Recommendations of the
Washington Kindergarten
Inventory of Developing Skills
(WaKIDS) Workgroup

December 2014

Authorizing legislation: RCW 28A.655.080

Early Learning Office
Robert Butts, Assistant Superintendent

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Executive Summary

This report includes the findings and recommendations of a workgroup created by the Washington Legislature to address issues identified in the 2012 legislative session pertaining to the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS). The workgroup, which was established in Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2586 (ESHB 2586), was directed by the Legislature to develop recommendations regarding the implementation of WaKIDS, how to implement WaKIDS in half-day classrooms, and how to reduce the number of other tests administered in kindergarten classrooms. Recommendations are to be submitted annually until state funding for full-day kindergarten is provided statewide.

OSPI submitted initial recommendations to the Legislature in January 2013: http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2013documents/WaKIDS_Legislative_Report_2013.pdf. The 2013 report includes extensive information regarding the development and implementation of WaKIDS and the workgroup’s initial recommendations.

The workgroup developed the recommendations in this year’s report after reviewing the status of the 2013 recommendations. They are intended to highlight and restate actions in the earlier recommendations that the workgroup found to be a high priority and/or where more progress is needed.

Recommendations include:

1. Provide legislative funding for implementation grants.

2. Provide state funding for WaKIDS training to replace funds that have been available from the state’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant.

3. Review the objectives measured in Teaching Strategies GOLD® (GOLD) to ensure they are aligned with new state learning standards and early learning guidelines, and to determine if the assessment can be shortened.

4. Do not require WaKIDS in half-day classrooms.

5. Encourage districts and schools to examine the relationship of their current kindergarten assessments with GOLD to determine which assessments might be eliminated and whether evidence collected in one assessment could inform another.

6. Districts and schools should eliminate or postpone the administration of assessments other than GOLD during the WaKIDS whole-child assessment window (through October 31).
WaKIDS Development and Implementation

The development of WaKIDS began in the 2009 session when the Legislature appropriated funds to the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to work with stakeholders and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to identify and evaluate a kindergarten assessment process and tools in geographically diverse school districts. A pilot was conducted that analyzed three different “whole-child” assessments and ways to connect kindergarten teachers with families and early learning providers.

Based on the pilot, Teaching Strategies GOLD® (GOLD) was selected as the whole-child assessment and two additional components of WaKIDS were developed: the Family Connection and Early Learning Collaboration.

GOLD is an observational assessment that was developed initially for use in early learning programs. The assessment provides a "developmental continuum" for each of the dimensions that are measured from birth through kindergarten. The kindergarten teacher indicates where on the continuum each child is at during the time of the observation using an online tool managed by Teaching Strategies.

A voluntary GOLD pilot was conducted in the 2011–12 school year. WaKIDS was required to be administered in all state-funded full-day kindergarten classrooms beginning in fall 2012.

The fall 2014 WaKIDS data will be available on the state report card in January 2015. Until the data are verified, the following numbers are approximations only. In fall 2014, WaKIDS was administered to 43,000 students, which is 53 percent of all kindergarten students. The assessment was administered by over 2,000 teachers in 190+ school districts and more than 620 schools. In addition to students in schools with state-funded full-day kindergarten, approximately 9 percent of the students assessed were in schools that volunteered to participate.

Race to the Top Timeline Legislation and the WaKIDS Legislative Workgroup

During the 2012 legislative session, legislation (HB 2586) was requested by DEL and OSPI to modify the WaKIDS implementation timeline to reflect the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant application so that the superintendent of public instruction would have the authority to require schools to participate in WaKIDS, statewide, beginning in the 2014–15 school year. The final version of the bill did not authorize this accelerated timeline, but instead established a workgroup to address a number of issues that were raised during legislative deliberations on the bill.

These issues included the difficulty of administering WaKIDS in half-day kindergarten classrooms because of the time it takes to administer the assessment, the large number of other district-required assessments that kindergarten teachers are required to administer, and other
implementation issues, including time for family visits, data entry, alignment with state learning standards, including the Common Core State Standards, and instructional impacts.

**Workgroup Responsibilities**

The final version of the bill (ESHB 2586) required that OSPI, in consultation with DEL, convene a workgroup to develop recommendations in three major areas:

1. Input and recommendations with respect to implementation of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills;

2. Recommendations regarding the optimum way to administer the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills to children in **half-day kindergarten** while ensuring that they receive the maximum instruction as required in **RCW 28A.150.205**; and

3. Recommendations with respect to achieving the goal of **replacing assessments currently required by school districts** with the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills.

**WaKIDS Legislative Workgroup Members**

The workgroup consists of teachers, principals, an early learning provider, and representatives from OSPI, DEL, and Thrive by Five Washington.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Title/Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy Blondin</td>
<td>Department of Early Learning</td>
<td>Government &amp; Community Relations Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Butts</td>
<td>Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction</td>
<td>Assistant Superintendent of Early Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Dunn</td>
<td>Beverly Park Elementary, Highline School District</td>
<td>Kindergarten Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Forslin</td>
<td>Encompass</td>
<td>Early Learning Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dan Torres</td>
<td>Thrive by Five Washington</td>
<td>Policy and Community Partnerships Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicole Rose</td>
<td>Department of Early Learning</td>
<td>PreK–3/ECEAP Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midori Tanaka</td>
<td>Van Asselt Elementary, Seattle School District</td>
<td>Kindergarten Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy Whipple</td>
<td>Hawthorne Elementary, Everett School District</td>
<td>Elementary School Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Yarbrough</td>
<td>Madrona Elementary, Highline School District</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Kathe Taylor, Ph.D., early learning assessment director at OSPI, provided support to the workgroup.

**Status of 2013 Recommendations**

Below are the recommendations made by the workgroup in January 2013 and the current status of each recommendation as of October 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Workgroup Recommendation</th>
<th>2013–14 Actions</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Legislature should consider adopting legislation that would allow schools to use up to five days at the beginning of the school year for purposes of the Family Connection component. This would eliminate the necessity that school districts obtain a waiver from the 180 school-day requirement from the State Board of Education. The time taken from instruction is more than compensated by the benefits of meeting individually with parents, children, and families. In addition, this option would be available to all schools without the paperwork and complications required to apply for a waiver.</td>
<td><strong>HB 1723</strong> was signed into law, allowing schools to use up to three days for the Family Connection component of WaKIDS. 72% (n = 93) of the 130 principals responding to the annual 2013 survey reported using time at the beginning of the year for the Family Connection.</td>
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<td>OSPI, in conjunction with the Educational Service Districts (ESDs), should provide additional opportunities for principals and district-level staff to understand the purpose of WaKIDS, its connections to other state initiatives and early learning, and how to assist their teachers in administering the assessment.</td>
<td>In winter/spring 2014, ESD WaKIDS Coordinators met with 2013–14 principals and district staff to review WaKIDS data. WaKIDS staff has developed five briefs for principals; more are in the works. WaKIDS is working with its ESD partners to develop additional communications; an OSPI memorandum will be sent in early winter to outline expectations.</td>
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<td>Prior to the administration of <strong>GOLD</strong> in fall 2013, OSPI should continue to take steps to reduce the amount of time it takes for kindergarten teachers to administer <strong>GOLD</strong>. Specifically, additional actions should be taken to reduce the time it takes to enter data, additional information should be provided on how to observe the different dimensions, and OSPI should consider reducing the number of <strong>GOLD</strong> dimensions being observed. However, if the number of observations is reduced, it is important that the “whole child” continue to be observed and that the reliability and validity of the assessment results be maintained.</td>
<td>WaKIDS staff continue to work with Teaching Strategies to improve administration of <strong>GOLD</strong>. WaKIDS has worked with OSPI Teaching and Learning staff to establish the connections of WaKIDS objectives and dimensions with state learning standards, including the Common Core State Standards. A handout describing those connections was part of the teacher training materials distributed this summer. In addition, in 2014 OSPI enabled the Common Core feature in <strong>GOLD</strong> to identify associations of WaKIDS objectives with the Common Core.</td>
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<td>In addition to reducing the time it takes to administer GOLD, OSPI should analyze the dimensions observed in GOLD to ensure they are aligned with kindergarten state learning standards, including the Common Core State Standards.</td>
<td>To begin the process of reviewing the objectives and dimensions, OSPI will ask 2014 WaKIDS teachers to rate the importance of each objective/dimension, including those not currently assessed in the customized version of GOLD that WaKIDS uses. After the survey results are in, OSPI will convene a committee in January 2015 to review the teacher input and recommend objectives and dimensions to assess within the six areas of development and learning. Any changes must take into consideration early learning connections and impact on the psychometric properties of the revised tool.</td>
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<td>This review, however, should not preclude the assessment of dimensions that are not in the state learning standards, such as the social-emotional dimensions in GOLD. This review should be conducted in collaboration with DEL, Thrive by Five Washington, curriculum and assessment experts, kindergarten teachers, elementary school principals, and early learning providers.</td>
<td>In response to an OSPI proposal, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided OSPI with $670,000 to award noncompetitive and competitive implementation grants. Of this amount, $550,000 was designated for noncompetitive grants ($300 per kindergarten teacher), $100,000 for competitive grants, and $20,000 for convening districts to share strategies and lessons learned through the competitive grants. This award was one-time only. Districts reported using the 2013–14 noncompetitive grants primarily in three ways: 1) substitutes to give teachers release time, 2) one-time hardware costs, and 3) resources to align curriculum/assessments with GOLD.</td>
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<td>The Legislature should provide an additional allocation of resources to school districts in the form of “WaKIDS implementation grants” that can be used for such purposes as:</td>
<td>OSPI used this information to support its decision to request implementation grant state funding for the 2015–17 biennium to support teachers in their first two years of implementing WaKIDS. The request is for $300 per teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Providing substitutes for releasing teachers to plan and administer WaKIDS.</td>
<td>OSPI will convene districts awarded competitive implementation grants in winter 2015.</td>
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<td>b. Purchasing hand-held devices to input data.</td>
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<td>c. Paying paraprofessionals to enter data.</td>
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<td>d. Paying districts for translators for the Family Connection.</td>
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<td>e. Aligning curriculum and other assessments with WaKIDS.</td>
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<td>f. Administering the assessment and meeting with parents prior to the beginning of the school year.</td>
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<td>g. Providing compensation for the extra time it takes to plan and administer the assessment.</td>
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<td>h. Providing release time for inter- and intra-district collaboration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Analyzing the assessment results.</td>
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<td>j. Determining how to modify instruction based on GOLD results.</td>
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<td>These funds would be allocated to school districts based on the number of teachers in the district administering WaKIDS. Decisions about how the funds will be used would be made at the district level in collaboration with their teachers. These funds would be allocated to school districts based on the number of teachers in the district administering WaKIDS. Decisions about how the funds will be used would be made at the district level in collaboration with their teachers.</td>
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<td>Funds would not be competitive grants. Funds would be allocated specifically for the implementation of WaKIDS. The amount of the funding allocated to districts for the grants should be calculated by OSPI and submitted to the Legislature for its consideration.</td>
<td><strong>WaKIDS</strong> staff continues to encourage schools to support school-based teams. However, only teachers and specialists trained in <strong>GOLD</strong> evaluate levels of development.</td>
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<td>Specifically allow schools to use strategies that involve school-based teams to support and assist classroom teachers in making the observations.</td>
<td>WaKIDS drafted a three-hour training module for teams of kindergarten teachers, principals, and specialists. WaKIDS is reviewing approaches taken by a few districts to learn from the range of approaches districts have used to collaborate on the assessment and use of data. This will be a continued focus in 2014–15.</td>
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<td>If <strong>GOLD</strong> is administered in schools at the beginning and end of the school year, the results should not be used in teacher evaluations as a measure of “student growth.” The purposes of WaKIDS are to provide an inventory of skills that children have at the beginning of the school year and to inform instruction.</td>
<td>WaKIDS staff clarified in 2014 training and in <em>Principal Series #4, Connecting WaKIDS, Learning Standards, and TPEP</em>, that teachers could <em>elect</em> to use WaKIDS math and literacy objectives to document student growth.</td>
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<td>OSPI should analyze how WaKIDS is being implemented with English language learners and whether the results accurately reflect the skills of these students.</td>
<td>WaKIDS staff asked the University of Washington to assemble footage of teachers talking about using <strong>GOLD</strong> with English Language Learners (ELLs). This video was used in the 2014 WaKIDS 101 and 201 training to initiate a discussion about strategies that work well when observing ELLs. Staff also convened a focus group of teachers to elicit suggestions for observation assessment strategies. The result was an expanded handout on <em>Guidance for WaKIDS Teachers Working with English Language Learners</em>. This will be a continued focus of work in 2014–15.</td>
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<td>Fund full-day kindergarten statewide. Once all classrooms are full-day, districts will have kindergarten assessment data district-wide and have less need for other district assessments.</td>
<td>OSPI is asking for an increase of state-funded full-day kindergarten in the 2015–17 biennium:</td>
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<td>- 62.5% in 2015–16</td>
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<td>- 81.25% in 2016–17</td>
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**Legislative Workgroup Recommendation**

Whenever feasible, school districts should eliminate the administration of other assessments during the first seven weeks of school. This would not preclude the assessment of individual children for other purposes, such as special education or language proficiency.

**2013–14 Actions**

Among the 130 principals who responded to the annual 2013 WaKIDS feedback survey, 18% reported postponing administration of other assessments until the GOLD inventory was complete; 12% reported discontinuing at least one assessment. WaKIDS will continue to suggest that districts consider rethinking assessments implemented early in the school year.

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As noted earlier, OSPI should review the GOLD dimensions measured in WaKIDS for alignment with kindergarten state learning standards, including the Common Core State Standards, and the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines.

**2013–14 Actions**

Completed in 2013.

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After clarifying the alignment of GOLD with the state learning standards, OSPI should review the possibility of reducing the number of assessment items while still maintaining the technical adequacy of the assessment.

**2013–14 Actions**

WaKIDS will continue to consider feedback from the field on the assessment items and is working with other states to learn how they have customized GOLD.

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OSPI should convene assessment and content specialists to develop crosswalks between GOLD and aligned common assessments in high-frequency areas (such as language, literacy, and mathematics) to reduce redundancy in the assessments.

**2013–14 Actions**

OSPI has not yet undertaken this task. One of the competitive grant recipients, Spokane, is conducting a crosswalk between GOLD and the Developmental Reading Assessment, as well as an end-of-year math assessment aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

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Many districts have curriculum adoptions in place that include kindergarten assessments in their elementary (K–5/6) assessment plans. Provide additional professional development opportunities for teachers and district staff on aligning district-required curriculum activities and assessments to inform GOLD, where applicable.

**2013–14 Actions**

Several of the competitive grant recipients are exploring these alignments, including Quincy and Lopez.

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**Findings Related to Workgroup Responsibilities**


Similar surveys are currently being administered for the fall 2014 WaKIDS administration. Results from these surveys will be available in January 2015.

**2014 Workgroup Recommendations**

The workgroup's recommendations highlight and restate actions in the earlier recommendations the workgroup found to be a high priority and/or where more progress is needed.

**Implementation of WaKIDS**

- **Provide Legislative funding for implementation grants.**

  As noted earlier, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided OSPI with $670,000 to award noncompetitive and competitive implementation grants. Of this amount, $550,000 was designated for noncompetitive grants ($300 per kindergarten teacher), $100,000 for competitive grants, and $20,000 for convening districts to share strategies and lessons learned through the competitive grants. **This award was one-time only.**

  Districts reported using the 2013–14 noncompetitive grants primarily in three ways: 1) substitutes to give teachers release time, 2) one-time hardware costs, and 3) resources to align curriculum/assessments with **GOLD**. OSPI will convene districts awarded competitive implementation grants in winter 2015 to learn and share the results of activities funded by these grants.

  OSPI used this information to support its decision to request implementation grant state funding for the 2015–17 biennium to support teachers new to WaKIDS.

  As recommended in the 2013 workgroup recommendations and the legislative intent to fund implementation grants (**RCW 28A.655.080(3)**), the workgroup recommends that the Legislature appropriate funding for implementation grants for the 2014–15 school year and beyond. At a rate of $300 per teacher a total of $524,700 will be needed for the 2015–16 school year and $967,500 will be needed for the 2016–17 school year assuming that the Legislature increases the number of students eligible to receive state-funding by three equal increments in fiscal years 2016, 2017, 2018 in order to achieve full statewide funding in 2017–18.

  These funds should be available for the purposes recommended in 2013. In addition, the workgroup recommends that the funds be available for the training of specialists and others (e.g., physical education and special education teachers) in making observations in **GOLD**.

  The workgroup also recommends that school districts collaborate with teachers and principals when determining how the implementation funds will be used in the district.
• **Provide state funding for WaKIDS training and the Early Learning Collaboration to replace funds that have been available from the state’s Early Challenge Race-to-the Top grant.**

In December 2011, Washington received a $60 million, four-year Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant from the federal government. Of this amount, $2,287,716 was allocated to training teachers in how to administer WaKIDS. Funds were also allocated to convene early learning providers and kindergarten teachers and other school staff to review the results from WaKIDS and take other actions to increase the number of children ready for kindergarten.

The grant term ends in December 2015, and grant funds for these purposes will not be available for the trainings that will occur in summer, 2015. To continue funding for the trainings, OSPI has requested $3,588,198 for FY 16 and $4,036,771 for FY 17.

In addition, to continue the Early Learning Collaboration of WaKIDS, DEL has requested that the budget submitted to the Legislature by the Governor include $250,000 for each fiscal year of the biennium.

• **Review the objectives measured in **_**GOLD**_** to ensure they are aligned with new state learning standards and early learning guidelines, and to determine if the assessment can be shortened.**

Teachers continue to express concern about the additional time it requires to integrate the WaKIDS activities into their workload and the extent that **_**GOLD**_** is aligned to new state learning standards, including the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts and the Next Generation Science Standards. The Common Core, Next Gen, and Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines were not in place when the original decisions were made about the **_**GOLD**_** objectives and dimensions to include in WaKIDS.

In response to these concerns, OSPI will ask 2014 WaKIDS teachers to rate the importance of each objective/dimension for informing instruction or providing feedback to families. The list will include current objectives and dimensions, as well as those not currently being assessed in the customized version of **_**GOLD**_** that WaKIDS uses. After the survey results are in, OSPI will convene a committee in January 2015 to review the teacher input and recommend objectives and dimensions to assess within the six areas of development and learning. Recommendations will be reviewed by the WaKIDS work team, which includes staff from all three partner agencies (OSPI, DEL, Thrive by Five Washington). Once OSPI has received the recommendations, OSPI will consider the psychometric impact of proposed changes on the reliability and validity of the tool, and make the final decision in time for the 2015–16 implementation of WaKIDS.
Administration of WaKIDS in Half-day Classrooms

- Do not require WaKIDS in half-day classrooms.

As recommended in January 2013, the workgroup continues to recommend that half-day teachers not be required to administer WaKIDS because of the significant time it takes to administer the assessment and the small amount of available instruction time.

Replacing Other Assessments Required by School Districts

- Districts and schools should examine the relationship of their current kindergarten assessments with **GOLD** to determine which assessments might be eliminated and whether evidence collected in one assessment could inform another.

Until WaKIDS is part of every school within a district, districts may prefer to maintain their current assessment menu in order to achieve consistency of student data across the district. Because assessments are valid for different purposes, districts should review their current assessments to see if they serve a purpose in addition to those served by WaKIDS.

- Districts and schools should eliminate or postpone the administration of assessments other than **GOLD** during the WaKIDS whole-child assessment window (through October 31).

This would not preclude the assessment of individual children for other purposes, such as special education, language proficiency, or assessments that inform **GOLD**.
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