

## Children’s knowledge and skills at kindergarten entry in Illinois: Results from the first statewide administration of the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey

At least half of states administer or are developing kindergarten entry assessments. In fall 2017 the Illinois State Board of Education began requiring teachers to report data on every child’s skills at kindergarten entry using the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey, which was adapted from a California kindergarten assessment. This study analyzed the psychometric properties<sup>1</sup> of the 14 required items on the survey after its first statewide administration. It examined average skills and the variation in skill levels at kindergarten entry, as well as their differences across child subgroups (children eligible for the national school lunch program and those not eligible, boys and girls, English learner children and non–English learner children, children eligible for an individualized education program and those not eligible, and children of different races/ethnicities) and school poverty levels. And it interviewed teachers and principals about barriers in administering the survey and suggestions for improvement.

The study used data from the fall 2017 Kindergarten Individual Development Survey, state student records, the federal Common Core of Data, and interviews with nine kindergarten teachers and nine principals. The study team analyzed the quantitative data using psychometric and regression analyses and analyzed the interview data by coding interview transcripts.

### Key findings

- **Analyses of data from the 2017/18 administration of the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey support the presence of two developmental domains: learning and social skills, and academic knowledge and skills.** This finding contrasts with the state’s current reporting of measures in three developmental domains: language and literacy development, cognition: mathematics, and approaches to learning/social-emotional development. State and local education agencies could use the study’s psychometric findings to label and describe the newly identified domains that the survey measures and to re-envision the reporting of survey results.
- **Skills at kindergarten entry were higher for some child subgroups than for others.** For example, for the academic knowledge and skills domain the gap between children who were eligible for the national school lunch program and those who were not eligible is equivalent to 51 days of kindergarten instruction. If these patterns hold in future years, state and local education agencies could consider providing targeted support and resources to reduce these skill differences.
- **Teachers and principals reported multiple challenges in administering the survey—including difficulties observing all skills for every child, choosing between adjacent rating categories, and entering data into the online portal—and had several suggestions for improvement.** If the opinions are representative of broader teacher and principal opinions in Illinois, state and local education agencies could continue to demonstrate potential applications of the assessment data in the classroom and within school systems so that educators feel more invested in survey administration. Additional professional development could be considered to support the observation and rating of children in the context of developmentally appropriate instruction.

1. Psychometric properties refer to the reliability and validity of the instrument. Reliability and validity indicate the extent to which a child’s scores are consistent and accurate.