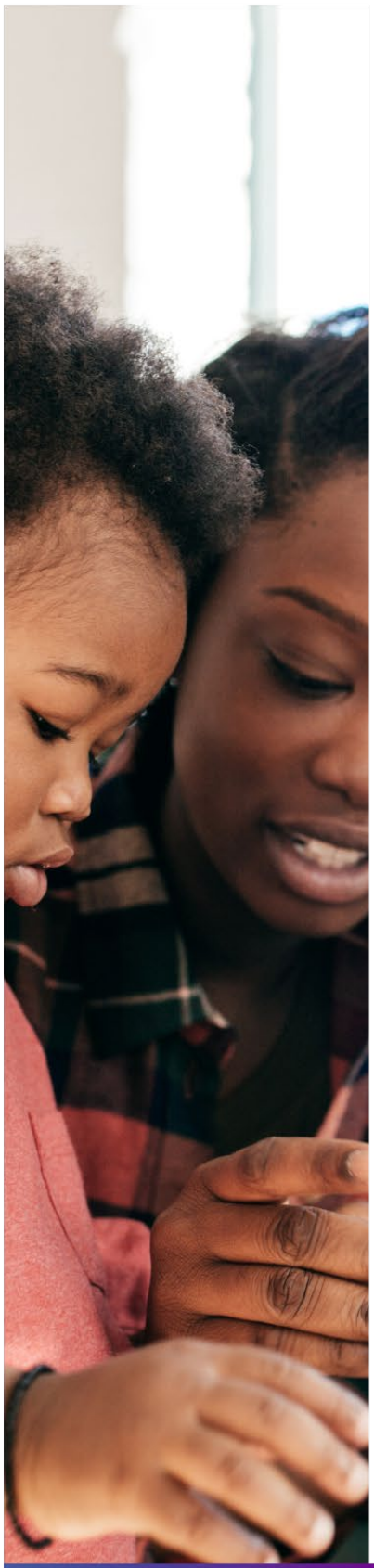

Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership
2023-2024 Twenty-Seventh Annual Report

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MARCH 2025

CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE

RECAP Report

Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership

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Children's Institute (EIN 23-7102632) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Rochester, NY, that works to strengthen, develop, and coordinate resources that promote the well-being of children, youth, and families. Children's Institute is affiliated with the University of Rochester and has served the community for over 60 years.

Our partner COMET Informatics offers a child-centric software system that specializes in the assessments/outcomes and operations of child-serving organizations: **www.comet4children.com**.

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INTRODUCTION

Acknowledgements

The Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership (RECAP) is made possible through valuable contributions from Rochester community members including parents and families, early childhood education program staff, funders, policymakers, and volunteers. The RECAP Assessment Team is grateful to its partners who meet with us twice monthly, year-round, to plan and implement the evaluation process. This team works collaboratively to continuously improve the RECAP system to meet the needs of young children, families, and early childhood education programs.

Financial support for RECAP is provided by Rochester Area Community Foundation, Rochester's Child Fund of the Rochester Area Community Foundation, and Rochester City School District (RCSD). We are further grateful for our Digital Uniting Caring Connection donors, who made this new program possible: ESL Charitable Foundation, Rochester Area Community Foundation, and the Community Crises Fund launched by United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes with Rochester Area Community Foundation. This program provided support for family engagement for families in the RCSD prekindergarten program in both schools and community-based organizations.

Participating community based organizations (many of which are also members of the Early Childhood Education Quality Council) include: Action for a Better Community's Early Education Division, Asbury Day Care Center, Baden Street Clinton and Charles Settlement House Centers, Care-a-lot, Child Care Center, Caring and Sharing Child Care Center, Community Child Care Center, Community Place of Greater Rochester, Creative Beginnings Child Care, Eastman Community Child Care, Friendship Children's Center, Generations Child Care Centers, Ibero Early Childhood Services, Little Hearts Child Care, Oregon Leopold Day Care Center, Richard M. Guon Child Care Center at Monroe Community College, Rochester Childfirst Network, St. Paul's Child Care Center, Sunshine Village Child Care, Volunteers of America Children's Center, and the UCP Finger Lakes Golisano Happiness House. Rochester City School District programs included: the Florence S. Brown Pre-K Center at School No. 33, Rochester City School District Montessori Academy, Rochester City School District Rochester Early Childhood Education Center, and 26 Rochester City School District prekindergarten sites in elementary schools.

We thank teachers, adult family educators, paraprofessionals, family service coordinators, center directors, and school administrators who contribute their expertise and numerous hours of work to RECAP. We extend our gratitude to thousands of parents and other caregivers who share essential feedback regarding prekindergarten programs and experiences with program staff routinely. Families are an indispensable component in the comprehensive RECAP model.

The RECAP Advisory Council, chaired by Nancy Kaplan, Coordinator of Rochester's Child, plays an instrumental role by providing feedback and advice regarding assessment goals, needs of children and families, and effective use of RECAP data to inform early childhood policymaking in Rochester. We are grateful to the Advisory Council for its wisdom and for advising our team how best to enrich the relevance of RECAP in community-wide decision-making on behalf of children, families, and programs.

We also extend thanks to our partners at COMET Informatics, LLC. Their product, COMET®, is a web-based system that supports and promotes our use of "real-time" data to inform the Rochester community regarding child outcomes as well as storing data for longitudinal analyses.

Authorship statement: Erinn B. Duprey conducted analysis and drafted the report, Kathleen M. Embt conducted analysis, managed data, revised the report, and wrote the Family Survey chapter; Joseph McFall and Lauri Strano revised the report and provided critical insights into evaluation results; David Peelle managed data, provided feedback on the writing, and provided input on interpreting analyses; Linda Murray and Genemarie Van Wagner provided information on the ECERS-3 and classroom observations; Geri Cone provided continuous support for data analytics and editing the technical report; Kim Avery provided essential input on pre-K screening via the GROW program.

Executive Summary

Below is a summary of findings from this 2023-24 report of the Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership (RECAP). RECAP evaluates Rochester's preschool system on multiple levels, including the individual child (e.g., social-emotional adjustment and pre-academic skills), the classroom environment, families of preschoolers, and the overall preschool program. These findings have multiple practical and policy implications, which are detailed at length in our Conclusions & Recommendations chapter. RECAP has evaluated and improved Rochester's pre-K system for over 25 years. Due to changes in program funding and district and state requirements, the present report marks the final report of RECAP.

Student Outcomes

Social emotional. Children's social and emotional development, measured by Teacher-Child Rating Scale, showed growth in the areas of task orientation, behavior control, assertive social skills, and peer social skills. Effect sizes ranged from small to medium, with the largest change over time in assertive social skills (d = .23 to d = .29). Overall growth in peer social skills was improved for both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 cohorts compared to the 2022-23 academic year. However, there remains a large proportion of preschoolers who show risk in at least one area of social and emotional development. Specifically, 40.7% of pre-K-3 students in fall and 35.3% in spring had multiple social and emotional risk factors, while 33.4% of pre-K-4 students in fall and 30.6% in spring had multiple social and emotional risk factors.

Pre-Academic . There was consistent growth for pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students across all domains in the Child Observation Record, with Creative Arts and Science and Technology showing the most notable improvements. Areas in need of improvement include Mathematics and Language, Literacy, and Communication.

There were 44.8% of pre-K-4 students who were rated as kindergarten ready in spring of their preschool year. There was a significant impact of program "dosage" (i.e., whether children attended one or two years of pre-K). Specifically, 49.2% of children who attended two years of pre-K were kindergarten ready, and 39.4% of children who attended only one year of pre-K were kindergarten ready.

Screening. In the Brigance Early Childhood Screen, 35.4% of pre-K-3 students and 36.2% of pre-K-4 students were screened as either "in need of formal evaluation" or "monitor closely". On the other hand, 8.0% and 9.6% of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students, respectively, were screened as possibly gifted and talented. Get Ready to Grow (GRTG) screenings revealed three high areas of need: speech/language, physical health (BMI), and vision.

Attendance. There were exceptionally low rates of attendance. Of note, 57.5% and 55.3% of pre-

K-3 and pre-K-4 students, respectively, were categorized as chronically absent. A RECAP workgroup was convened to address attendance; their findings and recommendations are summarized.

Program Quality

ECERS-3: There were a total of 178 classrooms observed with the ECERS tool in 2023-24, and classrooms on average achieved a total score of 5.36. This score represents "good" classroom quality and is consistent with the previous two years of ECERS administration. There were 44.9% of classrooms rated as "good" and 25.3% rated as "excellent". The highest subscale scores were in Program Structure and Interaction, while the lowest scores were in Space and Furnishings.

Family Engagement

Family survey results: Results are limited due to the small sample size ($n = 67$). Of note, families are experiencing more need: 61.3% of families reported none, down from 63.8% and 72.8% of families in 2022-23 and 2021-22, respectively. Of parents and family members who reported needs, the greatest needs reported were reliable transportation (19.4%), followed closely by childcare (16.1%) and a more stable place to live (9.7%).

Introduction to RECAP

The Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership (RECAP) is a community-wide initiative focused on enhancing early childhood education quality in Rochester. RECAP turns data into actionable insights for families, educators, and policymakers through community collaboration, technical support, and professional development. The RECAP model operates on two principles: "low stakes" assessments, allowing growth opportunities for teachers, agencies, and schools; and "continuous improvement," meaning the ongoing use of data to guide decision-making and practices in the pre-K system. For over thirty years, RECAP has been a crucial source of reliable information on early childhood education in Rochester, making it a vital component of the city's pre-K-12 educational system.

RECAP's services and activities include:

- Providing professional development for teachers, paraprofessionals, and program administrators on child screening measures, assessments, program quality rating scales, web-based data systems (like COMET®), and interpreting reports.
- Offering efficient and user-friendly data collection, processing, analysis, and reporting, delivering rapid feedback at various levels including child, parent, classroom, grade, program, and system.
- Conducting bi-monthly Assessment Team meetings with staff from community organizations such as Action for a Better Community (ABC) Head Start, Rochester City School District (RCSD) Department of Early Childhood, and The Children's Agenda, as well as Community Advisory Group meetings to foster partnerships with local families, professionals, and stakeholders.
- Presenting aggregate outcomes for pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 to aid in informed decision-making for practices and policies benefiting children, families, and programs.
- Developing additional resources to expand and improve capacity to address needs identified through continuous improvement, assessment, and partnership efforts.

Assessment Tools

A fundamental component of the RECAP system is our rigorous assessment methods, which employ reliable and valid measures to evaluate program quality, family experiences, and student outcomes. In the 2023-24 school year, we assessed program quality using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition (ECERS-3) to measure overall quality and teacher-child interactions. The ECERS-3 is an observational measurement tool administered by independent observers in classrooms.

Student outcomes were assessed with the Brigance Early Childhood Screen III, the Child Observation Record, and the Teacher-Child Rating Scale. Each of these three measures assesses

different aspects of children's development and growth. The Brigance Early Childhood Screen III (Brigance III) is a screening tool that was administered by teachers within the first 90 days of the school year or at time of student entrance into programming. Additionally, the Child Observation Record - Advantage (COR-Advantage) was used to measure levels of students' competencies and needs in multiple domains (including physical, social-emotional, and pre-academic). The COR Advantage is a standards-based, developmentally appropriate instrument completed by teachers three times yearly (fall, early winter and spring). To assess student's social and emotional growth and development, we administered the Teacher-Child Rating Scale short-form (T-CRS-sf), which is completed by teachers in fall and spring. Teachers are trained each year in how to complete all screening tools.

Finally, family perspectives on Rochester's early education programs were measured with the 2023-24 Universal pre-K Family Survey. This revised form of the Family Survey was launched in 2021-22 with modifications based on family input, and includes the Family-Teacher Relationship Quality (F-TRQ) assessment.

Table 1 below summarizes the measurement tools used and total number of assessments completed during the 2023-2024 school year.

Table 1. RECAP Variables, Measures, Numbers Assessed, and Method of Assessment

Variables	Measures	Units	*N*		Method
Classroom Environment Quality	ECERS-3	Classrooms	178		Classroom Observation by Independent Observer
Academic, Motor, and Social	COR Advantage (COR+)	Students	*Pre-K-3* Fall: 1,017 Winter: 966 Spring: 910	*Pre-K-4* Fall: 1,471 Winter: 1,387 Spring: 1,380	Teacher Observation
School, Emotional, and Behavioral Adjustment	Teacher-Child Rating Scale-short form (T-CRS-sf)	Students	*Pre-K-3* Fall: 902 Spring: 767	*Pre-K-4* Fall: 1,376 Spring: 1,266	Teacher Observation
Academic Skills, Physical Development, and Health	Brigance Early Childhood Screen III	Students	*Pre-K-3*: 883	*Pre-K-4*: 1,282	Children's Direct Performance; Teacher Observation
Family Perspective	Family and Teacher Relationship Quality (F-TRQ) with RCSD-specific questions	Caregivers of pre-K students	67		Electronic Survey completed by Parents and Caregivers

Student demographics:
Pre-K registration and enrollment is rolling throughout the year and there are frequent changes in enrollment numbers throughout the year. Tables 2 and 3 below show RECAP student demographics for pre-K-3 and pre-K-4. These demographics were pulled from year-end data (June 2024).

Table 2. RECAP Pre-K-3 Student Demographics (*N* = 1,778)

		Percent	*N*
Gender	Male	51.5%	916
	Female	48.5%	862
	Unknown or Other	-	-
Race	Black/African American	58.0%	1,031
	White	23.8%	424
	Multiracial	13.3%	237
	Asian	2.5%	45
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.5%	27
	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	.7%	13
	Unknown	.1%	1
Ethnicity	Latino	31.3%	557
	Non-Latino	68.7%	1,221
IEP	Students with IEP	10.3	183

Note. These numbers include students marked as "active" at year-end, including some students who are CPSE eligible (i.e., remain attending general education UPK classes). These numbers do not include students who have CPSE placements.

Table 3. RECAP Pre-K-4 Student Demographics (*N* = 2,207)

		Percent	*N*
Gender	Male	50.8%	1121
	Female	49.1%	1084
	Unknown or Other	.1%	2
Race	Black/African American	57.5%	1268
	White	23.7%	522
	Multiracial	14.4%	318
	Asian	2.7%	60
	American Indian or Alaska Native	.8%	18
	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	.8%	18
	Unknown	.1%	3
Ethnicity	Latino	32.2%	711
	Non-Latino	67.8%	1496
Disability	Student with a Disability	10.9%	241

Note. These numbers include students marked as "active" at year-end, including some students who are CPSE eligible (i.e., remain attending general education UPK classes). These numbers do not include students who have CPSE placements.

PROGRAM QUALITY – ECERS-3

A key objective of RECAP is to ensure high-quality learning environments for preschool students in Rochester. To achieve this, RECAP conducts annual evaluations of classroom settings using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, 3rd edition (ECERS-3; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2015). The ECERS-3 is an observational tool utilized by trained and reliable observers. It comprises 35 items rated on a 7-point scale, where 1 indicates "Inadequate" quality and 7 signifies "Excellent" quality. These items are grouped into six subscales: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language and Literacy, Learning Activities, Interactions, and Program Structure. Each subscale receives an average score, and an overall score is derived from the average of all subscales. Up to three items can be marked as not applicable (N/A), so the total score denominator can range from 33 to 35. Scores above 5.0 are considered indicative of "good" classroom quality, while scores between 6.2 and 7.0 reflect "excellent" classroom quality.

RECAP provides training for teachers, paraprofessionals, technical support staff, directors, and administrators on the ECERS-3 quality indicators, the classroom observation process, and the interpretation of feedback reports. RECAP trainers, who have extensive and in-depth knowledge of the ECERS-3, adhere to RECAP protocols and standards and follow the latest 'Notes for Clarification' by the ECERS-3 authors. These training sessions are crucial for the success of Rochester's early education continuous improvement efforts.

Reliability: All classroom observers are systematically checked for reliability. In the 2023-24 school year there were 15 active observers who were trained to reliability. A total of 178 observations were conducted, including 20 co-observations completed to maintain reliability between raters. All ECERS observers complete co-observations. After co-observations, observers discussed scoring differences and came to consensus. These agreement scores were used in the subsequent analysis. All observers maintained 85% reliability or higher, where reliability is defined as scoring within 1 point of the true consensus score on at least 85% of the items.

Aggregate Results

Table 4 and Figure 1 present an overall summary of ECERS scores for all RECAP classrooms. The total score averaged across all classrooms was a 5.36, which represents "good" quality and is consistent with the past two years. The highest scores were in Program Structure and Interaction, and the lowest scores were in Learning Activities and Space and Furnishings. There were 44.94% of all classrooms that achieved a "good" ECERS score and 25.28% of classrooms that achieved an "excellent" ECERS score.

Table 4. ECERS-3 Aggregate Results

Variable	*N*	Mean	*SD*
Space and Furnishings	178	5.09	1.01
Routines	178	5.34	1.28
Language and Literacy	178	5.25	1.06
Learning Activities	178	4.57	1.11
Interaction	178	5.90	1.01
Program Structure	178	6.02	1.12
Total	178	5.36	0.88

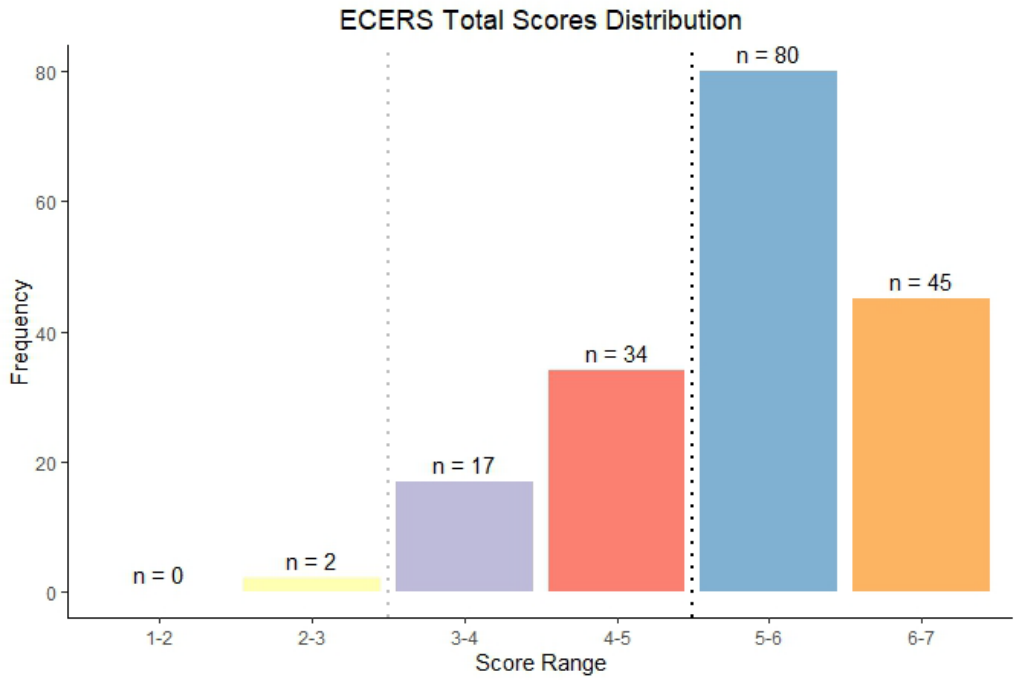

Figure 1. Bar graph showing number of classrooms within each score range. Note that the first gray dotted line indicates a score of 3, which is "minimal" classroom quality, whereas the second black dotted line indicates a score of 5, which is "good" classroom quality.

Results Separated by Grade

Table 5 shows the ECERS-3 results by grade. In total, there were 65 pre-K-3 classrooms, 84 pre-K-4 classrooms, 9 mixed grade classrooms (2 that included pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 and 7 that followed the Montessori model and included kindergarten students), 10 integrated special education classrooms, and 10 bilingual classrooms. In the table below and the subsequent statistical analyses, mixed grade classrooms were not included in comparisons due to (a) the different nature of the Montessori programming and (b) small sample size.

We found an overall statistically significant effect indicating ECERS scores varied across classroom types, in the following subscales: Routines, Language & Literacy, and Program Structure. Post-hoc comparisons (after controlling for the added statistical error in performing multiple comparison tests) showed, however, that the differences were isolated to bilingual (pre-K-3) classes having lower scores on Program Structure compared to both regular pre-K-3 and regular pre-K-4 classes.

Table 5. ECERS-3 Results by Grade

	Pre-K-3			**Pre-K-4**			**Integrated**		
Subscale	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***
Space & Furnishings	65	5.12	0.95	84	5.21	0.96	10	5.59	0.87
Routines	65	5.32	1.28	84	5.52	1.25	10	5.60	1.21
Language & Literacy	65	5.16	1.00	84	5.44	1.02	10	5.42	1.07
Learning Activities	65	4.50	0.90	84	4.80	1.16	10	4.56	0.85
Interaction	65	5.98	0.87	84	6.03	0.96	10	5.60	1.09
Program Structure	65	6.20	0.92	84	6.04	1.19	10	5.97	1.05
Total	65	5.38	0.75	84	5.51	0.88	10	5.46	0.75
	Bilingual Pre-K-3			**Bilingual Pre-K-4**			**Test**		
Subscale	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***	***F***		
Space & Furnishings	4	4.68	0.99	6	4.88	1.10	F=0.961		
Routines	4	4.38	1.30	6	4.25	1.52	F=2.176*		
Language & Literacy	4	4.15	1.46	6	5.40	0.75	F=2.044*		
Learning Activities	4	4.23	1.21	6	5.12	0.75	F=1.226		
Interaction	4	5.00	1.40	6	6.20	0.47	F=1.671		
Program Structure	4	4.50	1.75	6	5.89	0.78	F=2.39*		
Total	4	4.49	1.25	6	5.29	0.82	F=1.554		

Results Compared to Prior Years of Administration

Figure 2 depicts scores in 2023-24 compared to the four previous years of program-wide administration of the ECERS. In this figure, note that we have placed a reference line at a score of 5. Scores that are 5 and above are interpreted as “good” quality. As can be seen in the figure, the total ECERS score has been consistently “good” (i.e., above a 5.0) across the past five years. There were slight improvements on average scores in Space and Furnishings along with Routines.

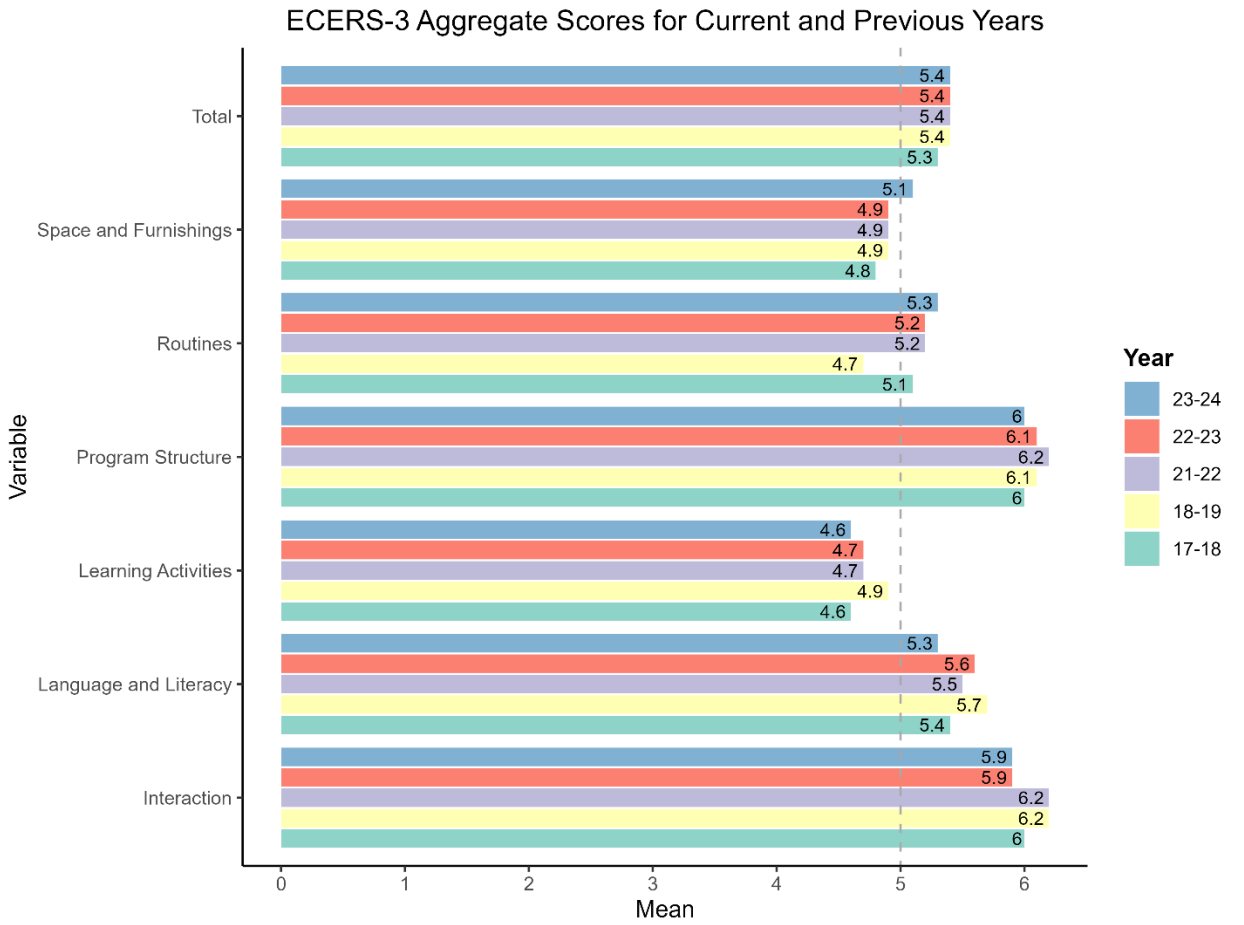

Figure 2. ECERS-3 scores for current and previous four years. The dotted line is at a score of 5 and indicates "good" quality.

Conclusions

In the 2023-24 school year, RECAP returned to observing the entire population of pre-K classrooms, with the exception of self-contained classes. There were 178 classrooms observed in total by trained and reliable ECERS observers. Results showed that the average total score across classrooms was a 5.36, which represents "good" classroom quality. This average total score is the same as the previous two years of administration, which highlights the consistent high quality of classrooms in the RECAP system.

There were some differences between classroom type, although after adjusting for multiple comparisons most of these were not statistically significant. The one statistically significant finding that bilingual-3 classrooms had lower scores compared to regular pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 classrooms should be interpreted with caution given that there were only four bilingual-3 classrooms.

Last, it should be noted that there were several practically significant differences in subscale scores between the current year and past several years of ECERS observations. Space and Furnishings, while remaining relatively low compared to other subscales, increased by 0.2 points in total. In the 2022-23 RECAP report we recommended focusing on improvements in Space and Furnishings. Thus, this increase in score may highlight the efficacy of the RECAP system and the goal for continuous improvement. Additionally, there was a 0.3 point decrease in Language & Literacy. This may relate to student outcome findings on the COR, which were lowest overall in Language, Literacy, and Communication. Of note, the lowest score items within Language & Literacy were "Becoming familiar with print" (average score = 4.61) and "Staff use of books with children" (average score = 4.63). We recommend continued focus in these areas for universal and targeted interventions.

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PRE-K STUDENT OUTCOMES: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

Social and emotional development is one of the critical tasks in the early childhood setting, and thus RECAP has prioritized the assessment and monitoring of children's social and emotional adaptation and progress throughout the academic year. To measure children's social and emotional adjustment, RECAP uses the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS), short-form version (i.e., TCRS-sf; Weber et al., 2017). The T-CRS was first published in 1979 by Primary Mental Health Project (PMHP, now Children's Institute).

The T-CRS-sf has four validated and reliable subscales related to classroom adjustment. **Task Orientation** is comparable to executive functioning and assessing how well a child can stay on task and participate in the classroom setting. Individual items include "self-starter," "works well without adult supervision," and "organized". **Behavior Control** assesses students' self-regulation, particularly during difficult or frustrating circumstances, and includes items such as "accepts imposed limits" and "tolerates frustration". **Assertive Social Skills** assesses students' ability to lead and speak up for themselves, with items including "defends own views under group pressure," and "comfortable as a leader". Finally, **Peer Social Skills** assesses children's ability to make friends and get along with others and is determined with items such as "well-liked by classmates" and "classmates like to sit near child".

For all subscales, item responses range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", and the summary scores range from 4-20, with higher scores representing better social-emotional adjustment. Teachers rate all students in their classroom twice a year, in late fall and late spring. Notable, the T-CRS can be used as a screening tool to inform placement in social and emotional programs and/or to inform universal SEL curricula, as well as an assessment tool to monitor children's growth at the individual-, school-, and district-level.

T-CRS-sf Aggregate Results for Pre-K-3

Results for three-year-olds are shown in Table 6. Chronbach's alpha coefficients for both fall and spring are above .87, indicating excellent internal reliability. Change in social-emotional adjustment from fall to spring was assessed using a paired t-test and calculating the accompanying effect size (Cohen's *d*). Significance was determined using a one-sided test set at $p < .05$.

There was a statistically significant change from fall to spring in all domains of social-emotional adjustment. The largest change from fall to spring was in Assertive Social Skills, $d = .29$, which represents a medium effect. This is consistent with prior years, wherein Assertive Social Skills had the largest effect size for both 3- and 4-year-old preschoolers. All other effect sizes were small, ranging from .11 (Behavior Control) to .19 (Peer Social Skills). These effect sizes, however, represent an increase from those seen in the academic year 2022-23 (which ranged from .08-.09

except for Assertive Social Skills). Additionally, the effect size for Peer Social Skills in 2022-23 was smaller than usual and signified an area of concern (d = .08). In 2023-24, the effect size signified more growth in Peer Social Skills for preschoolers throughout the school year compared to 2022-23, and thus may be interpreted with optimism.

Table 6. T-CRS-sf Reliability, Descriptive Statistics, and Pre-Post Change, Pre-K-3

	Fall				Spring				Pre-Post Change		
Subscale	*N*	*a*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*a*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*t*	*d*
Task Orientation	902	.87	12.31	3.92	767	.87	12.63	4.08	642	3.21***	0.13
Behavior control	902	.92	11.62	4.07	762	.92	11.99	4.35	638	2.83**	0.11
Assertive Social Skills	902	.91	12.84	4.04	766	.91	13.69	4.19	641	7.41***	0.29
Peer Social skills	902	.87	14.95	3.05	765	.88	15.43	3.37	640	4.69***	0.19

Notes: Chronbach's alpha (a) measures the internal consistency of the measure (i.e., reliability). "d" indicates Cohen's d, a measure of effect size. The denominator (i.e., standardizer) used for calculating d is the standard deviation of the difference scores.
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

T-CRS-sf Aggregate Results for Pre-K-4

Results for four-year-olds are shown in Table 7. All subscales exhibited excellent internal reliability, with Chronbach's alpha coefficients at or above .86. There were significant pre-post improvements on all sub scales, with small to moderate effect sizes. Similar to pre-K-3 students, the largest change from pre- to post- was in Assertive Social Skills (d = .23, a small-medium effect). However, this effect size was lower than seen in previous years (e.g., in 2022-23 the effect size for Assertiveness was d = .34). Other effect sizes were small ranging from .11 (Task Orientation) to .19 (Peer Social Skills). Similar to the results for pre-K-3, there was more growth in Peer Social Skills throughout the 2023-24 school year (d = .19) compared to that seen in 2022-23 (d = .06).

Table 7. T-CRS-sf Reliability, Descriptive Statistics, and Pre-Post Change, Pre-K-4

	Fall				Spring				Pre-Post Change		
Subscale	*N*	*a*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*a*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*t*	*d*
Task Orientation	1376	.87	12.90	3.77	1266	.86	13.22	3.83	1094	3.75***	0.11
Behavior control	1376	.91	12.16	3.88	1265	.91	12.53	4.06	1095	4.19***	0.13
Assertive Social Skills	1374	.89	13.68	3.78	1266	.90	14.37	3.86	1094	7.73***	0.23
Peer Social Skills	1376	.89	15.06	3.09	1266	.90	15.56	3.21	1094	6.20***	0.19

Notes: Chronbach's alpha (a) measures the internal consistency of the measure (i.e., reliability). "d" indicates Cohen's d, a measure of effect size. The denominator (i.e., standardizer) used for calculating d is the standard deviation of the difference scores.
*p < .05, **p < .001, ***p < .001.

Disaggregation by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

We disaggregated T-CRS-sf scores by student characteristics (gender, race, and ethnicity), to better inform service provisions for pre-K children.

See below (Tables 8 and 9) for disaggregation by student gender. Disaggregation by race and ethnicity can be found in the Statistical Supplement.

Table 8. T-CRS-sf Disaggregated by Gender, Pre-K-3

	Male			Female			
Variable	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Test**
Task Orientation T1	468	11.43	4.01	434	13.27	3.58	F=52.698***
Task Orientation T2	386	11.65	4.23	381	13.64	3.66	F=48.38***
Behavior Control T1	468	10.82	4.14	434	12.48	3.81	F=39.125***
Behavior Control T2	384	11.12	4.43	378	12.87	4.08	F=32.245***
Assertiveness T1	468	12.02	4.14	434	13.72	3.74	F=41.728***
Assertiveness Time 2	385	12.89	4.38	381	14.49	3.84	F=28.793***
Peer Social Skills T1	468	14.34	3.29	434	15.60	2.62	F=40.06***
Peer Social Skills T2	384	14.77	3.60	381	16.09	2.99	F=30.094***

Table 9. T-CRS-sf Disaggregated by Gender, Pre-K-4

	Male			Female			
Variable	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Test**
Task Orientation T1	697	13.87	3.43	678	11.90	3.84	F=50.305***
Task Orientation T2	653	14.11	3.52	613	12.27	3.92	F=77.669***
Behavior Control T1	697	13.05	3.59	678	11.25	3.96	F=39.136***
Behavior Control T2	653	13.36	3.84	612	11.65	4.11	F=57.991***
Assertiveness T1	695	14.18	3.59	678	13.17	3.91	F=12.968***
Assertiveness Time 2	653	14.77	3.76	613	13.95	3.93	F=14.504***
Peer Social Skills T1	696	15.72	2.68	679	14.38	3.32	F=34.735***
Peer Social Skills T2	653	16.06	2.89	613	15.03	3.44	F=33.265***

Risk Scores and Comparisons with Previous Years

To assess risk on social emotional adjustment among pre-K students, we calculated a risk score for each student. "Risk" for each subscale of the T-CRS-sf was defined as scoring at or below the 30th percentile. A dichotomous "multiple risk" score was also calculated if students scored at risk (i.e., 30th percentile or lower) on at least two subscales of the T-CRS.

Table 10 presents the prevalence of multiple social-emotional risks among Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4 students based on a percentile threshold of ≤30% for the 2023-24 year. In the fall, 40.7% (367 out of 902) of pre-K-3 students and 33.4% (460 out of 1377) of pre-K-4 students were identified as having multiple social-emotional risks. By spring, these percentages decreased to 35.3% (271 out of 767) for pre-K-3 and 30.6% (387 out of 1266) for pre-K-4. This data suggests a reduction in social-emotional risks over the academic year for both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 cohorts.

Table 10. Multiple Social Emotional Risks Based on Percentile ≤30%, 2023-24 Year

	Fall		Spring	
	n/total N	**%**	***n/total N***	**%**
Pre-K-3	367/902	40.7	271/767	35.3
Pre-K-4	460/1377	33.4	387/1266	30.6

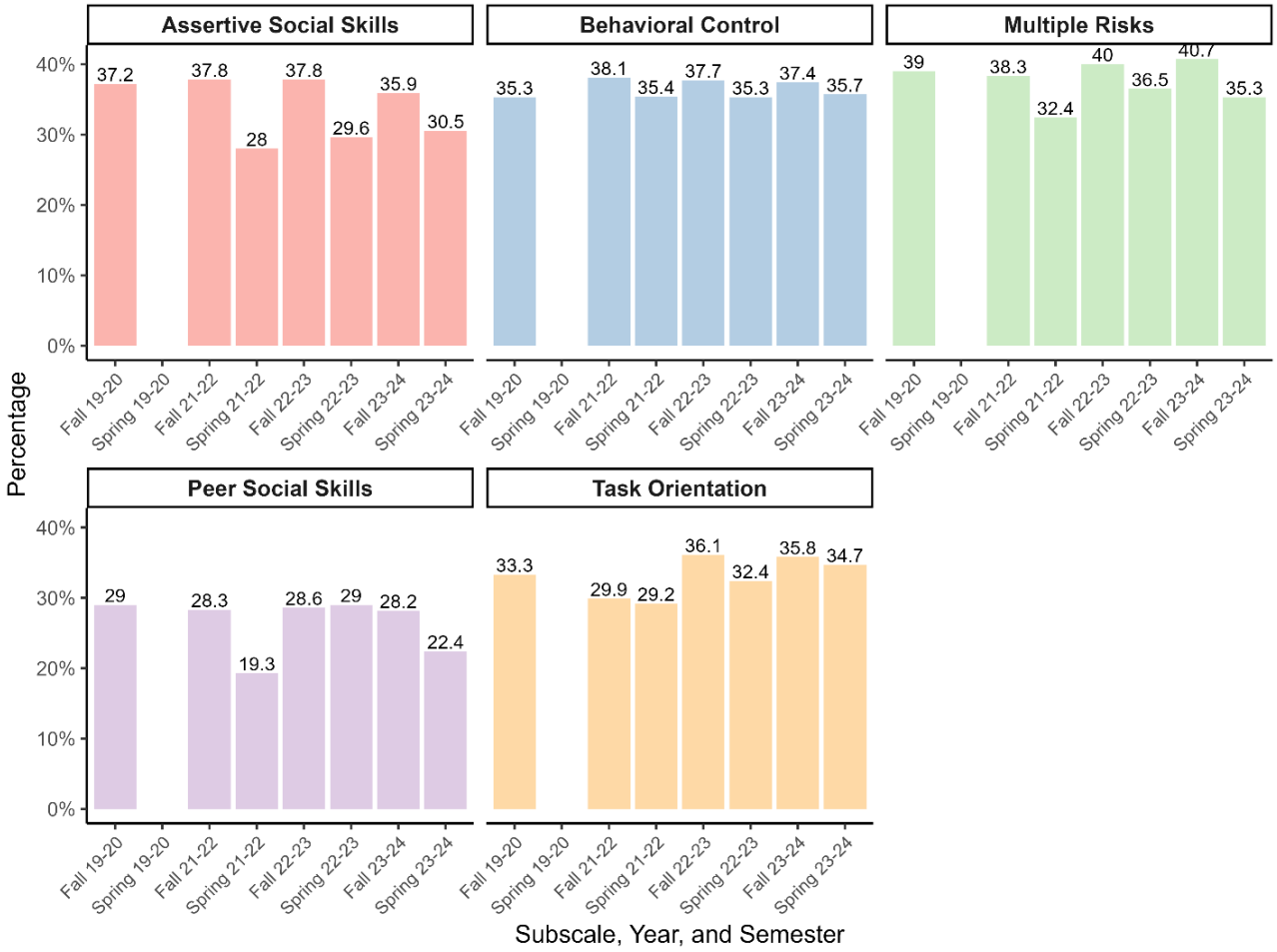


Figure 3. Percentage of RECAP Pre-K-3 population at risk (≤30 percentile), Fall 19-20 through current year.

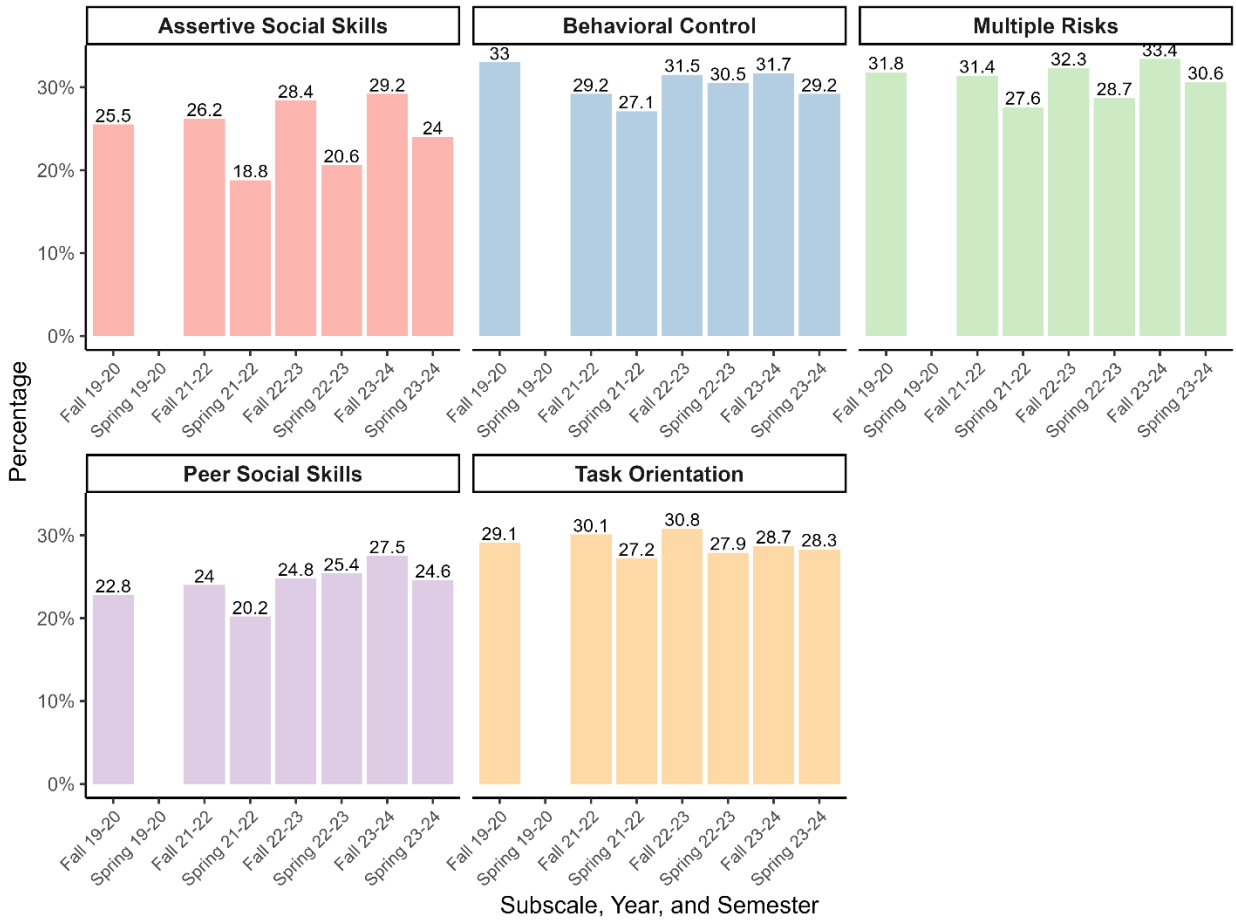


Figure 4. Percentage of RECAP Pre-K-4 population at risk (≤30 percentile), Fall 19-20 through current year.

Conclusions

Overall, both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 cohorts showed growth in social-emotional competencies throughout the school year, including in task orientation, behavior control, assertive social skills, and peer social skills. Effect sizes were small to medium with the smallest change over time in task orientation and behavior control, and the largest change over time in assertiveness, which is consistent with previous years. Notably, the effect size for peer social skills, which was exceptionally low for RECAP historical standards in the year 2022-23 (e.g., d = .06-.08), was higher in the year 2023-24 (d = .19 for both 3- and 4-year old preschoolers).

In terms of risk, results showed that 40.7% of pre-K-3 students in fall and 35.3% in spring had multiple social and emotional risk factors, based on having a percentile score lower than 30%. This is comparable to the risk scores for pre-K-3 children in 2022-23 (i.e., within 1.5%). Additionally, 33.4% of pre-K-4 students in fall and 30.6% in spring had multiple social and emotional risk

factors. Again, these numbers were similar to those seen in the prior year. Though these risk scores are consistent with historical standards, they indicate a key area of concern for RCSD preschool students: More than one-third of preschoolers are arriving at school in fall with multiple areas of concern in terms of social and emotional competence. Thus, we recommend continued full implementation of the Pyramid Model (Hemmeter et al., 2016), including professional development for all teaching staff, as well as continued supports for both Tier-2 and Tier-3 school-based interventions.

References

Hemmeter, M. L., Snyder, P. A., Fox, L., & Algina, J. (2016). Evaluating the implementation of the Pyramid Model for promoting social-emotional competence in early childhood classrooms. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 36(3), 133-146.

Weber, M. R., Lotyczewski, B. S., Montes, G., Hightower, A. D., & Allan, M. (2017). Examining the factorial structure of the T-CRS 2.1. Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 35(3), 336-341.

STUDENT OUTCOMES: CHILD OBSERVATION RECORD (COR) ADVANTAGE

For over twenty years, RECAP has utilized the Child Observation Record (COR) to assess pre-K child outcomes. The latest iteration, COR Advantage, developed and published by HighScope, aligns with the HighScope curriculum currently used in RCSD pre-K programs, ensuring cohesive instructional and assessment methods. This alignment is crucial for an effective educational program. Below is a description of the instrument and a summary of 2023-2024 results.

The COR Advantage is a 36-item teacher-reported inventory that evaluates students in nine categories:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development and Health
- Language, Literacy, and Communication
- Mathematics
- Creative Arts
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- English Language Learning

The COR Advantage is backed by extensive evidence of reliability and validity (see Wakabayashi et al., 2019). Each item is scored from 0 (lowest achievement) to 7 (highest achievement), and RECAP teachers complete the assessment three times annually (fall, winter, and spring). The total COR Advantage score is an average of all eight content areas, and a kindergarten readiness score is also calculated. This readiness score is dichotomous (0, 1), categorizing students as kindergarten ready if they have an overall COR+ score of ≥ 4.00 and a score of ≥ 3.75 in every category.

COR Advantage Results for Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4

The COR Advantage was analyzed by examining descriptive statistics and change scores between T1 (fall) and T3 (spring). A paired samples t-test was used to determine significance of change and effect sizes (i.e., Cohen's *d*). Additionally, we used growth curve modeling (adjusting for clustered data) to examine change in COR+ scores over time.

Below, Tables 11 and 12 display T1 (fall), T2 (winter), and T3 (spring) results for the COR+.

In Figures 5 and 6, we display results from the growth curve modeling analysis that show change over time in COR+ category scores.

Table 11. COR+ Results, Pre-K-3

	COR T1			*COR T2*			*COR T3*				
	N	**Mean**	***SD***	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***	**N**	**Mean**	***SD***	***d***	***p***
Approaches to Learning	1016	2.18	0.82	996	2.79	0.99	952	3.22	0.98	1.21	<.001
Social & Emotional Dev.	1017	2.29	0.96	976	2.86	0.99	932	3.30	1.00	1.06	<.001
Physical Dev. and Health	1016	2.76	0.85	981	3.29	0.89	942	3.81	0.90	1.30	<.001
Language, Literacy, & Comm.	1015	2.04	0.76	957	2.59	0.82	938	2.94	0.84	1.18	<.001
Mathematics	1016	1.98	0.70	949	2.53	0.83	915	2.97	0.84	1.33	<.001
Creative Arts	1017	2.13	0.87	1006	2.83	1.01	940	3.31	1.02	1.32	<.001
Science and Technology	1015	2.07	0.83	1004	2.67	0.88	913	3.05	0.95	1.15	<.001
Social Studies	1016	2.13	0.83	1008	2.70	0.83	915	3.08	0.97	1.10	<.001
Overall COR	1017	2.20	0.75	966	2.78	0.83	910	3.21	0.84	1.35	<.001

Note. The *N* for all three observations was 771.

Table 12. COR+ Results, Pre-K-4

	COR T1			*COR T2*			*COR T3*				
	N	**Mean**	***SD***	***N***	**Mean**	***SD***	**N**	**Mean**	***SD***	***d***	***p***
Approaches to Learning	1491	2.98	0.86	1477	3.62	0.94	1405	4.28	1.10	1.30	<.001
Social & Emotional Dev.	1474	3.09	0.92	1437	3.68	0.97	1384	4.30	1.07	1.19	<.001
Physical Dev. and Health	1490	3.55	0.77	1460	4.12	0.86	1402	4.76	1.00	1.34	<.001
Language, Literacy, & Comm.	1469	2.89	0.73	1434	3.36	0.81	1382	3.97	0.97	1.19	<.001
Mathematics	1470	2.78	0.72	1412	3.48	0.89	1370	4.07	1.00	1.41	<.001
Creative Arts	1468	3.11	0.88	1425	3.80	0.94	1382	4.40	1.01	1.38	<.001
Science and Technology	1474	2.87	0.78	1425	3.52	0.88	1388	4.22	1.09	1.39	<.001
Social Studies	1473	2.89	0.78	1424	3.52	0.89	1379	4.22	1.08	1.36	<.001
Overall COR	1471	3.02	0.71	1387	3.64	0.80	1380	4.28	0.94	1.47	<.001

Note. The N for all three observations was 1161.

The figures below show the average student's growth trajectory in each of the COR Advantage categories. Among pre-K-3 students, Language, Literacy, and Communication and Mathematics had the lowest scores and least amount of growth over the school year. These results are similar with the previous cohort in 2022-23. Scores in Creative Arts exhibited the greatest change over time.

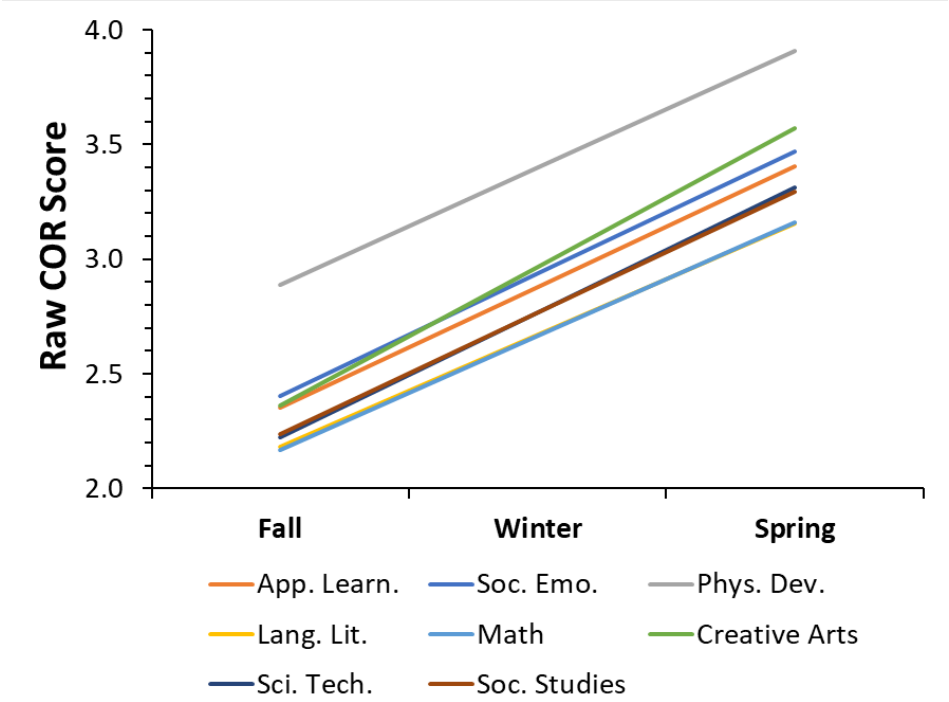


Figure 5. COR domain specific growth scores among Pre-K-3 students.

Among Pre-K-4 students, Language, Literacy and Communication and Mathematics were also the areas of greatest need. Language, Literacy and Communication had the lowest rate of growth over the school year. These results are consistent with the previous cohort of 4-year-olds in 2022-23. Science and Technology started low but had the fastest rate of growth over the school year.

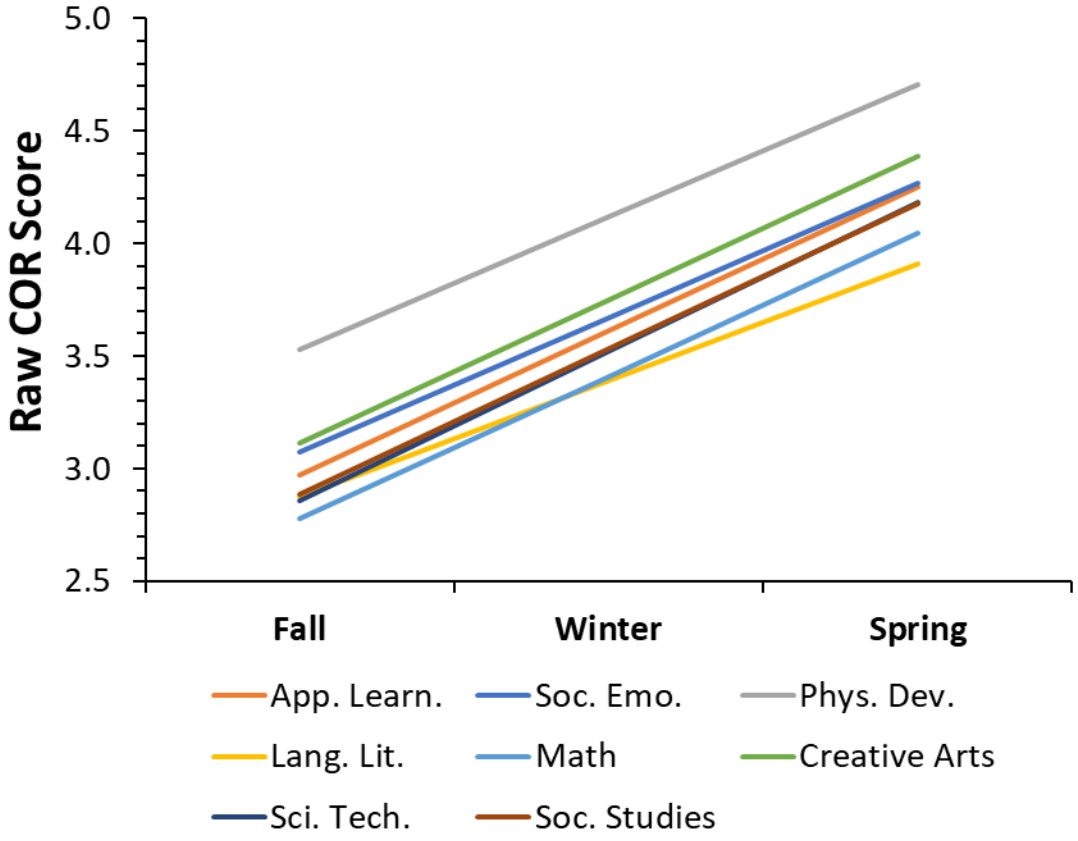


Figure 6. COR domain specific growth scores among Pre-K-4 students.

Demographic Differences by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Disaggregated COR Advantage results can be found in the Supplemental Report. As expected and consistent with previous years, girls scored higher on the COR in both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4. There were also some differences in COR categories and overall scores by race and ethnicity (See Tables S7 through S10).

Kindergarten Readiness

Overall, according to the spring 2024 COR assessment results, 55.2% (752) pf pre-K-4 students were not ready for kindergarten, and 44.8% (611) were kindergarten-ready. This is a slight decline from the 45.5% of pre-K-4 students who were deemed kindergarten-ready in spring of 2023.

Program Duration and Kindergarten Readiness: Table 13 illustrates the impact of pre-K programming duration (i.e., 1- vs. 2-years of dosage) on kindergarten readiness among RCSD students. Of the students who attended only pre-K-4, 60.6% (369) were not ready for kindergarten, while 39.4% (240) were ready. In contrast, among those who attended both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4, 50.8% (383) were not ready, and 49.2% (371) were ready. This was a statistically significant different according to a chi-square test, $\chi^2 = 13.07$ ($df = 1$), $p < .001$. These results indicate that attending both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 is associated with higher kindergarten readiness.

Table 13. Effect of Years of Programming on Kindergarten Readiness

RCSD Student Type	Not Ready *N* (%)	Ready *N* (%)	Total *N* (%)
Attended Pre-K-4 Only	369 (60.6%)	240 (39.4%)	609 (44.7%)
Attended Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4	383 (50.8%)	371 (49.2%)	754 (55.3%)
Total	752 (55.2%)	611 (44.8%)	1363 (100%)

Gender and kindergarten readiness: See Table 14. There was a significant difference in kindergarten readiness between boys and girls according to a chi-square test, $\chi^2 = 10.41$ ($df = 2$), $p < .01$. Out of the 699 girls attending pre-K-4, 48.9% were deemed kindergarten-ready in spring compared to 51.0% deemed not-kindergarten-ready. In contrast, out of the 663 boys attending pre-K-4, only 40.6% were kindergarten-ready in spring compared to 59.4% who were not. Thus, there were approximately 8% more girls who were ready for kindergarten than boys. This gender difference in kindergarten readiness is consistent with prior years, with the exception of 2022-23 wherein there was no statistically significant difference in kindergarten readiness between boys and girls.

Table 14. Effect of Gender on Kindergarten Readiness*

RCSD Student Type	Not Ready *N* (%)	Ready *N* (%)	Total *N* (%)
Female	357 (51.1%)	342 (48.9%)	699 (51.3%)
Male	394 (59.4%)	269 (40.6%)	663 (48.6%)
Total	752 (55.2%)	611 (44.8%)	1363 (100%)

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to one student with no information on gender.

Conclusions

Overall, findings show consistent growth for pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students across all domains, with Creative Arts and Science and Technology showing the most notable improvements.Consistent with prior years, there are several areas of need including Language, Literacy, and Communication, and Mathematics, which exhibited the lowest initial scores and slower growth trajectories.

In terms of kindergarten readiness, results showed a slight decline from the 2022-23 school year. Specifically, there were 44.8% of pre-K-4 students who were rated as kindergarten ready in spring of their preschool year. We also investigated the impact of "program dosage", or the number of years children attended pre-K. This analysis showed that children who attended two years of pre-K (i.e., pre-K-3 and pre-K-4) were significantly more likely to be rated as kindergarten ready compared to those who only attended the four-year-old program. Specifically, 49.2% of children who attended two years of pre-K were kindergarten ready, and 39.4% of children who attended only one year of pre-K were kindergarten ready.

Other analyses showed that there continues to be a gender gap in COR scores and kindergarten readiness. There were 8% more girls who were ready for kindergarten in spring of their pre-K-4 year compared to boys. This gender difference in kindergarten readiness is consistent with most prior years.

Overall, these findings have several practical implications for the preschool system. First, there may be a need for targeted interventions and curricular improvements in the areas of lower COR performance, particularly Language, Literacy, and Communication, and Mathematics. Additionally, additional resources should be targeted to support boys to improve pre-academic skills and overall kindergarten readiness. We recommend continued use of COR Advantage as an assessment tool given its reliability and alignment with the preschool curriculum. Additionally, findings highlight the importance of program dosage and the added benefit of children attending preschool at three years of age.

References

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. (2014). COR Advantage. High/Scope Press.

Wakabayashi, T., Claxton, J., & Smith Jr, E. V. (2019). Validation of a revised observation-based assessment tool for children birth through kindergarten: The COR advantage. Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 37(1), 69-90.

STUDENT OUTCOMES: ATTENDANCE

Attendance is critical for preschool students' growth and development over the course of the school year. Previous RECAP findings have linked higher attendance with better student outcomes. Unfortunately, chronic absenteeism (i.e., <80% of days attended) is historically a widespread problem among preschool families. Furthermore, chronic absenteeism has increased in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. See below for descriptive findings on rates of attendance and chronic absenteeism in the 2023-24 school year.

Descriptive Findings

See Table 15 for a summary of attendance among pre-K students in the 2023-24 school year.

Table 15. Attendance statistics, 2023-24 school year.

Attendance Category	**Pre-K-3 (*N, %*)**	**Pre-K-4 (*N, %*)**
<80%	798 (57.5%)	1,042 (55.3%)
80-90%	331 (23.8%)	475 (25.2%)
90% +	260 (18.7%)	366 (19.4%)
Attendance Category	**Pre-K-3 (*N, %*)**	**Pre-K-4 (*N, %*)**
<60%	425 (30.6%)	514 (27.3%)
60% +	964 (69.4%)	1,369 (72.7%)
Attendance Averages	***M* (*SD*)**	***M* (*SD*)**
Days Present	118.33 (47.86)	125.26 (41.29)
Days Absent	38.25 (29.23)	41.06 (30.69)
Days Absent, Excused	11.19 (14.18)	10.24 (14.85)
Days Absent, Unexcused	27.05 (28.72)	30.80 (28.88)
Present Percentage	71.56% (24.40%)	73.73% (20.84%)

Results show high rates of chronic absenteeism, with 57.5% and 55.3% of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students, respectively, categorized as chronically absent. Further, more than one-quarter of preschool students attended fewer than 60% of total school days. Rates of chronic absenteeism have increased even more since the 2022-23 school year, going up approximately four percentage points for three-year-olds, and going up approximately five percentage points for four-year-olds. This highlights the growing need to intervene and to increase school attendance for all preschoolers. Thus, interventions at the family, classroom, and school-level are needed to increase preschool attendance, given links between attendance and a variety of beneficial outcomes for children.

Student Demographics and Attendance

Several comparisons were made to determine if attendance differed, at a group level, by student characteristics such as race and ethnicity.

Results (see Figure 7) showed that there was a significant different in attendance by ethnicity, $F(1,2907) = 20.21$, $p < .001$, with non-Hispanic/Latino(a) students having an average attendance rate of 74.1% and Hispanic/Latino(a) students having an average attendance rate of 70.0%. There was not a significant difference in attendance between boys and girls, $F(1,2905) = 1.91$, $p = .168$. Finally, there was a significant difference in grade level, with pre-K-4 students having on average slightly higher attendance rates, F(1,2907) = 6.23, p = .01. Altogether, these results support the need for culturally relevant attendance interventions and strategies for preschool students.

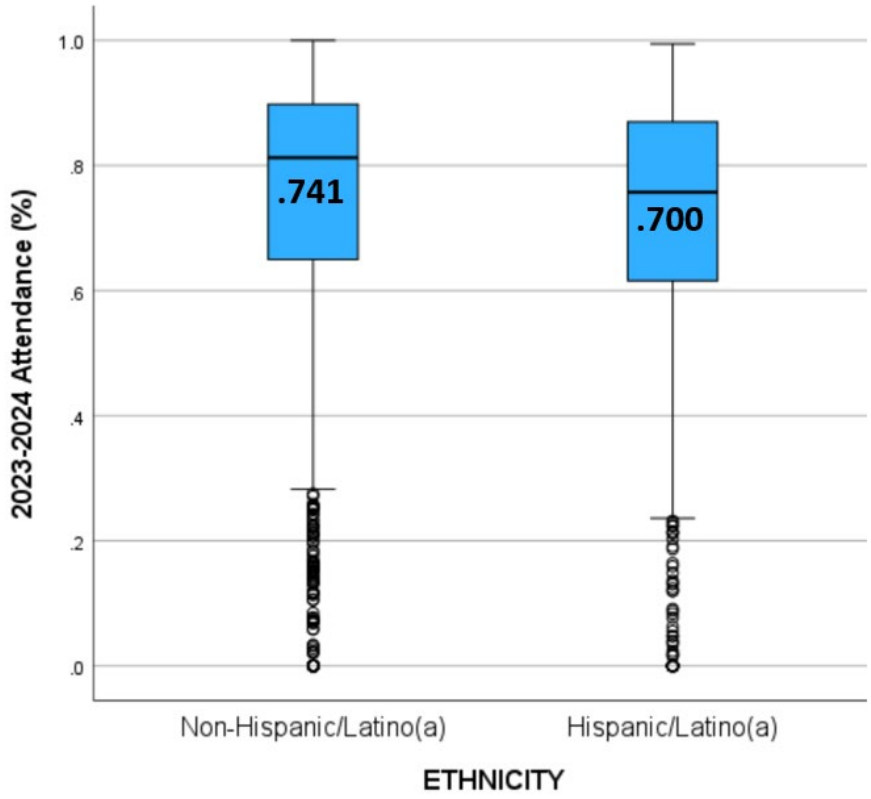


Figure 7. Attendance percentage averages, comparisons by ethnicity.

UPK Attendance Workgroup

Introduction

In response to the results of the RECAP 2022-23 Annual Report regarding Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) student attendance rates, the RECAP Community Advisory Committee formed an ad hoc workgroup to explore the issue of chronic absenteeism in Rochester's UPK system and share learnings to inform efforts that may improve attendance rates. Of concern were the following results: 1) average attendance among pre-K-3 children was 71% and for pre-K-4 children the rate was 73% and, 2) 54% of 3-year-olds and 51% of 4-year-olds are considered chronically absent (missing 20% or more school days)

The workgroup included representatives from Rochester City School District Department of Early Education, community-based UPK providers, and Children's Institute RECAP Assessment Team staff. The workgroup met several times between Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 and tasks were completed throughout this timeframe. Literature and resources on school attendance were reviewed. Resources included Attendance Works, Head Start Performance Standards on Attendance, Rochester City School District Department of Attendance Policy, and reports such as *Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools – Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences*.

The workgroup decided upon three activities to gather additional local information and gain an understanding of the reasons contributing to the low attendance rates of Rochester's UPK students.

- To obtain parent/family perspectives on prekindergarten attendance:
  - Caring Connections parent/caregiver survey included questions on attendance
  - Roc the Future Alliance Parent Café small group discussion sessions on attendance
- To obtain teacher perspectives on prekindergarten attendance:
  - Individual teacher interviews were completed for those classrooms with high attendance rates documented in the 2022-23 school year

Caring Connections Survey

Caring Connections is a program led by UPK program family liaisons and supported by Children's Institute staff that provides parent education and connection via webinars, one-on-one support from "Caring Connectors" (parent/adult family educators), and parent discussion groups. The goal is to facilitate connections between preschool families and schools/early childhood centers using innovative digital technologies, creating caring connections that improve preschool child and family wellbeing.

Administered in April 2024, the Caring Connections survey included the following questions about prekindergarten attendance: 1) What are some things that often get in the way of your child attending school every day? and 2) What resources would be helpful for you to make sure your child attends school every day? Respondents (n = 73) indicated that common reasons for missing school are *illness, transportation, childcare and school refusal*. Respondents commented that the following resources could help improve attendance: *reliable transportation (ex. gas, school bus, reliable car), reliable and affordable childcare (including wrap-around care), help with basic needs such as laundry, and preventative efforts to keep children healthier such as ill children remaining home.*

Roc the Future Alliance Parent Café

Roc the Future Alliance is a community-wide coalition working together to ensure academic success for every child. The collective impact initiative brings together partners and parents/caregivers working towards a shared vision of academic and social-emotional success for every child. A series of Parent Café discussion sessions were facilitated throughout the year. At the session on April 15, 2024, discussions included the topic of prekindergarten attendance and had 23 attendees.

Below are the discussion questions and responses from the session.

What does PreK/ Kindergarten success look like for you and your child/children?

- *Support both in and out of school.*
- *When disciplining my child, make me aware before the action takes place.*
- *Having a good relationship with my child's teacher.*
- *A school where my kids can be safe.*
- *Understand that all children are not the same and have patience when my child is*
- *struggling.*
- *A successful PreK would make sure my child is ready to move into kindergarten*
- *and continue to be successful.*
- *My child attends the XXXXX program, and I feel connected to the program because*
- *they have helped our family a lot since we came to Rochester (food, school and*
- *housing). Teachers will call and tell us how my child is doing in school.*
- *The school understands my culture.*
- *Teachers and administration who care*
- *I want my child to have the same opportunities every child has (good education,*
- *safe at school)*

- *No calls from the teacher*
- *A call to tell me my child had a good day*

Who or what would be a part of that success?

- *Parent liaison*
- *Office and support Staff because they know everything that happens in the school.*
- *Outside providers (counseling)*
- *My community of fellow parents. I wish the school would encourage parents to get to*
- *know each other. They are always rushing us out of the building.*
- *Resources from the school to help me help my child.*
- *Feeling welcomed when I come to school.*

What are the barriers to your child attending PreK?

- *Transportation*
- *The school (neighborhood) isn't safe*
- *My child was put on a waitlist for the school I wanted. I do not like the school where my child is attending.*
- *My work schedule. I need childcare after school and do not always have someone to pick my child up.*
- *Childcare costs are high*
- *Weather. Rochester is cold. No one plows the sidewalks.*
- *If my child misses the school bus - hub on St. Paul is not safe*

Teacher Interviews

Attendance data from the 2022-2023 school year was reviewed to identify Rochester City School District (RCSD) Prekindergarten classrooms (CBO and school-based) with the highest child attendance rates (>.85). Nineteen classroom teachers out of 174 achieved this attendance level. Eleven of those teachers were contacted by e-mail and invited to participate in a 30-minute telephone interview in February and March 2024. Seven teachers participated in an individual interview.

The goals of the interviews were to gather information on specific practices used in their programs that, in their opinion, contributed to their successful attendance rate and what the Rochester prekindergarten system could do to improve child attendance rates. Interview questions included 1) How did you achieve great attendance last year? and 2) What do you think we as a pre-k program and district could do to improve attendance? Responses are summarized below.

Building Relationships: A Cornerstone for Attendance

It's not one simple thing – its continual reminders and relationships – it is not 'I gotcha,' but rather, 'How can I help you?'

Teachers emphasized the importance of fostering strong relationships with parents and students. This forms the foundation for good attendance. Below are examples of how they achieved this.

> **Open Communication:** Teachers used various methods to connect with parents, including phone calls, texts, emails, Seesaw, and open-door policies. One teacher highlighted the importance of finding out how parents prefer to communicate.
> **Welcome Environment:** Creating a warm and welcoming classroom where children feel safe and loved is key. One teacher stressed acknowledging every family and expressing happiness when they bring their child to school.
> **Parental Involvement:** Several teachers encouraged parent involvement through activities, conferences, and field trips. Monthly parent-child activity nights with the teacher and adult family educator were suggested.

Making School Engaging: Where Children Want to Be

Teachers highlighted strategies to make prekindergarten an exciting and stimulating place for children, fostering a desire to attend.

> **Play-Based Learning:** Teachers emphasized the value of play-based learning and hands-on activities over a teacher-directed curriculum. One teacher expressed that the current curriculum lacks the engagement of the previous High Scope curriculum.
> **Incorporating Interests:** One teacher advocated for incorporating children's interests into lesson plans, making learning fun and relevant.
> **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Focusing on social-emotional skills like expressing feelings and self-regulation helps children feel comfortable and supported in the classroom.

Addressing Challenges and Supporting Families

Teachers also acknowledged challenges to attendance and suggested solutions:

> **Transportation:** Several teachers identified transportation as a barrier, especially for families who live far from the school.

Attendance Policies: Some teachers felt the UPK attendance letters were too negative and suggested a softer approach.
Family Support: Teachers offered various suggestions to support families, including establishing routines at enrollment, providing resources for special needs services, and creating social support networks. One teacher suggested offering a staggered start to the year with home visits to build relationships before classes begin.

These UPK teachers highlighted the importance of building relationships, creating an engaging learning environment, and supporting families as key factors in achieving good attendance. They provided valuable insights into strategies and challenges, offering a well-rounded perspective on fostering a positive school experience for young children and their families.

Conclusion

Information gathered from national resources and publications as well as local parents and teachers indicate similar barriers faced by families and opportunities for the community to support families' access and participation in Rochester's Universal Prekindergarten program at school- and community-based locations. This summary will further inform Rochester's providers and policymakers through their efforts to support our youngest students and their families.

Taken together, there are several recommendations based on the work of the RECAP Attendance Workgroup. A common barrier to attendance is logistical, namely transportation and availability and cost of childcare. Thus, we recommend working with families and community partners to address these needs. Second, we recommend creating stronger family-school partnerships that foster open communication about children's needs and barriers to attendance. Family-centered practices such as offering home visits may work to strengthen family-school connections. Additionally, communication to families should be positive, emphasizing the importance of attendance and how it benefits their child (versus communication that is punitive in nature). Third, we recommend that teachers continue to engage early learners with play-based strategies and curricula, which may motivate children's interest and motivation to attend school.

PRE-K SCREENINGS

Brigance© Early Childhood Screen III

The Brigance Early Childhood Screen (Brigance & French, 2013) is administered to each pre-K student within the first 90 days of enrollment. This typically occurs between September and November, although assessments are given throughout the year for newly enrolled students. This validated and widely used tool assesses each child's developmental level and potential needs, covering three subscales: Language Development, Academic and Cognitive Skills, and Physical Development and Health. An overall score is calculated out of 100 points, with specific cut-off scores determining whether a child falls into the 'at risk' or 'talented' categories. Additionally, an "At Risk" score is derived from a subset of items based on the student's age to identify those needing further evaluation. The administration of the Brigance is not required for students in self-contained classrooms and/or those who already have an IEP.

Based on students' scores and their age group, RECAP categorizes students into one of four categories:

1. **Need for formal evaluation**: High-risk students who may need further assessment for developmental delays.
2. **Monitor closely**: Students who require close monitoring.
3. **Functioning in normal range**: Students developing within the typical range.
4. **Possibly talented and may need enhanced work**: Students who are potentially gifted and may benefit from advanced activities and stimulation.

Results for Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4

Table 16 displays the outcomes of Brigance screening for pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students for the 2023-24 academic year. Among the 883 Pre-K-3 students, 31.7% (280) were identified as needing formal evaluation, 3.7% (33) require close monitoring, 56.5% (499) are functioning within the normal range, and 8.0% (71) are possibly talented and may need enhanced work. For the 1,282 pre-K-4 students, 32.8% (420) were identified as needing formal evaluation, 3.4% (43) require close monitoring, 54.3% (696) are functioning within the normal range, and 9.6% (123) are possibly talented and may need enhanced work.

Table 16. 2023-24 Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4 Brigance Screening Status Outcomes

Screening Status	Pre-K-3 (*N* = 883)		Pre-K-4 (*N* = 1,282)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Determine need for formal evaluation	280	31.7	420	32.8
Monitor closely	33	3.7	43	3.4
Functioning in normal range	499	56.5	696	54.3
Possibly talented and may need enhanced work	71	8.0	123	9.6

Trends in Brigance III Screening Results

Figures 8 and 8, below, show the trends in Brigance III screening results spanning from 2016-17 through the current year. Overall, there has been consistently at least one-third of all pre-K students who are deemed at-risk (i.e., categorized as *determine need for formal evaluation* or *monitor closely*). Additionally, a notable trend is the increase in risk for both 3- and 4-year-old children. This is particularly noticeable for the current pre-K-3 cohort, which had the highest number of children in need of additional services in the last eight years.

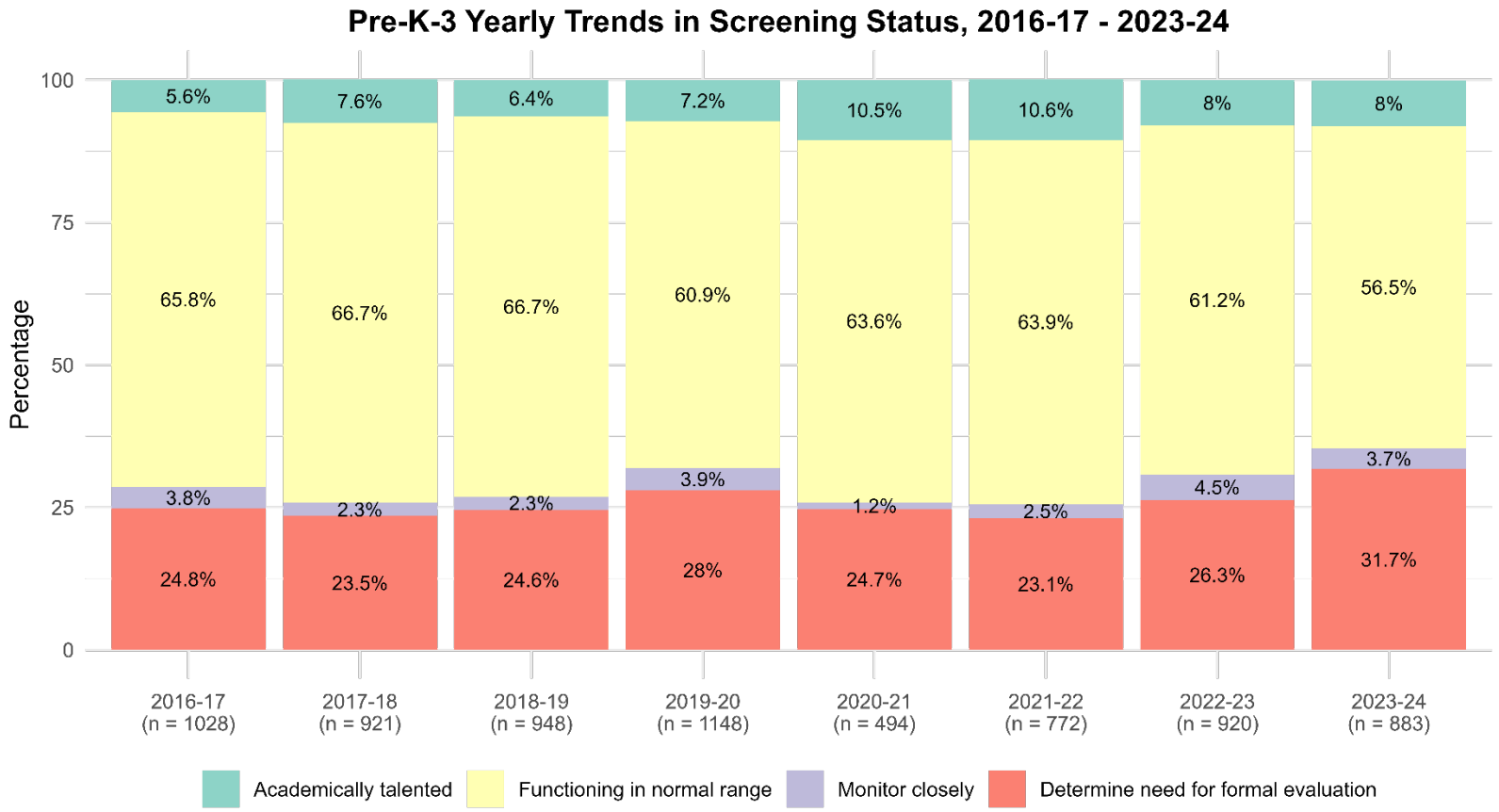


Figure 8. Trends in Brigance III Screening by Cohort Year, Pre-K-3

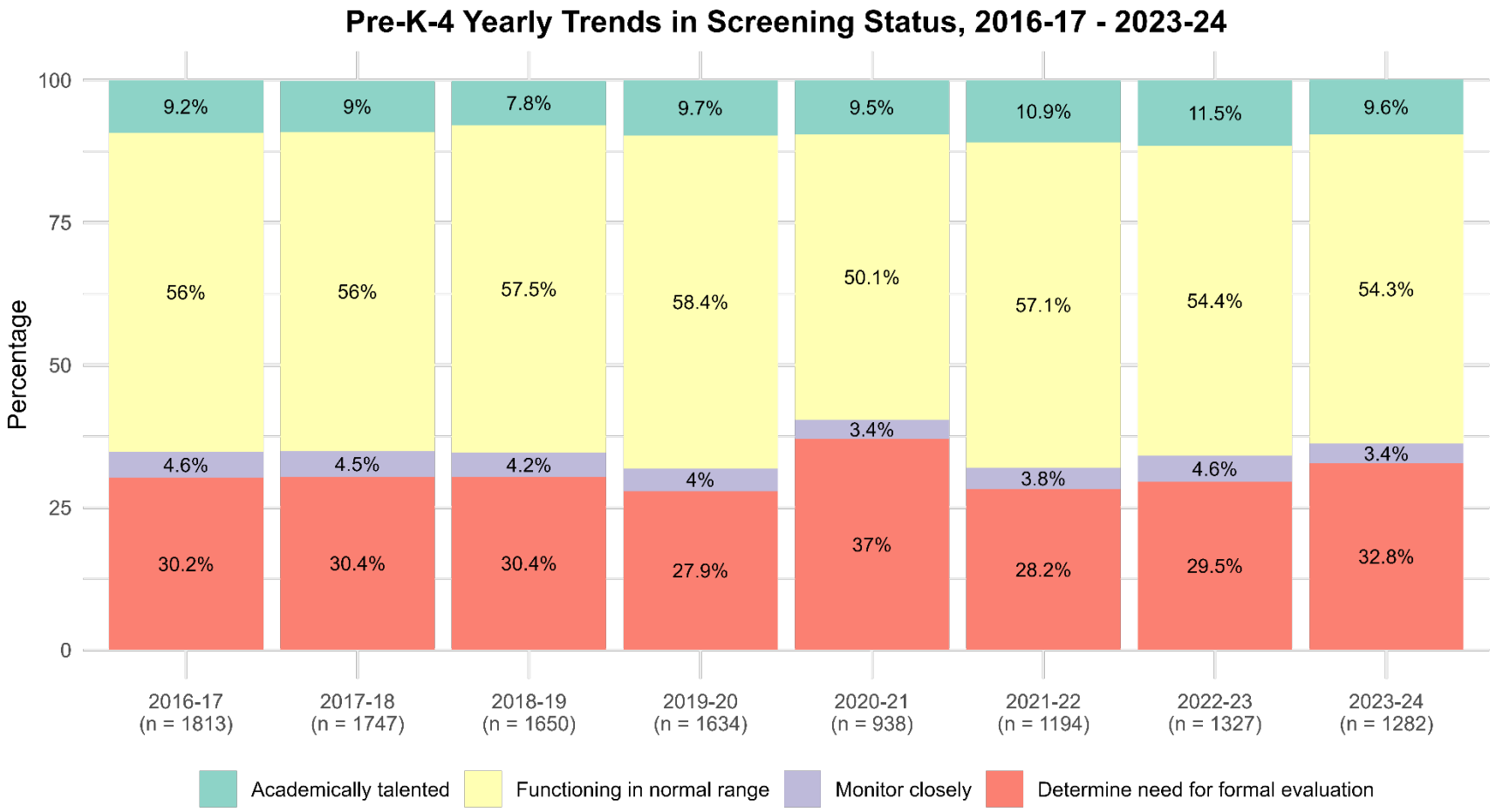


Figure 9. Trends in Brigance III Screening by Cohort Year, Pre-K-4

Get Ready to GROW Screenings

The Get Ready to GROW (GRTG) initiative of Children's Institute conducted 1,462 pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 comprehensive screenings for Rochester City School District (RCSD) students at school-based sites and community-based organizations. GRTG uses comprehensive state-of-the-art instruments to screen children in multiple areas including vision, hearing, dental, BMI, physical development (motor skills), speech/language, cognitive functioning, and social/emotional.

Below (see Table 17, 18) we present results (total screened and percentage for follow up, referral, and on track). We also present the frequencies for students' count of flags (i.e., follow up or referral) in Table 19.

Screenings were conducted for vision (using SPOT technology), hearing (using Pure Tone hearing screening, otoacoustic emissions [OAE] screening, or tympanometry screening), dental (assessed via a visual inspection for tooth decay – 'lift the lip'), BMI (height and weight), motor skills (using the DIAL – Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning), and language (using the Preschool Language Scale [PLS-5]). The total screened and percentage referred for follow-up are shown in the table below.

Table 17. Get Ready to GROW Screenings for Pre-K-3

	N **(total screened)**	**Follow Up (%)**	**Referral (%)**	**On Track (%)**
Vision	576	-	132 (22.9%)	444 (77.1%)
Hearing	544	2 (0.4%)	97 (17.8%)	445 (81.8%)
Dental	233	-	23 (9.9%)	210 (90.1%)
BMI	234	-	54 (23.1%)	180 (76.9%)
Gross Motor	541	42 (7.8%)	97 (17.9%)	402 (74.3%)
Fine Motor	541	62 (11.5%)	109 (20.1%)	370 (68.4%)
Motor	541	61 (11.3%)	111 (20.5%)	369 (68.2%)
Speech/Language	518	63 (12.2%)	167 (32.2%)	288 (55.6%)

Table 18. Get Ready to GROW Screenings for Pre-K-4

	N (total screened)	Follow Up (%)	Referral (%)	On Track (%)
Vision	821	-	174 (21.2%)	647 (78.8%)
Hearing	823	-	93 (11.3%)	730 (88.7%)
Dental	579	-	59 (16.1%)	308 (83.9%)
BMI	584	-	99 (27.3%)	263 (72.7%)
Gross Motor	785	37 (4.7%)	87 (11.1%)	661 (84.2%)
Fine Motor	785	50 (6.4%)	114 (14.5%)	621 (79.1%)
Motor	785	52 (6.6%)	118 (15.0%)	615 (78.3%)
Speech/Language	732	57 (7.8%)	152 (20.8%)	532 (71.4%)

Table 19. Multiple Flags (Refer or Follow Up) on GROW Screenings

Pre-K-3			Pre-K-4		
Flags	***N (students)***	**%**	**Flags**	***N (students)***	**%**
0	192	32.1	0	365	42.4
1	165	27.6	1	246	28.6
2	65	10.9	2	79	9.2
3	47	7.9	3	53	6.2
4	72	12.0	4	68	7.9
5	47	7.9	5	43	5.0
6	9	1.5	6	7	.8
7	1	.2	7	0	0
8	0	0	8	0	0
Total	598	100%	Total	861	100

Conclusions

Results from the pre-K Brigance and Get Ready to GROW screenings provide critical insights into the needs of pre-K students in Rochester. A notable trend is the consistent proportion of students falling into the at-risk categories (i.e., requiring formal evaluation or close monitoring) over the last eight years. This is particularly concerning in the current pre-K-3 cohort, which had the highest percentage of children needing additional services since 2016-17. These findings suggest an increasing prevalence of developmental risk factors among younger children in the district. On the other hand, the Brigance screening showed that 8.0% of pre-K-3 students and 9.6% of pre-K-4 students were rated as potentially talented and in need of additional or different work. This highlights the importance of providing additional classroom enrichment opportunities for these gifted students.

The Get Ready to GROW (GRTG) initiative further highlighted key developmental and health concerns among pre-K students. For pre-K-3 students, referral rates were highest for speech/language (32.2% referral rate), followed by BMI (23.1% referral rate) and vision (22.9% referral rate). Findings were similar for pre-K-4 students, with 21.2% referred for vision, 27.3% for BMI, and 20.8% for speech/language.

Overall, there were only 32% of pre-K-3 students and 42% of pre-K-4 students who were on-track without any Refer or Follow-Up flags. This highlights the necessity of both comprehensive screening and appropriate follow-up services among this population.

Together, the Brigance Early Childhood Screen and the various GRTG screening tools provide a comprehensive picture of pre-K student needs as they enter the preschool classroom. While the Brigance focuses on developmental milestones and academic readiness, GRTG screenings assesses physical health, vision, hearing, and motor skills. Taken together, these tools should enable educators and administrators to develop targeted interventions tailored to each child's unique needs.

Based on these findings, recommendations include the continued use of Brigance and GRTG in classrooms, with an expansion of GRTG screenings for all preschool children enrolled in pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 in RCSD. Additionally, the findings highlight the developmental needs of preschool students in Rochester's pre-K system. These needs will necessitate expanded resources for students in preschool, along with additional professional development opportunities and support for teachers to respond to increasing student needs.

References

Brigance, A. H., & French, B. (2013). *Brigance Early Childhood Screens III*. Curriculum Associates, Inc.

FAMILY SURVEY RESULTS

RECAP has been developing, collecting and analyzing parent and family measures and surveys since the beginning of Rochester's pre-Kindergarten program in 1998-99, using numerous instruments. The 2023-24 UPK Family Survey represents RECAP's latest work in gaining families' perspectives on the pre-K programs their children attend. The survey's current version includes an established measure from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, along with district-specific questions about families' experiences in education, health, and social-emotional realms.

Development of the 2023-24 Universal Pre-K Family Survey

The 2023-24 school year marked the third time that families of pre-K students were electronically surveyed. A small RECAP team convened to amend the district-specific questions to better document families' situations. New this year, to better understand families and their needs, we asked, "In a normal day, how many hours of screen time (tablet, TV, videos on phone, etc.) does your child typically get?" and "What are some things that often get in the way of your child attending school?" As we have since 2016-17, we continued to include the statistically validated questions from the nationally developed Family and Teacher Relationship Quality questionnaire (F-TRQ), discussed in detail below.

Administration Procedures

For the third year, we presented an electronic family survey, this year via Qualtrics in place of Microsoft Forms offered in past years. Paper forms used before electronic surveys were traceable to individual children and classrooms. Our electronic surveys were anonymous, identifiable only by self-reported grade level and school type (school-based versus community-based). This anonymity was intentional to produce more equitable and honest responses. The family survey was offered in English and Spanish for a one-time, spring, distribution.

Children's Institute emailed a flyer to Rochester City School District (RCSD) administrators containing a QR code and survey link to provide to parents and caregivers to access the survey. Along with survey access, Children's Institute provided parent prompts that could be employed on different academic and social media platforms. Data is not available on specific distribution tactics that were used.

The survey was active for parents and families of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students from May 23rd to July 31st, 2024. The survey directions stated the time commitment (approximately 10-15 minutes) and assured respondent anonymity. The total number of responses, sample size (*N*), was 67. Of those 67 respondents, 33 (49.3%) answered every survey question. Thirty-two people (47.8% of respondents) answered less than 50% of questions. Sample sizes are included with each table and

figure below. Overall, responses decreased from 2022-23 (*N* = 224). Generally, the district reported an average response rate of 10% from parents and caregivers in kindergarten through 12th grade. Response rates for the 2023-24 UPK Family Survey were below 10%. For Pre-K-3 families, compared to the year-end registration of 1,452, there were 20 (1.4%) families who responded to the survey and input information about grade; for pre-K-4 families compared to the year-end registration of 1,943 there were 28 (1.4%) of families who responded to the survey and input information about grade.

A general breakdown of respondent characteristics and how they accessed the survey are in Tables 20 – 24. Please note, due to rounding, percentages may not always add up to 100.0%. As seen in Table 20, most participants were English speakers.

Table 20. Language preference of respondents (*N* = 67).

	Percent	***N***
English	97.0% *	65
Spanish	3.0% *	2

*Similar percentages in 2022-23 (English 97.8%, *N* = 219 and Spanish 2.2%, *N* = 5)

In 2022-23, respondents from school-based and community-based centers were 64.7% and 35.3%, respectively (*N* = 224), see Table 21. The percentage of school-based and community-based respondents changed in 2023-24 to 83.3% and 16.7%, respectively. Meanwhile those who did not self-identify grade level and school type was 28.4% (19 persons). The lack of community-based respondents is an additional limitation of these results.

Table 21. School type of respondents' children (*N* = 48).

	2023-24 Pre-K-3	**2023-24 Pre-K-4**	**2022-23 Pre-K-3**	**2022-23 Pre-K-4**	**2021-22***
School-Based	37.5% (*N* = 18)	45.8% (*N* = 22)	29.0% (*N* = 65)	35.7% (*N* = 80)	52.3% (*N* = 138)
Community-Based	4.2% (*N* = 2)	12.5% (*N* = 6)	15.6% (*N* = 35)	19.6% (*N* = 44)	47.7% (*N* = 126)

*Grade information not gathered in 2021-22

Table 22 below shows the breakdown of respondents based on their relationship to the child. Most respondents were mothers, while a large portion did not identify their relationship (19 of 67 people, 28.4%).

Table 22. Respondent relationship to child (*N* = 48).

	Percent	*N*
Mother	91.7%	44
Father	6.3%	3
Grandparent	0.0%	0
Sibling	0.0%	0
Foster Parent	0.0%	0
Other	2.1%	1

In 2023-24, most of the parents and caregivers that responded were prompted to complete the survey from a link posted on the education platform, SeeSaw, or a posted QR code. This is a change from 2022-23, where most respondents were prompted by a survey link emailed or texted to them from the District's Office of Communications. See Table 23 below for a breakdown of all options.

Table 23. Platform by which the respondents accessed the survey (*N* = 33).

	Percent	*N*
Posted flyer QR code	27.3%	9
Link on the RCSD's Early Childhood website	0.0%	0
Link sent to my email	12.1%	4
Link texted to me	21.2%	7
Link posted on SeeSaw	33.3%	11
Link on Twitter	0.0%	0
Link on Facebook	0.0%	0
Robocall	0.0%	0
Other	6.1%	2

Note. Other included: school email (1), school event (1)

Description of the Family and Teacher Relationship Quality Measure

As part of the UPK Family Survey, RECAP utilizes the Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality (FPTRQ) Parent measure developed by Kim and colleagues (2015). RECAP changed the title to Family and Teacher Relationship Quality (F-TRQ) Family measure, F-TRQ– Family. For a more in-depth history of RECAP's adoption of this measure, see the Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership Twentieth and Twenty-First Annual Reports (Infurna et al, 2017; Infurna et al, 2018).

The F-TRQ–Family asks caretakers general questions about how they interact with their children's teachers. It assesses three constructs and eight subscales which describe family and teacher relationship quality from the family perspective. The F-TRQ–Family contains 25 questions rated

on a 1-4 Likert scale, with 4 being the most desirable score. Of note, respondent scores were computed only if more than 90% of questions within the construct or subscale were answered. If this criterion was met, missing scores were imputed using mean substitution. Excluding a respondent in one subscale or construct did not prevent that respondent from being included in a different subscale or construct.

In addition, RECAP retained the question, "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the worst you can imagine and 5 is the best you can imagine, how would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher?" from the FPTRQ parent measure, long form. After the F-TRQ questions were posed, information was gathered at the request of RCSD about specific RCSD initiatives. Those RCSD-specific questions will be considered after the F-TRQ discussion.

The F-TRQ–Family instrument assesses three constructs: Knowledge, Practices, and Attitudes, containing eight subscales. The constructs and subscales, as defined by the authors (Kim et al., 2015) are:

Knowledge: The Knowledge construct includes one subscale: *Family-specific Knowledge*, which is defined as "knowledge and an understanding of families' cultures; the context in which they live; situations that affect them; and their abilities, needs, and goals".

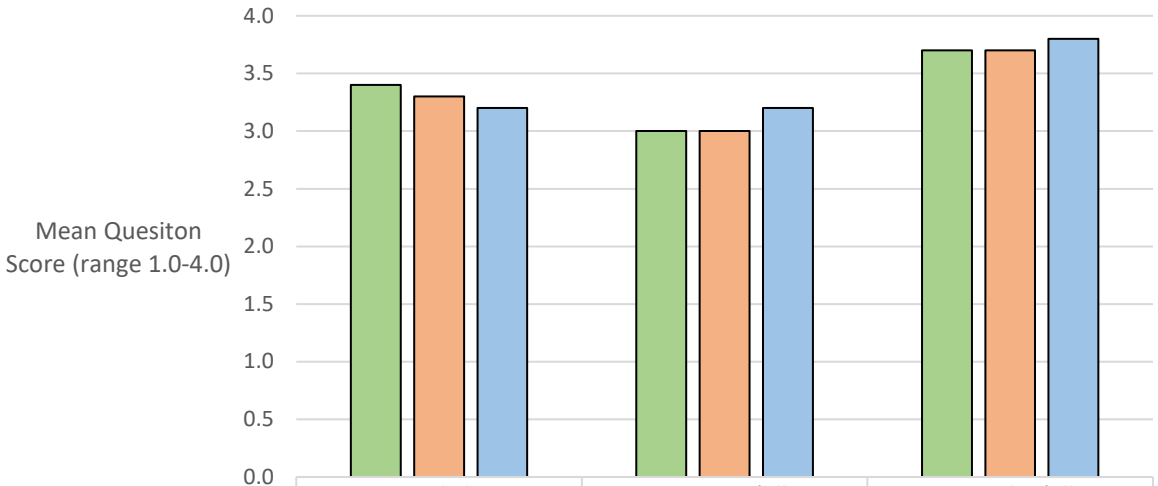
Practices: The Practices construct includes four subscales: *Collaboration, Responsiveness, Communication,* and *Family-focused Concern*. The Collaboration subscale addresses collaboration and engagement between families and teachers "through joint goal setting, decision-making, and following up on this decision-making process through the development of action plans". The Responsiveness subscale is defined as engaging "in sensitive, flexible, and responsive support of families' identified needs and goals". The Communication subscale is defined as promoting "positive, two-way communication that is responsive to families' preferences" and teachers' personal boundaries. The Family-focused Concern subscale is defined as "communication that demonstrates interest in the family as a unit".

Attitudes: The Attitudes construct includes three subscales: *Commitment, Understanding Context,* and *Respect*. The Commitment subscale measures "sensitivity to the needs of children, parents, and families; intrinsic motivation, or viewing work as "more than a job;" and being sincere, honest, encouraging, accessible, and consistent in interactions" with families and children. The Understanding Context subscale measures "having an appreciation for the broader context in which children's development and families' lives are situated and viewing the family as a unit, rather than focusing on the individual child". The Respect subscale measures "valuing the child and the family; being non-judgmental courteous/welcoming, and non-discriminatory; being accepting of divergent opinions of families (e.g., on managing children's behavior/how to socialize

children); and being considerate and patient with families when trying to elicit changes in their behavior".

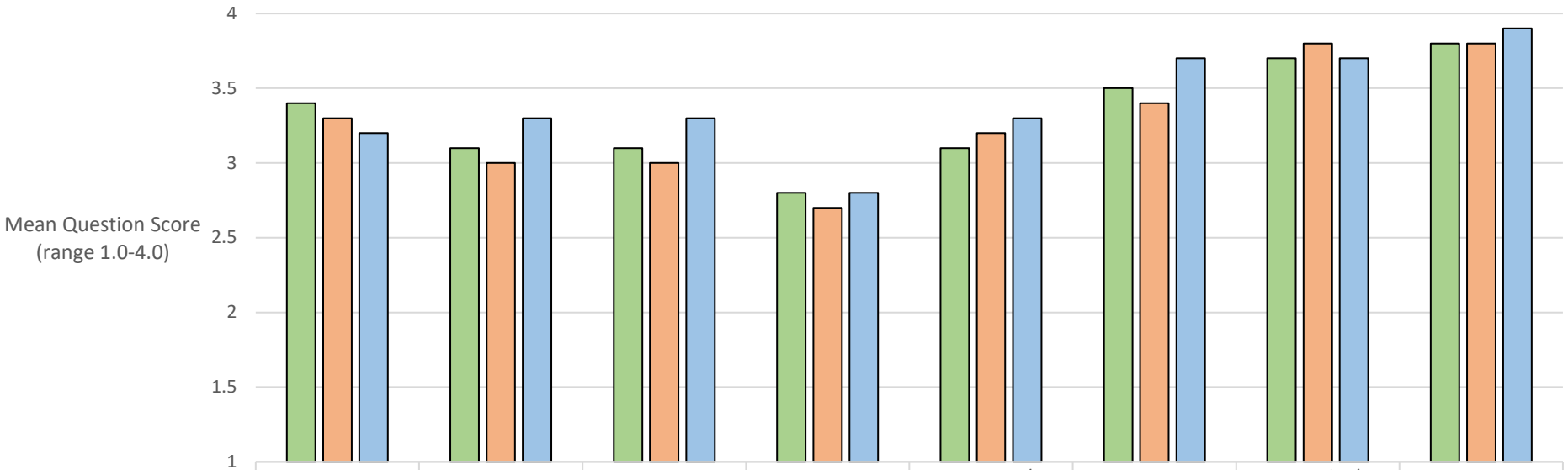
Results of the Family and Teacher Relationship Quality–Family Measure

Figures 10 and 11 present the mean construct and subscale scores, respectively, for F-TRQ–Family surveys, from the last three distributions.



	Knowledge (Family-specific)	Practices (All Subscales)	Attitudes (All Subscales)
2021-22 (238 ≤ N ≤ 250)	3.4	3.0	3.7
2022-23 (211 ≤ N ≤ 217)	3.3	3.0	3.7
2023-24 (35 ≤ N ≤ 39)	3.2	3.2	3.8

Figure 10. **F-TRQ–Family** comparison of construct means from 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24. Numerically, results were consistent. However, the mean question score in the Knowledge Construct decreased by two tenths of a point from 2021-22 to 2023-24. The mean question score in the Practices Construct increased by two tenths of a point from 2022-23 to 2023-24.



	Knowledge/ Family-specific	Practices/ Collaboration	Practices/ Responsiveness	Practices/ Communication	Practices/ Family-focused Concern	Attitudes/ Commitment	Attitudes/ Understanding Context	Attitudes/ Respect
2021-22 (238 ≤ N ≤ 250)	3.4	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.5	3.7	3.8
2022-23 (211 ≤ N ≤ 217)	3.3	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.2	3.4	3.8	3.8
2023-24 (35 ≤ N ≤ 40)	3.2	3.3	3.3	2.8	3.3	3.7	3.7	3.9

Figure 11. **F-TRQ–Family** comparison of subscale means from 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24.

Numerically, results were consistent for the last three years. However, the mean question score in the Practices/Collaboration, Practices/Responsiveness, and Attitudes/Commitment Subscales increased by three tenths of a point from 2022-23 to 2023-24. Of note, the Attitudes/Respect Subscale achieved an almost perfect mean question score of 3.9 out of 4.0 in 2023-24.

Results from the question "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the worst you can imagine and 5 is the best you can imagine, how would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher?" are presented below in Figure 12.

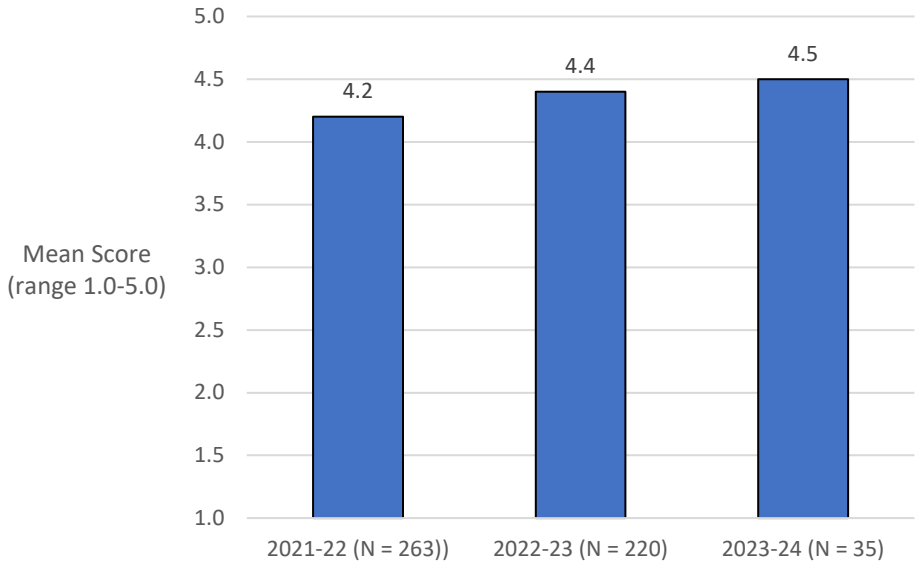


Figure 12. **F-TRQ–Family** comparison of score means for caregiver-reported family and teacher relationship quality from academic years 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24

The mean score for caregiver-reported family and teacher relationship quality increased numerically in 2023-24 to a high of 4.5 out of 5. This is three tenths of a point increased from 2021-22.

The overall results from 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 are reported in Table 24. Thirty-two of 67 caregivers (47.8%) did not answer this question.

Table 24. Frequency Distribution and Mean of Caregiver-Reported Teacher and Family Relationship Quality, 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 comparison.

	1 (Worst)		2		3		4		5 (Best)		
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	Mean
2023-24 (*N* = 35)	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	14.3%	5	20.0%	7	65.7%	23	4.51
2022-23 (*N* = 220)	0.5%	1	5.5%	12	10.9%	24	25.0%	55	58.2%	128	4.35
2021-22 (*N* = 263)	1.9%	5	3.0%	8	18.3%	48	22.1%	58	54.8%	144	4.25

Results of RCSD-specific Questions

Again in 2023-24, an F-TRQ committee added, removed, and refined questions directly related to family experiences inside and out of the RCSD environment. These questions are used to gather information about RCSD initiatives, school relationships, books, communication, and the health and adjustment of children, the wellbeing of families, and satisfaction of parents with preschool teachers and programming. The results are displayed on the pages that follow.

See Table 25 for information on how families found out about the district's pre-K program. The top three ways survey respondents found out about the program in 2023-24 were other, relative, and friend, the same findings as reported in 2022-23. Respondents were able to select multiple sources.

Table 25. Source of parent information about RCSD pre-K (*N* = 32).

	Percent	*N*
Relative	34.4%	11
Friend	12.5%	4
Neighbor	0.0%	0
Print ad	3.1%	1
Bus ad	3.1%	1
Sign on vehicle other than a bus	0,0%	0
TV	3.1%	1
WDKX	3.1%	1
The Beat 105.5	0.0%	0
Social media	3.1%	1
PODER 97.1	0.0%	0
La Mega 97.5	3.1%	1
Lawn sign	0.0%	0
Other	46.9%	15

Note. Other included: teacher (3), school event (1), other child at location (1), speech therapist (1), connection to employment (1)

Family School Communication

Families were asked several items regarding communication with educators. See Tables 26 and 27, below, for results. Overall, results show that families feel comfortable talking with at least 2 staff persons about their concerns, with the largest percentage feeling comfortable talking with more than 3 persons.

Table 26. Number of program personnel with whom families are communicating.

	No one		1		2		3		More than 3	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
2023-24 (*N* = 35)	0.0%	0	14.3%	5	31.4%	11	8.6%	3	45.7%	16
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	6.3%	14	10.8%	24	20.2%	45	18.4%	41	44.4%	99
2021-22 (*N* = 245)	3.3%	8	8.2%	20	23.7%	58	15.1%	37	49.8%	122

In terms of family preference of communication type with their child's teacher, the most preferred modality is in-person; the same result was found in 2022-23. See Table 28 below for overall results. Respondents were able to select multiple types.

Table 27. Family preference of communication type with their child's teacher (*N* = 34).

	Percent	*N*
In person	79.1%	27
Texting	73.5%	25
Email	50%	17
Classroom communication app (e.g., SeeSaw, ClassDojo)	61.8%	21
Phone Call	61.8%	21
Other	0%	0

At Home Literacy

There is an emphasis in preschool on reading and looking at books with children. Table 28 reports how often families and their children engaged with books together. Daily engagement with books in 2023-24 numerically went up to 62.9% from 55.6% in 2022-23 and 44.6% in 2021-22.

Table 28. How often families look at books with their children.

	Almost never		Monthly		1-2 times a week		3-4 times a week		Daily	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
2023-24 (*N* = 35)	2.9%	1	5.7%	2	20.0%	7	8.6%	3	62.9%	22
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	1.3%	3	5.4%	12	21.1%	47	16.6%	37	55.6%	124
2021-22 (*N* = 269)	0.7%	2	3.0%	8	21.6%	58	30.1%	81	44.6%	120

Child Health

Parents were asked how often their child visited the emergency room in the last year. Additionally, they were asked when their child last saw a non-emergency doctor or a dentist. The results are displayed in Tables 30, 31, and 32.

Table 29 describes emergency room visits. Most families did not experience an emergency room visit within the past year. Numerically, the percentage of children with 3 or more visits increased in 2023-24, while the percentage of children with 1 visit decreased.

Table 29. Number of emergency room visits in the past year.

	None		1 visit		2 visits		3+ visits	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
2023-24 (*N* = 33)	75.8%	25	6.1%	2	9.1%	3	9.1%	3
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	64.1%	143	18.4%	41	10.3%	23	7.2%	16
2021-22 (*N* = 264)	70.1%	185	16.7%	44	9.1%	24	4.2%	11

Overwhelmingly, most parents reported that their child had visited a doctor in the last year, see Table 30 for results from 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24.

Table 30. Frequency of doctor visits (non-emergency).

	Never		More than two years ago		More than one year ago		Within the past year		Within the past six months		Unsure	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
2023- 24 (*N* = 33)	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	6.1%	2	27.3%	9	63.6%	21	3.0%	1
2022- 23 (*N* = 219)	1.4%	3	2.3%	5	10.5%	23	16.4%	36	69.4%	152	0.0%	0
2021-22 (*N* = 270)	0.7%	2	1.9%	5	1.5%	4	28.1%	76	66.7%	180	1.1%	3

Most parents reported that their child had visited a dentist in the last year. However, 15.6% of families said their child had never seen a dentist, a numeric increase from past years. See Table 31 for a breakdown of responses from 2021-22 to last school year.

Table 31. Frequency of dental visits.

	Never		More than two years ago		More than one year ago		Within the past year		Within the past six months		Unsure	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
2023-24 (*N* = 32)	15.6%	5	3.1%	1	9.4%	3	28.1%	9	43.8%	14	0.0%	0
2022-23 (*N* = 218)	14.7%	32	1.8%	4	9.6%	21	11.9%	26	61.0%	133	0.9%	2
2021-22 (*N* = 224)	12.1%	27	0.9%	2	12.1%	27	19.2%	43	53.1%	119	2.7%	6

Child Adjustment and Experiences

Parents and caregivers were asked how well their children were adjusting to school and the words they would use to describe their children's preschool experience. The results are displayed in Tables 32 and 33 for 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24. Most parents and caregivers found their children had adjusted to school excellently, numerically increased from past years. No respondent reported fair or poor school adjustment; all respondents reported excellent or good adjustments.

Table 32. Child adjustment to school.

	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
2023-24 (*N* = 35)	82.9%	29	17.1%	6	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	68.2%	152	25.6%	57	4.0%	9	2.2%	5
2021-22 (*N* = 271)	69.9%	184	26.2%	71	4.8%	13	1.1%	3

The overwhelming majority of parents and caregivers used positive adjectives to describe their children's experiences, even more so than in past years. Results for 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 are displayed in Table 33. Respondents were able to select multiple descriptive words.

Table 33. Descriptive words parents selected to describe their children's preschool experiences.

	2023-24 (*N* = 33)		2022-23 (*N* = 222)		2021-22 (*N* = 270)	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Educational	97.0%	32	82.4%	183	82.2%	222
Social	94.0%	31	86.5%	192	72.6%	196
Supportive	87.9%	29	81.1%	180	71.9%	194
Comforting	78.8%	26	64.9%	144	63.0%	170
Joyful	97.0%	32	77.0%	171	72.6%	196
Frustrating	9.1%	3	10.4%	23	11.5%	31
Unhappy	3.0%	1	4.5%	10	4.1%	11
Other	6.1%	2	9.0%	20	NA	NA

Two new questions were added to the survey in 2023-24. Those questions were, "In a normal day, how many hours of screen time (tablet, TV, videos on phone, etc.) does your child typically get?" and "What are some things that often get in the way of your child attending school?". Results are shown in Tables 34 and 35 below.

Most parents and caregivers allowed their child screen time (tablet, TV, videos on phone, etc.) between one and three hours per day.

Table 34. Hours of screen time (*N* = 43)

	Percent	*N*
None	0.0%	0
0-1 hour	14.0%	6
1-2 hours	39.5%	17
2-3 hours	27.9%	12
3-4 hours	11.6%	5
4-5 hours	4.7%	2
5+ hours	2.3%	1

Thirty-nine parents and caregivers reported reasoning for child absences from UPK. The most common answer was transportation. Respondents were allowed to select more than one reason.

Table 35. Obstacles to UPK attendance (*N* = 39)

	%	*N*
Transportation	41.0%	16
Childcare for other children	5.1%	2
Work	20.5%	8
Bad weather	17.9%	7
Child resists going to school	5.1%	2
Difficulty getting up in the morning	20.5%	8
Other	35.9%	14

Note. Other included: health/surgery (4), no difficulty (4), late bus (1), no family support (1)

Family Wellbeing

The topic of family wellbeing was explored by asking about the loss of family members and the needs of the families. Results are below. In both 2022-23 and 2023-24, the majority of children had not experienced a close loss within the past year.

Table 36. Loss of a close family member in the past year.

	No		Yes	
	%	*N*	%	*N*
2023-24 (*N* = 33)	75.8%	25	24.2%	8
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	79.4%	177	20.6%	46

Table 37 below shows family areas of need. Families were able to select multiple needs. Most families' needs were being met in 2023-24. When families reported needs, the top three were identified as reliable transportation, childcare, and a more stable place to live. The top three identified needs were the same as in 2021-22. In 2022-23 food replaced a stable place to live as a top need. This trend reverted in 2023-24. Overall, from 2021-22 to 2023-24, families' needs being wholly met has decreased numerically. Over the same time period, the needs for parental employment, a more stable place to live, reliable transportation, and someone to talk with about needs had increased. The needs for food, healthcare, and clothing have fluctuated. The need for childcare has remained about the same.

Table 37. Family areas of need.

	2023-24 (*N* = 31)		2022-23 (*N* = 207)		2021-22 (*N* = 243)	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
None	61.3%	19	63.8%	132	72.8%	177
Food	6.5%	2	10.6%	22	4.5%	11
Healthcare	0.0%	0	3.9%	8	1.2%	3
Parental employment	6.5%	2	5.3%	11	3.7%	9
A more stable place to live	9.7%	3	8.2%	17	5.8%	14
Childcare	16.1%	5	15.9%	33	16.0%	39
Clothing	3.2%	1	7.2%	15	3.7%	9
Reliable transportation	19.4%	6	15.0%	31	8.2%	20
Someone to talk with about my needs	6.5%	2	5.3%	11	4.9%	12
Other	3.2%	1	3.9%	8	NA	NA

Family Satisfaction with Preschool Programing

The topic of family satisfaction with preschool programming was explored by asking respondents to grade their child's teacher and overall preschool program. Results are below in Tables 38 and 39 for school years 2018-19, 2022-23, and 2023-24.

Families were asked what grade they would give their child's teacher. Overwhelmingly, families and caregivers gave their child's teacher a grade of excellent. No one gave their child's teacher a grade of Poor (D) or Unacceptable (F) in 2018-19 and 2023-24.

Table 38. Grade given to the child's teacher.

	Excellent (A)		Good (B)		Average (C)		Poor (D)		Unacceptable (F)		*M*
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	
2023-24	87.9%	29	9.1%	3	3.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	4.85

(*N* = 33)											
2022-23 (*N* = 222)	75.2%	167	15.3%	34	6.8%	15	1.4%	3	1.4%	3	4.62
2018-19 (*N* = 617)	84.3%	520	13.6%	84	2.1%	13	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	4.82

Families were also asked what grade they would give their child's preschool program overall. Results can be seen in Table 39 below. No one gave their child's preschool program a grade of Poor (D) or Unacceptable (F) in 2023-24.

Table 39. Grade given to the child's preschool program overall.

	Excellent (A)		**Good (B)**		**Average (C)**		**Poor (D)**		**Unacceptable (F)**		***M***
	%	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	***N***	
2022-23 (*N* = 33)	81.8%	27	9.1%	3	9.1%	3	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	4.72
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	63.7%	142	22.9%	51	9.0%	20	1.8%	4	2.7%	6	4.43
2018-19 (*N* = 613)	74.1%	454	21.2%	130	4.2%	26	0.3%	2	0.2%	1	4.69

Qualitative Responses from Caregivers

The family survey included the opportunity for comments; 14 were submitted. Comments contained both positive and negative verbiage. Deidentified comments representing two themes, are displayed below.

Positive Feedback about Teachers and Schools

The majority of comments praised preschool teachers and schools. Additionally, parents often commented about how their child had developed as a result of pre-K and how secure they felt sending their child to school.

> *"My child had an excellent experience with preschool and all the educators in the classroom were excellent! They really cared about the students and I saw educational improvement in my child throughout the whole school year (writing name, drawing improvement, coloring improvement etc.)"*

> *"The teachers in my child's classroom at [community-based organization] have gone above and beyond to make sure my child is kindergarten ready, even though he has an*

extensive iep they have helped him grow so much! So greatful for such wonderful teachers"

"I Love My Daughters School Environment"

"Very thankful for universal UPK4!!"

"[Community-based organization] is the most amazing program around. My children have thrived with all of the teacher they have had."

"I think this year for her was very good…teacher was excellent with her and a very nice understanding facility for sure"

"…[community-based organization] did a great job…God bless you guys"

"This year was a great experience for my child and he had an amazing time learning and socializing."

"They gave their very best this year I am happy and proud my child got the teachers he did."

"…we know based on conversations with our teacher that he is doing great and on track developmentally. Absolutely love our center and wish they went all the way up till 12th grade! They are amazing!!"

"I think that the teachers made it very welcoming I was so scared to leave my baby she is my only child and it was all new but they gave me comfortable knowing my child would be taking care being a special need child they were awesome I appreciate all they have done to help me with services that helped my child she now speaks alot more and have learned to interact with other children I am very satisfied "

Suggestions for Improvements

A few families included specific suggestions for improvements, dealing with transportation and staffing issues.

"Allow pre k to have bus transportation especially if they have siblings who go to the same school"

"My child's original teacher left and I wasn't informed…"

"The teacher is always absent majority of the time and a para professional takes over the class."

Conclusions and Limitations

Caution must be exercised interpreting results from 2023-24, as this year's sample size was much reduced from any year since the F-TRQ measure has been implemented and distributed. It is probable that parents who submitted a survey this year are not a representative sample of the pre-K family population (i.e., selection bias), especially parents of children attending community-based organizations. Thus, the results of the Family Survey likely reflect the perspectives of families most inclined to respond to a survey, rather than providing a comprehensive representation of all families within the district.

Results in 2023-24 are mostly numerically consistent with results found in past years, with some notable positive findings. The average parent-teacher relationship quality score and daily parent-child interactions with books both increased. All families rated their child as having a good or excellent adjustment to school, the rating of excellent specifically increasing from 68.2% to 82.9% from last to this school year. Additionally, parents most often described their child's pre-K experiences as educational and joyful (both 97.0%), social (94.0%), and supportive (87.9%); all increased from past years. A grade of Excellent (A) for both teachers and programming increased in 2023-24.

Two new questions were added in 2023-24. We found that the majority of parents are allowing their children between one and three hours of screen time per day and the largest obstacle to preschool attendance is transportation.

Parents reported being able to discuss concerns with three or more program personnel at rates less than years past. The results regarding emergency room visits was mixed. The percentage of parents that had zero trips to the hospital increased, but those parents with three or more visits increased as well. Families are experiencing more need: 61.3% of families reported none, down from 63.8% and 72.8% of families in 2022-23 and 2021-22, respectively. Of parents and family members who reported needs, the greatest needs reported were reliable transportation (19.4%), followed closely by childcare (16.1%) and a more stable place to live (9.7%).

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECAP has captured and summarized the performance of Rochester's preschools since the launch of Universal pre-K in 1998. The current report, as in years past, provides insights into multiple levels of the system: individual students, their families, and their classroom's environment. Over the years, RECAP analysis and reporting has highlighted the program's strengths in areas such as classroom quality, responsive professional development, use of effective assessment tools, and fostering strong family-school relationships. Of note, findings from our robust classroom observation method reveal that classroom quality remained strong.

Despite these strengths, this report also highlights crucial areas of need for preschool children, their families, and classrooms in the Rochester city school district. For instance, data from the T-CRS show that 40.7% of pre-K-3 students in fall and 35.3% in spring had multiple social and emotional risk factors, while 33.4% of pre-K-4 students in fall and 30.6% in spring had multiple social and emotional risk factors. Not only that, but screening data obtained with the Brigance Early Childhood Screen revealed that over one-third of both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students were screened as either in need of a formal developmental evaluation and/or a need to monitor closely. In terms of pre-academic skills and kindergarten readiness, this report also reveals both areas of strength and areas of need. These and other areas of need are detailed below.

This twenty-sixth annual RECAP report marks the final year of RECAP. Due to changes in state and district requirements as well as with funding structures, the formal RECAP evaluation system is currently disbanded. Future reports on the state of Rochester's pre-K children, including kindergarten readiness rates and classroom quality ratings, will not be available unless RECAP is re-initiated by key partners.

A summary of strengths and weaknesses of the pre-K system, as well as strengths and needs of children and families in the system, are detailed below:

Areas of strength:

- ***Classroom Quality:*** Findings from the ECERS observation revealed an overall score of 5.4 out of 7, which is consistent with the prior several years. This score, according to the ECERS measure developers, represents good classroom quality. Additionally, there was a 0.2 improvement in the Space & Furnishings category of the ECERS, which is historically one of the lower scoring categories. Over one-quarter of classrooms received a score over 6, representing "excellent" classroom quality. Thus, despite numerous challenges including high rates of teacher turnover and increased student needs, classroom quality remained steady.
- ***Social-Emotional Adjustment***: Both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students showed expected growth in multiple domains of social-emotional competence, including task orientation,

behavior control, assertive social skills, and peer social skills. Compared to the 2022-23 school year, students showed greater growth (i.e., a larger effect size from fall to spring) in peer social skills.

- ***Pre-Academics**:* Results from the COR showed large effect sizes from fall to spring across all domains - indicating growth in multiple areas of development. There was a significant impact of years-of-programming on kindergarten readiness. In other words, children who attended both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 were significantly more likely to be kindergarten ready compared to those who attended only pre-K-4.
- ***Attendance:*** A RECAP workgroup identified several strategies to improve attendance among preschool students.
- ***Screenings:*** There were 8.0% and 9.6% of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students screened as 'possibly talented and may need enhanced work'.

Furthermore, the RECAP evaluation team continued the tradition of using valid and reliable instruments to robustly measure multiple aspects of the prekindergarten system. For instance, the T-CRS achieved excellent internal reliability with each of the domains achieving reliability above $\alpha = .87$.

Areas needing improvement:

- ***Classroom Quality:*** Although, on average, classroom quality was high, there were approximately 10% of classrooms with a less than adequate ECERS score. This highlights the need for individualized professional development and training for classroom teachers and support staff.
- ***Social-Emotional Adjustment:*** A high amount of both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students are at risk in domains of social-emotional adjustment, according to results from the T-CRS. For instance, fall T-CRS results showed that nearly 41% of 4-year-olds and 35% of three-year-olds were at risk (defined as scoring lower than the 30 percentile). Additionally, boys had significantly lower scores in all domains of social-emotional adjustment for both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students.
- ***Pre-Academics:*** There were less than half (44.8%) of pre-K-4 students kindergarten-ready in spring, according to results on the COR advantage. This was a slight decrease from 2022-23, when there were 45.5% of pre-K-4 students kindergarten-ready in spring. Additionally, there were several low scoring areas of the COR, including Mathematics and Language, Literacy, and Communication. These two areas are historically the lower scoring areas and indicate a need for increased professional development and training.
- ***Attendance:*** More than half of all preschool students are chronically absent from school, defined as attending fewer than 80% of possible school days. Attendance rates decreased even more since the 2022-23 school year and have been lagging since the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ***Family Survey:*** There was only a small number of surveys returned by caregivers, indicating a need to change survey administration procedures.
- ***Screenings:*** Over one-third of students were screened as at risk (i.e., either 'determine need for formal evaluation' or 'monitor closely') in both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4. Additionally, there was a higher prevalence of at-risk students in pre-K-3 cohorts compared to previous years. Get Ready to GROW screenings showed that the highest needs were in the areas of speech/language, BMI, and vision.

Implications and Recommendations

There are several implications and recommendations stemming from the findings in this report. First, findings from student assessments (e.g., COR Advantage) and classroom quality assessments (i.e., ECERS) indicate that improvement is needed in the area of Language, Literacy, and Communication We recommend focused professional development and curricular enhancements in this area. Findings from the COR also indicate that Mathematics is an area of need, with students scoring low and exhibiting, on average, the least amount of growth in this area over the school year.

In terms of social and emotional development, results from the T-CRS indicate that more than one-third of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students exhibited multiple social and emotional risk factors in fall. We recommend continued full implementation of the Pyramid Model (Hemmeter et al., 2016) with an expansion of Tier-2 and Tier-3 supports for students with social and emotional risk factors. Tier-2 programs may be particularly needed for students who are exhibiting mild to moderate social and emotional symptoms but do not have an IEP nor a need for Tier-3 services.

Additionally, findings from our family survey and our workgroup investigation of Pre-K attendance indicate that increased family-centered practices, such as positive communication strategies and home visits, could help engage families and improve attendance among preschool children. Improving attendance among preschoolers is a critical foundational step, as attendance has been found to be related to other outcomes including kindergarten readiness (Taylor et al., 2000).

Furthermore, enrollment data showed that there were over 50 languages spoken by preschool families. The city of Rochester has a culturally diverse population, including many immigrant and refugee families. It is essential to consider this rich cultural diversity while planning interventions for preschool students, such as the attendance strategies listed above. The diversity of native languages among Rochester's preschool children also spotlights potential challenges of teaching literacy at this level.

Preparing children for kindergarten is one of the primary goals of preschool. Results from this year's report show that fewer than half of pre-K-4 children are rated as "kindergarten ready" according to the standards set by the COR assessment. However, we found that children who attended both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 (i.e., received a larger "dosage" of preschool) were significantly more likely to be ready for kindergarten. Given this, we recommend encouraging families to enroll children in both years of preschool.

Finally, we recommend continued developmental screenings for all students beginning preschool – both in pre-K-3 and pre-K-4. Results from the Brigance and Get Ready to GROW screenings show a high percentage (more than one-third of both three- and four-year-olds) of students flagged as at risk and possibly in need of formal evaluations. As a result, preschool teachers and classroom support staff are consistently managing multiple children with different developmental needs within the classroom setting. Additional support is needed for classroom teachers and for families to respond to the unique needs of every preschool child.

Overall, the present report reveals the state of Rochester's pre-K system in the 2023-24 school year, showing both areas of strength as well as multiple areas of need. Preschool plays a pivotal role in the development of young children, laying the foundation for their future academic and social-emotional development. Indeed, research shows that the early childhood years are a critical period in brain development (Shonkoff et al., 2017). Not only that, but early childhood education is preventive – studies (e.g., Heckman et al., 2010) show that community investment in preschool has a high rate of return, leading to reductions in societal costs (e.g., criminal justice system involvement) as well as individual benefits for the children attending (e.g., better educational attainment).

It is essential to recognize that children in the Rochester city area are often confronted with various adversities, including but not limited to community violence and the impacts of systemic racism that has historically shaped neighborhoods and contributed to high levels of poverty (Nabonzy et al., 2023). Thus, we recommend, in addition to the points above, a family- and community-centered approach to early childhood development that addresses the unique challenges faced by Rochester's families while fostering equitable opportunities for all children. By prioritizing both academic and social-emotional growth both within and outside of school walls, Rochester's pre-K system can continue to serve as a catalyst to build a stronger, more resilient community.

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