

2019-2020 Illinois Kindergarten Individual  
Development Survey (KIDS) Report

# A LOOK AT KINDERGARTEN READINESS



**KIDS**

Kindergarten Individual Development Survey  
Every Illinois Child Ready for Kindergarten



**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education

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Statewide KIDS implementation receives support from a variety of public and private partners, including:



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## Background and Goals

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Until recently, Illinois did not use a uniform or consistent method to determine statewide whether children entering kindergarten possessed the skills and developmental strengths associated with long-term success in school. In the 2017-2018 school year, all kindergarten teachers in Illinois began observing their students on a common set of developmental measures using the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS).

KIDS data provide insight into children's unique learning and support needs and can help teachers and families understand trends in student development over the course of the year. This data provides information for teachers, administrators, families, and policymakers in Illinois to act earlier in a child's educational journey and more precisely to provide the supports and opportunities necessary to achieve success in school and beyond.

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

With this third annual statewide KIDS report, the hope is that a clearer and earlier picture of student developmental readiness will emerge to:

1. Assist classroom teachers in refining instruction and identifying professional learning needs
2. Allow early childhood providers to align programming around clear expectations for kindergarten readiness
3. Guide families on how to partner with teachers to advance learning at home and obtain additional needed supports
4. Inform state, local, and district policy decisions and specify needs for additional resources and investment





## How Does KIDS Work?

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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 Early Learning and Developmental Standards (IELDS), Illinois Early Learning Standards–Kindergarten (IELS-K), and other state standards including Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and Social and Emotional Learning Standards (SEL).

KIDS was piloted for five years before statewide implementation in 2017. ISBE identified the required 14 State Readiness Measures based on feedback from pilot district participants. KIDS is an observational tool designed to help teachers, administrators, families, and policymakers better understand the developmental readiness of children entering kindergarten.

The full KIDS instrument includes 55 measures across 11 learning domains. Each domain contains multiple measures, and each measure consists of a progression of developmental levels typical for kindergarten-aged children. For each measure within the KIDS tool, teachers indicate the highest developmental level they observe each child mastering.

ISBE requires kindergarten teachers to collect observations within the first 40 days of school on a minimum of 14 required measures. Those “14 State Readiness Measures” constitute a validated sample from 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 a proxy of readiness at the beginning of kindergarten** for a state-level view of a group of students.



*Rachel Dellamorte, with 6-year-old Bryce, found KIDS helpful in supporting her daughter’s development.*

“What I really like the most about it is the learning progression...seeing where she falls compared to the kids in her grade, and seeing what comes next. So when we want to work on skills in that area, it gives me some direction.”

— Rachel Dellamorte, parent, Romeoville

<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>






“If you ask any kindergarten teacher, all of them would say the KIDS assessment has helped them know the kids better by the 40th day than before.”

— Tara Kristof,  
Assistant Superintendent for Teaching  
and Learning, Rock Falls



**The 14 State Readiness Measures are organized into four learning domains and collapse into three developmental areas:**

14 STATE READINESS MEASURES	4 KEY LEARNING DOMAINS	3 KEY DEVELOPMENTAL AREAS
Curiosity and Initiative in Learning Self-Control of Feelings and Behavior Engagement and Persistence	<b>Approaches to Learning &amp; Self-Regulation (ALT-REG)</b> Assesses a child’s development of persistence, curiosity, and ability to self-regulate.	 <b>SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SED &amp; ALT-REG)</b>
Relationships and Social Interactions with Familiar Adults Relationships and Social Interactions with Peers	<b>Social and Emotional Development (SED)</b> Assesses a child’s development of feelings, behavior, and relationships with nurturing adults and peers.	
Communication and Use of Language (Expressive) Reciprocal Communication and Conversation Comprehension of Age-Appropriate Text Phonological Awareness Letter and Word Knowledge	<b>Language and Literacy Development (LLD)</b> Assesses a child’s progress in developing foundational language and literacy skills by observing communication, conversation, awareness of text, and letter and word knowledge. These skills can be demonstrated in any language and in any mode of communication.	 <b>LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT (LLD)</b>
Classification Number Sense of Quantity Number Sense of Math Operations Shapes	<b>Math (COG:MATH)</b> Assesses a child’s number sense, knowledge of shapes, and ability to classify objects through observation, exploration of people and objects, and objects and concepts.	 <b>MATH (COG:MATH)</b>

KIDS is an observational protocol. It is neither a pen and paper test, nor does it involve pulling children aside or disrupting instruction. Rather, teachers are trained to collect observational data on students as they go about their daily routines – such as playing, doing schoolwork, having conversations, and following directions. There is no interruption to regular classroom activity. KIDS observations are most easily collected in classrooms based on developmentally appropriate guided play-based curricula. Although there are only 14 required measures to collect, districts interested in a clearer picture of individual student development, skill level, and growth over time are encouraged to collect more than the required 14 measures and/or to administer KIDS multiple times a year. Districts or

teachers that want to track student growth across the school year can administer KIDS in the winter and/or the spring. The tool and scoring adjusts with the age of the child, gauging readiness against the skills and learning considered typical at that point of the school year.

KIDS is designed to accommodate diverse learning, communication, and language styles, allowing 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 English-only instruction. For this reason, the KIDS LLD measures<sup>2</sup> in the 14 required measures were modified for use in bilingual classrooms.

<sup>2</sup>For specific information on how and when teachers would use these alternate measures, see the “Guidance for Dual Language Users” document at [https://www.isbe.net/Documents\\_KIDSWebsiteResources/LLD\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents_KIDSWebsiteResources/LLD_Guidance.pdf)



# What “Demonstrating Readiness” Means

Because early childhood is a time of rapid development in multiple areas – physical, emotional, cognitive, and social growth – determining a child’s readiness for kindergarten involves more than observing a child recite shapes, numbers, and colors. In the case of KIDS, “demonstrating readiness” means that, throughout the first 40 days of school, kindergarten teachers observe their students and collect multiple pieces of evidence of the child displaying skills, knowledge, and behaviors in critical areas of development. This evidence supports a rating along a continuum of development associated with typical expectations of skills and behavior at kindergarten entry. Children who display typical or anticipated behaviors and skills in *all three* developmental areas **demonstrate kindergarten readiness**. Children who display the skills and behaviors expected upon entering kindergarten in *none, one or two* of the developmental areas **may need additional support**.

Many factors determine a child’s “readiness” for kindergarten. The KIDS 14 required measures provide a *proxy* of “kindergarten readiness” at the group level 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 IELDS, IELS-K, or research-based developmental constructs that are captured by the full range of KIDS domains. For a more comprehensive view of individual student or classroom-level development, teachers would need to collect observations on all measures in each needed domain, 29 specific measures in the 5 readiness domains, all 55 measures in 11 domains, and/or at multiple points throughout the year.<sup>3</sup> Even so, the 14-measure subset does provide a directional indicator of children’s strengths and developmental areas that need more support.

It is important to note that the development of individual children of the same chronological age varies, and that children enter kindergarten with a wide range of early experiences. A child who does not demonstrate readiness on a particular measure at the same time as a peer isn’t necessarily a cause 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 early in a child’s educational career.

## KIDS IS...



An informational tool for teachers to guide instruction, adapt curriculum, and encourage play-based learning experiences



Information for families to support their child’s unique learning and developmental needs



Data to inform policy decisions and leverage funding



A tool to foster greater alignment among early childhood programs, community services, and kindergarten

## KIDS IS NOT...



An accountability metric for schools or classrooms



A tool for enrollment or classroom placement decisions



An indicator of the effectiveness of individual early childhood providers



Appropriate for use in teacher evaluation

**See the KIDS instrument that teachers use to observe children [here](#).**<sup>4</sup>

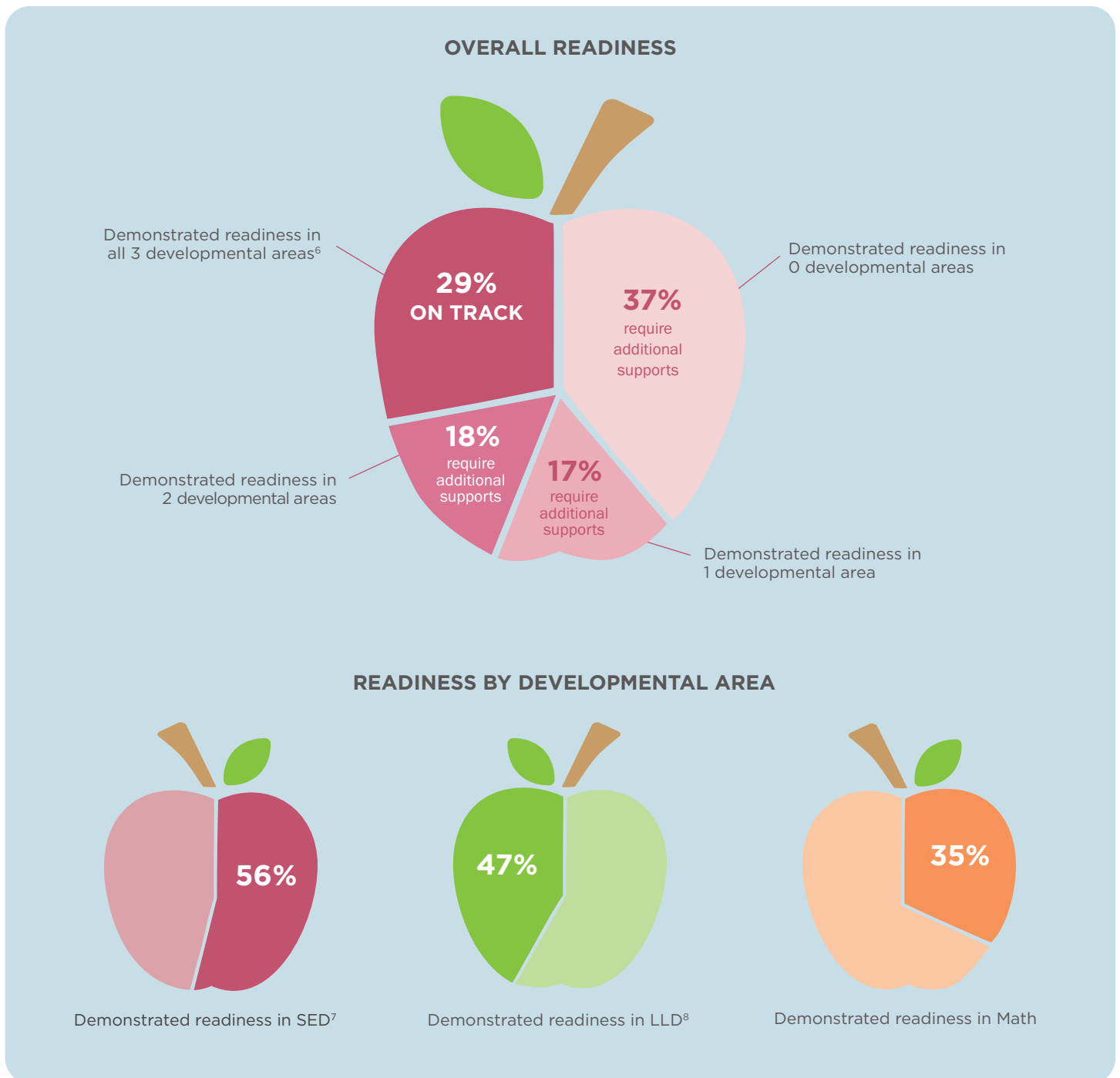
<sup>3</sup> For detailed information on the 14 State Required Measures, the 29 Measures in the 5 Domains of Readiness, and the Comprehensive View (full KIDS instrument), see [https://www.isbe.net/Documents\\_KIDSWebsiteResources/Summary\\_of\\_KIDS\\_Measures\\_and\\_Reports.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents_KIDSWebsiteResources/Summary_of_KIDS_Measures_and_Reports.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See the full KIDS instrument at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/KIDS-User-Guide-Instrument.pdf>



# 2019-2020 Statewide Readiness Findings

Among kindergarten students<sup>5</sup> assessed on all 14 required measures in Fall 2019:



<sup>5</sup> Teachers observed 124,086 children who were rostered for the Fall 2019 KIDS data collection. Of that number, 118,854 students were considered fully assessed, meaning teachers entered data for them in all of the 14 required measures. The rest of the children were either considered unable to rate or were only rated partially. Eligibility is based on enrollment date, and varies due to situations where teachers are unable to rate their students. Students would not be included in the “Eligible” category if they were enrolled too late to be rated appropriately OR if the student left without enough time to be rated appropriately. These enrollment dates are entered into ISBE’s Student Information System by the school district. Additionally, ISBE has established “Student Exemption Reason Codes” that may be applied in situations in which teachers are unable to complete the KIDS assessment for a specific student, such as if a child is hospitalized, residing in another state/country, or otherwise absent during most of the observation period.

<sup>6</sup> This is the second consecutive increase in overall readiness: 24% of kindergartners in 2017-2018 and 26% of kindergartners in 2018-2019 demonstrated readiness in all three developmental areas.

<sup>7</sup> SED and ATL measures are combined into one developmental area/score: SED.

<sup>8</sup> KIDS allows children to demonstrate mastery through a variety of communication modes, language, and behaviors.

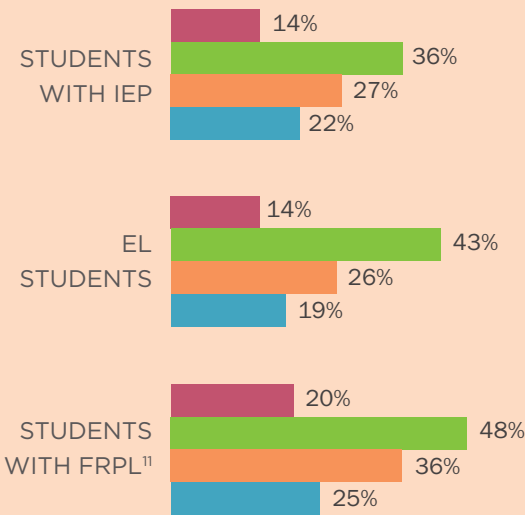
## Readiness by Student Group

The following disaggregated information is included for schools and communities to raise awareness, generate conversation, and direct state and local investment in supports for students demonstrating greater needs. Identifying and understanding the developmental needs of children as early as possible allows them the best chance to succeed in school. Providing additional supports to kindergartners already experiencing barriers to learning helps them reach higher developmental areas.

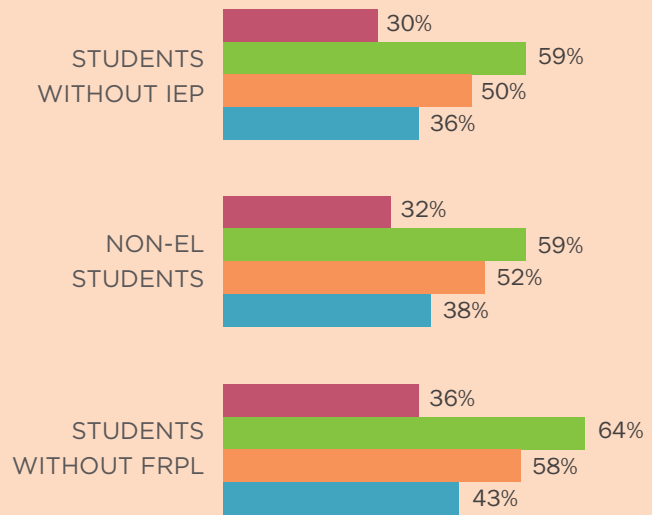
**In the 2019-2020 school year, students who required additional supports because they were English Learners (EL), have individualized education programs (IEP), or received free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL)<sup>9</sup> entered kindergarten at the following levels of readiness:**

### READINESS BY STUDENT GROUP AND DEVELOPMENTAL AREA

Student Group<sup>10</sup>



Student Group



% K Ready in all 3 developmental areas
  % K Ready in SED
  % K Ready in LLD
  % K Ready in Math

<sup>9</sup> During the 2019-2020 academic year, at least 47% of kindergartners lived in households with limited resources (as defined by eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch). Children living in households that are economically disadvantaged are more likely to face housing and food insecurity, which places them at greater risk of academic failure.

<sup>10</sup> Shortage of additional supports and services, such as early intervention, qualified special education or bilingual educators, and access to quality early childhood experiences may impact readiness of student groups.

<sup>11</sup> *The Impact of Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Poor Nutrition on Health and Well-Being* (2017). Food and Action Resource Center. Retrieved on July 1, 2020 from <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/hunger-health-impact-poverty-food-insecurity-health-well-being.pdf>



During free choice time, two kindergarten children mimic a focusing technique their award-winning teacher Michelle Lewis uses in her West Chicago dual language class.

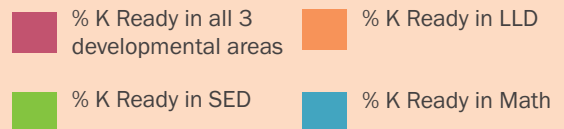
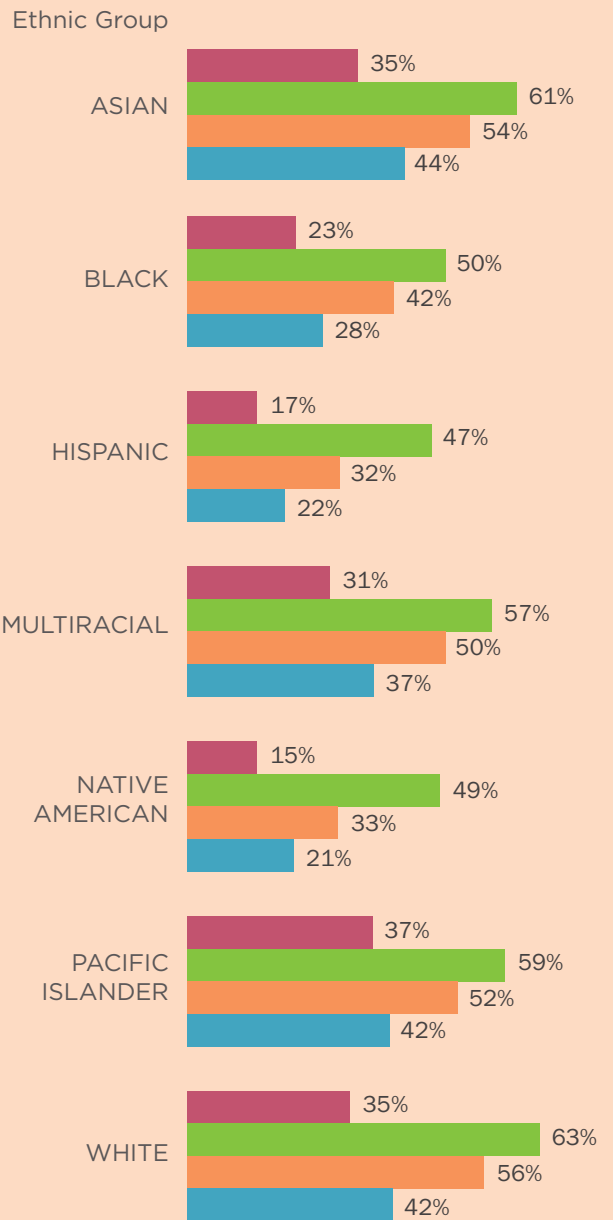
## Readiness by Race/Ethnicity

The data<sup>12</sup> show early gaps between the readiness of students of different races, reinforcing the need for equitable supports in school, and in access to quality experiences before kindergarten. It also confirms what is well established in the literature and codified in ISBE's Equity Statement<sup>13</sup>: that structural racism impacts children at this early stage of development. The data provide one indicator of barriers faced in prior years and affirm the importance of supporting early learners with comprehensive, high-quality supports to combat years of systemic inequity in both funding and opportunity.

<sup>12</sup>The denominator for the readiness percentages shown is based on the number of kindergarten students rated on a minimum of 14 required measures and who identified as a specific race or ethnicity at enrollment. These percentages are not based on the total population of students who were assessed on the 14 measures.

<sup>13</sup>ISBE Equity Statement (2020). Retrieved on July 12, 2020, from <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-Strategic-Plan-Presentation.pdf>

## READINESS BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL AREA



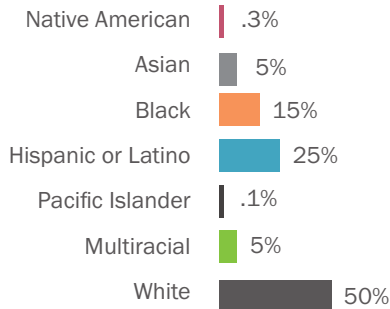


# By the Numbers

## A 2019-2020 Illinois Kindergarten Readiness Snapshot

### OVERALL KINDERGARTEN DATA

#### KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT<sup>i</sup>



**36%** of kindergartners were previously enrolled in state-funded pre-K<sup>ii</sup>

**761** districts in Illinois have kindergarten classrooms

**130,707** eligible<sup>iii</sup> students enrolled in kindergarten

**11%** of kindergartners have individualized education programs (IEP)

**47%** of kindergartners qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL)<sup>iv</sup>

**17%** of kindergartners are English Learners (EL)

### KIDS DATA

**6,053** kindergarten teachers implemented KIDS

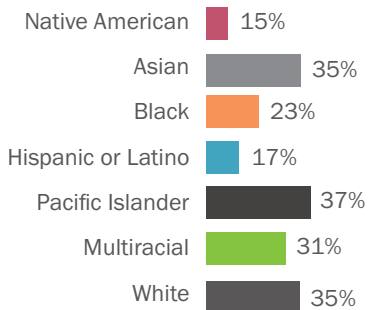


#### OVERALL READINESS

**18%** 2 Developmental Areas  
**17%** 1 Developmental Area  
**37%** 0 Developmental Areas



#### READINESS BY RACE/ETHNICITY



#### READINESS BY DEVELOPMENTAL AREA



#### READINESS BY SUBGROUP AS MEASURED BY KIDS

**14%** IEP    **20%** FRPL    **14%** EL

These data reaffirm the commitment ISBE has to supporting Illinois' early learners with comprehensive, high-quality supports to combat years of systemic inequity in both funding and opportunity. This strategy is outlined in ISBE's Equity Statement<sup>vii</sup>, which was adopted by the Board in February of 2020.

<sup>i</sup> Total enrolled students at the time of the fall KIDS assessment, including those "Exempted" or "Unable to Rate"

<sup>ii</sup> 47,434 Kindergartners attended either a PFA, PFAE, or PDG funded classroom.

<sup>iii</sup> Eligibility varies due to situations in which teachers are unable to rate their students.

<sup>iv</sup> As defined by school's Title I status

<sup>v</sup> Based on the total number of students assessed on a minimum of the 14 required measures collected during the first 40 days of attendance

<sup>vi</sup> KIDS allows children to demonstrate mastery through a variety of communication modes, language and behaviors.

<sup>vii</sup> ISBE Equity Statement (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-Strategic-Plan-Presentation.pdf>

# KIDS in Action Across Illinois

KIDS is a relatively new tool, and teachers are working hard to implement it with fidelity. KIDS requires educators to collect data by observation – a practice familiar to preschool and other early childhood teachers but often new in kindergarten classrooms, depending on the teacher’s background. Teachers across the state are showing creativity and diligence in familiarizing themselves with the measures and developing observation collection systems that allow them to create developmental portfolios for each child. The third year of statewide implementation shows improved district participation rates.

The information gathered through KIDS is encouraging districts to focus on strengthening early learning supports for classrooms, teachers, and families. Assisting in that is a team of Regional KIDS Coaches, all of whom are former kindergarten teachers, who are available to provide teacher, school, district, and regional level supports **at no cost** to each school district. Many districts have been working with their KIDS Coaches on more individualized goals based on their local KIDS data results.

- Some districts have created their own professional learning networks around KIDS.
- Others have used KIDS data to align more intentionally with feeder preschool classrooms.
- KIDS data have been used by schools to make the case to shift from half-day to full-day kindergarten or to a guided play curriculum.
- Some districts that made the decision to collect data for the full domains on each student and administer KIDS multiple times per year are using KIDS data as their student report cards.

## Promoting Play-Based Learning Through KIDS

Three years into KIDS, school leaders in Columbia, Illinois are making the most of the observational protocol to inform instruction and gauge student progress.

“KIDS reaffirmed that what we were doing is working in adjusting to being more play-based throughout the day,” said Principal April Becherer of Eagleview Elementary in Columbia, just south of St. Louis. “It’s helped kindergarten teachers feel more relaxed in saying, ‘It’s OK to do play.’”

Intentional play strengthens kindergartners’ conceptual foundations while building upon their initiative and interests. KIDS enables teachers to assess development, including while students go about play. Eagleview has introduced learning centers in its kindergarten classroom, including a dramatic play area. And teachers at the school assess students three times yearly rather than the one-time minimum.

“We really wanted to focus on SEL [social emotional learning] because we realized kids were coming from home without a basic understanding of sharing and cooperation. KIDS has been huge for us, for kindergarten, early childhood and 1st grade.”

—April Becherer,  
Principal, Eagleview Elementary



*Two children build their math, language and social-emotional skills while playing at a lemonade stand in their kindergarten classroom in Columbia.*

## How KIDS Data Altered One District's Focus and Investments

Jim Duggan dives into his district's KIDS data each year the moment it becomes available. In his annual analysis, the Bourbonnais assistant superintendent identified one particular data point that has since changed the district's approach to young children.

"Without a doubt, it has really changed how I see my job," said Duggan, of Bourbonnais Elementary School District 53, about an hour south of Chicago.

That data point is KIDS measure LLD4, the *Reciprocal Communication and Conversation* measure within the Language and Literacy Domain, and one of the state's 14 required measures. In layman's terms, LLD4 gives an indication of how well a child engages in back-and-forth communication.



*Preschool students at Alan B. Shepard Elementary School benefit from the district's focus on developing language and communication among Bourbonnais children before they enter kindergarten.*

childhood programs received *before* kindergarten – generally at least two years in full-day quality preschool – the higher their readiness scores at the start of kindergarten.

Bourbonnais then reallocated a portion of its federal Title I dollars – typically spent on K-12 – in a home visiting program for infants and toddlers likely to be the least ready for kindergarten. The program, called LENA, uses technology and home visits to accelerate language development of children ages birth to 3 in their homes.

Home visitor Denise Curtis-Reiniche visited 25 Bourbonnais families in 2019, sharing each child's LENA data with parents and coaching families on how to boost language development and maximize conversational opportunities at home. "Sometimes you think you are [conversing] more than you actually are," Curtis-Reiniche said. "A lot of times you just go through the motions of the day-to-day and don't realize there are opportunities to increase that language."

Despite a likely anomaly school year for KIDS due to COVID-19 in 2020-2021, Duggan remains confident that, a few years hence, Bourbonnais' investment in the district's youngest learners will result in narrowed developmental and equity gaps by kindergarten. He's eagerly awaiting future annual KIDS data to confirm that hunch.

Duggan found LLD4 to be a strong predictor of whether a kindergarten student would ultimately meet 1st grade literacy targets, and an even stronger predictor of 1st grade math targets on the MAP assessment. Having that information at the beginning of kindergarten rather than in the middle of 1st grade allows the district to act earlier to provide extra supports.

Other actions that resulted from Duggan's finding about LLD4 include conversations with Bourbonnais pre-K programs. Preschool teachers responded by adjusting curriculum and supports to ensure greater readiness by kindergarten, with emphasis on Reciprocal Communication.

The district also surveyed parents to ask about their child's prior early childhood experience. Duggan correlated those responses to each child's kindergarten readiness levels and found another significant pattern: particularly among low-income children, the more high-quality early

**"[Reciprocal Communication] is about the kid's ability to respond and add to a conversation. That's the kind of thing we work with parents on...to add richness to conversation because every time we do that, it is literally building neurons in the kid's brain."**

**—Jim Duggan,  
Assistant Superintendent,  
Bourbonnais**



# KIDS Resources

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As with any new tool, especially an observational tool, there is a learning curve in the administration of KIDS statewide. The Early Childhood Department at ISBE actively works with administrators and teachers across Illinois to ensure districts have sufficient supports in order to implement KIDS with fidelity.

“Kindergarten teachers want to know more, want to use [KIDS data] right and use it purposefully. That really inspires us to then align ourselves with kindergarten.”

— Amy Fullerton,  
Early Childhood Director,  
Regional Office of Education 33  
(Henderson, Knox, Mercer and Warren  
Counties)

<sup>14</sup> See Learning Opportunities with KIDS Coaches at <https://www.isbe.net/kids>

<sup>15</sup> See Pilot Case Studies & Videos under Administrators & Teachers Toolkit at <https://www.isbe.net/kids>

Every district in the state can access a KIDS Coach who is available to provide training and help with data collection and data interpretation. For a listing of available supports, go [here](#).<sup>14</sup>

For a new video featuring the importance of guided play in kindergarten, go [here](#).<sup>15</sup> For a clip on “What Teachers Say About Guided Play in Kindergarten,” go [here](#).

*Gym and recess provide easy opportunities to observe children interacting socially and emotionally and to collect KIDS data. Here three girls walk around the outdoor track together in Carbondale.*



# KIDS

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[isbe.net/KIDS](https://isbe.net/KIDS)