



STATE OF THE STATES POLICY SNAPSHOT:

STATE EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT POLICIES

By Diane Schilder and Megan Carolan

March 2014

Introduction: Why Assessment is Important for Improving Child Outcomes

Early childhood stakeholders in state departments of education are interested in knowing what child assessment measures are being used in state-funded pre-kindergarten and in kindergarten classrooms. To address this need, the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) performed a secondary analysis of data in the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) State of Preschool Yearbook.

In recent years, State Education Agencies (SEAs) and other early childhood stakeholders have focused increased attention on the role of a comprehensive early childhood assessment system as one policy lever to improve young children's earliest learning experiences. The National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force recommends that early education leaders, including those in SEAs, support the development and implementation of a comprehensive, standards-based assessment system to assure quality. According to the Task Force, these systems should be designed to: (a) inform state policy decisions, investments, and improvement efforts for early education program curriculum, assessments, and program improvement efforts, and should include (b) standards-based assessments of children's development and learning.¹ In other words, it is important for SEAs to support the use of developmentally appropriate and valid child assessment data and processes that can inform ongoing decisions about teaching and child learning.² Currently no state in the nation has a complete

¹ National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, 2007

² Fowler, Bloom, Talan, Beneke, & Kelton, 2008

comprehensive assessment system but many states are in the process of developing and implementing such systems.

Assessment of learning and development during the pre-K and Kindergarten years can provide administrators, teachers, and parents with information to target learning to the developmental and academic needs of children. Information about the status of state policies regarding pre-K and Kindergarten assessments can inform how early childhood stakeholders, including those in SEAs, develop or revise their comprehensive early childhood assessment systems.

What is child assessment and how are assessment data collected and used?

Assessment is the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information. Evidence is an outward sign or indication of the child's development or learning.³

Assessment data can provide information for and about children and their parents, teachers, and programs. Specifically, child assessment can be used to: 1) Identify children who may be in need of specialized services; 2) Plan instruction for individuals and groups of children; 3) Identify program improvement and staff development needs; and 4) Evaluate how well a program is meeting goals for children.⁴ As such, child assessment data can inform policy, teaching practice, and a continuous cycle of program improvement.

The purpose of the child assessment data collection and the audience(s) should be considered in determining who collects the data. For example, if the legislature wants to know whether money is well spent, then evaluations might independently collect data from a sample of children. By contrast, if teachers want to screen children, plan instruction or identify professional development needs, it is important that teachers with input from parents assess all students.

Finally, there are several types of assessments available and each type has a specific purpose. Some assessments are more appropriate for large-scale evaluations of programs and other assessments are more appropriate measures to assess children in a classroom to inform instruction. Standardized assessments that are normed or are based on specific criteria tend to be used to evaluate programs because they allow for a fair comparison among individual or groups of children. To be consistent, these assessments require data collectors to follow a strict protocol and each must attend formal training. However, these assessments do not necessarily provide the level of detail needed to use for planning instruction or for monitoring individual growth. Less formal assessments often provide the teacher with more information about the child in a timelier manner to guide instruction⁵.

³ Riley-Ayers, 2012

⁴ Epstein, Schweinhart, DeBruin-Parecki, & Robin, 2004

⁵ Ayers, Stevenson-Boyd, & Frede, 2007

This brief provides information about child assessments that states require of pre-K and Kindergarten providers. The brief is based on secondary analysis of data collected in the State of Preschool Yearbook and presents a snapshot of responses to questions about child assessment. The information is intended to help states learn from other states as they plan to implement new assessments (e.g. kindergarten entry assessments) and to implement comprehensive early childhood assessment systems.

Methods in Brief

For this brief, we performed secondary analyses of data collected through the State of Preschool Yearbook. The annual Yearbook⁶ tracks state trends on access and resources of state-funded preschool programs, information about access to kindergarten, and child outcome measures. We analyzed data collected in 2012 regarding state policies on early childhood assessment. This brief reports on state-funded pre-K programs and does not include data on either federally-funded programs, such as Head Start, or locally-funded pre-K programs, which have their own assessment requirements. The textbox below, “Methods,” describes the methodology of the survey in more detail.

States reported the following:

- State policies on access to pre-K and Kindergarten
- State policies regarding child assessments including whether specific child assessments are required by the state and if so, whether the state has requirements about the timing of the assessments
- State policies and information about how child assessment information is used

METHODS

To determine the child assessment instruments that states require or encourage pre-K providers and Kindergarten classrooms to use, we performed secondary analysis of data from the State of Preschool Yearbook and reviewed state websites and documents that have been published since the Yearbook was released. Data in the Yearbook were collected through surveys of state preschool administrators, with follow up interviews and reviews of documents as needed. In the summer of 2012, NIEER staff contacted state preschool administrators and asked them to complete a survey asking for information for the most recently completed program year. In 2012, data were collected using a web-based survey that included the previous year’s data and asked the administrators to verify and update the responses for the 2012 program year.

After the surveys were completed, staff followed up with state administrators to clarify any questions about their responses and major changes from the previous year. States that do not have pre-K programs are not included in the State of Preschool Yearbook data collection⁷.

CEELO staff asked early childhood specialist in state departments of education in these states to answer

⁶ Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012

⁷ For a full explanation of the specific methodology used in collecting all data, please see the Methodology section of the 2012 report online at http://www.nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2012_methodology.pdf.

the same State of Preschool Yearbook questions about Kindergarten assessments that states with pre-K programs had answered. In addition to these sources, CEELo staff collected existing data from state websites about pre-K and Kindergarten early childhood assessments. This additional data is presented in the state descriptions. Respondents were asked to review and verify all of the data from their state survey, as well as the narrative about their program.

The primary source of information for this brief are selected questions that ask respondents to list specific assessment tools for children's learning and development that are required for use in the state prekindergarten program and a question that asks what assessments are required for children attending Kindergarten. Questions about child assessments and the purposes of the assessments were open-response options and as such, the information that is summarized are based on the information provided by respondents. An additional question asks respondents about the how pre-K assessment information is used by the state.

FINDINGS

State-funded pre-K and Kindergarten programs served a significant number of young children. In 2012, 40 states and the District of Columbia offered one or more state pre-K programs, serving over 1.3 million children.⁸ In 2012, 10 states and the District of Columbia required full-day publicly funded Kindergarten, 21 states required districts to offer part-day Kindergarten at no charge to parents, 13 states allowed districts to charge families tuition for part of the Kindergarten day, and six states had no state statute requiring any type of kindergarten program.⁹ States utilize a variety of tools and techniques in assessing children's learning in these programs.

Most States Require Pre-K Programs to Collect Child Assessment Data. In 2012, most states required pre-K programs to collect child assessment data, but some states allowed programs and localities to decide both when to assess children and what assessments to conduct. Forty-three state-funded pre-K programs required assessments of children attending the programs, but purposes of assessments varied. Table 1 indicates common applications of pre-K assessment data, as reported by state program administrators.

As of 2012, most states reported using pre-K child assessment data to improve practice rather than to evaluate programs or teachers. The use of child assessment data for improvement is consistent with the National Academy of Sciences' recommendations about the use of data as part of a comprehensive assessment system.

⁸ Total program enrollment was 1,332,66

⁹ Children's Defense Fund, 2013

Early childhood specialists in state departments of education responded to an open-ended question asking the purpose of the assessments. The most common purpose of requiring child assessments (reported by 35 programs) was to inform professional development needs. The next most common purpose was to document child or program outcomes (34 programs).¹⁰ While 32 programs stated that the data were used to inform curriculum, few states specifically stated that the information was used to individualize instruction to meet children’s needs. Moreover, state education agencies reported that 17 pre-k programs used child assessment data to measure kindergarten readiness at some time during the pre-k year.

Despite increased federal attention on evaluating teacher performance using child assessment data, only two programs were using pre-K assessment data for teacher evaluation purposes in 2012. It is important to note that some programs collect data for multiple purposes and some state programs reported collecting an array of data using different instruments for differing purposes.

Table 1: Application of Pre-K Assessment Data

How Pre-K Assessment Data Are Used	Number of programs
Guide teacher training, professional development, or technical assistance	35
Track child and program level outcomes over time	34
Make adjustments to curricula	32
Provide a measure of kindergarten readiness	17
Make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program	16
Other uses	7
Make decisions regarding a child’s enrollment in kindergarten	6
Identify programs for corrective action or sanctions	5
Make funding decisions about programs or grantees	5
Evaluate teacher performance	2

States gave significant local control in choosing assessment tools. Thirty-four state pre-K programs were required to assess child outcomes but nineteen states allowed programs to choose the measures or allowed locally-designed measures rather than strictly dictating a set tool. Nine states provided a list of approved assessment options and allows local programs to select from the list.

The most common assessment instruments that were either required or encouraged to be used assessed multiple domains including socio-emotional, language and literacy, numeracy, and fine and

¹⁰ It is important to note that special education preschool programs use assessments to screen children for disabilities. This was not reported separately by respondents but we presume it is included in the category of “tracking child outcomes over time.”

gross motor development. The most common measure that was either required or encouraged to be used was Teaching Strategies GOLD (9 programs) followed by Work Sampling System (8 programs). Other measures included High Scope's Child Observation Record (4 programs), and Developing Skills Checklist (DSC), Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), and Creative Curriculum Development Continuum (all indicated by 3 programs). (Creative Curriculum Development Continuum is the older version of the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment.) A complete list of instruments that states encouraged or required pre-k programs to use is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pre-K Assessment Instruments ([Click here Table A1: Domains Addressed in Common Assessment Tools for information on domains covered by each instrument](#))

Instrument (Click on the name for further information)	Number of programs that require or encourage
Teaching Strategies GOLD	9
Work Sampling System (WSS)	8
Child Observation Record (COR)	4
Developing Skills Checklist (DSC)	3
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)	3
Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum	3
Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL)	2
State-developed	2
Language and Emergent Literacy Assessment (LELA)	1
Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT)	1
PreLAS	1
Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screenings (PALS)	1
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)	1
Learning Accomplishment Profile	1
Early Learning Scale	1
Galileo	1
Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and DRDP-Preschool DRDP-K	1
Assessment Evaluation and Programming System Interactive (AEPsi)	1
Other	10

Appendix A provides a guide to the domains addressed in common assessment tools for pre-K and K, which shows that the instruments that are required or encouraged mostly assess early language and literacy and include a mixture of assessments and screening tools. It is important to note that the table lists the broad domains rather than the specific sub-domains. For example, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test assesses receptive vocabulary whereas the DIBELS assesses fluency but both are listed as assessing language and literacy.

Even when states use the same instruments for assessing students, there are many ways these tools can be used. The box below presents descriptions of how states reported using the most commonly reported instrument used in state pre-K assessment – Teaching Strategies GOLD. This is not intended to promote any one tool above another, but rather to explore the real-world implementation of a common tool.

How are states using Teaching Strategies GOLD?¹¹

The most common assessment required or encouraged by state-funded pre-K programs is Teaching Strategies GOLD but the purpose of the assessment varied across states. Arizona, Delaware, Iowa's Shared Visions Preschool Program, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Rhode Island, and both of Vermont's pre-K programs either require Teaching Strategies GOLD or list Teaching Strategies GOLD as an acceptable instrument. The NIEER Yearbook survey asked early childhood specialists in state departments of education to report the types of instruments they used and the purposes. The results are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Uses of Assessment Data in States that use Teaching Strategies Gold¹²

	Arizona	Delaware	Iowa Shared Visions	Nebraska	North Carolina	Rhode Island	Vermont Act 62	Vermont EEI
Guide teacher training, professional development, or technical assistance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Track child and program level outcomes over time	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Make adjustments to curricula	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Make funding decisions about programs or grantees		X						X
Identify programs for corrective action or sanctions		X						
Make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program			X					
Evaluate teacher performance		X						
Provide a measure of kindergarten readiness							X	
Make decisions regarding a child's enrollment in kindergarten								
Other uses (Please specify:)	X				X			

All of the states that reported using Teaching Strategies GOLD also reported using pre-K assessment data to guide teacher professional development. Caution must be used in directly connecting their use of Teaching Strategies GOLD to their assessment goals, as Delaware notes other assessments are determined locally while Massachusetts, Nebraska, North Carolina, and Vermont also report other possible instruments.

Below, we briefly explore the pre-K assessment strategies of several of the states using Teaching Strategies GOLD.

- **Delaware:** The ECAP program used Teaching Strategies GOLD, a web-based assessment, to monitor the progress of enrolled children and required reporting 3 times a year. The ECAP program was evaluated for program impact/child outcomes through the 2008 Child Outcomes Study. The state was also in the process of implementing a quality rating

¹¹ Several states also indicate they used Teaching Strategies GOLD for general program monitoring: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Iowa (Shared Visions and SVPP), Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey Abbott program, Rhode Island, Vermont (Act 62 & EEI), and Washington.

¹² Massachusetts reported using Teaching Strategies GOLD for assessment in pre-K, but all uses of the tool are locally determined, so they are not indicated in this table.

improvement system (QRIS) for early childhood programs with programs voluntarily participating, though a minimum rating was not required as the QRIS was not available in all settings.

- **Iowa Shared Visions:** Shared Visions required documentation of children's learning and child outcomes using Teaching Strategies GOLD online based on state-determined by checkpoint dates. The program began using Teaching Strategies GOLD in August 2011, with all programs required to use in the 2011-2012 school year. During the 2011-2012 school year, the state Department of Education planned to complete a project to assign a unique child identification number for all children served across program auspices to better track children's progress.
- **Nebraska** required documentation of children's learning and child outcomes using Teaching Strategies GOLD, High/Scope Online COR, or AEPSi, on an ongoing basis. In addition, Nebraska used the data to document program-level outcomes. For documentation of program-level outcomes, child data are collected using Teaching Strategies GOLD for the state to aggregate the data and examined outcomes across programs.
- **Rhode Island** documented children's learning and outcomes using Teaching Strategies GOLD, as part of its ongoing progress assessments. The state required administration three times per year. Through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) was offering support to programs that were interested in implementing Teaching Strategies GOLD by providing the opportunity to purchase child subscriptions at the state rate. This rate was half the cost of the regular subscription, allowing more programs to purchase and implement a high-quality child assessment system. Programs were required to ensure their teachers would receive training and use the system with fidelity and to share student data so that RIDE could use it to inform decisions around professional development and assessment policies.
- **Washington** State's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) selected Teaching Strategies GOLD to use as the statewide ECEAP child assessment tool beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

Only about half of all states reported having a state-wide policy on assessing kindergarten children as of the 2011-2012 school year. Only 25 states required kindergarten assessment: of these, 12 reported assessing children at entry, 10 during the school year, and 3 at both at entry and during the school year. Some states such as Iowa, Maine, Oklahoma, Vermont, and Wisconsin offer kindergarten for 4 year olds but the NIEER Yearbook questions do not ask about these separately from the regular kindergarten.

States Give Local Administrators Wide Latitude in kindergarten assessment measures. An analysis of NIEER Yearbook data from 2012, reported in Table 5, reveals that of the states that had a kindergarten assessment policy, the most common policy was to allow localities to determine the measure (12 state) followed by a policy that required the use of state-developed assessments (7). Required kindergarten assessment/screening instruments included Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (required by 5 states), Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screenings (PALS) (required by 2 states), and Brigance (required by 2 states). Three states reported a variety of instruments from which localities could choose.

Table 4: State Kindergarten Assessment Instruments

Type of Assessment	Number of state that require or encourage it use
Locally determined	12
State-developed	7
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) ¹³	5
Brigance	2
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)	2
Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screenings (PALS)	2
Other approved	2
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment – Literacy (KRAL)	1
Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL)	1
Developing Skills Checklist	1
Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS)	1
Early Screening Inventory- Revised (ESI-R)	1
Quals Early Learning Inventory	1

Many of the programs indicated in the Yearbook that their kindergarten assessment system was being revised and developed with some reporting that they were piloting or initiating a graduated implementation strategy. The box below presents information about implementation strategies and timelines in several states to indicate the diversity of these systems.

State Kindergarten Assessment Policies in Flux

Analysis of 2012 NIEER Yearbook data reveals that many states' kindergarten assessment policies are changing. Examples of current and planned kindergarten assessment policies are presented below.

- **Colorado:** In 2007, the Colorado State Board of Education approved three assessments from which districts could choose: DIBELS, PALS, and DRA 2 (Developmental Reading Assessment). These are administered as pre- and post-tests in the kindergarten year. Currently the requirements for kindergarten assessments are being revised.
- **Florida:** The Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS), composed of Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR) and ECHO assessments, is administered annually to all kindergarteners in public schools and to all available kindergarteners attending nonpublic schools as a state assessment by the Department of Education. Results of children participating in Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) are compared to those who have not participated in the program. Florida's VPK program is reviewed annually as part of the legislative appropriation process.
- **Georgia:** Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment, used statewide, is modified from the Work Sampling System. For the 2011-2012 school year, the online version was used for approximately 45,540 children, more than half of children enrolled in the state-funded pre-K program. Georgia's Department of Education developed a specific instrument for kindergarten assessment (GKIDS), similar to Work Sampling System, which is administered throughout the kindergarten year.
- **Illinois:** The Illinois State Board of Education is developing and implementing a comprehensive kindergarten assessment process to be piloted in the 2012-2013 school year.
- **Louisiana:** Legislation passed in 2011 requires Louisiana districts to move toward the use of a single kindergarten

¹³ Iowa Shared Visions allows the use of both DIBELS and DIBELS Next.

assessment, the Developing Skills Checklist (DSC). The original timeline for implementation was 2014-2015, but funds were available to purchase tools and training on the DSC so that it could be used for the 2012-2013 school year. Individual providers may supplement DSC with Brigance, DSC, DRA, DIBELS, DIAL, Chicago, ESI-R, Screening Test for Education Prerequisite Skills (STEPS), or the Miller Assessment for Preschoolers for kindergarten assessment instruments. Additionally, seven targeted districts piloted the LA DOE Student Performance Checklist in 2011-2012. This checklist is aligned with 12 of the prekindergarten standards that are aligned to the Kindergarten Common Core State Standards.

- **Maryland:** State policy requires local school systems to analyze the kindergarten assessment system in order to evaluate the effectiveness of pre-K and make necessary adjustments to the instructional program. A voluntary pre-kindergarten assessment is a part of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) and Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Phase II is under development. As a recipient of Race to the Top and Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant funding, Maryland is collaborating with Ohio in the refinement of its pre-K-through-kindergarten formative assessment tools and systems.
- **Nevada:** In Nevada, kindergarten assessments are currently determined on a local basis, but there is a plan in place to identify one common comprehensive kindergarten entry assessment for all districts to use. Kindergarten attendance is not mandatory, but children not attending an approved kindergarten are required to be administered the Brigance before entering first grade.
- **Washington:** As of fall 2011, the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) kindergarten assessment process was voluntary in state-funded full-day kindergarten. As of fall 2012, it is mandatory in state-funded full-day kindergarten and voluntary in other schools. It will use the Teaching Strategies GOLD child assessment tool, as well as collaboration with early learning providers and communication with parents.

While this data reflects what was reported for the 2011-2012 school year, this is a period of particular attention to the development of kindergarten entry assessments. The federal government was recently increased the focus on kindergarten assessments through both the Race to the Top competitions as well as the Enhanced Assessment Grants programs. It is possible that some states who are only beginning development of such assessments are not represented here.

More recent information about state's Kindergarten assessment policies is available on state websites. [Table 5](#) below provides links and a brief description of state Kindergarten assessment policies as of December 2013.

Table 5: State Information on Kindergarten Entry Assessment Policies and Resources¹⁴

State	State Kindergarten/KEA Home Page or KEA Reports (as available)	Additional Resources on Professional Development, Pilot Studies, and Other information
Arizona	A report to the Arizona Department of Education from the Kindergarten Developmental Inventory Stakeholder Taskforce	Definition of School Readiness , vetting by stakeholders.
Arkansas	Kindergarten Readiness Program Home Page	Arkansas recently revised their kindergarten readiness indicators for parents. They are exploring options for a KEA.
California	Desired Results Developmental Profile- School Readiness	See also DRDP tech data system and online professional development modules.
Colorado	School Readiness Home Page	School Readiness Assessment Guidance for Kindergarten, includes individual school readiness plans

¹⁴ Connors-Tadros, 2014

State	State Kindergarten/KEA Home Page or KEA Reports (as available)	Additional Resources on Professional Development, Pilot Studies, and Other information
D.C.	Kindergarten-Entry Assessment (KEA) 2013-2014 Pilot Home Page	
Delaware	Delaware Early Learner Survey	Delaware Kindergarten Readiness Pilot Study: Results from a Statewide Survey of Kindergarten Teachers Kindergarten Readiness: An Overview of Components
Florida	Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) Home Page	
Georgia	Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills Home Page	
Hawaii	Hawaii State School Readiness Assessment (HSSRA)	Hawaii is revising the HSSRA. They piloted TS Gold in the 2013-2014 school year with 140 teachers, and offered training to kindergarten teachers and administrators. KEA legislation to expand the pilot is currently before the legislature. See video of teachers and principals on the impact of the pilot.
Illinois	Kindergarten Corner Home Page	Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey A New Beginning: The Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey
Iowa	Task Force on Early Childhood Assessment	
Kentucky	Common Kindergarten Entry Screener Home Page	
Louisiana	Early Childhood Home Page	Training on Birth to Kindergarten Entry Assessment Tool-Teaching Strategies Gold
Maryland	Maryland Model for School Readiness Home Page	
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA)	Readiness Centers in each region support information and professional learning communities in implementing the MKEA
Michigan	Kindergarten Entry Assessment Home Page	KRA frequently asked questions
Minnesota	School Readiness/Kindergarten Home Page	
Missouri	School Readiness Home Page	Results of the pilot study, including cost information is available at- http://dese.mo.gov/stateboard/meetings/June/documents/ec-assessment-pilot.pdf
Nevada	Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, Silver State KIDS (Kindergarten Inventory of Development Statewide)	

State	State Kindergarten/KEA Home Page or KEA Reports (as available)	Additional Resources on Professional Development, Pilot Studies, and Other information
New Jersey	Division of Early Childhood Education, Kindergarten	KEA Implementation Pilot Proposal
New Mexico	New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten	New Mexico has issued an RFP to identify a vendor to develop a KEA based on the observation rubrics in their ELGs.
New York	Regents Approve Development of Kindergarten Readiness Tool for Use in 2014-15 School Year	
North Carolina	North Carolina Ready to Achieve Kindergarten Entry Assessment Process	North Carolina Ready to Achieve Guidebook for K-3 rd grade literacy (KEA is element of this law)
North Dakota	Kindergarten Entry Assessment Consortium	SRI designing assessment: http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/EarlyChildhoodEduc/project.pdf
Ohio	Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L) Home Page	
Oregon	Kindergarten Assessment Home Page	Oregon Kindergarten Assessment (OKA) Specifications, 2013-2014 school year
Pennsylvania	The 2012 Pennsylvania Kindergarten Entry Inventory Pilot Report, May 2013	Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Rhode Island	Early Childhood Assessment	Early Learning Standards & Assessment Subcommittee Home Page
Texas	Texas Kindergarten Readiness System (KRS) Home Page	Texas has received an Enhanced Assessment Grant and will be revised the kindergarten reading assessment to develop a kindergarten entry assessment.
Utah	Kindergarten Assessment Home Page	
Vermont	Early Education: Kindergarten Readiness	
Washington	Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills	See WaKIDS: Washington State's KEA Process
West Virginia	West Virginia School Readiness Profile 2012	SR Profiles include data by county on access, enrollment, and health; child outcomes data on PreK children using the Early Learning Scale on 10 domains is reported at 3 points in the year. WV is developing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

Recommendations and Next Steps

As SEAs develop policies regarding the timing and types of pre-K and kindergarten assessments, it is important to:

- Determine the purpose of assessments as a first step.** The timing and type of assessments should be based on the intended purpose. Assessments can be used to screen children for disabilities, measure children's progress, provide formative data to inform instruction, evaluate

teachers, and evaluate programs. Screening and assessments instruments that are required for pre-K and kindergarten providers should be aligned with the state's definition of school readiness and should be designed to address the intended purpose.

Some screening and assessment instruments are developed for one purpose and might not be appropriate for other uses. For example, many assessment instruments used to screen for developmental delays are not appropriate for formative assessment to inform instruction.

Assessment instruments used for high-stakes purposes such as for evaluating teacher effectiveness should not be used for formative assessment purposes. A measure that is used to monitor state-wide trends should be focused on a narrow set of indicators across the key domains but formative and ongoing assessments should be aligned with them. Formative assessments can provide more detailed information about children's outcomes that can inform ongoing instruction. As such, a comprehensive assessment system should include multiple assessment and screening tools to capture data for different purposes.

- **Select assessments within a comprehensive assessment system that assess the five domains of development that contribute to children's readiness to learn and succeed in school:** physical well-being, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, and cognition and general knowledge. States should examine how assessment measures capture progress on all domains of development¹⁵ It is also important that child assessments align with the Common Core State Standards (Common Core) and the state's early learning guidelines. Our analysis reveals that most pre-K programs focus on the five domains of development but of the states that require a specific kindergarten assessment, the measures focus more narrowly on literacy and numeracy. While kindergarten readiness assessments might focus more narrowly on domains linked to the Common Core, it is important that kindergarten formative assessment measures and tools used to inform children's developmental progress include all five domains.
- **Consider the validity and reliability of the assessments in light of the intended purpose.** A valid instrument measures the underlying construct accurately and therefore the context and purpose is critically important. For example, an instrument designed to measure receptive vocabulary that is administered in English to children who primarily speak English is valid but is not valid in assessing receptive vocabulary if administered to students who do not speak English. Reliability, or consistency of the measure, requires that data collectors consistently collect the data. If the state wants to be able to aggregate data, it is important that the assessments are administered consistently and can provide data that are an accurate reflection of children's performance. It is important that any data that are aggregated take into account the way in which the data were collected and how the data are to be used. For example, it is not

¹⁵ Stedron & Berger, 2010

appropriate to aggregate data collected by a teacher for formative assessment purposes along with data collected by independent evaluators of the program that used the same instrument.

- **Support training and professional development on administration of assessment instruments.** Administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders must be with provided training and professional development to reliably collect data. Such training and professional development should present a detailed understanding of the purposes and processes of pre-K and kindergarten assessment systems. Fostering an understanding of the system can improve comfort with the system as well as reliability, but requires adequate time and resources. It is important to tailor the training to the purpose of the instrument. For example, training on a formative assessment that teachers will use to inform curriculum would differ from the training offered to data collectors who would need to be trained to a level of reliability. Moreover, it is important for stakeholders to consider costs associated with training and build in the support to ensure the information is collected reliably and used appropriately.¹⁶
- **Support training and professional development on administration of assessment instruments.** Administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders must be with provided training and professional development to reliably collect data. Such training and professional development should present a detailed understanding of the purposes and processes of pre-K and kindergarten assessment systems. Fostering an understanding of the system can improve comfort with the system as well as reliability, but requires adequate time and resources. It is important to tailor the training to the purpose of the instrument. For example, training on a formative assessment that teachers will use to inform curriculum would differ from the training offered to data collectors who would need to be trained to a level of reliability. Moreover, it is important for stakeholders to consider costs associated with training and build in the support to ensure the information is collected reliably and used appropriately.¹⁷
- **Allocate time for stakeholders to learn about assessment and reflect on the meaning of the findings.** As noted, child assessment data can be used to inform practice and assess children's development. To be useful for teachers, it is important that time is allocated for teachers to reflect on the meaning of the findings. Teachers need time to tailor curriculum to children's individual areas of growth and development. Moreover, it is important to allocate time for teachers to talk with parents about children's growth and development to understand children's growth and to reflect on the best way to support children in their homes.

¹⁶ National Research Council, 2008

¹⁷ National Research Council, 2008

For more information see the following:

- ❖ Council of Chief State School Officers Kindergarten Assessment Position Paper
http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/CCSSO_K-Assessment_Final_7-12-11.pdf
- ❖ Education Commission of the States: Policy Analysis Topics, P-3 Kindergarten
<http://www.ecs.org/html/educationIssues/ECSStateNotes.asp?nIssueID=260>
- ❖ Early Learning Challenge Collaborative - Kindergarten Entry Assessments
<http://www.elccollaborative.org/assessment/77-kindergarten-entry-assessment.html>
- ❖ NAEYC Assessment Policy Considerations
http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/research/Assessment_Systems.pdf
- ❖ National Institute for Early Education Research Assessment Resources
<http://nieer.org/research/assessment>
- ❖ Regional Education Lab for Northeast and Islands at EDC <http://www.relnei.org/events/event-archive/bridge-webinar-early-childhood-assessment.html> and
http://archive.relnei.org/documents/RDR_2011-09-30_Kindergarten_Readiness.pdf

References

- Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J.H. (2012). *The state of preschool 2012: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/publications/state-preschool-2012>
- Children's Defense Fund. (2013). *Full-day kindergarten in the States*. Retrieved from <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-data-repository/full-day-k/full-day-kindergarten-states-2012.html>
- Connors-Tadros, L. (2014). *Information and resources on developing state policy on kindergarten entry assessment (KEA)* (CEELO FASTFacts). New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.
- Epstein, A.S., Schweinhart, L.J., DeBruin-Parecki, A., & Robin, K.B. (2004). *Preschool assessment: A guide to developing a balanced approach* (NIEER Preschool for Policy Brief, Issue 7). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/7.pdf>
- Fowler, S., Bloom, P.J., Talan, T.N.; Beneke, S., & Kelton, R. (2008). *Who's caring for the kids? The status of the early childhood workforce in Illinois—2008*. Chicago, Illinois: McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership. Retrieved from <http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/whos-caring-for-the-kids-the-status-of-the-early-childhood-workforce-in-illinois/>
- National Research Council. (2008). *Early childhood assessment: Why, what, and how*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force. (2007). *Taking stock: Assessing and improving early childhood learning and program quality*. Retrieved from <http://policyforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Taking-Stock.pdf>
- Riley-Ayers, S. (July 2012). *An assessment primer: Effective assessment in the early childhood classroom* [Powerpoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/Assessment%20Primer%207-8-12.pdf>
- Stedron, J.M., & Berger, A. (2010). *State approaches to school readiness assessment*. Washington, DC: National Conference of State Legislatures.
- Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2008). *A guide to assessment in early childhood, infancy to age eight*. Retrieved from http://www.k12.wa.us/earlylearning/pubdocs/assessment_print.pdf

Appendix A

Table A1: Domains Addressed in Common Assessment Tools

Instrument	Appropriate age range	ELL ¹⁸ /SPED	Socio-Emotional	Language/Literacy	Numeracy	Gross and fine motor	Other developmental indicators	Link to source and psychometric info:
Assessment Evaluation and Programming System Interactive (AEPsi)	Birth- age 6	Can be used to identify eligibility for SPED services. No information found on use for ELL children.	X	X		X	X (cognitive)	Overview Psychometric Properties
BRIGANCE	Birth - Grade 1 (Various instruments for screening and assessing) Pre-K - Grade 9 (Spanish language assessment available)	BRIGANCE screening tools are designed to identify children with special needs. One version is available for assessing Spanish Language Children.	X	X	X	X	X (cognitive)	Overview Standardization and Validation Spanish Edition
Child Observation Record (COR)	6 weeks - age 3 (Infant-Toddler COR) Age 2 ½ - age 6 (Preschool COR)	Can be used with ELL and SPED but no psychometric analyses with these populations are published	X	X	X	X	X Creative; Representation; Music; Science	Overview COR Alignment with HighScope's Preschool Key Developmental Indicators ELL Support
Creative Curriculum Development Continuum	Teaching Strategies for Early Childhood produces curriculum and assessments. Validation: Age 3 and 4 (one study) Ages 3-5	Can be used for ELL and SPED	X	X	X	X	X	Creative Curriculum for Preschool and Teaching Strategies GOLD Validity of GOLD Assessment Tool for ELL & Children with Disabilities

¹⁸ Source on Spanish Language assessments: <http://www.cal.org/twi/assessments.pdf>

Instrument	Appropriate age range	ELL ¹⁸ /SPED	Socio-Emotional	Language/Literacy	Numeracy	Gross and fine motor	Other developmental indicators	Link to source and psychometric info:
	(one study - equally valid and reliable for children with disabilities and for those whose home language is not English)							
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)	Ages 2 - 5	This tool can be used to identify children in need of services. Spanish version is available but no psychometric analysis found for ELL children.	X				X (initiative, self-control and attachment)	Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Kit Literature Review
Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL)	Ages 2 year, 6 month –5 years, 11 months	Spanish version available.	X	X		X	X	Overview
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	K- Grade 3	Spanish version available. One report states that it is appropriate for screening children for SPED services.		X				Overview Technical Reports Special Education
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)	Pre-K to Grade 1 (Classic) K – Grade 3 (DRA-2)	Spanish language version available. Can be used to identify students in need of Special Education services.		X				DRA, 2nd Edition PLUS
Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and DRDP- Preschool DRDP-K	Infants/Toddlers (DRDP) Age 3 - K (DRDP-preschool)	Spanish language version is available. Can be used to identify students in need of special education services.	X	X	X	X	X Cognitive and Health	Introduction Overview Overview, Structure & Components, Information Page, Instructions, and Rating Record, List of Measures with Domains - Preschool
Developing Skills Checklist (DSC)	Pre-K - K	Spanish language version called La Lista is available. Can be used to identify students in need of special education services.	X	X	X	X	X	Overview

Instrument	Appropriate age range	ELL ¹⁸ /SPED	Socio-Emotional	Language/Literacy	Numeracy	Gross and fine motor	Other developmental indicators	Link to source and psychometric info:
Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS)	Entering K	Not available		X				Overview
Early Learning Scale	Age 3 - 5	Spanish Language version is available.	X	X	X		X (Math/science/social studies)	Technical Report
Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT)	Age 2 - Adult	Spanish -Bilingual editions		X				Overview
Early Screening Inventory-Revised	Pre-K K	To identify children who need SPED. Comes in Spanish to identify		X		X	X (Visual Motor/Adaptive, Cognition)	Overview
Emerging Literacy and Language Assessment	Age 4 – Age 9	Not available		X				Overview
Galileo	Infancy - Age5		X	X	X	X	X	Overview
Teaching Strategies GOLD	Birth - K	Bilingual and supports special needs	X	X	X	X	X	Overview
Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP)	Birth – Age 5	Materials in Spanish, includes children with disabilities	X	X		X	X (Cognitive)	Overview
Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screenings (PALS)	PreK - Grade 3	Spanish version		X				Overview
Phonological Awareness Test (PAT)	Age 5- Age 9	Can be used to identify kids with deficits in phonological processing		X				Overview
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)	Age 2 - Adult	Can be used for diagnosing special education placement		X				Overview
PreLAS	Age 3 – Age 6	Includes Spanish language development,		X				Overview
Qualls Early Learning Inventory (QELI)	Pre-K – Grade 1	Not available		X	X		X	Overview
Work Sampling System (WSS)	Pre-K – Grade 6	Not available	X	X	X	X	X	Overview

Suggested citation: Schilder, D. & Carolan, M. (2014). *State of the States policy snapshot: State early childhood assessment policies*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.

This policy snapshot was produced by the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under cooperative agreement number S283B120054. The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the federal government.

Authors are grateful to Penny Milburn, Education Consultant at the Bureau of Educator Quality in the Iowa Department of Education, for her thoughtful review of the brief and suggested improvements.