

Ms. Luisa Santos, Board Member

CO-SPONSORS: Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair
Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall
Ms. Mary Blanco
Mr. Danny Espino

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SUBJECT: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK UPDATE

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS, & INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

Early childhood education (ECE) is a critical priority for Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), as it lays the foundation for lifelong learning, academic success, and reduced educational disparities. ECE, when provided in a developmentally appropriate program, will improve children’s early language, literacy, and mathematics skills.¹ Early mastery of a range of cognitive, social, and emotional competencies makes learning at later ages more efficient and therefore easier and more likely to continue.²

Rigorous efforts to estimate benefit-cost ratios of preschool indicate that early childhood education can generate long-term educational and economic benefits. Strong early childhood education programs can benefit children from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and can reduce the achievement gap. Research indicates that investing in quality preschool outweighs the cost by reducing spending for special education and grade retention. Cost savings also come from lower involvement in child protection, welfare, and criminal justice systems. High-quality preschool leads to higher earnings as adults and greater economic productivity.³

Currently, Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) providers participate in a program assessment to measure the effectiveness of teacher-child interactions within the classroom. The Classroom Scoring System (CLASS) is an evidence-based tool that provides a framework for observing the effectiveness of classroom interactions among teachers and students in the areas of social

¹ Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W. T., Ludwig, J., Magnuson, K. A., Phillips, D., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education. In Society for Research in Child Development. Society for Research in Child Development. <https://www.srcd.org/news/investing-our-future-evidence-base-preschool-education>

² Heckman, J. J. (2006). Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children. Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science), 312(5782), 1900–1902. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1128898>

³ Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W. T., Ludwig, J., Magnuson, K. A., Phillips, D., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education. In Society for Research in Child Development. Society for Research in Child Development. <https://www.srcd.org/news/investing-our-future-evidence-base-preschool-education>

and emotional learning, classroom organization, and instructional support.⁴ Recent data reflect continued progress in early childhood education outcomes, while also accounting for updated state kindergarten readiness benchmarks. Based on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Star Early Literacy assessment administered to kindergarten students in fall 2024, 40% of test-takers in M-DCPS programs were identified as kindergarten-ready with scores of 707+ on FAST Star Early Literacy. In comparison, in the fall of 2025, 43% of test-takers in M-DCPS were kindergarten-ready with scores of 707+ in FAST Star Early Literacy.⁵ Among students who attended M-DCPS VPK programs, kindergarten readiness rates were notably higher, with 49% identified as kindergarten-ready in fall 2024, increasing to 53% in fall 2025.⁶ These data points reflect measurable gains in kindergarten readiness among M-DCPS students and demonstrate the positive relationship between VPK participation and school readiness outcomes.

As a district, we are committed to enhancing student readiness and early engagement, strengthening the M-DCPS K-12 pipeline, and maximizing the utilization of available high-quality classroom seats. To strengthen early childhood education outcomes, M-DCPS operates under the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Excellence Framework (delineated in Agenda Item H-7, approved at the June 18, 2025, Board Meeting):

Expanding Resources and Best Practices Supporting Quality Programs: M-DCPS will continue to support programs in creating a high-quality learning environment for students.

Accountability: M-DCPS must continuously review the standings of all early childhood education programs to maintain a high standard of excellence.

Early Literacy: Early literacy is foundational for long-term academic success, and M-DCPS will remain committed to fostering early reading habits.

Collaboration and Advocacy: M-DCPS will continue to build and strengthen partnerships across the state to support early childhood education.

Family & Caregiver Support: M-DCPS will continue to support families in actively engaging in their children's early education.

The Early Childhood Excellence Workshop on September 17, 2025 provided an in-depth overview of the current state of early childhood education in M-DCPS. As of September 17, 2025, there were 178 new enrollments since August 14, 2025. M-DCPS also led community meetings with external partners to explore the expansion of high-quality learning opportunities through public and private partnerships. M-DCPS' commitment to early learning is further underscored by its proactive efforts to enhance educational access and quality for young learners, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive in a nurturing and supportive environment.

⁴ Florida Department of Education. (n.d.). *Program assessment for VPK providers*. Florida Department of Education. <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/early-learning/providers/prog-assess-vpk.stml>

⁵ Florida Department of Education. (n.d.). *Kindergarten readiness (BEST)*. <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/best/k-ready.stml>

⁶ Miami-Dade County Public Schools. (2026). *2024–2025 M-DCPS VPK: Fall 2025 kindergarten readiness rates* [Research brief]. Office of Academics and Transformation.

This item seeks to reaffirm the School Board's commitment to early childhood education excellence for all students and update our latest understanding of progress, trends, and challenges we are facing.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the General Counsel's Office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. LUISA SANTOS:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to provide a comprehensive update on the implementation and progress of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Excellence Framework, including supporting quality programs, maintaining accountability, promoting early literacy, fostering collaboration, and supporting families, at the September 2026 Academics, Innovation, Evaluation, and Technology Committee Meeting, on:

1. Key areas for future growth and alignment with the ECE Excellence Framework, including
 - a. Year-over-year, site-level program data, including the number of seats available and the total number of students enrolled over the last five years; and
 - b. A countywide analysis of 0-5-year-old population demographics and enrollment in public and private early education programs by geographic area, to inform current and future demand, including identification of geographic gaps in access to high-quality early learning opportunities; and
 - c. Status and outcomes of early childhood partnership efforts with private providers; and
 - d. Provide an overview of progress monitoring and performance analysis, including CLASS, FAST Star Early Literacy, and learning gains, benchmarked to Miami-Dade County at large and the private sector; and
2. Recommendations for program expansion, resource allocation, legislative priorities, and needed policy adjustments based on findings.