

A photograph of a female teacher with long dark hair, wearing a mustard-colored long-sleeved shirt, leaning over a white table. She is surrounded by five young children of diverse backgrounds. They are all looking at a book or paper on the table. The background shows a classroom setting with green bookshelves filled with books.

Michigan Transitional Kindergarten: A First Look at Program Reach and Features



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Policy Issue

Thousands of young Michigan children attend state-funded transitional kindergarten (TK) programs. These programs are intended to provide an additional year of early education before children begin traditional kindergarten. School districts in Michigan choose whether or not to offer TK programs. This brief is part of a larger study of Michigan TK. Here, we provide the first evidence on the program's features and reach within the state.

Much of the data used for this project was structured and maintained by the MERI-Michigan Education Data Center (MEDC). MEDC data is modified for analysis purposes using rules governed by MEDC and are not identical to those data collected and maintained by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and/or Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). Results, information, and opinions solely represent the analysis, information, and opinions of the authors and are not endorsed by, or reflect the views or positions of grantors, MDE, CEPI, or any employee thereof. This research was funded with help from the Smith Richardson Foundation, as well as training grants R305B20011 and R305B170015 from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.

Key Findings

- 1 The majority of students in Michigan public schools are enrolled in a school district that offers a transitional kindergarten (TK) program.** In the 2021-2022 school year, 364 Michigan school districts and charter schools, serving 66% of elementary-age children in the state, offered transitional kindergarten. Administrators in districts and charters with TK programs report that improving kindergarten readiness and providing a more structured learning experience before traditional kindergarten were important factors in deciding to offer TK.
- 2 Districts that offer TK are more likely to be in suburbs and towns and to serve fewer students historically underserved by public education systems.** Within districts that offer TK, students who enroll in TK are also more likely to be White and less likely to be economically disadvantaged. However, there is considerable overlap in neighborhood household income for students in TK versus other options, suggesting that TK is reaching socioeconomically diverse students and families.
- 3 TK primarily serves students with summer and fall birthdays.** For students with summer birthdays, who would otherwise be the youngest in their kindergarten cohort, TK allows them to delay traditional kindergarten entry for a year without a direct cost to their families. Children with fall birthdays who miss the state's September 1st kindergarten cutoff can enroll in TK as an early learning program before starting traditional kindergarten the following year.
- 4 Curricula and assessments vary across TK programs.** Most programs use at least one literacy-specific curriculum, while just over half use at least one math-specific curriculum. Two-thirds of districts primarily use pre-K-only or pre-K/K curricula, while the rest use a kindergarten-level curriculum. Most districts report using at least one direct child assessment in TK. Literacy assessments are more common than assessments in other domains.
- 5 District leaders are overwhelmingly positive about their TK programs.** Nearly all believe that TK programs improve children's academic and socio-emotional preparedness for traditional kindergarten. Almost all report that TK instruction differs substantially from traditional kindergarten instruction and that children benefit from this model.

Introduction

Decades of evidence show that early education programs improve children's readiness for kindergarten. In some cases, these benefits last into adulthood, improving participants' health, economic well-being, and educational attainment.¹ This evidence – combined with increases in maternal employment and large income gaps in preschool participation – has led many states and localities to expand their early learning programs in recent years. Some localities, particularly in California, Michigan, and Washington, have done so in part through the creation or expansion of transitional kindergarten (TK) programs.²

Transitional kindergarten programs are intended to provide an additional year of early education before children begin traditional kindergarten. The state funds transitional kindergarten programs as part of its formula for traditional kindergarten (e.g., an extra year of funding). TK programs are open to any age-eligible child in the state, regardless of family income or other demographic factors. Districts and charter schools choose whether to offer a TK program. They also determine the age eligibility for the program. As we detail in this brief, most districts with TK programs allow children with fall and summer birthdays to enroll in TK.



TK teachers are paid on the same salary scale and are subject to the same educational requirements as K-12 teachers. Just as districts have wide latitude in determining the nature of traditional kindergarten programs, districts have flexibility in choosing TK curriculum and assessments.

To date, there has been no systematic research on Michigan's TK program. However, a rigorous evaluation of California's TK program has demonstrated positive impacts on participating students' early literacy, language, and math skills and engagement at entry. Effects on some literacy skills lasted through the end of kindergarten.³

In 2021, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Education, our team launched the first study of Michigan's TK program. Our broader aims are to: 1) describe variation in the implementation of TK across the state; 2) examine the fit of the program within the state's early learning landscape, which includes state-funded pre-K (called the Great Start Readiness Project, GSRP), Head Start, family child care homes, and other center-based providers; and 3) estimate the impacts of attending TK on children's later schooling outcomes.

Here, we report on goal 1 – describing variation in the implementation of TK across the state. To do so, we analyzed state administrative data and surveyed administrators of TK programs to provide the first comprehensive description of which districts offer TK and what students experience in the program.

Background

Combining state administrative records, internet research, and phone calls to districts, we identified 364 districts and charter schools in school year (SY) 2021-2022 with a TK program.⁴ We then used administrative records on district characteristics to examine how districts and charters that offered TK differed from those that did not. Given our use of multiple data sources, our findings may differ from analyses using state administrative records alone. Please see the Appendix (p. 15) to learn more about the way in which we triangulated data to understand TK programming in Michigan.

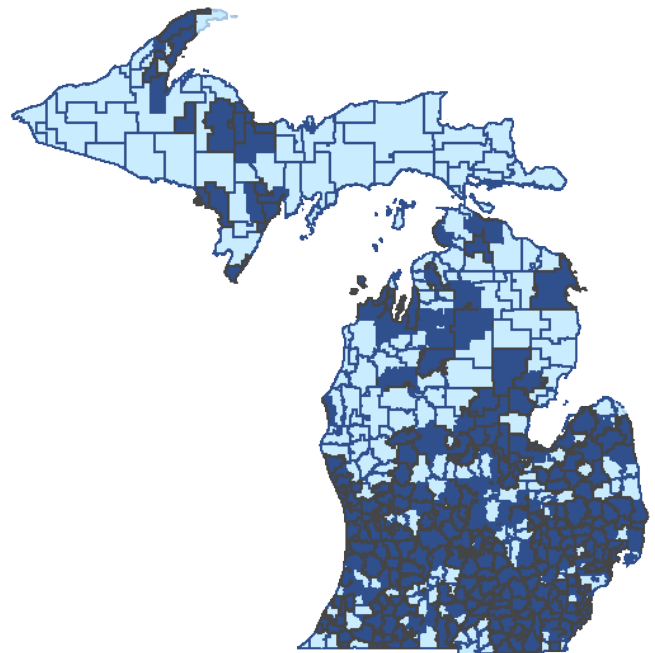
We also surveyed districts with TK to learn more about their programs, ultimately receiving responses from 171 districts (47% of TK programs in the state).⁵ In Appendix Table 1.A, we show that districts with TK that responded to the survey are demographically similar to districts with TK that were not surveyed or did not respond to the survey. In contrast, charter schools with TK that responded to the survey serve more advantaged populations than charter schools with TK that did not. Accordingly, our charter school findings are likely less representative of TK programs in charter schools than our district findings.

Key finding #1: The majority of students in Michigan public schools are enrolled in a school district that offers a transitional kindergarten program.

In Figure 1, we display the geographic distribution of TK programs in SY 2021-2022 across the 307 districts and 57 charter schools that offered it. Over half of traditional school districts and one quarter of charter schools offered TK in SY 2021-2022. Importantly, the districts and charter

schools offering TK served two thirds of elementary students in Michigan. TK programs are distributed across the state but are more prevalent in the southern half of the Lower Peninsula.

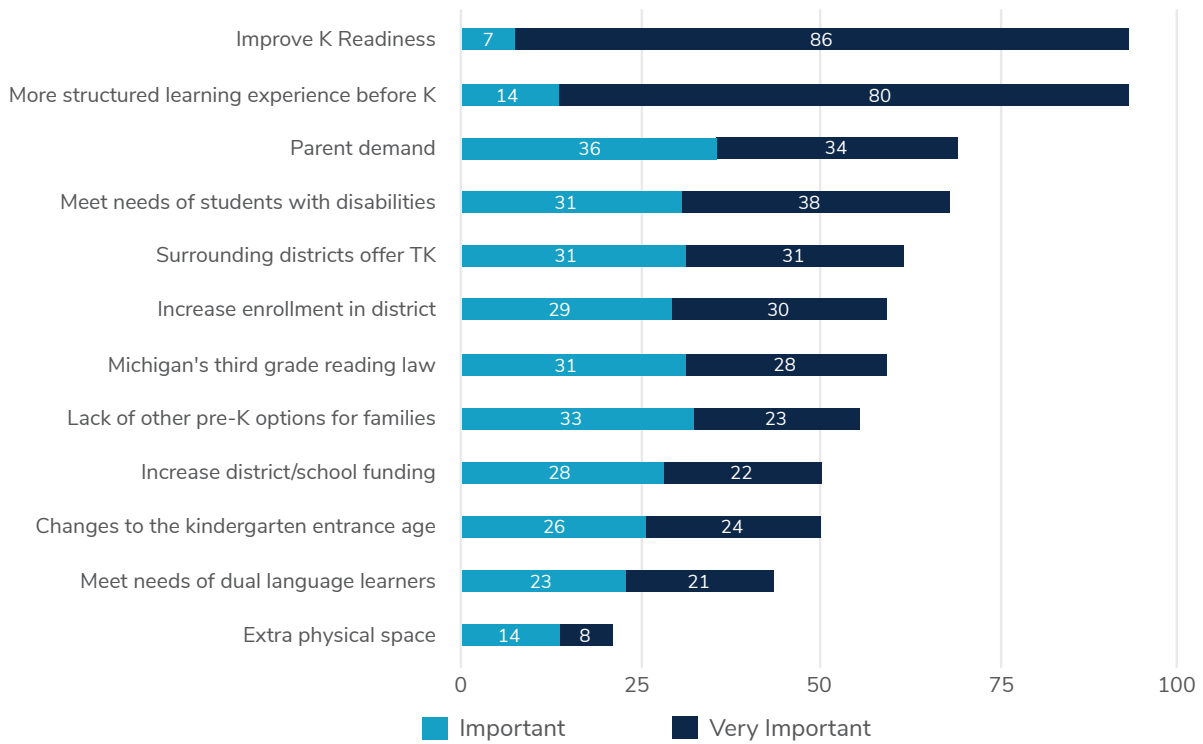
Figure 1: Districts Offering a TK program in SY21-22



Note: Dark blue districts (N=307) offered a TK program in SY21-22. In addition, 57 charter schools/PSAs offered TK (not shown).

District leaders who responded to our survey report many reasons for offering a TK program in their district (Figure 2). Almost all say that improving kindergarten readiness and providing a more structured learning experience before traditional kindergarten were important factors in their decision. Interestingly, 62% of respondents say that surrounding districts offering a TK program was an important or very important factor influencing their decision to offer a TK program. This suggests that TK programs are seen by some district leaders as a way to attract and retain students and families.

Figure 2: Which of the Following Influenced Your District's Decision to Offer a Transitional Kindergarten Program?



Note: N=160. Respondents were asked "Which of the following influenced your district's decision to offer a Transitional Kindergarten program?" with the options of "Very Important," "Important," "Somewhat Important," "Not at all Important," and "Don't Know."

Key finding #2: Districts that offer TK serve fewer students historically underserved by public education systems. In districts that offer TK, TK enrollees are more likely to be White and less likely to be economically disadvantaged.

In Table 1, we compare the demographic characteristics of districts and charter schools with and without TK programs. Districts with TK programs have higher shares of White students and correspondingly lower shares of Black and Hispanic⁶ students. Districts offering TK have a smaller share of economically disadvantaged students (50% compared to 67%), are larger on average, and are more likely to be in suburbs than districts without a TK

program. The pattern for charter schools with and without TK is similar.

In Table 2, we look within districts that offered TK, comparing the demographic characteristics of students in those districts who attended either TK, the GSRP (Michigan's state-funded public pre-K program open to economically disadvantaged children and children who meet other eligibility factors), or who did not attend any public early childhood education program prior to kindergarten.⁷ We find that students who attended TK or neither program are less likely to be classified as economically advantaged (43%) than students who attend GSRP (80%). TK students and students who attend neither TK nor GSRP are also more likely to be White and to live in neighborhoods with higher median household income.

Table 1: Characteristics of Districts and Charters With and Without TK in SY21-22

Student characteristics	Districts		Charter Schools	
	No TK	Has TK	No TK	Has TK
% White	53	72	25	40
% Black	27	10	58	33
% Hispanic	11	8	8	13
% Asian	3	4	4	5
% Other	6	6	6	9
% Limited English Proficient	10	7	11	11
% Economically Disadvantaged	67	50	85	66
% Special Education	18	16	12	13
District characteristics				
Traditional K Enrollment (N)	106.1	236.4	62.9	86.5
% of Traditional K Students Attended State-Funded Pre-K	34	29	30	27
% City	6	7	51	25
% Suburb	14	38	32	48
% Town	14	21	4	5
% Rural	65	34	14	21
Avg. 3rd Grade M-STEP Math Score (Standard Deviation)	-0.19 (0.50)	0.00 (0.36)	-0.57 (0.49)	-0.17 (0.45)
Avg. 3rd Grade M-STEP ELA Score (Standard Deviation)	-0.20 (0.50)	0.01 (0.32)	-0.49 (0.50)	-0.12 (0.42)
Districts/Charters (N)	274	307	176	57

Note: Figures in this table were estimated using administrative data from SY21-22. District-level designations for TK and no TK are based on administrative records and primary data collection (described above). "State-Funded Pre-K" refers to students who enrolled in Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) or a GSRP/Head Start blend program. Average 3rd Grade M-STEP scores are measured in standard deviation units from the mean score of all grade-subject test takers in the state.

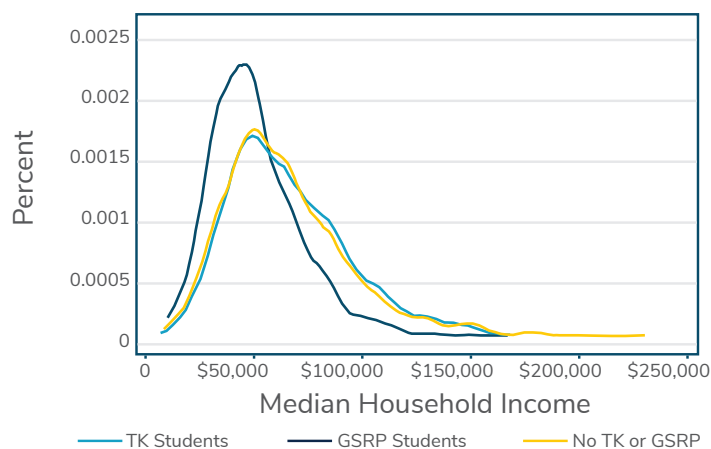
Table 2: Characteristics of Kindergarten Students in SY20-21 in Districts with TK, by Program Enrollment Prior to Kindergarten

Student characteristics	TK	GSRP	No TK or GSRP
% White	77	64	71
% Black	6	15	9
% Hispanic	8	12	8
% Asian	3	3	5
% Other	6	7	7
% Limited Education Proficient	7	12	7
% Economically Disadvantaged	43	80	42
% Special Education	13	17	15
Median Block-Level Household Income	\$63,601	\$49,443	\$62,165
# Districts	204		

Note: Figures in this table were estimated using administrative data from kindergarten students in SY20-21. Analysis is restricted to the 204 districts with 10 or more TK students reported in the SY19-20 administrative data (does not represent the full sample of districts that had TK in SY19-20) and to students born between 9/1-11/30 to account for variation in eligibility among students with summer birthdays. Median household income (in 2015 inflation-adjusted dollars) is from the American Community Survey (ACS).

When comparing the distribution of neighborhood income across the three groups, we see that TK students and students who attend neither TK nor GSRP live in wealthier neighborhoods than students in GSRP. However, there is considerable overlap in the distribution of median neighborhood household income across the three groups (Figure 3). Overall, these demographic patterns suggest that TK may be filling a gap in access to early learning programs in the year before kindergarten entry for students from families with middle and upper incomes but is not exclusively serving these more advantaged students.

Figure 3: Distribution of Median Household Neighborhood Income of Kindergarten Students in SY20-21 in Districts with TK, by Program Enrollment Prior to Kindergarten



Note: The figure above shows the distribution of the median household income (in 2015 inflation-adjusted dollars) of the residential census blocks of kindergarten students in SY20-21 who enrolled in TK, GSRP, or neither program in SY19-20. Analysis is restricted to the 238 districts and charter schools with 10 or more TK students reported in the SY19-20 administrative data (does not represent the full sample of districts/charter schools that had TK in SY19-20) and to students born in 9/1-11/30 to account for variation in eligibility among students with summer birthdays. Median household income is from the American Community Survey (ACS).

Key finding #3: TK primarily serves students with summer and fall birthdays.

Districts decide age eligibility criteria for their TK programs. Most administrators (90%) who responded to our survey report that children with fall birthdays (September 2 to December 1) are eligible to enroll in TK. These children sign a kindergarten early entrance waiver, but enroll in TK rather than a traditional kindergarten program. TK serves as an additional publicly funded early learning option for these children because they have missed the cutoff date of September 1st (the date by which a child must turn five to be eligible to enroll in kindergarten), and will enroll in traditional kindergarten in the following fall.⁸

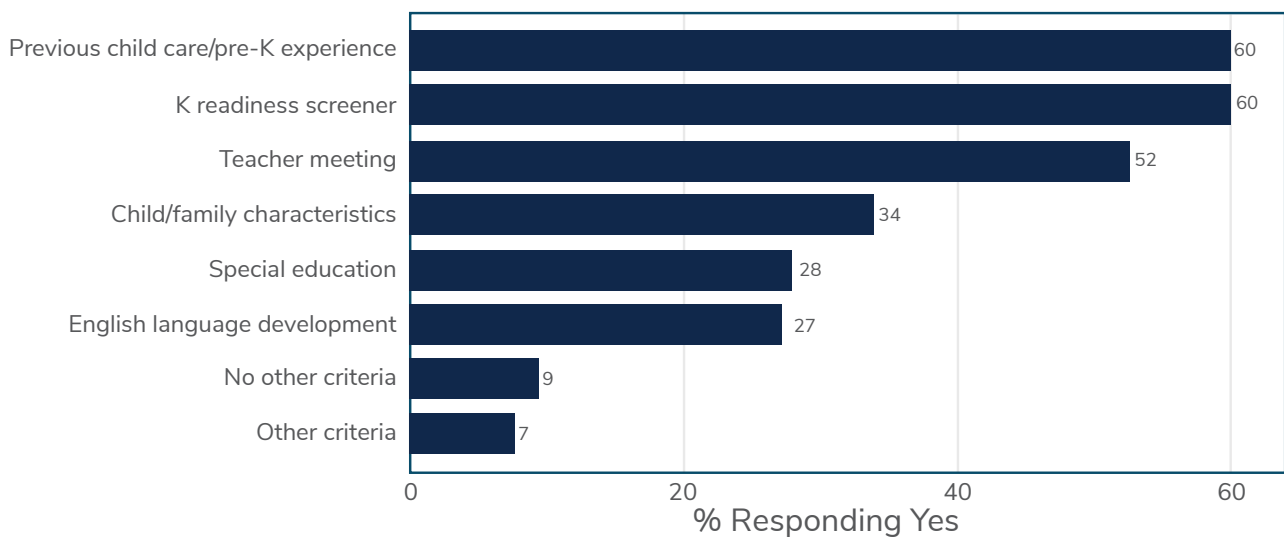
Nearly as many administrators (84%) also report that children born in the summer months (i.e., June, July, and August) can enroll in TK. Finally, 60% of districts report that children born in the spring months (March, April, and May) can enroll in TK. Importantly, children with spring or summer birthdays are also eligible to enroll in kindergarten. For these students, TK allows parents to delay their entry

into kindergarten (i.e., “redshirt”) while receiving an extra year of publicly funded instruction.⁹ Research on the benefits of “redshirting” is mixed,¹⁰ but it tends to be more popular among families with higher incomes who can afford to pay for an extra year of care before kindergarten.¹¹ If TK programs provide a publicly funded option for delaying traditional kindergarten entry, this could increase equity by providing an option to families who otherwise could not afford to delay their child's kindergarten entry.

While all districts rely on birthdate to determine eligibility, 92% of districts say they also consider other factors when determining enrollment in TK.¹² How these factors are considered in the TK enrollment process varies by school district.

As shown in Figure 4, 60% report that previous child care or pre-K experience and/or school readiness screeners are used, while slightly over half report using teacher meetings with parents. Fewer than one third of districts report using child/family characteristics, special education participation, and/or English language development to determine eligibility for TK.¹³

Figure 4: What Other Criteria Besides Birthday Are Used to Determine Transitional Kindergarten Eligibility?



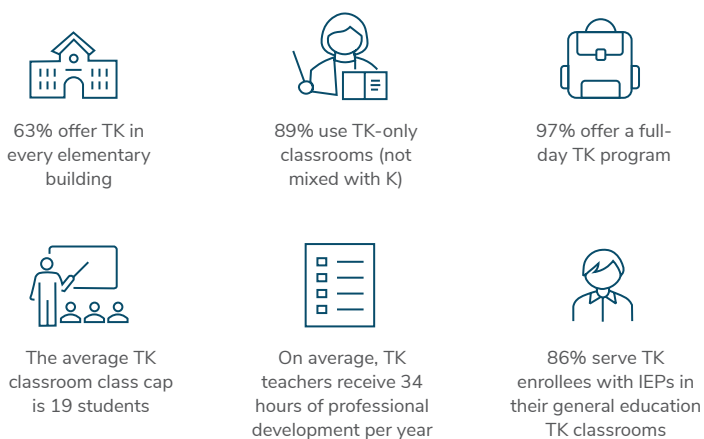
Note: N=164. Respondents were asked, “Are there any other criteria besides birthday that are used to determine transitional kindergarten eligibility?” and to check all criteria shown above that apply.

Key finding #4: Curriculum and assessments vary across TK programs.

TK programs in Michigan are district-initiated and district-led. This approach leads to more variation in the design of these programs compared with the state- and federally-funded pre-K programs offered in Michigan. In this way, the TK programs resemble kindergarten programs across the state more than pre-K programs.

Most school districts (63%) offer a TK classroom in every elementary school building (see Figure 5). For the districts that do not offer TK programs in every school building, between one third and one quarter report a lack of classroom space, insufficient parent demand, and/or locating TK programs in a dedicated early childhood center instead.¹⁴ Nearly all districts offer TK as a full-day program (97%), offer TK in a dedicated TK classroom (89%), and serve children with disabilities in general education classrooms (86%). The average TK classroom is capped at 19 students, and TK teachers receive an average of 34 hours of professional development per year.

Figure 5: Characteristics of TK

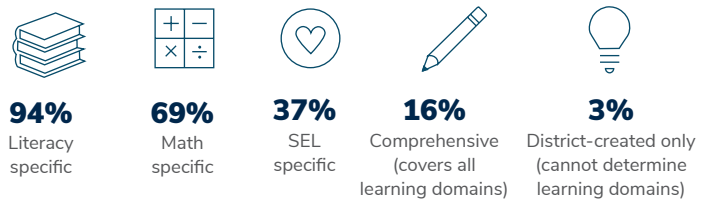


Note: TK teacher professional development hours per year (mean=34, SD=11, min=2, max=70), TK class cap (mean=19, SD=3, min=13, max=31)

Curricula

Michigan districts with TK programs decide which curricula to implement. There is no state-provided list of curricula for TK as there is for the state's pre-K program. District administrators report using an average of 3.5 curricula in their TK programs (standard deviation (SD)=1.8 and range of 1-9). As shown in Figure 6, virtually all districts use a literacy-specific curriculum (94%), and the majority also use a math-specific curriculum (69%). About 16% of districts report using a comprehensive curriculum that purports to cover all learning domains, and 3% report using a district-created curriculum only. Across these options, 66% of responding districts report using curricula covering both literacy and math.

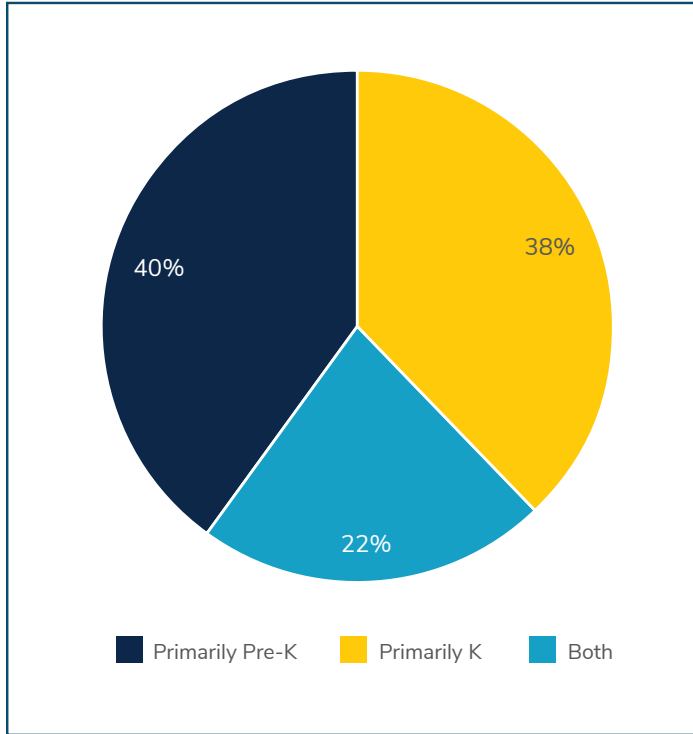
Figure 6: Curricula Used in TK



Note: N=153. Respondents were asked, "Which curriculum does your district use for transitional kindergarten classrooms?" and answers were categorized into academic domains, comprehensive curriculum, or district-created only. SEL= socio-emotional learning.

We also identified whether the reported curricula are designed for pre-K, kindergarten, or both grades. As shown in Figure 7, about 40% of districts primarily use pre-K curricula in their TK program, 38% use kindergarten curricula, and about 22% use an equal mix of both. In Appendix Table 2.A, we show the most popular curricula used in TK by learning domain, along with ratings of effectiveness and usability by reputable sources in the field. 71% of districts report using at least one curriculum with a positive rating from at least one source. Overall, the most commonly used math-specific curricula have a stronger evidence base than the most commonly used literary-specific, socio-emotional learning (SEL)-specific, or comprehensive curricula.

Figure 7: Grade Level of TK Curricula



Note: N=153. Respondents were asked, “Which curriculum does your district use for transitional kindergarten classrooms?” and answers were categorized based on the grade levels of the reported curricula used.

Assessment

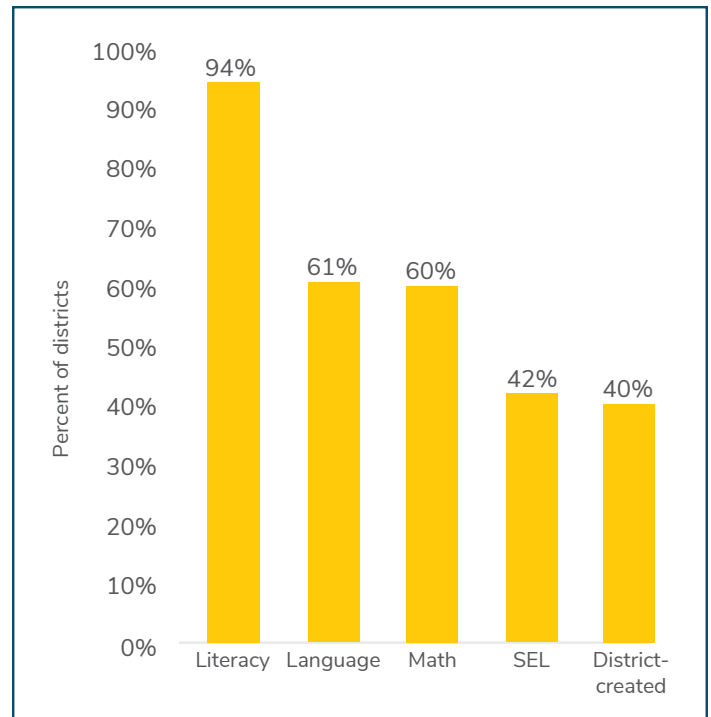
Districts report using 2.4 assessments on average in TK, and 85% report using the same assessments in TK and kindergarten.¹⁵ Most districts (88%) report using at least one assessment in which the child is directly assessed, while just under half report using an assessment based on the teacher’s observations of the child in the classroom.

We summarize assessment domains in Figure 8. Using at least one assessment is most common in literacy (94%), followed by language and math (~60%) and SEL (42%). Additionally, 40% of districts report using a district-created assessment.

Districts report using assessment data for multiple purposes, including informing instruction (90%),

grouping children for instruction (79%), identifying staff development needs (57%), and advertising TK (28%).¹⁶

Figure 8: Percent of Districts Reporting Using at Least One Assessment, by Early Learning Domain



Note: N=147. Respondents were asked, “Which assessment(s) does your district use for transitional kindergarten classrooms?” and answers were categorized into academic domains and/or district-created.

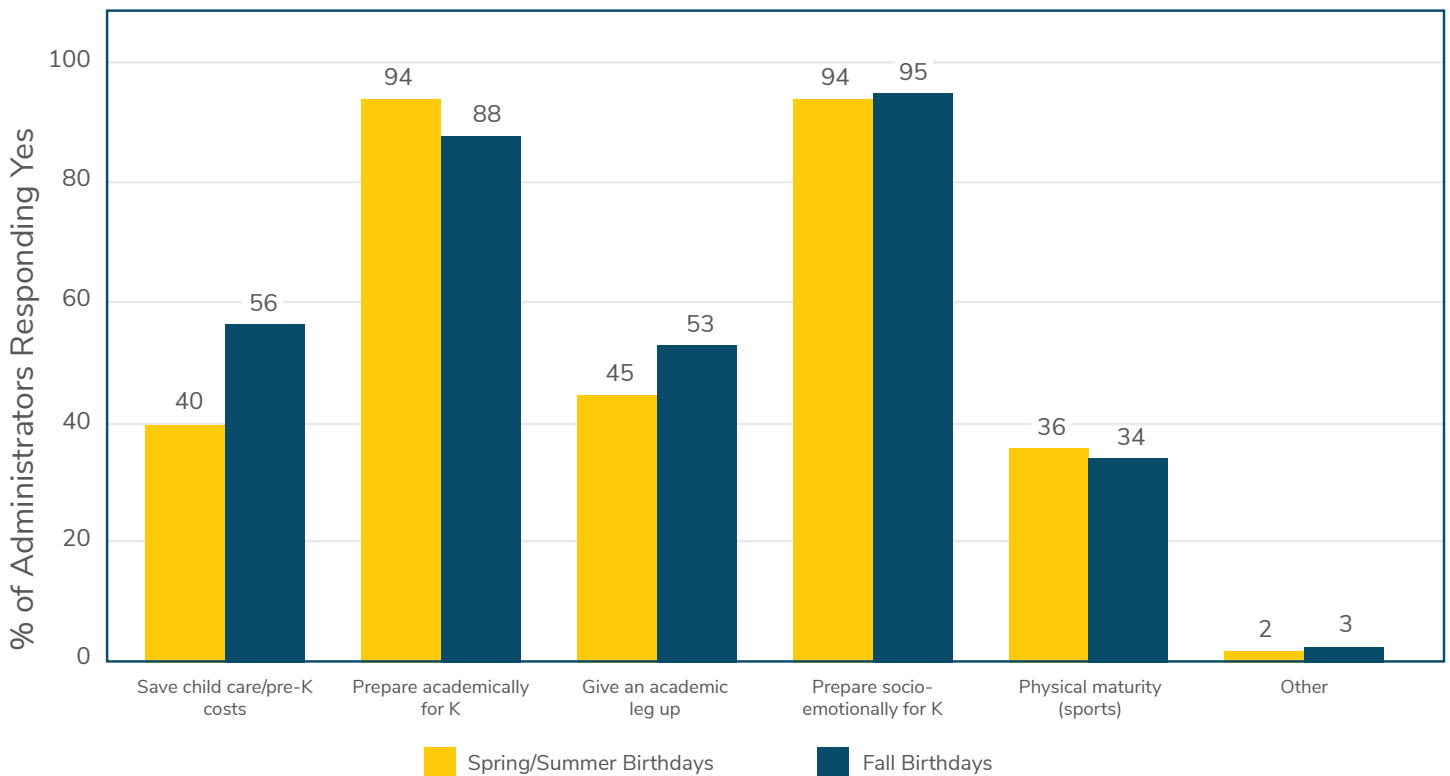
Key finding #5: Administrators are overwhelmingly positive about their TK programs.

Finally, we asked district administrators about their perceptions of TK. First, we asked administrators why they believe parents of eligible children choose to enroll in TK (Figure 9). Given that TK is a “redshirt” option for spring (March-May) and summer (June-August) birthdays but not fall birthdays (September-December), we asked administrators about these groups separately.

Virtually all administrators say that parents of all children choose TK to prepare their children academically and socio-emotionally for traditional kindergarten. Just over one-third say that parents choose TK for physical maturity reasons. Unsurprisingly, a higher share says that parents of fall birthdays choose TK to save on child care/pre-K costs (56%) than parents of spring/summer birthdays (40%). Finally, a higher share says that parents of fall birthdays choose TK to give their child an academic leg up (53%) than parents of spring/summer birthdays (45%).



Figure 9: Why Do You Think Parents with Eligible Children Choose to Enroll in Transitional Kindergarten?

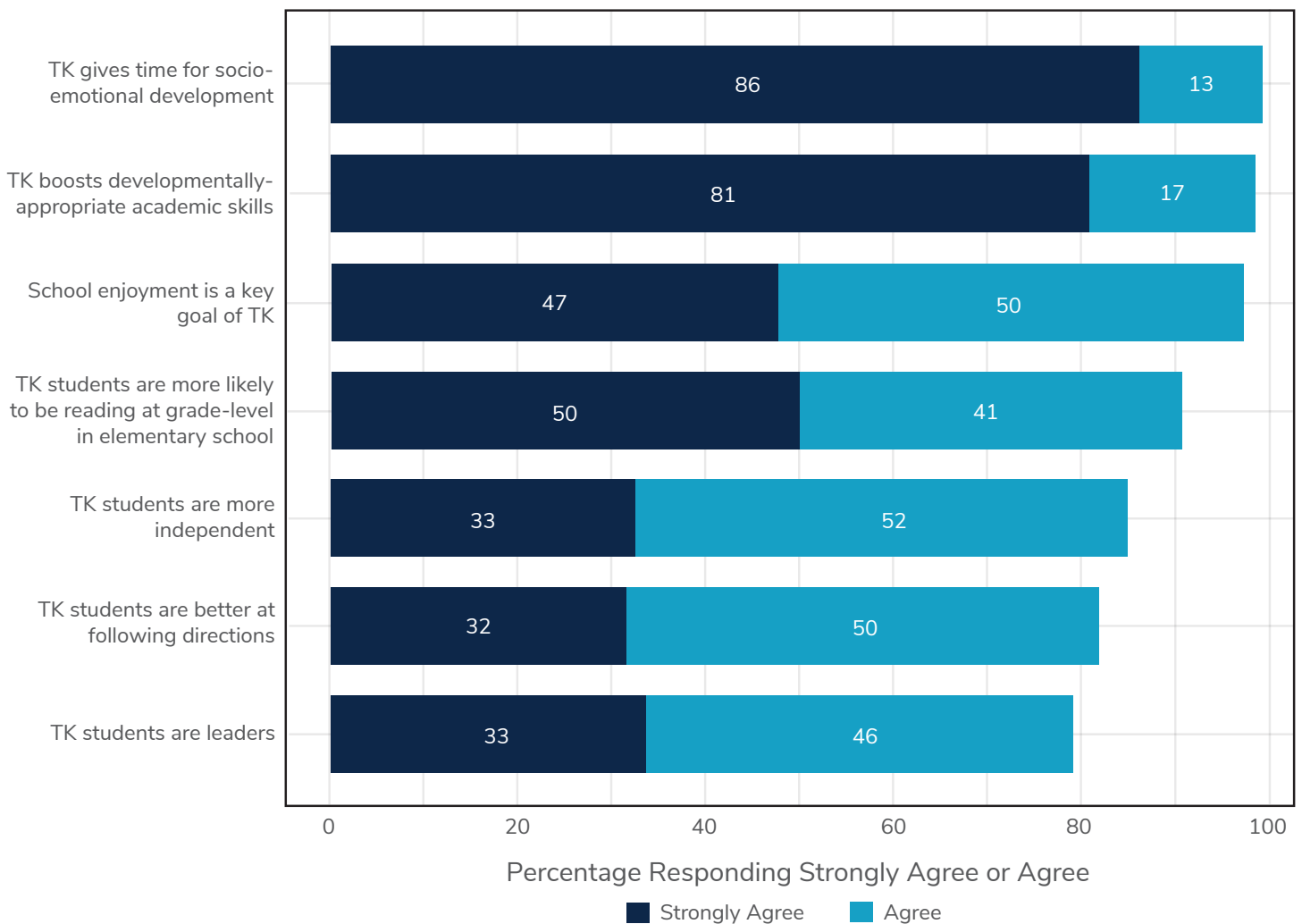


Note: N=143-150. Respondents were asked separately for spring/summer birthdays and for fall birthdays, “Why do you think parents with eligible children with [season] birthdays choose to enroll in transitional kindergarten?” and to check all options that apply.



Second, we asked administrators about what they perceive as the benefits of their TK programs. As shown in Figure 10, nearly all administrators agree that TK programs give children time for socio-emotional development and help boost developmentally appropriate academic skills. Administrators also report that TK students are more likely to be reading at grade-level in elementary school than their peers who did not attend TK. Administrators also agree that TK boosts children’s readiness for school by boosting school enjoyment, independence, the ability to follow directions, and leadership.

Figure 10: Percent of Administrators that Agree with the Following Statements about the Benefits of TK

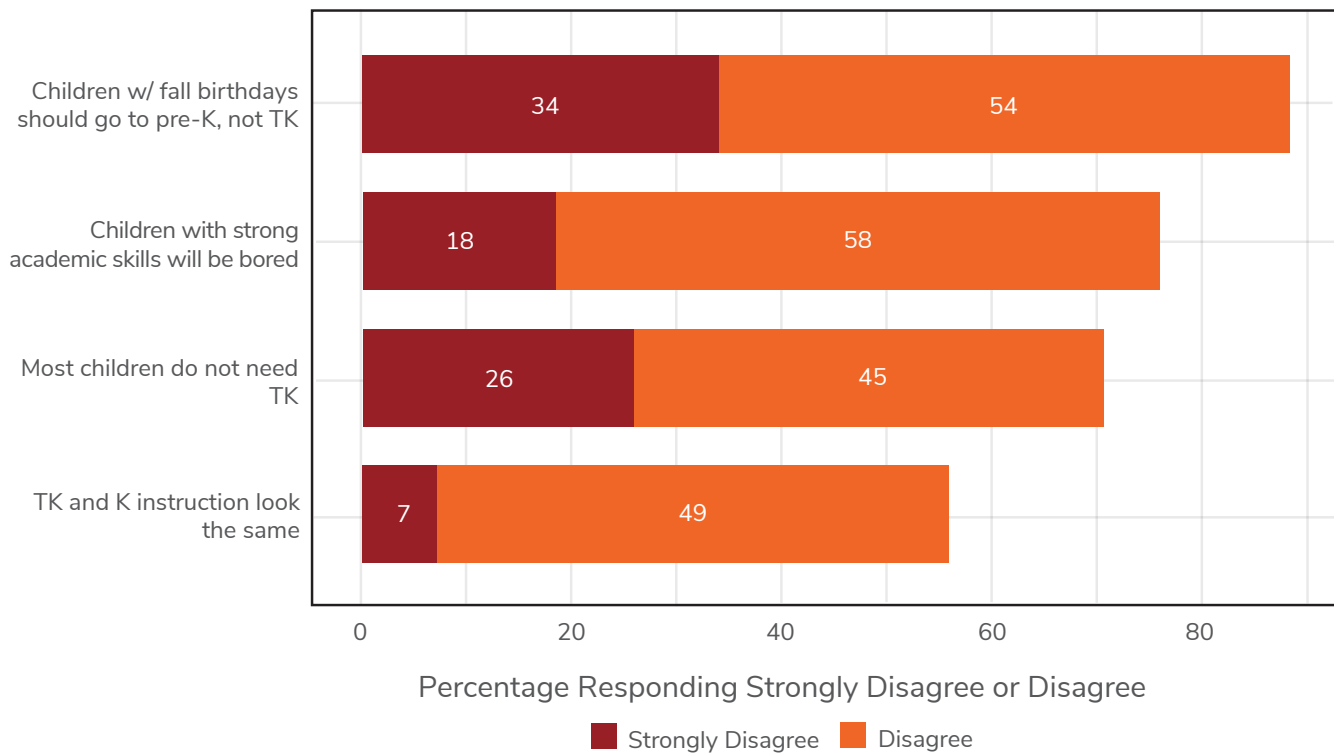


Note: N=150-161. Respondents were asked, “To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about offering transitional kindergarten in your district?” with the options of “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Agree,” “Strongly Agree” and “N/A.”

District administrators predominantly disagree with statements suggesting TK is not an appropriate option for most children, including children who could attend a pre-K program instead or who enter TK with strong skills. As shown in Figure 11, most district leaders disagree that children with fall birthdays should attend a pre-K program rather than a TK program (88%), with one third reporting strong disagreement. This is not to say that administrators necessarily advocate for TK enrollment instead of pre-K enrollment, but that they do not believe TK is a bad choice for students with both options. Most leaders also disagree that most children do not need to go to a TK program (71%) or that TK programs have similar instruction as kindergarten (56%). Finally, district leaders disagree that TK programs would not be appropriate for children who have strong socio-emotional skills (83%) or academic skills (76%).



Figure 11: Percent of Administrators that Disagree with the Following Statements about TK



Note: N=150-161. Respondents were asked, “To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about offering transitional kindergarten in your district?” with the options of “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Agree,” “Strongly Agree,” and “N/A.”

Expanding access to high-quality early education has been a bipartisan goal of Michigan policymakers for at least a decade. Our findings provide the first systematic description of transitional kindergarten, one of the largest early learning options the state funds. Data on how TK currently fits in the state's early learning landscape, along with research to come on its impacts on student learning, can help policymakers make evidence-based decisions on future early learning investments in Michigan.

What do parents say?

We conducted a survey in one partner district with two elementary schools that offer TK to better understand how parents view TK and the factors they consider when deciding whether to enroll their child in TK.¹⁷

Key Findings:

- Child care cost, staff experience, location of the TK program, and location of their child's siblings' school/care setting are important for parents when selecting a care setting in the year before kindergarten.
- Most parents who enrolled their child in TK say they did so to save child care costs.
- The majority of parents who chose TK report doing so because they felt the program would academically prepare their child for kindergarten and ease the transition to traditional kindergarten.
- More than 90% of respondents whose child attended TK were satisfied with the program, thought the program prepared their child academically for kindergarten, and would recommend TK to other families.
- Most parents who did not send their children to TK were not aware of their child's eligibility.
- Parents whose child did not enroll in TK do not indicate any apprehensions about the quality of the TK program.

Appendix

About the administrative data

In the state administrative data, children who are enrolled in a TK program should be coded as enrolled in grade 0 (kindergarten) with an additional program code indicating participation in a TK program. In SY 2020-2021, 214 districts and charter schools reported enrolling at least 10 children in grade 0 with a transitional kindergarten program code, indicating the presence of a TK program in that district. Through survey data collection (described below), internet searches, and direct district outreach, we identified another 150 districts and charter schools offering a TK program in SY 2021-2022. Therefore, district-level analyses (Table 1) include all 364 districts and charter schools with TK programs in SY 2021-2022 we identified through the data triangulation process.

On the other hand, for data availability reasons, student-level analyses (Table 2 and Figure 3) are restricted to the 204 districts and 34 charter schools that reliably report TK enrollment in the administrative data for SY 2019-2020. While we are confident in our data triangulation approach, it is possible other TK programs existed in SY 2021-2022 that we remain unaware of.

About the survey data

Our team contacted the 214 districts and charter schools that reported at least 10 TK students in SY 2020-2021 to request their participation in a survey to learn more about their TK programs. Of these 214 districts, 135 responded to the survey (63%).

We also reached out to a sample of 118 districts and charter schools we believed did not have a TK program to learn why they did not offer the program. Of these districts and charter schools, 51 responded (43%). Surprisingly, some of these districts (23) responded that they did offer TK, despite having no record of TK students in the administrative data. We then sent these districts the full survey to learn more about their programs.

Given that many districts report TK programs that do not appear in the administrative data, our team contacted all districts and charter schools in the state that do not report TK students to verify their program offerings. In addition to contacting the 214 districts and charter schools that report TK students in SY 2020-2021, we also surveyed 121 districts we identified as offering TK through web searches and direct district outreach, of which 36 responded to the survey (30%).

EPI Mission Statement

The central mission of the Education Policy Initiative is to inform evidence based policy making in education. EPI has long been a leader in using causal inference methods to identify the impact of specific policies, programs, and practices to improve student success and educational outcomes. Using this leading-edge methodological expertise, EPI works to:

- Produce rigorous empirical evidence
- Inform education policy debates and discussions nationwide
- Build capacity among policymakers, educational practitioners, parents, and students for evidence-based education reform
- Train the next generation of education policy researchers
- Extend and strengthen the network of professionals who share an interest in education reform

Table 1.A: Characteristics of Districts and Charters with TK in SY21-22 for Which We Do and Do Not Have Survey Responses

	Districts		Charter Schools	
	No Survey Response	Have Survey Response	No Survey Response	Have Survey Response
Student characteristics				
% White	75	69	36	45
% Black	8	12	40	25
% Hispanic	7	9	14	13
% Asian	4	4	2	8
% Other	6	7	8	10
% LEP	8	6	11	12
% Economically Disadvantaged	48	52	73	60
% Special Education	16	16	14	13
District characteristics				
Avg. Traditional K Enrollment (N)	244.9	227.1	78.9	96.9
% of Traditional K Students Attended State-Funded Pre-K	29	29	29	25
% City	8	5	28	21
% Suburb	35	41	38	63
% Town	22	20	3	8
% Rural	35	34	31	8
Avg. 3rd Grade M-STEP Math Score (Standard deviation)	0.00 (0.36)	0.01 (0.36)	-0.30 (0.39)	0.01 (0.47)
Avg. 3rd Grade M-STEP ELA Score (Standard deviation)	0.01 (0.33)	0.01 (0.32)	-0.21 (0.40)	-0.01 (0.42)
Districts (N)	160	147	33	34

Note: Figures in this table were estimated using administrative data from SY21-22. Analysis is restricted to districts designated as having TK in SY21-22 based on administrative records and primary data collection. "State-funded Pre-K" refers to students who enrolled in Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) or a GSRP/Head Start blend program.

Table 2.A: Most commonly used TK curriculum, by learning domain

Rank	Name	N	Percent	Pre-K, K, or Both	ESSA	WWC	EdReports Alignment	EdReports Usability
Literacy								
1	Heggerty Phonemic Awareness for Pre-K	68	40%	Pre-K	No studies met inclusion requirement	No Report	No Report	No Report
2	Handwriting Without Tears Pre-K	33	19%	Pre-K	No Report	No Report	No Report	No Report
3	Heggerty Phonemic Awareness for Kindergarten	32	19%	K	No Report	No Report	No Report	No Report
4	Lucy Calkins Reader's Workshop	22	13%	K	No Report	No Report	No Report	No Report
5	Lucy Calkins Writer's Workshop	21	12%	K	No Report	No Report	Does Not Meet Expectations	Not Rated
Mathematics								
1	Bridges in Mathematics	16	9%	Pre-K/K	No studies met inclusion requirement	No Report	Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations
T-2	Everyday Math for Pre-K	14	8%	Pre-K	No studies met inclusion requirement	Positive Effects	No Report	No Report
T-2	i-Ready Personalized Instruction for math	14	8%	K	No studies met inclusion requirement	No Report	Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations
4	Math Expressions	13	8%	K	No Report	No discernable research effects	Meets Expectations	Partially Meets Expectations
T-5	EngageNY math modules for Kindergarten	9	5%	K	No Report	No Report	Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations
Socio-emotional Learning								
1	Second Step Elementary (™)	19	11%	K	Strong	No studies met design standards	No Report	No Report
3	Second Step Early Childhood (™)	18	10%	Pre-K	Strong	No studies met design standards	No Report	No Report
2	Caring School Community	1	1%	K	No studies met inclusion requirement	Mixed Effects	No Report	No Report
Comprehensive								
1	Connect4Learning	11	6%	Pre-K	No studies met inclusion requirement	No Report	No Report	No Report
2	Creative Curriculum for Pre-K	9	5%	Pre-K	No studies met inclusion requirement	No discernable research effects	No Report	No Report
3	High/Scope	3	2%	Pre-K	No Report	No studies met design standards	No Report	No Report
4	Creative Curriculum for Kindergarten	2	1%	K	No Report	No Report	No Report	No Report

Note: ESSA= Every Student Succeeds Act. WWC= What Works Clearinghouse. EdReports does not rate Pre-K curriculum.

Endnotes

¹Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). *Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education*. New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development, Society for Research in Child Development; Phillips, D., Lipsey, M., Dodge, K.A., Haskins, R., Bassok, D., Burchinal, M.R., Duncan, G.J., Dynarski, M., Magnuson, K.A., & Weiland, C. (2017). *Puzzling it out: The current state of scientific knowledge on pre-kindergarten effects*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/consensusstatement_final.pdf; Barr, A., & Gibbs, C. (2022) Breaking the cycle? Intergenerational effects of an antipoverty program in early childhood. *Journal of Political Economy* (online version) doi:<https://doi.org/10.1086/720764>

²Friedman-Krauss, A., Barnett, S.W., Garver, K., Hodges, K., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B., & Jost, T. (2022). *The state of preschool 2021: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/YB2021_Full_Report.pdf

³Manship, K., Holod, A., Quick, H., Ogut, B., Brodziak de los Reyes, I., Anthony, J., Chernoff, J., Hauser, A., Martin, A., Keuter, S., Vontsolos, E., Rein, E., & Anderson, E. (2017). *The impact of transitional kindergarten on California students: Final report from the study of California's transitional kindergarten program*. www.air.org

⁴See 'About the Data' section in Appendix.

⁵Our team contacted 335 of the 364 districts with TK programs to request their participation in a survey to learn more about their TK program. Of these 335 districts and charter schools, 171 responded to the survey. After contacting the 335 districts and charter schools with active TK programs, we identified 29 districts that have active TK programs which we did not survey. Therefore, the survey responses represent 47% of active TK programs across Michigan. As decisions regarding TK program structure can be made at both the district and school level in Michigan, we surveyed district-level and school-level administrators. 40% (69) of survey respondents were principals/building administrators, while 24% (42) were curriculum coordinators, and 21% (37) were district superintendents.

⁶Hispanic is the term used by the state in data collection.

⁷We restrict this analysis to TK-offering districts with reliable TK enrollment data that report at least 10 TK students in SY19-20 (N=204).

⁸Children with fall birthdays can also choose to enroll in traditional kindergarten through an early entrance waiver.

⁹N = 166. Five administrators that responded to the administrator survey left the question regarding TK eligibility by birth cohort blank.

¹⁰Dee, T., & Sievertsen, H.H. (2018). The gift of time? School starting age and mental health. *Health Economics*, 27(5): 781-802. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.3638>; Deming, D. & Dynarski, S. (2008). The lengthening of childhood. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 22 (3), 71-92. DOI: 10.1257/jep.22.3.71; Ricks, M. (2022). *Strategic selection around kindergarten recommendations*. https://www.michaeldavidricks.com/s/ricks_kindergarten_revised.pdf

¹¹Bassok, D., & Reardon, S. F. (2013). "Academic Redshirting" in Kindergarten: Prevalence, patterns, and implications. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 35(3), 283-297. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373713482764>

¹²State funding rules restrict districts from enrolling children in K-12 who turn five after December 1.

¹³N = 164. Seven district administrators responded to the administrator survey but left the question on factors considered for TK eligibility blank.

¹⁴N= 59. When asked "Does your district offer TK in every elementary building in your district?" the administrators reported "No" and then selected from a list of possible reasons why their district does not offer the program.

¹⁵N=147, SD=1.1, range 1-6. Respondents were given a set of formal assessment tools and asked "What assessments are used in transitional kindergarten & kindergarten classrooms in your district?"

¹⁶N=160. Respondents were given a set of options and asked "How does the district use assessment data on transitional kindergarten students?"

¹⁷Out of approximately 160 students enrolled in kindergarten in the district in Spring 2022, 62 parents responded to the survey (response rate of 38%). 22 of the 62 respondents indicated that their child previously attended TK.