



For Immediate Release

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**Pre-K 4 SA students exceed national thresholds;
reap the benefits of high-quality early learning**

*Independent study finds evidence that pre-k through third grade learning and leadership
are critical to high levels of performance in children*

SAN ANTONIO — Pre-K 4 SA students continue to exceed the national norm in kindergarten readiness in cognitive, literacy and mathematics. New results from the Year 5 independent evaluation conducted by Westat, Inc. to study program outcomes provides evidence of lasting effects of high-quality early childhood education.

The Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment measures cognitive, mathematics, literacy, oral language, physical and social-emotional aspects of early childhood education. Pre-K 4 SA students, for the fifth consecutive year, began the school year significantly below the normed sample in five of six GOLD outcomes. But by the end of the year, Pre-K 4 SA students closed those gaps and demonstrated they were prepared to enter and succeed in elementary school. The gains the Pre-K 4 SA students made surpassed the national comparison group in cognitive, mathematics, and literacy by nearly 20 percent.

“The Board of Directors is pleased to see continued positive growth with each class of Pre-K 4 SA students,” Pre-K 4 SA Board Chair Elaine Mendoza said. “We are confident the results of this evaluation indicate Pre-K 4 SA teaching methods and high-quality instruction are benefiting children.”

The report also includes results of the Pencil Tap test, a direct measure of executive function, the cognitive ability to control thoughts, emotions and actions.

“Executive function is the most important measure of early learning because it is strongly associated with success later in life,” Pre-K 4 SA CEO Sarah Baray said. “Pre-K 4 SA students increased by nearly 20 percent from the fall to spring last year, indicating significant growth in key self-regulatory skills.”

Baray noted that testing of executive function is not a requirement of the state, but the Board of Directors wanted to directly measure this critical component of early learning. Baray referenced a study from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University indicating that when children have opportunities to develop executive function and self-regulation skills, individuals and society experience lifelong benefits.

“This evaluation is important because it indicates that Pre-K 4 SA is producing strong results. Our students made significant gains in all areas,” Baray said. “These results show positive steps in our mission to change the educational and workforce trajectory of San Antonio in one generation.”

In addition to student outcomes, Westat also measured instructional quality. According to the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), Pre-K 4 SA teachers observed during the 2017-18 school year demonstrated instructional quality above the national threshold in all three domains of emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support.

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“I am pleased to see our teachers continuing to provide exceptionally high-quality instruction,” Baray said. “Being in a classroom where a teacher meets the research threshold is associated with long-term academic benefits for the children. But, it is not enough to have high quality instruction in Pre-K 4 SA classrooms. We are also working with our colleagues in the school districts to support high-quality instruction in early childhood education classrooms throughout the city. Through our professional learning program, Pre-K 4 SA is providing more than 10,000 hours of coaching and training to more than 2,000 educators each year. This is a critical step to amplify results for our children and our city.”

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About Pre-K 4 SA:

Pre-K 4 SA is a comprehensive early childhood initiative aimed at changing the education and workforce trajectory of San Antonio in one generation. Pre-K 4 SA offers full-day pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds living in the City of San Antonio. Pre-K 4 SA is free for qualifying students and also accepts tuition-paying students. The school day begins at 8 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. Extended hours are available at no additional charge from 7:15 to 8 a.m., and from 3 to 6 p.m. for working families. Breakfast, lunch and two snacks are included and free transportation is available to all students. Pre-K 4 SA has four Education Centers located throughout the city: North Education Center, 3635 Medical Dr.; South Education Center, 7031 S. New Braunfels Ave.; East Education Center, 5230 Eisenhower Rd.; and West Education Center, 1235 Enrique M. Barrera Memorial Parkway. The Pre-K 4 SA Professional Learning program provides pre-kindergarten through third grade educators in San Antonio with complementary continuing education to support best practice instruction to help every child in San Antonio excel. The Pre-K 4 SA Competitive Grants program provides more than \$4 million in funding annually to increase quality and access in early childhood programs throughout San Antonio. Visit www.prek4sa.com for more information.

San Antonio: America’s 21st Century City

San Antonio is a global city with a dynamic economy and workforce, a deep cultural heritage, and diverse communities that are resilient and welcoming. It is one of the strongest fiscally managed cities in the country with a vibrant business climate and a ‘AAA’ general obligation bond rating from all three major rating agencies. San Antonio is a city that nurtures entrepreneurship, encourages investment and funds infrastructure. America’s seventh-largest city offers growth opportunities in bioscience, financial services, aerospace, cybersecurity, energy, transportation, manufacturing and health care. In 2015, UNESCO designated San Antonio’s 18th century Spanish colonial missions as a World Heritage Site — the first in Texas. Proudly called Military City, USA®, San Antonio is home to one of the largest populations of active duty military, veterans and crucial military commands. In 2018, the city will celebrate its 300th anniversary, honoring its rich past and a bright future focused on innovation and livability. For more information, visit www.sanantonio.gov.