

Guidance for Kindergarten Teachers in Alternative Learning Experience Programs

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to provide assistance in understanding the requirements of implementing three components of WaKIDS in Alternative Learning Experiences (ALE) programs and schools that offer full-day kindergarten.

WaKIDS Mandate of Full-day Kindergarten

Public school districts and charter schools offering ALE courses or course work to students enrolled in full-day kindergarten under [RCW 28A.150.315](#) must administer WaKIDS to identify the skills, knowledge, abilities, and characteristics of kindergarten students at the beginning of the school year in order to support social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and mathematic growth and development of individual children; support early learning provider and parent involvement; and inform instruction.

What is WaKIDS?

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a transition process that helps to ensure a successful start to the K-12 experience and connect the key adults in a child's life. These data help inform state and district-level decisions about education policy and investments, and classroom decisions about individualized learning.

WaKIDS also provides important information about where Washington's kindergartners are in their development early in the school year. Inequities begin prior to the start of kindergarten and persist far into the child's K-12 experience and beyond. For too many children, this opportunity gap is never resolved (Cook, 2019; Iruka et al, 2018; Winsler et al, 2008). WaKIDS data is helping make clear that many children who experience an opportunity gap at the start of formal schooling face further barriers created by the system that is meant to support them (Fontil et al, 2019; Winsler et al, 2008). The data collected through WaKIDS helps to inform classroom decisions about individualized learning and district-and state-level decisions about education policy and investments.

Family Connection

Family Connection welcomes families into the Washington K-12 system as partners in their child's education. This component occurs through a Family Connection Meeting which begins to build a relationship between the kindergarten teacher and each child's family. Legislation, [Second Substitute House Bill 1723](#), passed in 2013, permits schools to use up to three full school



days for the Family Connection Meetings without applying for a 180-day waiver from the State Board of Education.

Family Connection in ALE setting

There is no prescribed Family Connection format to follow, and your Family Connection Meetings may differ from family to family. The Family Connection Meeting should not feel like a formal interview, as you are using this time to establish a relationship and get to know the family and their child. The Family Connection Meeting is not to be used to conduct any assessments.

Teachers may set up virtual or in-person meetings with families at the beginning of the school year to conduct Family Connection Meetings. Each meeting typically lasts anywhere between 30 and 60 minutes and this is the time for families to share their culture and background, and ask questions. In ALE settings, these meetings may be combined with meetings aimed at developing the WSLP. Teachers may bring questions to learn about the child and the family to create meaningful connections. Although this time is not used to conduct the Whole-child Assessment, results of this meeting can inform the WSLP as well as the Whole-child Assessment.

Teachers may find it helpful to use the [Introducing Me! booklet](#) (which is [available in 18 languages](#)). This booklet is not a script and is intended to provide an outline for conversation. Teachers can add their own questions and conversation starters, as desired. Additionally, teachers may consider sharing the [Entering Kindergarten Family Brochure](#) with families to help explain the WaKIDS process and share helpful links. This brochure is also [available in 18 languages](#).

Early Learning Collaboration

The Early Learning Collaboration component of WaKIDS aims to foster relationships with early learning providers to transition children to kindergarten. This practice can create a sense of continuity for children, promote a shared understanding of kindergarten readiness, and ultimately provide a smooth transition for children and families. This WaKIDS component works to ensure that schools and teachers are ready to welcome children and families into kindergarten.

Early Learning Collaboration in ALE setting

There is no finite time frame for the Early Learning Collaboration component to occur. Many schools continually build connections with early learning providers throughout the school year. However, a particular emphasis on the Early Learning Collaboration occurs during the spring and summer.

Principals and program directors may collect, as part of kindergarten registration, any information families would like to share about early learning experience prior to attending kindergarten. Teachers may connect with early learning providers to collect any evidence of the child's growth and development and hear from providers about the child.

If a child has no prior early learning experience before entering kindergarten, then consider inviting those who were critical in the child's growth and development during 0-5 years at the Family Connection Meeting to learn from their perspectives.

Whole-child Assessment

Data gathered through the Whole-child Assessment helps kindergarten teachers learn about the skills and strengths of the children in their classrooms so they can meet the needs of each child. The data collected is used to guide instruction and to inform the school, district, state policy, and practices.

Whole-child Assessment in ALE setting

Kindergarten students claimed at greater than 0.5 monthly FTE during the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment window, must have multiple weekly observations each week during the eight-week WaKIDS window until October 31. Observations must take place either in person or through synchronous digital instructional contact and be conducted by certificated teacher(s) who have successfully completed the WaKIDS 101 training.

It is never helpful nor intended for teachers to complete the assessment in the first few weeks. Take advantage of and spread 31 objectives and dimensions out over 8 weeks to carefully design your instruction to allow children to demonstrate their true skills and abilities and you to intentionally observe and assess. Pacing guides (linked below) can be a great resource.

It is important to recognize family is the first teacher for children and appreciate their perspectives. Final decisions on assessment ratings must be made by the teacher but families can send pictures and/or videos of their children displaying skills and abilities that could help teachers determine ratings for one or more objectives. This can occur through the Family component of the *MyTeachingStrategies*® platform.

The Whole-child Assessment component of WaKIDS is an observation-based assessment that requires:

- Developmentally appropriate opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and can do in a natural way;
- Adequate time - in duration and frequency - within a developmentally appropriate context, in order to elicit the skill/behavior that is being observed;
- Opportunities to make observations of students' interaction with age-alike peers;
- Opportunities for multiple observations to determine the correct level of development; and,
- Opportunities for repeated attempts, if and when a student does not demonstrate a particular skill or behavior during the time allotted.

Resources for Implementation

- [Reopening Washington Schools 2020: Early Learning Planning Guide](#)
- [WaKIDS Implementation Guide for Teachers](#)
- [Pacing Guides](#)
- [WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment Documentation Guidance](#)