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**Statewide Group Calls for Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS)
to Assess Kindergarten Readiness**

KIDS Will Help Illinois Educators Individualize Instruction to Promote Future Academic Success

Chicago, IL – A statewide working group, convened by the Illinois State Board of Education, issued recommendations for creating a statewide, research-based kindergarten assessment process to provide schools and educational leaders with age-appropriate information about children’s developing knowledge and skills. The Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) will help identify gaps in school readiness, guide classroom instruction, and provide information to schools, districts and the state to support decision-making about resource allocations.

“Many children enter kindergarten with gaps in development that prevent them from thriving in school,” said Samuel J. Meisels, President of the Erikson Institute, and one of the co-chairs of the Kindergarten Readiness Stakeholder Committee. “Illinois, like many states, lacks a comprehensive, statewide assessment process for kindergartners that gives a deep picture of children’s strengths and needs across communities. Districts in the state use different assessment tools, implementing them at different times and for different purposes.

“As a result, we do not have a commonly defined baseline for evaluating children’s progress in kindergarten and we have no data which, collected on an ongoing basis, can inform classroom instruction or help improve school readiness statewide.”

Robin Steans, Executive Director of Advance Illinois, and one of the committee co-chairs, says that the assessment process is designed to measure a child’s abilities across multiple domains — cognitive, physical, developmental, social and emotional. “This will enable educators and families to identify a child’s strengths and needs early, help decision-makers target resources, and facilitate better alignment of early childhood and K–12 systems.”

The committee recommended that the State Board of Education undertake a voluntary pilot of the assessment in select Illinois school districts during the 2012-13 school year before rolling it out across the state. While the committee’s scope did not include selecting a specific assessment instrument, it unanimously agreed on a set of goals and priorities for the State Board of Education to use in implementing the assessment process, including:

- promoting the success of every child by providing key adults—family members and teachers alike—with a clear picture of a child’s developing strengths across multiple domains;
- guiding professional development for teachers from early childhood through third grade; and
- supporting alignment of early childhood and elementary school systems.

States such as Maryland and Colorado have put similar data sets to work in helping identify service gaps for young children, supporting teachers in how to best address early learners' development, and gauging effectiveness of early childhood programs.

"We know that establishing and implementing effective learning programs and assessment processes – for infants, preschoolers *and* kindergartners – that use data to improve learning outcomes is a smart investment of public funds, one that has a much higher economic rate of return than later remediation," said Diana Rauner, President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, and another of the group's co-chairs. "By gathering a clear picture of what Illinois children know and what they can do as they enter school, we can more effectively create the integrated learning system our children need to be successful in school and life."

"Adequately assessing whether Illinois's kindergartners have the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in school will involve more than administering a single assessment. What is required is a comprehensive strategy, which also includes giving teachers information so they can meet their student's needs," added Sara Slaughter, Education Program Director of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

"We are grateful for the Kindergarten Readiness Stakeholder Committee's hard work and thoughtful recommendations," State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch said. "Rather than relying on a one-time snapshot, we look forward to developing an assessment system that uses multiple measures. This type of data will support parents and educators as children enter kindergarten and create a strong foundation for growth."

The Kindergarten Readiness Stakeholder Committee, comprised of school administrators, teachers, university faculty, early childhood experts, researchers and education advocates, and funded by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation was commissioned by Illinois State Board of Education Superintendent Chris Koch in early 2010. The group's work and research over the course of 14 months informed recommendations presented in the final report.

The full report can be found on any of the partner organization websites.

Advance Illinois	www.advanceillinois.org/kids
Erikson Institute	http://www.erikson.edu/default/news/news.aspx?c=4880
Robert R. McCormick Foundation	www.mccormickfoundation.org
Ounce of Prevention Fund	www.ounceofprevention.org

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