

Collaborating with Community Partners to Create New Directions for Young Children

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Abstract

Vision 2015 is an initiative to improve the area and quality of life for people living within the Northern Kentucky region. A key aspect to Northern Kentucky's future is in reaching by 2015 the Educational Excellence goal of having all children enter kindergarten with the skills necessary to succeed. This paper focuses on the first phase of the steering committee's journey in development and dissemination of a kindergarten-readiness definition for the region.

Vision 2015 is an initiative to improve the area and quality of life for people living within the Northern Kentucky region. The regional initiative focuses on six components: competitive economy, educational excellence, livable communities, urban renaissance, effective governance, and regional stewardship. The authors were hired as Regional Steward faculty by Northern Kentucky University to contribute to two of the six Vision 2015 focal areas: educational excellence and regional stewardship. The goals for the Educational Excellence and Regional Stewardship are to “prepare children and adults to successfully compete in the global knowledge-based economy” and collaborate with community partners in achieving “a shared vision of our [Northern Kentucky region] future” respectively (Vision 2015 2005).

A key aspect to success for Vision 2015 and Northern Kentucky's future is in reaching by 2015 the Educational Excellence goal of having all children enter kindergarten with the skills necessary to succeed. When the authors began work with various community groups (consisting of professionals within the early care and education field) to establish six- to nine-month-long action projects to focus on increasing the number of children prepared for kindergarten at the county or city level, the authors found there was no common way that the region defined “prepared” for kindergarten other than randomly picking a cut-off score from a test, and there was a lack of consistency in how school districts selected tests to determine a child's kindergarten readiness. In fact, a definition of kindergarten readiness did not exist at the state level nor was screening children at kindergarten level required for school districts.

Since there was no common definition of kindergarten readiness or guidelines for screening kindergarteners, the authors were asked to be part of the Northern Kentucky Kindergarten Readiness Steering Committee (referred to as steering committee throughout the rest of the article). The steering committee consisted of professionals from Northern Kentucky Council of Partners in Education and United Way Greater

Cincinnati Success by Six, besides the authors who are Northern Kentucky University Regional Steward faculty. This paper focuses on the first phase of the steering committee's journey in development and dissemination of a kindergarten readiness definition for the region.

Kindergarten Readiness: Literature Review

Focus on kindergarten readiness is not a recent phenomenon. The "Goals 2000: Education America Act" which was signed into law in March 1994, had as its first goal that "all children in the United States will start school ready to learn" (Kagan, Moore, and Bredekamp 1995). The 1997 National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) report further clarified school readiness in five dimensions: physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, and cognition and general knowledge. However, assessing the readiness of children as they enter school is an important issue that is currently challenging many states "in large part because of increased accountability pressures in both the public schools and early care and education settings" (Maxwell and Clifford 2004, 42), greater amount of information on the role of quality early education on later school success (Entwisle and Alexander 1999; Barnett, Lamy, and Jung 2005; Howes et al. 2008), and ever changing diversity trends within the United States (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2008; KewalRamani et al. 2007).

Today children experience a range of settings prior to kindergarten. In addition to center-based care, children are receiving parent care, relative care, in-home family child care, or staying with a nanny or babysitter (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000). Research (DiBello and Neuharth-Pritchett 2008; Lee and Burkham 2002; KewalRamani et al. 2007) cites evidence of achievement gap which begins at the early childhood level, and children from certain family backgrounds are more at risk of starting at a deficit (NCES 2001). Thus, all players (i.e., families, schools/centers, and communities) in children's lives need to work together to provide positive experiences and environments. The brain development research (Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl 1999; Hawley 2000; Shore 1997) further emphasizes the impact of children's experiences during the first five years on their future development and learning.

While the importance of the need to prepare children, families, schools, and communities in order for children to be ready for school is clear (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000; Thompson 2001), there is debate about what characteristics indicate readiness as well as the manner in which to measure readiness. In an investigation about definitions of and measures of readiness at the state level, Saluja, Scott-Little, and Clifford (2000) found that none of the fifty states had adopted an official definition of school readiness. The only criterion for kindergarten entry across the United States is age eligibility even if the cut-off for age eligibility is different from state to state. There was, however, some consensus that school readiness should be looked at holistically; conceiving kindergarten readiness as the interaction among various related contexts and supports rather than as discrete skills (Clark and Zygmunt-Fillwalk 2008). This comprehensive perspective allows for a snapshot of the

whole child across developmental domains and encourages facilitation of the transition from preschool to kindergarten with an agreement based on expectations, communication across settings, alignment of curriculum, and collaboration with families (Clark and Zygmunt-Fillwalk 2008). The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative study, which involved a partnership across seventeen states including Kentucky, used the comprehensive perspective to develop “Ready Child Equation” that includes the role and responsibilities for families, services, schools, and communities in getting children ready for school (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT 2005). Therefore, with the variety of entities contributing to school readiness of children, an appropriate development of definition and implementation of recommendations require collaboration among community partners, educators, and families.

Developing Kindergarten Readiness

Definition: The Process

The process of creating and disseminating a regional kindergarten readiness definition began with the steering committee members providing the authors with the history of past activities which focused on eighteen school districts within Northern Kentucky. The steering committee had pulled school districts together in a May 2007 Forum to find out how the districts were assessing readiness. The results of the May 2007 Forum, which indicated no consensus and a long list of tests, were shared with the authors. The steering committee then brainstormed about the next step. After much dialogue, the steering committee next decided to seek the input of all Northern Kentucky school districts in creating a picture of what a child would look like if that child is ready for kindergarten.

Through the coordination of the Northern Kentucky Council of Partners in Education (referred to as Council of Partners), the steering committee contacted superintendents of eighteen school districts in the Northern Kentucky region to send a district designee to a focus group meeting where a discussion on a kindergarten readiness definition that is useful and acceptable for the school districts would be the focus. The district superintendent designees who came to the focus group represented a range of expertise and/or experiences. Some of the designees or district representatives were assistant superintendents, high school teachers, or administrators with no background in early childhood education, while others were preschool coordinators or kindergarten teachers. The University Regional Steward faculty facilitated the focus group, and the focus group consisted of individual, small group as well as large group activities. The individual activity consisted of school representatives sharing in writing how their districts currently determine if a child is ready for kindergarten (i.e., what academic and non-academic areas districts are looking for in a child to determine kindergarten readiness). The group activities consisted of district representatives working in small groups to define characteristics that are important in each of the five dimensions identified in the 1997 NEGP report and then large group discussion for additional feedback, analysis, and agreement of the attributes in each of the five dimensions. The focus group meeting ended with the district representatives ranking eighteen

characteristics for a beginning kindergartener to have from most important (1) to least important (5). The eighteen characteristics rated were:

- Knows conventions of print (e.g., left to right and top to bottom)
- Recognizes letters by name
- Associates sounds with letter or letter combinations
- Understands the meaning of many spoken words and phrases
- Rote counting
- Makes one-to-one correspondences
- Recognizes written numerals
- Understands greater, lesser, and equal relationships
- Eager to learn new things
- Pays attention reasonably well in class
- Persistent in completing tasks
- Communicates own needs to adults
- Readily accepts peer ideas for group activities
- Forms and maintains friendships without difficulty
- Often comforts or helps others
- Generally healthy – not out with sickness
- Within typical weight range for the chronological age
- Within typical height range for the chronological age

After the focus group meeting, the University Regional Stewards tabulated rankings of the above eighteen characteristics and organized individual as well as small group activity responses. The information from the focus group meeting with school district designees was shared with the entire steering committee to reach a consensus on the group's next step. The steering committee, acknowledging gaps in responses from some of the superintendent designees of school districts due to lack of knowledge in early childhood education, decided it would be important to ask kindergarten teachers what they believed was important for beginning kindergarten children to be able to do and know. Once again through coordination with the Council for Partners, the steering committee contacted elementary school principals and informed them of this project. The kindergarten teachers were surveyed using SurveyMonkey. The survey questions consisted of educational/qualification background information, what the kindergarten teachers are seeing in terms of what children are like today at the beginning of kindergarten, what an ideal kindergartner would look like, and ranking the same set of eighteen characteristics district designees rated.

The steering committee also felt that to get an appropriate definition of kindergarten readiness for the region, it was important to ask all who engage in the early care and education of young children in Northern Kentucky. The steering committee conducted focus group discussions with home visitation personnel, community child care providers, and Head Start teachers to measure how these professionals felt about the appropriate skills/behaviors kindergarten children should exhibit. These focus group sessions followed the same procedure as the focus group with school district representatives with University Regional Steward faculty facilitation (i.e., small group work of defining five dimensions identified by NEGP, large group discussion/analysis

of small group work, and individual activity). Simultaneously, the steering committee solicited the input of the elementary school principals of kindergarten teachers surveyed earlier in order to inform the principals and to get a “buy-in” of this project. The steering committee decided to survey community child care providers using SurveyMonkey in addition to the focus group because selecting a day and time that is accessible or convenient to all or even majority of the child care providers is not possible due to the range of operating hours with in-home and center-based child care.

All of the participants in both the focus groups and the online surveys were asked what an ideal child in a perfect world who is ready for the beginning of kindergarten looks like (i.e., expectations of a ready kindergartner) and to rank the same set of eighteen characteristics for a child to have at the beginning of kindergarten.

Focus Groups and Online Surveys: Results

The survey of Northern Kentucky’s school district personnel (kindergarten teachers, elementary principals, and district representatives), community private and public child care providers, home visitation personnel, and Head Start educators agree that the NUMBER ONE quality kindergarten children should come to school with is an eagerness to learn new things. The average rating for “eager to learn new things” ranged from 1.08 to 1.35 with a rating of 1.00 being most important. Child care providers also ranked “communicate own needs to adults” as most important (with the same average rating of 1.28 for both items) as well (Table 1).

Table 1

	District superintendent designees N=13	Kindergarten teachers N=54	Elementary school principals N=22	Child care providers N=36	Home visit/ Head Start personnel N=14
Conventions of print (e.g., left to right & top to bottom)	2.46	2.22	2.05	2.03	2.29
Learning to recognize letters by name	2.08	1.47 (3)	1.82	1.78 (5)	1.79
Associating sounds with letter or letter combinations	2.08	2.28	2.14	2.00	2.64
Understanding the meaning of many spoken words & phrases	1.69 (5)	1.54 (4)	1.45 (3)	1.44 (3)	1.29 (2)
Rote counting	2.23	1.72	1.91	1.92	2.43
One-to-one correspondences	1.92	2.07	2.09	2.06	2.07
Recognizing written numerals	2.15	1.96	2.14	1.97	2.38
Understanding greater, lesser, & equal relationships	2.54	3.17	2.91	2.47	3.21
Eager to learn new things	1.08 (1)	1.35 (1)	1.18 (1)	1.28 (1)	1.21 (1)

	District superintendent designees N=13	Kinder- garten teachers N=54	Elementary school principals N=22	Child care providers N=36	Home visit/ Head Start personnel N=14
Pays attention reasonably well in class	1.42 (2)	1.56(5)	1.45 (3)	1.39 (2)	1.64 (5)
Persistent in completing tasks	1.54 (4)	1.85	1.77 (5)	1.83	2.07
Communicate own needs to adults	1.46 (3)	1.45 (2)	1.27 (2)	1.28 (1)	1.36 (3)
Readily accept peer ideas for group activities	3.00	2.38	2.09	2.23	2.07
Form & maintain friendships without difficulty	2.23	1.74	1.82	1.83	1.69
Often comfort or help others	2.31	2.52	2.68	2.08	2.14
Generally healthy	1.92	2.06	1.68 (4)	1.64 (4)	1.62 (4)
Within typical weight range	2.23	3.76	3.50	2.44	2.71
Within typical height range	2.23	4.10	3.77	2.33	2.79

Of the eighteen characteristics, all participants ranked three other characteristics besides “eager to learn new things” within the top five most important attributes. These three characteristics are: “understanding the meaning of many spoken words and phrases,” “pays attention reasonably well in class,” and “communicate own needs to adults.” With “understanding the meaning of many spoken words and phrases,” home visitation/Head Start personnel felt this attribute was more important with an average rating of 1.29 than any other group, and school district superintendent designees felt it was less important with an average rating of 1.69. With “pays attention reasonably well in class,” school district superintendent designees and community child care providers ranked this item as the second most important characteristic, while kindergarten teachers and home visitation/Head Start personnel felt this was not as important as indicated by their fifth most important ranking. Kindergarten teachers, however, felt “understanding the meaning of many spoken words and phrases” is slightly more important than a beginning kindergartener’s ability to pay attention in class, as demonstrated in their fourth most important rank with an average rating of 1.54. School district superintendent designees and home visitation/Head Start personnel agree in their ranking of “communicate own needs to adults” as the third most important attribute for a child to have at the beginning of kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers and their principals concur in their ranking of “communicate own needs to adults” as the second most important characteristic for a beginning kindergartner although elementary school principals felt beginning kindergartners’ ability to communicate own needs to adults was more important than kindergarten teachers as indicated by average ratings of 1.27 and 1.45, respectively. The kindergarten teachers felt children “learning to recognize letters by name” (average rating of 1.47) was almost as important as children being able to “communicate own needs to adults” (average rating of 1.45).

In regards to expectations for academic skills, only “understanding the meaning of many spoken words and phrases” fared well in the top five most important skills for children to have at the beginning of kindergarten by all, and “learning to recognize letters by name” was ranked as third most important with kindergarten teachers and as fifth most important by child care providers. The other skills listed (i.e., “conventions of print,” “associating sounds with letter or letter combinations,” “rote counting,” “one-to-one correspondences,” “recognizing written numerals,” and “understanding greater, lesser, and equal relationships”) had average ratings from 1.79 to 3.21. All groups rated attributes that are related to approaches to learning with average ratings between 1.08 and 1.85.

Social-emotional development and physical well-being areas did not fare well in participants’ rankings. Elementary school principals, community child care providers, and home visitation/Head Start personnel concurred in their ranking of “generally healthy” as fourth most important characteristic and with average ratings of 1.68, 1.64, and 1.62, respectively. The school district superintendent designees and kindergarten teachers did not view children’s health in the same manner as the other three groups, and the average rating for kindergarten teachers was 2.06 where the rating of 5.00 indicates least important. The average ratings for beginning kindergarteners being within typical weight and height for their chronological age ranged from 2.23 to 4.10. Children’s social-emotional skills fared a bit better than the physical well-being domain with average ratings of 1.69 to 3.00.

In conclusion, all participants agreed the following four items belong within the top five most important characteristics for a child to have at the beginning of kindergarten: “understands the meaning of many spoken words and phrases,” “eager to learn new things,” “pays attention reasonably well in class,” and “communicates own needs to adults.” However, only kindergarten teachers ranked attributes related to literacy and language-related academic skills in the top five most important characteristics for a child to have at the beginning of kindergarten. The following descriptions are kindergarten teachers’ examples of what an ideal kindergartner would look like (from a December 2007 survey).

- An ideal student would be able to sit still for a 15 to 20 minutes and be able to listen and grasp what is going on in the room. It is wonderful if they have been read to consistently because it helps with readiness skills. It is great if they have some letter and number knowledge, but if they don’t, that is okay, too. I am fortunate to have many children who live in homes where education is very important—that helps!! I am not sure there is an ideal level for a beginning student; it is more in their readiness to learn what is being taught.
- If we lived in a perfect world, I would like a child to come into kindergarten being able to write his/her name (to some degree), recognize the letters of the alphabet, be able to count to twenty-five and recognize numbers to ten, be able to follow simple directions, recognize colors, be able to sit for a story, and get along with new friends.
- Because kindergarten has become what used to be first grade skills and we only have a half day, this is what would help a student entering kindergarten. A student should be able to count and recognize numbers to ten. The student should be able to write

his/her first name correctly. The student should know how to use scissors and glue, know colors, be able to recite the alphabet correctly, and have an awareness of letters and be able to identify some. The student should be able to identify the basic shapes. Having fine motor skills such as holding a crayon in a tripod grasp would help with coloring. Being able to follow directions and listen would be wonderful. The student should be able to zip and tie shoelaces. The student should be five to be allowed to start; the cut-off date should be moved to July 1st, especially if all day kindergarten is being considered.

- The perfect child will have good phonemic awareness skills, be able to identify like beginning or ending sounds, identify rhyming words, and be able to identify the letters of the alphabet. He or she would be able to count to twenty and would be able to count objects to ten. The student would be able to identify numbers to twenty and know how to write at least his/her first name without a model.

The child care providers, like kindergarten teachers, feel language and emergent literacy skills are important but having children generally healthy is as important:

A kindergarten child would be optimistic about school, eager to learn and try new things, have good interpersonal skills, communicate his or her feelings, can name letters and sounds in the alphabet, is aware of conventions of print, is mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally healthy (one community child care provider, January 2008).

The elementary school principals' rankings are similar to child care providers' except for not ranking "learning to recognize letters by name" and including "persistent in completing tasks" in the top five most important attributes for beginning kindergartners. Therefore, all groups in Northern Kentucky region felt that a child's disposition for learning (i.e., "eager to learn new things") outweighed in importance any other of the five dimensions identified in 1997 NEGP report. The participants, by identifying "eager to learn new things" as the top most important attribute for beginning kindergartners, declared fostering children's positive approaches to learning as most critical to success in school.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

The kindergarten readiness definition developed for the Northern Kentucky region in April 2008 highlights the consensus of participants whose perspective was sought by the steering committee (see Appendix A for the regional kindergarten readiness definition). Included in the definition document is identification of screening instruments that encourage and maintain "eager to learn new things" by assessing young children for attributes that are developmentally appropriate for the beginning of kindergarten along with suggestions for using common measurement tools in determining the readiness of each district's entering kindergartners.

In May 2008, the steering committee dialogued about how to proceed with the dissemination of the definition and decided to seek advice from Vision 2015 personnel.

In September 2008, the steering committee met to review advice from Vision 2015 and to brainstorm an action plan for the academic year. The focus for the 2008-09 year will be on dissemination of the definition and getting districts' buy-in of the suggested common measurement tools. The steering committee agreed that informing (and reminding) community stakeholders within Northern Kentucky of the regional kindergarten readiness definition and common assessment of beginning kindergartners is critical for achieving the ultimate goal of having more children prepared for school and for targeting the efforts and resources of all players who impact children. The specific action plan established in fall 2008 includes different combinations of steering committee members (1) attending the superintendent association meeting and sending a letter to all superintendents, (2) conversing with Vision 2015 and the Northern Kentucky University president for assistance, (3) visiting with each school district for one-on-one conversations with school superintendents and key personnel identified by superintendents, (4) conducting a regional discussion with district curriculum/assessment decision makers, (5) creating a family-friendly kindergarten readiness brochure, and (6) disseminating family-friendly kindergarten readiness brochures to community child care providers, families, and the general public.

The success of University Regional Steward faculty in assisting with Vision 2015's Educational Excellence component of having all children enter kindergarten with the skills necessary to succeed and Regional Stewardship component of collaborating with community partners in order to achieve a common regional vision depends on the process of reflecting on lessons learned from past activities and processes. The advancement of steering committee efforts and continual work is contingent on representation of key stakeholders. Naturally, inquiring about all community partners' perspectives by stating our need for their help with, "tell us what's important to you," and avenues for advocating their own rankings was critical in developing the definition and getting a regional buy-in of the definition. However, the presence of other steering committee members is critical as well. The Council of Partners, a known entity within public school districts, helped with getting contact information for surveys and focus groups. Likewise, the United Way Success by Six has worked with community early childhood partners so the steering committee had access to child care, Head Start, and home visitation programs as well as knowing who to approach for contact information. Other steering committee members other than University Regional Steward faculty were responsible for getting the word out for focus groups, finding a place for focus groups, and providing initial contact for online surveys with school districts. Without the Council of Partners and United Way Success by Six connection and knowledge, the University Regional Steward faculty could not have gained community perspective and data to analyze and to develop the definition.

Linked with the importance of community stakeholder presence is the importance of flexibility and communication among steering committee members and ongoing communication of the process and reporting of incremental findings to the community stakeholders. Even though input of all parties involved with the early care and education field from birth to five years was solicited, the time lag from focus groups, online surveys, and definition-sharing resulted in community stakeholders' comments

such as, “When did we participate?” or “Were we informed of this?” Therefore, the authors realized the importance of having an on-going communication throughout the entire process and constant reviewing of steps taken as well as objectives achieved.

One action that would have helped keep the steering committee’s efforts on everyone’s radar was giving the participants of focus group and online surveys the opportunity to provide feedback on drafts, which was the intention but not followed through by the steering committee. As a result, the steering committee’s current year effort of disseminating the regional kindergarten definition must include a review of last year’s process in order to dissipate any misconception of the steering committee mandating the kindergarten definition and assessment tool suggestions on individual school districts and the Northern Kentucky region. The steering committee found the collaborative aspect of the definition development was lost on seven of eighteen school districts visited so far. Thus, the steering committee intends to provide a general context of the steps taken prior to the creation of the kindergarten definition at the scheduled December 2008 regional discussion with district curriculum/assessment decision makers about the same or similar plans for determining kindergarten readiness based on the regional definition and suggested assessment tools. In addition, the steering committee recognized the critical nature of timing with this effort and is pursuing several steps of the 2008-2009 action plan concurrently in order to keep the momentum of kindergarten readiness moving and to build support from all community partners.

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Appendix A: Northern Kentucky Kindergarten Readiness Definition

The National Education Goals Panel recommends that there are three important components to school readiness: (1) *Readiness in the child*, (2) *Schools' readiness for children*, and (3) *Family and community supports and services that contribute to children's readiness*. In terms of the first component, *child's readiness*, a survey of Northern Kentucky's school district personnel (kindergarten teachers and elementary principals), community private and public childcare providers, home visitation personnel, and Head Start educators reveals their consensus that the number one quality kindergarten children should come to school with is an eagerness to learn new things. Therefore, we believe it is critical to encourage and maintain this eagerness by assessing young children for attributes that are developmentally appropriate for the beginning of kindergarten.

SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS TO EXPECT FOR MOST YOUNG CHILDREN AT THE BEGINNING OF KINDERGARTEN:

Emotional Development

1 To be away from parents/family without being upset

- To follow simple rules and routines
- To express his or her own wants and needs
- To express concern for other's feelings

Social Development

- To get along with others
- To share with others
- To participate in large and small group activities

- To listen to adults/others and follow simple instructions
- To work with others reasonably well

Physical Development and Care

- To have visited the doctor and dentist
- To dress and meet toileting needs independently
- To run, jump, hop, and climb
- To use pencils, crayons, and scissors in some fashion

Language/Vocabulary

- To use five- to six-word sentences
- To recognize and say simple rhymes
- To sing simple songs

Writing and Reading

- Try to write first name
- Tell the difference between print and pictures
- Write or scribble notes, letters, stories
- Recognize own name in print
- Hold a book correctly
- Recognize letters of the alphabet
- Listen to stories read to them
- Tell that print/words, not pictures, is read

Math

- Rote count to ten
- Sort objects by color, size, or shape
- Understand simple concepts of time – (for example, day and night, today, yesterday, and tomorrow)

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY:

The second component of the National Education Goals Panel's recommendation of school readiness is *schools' readiness for children*. A part of being ready for children would include having a mechanism in place at the schools for determining what children know as they enter Kindergarten and accommodating to children's different needs and abilities in order to facilitate their learning and development. One way to find out what skills and abilities children come with to Kindergarten would be to conduct an assessment (or screening) at the beginning of kindergarten.

All children should be screened for two purposes. The first purpose is to gain a quick snapshot of children's capabilities. Screening helps early childhood teachers identify those children who may not be meeting developmental milestones. Teachers can then refer children for further evaluation in order to determine eligibility for additional services. The second purpose for screening is to gain information that serves as a starting point or focus area for teachers to begin the continuous curriculum-based assessment process. Curriculum-based assessment, which is ongoing, provides

information such as how children learn, not just what children know. This information facilitates teachers' efforts in modifying their teaching/instruction to meet individual children's developmental needs and in aligning their day-to-day activities to the *Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards*. To gain further understanding about continuous curriculum-based assessment in Kentucky, teachers should refer to *Kentucky's Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide*, one of the guides in the *Building a Strong Foundation for School Success* series published by the Kentucky Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Development.

Recommended Screening Tool(s)

First a note of caution: Because "eagerness to learn new things," the number one priority identified by early childhood personnel in northern Kentucky, cannot be measured by a norm-based standardized test, the assessment of the child at the beginning of Kindergarten should utilize a variety of sources (people and methods) to gather information. Additionally, the schools need to take into account what is known about assessing children, particularly young children. Young children need an opportunity to warm up to a new setting and unfamiliar people. With this in mind, the suggested screening tools should be given to children only after the assessor has spent some time establishing a relationship with the individual children.

Given the nature of the Northern Kentucky definition, the most highly recommended screening tool from the approved list of screening tools in the *Kentucky's Early Childhood Continuous Assessment Guide* is the **Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Third Edition (DIAL 3)**. The **DIAL 3** not only fits best with our definition, but a number of school districts in Northern Kentucky already use **DIAL 3** as their screening tool. A second screening tool, the **Brigance Preschool Screen**, is acceptable because it has been correlated with **DIAL 3**.

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