



Engaging with Intention: Defining Play-Based Learning in Illinois Kindergarten

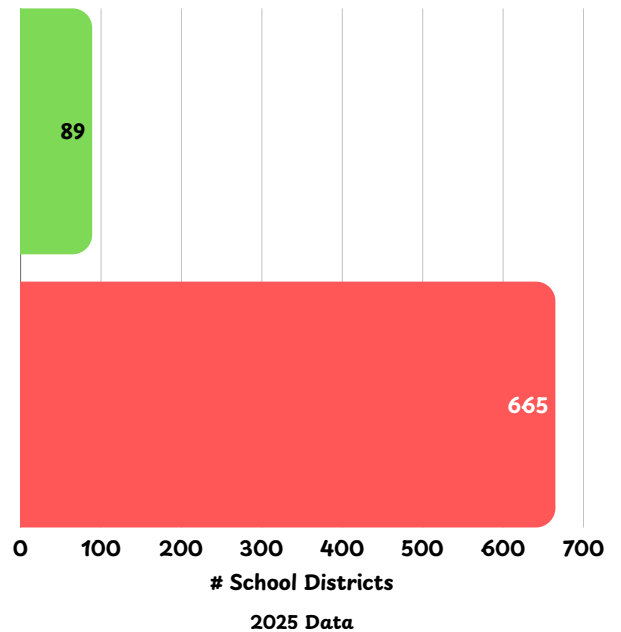


KEY ISSUE

Illinois statute states that *“full-day and half-day kindergarten should be developmentally appropriate and provide opportunities for play-based learning.”*

However, implementation of play-based learning varies widely across districts and classrooms, in part due to a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes play-based learning and how it should be enacted in instructional practice.

School Districts in Illinois Incorporating Play-Based Learning



PROPOSED ACTION

Amend the Illinois School Code to include a clear definition of play-based learning within existing kindergarten provisions, ensuring consistent interpretation and implementation of an existing statutory directives.

PROPOSED DEFINITION

With respect to a provision stating that kindergarten should provide opportunities for play-based learning, defines: (1) “play-based learning” as either teacher-initiated play or student-initiated play; (2) “teacher-initiated play” as intentional teacher-directed play with activities set up and led by a teacher that are aligned to learning goals or standards; and (3) “student-initiated play” as child-selected opportunities to build, pretend, create, move, or explore in an environment intentionally curated by a teacher to align with learning goals or standards.



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FIELD TESTED

This definition is based on research conducted by Teach Plus over the course of several years and has been tested in the field with positive outcomes:

“Shortly after the Teach Plus study on Implementing Play-Based Learning Across Illinois Kindergarten Classrooms was released for public consumption, I began using their definition when consulting with districts and agencies across the state...The overwhelming response from educators in Kindergarten as well as Early Childhood Education and Care is that the definition was instrumental in creating consistency and continuity of care when implementing curriculum and instruction in correlation with Illinois standards”

-Dr. Antoinette Taylor

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Alignment between Illinois kindergarten instruction, developmentally appropriate early childhood best practices, and kindergarten expectations.
- Lay the foundation for more consistent play-based learning practices throughout our state.
- Greater alignment among districts around curating play-based environments in order to conduct the KIDS assessment with fidelity state-wide.
- Equitable kindergarten learning experiences for students regardless of district, community, or zip code.