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State: Half of Kentucky's kindergartners not ready for school in 2015

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By Antoinette Konz **CONNECT**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (WDRB) -- Half of state's kindergartners did not enter the 2015-16 school year prepared to learn the reading and math skills they are expected to master, according to data released Wednesday by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Fifty percent of students who entered kindergarten in the fall of 2015 were considered "not ready," according to a statewide readiness screening administered by teachers to 46,789 kindergartners in all 173 school districts.

In Jefferson County Public Schools, just 47.9 percent of students entered kindergarten with the skills considered necessary to start school, down from 52 percent last year.

"Unfortunately, not all children have the same opportunities to develop and learn before they enter school," said Kentucky Education Commissioner Stephen Pruitt. "The reality is that poverty has a big impact on education in Kentucky. It is a reality that puts children at a disadvantage when they enter school and one that we must address from day one."

This is the third year that the Kindergarten Readiness Screener has been given statewide to all incoming kindergarten students. Last year, 50 percent were deemed ready statewide, compared to 51 percent in 2013.

JCPS Superintendent Donna Hargens said when fewer than half of the children entering school have the skills they need, "we have to step up as a community to intervene early."

In Jefferson County, data shows that students who attended kindergarten readiness camps showed dramatic improvements in kindergarten readiness scores. Those camps -- expanded from one school site to three locations serving 300 students this summer -- were made possible by a grant from C.E. & S. Foundation.

At the beginning of the summer camp, pre-assessments showed that 51 percent of the children were kindergarten ready. Post-assessments completed on the same group of students indicated that kindergarten readiness had increased to 73 percent by the end of the four-week camp, said Bonnie Hackbarth, a spokeswoman for JCPS.

"The pre-kindergarten camps were extraordinarily successful for the incoming kindergartners who attended regularly and achieved results surpassing our year-three goals in the very first year of expansion," Hargens said in a statement.

Hargens said the district's plan is to expand the program to 1,000 students within three years so "we can turn these declining kindergarten readiness numbers around and give students a much better start in reaching the goal that all students graduate prepared, empowered, and inspired to reach their full potential and contribute as thoughtful, responsible citizens of our diverse, shared world."

The results in kindergarten readiness in JCPS varies from school to school.

At Minors Lane Elementary, only 5 percent were ready, down from 14 last year; compared to 84 percent at Greathouse/Shryock and Stopher elementary schools and 83 percent at Bloom Elementary.

Nearly 64 percent of the students entering kindergarten statewide this year qualified for free- and reduced-price meals, state officials told members of the Kentucky Board of Education on Wednesday.

Countless research has shown that a student's ability to read and adequately comprehend by the time he or she exits primary school is a key indicator of future educational success, such as whether the student will be ready for college or a career upon graduating high school.

"We cannot let the opportunity gap determine a student's future," Pruitt said. "That's why this

data is so important. It provides kindergarten teachers with key information early in the school year that they can use to guide instruction and provide targeted support and interventions aimed at closing learning gaps before they have a chance to widen."

Officials say the assessment, called BRIGANCE, provides teachers with key information early in the school year that they can use to guide instruction to meet the individual needs of all students.

Among other things, students are asked their name and age, to recite the alphabet and count to 30. Their answers are measured in five areas: physical well-being, language, cognitive skills, self-help and social-emotional skills.

Parents were also asked to fill out a survey about what type of setting the child was in the year before starting kindergarten.

Percentage of JCPS kindergartners who were not ready for school (by school):

- **Alex Kennedy:** 62 percent not ready
- **Atkinson:** 72.9 percent not ready
- **Auburndale:** 60.4 percent not ready
- **Audubon:** 28.6 percent not ready
- **Bates:** 41 percent not ready
- **Blake:** 74.3 percent not ready
- **Bloom:** 17.2 percent not ready
- **Bowen:** 38.8 percent not ready
- **Brandeis:** 10.5 percent not ready
- **Breckinridge/Franklin:** 64.6 percent not ready
- **Brown School:** 25 percent not ready
- **Byck:** 52.7 percent not ready
- **Camp Taylor:** 66.7 percent not ready
- **Cane Run:** 64.8 percent not ready
- **Carter:** 41 percent not ready
- **Chancey:** 37.3 percent not ready
- **Chenoweth:** 34.4 percent not ready
- **Cochran:** 55.8 percent not ready
- **Cochrane:** 56.9 percent not ready
- **Coleridge-Taylor:** 27.4 percent not ready
- **Coral Ridge:** 75.3 percent not ready
- **Crums Lane:** 61.8 percent not ready
- **Dixie:** 70.8 percent not ready
- **Dunn:** 31.9 percent not ready
- **Eisenhower:** 48.9 percent not ready
- **Engelhard:** 82.3 percent not ready
- **Fairdale:** 72 percent not ready
- **Farmer:** 42.7 percent not ready
- **Fern Creek:** 53.5 percent not ready
- **Field:** 34.7 percent not ready
- **Foster:** 35.8 percent not ready
- **Frayser:** 68.1 percent not ready
- **Gilmore Lane:** 62.3 percent not ready
- **Goldsmith:** 61.7 percent not ready
- **Greathouse/Shryock:** 16.1 percent not ready
- **Greenwood:** 67.1 percent not ready
- **Gutermuth:** 75.4 percent not ready
- **Hartstern:** 58.9 percent not ready
- **Hawthorne:** 54.1 percent not ready
- **Hazelwood:** 70.8 percent not ready
- **Hite:** 29.7 percent not ready
- **Indian Trail:** 75.6 percent not ready
- **Jacob:** 59.1 percent not ready
- **Jeffersontown:** 47 percent not ready
- **Johnsontown Road:** 57.4 percent not ready
- **Kennedy (Montessori):** 35 percent not ready
- **Kenwood:** 75.2 percent not ready
- **Kerrick:** 55.6 percent not ready
- **King:** 57 percent not ready
- **Klondike:** 60.3 percent not ready
- **Laukhau:** 59.2 percent not ready

- **Layne:** 46.8 percent not ready
- **Lincoln:** 24.1 percent not ready
- **Lowe:** 27.4 percent not ready
- **Luhr:** 49.4 percent not ready
- **Maupin:** 62.1 percent not ready
- **Mcferran:** 45.8 percent not ready
- **Medora:** 54.2 percent not ready
- **Middletown:** 40.2 percent not ready
- **Mill Creek:** 48.6 percent not ready
- **Minors Lane:** 94.6 percent not ready
- **Norton:** 24.6 percent not ready
- **Okolona:** 82.4 percent not ready
- **Portland:** 72 percent not ready
- **Price:** 49.3 percent not ready
- **Rangeland:** 55 percent not ready
- **Roosevelt-Perry:** 84.7 percent not ready
- **Rutherford:** 80.3 percent not ready
- **Sanders:** 62.7 percent not ready
- **Schaffner:** 38.6 percent not ready
- **Semple:** 70 percent not ready
- **Shacklette:** 67.2 percent not ready
- **Shelby:** 63.2 percent not ready
- **Slaughter:** 84 percent not ready
- **Smyrna:** 50.5 percent not ready
- **St. Matthews:** 43.5 percent not ready
- **Stonestreet:** 52.2 percent not ready
- **Stopher:** 15.3 percent not ready
- **Trunnell:** 70.1 percent not ready
- **Tully:** 21.2 percent not ready
- **Watson Lane:** 72.1 percent not ready
- **Watterson:** 73.1 percent not ready
- **Wellington:** 64.9 percent not ready
- **Wheatley:** 64.3 percent not ready
- **Wheeler:** 24.3 percent not ready
- **Wilder:** 38.9 percent not ready
- **Wilkerson:** 63.9 percent not ready
- **Wilt:** 39.2 percent not ready
- **Young:** 69 percent not ready
- **Zachary Taylor:** 60.8 percent not ready

This story will be updated.

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