Arizona's Early Childhood Assessment System

Teaching Strategies GOLD

2011-2012

Arizona Department of Education
Early Childhood Education
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August 10, 2011

Introduction and History

State of Arizona
Department of Education
Office of John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction

June 25, 2011

Friends and Colleagues:

It is my pleasure to introduce to you Arizona's Early Childhood Assessment System.

As the Deputy Associate Superintendent of Early Childhood Education and the Director of Arizona's Head Start State Collaboration Office, it is very exciting to be introducing one single assessment tool for Arizona's children from Birth *through* Kindergarten. We have come a long way since this federal requirement began in 2004.

An initial workgroup in 2005 determined that collecting student outcomes and information must be authentic. Assessment should only be done *for* children and not something adults do *to* children. Hence, that brave group helped to establish the guiding direction for the systems building that has been established since that time.

Our first statewide plan to implement an assessment system involved a menu of 4 instruments. Time has demonstrated the need for a more streamlined system of formative assessment. In anticipation of a new RFP process, the Arizona Department of Education spent two years conducting surveys, focus groups and garnering feedback on how to improve the initial system of assessment. Ideas were collected and provided the foundation for the rubric that was used to choose our new tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD. A group of dedicated early childhood educators with a wide range of expertise was put together to choose Arizona's new instrument. The process of choosing a new tool was arduous and we are thankful to those who provided technical expertise and anecdotal information about implementation in the classroom.

As we move forward with building a true assessment system for young children, it is our best hope and expectation that any information garnered about a child will be used to improve the quality of the adult behavior that is critical in facilitating and nurturing children to grow into their full potential. The Teaching Strategies GOLD instrument is meant to be used as a tool to give adults a common understanding and language to improve our relationships with families as well as aid us in working together on behalf of each child in Arizona.

Teaching Strategies GOLD should be considered a tool of change, dialogue and communication as we work to place every child on a trajectory of success. Please contact me at 602-364-1530 or amy.corriveau@azed.gov if you have any questions or need any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Amy Corriveau
Deputy Associate Superintendent of Early Childhood Education
Head Start State Collaboration Director

In order to meet requirements in the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education identified specific outcome indicator data that all states must annually report for all preschool children receiving special education services funded by the IDEA.

Outcome 1: Positive social emotional skills
Outcome 2: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills
Outcome 3: Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

Following best practices, in 2005, the Arizona Department of Education Early Childhood Education unit created a system of assessment based on on-going, authentic assessment. To address the federal requirement, the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education issued a request for proposals and conducted a rigorous evaluation process in the spring and summer of 2006. This process resulted in the selection of four assessment instruments for use in district preschool programs statewide. District personnel were instructed to choose one of the four instruments and then attend training sessions from their specific vendor on how to use the instrument. In the fall of 2006, districts began collecting data and submitting data to the Arizona Department of Education Student Accountability Information System (SAIS).

Contracts with the four vendors were scheduled to expire in the summer of 2011. In anticipation of this expiration, the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education unit conducted focus groups and sent online surveys to early childhood district personnel in 2008 to examine the strengths and concerns of their chosen assessment instrument and process. The strengths gathered included teachers taking observational assessment data in an ongoing manner to drive instruction and provide program, classroom and individual child improvement based on data. Opportunities identified to improve the ongoing progress monitoring system included the need for ensuring the data collected was comparable for all students, that when students moved from district to district data was not lost and create a more efficient system of uploading the data without the need for SAIS. Information gathered from these groups and surveys guided the creation of the request for proposals and review process conducted in the spring and summer of 2010, resulting in the selection of a single instrument, Teaching Strategies GOLD. The State Board of Education approved this selection in August 2010. Regional training sessions were held in the spring of 2011 and districts will begin using the instrument to assess children beginning in the fall of 2011.

The Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education unit has focused on building a system of assessment that will allow all children participating in Arizona preschool programs to benefit from ongoing progress monitoring assessment that drives program improvement, links the child with kindergarten, guides instructional practices and informs parents and community stakeholders of how children are progressing. The Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education unit is collaborating with Local Education Agencies, First Things First, Head Start, Tribal communities, and varied Child Care settings such as faith-based, for profit and non-profit programs that serve preschool

children in order to create a system of ongoing progress monitoring and assessment for all preschoolers.

The contract with Teaching Strategies GOLD is available for use by all early childhood programs that have a collaborative relationship or are willing to enter into a collaborative relationship with the Arizona Department of Education. As approved by the Arizona State Board of Education, all programs are required to use the *online* version of the instrument, which renders the most useful information allowing programs to compile data in multiple ways in order to drive program, classroom and individual child improvement. There is no longer the requirement to upload data to the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS). Rather, the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education will retrieve data directly from GOLD for all programs statewide.

"For data to be most useful, teachers need to understand the purpose for collecting data, use valid procedures for collecting data, and ensure opportunities to analyze and interpret findings." [i]

Best Practices in Early Childhood Assessment

What is Assessment?

Assessment is the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information…the basic process of finding out what the children in our classroom, individually and as a group, know and can do in relation to their optimum development and to the goals of the program. With that knowledge of those children, we can plan appropriate curriculum and effective instructional strategies to help them develop and learn, monitoring their progress along the way.

(Basics of Assessment: A Primer for Early Childhood Educators, NAEYC. pg. 3)

Understanding the Purpose for Collecting Assessment Data

Assessing children in early childhood programs is essential to "*making sound decisions about teaching and learning, identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions.*"[ii] Though collecting data to meet state and federal requirements is necessary, educators and administrators must ultimately remain focused on the critical role of assessment in guiding instruction and improving outcomes for children.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers eleven *Indicators of Effectiveness* in assessment practices. To cite just four, effective assessment uses multiple sources of evidence gathered over time, assesses what is developmentally and educationally significant, is used to understand and improve learning and includes evidence gathered from realistic settings and situations that reflect children's actual performance. This last indicator suggests the model known as ***authentic assessment*** and reflects best practices in assessing young children.[iii]

Key Practices of Authentic Assessment [iv]

1. Assessment for young children should follow an on-going cycle.
   Step 1: Collect evidence
   Step 2: Analyze and evaluate the evidence
   Step 3: Plan for each child and the whole group
   Step 4: Report on children's progress

2. Assessment should cover all the developmental domains and content areas, measure developmentally appropriate skills as outlined in the Arizona Early Learning Standards, the Arizona Academic Standards for Kindergarten and the Infant/Toddler Guidelines (expected to be published in FY12).

3. Data collection should be conducted in varied, natural, authentic situations. Children should be assessed as they are engaged in hands-on activities, and interacting with their physical and social environment.

4. Assessments should result in information that can be used to make accurate and useful decisions. Teachers (and other team members) should be able to use the information to identify children's individual needs, plan appropriate activities and intervention, accurately monitor children's progress, and modify effective instructional strategies.

5. Assessment practices should involve multiple observations, and should involve multiple informants such as paraprofessionals, therapists, and family members. Given the complexities of early development and the variability with which children perform, gathering information from multiple sources, across time, and with varied forms of documentation ensures a convergence of ideas and a more holistic view of the child.

Best practice in assessment of young children recognizes the need for multiple forms of documentation to obtain a true picture of a child's progress. Teaching Strategies GOLD, the current state-approved instrument, is well designed for all of Arizona's children, including English language learners, children with special needs and children from diverse cultural backgrounds. GOLD aligns with the domains and content areas in the Arizona Early Learning Standards and Kindergarten Standards (see link: GOLD Alignment to Arizona Early Learning Standards;)

Using Valid Procedures for Collecting Assessment Data

As discussed previously, assessment data must be collected on children in an on-going manner using a variety of documentation methods and multiple informants. This is essential in capturing the most comprehensive "picture" of a child's development over time, in various contexts.

Observation is the basis of all good teaching and the foundation of any assessment system. To learn about a child, you look and listen objectively to what he or she does and says (Jablon, Dombro, & Dichtelmiller, 2007). For some objectives, seeing a child perform a skill once is sufficient to make an informed decision. Other objectives need more evidence and documentation. It may also be necessary to document a skill as it develops over time.

Documenting the words and actions of children serves as the *evidence* on which educators base their decisions about the development and learning of the children in their classrooms. This evidence is essential to accurately determining where a child is along the continuum of development as well as informing educators where they can begin to support this child toward the next developmental stage.

The *amount* of evidence collected for each child will vary depending on what is being assessed and the local program policy requirements.

Local programs should create policy recommendations based on generally accepted best practices in the field of early childhood education. This is essential to ensure that evidence is being collected and used for decision making.

When implementing an on-going progress monitoring system into your classroom remember to keep the documentation simple. Documentation may be collected in the action, out of the action, and after the fact. Set up simple systems to make collecting observation notes as convenient as possible.

Suggested collections methods:

- Mailing labels
- Legal pads
- Index cards
- Calendar pages
- Masking tape
- Post it notes
- Tape recorders
- Digital cameras/camcorders and voice recorders

Implementing an assessment system takes intentional planning. Document who and when you plan to observe the children in your weekly plans. Set goals for collecting evidence for all the adults working with the children. A common expectation would be to collect three or four pieces of evidence a day. Remember that you don't need to record everything that happens and every word a child says, focus on collecting information that addresses your plan.

Documentation Methods:
•Anecdotal notes—These are short, objective, factual notes about what you hear and see. Include the location and date observed, direct quotations of language and descriptions of actions, gestures, facial expressions, and creations. Quality anecdotal notes are factual, objective, focus on what the child does or says. Work to eliminate your feelings or judgments from your statements.
• Photographs—Take pictures of children's constructions, artwork, or examples of how they are demonstrating knowledge and skills related to an objective. Label each photo with the date and a brief note that explains the context in which it was taken.
• Video- and audio clips—Keep clips short. Capture just enough information to show an example of what the child knows and can do.
Lengthy clips are difficult to store and locate.
• Samples of children's work—Don't save everything! Select the writing and art samples that relate best to particular objectives.
• Diagrams or sketches—In the child's portfolio, include sketches of his or her block structures or other constructions.

Additional documentation methods include: Checklists, participation lists, frequency counts, running records, rating scales, time sampling, behavior inventories and/or interviews.

Ensuring Opportunities to Analyze and Interpret Findings

The final step of the assessment cycle is one of the most important steps, but it is often neglected. It involves summarizing what you know, basing plans for individual children and the group as whole on that knowledge and communicating with those outside your classroom to explain what children are learning. It is at this point that you make a clear link between curriculum and assessment.

You make many decisions each day as you observe children and respond in appropriate ways. Your observations often lead you to ask questions as you reflect on what you learn about a child and consider how best to provide support. Planning for children on the basis of assessment information is an art. There are no formulas or quick solutions. It would be wonderful to be able to say that a child will progress to the next level if you do a particular activity. However, it takes time, practice, and reflection to determine what support a child or group of children needs.

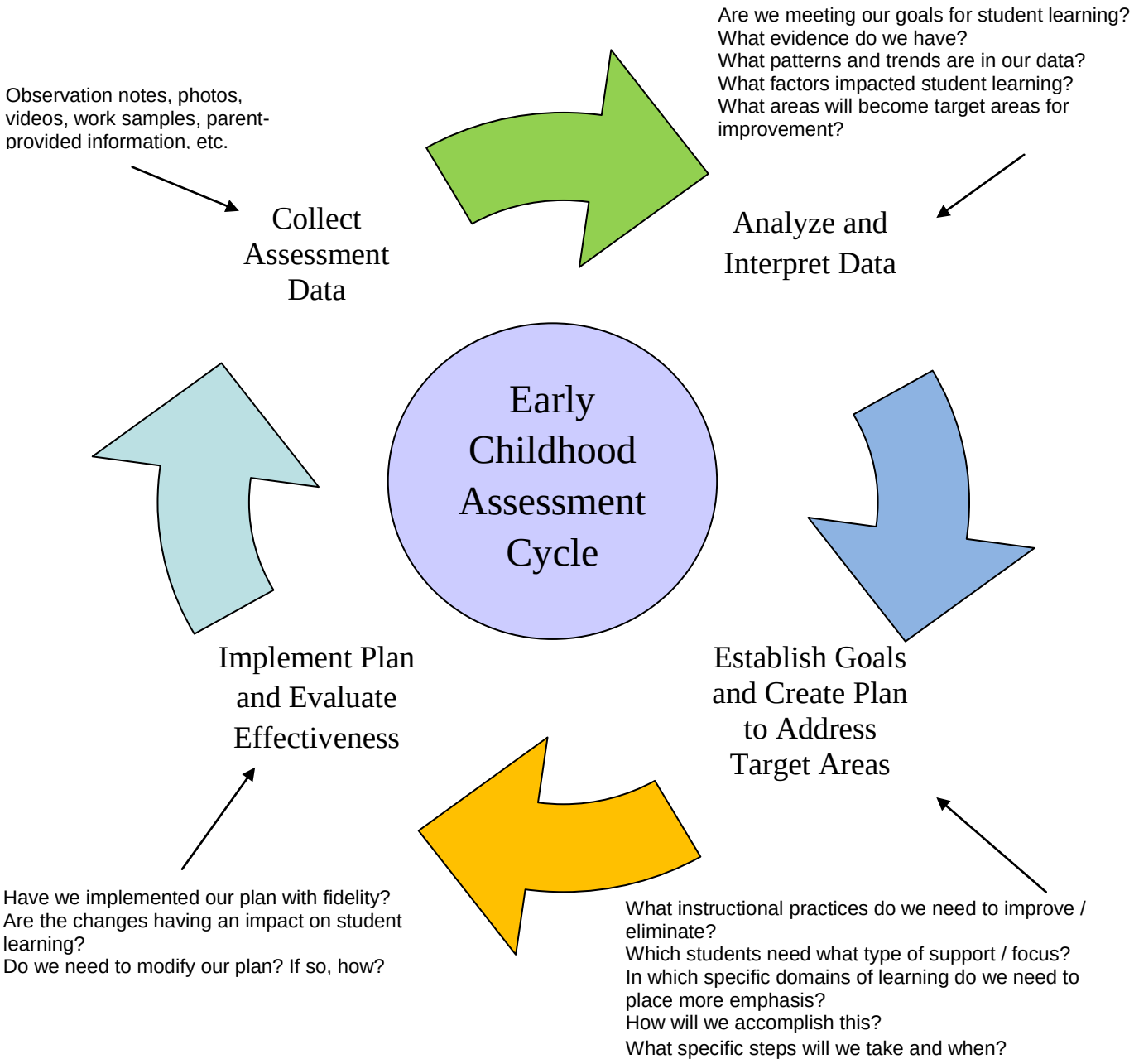
As you make your daily, weekly, and long-range plans, refer to the assessment information you've gathered. Your documentation will inform the types of experiences you offer to children, plan for the particular needs of individual children, think about what you know about children, the expected outcomes included in *Teaching Strategies GOLD*, the Arizona Early Learning Standards/Arizona Academic Standards for Kindergarten, and use this information to shape what you do each day. Your assessment information and the progressions of development and learning should guide how and when you adapt an activity to make it simpler or more complex.

Involve others in planning for the children in your class. Review assessment information with your paraprofessionals, families, and colleagues to consider how to best guide a child's learning. Think about the assessment information as you plan changes to your physical environment. Are the materials you include challenging yet manageable for the children in your group? Has your assessment information revealed that a child has a particular interest you want to nurture? Do you need to adapt some materials so that children can use them more easily?[v]

Inter-rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability is the extent to which two observers score an observed situation the same. Put another way, inter-rater reliability is the degree to which an assessment yields a similar score or rating for the child being assessed by more than one rater. Teaching Strategies states that to be considered "reliable" raters, two individuals observing the same child in the same moment in time must select the same rating, or a score within one level of each other, on a particular assessment item. Teaching Strategies currently offers an online certification in inter-rater reliability.

Early Childhood Assessment Cycle



Teaching Strategies GOLD in Arizona

Creating Local Program Policies and Procedures

Though the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education provides guidance on some aspects of GOLD, local programs will need to determine many policies and procedures that best serve their particular staff, children and families. Documenting and disseminating local policies and procedures to all staff helps to ensure consistency and sustainability in the assessment process over time. Written policies and procedures also ensure continuity in the event of staff turnover and can be modified as needed.

Some items needing addressed at the local program level include, but are not limited to:

Roles and responsibilities of specific program/district personnel regarding:

- Who has what level of access to child data in GOLD?
- Who will enter child demographic information?
- What method/means will be used in collecting and entering documentation in child portfolios?
- Who will finalize data for each child by three checkpoint dates?
- Who will make changes to child portfolios as needed (transferring, archiving, exiting)?
- What is the assessment process for children not in district classroom (i.e. Head Start, itinerant provider) and who is responsible?
- Who will purchase new online subscriptions throughout the year/ renew each year?

District/Program policies regarding:

- Deadline dates or calendar for any/all tasks related to GOLD
- Use of child name, photos and videos in documentation
- Use of Spanish Language and Literacy objectives
- Granting online access to families
- Sharing information with families – extent and format
- Amount of documentation required for each objective
- Use of weekly planning forms

The following section provides information on the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education unit policies and expectations in the use of GOLD. All features and functions of the GOLD assessment and how to use them are thoroughly explained through a variety of means including narrated training modules, brief tutorials, live webinars and printable instruction guides, all of which are easily accessible through an online account. Shown below are features and functions that require ***Arizona specific* guidance.**

Creating and Managing Child Portfolios

Purchasing a Subscription

To purchase per-child subscriptions to GOLD online, contact Teaching Strategies at 1-301-634-0818 ext. 1111 or email Johanna Hooks at johannah@teachingstrategies.com. New subscriptions can be purchased throughout the year at a pro-rated cost.

Managing Child Demographic Information

The following items appear on the "Manage Children" tab in GOLD.

SAIS ID #: Please enter each child's SAIS ID number in this field. If the child does not yet have a SAIS ID number, you can continue completing this page and return at a later date to add the number when it has been issued. You must have a SAIS ID number entered for every child before finalizing checkpoint data in October.

CTDS#*: County/Type/District/School.* Every program in Arizona using GOLD under the Arizona Department of Education license is required to have a CTDS number. This includes programs that are not considered school districts. Programs can apply for this number through this online application: https://www.azed.gov/schoolfinance/FAQs/CTDS_District/EntityProfileForm.pdf

> **CTDS# - Program of Attendance/Service Provider –** the number entered in this field should be the number that has been assigned to the program where the child attends or receives services on a regular basis. This could be a district, a Head Start program, a private child care or a variety of other program types. **This field is required.**
> **CTDS# - Responsible District** - a number is required to be entered in this field **ONLY** if a child is the responsibility of a district but is placed or receives services in a program outside of this district. This circumstance most commonly applies to children with special needs.

Age or Class/Grade:

The Age or Class/Grade field requires that you select an age range for each child. This selection determines the widely held expectations of development and learning that will be applied to each child as you conduct the assessment. **For children age 3 and older**, the child is assigned to a Class type that is designated as **Preschool, Pre-K, or K.** Each child is then assigned a Class/Grade by the teacher. The teacher can choose to assign the child to:

- **3 to 4 year olds (preschool 3 class/grade) (Green),**
- **4 to 5 year olds (pre-k 4 class/grade) (Blue),**
- **or Kindergarten (Purple).**

Birth-1 year 1-2 years 2-3 years 3-4 years 4-5 years 5-6 years

The Class/Grade for the children in the Preschool, Pre-K, K classes is **not based on the child's birth date, but on the class/grade assigned by the teacher for the entire school year.** That's because children typically remain in the same group with the same teacher for the year**. In most programs, all children in a Class will have the same Age or Class/Grade, but the ability to assign the Age or Class/Grade for each child allows programs to have classes with mixed ages.**

Even if the child is technically a few months shy of the age level (or a year or two above the age level in the case of a child with developmental delays) the child is in the "class/grade" and her skills are evaluated at the color band of the expectations for that year. If the child's skills do NOT meet expectations for that color band, the reason may be obvious – she's a bit young for the grade and we don't worry if she needs more time. Or, in the case of a child with delays, it is a wonderful way to show she is making progress. In a Kindergarten class, children are held to the expectations of the purple band (Kindergarten) whether they are 4-, 5-, or 6-years-old.

When you evaluate each child's skills in order to select the level that best describes these skills related to the objectives and dimensions, you select a level based on your documentation of what a child knows and can do--his skills, knowledge, and behaviors—regardless of the Age or Class/Grade to which the child has been assigned. In that way you are able to see whether a child's skills are below, meeting, or exceeding expectations.

Infants, Toddlers and Twos (birth to 36 months): For these age groups, the child is added to a group based on age. For example, a 10-month-old child is assigned to Birth to 1 year olds (Red). When she turns 2 in November, she is updated to 1 to 2 year olds (Orange). Thus, the assigned group for a child under the age of 3 might change during the course of a year based on the child's birth date. [vi]

First Day in Program: This date should reflect the child's first day of *attendance* in the program/classroom, even if it was a year or more prior to the current school year in a different program or classroom. This date should reflect the earliest known date that the child began attending preschool.

Program Participation: Though a child may be supported through various funding sources, please select the source that represents the **program in which the child is participating**.

IEP: This box should only be selected if a child has a current Individualized Education Plan on file in a school district in Arizona. After clicking this box, a field will pop up that requires an "Entry Date to Part B". This **date should reflect the first day that the child received or will receive special education services, not the date that the IEP was written**. For instance, if a child's IEP is created in May but the child does not receive any services until August, the August date is the "Entry Date". This date will help determine the amount of time a child receives special education services. Even if the IEP was transferred from another district, the date should reflect the first day that the child received special education services. This entry date should only be entered ONCE and will remain the same throughout the duration of a child's GOLD portfolio.

Free and Reduced Lunch: Please check this box if your program has this information available. First Things First Pre-K Scholarship programs are required to select this box for the children to whom it applies.

Assess this child using the Spanish Language and Literacy Objectives: For children whose home language is Spanish, a Spanish-language version of the language and literacy objectives is available for use to help teachers track language and literacy development in Spanish. These objectives are very similar to the English version of these language and literacy objectives, but adaptations were made to reflect patterns of development unique to Spanish language and literacy. The decision to use these objectives in **preschool programs** is left to the discretion of the local program. The adult using these objectives to assess a child must be able to fluently read and speak Spanish. The use of these objectives in **kindergarten classrooms** in not permitted.

Complete Home Language Survey: Completing this survey will help determine whether a child should be assessed using the two additional objectives 37-38 under the area of English Language Acquisition. This information assists teachers in planning ways to support children's language and literacy acquisition and in basing instruction on children's strengths and needs. The Home Language Survey should *not* be completed by teachers without input from parents or other family members. The data gathered with this "Home Language Survey" should not be used to label children or identify them for special services. It should be used to help the teacher determine how to assess children most accurately and support their development and learning. The "Home Language Survey" is a resource of the *Teaching Strategies GOLD*™ assessment system, not a requirement. Consider incorporating the completion of this survey with the Primary Home Language Other Than English Survey and/or with the screening process for children with special needs.

Documentation and Checkpoints

Self-Care Dimensions for Social Emotional, Objective 1c

The self-care dimensions under the area of ***Social-Emotional, Objective 1c: Takes Care of Needs Appropriately***, specifically assesses the abilities of children in the tasks of feeding (1c1), toileting and personal hygiene (1c2) and dressing (1c3). **Programs must include these three dimensions in the assessment of all children.**

Physical Dimensions

Objectives 4, 5, 6 under the area of *Physical* include dimensions that break these objectives down into more discrete skills. These dimensions show the sequence of development for walking, running, galloping and skipping, jumping, hopping, throwing, catching and kicking. Using these dimensions can provide greater insight into how a child is developing with regards to the widely held age expectations for these particular skills. **Programs must include these three dimensions in the assessment of all children.** These dimensions can be found in GOLD online in the Checkpoint tab at the point of selecting ratings for each child in the area of *Physical*.

Choosing Ratings in Science/Technology, Social Studies and the Arts

The Arizona Early Learning Standards (ELS) serve as the basis on which educators will select ratings. The Early Learning Standard, indicators and examples that align to these GOLD objectives can be viewed within GOLD for further support. For the objectives in these three areas, children can be rated as showing "no evidence yet", "emerging" or "meeting program expectations". Collecting and entering documentation for these content areas should follow the same process as all other areas in GOLD and should serve as the evidence to support the chosen ratings.

"Not Yet" versus "Not Observed"

A colored band in the *"Not Yet"* column shows that a child of that age is not yet expected to demonstrate a particular skill or behavior. Marking a child at the "*Not Yet*" level may apply to a child with a disability or developmental delay who is not yet demonstrating a particular skill or behavior.

"Not Observed" should be used only on rare occasions such as if a child has had significant absences during the checkpoint period. "*Not Observed*" should not be selected in instances where a teacher has not yet collected any documentation or attempted to observe this particular objective/dimension. The system requires that a reason be given when this box is selected.

Entering Documentation using GOLD online

- The collection of documentation can begin at the point of intake or initial eligibility evaluations of children.
- A single observation that documents the language and behaviors of multiple children at a single moment in time can be entered *once* into Teaching Strategies GOLD online and populated in the portfolios of each child instantly, saving time previously needed to document this same information for each child separately. Further, a single observation that is documented with rich and thorough detail can serve as documentation for multiple objectives and domains. Teachers and paraprofessionals can then edit each portfolio as needed to individualize this documentation for each child. **It is important to consider child confidentiality when using these methods.** Instead of a child's name, you can use initials when entering documentation into a single child's portfolio. Take the necessary steps to protect confidentiality when typing notes and uploading photos that include multiple children.
- In addition to typed notes, digital photos of children, photos of work samples, can be uploaded to a child's portfolio online and serve as documentation as it pertains to specific objectives and dimensions. Video clips, voice recordings and voice transcription/dictation software and smart phone applications are also efficient ways of documenting children's development and learning.
- Paraprofessionals, related service providers and parents can observe and document children's development and learning in a variety of ways that help assist teachers. These individuals can provide verbal or written documentation to be entered in the child's portfolio by the teacher. These same individuals can also be given personal login information to GOLD online that provides access only to the portfolios of particular children. The names of these individuals will appear next to any documentation they enter but they cannot score these observations. Only teachers designated with this role have the ability to score observations.
- Use the "On-the-Spot Observation Recording Tool" available in GOLD online to quickly assess children on 13 objectives. This method can be used for Objectives 4-7 and 15-23. Teachers can print a copy of this recording tool for each objective with children's names automatically populated on each sheet. See link for more information: http://www.teachingstrategies.com/content/gold/helpitems/On-the-Spot%20Observation%20Recording%20Tool_bw.pdf
- A report within GOLD online titled "Documentation by Objective and Dimension" can be found under the "Documentation" tab. This report allows teachers to view the amount of documentation that they have collected and entered for each child under each objective and dimension. Teachers can check in at any time to see which areas they still need to collect and enter documentation and plan accordingly to focus on these particular areas and objectives.

Checkpoint Dates for Arizona

Requirements for Data Submission

Starting in the fall of 2011, districts will no longer be required to upload early childhood assessment data to the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS). The Arizona Department of Education/ Early Childhood Education unit will now export this data directly from Teaching Strategies GOLD online. This requires that all programs have data entered and finalized for every child by three "checkpoint" dates.

Checkpoints for 2011-2012

Season/Start Date	Date to begin collecting observations and entering documentation in GOLD Online	Checkpoint Date (Date by which teachers must finalize ratings for all areas in GOLD Online)
*Fall	1st Day of Program	October 14
*Winter	On-going	February 10
*Spring	On-going	May 31
*Children entering program at various dates during the year (e.g. children with IEPs, children that start late, et.al)	Begin collecting data during evaluation or intake process	Enter as soon as possible but no later than 45 days from start date, then continue with schedule above.

On-going progress monitoring requires that teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers observe children and document these observations on a daily and weekly basis.
"Checkpoints" are simply three points in time at which teachers will stop to reflect upon and rate this documentation. All documentation should be entered into GOLD online by these dates to ensure that it is included when ADE/ECE exports the data for all programs. Special education staff will want to use data at approximately the mid IEP juncture to monitor goal progress and at the annual review timeframe to drive strengths, needs and goals for the next IEP.

* The purpose of data collected and ratings given at the first checkpoint date is to serve as a **baseline** for a child by which to measure progress. Therefore, teachers can enter initial ratings as soon as they have sufficient documentation for all areas for each child. Initial special education evaluation information can serve as documentation relating to particular Teaching Strategies GOLD objectives and can be entered as such in child portfolios online. Teachers do not need to wait for the first checkpoint date to finalize their data in GOLD. After entering initial ratings, staff can continue entering documentation and ratings by the next checkpoint date.

Sharing Access to Child Portfolios

Each child should only have one portfolio. Program administrators can grant access to multiple professionals that are working with particular children if desired, including related service providers, paraprofessionals and other program staff.

In the case of preschool children with special needs, staff of the program where children are placed will have full access to the portfolios of these particular children, enabling them to enter documentation and rate children's progress. Since the responsibility for meeting assessment requirements ultimately belongs to the school district in which the child resides, administrators at the responsible district can be given access to these particular online portfolios. This enables both the district and the program serving the child to be accountable for the assessment process. Districts are responsible for the cost of each child subscription unless other arrangements have been agreed upon between both programs. Such arrangements should be established and documented, along with roles and responsibilities of each program, in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). (See section titled "Conducting Assessment with Preschool Children with Special Needs Placed in Least Restrictive Environments" for more information.)

Archiving Child Portfolios

If a child leaves a program, do not delete his/her portfolio. Child portfolios can be saved in the online system through a process called 'archiving'. This simply means that all of the documentations and ratings collected on a child can be stored online even if the child has left the program. This is an important feature of GOLD that allows a child's portfolio to be reactivated if he/she returns to the program or enrolls in another district within Arizona. (See "Transferring Portfolios between Programs" below.)

Archiving portfolios of children that have un-enrolled also allows the program to now use this "open slot" to start a *new* portfolio for a *new* child without requiring the purchase of a new subscription. Each program has the ability to archive a certain percentage of their total purchased subscriptions at no additional cost. After reaching this maximum number of archived portfolios, Teaching Strategies charges a small fee for each additional archived portfolio.

Transferring Portfolios between Programs

If a child is known to be transferring from one program/district to another that is also located in Arizona, this portfolio can be transferred to the new program/district.

An administrator from the program/district from which the child is **UNENROLLING** must email or fax a completed and signed GOLD Child Portfolio Transfer Request forms to the Arizona Department of Education/ Early Childhood Education unit. A separate form must be completed and signed by an administrator from the program/district to which the child is **ENROLLING**. The administrators completing these forms should be the same individuals with Administrator access in GOLD online. See page 20 titled "GOLD Child Portfolio Transfer Request form". **A completed form must be received by both programs/districts before the transfer of a child's portfolio will be processed.**

GOLD Child Portfolio Transfer Request

(A fill-in PDF version of form will be available on ADE/ECE Webpage in September. If needed sooner, contact Holly Ford to request one via email)

Administrator: Complete *only* the top portion of this form if the child is **UNENROLLING** from your program/district and you want a portfolio **transferred FROM** your GOLD account. Completed forms for each requested portfolio transfer must emailed to holly.ford@azed.gov or faxed to 602-542-2730.

SAIS ID#	**Sample SAIS ID**
Child initials and Date of Birth	**John Doe**
Current Program	**XYZ Program**
Current Site	**XYZ Site**
Current Teacher	**Ms. Sample**
Current Class	**AM Class**
Administrator **Name** **Position Title** **Date**	

Administrator: Complete *only* the bottom portion of this form if the child is **ENROLLING** into your program/district and you want a portfolio **transferred TO** your GOLD account. Completed forms for each requested portfolio transfer must be emailed to holly.ford@azed.gov or faxed to 602-542-2730.

SAIS ID#	**Sample SAIS ID**
Child initials and Date of Birth	**John Doe**
New Program	**XYZ Program**
New Site	**XYZ Site**
New Teacher	**Ms. Sample**
New Class	**AM Class**
Administrator **Name** **Position Title** **Date**	

Conducting Assessment with Preschool Children with Special Needs Placed in Least Restrictive Environments

All preschool children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are the responsibility of the school district in which they reside, regardless of their placement, the type or extent of special education services provided and their status as being dual enrolled in two different programs (e.g. Head Start in the morning, district preschool in the afternoon). This responsibility includes ensuring that assessment data for children with IEPs has been entered accurately and on time for children placed in least restrictive environments such as Head Start programs, private placements and children receiving services on an itinerant basis.

The educator or service provider that has the greatest degree of interaction with the child should be responsible for completing the GOLD assessment. This should be verified by the team that serves the child as to who will have primary responsible for final ratings based on data that is entered from all team members. Document the name(s) of the person(s) responsible for conducting the assessment in the IEP. In the case of Head Start, community education classroom and private preschool, this would typically be the classroom teacher. In the case of itinerant services, this would typically be the speech-language pathologist. In all cases, district administrators will have access to the online portfolios of children with special needs.

In the case of children enrolled in both Head Start and district preschool, staff from both programs can enter documentation in online portfolios. Staff from the district and the Head Start should reach consensus regarding the ratings chosen for children enrolled in both programs. A teacher or other designee at the district will be responsible for actually entering the ratings and finalizing data at each checkpoint date within the online portfolios for these children.

Conducting Assessment with Children Receiving Itinerant or Home-based Services

Many preschool children in Arizona receive special education services on an itinerant or home-based basis only. This means that children do not participate in a preschool classroom in which a teacher can observe their development. In this scenario, the related service provider or home-based visitor may be the only professional that sees the child regularly and is responsible for conducting the assessment. This can be very challenging due to the limited time and context in which a service provider sees the children on his or her caseload.

Below are suggestions for service providers responsible for conducting assessments:

- Plan therapy sessions based on play activities so that developmental skills might naturally be observed, independent of direct interventions. Observe for multiple measures during a single activity.
- Replace a few individual 1:1 sessions for children with services for children in small groups and in various settings, e.g. park, library activity groups. This would allow for the observation of skills, generalization of skills, and opportunities for peer interactions. Set up play groups offering typical children a preschool environment as typical peers. If available, spend one day per week providing services in the classroom/center/common site to allow data gathering in a typical daily environment.
- Explain to parents the type of information you want to gather about their children and why. Create a plan to regularly collect information from parents via email, phone, in person or other means. Ask families to share photos, drawings, or other examples of a child's skills to inform ratings of specific measures.
- Use intake information to inform ratings, e.g. referrals from Head Start might include information that addresses all developmental domains. Include questions on intake forms for parents and referring teachers targeted to specific measures.
- Think about where children spend their time and identify potential collaborators that can share observations, work samples, photos, etc. (i.e. child care provider, teacher at faith-based center).
- During IEP development, under "Time," identify a specific number of days for direct sessions and a specific number of days for consultation/collaboration. Plan to work a portion of the time in a variety of settings and identify these settings on the IEP. Identify in the IEP that one week a month is dedicated to diagnostic observations of a child.

These suggestions were adapted from the Napa County Office of Education. More suggestions can be seen at: draccess.org/assessors/guidancefordrdp/StrategiesToSupportSLPs.html

Mandated Federal Reporting for Children with Special Needs

During the course of the program year and *especially at the end of the year*, a "Part B Exit Request" must be completed for preschool children with IEPs. This process is essential to ensuring that assessment data will be reported to the Office of Special Education Programs **ONLY** for children with IEPs that have **exited preschool** for one or more of the following reasons:

a) Dismissed from special education
b) Transition to kindergarten
c) Moving out of state
d) Withdrawal from the preschool program (*does not include moving to another district or program*)

Important to Note:

- Completing an exit request in GOLD for a child does not mean that the child's data is deleted from the system. This process simply flags the child's data to be included when federal reports are run.
- If the child is continuing in preschool but is no longer receiving special education services, the child's record is maintained and can continue to be used for progress monitoring in the system even though they have been "exited" for federal reporting purposes.
- If the child is transitioning out of preschool, the child record should be archived after the assessment checkpoint data has been finalized and the exiting process is completed.
- If the child's status is not changing at the end of the program year and they will be returning to the preschool special education program, finalization of the checkpoint data is the only action required.

Process for Completing "Part B Exit Request" in GOLD

1. Login to www.teachingstrategies.com, click the GOLD icon on the left of your Dashboard, click **Change Role** on the top right of the screen, and select **Admin Site** to get to your Administrator Site.
2. Select **Classes** from under the Administration Tab, then click **GO** next to the Class where the children are located.
3. From the Action box on the right of your screen, select **OSEP Exit Status Form**.
4. Check the boxes next to the children's names who you would like to exit, and select **UPDATE**.
5. Put in the Part B Exit Date, choose the Exit Status and select **UPDATE**.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Who is qualified to conduct the assessment?*
   All those that are in contact with the child can contribute to observations/work samples. Parent interview/parent observations should be treated as valid information that can contribute to ratings. One person is designated to finalize ratings based on observations that are recorded in GOLD.

2. *When must children be assessed?*
   On-going progress monitoring requires that teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers observe children and document these observations on a daily and weekly basis. "Checkpoints" are simply three points in time at which teachers will stop to reflect upon and rate this documentation. See Checkpoint tab in GOLD or refer to chart on page 17 for exact dates. All documentation should be entered into GOLD online by these dates to ensure that it is included when The Arizona Department of Education/ Early Childhood Education unit exports the data for all programs.

3. *If a child has been privately placed by his/her parents, are we required to assess this child?* If IEP/services are continuing, any preschool child with an IEP must be assessed regardless of their placement.

4. *If a child is only receiving itinerant therapy services, does he/she have to be assessed?*
   YES. Any child with an IEP must have assessment data recorded in GOLD. See page 21 for guidance. Accepting parent observations or child care teacher and other adults that know the child is a valid method of collecting data.

5. *Why are districts required to enter data for fall, winter and spring (or beginning, middle and end of IEP)*? Arizona is building a state-wide system based on best practices that drive instruction and program improvement. By rating documentation in the winter (mid-year), teachers can reflect on the data to make instruction or program modifications that will support each child toward the next level of progress during the remainder of the program year. In the case of children with special needs, this mid-year rating will support documentation of progress toward IEP goals or assist in developing the next IEP.

6. *What does it mean when we say a child has "exited"?*
   This means that a child has been dismissed from special education by the IEP team, has transitioned to Kindergarten, moved out of state or has withdrawn from preschool and not enrolled in another Arizona program. See page 22 for more information. If the child continues in an Arizona preschool program after being dismissed from special education, data should continue to be collected as a means to monitor the child's progress, alert to developmental issues that hinder the child's development and be a means of reporting progress to parents.

7. *What if a child transfers from/to a new district in Arizona?*
   See page 18 for instructions on how to transfer an online portfolio to a child's new district.

References

[i] Grisham-Brown, Jennifer, Mary Louise Hemmeter, and Kristie Pretti-Frontczak. *Blended Practices for Teaching Young Children in Inclusive Settings.* Pg. 115. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing, 2005.

[ii] NAEYC Position Statement. Pg.1. November 2003.
http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/pscape.pdf

[iii] NAEYC Position Statement. Pgs. 3-4. November 2003.
http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/pscape.pdf

[iv] Grisham-Brown, Jennifer, et. al. Pgs. 88-89. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing, 2005.
[v] Teaching Strategies GOLD Objectives for Development and Learning, Introduction pg. xxii
[vi] Teaching Strategies GOLD, online resource library

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