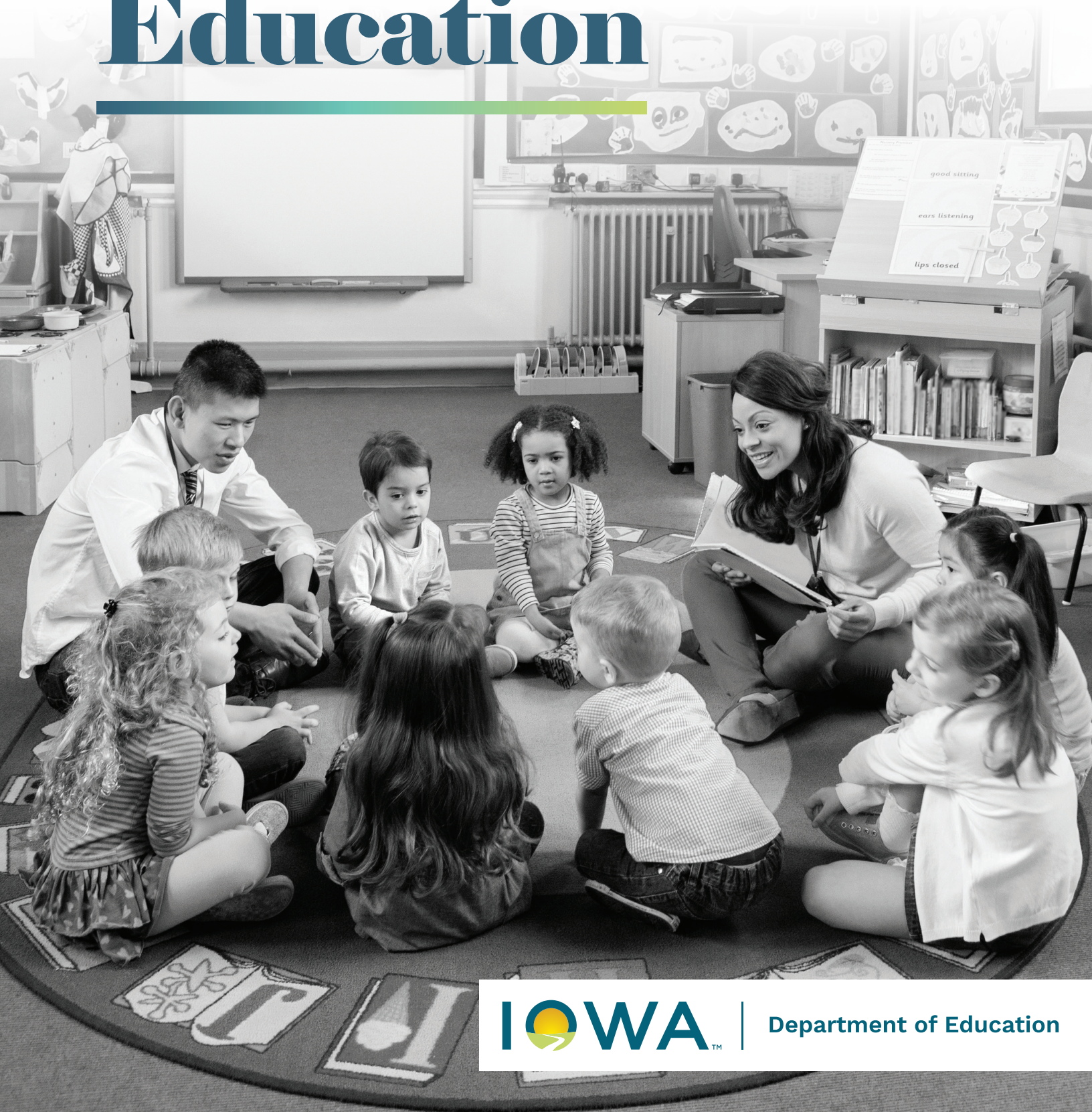


2025 Condition of Education

# Early Childhood Education



Department of Education



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## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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School districts report data on Early Childhood Education through the Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS) program-level data collection forms and the Student Reporting in Iowa (SRI) student-level data collection. This chapter describes preschool and kindergarten programs in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

# PRESCHOOL PARTICIPATION (PARENT PERCEPTION)

Districts report information on kindergarten students who participated in preschool prior to kindergarten annually through the SRI fall data collection. This information includes data from district records, as well as information that parents self-reported to districts. The term “preschool” is not specifically defined in legislation, which could result in different interpretations of what data to report for this indicator. Some districts report based on the number of kindergarten students who participated in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) and have a state identification number prior to kindergarten entry. Others may include child care or private enterprise preschools in their reporting.

Table 3-1 shows the number and percentage of kindergarten students reported as having had a preschool experience prior to kindergarten. For each year, the data represents the numbers and percentages of children who entered kindergarten for the first time and participated in preschool during the previous year.

**Table 3-1: Iowa Public School Kindergarten Students’ Preschool Attendance (Parent Perception), 2023-24 and 2024-25**

	2023-24		2024-25	
	Number of Students	Percent	Number of Students	Percent
First-Time Kindergarten Students Who Attended Preschool	26,761	80.3%	26,190	79.8%
First-Time Kindergarten Students Who Did Not Attend Preschool	6,552	19.7%	6,629	20.2%
First-Time Kindergarten Students with Information for Preschool Attendance	33,313	100.0%	32,819	100.0%
First-Time Kindergarten Students with Missing Information for Preschool Attendance	16	-	18	-
Total First-Time Kindergarten Students	33,329	-	32,837	-
Total Kindergarten Students	36,605	-	35,976	-

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.

# PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

## Preschool Enrollment

Districts throughout the state offer preschool to children ages 3 to 5. Table 3-2 shows the number of districts that offered preschool, and Table 3-3 presents preschool enrollment by district size category for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. The number of districts offering preschool has remained steady. About 99% of school districts offered preschool during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Table 3-4 shows the breakdown of preschool enrollment by student group for the two school years. There was a decrease in student participation in district-sponsored preschool programs in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24.

**Table 3-2: Iowa Public School Districts Offering Preschool by District Size Category, 2023-24 and 2024-25**

District Size Category	2023-24			2024-25		
	Total Districts	Districts Offering Preschool	Percent of Districts Offering Preschool	Total Districts	Districts Offering Preschool	Percent of Districts Offering Preschool
Under 300	37	37	100.0	40	40	100.0
300-599	106	105	99.1	103	102	99.0
600-999	71	70	98.6	72	72	100.0
1,000-2,499	74	74	100.0	73	73	100.0
2,500-7,499	25	25	100.0	26	26	100.0
7,500+	12	12	100.0	11	11	100.0
State	325	323	99.4	325	324	99.7

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.

**Table 3-3: Iowa Public School Preschool Enrollment by District Size Category, 2023-24 and 2024-25**

District Size Category	2023-24		2024-25	
	Number of Students	Percent of Total Preschool Students	Number of Students	Percent of Total Preschool Students
Under 300	752	2.6%	792	2.7%
300-599	3,855	13.1%	3,596	12.5%
600-999	3,821	13.0%	3,957	13.7%
1,000-2,499	7,110	24.2%	6,813	23.6%
2,500-7,499	5,898	20.1%	5,911	20.5%
7,500+	7,979	27.1%	7,759	26.9%
State	29,415	100.0%	28,828	100.0%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.

**Table 3-4: Iowa Public School Preschool Students by Student Group, 2023-24 and 2024-25**

Student Group	2023-24		2024-25	
	Number of Students	Percent of Total Preschool Students	Number of Students	Percent of Total Preschool Students
All Students of Color	7,837	26.6%	8,226	28.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	106	0.4%	77	0.3%
Asian	684	2.3%	640	2.2%
Black or African American	1,951	6.6%	1,990	6.9%
Hispanic/Latino	3,511	11.9%	3,786	13.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	155	0.5%	128	0.4%
Two or More Races	1,430	4.9%	1,605	5.6%
White	21,578	73.4%	20,602	71.5%
Potential English Learner	579	2.0%	421	1.5%
Low Socioeconomic Status (FRL)*	7,919	26.9%	7,526	26.1%
Female	14,294	48.6%	13,929	48.3%
Male	15,118	51.4%	14,899	51.7%
Non-Binary	3	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	29,415	100.0%	28,828	100.0%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.  
Note: \* Low socioeconomic status is determined by eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, when reported.

# STATEWIDE VOLUNTARY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM FOR 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

The SWVPP for 4-year-old children was established on May 10, 2007, with the signing of House File 877. The SWVPP legislation provides an opportunity for all 4-year-old children in Iowa to enter school ready to learn by expanding access to research-based preschool curricula.

The funding allocated for the SWVPP is to improve access to and increase participation in high-quality preschool instruction through predictable, equitable and sustainable funding. Table 3-5 shows the number of districts that provided the SWVPP, the number of students funded and the total number of students who participated in the program.

In the 2017-18 school year, amended code language allowed for increased flexibility in the use of SWVPP funds to include paying the cost of attendance for students younger or older than age 4 by Sept. 15, based on local school board decisions. The number of students funded in Table 3-5 includes students younger and older than age four for whom attendance was supported by existing local SWVPP funds based on a local school board decision. Districts continue to operate the SWVPP through ongoing state funding generated by the 4-year-old student count. Additional students are served in SWVPP classrooms using other funding sources. Table 3-5 includes the number of students served in SWVPP classrooms.

**Table 3-5: Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program, 2023-24 and 2024-25**

District Information	Academic Year	
	2023-24	2024-25
Number of Districts that Participated	323	324
Number of Students Funded	24,311	24,083
Number of Students Served	27,067	26,537

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Data, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.

Table 3-6A represents the number of students funded by age based on the funding flexibility previously described. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are reported separately based on their level of special education services, identified as either special education supplemental weighted (IEP Instruction) or non-weighted (IEP Support Services) factors. Districts generate revenue based on a different funding formula using the weighting plan established in Iowa Code chapter 256B for students who receive special education instructional services, while students with support-only IEPs generate 0.5 student state aid SWVPP funding. Of the students funded by the SWVPP in the 2024-25 school year, 22,850 4-year-olds (students in general education plus students with support-only IEPs) generated SWVPP funds for local school districts.

Table 3-6B shows the number of SWVPP students served by age and IEP status. The number of students enrolled in SWVPP who were eligible for special education services increased overall between 2024-25 and 2024-25. Overall, the number of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children served in SWVPP decreased between 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Tables 3-7A and 3-7B indicate the number of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children funded and served, respectively, in the SWVPP by race/ethnicity, Potential English Learners (PEL), socioeconomic status and gender. Low socioeconomic status (based on free or reduced-price lunch eligibility) data may be underreported given that the SWVPP is required to meet 10 hours per week, which may not include providing meals to preschool classrooms. The percentage of students served in district-sponsored preschool programs who were identified as potentially having English language learning needs in 2024-25 decreased to 1.5%.

**Table 3-6A: SWVPP Students Funded by Age and IEP Status, 2023-24 and 2024-25**

	2023-24				2024-25			
	<= Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	All Ages	<= Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	All Ages
IEP Instruction	171	407	5	583	276	601	6	883
IEP Support Services	4	320	5	329	8	374	3	385
General Education	199	23,070	130	23,399	209	22,476	130	22,815
Total Funded	374	23,797	140	24,311	493	23,451	139	24,083

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.

**Table 3-6B: SWVPP Students Served by Age and IEP Status, 2023-24 and 2024-25**

	2023-24				2023-24			
	<= Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	All Ages	<= Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	All Ages
IEP Instruction	862	1,428	35	2,325	927	1,495	24	2,446
IEP Support Services	17	329	12	358	19	384	5	408
General Education	878	23,280	226	24,384	862	22,633	188	23,683
Total Served	1,757	25,037	273	27,067	1,808	24,512	217	26,537

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.

**Table 3-7A: SWVPP Students Funded by Student Group, 2023-24 and 2024-25**

	2023-24							
	<= Age 3	Percent	Age 4	Percent	Age 5	Percent	All	Percent
All Students Funded	374		23,797		140		24,311	
All Students of Color	89	23.8%	6,191	26.0%	18	12.9%	6,298	25.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.3%	87	0.4%	0	0.0%	88	0.4%
Asian	7	1.9%	559	2.3%	0	0.0%	566	2.3%
Black or African American	21	5.6%	1,502	6.3%	2	1.4%	1,525	6.3%
Hispanic/Latino	35	9.4%	2,813	11.8%	8	5.7%	2,856	11.7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	0.8%	113	0.5%	2	1.4%	118	0.5%
Two or More Races	22	5.9%	1,117	4.7%	6	4.3%	1,145	4.7%
White	285	76.2%	17,606	74.0%	122	87.1%	18,013	74.1%
Potential English Learner	1	0.3%	474	2.0%	0	0.0%	475	2.0%
Low Socioeconomic Status (FRL)*	121	32.4%	5,865	24.6%	34	24.3%	6,020	24.8%
Female	152	40.6%	11,976	50.3%	48	34.3%	12,176	50.1%
Male	222	59.4%	11,818	49.7%	92	65.7%	12,132	49.9%
	2024-25							
	<= Age 3	Percent	Age 4	Percent	Age 5	Percent	All	Percent
All Students Funded	493		23,451		139		24,083	
All Students of Color	161	32.7%	6,581	28.1%	14	10.1%	6,756	28.1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.6%	61	0.3%	1	0.7%	65	0.3%
Asian	11	2.2%	553	2.4%	0	0.0%	564	2.3%
Black or African American	41	8.3%	1,556	6.6%	2	1.4%	1,599	6.6%
Hispanic/Latino	72	14.6%	3,058	13.0%	6	4.3%	3,136	13.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	0.4%	104	0.4%	0	0.0%	106	0.4%
Two or More Races	32	6.5%	1,249	5.3%	5	3.6%	1,286	5.3%
White	332	67.3%	16,870	71.9%	125	89.9%	17,327	71.9%
Potential English Learner	6	1.2%	327	1.4%	0	0.0%	333	1.4%
Low Socioeconomic Status (FRL)*	146	29.6%	5,638	24.0%	23	16.5%	5,807	24.1%
Female	187	37.9%	11,727	50.0%	44	31.7%	11,958	49.7%
Male	306	62.1%	11,724	50.0%	95	68.3%	12,125	50.3%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.

Note: \* Low socioeconomic status is determined by eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, when reported.



**Table 3-7B: SWVPP Students Served by Student Group, 2023-24 and 2024-25**

	2023-24							
	<= Age 3	Percent	Age 4	Percent	Age 5	Percent	All	Percent
All Students Served	1,757		25,037		273		27,067	
All Students of Color	546	31.1%	6,684	26.7%	40	14.7%	7,270	26.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	0.3%	95	0.4%	0	0.0%	100	0.4%
Asian	34	1.9%	600	2.4%	2	0.7%	636	2.3%
Black or African American	164	9.3%	1,646	6.6%	9	3.3%	1,819	6.7%
Hispanic/Latino	219	12.5%	3,013	12.0%	15	5.5%	3,247	12.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	11	0.6%	124	0.5%	3	1.1%	138	0.5%
Two or More Races	113	6.4%	1,206	4.8%	11	4.0%	1,330	4.9%
White	1,211	68.9%	18,353	73.3%	233	85.3%	19,797	73.1%
Potential English Learner	33	1.9%	536	2.1%	0	0.0%	569	2.1%
Low Socioeconomic Status (FRL)*	541	30.8%	6,496	25.9%	61	22.3%	7,098	26.2%
Female	721	41.0%	12,392	49.5%	95	34.8%	13,208	48.8%
Male	1,036	59.0%	12,642	50.5%	178	65.2%	13,856	51.2%
	2024-25							
	<= Age 3	Percent	Age 4	Percent	Age 5	Percent	All	Percent
All Students Served	1,808		24,512		217		26,537	
All Students of Color	616	34.1%	7,042	28.7%	20	9.2%	7,678	28.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	0.3%	66	0.3%	1	0.5%	73	0.3%
Asian	30	1.7%	573	2.3%	0	0.0%	603	2.3%
Black or African American	189	10.5%	1,680	6.9%	3	1.4%	1,872	7.1%
Hispanic/Latino	239	13.2%	3,267	13.3%	8	3.7%	3,514	13.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6	0.3%	114	0.5%	0	0.0%	120	0.5%
Two or More Races	146	8.1%	1,342	5.5%	8	3.7%	1,496	5.6%
White	1,192	65.9%	17,470	71.3%	197	90.8%	18,859	71.1%
Potential English Learner	20	1.1%	380	1.6%	0	0.0%	400	1.5%
Low Socioeconomic Status (FRL)*	542	30.0%	6,176	25.2%	44	20.3%	6,762	25.5%
Female	738	40.8%	12,069	49.2%	74	34.1%	12,881	48.5%
Male	1,070	59.2%	12,443	50.8%	143	65.9%	13,656	51.5%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall files.

Note: \* Low socioeconomic status is determined by eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, when reported.

# KINDERGARTEN

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School districts report information on kindergarten programming offered in their school district annually through the BEDS fall data collection. Table 3-8 shows that most districts offered all-day, every day kindergarten programs in 2024-25.

Iowa Code section 279.60 requires school districts in Iowa to administer a valid and reliable universal screening instrument to every kindergarten student enrolled in the district no later than October 1. The Department integrated this legislative change with Iowa Code section 279.68, pertaining to early literacy universal screening and progress monitoring. The Department provides a list of approved assessments for implementing the requirements of Iowa Code section 279.68. However, a district may also administer an assessment that is not on the approved list as long as it meets data quality requirements set by the Department.

In the fall of 2024, as shown in Table 3-9, most buildings used the FAST earlyReading Kindergarten Composite from the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (i.e., FAST) assessment suite. The FAST earlyReading Kindergarten Composite provides an estimate of overall early literacy skills during the fall screening window, typically within the first six weeks of school. The FAST earlyReading Kindergarten Composite includes four subtests in the fall: Concepts of Print (requires the student to distinguish among familiar literacy cues related to print, such as directionality and letter or word order), Letter Names (requires the student to identify upper and lowercase letters), Onset Sounds (requires the student to identify initial word sounds), and Letter Sounds (requires the student to provide the common sounds for upper and lowercase letters). Sixty-seven buildings used alternate approved measures for kindergarten literacy assessment.

Table 3-10 lists the number and percent of public school kindergarten students identified as at or above benchmark on all kindergarten literacy assessments during the fall 2024 screening window. The percentage of students at or above benchmark during the subsequent screening windows is likely to vary somewhat, given the increase in complexity of screening items as assessment content becomes more difficult over time.

**Table 3-8: Iowa Public School Kindergarten Program Type, 2024-25**

District Size Category	Number of Districts	Number of Districts Reported Kindergarten Program Type	Number of Districts Offering All-Day Every Day Kindergarten	Percent of Districts Offering All-Day Every Day Kindergarten
Under 300	40	38	38	100.0%
300-599	103	101	99	98.0%
600-999	72	71	70	98.6%
1,000-2,499	73	72	72	100.0%
2,500-7,499	26	26	26	100.0%
7,500+	11	11	11	100.0%
Independent Charter Schools	4	0	0	-
State	329	319	316	99.1%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Fall BEDS and Certified Enrollment files.

**Table 3-9: Number and Percent of Iowa Public School Buildings by Kindergarten Literacy Assessment Administered, Fall 2024-25**

Assessment	Number of Buildings	Percent of Total Buildings
FAST Kindergarten Composite	682	91.1%
i-Ready Diagnostics	25	3.3%
mCLASS DIBELS 8	9	1.2%
NWEA MAP Growth	18	2.4%
STAR Early Literacy	15	2.0%
Total Buildings with Default Assessment Data	749	100.0%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of School Improvement, 2024-25 Default Assessment Survey.

Note: Data are based on the school-reported default assessment.

**Table 3-10: Number and Percent of Iowa Public School Kindergarten Students At or Above Benchmark on Kindergarten Literacy Assessment, Fall 2024-25**

Assessment	Number of Students Assessed	Number of Students At or Above Benchmark	Percent of Students At or Above Benchmark
Students screened with an early literacy screener as described in Table 3-9	35,322	22,949	65.0%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of School Improvement, Panorama Student Success Data System.

Note: Data are based on all school-selected default assessments that were administered.



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