

# **Profile of the 2005-2006 Kindergarten Students With No Preschool Experience**

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**MONITORING AND EVALUATION SERVICES**

INFORMATION  
FOR



**ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

# **Profile of the 2005-2006 Kindergarten Students With No Preschool Experience**

MONITORING AND EVALUATION SERVICES

ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## **Profile of the 2005-2006 Kindergarten Students with no Preschool Experience**

### **Report Highlights**

- The percentage of entering kindergarteners with no preschool experience in Alexandria is declining: 35% of the 2005-2006 class did not have a structured preschool experience, compared to 53% in 2001-2002.
- The families, whose children were not enrolled in preschool prior to entering ACPS in 2005, were clustered in three main parts of the city, along the western border of the city, on the east and west sides of northern Mount Vernon Ave. and along central Duke Street.
- Students in Home Care settings were disproportionately Hispanic, speak a language other than English at home and are classified as Disadvantaged using the proxy of free and reduced price lunch status.
- Students in Home Care were less prepared to enter school, that is they scored 10-26 points below that of students with other types of pre-kindergarten experience on the Phonological Awareness of Literacy Screening and were less likely to attend the Kindergarten Prep Program.
- Students with no preschool experience had less successful first years in school; they were more likely to be retained in kindergarten (8%) and referred to summer school (40%).

### **Overview**

Alexandria City Public Schools have consistently collected data on the pre-kindergarten status of children registering for kindergarten. The student registration form asks parents to indicate if their child attended Head Start, a full-day child care center, a half-day preschool or nursery school program or was in home-based care with a family child care provider, baby-sitter or parent/relative. Over the past five years, on average, approximately 30% of entering kindergarten students have not had a structured preschool experience (see Appendix 1). In addition, the status of approximately 18% of students is unknown. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these students were most likely also in home care, thus increasing the number of students with no preschool experience to nearly 50%. The percentage of students in home care or with an unknown status has declined over the past five years from 53% to 35%. Although the percentage of students has been steadily declining, the city of Alexandria and the Early Childhood Task Force hope to proactively address the issue and expand quality preschool access for all residents. Their efforts are in response to research that demonstrates that preschool programs can provide both academic and social benefits for children, particularly children from low socioeconomic or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

A preschool work group was convened to further explore which children do not attend preschool and potential contributing factors. Staff from various city offices and community members have collaborated to share information (Deborah Warren, Division Director, Child, Family and Prevention Services; Veronica Aberle, Nurse Manager, Alexandria Health Department; Carol Farrell, Director, Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood Development; Allison Anderson, GIS Specialist, Department of Planning and Zoning; Cathy David, Deputy Superintendent, ACPS; Monte Dawson, Executive Director Monitoring and Evaluation, ACPS; Sean McEneaney, Chamber of Commerce; Susan Johnson, Chair, Early Childhood

Commission). ACPS explored the following five questions to add to the body of knowledge regarding the needs of young children who do not attend preschool:

1. Where were the families of ACPS kindergarten students with no preschool experience living during the 2004-2005 school year?
2. Do the ACPS kindergarten students with no preschool experience currently have younger siblings? Will they attend preschool during the 2006-2007 school year?
3. What are the salient demographic characteristics of the kindergarten students with no preschool experience (e.g., gender, ethnicity, free or reduced lunch status, LEP status, SPED status, home language)?
4. Did the 2005-2006 kindergarten students with no preschool experience arrive at school ready to learn?
5. How successful were the 2005-2006 kindergarten students with no preschool experience?

To answer the above noted questions, data were drawn from two sources. First, data were extracted from school records for all kindergarten students entering ACPS for the 2005-2006 school year (N = 1,018). These data allow for comparisons among children with different types of preschool experience. Types of data extracted included demographic characteristics, test scores, and school status variables. Second, a brief survey was developed and mailed in August 2006 to those families whose children did not have a structured preschool experience (see Appendix 2). The survey was in both English and Spanish. The total sample of children with no preschool experience included 363 families; however ACPS records indicated that 46 of those students left ACPS before the conclusion of the school year. Thus a possible 317 families were surveyed, of whom 95 chose to complete the survey (participation rate = 30%). The survey results were linked with the demographic and academic data collected from student records, so the data could be analyzed by various subgroups of interest. The survey data should be interpreted with caution, as they represent a nonrandom sample of the families. These families may differ in ways from families who chose not to respond to the survey. The data are presented for illustrative purposes and to bring some light to bear on the questions posed by the Early Childhood Task Force.

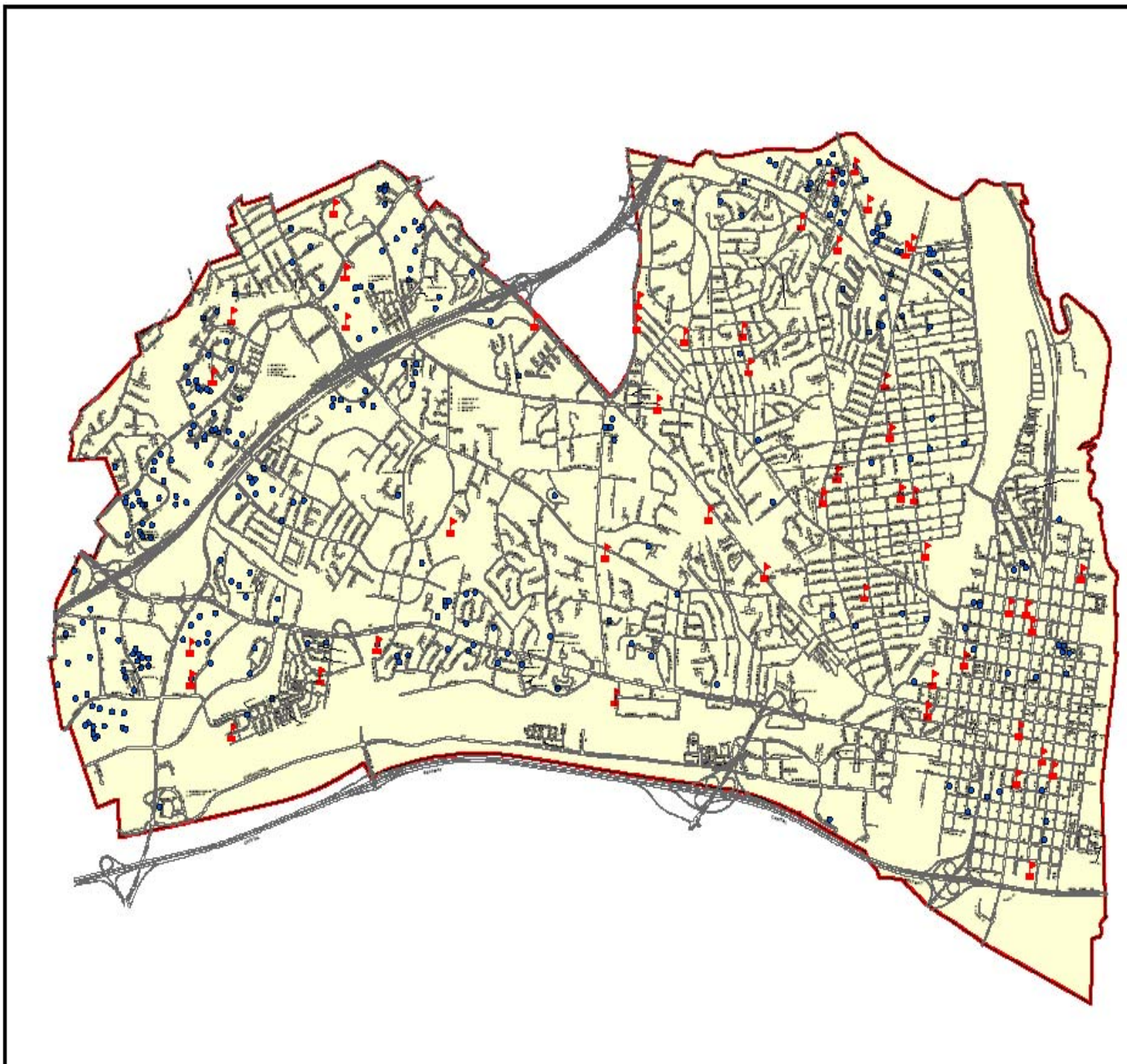
## **Results**

### **Question 1: Where were the families of ACPS kindergarten students with no preschool experience living during the 2004-2005 school year?**

Ninety-five percent of the families who responded to the survey indicated that they were living in Alexandria during the 2004-2005 school year.

In collaboration with Allison Anderson at the Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning, Figure 1 was created which visually depicts the location of the residences of the families with kindergarteners with no preschool experience, as well as the location of preschools available in Alexandria, as of the Fall 2005. The families live disproportionately along the western border of Alexandria with a cluster in the north on either side of Mount Vernon Ave and another cluster along Duke Street.

Figure 1

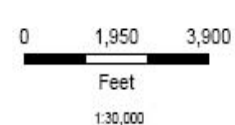


## Kindergarteners with no Preschool Experience

2005 - 2006 School Year

### Legend

- Students with no Preschool
- ▲ Preschools



This map was produced by the GIS Division of the Department of Planning and Zoning, City of Alexandria, Virginia

Maping Symbols:  
Coordinate System: NAD83 StatePlane Virginia East  
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic  
Map Units: Feet

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09-08-2006  
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**Question 2: Do the ACPS kindergarten students with no preschool experience currently have younger siblings? Will they attend preschool during the 2006-2007 school year?**

Forty-seven percent (N = 45) of the ACPS 2005-2006 kindergarteners that did not attend preschool have younger siblings that are preschool age. Of this group of children, parents reported that 57% will not attend preschool this year.

Parents were also asked about the characteristics of preferred daycare/preschool options for their neighborhood. A majority (60%) indicated that they would like full-day programs as opposed to half-day programs (21%; 19% were undecided). Parents were also asked if they preferred family care (14%), programs affiliated with a religious institution (17%) or center-based programs (40%; 29% were undecided).

**Question 3: What are the salient demographic characteristics of the kindergarten students with no preschool experience (e.g., gender, ethnicity, free or reduced lunch status, LEP status, SPED status, home language)?**

Table 1 displays the pre-kindergarten status of 2005-2006 students by relevant demographic characteristics. Gender is the only characteristic that is equally distributed within all types of preschool experience. Home Care students are majority Hispanic 44%, followed by Black (31%). Head Start and full-day programs are majority Black (49% and 46% respectively), while half-day programs are predominantly White (61%). Nearly 50% of the Home Care students are classified as ESL and 60% speak a language other than English at home. The language most often spoken at home is Spanish (38%), but other languages are represented as well. In addition, 58% of Home Care students are classified as disadvantaged, which is more than students who had full-day or half-day preschool experiences, but less than children who attended Head Start (72%). Home Care students are least likely to be classified as receiving special education services (6%). In sum, these frequencies demonstrate that the population of children not attending preschool may be doing so less by choice and more due to lack of financial resources or an ability to be able to research and find options in the community due to communication barriers.

TABLE 1  
Demographic Characteristics of 2005-2006 Kindergarten Students by Pre-Kindergarten Status

	Head Start (%)	Full Day Care (%)	Half Day Care (%)	Home Care and UNK (%)
Gender				
Male	54	51	58	52
Female	46	49	42	48
Ethnicity				
Asian	6	5	3	7
Black	49	46	14	31
Hispanic	26	22	17	44
White	14	19	61	12
Unspecified	5	8	7	7
Home Language				
English	54	65	75	41
Spanish	23	18	15	38
Arabic/Amharic	11	5	4	6
Other	13	12	7	15
LEP	36	25	17	49
Disadvantaged	72	46	22	58
Students with Disabilities	18	7	12	6

**Question 4: Did the 2005-2006 kindergarten students with no preschool experience arrive to school ready to learn?**

Multiple different pieces of data were assembled to answer this question. First, recent research has documented that shared book reading between parents and children and access to books in the house is reliably linked to language and school readiness outcomes<sup>1</sup>. Book reading and literacy related activities are especially advocated for low-income children as these activities provide focused language experiences that tend to be similar in quality as those routinely

<sup>1</sup> Raikes, H., Luze, G., Brooks-Gunn, J., Raikes, H.A., Pan, B., Tamis-LeMonda, C., Constantine, J., Tarullo, L., & Rodriguez, E. (2006). Mother-child bookreading in low-income families: Correlates and outcomes during the first three years of life. *Child Development, 77* (4), 924-953.

experienced by children in more advantaged homes. The brief survey sent to parents of children not attending preschool included two questions to understand how often parents and children read together and the number of books the child has. Table 2 shows that overall, 53% of parents read to their child at least once per day. Only 17% read a few times a month or rarely to their child. The frequency with which children are read to varied by disadvantaged status and ethnicity, within this small sample of families who did not send their child to preschool, 68% of non-disadvantage families read to their children everyday, while only 37% of disadvantaged families did. This behavior also varied across ethnic group, White parents were most likely to read to their children every day (76%), followed by Black (45%) and Hispanic (33%). A similar pattern was observed for the number of books children own.

TABLE 2  
Frequency of Parental Book Reading and Children’s Books in Home  
by Ethnicity and Disadvantage Status

	Total (%)	White (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	Disadvantaged (%)
Parental Bookreading					
At least once a day	53	76	45	33	37
Few Times a week	31	24	48	23	40
Few times a month	11	0	4	27	13
Rarely	6	0	4	17	10
# Books					
1-2	13	0	15	20	15
3-9	19	5	30	17	25
>10	68	95	56	63	60

Readiness for school was also examined with an additional piece of data. ACPS offers a free Kindergarten Prep Program (K-Prep) at all elementary schools except for Samuel Tucker and Mount Vernon, as these two schools follow a modified calendar and begin school during the summer. The program is two weeks and is designed to introduce new kindergarteners to their respective schools and classrooms to help them be prepared for early success in school. Participation in K-Prep was analyzed for all entering kindergarten students by pre-kindergarten status. K-Prep participation was approximately 32% for the 2005-2006 kindergarten class. There was limited variation by pre-kindergarten status, although children who were in home care participated the least (28%), followed by Head Start children (32%), half-day (34.5%) and full-day students (35.4%).

The final piece of data examined to answer the question regarding children’s readiness for school was children’s scores on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) that is done with all kindergarten students in the fall. Table 3 displays PALS results by pre-kindergarten status of kindergarten students. As can be seen, Home Care students were least likely to pass the test (65%). Their average scaled score was 10-26 points below that of students with other types of pre-kindergarten experience.

TABLE 3  
Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening Results by Pre-Kindergarten Status  
Fall 2005

	Head Start (%)	Full Day Care (%)	Half Day Care (%)	Home Care and UNK (%)
Pass				
Yes	83	78	89	65
No	17	22	11	35
Average Scaled Score	55	53	69	43

**Question 5: How successful were the kindergarten students with no preschool experience?**

Three discrete pieces of data were examined to learn how the kindergarten class functioned and performed over the school year. Table 4 presents the data by pre-kindergarten status. All students demonstrated excellent attendance, with insignificant differences between groups. However, Home Care students were most likely to be retained in kindergarten (8%) and referred to summer school (40%). These results are consistent with what you would expect, given that the students enter kindergarten less ready to learn (e.g., lower PALS scores, fewer literacy experiences at home). They are not able to “catch up” over the course of a school year and need more time to learn kindergarten skills. Nearly half (48%) are not ready to progress to first grade without some form of intervention. Many students from Head Start or those that attended full day programs were also referred to summer school, but the frequency of retention of those students was far less.

TABLE 4  
School Functioning by Pre-Kindergarten Status

	Head Start (%)	Full Day Care (%)	Half Day Care (%)	Home Care and UNK (%)
School Attendance	95	96	95	94
Retained in Kindergarten	3	4	2	8
Referred to Summer School	33	30	14	40

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The data presented in this report represent a first effort at examining the demographic characteristics and school performance of ACPS students who have not had a structured preschool experience, prior to entry in kindergarten. The themes observed are compelling and in many cases reinforce conceptions of the Early Childhood Task Force and research that has been conducted about the advantages of quality preschool education for children, especially less advantaged children. Although the data are limited in some respects (e.g., the small sample size for the survey data), the findings nonetheless warrant attention and suggest potential avenues for intervention to support the positive development of Alexandria’s youngest children.

The following are recommendations to consider as the Early Childhood Task Force continues its work:

- Review data on research based programs, types of experiences and time needed that will help kindergarten students “catch up” to their peers in regard to literacy and school readiness skills.
- Develop specific educational programs, resources and support for students and their families who enroll in kindergarten with no preschool experience.
- Provide community outreach to families for whom English is a second language that focuses on resources in the community for preschool age children, educational opportunities available at ACPS (e.g., K-Prep) and how to create a literacy rich environment in the home. ACPS staffs Bilingual Parent Liasons that can be utilized in this capacity. In particular, they can target families that report younger siblings in the home when they enroll kindergarten students.
- Finally, the data collected during kindergarten registration should be reviewed for potential changes that might improve the quality of the data regarding pre-kindergarten experiences and thus the understanding of the needs of children and their families.

**APPENDIX 1**  
 Alexandria City Public Schools  
 Pre-Kindergarten Status of  
 End of Year Kindergarten Students 2001-02 through 2005-06

Year	Head Start	Full Day Care	Half Day Care	Home Care	Unknown <sup>a</sup>	Total
2001-02	132 (13%)	194 (19%)	156 (15%)	353 (34%)	197 (19%)	1032
2002-03	135 (13%)	212 (21%)	145 (14%)	395 (39%)	131 (13%)	1018
2003-04	160 (15%)	199 (19%)	179 (17%)	208 (20%)	313 (30%)	1059
2004-05 <sup>b</sup>	170 (17%)	194 (19%)	199 (20%)	271 (27%)	170 (17%)	1004
2005-06 <sup>c</sup>	198 (19%)	259 (25%)	204 (20%)	281 (28%)	76 (7%)	1018

<sup>a</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that students with an unknown pre-kindergarten status were probably in Home Care.

<sup>b</sup> As of April 5, 2005.

<sup>c</sup> As of October 31, 2005

## APPENDIX 2

### Survey Questions for Families with Children Who Did Not Preschool

[Red Bracketed Text] indicates frequency of response.

1. Was your family living in Alexandria during the 2004-2005 school year?  
 Yes [95%]  No **If no**, where were you living?  
 Another city in Virginia [3%]  
 Maryland  
 D.C.  
 Another state [1%]  
 Out of the country [1%]
2. Are there presently any children in your household that are preschool age (less than 5 years old)?  
 Yes [47%]  No [53%]  
  
**If yes**, Will he or she attend preschool this year?  
 No [57%]  Yes [43%]
3. What type of preschool options would you like in your neighborhood?  
Choose one:  Half Day [21%]  Full Day [60%]  Don't Know [19%]  
Choose one:  Center Care [40%]  Family Based Care [14%]  Religious affiliation [17%]  Don't Know [29%]
4. How many times in the past month did you read (stories) with your child who was in kindergarten last year?  
 More than once a day [17%]  
 About once a day [36%]  
 A few times a week [31%]  
 A few times a month [11%]  
 Rarely [6%]  
 Not at all [0%]
5. About how many books does your child, who was in kindergarten last year, have?  
 0 [0%]  
 1-2 [13%]  
 3-9 [19%]  
 >10 [68%]