social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and math) that are associated with school success based on school readiness standards.

Students are assessed at entry (Fall), midpoint (Winter), and exit (Spring) of the preschool year, with scores compared to widely-held expectations (WHE) for children of their age and grade as provided by TS GOLD for each time point. Results are typically dichotomized to “below expectations” and “meets or exceeds

expectations.” Fall and Spring checkpoint data were compared for each child in order to assure equal comparison of children with both an entry/pre assessment and exit/post assessment.

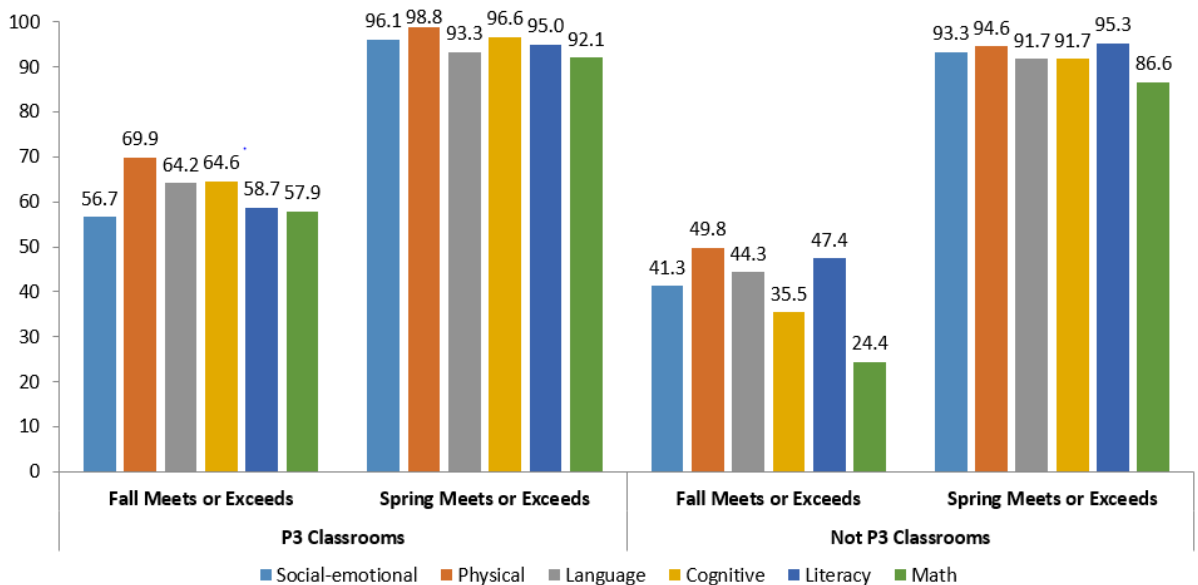
TS GOLD also provides an assessment of Kindergarten readiness by domain based on selected items. Kindergarten readiness is assessed for 4-year-olds in First Class Pre-K classrooms at the Spring checkpoint (exit) and for Kindergartners at the Fall checkpoint (entry).

a. Meeting/Exceeding Widely-Held Expectations (WHE): First Class Pre-K – P-3 vs. Non P-3 Classrooms

The chart below presents performance for 4-year-old children in First Class Pre-K classrooms, comparing classrooms that participated in the P-3 Pilot to all other First Class Pre-K classrooms. For each developmental domain, children in classrooms that were part of the P-3 Pilot had higher percentages of meeting/exceeding WHE at the entry assessment (Fall) compared to non-P-3 Pilot classrooms. However, by the exit checkpoint (Spring) results were similar between the groups, with a trend toward slightly higher performance for the P-3 Pilot classrooms. More than 90% of children met or exceeded WHE for 4-year-olds at First Class Pre-K exit for all domains (except math for non-P-3 Pilot classrooms).

Performance Compared to Widely-Held Expectations, FCPK 2017/2018 (Teaching Strategies GOLD)

Classrooms that were a part of the P-3 Pilot started with higher percentages of Meets/Exceeds in Fall compared to classrooms that were not part of the P-3 Pilot, but all had similar percentages in Spring.

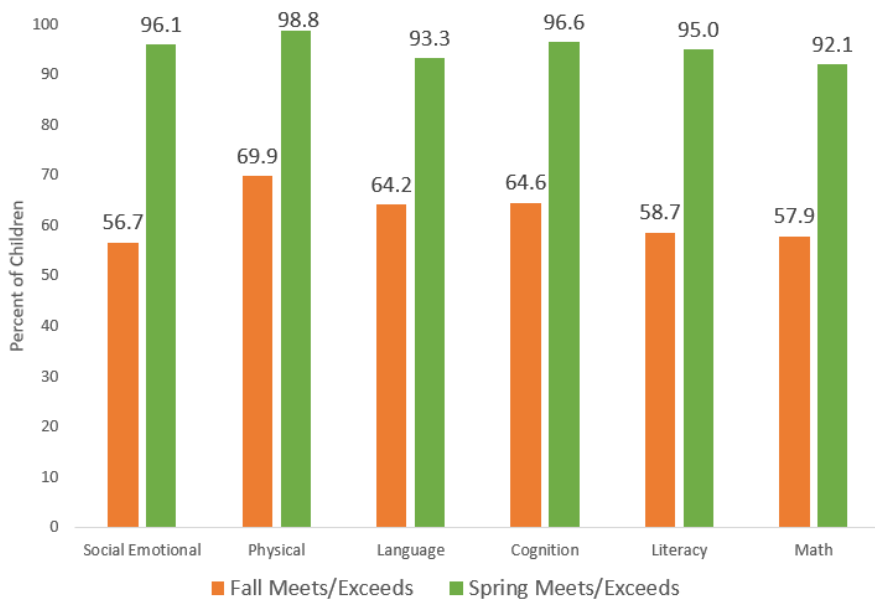


b. Meeting/Exceeding Widely-Held Expectations (WHE): First Class Pre-K P-3 Pilot Classrooms

The chart below presents performance for 4-year-old children in First Class Pre-K classrooms participating in the P-3 Pilot. Based on TS GOLD assessment at entry into First Class Pre-K in Fall 2017, roughly 55-70% of children were meeting or exceeding WHE for their age across the six domains of development, ranging from 56.7% for social-emotional to 69.9% for physical. After completing the year, significant gains were achieved in all domains as measured in the Spring 2018 checkpoint, with the majority of children meeting or exceeding WHE (ranging from 92.1% for math to 98.8% for physical).

The developmental school readiness domains with the largest increases in the percentage of children meeting or exceeding WHE were social-emotional (39.4 percentage points), literacy (36.3 percentage points), and math (34.2 percentage points).

Meeting/Exceeding Developmental Expectations by Domain, 4 year-olds in FCPK P-3 Pilot Year 1 (2017-2018 School Year), TS GOLD



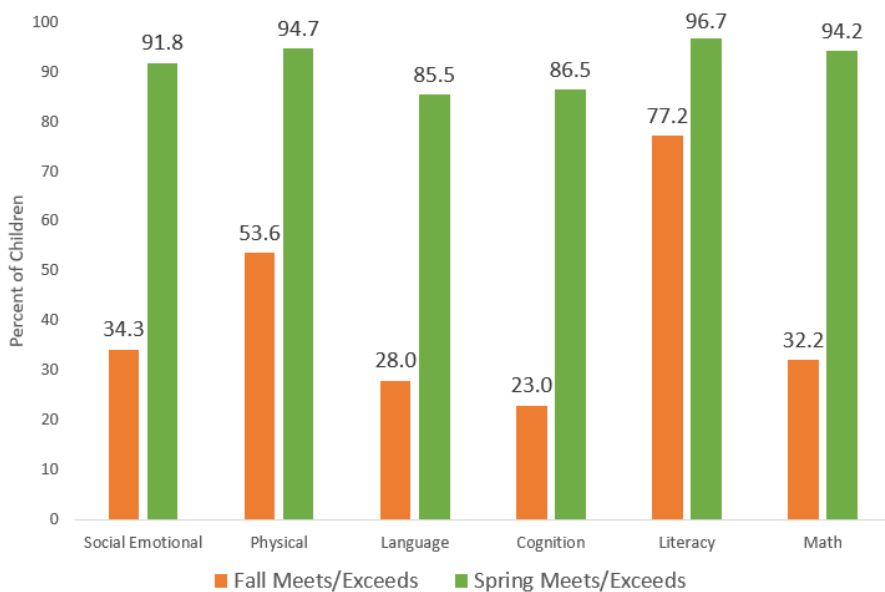
Domain	Percentage Point Growth
Social-Emotional	39.4
Physical	28.9
Language	29.1
Cognition	32.0
Literacy	36.3
Math	34.2

c. Meeting/Exceeding Widely-Held Expectations (WHE): Kindergarten-2nd Grade P-3 Pilot Classrooms

The chart below presents combined performance for children in Kindergarten through 2nd Grade classrooms participating in the P-3 Pilot. Based on TS GOLD assessment at entry into the 2017-2018 school year (Fall 2017), roughly 20-80% of children were meeting or exceeding WHE for their age across the six domains of development, ranging from 23.0% for cognition to 77.2% for literacy. Of note, at school entry, the range of percent of children meeting or exceeding WHE was broader for children in these older grades, with significantly lower performance compared to 4-year-old children in the First Class Pre-K classrooms participating in the P-3 Pilot. These lower starting percentages observed in older grades support the need for the expansion of the P-3 approach. With the outlying exception of literacy, only 23-53% of these older children were meeting or exceeding WHE across the other 5 domains at school entry, meaning that as many as 80% were performing below expectations. However, after completing the year, significant gains were achieved in all domains as measured in the Spring 2018 checkpoint, with the majority of children meeting or exceeding WHE (ranging from 85.5% for language to 96.7% for literacy). The magnitude of these gains was larger compared to those observed in the 4-year-old First Class Pre-K classrooms.

The developmental school readiness domains with the largest increases in the percentage of children meeting or exceeding WHE were cognition (63.5 percentage points) and math (62.0 percentage points). The observed large gains for math skills is an important finding as research suggests early math skills not only predict math achievement through high school, but are also a better predictor of later reading achievement than even early reading skills.

Meeting/Exceeding Developmental Expectations by Domain, K-2nd Grade Combined P-3 Pilot Year 1 (2017-2018 School Year), TS GOLD



Domain	Percentage Point Growth
Social-Emotional	57.5
Physical	41.1
Language	57.5
Cognition	63.5
Literacy	19.5
Math	62.0

The table below presents Fall 2017 (entry) and Spring 2018 (exit) performance comparisons disaggregated by grade (Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd). Though Fall percentages of children meeting or exceeding WHE vary across the grades with children in the 4-year-old First Class Pre-K classrooms starting at higher percentages, by the end of the P-3 year nearly all children (80% or more) were meeting or exceeding WHE at the Spring checkpoint across all grades and all domains. Note that 2nd grade performance is based on a small sample of just 3 classrooms in one school.

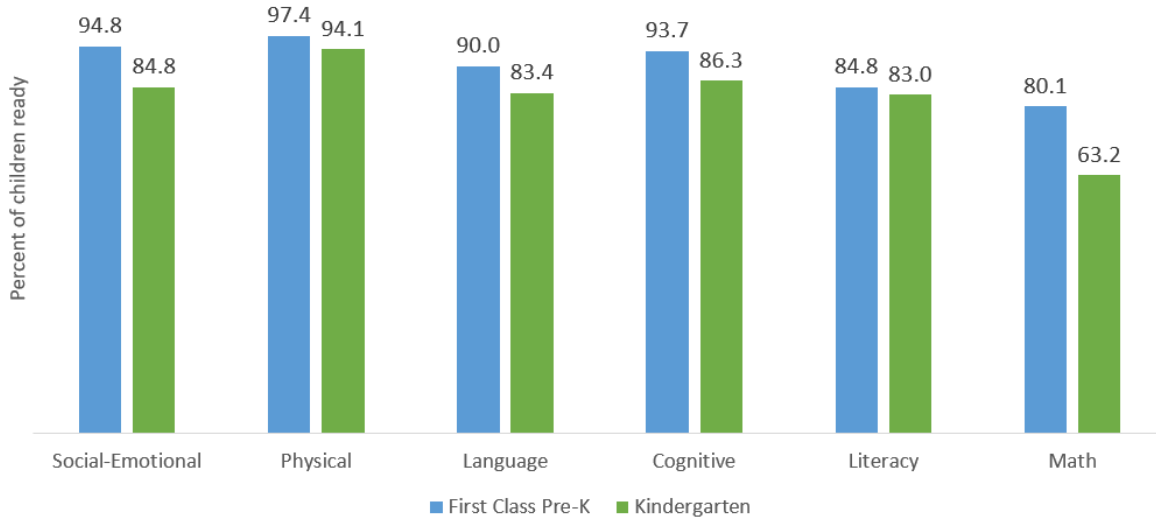
Grade / Domain	Fall Percent Meets/ Exceeds	Spring Percent Meets/ Exceeds
Pre-K		
Social-Emotional	56.7	96.1
Physical	69.9	98.8
Language	64.2	93.3
Cognition	64.6	96.6
Literacy	58.7	95.0
Math	57.9	92.1
Kindergarten		
Social-Emotional	35.7	94.7
Physical	57.6	94.2
Language	32.7	86.8
Cognition	29.9	90.2
Literacy	54.5	93.8
Math	31.1	90.6

Grade / Domain	Fall Percent Meets/ Exceeds	Spring Percent Meets/ Exceeds
First Grade		
Social-Emotional	37.1	89.0
Physical	54.8	95.4
Language	29.5	85.2
Cognition	17.5	80.7
Literacy	96.2	99.2
Math	31.3	98.2
Second Grade		
Social-Emotional	17.2	91.4
Physical	31.0	94.8
Language	0.0	83.9
Cognition	15.5	93.1
Literacy	94.8	98.3
Math	55.0	95.0

d. Kindergarten Readiness: Kindergarten entry (Fall 2017) and First Class Pre-K exit (Spring 2018)

The chart below presents Kindergarten readiness for 4-year-olds at the end of their First Class Pre-K year and for incoming Kindergarten children at the beginning of their school year. Note that these are separate groups of children and represent snapshots of readiness for the two groups as opposed to a longitudinal assessment for the same group of children over the two years. As shown below, the majority of children were “ready” for Kindergarten across all domains for both groups. Across all domains, children in First Class Pre-K classrooms had higher percentages readiness compared to children in Kindergarten classrooms. For both groups, the lowest percentages of readiness were observed in the math domain. This domain also showed the largest difference in the percentage of children who were Kindergarten ready between the two groups (80.1% for the 4-year-old First Class Pre-K children and 63.2%.

Kindergarten Readiness, P-3 Pilot, 2017-2018
4 year olds in First Class Pre-K Classrooms (Spring 2018) and Kindergarteners (Fall 2017)
(Teaching Strategies GOLD)



2. Instruction

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)² is an evidence-based tool for defining and measuring effective teacher-child interactions in classrooms. The tool includes 10 dimensions that are rated by a trained external observer using a 7-point scale, from low to high. In general, higher scores indicate better teacher-child interactions for all dimensions. The one exception is the negative climate dimension, for which lower scores are desirable. The 10 CLASS dimensions are aggregated into three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.

- Emotional Support assesses the degree to which teachers establish and promote a positive climate in their classroom. (Higher levels of emotional support have been shown to be associated with social competence in Kindergarten and growth in reading and math achievement from Kindergarten to 5th grade)³⁻⁴
- Classroom Organization assesses classroom routines and procedures related to the organization and management of children's behavior, time, and attention in the classroom. (Higher levels of classroom organization have been shown to be associated with gains in literacy in 1st Grade).⁵
- Instructional Support assesses the ways in which teachers implement the curriculum to effectively promote cognitive and language development. (Higher levels of instructional support have been shown to be associated with gains in pre-reading and math skills in preschool).⁶

The table below presents average CLASS scores by dimension for Kindergarten-2nd Grade classrooms in the P-3 Pilot. Scores are not available specifically for First Class Pre-K classrooms in the P-3 Pilot as not all of the more than 1,000 First Class Pre-K classrooms statewide are observed, but rather a representative sample is included in a beginning and end of school year observation protocol. (These pre and post scores for the statewide First Class Pre-K system are available upon request.) The Alabama averages are compared to national averages provided for the 2016-2017 Head Start grantees.⁷ Though these national averages are based upon 4-year-olds in Head Start classrooms, they are the best available comparisons as no national scores have been published at this time for classrooms of children in older grades.

For each dimension, Alabama averages and ranges were similar to national averages and ranges, though Alabama scores were slightly below national averages for all dimensions organized under the emotional support and classroom organization and for 1 of the 3 dimensions of instructional support. For two instructional support dimensions – concept development and quality of feedback – Alabama averages exceeded national averages. This is an important finding as previous research suggests that higher levels of concept development were beneficial to student outcome when teachers had even moderate levels of emotional support and classroom organization.⁸

Alabama P3 Pilot Year 1, 2017-2018 – Kindergarten-2nd Grade
Average CLASS Scores by Dimension and Domain

Domain	Dimension	National Average (min-max)	Alabama Average (min-max)
Emotional Support	Positive Climate	6.01 (4.83-7.00)	5.95 (3.75-7.00)
	Negative Climate (want to be low)	1.07 (1.00-2.00)	1.33 (1.00-2.50)
	Teacher Sensitivity	5.88 (4.00-7.00)	5.63 (3.75-7.00)
	Regard for Student Perspective	5.45 (4.00-6.86)	4.82 (3.50-7.00)
Classroom Organization	Behavior Management	6.00 (3.50-6.92)	6.11 (4.75-7.00)
	Productivity	6.14 (4.90-6.93)	5.74 (3.50-7.00)
	Instructional Learning Formats	5.35 (4.00-6.50)	5.00 (3.50-6.00)
Instructional Support	Concept Development	2.49 (1.25-4.55)	2.93 (1.50-4.25)
	Quality of Feedback	2.99 (1.38-5.38)	3.54 (2.5-5.00)
	Language Modeling	3.51 (2.00-5.15)	3.12 (2.25-4.25)

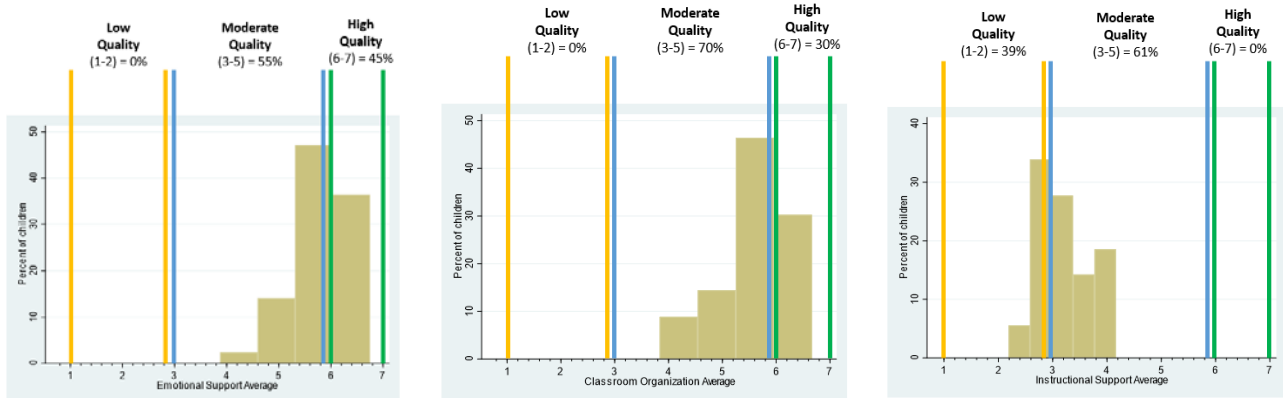
The table below presents Alabama averages compared to national averages for the three CLASS domains. Though the averages and ranges were similar, Alabama scores were slightly lower than national averages for emotional support and classroom organization yet slightly higher than national averages for instructional support. Previous research suggests that nationally, students are exposed to moderate to high levels of emotional support and classroom organization, yet lower levels of instructional support.⁹

Alabama P3 Pilot Year 1, 2017-2018 – Kindergarten-2nd Grade
Average CLASS Scores by Domain

Domain	National Average (min-max)	Alabama Average (min-max)
Emotional Support	6.07 (5.08-6.89)	5.76 (4.43-6.75)
Classroom Organization	5.83 (4.17-6.73)	5.62 (4.17-6.67)
Instructional Support	3.00 (1.93-4.96)	3.20 (2.33-4.17)

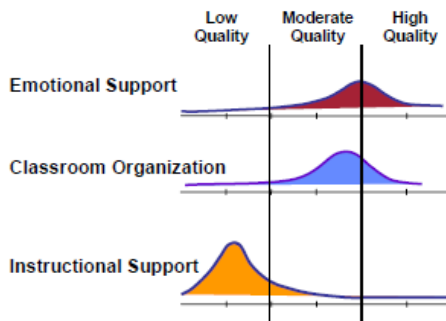
The figures below present histograms (visual depictions or plotting of data distributions) of Alabama averages compared to national studies. These represent the percentage of children exposed to the varying levels of quality in teacher-child interactions. Based on the 7-point scale, quality is divided into low (1-2), moderate (3-5), and high (6-7).¹⁰ Alabama and national histograms are similar for emotional support and classroom organization, with all children in moderate to high quality settings. Prior research has found that as long as the scores are in the 5-7 range for emotional support, students on average improve and have better social outcomes.¹¹ For instructional support, the Alabama histogram is shifted slightly to the right – indicating higher quality – compared to national averages. More than 60% of Alabama children were in classrooms with moderate quality instructional support, an important finding given the previous discussion of the benefits of higher levels of concept development (a dimension of the instructional support domain).^{8, 11}

Alabama Average CLASS Scores by Domain, P-3 Pilot Year 1, 2017-2018



National Average CLASS Scores by Domain

Average Ratings of Interactions in PK-5 Classrooms



From: Measuring and Improving Teacher-Student Interactions in PK-12 Settings to Enhance Students' Learning. (n.d). Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. Charlottesville, Virginia.
https://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/CLASS-MTP_PK-12_brief.pdf⁹

3. Leadership

The primary project strategy focused on leadership is a Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy, facilitated in partnership with Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and based on the six leadership competencies identified in a 2014 NAESP white paper “Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice.” A separate report focused solely on the Leadership Academy was prepared by an alternate external evaluator from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and is available upon request.

Based on pre and post testing, participants reported statistically significant growth on each of the six NAESP Pre-K-3 leadership competencies. Further, 90% percent of respondents (19 of 21) reported that the Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy helped them to “better meet the needs of vulnerable children.”

Qualitative Results

To supplement quantitative results, surveys were developed for P-3 classroom teachers and families of children in P-3 classrooms. Additional survey questions matching selected items from the teacher survey were included in the Leadership Academy post-test. All three surveys were provided in electronic format. Highlighted results are discussed below. (Full reports from the teacher and family surveys are available upon request) Based on response numbers and rates, findings from the teacher and leader surveys may be considered representative of the experiences of teachers and leaders who participated in the supplemental grants to support P-3 classrooms as a part of the P-3 Pilot project. The family survey response was low, and results based on the small sample size should be interpreted with caution. Family survey findings should be considered as trends that are helpful for planning purposes but not necessarily representative of the experiences of all families of children in P-3 classrooms.

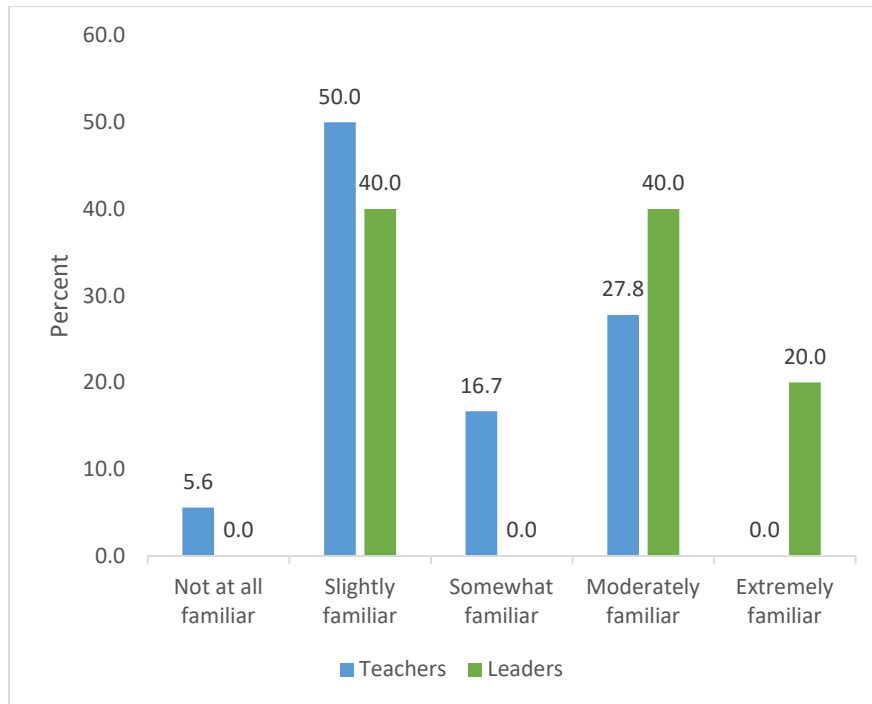
Survey	Number Responses	Response Rate
Family	26	unknown
Teacher	19	54.3%
Leaders of schools receiving supplemental P-3 grants	5	100%

1. Teacher and Leader Surveys

A. Perceptions and Knowledge

- Leaders appeared to be more familiar with active participatory learning approaches/developmentally appropriate practices than were teachers prior to participating in the P-3 Pilot supplemental grant project.

Before you were a participant in this P-3 pilot project, how familiar were you with active participatory learning approaches (such as project-based learning, active learning, play-based learning, child-directed learning, student-centered learning, developmentally-appropriate approaches to learning)?



- A slightly higher percentage of teachers had reported having an unfavorable reaction (47.4%) when they were first informed of their classroom’s participation in the P-3 pilot compared to favorable reactions (42.1%).
 - Reasons for unfavorable reactions were either not having enough background on the subject, concerns about the time involved in using the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment, and concerns about the approach in general.

Selected quotes:

“When I was first told about our grade moving to this style of teaching, I was very concerned that our students would not get what they needed academically. I was very intimidated by letting the “students lead their learning.” I was used to being the sole source of information during the teaching day.” –teacher

“I believe a child-centered, play-based learning environment teaches children that learning is fun! It creates an atmosphere that allows all children to learn and love coming to school. I enjoy the freedom to explore while teaching based on the students’ interests.” –teacher

- Most teachers and leaders expressed a belief that each of the 14 areas of learning presented were best addressed through active participatory approaches vs. traditional direct instructional practices.
 - Traditional approaches were favored by 31.2% of teachers for literacy/pre-literacy and reading skills.
 - Traditional approaches were favored by 14.3% of leaders for self-care skill management.

B. Progress and Improvements

- Both teachers and leaders described positive differences observed in how children in their P-3 classroom(s) interacted with each other and learned, which they attributed to the active participatory learning approaches implemented as a part of the P-3 Pilot project.
 - Student engagement, participation in learning, and eagerness to learn
 - Student interaction and growth in social skills and problem-solving
 - Student confidence and creativity
 - Student retention of learning

Selected quotes:

“I have seen a dramatic change in student engagement and their overall excitement for learning. I no longer have to convince children that school is a fun place. They know it is! They feel loved and cared for and have a high appreciation for what they are learning.” – teacher

“These students have been given the chance to become problem solvers and critical thinkers. We gave a lot of lip service to that idea in years past, but never really gave them the opportunity. Additionally, children have become better regulators of their own behavior which has decreased the amount of office referrals by a staggering amount.” – leader

“I have seen more growth and more participation in learning. The students are creating and problem solving now. I have learned to look at what all my students can do instead of first recognizing only failure. I see more social kids who talk and share and help each other.” –teacher

- Leaders also noted changes in their teachers as well.

Selected quotes:

“The teachers have changed almost as much as the students. They consider what is developmentally appropriate and make allowances for the different developmental levels in their classroom both in learning, play and behavior.” –leader

“My teachers love coming to work and love the freedom this has brought them. I have watched it reignite a passion in some of my older teachers who were becoming tired of the profession.” –leader

“Teachers have become more familiar with a child's development. Most teachers have realized the importance of social and emotional development.” –leader

- Teachers reported extensive professional growth as a result of participation in the P-3 Pilot project.
 - Most significant growth related to teacher-child interactions
 - Area for improvement: Changes in instructional approaches for special populations (IEP, ELL)

C. Successes

- Teachers and leaders described successes related to their participation in the P-3 Pilot. Successes were divided into the following themes:
 - Student engagement and learning – overall improvements, including those who have IEP and children who are shy or have limited social skills
 - Student academic achievement and testing “ready” for Kindergarten in reading and math
 - Students working together
 - Student problem-solving
 - Student creativity
 - Teacher job satisfaction
 - Personal leadership growth

Selected quotes:

“The growth we saw in these students was astounding. All students tested ready for 1st grade in reading and math.” –leader

“I have a passion for my job again! My students have a passion for learning again! This has been a wonderful experience that I am so grateful for!!” –teacher

*“Through the rigorous studies of the leadership program I realized that our school was not in fact a true primary school. ...teachers were so focused on meeting the state standards through curriculum adopted by the school system, they were not dedicated to meeting the social and developmental needs of our early childhood population. My participation in the NAESP Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy was very successful because I was able to grow as a leader and guide my faculty and staff to transform our school into what it truly should have been all along. We are not yet a model primary school, but we are headed in the right direction and will continue to learn and implement best developmentally appropriate practices for the children we continue to serve.”
–leader*

“My students are reading, doing math, talking to each other, and learning. They work together like a community!!” –teacher

“I have seen my building transform into a community of learners. The teachers are supportive of each other rather than competitive with one another which greatly benefits children. Children have a genuine JOY and LOVE for learning that was missing with the constant direct instruction model.” –leader

*“Students learning to work out their own problems without the teacher “fixing” it for them”
–teacher*

D. Challenges

- Teachers and leaders described successes related to their participation in the P-3 Pilot. Challenges were divided into the following themes:
 - Changing teaching approach
 - Teacher understanding of developmentally-appropriate practices and “buy-in”
 - Grading policies; alignment of strategies and standards with assessment
 - Time management
 - Teaching Strategies GOLD concerns (learning to document, time involved, alignment)
 - Lack of feedback on implementation of approach
 - Lack of monetary resources

Selected quotes:

“The biggest challenge we have is teaching developmentally and assessing with state test. Teachers want to teach developmentally appropriately but must be concerned about the testing instrument that will be used to judge them and their students.” –leader

“It was a challenge for me to move off of “scripted” teaching and let the students lead their learning. As the year went on, I learned how to do this better and it has worked really well for the students.” –teacher

“Teachers struggling to let go of control and traditional “grades” in 1st and 2nd grades.” –leader

“The standards we are expected to teach and the programs we use remain the same while I am trying to implement more hands-on and student led project based learning.” –teacher

“Getting seasoned teachers to change the way they have taught for years” –leader

“We are still held to a traditional report card. Having to give traditional grades and do the participatory approach has been difficult.” –teacher

“Time management with meeting the academic standards that we are required to teach by the state dept.” –teacher

E. Additional Support Needs

Teachers and leaders described additional support needs as follows:

- More support, professional development, coaching, and hands-on training
- Opportunities to watch implementation in other classrooms
- More resources (monetary/grants, consumables, and texts)
- More time and practice
- Ways to inform parents of child’s development and skills needed to master
- State leadership consensus on educational standards/expectations by grade and complementary alignment of accountability

2. Family Survey

A. Perceptions and Knowledge

- Nearly half of family respondents (48%) reported knowing a “pretty good bit about” active participatory approaches to learning.
- Parents overwhelmingly agreed that children were excited about learning and came home telling them about the things they did in school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My child comes home excited about learning.	0	4.3	4.3	52.2	39.1
My child comes home and tells me about the things he or she did in school.	0	0	0	47.8	52.2

- About half of parents agreed that they can better support their child’s future learning and expressed a belief that he/she would be better prepared for success in the next school year.
 - This may suggest an opportunity for further parent education on the benefits of active participatory learning approaches and to track and share student academic progress over time.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Because my child has been in this classroom, I understand how I can better support his or her learning and future school success.	4.3	4.3	30.4	26.1	30.4
Because my child has been in this classroom, I believe he or she is better prepared to be successful next year in school.	17.4	4.3	21.7	13.0	43.5

B. Progress and Improvements

- Parents noted progress in each of the 14 areas of learning and development discussed in the survey, but reported the most extensive progress in literacy/reading skills, motivation to learn, and fine and gross motor skills.

	No Progress	Minimal Progress/ A Little Progress	Moderate Progress/ Some Progress	Extensive Progress/ A Lot of Progress
Literacy/Pre-Literacy and Reading Skills: letters, sounds, words, vocabulary, spelling, words	0	0	39.1	60.9
Love of learning, motivation to learn	0	9.1	31.8	59.1
Fine Motor Skills: using small muscles of the hand; drawing, writing, cutting	0	5.0	20.0	75.0
Gross Motor Skills: moving large muscles; walking, pedaling, climbing, running, jumping, using stairs	0	5.0	25.0	70.0

- Families were asked to describe any differences they may have noticed in their child’s learning, communication, behavior, or social skills this year compared to past years.
 - Families described more positive differences versus neutral or negative comments.
 - Improvements in reading, math, and spelling
 - Improvements in language and communication with peers and adults
 - Increased confidence, reasoning, and creativity
 - Two families reported no changes and one had concerns about lack of preparation for the next grade.

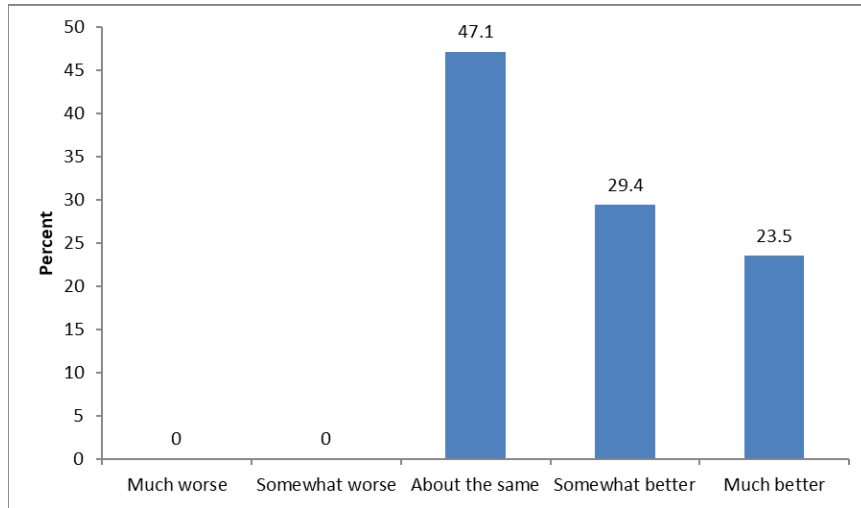
Selected quotes:

“My child's love for reading has definitely grown throughout this year. He also handles conflicts differently by trying to solve problems on his own with that person before including an outside individual.” –parent

“My child is excited about learning and communicates with others more openly than has in the past due to his positive experiences in school.” –parent

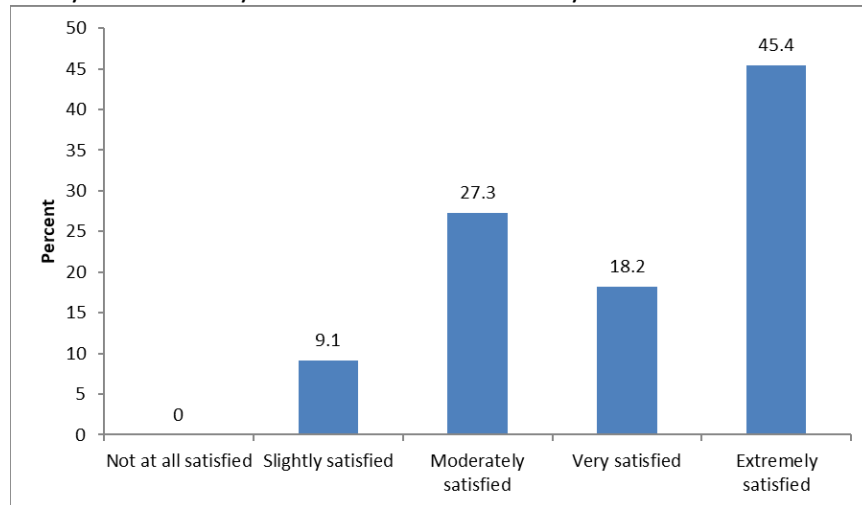
- All parents who indicated that their child had attended school in the previous year reported their child did about the same or better compared to past school years.

How satisfied are you with how your child did in school this year in terms of his or her learning?



- All parents were satisfied to some extent with their child’s learning – nearly half were extremely satisfied.

How satisfied are you with how your child did in school this year in terms of his or her learning?



III. Conclusions and Recommendations

By all measures, the first year of the P-3 Pilot project was a success. Children in all grades showed significant improvements across all areas of development and school readiness when comparing percentages meeting or exceeding widely-held expectations for their age at school year entry to those percentages at school year exit base on the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment. The quality of teacher-child interactions was similar to national averages based on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), and the Alabama average was higher for the important dimension of Concept Development – shown to be associated with later student success in vocabulary, language, and math.¹² Quantitative data gathered related to student performance and teacher-child interaction in classrooms will serve as a baseline for comparison in the coming years.

Lower starting percentages of children meeting or exceeding widely-held expectations at the higher grades included in the project support the need for a P-3 approach. Consistent exit percentages in excess of 90% of children meeting or exceeding widely-held expectations are reassuring and indicate across-grade success. Anecdotal comments from families, teachers, and leaders detail important growth in child academic performance, problem-solving skills, communication, and behavioral/social-emotional regulation along with decreased office referrals. Further, teachers and leaders both report professional growth in classroom and leadership skills, as well as job satisfaction and confidence in “doing what it right for children.”

Teacher and leader participants clearly indicated the need for more/enhanced coaching, professional development, and hands-on opportunities to support the implementation of developmentally-appropriate/active participatory learning approaches in the classroom, especially in the higher grades. Also, responses suggest a need for additional support related to making changes in instructional approaches for special populations (IEP, ELL) as the initiative expands. Further, teachers and leaders alike expressed concerns in aligning state educational standards and reporting requirements with student-led, participatory approaches. Finally, though responses from families of children in P-3 classrooms was limited, results suggest a need for more family information and education about developmentally-appropriate approaches to learning and outcomes.

Future evaluation activities will include expanded interviews with Department of Early Childhood Education leadership staff and interviews with P-3 coaches. Further, the Research Evaluation team and Department of Early Childhood Education will attempt to gather comparison data for Kindergarten through 2nd Grades to assess any differences in outcomes based on receipt of P-3 approach and will establish a method to identify children who received a P-3 experience (including dose response) in State Department of Education data once children enter 3rd Grade to support comparison analyses of reading and math performance on standardized tests. These longitudinal analyses are based on data availability and include standardized testing in the school setting (such as ACT Aspire), retention, absenteeism, and special education referrals/services.



“Each system is different, but my system from the top down has supported the program. If everyone is on board then great things will come.” –leader

“Keep an open mind! The switch is difficult but give it a real try and you will fall in love with your job again.” –teacher

“He has grown & matured more than I ever expected from just 1 year in kindergarten! He has learned so much, it's amazing!” –parent

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