

# MASTERING KIDS:

Voices from the Field



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## INTRODUCTION

In the 2017-2018 school year, Illinois began a statewide implementation of the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) in an effort to gather more data on student readiness at the beginning of Kindergarten.<sup>1</sup> This tool, the first of its kind in Illinois, provides a glimpse into the developmental readiness for entering Kindergarten students in a wide variety of demographic groups. It allows schools to track student progress and enable teachers to develop interventions to address individual learning needs well before formal statewide assessments begin in third grade. KIDS' results have implications for families, schools, early childhood programs, and policymakers.

KIDS is a comprehensive observation tool that places students on a developmental scale according to their demonstrated abilities.<sup>2</sup> To gauge a proxy of Kindergarten readiness for a group of students, the state of Illinois requires teachers to complete 14 state readiness measures within the domains of Approaches to Learning and Self-Regulation, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, and Cognition: Math.<sup>3</sup> In the inaugural year of implementation, only 24 percent of students in the state ranked as having achieved readiness based on the 14 measures within the four identified domains.<sup>4</sup> Data from the 2018-19 report of the second year of statewide implementation reflected similar trends, with 26 percent of students demonstrating readiness in all three areas.<sup>5</sup> This score and the data from across the state raised questions among our group of Teach Plus Early Childhood Teaching Policy Fellows about possible reasons for such a low demonstration of skills among our youngest learners.

Our group of Fellows encompasses early childhood educators, a diverse learning coordinator, a Pre-K to K transition coordinator, and a Kindergarten teacher. As educators, we support students in PreKindergarten through transitions to Kindergarten, and have therefore observed all points of development through the use of KIDS. As Fellows, our goal was to research teacher use and implementation of KIDS to incorporate teacher voice into future administrations of KIDS. We wanted to learn more about why the majority of entering Kindergarten students were not

demonstrating readiness on the KIDS tool.<sup>6</sup> We wondered how well this data connected to Pre-K performance, how the data was being utilized in Kindergarten classrooms, and if the scores were an accurate predictor of later school success.

Our study focused on how teachers navigate data collection, how they use the data to inform instruction, and the impact upon student outcomes. In this report, we share findings from our research and provide recommendations on how to successfully implement the KIDS tool in Kindergarten classrooms. Successful statewide implementation of the KIDS tool will depend on administrators and teachers working together with clear guidance and support from the Illinois State Board of Education.

## FINDINGS

- 1 Teachers report that their classroom curriculums do not always align with the core principles and aim of KIDS. A common concern voiced by teachers was that the tool requires play, but that this is not prioritized in the curriculum.
- 2 The KIDS tool is being implemented in vastly different ways across the state. There is a wide variance in the number of times the students are observed as well as the measures on which they are observed, and teachers are not able to view student results in terms of target scores for readiness.
- 3 Teachers reported that training and support for implementing KIDS affects the quality of data collected.
- 4 In schools where play was a priority, teachers reported that the KIDS assessment was a benefit to teaching and instructional planning. Teachers stated that the tool's focus on social-emotional learning encouraged an increased emphasis on that domain. Many teachers highlighted the tool's focus on the whole child and authentic observation as beneficial to their practice.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Teachers and administrators should be trained on the important links between play and academic rigor in Kindergarten (developmentally-appropriate practice), and be required to implement a minimum of one hour of play per day in classrooms with the ultimate goal of implementing a full play-based Kindergarten.
- 2 The KIDS tool should be used to evaluate students at least twice yearly with immediately-available, leveled results that align to childhood developmental milestones.
- 3 Sustainability should be a focus of the state and schools in implementation. This includes, but is not limited to, networking opportunities for teachers to share strategies and discuss implementation, additional adults to gather observational data, reduction in other classroom/school/district assessments, and release time for teachers to input data. Schools should develop systems for communicating with early childhood programs on student data upon entering Kindergarten when appropriate.

# KINDERGARTEN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY, EXPLAINED

The Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) is a developmental tool used to determine Kindergarten Readiness. In 2017, Kindergarten teachers across the state began using KIDS to collect observational data on their students. Although the tool consists of 11 domains of readiness, with a total of 55 measures, the state only requires teachers to collect data on a minimum of 14 measures across four developmental domains.<sup>7</sup> The goal of KIDS is to provide teachers with the data necessary to guide developmentally-appropriate instruction, develop interventions to address and track individual learning needs, give parents critical information and education about their child's development, and enable administrators and districts to better allocate resources and trainings.<sup>8</sup> It is groundbreaking in its recognition that young children may need early and ongoing interventions to ensure they stay on track academically and developmentally, as opposed to waiting until third grade to determine the need for interventions through standardized assessments as the state and federally-mandated minimum.<sup>9</sup> This tool differs from many traditional assessments due to its focus on an asset-based observation. Students are observed for what they can do and then placed on a continuum, rather than being given a task which they either "pass" or "fail."<sup>10</sup> These observations are the crux of developmentally-appropriate assessment for children, as placing children on a continuum of building and integrating (both with subsections for earlier/ middle/ later) skills honors the fact that children's brains and bodies develop at vastly differing paces.<sup>11</sup>

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) position statement on Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation, the best practice for assessing early learners is through frequent observations of students' daily activities in a strength-based model.<sup>12</sup> As a play-based observational tool, KIDS aligns to NAEYC's outline for effective and appropriate assessment of young children.

While the tool itself is based on best practices for assessing in early childhood, much of its adherence to developmentally-appropriate practice teaching or pedagogy that aligns with what is known about how young children learn best is dependent upon the settings in which it is used. According to informational materials, KIDS was written with the knowledge that play is a critical tool for building learning experiences for Kindergarteners.<sup>13</sup> In its teacher-facing documentation, KIDS is described as best implemented in classrooms where students learn through self-guided and teacher-influenced play, rather than classrooms where top-down curricula rely on worksheets to reinforce math and literacy skills.<sup>14</sup> KIDS is designed to serve the whole child, but can only do so when the classrooms are already built to do so.

Like the KIDS tool itself, our work is grounded in the research-backed belief that play is a necessary part of any developmentally-appropriate curriculum for children ages birth-8.<sup>15</sup>

# METHODOLOGY

Our research was designed to answer the following questions:

- + How are teachers administering the assessment?
- + How are teachers using KIDS to drive instructional decisions?
- + What suggestions do teachers have for areas of improvement of the KIDS assessment based on their experiences with the tool?
- + Does the tool align with the curriculum being used in school districts?
- + What can be done to strengthen KIDS to align to what is currently happening in Kindergarten classrooms?

To answer these questions, we conducted focus groups and individual interviews with 58 Kindergarten teachers with experience administering KIDS. Our research was conducted from March to May 2019.<sup>16</sup>

Respondents to the study:

- + Were mostly trained in elementary education, with less than half identifying as early childhood-trained.
- + Had anywhere between one and 28 years of experience.
- + Worked in varying locations, with less than half identifying as city school teachers, followed by suburban, rural, and town schools.

**FINDING 1.** Teachers report that their classroom curriculums do not always align with the core principles and aim of KIDS. A common concern voiced by teachers was that the tool requires play, but that this is not prioritized in curriculum.

The KIDS tool focuses on observations that teachers can take when students are engaged in intentionally-designed play experiences that support and promote academic rigor in the Kindergarten classroom. However, when asked “to what extent does your current classroom reflect a play-based learning environment,” a majority of teachers indicated that little to no play occurred in their classrooms. Hurdles to implementing play ranged from struggles to meet curriculum requirements to lack of administrator support and understanding of play-based learning.

One teacher responded that they have very little play in the classroom, and stressed, **“Although we are asked to conduct the KIDS assessment, our school finds little value in allowing students to have play time or a play-based learning environment.”**

Teachers were also asked if they had to make adjustments to teaching in order to effectively implement the assessment. While many teachers stated that they made guesses or judgements on students' levels without adding play, some teachers credited opportunities for play as the key to success in implementing the tool.

A teacher who had 45 minutes of dedicated time for play in her classroom emphasized how it is necessary for effective implementation of KIDS. In discussing instructional adjustments, the teacher stated, ***“Since play is already worked into my schedule, I have not had to make any adjustments to my teaching in order to implement KIDS. All I have to do is observe my students and use checklists to record data.”***

Nearly two thirds of teachers interviewed indicated that their programs had little to no play. Teachers' responses highlighted a gap in the field between teachers who espouse and promote play, and those who do not understand the connection between play and learning for a Kindergarten classroom. For teacher participants who did agree that play is necessary for both children and the tools' success, the issues of administrator and district regulations and policies regarding play were a barrier to implementation.

**FINDING 2.** The KIDS tool is being implemented in vastly different ways across the state. There is a wide variance in the number of times the students are observed as well as the measures on which they are observed, and teachers are not able to view student results in terms of target scores for readiness.

In an effort to bring teacher voice on implementation to the forefront, we asked teachers for their advice and suggestions on the implementation of the assessment. A frequently-repeated suggestion was that the tool should be implemented with more uniformity across the state. Another common suggestion was for the assessment to be used more than once a year, and that teachers have the ability to see data and where it measures in “readiness.”

One teacher responded, ***“If this is going to be the statewide standard for assessment, it needs to be done more than once at the beginning of the year.”***

Another teacher highlighted the disconnect between the amount of work and the amount of feedback on data, ***“We have to make our own paper copies of the assessment, as we are unable to see the results of previous marking periods. This is very tedious.”***

Respondents also felt that knowing results immediately would better guide instruction. While data is available, it is not clearly aligned to developmental milestones or marked as to what the state considers “ready,” making it more difficult to plan for instruction. One teacher said, ***“It would be helpful to see the results so we could see the areas we need to focus on with the students/class.”***

Teachers repeated in answers to multiple questions that without a developmental context for the data, they were unable to make the tool meaningful. Many teachers pointed out that if they had been able to immediately access and understand student results as compared to developmental markers, they could plan interventions and instruction that would directly address those students' gaps in readiness.

**FINDING 3.** Teachers reported that training and support for implementing KIDS affects the quality of data collected.

When asked what challenges teachers and colleagues faced when implementing KIDS, training and supports emerged as common themes. While KIDS coaches offer a variety of training and support across the state, feedback from teachers clearly indicates that

additional supports are necessary. Teachers responded with a range of needs, with nearly half of them indicating a need for more time to administer the assessment. Teachers created a comprehensive list of supports that would lead to better implementation, including time to enter data, time to collect data, additional aides in classrooms, training for support and "specials" staff to collect data in specialized content areas, and even a network where teachers can collaborate and discuss best practices.

## TIME COMMITMENT

Teachers discussed the difficulty of completing observations on 30 students without assistance, stating, ***"We are not receiving adequate support in administering KIDS. We do not have assistants trained to help collect data, but if they were trained, then they could help. We are short man-power for sure. We also do not have enough time to collect and enter data."*** Another teacher described similar challenges, noting, ***"It is time-consuming both for implementation and data entry and does not align in all areas with our curriculum. It is also very challenging to do this with 21+ kids and no aide in the classroom..."***

Another respondent highlighted the time commitment needed for inputting data into the online system, saying ***"[my] personal life [is] being affected because I have to do it at home...It's too cumbersome and takes too long to input data."*** Even if teachers have time to accurately gather data through classroom-based observation, they are not provided in-school, protected time to enter this data into the online system, meaning that this entry is done outside of working hours or at home.

## TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

Teachers highlighted training as another area where implementation could be improved. Many teachers described the initial training period as overwhelming and rushed, and requested that additional training and collaboration opportunities be provided as the year progressed. ***"The initial training at the time was enough, but once it was time to collect and input data, more support and help or refreshers would be helpful."***

Another teacher brought up experience as a barrier to implementation. ***"The training was a whole day training that gave me all the information and then I was left to implement it in. I had never taught in a kindergarten class and then I was set to implement KIDS with no K experience. I did not learn what was needed until after the training and by then it was too late for ask[ing] questions."***

One teacher, who was in her second year of implementation after initially piloting the tool, described the benefits of receiving additional supports in the form of ongoing training and coaching. ***"It effectively prepared me to pilot the assessment without being required to report to the state the first year. It took that year of training sessions, play coaching, and open discussion to feel adequate in implementing the tool effectively."***

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Not only was the training of teachers listed as a critical need, but many respondents mentioned their administrators' lack of knowledge around play. While teachers are the first level of addressing student needs and achievement, many teachers expressed that they were unable to fully implement the play-based curriculum called for by the KIDS tool due to administrator and district pushback. The majority of teachers who were not using any play-based learning in their classrooms explained that building and/or district administration did not allow play in Kindergarten.

Respondents mentioned administrator buy-in in regards to play as a barrier, with one stating, ***“I think it would be a great idea to bring principals together to discuss the importance of play in Kindergarten. Why would we even use this assessment when most of our classrooms don’t encourage play? I think if all Kindergarten classes had play, which is developmentally-appropriate, the KIDS assessment would be more beneficial and more relevant.”***

Another teacher emphasized that more training for school leaders around best practices for play was needed, stating that the tool needed ***“...more professional development for districts, principals, and teachers on the importance of play in early childhood education.”***

**FINDING 4.** In schools where play was a priority, teachers reported that the KIDS tool was a benefit to teaching and instructional planning. Teachers stated that the tool's focus on social-emotional learning encouraged an increased emphasis on that domain. Many teachers highlighted the tool's focus on the whole child and authentic observation as beneficial to their practice.

For the teachers who are implementing play, response to KIDS was positive and highlighted some of the strengths of observation-based tracking of students.

One explained, ***“I like the focus on the social-emotional development of the children. Sometimes we get too wrapped up in the academic progress of our students and forget the social-emotional piece. KIDS also allows for our team members to have thoughtful conversations about the development of our students.”***

Another teacher brought up the changes in adult approaches to Kindergarten, stating, “I feel that more staff and administration are on-board with the KIDS assessment and are beginning to understand the age and that the students need more play-based learning.”

One educator lauded the tool's emphasis on play for broadening her focus in observation, stating, ***“It has helped me look into other areas of the whole child other than the academic areas. I have been moved to look at social-emotional growth more in depth.”***

It is this last series of findings that have served as a starting point for our group's recommendations. While there are areas for growth with the tool, teachers are focusing on the whole child, and are advocating for play across settings, which aligns with both the principles of the tool and the best practices of early childhood education.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.** Teachers and administrators should be trained on the important links between play and academic rigor in Kindergarten [developmentally appropriate practice], and be required to implement a minimum of one hour of play per day in classrooms with the ultimate goal of implementing a full play-based Kindergarten.

*\*The recommendation for one hour as a required minimum for play is only to provide a start for districts who have not yet begun play-based learning. Districts that are already engaged in full play-based Kindergarten should continue with their established norms.*

In an informational release about the KIDS tool, the Illinois State Board of Education lays out a sound reasoning for the importance of play in Kindergarten. “Research shows that

play-based learning is essential for children's academic, social, emotional, and physical development. Additionally, play is the most accessible approach to learning for young children. Kindergartners' brains are wired to learning in context, meaning they learn from parts of something larger rather than the immediate task at hand."<sup>17</sup>

There are two issues within the field that directly affect the implementation and effectiveness of KIDS as a tool. The first is that the amount of early childhood training that Kindergarten teachers have is inconsistent. As schools begin to push standards and accountability as a solution to growing gaps in student performance, it is imperative that teachers be educated on the benefits of play in a kindergarten classroom as well as implementing developmentally-appropriate practices.<sup>18</sup>

This, however, is not enough, as NAEYC highlights that teachers are not often allowed to be decision-makers and drivers of curriculum in their own classrooms.<sup>19</sup> The state must take steps to ensure a continuity of training about play, so administrators are supportive of teachers in implementing play-based learning.

The state has implemented new legislation around teacher training in early childhood education requiring teachers who seek the new professional educator license to have training specifically related to play-based learning.<sup>20</sup> However, the majority of Kindergarten teachers in Illinois have been trained in elementary education, as evidenced in the less than half of interview participants with early childhood training. Illinois has led the way in extending early childhood education to principal training, and is currently the only state that requires early childhood training as part of the principal licensure training.<sup>21</sup> As a result, incoming principals may have some foundational training in developmentally-appropriate practice; in the meantime, our research shows that there is an overwhelming need for immediate training and support of current building and district administrators. Training that supports play-based learning should be extended to administrators and district leaders—the effective decision-makers around curriculum and implementation in classrooms.

In order for the state to have meaningful, representative Kindergarten readiness data, we recommend the following actions:

- + Schools implement intentionally-planned play-based learning in every Kindergarten classroom for at least one hour per day. As teachers and administrators receive training on play-based learning, play throughout the day should increase from this initial minimum of one hour per day.
- + KIDS developers/coaches provide annual professional development for all Kindergarten teachers, principals, and other administrative staff that focuses on developmentally-appropriate practice in Kindergarten.
- + ISBE outlines requirements to develop and reinforce expectations for play-based learning in Kindergarten. These could include a required annual minimum of six professional development hours for teachers and administrators focused on developmentally-appropriate practice, recommendations for districts on the essential role of play in Kindergarten, and a mandated minimum of a 60-minute period of daily play. Districts that are already engaged in full play-based Kindergarten should continue with their established norms.

With schools, the KIDS tool, and the state working toward the same goal of universal play-based learning, practitioners will be able to more effectively conduct and align their observations within the intended parameters of the tool.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.** The KIDS tool should be used to evaluate students at least twice yearly with immediately-available, leveled results that align to childhood developmental milestones.

Meaningful assessment is a cornerstone of early childhood education, but the focus is not on asset-based, one-time assessment. According to NAEYC, assessments are meant to be observations of a child's strengths that are then monitored over time.<sup>22</sup> Teachers must be supported in assessing students' strengths over time, so that teachers are able to plan for instruction that is "ongoing, strategic, and purposeful."<sup>23</sup>

The amount and quality of data available from KIDS has the potential for positively impacting teachers' effectiveness in using planning individualized interventions. However, teacher feedback led to two recommendations in improving how data was used. First, teachers feel that the required implementation minimum of once per year is not enough to meaningfully track student growth. If districts implement KIDS at least twice annually, it will be a more effective tool for gauging growth during the Kindergarten year. Teachers will be able to evaluate student progress throughout the year, and will have opportunities to share data with parents in more meaningful ways.

Using the tool twice yearly will help build meaning within teaching curricula and practice, but this is only part of building meaning for the evaluation. To make the twice yearly evaluations most useful, teachers overwhelmingly expressed a need to better understand the tool's developmental expectations for individual measures. Teachers enter a rating for each measure based on their observations, but have no context for which rating indicates readiness. For example, they can mark a child as having achieved "Building Middle" for print concepts, but do not understand what this specific rating means in terms of readiness expectations. Teachers would like to use their observational data from KIDS to inform their instruction and target children who do not demonstrate readiness on specific measures, but the tool does not indicate which ratings are on track and which are below developmental expectations for each measure. If the tool were to indicate an expected developmental range for individual measures within each domain, teachers will be able to immediately determine which students need instructional interventions in each area, as well as identify individual student strengths that they can use as a bridge to new learning.

We recommend the following actions to ensure that student data is accessible and meaningful:

- + All schools use KIDS at least twice annually to track student growth over time.
- + The KIDS tool clarifies and identifies which ratings are considered "ready for Kindergarten" for each measure, preferably through a developmental trajectory model that uses bands to indicate the range of acceptable expectations on individual measures.

**RECOMMENDATION 3.** Sustainability should be a focus of the state and schools in implementation. This includes, but is not limited to, networking opportunities for teachers to share strategies and discuss implementation, additional adults to gather observational data, reduction in other classroom/school/district assessments, and release time for teachers to input data. Schools should develop systems for communicating with early childhood programs on student data upon entering Kindergarten when appropriate.

Teachers overwhelmingly stated that time was a factor in their ability to collect observational data with fidelity. In discussing additional expectations for student assessment, teachers mentioned nearly 20 alternate assessments that are used in varying combinations across the state. These additional assessments are not required by the state but are instead selected by individual schools and/districts, and are greatly impacting the time allotted for implementing the KIDS tool with fidelity. We recommend that district administrators closely analyze the assessments currently used in Kindergarten to eliminate unnecessary overlap with KIDS and to streamline evaluation tools.

Sustainability continues to be an issue due to current practices and approaches to Kindergarten across Illinois — no matter the number of measures collected. NAEYC's position statement on Effective Assessment in Programs states that assessments must be taken from multiple observations of activities and learning that take place in the classroom, and this is not possible within the current Kindergarten statewide framework, especially for teachers required to collect 55 measures.<sup>24</sup> Because most kindergarten classrooms do not currently use full play-based systems, nor do they require students to perform some self-care activities (like tooth-brushing), our systems are not necessarily currently set up to address all 55 measures. School districts will need leadership and guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to introduce and expand the use of play-based learning. We are hopeful that the KIDS tool can be the catalyst for Kindergarten classrooms to become more developmentally-appropriate.

Sustainability is a key theme of our research, and it is critical to creating and maintaining a workforce that is skilled in implementing the KIDS tool with fidelity and accuracy. Based on teacher feedback, and in order to build sustainable practices around KIDS and Kindergarten, we recommend the following actions:

- + Schools provide release time for data entry prior during each data collection period.
- + Schools require additional staff (paraprofessionals, specials teachers, resource teachers) to receive training in KIDS in order to help collect observational data throughout the school day and in additional contexts.
- + Districts conduct assessment audits to eliminate redundant and/or unnecessary Kindergarten assessments in order to allow teachers to more fully focus on KIDS implementation.
- + Districts develop systems for communicating with community Pre-K programs about student strengths and learning needs.
- + KIDS coaches create a network for sharing and brainstorming ideas around best practices for implementation of the tool.
- + ISBE requires that an additional adult be present during play periods inside each data collection window, in accordance with NAEYC's best practice of a 1:12 teacher to student ratio.<sup>25</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The KIDS tool aims to gather data and establish practices that ensure that every child is ready to succeed in school. By taking an observational approach and having teachers collect data on measures that address the whole child, KIDS goes further towards establishing developmentally-appropriate classrooms than most other assessments. However, as with any new tool, some areas need support across schools and the state, and some changes can be made within the tool to increase teacher use and functionality. Two years of statewide data demonstrating similar trends, coupled with teacher input, indicate a need for additional supports and modifications.

We are encouraged by the potential for positive outcomes that our data showed, especially around classrooms and teachers who are already using play in their classrooms. Now, the state and ISBE have the opportunity to make changes that help fulfill the promise to prepare students for school and honor the whole child. By increasing play, standardizing use, and focusing on teacher sustainability, the KIDS tool can become a valuable asset in preparing Illinois' students for success in Kindergarten and beyond.

## ++++++ ENDNOTES ++++++

- <sup>1</sup> Illinois State Board of Education, "KIDS: Every Illinois Child Ready for Kindergarten." Retrieved from <https://www.isbe.net/kids>
- <sup>2</sup> Illinois State Board of Education, "Overview for Administrators and Teachers." Retrieved from, [https://www.isbe.net/Documents\\_KIDSWebsiteResources/KIDS\\_Overview\\_Admin\\_Teachers.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents_KIDSWebsiteResources/KIDS_Overview_Admin_Teachers.pdf)
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- <sup>4</sup> Lutton, Linda (2018, August 13). "Only a Quarter of Illinois Kindergartners Are Ready for School." WBEZ News, Retrieved from <https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/only-a-quarter-of-illinois-kindergartners-are-ready-for-school/e2781701-2e97-4441-8aed-f4a85858d5c1>
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- <sup>7</sup> See endnote 3.
- <sup>8</sup> Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Stakeholder Committee (2011, April). "A New Beginning: The Illinois Individual Development Survey." Retrieved from [https://www.isbe.net/Documents/kindergarten\\_survey.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/kindergarten_survey.pdf)
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- <sup>10</sup> See endnote 3.
- <sup>11</sup> See endnote 3.
- <sup>12</sup> NAEYC, NAECS/SDE (2003, November). "Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation: Building an Effective, Accountable System in Programs for Children Birth through Age 8. A Joint Position Statement of the National Association of the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education." Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/pscape.pdf>
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- <sup>14</sup> Illinois State Board of Education, "Frequently Asked Questions About KIDS." Retrieved from [https://www.isbe.net/Documents\\_KIDSWebsiteResources/KIDS\\_FAQ.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents_KIDSWebsiteResources/KIDS_FAQ.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> Illinois State Board of Education, "The Importance of Play in Kindergarten." Retrieved from [https://www.isbe.net/Documents\\_KIDSWebsiteResources/Importance\\_of\\_Play.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents_KIDSWebsiteResources/Importance_of_Play.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Focus Group Question #1: "The KIDS assessment is an observational tool designed to be used in play-based learning environments. To what extent does your current classroom reflect a play-based learning environment? Have you had to make adjustments to your teaching in order to implement KIDS?" Focus Group Question #2: "If you have been able to embed the KIDS assessment into your teaching and learning periods, can you share some examples of how you've been able to do this?" Focus Group Question #3: "What has been going well with the implementation of KIDS in your school?" Focus Group Question #4: "What challenges, if any, have you and your colleagues experienced in implementing KIDS?" Focus Group Question #5: "Do you think teachers and assistants are receiving adequate support in administering KIDS? If so, what supports are working well? If not, what types and kinds of supports do you believe that teachers need in order to more successfully implement KIDS?" Focus Group Question #6: "You received training on the KIDS assessment before implementing the tool in your classroom. Did it effectively prepare you to assess your students with KIDS?" Focus Group Question #7: "What other communications, building supports, or training opportunities would help you in implementing KIDS?" Focus Group Question #8: "Have you found KIDS data to be useful in your teaching? If so, how? If not, why not?" Focus Group Question #9: "In addition to KIDS, are you using any other tools to assess the domains that are included in KIDS?" Focus Group Question #10: "To what degree do you believe that KIDS is an accurate indicator of Kindergarten Readiness?" Focus Group Question #11: "Have you observed changes in children interactions within your classroom since you began administering KIDS?" Focus Group Question #12: "Does inputting the data into DRDPKIDSTECH pose any challenges for you? How have you overcome these challenges?" Focus Group Question #13: "How many years have you administered the KIDS assessment?" Focus Group Question #14: "How many times does your school district or program administer KIDS? A: Once a year (state required minimum) B: Twice a year C. Three or more times a year D. Other - Write in (Required)" Focus Group Question #15: "How many KIDS measures does your school district or program include in your assessment? A. 14 (state required minimum) B. 15-29 C. 30-44 D. 45-56" Focus Group Question #16: "Which best describes your teacher preparation training?" A. Early Childhood B. Elementary Education C. Secondary Education D. Special education E. Alternative certification F. Write In Focus Group Question #17: "To gather an accurate picture of students, was the initial 40-day data collection window: A: Not enough time B: Enough time C: More than enough time" Focus Group Question #18: "What other advice or suggestions do you have for school and state leaders when it comes to KIDS that we have not yet covered in today's discussion?" Focus Group Question #19: "Including 2018-2019 school year, how many years of teaching experience do you have?" Focus Group Question #20: "Which of the following best describes your school location? A. City B. Town C. Suburb D. Rural"

<sup>17</sup> See endnote 14.

<sup>18</sup> See endnote 12.

<sup>19</sup> See endnote 12.

<sup>20</sup> Illinois State Board of Education. "Standards for Certification in Early Childhood Education." Retrieved from <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/26ark.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Loewenberg, Aaron (2016, February 24). "Early Education Preparation for Principals: A Look at the Leading States." New America, retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/eceprep/>

<sup>22</sup> See endnote 12.

<sup>23</sup> See endnote 12.

<sup>24</sup> See endnote 11.

<sup>25</sup> SRI Education (2016). "Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions in Early Childhood Settings: A Program Leader's Guide to Supporting All Children's Success." Retrieved from <https://preventexpulsion.org/1d-implement-and-utilize-appropriate-child-teacher-ratios/>