



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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

December 2015

Authorizing legislation: RCW 28A.655.080

(<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.655.080>)

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Executive Summary

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a transition process that helps to ensure a successful start to the K–12 experience and connect the key adults in a child’s life. Legislatively mandated to be part of state-funded, full-day kindergarten ([RCW 28A.150.315](#) and [RCW 28A.655.080](#)), it provides a snapshot of where Washington’s kindergartners are in their development early in the school year. These data help inform state and district-level decisions about education policy and investments, and classroom decisions about individualized learning.

WaKIDS consists of a Family Connection meeting, a Whole-Child Assessment using an observational tool called *GOLD™* by Teaching Strategies® (*GOLD™*), and Early Learning Collaboration.

2015 WaKIDS Participation Data*

59,109	kindergartners (74% of all kindergartners in the state)
275	school districts
847	schools
~3,000	teachers

** Participation data are not final until January 2016 and are subject to change slightly.*

The Legislature’s goal is to fund full-day kindergarten (and WaKIDS) for all students by the 2017–18 school year, prioritizing schools with the highest number of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch.

In 2012, the Legislature created a workgroup 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 submitted annually until state funding for full-day kindergarten is provided statewide.

Initial recommendations were submitted to the Legislature in January 2013:

[http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2013documents/WaKIDS Legislative Report 2013.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2013documents/WaKIDS%20Legislative%20Report%202013.pdf).

Of the six actions the workgroup recommended in 2014:

- Two were funded by the Legislature (provide implementation grants, and replace Race-to-the-Top training funds);
- One was acted upon by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (review the *GOLD™* assessment tool to align it with learning standards and guidelines, and shorten it);
- One is no longer relevant (do not require WaKIDS in half-day programs); and
- Progress is still needed in two areas (replace other assessments required by school districts, and train on data use).

Background

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

In 2012, Engrossed Substitute House Bill 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 WaKIDS;
2. Recommendations regarding the optimum way to administer WaKIDS 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 WaKIDS.

2015 WaKIDS Legislative Workgroup Members

Name	Title/Position	Organization
Nicole Rose	Assistant Director for Quality Practice and Professional Growth	Department of Early Learning
Robert Butts	Assistant Superintendent of Early Learning	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Richard Dunn	Kindergarten Teacher	Beverly Park Elementary, Highline School District
Julie Forslin	Early Learning Manager	Encompass
Dan Torres	Policy and Community Partnerships Manager	Thrive Washington
Midori Tanaka	Kindergarten Teacher	Van Asselt Elementary, Seattle Public Schools
Tammy Whipple	Elementary School Teacher	Hawthorne Elementary, Everett School District
Daniel Yarbrough	Principal	Madrona Elementary, Highline School District

Kathe Taylor, Ph.D., Early Learning Assessment Director at OSPI, provided support to the workgroup.

Survey Findings Related to Workgroup Responsibilities

Implementation surveys were distributed to teachers and principals who administered WaKIDS in fall 2014. Results of these surveys:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/2014-15TeacherSurveySummaryReport.pdf>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/2014-15PrincipalSurveySummaryReport.pdf>

Major findings from these surveys include:

1. Almost 700 teachers (N=688) provided feedback about the specific objectives and dimensions assessed by GOLD™. OSPI used this information to inform a review process of the objectives and dimensions that reduced the overall number from 36 to 31. For more information, see [Changes to 2015 WaKIDS Whole Child Assessment](#).
2. The majority of the teacher respondents (84%) reported that they were able to meet with 90–100% of incoming kindergarten families, as part of the Family Connection. Although only a small percentage (12%) of principals responded, 66% reported using three full school days to host the Family Connection meetings, an option authorized by the Legislature in 2013. ([SSHB 1723](#))
3. More work needs to be done to help teachers think about ways to use the data formatively and summatively. Roughly half of the teachers reported using what they learned about individual children immediately to tailor instruction, and only 42% indicated they planned to use the GOLD™ reports immediately available to them at the completion of the assessment.
4. Almost three-fourths (72%) of the principals reported that their districts administered other assessments at the same time as teachers were administering GOLD™. Only 11% said their schools postponed administering other assessments until teachers were done administering GOLD™, and only 7% reported discontinuing at least one other assessment.

Update Status

In the December 2014 legislative report, the workgroup made six recommendations. Here's the status of each recommendation in December 2015:

2014 Recommendation	Current Status
1 Provide legislative funding for implementation grants.	The Legislature provided implementation grant funding for the first time for districts with schools newly state-funded in 2015-16 for full-day kindergarten.
2 Provide state funding for WaKIDS training to replace funds that have been	The Legislature provided funding for teachers new to WaKIDS to attend training to learn how to implement the WaKIDS assessment, Family Connection, and Early

available from the state's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant.

Learning Collaboration. No state funding was provided for the advanced level of training that had been developed using Race to the Top funds to help teachers understand better how to use the *GOLD™* data to inform instruction.

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

In order to decrease assessment time, Washington customized the *GOLD™* tool in 2011 to use a subset of objectives and dimensions. Still, concerns about teacher time persisted, and the WaKIDS Workgroup recommended that OSPI explore the possibility of reducing the length of the assessment. With three years of implementation experience, teachers were in a better position to determine which objectives and dimensions were most effective in helping to inform their instruction. A committee of kindergarten teachers, early learning providers, and district assessment coordinators reviewed and recommended a new slate of WaKIDS *GOLD™* objectives and dimensions. The work of the committee was informed by OSPI Teaching and Learning leaders who reviewed the objectives and dimensions from the perspective of their connections to end-of-year state learning standards. It was also informed by the perspectives of the 688 teachers who responded to the 2014 survey (see details provided earlier under "Survey Findings"), and by a psychometric review of the assessment tool. The WaKIDS Work Team, comprised of representatives from OSPI, Department of Early Learning, Thrive Washington, and the ESDs reviewed and approved the changes, and forwarded them to Robin Munson, Assistant Superintendent of Assessment and Student Information, OSPI. Dr. Munson approved the changes, which were implemented in fall 2015.

4 Do not require WaKIDS in half-day classrooms.

No longer a relevant issue.

5 Encourage districts and schools to examine the relationship of their current kindergarten assessments with Teaching Strategies *GOLD™* in order to determine which assessments might be

Districts do not routinely report to OSPI which assessments they are using locally. OSPI encourages districts to examine the relationship of their current kindergarten assessments to *GOLD™*.

eliminated and whether evidence collected in one assessment could inform another.

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| 6 Districts and schools should eliminate or postpone the administration of assessments other than <i>GOLD™</i> during the WaKIDS whole child-assessment window (through October 31). | Because the state’s policy is to phase in state-funded, full-day kindergarten (and by extension, WaKIDS) in the highest poverty schools first, not all schools in a district may yet be implementing WaKIDS. As a result, districts have been reluctant to eliminate district-wide assessments that provide a single, common source of data. When WaKIDS is implemented statewide, this concern will be less of an issue. However, it may still take some time before districts consider the costs and benefits of eliminating current, and sometimes district-created, assessments. Most of these assessments target math and literacy skills only. |
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2015 Workgroup Recommendations

As noted above, two of the six recommendations made in 2014 need more progress. The Workgroup recommends the following actions:

1. Replace other assessments required by school districts.
 - Districts and schools should compare their current kindergarten assessments with *GOLD™* to determine if those assessments could be eliminated and whether evidence collected in one assessment could also be used in another.
 - Until every school within a district participates in WaKIDS, districts may prefer to maintain their current assessment menu for consistency of student data across the district. Because educators learn different things from different assessments, districts should review their current assessments to see if they serve a different purpose than 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™*.
2. Train on data use.
 - The value of WaKIDS is significantly increased when teachers and principals use information learned from the assessment to inform instruction; provide feedback to parents and families about their students’ strengths; and start conversations within schools, across sectors, and with communities. As noted in

the “Update Status” section,” no state funding was provided in the 2015–17 biennium for the advanced level of training that was developed using Race-to-the-Top funds to help teachers understand better how to use GOLD™ data results in their teaching.

- Within the current WaKIDS 101 two-day training, there is insufficient time to teach teachers how to use all of the resources available within the GOLD™ system, including reports that synthesize and organize the information teachers have collected. One issue is simply timing: When teachers are first learning how to use the inventory, they are preoccupied with mastering the data collection system and are not yet ready to focus on how to use the reports.
- Additional WaKIDS funding is needed in the 2016–17 school year and beyond to offer this training and compensate teachers who participate in the training.

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