

# **KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

## **STAFF NOTE**

### **Review Item:**

Common kindergarten entry screener

### **Applicable Statute or Regulation:**

704 KAR 5:070

### **History/Background:**

***Existing Policy.*** The road to college and career readiness begins in early childhood. Kentucky must ensure children enter school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that promote the child's success. Research affirms that high quality preschool increases high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates, especially for low-income students (Jepsen, Troske and Brasher, 2009). For Kentucky to continue increasing the number of students who graduate college- and career-ready, we must increase the number of children who enter school ready to learn.

Kentucky's proficiency delivery plan emphasizes the importance of school readiness and early learning with strategies to support district collaboration with early childhood providers, assessment of children at school entry with a common screen and use of this screening data to inform instructional practices and support services. The Early Learning Leadership Networks (ELLNs), launched by the department in 2011, were designed to provide professional learning support to improve early learning outcomes. ELLNs assist in strengthening district capacity to understand and implement Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards and support school readiness. The teams attending the networks may include preschool coordinators, Head Start, kindergarten and child care staff. Additionally, K-3 Program Reviews and Preschool Program Reviews (P2R) also are critical to school readiness and early learning, each involving careful review of services to identify strengths and areas of growth leading to continuous improvement.

In its November 2010 final report, the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education recommended that working in cooperation with the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) should identify and implement a kindergarten entry assessment that provides information regarding each student's readiness for learning and success in a kindergarten setting. The data from this kindergarten entry assessment will be collected in the student information system to provide a specific set of information to inform continuous improvement of all students from the time they enter school. This data will inform a core set of policy questions that will guide future policy decisions related to early childhood education.

In December 2011, the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) gave final approval to 704 KAR 5:070 requiring a common kindergarten entry screener. The KDE offered the opportunity to districts to pilot the Brigance screener during the 2012-13 academic year. One-hundred and nine (109) districts volunteered to pilot the screener.

Every school district was required to administer the common screener and enter the results of the screener into the student information system during the 2013-2014 academic year. The regulation requires the KDE to publically report the following data at an aggregate level:

- School district
- School readiness domain
- Student demographics
- Prior early learning settings

Plans are for the latest round of data from the screener to be publicly released at the end of January. This data will be presented at the February KBE meeting.

Further support of school readiness and early learning will be available through a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant award. Kentucky is one of six states to receive federal funding through the most recent RTT-ELC competitive grant cycle, receiving \$44.3 million to support the state's ambitious agenda for improving the learning outcomes for our youngest citizens toward college and career readiness.

Specifically, the RTTT-ELC will support the following strategies:

1. ALL-STARS, a new early childhood quality rating improvement system, and implementation of the Strengthening Families initiative, a process to assist agencies with helping families build protective factors;
2. Expansion of Toyota's Bornlearning<sup>®</sup> Academies, an initiative to meet Kentucky's critical need for early childhood parent education; and
3. An integrated data system for early childhood demographic and program information, including professional learning and kindergarten screener data.

The grant includes \$2.3 million to KDE to support the integration of state-funded preschool into the ALL-STARS quality rating system.

### **Impact on Getting to Proficiency:**

The KBE strategic priority to ensure all students graduate college and career ready serves as the catalyst for the activity outlined above. Additionally, in order to close achievement gaps across the commonwealth, a focus on early childhood education is paramount.

Districts may use the data from the common kindergarten screener to inform communities about early learning in order to close school readiness gaps; make informed policy decisions at the local level to support early learning prior to school entry; establish local goals for program improvement in order to achieve early learning outcomes; and as evidences in the kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade program review.

**Contact Person:**

Felicia Smith  
Office of Next Generation Learners  
(502) 564-9850  
[Felicia.smith@education.ky.gov](mailto:Felicia.smith@education.ky.gov)



---

**Commissioner of Education**

**Date:**

February 2014

*Estimates of the Costs and Benefits of Expanding the Early Childhood Education  
Program in Kentucky*

Jepsen, Troske and Brasher, 2009

[http://cber.uky.edu/Downloads/CBER\\_early\\_educ\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://cber.uky.edu/Downloads/CBER_early_educ_report_final.pdf)