



PROGRAM AT A GLANCE:

Early Kindergarten Transition

HIGHLIGHTS

Early Kindergarten Transition (EKT) is a program that serves incoming kindergarteners and their families.

Students who participated in the Early Kindergarten Transition (EKT) program had higher attendance rates.

A larger proportion of EKT students met benchmarks for the DIBELS test, a measure of early literacy.



WHAT IS THE EARLY KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION PROGRAM?

The Early Kindergarten Transition (EKT) program is a free 3 week summer program for incoming Kindergarten students at Title I schools. Located at the school that the child will attend in the fall, children practice school routines and expectations with a kindergarten teacher from the school while parents meet regularly, begin relationships with each other and school staff, and learn how to support their child’s learning in the home. As a result, families who might otherwise struggle with the start of school become classroom and school leaders. Since the pilot, other Multnomah County school districts have replicated EKT with SUN Community Schools as the coordinating entity.

The EKT program has three main programmatic goals:

- 1 Increase parental involvement in their child’s learning;
- 2 Reduce chronic absenteeism in Kindergarten; and
- 3 Promote children’s success in school.

EKT is a community-wide program that brings early childhood and school partners together to promote successful kindergarten transitions for children and their families in Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Community schools. PPS piloted this program in 2010 at Woodmere and Whitman schools. Soon after schools and districts replicated the model; now there are 41 schools that have EKT county wide, 14 of which are in Portland Public Schools. At PPS, SUN site managers coordinate the program, while the District provides a fidelity team that includes an assistant principal, lead teacher and parent educator, and roving para-educators to support children with special needs.

Space is limited for each of these programs, and an application is required for admission. The EKT program prioritizes children who did not have a structured preschool experience, who speak a language other than English, and/or who struggled with attendance or behavior in Head Start. Each school hosts a program orientation to share expectations with parents.

Children attend school every morning for three weeks (15 half-day sessions) in late summer. Parents or caregivers attend meetings twice a week (6 half-day sessions). Classrooms are supported by bilingual educational assistants. Meals are provided, and childcare is offered during parent meeting times.

Many partners are collaborating to provide EKT and evaluate the program:

- SUN Community Schools
- Home Forward
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- PPS Departments: Title I, Special Education, English as a Second Language, Head Start, Nutrition Services, and the Office of Early Learners
- Multnomah County Library
- Early Learning Multnomah
- University of Portland, Northwest Evaluation Association
- Portland State University, Psychology Department Evaluation Team

BUILDING CHILDREN’S CAPACITY

Children “practice” kindergarten in classes of 20 students taught by Kindergarten teachers from their school. Throughout the 3-week program, they build social skills, confidence, and excitement about classroom learning. Their curriculum also includes literacy, classroom expectations, and school routines.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

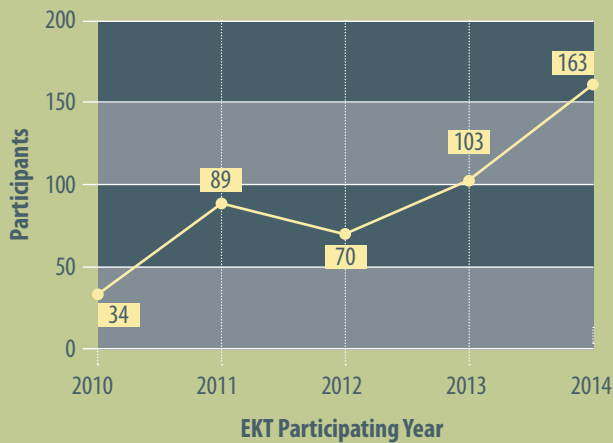
Parents participate two days each week learning how school works, connecting with teachers, the principal, and other parents, and learning how to extend their child’s learning at home. Topics covered in these classes include the importance of attendance, how to read interactively with their children, and strategies for promoting math concepts and skills at home. Other organizations also provide resources and training for parents. For example, Multnomah County Library provides education about literacy and ensures each family has a library card.



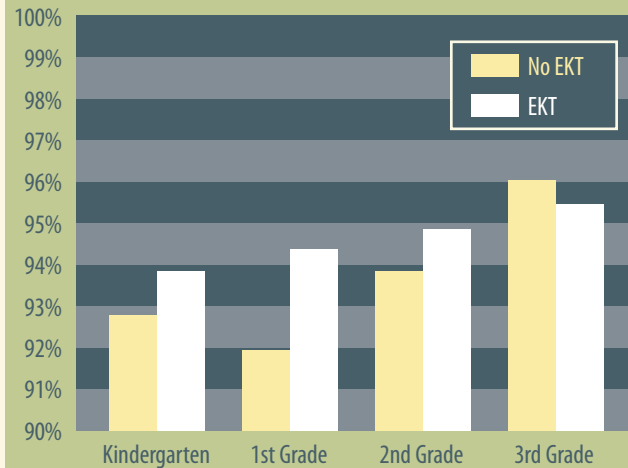
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IS THE EKT PROGRAM ACHIEVING ITS GOALS?

Participants vs. EKT Participating Year



2010 Cohort Student Attendance Rates*



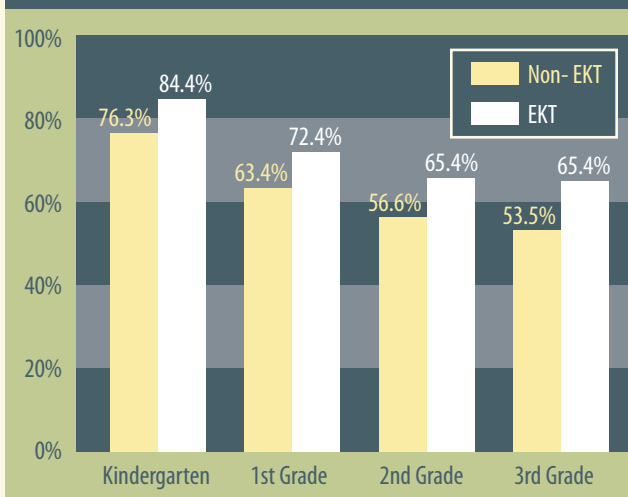
Participating Schools

Boise-Eliot/Humboldt	Rigler
Bridger	Scott
Cesar Chavez	Sitton
Harrison Park	Vernon
James John	Vestal
Lee	Whitman
Lent	Woodlawn
Marysville	Woodmere

EKT Student Demographics

Characteristic	Overall Percentage
Male	55.7%
White	27.7%
Asian	23.6%
Black	12.6%
Hispanic	27.4%
ESL	41.4%
SPED	13.3%

Percent of Students at DIBELS Benchmark



FINDINGS

A study¹ of the effects of EKT on students suggested that the program is beginning to achieve its goals:

Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in Kindergarten

The study found a trend of EKT students having higher attendance than students who did not participate in EKT in Kindergarten through 2nd grade (see Figure 1, 2010 Cohort Student Attendance Rates).

Promoting Children's Success in School

A lower proportion of EKT students was identified for intensive support based on their early literacy skills, which was measured with the DIBELS 6th Edition Assessment. A larger proportion of EKT students met early literacy benchmarks (were at "core") at most grades K through 3 (statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, see Figure 2, Percent of Students at DIBELS Benchmark).

REFERENCES & NOTES

1. University of Portland and Northwest Evaluation Association. (2015). *Longitudinal effects of the Early Kindergarten Transition Program*. Portland, OR.

* Note: Due to small sample sizes and other factors, results may not be generalizable.