

Is Oregon Ready to Learn?

Improving Oregon's Kindergarten Readiness Survey

Five Standards for Effective
School Readiness Assessments

PAGE 3

Examples of Effective School
Readiness Assessments

PAGE 7

How Oregon Scores

PAGE 11

Recommendations for
Improvement

PAGE 16

CHILDREN'S



INSTITUTE

The Children's Institute is a research and action organization dedicated to improving the odds for Oregon's at-risk children.

STAFF

Swati Adarkar
Executive Director

David Mandell
Research Director

Wade Fickler
Director of Policy and
Communications

Mary Kalafatis
Operations and Finance
Director

Esra Khalil
Development Associate

Maria Everhart
Research Associate

Kara Christenson
Executive Assistant

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ken Thrasher, Chair
Chairman/CEO
Compli

Richard C. Alexander
Founder
Viking Industries

Duncan Campbell
Chairman Emeritus
The Campbell Group

Gun Denhart
Founder
Hanna Andersson

Joyce Furman
Co-Founder
New Avenues for Youth

Irving Levin
CEO
Genesis Financial Solutions

Gary Withers
Executive Vice President
Concordia University

Julie Young
Children's Advocate

This report was made possible by the generous support of the John D. & Elizabeth N. Gray Endowment Fund of The Oregon Community Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Community Fund at the Northwest Health Foundation, Lora L. & Martin N. Kelley Family Foundation Trust, Jubitz Family Foundation, Birth to Five Policy Alliance and Pre-K Now in association with The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Additional copies of this report are available at www.childinst.org
or by contacting the Children's Institute.

503.219.9034
info@childinst.org
1221 SW Yamhill St., Suite 260
Portland, Oregon 97205

Photography by Joni Kabana. Published Fall 2009.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

FIVE STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENTS 3

PUTTING STANDARDS INTO PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL
READINESS ASSESSEMENTS 7

A REVIEW OF OREGON’S KINDERGARTEN READINESS SURVEY 9

EVALUATING OREGON’S ASSESSMENT 11

SCORECARD 15

RECOMMENDATIONS 16

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 17

APPENDICES 18

 APPENDIX A: OTHER TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS 18

 APPENDIX B: 2008 OREGON KINDERGARTEN READINESS
 SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS 20

September 2009

Dear friends and colleagues,

The Children's Institute is committed to closing the achievement gap for at-risk children by aligning public and private resources with evidence-based practices. In recent years, the Institute has successfully promoted sensible funding for effective early education programs.

Our commitment to high-quality early education necessitates a similar commitment to accountability for how public resources are expended. School readiness assessments – a process for measuring how prepared a population of children is to enter kindergarten – provide some accountability and are a critical component of any effective early education system. As Oregon and the nation move toward comprehensive data systems that track the education of children from birth through college, now is the time to re-engineer Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey to provide Oregonians – policy-makers in particular – a useful tool for measuring school readiness.

In the following report, the Institute makes five recommendations intended to improve Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey. The Children's Institute is eager to partner with the Department of Education and others to ensure that Oregon has a strong and effective accountability tool in place as we expand investments in high-quality early care and education programs. By working together, we can ensure that all children in Oregon enter kindergarten prepared for success.

Sincerely,



Ken Thrasher
Board Chair
Children's Institute



Swati Adarkar
Executive Director
Children's Institute

In 1993, the Oregon Progress Board identified school readiness as a critical state benchmark.¹ In response, the Oregon Department of Education developed Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey. It was first administered in 1997 and has been administered biennially since 2000. The design of Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey was heavily influenced by the 1990 release of the National Education Goals Panel report, written under the direction of President George H. W. Bush and 50 state governors. The first educational goal specified in this "Goals 2000" report was that "by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn."² The report spurred many states, including Oregon, to evaluate school readiness in their states.

In Oregon and across the nation, lawmakers, scientists, economists and business leaders have focused public attention on early childhood education and its positive effect on educational and lifetime outcomes. This attention has been driven in part by two sets of research findings. First, research has demonstrated that the achievement gap between children from low- and middle-income families and their more affluent peers is well-established before their first day of kindergarten. At the same time, a growing body of research has demonstrated that high-quality early learning programs, particularly for low-income and at-risk children, can significantly reduce this gap and place children on a path to success in school and later in life.

Well-designed assessments help public officials direct resources effectively and efficiently. On the other hand, poorly designed or poorly administered assessments — even if inexpensive — are not a good use of public resources.

Along with this growing interest in early education have come increased public investments in pre-kindergarten programs and a need to assess the effectiveness of public investments in these programs. Assessments of school readiness, when done correctly, are useful planning tools. Assessing children as they enter kindergarten allows policy-makers to identify and respond to achievement gaps and communities to determine whether children are prepared for success in school. Well-designed assessments help public officials direct resources effectively and efficiently. On the other hand, poorly designed or poorly administered assessments — even if inexpensive — are not a good use of public resources.

When the National Educational Goals Panel released its recommendations in 1990, it acknowledged that only a few models for measuring school readiness existed, and it found no consensus on how assessments should be conducted.³ Nearly 20 years later, the situation is far different. Currently, about 20 states conduct some kind of assessment of school readiness at the beginning of kindergarten and a

vigorous national conversation on how assessments should be conducted is taking place.⁴ In 2003, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) issued a joint position statement on early childhood curriculum, assessment and program

evaluation.⁵ In November 2007, the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force sponsored by the Foundation for Child Development, The Joyce Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts released *Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality*, with recommendations for states that are building early childhood accountability systems.⁶ More recently, in August 2008 the National Research Council of the National Academies released its congressionally mandated report titled *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How*.⁷

The emergence of these new resources and models for how to conduct school readiness assessments makes the present an opportune time for Oregon to re-evaluate its survey. While Oregon was ahead of many states when it developed its kindergarten readiness survey in 1997, the survey does not meet generally accepted standards for an effective school readiness assessment.

Updates to Oregon's survey were made as recently as 2008; however, a more significant overhaul is needed to address the statistical limitations of the survey. If the current weaknesses are not addressed, Oregon will continue to make decisions without a reliable picture of how prepared Oregon's children are when they enter kindergarten.

STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES OF OREGON'S KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- +** Reflects early childhood developmental standards
- +** Relatively easy and inexpensive to administer
- +** Is not misused to track children or bar them from kindergarten entry

Weaknesses

- Unclear what policy-planning questions it is intended to help answer
- Unclear whether the data accurately reflects the entire kindergarten-aged population (i.e., how representative is the sample?)
- No assurances that all teachers are interpreting questions in the same way (i.e., how reliable is the assessment tool?)
- Insufficient training and support for teachers administering the assessment
- Lack of background and demographic information about the children surveyed limits the types of conclusions that can be drawn from the data

The Children's Institute makes the following recommendations for improving Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey:

ESTABLISH A CLEAR AND FOCUSED PURPOSE FOR SURVEY

1. The Oregon Department of Education, in consultation with elected officials, K-12 leaders, education researchers, early childhood professionals, relevant state agencies, and education and children's advocates, should agree upon the policy questions that the survey is intended to address and determine what information and procedures are needed to answer those questions.

ENSURE THE INTEGRITY OF THE DATA

2. Select a methodology that ensures representative data by (a) requiring all kindergarten teachers to participate in the assessment and collect data on all children or (b) surveying a representative sample of children.

3. The validity and reliability of Oregon's survey should be assessed. If it is proven to lack validity or reliability, the survey should be improved or replaced with an assessment tool that has been tested and is known to be both valid and reliable.

4. Provide teachers with the training and technical assistance needed to make the assessment process meaningful and effective.

IMPROVE THE SURVEY PROCESS

5. Connect kindergarten readiness survey data to existing and relevant demographic data.

FIVE STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENTS

Over the past decade, experts have reached consensus around standards that school readiness assessments should meet. This consensus provides a useful starting point for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of Oregon’s kindergarten readiness survey.

The following generally accepted standards will be used for this evaluation.

1. The **purpose** of an assessment should be clearly defined at the outset, and the assessment should be used only for its intended purpose.
2. Expectations for school readiness should **align** with early learning and developmental standards.
3. A developmentally appropriate **methodology** that meets generally accepted statistical and psychometric standards should be used.
4. Relevant data (and only relevant data) that provide **context** for findings and conclusions should be collected.
5. The personnel who administer assessments should receive sufficient **guidance** in the form of ongoing training and support.

Each of these standards will be explained further below, followed by an assessment of Oregon’s survey and recommendations for improving it.

❖ **Purpose** — The purpose of an assessment should be clearly defined at the outset, and the assessment should be used only for its intended purpose.

Assessments are conducted for various purposes, and as the National Education Goals Panel noted in the following excerpt, each aspect of an assessment should be tied back to the purpose of the assessment.

“The intended use of an assessment — its purpose — determines every other aspect of how the assessment is conducted. Purpose determines the **conduct** of the assessment (What should be measured?); **method** of data collection (Should the procedures be standardized? Can data come from the child, the parent, or the teacher?); **technical requirements** of the assessment (What level of reliability and validity must be established?);

and, finally, the **stakes or consequences** of the assessment, which in turn determine the kinds of safeguards necessary to protect against potential harm from fallible assessment-based decisions.”⁸
[Emphasis added.]

School readiness assessments can be important **policy-planning tools**. By focusing on population-level data, they can answer questions such as: Are children arriving at kindergarten prepared for success? Is their level of school readiness improving or worsening over time? What disparities between groups of children need to be addressed? Which aspects of school readiness (e.g., health, social and emotional development or reading skills) are most in need of remediation? Which school districts or regions of the state require a more intensive effort to prepare children for school?

Not every child needs to be assessed in order to answer these questions. According to the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, “the key data collected in this approach are assessments of a representative sample of all young children in the state” and that “using a sample dramatically reduces the cost of administering assessments, training assessors, data management and analysis. The sampling plan can be designed to provide data on the overall population of young children, or enable reporting on specific subgroups of children.”⁹

Connecting the information from this type of assessment to information about the public and community resources available is also important. Do the groups of children with lower literacy and language skills have access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs? Are the children who are academically behind enrolled in full-day kindergarten? Are resources available to help promote children’s healthy social and emotional development? For these reasons, many experts recommend looking not only at the readiness of children for kindergarten, but also at the readiness of communities to support children and families and the readiness of schools to receive them.¹⁰

Not only should the purpose of an assessment be clearly specified from the outset, assessments, in general, should not be used for purposes other than those for which they were designed. There are important purposes other than policy planning

for conducting assessments, such as program improvement and evaluation, instructional planning, and screening young children. These purposes require different tools and strategies than used for policy planning. (See Appendix A.)

❑ **Alignment** — Expectations for school readiness should align with early learning and developmental standards.

School readiness assessments reflect the experiences and development that children have undergone during their early childhood.¹¹ As such, primary audiences for school readiness assessment data are those who work with and formulate policy affecting children below the age of 5. It is therefore crucial that school readiness assessments align with expectations for what early childhood programs are supposed to accomplish, as well as connect to K-12 standards.

Early childhood policy experts and kindergarten teachers agree that school readiness is much more than knowing letters and numbers.

Health, social and emotional development, and eagerness to learn are vital ingredients to school success. When kindergarten teachers are surveyed about what they expect from children entering their classrooms, they emphasize social and emotional skills, such as the ability to follow instructions or participate in group activities, more than cognitive skills, such as reciting the alphabet.¹²

There is widespread agreement that school readiness assessments should look at a broad range of developmental domains that include cognitive, physical, and social and emotional development. Almost every state has adopted early learning guidelines that describe shared expectations for what children should know and be able to do by the time they arrive at kindergarten. These guidelines provide a useful starting point for determining what school readiness assessments ought to measure. Designing a school readiness assessment also offers an opportunity for the early childhood and K-12 communities to agree upon what is best for children and how to meet

those goals. As such, discussions about assessments are occasions to build stronger connections between early childhood and elementary educators.

❑ **Methodology** — A developmentally appropriate methodology that meets generally accepted statistical and psychometric standards should be used.

Assessments should be developmentally appropriate.

The developmental appropriateness of an assessment requires more than asking about skills or behaviors reasonable for a 5-year-old child. It also requires gathering information about those skills or behaviors in an age-appropriate way. Assessing young children provides a host of challenges. Young children with limited verbal skills and emotions that change often and rapidly are notoriously poor and unreliable test takers. Most young children cannot perform traditional pen-and-paper tests and should not be asked to do so. They also tend to react strongly to unfamiliar people and situations.

As the authors of NAEYC's *Basics of Assessment* note, "children are most likely to perform to the best of their ability in a familiar setting, with known and trusted adults; direct questioning may cause some young children to become uneasy and unresponsive. If children are from a culture where that type of adult-child interaction is not typical, they are even less likely to show their true capabilities."¹³

Early childhood assessments often are divided into **direct assessments** (standardized tools administered by someone trained to use the instrument), **rating scales** (someone who knows the child — such as his or her teacher — fills out a form based on prior knowledge and impressions) and **authentic assessment** (e.g., the Work Sampling System®, where a trained assessor collects ongoing data during regular activities and then records the results, typically in the form of a rating scale).¹⁴ While some early childhood experts recommend against using direct assessments with young children, this type of standardized tool has been an important part of the major studies that

When kindergarten teachers are surveyed about what they expect from children entering their classrooms, they emphasize social and emotional skills, such as the ability to follow instructions or participate in group activities, more than cognitive skills, such as reciting the alphabet.

have demonstrated the effectiveness of early childhood interventions.¹⁵ Direct assessments generally are expensive to administer properly and, as noted above, can be stressful for young children. Therefore, most experts advise that direct assessments, if used, should be administered to a statistically representative sample of children rather than to an entire population.

Data should allow users to draw statistically meaningful conclusions about the populations in which they are interested.

Whether looking at all children or subgroups, data are only useful if they provide a true picture of the population under consideration. In order to obtain an accurate picture, users either need data from all children or a statistically representative sample. Simply increasing the participation rate in a survey does not necessarily improve the results. More important than the *rate* of participation is how *representative* of the entire population the sample is.

Because of the potential for bias, data based on a voluntary sample generally should be interpreted with extreme caution.

When participation is voluntary, it is more than likely that those who participate differ in significant ways from those who do not, and these differences may introduce significant bias. Because of the potential for bias, data based on a voluntary sample generally should be interpreted with extreme caution. Without universal participation, the only way to achieve a representative sample is through random selection.

Assessments should be valid (i.e., measure what is intended to be measured).

Assessments should measure what they are intended to measure and should predict later outcomes. Assessment experts refer to this as the “validity” of the assessment and have a number of formal tests to gauge validity (e.g., comparing the results from an assessment tool with a widely accepted assessment tool that is meant to measure the same thing). For instance, if a letter-recognition test at kindergarten entry fails to predict reading ability in third grade, it is a poor assessment of early literacy. Assessing young children, particularly from different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, can create validity challenges. For instance, a direct assessment

of math skills administered in English to an English language learner is more likely to register the child’s comprehension of spoken English than his or her grasp of sizes, shapes and patterns.¹⁶

Assessments should be reliable (i.e., measure consistently).

An assessment should be reliable, which means it should produce consistent results. While there are many types of reliability, inter-rater reliability is among the most important. The inter-rater reliability of an assessment tool refers to the likelihood that different assessors will produce similar results when assessing the same child. For example, if two teachers filling out a kindergarten readiness survey evaluated the same child, and one teacher reported that the child is “rarely” excited about learning while the other teacher reported that the child is excited about learning “most of the time,” the assessment would be considered unreliable. The reliability of an assessment tool is particularly important when assessors intend to make comparisons between groups of children or between results over time.

As the National Education Goals Panel noted, “[I]f policy changes are going to be made because reading scores have gone up or down, it is essential that the reported change be valid, and not an artifact of measurement error or changes in the test. One of the problems, for example, of using teacher opinion surveys to report on kindergartners’ readiness for school is that changes over time could be happening because children are becoming more or less ready or because teachers’ expectations of readiness vary or are changing.”¹⁷

Standardized direct assessments usually are designed to have a high level of reliability. Rating scales based on teachers impressions and authentic assessment using work sampling techniques can also have reasonable levels of reliability, but only if the teachers administering the assessment receive ongoing training so that they use rating scales consistently. For all types of assessments, the level of reliability is an empirical question that should be answered through measurement and testing. Trustworthy assessments have a rating for their reliability.

❖ **Context** — Relevant data (and only relevant data) that provide context for findings and conclusions should be collected.

The data gathered from school readiness assessments is most meaningful when placed in a context. Information about children’s early childhood experiences, family demographics and health status help policy-makers interpret the results and more effectively direct resources to benefit children. The Early Childhood Accountability Task Force recommended that population-level assessments “include the characteristics of the children and their families (e.g., name, birth date, address, health status, any diagnosed disabilities, parental data, family socio-economic status data); preschool enrollment (if applicable), with center identification numbers.”¹⁸ Without this information it is impossible to address questions such as: Is the state closing the achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers? Are children from urban and rural parts of the state equally well prepared for success? In what domains of school readiness do children with diagnosed disabilities need the most support? How are children’s early childhood experiences (such as participation in preschool) or their home environments affecting their school readiness?

While it is important to collect the information needed to answer such questions, it also is important to only gather data that will be used. It can be tempting for designers of data-collection systems to ask for as much information as seems reasonable, but gathering extraneous information is costly and time consuming. Furthermore, overly burdensome questionnaires can lead to teachers complying in a cursory fashion, which produces inaccurate data.

❖ **Guidance** — The personnel who administer assessments should receive sufficient guidance in the form of ongoing training and support.

Any assessment — whether it involves a standardized

tool or an analysis of a child’s portfolio — requires training and support. Both should be ongoing to maintain the reliability of the assessment over time.

A nationwide survey of state officials working with school readiness assessments found that more than half of the respondents commented on the need for better training of new professionals to understand what developmentally appropriate assessment means and how to use new methods of assessment. For example, the survey found that portfolio assessments are “overwhelming” for some teachers. Teachers “collect ‘all this stuff,’ and they have checklists, but they are not sure what to do with it.”¹⁹ As the quotation suggests, teachers not only need training

A nationwide survey of state officials ... found that more than half of the respondents [wanted] ... better training [for] new professionals to understand what developmentally appropriate assessment means and how to use new methods of assessment.

and support in how to properly administer an assessment, they also need guidance on how to interpret and use the results. Even when a school readiness assessment focuses on population-level outcomes rather than the individual-level data needed for instructional planning, publication of the results provides an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their work and the outcomes they are trying to promote. Creating opportunities for this kind of critical reflection is essential for making

assessments part of a program-improvement strategy.



While Oregon was ahead of many states when it developed its kindergarten readiness survey in 1997, the survey does not meet generally accepted standards for an effective school readiness assessment.

PUTTING STANDARDS INTO PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENTS

The five standards described above are not mere abstractions. State governments and other jurisdictions across the nation are putting them into practice and demonstrating what powerful tools school readiness assessments can be when done well. Currently, about 20 states conduct some kind of assessment of school readiness at the beginning of kindergarten.²⁰ The following examples from Maryland, San Francisco and Washington County, Oregon illuminate the effective application of several of these standards.

- ❑ Maryland shows that, with sufficient training and support for teachers who administer the survey, a rating scale can meet high standards for reliability and validity.
- ❑ San Francisco demonstrates that when the purpose of an assessment is well defined and the questions to be asked are clearly specified, the data collected can truly shape policy.
- ❑ The Washington County survey shows how data take on new meaning and relevance when placed in the larger context of community needs and resources.

Each of the three assessments produces results that are valid, reliable, statistically meaningful and developmentally appropriate. At the same time, each jurisdiction made different choices about the kind of tool to use, the kinds of contextual information to gather, and the questions to ask. These choices reflect legitimate differences in policy emphasis and focus.

Maryland

Assessment is a core component of the Maryland Model of School Readiness (MMSR).²¹ While assessments for policy and assessments for instructional planning are quite different, Maryland has found a way to do both at the same time — and do them well. It has done both effectively because it has invested significantly in the training and support of the kindergarten teachers who administer the survey and because the assessment is so closely integrated with the curriculum.

Since 2001, Maryland has used a modified version of the Work Sampling System® to measure the school readiness of its kindergartners every year. While teachers use the Work Sampling System® to create portfolios and organize their observation of their kindergartners throughout the year, the data are collected during the first few weeks of November using 30 out of 66 indicators.²² These indicators cover a broad range of developmental domains: social and personal development; language and literacy; mathematical thinking; scientific thinking; social studies; the arts; physical development and health. Information is also collected on: the race/ethnicity and gender of the children, their prior education experiences; whether they are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; whether they have limited English proficiency; and if they are receiving special education services.

Maryland kindergarten teachers report that the assessment is an important instructional planning tool. According to a survey of these teachers in 2002-2003, more than 90 percent reported that the assessment helped them decide what to work on with individual children. Eighty-six percent reported that they used it to help communicate with parents.²³ The survey is also used by school and county administrators to determine how to direct resources, but it is not used to judge the performance of particular early childhood programs. According to a Maryland education official, the information from this report has helped the state focus on student achievement and investments in early childhood programs.²⁴

Maryland invests significantly in the professional development of its kindergarten teachers, and training on the assessment process is integrated into overall professional development efforts. Through a planning process prior to the school year, Maryland's department of education and the local school districts develop a series of professional development activities that follow a particular sequence in the methodology and content of the MMSR. For instance, during the first year, teachers will participate in staff development sessions that introduce the early learning outcomes and indicators that define the level of school readiness statewide. The subsequent sessions stress the teachers' observational skills to gain insight into children's learning and inform their instruction. Additional

modules stress: the alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment; instructional planning; and communication with families about their children's learning.²⁵

Guidance and protocols for using the Work Sampling System[®] are integrated into this professional development support. During the training, teachers' accuracy in using this instrument is assessed. This training, along with well-defined criteria for scoring, helps transform a portfolio-based evaluation into an assessment with sufficient rigor to be used for planning. The department developed for each of the 30 Work Sampling System[®] indicators benchmark outcomes in the form of assessment exemplars for the fall (assessed statewide the first two weeks of November) and the spring (assessed during the last two weeks of May and only in some school districts or for specific schools). The benchmark outcomes are aligned with the learning objectives of the state's early learning standards. Maryland also takes further action to safeguard against teacher bias and ensure a high level of consistency and reliability in the assessment by contracting with an outside evaluator to statistically analyze the validity and reliability of the assessment.²⁶ Since 2006, the MMSR Kindergarten Assessment has been coordinated with the state's Early Childhood Accountability System, which records the progress of young children's individual education plans.

San Francisco

San Francisco Unified School District's (SFUSD) survey of kindergarten readiness demonstrates how a carefully designed school readiness assessment with a clear purpose and specific questions can produce specific and useful policy recommendations.²⁷ Approximately 4,000 kindergartners enter SFUSD each year. In 2007, SFUSD commissioned an independent research firm to determine the readiness of these children. The study was designed to answer the following questions:

- ❑ Are children ready for school?
- ❑ How are early education programs connected to school readiness?
- ❑ What other factors are associated with heightened school readiness?

The researchers selected a representative sample of 447 children to be assessed on 24 readiness skills. Kindergarten teachers were trained to administer the assessment, and "the focal point of the training was an item-by-item description of the readiness skill information to be collected via the Kindergarten Observation Form so that observers complete the form in a consistent way." Teachers also completed a separate survey that recorded their viewpoints on and priorities for school readiness. In addition, parents of selected children were asked to complete a survey that provided a glimpse into the family and community factors associated with the children. These three data sources allowed researchers to draw a rich picture of school readiness and pinpoint key areas for future investment.

The report identified the following:

- ❑ Specific neighborhoods have a concentration of children arriving at school needing more preparation, calling out where early childhood resources ought to be invested more intensively.
- ❑ "Self-regulation" is a particular area in which teachers need more help working with children. Thirty percent of children entered kindergarten far below where their teachers would like them to be in terms of "self-regulation." Teachers rated this as one of the most important skills for kindergarten entry and one of the most difficult to improve.
- ❑ Further investment is needed in developmental screenings. Although medical, dental, vision and hearing assessments were common, far fewer children had a developmental screening prior to kindergarten entry.

Washington County, Oregon

Oregon's Washington County has demonstrated the power of putting information about school readiness of children in a community context. In 1997 and again in 2007, Washington County Commission on Children and Families took a close look at school readiness in its community. Both studies used an ecological approach, looking not only at what children entering kindergarten know and can do, but also the readiness of the schools and the community to support, prepare and welcome these children and their families. The goals of these studies were to "measure

the current status of school readiness in the county and draw policy implications” and to “engage schools and communities in a conversation on the complex nature of school readiness and empower them to collect information on their own.”²⁸

The 2007 study used three direct assessments with a sample of 537 entering kindergartners from eight schools representing the demographic spectrum of the county. The direct assessments included a developmental inventory, a measure of alphabet knowledge and a measure of awareness of print concepts. The assessments were administered by teachers and other school personnel, all of whom received training in the proper use of the tools. Interviews were also conducted with the children’s families. The family interviews provided demographic data, level of satisfaction with child care, information about family routines, information about access to resources in the community, and involvement in the schools. In addition to this information about children and their families, the study also looked at what the schools were doing to ease students’ transition to kindergarten. Questionnaires were sent to participating teachers and principals. The survey of principals asked for information about school demographics and community context.²⁹

The 2007 study, just like the 1997 study, revealed that child outcomes were high, with “children ... generally holding their own.” Literacy development lagged behind expectations, especially in lower-income and language-diverse schools. The 2007 study also demonstrated significant progress made since 1997. Community resources are better integrated and better linked to schools, and schools have dramatically increased developmentally appropriate programming and cultural and linguistic practices. At the same time, the county faces new challenges. The number of children in general, and the number of lower-income children and English language learners in particular, is increasing, important services remain under-funded, and access to high-quality child care is limited.

A REVIEW OF OREGON’S KINDERGARTEN READINESS SURVEY

Every other fall since 2000, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has asked kindergarten teachers to participate in the kindergarten readiness survey on a voluntary basis. Oregon’s 2008 survey is the most recent survey for which the results are available. The 2008 Kindergarten Readiness Survey is also the first after a major revision of the domains and indicators, the definitions of the indicators, the system of scoring, and the survey’s administration. As a prelude to this revision, ODE hosted two discussions with kindergarten teachers about how to more effectively ask questions on the survey. The changes to the survey were made in consultation with the Oregon Progress Board.³⁰ (See Appendix B for a copy of the survey.)

The new survey, like its predecessor, is voluntary. Kindergarten teachers decide for themselves whether or not they take part in the survey. Participating teachers score each child in their class across a broad range of domains of school readiness based on their impressions of and experiences with each child during the period in which they have been in their classroom. While teachers receive written instructions on how to conduct the survey, they do not receive in-person training on how to score children on individual indicators.

The revised survey looks at the following five domains:*

1. approaches to learning;
2. social and personal development;
3. physical health, well-being and motor development;
4. general knowledge and cognitive development;
5. communication, literacy and language development.

*Each of these five domains is broken down into subcategories with its own new indicators. The revised survey includes much more specific indicators for domains than the previous version. For instance, “communication, literacy and language development” (formerly “language and literacy”) now includes “receptive and expressive language” and the indicator “Child demonstrates understanding of messages in conversation by listening and responding appropriately; communicates needs, wants, and thoughts verbally (in child’s primary language); and speaks clearly and conveys ideas effectively.”

ODE has also replaced its five-point scoring scale with a four-point scale.

Old Five-Point Scale	New Four-Point Scale
1 = Never	1 = Not Yet
2 = Rarely	2 = Beginning
3 = Sometimes (ready to learn)	3 = In Progress (ready to learn)
4 = Often (ready to learn)	4 = Proficient (ready to learn)
5 = Always (ready to learn)	

New definitions are given for each of these scores. For example, a score of 3 now equates to: “In Progress – Child demonstrates skill, knowledge, or behavior that is observable more than 50 percent of the time, but not all the time; demonstrates with regularity but is not completely proficient; needs minor or occasional assistance.” Using the new scale, scores of 3 and 4 are deemed “ready to learn.”

Teachers who participate are now asked to submit information for all students in all of their classes, rather than select which of their classes to include. An additional new administrative feature is the use of student identification numbers. For the first time, the student identification number for each child assessed is used to retrieve demographic information that teachers previously had to record themselves. Also for the first time, data is submitted entirely electronically. In November 2008, the Department of Education hosted a videoconference for kindergarten teachers and school officials on the new administrative features. The department is planning to conduct the survey yearly, rather than biennially as it has done in the past.

In addition to assessing children across a broad range of dimensions of school readiness, teachers are also asked to provide background information on children’s early childhood experiences, such as whether they had enrolled in preschool, attended Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten (OPK) or received Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services. The following demographic information is retrieved from the student’s data file and matched with the survey: child’s gender, ethnicity and whether English is a second language for that child. In addition to the survey, teachers are given an instructional sheet with a set of definitions meant to guide them in their scoring.

After the data are collected, a composite score of the percentage of children who enter kindergarten ready to learn is calculated and used as the Oregon Progress Board’s school readiness benchmark. Children who score a 3 or above across all domains are considered “ready to learn.” The Oregon Progress Board reports this benchmark for each county and the state in its biennial “Oregon Shines” report. The Oregon Progress Board also sets a statewide target for this benchmark and reports whether the state is making adequate progress toward this goal.

The 2008 survey collected data on 23,382 public school kindergartners from 492 schools. Data collection took place between December 1, 2008 and January 14, 2009. The number of kindergarten teachers who participated is not noted in the report, nor is the percentage of the total population of kindergartners represented by this survey. No information is provided about if and how respondents differ from non-respondents.

Of the children assessed, 46.3 percent were deemed by their teachers to be ready in all five developmental domains. In the 2006 survey, 80.3 percent of children were described by their teachers as meeting all dimensions of readiness. However, in all likelihood this significant drop reflects the changes in the survey and not changes in the preparedness of children for school. Indeed, this drop may reflect that the new indicators are described with greater precision. The domain in which the most children (73.5 percent) were deemed ready is *Physical Health and Well-being*, while *Communication, Literacy and Language Development* was the domain in which the fewest (61.9 percent) met the benchmark. Students who attended preschool exceeded the all-student average in all five developmental domains. The report, as in previous years, recorded gaps in school readiness among racial and ethnic groups, and for English language learners.³¹

EVALUATING OREGON'S ASSESSMENT

The purpose of Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey is not well defined.

According to the 2006 Kindergarten Readiness Report, information from Oregon's survey is used "for a variety of important purposes including ... Oregon's Early Childhood Legislative agenda, legislative decisions for statewide funding of programs impacting young children prior to school entrance, county and community planning related to Senate Bill 555 [enacted in 1999] and the Oregon Children's Plan, the Oregon Progress Board's Benchmark Report, instructional planning for preschool settings, and examination of the readiness of children participating in Oregon Pre-Kindergarten and Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education Programs."³²

The uses listed above are predominately for policy-planning purposes. While instructional planning is also included, the survey is ill-suited for this purpose, and there is little evidence that kindergarten teachers make use of it when planning instruction. (See Appendix A for information on how to use early childhood assessments for instructional planning.)

While the primary focus of Oregon's survey is policy planning, there is little clarity about how the survey is supposed to guide policy-makers. It is not clear what decisions Oregon's survey guides because it is not clear what questions the survey is trying to answer. The types of questions the survey is intended to answer should drive its design and use. At a minimum, the survey should be able to identify changes in the achievement gap among various populations. In addition, policy-makers could be asking questions such as: Are there differences at the state, county, school district or other levels? Do the children starting school most behind have access to full-day kindergarten or home-visiting programs? Determining the right set of questions is the responsibility of a broad set of stakeholders, including early childhood and K-12 educators, relevant state agencies, education advocates and elected officials.

While the primary focus of Oregon's survey is policy planning, there is little clarity about how the survey is supposed to guide policy-makers. It is not clear what decisions Oregon's survey guides because it is not clear what questions the survey is trying to answer.

To be an effective policy-planning tool, Oregon's survey must also meet basic standards of reliability and validity and be collected from a representative sample of children and teachers (discussed further below).

Recommendation: The Oregon Department of Education, in consultation with elected officials, K-12 leaders, early childhood professionals, relevant state agencies, and education and children's advocates, should agree upon the policy questions that the survey is intended to address and determine what information and procedures are needed to answer those questions.

Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey reflects early childhood development standards and aligns with the state's early learning guidelines.

The designers of Oregon's original kindergarten readiness survey followed the lead of the National Education Goals Panel when determining which domains of school readiness to assess. As such, Oregon's survey is holistic in its approach, assessing the domains of early childhood development that experts see as essential for success in kindergarten and beyond. The focus of the original survey, as well as the recently revised version, on domains such as social and emotional development and approaches to learning is one of its strengths.

In 2006, Oregon adopted early learning guidelines known as the Oregon Early Childhood Foundations. One of the intended uses of the foundations is to "guide the selection of assessment tools that are appropriate for learners from a variety of backgrounds with differing abilities."³³

Oregon's Early Childhood Foundations and the state's kindergarten readiness survey share a similar general approach to early childhood, with an emphasis on the broad domains of development. Because the domains were recently revised and are generally congruent with the Early Childhood Foundations, there is not a pressing need to further align the kindergarten readiness survey with the Early Childhood Foundations. However, the Early Childhood

Foundations should serve as a starting point for any future revisions to the content of the survey. Using the Early Childhood Foundations as a starting point also would provide an opportunity for early childhood professionals and K-12 leaders to develop shared expectations for young children and to improve their transition to kindergarten.

Oregon’s kindergarten readiness survey does not meet basic statistical and psychometric standards.

The statistical and psychometric properties of Oregon’s rating scale are its weakest features. In order for policy-makers and other data users to have confidence in the results, they need to know that the sample of children surveyed is representative, that teachers are completing the assessment reliably and consistently, and that the instrument validly measures the content and skills reported. Oregon’s current survey does not meet these standards.

Oregon’s survey may not be representative.

The current survey is voluntary. As a result, no one can know if the children surveyed or the teachers surveying are representative. Further, no one can be certain that the subpopulations surveyed, such as English language learners, are representative of the entire sub-population. The voluntary nature of Oregon’s survey makes drawing firm conclusions about how well children are doing almost impossible. As noted in the 2004 Oregon Department of Education issue brief, because the teachers and children who participate may significantly vary from survey to survey, it is also difficult to analyze changes over time.³⁴ Simply increasing the participation rate without addressing this issue of representation will not increase confidence in the data.

If Oregon decides to survey all children entering kindergarten, it should consider supplementing the survey with a standardized assessment of a smaller sample of children performed every four years. A quadrennial assessment designed in this way would increase confidence in the data. In addition, conducting the survey on a quadrennial basis and

using a representative sample would minimize the additional cost and burden of adding this in-depth survey.

The validity and reliability of Oregon’s survey is unknown.

Confidence in the survey results would also be enhanced by information about the instrument’s validity and reliability. Oregon has not formally tested the validity or reliability of its assessment. Of greatest concern is the survey’s reliability. Simply put, no one knows if teachers are assessing children in a consistent fashion, and because the reliability is unknown, the data should be treated as if they are not reliable. The rating scales, such as those used in Oregon’s survey, often have reliability issues. However, rating scales and authentic assessments can meet basic reliability

standards with sufficient support and oversight. While Oregon does provide written instructions, it does not provide the kind of training for teachers that would address concerns about reliability.

Reliability and validity can be measured using several standard techniques. The reliability and validity of Oregon’s survey can and should be assessed. New Mexico,

South Dakota and New Jersey are examples of states that have taken this basic but important step.³⁵

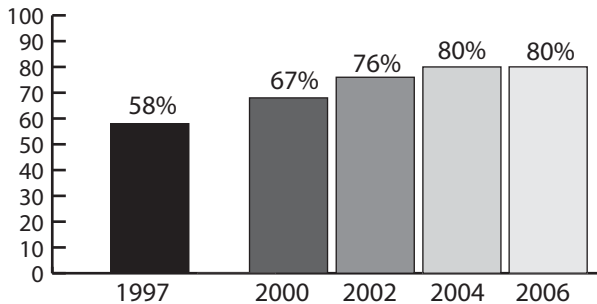
The statistical and psychometric properties of Oregon’s rating scale are its weakest features.



Expectations for school readiness should align with early learning and developmental standards. Oregon does well in this regard.

Is the number of Oregon kindergartners arriving at school “ready to learn” increasing? We don’t know.

Percent of Oregon children entering school ready to learn



2008 data not shown due to changes in methodology and content of survey.

When comparing the results from 1997 to 2006, it appears that Oregon has made great progress in preparing its young children for kindergarten. Over that period, according to results from the survey, the percentage of children “ready to learn” has increased by more than 20 percentage points. However, one should be cautious when interpreting these results.

According to Dr. Thomas Schultz, who led the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force and is director of early childhood for the Council of Chief State School Officers, one of the dangers of a subjective assessment based on kindergarten teachers’ perceptions, such as Oregon’s kindergarten readiness survey, is that the results often drift over time in ways that do not reflect actual changes in the population of children being evaluated. If teachers believe that a “ready to learn” score is supposed to be improving over time, this belief will color their judgment when they fill out the survey. This “upward bias” can be completely unintentional and still lead to changes in scores that don’t reflect actual changes in children.

The pattern of improvement in Oregon’s “ready to learn” score may indicate an expectations-driven drift. If the dramatic increase in this score is legitimate, it should correspond to some underlying changes such as a significant reduction in the number of children arriving at school with various risk factors or dramatically increased investment in early childhood programs that prepare children for success in school. Neither of these occurred during the period in which the kindergarten readiness survey reports major gains.

Recommendation: Select a methodology that ensures representative data by (a) requiring all kindergarten teachers to participate in the assessment and collect data on all children or (b) surveying a randomly selected representative sample of children.

Recommendation: The validity and reliability of Oregon’s survey should be assessed. If it is proven to lack validity or reliability, the survey should be improved or replaced with an assessment tool that has been tested and is known to be both valid and reliable.³⁶

Oregon’s kindergarten readiness survey does not collect sufficient contextual information.

The contextual information needed depends upon the questions to be answered. Oregon’s survey provides some background information about the children: whether they received EI/ECSE services; whether they attended Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten; whether they are English language learners; their school district and their race/ethnicity.

From data sources such as the ECLS-K (Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten), experts have learned that family background and resources (e.g., household income and parents’ education level) are important determinants of school readiness.³⁷ Family characteristics such as household income and parents’ educational attainment are highly correlated with all dimensions of school readiness. In addition, early childhood experiences, such as attending center-based child care and the quality of those experiences, can influence school readiness. Without this information, the picture drawn from the survey is incomplete, and important questions about how to target resources are difficult to answer.

If the results are to be used to formulate public policy, the data need to be placed in a useful context. For example, policy-makers may need to know what percentage of children are attending early education programs and the quality level of those programs. How communities support a child’s transition to kindergarten is also relevant.

Some information is readily available. For example, eligibility for the federal free and reduced-price lunch

program is often used by education departments and education policy-makers as a rough proxy for family resources. Linking the kindergarten readiness survey results to this data would improve the ability of policy-makers to interpret the results. Important additional background information, such as educational attainment of parents, may be best obtained through interviews with the children's families. Such family interviews could be part of a more in-depth assessment of a representative sample of children conducted less frequently.

Oregon's kindergarten readiness assessment lacks sufficient contextual information. Without it, no one knows how well Oregon is preparing children for kindergarten. As the school readiness studies conducted by the Washington County Commission on Children and Families demonstrates, connecting information about child outcomes with an assessment of the community context allows for a meaningful analysis of results and better policy recommendations.

Recommendation: Connect kindergarten readiness data to existing and relevant demographic data.

Oregon does not provide adequate training and support for the teachers who administer its kindergarten readiness survey.

The 2008 revisions to Oregon's survey provide kindergarten teachers with additional guidance on how to score students. This additional information should lead to increased consistency in teachers' responses. However, providing teachers with written guidelines is inadequate to maintain consistency and reliability over time. Kindergarten teachers need more support if the survey is to be a reliable measurement of school readiness. A robust assessment requires substantial training and support.

Maryland has shown what a difference training and support for kindergarten teachers who administer assessments can make. Because of this training, Maryland is able to use a rating scale and still meet a high standard of validity and reliability. Furthermore, this training and support has led kindergarten teachers to value the assessment and has enabled them to integrate it into their instructional planning.

Recommendation: Provide teachers with the training and technical assistance needed to make the assessment process meaningful and effective.



Oregon's kindergarten readiness assessment lacks contextual information. Without it, no one knows how well Oregon is preparing children for kindergarten.

SCORECARD

When measured against the five standards set forth in this document, Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey falls short on four of the five standards.

1. The **purpose** of an assessment should be clearly defined at the outset, and the assessment should be used only for its intended purpose.



The purpose of Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey is not well defined.

2. Expectations for school readiness should **align** with early learning and developmental standards.



Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey reflects early childhood development standards and aligns with the state's early learning guidelines.

3. A developmentally appropriate **methodology** that meets generally accepted statistical and psychometric standards should be used.



Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey does not meet basic statistical and psychometric standards.

4. Relevant data (and only relevant data) that provide **context** for findings and conclusions should be collected.



Oregon's kindergarten readiness survey does not collect sufficient contextual information.

5. The personnel who administer assessments should receive sufficient **guidance** in the form of ongoing training and support.



Oregon does not provide adequate training and support for the teachers who administer its kindergarten readiness survey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children's Institute recommends that Oregon's Department of Education improve its kindergarten readiness assessment by implementing the following recommendations.

ESTABLISH A CLEAR AND FOCUSED PURPOSE FOR SURVEY

1. The Oregon Department of Education, in consultation with elected officials, K-12 leaders, education researchers, early childhood professionals, relevant state agencies, and education and children's advocates, should agree upon the policy questions that the survey is intended to address and determine what information and procedures are needed to answer those questions.

ENSURE THE INTEGRITY OF THE DATA

2. Select a methodology that ensures representative data by (a) requiring all kindergarten teachers to participate in the assessment and collect data on all children or (b) surveying a representative sample of children.

3. The validity and reliability of Oregon's survey should be assessed. If it is proven to lack validity or reliability, the survey should be improved or replaced with an assessment tool that has been tested and is known to be both valid and reliable.

4. Provide teachers with the training and technical assistance needed to make the assessment process meaningful and effective.

IMPROVE THE SURVEY PROCESS

5. Connect kindergarten readiness survey data to existing and relevant demographic data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Children's Institute thanks the following individuals for their contributions to this report:

Elana Emlen, Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families & Community

Ellen Frede, National Institute for Early Education Research

Karen Freel, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Rolf Grafwallner, Maryland Department of Education

Beth Green, NPC Research

Jay Grussling, Oregon Progress Board

Catherine Heaton, Oregon Department of Education

Dana Hepper, Stand for Children Oregon

Mary Louise McClintock, The Oregon Community Foundation

Meg McElroy, Portland's Children's Investment Fund

Vicki Nishioka, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Thomas Schultz, Council of Chief State School Officers & National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force

Rebecca Severeide, Early Childhood Strategies

Diana Stotz, Washington County Commission on Children and Families

Maxine Thompson, Leaders Roundtable

Margie Wallen, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Albert Wat, Pre-K Now

Duncan Wyse, Oregon Business Council and Oregon Board of Education

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: OTHER TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS

Program improvement and evaluation — A program evaluation asks whether a program is achieving its intended results. Before an evaluation can assess outcomes, it must first determine whether the program has been implemented as planned. A good program evaluation serves not only as an accountability tool; it also indicates how to improve performance. An evaluation also should focus on the outcomes the program is designed to produce. Program evaluations should use baseline data collected before the start of a program to assess progress or lack thereof.

The ultimate goal of an outcome-focused program evaluation is to determine if children who participated in a program are doing better in the intended areas than they would be if they had not participated. The best way to answer this question is with an experimental design in which some children are randomly assigned to the program and other children from the same pool are assigned to a control group.

School readiness assessments alone should not be used to judge the effectiveness of specific early childhood programs or interventions in which children have participated prior to kindergarten. Because school readiness assessments only provide information about the status of children at kindergarten entry, they cannot be used to evaluate programs that children attended prior to that point.³⁸ Comparing kindergarten readiness survey results for children who received state early intervention/early childhood special education services to those who did not says nothing about the effectiveness of those services.³⁹ Such a comparison fails to take into account prior differences between these two groups.

Instructional planning — Ongoing assessment is a vital part of teachers' instructional planning. Such assessments help teachers design the curriculum for the entire class and tailor instruction for individual children. Teachers systematically observe children in their activities, collect samples of the work, and

make notes of their behaviors, use of language, etc. Monitoring and recording this information also helps teachers communicate with parents about their child's development. Assessments for instructional planning do not need to meet the same psychometric standards as assessments for some other purposes.⁴⁰ However, teachers need to understand how to objectively observe and document the criteria of assessment and how to interpret the data and use them in their teaching. Achieving this level of understanding requires extensive training. Without sufficient training and support, such assessments are not an effective use of public resources or teacher time. Many states now require teachers to demonstrate reliability if using observation-based assessment systems.⁴¹

Most standardized and norm-referenced school readiness assessments do not offer the rich individualized information about children that is needed to plan instruction. Because school readiness assessments by their very nature require data that can be compared across groups of children or across time, they usually exclude the kind of qualitative observations that would help a teacher determine how to work with a particular child or classroom.

Screening for services — A screening measure is an assessment used to determine if further evaluation is necessary and whether special services are needed. Screens are used in a variety of settings, such as Head Start classrooms and doctors' offices, to identify a variety of potential issues from delays in language development to hearing or vision impairment. Some screens are meant to be administered by a parent or caregiver; others require a higher degree of technical knowledge and training. Screens should be paired with other resources. If a screen identifies a potential issue, a referral for a more complete diagnosis is needed, followed by services or treatment, if warranted.⁴²

In years past, some states used school readiness assessments to screen out children who were deemed “not ready for school.” The idea of using a screen to determine whether a particular child is ready for kindergarten as a condition for enrollment has been almost universally rejected in Oregon and across the country.

When states have used tests to screen individual

children for school entry, the result has been that children who are most at-risk for school failure are denied access to kindergarten. Because the alternatives are often inadequate, screening out children has fostered inequities, perpetuating — and even widening — the gap between youngsters deemed ready and unready.⁴³ Furthermore, screening tools, by design, assess only a few items in each domain and are inadequate for determining an individual child's school readiness or making any other high-stakes decision.

APPENDIX B: 2008 OREGON KINDERGARTEN READINESS SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Student Learning & Partnerships

2008 OREGON KINDERGARTEN READINESS SURVEY

Timeline for Data Collection: Opens December 1, 2008; closes January 14, 2009.

Basis for Collection: Oregon Ready to Learn Benchmark: The Oregon Department of Education is identified as the relevant state agency for collection of these data.

Use of Data: The information is used for a variety of important purposes including, but not limited to, Oregon's Early Childhood Legislative agenda, legislative decisions for statewide funding of programs that impact young children prior to school entrance, county and community planning related to Senate Bill 555 and the Oregon Children's Plan, the Oregon Progress Board's Benchmark Report, instructional planning for preschool settings, and examination of the readiness of children participating in Oregon Pre-Kindergarten and Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Programs.

INSTRUCTIONS

District Office/School Office: Develop a data entry plan and communicate the plan to kindergarten teachers. Kindergarten students are new to the data system.

- Should kindergarten teachers use SSIDs or District Student IDs as they enter data for their students?
- Who will create the SSID, if the student does not already have one?

Kindergarten teachers will use worksheets to compile data.

- Will each kindergarten teacher input his/her own data electronically?
- Will a designated person at the school input data electronically for all kindergarten teachers in the school?
- Will a designated person at the district level input data electronically for all kindergarten teachers in the district?

Kindergarten Teachers: Complete the 2008 Oregon Kindergarten Readiness Survey worksheet for all students.

- If your school has SSIDs for all of your students, enter the SSIDs into the appropriate column for each student. If your school does not have SSIDs for your students, enter the District Student ID into the appropriate column for each student. (See the district data entry plan.)
- Enter the student's initials or name along with the ID number.
- Evaluate all students who are enrolled in your class(es) as of November 1 (or the first school day of November).
- Evaluate each student very carefully. Remember that the rating corresponds to indicators of readiness to learn.

Ratings of "3" and "4" are considered ready to learn.

- Data will be entered electronically and submitted to ODE by January 14, 2009. (See the district data entry plan.)

STUDENT DATA CODES AND DEFINITIONS

Kindergarten teachers: Complete the paper worksheet for all students who are enrolled in your class(es) as of November 1 (or the first school day in November). If your district/school has chosen to use a data entry plan operated by someone other than kindergarten teachers, submit the paper worksheet to the designated district/school data entry person.

Demographic Data

Mark all programs that apply to each child.

Head Start *Indicates child participated in Head Start or Oregon Head Start Pre-Kindergarten (OPK).*

Y = Yes or N = No

Preschool Indicates child was enrolled in a preschool program, not Head Start or Oregon Head Start Pre-Kindergarten (OPK).

Y = Yes or N = No

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Indicates child received ECSE services prior to kindergarten and had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Y = Yes or N = No

Developmental Domains and Indicators

Evaluate each child on each indicator. Remember that the rating corresponds to indicators of *readiness to learn*.

Ratings of “3” and “4” are considered *ready to learn*.

Approaches to Learning

Curiosity and Interest:

Child shows eagerness to learn by observing, asking questions, and exploring.

Attentiveness and Persistence:

Child sustains attention to tasks and persists when facing challenges.

Social and Personal Development

Adult Interaction:

Child accepts guidance and directions from familiar adults.

Peer Interaction:

Child plays and works with other children.

Adaptive Social Behavior:

Child reacts appropriately to a variety of situations.

Self-Control:

Child modifies behavior when asked; and follows simple rules and routines.

Physical Health, Well-Being, and Motor Development

Gross Motor Skills:

Child demonstrates strength, control, and coordination of large motor muscles to walk and run with ease.

Fine Motor Skills:

Child demonstrates strength, dexterity, and control needed to use pencils, crayons, markers, paintbrushes, scissors, and other manipulative materials.

Physical Fitness:

Child demonstrates the stamina and energy to participate in daily activities.

Daily Living Skills:

Child demonstrates personal health and hygiene skills; and appears to be physically healthy, well-rested, and well-nourished.

General Knowledge and Cognitive Development

Critical and Analytical Thinking:

Child demonstrates awareness of cause and effect; makes comparisons; differentiates between events that happen in the past, present, and future; and demonstrates the ability to follow directions.

Number Sense and Operations:

Child demonstrates beginning understanding of numbers, counting, and quantity; and sorts, classifies, and organizes objects.

Scientific Thinking:

Child collects information through observation, exploration, and manipulation.

Communication, Literacy, and Language Development

Receptive and Expressive Language:

Child demonstrates understanding of messages in conversation by listening and responding appropriately; communicates needs, wants, and thoughts verbally (in child's primary language); and speaks clearly and conveys ideas effectively.

Reading:

Child demonstrates awareness of the alphabetic principle; knows print carries the message in a book; listens with interest and understanding to stories; and recognizes own name in print.

Writing:

Child writes/draws pictures or symbols to communicate understanding and to communicate in messages.

Rating Codes and Definitions

4* = Proficient – Child has mastered this skill, knowledge, or behavior; demonstrates competently and consistently.

3* = In Progress – Child demonstrates skill, knowledge, or behavior that is observable more than fifty-percent of the time, but not all the time; demonstrates with regularity but is not completely proficient; needs minor or occasional assistance.

2 = Beginning – Child is just beginning to demonstrate skill, knowledge, or behavior that is observable less than fifty-percent of the time; needs significant or frequent assistance.

1 = Not Yet – Child has not yet demonstrated skill, knowledge, or behavior; cannot perform without assistance.

ENDNOTES

¹Kathryn Nichols, *Children's Readiness to Learn: Strategies for Improvement*. Multnomah Progress Board and Multnomah Commission on Children and Families. September, 1998. p. 10.

²<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/AchGoal1/goal1.htm>.

³The National Educational Goals Panel was a bipartisan and intergovernmental body of federal and state officials created to assess and report state and national progress toward achieving national education goals.

⁴Steffanie Clothier, *Preschoolers Progress*. State Legislatures. May, 2008.

⁵<http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/pscape.pdf>.

⁶For information about this task force and for copies of this report: http://www.pewtrusts.org/our_work_report_detail.aspx?id=30962

⁷Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How. A report of the National Research Council of the National Academies. August, 2008.

⁸National Education Goals Panel, *Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessment*. 1998. p. 6.

⁹Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality. p. 46.

¹⁰Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. February, 2005.

¹¹Because of the essentially retrospective nature of Oregon's Kindergarten Readiness Survey, an ODE issue brief concluded that it was a poor benchmark of ODE's performance. "As an agency key performance measure the Kindergarten Readiness Survey is more limited than it is for a state high-level benchmark. The connection between agency performance and ratings on Developmental Dimensions is weak." A.J. Ayers, *What is Ready to Learn*. Systems Accountability & Policy Development Issue Brief. October 22, 2004.

¹²Heaviside, S., & S. Farris, *Public school kindergarten teachers' views on children's readiness for school*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. 1993. Cited in Debra J Ackermann and Steve Barnett, *What does School Readiness Mean?* NIEER Policy Brief.

¹³Oralie McAfee, Deborah J. Leong and Elena Bodrova, *Basics of Assessment*. NAEYC. 2004. p. 16.

¹⁴A Review of Methods and Instruments Used in State and Local School Readiness Evaluation, REL Southeast. August, 2007. p. 14.

¹⁵For additional information on some of the difficulties in using direct assessment with young children and the arguments for using authentic assessments for instructional planning see Horton, Carol and Barbara Bowman, *Child Assessment at the Preprimary Level: Expert Opinion and State Trends*. Erikson Institute. 2002.

¹⁶For a basic overview of the concepts of validity and reliability and their importance to early childhood assessments see: *Preschool Assessment: A Guide to Developing a Balance Approach*. NIEER Preschool Policy Matters. July, 2004. For more detailed information see: *Standards for educational and psychological testing*. American Education Research Association, American Psychological Association and National Council of Measurement in Education. 1999.

¹⁷National Education Goals Panel Report on Early Childhood Assessment. p. 24.

¹⁸Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality. p. 46.

¹⁹Sharon L. Kagan, Lorrie A. Shepard and Grace Taylor, *Trends in Early Childhood Assessment*. October, 1996. p. 10.

²⁰Steffanie Clothier, *Preschoolers Progress*. State Legislatures. May 2008.

²¹For additional information on MMSR see <http://www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/mmsr/index.html>.

²²http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/BCFF0F0E-33E5-48DA-8F11-28CF333816C2/16185/School_Readiness_Report_07_08.pdf.

²³Children Entering School Ready to Learn: Maryland School Readiness Information, 2007-8.

²⁴Linda Jacobson, *Early Childhood: Assessing Young Children*. Education Writers Association. June, 2006.

²⁵http://www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/mmsr/MMSRF11_staffdevelopment.html.

²⁶Children Entering School Ready to Learn: Maryland School Readiness Information, 2007-8.

²⁷"Children's Readiness for Kindergarten in San Francisco: Results of the fall 2007 assessment in San Francisco Unified School District." San Francisco Unified School District, First 5 San Francisco and Applied Survey Research. 2008. http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/www/products/SFUSD_Readiness_Report_2007-2008_FINAL.pdf.

²⁸Rebecca Severeide, *Revisiting School Readiness: Washington County, Oregon*. Prepared for the Washington County Commission on Children and Families. 2007. p. 10; Rebecca Severeide, *Establishing a Baseline for School Readiness of Washington County Children Entering Kindergarten*. Prepared for Washington County Commission on Children and Families. 1997. p. 1.

²⁹Rebecca Severeide. *Revisiting School Readiness: Washington County, Oregon*. Prepared for the Washington County Commission on Children and Families. 2007.

³⁰For the Oregon Progress Board's analysis of these proposed changes see: http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/OPB/docs/Committees/2008/Benchmark18_Revision_Worksheet.doc.

³¹Oregon Kindergarten Readiness Survey Report 2008.

³²Oregon Kindergarten Readiness Survey Report 2006.

³³http://www.ode.state.or.us/gradelevel/pre_k/introfoundations.pdf.

³⁴A.J. Ayers, "What is Ready to Learn." *Systems Accountability & Policy Development Issue Brief*. October 22, 2004.

³⁵Personal communication with Ellen Frede.

³⁶For a survey of the instruments used by various states in their school readiness assessments see: *A Review of Methods and Instruments Used in State and Local School Readiness Evaluation*. REL Southeast. August, 2007. See also: Scott-Little, Catherine and Judith Niemeyer, *Assessing Kindergarten Children: A Compendium of Assessment Instruments*. SERVE. 2001 (2002 edition).

³⁷Lee, Valerie E. and David T. Burkam, *Inequality at the Starting Gate*. Economic Policy Institute. 2002.

³⁸The Early Childhood Accountability Task Force concluded that "assessments conducted under Child Population Approach should not be used to make inferences about the quality of children's preschool experiences. This means that assessments administered to answer questions about how all children are faring should not be used retrospectively to evaluate state programs or local agencies. In particular, using assessment from a single point in time (e.g., at kindergarten entrance) to evaluate local agencies can lead to inaccurate and unfair judgments. Without knowing about prior patterns of children's skills and knowledge, it is impossible to know whether outcomes result from program participation, or whether they reflect what children already know or could do before entering the program." *Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality*. p. 48.

³⁹Love, John. *Use of Data on Childhood Outcomes and Program Processes in Early Childhood Accountability Systems*. Mathematic Policy Research prepared for Early Childhood Accountability Task Force. September 25, 2006.

⁴⁰For information on conducting instructional assessment with young children see: Oralie McAfee, Deborah J. Leong and Elena Bodrova, *Basics of Assessment*. NAEYC. 2004.

⁴¹Haggard, D; Frede, E.; Gronlund, G. and Vaughan, H., "Do you think the quantification of authentic assessment data for instructional/program planning, statewide system improvement and even accountability is appropriate?" Session at the National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, New Orleans, LA.

⁴²Developmental Screening, Assessment and Evaluation: Key Elements for Individualizing Curricula in Early Head Start Programs, Technical Assistance Paper No. 4. Zero to Three.

⁴³National Education Goals Panel Report on Early Childhood Assessment. p. 4; See also: Sharon L. Kagan, Lorrie A. Shepard and Grace Taylor, *Trends in Early Childhood Assessment*. NAEYC & NAECs/SDE Position Statement. October, 1996. "Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment and Program Evaluation: Building an Effective, Accountable System in Programs for Children Birth through Age 8." Adopted November 2003.