Division of Early Learning
What's New and What's Next

Cari Miller
Chancellor of Early Learning

DIVISION OF Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
fldoe.org

Florida's Structure for Early Learning

State Board of Education

FL Department of Education

Division of Early Learning

- Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)
- School Readiness (SR)
- School Readiness Plus (SR Plus)
- Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)
- Gold Seal Quality Care Program

Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Program Oversight for:

Childcare licensing and regulation

Early Childhood PD Registry

30 Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs):

Provide local discretion to ensure programs meet unique community needs

School Readiness Plus Program

The School Readiness (SR) Plus Program will:

- Allow eligible SR families to continue receiving financial assistance for child care services to help them become economically self-sufficient.
  - **Family Eligibility** - An SR family whose income exceeds eighty-five percent (85%) of the State Median Income (SMI) but is at or below one hundred percent (100%) SMI.
- Promote the economic stability of Florida families by providing a gradual progression off social services, as needed.
  - **Family Copayments** - SR Plus copayments increase in relation to family income and exceed SR copayments as families progress off social services and toward economic self-sufficiency.
- Expand/Protect the workforce by encouraging participating families to accept higher wages without worry of losing valued child care subsidies.
- **As of January 2026, a total of 984 children have enrolled in SR Plus.**

Importance of Kindergarten Readiness

- **90%** of a child's brain is fully developed by the age of 5.
- For children who enter kindergarten behind, **roughly 75%** will never catch up to their classmates.
- The **strongest predictors of later achievement** are school-entry math, reading and attention skills.
- State and local **prekindergarten programs,** almost without exception**, improve academic readiness for school.**
- Participants in the prekindergarten program **scored higher on third-grade language arts tests** than did nonparticipants.
- Participation in an **early childhood experience** (child care or preschool) **increases** high school **graduation rates.**

Gold Seal Quality Care Program

- **Gold Seal** is a program that acknowledges providers that have gone above the required minimum licensing standards to become accredited by recognized agencies.
- **Gold Seal focuses on Structural Quality.** Structural quality refers to the features and characteristics of a program, for example: the class size, teacher-to-child ratios, teacher qualifications and experiences, teacher pay scale, etc.
- **Gold Seal** recognizes and incentivizes providers to implement high quality standards when caring for children. Incentives:
  - Receiving a 20% higher reimbursement rate for serving School Readiness children.
  - Qualifying for certain tax incentives.
  - Qualifying to provide the VPK program.
- In FY 2023-2024, there were **1,861** Gold Seal designated providers statewide, and in FY 2024-2025, there were **1,934** Gold Seal designated child care providers; **73** more GS designated providers.

Program Assessment

- CLASS = **CL**assroom **A**ssessment **S**coring **S**ystem is a research-based method of measuring, evaluating and improving teacher-child interactions from infant care through Prekindergarten.
- ELCs are responsible for administration of CLASS, which must be conducted by qualified individuals.
- Providers of School Readiness (SR)/Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) must have a 4.00 composite score to contract in future years.
- Over 99% of SR and VPK providers scored 4.0 or higher.

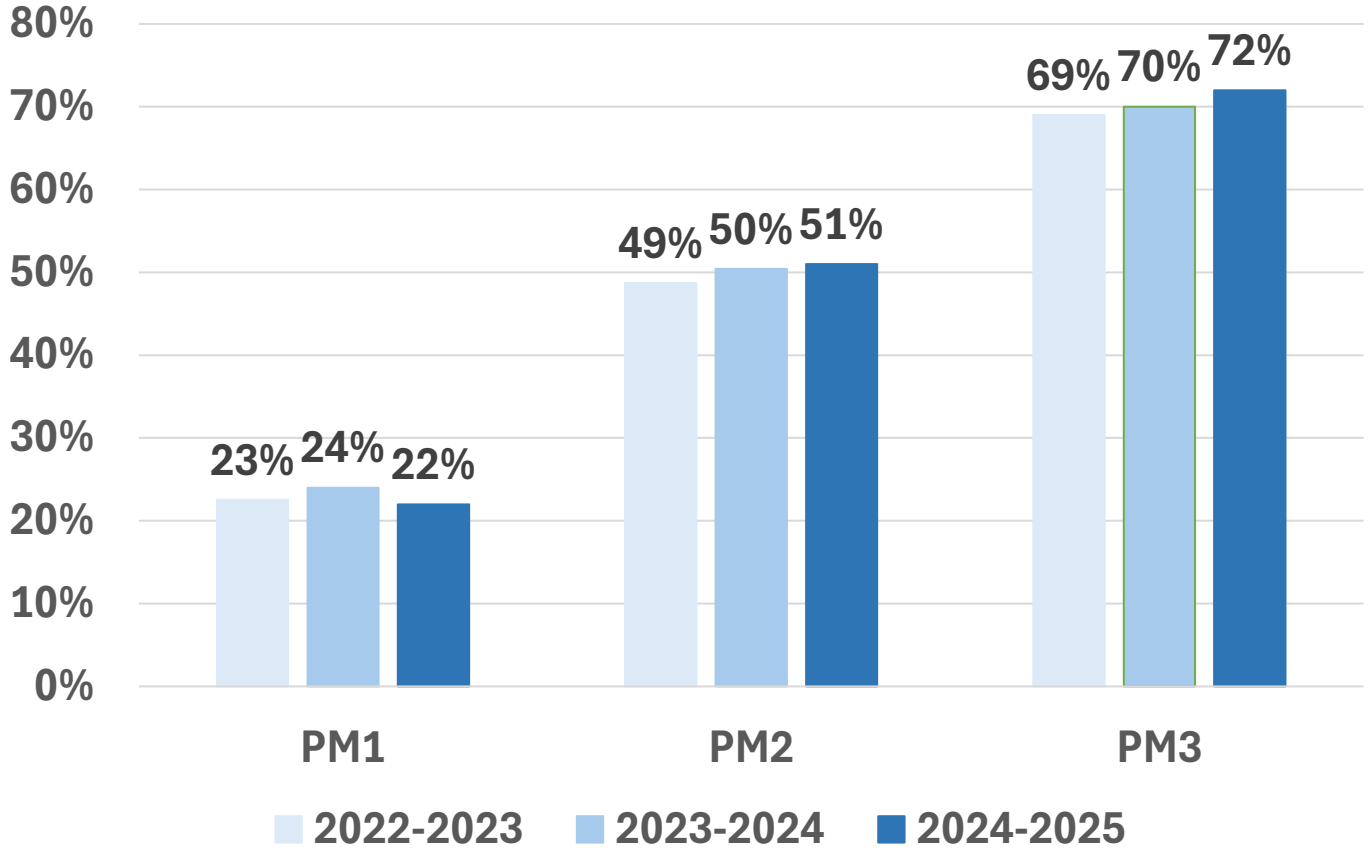
Program	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
School Readiness (Fiscal Year)	4.43	4.78	4.85	4.95	5.11	5.23
VPK (School-Year)	-	-	-	5.08	5.21	5.31

School Readiness: Developmental Screening

- **Increasing Kindergarten readiness requires early identification of children who may need additional services and supports.**
  - Early identification enhances development for ALL children with special needs, decreases behavioral concerns and increases positive outcomes for children at home and school.
  - Many children who receive needed support early will not need support services in kindergarten.
- **Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3) -** A series of caregiver-completed screening tools for children ages 1 month to 5 ½ years.
  - This tool identifies children who are developing on schedule or may be demonstrating potential developmental delays.
- **The number of ASQ-3 screenings for 2024-2025 was 116,265.**

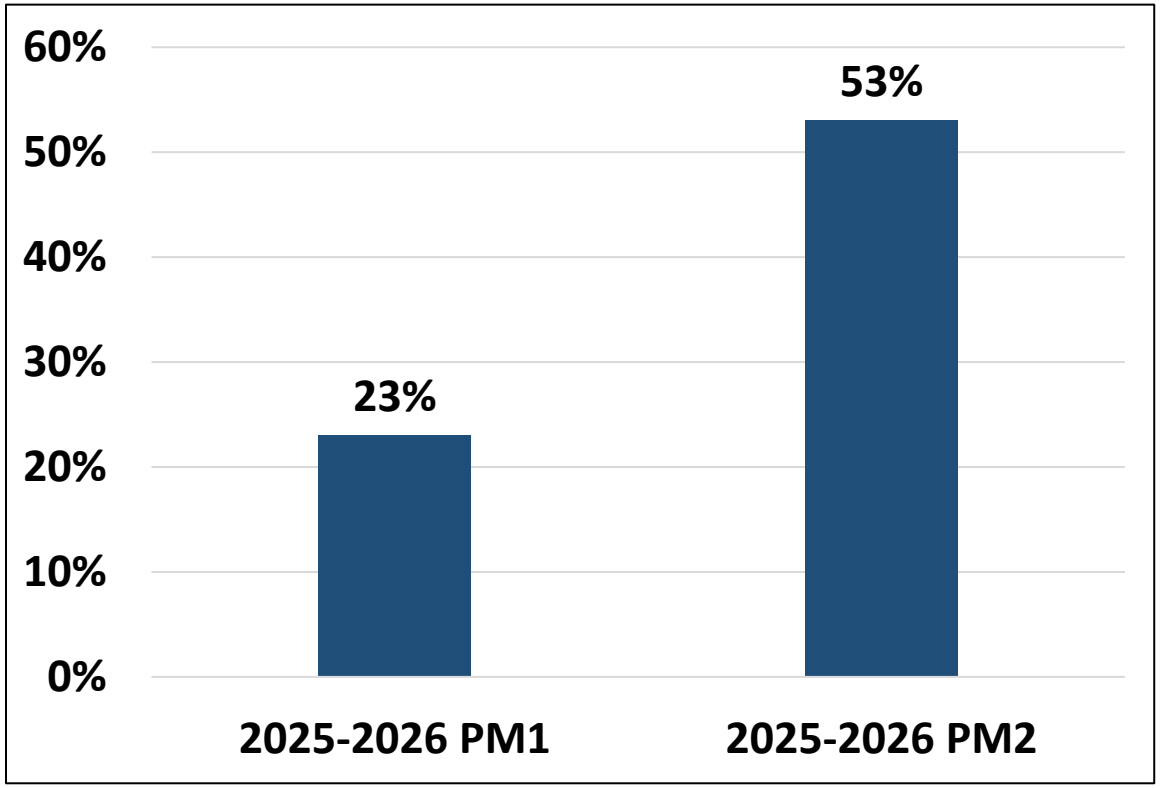
2024-2025 VPK FAST Star Early Literacy Overall Results

All Tested VPK Completers (Combined)
Percent Scoring "Kindergarten Ready" and Above



2025-2026 VPK FAST Star Early Literacy Results as of February 2026

All Tested VPK Children
Percent Scoring "Kindergarten Ready" and Above



2024-2025 VPK Provider Designations Results

A provider's performance metric is made up of three components:

- 50% Program Quality
- 20% Student Achievement
- 30% Student Learning Gains

6,240 providers earned a designation and/or incomplete status

- **88%** of providers met or exceeded expectations.
- **7%** of providers did not meet expectations and are placed on probation.
- **5%** of providers received an incomplete status.

Designation	Percent of Providers	Provider Count
Excellent	33%	2,066
Above Expectations	31%	1,941
Meets Expectations	24%	1,493
Below Expectations	6%	373
Unsatisfactory	1%	43
Incomplete	5%	324

VPK Data Packet (New)

- **Highlights from the 2024–2025 VPK program year include:**
  - **66%** of Florida's four-year-olds participated in the 2024–2025 VPK program.
  - **72%** of VPK completers achieved kindergarten readiness by the end of VPK.
  - **More than 99%** of VPK providers earned a score of 4.00 or higher on the program assessment, with a **state average score of 5.31**.
  - **88%** of providers satisfactorily delivered the VPK program based on performance metrics and designations.
  - **55%** of VPK completers achieved kindergarten readiness in kindergarten, compared to 29% of non-VPK children.
  - VPK cohort analysis demonstrates sustained benefits of VPK participation through Grade 3.

Summer Bridge

Summer Bridge is a FREE summer program offered by school districts to help eligible VPK students get ready for kindergarten.

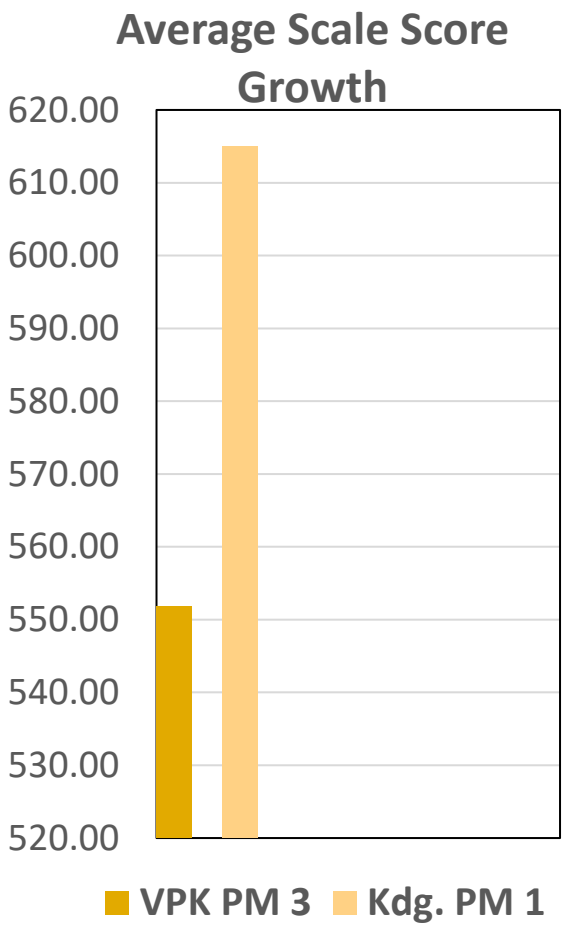
- **Eligible VPK children are those who:**
  - Scored below the 10th percentile on progress monitoring three (PM3)
  - Could not complete the practice items on PM3
  - Could not complete PM3 because it was inappropriate for their needs (e.g., child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), a non-English speaking child)
- **The district's Summer Bridge program includes:**
  - Qualified instructors
  - A minimum of 100 instructional hours and small class sizes (maximum 1:12 instructor-student ratio).
  - Florida Early Learning Developmental Standards (FELDS) with emphasis on oral language development and emergent literacy

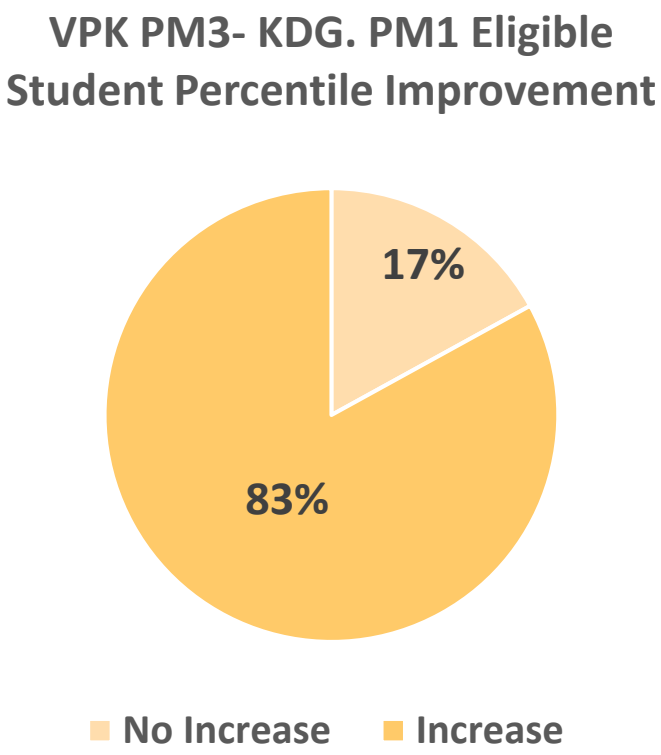
2025 Summer Bridge Participation

Eligible Population:	Participation:	Participating Eligible VPK Children:
2,482	841	183

- 5 districts with no eligible children, therefore no Summer Bridge program: Dixie, Gilchrist, Glades, Madison, Wakulla
- Other Participants:
  - 10-24th Percentile – 138
  - 25-39th Percentile – 72
  - 40-99th Percentile – 242
  - Non-VPK participants – 206

2025 Summer Bridge Program Results





68% of eligible students moved out of the Urgent Intervention, and therefore no longer classified as having a significant deficiency in early literacy/reading.

What's to Come

PDG B-5 has three main projects:

I. Improving Systems and Efficiency: EFSM

II. Examine Opportunities to Reduce the Administrative Burden on Providers

III. Taking Next Steps for Informal Pathway Recommendation Implementation

Legislative Session: Early Learning Bills

- **HB 1071/SB 7036**
  - Standardizes the termination period (to two program years) for VPK, SR, and GS providers that were non-compliant with state law or were determined to be low performing. (HB 1071 only)
  - Amends the eligibility requirements for GS providers by requiring DCF to determine if the provider was the primary cause of any class I violation.
  - Expands eligibility for the Summer Bridge program to VPK student that scored below the 25th percentile on PM3.
- **HB 765/SB 1690**
  - Clarifies that before/after school programs offered by public/private schools are exempt from child care licensing.
  - Revises definition of school age children to include 3 yr olds in ESE and 4 yr olds in public school child care programs.
  - Adds Large Family Child Care Homes; changes family day care to family child care.
  - Creates an early learning endowment fund through DOE's DSO to solicit and administer funds to support early learning programs.
  - Authorizes a newly established Center under the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH) Scholarship Program to align and standardize training statewide, contingent upon funding.

As of February 20, 2026.

www.FLDOE.org

Cari Miller
Chancellor of Early Learning
Cari.Miller@del.fldoe.org

DIVISION OF Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

facebook.com/educationFL | @EducationFL | youtube.com/educationFL | @EducationFL