



A Family Guide to Understanding Early Reading Skills

***The Kindergarten Readiness
Assessment – Literacy (KRA-L)***



*Center for
Students, Families and Communities*



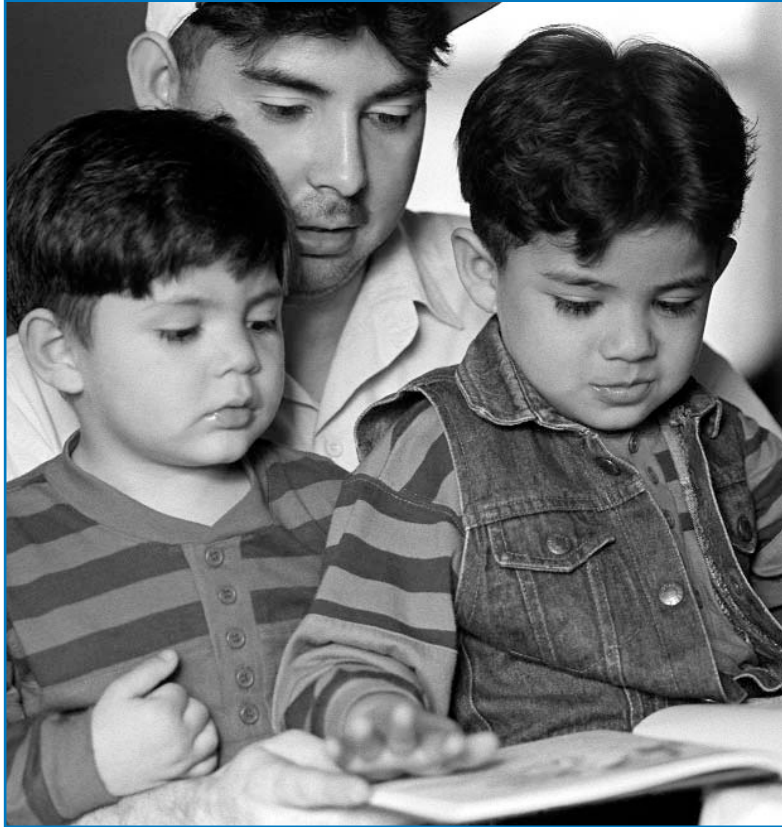


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Dear Family,

We know that children grow and develop at their own pace. Some children enter kindergarten just beginning to recognize the letters of the alphabet, while others enter knowing how to read long stories.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has developed a brief assessment tool that will help teachers identify early reading skills. This assessment is the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment–Literacy (KRA-L).

The KRA-L will be given to all kindergarten students up through the first six weeks of school. The assessment will measure skill areas important to becoming a successful reader. It also will help teachers plan for experiences and lessons that encourage reading.

Please use this guide to learn about the KRA-L. The pages ahead will give you an idea of the types of activities involved in the assessment and will suggest some things you can do at home to help your child become a successful reader.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Tave Zelman".

Susan T. Zelman
Superintendent of Public Instruction

The Importance of Reading

Reading is a fundamental tool for success in today's world. For all students it is a key to unlock all academic subjects (*Ohio's Literacy Framework, 2000*).

During the preschool and kindergarten years, children are developing many of the skills that help them read, write and speak with others effectively. All children are born with the potential to learn these skills, but many will need direct teaching strategies to help them develop the basics of reading.

Children who develop these skills will be on their way to becoming readers, and in turn will be successful learners throughout the rest of their lives. The purpose of this guide is to help you in three ways: 1) understand what skills are important to building the foundation for reading; 2) share with you what your child will be asked to do during the kindergarten readiness assessment; and 3) provide you with some resources to help your child succeed.

Important Skills for Learning to Read

Children come to kindergarten with a range of early reading abilities. The following lists some of the skills that many children demonstrate in the early months of kindergarten:

- Listening to and retelling a favorite story;
- Identifying letters of the alphabet, most often those in their own names;
- Matching sounds to letters — often the beginning sounds of a word — such as the sound of “d” in dog;
- Pretend writing letters, lists or descriptions of their art;
- Printing or copying letters of the alphabet;
- Writing and copying words of interest;
- Pretend reading;
- Reading along with an adult;
- Re-reading a favorite book many times;
- Retelling the story through pictures; and
- Playing with the sounds of words, by rhyming, such as hat, cat, bat.



Evaluating Early Reading

Assessment is one word used to describe a process for gathering information about what children know. Two other words used to describe the process are testing and screening.

There are many ways in which teachers can learn about what your child knows:

- By watching your child throughout the school day and recording the information;
- By actively listening to what your child talks about and shows an interest in learning more about;
- By collecting your child's work during a period of time for review;
- By sitting with your child and asking him or her to show them what they know by pointing to pictures, repeating words or sentences, or copying words; and
- By asking you what you have noticed about your child's interest in books, letters and writing.

Your child will take part in many different kinds of assessments throughout the school years. Assessments provide important information to help teachers make good teaching decisions. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment–Literacy is the starting point to learn what your child knows about reading.

What is the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L)

The KRA-L is a short assessment that will be given to all kindergarten children. Children will sit and work with the teacher.

The KRA-L is made up of activities that include:

- Answering who, what, when, why and how questions;
- Repeating sentences;
- Identifying words that rhyme;
- Giving a word that sounds the same as another word (rhyming production);
- Identifying letters; and
- Listening and identifying the beginning sounds of words.

The six skills were selected to assess because developing them is important to becoming a good reader.

The results of the KRA-L assessment will be used to help teachers meet each child's needs in learning to read. The KRA-L assessment cannot be used to hold any child back from starting kindergarten. It will, however, provide teachers with information about how to best build upon children's literacy strengths and also address their needs.

How is the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L) Given?

Teachers or teachers' aides will do the assessment activities one child at a time, in a quiet area away from other children. The teacher will write your child's answers on a score sheet.

What are the Assessment Activities?

Your child's score on each of the six assessment activities will be recorded. The activities are described below along with brief examples of the kinds of questions your child will be asked during each activity.

Activity 1:

Answering Who, What, When, Why and How Questions

In this activity your child will be asked to answer three questions. For example, your child may be asked to answer: "Why do you brush your teeth?" or "Where do you eat lunch?" The teacher will wait several seconds for your child's answer and then write down what your child says. Of course, the teacher isn't concerned with a single correct answer. Rather, the teacher will notice whether your child answers a "why" question with a reason and a "where" question with a place.

Activity 2:

Sentence Repetition

This activity consists of four items. For each item, your child will be asked to listen to and repeat a sentence. For example, the teacher may say, "Building with blocks is fun," and then will ask your child to repeat the sentence.



Activity 3:*Rhyming Identification*

Seven questions make up the rhyming identification portion of the assessment. Your child will be asked to say whether two words rhyme. For example, the teacher will ask, “Do the words ‘tap’ and ‘nap’ rhyme?”

**Activity 4:***Rhyming Production*

The rhyming production activity has five questions. Rhyming is the ability to notice that some words sound the same. Your child will be asked to provide a word that rhymes with another word. For example, the teacher may say the word “cat” and ask the child to think of and say another word that rhymes with “cat.” Perhaps your child will respond with “fat,” “hat” or “bat.”

Activity 5:*Letter Identification*

Your child will be asked to identify letters of the alphabet. The teacher will point to a letter of the alphabet and ask him or her to name that letter. There are two parts to this activity: one for identifying capital letters and another for identifying noncapital letters. Your child’s score on this activity indicates how many letters he or she recognizes and can name.

Activity 6:*Initial Sounds*

During this activity, the teacher will ask your child to find a picture that represents a word that begins with a given sound. First, the teacher will provide a set of four pictures. For example, there may be a picture of a hat, a box, a hand and a shoe. Then the teacher will ask your child to identify the picture that begins with the same sound as the target or first picture. The teacher may draw your child’s attention to the picture of a hat while saying the word hat and explaining that “hat” starts with an “h” sound. The teacher will then ask your child to find or point to the picture of something that begins with the same sound as the word “hat.” The correct response in this example would be the picture of a hand.

What Do the Results of the KRA-L Mean for My Child's Teacher and Me?

Your child's responses provide a small snapshot of some of what he or she knows and can do with words and letters at this time. This information can help you and the kindergarten teacher make good decisions about how to best support your child's reading development. Teachers will use the results to decide if more assessments are needed to identify possible concerns or difficulties that may interfere with reading development.

How You Can Help Your Child

It is important to know that it takes you, your child and your child's teacher working together to help him or her succeed in learning to read and write. What can YOU do as a parent to help?

- Let your child see you read and write. When you read something interesting, share what you are reading with your child;
- Provide a comfortable, quiet space for your child to read stories, draw and write;
- Read with your child every night; and
- Encourage your child to have many experiences that help build these literacy skills.

1. Listening:

- Give names to things in your child's environment to increase vocabulary, i.e., body parts, colors, clothing, food, toys;
- Sing songs and recite rhymes daily;
- Listen to music, move to and clap with the beat of the music; and
- Read stories to your child regularly, at bedtime for example, and talk about the pictures.



2. Speaking:

- Ask your child questions about their day and about stories you read to them;
- Explain new vocabulary used in books, label new items in your child's environment;
- Show interest in what your child has to say;
- Share storytelling time with your child; and
- Build your child's vocabulary by reading daily, going on field trips to the zoo, a farm or a grocery store.

3. Reading:

- As you read, help your child learn about books by talking about concepts like front/back, right-side-up, one page at a time, left to right and beginning/end of a story;
- Have your child "read" a story to you;
- Read and reread stories as often as your child requests;
- Put your child's name on some belongings to help him or her learn to recognize a name in print;
- Read road and business signs to your child when you are driving;
- Read some books that have memorable repeated words and phrases so your child can join in as you read;
- Display and talk about printed materials in your home, i.e., books, magazines, recipes and coupons;
- Visit the library regularly with your child;
- Read recipes, cards and information such as cereal boxes;
- Look at and read everything that comes home from school with your child; and
- When the mail arrives, look through it with your child.



4. Writing:

- Provide daily opportunities for your child to draw with different instruments, i.e., crayons, pencils, markers, pens and paintbrushes;

- Recognize the importance of drawing, coloring and scribbling;
- Let your child help you make grocery lists and sign birthday cards;
- Display your child’s scribbling, writing and artwork at the child’s viewing level; and
- Give your child’s “work” extra importance — display it where family members can see it.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does every child have to take the KRA-L?

Yes, every child will be assessed in the six skill areas.

Why is the KRA-L required for all children?

There are many assessments being done at school; however, the KRA-L is unique in that it lets teachers know what children know and can do in the six areas of literacy. Information from the KRA-L gives your child’s teachers a much better chance to provide the right instruction in these areas.

How will the KRA-L help my child in kindergarten?

The teachers will be able to select lessons, activities and strategies that match your child’s needs. By changing their teaching to match your child’s learning strengths and needs, your child’s teacher will provide instruction that is most likely to lead to positive results for your child.

When will the KRA-L be given?

Your child’s teacher or the teachers’ aides will administer the KRA-L up through the first six weeks of kindergarten.

How long does the KRA-L take to complete?

The KRA-L takes approximately 15 minutes to complete.



What happens if my child fails the KRA-L?

It's not possible for a child to fail the KRA-L. The KRA-L is an assessment that is used to let teachers know children's skills in six specific literacy areas. Children demonstrate what they are able to do, and teachers take that information and plan classroom lessons and experiences. Based upon the KRA-L results, teachers may suggest a more in-depth assessment as needed.

What will be done after the results are collected?

After the KRA-L is given, teachers take the information and plan lessons. This information will assure that each child is continuing to grow in the areas of strength and receiving focused instruction in learning the skills they still need to develop.

Will my child be kept out of kindergarten?

The KRA-L does not keep children out of kindergarten. No child will be excluded from kindergarten based on how he or she performs on the KRA-L.

Who can I ask for help if my child struggles in one or more KRA-L activities?

Your child's teacher is your best resource. You should never hesitate to ask the teacher for any help that you need.

What can I do at home to help my child?

Make reading a part of your child's daily life by: 1) reading and re-reading favorite books; 2) singing and reciting nursery rhymes and songs; 3) taking time to talk with your child everyday; and 4) visiting the library often.

Some Books to Enjoy with Your Child!

Answering who, what, when, why and how questions

- 1) *What Happens When I Go to the Dentist?*, by Helen Slater
- 2) *People in My Community*, by L. Gorman
- 3) *Ape Cape*, by P. Scheuneman
- 4) *Educating Arthur*, by A. Graham
- 5) *Discovering Dinosaurs*, by M. L. Sokoloff
- 6) *More Bugs in Boxes*, by D. Carter
- 7) *Who is Tapping at My Window*, by A. G. Deming

Sentence repetition

- 1) *Read with Dick and Jane: Go Away, Spot* (Grosset and Dunlap Inc.)
- 2) *Big Machines*, by M. Davis John
- 3) *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*, by B. Martin, Jr.
- 4) *I Can Read*, by M. Malcolm
- 5) *I Like Bugs*, by M. Malcolm
- 6) *My Many Colored Day*, by Dr. Seuss
- 7) *Hush, Little Baby*, by M. Zemach



Rhyming identification/rhyming production

- 1) *The Cat in the Hat*, by Dr. Seuss
- 2) *Green Eggs and Ham*, by Dr. Seuss
- 3) *There Is a Wocket in My Pocket*, by Dr. Seuss
- 4) *Fire! Fire! Said Mrs. McGuire*, by B. Martin
- 5) *ABC I Like Me!*, by N. Carlson
- 6) *Hippos Go Berserk*, by S. Boynton
- 7) *Engine, Engine, Number Nine*, by S. Calmenson
- 8) *Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young*, by J. Prelutsky
- 9) *Down by the Bay*, by Raffi

Identifying letters of the alphabet

- 1) *Word Bird's Hats (Word Birds for Early Birds)*, by J. Mancure
- 2) *Word Bird's Fall Words*, by J. Mancure
- 3) *The Butterfly Alphabet Book*, by Brian Cassie and Jerry Pallotto
- 4) *Miss Spider's ABC*, by D. Kirk
- 5) *The Icky Bug Alphabet Book*, by J. Pallotta
- 6) *The Hullabaloo ABC*, by B. Cleary
- 7) *Zoophabets*, by R. Tallon

Beginning sounds of words

- 1) *So Many Sounds*, by D. Meachen Rau
- 2) *My "f" Sound Box*, by J. Mancure
- 3) *The Handmade Alphabet*, by L. Rankin
- 4) *Action Alphabet*, by S. Rotner
- 5) *ABC*, by B. Wildsmith
- 6) *All in the Woodland Early: An ABC Book*, by J. Yolen
- 7) *Six Sleepy Sheep*, by J. Gordon

Online Resources

1. www.earlyliterature.ecsd.net/
2. www.kinderlit.ecsd.net
Early Literature Project containing parent information (ideas to support literacy development at home)
3. www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/ela/e_literacy
Literacy development of children with special needs
4. www.nul.org/programs/education/read_rise.html
Resource guide that offers research-based information to help parents engage their children in literacy-building activities
5. www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/parents.html
Resources for parents – early years, school-aged children and family literacy
6. www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/bibpi.html
Bibliography of article titles (1999-present: Parental involvement and family literacy)
7. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/digest/literacy.html
Research Digest: Parent involvement and early literacy
8. www.basic-skills-observatory.co.uk
Online library – provides information about improving basic literacy skills of children and adults







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