Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation:
2016-17

Buffett
Early Childhood
Institute
at the University of Nebraska

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska is dedicated to promoting the development and learning of children from birth through age 8. Our vision is to make Nebraska the best place in the nation to be a baby. Visit buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu for more information.

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Executive Summary

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, a collaboration between the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska, the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, and the superintendents of the districts that make up the Learning Community, offers an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing income- and race-based achievement gaps of young children from birth through Grade 3. The plan was developed with the superintendents of the 11 school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties in response to legislation (LB 585) passed by the Nebraska Legislature in 2013 directing the Learning Community Coordinating Council to enact an early childhood program created by the metro Omaha superintendents for young children living in high concentrations of poverty.

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan reflects research about young children's development and learning. All work undertaken as part of the plan revolves around six evidence-based ideas and is based on three interconnected levels of implementation through which school districts, elementary schools, and community-based professionals can strengthen efforts targeted at reducing opportunity and achievement gaps in early childhood.

THREE LEVELS OF IMPLEMENTATION
1. Full Implementation of the Birth – Grade 3 Approach
2. Customized Assistance to Districts
3. Professional Development for All

The purpose of this report is to present findings from the second year of evaluation activities, those focused on the implementation of the Superintendents' Plan during the 2016-17 school year. Evaluation activities were designed to address two broad questions about program implementation and changes in key outcomes.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS
1. What has been learned about the implementation of the Superintendents' Plan?
2. What progress has been made in specific processes and outcomes related to Superintendents' Plan components?

A multiple-cohort longitudinal design was used to learn about program implementation and to determine how processes and outcomes related to the Superintendents' Plan components are changing. Two cohorts were constructed: Birth – Age 3 and PreK – Grade 3 (children ages 3 – 8). Current enrollment in the birth – age 3 voluntary home visiting program is 99 families. In the PreK – Grade 3 cohort 3,612 students were enrolled in 184 PreK – Grade 3 classrooms at the 10 full implementation sites (or schools) in the 2016-17 year. This included 679 PreK students enrolled in 29 classrooms and 2,933 students in 155 Kindergarten – Grade 3 classrooms.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND MEASURES

A series of qualitative research methods, including observations, interviews, and focus groups, provided information about program implementation. Quantitative data collected to inform progress on key processes and outcomes included surveys and formal measures closely associated with the plan's hypotheses and widely used in the early childhood literature.

Qualitative results demonstrated that the Superintendents' Plan was widely embraced by personnel in all of the full implementation schools; awareness of the importance of early childhood beginning at birth and recognition that it extends through Grade 3 were also noted. Similarly, family partnerships and community connections have become a greater emphasis for schools. Those participating in the Superintendents' Plan have developed strong relationships and reported a sense of pride in their participation.

From a quantitative perspective, children are demonstrating age-appropriate levels of development and change in key developmental domains. Gains in vocabulary and general academic skills were observed across all students as well as within subgroups of students stratified according to race/ethnicity and Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) status. Similar gains were observed in social-emotional and executive function skills. Particularly encouraging is the percentage of children progressing beyond the lowest percentile ranks on each measure over time.

Parents/caregivers and families report positive experiences with teachers and schools as well as supportive environments and relatively strong relationships with their children. Parents/caregivers were particularly positive in reporting a collaborative relationship with their child's school. School personnel also report a better understanding of the need to support families in all of their children's school activities.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the plan is operating as expected with all participants reporting positive effects of the plan's components. Strategies for improving key aspects of each component of the plan are already in place. The 2017-18 evaluation will focus on continuous improvement within each component as well as addressing more comprehensively such areas as recruitment for birth – age 3 home visiting and transitions at key points across the continuum. Engaging more families and children in birth – age 3 programming and developing a stronger understanding about transition points will be critical for reaching the ultimate goal of closing achievement gaps.

Introduction

ABOUT THE SUPERINTENDENTS' EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAN

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan offers an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing income- and race-based achievement gaps of young children from birth through Grade 3 in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The plan was developed in response to legislation (LB 585) passed in 2013 directing the Learning Community Coordinating Council to enact an early childhood program created by the metro Omaha superintendents for young children living in high concentrations of poverty. The plan is financed by a half-cent levy, resulting in annual funding of approximately $2.9 million to be used for this purpose.

In 2013, the superintendents of the 11 school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties invited the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to work with them to prepare a plan for their review and, after approval by the Learning Community Council, to facilitate the plan's implementation. The plan was adopted unanimously by the 11 superintendents in June 2014 and approved by the Learning Community Council in August 2014. In-depth planning and initial implementation within the districts occurred throughout 2014-15. Implementation of all plan components was fully launched in summer 2015.

The goal of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is to reduce or eliminate social, cognitive, and achievement gaps among young children living in high concentrations of poverty. By translating research into practice, the plan provides for a comprehensive systems approach to programming that is required to increase opportunities to learn and eliminate income- and race-based achievement gaps for children most at risk for school failure by the end of third grade. In so doing, the plan elevates the capacity of the Omaha metro school districts to serve all young children well.

The purpose of this report is to present evaluation findings from the second year of implementation of the Superintendents' Plan, which occurred during the 2016-17 school year. A brief overview of the Superintendents' Plan will be provided as a precursor to the evaluation section.

FOUNDATION OF THE PLAN: SIX EVIDENCE-BASED IDEAS

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan reflects research about young children's development and learning (Allen & Kelly, 2015; Reynolds, Hayakawa, Candee & Englund, 2016; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). All work undertaken as part of the plan revolves around six evidence-based ideas.

Birth – Grade 3

Although intervention at any point during the first eight years of life is helpful for children placed at risk, research teaches us that we must go beyond a single year of PreK, or even birth – Grade 3 or birth – Grade 5 programs for the benefits of intervention to endure. The foundations for building children's brain architecture, language and skill acquisition, and relationships with others are established early and take time to reach their full potential. By maintaining continuity through the end of third grade, children are more likely to achieve lasting success in school and beyond.

School as Hub

At the core of the plan is the idea that schools can serve as the focal point for complex learning systems, connecting children and families to resources within and beyond school walls. Schools have the potential to span conventional silos, overcome traditional barriers, and become connectors across communities and different age groupings. They can help families navigate and access early education services and community resources and become a source of long-term continuity for children and families.

Developmental Change

We are committed to helping children negotiate the ongoing biological, neurological, psychological, and social pathways of development by which they evolve from a newborn infant to a competent and confident third-grader. Sustained learning does not occur in isolated fragments. Only when skills and emerging capabilities are followed up, supported, and extended is it likely that new skills and new capacities will be acquired and become reliably available over time.

Parent and Family Support

Parents and families are key to children's success and our most powerful allies in supporting and enhancing children's strengths and abilities. But families know too well the personal stress and toxicity that can accompany poverty and social inequality. Active family engagement and support are central to our work and to children's growth.

Professional Growth and Support

Enhancing the skills of teachers, caregivers, and those supervising and directing them is crucial. Educators equipped with research-based knowledge about children's development and early learning can maximize effectiveness of educational experiences for children with diverse learning needs. When the ability of caregivers, teachers, and administrators to translate development research into practice is enhanced, children thrive.

Persistence

Evidence assures us that the earlier we begin working with children and families placed at risk, and the more persistent, consistent, and well-designed our efforts are, the more likely it is that children will be launched on a path toward life success. This requires a long-term, comprehensive commitment—one that can lead to a lifetime of accomplishment and fulfillment. Persistence of effort yields persistence of effect.

THREE LEVELS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Superintendents' Plan provides three interconnected levels of implementation through which school districts, elementary schools, and community-based professionals can strengthen early childhood efforts targeted at reducing opportunity and achievement gaps.

Full Implementation of the Birth – Grade 3 Approach

In this intensive level of implementation, schools serve as hubs that connect young children and their families to a continuum of high-quality, comprehensive, and continuous early childhood education and community services from birth through Grade 3. This continuum includes home visiting for children birth to age 3, transitions to high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds, and aligned Kindergarten through Grade 3 educational experiences. Strong family and community partnerships provide the foundation for services across all age levels, birth – Grade 3.

Customized Assistance to Districts

This implementation option offers school districts focused assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs related to birth – Grade 3 policies and programming. Customized technical assistance provides districts with access to local and national consultation as they engage in strategic planning and improvement efforts that will impact system-wide early childhood education and services. Customized professional development provides districts with support in designing and delivering sustained professional learning opportunities for staff in order to address key dimensions of early childhood programming, birth – Grade 3.

Professional Development for All

The translation of research into high-quality early childhood practices is at the core of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan implementation. Professional Development for All provides a connected series of professional development institutes open to all school leaders, teachers, early childhood professionals, and caregivers who work with young children from birth through Grade 3 in the Omaha metro area. Community-based

PD for All introduces leading-edge research and innovative practices while promoting collaborative connections and shared commitments to strong early learning and family support systems, birth – Grade 3.

Evaluation activities are specific to each of the three interconnected levels of implementation in the Superintendents' Plan and will be reported below. Design, data collection, and analysis was led jointly by three University of Nebraska units: the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, the Munroe-Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Evaluation of the Full Implementation of the Birth – Grade 3 School as Hub Approach

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

For the 2016-17 school year, evaluation activities were designed to address two broad questions about program implementation and changes in key outcomes:

1. What has been learned about the implementation of the Superintendents' Plan?
2. What progress has been made in specific processes and outcomes related to Superintendents' Plan components?

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

Full implementation of School as Hub for Birth – Grade 3 is not a single program but a comprehensive, school-wide approach that leads to significant shifts in traditional school practices. All teachers, staff, and children in birth – Grade 3 participate in the program, including the home visitor and family facilitator who have been hired by each full implementation site to provide early childhood parenting supports and to promote family-school-community partnerships.

In the 2016-17 year, 3,612 students were enrolled in 184 PreK through Grade 3 classrooms at the 10 full implementation sites. This included 679 PreK students enrolled in 29 classrooms and 2,933 students in 155 Kindergarten through third grade classrooms. At the time of reporting, 183 children had enrolled in home visiting.

TABLE 1 | SCHOOL AND DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS: FULL IMPLEMENTATION SCHOOLS

District Schools	District and School Population	% Free/Reduced Price Lunch	% Minority Population	% At or Above Proficient Reading	% At or Above Proficient Math
Bellevue	**10,076**	**38**	**28**	**81**	**72**
Bellaire	292	72	38	78	67
DC West	**836**	**32**	**11**	**83**	**75**
DC West	336	39	12	89	93
Millard	**23,702**	**18**	**19**	**89**	**82**
Cody	348	46	31	78	74
Sandoz	381	47	49	83	70
Omaha	**51,928**	**73**	**70**	**67**	**54**
Gomez Heritage	865	90	91	77	72
Liberty	731	91	86	65	53
Mount View	414	91	92	62	52
Pinewood	247	72	64	76	59
Ralston	**3,179**	**54**	**42**	**75**	**63**
Karen Western	148	78	57	79	65
Meadows	273	45	38	90	71
Mockingbird	388	73	64	73	63
Westside	**6,106**	**32**	**25**	**83**	**79**
Westbrook	509	52	40	77	70

METHODOLOGY

Design

A multiple-cohort longitudinal design was used to learn about program implementation and to determine how process and outcomes related to the Superintendents' Plan components are changing. Two cohorts were constructed. The Birth – Age 3 Cohort consists of children ages 0 – 3 and the PreK – Grade 3 Cohort consists of children ages 3 – 8. This report presents baseline data for the Birth – Age 3 Cohort; the PreK – Grade 3 Cohort includes baseline data and an initial follow-up point of data collection.

Sample and Participant Characteristics

The cohort design required distinct processes of recruitment and sampling of children and families. These processes are described by cohort.

Birth – Age 3 Cohort

School personnel identified families for participation in the voluntary birth – age 3 home visiting program. Families enrolled chose whether or not to enroll in the evaluation. At the time of reporting, 183 children had enrolled in home visiting. Due to attrition and transition to PreK, current enrollment in the home visiting program is 99 families. Of those, 70 families and 78 children enrolled in the evaluation from April 6, 2016, through May 31, 2017. Table 2 provides a breakdown of program and evaluation enrollment numbers by district and school.

TABLE 2 | BIRTH – AGE 3 ENROLLMENT BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL (AS OF MAY 31, 2017)

District	School	Families in Evaluation	Children in Evaluation	Families in Program
Bellevue	Bellaire	5	6	7
DC West	DC West	8	9	12
Millard	Cody	5	6	12
	Sandoz	5	5	7
Omaha	Gomez Heritage	11	11	13
	Liberty	11	12	14
	Mount View	5	5	5
	Pinewood	13	15	15
Ralston	Karen Western Meadows Mockingbird	3	3	6
Westside	Westbrook	4	6	8
Totals		70	78	99

The age of children enrolled in the evaluation of the Birth – Age 3 Cohort ranges from 0 to 30.7 months at baseline (average age = 9.60 months; SD = 9.93; n = 71). Nearly 49% of children are male, 38% Hispanic, and 18% African-American. As reported by the primary caregiver, 92% of children have a regular health care provider and 17% have special health needs (e.g., allergies, eczema, asthma). Approximately 67% of families are English-speaking, 62% live in coupled households, and 75% receive public benefits. Over one-third of primary caregivers report an annual income of $17,000 or less, 48% do not have formal educational experience beyond high school, and more than half report worries about a shortage of food. Almost one-fourth of primary caregivers reported depressive symptoms. In contrast, only 1% report high levels of overall stress and 47% rate their own health as very good/excellent.

PreK – Grade 3 Cohort

The PreK – Grade 3 Cohort consists of a random sample of children collected from PreK and Kindergarten classrooms within each participating school during the 2015-16 school year. This sampling process resulted in 222 PreK through Kindergarten students participating in the evaluation study with parent consent. The retention rate of students over the first year of the evaluation was 95% (211 students). In the spring of 2017, the loss of an additional five students left 206 students remaining in the evaluation (46 students in PreK and 160 in Kindergarten through first grade). Table 3 provides a breakdown of children sampled within each school.

The PreK – Grade 3 Cohort consists of an equal number of males and females and a substantial percentage (69%) of students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL). A diverse sample of students is represented, with the largest proportion being Hispanic (37%), white (34%), and black (18%). There is also a notable percentage of students whose home language is Spanish (24%) or both Spanish and English (10%). Approximately 16% of children were eligible for early childhood special education services.

TABLE 3 | PREK – GRADE 3 EVALUATION ENROLLMENT BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL (AS OF BASELINE)

District	School	PreK Classrooms	K-3 Classrooms	PreK Children Sampled	K Children Sampled
Bellevue	Bellaire	1	8	4	8
DC West	DC West	2	14	8	15
Millard	Cody	4	8	11	8
	Sandoz	3	12	10	11
Omaha	Gomez Heritage	3	35	9	22
	Liberty	4	23	15	19
	Mount View	3	9	8	5
	Pinewood	2	7	8	9
Ralston	Karen Western	1	7	1	7
	Meadows	1	8	4	8
	Mockingbird	2	12	6	11
Westside	Westbrook	3	12	4	11
Totals		29	155	88	134

Evaluation Approach and Measures

A series of qualitative research methods, including observations, interviews, and focus groups, provided information about program implementation. Site visit observations were completed at all full implementation sites, some on multiple occasions. Retrospective interviews were completed with administrators, educational facilitators, and program specialists at all full implementation sites. Focus groups provided follow-up on information gained in the site visits and retrospective interviews. Four focus groups addressed the following topics: (1) establishing connections across the birth-Grade 3 continuum; (2) re-envisioning the School as Hub; (3) strategies for strengthening family partnerships; and (4) the evolution of the role of the family facilitator. Focus groups included four to six participants specifically recruited for their ability to inform investigators about the target topic.

Quantitative data collected to inform progress on key processes and outcomes included surveys and formal measures closely associated with the plan's hypotheses and widely used in the early childhood literature. Data collected from home visitors and teachers concerned the quality of home visiting and classroom environments. Family measures focused on understanding the family's social support system and the interaction of caregivers with children. Child measures focused on learning, general academic and language skills, and socio-emotional skills and executive function.

All measures used in the evaluation are briefly described in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Data Collection Process and Analysis

Data collection processes included direct assessment with evaluation staff, formalized coding of videos, and information gathered by home visitors. Baseline data collection for the Birth – Age 3 Cohort included a total of 78 children and 77 primary caregivers prior to the completion of the 2016-17 evaluation period. The PreK – Grade 3 Cohort baseline data (Time 1) were collected in spring 2016 for all school districts except for Omaha Public Schools (OPS), whose baseline data were gathered in fall 2016. Time 2 data were collected at all schools in spring 2017. Thematic analyses of qualitative data and descriptive analyses of quantitative data were used to summarize outcome data. Subgroup analyses examined differential progress for groups based on poverty (free/reduced lunch and paid lunch), home language status (English, Spanish, and dual English and Spanish), and race and ethnicity (black, white, and Hispanic).

Implementation Insights: Qualitative Findings

The dynamics of the Superintendents' Plan implementation were examined through a qualitative data collection process. The following themes summarize progress identified in key processes of implementing the birth – Grade 3 approach across the 10 full implementation school sites along with lessons learned about full implementation.

PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF A BIRTH THROUGH GRADE 3 CONTINUUM

All school sites are implementing the core components of the birth – Grade 3 approach, with most full implementation school sites reporting progress in connecting these components into a comprehensive continuum of early learning and family engagement supports starting at birth or even prenatally. Input from evaluation participants noted a number of implementation strengths:

- Use of a structured birth – age 3 home visiting curriculum has supported home visitors in providing consistency in implementation of home visits and parent-child playgroups across school sites. Parenting supports developed by the PreK – Grade 3 family facilitator at each school site have engaged families in parent-child playgroups and in a book bag exchange for 3- to 5-year-olds. Support for children and families transitioning into preschool and Kindergarten has been strengthened by strengthening teamwork between the birth – age 3 home visitor and PreK – Grade 3 family facilitator.

- Buffett Institute educational facilitators have provided substantial support to PreK – Grade 3 teachers, especially around the implementation of effective gap-closing instructional practices. These practices highlight five dimensions of instructional quality: (1) classroom relationships and interactions; (2) whole-child development; (3) language and communication; (4) intellectually rigorous learning experiences; and (5) strengths-based responsiveness to home culture and language.

- Implementation of home visiting, parent-child interaction groups, and other programming for families with very young children has shifted how most school sites approach family partnerships in general. Administrators report that staff and families increasingly view school as a place for the "whole family." Prior to the Superintendents' Plan, parents with very young children "wouldn't have thought to come to school and we wouldn't have thought to invite them." Similarly, having dedicated roles of home visitor and family facilitator has opened up "new trusting avenues for family engagement" that are enhancing home-school-community partnerships overall.

COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING AS IMPORTANT ENABLING FACTORS

Site visits, interviews, and focus groups identified collaborative learning and networking as pivotal factors in promoting full implementation of the Superintendents' Plan. This seemed to be particularly important given the need to integrate new staff roles and birth – Grade 3 practices within the ongoing work of participating elementary schools. Evaluation participants noted several dimensions of collaboration and networking most frequently:

- Strong, well-established professional relationships between Buffett Institute Superintendents' Plan staff and school personnel, including home visitors, family facilitators, teachers, and administrators, were cited as providing a necessary and valued resource in co-facilitating and advancing implementation of the innovative birth – Grade 3 approach.

- The birth – Grade 3 team put in place at each full implementation site provides a mechanism for planning, problem-solving, and improving implementation of the birth – Grade 3 system of supports. Consistent participants at each school's monthly birth – Grade 3 team meeting include the principal, home visitor, family facilitator, educational facilitator, and Buffett Institute specialists. In the majority of schools, these teams have shown themselves to be essential in clarifying and blending staff roles and responsibilities in order to provide greater quality and continuity for children and families across the birth – Grade 3 continuum.

- The Buffett Institute staff facilitate regular cross-school/cross-district networking meetings for home visitors, family facilitators, and school administrators from full implementation school sites. These "like-role" networking meetings give these pioneering full implementation staff opportunities to share promising implementation practices from their school sites and to work collaboratively to increase their understanding of the birth – Grade 3 approach. Observations of networking meetings revealed strong collegiality and productive working relationships among participants. Interviews indicated that participants consider these cross-school opportunities for collaboration to be one of their most rewarding learning opportunities as partners in the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan.

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT FULL IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of an initiative as comprehensive and multidimensional as the Superintendents' Plan is a process that takes place over time and requires a focus on continuous improvement. Findings from the qualitative data collection revealed a number of areas for improvements:

- Much of the effort of the first years of implementation was devoted to putting birth – age 5 components in place where none had existed before (e.g., home visiting, parent-child interaction groups, book bag exchanges, forging new relationships with families, connecting with community resources, etc.). Now that these family components are more solidly in place, more attention needs to be placed on extending targeted parenting supports and family engagement opportunities across the entire birth – Grade 3 continuum.

- The birth – age 3 home visiting program across school sites has benefited from the guidance of a structured curriculum. The preschool extension of this structured curriculum has proved to be less robust than anticipated. The identification of a high-quality research-based preschool curriculum to align with the birth – age 3 home visiting curriculum and to guide parent-child engagement for 3- to 5-year-olds will further strengthen the birth – age 5 components in full implementation school sites.

- The quality of PreK – Grade 3 classroom instructional practices is advancing across full implementation school sites. The importance of alignment of PreK through Grade 3 curriculum and instruction has not yet emerged at the forefront of conversations with the majority of administrators and educational facilitators. As quality continues to progress, attention must also be turned to continuity of instruction for children.

- As full implementation of the Superintendents' Plan began, the expectation was that most children transitioning out of birth – age 3 home visiting would move into school-based PreK classes. Although districts are making progress in expanding these transition opportunities, many children participate in community-based preschools or child care programs before transitioning into 4-year-old PreK or Kindergarten at the full implementation schools. An important step in implementation efforts will be outreach

and collaboration with key community-based preschools serving the families in each school site's enrollment area. This collaboration should target ways for the school and community-based educators to work together in advancing both the quality and continuity of preschool children's learning experiences.

- An important challenge reported by a number of administrators and educational facilitators was the alignment of Superintendents' Plan goals and activities with other initiatives taking place in schools and districts. Now that work is well underway at all sites, greater attention can be shifted to integrating birth – Grade 3 efforts more fully and explicitly into each school's site plan, staffing structures, and professional learning systems.

Home Visiting for Birth – Age 3: Quantitative Data at Baseline

QUALITY OF HOME VISITING

Home visitors' effectiveness in engaging the parent/caregiver and child during home visiting activities was assessed using the *Home Visiting Rating Scales* (HOVRS; Roggman et al., 2006). Data collected on an annual basis from up to three families per home visitor yielded scores on the process, quality, and effectiveness of the home visit. Twenty-seven home visits were studied and analyzed. Figure 1 provides average scores on each scale in comparison to a program target. Home visitor effectiveness and process quality are slightly below the recommended program target of "5" or "good." (G. Cook, personal communication, Sept. 1, 2017).

FIGURE 1 | HOME VISITING RATING SCALES (HOVRS), N = 27
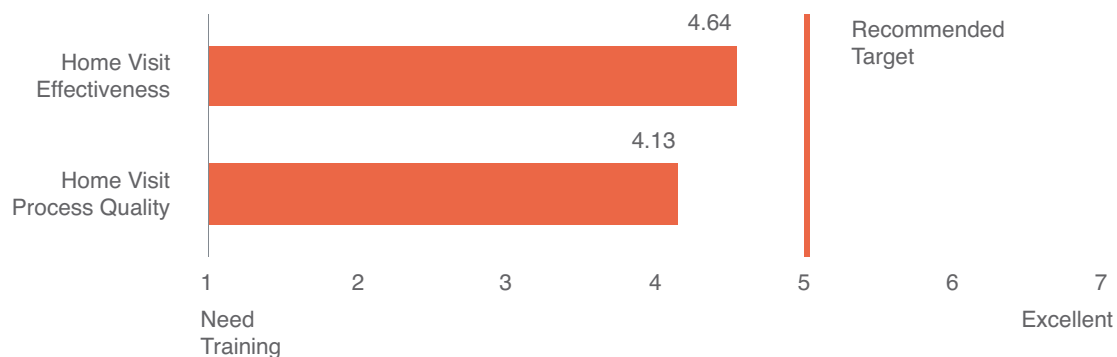
CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Language

The *Preschool Language Scale-5* (PLS-5; Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2011) was used to evaluate the language skills of infants and toddlers participating in the home visiting plan. Seventy-two children were assessed during this evaluation period (April 6, 2016 – May 31, 2017). On average, infants and toddlers demonstrated typical language skills in comparison to a normalized scale mean of 100 (auditory comprehension = 98; expressive communication = 102; total language = 101). Very few infants and toddlers demonstrated above-average language skills. Figure 2 displays the percentage of children in each score category by subscale.

FIGURE 2 | PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE SCALE (PLS-5), N = 48

	Below Average	Average	Above Average
Total Language	15%	68%	17%
Auditory Comprehension	17%	68%	15%
Expressive Communication	13%	68%	19%
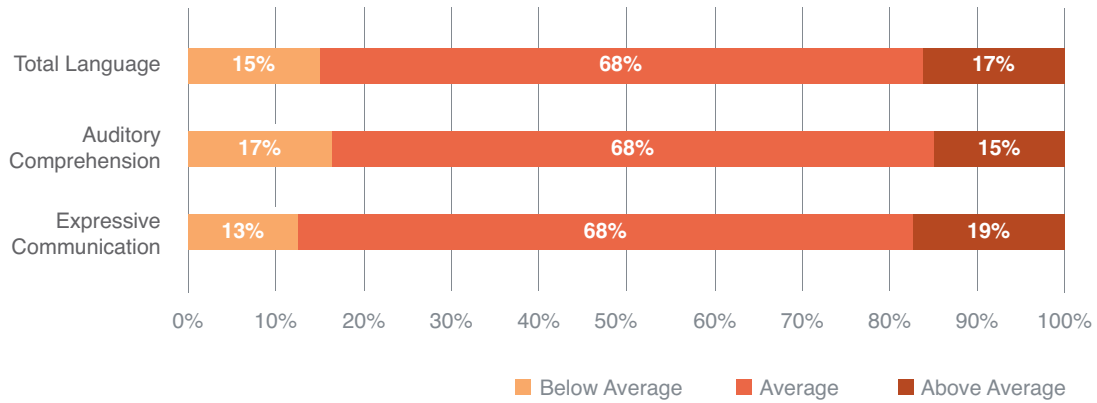
Social-Emotional

The *Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment* (ITSEA) was used to gather comprehensive information from caregivers about children's development across two broad domains: competence and dysregulation. (Dysregulation refers, among other things, to difficulty eating, sleeping, expressing emotions, and reaction to sensation.) The ITSEA was completed for 48 children meeting the criterion of being at least 12 months of age. Original scores were categorized according to their risk of a deficit or delay relative to their peers in the development of social-emotional competencies and behavior and emotion regulation. Figure 3 shows the percentage of children in each category for the domains measured. The majority of infants and toddlers were not at risk in either domain with 8% and 13% being of concern in the development of competence and dysregulation, respectively.

FIGURE 3 | INFANT-TODDLER SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASSESSMENT (ITSEA), N = 48

	Of Concern	Normal	Above Normal
Competence	8%	83%	8%
Dysregulation	13%	68%	19%
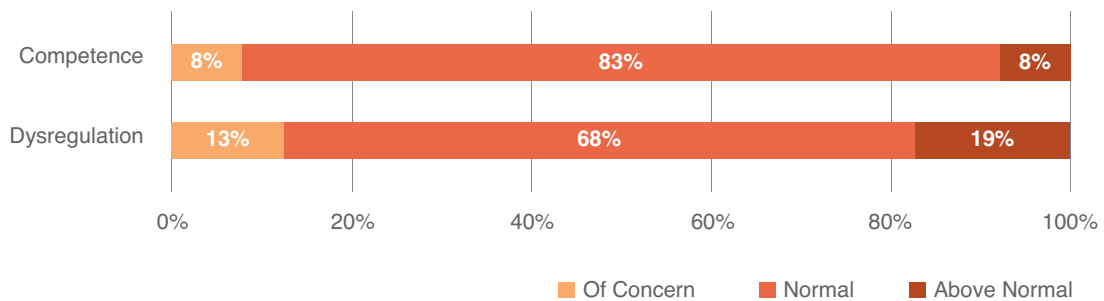
FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Family Support

The *FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey* (PFS) (FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2011) was used to examine families' perceptions of social and concrete support. Parents or caregivers of 78 children competed the FRIENDS PFS survey. As shown in Figure 4, a very small percentage of Birth – Age 3 Cohort families report receiving low levels of support in both domains.

FIGURE 4 | PROTECTIVE FACTORS SURVEY (PFS), N = 78
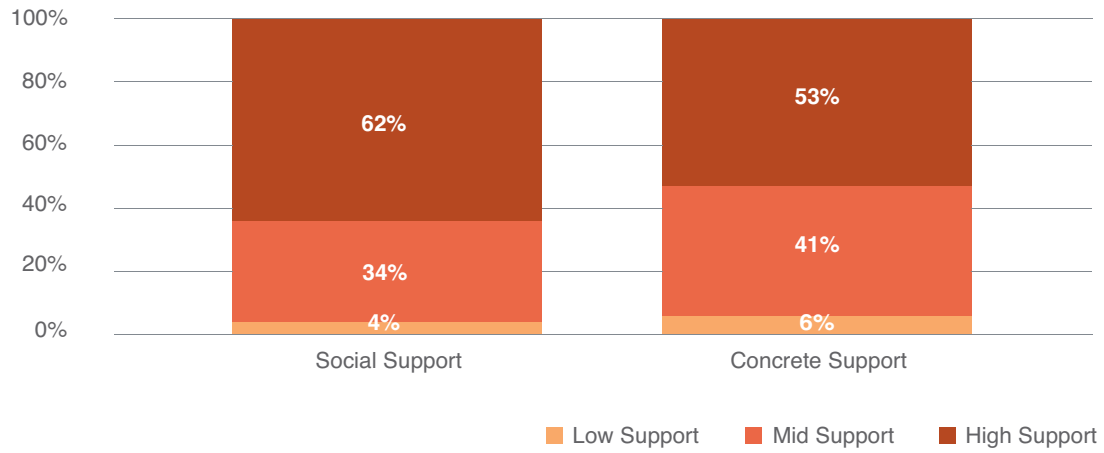
Caregiver-Child Interaction

The *Keys to Interactive Parenting* (KIPS; Comfort & Gordon, 2011) was used to evaluate parenting/caregiving behaviors during interactions with children. Scores on the KIPS were obtained for 78 parents or caregivers across three scales: (1) Building Relationships, (2) Promoting Learning, and (3) Supporting Confidence. As indicated in Figure 5, over half of caregivers demonstrate high quality in building relationships with their children while 63% of parents/caregivers showed low or medium quality in supporting their children's confidence.

FIGURE 5 | KEYS TO INTERACTIVE PARENTING (KIPS), N = 78
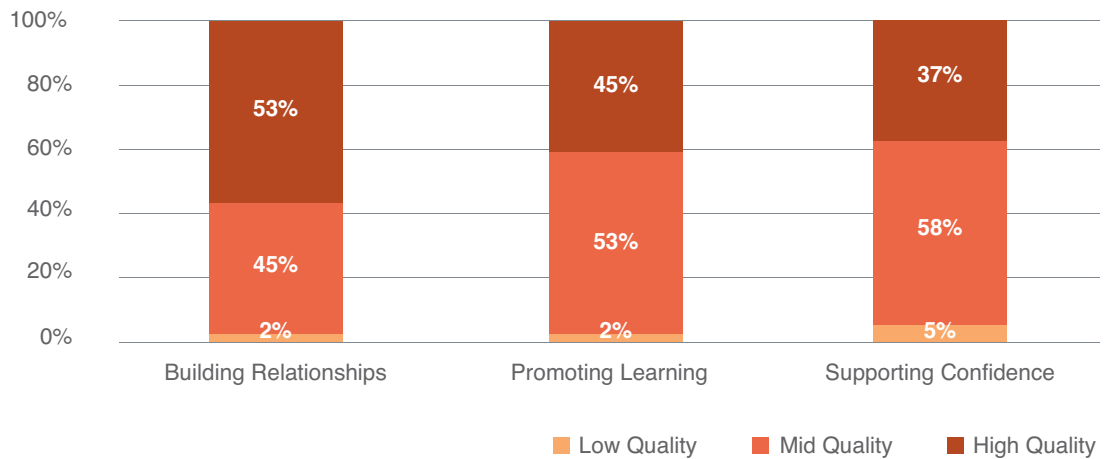
High-Quality Preschool
For 3- and 4-Year-Olds:
Quantitative Data

QUALITY OF PREK TEACHER PRACTICES

The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS; LaParo, Hamre, & Pianta, 2012) was used to evaluate the quality of participating classrooms. The CLASS has three dimensions: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. CLASS scores for 22 PreK classrooms at Time 1 and Time 2 are displayed in Figure 6. PreK teachers showed consistent improvement across subscales with the greatest gains coming in the area of emotionally supportive environments.

FIGURE 6 | PREK CLASS SCORES TIME 1 AND TIME 2, N = 22
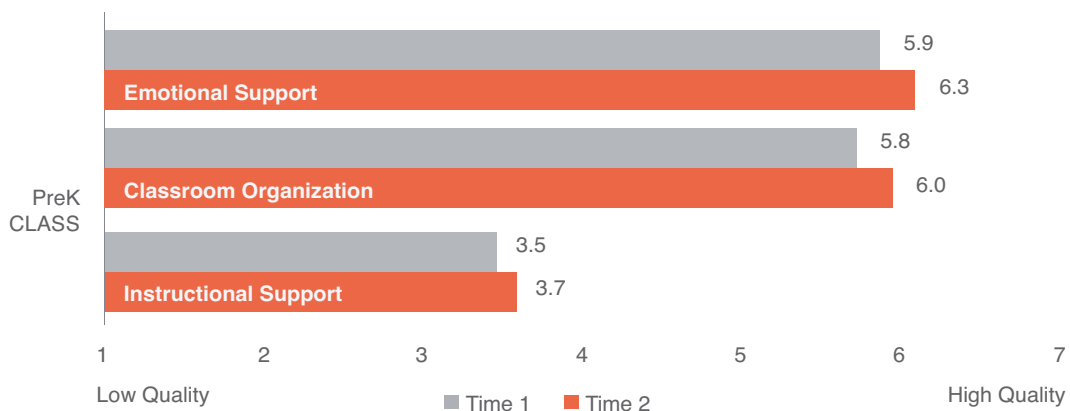
The *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (STRS) (Pianta, 1992) was also administered in order to assess teacher-child relationships, another important dimension of high-quality classroom environments. The STRS was completed for 45 PreK children. Overall, teachers report high levels of closeness with low levels of conflict with their children.

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Language

The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test*, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4; Dunn & Dunn, 2007) was administered to 45 children at Time 1 and Time 2. Results (Figure 7) indicate that PreK students' receptive vocabulary skills improved from Time 1 (m=88, SD=19) to Time 2 (m=94, SD=17). On average, students gained six points, yet were still below the national average. Of note, the percentage of students in the bottom 20th percentile decreased by 16%.

FIGURE 7 | CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: PREK RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY

	Low % <21		LowAvg % 21-40		Avg % 41-60		HighAvg % 61-80		High % 81-100	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Overall Receptive Vocabulary Skills: Time 1	22	49%	9	20%	3	7%	7	15%	4	9%
Overall Receptive Vocabulary Skills: Time 2	15	33%	10	22%	8	18%	7	16%	5	11%

Academic Achievement

The *Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, 3rd Edition Brief Form* (KTEA-3 Brief; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2015) was administered to 31 children at Time 1 and Time 2 and revealed positive results. Children's overall academic skills improved from Time 1 (m=84, SD=17) to Time 2 (m=88, SD=16). In addition, 13% more students scored above the 41st percentile at Time 2 on academic skills and 6% moved out of the lower 20th percentile.

FIGURE 8 | CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: PREK ACADEMIC SKILLS

	Low % <21		LowAvg % 21-40		Avg % 41-60		HighAvg % 61-80		High % 81-100	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Overall Academic Skills: Time 1	18	58%	8	26%	3	10%	0	0%	2	7%
Overall Academic Skills: Time 2	16	52%	6	19%	4	13%	3	10%	2	7%

Social-Emotional

The *Behavioral and Emotional Screening System Third Edition* (BASC-3 BESS; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015) was administered to 45 children at Time 1 and Time 2. Results indicate that approximately 20% of children are demonstrating elevated risk in adaptive and social-emotional skills at both time points.

Executive Function

The *Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Preschool Version* (BRIEF-P; Gioia, Espy, & Isquith, 2003) was administered to 45 children at Time 1 and Time 2. Results found the majority of PreK students were within the typical range for executive function skills at Time 1 (m=82%) and Time 2 (78%). "Executive Function" refers to the ability to control inappropriate behaviors or responses, to easily move from one task or activity to another, and to make use of short-term memory.

FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Family Support

The FRIENDS PFS was completed by parents or caregivers of 44 PreK children. Parents of PreK children reported high access to concrete and social supports at both time points, with ratings improving at Time 2.

Child-Parent Relationship

The *Child Parent Relationship Scale* (CPRS; Pianta, 1992) was completed by parents of 44 PreK children. Parents or caregivers of PreK children report high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict with their children. These ratings remained stable over time.

Aligned Kindergarten – Grade 3: Quantitative Data

QUALITY OF K-3 TEACHER PRACTICES

CLASS scores were obtained for 149 K-3 classrooms at Time 1 and Time 2. As indicated in Figure 9, K-3 teachers displayed improvement across subscales with the greatest gain coming in the area of instructional support.

FIGURE 9 | CLASS SCORES (K — GRADE 1), N = 149
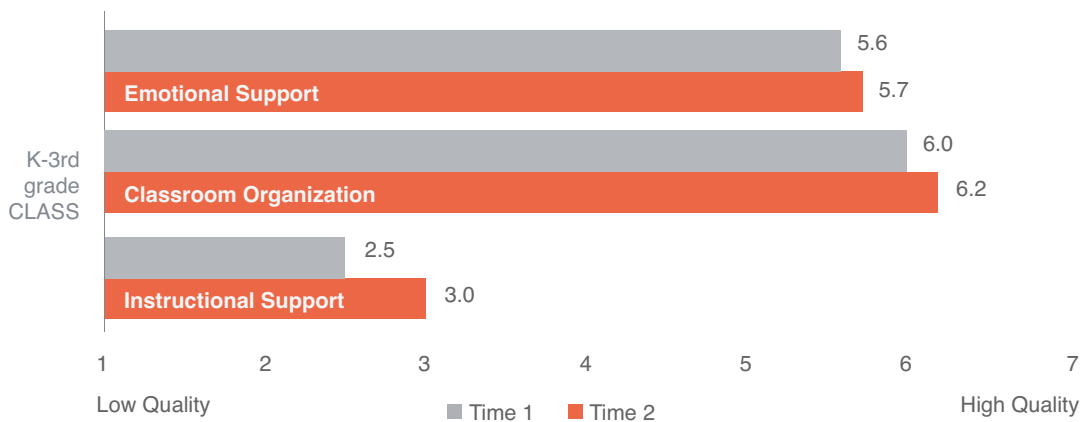
The *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (STRS; Pianta, 1992) was also administered to assess the teacher-child relationship of 161 teachers in Kindergarten and first grade. As reported for PreK children, teachers report high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict with children.

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Language

The PPVT-4 was administered to 161 children in Kindergarten and first grade. The results demonstrate that, on average, children made only small gains in language skills from Time 1 (mean=99, SD=17) to Time 2 (mean=101, SD=16). However, 6% of the children moved out of the lower 20th percentile.

Figure 10 displays subgroup analyses of poverty, home language status, and race/ ethnicity. All groups either made small gains in receptive vocabulary or showed stability. Noticeable differences were present between subgroups of children at Time 1 and Time 2. These gaps ranged from a low of 16 points at Time 2 between children eligible for FRL and their paid lunch peers to 19 points between children whose home language was Spanish or English.

FIGURE 10 | ANALYSIS OF K – GRADE 1 RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY BY GROUP CHARACTERISTICS
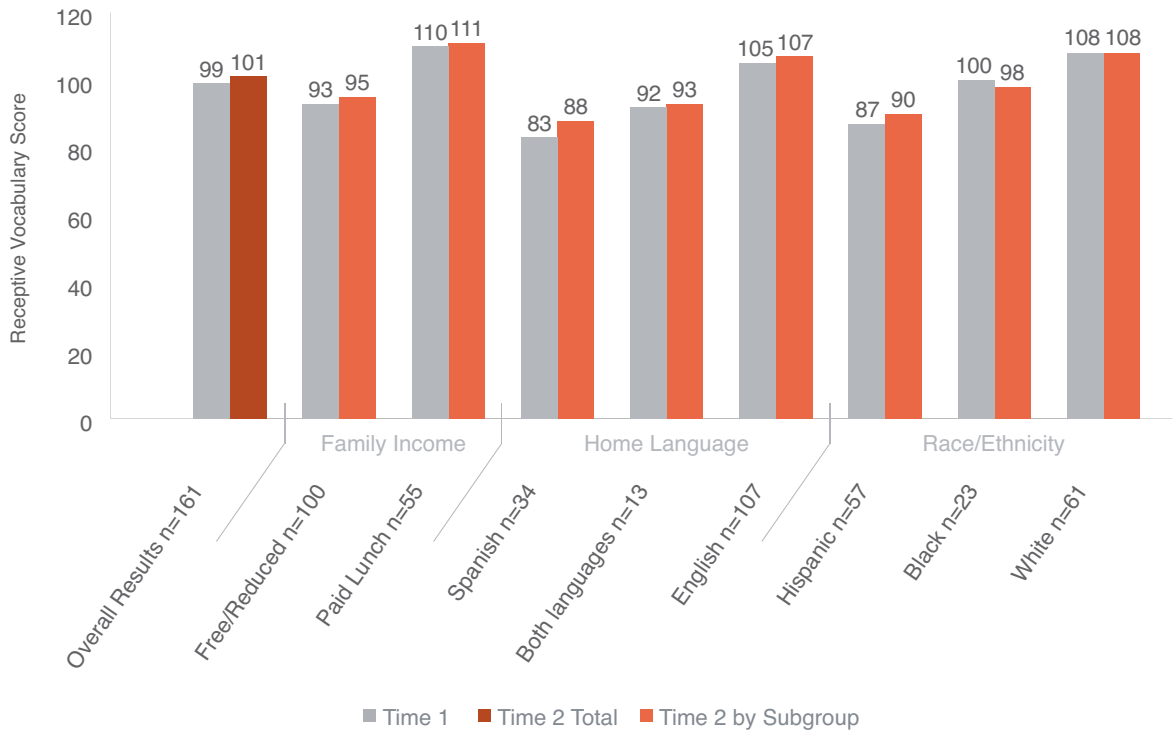
Academic Achievement

The KTEA-3 Brief was administered to 128 children in Kindergarten and first grade. The results (Figure 11) show that children made gains in overall academic skills from Time 1 (mean=91, SD=19) to Time 2 (mean=97, SD=18). Likewise, 16% more students were above the 41st percentile and 14% fewer were in the lowest 20th percentile.

FIGURE 11 | CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: K – GRADE 1 ACADEMIC SKILLS

	Low % <21		LowAvg % 21-40		Avg % 41-60		HighAvg % 61-80		High % 81-100	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Overall Academic Skills: Time 1										
	49	38%	29	23%	13	10%	28	22%	9	7%
Overall Academic Skills: Time 2										
	31	24%	27	21%	23	18%	29	23%	18	14%

Figure 12 displays subgroup analyses of family income, home language status, and race/ethnicity. All groups of children made gains in overall academic skills from Time 1 to Time 2. In general, the largest gains were made by minority children and those whose home language was other than English. The only exception was slightly smaller gains by children eligible for FRL as compared to their paid lunch peers.

FIGURE 12 | ANALYSIS OF K – GRADE 1 ACADEMIC SKILLS BY GROUP CHARACTERISTICS
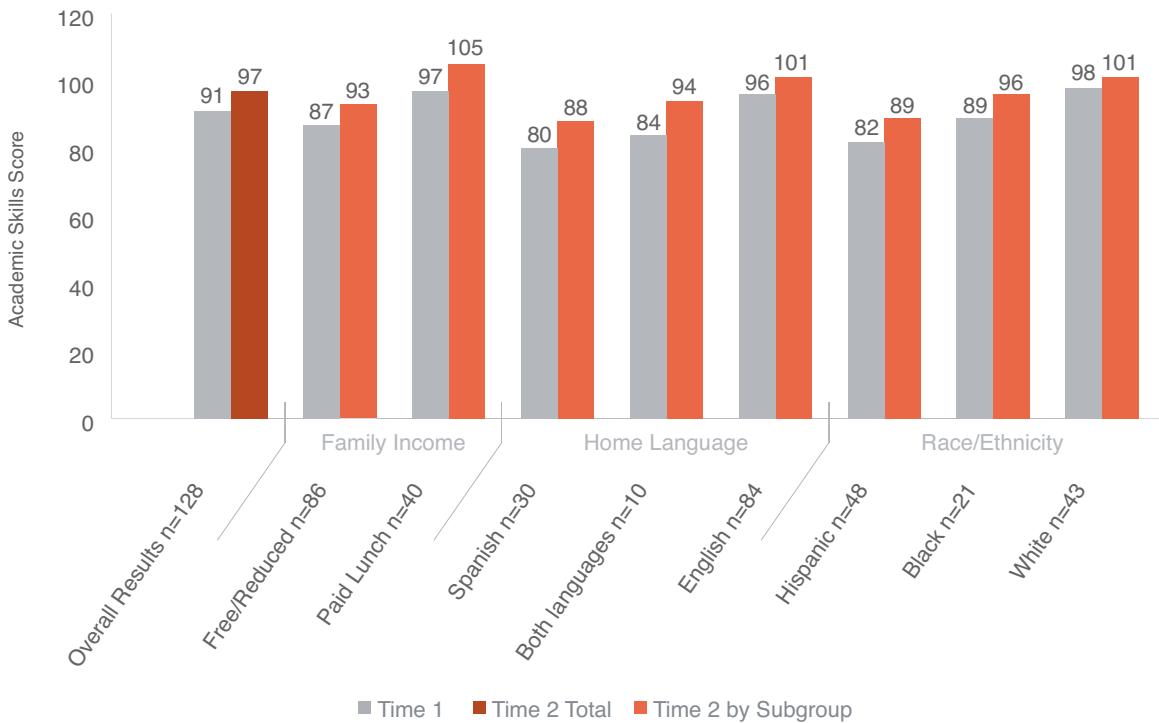
Social-Emotional
The BASC-3 BESS was administered to 162 children in Kindergarten and first grade. As was the case with PreK children, results indicate nearly 20% of Kindergarten and first grade children demonstrate elevated risk in adaptive and social-emotional skills at both time points.

Executive Function
The *Comprehensive Executive Function Inventory* (CEFI, Naglieri & Goldstein, 2012) was completed by teachers for 128 children in Kindergarten and first grade. The results (Figure 13) indicated executive function skills remained stable from Time 1 (m=101, SD=15) to Time 2 (m=101, SD 15).

FIGURE 13 | CHANGE IN PERCENTILE RANKS OVER TIME: K – GRADE 1 EXECUTIVE
FUNCTION SKILLS

	Low % <21		LowAvg % 21-40		Avg % 41-60		HighAvg % 61-80		High % 81-100	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Overall Executive Function Skills: Time 1										
	28	22%	20	16%	23	18%	32	25%	25	19%
Overall Executive Function Skills: Time 2										
	25	20%	28	22%	15	12%	29	23%	31	23%

FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Family Support

The FRIENDS PFS was completed by parents of 154 Kindergarten and first grade
children. Consistent with findings for parents of PreK children, parents of Kindergarten
and first grade children report high access to both concrete and social supports.
These ratings were generally stable across time with a slight improvement in the area
of social supports.

Child-Parent Relationship

The CPRS was completed by 153 parents of Kindergarten and first grade children.
Consistent with findings for PreK parents, parents of Kindergarten and first grade
students report high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict that remain stable
over time.

Summary

This report presents findings from the 2016-17 implementation evaluation of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. Two broad questions were posed in order to gain a better understanding of how the Superintendents' Plan was implemented and to provide information about any changes in outcomes related to key components of the plan. This summary will cover general implementation findings, child and family outcomes, and recommendations concerning quality improvement followed by a brief conclusion.

Implementation of the Superintendents' Plan was widely embraced by personnel in all of the full implementation schools. This was evident by staff and administrators' heightened awareness of the importance of early childhood beginning at birth and recognition that it extends through Grade 3. It was also seen in their commitment to the concept of School as Hub. Home visitors, family facilitators, and educational facilitators have become important staff members, integrated into each of the schools. Similarly, family partnerships and community connections have become a focal point for schools. The participants in the Superintendents' Plan have developed strong relationships and reported a sense of pride in their participation.

Children are demonstrating age-appropriate levels of development and change in key developmental domains. Gains in vocabulary and general academic skills were observed across all students as well as within subgroups of students stratified according to race/ethnicity, home language, and free or reduced lunch status. Ongoing efforts will be required to reduce these disparities further. Similar gains were observed in social-emotional and executive function skills. Particularly encouraging is the percentage of children progressing beyond the lowest percentile ranks on each measure over time. Parents/caregivers and families report positive experiences with teachers and schools, supportive environments, and relatively strong relationships with their children. Parents/caregivers were particularly positive in reporting a collaborative relationship with their child's school. School personnel also report a better understanding of the need to support families in all of their children's school activities.

Home visitor effectiveness is approaching the recommended program target. Continued support for improvement and coaching will be provided to advance the quality of home visiting. Classroom teachers created emotionally supportive environments and positive classroom organization. Improvement in all areas of classroom interaction was found across time. Continued support of teachers is needed to enhance instructional support strategies within their classroom practices.

CONCLUSION

All full implementation schools have the components for a successful Birth – Grade 3 approach in place. Overall, the plan is operating as expected with all participants reporting positively about the key components of the plan. Strategies for improving key aspects of each component of the plan are already being implemented. The 2017-18 evaluation will focus on continuous improvement within each component and will address more comprehensively such areas as recruitment for birth – age 3 home visiting and transitions at key points across the continuum. Engaging more families and children in birth – age 3 programming and developing a stronger understanding of how to facilitate transition points will be essential for reaching the ultimate goal of closing achievement gaps.

Evaluation of Customized Assistance to Districts

PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Customized technical assistance provides Learning Community school districts with access to state and national consultation as they engage in strategic planning and improvement efforts intended to affect system-wide early childhood education and services. Customized professional development engages districts in designing and delivering sustained professional learning opportunities for staff by addressing key dimensions of early childhood programming, birth – Grade 3. During the past year, as shown in Figure 14, eight Learning Community school districts received intensive assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs they identified.

FIGURE 14 | FOCUS AREAS AND IMPLEMENTATION: CUSTOMIZED ASSISTANCE, 2015-17

District	2015-16	2016-17
Bellevue	Review and development of a district plan to advance early learning system focused on aligning programs, transitions, and capacity-building.	Use needs assessment and strategic plan to develop action plans to improve enrollment data collection, transitions, instructional leadership, and curriculum alignment.
Bennington	Assess needs and service options for preschool children, develop strategies to improve access to high-quality early childhood education, and enhance home visits/family partnerships.	Continue work to enhance home visits, conduct family surveys to gather data about demographics, feeder patterns, and transitions.
Elkhorn	Review and develop a district plan to advance early learning system focused on school preparedness and transition to Kindergarten.	Use needs assessment and strategic plan to develop action plans to enhance curriculum alignment and connections with community providers.
Gretna	Implement a sequence of training, coaching, and professional learning communities to promote children's social, emotional, and behavioral development in all PreK – Grade 3 classrooms.	Continue PD plan and classroom implementation. Implement a program evaluation plan to assess impact on classroom practices and student outcomes.
Papillion La Vista	Enhance home visiting conducted by early intervention specialists and PreK – Grade 3 teachers. Complete summer professional learning and develop tool kit of home visiting guidelines and resources.	Participate in 2016 National P-3 Institute, which provides an intensive professional education to deepen P-3 approaches. The team will develop a district action plan and share what was learned with other districts.
Ralston	Assess preschool education programs using research-based indicators for self-assessment and classroom observations. Use results for district-wide program development and professional learning.	Implement plans for ongoing professional development combined with classroom observations and feedback to implement quality instructional practices.
Springfield Platteview	Participate in advisory group to plan PD for All.	Complete site visits to full implementation schools. Continue participation in PD for All advisory group.
Westside	Strengthen collaboration and plan for professional learning among principals and directors of on-site early childhood programs.	Implement plan for elementary principals, early childhood program directors, and Kindergarten and preschool teachers to align learning expectations from preschool to Kindergarten.

EVALUATION OF CUSTOMIZED DISTRICT ASSISTANCE

Distinct evaluation plans are necessary for each customized assistance plan. Measures are aligned with the goals and expected outcomes for the specific plan and with the overall goals of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. These include child, family, classroom, school and/or district level measures, as well as implementation evidence. Districts are at differing stages in their customized assistance initiatives. Below is an example of the evaluation of one district that has reached a more advanced stage in its implementation of customized assistance.

CASE STUDY: GRETNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS CUSTOMIZED ASSISTANCE

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan professional development focus of Gretna Public Schools is on strengthening teacher practices and the school environment to support children's social-emotional development using the Nebraska Department of Education Pyramid Model. The Pyramid is an evidence-based model for supporting young children's social competence and preventing and addressing challenging behaviors.

The project includes all five elementary buildings in the district and will eventually involve all K-3 teachers, counselors, resource specialists, and students in those classrooms. Beginning in 2015-16 with the Kindergarten cohort, the professional development and coaching process was expanded to include first grade in 2016-17 and second grade in 2017-18. In 2018-19, the plan will extend through third grade in all elementary school buildings.

TABLE 4 | COHORT DESCRIPTIONS

Cohort	Grades	Classrooms/ Teachers	Students
2015-16	Kindergarten	20	419
2016-17	First	20	430
2017-18	Second	20	433

Project Evaluation

Purpose and Need

Gretna Public Schools educators are seeking evidence that their professional development around the Pyramid Instructional Model with a focus on self-regulation is having an impact on the overall program, the instructional practices used, and children's social-emotional development. The current evaluation addresses the following questions:

1. What was the fidelity to the Pyramid Model for program-wide implementation?
2. Are those students identified as at risk doing better, the same, or worse than a randomly selected sample of children?

Sampling Procedure

In 2016-17, Gretna Public Schools selected 159 children for the evaluation sample across four elementary buildings and 40 Kindergarten and first grade classrooms. The sample represents approximately 20% of the student population in Kindergarten and first grade. Eighty were in Kindergarten (34 males, 37 females) and 79 were in first grade (39 males and 38 females). Gender is unknown for 11 students.

Approximately two students in each 2016-17 first grade classroom were selected by their previous Kindergarten teachers based on observed social and emotional risks. Preschool teachers, who were not involved in the 2016-17 training, also identified students with challenges for the 2016-17 Kindergarten sample.

An additional two to three students were selected using a stratified random selection process through the student information system at ESU 3. Therefore, the final sample included approximately 50% at-risk students (as identified by their previous teacher) and 50% randomly selected students.

Results: What Was the Fidelity to the Pyramid Model for Program-Wide Implementation?

The Measure

The *Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool* (TPOT) measures the implementation of classroom practices specifically related to promoting young children's social-emotional competence and addressing challenging behavior in the preschool classroom. For the purpose of this evaluation, a modified version of the TPOT was administered in both fall and spring by trained, objective professionals in Kindergarten and first grade classrooms during the 2017-18 school year.

TABLE 5 | KINDERGARTEN KEY PRACTICES

The table summarizes the 14 indicators observed within the three subscales (out of 114 possible) and the degree to which the indicators were present during each observation.

Item	% Indicators Present Fall	% Indicators Present Spring	% Change
Schedules, routines, and activities	91.7	97.0	+5.3
Transitions between activities	96.0	98.0	+2.0
Supportive conversations	95.6	100.0	+4.4
Promoting children's engagement	95.7	99.2	+3.5
Providing directions	94.7	100.0	+5.3
Collaborative teaming	93.5	100.0	+6.5
Teaching children behavior expectations	71.4	95.5	+24.0
Teaching social skills and emotional competencies	65.1	100.0	+34.9
Teaching friendship skills	95.9	100.0	+4.1
Teaching children to express emotions	92.8	100.0	+7.2
Teaching problem solving	74.3	100.0	+25.7
Interventions for children with persistent challenging behavior	89.5	100.0	+10.5
Connecting with families	92.1	99.3	+7.2
Supporting family use of the Pyramid Model practices	75.9	100.0	+24.1
Key Practices Subscale	**87.2**	**99.2**	**+12.0**

TABLE 6 | FIRST GRADE KEY PRACTICES

The table summarizes the 14 indicators observed within the three subscales (out of 114 possible) and the degree to which the indicators were present during each observation.

Item	% Indicators Present Fall	% Indicatorsl Present Spring	% Change
Schedules, routines, and activities	91.7	98.4	+6.7
Transitions between activities	96.0	99.3	+3.3
Supportive conversations	95.6	100.0	+4.4
Promoting children's engagement	95.7	100.0	+4.3
Providing directions	94.7	98.4	+3.7
Collaborative teaming	93.5	100.0	+6.5
Teaching children behavior expectations	71.4	93.5	+22.1
Teaching social skills and emotional competencies	65.1	100.0	+34.9
Teaching friendship skills	95.9	100.0	+4.1
Teaching children to express emotions	92.8	100.0	+7.2
Teaching problem solving	74.3	100.0	+25.7
Interventions for children with persistent challenging behavior	89.5	100.0	+10.5
Connecting with families	92.1	99.3	+7.2
Supporting family use of the Pyramid Model practices	75.9	100.0	+24.1
Key Practices Subscale	**88.4**	**99.2**	**+10.8**

Child Outcomes

The *Work Sampling System* (Meisels, Marsden, Jablon, & Dichtelmiller, 2013) is a curriculum-embedded, authentic performance assessment used to assess the skills of children age 3 through third grade in multiple domains. Students demonstrate what they know through a series of evaluations which allows teachers to make informed decisions about how to guide instruction.

Gretna teachers used the personal and social development domain within *Work Sampling System* to document children's skills in four designated areas: (1) self-concept, (2) self-control, (3) approaches to learning, and (4) interaction with others. Teachers acquire information about children's social competence and approaches to learning by interacting with them, observing their interactions with other adults and peers, and reflecting on how they make decisions and solve academic and social problems.

Results

Table 7 summarizes *Work Sampling System* results for those Kindergarten students selected for at-risk social-emotional behaviors (indicated in the identified column as "yes") as compared to those in the sample who were not identified (indicated in the identified column as "no").

Table 8 summarizes *Work Sampling System* results for those first grade students selected for at-risk social-emotional behaviors (indicated in the identified column as "yes") as compared to those in the sample who were not identified (indicated in the identified column as "no") Fall, winter, and spring samples are an exact match.

Summary

Gretna Public Schools is launching its third year of professional development and instructional improvement in the area of social and emotional learning. This report represents the first full set of data (pre- and post-) since the inception of the project. All data collection will be consistent with this format and will also provide more information about each cohort as the plan moves forward.

Results are generally positive with some areas that may merit further investigation as determined by the Gretna leadership team.

TABLE 7 | KINDERGARTEN WORK SAMPLING RESULTS

Item	Identified	N	Fall Proficient %	Winter Proficient %	Spring Proficient %	Year Change %
A1. "Demonstrates self-confidence"	No	56	44.1	55.4	66.1	+22.0
	Yes	18	33.3	38.9	44.4	+11.1
A2. "Shows initiative and self-direction"	No	56	44.6	53.6	62.5	+17.9
	Yes	18	22.2	22.2	33.3	+11.1
B1. "Follows classroom rules and routines"	No	55	70.9	70.9	74.5	+3.6
	Yes	18	38.9	55.6	50.0	+11.1
B2. "Manages transitions and adapts to changes in routine"	No	56	69.1	80.0	87.3	+18.2
	Yes	17	55.6	66.7	72.2	+16.6
C1. "Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner"	No	56	55.4	76.8	83.9	+28.5
	Yes	18	58.8	70.6	76.5	+17.7
C2. "Sustains attention to a task, persisting even after encountering difficulty"	No	56	46.4	55.4	69.6	+23.2
	Yes	18	27.8	33.3	38.9	+11.1
C3. "Approaches task with flexibility and inventiveness"	No	56	42.9	60.7	73.2	+30.3
	Yes	18	22.2	22.2	44.4	+22.2
D1. "Interacts easily with familiar peers"	No	56	67.9	83.9	87.5	+19.6
	Yes	18	55.6	66.7	83.3	+27.7
D2. "Interacts easily with familiar adults"	No	56	71.4	83.9	89.3	+17.9
	Yes	18	66.7	66.7	77.8	+11.1
D3. "Participates in the group life of the class"	No	56	57.1	73.2	85.7	+28.6
	Yes	18	50.0	44.4	55.6	+5.6
D4. "Identifies feelings and shows empathy for others"	No	56	57.1	73.2	76.8	+19.7
	Yes	18	33.3	44.4	61.1	+27.8
D5. "Uses simple strategies to resolve conflicts"	No	56	39.3	67.9	69.9	+30.6
	Yes	18	16.7	22.2	38.9	+22.2

TABLE 8 | FIRST GRADE WORK SAMPLING RESULTS

Item	Identified	N	Fall Proficient %	Winter Proficient %	Spring Proficient %	Year Change %
A1. "Demonstrates self-confidence"	No	30	30.0	46.7	86.7	+56.7
	Yes	48	18.8	37.5	60.4	+41.6
A2. "Shows initiative and self-direction"	No	30	34.5	44.8	82.8	+48.3
	Yes	48	14.6	29.2	41.7	+27.1
B1. "Follows classroom rules and routines"	No	29	41.4	58.6	79.3	+37.9
	Yes	49	20.4	30.6	44.9	+24.5
B2. "Manages transitions and adapts to changes in routine"	No	30	33.3	63.3	86.7	+53.4
	Yes	49	18.4	28.6	51.0	+32.6
C1. "Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner"	No	30	43.3	66.7	83.3	+40.0
	Yes	49	34.7	49.0	71.4	+36.7
C2. "Sustains attention to a task, persisting even after encountering difficulty"	No	30	33.3	53.3	70.0	+36.7
	Yes	49	18.4	28.6	46.9	+28.5
C3. "Approaches task with flexibility and inventiveness"	No	30	30.0	50.0	76.7	+46.7
	Yes	49	16.3	24.5	46.9	+30.6
D1. "Interacts easily with familiar peers"	No	30	56.7	60.0	83.3	+26.6
	Yes	49	16.3	32.7	51.0	+34.7
D2. "Interacts easily with familiar adults"	No	30	63.3	76.7	90.0	+26.7
	Yes	49	28.6	40.8	67.3	+38.7
D3. "Participates in the group life of the class"	No	30	30.0	46.7	73.3	+43.3
	Yes	49	18.4	30.6	55.1	+36.7
D4. "Identifies feelings and shows empathy for others"	No	30	50.0	56.7	80.0	+30.0
	Yes	49	34.7	42.9	61.2	+26.5
D5. "Uses simple strategies to resolve conflicts"	No	30	30.0	33.3	73.3	+43.3
	Yes	49	8.2	20.4	38.8	+30.6

Professional Development for All

Professional development is essential to assist educators and other professionals in enhancing their knowledge and skills so they can perform their roles in promoting young children's learning and development more effectively. The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan offers a "Professional Development for All" series to all teachers, early childhood caregivers, school principals, district administrators, community-based program administrators, and family support professionals in the Learning Community who serve young children, birth – Grade 3, and their families.

Professional Development for All is a connected series of professional learning institutes that introduces research and innovative practices to participants along with the opportunity to come together and learn from one another. During 2016-17, 1,080 individuals participated in the PD for All series, a 23% increase over 2015-16. Participants included staff from across the 11 Learning Community districts as well as staff from community child care and other agencies. More than 80 different agencies and organizations were represented at PD for All institutes, including home visiting programs, Educare, the Learning Community Centers of North and South Omaha, Metropolitan Community College, and an array of center-based and family child care providers.

Topics for the PD for All institutes focus on research-based practices for early childhood caregiving, teaching and family-school-community connections that help reduce opportunity and achievement gaps for low-income children, English language learners, and children of color. The 2016-17 PD for All series highlighted gap-closing practices that rigorously promote each child's academic and intellectual growth while nurturing the development of the whole child. The themes for the three 2016-17 PD for All institute sessions included:

1. Engaging Young Children as Active Thinkers
2. It's More Than Words: Language as the Foundation for Thinking and Learning
3. Integrated Experiences to Deepen Children's Learning

Based on participant feedback and input from the PD for All Advisory Committee, the 2016-17 PD for All institutes were designed to incorporate important enhancements and extensions. The goals were to increase accessibility for diverse early childhood professionals and to support application of content from the institutes. Through these revisions, each full-day institute was repeated twice—once on a weekday and the second time on a weekend—and an evening session was provided. This resulted in participation by a broader range of community-based early childhood educators and family child care providers who are unable to attend during weekday hours. In addition,

selected institutes offered either simultaneous translation of presentations into Spanish or separate workshops presented in Spanish. These enhancements addressed the significant unmet need for professional learning by Spanish-speaking early educators across the Learning Community.

A third modification in the 2016-17 PD for All series consisted of a half-day leadership seminar that was convened in conjunction with each PD for All institute. The seminars allowed principals, program directors, district-level administrators, and instructional coaches to review institute content with keynote presenters. They also helped participants plan strategies to integrate the content into their programs' ongoing early childhood professional learning and increase translation of the content into practice. An average of 25 program administrators and instructional leaders participated in each of the 2016-17 PD for All leadership seminars.

Participant surveys were administered following each 2016-17 PD for All institute. The surveys asked participants to rate whether the sessions provided a productive balance between research and practice, provided new knowledge and skills, and provided content with a high likelihood of being applied to practice. Across all 2016-17 sessions, average scores for each item ranged from 3.3 to 3.9 on a four-point scale. Feedback was shared with institute presenters and used by the PD for All advisory committee to inform ongoing planning. Participant surveys and advisory committee feedback indicated the need for follow-up support for classroom implementation following each PD for All institute. Strategies for providing this follow-up implementation support will be incorporated into the design of future PD for All series.

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Appendix 1:
Birth – Age 3 Measures

CHILD: BIRTH – AGE 3			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
Cognitive-Language-Academic	Preschool Language Scales, Fifth Edition (PLS 5)	An interactive, play-based assessment of developmental language skills in the areas of auditory comprehension and expressive communication. Administered annually at time of enrollment.	Direct assessment by Eval Team
Social-Emotional	Infant Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment (ITSEA)	Provides in-depth analysis of emerging social-emotional development and intervention guidance. Four domains include externalizing, internalizing, dysregulation, and competence. Forms are designed to be applicable to a wide range of parents including those with limited education and from different cultural backgrounds.	Parent report via Eval Team
Language	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) English speakers only	A measure of receptive vocabulary for Standard American English.	Direct assessment by district SLP
	Preschool Language Scales-Spanish Edition (PLS-S) Spanish speakers only	An interactive assessment for monolingual and bilingual Spanish-speaking children.	Direct assessment by Eval Team

PARENT			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
Parent-Child Interactions	Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS)	A self-report instrument completed by mothers or fathers that assesses their perceptions of their relationship with their child. The 15 items are rated on 5-point Likert scales and the ratings can be summed into groups of items corresponding to conflict and closeness subscales. Applicable to children ages 3 to 12.	Parent report via Eval Team
	Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME)	Measures the quality and quantity of stimulation and support available to a child in the home environment. The focus is on the child in the environment, child as a recipient of inputs from objects, events, and transactions occurring in connection with the family surroundings. Clustered into six subscales: Parental Responsivity, Acceptance of Child, Organization of Environment, Learning Materials, Parental Involvement, Variety in Experience.	Structured parent interview and direct observation by HV/parent
	Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS)	A structured observation tool for parent-child interaction, assesses interaction during play in a familiar environment.	Video observation by Eval Team

Social Support Networks	Parenting Stress Index (PSI 4)	Screening measure for evaluating the parenting system and identifying issues that may lead to problems in the child's or parent's behavior. Focuses on three domains of stress: child characteristics, parent characteristics, and situational/demographic life stress. Only the Parental Distress and Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction were assessed in the School as Hub program evaluation.	Parent report by Eval Team
	Protective Factors Survey (PFS)	Primary purpose is to provide a snapshot of the families served, changes in protective factors, and areas where workers can focus on increasing individual family protective factors. It is not intended for individual assessment, placement, or diagnostic purposes. Five protective factors are included in the complete PFS. Only social-emotional support and concrete support protective factors were assessed in the School as Hub program evaluation. Social-Emotional Support = perceived informal support (from family, friends, and neighbors) that helps provide for emotional needs. Concrete Support = perceived access to tangible goods and services to help families cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis or intensified need.	Parent report by Eval Team
	Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale Revised (CESD-R)	A screening test for depression. Measures symptoms defined by the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V) for a major depressive episode.	Parent report by Eval Team

Appendix 1: Birth – Age 3 Measures

HOME VISITING: BIRTH – AGE 3			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
HV-Parent and HV-Child Interactions	Home Visit Rating Scales (HOVRS)	Developed to describe and evaluate strategies used in home visiting interventions. Measures the home visitor's effectiveness in engaging the parent and the child in home visiting activities and in interactions with each other.	Video or direct observation by Eval Team

SCHOOL: BIRTH – GRADE 3			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
School as Hub System Change	Staff and Administrator Focus Groups	Staff and Administrator Focus Group Interviews (initiated spring 2017)	Focus group

Appendix 2:
PreK – Grade 3 Measures

CHILD: PreK – GRADE 3			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
Cognitive-Language-Academic	Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Academic Skills Battery (KTEA-ASB) PreK (age 4+)	Individually administered, norm-referenced battery of key academic skills including a composite score and three subtests (Math Concepts and Applications, Letter and Word Recognition, Written Expression).	Individual assessment by Eval Team
	Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Third Edition (KTEA BA-3) Kindergarten	Individually administered norm-referenced battery that provides assessment of key academic skills including a brief achievement composite score and three subtests (Letter and Word Recognition, Math Computation, Spelling).	Individual assessment by Eval Team
Social-Emotional	Behavior Assessment System for Children: Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC 3– BESS) PreK and Kindergarten	A brief, universal screening system for measuring behavior and emotional strengths and weaknesses in children and adolescents in preschool through high school.	Teacher report
	Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF-P) PreK	A standardized rating scale developed to provide a window into everyday behaviors associated with specific domains of executive functioning in children aged 2 to 5 years. Consists of a Global Executive Composite, three overlapping summary indexes each with two scales (Inhibitory Self-Control = Inhibit and Emotional Control, Flexibility = Shift and Emotional Control, Emergent Metacognition = Working Memory and Plan/Organize).	Teacher report

	Comprehensive Executive Functioning Inventory (CEFI) Kindergarten	A standardized behavior rating scale of executive function. In addition to a Full Scale Score, CEFI uses nine rationally derived scales to pinpoint targets for intervention: Attention, Emotion Regulation, Flexibility, Inhibitory Control, Initiation, Organization, Planning, Self-Monitoring, Working Memory.	Teacher report
Language	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) PreK and Kindergarten	A measure of receptive vocabulary for Standard American English.	Direct assessment by district SLP

PARENT			
Domain	**Measure**	**Description**	**Method**
Parent-Child Interactions	Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) PreK and Kindergarten	A self-report instrument completed by mothers or fathers that assesses their perceptions of their relationship with their child. The 15 items are rated on 5-point Likert scales and the ratings can be summed into groups of items corresponding to conflict and closeness subscales. Applicable to children ages 3 to 12.	Parent report
Social Support Networks	Protective Factors Survey (PFS) PreK and Kindergarten	Primary purpose is to provide a snapshot of the families served, changes in protective factors, and areas where workers can focus on increasing individual family protective factors. It is not intended for individual assessment, placement, or diagnostic purposes. Five protective factors are included in the complete PFS. Only the social-emotional support and concrete support protective factors were assessed in the School as Hub program evaluation. Social-Emotional Support = perceived informal support (from family, friends, and neighbors) that helps provide for emotional needs. Concrete Support = perceived access to tangible goods and services to help families cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis or intensified need.	Parent report

CLASSROOM/TEACHER: PreK – GRADE 3

Domain	Measure	Description	Method
Teacher-Child Classroom Interactions	Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) All PreK – Grade 3 teachers	An observational instrument to assess teacher-student interactions in PK-12 classrooms and in settings serving infants and toddlers. It describes multiple dimensions of interaction that are linked to student achievement and development and has been validated in over 6,000 classrooms. Can be used to reliably assess classroom quality for research and program evaluation and also provides a tool to help new and experienced teachers become more effective.	Video observation by Eval Team
Teacher-Child Relationships	Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) PreK and Kindergarten	A teacher-report instrument designed for teachers of children between the ages of 3 and 12 that measures a teacher's perception of conflict, closeness, and dependency with a specific child. Only conflict and closeness were assessed in the School as Hub program evaluation.	Teacher report

SCHOOL: BIRTH – GRADE 3

Domain	Measure	Description	Method
School as Hub System Change	Staff and Administrator Focus Groups	Staff and Administrator Focus Group Interviews (initiated in spring 2017)	Focus group

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