

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early childhood (i.e., birth to approximately eight years old) is generally considered the most significant and influential time of life (Follari, 2015) and can provide a multitude of benefits, such as (a) developing foundational skills in language and literacy, (b) improving children's academic performance in reading and mathematics, and (c) closing achievement gaps based on ethnicity and socioeconomic status.¹

Program Components

Dallas ISD offers free, scholarship, and tuition-based PK programs to families residing within the Dallas ISD boundaries.² PK for SPED students is provided through the Dallas ISD Early Childhood (EC) program, which serves children with qualifying disabilities at no cost as early as age three.³

The Dallas ISD PK programming differs by a student's age and program site. Students who are three years old on or before September 1 may attend PK3 at one of many Dallas ISD elementary schools. Likewise, students who are four years old on or before September 1 may attend PK4 at one of many Dallas ISD elementary schools. Dallas ISD children may also enroll as PK3 or PK4 students at one of the district's PK Partnership (PKP) sites. Finally, Dallas ISD also offers PK3 and PK4 at several Choice Schools that are designed around an innovative model such as Montessori, Performing and Visual Arts, Personalized Learning, Single Gender, or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Like PKP classrooms, Montessori classrooms are also mixed-age.

Program Staff

- In 2022-23, program staff included 2,196 EL teachers and 203 other EL staff (Instructional Specialists, Home Instructors, Specialists, and Coordinators).
- The majority of all EL staff in the district were female (86.9%; $n = 2,085$) and were Hispanic or African American (55.8%, $n = 1,339$ and 25.3%, $n = 608$, respectively). The average length of experience in the Dallas ISD among all EL staff was nine years.
- Seventy-four percent of 2021-22 EL teachers continued to teach EL in 2022-23. Sixty percent of 2020-21 and 52% of 2019-20 EL teachers also continued in EL in 2022-23.

Budget

The total 2022-23 budget for the Early Learning Department (which excludes campus level funding for EL teachers) was \$34,001,355, an increase from 2021-22 (\$30,892,950).^{4,5} The 2022-23 budget was funded through district general operating funds as well as Title I and Title II funds.

Program Goals

In 2022-23, the Dallas ISD EL Department continued its pursuit of two principal goals: 1) increase Kindergarten readiness (K-readiness) and 2) increase on-grade-level performance in reading and mathematics.

The following specific objectives relate to the K-readiness goal:

- Improve K- readiness year-over-year as measured by the *Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment (TX-KEA)* Literacy Screener.
- Increase PK enrollment year-over-year.
- Maintain/improve quality of PK teaching as measured by the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)*.
- Continuous improvement in PK outcomes as measured by the *CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System (CIRCLE)*.

The following specific objectives relate to increasing on-grade-level performance in reading and mathematics:

- Increase the proportion of grade-two students performing at or above grade level in reading and mathematics, year-over-year, as measured by the end-of-year (EOY) Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) *Measures of Academic Progress - Growth (MAP Growth)*.
- Maintain/improve quality of K-2 teaching as measured by *CLASS*.
- Continuous improvement in K outcomes as measured by *TX-KEA* and *EOY MAP Growth*.
- Continuous improvement in grade-one (at beginning, middle, and end of year) and grade-two (at beginning and middle of year) outcomes as measured by *MAP Growth*.

¹ A full list of references can be found in the full report (Eells, 2023). Portions of this report have been adapted from Voss, Kim, & Tyree (2022).

² For more information about the Dallas ISD PK eligibility requirements, see <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/74638>.

³ For information about EC enrollment, see <http://tea.texas.gov/index4.aspx?id=2147494988>.

⁴ The overall Dallas ISD EL investment includes an additional \$24,562,161 allocated at the campus level, which funds EL teacher positions.

⁵ The 2021-22 EL Executive Summary showed a higher total, that included Title III funding. This was an error, as EL did not receive Title III funds. The 2021-22 total shown here is the corrected amount.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

How was the Early Learning program implemented in 2022-2023?

Engagement with community partners

- The Dallas ISD EL department continued to engage with a network of partners (including Texas HIPYP Center at University of North Texas (UNT), AVANCE – North Texas, Concilio, Bachman Lake Together Family Center, and the Strong Start Dallas initiative) to provide continuums of care to students and families.^{6,7,8}

Recruitment and re-enrollment efforts

- The EL department continued to pursue various advertising modes/outlets as well as in-person events and touchpoints to spur recruitment and re-enrollment.

Expansion of PK3 and PK4

- In 2022-23, PK3 was available at 127 locations, four more than were available in 2021-22. Of these, 50 (39%) provided half-day PK and 77 (61%) provided full-day PK. Forty of these locations (31%) were PKP sites.
- All 127 PK3 locations also offered PK4, plus an additional 61 elementary campuses with only PK4, for a total of 188 PK4 locations, two more than were available in 2021-22.

Coaching and training to teachers

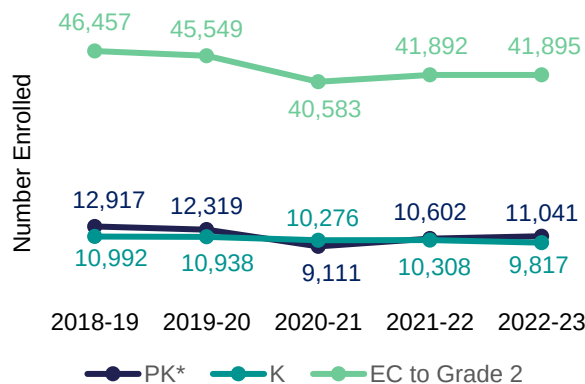
- EL department specialists continued efforts to improve teaching quality by providing coaching and PD to EL teachers. Support focused on high priority campuses and reading academy cohort three campuses.
- In addition to continuing to train teachers, EL specialists in 2022-23 were deployed to work more directly with students. Efforts focused on providing small group reading support to Tier II African-American students in grades one and two.
- The CLASS observation instrument continued to be used to measure the quality of teacher-student interactions and to target teacher coaching.⁹

Students Served

- In 2022-23, 41,895 students were enrolled in EC through grade-two. Most of the students were Hispanic (68%, $n = 28,391$) or African American (22%, $n = 9,219$).
- The majority of students were classified as economically disadvantaged (EcoDis; 87%, $n = 36,378$). Nearly half of the students were Emergent Bilingual (EB) students (48%, $n = 20,007$).

- The number of students served by Dallas ISD EC through grade-two programs remained stable from 2021-22 to 2022-23, after increasing from 2020-21 to 2021-22 (Figure 1).
- While K enrollment dropped in 2022-23 after maintaining a steady enrollment in the prior two years, PK enrollment has steadily increased since 2020-21.

Figure 1: 2018-19 to 2022-23 Dallas ISD Early Childhood to Grade 2 Enrollment Rates



Source: 2018-19 to 2020-21 (Tyree, 2021), 2021-22 (Voss, Kim & Tyree, 2022). PEIMS district data file dated 10/31/22 (2022-23).

Note: PK = Prekindergarten. * In Figure 1, PK totals include EC, PK3 and PK4, at both Dallas ISD campuses and PK partnership sites. K = Kindergarten. EC = Early Childhood (i.e., SPED PK).

Continuous Enrollment Rates

- The re-enrollment rate of PK students has remained consistent for the past three years, at about 80 percent.
- Sixty-seven percent of the 2019-20 K cohort remained continuously enrolled through their third-grade year, in 2022-23. This rate was slightly lower than that of the prior two K cohorts. The largest student loss (about 12%) for each of these three K cohorts occurred between K and grade-one.

What was the quality of Early Learning instruction?

- From spring 2022 to spring 2023, there were statistically significant increases in CLASS scores on each domain (emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support) and overall.
- As in the past two years, compared to K-2 teachers, higher percentages of PK teachers met or exceeded the quality thresholds on each domain and overall. However, the percentage of K-2 teachers at or above quality thresholds (on each domain and overall) were the highest they have been across the past three school years. (See Figure 2.)
- In each of the last three years, the lowest percentage of teachers (both PK and K-2) met the quality threshold for instructional support (79% and 75%, respectively). Yet, the largest increases in the percentage of teachers

⁶ For more information about the HIPYP program, see the HIPYP evaluation report (Eells, 2023).

⁷ For more information about AVANCE, see <https://www.avance.org/>. For more information about Concilio, see <https://www.theconcilio.org/>.

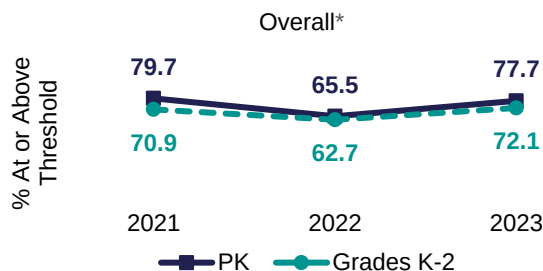
⁸ For more information about Bachman Lake Together Family Center, see <https://bachmanlaketogether.org/>.

⁹ For more information, see <http://teachstone.com/classroom-assessment-scoring-system/>.

meeting or surpassing the quality threshold, from 2022 to 2023, was seen on the instructional support domain.

- Over ninety percent of teachers (PK-2) met the threshold for emotional support and classroom organization, as in the past two years.

Figure 2: 2021 to 2023 Spring Percentages of Prekindergarten and Kindergarten through Grade-Two Teachers At or Above the Quality Threshold by CLASS



Source: Data files can be found in the full report (Eells, 2023).

Note: * = These percentages reflect the percentage of teachers that met all three domain thresholds.

What were the academic outcomes of Early Learning students?

CIRCLE (PK)

- The percentage of 2022-23 PK students considered on-track grew from beginning to end-of-year on phonological awareness (+29 percentage points, to 84%), rapid vocabulary (+23 percentage points, to 70%), and mathematics skills (+14 percentage points, to 71%).
- An equal or slightly greater proportion of students were On-Track at EOY in 2022-23 for phonological awareness and rapid vocabulary, compared to 2020-21 and 2021-22. However, an equal or slightly lower proportion were On-Track in mathematics, compared to 2020-21 and 2021-22.

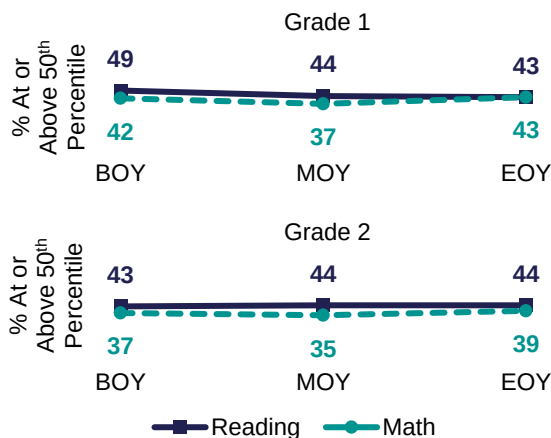
TX-KEA (K)

- The percentage of K-ready students, as measured with the TX-KEA Literacy Screener, increased from 2021-22 to 2022-23, overall (from 67 to 71%) and by student group and test version, with only one exception (white students who took the test in Spanish).
- Students who had attended Dallas ISD PK achieved higher rates of K-readiness (78%) compared to students who did not attend Dallas ISD PK (44%).
- Across all domains on the TX-KEA, the percentage of On-Track students increased from BOY to EOY. Compared to the past two years, a higher percentage of students at BOY, MOY, and EOY were On-Track in Spelling, Vocabulary, and Math, with few exceptions. Scores on Social Emotional Competence tended to be lower compared to the last two years.

MAP Growth (Grades One and Two)

- In 2022-23, there were slight increases from BOY to EOY in the percentage of grade-one and grade-two students achieving at or above the 50th percentile in Mathematics. For Reading, there was a slight increase from BOY to EOY for grade-two students. However, for grade-one students there was a decrease from BOY to EOY in the percentage of students achieving at or above the 50th percentile in Reading. (See Figure 3.)
- Compared to 2021-22, a higher percentage of grade-one and grade-two students achieved at or above the 50th percentile on MAP EOY Reading and Mathematics in 2022-23 (range of 4 to 7 percentage points).
- Compared to 2021-22, a higher percentage of grade-one and grade-two African American students achieved at or above the 50th percentile on MAP EOY Reading and Mathematics in 2022-23 (+6 and +9 percentage points, respectively).
- For 2022-23, the percentage of grade-one and grade-two African American students who performed at or above grade level (50th percentile) on EOY MAP Reading and Mathematics met interim student outcome goals.

Figure 3: 2022-23 Percentage of Grade-One and Grade-Two Students At or Above the 50th Percentile on MAP by Subject and Administration



Source: Data files can be found in the full report (Eells, 2023).

Note: To allow for examination of overall student performance of reading, the English and Spanish administrations were combined.

Did grade-three students meet STAAR reading and mathematics goals?

- Compared to 2021-22, a higher percentage of grade three students achieved the Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) and Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+) performance standards on STAAR Reading in 2022-23. This trend was seen across all student groups, with the exception of EB students who remained stable at the Approaches+ performance standard.
- Across all student groups, a higher percentage of grade-three students performed at the Approaches+ and Meets+ performance standards on STAAR Mathematics in 2022-23, compared to 2021-22.

Did student academic performance differ by Dallas ISD PK participation?

- Across the past four years of K cohorts, a larger proportion of former Dallas ISD PK students are On-Track on EOY assessments (MAP and STAAR - Reading and Mathematics) in K through grade-two, compared to students who did not attend Dallas ISD PK. (See Table 1.)
- The perceived benefit of PK appears to be greater for Mathematics, for any given K cohort and grade.

Table 1: 2022-23 Percentage of Students At or Above the 50th Percentile, Approaches+, or Meets+ on Assessments by Cohort and PK Enrollment Status

Exam	Total N	DISD PK %	No DISD PK %
Kindergarten Data for 2022-23 K Cohort			
MAP Reading	7,132	46.9	38.9
MAP Math	7,442	52.5	38.3
Grade-One Data for 2021-22 K Cohort			
MAP Reading	6,891	44.3	35.2
MAP Math	6,978	44.4	34.6
Grade-Two Data for 2020-21 K Cohort			
MAP Reading	6,126	42.1	38.6
MAP Math	6,299	38.2	30.9
Grade-Three Data for 2019-20 K Cohort			
STAAR Reading Approaches+	6,180	67.3	64.7
STAAR Reading Meets+	6,046	38.7	36.5
STAAR Math Approaches+	6,181	71.3	65.8
STAAR Math Meets+	6,047	41.6	34.2

Source: Data files can be found in the full report (Eells, 2023).

Note: % = Percentage of students at or above the 50th percentile (MAP) and Approaches+ or Meets+ (STAAR). Additional note information can be found in the full report (Eells, 2023).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Investigate parents' re-enrollment intent. When examining Early Childhood through Grade Two enrollment trends, the highest rate of student attrition occurs with PK students, with 1 out of 5 students not re-enrolling in the district the next school year. This attrition rate is nearly double the attrition rate for K students, with approximately 12% of whom do not re-enroll. Program managers should consider surveying parents of PK4 students in the spring to gather enrollment intent data. Such data could be utilized by

program managers to target retention efforts from PK4 to K to decrease student attrition rates.

As recommended in previous years, continue to train teachers to provide more effective instructional support for students. Overall, the percentage of teachers meeting or surpassing the quality threshold for the instructional support domain increased from spring 2022 to spring 2023. However, compared to the emotional support and classroom organization domains, instructional support continues to lag by 14 to 23 percentage points across grade-levels. Thus, the department should continue efforts to improve these scores and provide additional resources regarding instructional support.

Consider revisiting and updating the strategic plan for EL. In 2014, in collaboration with the Boston Consulting Group, the district developed a strategic plan to increase K-readiness. The strategic plan included four key initiatives which still guide the growth of the PK programs and serve as the foundation of the EL department: increase access, increase demand, increase quality through training and specialists, and expand the continuum of care through community partners. Based on the Early Childhood through Grade Two growth and advances over the last decade, both in legislation and in the district, the Early Learning department should consider revisiting and updating its strategic plan to build on the district's accomplishments and guide the department into the future.

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