Fall 2025 NC ELI & mClass Overview

Presented by

A collaborative effort between Asheville and Buncombe County Schools and Buncombe County Government's Strategy & Innovation Team

How We Got To Now

- October 2018 - Buncombe County established an Early Childhood Education and Development Fund for the purpose of advancing the strategic priority to ensure that every child in Buncombe County has an equal opportunity to thrive during their first 2,000 days, including access to quality early childhood education
- The purpose of the Early Childhood and Development Committee is to engage with community partners, solicit public input and make policy and funding recommendations to the Board of Commissioners for Buncombe County's Early Childhood Education and Development Fund
- Annually the Committee awards grants to entities conducting work supporting the objectives of the Committee and Fund
- County staff supports the Committee in a variety of capacities – big thanks to Ian Nelson from Asheville City Schools & Theresa Melenas from Buncombe Co. Schools
- This analysis was not conducted last year due to staff constraints because of the Helene response
- Analysis and measures in this report are intended to provide a high-level, directional status on the state of early childhood education in Buncombe Co.

NC Early Learning Assessment (NCELI)

- NC Early Learning Inventory (NCELI) is an observation-based formative assessment that leverages the Teaching Strategies Gold tool
- The assessment is administered within first 60 days of school year across the state for all entering kindergarteners
- Values presented reflect consolidated results for both Asheville County School and Buncombe County Schools – any means of identifying an individual child is excluded from the data
- Data for Children attending a Pre-K program prior to registration for kindergarten is available from the 2022-23 school year and in subsequent years
- Stratification of data by child's race is included in analysis (based on race and ethnicity identified at registration) – there are four categories reflected in the analysis:
  - Black: Race = Black or African American
  - Hispanic: Ethnicity = Hispanic or Latino
  - White: Race = White
  - Other: Includes all other categories such as Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Identification with Two or More Races, etc.
- The following report reflects results for Early Childhood Education Committee approved key indicators of kindergarten readiness and is not intended to make recommendations for outcome improvements

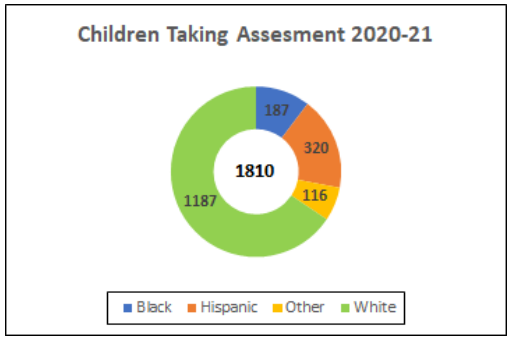
NC ELI Assessment Objectives Included

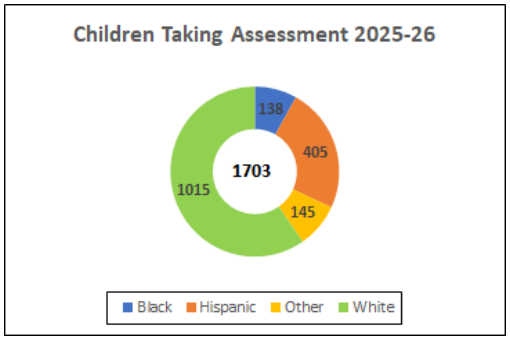
- Assessment evaluates competency in the following categories: Language, literacy, cognitive/math, social-emotional
- Focus is placed on a subset of 9 core objectives defined by N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction (NCDPI) that addresses the requirement for a screening of early language, literacy & math skills
- As requested by the ECE Committee, now including the 5 social-emotional objectives going forward
- Each objective has a state defined baseline score for evaluating results
- The measures in the presentation reflect the percentage of children at or exceeding expectations for a defined number of objectives
- Ideal state - all children at or exceeding expectations across all objectives
- Stratification methodology: 1.) high level / overall results, 2.) by race, 3.) by Pre-K attendance, 4.) by race and Pre-K attendance
- Where possible data has been aggregated / consolidated for ease of interpretation
- For more information: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/office-early-learning/kindergarten

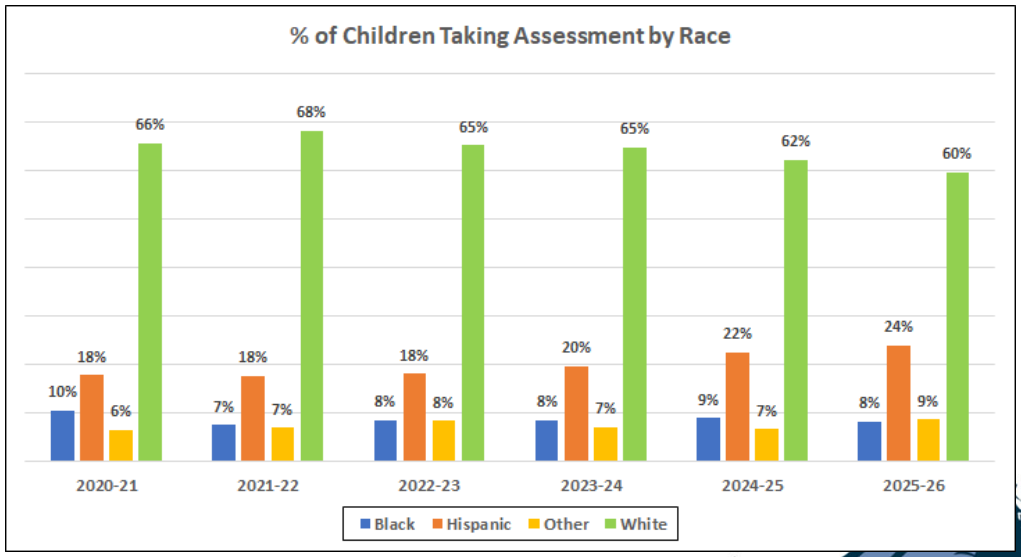
Core Objective	Category	Objective Description
Yes	Language	9d. Tells about another time or place
Yes	Language	8b. Follows directions
Yes	Literacy	15a. Notices & discriminates rhyme
Yes	Literacy	15b. Notices & discriminates alliteration
Yes	Literacy	17a. Uses & appreciates books & other text
Yes	Literacy	17b. Uses print concepts
Yes	Cognitive/Math	20a. Counts
Yes	Cognitive/Math	20b. Quantifies
Yes	Cognitive/Math	20c. Connects numerals with quantities
No	Social-Emotional	1b. Follows limits & expectations
No	Social-Emotional	2b. Responds to emotional cues
No	Social-Emotional	2c. Interacts with peers
No	Social-Emotional	3b. Solves social problems

Children Taking the Assessments

- Overall the children taking the assessment has declined by 6% between 2020-21 & 2025-26
  - The number of Black children taking the assessments have declined by 26%
  - The number of Hispanic children taking the assessments have increased by 27%
  - The number of children in the Other category taking the assessments have increased by 25%
  - The number of White children taking the assessments have declined by 14%
- As a percent of total, White children taking the assessments have been declining for the period and the percent of Hispanic children taking the assessments over the past three years have increased with Black children and children in the Other category remaining relatively consistent

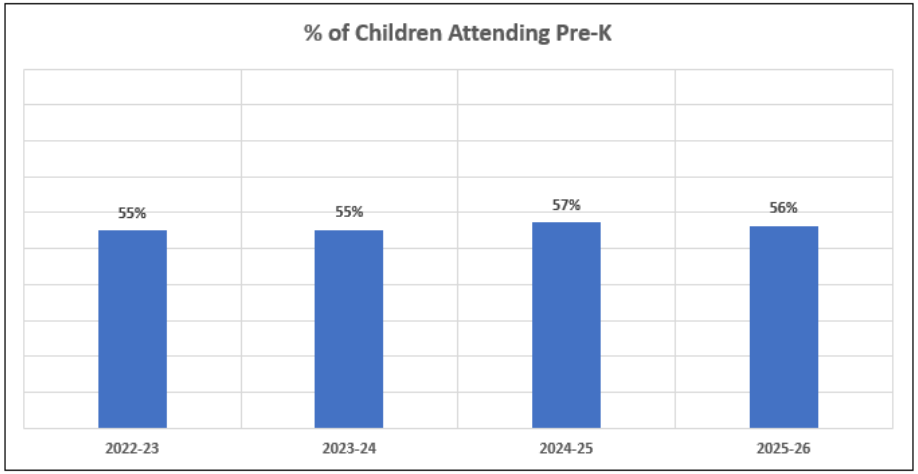


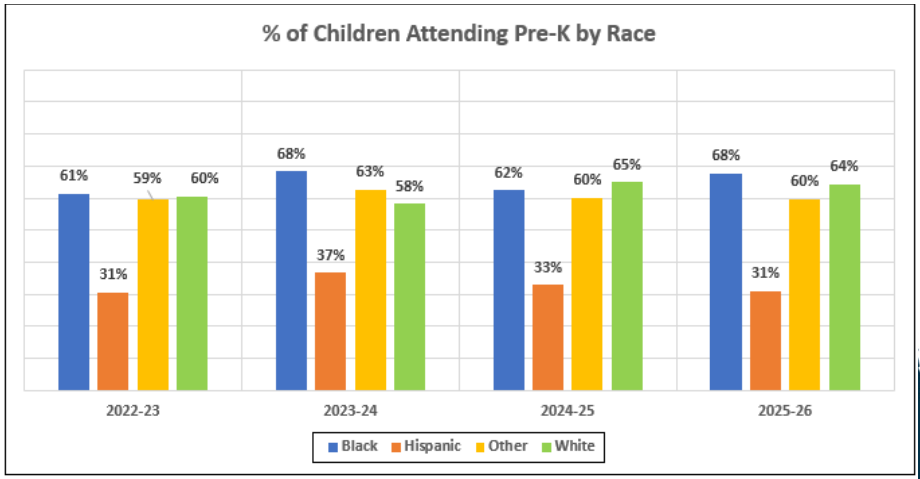




Children Attending Pre-K

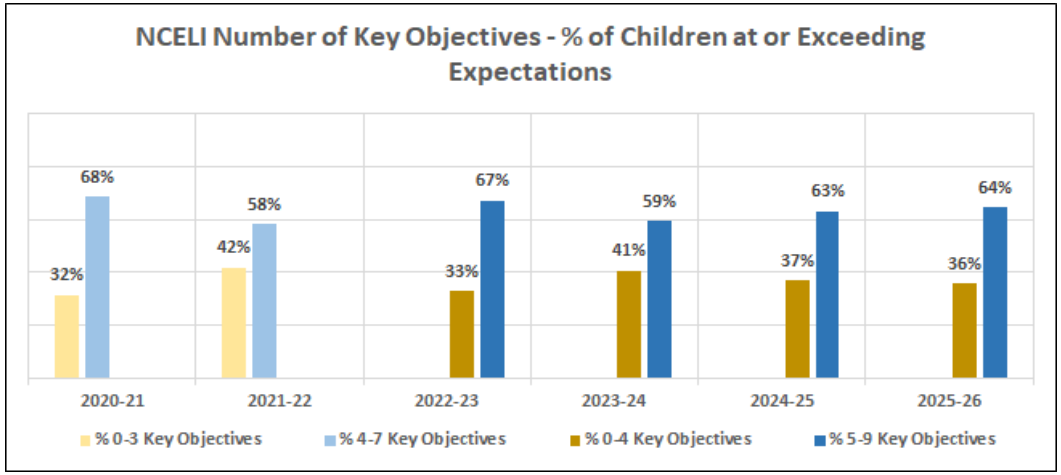
- At time of kindergarten registration parents / guardians are asked to indicate if child attended a Pre-K program (Note: This is a yes/no response, and there is no data about type or length of pre-k participation.)
- Over the four years that this data has been collected the percentage of total children attending Pre-K has remained consistent in the mid-50's
- The percentage of Black children attending Pre-K has been among the highest for the period
- The percentage of Hispanic children attending Pre-K has been the lowest for the period – approximately half that of the other races and has been declining for the past three years

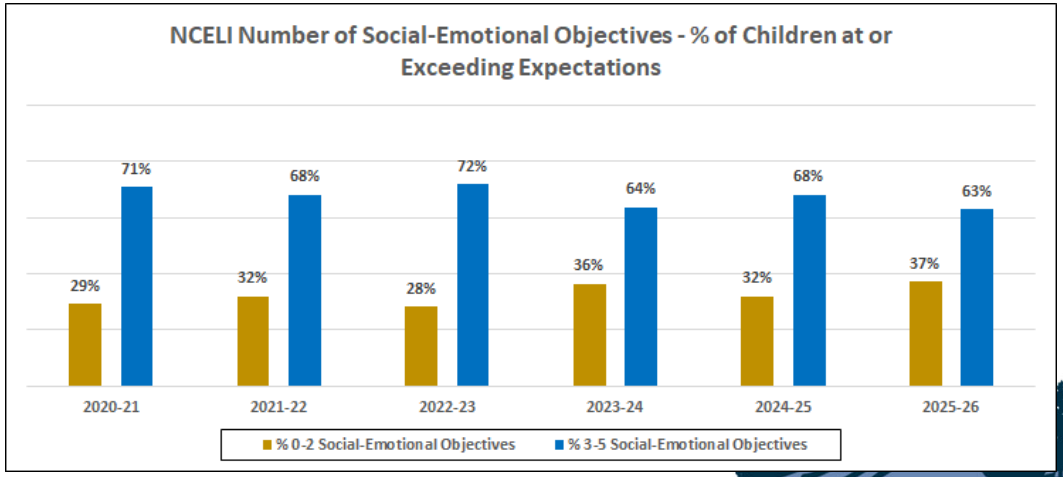




% of Children at or Exceeding Expectations

- Higher level groupings created for ease of interpreting results – values reflect the percentage of children at or exceeding expectations for a count of objectives
  - Key Objectives increased from 7 in 2020-21 to 9 in 2022-23 – note change in categories on top chart
  - There are 5 Social-Emotional objectives – see bottom chart
- Optimal state would be 100% of children in the 5-9 Key Objectives and 3-5 Social-Emotional Objectives
- Values for the key objectives have been consistent for the past two years with the social and emotional results showing a cyclical nature





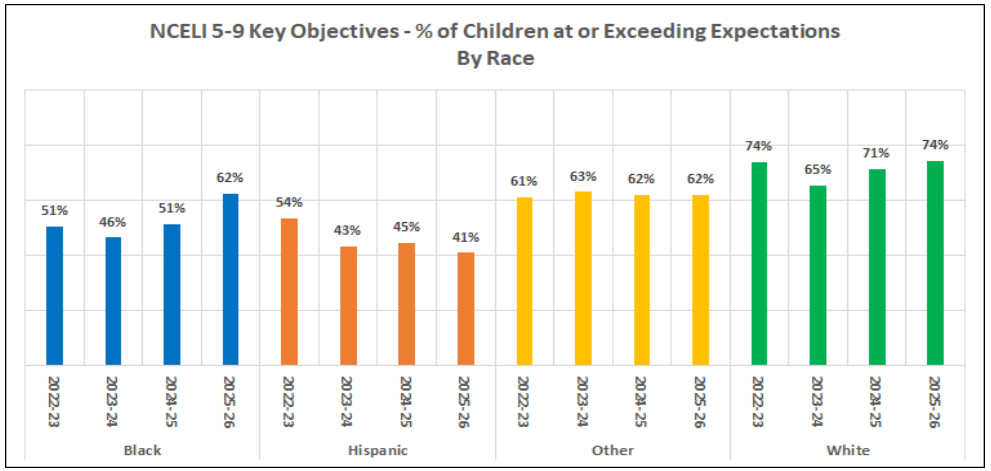
% of Children at or Exceeding Expectations by Race

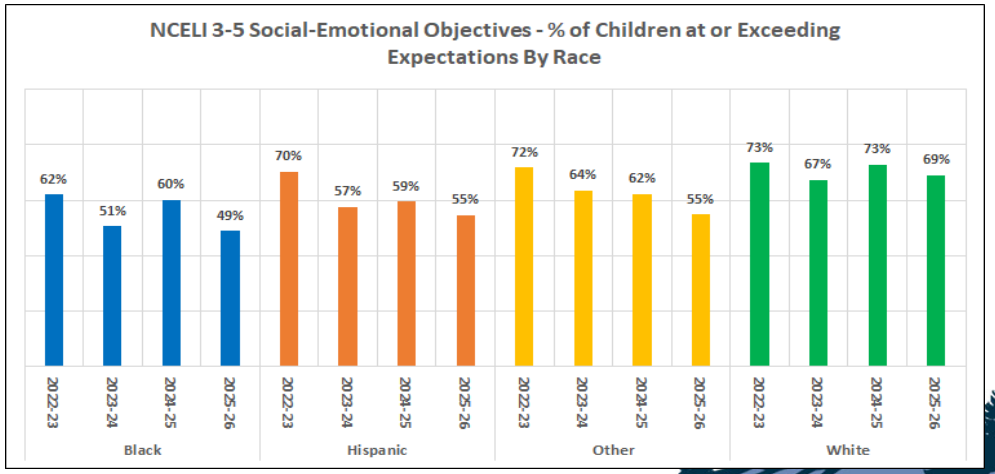
<u>5-9 Key Objectives at or Exceeding Expectations (top chart)</u>

- The values for Black children have been increasing and are at a four-year high
- The values for Hispanic children have been decreasing and are at a four-year low
- The percentages of Children in the Other race and White children have been relatively consistent for the period

<u>3-5 Social-Emotional Objectives at or Exceeding Expectations (bottom chart)</u>

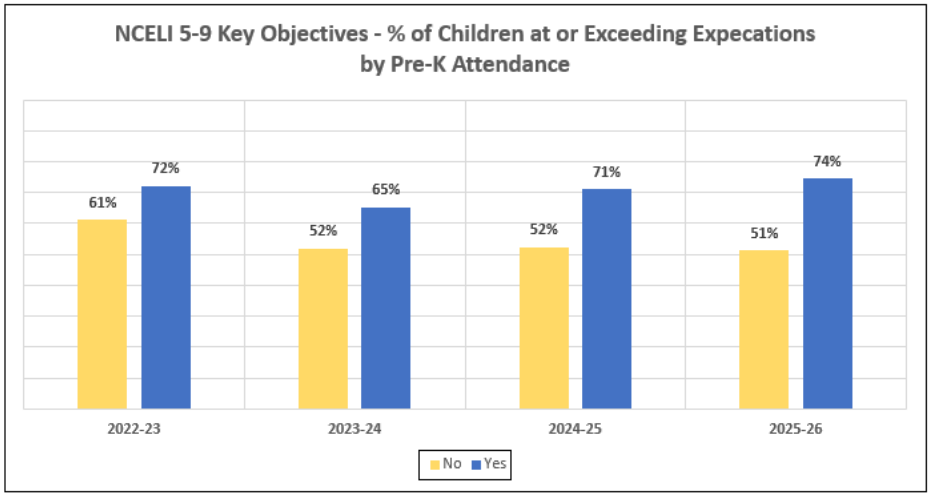
- The values for Black, Hispanic, and children in the Other category are showing the lowest values for the period – results for Black children have been somewhat cyclical with Hispanic and children in the Other category showing a declining trend for the period
- Results for White children have been showing a cyclical nature for the period

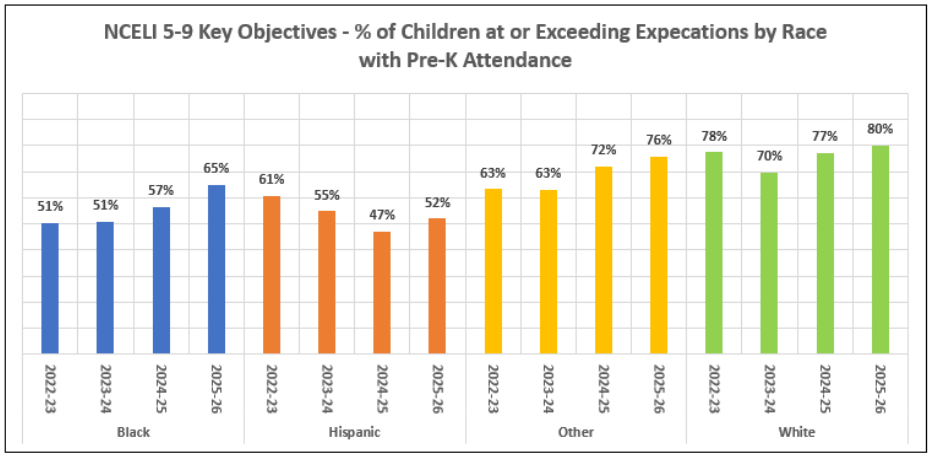




5-9 Key Objectives % of Children at or Exceeding Expectations by Pre-K Attendance

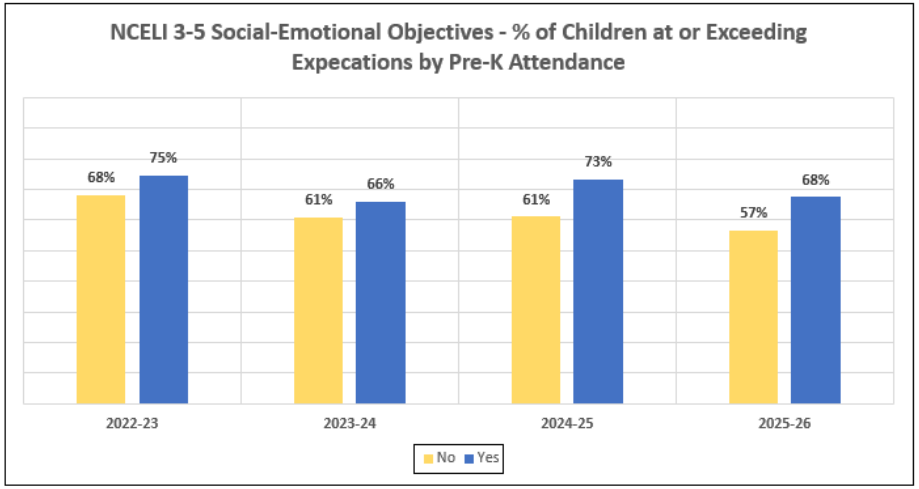
- For the entire period the percentage of children at or exceeding in 5-9 Key Objectives is higher for those that attended pre-k with approximately a 20-point difference the last two years
- With the exception of 2023-24, overall values have been consistently in the low 70's
- Evaluating trends across races for children attending pre-k:
  - Across all 4 races the values for the current year are showing an increase over the prior year
  - Black children and children in the Other race category are showing a positive, upward trend for the period
  - The value for the current year for Hispanic children is showing an increase after 3 years of steady decline
  - White children have consistently been the category with the highest percentage of children in the at or exceeding category for children attending pre-k

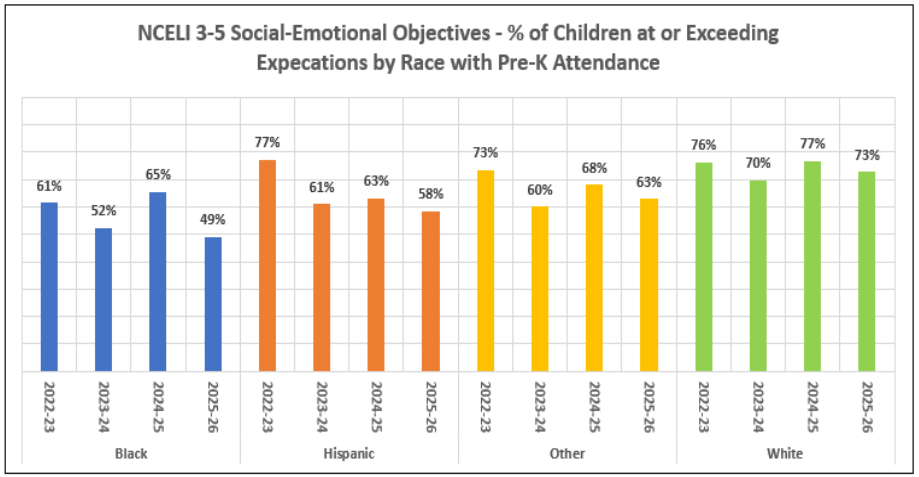




3-5 Social-Emotional Objectives % of Children at or Exceeding Expectations by Pre-K Attendance

- For the entire period the percentage of children at or exceeding in 3-5 Social-Emotional Objectives is higher for those that attended pre-k with approximately a 10-point difference the last two years
- Results for children attending pre-k are showing some variability year-to-year with values fluctuating from the mid-60's to mid-70's
- Evaluating trends across races for children attending pre-k:
  - Across all 4 races the values for the current year are showing a decrease over the prior year
  - The current year value is the lowest over the period for Black and Hispanic children with Hispanic children showing a consistent decline for the period
  - White children have had historically the highest values for the period



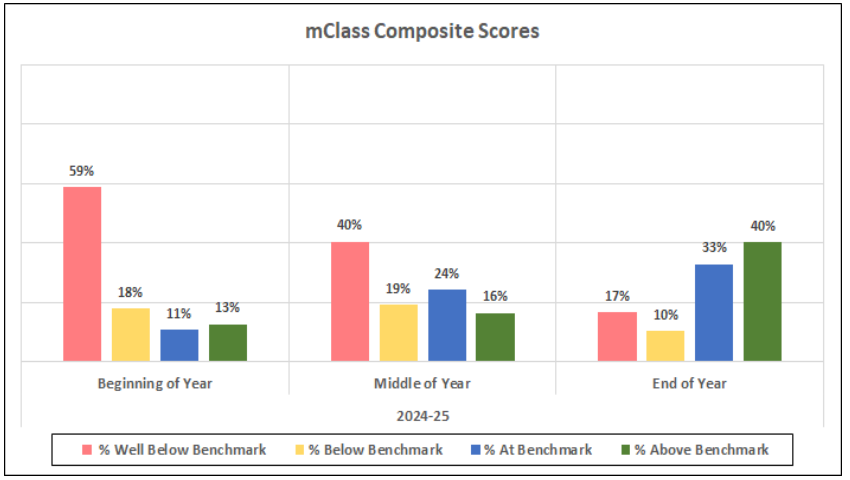


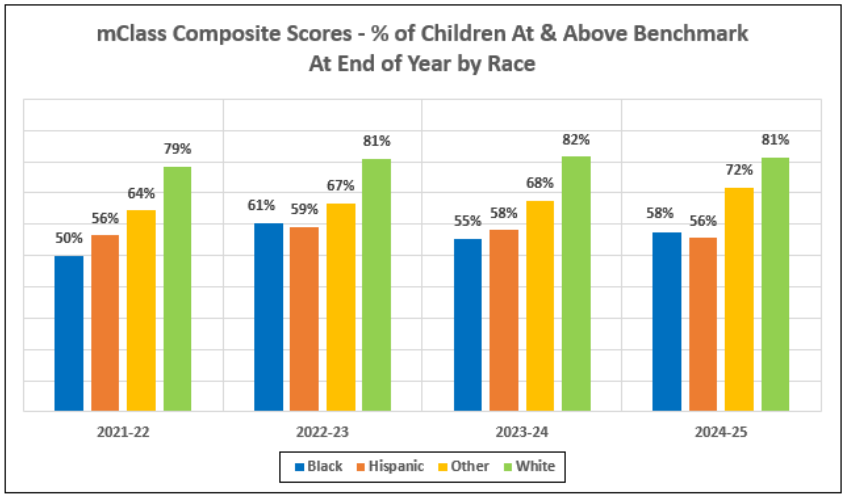
mClass Overview

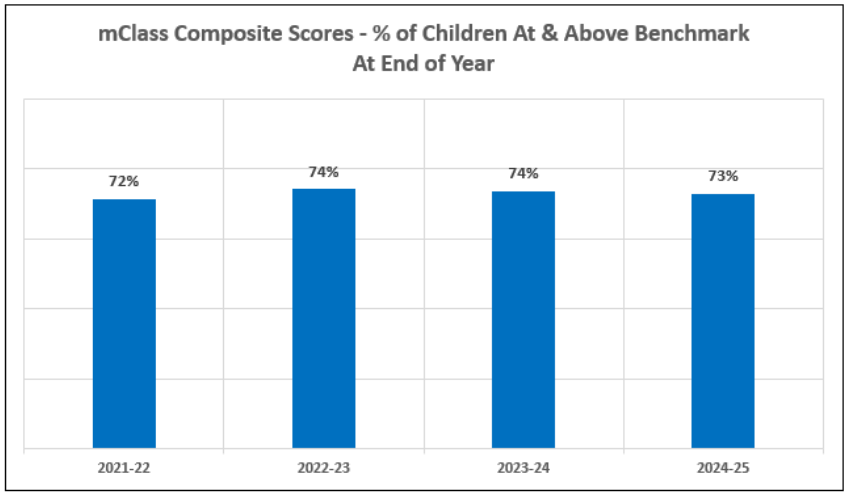
- N. C. Dept. of Public Instruction (NCDPI) selected mCLASS DIBELS ® 8th Edition as the state's K-3 Literacy Assessment in 2021
- mCLASS is an integrated, gold standard literacy system based on the *Science of Reading*
- The *Science of Reading* is a comprehensive body of research that provides an evidence-based best practice approach for teaching foundational literacy skills
- mClass Assessment is interactive and computer based and is teacher administered 3 times throughout the year
  - Beginning – days 6-21
  - Middle – days 80-100
  - End – days 155-170
- Grade K assessment measures: Letter naming fluency, Phonemic segmentation fluency, Nonsense word fluency, Word reading fluency – also measures Oral Language and Vocabulary
- Assessment evaluations are based on 4 categories: Well Below Benchmark, Below Benchmark, At Benchmark, Above Benchmark
- mClass assessment is different compared to NC ELI
  - NC ELI is an observation-based formative assessment that includes a set of developmental progressions across the six domains of learning and development
  - The teacher is collecting evidence and documenting observations during the first 60 days of kindergarten to create a snapshot of each child's early learning development
  - The assessment is administered annually at the beginning of year

mClass Results

- Historically it's been the case that the there's a transition in the percentages of children in the below benchmark categories to above benchmark throughout the school year – more children in above benchmark at the end of year
- Chart in lower right reflects very consistent results at end of year for children in the at & above benchmark categories
- Looking at values stratified by race, results for the past several years have been consistent with White children showing the highest percentages followed by children in the other category with Black and Hispanic at parity

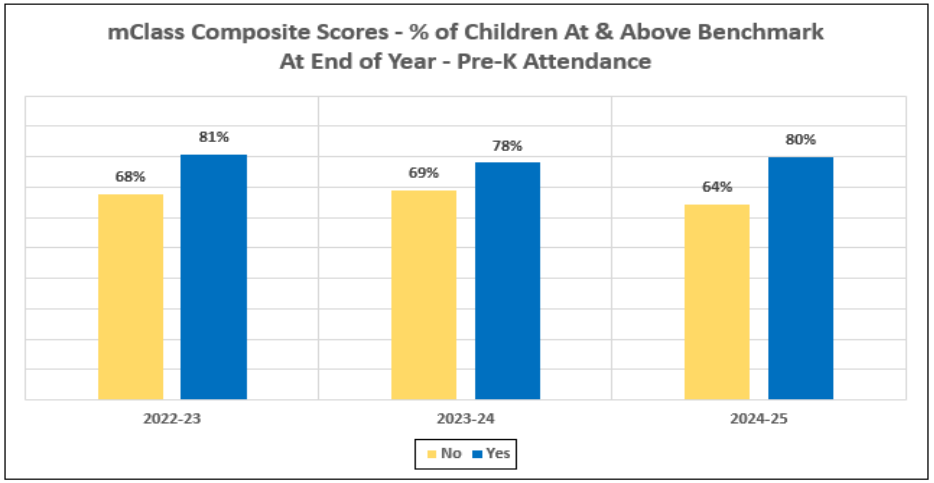


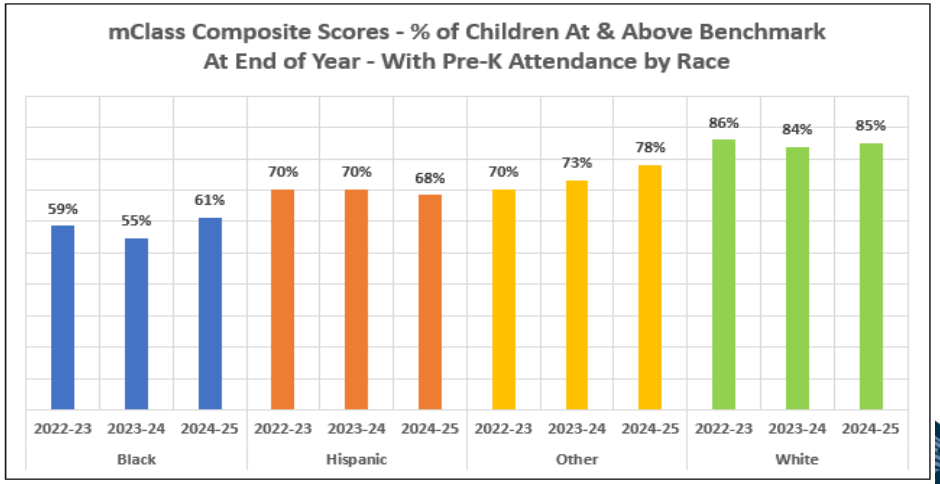




mClass Results by Race by Pre-K Attendance

- For the entire period the percentage of children at or above benchmark is higher for those that attended pre-k with approximately a 16-point difference at the end of the 2024-25 school year
- Values have been consistent at approximately 80% for children attending pre-k in the at or above benchmark category
- Evaluating trends across races for children attending pre-k:
  - Children in the Other category are showing a positive increase in values across the three periods
  - Values across the period for Black, Hispanic, and White children are relatively consistent
  - Black children are showing the lowest values across the race categories compared to white children who are showing the highest values





Key Take Aways & Questions