

Pre-K 4 SA Education Centers: Year 11 Evaluation Brief

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Pre-K 4 SA Education Centers:

Year 11 Evaluation Brief

Introduction

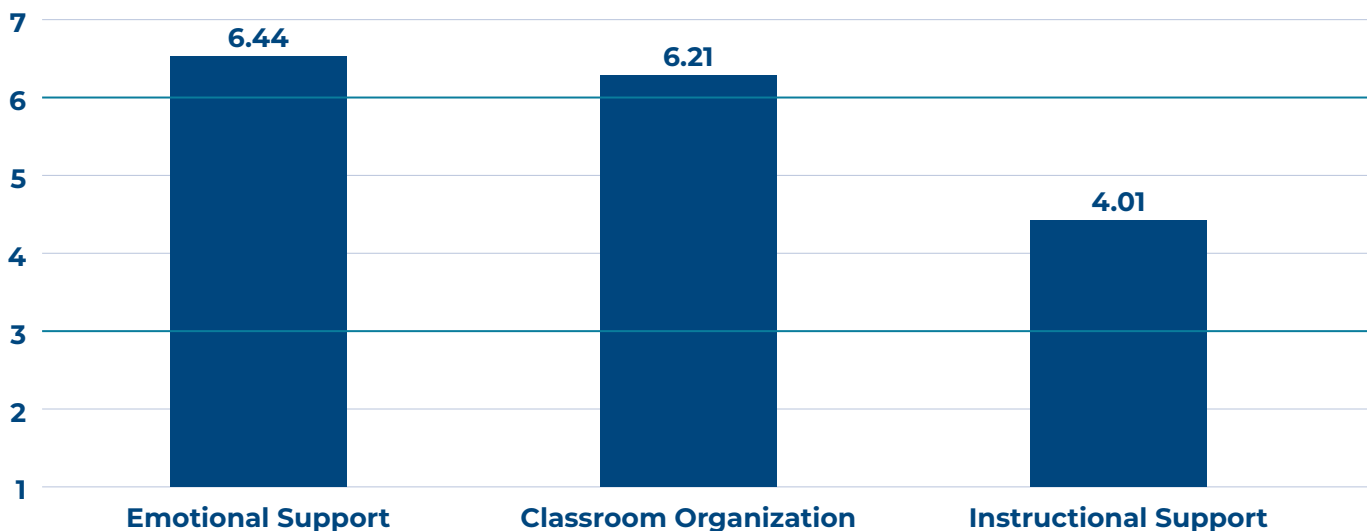
Children Attending the Pre-K 4 SA Education Centers are Experiencing Positive Classroom Environments, Accelerating Their Learning, and Benefiting Academically and Socially.

The Pre-K 4 SA education centers continued to serve 3- and 4-year-old children from economically disadvantaged families. The education center annual evaluation focuses on classroom quality and children's learning within the four centers. During the eleventh year (2023–24), the partnership served more than 2,100 children. Of those children served, 51.8 percent were girls and 48.2 percent were boys. Pre-K 4 SA served more 3-year-old children (55.6 percent of the total sample) in 2023–24 than 4-year-old children (44.4 percent), and of the 4-year-old children served, 59.3 percent returned and were in their second consecutive year of Pre-K 4 SA. 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 and Well-Organized Learning Environments. Results from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) show that classrooms provided, on average, high-range levels of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, and midrange levels of Instructional Support (see Exhibit 1). Emotional Support scores in this range suggest warm, supportive, respectful, welcoming environments that value and incorporate children's perspectives. Classroom Organization scores in this range suggest classrooms show 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 provide support that extends children's thinking, ask questions that encourage children to analyze and reason, scaffold children's learning, and give children experiences to both hear and use language.

Exhibit 1 | Year 11 average classroom quality scores for Pre-K 4 SA 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 Numeracy. Children showed significant improvement on indicators of early literacy, early numeracy, and receptive vocabulary over time (see Exhibit 2). We observed that accelerated learning reduced existing learning gaps for early numeracy and receptive vocabulary for some children.

Exhibit 2 | Summary of Pre-K early literacy and numeracy findings across measures

Outcome	Assessment	Domain	Growth (fall to spring)
Early Literacy	GOLD	Literacy	↑
		Oral Language	↑
	WJ ^a	Letter-Word	↑
	PPVT ^a	Receptive Vocabulary	↑
Early Numeracy	GOLD	Mathematics	↑
	WJ ^a	Applied Problems	↑

Note: WJ = Woodcock Johnson and Bateria; PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

^a Assessments conducted for a random sample of children.

↑ Indicates a positive significant result

Children Displayed Significant Improvement in their Social-Emotional Readiness According to Teacher Reports. Children demonstrated significant improvement in the social-emotional area of readiness across multiple indicators (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3 | Summary of Pre-K social-emotional findings across measures

Outcome	Assessment	Domain	Growth (fall to spring)
Social-Emotional	GOLD	Social-Emotional	↑
		Initiative	↑
	DECA	Self-Control	↑
		Attachment	↑
		Total Protective Factors	↑
		Behavioral Concerns	↑ ^a

Note: DECA = Devereux Early Childhood Assessment.

^a The Behavioral Concerns outcome is intended to measure problematic behaviors, which is reversed from the other outcomes measuring positive behaviors.

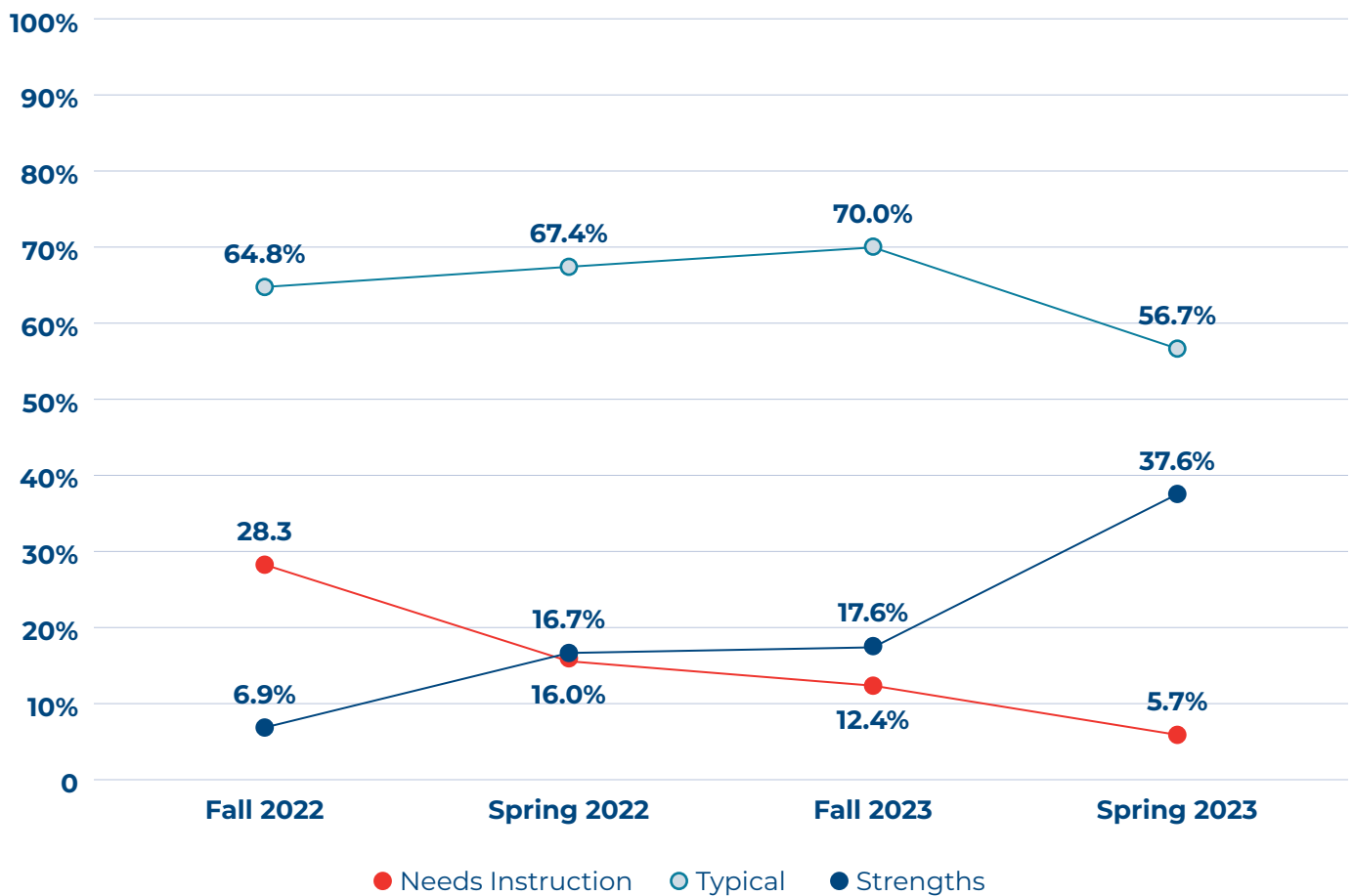
↑ Indicates a positive significant result

Social Outcome Results of Children Attending Pre-K 4 SA as both 3-Year-Olds and 4-Year-Olds

Children who Attended Pre-K 4 SA for 2 Consecutive Years Demonstrated Significant Growth Across Multiple Indicators of Social-Emotional Competency.

Over time, they also showed significant positive movement into higher levels across the three categories (Needs Instruction, Typical, and Strengths) and into the highest level (Strengths). Moreover, at the start of their second year (2023–24), 4-year-olds demonstrated improved social-emotional understanding compared to where they finished as 3-year-olds the previous school year (2022–23), suggesting they retained these skills over time (see Exhibit 4, which displays findings for the overall scale Total Protective Factors). Additionally, children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for both years demonstrated improved social-emotional competency compared to children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for a single year, demonstrating the positive benefits of multiple years with Pre-K 4 SA.

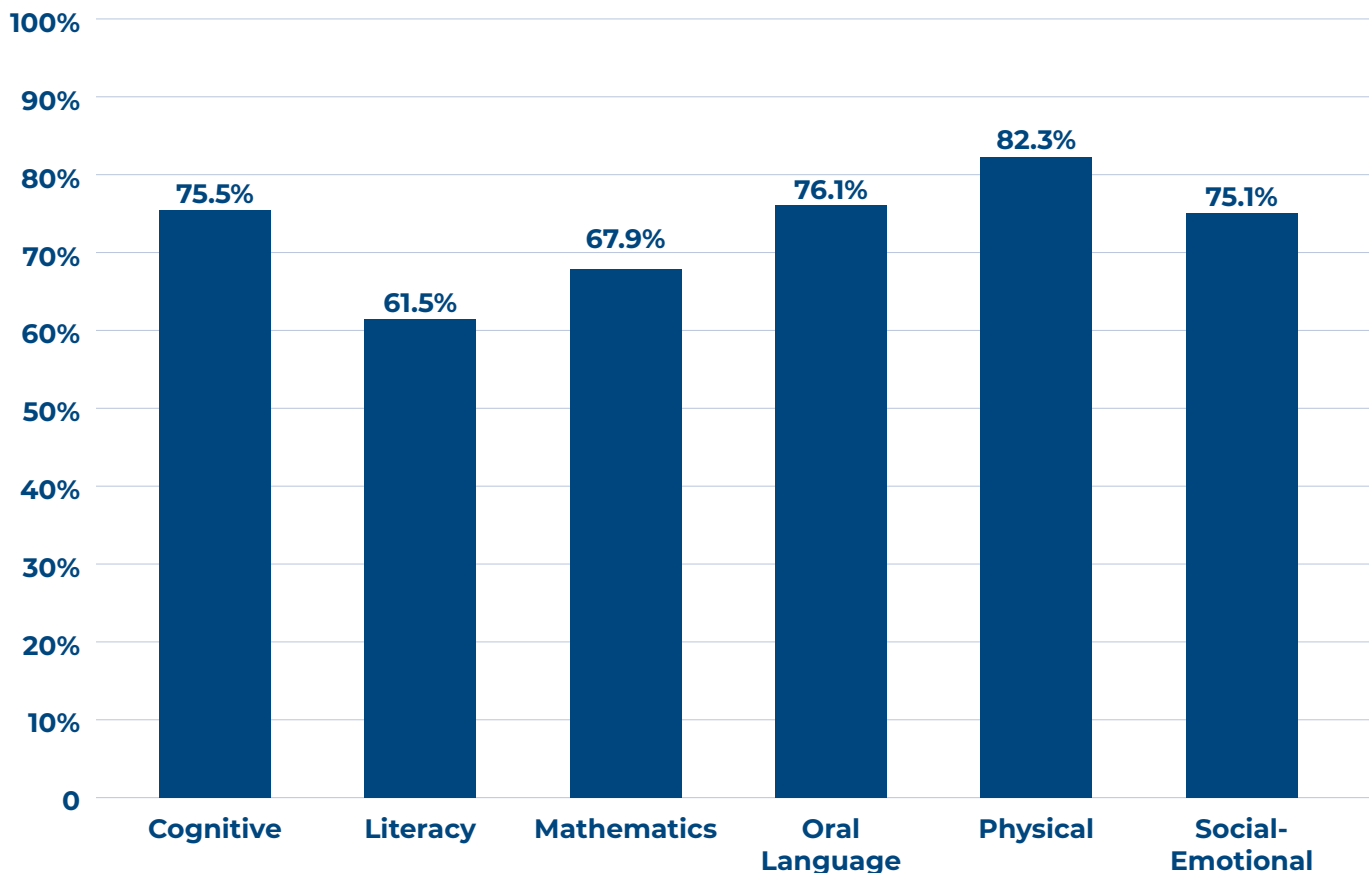
Exhibit 4 | Children attending Pre-K 4 SA as both 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds demonstrated significant improvement over time in their social-emotional competency



Kindergarten Readiness Results

Children Displayed Kindergarten Readiness According to Teacher Reports. The majority of 4 year-old children demonstrated kindergarten readiness in the spring across all six Growth, Observation, and Learning (GOLD) outcomes, with scores ranging from 61.5 percent for the literacy domain to 82.3 percent for the physical domain (see Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5 | Most 4-year-old children demonstrated kindergarten readiness across multiple GOLD outcomes



Conclusions

It is worth noting that children who attended the education centers during Year 11 were born during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is currently mixed evidence regarding how the pandemic may have influenced children's development. Some research indicates babies born during the pandemic had lower gross and fine motor skills and less social-emotional development (Shuffrey et al., 2022). Other research indicates infants were resilient with respect to their social-emotional and cognitive development during the pandemic (LoBue et al., 2023). And yet other research demonstrates 3- to 5-year-olds experienced instruction losses and decreases in their social-emotional development and well-being (Jung & Barnett, 2021). Therefore, the Year 11 education center findings that are presented here add to the larger conversation on how the pandemic is influencing children's developmental trajectory during their prekindergarten years.

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, the social-emotional findings for children who attended as both 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds demonstrate the positive benefit of multiple years of Pre-K 4 SA involvement. Pre-K 4 SA should consider continuing to invest in resources that support children attending Pre-K 4 SA for multiple years.

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



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