

January 2016



Legislative Report
Kindergarten Literacy Assessment
Preliminary Report

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Department of Education
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INTRODUCTION

Iowa Code 279.60: Assessments -access to data - reports

The 2014 General Assembly passed legislation requiring local school districts to complete the following:

- Administer a valid and reliable universal screening instrument as prescribed by the Iowa Department of Education(DE) to every kindergarten student enrolled in the district (Iowa Code 270.60);
- Collect from each parent guardian or legal custodian of a kindergarten student enrolled in the district, information including, but not limited to, preschool attendance and demographic factors; and
- Report the results of the assessment and preschool information to the DE no later than January 1 of that school year.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS USED

The DE aligned the kindergarten assessment requirements of Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) 279.60 with IAC 279.68, the statutory requirements for ensuring that all students are proficient in reading by the end of third grade. This law requires each school district assess all students enrolled in kindergarten at the beginning of the school year for their level of reading or reading readiness on a locally determined or statewide assessment. Locally determined assessments that districts select, must meet minimum standards for reliability and validity established by the DE. In order to support districts in the implementation of IAC 279.68, the DE reviewed early literacy assessments for universal screening and progress monitoring to determine valid and reliable instruments. Based on this review, the DE chose to support implementation of the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) for K–6 grades as a statewide measure for Iowa schools at no cost.

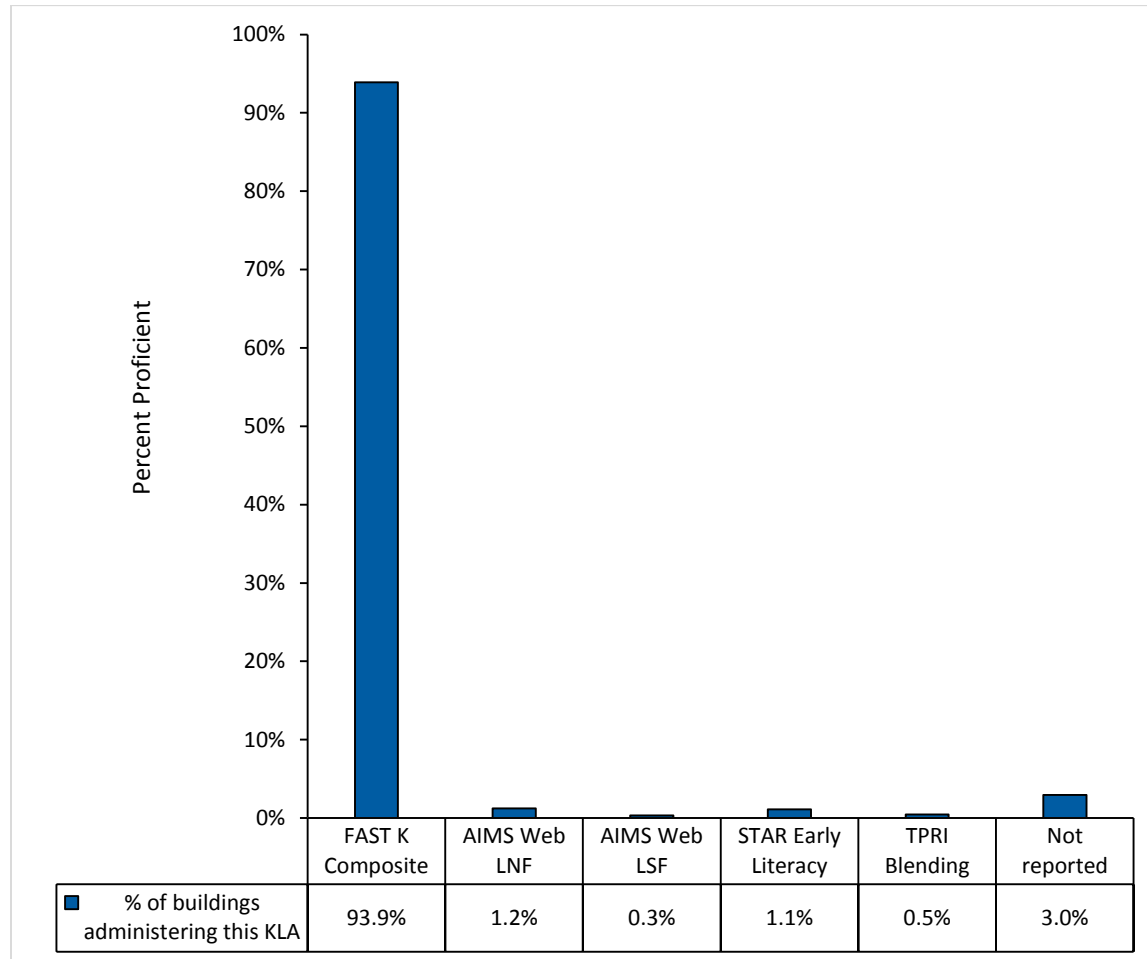
Additional information regarding the assessment tools reviewed, the review process, and results is located at: <https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/standards-and-curriculum/iowas-multi-tiered-system-supports> under the subheading Literacy Assessment. The results reflect an analysis of the preliminary data. Final results addressing all the approved assessments will be reported in the 2015 Condition of Education.

Most districts reported preliminary data and 97 percent of the buildings with kindergarten classrooms submitted kindergarten assessment data. (This percentage reflects buildings with prekindergarten or transitional kindergarten.) A total of 39,232 students were enrolled in kindergarten.

Figure 1 depicts the various types of kindergarten literacy assessment instruments used in school buildings. Each of these assessment tools measures a different aspect of print, letter names, and sounds and beginning sounds (phonemic awareness) in young children. As shown

in Figure 1, the majority of schools reported data using the FAST, for the five categories of assessment tools used.

Figure 1. Percent of Iowa School Buildings and Kindergarten Assessment Tools Administered.

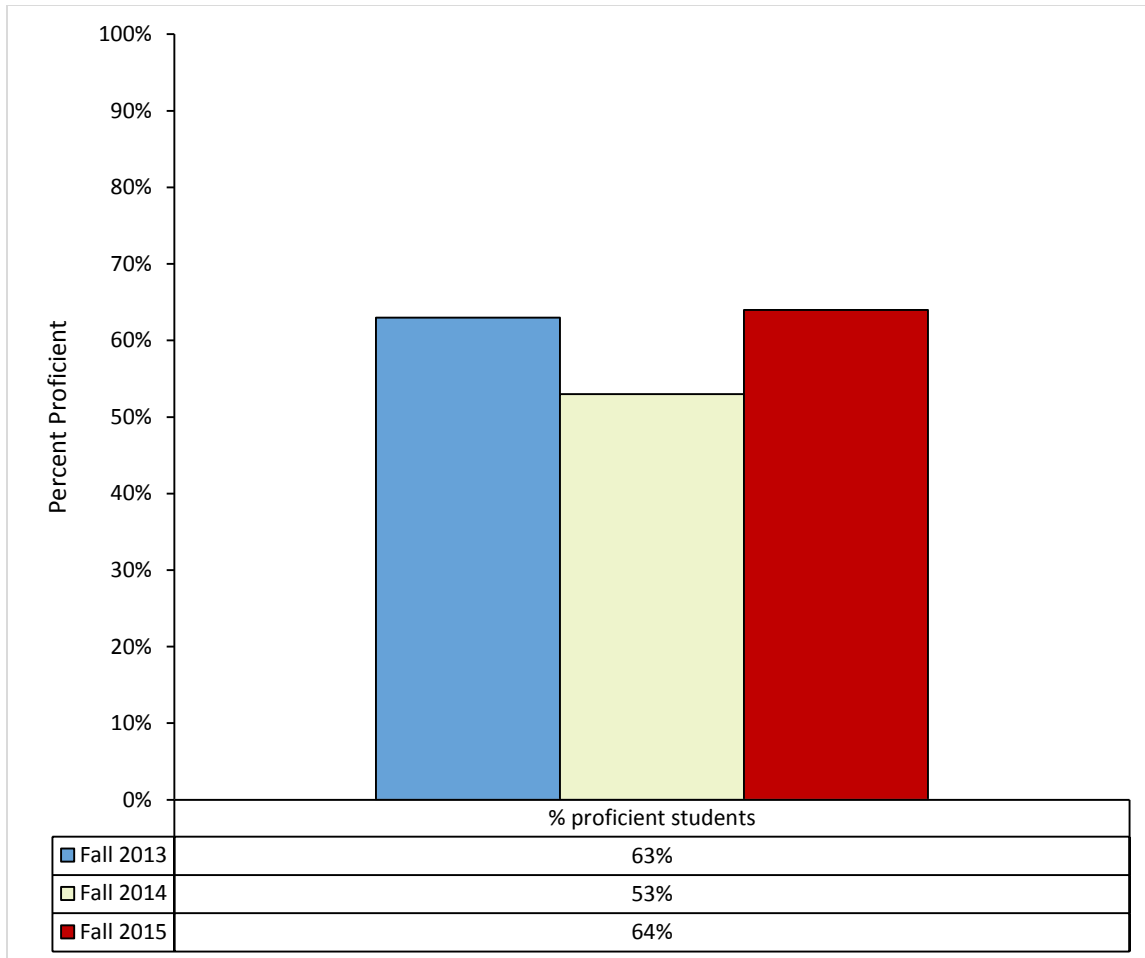


Data Source: Preliminary Student Reporting in Iowa fall files, Iowa Department of Education, 2015-2016

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

FAST *earlyReading* assesses important skills in early reading development. In the beginning of kindergarten, subtests address concepts about print, letter names, and beginning sounds. Students are compared based on a criterion or benchmark aligned with relevant outcomes. A composite or total score is calculated based on the five subtests. The composite score is reported to determine the percent of children proficient regarding early reading skills at the beginning of kindergarten. In 2013-2014, 5,119 students were assessed using FAST. In 2015-2016, 36,552 students were assessed. Preliminary data indicate 64 percent of the students assessed this fall were proficient.

Figure 2. Percent of Students Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Beginning Reading Skills Using FAST Assessment Measure (N=36,552)



Data Source: Preliminary Iowa TIER Files, Iowa Department of Education, 2015-2016

REPORT OF PRESCHOOL PARTICIPATION

Districts reported the number of students who had attended preschool at any time twelve months prior to registering for kindergarten. Districts gathered the information through parent reports or district records. Three categories of preschool attendance were reported: 1) district sponsored preschool, 2) non-district preschool, or 3) no preschool. Non-district sponsored preschool programs include programs such as Head Start, local private preschools, and preschools funded by Early Childhood Iowa scholarships. Since the amount of time devoted to instruction may vary by program requirements, the data collected and analyzed should be interpreted with some level of caution. In 2015-2016, 39,232 students entered kindergarten. Districts indicated that based on parent reports, 26,149 or 67 percent of students entering kindergarten attended preschool, an increase from 61 percent.

SUMMARY

Results are supportive of statewide efforts to increase proficiency of literacy skills. Supporting statewide efforts include implementation of the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, the National Association for the Education of Young Children Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, the Head Start Program Performance Standards, and instructional strategies. Ongoing efforts to support the alignment of assessment, curriculum, and instruction will assist in closing the achievement gap.

Current data indicate the following:

- Continue state funding supporting the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of quality preschool programming.
- Support quality preschool programs through maintaining program standards and implementation of Iowa Early Learning Standards in order to prepare children for success in kindergarten.
- Support quality professional development that addresses the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards and Iowa Early Learning Standards.
- Provide technical assistance through area education agency early childhood staff.
- Continue work with Collaborating for Iowa's Kids (C4K), a partnership between the DE and the area education agencies. The intent of the C4K collaborative is to effectively and efficiently work as a comprehensive educational system to accomplish agreed-upon high-impact priorities. The initial work for the group's collaborative efforts is preschool – 6th grade reading with a focus on early literacy.