UNIVERSITY *of* VIRGINIA

# Classroom Quality, Interactions, and K-Readiness
*Spring 2021*

## The New E3 School

Our school is a state-of-the-art early learning program for children ages one to five in the Park Place neighborhood of Norfolk. Our innovative, mixed-income model includes:

- The STREAMin³ curriculum
- Professional development
- Coaching
- Measurement of classroom quality
- Assessment of children's readiness
- Performance-based pay for teachers and staff

## The STREAMin³ Curriculum

The STREAMin³ Curriculum (www.streamin3.org) is an innovative, interactions-based, comprehensive package that seamlessly blends academic and social-emotional learning. It focuses on **5 Core Skills** that form the building blocks for later learning and **6 STREAM Skills** to prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond.

**STREAM Skills**

- SCIENCE
- TECHNOLOGY
- READING
- ENGINEERING
- ART
- 123 MATH

**Core Skills**

- **RELATE** – with peers and adults
- **REGULATE** – their emotions, attention, and behavior
- **THINK** – deeply about the world around them
- **COMMUNICATE** – with others productively
- **MOVE** – their bodies to achieve goals

UVA developed the STREAMin³ curriculum in The New E3 School with funding from E3: Elevate Early Education (E3). Ultimately, our goal was to design a curricula model that would empower and equip teachers with the support and resources they need in the classroom. The New E3 School's model can be replicated and scaled to give **more children** the opportunity to attend a high-quality program that prepares them academically and socially. Our school is a catalyst for policy change, impacting children in our region and across Virginia.

## The STREAMin[3] Pilot

In 2019, the implementation evaluation pilot began, and data was collected in over **100 classrooms** in faith-based, Head Start, private, and Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) programs across Virginia. Many pilot programs were not open during the pandemic, and there was a disruption in the data collection measuring classroom quality and kindergarten readiness. The initial findings show:

♦ It is feasible for faith-based, Head Start, private programs, and the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) to replicate and scale the model with support.

♦ Coaching and professional development can be delivered virtually.

♦ The model can be adapted and modified virtually or in a hybrid setting.

## The Pandemic

The health crisis impacted children, parents, families, teachers, and programs. There were disruptions across classrooms, turnover with teachers and staff, and increased regulations on health, safety, social distancing, masks, and travel. There were transitions at home and school. Leaders, teachers, coaches, instruction, and professional development all shifted to focus on supporting children and families in these challenging times.
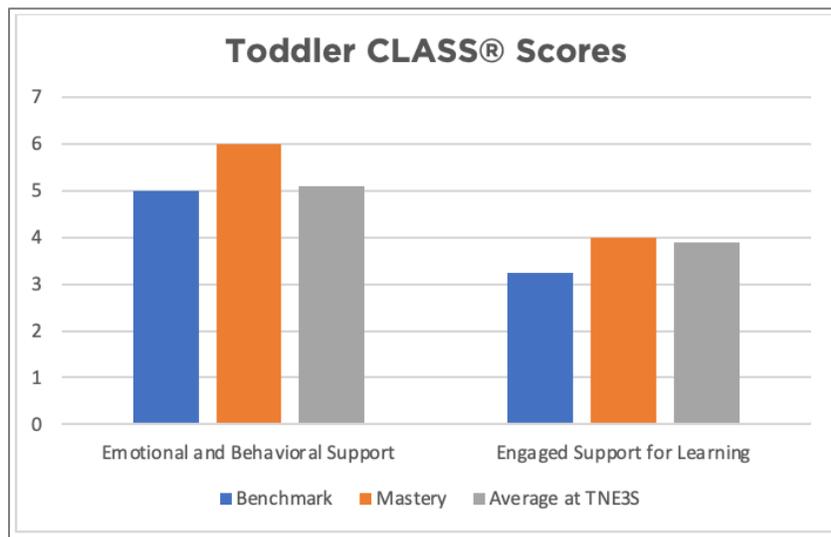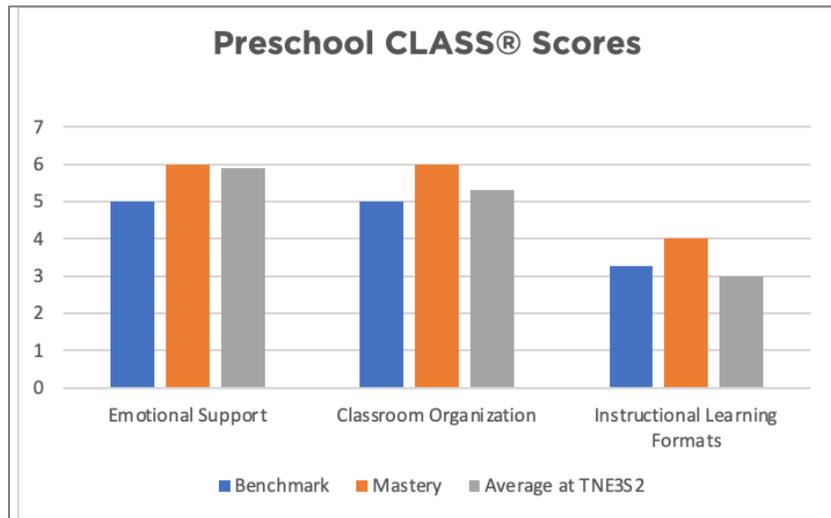
## Classroom Quality and Teacher-Child Interactions at The New E3 School

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) is used to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions across critical domains of teaching that link to student achievement and development. The interactions between teachers and children matter. When there is a strong relationship that is positive, consistent, and supportive, **children thrive**.

The data collected is used to inform professional development and coaching to improve teaching and learning in every classroom. The benchmarks for quality set by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) are used for comparison purposes.

## *Fall Observations*

Every fall, the school conducts *internal* CLASS® observations. There were four preschool and five toddler classrooms observed. In the fall of 2020, the internal observations and CLASS® data indicated the need to intensify coaching and target professional development in several critical domains.
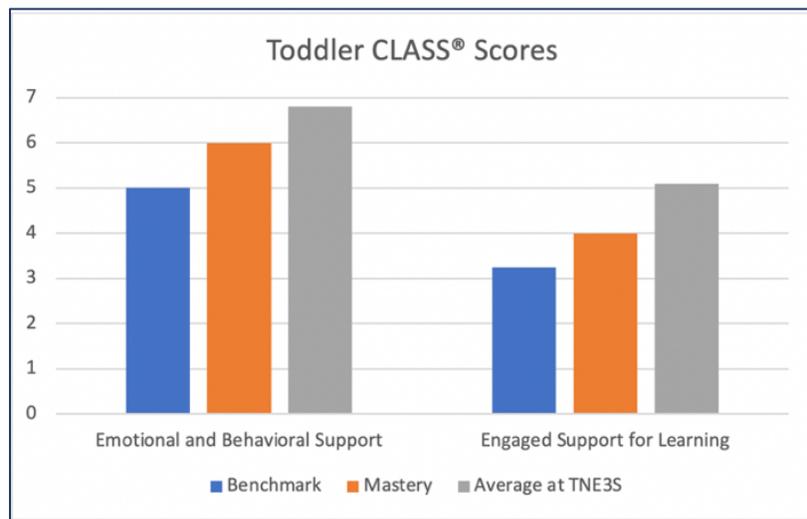
**Preschool CLASS® Scores**

| Domain | Benchmark | Mastery | Average at TNE3S2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional Support | 5.0 | 6.0 | 5.9 |
| Classroom Organization | 5.0 | 6.0 | 5.3 |
| Instructional Learning Formats | 3.25 | 4.0 | 3.0 |

**Toddler CLASS® Scores**

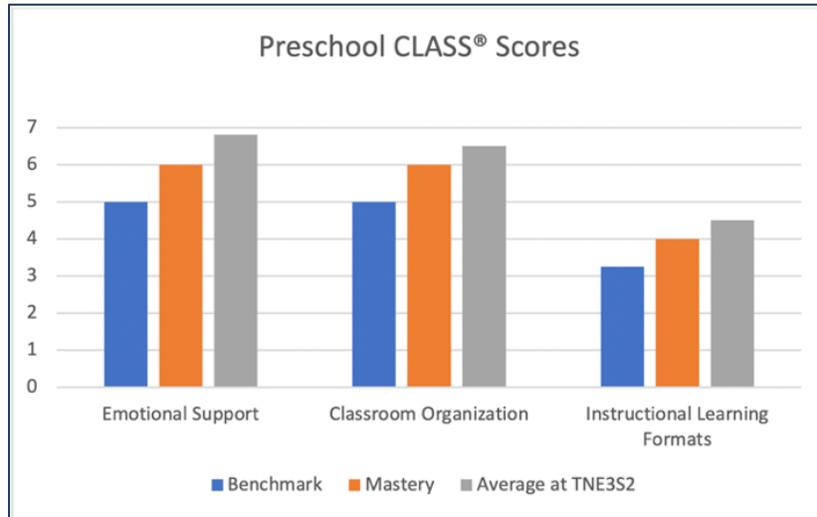| Domain | Benchmark | Mastery | Average at TNE3S |
|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional and Behavioral Support | 5.0 | 6.0 | 5.1 |
| Engaged Support for Learning | 3.25 | 4.0 | 3.9 |

## *The Key Findings:*

♦ **4 out of 9 classrooms were below the threshold for quality** in at least one domain.

♦ **Teachers needed help and support** to improve quality in their classrooms.

♦ **An action plan was developed to** design professional development and coaching for every teacher, co-teaching team, and the school to improve teaching and learning.

## Spring Observations

In the spring of 2021, an ***external*** observer assessed the quality of teacher-child interactions. There were five preschool and four toddler classrooms observed.

### Preschool CLASS® Scores

| Domain | Benchmark | Mastery | Average at TNE3S2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional Support | 5 | 6 | 6.8 |
| Classroom Organization | 5 | 6 | 6.5 |
| Instructional Learning Formats | 3.25 | 4 | 4.5 |

### Toddler CLASS® Scores

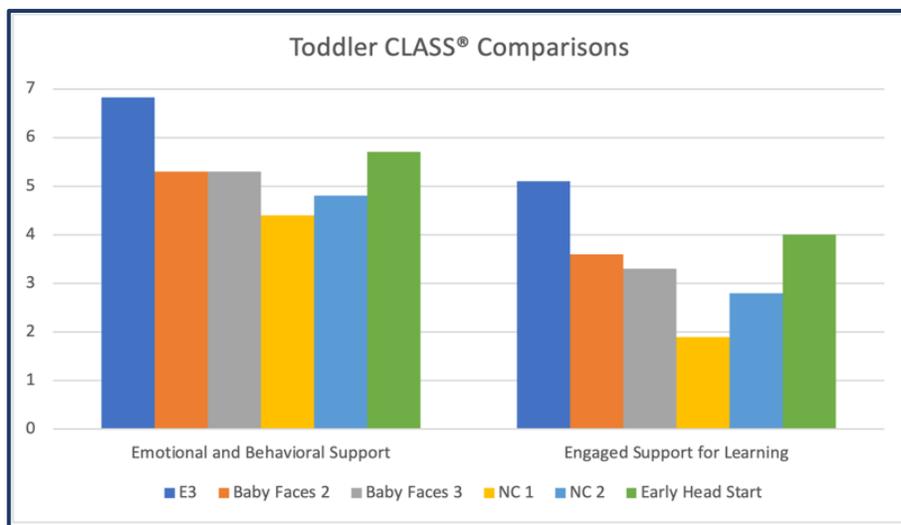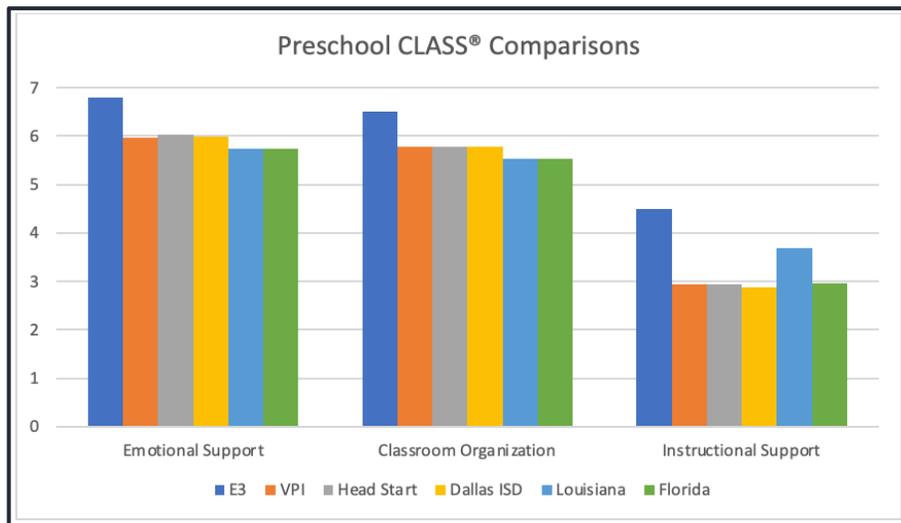| Domain | Benchmark | Mastery | Average at TNE3S |
|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional and Behavioral Support | 5 | 6 | 6.8 |
| Engaged Support for Learning | 3.25 | 4 | 5.1 |

## *The Key Findings:*

- ◆ **ALL classrooms met or exceeded** the threshold for quality across all domains.
- ◆ **All classrooms** reached **mastery-level** in at least **two domains.**
- ◆ **The data shows children** are engaged in quality interactions.
- ◆ **High quality is consistent and strong across all classrooms.**

## How Does Our School Measure Up?

Below, TNE3S's Spring-2021 CLASS® scores are compared to those from other respected programs collected in previous years (pre-pandemic). This year was unlike any other with COVID-19 restrictions. For example, masks or distancing may have hindered interactions, while smaller class sizes may have facilitated quality. Any comparison made to previous years' data should keep these factors in consideration.

### Preschool CLASS® Comparisons

Legend: E3, VPI, Head Start, Dallas ISD, Louisiana, Florida

Categories: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, Instructional Support

| | Emotional Support | Classroom Organization | Instructional Support |
|---|---|---|---|
| E3 | 6.8 | 6.5 | 4.5 |
| VPI | 5.95 | 5.8 | 2.95 |
| Head Start | 6.0 | 5.8 | 2.95 |
| Dallas ISD | 6.0 | 5.8 | 2.9 |
| Louisiana | 5.75 | 5.55 | 3.7 |
| Florida | 5.75 | 5.55 | 3.0 |

### Toddler CLASS® Comparisons

Legend: E3, Baby Faces 2, Baby Faces 3, NC 1, NC 2, Early Head Start

Categories: Emotional and Behavioral Support, Engaged Support for Learning

| | Emotional and Behavioral Support | Engaged Support for Learning |
|---|---|---|
| E3 | 6.8 | 5.1 |
| Baby Faces 2 | 5.3 | 3.6 |
| Baby Faces 3 | 5.3 | 3.3 |
| NC 1 | 4.4 | 1.9 |
| NC 2 | 4.8 | 2.8 |
| Early Head Start | 5.7 | 4.0 |

## The Key Findings:

- ♦ TNE3S classrooms have scores that are **higher than other respected programs across all domains and ages.**
- ♦ Amidst a pandemic, the children at the TNE3S are engaged in levels of quality that are comparable or higher than respected programs during non-pandemic years.

# Are Children Ready?

The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) is a partnership between E3: Elevate Early Education, the University of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Education, and all school divisions across the Commonwealth. The assessment tool provides a comprehensive understanding of how kindergarten children are entering school in terms of key readiness skills in the domains of literacy, math, social skills, and self-regulation. **In 2019, 44% of Virginia children entered kindergarten unprepared in at least one domain. 50% of Norfolk's children entered kindergarten not ready.**

Our school piloted a four-year-old version of VKRP over the last few years. **The state will begin using the preschool version of the VKRP in all publicly funded early learning programs.**

In the spring of 2021, our children heading off to kindergarten in the fall were assessed.

| | Benchmark* | Class Average | Children Meeting Benchmark |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Math** (number sense, operations, shape, space, and pattern) | 15 | 27.3 | **21/24** |
| **Self-Regulation** (attention, emotions, behaviors) | 3.4 | 4.1 | **21/24** |
| **Social Skills** (cooperating, positive expression of emotions, and conflict resolution) | 3.8 | 3.86 | **13/24** |
| **Literacy** (name writing, alphabet, sounds, print and word, rhymes) | There are 8 sections. Each has its own benchmark. | **16 out of 24 children met or exceeded** the benchmark in all 8 sections. **6 met or exceeded** the benchmark in 6 or 7 of 8. **2 met or exceeded** the benchmark in 4 or fewer. | |

**\*** Benchmarks are set based on research suggesting the levels of skills expected in these areas for children at this age.

## *The Key Findings:*

♦ **Most children met or exceeded** the benchmarks in literacy, math, and self-regulation.
♦ **All children** from across different socioeconomic backgrounds needed more support with social skills.
♦ **Most children** who received a scholarship **met or exceeded** the benchmarks in literacy, math, or self-regulation.
♦ **Some children** who received a scholarship needed **more support** in the domain of social skills.
♦ **The majority of our preschoolers** are ready for kindergarten academically and socially.

## Summary of Findings

- ◆ Our teachers are engaged in quality interactions with children.
- ◆ The quality is consistent and strong in all classrooms.
- ◆ Most children are ready for kindergarten.
- ◆ All of our children need more support in the domain of social skills.

## The Action Plan

The data collected will be used to improve classroom quality, teaching, and learning. Our school is committed to continuous improvement and implementing the STREAMin$^3$ curriculum with fidelity. This year our teachers and staff will:

- ◆ Focus on the needs of individual children.
- ◆ Utilize formative assessments to differentiate learning.
- ◆ Provide individual and small group support for children based upon their strengths and needs.
- ◆ Develop individualized plans for every teacher, teaching team, and staff member.
- ◆ Target coaching to improve teaching and learning in the classroom for all children.
- ◆ Focus on improving social skills through targeted professional development.
- ◆ Provide families with STREAMin$^3$ resources to connect learning between home and school.

This report was prepared by leadership at the University of Virginia, Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning and E3: Elevate Early Education.