FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: GUIDANCE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICYMAKERS

CEELO POLICY REPORT

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This policy report provides a guide and framework to early childhood policymakers considering formative assessment. The report defines formative assessment and outlines its process and application in the context of early childhood. The substance of this document is the issues for consideration in the implementation of the formative assessment process. This guide provides a practical roadmap for decision-makers by offering several key questions to consider in the process of selecting, supporting, and using data to inform and improve instruction.

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Introduction

Formative assessment[*] is a process that teachers employ to collect and use assessment information to tailor instruction to the individual needs of children.[1] Collecting information from multiple sources and analyzing it in light of children's individual learning needs can support teaching whereby all children continue to learn and thrive.

Ideally, early childhood educators embed formative assessment in instruction by working directly with children to gather information about what children know and can do, how they process information and solve problems, and how they interact with other children and adults. Formative assessment may include informal, but systematic, vetted and published assessment instruments, home-grown assessment instruments, and data collection procedures employed by teachers in classrooms.

Formative assessment is one component of a comprehensive assessment system. A comprehensive assessment system is defined as, "a coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments– each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used–that organizes information about the process and context of young children's learning and development in order to help early childhood educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions. A comprehensive assessment system includes, at a minimum, screening measures, formative assessments, measures of environmental quality, and measures of the quality of adult-child interactions."[2]

A comprehensive assessment system addresses several purposes, each with implications for data use. These purposes include (1) assessments used to support learning and instruction, (2) assessments used to identify children who may need additional services, (3) assessments used for program evaluation and to monitor trends, and (4) assessments used for high-stakes accountability.[3] These assessments can further be classified into three tiers, summative, interim, and formative.[4]

- Summative assessments are often used as one-time high-stakes tests;

- Interim assessments are those that are given a few times a year but are administered at the program, school, or district level;

- Formative assessment is embedded in instruction and administered in an ongoing manner.

This brief focuses specifically on formative assessment.

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[*] Other terms that are used include classroom assessment, observation-based assessment, or authentic assessment, but for consistency this brief will use the term formative assessment.

What We Know

- Formative assessment is a process that provides a critical link between standards, curriculum, and instruction.
- Formative assessment data are used to plan effective and differentiated instruction and intervention for young children.
- Reliable assessment and effective data use require considerable training and support for educators and administrators.
- Assessments selected to inform instruction for young children must be used in everyday routines, activities, and places and include information from multiple sources.
- Evidence that informs instruction should be gathered over time. A single snapshot does not provide a complete and accurate picture of a child's capabilities.
- Assessments must be reliable and valid; aligned with standards, age-appropriate expectations, and curricula; and examine key domains of learning and development.
- Assessment should not supersede effective practices, nor should it in any way drive instruction and learning to become didactic, rote, or isolated for children.
- Empirical research on formative assessment implementation in the early childhood field is critical, as policy is outpacing research in this area.

Recommendations for Policymakers

- Ensure that formative assessment is a key component of a larger, balanced, and comprehensive state assessment system.
- Include research and evaluation as components of any new systemic child assessment.
- Consider the unique needs of children being assessed, including their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, when selecting an assessment system.
- Pilot test and revise any new assessment policy and procedures, based on feedback from educators, administrators, families, and researchers or data analysts, before roll out.
- Coordinate assessment policy with other mandates from federal, state, and local sources to avoid duplication, excessive burden on classroom staff, and over-assessment of young children.
- Engage stakeholders in making decisions, developing policy, and providing important supports such as professional development and ongoing technical assistance.
- Consider the larger data system when weighing the pros and cons of adopting a common tool across the state, giving local choice from a list of approved tools, or simply providing guidance in selecting assessment tools.

Defining Formative Assessment and Its Process

The process of assessing what young children know and can do poses particular challenges for young learners.[5] Assessing children is often "unreliable," as young children's performance is not necessarily consistent over even short periods of time. Contextual influences and emotional states can affect how they perform on assessments.[6] Moreover, young children develop at vastly different rates and their developmental and learning patterns can be episodic, uneven, and rapid.[7] Understanding what children know is important for teachers, since children's new knowledge builds on prior knowledge. Given these factors, teachers' use of formative assessment to inform instruction is an essential piece of effective pedagogy.[8]

> ### *What Formative Assessments Are Not*
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> Formative assessment is decidedly distinguished from summative and interim assessments. Examples of assessments that are *not* formative are as follows.
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> - One-time statewide, standardized tests of achievement and end-of-course exams can provide summative data but do not provide ongoing data to teachers to inform instruction (Perie, Marion, & Gong, 2007).
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> - Interim assessments, even if they are administered more than one time, are not formative assessments. These have been misconstrued as formative assessment simply because they are administered at more than one point (Pinchok & Brandt, 2009; Heritage, 2010).

Formative assessment is much more than repeated assessment measures over time. Formative assessment is a process, which includes a feedback loop to assist children in closing the gap between current status and desired outcomes, milestones, or goals.[9] It informs and supports instruction while learning is taking place, by having children receive feedback from the instructor.[10] It also includes multiple sources of evidence gathered over time.[11] The formative assessment process is not a single event or measurement but rather an ongoing planned and intentional practice to evaluate learning with teaching.[12] Formative assessments yield descriptive data—not necessarily judgments.[13] It often takes the form of observational protocol using evidence collection as a means to examine children's cognitive processes.[14]

Formative assessment may be defined in different ways in state regulations and interpretations. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) definition best captures the essence of formative assessment for the purposes of this brief focused on young children. It is defined as, "a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes."[15]

Thus, formative assessment is a process rather than simply a tool.[16] In this process, teachers gather assessment data from children using multiple methods in an ongoing process and then organize the data.[17] This leads to the interpretive process of taking note of data, making meaning of it, and making a plan of action.[18] Riley-Ayers, Stevenson- Garcia, Frede, & Brenneman (2012) suggest that teachers of young children become participant-observers and engage in an iterative process over time that includes:

The Formative Assessment Process
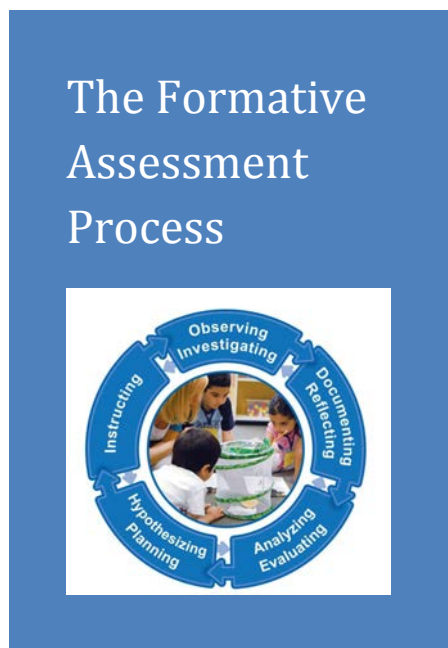
(1) **observing and investigating** young children's individual behaviors as a seamless part of instruction,

(2) **documenting and reflectin**g on the evidence,

(3) **analyzing and evaluating the data** in relation to set goals or a trajectory of learning,

(4) **hypothesizing and planning,** which considers what the children are demonstrating and the implications for instruction, and

(5) **guiding and instructing,** where the data help the teacher to target the needs of the children and scaffold their learning to the next level.

Perspectives and Evidence about the Importance of Formative Assessment

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has long promoted the use of developmentally appropriate assessments to improve instruction and programs.[19] Using systematic ongoing assessment of children's learning and development has become a distinctive feature of high-quality programs and classrooms.[20] The National Council of Teachers of English and The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics have each also published research briefs describing the benefits of formative assessment.[21]

The landmark synthesis of research by Black and William (1998) reported that formative assessment is critical for effective teaching practice. These authors concluded that firm evidence of student learning gains is reported from a number of studies that examined teacher use of data to inform teaching. These studies collectively encompassed kindergarteners to college students, represented a range of subject areas, and were conducted in countries throughout the world, including the United States. They further note that the gains reported in the studies are among the largest found for any educational intervention.   More recent meta-analyses report that there is research evidence to support the use of feedback and formative assessment as a strategy to improve student learning when considering high-quality interventions studied with rigorous methods.[22]

Additional evidence shows that teachers' judgments of young children's learning and development are valid.[23] Teachers' data collected over time in the classroom with formative assessment tools were related to standardized assessments of the same children. This demonstrates that teachers' evaluation

of children, with training and support and using specific tools, can be trusted. One study demonstrated that formative assessment in the classroom can produce a larger growth in reading skills than for children in a classroom that remained status quo.[24]

Setting the Future Research Agenda. Formative assessment may be an example of where policy is outpacing research. With Race to the Top money, requests for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) flexibility, and states working diligently to set policies around formative assessment practice in early childhood, there is much need for information and research. One essential component of future research is the need to clearly conceptualize and operationalize formative assessment.[25] This will allow studies to be easily synthesized, compared, and evaluated.

In particular, there is a deficiency of quality empirical studies in early childhood. A strong research agenda of empirical research is needed to strengthen the evidence of the impact of formative data use.[26] Several states are implementing formative assessment policies, thus generating large-scale implementation and even opportunities for randomization of implementation with various roll-out plans. Researchers must be ready to evaluate and examine the impacts of these measures.

Issues for Policymakers and Stakeholders to Consider

Implementation of a formative assessment process is not a one-time event, but rather it is a decision that needs systemic change, and requires professional development to train, empower, and support teachers and educational leaders charged with its implementation.[27] This systemic change can be broken into three components: leadership and policy, professional development and support, and time. Each section here describes the context needed to assure successful roll out of an assessment system. Policymakers will want to consider having all pieces in place before moving forward with requirements that are put upon local education agencies.

> ### *Issues for Policymakers to Consider*
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> - Who is involved in decisions about the formative assessment system?
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> - What is the purpose of formative assessment, who are the target children to be assessed, and how does formative assessment fit within a comprehensive assessment system?

Leadership and Policy. One key component in successful assessment policies is to first cultivate the environment to be supportive of such an approach.[28] This means including all stakeholders from state agencies and local agencies to be a part of the decision-making process. Policymakers should also arrange the coordination of the assessment policy with other policies, such as mandates from federal, state, and local sources. This will eliminate duplication and also work toward building a common vocabulary and understanding across program types (0-3, preschool, K-3, etc.). Doing so provides a systemic approach, rather than a misalignment of data interventions and uses that can impede the

success of using data to inform instruction.[29] Finally, leadership enhancement is needed, because data-driven decision-making requires leader initiative to align curriculum and assessment practices, professional development, and data systems.[30]

Multiple Methods of Professional Development Support Needed

Policy-makers should consider putting several methods of support in place.

- Traditional training can support teachers' understanding of formative assessment. Such in-person training requires a qualified trainer who understands the importance of using data to inform instruction.
- Supplemental training or refresher information may be delivered as self-paced online modules.
- Supporting "work groups" or cadres of teaches who meet regularly to discuss the data collection and data use in their classrooms has been shown to be helpful.
- Inter-rater reliability training is important to assure teachers have an accurate understanding of how children in their classroom are performing relative to national norms. Such training can be done with many systems online. Or, supports can be offered so two educators examine the same data and discuss interpretations or scores. Another model is to support a second observer who observes a sample of children and compares data with the data collected by the classroom teacher.
- Curriculum supports must be offered for teachers to know how to plan and implement instructional practices based on the data collected in their classrooms.

Professional Development and Support. Teachers' understanding and expertise with assessment is crucial, but has been found to often be lacking.[31] There is evidence that teachers are better at drawing reasonable inferences about student levels of understanding from assessment information than they are at deciding the next instructional steps to take.[32] This demonstrates that teachers have the skills to use data and draw inferences but can fall short with respect to planning the next instructional steps.

Issue for Policymakers to Consider

- What professional development and other must be offered to ensure effective formative assessment implementation?

It is widely known that substantial support of professional development is needed to effectively change practice and that this must be an on-going supportive effort.[33] For formative assessment systems to be successful, teachers need training in child development, a strong understanding of what typical development for the age group looks like and support to become adept at collecting classroom-based data, judging a child's progress, and using that understanding to improve their teaching practices.[34] Teachers also need direct training and support in how to implement any specific assessment approach or tool.

Time. An understanding of child development and the assessment approach or tool is not sufficient for teachers to adequately implement formative assessment in their classrooms. Often, time--to document child learning and development, to reflect on what has been gathered, and to interpret data--is in short

supply.[35] Using data to inform and influence instructional practice requires time. Teachers need time to reflect on the data independently. Then, they also need time to meet as a professional team to

collaborate about both implementing data systems and interpreting data. Teachers need data routines that include ongoing ways to interact with data collectively with colleagues.[36] Research has shown that teachers may not necessarily organize themselves into collaborative groups to discuss making instructional improvements, but that most teachers are willing to do so if groups are organized

> ### Issue for Policymakers to Consider
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> - Are systems in place to assure teachers have ample time to review data and reflect on implications for instruction? Are supports in place for collaborative reflection?

for them.[37] There is great value to investing in ongoing data interpretation that emphasizes teachers' learning within formal instructional communities, such as grade-specific groups of teachers.[38] Allowing teachers time to gather information, reflect on their findings, and make sound assessment decisions is also worthwhile.

The Assessment Tool

One critical feature of an effective assessment is a clear match between the purpose of the assessment and the intended use of the assessment.[39] For example, screening assessments are critical in early identification and intervention for children with or at risk for disabilities[40] and identifying those children

who need further evaluation.[41] Diagnostic tests provide specific information regarding children's development when a risk is identified. Standardized, norm-referenced assessments can be used in aggregate to evaluate program effectiveness or impact. Formative assessments are used to collect data on the child during his/her time in school.

> ### Issues for Policymakers to Consider
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> - What assessments are most appropriate given the purpose?
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> - Is the assessment appropriate for the population it will be administered to?

Not only is it essential to use data for the correct purpose(s), the collection procedures and the content also must be appropriate for the children for whom the assessment is administered. The first step is to look at the developmental appropriateness for the children's age level. For example, when assessing children of a specific age range, consider the assessment's content alignment with what we expect children of this age to be able to do. Also ask whether the assessment provides an extensive enough range of development to reach children developing at expectation, above expectation, and below expectation. Next, examine the procedures used to collect data to assure that they are age-appropriate and sensitive to children's developmental stages.[42]

The sensitivity to children's individual background, such as ethnic, racial, language, and functional status[43] is also a critical consideration in determining an appropriate assessment for young children. If the population has a high percentage of children whose first language is not English then the tool or approach must be sensitive to this distinction.[44] If the assessment will be used with children who have

special needs, then the policymaker must be aware of the level of increments of development that are shown on the assessment to assure its appropriateness. Of course, the instrument should be clear of any bias or discrimination against any group of individuals.[45]

Standards Alignment. Assessments used to inform and monitor instruction are generally criterion-referenced, which means they compare a child's performance with a specified set of performance standards or expectations.[46] Therefore, the first step in considering formative assessment systems or tools is deciding what is most important to learn.[47] Formative assessment tools must be aligned to age-appropriate standards (e.g., Early Learning Guidelines, Common Core State Standards). This means that assessments should be similar in both breadth and depth to the domains and benchmarks in the learning standards.

> ***Issues for Policymakers to Consider***
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> - Are the assessments aligned with appropriate standards?

Any formative assessment should be built on a foundation of age-appropriate standards, child development research, and developmentally appropriate content and methods. In early childhood, this foundation often provides a learning trajectory, developmental continuum, or milestone checklist that spans specific age levels[48] to provide the teacher both the end goal (e.g., standard, expectation, or developmental milestone) and a roadmap of the path to this goal. This continuum of learning can also be presented as learning progressions that include a set of building blocks of sub-skills that leads to the end standard or goal.[49]

Curriculum Connection. Formative assessment brings the child back to the focus of teaching. It provides teachers with the tools to notice the individual differences among their children. It prevents teachers from blindly going through a curriculum, often teaching to the middle. Knowing this, we must be mindful that teachers need the curricular resources and support to address these noticed differences and individual needs. Formative assessment is tailored to document what's happening for children based on what the teacher is doing in the classroom for children. Formative assessment informs the administration of the curriculum, with the teacher adjusting as needed through a mix of interactions with the students, peer interactions, learning materials, and use of time.

> ***Issues for Policymakers to Consider***
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> - Do the assessments align with the classroom curriculum?
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> - Do assessments provide user-friendly data so that teachers can use information to inform ongoing curriculum design?

Key Domains. High-quality assessment systems or tools assess the domains of importance to parents and educators, as well as those that are critical to and predictive of long-term academic success.[50] Five domains are often referenced for consideration: (1) physical well-being and motor development, (2) social and emotional development, (3) approaches to learning, (4) language and literacy, and (5) cognitive skills (including early mathematics and early science knowledge).[51] Additionally, young children generally best demonstrate their knowledge and skills in their natural environment through

daily activities, routines, interactions, and play.[52] Methods of assessment that let children be assessed in this familiar environment and over time generally lead to a more complete understanding of the child.[53]

> ### *Issues for Policymakers to Consider*
>
> - Do the assessments have the necessary breadth and depth of learning that is important for young children?

Reliability and Validity. Assessment systems and instruments must have acceptable reliability and validity evidence to support their use. This holds true for home-grown assessments developed at the local or state level and published assessments.   It is important that these levels of reliability and validity were achieved with a population similar to the group targeted for assessment.

Snow and Van Hemel (2008) offer succinct definitions of these two key components of consideration when looking at assessment for young children. "Validity of an assessment or tool is the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure; the extent to which an assessment's results support the meaningful inferences for certain intended purposes" (p. 427).   This means that the assessment actually measures what it says it measures. It has been noted that validity, in particular, is the most fundamental consideration in developing and evaluating assessments.[54] Reliability is defined as, "The consistency of measurements, gauged by any of several methods, including when the testing

> ### *Issues for Policymakers to Consider*
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> - Are assessments valid for the children being assessed? In other words, are the assessments accurately measuring what is purported to be measured?
>
> - Are assessments consistently documenting children's progress?

procedure is repeated on a population of individuals or groups (test-retest reliability), or is administered by different raters (inter-rater reliability)" (p. 427). The reliability most often associated with formative assessment of young children is inter-rater reliability. This is when two assessment administrators examine data or evidence and agree on the interpretation or "score" associated with the evidence.

There are several published tools available to collect formative assessment data on young children.[55] Not all published instruments have sufficient reliability and validity evidence to be used with all populations of children. It is the burden of the user to identify the threshold expected, often determined by the intended use of the data,[56] and to find an assessment match for the purpose and the population.

Policymakers would be wise to examine the quality of data collected by programs using the system, or an approach with a population similar to theirs. Additionally, leaders may institute local inter-rater reliability checks. This is when an outside data collector observes a small sample of children to compare results with the teacher's assessments. Local validity tests can be conducted by administering standardized assessments to a sample of children to determine the correlation between the formative assessment and the standardized assessment.

Data

Assessments can often yield copious amounts of data. Too much data can easily cause a shift in focus, and data collectors become absorbed in collecting required amounts of data and managing or organizing the data. This is in sharp contrast to the intended emphasis for formative assessments, which is on interpreting and using the data to improve instruction. More assessments and increased data do not necessarily result in better assessment information.[57] It is the quality of the data, not the quantity of data, that is important in being able to make meaningful changes to instruction for individual children. Assessment must be focused on key factors and have a systematic, but fluid, approach to data collection so that the data do not become overwhelming.

> **Issues for Policymakers to Consider**
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> - Are supports in place to assure teachers can use data to check progress and identify learning gains, notice strengths and weaknesses and transform curriculum?
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> - Are management systems accessible for all key stakeholders?
>
> - Are systems in place to report progress to parents?

It cannot be overstated that using the data is a key characteristic of formative assessment. These data are used to support learning, target specific goals, check for progress, identify learning gains, notice strengths and weaknesses, and transform curricula.[58] These data in early childhood can take the shape of observational notes, work samples, checklists and scales, photographs, video clips, or a combination of these.

Data management systems can often help make the process of collecting, storing, and using data less cumbersome for educators.[59] Data systems are expected to play an integral role in improving educational decision-making at all levels—including that of the classroom teacher.[60] Data systems provide data at the state level to evaluate children's learning and look longitudinally at development and impact. Systems such as these also provide opportunities to look at various sources of data alongside each other. For instance, one could look at student growth data through formative assessment in relation to teaching practices, or classroom quality data, or even professional development efforts, or student characteristics.

Data systems can provide evidence for informing district comprehensive plans, enhancing curriculum or training in a specific area, creating individual instruction for a child, communicating between staff and families, and supporting collaboration/coordination among EC programs.[61]

When classroom-level data on children are missing it is important to ask why. The response could take several forms. The teacher may not have collected the evidence, the teacher may not have recorded the evidence, the child may not have had the opportunity in the classroom to demonstrate the skill, or the child may not yet be able to demonstrate the skill. Each of these scenarios would lead to a different conclusion about the child and/or classroom. This highlights that qualitative information is critical for effective formative assessment. Data systems are necessary, but not sufficient.[62] Even with good

assessment instruments, teachers often have difficulty figuring out how to respond effectively to the data they gather demonstrating the children's development understanding.[63] This process of actively making meaning of data and constructing implications for action leads to one of the central lessons from the research on data use: that the data are only as good as how they are used.[64] Knowing this, policymakers must consider the end user of the assessment when considering selection. As noted above, sufficient professional development and support must be in place. In addition, the assessment system should have inherent characteristics that demonstrate its ease of use specific for the population of users.

Data security and privacy issues have been of concern to stakeholders, especially with some information being stored using technology. It is critical that best practices with data security be employed and communicated to all data users. All policymakers and data users should be familiar with the information in the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)](#) to ensure careful protection of the information collected and how it is used.

Parents, families, and caregivers are valued sources of assessment information, as well as being the audience for assessment results, and should be actively included in the formative assessment processes.[65] Summaries of formative assessment data should be easy to distribute to inform parents, providers, educators, and specialists about what a child knows and can do; what he/she is expected to be learning next; and the child's rate of progression through a developmental continuum.[66] Therefore, the assessment system should easily support the development of summaries and next steps for learning as a key component for consideration.

Important Considerations for Policymakers

 It warrants repeating a critical message for this brief: Formative assessment and instruction are not separate acts. Assessment should not supersede effective practices, nor should it in any way drive instruction and learning to become didactic, rote, or isolated for children. Young learners need to work in a natural environment at their own pace, with supportive teachers scaffolding and guiding their learning based on their individual needs. This learning should be couched in the understanding of the whole child and should be based on hands-on learning in a context with opportunities for both play and playful learning.[67]

Policymakers should understand their individual setting, as it can be complex and multifaceted when considering policies of assessment. It is critical to clearly define the purpose and role of assessment within a specific context. Above all, ethical principles must guide assessment practices and policies and children should not be denied opportunities and/or services, nor should high-stakes decisions be made based on a single assessment.[68] Data must be used appropriately so that there are not unintended consequences to implementing the assessment system.

Policymakers are cautioned here to invest more in developing teacher knowledge and skills needed to engage in the process of formative assessment, than in the tools available for formative assessment.[69] When instituting a large-scale assessment system policymakers must consider the time, cost, and

personal resources needed to conduct, score, report, and interpret the data.[70] Enacting a policy around assessment without the necessary contextual supports is sure to miss the mark. However, a systematic approach that takes key stakeholders--students, teachers, and education leaders--into consideration has a stronger chance of success.[71]

Policymakers will also need to consider the pros and cons of adopting a common tool across the state, giving local choice from a list of approved tools, or simply providing guidance in selection. Adopting one assessment tool allows for quick analyses of state data across programs. However, one measure is not always the best fit across programs or age levels. Providing a choice of several vetted tools offers local control and an easier fit to various needs. This practice does not necessarily allow for easy aggregation and comparison of children from across the state. However, there are states that are using formulas to aggregate data from various tools into one common scoring and reporting mechanism. The formative assessment literature is not yet rich enough to provide a definitive answer to the question of which option works best. However, there is enough variety in current practices and policy that we will soon be able to answer this question with evidence. So, again highlighting the critical need for continued robust research studies.

Several thought questions are presented below for policymakers to consider in the decisions around formative assessment. Each of the issues brought to attention in the questions and in this brief should be well thought out before implementing policy. Pilot testing any wide-scale implementation will allow for feedback from teachers and users of data on the experience of training to use, and using, the system.

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Overall Considerations for Policymakers Responsible for Formative Assessment Systems

1. Does the purpose of the assessment match the intended use of the assessment?   Is the assessment appropriate for the age and background of the children to whom it will be administered?
2. Does the assessment allow the convergence of information from multiple sources/caregivers?
3. Are the necessary contextual supports in place for assessment implementation and effective, meaningful data use? (e.g., training, time, ongoing support)
4. Does the assessment have a base or trajectory/continuum that is aligned to child developmental expectations, standards, and curricula? Does the assessment include all key domains?
5. Does the assessment have a systematic approach and acceptable reliability and validity data? Has the assessment been used successfully with similar children?
6. Are the data easily collected and interpreted to effectively inform teaching and learning?
7. What technology is necessary in order to gather data?
8. Are the data useful to teachers and other stakeholders?
9. What are the policies for implementation and what is the roll-out plan for the assessment?
10. Will data be gathered and maintained within FERPA and other security guidelines? Are there processes in place to inform stakeholders about how data are being gathered and held securely to allay concerns?

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Conclusion

The formative assessment process is a valuable tool for teachers to observe and interact with their students in order to learn about their development every day. Formative assessment pushes teachers to be more systematic and consistent in how they look at each child in all areas of learning and development. It allows all children to receive the individualized instruction they deserve, in particular enabling the high-achieving children to go further, the lower-achieving children to receive the support they need, the quiet children to be heard, and those with challenging behaviors to be understood beyond the behaviors. Formative assessment also underscores cognitive domains often overlooked, such as science or geometry. It provides attention and consideration of approaches to learning and to the social and emotional development of children. Formative assessment supports educators in being more responsive to the developmental needs and interests of young children.

Additional Resources

CEELO resources on formative assessment

➢   Formative Assessment FastFact- http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Resources-to-Inform-TA-on-Formative-Assessment-CEELO-Products-July-2013.pdf

➢   2013 RoundTable- http://ceelo.org/ceelo-events/ceelo-roundtable/

➢   Selected Resources on Assessment (under "Assessment" tab) - http://ceelo.org/selected-resources/

➢   Formative Assessment Webinar - http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/FormativeAssessmentWebinarSlides.pdf

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