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STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELEASES KINDERGARTEN INVENTORY STUDY SHOWING POSITIVE RESULTS OF PUBLICLY FUNDED PRE-K EXPERIENCE

Children from Low-Income Families Who Attend Preschool Are Approximately 10% Less Likely To Need Substantial Support When Entering Kindergarten

HARTFORD, CT—Visiting the Women & Families daycare program in Meriden with Governor Dannel Malloy, Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor released results of a Kindergarten Entrance Inventory (KEI) study conducted by the State Department of Education. It suggests that kindergarteners with publicly funded preschool are approximately 10% less likely to require substantial instructional support in one or more of the major learning domains than those students entering Kindergarten without this experience. Specifically, children with pre-K experience are less likely to need substantial instructional support in any one of the three academic domains of language, literacy, or numeracy. These results are consistent with findings from statistically more rigorous national studies that demonstrate the positive effect of preschool on a child's readiness for kindergarten, particularly for children in low-income, high-need communities.

"We know that children with good early learning experiences fare better in school—it's why early education was such an important component of last year's education reform package," said Governor Malloy. "Students who have a pre-K experience arrive at school ready to learn—they have an expanded vocabulary, stronger social skills, and they are able to build on this base throughout their academic careers."

"Based on our analysis, Connecticut children who receive publicly funded, quality preschool need less significant instructional support when they begin kindergarten," said Commissioner Stefan Pryor. "To close our worst in the nation achievement gap, we must invest in high-quality early childhood programs. The Office of Early Childhood that the Governor proposed this year and the 1,000 additional preschool seats that the Governor and General Assembly added last year are crucial steps in the right direction."

Women & Families Center, a school readiness site, recently added a class of 20 children to its full day preschool program. This expansion was possible because of Governor Malloy's increased funding for preschool seats as part of the educational package he signed into law last year.

Kindergarten teachers utilize the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory to rate the skills of each entering student on six learning domains: language; literacy; numeracy; physical/motor; creative/aesthetic; and personal/social. For each domain, the teacher classifies the student in one of three performance levels which denotes if a student requires minimal, some, or substantial instructional support in that particular area.

The KEI study was limited to 13 districts with high concentrations of children served by publicly funded preschool programs, which includes School Readiness programs, state funded child daycare centers, and Head Start. The study was further limited to comprise of only students who qualify for free lunch status in the kindergarten years of 2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12.

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Preliminary Results from the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory (KEI)

Question

How do kindergarteners who were enrolled in publicly funded pre-Kⁱ compare, on the KEI, to those who were not enrolled in publicly funded pre-K?

Methods

To ensure homogeneity, this analysis was limited to students from the following 13 districts with large concentrations of students in publicly funded pre-K programs (i.e., Bridgeport, Danbury, East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Stamford, Waterbury, and Windham). In addition, this analysis was limited to those students who were reported to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as eligible for Free lunch status in the kindergarten years of 2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12.

Kindergarten teachers statewide use the Kindergarten Entrance Inventoryⁱⁱ to rate the skills of each entering student on six domains: *Language; Literacy; Numeracy; Physical/Motor; Creative/Aesthetic; and Personal/Social*. For each domain, the teacher is required to classify the student into one of three performance levels (PL). In the early years, learning domains are highly interconnected and each contribute to children’s overall school success.

- PL1 – Students at this level demonstrate *emerging* skills in the specified domain and require a *large degree* of instructional support.
- PL2 – Students at this level *inconsistently* demonstrate the skills in the specified domain and require *some* instructional support.
- PL3 – Students at this level *consistently* demonstrate the skills in the specified domain and require *minimal* instructional support.

Data from the Fall KEI for the school years 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 were analyzed for this report. The number of students, rated PL1 in one or more domains were compared based on whether or not the student had been enrolled in a publicly funded pre-K program. A kindergarten student was determined to have a pre-K enrollment if he/she was evidenced in the CSDE pre-K data systems. These students were all classified by their teachers as requiring substantial instructional support in kindergarten in one or more domains.

Results

Of the students enrolled in kindergarten in the 13 districts for the three years of 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 who are eligible for free lunch, a smaller percentage of students with pre-K enrollment need substantial instructional support in one or more domains at kindergarten entry as compared to those without pre-K enrollment. The same result is observed when the analysis is limited to the three academic domains of language, literacy, and numeracy. These findings are not generalizable to children outside the 13 districts who are receiving free lunch and are enrolled in publicly funded pre-K; it also cannot be used to infer the level of readiness.

Percent of Kindergarten Students in 13 Districts Needing Substantial Instructional Support

Enrolled in Publicly Funded Pre-K?	PL1 in At Least One of the Six Domains of the KEI			PL1 in At Least One of the Three Academic Domains		
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
No	57.0% (N=2,846)	54.2% (N=3,236)	54.3% (N=3,348)	53.0% (N=2,846)	50.2% (N=3,236)	50.9% (N=3,348)
Yes	46.9% (N=5,116)	46.4% (N=4,978)	44.8% (N=4,931)	42.3% (N=5,116)	41.6% (N=4,978)	39.9% (N=4,931)
Total Free Lunch	(N=7,962)	(N=8,214)	(N=8,279)	(N=7,962)	(N=8,214)	(N=8,279)

ⁱ Publicly funded pre-K includes School Readiness programs, state funded child daycare centers, and Head Start.

ⁱⁱ The fall Kindergarten Entrance Inventory provides a snapshot of the skills students demonstrate at the beginning of the kindergarten year. The content of the inventory was selected to represent the most important skills that students need to demonstrate at the beginning of kindergarten. The indicators were developed from the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework and State Curriculum Standards for language arts and mathematics.