

Giant City Consolidated School District #130

Carbondale's 'Potluck' Approach to KIDS

OBSERVING STUDENTS BEYOND THE HOMEROOM

Across the gym entrance, four kindergarten children count how many times they can bounce a balloon off a rubber paddle. Nearby, three girls groan theatrically as they count how many sit-ups their tiny bellies can handle in a minute. Another four children happily skip along one side of the gym, something only one kindergarten child could do only seven months before at the beginning of the school year.



Physical Education Teacher Sarah Honza videotapes students during gym, then reviews later to quickly generate KIDS observations on a handful of measures.

It looks and sounds like a birthday bash in here. But while the children play and squeal with delight, Physical Education Teacher Sarah Honza and Aide Teresa Armit float from group to group, jotting quick notes on a clipboard or videos with a pink iPad. The two are collecting KIDS observations.

When the opportunity to pilot the KIDS tool came about in 2012, Carbondale Superintendent and Principal Belinda Hill jumped. With her early childhood background, Hill immediately understood the value of creating observational portfolios for each kindergarten student. However, with the district's small size and limited resources, a teacher new to kindergarten and no classroom aide, Hill knew they needed to get creative.

Why not involve other teachers in helping collect KIDS information?



LESSONS FROM CARBONDALE

- **Observational assessment is just as important in kindergarten as it is in PreK, and can jump start learning in a way that makes it easier to reach 3rd grade proficiency.**
- **Other school staff can help collect KIDS observations, including art, music, physical education teachers, aides and monitors, and feel more engaged in each child's development.**
- **Using KIDS data to generate report cards allows districts to eliminate other assessments and leave more time for teaching.**
- **Report cards are easily generated from KIDS data and provide the opportunity for teachers to have more meaningful conversations with families around how to best support each child's development.**

ALL TEACHERS DEEPEN INVESTMENT IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Soon, the physical education, music, and art teachers were trained to notice certain skills during their class periods and jot a note down for each child. Unstructured recess or lunchroom time provides a perfect opportunity to observe children interacting, regulating emotions and solving problems, which is a perfect time for lunchroom assistants and recess monitors to collect information on social and emotional measures.

“It’s like a potluck,” Hill said. “Everybody brings their little dish to the table and then we get a complete picture of the students. It also helps everyone feel like they’re contributing.”

Some use clipboards. Some take video or photos. Others go outside with fanny packs filled with Post-Its and pens. They hand those notes to the kindergarten teacher, who ultimately enters them into each child’s binder and into the KIDSTech data system, which generally takes a day to input. One unanticipated outcome is that the other support staff in the building feel more deeply invested in each child’s development.

“We’re looking for how they interact with each other and if they can share and how they react when there’s a conflict, their conflict negotiations,” said Armit, a paraprofessional outside, as she walked with students around the school track. “We also look to see if there’s anyone who’s alone, who needs to socialize a little more...just different measures like that.”

Honza figured out how to efficiently capture observations on multiple measures for every child in the span of only one or two class periods: Ask them to do a few specific skills – such as dribbling a ball, running dashes, or jumping up and down – while she videotaped them. A quick review of the iPad later allowed her to quickly write down each child’s progress on specific skills. Pointing to the children energetically skipping along one wall of the gym, Honza noted that just a few months ago, almost none could skip.

“This is just a fun interactive way for the kids to do it, and they don’t even know they’re being assessed,” Honza said.

The Illinois State Board of Education requires these observations to be submitted just once a year, after the 40th day of school, but many districts like Carbondale 130, already experienced in KIDS, have opted to continue implementing KIDS multiple times a year. Because they’re now using KIDS data as their report card, they’ve been able to reduce the number of annual assessments from seven, for the former quarterly report card, to just three. That leaves more time for teaching.



Superintendent and Principal Belinda Hill says of the KIDS-generated report card: “Parents love it.”

KIDS HELPS IMPROVE DISCUSSIONS WITH FAMILIES

Hill said that since the teachers began sharing responsibility for collecting KIDS observations and it became routine, it has transformed teaching in the classroom, and the quality of conversations teachers have with families.

Progress reports are easily generated from KIDS data and allow the teacher to show a variety of concrete examples of children’s knowledge and skills in each of at least four important domains, discuss likely next steps in the child’s developmental progression, and provide resources and ideas for families to support that development at home.

“I feel very strongly that if we don’t have our kids prepared in early childhood and into kindergarten it really affects what we’re doing later on in school,” Hill said. “If I don’t have a good PreK and I don’t have a good kindergarten program, most of my first month of kindergarten is teaching children how to behave, how to line up, how to get a drink of water without pushing the next person. When we already have those programs in place, we go right into teaching, we’re already ahead of the game. And that just puts us that much further ahead in first grade, in second grade and in third grade.”

DISTRICT OVERVIEW 130

Enrollment	200
Elementary schools	1
Kindergarten students	19
Low income	32%

White	82%
African American	7%
Hispanic	4%
Asian	2%
American In. & PI	0%

First implemented KIDS	2012
KIDS administrations per year	3
No. KIDS measures used	29

Source: 2016 ISBE Report Card & Carbondale SD130



Paraprofessional Teresa Armit walks with children outside, an easy opportunity to observe children interact socially and emotionally and to collect KIDS data.