

AISD Prekindergarten Partnership Program Enrollment Report, 2020–2021

Introduction

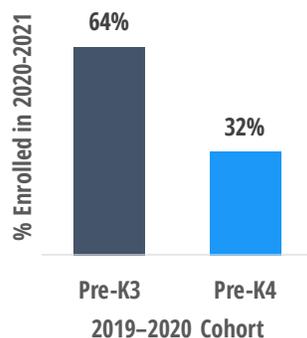
This report is a follow-up to the *AISD Prekindergarten Partnership Program Summary Report, 2019–2020* (Lucas & Poulsen, 2020), which introduced the prekindergarten (pre-K) partnership between Austin Independent School District (AISD), United Way for Greater Austin (UWATX), and participating child development centers (CDCs). The partnership is supported by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) \$2,000,000 2-year School Transformation Fund implementation grant and authorized by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title I, Part A, School Improvement grant. One of the goals of the grant is to increase kindergarten (KG) enrollment in AISD. This report summarizes student enrollment during the 2020–2021 school year for the 2019–2020 cohort of partnership students. Demographic information and academic performance for beginning-of-year (BOY) are also reported for the 2019–2020 cohort and comparison students currently enrolled in AISD.

Student Enrollment, 2020–2021

Figure 1 shows the percentage of the 2019–2020 cohort who subsequently enrolled in AISD during the Fall 2020 semester. Out of the original 2019–2020 cohort of 230 pre-K3 partnership students, 64% continued enrollment in either UWATX or AISD pre-K4 in Fall 2020 (108 enrolled in UWATX pre-K4; 40 switched enrollment to AISD pre-K4). Seventy-two pre-K3 partnership students did not return for pre-K4, and 31 students withdrew prior to April 2021. In April 2021, 51% ($n = 117$) of the original pre-K3 cohort was still enrolled in either AISD or UWATX pre-K4 centers.

As for the original 2019–2020 cohort of 195 pre-K4 partnership students, **32% enrolled in AISD KG in Fall 2020**. Eighty-nine students did not return for KG, and eight students withdrew prior to April 2021. In April 2021, 28% of the original pre-K4 cohort ($n = 54$) were still enrolled in AISD. There were no significant demographic differences between students who enrolled in AISD KG and those who did not.

Figure 1.
2019-2020 Pre-K Partnership Students Enrolled in AISD or UWATX, 2020–2021



Original 2019–2020 Partnership cohort	Grade	2020–2021 Enrollment			
		Ever enrolled (Aug–Jan)		Still enrolled (Jan)	
PK3 ($n = 230$)	PK4	AISD	UW	AISD	UW
		40	108	36	81
PK4 ($n = 195$)	KG	62	-	54	-

Source. AISD student records

Note. Analyses do not include students who were held back a grade level in Fall 2020.

Follow-up analyses will explore additional factors that may have affected enrollment in AISD KG, including prior academic performance, emergent bilingual (or English learner) status, and type of care in pre-K4 (e.g., virtual versus in-person).

The TX-KEA is administered to AISD KG students in the fall and is used to screen children’s school readiness upon entry to KG. The University of Texas Health Science Center’s Children’s Learning Institute, the TEA, and the U.S. Department of Education collaborated in the development of the test.

TX-KEA is a criterion-referenced test designed to assist school staff with determining whether students meet specific academic standards and development levels. The test assesses KG readiness across six domains: language, literacy, math and science, executive functioning, social emotional skills, and academic motor skills. The test results are used to guide instruction and help teachers identify students in need of further diagnostic assessment and intervention.

The test is available in both English and Spanish. The results presented in this report represent the best performance for a student in either language. Thus, if a student took the test in both English and Spanish, the higher performance of the two would be the data included in the analysis. In Fall 2020, TX-KEA was made available to be administered virtually for the first time, due to remote attendance options provided by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students who took the assessment virtually were assisted by their caregivers. For more information on TX-KEA, see <https://www.texaskea.org>.

Student Demographics, 2020–2021

Demographic information is presented for 2019–2020 cohort students who subsequently enrolled in AISD or UWATX at some point during the Fall 2020 semester (Table 1).

Table 1.

2019–2020 Pre-K Partnership Cohort Demographics for Students Who Enrolled in AISD or UWATX, 2020–2021

	2020–2021 Pre-K4				2020–2021 KG	
	AISD		UW		AISD	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Male	17	43%	63	58%	38	61%
Female	23	58%	45	42%	24	39%
Hispanic/Latino	31	78%	74	69%	38	61%
African American/Black	5	13%	25	23%	20	32%
Other	4	10%	10	8%	4	7%

Source. AISD student records

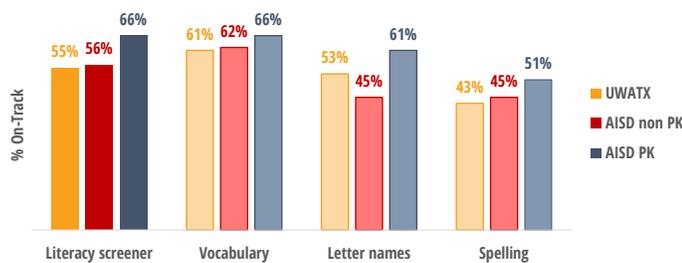
Note. Analyses do not include students who were held back a grade level.

Student BOY Academic Performance, Fall 2020

The Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment (TX-KEA) was administered to KG students in Fall 2020. Three subtests were administered (vocabulary, letter names, spelling), from which an overall literacy screener was calculated. Figure 2 displays the percentages of students who met benchmarks on each of the subtests and the literacy screener. Figure 2 also shows TX-KEA scores of two matched comparison samples of AISD KG students: those who attended AISD pre-K in the 2019–2020 school year (nontuition) and those who did not attend AISD pre-K in the previous year. Students in both groups were randomly selected and matched on economic disadvantage (all students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals) and ethnicity (see Figure 3 for ethnic distribution of each group).

Figure 2.

Partnership Students’ TX-KEA BOY Performance Relative to Two Comparison Samples of AISD KG Students Matched on Economic Disadvantage and Ethnicity, Fall 2020.



Source. AISD TX-KEA student records

Note. UWATX (*n* = 58-59); AISD non pre-K (*n* = 64-65); AISD pre-K (*n* = 65-66). There were no significant differences in performance between UWATX students and either of the comparison samples. Students were excluded from the literacy screener if they were missing any of the subtests.

Despite the slight differences seen in performance across groups in Figure 2, they were not significant. Furthermore, the groups had small sample sizes; thus, the slight advantage observed for students who participated in AISD pre-K could have been due to a random sampling error or lack of variability. Therefore, no definitive conclusions can be made about UWATX students’ TX-KEA BOY performance relative to that of the AISD comparison groups.

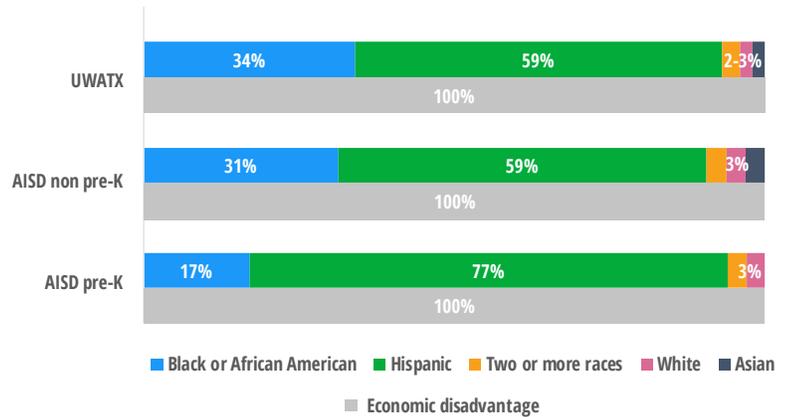
Conclusions

Overall, less than half of the students who were part of the 2019–2020 UWATX partnership and eligible to enroll in AISD KG were enrolled in Fall 2020. Enrollment was likely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which continued throughout the Fall 2020 semester. AISD district-wide enrollment in Fall 2020 was also lower for pre-K and KG students, compared with what it was in the last 5 years. Familiarity with AISD, gained through experiences at the UWATX partnership pre-K centers, may have contributed to some students enrolling in AISD KG despite the pandemic.

The current report found no differences in BOY academic performance between AISD KG students who attended child care centers as part of the UWATX partnership and those who either attended or did not attend AISD pre-K.

The majority of UWATX students were economically disadvantaged and either Hispanic or Black. Leading researchers have posited that providing high-quality early childhood education to historically disadvantaged students may be effective for combatting future inequalities in education (Crosnoe, 2020). The UWATX pre-K partnership is one example of efforts being made not only to boost the academic success of underrepresented students starting from an early age but also to reduce educational inequalities at a societal level. Partnership students may see lasting benefits across their schooling years, as joint enrollment in both AISD-affiliated pre-K and subsequent KG is associated with continuous enrollment in AISD until the 12th grade; this long-term trend in continuous enrollment is especially true for economically disadvantaged students who entered an AISD pre-K rather than waiting until KG (Christian, 2021).

Figure 3.
Distribution of Ethnicity Across TX-KEA BOY UWATX and AISD Comparison Samples, Fall 2020.



Source. AISD student records

Note. Percentages represent number of students with data on the TX-KEA literacy screener. Percentages are not exactly matched across groups due to automatic processes conducted by the random generator.

References

- Christian, C. (2021). *Prekindergarten enrollment: Impact on long-term AISD enrollment* [Manuscript in preparation]. Austin Independent School District.
- Crosnoe, R. (2020). *The starting line: Latina/o Children, Texas schools, and national debates on early education*. University of Texas Press.
- Lucas, M., & Poulsen, H. (2020). *AISD Prekindergarten Partnership Program summary report, 2019–2020*. Austin Independent School District.



Michelle Lucas, Ph.D.
Helen Poulsen, Ph.D.

Department of Research and Evaluation



4000 IH 35 Frontage Road | Austin, TX 78704
512.414.1724 | fax: 512.414.1707
www.austinisd.org/dre | Twitter: @AISD_DRE

April 2021

Publication 20.15