

# WHAT IS SCHOOL READINESS?

**A primer on school readiness,  
measurement, and equity**

Institute for Child Success  
EC PRISM®



# WHAT IS SCHOOL READINESS?

## In this resource:

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## "Do we prepare children for schools, or do we prepare schools for children?"

To prepare children for schools, is to understand birth to age five is a sensitive time in human development where neurological and cognitive processes are rapidly developing, critical frameworks for social interactions with caregivers and peers are being introduced and reinforced, and foundations for behavioral states and responses are being set.

To prepare schools for children, is to acknowledge these experiences are culturally and contextually bound for each child, family and community.

**There is no single definition of kindergarten readiness. However, it often refers to a set of developmental milestones assessing children's behavior, skills, and attitudes upon kindergarten entry.**



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## How are measures and assessments helpful for school readiness?

Measures and assessments can be used in early childhood to provide a snapshot of a child's social-emotional, cognitive (executive function and language development) and academic skills, as well as overall well-being and mental health. The data from these measures can then be used to understand children and communities in relation to the evidence base surrounding the assessment. Measures may be most useful when they are aligned with a goal or value for children at school entry (typically kindergarten). Depending on when (e.g. 18 months, 3 years, 5 years) or at what level (e.g. child, family, community) the measure is administered in the years before kindergarten entry, the data can be used to inform education, healthcare, or social services before or during kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) years. Using this data, families, practitioners, administrators and policy-makers can work together to plan and make decisions to inform local, state, and federal recommendations and policies. By drawing from standardized measures, educators and stakeholders can begin to gather information about the lived experience of children and families relative to an evidence base.



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## How can measures be used to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)?

Measure administrators and decision makers must be informed of the limits and constraints of individual measures. Administrators and decision makers should look to [new best data practices](#) when choosing and implementing assessment questions or modes of assessment. This includes:

1. Consulting with decisions makers, administrators, educators, [families](#) and children in the community to be assessed, on definitions and values around the constructs (e.g., social or cognitive development).
2. Building coalitions to develop shared understanding on how, what and when to assess children and families related to the agreed upon definitions and values.

Decision makers that decide to use validated measures from the field should review the evidence base around validated measures to learn the demographic and measurement variables considered in developing the measure. These demographics may include but are not limited to developmental age and abilities, cultural, racial or ethnic identity, language, geography, economic status, family composition and gender.

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The evidence used to develop and promote many assessments is culturally biased and may provide incomplete or inaccurate data of some children or families' lived experience, particularly [marginalized racial and ethnic groups](#). Stakeholders looking to implement or standardize the use of assessments should carefully consider how the data will be used and consult with families about their experiences before researching and selecting an assessment to promote quality data outcomes for decision making. For additional information on this topic, view our [presentation on equity and assessments](#), as well as the [Scoring Evidence Guide](#) for the IMPACT Measures Tool®, our free repository of early childhood and parenting measures. This guide contains information about our method for scoring each measure on four key categories, including cultural relevance. Reach out to us for a presentation to your team about equity in assessment.

## Can the IMPACT Measures Tool® help me find a kindergarten readiness measure?

The IMPACT Measures Tool® contains many measures that are relevant to kindergarten readiness. Kindergarten readiness itself is difficult to measure because it is not clearly defined. Many states in the United States [vary on both their definition and assessment](#) of kindergarten readiness. They may work with developers or develop their own assessment [based on their own state early learning and K-12 standards](#). It is often measured with a mix of direct assessment and observational measures assessing children's behaviors, skills and attitudes at a time point before kindergarten. This data is often part of a set of multiple data points rather than a single score in an assessment.

Number of measures on IMPACT Measures Tool® related to kindergarten readiness		
Measure topic	Number of measures intended for children 0 – 3 years	Number of measures intended for children 3 – 5 years
Social-Emotional Development	83	75
Executive Function Ability	69	64
Language Development	68	71
Overall Child Development	46	43
Academic Skills	22	30
Child Mental Health	17	17

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## School readiness assessments on the IMPACT Measures Tool®: A selection of examples

Ages and Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ®)

Battelle® Developmental Inventory (BDI)

Child Development Review (CDR)

Denver Developmental Screening Test II

Desired Results Development Profile (DRDP)

Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning™  
(DIAL™)

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS®)

Early Screening Inventory (ESI™)

Infant-Toddler Developmental Assessment (IDA)

Learning Accomplishment Profile™ (LAP)

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test™ (PPVT™)

Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)

Survey of Well-being of Young Children (SWYC)™

Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TS GOLD®)

Work Sampling System® (WSS)

The IMPACT Measures Tool® has gathered and shared information on a variety of measures that are related to child- and class-level elements of interest in kindergarten readiness. The information posted about each measure includes domains, time to administer, age range, and more. We also use a science-backed approach to assign a numeric score for the cost, usability, cultural relevance, and technical merit of each measure. This information is intended to support decision makers to identify tools that are a good fit for their community.



**How have you involved your community in school readiness planning and assessment?**

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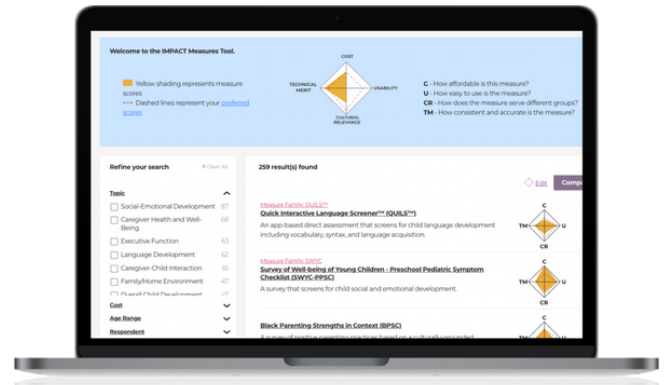
## Interested in exploring other measurement options?

With over 250 measures available, the free IMPACT Measures Tool provides research-backed ratings of each measure based on the categories of cost (price and accessibility), usability (time and resources to complete), cultural relevance (cultural groups and languages the measure was developed and adapted to serve), and technical merit (accuracy and consistency).

Filter by topic, age range, and language to help you find other tools that may be useful for your purpose and community.

To learn more, visit

<https://ecmeasures.instituteforchildsuccess.org/>.



## Connect With Us!

- Join our mailing list to receive updates about new measures and resources: <http://ecmeasures.instituteforchildsuccess.org/join>
- Email us at [ecprism@instituteforchildsuccess.org](mailto:ecprism@instituteforchildsuccess.org)
- Find us on social media at [@ec\\_prism](#) and [@Child\\_Success](#)

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