



Iowa Department of Education

***Kindergarten Literacy Assessment
Preliminary Report***

Iowa Department of Education

Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

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State of Iowa
Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
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INTRODUCTION

House File (HF) 761: Kindergarten Literacy Assessment

The 2005 General Assembly passed legislation requiring local school districts to complete the following:

- Administer Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) or a kindergarten benchmark assessment adopted by the Department of Education (DE) to every kindergarten student enrolled in the district no later than October 1 [Iowa Code 279.60(16)];
- Collect from each parent guardian or legal custodian of a kindergarten student enrolled in the district, information including, but not limited to, preschool attendance and demographic factors; and
- Report the results of the assessment and preschool information to the DE no later than January 1 of that school year.

Assessment Tools Used

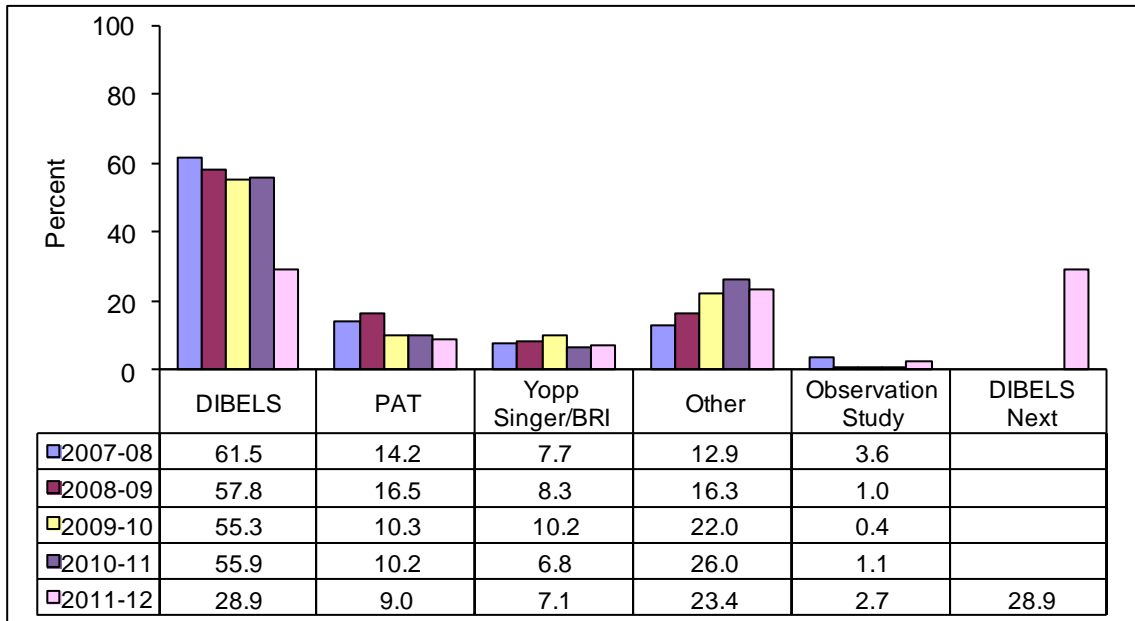
The DE aligned kindergarten assessment requirements of HF 761 with the statutory requirements for comprehensive school improvement and early intervention/class size reduction. The assessments the districts select must be technically adequate.

Assessment Results

In the 2011-2012 school year, preliminary data indicates all school districts reported data and 99 percent of the buildings with kindergarten classrooms submitted kindergarten assessment data. (This percentage does not reflect buildings with prekindergarten or transitional kindergarten.) A total of 37,211 students were enrolled in kindergarten.

Figure 1 depicts the various types of kindergarten literacy assessment instruments used in school buildings. Each of these assessment tools measures a different aspect of sound (phonemic) awareness in young children. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of schools reported data using the DIBELS measure, for the six categories of assessment tools used.

Figure 1. Percent of Iowa School Buildings and Kindergarten Assessment Tool Administered.

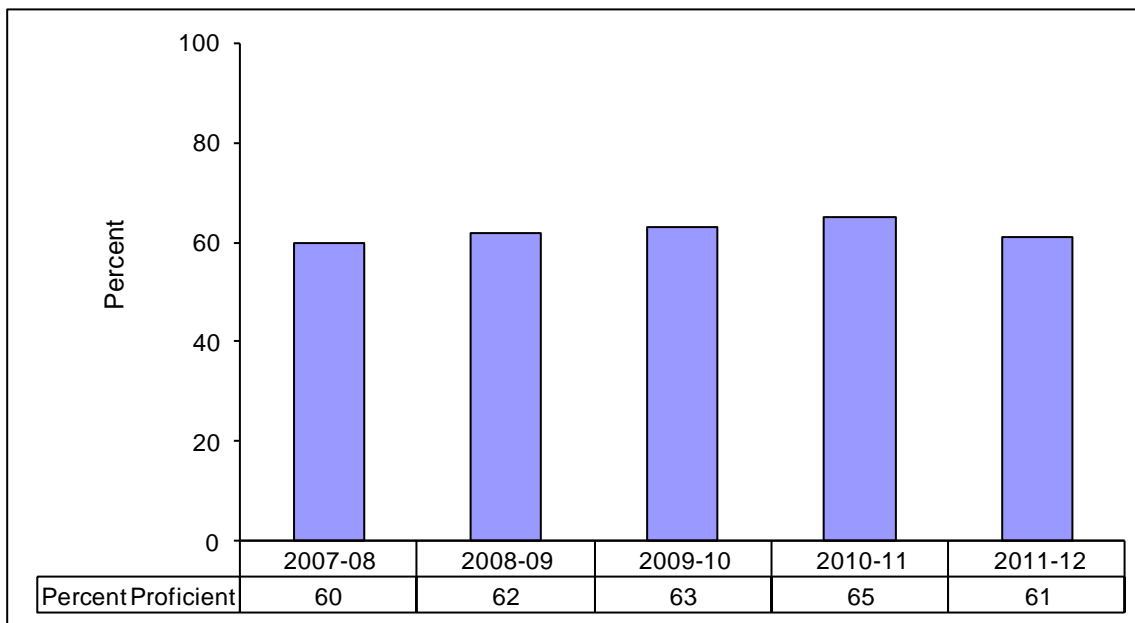


Data Source: Preliminary EASIER Fall Files, Iowa Department of Education, 2011-2012.

DIBELS Data

The DIBELS assessment measures student literacy skills for identifying beginning sounds of words by pointing to the picture matching the sound. Districts submitted data to the DE using the EASIER data system. Figure 2 represents DIBELS data for a five-year trend, from 2007-2008 to 2011-2012. As indicated in Figure 2, the percent of students proficient in beginning sounds as measured by DIBELS decreased by 4 percent from 2010-2011 to 2011-2012. The number of students assessed using DIBELS has decreased from 18,923 in 2010-11 to 10,131 this fall. Preliminary data indicates 9,929 students were assessed using DIBELS Next. The number of student assessed using DIBELS Next, may explain the decline in the percent of students proficient in DIBELS.

Figure 2. Percent of Students Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Identifying Beginning Sounds Using DIBELS Assessment Measure (N=10,131)



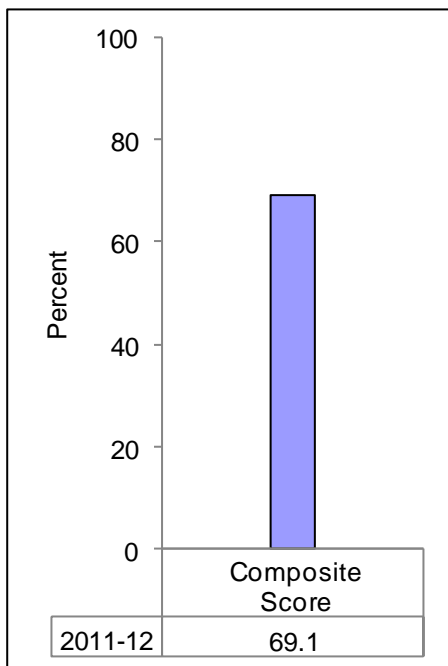
Data Source. Preliminary EASIER Fall Files, Iowa Department of Education, 2011-2012.

Note: This is preliminary data. Data regarding other approved assessment instruments will be reported in the Annual Condition of Education Report, 2012.

DIBELS Next Data

The DIBELS Next assessment measures important early reading skills. The DIBELS Next First Sound Fluency subtest measures kindergarten student literacy skills for identifying beginning sounds of words by saying or producing the sound. The DIBELS Composite Score is a combination of the DIBELS kindergarten fall subtests (Letter Naming Fluency and First Sound Fluency) and provides the best overall estimate of the student's reading proficiency. The Letter Naming Fluency and First Sound Fluency measures were used to calculate the Composite Score for fall 2011. In 2011-12, 9,929 students were assessed and 69 percent were proficient (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Percent of Students Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Beginning Reading Skills Using DIBELS Next Assessment Measure (N=9,929)



Data Source. Preliminary EASIER Fall Files, Iowa Department of Education, 2011-2012.

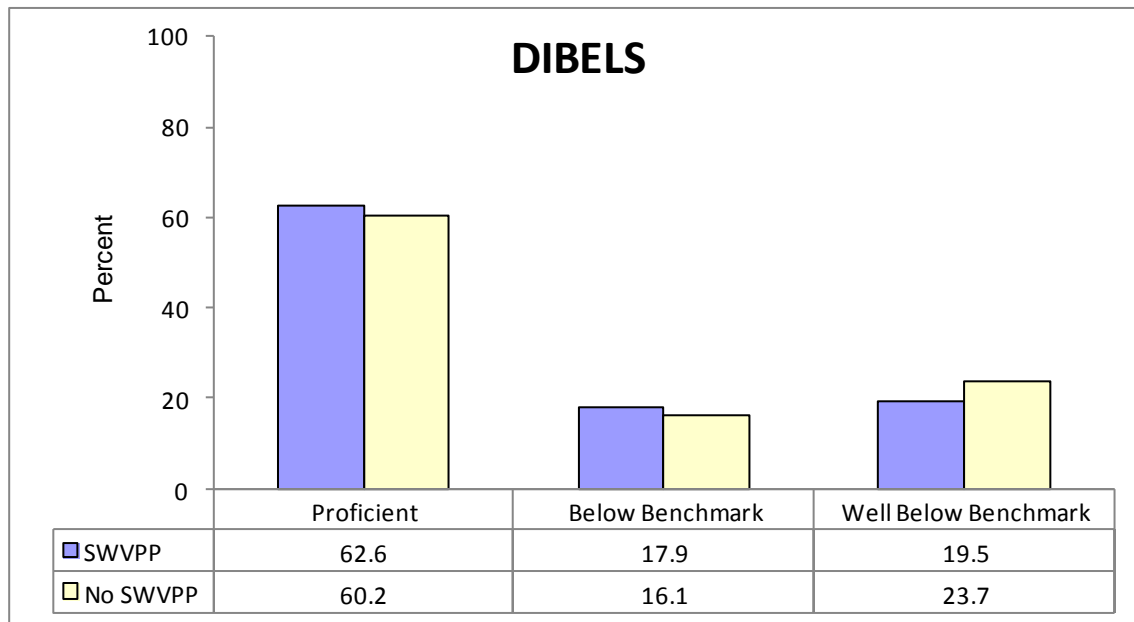
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Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Demonstrates Significant Results

DIBELS scores from children participating in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program were compared to Students with no preschool experience (Figure 4). The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program was established in 2007. This preschool program is based on quality program components including quality program standards, a licensed early childhood teacher, research-based child standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

In 2006-2007, prior to the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program, only 56 percent of all kindergarten students assessed were proficient. In 2011-2012, 62.6 percent of the kindergarten students who participated in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program were proficient as compared to only 60.2 percent of the students who had no preschool experience prior to kindergarten enrollment. As represented in Figure 4, kindergarten students who did not attend the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program were more likely to need additional supports to become proficient. In 2011-12, 23.7 percent of the students who did not attend the preschool program were not proficient (scored well below the benchmark) as compared to only 19.5 percent of those kindergarten students who had attended the preschool program. Kindergarten students scoring well below the benchmark need significant support and resources to achieve grade level reading skills in kindergarten.

Figure 4. Percent of Students Attending Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Identifying Beginning Sounds Using DIBELS Assessment Measure (N=10,131)

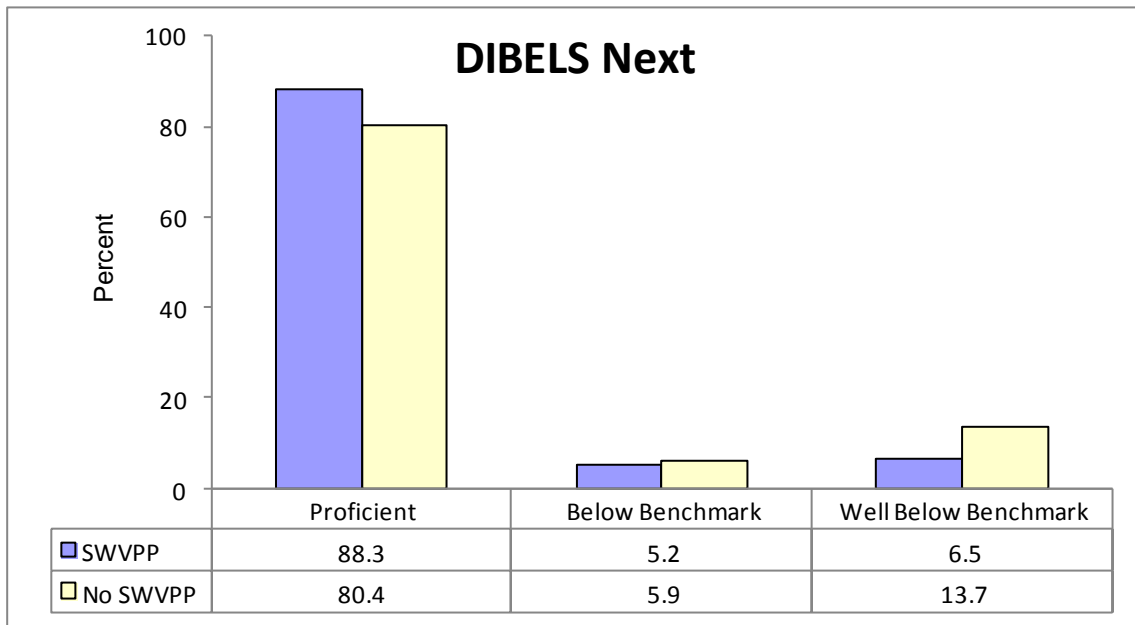


Data Source. Preliminary EASIER Fall Files, Iowa Department of Education, 2011-2012.

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The DIBELS Next assessment indicated similar findings. Of the kindergarten students who attended the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program, 88.3 percent were proficient compared to only 80.4 percent of kindergarten students who had not attended the preschool program. Kindergarten students who did not attend the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program need significant additional support to become proficient. As indicated in Figure 5, 13.7 percent of these students were considered not proficient (scored well below the benchmark) as compared to only 6.5 percent of the students who attended this quality preschool program.

Figure 5. Percent of Students Attending Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Entering Kindergarten Proficient Using DIBELS Next Assessment Measure (N=9,929)

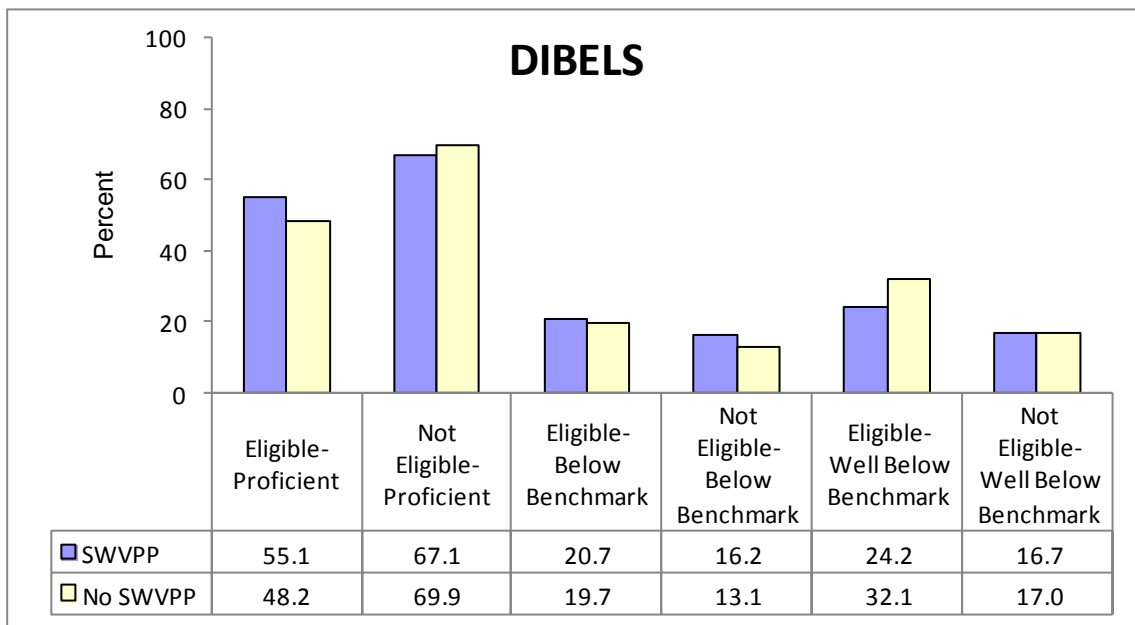


Data Source. Preliminary EASIER Fall Files, Iowa Department of Education, 2011-2012.

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The impact of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program is greater for students in poverty (eligible for free or reduced meals). As seen in Figure 6, fewer kindergarten students in poverty without a preschool experience were proficient in naming beginning sounds than students who attended the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. Of the students eligible for free or reduced meals, 48.2 percent were proficient in beginning sounds as measured by DIBELS as compared to 55.1 percent of kindergarten students who attended the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. Eight percent more students eligible for free or reduced meals were well below the benchmark than students who had attended the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.

Figure 6. Percent of Students in Poverty Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Identifying Beginning Sounds Using DIBELS Assessment Measure.

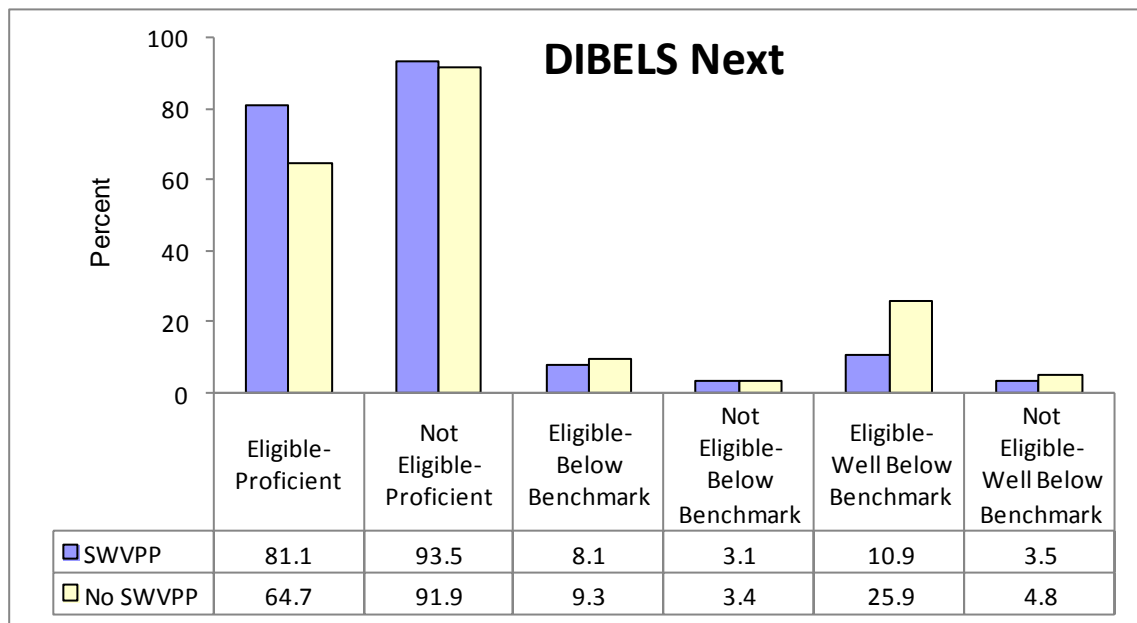


Data Source. Preliminary EASIER Fall Files, Iowa Department of Education, 2011-2012.

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Similar patterns emerge in DIBELS Next. Of the students eligible for free and reduced meals and attending the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program 81.1 percent were proficient as measured by DIBELS Next as compared to only 64.7 percent who did not attend. As indicated in Figure 7, this is a 16.4 percent difference. Similar differences are seen in the results for students not proficient or scoring well below the benchmark. Over twenty-five percent of the students eligible for free and reduced meals who did not attend this quality preschool program were considered not proficient as compared to only 10.9 percent who attended this preschool program. These students need significant support to become proficient in reading.

Figure 7. Percent of Students in Poverty Entering Kindergarten Proficient Using DIBELS Next Assessment Measure (N=9,929)



Data Source. Preliminary EASIER Fall Files, Iowa Department of Education, 2011-2012.

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Report of Preschool Participation

Districts reported the number of Students that had attended preschool at any time 12 months prior to registering for kindergarten. Districts gather the information through parent report or district records. The term “preschool” was not specifically defined in legislation and thus could have resulted in very different meanings for parents ranging from a childcare setting in a home to a private enterprise. The amount of time devoted to instruction may have been interpreted very differently by parents. The data collected and analyzed should be interpreted with extreme caution. In 2010, 37,211 students entered kindergarten. Districts indicated that based on parent report, 23,585 Students attended preschool. Since the term “preschool” was a local definition, this data provides a broad interpretation of preschool based on parent perceptions.

Recommendations

Results are supportive of statewide efforts to increase proficiency of literacy skills. Supporting statewide efforts include implementation of the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, the National Association for the Education of Young Children Program Standards, and Accreditation Criteria, the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the ongoing Every Child Reads: 3 to 5 Training. Ongoing efforts to support the alignment of assessment, curriculum, and instruction will assist in closing the achievement gap.

Current data indicate the following recommendations:

- Continue state funding supporting the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of quality preschool programming;
- Support quality preschool programs through maintaining program standards and achieving Iowa Core Curriculum for preschoolers;
- Support quality professional development that addresses the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, Iowa Early Learning Standards, and early literacy skills; and
- Provide funding to support the delivery of technical assistance through the area education agency early childhood staff.