

Background

With the 2012 *Read to Achieve* legislation and North Carolina's *Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge* grant award as an impetus, the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) began its work to develop and implement a statewide kindergarten entry assessment (KEA). The work began with the convening of a group of NC education experts who evaluated research and best practices, surveyed more than 2,500 teachers, and consulted with other state and national scholars. Guided by this work, DPI formed an assessment design team and continued to engage with teacher, principal, and central office stakeholders to inform design and implementation of the KEA.

What is the KEA?

The KEA provides a **snapshot of a child's development** and is used to assess the five essential domains of school readiness: language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional knowledge. In accordance with state law (G.S. 115C-83.5), the KEA is: administered at the classroom level; aligned to North Carolina's standards; and is reliable, valid and appropriate for use with all children. The goal is to provide teachers a better understanding of each child's progress towards meeting the standards and using the information gathered to impact children's success.

Components of North Carolina's KEA

Within the first 60 days of school, teachers use observational and authentic evidence of learning - **gathered during instruction** - to identify where children are on construct progressions (a sequenced set of understandings and skills) of learning and development within the five domains of school readiness. Situations and tasks that afford children **many opportunities** to make, do, say, or write, are provided for teachers to elicit evidence, which is entered into the KEA online assessment platform. Evidence may include photos, videos, audio, or written notes from teacher observations. Teachers use the evidence to **make determinations** about each child's school readiness and use the data to inform **instructional planning**.

Domain	Construct	Examples
Language Development and Communication	Book orientation	Understands that books contain pictures and/or words.
	Print awareness	Understands that books contain pages of print that represent language.
	Letter naming	Knows features of letters.
	Following directions	Responds to directions, requests, and commands in various settings.
Approaches to Learning	Engagement in self-selected activities	Makes purposeful choices for self-directed tasks.
Emotional and Social Development	Emotional literacy	Understands that emotions have causes and effects
Cognitive Development	Object counting	Recognizes that counting tells the number of objects.
Health and Physical Development	Grip and manipulation	Type of grip used.
	Hand dominance	Dominant hand used for manipulation.
	Crossing midline	Midline crossed consistently.

In the 2014-15 school year, DPI piloted the KEA in 82 schools in 51 school districts. The KEA will be implemented statewide in the 2015-16 school year. For more information about the KEA, see DPI's website: <http://rtd-elc-k3assessment.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/home>.



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