

The Critical Role of Preschool

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Anchorage School District

Educating All Students for Success in Life



Evidence-Based Success & Kindergarten Readiness

High-quality early childhood education is proven to strengthen families and can break cycles of intergenerational poverty.

- **Kindergarten Readiness**

- Preschool builds the social, emotional and cognitive skills necessary for a child to adapt to the classroom environment.

- **Performance Data**

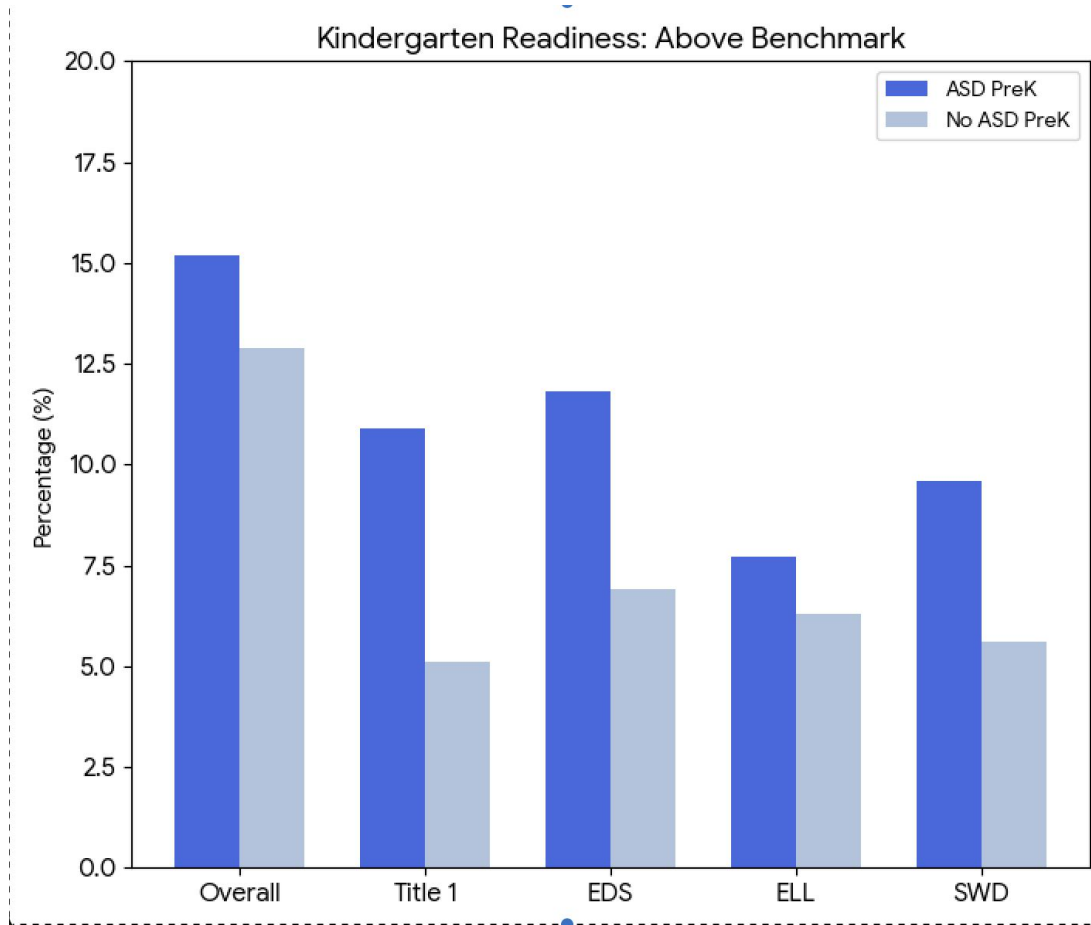
- Students who attended ASD PreK consistently outperform their peers who did not.

- **Proven Outcomes**

- Higher high school graduation rates (65% vs 45%) and higher earnings by age 40.



ASD Preschool to Kindergarten



Strengthening Literacy Foundations

Preschool provides exposure to phonemic awareness & numeracy.

- **Consistent Tracking**

- ASD intentionally tracks data and has a structured plan moving forward.

- **Current Progress**

- GOLD assessment monitors ongoing student growth.

- **New Tools for Fall 2026**

- Will implement an Early Literacy Screener aligned with the state-approved "Creative Curriculum by Teaching Strategies."



Meeting the Demand

ASD has **37** general education preschool classrooms.

Despite clear benefits, current funding limits our ability to serve.

- 1,200+ applicants in 2025-26
- 635 students placed; 480 waitlisted
 - For reference, there are 2,900 kindergartners this year; our preschool reach is only a fraction of that need.



Barriers to Expansion - Funding Gap

- **Resource Distribution**

- 27 classrooms funded through grants
- 10 classrooms funded through the .5 ADM (Average Daily Membership)

- **Economic Impact**

- Childcare issues result in an estimated **\$165 million annual loss** for Alaska's economy

- **Employer Costs:**

- Absences and turnover due to childcare breakdowns cost Alaska employers **\$152 million per year**



Economic Driver for Alaska's Workforce

- **Workforce Participation**
 - Access to high-quality preschool correlates directly with higher maternal labor force participation.
- **The Childcare Ecosystem**
 - Families need "saturation-level" care, including post-preschool care, just as elementary families do.
- **Community Collaboration**
 - We maintain continuous collaboration with childcare providers, as infant and toddler care is the most expensive to operate.
- **Professional Growth**
 - Expansion increases employment opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals within the state.



Long-Term Student Success

Early learning is the most effective intervention for long-term health and success.

- **Critical Window**
 - 90% of a child's brain development happens before age 5
- **Addressing Trauma**
 - Preschool supports mental health and helps break the cycle Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)
- **ACEs in Alaska**
 - 16% of Alaska's children (birth to age 5) experience 2+ ACEs
- **Early Intervention**
 - Preschool allows for early ID of needs, ensuring students start on or above the same playing field as their peers



Future Growth and Accountability

- **Capacity to Grow**
 - ASD has the physical space in schools, existing playgrounds, and high interest from local families
- **Infrastructure Needs**
 - To maintain quality while growing, we must invest in our infrastructure and programming support systems
- **The 1.0 ADM Goal**
 - Moving to 1.0 ADM would allow ASD to immediately open 10 additional classrooms to serve the Anchorage community



From School Day to Full Day

Powered by Partnership

- **Innovative Pilot**
 - The ACCEE Project
- **Locations**
 - Airport Heights and Tudor elementary schools
- **Funding**
 - Supported by ACCEE fund to test new integrated care model
- **The Model**
 - Provides a full-day solution on-site, eliminating the need for mid-day transportation for young learners

$$\begin{array}{r} \frac{1}{2} \text{ day preschool} \\ + \frac{1}{2} \text{ day childcare} \\ \hline = \text{ full day solution} \end{array}$$





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Empowering *ALL* Early Learners for Lifelong Success

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (n.d.). *Connecting the brain to the rest of the body: Early childhood development and lifelong health are deeply intertwined.*

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/working-paper/connecting-the-brain-to-the-rest-of-the-body-early-childhood-development-and-lifelong-health-are-deeply-intertwined/>

HighScope Educational Research Foundation. (2015). *The Perry Preschool Study: Summary of 40-year outcomes.* <https://highscope.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/perry-preschool-summary-40.pdf>

U.S. Chamber of Commerce. (2024). *Untapped Potential: The Economic Impact of Child Care Breakdowns on Alaska Businesses.*

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63dac7cd1a225958e4b08502/t/659f1955c796664577c83247/1704925528414/US+Chamber+of+Commerce>

