



STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY
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NEWS RELEASE

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Report Examines Progress-To-Date of Tennessee's State-Funded Pre-Kindergarten Program

Kindergarten students who attended a state-funded pre-kindergarten program prior to entering kindergarten performed better academically than a comparable group of peers who did not attend Tennessee's pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) program, according to findings from a report released today.

However, the report "Assessing the Effectiveness of Tennessee's pre-kindergarten Program: Annual Report 2008-2009" reveals that there is little evidence that the unique effects of Pre-K attendance on academic achievement last beyond second grade.

The report summarizes previous reports and reviews similar Pre-K studies that have been conducted in other states. The series is based on a multi-year project produced by the Strategic Research Group (SRG) and commissioned by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury's Offices of Research and Education Accountability (OREA).

The project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pre-K program over time. To date, project reports have analyzed student assessments in kindergarten through fifth grade as measured by results of standardized tests administered in three academic years: 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07. The present report includes analysis of a limited amount of additional data for these years.

The objective of the report series is to determine whether children who attended a state-funded Pre-K program perform better academically in the short- and long-term than a comparable group of peers who did not attend Tennessee's Pre-K program. The report also aims to assess what aspects of Pre-K programs impact student academic achievement.

"This analysis of year-end assessments in kindergarten reveals that students participating in the Pre-K program demonstrated an increase in school readiness, such as language and math skills, which confirms that this objective of the state's Pre-K program is being met," said OREA Director Phil Doss, Ph.D. "Other considerations for policy-makers include the finding that the effects tend to fade over time and that there is significant variation in the types of Pre-K curricula students are exposed to statewide, which makes it difficult to assess the impact of program characteristics."

An upcoming report, expected to be released later this year, will contain analysis for two additional school years, 2007-08 and 2008-09. It will also further evaluate results of a program and curriculum alignment in 2005-2006, which brought the Pre-K program up to kindergarten standards, but in the first year showed no significant difference in pre- and post-alignment assessment results.

The full report may be viewed or downloaded at:

<http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/Repository/RE/SRGAnnualReport08-09.pdf>

Visit www.tn.gov/comptroller/orea to view previous reports related to the Pre-K program and to sign up to receive email notification of future reports released by OREA.

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About OREA:

The Comptroller's Offices of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) support the General Assembly, the Comptroller and the public with accurate and objective policy research and analysis. This year marks the 15th anniversary of OREA.

The office has issued reports covering a wide range of policy topics since 1994, from education to health care to criminal justice. OREA's body of published work chronicles the office's responsiveness to the varied research and evaluation needs of the General Assembly. OREA reports have led to changes in state law, sparked the creation of state initiatives to address critical needs and informed policy debates within the state legislature and across the state.

The National Legislative Program Evaluation Society has recognized the significant impact (dollar savings, program improvements, or increased legislative awareness) of select OREA reports every year since 2002.

About SRG:

The Strategic Research Group (SRG) is a full-service research firm that provides data collection, consultative and research services. SRG specializes in conducting public opinion surveys, program evaluations, policy assessments, customer satisfaction studies and community needs assessments on national, state and local levels.