

Gardendale Early Learning Program: Year 5 Evaluation Brief

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Introduction

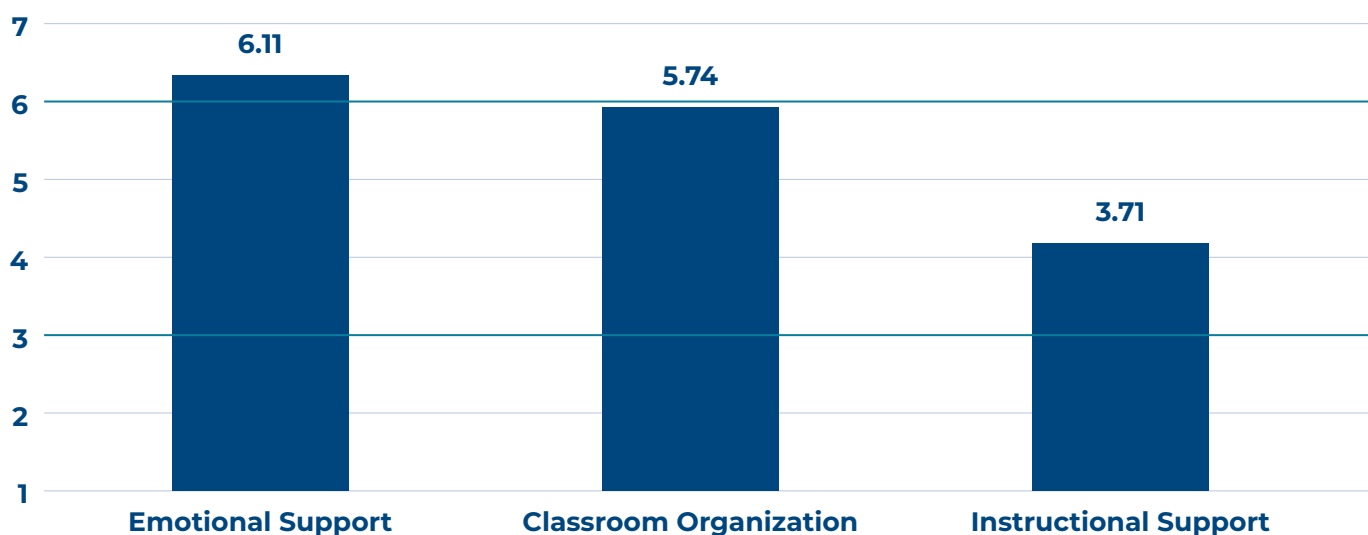
Children Attending the Pre-K 4 SA Replication Site, Gardendale Early Learning Program, are Experiencing Positive Classroom Environments, Accelerating Their Learning, and Benefiting Academically and Socially. The Pre-K 4 SA replication site at Edgewood Independent School District's Gardendale Elementary School opened in 2019 and continues to serve children in prekindergarten (pre-K) through second grade. The Gardendale annual evaluation focuses on examining classroom quality and children's learning within the site. During the fifth year (2023–24), the partnership served more than 260 children. Of those children served, 58.6 percent were boys and 41.4 percent were girls, and the majority (95.5 percent) were Hispanic. Westat analyzed data collected from classroom quality observations, teacher report assessments, and direct child achievement assessments.

Classroom Quality Results

Classrooms are Providing Children with Consistently Emotionally Supportive Learning Environments.

Partnership classrooms provided, on average, high levels of Emotional Support, midrange levels of Classroom Organization, and midrange levels of Instructional Support according to scores using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; see Exhibit 1). Emotional Support scores in this range suggest warm, supportive, respectful, and welcoming learning environments that valued and incorporated children's perspectives. Classroom Organization scores in the midrange suggest classrooms which sometimes showed effective interactions, such as proactive behavior management, clear expectations, and minimal disruptions for behavioral challenges. Finally, Instructional Support scores in the midrange suggest teachers sometimes provided support that extended children's thinking, asked questions that encouraged children to analyze and reason, scaffolded children's learning, and gave children experiences to both hear and use language. Moreover, classroom quality results increased compared to last year, suggesting that the ongoing partnership is helping provide children with higher quality learning environments over time.

Exhibit 1 | Year 5 Gardendale average classroom quality scores by CLASS domain



Note: The teal horizontal lines mark the boundaries of the three score ranges: low (below 3), mid- (between 3 and 6), and high (6 and above).

Academic and Social Outcome Results

Children Displayed Significant Improvement in Early Literacy and Early Numeracy. Children across all grade levels showed significant growth on indicators of early literacy, early numeracy, and receptive vocabulary over time. We observed that accelerated learning reduced existing learning gaps in receptive vocabulary for some children by the end of the school year. For a small subgroup of children, accelerated learning significantly reduced existing learning gaps in early literacy (see Exhibits 2 and 3).

Exhibit 2 | Summary of early literacy findings across measures

Outcome	Assessment	Grade levels	Domain	Growth (fall to spring)
Early Literacy	Gold	PK and K	Literacy	↑
			Oral Language	↑
	WJ ^a	PK-2nd	Letter-Word	↑
	PPVT ^a	PK-2nd	Receptive Vocabulary	↑
	MAP	K-2nd	Reading	↑
	mCLASS	K-2nd	English Literacy	↑
			Spanish Literacy	↑

Note: MAP = Measures of Academic Progress; PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; WJ = Woodcock-Johnson and Bateria.

^a Assessments conducted for a random sample of children.

↑ Indicates a positive significant result

Exhibit 3 | Summary of early numeracy findings across measures

Outcome	Assessment	Grade levels	Domain	Growth (fall to spring)
Mathematics	Gold	PK and K	Mathematics	↑
	WJ ^a	PK-2nd	Applied Problems	↑
	MAP	K-2nd	Mathematics	↑

Note: MAP = Measures of Academic Progress; WJ = Woodcock-Johnson and Bateria.

^a Assessments conducted for a random sample of children.

↑ Indicates a positive significant result

Children Displayed Significant Growth in Their Social-Emotional Readiness According to Teacher Reports. Children in pre-K and kindergarten demonstrated significant improvement in the social-emotional area of readiness, and children across all grade levels showed significant improvement in indicators of social-emotional competency over time (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4 | Summary of social-emotional findings across measures

Outcome	Assessment	Grade levels	Domain	Growth (fall to spring)
Social Emotional	Gold	PK and K	Social-Emotional	↑
	DECA	PK	Initiative	↑
			Self-Control	—
			Attachment	↑
			Total Protective Factors	↑
			Behavioral Concerns	—
	DESSA (mini)	K-1st	Overall	↑
		2nd		—

Note: DECA = Devereux Early Childhood Assessment; DESSA = Devereux Student Strengths Assessment.

 Indicates a positive significant result

 Indicates a non-significant result



Conclusions

Recent research which investigated how students across the nation have performed after the COVID-19 pandemic suggests pandemic-related learning losses are large and vary among communities relative to previous pre-pandemic years. Based on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test scores, students on average experienced one-half (-0.49) of a grade level of learning loss in math and almost a third (-0.31) of a grade level of learning loss in reading between 2019 and 2022 (Fahle et al., 2023). When comparing this to student learning trends prior to the pandemic, students recovered 20–30 percent of learning loss in the 1st year but did not make any further recovery in the subsequent 3–4 years (Center for Education Policy Research, 2023). The Year 5 Gardendale findings mirror both this nationwide trend and the prior evaluation findings. Therefore, they are not surprising given the disruptions to learning brought on by the pandemic. To overcome these challenges and recover these substantial learning losses, a concerted focus on and investment in children's learning, as represented by the partnership here, are crucial.

Implications for Practice

There are two implications regarding these findings. First, given the midrange CLASS score for Instructional Support, children would benefit from increased opportunities to think critically, be asked questions to prompt their thought processes and scaffold learning, and hear and use language. Therefore, Pre-K 4 SA should consider continuing to focus on and invest resources in improving instructional quality (e.g., teacher professional learning, mentoring, and coaching). Second, there is a need for accelerated learning so children can close existing achievement gaps. Pre-K 4 SA should consider continuing to focus on and invest targeted resources (e.g., evidence-based enrichment activities or engaging families and caregivers to support their child's education) for supporting and bringing children's academic understanding up to grade level.

For further details on the individual analyses and measures reported here, please refer to the full technical report and companion supplemental appendix materials.



References

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