WaKIDS is a transition process between early learning and kindergarten. It has three components: family connection, whole-child assessment, and early learning collaboration. WaKIDS builds connections to:

- Promote a shared understanding of kindergarten readiness.
- Strengthen kindergarten transitions and planning.
- Engage families in their children’s education and school.
- Improve the readiness of children, families, schools, and communities through the use of data.

**Starting a Conversation**

RCW 28A.150.315 requires state-funded full-day kindergartens to:

- Demonstrate strong connections and communication with early learning community providers.
- Participate in kindergarten program readiness activities with early learning providers and families.

What teachers learn about their students through the family connection and the whole-child assessment can help start a kindergarten/early learning conversation.

**Leading Early Learning Collaboration**

As a principal, you have the opportunity to guide WaKIDS collaboration efforts and build relationships in your community:

- **Make contact.** Get in touch with child care programs in your school’s neighborhood. Child Care Aware of Washington (bit.ly/1lDGumP) is a non-profit agency that provides resources and referrals to families. It can also provide principals with a list of local child care providers — including those in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Head Start — and connect you with the Child Care Aware director in your region.

- **Bring kindergarten teachers and early learning providers and staff together to:**
  - Create shared professional development opportunities.
  - Review transition forms from pre-kindergarten programs.
  - Review WaKIDS data.
  - Plan family engagement events.
  - Visit each other’s classrooms.

Also speak with your district’s early learning contact or ESD WaKIDS regional coordinator (bit.ly/MaYPuu) to learn more about activities your district may be doing to support families.

**What is your school/district currently doing to reach out to early learning providers in your area? (check all that apply)**

**Top 3 responses from 2014 principal feedback survey:**

- **50%** We’re reviewing transition forms from pre-K programs together
- **41.9%** We’re creating shared professional development opportunities for early learning and K–12 teachers
- **41.9%** We work together with our early learning providers on kindergarten readiness
• Learn about incoming kindergarten skills. Ask teachers what they learned during the family connection and whole-child assessment. Then share that information with early learning providers and families.

• Network. Attend early learning regional coalition (bit.ly/1IDKEex) events. These coalitions are partnerships of community groups committed to supporting early learning. There are 10 statewide.

• Provide resources. Here is a list of some possibilities:

  ➤ State Learning Standards (bit.ly/1IWyUaN) define what all students should know and be able to do at each grade level.

  ➤ The Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines (1.usa.gov/1gCGFHs) provide a family-friendly explanation of child development and activities for children.

  ➤ Getting School Ready (bit.ly/1faYRPQ) outlines ways families can help prepare their children to enter school.

  ➤ Characteristics of Entering Kindergartners (bit.ly/1gfGBRM) explains the typical skills, behavior, and knowledge of an entering kindergartner that are assessed in WaKIDS.

  ➤ Making a Difference: 10 Essential Steps to Building a PreK-3 System (amzn.to/1ms4aOQ), by Linda Sullivan-Dudzic, focuses on increasing achievement for all young learners.

  ➤ For kindergarten families with younger siblings, Love. Talk. Play. (lovetalkplay.org) is a set of tools for parents to engage their children in fun, educational games and activities. Brochure on Early Achievers (1.usa.gov/1hwOr46) helps families find early learning programs focused on quality improvement.

Survey Says?

What are other principals saying about WaKIDS? Learn about what strategies work for them and how they have implemented the program: http://bit.ly/1khYG7D.

Note: This document is one of several support materials available to deepen principals’ understanding of WaKIDS and support best practices. Additional materials are available at www.k12.wa.us/wakids.

Contact Information

Main Number: 360-725-6161

Nancee Alvord, Professional Development Coordinator
nancee.alvord@k12.wa.us

Educational Service District WaKIDS Coordinators
www.k12.wa.us/wakids/ESD-Coordinators.aspx

We look forward to hearing your challenges and success stories, and hope you will share them with your colleagues!

We know that kids who are five know a lot, and we need to build off those strengths. Understanding what the kids come with helps us prepare them better for what they need to know at the end of kindergarten.

Going slower at the beginning of kindergarten really helps us go faster at the end. Last year we had more students reach the end of kindergarten standards than ever before, because we slowed down.

The connections we have made and are trying to make have helped Barge Lincoln become a hub.

We are not done. The work with providers serving students from birth to age five is really school improvement work.”

— Stacey Drake, Principal, Barge-Lincoln Elementary School, Yakima School District