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Instructional Resources in Public School–Based Pre-K

Findings from the Spring 2024 American Pre-K Teacher Survey

KEY FINDINGS

- More than 80 percent of public school–based pre-kindergarten (pre-K) teachers used multiple commercially available curriculum materials in their classrooms, even when they used a comprehensive curriculum.
- Most pre-K teachers believed that the instructional materials they used were high quality, particularly for promoting development in language and literacy, early numeracy, and social and emotional domains.
- Teachers of part-day and full-day classrooms reported using similar curriculum and assessment materials, but part-day teachers had less training on how to use them.
- Less than one-third of pre-K teachers strongly agreed that they had adequate time during their contracted hours for tasks that support instructional delivery.
- Teachers of part-day classrooms were less likely to report having adequate time for typical instructional planning tasks than were teachers of full-day classrooms.
- Less than half of pre-K teachers reported having dedicated time to coordinate across grades or dedicated time for kindergarten transition.

More children are enrolled in pre-kindergarten (pre-K) than ever before, and publicly funded programs now account for 60 percent of pre-K enrollment (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2024; McElrath and Bauman, 2021).¹ Although publicly funded pre-K programs are offered in a variety of settings, most students (60 percent) are enrolled in public schools. Furthermore, an estimated 60 percent of public elementary schools enroll pre-K students, with about one-quarter enrolled in part-day classrooms and three-quarters in full-day classrooms (Little, 2021; National Survey of Early Care and Education [NSECE] Project Team, 2021). In this report, we present national data on public school–based pre-K teachers’ reports of the curricula and assessments they use, their planning time

and professional learning, and their perceptions of these resources.

School-based pre-K programs typically focus on preparing children developmentally for success in kindergarten. Students who attend school-based pre-K enter kindergarten with stronger language and literacy, math, and social and emotional skills (Meloy, Gardner, and Darling-Hammond, 2019; Mofett et al., 2023; Woodyard, Sass, and Fazlul, 2022). Although many studies have documented fadeout in the initial positive effects of pre-K as children progress through school (e.g., Weiland, Unterman, and Shapiro, 2021), some have found that positive effects of school-based pre-K persist or reemerge through middle and high school and into adulthood (e.g., Gormley, Phillips, and Anderson, 2018; Gray-Lobe, Pathak, and Walters, 2023; McCoy et al., 2017).

As states continue to invest in expansion of pre-K programs, researchers and policymakers have shifted focus from not only understanding whether pre-K programs have positive impacts on children but also to understanding how those impacts occur (Barnett and Jung, 2024; Greenberg et al., 2024). One set of characteristics that might affect how pre-K programs can be effective are *structural*, such as teacher pay and training, student-teacher ratios, and physical characteristics of classroom space (Burchinal et al., 2010). School-based pre-K programs typically offer more of these structural resources than other pre-K programs: They often offer higher compensation for teachers and employ teachers with higher degrees, and these teachers leave teaching at lower rates than teachers in pre-K programs in other settings. All of these factors might relate to program effectiveness (Bellows,

Bassok, and Markowitz, 2021; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024; Grunewald, Palmer, and Nunn, 2022). However, less is known about the prevalence of structural characteristics, such as curriculum and assessment use, access to planning time and professional learning, and processes for instructional alignment, in public school-based pre-K nationwide.

For example, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have agencies that oversee their state-funded school-based pre-K programs. Many of these agencies provide pre-K programs with lists of approved curriculum and assessment materials from which programs or teachers can choose (Fischer and Weyer, 2024). These approved curriculum and assessment lists might include both comprehensive (or *global*) materials, which target all developmental domains, and domain- or content-specific materials (e.g., a language and literacy curriculum or a math assessment). Although comprehensive curricula are more commonly used, research suggests that domain-specific curricula might have stronger impacts on students' skills in the targeted domain (Clements et al., 2011; Jenkins and Duncan, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2019; Bredekamp et al., 2024; Nguyen, Jenkins, and Whitaker, 2018; What Works Clearinghouse, undated).

Pre-K teachers located in school-based settings might also have access to dedicated planning time and professional learning to support curriculum implementation and use of assessment data (Allen and Kelly, 2015). Coordinated use of curriculum, assessments, and planning time can also support horizontal instructional alignment across pre-K classrooms and vertical instructional alignment between pre-K and elementary classrooms. Vertical alignment involves coordinated use of instructional materials (e.g., standards, curricula, assessments) across grade levels and an understanding of individual students' competencies and development as they move through the early grades (Abry et al., 2015; McCormick et al., 2024). School-based pre-K programs can also facilitate smoother transitions to kindergarten by familiarizing students with the school routines they will experience in the early grades (Little et al., 2022; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008; Vitello et al., 2020).

Descriptions of how these structural characteristics of pre-K programs vary across public school-

Abbreviations

AEP	American Educator Panels
ATP	American Teacher Panel
ELA	English language arts
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
NSECE	National Survey of Early Care and Education
PKTS	Pre-K Teacher Survey
pre-K	pre-kindergarten
SEL	social and emotional learning

based pre-K settings can provide valuable insight into the instructional materials and supports to which public school–based pre-K teachers have access. To learn about these instructional features of public pre-K classrooms, we fielded a survey to pre-K teachers nationally using RAND’s American Teacher Panel (ATP). This panel started in 2014 and now has more than 25,000 K–12 public school teachers. In 2024, RAND newly recruited about 1,500 public school pre-K teachers to the panel.

This report presents findings from the first American Pre-K Teacher Survey (PKTS), a nationally representative survey of pre-K teachers in public schools across the United States. We focus on the curriculum and assessment materials that pre-K teachers used most frequently in their classrooms, their perceptions of the quality of these materials, their access to planning time and dedicated time for coordination across grades, and their professional learning activities. Because one-quarter or more of school-based pre-K students are enrolled in part-day classrooms, we also describe how teachers’ reports varied between teachers in full-day and part-day classrooms (NSECE Project Team, 2021).

Our findings provide unique information to state legislators, early childhood program leaders, and school district leaders by describing the features of public school–based pre-K programs, the most prevalent form of public pre-K across the country. Our findings also provide valuable insight to researchers by describing the prevalence of instructional resources that are associated with positive impacts of public school–based pre-K programs.

Research Questions

We address the following five research questions in this report:

1. What types of curriculum materials do public school–based pre-K teachers use in their classrooms?
2. What types of assessment materials do public school–based pre-K teachers use in their classrooms?
3. How much instructional planning time do public school–based pre-K teachers receive per

week, and how adequate do they perceive this time to be?

4. What are teachers’ perceptions of the extent of horizontal instructional alignment between pre-K classrooms and vertical instructional alignment between pre-K and early elementary classrooms in their schools?
5. What types of professional learning do public school–based pre-K teachers have access to, and what are their perceptions of the helpfulness of these professional learning opportunities?

The Public School Pre-K Teacher Surveys

The PKTS are a recurring set of surveys that RAND will field over several years to public school pre-K teachers. The purpose of the PKTS is to present public school pre-K teachers’ perspectives about a variety of timely topics, such as curriculum and assessment, alignment with early grades, professional learning, use of technology, well-being, working conditions, and retention. Teachers’ firsthand experiences and perspectives provide valuable insight about conditions on the ground and can inform which policies and programs could be most effective in practice.

This survey focuses on pre-K teachers in public schools. We define a *pre-K program* as one that children attend one to two years before they begin kindergarten. We refer to the teachers in our survey as *pre-K teachers* or *teachers* in this report. We describe our methods for expanding the ATP to include pre-K teachers in *Creating a Nationally Representative Survey Panel of Public School Pre-K Teachers* (Grant et al., 2025a). We describe our sampling and weighting procedures and present the results of the spring 2024 PKTS in *American Public-School Pre-K Teacher Survey: Spring 2024 Technical Documentation and Survey Results* (Grant et al., 2025b).

The PKTS is the only nationally representative standing panel of public school pre-K teachers in the United States (Grant et al., 2025a). In addition, the results are freely accessible to the public and timely: We publish our findings—along with technical information about survey administration and weighting—shortly after fielding a survey.

Spring 2024 Pre-K Teacher Survey

In this report we use data from the spring 2024 administration of the PKTS, a nationally representative survey of 1,368 public school pre-K teachers that was administered in April and May 2024 (Grant et al., 2025b). To be included in the survey, teachers had to teach pre-K in a public school. We screened teachers into the survey using a standard ATP approach, which involved first asking about a comprehensive list of grades and subjects taught. If the teacher reported teaching pre-K and additional grades, they were eligible for the survey if they taught only kindergarten or 1st grade in addition to pre-K. Eligible teachers could report teaching any of the following subjects as their main subject: elementary education (including pre-K), special education, English language arts (ELA), English as a second language, mathematics, natural sciences, or social sciences.

The survey sample includes responses from pre-K teachers in all 50 United States and the District of Columbia who teach in a variety of public school settings, as described in the box on the next page. For a full description of our recruitment and sampling approach, as well as a complete description of the demographic characteristics of responding teachers, see Grant et al., 2025a.

To analyze data from the PKTS, we used similar analytic methods as in our numerous past surveys of educators. Therefore, we recycle text from our prior reports in the sections that describe our data, methods, and limitations (Grant et al., 2025a; Grant et al., 2025b; Doan, Steiner, and Pandey, 2024).

When analyzing the survey data for this report, we explored whether teachers' survey responses differed according to whether they taught in full-day or part-day classrooms. We also explored variation by teacher characteristics, student characteristics, and other school-level characteristics; however, we do not present these results in this report because we did not detect statistically significant differences in responses along these dimensions.²

In the survey, we defined *curriculum materials* as materials that outline a predetermined plan for the learning experiences through which children acquire knowledge, skills, abilities, and understand-

ing (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], undated). We categorized the commercial curricula named by respondents as *comprehensive* if they were intended to cover at least three developmental domains (e.g., language and literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning [SEL], physical development, approaches to learning). We categorized materials as *domain-specific* if they were designed to cover only one domain. In these cases, we identified the domains as one of the following: language and literacy, math, or SEL.³

In the survey, we defined *assessments* as evaluation tools used to measure student learning that have predetermined guidelines for administration, scoring, and interpretation of results. These assessments could include formative and summative assessments and observational or teacher-administered assessments. We categorized the commercial assessments named by respondents as *comprehensive* if they were intended to measure language and literacy as well as numeracy. Many comprehensive assessments also measure other domains, such as social and emotional skills and motor development.

We categorized assessment materials as *domain-specific* if they were designed to measure only one domain, and we identified which assessments measured language and literacy, math, or SEL. Although we directed teachers to exclude developmental screenings or screenings for hearing or vision in their responses, some teachers entered the names of such tools. We categorized responses as developmental screeners if teachers reported using such tools as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire or the Battelle Developmental Inventory. We also generated indicators for whether the teacher reported using a commercial assessment that is a component of a commercial curriculum they use (e.g., teacher reported using both The Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD).

In addition to reporting results for the full survey sample, we compared the responses between teachers teaching in full-day classrooms and teachers teaching in part-day classrooms to explore variation in teachers' instructional practices and experiences.⁴ Although a majority of states offer funding for five or more hours of pre-K per student per day, 19 states require as few as 2 or 2.5 hours of state-funded pre-K

Spring 2024 PKTS Respondents

The following are key characteristics of the spring 2024 PKTS respondents:

- 75 percent of survey respondents taught in an elementary school building (i.e., pre-K to 5th grade or pre-K to 8th grade), 11 percent of survey respondents taught in a building that included only early grades (pre-K to kindergarten, pre-K to 1st grade, pre-K to 2nd grade, or pre-K to 3rd grade), 1 percent of survey respondents taught in a comprehensive school building (pre-K to 12th grade), and 9 percent taught in a building that enrolls children only from birth to age five.
- 6 percent of respondents reported teaching in a Head Start classroom.^a
- Roughly one-third of survey respondents taught in urban schools, one-third in suburban schools, and one-third in town/rural schools.
- 68 percent of survey respondents worked in a school where a majority of their students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- 58 percent of survey respondents worked in a school where a majority of students were students of color.
- Similar to K–12 teachers, half of the PKTS respondents held a master’s degree or higher.
- 22 percent of respondents had fewer than five years of experience as a pre-K teacher, 28 percent had five to nine years of experience, 17 percent had between ten and 14 years of experience, and 32 percent had 15 or more years of experience.
- 70 percent of respondents identified as White, 10 percent as Black, and 14 percent as Hispanic.
- 91 percent of respondents had a state certification or teaching endorsement for early care and education, early childhood education, and/or child development.

^a Head Start is a federal early childhood program. Some Head Start programs are located in public schools.

instruction each day (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2024; USAFacts, 2023). In practice, however, many localities provide supplemental funds to offer longer school days for students.

We categorized teachers as *teaching in full-day classrooms* if they reported that 50 percent or more of their students were enrolled for at least five hours. Using this definition, 78 percent of our sample taught in full-day classrooms, nearly all of whom reported that 75 to 100 percent of their students were enrolled for at least five hours. We categorized teachers as *teaching in part-day classrooms* if they reported that less than 50 percent of their students were enrolled for at least five hours. Using this definition, 22 percent of our sample taught in part-day classrooms, nearly all of whom reported that no students were enrolled for at least five hours. This proportion of part-day teachers aligns with other national data: Just over one-quarter (28 percent) of programs enrolling four-year-olds that are located in a public school enrolled only part-day students as of 2019 (NSECE Project Team, 2021).

Teachers who were categorized as teaching in part-day classrooms reported working an average of 38 contracted hours per week, compared with 39 hours among teachers in full-day classrooms, which could suggest that part-day teachers teach two sessions (or more) per day. More details about our data and analysis can be found in the “How This Analysis Was Conducted” section at the end of this report.

Public School–Based Pre-K Teachers’ Curriculum Use

Two-Thirds of Public School–Based Pre-K Teachers Reported Using a Commercially Available Comprehensive Curriculum

Nearly all public school–based pre-K teachers—90 percent—reported using at least one commercial curriculum material in their classrooms, and 80 percent reported using at least two commercial curriculum materials. To better understand the types of commercially available curriculum materi-

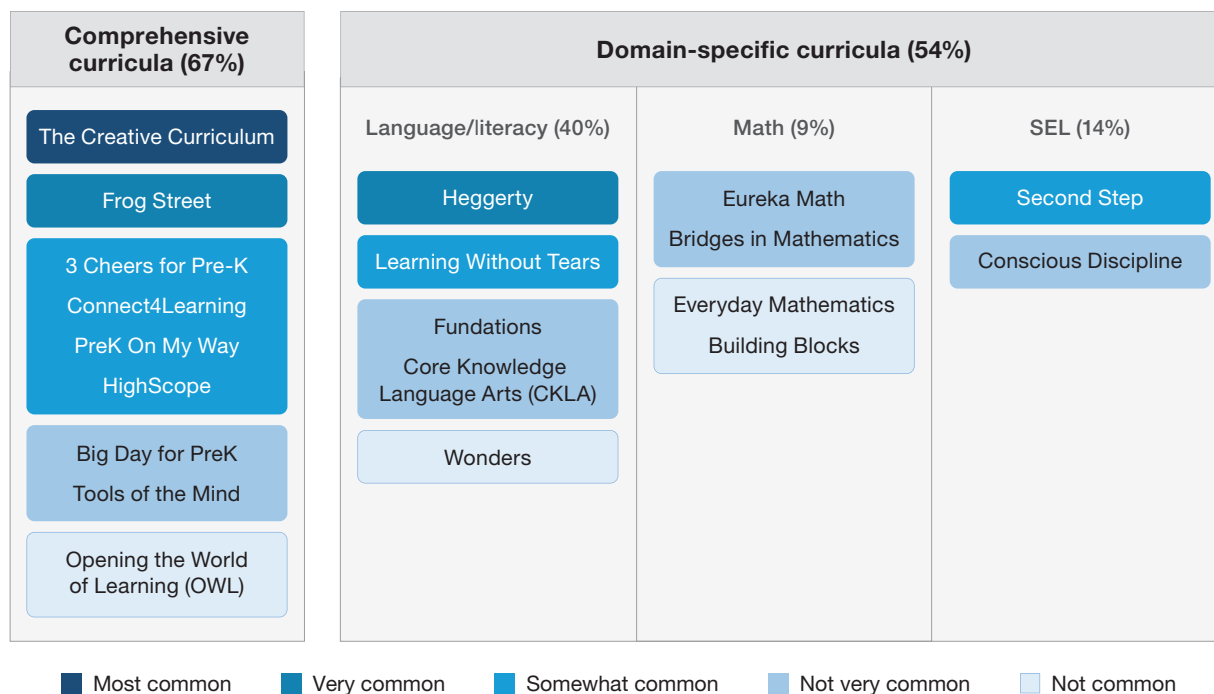
als that public school-based pre-K teachers used, we asked teachers to provide the names of the two commercial materials that they used most frequently in their classrooms in the 2023–2024 school year.

One-third of teachers responded “yes” when asked whether they used more than two commercial materials regularly. More than two-thirds of teachers also reported using materials that they created themselves, often in conjunction with the commercial curricula they reported. Therefore, we interpret these responses as providing insight into the commercial materials used most intensively by public school-based pre-K teachers, but this is not an exhaustive list of all materials used in pre-K classrooms. Sixty-seven percent of teachers reported using a comprehensive curriculum as one of their two main commercial materials, and 54 percent reported using a domain-specific curriculum material (Figure 1).

Just over one-third of teachers reported using only comprehensive curricula when asked to report their two most frequently used commercial materials (Figure 2). Roughly one-third of teachers reported using both a comprehensive curriculum and a domain-specific curriculum. Among teachers who used one comprehensive curriculum and one domain-specific curriculum as their two most frequently used materials, 60 percent used an ELA material with their comprehensive material, 10 percent used a math material with their comprehensive material, and 28 percent used an SEL material with their comprehensive material (2 percent used materials targeting another domain).

Just under one-quarter of teachers nationally reported using only domain-specific curricula. Of those teachers, 54 percent used only ELA materials, 3 percent used only math materials, 20 percent used

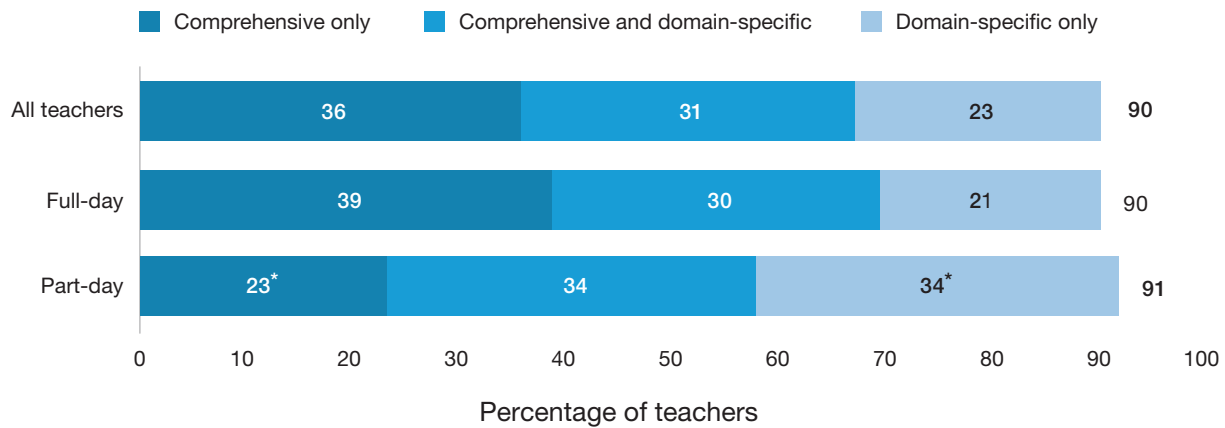
FIGURE 1
Comprehensive and Domain-Specific Commercial Curricula in Rank Order of Use by Percentage of Pre-K Teachers



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Please provide the names of the two commercially available curriculum materials you use most frequently in your pre-K classroom this school year (2023–2024).” Percentages reported for each category indicate the proportion of teachers who reported using a curriculum material in each category. Percentages do not add up to 100 because teachers could list one or two materials. Curricula are listed in order of prevalence within each category and shaded by most prevalent (darkest color) to least prevalent (lightest color). All listed curricula were reported as used by at least ten respondents. Free responses were coded to resolve spelling and case inconsistencies. *N* = 1,339.

FIGURE 2

Teachers’ Use of Commercial Curriculum Materials, by Type of Materials and Full-Day or Part-Day Classrooms



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Please provide the names of the two commercially available curriculum materials you use most frequently in your pre-K classroom this school year (2023–2024).” *N* = 1,339. Free responses were coded to resolve spelling and case inconsistencies, and curricula were classified as comprehensive or domain-specific using publicly available information found on developers’ websites. Percentages do not add to 100 because teachers who responded that they do not use commercially available curriculum materials are not shown. Numbers might not perfectly add to totals because of rounding.

* Asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between teachers in part-day classrooms and teachers in full-day classrooms.

one ELA material and one math material, and 10 percent used one ELA material and one SEL material.

As shown in Figure 2, part-day classroom teachers were significantly less likely to use only comprehensive materials and significantly more likely to use only domain-specific materials than were full-day teachers. Teachers of full- and part-day classrooms were similarly likely to use a combination of comprehensive and domain-specific materials.

Pre-K Teachers Believed That Their Commercial Curriculum Materials Were High-Quality

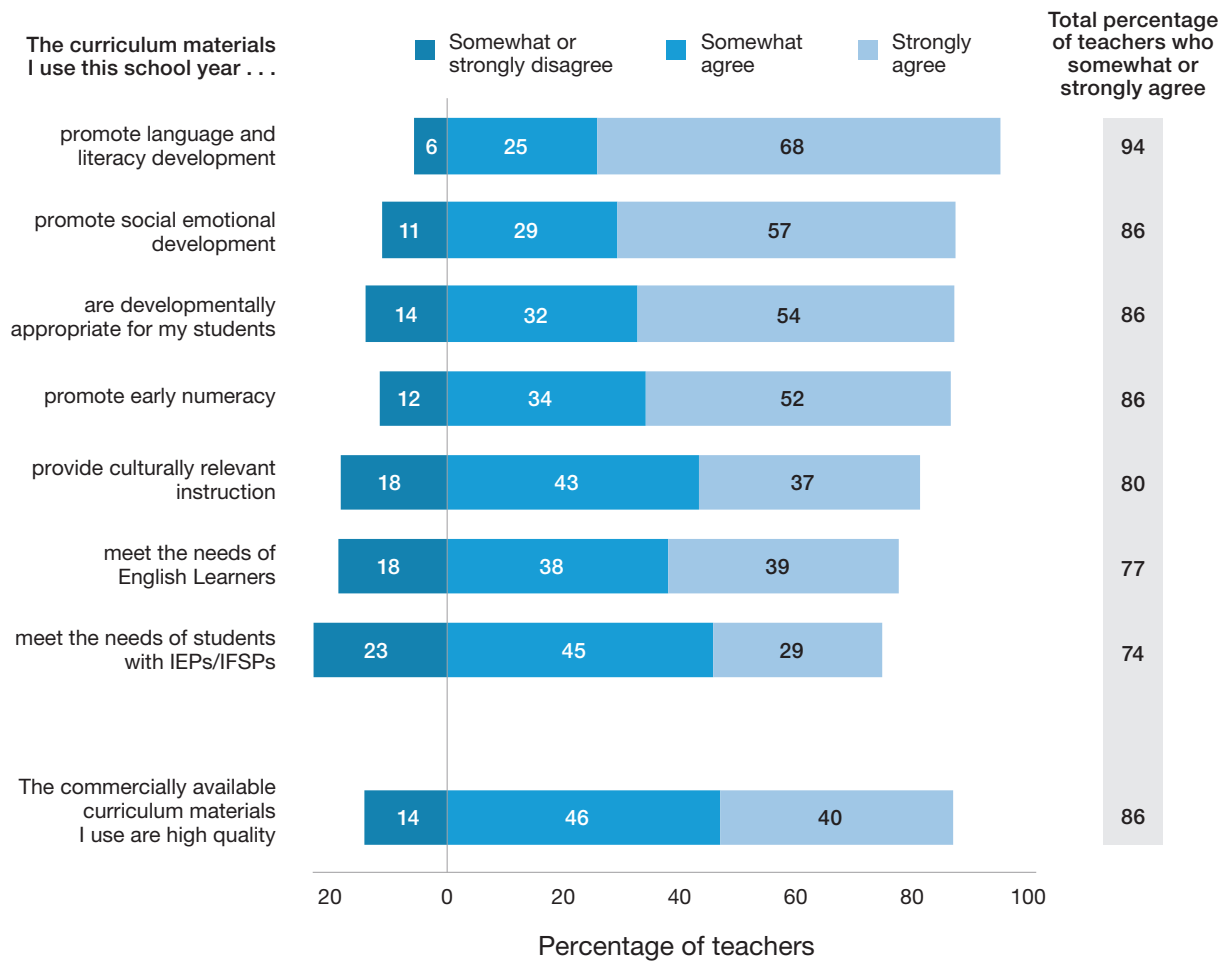
A large majority of pre-K teachers reported positive perceptions of all the commercial materials that they used on several dimensions. Ninety-four percent somewhat or strongly agreed that their materials promoted language and literacy development, with 68 percent reporting that they strongly agreed (Figure 3). More than half of teachers strongly agreed that their materials promoted early numeracy and social and emotional development and were developmentally appropriate for their students.

Although agreement overall was high, fewer teachers agreed that their commercial materials met the needs of specific populations of students. Only 39 percent of teachers strongly agreed that their materials meet the needs of English learners, 37 percent strongly agreed that their materials provided culturally relevant instruction, and 29 percent strongly agreed that their materials meet the needs of students in special education. We found no differences in perception of curriculum quality by whether teachers taught in part- or full-day classrooms.

Teachers’ overall perceptions of the quality of their commercial materials—which we asked about after teachers had responded to the seven individual items related to curriculum quality—were consistent with their perceptions of specific dimensions of quality. Eighty-six percent of teachers somewhat or strongly agreed that the commercially available curricula that they used were high quality. There were no differences in levels of agreement with this statement by teachers in full-day or part-day classrooms.

FIGURE 3

Teachers’ Perceptions of the Quality of Their Commercial Curriculum Materials



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Thinking about all the commercially available curriculum materials you use in your pre-K classroom this school year (2023–2024), indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements. The curriculum materials I use this school year . . .” Response options were “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” “strongly disagree,” and “does not apply.” *N* = 1,292. Because very few respondents selected “strongly disagree,” respondents who selected “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree” are represented together in the figure. Respondents who selected “does not apply” are not shown. The item “The commercially available curriculum materials I used are high quality” was asked in a separate question after the seven specific quality dimensions. Numbers might not perfectly add to totals because of rounding. IEP = Individualized Education Plan; IFSP = Individualized Family Service Plan.

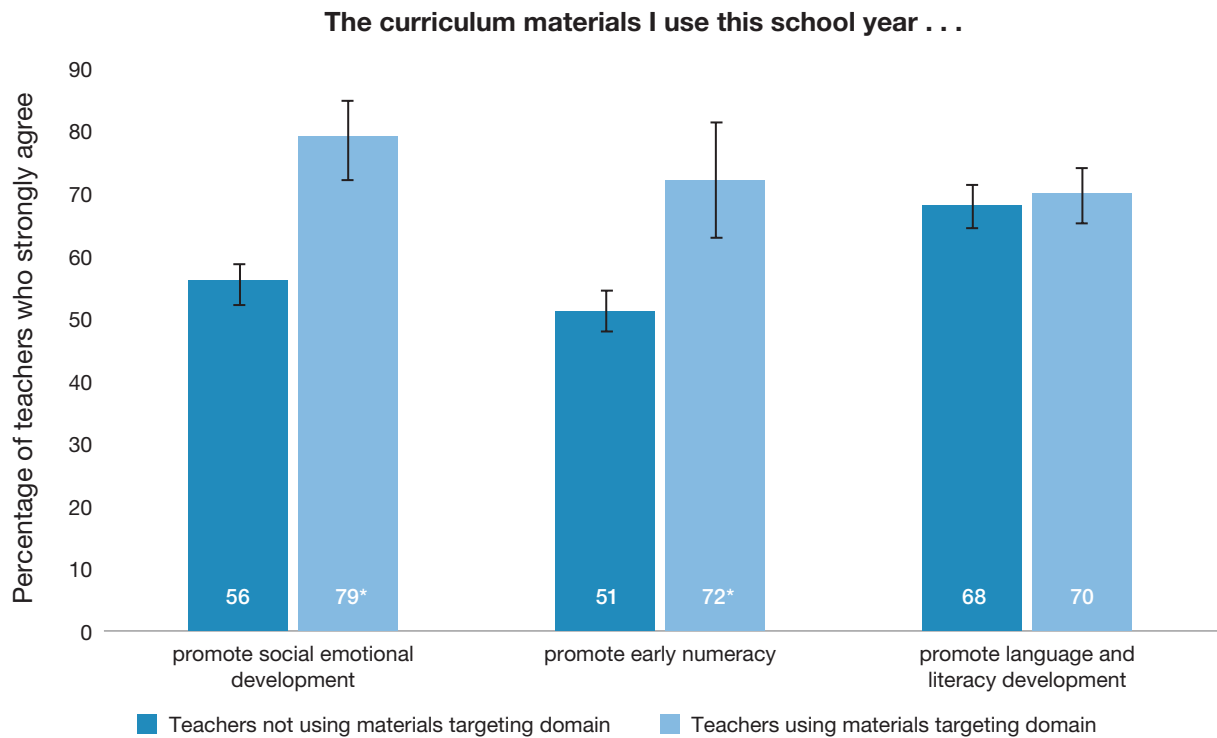
Teachers Who Used Domain-Specific Numeracy and Social and Emotional Learning Curricula Were More Likely to Report That Their Materials Supported Children’s Development in Those Areas

Teachers who used domain-specific commercial materials that promote early numeracy or SEL were more likely to strongly agree that their materials supported children’s development in that domain, compared with teachers not using materials specific to that domain

(Figure 4). In contrast, teachers who used domain-specific materials that promote early literacy were no more likely than teachers who did not use such materials to strongly agree that their materials promoted literacy development. Given the widespread use of comprehensive curricula (67 percent of teachers in our sample), these findings might suggest that teachers perceive that domain-specific literacy materials add less additional value when used with a comprehensive material than do materials that specifically target numeracy or social and emotional domains.

FIGURE 4

Teachers' Perceptions of the Quality of Their Commercial Curriculum Materials for Promoting Targeted Domains



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Thinking about all the commercially available curriculum materials you use in your pre-K classroom this school year (2023–2024), indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements. The curriculum materials I use this school year . . ." $N = 1,292$. Bars represent the proportion of teachers who strongly agreed that their materials promote development in each domain.

* Asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between teachers using materials that target each domain and those not using materials that target that domain. Black bars represent 95-percent confidence intervals.

Public School–Based Pre-K Teachers' Assessment Use

Three-Quarters of Pre-K Teachers Used a Comprehensive Assessment

Just under 80 percent of public school–based pre-K teachers reported using commercially available assessment materials in their classrooms. The remaining 20 percent of teachers reported using only assessments that they created themselves.

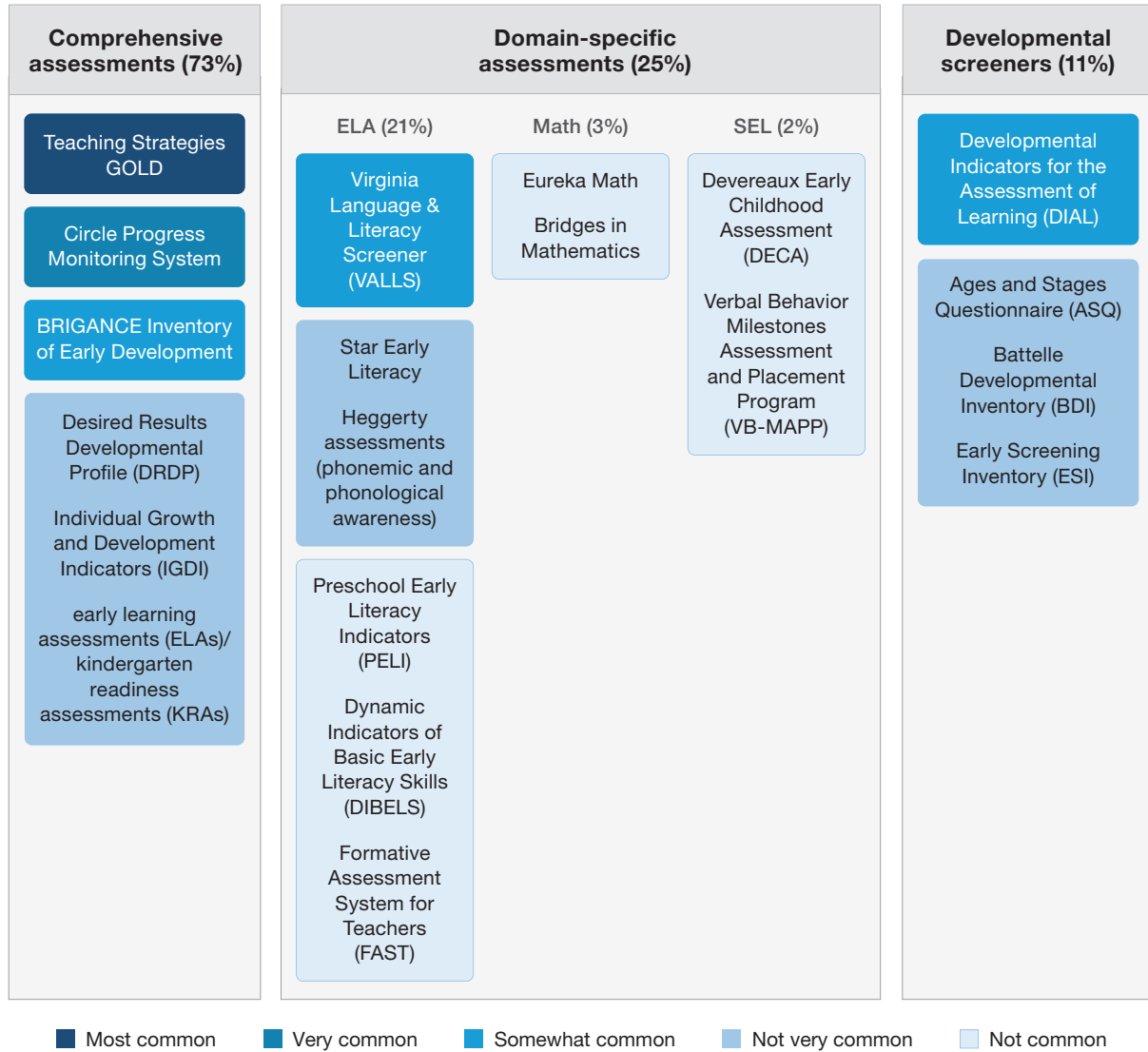
We asked teachers to provide the names of the two assessment materials that they used most frequently in their classrooms. Nearly three-quarters of teachers reported using a comprehensive assessment as one of their two most frequently used assessment materials, and 25 percent reported using a domain-specific assessment (Figure 5). Although we asked teachers

not to include developmental screeners, 11 percent reported a developmental screener as one of their two most frequently used assessment materials. Two percent of teachers reported using only a developmental screener as their most frequently used assessment material. We did not ask teachers to describe how these developmental screeners were used, so we do not know, for example, whether the developmental screeners replaced or supplemented tools that measure learning throughout the year or were administered as part of universal screening practices for students with disabilities.

Teachers in part-day and full-day classrooms used a similar mix of comprehensive and domain-specific assessments and conducted assessments at similar frequencies. Roughly one-quarter of teachers in full-day and part-day classrooms reported assess-

FIGURE 5

Comprehensive and Domain-Specific Assessments and Developmental Screeners in Rank Order of Use by Percentage of Pre-K Teachers



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Please provide the names of the two commercially available assessments you use most frequently in your pre-K classroom this school year (2023–2024).” *N* = 1,119. Free responses were coded to resolve spelling and case inconsistencies. Percentages reported for each category indicate the proportion of teachers who reported using an assessment material in each category. Percentages do not add up to 100 because teachers could list one or two materials. Assessments are listed in order of prevalence within each category and shaded by most prevalent (darkest color) to least prevalent (lightest color). This figure displays assessments reported by at least ten respondents.

ing their students at least weekly; 13 percent of teachers in part-day classrooms and 18 percent of teachers in full-day classrooms reported assessing monthly or bimonthly. Fifty percent of part-day classroom teachers and 55 percent of full-day classroom teachers reported assessing two to four times per year.

Although we did not ask teachers how much time they spent assessing students’ learning, only about two-thirds of teachers in part-day classrooms and full-day classrooms somewhat or strongly agreed that they had adequate time to conduct assessments (see Figure 9). If teachers in both full- and part-day classrooms are using the same assess-

ments, this might suggest that part-day classroom teachers administer less of the assessment, administer the whole assessment less thoroughly, administer the assessment in a way that is not consistent with the design to adapt to their shorter instructional hours, or spend a greater share of their instructional time administering assessments than do full-day teachers.

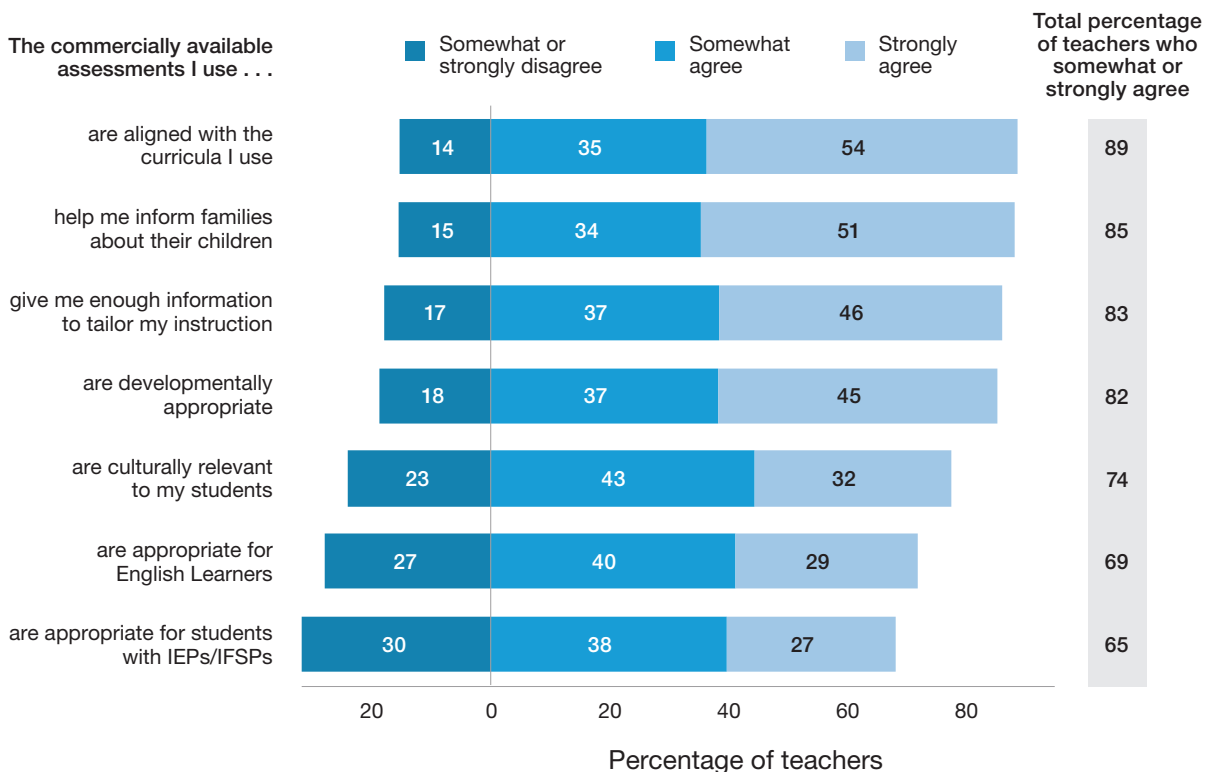
Pre-K Teachers Believed That Their Commercial Assessments Were High Quality

Pre-K teachers expressed generally positive perceptions of the commercial assessments that they used, in patterns that were similar to their perceptions of commercial curricula. More than 80 percent of

teachers somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that their assessments were aligned with the curricula they used, were helpful for informing families about their students, gave them enough information to tailor their instruction, and were developmentally appropriate (Figure 6). Smaller proportions of teachers somewhat or strongly agreed that their assessment materials were culturally relevant, appropriate for English learners, or appropriate for students with disabilities.

Half of teachers reported using a commercial assessment that was paired with a commercial curriculum that they used. An example of a paired curriculum and assessment is Teaching Strategies GOLD, which is a formative assessment administered as part of the implementation of The Creative Curriculum. Similar shares of full- and part-day

FIGURE 6
Teachers’ Perceptions of the Quality of Their Commercial Assessments



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Thinking about all the commercially available assessments you use in your pre-K classroom this school year (2023–2024), indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements. The commercially available assessments I use . . .” Response options were “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” “strongly disagree,” and “does not apply.” *N* = 1,049. Because very few respondents selected “strongly disagree,” respondents who selected “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree” are represented together in the figure. Numbers might not perfectly add to totals because of rounding.

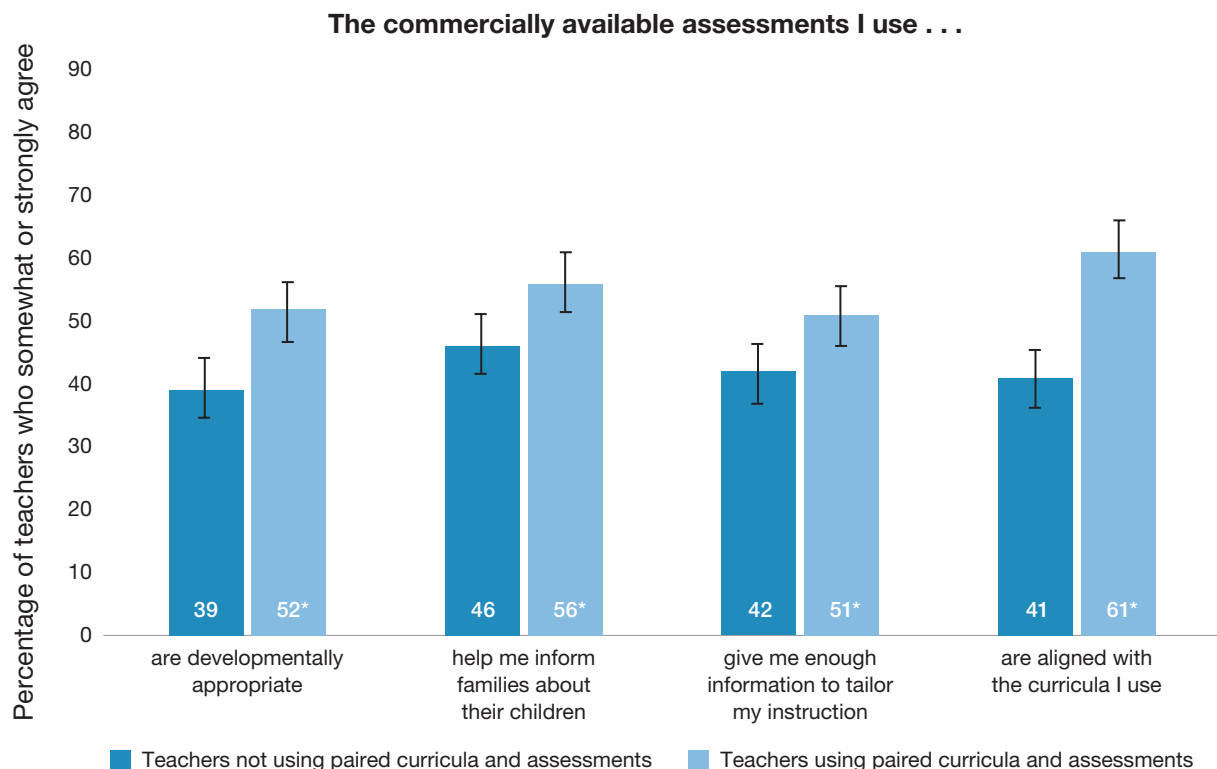
classroom teachers used assessments that were connected to their curricula: 55 percent of part-day classroom teachers and 48 percent of full-day classroom teachers reported using such assessments. Teachers who used assessments connected to their curricula were more likely to agree or strongly agree that their assessment materials were developmentally appropriate, helped them inform families about students' development, gave them enough information to tailor instruction, and were aligned with their curricula (Figure 7).

Public School-Based Pre-K Teachers' Use of Planning Time

One-Quarter or More of Teachers—Especially Part-Day Classroom Teachers—Said That They Had Inadequate Instructional Planning Time

Teachers at all grade levels say that they do not have enough time to perform essential job-related tasks (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017; Doan, Steiner, and Pandey, 2024). Pre-K teachers are no different. One-quarter to one-third of pre-K teachers—especially part-day classroom teachers and teachers who reported less weekly planning time—somewhat

FIGURE 7
Teachers' Perceptions of the Quality of Their Commercial Assessments, by Use of Paired Curricula and Assessments



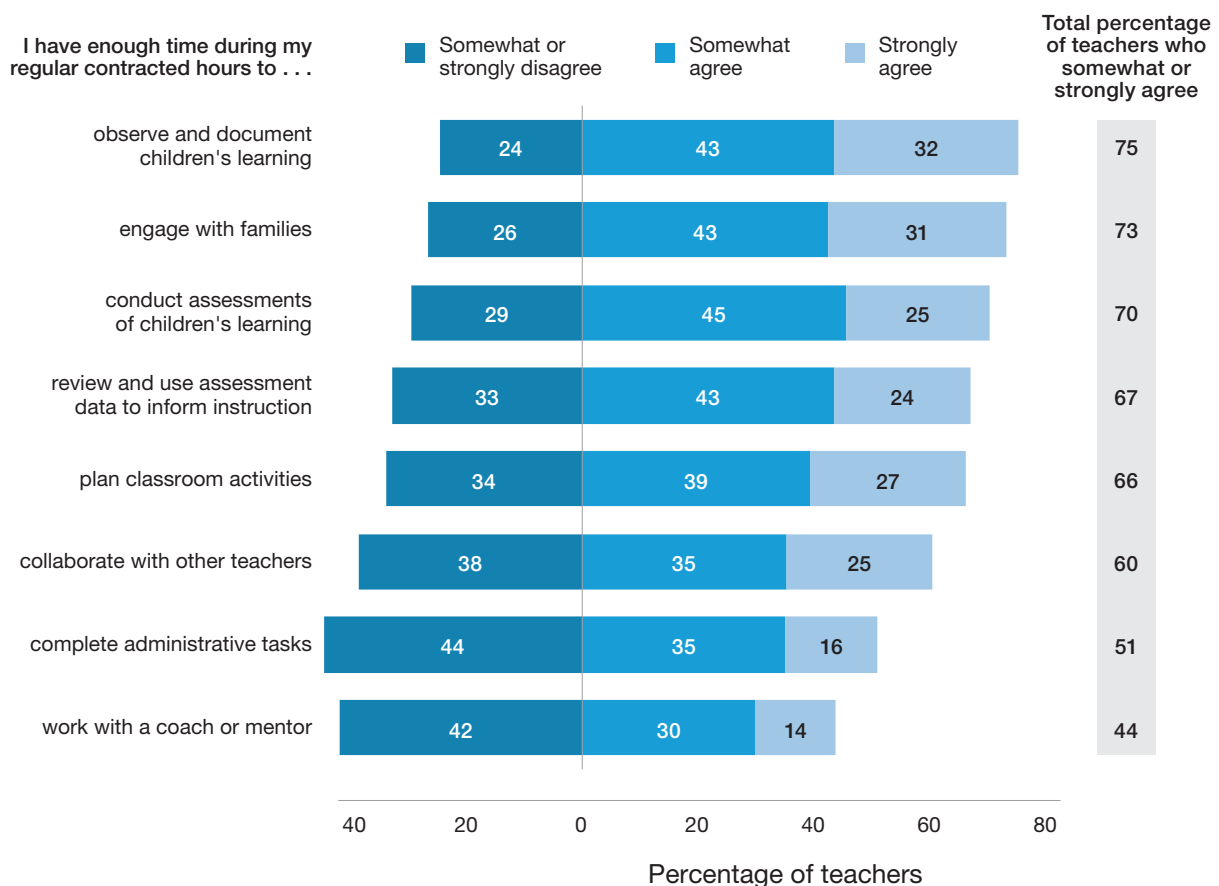
NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Thinking about all the commercially available assessments you use in your pre-K classroom this school year (2023–2024), indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements. The commercially available assessments I use . . ." $N = 1,092$. Bars represent the proportion of teachers who somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that their assessment materials are developmentally appropriate, help them inform families about their children, give enough information to tailor instruction, and are aligned with the curricula they use.

* Asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between teachers using paired curricula and assessments and those not using paired curricula and assessments. Black bars represent 95-percent confidence intervals.

or strongly disagreed that they had enough time to complete tasks that support instructional delivery. Only one-third or fewer teachers strongly agreed that they had adequate time to complete these tasks. One-quarter or more of pre-K teachers said that they did not have enough time during their contracted hours to carry out such tasks as documenting or assessing students' learning, engaging with families, planning classroom activities, completing administrative tasks, and working with colleagues (Figure 8). Teachers were most likely to say that they did not have enough time to collaborate with other teachers, complete administrative tasks, and work with a coach or mentor.

Nearly all pre-K teachers (96 percent) said that they had some amount of instructional planning time scheduled during their weekly contracted hours. Pre-K teachers most commonly reported having two or three scheduled hours of instructional planning time per week (42 percent). Thirty-seven percent of pre-K teachers reported having four or more hours of planning time each week, and 20 percent had one hour or less per week of planning time or no planning time at all. Although the modal amount of planning time for pre-K teachers was similar to that for elementary grade teachers—42 percent of elementary grade teachers reported having two or three hours

FIGURE 8
Teachers' Perceptions of Whether They Had Enough Time During Contracted Hours Each Week to Carry out Planning and Administrative Tasks



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements. Think about a typical week this school year (2023–2024). I have enough time during my regular contracted hours to . . ." *N* = 1,404–1,405. Bars represent the proportion of teachers who strongly disagreed or disagreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that they have enough time to carry out each task. Because very few respondents selected "strongly disagree," respondents who selected "somewhat disagree" or "strongly disagree" are represented together in the figure. Respondents who selected "does not apply" are not shown. Numbers might not perfectly add to totals because of rounding.

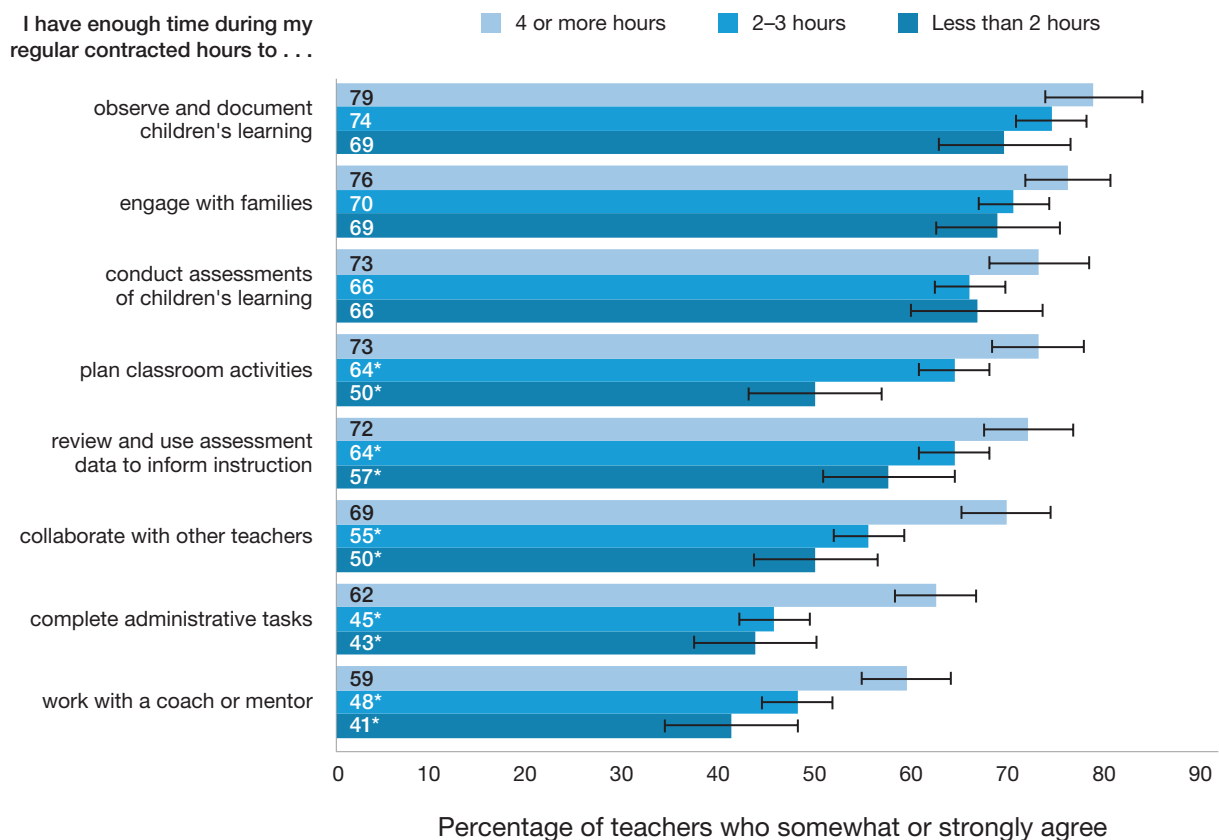
of dedicated planning time in the 2023–2024 school year in the national School Pulse Panel (National Center for Education Statistics, undated)—more pre-K teachers reported having four hours or more of planning time than did elementary grade teachers.

Pre-K teachers with less weekly planning time were more likely to say that they lacked adequate time to complete the tasks we asked about. Teachers with four or more hours of weekly planning time were more likely to say that they had enough time to complete each task during their contracted hours than their counterparts (Figure 9). Even so, about

one-quarter or more of pre-K teachers with four or more hours of weekly planning time said that they lacked time to complete some of the tasks we asked about.

These findings suggest that although more planning time can help teachers complete some necessary tasks (e.g., planning classroom activities or using assessment data to inform their instruction), it might not be sufficient to enable all important activities, such as working with a coach or mentor. About 60 percent of teachers who had four or more hours of

FIGURE 9
Teachers’ Perceptions of Whether They Had Enough Time During Contracted Hours Each Week to Carry Out Planning and Administrative Tasks, by Weekly Hours of Planning Time



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: “Indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements. Think about a typical week this school year (2023–2024). I have enough time during my regular contracted hours to . . .” *N* = 1,404–1,405. Bars represent the proportion of teachers with less than two hours of instructional planning time (*n* = 288), the proportion of teachers with two to three hours of instructional planning time (*n* = 592), and the proportion of teachers with four or more hours of instructional planning time (*n* = 523) who responded that they somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that they have adequate time to perform each task.

* Asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference (*p* < 0.05) between teachers with less than two hours of planning time and teachers with four or more hours of planning time and between teachers with two to three hours of planning time and teachers with four or more hours of planning time. Black bars represent 95-percent confidence intervals.

weekly instructional planning time still said that they lacked adequate time for coaching.

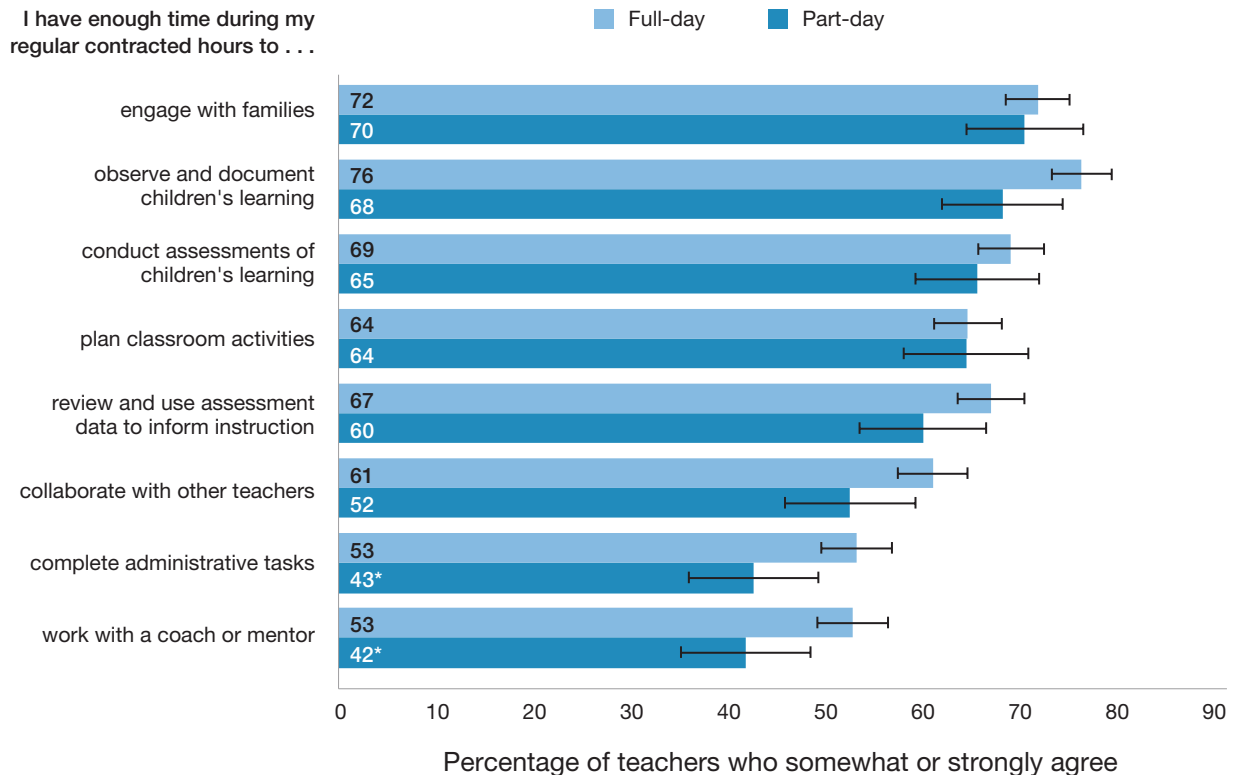
Although full- and part-day teachers reported similar amounts of weekly planning time, on average, part-day classroom teachers were less likely to report that they had adequate time to complete administrative tasks and work with a coach or mentor (Figure 10). This might be because teachers in part-day classrooms are likely to teach two different classes each day and might have a greater volume of some tasks to complete (e.g., more administrative tasks or more assessment data to examine).

Public School-Based Pre-K Teachers' Perception of Instructional Alignment in Their Schools

Teachers of Part-Day Classrooms Were Less Likely to Report Either Vertical or Horizontal Instructional Alignment Practices in Their Schools

Most teachers in full- and part-day classrooms agreed or strongly agreed with many statements about the extent of both vertical and horizontal instructional alignment in their school (Figure 11). More than 80 percent agreed that their programs used a

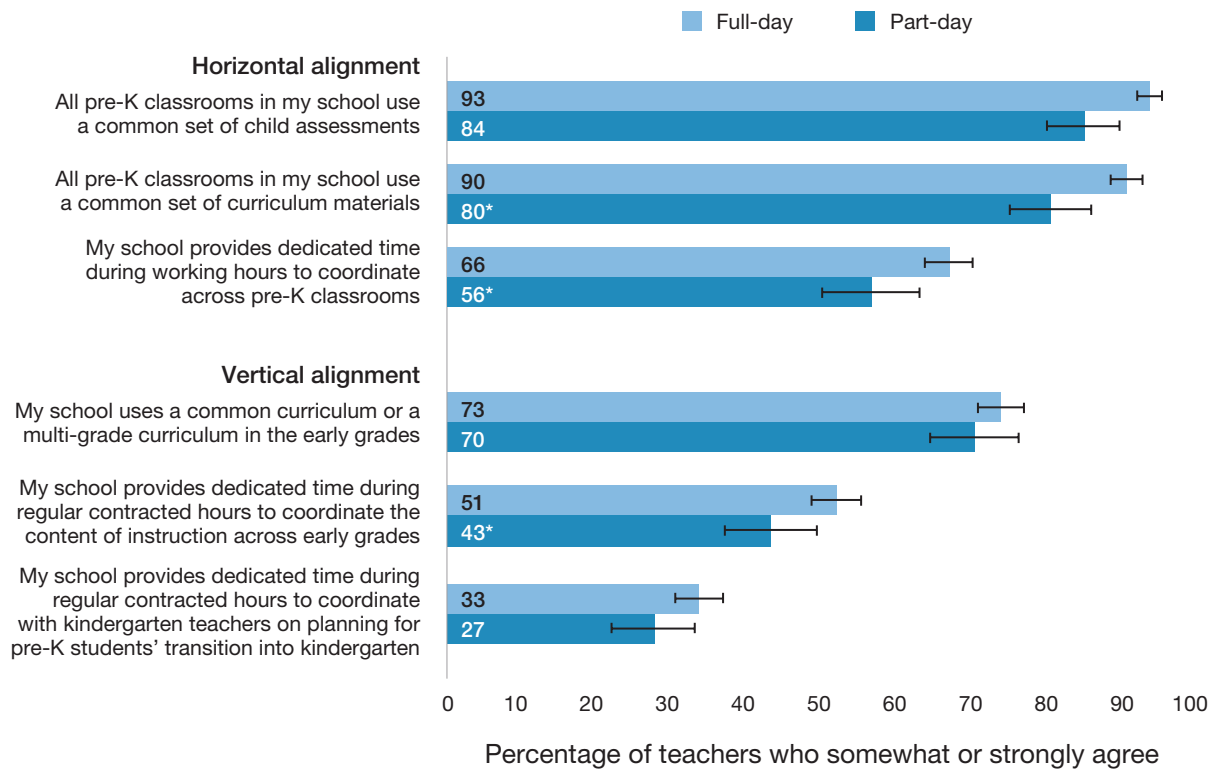
FIGURE 10
Teachers' Perceptions of Whether They Had Enough Time During Contracted Hours Each Week to Carry out Planning and Administrative Tasks, by Teachers in Part-Day and Full-Day Classrooms



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements. Think about a typical week this school year (2023–2024). I have enough time during my regular contracted hours to . . ." *N* = 1,404–1,405. Bars represent the proportion of teachers in full-day classrooms (*n* = 1,062) and the proportion of teachers in part-day classrooms (*n* = 306) who responded that they somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that they have adequate time to perform each task. * Asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference (*p* < 0.05) between teachers in full-day and part-day classrooms. Black bars represent 95-percent confidence intervals.

FIGURE 11

Teachers' Agreement That There Was Vertical or Horizontal Alignment in Their School or District



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements about coordination with other pre-K and/or early grade classrooms in your school and district this school year (2023–2024)." Bars represent the proportion of teachers in full-day classrooms ($n = 1,061$) and the proportion of teachers in part-day classrooms ($n = 306$) who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements above.

* Asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between teachers in full-day and part-day classrooms. Black bars represent 95-percent confidence intervals.

common set of curriculum and assessment materials within pre-K classrooms, and around 70 percent agreed that they use a common curriculum or a multigrade curriculum in the early grades. Fewer teachers agreed that their programs provided dedicated time for coordination across pre-K classrooms (60 percent) or across grades (48 percent). Only 30 percent of teachers reported having dedicated time to coordinate with kindergarten teachers on planning for pre-K students' transition into kindergarten.

More full-day classroom teachers than part-day classroom teachers agreed with all of these statements, although not all of the differences were statistically significant. For example, teachers of full-day classrooms were more likely to agree with statements about horizontal alignment across pre-K classrooms

(using common curriculum materials and assessments in the pre-K classrooms in their school) than were teachers of part-day classrooms. Full-day classroom teachers were also more likely to agree that they had dedicated time to coordinate instruction classrooms in pre-K and across grades (vertical alignment) than were part-day classroom teachers.

Teachers with More Dedicated Planning Time Were More Likely to Report That They Had Adequate Time Dedicated to Vertical and Horizontal Instructional Alignment

Teachers' perceptions of alignment across classrooms and grade levels were also related to the amount of

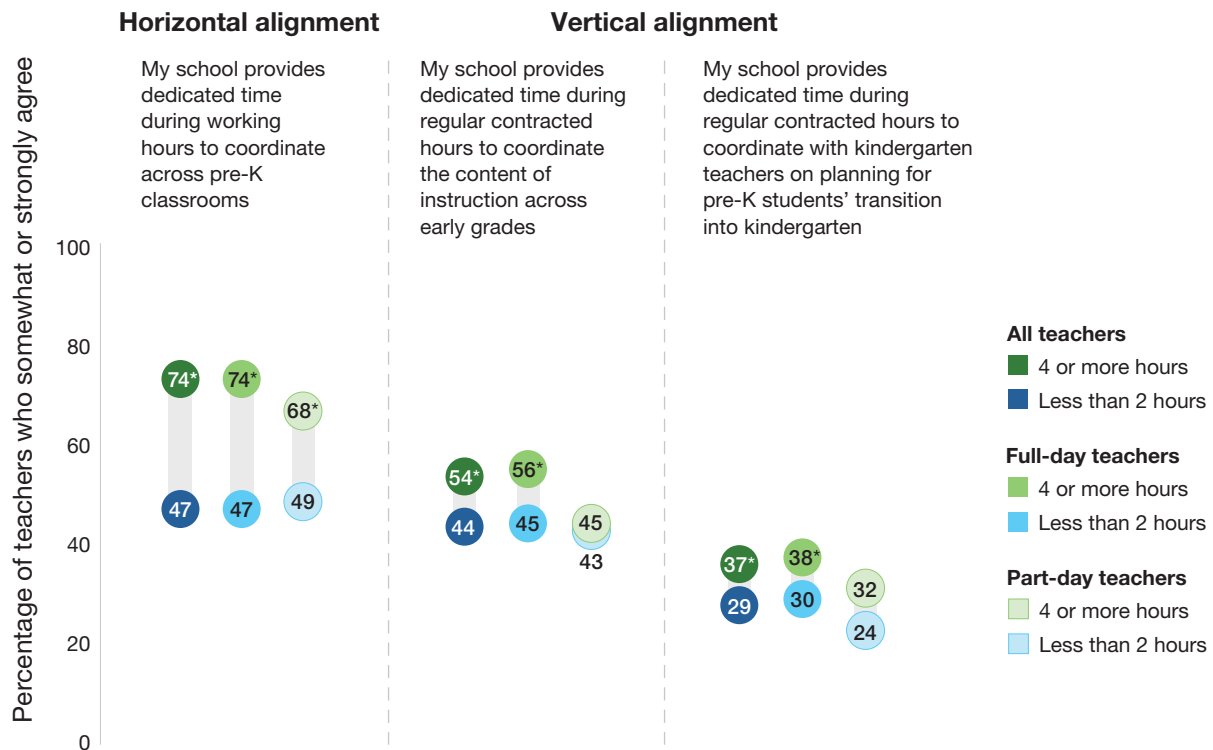
planning time that they reported having. In general, teachers who reported four or more hours of instructional planning time per week were 20 percentage points more likely to somewhat agree or strongly agree that there was dedicated time for coordination across pre-K classrooms and 10 percentage points more likely to agree that there was dedicated time for coordination across grade levels than were teachers with two hours or less of instructional planning time. Full-day teachers with more weekly planning time were more likely to agree that they had dedicated time to coordinate across pre-K classrooms and across grades and that there was dedicated time for kindergarten transition than were teachers with less than two hours of weekly planning time (Figure 12). These patterns were similar for part-day classroom teachers, with the exception of having dedicated time for coordinating across grades.

Public School-Based Pre-K Teachers' Participation in and Perception of Professional Learning in Their Schools

More Than Two-Thirds of Pre-K Teachers Reported Participating in Professional Learning Communities and Receiving Training on Curriculum and Assessment Implementation

Participation in professional learning communities, training on how to use curriculum materials, and training on how to use data to inform instruction were the most commonly reported professional learning activities. Pre-K teachers' reports of participation in these activities are consistent with

FIGURE 12
Teachers' Agreement That Their Schools Had Dedicated Time to Coordinate Across Grades, by Full- or Part-Day Classrooms and Amount of Weekly Planning Time



NOTE: This figure depicts response data to the following survey question: "Indicate your disagreement or agreement with the following statements about coordination with other pre-K and/or early grade classrooms in your school and district this school year (2023–2024)." Circles represent the proportion of all teachers ($N = 1,369$), the proportion of teachers in part-day classrooms ($n = 306$), and the proportion of teachers in full-day classrooms ($n = 1,061$) who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements above, split by whether they had less than two hours of planning time or had four or more hours of planning time.

* Asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between teachers with less than two hours of planning time and teachers with four or more hours of planning time among all teachers, full-day teachers, and part-day teachers.

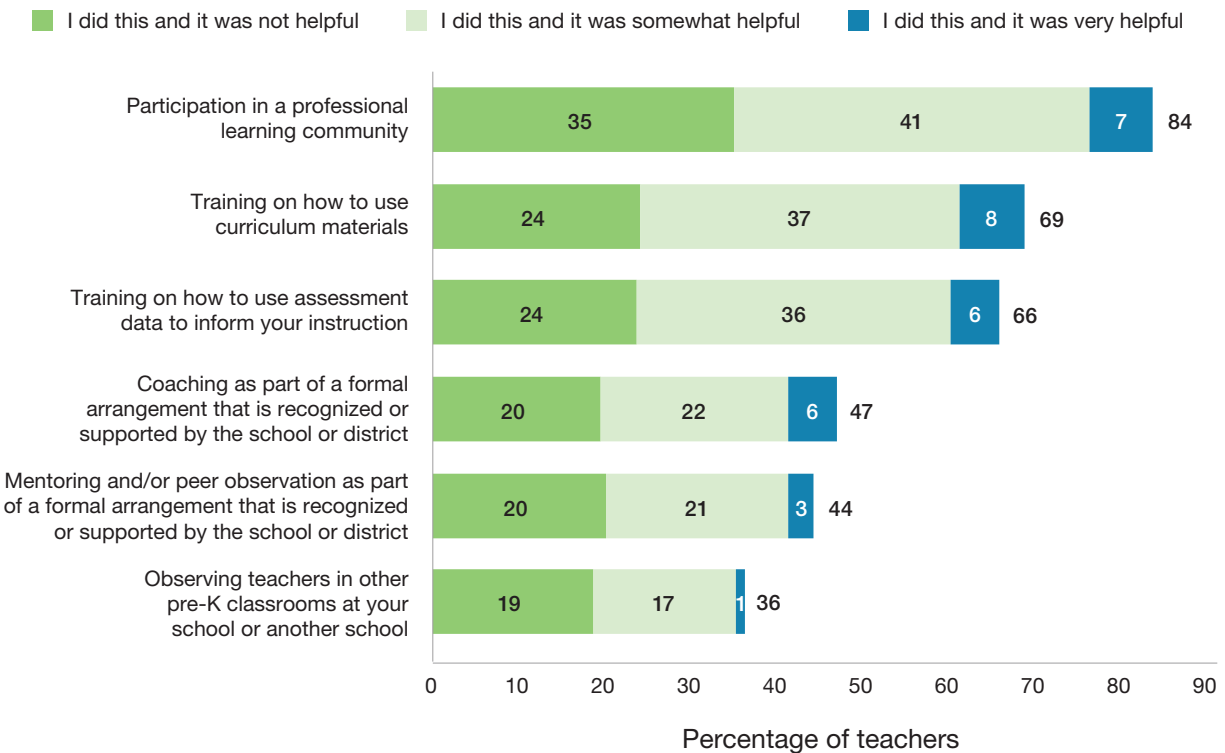
teachers of elementary grades nationally (Doan et al., 2024). Most teachers who participated in each professional learning activity found it somewhat or very helpful, although, for most of the activities we asked about, more teachers found the activity somewhat helpful than found it very helpful (Figure 13). Similar shares of part-day and full-day classroom teachers reported participating in most of these activities, with two exceptions: Teachers in part-day classrooms were less likely than teachers in full-day classrooms to report training on using curriculum materials (60 percent versus 71 percent) and assessment data (55 versus 69 percent).

Less Than Half of Teachers Reported Receiving Formal Coaching

Forty-seven percent of teachers said that they participated in a formal coaching arrangement for professional learning during the 2023–2024 school year, and most of these teachers found it somewhat or very helpful (Figure 13). This finding is consistent with the share of elementary grade teachers who reported participating in any coaching during the 2023–2024 school year (Doan et al., 2024).

Teachers who received coaching, on average, reported seven visits with their coach by the time of survey administration in March 2024 (roughly once per month, on average). More than 70 percent of teachers who participated in coaching worked collaboratively with their coach to determine the focus of

FIGURE 13
Pre-K Teachers’ Participation in Professional Learning Activities by Perception of Helpfulness



NOTE: This figure depicts response data to the following survey question: “Have you participated in any of the following activities related to teaching pre-K this school year (2023–2024) and if so, how helpful were they for improving your instruction?” *N* = 1,391–1,393. Bars represent the proportion of teachers who responded that they did each type of professional development and who found it very helpful, somewhat helpful, or not helpful. Teachers who responded “I did not do this” are not included in this figure. The proportion of teachers who participated in each professional learning opportunity is displayed in the number to the right of the bar. Numbers might not perfectly add to totals because of rounding.

the observation, received feedback from their coach after being observed, and worked with their coach to interpret data about student learning. Relatively fewer teachers—46 percent—ever observed the coach modeling or demonstrating an instructional strategy. Part-day teachers were less likely to participate in coaching than were full-day teachers (39 and 49 percent, respectively).

Summary and Implications

This report presents findings from the first nationally representative survey of public school–based pre-K teachers in the United States. Public school–based pre-K teachers reported using a mix of commercially available curriculum and assessment materials and reported that they believed these materials were high quality. The pre-K teachers particularly endorsed their instructional materials for promoting children’s development in language and literacy, early numeracy, and social and emotional domains. Those teachers who used curriculum materials that target a specific domain and those who used paired curricula and assessments were more likely to report that their most frequently used materials promoted development in the targeted domains and supported their instruction.

Public school–based pre-K teachers reported not having adequate planning time to engage in activities that support instruction, such as planning classroom activities, using assessment data to support student learning, and completing administrative tasks. Teachers who had less than four hours of planning each week were more likely to report having insufficient time for a variety of tasks than teachers who had more than four hours of weekly planning time.

Although most public school–based pre-K teachers reported using common curricula and assessments across pre-K classrooms in their schools (i.e., horizontal alignment) and across early grades (i.e., vertical alignment), relatively fewer teachers had dedicated time to coordinate across grade levels and plan for kindergarten transition. Finally, less than half of public school–based pre-K teachers reported participating in coaching, mentoring, or peer observation.

Teachers in part-day classrooms shared both similarities and differences with those in full-

day classrooms. We found no sizeable differences between teachers in part-day and full-day classrooms in the types of curriculum and assessment materials or perceptions of quality of the materials that teachers used. Part-day classroom teachers were more likely to report that their planning time was inadequate for many of the activities we asked about than full-day teachers. Teachers in part-day classrooms were also less likely to report horizontal and vertical alignment along these dimensions than were teachers in full-day classrooms.

Our findings highlight variation in some structural aspects of public school–based pre-K programs and the ways in which the experiences of teachers who teach in part-day classrooms differ from those who teach full-day classrooms. Using these findings, we offer the following implications.

Teachers Might Need Additional Resources to Support the Use of Curriculum and Assessment Materials, Particularly When Using Multiple Materials

Eighty-two percent of public school–based pre-K teachers used at least two commercially available curriculum materials frequently (at least once per week), and nearly all—90 percent—used at least one commercially available assessment material. Although we suspect this is typical—most elementary grade teachers do not use a single curriculum as it is written (Kaufman et al., 2020)—it is nevertheless surprising because one benefit of a comprehensive curriculum is that teachers can rely on a single set of materials without having to integrate and pace multiple materials (Bredenkamp et al., 2024).

Teachers in part-day pre-K classrooms reported using the same curriculum materials as did full-day classroom teachers. This is unsurprising because many materials are designed to be adaptable to both full- and part-day classrooms (Wasik and Snell, 2019). However, it is likely that full-day and part-day classroom teachers, simply because of the different amounts of time they had with their students, were implementing their materials in different ways (Denker and Atteberry, 2024).

Successful adaptation of materials and the coherent integration of multiple materials requires considerable training and experience (Bredenkamp et al., 2024). Yet teachers in part-day classrooms were less likely to report receiving training on using curriculum materials than teachers in full-day programs. This suggests that guidance on how to best use materials to take advantage of the few instructional hours available to teachers of part-day students might be necessary. For example, the New Jersey Department of Early Childhood provides both full- and part-day suggested schedules for implementation of approved curricula (New Jersey Department of Education, undated).

In addition, part-day classroom teachers used similar assessment materials and assessed their students at a similar frequency as full-day teachers. This could imply that part-day classroom teachers spent a larger share of their time assessing students. Alternatively, it could suggest that teachers were shortening or otherwise adapting the assessments they use. Part-day classroom teachers were substantially less likely to report having participated in professional learning activities to support their use of assessment data than full-day classroom teachers. Together these findings suggest the need for schools, districts, or states to provide training or other supports to help part-day teachers use their assessments efficiently and effectively.

Part-Day Classroom Teachers Might Need More Dedicated Instructional Planning Time

Part-day classroom teachers consistently reported that they did not have adequate instructional planning time for many instructional and administrative tasks. Part-day classroom teachers, many of whom teach two classes per day, reported similar hours of weekly instructional planning time as full-day classroom teachers but lower satisfaction with the amount of planning time they received. One reason for the lower satisfaction reported by part-day classroom teachers could be that they have more tasks to complete, commensurate with the number of classes they teach, or it could reflect that they complete tasks

less thoroughly or completely than they would like. Providing more instructional planning time to these teachers might be necessary to account for the additional load of teaching two classrooms per day.

Providing adequate planning time, training, and other supports for teachers to use their curricula and assessments to support student learning is critical in states and localities engaged in expanding pre-K. Such expansion will require districts to hire, train, and onboard new teachers and make sure that those programs are aligned with early elementary grades. Consideration of how instructional resources might need to be adapted to support the different working conditions in full- and part-day classrooms, and what supports are necessary for teachers to do this well, is critical.

More Focus on Dedicated Time to Promote Instructional Alignment Within Pre-K Classrooms and Across Early Grades Might Be Needed

Alignment of curriculum and assessment materials within pre-K and across early grades is common, but less than half of teachers reported having dedicated time to coordinate within and across grades. Instructional alignment between pre-K and kindergarten classrooms has been shown to improve the long-term academic outcomes of children (Abry et al., 2015; McCormick et al., 2024). School-based pre-K programs can also facilitate smoother transition to kindergarten by familiarizing students with the school routines they will experience in the early grades (Little et al., 2022; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008; Vitello et al., 2020). The potential benefits of school-based pre-K might be difficult to realize without dedicated time to coordinate across grades.

Half of teachers reported using aligned curriculum and assessment materials across pre-K classrooms in their schools, and nearly two-thirds reported using a multigrade curriculum. However, we also found that most teachers did not have dedicated time to coordinate with other pre-K classrooms and with older grades or to coordinate kindergarten transition. Half of teachers did not have dedicated time to coordinate across grades, and two-thirds did

not have dedicated time for kindergarten transition. These findings underscore the need for intentional alignment practices across early grades to realize the benefits of school-based pre-K programs. In the interest of supporting smooth kindergarten transitions, school leaders should consider providing dedicated time for coordination across early grades, adoption of multigrade curricula, and/or dedicated kindergarten transition activities to leverage the benefits of school settings in facilitating instructional alignment across early grades.

Instructional alignment includes many components, such as aligning standards across grades, adopting multigrade curricula, using consistent pedagogical practices, and providing integrated professional learning across early grades (Stipek et al., 2017). Although our findings speak to only a few of the components of instructional alignment, they indicate that many pre-K teachers in public school-based settings perceive the amount of time they have dedicated to achieving instructional alignment to be inadequate.

Future Directions

This report presents information about instructionally related structural aspects of public school-based pre-K programs. The findings raise many questions that would benefit from future research, some of which we will address in future PKTS. Here we offer suggestions for future directions of this research.

How Do Public School-Based Pre-K Teachers Implement Curricula and Assessments, and How Does Implementation Vary Across the Country?

In this report, we described the two most frequently used commercially available curriculum and assessment materials and teachers' perceptions of the quality of these materials. However, this does not capture the full array of materials teachers use or address how teachers implement those materials in their classrooms. Future administrations of the PKTS can explore the full array of commercial, self-created, or

self-purchased materials teachers use and how they combine, modify, or adapt these materials for the students in their classrooms.

A recent study conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recommended that pre-K program leaders adopt and encourage teachers to implement curricula that are coherently integrated, include developmentally appropriate learning goals, have a scope and sequence, provide rich instructional content, and ensure coherent alignment across learning domains (Bredenkamp et al., 2024). Just as leaders in many states have focused on implementing standards-aligned instructional materials in K-12 classrooms, we anticipate that the PKTS can be used to assess the extent to which public school-based pre-K teachers are using curriculum and assessment materials that meet the new vision of high-quality materials offered by the National Academies (Doan et al., 2022).

Classroom activities can also vary widely even when teachers use the same curriculum (Jenkins et al., 2019). Gathering evidence on the materials that public school-based pre-K teachers use and on the activities that they use to engage their students and to promote development in all domains of early learning can help researchers understand the mechanisms underlying any program effects or identify gaps in program implementation.

How Do the Structural Characteristics of Part-Day and Full-Day Classrooms Affect the Quality of Public School-Based Pre-K Programs?

Recent evidence suggests that part-day pre-K programs have smaller impacts on student achievement than do full-day pre-K programs (Atteberry, Bassok, and Wong, 2019; Regional Educational Laboratory, 2021). Our findings indicate that teachers in full- and part-day classrooms use similar curriculum and assessment materials but that part-day classroom teachers have less access to structural resources, such as professional development or planning time to support their implementation of these materials. More descriptive evidence on how teachers in part-day classrooms implement curriculum materials in ways

that might differ from those of teachers in full-day classrooms and on the specific needs of teachers who have multiple classes of children per day can help researchers better understand why part-day programs demonstrate less effectiveness than full-day programs and identify how to close this gap.

Increased understanding of differences in structural resources between part-day and full-day public school–based pre-K programs and how those differences relate to student outcomes can inform policymakers as they consider how best to use available resources to expand pre-K. For example, part-day programs have expanded in Colorado, where state funding supports only 10 hours per week per child. However, citing new evidence that the full-day programs are more effective than the part-day programs, some advocates have pointed out that favoring expansion through part-day slots means that fewer low-income and vulnerable children can enroll in full-day programs (Atteberry, Bassok, and Wong, 2019; Eason, 2024; Schimke, 2024).

What Other Structural Characteristics, Such as Program Oversight, Are Associated with Differences in Public School–Based Pre-K Program Implementation?

Our findings highlight variation in access to instructional resources, such as planning time, professional learning, and instructional alignment practices. However, there are many other structural characteristics that could be associated with variation in how teachers in public school–based programs use instructional materials, such as curricula and assessments, and how their classrooms are or are not integrated into the broader school environment.

For example, oversight of programs can have a large impact on what materials teachers use, the level of autonomy they have to use homegrown or adapted materials, and the amount and type of professional learning to which they have access. Whether teachers teach in mixed-age classrooms, teach predominantly 3-year-olds, teach predominantly 4-year-olds, or teach in “transitional kindergarten” classrooms that

enroll children over age 5 might also be associated with their use of instructional resources.

Finally, the extent to which principals engage with the pre-K classrooms in their schools can affect how integrated teachers feel into their school community and how much intentional instructional alignment occurs across pre-K classrooms and across early grades (Little et al., 2024). Future administrations of the PKTS can include questions about these, and other, structural characteristics that might shed light on how design decisions affect instructional delivery and teacher experiences in school-based pre-K.

Limitations

There are several limitations of our study. First, limited publicly available data on school-based pre-K teachers required us to modify our typical weighting procedure for the American Educator Panels (AEP) surveys. As described in Grant et al., 2025a, although several national data sources provide demographic characteristics for public school–based teachers, those sources do not include pre-K teachers or do not disaggregate pre-K teachers from kindergarten teachers. Typically, we use the National Center for Education Statistics’ National Teacher and Principal Survey person-level demographics to generate survey weights for surveys of K–12 teachers. However, this federal dataset does not include pre-K teachers.

Instead, we used data on public employees in the pre-K/kindergarten occupational group of the American Community Survey (ACS) to generate the weights. Because this data source does not disaggregate pre-K and kindergarten teachers, we assumed that the distribution of race/ethnicity and age of pre-K teachers and kindergarten teachers was the same when generating the weights. We then compared these estimates with those from the 2019 NSECE (NSECE Project Team, 2021) and determined that this assumption was reasonable. We therefore felt comfortable using ACS data for some weights.

Second, we caution readers that the findings in this report are not generalizable to all publicly funded pre-K programs. Publicly funded pre-K programs in the United States are located in private centers and in public schools, but our survey included

responses from only public school–based pre-K teachers. Moreover, in focusing on public school teachers, our sample included teachers in tuition-based programs located in public schools, teachers in locally funded public pre-K programs, and teachers in state-funded or federally funded public programs.

This diversity of funding arrangements is unique to the pre-K sector, which includes no-cost and paid programs offered in public schools. We are unable to disaggregate findings by whether a teacher works for a state-funded pre-K program, a locally funded program, or a program overseen by a different entity. This is because public data that would allow us to identify program funding do not exist, and we did not ask teachers to report the funding source of their program or of the students in their classroom. We did not ask teachers to report the funding source of their program because of the complexity of this question, given the prevalence of blended or braided funding sources, and the low likelihood (according to our survey pilot) that teachers would be able to answer this item with certainty.

Third, because of limited space on the survey, we could not ask about many things related to instructional resources that might also influence the relationships we describe in this report. For example, in this survey, we asked teachers to name the two commercially available curriculum materials that they used most frequently, but nearly one-third reported using more than two commercially available materials. Therefore, we consider our results to be illustrative but not comprehensive. For example, we did not ask about time use for each curriculum material, which we have done in other AEP surveys of K–12 teachers. Understanding the share of instructional time spent using specific materials could help unpack the extent to which teachers are mixing and matching materials. We plan to explore these questions around instructional material use in future surveys.

Finally, our results rely on individual responses to survey items and should be strictly interpreted as descriptive characterizations of patterns in teachers' responses. They are not intended to suggest causality.

How This Analysis Was Conducted

Each pre-K survey respondent was assigned a weight to ensure that estimates reflect the national population of teachers. Characteristics that factor into this process include descriptors at the individual level (e.g., age, race/ethnicity) and school level (e.g., school size, locale). More information about survey sampling and weighting is available in our technical report (Grant et al., 2025b).

This report examines teachers' perceptions of their curriculum materials, assessment materials, and instructional planning time. The survey defined *curriculum materials* as "materials that outline a predetermined plan for the learning experiences through which children acquire knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding." To understand the curriculum materials that teachers used, we asked teachers who reported using commercial curriculum materials, either exclusively or in combination with other materials that they created themselves, to provide the names of the two materials that they used most frequently. We then coded the responses to identify whether teachers used only comprehensive curricula, only domain-specific curricula, or a combination of comprehensive and domain-specific curricula. We were able to code 1,128 of the 1,329 responses provided for curriculum name 1 (85 percent), and we identified the remaining responses as assessments (1.6 percent); supplemental materials, such as those purchased from online resource aggregators like Teachers Pay Teachers (4.3 percent); not specific enough to code (e.g., the respondent provided the name of the publisher but not the specific material; 6.7 percent); or unknown (2.3 percent). For curriculum name 2, we were able to code 777 of 1,036 responses provided (75 percent), and we identified the remaining responses as assessments (2.8 percent), supplemental materials (11.4 percent), not specific enough to code (5.6 percent), or unknown (5.3 percent).

We used a similar approach to analyze the assessments that teachers used. The survey defined *assessments* as "evaluation tools used to measure student learning that have predetermined guidelines for administration, scoring, and interpretation of results. Do not include developmental screenings such as hearing or vision." We were able to code 1,013 of the 1,047 responses provided for assessment name 1 (97 percent). For assessment name 2, we were able to code 473 of 983 responses provided (48 percent).

Two RAND researchers used information on publisher websites to code curriculum and assessment materials as *comprehensive*, which we defined as covering multiple instructional domains (e.g., language and literacy, math, SEL), or *domain-specific*, which we defined as covering a single domain (e.g., language and literacy or math).

We matched teachers' responses to school-level data from the 2020–2021 Common Core of Data to enable us to compare responses for teachers in schools with different demographic profiles. We do not present these analyses because we did not find consistent evidence of variation in responses by school size, school type, urbanicity, student demographics or poverty, teacher education, teacher experience, or teacher union membership.

All estimates presented in this report are sample-wide or subgroup-specific estimates that are unadjusted for statistical controls. We used linear regression models to test whether estimates for a particular subgroup differed at the $p < 0.05$ level from estimates for the reference subgroup in that category without the use of any statistical controls. Because the intent of this report is to provide exploratory, descriptive information rather than to test specific hypotheses, we did not make statistical adjustments for multiple comparisons.

Notes

¹ *Publicly funded programs* include those receiving federal, state, and/or local dollars.

² We examined teacher survey responses for differences by the following respondent characteristics: gender (male or female), race and ethnicity (White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, or other race or ethnicity), and years of teaching

experience. We also examined survey responses by the following school characteristics: locale (urban or not urban), high poverty (which we categorize as schools in which more than 50 percent of enrolled students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch), majority students of color (which we categorize as schools in which more than 50 percent of enrolled students are identified as non-White), and school grade configuration (which we categorize as early childhood only [birth to age five] or elementary [e.g., pre-K to 5th grade, pre-K to 8th grade]).

³ We categorized a small number of written-in materials as supplemental if the material was commercially available but did not meet our definition of a curriculum material. Responses categorized as supplemental included manipulatives or materials purchased on online resource aggregators, such as Teachers Pay Teachers.

⁴ Full-day programs can range from the length of a typical school day to as long as ten hours per day. Part-day programs offer fewer hours than a typical school day and could range from as short as two hours to up to almost five hours per day.

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This report presents findings from the first American Pre-K Teacher Survey (PKTS), a nationally representative survey of pre-K teachers in public schools across the United States, fielded through RAND's American Teacher Panel (ATP). The ATP is one of three survey panels that compose the American Educator Panels (AEP), which are nationally representative samples of teachers, school leaders, and district leaders across the country. The panels are a proud member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Transparency Initiative. If you are interested in using AEP data for your own surveys or analysis or in reading publications using AEP data, please email aep@rand.org or visit www.rand.org/aep.

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