The First Eight Years
Early Outcomes of Hawai‘i’s Public Pre-Kindergarten Program

HAWAI‘I P-20 PARTNERSHIPS FOR EDUCATION
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The First Eight Years

This report shows that Hawai’i’s public pre-kindergarten (pre-K) program reveals promise for being a worthwhile investment to provide high-quality early learning experiences for the state’s most disadvantaged children. While it is too early to draw definitive conclusions, ensuring more children transition to kindergarten ready to learn and sustaining that momentum is crucial for preparing more children to meet rigorous learning standards by the third grade.

Early childhood, often defined as the period between birth and eight years, sets a foundation for later development and learning. This is a critical period for learning and growth; the quality of children’s early experiences are the building blocks that shape how their brains develop. Studies have found that children who attend pre-K are better prepared for kindergarten than children who do not, and while all children benefit, children who are at risk often make the most gains. Children’s early learning trajectories depend on the quality of experiences prior to and during pre-K as well as early elementary.

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) was established in 2012 to guide the development of a comprehensive and integrated statewide system for early childhood development and learning. In school year 2014-2015 (14-15), EOEL launched the state’s first publicly funded pre-K program at 18 Hawai’i State Department of Education (HIDOE) schools. The EOEL pre-K program serves four-year-old children, with priority given to students who meet income eligibility requirements or other at-risk criteria.

Primary Findings

How did EOEL pre-K student characteristics compare to other students who entered kindergarten in 15-16?

• EOEL pre-K was rolled out at the HIDOE schools with the highest rates of economically disadvantaged students or schools in communities with limited early learning opportunities.

• EOEL pre-K students were similar to students who entered kindergarten at schools that offered EOEL pre-K. These students were more likely to be economically disadvantaged, Native Hawaiian, and chronically absent in any school year between kindergarten in 15-16 and third grade in 18-19, compared to other students who entered kindergarten at a school that did not offer EOEL pre-K.

How did EOEL pre-K students perform on third grade assessments?

• EOEL pre-K students were more likely to meet or exceed standards on third grade standards-based assessments, compared to students who attended an EOEL school but did not participate in EOEL pre-K.

How many students remain at the same school from kindergarten to third grade?

• EOEL pre-K students were more likely to remain enrolled at the same school from kindergarten to third grade.

• Students who entered kindergarten at an EOEL school but did not participate in EOEL pre-K in 14-15 were most likely to change schools by the third grade.

How did school mobility influence performance on third grade assessments?

• Students who remained continuously enrolled at the same school between kindergarten and third grade had higher rates of meeting or exceeding third grade standards-based assessments than students who changed schools.

How did performance on third grade assessments vary by sub-populations?

• Students who were identified as having “at-risk” characteristics were less likely to meet or exceed standards-based assessment standards in the third grade.
EOEL Pre-K Schools and Number of Students Served in 14-15

**KAUAI COUNTY**
- 'Ele'ele Elementary 19
- Kekaha Elementary 18

**CITY & COUNTY OF HONOLULU**
- Likelike Elementary 18
- Linapuni Elementary 33
- Nānākuli Elementary 20
- Waialae Elementary 16
- Waialua Elementary 20

**HAWAI'I COUNTY**
- Honoka'a Elementary 19
- Ho'okena Elementary 11
- Kea'au Elementary† 15
- Konawaena Elementary 18
- Mountain View Elementary 18
- Na'alehu Elementary 31
- Pāhala Elementary 19
- Pāhoa Elementary 18

**MAUI COUNTY**
- Hana High & Elementary 14
- Kaunakakai Elementary 18
- Lāna'i High & Elementary † 20

† All schools except Lāna'i High 
& Elementary are Title 1 schools

* Students enrolled at Keonepoko 
Elementary shifted to Kea'au 
Elementary due to volcano eruption

TOTAL: 18 SCHOOLS, 345 STUDENTS

In its first year, EOEL pre-K operated statewide starting with the Title 1 schools with the highest rates of economically disadvantaged students or schools in communities with limited early learning opportunities. Title 1 grants are awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide financial assistance for schools with high enrollment numbers or percentages of students from low-income families to help ensure that all students meet challenging state academic standards. EOEL pre-K eligibility requirements were initially based solely on family income, but have since changed to also include certain at-risk criteria. See [https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/](https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/) for information about the program.

The Students Who Entered Kindergarten in 15-16

This report examines differences in student characteristics, performance on third grade assessments, and school mobility for the 15,190 HIDOE kindergarten students in 15-16. Kindergarten students were identified as falling into one of four mutually exclusive groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EOEL Pre-K Students</th>
<th>EOEL Schools</th>
<th>Title 1 Schools</th>
<th>Non-Title 1 Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>318 students</td>
<td>994 students</td>
<td>8,266 students</td>
<td>5,612 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participated in EOEL pre-K in 14-15 and enrolled in kindergarten at any HIDOE school in 15-16.</td>
<td>• Enrolled in kindergarten in 15-16 at a school that offered EOEL pre-K.</td>
<td>• Enrolled in kindergarten in 15-16 at a Title 1 school that did not offer EOEL pre-K.</td>
<td>• Enrolled in kindergarten in 15-16 at a non-Title 1 school that did not offer EOEL pre-K.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: 27 EOEL pre-K students were not enrolled in kindergarten at a HIDOE school in 15-16.</td>
<td>• Did not participate in EOEL pre-K in 14-15.</td>
<td>• Did not participate in EOEL pre-K in 14-15.</td>
<td>• Did not participate in EOEL pre-K in 14-15.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These four groups allow the comparison of how well the students who attended an EOEL pre-K program did when compared to those who did not participate in EOEL pre-K. It is important to note that students who did not participate in EOEL pre-K may have had other early learning experiences that have not been documented.

Percent of Kindergarten Students Identified as Economically Disadvantaged in 15-16

- **80%** EOEL Schools
- **68%** Title 1 Schools
- **32%** Non-Title 1 Schools
How did EOEL pre-K student characteristics compare to other students who entered kindergarten in 15-16?

- A higher percentage of EOEL pre-K students who took the third grade SBA in 18-19 met or exceeded English Language Arts (ELA) standards (43%) compared to students who attended an EOEL school but did not participate in EOEL pre-K (38%).
- Similarly, a higher percentage of EOEL pre-K students met or exceeded math standards (46%) compared to students who started at an EOEL school but did not participate in EOEL pre-K (43%).

Overall, 51% of students statewide met or exceeded third grade ELA standards, and 55% met math standards.

Note: The first year of EOEL pre-K did not include students who were identified as requiring SPED services. EOEL pre-K programs have included SPED students in subsequent years.

How did EOEL pre-K students perform on third grade assessments?

- Percent of students with third grade Smarter Balance Assessment (SBA) scores in 18-19 who met or exceeded standards

A higher percentage of EOEL pre-K students who took the third grade SBA in 18-19 met or exceeded English Language Arts (ELA) standards (43%) compared to students who attended an EOEL school but did not participate in EOEL pre-K (38%). Similarly, a higher percentage of EOEL pre-K students met or exceeded math standards (46%) compared to students who started at an EOEL school but did not participate in EOEL pre-K (43%).

Overall, 51% of students statewide met or exceeded third grade ELA standards, and 55% met math standards.
How many students remain at the same school from kindergarten to third grade?

School mobility refers to the frequency of school changes for reasons other than grade promotion. These school changes may disrupt a student’s relationships with peers, teachers, and learning. Studies have found that student mobility—particularly multiple moves—is associated with lower school engagement, grades, and test scores, and higher risk of dropping out of high school.²

Compared to their peers, a higher percentage of EOEL pre-K students were continuously enrolled and promoted on time to third grade by 18-19 at the same school (66%).

Students who entered kindergarten at an EOEL school but did not participate in EOEL pre-K had the highest percentage of students who changed schools by the third grade (27%). Students who entered kindergarten at a non-Title 1 school that did not offer EOEL pre-K were least likely to change schools (11%), but were most likely to leave HIDOE by 18-19 (25% were no longer enrolled).


How did performance on third grade assessments vary by student mobility?

Overall, a higher percentage of students who promoted on-time at the same school from kindergarten to the third grade met ELA and math standards compared to students who promoted on-time and changed schools.
How did performance on third grade English Language Arts assessments vary by sub-populations?

Percentage of students with third grade SBA scores in 18-19 who met or exceeded ELA standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-population</th>
<th>EOEL Pre-K Students</th>
<th>EOEL Schools</th>
<th>Title 1 Schools</th>
<th>Non-Title 1 Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>63% †</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ Disadvantaged</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Econ Disadvantaged</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not English Learner</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Special Education</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>43% †</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Homeless</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Absent</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Chronically Absent</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data suppressed to protect student privacy due to insufficient sample size
† Interpret with caution; small sample

Econ Disadvantaged: identified as economically disadvantaged at any time between 15-16 and 18-19
English Learner: received English Learner services at any time between 15-16 and 18-19
Special Education: received Special Education services at any time between 15-16 and 18-19
Homeless: identified as homeless at any time between 15-16 and 18-19
Chronically Absent: absent 15 or more days in any school year between 15-16 and 18-19
### How did performance on third grade math assessments vary by sub-populations?

Percentage of students with third grade SBA scores in 18-19 who met or exceeded math standards

#### Students Not in EOEL Pre-Kindergarten

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-population</th>
<th>EOEL Pre-K Students</th>
<th>EOEL Schools</th>
<th>Title I Schools</th>
<th>Non-Title I Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>63% †</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ Disadvantaged</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Econ Disadvantaged</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not English Learner</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Special Education</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>50% †</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Homeless</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Absent</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Chronically Absent</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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What Resources are Available to Children Before Kindergarten?

In addition to public pre-K, Hawai‘i’s families may be served by a number of state agencies or private programs that support the development, learning, and health and well-being of young children before they enter kindergarten. Connecting early childhood data to K-12 can help the state to better understand children’s readiness for kindergarten, improve the quality of and access to services, coordinate resources to avoid duplication, and inform education policy decisions.

* Including private preschool, family child care homes (FCC), family-child interaction learning programs (FCIL), and family, friends, and neighbors (FFN).

How is Hawai‘i Increasing High-Quality Early Learning Opportunities?

**EARLY CHILDHOOD STATE PLAN**

The Hawai‘i Early Childhood State Plan, 2019-2024 was developed by a broad range of Hawai‘i stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The Plan provides a framework to coordinate resources and collectively support the state’s young children and their families.

The Early Learning Board oversees the implementation of the Plan and sets milestones. EOEL is responsible for coordinating and supporting stakeholders’ efforts to address the Plan’s priorities for collective action.

**EXPAND PUBLIC EARLY LEARNING**

Over the past five years the Hawai‘i State Legislature has provided funding to nearly triple the number of public pre-K seats in HIDOE and charter schools. In 20-21, EOEL plans to serve 740 pre-K students at 34 HIDOE schools; charter schools plan to serve 360 students at 12 schools.

The Governor, House, and Senate jointly introduced the 2020 economic bill package, which proposes to expand public and private childcare options to increase access to early learning for underserved children in Hawai‘i.

**EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY**

Since 2015, the Early Learning Academy has provided EOEL pre-K educators with professional development learning experiences and supports to improve the quality of educational practice. The goals of the Early Learning Academy are to strengthen professional practice, build and sustain learning communities, and enhance partnerships with families and other early childhood professionals. EOEL plans to expand the Early Learning Academy to include educators within the private sector.

**STATE LITERACY INITIATIVE**

Hawai‘i P-20, EOEL, HIDOE, and the University of Hawai‘i have partnered to design and implement strategies that support literacy advancement for all learners. This work to enhance the state’s capacity to implement evidence-based literacy programs is being supported by the federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant. This $50 million grant will serve children from birth through grade 12 with an emphasis on supporting the state’s highest-need students to mitigate achievement gaps.

What questions can Hawai‘i DXP help answer for you?

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