



2018 SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

The second annual “Mastering KIDS Summit” was held on December 13, 2018 at the Springfield Wyndham City Centre. More than 250 participants from around the state, including administrators, principals, teachers and other district staff, joined in conversations and peer-to-peer learning as part of a statewide movement to ensure every child in Illinois arrives to kindergarten ready to learn.

A tremendous thanks to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Robert R. McCormick Foundation and the Steans Family Foundation for providing the Support to make the Summit possible.



The Spirit of Play

Richard Cohen, M.A., a 30-year early childhood veteran and consultant, coach and motivational speaker, kicked-off the day with an inspiring session about the importance of play in child development. Richard explained the definition of play has several components—it’s child directed with a “hands-on and body-on” approach and enables autonomy and social and emotional interactions.

Cohen illuminated how the process of play is far more important than the product, and that since children have a limited sphere of life experience, their minds are focused on the now or “present” state. And, humans learn best when their emotions are heightened and experiences are meaningful making singing, dancing, pretending, experimenting and playing even more critical to a child’s learning in the early years.

Making KIDS Work for All Students

Educators gathered for a discussion about how to make KIDS work for all students including Dual Language Learners (students learning more than one language) and those with special needs.

The group emphasized the importance of using KIDS in these circumstances with a spirit of integrity that includes honest and ethical reporting, preferably in a play-based environment where students are most likely to demonstrate their greatest strengths. They also highlighted the benefit of engaging a team, specifically other professionals who may be part of a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), in the KIDS ratings process to ensure strong evidence is captured. And, an important reminder for all teachers is that the KIDS tool has alternate measures for English Learners. If you have questions about when and how to implement the alternative measures, please ask your KIDS Coach!

The discussion was led by Patricia Chamberlain, Instructor, Erikson Institute; Joyce Weiner, Policy Manager, Ounce of Prevention Fund; and Julie Cotter, Adjunct Professor of Early Childhood, Heartland Community College, former Director of Special Education Services for Livingston County.



KIDS 2.0

Participants engaged in a presentation spotlighting the benefits of collecting more than the 14 required measures and administering KIDS multiple times in an academic year. The speakers highlighted ways to use KIDS to improve instruction by planning, teaching, assessing, reflecting and applying lessons learned. In addition, KIDS can better support students from early childhood programs through third grade

by providing common definitions and expectations of student development. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of smooth transitions to kindergarten, and provides a platform for engaging families in their student's learning at school and at home.

Speakers: Lisa Hood, PhD, Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher, at the Center for the Study of Education Policy Department of Educational Administration & Foundations, Illinois State University; Melissa Figueira, Senior Policy Association, Advance Illinois.

Ask A Coach

Seven regional KIDS Coaches across the state are available to provide districts and teachers with additional training and technical support.

You can find more information about how to contact the KIDS Coach assigned to your district and the services available at www.isbe.net/Pages/KIDS-Coach-Map.aspx.



Best Practice Sharing

KIDS Coaches Lindsay Bohm, Sandra Ehrat, Peggy Potthoff, Stephanie Plourde and Patricia Dougherty facilitated a session focused on sharing best practices. Topics covered ranged from building inter-rater reliability to rating the most difficult measures and implementing play-based instruction. Highlights included:

- **Building Inter-rater Reliability**

Some districts have realized increased success in inter-rater reliability through professional learning sessions led by a KIDS Coach focused on a “deep dive into the measures.” Other districts checked consistency and variability in ratings by collecting and exchanging evidence with multiple teachers.

- **Rating Difficult Measures**

Participants shared stories of success by utilizing an “all hands on deck” approach to collecting evidence on the KIDS measures. Soliciting the assistance of PE, Music or other special teachers, paraprofessionals and other adults who work with kindergarten students on a regular basis can provide insights and information on measures when the kindergarten teacher may be struggling to gather “enough” evidence.

- **Implementing Play-Based Instruction**

Participants shared how they are currently incorporating play in the classroom. A common theme was that most teachers believe they are using play, but the purposeful play that many experts are advocating for will require deeper understanding and support from Administrators and elementary grade teachers.

- **Using Observational Assessments**

The KIDS Coaches highlighted that KIDS is a very different “assessment” than many teachers are familiar with administering. KIDS does not require teachers to pick a specific day or week to complete the assessment or “check a box.” It is an approach of gathering information and making decisions to support student development that will eventually become second nature.

More Than Meets the Eye: The Power of Observation

Richard Cohen led a session on observation with the guiding principle that observation bridges theory and practice. He talked about the role that each of our own biases can play in observation, and the importance of self-reflection to continually improve. He quoted educator and author Lisa Delpit in saying “We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs.” Richard then engaged participants in a group exercise to identify facts versus inferences as a way to illustrate the role that bias can play in observation, and how critical it is to ensure that teachers are only documenting facts.



Strengthening Partnerships with the Early Childhood Community

Pat Chamberlin, Instructor, Erikson Institute; Stephanie Drake, Principal, Gary School, West Chicago SD33; Erin Stout, Program Director, Peoria Heights Bright Futures; and Katie Cobb, Principal, Early Childhood Programs, Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center, Peoria SD150 hosted a session on how to use KIDS to build partnerships with the early childhood community to strengthen student outcomes.

The panelists advocated for teachers to be the voice of what they need and to make time to get out of their own classrooms, visit others and talk to early childhood educators to build stronger lines of communication and a richer information exchange. They also recommended that teachers make time to connect with the broader community to raise awareness and inform people about the importance of early childhood education and play-based learning. Participants suggested that teachers nominate “Parent Ambassadors” to help educate other parents and think creatively about how community partners, including local businesses and pediatrician’s offices, can be an outlet for sharing information.



Power of Translating Data to Improve Classroom Outcomes

Dr. Jill Bowdon, P.h.D., Researcher, American Institutes for Research and the Midwest Regional Education Laboratory led participants in a session on understanding the uses and misuses of KIDS, interpreting KIDS results, and creating local goals and action plans. Dr. Bowdon highlighted that KIDS identifies what children already know and what they should learn next with concrete and tangible examples. She recommended that teachers look at the data from different angles including subgroups at the classroom, district or state level to obtain deeper insights for action planning.

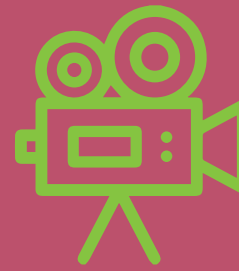


Zen and the Art of Early Childhood Education

Richard Cohen shared personal experiences from more than 30 years of working in early childhood education and solicited stories from session participants. He reflected on why teachers make the choice to spend their lives giving young people meaningful learning experiences. He equated being an early learning teacher to taking a leap of faith. Unlike other teachers, early learning teachers rarely see the fruits of their labor pay off because students move on to elementary school. It's not often that students come back to visit their pre-K teacher to say "thanks for everything you taught me when I was four" the way students commonly come back to pay respects to a grade school or high school teacher and say thank you for everything they learned. Early childhood teachers have to trust that what they are doing will be important for students long-term. Richard closed the session with a candle lighting ceremony to demonstrate the powerful difference that one person by spreading their brilliance to others time and time again.

Administrator Roundtable

Participants joined an open dialogue with Jason Helfer, Ph.D, Deputy Superintendent for Education, and Carisa Helfer, Director of Early Childhood Education, on a range of KIDS topics including whether ISBE plans to change the mandatory requirement for KIDS, how the agency is using the first round of KIDS data, getting stronger input and buy in from Superintendents, using KIDS to streamline other assessments at the district level and engaging the early childhood community.



DOCUMENTARY ON PLAY

Kindergarten: Where Play and Learning Can Meet was produced in partnership with WTTW Channel 11 and the Midwest Early Childhood Education Research Alliance at the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest.

The 25-minute documentary explores the advantages associated with a play-based approach in kindergarten and features stories of how two Illinois school districts- Valley View School District 365U and Elgin Area School District U-46- made the transition to play-based learning. The documentary also includes scientific findings about the cognitive and social-emotional benefits of play from experts Dr. Roberta Golinkoff (University of Delaware), Dr. Christina Weiland (University of Michigan), and Dr. Eboni Howard (American Institutes for Research).

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/events/archived_events/2018/december-12.aspx

District Action Planning

Wendy Uptain, Program Officer for the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, facilitated a working session for representative(s) from a district to develop local KIDS action plans. Participants started by thinking through a KIDS logic model, identifying a problem statement and the desired long-term outcomes they want to achieve. They then developed immediate goals, timelines, progress indicators and other support needed to be successful.

KIDS SUMMIT & TOOLKIT RESOURCES



Presentations and support materials from the KIDS Summit sessions are available on the KIDS website at www.isbe.net.

Additionally, you will find toolkit resources addressing many of the topics highlighted at the Summit, including the importance of play and strategies for administering observational tools.

If you have any questions regarding KIDS resources, please contact Terri Lamb, Principal Consultant for ISBE, at tlamb@isbe.net.