



Using Teaching Strategies GOLD® within a Kindergarten Entry Assessment System

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INFORMATION REQUEST

A state department of education made a request to learn how other states were using Teaching Strategies assessment tool GOLD® to measure kindergarten readiness. The state was also interested in understanding which GOLD® learning objectives and learning domains are used, and how states set “readiness” benchmarks with GOLD® data.

What We Know

Nine states use GOLD® in various degrees as a tool to identify kindergarten readiness (see **Figure 1**).

- Four states are piloting GOLD® (Alabama, Hawaii, Michigan, and Minnesota).
- Five states are in various phases of implementation (Colorado, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington).

GOLD®’s objectives for learning are typically categorized into six broad learning domains: social–emotional development, physical development, cognitive development, language development, literacy, and mathematics.

- For the five states beyond the piloting stage, all have reduced the number of learning objectives/items that are required to be reported.
- Colorado, Delaware, and Washington require all of the six domains be observed, but not all of the objectives within the domain.
- Massachusetts and New Jersey do not require that all six of GOLD®’s learning domains be used.

Background and Context

A growing number of states are interested in tracking the readiness of children entering kindergarten. The most commonly used child assessment tool that states use as a KEA is GOLD®.

Methodology

CEELO staff reviewed the NIEER State of Preschool Yearbook data to identify which states report using GOLD® as a measure of child outcomes. CEELO then reviewed states’ early learning websites, Race-to-the-Top (RTT) annual reports, and other relevant documents to determine whether and how GOLD® is being used to inform or as part of the state’s KEA, which objectives were being used, if the states have an identified threshold for kindergarten readiness, and the current status of the state’s KEA.

¹ This document was updated in February 2017 to reflect new information provided by Colorado.

Only two states are reporting the percentage of students who are “ready for kindergarten” as measured by *GOLD*®. Both Washington and Colorado follow the six domains and expectations of development identified by *GOLD*®.

Washington’s Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) uses *GOLD*® as its whole child assessment, but in conjunction with two other components: a family meeting to discuss each child’s strengths and needs, and information from the previous early learning provider.

Separately, Vermont uses a survey instrument to gather Kindergarten Readiness data. This instrument—called Vermont’s Ready for Kindergarten Survey (R4KIS) (formerly Kindergarten Readiness Survey (KRS))—has 30 questions per child that teachers complete based on perceptions rather than performance ratings². At the same time, all publicly funded prekindergarten programs are required to report on the progress of children on an annual basis using the online *GOLD*® system. Thus, the *GOLD*® data that preschool teachers collect would likely inform the completion of the R4KIS.

Lessons Learned

States have identified strategies to enhance implementation of *GOLD*®. These include supporting kindergarten teachers through:

- Providing incentives (stipend or classroom materials) to complete the inter-rater reliability;
- Hiring substitutes to offer classroom support;
- Providing in-person technical assistance on using *GOLD*® in addition to the training offered by Teaching Strategies;
- Expanding professional development to include help not only understanding how to conduct observational assessments but also embracing multiple dimensions of child development, understanding developmentally appropriate practice, and how to connect KEA data with their lesson planning and intentional teaching;
- Creating professional learning communities for teachers to share strategies and experiences; and
- Identifying ways to use the KEA data such as differentiated instruction, IEP meetings, and student support, parent conferences.

² In Vermont, Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) was used to determine “readiness” for each of the KRS domains and to calculate an overall readiness value. Readiness at the domain level requires that the child have a rating of “practicing,” “performing independently,” “never,” or “seldom” on all items within the domain. Readiness across the domains requires that the child is rated as “ready” on all items in the survey. Survey items rated as “Don’t know” or missing responses are not included in the denominator when calculating domain and overall readiness percentages. Vermont reported that the following percentages of 5,156 kindergarten students in the fall 2014 met readiness expectations in social-emotional development (76.2%); approaches to learning (76%); communication (82.6%); cognitive development (65%); and wellness (85.4%). VT also reports readiness across all 5 child domains; in 2014-2015, 52.2% of the assessed children were rated as “ready for kindergarten.” See: http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-201415_KRS_Statewide.pdf

In addition to providing teacher incentives and hiring substitutes, funds should also be dedicated for more resources and materials, including computer tablets. Other advice includes:

- Collect feedback from both teachers and administrators about the implementation of *GOLD®* and making adaptations along the way.
- Conduct an inventory of what other assessments are being used to gather readiness skills of incoming students and help classrooms and schools eliminate unnecessary assessments.
- Create a system to organize basic information about students and individuals inputting data.

Conclusion

GOLD® is one of several tools being used to assess the readiness of students at kindergarten. Each state using *GOLD®* has adapted it to meet different expectations as to which objectives or domains are used. Only a few states are using *GOLD®* to report readiness, however this may increase as more states move out of the piloting phase.

Figure 1. Status of KEA and Use of Teaching Strategies *GOLD®* to Inform State Indicators of Readiness

State	Status of KEA	Selected <i>GOLD®</i> objectives	Determination of Readiness?
Alabama	Pilot	No	No
Colorado	Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment: Required for state funded kindergarten students	Yes ³	Yes ⁴
Delaware	Delaware Early Learning Survey: Statewide	Yes ⁵	Is not reported publicly
Hawaii	Hawaii Individual Kindergarten inventory of developing skills (HIKids): Pilot	No	No

³ Colorado’s selected *GOLD®* objectives: https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness/reduced_item_kea_2016-0

⁴ Colorado’s annual Colorado Preschool Program legislative report includes the percentage of students who in the spring of their pre-K year meet age expectations in at least 80% of the objectives within an area. In spring 2015, the following percentages of the 13,800 pre-K students met age expectations in literacy (79.7%); physical development (94.6%); cognitive development (89.7%); social-emotional development (86.0%); language development (81.6%); and mathematics (65.5%). See: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/legreports.html> for all reports and for the 2017 legislative report: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/2017legreport>
Statewide kindergarten school readiness data reporting will begin in the fall of 2017. The Colorado Department of Education will produce an annual report. Colorado has developed a data reporting fact sheet to highlight data reporting requirements by state law, and provide updates and guidance for kindergarten school readiness data reporting. See <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness/srdatareporting1617>

⁵ Delaware’s original Early Learner Survey contained 43 items, but teachers thought the items were too numerous. DE worked with a group of teachers, administrators, and representatives from Teaching Strategies and deleted items, resulting in a final version of 34 objectives. Child Trends conducted an informal study that included a review of a psychometric analysis that was conducted by Teaching Strategies. See: <https://elc.grads360.org/services/PDCService.svc/GetPDCDocumentFile?fileId=5738>

State	Status of KEA	Selected GOLD® objectives	Determination of Readiness?
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) system: Recommends using GOLD® [previously choice of several tools including WSS] ⁶	Only social emotional and cognitive domains	Is not reported publicly
Michigan	Pilot/Field test completing, will not be implemented statewide	Yes ⁷	No
Minnesota	Kindergarten Entry Profile: Piloting several tools: GOLD®, WSS, or DRDP ⁸	Unknown	Will be identified in 2016 ⁹
New Jersey	New Jersey Kindergarten Entry Assessment: Voluntary (currently, used by 80 school districts)	Only Social-Emotional, Literacy, and Math domains for the first year ¹⁰	Is not reported publicly
Washington	Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS): Full implementation in all school districts in 2017-18. All schools accepting state funding for FDK must implement all three components of WaKIDS: Family Connection, Whole Child	Yes ¹²	Yes ¹³

⁶ <http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/mkea/#description>

⁷ http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/GOLD_HNDT_Michigan_Objectives_454209_7.pdf

⁸ The Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) includes a menu of comprehensive assessment tools [DRDP, GOLD®, WSS] from which districts can select. All of the tools are aligned to the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPS) and the MN Kindergarten Academic Standards, see: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/SchReadiK/>

⁹ Beginning in 2016, the status of children's learning and development will be reported according to the early learning standards rather than any assessment tool.

¹⁰ Teachers add objectives from other domains in subsequent years.

¹⁰ OSPI administers WaKIDS in partnership with Department of Early Learning, Thrive Washington, and all nine Educational Service Districts. OSPI develops resources to frame WaKIDS within the context of all state standards and guidelines from birth through 3rd grade including these foundational tools:

<https://www.del.wa.gov/helpful-resources/washington-state-early-learning-and-developmental-guidelines>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/WashingtonEarlyLearningPlan.pdf>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/Collaboration/pubdocs/ECEAPWaKIDSCrosswalk.pdf>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/WAFull-dayKGuide-January2016.pdf>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/LearningPathwaysInNumeracy.pdf>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/ELA/pubdocs/EarlyLiteracyPathways.pdf>

¹¹ Beginning in 2015, the number of GOLD® objectives in WA was reduced from 36 to 31. The process included interviews with teachers, see: <http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/QAaboutChangesWaKIDSObjectives.pdf>

¹³ Washington releases an annual *State Report Card* that reports the percentage of kindergarten students who demonstrate the characteristics of entering kindergartners, which includes all students at GOLD® readiness levels in each of the six areas of development. In 2015-16, the following percentages of the 58,656 students were defined as demonstrating the characteristics of entering kindergartners in literacy (80.9%); physical development (77.4%); cognitive development (74.6%); social-emotional development (73.2%); language (78.9%); and math (60.8%). See: [WaKIDS Fall 2015 Data Summary](#). (77.4%); cognitive development (74.6%); social-emotional development (73.2%); language (78.9%); and math (60.8%). See: [WaKIDS Fall 2015 Data Summary](#).

State	Status of KEA	Selected GOLD® objectives	Determination of Readiness?
	Assessment, and Early Learning Collaboration ¹¹		

Resources and Links

Barnett, W.S., Friedman-Krauss, A.H., Gomez, R., Horowitz, M., Weisenfeld, G.G., Clarke Brown, K., & Squires, J.H. (2016). *The state of preschool 2015: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Connors-Tadros, L. (2014). *Information and resources on developing state policy on kindergarten entry assessment (KEA)* (CEELO FASTFacts). New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.

Schilder, D. & Carolan, M. (2014). *State of the States policy snapshot: State early childhood assessment policies*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.

Alabama

<https://www.alsde.edu/sites/memos/Memoranda/FY15-3037.pdf>

Colorado

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/coapr2014.pdf>

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness>

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness/kindergartenresources>

https://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness/tsg_cde_mou_12_21_2015

Delaware

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/deapr2014.pdf>

<https://elc.grads360.org/services/PDCService.svc/GetPDCDocumentFile?fileId=5738>

Hawaii

<http://p3hawaii.org/opportunities/GOLD>

Massachusetts

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/maapr2014.pdf>

<http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/mkea/>

<http://www.collaborative.org/node/5946>

Michigan

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/miapr2014.pdf>

http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_65339---,00.html

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Everything_You_Need_To_Know_About_KEA_488297_7.pdf

Minnesota

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/mnapr2014.pdf>

<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/SchReadiK/>

New Jersey

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/njapr2014.pdf>

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/rttt/njkea/>

Vermont

http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-201415_KRS_Statewide.pdf

<http://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-early-education-ready-for-kindergarten-report.pdf>

Washington

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/Data/WaKIDS-2015-data-summary.pdf>

http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/Materials/pubdocs/WaKIDSCutScoresFAQ_TSGOLD2015.pdf

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/WhatIsWaKIDS.pdf>

http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/PrincipalSeries%20FamilyConnection_May2015.pdf

http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/3_WholeChildAssessment.pdf

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/ReferenceGuidefortheConnectionsofWaKIDSObjectives8x11.pdf>

http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/5_EarlyLearningCollaboration.pdf

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/waapr2014.pdf>

<http://www.hanoverresearch.com/media/Kindergarten-Entry-Assessments-Practices-and-Policies.pdf>

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