



Destination 2025 Monthly: April 2021

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

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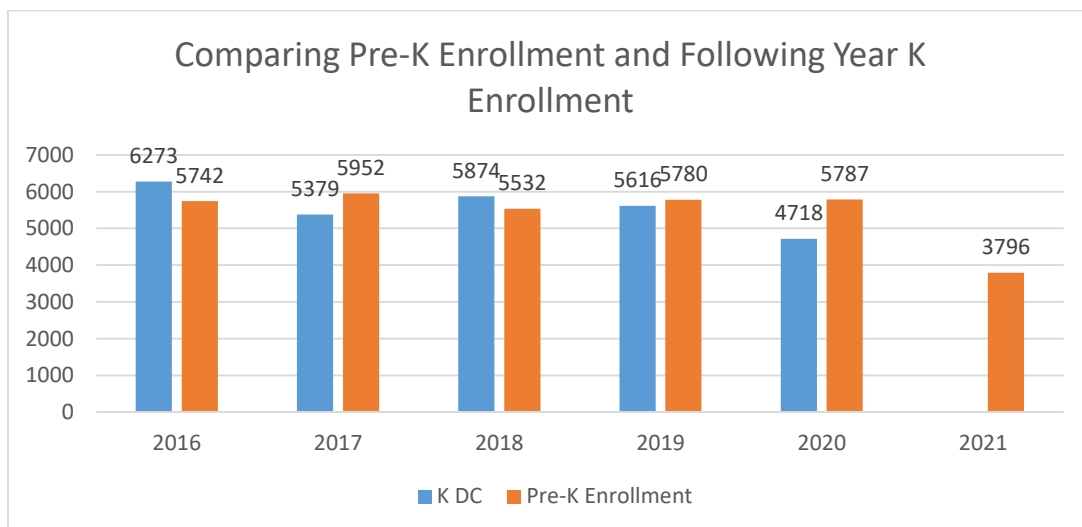
Key Findings

- 46% of Kindergarteners entering the District in 2020-21 were considered Kindergarten ready based on Fall Fastbridge Illuminate results, and 39% met the benchmarks for Kindergarten readiness in both Reading and math.
- 69% of Kindergarteners who attended an SCS Pre-K program in 2019-20 were considered Kindergarten ready in reading compared to only 40% of students who did not attend an SCS Pre-K program.
- 84% of SCS Pre-K students enrolled in 2019-2020 cohort re-enrolled in SCS in 2020-2021—down 2 percentage points from the 2018-2019 cohort.
- 25% of SCS Pre-K students enrolled in 2018-2019 either did not enroll or enrolled in Charter School in the 2019-2020 School year.
- 73% of exiting Pre-K students in 2020 met the iStation Literacy Benchmark for Kindergarten readiness—down 11% from 2019 but flat with previous years

Prior Enrollment in a Pre-K Program

SCS Pre-K programs support Priority 1 of Destination 2025 to strengthen early literacy. SCS Pre-K enrollment has the potential to bridge an opportunity gap for District students with the most need. The 2020-2021 cohort of Pre-K had a total of 3,796 students enrolled, a decrease likely due to the pandemic. When we compare the Pre-K enrollment to the 4,718 Kindergarteners enrolled in 2019-2020 receiving direct certified services (Figure 1), the level of service potentially matches the need of this Kindergarten cohort. This means that SCS filled enough Pre-K seats in 2019-20 to potentially have had a seat available for all incoming Kindergartners who were eligible. When excluding Pre-K seats for the three-year-old cohort, the number of Pre-K seats for the four-year-old cohort in 19-20 still exceeded the number of Direct Certified Kindergarteners in 20-21.

Figure 1





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As we look at the number of students from each Pre-K cohort who were subsequently retained in SCS (Figure 2), 4,877 of the 5,787 (84%) Pre-K students in 2019-20 enrolled in SCS in 2020-2021. The 84% retention rate for 2019-20 is trending down from previous years retention of 87% and 88% respectively. This decrease follows a national trend of decreased enrollment rates linked to COVID-19.

Figure 2

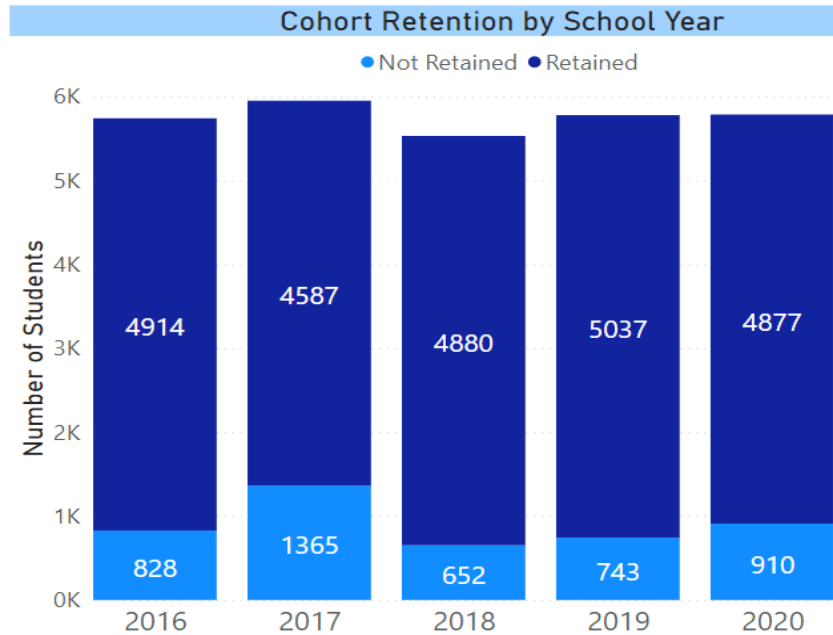
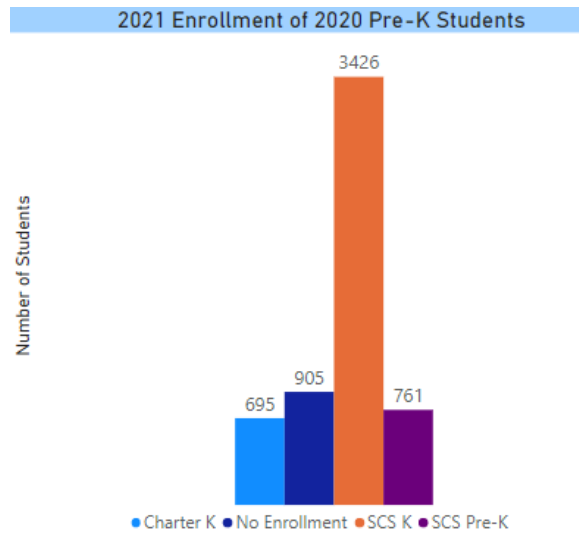


Figure 2a shows the 20-21 enrollment of the 2019-20 Pre-K cohort. 29% of students that entered Kindergarten (1,426) either did not enroll or were enrolled in Charter Schools. 14% of students (832) enrolled again in SCS Pre-K.

Figure 3a



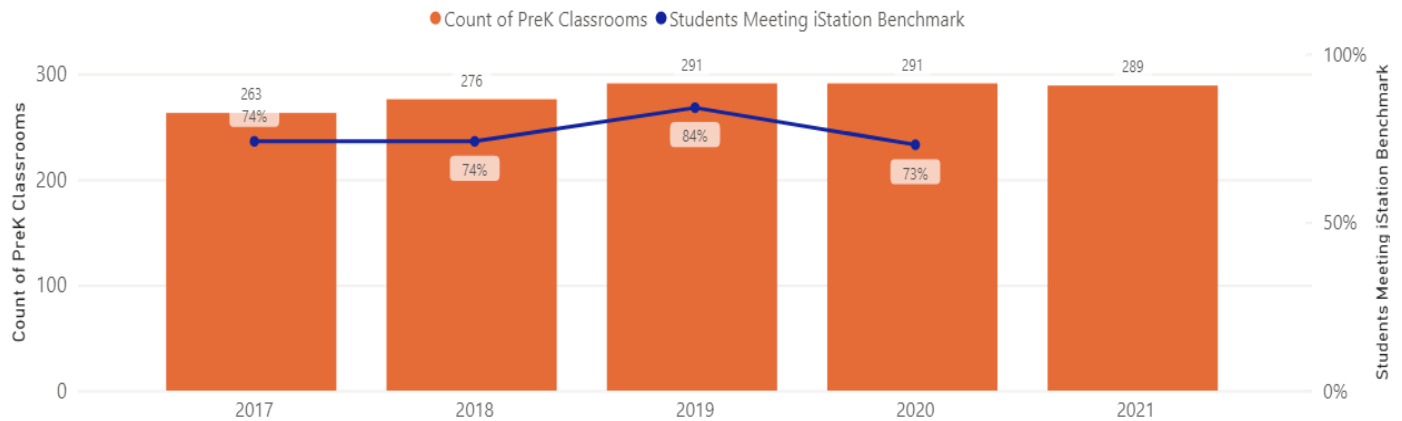


iStation

SCS Pre-K programs use iStation as a measurement for literacy and as an indirect indicator of readiness for incoming Kindergarteners. In spring 2019-20, 73% of Pre-K students reached the benchmark for literacy (Figure 3). The percentage of exiting Pre-K students meeting the literacy benchmark on iStation decreased by 11 points from 2019 to 2020. The Department of Early Childhood Programs has set a target of 82% and the program decreased slightly from 291 classrooms in 2019-20 to 289 classrooms in 2020-21.

Figure 4

Number of Pre-K classrooms vs. Percentage of Students Kindergarten Ready - iStation Benchmark



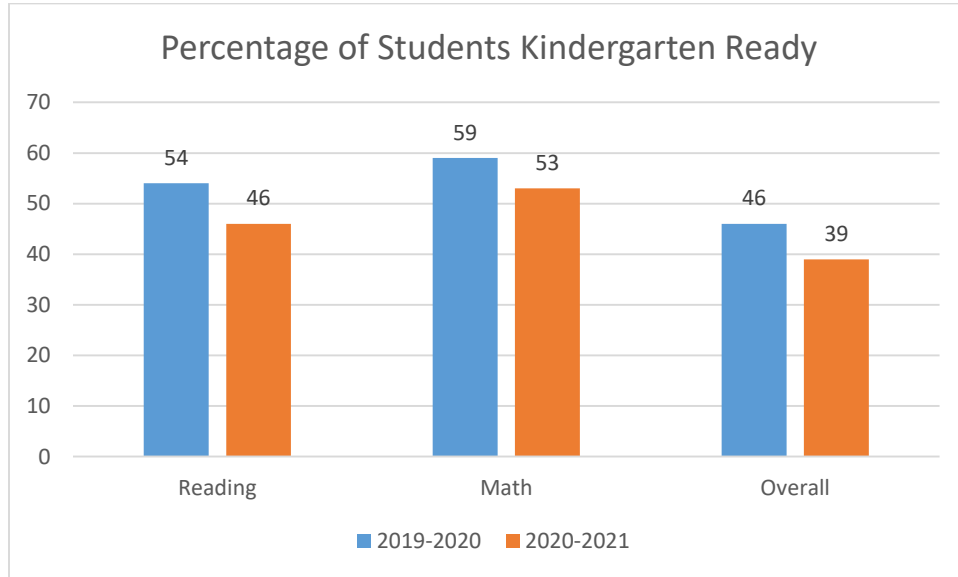
Evaluating Kindergarten Readiness

In 2019-20, the District began using the Fastbridge Early Reading and Early Math Assessments to measure academic levels for Kindergarten and First Grade Students. Fastbridge uses national comparison data to rank student scores on each assessment, and SCS uses the 50th percentile rank on Early Reading as a benchmark for students to be considered *Kindergarten ready*. The same 50th Percentile rank is also used as a benchmark for math. Understanding the readiness level of students entering Shelby County Schools allows District decision makers to take actions; not only to increase early identification for intervention pathways, but also to support SCS Pre-K rigor and enrollment. Schools receiving fewer students prepared for Kindergarten will need greater support for targeted intervention.

With the Kindergarten Readiness benchmarks for 2019 being measured with the Fastbridge assessments (Figure 4), a direct comparison can be drawn to the Kindergarten Ready results between fall 2019 and fall 2020. Overall, Kindergarten readiness is down about seven percentage points. 46% of entering Kindergarten students met 2020 reading readiness benchmarks. 53% met 2020 math benchmarks, and 39% met both Reading and Math benchmarks (50th Percentile and above).



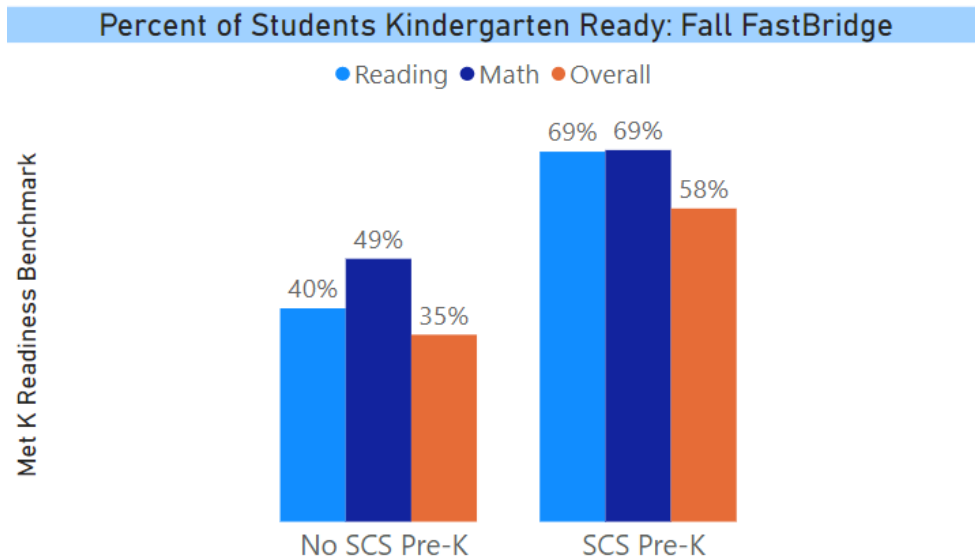
Figure 4



Pre-K and Kindergarten Readiness

Kindergarten readiness can also be used as an indicator of SCS Pre-K effectiveness. When Kindergarten students who participated in a SCS Pre-K program are compared with those who did not, we find that a higher percentage of students with SCS Pre-K participation are considered Kindergarten ready (Figure 5). 69% of students with SCS Pre-K achieved the reading benchmark for Kindergarten readiness compared to 40% of students who did not participate in SCS Pre-K. For students achieving both math and reading benchmarks, 58% of students with SCS Pre-K met both benchmarks versus 35% of students without SCS Pre-K.

Figure 5

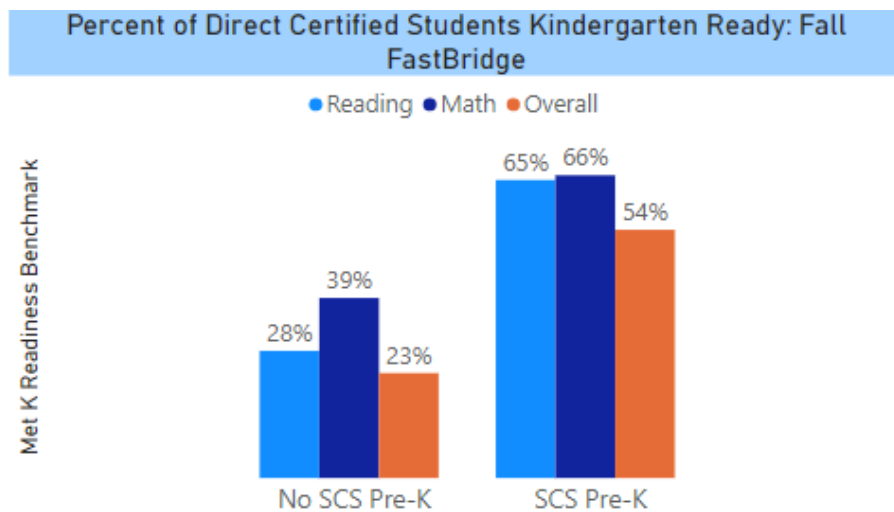




Pre-K and Economic Status

Kindergarten students of varying economic backgrounds consistently show a gap in performance on measures of Kindergarten readiness. Filling Pre-K seats with students that have the most need has been employed as an effective strategy to close the gap. In 2020 Kindergarten students receiving Federal Direct Certified services who attended SCS Pre-K (Economically Disadvantaged) were Kindergarten ready at twice the rate than students who did not attend SCS Pre-K (23%) (Figure 6). Economically disadvantaged students with Pre-K also outperformed their non-economically disadvantaged peers that did not attend Pre-K (40%).

Figure 6

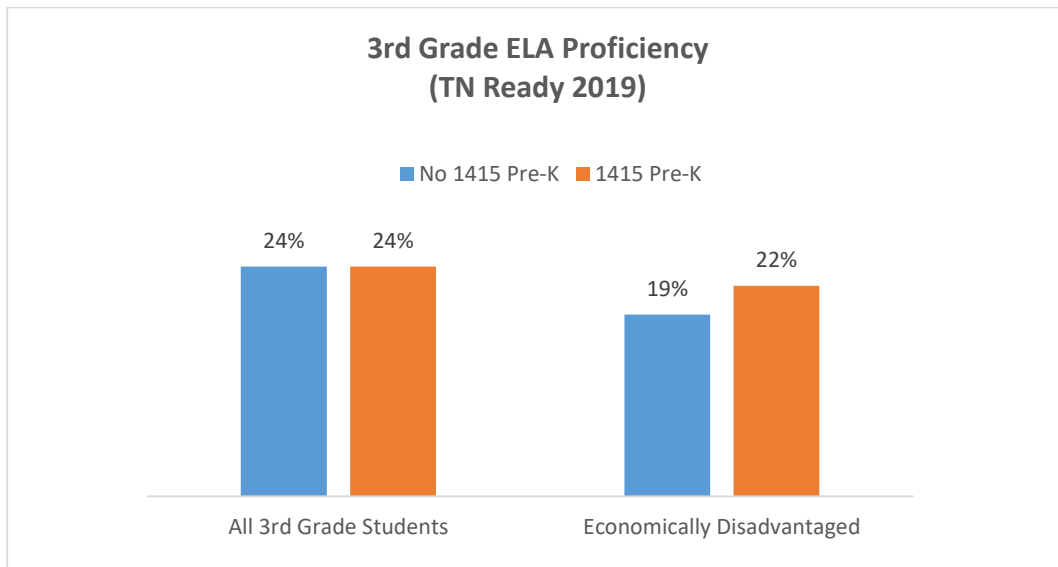


Pre-K and 3rd Grade Reading

Pre-K can affect academic achievement and close gaps at the Kindergarten level. When students matriculate to 3rd grade the effect of having attended Pre-K becomes dramatically less pronounced compared to earlier grades. The results of the TNReady ELA assessment of Spring 2019 shows no advantage for students that attended SCS Pre-K in 2014-2015 when comparing all 3rd grade students. However, there is still a difference in achievement for economically disadvantaged students (Figure 7) with 22% of the 14-15 Pre-K students achieving proficiency versus 19% of their peers who were not a part of the 14-15 Pre-K cohort.



Figure 7

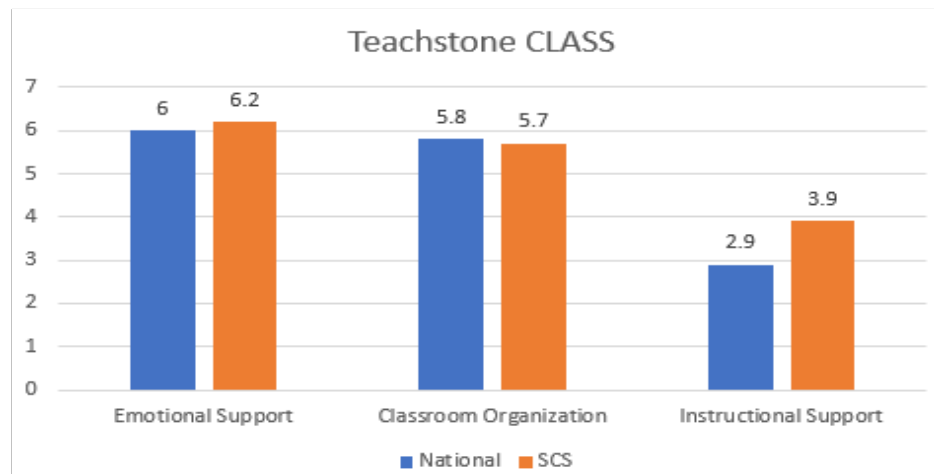


Of the 3,965 students that participated in the 2014-2015 Pre-K cohort, 2,385 (60%) were successfully matched to 3rd grade TNReady ELA Scores.

Division of Early Childhood Program Outlook

The Division of Early Childhood is working to continuously improve quality while expanding its reach. Research has shown that quality interactions between teachers and children are critical to a child's achievement and development in all areas. The Division of Early Childhood utilizes the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) by Teachstone to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions in the following domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. SCS Early Childhood classrooms have exceeded or maintained comparable scores to the 2019 Office of Head Start national average (Figure 8). SCS Early Childhood classrooms are leading the national average by a full point in Instructional Support.

Figure 8





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Quality improvement efforts are also taking shape in the form of new initiatives for community engagement and partnerships, Kindergarten transition, Family Support, and student enrichment. The Division of Early Childhood strengthened relationships within the community by hosting community fairs throughout the county with an objective of supporting Kindergarten transition. The Real Men Read Program engaged 115 community volunteers as readers to nearly 1,000 students, and partnered with local Barbershops to offer family furnishings and reading corners at their establishments. Community partnerships with Homewood Suites by Hilton and Studio institute provided the funds and resources to create Pre-K libraries and introduce Pre-K classrooms to visual arts.

Family support and Kindergarten transition programs were implemented to assist families of Pre-K students experiencing homelessness, incarceration, or other forms of family crisis. Purchasing of school materials, Adult learning, and on-site early childhood program registration were a few of the support services offered to families.

The Division of Early Childhood Programs has introduced other improvement efforts to expand program reach and quality. One of these efforts is to make student enrichment more accessible by starting to collaborate with the CLUE department to identify Pre-K students that may be eligible. Another is collaborating with the Early Literacy department to create a summer enrichment packet promoting early literacy and foundational skills. In addition, Pre-K screening and recruitment has been made available online. Parents are able to complete applications and select individual appointments to bring required documents. Parents without online access can visit the designated screening site (Knight Road) to get assistance completing the application.

The Division of Early Childhood Programs has also made a large investment in professional learning and leadership. Over 100 teachers participated in after school professional development sessions (New Teacher Monday and Toolbox Tuesday) provided to strengthen learning strategies to achieve high-quality instruction. The Education Director has worked with the instructional support team focusing on best practices in Early Childhood by engaging in book studies, data digs, and weekly focused meetings regarding foundational skills, social- emotional learning, and effective teaching strategies. All Advisors, specialists, and coaches are Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) certified.