



EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER
Indiana Institute on Disability and Community
Indiana's University Center for Excellence on Disabilities
Indiana University-Bloomington

What's Happening?

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A quarterly newsletter published by the Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community (IIDC), focusing on current research and best practices for Early Childhood professionals and settings to inform practices in the state of Indiana.

Editor: Kirsten Bonifacio (knhisson@indiana.edu) • Center Director: Michael Conn-Powers (mipower@indiana.edu)

EEMG: Child and Program Demographics

What is EEMG?

The Early Education Matching Grant (EEMG) is Indiana's first public Pre-K effort. The grant, in its second year, provides an opportunity for eligible low-income four-year olds to attend high quality (Paths to Quality Levels Three or Four) preschool programs across the state. The EEMG was originally a two-year pilot program but the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) and the Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL) have funded it for an additional two years.

What Types of Programs Are Participating?

This year, the EEMG has supported a total of 19 programs spread across 14 counties. These programs started out serving 393 eligible children and had a current enrollment of 372 at the end of March.

The majority of this year's EEMG programs are community-based preschools, although public schools, a Head Start, and a registered ministry are also supported by this year's grant. Of the 19 enrolled EEMG programs, eight are rated as Level Three Paths to Quality and 11 are rated as Level Four Paths to Quality. Within the 19 participating programs, there are 41 classrooms participating: 24 full-day classrooms serving 208 students and 16 part-day classrooms serving 164 children.

What Types of Children Are Participating?

To be eligible, children must be Indiana residents, four years of age and families must earn less than 100% of the federal poverty level. The EEMG is serving a diverse group of eligible children this year, many of which are white but several children are also African American, Hispanic/Latino, or two or more races. Of the children participating in the EEMG this year, 12% speak a language other than English, 21% have developmental concerns either expressed by the parent or identified through the need for special education services, and 49% have had prior early education experiences.

Are Children Attending Regularly?

Attendance is a critical component of academic success. The mid-year average attendance rate for current EEMG programs is 92%, ranging from 72 to 98 percent. Although overall attendance rates seem high, it is important to look at attendance at the level of the individual child. Children who are absent more than 10% of scheduled school days are considered to be chronically absent. Currently, 29% of EEMG children are chronically absent. When children are not present regularly, they cannot experience the full benefits of school. All early education programs need to continue to explore new, positive strategies for engaging with families who are struggling with attendance. EEMG program directors and teachers participated in a webinar in August that addressed the importance of preschool attendance, introduced a tiered model for approaching and improving attendance, and provided strategies for intervention at each level of the tiered model. To view this webinar, click [here](#) and scroll down to "Re-Thinking Pre-K Attendance."



Quick Facts

The EEMG is serving a diverse group of children across fourteen counties in Indiana. This year, several children are receiving special education services for identified disabilities, some speak a language other than English, and nearly half have had no experience in prior early education programs.



The Indiana Institute on Disability and Community (IIDC) is a part of the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at Indiana University, Bloomington (OVPR). OVPR works with individuals, teams, centers, institutes, and schools to foster excellence in research and creative activities and to support faculty in successfully competing for external funding.

EEMG: Fall Child Assessment

The Early Childhood Center (ECC) was contracted to evaluate the impact of high quality preschool programming provided through the Early Education Matching Grant (EEMG). Child assessments were completed in the fall of 2015 and post assessments are scheduled to begin in April of 2016. Fall assessment procedures included 266 children (randomly selected from all EEMG programs across the state).

The following assessment measures were used:

1. **Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-4 (PPVT-4):** a receptive vocabulary assessment. Completed by an assessment team member.
2. **Bracken School Readiness Assessment- 3 (BRSA-3):** evaluates skills in six core academic areas (colors, letters, numbers and counting, sizes, comparisons, and shapes) to form a composite school readiness standard score. Completed by an assessment team member.
3. **Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales-2 (PKBS-2):** a behavior rating scale that measures social skills (e.g., cooperation, social interactions, and independence) and problem behaviors (e.g., temper tantrums, bullying, not making friends). The PKBS-2 is completed by both families and teachers.
4. **Family Engagement Survey:** a brief measure of attitudes and beliefs related to family engagement. Completed by the family.



How were Children Doing in the Fall?

22% of children showed delays in their receptive vocabulary skills on the PPVT-4.

49% of children were delayed in their composite school readiness score on the BRSA-3.

10% of children displayed problem behaviors that are consistent with moderate to high risk for having or developing significant behavioral or emotional challenges (teachers scoring on the PKBS-2).

27% of children have moderate to high risk of developing behavioral or emotional problems on the PKBS-2, according to family raters.

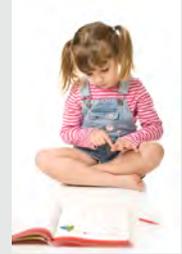
23% of children have a moderate to high risk for having or developing social skills deficits on the PKBS-2, according to teachers.

19% of children have deficits in adaptive social skills that were consistent with moderate to high risk on the PKBS-2, according to family raters.

35% of parents reported that they would not have time to partner with the program.

50% of parents reported that they did not enjoy school as a child.

These are the “pre” results. Stay tuned in the spring for the “post” results—let’s see how far these children and families have progressed after a year of high quality early education in Indiana!



Quick Facts

Several assessment measures were used to help understand children’s academic and social-emotional school readiness skills. Generally we found that children enrolled in EEMG programs were delayed in their receptive vocabulary and school readiness skills. Some children also displayed or have high risk of developing behavioral or emotional difficulties. Data from the Fall EEMG assessments also suggested that many parents reported they would not have time to partner with their child’s preschool program.



How Do we Measure Classroom Quality?

As part of the Early Education Matching Grant (EEMG) evaluation, classroom quality was measured using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The CLASS is a classroom observation tool used to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions in three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. Classroom observations were completed in 35 EEMG classrooms by CLASS-trained evaluators from the Early Childhood Center (ECC). Following the observations, the ECC provided one-on-one technical assistance to EEMG classroom teachers designed to help teachers understand their CLASS scores and think about how to improve their practices.

How well do Teachers Emotionally Support their Students?

The first CLASS domain is Emotional Support. On average, EEMG teachers were found to be generally emotionally supportive of the children in their classroom (average score of 6 out of 7). This was the highest domain score across EEMG teachers this year. This high score demonstrates that teachers generally had positive classroom climates with warm, respectful connections; an absence of expressed negativity; an awareness of and responsiveness to children's needs; and an emphasis on children's interests and growth in responsibility.

How well do Teachers Organize their Classrooms?

The second CLASS domain is Classroom Organization. Scores showed that EEMG teachers were generally running well organized classrooms (average score of 5.40 out of 7). The domain of Classroom Organization addresses if teachers are effectively implementing classroom routines and procedures to manage behavior, time, and attention in their classroom. Classrooms with high scores in this domain give children a sense of stability and predictability and ensure that more time can be spent on instruction versus managing children's behaviors.

One component of the Classroom Organization domain where teachers struggled was Instructional Learning Formats (average score of 4.03 out of 7). What does this mean? This can mean two things: lack of clear learning objectives to focus children's attention, and teachers struggling to use effective questions that expand children's involvement thus leading to higher engagement (student interest) and effective implementation of lessons.

How well do Teachers Provide Instructional Support to their Students?

The last CLASS domain, Instructional Support, is generally the most difficult CLASS domain for teachers on a national-level and EEMG teachers were not an exception (average score of 2.68 out of 7). Instructional Support measures how curriculum is implemented to promote cognitive and language development. Teachers who score high in this domain encourage children to think about their learning beyond the rote memorization of facts, provide quality feedback that expands children's learning and encourage active participation, and facilitate conversations with advanced language.

In particular, teachers struggled most in the Instructional Support dimension which measures Concept Development (average score of 2.46 out of 7). A low score in Concept Development indicates that most teachers did not facilitate frequent discussions and conversations that encouraged child creativity and idea generation beyond memorized facts and basic skills, nor did they frequently give children opportunities to connect concepts to their own lives.



Practical Tips for Teachers

Practical Teacher Tip

#1 (Instructional Learning Formats):

During free choice time, get involved with the children and their activities. Think of learning objectives that would complement and expand their play and learning. Don't be afraid to ask questions and facilitate more sophisticated play and interactions.

Practical Teacher Tip #2

(Instructional Learning Formats):

When implementing lessons be sure to orient students to your learning goals. Children should always be aware of a lesson's purpose. For example, when going on a nature walk, be sure to tell children "we are going to go for a walk and look for signs of spring". When you are on the walk reorient students to this goal by saying, "We are looking for signs of spring, what do you notice?" When you come back inside, summarize the objective by asking, "We went on a nature walk to look for signs of spring, what did we find?" As children share information, write their responses down and ask deeper questions.

Practical Teacher Tip #3 (Concept Development/Language Modeling):

When you are reading a book, take time to ask higher order thinking questions that require children to infer, predict, problem solve and relate a story to their own lives. Keep yes/no questions to an absolute minimum and ask "Why...", "How...", "What might happen" questions instead.

Practical Teacher Tip #4 (Concept Development):

When doing any activity, whether it is science or building a tower or mixing colors, ask students to predict what they think will happen next and why. EEMG teachers also struggled with the dimensions of Quality of Feedback and Language Modeling. Quality of Feedback looks at the feedback teachers give in response to children's comments and actions and Language Modeling examines the frequency of conversations, open-ended questions, and elaboration on children's ideas with advanced language.

Practical Teacher Tip #5 (Quality of Feedback):

When a student makes a comment, frequently ask "Why?" or ask for more information.

Practical Teacher Tip #6 (Language Modeling):

If a student says that his hat is blue and red and gold, you can say, "You have a multi-colored hat!" or if a book uses a long word, ask the children to guess what it might mean based on what is happening in the story.