

Lessons Learned from an Illinois Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Children’s knowledge, skills, and behaviors at the start of kindergarten can vary widely. To help teachers, families, and education leaders better understand and support each child’s readiness for school, Illinois has adopted a kindergarten entry assessment, called the **Kindergarten Individual Development Survey**, or **KIDS**.

KIDS

Illinois kindergarten teachers administer KIDS during the first **40 days** of school to report on each child’s skills and behaviors across **14 required measures**:¹

1. Curiosity and initiative in learning
2. Self-control of feelings and behavior
3. Engagement and persistence
4. Relationships and social interactions with familiar adults
5. Relationships and social interactions with peers
6. Expressive language
7. Reciprocal conversation and communication
8. Comprehension of age appropriate text
9. Phonological awareness
10. Letter and word knowledge
11. Classification of objects into groups based on their attributes
12. Number sense of quantity
13. Ability to add and subtract small quantities
14. Knowledge of shapes

Learn more about KIDS and free training and supports, including KIDS Coaches:
<https://www.isbe.net/kids>

To administer KIDS, teachers **observe and document** children’s skills, **gather samples** of student work, and **interview** families and other school staff.



Teachers **reflect** on this evidence, **rate** each child’s development, and **record** the results in an online reporting tool.



Teachers then **review** the data to **inform instructional practice**.



The **Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)** and the **Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest** conducted a study to learn more about the first statewide administration of KIDS in fall 2017.



Interviews

Researchers interviewed nine teachers and nine principals about their challenges using KIDS and their suggestions for improvements.



Quantitative analyses

The study also examined the reliability and validity of KIDS and variations in children’s developmental skills at kindergarten entry.

View the full report at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=4573>

¹ Illinois kindergarten teachers may collect data on more than 50 KIDS measures, but only 14 are state mandated as of 2019.

Illinois teachers and principals made the following recommendations to address the challenges they experienced in administering and using KIDS during fall 2017.



Recommendations for teachers and principals

| Challenges | Recommendations |
|--|---|
| Teachers reported that competing beginning-of-year priorities , such as other assessments, hampered data collection and increased teachers' burden. | Explore how to fit KIDS to the local context. For instance, identify and drop redundant testing. Observe children on all domains three times a year to use KIDS as a report card. |
| Teachers reported difficulty observing children and covering all the required KIDS items , especially in whole-group, teacher-led activities. | Incorporate play-based learning or child-led centers into instruction. These approaches make observing children easier and also have a strong research base. |



Recommendations for district leaders and ISBE

| Challenges | Recommendations |
|--|--|
| Teachers found the language describing the KIDS ratings to be ambiguous, making it difficult to choose between adjacent rating categories . | Enhance trainings and supports by providing more guidance and clarification on the developmental skills observed in the 14 required KIDS measures. |
| Teachers expressed concern about the accuracy of ratings for English learner children . | Take advantage of training and supports on when and how to use alternate KIDS items for special populations. |
| Teachers found the KIDStech online data entry and reporting tool difficult to use. | Simplify the KIDStech interface and separate out required KIDS items to aid data entry. Make reports parent-friendly and enable teachers to enter comments. |
| Principals reported the need to improve training on KIDS data collection and reporting and to offer this training to a wider range of school staff. | Provide activities or lesson plans for each of the 14 required KIDS items to aid data collection. Ensure a range of staff have opportunities to attend training. |
| Teachers and principals reported uncertainty about the intended purposes of KIDS and about using KIDS data to inform practice . | Clarify how teachers and education leaders can use KIDS data at local and state levels. Strengthen training on using KIDS data to inform practice. |



For additional findings, including the quantitative findings, see the full report at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=4573>