

FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina Study of Quality in Georgia's Early Learning Environments

(Select Discussion Presented by BFTS)



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

About the Study

- Study of quality across licensed child care centers and Georgia's Pre-K programs.
- Study was statewide.
- Study was funded by DECAL, but conducted independent of DECAL.
- All participants were guaranteed confidentiality.
- Findings are divided into two separate reports:
 - *Child Care Center Findings*
 - *Findings from Georgia's Pre-K Program*

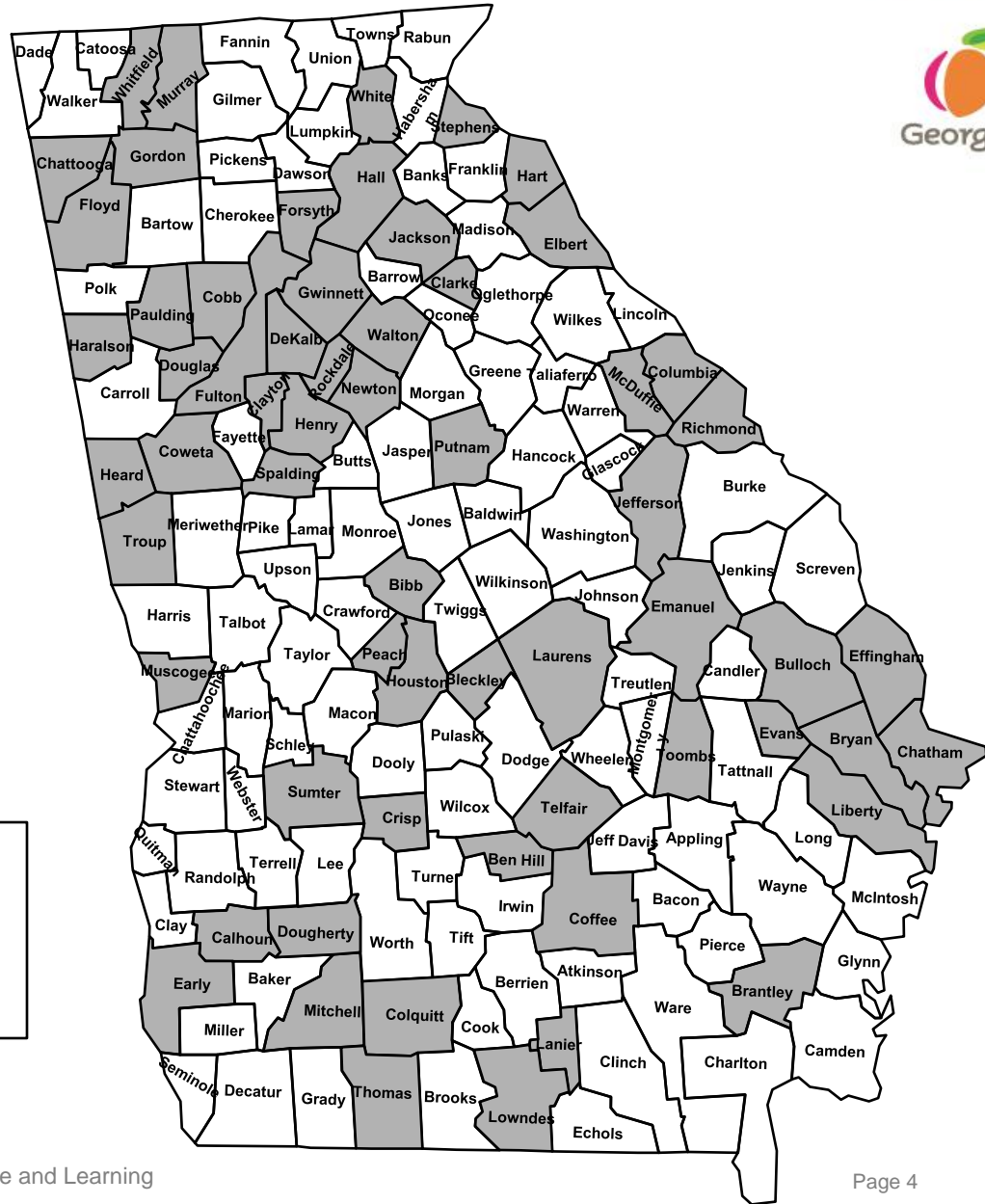


Study Methodology

- **Representative sample (N=173)**
 - Data collected from 320 classrooms in 173 programs. Overall response rate was 56%.
 - Results can be generalized to centers and Pre-K across the state. Study answers, “What does quality look like across the state?”
 - Study not designed or sampled to make comparisons across regions or program types.
- **Common observational tools that measure varying aspects of quality**
 - Can be used to compare results from this study with studies from other states.



Counties Included in Sample



■ Data were collected from a sample of 173 randomly selected programs across Georgia. These programs were in counties shaded gray.



Program and Classroom Measures

Program Level	Infant/Toddler Classrooms	Preschool Classrooms	Georgia's Pre-K Classrooms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director/Principal Interview • Document Review • Director/Principal Education & Experience Form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ITERS-R • Teacher Education & Experience Form • Assistant Teacher Education & Experience Form • Infant/Toddler Observation Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECERS-R • ELLCO • Teacher Education & Experience Form • Assistant Teacher Education & Experience Form • Preschool Observation Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECERS-R • ELLCO • CLASS • Snapshot • Teacher Education & Experience Form • Assistant Teacher Education & Experience Form • Preschool Observation Checklist



FPG Study of Early Care and Education in Georgia: Child Care Center Findings



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



Child Care Center Findings: Quality

- **Global quality measured by the Infant/Toddler Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) for infant/toddler classrooms and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) for preschool classrooms.**
- **Scores range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating higher quality. A score of 3 is considered “minimal” quality. Scores of 5 or above are considered “good.”**
- **On average, center-based care across Georgia was of “low” to “medium” quality.**
 - **Average ITERS-R Score: 2.74**
 - **Average ECERS-R Score: 3.39**



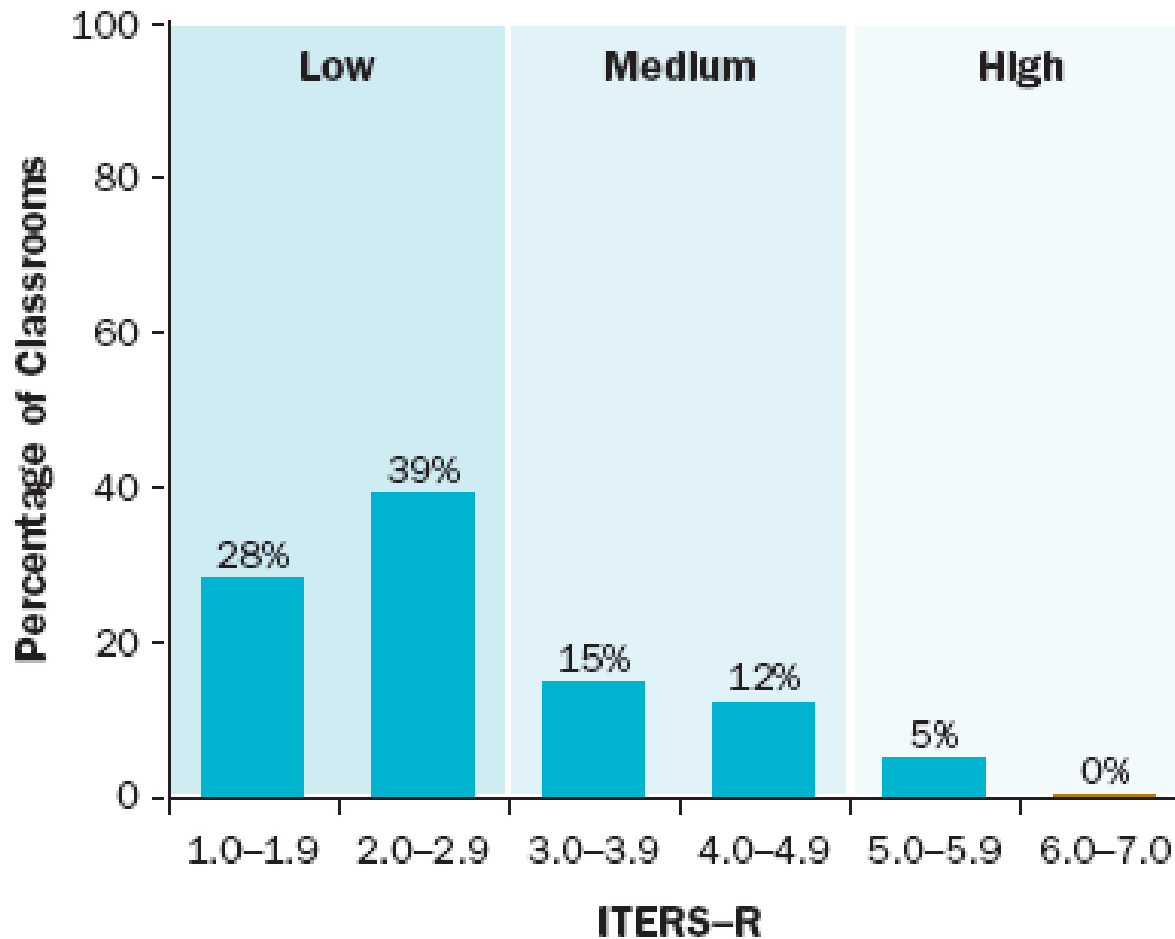
Child Care Center Findings: Quality

- **The quality of care for infants and toddlers was lower than the quality of care for preschoolers.**
 - Using the ITERS-R and the ECERS-R, 35% of preschool classrooms and 67% of infant/toddler classrooms were rated as having low quality.
 - Using the ITERS-R and the ECERS-R, only 5% of both infant/toddler and preschool classrooms were rated as “high quality.”



Child Care Center Findings: Quality

Quality of Georgia's Infant/Toddler Classrooms (ITERS-R)





Child Care Center Findings: Quality

ITERS-R Subscale Scores in Infant/Toddler Classrooms

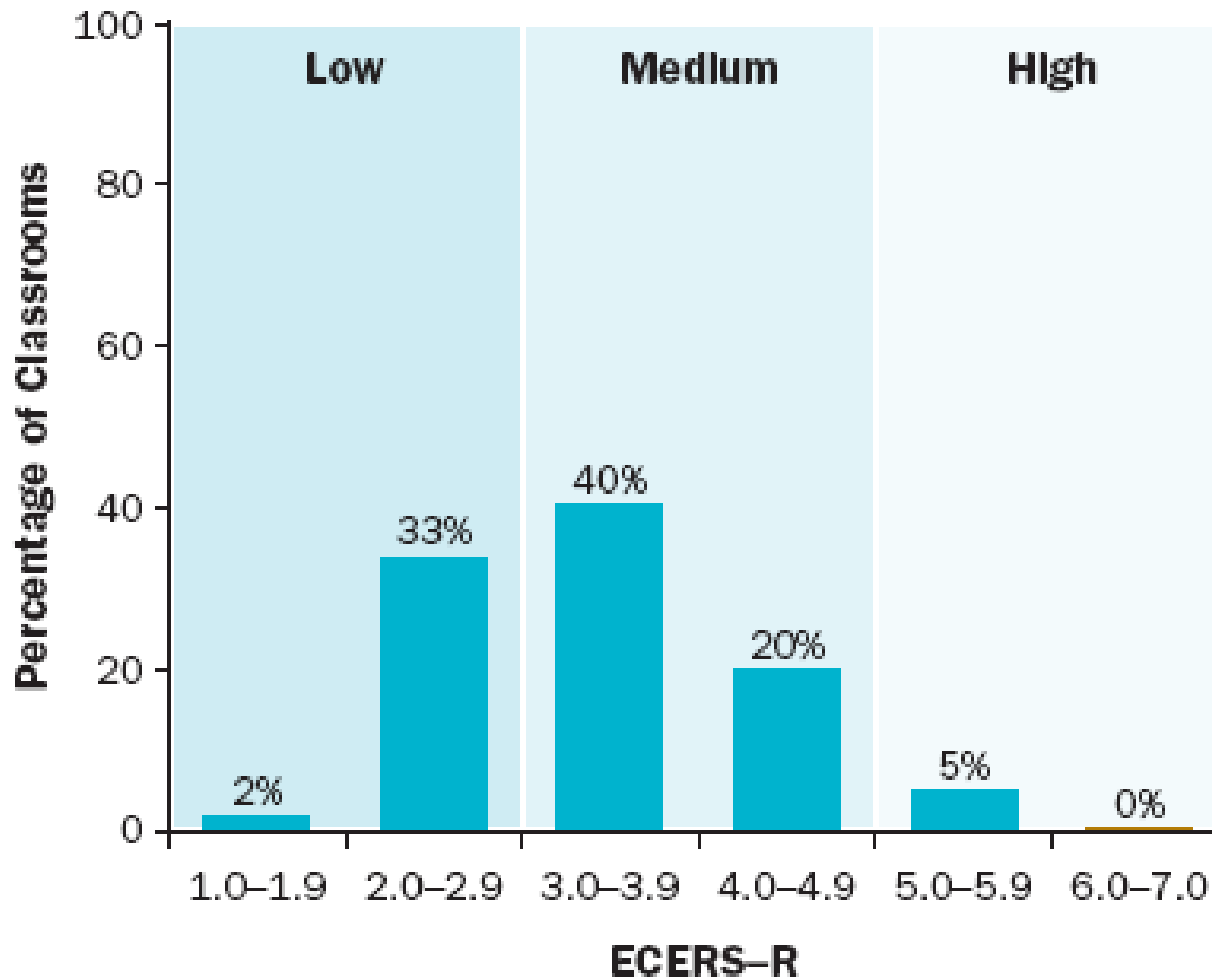
Subscale	Mean	Range
Space and Furnishings	3.52	1.40 – 6.40
Personal Care Routines	2.07	1.00 – 6.17
Listening and Talking	2.77	1.00 – 7.00
Activities	2.76	1.22 – 6.11
Interaction	3.02	1.00 – 7.00
Program Structure	2.3	1.00 – 7.00

Average ITERS-R Score: 2.74



Child Care Center Findings: Quality

Quality of Georgia's Preschool Classrooms (non GA Pre-K) (ECERS-R)





Child Care Center Findings: Quality

ECERS-R Subscale Scores in Preschool Classrooms

Subscale	Mean	Range
Space and Furnishings	3.92	2.25 – 6.38
Personal Care Routines	2.32	1.17 – 5.67
Language-Reasoning	3.73	1.50 – 7.00
Activities	3.02	1.30 – 5.80
Interaction	4.02	1.00 – 6.80
Program Structure	3.78	1.00 – 6.67

Average ECERS-R Score: 3.39



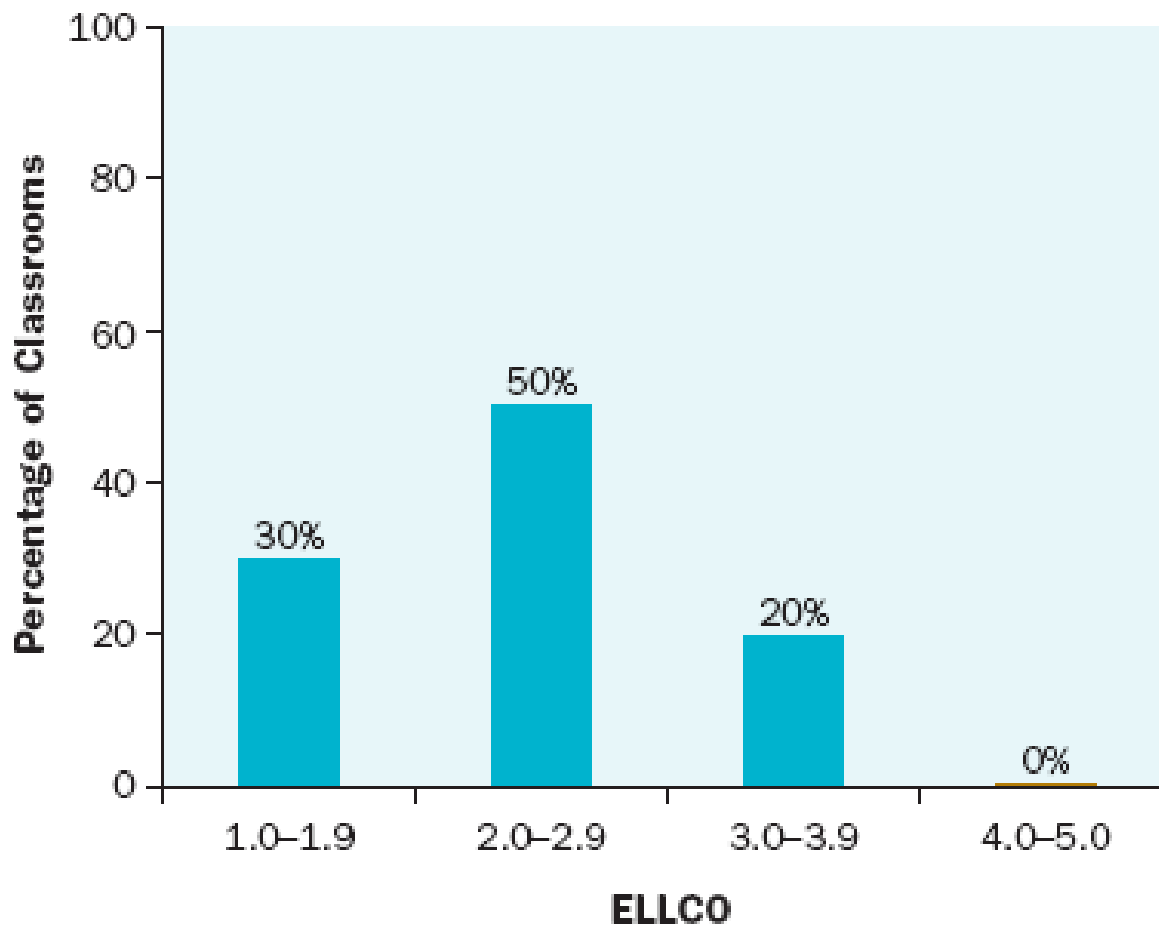
Child Care Center Findings: Language and Literacy

- Language and Literacy environment measured by the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO). The Language and Literacy subscale was used.
- Scores range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating better language and literacy environments. A score of 3 indicates a “basic” language and literacy environment.
- The average language and literacy score was 2.39.
- 80% of the preschool classrooms were rated as having less than “basic” practice supporting children’s language and literacy skills.



Child Care Center Findings: Language and Literacy

Language and Literacy Environment in Preschool Classrooms (measured by ELLCO)



**Average
ELLCO
Score: 2.39**





Child Care Center Findings: Administrative

- Findings from the director interviews, document review, and experience forms indicate that administrators and teachers in licensed child care centers are working hard to serve young children and their families.
 - Most programs met or exceeded group size and ratio.
 - Most lead and assistant teachers report more than 15 hours of training in the past year.
 - Most report using a curriculum in their program and child assessments to guide instruction.
 - Most report providing a range of services and supports to the families they serve.



Child Care Center Findings: Administrative



Highest Degree and Major of Lead Teachers

	Infant/ Toddler	Pre- school
Associate's degree with major in early childhood	7%	11%
Bachelor's degree with major in early childhood	2%	4%
Graduate degree with major in early childhood	1%	1%
Other education major, any degree	2%	5%
Other non-education major, any degree	10%	13%
No Associate's, Bachelor's, or Graduate degree	77%	67%



Child Care Center Findings: Conclusions

- The findings of this study underscore the need for improving the quality of center-based care for children across Georgia.
- Additional efforts are needed to improve the quality of infant/toddler center-based care in Georgia.
- Although multiple strategies are needed, professional development (education, training and technical assistance) is important for improving the quality of care for Georgia's young children.
- Improving the quality of care will require additional funds.



Child Care Center Findings: DECAL Initiatives

DECAL is making substantial investments to improve quality:

- Raising core health and safety licensing requirements
- Raising the credentialing requirements of child care providers, including directors, teachers and assistant teachers
- Providing numerous incentives to help providers achieve higher levels of education and higher credentials (e.g., FIRST Program)



Child Care Center Findings: DECAL Initiatives

- Providing assistance to 600+ providers who have demonstrated difficulty in maintaining compliance
- Creating the Infant Toddler Specialist Network
- Implementing the Professional Development Registry
- Initiating an alignment review of all learning standards, birth through third grade



FPG Study of Early Care and Education in Georgia: Findings from Georgia's Pre-K Program



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



About the GA Pre-K Program Report

- **Data are presented separately for centers and schools because of the different response rates in these two groups.**
 1. Response rate for centers was 48%. Includes centers without GA Pre-K.
 2. Response rate for public schools was 84%.
- **Study and sampling were designed to make overall generalizations about quality of care in child care programs (including GA Pre-K) across the state.**
- **Study and sampling were not designed to examine differences between GA Pre-K Program in centers and schools.**

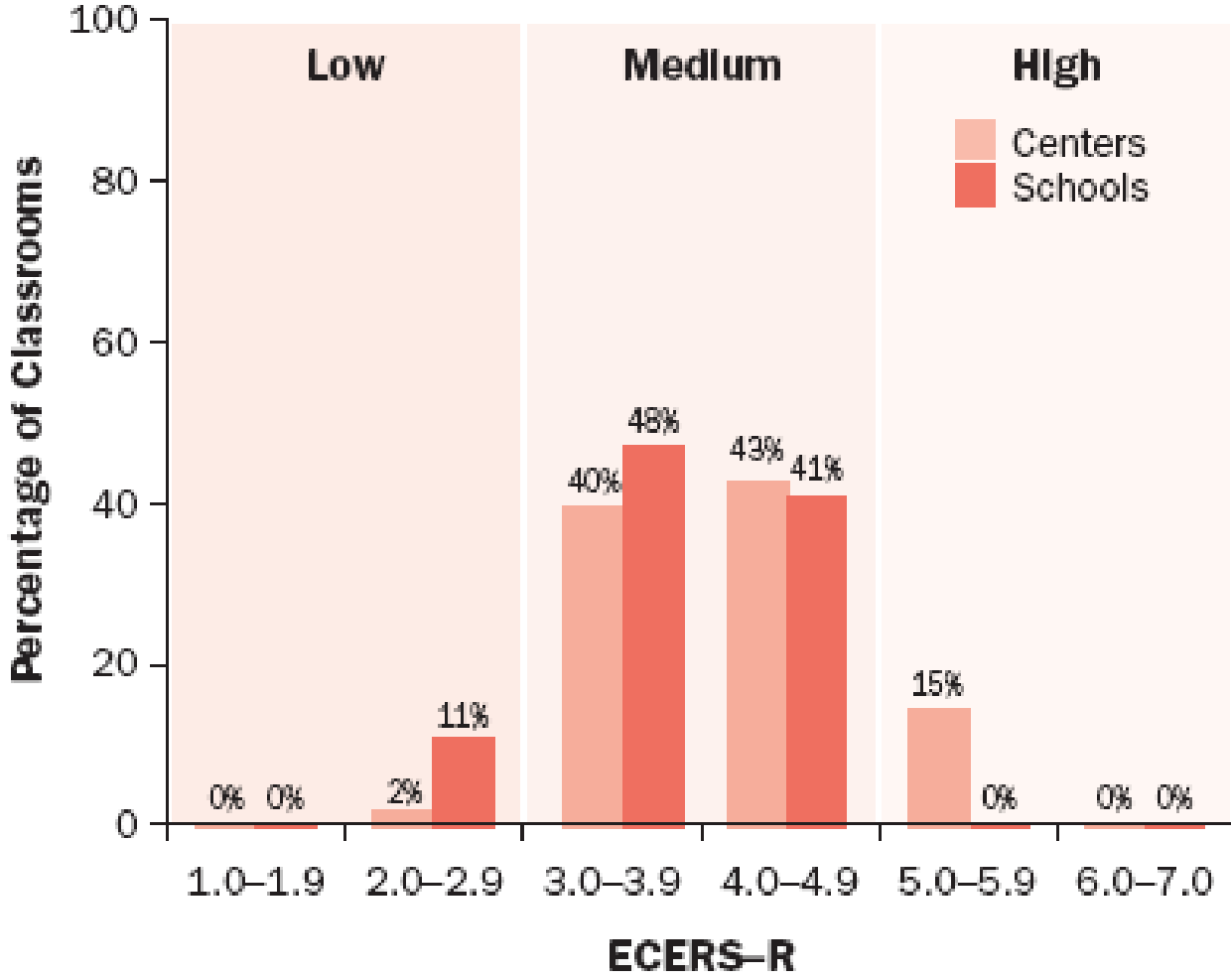


GA Pre-K Findings: Quality

- **Global quality measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) for GA Pre-K classrooms.**
- **Scores range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating higher quality.**
- **Global quality in Georgia’s Pre-K classrooms was at the “medium” level.**
 - ECERS-R Mean: 4.16 (Center); 3.74 (Schools)
 - Medium quality is characterized by a generally safe environment with access to good quality materials, although activities and interactions could be more enriching and purposeful.



GA Pre-K Findings: Quality



ECERS-R Means:
4.16 (Center)
3.74 (Schools)



GA Pre-K Findings: Quality

ECERS-R Subscale Scores in GA Pre-K Classrooms



Subscale	Georgia's Pre-K Classrooms in Centers		Georgia's Pre-K Classrooms in Schools	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Space and Furnishings	4.77	2.75 – 6.88	3.79	1.88 – 5.38
Personal Care Routines	2.27	1.00 – 4.67	1.71	1.00 – 3.50
Language- Reasoning	4.8	2.50 – 6.75	4.7	2.00 – 6.25
Activities	4.15	1.80 – 6.00	3.78	1.70 – 5.10
Interaction	4.57	2.00 – 6.80	4.96	1.40 – 7.00
Program Structure	4.78	2.67 – 7.00	4.13	2.33 – 5.75

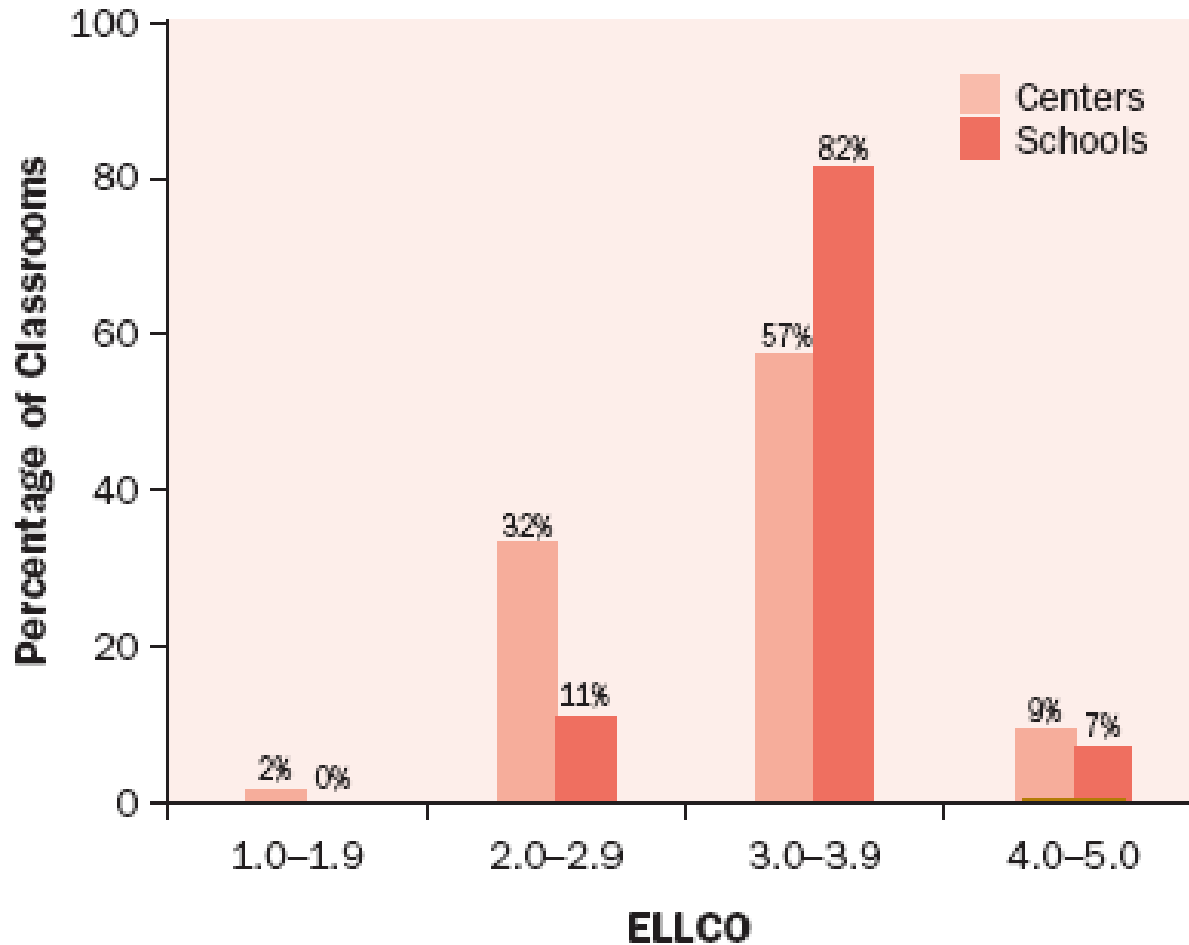


GA Pre-K Findings: Language and Literacy

- Using the ELLCO, the average language and literacy subscale score was 3.2 for centers and 3.4 for schools.
- Over 80% of Georgia’s Pre-K classes in schools and almost 60% of Georgia’s Pre-K classes in centers were rated as having “basic” practice supporting children’s language and literacy skills.



GA Pre-K Findings: Language and Literacy



**Average
ELLCO
Scores:
3.2 (centers)
3.4 (schools)**





GA Pre-K Findings: Interactional Quality

- Classroom quality specifically related to adult child interactions was measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).
- CLASS is scored on a 1 to 7 scale. Scores of 1 or 2 indicate a “low” score, scores of 3 to 5 indicate a “mid-range” score, and scores of 6 or 7 indicate a “high” score.
- CLASS is divided into three dimensions: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.
- Overall findings suggest that Georgia’s Pre-K classes are generally warm, enjoyable places for children where students are well-behaved and are interested and engaged in learning tasks.



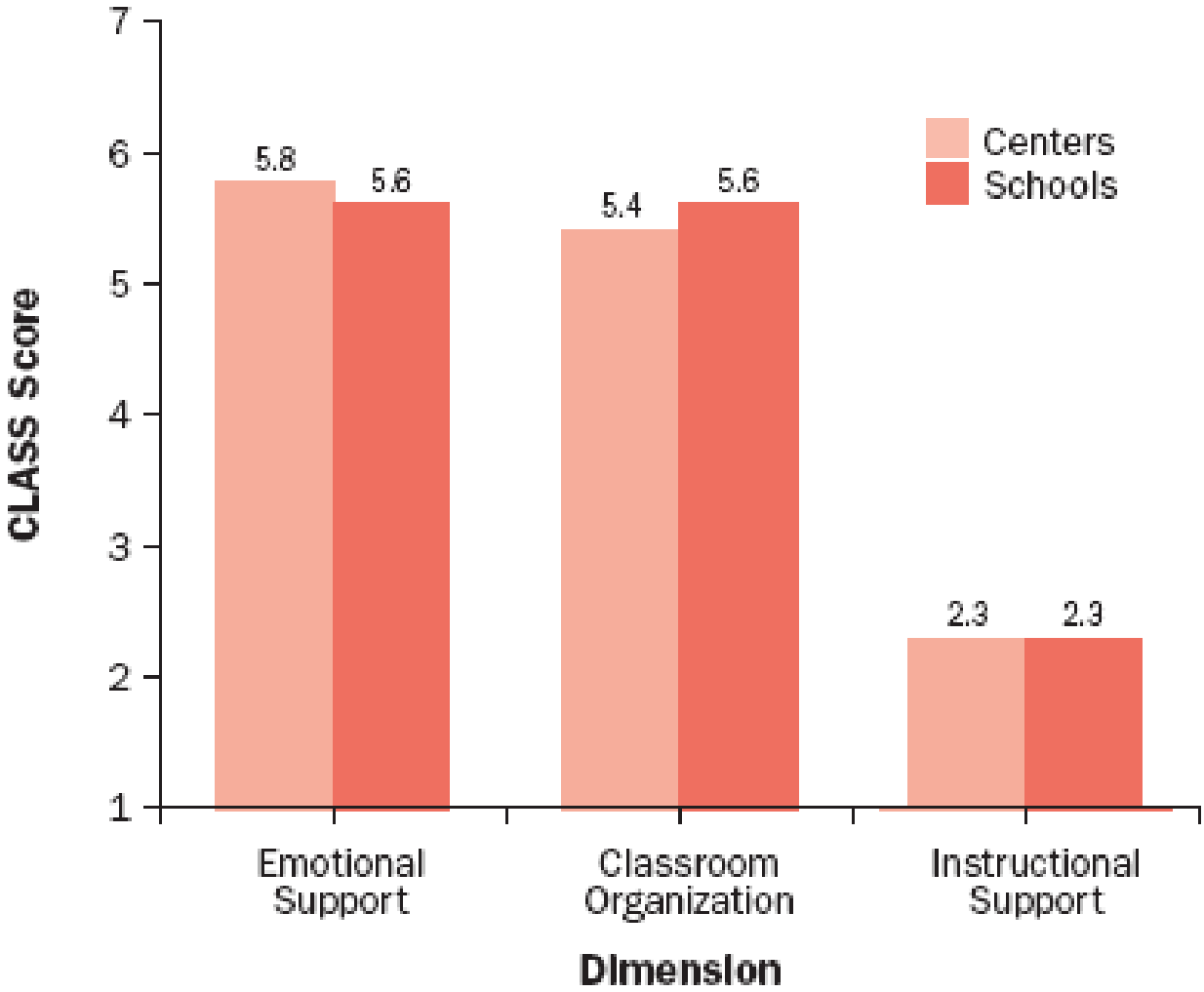


GA Pre-K Findings: Interactional Quality

- The quality of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization were generally “high.” The quality of Instructional Support was generally “low.” The average score for the first two dimensions ranged between 5.4 and 5.8 for both centers and schools. Both centers and schools scored an average of 2.3 on instructional support.
- The “low” scores on Instructional Support suggest that teachers do not offer many activities that promote analysis and reasoning, and they rarely talk with children in a way that expands their understanding of concepts or uses advanced language.
- Research suggests that many state-funded pre-kindergarten programs across the U.S., not just Georgia’s, struggle to provide high quality instructional support.



GA Pre-K Findings: Interactional Quality





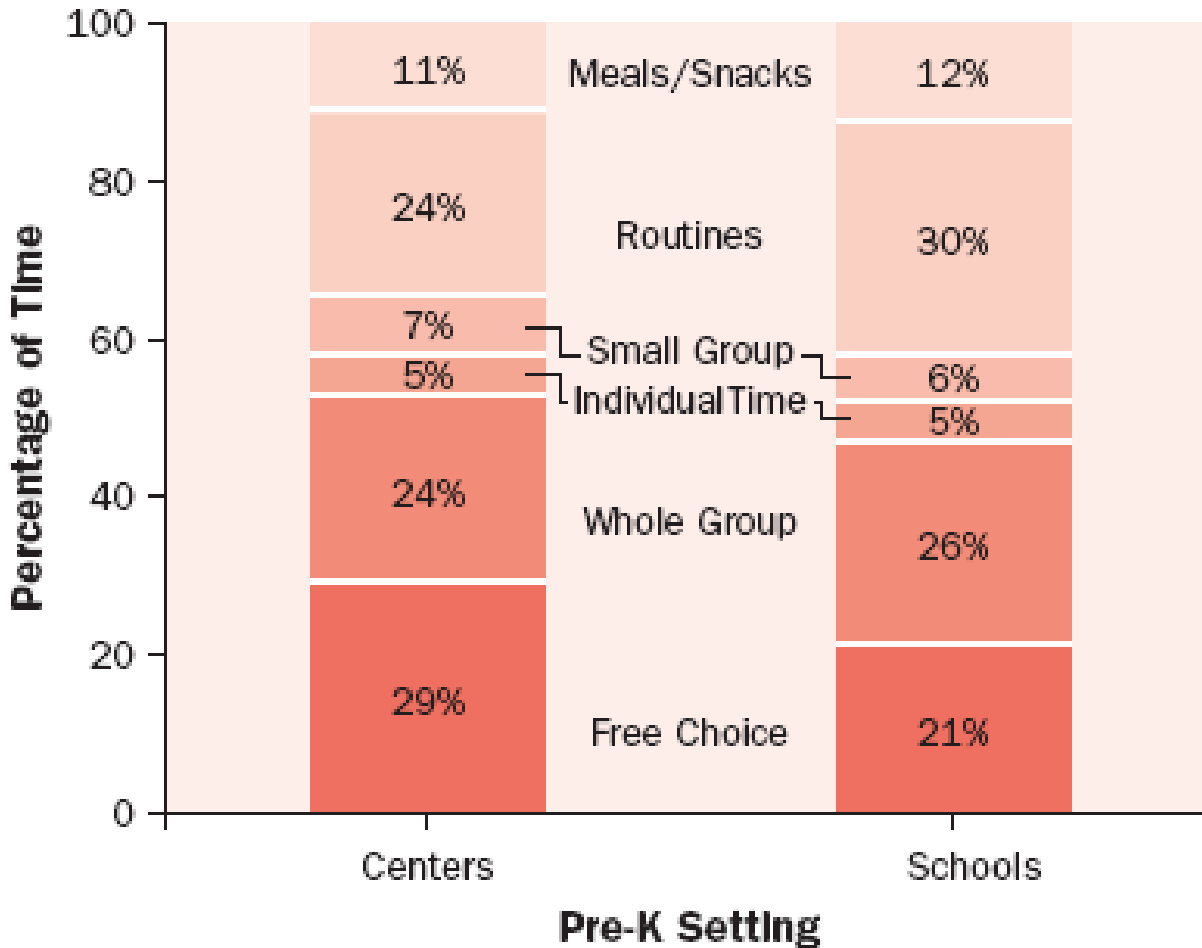
GA Pre-K Findings: Involvement and Activities

- Children's involvement in classroom activities and interactions with peers and adults was measured by the Emerging Academic Snapshot (Snapshot).
- Observer focuses on four randomly selected children and records information about their activity setting. Observer watches the activity of each child for 20 seconds, once every four minutes.
- On average, 234 observations were made per class in centers and 231 observations were made per class in schools.
- Snapshot also indicates if target child was engaged with the teacher or if the child was a participant in a group with which the teacher was working.



GA Pre-K Findings: Involvement and Activities

Percentage of Time GA Pre-K Children Spent in Various Activities



Children in center-based classrooms spent 11% of their time outside and interacted with an adult 47% of the time.

Children in school-based classrooms spent 9% of their time outside and interacted with an adult 48% of the time.





GA Pre-K Findings: Children’s Involvement

Percentage of Time GA Pre-K Children Spent in Various Learning Activities

Activity	Centers	Schools
Literacy	17%	17%
Math	15%	15%
Science	8%	8%
Social Studies	18%	16%
Art	25%	15%
Fine Motor	9%	7%
Gross Motor	7%	6%

Note: Children could be in more than one learning activity at the same time. For instance, if a child were looking at a book about planets, that was coded as both “literacy” and “science.” Therefore, the codes in this table should not be added together.





GA Pre-K Findings: Administrative

Findings from the director interviews, document review, and experience forms indicate that administrators and teachers are working hard to serve young children and their families.

- **Almost all programs met or exceeded Georgia's Pre-K Operating Guidelines for group size and ratio.**
- **A majority of directors/principals and lead teachers have at least a Bachelor's degree.**
- **Both lead and assistant teachers report participating in many hours of training in the past year.**
- **Almost all report using a curriculum in their program and using assessments to guide instruction.**
- **Almost all report providing a range of services and supports to the families they serve.**





GA Pre-K Findings: Administrative

Highest Degree and Major of Lead Teachers

	Centers	Schools
Associate's degree with major in early childhood	17%	3%
Bachelor's degree with major in early childhood	30%	36%
Graduate degree with major in early childhood	8%	36%
Other education major, any degree	17%	21%
Other non-education major, any degree	17%	3%
No Associate's, Bachelor's, or Graduate degree	12%	0%





Georgia's Pre-K: Study Comparison to Oklahoma

- Both are universal (open to all children regardless of family income).
- Both serve a large percentage of their four-year-old population.
- In key quality areas, the program in Oklahoma receives higher scores. Underscoring that point, however, is the fact that the total per child expenditure in Georgia is only 57% of that in Oklahoma.



Georgia's Pre-K: Conclusions

- **Georgia's Pre-K Program has many strengths that form a strong foundation on which to improve.**
- **Although multiple strategies are needed, professional development (training and technical assistance) is important for improving the quality of care and education for Georgia's pre-kindergartners.**
- **Improving the quality of care will require additional and strategic investments.**





Georgia's Pre-K: Conclusions

- Results indicate that, on average, Georgia's Pre-K classrooms are warm, exciting places for four year olds, but opportunities for higher levels of learning are not maximized.
- These results trend similarly to national studies of other Pre-K programs.





Georgia's Pre-K: Current Initiatives

DECAL is continually making changes to improve the quality of Georgia's Pre-K program:

- Revising how Pre-K programs are monitored
- More stringent probation process for Pre-K programs
- Offering increased language and literacy professional development
- Use of stimulus dollars to improve the quality of Pre-K environments and instruction
- Alignment review of all learning standards, birth through third grade



Study Final Points

- The lead researchers from the study commend DECAL for asking hard questions related to the quality of early learning environments and maintaining a commitment to quality even during these tough economic times.
- This study shows areas of strength across early learning environments statewide while also indicating where further investments may be needed.



References

Maxwell, K. L., Early, D. M., Bryant, D., Kraus, S., Hume, K., & Crawford, G. (2009). *Georgia study of early care and education: Child care center findings—Executive Summary*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute.

Maxwell, K. L., Early, D. M., Bryant, D., Kraus, S., Hume, K., & Crawford, G. (2009). *Georgia study of early care and education: Child care center findings*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute.

Maxwell, K. L., Early, D. M., Bryant, D., Kraus, S., Hume, K., & Crawford, G. (2009). *Georgia study of early care and education: Findings from Georgia's Pre-K Program—Executive Summary*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute.

Maxwell, K. L., Early, D. M., Bryant, D., Kraus, S., Hume, K., & Crawford, G. (2009). *Georgia study of early care and education: Findings from Georgia's Pre-K Program*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute.

