Kindergarten School Readiness Initiative Guidance

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Young children learn holistically with growth in one area dependent on growth in other areas. Success in the academic domains is dependent on a child's progress within the developmental domains.

Introduction

Each child enters kindergarten with great potential and the possibility of success. Families send their kindergarteners to school with the hope and expectation that their child will be nurtured, challenged, and supported in their growth, development, and learning for later academic achievement. Colorado's school readiness initiative is aimed at promoting the school success of each child, recognizing that a strong start in school can close gaps early and prevent other gaps from starting. School readiness is a national movement and Colorado is one of a majority of states implementing school readiness. The assessments and individual plans provide educators and families with tools to support later school success through identifying each child's strengths and areas for growth.

Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids: The Source of the School Readiness Initiative

Senate Bill 08-212, Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), passed in 2008 with the goal of aligning Colorado's preschool through postsecondary education system. The act includes provisions related to school readiness for both the State Board of Education and local education providers. The State Board of Education was required to define school readiness and to adopt one or more assessments aligned with the definition of school readiness. CAP4K states that the state board shall consider assessments that are research-based, recognized nationwide as reliable instruments for measuring school readiness, and suitable for determining the instruction and interventions students need to improve his/her readiness to succeed in school. Section 22-7-1004 (2)(a).

Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year all local education providers are required to ensure all children in publicly-funded preschool or kindergarten receive an individual school readiness plan that is informed by a State Board of Education approved school readiness assessment.

Colorado's Definition of School Readiness
School readiness describes both the preparedness of <u>a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences,</u> and <u>the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students</u> enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten. School readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content.

Re-Adopted by the State Board of Education in 2017

Purpose and Principles

The purpose of assessing and monitoring school readiness in kindergarten is to understand each child's strengths and needs across developmental and academic domains so that schools and teachers may provide a responsive learning environment. Legislative language specifically states, the purpose of the continuing assessment shall be to help direct teachers' practice within the classroom with each student and thereby maximize each students' progress towards demonstrating school readiness and to facilitate the systematic measurement of a students' increasing knowledge, skills and accomplishments within the classroom context. Section 22-7-1014 (1)(b). Information provided by school readiness assessment is intended to help develop an individual readiness plan to inform instruction for each child. School readiness assessment is not designed as a 'ready or not' assessment, but rather an ongoing, authentic, curriculum embedded assessment system that helps identify what next steps and supports will provide the greatest opportunity for each child's growth and success. CAP4K clearly states that school readiness assessments shall not be used to deny a student admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade. Section 22-7-1004 (2)(a).

Ready Child, Ready Schools

Colorado's definition of school readiness promotes the notion of *Ready Child and Ready School*. School readiness describes the status and ongoing progress a child makes within the domains of physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension development, and cognition and general knowledge. By monitoring each child's progress across multiple domains, teachers, families, schools, and caregivers can provide needed support to promote each child's success in school. It is imperative for schools to respond to the needs of all children by providing them with coordinated support at home and school in order to facilitate improved academic and behavioral outcomes. A multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) provides a framework to structure the decision making process needed for the selection, implementation, and evaluation of supports to provide children. Student progress encouraged by these practices is systematically measured, using data, within a structured problem solving process to drive student success.

Children come to school with unique assets in cultural, behavioral, developmental, linguistic, and familial experiences that affect their learning and success in school. Improved child outcomes are directly linked to understanding what children bring to school, their experience with school and classroom conditions, teacher practices, and the level of family and community support in continuing learning outside of school. Quality school readiness assessment provides vital information that identifies children's strengths and needs so schools are better able to provide appropriate instruction, learning environments, and support to allow each child to learn and thrive.

This system-based approach emphasizes a school's ability to provide a responsive environment which is integral in supporting school readiness and success for all children.

The Whole Child: The Interconnected Relationship of the Academic and Developmental Domains

Success in school is measured in terms of a child's academic progress. Yet academic success is dependent on a child's progress within key developmental areas or domains. CAP4K outlines the following domains that are, at a minimum, to be included in assessment of school readiness: physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension development, and cognition and general knowledge (math and literacy). Section 22-7-1004 (1). Positive approaches to learning are also instrumental to children's academic success and support the skills needed to meet grade level expectations. Young children learn holistically with growth in one area dependent on growth in other areas. Children's progress in the developmental domains and their ability to focus, manage feelings and behavior, follow multiple step instructions, problem solve, plan, and reflect are critically important to progressing academically, as academic success is only possible when crucial developmental foundations are firmly in place. For example, it is not possible to make good progress in reading and writing unless a child's oral language skills as well as his/her ability to understand spoken language are meeting grade expectations. The following figure illustrates and describes the domains outlined in School Readiness legislation as well as highlights the knowledge, skills, and behaviors key to future school success.

Academic Areas, Developmental Domains, and Approaches to Learning

Academic Areas
- Students develop academic skills and knowledge that correlate to the Colorado Academic Standards.
- Students demonstrate progression towards mastery through engaging in classroom activities.

Physical Well Being and Motor Development
- Students develop skills that contribute to healthy development and the reduction of health risks.
- Students demonstrate competencies in motor skills and movement patterns.

Social and Emotional Development
- Students can form and sustain healthy relationships with adults as well as with other children.
- Students talk about and use strategies to regulate responses to their own emotions.
- Students use appropriate social skills to interact with adults and other children.
- Students can wait their turn, stop themselves from yelling or hitting, ignore distractions and interruptions.

Cognition
- Students develop working memory skills – problem solving, remembering multiple tasks, rules, and sources of information
- Students can 'switch gears' to apply different rules in different settings (inside and outside voices).
- Students can try different strategies until they find one that works.

Language and Comprehension
- Students develop and use verbal and nonverbal communication to participate in learning activities, effectively negotiate with peers, and integrate vocabulary and language structures in increasingly complex ways.

Approaches to Learning
- Students develop an interest in varied topics and activities, a desire to learn, creativity, problem solving, self-regulation and independence in learning
- Students develop the ability to begin and finish activities with persistance and attention.
- Students can focus and persevere to accomplish collaborative and individual tasks.

Attending to each of the domains enable teachers to "meet children where they are, as individuals and as a group, and help each child reach challenging and achievable goals that contribute to his or her ongoing development and learning" (Phillips and Scrinzi, 2014).

School Readiness Assessment

Educators often collect data and report progress by separate domains or subject areas yet progress in each domain does not occur in isolation. Children learn and develop as whole beings. In fact development in one domain directly influences development in other domains. In order to create individual learning plans that offer each child the greatest potential for success, it is essential that teachers understand what children know and are able to do in both developmental and academic domains. CAP4K also calls for local education providers to use assessment instruments that are research-based, valid, and reliable to facilitate the systematic measurement of a student's increasing knowledge, skills, and accomplishments within the classroom context. Section 22-7-1014(1)(b). Holistic, authentic, observation based, formative assessments offer children an opportunity to demonstrate who they are, what they know, and what they need next. They offer adults a way to capture and organize a child's progress.

Colorado's School Readiness Assessments

The Colorado State Board of Education has approved three kindergarten school readiness assessment tools: Desired Results Developmental Profile for Kindergarten (DRDP-K), HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) for Kindergarten and Teaching Strategies *GOLD*®. The three kindergarten school readiness assessment tools all function in similar ways. They measure the required areas of development and learning defined by school readiness legislation: early literacy, mathematics, social, physical, language, and cognitive development. Results are measured against research based age or grade expectations and can show student growth over time. Some of the assessment tools have additional optional areas that can be utilized at the discretion of the district.

School Readiness Assessment Timeline

House Bill 15-1323 requires districts to complete initial kindergarten entry information for each child with a state board approved school readiness assessment within the first 60 calendar days of the school year. Districts individually establish their 60 day timeline directly with their school readiness assessment vendor based on their kindergarten start date. Districts have the option to continue using school readiness assessments throughout the year to continue monitoring the growth and development of their students. The number of additional checkpoints and the due dates can be determined and set by the district.

School readiness assessment data reported to CDE will be from the initial fall assessment window. Information collected from READ assessments administered within the first 60 calendar days may be used to inform or fulfill the literacy component of the school readiness entry assessment. For more information on the school readiness data collection and the connection between school readiness assessment and READ assessment please see the following section on page 8 and 9.

When kindergarten students enroll after the start of the school year, and within the first 60 calendar days of the year, CDE suggests districts use their current district policies for the assessment of new students, as well as their district policies on timelines for reporting information to parents to guide the timeline for completion of the initial kindergarten entry information and the development of the Individual School Readiness Plan.

Implementation Options

CDE recognizes both the value of the school readiness initiative and the initial effort required to learn and implement new assessment tools and practices on the part of district and school leaders and individual teachers. CDE is not issuing specific requirements for the use of the assessment systems, nor the development of school readiness plans. Furthermore, the department is **not** requiring teachers to complete a given number of observations nor to collect specific types of documentation in providing ratings for each child. Instead, CDE is providing the following information regarding legislative requirements and options for districts to consider as they plan for and implement the school readiness initiative.

Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment District Implementation Options	
What is Minimally Required:	**Expanded Considerations:**
Assess only statutorily required domains. (SB 08-212) ➤ physical well-being and motor development ➤ social and emotional development ➤ language and comprehension ➤ cognition ➤ general knowledge (math and literacy)	Assess all domains/areas outlined within the assessment tools. Benefits: ➤ Assessment data of expanded tool yield comprehensive "whole child" information ➤ Additional information available for reports to families
Complete only the initial assessment checkpoint within the first 60 calendar days. (HB 15-1323) ➤ No mid-year or end-of-year requirement	Ongoing use of the tools Benefits: ➤ Reduces need for teacher/district created assessments ➤ Reports generated are powerful child progress communication tools ➤ Yields whole class and individual child data over time that can be used to show growth ➤ Data can be used to inform instruction and to update school readiness plans
Information collected from READ assessments administered within the first 60 calendar days may be used to inform or fulfill the literacy component of the school readiness entry assessment. (HB 15-1323) ➤ It is not required for the literacy area to be reassessed While data from READ assessments can be used to inform all, or a portion of the literacy area of the school readiness assessment, the literacy area of the school readiness assessment must be completed in order to automatically aggregate the school readiness report within the assessment systems to meet the kindergarten school readiness data reporting requirements.	Using both READ Act data and authentic, observation based assessment information will support a clear whole-child picture to inform instruction and intervention. Benefits: ➤ Use of multiple data points based on standardized and non-standardized assessments helps triangulate data and provides thoughtful teacher reflection and planning so interventions do not occur in isolation.

Regardless of the assessment chosen by districts, full access to all of the features within the selected assessment tool is available. This will allow teachers flexibility to expand the use of the tool as needed.

Funding for School Readiness Assessments

CAP4K did not provide funding for school readiness assessments. A portion of the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund grant awarded to Colorado has been used to support districts with implementation of kindergarten school readiness. These funds have supported districts through reimbursements of the costs of kindergarten student portfolio subscriptions, state wide trainings, and technical assistance through 2017.

Kindergarten School Readiness Data Reporting

Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids requires districts to report school readiness data to the Colorado Department of Education.

Determination of School Readiness Data Reporting

CAP4K requires that following the adoption of the school readiness assessment, the state board shall adopt a system for reporting population-level results that provide baseline data for measuring overall change and improvement in students' skills and knowledge over time. (Section 22-7-1004 (2)(b) C.R.S.) In March 2016, the State Board of Education voted to adopt a system for reporting school readiness data. The system calls for districts to submit only aggregate readiness information not by domain but by number of domains in which students demonstrate readiness as illustrated in the sample tables below. For complete details please see the file layout on the school readiness web page.

Sample School Readiness Report

Number of Students	Domains	Total # Per Domain	Gender M	Gender F	SES	Race/Ethnicity
Total # of Students	0 of 6 Domains	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category
Total # of Students	1 of 6 Domains	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category
Total # of Students	2 of 6 Domains	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category
Total # of Students	3 of 6 Domains	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category
Total # of Students	4 of 6 Domains	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category
Total # of Students	5 of 6 Domains	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category
Total # of Students	6 of 6 Domains	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category	# by category

Data will be reported in aggregate for the district as a whole, and disaggregated by school, free or reduced lunch eligibility status, ethnicity, and gender.

Data Reporting Elements

School readiness includes both developmental and academic areas: physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension, cognition, and general knowledge defined as math and literacy.(Section 22-7-1004 (1)(b). For districts using Teaching Strategies *GOLD*® the areas include: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy and Math.
The reporting system is intended to provide baseline data for measuring improvement in students' knowledge and skills over time.

Statewide school readiness data reporting will begin in the fall of 2017. Data reported to CDE will be from the initial fall kindergarten school readiness assessment window. The initial assessment is to be completed within the first 60 calendar days of the school year as required by HB 15-1323. The Kindergarten School Readiness (KSR) collection will be open from mid-October to mid-December. Data will be submitted to CDE through Data Pipeline.

Districts using Teaching Strategies may complete the initial entry assessment by using the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) Survey in *GOLD*® for the first checkpoint. The Colorado reduced item set of objectives and

dimensions in *GOLD*® can be used to complete the KEA. Teaching Strategies is developing a customized report within their assessment tool that will allow districts to automatically aggregate and report on the state board approved data reporting elements. The report will be available in early Fall 2017.

HighScope also offers a report within their assessment tool that will allow districts run a report in the state board approved data reporting format.

Districts have the option to continue using school readiness assessments throughout the year to continue measuring overall change and improvement in students' skills and knowledge over time. Data reporting will not be required beyond the initial assessment.

Data Reporting Connections Between School Readiness and READ

The State Board approved format calls for data to be reported in 6 areas. These are the areas outlined in legislation with general knowledge broken out into 2 areas: Math and Literacy. If a READ Act assessment is administrated within the first 60 calendar days of the school year, the READ Act assessment can be used to inform or fulfill the literacy component of the school readiness assessment (HB 15-1323). While data from READ assessments can be used to inform all, or a portion of the literacy area of the school readiness assessment, the literacy area of the school readiness assessment must be completed in order to automatically aggregate the school readiness report within the assessment systems.

It is not required for the literacy area to be reassessed or to administer the literacy component of the school readiness assessment if using READ assessment information.

If data is not included in the literacy area within the school readiness assessment tool, reports including all 6 required areas must be manually aggregated in the approved format. A file layout is available for the Kindergarten School Readiness data collection on the [Assessment Choices and School Readiness Plans]

The Colorado Department of Education will produce an annual report with the following information:
- Levels of school readiness demonstrated by students enrolled in kindergarten
- Disaggregated results by school district, school, grade level, free or reduced lunch eligibility status, gender, and ethnicity

As stated in CAP4K, school readiness assessment results shall not be publicly reported for individual students. Section 22-7-1004 (2)(b).

Individual School Readiness Plans

Requirements
All children in publicly funded kindergarten programs will have an Individual School Readiness Plan informed by a State Board of Education approved school readiness assessment. CAP4K does not have specific requirements for the content of the individualized plans required for every kindergartener. Districts have a high degree of flexibility for the design and content of the plans.

Recommendations
CDE recommends that Individual School Readiness Plans reflect a child's strengths and next steps in development over the course of a child's kindergarten year. Also, Individual School Readiness Plans should unify supports for a child's language, literacy, academic, physical, and behavioral development. The Individual School Readiness Plan should incorporate all of the elements of any other student plans currently in use, including READ plans (pursuant to legislative requirements), response to intervention (RtI) plans, English language development plans, and advanced learning plans (ALPs) such that kindergartners have a **single** education plan. However, students with disabilities will need to have a separate Individualized Education Programs (IEP) according to federal requirements within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IEPs should inform the school readiness plan such that general educators and special educators can effectively collaborate to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities, and the Individual School Readiness Plan for students with disabilities should provide appropriate connections to the child's IEP.

The Individual School Readiness Plans should be created through collaboration between teachers (general education and when appropriate, special education), families, and caregivers. Readiness plans should address the kindergarten standards as appropriate and the knowledge and skill areas in which a student needs assistance to make progress.

School Readiness Plan Options
Many options exist for districts as they consider the most appropriate Individual School Readiness Plan model. All of the school readiness assessment systems generate reports that can serve as a readiness plan. For example, within Teaching Strategies *GOLD®* the most widely used reports include the Development and Learning Report, and the Report Card report. Also, student information systems (i.e., Alpine) that have the functionality to create individual child plans can be utilized to generate and house Individual School Readiness Plans. Finally, districts may choose to develop a district template for Individual Readiness Plans. CDE has created a sample template which can be found in Appendix A. It is designed to illustrate the type of information that will be important to include in a child's plan. The template includes a "child information" box listing demographic information, as well as any additional plans or special considerations. The rest of the plan is grouped under developmental and academic domains. Within each domain there are two sections: (1) Strengths, (2) Goals and Next Steps.

Given the flexibility within statute, districts may consider using Individual Readiness Plans as their report card for kindergarten.

Final Thoughts

Colorado's school readiness initiative recognizes the importance of a strong start to each child's school experience to his or her ultimate academic success. Through identification of a child's strengths and next steps/needs, teachers and families can come together to plan the necessary supports to promote the child's learning and development over the kindergarten year and beyond.

Appendix A:

Sample Individual School Readiness Plan

Child Information

Teacher Name: **School:**   **Plan Date:**

Child's Name: **DOB:**

☐ **Other programs and supports for this student:**_____

Consider all appropriate goals from the child's IEP, READ plan, or other plans as priority growth areas are identified and strategies are developed.

Developmental Domains	Academic Domains
Strengths:	**Strengths:**
Goals and Next Steps (including suggested strategies):	**Goals and Next Steps (including suggested strategies):**