



BRIGHT STARS FY 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

A PROGRAM OF
THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY PRESCHOOL NETWORK

Presented to
The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
The Albemarle County School Board





ALBEMARLE COUNTY
Department of Social Services
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ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOLS
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It is a pleasure to provide this introductory letter to the FY2012 Annual Report for the Albemarle County Preschool Network/Bright Stars Program. In our seventeenth year of collaboration between the County Schools and Social Services we have continued to demonstrate the benefits of a high quality pre-school program for at-risk County children, preparing them for success in the kindergarten year and beyond.

In Albemarle County, the importance of early childhood as a time for special attention has long ago been identified, goals and strategies determined, and initiatives undertaken. Its importance is highlighted in planning for the future on the part of both schools and local government:

- The Strategic Plan for the Albemarle County Public Schools 2011–2013 sets as goals to “prepare all students to succeed as members of a global community and in a global economy” and to “eliminate the achievement gap.” A quality pre-school program that helps at-risk children get “on the bus” and arrive ready to learn is an obvious strategy to attain those goals.
- The Strategic Plan for Albemarle County FY13–FY17 sets as a goal to “provide excellent educational opportunities to all Albemarle County residents.” A stated objective under that goal is to “increase the availability and quality of pre-kindergarten learning opportunities.”

All Bright Stars classrooms offer a robust, academic learning experience with daily opportunities for children to develop critical social and personal skills. Well-trained Teachers and Teaching Assistants are keys to the success of our programs. Our Family Coordinators encourage active parent engagement through the year, and families are assisted in accessing community services to create stability, opportunity, and a network of support.

Parent engagement is an important strategy in helping children to make best use of the classroom experience. Parents consistently note a high degree of satisfaction in their program ratings and speak in glowing terms about their children’s experience. Their positive interactions with the school and their involvement in the child’s education will serve the child well in future years.

We are confident that you will be impressed by the results achieved by the Bright Stars’ educational community – host schools, Teachers and Teaching Assistants, Family Coordinators, and families – that are the result of this unique collaboration on behalf of young children in Albemarle County.

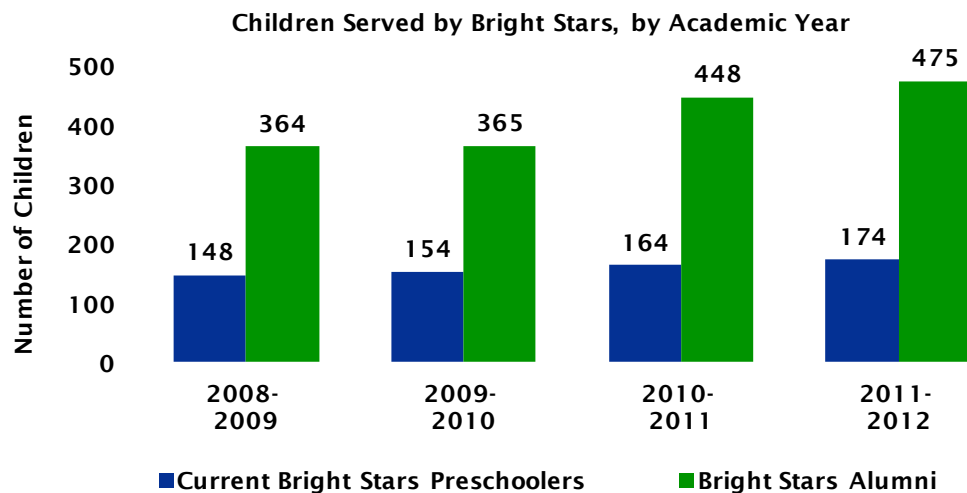
Dr. Pamela R. Moran
Superintendent

Kathy Ralston
Director



BRIGHT STARS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2011-12

The Bright Stars program operated in 11 preschool classes at 8 Albemarle County schools. Five of these classrooms also served 3- and 4-year-old students with special needs within a blended Early Childhood Special Education inclusion model. Funding from the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), ACPS Title I and Early Childhood Special Education programs, Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, and funds from local government and Social Services provided for Bright Stars classes and Family Coordinators enabling the program to serve a record number of children and families.



Includes VPI-funded Bright Stars and Early Childhood Special Education/Title I students served in blended preschool classes in years 2008-12



"The entire program was just phenomenal. I am so glad my daughter had a space in such a terrific preschool."

~Stony Point Parent

In addition to 174 preschoolers served in Bright Stars classes, 475 "alumni" from kindergarten through 5th grades benefitted from the continued support of their Bright Stars Family Coordinator. Over the course of the year, 2105 contacts were provided to Bright Stars alumni and their families.

"The Bright Stars program exceeded our expectations in every way. We felt that our daughter and family as a whole were well-nurtured during this transition."

~Scottsville Parent



A CLOSER LOOK AT THE BRIGHT STARS



PRESCHOOLERS, ALUMNI, AND THEIR FAMILIES



ABOUT OUR PARTICIPANTS

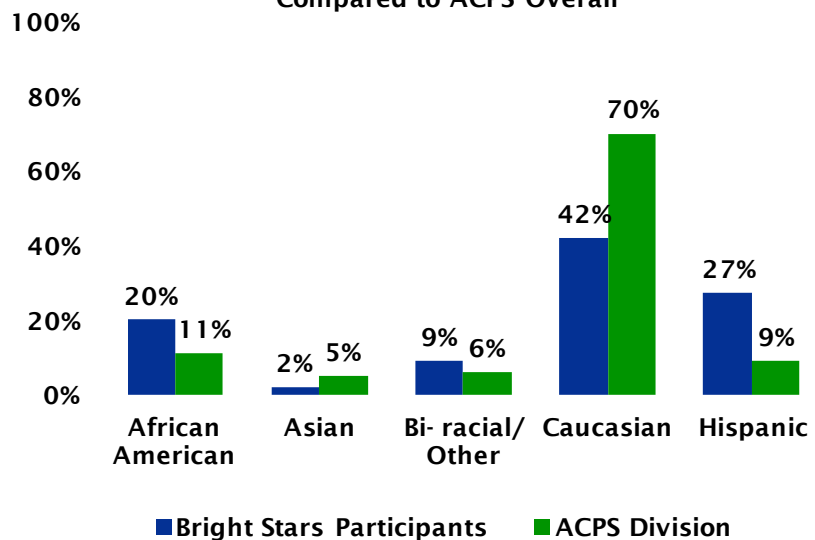
Children enrolled in the Bright Stars program are those prioritized because of individual or family factors that could result in poor school performance over the years. Risk factors for Bright Stars children may include limited parental education or illiteracy, parents who are very young or parenting alone, poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, incarceration of a parent, siblings having difficulty in school, previous child protective services reports or involvement with foster care, and substance use and/or mental health issues among family members.

Despite these challenges, year after year the children enrolled in the Bright Stars program show considerable progress across a number of specific and measurable program goals. Bright Stars Teachers, Teaching Assistants, and Family Coordinators work together in assisting children and parents to meet these goals.

Ensuring that children receive adequate health and dental care is one effort the Bright Stars program makes to support and enhance the well-being of our children and families.

An award from the Martha Jefferson Hospital Community Health Partnership allowed for sixteen children to receive intensive pediatric dental care and services, provided by several local specialists. In addition, dental care supplies were purchased for all of our preschoolers for use in the classroom and at home.

Race/Ethnicity of Bright Stars Preschoolers, Compared to ACPS Overall

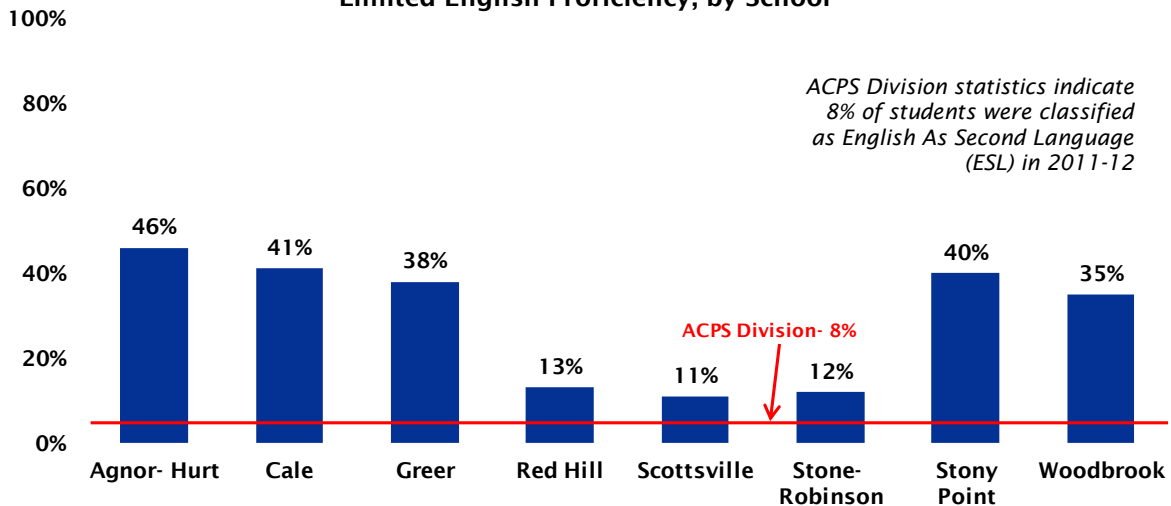


Of the 174 preschoolers who were served by Bright Stars:

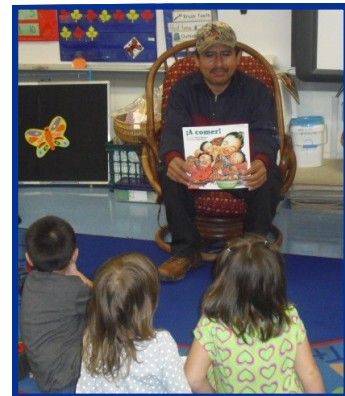
- 94% resided with one or both biological parents, and 5% lived with grandparents or other relatives.
- 86% were from families where at least one member of the household was employed.
- 83% qualified for Free or Reduced Meals, compared to 27% for the Division overall.

ABOUT OUR PARTICIPANTS

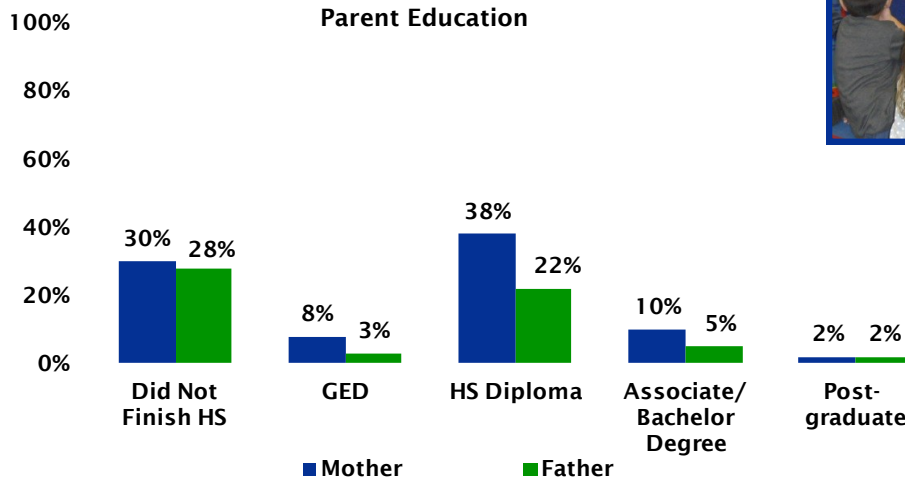
Bright Stars Preschoolers from Families Identified with Limited English Proficiency, by School



30% of our preschoolers were from families with Limited English Proficiency and required the coordination of interpreter services. In addition to paid interpreters, the Bright Stars program utilizes volunteers to assist in the classroom and with family events whenever possible. For example, Señor Albarran, a custodian at Red Hill, visited the Bright Stars class weekly to read to students in Spanish.



Parent Education



BRIGHT STARS “ALUMNI” WHO CONTINUED TO RECEIVE SERVICES 2011-12

Bright Stars Family Coordinators work with families to encourage regular and timely school attendance, participation in parent-teacher conferences, engagement in school events, and the prevention of dental and medical problems. Some parents seek support to improve their housing and employment circumstances. Family Coordinators are available to provide on-going services to eligible children and families past the preschool year. Many continue to receive services on an as-needed basis throughout the elementary school years. Services for Bright Stars alumni and their families are entirely voluntary and Bright Stars parents may agree to participate or not depending on their own particular needs and circumstances. During the 2011-12 school year, 475 Bright Stars alumni were served in K-5th grades.



*The Bright Stars Family Coordinators
and Teachers at Greer Elementary*

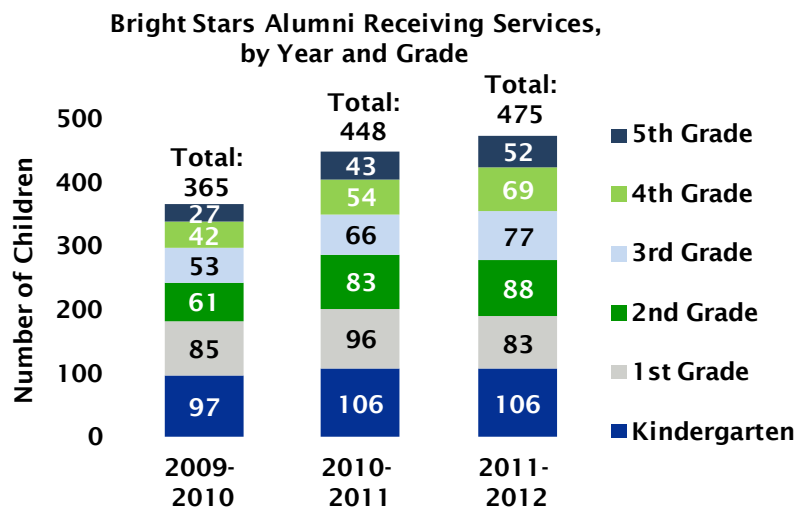
“I believe this will have an impact on the way my son views school forever - good starts always help!”

~Stony Point Parent

“My child received the support needed for his successful development.”

~Red Hill Parent

The Family Coordinators made an average of 175 contacts per month to alumni families — a 12% increase over the number of contacts typical of the previous school year. The continuity of care and support that is provided by each Family Coordinator is a key element of the Bright Stars program model. By linking our families to needed resources, while also facilitating connections between home, school, and community services, we aim to encourage and promote self-sufficiency throughout the early school years — and beyond.



BRIGHT STARS PROGRAM OUTCOMES



"Bright Stars is a gift to every school that houses the program. It does an amazing job of helping our students get acclimated to the structures and routines of school, while equipping them with the readiness skills that support their learning of curriculum—and most importantly it allows them to feel like leaders among their peers because they have already established relationships with students and staff in the building."

~Lisa Molinaro, Woodbrook Principal

"The program made a huge difference in my son's life... While he was ready for the 'next step,' he had limited language, severe anxiety, and still needed a lot of support... Now, he is my little chatterbox, can handle most any new challenge, and is excited every morning about taking the big bus to kindergarten. There will be new challenges along the way but his time as a Bright Star has given him a foundation for success!"

*~Amy Azano, Cale Parent
Special Education Inclusion Class*

"Thank you to [our Bright Stars Teacher, Assistant, and Family Coordinator] for helping me get another child off to a great start!"

~Greer Parent



"Bright Stars provided the necessary skills my child needed to have a better transition to an advanced level of learning."

~Greer Parent



"[My son] learned and grew so much with the Bright Stars program, and I know that he is more than ready to go on to Kindergarten! ...It is evident to me that Bright Stars is a great program that is doing the community, and the children it serves, a great service."

~Red Hill Parent

"The program was great...He loved it and enjoyed coming to school every day!"

~Woodbrook Parent

PERFORMANCE ON KEY PROGRAM GOALS



"I think that the program is invaluable to our kindergarteners. The Bright Stars kids come in ready to learn – and very knowledgeable in phonics, colors, and numerals. They score higher than the children who have not had any preschool experiences."

~Sandy Billies, Kindergarten Teacher

OUTCOME MEASURE	MEASUREMENT	GOAL	ACTUAL
Preschool Literacy Skills Preschoolers who are in Bright Stars for at least six months achieve literacy benchmark scores for the preschool developmental range at the end of the school year	PreK Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (pKALS)	FY12Target: 80% Previous Target: 80%	FY 12 Actual 81% FY 11 Actual 81% FY 10 Actual 80% FY 09 Actual 68% FY 08 Actual 75%
Kindergarten Literacy Skills Bright Stars alumni achieve literacy benchmark scores for the kindergarten developmental range at the end of the school year	Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (KPALS)	FY12Target: 85% Previous Target: 80%	FY 12 Actual* FY 11 Actual 94% FY 10 Actual 78% FY 09 Actual 85% FY 08 Actual 86%
Family Events Parents of Bright Stars preschoolers attend at least three Bright Stars/school functions, not including parent-teacher conferences, during the school year	Bright Stars database	FY12Target: 90% Previous Target: 85%	FY 12 Actual 86% FY 11 Actual 88% FY 10 Actual 88% FY 09 Actual 93% FY 08 Actual 86%
Parent-Teacher Conferences Parents of Bright Stars preschoolers attend both parent-teacher conferences offered during the school year	Bright Stars database	FY12Target: 90% Previous Target: 85%	FY 12 Actual 86% FY 11 Actual 85% FY 10 Actual 91% FY 09 Actual 88% FY 08 Actual 91%
Parent Goals Parents of Bright Stars preschoolers make progress on goals that support their child's success during the school year	Family Needs Assessment	FY12Target: 80% Previous Target: 80%	FY 12 Actual 89% FY 11 Actual 92% FY 10 Actual 85% FY 09 Actual 91% FY 08 Actual 71%

**data from ACPS unavailable at the time of publication*

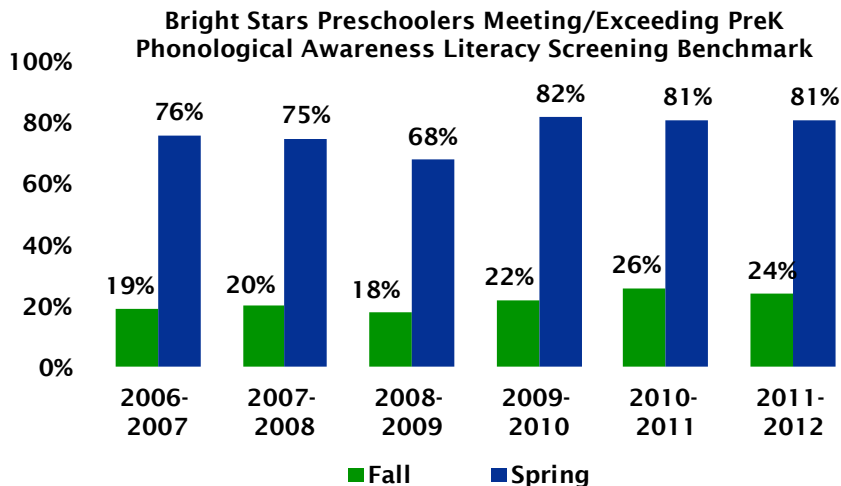
"Our preschool students come to kindergarten as confident learners who know they are a valuable part of our community. Because we have been able to foster relationships with them early on, our preschoolers already feel connected to adults and other students in their school."

~Carrie Neeley, Stony Point Principal

EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS



Pre-kindergarten language and literacy screenings are administered by classroom teachers in fall and spring. The assessments include questions about the alphabet, letter sounds, rhymes, and awareness of how pictures and words work together in a story. Research shows that children who obtain these developmental benchmarks by the end of preschool are more likely to reach key targets when tested in kindergarten and first grade.



Our preschoolers show substantial improvement over the course of the year as they work to

master the basic skills related to “reading readiness.” In the spring, 57% more students meet target literacy benchmarks than in the fall. Moreover, 58% of the Bright Stars preschoolers achieved the “high-pass” level for their end-of-year assessment.

Students from older grades serve as “Reading Buddies” for many Bright Stars classes and visit weekly to read to the preschoolers.



A grant from the First Book organization and special support from WHTJ’s Ready-To-Learn Coordinator made books available for each Bright Star to take home.



“I was really impressed with the emphasis on reading at Scottsville Elementary and how the Bright Stars students have mentors from the third grade.”
~Nancy Gill, ACDSS Advisory Board Member

EARLY NUMERACY SKILLS

Preschoolers' abilities in the areas of numeral identification, completing patterns, identifying shapes and colors, and counting sequentially are assessed in the fall and spring using the *Math Quick Screen*, a tool based on nine domains from the *Student Numeracy Assessment Progressions™*.

In the spring, 61% of our preschoolers perform up to the minimum standards for numeracy skills (passing 7 of 9 subtests), compared to only 10% in the fall. Just over 30% of our students achieve the ideal target and pass all 9 subtests at the end of the year.

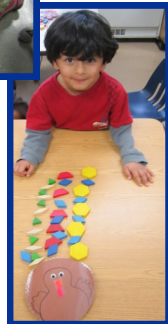
Counting forwards and backwards and identifying numerals continue to be the most challenging areas for our preschoolers in both the beginning and end of the year, but these are by far the areas of greatest improvement over the course of the year.



Preschoolers learn about colors and patterns while completing a creative fall project.



Children at Stone-Robinson work on a sorting and counting activity with their teacher.

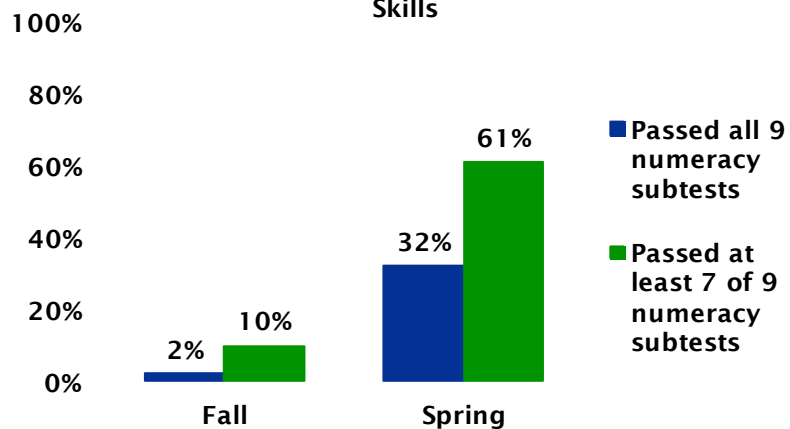


"My child received the support needed for his successful development."

~Red Hill Parent



Students Demonstrating Desired Numeracy Skills



PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers and early childhood researchers tend to agree that readiness for kindergarten is about knowing how to get along with others, learning to share, take turns and follow directions, and being curious and excited about learning. This foundation prepares children to be more open to learning new skills and more likely to be successful. The standards outlined in *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning* specifically include expectations for social and personal development in addition to those for Literacy, Math, Physical/Motor Development, Science, and History.



"They have fun while learning academic and social skills and enjoy hands-on, get-out-there-and-experience-it learning."

~Greer Parent



Preschoolers are assessed in the fall and spring on multiple domains of personal and social development. While in the fall only 58% of the 30 items are noted "Usually" or "Consistently," by spring 83% of all items are rated as such—a 44% improvement over the course of the year.



"This helped my son to be more confident and much more independent."

~Stony Point Parent

Although the percentage of children achieving consistently desirable behavior by spring may appear low in each domain, when compared to their performance at the start of school, Bright Stars do make quite significant gains.



The poorest performance at the start of school tends to be in the areas of *Social Problem-Solving* and *Interactions With Others* (e.g., appropriately expressing feelings, managing conflict, sharing, and social play). Bright Stars are regularly presented with opportunities to develop and practice these skills in the course of work and play during each preschool day. It is not surprising that these areas show the greatest improvements, with 67% and 53% gains in the percentage of children consistently demonstrating the desired behaviors.

Personal/Social Development Domains and Definitions	Children Consistently Demonstrating All Aspects of Domain	
	Fall	Spring
Self Concept: Self-confidence and self-reflection	7%	28%
Self Control: Self-direction and responsibility	22%	44%
Approaches to Learning: Eagerness and persistence as a learner	41%	72%
Interaction with Others: Ease of interactions with other children and familiar adults	29%	62%
Social Problem- Solving: Use of non-physical ways to resolve conflicts	25%	62%

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Engaging a child's family in the school community is viewed as key to long-term success in school. Measures of Parent Engagement include attendance at Parent-Teacher Conferences and school events such as Open House and Back-To-School Night as well as participation in Bright Stars Family Events and class field trips held frequently throughout the year.

"Family events, especially at the beginning of the year, reassured us all and made the transition easier."

~Stony Point Parent



Woodbrook and Agnor-Hurt parents assemble Make-And-Take projects to be used at home with their preschoolers.



The Scottsville program hosts an annual dinner gathering for dads, stepdads, uncles, granddads—all the important men in the lives of our Bright Stars.



"They really worked with the kids on letters, numbers, sounds, rhymes, letter of the week – and showed me new ways to teach him things."

~Stone-Robinson Parent



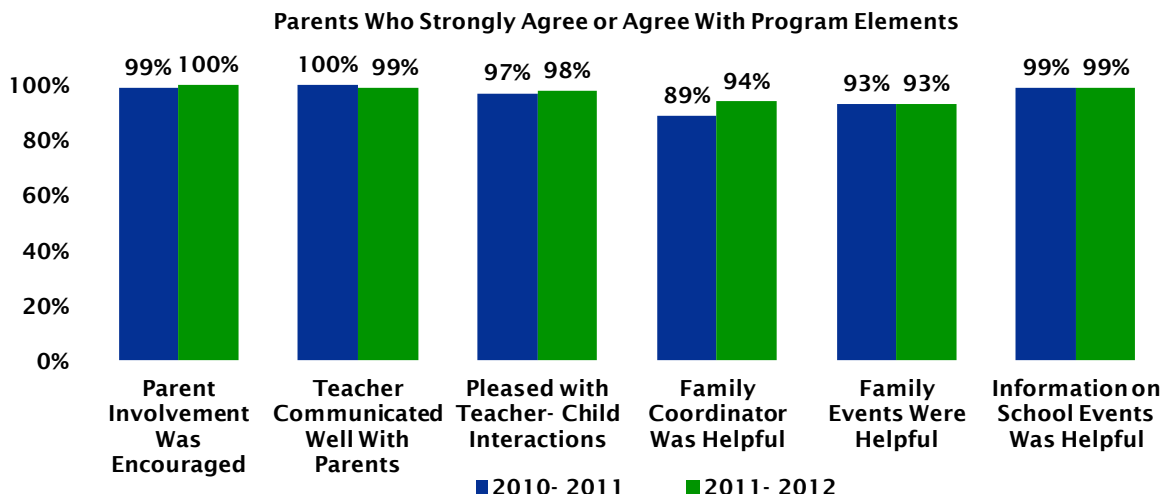
Overall, parents engaged in nearly half of all the possible opportunities for family involvement - a very significant statement in support of their child's entry to the school community. Other indicators of the Bright Stars' parent involvement include:

- 86% of parents attended both the fall and spring Parent-Teacher Conferences
- 96% of families attended at least one school function, excluding conferences
- 86% of families attended 3 or more functions besides conferences
- one school had 100% attendance for Open House, Back To School Night, and the fall and spring conferences

"Of course, I LOVE the fact that kids are coming to us MUCH more prepared for the level of work and with the necessary skills they need to succeed in kindergarten and first grade, but more than that the parents also know how to 'play school' and understand by the time they come to K/1 what our goals are and expectations for work and behavior."

~Laura Morris, 1st Grade Teacher

PARENT SATISFACTION



"They always kept us informed and always included and treated me with respect."
~Scottsville Parent

In keeping with previous years' outcomes, parents' satisfaction with the preschool class and Bright Stars experience was consistently high, with 100% of parents indicating they felt their child benefitted from the program and 96% affirming they would recommend Bright Stars to others. An overwhelming number of parents (99%) noted that they felt their child was more likely to be comfortable and successful in kindergarten than if they had not participated in the Bright Stars program. Besides this positive assessment of overall impact, parents noted improvements in many specific areas as well.

Child Improvement in Growth Domains		
Growth Domain	Definition	Parents Reporting Improvement
Language	Understanding and using oral speech	90%
Social	Getting along with other children and adults	94%
Self Care	Meeting own needs for feeding, toileting, dressing, etc.	88%
Motor	Moving large muscles and using small, fine muscles	85%
Pre-Academic	Recognizing colors, letters, numbers, songs, etc.	91%
Problem-Solving Skills	Using cooperation, asking for help, etc.	86%

"The teachers are very kind and have enough attention for the children and parents."

~Cale Parent



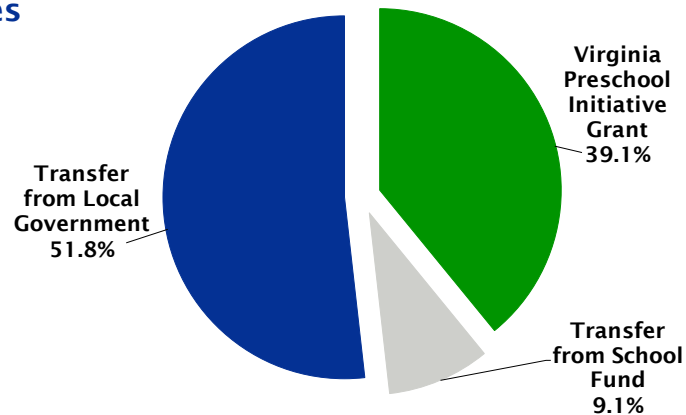
"My family enjoyed being part of the Bright Stars Program! We really appreciate the support and dedication of the teachers and the Family Coordinator."

~Red Hill Parent



BRIGHT STARS FISCAL REPORT

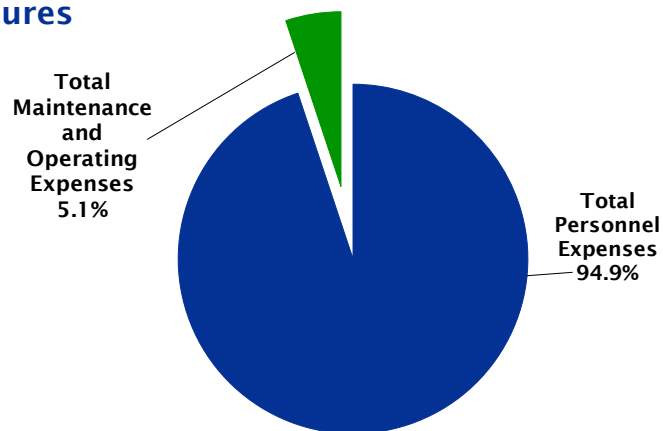
FY 2012 Revenues



Bright Stars Revenues FY2011-2012	
Virginia Preschool Initiative Grant	\$ 409,500
Transfer from School Fund	\$ 95,535
Transfer from Local Government	\$ 542,452
Total Bright Stars Revenues	\$ 1,047,487

The above Bright Stars Program budget includes 40% of the Bright Stars Family Coordinator positions and the remaining 60% is funded in the Albemarle County Department of Social Services general fund

FY 2012 Expenditures



Bright Stars Expenditures FY2011-2012	
Total Personnel Expenses	\$ 993,911
Total Maintenance and Operating Expenses	\$ 53,576
Total Bright Stars Expenditures	\$ 1,047,487

Field trips offer unique opportunities to learn about the world beyond the classroom. Visits to Slice Pizza, Whole Foods, and Carter Mountain Orchard showed Bright Stars the source of foods they eat.



AT WORK AND AT PLAY... LEARNING

Volunteers and members of the community enrich the experiences provided in the classroom. Police officers and firemen explain their roles and reinforce safety skills, parents share about their jobs, and special guests participate in some of the Bright Stars' favorite activities.

EVERY
DAY



Play is the work of childhood, and the Bright Stars classrooms offer so many ways for our preschoolers to explore their interests and abilities as well as ways that they are similar to and different from their peers.



"I really enjoyed reading to the kids and spending time in the classroom. It certainly helped me better understand and appreciate the important work being done through our Bright Stars program." ~Tom Foley, County Executive