

# WaKIDS Frequently Asked Questions

## WaKIDS General Questions

### What is WaKIDS?

Each transition into a new educational environment, especially beginning kindergarten, is a big milestone for children and their families. When children arrive feeling welcomed and excited, they are more likely to find success in school. Smooth transitions into school matter greatly as the quality of a child's transition will sway how the child experiences this first year of formal schooling (Cook, 2019; Little et al, 2016; LoCasale-Crouch et al, 2008).

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a transition process that strives to connect the key adults in a child's life and provide a smooth transition between early learning or home, into the TK and/or kindergarten classroom.

WaKIDS also provides important information about where Washington's Transition to Kindergarten (TK) and kindergarten students are in their development early in the school year. Inequities begin prior to the start of public schooling and persist far into the child's educational experience and beyond. For too many children, this opportunity gap is never resolved (Cook, 2019; Iruka et al, 2018; Winsler et al, 2008). WaKIDS data is helping make clear that many children who experience an opportunity gap at the start of formal schooling face further barriers created by the system that is meant to support them (Fontil et al, 2019; Winsler et al, 2008). The data collected through WaKIDS helps to inform classroom decisions about individualized learning and district-and state-level decisions about education policy and investments.

### What are the components of WaKIDS?

WaKIDS has three components:

1. **Family Connection** welcomes families into the Washington public education system as partners in their child's education. This component occurs through a Family Connection Meeting which builds a relationship between the TK/kindergarten teacher and each child's family. Legislation, [Second Substitute House Bill 1723](#), passed in 2013, permits schools to use up to three full school days for the Family Connection Meetings without applying for a 180-day waiver from the State Board of Education.
2. **Early Learning Collaboration** schools work with community-based early learning programs to promote a common understanding of school readiness so that children can transition smoothly into TK and/or kindergarten.
3. **Whole-child Assessment** helps TK/kindergarten teachers learn about the skills and strengths of the children in their classrooms so they can meet each child's needs. The



data collected during the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment guides instruction and to inform the school, district, state policy, and practices.

### **Who administers WaKIDS?**

Transition to Kindergarten (TK) teachers, kindergarten teachers, and Special Education teachers supporting TK/kindergarten students administer WaKIDS. These teachers are required to complete the WaKIDS 101.

### **Is WaKIDS required?**

Yes, WaKIDS is legislatively mandated to be a part of state-funded, full-day kindergarten ([RCW 28A.150.315](#) and [RCW 28A.655.080](#)). All components of WaKIDS are required for TK and kindergarten classrooms. Schools/programs offering ALE courses or coursework to students enrolled in FDK must also administer WaKIDS.

## **WaKIDS Training Questions**

### **What trainings are available for WaKIDS?**

OSPI currently offers five WaKIDS trainings, all of which are asynchronous via Canvas. Training occurs throughout the summer and briefly in winter.

1. **WaKIDS 101** (16 clock hours): this one-time training is REQUIRED for students. This training must be completed to implement WaKIDS. WaKIDS 101 also includes the Interrater Reliability Course, which prepares WaKIDS 101 participants to be in the Whole-child Assessment. by *GOLD*®.
2. **WaKIDS Refresher** (5 clock hours): ideal for teachers who have previously taken WaKIDS 101 but would like to refresh their learning. This training dives deeper into observational assessment and explores the *SmartTeach*® platform updates.
3. **WaKIDS Administrator**: intended for principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches; stakeholders who are indirectly involved in the WaKIDS process. This training provides an administrator view point to supporting the implementation of WaKIDS in schools.
4. **WaKIDS Support Staff** (3 clock hours): this training is designed for TK and kindergarten specialists, and any other staff who will support kindergarten teachers during the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment checkpoint.
5. **WaKIDS for Paraprofessionals** (3 clock hours): This training is designed for TK and kindergarten paraprofessionals and instructional aides who wish to assist in the collection of WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment documentation collections. Participants in this course will receive a *SmartTeach*® username.

Please visit the [WaKIDS Training and Webinars page](#) for training dates and registration information.



### **I previously completed WaKIDS 101. Am I required to retake the training?**

No, WaKIDS 101 is a one-time training . If you completed the training previously (there is no time restraint), you do not need to retake the training. If you want a refresher, please register for the *WaKIDS Refresher* by visiting the [WaKIDS Training and Webinars page](#). Check with your ESDs and [WaKIDS Coordinators](#) for upcoming WaKIDS related professional development.

### **I did not complete WaKIDS 101. What should I do?**

Completion of WaKIDS 101 is required to implement WaKIDS, especially the Whole-child Assessment. Teachers who do not complete the WaKIDS 101 will have their *SmartTeach*® be assessed, and their district will be out of compliance with the state-mandatory assessment.

If/when teachers re-enroll for the WaKIDS 101 in the future, previous course completion will not carry over to their new course.

### **Will I receive clock hours for completing WaKIDS 101?**

Yes, all teachers new to WaKIDS will receive 12 clock hours for completing the course and 4 clock hours for completing the Interrater Reliability Certification (IRR). Partial clock hours are not offered.

The WaKIDS Refresher offers 5 clock hours, the WaKIDS for Support Staff course offers 3 clock hours, and the WaKIDS Administrator does not offer clock hours.

## **WaKIDS and Full-day Kindergarten**

### **How does WaKIDS relate to full-day kindergarten (FDK)?**

WaKIDS is legislatively mandated to be part of state-funded, full-day kindergarten ([RCW 28A.150.315](#) and [RCW 28A.655.080](#)) in Washington. If kindergarten classrooms accept funds for FDK, they must implement WaKIDS.

### **Statutory Requirements for State-funded full-day kindergarten**

When creating the program of full-day kindergarten in Washington, the Washington State Legislature adopted legislation that specified critical elements of a high-quality full-day kindergarten. These elements, which are in [RCW 28A.150.315](#), include:

- Provide at least a one-thousand-hour instructional program.
- Provide a curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences that assist students in:
  - Developing initial skills in the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and



- writing;
- Developing a variety of communication skills;
  - Providing experiences in science, social studies, arts, health and physical education, and a world language other than English;
  - Acquiring large and small motor skills;
  - Acquiring social and emotional skills including successful participation in learning activities as an individual and as part of a group; and
  - Learning through hands-on experiences.
  - Establish learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity.
  - Demonstrate strong connections and communication with early learning community providers (aligns to Early Learning Collaboration).
  - Participate in kindergarten program readiness activities with early learning providers and parents (aligns to Family Connection).
  - Administer WaKIDS, the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (aligns to Whole-child Assessment).

### **How is full-day kindergarten funding tied to the completion of WaKIDS?**

WaKIDS is a required component of the statute of state-funded full-day kindergarten (FDK). By enrolling students into FDK, districts are obligated to offer a program of FDK, which includes WaKIDS. Not completing WaKIDS could result in a loss of funding and will have to be reported. The ultimate decision about impact to funding will be made by OSPI fiscal staff in consultation with district leadership.

## **Family Connection Questions**

### **What is the Family Connection component of WaKIDS?**

The Family Connection, which occurs through a Family Connection Meeting, is a one-on-one Meeting with children's families/guardians to welcome them to the public education system, share information about their child, and ask questions. Additionally, Family Connection Meeting helps families and teachers begin to build relationships so that they can work together to help children be successful in school. Thus, the earlier these Meetings occur, the more helpful they are.

### **When does the Family Connection occur?**

Family Connection takes place at the very beginning of the school year. Schools typically use the first three days at the beginning of the school year to conduct the Family Connection. Legislation, [Second Substitute House Bill 1723](#), passed in 2013, permits schools to use up to three full school days for the Family Connection without applying for a 180-day waiver from the State Board of Education.

### **What happens during the Family Connection Meeting?**



There is no prescribed Family Connection format to follow, and your Family Connection Meetings may differ from family to family. The Family Connection Meeting should not feel like a formal interview, as you are using this time to establish a relationship and get to know the family and their child. The Family Connection Meeting is not to be used to conduct any assessments.

Teachers may find it helpful to use the [Introducing Me! booklet](#) (which is available in 18 languages). This booklet is not a script and is intended to provide an outline for conversation. Teachers can add their own questions and conversation starters, as desired. Additionally, teachers may consider sharing the [Entering Kindergarten Family Brochure](#) with families to help explain the WaKIDS process and share helpful links. This brochure is also available in 18 languages.

### **Who can attend the Family Connection Meeting?**

Typically, Family Connection Meetings includes the teacher, the child's family (this can be multiple members such as a grandmother), a guardian, and sometimes the child. There is no prescribed formula for who can attend, and it is encouraged to follow the families' lead on who they wish to participate; for example, if the family wants the child's preschool teacher to attend, they are welcome to join.

### **What optional resources are available in *SmartTeach*® to plan instruction and to engage with families?**

Within *SmartTeach*® teachers have access to the Teach tab, which is an optional function. In the Family tab, teachers can invite families to view and share documentation via the *SmartTeach*® platform or app and share resources from the *SmartTeach*® resource library. These include the *At-Home Guided Learning Plans*, Digital Children's Library, and development and learning activities.

### **Can I assess children during the Family Connection?**

No. The purpose of the Family Connection is purely to welcome families and build relationships.

## **Early Learning Collaboration Questions**

### **What is the Early Learning Collaboration component of WaKIDS?**

The Early Learning Collaboration component of WaKIDS aims to foster relationships with early learning providers to transition children to kindergarten. This practice can create a sense of continuity for children to promote a shared understanding of kindergarten readiness, and ultimately provide a smooth transition for children and families. This WaKIDS component works to ensure that schools and teachers are ready to welcome children and families into kindergarten.

Schools offering Transition to Kindergarten will have additional responsibilities to coordinate recruitment and enrollment practices with community early learning programs, as part of the



required elements of Early Learning Collaboration. For more information, visit the [Transition to Kindergarten web page](#).

### **When does Early Learning Collaboration occur?**

There is no finite time frame for the Early Learning Collaboration component to occur. Many schools continually build connections with early learning providers throughout the school year. However, a particular emphasis on the Early Learning Collaboration occurs during the spring and summer.

### **Who can I contact in my ESD for support around the WaKIDS?**

Learn about the [Early Learning District Liaisons](#) for the Early Learning Collaboration component or find your [ESD WaKIDS Coordinator](#).

### **Are there resources for the Early Learning Collaboration?**

Yes, please visit the [Early Learning Collaboration web page](#).

## **Whole-child Assessment Questions**

### **What is the Whole-child Assessment component of WaKIDS?**

The Whole-child Assessment is an authentic and observational assessment that examines six areas of development and learning. The Whole-child Assessment recognizes that all areas of child development are interconnected, and children develop in predictable stages at their own pace.

### **What is the purpose of the Whole-child Assessment?**

The purpose of the Whole-child Assessment is to identify the skills, knowledge, and characteristics of kindergarten children at the beginning of the school year to support six areas of development: social-emotional, physical, language, literacy, cognitive, and mathematical growth and development of individual children, support early learning providers and parent involvement, and inform instruction.

### **How is the Whole-child Assessment conducted?**

As an observational assessment, the Whole-child Assessment is embedded into instruction and learning. The Whole-child Assessment should be conducted by the teacher of record. Additionally, children are NOT PULLED out of the classroom for the Whole-child Assessment. Teachers will engage with and observe children in six areas of development and learning as they collect and create documentation and assign a level to the child's knowledge, skills, and abilities.

### **What are the Whole-child Assessment Checkpoint Deadlines?**

There are three Whole-child Assessment checkpoints.



Period	Checkpoint Deadline
Fall (required for all K programs)	November 15 at 9:00 pm
Winter	March 15 at 9:00 pm
Spring	June 15 at 9:00 pm

All ratings and documentation must be finalized in *SmartTeach*® by the checkpoint deadline. Teachers will conduct the Whole-child Assessment through the checkpoint window. .

Review [tips about successfully completing your checkpoint period](#).

### **How many times during the year must the Whole-child Assessment be completed?**

The amount of required Whole-child Assessment checkpoints varies depending the grade level.

#### **Kindergarten**

OSPI requires the Whole-child Assessment to be completed once, for the fall checkpoint ending November 15 at 9pm PST. However, teachers, schools or districts may elect to complete the assessment more than once in winter and spring. For this reason, the state has contracted with Teaching Strategies, LLC to provide access to the online system throughout the school year. Some districts do administer multiple checkpoints throughout the year. Please consult with your district to learn if your school or district requires multiple checkpoints.

#### **Transition to Kindergarten**

TK classrooms are legislatively mandated to administer the Whole-child Assessment twice per school year ([RCW 28A.300.072](#)). Once at the beginning of the program, and a second time throughout the school year. OSPI suggests that the second checkpoint be at the end of school year to show growth throughout the program. The [TK Checkpoint document](#) explains the logistics of the two checkpoints.

### **What if teachers already gather similar data using other district assessments?**

Please note that [ESHB 2586](#) requires that the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment 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. However, teachers may utilize other assessment tools to inform the ratings they give for their students on the *GOLD*® objectives.

### **What language should teachers assess children in for the Whole-child Assessment?**

With the exception of Language Objectives 9b, 10a and Literacy Objectives 15-19, which must be assessed from an English-language perspective, it is ideal to assess in the child's preferred language - the language they choose at particular times to show what they know and can do. By allowing for the use of preferred language, we can gain better understanding of our students' strengths and needs. If teachers don't have the capacity to assess students in their preferred language, either because they don't speak that language or don't have



support from someone who is proficient in that language, they will need to select the highest level that they can assure the child is able to demonstrate. Please refer to the [guidance on English Language Learners](#).

### **Can I conduct the Whole-child Assessment on children with IEPs?**

Yes. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act 2004 asserts that “a state must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general state and district-wide assessment programs...with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, if necessary...” The Whole-child Assessment uses the *GOLD® Objectives for Development and Learning*, a developmental progression spanning birth through third grade, granting the tool the ability to accommodate individual children at varying developmental milestones. To learn more, please refer to the [Guidance for Kindergarten Teachers Supporting Students with Disabilities](#).

### **What tool is used to collect the Whole-child Assessment data?**

*SmartTeach®* is the online platform used for the Whole-child Assessment. Within *SmartTeach®*, teachers will use a developmental progression called the *GOLD® Objectives for Development and Learning* (ODL). The ODL spans birth through third grade and enables teachers to see children’s development and learning along a progression across the whole of the early childhood years.

### **Do the *GOLD® Objectives for Development and Learning* align to other state standards?**

Yes, the *GOLD®* objectives align to the [Common Core State Standards](#). Additionally, the *GOLD®* objectives align to Washington State initiatives, including the [Early Learning and Development Guidelines](#), the [Learning Pathways in Literacy](#), the Learning Pathways in Numeracy: Addressing Early Numeracy Skills, and the Teacher Principal Evaluation Program.

### **How is WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment data used?**

The WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment data can be used for the following purposes:

1. Provide targeted supports to students who entered kindergarten with skills and behaviors below expectation;
2. Share with specialists and other district staff to guide their instructional planning;
3. Prompt further investigation about children’s strengths and needs, including as part of the
4. information considered for highly capable, or spcialeducation services;
5. Share with families, including at conferences and with report cards;
6. Look for trends in student needs to prioritize paras and resources for targeted support to schools and classrooms;
7. Track student growth across the kindergarten year;
8. Determine professional development needs, including with community preschool teachers;





9. Prepare reports for conversations with local early learning providers; and
10. Share with school board and community stakeholders.

**What optional resources are available in *SmartTeach*® to plan instruction?** Within *SmartTeach*® teachers have access to the Family tab where two-way communication between the teacher and family may occur. In the Teach tab, teachers have access to *Intentional Teaching Experiences and Mighty Minutes*®.

[Intentional Teaching Experiences-The Creative Curriculum for Kindergarten](#) are designed specifically to support learning in the key areas of math and literacy and encourage children's physical and social-emotional development and align to the *GOLD*® objectives.

Mighty Minutes® are collections of playful songs, chants, rhymes, games, and activities to help teachers fill those "in-between" moments with warm interactions and meaningful learning.

**Does OSPI offer resources, such as pacing guides, for the Whole-child Assessment?**

Yes, please visit the [WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment web page](#) to see examples of pacing guides and assessment planning resources.

**Do you have specific *SmartTeach*® questions?**

Explore the *SmartTeach*® Support Portal to find a myriad of *SmartTeach*® support articles. If you are experiencing technical issues with *SmartTeach*® please contact [WaKIDS Teaching Strategies](#) or call (844)-853-GOLD (4653).

**How many pieces of documentation are needed?**

OSPI requires teachers to collect at least one piece of documentation to support their determination for leveling of children's skills, knowledge, and abilities. This means one piece of documentation per child per objective and dimension. However, teachers can leverage one piece of documentation for multiple objectives, dimensions, and children. Take the following anecdotal note as an example:

*Damari walks into the classroom and writes his name on the sign in sheet. He goes to his cubby, hangs up his backpack and coat, and washes his hands. He walks over to the library and picks up the book *The Cat in Hat*. Damari says, "Yes, I love rhyming words. Cat, hat, mat, bat, sat!"*

In this one piece of documentation Damari demonstrates the following objectives and dimensions:

- Social Emotional Objective 1b: follows limits and expectations
- Physical Objective 4: demonstrates traveling skills
- Physical Objective 7a: uses writing and drawing tools



- Language Objective 9b: Speaks clearly
- Literacy Objective 15a: notices and discriminates rhyme
- Literacy Objective 19a: writes name

You can associate the above documentation with six objectives and dimensions across four areas of learning and development.

The Documentation Status Report is an excellent resource (located in the Report area of *SmartTeach*®) to track how many pieces of documentation have been uploaded into *SmartTeach*® (this only works for uploaded documentation).

### **Is uploading documentation into *SmartTeach*® required?**

The Whole-child Assessment uses *SmartTeach*®, an online platform, to house documentation and levels of children’s knowledge, skills, and abilities. However, it is not required for teachers to upload their documentation into *SmartTeach*®. Teachers have the option to store hard copies of documentation. Please note that some of the time-saving functionalities of *SmartTeach*™ pull from uploaded documentation and will not be available if documentation is not uploaded into the platform.

### **How long must teachers retain the documentation?**

Teachers must retain documentation and assessment-related records (either hard copy or in *SmartTeach*®) for one school year (end of the school year)

### **What qualifies as documentation?**

Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of documentation throughout the Whole-child Assessment. Options include checklists, anecdotal notes, pictures, work samples, video and audio notes (captured through the Teaching Strategies Teacher app).

### **What is the difference between Not Observed vs Not Yet?**

Using **Not Yet** means that a child is not yet demonstrating a skill or is not a reasonable expectation for a child of this age. Note that **Not Yet** comes before the 0-1-year-old color band. Selecting **Not Yet** is leveling a child’s knowledge, skills, and abilities here. **Not Yet** purely refers to a child’s knowledge, skills, and abilities (not a teacher’s ability to observe them). A child whose knowledge, skills, and abilities are labeled as **Not Yet** means that they are not yet demonstrating a skill. If a teacher is unsure whether to use **Not Yet**, look at each level on the developmental progression to see if a child’s knowledge, skills, or abilities can be found below their grade color band. Please **do not** use this option for a child you have not observed.

**Not Observed** means that the teacher is unable to observe an objective or dimension. This may be due to several reasons: a child beginning excessively absent, late enrollment, inability to connect with a child in a virtual environment, etc. **Not Observed** does not level a child’s



knowledge, skills, or abilities. **Not Observed** refers to the teacher's ability to observe a child.

### **Can paraprofessionals/specialist help observe and enter data?**

To ensure that the data is reliable and of high quality, only people who have completed the WaKIDS 101 training may observe, enter documentation, and assign levels to children's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Paraprofessionals and instructional aides may take the WaKIDS for Paraprofessionals training to collect observation data. Additionally, teachers may partner with specialists to assist in the observation and documentation collection process. Specialists such as PE, art or music teacher, paraprofessional, counselor and/or librarian could provide videos or pictures of children demonstrating skills to the homeroom teacher so that they can determine on a rating based on evidence provided.

Only the teacher of record can assign a final level of documentation.

### **Can I use the *Teaching Strategies Teacher* app to collect and level documentation?**

Yes, the purpose of the *Teaching Strategies Teacher* app is to seamlessly capture and collect documentation in the classroom and send it to *SmartTeach*®. The app uses the same username and password as your login to *SmartTeach*®.

With the *Teaching Strategies Teacher* app, teachers can:

- Capture documentation in real-time using audio, video, photo, and text notes (and voice to text notes).
- Easily tag documentation with children's names, objectives, and dimensions.
- Assign preliminary levels directly from the app and upload the data straight to *SmartTeach*®.
- Communicate with families

To learn more, please visit the [SmartTeach® Support Portal article on Adding Documentation](#) in the *Teaching Strategies Teacher* app.

- Count on the highest level of security—all documentation is accessible only from within the app and *SmartTeach*®.
- Move quickly—one tap transfers documentation straight into *SmartTeach*®.
- Assess with confidence—more high-quality documentation better prepares teachers to
- Assess a child's growth and development.



## Interrater Reliability

### What is the Interrater Reliability (IRR)?

Interrater Reliability Certification in *SmartTeach*® is an online certification process that gives teachers the opportunity to evaluate sample child portfolios and compare their ratings with those of master raters at Teaching Strategies LLC. Receiving your IRR Certification means that your ratings of children's knowledge, skills, behaviors, and abilities agree with the ratings determined by *GOLD*®. Think of the IRR as a norming assessment to ensure that what you consider a level 6 is what another teacher considers to be a level 6.

### How long is the Interrater Reliability Certificate valid?

The IRR certificate is valid for three years from the date of passing the IRR. As OSPI does not require recertification, teachers who recertify will not receive clock hours. Regardless, teachers will receive a notification email from Teaching Strategies 30 days prior to when an Interrater Reliability Certification expires, as well as a notification email from Teaching Strategies once an Interrater Reliability Certification expires. For information on recertifying, please review this [article](#) from *SmartTeach*® Support Portal.

### When should I complete my IRR Certification?

IRR Certification will occur during your WaKIDS 101 4-week training window. The IRR is a component of successfully completing WaKIDS 101.

## District Assessment Coordinator Questions

### I do not see children in my class roster in *SmartTeach*®.

If you do not see children in your *SmartTeach*® class, this means that children have not been added to your account. This will impact both your *SmartTeach*® and Teaching Strategies Teacher App. Please reach out to your building administrator and/or District Assessment Coordinator to import your roster into the system. You can see find who your DAC is on the [WaKIDS Contacts page](#).

### Who adds children to *SmartTeach*®?

This is the responsibility of your District Assessment Coordinator (DAC). Teachers SHOULD NOT create their own classroom or add children to their classrooms in *SmartTeach*®. If you have questions, please contact your DAC.

### I have children from Transition to Kindergarten, ECEAP and/or Head Start in my classroom, can I access their previous data?

Yes, children entering TK or kindergarten from an Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) classroom will have prior *GOLD*® checkpoint information. Head Start child records are not transferred under the OSPI *GOLD* license. Learn how to view this



information by reading this [SmartTeach® Support Portal article](#). For additional support, please email [WaKIDS](#).



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