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VPK Readiness & Enrollment Project: Fall 2023 Student Kindergarten Readiness and 2022-23 VPK Attendance

At a Glance

Prekindergarten programs are designed to prepare young children for kindergarten and increase their likelihood of academic success. This Research Brief examined kindergarten readiness rates, enrollment, attendance, and withdrawal patterns of students in prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs in 2022-2023. Data revealed that 62% of Pre-K students who were voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) completers from programs under the purview of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) were kindergarten-ready in fall 2023. The readiness rate for M-DCPS VPK completers was 13 percentage points higher than the 49% overall readiness rate for Miami-Dade County (countywide - public and private providers) and 11 percentage points higher than the state's 51% overall readiness rate (public and private providers).

This Research Brief analyzes kindergarten readiness for Miami-Dade County students who participated in VPK programs during 2022-2023. It also addresses the attendance rate of VPK participants to determine those who met the criteria of VPK completer (having attended their respective VPK programs at least 70% of the time).

The Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) was established by the Florida Legislature in 2004 and launched in 2005-2006. Since its inception, more than 2.6 million children have benefited from the program. Data collected by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) shows that children who participate in VPK are generally more ready for kindergarten than children who do not participate in VPK (Florida Department of Education, n.d.-a). Therefore, these programs are instrumental in preparing students for academic success once they enter kindergarten.

Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) STAR Early Literacy and FLKRS

The Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring Program is the statewide, standardized program known as Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) STAR Early Literacy. It is implemented in all VPK programs as required by s. 1002.68, F.S., and it is used to assess student achievement of the performance standards in early literacy and mathematics as established in s. 1002.67(1)(a), F.S. (FLDOE, n.d.-b). School districts must screen each kindergarten student within the first 30 school days of each

academic year to determine his or her readiness for kindergarten. The FLDOE previously adopted the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) for that purpose. FLKRS Star Students who scored at least 500 points were identified as kindergarten-ready. FLKRS was last implemented in fall 2021, and it has been replaced with the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (F.A.S.T.) STAR Early Literacy.

VPK FAST STAR Early Literacy results are now part of the VPK Provider Performance Metric and are used to identify student achievement and learning gains (FLDOE, n.d.-b). VPK Programs began implementing the FAST STAR Early Literacy in the 2022-2023 VPK Program Year. Students must earn a score of 690 or higher on the FAST STAR Early Literacy assessment to be deemed ready for kindergarten.

Results

Results from the FAST STAR Early Literacy Progress Monitoring 1 (PM1) assessment for fall 2023 for select Florida districts and the state are presented first, followed by a section on kindergarten readiness rates for Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) VPK completers and a section on VPK enrollment and withdrawal patterns.

Florida Kindergarten Readiness Results

The Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement of the Florida Department of Education reported district and statewide results of PM1 of the FAST STAR Early Literacy assessment for fall 2023. Tables 1 and 2 comprise data for the largest districts in the state, as well as data for the state as a whole relative to students who met the cut score for kindergarten readiness (690+) on the assessment. Additionally, the data in Tables 1 and 2 represent students in all VPK programs (public and private) and are not limited to VPK programs within public schools of the school districts selected for inclusion in this research brief.

Table 1

Fall 2023 Kindergarten Readiness Rates in Largest Florida Counties and Statewide (FLDOE Data)

County/District	Overall			VPK Completers (Public & Private)		
	Test Takers (N)	K-Ready (N)	K-Ready (%)	Test Takers (N)	K-Ready (N)	K-Ready (%)
Broward	15,767	7,991	51%	8,498	5,527	65%
Miami-Dade	20,340	10,067	49%	11,401	6,676	59%
Duval	9,457	4,333	46%	4,913	2,862	58%
Hillsborough	14,659	7,628	52%	7,742	5,061	65%
Orange	12,985	6,470	50%	7,202	4,603	64%
Palm Beach	12,717	6,299	50%	7,403	4,629	63%
Florida	186,417	95,494	51%	101,348	64,394	64%

Note. This table was constructed with data from the Fall 2023 Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Progress Monitoring 1 District Results (Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement, Florida Department of Education).

Table 1 includes the overall readiness rates for Broward, Miami-Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Orange, and Palm Beach Counties (irrespective of VPK completion status), as well as the readiness rates for VPK completers. It is important to stress that the FLDOE data presented in Table 1 reflect kindergarten readiness for all VPK completers across all program types for those samples (irrespective of whether those programs were privately run or under the purview of public school districts). According to these data, 51% of kindergarten students in the state were ready for kindergarten in the 2023-2024 school year. Hillsborough

County exceeded the state readiness rate by one percentage point (52% ready), followed by Broward County (51% ready). For Miami-Dade County, 49% of students who took the assessment met the criteria for kindergarten readiness.

The results for students who participated in VPK programs and met the 70% attendance threshold indicate higher kindergarten readiness rates for VPK completers. Statewide, 64% of VPK completers met the criteria for kindergarten readiness. The readiness rate for VPK completers in Hillsborough County also exceeded the statewide rate by one percentage point (65% ready). Broward County's VPK completers matched Hillsborough County's readiness rate at 65%. Miami-Dade (59% kindergarten-ready) and Duval (58% ready) were just shy of a 60% readiness rate for their VPK completers.

Table 2 displays the fall 2023 kindergarten readiness rates for students who did not attend VPK programs. As in Table 1, Table 2 presents data for the six largest school districts in Florida and the state. These data reveal that students who took the assessment but did not participate in VPK programs during 2022-2023 were less likely to be prepared for kindergarten at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. This finding is consistent across each of the selected counties (with readiness rates ranging from 30% to 38% for non-VPK students) and statewide (with only 36% of students who did not participate in VPK programs kindergarten-ready).

Table 2

Fall 2023 Kindergarten Readiness Rates in Largest Florida Counties and Statewide (Non-VPK)

County/District	Test Takers (N)	K-Ready (N)	K-Ready (%)
Broward	5,748	1,952	34%
Miami-Dade	7,240	2,785	38%
Duval	3,405	1,112	33%
Hillsborough	5,207	1,910	37%
Orange	4,537	1,445	32%
Palm Beach	3,990	1,201	30%
Florida	65,520	23,780	36%

Note. This table was constructed with data from the Fall 2023 Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Progress Monitoring 1 District Results (Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement, Florida Department of Education).

VPK Completers, PM1 Scores, and Kindergarten Readiness Results

This section uses district-level data to discuss the attendance status of Miami-Dade students (public and private) enrolled in Pre-K programs in 2022-2023. It also discusses the kindergarten readiness for students who attended Pre-K programs for at least 70% of the academic year. It is important to note that while all non-VPK Pre-K programs do not require the same attendance standard required of VPK programs, the threshold is being applied across all Pre-K programs for comparison. Thus, the sample will be referenced as the Miami-Dade County Pre-K completers sample (also the Pre-K completers).

Descriptive statistics for the Pre-K completers sample reveal that 11,570 students enrolled in Pre-K programs in 2022-2023 attended 126 days (or more) in their respective Pre-K programs in Miami-Dade. Of

the 11,570 Pre-K students who met the attendance threshold, 5,867 were enrolled in M-DCPS VPK programs (qualifying them for VPK completer status). From this sample, 6,249 students (54%) participated in the fall 2023 assessment (PM1 of the STAR Early Literacy), 5,270 of whom were M-DCPS VPK completers. Thus, when considering only the M-DCPS VPK completers, 90% participated in the fall 2023 assessment.

Since M-DCPS VPK programs are included in the District's strategic plan, kindergarten readiness rates for those programs are of interest. The specific VPK programs within M-DCPS include VPK ESE Inclusion (program type A), Head Start VPK (program type B), VPK Title I (program type F), and two Fee-Supported VPK programs (programs V and X). Of the two fee-supported VPK programs, students enrolled in program V attend for one-half day compared to students enrolled in program X who attend for a full day.

Table 3

Miami-Dade & M-DCPS 2023-2024 Kindergarten Readiness by Pre-K Program Code (Pre-K Attendance at least 70%)

Pre-K Program Type				
	Program Totals (N)	Test Takers (N)	K-Ready (N)	K-Ready (%)
A – ESE Inclusion	255	221	138	62%
B – Head Start	623	525	260	50%
D – Day Care (TAP)	26	0	0	0%
E – Exceptional Student	1,902	543	138	25%
F – Title I	3,577	3,209	1,901	59%
G – Head Start (Metro-Dade)	505	0	0	0%
H – Early Head Start	73	0	0	0%
J – Infant/Toddler, Fee	11	0	0	0%
M – Montessori Magnet	50	46	33	72%
V – Fee Supported	331	309	198	64%
X – Fee Supported	1,081	1,006	794	79%
Z – Pre-K Role Model	427	68	35	51%
	2,709*	322*	127*	39%*
Total	11,570	6,249	3,624	58%
Total (M-DCPS VPK_A, B, F, V, & X)	5,867	5,270	3,291	62%

Note. *These statistics reflect missing data on the Pre-K program type variable.

Table 3 presents the crosstabulation analyses of kindergarten readiness rates for the Miami-Dade Pre-K completers sample by Pre-K program type. Focusing only on Pre-K students who were enrolled in M-DCPS VPK programs in 2022-2023, the combined kindergarten readiness rate for M-DCPS VPK completers was 62% (n=3,291). Therefore, the readiness rate for M-DCPS VPK completers was 13 percentage points higher than the 49% overall readiness rate for Miami-Dade County (see Table 1) and 11 percentage points higher than the 51% readiness rate for the state (see Table 1). Relative to other VPK completers, the readiness rate

for M-DCPS VPK completers was three percentage points higher than the 59% readiness rate for Miami-Dade County VPK completers (see Table 1) and two percentage points lower than the 64% kindergarten readiness rate for VPK completers statewide (see Table 1).

Regarding within-program differences in readiness rates, the readiness rates for VPK completers from M-DCPSs two fee-supported VPK programs either met or exceeded the kindergarten-readiness rates for VPK completers in Miami-Dade County and the state. Specifically, Program V (where students attend half a day) met the state's 64% K-readiness rate and exceeded Miami-Dade County's 59% readiness rate (see Table 1) by five percentage points. The 79% readiness rate for M-DCPS VPK completers from Program X (see Table 3), on the other hand, far exceeded the rates for VPK completers from Miami-Dade (59% K-ready) and the state (64% K-ready) – see Table 1. It is also important to note that the 79% readiness rate for VPK completers from Program X at M-DCPS (where students attend a full day) exceeded the 64% readiness rate for Program V (where students attend half a day) by 15 percentage points. This data suggests that enrollment in VPK programs, student attendance, and the time Pre-K students spend at those programs (in this case, half a day versus a full day) could impact kindergarten readiness rates.

2022-2023 VPK Enrollment and Withdrawal Pattern Results

Data were also gathered from multiple District data sources to determine Pre-K enrollment and withdrawal patterns. For this research brief, February 2023 is used as a snapshot to discuss 2022-2023 Pre-K enrollment patterns of all active prekindergarten students during the February 2023 Survey 3 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) survey week. Student status and grade level in October 2023 are also examined to address how many Pre-K students moved on to kindergarten in M-DCPS for the 2023-2024 school year.

Unlike the Pre-K completers sample discussed in the previous section (which reflects active Miami-Dade public and private prekindergarten students for the entire 2022-2023 school year who attended their respective Pre-K programs at least 126 days, equivalent to at least 70% attendance), the February 2023 Survey 3 FTE sample used for analyses in this section represents only a snapshot of the 2022-2023 school year. As a result, the Miami-Dade Pre-K completers has a larger sample size (N=11,570) than the February 2023 Survey 3 FTE sample discussed in this section.

Table 4 contains demographic information for the 2022-2023 VPK and Prekindergarten enrollment during the February 2023 Survey 3 FTE by Pre-K program type. Data for all program types are presented, including M-DCPS VPK programs. During the selected snapshot period, 9,883 students were enrolled in Pre-K programs in Miami-Dade in 2022-2023. Of this sample (February 2023 Survey 3 FTE), 65% (n=6,420) were enrolled in M-DCPS VPK programs (program types A, B, F, V, and X).

Regarding demographic patterns, Table 4 reveals that Hispanic students represented 68% of the overall Pre-K enrollment (n=6,713) and 72% of M-DCPS VPK programs (n=4,611). Black students represented 26% of the overall Pre-K enrollment (n=2,558) and 22% (n=1,377) of M-DCPS VPK programs. Relative to gender, Table 4 reveals similar enrollment patterns for males and females across the various Pre-K program types. However, male students represented 69% (n=1,345) of the Exceptional Student Program versus 593 female students (31%) within that Pre-K program type.

To determine the number of Pre-K students who moved on to kindergarten in the 2023-24 school year and who withdrew, student grade status and student status in October 2023 were analyzed using crosstabulations. As reflected in Table 5, of the 9,883 students in Pre-K as of February 2023, 7,082 moved on to grade K in one of the M-DCPS schools (72%). The data also indicate that 2,291 students remained in

Pre-K (23%), two moved on to grade 1, and 508 (5%) withdrew before the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year.

Table 4

Miami-Dade & M-DCPS 2022-2023 Pre-K Enrollment by Program Type and Student Demographics (February 2023 FTE)

Pre-K Program Type	N	%	Demographics				
			Ethnicity			Gender	
			Black	Hispanic	Other	Female	Male
A – ESE Inclusion	264	2.7	42	195	27	142	122
B – Head Start (VPK)	712	7.2	400	300	12	369	343
E – Exceptional Student	1,938	19.6	514	1,327	97	593	1,345
F – Title I	3,953	40.0	882	2,922	149	1,951	2,002
G – Head Start (Metro-Dade)	652	6.6	375	254	23	327	325
H – Early Head Start	296	3.0	205	86	5	150	146
J – Infant/Toddler, Fee	13	0.1	0	12	1	2	11
M – Montessori Magnet	52	0.5	24	23	5	26	26
V – VPK, Fee Supported	373	3.8	10	317	46	178	195
X – Fee Supported	1,118	11.3	43	877	198	548	570
Z – Pre-K Role Model	502	5.1	63	400	39	286	216
Total	9,883	100.0	2,558	6,713	602	4,572	5,301
Total (A, B, F, V, & X)	6,420	65.0	1,377	4,611	432	3,188	3,232

Note. The demographic statistics do not equal the sample size (N=9,883) due to 10 students without Pre-K program codes. For these analyses, the “other” ethnic category includes all non-Black and non-Hispanic ethnic groups.

Table 5

Crosstabulation of M-DCPS Student Status by Student Grade (October 2023)

Student Status Oct 2023	Student Grade Oct 2023			
	PK	K	01	Total
A – Active	855	6,709	2	7,566
H – Home Education	6	7	0	13
I – Inactive	199	358	0	557
O – Other	1,214	0	0	1,214
R – Part-Time	16	6	0	22
Total	2,291	7,082	2	9,372

Note. The total number of students in this table does not equal the sample size (N=9,883). This includes students who withdrew before the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year (n=508) and students without student status codes (n=3). Inactive students (n=557) represent those who withdrew from M-DCPS during the 2023-2024 school year.

Relative to student status in October 2023, Table 5 reveals that 8,780 students were classified as active status (combined A and O categories). Students who were enrolled in the Home Education program (n=13) and those with part-time status (n=22) are also included in Table 5. The data also reveal that of the total number of students in Pre-K as of February 2023, 557 were classified as Inactive during October 2023, indicating that 557 students withdrew after the 2023-2024 school year began (before or during Survey 2 of the academic year).

Table 6

Students Who Withdrew Before the 2023-2024 School Year (Type of Withdrawal)

Withdrawal Codes	N	%
W04 – W/D to a nonpublic school (in/out of state, out of country)	54	11
W22 – W/D due to whereabouts unknown (efforts to locate required)	128	25
W25 – W/D (under the age of 6 a/o February 1 st of current school year)	70	14
W3A – W/D to attend a public school in another Florida district	114	22
W3B – W/D to attend another public school (out of state/country)	117	23
Other	25	5
Total	508	100

Table 6 reflects the withdrawal patterns for the 508 students who withdrew before the beginning of the current (2023-2024) school year. According to these data, 25% of the students (n=128) were designated withdrawal code W22. The whereabouts of students in that category are unknown, and pursuant to Florida Statutes (s. 1003.26), documented efforts to locate the whereabouts of those students must be maintained. The data also reveal that 23% of students who withdrew before the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year did so to attend another public school out of the state or out of the country. The next largest withdrawal category (22%) accounts for students who withdrew to attend a public school in another district in Florida (withdrawal code W3A). The “Other” category in Table 6 combines five withdrawal codes due to small counts within those cells.

Table 7

2023-2024 Enrolled M-DCPS Students Who Withdrew Before or During 2023-2024 Survey 2

Withdrawal Codes	N	%
DNE – Expected but did not attend for unknown reasons (efforts to locate required)	96	17
W04 – W/D to a nonpublic school (in/out of state, out of country)	146	26
W25 – W/D (under the age of 6 a/o February 1 st of current school year)	109	20
W3A – W/D to attend a public school in another Florida district	120	22
W3B – W/D to attend another public school (out of state/country)	65	12
Other	21	4
Total	557	100

Table 7 reveals data for additional analyses to isolate the specific withdrawal reasons for the 557 students who were Inactive by October 2023 of the 2023-2024 school year (see Table 5). As reflected in Table 7, 146 of the 557 Inactive students who withdrew before or during the 2023-2024 Survey 2 period did so under withdrawal code W04. Therefore, 26% of this subsample of students from the February 2023 Survey 3 FTE data withdrew from M-DCPS to attend a nonpublic school (either in or out of the state or out of the country). According to these data, 22% of students (n=120) withdrew under withdrawal code W3A (students who withdrew from the district to attend a public school in another district in Florida). Withdrawal codes W25 (n=109) and DNE (n=96) were the next largest withdrawal reasons for students who were Inactive by October 2023, accounting for 37% of students who withdrew before or during this time frame. The “Other” category reflects three combined withdrawal codes due to their individual small cell counts (18 who withdrew to attend another school in the District, code W02; two who withdrew due to nonattendance, code W15; and one who withdrew to attend a Home Education program).

Summary and Discussion

This Research Brief examined kindergarten readiness rates, enrollment, attendance, and withdrawal patterns of students in Pre-K programs in 2022-2023. To contextualize the kindergarten readiness rates for Pre-K students within Miami-Dade County as a whole and for Pre-K students who were enrolled in M-DCPS VPK programs during 2022-2023, the kindergarten readiness rates for Florida and the six largest school districts in the state were presented first. Those data were calculated by the Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement of the Florida Department of Education.

Kindergarten readiness was determined by a score of 690+ on PM1 of the FAST STAR Early Literacy assessment for fall 2023. According to FLDOE data, the overall kindergarten readiness rate for Florida (all test takers, irrespective of VPK status) was 51% and 49% for all test takers in Miami-Dade (public and private), regardless of their VPK status. The readiness rates for VPK completers in Florida and Miami-Dade were 64% and 59%, respectively. The kindergarten readiness rates for non-VPK students in the state (36% K-ready) and in Miami-Dade (38% K-ready) were significantly lower than those for VPK completers. Therefore, non-VPK students who took PM1 of the FAST STAR Early Literacy assessment in fall 2023 were less likely to be prepared for kindergarten at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year.

Of the 11,570 Miami-Dade Pre-K students in 2022-2023 who met the threshold of VPK completers, 6,249 took PM1 of the FAST STAR Early Literacy in fall 2023. The Miami-Dade Pre-K completers data revealed that 62% of M-DCPS VPK completers were K-ready. When comparing M-DCPS VPK completers with the FLDOE data, M-DCPS VPK completers exceeded the 49% overall K-readiness rate for Miami-Dade County by 13 percentage points and the statewide 51% readiness rate by 11 percentage points. Additionally, M-DCPS VPK completers outperformed Miami-Dade County VPK completers by three percentage points (62% K-ready versus 59% K-ready), and they were just shy of the 64% statewide VPK completers K-readiness rate by two percentage points.

Disaggregation of the M-DCPS VPK completers by program type revealed that VPK completers from the two fee-supported programs (programs V and X) were either on par with or outperformed VPK completers in Miami-Dade County and statewide. Specifically, Program V (where students attend half a day) met the state’s 64% K-readiness rate and exceeded Miami-Dade County’s 59% readiness rate by five percentage points. Moreover, M-DCPS VPK completers from Program X (79% kindergarten-ready) outperformed VPK completers from each of the counties discussed in this report (ranging from 58% to 65% kindergarten-ready), the state (64% K-ready), and the other M-DCPS VPK program types (with kindergarten-readiness rates ranging from 50% to 64%). It is also important to note that the 79% readiness rate for M-DCPS VPK completers from Program X (full-day attendance) surpassed the readiness rate of 64% for Program V (half-

day attendance) by 15 percentage points. These data indicate that enrolling in VPK programs, consistent student attendance (at least 70%), and the time Pre-K students spend in these programs each day could positively impact kindergarten readiness rates.

VPK enrollment patterns were examined using the February 2023 Survey 3 FTE sample (gathered from several District data sources). According to those data, the enrollment for active 2022-2023 Pre-K students during the February 2023 snapshot was 9,883. Most students in the sample (65%) were enrolled in M-DCPS VPK programs (n=6,420). Hispanic and Black students were overrepresented in the sample. Specifically, Hispanic students were 68% of all active Pre-K students during this time frame and 72% of M-DCPS VPK programs. Black students, on the other hand, comprised 26% of all active Pre-K students during the February 2023 Survey 3 FTE period and 22% of M-DCPS VPK students.

Regarding withdrawal patterns, most Pre-K students who were active during February 2023 were active M-DCPS students in October 2023 (n=8,780). While 2,291 of those students remained in Pre-K, two moved on to first grade, and 7,082 moved on to kindergarten. This research brief also discussed the withdrawal patterns of the 508 students who withdrew before the 2023-2024 school year. The withdrawal patterns of the 557 students who were enrolled during the current (2023-2024) school year but withdrew before or during the 2023-2024 Survey 2 period were also discussed.

References

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