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READINESS RESULTS HIGHLIGHT NEED FOR QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

(Frankfort, KY) – Many Kentucky students are at a disadvantage for learning before they even start school, according to Kindergarten Readiness Screener data released by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Slightly more than half of the students entering kindergarten at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year were considered ready, the Kentucky Board of Education learned at its meeting in Frankfort on Dec. 5. School readiness is defined in 704 KAR 5:070 as “a student entering school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the student’s success.”

“The research is clear that brain development begins very early, with much of it complete before kids enter kindergarten. The results of this year’s screener data tells us that much remains to be done to ensure our little ones are well-prepared for kindergarten,” Commissioner Wayne Lewis said. “The research literature is clear that high-quality early learning environments – like public preschool, Head Start and child care – significantly increases the likelihood that children will be ready for kindergarten academically, socially and emotionally. An essential element of improving education, workforce and the life outcomes for Kentuckians is focusing on kids’ early learning and readiness for kindergarten.”

The results showed a modest increase in school readiness for students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities. Other groups scores, such as African American students, remain on pace with previous years’ scores.

Kindergarten Readiness by Group Percentage

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
All Students	49.0	50.0	50.1	50.1	51.4	51.0
Male	43.6	44.6	45.2	45.5	47.2	46.7
Female	54.5	55.6	55.2	55.0	55.8	55.6
White (Non-Hispanic)	51.2	52.1	52.7	52.3	53.4	53.3
African American	44.2	46.3	44.5	46.9	47.9	47.3
Hispanic	28.0	28.7	27.7	28.6	31.2	30.4
Asian	61.6	64.2	59.1	63.4	65.4	67.0
American Indian/Alaska Native	49.2	45.5	50.9	52.8	42.6	57.1
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	51.4	49.0	31.1	48.3	45.0	41.7
Two or more races	50.5	51.0	50.9	50.5	49.8	49.5
Limited English Proficiency	26.1	28.7	26.0	26.9	30.1	31.2

Free/Reduced-Price Meals	37.6	39.4	39.7	39.8	41.3	40.4
Students with Disabilities	28.2	27.6	31.1	29.7	32.1	34.2

**School readiness is defined in 704 KAR 5:070 as “a student entering school is ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the student’s success”.*

**The K screen utilized provides a snapshot of student readiness in the following domains: academic/cognitive, language development, physical development, self-help and social-emotional. Self-help and social-emotional scales are parent reported and do not figure into readiness scores reported here.*

Note: Kindergarten readiness is reported as students who have scored Ready with Interventions, Ready, and Ready with Enrichments. Kindergarten Ready percentage includes students who scored Ready and Ready with Enrichments.

Studies show that children who attend high-quality early learning environments have better math, language and social skills. Additionally, they are less likely to be retained in a grade, have a lower likelihood of being chronically absent in their primary and secondary school years, and they are more likely to graduate from high school.

Kentucky is focused on improving the quality of early care and education programs and increasing educational outcomes and success for all preschoolers. One way it is doing that is through the Kentucky All STARS program, a five-star quality rating and improvement system that serves all early care and education programs that receive public funding, including child care centers, Head Start and public preschool. Kentucky All STARS is based on Kentucky’s Early Childhood Standards and research-based indicators of quality, and recognizes programs that have made a commitment to continuous quality improvement.

This is the sixth year that the Kentucky Readiness Screener has been given statewide to all incoming kindergarten students. Teachers administered the BRIGANCE K Screener to 47,808 students in all 173 school districts at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. Students are asked their name and age, to stand on one foot for 10 seconds, to recite the alphabet and count to 30, among other tasks.

The screener provides a snapshot of student readiness in the following domains: academic/cognitive, language development and physical development. Performing at a certain level is not a requirement to enter kindergarten.

As part of the screener, parents also fill out a survey on their child’s ability to help him or herself and social-emotional development, though this information is not factored into readiness scores. Results for social-emotional development are reported separately.

Parents also are asked to fill out a survey about what type of setting the child was in the year before kindergarten. The questionnaire does not distinguish whether the program was a half-day or full-day program, or the duration a child in a particular setting. Students can be included in multiple prior settings.

The settings include:

- State Funded Preschool – State funded preschool serving 3- and 4-year-old children; 3-year-old children qualify based on developmental delay; 4-year-old children qualify based on developmental delay or income
- Head Start – federally funded program serving 3- and 4-year-old children; students qualify based on developmental delay and income
- Child Care – privately owned, licensed child care facilities and certified homes; usually private pay or subsidized
- Home – with parent or guardian
- Other – non-licensed child care facilities, baby-sitters, kin care
- Unknown – no data gathered from families

The results did show consistent growth for students enrolled in state-funded preschool programs.

Kindergarten Readiness by Prior Setting (parent reported)

Prior Setting ¹	Kindergarten Ready ² Percentage					
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
State Funded Preschool ³	44.9	47.4	48.1	49.5	50.3	50.8
Head Start ⁴	42.4	44.5	45.8	48.0	47.0	47.8
Child Care ⁵	70.0	69.9	70.1	69.7	69.9	70.3
Home ⁶	37.4	37.9	36.2	36.1	37.8	36.7
Other ⁷	60.3	61.3	61.2	62.0	63.4	62.6
Unknown ⁸	45.2	41.0	41.1	39.9	48.3	41.4

¹Students can be included in multiple prior settings.

²Kindergarten readiness is reported as students who have scored Ready with Interventions, Ready, and Ready with Enrichments. Kindergarten Ready percentage includes students who scored Ready and Ready with Enrichments.

³State Funded Preschool – State funded preschool serving three (3) and four (4) year old children; three (3) year old children qualify based on developmental delay; four (4) year old children qualify based on developmental delay or income

⁴Head Start – federally funded program serving three (3) and four (4) year old children; students qualify based on developmental delay and income

⁵Child Care – privately owned, licensed child care facilities and certified homes; usually private pay or subsidized

⁶Home – with parent or guardian

⁷Other – non-licensed child care facilities, baby-sitters, kin care

⁸Unknown – no data gathered from families

Resources to support quality learning experiences are available for parents and for early care and education providers on the Kentucky Department of Education and the Governor's Office for Early Childhood websites (<https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/prim-pre/Pages/Early-Childhood-Resources.aspx> and <https://kidsnow.ky.gov/families/Pages/default.aspx>). To learn more about kindergarten readiness or to review an early childhood data profile in your area, visit the Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky Center for Statistics websites (<https://openhouse.education.ky.gov/Data> and <https://kystats.ky.gov/Reports/Reports>).

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