

Old Capitol Building
PO Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200



Washington Office of Superintendent of
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Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

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BULLETIN NO. 027-21 Learning and Teaching

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers
Elementary School Principals
School District Special Education Directors

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: 2021–22 PreK–3rd Grade Entry Guidance

CONTACT: Karma Hugo, Director of Early Learning
360-725-6153, karma.hugo@k12.wa.us

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify the requirements associated with the grade level entry of PreK–3rd grade students for the 2021–22 school year; provide key considerations to support strong school transitions; and alert districts to resources available now or coming this summer.

GRADE LEVEL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS PREK–3RD GRADE

Washington state law ([RCW 28A.225.010](#)) requires children 8 years and older, and 17 and younger, to attend public school, with some exceptions noted. A child’s age should be the primary determinant for placement in the 2021–22 school year. Preschool (PreK) and Transitional Kindergarten (TK) programs will have additional eligibility requirements, as will students qualifying for special education services. Having a disability does not preclude a preschool- or kindergarten-age student from participating in any educational program, including those described below.

PreK: Eligibility for entry into district-based PreK programs will vary by the source of funds used and may involve an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or coordinated effort with community-based PreK. Due to program requirements, many PreK programs are unable to enroll students who are age-eligible for kindergarten. For a listing of possible PreK funding sources see [Unlocking State and Federal Program Funds to Support Student Success](#).

Beginning in 2020–21, all students enrolled in and receiving preschool education/services must be reported to CEDARS. If multiple funding sources are used, a unique record of each must be submitted, including students ages 3–5 with IEPs.

Transitional Kindergarten: Schools may provide for a program of early entrance kindergarten for a child who is not yet age 5 by August 31st, with the adoption of regulations that provide for a screening process and/or instrument(s) which measure the ability or the need, or both, of an individual student to succeed in earlier entry ([WAC 392-335-025](#)). Transitional Kindergarten enrollment must be coordinated in collaboration with, and not adversely impact community-based preschool programs, including Head Start, ECEAP (Early Childhood Education Assistance Program), tribally-led early learning programs, and those operating in licensed child care centers and licensed family homes. Districts participate in coordinated outreach, referral, and placement to assure best fit and appropriateness of services based on each child and family's need.

Kindergarten: Except as otherwise noted above, a child must be five years of age as of midnight August 31 of the year of entry to be entitled to enter kindergarten ([WAC 392-335-010](#)). School districts may adopt regulations that provide for a screening process and/or instrument(s) which measure the ability or the need, or both, of an individual student to succeed in earlier entry according to the option for exceptions to uniform entry qualification requirements ([WAC 392-335-025](#)).

1st Grade: Except as otherwise noted below, a child must be six years of age as of midnight August 31 of the year of entry to enter 1st grade. Having attended kindergarten is not a requirement for first grade. If a child successfully completed a kindergarten program in a public or private school but will not be six years of age as of midnight August 31 of the year of entry, the school may choose to permit entry to the school program, provided that program standards substantially equaled or exceeded applicable basic education program requirements ([RCW 28A.150.220](#) and [WAC 180-16-220](#)) ([WAC 392-335-020](#)). School districts may adopt regulations that provide for a screening process and/or instrument(s) which measure the ability or the need, or both of an individual student to succeed in earlier entry according to the option for exceptions to uniform entry qualification requirements ([WAC 392-335-025](#)).

2nd–3rd Grades: [RCW 28A.225.010](#) establishes that children eight years of age and under eighteen years of age shall attend the public school of the district in which the child resides.

FAMILY MEETINGS AND SCHOOL DAYS

The Washington Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a transition process that includes three components: Family Connection, Whole-child Assessment, and Early Learning Collaboration. Schools administering WaKIDS may use up to three school days for [Family Connection](#) meetings ([RCW 28A.150.220](#)).

School districts choosing to meet with families at the beginning of the school year in grades other than kindergarten may count these days as school days if they seek a waiver for the purpose of conducting parent-teacher conferences. A district seeking a [waiver solely for the purpose of parent-teacher conference days](#) must have local school board of directors approval and must notify the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). A district seeking a waiver of more than five days must request the waiver through the regular [180-day School Year Requirement](#) waiver application process.

RESOURCES

WaKIDS Data Brief

A recent analysis of kindergarten readiness skills, as measured by WaKIDS, and third grade mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) performance, as measured by the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA), compared the records of over 43,000 students. 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 social-emotional readiness.**

These results underscore the importance of addressing multiple areas of students' development.

PreK–3rd Grade Entry and Transition Considerations

For entry and transition considerations specific to young students, see the [Reopening Washington Schools 2020: Early Learning Planning Guide](#) for suggestions and resources that will be relevant in fall 2021.

Developmental Progressions

Development is sequential, with skills building on prior knowledge and learning. Young students pass through many milestones on their way toward end-of-year standards. Using developmental progressions that show how skills unfold across multiple grade levels allows teachers to identify what knowledge and abilities students possess at the start of the year and what comes next, so they can address any gaps that may exist.

Examples of developmental progressions available to teachers, PreK–3rd grade include:

- Teaching Strategies *GOLD*® (all kindergarten teachers have access)
- [The Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines: Birth Through 3rd Grade](#)

- [Early Literacy Pathways](#)
- [Learning Pathways in Numeracy](#)

Teaching Strategies *GOLD*®

As part of WaKIDS, teachers use developmental progressions from Teaching Strategies *GOLD*® to assess students across six domains: social-emotional, cognitive, language, physical, literacy and math. The developmental progressions in *GOLD*® span from birth through 3rd grade and may be useful for identifying the sequence of development in high-priority areas for students across the early grades. Although it is not a screener, *GOLD*® provides teachers with a powerful tool for identifying present levels of development and providing information about the next steps in students' growth.

Kindergarten teachers may choose to conduct *GOLD*® for some or all students up to three times a year. If conducted late this spring, kindergarten teachers could share information with first grade teachers about the skills and abilities of 2021–22 incoming 1st graders. Kindergarten teachers can also be a resource to their grades 1–3 colleagues in understanding the progressions. All kindergarten teachers—or all teachers trained to use Teaching Strategies *GOLD*®—can access the Teaching Strategies *GOLD*® Objectives for Development and Learning in the [MyTeachingStrategies® online assessment platform](#).

Range of Skills Expected

Children's development across PreK–3rd grades is naturally wide-ranging. Students who are the same age or are in the same grade can often display differing skills and abilities from one another, based in part on what experiences and opportunities they have had as well as their innate biology and tendencies. In addition, students this age can also experience periods of rapid growth as well as stagnation, and even regression, at times. WaKIDS data continues to underscore that children enter school with a wide range of knowledge and skills and that these ranges in development persist beyond kindergarten. Differences in development in the early grades are normal and need to be explored and supported. Districts' 2020–21 WaKIDS data is not available on the [State Report Card](#); however, districts can access and analyze their data locally.

Screening and Placement

Screening for the purposes of holding students back or repeating a year is discouraged. Screening processes can easily fail to capture all that a child knows and can do, or areas of concern. Because children during the PreK–3rd grade years have highly variable development, culturally and linguistically relevant screening is helpful primarily to identify when more extensive evaluation might be needed.

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

This summer, OSPI will have online professional learning available to assist teachers and school districts who wish to utilize elements of WaKIDS, including the Family Connection meetings and use of developmental progressions in 1st–3rd grades. Please watch the WaKIDS [Events & Trainings webpage](#) in the coming weeks for more information. For more information about conducting WaKIDS in grades beyond kindergarten, contact the Early Learning Office at OSPI at wakids@k12.wa.us.

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Karma Hugo, at 360-725-6153 or email karma.hugo@k12.wa.us. The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631.

This bulletin is also available on the [Bulletins](#) page of the OSPI website.

Michaela W. Miller, Ed.D., NBCT
Deputy Superintendent

Kathe Taylor, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Learning and Teaching

Karma Hugo
Director
Early Learning

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