Strong Beginnings State Evaluation 2023–24 Annual Report

Community Evaluation Programs
Office of Public Engagement and Scholarship
University Outreach and Engagement
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State Evaluation of Strong Beginnings

Community Evaluation Programs at Michigan State University's (MSU) Office of University Outreach and Engagement is conducting a three-year external evaluation with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP). Outside of these efforts, Clinton County RESA (CCRESA) is conducting separate local and regional data collection processes as a contractor for MiLEAP. The goal of MSU's evaluation of Strong Beginnings is to access which aspects of the pilot are improving child and family outcomes. The evaluation began in 2021 alongside Strong Beginnings and will continue throughout the pilot. The results of the multi-year evaluation will inform MiLEAP's decision making about Strong Beginnings' future after the pilot ends. This report evaluates the fourth year of the Strong Beginnings pilot. Due to data limitations around demographics and eligibility factors, the report primarily focuses on classroom quality and family engagement.

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Strong Beginnings Pilot Overview

Following the model of the Great Start Readiness Program's (GSRP) publicly funded PreK for four-year-olds, the State of Michigan launched its pilot PreK program for three-year-olds in 2021. The pilot, Strong Beginnings, recently ended its fourth year with 28 classrooms across the state (Figure 1). Michigan's venture into two-year PreK is supported by research suggesting that two years of preschool (instead of the traditional single year) can have lasting academic benefits, as seen up to the tenth grade by New Jersey's two-year PreK program.[1] An academic achievement gap emerges before children enroll in kindergarten, as income and racial inequities leave low-income and children of color at a disadvantage.[2,3] Publicly funded PreK for three-year-olds can help close this gap, as the increased dosage of two years of high-quality instruction increases the likelihood that a child is kindergarten-ready.[4,5]

Strong Beginnings mirrors the high-quality instruction provided by GSRP, an important facet of Michigan's approach to education as both programs serve low-income pre-kindergarteners. Strong Beginnings aligns with the State's Top 10 Strategic Educational Plan, structuring its enrollment practices after the principle of providing children with "access to high-quality instruction regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, economic status, native language, or physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities to close the student achievement and opportunity gaps that currently exist."[6] In fulfilling its purpose of reducing the socioeconomic academic achievement gap, Strong Beginnings primarily serves children whose family income is less than 250% of the federal poverty level (FPL).
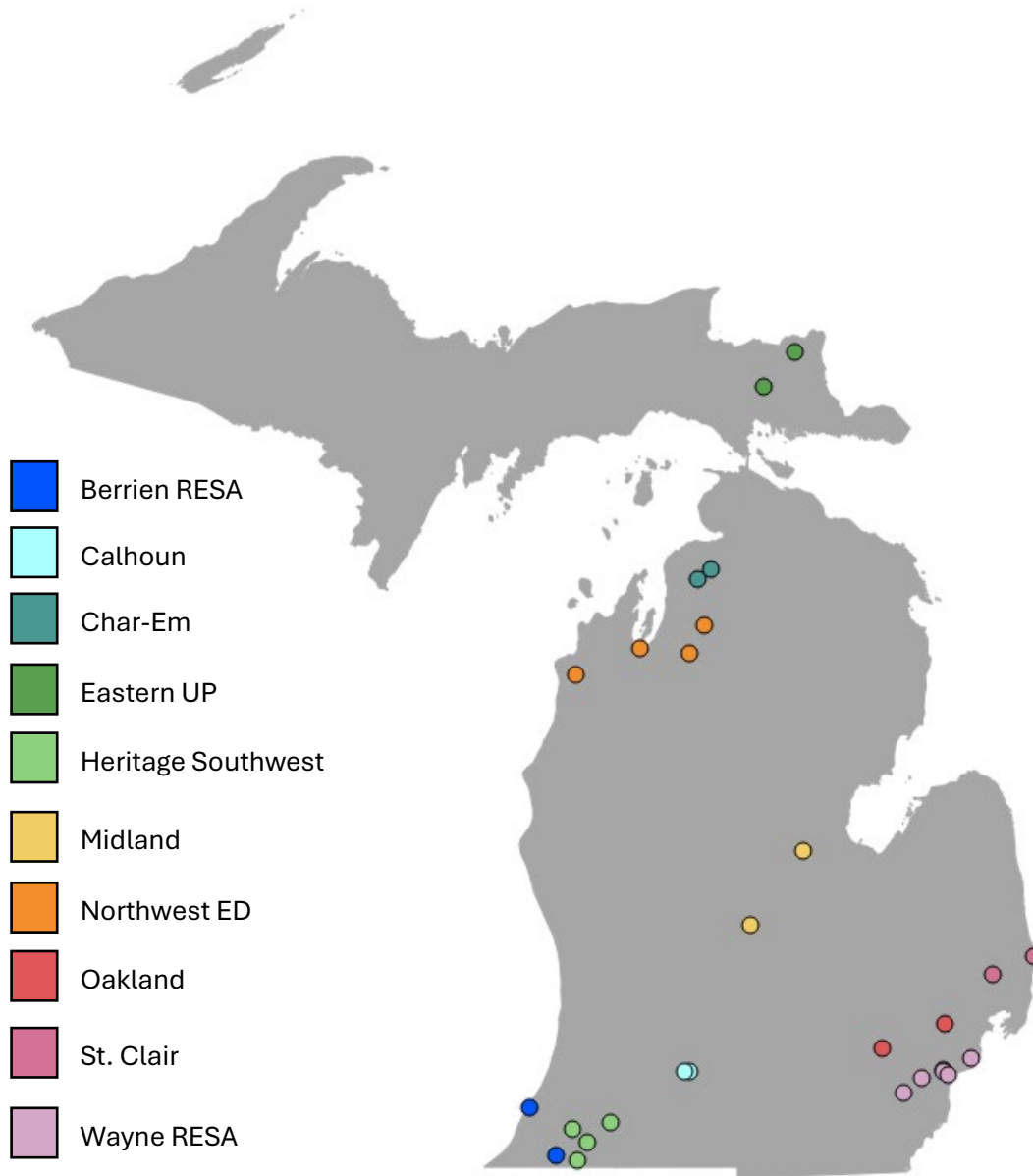
HISTORY AND FUNDING[7]

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) began mapping the state's first early education program for three-year-olds in 2017, using funds from the federal Race to the Top-Early Childhood Challenge. Over the next three years, MDE revised Strong Beginnings' conceptual framework to align with its dual goals of equity and access; further financial support was provided by the federal government's Preschool Development Grants Birth Through Five Program. Throughout this process, Strong Beginnings was intentionally modeled after the state's high-quality PreK program for four-year-olds (GSRP).

The pilot officially launched in the start of 2021 with four intermediate school districts (ISDs) selected to operate 10 Strong Beginnings classrooms and sites. This 'legacy' cohort included Berrien RESA, Heritage Southwest ISD (formerly Lewis Cass), Northwest Education Services (formerly Traverse Bay Area ISD), and Wayne RESA. During the 2021-22 school year ('Cohort 2'), these ISDs expanded their Strong Beginnings offerings to two additional classrooms, serving a total of 177 three-year-olds. At the start of the 2022 school year ('Cohort 3'), the Michigan School Aid Act became the funding source for Strong Beginnings. During the same year ('Cohort 3'), the same ISDs and classrooms served 178 Strong Beginnings participants at the same sites.

In 2023-24 ('Cohort 4'), Strong Beginnings welcomed six additional ISDs to the pilot: Calhoun, Char-Em, Eastern UP, Midland, Oakland, and St. Clair. The number of classrooms per ISD varies, ranging from one to six; a map of site locations by ISD is available in Figure 1. The pilot will continue through the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years with the same classroom and program structure as 2023-24. Strong Beginnings is facilitated by the Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency (CCRESA), under the direction of MDE and later the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP).

Figure 1. 2023–24 Strong Beginning Site Locations by ISD

Legend:
- Berrien RESA
- Calhoun
- Char-Em
- Eastern UP
- Heritage Southwest
- Midland
- Northwest ED
- Oakland
- St. Clair
- Wayne RESA

PROGRAM DESIGN[8]

As with GSRP, Strong Beginnings prioritizes enrollment of children from families with a household income less than 250% of the FPL. Children from families with the lowest income level are enrolled first (0 to 50% of the FPL), followed by low-income children in higher income brackets. With permission, Strong Beginnings classrooms can enroll children with a family income above 250% the FPL threshold if seats are still available after all children under the income threshold are admitted.

Children with the lowest household income receive priority enrollment, as well as those with a qualifying IEP (individualized education program), experiencing homelessness, are a part of the foster care system, or their household receives public assistance. Additional criteria are used to determine enrollment of two children with the same household FPL, including having a diagnosed disability or developmental delay, severe or challenging behavior, having a primary home language other than English, parents with low

educational attainment, abuse or neglect within the household, and environmental risk. Environmental risk includes loss due to death, divorce, incarceration, military service, or absence; sibling issues; teen parent (not age 20 when first child born); family is homeless or without stable housing; residence in a high-risk neighborhood (area of high poverty, high crime, limited access to critical community services); or prenatal or postnatal exposure to toxic substances known to cause learning or developmental delays.

Data on the demographics and eligibility factors of children in the Strong Beginnings pilot comes from programs' submission of data annually to the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). Data from MSDS is expected to be available in October 2024 and will be shared later in a follow-up analysis.

ISDs are encouraged to create a common application for Strong Beginnings and Head Start. Children who qualify for both programs are referred to Head Start. Depending on seat availability, a family may enroll their qualifying child into Strong Beginnings instead. Strong Beginnings classrooms offer a minimum of 120 full days of instruction, spread out over 30 weeks. ISDs are encouraged to exceed these recommendations to increase the program's academic dosage. Further, each program is required to meet the state's early childhood quality standards. Strong Beginnings offers a 1:7 ratio of children to staff with each classroom staffed with a full teacher and associate teacher. Each Strong Beginnings' team includes a family liaison to support caregiver engagement, participation, and family wellbeing and independence.

STRONG BEGINNINGS COMMUNITIES

In partnership with Strong Beginnings' Early Childhood Contact (ECCs), the MSU team outlined the ZIP codes where Strong Beginnings children and families live; table 1 outlines the characteristics of these communities. All Strong Beginnings ISDs teach children from rural areas, while three serve children from more populated suburbs and cities as well. While Strong Beginnings is designed to serve low-income students, some communities provide more resources and opportunities to their low-income children than others. Brandeis University developed the Child Opportunity Index 3.0 to capture the neighborhood resources available to children based on educational, health and environmental, and socio-economic factors.[9] Scores range from "Very High" and "High" to denote communities with ample resources to "Low" and "Very Low" for areas with limited resources.[10] To supplement the Child Opportunity Index, the percentage of children under six years old classified as living below the poverty line is provided.[a] Strong Beginnings operates in a wide spectrum of communities, including well-resourced, mixed-resourced (some areas with lots of resources next to those without), and low-resourced communities. Each ISD is mapped in Figure 2 by its Child Opportunity Levels with Strong Beginnings sites marked as black dots.

Table 2 estimates the number of three-year-olds at a Strong Beginnings ISD, as well as the percentage of three-year-olds served by Strong Beginnings and other licensed childcare providers (including centers, family homes, and group homes). The percentage served by Strong Beginnings ranges from 1% to 15%, a fraction of the children in the area. Similarly, over half of three-year-olds in all ISDs except Calhoun (45%), Eastern UP (46%), and Northwest ED (47%) are not served by a licensed childcare provider, implying the

[a] The U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey estimates the number of children under five years old who are under the poverty line. It does not breakdown its estimate for each ZIP code by age. It is assumed that the percentage of children under five below the poverty level is demonstrates of the number of three-year-olds under the poverty level.

need for greater state-funded services like Strong Beginnings. Wayne RESA has the highest estimated percentage of three-year-olds without licensed childcare at 76%, while Calhoun has the lowest at 45%.
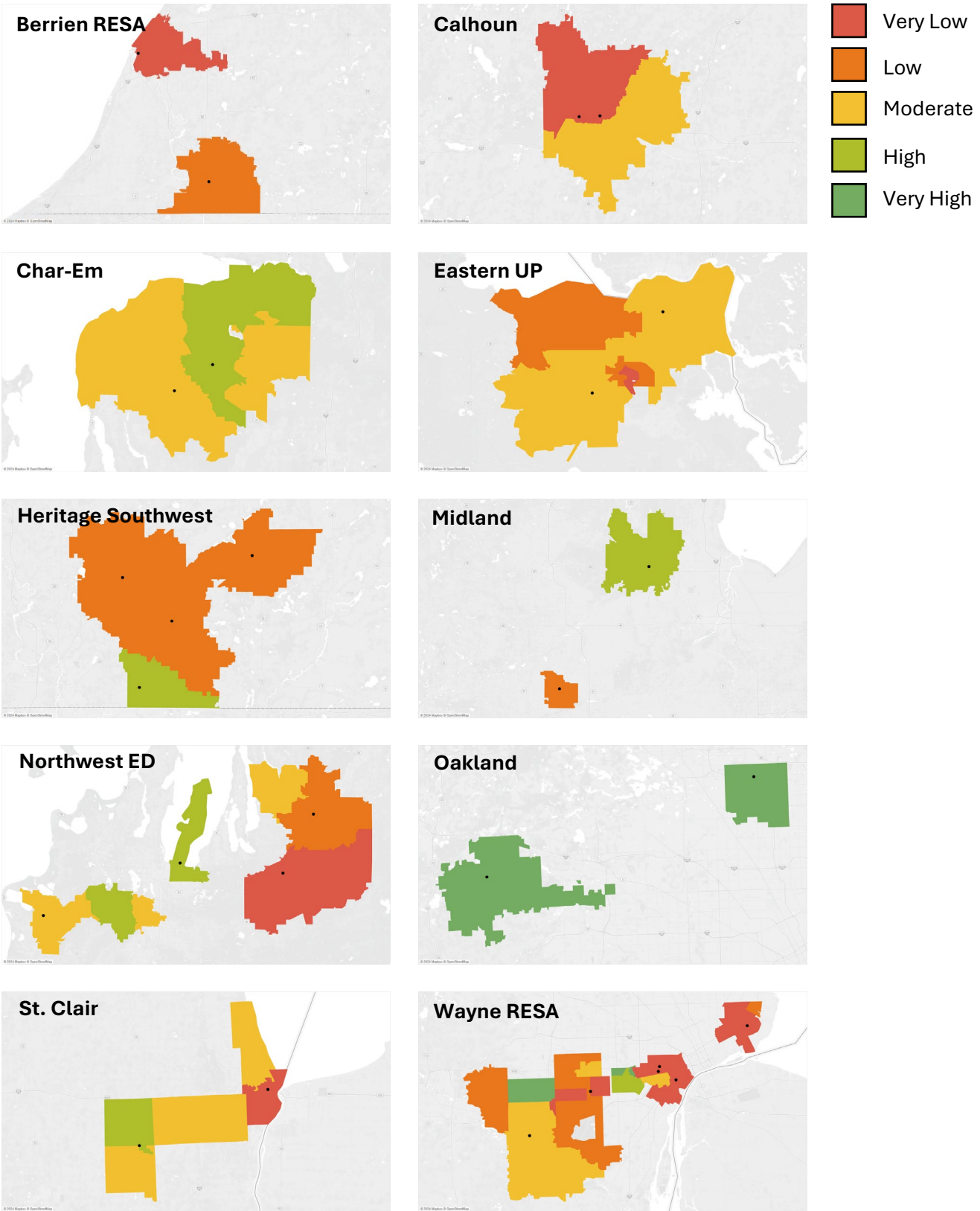
Table 1. Characteristics of Strong Beginnings Communities

ISD	Child Opportunity Level[11]	Geographic Type[12]	% Youth In Poverty[13]
Berrien RESA	Very Low, Low	Rural	45%
Calhoun	Very Low, Moderate	Rural, City	28%
Char-Em	Moderate, High	Rural	12%
Eastern UP	Very Low, Low, Moderate	Rural	30%
Heritage SW	Low, High	Rural	33%
Midland	Low, High	Rural	12%
Northwest ED	Very Low, Low, Moderate, High	Rural	22%
Oakland	Very High	Rural, Suburb, City	4%
St. Clair	Very Low, Moderate, High	Rural, Suburb	20%
Wayne RESA	Very Low, Low, Moderate, High, Very High	Rural, Suburb, City	35%

Table 2. Licensed Childcare for 3-Year-Olds in Strong Beginnings Communities [b,14,15,16]

ISD	# of 3YOS	# Served by Strong Beginnings (%)	# Served by Other Providers (%)	# Not Served by Licensed Care (%)
Berrien RESA	826	28 **(3%)**	245 **(30%)**	552 **(67%)**
Calhoun	1,051	28 **(3%)**	545 **(52%)**	478 **(45%)**
Char-Em	401	28 **(7%)**	141 **(35%)**	232 **(58%)**
Eastern UP	312	28 **(15%)**	140 **(45%)**	144 **(46%)**
Heritage SW	386	56 **(3%)**	61 **(16%)**	268 **(70%)**
Midland	833	28 **(9%)**	376 **(45%)**	429 **(52%)**
Northwest ED	523	56 **(11%)**	223 **(43%)**	244 **(47%)**
Oakland	1,877	28 **(1%)**	882 **(47%)**	967 **(52%)**
St. Clair	911	28 **(3%)**	219 **(24%)**	664 **(73%)**
Wayne RESA	8,731	84 **(1%)**	2,033 **(23%)**	6,614 **(76%)**

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[b] The U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey estimates the number of three- and four-year-olds in each ZIP code. To estimate the number of three-year-olds in each community, we assumed that half of the American Community Survey's estimate were three-year-olds. We estimated providers' number of slots for three-year-olds by subtracting the number of GSRP students at each site from its total licensed capacity; the difference was then divided their total licensed capacity by the age of ranges served. Providers that are closed are automatically assumed to have no capacity for three-year-olds. The formula is (((Total Capacity - # of Strong Beginnings Slots - # of GSRP Slots) / (Max Age Cared For - Minimum Age Cared For)) + # of Strong Beginnings Slots). Only licensed providers (i.e., centers, family homes, and group homes registered with the Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs) are included in the analysis.

Figure 2. Strong Beginnings Communities by ISD and Child Opportunity Level

Legend:
- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

Maps shown: Berrien RESA, Calhoun, Char-Em, Eastern UP, Heritage Southwest, Midland, Northwest ED, Oakland, St. Clair, Wayne RESA

Classroom Quality: Classroom Assessment Scoring System

Classroom quality is monitored in all Strong Beginnings classrooms for ongoing evaluation and program improvement. For program year 2023-24, all Strong Beginnings classrooms were required to evaluate classroom quality using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) by TeachStone. CLASS has been used by both GSRP and Head Start to gauge PreK program quality, as trained evaluators examine teacher and child interactions within the lens of three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.[17] An Early Childhood Specialist that has been trained in the tool, passed the CLASS Reliability Test within the past year, and serves as the trained evaluator. These specialists evaluate Strong Beginnings classrooms twice a year; the first observation is labeled 'Beginning of Year,' while the second observation is 'End of Year.' CLASS scores range from 1 to 7, with the range 1-2 designating low quality, 3 to 5 representing middle quality, and scores from 6 to 7 representing high quality. A full breakdown of CLASS averages for each domain, as well as indicator, is available in Table 3.
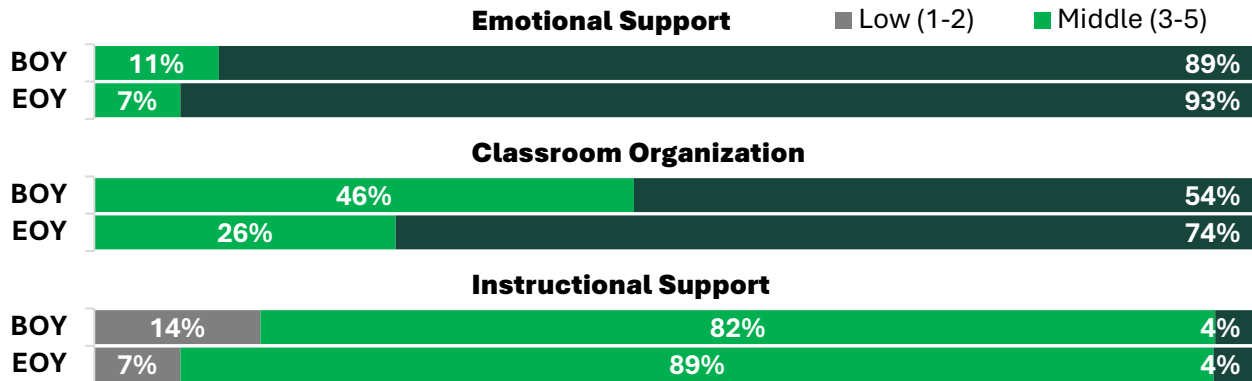
Table 3. Percentage of Classrooms at CLASS Quality Levels at the End-of-Year

CLASS Items (N = 27 classrooms)	Low (1-2)	Middle (3-5)	High (6-7)
Emotional support	**0%**	**7%**	**93%**
Positive climate	0%	0%	100%
Negative climate*	0%	0%	100%
Teacher sensitivity	0%	15%	85%
Regard for student perspectives	0%	15%	85%
Classroom organization	**0%**	**26%**	**74%**
Behavior management	0%	19%	82%
Productivity	0%	15%	85%
Instructional learning formats	0%	52%	48%
Instructional support	**7%**	**90%**	**4%**
Concept development	34%	93%	4%
Quality of feedback	7%	89%	4%
Language modeling	0%	93%	7%

* Data were reverse coded, so that higher scores are better.

As shown in Figure 3, most Strong Beginnings classrooms excelled in Emotional Support and Classroom Organization. The percentage of classrooms providing high quality emotional support increased from 89% to 93%, while the percentage growth from classrooms providing high quality classroom organization increased from 54% to 74%. In contrast, the percentage of Strong Beginnings classrooms providing high quality instructional support remained at 4%; a 7% gain was observed from classrooms improving from providing low quality to middle quality instructional support.

Figure 3. CLASS Domain Beginning of Year (BOY) vs. End of Year (EOY) Quality Ranges

Emotional Support   ■ Low (1-2)   ■ Middle (3-5)

BOY 11% 89%
EOY 7%   93%

Classroom Organization

BOY 46% 54%
EOY 26% 74%

Instructional Support

BOY 14% 82% 4%
EOY 7%   89% 4%

In 2023, only the District of Columbia and Vermont offered universal PreK for three-year-olds, leading to difficulties in comparing classroom quality.[18] While Vermont's CLASS scores are not publically available, the District of Columbia provides information on its Universal PreK Program (DC's PreK). It is important to note that only 27 Strong Beginnings classrooms were evaluated using CLASS, whereas 709 GSRP classrooms and 840 DC's PreK classrooms were observed.[19] DC's PreK is rated by the National Institute of Early Education Research as the most well-funded and accessible (i.e., highest enrollment of three- and four-year-olds) state PreK program in the nation.[20] In comparison, Michigan is ranked as 18th in access, 6th in spending, and Strong Beginnings is a pilot instead of an universal PreK program for three-year-olds.[21]

As shown in Figures 4 and 5, Strong Beginnings meets or surpasses GSRP's average CLASS score for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization. It is in-between GSRP and DC's PreK for Instructional Support. To meet or exceed expectations, a classroom needs to score a six for emotional support and classroom organization and a four for instructional support.[22] When looking at the percentage of classrooms meeting or exceeding expectations, Strong Beginnings outpaces DC's PreK in all areas except Classroom Organizations. Almost a third (32%) of Strong Beginnings classrooms meet or exceed expectations for all three domains, as compared to 41% of GSRP classrooms and 9% of DC's PreK classrooms. As the Strong Beginnings pilot continues to mature, it will be interesting to see how scores change as an additional 16 Strong Beginnings classrooms were added with staff new to the pilot in 2023-24. For example, CCRESA is implementing a new, custom professional development course for Strong Beginnings staff in the 2024-2025 school year, which should impact average CLASS scores.

Figure 4. Average CLASS Scores for Strong Beginnings, GSRP, and DC's PreK[23]

■ DC's PreK   ■ GSRP   ■ Strong Beginnings

Emotional Support
DC's PreK 6.10
GSRP 6.47
Strong Beginnings 6.52

Classroom Organization
DC's PreK 5.91
GSRP 5.97
Strong Beginnings 5.97

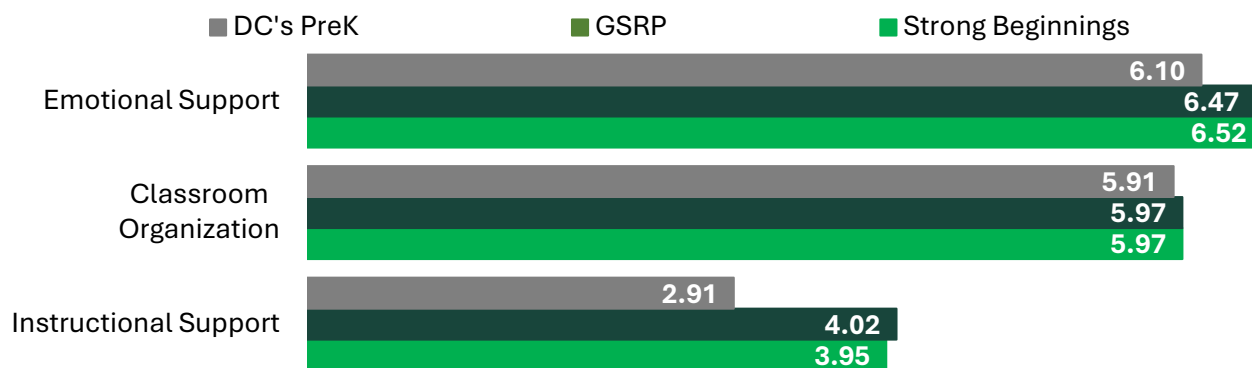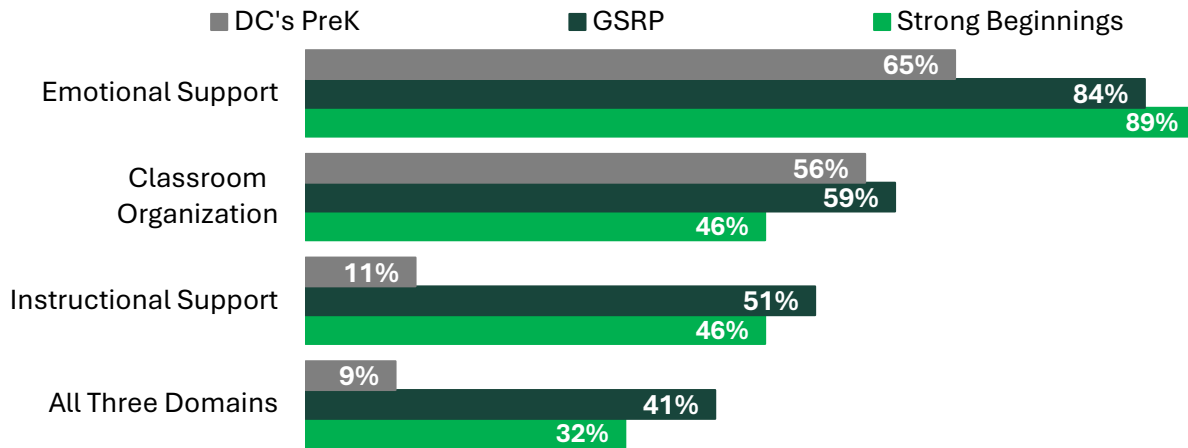Instructional Support
DC's PreK 2.91
GSRP 4.02
Strong Beginnings 3.95

Figure 5. Percentage of Strong Beginnings, GSRP, and DC's PreK Classrooms Meeting or Exceeding Expectations for CLASS Scores[24]

Legend: ■ DC's PreK ■ GSRP ■ Strong Beginnings

Emotional Support
- DC's PreK: 65%
- GSRP: 84%
- Strong Beginnings: 89%

Classroom Organization
- DC's PreK: 56%
- GSRP: 59%
- Strong Beginnings: 46%

Instructional Support
- DC's PreK: 11%
- GSRP: 51%
- Strong Beginnings: 46%

All Three Domains
- DC's PreK: 9%
- GSRP: 41%
- Strong Beginnings: 32%

Family Engagement Outcomes

In designing Strong Beginnings, MiLEAP recognizes the pilot as "a unique opportunity to learn the need for and then provide supports that will strengthen the foundation for both children and families as they begin their journey through the school system."[25] Strong Beginning's emphasis on family engagement (i.e., providing family- and child-level support) requires each classroom to have a family liaison, a professional capacity-builder that provides information, resources, and support to Strong Beginnings families. The exact nature of their position depends on the community being served. For example, the needs of a community in a food desert may rely on a family liaison for information about food pantries more than families in an area with numerous, affordable grocery stores. Another example includes a family liaison might provide more frequent information about bilingual or English-learning programs in a community with higher amounts of immigrant families, as compared to a community that is majority native born. Family liaisons work directly with families and Strong Beginnings staff to learn about families' needs, provide information and resources, and coach caregivers to become their own advocates.

Data about family liaisons' contact logs with families, family event attendance lists, and staff focus groups were not available in 2023-24. Rather, family engagement is evaluated through family satisfaction surveys and the Family Liaison Self-Reflection Rubric. The Rubric is a new evaluative tool specifically designed for Strong Beginnings family liaisons' professional development.

FAMILY SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Using a family satisfaction survey designed by the MSU evaluation team, Strong Beginnings families were asked to measure the effectiveness of their sites' family engagement outreach and support. Lead teachers were asked to email their classroom's families a survey link; paper copies were available upon request. Surveys were available in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Burmese. The survey was broken down into three primary categories (instruction, communication, and support) and respondents were asked to rate each of 12 items using a 4-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

345 responses were collected from April to June 2024, aligning with an estimated 80% survey return rate. Among the 322 usable survey responses, the most common respondent type (86%) was mothers (including step- and foster mothers). Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents indicated their child currently enrolled in

Strong Beginnings was not the first in the family to attend preschool. Nearly half (49%) of respondents identified their child as non-White, including 16% identifying as African American or Black; 11% as Biracial, Multiracial, or mixed race; 8% as Middle Eastern, North African, or Arab American; 8% as Hispanic or Latino; 5% as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; and 1% as American Indian or Alaska Native.

Table 4 tracks the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with a survey item. Of the different features of Strong Beginnings, the most popular aspects with families are their children's learning (26%), their improved social skills (16%), and their improved emotional skills (14%). Other appreciated aspects of Strong Beginnings include the teachers (14%) and the opportunity for social interaction (11%). Overall, the survey results demonstrate families' widespread satisfaction with the program.

Table 4. Percentage of Survey Respondents 'Agreeing' or 'Strongly Agreeing'

Survey Item (n = 322)	%
Instructional Quality	
My child loves going to this program.	96%
My child has developed new skills and/or abilities from attending the program	97%
My child's classroom has plenty of toys and learning materials.	98%
My child knows the rules and routines of this program.	97%
Communication	
I feel the teachers have a good sense of my child's interests and how to work with my child.	97%
The teachers design activities that expose my child to the culture, histories, or the communities we care about.[a]	98%
This program makes me, the caregiver, feel supported and welcomed.	97%
I am well informed about what my child is doing at the program.	95%
The field trips or special events I attended were well organized.[b]	98%
Support	
This program checked in with me about my child's interests and how we interact with each other at home.	94%
This program makes sure I have support to address my child's social, emotional, and behavioral needs.	95%
The family liaison at this program knows my and my child's name.[c]	98%
My family liaison spends time talking and listening to me.[d]	98%

% based on total scoring 'Agree/Strongly Agree' or 'Disagree/Strongly Disagree.' Selection of 'I don't know' not included.

[a] 8% of respondents for this question answered, 'I do not know.'

[b] 17% of respondents for this question answered, 'I do not know,' 'I did not attend one,' or 'Not applicable.'

[c] 9% of respondents for this question answered, 'I do not know.'

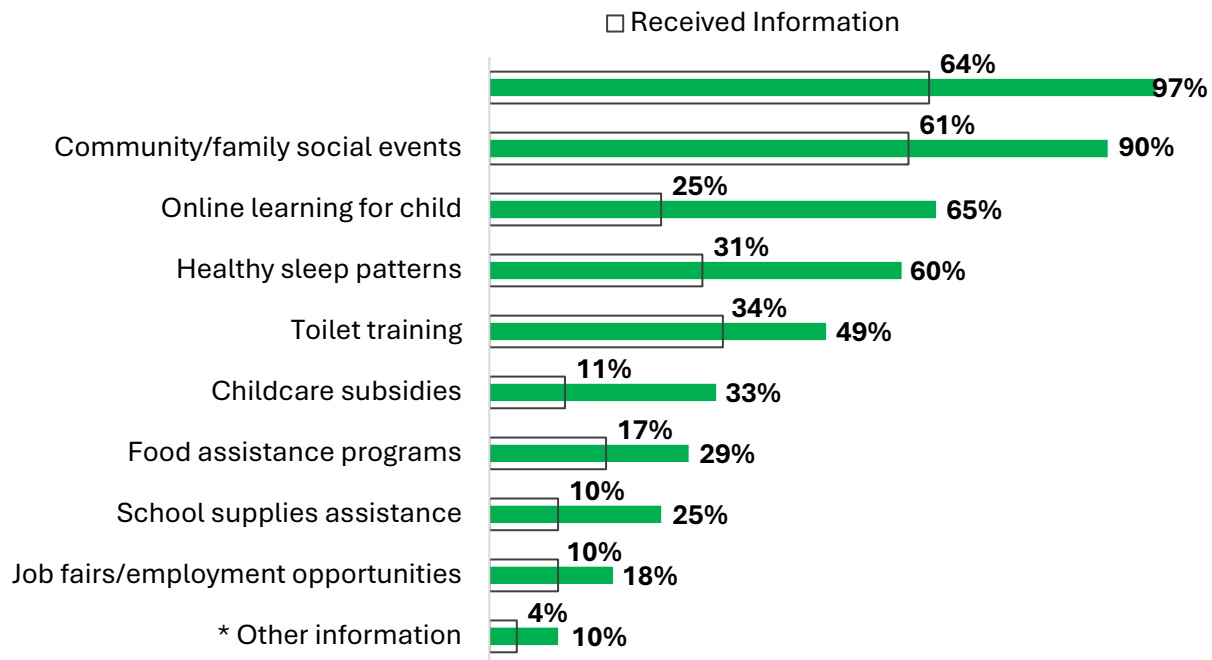[d] 15% of respondents for this question answered, 'I did not spend time speaking to my family liaison.'

Some quotes from family respondents include:

- "Being able to take my child to a facility that ensures her safety and growth while I work to provide for our home has been the most helpful and peaceful aspect of this program!"
- "The care and knowledge the teachers and liaison show every week for my child is extremely appreciated! We always feel informed on topics, and they are very quick to help when you ask questions."
- "...it feels like a second family, and everyone is so close, and they love the kids so much!"

Family respondents rarely had suggestions for improvements to their Strong Beginnings' classroom. Of the 7% with recommendations, comments indicated room for improvement in parent/teacher interactions (3%), more frequent parent/teacher conferences (2%), and more information about their child's daily learning (2%). Almost a third (31%) of respondents indicated there was no need for improvements.

Part of Strong Beginnings' design is its provision of support and information to families. The most reported additional support families received was on social/emotional growth (64%), community/family social events (61%), and toilet training (34%). Most respondents indicated interest in learning about social/emotional growth (97%), community/family social events (90%), online learning for their child (65%), and healthy sleep patterns (60%) from their Strong Beginnings team. A full breakdown of reported support received by families and topics that interest them is available in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Support Respondents Received or Are Interested In

□ Received Information

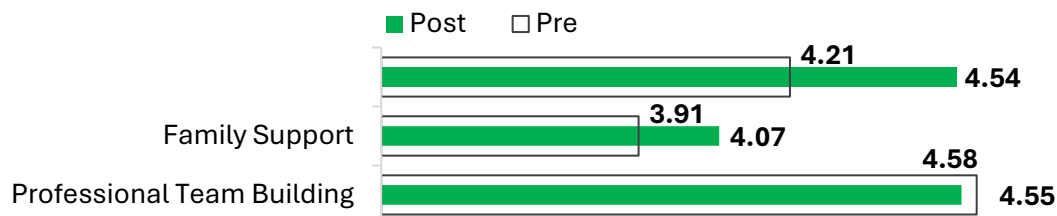|	Received Information	Interested In
	64%	97%
Community/family social events	61%	90%
Online learning for child	25%	65%
Healthy sleep patterns	31%	60%
Toilet training	34%	49%
Childcare subsidies	11%	33%
Food assistance programs	17%	29%
School supplies assistance	10%	25%
Job fairs/employment opportunities	10%	18%
* Other information	4%	10%

Other information includes school programs; diaper donation programs; Spanish classes; speech, sports, summer school activities; and tribal culture information.

FAMILY LIAISON SELF-REFLECTION RUBRIC

Recognizing the lack of quick, accessible professional development tools for PreK family engagement professionals, the MSU team worked with CCRESA and Strong Beginnings' family liaisons and administrators to create the Family Liaison Self-Reflection Rubric. This evaluative tool was designed to provide family liaisons with best practices, a space for self-reflection, and to foster professional development conversations between liaisons and their administrators. In listening to family liaisons describe their work, three themes emerged: relationship building with families, family support and advocacy, and collaboration with Strong Beginnings staff and administrators. The rubric is broken down into ten indicators for participants to rate their behavior from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Additional space was given for liaisons to explain their scores and provide examples. 19 family liaisons participated in two data collection periods: February 23rd to March 25th (Pre-Test) and May 8th to 22nd, 2024 (Post-Test).

A breakdown of average pre- and post-test scores is available in Table 5, while an average of pre- and post-test domain scores is available in Figure 7. When looking at pre- and post-test averages in Figure 7, family liaisons significantly improved in Atmosphere and Relationship Building, followed by Family Support. Professional Team Building scores slightly decreased by 0.03. Despite this small decline, Professional Team Building had the highest scores out of all three domains in both the pre- and post-tests.

Figure 7. Family Liaison Self-Reflection Rubric Pre & Post Average Scores by Domain

Legend: ■ Post □ Pre

- Atmosphere and Relationship Building: Pre 4.21, Post 4.54
- Family Support: Pre 3.91, Post 4.07
- Professional Team Building: Post 4.58, Pre 4.55

The questions in the family engagement survey mirrored the rubric's indicators. Family liaison's average score on the rubric was a significant predictor to family's response on the engagement survey's question 15, "The family liaison at this program knows my and my child's name," showing their work was well received by families. When comparing average pre- and post-test scores, the post-test average was higher for every indicator except "9. My working relationship with classroom teachers is both positive and effective."

Table 5. Family Liaison Self-Reflection Rubric Pre & Post Average Scores by Indicator

(N = 19 family liaisons)	Pre	Post	Change
Atmosphere and Relationship Building	**4.21**	**4.54**	**0.33**
1. I find ways to use all children's and families' names to show my interest in them.	4.68	4.74	0.05
2. I chat regularly with families in-person or check in with them over the phone.*	4.05	4.74	0.68
3. I return families' calls, texts, and emails within 48 hours.	4.42	4.79	0.37
4. I follow up with individual families to see how my support to them was helpful.	4.11	4.53	0.42
5. I promote a welcoming and inclusive environment for all families.*	3.79	3.89	0.11
Family Support and Advocacy	**3.91**	**4.07**	**0.16**
6. I strengthen families by providing resources, active listening, and encouraging them to be their own advocates.	3.84	3.95	0.11
7. I chat with families about their child's interests and how they integrate them into their daily activities at home.	3.68	4.00	0.32
8. I make sure families have support to address their child's social, emotional, and behavioral needs.	4.21	4.26	0.05
Professional Team Building	**4.58**	**4.55**	**-0.03**
9. My working relationship with classroom teachers is both positive and effective.	4.79	4.63	-0.16
10. My administrators provide me with strong support.	4.37	4.47	0.11

*Items changed between pre- and post- based on participant feedback.

Conclusion

Due to data limitations, analysis on the demographics of children and families served by Strong Beginnings cannot be conducted at this time. However, families' feedback of Strong Beginnings remains positive and affirmative. The implementation of the Family Liaison Self-Reflection Rubric allows for comparison of families' and family liaisons' perceptions of family engagement. Further implementation of the Rubric in 2024-25 can help elaborate on the relationship between these two metrics.

Strong Beginnings' positive CLASS scores, especially in relation to DC's PreK and GSRP, indicates that the pilot is providing low-income and at-risk three-year-olds with quality PreK. Areas for professional development to strengthen the program include classroom organization and instructional support. Additional CLASS evaluation in 2024-25 and 2025-26 will allow for better analysis, especially when considered in relation to Strong Beginnings teachers' and the length of their tenure. The impact of PreK is tied to its quality; maintaining and growing Strong Beginnings' quality will be crucial to positively impacting three-year-olds.

The placement of Strong Beginnings into 28 communities and ten ISDs allows for the pilot to mirror the needs, geographic, socioeconomic, and racial diversity of the state. Continuing to maintain the diversity of the pilot, and to confirm the diversity of Strong Beginnings children through future data sharing, will be essential to ensure that Michigan's publicly funded PreK is serving children equitably.

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