

# Longitudinal Study of Georgia's Pre-K Program: PRE-K THROUGH 4TH GRADE

**G**eorgia's Pre-K Longitudinal Study followed a statewide sample of 1,169 children who attended Georgia's Pre-K Program in 2013–14 through their 4th grade year in 2018–19. The study was conducted by researchers at the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The following summary describes the design and results of the full study.

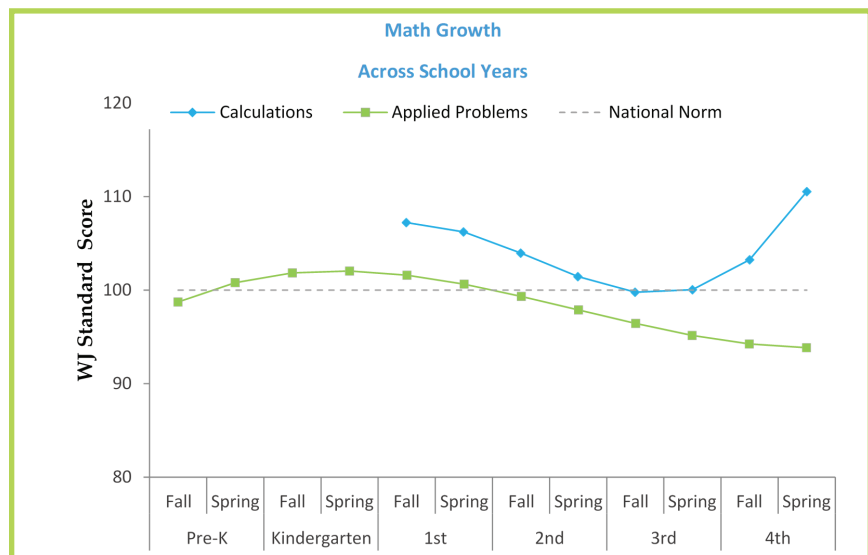
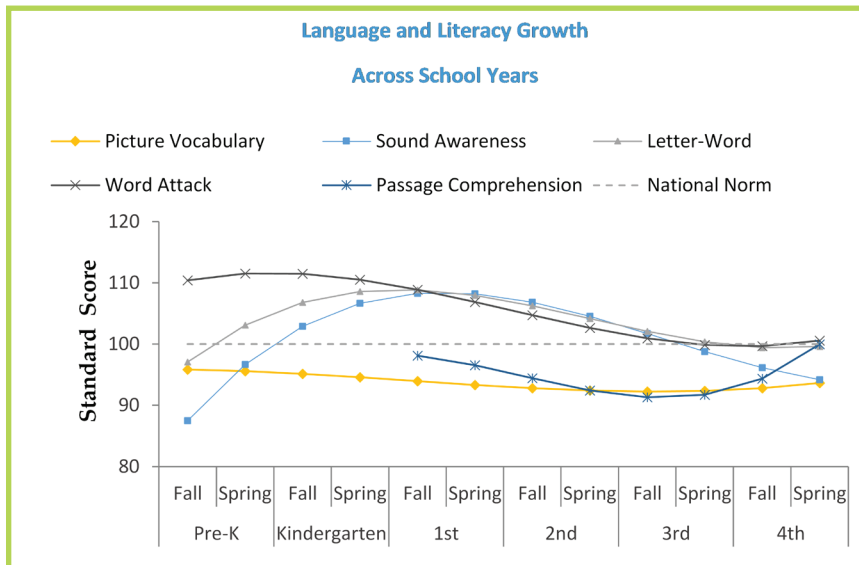
## Study Components

- Standardized child assessments that measure skills across learning domains (by using standardized child assessments, scores can be compared to a nationally representative sample of children of the same age)
- Observations of classroom quality over time that measure the quality of teacher-child interactions
- Subsample of dual language learners (English-Spanish)
- Comparison sample of children who did not attend any pre-k program (added in the 3rd grade year)

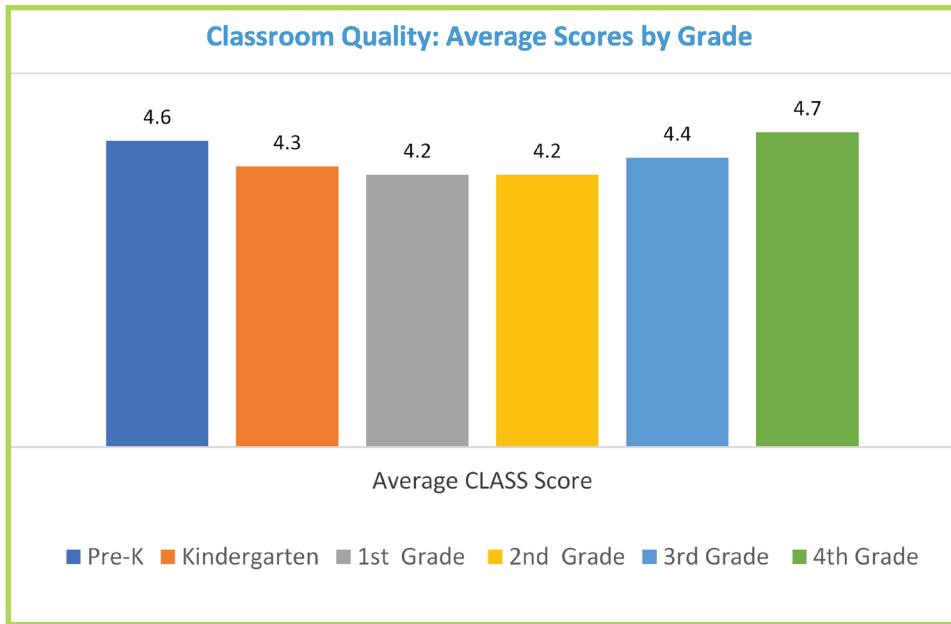
## Key Results of the Longitudinal Study

- The largest gains (higher than expected scores relative to the norming sample) were observed during the Georgia's Pre-K and 4th grade school years, with small to moderate gains found in measures assessing literacy, math, and social skills.
- Initial gains persisted through kindergarten on most outcomes, with scores starting to level off in 1st grade and then decreasing or stabilizing through 3rd grade, followed by small increases in 4th grade in literacy, math, and social skills, as well as behavior problems.





- A change in standard scores can reflect the influence of school experience above and beyond the expected growth due to age. For five of the seven assessments conducted from pre-k through 4th grade, children’s scores were higher in 4th grade than at the beginning of pre-k or 1st grade, which likely reflects a cumulative benefit of pre-k and elementary instruction.
- Children’s language scores, on average, were below the national norm throughout the study .
- Scores for children classified as Dual Language Learners (DLLs) were slightly below the national norm in 4th grade for skills measured in English and well below the national norm for skills measured in Spanish. DLLs had the lowest levels of behavior problems throughout the study.
- Child characteristics related to small differences in outcomes over time included English Language Proficiency and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) status at pre-k entry, as well as a child’s gender.
- Classroom quality, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), was in the moderate range, on average; was highest in pre-k and 4th grade; and was associated with small gains in child skills in pre-k and 4th grade.



### Key Results from the Comparison Sub-Study

Children who attended Georgia’s Pre-K Program had better language, literacy, and executive function skills in 3rd and 4th grades than children whose parents reported that their child did not attend any pre-k program (comparison group). These results are similar to the findings of the Longitudinal Study, where children who attended Georgia’s Pre-K had higher scores in foundational literacy skills relative to the national norming sample. Together, these results suggest that foundational literacy skills, which are a focus of pre-k, were not obtained by children in the comparison sample. The chart below shows where differences were statistically significant between the two groups and the size of those differences.

### Fourth Grade Differences: Comparison Sub-Study

**Georgia’s Pre-K Attendees > No Pre-K**

Executive Function	■
Social Skills	□
Math	□
Language and Literacy	■

Key:

- Differences were not statistically significant.
- Differences were small and statistically significant.
- Differences were moderate and statistically significant.

## Summary and Implications

- Overall, results from the study show that Georgia’s Pre-K Program prepares students to enter kindergarten.
- While students in the study are at or above the national average on most measures at the end of 4th grade, the rate of growth in pre-k and kindergarten is not maintained in later grades (except for larger growth in social skills and math in 4th grade).
- A key strength of Georgia’s Pre-K Program is building foundational literacy skills for reading.
- Vocabulary development is an area of growth for children ages birth to five, but also kindergarten to 4th grade, and opportunities to support this growth are warranted.
- While classroom quality is highest in pre-k, quality is still in the moderate-to-high range throughout K-4th grades.
- This longitudinal study reflects a deep investment in ensuring that children fully benefit from enrollment in Georgia’s Pre-K and from aligned and supportive K-4 experiences. The study also reflects a commitment to continuous improvement through an established state-university partnership.



Larger than expected growth was observed during Georgia’s Pre-K year in literacy, math, and social skills; gains were supported through kindergarten. Another period of higher than expected growth occurred in 4th grade.



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