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**Iowa Department of Education**

***Kindergarten Literacy Assessment Report***

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***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  
400 E 14<sup>th</sup> St  
Des Moines IA 50319-0146

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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**

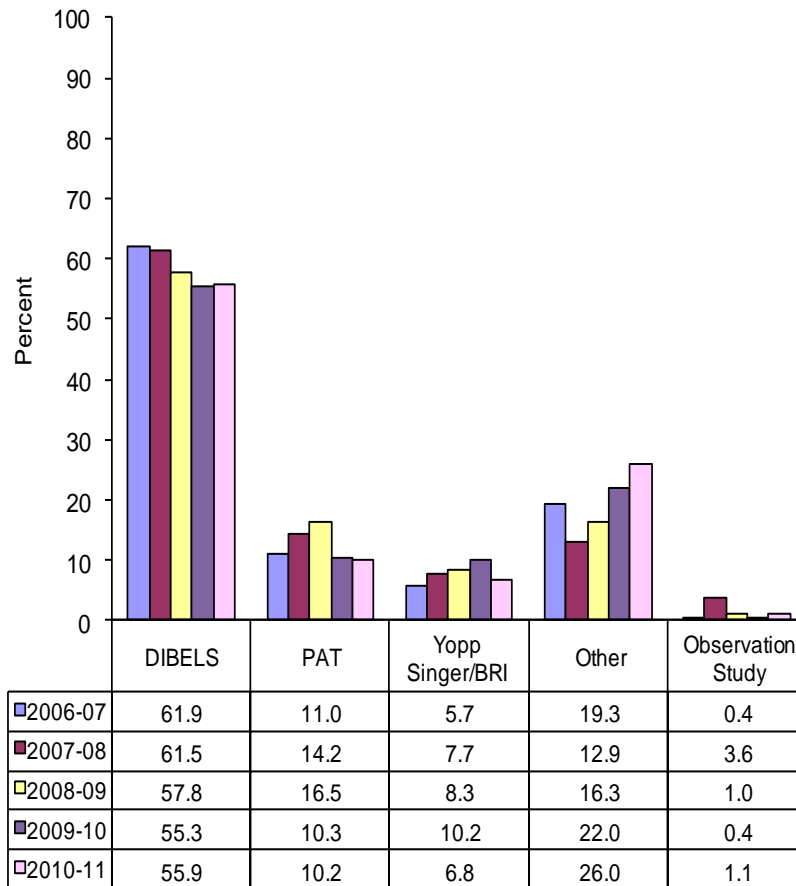
The DE aligned kindergarten assessment requirements of HF 761 with the statutory requirements for comprehensive school improvement and early intervention/class size reduction. The assessments the districts select must be technically adequate.

### **Assessment Results**

In the 2010-2011 school year, 97 percent of the school districts and buildings with kindergarten classrooms submitted kindergarten assessment data. (This percentage does not reflect buildings with prekindergarten or transitional kindergarten.) A total of 36,327 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 five categories of assessment tools used.

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

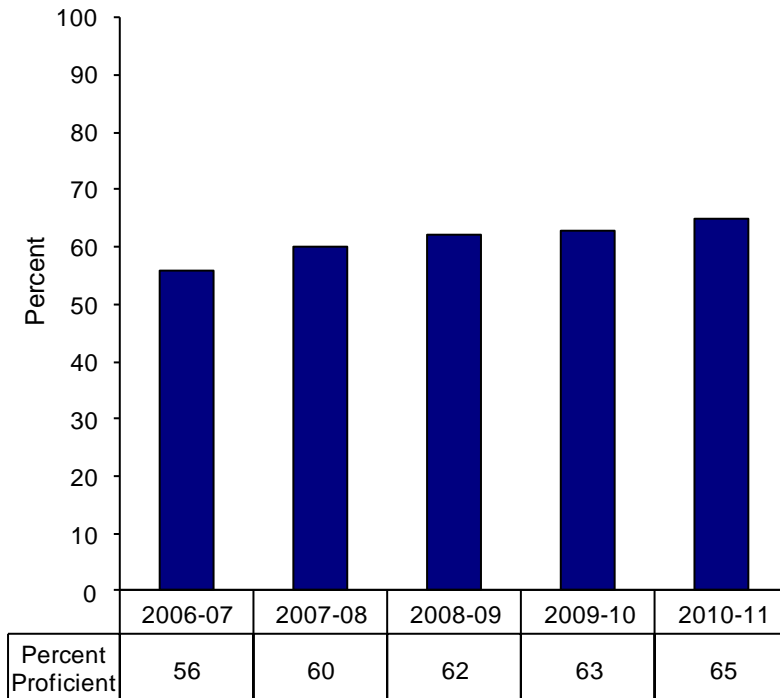


Data Source: Project Easier, Iowa Department of Education, 2010-2011.

### DIBELS Data

The DIBELS assessment measures children’s literacy skills for identifying beginning sounds of words by pointing to the picture matching the sound. Districts submitted data to the DE using Project Easier data system. Figure 2 represents DIBELS data for a five-year trend, from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011. As indicated in Figure 2, the percent of children proficient in beginning sounds as measured by DIBELS increased by 9 percent from 2006-2007 to 2009-2010.

**Figure 2.** Percent of Children Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Identifying Beginning Sounds Using DIBELS Assessment Measure (N=18,923)



Data Source. Project Easier, Iowa Department of Education, 2010-2011

Note: Data regarding other approved assessment instruments will be reported in the Annual Condition of Education Report, 2011.

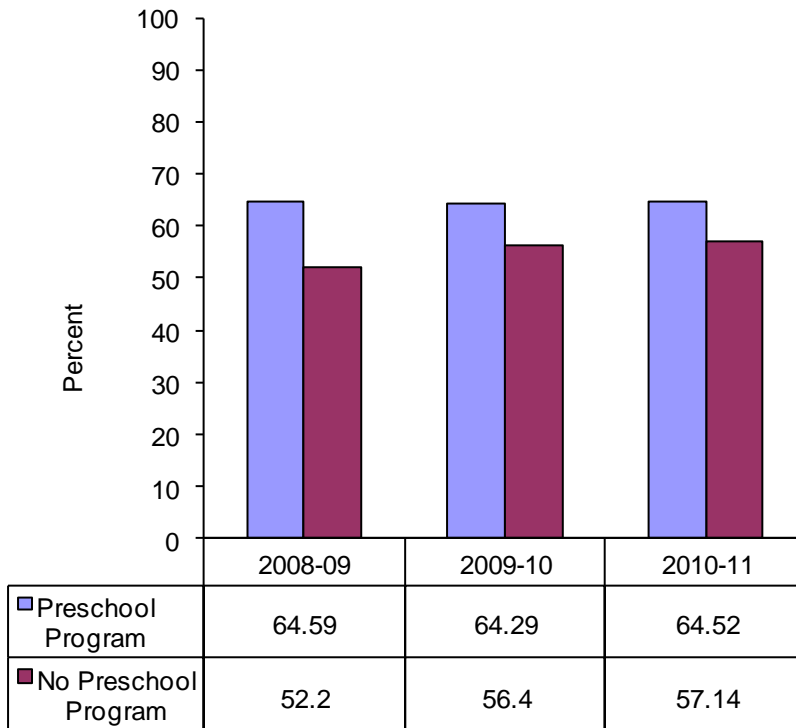
### Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Demonstrates Significant Results

DIBELS scores from children participating in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program were compared to children with no preschool experience (Figure 3). 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 2010-2011, 64 percent of the kindergarten children who participated in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program were proficient as compared to only 57 percent of the children who had no preschool experience prior to kindergarten enrollment. This represents a 7 percent increase in the percentage of children proficient.

An additional benefit of the ten hour Statewide Voluntary Preschool has been the emphasis of quality components that have impacted other preschool programs throughout the state. This has been due to the overall increased emphasis on preschool in general and the focused professional development provided by area education agency staff on program standards, curriculum, and instruction. The percent of children proficient in beginning sounds also has increased statewide.

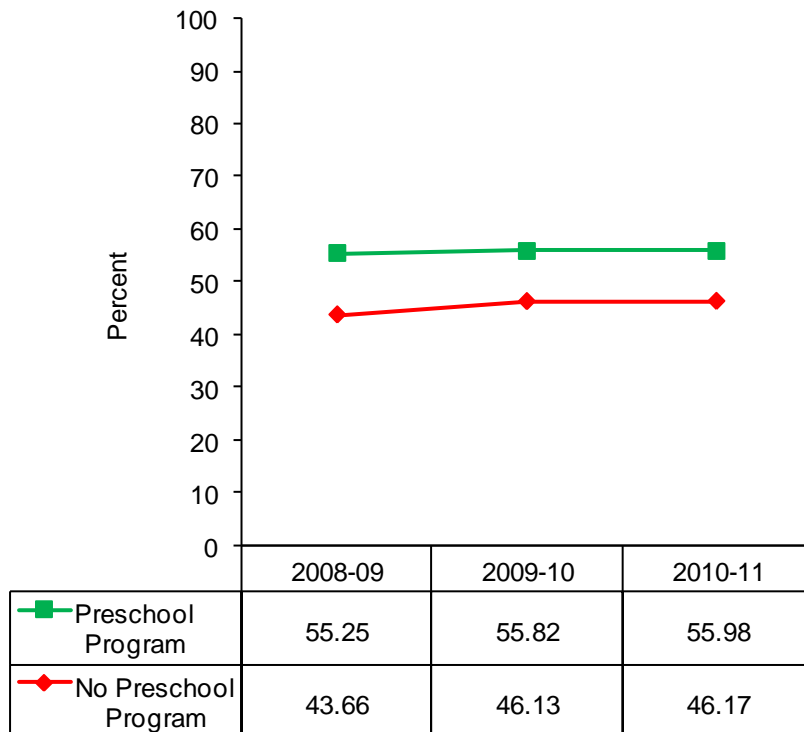
**Figure 3.** Percent of Children Attending Statewide Voluntary Preschool Entering Kindergarten and Proficiency in Identifying Beginning Sounds Using DIBELS Assessment Measure.



Data Source. Project Easier, Iowa Department of Education, 2010-2011.

The impact of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program is greater for children in poverty (eligible for free or reduced meals). As seen in Figure 4, fewer kindergarten students in poverty without a preschool experience were proficient in naming beginning sounds than students who attended the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. The percent of students in poverty that are proficient appears to be declining while the percent proficient for those attending the preschool program is increasing. Also, the last three years of data shows the difference of proficiency for children in poverty and the impact of the quality Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program

**Figure 4.** Percent of Children in Poverty Entering Kindergarten Proficient in Identifying Beginning Sounds Using DIBELS Assessment Measure.



Data Source. Project Easier, Iowa Department of Education, 2010-2011.

### Report of Preschool Participation

Districts reported the number of children 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, 36,327 children entered kindergarten. Districts indicated that based on parent report, 24,197 children 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: Ages 3 to 5 Training. The impact of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds established in 2007-2008, is evident. Ongoing efforts to support the alignment of assessment, curriculum, and instruction will support 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.