



Ohio's Early Childhood Education Program Works for Kids

An Analysis of KRA-L Scores from Districts Starting Public Preschool in the 2007-2008 School Year

In SFY2008, Ohio funded Early Childhood Education (Public Preschool) programs in 61 new school districts. The children in those programs began kindergarten in the fall of 2008 and their Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L) scores show what research has consistently shown – that high-quality early education experiences prepare children to enter kindergarten ready to learn and reduce the need for expensive remediation.

Summary of the KRA-L

The KRA-L is the standard screening instrument given to Ohio's kindergarteners at the beginning of the school year to assess literacy skills and academic readiness. The KRA-L is made up of six activities that require the student to use skills important to becoming a good reader.

The maximum, or best, score possible on the KRA-L is 29. At the district level, an average score is reported as well as the percentage of children in the district scoring in one of three score bands. Children scoring 0-13, Band 1, are assessed as needing a period of intensive instruction in a range of literacy skills to successfully accomplish the indicators of literacy described in the English Language Arts Standards (ELAS) for kindergarten. Band 2 includes children who score 14-23 and for whom targeted, or standard, instruction is appropriate to accomplish the ELAS standards, with some degree of additional assessment and instruction. Scores of 24 and above indicates children who have a good grasp of early reading and writing skills and need rich and varied learning opportunities.

KRA-L scores in districts with new Early Childhood Education programs

An analysis of the KRA-L scores from fall of 2008 shows that 72 percent of the districts that started a Public Preschool program in the 2007-2008 school year saw an increase in the district's KRA-L scores the following year when those children entered kindergarten.^{1,2} Furthermore, some districts saw a notable decrease in the percentage of children in the lowest band, indicating a reduced need for intensive instruction.

- New Boston Local School District in Scioto County, the highest poverty per capita district in Ohio: The percentage of students scoring in bands 1 and 2 decreased while those in **band 3 increased 31.99 percentage points. The district KRA-L score increased by 5.5 points.**
- Rock Hill Local School District in Lawrence County: The percentage of students scoring in bands 1 and 2 decreased while those in **band 3 increased 14.34 percentage points.**
- Zanesville City School District in Muskingum County: The percentage of students scoring in bands 1 and 2 decreased while those in **band 3 increased 8.31 percentage points.**
- Warrensville Heights City School District in Cuyahoga County: The percentage of students scoring in band 2 decreased while those in **band 3 increased 8.15 percentage points.**
- Wooster City School District in Wayne County: The percentage of students scoring in bands 1 and 2 decreased while those in **band 3 increased 5.01 percentage points.**

The South Central Ohio Educational Service Center (ESC) has analyzed the data for the ten Scioto County school districts that began offering an Public Preschool program in the 2007-2008 school year. Seven of the ten districts had increased KRA-L scores and, county wide, the average KRA-L score increased 2.8 points from the 2007-2008 school year (17.4) to the 2008-2009 school year (20.2). Furthermore, the ESC has disaggregated the data for Green Local School District; **children who attended the ECE program in the district scored 6.8 points higher (24.8) on the KRA-L than those that did not (18.0).**³

About Ohio's Early Childhood Education Program

The Public Preschool Program in Ohio provides education and comprehensive services for children ages three to five at 200 percent FPL and below. Many of Ohio's high-poverty districts depend on public preschool to help prepare the most at-risk children to enter school ready to learn, avoiding higher costs down the road for special education, grade retention, and other remediation.

The Public Preschool program is administered by the Ohio Department of Education's Office of Early Learning and School Readiness. The program follows Ohio's Early Learning Program Guidelines which align pre-kindergarten students with Ohio's K-12 curriculum. The program also has the following quality standards:

Teacher Education: Lead teachers are required to have an Associate's Degree (AA). Assistant teachers are required to have their high school diploma.

Child-Teacher Ratio: Maximum class size for 3 year olds is 24, with a staff-child ratio of 1:12. For 4 year olds, maximum class size is 28, with a staff-child ratio of 1:14.

Comprehensive Services: The State requirement for Pre-K screening, referral and support services includes vision, hearing, health, developmental, dental and support services. Meals depend on length of program day, and monitoring is provided through site visits and other monitoring.

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Early Childhood Education in the SFY2010-2011 Budget

The Executive Budget proposed flat-funding of \$34.8 million per year for Public Preschool. In the House version of the budget funding was reduced \$23 million over the biennium.

This cut would reverse much of the progress outlined above. **In just one year, districts were able to make significant progress towards increasing the number of children entering school with the skills they need to succeed.** Many of these districts also invested local dollars, created community partnerships, and systems for engaging families. **Restoring \$23 million will ensure that Ohio can continue provide quality early education to our most at-risk children in these districts, preparing them to take advantage of any new resources in the K-12 and higher education systems.**

¹ *Aggregate Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L) Data for Fall 2007: District Scores by County.* Office of Learning and School Readiness, Ohio Department of Education. June 2008.

² *Aggregate Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L) Data for Fall 2008: District Scores by County.* Office of Learning and School Readiness, Ohio Department of Education. June 2009.

³ Lowell Howard, Superintendent South Central Ohio Educational Service Center. June 19, 2009.