

Spring 2009--Third grade results

Following 2005-06 Kindergartners

The Kindergarten class of 2005-06 entered third grade in the fall of 2008 and completed their first state assessments in Reading and Mathematics in the spring of 2009. This is the first opportunity for examining third grade results on children who attended Kindergarten and were assessed using the KELI (Kansas Early Learning Inventory). Using the KIDS numbers assigned during a child's first year in a public school program, it is now possible to follow these children into the later primary grades and beyond. This is the first year of following children past their Kindergarten year in order to determine the impact of parental practices, child learning in Kindergarten, and Teacher practices. More years of statistical study will be needed to make any strong interpretations, but this first year gives a glimpse into the long term effects of early learning practices in the home and in schools.

Parent/Home practices before Kindergarten: Impact on Reading and Math scores

The most influential activity that parents performed before kindergarten in relation to third grade scores was to talk with their children about what happened during the day. Parents who talked with their children daily, had children who performed better on the third grade reading and math assessments.

Parents who reported reading daily prior to Kindergarten had children who scored higher on third grade assessments.

All five home literacy activities are correlated with reading and math scores—the more frequently the parents performed the activities, the better the children did in third grade assessments. These activities also positively impacted children's Kindergarten scores so the impact appears to be maintained across the years. The five activities are:

1. Someone reads to my child in our home.
2. My child and I talk about what happened during the day.
3. My child reads or presented to read along and/or to others.
4. Someone takes my child to a museum, library, learning/activity center or zoo.
5. Someone teaches my child a sport or takes my child to a sporting event.

Clearly, parent involvement makes a difference before Kindergarten, in Kindergarten, and in the primary grades. More analyses in upcoming years will allow a more detailed and stronger case to be made for the critical nature of parent involvement in their child's learning from the early years on.

Kindergarten Entry Skills: impact on Third Grade assessment results

- Children who enter Kindergarten with high skills levels, maintain that higher skill level in the third grade assessments in comparison to peers who entered with lower skills.
- Children who entered Kindergarten with higher literacy levels maintained that higher level on 3rd grade reading assessment.
- For both 3rd grade math and 3rd grade reading scores, the academic scores on the KELI are better predictors of results than the social skill scores.
- Children who entered Kindergarten with lower fall scores had higher change scores—they improved more than the children who entered Kindergarten with a higher score. This children who entered higher, maintained that higher level of skills even into third grade. The children who improved the most (entered with a lower fall skill level, but improved across the Kindergarten year) were still showing lower assessments scores relative to their higher level peers on the third grade math and reading assessments.

Further years of data will be needed to make any definitive statements, but it is clear that children who enter Kindergarten with strong school readiness skills are more likely to maintain their Kindergarten success at least into third grade, based upon the two state assessments. More study is needed to determine the impact of social skills on later learning as well and the

Full Day Kindergarten vs. Half Day Kindergarten, including Best Practices

The impact of a full day Kindergarten schedule, the use of best practices, including the use of centers was not found to have a significant impact on third grade assessment results. However, the Kindergarten results found that children who entered Kindergarten with lower skills improved more in a full day Kindergarten classrooms. Children who left Kindergarten with higher levels of skill tended to do better in Third grade assessments. More study is clearly needed to determine which of these conditions (full day/half day; best practices; center use) really helps learning in later years after the Kindergarten experience.