Linking Kindergarten & 3rd Grade Assessment Results

Research has confirmed a relationship between meeting standards at 3rd grade and high school graduation. One out of six children not reading proficiently in 3rd grade will not graduate from high school on time (Hernandez, 2011). Can these gaps be identified before 3rd grade?

Data from the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) and Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) indicate a correlation between kindergarten readiness and meeting 3rd grade math and English Language Arts (ELA) standards. WaKIDS is a kindergarten transition process that includes an observational assessment that assesses incoming kindergartners’ readiness in six domains: social, emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy and math. Kindergarten readiness is based on readiness in all six domains.

Percentage of students who met SBA standards by number of domains kindergarten-ready.

Key Findings:

• More students who were kindergarten-ready in multiple domains met SBA math and ELA standards.
• Kindergarten readiness in literacy and math was significantly associated with meeting 3rd grade SBA standards in the same subjects.
• While overall fewer students met SBA standards that were kindergarten-ready in the same subject, historically under-represented student groups experienced larger decreases in the proportion of students meeting standards than Asian/White peers. This suggests they are more at risk for falling behind even if they were kindergarten-ready.

About the WaKIDS Data

WaKIDS was piloted in 2010-11 and implemented in volunteer schools in 2011-12. It became mandatory in state-funded full-day kindergarten in 2012-13, and was scaled up incrementally each succeeding year, prioritizing schools with the highest percentages of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. As of 2017-18, full-day kindergarten and WaKIDS is statewide.

This analysis only included 49,943 students who participated in WaKIDS in 2015-16 and had a 3rd grade SBA score in 2019-19. 39.3% of 3rd graders who attempted the SBA in 2018-19 were excluded from the analysis because they didn’t attend kindergarten in Washington because WaKIDS wasn’t yet implemented in their school. A more detailed analysis on how kindergarten readiness predicts 3rd grade SBA outcomes is forthcoming.

Chi-square tests assessed whether there was a statistically significant association between kindergarten readiness and meeting SBA standards in math and literacy/ELA. Tests were repeated using data from the 2014-15 kindergarten cohort and their matched 3rd and 4th grade SBA results. All results were highly significant (p<0.001).