

BRIGHT STARS FY 2013 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
1600 5th Street, Suite A
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ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOLS
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It is a pleasure to provide this introductory letter to the FY2013 Annual Report for the Albemarle County Preschool Network/Bright Stars Program. In our eighteenth year of collaboration between the County Schools and the Social Services department of County government, we have continued to demonstrate the benefits of a high quality pre-school program for at-risk County children, to prepare 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 – Horizon 2020 – states an objective that “We will improve opportunity and achievement,” and seeks to “prepare all students for successful transition to the next grade in their PK–12 experience.”
- 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.”

It is clear from program results that the Pre-K year in the Bright Stars classroom prepares children for successful transition to kindergarten. While few Bright Stars children are able to meet the PreK PALS benchmark when entering the program in the fall (27% in Fall 2012), a large percentage of the children are able to do so in the spring (74% in Spring 2013). When taking the KPALS in the fall of their kindergarten year, these gains remain.

All Bright Stars classrooms offer a robust, academic learning experience with daily opportunities for children to develop critical social and personal skills. 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 experience 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 educational community – host schools, teachers and assistants, family coordinators, children and families— that is the result of this unique collaboration on behalf of young children in Albemarle County.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pam Moran'.

Dr. Pamela R. Moran
Superintendent, ACPS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathy Ralston'.

Kathy Ralston
Director, ACDSS



BRIGHT STARS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2012-13



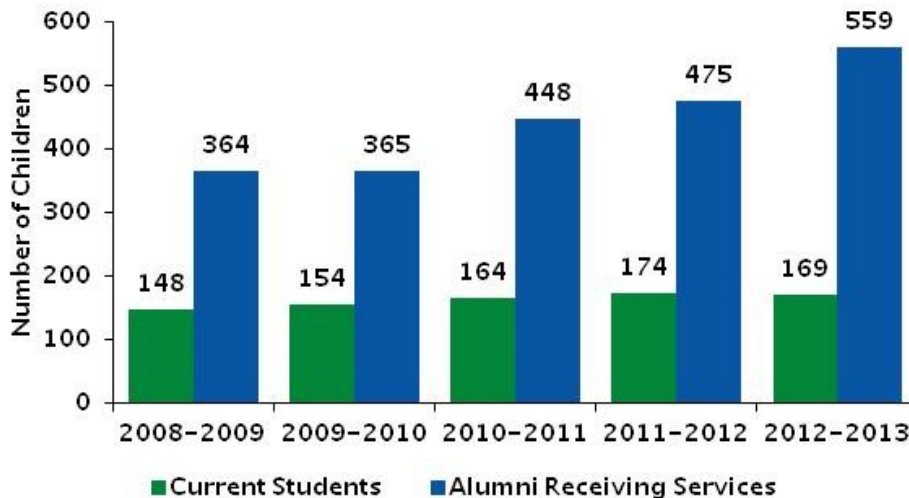
The Bright Stars program operated in **10 preschool classes at 8 Albemarle County schools**. Four of these classrooms also served 3- and 4-year-old students with special needs within a blended Early Childhood Special Education inclusion model. Funding from the Virginia Pre-school Initiative (VPI), ACPS Title I and Early Childhood Special Education programs, Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, and funds from local government and Social Services supported Bright Stars classes and Family Coordinators. This support enabled the pro-

"We thought Bright Stars was a wonderful program and feel truly blessed that our family was part of it. Thank you!" ~Bright Stars parent

gram to serve a record number of children and families for the second year in a row.

In addition to the 169 preschoolers in Bright Stars classes, 559 "alumni" from kindergarten through 5th grades benefitted from the continued support of their Bright Stars Family Coordinator. Over the course of the year, Family Coordinators conducted **2,784 contacts with Bright Stars alumni and their families**.

Bright Stars Program Participants, by Academic Year



"My experience with Bright Stars at Scottsville Elementary has been exceptional. Bright Stars is a wonderful program and thank you for providing this service."
~Bright Stars parent

ABOUT OUR PARTICIPANTS

Children enrolled in the Bright Stars program are selected based on 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.

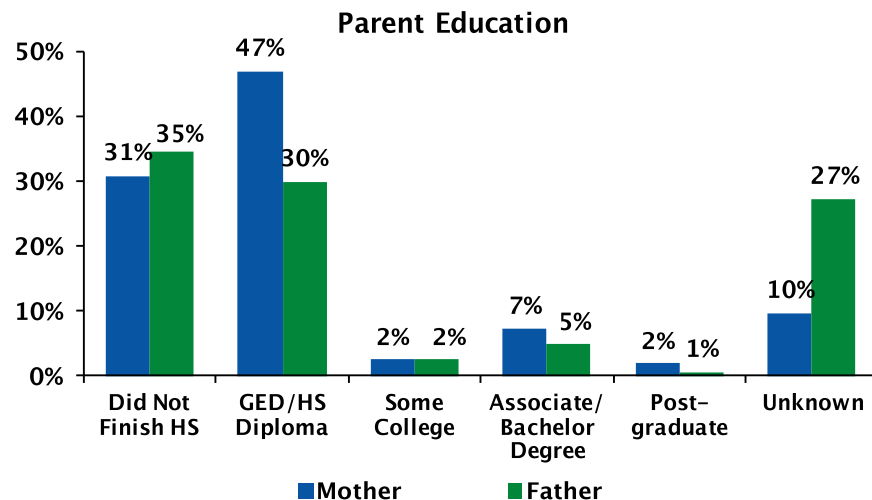
Of the 169 preschoolers who participated in Bright Stars classes:

- 94% resided with one or both biological parents, and 5% lived with grandparents or other relatives.
- 27% were from families where all caretakers were unemployed.
- 79% qualified for Free or Reduced Meals, compared to 46% of students in Bright Stars schools overall.
- Most had parents who do not have a college degree: 47% of mothers and 30% of fathers have a GED or high school diploma, while 31% of mothers and 35% of fathers did not finish high school.



Yet despite their challenges, year after year the children participating 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.

"I wish Cale had more Bright Stars classrooms so more children could benefit from this. I enjoyed my child coming home reading and writing and singing because she was happy and an accomplished student." ~ Parent of Bright Stars student in Cale Elementary School

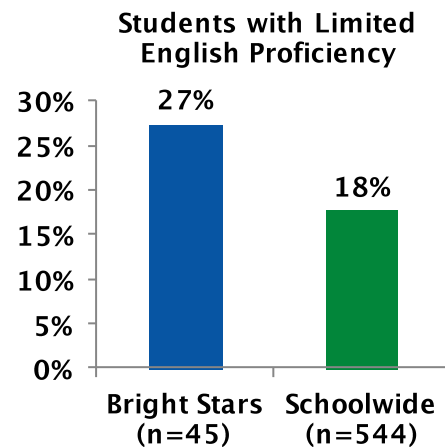


ABOUT OUR PARTICIPANTS

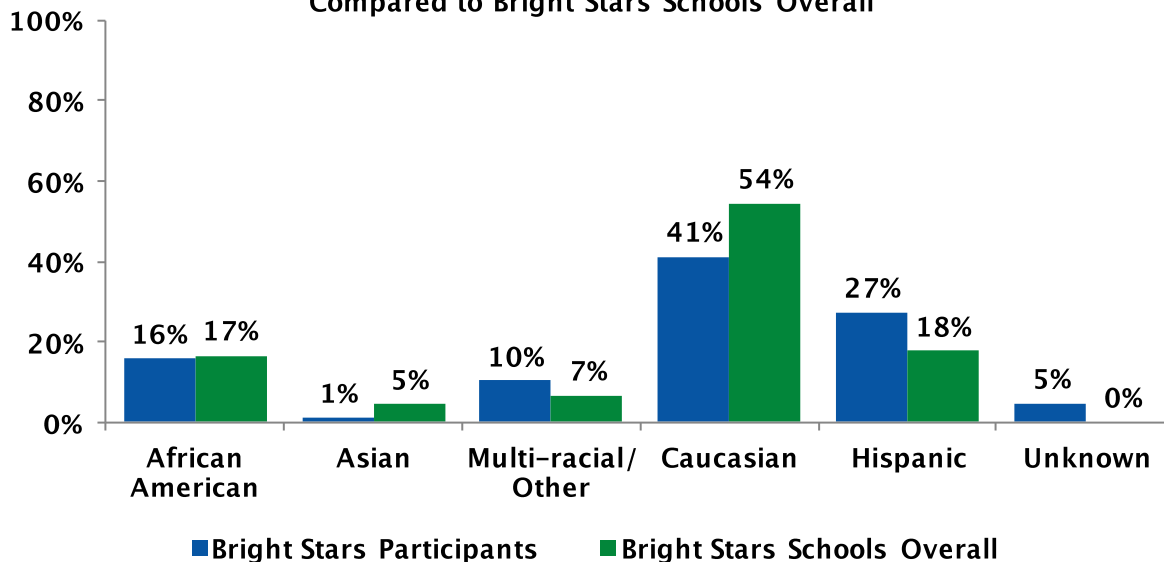
Bright Stars classrooms tend to be more ethnically and linguistically diverse than the overall student body in the same schools. Bright Stars students are more likely to be multi-racial or Hispanic, and are less likely to speak English. More than one quarter (27%, or 45 students) of Bright Stars students have limited English proficiency (LEP), compared to 18% among the Bright Stars schools overall.



Students from LEP families require 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. We also provide families with bilingual books, so that LEP parents can share in their children's literacy-building activities at home.



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



BRIGHT STARS PROGRAM ACTIVITIES IN 2012–13



The Bright Stars Program is more than just pre-school—we focus on all aspects of family wellbeing. For example, we ensure that children receive adequate health and dental care. An award from the Martha Jefferson Hospital Community Health Partnership allowed for **11 children to receive intensive pediatric dental care and services**, provided by several local specialists. In addition, we purchased **dental care supplies for all of our preschoolers** to use in the classroom and at home.

Bright Stars classrooms have also hosted representatives of the Albemarle County Police Department, who taught students about bike safety. As part of this, **every child received a free bike helmet**. Other activities and presentations focused on how plants grow and healthy eating.

“Bright Stars has loving teachers and awesome field trips!” ~Bright Stars parent



Bright Stars recognizes that opportunities for learning exist both inside and outside the classroom. Bright Stars classes conduct field trips throughout the year, bringing children to destinations including **local orchards and farms, the library, the fire station, museums, and local businesses**. We encourage parents to serve as chaperones for these field trips, in order to engage them in their children’s school activities.

For one field trip, the Stone–Robinson class entered a gingerbread decorating competition at the Omni Hotel—and won first prize in the children’s category!

“Bright Stars has small classes and good interaction between students and teachers. They did activities to make learning fun and help students be comfortable around other children.” ~Bright Stars parent



PERFORMANCE ON PROGRAM GOALS

The following table shows our progress towards achieving key program goals over the past five years:

OUTCOME MEASURE	MEASUREMENT	GOAL	ACTUAL
Preschool Literacy Skills Pre-schoolers 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 (pKPALS)	FY13Target: 80%	FY13 Actual: 74% FY12 Actual: 81% FY11 Actual: 81% FY10 Actual: 82% FY09 Actual: 68%
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)	FY13Target: 80%	FY13 Actual: 82% FY12 Actual: 85% FY11 Actual: 94% FY10 Actual: 78% FY09 Actual: 85%
Family Events Parents of Bright Stars preschoolers attend at least four Bright Stars/school functions, not including parent-teacher conferences, during the school year*	Bright Stars database	FY13Target: 90%	FY13 Actual: 74% FY12 Actual 86% FY11 Actual 88% FY10 Actual 88% FY09 Actual 93%
Parent-Teacher Conferences Parents of Bright Stars preschoolers attend both parent-teacher conferences offered during the school year	Bright Stars database	FY13Target: 80%	FY13 Actual: 72% FY12 Actual 86% FY11 Actual 85% FY10 Actual 91% FY09 Actual 88%
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%	FY13 Actual: 89% FY12 Actual: 89% FY11 Actual: 92% FY10 Actual: 85% FY09 Actual: 91%

**In FY09-12, the target was attendance at 3 school functions. This was increased to 4 school functions in FY13.*

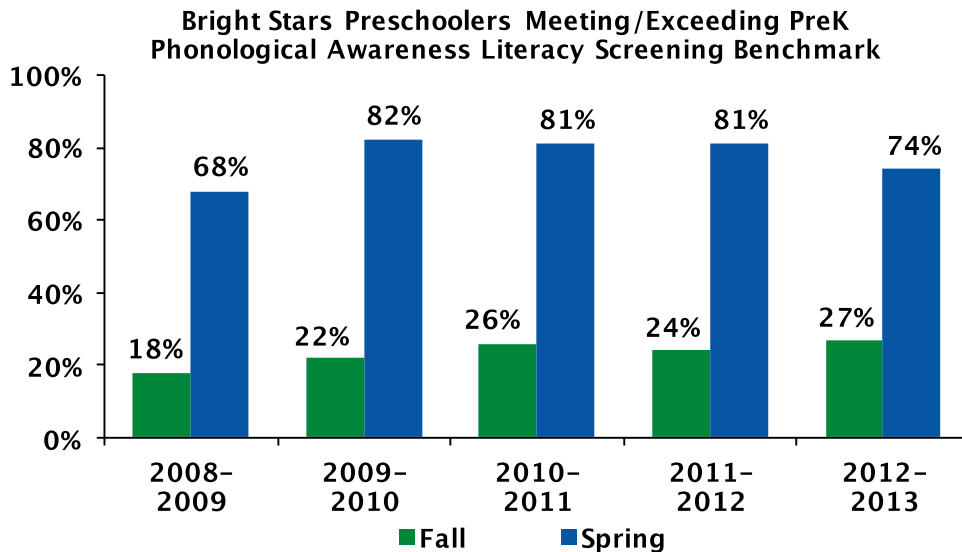
EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS

Classroom teachers administer pre-kindergarten language and literacy screenings in the 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.

Our preschoolers show substantial improvement over the course of the year as they work to master the basic skills related to reading readiness. Almost twice as many students meet target literacy benchmarks in the spring as in the fall. Moreover, **52% of the Bright Stars preschoolers achieved the “high-pass” level** for their end-of-year assessment.

“My child is much more prepared for kindergarten now. I can’t imagine her beginning kindergarten without Bright Stars experience.”
~ Bright Stars parent

This success carries over into kindergarten. Among Bright Stars alumni who entered kindergarten in 2012, **88% passed the kindergarten PALS in the fall, compared to only 83% of students in the same schools overall.**

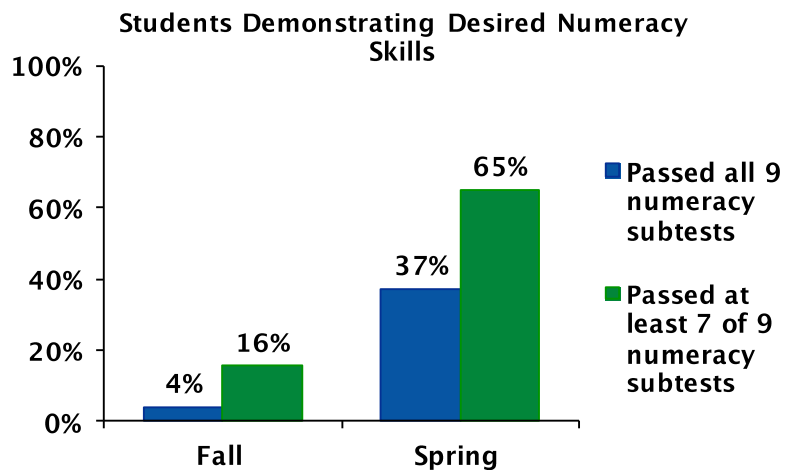


EARLY NUMERACY SKILLS

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, **65% of our preschoolers performed up to the minimum standards for numeracy skills** (passing 7 of 9 subtests), compared to only 15.5% in the fall. Thirty-seven percent of our students achieve the ideal target and pass all 9 subtests at the end of the year.

The two areas of greatest improvement over the course of the year were backwards number sequencing and recognizing the number of dots displayed on a card. The proportion of children who passed these subtests was 47 percentage points higher in the spring than in the fall.



By honing these math skills in pre-K, Bright Stars alumni are better prepared to enter kindergarten. In the 2012–13 kindergarten class, **85% of Bright Stars alumni were at or above grade level performance for math**, which is the same proportion as among kindergarteners overall in those same schools.



I wish the state would fund more programs like Bright Stars; my child isn't a shy and quiet kid now. She interacts more with kids her own age and she's so smart. Thank you for everything, the staff deserve a raise for everything they do." ~ Bright Stars parent

BRIGHT STARS “ALUMNI” WHO RECEIVED SERVICES IN 2012–13

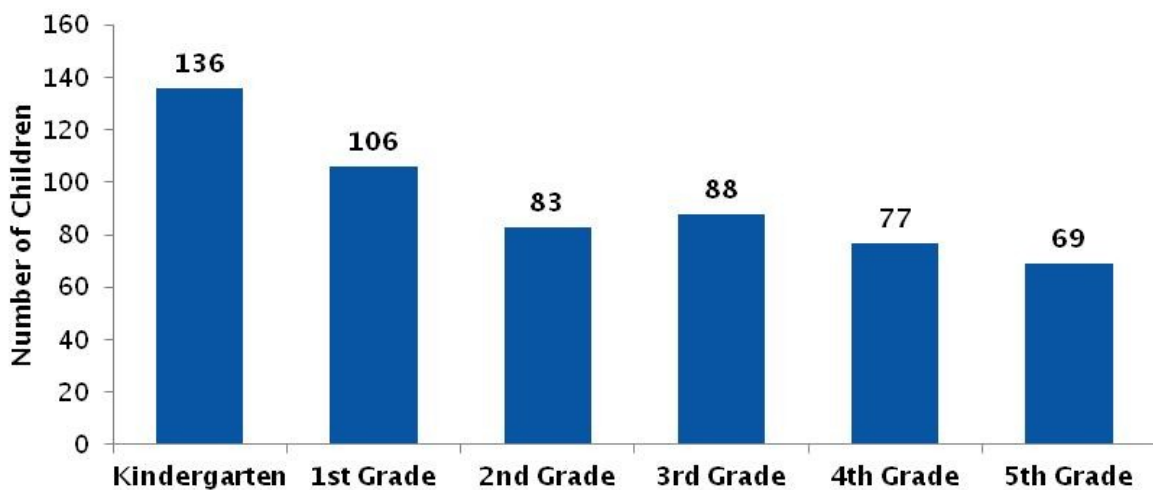
Family Coordinators are available to provide ongoing services to eligible children and families past the preschool year. Many families continue to receive services on an as-needed basis throughout the elementary school years. Services for Bright Stars alumni and their families are entirely voluntary and Bright Stars parents may agree to participate or not depending on their own particular needs and circumstances. During the 2012–13 school year, we provided services to **559 Bright Stars alumni in kindergarten through fifth grade.**

Bright Stars Family Coordinators work with families to encourage regular and timely school attendance, participation in parent-teacher conferences, engagement in school events, and preventive dental and medical health practices. Some parents seek support to improve their housing and employment circumstances.



Each Family Coordinators made an average of **29 contacts per month to alumni families**—compared to an average of 21 contacts per month in 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 Alumni, by Grade, 2012–13

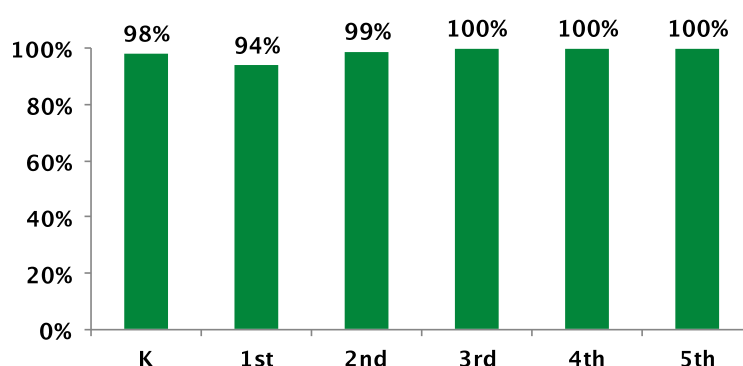


BRIGHT STARS “ALUMNI” WHO RECEIVED SERVICES IN 2012–13



The academic benefits of Bright Stars can be seen among alumni throughout elementary school. Among all Bright Stars alumni in grades K–5 in 2012–13, 98% were promoted from their 2011–12 grade.

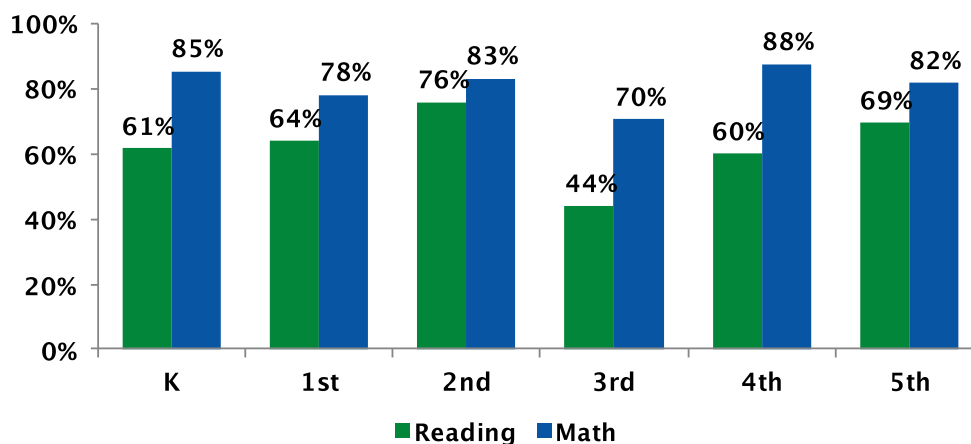
% Bright Stars Alumni Promoted from Previous Grade, by Grade, 2012–13



Furthermore, among every year from kindergarten to 5th grade, the majority of **Bright Stars alumni were meeting or exceeding the grade level requirements for math.** In general, more students in the Bright Stars schools overall are performing at the grade level

for math than for reading. However, among all classes except 3rd grade, most Bright Stars alumni are meeting or exceeding the grade level requirements for reading, as well.

% Alumni Meeting or Exceeding Grade Level Requirements, by Subject Area and by Grade, 2012–13

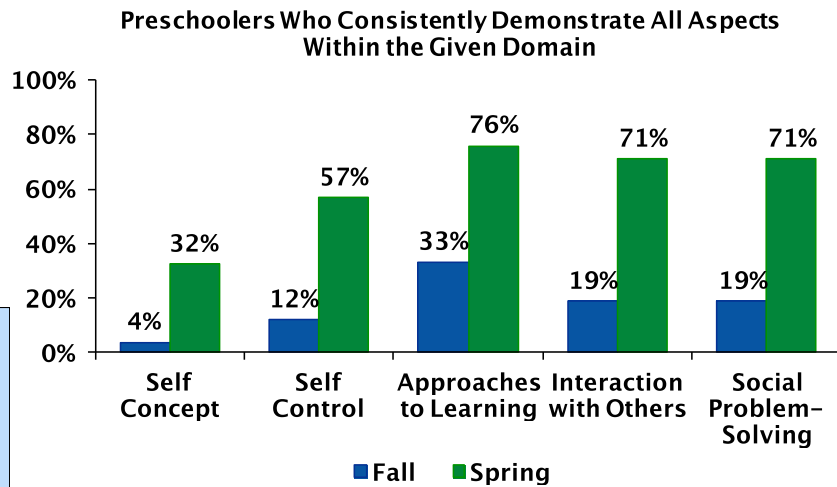


PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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 open to learning new skills, which will help them be more successful in school. 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.

We assess preschoolers in the fall and spring on multiple domains of personal and social development.

"Through Bright Stars, my son learned how to tell people what he feels instead of fighting."
~ Bright Stars parent



When compared to their performance at the start of school, Bright Stars make significant behavioral improvements over the course of the year. There was a **52 percentage point improvement** in the proportion of children consistently demonstrating positive interaction with others and social problem-solving.



The poorest performance at the start of school tends to be in the area of *Self-Concept* (e.g., demonstrating self-confidence and self-reflection). Bright Stars are regularly presented with opportunities to develop and practice these skills in the course of work and play during each preschool

"It was absolutely the best decision to enroll in Bright Stars—I'm so glad we did. My son is 1000% more confident, more social, and smarter!" ~Bright Stars parent

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 throughout the year.

Overall, **parents engaged in nearly half (45%) 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 Bright Stars parent involvement include:

- 72% of parents attended both the fall and spring Parent-Teacher Conferences, with 95% of parents attending at least the fall conference
- 92% of families attended at least two school functions, excluding conferences
- 74% of families attended four or more non-conference school functions
- On average, parents attended 5.8 out of the 13 events held per school



Many parents are working and have younger children to care for, making this level of participation in school events even more impressive.

Outside of the classroom, Bright Stars Family Coordinators also work with parents to work towards their own personal goals. By the end of the school year, **89% of our parents had demonstrated meaningful progress or fully achieved their personal goals.** This included working towards earning a GED, achieving legal status as an immigrant, and establishing more secure housing. We help by providing community resources and moral support for

these parents as they work towards building a better life for themselves and their families.

"The Bright Stars staff at Scottsville Elementary were wonderful with my daughter, helping her and our family through difficult times. They're the best!" ~ Bright Stars parent

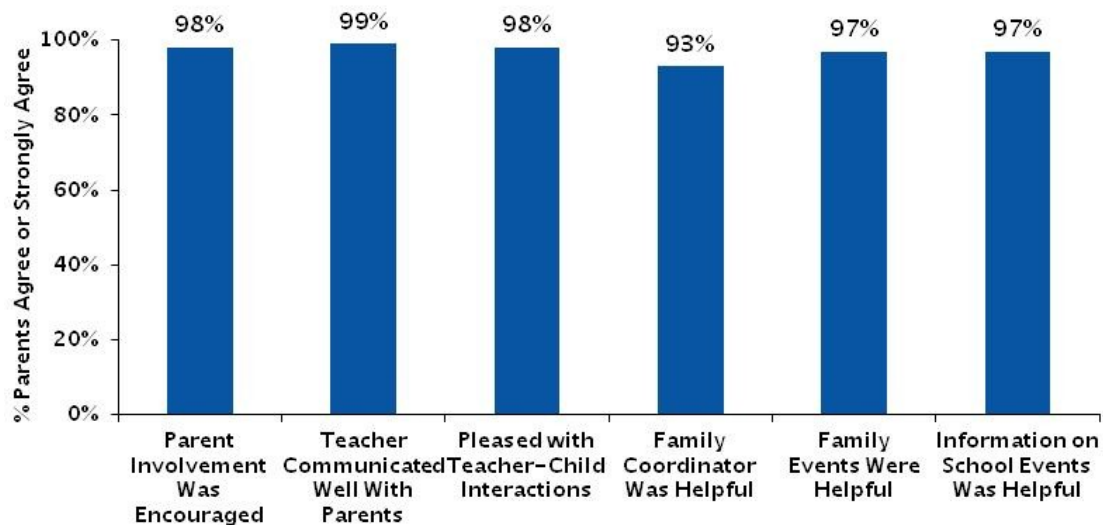
PARENT SATISFACTION

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 98% 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	88%
Social	Getting along with other children and adults	89%
Self Care	Meeting own needs for feeding, toileting, dressing, etc.	84%
Motor	Moving large muscles and using small, fine muscles	77%
Pre-Academic	Recognizing colors, letters, numbers, songs, etc.	88%
Problem-Solving	Using cooperation, asking for help, etc.	84%

"We can't say enough good things about Bright Stars. Everyone involved treated our family and our child with respect, and genuinely cared about our child's pre-school program and her success."~Bright Stars parent

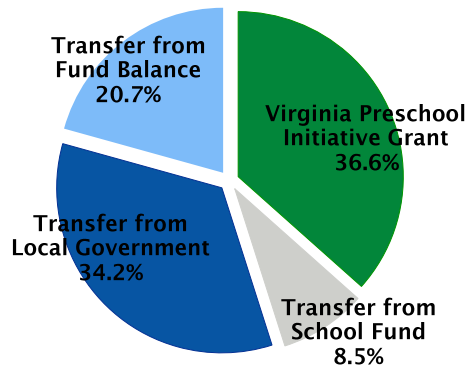
**Parents' Perception of Bright Stars Program Elements,
SY 2012-2013**





BRIGHT STARS FISCAL REPORT

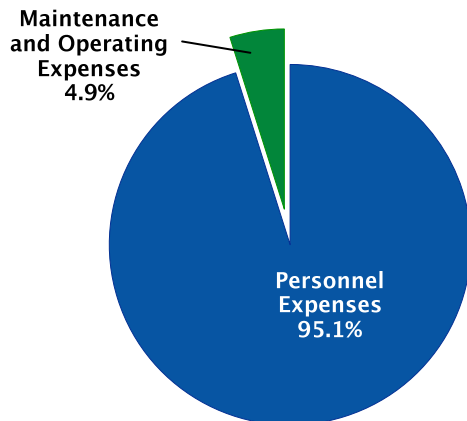
FY 2013 Revenues



Bright Stars Revenues FY2012-2013	
Virginia Preschool Initiative Grant	\$411,000
Transfer from School Fund	\$95,535
Transfer from Local Government	\$384,519
Transfer from Fund Balance	\$232,423
Total Bright Stars Revenues	\$1,123,477

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 2013 Expenditures



Bright Stars Expenditures FY2012-2013	
Personnel Expenses	\$1,068,663
Maintenance and Operating Expenses	\$54,814
Total Bright Stars Expenditures	\$1,123,477



Listening to the need.



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