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**State Board of**  
**Education**

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# 2020-2021 Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) Report



**Kindergarten Individual Development Survey**  
Every Illinois Child Ready for Kindergarten



**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education

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## KIDS IN A TYPICAL YEAR

The Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) is the result of years of planning and collaboration between the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the early childhood community, advocates, educators, and policymakers.<sup>1</sup> KIDS was developed in alignment with Illinois state standards, including the Illinois Early Learning and Developmental Standards, Illinois Early Learning Standards–Kindergarten, Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and Social and Emotional Learning Standards. KIDS was piloted for five years before statewide implementation in fall 2017.

In typical school years, ISBE requires kindergarten teachers to collect observations within the first 40 days of school on a minimum of 14 required measures. Taken in the aggregate, the results from those 14 common measures at the beginning of the kindergarten year constitute a validated sample of “readiness” in four critical learning domains linked to children’s success in the early elementary grades -- approaches to Learning and Self-Regulation, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, and Math. This subset of 14 measures provides an annual *proxy* of readiness at the beginning of kindergarten for a group of students (classroom, school, district, and/or state).

KIDS was designed as an observational tool to help teachers, administrators, families, and policymakers better understand the developmental readiness of children entering kindergarten. Each KIDS measure consists of a progression of developmental levels typical for kindergarten-aged children. Teachers indicate the highest developmental level they observe each child mastering for each measure within the KIDS tool. The KIDS tool can be used multiple ways, up to three times per year, to measure development, growth, and progress throughout the kindergarten year. Teachers and districts can choose to gather additional measures; collect observations on full domains; and gather information on specific populations, such as English Learners, using targeted measures. In fact, the full KIDS instrument, which is always available to teachers and districts, includes 55 measures across 11 learning domains, each containing multiple measures. The more measures, full domains, and administrations conducted, the more accurate the picture of student development at the individual student and group levels.

## KIDS DURING COVID-19

ISBE required districts to collect the same 14 required measures in fiscal year 2021 as in past years. However, the State Superintendent of Education and ISBE provided the following guidance in [KIDS FAQ - COVID](#)  :

- The 40-day observation window and data collection period began on the first day of in-person instruction for each district in school year 2020-21.
  - Data collection windows were unique to each school district.
  - ISBE did not require the completion of KIDS for students who remained remote for the entire school year.
    - **Yet**, many teachers chose to observe and rate their students on some or all of the 14 measures while in remote learning situations.
- The KIDStech data entry window remained open through June 30, 2021, to allow maximum time to enter student ratings.
- KIDS was required for kindergarten students who attended in a hybrid or fully in-person situation, since teachers had both access and opportunity to observe students and collect evidence of skills and behaviors throughout the day.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information about the timeline and process of developing KIDS, see: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/KIDS-IL-School-Readiness-Initiative.pdf>

ISBE requested that teachers and districts do their best to use KIDS to evaluate the needs of their students at a time when individualized and equitable supports was more critically important than ever.

### Why Not Readiness?

One major change to this year's report is the elimination of a statewide "readiness" score. Given that school districts collected data at different times throughout the course of the school year, what was observed and collected did provide more granular insight to schools and classrooms. The data were relevant for educators to understand their students' knowledge and help guide lesson planning but were not appropriate to be used as a statewide indicator of readiness. For instance, students who had the opportunity to attend kindergarten in-person for the first half of the year would have been observed and had data entered based on the skills they displayed at the beginning of the school year, as is typically done. However, a child who attended school remotely until January, then attended in-person for the remainder of the school year would developmentally be at a different place than they would have been at the start of the year because some growth and development has taken place within those five or six months.

Prior to statewide KIDS implementation in fall 2017, Illinois did not use a uniform or consistent method to determine whether children entering kindergarten possessed the skills and developmental strengths associated with long-term success in school. State leaders and policymakers began to use KIDS data in early 2020 to inform opportunities for improving early childhood experiences prior to kindergarten.

### This Year's Numbers

The data for the 2020-21 school year has been posted on our KIDS webpage. Districts can view their data and the state-level data. However, the data does not measure readiness because it was collected over the entire school year and districts entered the ratings at different points in the school year.

### Participation Rates and Other Impacts

As stated previously, this year's data cannot and should not be used to indicate "readiness," which may be a noticeably missing piece of this report. Readers may notice that there are other areas that appear different from reporting in past years. Some of those reporting differences are highlighted here.

**State-Level Data Line:** In past years, KIDS observation and data entry windows were set based on the first 40 days of attendance for each district, which provided a consistent developmental window right at kindergarten entry. That data provided the state with the opportunity to generate state readiness percentages. School districts collected data at different times throughout the course of SY 2021. Generating aggregate data points to describe the development of kindergarten students on a statewide level using data collected at any point throughout the year provides an inaccurate snapshot of student strengths and challenges. The state-level data should **not** be used as an indicator of readiness, nor should the data be compared to state-level or specific demographic group readiness percentages from previous years. As a reminder, the data were **not** gathered during the same 40-day period at the beginning of kindergarten but gathered *across the entire school year* at various times, depending on when students were in-person.

**KIDS District-Level Participation Rates:** School districts had the flexibility during this pandemic year to make decisions about holding in-person instruction based on the local health and safety concerns in their communities. For the most part, families across the state also were given the opportunity to keep their children in remote learning situations. Some of the 14 state required measures were difficult or impossible to collect in remote

situations because KIDS is an observational survey, with the expectation that teachers will have the opportunity to observe their students play, learn, and interact in-person. Participation rates are calculated based on enrolled versus fully rated students. Hence some district participation rates were significantly impacted due to those remote learning situations.

**Number of Enrolled versus Fully Rated Students:** Similar to the impacts on district-level participation rates, the enrollment versus fully rated numbers this year were also negatively impacted. Many teachers were unable to rate students remaining in remote situations on all 14 measures. Such students were not included in the data set, which has implications for participation rates. Districts were offered the *option* of submitting Student Exemption Reason Codes to offset the impact of remote learning on participation rates but, due to competing priorities, not all districts opted to submit KIDS student exemptions.

## AVAILABLE SUPPORTS

Use of KIDS is required in statute. Now that we are all beginning to adjust to a sense of normalcy, it may be time for individual districts to reassess their goals and ideas for using KIDS data locally. Best practices and local use examples have been cited in this report, but there are other ways districts can access information on how to use KIDS. Keep in mind that all the KIDS coaching, supports, and resources are available to school districts for free!

- **Website:** More information about different versions of the KIDS tool; other KIDS implementation resources, observational tools, and tips; KIDS guidance; and more can be found at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/EarlyChildhoodKIDS.aspx>.
- **Coaches:** The KIDS Coaching and Training Project staff (KIDS coaches) offer individualized classroom teacher and team support that builds on strengths and facilitates high-quality practice through on-site visits, ongoing communication, and reflective and embedded professional learning opportunities. In addition, educators can find professional learning opportunities on a range of topics relating to KIDS. Districts can find a full list of potential learning opportunities they may be interested in in [Learning Opportunities with KIDS Coaches](#) or find their regional coach contact information at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/KIDS-Coach-Map.aspx>.
- **Family and Caregiver Engagement Resources:** KIDS focuses on the skills and behaviors that are very important for a child's long-term success. Information from KIDS also can help families learn more about what their child is learning in kindergarten and what they can do at home to continue to support their child's healthy growth and development. Materials and resources are available to assist teachers in explaining KIDS to families and the community and can be accessed on the KIDS webpages, as well as through <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/KIDS-Families.aspx>.
- **NEW KIDS RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS!** We're excited to announce that ISBE has released [14 joy-filled videos](#) with ideas for families and caregivers to engage with their 3- to 5-year-olds at home. Each video aligns with one of the 14 required measures that are part of the [KIDS](#). The videos can help families be sure their child is learning the skills that are needed to be successful in kindergarten. [Check them out here!](#)
- **Training Calendar:** KIDS webpages now include a KIDS Calendar of Professional Learning Opportunities specific to the needs of teachers and districts with kindergarten programs and for those who are interested in knowing more about KIDS. Those scheduled events are continually updated and can be accessed through the KIDS webpages or through <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/KIDS-Events.aspx>.
- **Assessment Webinars:** The Assessment Department at ISBE conducts regular webinars on all required assessments. Most include information on KIDS implementation, administration, and resources. Those webinars can be accessed through the ISBE website and through [Assessment webinars](#).

For questions about this year's report or about KIDS, please email [kids@isbe.net](mailto:kids@isbe.net) .