



PUBLIC STATEMENT
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NEW DATA SHOW STATEWIDE SNAPSHOT OF KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Encouraging Progress on Kindergarten Readiness: Still a Long Way to Go

Data from the statewide Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS), released today by the Illinois State Board of Education, provides a snapshot of the skills of beginning kindergarteners in Illinois in the fall of 2019 and reflects the third consecutive year of increases in kindergarten readiness scores. Given KIDS is a relatively new tool, teachers are gaining expertise in observational data collection each year of implementation – making data and trends more conclusive every year.

Over 6,300 teachers observed over 130,000 kindergarteners (91 percent of all IL kindergarteners) with the KIDS tool in the fall of 2019. From fall 2018, the number of students scored as demonstrating readiness to learn at a kindergarten level increased from 26 percent to 29 percent, and fewer students were scored as having not reached readiness in any area - down from 39 percent to 37 percent. However, the third year of statewide KIDS data continues to reveal systemic inequities. For example, 21 percent of Black and 17 percent of Latino children demonstrated readiness, compared to 35 percent of their white peers. Significantly fewer children with IEPs (14 percent), English Learners (14 percent), and children qualifying for free/reduced price lunch (20%) were scored as “kindergarten ready,” indicating that Illinois has important work to do to close gaps in opportunity and outcomes.

Although it is encouraging to see overall kindergarten readiness numbers grow, it will take more data to draw definitive conclusions about readiness trends in Illinois.

KIDS provides a consistent indicator of readiness across the state, which is a critical starting point in efforts to support and promote more equitable outcomes for children, particularly among communities with the fewest resources. **The most recent KIDS data underscores the need for deeper investment in high-quality early childhood services for children before they enter kindergarten, with a specific focus on equity** – particularly improving access and quality for children from Black and Latino communities, children from low-income households, English Learners, and students with special needs.

KIDS data also highlights the critical need for the [Governor’s Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding Commission](#). Appointed in December, the Commission is tasked with taking a fresh look at the state’s early childhood education and care system and establishing funding goals and mechanisms to provide equitable access to high-quality early

childhood education and care services for children from birth to age five. The Commission's recommendations to the Governor in January will represent a critical milestone towards ensuring all children are ready for kindergarten.

Having standardized kindergarten readiness data has already catalyzed significant systems change across the state. Examples abound of how use of KIDS has prompted shifts from half-day to full-day kindergarten, driven a move toward more developmentally-appropriate play-based instruction, informed adjustments to curriculum, galvanized community-wide attention to critical impact of experiences of children prior to kindergarten, and fostered stronger relationships between preschools and public schools.

Looking forward, now more than ever, educators will need to understand what their students know and are able to do, as children enter school with disrupted preschool experiences due to COVID-19.

We applaud the continued collaboration between educators, ISBE, public policy makers, advocates and researchers as they work through the challenges presented by COVID. In the meantime, we are glad to have information that can be used to strengthen and connect the systems, investment and learning that happens in early childhood programs through transitions into kindergarten and the early elementary grades.

[The 2019-2020 Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey \(KIDS\) Report: A Look at Kindergarten Readiness](https://www.isbe.net/kids) provides additional information about the KIDS fall 2019 data. Visit <https://www.isbe.net/kids> to learn more about KIDS.

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The following organizations support the content of this statement.



