

Washington Kindergarten Inventory

Statutory and/or Budget Language

\$2,590,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$2,590,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills. State funding shall support statewide administration and district implementation of the inventory under RCW 28A.655.080.

Purpose

2SSB 5427 (Full-day Kindergarten – Assessment, 2011 Session) states that beginning with the 2011–12 school year on a voluntary basis, schools must identify the skills, knowledge, and characteristics of kindergarten students at the start of the school year in order to support social-emotional, physical, and cognitive growth and development of individual children; support early learning provider and parent involvement; and inform instruction.

Kindergarten teachers shall administer the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) at the beginning of the school year to all students enrolled in state-funded full-day kindergarten programs under RCW 28A.150.315, as directed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction and report the results to the superintendent. The superintendent shall share the results with the director of the Department of Children, Youth and Families. School districts shall provide an opportunity for parents and guardians to excuse their children from participation in WaKIDS.

A second piece of legislation, ESHB 2586 (2012 Session), requires that WaKIDS replace administration of other assessments being required by school districts or that other assessments only be administered if they seek to obtain information not covered by WaKIDS.

[WAC 392-425-055](#) as passed by the legislature requires the WaKIDS must be administered at the beginning of the Transition to Kindergarten (TK) program. Additionally, the WaKIDS whole-child assessment must be administered at least one more time during the school year.

Description of Services Provided

OSPI provides leadership and administration of the WaKIDS kindergarten entry transition process, which includes three components: Family Connection, Whole-child Assessment and Early Learning Collaboration. OSPI coordinates a regional network of Educational Service Districts (ESDs) to provide support to teachers and administrators in schools implementing WaKIDS.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

WaKIDS is legislatively mandated to be part of state-funded, full-day kindergarten, and TK. Schools accepting state funding for full-day kindergarten and TK are required to administer WaKIDS, among other requirements, according to [RCW 28A.150.315](#), [RCW 28A.655.080](#) and [WAC 392-425-055](#).

Beneficiaries in the 2023–24 School Year

Number of School Districts	287
Number of Schools	1,224
Number of Students	78,324
Number of Educators	4,424
Other	N/A

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	\$2,590,000	\$2,467,170
2023	\$2,590,000	\$2,403,774
2022	\$2,590,000	\$2,523,334
2021	\$2,590,000	\$2,401,770
2020	\$2,590,000	\$2,124,292

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	1,224 schools
2023	1,230 schools
2022	1,246 schools
2021	1,244 schools
2020	1,179 schools

Commented [A1]: Response missing

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

WaKIDS was piloted in 2010–11 and implemented in volunteer schools in 2011–12. Beginning in 2012–13, WaKIDS was required in all state-funded full-day kindergarten schools that fell within a designated poverty level, unless the district received a waiver from the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Each succeeding year, WaKIDS was scaled up, based on the poverty levels of the schools. Schools with the highest percentages of students on free and reduced lunch were given

access to state-funded, full-day kindergarten first. Full funding was provided to support full-day kindergarten in 2016–17. As of 2017–18, all schools in Washington state were expected to provide state-funded, full-day kindergarten.

In 2014, changes were made to the objectives assessed to be in better alignment with Washington Learning Standards.

On July 1, 2017, Teaching Strategies GOLD®, the tool used for the whole-child assessment component of WaKIDS, converted to a new, upgraded platform. As a result, training and other support materials had to be revised to reflect changes to the user interface and expanded progressions of development. Updated materials had to be printed and disseminated to all kindergarten teachers and principals who had been using the tool prior to the upgrade.

In June 2019, the contract with the assessment vendor, Teaching Strategies, was amended to address the increase in students being assessed. The initial contract was based on an estimate of 80,000 kindergarten students. In the fall of 2018, 80,956 students were assessed. The contract was revised to 81,000 students, to allow more fluctuation from year to year without triggering a contract revision. The amount paid to the vendor is based on the actual number of students assessed.

In July 2019, OSPI piloted a new WaKIDS teacher training model that replaced the previous two-day, in-person training with a “hybrid” training model with one day in-person and one day online. The reason for this change was to reduce the cost of the training model in line with the proviso reduction between FY 18 and FY 19.

In July 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, OSPI moved the required WaKIDS training for teachers to an online learning management system. Teachers had two weeks to complete the training. Multiple sessions were hosted concurrently by three WaKIDS instructors who provided virtual feedback and monitored for completion. Additional resources were developed to support families, teachers, and school administrators with remote WaKIDS implementation. The deadline for the Whole-child Assessment component was extended by two weeks.

In August 2021, to understand the growth and locations of Transitional Kindergarten implementation, OSPI initiated the TK Survey that districts are requested to complete to inform OSPI about TK enrollment plans.

Starting 2022–23 school year, Alternative Learning Experience programs that offer full-day kindergarten were officially granted access to the WaKIDS program, including the Whole-child Assessment.

[WAC 392-425-055](#) as passed by the legislature in 2023 requires the WaKIDS must be administered at the beginning of the Transition to Kindergarten (TK) program. Additionally, the WaKIDS whole-child assessment must be administered at least one more time during the school year. Starting 2024–25 school year, students enrolled in TK program must be assessed twice during the school year. There were 5,520 TK students enrolled in 2023–24 school year.

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

OSPI used multilevel logistic regressions to analyze whether kindergarten readiness, as assessed by the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment, predicted 3rd grade Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) outcomes in math and English Language Arts (ELA). The dataset included matched student records from the 2015–16 WaKIDS kindergarten cohort and their 2018–19 3rd grade SBA results, in a study of 43,458 students.

Key Findings

- Kindergarten readiness predicted whether students met 3rd grade SBA standards, even after controlling for student characteristics. The odds of meeting ELA standards were 1.62 times greater for students who were kindergarten-ready in literacy compared to students who were not. Likewise, the odds of meeting math standards were 1.72 times greater for students who were kindergarten-ready in math. There were also cross-domain effects. ELA SBA proficiency was also predicted by math, cognitive and physical readiness. Math SBA proficiency was also predicted by literacy, cognitive, and socioemotional readiness.
- Among students who were kindergarten-ready in literacy and math, those who didn't meet 3rd grade SBA standards were more likely to be American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino of any race(s), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Multilingual/English learners, from low-income families, students with disabilities, not marked as regularly attending school, been suspended or expelled, received Learning Assistance Program (LAP) services and changed schools more often. Additionally, female students appear more likely to fall behind in math, and male students in ELA.
- Statistically significant opportunity gaps in literacy and math persisted from kindergarten to 3rd grade and also widened between most student groups. Additionally, significant opportunity gaps were observed and widened in both subjects between students identified as White and students identified as other races/ethnicities, except for students identified as Asian. While there was no significant difference between White and Asian students in kindergarten, the gap widened and became significant by 3rd grade. Hispanic/Latino students were the only racial/ethnic group that experienced a narrowing of the gap compared to White students, though the gap remained significant.

The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) was charged by the 2020 supplemental operating budget bill (SB 6168/HB 2325) to review 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 presented 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.

OSPI published data on February 1, 2023, showing that TK is an effective strategy for closing opportunity gaps. According to the published data, in the fall of 2022, kindergarten students who had participated in TK outperformed their peers on the WaKIDS assessment in all six domains. Differences were especially pronounced for some student groups, confirming that participation in TK—even for a short time—provides students with the jump start they need for a successful kindergarten entry.

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

The growth of Transition to Kindergarten (TK) has impacted WaKIDS. Because TK programs may begin anytime between beginning of the school year and end of the following January, TK teachers may be hired after the traditional summer/fall WaKIDS training period. Additional trainings have been added to accommodate this.

Eventually, TK will also impact the cost of administering the WaKIDS assessment, which is based on a per-student fee. TK would have increased the number of students assessed in 2020–2021, but this was offset by overall low kindergarten enrollment due to COVID-19. As more school districts begin to offer TK, the cost of teacher training and student assessment may increase beyond the current projections. With schools returning to in-person instruction, the kindergarten student population in 2021–2022 has nearly returned to pre-pandemic years along with growth in TK population.

Another challenge faced by the program is the current licensing agreement with the assessment vendor, Teaching Strategies, limits the access districts have to prior student data. The assessment tool used in WaKIDS is also used by the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Washington’s state-funded preschool. OSPI holds a license for use of the

assessment in kindergarten and TK. The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) holds the license for use of the assessment in ECEAP, as well as for other preschool programs in Washington state. If a school district chooses to use the Teaching Strategies assessment tool for district-funded preschool programs, for instance developmental preschool programs serving students with disabilities, they must purchase access under the DCYF license. The two licenses do not interface with one another. ECEAP data for preschool students moving to kindergarten must be manually transferred from the DCYF to the OSPI license each year. The transfer does not extend to any other preschool programs that purchased access under the DCYF license, including district-based programs. This means that school administrators and kindergarten teachers may have access to ECEAP data but not data from other district-based preschool programs. OSPI and DCYF would like to resolve this fragmented arrangement and in conversation with the assessment vendor to reach the desired outcome for both agencies.

Future Opportunities

Although WaKIDS is not among the measures of the Washington School Improvement Framework, Washington's Every Student Succeeds Act Consolidated Plan includes numerous references to actions that improve kindergarten-readiness and use of WaKIDS data. For the last three years, the Office of System and School Improvement (OSSSI) has included a focus on increasing understanding and use of WaKIDS data in the System and School Improvement Coordinated Services Agreement with the Educational Service Districts. This continues to provide the opportunity to support schools in targeted or comprehensive improvement status in using their WaKIDS data to identify school improvement strategies that are specific to their student populations and early learning needs.

Currently, only full-day kindergarten assessment data is reported in the State Report Card. However, Transition to Kindergarten students' assessment data, that are assessed using the same metrics, are not reported in the State Report Card. Reporting assessment data from the TK cohort each year will inform policies around TK implementation, clearly inform the public about the enrollment of TK and TK program effectiveness.

Also, there were recommendations from the EOGOAC report that the team could work on to bolster the program implementation and student outcome. A few recommendations have been implemented and a few are in the process of development but to implement more or all of them with authenticity and intention, it requires additional funding to supervise development and implementation.

Other Relevant Information

None.

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

[Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.](#)

Program Contact Information

Name	Samantha Bowen
Title	Executive Director of Early Learning, OSPI
Phone	360-725-6161
Email	samantha.bowen@k12.wa.us