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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

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BULLETIN NO. 051-21 ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers
Elementary Principals

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: 2021–22 Implementation of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of
Developing Skills (WaKIDS)

CONTACT: Karma Hugo, Director of Early Learning
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this bulletin is to outline the 2021–22 Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) requirements for districts offering full-time or Transitional Kindergarten.

WaKIDS helps schools to identify the skills, knowledge, and characteristics of kindergarten students at the beginning of the year; informs instruction; supports family involvement; and builds partnerships with early learning providers.

WaKIDS FAMILY CONNECTION

The WaKIDS Family Connection component requires districts to invite families to meet with their child's teacher prior to or at the beginning of the school year. The purpose of this meeting is to initiate a relationship among the child, the family, and the teacher. Families need time to share information about their child and voice their hopes and concerns about kindergarten. Schools may structure time for these meetings any way they would like, including using up to three school days to meet with parents and families as part of the family connection component of WaKIDS ([RCW 28A.150.220](#)). No waiver is needed to use these three school days.

Districts seeking to pursue more than three days for Family Connections may use a waiver process. A district can waive up to five (5) school days during the regular 180-day school year for the [purpose of conducting parent-teacher conferences](#). Districts seeking to extend the Family Connections time beyond three days need local school board of directors' approval and must notify the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). A district seeking a waiver of more than five days must request the waiver through the regular [180-day School Year Requirement](#) waiver application process.

Best Practices for Conducting Family Connection in 2021–22

- Assign students to classroom teachers as soon as possible so teachers can meet with families early. Early classroom teacher assignments strengthen family and community collaboration.
- Consider arranging home visits in partnership with cultural leaders, previous preschool providers, and/or family liaisons.
- Support school staff to meet the basic needs of families, such as making connections to social workers and family resource specialists.
- Refer to the [Family Connection](#) page on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website for resources to support conversations with families. Check frequently, as materials will be added throughout the summer.
- Support teachers to communicate frequently with family members beyond the initial Family Connection, adapting schedules to meet with and respond to families at different times of the day.

WaKIDS EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATION

The expectations for Early Learning Collaboration are outlined in [RCW 28A.150.315](#), which include developing strong connections to community early learning providers and participating in kindergarten-readiness activities.

During the pandemic, the importance of early learning collaboration increased. Working families with school-age children may have an increased need for additional care and supervision outside of school. It is important to listen to families needs and to know the landscape of available child care in local communities.

The Early Learning Collaboration component of WaKIDS has traditionally focused on smoothing the transition between preschool and kindergarten. While this outcome will still be very important, it is critical that schools leverage their role in helping to support existing preschool, child care, and extended learning programs to meet the needs of children and families.

Best Practices for Conducting Early Learning Collaboration in 2021–22

- Identify an early learning/extended learning contact in the district to serve as a point person between community and district-based early learning and extended learning

programs.

- Work with community partners to identify child care options for kindergartners whose families need child care before and after school. Visit [Child Care Aware of Washington](#) to request a list of child care providers in your area.
- Prioritize resuming Head Start, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), developmental preschool, and other high-quality early learning programs that serve vulnerable children.
- Reach out to preschool partners early to confirm service agreements and let partners know, as soon as possible, what options exist for resuming onsite care. Be open to creative options for sharing space.
- Partner with community-based preschool and child care programs, and parent/guardian advisory committees to connect with and support families.
- With family permission, encourage child care providers to share information such as the [Washington State Kindergarten Transition Summary Form](#) and Teaching Strategies *GOLD*® Individual Child Reports for children transitioning to kindergarten.

WaKIDS WHOLE-CHILD ASSESSMENT

The Whole-child Assessment component of WaKIDS is a formative, observational assessment tool called Teaching Strategies *GOLD*® that provides information about each child's current levels of development and next steps for growth in areas fundamental to social-emotional and academic achievement.

Development is sequential, with skills building on prior knowledge and learning. Young students pass through many milestones on their way toward end-of-year standards. Teaching Strategies *GOLD*® shows how skills unfold, from birth through age eight, allowing teachers to identify what knowledge and abilities students possess at the start of the year and what comes next, so they can address any gaps that may exist.

To allow more time to build relationships with children and families at the beginning of school and adjust to in-person learning following Department of Health guidelines, the fall WaKIDS assessment window will close November 12, 2021, rather than October 31. Transitional Kindergarten programs will also be granted an extension, allowing them to conduct the assessment within 12 weeks (rather than 10 weeks) of the program start date.

Observations should be conducted across the full assessment period, allowing time to get to know students and observe skills and abilities in authentic ways. It is not appropriate to conduct the Whole-child Assessment within the first few days of school or over a one-time condensed period of time.

When the family has opted for remote instruction, remote assessment may be conducted for the purposes of completing WaKIDS by the fall deadline. In cases where students are engaging remotely, educators can use multiple forms of evidence of students' skills, including work

samples received from families (e.g., photos, videos, worksheets, recordings). Wherever possible, teachers should observe and assess students in-person, in authentic, play-based settings, so even schools/students engaging primarily in remote learning should consider opportunities for teachers to meet with small groups of students within the building. Remote assessment is a temporary solution to address ongoing challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers are advised to use the “not observed” level sparingly and take advantage of the year-long availability of the online platform to document children’s growth beyond the fall assessment window.

Students who have transferred or whose families have formally or informally withdrawn them from class should be archived in *MyTeachingStrategies*® prior to November 12 so an incomplete student portfolio does not prevent teachers from finalizing data by the assessment deadline.

Refer to [Whole-child Assessment](#) on the OSPI website for resources to support conducting the WaKIDS assessment (check frequently, as materials will be added throughout the summer).

Best Practices for Conducting the Whole-child Assessment

- Prioritize building relationships with children and families at the start of the school year, staggering the assessment over the full assessment window.
- Work with families to identify opportunities to practice skills that can occur during daily routines using everyday household items as learning materials (e.g., identifying shapes when drying dishes, counting articles of clothing while putting away laundry). Teachers can determine which objectives might be assessed through these experiences.
- Engage families in collecting evidence (work samples, photos videos, etc.) of their child’s progress toward learning goals, inviting them to participate in the process of documenting their child’s learning. Be cautious not to pressure or suggest that families are *expected* to contribute.
- Encourage teachers and families to build learning around the child’s interests and adjust the pace, if needed, to accommodate the family’s capacity to contribute to and document the child’s learning. Observations should take place slowly and gradually.
- Leverage the resources embedded in the assessment system. This year, *MyTeachingStrategies*®, the online platform used for Teaching Strategies *GOLD*® of the WaKIDS assessment, will include additional resources to support teachers and families, including:
 - *Intentional Teaching Experiences* and *Mighty Minutes*®, short engaging activities that provide valuable learning opportunities that can be printed or shared digitally with families to extend learning at home and/or to facilitate remote learning.
 - A family mobile app that introduces two-way communication between teachers and family members and assists teachers in using photos and videos shared by families as documentation.

WaKIDS TRAINING

WaKIDS 101

WaKIDS 101 is the one-time, self-paced, online training required for all kindergarten teachers new to WaKIDS, including Transitional Kindergarten and certificated special education teachers who provide instruction to kindergarten students with disabilities. Only certificated teachers who have completed the WaKIDS 101 training can assess children in their classes. It is through WaKIDS 101 that teachers new to WaKIDS gain access to *MyTeachingStrategies*[®]. Teachers who have prior experience with Teaching Strategies *GOLD*[®] but who are new to kindergarten must still take WaKIDS 101. An optional refresher course is also available for teachers who previously completed WaKIDS 101 but want to revisit the basics of WaKIDS implementation.

Districts may claim funding, at a rate of \$360, to reimburse kindergarten teachers **new to WaKIDS** in the 2021–22 school year for completing the WaKIDS 101 training. Transitional Kindergarten is not a required program; therefore, Transitional Kindergarten teachers are not eligible for reimbursement.

Additionally, districts may claim funding at a rate of \$120 per teacher to reimburse all teachers, including Transitional Kindergarten teachers, **new to WaKIDS** in the 2021–22 school year who complete Interrater Reliability (IRR) Certification as part of their online training.

Please note: OSPI reimburses districts at a set rate to compensate teachers for participation in WaKIDS 101 training and completion of IRR Certification. The rate of compensation districts pay teachers may vary in accordance with districts' own policies and bargaining agreements.

In early October, OSPI will contact school districts through the iGrants system to notify them which teacher(s) participated in a WaKIDS 101 training and completed the IRR Certification between July 1 and September 30, 2021. Districts will claim funds through iGrants.

WaKIDS for District Administrators and Others Supporting WaKIDS

New self-paced, online WaKIDS trainings are available this year, designed for principals, district administrators, and others who play a key role in supporting WaKIDS implementation. Trainings include Introduction to WaKIDS for District and School Administrators, WaKIDS Refresher for teachers who have taken WaKIDS 101 previously and WaKIDS Support Staff Course, designed for paraprofessionals, specialists, and others who may support kindergarten teachers with WaKIDS implementation.

Teacher and Principal Training Registration

Trainings are available between July and the end of September. [Visit the OSPI website to register for a WaKIDS training.](#)

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Karma Hugo, Director of Early Learning, at 360-725-6153 or email karma.hugo@k12.wa.us. The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631.

This bulletin is also available on the [Bulletins](#) page of the OSPI website.

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