



Kentucky Invests in **D**eveloping **S**uccess

# Early Care & Education Evaluation Executive Summary 2012



University of Kentucky

# Executive Summary

In 2010 Governor Steve Beshear advanced support for early childhood education by forming the Kentucky Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) “to provide vision, leadership, oversight, collaboration, advocacy and accountability for the delivery of early childhood services to children from birth (including pre-natal services) to school entry” (Governor’s Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education, 2010, p. 3). The goals of the ECAC are to:

- promote collaboration and coordination between entities that provide services to young children;
- promote school readiness;
- increase access to high quality early care and education;
- develop and implement a professional development system; and
- develop longitudinal data-management system.

The 2011-2012 evaluation of early care and education in Kentucky reveals children’s kindergarten readiness skills and classroom quality differences among 3 or 4 STARS centers, Head Start, and public pre-K programs. Staff characteristics, child characteristics, classroom quality, and child outcomes were examined in these programs. The University of Kentucky evaluated programs using an integration of data (surveys, child assessments, parent questionnaire, and classroom observations) to answer 5 research questions. Results from the evaluation show similarities in early care and education settings serving young children in Kentucky. Programs performed similarly on the CLASS domains, and children in all programs share similar family demographics. In addition, the majority of children are performing similar to same age peers on some measures of school readiness.

## Action Items

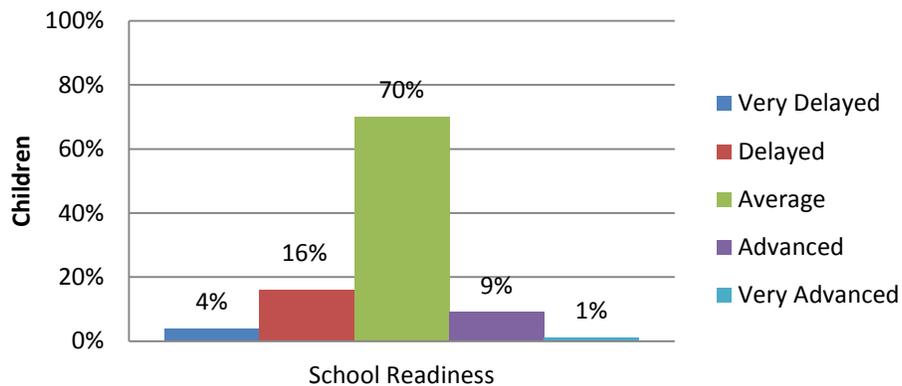
- Teacher education level has consistently been associated with positive child outcomes in Kentucky’s evaluation of early care and education. Administrators should support teachers to gain higher education levels and create work environments that encourage teachers to remain in the field of early care and education. Evaluation results suggest that teachers with more experience engage in teaching behaviors linked to positive child outcomes.
- Instructional strategies need to be implemented to ensure that children with risk factors learn important pre-literacy skills including code-focused interventions, shared-book reading, and language-enhancement interventions (NELP, 2009).
- Future research should examine the relationship between parents’ and teachers’ perceptions of school readiness and any impact those perceptions have on children’s outcomes. Care should be given to ensure that parents understand Kentucky’s definition of school readiness in an effort to support parents’ appropriate expectations of what children need to know and do before entering kindergarten.
- All programs had low- to mid-range scores on the Instructional Support domain of the CLASS. This domain and teachers’ behaviors associated with it are shown to be most predictive of future school performance (Pianta et al., 2007). Training and technical assistance should focus on supporting teachers to improve their teaching in the important areas of language modeling, quality feedback, and concept development.

# Research Questions

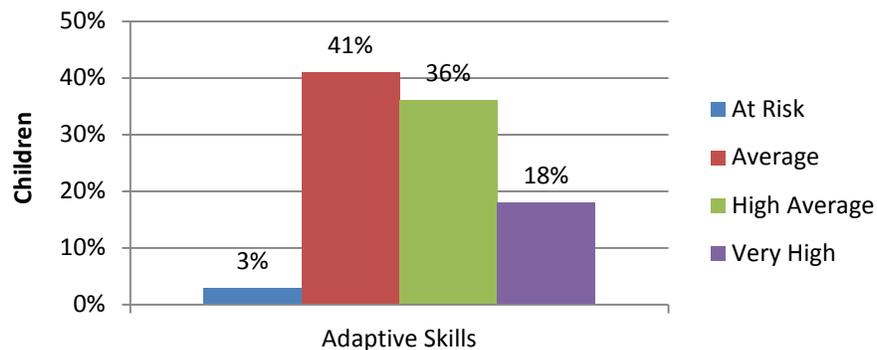
## 1. How prepared for kindergarten are young children based on important academic and social indicators of school readiness?

The majority of children in the sample scored in the average range of school readiness on *Bracken School Readiness Composite* (SRC), while smaller percentages of children were classified as above or below average. Most children received average or above average scores on the *Behavior Assessment Scoring System* as rated by teachers indicating that the majority of children sampled had acceptable adapted behavior and low levels of significant behavior programs.

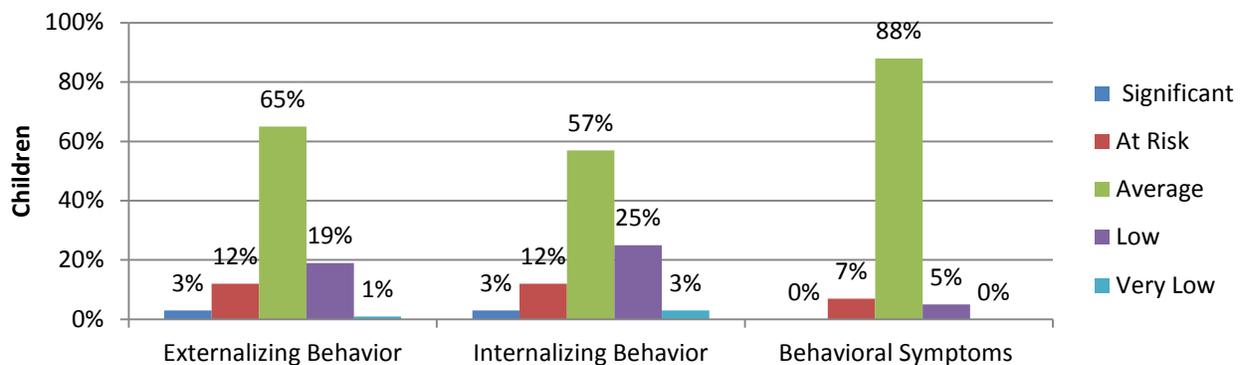
### Classification of School Readiness



### Classification of Adaptive Skills

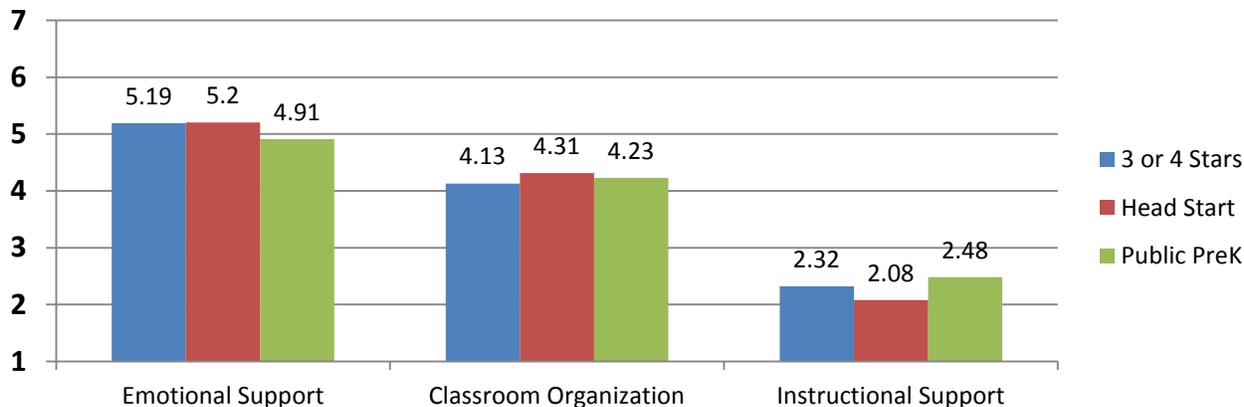


### Classification of Behavioral Problems



**2. What is the classroom quality, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), of Head Start, 3/4 STARS centers, and public pre-kindergarten programs in which sample children attend?**

### Classroom Quality Scores



**3. What is the relationship between program quality and children’s preparedness for kindergarten as measured by academic and social measures of school readiness?**

Teacher’s education level was significantly related to scores on the Bracken School Readiness Composite. The average score for children whose teacher has a Bachelor’s degree is 8 points higher than the average score for children whose teacher does not have a Bachelor’s degree.

**4. What is the relationship between children’s participation in 3/4 STARS child care, Head Start, and public pre-kindergarten, and their preparedness for Kindergarten as measured by academic and social measures?**

Children in these three center types scored similarly on social-emotional and academic outcome measures. There were no statistically significant differences.

**5. What is the relationship between family characteristics and family perceptions of school readiness and child outcomes?**

Higher family incomes were associated with higher scores on the Bracken SRC and Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) *Picture Naming*, *Alliteration*, and *Rhyming*. Higher maternal levels of education were also associated with higher scores on the Bracken SRC and IGDIs *Alliteration*. The majority of parents indicated “motivated and curious”, “follows simple rules”, and “sits still and pays attention” as the most important goals for their children to be ready for kindergarten.

Prepared by third party evaluators at the University of Kentucky

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