



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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May 28, 2019

(X) Action Required
Due Date: October 31, 2019
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BULLETIN NO. 033-19 LEARNING AND TEACHING

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers
School Principals
School District Assessment Coordinators
School District Early Learning Coordinators

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Expectations and Procedures for the Washington Kindergarten
Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)

CONTACT: Amber Havens, WaKIDS Assessment Coordinator
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PURPOSE/ BACKGROUND

This bulletin provides information about the expectations and procedures associated with the administration of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS). WaKIDS is a kindergarten entry transition process that includes three components: Family Connection, Whole-child Assessment, and Early Learning Collaboration. WaKIDS is a requirement of state-funded, full-day kindergarten (RCW [28A.150.315](#)).

Other requirements of state-funded, full-day kindergarten include establishing learning environments that are appropriate for very young children; providing rich, varied experiences, with hands-on learning; and the development of social and emotional skills. For more information about Washington's vision for full-day kindergarten and examples of best-practices visit [The Washington State Full-day Kindergarten Guide](#).

The *WaKIDS Assessment Implementation Quick Start Guide 2019-20*, which includes an outline of the major tasks associated with WaKIDS administration and links to instructions, can be found in the messages section of WaKIDS assessment platform *MyTeachingStrategies*®. A copy can also be obtained by contacting wakids@k12.wa.us.

PURPOSE AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE FAMILY CONNECTION

The purpose of the Family Connection component of WaKIDS is to bring together teachers, students, and families to get to know each other, share information about the student, and support the student's transition to kindergarten. Schools are required to arrange for kindergarten teachers to meet individually with each student's parents or guardians. These individual meetings, which generally take 20–45 minutes, occur at the school or at a mutually-agreed-upon location, before or near the beginning of school.

Though it may be possible to gather some information that can inform the WaKIDS assessment, Family Connection is not intended as a time to assess students, conduct surveys with families or have families complete paperwork. Teachers should welcome and review information that families bring to share, which may include transition reports completed by the family or the student's previous teacher(s).

Legislation enacted in 2013 ([RCW 28A.150.220](#)) permits schools implementing WaKIDS to use up to three days at the beginning of the school year to meet with parents and families as part of Family Connection. Schools are not required to use three full days and may conduct these individual meetings using other schedules such as early release days, evening conferences, prior-to-school meetings, and/or home visits (see the [WaKIDS Family Connection webpage](#) for more detailed information). These family-teacher conferences may be counted as instructional hours to meet the Basic Education Act requirement ([RCW 28A.150.315](#)) that students receive 1000 hours of instruction for state-funded, full-day kindergarten. A 180-day waiver is not required to use up to three days.

PURPOSE AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE WHOLE-CHILD ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the Whole-child Assessment component of WaKIDS is to determine what each child knows and can do at the beginning of the school year. There is a strong correlation between kindergarten readiness and performance on 3rd grade Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA). Students who lack the skillset expected of a 5-year old in math and literacy are more than 30 percent less likely to meet standards on 3rd grade math and English Language Arts SBA. Knowing more about children's entering skills helps teachers support student growth, close opportunity and achievement gaps early, and assure children are on track prior to 3rd grade.

WaKIDS data provides valuable information that can be used to:

- Prompt further investigation about a student's strengths and needs, including consideration for highly capable or special education services.
- Provide targeted supports to students who entered kindergarten with skills and behaviors below expectation.

- Track student growth across the kindergarten year.
- Look for trends in student needs to prioritize paraeducators and resources for targeted support to schools and classrooms.
- Share with specialists and other district staff to guide instructional planning.
- Share with families, including at conferences and with report cards.
- Determine professional development needs for district staff and community preschool teachers.
- Share with school board and community stakeholders.

WaKIDS uses Teaching Strategies *GOLD*[®] for the Whole-child Assessment component. This includes the use of an online platform called *MyTeachingStrategies*[®]. Teachers must assess each kindergarten student in six areas of development and learning using *GOLD*[®]. The assessment window begins with the start of the school year and ends by October 31st at 9 pm.

In addition to its use as an assessment, *GOLD*[®] also provides teachers with information about the developmental next steps for each child, based on progressions for learning that span birth through third grade for each child assessed. Teachers, specialists, and families can use information in *GOLD*[®] to support growth and learning.

Individual students may be at different developmental milestones along this progression during the assessment window, demonstrating skills and abilities more typically associated with younger or older children. Fidelity to the assessment requires that teachers determine the correct level of development along each progression for each student, even if it is outside the widely-held expectations for kindergarten.

WaKIDS is an observation-based assessment, not a pull-out test or a “once-and-done” measure. Students are assessed within the context of daily routines and classroom activities. The assessment should not interfere with instruction. [The Washington State Full-day Kindergarten Guide](#) describes the routines and learning environments that are necessary for observation-based assessment and building the foundational skills that WaKIDS assesses.

Not all kindergarten students receive the majority of their education in the general education classroom; some may have multiple teachers. This does not excuse the student from the assessment. The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act asserts that “a state must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general state and district-wide assessment programs...with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, if necessary.” Because *GOLD*[®] encompasses the developmental stages of children from birth through third grade, with the ability to accommodate individual students who may be at different milestones, an alternate assessment is not necessary for students with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability.

Of the thirty-one *GOLD*[®] assessment objectives, many have indicators that are language-neutral, which means that they do not require students to comprehend or produce English (or any language) for teachers to document their skills and abilities. With the exception of a few objectives, which must be assessed from an English-language perspective, it is ideal to assess in the student's preferred language—the language they choose at particular times to show what they know and can do. Teachers may not have the capacity to assess students in their preferred language, either because they do not speak that language or do not have support from someone who is proficient in that language. In these instances, teachers should document what they observe during the assessment window, even if it is outside the widely-held expectations for kindergarten. Contact the WaKIDS office for suggestions and advice.

The WaKIDS Assessment is the responsibility of the certificated, WaKIDS-trained teacher to whom the student is assigned. Support staff can assist by taking photos and video or by supervising a group of students while the teacher is assessing another group of students.

Even though WaKIDS is only required in the fall, schools may choose to use *MyTeachingStrategies*[®] up to three times a year to show student growth.

PURPOSE AND EXPECTATIONS OF EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATION

The purpose of the Early Learning Collaboration component of WaKIDS is to promote a shared understanding of kindergarten readiness; improve the preparedness of children, families, schools, and communities; and ultimately, provide a smooth transition for children and families.

The expectations for Early Learning Collaboration are outlined in [RCW 28A.150.315](#), which includes developing strong connections to community early learning providers and participating in kindergarten-readiness activities.

Districts should look for, encourage and receive information, like Transition Reports, from preschool and child care programs. Information about a child's prior early learning experience, provided with parent or guardian permission, can offer valuable information to receiving schools and teachers.

School districts are collaborating with early learning providers in a variety of ways, including:

- Participating in shared professional development.
- Sharing PreK–K transition reports.
- Reviewing WaKIDS data.
- Coordinating cross-program visits.
- Co-hosting kindergarten-readiness events.
- Attending local meetings and gatherings of community stakeholders.

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INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

Detailed information about all components of WaKIDS may be found on the [WaKIDS website](#).

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Amber Havens, WaKIDS Assessment Coordinator, at 360-725-6180 or email amber.havens@k12.wa.us. The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631.

This bulletin is also available on [OSPI's Bulletins website](#).

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