

Fact Sheet



NEW MEXICO Kindergarten Observation Tool

Understanding the developmental characteristics of children as they enter school and the types of early experiences that are linked to school success are of great interest to state stakeholders, including educators at the preschool and elementary levels, program developers, early childhood researchers, and parents. Evaluating students at the start of kindergarten is one way to help these stakeholders understand children's developmental strengths and needs. Thus, a growing demand has emerged for reliable and trustworthy tools that describe what children know and are able to do when they enter kindergarten.

What is the Kindergarten Observation Tool (KOT)?

► The KOT is an authentic observational tool that looks at the "whole child," and is designed to gather information on how children perform at the time of kindergarten entry. This information is intended to assist teachers in data-driven instructional decision making at the child and classroom level. The KOT has the added benefit of helping to identify individual children's needs and provide necessary supports to children and teachers while providing families with information about their children's learning and development.

► The KOT is **not** an evaluative measure for teacher competency and will **not** be used for "high stakes" decision making. It is **not** a measure designed to fund/defund programs, to deny access to kindergarten for any child, or to be a screening tool to identify students with special needs.

Every child in New Mexico will have an equal opportunity for success in school based up on equitable access to an aligned and high-quality early learning system.

—New Mexico Early Learning Advisory Council

What is assessed on the KOT?

- The KOT looks at the whole child, focusing on the areas of:
- Self, Family, and Community;
 - Physical Development, Health, and Well-being;
 - Approaches to Learning;
 - Scientific Conceptual Understanding;
 - Literacy; and
 - Numeracy.

How and why did the Public Education Department design the KOT?

- New Mexico was awarded a Phase 2 Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant, which provided the state with \$37.5 million dollars to improve the early education system. This grant has five projects:
- Implement FOCUS, a tiered quality rating and improvement system for all programs serving young children.
 - Establish Early Learning Investment Zones to identify and prioritize services where children are at the greatest risk.
 - Develop an early learning data system that is aligned across the Department of Health; Children, Youth and Families Department; and the Public Education Department.
 - Provide a system of professional development to build the capacity of New Mexico's early childhood workforce.

(continued...) How and why did the Public Education Department design the KOT?

- Develop a kindergarten entry measure, the KOT.
- ▶ The Public Education Department has implemented a thoughtful approach in the development of the KOT:
- The process included a validation study, pilot testing, and field testing.
 - Teacher and stakeholder feedback was collected via extensive surveys, and focus groups, with gathered information directly impacting development.
 - KOT indicators are an extension of those found on the PreK instrument and align to New Mexico Kindergarten Standards as well as the Common Core State Standards.

KOT Timeline

- ▶ KOT field test participants (Fall 2015) included 351 teachers representing 39 districts and 7 charters.
- ▶ KOT participants (Fall 2016) include 100% of all districts and charters in the state.
- ▶ KOT full implementation (Fall 2016) window:
 - K–3 Plus programs will be administering the KOT during the K–3 Plus summer program and submit Final Ratings by the end of the K–3 Plus program.
 - The KOT will be given within the first 30 instructional days of the school year beginning with the first full day of instruction.
 - Student Final Ratings data must be entered in the KOT online application by October 15, 2016.

Who participates?

- ▶ KOT Trainers
 - Each district has an assigned KOT Trainer. These individuals will train kindergarten teachers on how to observe, score, and submit data for the KOT field test administration. They will also:
 - Serve as the point of contact for the KOT for their district;

- Distribute KOT-related information to teachers;
- Provide ongoing support for teachers within the district for KOT-related issues; and
- Serve as a KOT “data reflection facilitator” for their district.

- ▶ Teachers and Long-Term Substitute Teachers
 - During statewide implementation in the fall of 2016, every New Mexico kindergarten teacher will serve as the KOT administrator for their class. In this capacity they will:
 - Implement the KOT;
 - Score students based on the KOT rubrics; and
 - Enter student scores in the KOT Application.

How is the KOT administered?

- ▶ Teachers conduct KOT observations during the course of “normal” day to day instruction. Time is not taken away from the student’s instructional day. Teachers may choose to record their observations directly into the KOT online application, through paper and pencil Quick Look recording sheets, or through a system they develop on their own.

Who provides financial support?

- ▶ Training is funded by the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant including, stipends for trainers and participants out of contract, substitute pay for trainers and participants on contract, travel (over 60 miles), and hotel (over 60 miles).
- ▶ Materials will be provided to the KOT Trainers for each district at no cost to the district.

Additional resources/information:

- ▶ http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/LiteracyEarlyChildhoodEd_KOT_index.html
- ▶ Contact: Joe Manley
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