

The Educational
Opportunity Gap Oversight
and Accountability
Committee (EOGOAC)
Review of The Washington
Kindergarten Inventory of
Developing Skills (WaKIDS)
2022 Report



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Executive Summary

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) was charged by the 2020 supplemental operating budget bill ([SB 6168/](#)[HB 2325](#)) to review the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS), including professional development available to educators and other assessment materials and tools, for opportunities to reduce bias in the observational assessment process and materials, and barriers to implementation of the inventory. Upon review, a subcommittee of the EOGOAC identified sources of bias and structural barriers to culturally and developmentally appropriate implementation that fit into four broad categories. These include:

1. Bias in the process
2. Developmental appropriateness
3. Systemic barriers
4. Use of the results

In order to address the identified sources of bias and structural barriers, the EOGOAC presents the following recommendations with the goal of creating a WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment that is an effective and accurate tool that:

- a. Identifies the strengths of ALL children regardless of and including culture, languages, learning styles, and abilities,
- b. Provides educators with important insights that are useful for meeting children where they are at and helping them grow,
- c. Creates continual opportunities for families to share with educators the strengths they see in their child and to be partners in their education, and
- d. Encourages developmentally appropriate classrooms and practices that help ALL children to learn and grow

Table of recommendations

Recommendation	Audience		
	OSPI	Legislature	Other
1. OSPI work with Teaching Strategies to develop a process to collect and use evidence from family observations in order to understand growth in the context of the home.	✓		
2. Require use of the tool year-round through a series of assessments to show growth over time and emphasize use as a formative assessment to show progression.	✓	✓	

Recommendation	Audience		
	OSPI	Legislature	Other
3. OSPI leadership engage in a process of exploring the purpose of the assessment in the context of early learning and the impact of current implementation with the intention of reframing the language of “kindergarten readiness”.	✓		
4. Require evidence to be uploaded to the <i>MyTeachingStrategies</i> (R) platform - including evidence from families. OSPI and partners should review this evidence by disaggregated student groups for quality and bias, including evidence of partnership with families and identifying student strengths.	✓		✓
5. Require training for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. all elementary school principals on all three components of WaKIDS b. school board directors c. other administrators, school psychologists, school counselors, early learning coordinators and paraeducators at elementary schools 	✓	✓	
6. OSPI Partner with AWSP to promote awareness and best practices on how to engage with communities, WaKIDS family connection meetings and assessment, use of family observations, and partnering with local CBOs and providers.	✓		✓

Recommendation	Audience		
	OSPI	Legislature	Other
7. Require consideration and inclusion of WaKIDS data in elementary school improvement plans.	✓	✓	
8. OSPI and Teaching Strategies provide examples of objectives that are language neutral for students who are English language learners and students with disabilities.	✓		✓
9. OSPI explore integration of the WaKIDS Whole-child assessment with the WIDA ACCESS English language proficiency assessment.	✓		
10. Increase access and involvement of educators who speak the home language of the student in the process.	✓		✓
11. Increase access to experienced coaches who can mentor kindergarten teachers on awareness of their biases and developmental appropriateness of the classroom setting.	✓	✓	
12. Increase recruitment and hiring of a diverse teaching staff that represent (culturally and linguistically) the families and students served.			✓
13. Early learning providers give kindergarten teachers a transition summary file for each student that will begin with a family perspective about the child's strengths.	✓		✓

Recommendation	Audience		
	OSPI	Legislature	Other
14. The State explore a joint licensing option that would enable seamless transfer of information between early learning providers and K-12 as well as the connection of Student Information Systems and the registration process to WaKIDS.	✓	✓	✓
15. Develop and utilize regional structures of support for more regular interaction between kindergarten classroom teachers and childcare and early learning providers.	✓		✓
16. Districts partner with CBOs to provide care during Family Connection Meetings while teachers are meeting with families individually.			✓
17. The State fund family support specialists focused on PreK-3 who support the family as a whole and educate and involve families in the process.		✓	
18. OSPI engage in a process of consultation with families and communities of color, including tribes, and families who speak languages other than English before and during the contract process to make sure that the next iteration of WaKIDS supports their needs and addresses their concerns.	✓		

Recommendation	Audience		
	OSPI	Legislature	Other
19. OSPI and PESB work together to ensure the integration of the skills and knowledge of observational assessment, child development and family engagement into the standards for Washington state educator preparation programs.	✓		✓

Introduction

Legislative Charge

The 2020 supplemental operating budget bill ([SB 6168](#)/[HB 2325](#)) charged the EOGOAC with the following tasks:

(ii) Within amounts provided in this subsection, the committee must review the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills, including professional development available to educators and other assessment materials and tools, and make recommendations to the office of the superintendent of public instruction and the education committees of the legislature on the following topics:

- (A) Opportunities for reducing bias in the observational assessment process and materials; and
- (B) Barriers to implementation of the inventory.

(iii) The committee shall seek feedback from relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- (A) The office of the superintendent of public instruction;
- (B) The department of children, youth, and families;
- (C) Kindergarten teachers who are representative of or who teach in schools with diverse student subgroups;
- (D) A representative from a tribal school who is currently using the inventory;
- (E) Principals who are currently using the inventory;
- (F) Parents who are representative of student populations that have historically scored low on the inventory, and who are recommended by an organization that serves parents of color;
- (G) District assessment coordinators; and
- (H) Early childhood providers.¹

¹Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6168, Operating Budget—Supplemental § Section 501(1)(e)(i) (2020).

<http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6168-S.SL.pdf?q=20210129111842>

Process

After initial review of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) process and a primer on observational assessment in 2020, the EOGOAC appointed a subcommittee to conduct an in-depth review of the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment, meet with additional stakeholders, and draft recommendations. The subcommittee met from March 2021 through June 2021. The process of the subcommittee included:

- Review of the assessment objectives, materials, and tools
- Discussions with stakeholders on implementation including:
 - Principals
 - Kindergarten teachers
 - Tribal Head Start teachers
 - WaKIDS trainers
 - School improvement partners
- Review of related professional development
- Discussions on topics such as, the importance and role of early learning, bias in observational assessment, developmentally appropriate classrooms, the role of parents, the community and child care providers, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, transitional kindergarten, and the future of WaKIDS
- Drafting of recommendations
- Review of the final report

The WaKIDS subcommittee presented their draft recommendations to the full EOGOAC at the meeting on July 20, 2021, and the report was finalized on February 28, 2022.

Membership

The EOGOAC designated several community members with expertise in the area of early childhood education to serve on the subcommittee. Members included:

- Lydia Faitalia (Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs)
- Danielle Eidenberg (Office of the Education Ombuds)
- Susan Yang (designee of the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs)
- Kimberly Early (designee of the Commission on African American Affairs)

Staff

OSPI staff supported the WaKIDS subcommittee including:

- Gretchen Stahr Breunig, Kindergarten Transition Specialist, OSPI
- Heather Rees, Research Analyst, Center for the Improvement of Student Learning, OSPI
- Karma Hugo, Director of Early Learning, OSPI
- Maria Flores, Executive Director, Center for the Improvement of Student Learning, OSPI
- Robin Howe, Administrative Assistant, Center for the Improvement of Student Learning, OSPI
- Yoona Park, WaKIDS Assessment Specialist, Learning and Teaching, OSPI

Background

According to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is “a transition process that helps to ensure a successful start to the K-12 experience and connect the key adults in a child’s life”.² The WaKIDS process is mandated by statute³ and developed out of the recommendations of the Washington Learns initiative.

Timeline



WaKIDS includes three components: [Family Connection](#) meetings, [Early Learning Collaboration](#) and the Whole-child Assessment (referred to in this report at the WaKIDS assessment). While each individual portion is essential to the overall success of the process and is linked to the success of the other portions, this report is focused on the Whole-child Assessment, as the EOGOAC was specifically tasked with identifying opportunities for reducing bias in the observational assessment process and materials and barriers to implementation of the inventory.⁴

² Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.). *Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)*. <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/testing/state-testing-overview/washington-kindergarten-inventory-developing-skills-wakids>

³ [RCW 28A.150.315](#) and [RCW 28A.655.080](#)

⁴ Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6168, Operating Budget—Supplemental § Section 501(1)(e)(i) (2020). <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6168-S.SL.pdf?q=20210129111842>

Teaching Strategies GOLD(R) is currently the strengths-based, observational assessment tool used by teachers to identify the skills and strengths of children on a developmental scale, as the required Whole-child Assessment. The [objectives and dimensions](#) of this tool used in WaKIDS include progressions of development that range from birth through third grade in six areas of development and learning including: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy and mathematics. These objectives are aligned to the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines: Birth through Five Years⁵

Over the first 8-10 weeks of kindergarten, educators identify the indicators observed from their play, social interactions, and everyday activities on the progression of development and learning for each objective assessed, keeping record of the evidence they used to make that determination. Scores for each child are entered into the online tool *MyTeachingStrategies(R)*. The results are not “pass” or “fail”, but rather inform teachers about the abilities observed that describe children’s’ current stages of development on a range of skills to guide instruction and support student growth. However, there are a range of characteristics that are considered appropriate for typically developing children at kindergarten age⁶. This is often referred to as a measure of “kindergarten readiness”.

The individual assessment data is intended to be used locally by individual classroom teachers to inform instructional planning tailored to each child’s needs and skills, to structure classroom practices and materials, and to share with families information about their child’s development and opportunities for learning at home. At the district and state level, the data should be used to inform educational policy and targeted allocation of resources. Since first piloting in school year 2010-2011, WaKIDS assessment data can be used to identify trends and gaps for specific student groups (see figures 1 & 2).

⁵ Teaching Strategies. (2013). *Alignment of the Teaching Strategies GOLD objectives for development & learning: birth through kindergarten with Washington State early learning and development guidelines*. <https://teachingstrategies.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WA-GOLD-Alignment-Birth-thru-60-mos-2013.pdf>

⁶ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d). *Characteristics of children entering kindergarten*. <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/wakids/pubdocs/characteristicsofchildrenenteringkindergarten-english.pdf>

Figure 1. Kindergarten Readiness by Student Demographic 2019-2020⁷

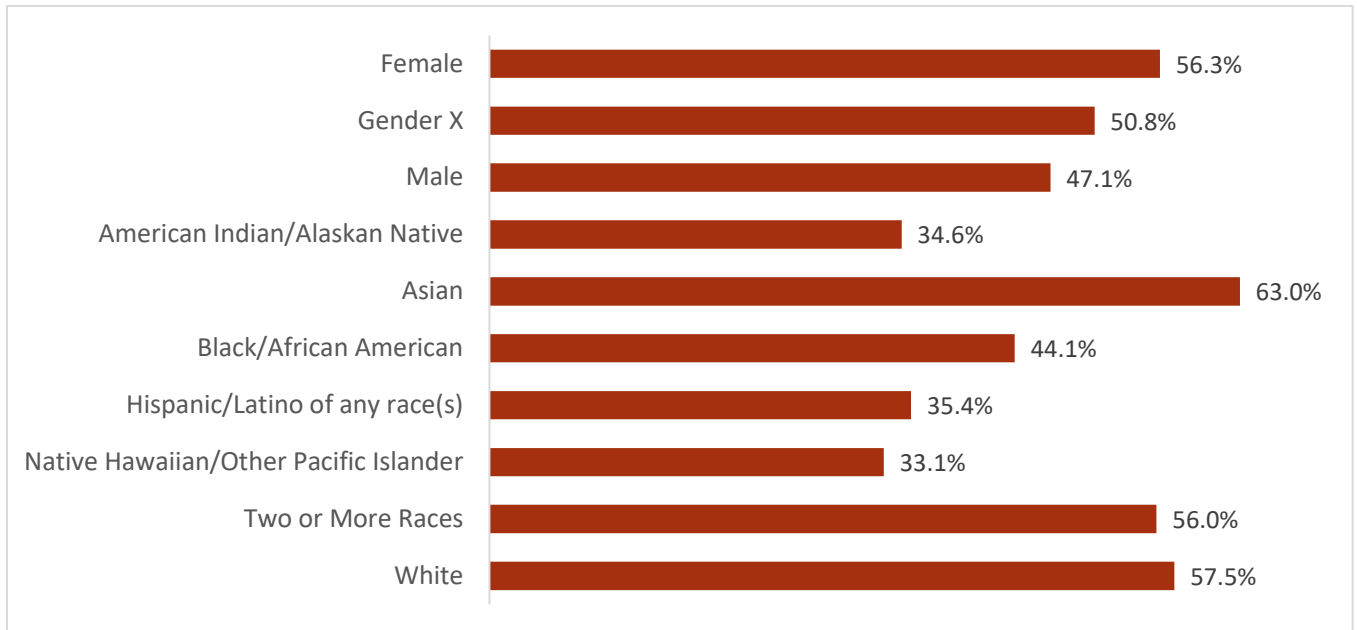
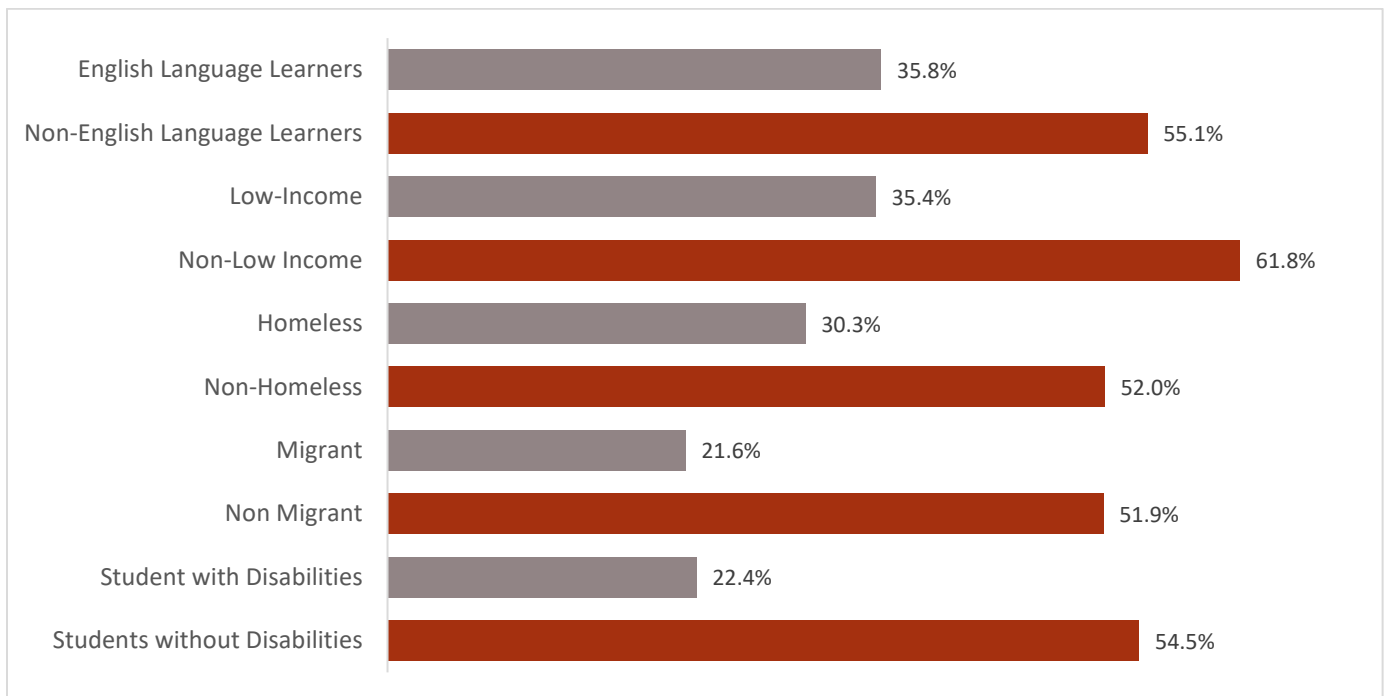


Figure 2. Kindergarten Readiness by Student Program & Characteristics⁸



Figures 1 and 2 show lower rates of identified age-typical skills, knowledge, and behaviors, termed “readiness”, among students who are American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African American,

⁷ Data retrieved from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (2022). Washington State Report Card [Date set]. <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

⁸ Ibid

Hispanic/Latino of any race, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, English Language Learners, low-income, McKinney Vento eligible, migrant, and students with disabilities compared to students who identify with other demographic groups. Please note that further breakdown by disaggregated race/ethnicity categories will be available as of the 2022-2023 school year for all kindergarten students. The consistency of the WaKIDS assessment has also allowed for additional research into student development and the persistence of gaps through comparison with 3rd grade Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) data.⁹

Considering the potential usefulness of this data and the demonstrated identified gaps, the key question becomes: How much of apparent lack of “kindergarten readiness” identified is due to actual delayed rates of development and how much is due to potential bias in the observational assessment process and materials that lead to an undervaluation or lack of opportunity for children to demonstrate their skills among students of color, English Language Learners, and other student groups? This report serves to identify possible sources of bias and structural barriers to culturally and developmentally appropriate implementation and to make recommendations for addressing these issues.

Explanation of the identified problem areas and challenges

After reviewing the WaKIDS assessment objectives, materials, tools, and professional development, as well as discussions with stakeholders, the subcommittee identified sources of bias and structural barriers to culturally and developmentally appropriate implementation that fit into four broad categories. These include:

1. Bias in the process
2. Developmental appropriateness
3. Systemic barriers
4. Use of the results

Key question: How much of apparent lack of “kindergarten readiness” identified is due to actual delayed rates of development and how much is due to potential bias in the observational assessment process and materials that lead to an undervaluation or lack of opportunity for children to demonstrate their skills among students of color, English Language Learners, and other student groups?

Purpose of the report: To identify possible sources of bias and structural barriers to culturally and developmentally appropriate implementation and to make recommendations for addressing these issues.

⁹ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d). *Linking kindergarten & 3rd grade assessment results*. https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/wakids/materials/pubdocs/LinkWaKIDS3rdOnePageFinal_20200714%20%2802%29.pdf

Table 2. Explanation of the identified problem areas and challenges

Problem Area	
1. Bias in the process	2. Developmental appropriateness
<p>Not all the assessment objectives give an accurate measure of children from all cultural backgrounds. Educator observations can be affected by personal bias.</p> <p>These sources of potential bias can result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labeling and tracking of children early on • Pushing students out of school because their behaviors are not understood • Overlooking the strengths and assets of individual children • Missing opportunities for enrichment of the child and the classroom • Using inappropriate disciplinary actions • Over-identifying children for special education services • Parents feeling judged and misunderstood by the education system and their child’s educator 	<p>Classrooms often lack the developmentally appropriate instructional opportunities to assess students’ demonstrated skills. The WaKIDS assessment results will be inaccurate if the assessment is not conducted appropriately and in a manner that disadvantages certain groups of students.</p> <p>The language of “school readiness” creates a false sense that there are requirements for the successful start of kindergarten.</p> <p>All children have a right to basic education regardless of their demonstrated skills and abilities</p>
3. Systemic barriers	4. Use of the results
<p>Educators experience a lack of support from their school administration including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate time • Lack of resources • Lack of guidance • Lack of support for developmentally appropriate classrooms <p>Administrators without expertise in child development are unable to evaluate educators on how they conduct the assessment to provide guidance and accountability.</p> <p>There is a lack of communication among educators, administrators, families, communities, early childhood preschool, and child care providers around the WaKIDS assessment process.</p> <p>The WaKIDS assessment system is difficult to change or adjust to changing needs.</p>	<p>The resulting data is useless and at most harmful if not used and understood appropriately. Areas of risk for misuse include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to use the data to inform classroom teaching plans and next steps for student’s learning • Use of results to label and track students • Misinterpretation of results that leads to over-identification of certain student groups for special education services • Failure to use the results to inform school planning and allocation of resources • Failure to share and appropriately explain the results to family and community members

1. Bias in the process

Not all the objectives give an accurate measure of children from all cultural backgrounds. For example, indigenous children have demonstrated exceptional oral recall and knowledge of the natural environment, which may not be provided as part of the learning environment. Educator observations can also be affected by personal biases. These sources of potential bias can result in:

- Labeling and tracking of children early on
- Pushing students out of school because their behaviors are not understood
- Overlooking the strengths and assets of individual children
- Missing opportunities for enrichment of the child and the classroom
- Using inappropriate disciplinary actions
- Over-identifying children for special education services
- Parents feeling judged and misunderstood by the education system and their child's educator

2. Developmental appropriateness

The WaKIDS assessment is meant to be conducted through observation of students' behaviors and demonstrated skills in the classroom. This requires that classrooms present children with the developmentally appropriate instructional opportunities in which to observe them making choices and interacting with other children and adults. However, many kindergarten classrooms are set up more like the structured settings of much higher grades, with close to a majority of time spent in whole group settings where students have fewer opportunities to interact and express themselves.¹⁰ The WaKIDS assessment results will be inaccurate if the assessment is not conducted appropriately and thus disadvantages certain groups of students.

Additionally, the subcommittee found that language used to describe the WaKIDS assessment results as a measure of "school readiness" creates a false sense that there are requirements for the successful start of kindergarten. Research shows that at age five when children often begin kindergarten, the range of variability in maturation between "early maturation" and "slow to mature" is very wide.¹¹ The language of "ready or not ready" fails to capture that developmental range and conveys to parents that their child "must" master a particular set of skills in order to start kindergarten. This is false. Children who turn five years old by August 31 have a right to basic education and access to full-day kindergarten.¹²

3. Systemic barriers

In addition to the challenges presented in the classroom and the assessment process, the subcommittee found systemic barriers that inhibit culturally and developmentally appropriate implementation. These barriers include:

- a. Educators experience a lack of support from their school administration including:
 - Not enough time in their schedules to complete, document and record the assessment

¹⁰ Hugo, K. & Yoona, P. (2020, Jul. 21). *Bias in WaKIDS?* [Presentation]. Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. <https://padlet.com/cisl/EOGOAC>

¹¹ Dominic F. Gallo, profession of elementary and early childhood education, Queens College, University of New York, 2007

¹² Washington State Legislature. (2007). *RCW 28A.150.315 All-day kindergarten programs—funding—identification of skills, knowledge, and characteristics—assessments.* <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.315>

- A shortage of resources such as age-appropriate supplies and materials
 - Not enough guidance through mechanisms such as mentoring of beginning educators
 - Pressure to organize their classrooms in ways that are not developmentally appropriate
- b. Administrators who lack experience and training in the area of early education and observational assessment are unable to evaluate educators on how they conduct the assessment and therefore unable to provide guidance and accountability.
 - c. The work is siloed between in the classroom and out of school time. Lack of communication between educators, administrators, families, communities and early childhood preschool and child care providers (including extended day for children ages five to twelve) around the WaKIDS assessment process results in confusion for communities, a lack of resources/materials, a lack of access to resources and services for students and families (language, supports for children with disabilities), and ultimately the possibility that student are pushed out of school because their behaviors are not understood.
 - d. Overall, the WaKIDS assessment system is difficult to change or adjust to changing needs of families and children.

4. Use of the results

Even with the most culturally and developmentally appropriate implementation of the assessment, the resulting data are useless and at most harmful if not used and understood appropriately. Areas of risk for misuse include:

- Failure to use the data to inform classroom teaching plans and next steps for student’s learning
- Use of the results to label and track students
- Misinterpretation of results that leads to over-identification of certain student groups for special education services
- Failure to use the results to inform school planning and allocation of resources
- Failure to share and appropriately explain the results to family and community members

Recommendations

The EOGOAC WaKIDS Review Subcommittee proposed the following recommendations in order to address the identified sources of bias and structural barriers to culturally and developmentally appropriate implementation. The goal of these recommendations is to create a WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment that is an effective and accurate tool that:

- a. Identifies the strengths of ALL children regardless of and including culture, language(s), and abilities, and learning styles
- b. Provides educators with important insights that are useful for meeting children where they are developmentally and helping them to grow
- c. Creates an opportunity for families to share with educators the strengths they see in their child and to be partners in their child’s education






- d. Encourages developmentally appropriate classrooms and practices that help ALL children to learn and grow






Table 3. Recommendations and the problem/challenge they address

Recommendation	1. Bias in the process	2. Developmental appropriateness	3. Systemic barriers	4. Use of the results
1. OSPI work with Teaching Strategies to develop a process to collect and use evidence from family observations in order to understand growth in the context of the home.	✓	✓		
2. Require use of the tool year-round through a series of assessments to show growth over time and emphasize use as a formative assessment to show progression.		✓		
3. OSPI leadership engage in a process of exploring the purpose of the assessment in the context of early learning and the impact of current implementation with the intention of reframing the language of “kindergarten readiness”.	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Require evidence to be uploaded to the <i>MyTeachingStrategies</i> (R) platform - including evidence from families. OSPI and partners should review this evidence by disaggregated student groups for quality and bias, including evidence of partnership with families and identifying student strengths.	✓			✓

Recommendation	1. Bias in the process	2. Developmental appropriateness	3. Systemic barriers	4. Use of the results
<p>5. Require training for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. all elementary school principals on all three components of WaKIDS b. school board directors c. other administrators, school psychologists, school counselors, early learning coordinators and paraeducators at elementary schools 	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>6. OSPI partner with AWSP to promote awareness and best practices on how to engage with communities, WaKIDS family connection meetings and assessment, use of family observations, and partnering with local CBOs and providers.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>7. Require consideration and inclusion of WaKIDS data in elementary school improvement plans.</p>				✓
<p>8. OSPI and Teaching Strategies provide examples of objectives that are language neutral for students who are English language learners and students with disabilities.</p>	✓			

Recommendation	1. Bias in the process	2. Developmental appropriateness	3. Systemic barriers	4. Use of the results
9. OSPI explore integration of the WaKIDS assessment with the WIDA ACCESS English language proficiency assessment.	✓			
10. Increase access and involvement of educators who speak the home language of the student in the process.	✓			
11. Increase access to experienced coaches who can mentor kindergarten teachers on awareness of their biases and developmental appropriateness of the classroom setting.	✓	✓		
12. Increase recruitment and hiring of a diverse teaching staff that represent (culturally and linguistically) the families and students served.	✓			
13. Early learning providers give kindergarten teachers a transition summary file for each student that will begin with a family perspective about the child's strengths.	✓			

Recommendation	1. Bias in the process	2. Developmental appropriateness	3. Systemic barriers	4. Use of the results
<p>14. The State explore a joint licensing option that would enable seamless transfer of information between early learning providers and K-12 as well as the connection of Student Information Systems and the registration process to WaKIDS.</p>				
<p>15. Develop and utilize regional structures of support for more regular interaction between kindergarten classroom teachers and childcare and early learning providers.</p>				
<p>16. Districts partner with CBOs to provide care during Family Connection Meetings while teachers are meeting with families individually.</p>				
<p>17. The State fund family support specialists focused on PreK-3 who support the family as a whole and educate and involve families in the process.</p>				

Recommendation	1. Bias in the process	2. Developmental appropriateness	3. Systemic barriers	4. Use of the results
<p>18. OSPI engage in a process of consultation with families and communities of color, including tribes, and families who speak languages other than English before and during the contract process to make sure that the next iteration of WaKIDS supports their needs and addresses their concerns.</p>				
<p>19. OSPI and PESB work together to ensure the integration of the skills and knowledge of observational assessment, child development and family engagement into the standards for Washington state educator preparation programs.</p>				

Recommendation 1. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI work with Teaching Strategies to develop a process to collect and use evidence from family observations in order to understand growth in the context of the home.

Inclusion of observations from families will help to decrease the impacts of any possible bias of the educator by including the perspectives of the family that are collected in the child's natural and comfortable home setting. A precedent for including parent and family observations in assessments exists in the process of the [Functional Behavioral Assessment \(FBA\)](#), which includes parent observations of the child's behavioral patterns to inform the Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP).

Recommendation 2. The EOGOAC recommends that the State require use of the tool year-round through a series of assessments to show growth over time and emphasize use as a formative assessment to show progression.

Requiring educators to document children's growth year-round will transition use of the tool from a point-in-time assessment to a formative assessment that documents the child's progress and opportunities for growth throughout the year. OSPI should consult with educators who currently use *Teaching Strategies GOLD(R)* year-round to inform this transition including those in Bellingham, Mount Vernon, and Richland school districts.

Recommendation 3. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI leadership engage in a process of exploring the purpose of the assessment in the context of early learning and the impact of current implementation with the intention of reframing the language of "kindergarten readiness".

The committee finds that a holistic review by the agency is necessary to move the state away from the detrimental language of "kindergarten ready" and to re-orient the entire WaKIDS process to connect with OSPI's mission, vision, and strategic goals, specifically those related to early learning and equity. Additionally, OSPI should work with partner agencies to align language across early learning.

Recommendation 4. The EOGAOC recommends that the State require evidence to be uploaded to the MyTeachingStrategies(R) platform - including evidence from families. OSPI and partners should review this evidence by disaggregated student groups for quality and bias, including evidence of partnership with families and identifying student strengths.

The committee finds that without access to the documented evidence that informs WaKIDS assessment ratings, school and state administrators are unable to review the evidence for quality and possible bias, hampering any accountability measures of the system. Giving parents access to the documented observations would help them to partner with educators on strategies to utilize the strengths and encourage the growth of their child.

Recommendation 5. The EOGOAC recommends that the State require training for:

- all elementary school principals on all three portions of WaKIDS
- school board directors
- other administrators, school psychologists, school counselors, early learning coordinators and paraeducators at elementary schools

Training for school administrators should include how to understand WaKIDS data and to use it to target resources for school improvement. All members of the elementary school team need this training in order to work together to support children’s learning both in and out of the classroom.

Recommendation 6. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI partner with AWSP to promote awareness and best practices on how to engage with communities, WaKIDS family connection meetings and assessment, use of family observations, and partnering with local CBOs and providers.

This should include information for principals on the role of WaKIDS in establishing the school community, how to communicate and engage with communities about WaKIDS family connection meetings and assessment, how to collect and utilize family observations, and how to partner with local community-based organizations and childcare providers to support the WaKIDS process.

Recommendation 7. The EOGOAC recommends that the State require consideration and inclusion of WaKIDS data in elementary school improvement plans.

WaKIDS assessment data should be used to influence targeted use of funds and other resources to address the needs of students and families.

Recommendation 8. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI and Teaching Strategies provide examples of objectives that are language neutral for students who are English language learners and students with disabilities.

The committee finds that an overreliance on objectives that require use of the English language results in lower scores for students who are English language learners and students with disabilities (see Figure 2). Educators need extra support to eliminate this bias that undervalues the skills of these students.

Recommendation 9. The EOGOAC recommends that OSPI explore integration of the WaKIDS assessment with the WIDA ACCESS English language proficiency assessment.

Washington State has adopted the [WIDA English Language Development Standards](#) and began transitioning to using the new standards and related assessments in the 2021–22 school year, starting in August 2021. The WIDA Screener for Kindergarten will be used to screen all possibly eligible kindergarteners. As the WaKIDS assessment includes language and literacy domains, the use and results of these two assessments may inform one another and help address possible bias against students who are English Language Learners.

Recommendation 10. The EOGOAC recommends that schools increase access and involvement of educators who speak the home language of the student in the WaKIDS assessment process. Whenever possible, schools should involve bilingual educators in the WaKIDS assessment process to help reduce possible bias against students who are English Language Learners. For example, bilingual

educators could assist in making and documenting observations, consulting with lead kindergarten teachers or reviewing evidence and scores for children who are English Language Learners.

Recommendation 11. The EOGOAC recommends that the state increase access to experienced coaches who can mentor kindergarten teachers on awareness of their biases and developmental appropriateness of the classroom setting.

The committee finds that the initial one-time training for educators administrating WaKIDS is not sufficient to eliminate bias. Educators should engage in an ongoing process of improvement. OSPI has seen very positive outcomes when Educational Service District (ESD) WaKIDS Coordinators have the capacity to work with teachers and administrators as coaches and mentors and the use of practitioner coaches to guide teachers in inclusionary practices. The state should seek to increase access to mentor teachers, practitioner coaches, and/or ESD staff who can mentor teachers to reduce bias in the observational assessment process and increase developmental appropriateness of classrooms.

Recommendation 12. The EOGOAC recommends that schools increase recruitment and hiring of a diverse teaching staff that represent (culturally and linguistically) the families and students served.

As of 2019-2020 school year data, 86.8% of classroom teachers are White while only 52.5% of students are White.¹³ Statewide there are ongoing efforts to close the race/ethnicity gap between teachers and students. The committee recognizes that having a diverse teaching staff that is culturally and linguistically representative of the students in the classroom will help to reduce bias in the observational assessment process and these educators will be better able to relate and connect with families and to increase trust.

Recommendation 13. The EOGOAC recommends that early learning providers give kindergarten teachers a transition summary file for each student that begins with a family perspective about the child's strengths.

For children who participate in formal pre-kindergarten programming such as Head Start and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), early childhood providers should work with families to prepare a transition summary file to be delivered to the kindergarten teacher. This file should include the family and provider's perspective about the child's strengths, any skills assessments and screenings completed, and any other information that would be useful to the kindergarten teacher in understanding the developmental stage of the child. This will help to increase connections between kindergarten teachers, families, and early childhood providers.

Recommendation 14. The EOGOAC recommends that the State explore a joint licensing option that would enable the seamless transfer of information between early learning providers and K-12 as well as the connection of Student Information Systems and the registration process to WaKIDS.

In order to reduce systemic barriers that create silos between the systems, kindergarten teachers should have access to the data from pre-k programs that also use *Teaching Strategies GOLD(R)*. Access to this information would help kindergarten teachers to understand the needs and strengths of incoming

¹³ Data pulled from Report Card 11/7/2021

<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

students and allow evaluators and researchers to look for discrepancies between applications of the assessment.

Recommendation 15. The EOGOAC recommends the development and utilization of regional structures of support for more regular interaction between kindergarten classroom teachers and child care and early learning providers.

These regional structures of support, for example Educational Service Districts (ESDs), should create opportunities for shared professional development and the exchange of ideas about learning environments indoors and outdoors, where child care providers and community-based organizations share their knowledge of developmentally and culturally appropriate practices with school early childhood educators and administrators. Intentional development and utilization of these relationships would help to address systemic barriers and increase developmental appropriateness.

Recommendation 16. The EOGOAC recommends that districts partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide care for younger siblings during Family Connection meetings, while teachers are meeting with families individually.

[Family Connection meetings](#) are a component of WaKIDS where families have the opportunity to meet on-on-one with their child's kindergarten teacher at the beginning of the school year. These meetings are meant to welcome families to the school and to build intentional, supportive relationships. In order for the caregivers and incoming kindergartener to participate in these meetings, childcare for other kindergarteners and siblings is necessary. Districts should partner with CBOs and child care providers to provide this care. Districts can also utilize this opportunity to connect families to the [Help Me Grow network](#), which can provide connections to resources such as developmental screening, application assistance for health insurance, or help finding a food bank, parenting class or low-cost medical clinic. This will reduce barriers for families who need childcare support and establish the district's role in supporting the family as a whole.

Recommendation 17. The EOGOAC recommends that the State fund family support specialists focused on PreK-3 who support the family as a whole and educate and involve families in the process.

These early learning family support specialists will help to reduce bias by increasing parent involvement and support the family as a whole. Teachers cannot be expected to do it all on their own and they need a team of support staff who can provide vital resources to families.

Recommendation 18. The EOGOAC recommends that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) engage in a process of consultation with families and communities of color, including tribes, and families who speak languages other than English before and during the renewal of the OSPI-Teaching Strategies contract to make sure that the next iteration of WaKIDS supports their needs and addresses their concerns.

The contracts between OSPI and Teaching Strategies, LLC should be informed by the needs of families and communities of color, including tribes, and families who speak languages other than English. OSPI should utilize any opportunity for evaluating and making changes to this contract to gather feedback from these communities in order to secure an assessment that reduces systemic barriers and increases developmental appropriateness.

Recommendation 19. The EOGOAC recommends that Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) work together to ensure the integration of the skills and knowledge of observational assessment, child development and family engagement into the standards for Washington State educator preparation programs. While training on the WaKIDS process and the administration of the *Teaching Strategies GOLD(R)* assessment tool is provided to kindergarten teachers, the general skills and knowledge of observational assessment, child development, and family engagement are essential to all early learning educators and teachers should come to the profession prepared. This will help reduce bias and increase developmental appropriateness of classrooms.

Conclusion

The EOGOAC recognizes that the WaKIDS whole-child assessment does not exist in a vacuum but is one element of a whole system of many moving parts. Although opportunity gaps and inequity issues often start prenatally, and observational assessment can begin in infant/toddler programs, we have an opportunity to set up children for success in kindergarten and beyond. As a pivotal component of a child's and family's first encounters with the public K-12 educational system, the three components of WaKIDS set the tone for the relationship between our communities and schools. Bias in the whole-child assessment process affects not just numbers on a report but can set the entire trajectory of a child's education. This is why implementation of these recommendations is an essential step in increasing equity in the K-12 system, starting with kindergarten.