

Our Children: Ready for School?

Brief #2 September 2010

Ready for Kindergarten:

The State of Local School Readiness in Charlottesville and Albemarle



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Participation in preschool or other early learning programs significantly impacts academic readiness, especially for disadvantaged children.
- 78% of disadvantaged children in Charlottesville and Albemarle with early learning program experiences achieved academic benchmarks at kindergarten entry.
- In comparison, only 53% of their peers without early learning program experiences achieved academic benchmarks at kindergarten entry.
- Children's participation in public preschool programs resulted in significant gains in language and social-emotional development.

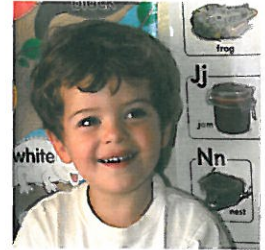
Public preschool programs are often on the forefront of school readiness preparation and assessments. In Virginia, teachers and principals say that public preschool experience for "at-risk" students substantially increased their academic and social abilities.

JLARC Report on Virginia Preschool Initiative, 2007

Measuring a Child's School Readiness

The five key areas to assess school readiness:

- Language Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Cognitive and General Knowledge
- Physical Well-being and Motor Development
- Individual Approaches to Learning

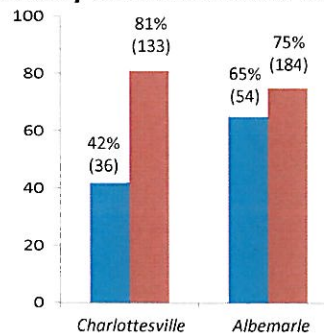


Virginia has not implemented a uniform "readiness" assessment tool. The Virginia Department of Education reports on school readiness utilizing one screening tool to measure language development, the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS). (*Council on Virginia's Future, 2010*)

Local Language and Literacy Readiness (2008/09)

- 16% (59) of Charlottesville and 11% (110) of Albemarle kindergarteners did not meet academic benchmarks upon kindergarten entry.
- In Charlottesville, only 42% of economically disadvantaged kindergarteners who did not participate in early learning programs prior to kindergarten also met academic benchmarks. In contrast, 81% of their peers who participated in early learning programs met academic benchmarks.
- In Albemarle, 65% of economically disadvantaged kindergarteners who did not participate in early learning programs prior to kindergarten also met academic benchmarks. In contrast, 75% of their peers who participated in early learning programs met academic benchmarks.

Economically disadvantaged students who met language and literacy benchmarks at kindergarten entry. (2008/09)



Blue % (#) of students without prior early learning program experiences who met language and literacy benchmarks.

Red % (#) of students with prior early learning program experiences who met language and literacy benchmarks.

Public Preschool Participation Increases School Readiness (2008/09)

Nearly 450 four year-olds who participated in Charlottesville and Albemarle's three public preschool programs showed significant language and literacy progress by spring.

- In fall, 22% of children met academic developmental ranges.
- By spring, 79% of children met academic developmental ranges.

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Social-Emotional Readiness: An Important School Readiness Measure

The social and emotional competencies of young children are strong predictors of academic and workplace success.

- Kindergarten teachers state that children's ability to get along with others and control their own behavior and emotions are essential skills for a successful start in school.
(National Center for Children in Poverty, 2002)
- Healthy social and emotional development in the early years can be linked to long-term health, well-being and workplace readiness in adulthood.
(The PNC Financial Services Group, 2007, National Center for Children in Poverty, 2009)



What We Know: Local Social-Emotional Readiness

Charlottesville/Albemarle Pilot Serving Children 0-3 years

The 2010 Charlottesville/Albemarle Pilot project for Infant and Toddler Social, Emotional and Behavioral Development based at Children, Youth & Family Services will screen children 0-3 years in 40 classrooms at both center-based and family-based child care settings.

Home Visiting Programs

Jefferson Area CHIP; Children, Youth & Family Services; and Arc of the Piedmont serve over 500 children and measure children's social readiness skills as a tool to work with families. The programs collaborate to document trends in social readiness indicators.

Public Preschool Programs

Albemarle County Bright Stars Programs, Charlottesville City Schools Preschool Programs and Monticello Area Community Action Agency Head Start serve nearly 500 three and four year-old children. All three measure children's progress with social-emotional readiness skills.

- 79 - 90% of children met appropriate social-emotional developmental ranges by spring using measurement tools.

Public School Systems

Albemarle County Public Schools and Charlottesville City Schools do not report on social-emotional readiness data at kindergarten entry. However, data related to social-emotional readiness may be collected by individual schools to assess children's skill levels.

Nationwide, employers rank the social-emotional related area of teamwork and collaboration as one of the top four skills needed for success in the workplace.

*Are They Really Ready to Work?
(The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Society for Human Resource Management) 2006.*

