

# New Mexico Kindergarten Teachers' Use of Kindergarten Entry Assessment Data

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**How are New Mexico's kindergarten teachers using data collected through its statewide kindergarten entry assessment?**

The Kindergarten Observation Tool (KOT), an observation-based assessment tool designed for use during the first 30 instructional days of kindergarten, was implemented across New Mexico in fall of 2016 as the states' kindergarten entry assessment (KEA).<sup>1</sup> After KOT administration ended, the Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation (CSAI) helped to develop and administer a survey aimed to understanding how New Mexico kindergarten teachers are using data collected through the KOT. This update provides information about the survey that was administered, along with a summary of its key findings.

## New Mexico KOT Data Use Survey

The survey was provided to 1,447 teachers across the state in December 2016. The survey aimed to gather information from New Mexico kindergarten teachers who administered the KOT in fall of 2016. The questions focused around three main topics:

1. How kindergarten teachers are using KOT data;
2. How kindergarten teachers perceive the impact of concurrent assessment initiatives on KOT administration; and
3. How kindergarten teachers are communicating about KOT results with families.

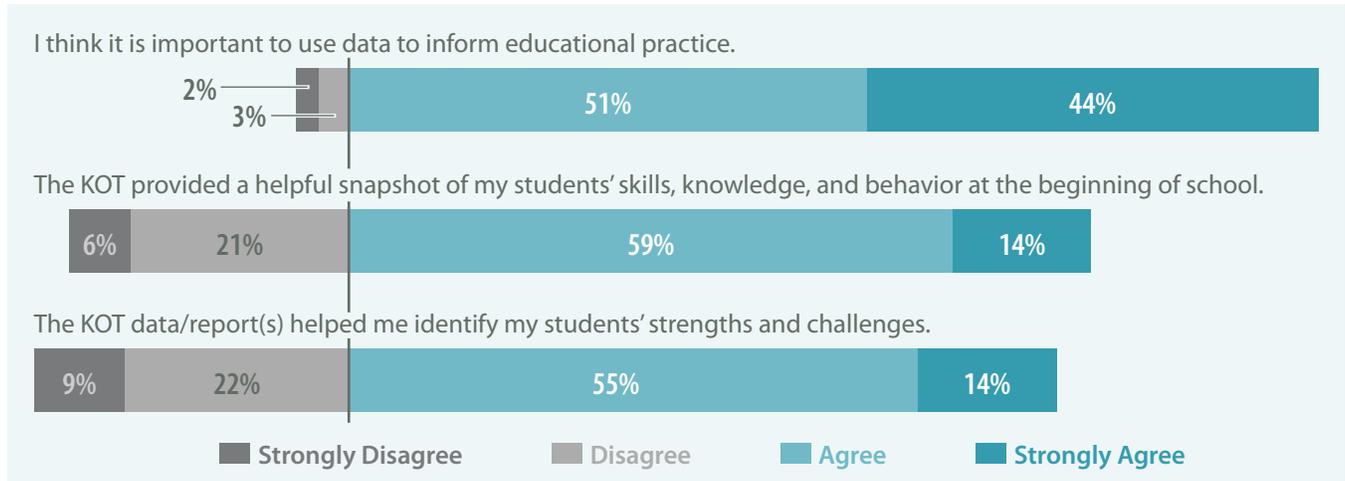
During the three weeks in which the survey was open, 371 teachers responded (all responses were recorded anonymously), although teachers did not respond to every question on the survey. Approximately 20 percent of these teachers had participated in early stages of KOT development, including a 2014 pilot and a 2015 field test. Of the respondents, approximately 51 percent had been teaching kindergarten for more than six years.

<sup>1</sup> For more information about KOT development, visit the [summary page on New Mexico](#) within the Pre-K/K assessment tab of the State of the States site feature on [www.csai-online.org](http://www.csai-online.org). Also see [PED's KOT website](#).

### Opinions About Data Use

The majority of responding teachers agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to use data to inform instructional practice (95%); that the KOT provided a helpful snapshot of students' skills, knowledge, and behavior at the beginning of school (73%); and that the KOT data/report(s) helped them to identify students' strengths and challenges (69%). See Figure 1 for details.

Figure 1. Teachers' Opinions Regarding Data Use and the Utility of KOT Data/Report(s)

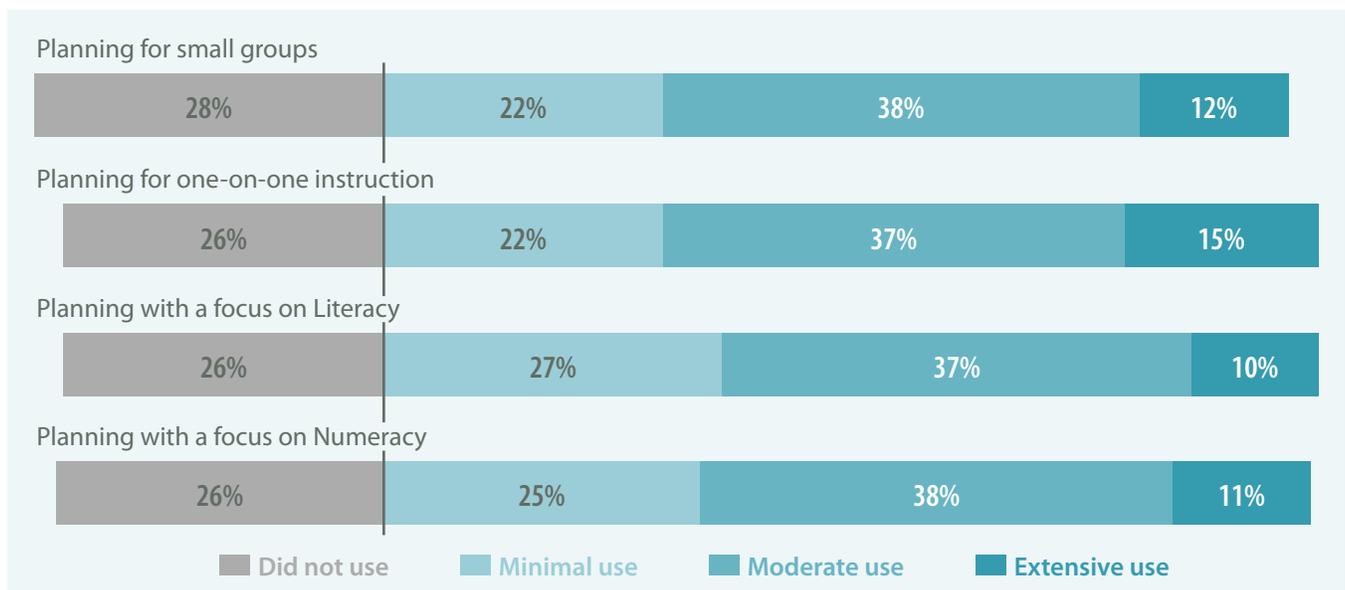


Total responding teachers: 347

### Use of KOT Data<sup>2</sup>

When asked about their use of KEA data in instructional practices, almost half of teachers indicated a moderate or extensive use of KOT data in planning for small groups (50%), planning for one-on-one instruction (52%), planning with a focus on Literacy (47%), and planning with a focus on Numeracy<sup>3</sup> (49%).

Figure 2. Teachers' Use of KOT Data in Specific Contexts



Total responding teachers: 337

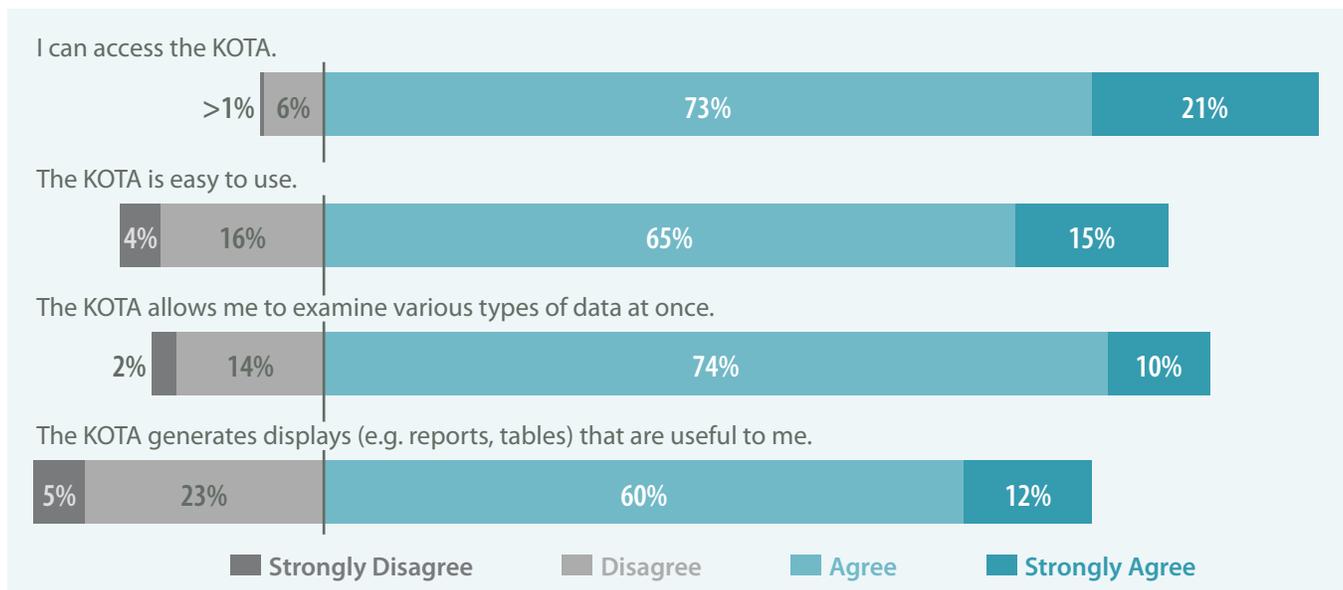
<sup>2</sup> The survey included a list of 17 different contexts; the four contexts highlighted here represent the contexts in which teachers used KOT data to a relatively greater extent.

<sup>3</sup> Literacy and Numeracy are two of the six learning domains represented on the KOT; in general, teachers did not report using KOT data to the same extent for planning with a focus on the other four domains.

## Kindergarten Observation Tool Application (KOTA)

The KOTA is an interactive, online application that has been developed to allow teachers to record and submit KOT observations and ratings. The KOTA can be accessed via any web-enabled device (e.g., tablets, laptops, cell phones) using a secure login. All data submitted via the KOTA is synced automatically to the database and data is attached to each child's unique ID. Teachers, school staff, and district administrators can also access various KOT reports via the KOTA system, including reports for families. The majority of responding teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the KOTA was easy to access (94%), was easy to use (80%), allowed them to examine various types of data at once (84%), and generated useful displays (e.g., reports, tables) (72%).

Figure 3. *Teachers' Impressions Regarding the KOTA*

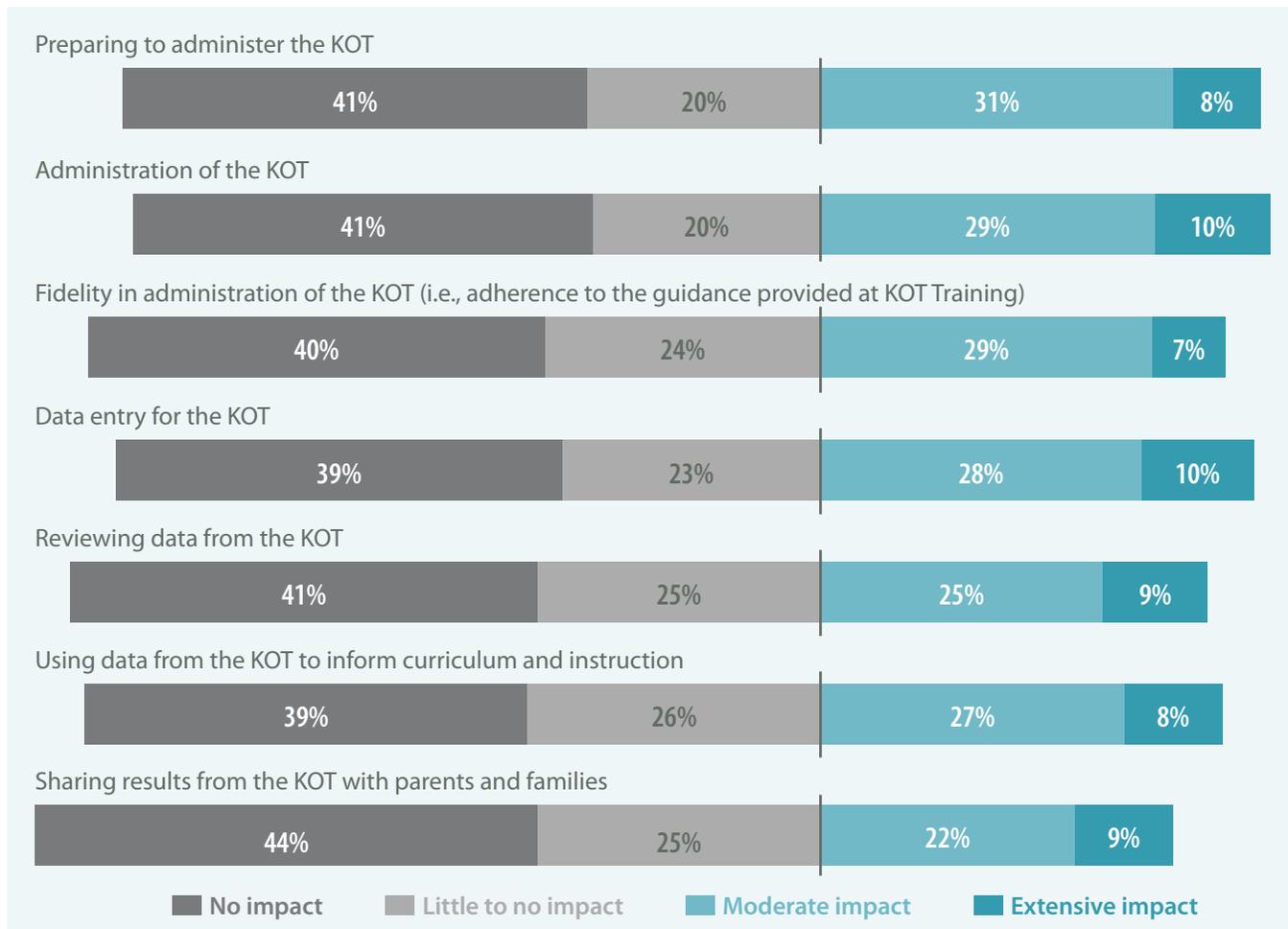


Total responding teachers: 332

## Effect of Concurrent Curriculum and Assessment Initiatives

New Mexico implemented a new kindergarten English language arts (ELA) curriculum and a new formative assessment initiative the same year it implemented the KOT statewide. The following questions asked teachers about the impact of this dual implementation. The majority of responding teachers indicated that two concurrent curriculum and assessment initiatives—Istation<sup>5</sup> and a new English language arts (ELA) curriculum<sup>6</sup>—had little to no impact on their administration of the KOT in specific contexts.

Figure 4. *Impact of Implementation of Istation on KOT Administration*

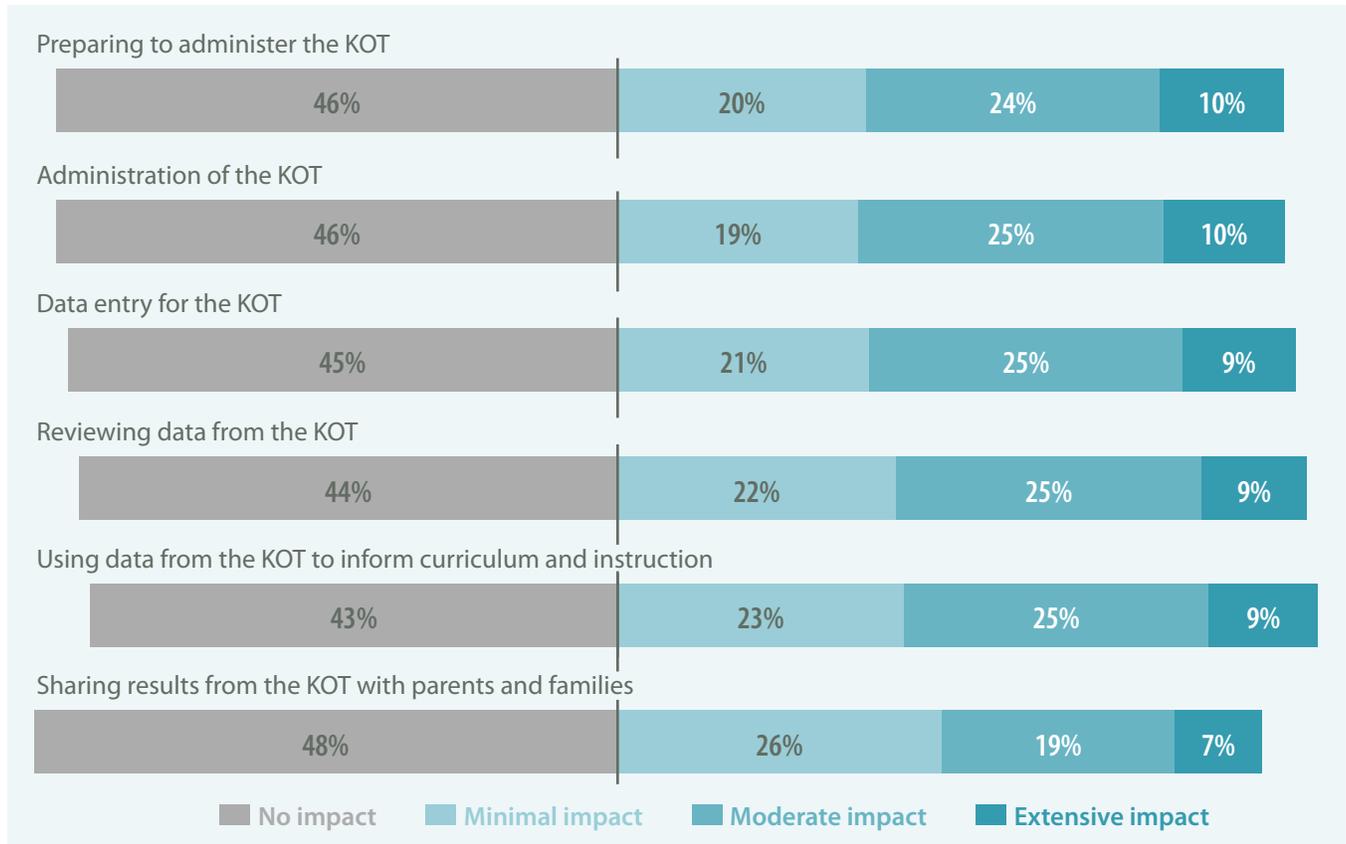


Total responding teachers: 326

<sup>5</sup> Istation provides New Mexico district and charter schools with literacy-focused formative assessments for use with students in kindergarten through third grade. Like the KOT, it was implemented statewide in Fall 2016. For more information, visit <http://www.istation.com/newmexico>.

<sup>6</sup> Many districts across New Mexico instituted a new ELA curriculum in Fall 2016.

Figure 5 *Impact of Implementation of New ELA Curriculum on KOT Administration*

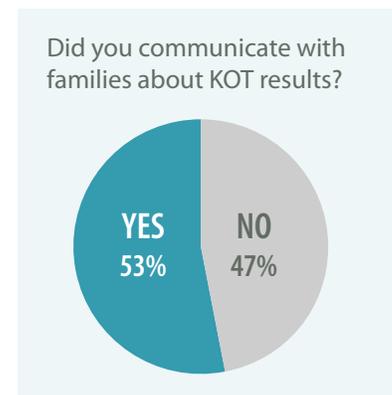


Total responding teachers: 326

### Teachers' Approaches to Communicating with Families about KOT Results

One survey question focused on teachers' communication with families about KOT results. Approximately half of teachers who responded to this survey question (53%) indicated that they communicated with families about KOT results.

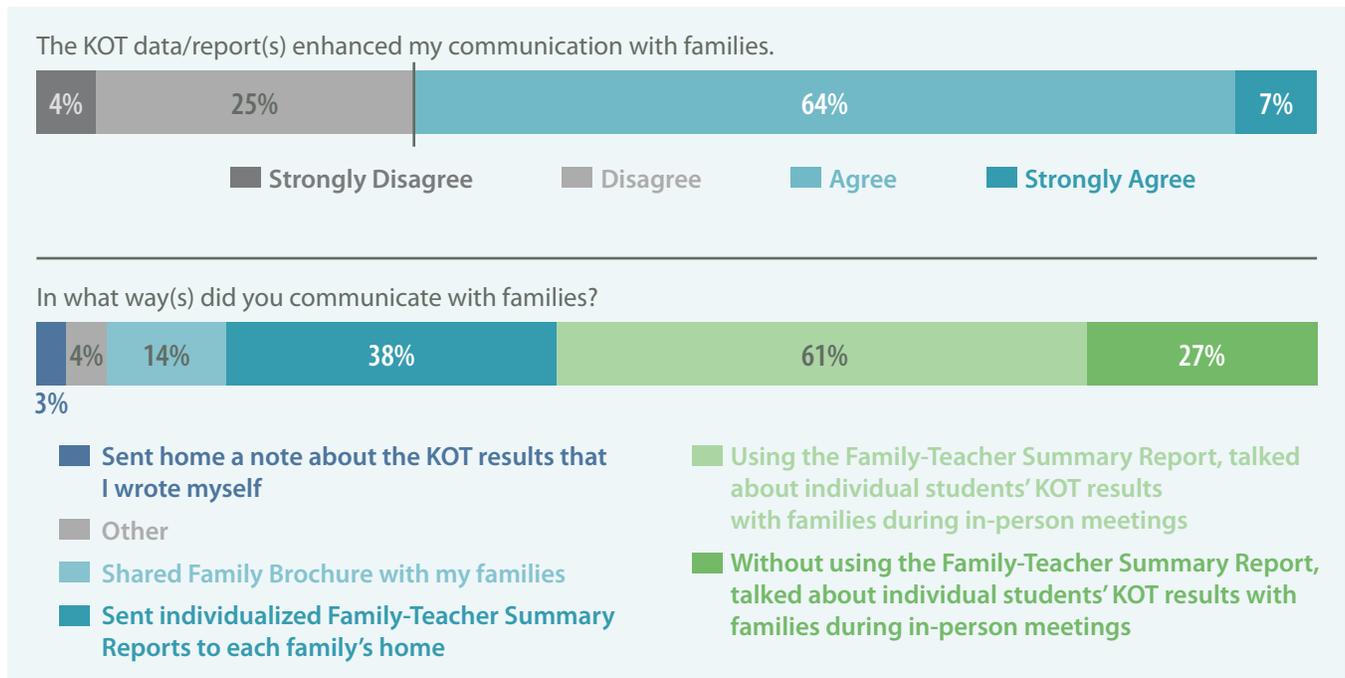
Of the teachers who communicated with families, almost three-quarters (71%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the KOT data/report(s) enhanced their communication with families. The majority of responding teachers (61%) indicated that they communicated with families about KOT results during in-person meetings/conferences, using the Family-Teacher Summary Report.<sup>7</sup>



Total responding teachers: 331

<sup>7</sup> The Family-Teacher Summary Report is a version of the Individual Student Report. It is specifically designed for teachers to use in communicating with families about KOT results, and it provides space for teachers to add notes about their observations of students, as well as space to add family input.

Figure 6 *Impact of Implementation of New ELA Curriculum on KOT Administration*



Total responding teachers: 173 of the 174 that communicated with families about the KOT results

## Open-Ended Response Analysis

Teachers had the option of responding to an open-ended question to outline their use of KOT data. Common themes that emerged from the set of open-ended responses include:

- Teachers believe that the KOT helps them better understand what their students know and can do.
- Many teachers expressed concerns about the time that completing KOT data collection takes. However, teachers recognize that their concerns about time can be attributed to the fact that the KOT is a new assessment and is unfamiliar to them.
- Teachers feel like they did not use KOT data as strategically as they could have and see room to grow in subsequent years.
- Teachers see some redundancy between the KOT and other district-required assessments.

In addition to these themes, many teachers saw the KOT as an assessment that showed student growth throughout the kindergarten year. This is notable because the KOT was designed as a point-in-time assessment (at kindergarten entry), and was not designed to be a metric of growth over time. The New Mexico Public Education Department's KOT website clearly states the purpose of the assessment:



**“The purpose of the KOT is to gather information about what children know and can do at the time of kindergarten entry. The KOT will serve as a ‘bridge’ between preschool and grade 1.”**

### Considerations for States with KEAs

The results of this survey can be used to inform states' decisions about how best to provide support and professional development opportunities to kindergarten teachers.

Analysis of the open-ended responses provides strong evidence that, in general, teachers would benefit from additional opportunities to:

- ◆ Build their assessment literacy and understanding of the purpose of KEAs;
- ◆ Learn strategies for using KEA data to improve instruction and curriculum; and
- ◆ Participate in collaborative experiences, such as structured meetings or focus groups, where they could discuss and reconcile concerns about assessment time and the challenges of balancing the demands of multiple assessment requirements at the state and local levels.

Additional ways that schools, districts, and the state can support teachers in using KEA data more effectively include:

- ◆ Establishing a culture of data use to ensure that data-based decisions are made frequently, consistently, and appropriately;
- ◆ Creating an overall plan for KEA data that includes a common vision and shared goals;
- ◆ Providing ongoing data leadership at the school and district levels that serves as a resource for educators; and
- ◆ Encouraging data use by investing in regular professional development and structured time for collaboration, reviewing data, and discussing data.;

KEAs can bring together a combination of data and anecdotal information about students, how they learn, and their educational environments. Through continued work with educators, states can help reduce barriers to data use and ensure that educators are using and communicating valuable information about their students' learning.



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