

Early Learning Inventory (ELI)

Equipping kindergarten and first-grade teachers with an observational tool to quickly assess student knowledge and abilities

WHY IS THIS INITIATIVE NEEDED?

When they enter school, children's knowledge, skills and experiences vary widely – a situation that may be more pronounced in the 2021-22 school year due to COVID-19 disruptions or delayed enrollment. The [Oklahoma Early Learning Inventory \(ELI\)](#) can support learning recovery by giving kindergarten and first-grade teachers information on each student regardless of prior learning experiences. With this tool, educators can quickly determine individual students' knowledge and skills by observing learning progress in six essential domains of school readiness: literacy; mathematics; approaches toward learning; physical development, health and well-being; scientific conceptual understanding; and self, family and community. This information can provide a foundation for rich conversations with families on student goals early in the school year.

HOW WILL THIS INITIATIVE WORK?

Beginning in summer 2021, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) will give kindergarten and first-grade teachers access to an online training module on the [OSDE Connect platform](#). The training will cover best practices in observational formative assessments and how to use the Oklahoma ELI rubric and data dashboard to plan for instruction and communicate student progress with families. Teachers can then use the observational rubrics during the first 30 days of instruction to gather data on student knowledge and skills, which will aid them in making instructional choices and partnering with families to support student learning. Kindergarten teachers can use the tool for a mid- and end-of-year check of student progress.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH BASE FOR THIS INITIATIVE?

- [This National Institute for Early Education Research \(NIEER\) report](#) points to the use of Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEAs) in a majority of states to quickly assess student learning and development, inform instruction and create valuable opportunities to communicate with families and drive policy.
- The Oklahoma ELI is modeled after the New Mexico Kindergarten Observation Tool, which was found to be “a valid measure of children's foundational knowledge and skills, as well as their academic knowledge and skills and their learning and social skills at kindergarten entry” by the [Regional Education Laboratory Southwest \(REL-SW\)](#).

WHAT IS THE OSDE'S TOTAL INVESTMENT IN THIS INITIATIVE?

Because the ELI tool has already been developed, the only cost is \$36,000 for professional development for the teachers participating in the pilot during the 2021-22 school year.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is eligible to use the Oklahoma Early Learning Inventory (ELI)?

All kindergarten and first-grade teachers who will be providing in-person instruction in fall 2021 can access the ELI and online professional development.

Is the ELI required for all kindergarten and first-grade teachers?

NIEER has determined the New Mexico Kindergarten Observation Tool to be an effective tool to drive instruction in early grades and facilitate student success. The OSDE strongly encourages kindergarten and first-grade teachers to utilize the ELI, particularly since students will enter school following a year of disruptions and uncertainties resulting from the pandemic. The ELI is not intended to replace current screening or diagnostic assessments, but should work alongside them to create a holistic picture of what a student knows and is able to do.

The OSDE, in partnership with the REL-SW, will study the use and effectiveness of the Oklahoma ELI with 14 districts and approximately 50 teachers across the state during the 2021-22 school year. This data will allow for evaluation of the ELI's reliability and validity and provide insight on how to strengthen the tool, dashboard and supports.

Will the Oklahoma ELI be available to kindergarten and first-grade teachers beyond the upcoming school year?

Yes, the OSDE will make this tool available on an ongoing basis.

Is there a cost associated with the Oklahoma ELI?

The ELI training, rubrics and data dashboard are free to Oklahoma public school kindergarten and first-grade teachers.

How will the Oklahoma ELI impact students?

When teachers have a clear picture of the skills and abilities of each student entering the classroom, they are able to target instruction to ensure the individualized supports students need to thrive.

In the early grades, it is essential to include families in student learning and development. The ELI tool allows teachers to communicate student progress and partner with families on how to support the student at school and at home.

Can I use the Oklahoma ELI if my instruction is virtual?

Because the ELI is completed through observation of students as they engage in learning and play, it is not applicable to a virtual learning environment. If instruction is hybrid, and students are in person a portion of the school week, the ELI can be used.

What is the time commitment for teachers?

The initial training on OSDE Connect will take approximately six hours to complete. The length of time required to enter scores and generate reports will depend on the number of students in the class.

For questions, contact Lauren Jenks-Jones, Executive Director of Early Childhood Education, at Lauren.Jenks-Jones@sde.ok.gov.