

Mapping the National Kindergarten Entry Assessment Landscape

A 51-State Analysis of What, Why, How, and When

Dara Drake¹, Sadie Richardson¹, Negar Fatahi², sean reardon¹, Sofia Wilson¹, Erin Fahle², and Maya Provençal¹

¹ Stanford University Graduate School of Education

² The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University

October 2026

SUGGESTED CITATION

Drake, D., Richardson, S., Fatahi, N., Reardon, S. F., Wilson, S., Fahle, E., & Provençal, M. (2026). *Mapping the national kindergarten entry assessment landscape: A 51-state analysis of what, why, how, and when*. The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University. <https://edopportunity.org/papers/mapping-national-kea-landscape.pdf>

This report is part of the **Early Childhood Educational Opportunity Project**. Read and download it, and explore related resources, at <https://edopportunity.org/early-childhood/>. The data presented in this report will be updated annually at this site.

Table of Contents

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
A. Background	4
C. The KEA Landscape	6
D. Assessment Purpose.....	9
E. Assessment Design	10
G. Assessment Implementation	15
G. Evidence Gaps and Research Needs	16
II. INTRODUCTION.....	18
A. KEA Policies: Federal Drivers, State Responses, and Implementation Realities	18
B. Aims of this Report.....	21
C. Research Questions.....	23
III. METHODOLOGY	24
IV. THE NATIONAL KEA POLICY LANDSCAPE: ADOPTION, STRUCTURE, AND CHANGE	27
A. Adoption and Mandate Structure	27
B. Assessment Windows and Timing.....	29
C. Kindergarten Entry Requirements and Age Cutoffs	31
D. Assessment Tool Change and Market Instability	33
V. USE, PURPOSE, AND QUALITY.....	36
A. KEA Purposes	36
B. Proprietary vs. State-Developed Tools	38
C. Assessment Modality: Observational, Direct, and Mixed.....	40
D. Technology-Enabled Assessments	42
VI. WHAT STATES MEASURE: KEA DOMAINS AND SUB-DOMAINS	44
A. Overview of Domain Coverage Across States	44
B. Social Foundations Domain.....	45
C. Language & Literacy Domain.....	46
D. Mathematics Domain	48
E. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development Domain.....	49
F. Scoring Granularity	50
VII. CROSS-STATE PATTERNS AND EMERGING THEMES	52
A. Purpose Varies Widely, Even When States Use Identical Assessments	52

B. Gateway Skills	52
C. Comprehensive vs. Focused Assessment Strategies	53
VIII. POLICY IMPLICATIONS	54
A. On Trade-Offs with Comparability Over Time and Place	54
B. On Domain Coverage	55
C. On Assessment Design and Administration	55
D. On Data Transparency	56
E. On Kindergarten Entry Policy & Timing	57
IX. CONCLUSION	58
APPENDICES	60
Appendix A: State-by-State KEA Policy as of SY2025-26	60
Appendix B: Kindergarten Entry Policies as of SY2025-26	65
Appendix C: Current KEA Information by State as of SY2025-26	68
Appendix D: KEA Purposes and Features	73
Appendix E: Domains Measured by State	79
Appendix F: Domain Framework and Definitions	83
Appendix G: Granularity Coding Definitions & Examples	86
Appendix H: Assessment Administration: Performance Levels and Scoring Guidelines	88
REFERENCES	90

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Background

Kindergarten entry assessment (KEAs), also known as kindergarten readiness assessments (KRAs), are tools designed to provide a snapshot of a child's developmental status at school entry (Ackerman, 2018; Jensen et al., 2021; Yun et al., 2021). These assessments are administered at or near the start of kindergarten and are designed to evaluate whether students are prepared for school and whether schools are equipped to serve their entering kindergarten class (Ackerman, 2018; Bernstein et al., 2019; Feeney, 2016; Jensen et al., 2021).

While the intended purpose of KEAs is clear, how well they accomplish these goals is up for debate. Prior work has documented key limitations of KEAs, including the potential for inconsistency across raters (Joseph et al., 2019), low discrimination across items or domains (Rock & Pollack, 2002; Goldstein et al., 2017), and limited instructional value because they only capture a single point in time (Hur et al., 2026; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024; Yun et al., 2021)¹. Finally, the information is useful only if it is used, which requires training teachers not only to administer the assessment but to use what it shows (Ackerman, 2018); few teachers individualize instruction on the basis of assessment results (Hur et al., 2026).

Federal policy has served as a major driver of the expansion of these assessments since the 1990 National Education Goals Panel first brought national attention to school readiness (Powers, 2012; Abo-Zena & New, 2012). A significant catalyst for this growth was the 2011 Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, which required states to implement statewide assessments as a condition for funding (Ackerman, 2018; Kiguel et al., 2024; Yun et al., 2021; Feeney, 2016; Weisenfeld et al., 2020). While these federal grant programs defined essential domains and timing, states retain autonomy over the specific assessment design, the domains assessed, the items included, and the implementation approach (Ackerman, 2018).

Prior research has documented important aspects of the KEA landscape. National scans conducted by Schilder and Carolan (2014), Weisenfeld et al. (2020), Yun et al. (2021), the Education Commission of the States (2023), the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2024), and Hur et al. (2026) identified which states had adopted KEAs and catalogued commonly used assessment tools. Researchers have established links between early skills and later academic achievement (Duncan et al., 2007; Claessens et al., 2009; Herring et al., 2022; Justice et al., 2019). Additionally, case studies have highlighted practical challenges educators face, such as time constraints and technical issues (Yun et al., 2021; Ackerman, 2018; Hur et al., 2026). However, these earlier scans often focused on limited state samples or are now out of date. In addition, prior work has not systematically documented what these

¹ See Appendix A for details on when states test and which states test multiple times a year.

assessments measure at a detailed sub-domain level, why states have chosen to use them based on their stated purposes, or how design choices vary nationally.

B. Aims of This Report

This report provides a comprehensive scan of KEA policy for all 50 states and the District of Columbia using school-year 2025-2026 data. Throughout this report, sample sizes vary based on the specific analysis being conducted. The total universe includes all 51 jurisdictions (50 states plus the District of Columbia). However, certain analyses focus only on subsets of states based on their KEA policies, such as whether they require assessments or mandate a single statewide tool. The analysis draws from state statutes, regulations, assessment manuals, public government websites, and direct outreach to state officials to document the national landscape. The research is organized around four primary inquiry areas to clarify how states have translated policy mandates into practice. The report aims to describe the national landscape systematically.

1. The KEA Landscape

To understand the KEA landscape, the report identifies which states mandate assessments and whether they require common statewide tools or permit local district choice. The analysis examines what types of tools states have selected, distinguishing between proprietary commercial products and state-developed instruments. It also documents patterns of assessment tool changes over time.

2. Assessment Purpose

To clarify why states say they assess children at school entry, the report introduces a four-type framework for categorizing assessment purposes based on direct quotes from official state documentation. This categorization identifies whether a state's documentation describes its assessment primarily as a Screener for early intervention, a guide for Instructional Planning, a record for Readiness Documentation, or a tool for System Alignment. These are stated purposes, which may not always match how assessment results are actually used (Regenstein et al., 2017).

3. Assessment Design

To examine what KEAs measure and how they measure it, the report investigates three key design dimensions. First, it examines which domains (broad areas of child development, such as literacy or social-emotional development) and sub-domains (specific skills within a domain) states assess, using a coding framework described in the Methodology section. Sub-domains matter because prior research links the specific skills measured to later academic success and long-term life outcomes (Claessens et al., 2009; Duncan et al., 2007)². Second, the analysis distinguishes between two assessment modalities: observation-based assessments where teachers document behaviors during regular classroom activities, and direct assessment tasks

² Note that research linking early skills to later outcomes largely uses research-grade measures, not state KEAs, but limited validation evidence for individual KEAs shows similar patterns.

that require standardized prompts administered to individual children. Third, the report introduces a measurement for scoring granularity by counting the performance levels used to score individual assessment items.

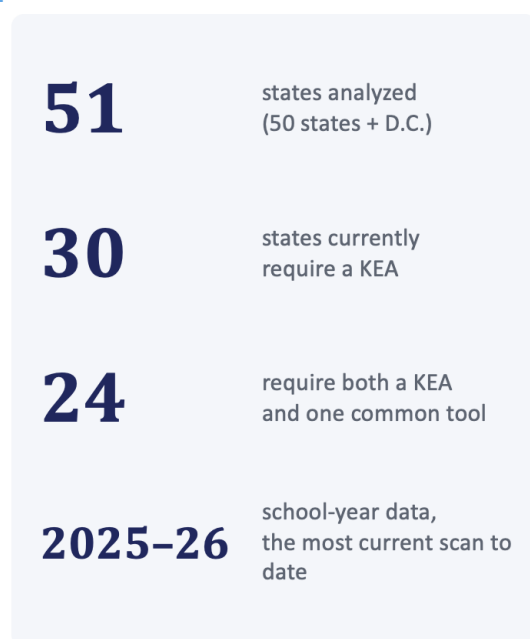
4. Assessment Implementation

To understand practical considerations, the analysis reviews state-mandated timing windows for completion. It examines classroom challenges such as teacher-training requirements, which add to burden but may improve the validity of ratings (Hur et al., 2026; Ackerman, 2018; Joseph et al., 2019), and the time burden associated with documenting student development. The report also investigates kindergarten entry age policies and cutoff dates.

This report focuses on documenting the current national landscape of KEA policy and practice. In subsequent reports and briefs, we will build on this foundation to examine the tradeoffs inherent in various KEA policy and practice decisions and to offer recommendations for states seeking to strengthen their assessment systems.

C. The KEA Landscape

How common are kindergarten entry assessments, and are they becoming standard practice?



Kindergarten entry assessments have become increasingly common tools for measuring some domains of children's developmental status at school entry. As of the 2025-2026 school year, 30 states require a kindergarten entry assessment. While these assessments are becoming more widespread, there is notable variation in how they are implemented, what developmental domains they measure, and whether they are mandatory or optional (Ackerman, 2018; Jensen et al., 2021; Weisenfeld et al., 2020; P.G. Williams et al., 2019; Yun et al., 2021; Kiguel et al., 2024; Education Commission of the States, 2023). Even among states with KEA requirements, states vary regarding assessment modality or the number of performance levels used to score student progress.

In the 2025-26 school year, 24 states both require an assessment and mandate that a single common statewide tool is used. Statewide standardization enables consistent data collection, facilitates cross-district comparisons, and supports state-level policy decisions about early learning investments. The remaining 6 states that require assessments allow for

local flexibility, permitting districts to choose from state approved menus or giving them complete control over tool selection.

Of states that do not require a KEA, 10 states still have a policy in place in the case a district chooses to administer one. For example, Oregon and Pennsylvania do not require a KEA to be administered but do require that a single tool determined by the state is used if districts choose to opt in. The remaining 11 states have no policy or guidance in place at all regarding KEA use or administration. Districts in these states may still choose to administer a KEA and select their own tool.

		Standardization Level				Total
		State-Mandated Single Tool	State-Approved List	District Selected	No KEA System	
KEA Required?	Yes	24	5	1	0	30
	No	2	2	6	11	21
Total		26	7	7	11	51

Table 1. Distribution of KEA Requirement and Standardization Policies, SY2025-26 (n = 51)

How stable are state KEA practices, and what does this mean for long-term data collection?

12

of the 24 states with a common statewide KEA changed their assessment tool in the last 4 years

2.5

average number of different tools used by states that changed, over the last 10 years

47%

of state grade 3-8 assessment regimes survive more than 4 years (Ho et al., 2026)

The national landscape for kindergarten entry assessments is characterized by high volatility, with frequent transitions between assessment regimes that complicate the long-term tracking of student progress. As of the 2025–2026 school year, 12 of the 24 states³ that require a common statewide assessment have changed their assessment tool or system in the last 4 years. In this report, a “change” indicates that a state switched to a different assessment tool or made a substantive revision to the items, scoring, or cut scores of its existing tool (see Appendix C for the type of change in each state). Most changes involved switching to a different assessment tool (e.g., switching from Teaching Strategies GOLD to an assessment developed by Pearson instead). Over the last 13 years, states that have changed their KEA system have used an average of 2.5 different assessment tools. Feedback regarding

the excessive time required for administration across tools and states has frequently prompted states to adopt shorter, more efficient instruments or to give districts choice in the length of the assessment.

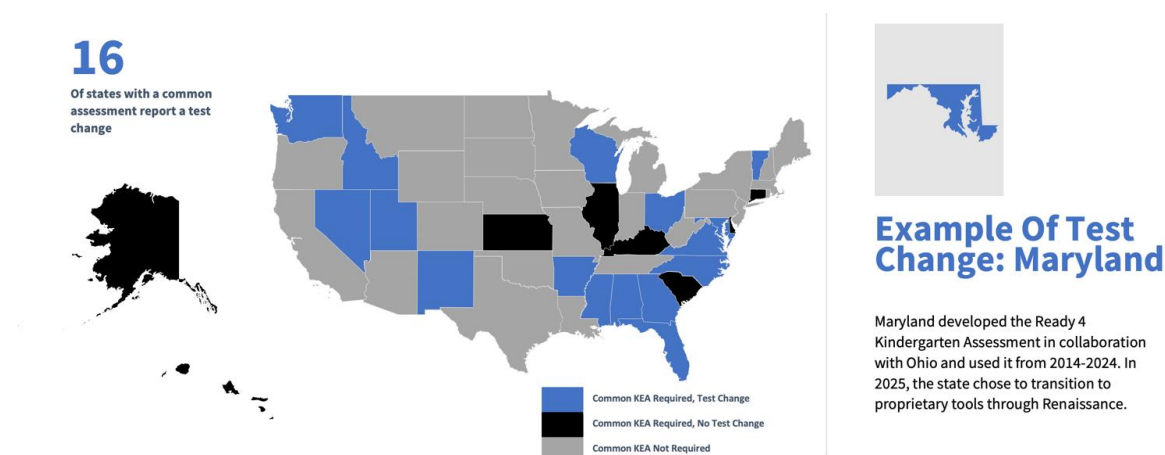


Figure 1. States That Changed Their KEA Tool or System, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

³This analysis examines only the 24 states that mandate a single common statewide tool because changes in assessment tools can only be tracked when states use standardized instruments. The six states that require assessments but allow local choice are excluded because they do not have a single identifiable “state tool” that could change over time.

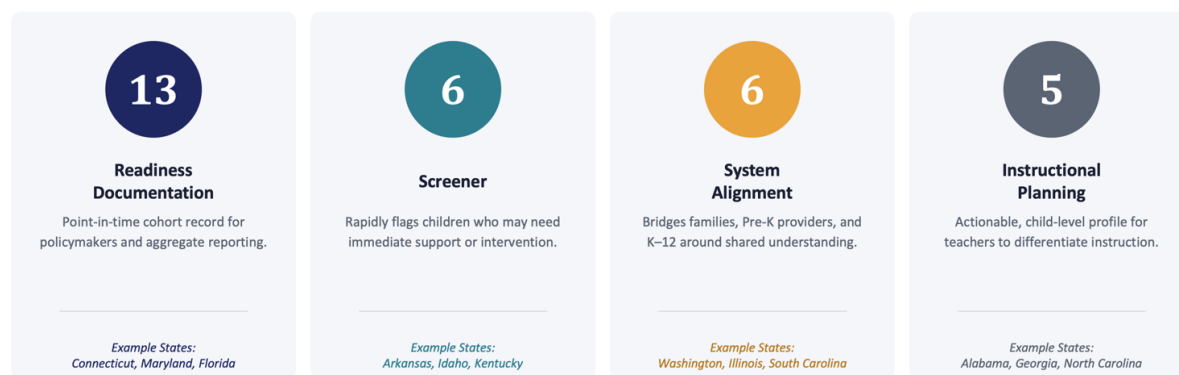
States may change assessment regimes for various reasons: to improve standards alignment, enhance cultural responsiveness, or address implementation challenges such as excessive time demands on teachers to name a few. Yet, with few exceptions, this high rate of "churn" makes establishing long-term trends in school readiness difficult, as constant changes in instruments and scoring methodology make it hard to distinguish genuine improvements in child outcomes from measurement artifacts (Came, 2022). Another challenge associated with high rates of assessment tool turnover is the need for frequent retraining of teachers and assessors (Yun et al., 2021; Hur et al., 2026). Because assessments are scaled differently across tools and years, there is currently no reliable national data source to track whether overall kindergarten entry skills have meaningfully changed across time (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Furthermore, these transitions require expensive and ongoing teacher retraining, which can lead to inconsistent scoring as educators struggle to master new protocols (Yun et al., 2021).

D. Assessment Purpose

For what purposes do states use kindergarten entry assessments?

Drawing on state documentation, the 30 states that require a KEA⁴ were categorized as using them primarily for one of four purposes: Readiness Documentation (13 states), Screener (6 states), System Alignment (6 states), and Instructional Planning (5 states). Many states describe more than one purpose; each state was coded to the single purpose emphasized most in its documentation, so these counts reflect primary, not exclusive, purposes.

Primary purpose bucket of the 30 states that require a KEA



States may state overlapping purposes; each is coded to a single primary bucket for analysis (see Appendix D)

Figure 2. KEA Purpose Types, SY2025-26 (n = 30)

Readiness Documentation KEAs are designed to produce a point-time record of what a cohort of children at the state, program, or classroom level knows and can do with regard to a particular set of domains upon entering school. Administrators and policymakers have utilized this aggregate data to track school readiness trends, examine whether new policies (for example, a new teacher-training requirement) are associated with higher scores, and

⁴This analysis includes only the 30 states that require a KEA because only states with mandated assessments have articulated official policy purposes in their documentation. The 21 jurisdictions without KEA requirements are excluded because they have no stated assessment purpose to categorize.

meet statutory reporting mandates. Because a KEA is a single point-in-time measure, it cannot show gains within a cohort over time (Yun et al., 2021; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024), and using it to judge the effectiveness of individual programs or teachers is controversial (Yun et al., 2021; Hur et al., 2026; Herring et al., 2022). *Screeners* for early intervention are designed to rapidly identify individual children who may be at developmental risk or require immediate follow-up support. These tools prioritize speed and efficiency to serve as an initial flag rather than providing a comprehensive developmental profile. *System Alignment* KEAs help support communication and coordination among families, early learning providers, schools, and state leaders around children's transition to kindergarten, for example by giving them common information about children's skills at school entry and about the state's expectations for entering kindergartners. Whether an assessment actually achieves this depends on how the results are shared and used. *Instructional Planning* KEAs are used to generate detailed, child-level data that informs teaching strategies. This information can provide an actionable profile of student strengths and needs so that teachers could personalize and differentiate daily classroom instruction (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024).

Understanding a state's primary purpose is foundational to evaluating whether a tool is appropriate. For example, a screener intended to flag children at risk in particular domains of development requires higher sensitivity and specificity than a whole-child documentation tool (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014; Yun et al., 2021). Misusing a point-in-time snapshot for inappropriate purposes, such as evaluating individual teachers or programs, can lead to invalid conclusions (Yun et al., 2021).

E. Assessment Design

What developmental areas do KEAs typically measure?

As part of the Race to the Top legislation policy guidance, the federal government introduced five essential domains for kindergarten readiness: Language/Literacy, Cognition (which includes math and science), Social-Emotional Development, Approaches Toward Learning, and Physical Well-being (Jensen et al., 2021; Weisenfeld et al., 2020). While federal guidance outlines five domains, we find that state measurement practices tend to fall more neatly into four domains—Language and Literacy, Numeracy/Math, Social Foundations, and Physical Well-Being and Motor Development—that we use throughout this report. Note that this categorization combines the Social-Emotional Development and Approaches Toward Learning constructs into the Social Foundations domain⁵.

⁵ We use a single Social Foundations domain, following the Maryland-Ohio KRA framework used for coding. We use this structure because it lets us compare sub-domains consistently across states. The trade-off is that Approaches Toward Learning is not shown as its own domain in this landscape.

The Language and Literacy domain includes gateway skills such as phonics and letter recognition, phonological awareness, vocabulary, emergent writing, and story or text comprehension. The Numeracy/Math domain focuses on number sense (understanding numbers, including one-to-one correspondence in counting, cardinality (knowing that the last number counted tells how many are in a set), and recognizing numerals) as well as early mathematical reasoning. Social Foundations, the term used in this report for the social-emotional domain, encompasses social-emotional development and executive functioning skills, including cooperation with peers, self-control, and working memory. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development covers both gross and fine motor skills.

To analyze exactly which skills are being assessed at the broader domain and detailed sub-domain level, we narrowed our focus to the 24 states that require a single mandated statewide tool. This restriction was necessary because only states with standardized instruments allow for consistent identification and comparison of specific item-level content to be coded into common domain structures. The six states that allow local choice were excluded from this detailed sub-domain analysis because they do not have a single identifiable set of assessment items that can be catalogued.

As of the 2025-2026 school year, most states evaluate children across several core developmental areas. Language and Literacy is the most commonly assessed domain (24 out of the 24 states that require a single state-mandated KEA), followed by Numeracy/Math (21 states), Social Foundations (18 states), and Physical Development (15 states). However, states often measure these domains in limited ways. For example, while Social Foundations broadly encompasses social-emotional development and executive functioning, state requirements often cluster around observable behaviors like cooperation with peers rather than underlying cognitive skills such as working memory. Social Foundations also varies in depth: a state may assess a single behavior, such as taking turns, or a full battery of executive-function tasks, and both count as covering the domain.

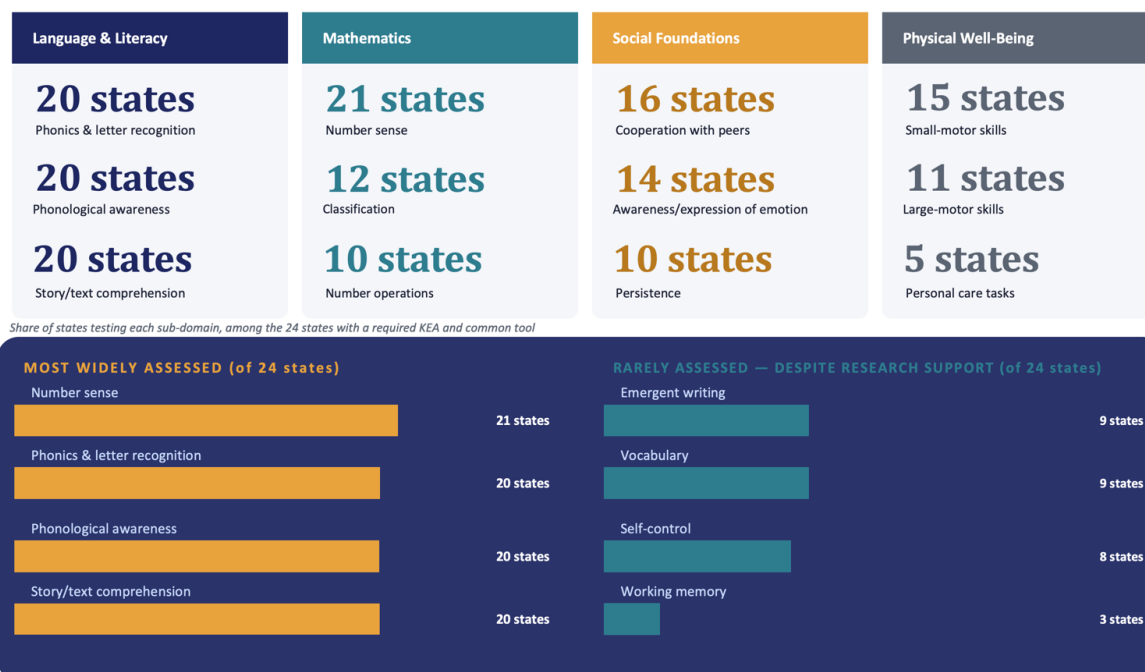


Figure 3. Sub-Domain Coverage, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

Within Language and Literacy, states focus heavily on Phonics and Letter Recognition (assessed in 20 out of 24 states that measure Language/Literacy) and Phonological Awareness (20 states), while fewer states assess Vocabulary (9 states) or Emergent Writing (9 states). In Numeracy/Math, Number Sense is universal among states that assess this domain (21 states). Within Social Foundations, Cooperation with Peers is most commonly assessed (16 states), while executive function skills receive minimal attention. Only three states measure Working Memory and eight states measure Self-Control. In the Physical domain, all 15 of the states that measure Physical domains measure Small-Motor Control. 11 states measure Large-Motor Control and 5 measure personal care tasks.

The specific domains and sub-domains measured often vary based on the state's defined purpose for the assessment. For instance, states that use KEAs primarily as Screeners often adopt a narrower focus on specific at-risk indicators within Literacy and Numeracy/Math. In contrast, states focused on System Alignment or Instructional Planning tend to utilize frameworks that include all of these developmental domains.

What tradeoffs do states consider when selecting or developing a KEA?

A primary consideration is the balance between teacher time burden and the comprehensiveness of data collected. Case studies from statewide KEA implementations suggest that while comprehensive assessments offer more detail for Instructional Planning, they can also impose a significantly higher documentation burden on teachers (Ackerman, 2018) compared to narrower, more focused tools.

Another critical choice involves selecting standardized commercial tools versus state-developed assessments. Proprietary commercial products often provide a research base, national benchmarking capabilities, and reliability and validity testing, although the strength of that evidence varies across tools and they can also be expensive. In contrast, state-developed instruments allow for precise customization to state and local learning standards and give state agencies the agility to modify tools quicker based on local feedback. Of the 24 states that require a common KEA⁶, 16 use proprietary tools.

Most states buy off-the-shelf rather than build their own



Figure 4. Proprietary Versus State-Developed Tool Count, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

Policymakers must also determine the appropriate granularity of information, which refers to how finely a tool divides skill development into distinct performance levels. High-detail tools with 12 to 15 performance levels per item are intended to support instructional differentiation, but they require extensive teacher time and skill in discerning the differences between adjacent levels, which threatens data validity (Ackerman, 2018; Miller-Bains et al., 2017; Joseph et al., 2019), and there is little evidence that teachers can use this level of differentiation in instructional decisions. High-detail scoring is most useful when assessment domains capture meaningfully distinct information. Prior research on observational kindergarten-entry assessments raises concerns about discriminant validity and rater effects, including evidence that teacher-rated domains may be highly correlated and less differentiated than direct assessments (Miller-Bains et al., 2017; Russo et al., 2019). If items within a domain, or domains within a teacher-rated measure, are highly correlated, additional performance levels may add burden without giving teachers substantially more actionable information for instructional planning. Conversely, simplified frameworks with 2 to 3 performance levels prioritize administrative efficiency consistent reporting, even though they may mask important developmental variations.

⁶Tool type analysis examines the 24 states with mandated statewide tools, as these are the only states where a single identifiable tool can be classified as proprietary or state-developed. States allowing district choice use multiple tools that vary by district.

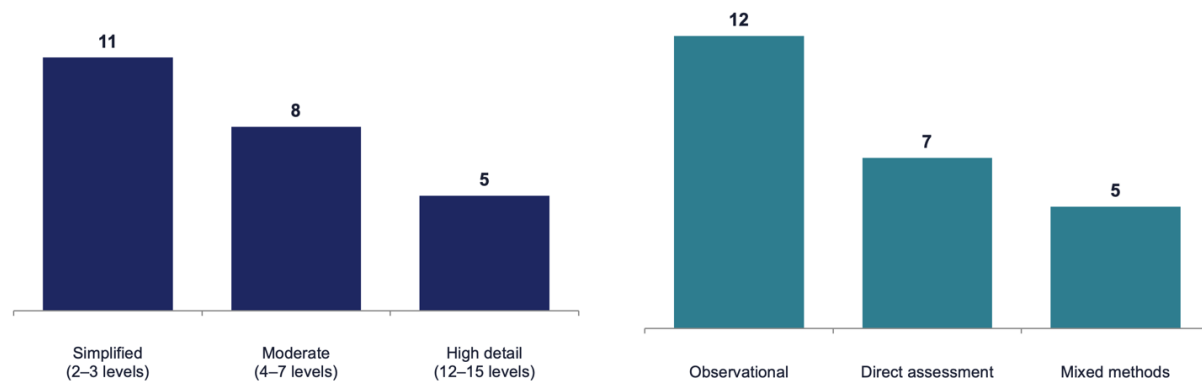
Additionally, the modality of assessment presents a choice between observational assessments and direct assessment tasks. Observational assessments, often called "authentic" assessments, require teachers to document child behaviors and skills during typical, everyday classroom activities rather than in a dedicated testing environment. Observational methods are well suited for capturing development during regular classroom activities (Yun et al., 2021; Miller-Bains et al., 2017; Stull, 2015). Yet, they rely heavily on subjective teacher judgment and are time-intensive to document (Joseph et al., 2019; Ackerman, 2018; Miller-Bains et al., 2017; Hur et al., 2026; Bassok & Latham, 2017; Came, 2022). Direct assessment involves a familiar adult sitting with one child at a time to ask specific prompts, ranging from multiple-choice questions to performance tasks (e.g., "count these blocks"). Literature in favor of direct assessment argues that individually administered tests by trained personnel provide a highly reliable way to assess early skills (Duncan et al., 2007). Because they are standardized, these tools are less susceptible to the "reference bias" that occurs when a teacher rates a child relative to their specific classmates rather than national norms (Reardon & Portilla, 2016). However, direct assessments may inadvertently measure a child's fine motor skills (if children must write or use a mouse) or "digital familiarity" (if computer-based) rather than their true cognitive ability (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024). Moreover, their "sit and stay" requirements can be developmentally inappropriate for the 4-to-7-year-old range (Yun et al., 2021). Touch screen technology and the pervasiveness of mobile devices have minimized these issues, though the concerns around appropriate levels of screentime for young children persist (Neumann et al., 2019).

Two design choices define the teacher experience

Among the 24 states with a required KEA and common tool

GRANULARITY · performance levels per domain

MODALITY · how evidence is collected



High-granularity observational tools like Teaching Strategies GOLD took teachers 18–23 hrs/class to document in Washington (Ackerman, 2018)

Figure 5. Number of States by Granularity and Modality of Their Common KEA, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

G. Assessment Implementation

How are KEAs implemented and scored?

Implementation choices determine how much teacher time a KEA consumes and how comparable its results are. As of SY2025-26, 36 jurisdictions set a state-mandated assessment window, including some states that do not require a KEA but set a window for districts that choose to administer one. Most windows fall within the first 4–8 weeks of the school year, with 30- and 45-day deadlines the most common. They range from the first 20 instructional days in Ohio to 6–10 weeks in Vermont, and several states also require mid-year or end-of-year administrations. These differences matter for interpretation: children assessed later may score higher simply because they have had more kindergarten instruction (Bassok & Latham, 2017; Le et al., 2025; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024). Windows also coincide with one of the busiest periods of the school year, and when teachers feel time pressure they are more likely to skip or rush items (Ackerman, 2018).

The burden of administration depends heavily on modality and scoring design. Among the 24 states that require a common tool, 12 use observational assessments, 7 use direct assessment, and 5 use mixed methods. Observational tools fit naturally into classroom routines but rely on teacher judgment and are time-intensive to document. Rater reliability can drop for dual language learners (Joseph et al., 2019), and states that use observational methods often do not require teacher training before administration (Hur et al., 2026). Direct assessments are more standardized and less prone to rater bias (Reardon & Portilla, 2016), but they can be developmentally demanding for young children and may capture fine motor or digital skills rather than content knowledge (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024). Scoring granularity adds another layer: 10 states use simplified scoring with 2–3 performance levels, 9 use moderate scoring (4–7 levels), and 5 use high-detail scoring (12–15 levels). All five high-detail states use Teaching Strategies GOLD, which can require extensive documentation time (Ackerman, 2018).

Finally, kindergarten entry policies shape who is assessed and how old they are when tested. Nineteen states and DC require kindergarten attendance, and 16 of the 30 states that require a KEA do not require attendance. Forty-five states and DC set a statewide age cutoff, most commonly September 1 (22 states), while 5 states leave the cutoff to local determination. Because older children within a cohort tend to score higher (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014; Kiguel et al., 2024), differences in cutoffs and delayed entry further complicate comparisons across states.

How, when, and for whom KEAs are administered varies widely

SY2025-26 · Modality and scoring cover the 24 states with a required KEA and common tool; timing and age policies cover all jurisdictions

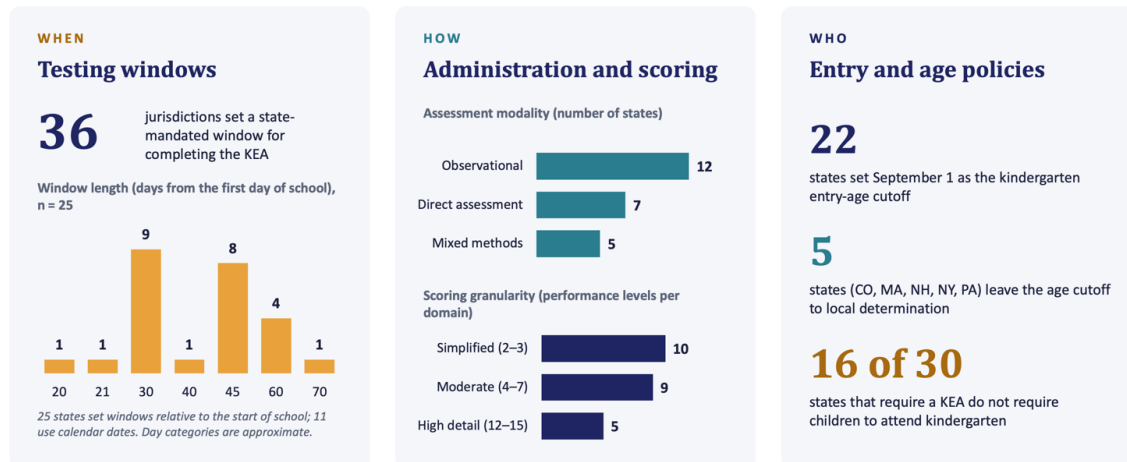


Figure 6. Assessment Implementation Quick Facts, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

Taken together, variation in when, how, and by whom a KEA is administered makes cross-state and over-time comparisons difficult, even among states with a common statewide tool.

G. Evidence Gaps and Research Needs

What evidence is still needed to understand the landscape?

First, comprehensive cost data is largely unavailable. States lack publicly available information on the full expenses associated with KEA design, implementation, and ongoing administration, making it difficult to conduct accurate cost-benefit analyses when analyzing various assessment tools or the cost of test changes. Second, information on the reliability of KEA scores and technical data showing whether KEAs produce consistent results across different teachers, classroom contexts, and administrations is likewise frequently unavailable, particularly for state-developed assessments. Third, comparability across tools and states is unclear. Without standardized metrics, states cannot determine whether different instruments measure kindergarten readiness in equivalent ways. Finally, validity studies are incomplete. While some proprietary commercial tools have published research demonstrating that they accurately measure what they claim to measure, many state-developed assessments lack this publicly available evidence.

Despite the costs and complexity of administering and using KEAs, they can have substantial benefits (Hur et al., 2026; Regenstein et al., 2017; Yun et al., 2021). They can provide teachers and parents with key early information on children's skills and needs (Ackerman, 2018; Weisenfeld, 2020; Regenstein et al., 2017; Yun et al., 2021). They can allow states to identify and target resources to communities and populations where more supports for early childhood education are needed (Weisenfeld, 2020; Hur et al., 2026; Jensen et al., 2021; Regenstein et al., 2017; Yun et al., 2021). They can enable evaluation of states' early childhood

investments (Weisenfeld, 2020; Hur et al., 2026; Regenstein et al., 2017; Yun et al., 2021). And they can provide baseline information for evaluation of early elementary school instruction, curricula, and school practices (Ackerman, 2018; Regenstein et al., 2017; Stull, 2015; Yun et al., 2021).

II. INTRODUCTION

Summary & Key Takeaways:

- Federal policy has driven KEA expansion since 1990, with major catalysts including the 2011 Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge and subsequent grant programs, though states retain autonomy over specific assessment design and implementation.
- The KEA landscape shows significant instability. As of SY2025-26, 12 of the 24 states that require a common assessment have changed their assessment tool or system in the last 4 years due to things like implementation challenges, funding expiration, and pandemic disruptions.
- This report provides a comprehensive scan of all 50 states plus DC using SY2025-2026 data, analyzing what assessments measure at the granular sub-domain level, the intersection of kindergarten entry age policies and assessment design, and introducing a four-type framework for KEA purposes.

Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEAs), also known as Kindergarten Readiness Assessments (KRAs), are tools designed to provide a snapshot of a child’s developmental status at school entry (Ackerman, 2018; Jensen et al., 2021; Yun et al., 2021). They evaluate whether students are prepared for the demands of kindergarten and help identify those needing extra support (Ackerman, 2018; Feeney, 2016; Jensen et al., 2021). In recent years, policy has shifted from using “readiness tests” to determine a child’s eligibility for enrollment toward comprehensive assessments that inform things such as instructional needs and state-level policy decisions (Ackerman, 2018; Bernstein et al., 2019; Stull, 2015; P.G. Williams et al., 2019; Yun et al., 2021).

A. KEA Policies: Federal Drivers, State Responses, and Implementation Realities

In 1990, the National Education Goals Panel was convened with the goal of improving education in the United States (Sorrels, 2012). After evidence showed that many low-income students, especially those who did not speak English as a first language, were already behind their more affluent peers when they began kindergarten (Feeney, 2016) this panel set the bipartisan goal that “by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn” (Powers, 2012; Sorrels, 2012). This statement brought national attention to school readiness (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act followed in 2001, explicitly connecting assessment to equity (Jensen et al., 2021) and monitoring achievement gaps from third grade onward. NCLB emphasized a desire to have every student reading at grade level by third grade (Weisenfeld et al., 2020). In 2002, the Good Start, Grow Smart Initiative was launched to complement NCLB with the goal of ensuring children enter kindergarten with necessary skills, although the initiative did not define what these skills were (Weisenfeld et al., 2020). This initiative encouraged states to create early learning standards aligned with K-12 standards (Weisenfeld et al., 2020).

In 2011, the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) served as a major catalyst for KEA expansion (Ackerman, 2018; Kiguel et al., 2024; Yun et al., 2021). The grant program required states to implement statewide KEAs as a condition for funding (Feeney, 2016; Weisenfeld et al., 2020; Yun et al., 2021). RTT-ELC defined five essential domains of school readiness (Ackerman, 2018): Language and Literacy, Cognition and General Knowledge (including math and science), Approaches Toward Learning, Physical Well-being and Motor development, and Social and Emotional Development (Jensen et al., 2021; Goldstein et al., 2017; Weisenfeld et al., 2020). In 2013, the federal government further expanded the use of KEAs when they introduced Enhanced Assessment Grants (EAG), which specifically prioritized the development or enhancement of KEAs to provide valid and reliable data across the essential domains (Ackerman, 2018; Jensen et al., 2021; Weisenfeld et al., 2020; P.G. Williams et al., 2019). Federal Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge and Enhanced Assessment Grants were awarded directly to state education agencies and state-led consortia, rather than commercial publishers, to support the design and implementation of kindergarten entry assessment systems (Ackerman, 2018; Weisenfeld et al., 2020; Yun et al., 2021). Both federal grant competitions explicitly mandated that funded assessments evaluate children across all five essential domains of school readiness, encompassing language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, social and emotional development, physical well-being and motor development, and approaches toward learning (Ackerman, 2018; Goldstein et al., 2017; Jensen et al., 2021; Weisenfeld et al., 2020). While both RTT-ELC and EAG defined KEAs and when they should be administered (e.g., at kindergarten entry), the assessment approach and items to be included were left up to states (Ackerman, 2018).

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorized NCLB and expanded federal funding to include children from birth through grade three (Jensen et al., 2021). ESSA also gave states more autonomy in setting assessment requirements allowing them to determine whether to mandate a kindergarten entry assessment at all, whether to test all entering students or specific sub-populations, whether to grant local districts tool selection flexibility, and whether to narrow assessment content rather than requiring all five essential developmental domains (Weisenfeld et al., 2020; Yun et al., 2021). In 2018, the federal government provided funding to 45 states and territories through the Preschool Development Grant, which asked states to revisit KEA policies to foster alignment and support integrated birth-through-five early learning systems across the transition into elementary school (Weisenfeld et al., 2020).

By 2021, twenty-eight states had a statewide KEA (Yun et al., 2021). By 2023, twenty-nine states required a KEA (Education Commission of the States, 2023). This report reveals that as of the 2025-2026 school year, thirty require a KEA and twenty-six have a statewide “common” assessment. Twenty-four states require a KEA and mandate that a single common assessment is used. This group of twenty-four states will be the primary group of states analyzed in detail throughout the report because they require the same assessment system statewide, making it easier to compare their practices.

While many states mandate participation in a KEA for all entering students, some offer optional KEAs (Education Commission of the States, 2023; Weisenfeld et al., 2020) or only require them for specific populations, such as those in Title I schools or Preschool Development Grant programs (Weisenfeld et al., 2020). States often select commercially developed tools like Teaching Strategies GOLD or other externally developed⁷ tools like the DRDP-K created by the California Department of Education (Weisenfeld et al., 2020). They may also choose to create or collaborate on state developed ones, like the Ready 4 Kindergarten assessment from Maryland and Ohio (Ackerman, 2018; Weisenfeld et al., 2020). For simplicity, this report uses the term "proprietary" to refer collectively to commercially developed tools and tools developed outside the state that uses them.

Most states require KEAs to be administered within the first 30 to 60 days of school (Ackerman, 2018) although states vary in the specificity of each window (Weisenfeld et al., 2020). However, real world challenges such as teacher "time crunch" have frequently led states to reduce the number of items or adjust data entry deadlines (Ackerman, 2018; Yun et al., 2021; Hur et al., 2026). While federal guidance emphasizes comprehensive assessment across the five domains (Yun et al., 2021), many states have pivoted toward a narrower focus on Literacy, partly due to high-stakes testing requirements in reading and math starting in third grade (Weisenfeld et al., 2020).

KEAs are often used to understand the educational opportunity students have had prior to kindergarten. Aggregated state-level KEA data is increasingly used to identify systemic needs, justifying funding for early childhood programs, and, where data can be linked, examine how readiness relates to later outcomes (although most KEAs are not aligned with the assessments used in later grades) (Jensen et al., 2021; Yun et al., 2021). KEA data is also used to screen children for specific supports, inform teaching practices, and understand the extent of disparities between groups (Herring et al., 2022; Yun et al., 2021).

The expiration of RTT-ELC and EAG funds in combination with the pandemic has led to a slowing of state progress in implementing comprehensive KEAs, with some states shifting requirements to optional status (Weisenfeld et al., 2020). Despite implementation challenges, KEAs have the potential to serve as a critical tool for identifying skill gaps early, promoting educational equity, and helping to ensure schools are ready to meet the diverse needs of entering kindergarteners (Yun et al., 2021; Jensen et al., 2021; Kiguel et al., 2024).

⁷ "Externally developed" refers to assessment tools adopted or adapted by a state that was created by organizations external to them, such as another state.

B. Aims of this Report

Understanding Kindergarten Readiness and Assessment

To understand kindergarten entry assessments, we must first understand what "readiness" means. "Readiness" is commonly defined as the skills teachers expect students to have when entering kindergarten (Grotsky et al., 2017). In practice, children's skills at kindergarten entry are based on the learning opportunities they had in their families, their preschool and their community. Some advocates object to the word "readiness" because children typically enter kindergarten on the basis of age, not their skills, and it is the school's responsibility to address children's educational needs whatever their entry skills – whether they are deemed ready or not (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014; P.G. Williams et al., 2019). Readiness is therefore a shared responsibility between children, families, and educational systems.

Federal guidance and state practice have set an expectation that kindergarten entry assessments cover multiple domains, or distinct areas of child development, including Language and Literacy (the ability to communicate and understand written text), Cognition (thinking and problem-solving skills, including math and science), Social-Emotional Development (the ability to interact with others and manage emotions), Approaches Toward Learning (attitudes such as curiosity, persistence, and attention), and Physical Development (motor skills and health) (Jensen et al., 2021; Weisenfeld et al., 2020; P.G. Williams et al., 2019).

But which of these domains actually matter for long-term success? Cornerstone research by Duncan et al. (2007) established that early math, literacy, and attention skills are the strongest predictors of later academic achievement, findings largely confirmed by Claessens et al. (2009) with the exception of attention skills. These predictions extend well beyond elementary school: previous studies with different measurement protocols than a typical KEA (for example, direct assessments given by trained assessors in experimental study contexts), have shown that math and reading skills at kindergarten entry significantly predict college attendance and adult earnings (Chetty et al., 2011). State-specific validation studies demonstrate that teacher-administered KEAs in states like Ohio, Washington, Connecticut, and Illinois moderately to strongly predict third-grade academic achievement, particularly in early literacy and mathematics domains (Came, 2022; Goldstein et al., 2017; Justice et al., 2019; Kiguel et al., 2024). However, predictive strength varies across developmental domains, and initial kindergarten readiness scores alone do not fully explain subsequent racial and socioeconomic disparities in third-grade proficiency (Herring et al., 2022; Kiguel et al., 2024).

Despite growing attention to what students understand and can do at kindergarten entry, persistent disparities remain. Literature extensively documents that achievement gaps, or differences in academic, social-emotional, and executive function skills between groups of students, are present at the start of kindergarten and even earlier and are closely correlated with family income, race, and language spoken at home (Feeney, 2016; Jensen et al., 2021;

Herring et al., 2022; Kuhfeld et al., 2020). These early gaps highlight why understanding how states assess and respond to kindergarten readiness is so critical.

Prior research has documented important aspects of the KEA landscape. National scans conducted by Schilder and Carolan (2014), Weisenfeld et al. (2020), Yun et al. (2021), the Education Commission of the States (2023), the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2024), and Hur et al. (2026) identified which states had adopted KEAs and catalogued commonly used assessment tools. Additionally, case studies have highlighted practical challenges educators face, such as time constraints and technical issues (Yun et al., 2021; Ackerman, 2018; Hur et al., 2026). However, earlier studies often relied on older datasets and focused on a limited number of states or districts. While they successfully identified whether states had KEAs, they did not systematically document what these assessments actually measure at a detailed sub-domain level or how assessment designs vary across states at the national level.

What This Report Contributes

This report fills these gaps by providing a comprehensive scan of all 50 states and Washington D.C. using the most current school year 2025-2026 data from sources such as statutes, regulations, and KEA implementation manuals. Unlike previous literature that simply identified whether states had KEAs, this analysis examines what assessments measure at a granular sub-domain level. Sub-domains are specific skills and items within broader developmental areas. For example, within the Language and Literacy domain, sub-domains might include vocabulary, phonological awareness, and comprehension.

Beyond content, this report documents substantial variation in how states measure student performance. States use anywhere from 2 to 15 performance levels per domain. Performance levels are categories that indicate how well a child demonstrates a skill, creating vastly different levels of detail in pictures of student readiness across states. Additionally, this work examines the intersection of kindergarten entry age policies (the cutoff dates determining when children can start kindergarten) and assessment design, documenting how age-eligibility mandates relate to the timing of KEA administration.

To make sense of why states conduct these assessments in the first place, this report introduces a four-type framework representing common themes in KEA purposes: Screener (identifying children who may need additional support), Instructional Planning (helping teachers tailor their teaching), Readiness Documentation (recording what skills children have at entry), and System Alignment (supporting communication and coordination across stakeholders around children's transition to kindergarten).

During the course of this research, a notable gap in publicly available data emerged. Information about costs and expenditures related to KEA design, implementation, and administration remains largely unavailable, as does reliability data showing whether assessments consistently measure what they claim to measure. It is important to note that this report does not evaluate the causal impact of KEAs on student learning outcomes. It focuses instead on documenting what assessments exist and how they are structured.

C. Research Questions

This report is organized around four primary research questions that the existing literature has not addressed:

1. How widespread and standardized are state KEA requirements, and how have they changed over time?
2. What are the stated purposes of each state's KEA?
3. What specific sub-domains do states assess, and where does coverage cluster or diverge across domains and sub-domains?
4. How are KEAs implemented and scored?

III. METHODOLOGY

Summary & Key Takeaways:

- This research provides the most current comprehensive scan of all 51 states using SY2025-2026 data from state websites, assessment instruments, manuals, statutes, and direct outreach to officials.
- States were categorized into a four-type framework (Screener, Instructional Planning, Readiness Documentation, and System Alignment) using official state documentation.
- The Maryland-Ohio KRA framework with four core domains and 24 sub-domains serves as the central coding structure for domain comparison nationally. It was chosen because it includes elements from the federally defined essential domains and encompasses skills that prior research has linked to later academic success.
- KEAs were coded for assessment modality by analyzing administration manuals and scoring guidelines to document whether assessments use observational, direct assessment, or mixed methods. Scoring granularity was measured by counting performance levels per domain, categorizing states as High Detail, Moderate Detail, or Simplified.

This research provides a scan of all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia to document approaches to measuring skills and understanding of students at kindergarten entry. This analysis draws directly from state education agency websites, official assessment instruments, administration manuals, state statutes, and publicly available KEA data portals. In instances where public documentation was unclear or unavailable, direct outreach to state officials via phone or email was conducted to obtain or clarify missing information. Publicly available policy documentation is the most direct way to understand the “theory of action” or the underlying premise driving a state’s use of KEAs (Ackerman, 2018; Weisenfeld et al., 2020). All data and analysis were collected to reflect policy decisions as of SY2025-2026 in efforts to include the most recent policy shifts. The KEA policy environment is characterized by frequent change, particularly following the expiration of federal RTT-ELC and EAG grants (Weisenfeld et al., 2020; P.G. Williams et al., 2019). Recent literature is already outdated because states frequently redefine requirements or shift comprehensive assessments to “optional” status in response to funding losses (Weisenfeld et al., 2020; Yun et al., 2021).

Using direct quotes from official state documentation, states were categorized into a four-type purpose framework: Screener, Instructional Planning, Readiness Documentation, and System Alignment. Understanding a state's primary purpose is foundational to evaluating if a tool is fit for use. For example, a Screener intended to flag children at risk requires higher sensitivity and specificity than a whole-child documentation tool (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014; Yun et al., 2021). Research warns that misusing a point-in-time snapshot for inappropriate

purposes, such as evaluating individual teachers or programs, can lead to invalid conclusions (Yun et al., 2021; Regenstein et al., 2017).

The Maryland-Ohio KRA domain framework (from the assessment designed by Maryland and Ohio, and used by Hawaii, South Carolina, Ohio, and previously Maryland and Michigan) serves as the central coding structure for comparing developmental constructs across different state methodologies. Each state's assessment items were mapped onto this framework by analyzing publicly available information including sub-domain descriptions, individual assessment items (the specific questions or tasks presented to students), and administrative manuals and implementation guides that detail what teachers actually assess in practice. The analysis is organized into four core domains: Social Foundations, Language & Literacy, Math, and Physical Well-Being & Motor Development. Social Foundations is the development of emotional awareness, self-regulation, relationship-building, and responsible behavior that enables children to learn and participate effectively in social and academic settings. Language & Literacy is the comprehensive development of children's ability to understand, speak, read, and write through skills including vocabulary, phonics, comprehension, and communication that form the foundation for all academic learning. Math is children's growing ability to work with numbers, compare and classify objects, measure quantities, and understand shapes and spatial concepts. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development is the development of children's overall health, movement skills (both large and small muscle control), safety awareness, and self-care abilities that enable them to participate fully in daily activities and school. For more details about MD-OH KRA domains and subdomains, see Appendix F.

The MD-OH KRA framework was used because the framework includes elements from the five essential domains defined by federal policy: Language/Literacy, Cognition, Social-Emotional Development, Approaches Toward Learning, and Physical Well-being (Jensen et al., 2021; Weisenfeld et al., 2020), but better aligns with state practices and includes specific sub-domain competencies that underlie each domain.

Assessment modality was coded by reviewing administration manuals and scoring guidelines for each KEA. Assessments were classified as observational (teacher/caregiver observation), direct assessment (tasks administered by an examiner, often the teacher), or mixed methods (combination of both approaches). Granularity refers to how finely assessment tools divide children's skill development within each domain, or how many distinct categories are used to describe a child's progress. Performance levels are the specific categories or scores that indicate where a child falls on the developmental continuum for each skill, ranging from emerging ability to mastery. The scan across each state's KEA policies and tools included a novel coding scheme that counts the maximum number of distinct performance levels per domain (ranging from 2-15) as a measure of scoring granularity. No states measure between

8-11 maximum performance levels. Assessments were then categorized by their level of granularity:

- High Detail: 12-15 performance levels (e.g., Delaware, Washington) emphasizing precision and targeted instruction.
- Moderate Detail: 4-7 performance levels (e.g., Illinois, Kentucky) typically using focused checklists or structured observations that capture key developmental milestones without excessive detail.
- Simplified: 2-3 performance levels (e.g., Ohio, Virginia) emphasizing efficiency and reduced teacher burden.

Literature shows that high-detail assessments (12-15 performance levels) have potential to provide precise data for Instructional Planning but often trigger teacher “time crunch” and protocol deviations (Ackerman, 2018; Yun et al., 2021; Hur et al., 2026). Conversely, simplified assessments (2-3 performance levels) emphasize efficiency and reduced teacher burden but may mask meaningful skill differences.

It is important to note that only the 24 states that both require a KEA and mandate a single common assessment were included in this deeper analysis of specific domains, granularity, and scoring guidelines. This restriction ensures that comparisons are made across assessments with consistent implementation and structure statewide, rather than across states where multiple tools or optional assessments would introduce too much variation to analyze meaningfully.

Methodology Limitations

This analysis is strictly descriptive. It does not attempt to analyze the causal impact of KEAs on student learning or track longitudinal progress. The quantitative coding process used in this report cannot access the psychometric quality of validity of individual instruments if it is not reported in existing documentation or research, nor can it validate specific test items where raw data is restricted. Cost data and psychometric data, such as reliability and validity studies, are also sparse and mostly not public, so this report does not compare tools on cost or psychometric strength. Document descriptions may also not fully capture how teachers implement assessments locally, particularly regarding compromises made during administration. While this report uses the most current data available (SY2025-26), recent policy changes or shifts in assessment requirements may lag behind publicly available documentation.

IV. THE NATIONAL KEA POLICY LANDSCAPE: ADOPTION, STRUCTURE, AND CHANGE

Summary & Key Takeaways:

- About 59% of U.S. states require kindergarten entry assessments (KEAs), though their approaches vary widely. Among the states that require a KEA:
 - 80% mandate a single statewide tool
 - 17% allow districts to choose from a state-approved list of tools
 - 3% leave tool selection entirely up to districts
 - Timing windows are critical but create practical challenges. Most states (36) require KEAs within the first 30-60 days of school to capture true "entry" skills, but these narrow windows coincide with the busiest classroom period and can consume significant instructional time.
 - The KEA market is highly unstable. Just under 70% of states that require a common KEA have changed their tools in the last 10 years, making it difficult to track readiness trends over time or compare student cohorts.
-

A. Adoption and Mandate Structure

Just under 60% of U.S. states (and Washington DC) mandate kindergarten entry assessments. As of SY2025-2026, 29 states and Washington D.C. mandate the administration of a kindergarten readiness assessment while 21 states do not have a formal state-level requirement.

26 states mandate one common assessment tool. 7 states including West Virginia, Texas, and Missouri provide a vetted menu of approved assessments from which districts can select. 7 states including Arizona, California, and Washington D.C. leave the tool selection entirely to local district discretion (in most of these states, the decision to use a KEA at all is also local). 11 states do not have a KEA standardization policy in place.

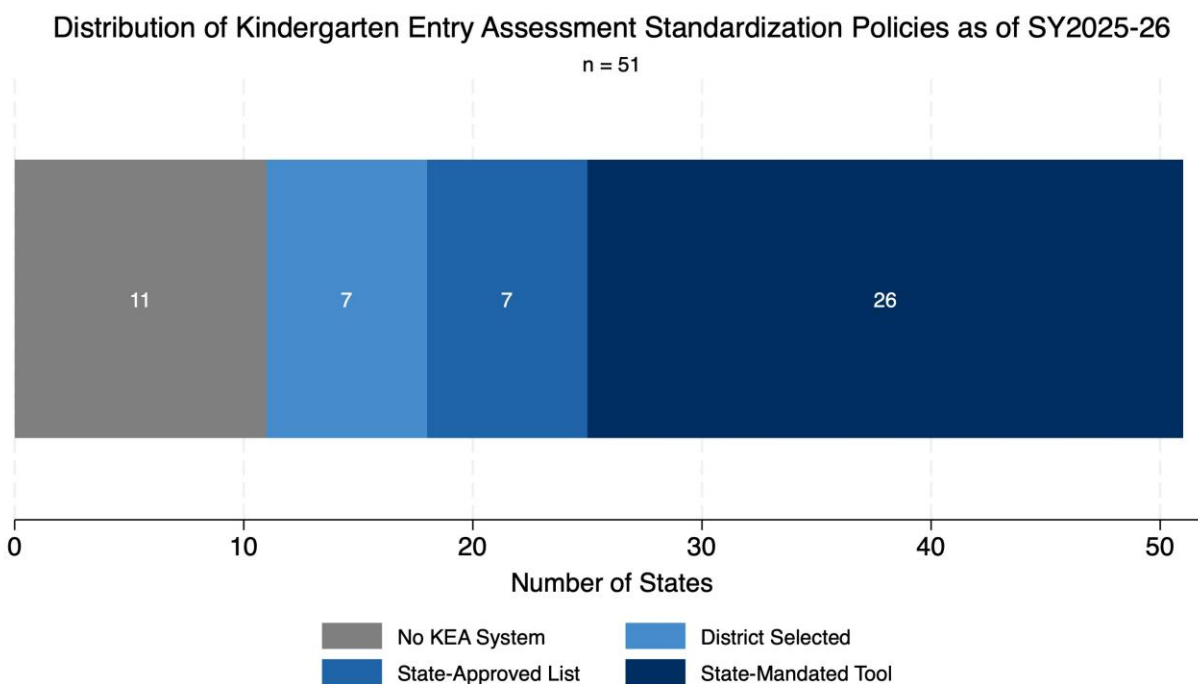


Figure 7. Distribution of KEA Standardization Policies, SY2025-26 (n = 51)

24 states mandate a KEA and also mandate that a common statewide tool is used, requiring all districts to use the same KEA instrument. Statewide standardization enables consistent data collection, facilitates cross-district comparisons (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024), and supports state-level policy decisions about early learning investments. A single required tool allows for centralized professional development for teachers, unified data reporting systems, and appropriate aggregate documentation for legislatures. However, standardized mandates may limit a district's ability to select tools that best fit their specific community needs or existing resources. Uniform tools also may not align with local curricula. In fact, flexible KEA structures that do not require one common tool are often designed to promote curricular alignment at the local level (Yun et al., 2021). This decision is made with the goal that schools may use instruments that mirror their specific instructional goals. States have been mandating common statewide tools more over time.

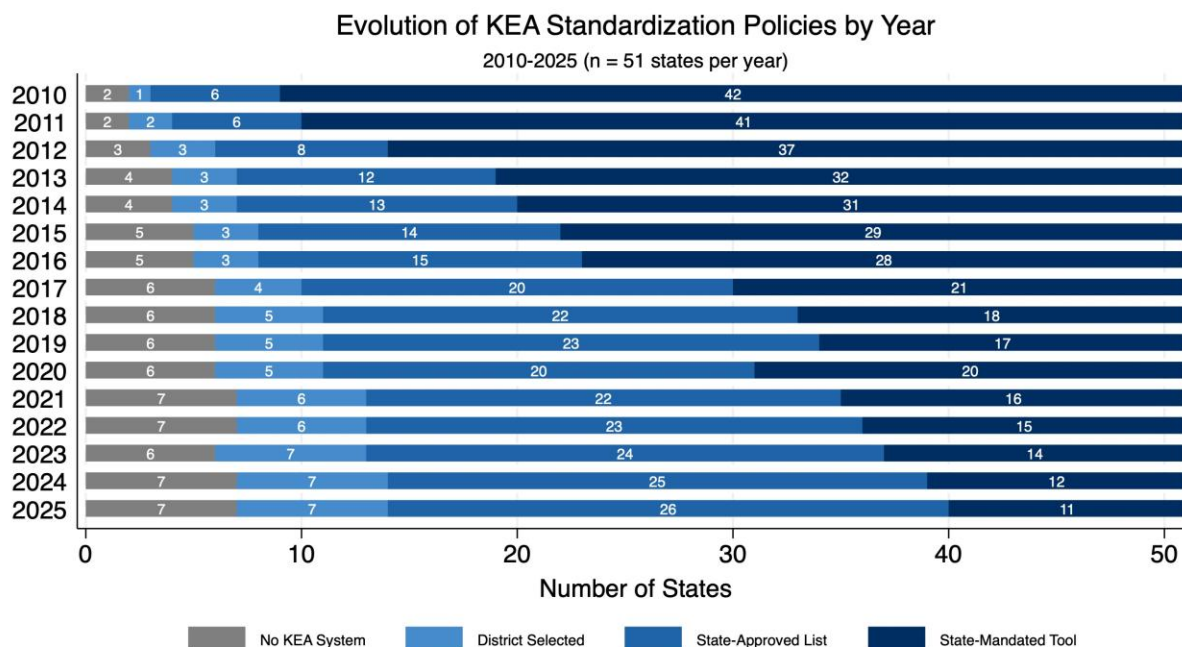


Figure 8. Evolution of KEA Standardization Policies by Year, 2010-2025 (n = 51 states per year)

By allowing districts to select tools that are “the best fit” states may hope to increase teacher buy-in and encourage formative use of the data for day-to-day Instructional Planning (Yun et al., 2021), although district leaders typically select tools with little teacher input and evidence that local choice improves data use is limited (Hur et al., 2026). The primary trade-off of this decision is that allowing local choice significantly limits a given state’s ability to combine data or meaningfully draw conclusions about readiness across the whole state. Flexible mandates can lead to variation in the quality of training, the types of domains assessed, and the overall reliability of the data collected across different districts (Yun et al., 2021).

B. Assessment Windows and Timing

36 states require that KEAs are completed within a specified, state-mandated timeframe. States that mandate common assessments often also mandate a window in which they must be completed, but states that do not mandate assessments may also choose to set an assessment window for districts that choose to administer a KEA, such as California and Pennsylvania. These windows most commonly fall within the first 4-8 weeks (approximately 30-60 days) of the school year. The majority (25 jurisdictions) specify assessment timing relative to the start of school or a child’s enrollment or attendance, using a number of days or weeks. The remaining 11 jurisdictions specify calendar dates or months for administration or reporting (see Appendix A for more details). For example, in Virginia scores must be submitted by November 7 (Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program, 2026). As of SY2025-26, the most common testing windows are 30 days (9 states) and 45 days (8 states).

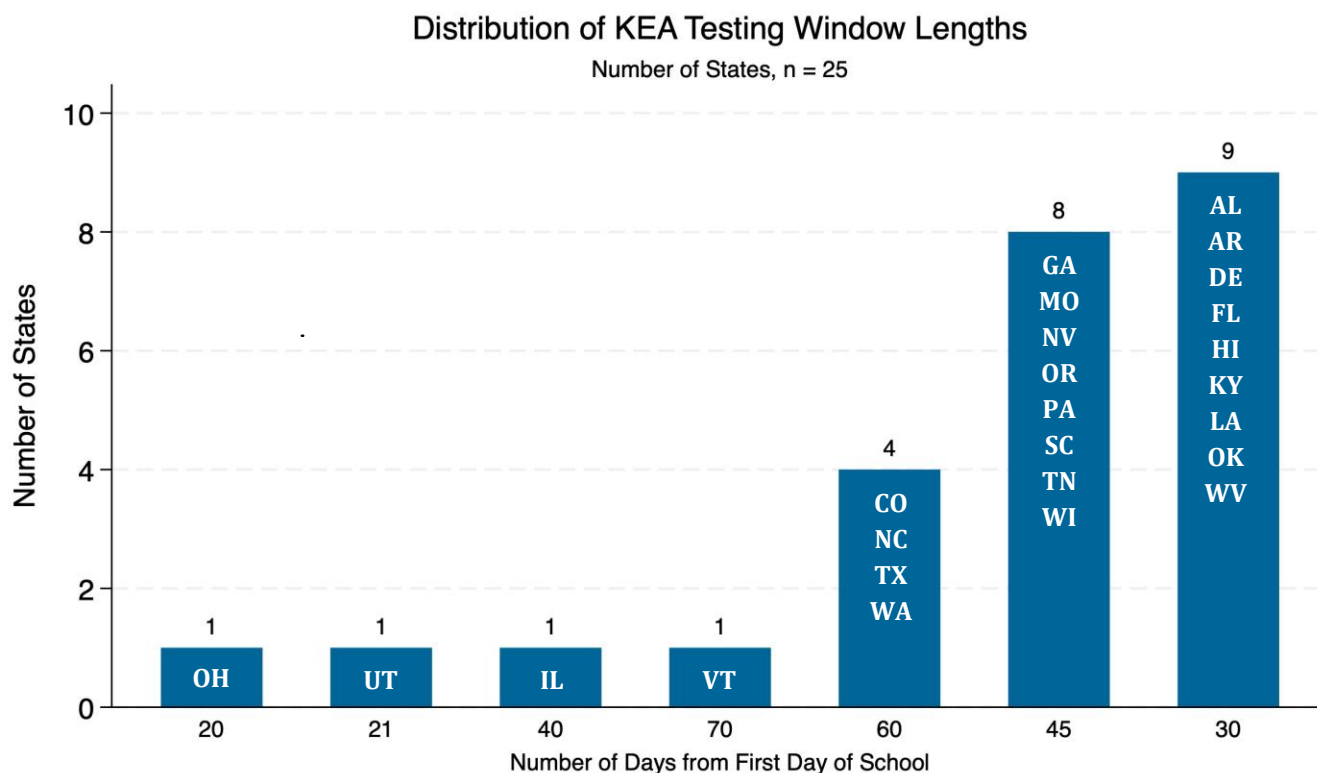


Figure 9. Distribution of KEA Testing Window Lengths, SY2025-26 (n=25)

Note: Day categories are approximate: six-week deadlines are grouped with 45-day deadlines, and eight-week deadlines with 60-day deadlines. Some states count calendar days and others count school days, so the same deadline may allow different amounts of time in the classroom. Utah's assessment window begins three weeks before school starts and ends three weeks afterward. The plotted value of 21 days represents its closing date relative to school entry, rather than the full six-week interval.

Almost all states that mandate testing windows specify a window at the beginning of the school year because to reliably measure what children know when they “walk through the door”, assessments must be conducted as close to the start of the year as possible (Ackerman, 2018). New Mexico is an exception: beginning in 2023–24, the state shifted to a spring assessment window. Defined windows are essential for cross-district comparisons. Without them, data becomes difficult to compare because scores may reflect varying amounts of class instruction rather than true “entry” skills (Ackerman, 2018). States like Oregon and Pennsylvania revised their timelines specifically to reduce variations when teachers were assessing children in efforts to produce a consistent statewide snapshot. Some states, including Arkansas, Idaho, and Mississippi, require additional testing windows during mid-year and/or end of year in addition to testing at the beginning of the school year (see Appendix A for more details). Assessments given repeatedly across the year can function as formative assessments rather than KEAs in the strict sense.

15 states do not mandate specific windows at the state level, either because they:

1. Do not require kindergarten entry assessment at all
2. Require assessment but allow districts to determine optimal timing
3. Use ongoing observational systems without discrete assessment periods

Research indicates that children assessed later in the year (or even within a state-mandated window) may score higher simply due to having more weeks of exposure to kindergarten curriculum (Le et al., 2025; Bassok & Latham, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024). While there are validity benefits to an early testing window, these mandated windows also coincide with the school year's most intense period of classroom management and relationship building (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024; Hur et al., 2026). Completing a KEA within the required window can take substantial teacher time, particularly for observational tools, and when teachers feel time pressure, they are more likely to deviate from protocol including skipping or rushing observations (Ackerman, 2018). This, too, threatens the validity of the data. In an attempt to combat this, Connecticut, Delaware, and Nevada all created windows (e.g., 30 days) specific to testing only and then gave teachers an additional window (e.g., 15 days) to submit results.

C. Kindergarten Entry Requirements and Age Cutoffs

Kindergarten attendance requirements and age cutoffs shape who is included in KEA data and how old children are when assessed. These policies affect both participation and score interpretation because older kindergarten entrants may be more likely to meet readiness benchmarks. Research indicates a positive relationship between chronological age and assessment performance. Older students within a cohort are consistently more likely to be deemed “kindergarten ready” in all domains (Kiguel et al., 2024). Additionally, studies show that students closest to the age cutoff, or the youngest in the class, are often at a disadvantage for acquiring academic skills and may score lower on tests focusing on information processing (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014). While older students often perform better academically at the kindergarten level, studies are mixed on whether entry age correlates with social skills like peer acceptance or teacher ratings of anxiety and hyperactivity (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014).

19 states plus the District of Columbia currently mandate that children attend kindergarten. The remaining 31 states do not have a formal state-level requirement for kindergarten attendance. In states that do not require a child to attend kindergarten, they may still mandate that local school districts *provide* a kindergarten program in the form of at least a half-day option, such as in Massachusetts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In states where kindergarten is not required, they may also still mandate a KEA for students who do enroll, such as in North Carolina and Washington. Interestingly, of the 30 states that do require a KEA just over half (16 states) do not require kindergarten attendance. Conversely,

some states like Alabama do not require kindergarten attendance, but if a student enters first grade without having completed kindergarten, they must take a readiness assessment at that time (Ala. HB 113, 2024). Still other states, like Pennsylvania, do not require students to attend kindergarten, but if a family chooses to enroll their child in a kindergarten program then attendance becomes compulsory (24 Pa. Stat. § 5-503, 2022). For more information regarding kindergarten requirements, see Appendix B.

While the majority of states do not require kindergarten, nearly all (45 states and Washington D.C.) establish specific cutoff dates for kindergarten entry. Only 5 states (Colorado, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Pennsylvania) do not have a statewide date or age requirement.

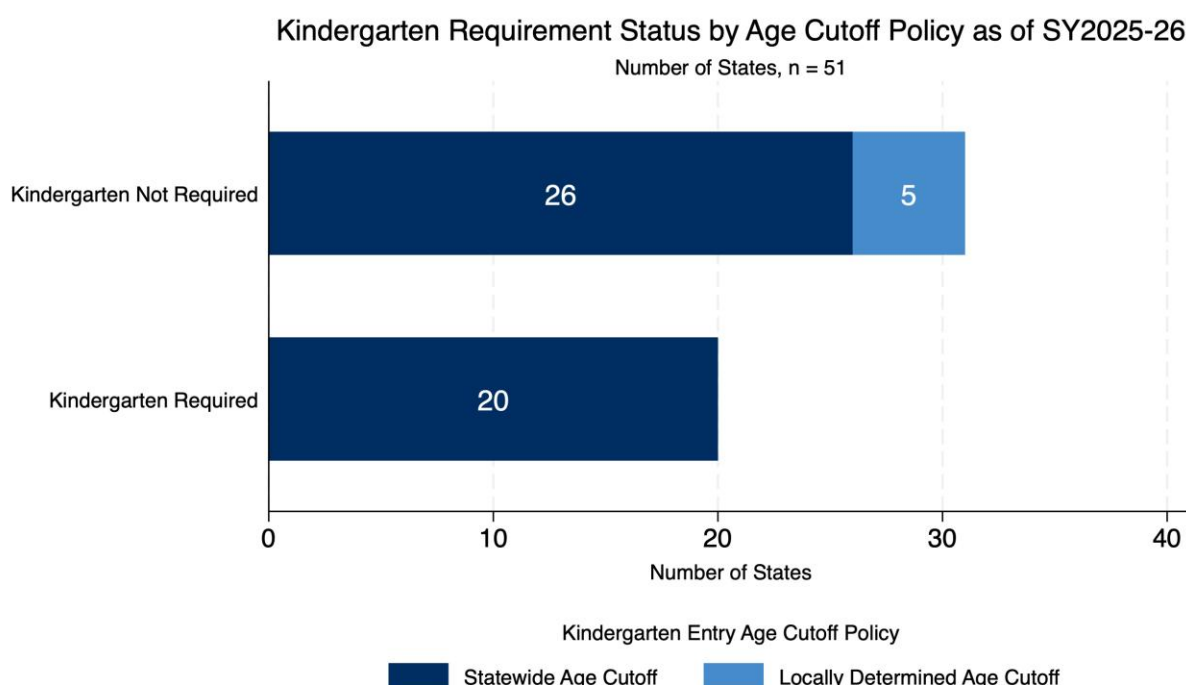


Figure 10. Kindergarten Requirement by Age Cutoff Requirement State Counts, SY2025-26 (n=51)

In most jurisdictions, eligibility for formal enrollment begins at age 5. 22 states mandate that entering kindergarteners must be five years old by September 1 as their primary cutoff date, often aligning school entry with the start of the academic year. Cutoff dates corresponding to the start of the school district are a recent trend. 30 years ago, nearly half of districts allowed children who turned 5 as late as December or January to enroll (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014). Ohio only mandates that children are 5 years old before the first day of school.

Age cutoffs pose an interesting challenge for proprietary tools that serve multiple states such as Teaching Strategies GOLD or KEA development collaboration efforts between states such as the MD-OH KRA. KEAs must be designed to address a wide age span as classroom ages can

range from not-yet-5 to older than 6 due to differing state cutoffs and parental redshirting. Nationally, between 4 and 5.5% of parents hold their children back based on the assumption that extra time will alleviate future academic struggles; male, White, and high-SES children are more likely to be redshirted (Bassok & Reardon, 2013). About 5% of kindergarten students are intentionally redshirted in Tennessee alone (Johnson & Thibault, 2022). Redshirting is more common for boys. The intersection of kindergarten attendance mandates, state-level age cutoffs, and parental redshirting practices creates a complex landscape where KEA participants may vary in age across states. These differences should be carefully considered when interpreting KEA outputs, comparing results across jurisdictions, or designing assessments intended to serve multiple states with diverse policy environments.

D. Assessment Tool Change and Market Instability

The KEA landscape is characterized by high volatility, with frequent transitions between different assessment regimes as states react to funding shifts and implementation feedback. No prior research has documented the frequency at which states switch their KEA tools nationally. Among the 24 states that mandate a common statewide KEA, 16 states (67%) have documented changes to their assessment tool, scoring, or cutscores (the thresholds separating proficiency categories). In the last 4 years, 12 of those 24 states (50%) documented changes. Changes reflected efforts to improve alignment with state standards, enhance cultural responsiveness, or address implementation challenges. States with documented recent assessment changes include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

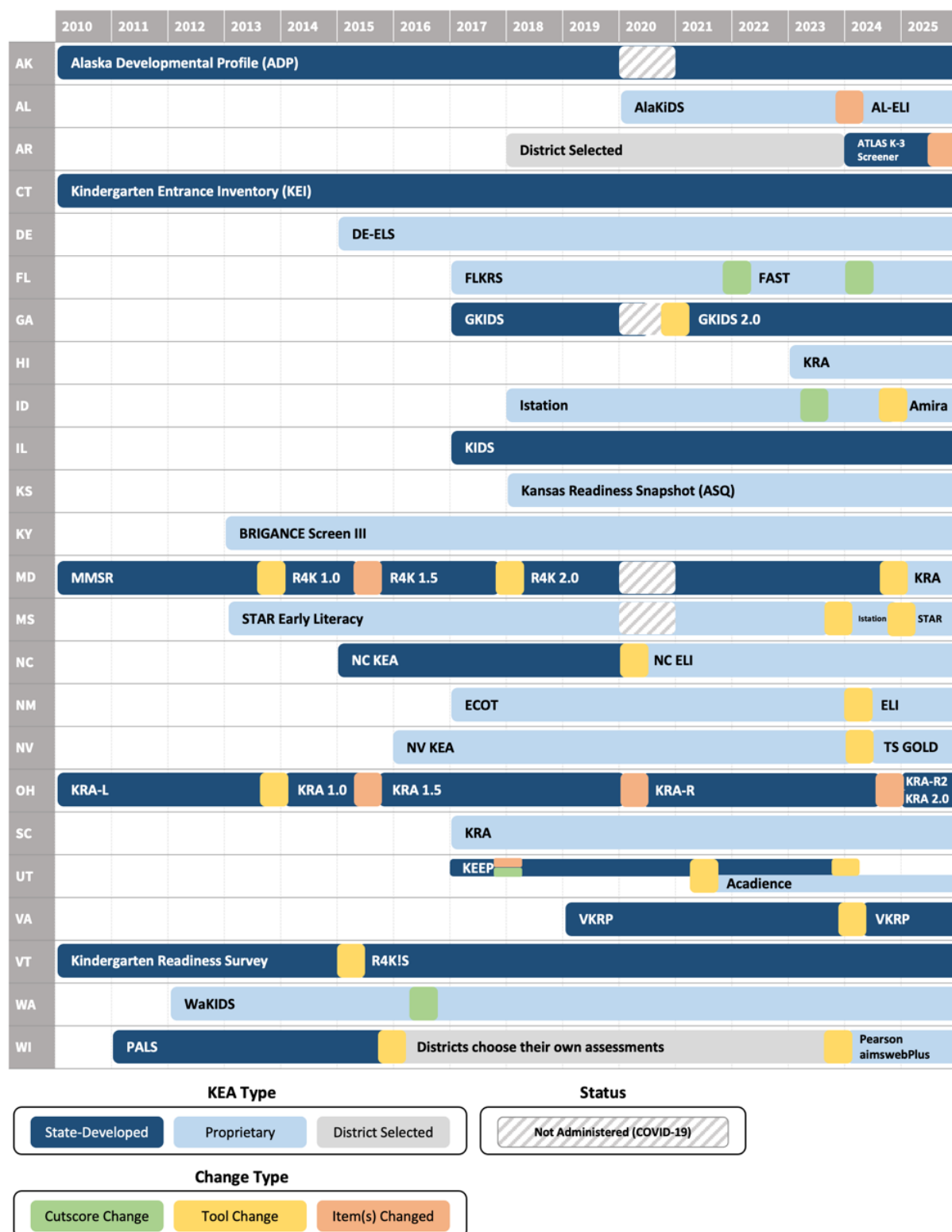


Figure 11. KEA Changes Over Time, 2010-2025 (n=24)

Note: Florida's FLKRS to FAST transition in 2022-23 changed the assessment system's name without changing the assessment. No WaKIDS data are available for 2020-21 because of COVID-19 data collection and quality issues.

States frequently switch tools to ensure the assessment content better mirrors updated K-12 or early learning standards. Some states, including Maryland, updated their tool to more accurately and fairly address diverse student populations, including dual language learners (Maryland Department of Education, 2024). Feedback regarding the excessive time required for administration (Ackerman (2018) revealed that this sometimes takes 1-2 hours per student), frequently prompts states to adopt shorter, more efficient instruments or give districts choice in the length of the assessment such as the case of Ohio.

The high rate of assessment change makes it difficult to compare cohorts of children over time or establish long-term trends in school readiness. Because assessments are scaled differently across tools and years, there is currently no reliable national data source to track whether overall readiness skills have actually changed across time (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). In addition, changes in cutscores (as seen in Washington) can obscure patterns and trends in student performance, making it unclear if shifts in scores reflect children's skills or merely changes in measurement standards (Came, 2022). Changes in tools also require ongoing, expensive teacher retraining (Yun et al., 2021) which can lead to inconsistent scoring as teachers struggle with new protocols. These frequent tool changes raise an important question: Are states selecting assessments based on a clearly defined purpose, or are they choosing tools first and determining their use afterward? The next section discusses KEA purpose in more detail.

V. USE, PURPOSE, AND QUALITY

Summary & Key Takeaways:

- States use KEAs for four distinct purposes. Of the 30 states that require a KEA, states primarily use their tool for Readiness Documentation (13 states), Screening (6 states), Instructional Planning (5 states), or System Alignment (6 states).
- Most states rely on externally developed assessments rather than creating their own tools. Among the 24 states requiring a common statewide KEA, 16 use proprietary tools like Teaching Strategies GOLD.
- Observational assessment modalities dominate but each assessment approach involves significant tradeoffs. Twelve states use observational assessments that allow natural classroom documentation but require subjective teacher judgment and extensive time. 7 states use direct testing for standardized reliability and 5 states combine both methods.
- States are adopting computer-based platforms and adaptive testing for rapid screening and immediate data access, but experts question whether requiring young children to interact with screens for extended periods is developmentally appropriate or actually measures digital skills rather than cognitive ability (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024).

A. KEA Purposes

In policy and measurement literature, a KEA's purpose refers to the explicit design intent and primary objective governing data collection, representing the underlying "theory of action" that dictates how assessment scores are interpreted and translated into practice (Ackerman, 2018). This report categorizes state-level KEAs into four primary purpose types based on their design intent.



Readiness Documentation

Creates a snapshot that captures the skills, knowledge, and abilities of all children when they enter school.



Screener

Quickly detects children who may need extra help or immediate intervention for issues like developmental delays.



System Alignment

Helps support communication and coordination among families, early learning providers, schools, and state leaders around children's transition to kindergarten.



Instructional Planning

Provides child-level information about each child's strengths and needs to help teachers plan instruction.

Figure 12. The Four Types of KEA Purposes

For analysis purposes, states were coded into one primary type that aligned most with their stated purpose. Of the 30 states that require a KEA, the most (13) report that their KEA is used

primarily for Readiness Documentation. For more information and state-specific details regarding purpose, see Appendix D.

	Goal	Design Priority	Examples
 Screener (6 states)	Rapidly identify individual children who may be at developmental risk such as dyslexia or require immediate follow-up services or interventions.	Speed and efficiency. The assessment is intended as a “first pass” flag rather than a comprehensive developmental profile.	Arkansas (ATLAS), Idaho (IRI), Kentucky (BRIGANCE)
Instructional Planning (5 states)	Generate detailed, child-level data that teachers use to differentiate and personalize day-to-day instruction in the classroom.	An actionable profile of student strengths and needs. The primary audience is an individual teacher.	Alabama (AL-ELI), Georgia (GKIDS 2.0), North Carolina (ELI)
Readiness Documentation (13 states)	Produce a point-in-time record of what an entire cohort of children knows and can do upon entering school.	Aggregate data for administrators and policymakers to measure program effectiveness or meet statutory reporting requirements.	Connecticut (KEI), Maryland (R4K), Florida (FAST)
System Alignment (6 states)	Helps support communication and coordination among families, early learning providers, schools, and state leaders around children’s transition to kindergarten.	Communication and coordination across home, early learning, and school settings (e.g., school to home or Pre-K to Kindergarten). Relationship-building is as central as the data collected.	Washington (WaKIDS), Illinois (KIDS), South Carolina (KRA)

Table 2. KEA Purpose Descriptions

States may report a purpose that falls into more than one type. In fact, many states do exactly that. When states reported purposes that touched on multiple types in assessment overviews, additional scans were conducted to identify the purpose which appeared most frequently across all state KEA documentation including administration manuals, public government web pages, and official legislative language. Figure 13 contains possible overlaps between states and purpose types. For the rest of this report, states will be classified under their single primary purpose type.

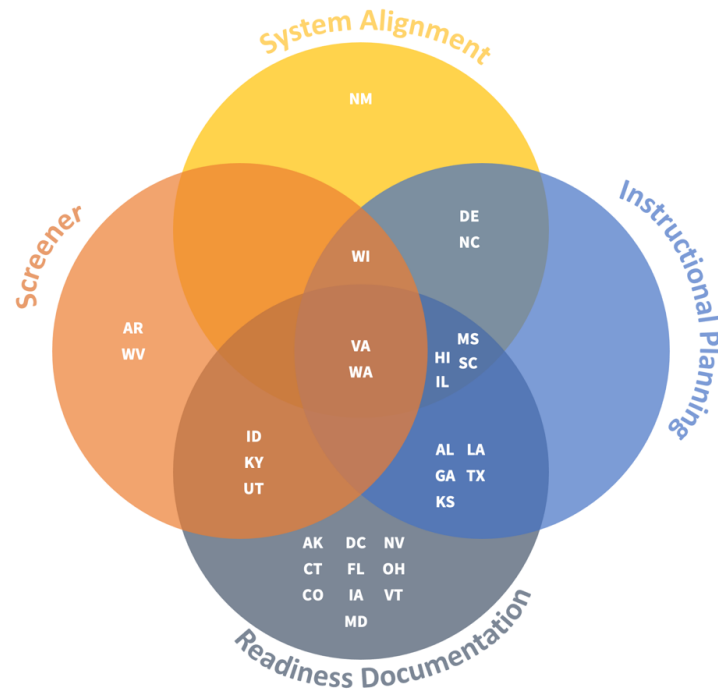


Figure 13. KEA Purpose Overlap by States that Require a KEA, SY2025-26 (n=30)

There may be a tension between the purpose a state articulates for a KEA and the purpose their tools and data practices actually serve (Regenstein et al., 2017). For instance, a state may claim their KEA supports Instructional Planning, yet select an assessment administered only once at the beginning of the year with results not available to teachers until months later. The following sub-sections explore various elements of KEA design and implementation by purpose type. As of this report's findings, 21 states do not require a KEA and therefore have no documented state-level purpose for such an assessment. These 21 states were excluded from analysis and were not sorted into a purpose type. Of the 30 states that mandate a KEA, 24 states also require a common tool. The following sub-sections only consider those 24 states. For more details on state counts, see Appendix A.

B. Proprietary vs. State-Developed Tools

A proprietary assessment is a commercially produced, "off-the-shelf" tool purchased from an external vendor. A state-developed assessment is an instrument designed and maintained directly by a state's education agency to align with specific local learning standards and state-level policy priorities. Among the 24 states that currently mandate both a kindergarten entry assessment and a common statewide tool, 16 states use proprietary commercial assessments, while 8 states employ state-developed instruments.

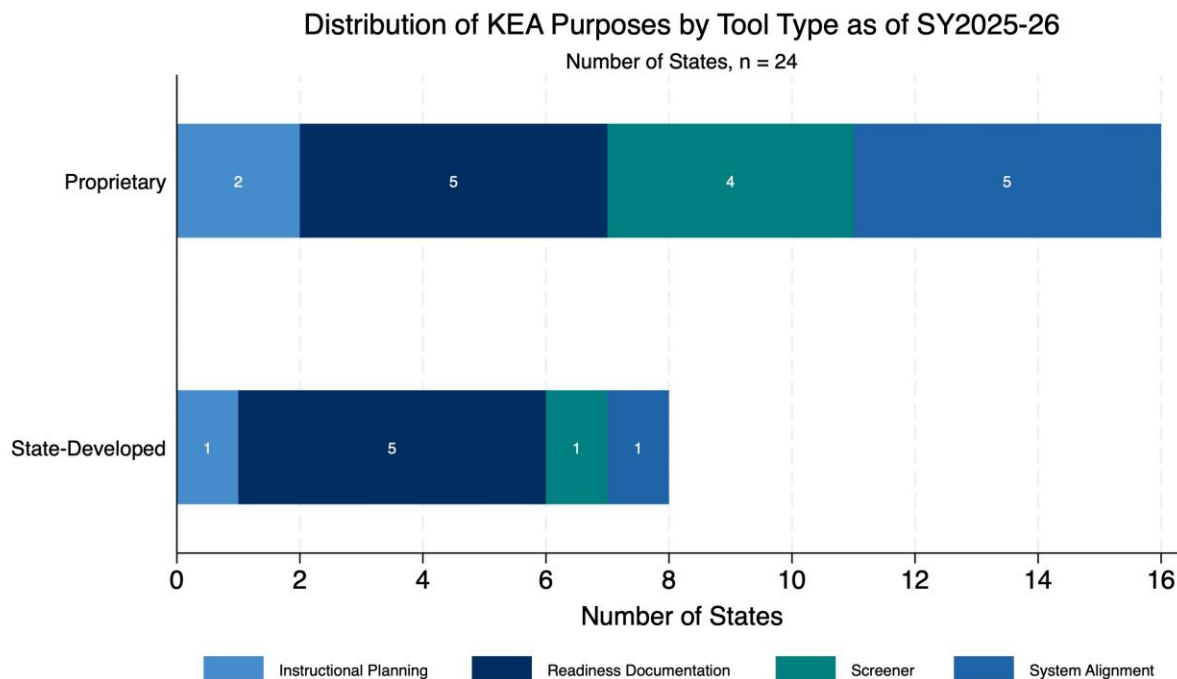


Figure 14. Distribution of KEA Purposes by Tool Type, SY2025-26 (n=24)

States face significant strategic tradeoffs when deciding between "off-the-shelf" commercial products and home-grown KEAs. Proprietary tools may offer a research base and reliability and validity testing that are difficult for individual states to replicate, but the evidence varies, and some widely used observational tools lack published inter-rater reliability studies. These vendors also often provide national calibration data, allowing states to benchmark their students' performance against a broader U.S. population rather than just a local cohort. The most widely adopted proprietary tools include Teaching Strategies GOLD (used in AL, DE, NC, NV, and WA) and Renaissance STAR (FL, MS, and MD). Other states use BRIGANCE (KY), the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (KS), EDI (NM), Acadience (UT), Pearson aimswebPlus (WI) or Amira (ID). Some states choose to use tools developed by other states, such as Hawaii and South Carolina, which use the MD-OH KRA. These states have been coded as proprietary because they did not develop the tool themselves.

Proprietary Tool Use as of SY2025-26

Of the 24 states that require a KEA and a common assessment, 16 use proprietary tools.

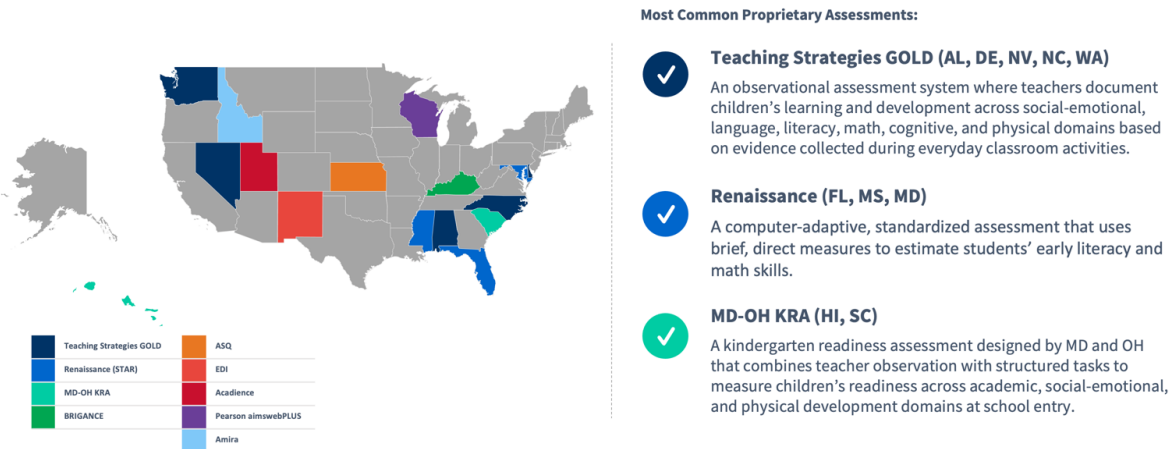


Figure 15. Proprietary Assessments Used, SY2025-26 (n=16)

On the other hand, state-developed tools allow for precise customization to a state's unique K-12 learning standards and early learning guidelines. While proprietary tools require ongoing licensing fees, state-created instruments are often viewed as less costly over the long term. Furthermore, state agencies maintain the agility to modify tools quickly in response to "real world" feedback, such as reducing the number of assessment items based on teacher feedback like Ohio did.

C. Assessment Modality: Observational, Direct, and Mixed

Among the 24 states that mandate both a kindergarten entry assessment and a common statewide tool, 12 states use observational assessments, 7 states use direct assessment, and 5 states use mixed-method approaches.

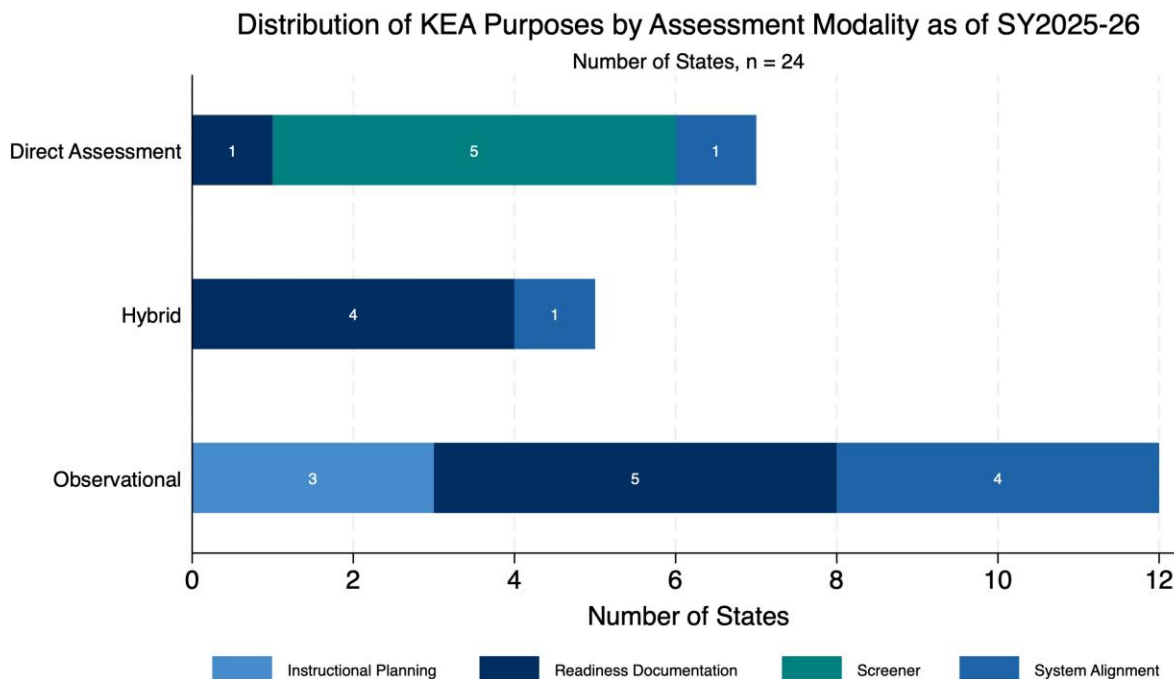


Figure 16. Distribution of KEA Purposes by Assessment Modality, SY2025-26 (n=24)

Observational assessments, often called "authentic" assessments, require teachers to document child behaviors and skills during typical, everyday classroom activities rather than in a dedicated testing environment. This type of assessment is most popular (12 states) and currently leveraged by states, including Alabama, Alaska, and Connecticut. One report from the Learning Policy Institute emphasizes that observational tools are highly compatible with play-based, child-centered environments (Yun et al., 2021). They allow teachers to collect evidence of a child's abilities during regular activities rather than in a separate testing situation, although evidence that well-conducted one-on-one assessment is stressful for children is limited (Rock & Pollack, 2002). These tools, such as Teaching Strategies GOLD or the DRDP-K, are uniquely suited to measuring non-cognitive domains like Social-Emotional Development and Approaches Toward Learning (e.g., persistence and curiosity). Despite their pedagogical appeal, observational tools rely heavily on subjective teacher judgment, which introduces bias. Research indicates that inter-rater reliability often drops significantly when teachers assess dual language learners or children with developmental delays (Joseph et al., 2019). More often than not, states that use observational methods do not require teacher training before the test is administered (Hur et al., 2026). Furthermore, the documentation process is notoriously time-intensive (Ackerman, 2018).

Direct assessment involves a familiar adult sitting with one child at a time to ask specific prompts, ranging from multiple-choice questions to performance tasks (e.g., "count these blocks"). Literature in favor of direct assessment argues that individually administered tests

by trained personnel provide a highly reliable way to assess early skills (Duncan et al., 2007). Because they are standardized, these tools are less susceptible to the "reference bias" that occurs when a teacher rates a child relative to their specific classmates rather than national norms (Reardon & Portilla, 2016). Direct assessments are used across almost all Screener states (Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Utah, and Wisconsin)⁸ because they provide the standardization and speed required to efficiently identify children at developmental risk. Critics argue that direct assessments can be inauthentic and may inadvertently measure a child's fine motor skills (if children must write or use a mouse) or "digital familiarity" (if computer-based) rather than their true cognitive ability (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024) and that "sit and stay" requirements can be developmentally inappropriate for the 4-to-7-year-old range (Yun et al, 2021).

Mixed-method states (Hawaii, Maryland, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia) attempt to combine the strengths of both formats to create a "whole child" profile. Four states report a purpose of Readiness Documentation, and one reports a purpose of System Alignment. Currently, three states in this category use the MD-OH KRA Framework, though four of the five have utilized it at some point. The MD-OH KRA framework includes observational rubrics for Social Foundations and physical skills, paired with direct performance tasks for Literacy and Numeracy/Math.

D. Technology-Enabled Assessments

Direct assessment formats are increasingly delivered through technology-based platforms. States that have adopted online or computer-based instruments include STAR Early Literacy (used by Florida's FAST, Mississippi's KRA, and Maryland's R4K) and Amira (used by Idaho's IRI). Modern tech-based assessments for kindergarten often include engaging items, interactive elements, and targeted audio supports. These features are designed to engage and assess young students who are just beginning to learn to read. Even in states that use observational rubrics, such as Alabama, Delaware, Illinois, and North Carolina, technology plays a critical role through electronic data platforms (e.g., KIDStech or Teaching Strategies GOLD) used by teachers to house notes, photographs, and videos.

Computer-based instruments often utilize computer-adaptive testing. These assessments begin with grade-level questions and automatically adjust the difficulty based on student responses. This allows for a more accurate assessment of a student's specific knowledge level within a shorter timeframe (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Technology-enabled instruments are often prioritized for Screener states because they offer a "first pass" flag with high speed and efficiency, helping to rapidly identify children who may be at developmental risk. Technology

⁸ The only Screener state that does not use direct assessment is West Virginia, which is tool dependent as the State has an approved list of tools districts may choose from ranging in assessment modality.

platforms allow teachers to access class and individual data immediately rather than waiting weeks for manual scoring or report generation (Yun et al., 2021; Ackerman, 2018).

The shift toward technology-enabled assessments has raised significant concerns regarding whether these tools are appropriate for the 4-to-7-year-old developmental range. Experts argue that requiring young children to stay seated and engaged for long periods in front of a computer is developmentally inappropriate (Yun et al., 2021). Tech-based assessments requiring children to respond by typing or operating a mouse may measure fine motor dexterity and "digital familiarity" rather than true cognitive ability (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024). Touch screen technology and the pervasiveness of mobile devices have reduced some of these issues, though concerns around appropriate levels of screentime for young children persist (Neumann et al., 2019).

Several studies have tested whether technology-based assessments are valid by checking how well their scores match non-technology measures and predict later academic performance. In the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K), researchers compared a computer-assisted reading assessment to the paper-based Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA) and found the two lined up closely, with correlations in the mid- to upper-.80s. They also found that the computer-based scores matched teachers' own ratings of students (Rock & Pollack, 2002). Other studies of computer-based screeners, such as STAR Early Literacy and Oregon's easyCBM, found that early scores reasonably predicted how well students would read later on (Clemens et al., 2015; Lai et al., 2013).

VI. WHAT STATES MEASURE: KEA DOMAINS AND SUB-DOMAINS

Summary & Key Takeaways:

- The most commonly assessed skills include Number Sense (21 states), Phonics and Letter Recognition (20 states), Phonological Awareness (20 states), and Cooperation with Peers (16 states).
- Emergent Writing (9 states), Vocabulary (9 states), and Working Memory (3 states) receive minimal attention even though research links these skills to later academic success.
- Physical Development receives less attention than the other domains despite links to academic achievement. 15 states measure Small-Motor Development and just 11 measure Large-Motor Skills.
- States face a critical tradeoff between the granularity of each domain and teacher workload. Scoring granularity ranges from simplified tools with 2-3 performance levels per domain to high-detail tools with 12-15 performance levels.

A. Overview of Domain Coverage Across States

State kindergarten entry assessments vary considerably in what developmental areas they measure, though certain core competencies appear consistently across states. Analysis of assessment content across states reveals that while most states assess foundational Literacy and Numeracy/Math skills, there is substantial variation in the breadth and depth of assessment within and across developmental domains. This variation reflects different state priorities, views of child development, and policy goals for kindergarten readiness. Despite differences in specific assessments, states measure similar core competencies:

- **Social Foundations:** Social Foundations is measured by 18 states and encompasses the social-emotional and executive functioning capacities that enable children to manage emotions, build relationships, regulate behavior, and engage successfully in learning environments. States may choose to assess things like how children recognize and express emotions, build relationships with adults, or exercise self-control.
- **Language & Literacy:** Language & Literacy is measured by 24 states and encompasses children's development of oral and written language skills that form the foundation for reading, writing, and academic learning. States may choose to assess things like a child's comprehension of stories and texts, phonological awareness, or phonics and letter recognition.
- **Numeracy/Math:** Numeracy/Math is measured by 21 states and encompasses children's foundational quantitative and spatial reasoning abilities. States may choose to assess things like children's ability to classify and compare objects, measure

and quantify attributes, and recognize, describe, and analyze shapes and spatial relationships.

- **Physical Well-Being and Motor Development:** Physical Well-Being and Motor Development is measured by 15 states and refers to children's physical capacities and self-care skills that support their engagement in school and daily activities. States may choose to assess things like gross-motor and fine-motor coordination or knowledge of safety and injury prevention practices.

For more information about overall domain coverage nationally, see Appendix E.

B. Social Foundations Domain

Social Foundations, also known as Social-Emotional (SEL) Development, shows the most variable assessment patterns across states. Of the 24 states that require a common statewide KEA, cooperation with peers (16 states) is most frequently assessed, followed by awareness and expression of emotion (14 states), persistence (10 states), and initiative (10 states). Relationships with adults (9 states) and responsible behavior (9 states) receive moderate attention, while working memory (3 states) and self-control (sometimes referred to as inhibitory control) (8 states) are less commonly assessed.

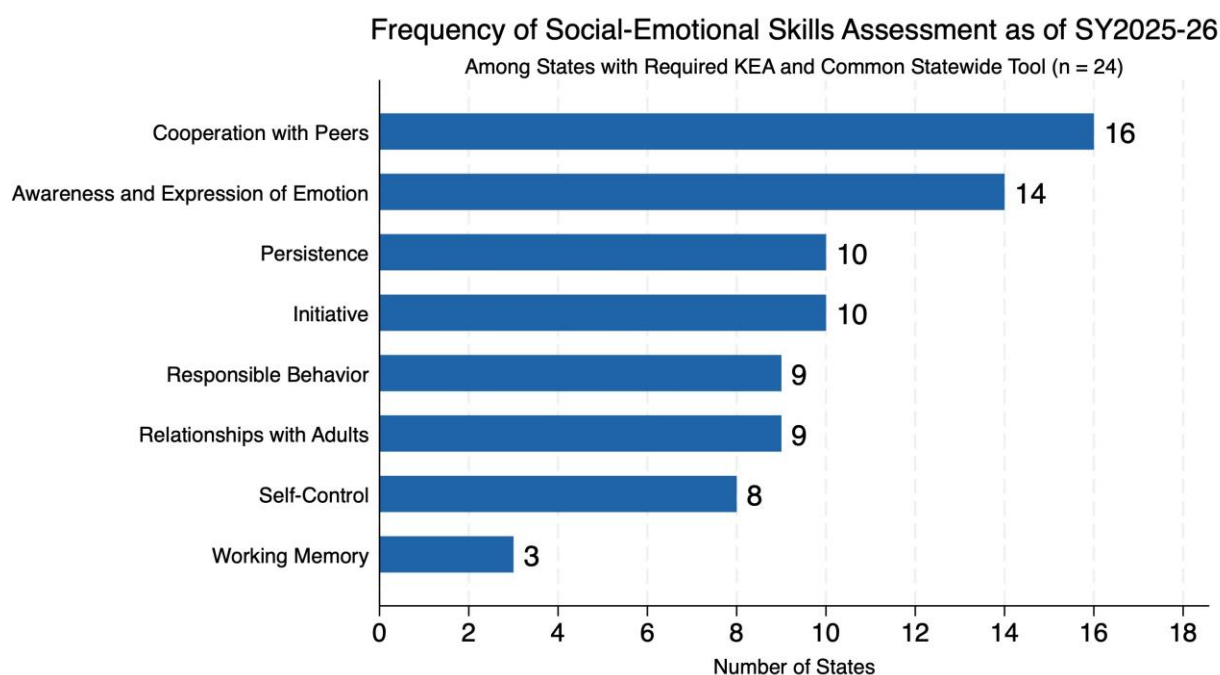


Figure 17. Social-Emotional Development Sub-Domain State Counts, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

The wide variation in sub-domain coverage reflects a design tension in KEA between measuring directly observable social behaviors (such as peer cooperation and following rules) and underlying cognitive capacities (such as working memory and inhibitory control). While observable social behaviors like cooperation are the most common focus, research indicates that underlying cognitive capacities, particularly working memory, are strong

predictors of later academic outcomes (Burchinal & Vandell, 2025; Came, 2022). Despite this, just 3 states assess working memory.

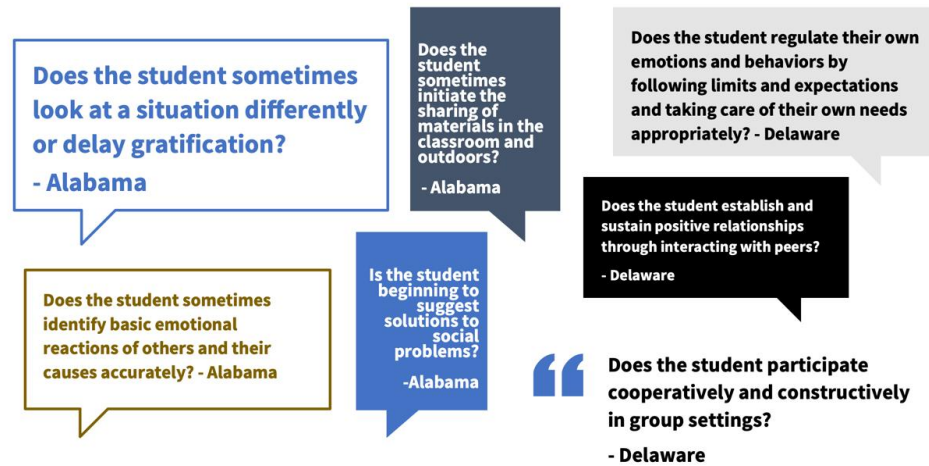


Figure 18. Social Foundations Example Questions from Alabama and Delaware as of SY2025-26

C. Language & Literacy Domain

Nationally, Language & Literacy receives the most extensive assessment coverage of any domain. Of the 24 states that require a common KEA, phonics and letter recognition (20 states), phonological awareness (20 states), and story/text comprehension (20 states) were the most measured. Vocabulary (9 states) and grammar (2 states) were the least measured.

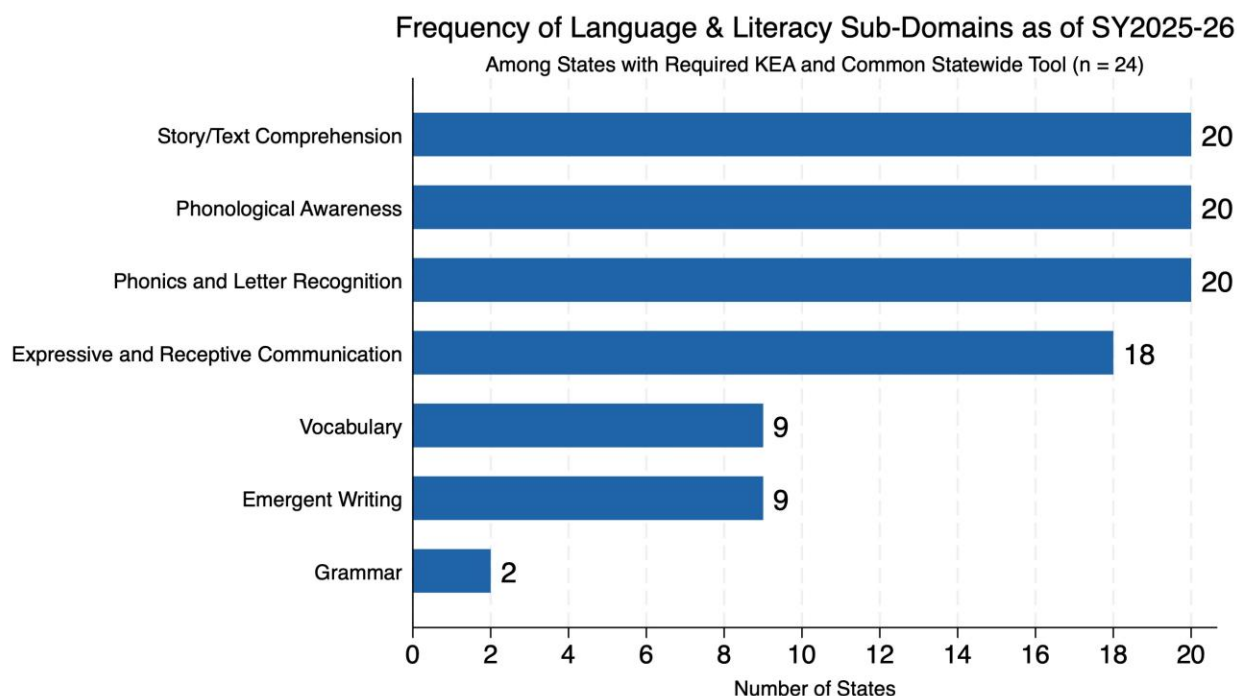


Figure 19. Language & Literacy Sub-Domain State Counts, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

The current landscape reveals a significant alignment between state policy and the "structured literacy" (or "science of reading") movement, which emphasizes discrete, code-based skills (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2026) like phonics and letter recognition (20 states) and phonological awareness (20 states). These "gateway" skills are prioritized because they provide a rapid and reliable signal of a child's immediate readiness for formal reading instruction. In Utah (Acadience), phonics and letter recognition are measured through Letter Naming Fluency, while in North Carolina (ELI) and Alabama (AL-ELI), teachers use observational progressions to track a child's ability to name and recognize letters. States using the Renaissance STAR Early Literacy (FL, MS) utilize computer-adaptive tasks where children match words to pictures, while New Mexico uses observational indicators of a child's general interest in and understanding of language, an approach that is less aligned with that emphasis.

The relatively low attention to vocabulary (9 states) represents a critical gap worth highlighting. While phonics skills are "constrained", meaning they are eventually mastered by most students, vocabulary is an unconstrained skill that serves as a powerful long-term predictor of reading comprehension into the later elementary grades (Came, 2022; Stull, 2015).

D. Mathematics Domain

Math is also broadly assessed across KEAs. Of the 24 states that require a common KEA, 21 measure number sense and 10 measure number operations. 12 states measure classification and 6 states measure measurement and 11 measure shapes . Number sense typically evaluates a child's ability to rote count in sequence, recognize written numerals, and demonstrate one-to-one correspondence (e.g., one count for each object). Number operations assess a child's beginning understanding of addition as "putting together" and subtraction as "taking apart". For example, in Illinois (KIDS), this includes identifying the new number of objects after one is added or removed from a small set.

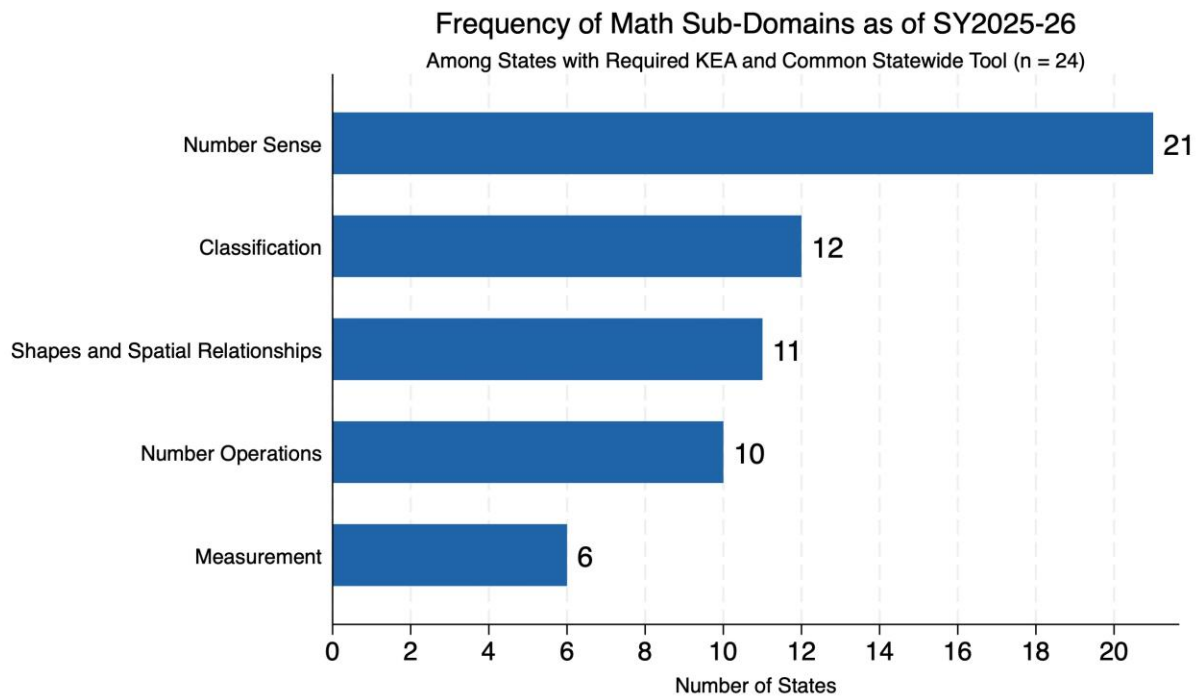


Figure 20. Math Sub-Domain State Counts, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

The striking convergence on number sense mirrors the Literacy field's convergence on phonics. This suggests a parallel "foundational skills" policy consensus across both domains, where states prioritize discrete, easily measured "gateway" skills.

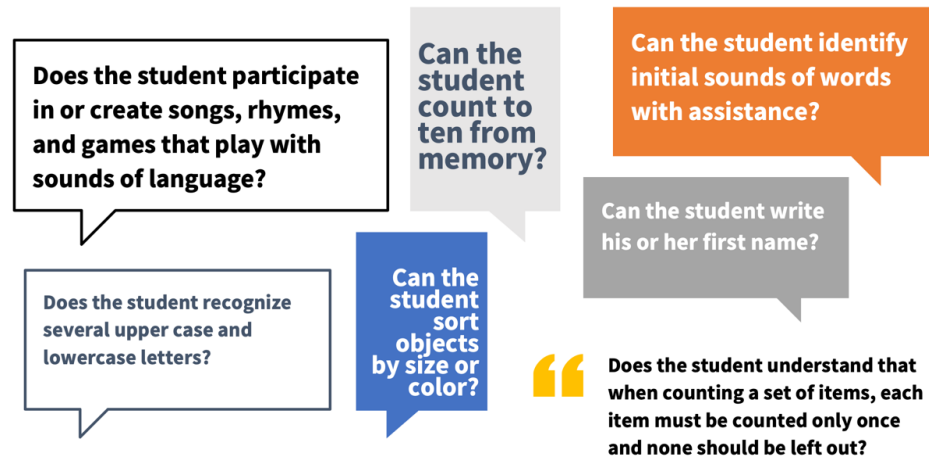


Figure 21. Literacy and Math Example Questions from Alaska

While the push for structured literacy and Phonics is grounded in decades of intensive research, the evidence base for prioritizing discrete number sense at kindergarten entry as the primary predictor of success is relatively less developed. Some educational experts caution that the "obsession" with discrete knowledge (e.g., naming numbers and shapes) reflects auditory discrimination and memory rather than true conceptual understanding of how the world works (Sorrels, 2012).

E. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development Domain

Among the domains assessed, physical development is the domain receiving the least systematic attention across state kindergarten assessments. Of the 24 states that require a common KEA, 15 measure small-motor development, 11 measure large motor development, 5 measure personal care tasks, and 4 states measure safety and injury prevention.

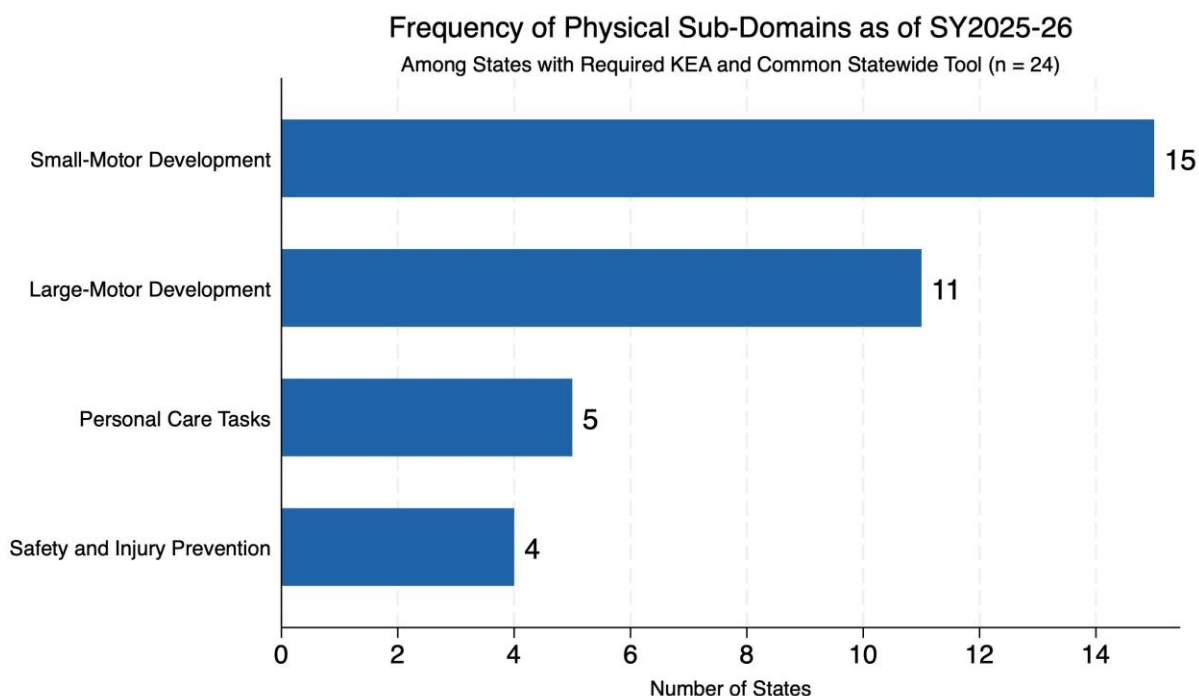


Figure 22. Physical Sub-Domain State Counts, SY2025-26 (n = 24)

Most states prioritize skills directly linked to academic learning, often treating broader health and wellness indicators as supplemental rather than core components of readiness. The Physical domain can be difficult to assess reliably. In Washington, while teachers' ratings were usually within one point of expert scores (84% exact or adjacent agreement), these small discrepancies were enough to misidentify the readiness status of three out of four students in a study portfolio when scores fell near decision-making cut-points (Joseph et al., 2019).

Small-motor skills are assessed more frequently than large-motor coordination, likely due to its direct relevance to writing and other academic tasks. Research indicates that fine motor skills can predict academic outcomes even when controlling for early cognitive abilities (Came, 2022). In KEAs, teachers or assessment administrators may be asked to observe a child's grip and manipulation of writing tools or rate a child's ability to use fingers and hands to manipulate small objects. Large motor items typically evaluate locomotor skills such as running, hopping, jumping, and balancing. Kentucky's BRIGANCE Screener includes tasks like standing on one foot for ten seconds or walking backward toe-to-heel.

F. Scoring Granularity

State assessments vary dramatically in their level of measurement detail. Granularity refers to how finely assessment tools divide children's skill development within each domain, with the maximum number of distinct performance levels per domain ranging from 2 to 15 among

states mandating common tools. Performance levels are the distinct categories or stages used to classify a child's ability within a specific skill domain on an assessment. This granularity reflects a fundamental policy choice between precision (detailed developmental profiles) and practicality (minimizing administrative burden). High-detail scoring is most useful when assessment domains capture meaningfully distinct information. Prior research on observational kindergarten-entry assessments raises concerns about discriminant validity and rater effects, including evidence that teacher-rated domains may be highly correlated and less differentiated than direct assessments (Miller-Bains et al., 2017; Russo et al., 2019). If items within a domain, or domains within a teacher-rated measure, are highly correlated, additional performance levels may add burden without giving teachers substantially more actionable information for instructional planning. For more detail on scoring granularity, see Appendix G.

Granularity Tier	Key Tradeoffs
Tier 1: High Detail	Pros: High precision for instructional differentiation; captures small developmental steps Cons: extreme teacher time burden; requires extensive training
Tier 2: Moderate Detail	Pros: Strikes a middle ground; captures key milestones without excessive documentation Cons: Less diagnostic depth than Tier 1 assessments
Tier 3: Simplified	Pros: High feasibility and efficiency; reduces administrative load on teachers Cons: May mask important variation; limited value for personalized instruction

Table 3. Scoring Granularity Tiers, SY2025-26 (n=24)

The most common approach nationally is the Simplified Tier, with 10 states utilizing just 2-3 performance levels per domain, often to prioritize administrative efficiency. States employing Teaching Strategies GOLD (e.g., DE, NC, NV, WA) cluster at the highest level of granularity (15 performance levels), as this tool is specifically designed to provide the fine-grained progressions needed for Instructional Planning (Teaching Strategies LLC, 2015). However, high granularity creates substantial documentation burdens. Highly detailed assessments can require extensive classroom observation time. When granularity becomes excessive, teachers may deviate from protocols or skip items to manage their workload, directly threatening data reliability and validity (Yun et al., 2021; Ackerman, 2018). Granularity, however, is only one design choice that shapes assessment outcomes. Equally consequential is what criteria assessments use to assign those scores.

VII. CROSS-STATE PATTERNS AND EMERGING THEMES

Summary & Key Takeaways:

- Identical assessment tools serve fundamentally different purposes across states based on policy priorities.
 - States have established a de facto national consensus prioritizing four "gateway skills" as essential readiness indicators. Phonics and letter recognition, number sense, phonological awareness, and cooperation with peers can be considered a widely shared definition of school "readiness".
 - States fall along a spectrum from comprehensive "whole child" assessments covering multiple domains to narrow Literacy-focused Screeners designed for rapid risk identification.
-

A. Purpose Varies Widely, Even When States Use Identical Assessments

The design of a kindergarten entry assessment does not strictly dictate its use; instead, a state's "theory of action" determines whether a tool functions as a policy snapshot, an instructional guide, or a way to support communication and coordination among stakeholders. For example, Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) is utilized by North Carolina and Alabama for child-level Instructional Planning, whereas Nevada uses the identical instrument for Readiness Documentation to determine what percentage of children enter school "ready to learn". Similarly, Renaissance STAR Early Literacy is used in Florida, Mississippi, and Maryland but serves diverse purposes of Readiness Documentation (Florida and Maryland) and System Alignment (Mississippi). This divergence demonstrates that states often adapt identical proprietary tools to serve fundamentally different strategic goals.

B. Gateway Skills

Four specific sub-domains show high adoption across the states that require a common KEA, constituting what can be considered a widely shared definition of school 'readiness' across the 24 states of analysis: phonics and letter recognition (20 states), math number sense (21 states), phonological awareness (20 states), and cooperation with peers (16 states). Together, these gateway skills suggest a 'foundational skills' policy consensus where states prioritize readily observable indicators that can be efficiently assessed and that provide a rapid signal of readiness for formal K–12 instruction. In contrast to the gateway skills, several sub-domains with strong research backing for long-term academic success are frequently omitted from state-level mandates: emergent writing (9 states), vocabulary (9 states), and working memory (3 states).

Cross-state analysis reveals a theoretical tension in how states conceptualize and measure social-emotional readiness. Most states (e.g., 16 states measuring peer cooperation) focus on observable behaviors (such as following rules and getting along with others) that are easily documented during classroom routines. A minority of states attempt to measure internal executive function capacities, such as working memory (3 states) and self-control (8 states). This divergence is significant because while behavioral markers are easier for teachers to rate reliably, internal executive functions often possess higher predictive power for long-term success (Came, 2022). States that rely solely on behavioral checklists may overlook the cognitive self-regulation skills that are essential for independent learning as students transition into higher grades (Duncan et al., 2007).

C. Comprehensive vs. Focused Assessment Strategies

The national landscape reveals two distinct state philosophies regarding assessment breadth. States like Alabama, Alaska, and Connecticut utilize frameworks with 10+ items, covering all four major domains with significant depth. These comprehensive tools aim to provide a "whole child" profile that can support diverse policy and instructional goals. In contrast, states such as Florida, Mississippi, and Idaho employ narrower Screeners primarily focused on Literacy. These focused tools prioritize speed and efficiency to rapidly identify children who may be at developmental risk and require immediate intervention. Case studies from statewide KEA implementation suggest that while comprehensive assessments offer more detail for Instructional Planning, they also impose a significantly higher documentation burden on teachers (Ackerman, 2018), which can act as a primary implementation barrier.

VIII. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Summary & Key Takeaways:

- KEA data comparability is limited by conflicting state goals and diverse assessment designs. States prioritize different objectives (administrative efficiency, validity and reliability, instructional guidance to name a few) that produce vastly different formats, making cross-state and longitudinal comparisons difficult.
 - Kindergarten entry policies and testing windows introduce confounding variables that make it difficult to compare readiness across states.
-

A. On Trade-Offs with Comparability Over Time and Place

A state's stated goals for a KEA (sometimes called its "theory of action") determine whether a tool functions as an instructional guide, a policy snapshot, or a way to support communication and coordination among stakeholders (Schilder & Carolan, 2014). State KEA policies are driven by a variety of goals, including minimizing administrative burden, ensuring clinical reliability for identification of students with additional learning needs, and providing immediate results for instructional guidance. These goals often conflict, as a tool designed for rapid screening may not provide the detailed diagnostic profiles required for effective Instructional Planning.

As a result, states use vastly different assessment modalities and content ranging from direct computer-adaptive testing to observational rubrics. Because these tools measure different constructs using different methods, KEA data is difficult to compare across state lines or even across different longitudinal cohorts (Bassok & Latham, 2017; Reardon et al., 2019; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024; Weisenfeld et al., 2020). Additionally, differences in state learning standards further complicate comparability, as each state may define kindergarten readiness differently at the foundational level.

From 2010-2025, 16 of the 24 states with a common KEA have changed their assessment tool. Significant professional development investments are at risk of being undermined. Tool instability often forces teachers to "restart" their learning of assessment and complex scoring protocols, which may affect overall buy-in and morale (Yun et al., 2021).

Sometimes a tool change might be required. For example, Maryland transitioned tools in 2025 after it was found their previous tool might have been biased against English language learners (Maryland Department of Education, 2024). When these changes must be made, it is important to develop formal transition plans that prioritize data continuity. When Vermont transitioned from KRS to R4K!S in SY2015-16, the redesign caused results to be unable to be compared before SY2015-16 (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). This makes it much harder to accurately evaluate long term effects in the state.

In a paper by Ho et al. (2026), they find out of 589 statewide assessment “regimes”, just 71% last one year before changes are made. 4 years out, just 47% remain (Ho et al., 2026). This means less than half of states use the same assessment for more than 4 years. “Churn” in assessments makes comparison over time hard. This churn also makes it difficult to establish the stable metrics required to track the effectiveness of state-funded preschool initiatives and other policy changes over time.

B. On Domain Coverage

States using assessment limited to Literacy and Numeracy/Math may want to evaluate the research showing that Social-Emotional and Physical Development are linked to later participation and achievement (Came, 2022; Yun et al., 2021; Hur et al. 2026) if they state a purpose of Instructional Planning, Readiness Documentation, or System Alignment. While cognitive skills are often prioritized, a child's ability to pay attention and inhibit impulsive behavior can be just as foundational for taking advantage of classroom learning opportunities (Claessens et al., 2009).

C. On Assessment Design and Administration

In assessment administration, state KEA systems range from objective direct assessment by trained examiners to teacher checklists completed over the 60 days.

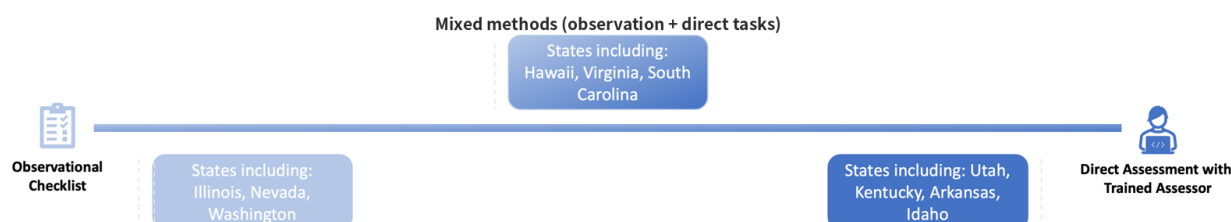


Figure 23. Assessment Modality Spectrum: From Observation-Based to Direct Assessment Tools

Research indicates that observational assessments are particularly susceptible to subjective teacher judgment and rater bias, making them less comparable across different environments than standardized direct assessments. Because these scales are reported by teachers, they are not standardized in the same way as task-based measures (Reardon & Portilla, 2016). Teachers may assess a child's readiness relative to their current classroom peers rather than against stable national norms, introducing what researchers term "reference bias" (Reardon & Portilla, 2016). Additionally, teachers may rate students differently over time as student norms and expectations change, which makes it difficult to use teacher reports to estimate genuine shifts in children's skills across different cohorts (Bassok & Latham, 2017). While rarely intentional, this subjectivity can result in over- or underestimating a child's proficiency (Ackerman, 2018), and these evaluations can be influenced by a student's socioeconomic background, race, ethnicity, and disability status (Joseph et al., 2019). Assessors may also fall victim to a "halo effect," where a general

impression of a child skews ratings across all developmental dimensions rather than focusing on specific evidence for each item (Kiguel et al., 2024). This subjectivity is particularly pronounced when teachers are unfamiliar with a measure's scoring rubric or lack sufficient training in making reliable judgments (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024), challenges that can be compounded by the perception that scores will lead to consequential decisions for the student or program (Ackerman, 2018).

D. On Data Transparency

Publicly accessible data regarding outcomes, cost, and reliability of KEAs is limited across states. Although many states administer kindergarten entry assessments, most results remain unavailable for public research, evaluation, or policy development.

States balance multiple priorities when deciding whether to publish KEA data. Some states do not publish their data to emphasize their KEA is a formative assessment not to be used to punish or rank children. For example, Georgia does not publish statewide KEA results to maintain a strict focus on formative assessment and to prevent the data from being misused for high-stake accountability or deficit-based labeling (Georgia Department of Education, 2025). Other states have concerns around inconsistent or inaccurate data. One report from Hur et al. (2026) found that primary obstacles to data analysis included challenges obtaining the data from the schools, inconsistency from districts using different assessments or teachers rating student abilities inconsistently. The same report found that about one-third of states reported challenges of inaccurate data.

According to a report by Hur et al. (2026), only 40% of states with active KEAs break down public data by child demographics such as race, disability, or income and 17.1% report readiness data by the type of prior care a child received (e.g., center-based vs. home-based), which limits understanding of systemic factors influencing school entry skills. Maryland has successfully used aggregated profiles to secure increased legislative investment in early childhood programming and now reports disaggregated data as well (Regenstein et al., 2017; Herring et al., 2022). State administrators in Illinois have used public data to make the case for increased investment in subsidized preschool and to map readiness levels by legislative district to inform specific policy decisions (Yun et al., 2021).

The degree of data transparency often reveals the underlying premise of how assessment data should be used to improve outcomes according to the KEA's purpose. For example, Washington's WaKIDS assessment has a stated purpose of structurally connecting families, teachers, and policymakers (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.). Washington is one of the few states that makes its data publicly available for analysis and as a result has strong independent validity and reliability studies on WaKIDS. One such study by

Joseph et al. (2019) found that the WaKIDS assessment was notably weaker when teachers assessed dual language learners, and Washington followed in 2020 by launching the Dual Language Initiative (Williams et al., 2020).

E. On Kindergarten Entry Policy & Timing

A student's eligibility for kindergarten is often defined solely by a child's birth date (Feeney, 2016). Currently, 45 states and Washington DC have statutes specifying cutoff dates in which a child must turn 5 years old before, with the most popular (22 states) date being September 1st of an academic school year. Over the last 30 years, there has been a shift away from late-year (December/January) cutoffs toward dates corresponding with the start of the school year (September), suggesting a policy attempt to address perceived "readiness problems" by ensuring an older, more developmentally mature cohort (Ackerman & Barnett, 2014). Parents may also choose to delay their age-eligible child's entry, otherwise known as redshirting (Bassok & Reardon, 2013). Nationally, between 4 and 5.5% of parents hold their children back based on the assumption that extra time will alleviate future academic struggles; male, White, and high-SES children are more likely to be redshirted (Bassok & Reardon, 2013). Data from Delaware shows redshirting rates fell in 2020 during the pandemic but surged by 44% in 2021 (Fidel et al., 2024). In areas with high prevalence of redshirting, kindergarten entry assessment scores may be higher because the cohort is older and has had more time to learn. States also mandate windows for KEA completion that range from the first 20 instructional days in Ohio to the first 6–10 weeks in Vermont. Because children develop rapidly at this age, variation in testing windows means assessments often capture varying amounts of school-based instruction rather than "pure" entry-level skills (Bassok & Latham, 2017; Le et al., 2025). If the primary goal is a beginning of the school year one-time readiness check or a Screener, the age of the child is likely less critical; however, for longitudinal tracking, the time elapsed since the first day of school is a significant confounding variable.

Research in Illinois confirms a positive relationship between age (in months) and readiness scores across all domains, suggesting that variation within a single classroom is often a function of development associated with age rather than a deficit in preschool preparation (Kiguel et al., 2024).

IX. CONCLUSION

This report's analysis reveals both growing commitment to understanding children's early development and significant challenges that remain in measuring what truly matters for school success. Our analysis documents that 30 states now require kindergarten entry assessments and 26 states mandate a common tool, with 24 states both requiring a KEA and mandating that the tool is the same.

Four major challenges emerge from this analysis. First, limited data transparency constrains the potential value of these assessments. While some states publish kindergarten entry assessment data, many do not yet make this information publicly available. This limits opportunities for research, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Second, turnover in assessment tools creates instability that prevents longitudinal tracking of progress. Sixteen of the 24 states that require a common KEA have changed their assessment tool or system in recent years⁹, making it difficult to distinguish actual improvements in children's development from differences in measurement approaches. When the assessment itself changes, any observed shifts in readiness rates could reflect the new tool's different item coverage or scoring criteria rather than genuine changes in children's skills.

Third, the interaction between kindergarten entry age policies and assessment design remains poorly understood. Variation in age cutoff dates across states, combined with varying rates of delayed entry, means that kindergarten classrooms contain children at different developmental stages. This age heterogeneity complicates the interpretation of readiness data, as younger children in a cohort may appear less ready simply due to their age rather than lack of preparation, yet assessments rarely account for these developmental timing differences when reporting results.

Fourth, questions about the validity and use of KEA data remain unresolved (Ackerman, 2018; Hur et al., 2026; Regenstein et al., 2017). The validity of observational assessments is a particular concern, given differences among raters and very high correlations among items and domains (Miller-Bains et al., 2017; Russo et al., 2019; Goldstein et al., 2017). Little is known about whether KEA data are used in any productive way, even though the assessments are costly. Until these questions are answered, the benefits of KEAs relative to their costs remain uncertain.

⁹Oregon, which no longer requires a KEA, has announced a tool change based on the development of a future revised assessment. The total count across all states regardless of if they require a KEA currently or not is seventeen.

This report also opens several avenues for future research:

- Longitudinal tracking of domain coverage trends to understand how state priorities evolve
- Validation studies of KEAs, both state-developed and proprietary, to show whether they meet psychometric standards and whether scores collected early in the school year are reliable and valid indicators of later achievement, and whether this holds across instruments, domains, and outcomes
- Research on what predicts KEA scores (for example, child age, family income, preschool experience, and rater characteristics) and what outcomes KEA scores predict, and how this varies by instrument
- Linkage analyses connecting assessment design features to student outcome data
- Systematic examination of the kindergarten entry age and assessment interaction to disentangle developmental maturity from program effectiveness
- Examination of how the information from KEAs are used
- How teachers record data, where the data are stored (vendor platforms, state portals, local systems, or paper), how quickly and in what form results reach teachers

Ultimately, this report documents a field in motion: more states are measuring kindergarten readiness than ever before, yet the diversity of goals, tools, policies, and practices makes it difficult to draw clear comparisons or firm conclusions. The first day of kindergarten marks a pivotal moment in a child's life, and the assessments used to capture it carry real consequences for how children, classrooms, and programs are understood.

Understanding the current KEA landscape, with all its variation and complexity, is essential groundwork for making sense of what these assessments can and cannot tell us. Only by first understanding how readiness is measured can we begin to understand what it truly reveals about children entering school.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: State-by-State KEA Policy as of SY2025-26

State	Ever Had Statewide KEA Requirements?	KEA Currently Required Statewide?	Statute	Is there a KEA Assessment Window Policy?	Common KEA Required?
Alabama	Yes	Yes	Ala. Code § 26-24-23	Yes, required within 60 days of enrollment	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Alaska	Yes	Yes	Alaska Admin. Code tit. 4, § 06.712	Yes, required by November 1	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Arizona	Yes	No	Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. §15-701	N/A	No, district selected
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-16-203	Yes, required within first 30 days of the school year*	Yes, State-mandated single tool
California	No	No	Cal. Educ. Code § 8972	Yes, September 1	No, district selected
Colorado	Yes	Yes	Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 22-7-1004; Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 22-7-1014	Yes, required on the first day of school through the first 60 calendar days.	No, State-approved list
Connecticut	Yes	Yes	Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 10-500	Yes, required between Oct–Dec	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Delaware	Yes	Yes	Del. Code Ann. tit. 14, § 151	Yes, required within first 30 days of kindergarten entry	Yes, State-mandated single tool
District of Columbia	Yes	Yes	D.C. Code § 38-755.03; D.C. Code § 38-755.0	Yes, required to report results by October 1	No, district selected
Florida	Yes	Yes	Fla. Stat. Ann. §1008.2125; Fla. Stat. Ann. §1008.25	Yes, required within first 30 days of the school	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Georgia	Yes	Yes	Ga. Code Ann. § 20-2-151	Yes, required within first 6 weeks of	Yes, State-mandated single tool

State	Ever Had Statewide KEA Requirements?	KEA Currently Required Statewide?	Statute	Is there a KEA Assessment Window Policy?	Common KEA Required?
				kindergarten	
Hawaii	Yes	Yes	Haw. Rev. Stat. §302A-1165	Yes, required within first 30 days of admission	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Idaho	Yes	Yes	Idaho law (section 33-1806)	Yes, required by October 31*	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Illinois	Yes	Yes	Ill. Admin. Code tit. 23, 1.420	Yes, required within first 40 days of attendance	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Indiana	No	No	Ind. Code Ann. § 20-33-2-7	N/A	No, no KEA system
Iowa	Yes	Yes	Iowa Code Ann. § 279.60; Iowa Code Ann. § 279.68	No specific window prescribed, but required at the beginning of school year	No, State-approved list
Kansas	Yes	Yes	Kan. Admin. Regs. 91-31-32	Yes, required by September 22	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Kentucky	Yes	Yes	704 Ky. Admin. Regs. 5:070	Yes, required no earlier than 15 calendar days before the start of the school year and no later than the 30th instructional day	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 17:391.11	Yes, required within first 30 school days of the school year	No, State-approved list
Maine	No	No	N/A	N/A	No, no KEA system
Maryland	Yes	Yes	Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-210; MD ADC 13A.08.01.02-3	Yes, first day of school through October 10	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Massachusetts	No	No	Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. 15D § 12	N/A	No, State-approved list
Michigan	Yes	No	Public Act 108 of 2017 (State School Aid Act)**	Yes, by November 1	No, district selected

State	Ever Had Statewide KEA Requirements?	KEA Currently Required Statewide?	Statute	Is there a KEA Assessment Window Policy?	Common KEA Required?
Minnesota	No	No***	Minn. Stat. Ann. § 124D.162	N/A	No, no KEA system
Mississippi	Yes	Yes	Miss. Code. Ann. § 37-21-11	Yes, by September 19*	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Missouri	No	No	N/A	Yes, required within the first 6 weeks of the school year	No, State-approved list
Montana	No	No	N/A	N/A	No, no KEA system
Nebraska	No	No	92 Neb. Admin. Code Ch. 10, 004	N/A	No, no KEA system
Nevada	Yes	Yes	Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 392.040	Yes, no later than 45 school days after the beginning of the school year	Yes, State-mandated single tool
New Hampshire	No	No	N/A	N/A	No, no KEA system
New Jersey	No	No	N.J. Admin. Code §18A: 7C-6.3	N/A	No, no KEA system
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	N.M. Admin. Code 6.30.5.12	Yes, between February–May	Yes, State-mandated single tool
New York	No	No	N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 8, § 117.2-3	N/A	No, no KEA system
North Carolina	Yes	Yes	N.C. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 115C-83.5	Yes, required within first 60 days of school	Yes, State-mandated single tool
North Dakota	No	No	N.D. Cent. Code Ann. § 15.1-21-23	N/A	No, district selected
Ohio	Yes	Yes	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3301.0715	Yes, first day of instruction through 20th instructional day	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Oklahoma	No	No	Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 70, § 1210.282; Okla. Stat. Ann.	Yes, required within the first 30 days of school	No, district selected

State	Ever Had Statewide KEA Requirements?	KEA Currently Required Statewide?	Statute	Is there a KEA Assessment Window Policy?	Common KEA Required?
			tit. 70, § 1210.283		
Oregon	Yes	No	Or. Admin. R. 581-022-2130	Yes, required within the first 6 weeks of the school year	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Pennsylvania	No	No	N/A	Yes, required within the first 45 days of the school year	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Rhode Island	No	No	R.I. Gen. Laws Ann. § 16-67-2	N/A	No, no KEA system
South Carolina	Yes	Yes	S.C. Code Ann. § 59-152-33; S.C. Code Ann. § 59-155-150"	Yes, required within first 45 days of school year	Yes, State-mandated single tool
South Dakota	No	No	N/A	N/A	No, no KEA system
Tennessee	No	No	N/A	Yes, required within first 45 days of the school year	No, district selected
Texas	Yes	Yes	Tex. Educ. Code § 28.006(g)	Yes, required within first 60 days of the school year	No, State-approved list
Utah	Yes	Yes	Utah Code Ann. §53F-185-4	Yes, required 3 weeks before the first day of school through 3 weeks after the first day of school (≈6-week window)	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Vermont	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes, required within first 6–10 weeks of school	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Virginia	Yes	Yes	Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-14	Yes, August 18-November 7*	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Washington	Yes	Yes	Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 28A.150.315; Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 28A.655.080	Yes, required within first 8 weeks of kindergarten	Yes, State-mandated single tool

State	Ever Had Statewide KEA Requirements?	KEA Currently Required Statewide?	Statute	Is there a KEA Assessment Window Policy?	Common KEA Required?
West Virginia	Yes	Yes	W. Va. Code R. § 126-42-4.1.a.6 (WVBE Policy 2510)	Yes, first 30 days	No, State-approved list
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	Wis. Stat. § 118.016; 2023 Wis. Act 20; 2023 Wis. Act 192	Yes, by the 45th calendar day after the first day of school*	Yes, State-mandated single tool
Wyoming	No	No	Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 21-3-401	N/A	No, no KEA system
Total # of Yes	33	30	N/A	36	26

*Indicates a state tests multiple times a year (e.g., at mid-year and/or end of year).

**Michigan statewide district requirement removed by Public Act 48 of 2021

***Minnesota enacted legislation in 2023 directing the state to develop a statewide kindergarten assessment. However, the Minnesota Kindergarten Fall Assessment (MnKFA) was not administered during the 2025–26 school year. A pilot is planned for 2026–27, followed by statewide administration in 2027–28. Minnesota is therefore classified as having no active KEA for 2025–26.

Appendix B: Kindergarten Entry Policies as of SY2025-26

State	Kindergarten Attendance Required?	Kindergarten Age Cutoff	Kindergarten Cutoff Date
Alabama	No	Statewide	9/1
Alaska	No	Statewide	9/1
Arizona	No	Statewide	9/1
Arkansas	Yes	Statewide	8/1
California	No	Statewide	9/1
Colorado	No	Locally Determined	N/A
Connecticut	Yes	Statewide	9/1
Delaware	Yes	Statewide	8/31
District of Columbia	Yes	Statewide	9/30
Florida	No	Statewide	9/1
Georgia	No	Statewide	9/1
Hawaii	Yes	Statewide	7/31
Idaho	No	Statewide	9/1
Illinois	No	Statewide	9/1
Indiana	No	Statewide	8/1
Iowa	No	Statewide	9/15
Kansas	No	Statewide	8/31
Kentucky	No	Statewide	8/1
Louisiana	Yes	Statewide	9/30
Maine	Yes	Statewide	10/15
Maryland	Yes	Statewide	9/1
Massachusetts	No	Locally Determined	N/A
Michigan	No	Statewide	9/1
Minnesota	No	Statewide	9/1
Mississippi	No	Statewide	9/1

State	Kindergarten Attendance Required?	Kinderdaten Age Cutoff	Kindergarten Cutoff Date
Missouri	No	Statewide	8/1
Montana	No	Statewide	9/10
Nebraska	Yes	Statewide	7/31
Nevada	Yes	Statewide	8/1
New Hampshire	No	Locally Determined	N/A
New Jersey	No	Statewide	10/1
New Mexico	Yes	Statewide	9/1
New York	No	Locally Determined	N/A
North Carolina	No	Statewide	8/31
North Dakota	No	Statewide	8/1
Ohio	Yes	Statewide	First Day of School
Oklahoma	Yes	Statewide	9/1
Oregon	No	Statewide	9/1
Pennsylvania	No	Locally Determined	N/A
Rhode Island	Yes	Statewide	9/1
South Carolina	Yes	Statewide	9/1
South Dakota	Yes	Statewide	9/1
Tennessee	Yes	Statewide	8/15
Texas	No	Statewide	9/1
Utah	No	Statewide	9/1
Vermont	No	Statewide	1/1
Virginia	Yes	Statewide	9/30
Washington	No	Statewide	8/31
West Virginia	Yes	Statewide	7/1
Wisconsin	Yes	Statewide	9/1
Wyoming	No	Statewide	8/1

State	Kindergarten Attendance Required?	Kinderdaten Age Cutoff	Kindergarten Cutoff Date
Total # of Yes	20	N/A	N/A

Appendix C: Current KEA Information by State as of SY2025-26

State	Current KEA/System	Year Current Assessment Version Implemented	Current Assessment Type	Any Statewide Tool Change?
Alabama	Alabama Early Learning Inventory (AL ELI)	2024	Vendor-developed (TS GOLD)	Yes, reduced number of items
Alaska	Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP)	2000	State Developed	No
Arizona	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Arkansas	ATLAS K-3 Screener	2024	State Developed	Yes, updated items*****
California	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colorado	Kindergarten School Readiness (KSR) Assessment	2015	Vendor-developed state-approved list (Acadience Math K-6, BRIGANCE Early Childhood Screens III, COR for Kindergarten, DRDP-K, Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, 4th Edition (DIAL-4), FastBridge earlyMath, FastBridge earlyReading, FastBridge SAEBRs, Teaching Strategies GOLD, ISIP Math Assessment, North Carolina Kindergarten Entry Assessment)	No
Connecticut	Kindergarten Entrance Inventory (KEI)	2007	State Developed	No
Delaware	Delaware Early Learner Survey (DE-ELS)	2015	Vendor-developed (TS GOLD)	No
District of Columbia	District of Columbia Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)	2015	Tool-Dependent*****	No
Florida	Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST)	2017	Vendor-developed (STAR Early Literacy)	Yes, changed cut scores (two changes, the most recent in 2024-25)**
Georgia	Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of	2020	State Developed	Yes, tool change

State	Current KEA/System	Year Current Assessment Version Implemented	Current Assessment Type	Any Statewide Tool Change?
	Developing Skills (GKIDS) Readiness Check			
Hawaii	Johns Hopkins University Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)*****	2023	Vendor-developed (MD-OH KRA framework)	No
Idaho	Idaho Reading Indicator	2025	Vendor-developed (Amira Learning)	Yes, tool change
Illinois	Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS)	2017	State-developed (DRDP-SR)	No
Indiana	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iowa	Statewide early literacy Screener	2011	Vendor-developed (FAST earlyReading*)	No
Kansas	Kansas Kindergarten Readiness Snapshot	2018	Vendor-developed (Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3); Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2))	No
Kentucky	BRIGANCE Early Childhood Kindergarten Screen III	2013	Vendor-developed (BRIGANCE)	No
Louisiana	Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)	2018	Proprietary (DRDP-K developed by the state of CA; TS Gold)	No
Maine	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maryland	Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (R4K)	2024	Vendor-developed (STAR Early Literacy; STAR Math; SAEBS)	Yes, updated items several times and then ultimately changed their tool
Massachusetts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Michigan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

State	Current KEA/System	Year Current Assessment Version Implemented	Current Assessment Type	Any Statewide Tool Change?
Minnesota	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mississippi	Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)	2025	Vendor-developed (STAR Early Literacy)	Yes, tool change
Missouri	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Montana	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nevada	Nevada Kindergarten Entry Assessment (NV KEA)	2025	Vendor-developed (TS GOLD)	Yes, tool change
New Hampshire	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Mexico	Early Development Instrument (EDI)	2024	Vendor-developed (UCLA / EDI online portal)	Yes, tool change
New York	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Carolina	NC Early Learning Inventory (formerly used NC KEA)	2020	Vendor-developed (TS GOLD)	Yes, tool change but still under TS GOLD
North Dakota	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA-R2 or KRA 2.0)	2025	State-developed (MD-OH KRA framework)	Yes, tool change
Oklahoma	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oregon	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes, tool change***
Pennsylvania	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rhode Island	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Carolina	Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	2017	Vendor-developed (MD-OH KRA framework)	No

State	Current KEA/System	Year Current Assessment Version Implemented	Current Assessment Type	Any Statewide Tool Change?
South Dakota	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tennessee	N/A****	N/A	N/A	N/A
Texas	Kindergarten Reading Readiness (approved tools: Circle Kindergarten Progress Monitoring (KPM), formerly TXKEA; mCLASS Texas Edition)	N/A	Vendor-developed (CLI Engage; Amplify mCLASS platform)	No
Utah	Acadience Math and Reading	N/A	Vendor-developed (Acadience)	Yes, tool change
Vermont	Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S)	N/A	State-developed	Yes, tool change
Virginia	Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP)	2024	State-developed (in partnership with University of Virginia CASTL) (VALLS: K literacy + EMAS mathematics + abbreviated CBRS self-regulation/social skills)	Yes, tool change
Washington	Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)	2012	Vendor-developed (TS GOLD)	Yes, cutscore change
West Virginia	State-approved K–3 ELA and mathematics benchmark/Screeners	2023	Vendor-developed list of options	No
Wisconsin	aimswebPlus Early Literacy Universal Screener	2024	Vendor-developed (Pearson aimswebPlus)	Yes, tool change
Wyoming	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*As of 2024, 97% of districts use FAST earlyReading but others use Amira ISIP, EPS Reading Assistant, i-Ready Diagnostic, Literably Screener, MAP: Reading Fluency, mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition, or STAR CBM Reading - Letter Sounds (Iowa Department of Education, 2025; Iowa Department of Education et al., 2024)

**Scores still comparable if tool changed

***OR is selecting a new KEA tool which is yet to be announced as of SY2025-26

****TN required the KEI, a subset of the DRDP-K, was required recipients of the Preschool Development Grant. Currently, districts may select what assessments they use.

*****Current DCPS materials list DIBELS for K–2 early literacy screening and GOLD for PreK3–K4, but charter/local implementation may vary.

*****In 2025, Arkansas worked with Cambium to update the content of their KEA with more age-appropriate items and introduced new item types, including verbal responses instead of multiple choice.

*****Hawai'i now operates a dual-language statewide KEA system. Students in English classrooms take the MD–OH KRA, while students in Kaiapuni (Hawaiian-language immersion) classrooms use a state-developed KEA Kaiapuni. The two assessments are designed to measure the same readiness constructs and serve the same purpose, but KEA Kaiapuni was developed and validated in Hawaiian. During 2025–26, KEA Kaiapuni was still being field-tested.

Appendix D: KEA Purposes and Features

State	Primary Purpose Type	KEA Purpose Documentation	Assessment Type	Who Administers
Alabama	Instructional Planning	"The AL ELI helps kindergarten teachers understand each student's strengths and areas for growth, enabling them to personalize instruction." (Tuscumbia City Public schools, n.d.)	Observational	Teachers
Alaska	Readiness Documentation	"To identify, record, and summarize the skills and behaviors students demonstrate upon entry to school, based on teacher observations." (Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, n.d.-a)	Observational	Teachers
Arizona	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Arkansas	Screeners	"Beginning of year screener" (Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.)	Direct assessment	Computer Assessment
California	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colorado	Readiness Documentation	"...used to evaluate school readiness through multiple domains, including academic skills, social-emotional development, and physical well-being." (Colorado Department of Early Childhood, 2025)	Tool dependent	Teachers
Connecticut	Readiness Documentation	"...designed to provide a statewide snapshot of the skills students demonstrate, based on teachers' observations, at the beginning of the kindergarten year. This instrument requires each teacher to classify each of the students in his/her class(es) into one of three performance levels by domain." (Connecticut Department of Education, n.d.)	Observational	Teachers
Delaware	System Alignment	"DE-ELS results allow educators, families and the state to identify: Resources the child may need to customize instruction to children's needs in all developmental domains, how to best support young children's progress before, during and after kindergarten, [and] ways to support early learning and kindergarten teachers and administrators throughout Delaware" (Delaware Department of Education, n.d.-a)	Observational	Teachers
District of Columbia	Readiness Documentation	"...focuses on what children, ages three to five, in preschool or prekindergarten programs should know and be able to do by the time they enter Kindergarten." (Office of Early Childhood Education, 2010)	Tool Dependent	Teachers
Florida	Readiness Documentation	"It is implemented in all VPK programs as required by s. 1002.68, F.S., and used to assess student	Direct assessment	Computer Assessment

State	Primary Purpose Type	KEA Purpose Documentation	Assessment Type	Who Administers
		achievement of the performance standards established in s. 1002.67(1)(a), F.S., in early literacy and mathematics.” (Florida Department of Education, 2026)		
Georgia	Instructional Planning	“The goal of the assessment is to provide information about the skills of students entering kindergarten. GKIDS 2.0 is organized around big ideas and learning progressions and provides teachers with one source of real-time information to adjust instruction.” (Georgia Department of Education, 2025)	Observational	Teachers
Hawaii	Readiness Documentation	“The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) is a summative assessment administered at the beginning of kindergarten to provide an individual readiness profile that helps teachers, families, and school leaders make informed decisions to close readiness gaps.” (Johns Hopkins Center for Technology in Education, n.d.)	Hybrid	Teachers
Idaho	Screeners	“The Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) is a statewide early literacy assessment designed to evaluate foundational reading skills in students from kindergarten through third grade. It helps educators identify students who may be at risk for dyslexia or may need additional support and informs targeted interventions to improve literacy outcomes.” (Idaho Department of Education, 2026)	Direct Assessment	Computer Assessment
Illinois	System Alignment	“The data from KIDS will promote the success of every child, guide professional development for teachers, support alignment of early childhood and elementary school systems, document the importance of birth-to-five programs in preparing children for elementary school, and enable the state to respond to district, school, teacher, and student needs over time.” (Illinois State Board of Education & WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies, 2016)	Observational	Teachers
Indiana	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Iowa	Readiness Documentation	“This law requires each school district to assess all students enrolled in kindergarten at the beginning of the school year, for their level of reading or reading readiness, on a locally-determined or statewide assessment” (Iowa Department of Education, 2023)	Direct Assessment	Computer Assessment
Kansas	Readiness	“The snapshot data helps teachers ensure their	Observational	Parent

State	Primary Purpose Type	KEA Purpose Documentation	Assessment Type	Who Administers
	Documentation	kindergarten classrooms are ready to support the social, emotional and academic success of each student. At the state level, this data provides a snapshot of Kansas kindergartners' development and helps inform opportunities to improve kindergarten readiness statewide." (Kansas State Department of Education, 2024)		
Kentucky	Screeners	"Kentucky's Common Kindergarten Entry Screener, the BRIGANCE Early Childhood Kindergarten Screen III, provides a quick and accurate assessment of a child's development in five areas: Academic/Cognitive, Language, Development, Physical Development, Self-Help and Social-Emotional Development." (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.)	Direct Assessment	Computer Assessment
Louisiana	Instructional Planning	"Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) identifies the developmental levels of every child entering kindergarten for the first time through gathering of information concerning their social-emotional, language and literacy, math, cognitive, and physical development. The results of this assessment shall be used for measuring student readiness for kindergarten and for planning instruction." (Louisiana Department of Education, 2022)	Observational	Teachers
Maine	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maryland	Readiness Documentation	"The current Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) measures the school readiness of incoming kindergartners." (Wright et al., 2024)	Hybrid	Teachers
Massachusetts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Michigan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minnesota	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mississippi	System Alignment	"The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment provides parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is also used to measure how well Pre-K programs prepare four-year-old children to be ready for kindergarten based upon the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children. The primary purpose of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is to improve the quality of classroom instruction and other services provided	Direct Assessment	Computer Assessment

State	Primary Purpose Type	KEA Purpose Documentation	Assessment Type	Who Administers
		to students from birth to 3rd grade.” (Mississippi Department of Education, n.d.)		
Missouri	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Montana	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nevada	Readiness Documentation	“Of primary interest to Nevada, as noted by the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council (Nevada ECAC) and the Department of Education was using the TSG assessment tool to determine kindergarten readiness—what percent of children enter kindergarten “ready to learn?” (Loesch-Griffin et al., 2015)	Observational	Teachers
New Hampshire	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Mexico	System Alignment	“New Mexico implemented the EDI in 2024 to better understand the needs of our youngest children and to guide policies and practices that support their growth and success.” (New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department, n.d.)	Observational	Teachers
New York	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Carolina	Instructional Planning	“The NC ELI helps teachers and families gain an ongoing understanding of the strengths and needs of each child as a way to help ensure that each child reaches his or her greatest potential.” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.)	Observational	Teachers
North Dakota	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	Readiness Documentation	“This assessment includes ways for teachers to measure a child’s readiness for engaging with instruction aligned to the kindergarten standards.” (Ohio Department of Children and Youth, n.d.)	Hybrid	Trained School Staff
Oklahoma	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oregon	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pennsylvania	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rhode Island	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Carolina	System	“The KRA is a developmentally appropriate	Hybrid	Trained

State	Primary Purpose Type	KEA Purpose Documentation	Assessment Type	Who Administers
	Alignment	instrument that measures a child's school readiness across multiple domains. Understanding a child's school readiness helps kindergarten teachers best meet the child's needs, and it helps schools, families, communities and policy makers know how best to support young children as they enter the K-12 environment." (South Carolina Department of Education, n.d.)		School Staff
South Dakota	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tennessee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Texas	Instructional Planning	"...help schools determine whether students have mastered developmental benchmarks, as described in the Texas PreK Guidelines and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). This point-in-time snapshot of each student's competencies will inform instruction and identify whether additional diagnostic assessment is needed." (Children's Learning Institute, 2026)	Tool Dependent	Teachers
Utah	Screeners	"Acadience®...is a universal screening and progress monitoring assessment that measures the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade." (Acadience Learning, 2026)	Direct Assessment	Computer Assessment
Vermont	Readiness Documentation	"Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S) is a readiness assessment of children entering kindergarten about students' knowledge and skills within the first six to ten weeks of school." (State of Vermont Agency of Education, n.d.)	Observational	Teachers
Virginia	Readiness Documentation	"The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) gives schools, teachers and families a more complete picture of school readiness in 4 key areas: Literacy, Mathematics, Self-Regulation, and Social Skills." (University of Virginia, 2026)	Hybrid	Teachers
Washington	System Alignment	"The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) supports a smooth transition into K-12 by connecting the key adults in a child's life. Through its three components—Family Connection, Whole Child Assessment, and Early Learning Collaboration—WaKIDS provides data that informs policy decisions and helps teachers tailor instruction to each child." (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.-b)	Observational	Teachers
West Virginia	Screeners	"...an approved list of screeners and/or benchmark assessments in English language arts and	Tool Dependent	Teachers

State	Primary Purpose Type	KEA Purpose Documentation	Assessment Type	Who Administers
		mathematics for students in grades kindergarten through three for the purpose of identifying students with a significant reading and/or mathematics deficiency.” (Third Grade Success Act, 2023)		
Wisconsin	Screeners	“aimswebPlus by NCS Pearson provides Wisconsin schools with the opportunity to efficiently identify young students in need of additional reading support and quickly adjust instruction and provide necessary interventions” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2024)	Direct Assessment	Teachers
Wyoming	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Appendix E: Domains Measured by State

State	Domains Measured					
	Social-Emotional	Mathematics	Cognitive	Language	Literacy	Physical
Alabama	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alaska	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arizona						
Arkansas		✓			✓	
California						
Colorado	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Connecticut	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Delaware	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
District of Columbia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Florida					✓	
Georgia	✓	✓		✓		✓
Hawaii	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Idaho					✓	
Illinois	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Indiana						
Iowa					✓	

State	Domains Measured					
	Social-Emotional	Mathematics	Cognitive	Language	Literacy	Physical
Kansas	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Kentucky	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maine						
Maryland	✓	✓			✓	
Massachusetts						
Michigan						
Minnesota						
Mississippi ¹⁰		✓			✓	
Missouri						
Montana						
Nebraska						
Nevada	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Hampshire						
New Jersey						
New Mexico	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

¹⁰Mississippi measures both literacy and math but reports outcomes as one combined “literacy” score.

State	Domains Measured					
	Social-Emotional	Mathematics	Cognitive	Language	Literacy	Physical
New York						
North Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
North Dakota						
Ohio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oklahoma						
Oregon						
Pennsylvania						
Rhode Island						
South Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Dakota						
Tennessee						
Texas					✓	
Utah		✓			✓	
Vermont	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Virginia	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Washington	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
West Virginia		✓		✓	✓	

State	Domains Measured					
	Social-Emotional	Mathematics	Cognitive	Language	Literacy	Physical
Wisconsin				✓	✓	
Wyoming						

Appendix F: Domain Framework and Definitions

This report leverages domains used in the MD-OH KRA (Maryland State Department of Education, 2018) to compare what domains are measured across states. The definitions for each domain can be found in this table:

Domain	Sub-Domain	Definition
Social Foundations	Awareness and Expression of Emotion	Recognize and identify emotions of self and others. Express, understand, and respond to feelings (emotions) of self and others.
	Relationships with Adults	Look to adults for emotional support and guidance. Seek security and support from familiar adults in anticipation of challenging situations. Request and accept guidance from familiar adults.
	Self Control	Manage the expression of feelings, thoughts, impulses, and behaviors. Demonstrate the ability to delay gratification for short periods of time.
	Persistence	Demonstrate the ability to persist with a task. Focus on an activity with deliberate concentration despite distractions and/or temptations.
	Working Memory	Demonstrate the ability to retain and apply information. Follow routines and multi-step directions. Use prior knowledge and information to assess, inform, and plan for future actions and learning.
	Initiative	Seek and gather new information to plan for projects and activities. Express a desire to learn by asking questions and seeking new information.
	Cooperation with Peers	Demonstrate cooperative behavior in interactions with others. Interact with peers in complex pretend play, including planning, coordination of roles, and cooperation. Share materials and equipment with other children, with adult modeling and support.
	Responsible Behavior	Demonstrate understanding of rules and responsible behavior. Explain how rules promote order, safety, and fairness.
Language & Literacy	Story/Text Comprehension	Comprehend and respond to interactive read-alouds of literacy and informational text. Before interactive read-alouds, make predictions and/or ask questions about the text by examining the title, cover, illustrations/photographs, graphic aids, and/or text. During interactive read-alouds, listen and ask and answer questions as appropriate. After interactive read-alouds, listen and ask and answer questions as appropriate.
	Phonological Awareness	Demonstrate understanding of spoken words and sounds (phonemes). Identify initial and final sounds in spoken words. Identify, blend and segment syllables in spoken words. Recognizing rhyming words in spoken language.
	Phonics and Letter Recognition	Know and apply letter-sound correspondence and letter recognition skills. Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the most frequent sound for some consonants. Recognize and name some upper- and lowercase letters.
	Communication	Communicate effectively in a variety of situations with different audiences, purposes, and formats. Speak or express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly

Domain	Sub-Domain	Definition
		enough to be understood in a variety of settings. Participate in conversations with adults and peers, staying on topic through multiple exchanges and adding appropriate ideas to support or extend the conversation.
	Emergent Writing	Produce letter-like shapes, symbols, letters, and words to convey meaning. With modeling and support, print letters of their own name. With modeling and support, print meaningful words with letters and letter approximations.
	Grammar	Demonstrate beginning understanding of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when engaged in literacy activities. Use familiar nouns and verbs to describe persons, animals, places, events, actions, etc. Use frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., “to” “from” “out” “on” “off” “for” “of” “by” “with”).
	Vocabulary	Use words acquired through conversations and shared reading experiences. Determine the meanings of unknown words/concepts using the context of conversations, pictures that accompany text, or concrete objects.
Mathematics	Number Sense	Know number name, count sequence, and relationships among number, numeral, and quantity. Count the number sequence to 20. Use number cards arranged in a line to count and then determine what number comes before or after a specific number. Identify, without counting, small quantities of items (1-3) presented in an irregular or unfamiliar patterns (subsidize). Demonstrate understanding that the last number spoken tells the number of objects counted; respond correctly when asked “how many” after counting concrete objects. Name written numeral and pair them with concrete objects.
	Number Operations	Understand addition as putting together and adding to, and understand subtractions as taking apart and taking from. Use manipulatives to find the correct amount needed to complete the set.
	Classification	Sort, classify, and compare objects. Sort multiple groups by one attribute (“all blue” “all red” “all yellow” or “all bears” “all cats” “all dogs”). Count to identify the number of objects in each set, and compare categories using comparison vocabulary (greater/more than, less than, same/equal to).
	Measurement	Describe and compare measurable attributes. Directly compare and describe two objects with a measurable attribute (length, size, capacity, and weight) in common, using words such as longer/shorter, heavier/lighter, or taller/shorter. Order objects by measurable attribute (e.g., biggest to smallest).
	Shapes	Describe two and three dimensional shapes. Match similar shapes when given a variety of two and three dimensional shapes. Use names of two dimensional shapes (e.g., square, triangle, circle) when identifying objects.
Physical Well-Being and Motor Development	Coordination - Large Motor	Demonstrate the ability to use large muscles to perform a variety of physical skills. Show fundamental movement by demonstrating spatial concepts in movement patterns. Demonstrate locomotor skills with control, coordination, and balance during active play (e.g., running, hopping, jumping).

Domain	Sub-Domain	Definition
	Coordination - Small Motor	Demonstrate the ability to use small muscles to perform fine motor skills in play and learning situations. Use classroom and household tools independently with eye-hand coordination to carry out activities. Use a 3 finger grasp of the dominant hand to hold a writing tool.
	Safety and Injury Prevention	Demonstrate the ability to apply prevention and intervention knowledge, skills, and processes to promote safe living in the home, school, and community. With modeling and support, identify and follow basic safety rules. Identify ways adults help to keep us safe.
	Personal Care Tasks	Demonstrate personal health and hygiene practices. Independently complete personal care tasks (e.g., washing hands before eating and after toileting).

Appendix G: Granularity Coding Definitions & Examples

Scoring Granularity

Granularity refers to the level of measurement depth, specifically the maximum number of distinct performance levels provided per developmental domain. This dimension reflects a policy choice between the precision needed for Instructional Planning and the practicality of minimizing teacher burden. States are categorized into three distinct tiers:

Tier	Number of Performance Levels	Example States & Assessment Tools	Example Question
1: High Detail	12-15	DE, NV, NC, WA (15); AL (12) Teaching Strategies GOLD	From Alabama (Teaching Strategies, LLC, 2015): <i>Can the student sustain balance during simple movement experiences? (Balancing skills). Score on a scale of 1-14.</i> 2: Balances while exploring immediate environments 4: Experiments with different ways of balancing 6: Sustains balance during simple movement experiences 8: Sustains balance during complex movement experiences 10: Demonstrates how to balance on different body parts (feet, hands, knees, elbows) at varying levels (e.g., up high, down low) while making different poses 12: Balances on apparatus with control and stability 14: Designs and performs movements that combine traveling and balance into a smooth, flowing sequence with intentional changes in direction and speed
2: Moderate Detail	4-7	IL (7); KY (6), GA, MD, FL, MS, UT ¹¹ (5); AR, NM, (4) DRDP-K, BRIGANCE, Istation	From Illinois State Board of Education (2022): <i>Reciprocal Communication and Conversation</i> - Building - Earlier: Engages in brief back-and-forth communication, using short phrases and sentences - Middle: Engages in brief conversations with a shared focus - Later: Engages in conversations with a shared focus, contributing clarifying comments or building on the other person's ideas - Integrating

¹¹Utah has two items in their literacy that technically have up to 26 performance levels - students get one point for every letter of the alphabet they can name. However, a majority of the assessment scoring happens on a 4 or 5 point scale so UT was coded as moderate.

Tier	Number of Performance Levels	Example States & Assessment Tools	Example Question
			○ Earlier: Engages in extended focused conversations that involve reasoning, predicting, problem solving, or understanding ideas ○ Middle: Builds on both concrete and abstract ideas of others during extended conversations ○ Later: Seeks additional information during extended conversations in order to understand and build on the ideas of others and displays appropriate turn taking and social conventions of conversation ● Emerging
3: Simplified	2-3	WI (2); AK, CT, HI, ID, KS, OH, SC, VT, VA (3) State developed rubrics, KRA-R, ASQ-3	Per the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (n.d.-b), every item on the KEA is rated on a 3-point scale and a response for every item is required from the student's teacher. Teachers rate at each of the black bullets below. ● 2: Consistently Demonstrates ○ Student demonstrates the indicated skills or behaviors on a consistent basis (80% or more of the time). ○ Student is generally able to demonstrate these skills most of the time. Students are not required to successfully demonstrate each skill and behavior all of the time to receive this rating. ● 1: Progressing ○ Student demonstrates the indicated skills or behaviors on an inconsistent basis. ○ Student demonstrates the indicated skills or behaviors on an inconsistent basis OR if they are unable to consistently demonstrate most of the indicated skills and behaviors (i.e., for students who demonstrate only some of the indicated skills or behaviors consistently) ● 0: Does Not Demonstrate ○ Student does not demonstrate the indicated skills or behaviors (20% or less of the time). ○ Student is generally unable to successfully demonstrate these skills most of the time.

Appendix H: Assessment Administration: Performance Levels and Scoring Guidelines

State	Granularity Tier	Maximum Number of Performance Levels
Alabama	1	12
Alaska	3	3
Arizona	N/A	N/A
Arkansas	2	4
California	N/A	N/A
Colorado	N/A	N/A
Connecticut	3	3
Delaware	1	15
District of Columbia	N/A	N/A
Florida	2	5
Georgia	2	5
Hawaii	3	3
Idaho	3	3
Illinois	2	7
Indiana	N/A	N/A
Iowa	N/A	N/A
Kansas	3	3
Kentucky	2	6
Louisiana	N/A	N/A
Maine	N/A	N/A
Maryland	2	5
Massachusetts	N/A	N/A
Michigan	N/A	N/A
Minnesota	N/A	N/A
Mississippi	2	5

State	Granularity Tier	Maximum Number of Performance Levels
Missouri	N/A	N/A
Montana	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	N/A	N/A
Nevada	1	15
New Hampshire	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	N/A	N/A
New Mexico	2	4
New York	N/A	N/A
North Carolina	1	15
North Dakota	N/A	N/A
Ohio	3	3
Oklahoma	N/A	N/A
Oregon	N/A	N/A
Pennsylvania	N/A	N/A
Rhode Island	N/A	N/A
South Carolina	3	3
South Dakota	N/A	N/A
Tennessee	N/A	N/A
Texas	N/A	N/A
Utah	2	5
Vermont	3	3
Virginia	3	3
Washington	1	15
West Virginia	N/A	N/A
Wisconsin	3	2
Wyoming	N/A	N/A

REFERENCES

24 Pa. Stat. § 5-503. (2022).

Abo-Zena, M. M., & New, R. S. (2012). Children are ready to learn, but are we? The role of adult relations in school readiness.

Zero to Three, 33(1). <https://www.zerotothree.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Understanding-School-Readiness-For-Infants-And-Toddlers-12-Sep-Digital-Journal-Issue.pdf>

Acadience Learning. (2026, April 30). *What is Acadience Reading K-6?* [https://acadiencelearning.org/help-center/what-is-acadience-reading-k-](https://acadiencelearning.org/help-center/what-is-acadience-reading-k-6/#:~:text=Acadience%C2%AE%20Reading%20K%2D6,on%20the%20Acadience%20Resource%20Hub)

[6/#:~:text=Acadience%C2%AE%20Reading%20K%2D6,on%20the%20Acadience%20Resource%20Hub](https://acadiencelearning.org/help-center/what-is-acadience-reading-k-6/#:~:text=Acadience%C2%AE%20Reading%20K%2D6,on%20the%20Acadience%20Resource%20Hub)

Ackerman, D. J. (2018). Real World Compromises: Policy and Practice Impacts of Kindergarten Entry Assessment-Related Validity and Reliability Challenges. In *Policy Information Report and ETS Research Report Series* [Report].

<https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12201>

Ackerman, D. J., & Barnett, W. S. (2014). Prepared for Kindergarten: What Does “Readiness” Mean? *NIEER*.

Ala. House Bill No. 113, 2024 Reg. Sess. (2024).

Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. (n.d.-a). *Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP) - Education and Early Development*. <https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/developmental>

Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. (n.d.-b). *Alaska Developmental Profile Implementation Guide*. In *Alaska Department of Education & Early Development*.

Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.). *ATLAS Assessment Overview*. Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/public-school-accountability/assessment/atlas-assessment-overview>

Bassok, D., & Latham, S. (2017). Kids today. *Educational Researcher*, 46(1), 7–20. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x17694161>

Bassok, D., & Reardon, S. F. (2013). “Academic redshirting” in kindergarten. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 35(3), 283–297. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373713482764>

- Bernstein, S., Barnett, W. S., & Ackerman, D. J. (2019). What is readiness? Preparing all children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. *NIEER*, 107. <https://nieer.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/nieer-policy-brief-august-2019.pdf>
- Burchinal, M., & Vandell, D. L. (2025). School entry skills and young adult outcomes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2025.01.004>
- Came, D. (2022). *Kindergarten readiness and 3rd Grade Outcomes: A predictive analysis using 2015–16 WAKIDS and 2018–19 3rd grade SBA data*. https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-08/kindergarten-readiness-and-3rd-grade-outcomes_0.pdf
- Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., Hilger, N., Saez, E., Schanzenbach, D. W., & Yagan, D. (2011). How does your kindergarten classroom affect your earnings? Evidence from Project Star. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(4), 1593–1660. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjr041>
- Children’s Learning Institute. (2026). *Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment (TX-KEA)*. <https://childrenslearninginstitute.org/research/texas-kindergarten-entry-assessment-tx-kea/>
- Christ, T. J., PhD & Colleagues, LLC. (2018). *Formative Assessment System for Teachers Technical Manual* [Technical Manual]. Theodore J. Christ and Colleagues, LLC. https://support-content.fastbridge.org/FAST_Research/FAST_Technical_Manual_Version_FINAL.pdf
- Claessens, A., Duncan, G., & Engel, M. (2009). Kindergarten skills and fifth-grade achievement: Evidence from the ECLS-K. *Economics of Education Review*, 28(4), 415–427. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2008.09.003>
- Clemens, N. H., Jr., Hagan-Burke, S., Luo, W., Cerda, C., Blakely, A., Frosch, J., Gamez-Patience, B., & Jones, M. (2015). The Predictive Validity of a Computer-Adaptive Assessment of Kindergarten and First-Grade reading skills. In *School Psychology Review* (Vols. 44–44, Issue 1, pp. 76–97).
- Colorado Department of Early Childhood. (2025). *Department of Early Childhood 2025 SMART Act Hearing*. https://content.leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/2025_education_cdec_smart_act_slides_final.pdf
- Connecticut Department of Education. (n.d.). *Kindergarten inventory*. CT.gov. <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Student-Assessment/K-Assessment/Kindergarten-Inventory>
- Connecticut State Department of Education. (2021). *Kindergarten entrance inventory* [Handbook]. <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/student-assessment/k-assessment/kei-handbook.pdf>
- Delaware Department of Education. (n.d.-a). *Delaware Early Learner Survey*. <https://education.delaware.gov/families/birth-age->

[5/early_resources/deels_survey/#:~:text=The%20Delaware%20Early%20Learner%20Survey%20\(DE%20DELS\)%20is,using%20sounds%20\(talking\)%2C%20hand%20signals%2C%20and%20writing](#)

Delaware Department of Education. (n.d.-b). Delaware Early Learner Survey - Objectives for development and learning. In *Delaware Department of Education*.

Delaware Department of Education. (n.d.-c). Introduction to DE ELS. In *Delaware Department of Education*.

Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P., Pagani, L. S., Feinstein, L., Engel, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., Sexton, H., Duckworth, K., & Japel, C. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1428–1446. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1428>

Education Commission of the States. (2023). State K-3 Policies 2023. In *Education Commission of the States*.

Feeney, S. (2016). Straight talk about kindergarten readiness assessment. *Defending the Early Years*. https://dey.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/kindergarten_assessment_with_photos_final_final.pdf

Fidel, R., Shores, K. A., & Whitaker, A. (2024). Changes in kindergarten redshirting during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Annenberg Institute at Brown University, *EdWorkingPaper* (Report No. 24–1038). <https://doi.org/10.26300/h3mn-by73>

Florida Department of Education. (2026). *Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener historical*. <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/archive/flkrs/#:~:text=From%202017%E2%80%932021%2C%20the%20Florida,final%20time%20in%20fall%202021>.

French, B. (2013). *Screens III Technical Manual*. Curriculum Associates, LLC. <https://oms.brigance.com/Reports/ScreensIII-Tech-Manual-04.pdf>

Georgia Department of Education. (2025, March 11). *GKIDS Readiness Check & GKIDS 2.0 – Georgia Department of Education*. <https://gadoe.org/assessment-accountability/gkids/>

Goldstein, J., McCoach, D. B., & Yu, H. (2017). The predictive validity of kindergarten readiness judgments: Lessons from one state. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 110(1), 50–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2015.1039111>

Grodsky, G., Huangfu, Y., Miesner, H. R., & Packard, C. (2017). Kindergarten readiness in Wisconsin: WCER Working Paper No. 2017-3. In *University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research*. <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/working-papers>

- Herring, W. A., Bassok, D., McGinty, A. S., Miller, L. C., & Wyckoff, J. H. (2022). Racial and socioeconomic disparities in the relationship between children's early Literacy skills and Third-Grade Outcomes: Lessons from a Kindergarten Readiness assessment. *Educational Researcher*, 51(7), 441–450. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x221091535>
- Ho, A., Reardon, S., Min, J., Fahle, E., & Shear, B. (2026). *Broken Bridges: State test score trend lines through policies and pandemics*. Annual Meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education, Los Angeles, California, United States of America.
- Hur, E. H., Satchell, T., Carling, L., Boyle, B., & Szocik, K. (2026). A national scan of statewide kindergarten entry assessments and data reports. *Early Education and Development*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2026.2680566>
- Idaho Department of Education. (2026, April 24). *Idaho Reading Indicator*. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/about-us/departments/assessment-accountability/idaho-reading-indicator/>
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2022). *Overview of KIDS*.
- Illinois State Board of Education & WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies. (2016). *Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*. <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/kids-faqs.pdf>
- Institute of Education Sciences & United States Department of Education. (2007). *Early Childhood Longitudinal Studies Program*. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/ecls/Kindergarten.asp>
- Iowa Department of Education. (2023). Legislative report Early childhood assessments. In *Iowa Department of Education* (pp. 2–5).
- Iowa Department of Education. (2025). Approved early Literacy assessments 2025-26. In *Iowa Department of Education*. <https://educate.iowa.gov/media/11096/download?inline>
- Iowa Department of Education, Snow, M., Wahlert, T., Villotti, K., & Breyfogle, M. (2024). *Legislative report Early childhood assessments*. <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/DF/1529357.pdf>
- Jensen, J. L., Goldstein, J., & Brunetti, M. A. (2021). Kindergarten readiness assessments help identify skill gaps. *WestEd*.
- Johns Hopkins Center for Technology in Education. (n.d.). *Kindergarten readiness assessment*. Johns Hopkins School of Education. <https://education.jhu.edu/cte/solutions/ready-for-kindergarten/kindergarten-readiness-assessment/>
- Johnson, A., & Thibault, J. (2022). Kindergarten readiness and academic performance. In *Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury*. <https://comptroller.tn.gov/content/dam/cot/orea/advanced-search/2022/Kindergartenreadinessandacademicperformance.pdf>

- Joseph, G., Soderberg, J. S., Stull, S., Cummings, K., McCutchen, D., & Han, R. J. (2019). Inter-Rater reliability of Washington State's kindergarten entry assessment. *Early Education and Development*, 31(5), 764–777.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2019.1674589>
- Justice, L., Koury, A., & Logan, J. (2019). Ohio's Kindergarten readiness Assessment: Does it forecast Third-Grade reading success? In *Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy (CCEC)*.
- Kansas State Department of Education. (2024, August 1). *What is the ASQ and how is it used*.
<https://www.ksde.gov/Home/Quick-Links/News-Room/Weekly-News/IT-Cybersecurity/ArtMID/8207/ArticleID/3522/What-is-the-ASQ174-and-how-is-it-used-for-the-Kansas-Kindergarten-Readiness-Snapshot>
- Kentucky Department of Education. (2026). *Common Kindergarten entry screener*. KY.gov.
<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Assessments/Pages/K-Screen.aspx>
- Kiguel, S., Cashdollar, S., & Bates, M. (2024). *Trends and disparities in readiness using the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS)*. Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative.
- Kuhfeld, M., Soland, J., Pitts, C., & Burchinal, M. (2020). Trends in Children's academic skills at school Entry: 2010 to 2017. *Educational Researcher*, 49(6), 403–414. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x20931078>
- Lai, C.-F., Alonzo, J., & Tindal, G. (2013). *Technical Report # 1309 EasyCBM® Reading Criterion Related Validity Evidence: Grades K-1*. University of Oregon.
- Le, V., Schaack, D., Cisneros, C., & Gregory, J. (2025). The COVID-19 pandemic's disruptions to preschool children's Cognitive, Social-Emotional, and executive functioning skills. *AERA Open*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584251330165>
- Loesch-Griffin, D., Christiansen, E., & Everts, J. (2015). *Silver State Kindergarten Inventory Development Statewide (SSKIDS) Year 2 Pilot Evaluation: Findings from Nevada's users of the Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) Assessment Tool*.
- Louisiana Department of Education. (2022). *Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) Guidelines*.
- Maryland Department of Education. (2024, February 28). *MSDE to adopt new kindergarten Assessment for school readiness – Maryland State Department of Education*. <https://news.maryland.gov/msde/msde-adopts-new-kra/>
- Maryland State Department of Education. (2018). *Ready for Kindergarten: Maryland's early childhood Comprehensive Assessment system*.

- Miller-Bains, K. L., B., Russo, J. M., Williford, A. P., DeCoster, J., & Cottone, E. A. (2017). Examining the validity of a Multidimensional Performance-Based Assessment at Kindergarten Entry. *AERA Open*, 3(2), 1–16.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858417706969>
- Mississippi Department of Education. (n.d.). *Kindergarten readiness assessment*.
https://mdek12.org/studentassessment/k_readiness/
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Types of state and district requirements for kindergarten entrance and attendance, by state: 2020*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab1_3-2020.asp
- National Center on Improving Literacy. (2026, June 22). *Features of Structured Literacy Instruction - NCIL*.
<https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/features-of-structured-literacy-instruction/>
- Neumann, M. M., Anthony, J. L., Erazo, N. A., & Neumann, D. L. (2019). Assessment and Technology: Mapping future directions in the early Childhood classroom. *Frontiers in Education*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00116>
- New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department. (n.d.). *Early Development Instrument (EDI)*.
<https://www.nmececd.org/edi-2/>
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *NC Early Learning Inventory for families*.
<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/parents-corner/early-learning-info-families/nc-early-learning-inventory-families>
- Office of Early Childhood Education. (2010). Family Guide to Kindergarten Readiness Standards. In *District of Columbia Public Schools* (pp. 1–11). https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/publication/attachments/DCPS-Early-Childhood-Parent_Guide_Final%20%281%29.pdf
- Office of Early Learning. (2019). *Delaware Early Learner Survey*.
- Ohio Department of Children and Youth. (n.d.). *Kindergarten readiness assessment*. <https://childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/providers/resources/kindergarten-readiness-assessment>
- Powers, S. (2012). From Research to Practice: Strategies for supporting school readiness in programs serving infants and toddlers. *Zero to Three*, 33(1). <https://www.zerotothree.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Understanding-School-Readiness-For-Infants-And-Toddlers-12-Sep-Digital-Journal-Issue.pdf>
- Quinn, D. M., & Le, Q. T. (2018). Are we trending to more or less Between-Group achievement inequality over the school year and summer? comparing across ECLS-K cohorts. *AERA Open*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858418819995>

- Reardon, S. F., Fahle, E. M., Kalogrides, D., Podolsky, A., Stanford University, St. John's University, & Columbia University. (2019). Gender achievement gaps in U.S. school districts. In *American Educational Research Journal* (Vols. 56–56, Issue 6, pp. 2474–2508). <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219843824>
- Reardon, S. F., & Portilla, X. A. (2016). Recent trends in income, racial, and ethnic school readiness gaps at kindergarten entry. *AERA Open*, 2(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858416657343>
- Regenstein, E., Connors, M., Romero-Jurado, R., & Weiner, J. (2017). Uses and misuses of Kindergarten readiness Assessments. *Policy Conversations*. https://www.startearly.org/app/uploads/2020/09/PUBLICATION_Uses-and-Misuses-of-Kindergarten-Readiness-Assessment-Results.pdf
- Rock, D. A., Pollack, J. M., National Center for Education Statistics, Atkins-Burnett, S., Hoffer, T., Meisels, S. J., Tourangeau, K., West, J., & Germino Hausken, E. (2002). Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K): Psychometric Report for Kindergarten through First Grade. Working Paper Series. In *National Center for Education Statistics (ED)*, Washington, DC.
- Russo, J. M., Williford, A. P., Markowitz, A. J., Vitiello, V. E., & Bassok, D. (2019). Examining the validity of a widely-used school readiness assessment: Implications for teachers and early childhood programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 48, 14–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2019.02.003>
- Schilder, D., & Carolan, M. (2014). *State of the States Policy snapshot: State Early childhood assessment policies*. Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.
- Sorrels, R. (2012). The Foundations of Learning Framework: A model for School Readiness. *Zero to Three*, 33(1). <https://www.zerotothree.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Understanding-School-Readiness-For-Infants-And-Toddlers-12-Sep-Digital-Journal-Issue.pdf>
- South Carolina Code of Laws. (2020). *Analysis of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results school year 2019-2020*. <https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/eoc/files/Documents/KRA/KRA%202020.reduced.pdf>
- South Carolina Department of Education. (n.d.). *Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)*. <https://ed.sc.gov/tests/elementary/kindergarten-readiness-assessment-kra/>
- State of Vermont Agency of Education. (n.d.). *Early Childhood education assessment*. Vermont.gov. <https://education.vermont.gov/student-support/early-education/early-childhood-education-assessment>
- Stull, S. (2015). *The Predictive Validity of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills GOLD's Literacy Domain: Why assessment matters for Washington's earliest readers* [PhD dissertation]. University of Washington.

- Teaching Strategies LLC. (2015). *Objectives for Development & Learning, Birth through third Grade 1*.
- Third Grade Success Act, §18-2E-10. (2023). <https://code.wvlegislature.gov/18-2E-10/>
- Tuscumbia City Public schools. (n.d.). *Alabama Early Learning Inventory*. Tuscumbia City Public Schools.
- <https://www.tuscumbia.k12.al.us/departments/testing/alabama-early-learning-inventory-al-eli>
- University of Virginia. (2026, April 22). *Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program*. Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program.
- <https://vkrponline.org/>
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2024). *K-12 Education: State and selected teachers' use of kindergarten readiness information* (GAO-24-106552). <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-106552.pdf>
- Vermont Agency of Education. (2016). Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S). In *Report to Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts* (pp. 1–4) [Report].
- Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program. (2026). *Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) 2025-2026 Assessment Calendar: Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten*.
- Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WAKIDS)*. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/testing/state-testing/washington-kindergarten-inventory-developing-skills-wakids>
- Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2019). *Washington Kindergarten inventory of developing skills*. <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2022-12/SC2WashingtonKindergartenInventoryofDevelopingSkillsFY19.pdf>
- Weisenfeld, G. G., Garver, K., Hodges, K., & National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Rutgers University. (2020). Federal and state efforts in the implementation of kindergarten entry assessments (2011-2018). In *Early Education and Development*. Rutgers University. <https://doi.org/10.7282/t3-cjs2-k115>
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (Expanded 2nd edition). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Williams, P. G., Lerner, M. A., Council on Early Childhood, & Council on School Health. (2019). School readiness. *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 2, e20191766. http://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-pdf/144/2/e20191766/1077590/peds_20191766.pdf
- Williams, W., Strunk, K., Finnegan, P., & Members of the Washington State OSPI K-12 Dual Language Steering Committee. (2020). Washington State's Dual Language Initiative. In *Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction*.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2024, July 15). *New statewide reading screener provides educators with innovative support in teaching students to read*. <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2024/reading-screener-assessment-act-20>

Wright, C., Maryland State Department of Education, & Haislet, C. (2024). *Update on Kindergarten readiness assessment*.

Yun, C., Melnick, H., Wechsler, M., & Learning Policy Institute. (2021). *High-Quality Early Childhood Assessment: Learning from states' use of kindergarten entry assessments*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED614431.pdf>