



Pinellas Education Foundation

**Plan to Conduct an
Early Literacy Scan in Pinellas County
April 2020**

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Introduction

The Pinellas Education Foundation, in partnership with the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, the Juvenile Welfare Board, the Early Learning Coalition, and Pinellas County Schools, is conducting an Early Literacy Landscape Scan for Pinellas County. The scan is intended to build on the Lectio research organized by the Juvenile Welfare Board and an evaluation of elementary literacy completed by Pinellas County Schools. We hope to shine a light on the current state of literacy preparedness for students entering kindergarten and literacy achievement in K-3. The scan will use existing available data to help identify practices which are most successful; results will be disaggregated to assess equity. Findings will be used for a data walk with the funder and provider communities invited in order to reflect and comment upon available data. By building a comprehensive research report that considers the efforts within PreK-3rd grade around this emergent literacy space, the hope is we can create a stronger pathway forward resulting in better literacy outcomes for students involving the early childhood community, before and after school providers, and the school district.

Research Purpose and Plan

The research is an early step in a larger initiative focused on building a cross sector understanding of literacy achievement and efforts to improve achievement in our community. The goal of the research report is to:

1. Build an understanding of the current educational outcomes of literacy interventions for pre-Kindergarten through 3rd grade.
2. Build an understanding of the factors that contribute to students starting school unprepared for kindergarten
3. Build an understanding of why some students struggle to gain age appropriate literacy skills in grades K-3.
4. Identify what's working in the community (i.e. successfully preparing students) to potentially build on those successes.
5. Identify what interventions are most impactful (whether they are happening here or not) on student learning and assess where those are happening.
6. Build community buy-in for interventions and approaches that lead to positive student outcomes.

The proposed research plan to meet the research goals begins on the next page; a deleted listing of variables and analysis strategies is in the appendix.

Research Plan

The project will start with a brief literature review to identify those practices in pre-kindergarten and K -3 that have been shown to positively impact student outcomes. By comparing effective practices to what exists locally, we will be able to identify gaps in our community.

1. Who is “ready to read” and who is not?

For this question, using Kindergarten Readiness (KR) scores, I will identify which children are ready to read by demographic variables. This is straightforward and similar to other research you have seen before but I will need to do it with this dataset to do the rest of the analysis.

2. Are children who participate in VPK programs with degreed teachers, experienced teachers, and/or evidence-based curriculum more likely to be “ready to read”? Who participates in these programs and who doesn’t?

For this question, I will take the same KR scores but start to look at the influence of measures of quality such as teacher degree, teacher experience, and curriculum. While the data won’t be perfect since we don’t have a starting readiness cores, it should allow us to see which students attend programs with quality elements and their outcomes. This will have to be combined with the demographic analysis in question 1.

3. Which VPK programs have degreed teachers, experienced teachers, and/or evidence-based literacy curriculums?

This question is really a pre-courser to number 2 as it will create a database of the programs so that we can determine if a program has 1, 2, or all the quality elements for the analysis mentioned above. We can also compare what exists to what the research states impacts student outcomes.

4. Are children with higher Kindergarten Readiness (KR) scores more likely to have higher benchmark assessment scores and/or 3rd grade FSA reading scores?

This analysis will be fairly straightforward: comparing the association between KR readiness scores to benchmark assessment scores and 3rd grade FSA reading. Results will be disaggregated by student demographics and by school. My hope is to show the trajectory among four quartiles (i.e., does the slope change).

5. What are the teacher qualifications and experience levels in K-3, by school?

With this question, we start to move into the K-3 realm and begin to explore some of the same issues as we did in questions 2 and 3. Here I will identify what exists, by school. This question will lay the groundwork for question 7 but may also be compared to the slope of the student outcomes. We can also compare what exists to what the research states impacts student outcomes.

6. What supports are offered in K-3 classrooms (e.g., early literacy and equity efforts)?

The analysis will be the same as question 5 but will focus on quality elements not related to teachers.

7. Are children who attend schools with higher teacher qualifications, more teacher experience, evidence-based curriculum, and other supports more likely to have higher benchmark assessment and FSA reading scores?

Similar to question 2, this question will should allow us to see which students have access to quality elements in K-3 and their outcomes.

8. For populations and schools at risk identified through prior research questions, what are other factors that are important to consider (e.g., attendance, tardiness, behavioral referrals) and their connection to literacy outcomes?

Finally, it is likely that some schools will have the most student at risk of poor reading outcomes. When those schools are identified, it would be helpful to look at what other factors – beyond teachers and curriculum – are at play.

In addition, data regarding investment from the NIEER yearbook could be added for context, although it references early childhood development as a whole, not just for early literacy. Other research that may be referenced includes research conducted by the Juvenile Welfare Board and Pinellas County Schools.

Scope of Work

The scope of work to complete the study is outlined below.

- Conduct a brief literature review to determine effective practices in pre-K, K-3, and supports for comparison.
 - Collect data from the data sources outlined in the Appendix to this document. This includes preparing data use agreements or submitting research requests and ensuring the safe transfer of data.
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- Merge data as needed to create a database that will allow analysis of the research questions.
- Analyze the data to answer the questions, including measures of equity where available.
- Prepare a report to share with the community and that can be excerpted for the data walk.

Timeline

Figure 1 provides a project timeline, although it will be dependent on how quickly data are available from project partners.

Figure 1: Project timeline

| Task | Timeframe |
|--|-------------------|
| Review research plan with partners and revise | April 27 – May 1 |
| Prepare data use agreements/submit research requests | May 4 – May 15 |
| Collect data | May 18 to May 22 |
| Merge and analyze | June 1 – June 12 |
| Prepare a report | June 15 to July 3 |

Appendix: Variables and Analysis

| VARIABLE(S) NEEDED | DATA SOURCES | ANALYSIS PLAN |
|---|--------------|---|
| 1. Who is “ready to read” and who is not? | | |
| KR total scores and by domain by child ID for 2017, 2018, and 2019 | PCSD | Disaggregate results |
| Child race and ethnicity | PCSD | |
| Child ID | PCSD/ELC | |
| Child zip code | PCSD | |
| Child gender | PCSD | |
| Child free and reduced lunch | PCSD | |
| 2. Are children who participate in VPK programs with degreed teachers, experienced teachers, and/or evidence-based curriculum more likely to be “ready to read”? Who participates in these programs and who doesn’t? | | |
| KR total scores and by domain by child ID for 2017, 2018, and 2019 | PCSD | Analyze association between scores and program elements, noting caveats |
| Child race and ethnicity | PCSD | Analyze participation and disaggregate results |
| Child zip code | PCSD | |
| Child gender | PCSD | |
| Child free and reduced lunch | PCSD | |
| VPK Program name | ELC | |
| Child ID | ELC/PCSD | |
| Characteristics of program quality (see #4) | Computed | |
| VPK attendance / rate of attendance | ELC | |
| 3. Which VPK programs have degreed teachers, experienced teachers, and/or evidence-based literacy curriculums? | | |
| Program | ELC | Descriptive statistics of programs |
| Program zip code | ELC | |
| Classroom name | ELC | |
| Teacher educational degree | ELC | Analysis by zip code and child characteristics |
| Teacher years of experience | ELC | |
| Literacy curriculum used | ELC | Compare to evidence-based practices that impact student outcomes |
| Curriculum evidence based | RCG | |
| Teacher race and ethnicity | ELC | |
| C.L.A.S.S. score, by domain as available | ELC | |
| Percent of school readiness children served | ELC | |

| VARIABLE(S) NEEDED | DATA SOURCES | ANALYSIS PLAN |
|---|--------------|--|
| Percent of minority children served | ELC | |
| 4. Are children with higher Kindergarten Readiness scores more likely to have higher formative assessment scores and/or 3rd grade FSA reading scores? | | |
| KR total scores and by domain by child ID for 2017, 2018, and 2019 | PCSD | Analyze association between KR and FSA, disaggregate results |
| End of year literacy formative assessments by child ID by 2017, 2018, and 2019 | PCSD | Trajectory from KR through benchmarks to FSA, by quartile |
| 3 rd grade FSA reading scores by child ID for 2017, 2018, and 2019 | PCSD | |
| Child race and ethnicity | PCSD | |
| VPK program quality | ELC | |
| Child zip code | PCSD | |
| Child gender | PCSD | |
| Child free and reduced lunch | PCSD | |
| Child elementary school attended | PCSD | |
| 5. What are the teacher qualifications and experience levels in K-3, by school? | | |
| Teacher degree | PCSD | Descriptive statistics, by school, compared across schools |
| Reading endorsement | PCSD | |
| Teacher years of experience | PCSD | Compare to evidence-based practices that impact student outcomes |
| Grade taught | PCSD | |
| School | PCSD | |
| Teacher race and ethnicity | PCSD | Compare access by student demographics / trajectory |
| 6. What supports are offered in K-3 classrooms (e.g., early literacy and equity efforts)? | | |
| Support, including professional development and curriculum | PCSD | Descriptive statistics, by school, compared across schools |
| Level of support (i.e., district, school, grade) | PCSD | Comparison of support design and implementation to evidence base |
| Name of impacted level (i.e., school, grade) | PCSD | |
| Percent FRL by school | PCSD/public | Compare access by student demographics / trajectory |
| Percent minority by school | PCSD/public | |

| VARIABLE(S) NEEDED | DATA SOURCES | ANALYSIS PLAN |
|---|--------------|---|
| 7. Are children who attend schools with higher teacher qualifications, more teacher experience, evidence-based curriculum, and other supports more likely to have higher benchmark assessment and FSA reading scores? | | |
| KR total scores and by domain by child ID for 2017, 2018, and 2019 | PCSD | Analyze association between scores and program elements, noting caveats |
| End of year literacy benchmark assessments by child ID by 2017, 2018, and 2019 | PCSD | Analyze participation and disaggregate results |
| 3rd grade FSA reading scores by child ID for 2017, 2018, and 2019 | PCSD | |
| Teacher qualifications | PCSD | |
| Teacher experience | PCSD | |
| Curriculum used | PCSD | |
| Supports available | PCSD | |
| 8. For populations and schools at risk identified through prior research questions, what are other factors that are important to consider (e.g., attendance, tardiness, behavioral referrals) and their connection to literacy outcomes? | | |
| TBD | TBD | Compare factors across schools |
| TBD | TBD | |
| TBD | TBD | |
| 9. What is the participation in School Readiness programming? | | |
| Child ID | ELC/PCSD | |
| Child zip code | ELC | |
| Child race and ethnicity | ELC | |
| Child gender | ELC | |
| SR start/end date by age | ELC | |