

Frequently Asked Questions

Communication

What year should we expect the Family Conversation to be required statewide?

It is not yet known when the Family Conversation will be required statewide. The legislature and State Board of Education will make that determination. To support school districts who want to begin planning for implementation, ODE and DELC are holding a yearly Informational Webinar in October to prospective districts interested in partnering with the Departments to implement the Family Conversation. Districts that indicate interest will be added to a communication listserv and will be invited to an Orientation meeting held in February each year.

How will districts learn about the requirements once it is required statewide?

There are several ways ODE/DELC communicate to districts about the Family Conversation.

1. Assessment and Accountability listserv that is sent once per month to all that subscribe and can also be found on ODE's Student Assessment webpage.
2. During monthly District Test Coordinator meetings.

How will families learn about their school's participation?

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) will provide participating schools with sample invitations and letters that can be customized and sent to families. These templates can be used for any kindergarten transition activity. Districts and schools are encouraged to begin sharing information with families in early spring, especially during kindergarten transition events. Since the Family Conversation takes place at the beginning of the school year, early and consistent communication is key.

In addition, ODE and (DELC) are partnering with early learning and care organizations to raise awareness and promote the Early Learning Transition Check-In across Oregon communities.

Data:

How will educators use the information from the Family Conversation?

Educators can use this information to build strong relationships with each child and their family, fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom. It can inform classroom management, curriculum, and instructional approaches to honor each student's strengths and needs. Additionally, educators can connect families with valuable resources to support their child's success.

How will the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) use information collected during the Family Conversation?

ODE and DELC will use the information to better understand families' strengths, experiences and needs. They will also inform the state's education programs, policies, and funding. The information may also be used to answer these research questions:

What early learning supports, services, and systems do families of entering kindergarteners in Oregon value?

- Who's accessing which systems?

- How have these systems impacted families and children?
- Which systems are not available or accessible to which families?
- What are the reasons that certain systems are not available or accessible to certain families?

What are the strengths, experiences, and needs for entering kindergarteners?

Is there any data around attendance being higher in the schools/districts that are a part of this process?

The Family Conversation is not designed to directly impact attendance rates. It is instead designed to improve educator-family relationships and students’ sense of belonging. These improvements may indirectly impact attendance, but such associations have not yet been explored.

Will there be academic measures included in the Early Learning Transition Check-In?

Academic measures similar to the OKA will not be part of the Early Learning Transition Check-In at this time.

Important Contextual Information

What are the reasons for the redesign of Oregon’s Kindergarten Assessment (OKA)?

Established in 2013, the original OKA received feedback from families and educators that it was not culturally responsive and was potentially harmful to children and families in communities marginalized by Oregon’s educational system. Concerns included a lack of bias training for staff and questions about its purpose and redundancy with existing assessments.

The redesigned tool will center family voices, support anti-racist practices, and take a whole-child approach, creating a safe and supportive environment for young children and families.

**The whole-child approach fosters all areas of children’s development and learning. It includes social–emotional and cognitive skills, literacy, math, and science understanding. This approach offers a powerful, supportive approach as preschool children transition to kindergarten.*

How is the state including community voice in this redesign?

The Early Learning Transition Check-In prioritizes family and community input while implementing anti-racist assessment practices.

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) are working to ensure the redesigned tool is respectful, accessible, and meaningful for all families—especially those historically marginalized. An advisory panel of early educators, kindergarten teachers, system partners, and researchers is guiding the redesign.

Community Engagement & Feedback

- Family & Educator Feedback Sessions (led by Oregon’s Kitchen Table) shaped improvements to the process and questions. Sessions included in-person and virtual options, with multilingual facilitation, food, and childcare.

- Twelve Community Engagement Opportunities (February 2024) gathered input from early learning and culturally specific groups to ensure the system meet needs of diverse communities.