Guidance for Kindergarten Teachers
Supporting Students with Disabilities

WaKIDS strives to provide smooth transitions and yield reliable information for all of Washington State’s kindergarten students, which includes students with disabilities.

Important Considerations

- Teaching Strategies GOLD®, the assessment component of WaKIDS, can be used to gather current developmental information in a variety of settings. In addition to being used statewide for kindergarten, it is currently being implemented in many community-based and developmental preschool classrooms.
- The assessment component of WaKIDS is a strength-based, observational assessment which considers the whole child and is gathered over a period of time.
- Observation-based assessment compliments gathering information about students at varying stages of development.
- The assessment component of WaKIDS includes progressions of development that range from birth through third grade.
- Individual students may be at different developmental milestones along the progressions.
- Students with special needs may not be developing in one or more areas along with their typically developing peers, and may show their strengths and abilities in ways which can be assessed with this observational assessment.
- The Individual with Disabilities Education Act 2004 asserts that “a state must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general state and district-wide assessment programs...with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, if necessary...”
- Because the Teaching Strategies GOLD® encompasses the developmental stages of children from birth through third grade, with the ability to accommodate individual students who may be at different milestones, an alternate assessment is not necessary for students with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability.
- Not all kindergarten students may receive the majority of their education in the general education classroom and may have multiple teachers. This does not excuse the student from the assessment.
- Many of the assessment objectives lend themselves to Individualized Education Program (IEP) goal setting and can also be used for progress monitoring.

Ways that WaKIDS Can Support Transition from Developmental Preschool into Kindergarten

- Sharing information can provide a common language and be an excellent opportunity for early learning collaboration within your school or community.
- Develop and share kindergarten transition plans and practices that include this type of sharing between families, early learning partners and kindergarten teachers.
- Collect current information from families and the child’s prior preschool program, including copies of assessments or current developmental information, and strategies known to work. This is a place to start for the fall kindergarten assessment.
- WaKIDS information is an early learning collaboration and alignment tool.
• Developmental and school readiness information such as *The Characteristics of Entering Kindergartners*, shared with early learning providers and families promotes understanding and supports transition to kindergarten.
• Consider using the Family Connection meeting to gather information, discuss strategies and share information about the advantages of observation-based assessment.

High-quality Observation and Documentation Practices

Using research-based classroom strategies and resources, consider:
• Developmentally appropriate program planning.
• Intentional teaching practices with the objectives for learning in mind (link planning to the assessment).
• Using a pacing guide to choose objectives to observe and how they will be observed.
• Exploration and active learning.
• Opportunities for all children to respond and participate in conversations.
• Promoting peer interactions.
• Co-teaching and partner teaching strategies. Which parts are you each assessing? How will you share information?
• Adaptive environments:
  o Are all areas of the classroom accessible by all children?
  o Is information delivered and gathered through a variety of formats?
  o Is language modified to meet individual developmental needs?
  o Are activities set up for a variety of developmental needs so that all students can access at their own level?
  o Are sensory issues noted and addressed that may impact special needs?

Observational Strategies for Assessing Students with Special Needs

• Set up developmental activities that the child can access.
• Use observation and receptive activities as much as possible if language is a challenge, “touch the red one.”
• Note that the assessment language is inclusive of a range of child abilities, for instance observing “traveling” skills, rather than walking or running.
• Wherever possible, consider the “intent” of the assessment objective in order to gather information to assess it. Students will demonstrate their strengths and abilities in different ways.
• Most assessment objectives can be observed during classroom activities and embedded learning opportunities.

Sharing WaKIDS Assessment Information with Families of Students with Special Needs

• Families are integral members of the student’s educational support team, and parents are required members of the child’s IEP team. Sharing WaKIDS information promotes opportunities for whole team support of student growth and learning.
• The assessment component of WaKIDS uses strength-based, developmental language that can be shared openly and honestly with families in a sensitive and respectful manner.
• Consider sharing one of the many reports from *MyTeachingStrategies*™ that can be individualized and focuses on areas of strength, next steps and goal setting.