

Pre-K 4 SA Education Centers: Year 12 (2024–2025) Evaluation Brief

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Introduction

In school year 2024–25, Pre-K 4 SA education centers continued their mission of serving 3- and 4-year-old children from economically disadvantaged families. During the twelfth year of the program (2024–25), the education centers served more than 2,000 children. Of those children served, 50.2 percent were boys and 49.8 percent were girls. More 3-year-old children (53.2 percent) than 4-year-old children (46.8 percent) were enrolled at Pre-K 4 SA education centers in 2024–25. Of the 4-year-old children served, 77.4 percent returned after attending as 3-year-olds for a second year of Pre-K 4 SA. Most Pre-K 4 SA children were Hispanic (74.5 percent), with the remaining children reported as Black (10.2 percent), White (7.6 percent), Asian (5.9 percent), and multiracial and other ethnicities (1.8 percent).

Children attending the Pre-K 4 SA education centers experienced positive classroom environments and both academic and social benefits. This annual evaluation focuses on classroom quality and children’s learning within the four centers. Westat analyzed data collected from classroom quality observations, teacher report assessments, and direct child achievement assessments. The data were collected in both the 2024–25 school year and, for children who were enrolled in Pre-K 4 SA as 3-year-olds, in the 2023–24 school year.

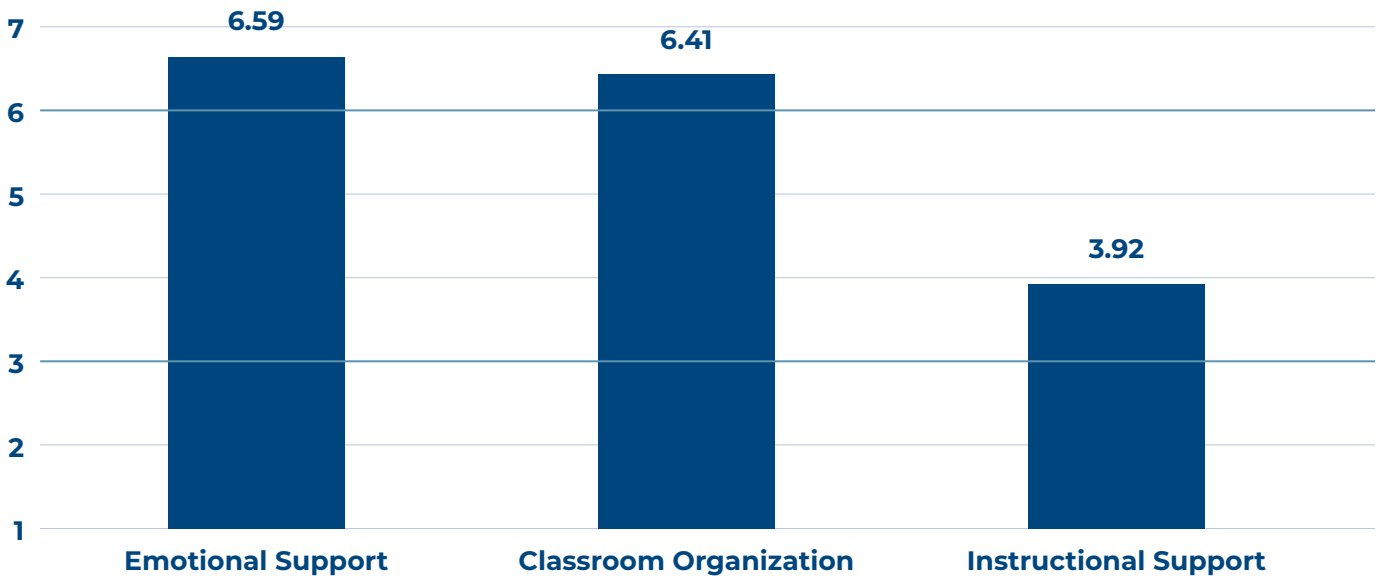
Classroom Quality Results

Children experienced 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). CLASS is a validated tool to assess the quality of teacher–child interactions. This tool assigns qualitative ratings based on observed classroom interactions between teachers and children. It uses a 7-point scale subdivided into low (1, 2), mid (3, 4, 5), and high (6, 7) ranges of quality. Certified observers assign these scores based on what they see and hear for a selected period in the classroom. CLASS consists of three domains

- **Emotional Support.** Scores above 6, as observed in Pre-K 4 SA this year, suggest warm, supportive, respectful, welcoming environments that value and incorporate children’s perspectives.
- **Classroom Organization.** Scores above 6, as observed in Pre-K 4 SA education centers this year, suggest effective interactions, such as proactive behavior management, clear expectations, and minimal disruptions for behavioral challenges.
- **Instructional Support.** The education center’s 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. (In a high-scoring classroom, these types of interactions would be seen more consistently and be sustained for longer periods of time.)

Moreover, classroom quality results were approximately the same this year compared to last year, suggesting children consistently experienced quality learning environments over time.

Exhibit 1 | Pre-K 4 SA classrooms are providing children with emotionally supportive and well-organized learning environments



Note: The teal horizontal lines mark the boundaries between the three score ranges: low (below 3.00), midrange (between 3.00 and 5.99), and high (6.00 and above).

Academic and Social Outcome Results

Children displayed significant improvement in early literacy and numeracy. Pre-K 4 SA assessed children on a range of academic and social measures. Sometimes those measures were collected for the whole class (such as by using Teaching Strategies Growth, Observation, and Learning [GOLD] assessment, through which teachers collect data about each child in their classrooms on a range of academic and social outcomes). For other measures, a random sample of children were assessed across the four education centers (including direct child assessments that measure aspects of literacy, numeracy, and vocabulary outcomes).

Children showed significant improvement on indicators of early literacy, early numeracy, and receptive and expressive vocabulary over the school year (see Exhibit 2). Westat observed accelerated learning which indicates the reduction of existing learning gaps for early numeracy for some children, compared to normative samples.



Exhibit 2 | Children demonstrated significant growth in early literacy, numeracy, and vocabulary

Outcome	Assessment	Age	Domain	Growth (fall to spring)
Early Literacy	GOLD	3	Literacy	↑
			Oral Language	↑
		4	Literacy	↑
			Oral Language	↑
	WJ ^a	3&4	Letter-Word	↑
	ROWPVT ^a	3&4	Receptive Vocabulary	↑
	EOWPVT ^a		Expressive Vocabulary	↑
Early Numeracy	GOLD	3	Mathematics	↑
		4		↑
	WJ ^a	3&4	Applied Problems	↑

Note: GOLD = Teaching Strategies GOLD; WJ = Woodcock-Johnson and Bateria; ROWPVT = Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test; EOWPVT = Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test.

^a Assessments conducted for a random sample of children.

↑ Indicates a positive significant result

Children displayed significant improvement in social-emotional readiness according to teacher reports.

Children demonstrated significant improvement across multiple indicators in the social-emotional area of readiness (see Exhibit 3). These indicators included both the GOLD (described above) and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), a teacher-reported measure about each child in their classroom that assesses children's social-emotional development.

Exhibit 3 | Children demonstrated significant growth in social-emotional readiness

Outcome	Assessment	Age	Domain	Growth (fall to spring)
Social Emotional	GOLD	3	Social-Emotional	↑
		4		↑
	DECA	3&4	Initiative	↑
			Self-Control	↑
			Attachment	↑
			Total Protective Factors	↑
			Behavioral Concerns ^a	↑

Note: GOLD = Teaching Strategies GOLD; 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. A positive significant result in Behavioral Concerns indicates a significant reduction in challenging behaviors.

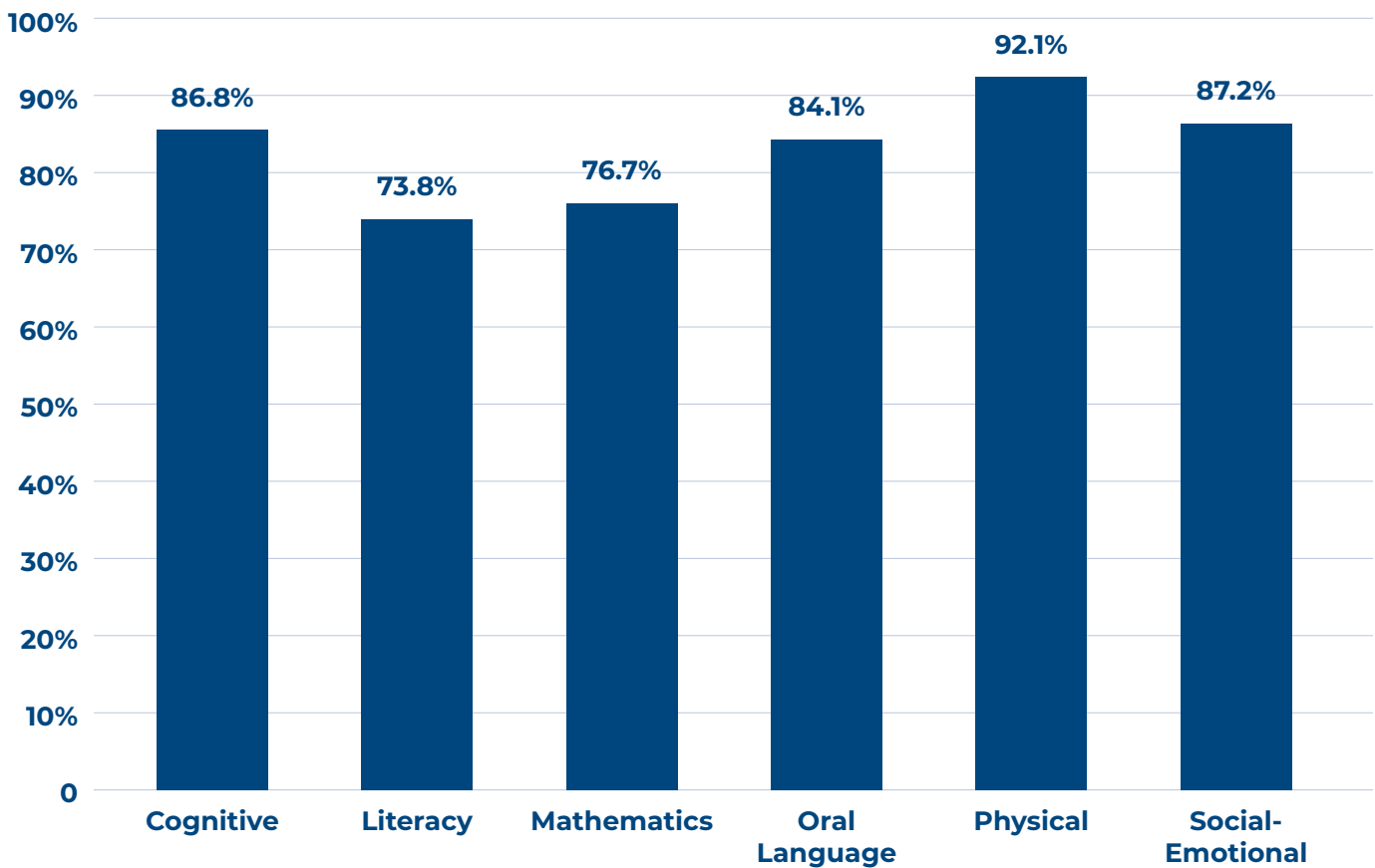
↑ Indicates a positive significant result

Kindergarten Readiness Results

Children displayed kindergarten readiness according to teacher reports. The majority of 4 year-old children demonstrated readiness for kindergarten in the spring across all GOLD outcomes. Among Pre-K 4 SA children in spring, average kindergarten readiness scores ranged from the low 70 to mid-80 percent (for Literacy, Mathematics, and Oral Language) to the high 80s to low 90s (for Cognitive, Social-Emotional, and Physical outcomes; see Exhibit 4). These scores average across children who had only one year of Pre-K 4 SA and those who had two years of Pre K 4 SA.



Exhibit 4 | Most children demonstrated kindergarten readiness across GOLD outcomes

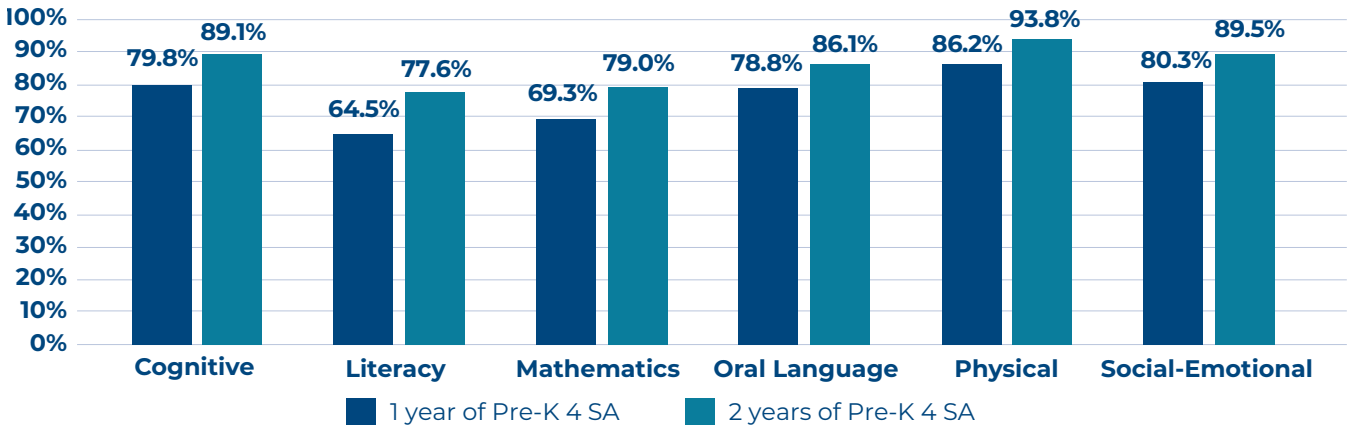


Note: GOLD = Teaching Strategies GOLD.

Two Years of Pre-K 4 SA Participation

Children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for 2 consecutive years demonstrated improved kindergarten readiness across multiple indicators. Children who attended Pre-K 4 SA as 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds demonstrated improved kindergarten readiness across all GOLD outcomes in the spring compared to children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for a single year. The differential between the two cohorts average is 9.4 percentage points (see Exhibit 5).

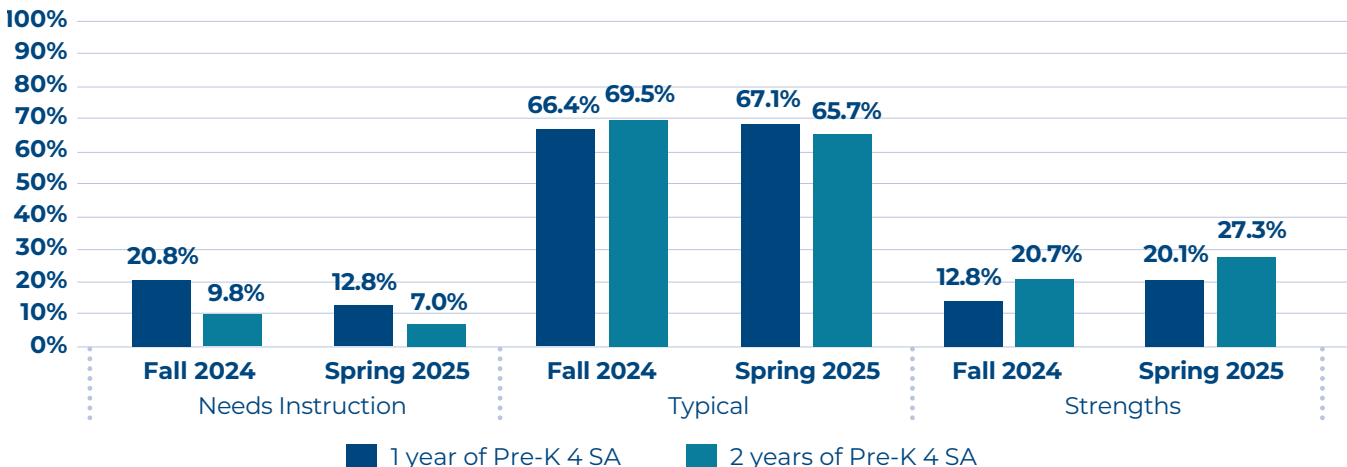
Exhibit 5 | Children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for 2 consecutive years demonstrated improved kindergarten readiness across GOLD outcomes



Note: GOLD = Teaching Strategies GOLD.

Children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for 2 consecutive years also demonstrated higher social-emotional competency compared to children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for a single year. Children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for both years demonstrated improved social-emotional competency for the DECA's overall scale (Total Protective Factors) compared to children who attended Pre-K 4 SA for a single year. That said, children who attended for both 1 and 2 years showed significant positive movement into higher levels across the three DECA categories (Needs Instruction, Typical, and Strengths) as well as into the highest level (Strengths) over time, indicating overall improvement in social-emotional competency (see Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6 | Children attending Pre-K 4 SA for 2 consecutive years demonstrated improved social-emotional competency



Conclusions

Pre-K 4 SA's Year 12 education center findings indicate positive pre-kindergarten learning experiences for children in San Antonio. Broadly

- Classroom quality was moderate (Instructional Support) or high (Emotional Support and Classroom Organization).
- Children grew in academic and social domains of development, and children enrolled in Pre-K 4 SA for two years maintained and increased their growth over time.
- For children enrolled for two years, social-emotional competency showed improvement over their time in Pre-K 4 SA. Additionally, Emotional Support was also the highest scoring aspect of classroom quality in the 2024–25 school year. This suggests teachers were effectively meeting children wherever they had need for growth.
- Conversely, although classroom quality scores were moderate or high overall for these children, a pattern worth noting is moderate classroom quality (Instructional Support) may correspond to GOLD outcome areas with comparatively lower—although still high—kindergarten readiness (i.e., Literacy, Mathematics, and Oral Language).

Understanding these patterns can help us better care for our young learners and adapt approaches to meet their evolving needs and support their developmental trajectory.

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 kindergarten readiness and social-emotional findings for children who attended Pre-K 4 SA 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 continue 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.

