



Kindergarten Individual Development Survey
Every Illinois Child Ready for Kindergarten

Fall 2021

Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey Report



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Overview of KIDS

In fall 2017, all kindergarten teachers in Illinois began observing their students on a common set of developmental measures using the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS). KIDS was designed to help teachers, administrators, families, and policymakers better understand the developmental readiness of children entering kindergarten. 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 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. The 14 required measures make up a sample from four critical learning domains linked to children's success in the early elementary grades: Social-Emotional Development (SED), Approaches to Learning and Self-Regulation (ALT-REG), Language and Literacy Development (LLD), and Cognition: Math (COG: MATH). The measures in SED and ALT-REG are combined to create the SED Readiness rating. These select measures provide a proxy of kindergarten readiness at the beginning of kindergarten for a group of students.

KIDS is completed in three steps. The first step is observation and documentation. Observations should occur over time and in typical settings. Those settings can be in the classroom or home, but the teacher who has been trained on KIDS and is consistently in class with the students will make final decisions on ratings and will enter the data. Other staff (teaching assistants, volunteers, reading specialists, social workers, PE instructors, etc.) and even family members can collect evidence and provide that information to the teacher to assist in determining a rating. Educators should use a variety of documenting techniques like anecdotal notes, photographs, work samples, etc. The second step is rating the measures. A child must demonstrate the skill, behavior, or knowledge consistently over time and in different situations or settings. A teacher considers such factors when determining a child's mastery of the developmental level. The last step is for a teacher to review the ratings that were entered and complete any missing information provided by prompts in the survey tool. The [KIDS User's Guide & Instrument tool](#) provides more detailed explanations regarding the steps for completing the survey tool.

Statewide implementation of KIDS began in fall 2017 and followed five years of piloting with select districts that engaged more than 50,000 children. In fall 2021, the statewide requirement for school districts to implement KIDS was further codified in rule and law (105 ILCS 5/2-3.64a-10)(b). Full text of the law can be found in the [School Code](#). School districts that enroll kindergarten students have continued to implement KIDS each year since 2017; however, teachers conducted KIDS observations throughout the entire duration of the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of in the first 40 days of school as typically required. Therefore, the KIDS data from the 2020-21 school year are not comparable to other years. Additionally, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) added all four years of comparable KIDS data (2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2021-22) to the Illinois Report Card to boost accessibility of the data for educators, parents, advocates, policymakers, and communities.

In October 2022, ISBE launched the Equity Journey Continuum, an informational tool for districts to track their progress toward closing gaps in student achievement, opportunities, and supports. ISBE developed the tool using national research and examples from other states and refined the tool through a pilot with districts across Illinois. The Equity Journey Continuum analyzes [data](#) in three areas that are aligned to the ISBE Strategic Plan: Student Learning, Learning Conditions, and Elevating Educators. Each area includes a suite of data elements that, together, describe students' access to opportunities, resources, and supports. The tool includes kindergarten readiness as one of 10 data elements in the Student Learning area. There are no mandates or requirements associated with the Equity Journey Continuum, and it only uses data already collected and

reported by districts. The tool is informational only, designed to empower school communities to make informed decisions about their district’s equity strengths, speak effectively about where to invest their equity efforts and resources, and develop creative strategies for moving forward in their unique equity journey. A high-level view of each district’s Equity Journey Continuum is available on the [Illinois Report Card](#). District administrators have access to the underlying data through a private portal called the Data Review and Verification Tool, accessible via [MyIRC](#).

What was different this year?

In fall 2021, teachers returned to observing students and collecting KIDS evidence in the first 40 days of student attendance. ISBE also enhanced security features for KIDS, including the addition of a single sign-on system for access to the KIDStech platform (which is the data system used to collect KIDS data).

What is meant by ‘demonstrating readiness’?

Early childhood is a time of rapid development in multiple areas – physical, emotional, cognitive, and social growth – so determining a child’s readiness for kindergarten involves more than observing a child recite shapes, numbers, and colors. Many factors determine a child’s “readiness” for kindergarten.

In the case of KIDS, kindergarten teachers observe students during the first 40 days of school as they move through their regular daily class and school activities. The chart below shows the 14 required readiness measurements.

Approaches to Learning and Self-Regulation (ATL-REG)	Social and Emotional Development (SED)	Language and Literacy (LLD)	Cognition: Math (COG: MATH)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity and initiative in learning (ATL-REG 1) • Self-control of feelings and behavior(ATL-REG 2) • Engagement and persistence (ATL-REG 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships and social interactions with familiar adults (SED 3) • Relationships and social interactions with peers (SED 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and use of language (expressive) (LLD 3) • Reciprocal communication and conversation (LLD 4) • Comprehension of age-appropriate text (LLD 6) • Phonological awareness (LLD 8) • Letter and word knowledge (LLD 9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classification (COG: MATH 1) • Number sense of quantity (COG: MATH 2) • Number sense of math operations (COG: MATH 3) • Shapes (COG: MATH 6)

Children who display behaviors and skills within the expected range for children at kindergarten entry in *all three* developmental areas -- social-emotional development, language and literacy, and math -- are considered to have **demonstrated kindergarten readiness**. Students who display expected skills and behaviors in *two, one, or none* of the three developmental areas **may require additional support**.

The KIDS 14 State Readiness Measures provide a *proxy* of “kindergarten readiness,” as they include a narrow set of specific skills assessed by a small number of selected measures. This subset does not provide *comprehensive* coverage of the Illinois Early Learning Development Standards, Illinois Early Learning Standards Kindergarten, or research-based developmental constructs that are represented in all of the KIDS domains. However, all KIDS measures and domains are aligned to those same educational standards. The state-required administration of KIDS does not allow for tracking students’ developmental progress, but districts or teachers have the option to track student growth across the school year by administering KIDS in the winter and/or the spring to provide information on the students’ development, skills, and behavior displayed later in the year.

Using only the 14 state-required measures at the 40th day of attendance will not yield KIDS ratings that are appropriate for determining the development of an individual student. Teachers would need to collect observations on and rate all measures in a specific domain to get a more comprehensive view of group-level development or for information on individual student development. These would include observations in all 29 measures in the five Readiness Domains or the 55 measures in all 11 Readiness Domains. In addition, teachers and districts that wish to show student growth across the school year would implement KIDS multiple times per year -- at the 40th, 105th, and 170th days of attendance. However, the 14-measure subset does provide a directional indicator of children’s strengths and developmental areas that need more support and can prove valuable in tailoring curriculum and instruction for currently enrolled kindergarten students. For example, many districts choose to increase the local utility of KIDS data long before the state report results are released. As soon as teachers lock in students’ ratings on the 14 required measures, they can generate group level reports in KIDStech that could inform classroom practice with currently enrolled kindergarten students. Whole class reports provide a high-level overview of where a class/school/building/district is on the developmental continuum. Teachers and administrators can use whole class reports to get a sense of some strengths and areas for support to guide classroom or district-level planning. Some districts also pull group reports to see additional information by a specific student subgroup, such as gender or age.

It is important to note that the development of individual children of similar chronological age varies and that children enter kindergarten with an endless range of early experiences. A child who is not demonstrating readiness in a particular measure or developmental area at the same time as their peers is not necessarily a reason for concern. Developmental skills build upon other developmental skills. Providing appropriate supports allows children the opportunity to get back on track – something easier to do in the early years.

Also worthy of note is that the KIDS tool accommodates diverse learning, communication, and language styles, which allow children to demonstrate skills and abilities in a variety of ways, such as use of a communication board, sign language, or their native language. Bilingual kindergarten classrooms in Illinois provide instruction on phonological awareness and letter and word knowledge in different ways from classrooms with predominantly English-only instruction. For this reason, the KIDS Language and Literacy Development measures in the 14 required measures can be modified for use in bilingual classrooms or with students identified as English learners (ELs). Refer to [Guidance for Dual Language Users](#) on the ISBE KIDS webpage for specific information on how and when teachers would utilize these alternate measures.

KIDS is...

- An informational tool for teachers to guide instruction, adapt curriculum, and encourage play-based learning experiences.
- Information families can use to support their child’s unique learning and development needs.

- Data to inform policy decisions and leverage funding.
- A tool to foster greater alignment between early childhood programs, community services, and kindergarten.

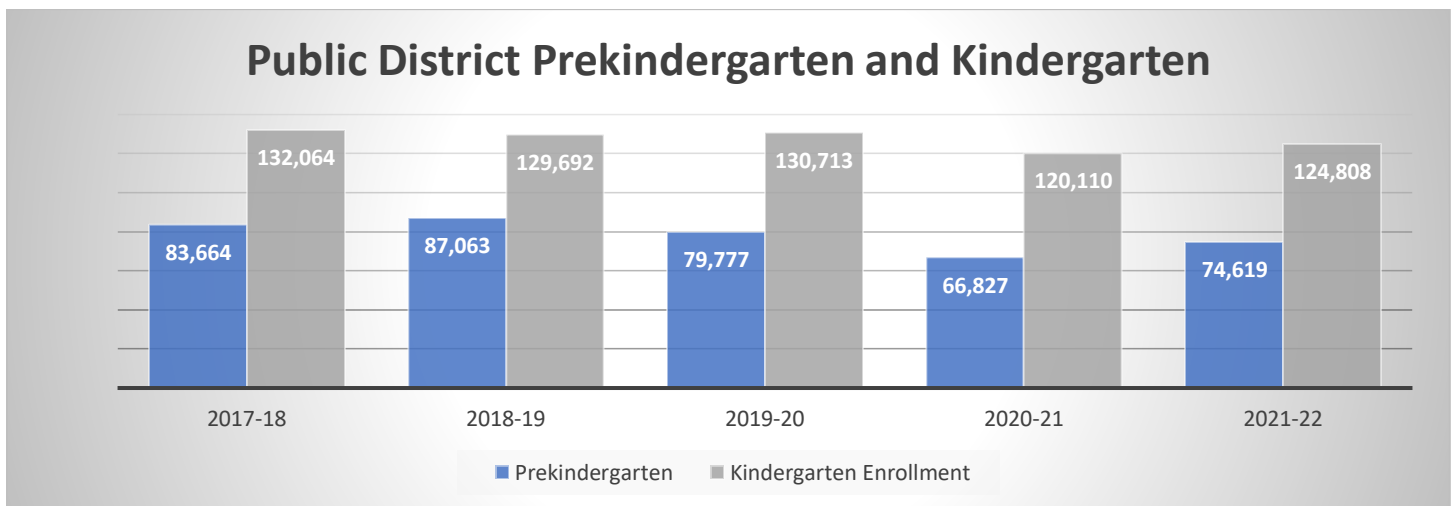
KIDS is not...

- A tool for enrollment or classroom placement decisions.
- An indicator of the effectiveness of individual early childhood providers.
- An appropriate tool to use for teacher evaluation.
- An accountability metric for schools or classrooms.

Fall 2021 Statewide Findings

Student Enrollment

We know that high-quality early learning experiences boost kindergarten readiness. The enrollment data ISBE has received from public school districts for preschool programs indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically reduced the number of students enrolled in preschool programs statewide from 79,777 in fall 2019 to 66,827 in fall 2020 – a 16% drop. Like kindergarten enrollment, pre-k enrollment began to rebound in fall 2021, increasing 10% to 74,619. Kindergarten enrollment also was impacted by COVID-19. The number of students enrolled in kindergarten in the fall of 2019 (130,713) to fall of 2020 (120,110) showed an 8% decrease. Kindergarten enrollment in the fall of 2021 rebounded 4% from 2020.



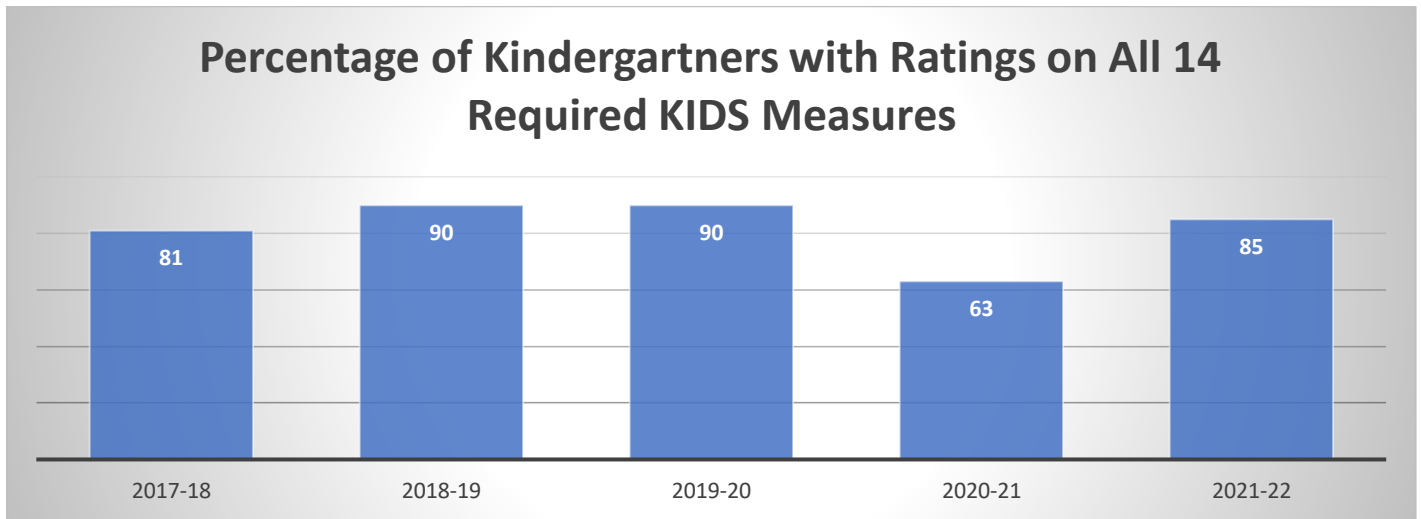
Student Participation

Eighty-five percent of kindergarten students received ratings on all of the 14 required measures in the fall 2021 administration of KIDS. Among the 15% of students not included in the fall 2021 KIDS data in this report, 11,513 students did not have a response record for unknown reasons, 7,991 students only had a response record for part of the 14 required measures, and 485 students were provided an applicable exemption for rating to not be completed.

The 85% participation rate in fall 2021 is comparable to pre-pandemic years.

In the 2020-21 school year, ISBE required districts to collect the same 14 measures as in past years, except for students who remained remote for the entire school year. The KIDStech data entry window remained open

through June 30, 2021, to allow maximum time to enter student ratings. However, the pandemic did result in significantly reduced participation – another reason why the fall 2020 KIDS data are not comparable to other years.

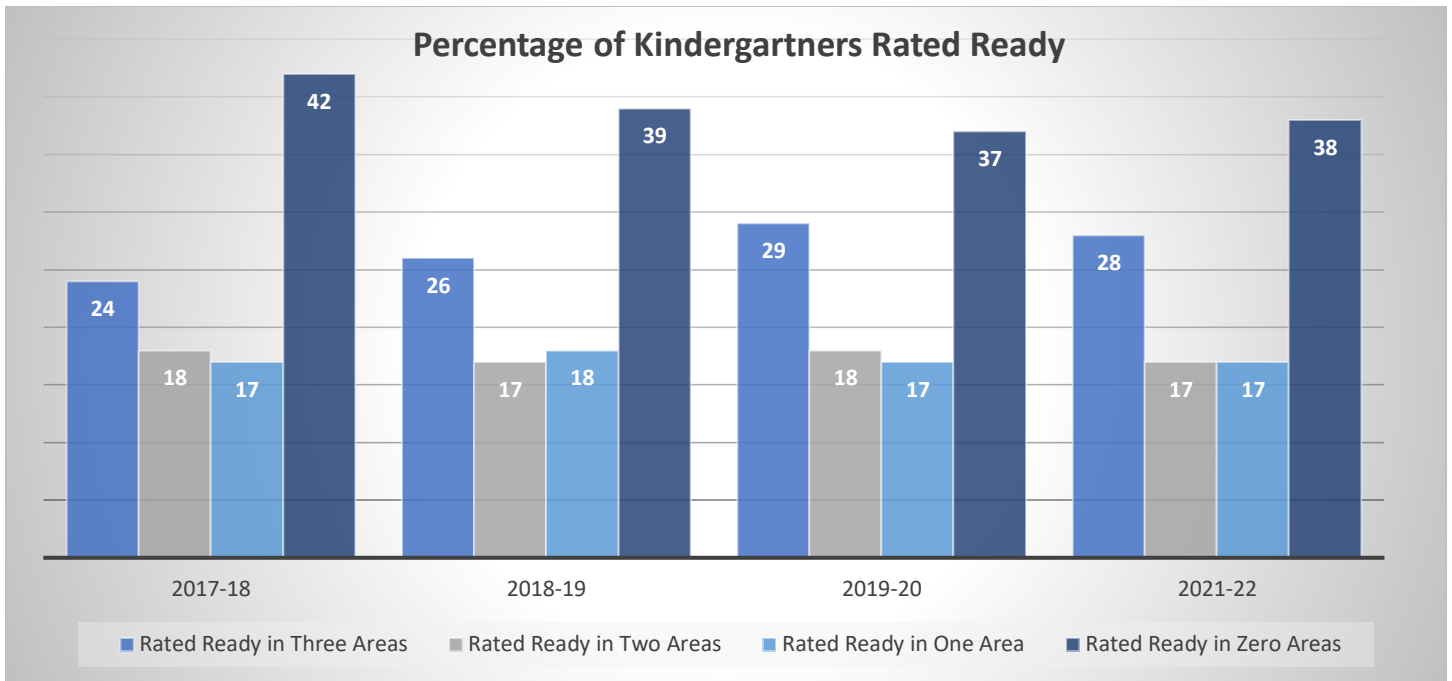


Overall Kindergarten Readiness

Overall kindergarten readiness identifies how early learners are demonstrating skills and behaviors when entering kindergarten. In fall 2021, Illinois kindergartners demonstrated similar rates of readiness as kindergartners in fall 2019 before the pandemic, despite the 16% drop in enrollment in district-run preschool programs the year prior.

In fall 2021, 28% of kindergartners demonstrating readiness in all three areas (a one percentage point decline from fall 2019); 17% demonstrated readiness in two areas (a 1 percentage point decline from fall 2019); 17% demonstrated readiness in one area; and 38% demonstrated readiness in zero areas (a 1 percentage point increase from fall 2019).

Overall, Illinois has seen a 4 percentage point increase in the percentage of students showing readiness in all three areas from the fall of 2017 to the fall of 2021 and a 4 percentage point decrease in the percentage of students showing readiness in zero areas, while the percentage of students showing readiness in one or two areas has held steady. These longer-term gains in kindergarten readiness coincide with continually increasing state investments in early childhood programs across the state, increasing both access and quality.



Only Louisiana had publicly reported data for the school years 2019-2022 at the time of this report. It also showed a 1 percentage point decrease in the percentage of students rated ready – from 35.4%¹ in the 2019-20 school year to 34.8%² in the 2021-22 school year.

Illinois invested \$12.5 million of federal pandemic relief funds in the Jump Start grant program to provide educational support to younger learners who were the most impacted by the pandemic. The grant program targeted the least well-funded districts -- those in Evidence-Based Funding Tier I and Tier II -- where children received less than 50% of instruction in-person during the 2020-21 school year and provided educational supports during the summer prior to students starting kindergarten or first grade. The program has provided funding for 127 districts, reaching approximately 15,000 Illinois kindergarten students to date. The program will continue through summer 2023.

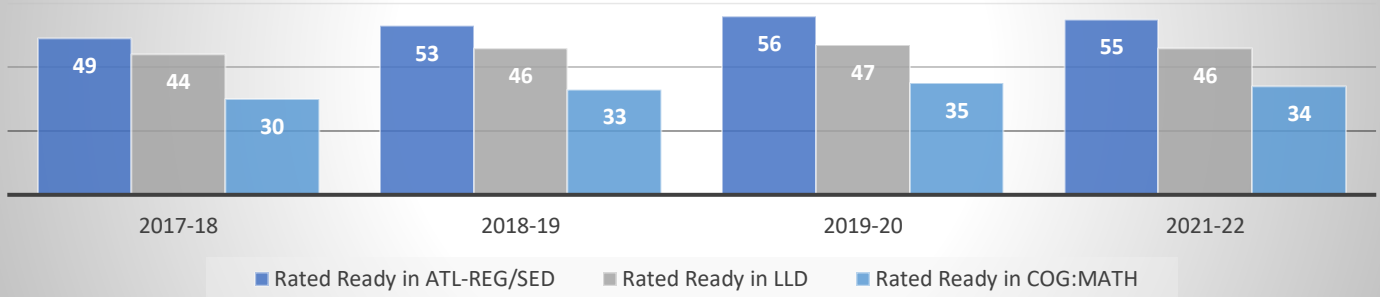
Interventions like the Jump Start program and other district-led interventions may have prevented any significant impact of the pandemic on kindergarten readiness in Illinois.

Overall Readiness by Developmental Area

Students in fall 2021 continue to show the greatest readiness in the ATL-REG/SED area, followed by LLD, then COG: MATH. The percentage of students rated ready declined by 1 percentage point in each of these three areas from fall 2020 to fall 2021. Overall from fall 2017 to fall 2021, the percentage of students rated ready in each of the developmental areas has increased by 6 percentage points in ATL-REG/SED, by 2 percentage points in LLD, and by 4 percentage points in COG: MATH.

1. Louisiana Department of Education: 2018-2019 Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) Kindergarten Assessment Results
 2. Louisiana Department of Education: 2021-22 DRDP Kindergarten Assessment Results

Percentage of Kindergartners Rated Ready by Developmental Area



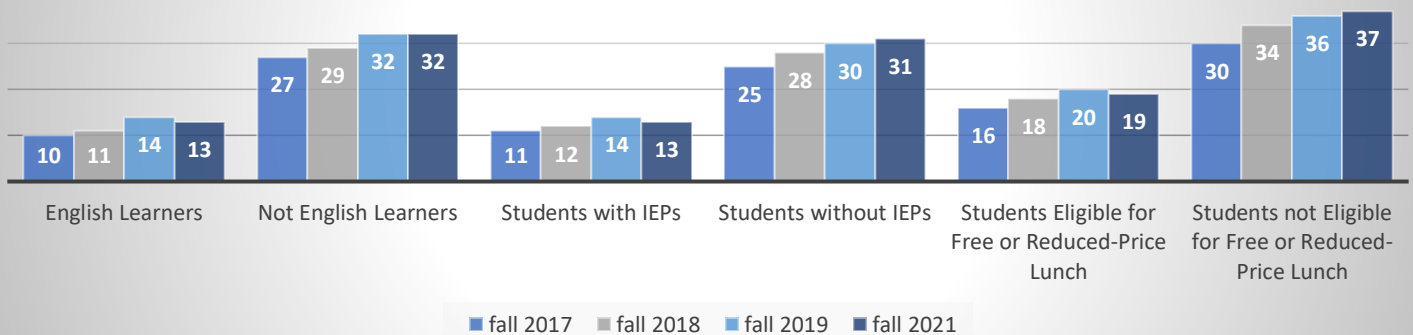
Overall Readiness by Student Group

The following disaggregated information is included for schools and communities to raise awareness, generate conversation, and direct greater state and local investment in supports for students who have less access to high-quality early learning experiences prior to entering kindergarten. Identifying and addressing children’s needs as early as possible allows them the greatest chance to succeed in school. Providing additional supports to kindergartners already experiencing development gaps may afford them an opportunity to make greater learning gains in school. Student group results provide districts a way to target groups of students for additional supports and targeted interventions to increase readiness in students.

Compared to fall 2019, the fall 2021 data show a 1 percentage point decrease in students rated ready in all three development areas among ELs, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL). From fall 2017 to fall 2021, the percentage of students rated ready in all three areas has steadily increased among students who are not eligible for FRPL and who do not have an IEP and has remained the same for EL students.

The persistent early gaps between student groups (EL and non-EL, with IEP and without IEP, eligible for FRPL and not eligible) indicate the importance of increasing identification and supports for students with greater needs in the critical early years prior to kindergarten.

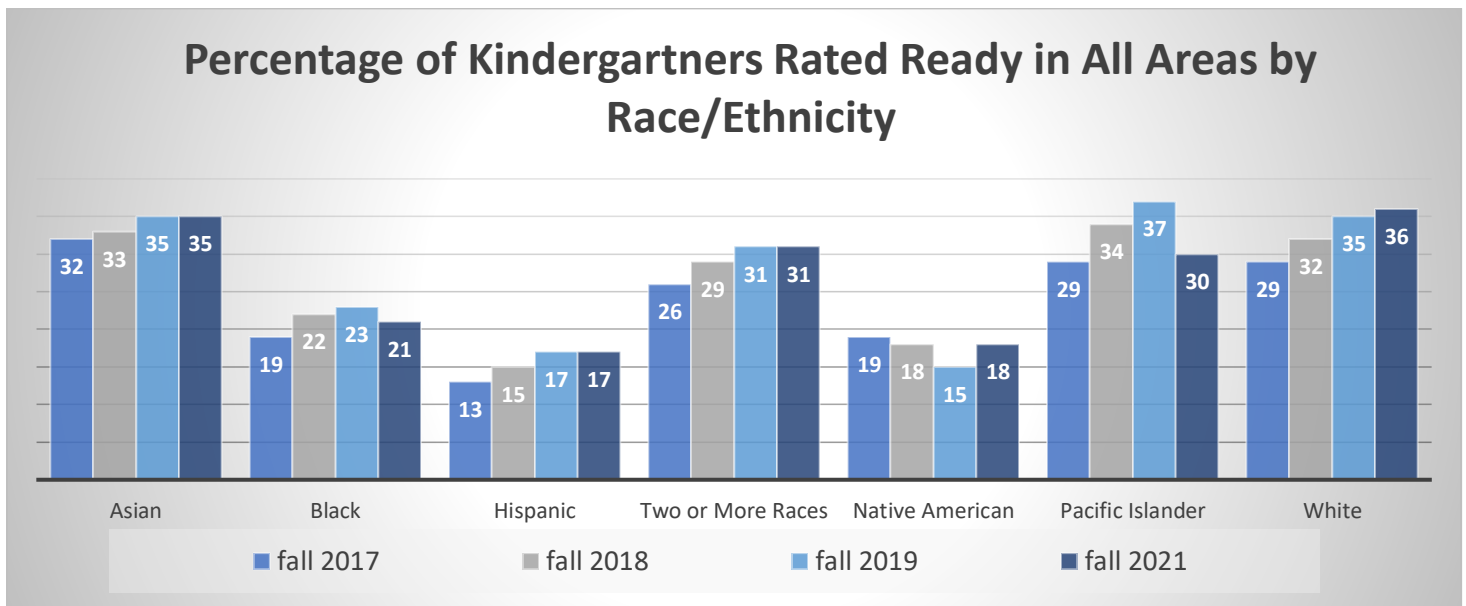
Percentage of Kindergartners Rated Ready in All Areas by Student Group



Overall Readiness by Race/Ethnicity

The data also show lower percentages of students rated ready in all three areas among Black, Hispanic, and Native American students compared to their White, Asian, and Pacific Islander peers, as students who are Black, Hispanic, or Native American are more likely to live in under-resourced communities. The data reaffirms the existence of structural and systemic gaps in access to adequate supports and resources for families and children across Illinois.

Illinois continues to take steps each year to increase access to comprehensive, high-quality supports to combat years of systemic inequity in both funding and opportunity. ISBE has outlined several strategies in its [2020-2023 Strategic Plan](#). ISBE also continues to work with partners and KIDS coaches to provide professional development to educators on how to effectively interpret and rate behaviors and skills displayed in the classroom, how to collect valuable evidence that demonstrates readiness, and how to collaborate with other classroom educators who have an impact on the student for reliable data gathering.



Next Steps

Teachers, administrators, families, and children were beginning to emerge in fall 2021 after COVID-19 lockdowns and a long hiatus from typical learning situations. The fall 2021 KIDS data set may indicate a “returning to normal, but not quite there” situation, with results prompting more questions than answers. Kindergarten readiness percentages are not far below those from pre-COVID levels; disruptions in learning do not appear to have significantly impacted this particular group of students. But why? Demographically, how different is this group of students from previous kindergarten years? How different are the teachers who collected evidence and chose the ratings? Do the results provide reasons to consider collecting full domains of measures or to adjust resources and supports being offered to teachers and districts? Did state and district interventions with early learners result in the stability in readiness that we see?

The [Education and Workforce Equity Act \(Public Act 101-0654\)](#) established an advisory committee to review on an ongoing basis the content and design of the KIDS instrument, the collective results of KIDS as measured against kindergarten-readiness standards, and other issues involving the KIDS tool as identified by the committee. The experts convened in the [KIDS Advisory Committee](#) are tasked with analyzing the fall 2021 KIDS

results and offering recommendations to the state that could provide insight, understanding, and a path forward in supporting the development of our state's youngest learners. The purpose of those recommendations is to provide guidance for ISBE's Assessment and Early Childhood departments to ensure future KIDS utility with fidelity, data accuracy, teacher and administrator professional development opportunities, and school district and community supports and resources, as well as to inform legislation, policy, and targeted investments to improve outcomes for all Illinois children.

The state of Illinois is committed to continuing to close equity and opportunity gaps in access to early learning supports. ISBE also will continue to administer other intervention programs to ensure Illinois' young learners who experienced the impacts of the pandemic are prepared for kindergarten. ISBE's Early Childhood Department will utilize the KIDS coaches project to collaborate with districts on ways to improve data gathering and instruction to support educators and students in kindergarten.