



MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

September 4, 2024

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

I am pleased to submit to the Council of the District of Columbia the enclosed report titled “Fiscal Year 2023 Pre-K Report,” which was prepared by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) pursuant to section 105 of the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Act of 2008, effective July 18, 2008 (D.C. Law 17-202; D.C. Official Code § 38-271.05).

This report highlights the District’s progress towards providing high quality, universal pre-K to three- and four-year-old children. Overseen by OSSE, the District’s universal pre-K program continues to lead the nation in access and per-pupil funding. This report also provides data on enrollment, utilization, and access to public pre-K programs. In FY23, 12,789 (84%) of the District’s estimated 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in publicly funded pre-K. Lastly, this report presents information on the quality of pre-K programming as measured using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS), which was used to calculate program ratings in FY24 for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.

My administration is available to discuss any questions you may have regarding this report. In order to facilitate a response to any questions you may have, please have your staff contact Andrew Gall, Deputy Chief of Staff for Legislative Affairs and Policy, OSSE, at (202) 802-5827.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Muriel Bowser".

Muriel Bowser

Enclosures



District of Columbia
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

FISCAL YEAR 2023 PRE-K REPORT

August 2024

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Executive Summary

The District of Columbia leads the nation in pre-kindergarten (pre-K) access and per-pupil funding. Of the estimated 15,220 children ages 3 and 4 living in the District of Columbia, 12,789 (84 percent) were enrolled in publicly funded pre-K in the 2022-23 school year (FY23). The District delivers publicly funded pre-K through a mixed delivery system that includes classrooms operated by DC Public Schools (DCPS), public charter schools (PCS) and community-based organizations (CBOs) participating in the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP), maximizing access across diverse communities and providing a robust variety of choices to meet families' needs and aspirations for their children's learning. Quality, universal pre-K is an important component of the District's strategy for improving educational outcomes.

To support quality pre-K programming across the mixed delivery system, the District uses the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS), a research-based observational tool, as a common measure of quality across all publicly funded pre-K programs. CLASS® captures the quality of teacher-child interactions in preschool classrooms across three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support. The District uses CLASS® data as a measure of pre-K quality in accountability systems across public schools and child development facilities to inform professional learning and quality improvement efforts.

In fiscal year 2023 (FY23), CLASS® observations were conducted in 859 pre-K classrooms, located within 238 programs operated by DCPS, PCS and PKEEP CBOs, as well as other community-based child development facilities that accept child care subsidies and serve preschool-age children. The results are encouraging. Compared to prior years, CLASS® scores increased across all three domains, continuing a trend of improvement that was underway prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In FY23, 83 percent of the District's pre-K classrooms met or exceeded evidence-based targets in the Emotional Support domain, 67 percent of classrooms met or exceeded targets for Classroom Organization and 22 percent met or exceeded targets for Instructional Support. While fewer classrooms met the target for Instructional Support, scores on this domain increased for the first time since FY19. While domain-level average CLASS® scores varied modestly across sectors, variations in performance within each sector were greater than variations between sectors, and each sector—DCPS, PCS and CBOs with the PKEEP high-quality designation—had programs that were providing high-quality early learning experiences for children.

Quality pre-K is part of the District's larger early learning strategy that seeks to expand access, quality and affordability of early learning experiences for young children across the District, beginning at birth. By continuing to support quality early learning and continuous improvement for programs serving children birth to 5 across the mixed delivery care and education system, the District will continue to lead the nation in quality early learning and improve early childhood outcomes for our youngest learners.

Overview of Pre-K in the District of Columbia

For 15 years, the District of Columbia has made free, universal pre-K available to all 3- and 4-year-olds residing within the District. With universal pre-K and innovative efforts to expand access, quality and affordability of early care and education for infants and toddlers, the District of Columbia has positioned itself as a national leader in early learning opportunities for young children.

In the 2022-23 school year (FY23), the District served 80 percent of all 3-year-olds and 88 percent of all 4-year-olds in public pre-K, far higher than the national averages of 6 percent and 32 percent, respectively.¹ The District also invested more per student in pre-K education than the national average: \$20,442 in the District, compared to a national average of just \$6,571 per child.²

The District provides publicly funded pre-K through a mixed-delivery system that includes DCPS, PCS and CBOs that have been designated as high-quality through PKEEP. PKEEP programs are required to meet several high-quality standards including, but not limited to, providing teacher training opportunities, hiring lead teachers with bachelor's degrees in early childhood education and assistant teachers with associate degrees in early childhood education, and compensating lead teachers at a wage that is comparable to the DCPS pay scale. Additionally, Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided in some DCPS and CBO education facilities. Finally, some community-based child development facilities that are not part of the universal pre-K system provide early care and education services to 3- and 4-year-olds funded through parent tuition and publicly financed child care subsidies. This report provides information on publicly funded pre-K programs operated by DCPS, PCS and PKEEP CBOs, as well as community-based child development facilities that serve preschool-age children and participate in Capital Quality, the District's child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), which is mandatory for facilities that accept child care subsidies. Table 1 provides an overview of publicly funded preschool programs in the District.

¹ Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Hodges, K. S., Garver, K. A., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B. A., Jost, T. M. (2023). The State of Preschool 2022: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from: nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/YB2022_FullReport.pdf

² Ibid.

Table 1. Preschool options in the District of Columbia at-a-glance

| Setting | Universal Public Pre-K | Delivery System Overview | Funding Source | Number of Children Served in FY23 |
|---|------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| DCPS | Yes | DCPS is the public school district for the District of Columbia and provides publicly funded pre-K to age-eligible District residents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform per student funding formula (UPSFF) for students enrolled in pre-K classrooms. • Allowable federal funds from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. • Federal Head Start funding in six DCPS schools. | 5,573 |
| PCS | Yes | Some PCS local education agencies provide publicly funded pre-K to age-eligible District residents. PCS operate independently of the traditional public school system and are authorized and monitored by the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPSFF for students enrolled in pre-K classrooms. • Allowable federal funds from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. | 6,215 |
| CBOs with PKEEP | Yes | CBOs that achieve and maintain a High-Quality designation under PKEEP provide publicly funded pre-K open to all age-eligible District residents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding equivalent to UPSFF for eligible students enrolled in PKEEP classrooms. • Public funding for eligible children through the District’s subsidized child care program. • Federal Head Start funding in three CBOs. | 1,001 |
| Child care subsidy preschool-age enrollment in CBOs (without PKEEP funding) | No | Child development facilities that offer full-day, year-round early care and education services that include pre-K-age children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding for eligible children through the District’s subsidized child care program. • Parent tuition. | 347 |

Funding for Universal Pre-K

Funding for public pre-K is provided to programs through the UPSFF or, in the case of CBOs participating in PKEEP, grants provided by OSSE. The UPSFF provides per pupil funding to DCPS and PCS based on student enrollment. The formula incorporates weights based on the age of students and whether students meet criteria for being identified as at-risk, English learners and/or receiving special education services (see Table 2).³ While CBOs providing public pre-K do not receive funding through the USPFF directly, they receive funding equivalent to the USPFF based on enrollment, through a combination of grants and child care subsidy payments (for eligible children) and receive an added weight adjustment for children meeting at-risk criteria.

Table 2. UPSFF FY23 Allocations

| Student | Per Pupil Allocation |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Pre-K 3 | \$16,641* |
| Pre-K 4 | \$16,145* |
| English Learners | \$6,210 |
| At-risk | \$2,981 |
| Special Education | \$14,530 |

*Base weight

Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization of Universal Pre-K

Enrollment

In FY23, enrollment in public pre-K was high across the District and across all sectors: DCPS, PCS and PKEEP CBOs. A total of 12,789 students, 84 percent of all 3- and 4-year-old children in the District, were served by universal pre-K programs. The District served 80 percent of 3-year-olds, an increase of 10 percentage points from FY22, and 88 percent of 4-year-olds, an increase of three percentage points from FY22 (see Table 3). An additional 347 preschool-age children who were not enrolled in public pre-K received subsidized care in FY23 in licensed child development facilities.

³ A student is identified as “at-risk” if the student is identified as any one of the following: (1) having received (or currently receiving) support from assistance programs, including the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) programs; (2) is (or ever was) a ward of the state under the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA); or (3) was ever experiencing homelessness.

Table 3. 3- and 4-year-olds served in universal pre-K in DC in FY22 and FY23

| Age | FY22 Census Data ⁴ | Number Enrolled | Percent Served | FY23 Census Data | Number Enrolled | Percent Served |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 3-year-olds | 7,957 | 5,562 | 70% | 7,486 | 5,956 | 80% |
| 4-year-olds | 7,951 | 6,748 | 85% | 7,734 | 6,833 | 88% |
| Total | 15,908 | 12,310 | 77% | 15,220 | 12,789 | 84% |

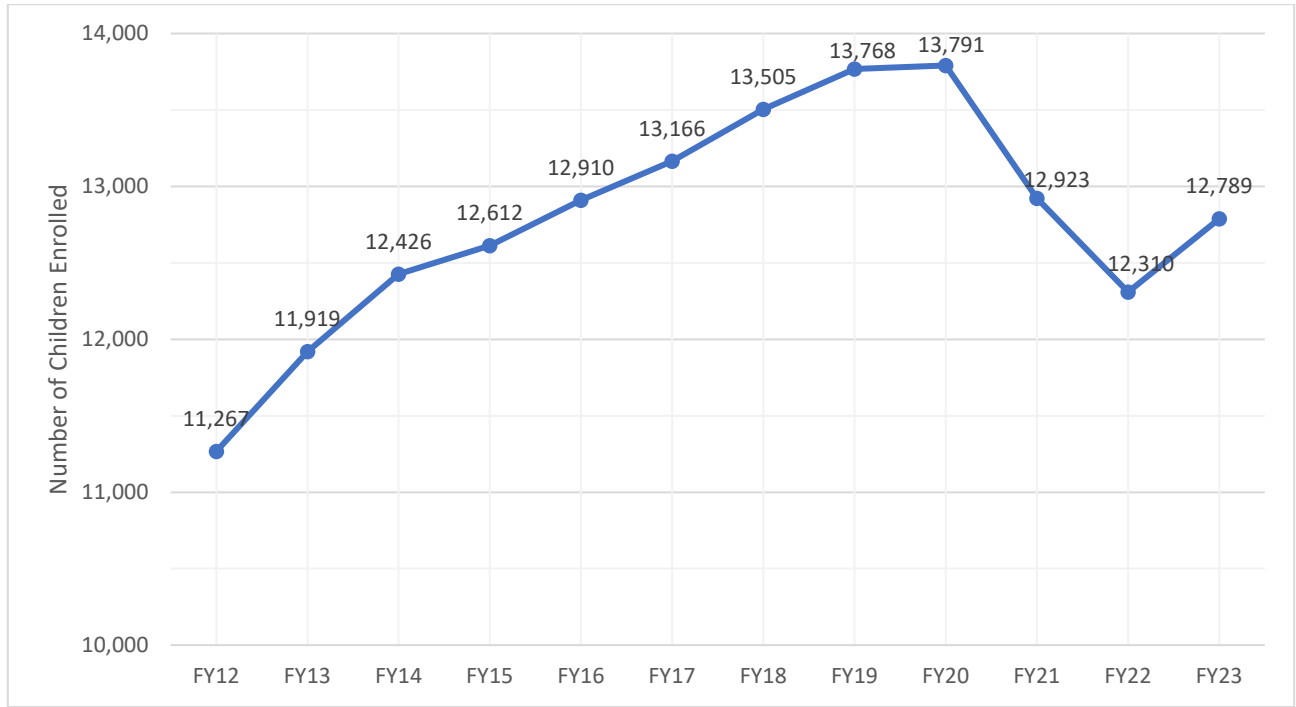
Enrollment Over Time

Enrollment in public pre-K increased from 12,310 students in FY22 to 12,789 students in FY23, marking the first increase in enrollment since FY20. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the District was enrolling more than 13,000 students in public pre-K. This number dropped to a low of 12,310 students in FY22, which was the lowest since before FY14 (see Figure 1).

While the percentage of students served increased markedly in FY23, the population of 3- and 4-year-olds in the District continued to decrease. The total number of students enrolled in pre-K increased by 479 children.

⁴ US Census Bureau, Population Division. (July 2022) State Population by Characteristics: 2020-2022. Retrieved from: [census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html). Population estimates by age are not available for July 1, 2023. Note: Population estimates use the most recently available data and differ from previous pre-K reports as population data has been updated.

Figure 1. Universal pre-K enrollment from FY12 to FY23

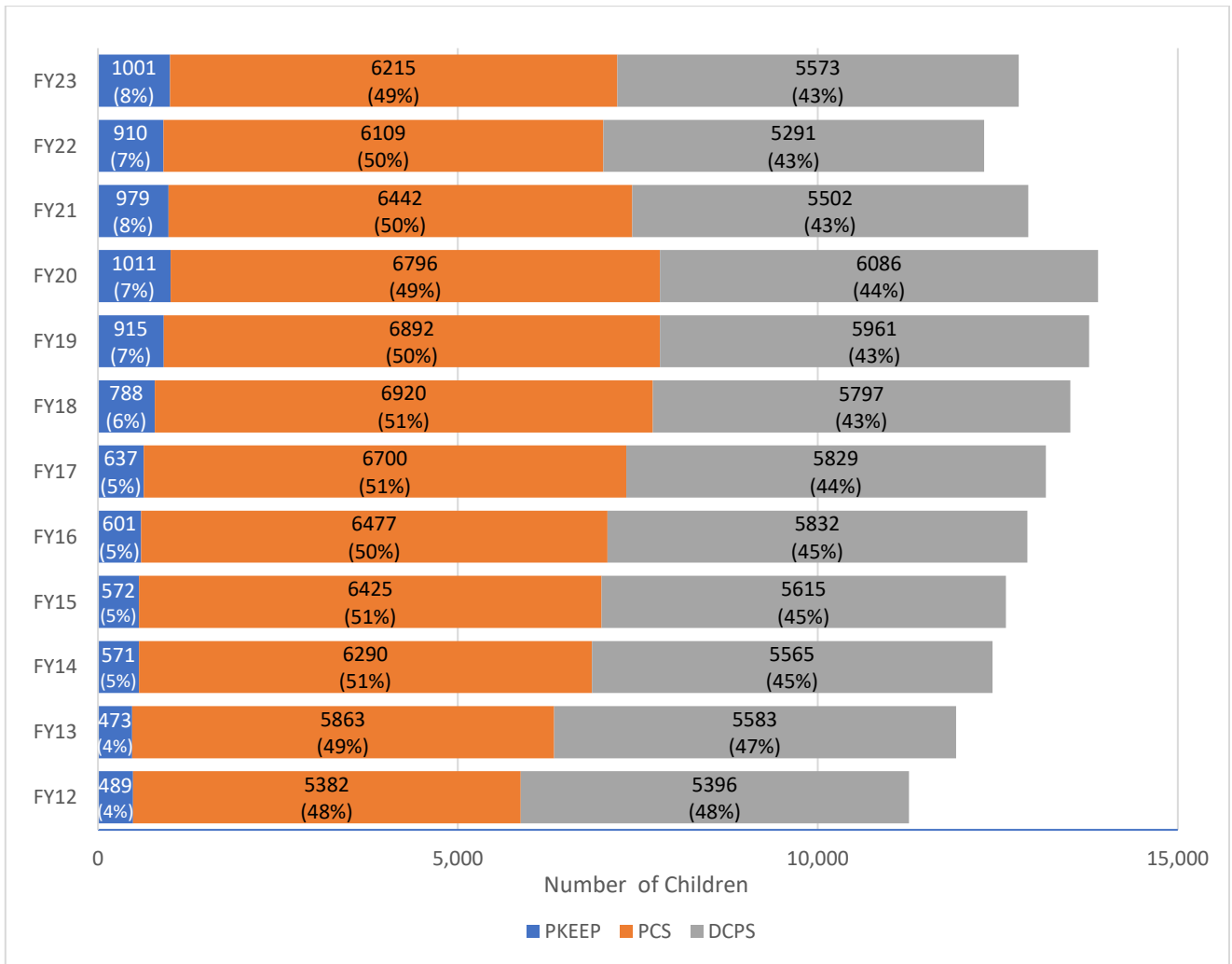


Enrollment by Sector

The District uses a mixed delivery system for public pre-K to provide opportunities to participate in pre-K across all sectors – DCPS, PCS and PKEEP CBOs – allowing for choice and flexibility among families.

The growth in enrollment in FY23 reflects growth in all three sectors. DCPS enrollment increased from 5,291 children in FY22 to 5,573 children in FY23, a 5 percent increase. PCS enrollment increased from 6,109 children in FY22 to 6,215 children in FY23, a 2 percent increase. PKEEP enrollment increased from 910 children in FY22 to 1,001 children in FY23, a 9 percent increase (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Universal pre-K enrollment by sector from FY12 to FY23



Capacity

Across the mixed delivery system, universal pre-K was offered at 175 sites in FY23. DCPS operated pre-K classrooms in 80 schools (the same as FY22), 67 PCS offered pre-K classrooms (one more than FY22) and 28 PKEEP CBOs provided public pre-K (the same as FY22). The District had a total capacity of 13,986 publicly funded pre-K seats across 785 classrooms with the greatest enrollment and capacity in PCS (see Table 4), consistent with prior years.⁵

Utilization

Utilization—the percent of available capacity that is occupied by enrolled children—is calculated by dividing the number of enrolled children by estimated capacity. In FY23, utilization was high District-wide and across sectors and up from FY22, although still lower than utilization at the peak enrollment reached in FY20.⁶ Nearly 91 percent of seats District-wide were filled by an enrolled student in FY23 (see Table 4). Utilization across sectors was fairly even with the highest utilization rate among PKEEP CBOs, consistent with prior years.

Table 4. Public pre-K program capacity and utilization by sector FY23

| Sector | Sites | Enrollment | Number of Classrooms | Estimated Capacity | Estimated Utilization | Unfilled Slots (estimated) |
|--------------|------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| DCPS | 80 | 5,573 | 383 | 6,206 | 90% | 633 |
| PCS | 67 | 6,215 | 337 | 6,740 | 92% | 525 |
| PKEEP | 28 | 1,001 | 65 | 1,040 | 96% | 39 |
| Total | 175 | 12,789 | 785⁷ | 13,986 | 91% | 1,197 |

⁵ For PCS sites, capacity was estimated using classroom configuration data to determine an appropriate weight to calculate capacity. PKEEP classrooms were weighted at 16 children per classroom. For DCPS classrooms, capacity was calculated using the number of general education seats in both general and inclusion classrooms.

⁶ *FY22 Pre-K Report*, OFF. OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUC., Aug., 2023, at 10, osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20Annual%20Pre-K%20Report%202022.pdf

⁷ This number does not include CBO classrooms that are not participating in PKEEP (n=60 programs) that also serve pre-K age children.

Pre-K by Ward

In FY23, public pre-K enrollment increased in every ward except Ward 6. Pre-K capacity increased in wards 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 and decreased in wards 1, 6 and 8. Utilization also increased in FY23 and was high across the District, ranging from 78 percent in Ward 6 to over 100 percent in wards 1 and 3 (see Table 5). Utilization can exceed 100 percent over the course of the school year due to student mobility (e.g., when a student leaves a pre-K program and is replaced by another student). Utilization exceeding 100 percent indicates that all available pre-K slots were filled.

Table 5. Universal pre-K program slots and utilization by ward in FY23

| | Total Sites | Enrollment | Number of DCPS Classrooms | Number of PCS Classrooms | Number of PKEEP Classrooms | Estimated Capacity | Estimated Utilization |
|---------------|-------------|------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Ward 1 | 15 | 1,114 | 43 | 12 | 16 | 1,020 | 109% |
| Ward 2 | 10 | 609 | 26 | 10 | 3 | 645 | 94% |
| Ward 3 | 11 | 668 | 18 | 0 | 17 | 618 | 108% |
| Ward 4 | 28 | 1,953 | 69 | 41 | 12 | 2,209 | 88% |
| Ward 5 | 32 | 2,498 | 34 | 113 | 4 | 2,842 | 88% |
| Ward 6 | 17 | 1,370 | 64 | 20 | 2 | 1,747 | 78% |
| Ward 7 | 26 | 2,082 | 62 | 61 | 3 | 2,144 | 97% |
| Ward 8 | 36 | 2,495 | 67 | 80 | 8 | 2,761 | 90% |
| Total | 175 | 12,789 | 383 | 337 | 65 | 13,986 | 94% |

Demographics of Children Served in Universal Pre-K Programs in DC

Of the 12,789 children served in public pre-K programs in the District in FY23, 48 percent were identified as economically disadvantaged, a 2 percent increase from FY22.⁸ The percentage of economically disadvantaged children served varies across sectors, from 30 percent in PKEEP programs, to 45 percent in DCPS and 54 percent in PCS. While the share of economically disadvantaged children enrolled was relatively consistent in DCPS and PCS from FY22 to FY23, the share of economically disadvantaged children served by PKEEP programs fell from 43 to 30 percent.

The majority (59 percent) of children enrolled in public pre-K were Black/African American; 19 percent of students were White and 16 percent were Hispanic/Latino. American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, two or more races, and Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian each account for less than 5 percent of pre-K enrollment. Approximately equal numbers of male and female children were enrolled District-wide in pre-K programs and less than 1 percent of students enrolled identified as non-binary. Eleven percent of children enrolled in public pre-K (1,353) received special education services, up from 8 percent in FY22. Table 6 presents the demographics of District pre-K students in further detail, including demographics by sector.

Table 6. Demographic characteristics of children enrolled in universal pre-K by sector

| Economically Disadvantaged | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|---------|
| | DCPS | | PCS | | PKEEP CBO | | District-wide | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Yes | 2,515 | 45% | 3,356 | 54% | 303 | 30% | 6,174 | 48% |
| No | 3,058 | 55% | 2,859 | 46% | 698 | 70% | 6,615 | 52% |
| Gender | | | | | | | | |
| | DCPS | | PCS | | PKEEP CBO | | District-wide | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Female | 2,710 | 49% | 3,127 | 50% | 510 | 51% | 6,347 | 50% |
| Male | 2,859 | 51% | 3,082 | 50% | 491 | 49% | 6,432 | 50% |
| Non-binary ⁹ | | | | | | | 10 | <1% |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | | | | | | |

⁸ Previous pre-K reports used the term “at risk” to describe pre-K children. A student is identified as economically disadvantaged if the student is identified as any one of the following: (1) having received (or currently receiving) support from assistance programs, including the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) programs; (2) is (or ever was) a ward of the state under the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA); or (3) was ever experiencing homelessness. This definition of economically disadvantaged is the same as the definition previously use for the “at risk” population and the population that receives the “at risk” weight in the UPSFF.

⁹ Data is suppressed at the local education agency (LEA) and PKEEP CBO level to protect personally identifiable information.

| | DCPS | | PCS | | PKEEP CBO | | District-wide | |
|------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 9 | <1% | 17 | <1% | 1 | <1% | 27 | <1% |
| Asian | 104 | 2% | 60 | 1% | 50 | 5% | 214 | 2% |
| Black/African American | 2,872 | 52% | 4,390 | 71% | 339 | 34% | 7,601 | 59% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 1,034 | 19% | 718 | 12% | 269 | 27% | 2,021 | 16% |
| Two or more races | 184 | 3% | 272 | 4% | 11 | 1% | 467 | 4% |
| Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian | 5 | <1% | 9 | <1% | 0 | - | 14 | <1% |
| White | 1,365 | 24% | 749 | 12% | 331 | 33% | 2,445 | 19% |
| Receiving Special Education | | | | | | | | |
| | DCPS | | PCS | | PKEEP CBO | | District-wide | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Yes | 863 | 15% | DS | DS | n<10 | n<10 | 1,353 | 11% |
| No | 4,710 | 85% | DS | DS | DS | DS | 11,436 | 89% |

The Quality of Pre-K Programming

The quality of pre-K programs is important to support intended outcomes for children. OSSE has oversight responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the quality of pre-K programs in the District.¹⁰ CLASS® data is used in three accountability systems for public schools and child development facilities: the DC School Report Card, administered by OSSE for DCPS and PCS; Capital Quality, the District’s QRIS administered by OSSE for child development facilities; and the PCSB’s Performance Management Framework. These systems, which use multiple indicators to provide a comprehensive picture of school or child development facility quality, use CLASS® as one measure of pre-K quality, along with other indicators, to inform public ratings that families can use to make decisions about schools or child development facilities and that inform accountability and quality supports for schools and child development facilities.¹¹

¹⁰ DC Code § 38–271.02(b)(5).

¹¹ The [DC School Report Card](#) includes assessment of pre-K quality using CLASS®. [DC PCSB’s Performance Management Framework \(or PMF\)](#) was previously used to produce the annual School Quality Report for each public charter school for which it provides oversight, however DC PCSB DC PCSB has been revising their accountability framework and plans to implement their new ASPIRE framework, including a PreK-only framework, which will be piloted in FY25Capital Quality designations are available for each participating child development facility at mychildcare.dc.gov.

The District has used CLASS® as a common measure of pre-K quality for more than a decade; however, universal observations were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in FY20 and FY21. While observations resumed in FY22 for all programs across the mixed-delivery system, due to ongoing impacts of the pandemic, OSSE did not use data from FY22 CLASS® observations for program rating purposes. Data were shared with schools and programs to support professional development and ongoing continuous improvement and aggregate data provided the District important insights on the quality of children’s learning experiences during the school year. FY23 CLASS® observation data was used for calculating program ratings in FY24 for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overview of CLASS

CLASS® pre-K is a research-based observational measure that captures the quality of teacher-child interactions in preschool classrooms.¹² It comprises of three domains—Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support—which are further divided into 10 dimensions that capture specific features of teacher-child interactions within the domains. By observing and providing feedback within each dimension, CLASS® data can provide teachers and program leaders with specific, actionable information for targeting professional development and improvement. Table 7 describes each CLASS® domain and dimension.

Table 7. CLASS pre-K domains, dimensions and descriptions

| CLASS Domain | CLASS Dimensions | Description |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Emotional Support | Positive climate (PC) | Relationships, respect and positive affect |
| | Negative climate (NC) | Irritability, anger and disrespect |
| | Teacher sensitivity (TS) | Awareness of responsiveness to students’ needs |
| | Regard for student perspectives (RSP) | Going along with students’ ideas and encouraging student expression |
| Classroom Organization | Behavior management (BM) | Effectively monitoring, preventing and redirecting behavior |
| | Productivity (P) | Maximizing time spent in learning activities |
| | Instructional learning formats (ILF) | Facilitating activities and providing interesting materials |
| Instructional Support | Language modeling (LM) | Facilitating and encouraging growth of students’ language |

¹² Pianta, R.C., LaParo, K.M., & Hamre, B. K., (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System Manual: Pre-K*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Concept development (CD) | Promoting students’ higher-order thinking skills |
| Quality of feedback (QF) | Extending students’ learning through teacher responses |

Each dimension is scored on a scale of 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating higher quality.¹³ The dimension scores are then averaged to create a domain score.¹⁴ Research has shown that achieving scores of 5 or higher in Emotional Support and Classroom Organization and 3 or higher in Instructional Support are associated with children’s social and academic gains.¹⁵ The District has adopted targets and floors for each CLASS® domain that are used in the DC School Report Card and to calculate Capital Quality ratings and support continuous improvement in pre-K programs. As in prior years, floors are set at a score of 4.5 for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization and 2.0 for Instructional Support, and targets for quality are set at a score of 6 for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization and a score of 4 for Instructional Support.

Observed Classrooms

In FY23, OSSE contracted with Teachstone Training, LLC, to conduct observations in all publicly funded pre-K programs in the District. Each classroom observation was prescheduled, lasted approximately three hours, and took place over the course of one morning during a typical instructional day.¹⁶ All pre-K classrooms in each of the three sectors (DCPS, PCS and CBOs) were observed using the CLASS® measure. CBOs participating in Capital Quality with classrooms serving preschool-aged children were observed even if they did not participate in PKEEP.¹⁷ Table 8 shows the number of pre-K classrooms observed in FY23 by sector.

Table 8. Pre-K classrooms observed by sector

| Type | DCPS | PCS | PKEEP CBOs | Non-PKEEP CBOs | Total |
|-------------------|------|-----|------------------|----------------|------------|
| Classrooms | 369 | 336 | 83 ¹⁸ | 71 | 859 |

¹³ The exception is the Negative Climate dimension, in which a lower score indicates higher quality. These scores are inverted for reporting purposes.

¹⁴ Negative Climate is reverse coded, so higher scores indicate lower negative climate, before averaging to create a domain score.

¹⁵ Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N., Pianta, R. C., & Mashburn, A. J. (2010). Threshold analysis of association between child care quality and child outcomes for low-income children in pre-Kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(2), 166-176.

¹⁶ For more information, see the Quality Observation Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols for CBOs and local education agencies: osse.dc.gov/page/program-quality-evaluation-and-assessment-class-pre-k.

¹⁷ Use of the CLASS assessment has not been validated in self-contained special education classrooms; therefore, a small number of self-contained preschool classrooms were not observed.

¹⁸ Sixty-five of the 83 classrooms in PKEEP CBOs were PKEEP classrooms. The remaining 18 classrooms served a majority—51 percent or more—of children ages 36 months to 5 years of age. In non-PKEEP CBOs, all classrooms served a majority of children ages 36 months to 5 years of age.

FY23 Pre-K Report

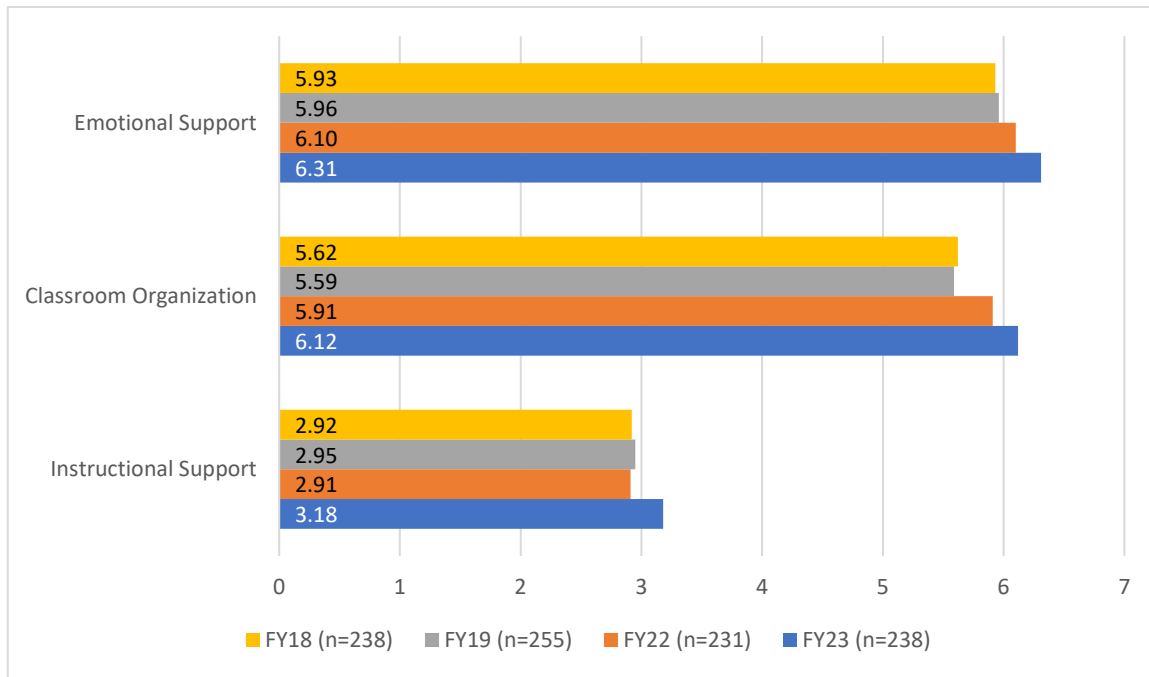
| | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|------------|
| Programs | 80 | 66 | 28 | 62 | 236 |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|------------|

FY23 CLASS Observation Findings

Finding 1: CLASS scores for all domains increased District-wide in FY23 and showed strong improvement over time.

Average CLASS® scores improved in every domain in FY23, continuing a trend of improvement over time across the District. Average CLASS® scores in FY23 were higher in the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domains as compared to FY18, FY19 and FY22. Average CLASS® scores also increased in the Instructional Support domain in FY23, following largely stable scores across FY18, FY19 and FY22. These trends indicate that quality of District preschool programs continues to improve, even following disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the gains in CLASS® scores observed in FY23 are the largest single-year jump since FY18. Figure 3 shows a comparison of CLASS® domain averages over time.

Figure 3: Comparison of CLASS® domain averages over time



Finding 2: District-wide, nearly all programs met or exceeded floors for CLASS® scores across all domains, and the majority of pre-K classrooms met or exceeded targets for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization. Fewer classrooms (22 percent) met or exceeded the target for Instructional Support compared to the other two domains, but the percentage that met or exceeded their targets doubled from FY22 to FY23.

Figure 4. FY23 pre-K program level percentages for meeting or exceeding floors for CLASS® scores

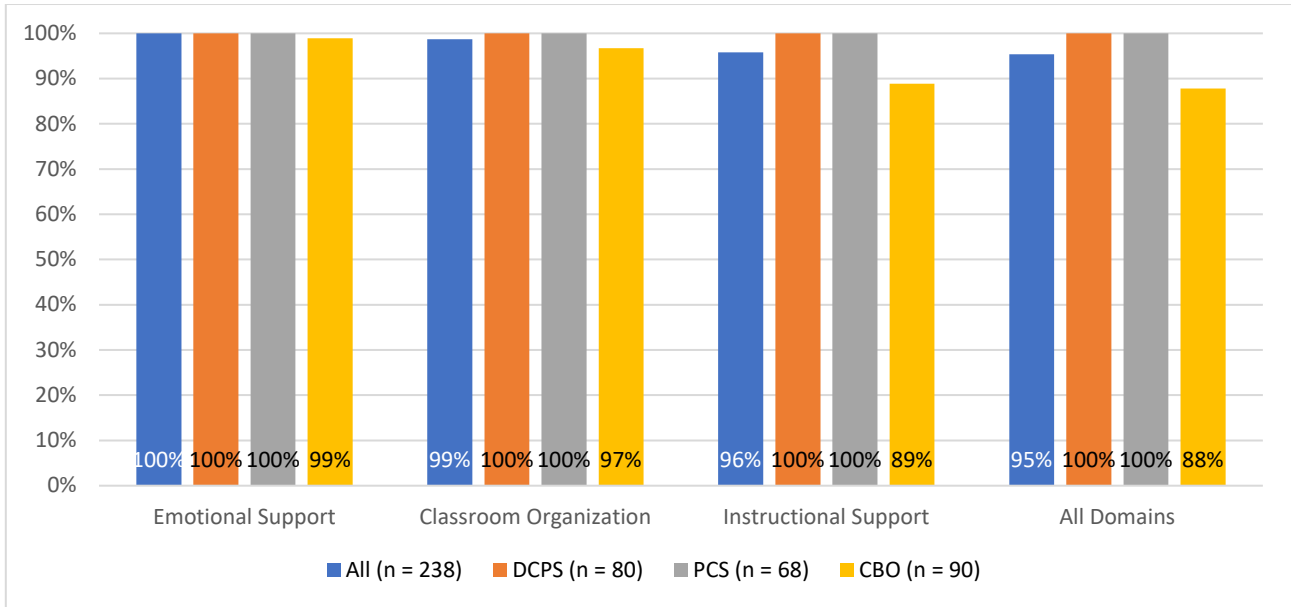
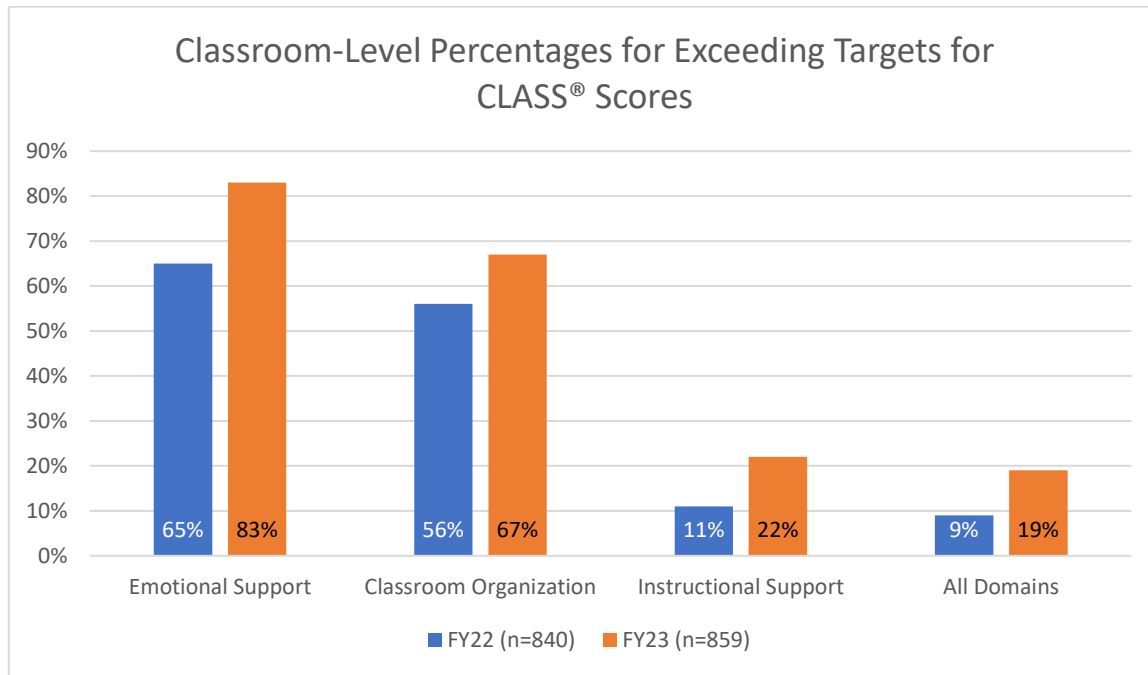


Figure 5. FY23 pre-K classroom level percentages for meeting or exceeding targets for CLASS® scores



As shown in Figure 5, 83 percent of pre-K classrooms met or exceeded the target in Emotional Support, 67 percent of pre-K classrooms met or exceeded the target in Classroom Organization, 22 percent met or exceeded the target in Instructional Support and 19 percent of classrooms met or exceeded targets in all three domains. The percentage of classrooms meeting targets increased from FY22 to FY23 across all domains, with the percentage of classrooms meeting targets for Instructional Support and all domains doubling during this time period. Across all observed classrooms, the average score for Emotional Support was 6.31 (on a seven-point scale), the average score for Classroom Observation was 6.12 and the average score for Instructional Support was 3.18.

Text Box 1. Implications of CLASS® Scores for Child Experiences

Understanding the kinds of interactions and activities observed in programs that score at the District-wide average on each CLASS® domain can help early educators, families and other stakeholders understand what children’s pre-K experiences look like in practice, support informed parent choices about pre-K programs and program and inform system level decisions about professional development and supports for pre-K teachers.

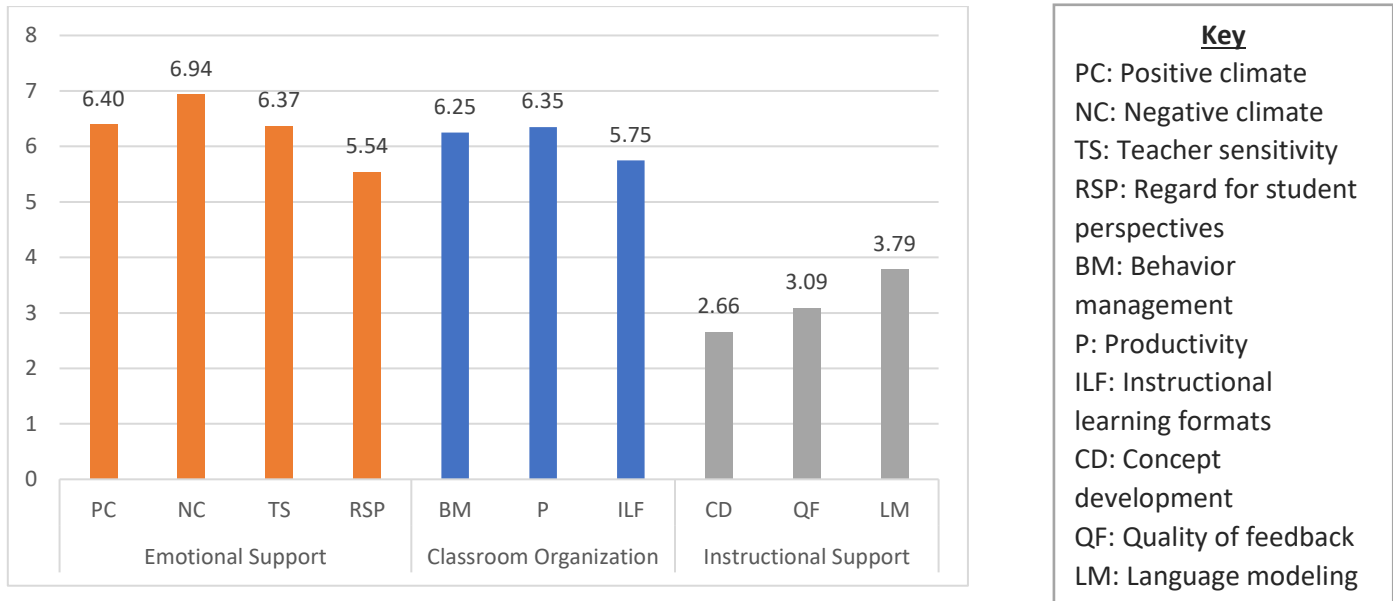
Emotional Support: The average pre-K program in the District scores above the target for emotional support. Classrooms scoring at or above the District average in this domain are those that typically exhibit warm, positive and respectful relationships between teachers and children, where negative interactions or disrespect between teachers and children is limited, and where teachers address children’s needs and are responsive to challenge sometimes.

Classroom Organization: The average pre-K program in the District scores above the target for Classroom Organization. Classrooms scoring at or above the District average in this domain support consistency, intentionally designed learning space, and routines that are sensitive and appropriate to the needs of the children. In such classrooms, behavioral expectations are communicated somewhat clearly and behavior management techniques are often effective. Teachers maximize learning time and have established some routines that allow the classroom to run efficiently, sometimes make learning objectives clear and provide children with a range of ways to engage to enhance learning opportunities.

Instructional Support: The average pre-K program in the District scores above the floor but below the target for Instructional Support. Classrooms with Instructional Support scores near the District average score may use a variety of ways to teach, provide feedback to students, and provide opportunities for students to be creative, although these approaches may not always be implemented.

Since the Instructional Support domain is the area where observations found the greatest opportunity for growth in pre-K programs, it is worth looking more closely at observed scores within the three dimensions that compose the Instructional Support score (Language Modeling, Quality of Feedback and Concept Development) to identify areas of relative strength and greatest opportunities for growth within this domain. The District-wide average score on the Language Modeling dimension, 3.79, is relatively strong and closer to the established targets than other dimensions within this domain. Over the past several years, improvement efforts across all three sectors have prioritized supporting language and language interactions in preschool classrooms; data suggest that this focus has supported progress on CLASS scores and that a similarly intentional focus on other dimensions of Instructional Support may also be necessary. The District-wide average score on the Quality of Feedback dimension, 3.09, suggests a potential need for greater focus on promoting teaching strategies that support deeper learning through continued student engagement, scaffolding, allowing for ongoing feedback and pushing students to explain their reasoning. The greatest opportunity for growth is the Concept Development dimension, where the District-wide average score was 2.66. This suggests an opportunity to build pre-K teacher capacity to implement instructional strategies that focus on critical thinking and challenge children’s thinking on the “hows” and “whys” of learning, such as sequencing, comparing and contrasting and problem-solving activities and promoting exploration of concepts that link across activities and are applicable to the real world.

Figure 6. The average scores for all dimensions at the program-level.



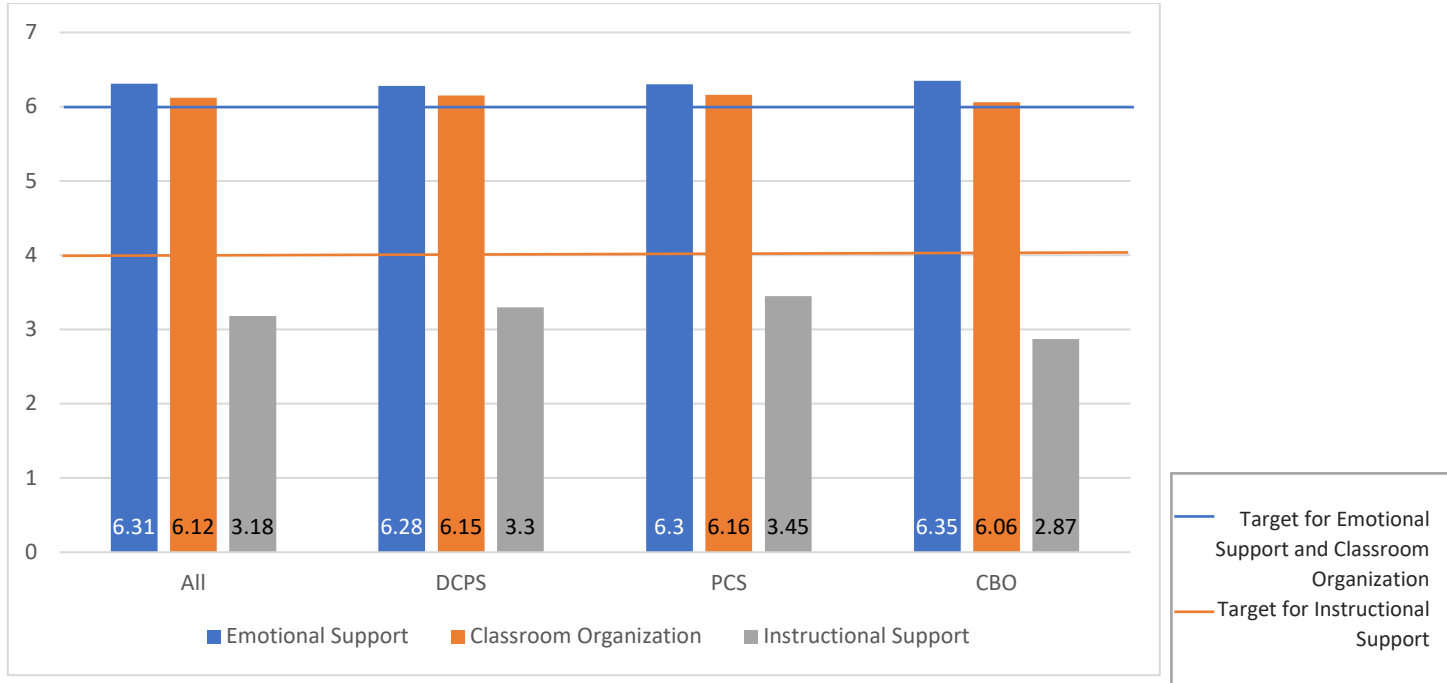
Note: Negative climate is reverse coded; higher scores indicate lower negative climate.

Finding 3: Performance on CLASS® varies across sectors and wards, but most differences were not statistically significant.

The data show modest differences in CLASS® domain scores across sectors. DCPS and PCS programs scored significantly higher than CBO programs in Instructional Support. While PCS programs scored higher on Instructional Support than DCPS, differences between DCPS and PCS programs were not statistically significant in any other domain. Overall, PCS programs met or exceeded targets for all domains more frequently than DCPS or CBO programs, largely because more PCS programs meet the target for Instructional Support compared to the other sectors.

Differences between CBOs with and without PKEEP designation also were not significant in any domain. Commonalities across sectors were more frequently observed than differences between them. Programs in each sector, on average, scored higher on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization and lower on Instructional Support. More than 99 percent of programs within each sector met or exceeded the floor for Emotional Support, and at least 89 percent met or exceeded the floor for both Classroom Organization and Instructional Support. Figure 6 shows the average CLASS® domain scores by sector.

Figure 7. Program-level domain scores by sector in relation to targets



Average program-level CLASS® scores varied slightly across wards with no statistically significant differences in any domains (see Table 9).

Table 9. CLASS domain averages by Ward

| Ward | Emotional Support | Classroom Organization | Instructional Support |
|------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 6.32 | 6.21 | 2.84 |
| 2 | 6.24 | 5.93 | 3.09 |
| 3 | 6.27 | 6.08 | 2.85 |
| 4 | 6.44 | 6.27 | 3.00 |
| 5 | 6.25 | 6.12 | 3.32 |
| 6 | 6.30 | 6.12 | 3.29 |
| 7 | 6.25 | 6.04 | 3.44 |
| 8 | 6.32 | 6.05 | 3.23 |

Conclusion

As a result of strategic efforts made over the last decade, the District of Columbia has positioned itself as a national leader in the provision of quality, universal pre-K through a mixed delivery system that offers a range of choices for families across DCPS, PCS and CBOs. Data on classroom quality, observed across all three sectors, shows the District has made progress in achieving and maintaining quality in publicly funded pre-K classrooms, while also highlighting opportunities for continued growth. The District will continue to align and leverage resources and professional learning to areas where support is most needed, particularly concept development and quality of feedback, in order to improve the quality of teacher and child interactions.

OSSE is committed to supporting vibrant and quality early learning environments that prepare young children for success in school and life. Universal pre-K remains a key component of the District's broader effort to expand access, quality and affordability of early learning for all young children and improve educational outcomes for District learners, particularly those furthest from opportunity, across the educational continuum.