

snapshot

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A LONGITUDINAL VIEW OF EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR *PRESCHOOL FOR ALL* PARTICIPANTS IN REDWOOD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Since 2011, the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University (Gardner Center) has examined school-based outcomes for San Mateo County *Preschool for All* (PFA) students who went on to attend elementary school in Redwood City School District (RCSD). The Gardner Center has previously reported on PFA students' outcomes through kindergarten ([2011 report](#)) and first grade ([2012 report](#)). This study follows these students through third grade, providing a complete look at the Pre-K to third grade experiences of children who participated in San Mateo County's high-quality preschool program.

PFA San Mateo County was established in 2004 as a five-year demonstration project aimed at reducing the achievement gap by supporting high-quality preschool programs for low income three- and four-year old children. Overall, the majority of PFA students were at-risk for academic failure due to low parent education levels, English language learner status, and low-income status. We used longitudinal data from the Gardner Center's Youth Data Archive (YDA) to link individual student records from PFA to their early elementary records in RCSD. This study follows 876 PFA students who enrolled in RCSD kindergarten immediately following their participation in PFA. Due to data limitations, this study compared PFA participants to children who we know from other research likely attended private preschool.¹

Key Findings

This analysis examined the longitudinal outcomes of PFA students during their first four years in elementary school, comparing PFA students to their RCSD non-PFA counterparts. Using unadjusted report card proficiency scores in five subjects (language arts listening/speaking, language arts writing, language arts reading, math, and work study skills), we categorized students as never proficient (0 years of proficiency), intermittently proficient (1-2 years of proficiency), or persistently proficient (3-4 years of proficiency) over four years. We found that:

- Among students in traditionally underserved subgroups—in particular Latino students, low income students, and students with a parent who did not complete a high school diploma—PFA students were more likely to be persistently proficient in many report card subjects than their non-PFA peers, depending on the subgroup (Exhibit 1).

¹ Applied Survey Research. (2009). *School Readiness in San Mateo County: Results of the 2008 Assessment*. San Jose, CA.

Exhibit 1: PFA Subgroups More Likely to be Persistently Proficient in Grades K to 3 than Non-PFA Peers, by Report Card Subject

	Listening/ Speaking	Reading	Writing	Math	Work Study Skills
Latino	X				X
Low Income	X		X		X
Parent without a HS Diploma	X	X		X	X

X = More likely to be Persistently Proficient

- Two-year PFA participants were more likely to be persistently proficient (3-4 years) and less likely to have never been proficient compared to one-year PFA participants. They were just as likely as non-PFA students to be persistently proficient on all report card subjects.
- PFA students attending a community school² for their first four years in elementary were more likely to be persistently proficient (3-4 years) in listening/speaking and work study skills than PFA students attending traditional schools, and just as likely to be persistently proficient on other report card subjects.

Implications and Conclusion

A “Pre-K to Third” grade approach aligns early childhood educational experiences with elementary school and provides continuity and consistency between these settings. Findings from this report support the salience of this approach by demonstrating that providing high-quality preschool experiences to traditionally underserved students can help prepare them to succeed in early elementary school. Findings were particularly promising in listening/speaking and work study skills. Proficiency in listening/speaking is especially relevant to successfully meeting the Common Core State Standards as verbal expression is an essential component. Work study skills reflect student habits such as completing homework on time, which supports the standards’ emphasis on student readiness for college and careers. Positive findings for PFA students attending community schools may also point to community schools’ ability to support student achievement through on-site services such as afterschool programming and family engagement opportunities.

Overall, our analysis suggests that participating in a high-quality preschool program was associated with positive academic outcomes for children once they entered the K-12 school system. In combination with integrated instruction, family engagement, and support through third grade, we hope that these efforts can reduce the achievement gap and that these children will have the opportunity to thrive in every future setting they encounter.

² Full-service community schools are a model that RCSD and other school districts across the nation utilize to meet the needs of the whole child. For more information, see the Coalition for Community Schools, http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what_is_a_community_school.aspx