

The Kindergarten Initial Assessment and How It Is Used

Kindergarten students enter school with a wide variety of skills and at various stages of development. During the first few days and weeks of the school year, all kindergarten students are assessed to learn about their strengths and needs to help teachers plan instruction.

One tool is the Kindergarten Initial Assessment, which measures skills in literacy, math, physical, personal, and social skills.

The Kindergarten Initial Assessment is not a “test”; it’s a way to measure a child’s skills at the start of kindergarten so that teachers can get to know each individual student.

Here are some of the skills measured in the Kindergarten Initial Assessment:

Literacy: Students complete tasks related to understanding a story and identifying a few words.

Letter identification and

sounds: Students are asked to identify upper- and lower-case letters. If they identify all the letters, they are asked to identify letter sounds.



Phonological Awareness Skills Test

(PAST): PAST assesses a student’s understanding of spoken words, rhymes, and syllables within words.

For students who have mastered those skills, PAST assesses advanced skills.

Oral language checklist: Conversational skills are measured during the initial assessment and first two weeks of school.

Math and Other Areas:

Students count and match objects as they count.

They copy patterns, extend patterns, and create their own patterns. They also do physical tasks, such as catching and throwing a ball.



Some students cannot be assessed via the Kindergarten Initial Assessment because of disabilities; teachers assess these students in other ways. Spanish-speaking students with limited English proficiency can sometimes be assessed in Spanish.

Teachers at traditional-calendar schools and with Tracks 1, 2, and 3 at year-round schools are asked to enter assessment results for all students by the first week in October (Track 4 schools have a later schedule).

Your child’s teacher should meet with you to review your kindergartner’s initial assessment—perhaps at a fall conference. You can view results for WCPSS overall at the Evaluation and Research Department’s Web site: http://www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research/reports/2007/0613elementary_out_comes_2005_06.pdf (WCPSS, 2006).

Is Your Child Ready?

Age is generally the only criterion for children entering kindergarten.

Students must be five years old on or before October 16.

Although there is no other requirement for entering kindergarten, here are some common expectations for new students, according to the N.C. Department of Public Instruction (2008):

Approaches to Learning

- Is confident in ability to learn
- Enjoys exploration and discovery through play
- Expresses self through music, movement, and art
- Pays attention to task for short period of time (about 15 minutes)
- Persists with tasks even when difficult



Social and Emotional Development

- Plays cooperatively and participates appropriately in a group
- Follows basic rules and routines
- Demonstrates some independence and can separate from parents
- Respects people and property
- Begins to identify and express feelings appropriately
- Begins to understand others’ feelings
- Forms close relationships with children and familiar adults

Language Development

- Knows many vocabulary words in own language

- Uses sentences of several words
- Speaks in a way that is understandable to unfamiliar adults
- Follows directions that have one, two, or three steps
- Recognizes rhyming words and similar sounds
- Recognizes familiar alphabet letters and knows the letters of his/her own name
- Is interested in books/stories; can retell a story when it's read aloud

Health and Physical Development

- Has had vision/hearing screenings and required immunizations
- Receives medical care when sick
- Receives regular dental check-ups
- Eats a balanced diet and gets 10-12 hours of sleep each night
- Can run, jump, climb, swing, and throw balls
- Demonstrates self-help skills, such as use of toilet, unassisted eating, dressing self, washing hands, etc.
- Cuts with scissors appropriately

Cognition and General Knowledge

- Identifies self by first and last name
- Knows basic colors
- Has awareness of self and family
- Draws picture of self
- Knows that actions have consequences
- Understands simple science concepts
- Demonstrates good problem-solving skills

- Names some numbers and counts to 10
- Names basic shapes
- Can informally measure things ("Which is longer?")
- Understands spatial concepts (up and down, inside and outside)

For more information

To learn more about other evaluation and research issues, visit our Web site at www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research.

A Spanish version of this newsletter is available online.

As always, feel free to talk with your child's teacher and other school staff. Being partners in our students' educational lives helps us all!

References

Baenen, N., Holdzkom, D. editors (2006): *WCPSS elementary school outcomes 2005-06*. Raleigh, N.C. http://www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research/reports/2007/0613elementary_outcomes_2005_06.pdf

N.C. Department of Public Instruction (2008): *Foundations: Early Learning Standards*. Raleigh, N.C. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/success>

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Initial Assessment



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