

IL Districts Embracing KIDS: West Chicago

KIDS Helps West Chicago Teachers Improve Instruction

IT'S DRAMATIC PLAY TIME,

and the 27 kindergarteners in Michelle Lewis's classroom are going about the business of playing, which also is the business of learning.

In one corner, four children toggle between Spanish and English as they set the table for a feast. Lewis floats from the feast to the Lego construction zone with an iPad in hand, where she's asking children what they're planning, who's responsible for what and how many forks they'll need. At the same time, she's casually tapping on her iPad, collecting photos and observations about each child's learning. Taken over the course of weeks, that information collected under KIDS helps create a sophisticated picture of what each student is able to demonstrate in all the most important learning domains, and that, in turn, informs Lewis what to focus on next with each child.

KIDS provides Lewis with more precise information on the development of her students learning two languages simultaneously. "We're already trained to look for student ability as far as their second language, but now with these measures, we're able to quantify where they are, versus waiting for the ACCESS test," she said, referring to the English language proficiency test for students learning English.

Lewis likes that the KIDS observations offer provide more than just a snapshot of how well a child masters a particular task on a specific day. The information helps Lewis build a nuanced, comprehensive portfolio for each child on 20 different measures to demonstrate their mastery or struggles with particular skills.

(Note: West Chicago Elementary School District 33 piloted the 14 required measures and opted to collect observations on an additional five measures.)



LESSONS FROM WEST CHICAGO

- KIDS allows districts to move away from multiple assessments measuring specific skills, increasing instructional and learning time.
- KIDS helps teachers avoid mistaking age-appropriate, everyday challenges among dual language learners for disabilities.
- Even short, small exchanges between children can yield multiple KIDS observations for teachers.



Michelle Lewis easily collects KIDS observations on her iPad while interacting with children during independent play.

KIDS OBSERVATIONS EASILY COLLECTED

Lewis said she has quickly learned how to observe and collect multiple observations for KIDS in even the briefest of student exchanges. At the easel, for example, Alyssandra begins mimicking a device Lewis uses in class to help children focus. A disapproving classmate watching Alyssandra sketch it out, Andrea declares "It's too big!" and erases Alyssandra's handiwork with her sleeve. Alyssandra pouts for a moment, but within moments revives and together, both draw large smiley faces, just the way Lewis does.

In this 60-second interaction, Lewis may collect as many as six KIDS observations on two students. Writing, because Alyssandra was writing recognizable letters (LLD10); word knowledge, because she was writing words (LLD9); number sense and quantity because Alyssandra demonstrated a sense of 10 objects in her



Students in Lewis' classroom mimic her whiteboard drawings.

tallies (COGMATH2); demonstrating relationships with familiar adults by mimicking what the teacher draws on her mini white board (SED2); using strategies to regulate emotions and start over (SED3); and even initiating a learning activity (ATL1).

INVOLVING FAMILIES USING KIDS

In summer 2016, when district administrators and KIDS Coach Julie Kallenbach explained KIDS and how much learning occurs during play to families, a handful of parents asked if such rich information could be shared with them, too. That prompted the district to begin using KIDS data in kindergarten report cards, as are a growing number of kindergarten teachers across the state. During conferences, Lewis and parents are able to discuss in more depth how their child is progressing in each developmental domain. She's even able to show photos and video clips to help illustrate.

"They liked that I was aware of what their child could do and that I was conscious not to skip ahead to some target that they weren't yet ready to meet," said Lewis, whose dual language classroom includes 16 native Spanish speakers and 4 native English speakers.

TEACHERS SPEND MORE TIME TEACHING

Lewis said the KIDS tool also has changed the way she teaches. KIDS data have prompted Lewis to make sure she's also supporting the more developmentally advanced students in her class as much as the ones who struggle. "Just because it's new, a lot of teachers don't understand how their instruction might change in a positive way because they're using KIDS," Lewis said.

KIDS also has allowed Lewis to spend more time teaching and observing independent play, and less time assessing. In 2015, West Chicago conducted some 20 different assessments on each of its 500 kindergarteners. Each assessment tested a specific, distinct skill, and required teachers to pull children out of the classroom one-by-one each time. This year, Lewis and her colleagues use only KIDS, and lesson plans no longer are interrupted by as many assessment pull-outs.

Lewis has been teaching nine years. "You think that's enough that you know each child's abilities. But I kind of didn't," Lewis said. "Now, I'm not just looking at them and saying, 'Oh, that student can segment syllables - yay!'"

"Just because it's new, a lot of teachers don't understand how their instruction might change in a positive way because they're using KIDS."

**West Chicago Kindergarten
Dual Language Teacher
Michelle Lewis**

SUPPORTING EVERY CHILD'S NEEDS

Kristina Davis, West Chicago's Assistant Superintendent for Learning, conceded that KIDS initially caused panic. That concern came in part from the self-realization that the district had not been teaching kindergarten children in a way that fully supported each child's strengths and areas in need of support. "We used to be very mastery-focused, like, 'Here's the skill you have to master,'" Davis said. "But in kindergarten, every child comes in with a different experience, so now our focus is on each individual child's target, rather than a district target."

In the last 15 years, West Chicago has experienced enormous demographic changes, and KIDS has helped them adapt. Its percentage of low-income children rose during that period from 23 percent to 76 percent, and the

percentage of native Spanish speakers also soared. "In a district like ours where we're under-resourced and the kids are lacking exposure to a lot of things and experiences, KIDS has been really important for educators and great for our kids," said Davis.

KIDS also prompted the district to re-introduce more developmentally appropriate play-based instruction back into its classrooms after years of a more exclusive emphasis on just math and reading.

"We had gone full circle, first away from developmentally appropriate practice, to now more developmentally appropriate practice, which is how it was way back when I started, and how I think it should be," said Karen Brogan, a veteran kindergarten teacher at Wegner Elementary, also in District 33. "I was all for it.

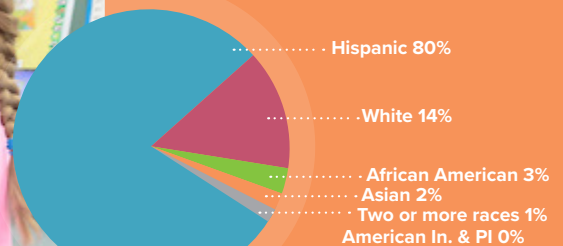
The KIDS tool helped Brogan notice that one child would play with the same child each day, doing the same activity. She realized that impeded her ability to support both children. With that information, Brogan changed the way students chose their learning center activities during independent play periods, and made sure they shifted activities at least once or twice during the period.



Veteran West Chicago kindergarten teacher, Karen Brogan, said KIDS changed the way she teaches to better promote students' social and emotional growth.

DISTRICT OVERVIEW 33

Enrollment	4,571
Elementary schools	6
Kindergarten students	500
Low income	44%
Limited English Prof.	53%



First implemented KIDS	2012
KIDS administrations per year	4
No. KIDS measures used	18-20*

*In DLL classrooms, additional 2 measures used.
Source: 2016 ISBE Report Card & West Chicago SD33