

Child Assessment

Child assessments are point-in-time or ongoing activities that measure children’s learning and development. The results inform program administrators, early childhood teachers and providers, policymakers, parents, and the public about children’s attainment of developmental milestones and learning. Results may measure progress over time, gauge the impact of teaching practices or curriculum implementation, and help identify outcomes of quality initiatives and investments. In addition, some States use child assessments to identify children eligible for special services, modify curriculum to meet the needs of individual children, and ease the transition for children and families from home to school.

All States must address accountability for special education services as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and conduct some form of approved child assessments. Because children attend a variety of public school–based and community-based early and school-age care and education settings, teachers and administrators across settings may be trained in the administration and use of assessment tools. A few States coordinate child assessment training, implementation, and data reporting to meet special education reporting requirements, assess all young children, inform teacher practice, and educate parents and the public about the importance of early development. This document provides information about the purpose of child assessments, assessment tools, State assessment practices, and child assessment resources.

The National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement does not endorse any non-Federal organization, publication, or resource.

Types of Assessment

Assessments can measure developmental growth in young children within a single area or multiple areas or be used to screen for abnormalities and exceptionalities in development.

- **Single-domain assessments** focus on a single developmental domain (i.e., social-emotional, cognitive, language, or physical development). Assessments that focus primarily on early language or literacy skills are single-domain assessments.
- **Multiple-domain assessments** measure more than one developmental domain (i.e., social-emotional, cognitive, language, *and* physical development).
- **Screening assessments** are used to screen and diagnose delays, disabilities, giftedness, and other exceptionalities.

Child Assessment Tools

The following table includes information about child assessment tools and how they can be used to measure development in young children.

Assessment Tool and Web Site		
<p>The Creative Curriculum® Developmental Continuum for Ages 3–5 http://www.teachingstrategies.com/content/pageDocs/Dev_Continuum_Technical_Report.pdf</p>	<p>The Creative Curriculum assesses social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development.</p>	<p>Preschool</p>
<p>Galileo System for the Electronic Management of Learning http://www.ati-online.com/galileopreschool/PreWelcomeTechManual.html</p>	<p>Galileo Preschool is a comprehensive early childhood knowledge-management system that measures cognitive, social, and physical development. There are seven scales based on the ages of the children, and each covers a different developmental domain. Below are the domains covered by the infant–toddler and preschool scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Infant–Toddler Scales</i> (birth to 2). Early Cognitive Development, Perceptual-Motor Development, Self-Help, and Social Development. ■ <i>Preschool Level One Scales</i> (ages 2–4). Early Math, Language and Literacy, Nature and Science, Perceptual-Motor Development, Self-Help, and Social Development. ■ <i>Preschool Level Two Scales</i> (ages 3–5). Approaches to Learning, Creative Arts, Early Math, Fine and Gross Motor Development, Language and Literature, Nature and Science, Physical Health, and Social and Emotional Development. 	<p>Infant, toddler, preschool, and school age</p>
<p>The HighScope Child Observation Record (COR)® http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=113</p>	<p>COR is an observational assessment tool that assesses initiative, social relations, creative representation, movement and music, language and literacy, and mathematics. It can be used in a variety of early childhood settings.</p>	<p>Toddler, preschool, and school age</p>
<p>Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) http://igdis.umn.edu/</p>	<p>IGDIs are quick, efficient, and repeatable measures of components of developmental performance. They sample child performance in major developmental domains (i.e., language, social, cognitive, motor, and adaptive), with a special emphasis on assessment related to long-term developmental outcomes that are common across the early childhood years.</p>	<p>Infant, toddler, preschool, and school age</p>

Assessment Tool and Web Site		
<p>The Ounce Scale http://www.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=PAaOunce</p>	<p>The Ounce Scale assesses six major areas of development: personal connections, feelings about self, relationships with other children, understanding and communicating, exploration and problem-solving, and movement and coordination. This tool provides a way to evaluate children's accomplishments, areas of difficulty, and approaches to learning.</p>	<p>Infant, toddler, and preschool</p>
<p>The Work Sampling System® (WSS) http://www.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=PAworksampl</p>	<p>WSS documents children's skills, knowledge, behavior, and accomplishments across a wide variety of curriculum areas on multiple occasions to enhance teaching and learning. Curriculum areas include personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development.</p>	<p>Preschool and school age</p>
CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENTS: SINGLE DOMAIN		
<p>Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation http://portal.wpspublish.com/portal/page?_pageid=53,70227&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL</p>	<p>This assessment measures social-emotional development (i.e., social competence, emotional expression, and adjustment).</p>	<p>Toddler, preschool, and school age</p>
<p>Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy (TROLL) http://ici-bostonready-pd-2009-2010.wikispaces.umb.edu/file/view/Teacher+Rating+of+Oral+Language+%26+Literacy-TROLL.pdf</p>	<p>TROLL assesses literacy skills (i.e., language use, reading, and writing).</p>	<p>Preschool</p>
<p>The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) http://www.devereux.org/site/PageServer?pagename=deci_preschool_theory#assessment</p>	<p>DECA assesses social-emotional development (i.e., initiative, self-control, and attachment).</p>	<p>Toddler and preschool</p>
<p>Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Tool http://www.brookespublishing.com/tools/ellco/index.htm</p>	<p>ELLCO measures five key literacy elements: classroom structure, curriculum, the language environment, books and book-reading opportunities, and print and early writing supports.</p>	<p>Preschool and school age</p>

Assessment Tool and Web Site		
Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System (AEPS) for Infants and Children® http://www.brookespublishing.com/store/books/bricker-aeps/	AEPS assesses fine-motor, gross-motor, cognitive, adaptive, social-communication, and social-emotional development.	Birth to school age
Bayley Scales of Infant Development http://www.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=015-8027-23X	This scale assesses physical, motor, sensory, and cognitive development in babies and young children.	Infant and toddler
Battelle Developmental Inventory http://www.riversidepublishing.com/products/bdi2/index.html	This inventory assesses personal-social, adaptive, motor, communication, and cognitive abilities.	Birth to school age
Brigance® Inventory of Early Development II (IED II) http://www.curriculumassociates.com/products/detail.asp?title=BrigIED2	This inventory is used to diagnose delays, disabilities, giftedness, and other exceptionalities. The tool assesses motor, language, cognitive, daily living, and social-emotional skills.	Birth to school age
Child Development Inventory http://www.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=PAa9670&Mode=summary	This inventory measures development in eight areas: social, self-help, gross-motor, fine-motor, expressive language, language comprehension, letter, and number skills.	Toddler, preschool, and school age
The Carolina Curriculum http://www.brookespublishing.com/store/books/johnson-martin/index.htm	This curriculum assesses five developmental domains: cognition, communication, social adaptation, fine-motor skills, and gross-motor skills.	Infant, toddler, and preschool

Key Considerations for Designing and Implementing Assessment

A report prepared by the National Research Council in 2008 affirms that assessments can make a crucial contribution to the improvement of children's well-being, but only if designed and implemented with the following principles in mind:

- The purpose of assessment should guide assessment decisions, with the purpose defined and clearly communicated to stakeholders before the assessment is designed or implemented.
- Assessment activity should be conducted within a coherent system of health, education, and family support services that promote optimal development of all children. The system should ensure that
 - ◆ Assessments are aligned with other system elements, such as early learning standards or guidelines, program objectives and curriculum, and relevant theories of development and instruction;
 - ◆ Assessors and those who will interpret and use assessment results receive sufficient training and support to ensure skilled, reliable administration of the assessment instruments and appropriate use of the information generated;
 - ◆ Infrastructure and resources are available both to perform assessment and to respond constructively to assessment findings with support for professional development, technical assistance, and other program improvement efforts; and
 - ◆ The burden of assessment on both the children to be assessed and the programs they attend is the minimum needed to accomplish the assessment's purpose.

Child Assessment: Practices in the States

States use assessment tools for a variety of purposes, such as State investment accountability measures, program progress or improvement reporting, individual child progress tracking, and guiding classroom instruction tracking. As reported in the *Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plans for FY 2010–2011*, CCDF Lead Agencies are coordinating with other State agencies to implement child-assessment tools¹. NCCIC's examination of CCDF Plans reveals the following:

- Of those States that reported using child-assessment tools, most use them in alignment with the voluntary early learning guidelines (ELGs), and some use them in alignment with state-approved curricula. These aligned initiatives are designed to encourage and strengthen the capacity of early and school-age care and education programs to increase positive outcomes for young children birth to age 5.
- Several States reported that assessment tools are aligned with and approved by State departments of education to meet accountability requirements for early childhood special education programs.
- At least ten States (AZ, CO, DE, IA, IN, KS, MD, NE, OH, OR) coordinate with state departments of education to use automated Web-based data systems to track longitudinal child outcomes data.

¹ *Child Care and Development Fund Report of State and Territory Plans FY 2010–2011* (2010), by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau is available at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/stateplan2010-11/index.html>.

Additionally, Child Trends (2010) recently conducted a review of school readiness assessment practices and found that 29 States assess children in kindergarten, and among those States, the report revealed the following²:

- Twenty-five percent of the States conduct readiness assessments to track aggregate child outcomes to determine the percentages of children who are “ready for school.”
- Sixty-four percent of States have adopted a common assessment for statewide use, and 36 percent rely on locally selected assessments.
- Fifty percent of States use multidomain assessments, and 50 percent use assessments that focus on a specific domain of learning.
- Eighteen percent of States publish reports showing the percentage of children who are school ready statewide, and 7 percent report assessment data by at-risk populations.

State Examples

Representative examples have been included from the CCDF Plans for FY 2008–2009 and 2010–2011 to illustrate the different kinds of initiatives States are implementing across diverse care settings and age levels. These examples do not include all State assessment initiatives but are meant to illustrate the range of approaches States have taken to address assessment. Minor revisions were incorporated to enhance readability.

Arkansas

Numerous assessments are used within early care programs in Arkansas, but the predominant assessment used in all public prekindergarten programs—Arkansas Better Chance—is the Work Sampling assessment. All early learning guidelines are linked to the Work Sampling Assessment. A research study is being conducted by Rutgers University to provide a longitudinal profile of children in public prekindergarten programs. All children entering public kindergarten in Arkansas are tested using the Iowa Basic Skills inventory. Additional information is available in the *Arkansas Better Chance Program Manual* (2009), by Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, available at <http://www.state.ar.us/childcare/abc/pdf/0910/PUB0910-Program%20Manual.pdf>.

California

The Desired Results system is an assessment and accountability system designed to measure the achievement of identified desired results (DR) for children and families receiving State and federally subsidized child care and development services through state-contracted center-based or family child care home education networks. The centerpiece of the DR system is the Desired Results Developmental Profile, Revised (DRDP-R), an assessment instrument based on teacher observations that measures children’s developmental progress toward the Desired Results for children. The instrument is based on research findings and has been tested for reliability and validity. The DRDP-R is designed to assist local administrators, teachers, and families to monitor children’s

² *A Review of School Readiness Practices in the States: Early Learning Guidelines and Assessments* (2010), by Sarah Daily, Mary Burkhauser, and Tamara Halle, Child Trends, is available at http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_06_18_ECH_SchoolReadiness.pdf.

developmental progress in a child development program; to inform the curriculum-planning process for individual children and groups of children; and to support continuous program improvement. The system includes a Desired Results Family (Parent) Survey and the Harms Environment Rating Scales to measure program quality. The Child Development Division (CDD) maintains accountability through the guidance and oversight provided to local programs by CDD Field Services staff visiting local programs, who review use of the DRDP-R results with local program staff. Additional information is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/desiredresults.asp>.

District of Columbia

The Division of Early Childhood Education has examined child assessment strategies in the District through a variety of mechanisms. The first assessment process that aligned with the Early Learning Standards was the monitoring of children's progress through the Head Start National Reporting System (NRS). The NRS aligned with the Early Learning Standards because Head Start "outcomes" were used in the development of the Early Learning Standards. The prototype portfolio measure was piloted in the community-based Pre Kindergarten Program and also the school-based programs in the District of Columbia Public and Charter Schools. Additional information is available on the Division of Early Childhood Web site at <http://www.osse.dc.gov/seo/cwp/view,a,1224,q,561963,seoNav,%7C31193%7C.asp>.

Georgia

The Pre-K Content Standards are linked to on-going assessments used to document children's progress, guide instruction, and inform parents. During the 2007–2008 school year, Georgia's Pre-K Programs began full implementation of Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment, which incorporates the Work Sampling System®, along with additional school readiness indicators, to assess children's progress, individualize instruction, and increase families' participation in their children's educational experience. Pre-K lead teachers, assistant teachers, and directors have received training on the Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment Program.

A year of work led to the selection of the Work Sampling System® (WSS), developed by Dr. Samuel J. Meisels and distributed by Pearson Early Learning, as a core component of Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment. WSS best combined a measure of all of the domains within the Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards and the guidelines established by the advisory committee. WSS was piloted with over 500 teachers in select Pre-K programs around the State during the 2004–2005 and 2005–2006 school years. Changes were made to the program based on the pilot program results, and Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment was implemented statewide during the 2006–2007 school year.

During the 2008–2009 school year, an online version of Work Sampling System® was piloted with 200 teachers. The Department of Early Care and Learning is working with Pearson Early Learning on customizations to the online system to better meet the needs of Georgia's Pre-K Child Assessment Program. Assessing the results of the pilot will address the feasibility of using WSS aggregate data to demonstrate the effectiveness of Georgia Pre-K. Additional information is available at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/Prek/PreKChildAssessmentProgram.aspx>.

Maryland

Each year, Maryland conducts a multidomain assessment of children’s readiness for school using the Work Sampling System®, which is administered by kindergarten teachers in each school district. The expectation is that through program coordination and training opportunities, child care providers and teachers will help children be more fully prepared for school. Since 2002, when the State first began assessing students through Work Sampling, the results relevant to school readiness indicate that the focus on early learning skills and activities has increased the number of children who are fully ready for school by 24 percent statewide. Data from the kindergarten assessment are published in a *School Readiness Baseline Report*. Data also show the school readiness of at-risk populations. Additional information is available on the Maryland Department of Education Web site at http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/ready.

Minnesota

Individual programs are encouraged to use an assessment tool that aligns with the early learning guidelines to assess the progress of children. In the Parent Aware quality rating pilot, programs using a tool that aligns with the guidelines are provided points that help them earn a higher quality rating. The pilot also reviews nominations of tools that providers wish to have reviewed, to learn whether or not the tool is reliable and valid and aligns with the guidelines.

The State provides an overall snapshot of the progress of children in Minnesota through the School Readiness Study, conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education. This annual study assesses the school readiness of children in Minnesota at kindergarten entrance using an assessment tool that is aligned with the early learning guidelines. In the fall of each year, schools are randomly selected to participate in the study. All of the kindergarten children at the selected schools are assessed. Teachers rate the school readiness of each child during the first six weeks of kindergarten using a customized Work Sampling System® assessment that includes 32 indicators in five domains, including personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, the arts, and physical development and health. The developmental domains and indicators in the Preschool–4 Work Sampling System® Developmental Guidelines used in this study are consistent with and align with Minnesota’s early learning guidelines for 3- to 5-year-olds. Additional information is available at http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Kindergarten/Minnesota_School_Readiness_Studies/index.html.

The Department of Human Services and the Department of Education use the results of these studies to estimate developmental levels at kindergarten entry and to describe the demographic characteristics of children who are starting school not yet demonstrating the skills, knowledge, behaviors, or accomplishments commonly expected at the end of a child’s fourth year. These statistics are used to estimate the numbers of children in need of additional early learning opportunities prior to kindergarten entrance and to explore ways to support children before they enter kindergarten. The findings also inform school practices for serving the needs of all students at kindergarten entry.

Nebraska

The early learning guidelines have been aligned with the child outcomes instruments designated for the “Results Matter” system in Nebraska. This system has identified three authentic assessment child outcome measures—The HighScope Child Observation Record; the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum; and the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System—used in all school district early childhood programs, in Head Start programs, and with community child care programs that serve children with disabilities. These tools and the processes of observation and authentic assessment are promoted through a variety of training workshops offered throughout the state. Additional information is available at <http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/rm/rm.html>.

Ohio

The State has two assessment initiatives for young children. Educators test for literacy skills at the beginning of each school year using the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment –Literacy (KRA-L). All children attending state-funded preschool and preschool special education programs participate in the Get It, Got It, Go! (GGG) child assessment system. Programs are required to report the results of the GGG assessment in the fall and spring. GGG is a quick, efficient, and repeatable tool that is useful to measure children’s progress in critical language and early literacy indicators. The information gathered through the administration of GGG is used for two purposes: (1) tracking program progress and (2) informing individual instruction. Additional information is available at <http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=463&ContentID=7599&Content=94875>.

The KRA-L is designed to assist educators in evaluating young children’s literacy skills at the beginning of the kindergarten year. This assessment tool measures six elements or essential indicators of success: answering questions, sentence repetition, rhyming identification, rhyming production, letter identification, and initial sounds. The KRA-L may not be used to determine entrance or placement in kindergarten. Students receive a composite score (on a scale from 0–29), which is reported to the Ohio Department of Education. The composite scores may fall within three score bands. Each of the score bands has been designed to guide decisions about further assessment and instruction for individual children and groups of children. The composite score bands are as follows: Band 1 (0–13): Assess broadly for intense instruction; Band 2 (14–23): Assess for targeted instruction; Band 3 (24–29): Assess for enriched instruction. Additional information is available at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1366&ContentID=3930&Content=88588>.

Research and Resources

- *A Review of School Readiness Practices in the States: Early Learning Guidelines and Assessments* (2010), by Child Trends, describes how research about the importance of the early childhood years has compelled States to support children’s school readiness. This brief provides an overview of State ELGs and school readiness assessments. It outlines several considerations, including the need to (1) view school readiness in terms broader than academic preparedness; (2) align standards in developmentally appropriate ways when developing child assessment programs; and (3) provide high-quality comprehensive services to support school readiness. http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_06_18_ECH_SchoolReadiness.pdf
- *State Approaches to School Readiness Assessment* (2010), by the National Conference of State Legislatures, focuses on how States currently assess school readiness and how readiness information is used. Included are States that have universal or near-universal assessment on an ongoing basis. Although not all States evaluate child readiness across the multiple domains, almost half evaluate at least some elements of school readiness. The report contains a full summary of approaches used in 23 States that perform assessments, including (1) populations assessed, (2) domains addressed, (3) assessment instruments used, and (4) methods and uses of data reporting. <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/Educ/KindergartenAssessment.pdf>
- *Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers: Recommendations for States* (2008), by Sandra Petersen, Lynn Jones, and Karen McGinley, presents recommendations to help States create or revise ELGs for infants and toddlers. These guidelines consist of “widely accepted expectations for learning” for children from birth to 3 years. Even though States are not required by Federal mandate to enact such guidelines, nearly half of the States have developed guidelines and others are working on them. Based on the experiences of States as they developed their guidelines, the report highlights challenges and

questions to consider, including how best to inform adults about the learning needs of young children, connect with later school success, write guidelines that appreciate the natural trajectory of early learning, and develop guidelines that are culturally sensitive.

http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Early_Learning_Guidelines_for_Infants_and_Toddlers.pdf

- *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How?* (2008), a report of the National Research Council of the National Academies, states that well-planned and effective assessment can inform teaching and program improvement and can contribute to better outcomes for children. Current assessment practices do not universally reflect the available information about how to do assessment well. This report affirms that assessments can make crucial contributions to the improvement of children’s well-being, but only if they are well designed, implemented effectively, developed in the context of systematic planning, and interpreted and used appropriately; otherwise, assessment of children and programs can have negative consequences for both. The value of assessments therefore requires fundamental attention to their purpose and the design of the larger systems in which they are used.

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/national_academy/reports/early_child_assess/early_child_assess.pdf

Additional Resources

- *Where We Stand on Assessing Young English Language Learners (2009)*, published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/WWSEnglishLanguageLearnersWeb.pdf>
- *The Head Start National Reporting System as a Model for Systems Aimed at Assessing and Monitoring the Performance of Preschool Programs* (November 2007), by the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force.
http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k_education/Zill%20final%20paper%20081407.pdf
- “Early Learning Standards: Results From a National Survey to Document Trends in State-level Policies and Practices (Spring 2007),” in *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, Vol. 9, No. 1, by Catherine Scott-Little, Jim Lesko, Jana Martella, and Penny Milburn.
<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v9n1/little.html>
- *Uses of Data on Child Outcomes and Program Processes in Early Childhood Accountability Systems: Assumptions, Challenges, and Consequences* (September 2006), by the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force.
http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k_education/JLove%20Uses%20of%20assessment%20data%20final%2009-25-06.pdf
- *Considerations Related to Developing a System for Measuring Outcomes for Young Children With Disabilities and Their Families* (April 2004), by the Early Childhood Outcomes Center.
<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/assets/pdfs/considerations.pdf>
- *Early Childhood Measures Profiles* (2004), by Child Trends.
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/ECMeasures04/report.pdf>

National Organizations

Data Quality Campaign

<http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org>

The Data Quality Campaign is a collaborative effort to encourage and support State policymakers to improve the availability and use of high-quality education data to improve student achievement.

Early Childhood Education Assessment (ECEA) Consortium

Council of Chief State School Officers

[http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Early_Childhood_Education_Assessment_\(ECEA\).html](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Early_Childhood_Education_Assessment_(ECEA).html)

ECEA provides guidance to decisionmakers about appropriate early childhood assessment systems that ensure high-quality learning opportunities for young children from birth through age 8.

Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/index.cfm>

ECO provides national leadership in helping States implement high-quality outcome systems for early intervention and early childhood special education programs.

National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force

Pew Charitable Trusts

http://www.pewtrusts.org/our_work_detail.aspx?id=102

This task force helps States develop strategies to assess programs and use the results to help improve early education.