



MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

September 15, 2025

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 2024 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. In the 2023-24 school year (FY24), the District served 82 percent of all 3-year-olds and 95 percent of all 4-year-olds in public pre-K, far higher than the national averages of 7 percent and 35 percent, respectively.

This report also provides data on enrollment, utilization, and access to public pre-K programs. In FY24, 13,219 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in publicly funded pre-K. This represents an increase of 430 students from FY23. Lastly, this report presents information on the quality of pre-K programming as measured using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System[®] (CLASS) across 887 pre-K classrooms.

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



District of Columbia
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

FISCAL YEAR 2024 PRE-K REPORT

July 2025

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Executive Summary

The District of Columbia leads the nation in pre-kindergarten (pre-K) access and per-child spending.¹ In the 2023-24 school year, or fiscal year 2024 (FY24), a total of 13,219 children, or 89 percent of the District's 3- and 4-year-old children, were enrolled in publicly funded universal pre-K.² Enrollment in universal pre-K increased by 430 students from FY23 to FY24. 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.

Research indicates that high-quality early care and education experiences for young children can improve outcomes in nearly every aspect of life, from better social and working relationships to higher earnings and better health outcomes.³ Quality, universal pre-K is an important component of the District's strategy for improving educational outcomes, particularly for children and families furthest from opportunity.

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 pre-K 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 (CDFs) to inform professional learning and quality improvement efforts.

In FY24, CLASS® observations were conducted in 887 pre-K classrooms, located within 252 programs operated by DCPS, PCS and PKEEP CBOs as well as additional CDFs that serve preschool-aged children and participate in the DC Child Care Subsidy Program.⁴ Compared to FY23, average program-level CLASS® scores decreased in the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domains and increased in the Instructional Support domain. In FY24, 82 percent of the District's pre-K classrooms met or exceeded evidence-based targets in the Emotional Support domain, 58 percent met or exceeded targets for Classroom Organization

¹ Dr. Allison H. Friedman-Krauss, et al., *The State of Preschool 2023: State Preschool Yearbook*, NAT'L INST. FOR EARLY EDUC. RSCH. (2024), <https://nieer.org/yearbook/2023/executive-summary>.

² Total pre-K enrollment of 13,219 includes 26 5-year-olds (as of Sept. 30, 2023).

³ Annie D. Schoch, et. al., *Children's Learning and Development Benefits From High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Summary of the Evidence*, U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH AND HUM. SERVICES (Aug. 2023), <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/%232023-226%20Benefits%20from%20ECE%20Highlight%20508.pdf>.

⁴ An additional 90 pre-K classrooms, located within 43 programs that participated in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, were observed in CLASS® observations in FY24. Their inaugural scores are excluded from aggregate findings in this report because year-over-year data increase data validity and reliability.

and 27 percent met or exceeded targets for Instructional Support. Instructional Support scores increased for the second consecutive year. The percentage of classrooms meeting targets decreased slightly from FY23 to FY24 in the Emotional Support domain (1 percent), with a larger decrease in the Classroom Organization domain (9 percent). The percentage of classrooms meeting targets in the Instructional Support domain increased by 5 percent. While domain-level average CLASS[®] scores varied across the pre-K sector, variations in performance within each sector were greater than variations between sectors. DCPS, PCS, PKEEP CBOs, and CDFs all had programs that were providing high-quality early learning experiences for children.

By continuing to support quality early learning and continuous improvement for programs serving children birth to age 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 17 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 2023-24 school year (FY24), the District served 82 percent of all 3-year-olds and 95 percent of all 4-year-olds in public pre-K, far higher than the national averages of 7 percent and 35 percent, respectively.⁵ The District also invests more funding per student in pre-K education than the national average. In FY24, annual per pupil funding was \$23,785 in the District (per OSSE calculations), compared to a national average of just \$7,277 per child.⁶

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: professional learning requirements; 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 schools and CBOs, many of which also participate in the state-funded pre-K program. Finally, some CDFs 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, child care subsidies and/or other public or private funding.

This report provides enrollment and demographic information on universal pre-K programs operated by DCPS, PCS and PKEEP CBOs. It also provides information on quality across pre-K classrooms receiving public

⁵ Dr. Allison H. Friedman-Krauss, et al., *The State of Preschool 2023: State Preschool Yearbook*, NAT'L INST. FOR EARLY EDUC. RSCH. (2024), <https://nieer.org/yearbook/2023/executive-summary>.

⁶ *Id.*

funding, including universal pre-K programs and CDFs that serve preschool-aged children and participate in Capital Quality, the District's child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), which is required for all child care providers participating in the DC Child Care Subsidy Program.⁷ Table 1 provides an overview of publicly funded pre-K programs in the District.

⁷ Child care providers participating in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund who do not participate in universal pre-K or Capital Quality are required to participate in annual CLASS® observations.

Table 1. Public pre-K options in the District of Columbia at-a-glance

Setting	Universal Public Pre-K	Delivery System Overview	Funding Source	Number of Children Served in FY24 ⁸
DCPS	Yes	DCPS is the traditional public school district for the District of Columbia and provides publicly funded pre-K open to age-eligible District residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform per student funding formula (UPSFF) for students enrolled in pre-K classrooms. Federal Title I funds in eligible schools. Federal Head Start funding in six DCPS schools. 	5,772
PCS	Yes	PCS provide publicly funded pre-K open to all 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. Federal Title I funds in eligible schools. 	6,420
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 four CBOs. Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund program. 	1,027
Child care subsidy preschool-age enrollment in CBOs (without PKEEP funding)	No	CDFs that offer full-day, year-round early care and education services that include pre-K-aged children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent tuition. Public funding for eligible children through the DC Child Care Subsidy Program. Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund program. 	396

⁸ Numbers reflect child counts as of October 2023.

Funding for Universal Pre-K

Funding for universal pre-K is provided to programs through the UPSFF or, in the case of CBOs participating in PKEEP, grants administered 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). 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 FY24 Allocations⁹

Student	Per Pupil Allocation
Pre-K 3	\$17,482*
Pre-K 4	\$16,960*
English Learners	\$6,523
At-Risk	\$3,131**
Special Education	\$12,655***

* Base weight

** Per D.C. Official Code § 38-2901, “at risk” means a DCPS or public charter school student who is identified as one or more of the following: homeless; in the District’s foster care system; qualifies for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; or a high school student that is one year older, or more, than the expected age for the grade in which the student is enrolled

*** There are four supplementary levels of special education funding defined in D.C. Code and four subcategories. The figure provided in the chart represents Level 1 funding.

⁹ 2023-24 Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) Payment Letter, OFF. OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUC. <https://osse.dc.gov/publication/2023-24-uniform-student-funding-formula-upsff-payment-letter>.

Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization of Universal Pre-K

Enrollment

The District of Columbia continues to be a national leader in access to and participation in public pre-K. In FY24, the District served a total of 13,219 students in universal pre-K, or 89 percent of all 3- and 4-year-old children in the District, an increase of 6 percentage points from FY23.¹⁰ The District served 82 percent of 3-year-olds, an increase of 6 percentage points from FY23 and 95 percent of its 4-year-olds, an 8 percentage point increase from FY23 (see Table 3). An additional 396 preschool-age children were not enrolled in universal pre-K and received full-day subsidized care in licensed CDFs through the DC Child Care Subsidy Program.

Table 3. 3- and 4-year-olds served in universal pre-K in DC in FY23 and FY24

Age	FY23			FY24		
	Census Data ¹¹	Number Enrolled	Percent Served	Census Data	Number Enrolled	Percent Served
3-year-olds	7,574	5,929	76%	7,449	6,115	82%
4-year-olds	7,797	6,821	87%	7,461	7,078	95%
Total¹²	15,371	12,789	83%	14,910	13,219	89%

Enrollment Over Time

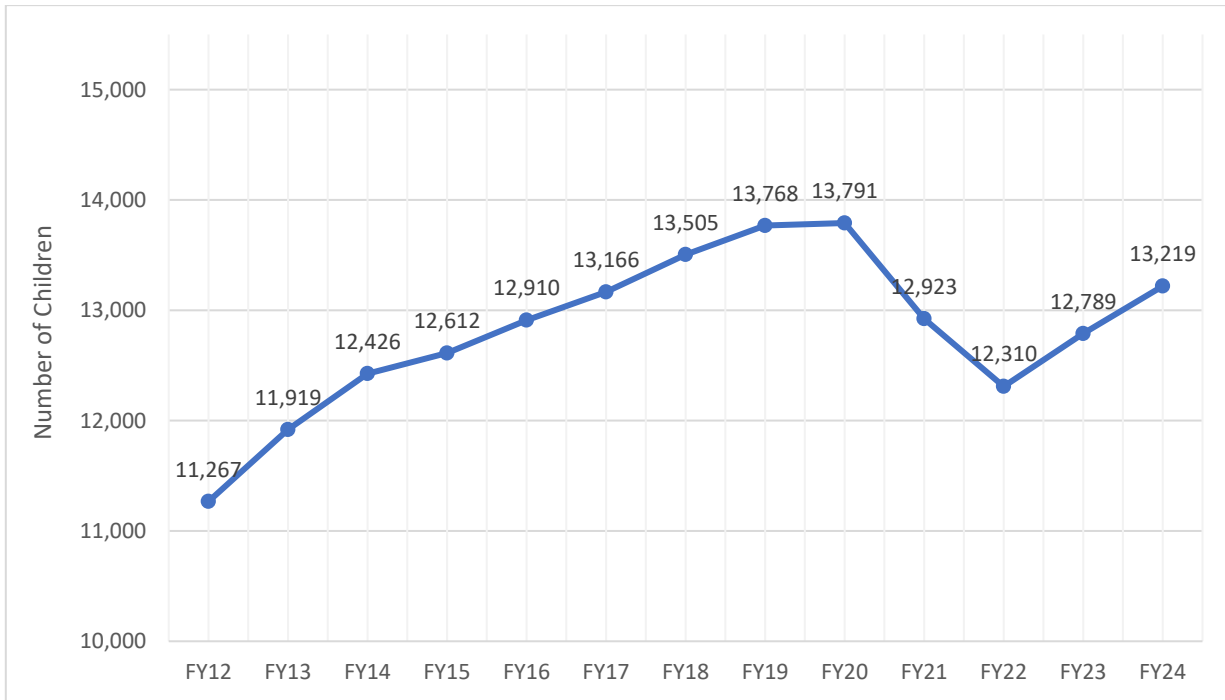
Enrollment in universal pre-K increased by 430 students from FY23 to FY24, from 12,789 to 13,219. Total enrollment is rebounding from the lows experienced during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This is the second consecutive year enrollment has increased by more than 400 students (see Figure 1). Even as pre-K enrollment increased, the population of 3- and 4-year-olds in the District continued to decrease. Thus, the increase in the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in pre-K in FY24 reflects both an increase in the actual number of children enrolled in pre-K and a decrease in the age-eligible population.

¹⁰ Total pre-K enrollment of 13,219 includes 26 5-year-olds (as of Sept. 30, 2023).

¹¹ *Population by Characteristics: 2020-2022*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (July 2023), [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, 2024. Note: Population estimates use the most recently available data and differ from previous pre-K reports as population data has been updated.

¹² Total pre-K enrollment included 39 5-year-olds in FY23 (as of Sept. 30, 2022) and 26 5-year-olds (as of Sept. 30, 2023) in FY24 and therefore does not equal the sum of 3- and 4-year-olds.

Figure 1. Public pre-K enrollment from FY12 to FY24

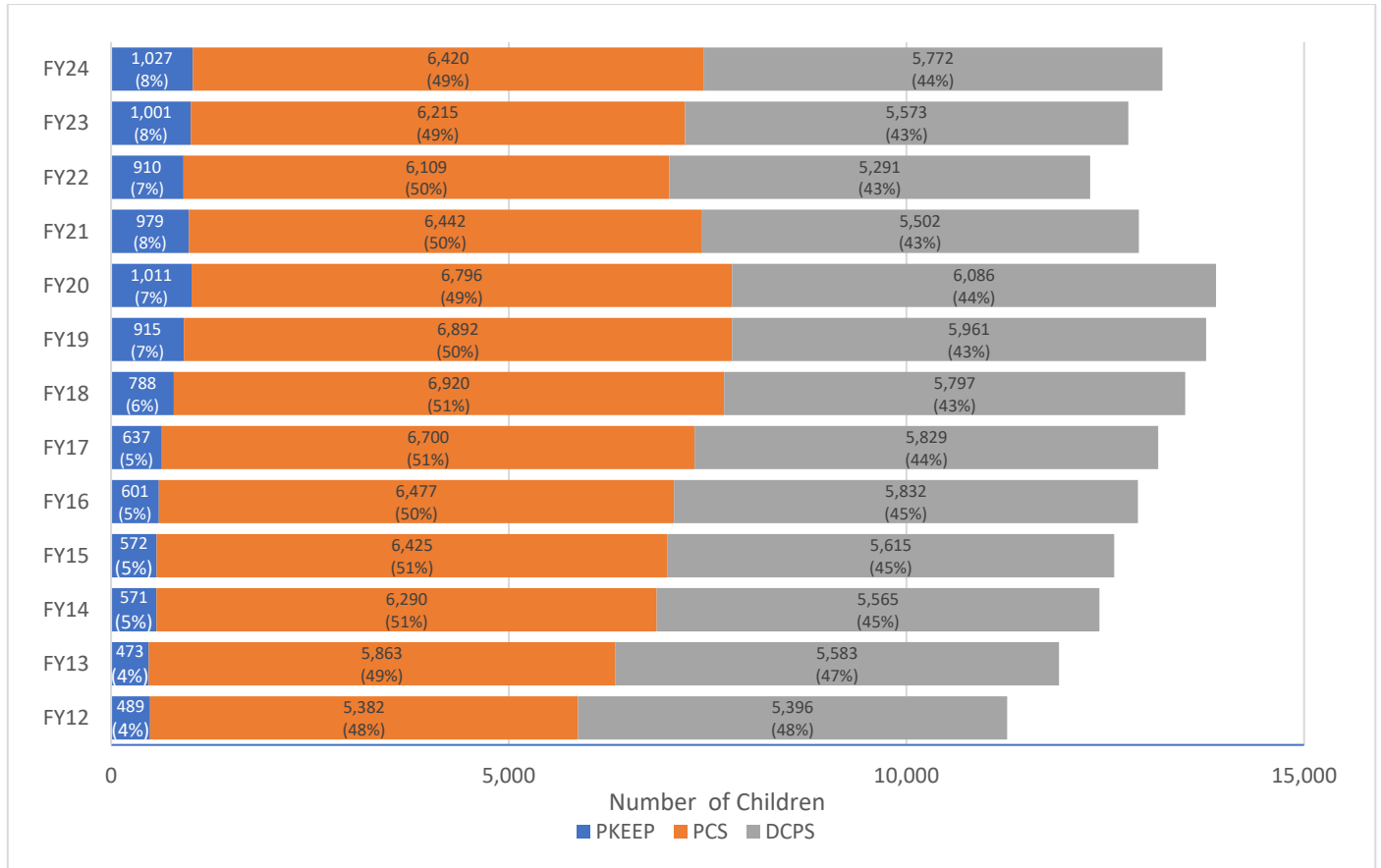


Enrollment by Sector

The District offers universal pre-K through a mixed-delivery system that incorporates providers across three sectors (DCPS, PCS and PKEEP CBOs) to provide broad pre-K access and promote choice and flexibility for families. The growth in overall enrollment in universal pre-K was due to growth in all three sectors. DCPS enrollment increased from 5,573 students in FY23 to 5,772 students in FY24 (a 3.6 percent increase). PCS enrollment increased from 6,215 to 6,420 (a 3.3 percent increase). PKEEP enrollment increased from 1,001 to 1,027 (a 2.6 percent increase) (see Figure 2).¹³

¹³ Student counts included in the annual pre-K report indicate enrollment as of October of the school year. Final PKEEP enrollment reconciliation concludes in March of the school year and therefore may differ from numbers reported here.

Figure 2. Universal pre-K enrollment by sector from FY12 to FY24



Capacity

Across the mixed-delivery system, universal pre-K was offered at 173 sites in FY24. DCPS operated pre-K classrooms in 80 schools (the same as FY23), 67 PCSs offered pre-K classrooms (the same as FY23) and 26 PKEEP CBOs provided universal pre-K (two fewer than FY23). The District had a total capacity of 14,513

publicly funded pre-K seats across 802 classrooms with the greatest enrollment and capacity in PCS (see Table 4), consistent with prior years.¹⁴

Utilization

Utilization is the percent of pre-K slots that are filled by enrolled children, calculated by dividing the number of enrolled children by estimated capacity. In FY24, utilization was high District-wide and across sectors. Approximately 91 percent of seats District-wide were filled by an enrolled student in FY24 (see Table 4). Utilization was highest among PCS.

Table 4. Universal pre-K program capacity and utilization by sector FY24

Sector	Sites	Enrollment	Number of Classrooms	Estimated Capacity	Estimated Utilization	Unfilled Slots (estimated)
DCPS	80	5,772	381	6,393	90%	621
PCS	67	6,420	346	6,920	93%	500
PKEEP	26	1,027	75	1,200	86%	173
Total	173	13,219	802	14,513	91%	1,294

Pre-K by Ward

In FY24, pre-K enrollment increased in every ward except Ward 1. Pre-K capacity also increased in every ward except Ward 2. Utilization remained stable in FY24 and was high across the District, ranging from 83 percent in Ward 6 to more than 100 percent in wards 1 and 2 (see Table 5)¹⁵. Utilization can exceed 100 percent due to student mobility (e.g., when a student leaves a pre-K program and is replaced by another student). Utilization at or above 100 percent indicates that all available pre-K slots were filled.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Apple Tree Spring Valley in Ward 3 had four pre-K classrooms based on classroom observation data. However, due to a data system error, students attending Spring Valley were assigned to the school code for Apple Tree Oklahoma Avenue. As a result, all enrolled students from Spring Valley are recorded under Oklahoma Avenue and cannot be separated. Consequently, while all students are included in total enrollment figures, the enrollment counts for Ward 3 and Ward 6 are lower and higher respectively than actual enrollment.

Table 5. Universal pre-K program slots and utilization by ward in FY24

	Total Sites	Enrollment	Number of DCPS Classrooms	Number of PCS Classrooms	Number of PKEEP Classrooms	Estimated Capacity	Estimated Utilization
Ward 1	14	1,090	36	13	19	1,080	101%
Ward 2	10	637	25	9	3	621	103%
Ward 3	12	701	19	4	27	882	79%
Ward 4	28	2,081	73	42	12	2,270	92%
Ward 5	30	2,656	34	115	1	2,871	93%
Ward 6	15	1,418	65	17	0	1,785	83%
Ward 7	26	2,119	62	64	4	2,237	95%
Ward 8	36	2,517	67	82	9	2,847	88%
Total	171	13,219	381	346	75	14,513	91%

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

Of the 13,219 children served in universal pre-K programs in the District in FY24, the majority (57 percent) were Black/African American, 19 percent of students were white/non-Hispanic, and 17 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.

Forty-seven percent of children were identified as economically disadvantaged, 1 percent fewer than in FY23.¹⁶ The percentage of economically disadvantaged children served varies across sectors, from 26 percent in PKEEP programs to 44 percent in DCPS and 53 percent in PCS. While the share of economically

¹⁶ 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.

disadvantaged children enrolled was relatively consistent in DCPS and PCS from FY23 to FY24, the share of economically disadvantaged children served by PKEEP programs fell from 30 to 26 percent.

Thirteen percent of children enrolled in public pre-K (1,670) received special education services, up from 11 percent in FY23. Table 6 presents the demographics of District pre-K students, by sector, in further detail.

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	2,537	44%	3,381	53%	271	26%	6,189	47%
No	3,235	56%	3,039	47%	756	74%	7,030	53%
Gender								
	DCPS		PCS		PKEEP CBO		District-wide	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Female	2,780	48%	3,209	50%	514	50%	6,503	49%
Male	2,989	52%	3,205	50%	513	50%	6,707	51%
Non-binary ¹⁷							9	<1%

¹⁷ Data is suppressed at the local education agency (LEA) and PKEEP CBO level to protect personally identifiable information.

Race/Ethnicity								
	DCPS		PCS		PKEEP CBO		District-wide	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
American Indian/Alaskan Native	6	<1%	18	<1%	4	<1%	28	<1%
Asian	119	2%	71	1%	46	4%	236	2%
Black/African American	2,852	49%	4,456	69%	284	28%	7,592	57%
Hispanic/Latino	1,145	20%	817	13%	291	28%	2,253	17%
Two or more races	208	4%	298	5%	26	3%	532	4%
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	3	<1%	5	<1%	0	0%	8	<1%
White	1,439	25%	755	12%	376	37%	2,570	19%
Receiving Special Education								
	DCPS		PCS		PKEEP CBO		District-wide	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	1,043	18%	DS ¹⁸	DS	n<10	n<10	1,670	13%
No	4,729	82%	DS	DS	DS	DS	11,549	87%

The Quality of Pre-K Programming

The quality of pre-K programs is important to support positive outcomes for children. OSSE has oversight responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the quality of pre-K programs in the District.¹⁹ CLASS® data is used in three accountability systems for public schools and CDFs: the DC School Report Card, administered by OSSE for DCPS and PCS; Capital Quality, the District’s QRIS administered by OSSE for CDFs; and the PCSB’s Annual School Performance Index Report & Evaluation (ASPIRE). These systems, which use multiple indicators to provide a comprehensive picture of school or CDF quality, use CLASS® as one measure of pre-K quality,

¹⁸ It is OSSE’s [policy](#) to use dual suppression, notated by “DS,” to prevent releasing information that could potentially lead to the identification of individual children or students based on other released numbers.

¹⁹ DC Code § 38–271.02(b)(5).

along with other indicators, to inform public ratings that families can use to make decisions about schools or CDFs, and that also inform accountability and quality supports for schools and CDFs.²⁰

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 learning 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 were 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.²¹ It comprises 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. 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

²⁰ Capital Quality designations are available for each participating child development facility at mychildcare.dc.gov. Find DCPS and PCS accountability scores and data on OSSE’s [DC School Report Card](#). Find information on PCSB’s ASPIRE accountability system [here](#).

²¹ Pianta, R.C., LaParo, K.M., & Hamre, B. K., (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System Manual: Pre-K*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

	Instructional learning formats (ILF)	Facilitating activities and providing interesting materials
Instructional Support	Language modeling (LM)	Facilitating and encouraging growth of students’ language
	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.²² The dimension scores are then averaged to create a domain score.²³ Research has shown that programs that achieve 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.²⁴ 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. 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 6.0 for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization and a score of 4.0 for Instructional Support.

Observed Classrooms

In FY24 (and consistent with previous years), 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 3 hours, and took place over the course of one morning during a typical instructional day.²⁵ All pre-K classrooms in each of the three sectors were observed using CLASS®.²⁶ Additionally, CDFs with classrooms serving preschool-aged children participating in Capital Quality (required

²² The exception is the Negative Climate dimension, in which a lower score indicates higher quality. These scores are inverted for reporting purposes.

²³ Negative Climate is reverse coded, so higher scores indicate lower negative climate, before averaging to create a domain score.

²⁴ Margaret Burchinal, et al., *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 (2010), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0885200609000738>.

²⁵ For more information, see the Quality Observation Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols for CBOs and LEAs: osse.dc.gov/page/program-quality-evaluation-and-assessment-class-pre-k.

²⁶ 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.

for all facilities participating in the DC Child Care Subsidy Program) were observed even if they did not participate in PKEEP. Table 8 shows the number of pre-K classrooms observed in FY24 by sector.

Table 8. Pre-K classrooms observed by sector

Type	DCPS	PCS	PKEEP CBOs ²⁷	Non-PKEEP CDFs ²⁸	Total
Classrooms	370	346	80	91	887
Programs	80	71	28	73	252

FY24 CLASS Observation Findings

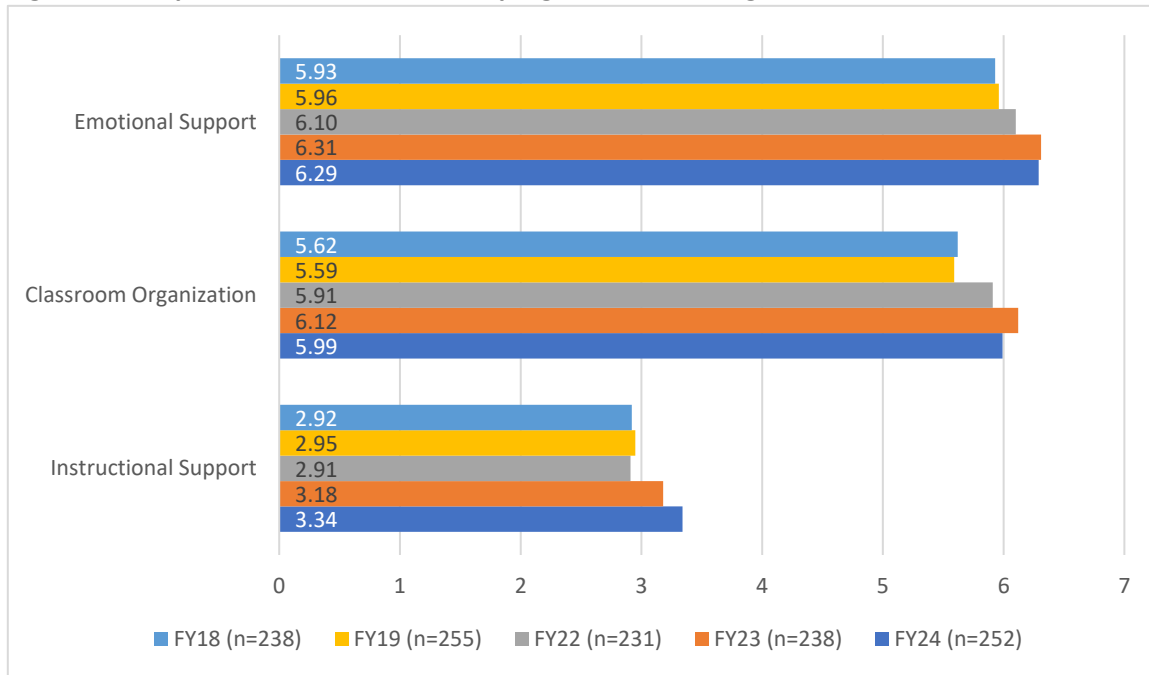
Finding 1: District-wide CLASS scores[®] decreased in Emotional Support and Classroom Organization and increased in Instructional Support in FY24 compared to FY23. FY24 CLASS[®] scores for all domains remain higher than FY18 – FY22, showing a general trend in improvement over time.

Average CLASS[®] program-level scores increased in the Instructional Support domain in FY24 for the second consecutive year. Average CLASS[®] program-level scores decreased in Emotional Support and Classroom Organization in FY24 compared to FY23. However, average CLASS[®] scores in FY24 were higher in all domains as compared to FY18, FY19 and FY22, showing an overall long-term trend of improvement across the District. Figure 3 shows a comparison of CLASS[®] domain averages over time.

²⁷ Observed classrooms in PKEEP CBOs may include “non-PKEEP” classrooms that serve children ages 36 months to 5 years of age.

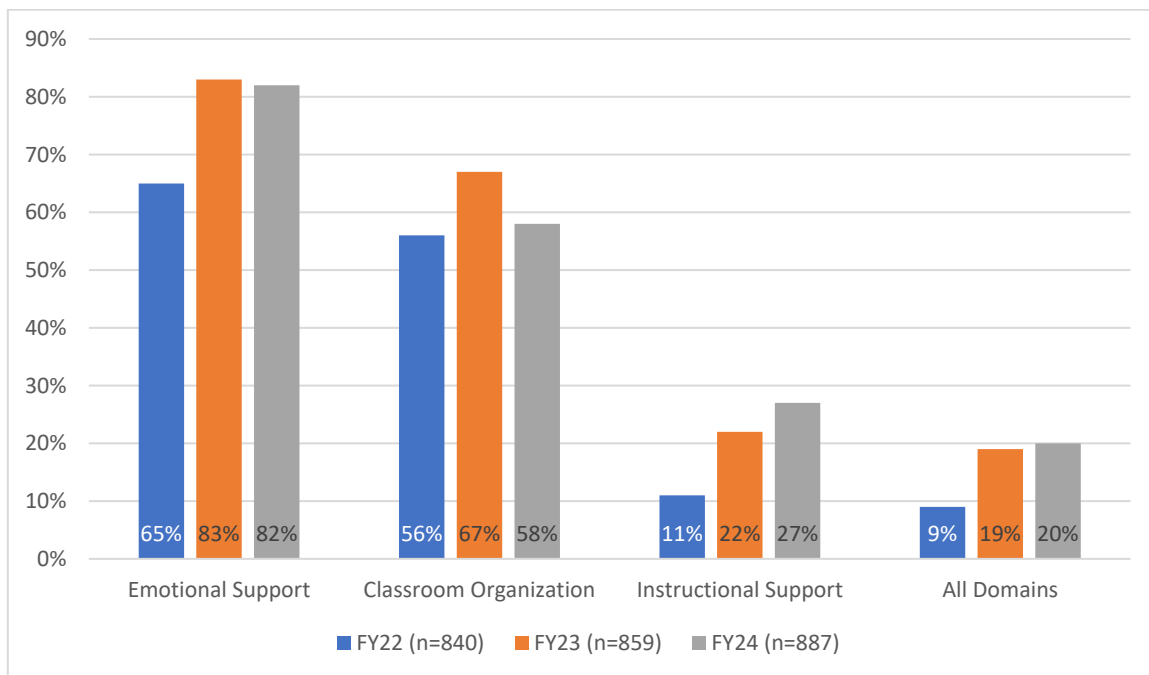
²⁸ “Non-PKEEP CDFs” participated in Capital Quality.

Figure 3: Comparison of CLASS® domain program-level averages over time



Finding 2: District-wide, the majority of pre-K classrooms met or exceeded targets for Emotional Support (82 percent) and Classroom Organization (58 percent). Fewer classrooms (27 percent) met or exceeded the target for Instructional Support. Nearly all programs met or exceeded floors for CLASS® scores across all domains.

Figure 4. FY24 pre-K classroom-level percentages for meeting or exceeding targets for CLASS® scores



As shown in Figure 4, 82 percent of pre-K classrooms met or exceeded the target in Emotional Support, 58 percent of pre-K classrooms met or exceeded the target in Classroom Organization, 27 percent met or exceeded the target in Instructional Support and 20 percent of classrooms met or exceeded targets in all three domains. The percentage of classrooms meeting targets decreased slightly from FY23 to FY24 in the Emotional Support domain (1 percent) with a larger decrease in the Classroom Organization domain (9 percent). The percentage of classrooms meeting targets in the Instructional Support domain increased by 5 percent. Across all observed classrooms, the average score for Emotional Support was 6.29, the average score for Classroom Observation was 6.03 and the average score for Instructional Support was 3.40 on a 7-point scale.

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 and support informed family choices about pre-K programs, as well as program- and system-level decisions about professional learning 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 teachers address children’s needs and are responsive to challenge sometimes.

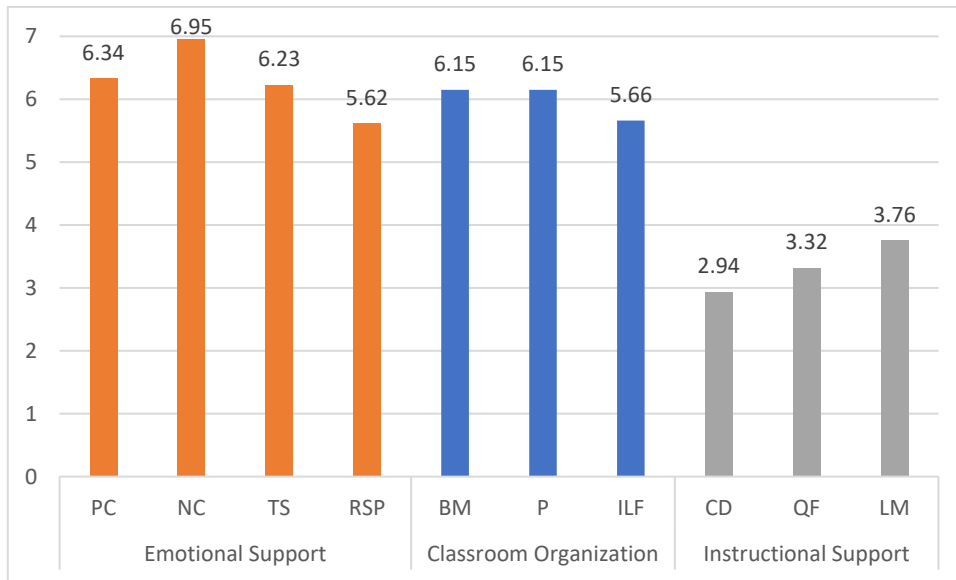
Classroom Organization: The average pre-K program in the District scores above the target for Classroom Organization. Classrooms scoring at or above the District average in this domain support consistency, intentionally designed learning space and routines that are sensitive and appropriate to the needs 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.

The Classroom Organization domain showed a decrease in the percentage of classrooms meeting or exceeding the domain target from FY23 to FY24. As seen in Figure 5, the average program-level scores in the associated dimensions exceeded the target score of 6.0 in the Behavior Management and Productivity dimensions, though they were lower than dimension scores in FY23. The average program-level score for Instructional Learning Format was below the target score at 5.66 and also decreased from FY23. The Instructional Learning Format dimension is an area of growth across both years, suggesting an opportunity to further develop the use of engagement strategies and clarity of lessons used in pre-K classrooms.

Since the Instructional Support domain is the area where observations have consistently 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, 3.76, 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 pre-K classrooms; data suggest that this focus has supported progress and that an intentional focus on other dimensions of Instructional Support may also be necessary. The District-wide average score on the Quality of Feedback dimension, 3.32, suggests a potential need for greater focus on promoting teaching strategies that support expanded learning and 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 2.94. 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 “how’s” 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. The Quality of Feedback and Concept Development dimensions improved slightly from FY23 to FY24.

Figure 5 shows the FY24 average scores for all dimensions at the program-level.



Key

- PC: Positive climate
- NC: Negative climate
- TS: Teacher sensitivity
- RSP: Regard for student perspectives
- BM: Behavior management
- P: Productivity
- ILF: Instructional learning formats
- CD: Concept development
- QF: Quality of feedback
- LM: Language modeling

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.

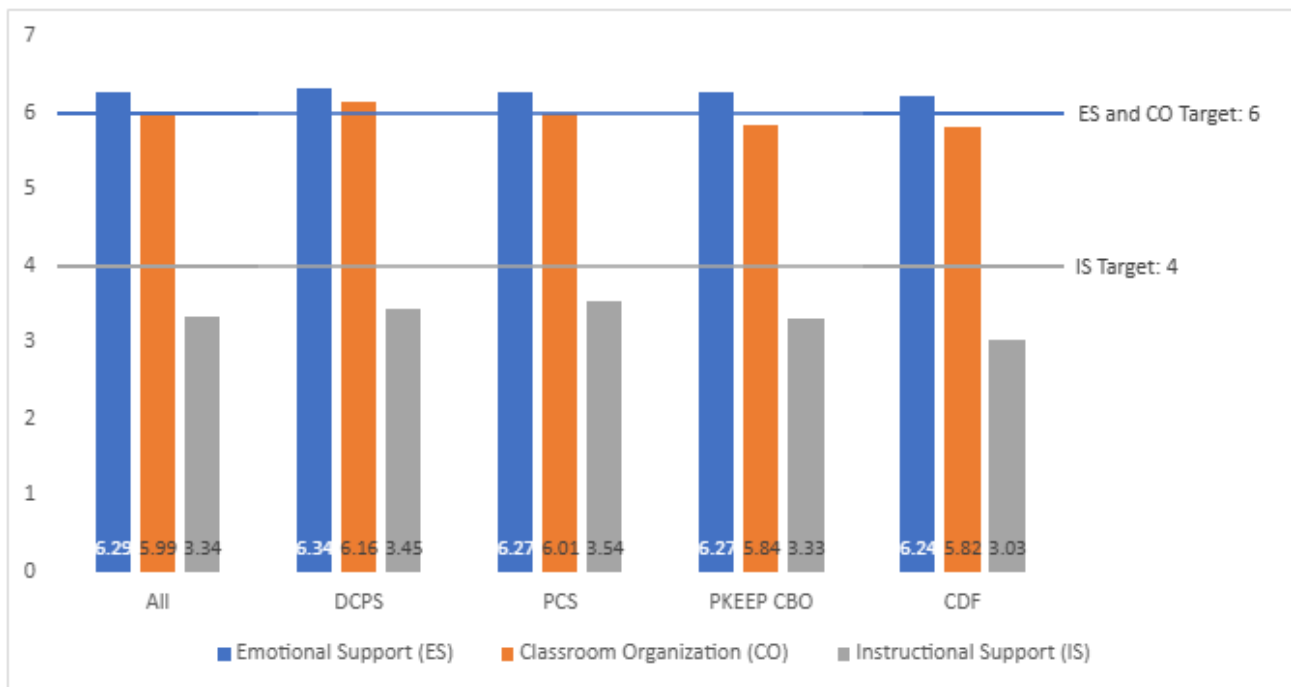
CLASS® Emotional Support scores are similar and exceed the target across all three sectors. DCPS and PCS programs scored higher than PKEEP CBO and CDF programs in Instructional Support and Classroom

Organization. Differences between DCPS and PCS programs in Classroom Organization and Instructional Support were not statistically significant. There were no significant differences in any domain for CDFs regardless of PKEEP designation.

Looking at individual programs (schools or CDFs), within each sector, DCPS had the highest percentage of programs meet or exceed targets for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, while PCS had the highest percentage of programs meet or exceed targets for Instructional Support. PCS programs were more likely to meet all three domain targets, largely because more PCS programs met the target for Instructional Support compared to the other sectors.

Common trends across sectors were much more pronounced 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, 98 percent of programs met or exceeded the floor for Classroom Organization, and at least 98 percent met or exceeded the floor for Instructional Support. Figure 6 shows the average CLASS® domain scores by sector.

Figure 6. 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 program-level averages by ward

Ward	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
1	6.25	5.98	3.25

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2	6.23	5.98	3.35
3	6.29	6.04	3.13
4	6.29	6.05	3.23
5	6.23	6.05	3.31
6	6.34	6.10	3.47
7	6.29	5.94	3.58
8	6.34	6.06	3.57

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 supportive environments in publicly funded pre-K classrooms but must continue to make improvements to meet all targets. The District will continue to align and leverage resources and professional learning to areas where support is most needed.

In 2024, the District was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant, Birth to Five award. Through this funding, OSSE is engaging a research partner that will help to identify lessons learned from Capital Quality implementation to date, evaluate strengths and areas for improvement, and identify opportunities to better support early childhood programs, with a specific view toward understanding what quality measures and supports will be most meaningful for CDFs participating in the program. This work will inform quality improvement strategies for pre-K programs and CDFs in years to come.

OSSE is committed to supporting vibrant, 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.