

# MICHIGAN PUBLIC PRESCHOOLS IMPROVE KINDERGARTEN READINESS

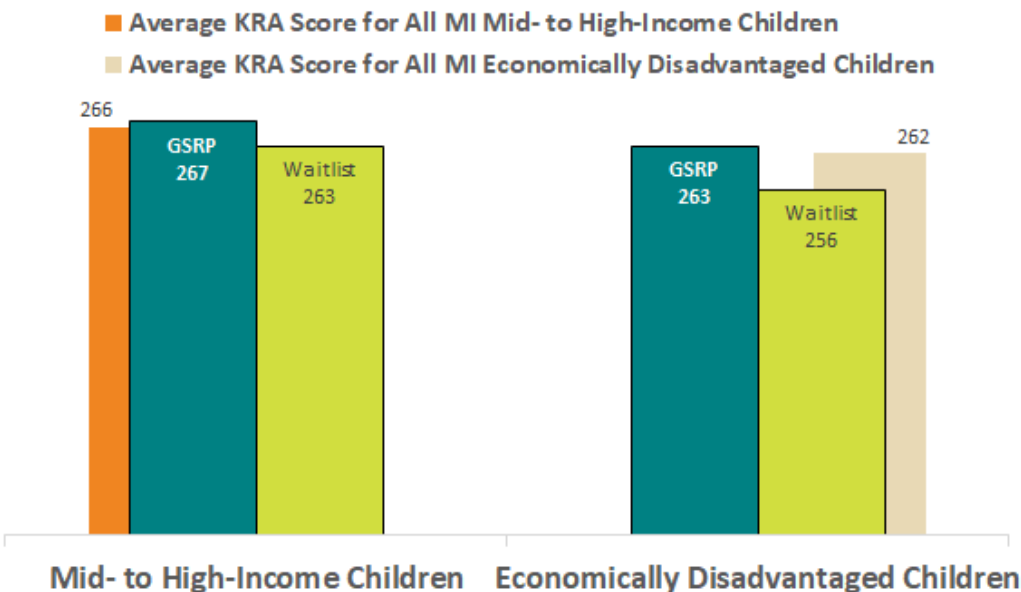
*Findings from the Michigan Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)*

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), which is Michigan’s state-funded preschool program for eligible 4-year-old children, operates about 2,000 classrooms across the state, serving almost 40,000 children annually. Participants are primarily low-income and have factors that may place them at risk of academic failure.



In 2019-2020, a total of 50,598 Michigan kindergarteners, including 19,026 GSRP participants and 469 children on the waitlist, were evaluated by their classroom teachers at kindergarten entry using the **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)**. An early achievement gap persisted, and children of mid- to high-income families tended to be better prepared for kindergarten than economically disadvantaged children. GSRP participants scored slightly better than the average score of all Michigan children at their income level. They outperformed their waitlist peers regardless of gender, race, or disability status.

## Economic Status



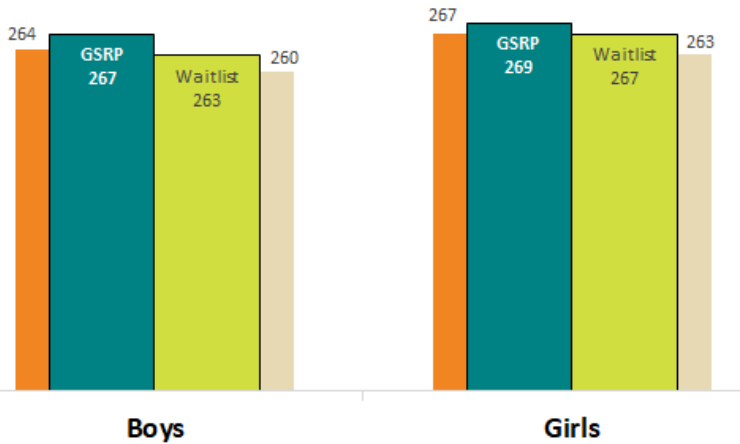
Although GSRP did not completely close the readiness gap, economically disadvantaged GSRP participants scored close to their wealthier peers. Economically disadvantaged waitlist children remained behind, scoring lower than the state averages.

**Note.**

- “Economically disadvantaged” children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“food stamps”) or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (“welfare”); or are homeless, migrants, or in foster care.
- GSRP primarily serves children with family income not exceeding 250% of the federal poverty level or higher-income children with eligibility factors. In the study sample, 19% of GSRP participants and 43% of waitlist children were not “economically disadvantaged.”
- National average KRA scores do not exist. The average KRA score for Ohio kindergartners in fall 2018 was 267.
- KRA readiness levels are as follows: 202-257 = Emerging Readiness; 258-269 = Approaching Readiness; 270-298 = Demonstrating Readiness.
- All score differences are statistically significant.

## Gender

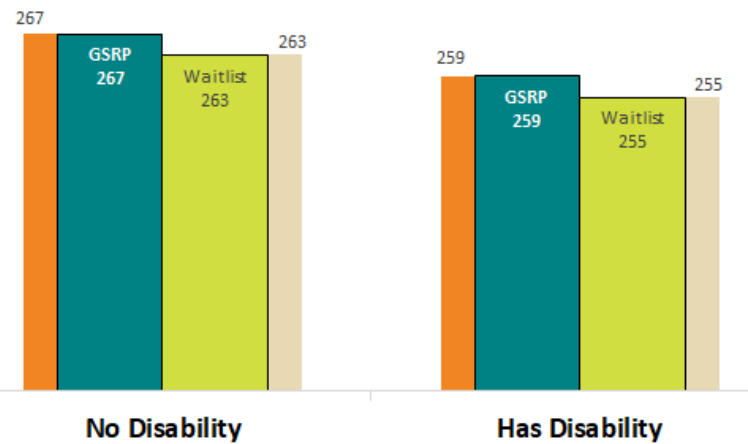
- Average KRA Score for All MI Mid- to High-Income Children
- Average KRA Score for All MI Economically Disadvantaged Children



Girls demonstrated greater kindergarten readiness than boys. GSRP participants scored higher than waitlist children and the state averages at both income levels.

## Disability Status

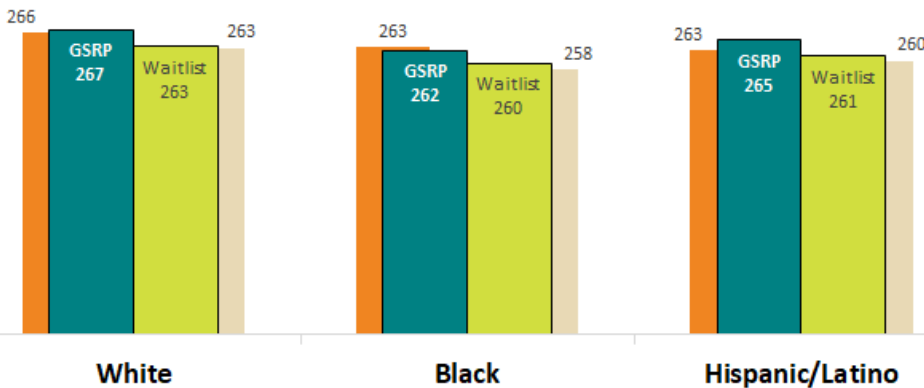
- Average KRA Score for All MI Mid- to High-Income Children
- Average KRA Score for All MI Economically Disadvantaged Children



Despite the challenges children with disabilities face in being ready for kindergarten, GSRP participants with disabilities showed a higher readiness score than their waitlist peers.

## Race/Ethnicity

- Average KRA Score for All Mid- to High-Income Children
- Average KRA Score for All Economically Disadvantaged Children



A racial gap in kindergarten readiness was observed. White GSRP participants scored higher than Hispanic/Latino and Black participants. The average scores of all GSRP participants, regardless of income, were close to, or slightly higher than, the state average score of mid- to high-income children of the same group, while waitlist children performed similarly to economically disadvantaged children.



Recommended citation: Wu, J. H., Akaeze, H. O. & Shereda, A. (2021) Michigan public preschools improve kindergarten readiness: Findings from the Michigan Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). GSRP state evaluation fact sheet. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.

Contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Jamie Heng-Chieh Wu, at [wuhengch@msu.edu](mailto:wuhengch@msu.edu) for questions.