KINDERGARTEN OBSERVATION FORM

Overview of the KOF and the ASR School Readiness Assessment Model
WHAT IS THE KINDERGARTEN OBSERVATION FORM?

The Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF) was developed in 2001 to help fill an information gap that still exists in many areas today: the preparedness of children to smoothly transition into kindergarten. In a partnership between Applied Survey Research, the Peninsula Community Foundation and First 5 San Mateo, a scan was conducted of readiness frameworks and tools used around the country, and the KOF’s items were developed with significant local input from the fields of early childhood education, primary education, philanthropy and research. Using a blend of observational and test-based assessment techniques, the Kindergarten Observation Form was piloted in 2001 with over 700 students in 8 high need districts in San Mateo County. After initial psychometric testing, the tool was refined and implemented in 2002.

The tool was originally designed around the National Education Goals Panel’s five dimensions of kindergarten readiness, but later psychometric testing of large sets of KOF data identified four factors of readiness, as seen at right: Motor Skills, Self Regulation, Social Expression and Kindergarten Academics.

In 2009, an expert panel of early education and elementary school educators helped develop the KOF’s Scoring Guide, a rating rubric which defines each indicator across the four levels of proficiency.

The KOF has been validated against other evidence-based measures of child development such as the Woodcock Johnson III, Expressive One Word Vocabulary Test, Brigance K-1 Screens, Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Head Toes Knees Shoulders test, Work Sampling System, and the Pre-K and Kindergarten Behavior Scales. Five different longitudinal studies have shown that the KOF predicts 2nd and 3rd grade academic test scores. (For more information, please see the Psychometric Fact Sheet).

The Kindergarten Observation Form have been used in over 15 counties in California, as well as in Arizona, North Carolina and Illinois, and to date, over 60,000 unique child assessments have been conducted. (For more information, please see the Introduction to the Kindergarten Observation Form PowerPoint).

This document provides a brief overview of the KOF and frequently asked questions. To request other fact sheets or sample reports, please contact Lisa Niclai at lisa@appliedsurveyresearch.org.
WHY DO A SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENT?

There are many potential reasons to assess kindergarten readiness. The KOF is designed to be a summative assessment that describes the range of child, family and community experiences that shape children’s preparedness to transition to kindergarten; the items are leveled at desired proficiencies for children as they enter kindergarten, and not end-of-year kindergarten standards. In sum, typical purposes for doing a kindergarten readiness assessment are to:

- To gather a snapshot of children’s readiness as they enter school.
- To understand and evaluate which local community, demographic and family factors contribute to children’s readiness, as well as the benefit of local preschools and other interventions.
- To track trends in the school readiness levels in targeted communities over time.
- To build bridges between the ECE and K-12 community by providing a common framework and indicators for readiness.

WHAT ARE THE ASSESSMENT TOOLS USED?

ASR’s school readiness assessment model gathers a holistic 360 degree view of entering kindergartners. Data come from the following sources:

- *Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF)*: A 20-item assessment that is completed by kindergarten teachers using direct assessment and observational techniques.
- *The Parent Information Form (PIF)* is a take-home survey completed by children’s parents that help us understand which family factors are related to children’s readiness.
- *Secondary data* are gathered from programs or preschools of interest.

WHAT DO KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS SAY ABOUT THE KOF?

- “I like that it focuses on the total child, not just academics.”
- “It gave me a head start in assessing students and knowing what their needs are.”
- “Clear, easy, all areas covered, short, to-the-point.”
- “The Kindergarten Observation Form was very clear and user-friendly.”
- “The scoring guide really helped make sure the scoring was consistent. The trainer was very helpful and spoke about the role we played very well.”
- “After a few years of doing this, I find the process quite smooth. I appreciate that this assessment is part of what I need to test my kiddos on anyway!”
INTRODUCTION TO THE KINDERGARTEN OBSERVATION FORM

HOW ARE TEACHERS TRAINED?

- Teachers are provided with a 60 minute in-person training, a packet of pre-labeled assessment materials, and a prepaid envelope to return their completed assessments.
- Trainings are provided in person whenever possible; webinar trainings are offered for teachers unable to attend the in-person training.

At the trainings, teachers are informed about the purpose of the assessment, the kindergarten Observation Form items, and use the Scoring Guide and test scenarios to calibrate their understanding of key items.

HOW LONG DOES THE KOF TAKE TO COMPLETE?

- Teachers spend approximately 10 minutes per student to complete each assessment. Assessments can be spread over a two week period to avoid disruption to the classroom routine. Release time by a substitute teacher is also often provided by districts.
- Teachers are compensated for their time; stipends depend on the funding agency but average about $200 per teacher.

WHEN ARE THE ASSESSMENTS DONE?

- Teachers are trained in the summer or early fall, and they conduct their assessments within three to four weeks after children enter kindergarten. Gathering kindergarten readiness data early in the year is important because ASR has found that data gathered after four weeks of school begin to be influenced by and the amount of time elapsed since the start of school and kindergarten classroom instruction.

HOW ARE DATA GATHERED?

- The KOF and PIF are formatted in scantron forms and are typically sent back to ASR to scanning, cleaning and analysis.
- Some partners enter their own data on our on-line data portal, or our Excel database. ASR then retrieves the needed data for analysis.
- All data are quality-checked by ASR before we begin analysis, making sure that skip patterns are followed and that teachers do not provide assessment scores for children with whom they have a language/communication barrier.
WHAT KIND OF PRODUCTS ARE CREATED?

ASR produces a variety of data reporting products, depending on each partner’s needs:

✓ **Teacher / Classroom Dashboard**: A one page snapshot of children’s overall readiness as well as proficiency on each of the 20 items.

✓ **School Dashboard**: This report is for studies that involve all classrooms at a school. Page 1 provides a snapshot of child and family characteristics, overall readiness as well as proficiency on each of the 20 items. The report is accompanied by the individual classroom dashboards.

✓ **District Dashboard**: A three page infographic which summarizes child and family characteristics, overall levels of readiness, early education experiences and family practices that are known to impact readiness.

✓ **Comprehensive Report**: Typically a 30-50 page report, this product contains the full results of sophisticated analyses, such as regression modeling to identify the child and family factors that best predict readiness, Analyses of Covariance to compare child populations of interest to other groups that are statistically comparable, and cumulative indexing of factors to identity the “recipe” that matters most for readiness in the targeted community.

✓ **Executive Summary**: In Word or PowerPoint form, a brief summary of the major study findings.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO USE THE KOF?

There is no fee to use the Kindergarten Observation Form. However, to ensure that the form is not misused (e.g. to keep children from entering kindergarten), it is not available in the public domain. ASR offers a tiered model of technical support based on partners’ capacity. For instance, fees can range from $500 (mandatory training and a one year licensing of the forms) to $7,000 (partner does data entry and ASR creates short analysis and report), and up to $80,000 for full implementation support on an 80-classroom sample.

To request more information, contact Lisa Niclai at lisa@appliedsurveyresearch.org (408-483-8471).