



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Early Childhood Program

Preparing students for success



The District of Columbia Public Schools offers pre-kindergarten classes to all three- and four-year-old children in the District. Currently, we serve more than 6,000 three- and four-year-old students in 75 elementary schools across the city.



Our high-quality program gives students a warm, supportive environment that helps them develop social and emotional skills. Children also develop the academic skills and knowledge they need to succeed in Kindergarten.

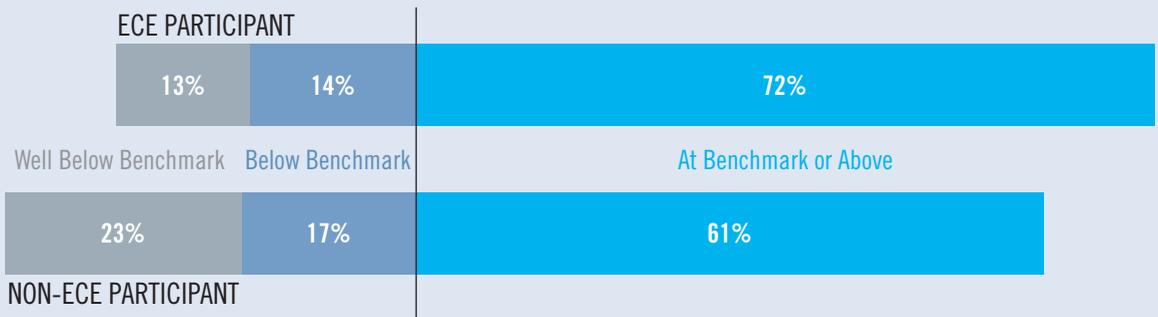
Supporting Learning

Our goal is to create nurturing environments for our youngest learners.

Each of our 350 classrooms has at least two staff members, including a teacher and teacher's aide, so that students can learn in **small groups** and with **one-on-one instruction and support**. We require every teacher to have *at least* a Bachelor's Degree. All early childhood staff receive regular professional development and training throughout the year.

Thousands of families have chosen DCPS for their children. We are excited that our program is working and helping our students to grow and learn. In fact, children who attended pre-k at DCPS had stronger pre-reading skills in Kindergarten than their classmates who did not attend the program.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) Prepares Students for Reading Pre-Literacy and Fluency Scores for Kindergarten Students, Fall 2013



STRENGTHENING READING SKILLS

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is a reading tool that helps teachers better understand their students' reading needs. DIBELS testing is done three times a year in Kindergarten. Teachers use the data from the tool to help monitor students' progress, guide reading instruction and identify students who may need extra help.

Building Skills for Success

DCPS' unique early childhood program focuses on providing the academic, social and emotional skills that research shows children need for future success in school.

Teachers build **reading and math skills** through age-appropriate activities that engage children and support curiosity and problem-solving. Students are given time to explore and time for pretend play, which we know helps build students' **creativity**. Students are also taught to manage their **feelings and other skills** to help prepare them for social situations as they progress in school and in life.

Family engagement is another important way we support students in their pre-k classrooms. We believe that parents are a child's first and best teacher. We work to help parents support their child at home and school. We offer meetings and host workshops on child development, understanding report cards, the importance of daily attendance, health and nutrition, finance, and other areas of interest. We also work with parents individually.

Finally, we know that **good health** supports active learning! The DCPS early childhood program works with families to visit their doctor and helps

make sure that children have healthy eyes, ears and teeth. We help set up hearing, vision and complete dental screenings. We also screen for possible developmental delays. We want our children to be healthy, focused and able to learn.

What We Teach

Just as we have improved and overhauled what we teach to students in Kindergarten through high school, we have also significantly improved what is taught to our youngest learners. Starting this school year, nearly all early childhood classrooms are using **research-based curricula that support social and emotional skills and academic content**. The curricula are aligned with the rigorous Common Core State Standards that are in place in our K–12 classrooms and proven to support the skills and knowledge children need to be successful in Kindergarten. Schools can choose which curricula best meet the needs of the children, families and school community. The teachers also receive curriculum-specific, targeted professional development.

DCPS VALUES PARENT CHOICE

Early Childhood Program Offers a Variety of Research-Based Curricula

- Tools of the Mind
- Creative Curriculum
- Montessori
- Reggio Emilia Approach
- International Baccalaureate Approach

If you want to learn more about the curricula/instructional approaches in our programs, please see DCPS Early Childhood Education Curricula & Instructional Approaches at www.dcps.dc.gov.



Working for Students

DCPS is committed to providing a high-quality program for all early learners.

We use a number of assessments to better understand what works for students and to be sure our classrooms are high quality. To help students learn and grow, DCPS uses:

- classroom observations,
- teacher quality assessments,
- teacher evaluations and
- other measures of direct child assessments.

What does all this information tell us? It shows clearly that **our programs meet benchmarks for quality** and that **our teachers and classrooms have the needed supports** to help students do their best.

Ensuring High-Quality Teaching

Research shows that a child's teacher is the most important factor in student success. We want our students to have great teachers who use the best teaching practices in early childhood to help children thrive. The DCPS early childhood program uses the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a widely used and researched

tool that looks at the quality of the classroom and how the teacher and students interact. **When compared to other programs across the country where CLASS is widely used, DCPS programs are meeting national norms and the quality levels of other programs.**

Additionally, our early childhood classroom teachers participate in the DCPS teacher evaluation system, known as IMPACT. In the 2012–2013 school year, 82% of early childhood teachers were rated Effective or Highly Effective on the IMPACT teacher evaluation system. This means that most early childhood students have teachers who have been recognized and rewarded for their work. The IMPACT system also gives teachers opportunities to work with and learn from their peers, which ultimately leads to better instruction.

Monitoring Progress

The DCPS early childhood program also looks at student's development and progress over the school year using a tool called Teaching Strategies GOLD®. GOLD uses



Michael DeAngelis

GREAT TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

- 100% of early childhood teachers have at least a Bachelor's Degree.
- 82% were rated Effective or Highly Effective on IMPACT.
- Every classroom has at least two staff members.
- All staff receive professional development and training throughout the year.

Early Childhood Students Leave Pre-K Prepared

FALL

65%

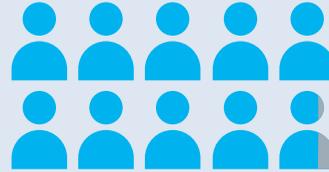
Meet Benchmarks



SPRING

97%

Meet Benchmarks



teacher observations to look at how a child is progressing to meet grade-level expectations in six developmental and content areas (see chart above). We know that children are making progress throughout the year on this assessment, as 35% enter the year below these benchmarks and then make gains throughout the year. At the end of the last school year, **97% of our early childhood students met or exceeded the GOLD expectations for their grade level.** This means that most students finish the program with the skills needed to enter and succeed in Kindergarten.

In addition to GOLD, DCPS has taken a closer look at a group of classrooms to examine the quality of the early childhood program at a

deeper level. These classrooms, which receive additional supports for children, teachers and families through federal Head Start funding, also receive additional observations of teachers and children together. Students in those rooms are assessed using several measures that look at pre-reading, pre-math, problem-solving and social-emotional development. The results give us reasons to be very optimistic and very proud of our students. We've learned that **our students are gaining important reading and math skills.** In addition, children in classrooms using the Tools of the Mind curriculum have developed **significant self-regulation and working memory skills.** These results reaffirm our commitment to strong curricula that meet the needs of all our students.



“ “ As an early childhood teacher, I have the opportunity to teach basic social skills every person needs to learn, like how to express feelings or mediate a disagreement, in an environment where children are constantly practicing these skills, playing along with others. High quality early childhood experiences also support children in every aspect of their development, from literacy and mathematics development to physical or language development. The foundation this builds for further success in school, and life in general, is paramount to the success of my past and current students, and I believe, future generations of children. — KRYSTAL BEAULIEU, DCPS TEACHER ” ”

“ “ In DC, there's all day Pre-School for every child! Clark, now 4, is in a Montessori program. Socially, he's thriving in a group of friends. Emotionally, he's maturing as a scholar who excels. Cognitively, he's secure in the basics (alphabet, counting, shapes and colors). He's already learning to read! His teacher's goal is for him to be reading and writing sentences by the end of the year. At home, he tells me about different cultures and continents. He speaks of space, astronauts and the galaxy. He is so into learning and experiencing life! And I'm happy for him, for us. — LATOYA SMITH, DCPS PARENT AND POLICY COUNCIL MEMBER ” ”

“ “ Over the past few years, our early childhood instruction has grown as much as any other part of our program, if not more. It's been exciting to see the ECE pedagogy rise to the level where it serves as a model for best practice, even for upper grades. The teachers and aides meet higher standards than in years past, and the curriculum has a stronger research basis for developmentally appropriate practice—in our case that's Tools of the Mind. The DCPS ECE team provides so much dedicated coaching and [professional development] for the teachers that they are essentially extended members of our faculty—they know some students better than I do. As a result, our kids are growing in leaps and bounds of creative thinking and literacy foundations, just as we'd hope for the ripest age of learning. — EUGENE PINKARD, JR., DCPS PRINCIPAL ” ”

Find out more: www.dcps.dc.gov



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