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Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Reveals Impact of COVID-19 on School Preparedness

State Results Show Less Than Half of Students Prepared for Success in Kindergarten

BALTIMORE, MD (March 22, 2022) – Today the Maryland State Department of Education released results of Maryland’s 2021-2022 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) demonstrating that all 24 local education agencies reported lower “demonstrating readiness” scores than in 2019–2020, when the KRA was last administered. Enrollment in prekindergarten last school year declined 25%, and most students who did attend were in predominantly virtual programs.

“The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data underscores the stark and unacceptable achievement gaps that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic,” said Maryland State Board of Education President Clarence C. Crawford. “By leading the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, we will act boldly and swiftly to ensure that our youngest children are provided every opportunity to succeed and thrive.”

“This year’s data show our youngest learners are in great need of support, especially English learners, children with disabilities, and children from low-income families. Simply returning to normal will not be good enough to recover and accelerate student learning coming out of the pandemic,” said State Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury. “The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future provides us with this once-in-a-generation moment and demands that we rebuild our foundation for early learning and expand access to high-quality prekindergarten for every three and four-year-old child in the state.”

Twenty-one local education agencies (LEAs), Maryland School for the Blind, and Maryland School for the Deaf administered the KRA to all kindergartners (Census administration). Kindergarten teachers administer the KRA to students during the first few months of school. The assessment measures students’ skills, knowledge, and behaviors across four domains: language and literacy, mathematics, social foundations, and physical well-being and motor development.

The 2021–2022 KRA data show:

- 40% of Maryland’s kindergartners demonstrate readiness and entered classrooms prepared to fully participate in kindergarten. This is a 7-point decrease from the 2019–2020 (47%) school year.
- 33% of kindergartners are approaching readiness and may require additional instruction based on their individual strengths and needs.
- 27% of kindergartners are identified as emerging on the KRA and will require targeted supports or interventions to be successful in kindergarten.

Of the more than 61,535 children who entered kindergarten in Maryland’s public schools this year, 30% are African American and 22% are Hispanic. The 2021–2022 KRA data indicate:

- 33% African American kindergarteners demonstrate readiness, compared to 54% of white kindergarteners. This is a decline from the previous KRA administration, which reported 42% of African American children demonstrated readiness and 60% of white children demonstrated readiness.
- 19% of Hispanic kindergarteners demonstrate readiness, a decline from the previous administration (26%).

This year, school systems reported over 8,040 English learners (13%) entered kindergarten, a decline from 2020–2021 (17%), although trends indicate that the number of multilingual families continues to grow. The 2021–2022 KRA data show that fewer English learners (10%) demonstrate readiness as compared to their English fluent (44%) peers. This represents a 34-percentage point gap, consistent with the prior KRA administration.

Children who are not from low-income families demonstrate higher levels of readiness (45%) than children who are from low-income families (23%). The readiness gap between these two groups has increased to 22-percentage points, from 16-percentage points in 2019–2020.

This school year, 9% of children entering kindergarten have an identified disability and receive services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). In 2021–2022, 17% of children with disabilities demonstrated readiness compared to 42% of children without disabilities.

A more detailed analysis of the KRA results, including individual LEA results, can be found in the report titled: [“Coming Back Stronger: Resilience and Opportunity.”](#)

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