Evaluation Findings from

Georgia's 2014

Rising Kindergarten and Rising Pre-Kindergarten

Summer Transition Programs

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Introduction

Georgia is known nationally for its universal pre-kindergarten program, Georgia's Pre-K, which is available to all 4-year-old children in the state from all income levels. Since the program's inception in 1993, over 1.3 million children have been served. In 2013-2014, Georgia's Pre-K served 81,453 children, approximately 60% of all 4-year-olds in the state. Approximately 53% of classrooms were offered in private child care facilities and 46% through local school systems. Additional classes are found in Head Start centers, military bases, technical colleges, and charter schools. All Georgia's Pre-K classrooms operate for 6.5 hours a day, 5 days a week, during the traditional "school year" 9-month calendar. All programs are required to use a pre-approved curriculum and are monitored on-site at least once each year. A recent evaluation indicated that participation in Georgia's Pre-K had significant positive effects on children's language, literacy, math, and general knowledge skills (Peisner-Feinberg, Schaaf, LaForett, Hildebrandt, & Sideris, 2014).

Due to the success of Georgia's Pre-K, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has expanded its pre-k services by offering two Summer Transition Programs. Beginning in the summer of 2010, the program has been available each summer to rising kindergartners—that is, children starting kindergarten the following fall—and it has enrolled both children who did and did not attend Georgia's Pre-K during the preceding year. Starting in 2013, summer services were expanded to offer a program for rising pre-kindergartners, that is, children who would be attending Georgia's Pre-K at the end of the summer. The overall goal of both summer programs is to support children's transitions and development, particularly their early literacy skills, through the last few months before kindergarten or pre-kindergarten entry.

The purpose of this report is to summarize evaluation findings from these two summer programs in 2014. This evaluation was conducted through a partnership between DECAL and researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Child Trends. The study design, measures, and procedures were developed jointly.

Rising Kindergarten (RK) Program Description

In 2014, as in the past four years, the Rising Kindergarten (RK) Program met for six weeks in June and July. All children who attended were from low-income families and the services were free to participating families. As in past years, several specific components were in place to meet the program's overall goal of preparing children for success in kindergarten. First, each RK class size was small—with a maximum of 16 students—and each class had both a lead and an assistant teacher. Second, the RK classrooms were required to use a specific curriculum, Opening the World of Learning (OWL; Dickinson, et al., 2011), to support language development and kindergarten readiness. Third, a half-time transition coach was hired for every class to help families meet transition needs and to offer parent educational activities. Finally, DECAL partnered with the Woodruff Arts Center to offer art activities in every RK classroom.

The RK Program expanded greatly from 2012 to 2013. In 2012, it was offered in 59 classrooms in 47 sites in 18 counties across the state. In 2013, the RK Program was offered in 122 classrooms in 107 sites in 41 counties. In 2014, the RK Program reverted to approximately its original size due to budgetary constraints and was offered in 62 classrooms in 55 sites in 24 counties. A total of 1,010 children participated. Sixty-six percent (66%) of classrooms were housed in private child care facilities and 34% were located in public schools.

Table 1 (see sidebar) indicates the types of professional development provided to RK lead teachers and transition coaches in the summer of 2014. Lead teachers received one-on-one or group coaching from a Georgia's Pre-K Consultant focused on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (*CLASS;* Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) dimensions of Language Modeling and Concept Development. The *CLASS* is a widely used observational measure of teacher-child interactions. This *CLASS*-based professional development was a new support offered to RK teachers for the first time in 2014.

Each summer since its inception, there has been an evaluation of the RK Program. Participating children in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 significantly improved their skills during the six-week program (Maxwell et al., 2011, 2012, 2013; Early et al., 2014). In 2013, a classroom observation was added for the first time, using the *CLASS*. Findings from 2013 indicated

Table 1. Professional Development Activities

	Modeling & Concept Dev.	OWL Curriculum	Training on Arts	Family Engagement	CAPS	Supporting DLLs
RK Lead Teachers	✓	✓	✓			
RK Transition Coaches				✓	✓	
RPre-K Lead Teachers		✓				✓
RPre-K Transition Coaches				✓	✓	

Note: Assistant teachers did not participate in professional development.

Language Modeling and Concept Development. This professional development took place throughout the program and took two forms: focused and collaborative. Slightly over half of the RK lead teachers (56%) took part in the **focused model**, in which a Georgia's Pre-K consultant visited each teacher's classroom five times to observe instruction. Following each visit, the consultant held a one-on-one conference with the teacher to provide technical assistance on the *CLASS* dimensions of language modeling and concept development and to assist in planning the next week's instruction. The remaining RK lead teachers took part in a **collaborative model**, in which teachers received four visits from a Georgia's Pre-K consultant and then met in small groups of two to five teachers with the consultant to discuss Language Modeling and Concept Development. Teachers in centers with multiple classrooms or with several nearby schools/centers typically took part in the collaborative team model, whereas those in more remote areas with only one classroom typically took part in the focused model.

OWL Curriculum: This half-day training focused on use of the Opening the World of Learning (OWL) curriculum and took place before the start of the program. Sessions for RK teachers focused on supporting language development and kindergarten readiness. Sessions for RPre-K teachers focused on the dual language learner version of the curriculum, with special emphasis on how to have meaningful conversations with dual language learning children and building language through story reading.

Arts Alliance Training: This half-day training, provided by the Woodruff Arts Center before the start of the program, focused on incorporating arts activities into the classroom.

Family Engagement: This half-day training provided transition coaches with ideas for workshops and guidance on engaging families.

CAPS: This half-day training provided information about how to identify children who were eligible for Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS) and how to complete the needed paperwork. Only children eligible for CAPS could participate in the RK and RPre-K Programs.

Supporting Dual Language Learners: This half-day training, provided by the Rollins Center for Language and Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School, focused on culturally competent approaches to supporting dual language learners and their families, including getting to know Latino families and bilingual development in support of home language.

that *CLASS* Emotional Support and *CLASS* Classroom Organization were high, but scores for *CLASS* Instructional Support were low, a pattern of findings similar to that seen in other early childhood studies, both in Georgia and in other states. The 2013 evaluation also expanded the evaluation questions by collecting information about services and supports for parents, recruitment, and attendance.

The current evaluation again included a classroom observation, using the *CLASS,* and information about services and supports. However, instead of direct assessment of children's skills, in 2014 the evaluation included a parent questionnaire in order to learn about parents' perceptions with the summer program.

Rising Pre-Kindergarten (RPre-K) Program Description

Summer of 2014 was the second year that DECAL implemented a summer program for rising pre-kindergarteners. The Rising Pre-Kindergarten (RPre-K) Program was modeled after the RK Program, and the two programs shared several core features. Like the RK Program, the RPre-K Program met for 6 weeks in June and July. All children were from low-income families and the program was free to families. Maximum class size was even smaller in RPre-K than RK, with a maximum of 14 children per class. Like RK, each RPre-K classroom had a lead and an assistant teacher and a half-time transition coach to help families meet transition needs and to offer parent educational activities and support services. Whereas in 2013 no specific curriculum was prescribed for the RPre-K classrooms, in 2014 all RPre-K classrooms used the dual language version of the Opening the World of Learning (OWL) curriculum.

The RPre-K Program had additional requirements that all children be dual language learners (DLLs) from homes where Spanish was the predominant language and that one teacher (lead or assistant) in each classroom be a Spanish speaker. A recent evaluation of Georgia's Pre-K program suggested that additional supports were needed for Georgia's growing population of children from homes where English was not the predominant language. Peisner-Feinberg, Schaaf, and LaForett (2013) found that although Spanish-speaking DLLs made significant gains during the pre-k year, they entered and left pre-k significantly behind their monolingual English-speaking peers on all outcomes. Based on that finding, DECAL decided to provide a summer program to support children from homes where Spanish is the predominant language as they make the transition to pre-k.

As seen in Table 1 (sidebar), RPre-K lead teachers received professional development regarding working with DLLs and on use of the OWL curriculum with DLLs. These were new supports offered to RPre-K teachers for the first time in 2014.

During this second summer of implementation, DECAL funded 20 RPre-K classrooms at 13 sites in 10 counties. This represented a small expansion from 2013, when DECAL funded 19 RPre-K classrooms at 11 sites in eight counties. Approximately 275 children participated in RPre-K in 2014. Thirty-five percent (35%) were housed in private child care facilities and 65% were located in public schools.

Organization of this Report

The remainder of this report is broken into two sections. The first section describes the evaluation of the Rising Kindergarten Program; the second section describes the evaluation of the Rising Pre-Kindergarten Program.

Evaluation of the Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition Program

Purposes

The 2014 Evaluation of the Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition Program had several goals: (1) describe the quality of the teacher-child interactions in RK classrooms; (2) learn about parent's perceptions of the services they and their children received; (3) describe the services provided by the RK Programs to participating children and their families; (4) characterize the RK Program's efforts to recruit children into the programs and challenges they experienced in recruiting children; and (5) understand reasons that attendance in the RK Programs may be lower than during the school year.

Information Collected

The research team sought to collect information from all 62 RK Program classrooms, lead teachers, and assistant teachers, as well as the parents of all enrolled children and the 56 transition coaches that served these 62 classrooms. Data were collected by a team of four individuals. They were FPG employees and had been trained on proper data collection procedures by the research team.

CLASS. The *CLASS* provides an assessment of the quality of teacher-child interactions. Its ten dimensions are organized into three domains. The Emotional Support domain includes positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives. The Classroom Organization domain includes behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats. The Instructional Support domain includes concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling. Each dimension is rated from 1 to 7, with 1 or 2 indicating the classroom is "low" on that dimension; 3, 4, or 5 indicating that the classroom is in the "mid-range"; and 6 or 7 indicating the classroom is "high" on that dimension. Each RK classroom received a single *CLASS* visit from one of four observers. Because the program was only six weeks long, *CLASS* visits took place at almost any point during the program. The only days during which no visits occurred were the first three days and last two days. The observer rated the RK classroom and teacher on the 10 dimensions roughly every 30 minutes throughout the observation morning. Six 30-minute observation cycles were completed in each room. At the start of each of the six *CLASS* cycles, data collectors noted the number of children and teachers present. All observers were certified as reliable on the *CLASS* observation tool by Teachstone. For 10% of the observations, two observers were present, in order to ensure that they were continuing to score similarly.

Parent questionnaire. A parent questionnaire was sent home with each child enrolled in one of the 62 classrooms. A cover note asked that the adult who was most familiar with the RK Program respond. The questionnaire included items about why the parent elected to enroll the child in the summer program, services and supports the family received from the summer program, family participation, transition activities aimed at helping their child prepare for kindergarten, reasons for absences, and reasons other families like them might not enroll their children. The questionnaire was available in both English and Spanish. In all, 956 were distributed and 552 were completed for a response rate of 58%. Of those completed, 515 (93%) were in English and 37 (7%) were in Spanish. The English and Spanish responses have been combined for this report.

Lead and assistant teacher questionnaires. Each lead and assistant teacher was asked to complete a questionnaire with items about experience, education, and professional development. Of

the 62 leads and assistants, 61 leads and 61 assistants did so, for a response rate of 98% in each group. Each lead and assistant teacher was given $50 as a "thank you" for her or his participation.

Transition coach questionnaire. The transition coach for each classroom was also asked to complete a questionnaire. In addition to the items asked of teachers (experience, education, professional development), transition coaches were asked about workshops they had held or were planning to hold for families, opportunities for families to participate in the program, services they provided to families, how they helped children and families with the transition to kindergarten, how they recruited children for the program, barriers to recruitment, and barriers to higher attendance. A total of 56 transition coaches served these 62 classrooms and all 56 completed the questionnaire. Each transition coach was given $50 as a "thank you" for his or her participation.

Findings

Teacher-Child Interactions as Measured by the CLASS

As seen in Table 2, the mean score was 6.1 for the Emotional Support domain, 6.1 for the Classroom Organization domain, and 3.5 for the Instructional Support domain. Figures 1, 2, and 3 illustrate the distribution of scores on the three domains. On Emotional Support, two-thirds (66%) of the classrooms were rated as 6.0 or above and no classroom was rated below a 4.0. Likewise, over two-thirds of rooms (69%) were rated at 6.0 or above on Classroom Organization, and only one classroom (2%) scored below 4.0. Scores on Instructional Support were considerably lower, as seen in most studies using this tool. Almost three-quarters (74%) fell into the middle range (3.00 to 5.99). The remaining classrooms (26%) were in the low range.

Table 2 also presents *CLASS* scores from the 2013 RK Program and those from a 2011-12 evaluation of Georgia's school year Pre-K program (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2013). In 2014, Emotional Support and Classroom Organization scores were roughly comparable to RK scores from 2013, but Instructional Support scores were almost a full point higher in 2014 compared to 2013. In comparison to a recent evaluation of Georgia's Pre-K program during the 2011-12 school year (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2013), the *CLASS* scores from the 2014 RK Program classrooms were higher in all three domains. Past research has indicated that Instructional Support is important for improving children's early academic skills (Mashburn et al., 2008). Attaining scores in the mid-range on this important variable will help these programs attain their goal of improving children's school readiness skills.

Table 2. CLASS Means in the RK and Georgia's Pre-K Classrooms

	RK 2014 (*n* = 62)	RK 2013 (*n* = 60)	GA's Pre-K 2011-2012 (*n* = 100)
Emotional Support	6.1	6.0	5.5
Classroom Organization	6.1	5.9	5.2
Instructional Support	3.5	2.6	2.8

Figure 1. CLASS Emotional Support in 2014 RK Classrooms
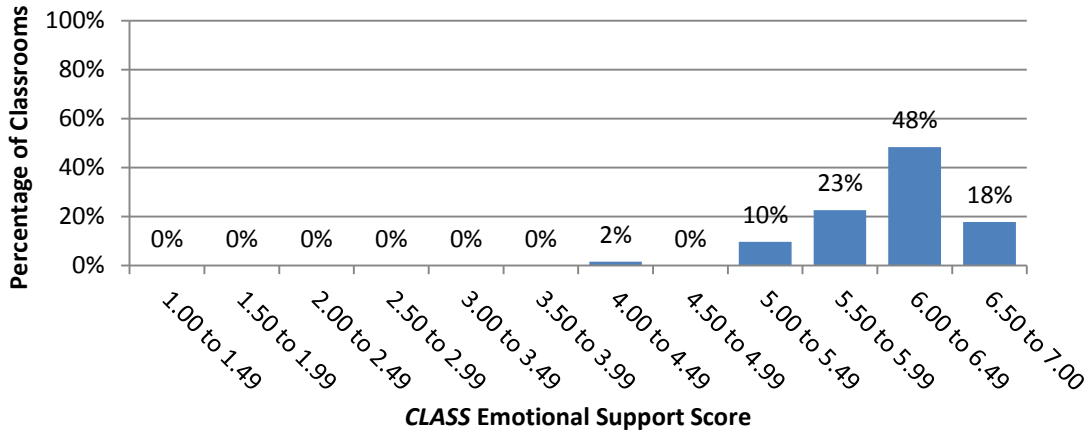
Figure 2. CLASS Classroom Organization in 2014 RK Classrooms
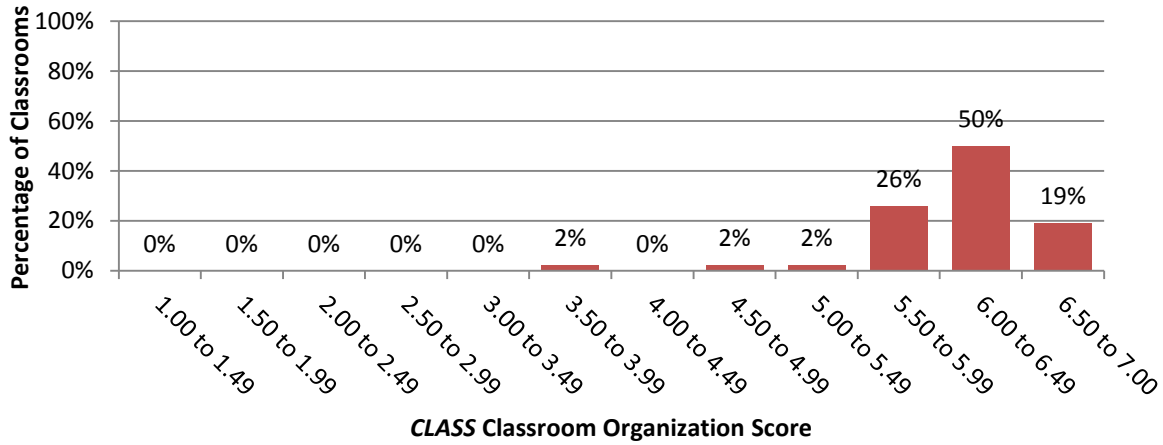
Figure 3. CLASS Instructional Support in 2014 RK Classrooms
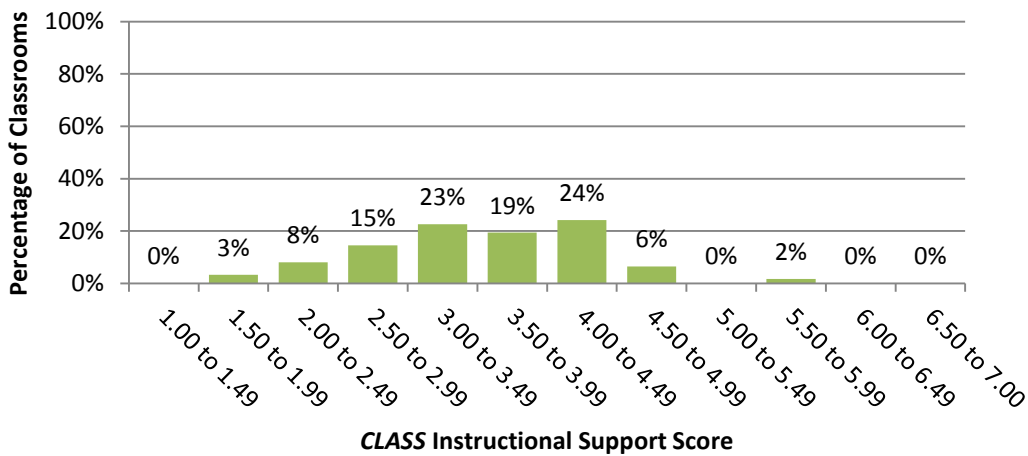
Group Size and Ratios

Data collectors counted children and adults present in each classroom six times, at the start of each *CLASS* observation cycle. Table 3 provides observed mean group size and ratios for RK Program classes. The total number of children in a classroom (i.e., group size) and the number of children per adult (i.e., ratio) are important aspects of quality. It is easier for adults to meet the health and developmental needs of each child if there are fewer children and more adults in a group. Small group size and low child-to-teacher ratios may be thought of as necessary, but not sufficient, for high-quality care and education.

In all classes, the average group sizes and ratios were at or below the maximum allowable by DECAL. These small group sizes may reflect low attendance and difficulty with recruitment in some programs. In 2014, the group sizes and ratios were identical to those found in the 2013 RK Program and smaller than those seen in a recent study of the traditional school-year Georgia's Pre-K (group size mean = 21.4; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2013), which is not surprising as that program has a larger maximum group size of 22.

Table 3. Group Size and Ratios (Number of Children per Adult) in RK Classrooms

	Mean	Range	DECAL Allowable Maximum
Group Size	12.0	5 to 16	16
Ratios	5.9	2 to 8	8

RK Parents

The parent questionnaire, which was added to the RK Program evaluation for the first time in the summer of 2014, was intended to add the parents' perspective to our understanding of the services. At most sites, it was distributed in the fourth week of the six-week program, which was the latest the research team felt was feasible to attain an acceptable response rate. Some sites received it during the third or fifth weeks, due to variance in program start dates.

Help provided by the transition coach. Because families participating in the RK Program have low incomes, they often have needs for services and supports beyond summer educational supports for their rising kindergartner. One of the roles of the transition coach was to identify community resources to meet the families' needs, and a goal of the parent questionnaire was to understand the types of supports parents received from transition coaches. The responses appear in Table 4, ordered from most to least common support. Help regarding kindergarten registration was the most common.

Table 4. RK Families' Reports of Help Provided by the Transition Coach

Did the transition coach help you find any of the following services in the community? The transition coach helped my family….	Yes
gather the required documents for kindergarten registration (for example, birth certificate, immunization record).	53%
register my child for kindergarten.	42%
find activities or events in the community for families and children.	41%
connect with the local school system due to concerns about my child's development or behavior.	30%
find services for follow-up based on my child's health screening.	27%
with translation or interpretation in the community.	20%
find child care for my other children.	19%
find services such as financial aid, health care, housing, counseling.	17%

Kindergarten transition activities. One goal of the RK Program was to smooth the transition to kindergarten for participating children and families. To learn about the transition activities the RK Programs were providing, parents were asked which activities their family had done during the summer. Responses appear in Table 5, ordered from most to least common. As seen in that table, provision of written information and supplies were the most common, whereas visiting and meeting with teachers were much less common.

Table 5. RK Parents' Reports of Activities to Get Ready for Kindergarten

Some programs work with families to help them get ready for kindergarten. Which things did your family do this summer?	Yes
Received written materials about my child's transition to kindergarten.	63%
Received information about my child to take to kindergarten this fall.	58%
Visited the school/center where my child will go to kindergarten.	56%
Received school supplies to take to kindergarten.	52%
Met with the teacher my child will have for kindergarten.	29%
My child visited the classroom where she or he will attend kindergarten.	29%
My child met the teacher she or he will have for kindergarten.	25%

Family workshops and activities. Another role of the transition coach was to organize family workshops and activities. The RK transition coaches were asked to organize six workshops during the summer and they reported offering, or planning to offer, an average of 6.6 workshops. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of parents reported attending at least one, and among those who attended at least one,

they reported attending an average of 2.9; however the program was still underway when the questionnaire was distributed, so parents may have attended more workshops after completing the questionnaire.

Parents who reported having attended at least one workshop were asked to respond to a series of statements about the workshops using a 5-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = mildly disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = mildly agree, and 5 = strongly agree. As seen in Table 6, parents had a generally favorable view of the family workshops and activities, scoring all items between mildly and strongly agree. It is important to remember, however, that these opinions come only from those who attended. Families who did not attend might have had different views of the importance of the topics, convenience of the times and locations, and sense of being welcome.

Table 6. RK Parents' Views of Family Workshops and Activities

Thinking about the family workshops and activities you attended, please answer the following questions.	Average Rating
The topics of the workshops/activities were interesting and important.	4.7
The way the information was presented was useful.	4.7
The workshops/activities were offered at times and places that made it easy for me to attend.	4.5
I learned a lot from the workshops/activities attended.	4.6
I felt welcome at the workshops/activities.	4.8

Note*: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = mildly disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = mildly agree, and 5 = strongly agree

Family participation. Parents' involvement in school is a critical predictor of school success (Graue, Clements, Reynolds, & Niles, 2004; McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green, 2012), and parent involvement activities have been associated with improvements in parent-teacher communication and parents' increased feelings of efficacy in helping their child in school (Gillanders, McKinney, & Ritchie, 2012). In addition, by beginning to participate when their children are young, families increase their opportunities to gain the specific skills and knowledge needed to engage with educational institutions and advocate for their children (National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, 2014). For these reasons, families were asked about ways they had been involved in the RK Program. Table 7 shows their responses, from most to least common.

Table 7. RK Parents' Reports of Family Participation

Which of the following did you or someone from your family do in your child's program this summer?	Yes
Went to a social activity for families at school/center, like pizza night	42%
Ate with my child's class	30%
Helped out in the classroom	28%
Helped out on field trips	26%
Went to an activity for families in the community, like a picnic at a local park or bowling alley	26%
Helped with jobs outside of the classroom (for example, helped with laundry or made snacks)	16%
Shared a family or cultural tradition with my child's class	13%
Read to the children in class	12%

Why parents enroll their children. In order to improve outreach efforts, DECAL was interested to learn why parents elect to enroll their children in the RK Program. Parents were given a list of possible reasons and asked to indicate how important each was on a 5-point scale where 1 = not at all important, 3 = somewhat important, and 5 = very important. Their reasons appear in Table 8, from most to least important. Educational goals such as learning new things and getting ready for school were the highest rated.

Table 8. RK Parents' Reasons for Enrolling

How important was each of the following in deciding to enroll your child in the summer program?	Average Rating
To help my child learn new things.	4.9
To help my child get ready for kindergarten.	4.9
To improve my child's English skills.	4.3
To help my child make friends and learn to get along with other children.	4.3
The Transition Coach contacted me and thought it would be good for my child.	4.0
Because it seemed like fun for my child.	3.8
I needed child care for my child this summer.	2.7

Note: 1 = not at all important, 3 = somewhat important, and 5 = very important

Reasons for not enrolling. Although all parents responding to the survey had enrolled their child in RK, the research team thought they might have some idea of why other eligible families do not enroll. To that end, they were asked: "Why do you think some eligible families decided not to enroll their child in the summer program?" Parents responded using a 5-point scale where 1 = not a reason, 3 = part of the reason, and 5 = a major reason. Table 9 shows the average responses, ordered from highest to lowest.

Table 9. RK Parents' Beliefs About Why Other Families Did Not Enroll

Why do you think some eligible families decided not to enroll their child in the summer program?	Average Rating
Some eligible families did not know about the program.	3.4
Families found out about the program too late and already had other arrangements for summer.	3.1
The program is only 6 weeks, and many families need child care all summer.	3.0
Some families can't get their child to the program (for example, because they don't have a car).	3.0
Families need child care for more hours each day.	2.7
Some families think their child is too young for school.	1.8

Note: 1 = not a reason, 3 = part of the reason, and 5 = a major reason

Reasons for absences. In past years, some RK classes have experienced problems with high absenteeism. For that reason, parents were asked if their child had been absent during the summer and if so, why. Fifty-two percent (52%) of parents reported that their child had been absent at least once and 10% of parents reported their child had been absent four or more times. Table 10 indicates the reasons that were cited for absences among all parents and among those whose child was absent four or more times, from most to least common[1]. Child illness or medical appointments was the most common reason for both groups. Parents whose child had been absent four or more times were more likely than those with fewer absences to cite family trips or visitors, transportation, program hours, and older siblings as reasons for the absences.

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[1] Parents were asked to rate each reason from 1 = not a reason to 3 = part of the reason to 5 = a major reason. This table presents the percentage of parents who rated each reason above a 1.

Table 10. RK Parents' Reports of Reasons for Child Absences

If your child has been absent, what were the reasons?	All	Four or More Reported Absences
My child was sick or had medical appointments.	66%	71%
Family trips and summer visitors.	34%	56%
Family members' work schedules change, and we sometimes don't need child care.	13%	12%
We don't always have a way to get to the program.	12%	16%
The program's hours do not meet my family's schedule.	9%	18%
My older children were not in school this summer and the younger child wanted to stay home with them.	9%	16%
We moved this summer.	6%	4%

Parents of RK children were also asked two open-ended questions. The first question asked them to provide suggestions for improving the program, while the second gave them an opportunity to share what they or their child liked best about the program. Of the 552 parents who returned the questionnaire, 35% responded with suggested improvements, and 87% answered the question about what they or their child liked best about the RK Program.

Parents' suggestions often reflected a desire to expand the program, including extending the hours of the school day, offering the program for more weeks, and/or expanding the number of classes (26%). Nineteen percent (19%) of the parents requested more advertising about the program and/or earlier notification to parents and community about the program. Other common responses included: needing more assistance with transportation (12%), requesting more regular information from the teacher or transition coach about their child's progress (11%), and more learning or educational activities (i.e., less play; 10%). A few parents mentioned improvements needed in workshops (6%); half of these (3%) indicated that the times of the workshops conflicted with their work schedule.

Parents of children in the RK Program had very favorable words to say about the program. Areas they or their child liked best included: learning (i.e., learning new things through units on family, animals, numbers, colors, alphabet; writing name; improving speech; learning English; 35%), playing

Parents were enthusiastic about the RK Program. When asked what they or their child liked best, some parents responded:

"This program was invented for my child, so that she will be ready for kindergarten."

"How much my child has learned in a short time. I'm so happy."

"It really encouraged my daughter to enjoy school and learning."

"She has grown because of the wonderful teachers' help in finding her way."

with new friends (21%), participating in the classroom activities (i.e., story time, games; 19%), enjoying their teachers (14%), getting the children ready for kindergarten (13%), and going on the field trips (13%).

RK Lead Teachers (n = 61)

Education. All lead teachers (100%) met DECAL's requirement that they have at least a Bachelor's degree and a high proportion exceeded that requirement. (See Figure 4.)

Major and courses taken. Close to three-quarters (74%) of the RK lead teachers had a degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree) in early childhood education. Other common majors included some other type of education (e.g., elementary, special education; 33%) or child development, human development, or family and consumer sciences (7%). Regardless of major, all lead teachers (100%) had taken at least one college course in early childhood/child development.

Figure 4. RK Lead Teachers' Education

Ed.D. or Ph.D. 7%

Bachelor's 33%

Master's 47%

Some graduate work 13%
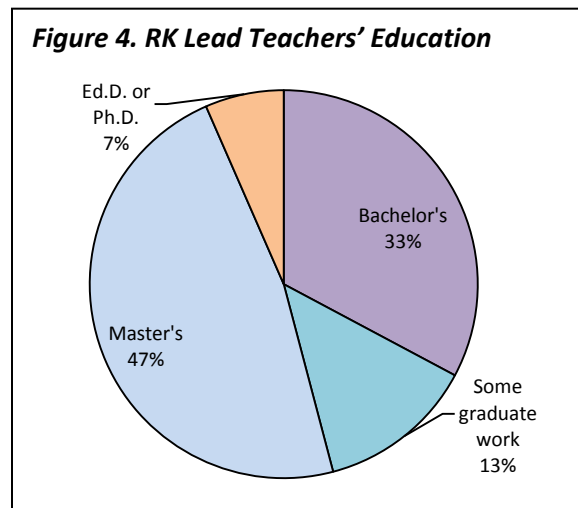
Teacher certificates. Most (70%) RK lead teachers reported having a Georgia teaching certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission.

Experience. On average, RK lead teachers reported having 5.6 years of experience as a lead teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom (*median* = 4.0, *range* = 0 to 22) and 0.7 years of experience as an assistant teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom (*median* = 0, *range* = 0 to 11). For most, this was their first summer teaching in the RK Program (70%). For 20%, it was their second summer; for 8%, it was their third summer; and for 2%, it was their fourth summer.

Professional development. Over three-quarters of the lead teachers reported having received professional development in the past year in early language and/or literacy (79%). Professional development in the past year on other topics was less common: socio-emotional development (49%), cultural diversity (33%), math (41%), working with DLLs (25%), and building partnerships with Latino families (11%).

Home visits. Most (87%) of the RK lead teachers had not visited any of the homes of their children. The remainder (13%) reported they have visited some of the children's homes, but none of the teachers indicated they had visited most or all of the children's homes.

RK Assistant Teachers (n = 61)

     Education. Assistant teachers in Georgia's RK Program generally had some college (39%) or an Associate's degree (29%; see Figure 5).

     Major and courses taken. Over one-quarter (28%) of RK assistant teachers had a degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree) in early childhood education. Other majors included some other type of education (e.g., elementary, special education; 11%) or child development, human development, or family and consumer sciences (2%). Regardless of major, most had taken at least one college course in early childhood/child development (77%).

Figure 5. RK Assistant Teachers' Education
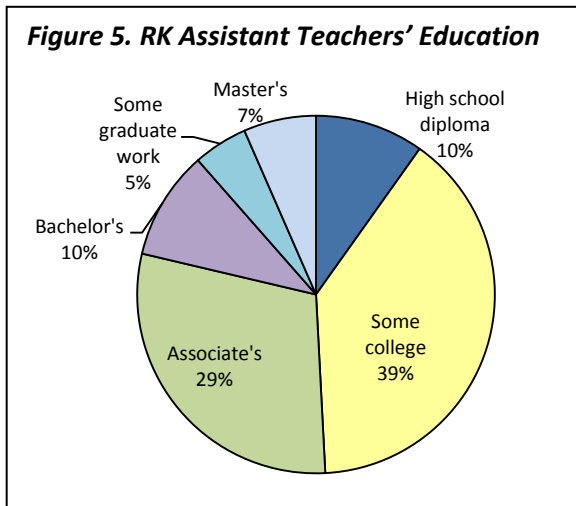
     Teacher certificates. Eleven percent (11%) of RK assistant teachers reported having a Georgia teaching certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission.

     Experience. On average, RK assistant teachers reported having 4.9 years of experience as an assistant teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom (*median* = 3.0, *range* = 0 to 23) and 1.3 years of experience as a lead teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom (*median* = 0, *range* = 0 to 13). For most (66%), this was their first summer teaching (as a lead or assistant) in the RK Program. For 25%, it was their second summer; for 8%, it was their third summer; and for 2%, it was their fourth summer.

     Professional development. Over half of the RK assistant teachers reported having received professional development in the past year in early language and/or literacy (51%). Professional development in the past year on other topics was less common: socio-emotional development (39%), cultural diversity (40%), math (43%), working with DLLs (22%), and building partnerships with Latino families (12%).

     Home visits. Most (86%) of the RK assistant teachers had not visited any of the homes of their children. The remainder (14%) reported they have visited some of the children's homes, but none of the assistant teachers indicated they had visited most or all of the children's homes.

RK Transition Coaches (n = 56)

  Education. RK transition coaches generally held at least a Bachelor's degree (86%; see Figure 6).

  Major and Courses Taken. Just under one-third (32%) of RK transition coaches had a degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's) in early childhood education. Other common majors included some other type of education (e.g., elementary, special education; 25%) or child development, human development, or family and consumer sciences (7%). Regardless of major, most RK transition coaches reported having taken at least one college course in early childhood/child development (94%).

Figure 6. RK Transition Coaches' Education

- Master's 45%
- Some college 2%
- Associate's 12%
- Bachelor's 25%
- Some graduate work 16%
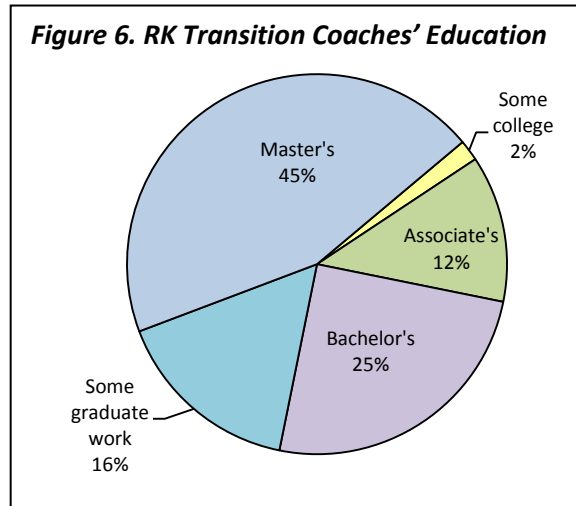
  Experience. For most RK transition coaches (55%), 2014 was their first summer serving as a transition coach. For 25%, it was their second summer; for 14%, it was their third summer; and for 5%, it was their fourth summer.

  Parent conferences. Many RK transition coaches reported scheduling parent conferences once (32%) or twice (26%) during the summer; although a substantial group (42%) reported that they do not schedule parent conferences.

  Home visits. Over half (55%) of the RK transition coaches reported having visited some of the children's homes, but only 5% reported having visited the homes of all the children.

  Workshops and family activities. On average, RK transition coaches reported that they had or planned to have 6.6 (*range* = 4 to 21) family workshops or activities during the summer, which is a little more than one per week during the six-week program. The most common topics included: early literacy (100%); kindergarten (how to enroll, what to expect, etc.; 100%); parenting and behavior management (73%); art activities to do with children (70%); child development (61%); early math (61%); nutrition, food preparation, and food safety (57%); Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS; 51%).

  Family participation. RK transition coaches were asked what kinds of opportunities there were for families to participate in the RK Program. Table 11 shows their responses, ordered from most to least common in 2014, as well as the responses from the 2013 questionnaire. Like last year, in 2014 families were offered many opportunities to participate in the program, with the most common types being helping in the classroom, reading to the children, eating with the class, and helping on field trips.

Table 11. Opportunities for Families to Participate in RK Programs

What kinds of opportunities are there or will there be this summer for families to participate in your program?	Yes	
	2013	**2014**
Help out in the classroom as needed	93%	95%
Read to the children in the class	92%	91%
Eat with child's class or help at meals	84%	89%
Help out on field trips	83%	82%
Social activity for families at school/center (e.g., pizza night)	82%	71%
Share a family or cultural tradition with their child's class	70%	58%
Social activity for families in the community (e.g., picnic at a local park, bowling)	63%	45%
Help with jobs outside of the classroom (e.g., help with laundry, prepare snacks/materials)	41%	30%

Services and supports provided to families. RK transition coaches were asked what kinds of supports their RK Program provides to families and how they help families to find services and resources in the community. Tables 12 and 13 show the 2013 and 2014 responses, ordered from most to least common in 2014. Almost all transition coaches reported coordinating community services and helping to locate events for families with young children; most also provided reading activity packs to take home and helped with finding social services, mental health services and school-age care.

Table 12. Services Provided to Families in RK Programs

Does your program provide any of the following materials or services to families?	Yes	
	2013	**2014**
Coordination of community services for families (e.g., provide information about services, assist families in contacting services, provide follow-through with families)	100%	95%
Reading activity packs to take home	81%	86%
Lending library for families	72%	65%
Translation of your program's written materials for families who do not speak English	62%	52%
Distribution of translated materials about community services (in a language other than English)	60%	46%
Interpretation at program events, activities, conferences, or meetings for families who do not speak English	47%	38%

Table 13. Finding Services in the Community for Families in RK Programs

Does your program help families find services or resources in the community to help with any of the following things?	Yes	
	2013	**2014**
Activities or events in the community for families and children	100%	93%
Social service needs (financial, health care, housing, etc.)	97%	86%
Mental health needs (counseling, therapy, support groups)	86%	85%
School-age care	85%	91%
Translation or interpretation in the community for families who do not speak English	62%	68%

Transition activities. To understand how programs are helping children and families make the transition to kindergarten, RK transition coaches were asked about services they provide. The most common practice was providing written materials to families about transitions in general (100%). Other common practices included: providing children with school supplies to take to kindergarten (75%); sharing information about the child with the new school or classroom (71%); giving parents the child's portfolio to take to kindergarten (65%); and inviting kindergarten teacher to visit preschool classroom (56%). Less common practices included meeting with parents and kindergarten teacher together (41%) and taking children to the kindergarten (25%).

Recruitment strategies. In order to understand how programs find children for the RK Program, transition coaches were asked about the strategies they used and the agencies and community groups with whom they collaborated. The 2013 and 2014 responses appear in Tables 14 and 15, ordered from most to least common in 2014.

Table 14. Recruitment Strategies Used in RK Programs

Which of the following strategies did you use to recruit children to participate in your program this summer?	Yes	
	2013	**2014**
Word of mouth	97%	95%
Contacted families with children on the Georgia's Pre-K wait list	NA	91%
Fliers or posters here at our center/school	88%	89%
Fliers or posters elsewhere in the community (e.g., grocery stories, churches, social service agencies)	84%	85%
Sent home information to families in our regular (school-year) early childhood program(s)	89%	82%
Sent home information via other early education programs	68%	73%
Sent home information via local elementary schools	71%	71%
Contacted families with children on the kindergarten enrollment list	NA	63%
Open house before the program began	66%	59%
Road signs or signs in front of our site	33%	43%
Information on our program's website	34%	35%
Contacted families whose children had attended Georgia's Pre-K for only part of the year	NA	34%
Newspaper advertisements or public service announcements	34%	30%
Radio advertisements or public service announcements	9%	22%

Note: NA=not asked

Table 15. Agencies or Community Groups that Collaborated in Recruitment in RK Programs

What agencies or community groups did you collaborate with to recruit applicants to your program this year?	Yes	
	2013	**2014**
Schools	86%	89%
Other Georgia's Pre-K Program site(s)	83%	84%
Other child care facilities	77%	72%
Faith-based organizations, church/temple bulletins	51%	71%
Neighborhood and community centers	69%	70%
Head Start Centers	NA	59%
Department of Family & Children's Services	53%	57%
Libraries	NA	52%
Parks and recreation centers	42%	50%
Local public health center(s) or local mental health center(s)	50%	46%
Pediatricians' offices	42%	46%
Family Connection Agency or family resource center	47%	44%
Child care resource and referral agencies	48%	41%
Ethnic/cultural organizations	27%	26%
Developmental evaluation center(s)	11%	24%
Local interagency councils	20%	22%
Domestic violence shelter(s)	12%	16%

Note: NA=not asked

RK transition coaches were also asked three open-ended questions about their recruitment strategies. The first simply asked them to note any other strategies they had used, in addition to those listed above. Consistent with the responses in the closed-ended options, about 61% of transition coaches indicated that they contacted local community resources (e.g., churches, health department, YMCA, parks and recreation departments, community college), made personal visits to local businesses (e.g., grocery stores, laundromats), or walked door-to-door in their neighborhoods.

Ninety-five percent (95%) of RK transition coaches reported that they made a special effort to recruit children who had not gone to Georgia's Pre-K. The second open-ended question asked them to describe how they recruited those children. As in 2013, the responses in 2014 described strategies similar to ones used to recruit all children. Another, more novel, recruitment approach was following up with the parents of children who scored low on the kindergarten screening instrument (about 10%).

The final open-ended question about recruitment asked which strategies and collaborations transition coaches found most effective and why. Over one-fourth (27%) of the RK transition coaches indicated that the most effective recruitment strategy was word of mouth, generally because of the

trust that families have with teachers, other families, and resources in the community. Additionally, 24% of RK transition coaches found contacting families directly using flyers, phone calls, or visiting door-to-door to be very effective because of the rapport built through the direct communication with parents. RK transition coaches also reported other effective strategies included: using waitlists for Georgia's Pre-K (22%), contacting personnel at the elementary schools (15%), and contacting other community resources (13%). Two of the transition coaches described social media as very effective.

   Challenges to recruitment. Coaches responded to the items in Table 16 using a 5-point scale, where 1 = not a challenge, 3 = somewhat of a challenge, and 5 = a major challenge. Most RK transition coaches reported few challenges in recruiting children. Even the highest rated challenges—process started too late and lack of transportation—were rated lower than "somewhat" on this scale. On all items, the most common (i.e., modal) response was "not a challenge."

Table 16. Challenges to Recruitment for RK Programs

How large of a challenge were each of the following in recruiting children to participate?	Average Rating	
	2013	2014
The process started too late. Families had already made summer plans for their children by the time we found out we would have a summer program.	NA	2.6
Families lack transportation so they can't get their children to the program.	2.5	2.4
DECAL does not advertise enough.	2.3	2.2
Families find the application process burdensome (too many forms, applications only accepted during limited hours).	2.2	2.1
Many eligible families do not want their children in a formal early childhood program.	1.8	1.9
We do not have money for advertising.	2.0	1.8
Eligible families move a lot making them hard to locate.	1.9	1.8
Many eligible families do not speak English making it difficult for us to communicate with them.	1.7	1.8
The program's hours do not meet the needs of many working families.	1.5	1.7
The six-week program does not meet the needs of many working families.	1.7	1.6
Many families believe they have to pay for the program.	1.7	1.6
We do not know how to identify and approach families who might be eligible.	1.5	1.3

Note: 1 = not a challenge, 3 = somewhat of a challenge, and 5 = a major challenge; NA=not asked

   An open-ended question asked RK transition coaches if they experienced any other recruitment challenges, especially for children who had not gone to Georgia's Pre-K. Consistent with the closed-

ended responses, the open-ended responses displayed no strong pattern. The most common responses (16% each) mentioned that the recruitment process starting too late, that they had difficulty in identifying eligible children, and that program did not meet the parents' needs (i.e., length of day too long, no afterschool care, other siblings at different site). Several transition coaches mentioned that parents were reluctant to enroll their child because they had no previous experience with a formal early childhood program (23%). Four transition coaches specifically stated that they did not have any challenges in recruiting. One even indicated that two more classes could have been filled if they had been available.

Attendance. In past summers, DECAL had noted that attendance was lower during the summer than during the school year. One goal of this evaluation was to determine why. RK transition coaches were asked "What do you think prevents children who are enrolled in your program from attending more often?" They responded to the items below using a 5-point scale, where 1 = not a barrier, 3 = somewhat of a barrier, and 5 = a major barrier. Table 17 lists the average responses for 2013 and 2014, from the highest to lowest in 2014.

Table 17. Barriers to Attendance in RK Programs

What do you think prevents children who are enrolled in your program from attending more often?	Average Rating	
	2013	2014
Family trips and summer visitors interfere.	3.6	3.0
Some children had older siblings who were not in summer school, so the younger children wanted to stay home with them.	NA	3.0
Families do not think of the summer program as 'real school.'	3.0	2.7
Families lack transportation so they can't get their children to the program.	2.5	2.3
Illness or medical appointments.	NA	2.2
Parents have irregular work schedules.	2.0	2.1
The families of participating children move often.	1.8	1.8
Program hours do not meet families' schedules.	1.7	1.8

Note: 1 = not a barrier, 3 = somewhat of a barrier, and 5 = a major barrier ; NA=not asked

An open-ended question asked RK transition coaches if there were other issues that prevented children from having better attendance. About two-thirds (66%) of the transition coaches responded. Consistent with the responses in the closed-ended options, coaches mentioned family trips and summer plans (16%) and families not thinking of the summer program as "real school" (16%). Several transition coaches (14%) included comments that indicated parents' lack of cooperation or interest (i.e., "apathy among parents," "parents don't feel like getting up to get them dressed for pick-up") prevented children from attending more often. Similar comments were noted in 2013. These types of comments that blame parents are concerning because they seem to indicate a lack of understanding for many of the challenges low-income families may face. Five transition coaches stated specifically that there were no attendance issues at their sites.

Conclusions and Recommendations from the Rising Kindergarten Program Evaluation

Encouragingly, children in the 2014 RK Program experienced Instructional Support in the middle range; almost a full point higher on a 7-point scale than the Instructional Support experienced by children in the 2013 program. This is important because past research has indicated that Instructional Support is more strongly linked to children's academic gains than other components of teacher-child interactions (Mashburn et al., 2008). It is not possible to know if the professional development provided in the summer of 2014 caused this improvement. Only 6 of the 62 lead teachers taught both summers, so it is possible that the 2014 teachers were simply stronger in Instructional Support from the outset or that some other factor led to the higher scores in 2014. A more rigorous evaluation would be needed to determine the effectiveness of the professional development in changing teacher practices in the summer RK program. For the future, DECAL should continue to ensure that its professional development activities are aligned with the program's goals of providing a high-quality summer educational experience.

As in past years, in 2014 group sizes and child-to-adult ratios were at or below DECAL's maximum allowable and within the guidelines endorsed by the National Institute for Early Education Research (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012). Lead teachers and transition coaches were generally well educated with specialized training in early childhood. All these structural features are important to maintain because they contribute to the program's ability to maximize instructional impact and attend to the individual needs of participating children.

> ***Pride in the Rising Kindergarten Program.*** RK transition coaches responded heartily to the question "What are you most proud of about your program?" All of the transition coaches answered this question. The amount of growth and excitement among the children in this short six-week program was echoed many times with answers like:
>
> *"When parents tell me they see a growth in their child and that they're excited about going to school."*
>
> *"Seeing students grow and being happy about coming to school."*
>
> Additionally, transition coaches felt the workshops were successful with comments such as:
>
> *"Great parent meeting and parent meeting attendance."*
>
> *"Parents seem to enjoy the content and conversation."*
>
> *"Parents made friends, worked together, learned things to help children at home."*

Parents of participating rising kindergartners were generally pleased with the program and their child's experiences. Many parents reported receiving help and support from transition coaches with activities, such as assembling the required documents for kindergarten, registering for kindergarten, and finding community activities. Over half of the parents received information about kindergarten from the RK Program. Not surprisingly, supports for the transition to kindergarten that required that the kindergarten be open, such as meeting the kindergarten teacher or visiting the classrooms, were much less common. About two-thirds of parents reported having attended at least one family workshop or activity, and those that did attend reported positive experiences. Most parents indicated that helping their child learn new things and prepare for kindergarten were their main motivations for enrolling.

Both parents and transition coaches indicated that the late announcement of the program hampered some parents from enrolling their children. To the extent feasible, it would be useful for DECAL to notify programs earlier in the school year about the program and encourage them to start recruiting right away.

Evaluation of the Rising Pre-Kindergarten Program

Purposes

The 2014 Evaluation of the Rising Pre-Kindergarten Summer Transition Program (RPre-K) had several goals: (1) describe the quality of teacher-child interactions in RPre-K classrooms, (2) understand the amount and purposes of Spanish and English used in the classrooms, (3) learn about the experiences of parents of children enrolled in these programs, (4) describe the services provided to participating children and their families, and (5) understand reasons that attendance may be lower than during the school year.

The RPre-K Program was modeled on the RK Program but served children in the summer prior to the pre-k year and was tailored to meet the needs of families and children who spoke Spanish at home. The decision to create a program for this population was a result of an evaluation that indicated more supports may be needed for DLLs as they begin their Pre-K year. The evaluation found that many DLLs were entering Georgia's Pre-K significantly behind their peers and, while making gains throughout the program, were exiting with a similar achievement gap (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2013). The summer of 2014 was the second year that DECAL had a program for rising pre-kindergarteners.

Information Collected

The research team sought to collect information from all 20 RPre-K Program classrooms, lead teachers, and assistant teachers, as well as the parents of all enrolled children and the 15 transition coaches that served these 20 classrooms. Most data were collected by a single, bilingual data collector, who was certified as reliable on the *CLASS* observation tool by Teachstone[2]. She was an employee of FPG and had been trained by the research team on proper data collection procedures.

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[2] A single, bilingual data collector collected 15 of the 20 *CLASS* and *LUI* observations. Toward the end of the summer an illness prevented her from completing the remaining observations. Two bilingual, *CLASS*-certified individuals were identified to complete the remaining five *CLASS* observations (one individual

CLASS. The *CLASS* provides an assessment of the quality of teacher-child interactions and each of the 20 RPre-K classrooms received a single *CLASS* visit. See page 9 for more details about this measure.

Language Use Inventory (LUI). This tool was created specifically for this study by the authors. Its purpose was to quantify the amount of English and Spanish used in classrooms, as well as the purposes for each language. Current research recommends the strategic use of the home language when working with DLLs (Castro, Espinosa, & Páez, 2011; Goldenberg, 2008). Teachers' use of the home language is "strategic" when it is employed in an intentional manner during selected key points of instruction, such as clarifying and extending concepts. Indeed, a strong foundation in the home language has been linked to achievement in English (August & Shanahan, 2006). When using Spanish and English in the classroom, it is important that both languages be used for a range of purposes that include instruction and behavior management. Using both languages helps children continue to grow in their home language while acquiring English and reinforces the value of both languages (August & Shanahan, 2006).

To complete the LUI, the data collector spent five minutes observing language use in the classroom after completing the coding for each *CLASS* cycle. At the end of the five minutes, she answered a series of questions regarding language use. The first set of questions asked her to rate the amount of English and Spanish used during that five-minute observation (1) by the lead teacher talking to the child(ren); (2) by the assistant teacher talking to child(ren); (3) by teachers for instruction; and (4) by teachers for managing children's behavior. The scale used for these ratings was 1 = all English, 2 = mostly English, 3 = an equal amount of English and Spanish, 4 = mostly Spanish, and 5 = all Spanish. If during the five-minute observation window no language was used (questions 1 and 2) or that type language was not used (questions 3 and 4), the data collector indicated NA.

For purposes of this instrument, "instruction" was defined as talk that is used by teachers to explain new content and skills for children to acquire. The data collector was given multiple examples and told that this talk could span academic areas such as language and literacy, math, and science and that this talk could also build on children's interest in the world around them and daily living. "Behavior management" was defined as talk in the context of activities that help children learn about classroom routines, rules, and expectations. The data collector was told that this talk could take the form of giving initial instructions and/or reminders, as well as redirecting or correcting children who were not following expectations, and it could be directed toward the whole class, a small group, or individual children.

At the end of the observation morning, the data collector was asked to respond to six additional questions. The first was about language used for reading to children in a whole group setting and the second was about reading to children in small group or one-to-one settings. The data collector used the same 5-point scale described above but was asked to think about the entire observation morning. She was asked to indicate NA if no whole group or small group/one-to-one reading took place.

These questions were followed by two questions about books. The data collector was asked to indicate how many books in English and how many books in Spanish were in the classroom. The options were none, few, or many, and the data collector was instructed that "few" meant that there are not

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did three and the other did two). They were not trained on the *LUI*, however so those five rooms did not receive an *LUI* observation.

enough books in that language for each child to use simultaneously and "many" meant that there were enough books in that language for each child to have one.

The final two questions were about labels. The data collector was asked "How many objects and other important features in the classroom are purposefully labeled in English?" and "How many objects and other important features in the classroom are purposefully labeled in Spanish?" The options were none, five or fewer, and more than five.

The data collector participated in didactic and field-based training on the LUI. The didactic training provided an overview of the tool, operational definitions, and scoring rules. The field-based training involved a practice observation and a reliability observation. For the practice observation, the data collector and one of the study authors conducted the LUI during four 30-minute observation periods. During each of the observation periods, the data collector and study author generated independent scores every five minutes, for a total of six times per observation period. Following each 30-minute period, they discussed any discrepant scores. For the reliability observation, the same procedure was followed except there was no discussion and only three 30-minute observation periods took place. Inter-rater reliability within one point ranged from 94-100% agreement across the 18 times it was scored during the reliability observation.

Because this tool was created specifically for this study, the findings presented here should be considered preliminary and be interpreted with caution. A similar tool was used last year in the RPre-K Program Evaluation, but it was altered considerably for 2014.

Lead and Assistant Teacher Questionnaires. In each participating classroom, the lead and assistant teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was the largely the same as the one used in the RK Program, but also included items on knowledge and use of Spanish. Of the 20 lead and assistant teachers asked to complete the questionnaire, 17 leads (85%) and 19 assistants (95%) did so. Each lead and assistant teacher was given $50 as a "thank you" for her or his participation.

Transition Coach Questionnaire. The transition coach for each participating classroom was also asked to complete a questionnaire similar to the one used in the RK Program, again with added items about their knowledge and use of Spanish. There were 15 transition coaches for the 20 Pre-K classes. All 15 of them returned the completed questionnaire and received $50 as a "thank you" for participating.

Parent Questionnaire. A parent questionnaire was sent home with each child enrolled in the RPre-K Program. The questionnaire's content was similar to that of the RK parent questionnaire. The questionnaire was available only in Spanish because the RPre-K Program is designed to serve only children's from Spanish-speaking families. In all, 273 were distributed and 189 (69%) were completed.

Findings

Teacher-Child Interactions as Measured by the CLASS

As seen in Table 18, in the RPre-K Program classrooms, the mean score was 5.9 for the Emotional Support domain, 5.6 for the Classroom Organization domain, and 2.5 for the Instructional Support domain. Figures 7, 8, and 9 illustrate the distribution of scores on the three domains. On Emotional Support, over half (55%) of the classrooms were rated a 6.0 or above, and no classroom was rated below 4.5. The range of scores on Classroom Organization was a bit wider, but still a substantial group (40%) was rated at 6.0 or above and no classroom was rated below a 3.0. As in most studies, the

Instructional Support scores were markedly lower, with most classrooms (80%) scoring below a 3.0 and no classroom scoring higher than 4.5.

The 2014 Rising Pre-K scores were similar to those seen in that program in 2013 on all three domains. In comparison to the 2014 RK Program, the 2014 RPre-K scores were somewhat lower on both Classroom Organization and Instructional Support. These comparisons should be interpreted cautiously, though, because of the small number of RPre-K classes (n = 20).

Table 18. CLASS Means in RPre-K and RK Classrooms

	RPre-K 2014 (n = 20)	RPre-K 2013 (n = 19)	RK 2014 (n = 62)
Emotional Support	5.9	6.0	6.1
Classroom Organization	5.6	5.4	6.1
Instructional Support	2.5	2.4	3.5

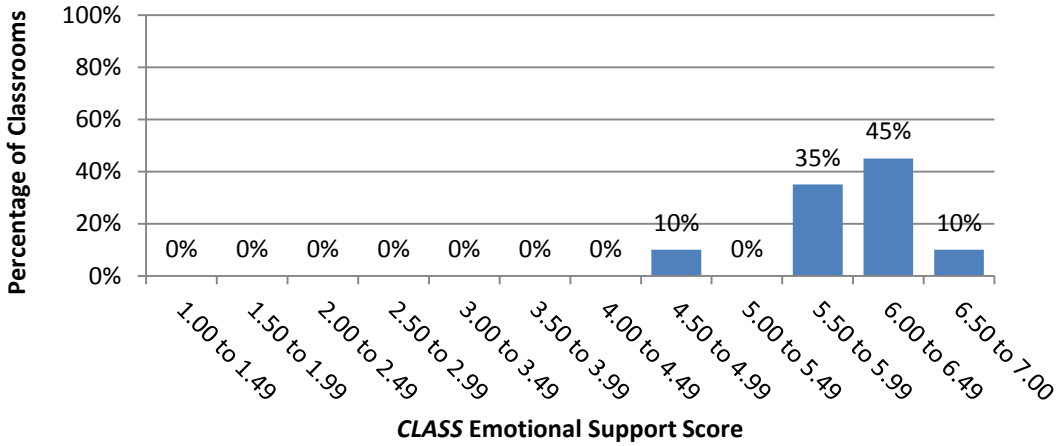*Figure 7. CLASS Emotional Support in 2014 RPre-K Classrooms*

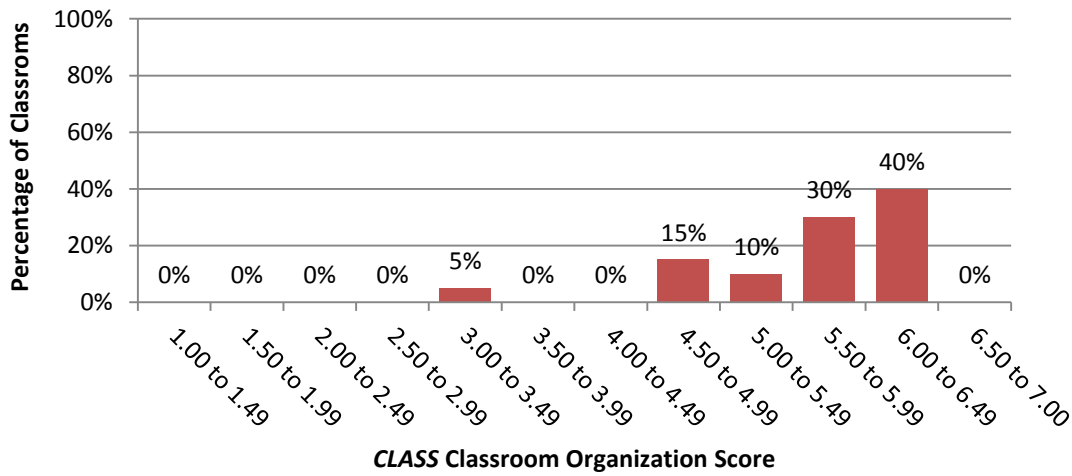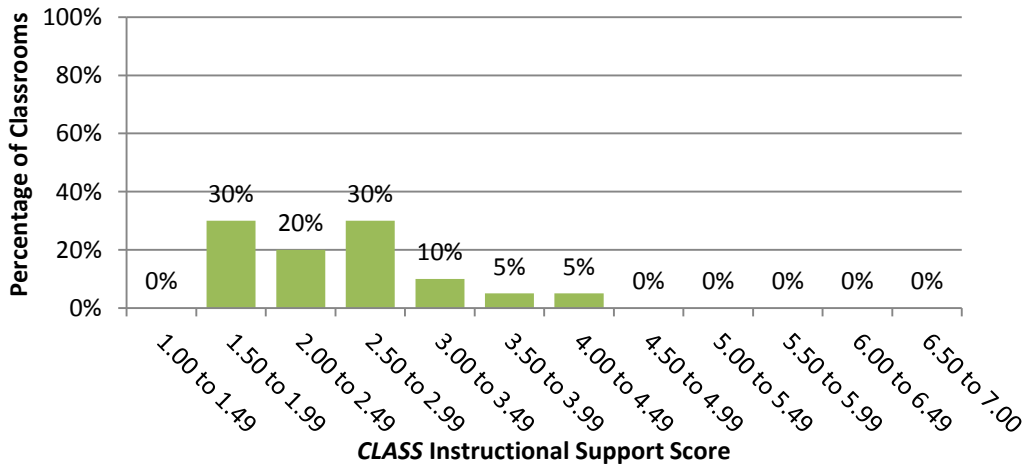*Figure 8. CLASS Classroom Organization in 2014 RPre-K Classrooms*

Figure 9. CLASS Instructional Support in 2014 RPre-K Classrooms

Teacher and Transition Coach Spanish Knowledge and Use

    Lead teachers. Most of the RPre-K lead teachers indicated they were native English speakers (69%), but 19% reported being native Spanish speakers and 13% reported that they spoke both English and Spanish as their native languages. All lead teachers reported that they could speak at least some Spanish. When asked to describe their competency, about two-thirds (63%) reported only being able to give a simple command to a child in Spanish, whereas 38% indicated they could have an in-depth conversation with an adult.

    Assistant teachers. Over half (53%) of the RPre-K assistant teachers indicated they were native English speakers, whereas 37% reported being native Spanish speakers, and 11% reported that they spoke both English and Spanish as their native languages. Ninety-five percent (95%) of assistant teachers—all except one— reported that they could speak at least some Spanish. Forty-two percent (42%) reported only being able to give a simple command to a child in Spanish, and 53% reported that they could have an in-depth conversation with an adult in Spanish.

    Either lead or assistant. Combining the information received from lead and assistant teachers, in 80% of rooms either the lead or the assistant reported speaking Spanish well enough to have an in-depth conversation with an adult. In the remaining 20%, both adults reported only speaking enough Spanish to give a simple command to a child.

    Transition coach. The RPre-K transition coaches reported a high level of proficiency in Spanish as well. Many indicated that they were native Spanish speakers (40%) or that they spoke both English and Spanish as their native language (27%). Most (80%) reported being able to have an in-depth conversation with an adult in Spanish. Of those remaining, 13% indicated they could give a simple command to a child in Spanish. One transition coach (7%) reported no ability to communicate in Spanish.

Language Use Inventory

    English and Spanish use in the classroom (n = 15). As described earlier, after each of the six *CLASS* cycles the observer spent five minutes watching language interactions and rating them on a 5-point scale where 1= all English, 2= mostly English, 3 = an equal amount of English and Spanish, 4 = mostly Spanish, and 5 =all Spanish or NA if the type of talk being rated did not occur during the five minutes. Scores were calculated as the average of the six cycles for each type of talk. As seen in Table 19, the scores were typically around 2.0 indicating that English was mostly, but not exclusively, used in these classrooms. The ranges indicate that there were some rooms where English was used exclusively and some rooms where Spanish predominated. It was very rare (less than 1% of cycles, on average) for there to have been no talking by the lead teacher to children. It was somewhat more common for assistant teachers to not talk to children during a cycle (7% of cycles). On average, more than a quarter (26%) of cycles contained no instruction, as broadly defined by this measure.

Table 19. English and Spanish Use in RPre-K Classrooms

	Score	Range	% NA[3]
Lead teacher talking to children	2.0	1.0 to 4.8	1%
Assistant teacher talking to children	1.9	1.0 to 4.5	7%
Instruction	2.2	1.0 to 4.3	26%
Behavior Management	2.3	1.2 to 4.2	4%

Note: 1= all English, 2= mostly English, 3 = an equal amount of English and Spanish, 4 = mostly Spanish, 5 =all Spanish; NA indicates none of this type took place during the five minutes.

Language for reading. At the end of the observation morning, the observer used the same 5-point scale to indicate the language used for reading to children while in a group setting and reading to children in a small group or one-to-one setting. These ratings referred to the entire morning, not the special time dedicated to observing language use.

Whole group reading took place in 10 out of the 15 rooms (67%) at some point during the morning. The average score was 2.5 indicating that somewhat more English was used than Spanish. In half of the rooms where whole group reading was observed, the reading was in English only; in 30% of rooms it was in Spanish only; and in the remainder (20%) it was a mixture of English and Spanish.

Small group or one-to-one reading took place in only four out of the 15 rooms (27%) at some point during the morning. Of those, in one room it was all in English; in one, it was an equal amount of English and Spanish; and in two, it was all in Spanish.

Books and labels. Finally, the data collector counted how many books and labels were in English and/or Spanish. For books, "few" was defined as fewer than there were children present and "many" was defined as at least as many as there were children enrolled. As seen on Table 20, almost one-half of the rooms (47%) had many books in English, plus a few books in Spanish. Additionally, one-third (33%) of the rooms had many books in both English and Spanish. All rooms had at least some books in English, and only two rooms (14%) had no Spanish books.

Table 20. Percentage of RPre-K Classrooms with Books in Spanish and/or English

		Books in Spanish		
		None	Few	Many
Books in English	None	0%	0%	0%
	Few	7%	7%	0%
	Many	7%	47%	33%

---

[3] These values were calculated by first creating a percentage of cycles where NA was scored for each classroom, then taking the mean of the percentages across the 19 rooms.

For labels, "few" was defined as five or fewer and "many" was defined as more than five. As seen on Table 21, about half (53%) of rooms had many labels in English and no labels in Spanish. Additionally, one-third (33%) of rooms had many labels in both English and Spanish.

Table 21. Percentage of RPre-K Classrooms with Objects labeled in Spanish and/or English

		Labels in Spanish		
		None	**Few**	**Many**
Labels in English	**None**	0%	0%	0%
	Few	13%	0%	0%
	Many	53%	0%	33%

Group Size and Ratios

The data collector counted children and adults present in each classroom six times, at the start of each *CLASS* observation cycle. Table 22 provides observed mean group size and ratios for RPre-K classes. In almost all classes, the average group sizes and ratios were at or below the maximum allowable by DECAL for RPre-K classes. There was one exception: that room had two adults and 15 children present for most cycles, but had only one adult for the 15 children at the start of one of the cycles. As would be expected, these mean group sizes and ratios were smaller than those observed in the RK Program (group size *mean* = 12.0, ratio *mean* = 5.9) and smaller than those seen in a recent study of the traditional school-year Georgia's Pre-K program (group size *mean* = 21.4; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2013). This finding is not surprising because the allowable maximum group size was lower for RPre-K than for either of these other programs. Further, the challenges in recruiting children for this new program could explain, at least in part, the small number of children in each class.

Table 22. Group Size and Ratios (Number of Children per Adult) in RPre-K Classrooms

	Mean	**Range**	**DECAL Allowable Maximum**
Group Size	11.8	6 to 14	14
Ratios	5.8	3 to 8	7

RPre-K Parents

Rising Pre-Kindergarten parents were asked to complete a questionnaire that was largely similar to the one completed by RK parents. In addition to topics covered by the RK parent questionnaire, RPre-K parents were asked about communication with the program, because all children enrolled in RPre-K were from homes where Spanish was the primary language.

Help provided by the Transition Coach. As noted earlier, one of the roles of the transition coach is to identify community resources that can meet families' needs. Responses to questions about help received by RPre-K parents appear in Table 23, ordered from most to least common support. Many parents reported receiving help with translation or interpretation in the community.

Table 23. RPre-K Families' Reports of Help Provided by the Transition Coach in RPre-K Programs

Did the Transition Coach help you find any of the following services in the community? The Transition Coach helped my family….	Yes
with translation or interpretation in the community.	60%
find activities or events in the community for families and children.	57%
connect with the local school system due to concerns about my child's development or behavior.	51%
find services for follow-up based on my child's health screening.	46%
find services such as financial aid, health care, housing, counseling.	36%
find child care for my other children.	19%

Family workshops and activities. Another role of the transition coach is to organize family workshops and activities. The transition coaches were asked to organize six workshops during the summer, and RPre-K transition coaches reported offering, or planning to offer, an average of 6.7. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of parents reported attending at least one; among those who attended at least one, they reported attending an average of 2.9; however, as noted in the section about the RK Program, the RPre-K Program was still underway when the questionnaire was distributed, so parents may have attended more workshops after completing the questionnaire.

Parents who reported having attended at least one workshop were asked to respond to a series of statements about the workshops using a 5-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = mildly disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = mildly agree, and 5 = strongly agree. As seen in Table 24, parents had a generally favorable view of the family workshops and activities, scoring all items between mildly and strongly agree. As with RK, it is important to remember, however, that these opinions come only from those who attended. Families who did not attend might have had different views of the importance of the topics, convenience of the times and locations, and sense of being welcome.

Table 24. RPre-K Parents' Views of Family Workshops and Activities

Thinking about the family workshops and activities you attended, please answer the following questions.	Average Rating
The topics of the workshops/activities were interesting and important.	4.8
The way the information was presented was useful.	4.8
I felt welcome at the workshops/activities.	4.8
I learned a lot from the workshops/activities attended.	4.7
The workshops/activities were offered at times and places that made it easy for me to attend.	4.6

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = mildly disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = mildly agree, and 5 = strongly agree

Additionally, RPre-K parents were asked about the language used during the workshops and activities and the language of the written materials provided during the workshops and activities. Most parents (61%) reported that the workshops and activities were in a mix of English and Spanish; whereas 38% reported they were in Spanish only, and one parent (<1%) reported they were in English only. Likewise, most (70%) reported that written materials were provided in a mix of English and Spanish, whereas 27% reported that the materials were in Spanish only. Two percent (2%) reported that there were no written materials and one parent (<1%) reported that the materials were in English only.

Pre-Kindergarten transition activities. One goal of the RPre-K Program was to smooth the transition to pre-kindergarten. To learn about the transition activities the RPre-K Programs were providing, parents were asked which activities their family had done during the summer. Responses appear in Table 25, ordered from most to least common.

Table 25. RPre-K Parents' Reports of Activities to Get Ready for Pre-Kindergarten

Some programs work with families to help them get ready for Pre-K. Which things did your family do this summer?	Yes
Received information about my child to take to Pre-K this fall.	66%
Received written materials about my child's transition to Pre-K.	65%
My child visited the classroom where she or he will attend Pre-K.	57%
Received school supplies to take to Pre-K.	51%
Met with the teacher my child will have for Pre-K.	51%
My child met the teacher she or he will have for Pre-K.	45%

Family Participation. Parents were asked about ways they had been involved in the RPre-K Program. Table 26 shows their responses, from most to least common.

Table 26. RPre-K Parents' Reports of Family Participation

Which of the following did you or someone from your family do in your child's program this summer?	Yes
Went to a social activity for families at school/center, like pizza night	36%
Ate with my child's class	36%
Went to an activity for families in the community, like a picnic at a local park or bowling alley	19%
Helped out in the classroom	15%
Shared a family or cultural tradition with my child's class	14%
Read to the children in class	12%
Helped out on field trips	11%
Helped with jobs outside of the classroom (for example, helped with laundry or made snacks)	9%

Reasons for Absences. Parents were asked if their child had been absent during the summer and if so, why. Forty-six percent (46%) of parents reported that their child had been absent at least once and 6% of parents reported their child had been absent four or more times. Table 27 indicates the reasons that were cited for absences by all parents and by parents who reported four or more absences, from most to least common[4]. Child illness or medical appointments was the most common reason for both groups. Parents whose child had been absent four or more times were more likely than those with fewer absences to cite family trips or visitors and transportation. However, it is important to note that the group of parents reporting four or more absences was very small (*n* = 11).

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[4] Parents were asked to rate each reason from 1 = not a reason to 3 = part of the reason to 5 = a major reason. This table presents the percentage of parents who rated each reason above a 1.

Table 27. RPre-K Parents' Reports of Reasons for Child Absences

If your child has been absent, what were the reasons?	All	Four or More Reported Absences
My child was sick or had medical appointments.	69%	64%
Family trips and summer visitors.	20%	40%
The program's hours do not meet my family's schedule.	19%	20%
We don't always have a way to get to the program.	17%	30%
Family members' work schedules change, and we sometimes don't need child care.	13%	20%
My older children were not in school this summer and the younger child wanted to stay home with them.	9%	10%
We moved this summer.	2%	0%

Why parents enroll their children. In order to improve outreach efforts, DECAL was interested to learn why parents elect to enroll their children in the RPre-K Program. Parents were given a list of possible reasons and asked to indicate how important each was on a 5-point scale where 1 = not at all important, 3 = somewhat important, and 5 = very important. Their reasons appear in Table 28, from most to least important.

Table 28. RPre-K Parents' Reasons for Enrolling

How important was each of the following in deciding to enroll your child in the summer program?	Average Rating
To help my child learn new things.	4.9
To help my child get ready for Pre-K.	4.9
To improve my child's English skills.	4.7
To help my child make friends and learn to get along with other children.	4.7
The Transition Coach contacted me and thought it would be good for my child.	4.7
Because it seemed like fun for my child.	4.5
I needed child care for my child this summer.	2.8

Note: 1 = not at all important, 3 = somewhat important, and 5 = very important

Reasons for not enrolling. Although all parents responding to the survey had enrolled their child in RPre-K, the research team thought they might have an idea why other families do not enroll. To that end, they were asked: "Why do you think some eligible families decided not to enroll their child in the summer program?" Parents responded using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = not a reason, 3 = part of the reason, 5 = a major reason. Table 29 shows the average responses, ordered from highest to lowest.

Table 29. RPre-K Parents' Beliefs About Why Other Families Did Not Enroll

Why do you think some eligible families decided not to enroll their child in the summer program?	Average Rating
Some families can't get their child to the program (for example, because they don't have a car).	3.3
Some eligible families did not know about the program.	3.1
The program is only 6 weeks, and many families need child care all summer.	3.0
Some families think their child is too young for school.	2.9
Families need child care for more hours each day.	2.7
Families found out about the program too late and already had other arrangements for summer.	2.6

Note: 1 = not a reason, 3 = part of the reason, 5 = a major reason.

Communication with the RPre-K Program. All families with children enrolled in the RPre-K Program spoke Spanish at home. The programs were required to have a Spanish-speaking transition coach and either a lead or assistant teacher who spoke Spanish; however, it was still possible that communication difficulties would arise. To assess this possibility, parents were asked to respond to a series of statements using a 5-point scale where 1 = not at all true, 3 = somewhat true, and 5 = very true. The average responses appear in Table 30. The average of the six items, after reversing the first one, was 4.6, indicating that linguistic and cultural barriers were small.

Table 30. Communication with the RPre-K Program

How true is each of the following statements about communication with the RPre-K Program?	Average Rating
It is difficult to talk with program staff because we speak different languages.	1.6
My child's teacher(s) speaks Spanish well enough for us to communicate.	4.3
The transition coach speaks Spanish well enough for us to communicate.	4.7
When the program sends home written materials, they are typically written in Spanish.	4.7
The program provides interpretation when needed so I can communicate easily.	4.8
Program staff respect and understand my family's culture and values.	4.9

Note: 1 = not at all true, 3 = somewhat true, and 5 = very true

Like parents of RK children, parents of RPre-K children were asked to provide suggestions for improving the program and 75 of them (40%) responded. RPre-K parents' suggestions often reflected a desire to expand the program, including extending the number of weeks and expanding the number of classes (39% of those who responded). Additionally, parents reported needing assistance with transportation (15%) and requested more advertising about the program or earlier notification about the program (9%). Only a small number of parents mentioned improvements needed in workshops (5%); of these, 75% indicated that the times of the workshops conflicted with their work schedule.

A second open-ended question gave them an opportunity to share what they or their child liked best about the program. Almost all (92%) responded and had favorable words to say about the program. Parents reported they or their children liked learning (i.e., learning numbers, colors, alphabet; writing name; getting along with peers; learning English; 53%), making new friends (35%), classroom activities (i.e., story time, games; 19%), getting ready for pre-kindergarten (17%), and enjoying their teachers (10%). Almost 10% of the parents specifically stated that they liked that their child was learning to speak English better.

> **RPre-K parents were enthusiastic about the program.** When asked what they or their child liked best some responded:
>
> *"I liked how the teachers care for the children; they are very efficient and children learn very well."*
>
> *"My daughter comes home very excited to show me what she learned at school. She speaks more English. She loves when I read her books."*
>
> *"I liked it a lot because my daughter has learned to get along with other children and the truth is it has helped in her development of learning."*
>
> (these quotes were translated from Spanish)

RPre-K Lead Teachers (n = 17)

Education. As required by DECAL, all lead teachers in RPre-K Programs held at least a Bachelor's degree and many (41%) had an advanced degree (see Figure 10).

Major and Courses Taken. Over half (59%) of RPre-K lead teachers had a degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree) in early childhood education. Other common majors included some other type of education (e.g., elementary, special education; 47%) or child development, human development, or family and consumer sciences (6%). Regardless of major, most had taken at least one college course in early childhood/child development (88%). Fewer lead teachers had taken a college course in teaching young children whose home language is not English (41%) or bilingual or dual language development in young children (41%).

Figure 10. RPre-K Lead Teachers' Education

Master's 41%
Bachelor's 53%
Some graduate work 6%
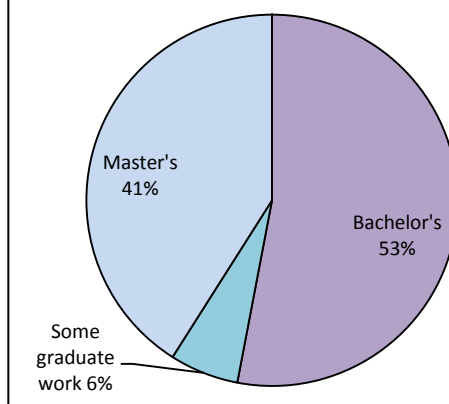
Teacher certificates. Most (88%) RPre-K lead teachers reported having a Georgia teaching certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission Twelve percent (12%) had a certification specific to English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Additionally, 18% had an endorsement specific to ESOL.

Experience. On average, RPre-K lead teachers reported having 5.6 years of experience as a lead teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom (*median* = 4.0, *range* = 0 to 19) and almost no experience as an assistant teacher (mean = 0.1, *median* = 0, *range* = 0 to 1).
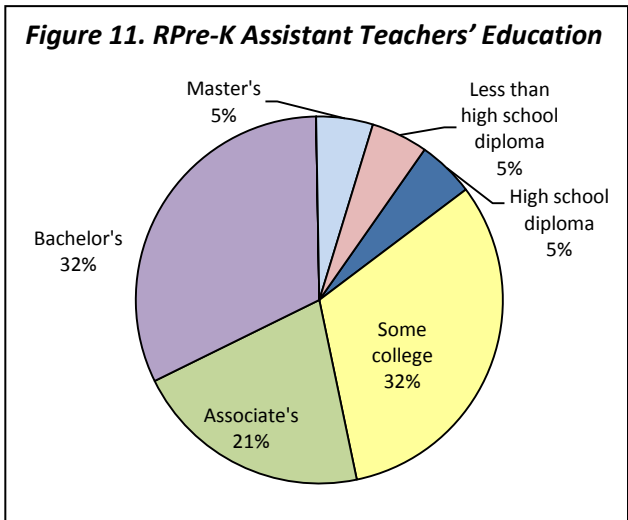
Professional development. At least half of lead teachers reported having received professional development in the past year in early language and/or literacy (86%), working with dual language learners (60%), math (54%), and cultural diversity (50%). Additionally, in the past year 47% reported having received professional development on building partnerships with Latino families, and 46% on socio-emotional development.

Home visits. Most (94%) of the RPre-K lead teachers had not visited any of the homes of their children. The remainder (6%) reported have visited some of the children's homes, but none of teachers indicated they had visited most or all of the children's homes.

RPre-K Assistant Teachers (n = 19)

Education. About one-third (32%) of assistant teachers in the RPre-K Program held a Bachelor's degree and another 21% held an Associate's degree (see Figure 11.)

Major and Courses Taken. Twenty-six percent (26%) of RPre-K assistant teachers had a degree (Associate's, Bachelor's or Master's degree) in early childhood education. Sixteen percent (16%) majored in some other type of education (e.g., elementary, special education). No assistant teacher majored in child development, human development, or family and consumer science. Regardless of major, most reported having taken at least one college course in early childhood/child development (84%). Fewer assistant teachers reported having taken a college course in teaching young children whose home language is not English (26%) or bilingual or dual language development in young children (33%).

Figure 11. RPre-K Assistant Teachers' Education

Master's 5%
Less than high school diploma 5%
High school diploma 5%
Bachelor's 32%
Some college 32%
Associate's 21%

Teacher certificates. Only one RPre-K assistant teacher (5%) reported having a Georgia teaching certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission.

Experience. On average, RPre-K assistant teachers reported having 4.9 years of experience as an assistant teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom (*median* = 4.0, *range* = 0 to 15). None of them reported any experience as a lead teacher. Forty-seven percent (47%) reported that this was their second year teaching in the RPre-K Program.

Professional development. Over half of the RPre-K assistant teachers reported having received professional development in the past year in math (56%), cultural diversity (56%), early language and/or literacy (53%), and working with dual language learners (50%). A smaller proportion reported having
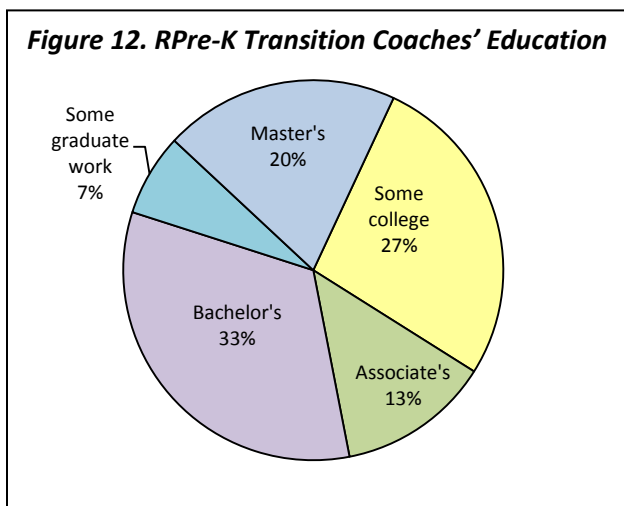
received professional development in building partnerships with Latino families (44%) or socio-emotional development (35%).

   Home visits. Most (78%) of the RPre-K assistant teachers had not visited any of the homes of their children. The remainder (22%) reported to have visited some of the children's homes, but none of the assistant teachers indicated they had visited most or all of the children's homes.

RPre-K Transition Coaches (n = 15)

   Education. Most of the RPre-K transition coaches held at least a Bachelor's degree (60%; see Figure 12).

   Major and courses taken. Only 20% of RPre-K transition coaches had a degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's) in early childhood education. Seven percent (7%) majored in some other type of education (e.g., elementary, special education). No transition coach majored in child development, human development, or family and consumer sciences. Sixty-seven (67%) of RPre-K transition coaches reported having taken at least one college course in early childhood/child development. Smaller numbers reported having taken a course focused on teaching young children whose home language is not English (33%) or bilingual or dual language development in young children (20%).

Figure 12. RPre-K Transition Coaches' Education

   Experience. For 11 of the 15 (73%) RPre-K transition coaches, 2014 was their first summer serving as a transition coach. For the remaining 4 (27%) this was their second summer.

   Parent conferences. Most RPre-K transition coaches reported that they did not schedule parent conferences in the summer (71%). Of those that did schedule conferences during the summer, they were evenly split between holding one conference (14%) or two (14%).

   Home visits. Half of the RPre-K transition coaches reported having visited at least some of the children's homes, but only 14% reported visiting all the children's homes.

   Workshops and family activities. On average, transition coaches reported that they had conducted or planned to conduct 6.7 (*range* = 6 to 12) family workshops or activities during the summer, which is a little more than one during each week of the six-week program. The most common topics included: early literacy (87%); Georgia's Pre-K (how to enroll, what to expect, etc.; 87%); Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS; 80%); nutrition, food preparation, and food safety (73%); overall child development (67%); early math (60%); encouraging the use of Spanish at home (60%); importance of physical activity (60%); general health and well-being issues for children (53%); parenting and behavior management (53%); and art activities to do with children (53%).

   Most of the transition coaches reported that the workshops and family activities were in a mix of English and Spanish (64%); 29% indicated they were in Spanish only and 7% indicated they were in

English only. Written materials at the workshops and family activities were generally in a mix of English and Spanish (93%). The remainder (7%) was in Spanish only.

Family participation. Transition coaches were asked what kinds of opportunities there were for families to participate in the RPre-K Program. Table 31 shows their responses for 2013 and 2014, ordered from most to least common in 2014.

Table 31. Opportunities for Families to Participate in RPre-K Programs

What kinds of opportunities are there or will there be this summer for families to participate in your program?	Yes	
	2013	2014
Social activity for families at school/center (e.g., pizza night)	82%	79%
Help out in the classroom as needed	73%	64%
Help out on field trips	70%	64%
Social activity for families in the community (e.g., picnic at a local park, bowling)	45%	57%
Read to the children in the class	80%	50%
Eat with their child's class or help at meals	73%	50%
Share a family or cultural tradition with their child's class	82%	43%
Help with jobs outside of the classroom (e.g., help with laundry, prepare snacks/materials)	55%	36%

Services and supports provided to families. RPre-K transition coaches were asked what kinds of supports their program provides to families and how they help families to find services and resources in the community. Tables 32 and 33 show their responses in 2013 and 2014, ordered from most to least common in 2014. It is noteworthy that all transition coaches reported that their program provided translation and interpretation services and translated materials.

Table 32. Services Provided to Families in RPre-K Programs

Does your program provide any of the following materials or services to families?	Yes	
	2013	2014
Translation of your program's written materials for families who do not speak English	100%	100%
Interpretation at program events, activities, conferences, or meetings for families who do not speak English	100%	100%
Distribution of translated materials about community services (in a language other than English)	91%	100%
Coordination of community services for families (e.g., provide information about services, assist families in contacting services, provide follow-through with families)	91%	100%
Reading activity packs to take home	91%	79%
Lending library for families	64%	71%

Table 33. Finding Services in the Community for Families in RPre-K Programs

Does your program help families find services or resources in the community to help with any of the following things?	Yes	
	2013	**2014**
Activities or events in the community for families and children	82%	93%
Translation or interpretation in the community for families who do not speak English	100%	86%
Social service needs (financial, health care, housing, etc.)	73%	86%
School-age care	91%	71%
Mental health needs (counseling, therapy, support groups)	73%	57%

Attendance. In past summers, DECAL had noted that attendance was lower during the summer than during the school year. For this reason, RPre-K transition coaches were asked "What do you think prevents children who are enrolled in your program from attending more often?" Coaches responded to the items below using a 5-point scale, where 1 = not a barrier, 3 = somewhat of a barrier, and 5 = a major barrier. The responses for 2013 and 2014 are listed in Table 34, ordered from the highest to lowest in 2014. The largest barriers were older siblings at home, parents' irregular work schedules, illness and medical appointments, and family trips and visitors. The response regarding siblings and illness were added to the questionnaire in 2014 based on responses to open-ended questions in 2013.

Table 34. Barriers to Attendance in RPre-K Programs

What do you think prevents children who are enrolled in your program from attending more often?	Average Rating	
	2013	**2014**
Some children had older siblings who were not in summer school, so the younger children wanted to stay home with them.	NA	3.4
Parents have irregular work schedules.	2.5	3.1
Illness or medical appointments	NA	3.0
Family trips and summer visitors interfere.	2.7	3.0
Families lack transportation so they can't get their children to the program.	3.4	2.9
Families do not think of the summer program as 'real school.'	2.2	2.2
The families of participating children move often.	1.6	2.2
Program hours do not meet families' schedules.	1.5	1.7

Note: 1 = not a barrier, 3 = somewhat of a barrier, and 5 = a major barrier; NA=not asked

Seventy-three percent (73%) of the transition coaches answered an open-ended question that asked if there were other issues that prevented children from having better attendance. According to transition coaches, the three most common barriers to attendance were: parents' irregular work schedule, parents' concern over providing proof of income, and lack of transportation (18% for each). Three transition coaches indicated that there were no attendance issues this summer.

Conclusions and Recommendations from the Rising Pre-K Program Evaluation

In many ways the Georgia Rising Pre-K Program appears to be responsive to the learning and development needs of young children who are Spanish-speaking dual language learners (DLLs). For example, the fact that most classrooms had a lead and/or assistant teacher with strong Spanish skills is encouraging. Further, in the average classroom, English was the predominate language but Spanish was also used for both instruction and behavior management and by both the lead and assistant teachers. Use of both languages is important because children may learn a new concept in either language, so use of both increases learning opportunities. Also, it is important for young DLLs to see both languages as valuable for learning, and use of home language in the classroom helps children build similar skills in English (LaForett, Fettig, Peisner-Feinberg, & Buysse, 2012).

Pride in Rising Pre-Kindergarten Program. Almost all of the RPre-K transition coaches answered the question "What are you most proud of about your program?" Many comments focused on being proud about the children's adjustment to school and the parents' participation:

"The enthusiasm of parents and children toward the program."

"Just seeing how the students are adjusting to school and enjoying being at school shows great signs for success."

Several transition coaches were pleased that families' primary language (Spanish) was spoken in the RPre-K Program:

"Eliminating the language barrier for those families is a great advantage for successful student transitions."

"Children get the opportunity ..... to have a teacher that speaks their language [Spanish]."

Whole group reading activities took place in the majority of classrooms, with approximately half using some or all Spanish. Reading stories aloud to young children fosters the development of early language and literacy skills such as knowledge about written syntax, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and print concepts; these early skills have been shown to predict later reading and writing skills (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Researchers have recommended storybook reading as a key learning experience for children who are dual language learners given the ample opportunities for building new vocabulary (in English and the home language), gaining listening comprehension skills, and getting exposure to word pronunciation, sentence construction, and appropriate use of common phrases or expressions used by different cultures (Gillanders & Castro, 2011). In addition, when children's home language is incorporated, reading activities may offer enhanced opportunities for children to become excited about learning and attending school, to develop self-regulation skills needed for whole group learning formats, and to form personal connections with the teacher through their engagement with the story content. It is of concern that in about three-quarters of the rooms, no one-on-one or small group reading was observed.

As in 2013, the group size and child to adult ratios seen in these 2014 RPre-K Program classrooms were excellent, much better than typically seen in early childhood programs. Additionally, the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domains were rated as high. Instructional Support, however, was low. This pattern of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization being considerably higher than Instructional Support is similar to findings from other studies (Denny, Hallam, & Homer, 2012; Maier, Vitiello, & Greenfield, 2012; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2013) and the quality of teacher-child interactions were almost identical to those observed in 2013. The relatively high level of Emotional Support is a positive sign because fostering positive teacher-child relationships is critical for supporting DLLs in the classroom. Effective teacher-child relationships that promote children's socio-emotional development are particularly important for young DLLs as a means for promoting their classroom participation and enhancing their social status (Castro, Peisner-Feinberg, Buysse, & Gillanders, 2010; Gillanders & Castro, 2007). However, other research has suggested that Instructional Support is most closely linked to children's gains in academic skills (Mashburn et al., 2008), so DECAL should consider providing supports and professional development to RPre-K teachers to strengthen that aspect of classroom quality as they have done for RK teachers.

As in the RK Program, parents in the RPre-K Program reported generally positive experiences and impressions. About two-thirds had attended a parent workshop and those who had attended reported that they were interesting and useful and that they felt welcome. Over half the parents reported having participated in activities designed to smooth the transition to pre-k. With regard to language and communication, almost all those who attended workshops indicated that they were either in Spanish or in a mix of English and Spanish. Parents reported little difficulty in communicating with the programs teachers and transition coach due to language or cultural barriers. Parents' responses to the open-ended questions revealed a high level of enthusiasm for the program among both parents and their children.

A few concrete recommendations emerged from this study. First, all RPre-K classrooms should have books and labeled objects in both English and Spanish. In 2014, 14% of classrooms had no Spanish books and two-thirds of classrooms had no Spanish labels. Only 33% of classrooms had many English and Spanish books. Increasing the availability of books and labels in both languages would be relatively easy and would not only increase children's exposure to print in Spanish, but could also be used for teaching specific skills (e.g., vocabulary, phonological awareness), illustrating differences between the English and Spanish languages, and stimulating conversation between children and teachers. Storybook reading featuring themes and content from children's cultures is recommended for increasing children's comprehension, whereas labeling objects in both languages is consistent with suggestions that DLLs benefit from pictures and other visual cues regarding key information and classroom procedures (Goldenberg, 2008). Second, every classroom should have a lead or assistant teacher with strong Spanish skills. While most rooms met this standard in 2014, DECAL should strive to ensure that every room has such a teacher. Finally, RPre-K teachers need additional support and professional development to increase instructional support and small group reading.

Overall Conclusions

The development of summer pre-k programs underscores Georgia's continued commitment to providing a free educational experience for children prior to kindergarten entry, particularly those from low-income families. In both the RK and RPre-K Programs, Emotional Support and Classroom Organization were high, indicating that programs are providing children with an important basis for learning as they make the transitions to pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. In the RK Program, Instructional Support was in the middle range; whereas in the RPre-K Program it was in the low range. For both programs, DECAL should continue to offer professional development to address goals such as support children's literacy, provide high-quality teacher-child interactions, and encourage use of the home language while improving English skills.

Encouragingly, parents had very favorable impressions of both programs, although many parents indicated that earlier notification about the program would be beneficial. Those that attended family workshops and activities reported they were generally interesting, informative, and welcoming. Open-ended parent responses indicated that the children were generally enjoying themselves and the parents thought they were learning a lot and forming positive impressions of school.

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