STARS Program Data Summary & Evaluation, 2021-2023

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

STARS is a major investment from GAR Foundation designed to engage a cohort of community-based early learning centers in high-quality early childhood instructional development. Started in February 2020, STARS 101 provided expert tools and support to help early learning centers navigate the state's quality rating system, Step Up to Quality (SUTQ), and increase their ratings over two years. The majority of participants in the original cohort become highly rated and subsequently were awarded continued support with new funding from the GAR Foundation to support literacy and math skills of young children. The ongoing support is called STARS 202. In 2021, a new cohort of child care programs were recruited to receive STARS 101 which included coaching, training and support to navigate and increase their star rating. The STARS initiative addresses gaps in the early childhood education system and seeks to demonstrate how effective teaching and engagement tactics can support meaningful educational advancements for young children.

- The goal of the STARS Program Data Analysis & Evaluation is to compare students in the STARS programs to other students in Akron and Summit County on Transition Skills Summary (TSS) and Kindergarten Readiness Assessment – Learning and Literacy (KRA-LL) outcomes for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023.

- One criterion for inclusion in the STARS 202 and 101 programs was that preschools are in zip codes with higher economic disadvantage and need. A comparison group was created that aligned with the focus on students meeting these criteria.

- Students with complete TSS and KRA-LL data available were included in analyses for the years 2021 and 2022. The analysis using 2023 data includes only students with complete TSS data available since KRA-LL data were not available for this cohort at this time.

- For each year, analyses were conducted for all students in the dataset who subsequently attend any Summit County public school kindergarten.
    - Descriptive statistics, mean comparisons (i.e. One-Way ANOVAs), proportional comparisons (i.e. Chi-Square), and correlational analyses (i.e. Pearson's r) were conducted.
    - Analyses of the TSS data include overall score and On Track comparisons by subscales including Approaches Toward Learning (ATL), Social Emotional Development (SED), Language and Literacy Development (LLD), Cognition and General Knowledge (CGK), and Physical Health and Motor Development (PHMD). Analyses of the KRA-LL data include overall score and On Track comparisons.

- Scores on the TSS are significantly associated with scores on the KRA-LL across years and sub-groups.

- Do students in the STARS Programs score significantly higher on the TSS and KRA than students in the comparison group? The Summary of Statistical Findings across program years 2021, 2022, and 2023 are presented in Table 1.
    - ***Across years, there is strong evidence to suggest that participation in the STARS 202 program is associated with significantly higher TSS scores and KRA-LL scores overall and with being On Track on the TSS-LLD, TSS-PHMD, and KRA-LL.***

    - ***Across years, there is strong evidence to suggest that participation in the STARS 101 program is associated with significantly higher KRA-LL scores overall and with being On Track on the KRA-LL.***

Table 1. Summary of Statistical Findings – Preschool students in the sample who attend any Summit County public school Kindergarten (KG)

Preschool students who attend any Summit County public school Kindergarten (KG)						
Do students in the STARS Programs score significantly higher than students in the Comparison Group?	**2021** STARS 202 (N=40)	**2021** STARS 101 (N=20)	**2022** STARS 202 (N=52)	**2022** STARS 101 (N=29)	**2023** STARS 202* (N=66)	**2023** STARS 101* (N=26)
TSS (Average Score)	X				X	
TSS-ATL On Track						
TSS-SED On Track						
TSS-LLD On Track	X		X		X	X
TSS-CGK On Track					X	X
TSS-PHMD On Track			X	X	X	
KRA-LL (Average Score)	X	X	X	X		
KRA-LL On Track	X	X	X	X		

*Includes all TSS data available for students in the sample, regardless of KG attendance (KRA data not yet available)