

Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) Frequently Asked Questions (6-24-13)

What is the KEA?

The KEA is an authentic observational system for assessing children in the first 45 days of kindergarten that has proven to be valid and reliable. It helps teachers observe children in the context of everyday experiences, which is an effective way to get to know them well and find out what they know and can do.

What is the purpose of the KEA?

Provide teachers and parents with important criterion-based information about a child's learning and development in five domains at the beginning of kindergarten so that teachers can inform individual instruction and parents can provide learning opportunities beyond the school day.

What are the five domains?

Mathematics – Learning early mathematical concepts strengthen young children's problem-solving and reasoning skills. The ability to count, measure, identify shapes, compose and decompose numbers is essential to future academic success and to participate in daily life activities.

Literacy and Language – Literacy begins with language development. Language allows children to participate both cognitively and affectively within the school setting. Reading, writing, and speaking provide the tools children need to interact with others and to represent their ideas, thoughts, and experiences. Effective communication with others is basic to this dimension.

Approaches toward Learning – A child's attitude toward, and interest in, learning define his or her approaches toward learning. Curiosity, creativity, independence, cooperation, and persistence are some of the approaches that enhance early learning and development. This domain is manifested in every other domain.

Social and Emotional Development – Developing strong relationships with adults and other children help children positively participate in classroom and school activities. In addition, developing strong relationships help children develop characteristics such as self-confidence that are useful when trying to make and keep friends and when cooperating in groups.

Physical Well-Being and Motor Development – Healthy children are ready children. Healthy children are more prepared to learn and perform at higher levels. Large/gross and small/fine motor skills are essential for health and for accomplishing school tasks such as cutting, coloring, using a pencil, keyboarding, and navigating the internet.

Why these domains?

In 1995, the National Education Goals Panel identified these five essential dimensions (developmental domains) of early development and learning as relevant to school readiness.

Child Trends, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center, reports the following about the importance of assessing these five domains.

School readiness, a multi-dimensional concept, conveys important advantages. Children who enter school with early skills, such as a basic knowledge of math and reading, are more likely than their peers to experience later academic success, attain higher levels of education, and secure employment. Absence of these and other skills may contribute to even greater disparities down the road. For example, one study found that gaps in math, reading, and vocabulary skills evident at elementary school entry explained at least half of the racial gap in high school achievement scores.

In addition, their report includes the importance of assessing the noncognitive domains.

While cognitive development and early literacy are important for children's school readiness and early success in school, other areas of development (i.e., health, social development, engagement) may be of equal or greater importance.

Retrieved from Internet on June 5, 2013: <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=early-school-readiness>.

Furthermore, research about school readiness suggests that a child's approaches toward learning are powerful predictors of his or her later success in school.

The Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network [FAN] (2000)

Is the KEA developmentally appropriate?

Yes the KEA is developmentally appropriate. It is an observational assessment. The data is collected by the kindergarten teacher during the children's daily activities; therefore it is culturally and linguistically responsive and inclusive of all children and families.

Is the KEA research-based?

Yes it is research-based. It is thoroughly grounded in the most current research about how children develop and learn. Within the KEA assessment guide are comprehensive summaries of important research findings about each objective and how it is a predictor of school success. Educators will not have to wonder whether they are focusing on what is most important for children's development and learning. The teaching strategies that are provided in relation to each objective reflect the most current thinking about best practices in early childhood education.

Is the KEA valid and reliable?

The KEA has been rigorously and extensively field tested by independent researchers who measured the reliability and validity of the tool. That field testing was representative of a national sample. That field testing determined that the KEA is both reliable and valid. Teacher's ratings are consistent and stable and the KEA can be used to effectively assess children from birth through kindergarten.

What kinds of reports does the KEA provide?

Widely Held Expectations Report – Compares information about the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of an individual child, class, or other group with widely held expectations for children of the same age or same class/grade.

Alignment Report – Shows how the measures for each child relate to particular state standards. Educators can easily view the percentages of children whose skills are emerging and children who have achieved the standards.

Performance and Growth Report – Provides a snapshot of children’s development and learning over multiple checkpoint periods.

Reports for Planning – A suite of reports designed to provide teachers with continuous information about children’s progress. The suite includes the “Individual Child Report” and the “Class Profile Report” which assist with planning.

Family Report – Shares information with family members by providing a narrative for every objective or dimension. This report helps families understand their child’s skills, knowledge, and behaviors and it identifies likely next steps in the child’s development and learning.

Can the KEA observational assessment be used beyond the beginning of kindergarten?

Yes. The license freely allows use of the assessment throughout the school year. Districts, schools, and teachers who use the KEA can continue to use it to evaluate their students at checkpoints throughout the school year. The Michigan Department of Education will only gather and use the data collected from the first 45 days of school checkpoint.

Is participation in the pilot and training free?

Yes, there is no cost to districts, schools, or teachers for participating in the pilot, subsequent field test, or implementation.

Can GSRP teachers participate in for the Fall 2013 Kindergarten Entry Assessment pilot?

No. The KEA is administered during the first 45 days of kindergarten, so this particular funding/initiative is targeted at kindergarten teachers. GSRP does not provide for kindergarten services.

Can GRSP teachers attend the TS GOLD training?

Not at this time. At some time in the future, there may be TS GOLD training offered locally that both GSRP and kindergarten teachers attend together, but at this time, the state funding is only for kindergarten teachers.

Can or must GRSP use TS GOLD as an assessment?

GSRP can use TS GOLD, but it can also utilize other assessment instruments. Refer to the GSRP Implementation Manual section on Child Assessment at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Child_Assessment_353323_7.pdf , which includes a list of acceptable ongoing comprehensive child assessment tools.

Can developmental kindergarten teachers participate?

Yes, all teachers of kindergarten age students can sign up for the fall pilot.