

State Board releases first-ever snapshot of kindergarten readiness

Kindergarten Individual Development Survey provides critical data to improve early learning supports for all children

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) today released the first-ever statewide snapshot of kindergarten readiness in Illinois. The data cap off the first year of the state’s bold effort to collect readiness data for all kindergartners in the state. The Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) puts critical information about children’s early development into the hands of policymakers, schools, and communities.

The data reinforce the importance of high-quality early learning experiences for all children to get a strong start. The data give communities a powerful tool for advocacy and empower the state to increase investments in our early learners. Current KIDS data, when considered with data on Free and Reduced-Price Lunch eligibility, suggest that students not receiving free or reduced-price lunch in general demonstrate higher readiness when entering kindergarten. ISBE will analyze additional indicators for possible trends or patterns in subsequent years.

“Illinois’ kindergarten teachers and school and district leaders have shown extraordinary leadership in making the first year of KIDS data collection a success,” said State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, Ph.D. “The data give families, teachers, and communities a powerful tool to advocate for the resources and supports all children need. We all have an urgent opportunity and responsibility to align state policy and investments with what children need for long-term academic and social success.”

What is KIDS?

Teachers use the KIDS instrument to observe and document students’ skills, knowledge, and behaviors on 14 required measures in three developmental areas that are key to long-term success: social-emotional development, language and literacy, and math. Teachers observe students’ strengths in the first 40 days of instruction as they go about their daily routines – such as playing, schoolwork, conversations, and following directions – with no interruption to regular classroom activity. School districts have the option of using the tool again in the winter and spring to track students’ developmental progress and of collecting up to 55 measures for a richer, fuller picture of individual development.

ISBE developed KIDS in partnership with a committee of experts; advocates; and practitioners, including representatives from the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies and the Berkeley Evaluation and Assessment Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation and the Joyce Foundation have provided significant support throughout development and implementation.

Statewide implementation in 2017 followed five years of piloting with select districts that engaged more than 50,000 children.

What does KIDS data show?

KIDS provides a measure of children's development upon entering kindergarten. Children enter kindergarten with a wide range of prior child care and education experiences, including in-home care, child care centers, family care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, and privately run programs.

The results of KIDS do not reflect the work taking place in schools prior to or after KIDS data collection. Children's experiences prior to kindergarten do not reflect district or school performance.

KIDS entails teachers using a new observational tool and entering data into a new platform. Most school districts implemented KIDS for the first time in 2017, the first year of required statewide implementation.

ISBE will continue to provide training to ensure consistent observation approaches, data input, and reporting protocols as KIDS implementation moves into year two. KIDS coaches, available at no cost to all districts, provide ongoing professional learning opportunities in support of teachers as they learn and refine their observational skills.

View the statewide data summary at www.isbe.net/kids.

What does KIDS mean for families?

Kindergarten is a critical milestone in a child's long-term educational trajectory. [Research shows](#) that children with higher levels of school readiness at age 5 are generally more successful in grade school, are less likely to drop out of high school, and even earn more as adults.

Parents, guardians, and families are essential for children's healthy development. Research has explored and described the conditions children need to thrive, such as opportunities for imaginative play, being read to, and describing the world around them. Families can visit www.isbe.net/Pages/KIDS_Parents_Families.aspx to see activities to support their children's learning before they start school.

Teachers also can use KIDS to inform conversations with parents and caregivers about students' developmental needs and supporting learning outside of school. Kindergarten teachers have access to their students' data year-round in the KIDStech platform.