Bright Stars
FY 2015 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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It is a pleasure to provide this introduction to the FY2015 Annual Report for the Albemarle County Bright Stars Program. In our twentieth year of collaboration between the Social Services department of county government and the county schools, 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 school in the kindergarten year and beyond.

In the past year the issue of pre-school education has been much on the minds of stakeholders in the county. A community summit on pre-school was convened in April 2015, with a broad-based task force formed as a result. Complex questions of how best to meet the needs of all children who could benefit, how and where to best deliver the program, and how to pay for the program, have been and continue to be on the table.

In the midst of those discussions, it is good to remember that in Albemarle County the importance of early childhood education has long ago been identified, and a successful program undertaken under the aegis of the Virginia Pre-School Initiative. The importance of the program has been highlighted in planning for the future on the part of both schools and local government, with a major commitment of local dollars as well as substantial dedicated "in-kind" services from both the schools and local government. In FY2015 a new Bright Stars classroom was added at Cale Elementary School, bringing our total to eleven preschool classrooms serving Bright Stars children in eight county elementary schools.

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 Pre-K PALS benchmark when entering the program in the fall (16% in Fall 2014), a large percentage of the children are able to do so in the spring (67% in Spring 2015).

The gains made in the Pre-K year also hold up in kindergarten. When taking the KPALS at the end of their kindergarten year, 84% of Bright Stars graduates from the class of 2014 achieved the KPALS target in Spring 2015.

The Bright Stars program continues to feature a robust, academic learning experience with daily opportunities for children to develop critical social and personal skills; and a strong family service component in which 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 with the program and speak in glowing terms about their children's experience. Their positive experience with the school and their involvement in their child's education will continue to benefit the child in future years.

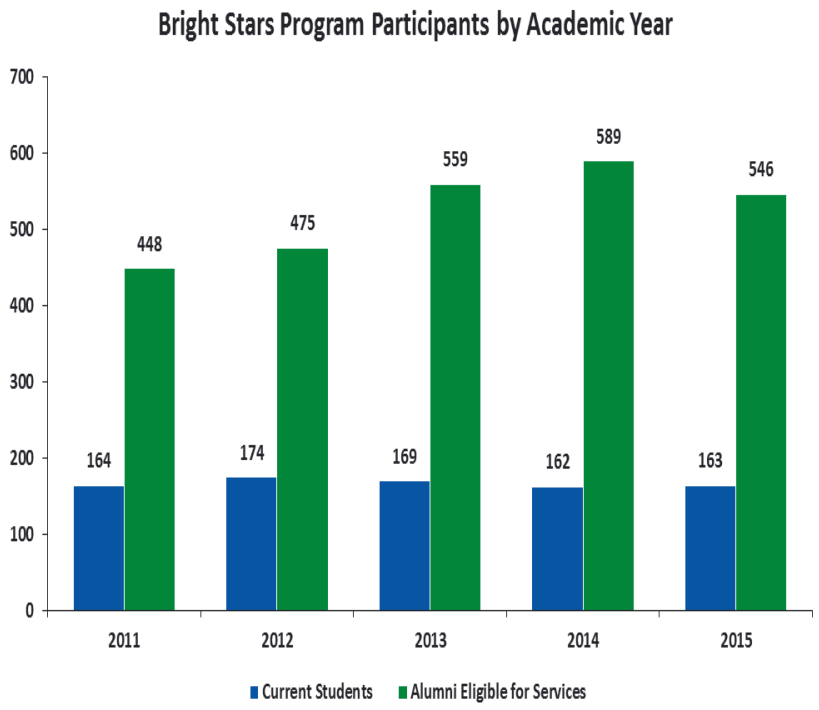
We believe that you will once again be impressed by the results achieved by the educational community – host schools, teachers and assistants, family coordinators, children and families— that is the result of this unique collaboration on behalf of young children in Albemarle County.

Dr. Pamela R. Moran
Superintendent, ACPS

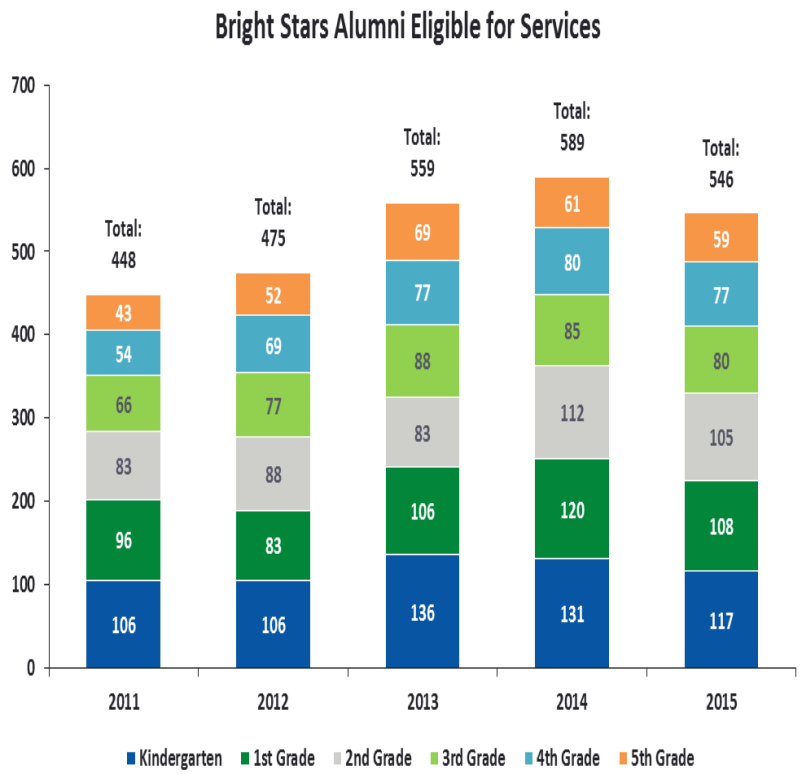
Phyllis C. Savides
Director, ACDSS

BRIGHT STARS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Bright Stars program operated in 10 preschool classrooms at 8 Albemarle County schools in 2014-15. Three 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, and funds from local government and Social Services supported Bright Stars classes and Family Coordinators. A total of 163 children were served in Bright Stars classrooms.



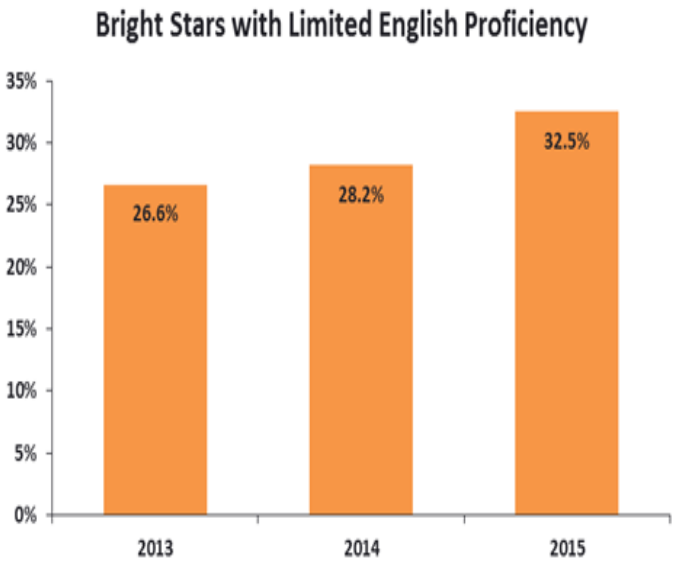
In addition to the 163 preschoolers, 546 "alumni" from kindergarten through 5th grades were eligible for continued support from their Bright Stars Family Coordinators. The Coordinators supported families by serving in a liaison capacity with the schools. They also assisted with transportation to school and medical appointments. Some families received help with emergency financial assistance for housing, utilities and food, or employment searches. Coordinators also helped parents locate educational opportunities for themselves and enrichment opportunities for their children.

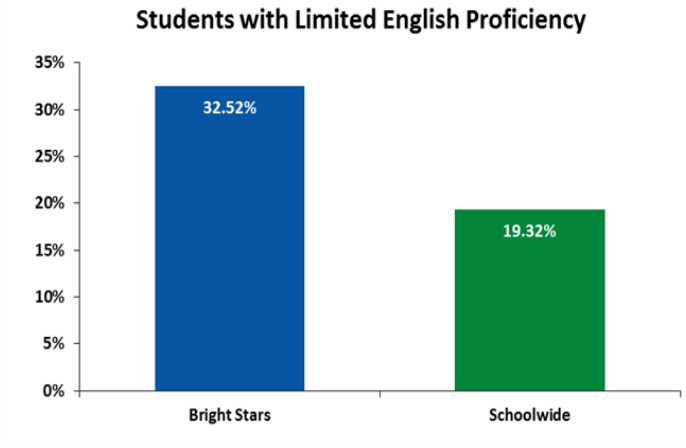


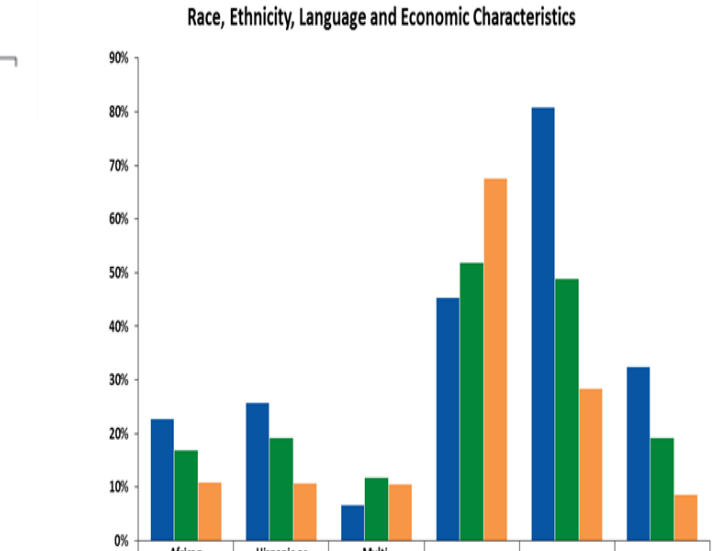
ABOUT OUR PARTICIPANTS

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 African American or Hispanic, and are less likely to have English as their primary language.

The percentage of students who enter Bright Stars with Limited English Proficiency has been steadily climbing. These students benefit greatly from their preschool experience, usually picking up a considerable amount of English before entering Kindergarten. Some students' families require interpretive 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 bi-lingual books so they can share in their children's literacy-building activities at home.







	African American	Hispanic or Latino	Multi-Race/Other	White	Disadvantaged	LEP
Bright Stars	22.7%	25.8%	6.7%	45.4%	80.9%	32.5%
Bright Stars Schools	16.9%	19.3%	11.8%	52.0%	49.0%	19.3%
Albemarle Public Schools	11.0%	10.7%	10.6%	67.7%	28.4%	8.7%

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, a sibling 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 163 preschoolers who participated in Bright Stars Classes:

- **83% lived with one or both biological parents, with about half of those in single-parent households.**
- **9% were from families where all caretakers were unemployed.**
- **81% qualified for free or reduced lunch.**
- **Most had parents without a college degree: 10% of children lived with a parent/guardian who earned an associates or bachelor's degree. Sixty-one percent lived with a parent with a GED or HS Diploma while 46%of students had at least one parent who did not finish high school.**

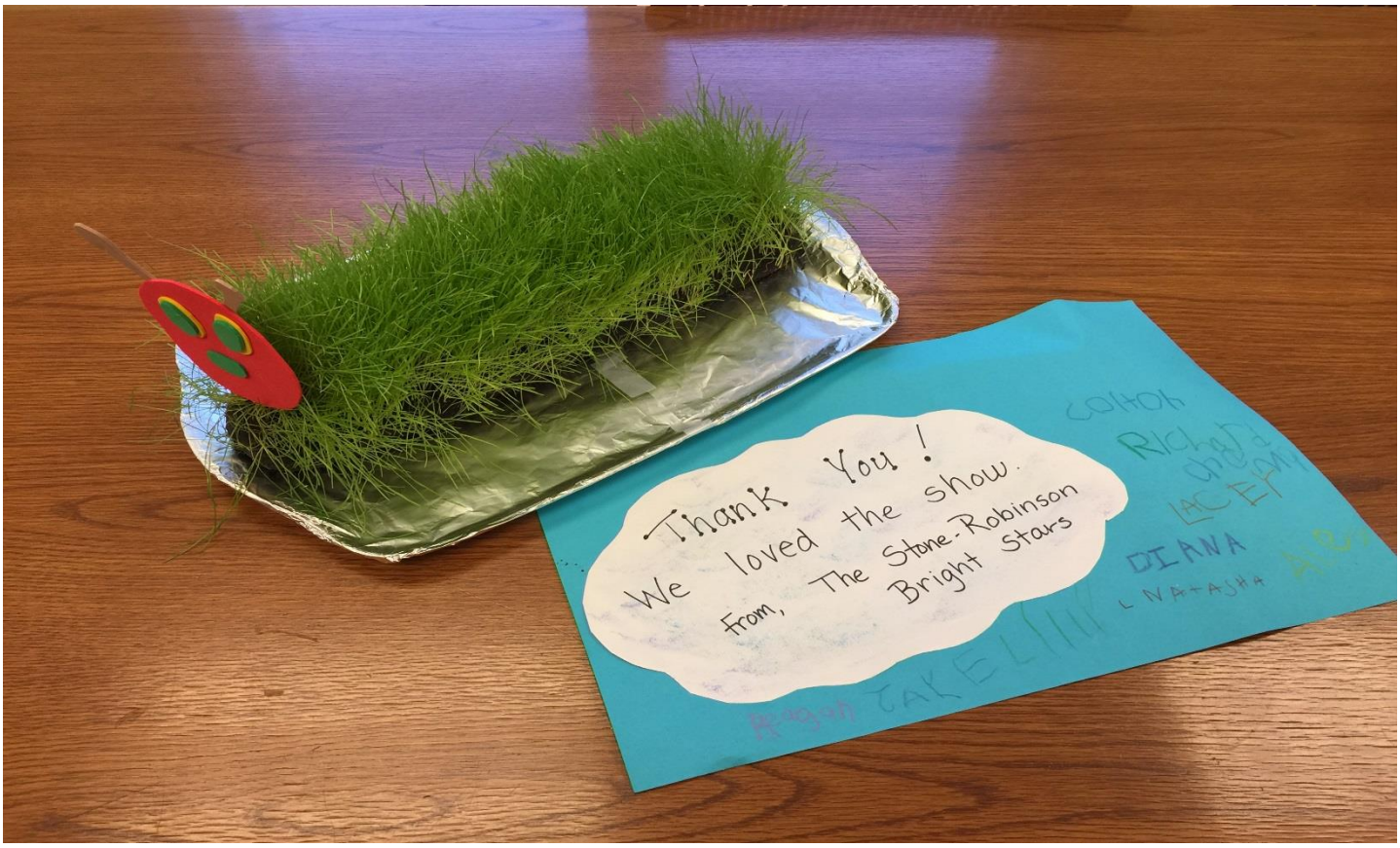
Thanks for all you did, I saw a completely different and "bright" child at the end of this year"

Agnor Hurt Parent

BRIGHT STARS PROGRAM ACTIVITIES IN 2014-2015

The Bright Stars Program is more than just preschool; we focus on all aspects of family well-being. For example, we work to help children receive adequate health and dental care. Family Coordinators assist in making appointments and providing transportation when necessary. An award from the Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital Community Health Partnership allowed for children to receive pediatric dental care and services, sometimes their initial visit to a dentist. These services were provided by a variety of local specialists. In addition, we purchased dental care supplies for our preschoolers to use in the classroom and at home.

Because children learn best by doing, the Bright Stars program includes activities where the children travel to interesting venues and have the opportunity to create during hands-on activities. Bright Stars enjoy visits to apple orchards and farms, local firehouses, and the Paramount Theatre. They invite their parents into the classroom to help them make gingerbread and bird houses and host them for Thanksgiving Dinner.



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 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 (pKPALS)	**FY15 Target: 80%**	**FY15 Actual: 67%** FY14 Actual: 68% FY13 Actual: 78% FY12 Actual: 81% FY11 Actual: 74%
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)	**FY15 Target: 80%**	**FY15 Actual: 84%** FY14 Actual: 86% FY13 Actual: 82% FY12 Actual: 85% FY11 Actual: 94%
Family Events Parents of Bright Stars preschoolers attend at least 4 Bright Stars/school functions, not including parent-teacher conferences, during the school year*	Bright Stars database	**FY15 Target: 90%**	**FY15 Actual: 87%** FY14 Actual: 62% FY13 Actual: 74% FY12 Actual: 86% FY11 Actual: 85%
Parent-Teacher Conferences Parents of Bright Stars preschoolers attend both parent-teacher conferences offered during the school year	Bright Stars database	**FY15 Target: 80%**	**FY15 Actual: 89%** FY14 Actual: 84% FY13 Actual: 72% FY12 Actual: 86% FY11 Actual: 85%
Parent Goals Parents of Bright Stars preschoolers make progress on goals that support their child's success during the school year	Family Needs Assessment	**FY15 Target: 80%**	**FY15 Actual: 75%** FY14 Actual: 83% FY13 Actual: 89% FY12 Actual: 89% FY11 Actual: 92%

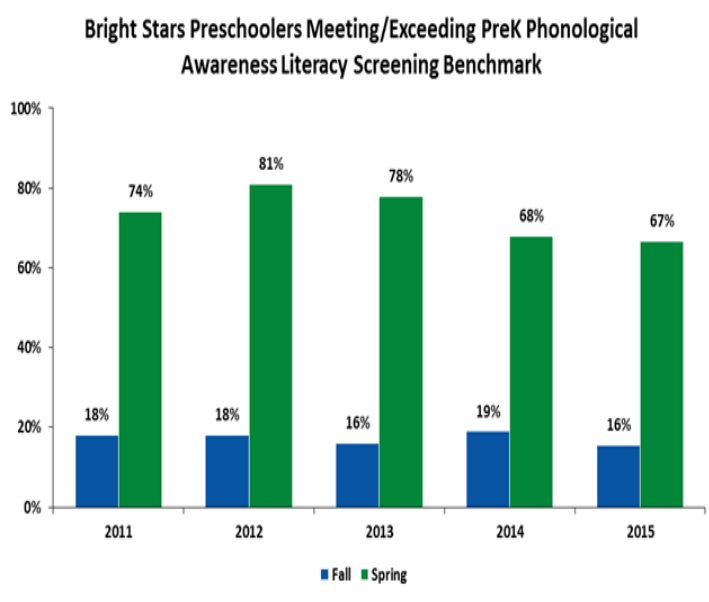
**In FY09-12, the target was attendance at 3 school functions. This was increased to 4 school functions in FY13.*

EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS

Classroom teachers administer pre-kindergarten language and literacy screening 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 for reading readiness. More than four times as many students were able to meet the standard of passing 6 out of 8 subtests in the spring than in the fall.

This success carries over into kindergarten. Among Bright Stars alumni who entered kindergarten in 2014, 84% passed the kindergarten PALS in the fall, compared to 83% of students in the same schools overall.

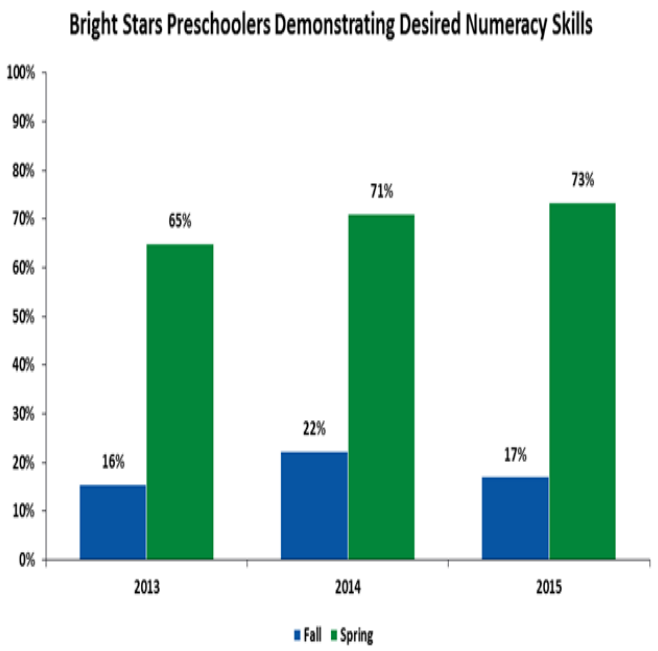


"We can't imagine our child in kindergarten without this program, thank you Red Hill."

EARLY NUMERACY SKILLS

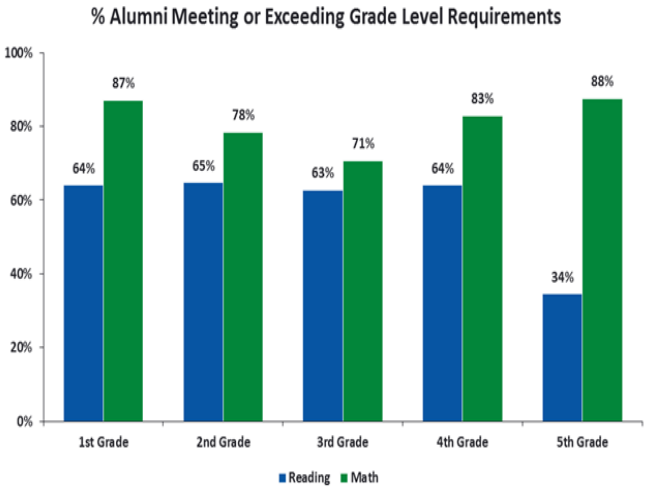
Preschoolers' abilities in the areas of numeral identification, completing patterns, identifying shapes and colors, and counting sequentially are assessed in the fall and spring using the Math Quick Screen.

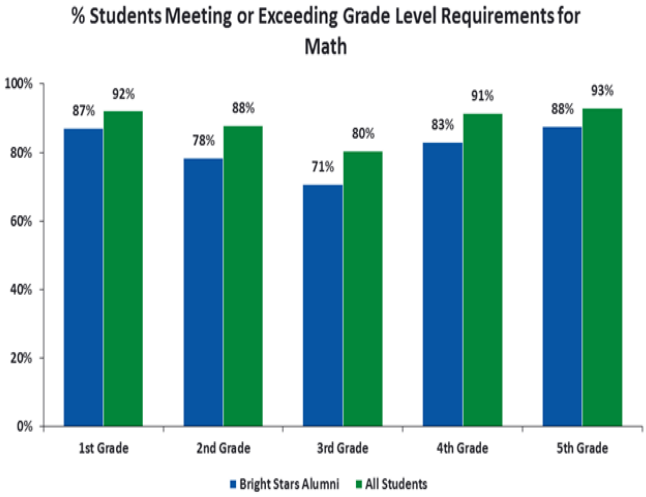
In the spring, 73% of our preschoolers performed up to the minimum standards for numeracy skills (passing 7 of the 9 subtests), compared to only 17% in the fall.

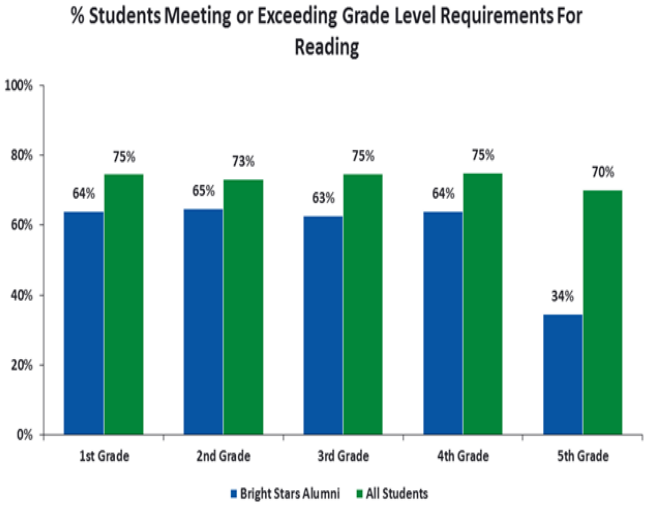


LONG TERM ACADEMIC BENEFITS

Some academic benefits of Bright Stars can be seen in alumni throughout elementary school. Among all Bright Stars alumni in grades K-5, 99% were promoted to the next grade.



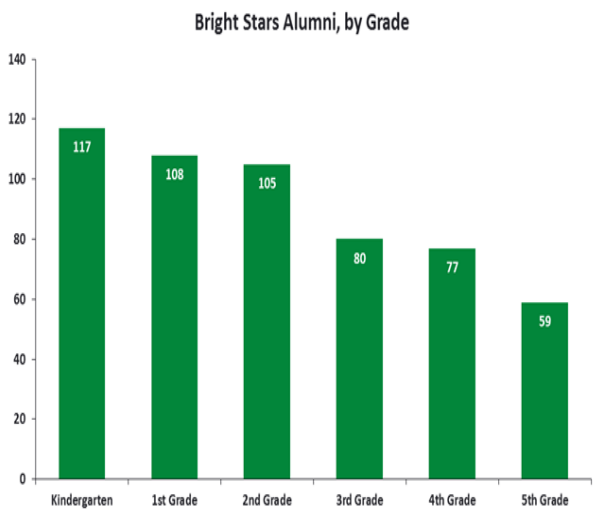




BRIGHT STARS "ALUMNI" SERVICES IN 2014-15

Family Coordinators are available to provide ongoing services to 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 families are entirely voluntary. Bright Stars parents may agree to participate or not depending on their own needs and circumstances.

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 educational, housing or employment circumstances. The continuity of care and support that is provided by each Family Coordinator is a key element of the Bright Stars program. 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.

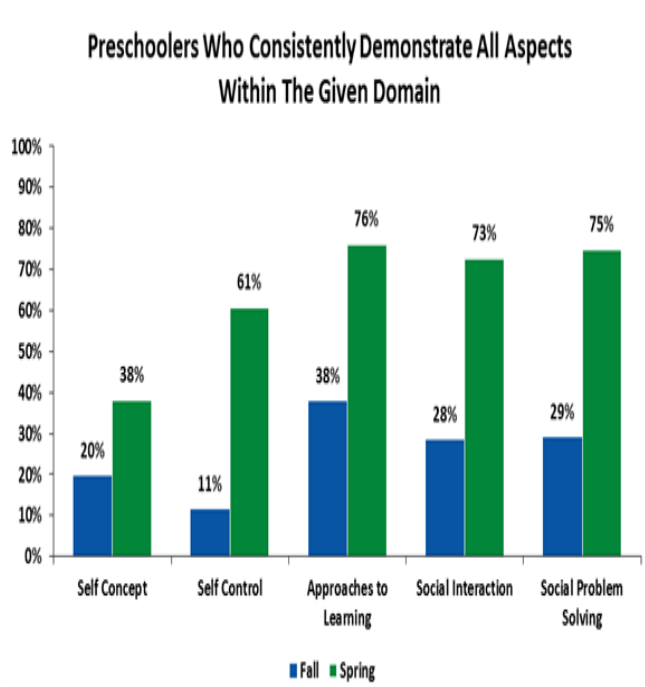


PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers and early childhood researchers agree that readiness for kindergarten includes knowing how to get along with others, to share, to take turns and follow directions, as well as having curiosity and excitement about learning. We assess preschoolers in the fall and spring on multiple domains of personal and social development as indicated in the accompanying chart.

When compared to their performance at the start of the year, Bright Stars made significant behavioral improvements over the course of the year. Bright Stars are regularly presented with opportunities to develop and practice these skills in the course of work and play.

Personal/Social Development Domains and Definitions
Self Concept: Self-concept and self-reflection
Self Control: Self-direction and responsibility
Approaches to Learning: Eagerness and persistence as a learner
Interaction with Others: Ease of interactions with other children and familiar adults
Social Problem-Solving: Use of non-physical ways to resolve conflicts



"I wish it wasn't ending, my daughter has grown so much with this program."

Greer 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 classrooms, family events and fieldtrips. Parents play an important part of our Bright Stars success. Their active involvement in the classroom and at home supports the work the teachers do at school.

This year:

89% of parents attended both parent teacher conferences

87% of parents attended four or more non-conference school functions

"You can tell a lot of time, thought and preparation went into their events, they were not just thrown together."

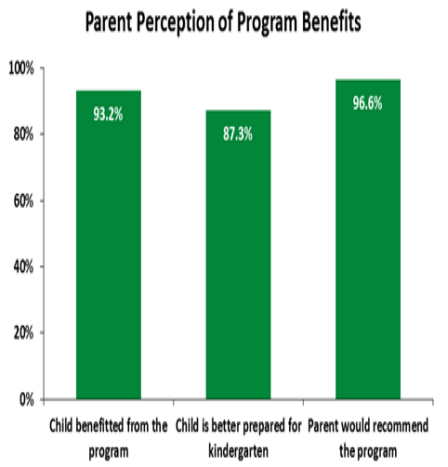
Scottsville Parent

Outside the classroom, Bright Stars Family Coordinators also worked with parents towards parents' personal goals. By the end of the school year, 75% of our parents had demonstrated meaningful progress or fully achieved their goal. Examples of goals might include getting financial education, learning English, being more consistent with consequences for their children's behavior, finding employment, increasing reading time with their children, getting a driver's license, taking care of an ill relative, being involved with their children's school and improved eating habits

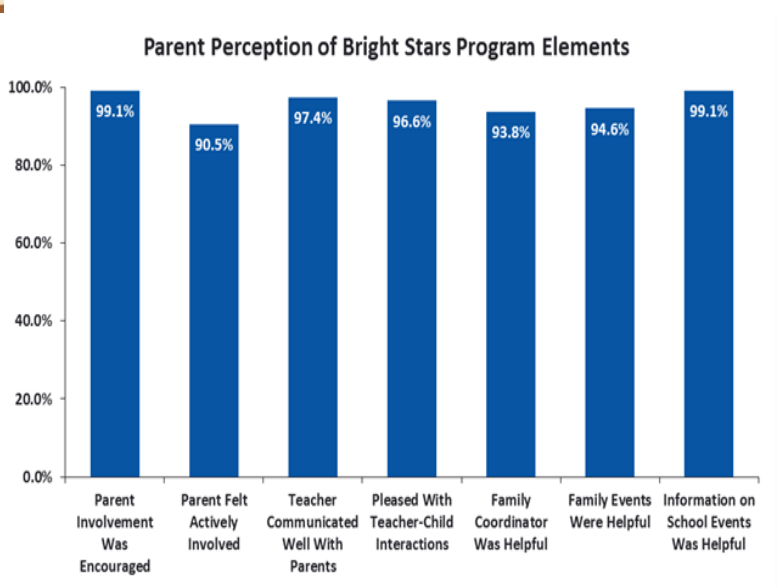
PARENT SATISFACTION

Parents' satisfaction with the Bright Stars Program remains very high. They report significant growth in their children and believe them to be better prepared to enter Kindergarten. Parents report positive relationships with the Bright Stars staff and feel that their participation in their child's preschool program is encouraged. Over 96% of parents would recommend the program to others.

"This has been a turning point for my child, she went from a shy, non-interactive child to a bright and social kid."
Woodbrook Parent

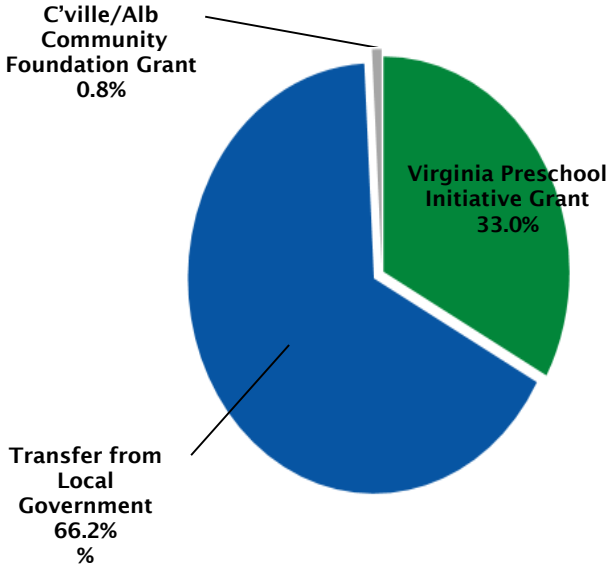


Child Improvement in Growth Domains		
Growth Domain	Definitions	Parents Reporting Improvement
Language	Understanding and using oral speech	89.8%
Social	Getting along with other children and adults	89.8%
Self Care	Meeting own needs for feeding, toileting, dressing, etc.	87.3%
Motor	Moving large muscles and using small, fine muscles	86.4%
Pre-Academic	Recognizing colors, letters, numbers, songs, etc.	90.7%
Problem Solving	Using cooperation, asking for help, etc.	88.1%



Bright Stars Fiscal Report

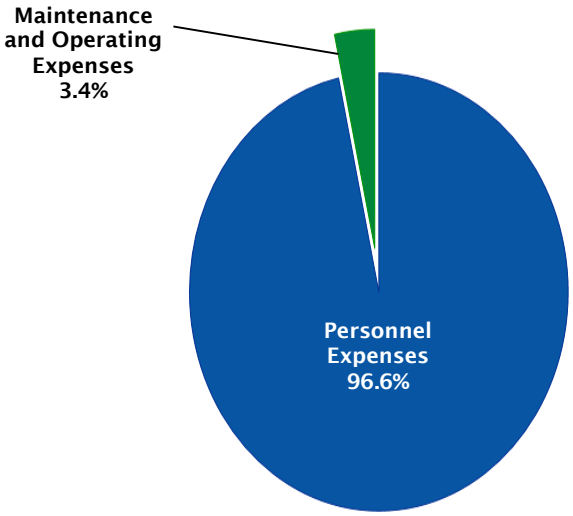
FY 2015 Revenues



Bright Stars Revenues FY2014-2015	
Virginia Preschool Initiative Grant	$ 399,000
Transfer from Local Government	799,787
Cville/Alb Community Foundation Grant	10,000
Close out old Bright Stars Fund Bal	48
Total Bright Stars Revenues	**$1,208,835**

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 2015 Expenditures



Bright Stars Expenditures FY2014-2015	
Personnel Expenses	$1,134,583
Maintenance and Operating Expenses	40,139
Total Bright Stars Expenditures	**$1,174,722**

Listening to the need.

ac-dss

Working together for solutions.

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