

Minnesota's Kindergarten Entry Profile: Frequently Asked Questions for Early Learning Programs



What is the Kindergarten Entry Profile?

Over the past few years, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has been working to revise, expand and improve the decade-long *School Readiness Study*, which measures children's status at kindergarten entry. The main purpose is to support districts, schools, administrators and teachers in measuring children's status at the beginning of kindergarten in order to inform their practice and programming. Districts may also use this process to inform other initiatives including World's Best Workforce planning as well as pre-K through 3rd grade alignment initiatives.

The Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) includes a menu of comprehensive assessment tools from which districts can choose based on the needs of students and teachers. All tools on the KEP list provide real-time data to schools in order to inform planning and practice. *Additionally, all of the measures have alignment to the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIP) and the Kindergarten Academic Standards.*

- Desired Results Developmental Profile-Kindergarten
- Formative Assessment System for Teachers
- Teaching Strategies Gold
- Work Sampling System-Minnesota Version

The purpose of the KEP is to provide teachers with a menu of valid, reliable measurement tools that will assist them in observing, documenting and reflecting on the learning progress of their students. *The KEP is not designed for teacher evaluation, developmental screening, or student outcomes in early learning or kindergarten.*

Why were these tools chosen?

The tools were selected based on demand in the field, federal guidance in the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, the National Research Council report, *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How*, and in consultation with a multi-sector comprehensive assessment system workgroup. Tools were tested in kindergarten programs and put through a battery of additional validity studies to ensure the highest quality tools ended up on the menu.

These are the same tools I use in my early learning program. What is the difference between what I use and what is used for the Kindergarten Entry Profile?

There is no difference between the tools used in early learning and the KEP. The tools chosen for the KEP have a broad range of ages for which they can be used. The Teaching Strategies

Gold, Work Sampling System and Desired Results Developmental Profile are all very popular tools in early learning programs and are approved for use in Parent Aware.

Is the Kindergarten Entry Profile for early learning/preschool programs, just kindergarten classes or both?

The KEP is designed for kindergarten students only. However, the tools on the menu are also appropriate for use with pre-K students. Administrators, principals and teachers in school readiness and other early learning programs are encouraged to reach out to their district elementary schools and work with them if they intend to implement the same assessment tool in their program. The KEP supports pre-K through 3rd grade alignment initiatives and reporting progress on World's Best Workforce goals. Additionally, KEP assessment tools can provide rich information to teachers in early learning settings and kindergarten as children transition from an early learning environment to K-12.

How will the Kindergarten Entry Profile impact early care and education programs?

The KEP is used to measure children's status at entry to kindergarten in order to provide kindergarten teachers with information and knowledge on how differentiate and adjust instruction. It does not take into account the program or environment from which a child comes. The KEP is not meant to be used for accountability or evaluation of early learning programs.

The tools on the KEP menu can be used to track a child's progress over time, making it easier for early learning programs to provide information to the child's family in preparation for kindergarten transition. If your early learning program is part of a preK-3 alignment team, using the KEP tools in both early learning and kindergarten can facilitate curriculum adjustments and joint professional development over time.

Can my early learning teachers attend training on the Kindergarten Entry Profile tools?

Yes. School districts must have a pre-K to grade 3 plan to allow pre-K teachers to attend trainings. If your district is in the process of creating a pre-K to 3rd grade initiative, MDE would work with your district on a case by case basis in order to support district goals for pre-K to 3rd grade alignment.

Early learning programs that are working on preK-3 alignment with partnering elementary schools may send pre-K teachers to training if they choose the same tool as the participating school. For instance, if your early learning program is using the Teaching Strategies Gold, and your partnering school also chooses the Gold, both pre-K and kindergarten teachers are invited to attend training together.

What is expected of my early learning teachers if they participate in Kindergarten Entry Profile training?

Early learning teachers can attend the training if your program is planning on using the same assessment tool as in kindergarten. Teachers would be expected to attend the full training. No additional tasks are required as part of the KEP.

Can I use a Kindergarten Entry Profile tool for Parent Aware?

The approved tools used for the KEP are also approved for use in Parent Aware¹. For districts participating in the KEP, pre-K and kindergarten teachers may attend the same assessment training and the hours will count toward Parent Aware Rating. If you are a child care program participating in Parent Aware and want to learn more about the KEP, please contact mde.kep@state.mn.us.

What will it cost for early learning programs to attend training in Kindergarten Entry Profile?

MDE pays to host the training on all KEP tools. Districts are responsible for costs that may be incurred for teacher travel time, hotel, mileage and meals. Districts are also responsible for teacher salary or subs when sending teachers for training.

Are preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers to attend training together?

Teachers can choose to attend trainings based on their availability and professional development plans. In some cases, staff may attend trainings that work better for them and the timing may not align with the rest of their district staff. Trainings will be available based on the needs of individual trainers, assessment tool and participation enrollment numbers. Best practice is that pre-K and kindergarten staff is trained together, but we understand that this is not always possible. Pre-K and K staff may attend trainings together or separately.

Does the KEP benefit me as a school readiness coordinator?

As a school readiness coordinator, you are responsible for contributing to multiple initiatives such as Parent Aware, scholarships, World's Best Workforce, local initiatives and working with families. The tools approved for the KEP assist you with program planning, reporting progress and storing data in a systematic way. All tools for the KEP have reports for families. Additionally, you can use the tools to help with transition planning for students and planning for staff professional development.

Will the Kindergarten Entry Profile determine the effectiveness of early learning initiatives?

The KEP is not designed to evaluate existing programs, but rather provide a snapshot of children's knowledge and skills in the first weeks of kindergarten. Early learning initiatives such as Parent Aware and scholarships are outside the scope of the KEP.

More questions?

For more information on the Kindergarten Entry Profile, please email kep.mde@state.mn.us

¹ The FAST is currently awaiting Parent Aware approval.