

Evaluation of Child Outcomes in Nine Child-Parent Centers Report for 2015-16
Chicago Pay for Success Year 2 Outcomes Report
Addendum to the Independent Evaluation
Produced by the City of Chicago & Chicago Public Schools
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As Chicago Public Schools (CPS) oversees the implementation of Child-Parent Centers (CPC) through this Pay for Success (PFS) initiative, the District is committed to focusing on quality instruction that has been proven to support long-term child outcomes. In addition to expanding access to the CPC program for thousands more children through this investment, the construct of the PFS model allows CPS to learn from executing the scaling of this proven model with new populations in real-time. One of the primary goals of the pre-kindergarten expansion is to ensure that more children across the city receive early instruction to begin their K-12 education on the right foot, and in order to achieve this goal, CPS educators are committed to ensuring both quality instruction for all participating students and families and a process of continuous quality improvement that will ensure that the promise early education is achieved. For the purposes of this PFS initiative, outcome metrics data were chosen from the District's readily available tools, which provide both insights and limitations for the system overall. While the SRI PFS evaluation report details some of the specific constraints of the outcomes measurements, the questions outlined in the outcomes analysis prompted CPS to conduct a deeper review within the broader context of early childhood programming and to inform quality improvement initiatives currently underway throughout the City.

Based on lower rates of kindergarten readiness from the first year and the limited reduction in Special Education utilization, the outcome results from the second year Pay for Success cohort have offered CPS the opportunity to analyze the specific factors that could be used to understand the differentiation across the nine sites involved with the project. Below are some highlighted areas of analysis that can help better understand the variation in kindergarten readiness scores and the comparison of special education rates outlined in the ***Evaluation of Child Outcomes in Nine Child-Parent Centers: Report for 2015-16***, prepared by SRI International.

Kindergarten Readiness:

Through in-depth analysis of child assessment data disaggregated by site and classroom provided by SRI, there are some overarching trends that can help explain the variation between cohorts 1 and 2. As SRI outlines in its report, there are significant limitations of the Teaching Strategies GOLD™ (TS GOLD) tool based on the constructs of the assessments, and CPS generally utilizes outcomes from TS GOLD™ as one element of determining a child's kindergarten readiness. The fact that this tool is implemented city-wide allowed for efficient analysis for purposes of the PFS initiative, however the sensitivity of the tool to teacher

discretion based on observation is paramount as CPS conducted further analysis into the comparison between cohort one and cohort two. Many of the factors uncovered through classroom by classroom differences across cohorts appear to be challenges in scaling evidence-based education models within a large system with a formative, observation-based tool. Compounded with the relationship-based nature of education—and particularly early childhood education—measuring child progress and outcomes with this type of assessment presents challenges.

Concentrations of Bilingual Children:

In most of the classrooms with significantly lower kindergarten readiness performance, there were higher concentrations of bilingual children and more bilingual children in cohort 2 than in cohort 1. The impact of this can be two-fold. First, young children developing skills in multiple languages simultaneously often have delayed development in their non-dominant language. While the TS GOLD™ scores for kindergarten readiness as defined in the PFS project are only available in English, this may not accurately capture the full developmental achievements of bilingual learners. While Teaching Strategies GOLD™ provides specific guidance on when a child is ready to be assessed in English if they are dual language learners, the language and literacy scores for bilingual children who are assessed in English may be lower than their English speaking peers. Given the limitations of the scoring mechanism for the TS GOLD™ assessment, those bilingual children assessed in English are benchmarked against their English dominant peers. This would impact bilingual children's ability to meet the rigorous kindergarten readiness threshold set forth in the PFS outcomes study, although their language development in their home language may be on track.

Second, finding highly qualified preschool teachers who are fluent in multiple languages is a challenge across the country, including in the local Chicago context. While all teachers in CPS classrooms meet state licensing standards for teaching children with bilingual or English language learner needs, these requirements do not necessitate that teachers speak the home language of the child. This means that some teachers may not speak the child's home language. The impact of this can be that children are being supported with best practices in English as a second language development, but may not have home language support within the classroom, impacting the overall language and literacy trajectory of development.

Teacher Trends:

One trend observed across classrooms with lower rates of kindergarten readiness as defined by the PFS model was that many of these classrooms had new or substitute teachers because the previous teacher had left or were on medical leave. . This trend was particularly evident in schools with newly-opened classrooms, where new teachers had not yet accessed the full menu of training in protocols, curriculum, and assessment fidelity and the full CPC program can be a challenge given the time necessary to train new staff. With this in mind, time to complete training protocols may have compromised the fidelity of the TS GOLD™ assessments, which is depend on teacher observations to score children reliably on early childhood developmental milestones, or may have impacted the implementation of the CPC model in other waysIn

general, while we see less staff turnover in the CPC model, scaling the program quickly across sites may have put strain on the recruitment and onboarding in some communities.

Leadership Transition:

Another factor that appears to be impacting the kindergarten readiness scores in certain sites is leadership transition. A key component of the CPC model is consistent instructional leadership from the Head Teacher and principal. In four of the sites with the lowest rates of children meeting the kindergarten readiness benchmarks, schools experienced transition in Head Teacher and/or principal transitions that may have impacted instruction, which in turn may have impacted kindergarten readiness of children. While CPS is working to support the new leadership to get accustomed to the CPC model requirements and focus on the implementation, it is possible that the changes in leadership impacted the implementation of the model for cohort 2.

Attendance:

While the SRI PFS outcomes study did look at minimum attendance requirements (66%) for individual students, there does appear to be variation in attendance across sites that may have impacted kindergarten readiness. For example, in one of the new sites brought on for cohort 2, “third shift” classrooms were put in place. These classrooms are scheduled to meet after the regular elementary school day. Due to the untraditional meeting time of these classrooms, they tend to have lower attendance and we also find fewer children meeting or exceeding the kindergarten readiness benchmark. While children seem to still meet the requisite minimum attendance for the outcomes evaluation, it is possible that the reduced “dosage” for the children enrolled in these classrooms as compared to their peers impacted their kindergarten readiness.

Special Education Rates:

In addition to the analysis that SRI presented in regards to Special Education outcomes, there are three contextual factors that may be impacting the rates of the Special Education utilization in the comparison group of children who received no known preschool. As policy and best practice dictate, Chicago’s preschool programs are designed to seek out and identify children in need of special education service, and these children were thus excluded from the PFS study’s control group by virtue of having been enrolled in preschool. These contextual factors point to the limitations of using this comparison group to define a benchmark of Special Education utilization in comparison to those students involved in the CPC intervention :

- All children participating in Chicago’s early childhood programs—regardless of funding stream—are screened and evaluated for developmental delays. While this is best practice for child development, this practice could be leading to a higher rate of children entering kindergarten with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) if they had

participated in preschool in Chicago. These children would have been excluded from the comparison group.

- Children with IEP's are prioritized in preschool admissions across CPS, regardless of program model. Given the finite amount of preschool seats across the District, children with IEP's represent a larger percentage of the overall preschool population enrolled in Chicago than in other grades due to federal mandates that those children be prioritized for services. Given that children with IEP's are thus enrolled in preschool at higher rates, the comparison group of children used in this study would eliminate most if not all children who were identified as needing special education prior to kindergarten.
- A significant portion of Chicago's early childhood system beyond the CPC programming is funded through federal Head Start funding. This funding mandates that providers seek to identify and serve children at-risk of academic failure due to having a disability or delay. This also leads to a higher percentage of children with IEP's that are part of the early childhood system and consequently excluded from the comparison group.

Implementation Support for CPS in the 2016-17 School Year and Beyond:

The intention of the Pay for Success project is to provide valuable, real time insights into implementation. When CPS began looking at the outcomes data with SRI, it offered an opportunity to make both immediate improvements to the system and plan for on-going changes necessary to support improved outcomes on an on-going basis. As such, CPS has looked at a few critical improvements to be made from the lessons learned to date:

- **Immediate:** A new CPC coordinator has been identified at Central Office to support the CPC system districtwide and to ensure that continuous data analysis occurs throughout the year. This will help teachers ensure that children who look to be at risk of not meeting kindergarten readiness benchmarks are targeted for additional supports and classrooms where teachers need additional coaching can be identified earlier on.
- **On-Going:** Focused training for new teachers and school-based leaders will be provided. Through this analysis, it is clear that increased supports for new teachers and leaders coming into the CPC programs is necessary. CPS will be seeking external support from CPC experts to ensure that new teachers and leaders get the comprehensive on-boarding support they need.
- **On-Going:** Monitoring child outcomes and targeted PD throughout the year to ensure that there are specific supports to bilingual children in classrooms with English speaking teachers will be enhanced. Through data dialogues, there will be targeted review on language and literacy domains specific to English language learners. Again, external support and coaching has been sought out to support this approach.

Conclusion:

The PFS study has allowed CPS to both expand CPC preschool to needed communities in Chicago, as well as use the evaluation data to illuminate some of the specific implementation

challenges in scaling this evidence-based model to new populations in new schools. This type of in-depth analysis provides the type of targeted interventions essential to continuous quality improvement efforts. It also supports CPS in identifying mechanisms to target interventions in pursuit of achieving the long-term promise of early education.