



Early Childhood Education

in Nebraska Public School District,
Educational Service Unit and Head Start Programs



2017-2018 State Report

Evaluation Report
prepared by
Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood
In collaboration with
Barbara Jackson, Ph. D
Interdisciplinary Center of
Program Evaluation
The University of Nebraska
Medical Center's
Munroe-Meyer Institute: A University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities

*Supported (in part) by grant T73MC00023 from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration,
Department of Health and Human Services.

*Supported in part by grant 90DD0601 from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities
(ADD), Administration for Children and Families,
Department of Health and Human Services.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SUCCESS

The Early Childhood Education Program—Birth through Age 5 (B–5) included all children who were part of Nebraska public education programs that were supported through the blending of multiple funding sources. Comprehensive early childhood education programs operated by Nebraska public school districts (hereafter referred to as districts) or Educational Service Units (ESUs) supported the learning and development of children B–5 across home- and center-based settings including Sixpence programs. Many of these full- or half-day programs received support through partnerships with community agencies.

Districts and ESUs served children who represented a full range of abilities, languages, and economic diversity of families within the community. The purpose of the Early Childhood Program was to provide high quality early childhood education experiences that empower children to reach their full potential and increase the likelihood of their later success in school.

PROGRAM FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO QUALITY

NDE requirements for Early Childhood programs included:

- Use of developmentally appropriate curriculum and authentic assessment
- Inclusive programs and services
- Attention to research-based elements of effective programs
- Teachers in classrooms hold a Nebraska teaching certificate with an approved early childhood endorsement
- Para professionals in classrooms have 12 credit hours in early childhood education or its equivalent
- Teachers in home-based Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Programs hold a Nebraska teaching certificate with an approved endorsement
- Staff in home visiting programs hold a degree in early childhood education, early childhood special education, social work, nursing or related field
- Home-school-community partnerships



INTEGRATED FUNDS EXPANDED EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

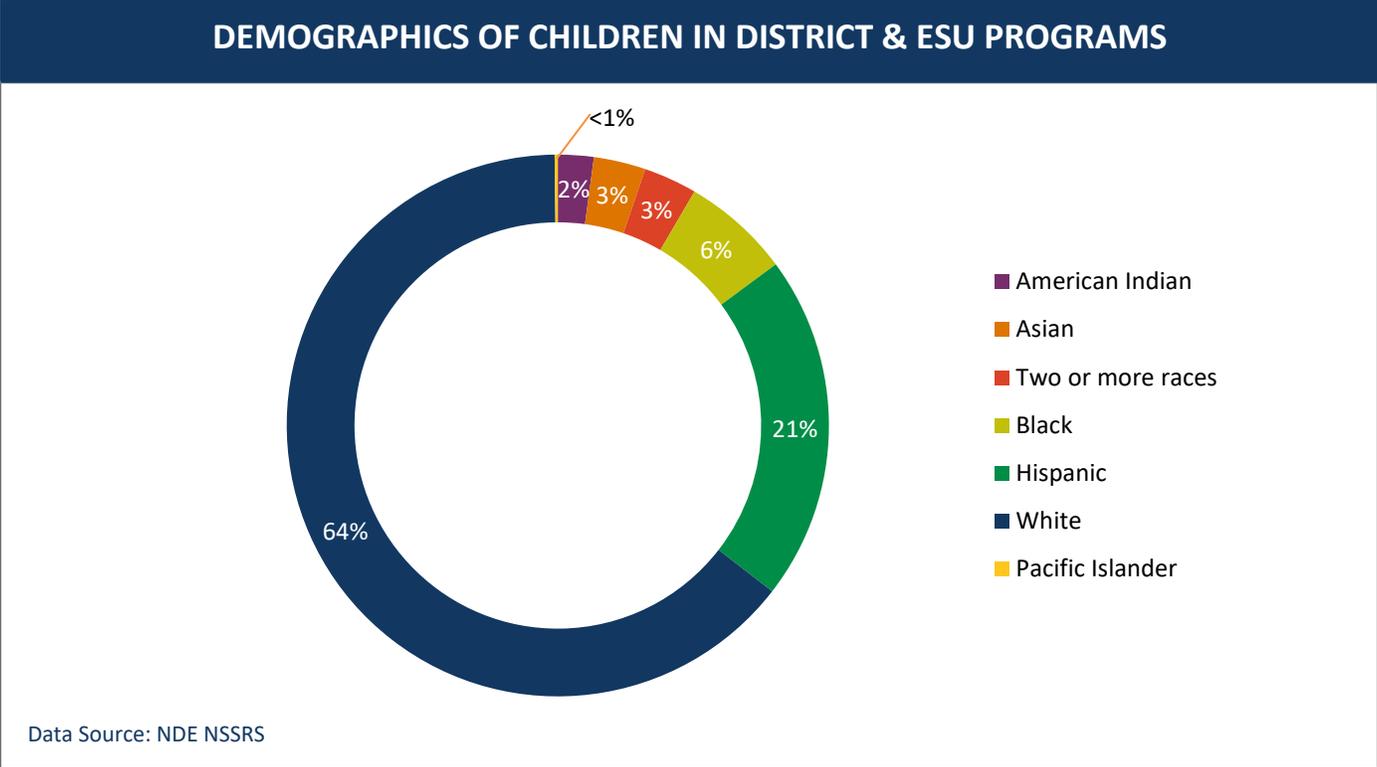
Nebraska’s district and ESU operated early childhood programs were funded with multiple sources. In 2017-18, over 102 million dollars supported these ECE programs. Federal dollars accounted for the majority of Early Childhood Education funds and were provided through IDEA, Head Start, Title 1 Part A, and Title 1 Migrant. State sources of funding were provided through early childhood grants for ages three through five, state aid, and general funds. Local district funds as well as parent fees were included in local funding sources. Districts also received funding from the Early Childhood Education Endowment Fund to support birth to three programs.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

Program Type	Kid Count	Percent
NDE Grant Funded Early Childhood Education Programs serving children ages three to five	2160	11%
NDE non-Grant Funded Early Childhood Education Programs serving children ages three to five	11,475	57%
Early Childhood Birth to Age Three Endowment Grant Programs (Sixpence)	1294	6%
Home-based Early Childhood Education Program serving non-special education children ages birth to five	217	1%
Special Education services provided to children ages birth to five in homes and community settings	4912	25%
Total	20,058	100%

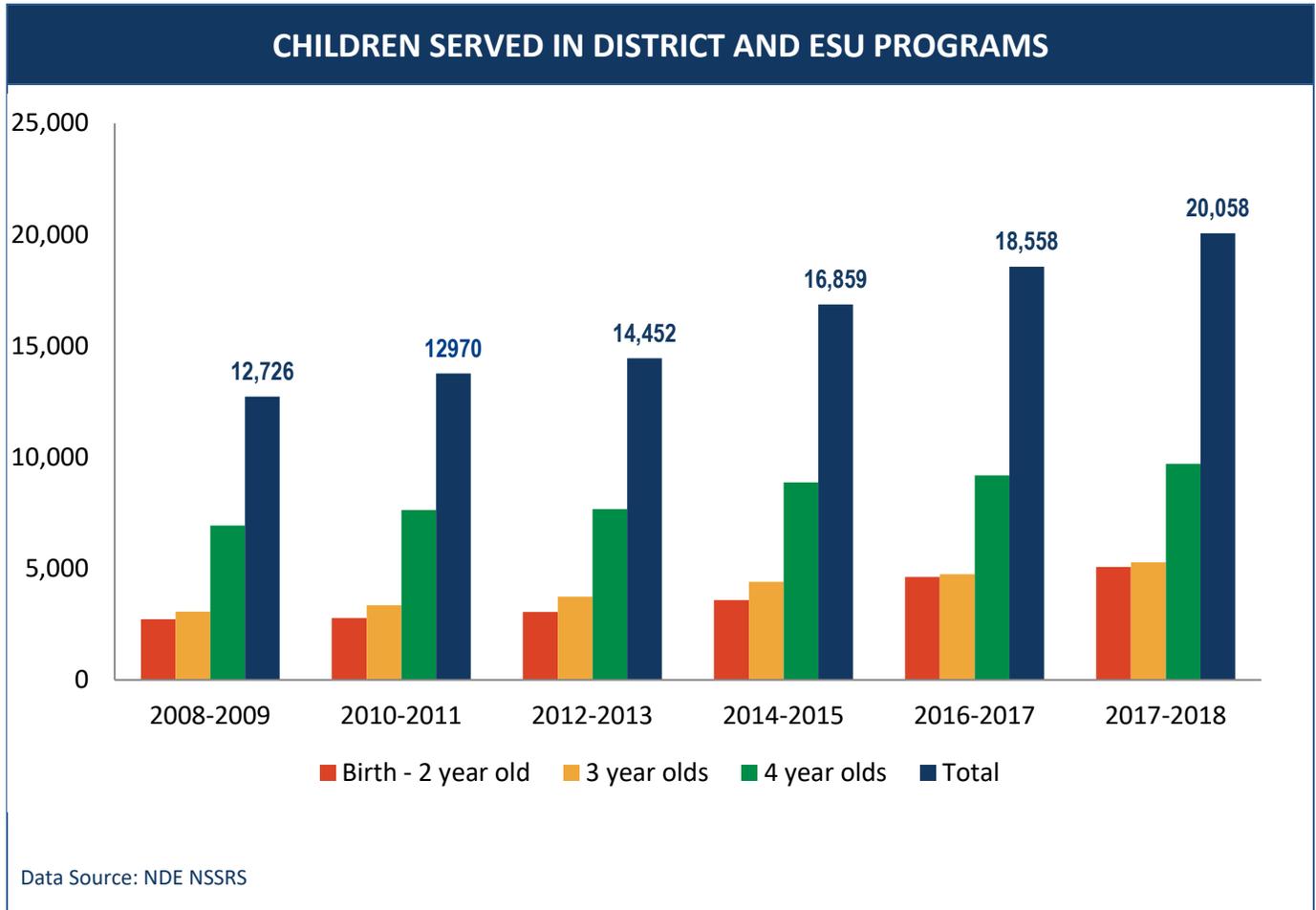
The Nebraska Department of Education began approving district-operated early childhood programs based on compliance with Rule 11 in 2004. At that time, there were only 23 approved programs. For the 2017-2018 school year that number grew to 220 approved district-operated early childhood programs. These approved Nebraska school districts and ESUs provided early childhood programs and services to 20,058 children, age birth to five. Districts served a diverse population that represented a similar picture of the demographics served in K-12 settings across the state according to district data submitted to the Nebraska Department of Education.



Of the total number of children served, the following categories show the number of children considered at-risk for possible poor outcomes in future academic settings:

- 9,071 – 45% had an IEP or IFSP (center-based and home-based)
- 8,553 – 43% qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch
- 466 – 2% were English Language Learners

Longitudinal data was reviewed to track the pattern of children served by district and ESU operated programs across ages. The graph below represents children served in programs that were home-based, center-based and services provided to children ages birth to five in homes and community settings. Reports prior to 2008-09 only represented home-based and center-based numbers, which indicated a higher percentage of increases across years for children; the current numbers more accurately reflect the increases. Since 2008, there has been a 58% increase in the total number of children served. Each age group has seen a steady increase over the past 9 years: Birth to 2-year-olds (86% increase), 3 year olds (72% increase) and 4 year olds (40% increase).



RESULTS MATTER IN NEBRASKA: A COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

Results Matter in Nebraska is a child, family, and program outcomes measurement system designed and implemented to improve programs and supports for all young children birth to age five, served through districts, ESUs, the Early Development Network (EDN), Early Head Start, Head Start, Tribal and Migrant seasonal Head Start programs, and community partners. Child, family, and program outcome data is used to inform early childhood program practices and policy.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Quality early childhood education programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term positive academic outcomes (Campbell & Pungello, 2012). Nebraska promotes quality programs through ongoing training and technical assistance.

Program quality is measured through onsite observations. The assessment tools used measure how the classroom environment supports children's physical, cognitive, language and literacy, mathematical, and social-emotional development.

QUALITY MEASURES FOR SIXPENCE INFANT AND TODDLER PROGRAMS

Two tools were chosen to evaluate the quality of Sixpence classrooms, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scales-Revised (ITERS-R). The CLASS "is a rating tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning" (LaParo, Hamre, & Pianta, 2012). The ITERS-R assesses classroom quality with a focus on classroom structure, activities, and play materials.

Home visiting programs were assessed using the Home Visit Rating Scales-Adaptive and Extended (HOVRS-A+ v2.1)

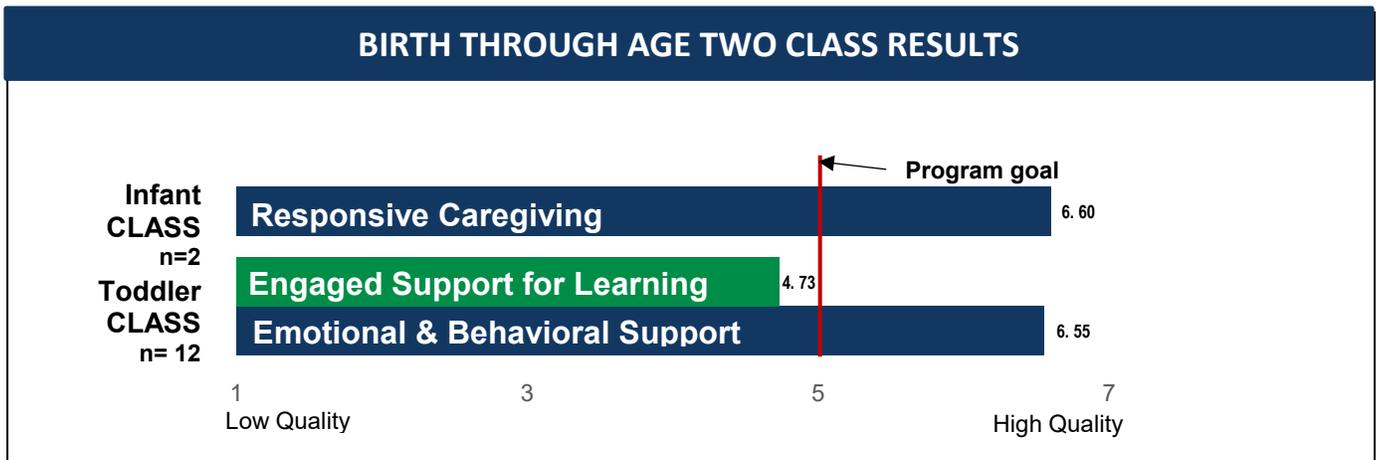
This report includes highlights from the Sixpence Classroom results. The complete Sixpence Report and analysis can be accessed at <http://www.singasongofsixpence.org/>.



Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Results

CLASS ratings were completed through a live observation or a video recording of classroom activities across staff members throughout a morning period. Four cycles of 15-20 minute increments were rated by reliable evaluators. Both the Infant and Toddler CLASS assess teacher-child relationships based on social-emotional supports. The Toddler CLASS has an additional domain, Engaged Support for Learning, which measures how teachers engage children in discovery, promote critical thinking, and provide rich language experiences. Scoring is based on a 7-point scale with 7 indicating highest quality. The quality program benchmark is a score of 5 or higher. The CLASS results for 14 classrooms are presented below.

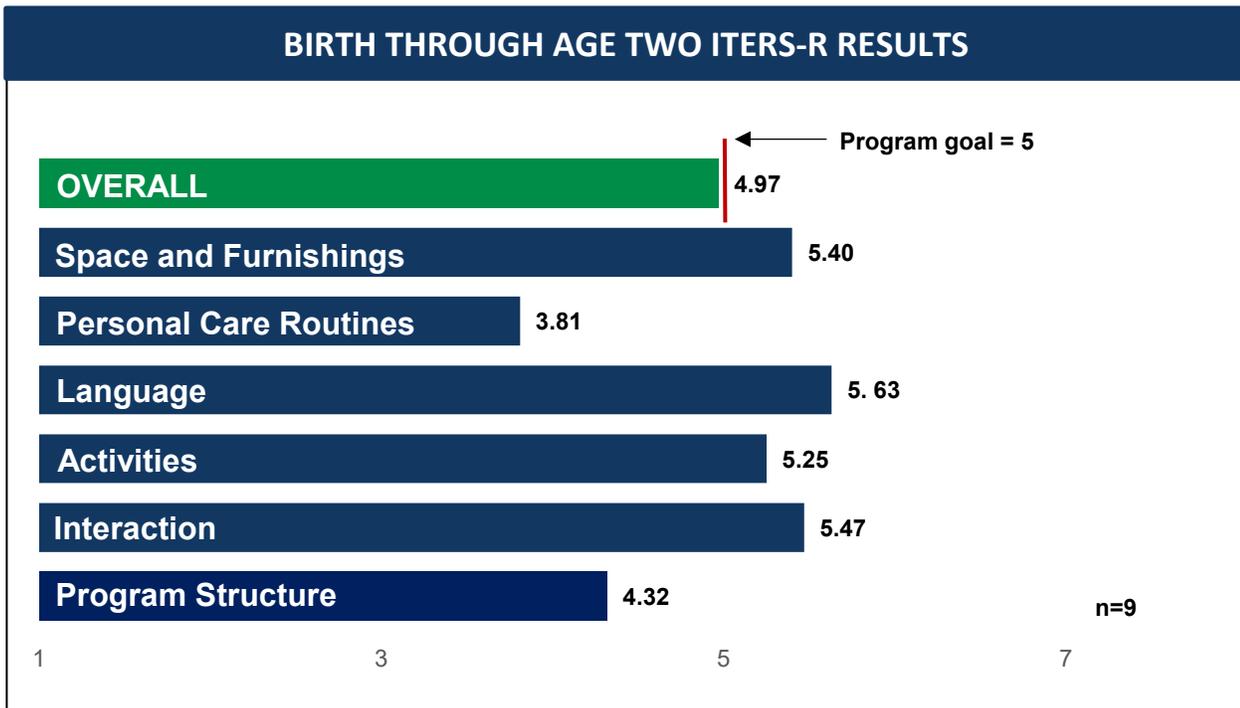
Sixpence center-based teachers consistently created emotionally supportive and caring environments in their classrooms.



Infant/Toddler Ratings Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) Results

The ITERS-R assessment was conducted in classrooms with a new teacher or a new setting, or in classrooms that had not met the quality benchmark in the previous year. The ITERS-R is based on a three-hour, in-person observation. Scoring is based on a 7-point scale with 7 indicating highest quality in each of the six subscales. The Space and Furnishings subscale considers the space, furniture, room arrangement, and provisions for comfort. Personal Care Routines includes meals, toileting/diapering, naptime, and health and safety practices. Listening and Talking, which focuses on language, also encompasses the use of books. The Activities subscale consists of materials and activities provided in eleven areas including fine motor, sand and water play, and promoting diversity. Discipline, supervision, and interactions between children and adults are under Interaction. Program Structure examines the classroom schedule, free play, and provisions for children with disabilities. The following graph shows ITERS-R subscale and overall averages for nine classrooms. The program goal is a score of 5 overall.

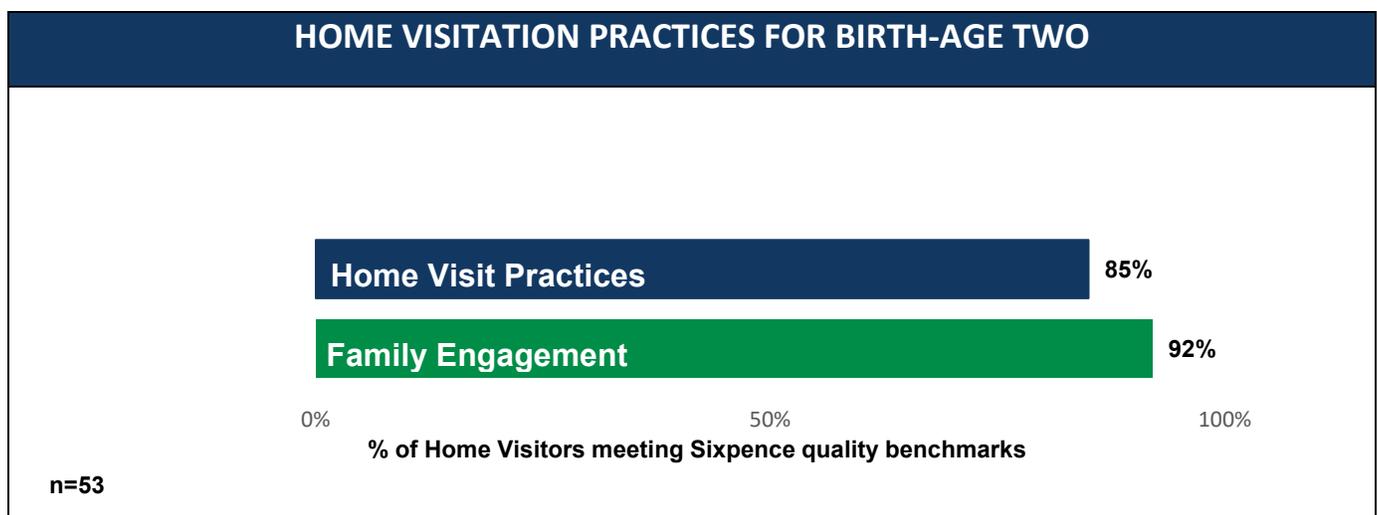
Sixpence classrooms have high quality practices in supporting language development, interacting with the children, play activities, and the environment.



The Home Visit Rating Scales-Adaptive and Extended (HOVRS-A+ v2.1)

The HOVRS-A+ v2.1 assesses the quality of family engagement sessions based on a video recording of a home visit. The tool is scored on a 7 point scale, with 7 indicating high quality home visitation practices. The HOVRS-A+ v2.1 results are reported in two domains. The first, Home Visit Practices, measured the home visitor's responsiveness to the family and how the visitor facilitated parent-child interaction, built relationships with the family, and the use of non-intrusive approaches. The second domain, Family Engagement, measured parent-child interaction, and the level of parent and child engagement within the activities of the home visit. The results indicated that most home visitors met the program quality benchmark (a score of 5 or higher) in the area of home visit practices. Family engagement during home visits was also high.

Most home visitors implemented high quality home visitation practices and most families were highly engaged during home visits.



QUALITY MEASURES FOR THREE TO FIVE YEAR-OLD PROGRAMS

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-3 (ECERS-3) and CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SCORING SYSTEM (CLASS) were used to evaluate the overall quality of Pre-kindergarten programs.

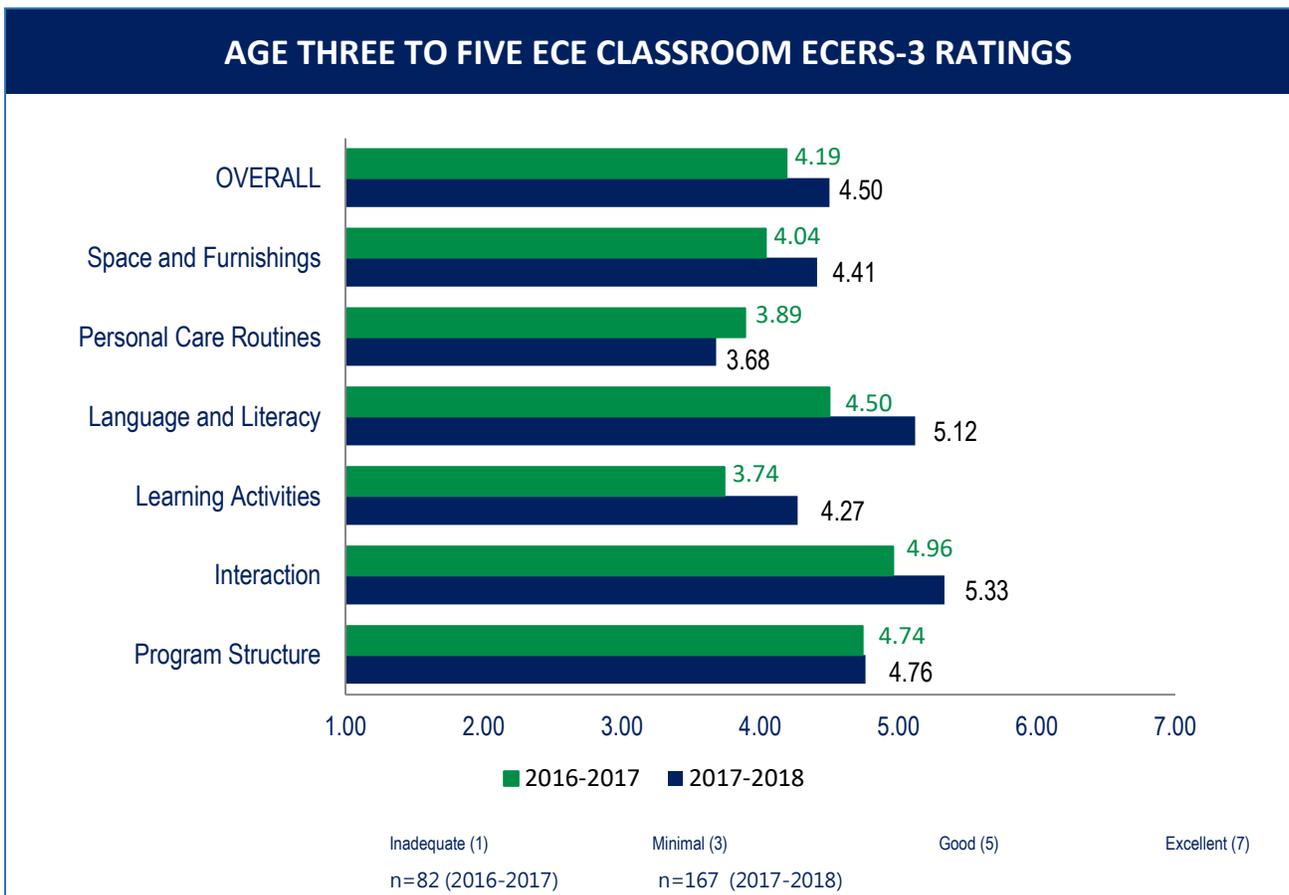
The ECERS-3 is an observational assessment of 35 items across six subscales, designed to assess center-based programs for children 3–5 years of age. The program standard of quality is a rating of five across all six subscales (based on a 7-point scale with 7 = excellent). The ECERS-3 rates six areas: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language and Literacy, Learning Activities, Interactions, and Program Structure.

NDE selected the district classrooms in which observations were conducted. All district observations were completed using the ECERS-3. No CLASS observations were conducted during 2017-18.

ECERS-3

ECERS-3 observations were completed in 167 classrooms. While most of the six subscales in the ECERS-3 are similar to the ITERS-R, there are some additional items in the ECERS-3. Space and Furnishings assesses both the outdoor and indoor environment. The Language and Reasoning subscale includes vocabulary, children’s use of books, and becoming familiar with print. Math and written numbers are part of the Learning Activities subscale. The Interaction subscale also considers individualized teaching and learning. Transitions and wait times are observed in the Program Structure subscale. NDE set a program goal of a score of 5.00 (excluding Personal Care Routines and Space and Furnishings). In 2017-2018, 48% of the classrooms met this program goal – a 26% increase over the previous year. Classroom quality was strongest in the subscales of Interaction, and Language and Literacy. The most gains from the previous year were in the areas of Language and Literacy, and Learning Activities.

Classrooms that were rated this year were of higher quality overall than the previous year.



CHILD OUTCOMES

CHILD ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Early Childhood programs are informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches that provide teachers and families with information about children’s learning and development. MyTeaching Strategies GOLD™ (TS GOLD™) is a research-based, authentic assessment system used by district and ESU programs, as well as in many federally funded Head Start programs. This report includes data from district and ESU programs and Head Start programs through a data sharing agreement with NDE.

TS GOLD™ data is collected through observation of six areas of development and learning on an ongoing basis for all children B–5 served by districts, ESUs, and Head Start. The data is used by teachers and programs to inform and improve instruction to meet the needs of individual children and groups of children.

NDE uses TS GOLD™ data for state and federal reporting purposes. Fall and spring checkpoint data is analyzed and used to monitor district progress toward achieving widely held expectations across the six areas.

The areas of development and learning are:

- **Social-Emotional:** Regulate emotions and build relationships with others.
- **Physical:** Demonstrates traveling, balancing, and coordinated physical manipulation skills.
- **Cognitive:** Demonstrates positive approaches to learning, classification skills, and uses representational skills.
- **Language:** Learns to understand and use words/gestures to effectively communicate.
- **Literacy:** Engages in emergent reading and writing behaviors.
- **Mathematics:** Explores spatial relationships and demonstrates knowledge of patterns and number concepts.

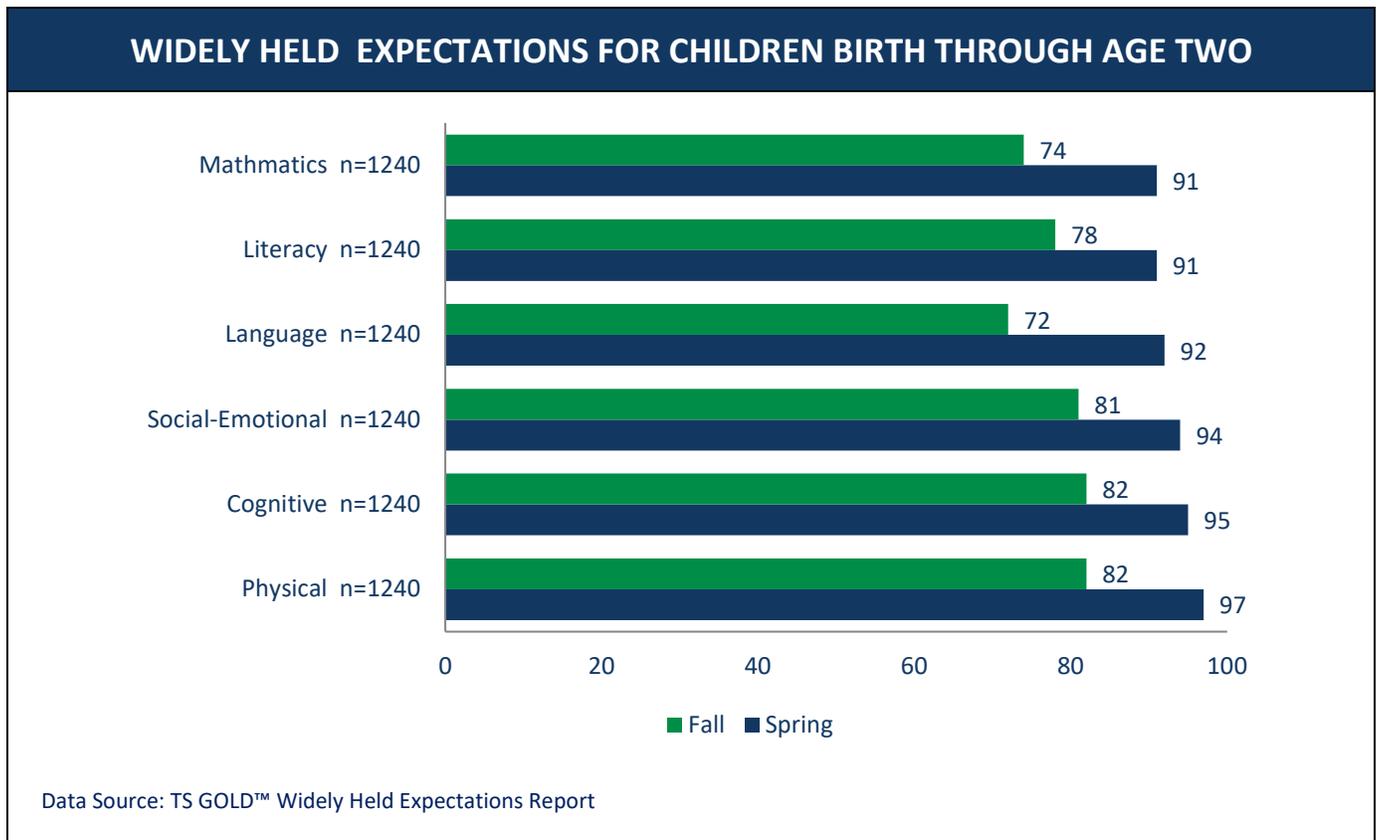
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITHIN AGE EXPECTATIONS

For this report, fall and spring checkpoint data were analyzed to monitor children’s progress towards achieving widely held expectations. A total of 19,577 children birth to age five had completed assessment data for at least one checkpoint during the 2017-2018 year. The *TS GOLD™ Widely Held Expectations* report identified children who met or exceeded age expectations.



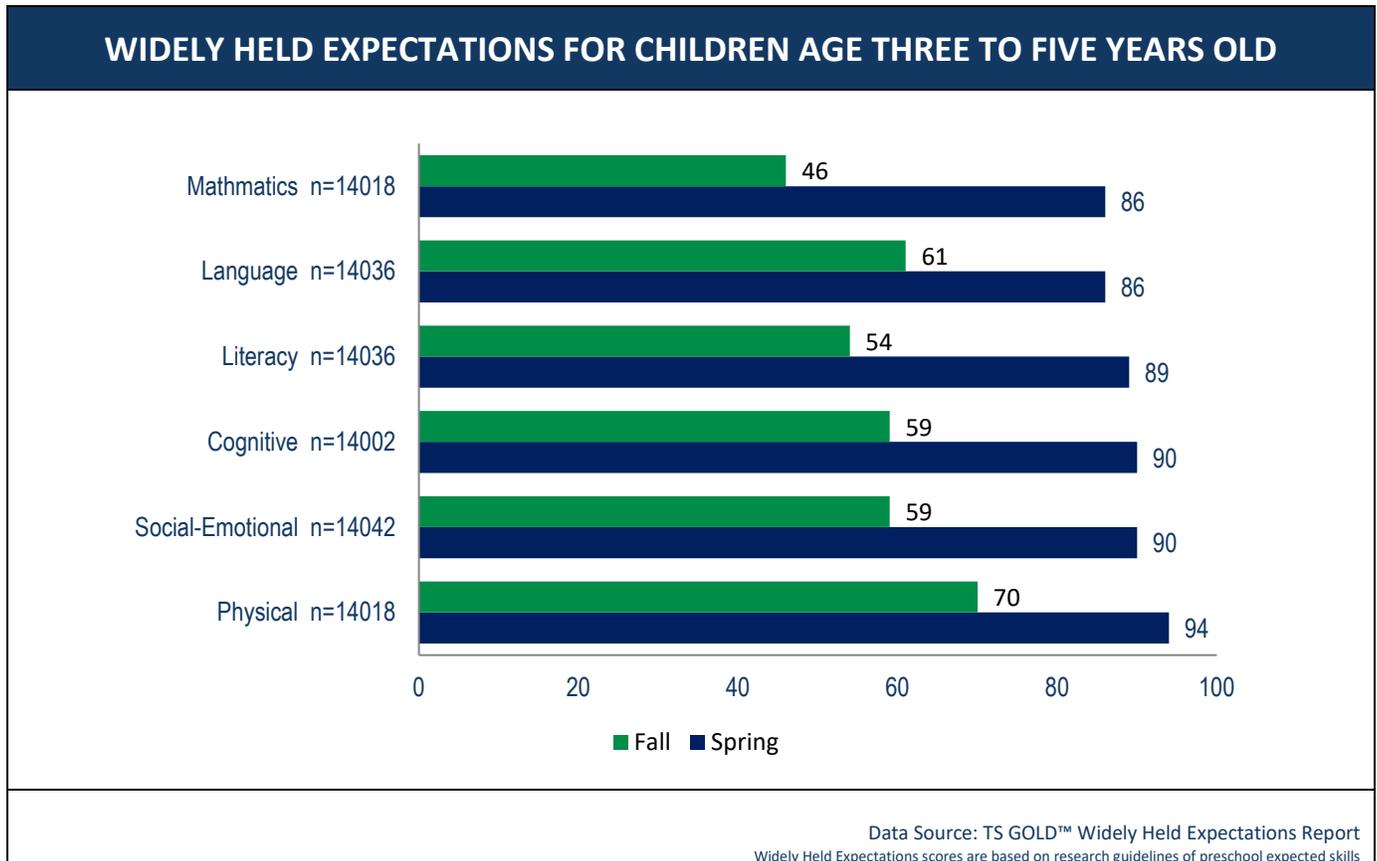
OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN BIRTH THROUGH AGE TWO

Data were collected for infants and toddlers that participated in Sixpence, Public School/ESU operated childcare, Special Education and Early Head Start programs. A total of 2,642 children, including 11% who were on IFSPs, had assessment data collected. Fall to spring comparisons could not be completed for 1,003 children as they were assessed across two different age trajectories or color bands. Analyses were completed on the 1,240 children who remained on the same age color band across both the fall and the spring assessments. Those results found that most of the children were meeting widely held expectations across all developmental areas. Strengths were in the areas of physical, cognitive, and social-emotional competencies. The greatest gains from fall to spring were in language and math.



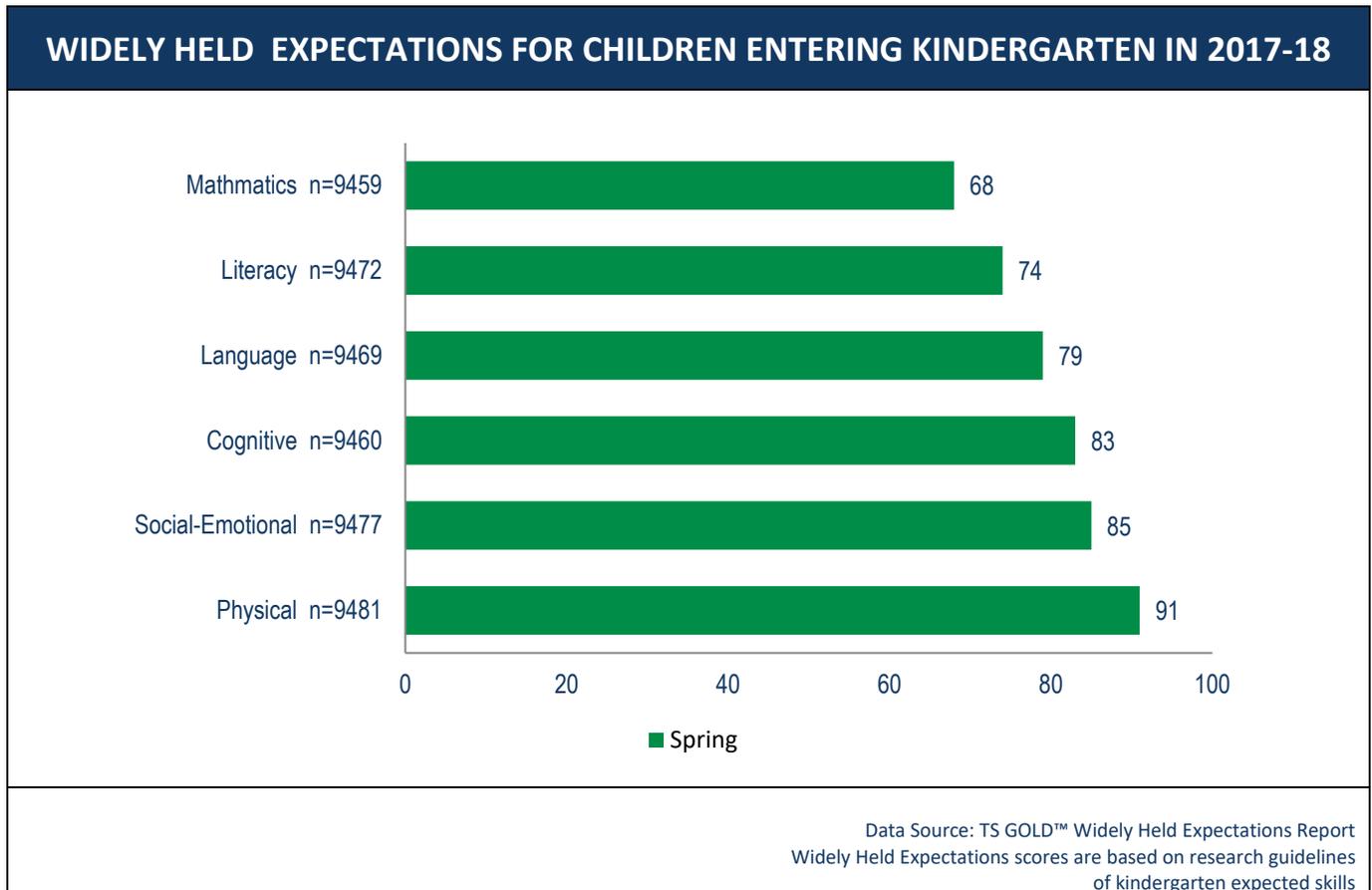
OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AGE THREE TO FIVE YEARS OLD

The preschool data included children in district, ESU and Head Start classrooms. For this report, fall and spring checkpoint data were analyzed to monitor children’s progress towards achieving widely held expectations. Data was collected for all children [i.e., typically developing (72%) and those with IEPs (28%)]. By the spring of 2018, the majority of children age three to five years old met widely held expectations in every area assessed. The largest number of children meeting widely held expectations were in the areas of physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development. The strongest progress was in math and literacy.



OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN ENTERING KINDERGARTEN IN 2017-2018

To evaluate the growth and learning of children eligible to enter kindergarten in 2017–2018, data was gathered during the spring of 2017 for children who participated in district, ESU, and/or Head Start programs and would be eligible for kindergarten in the fall of 2018. The data was analyzed in six areas of development and learning. The majority of children age eligible for kindergarten for the upcoming fall demonstrated the foundational skills for entrance to school. Strengths for these children were the physical, social-emotional, and cognitive skills.



REPORTING CHILD OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN WITH AN IFSP OR IEP

In addition to the NDE annual Early Childhood Education State report, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires NDE to annually report child outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities (IDEA Part C, ages Birth to 3) and preschoolers with disabilities (IDEA Part B, ages 3–5). To meet annual reporting requirements of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), child program entry and exit checkpoint data is analyzed to determine if NDE’s annual targets are being met for the three outcomes. The NDE Annual Reports to OSEP include the number and percentage of children who: 1) showed greater than expected growth and 2) who function within age expectations.

Annual reporting is based on functional outcome areas across areas of development and learning that reflect the integration and progression of child development and learning. Child outcomes reflect the child’s ability to be successful in the context of everyday living. The three functional outcomes are:

Outcome A: Children have positive social skills including positive social relationships. Positive social relationships involve relating with adults and other children, and for older children, following rules related to groups or interacting with others. This outcome includes attachment, expressing emotions and feelings, learning rules and expectations, and social interactions and play.

Outcome B: Children acquire and use knowledge and skills including language/communication. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills involves thinking, reasoning, remembering, problem solving, using symbols and language, and understanding physical and social worlds. This outcome includes early concepts such as symbols, pictures, numbers, classification, spatial relationships, imitation, object permanence, and language skills.

Outcome C: Children take appropriate action to meet needs (e.g., self-help and initiative). Use of appropriate behaviors to meet needs involves taking care of basic needs, getting from place to place, using tools, and for older children contributing to their own health and safety. The outcome includes integrating motor skills to complete tasks and self-help skills (dressing, feeding, grooming, toileting, and household responsibility).



Each year the results are compared to state targets. The chart below shows the status of children who exited between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018.

COMPARISON OF CHILDREN'S PART C OR B OUTCOME DATA TO STATE TARGETS				
SUMMARY STATEMENTS	PART C N=969		PART B N=2173	
	TARGETS (% OF CHILDREN)	ACTUAL (% OF CHILDREN)	TARGETS (% OF CHILDREN)	ACTUAL (% OF CHILDREN)
OUTCOME A: POSITIVE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS				
Showed greater than expected growth	41.00%	44.28%	75.00%	67.59%
Exited the program within age expectations	46.00%	29.51%	70.25%	61.50%
OUTCOME B: KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS				
Showed greater than expected growth	41.40%	39.41%	75.50%	74.23%
Exited the program within age expectations	35.00%	29.31%	70.25%	70.27%
OUTCOME C: TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTIONS TO MEET NEEDS				
Showed greater than expected growth	58.50%	87.32%	76.00%	95.77%
Exited the program within age expectations	74.00%	90.20%	75.50%	96.18%

During the 2017-2018 OSEP reporting timeframe, the Part C Infants and Toddlers age group had 969 children reported as exiting early intervention services. Part B, preschool services for children ages 3-5, had 2,173 children reported as exiting preschool special education services during the same time-period.

BIRTH THROUGH AGE TWO FAMILY OUTCOMES

Data is collected to assess the impact of birth through age two programs. The primary focus of the program is family engagement as a means to support children's development. Family data from two programs is summarized including Sixpence and the Early Development Network (EDN).

IDEA PART C: EARLY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

OSEP requires monitoring of family outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Three outcomes are identified for families who have a child with an IFSP. They include the percent of families participating in Part C who report that early intervention services helped the family:

- Know their rights;
- Effectively communicate their children's needs; and
- Help their children develop and learn.

Each year families are asked to complete a family survey. A total of 1,536 surveys were completed in 2017 - 2018, which was a return rate of 82%. Data was analyzed and compared against state determined targets. The results found that the state met or exceeded all targets. Meeting the targets is attributed to the program's strong belief in the importance of family involvement in all areas of Early Intervention.



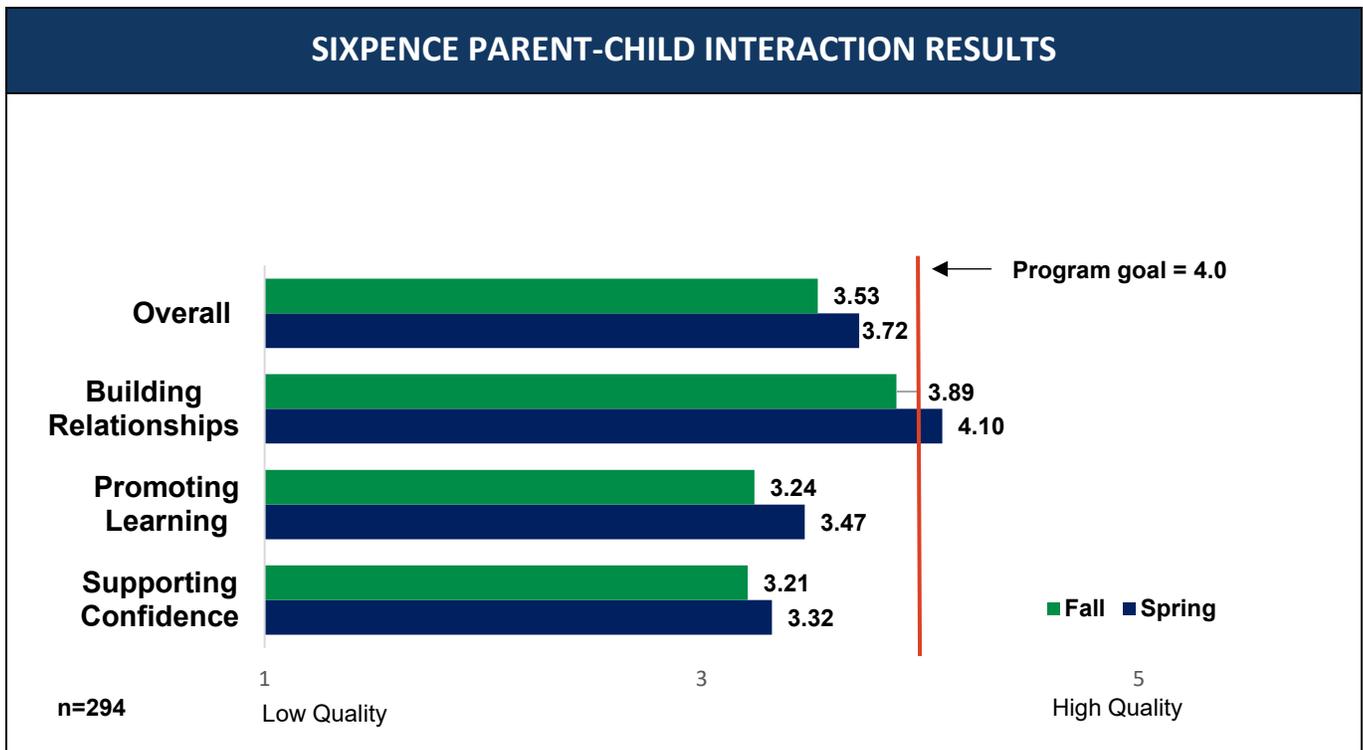
SIXPENCE

For children and families participating in the Sixpence programs, family outcomes focused on parent-child interaction as well as the impact of child risk and family home language on parent-child interactions. These outcomes were assessed through the family's completion of a survey and coding of a videotape of the parent's interaction with their child. The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) was used to measure parent-child interactions in three areas: Building Relationships, Promoting Learning, and Supporting Confidence. Scores are based on a 5-point scale with 5 = high quality.

Parent-Child Interaction

An analysis was done to measure parent-child interactions over time, with a total of 294 families having fall and spring KIPS results. Average scores for Building Relationships exceeded the program goal of 4.0 in the spring. Overall, spring average KIPS scores approached the program goal. Family risk was a significant predictor of Building Relationships scores and Overall scores. Families with lower risk factors averaged .12 points higher in Building Relationships and .16 points higher Overall. Family home language was not a significant predictor of the outcomes in Building Relationships or the Overall KIPS score. The full report is posted at <http://www.singasonofsixpence.org/>.

Sixpence families demonstrated strong skills in building relationships with their children.



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Office of Early
Childhood Nebraska
Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
P. O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987
<http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC>

July 2018