

School Readiness: Ready Child, Ready School

In 2008, the Colorado State Board of Education defined school readiness as:

Both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students 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.

School readiness describes the status and ongoing progress a child makes within 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 areas, teachers, parents, schools, and caregivers can provide needed support to ensure each child's success in school. Information gathered from school readiness assessments is used for supportive and instructional purposes and cannot be used to deny a student admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade.

School Readiness Requirements

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 included provisions related to school readiness for both the Colorado State Board of Education and Colorado school districts. CAP4K requires:

- The State Board of Education to define school readiness and postsecondary and workforce readiness and adopt new academic standards defining a clear learning path for Colorado's children.
- Colorado school districts to ensure all children in publicly-funded kindergarten programs receive an individual school readiness plan that addresses the academic standards and skill areas students needed to be ready for higher levels of learning.
- School districts to administer a State Board of Education-approved school readiness assessment to each student in kindergarten. The assessment results help inform each child's school readiness plan. Districts have until the 2015-16 school year to fully implement school readiness plans and assessments.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Colorado implementing school readiness plans and assessments?

[CAP4K](#) requires that each child in a publicly-funded preschool and kindergarten program have an individual school readiness plan or a learning plan, informed by regular monitoring and assessment of a child's progress in developmental and academic domains. School readiness plans are dynamic documents, used to record progress and inform instruction.

What are the requirements for school readiness assessment tools within CAP4K?

CAP4K describes the requirements for school readiness assessment:

1. The State Board of Education shall adopt one or more assessments aligned with the definition of school readiness.
2. The adopted school readiness assessments should be suitable for measuring children's level of school readiness and for determining instruction and intervention to improve the readiness of children to succeed in school.
3. The assessment tools should be research-based, recognized nationwide as reliable.
4. The results of school readiness assessment may not be used to deny a child's admission to kindergarten or progression to first grade.

What is the purpose of a school readiness assessment?

The school readiness assessment provides educators and families with information about how prepared a child is for the academic, social, physical, emotional and cognitive demands of school. The assessment helps educators chart students' progress over time and informs families as to how their children are doing compared with age expectations. This information helps educators and families as they plan learning goals for each child.

What are the key areas for a child's school readiness?

In addition to readiness to learn academics (reading, mathematics, science and social studies), a kindergartener's success in school depends on his or her language development, cognitive skills, physical well-being and motor development, as well as social and emotional development.

- The *language* domain pertains to the child's ability to listen and understand, to express his/her thoughts and needs, and to engage in appropriate conversations.
- The *social* domain includes the child's ability to follow limits, make friends and take care of his or her own needs – all of which are important skills that contribute to the ability to participate effectively in a kindergarten classroom.
- Being able to persist with learning tasks, solve problems, use symbols and organize information are important *cognitive* skills that set the stage for later academic learning.
- The *physical* domain looks at a child's ability to use small and large muscles in order to engage in learning activities and to meet his/her own needs.

Why is it important to measure developmental progress in young children?

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 age expectations.

What are best practices when assessing young children?

High quality early childhood assessment:

- Takes place in the child's everyday routines, activities and places;
- Considers a child's learning and development over time rather than just a single point in time;
- Includes observations and work samples that are gathered over time to inform instructional decisions for teachers and families;
- Focuses on students' strengths, on what they know and can do, rather than things they are not yet able to do; and
- Allows input from a variety of sources including teachers, families, other caregivers.

How does early childhood assessment work?

Teachers assess the developmental progress of young children by making observations and collecting work samples in student portfolios. Teachers use this information to guide their instruction and share with families.

What does an assessment portfolio look like?

For decades, early childhood and kindergarten teachers have identified creative ways to collect and organize the observations, work samples and other forms of documentation they gather to share with families on the progress young children make in their programs. In the past, these have been gathered in boxes, storage bins, binders and file folders. Now, teachers are able to use secure electronic portfolios for these collections. Access to these portfolios is secured by the unique username and password provided only for authorized individuals. In addition to added security, teachers can provide parents with a username and password so that they may view items in their own child's portfolio and add to the portfolio if they choose.

How are portfolios used?

Portfolio collections allow teachers and families to reflect on the progress children have made. The evidence collected allows teachers to accurately monitor student progress and make informed instructional decisions. And, it allows children to view their own work, discuss their progress and participate in goal setting for what they want to work on next.

Assessments are completed in the secure online assessment system used by the school. Access is only permitted for persons authorized by the school, usually the lead teacher and, if applicable, the co-teacher who both have unique usernames and passwords.

How is assessment information used?

Teachers use child-level assessment information to guide instructional planning and to communicate with families. School administrators help teachers look at their classroom level trends from semester to semester and year to year in order to help them improve their teaching. Administrators also use the collective set of assessment information (not child-level information) to help them make decisions about how to allocate resources such as professional development funds. Once the school readiness initiative is fully implemented, the Colorado Department of Education will use the collective results of assessment information to report to the legislature on the level of school readiness of Colorado's children.

What assessments are currently used to assess school readiness?

In December 2012, the State Board of Education voted to offer a menu of school readiness assessments for districts to choose from. The board approved *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® as the first school readiness assessment tool for the menu. The Colorado Department of Education has been conducting reviews of other school readiness assessments and will recommend additions to the menu as appropriate tools are identified.

What information can be stored within the *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® system and where is it stored?

Districts or other purchasers (e.g., BOCES or charter schools) of *Teaching Strategies GOLD* decide what data is collected and who is authorized to use and/or view it. At all times, districts maintain ownership over their data. Like many commercially-available instructional or assessment programs, *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® has online functionality that creates efficiencies for teachers within a secure environment. Users decide what functionality they want to use in the system. *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® has the functionality to collect (house) demographic information on students, assessment ratings, work samples and teacher/parent communication. The online assessment system does NOT collect children's phone numbers, physical addresses or Social Security numbers.

What steps are put into place to make sure that children's information remains private?

Teaching Strategies GOLD® uses a very secure process to protect data similar to processes banks and big organizations use. The process uses a tiered data structure of secure passwords and SSL encryption, a protocol developed for transmitting private documents via the Internet so that un-authorized users cannot access information.

Where can I learn more about *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® security and privacy policies?

Please refer to the following websites for more information:

<https://www.teachingstrategies.com/page/privacyPolicy.cfm>

<https://gold.teachingstrategies.com/Gold/admin/privacyPolicy.cfm>

Where can I learn more?

CDE's early learning and school readiness website: www.cde.state.co.us/early