



The Assessment Continuum Guide for Pre-K through Third Grade in Arizona

Arizona Department of Education

Early Childhood Education

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Revised 2016

Table of Contents

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| Table of Contents..... | 1 |
| Acknowledgments | 2 |
| Preface | 3 |
| Creating a Local Assessment System | 4 |
| PreK-Grade 3 Assessment Cycle..... | 7 |
| Recommendation #1: Screening Measures..... | 8 |
| Key Features of a Screening Tool: | 9 |
| Recommendation #2: Formative Assessments | 10 |
| Select an Ongoing Progress Monitoring Assessment Instrument | 12 |
| Formative Assessment Capacity-Building..... | 12 |
| Conducting and Collecting Evidence | 13 |
| Analyzing and Utilizing Data..... | 15 |
| Quality Adult-Child Interactions..... | 16 |
| Recommendation #3: Kindergarten Entry Assessment..... | 18 |
| Key Features of a K-3 Assessment Plan | 19 |
| Ways to Use Data..... | 21 |
| Frequently Asked Questions..... | 23 |
| Appendix A | 25 |
| Appendix B | 27 |
| Appendix C | 29 |

Acknowledgments

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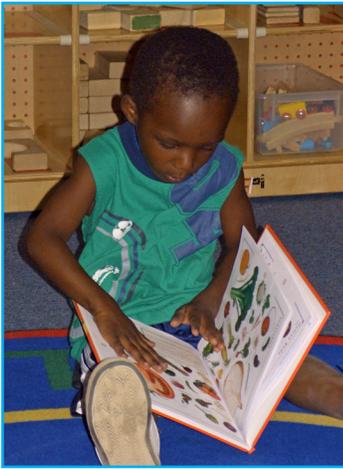
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Preface

According to the position statement from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), assessment is, “the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information” and “the basic process of finding out what the child knows and can do in relation to their optimum development. With that knowledge, an appropriate plan for effective instructional strategies to help them develop and learn can be identified, monitoring their progress along the way.” As educators, our goal should always be to help students make progress toward achieving their “optimum development.” Using data gathered through the assessment process; administrators, teachers, and students should make decisions that support the best interests of students. This guidance document was developed to promote best practices for this kind of beneficial assessment process in an early childhood setting. The recommendations are for components of a comprehensive assessment system that utilizes a robust continuum of tools and resources. The recommendations rely on researched and/or evidence-based practices that meet rigorous professional standards that have been shown to positively affect outcomes for all children and families within our communities. This document is intended as a resource for all administrators and teachers who use screening measures, environmental assessments, teacher-child interaction assessments, formative assessments, and Kindergarten entry assessments (KEA).

An additional benefit of using this guidance document is to meet state and federal compliance requirements. For programs receiving federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) funds, preschool assessment results are reported to ADE using the tool mandated by the State. In turn, ADE synthesizes the data and reports to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) on behalf of those programs. The Student Accountability and Information System (SAIS), which is currently used in every school district throughout Arizona, is also used to gather data. SAIS is an automated data collection and reporting system that will greatly enhance the ability to evaluate programs, identify trends, and document the benefits of investment in early childhood programs (birth through Grade 3) in Arizona.

This document will also assist programs in assessing the implementation of the *Arizona College and Career Ready Standards* (AZCCRS). The AZCCRS call for programs to have focus and coherence in instruction and assessment: “While the standards delineate specific expectations in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, each standard need not be a separate focus for instruction and assessment. Often, several standards can be addressed by a single rich task. For example, when discussing something students have written or read, students are also demonstrating their speaking and listening skills” (AZCCRS, page vi). The intent of this document is to demonstrate to programs in the state of Arizona the cyclical process of instruction and assessment, utilized to scaffold all children’s learning. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Local Education Agency (LEA) to ensure assessment data is successfully submitted for the district and on behalf of any collaborating partners.



Creating a Local Assessment System

*“Quality instruction needs to be contingent on who the students are, what they bring to the school context with them, and be able to adapt instruction in response to a particular language and content needs the children manifest within real time.”
~Margaret Heritage, 2012*

To develop a local assessment system, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, “the program should have a coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments. The assessments used should be valid and reliable, as well as specific for the purpose and for the population for which it will be used. The program 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.” At minimum, programs should be utilizing an assessment for:

- (a) Screening measures;
- (b) Formative assessment of all children; and
- (c) Kindergarten entry

Creating a birth to third grade assessment continuum is crucial for the children of Arizona. Without a common understanding of the essential components of a comprehensive assessment system in early childhood, there is a limited picture of children’s growth and development before third grade. Questions are raised about what to assess in order to gain insight on growth and development within each grade level. When there are no commonalities in assessment systems, continuity from birth to third grade is difficult and administrators at state, district, and local community levels may have limited information to answer key questions and make decisions. In Arizona’s communities, systematic and comprehensive local assessment systems need to be in place for pre-Kindergarten through third grade to bring coherence to a system that supports Arizona’s youngest learners and the early childhood educators teaching them.

Implementing a local assessment system is not a task that should be completed by programs in isolation. It will require all early childhood education (ECE) programs in a community to meet and dialogue about what may work best in their individual programs. In Arizona, early childhood education programs are defined as programs serving children from ages birth to eight years of age. Therefore, while setting up a local assessment system, LEAs should begin the process by convening an ECE team which includes instructional members, preschool through third grade. Additionally, collaborating partners, such as from a local Head Start or private child care center, should also be included. In some cases, related service providers will need to work with teachers from other

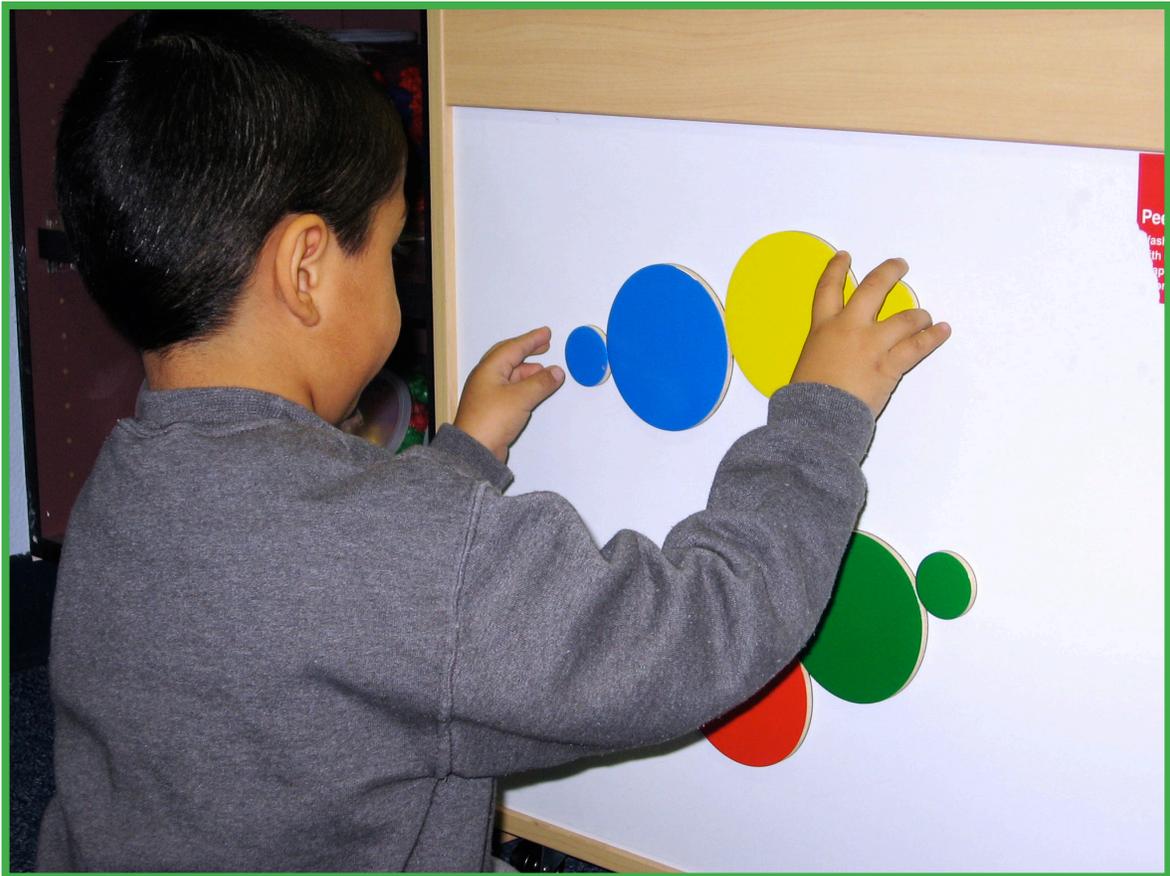
programs or families to obtain the information needed for an assessment. Building relationships within the ECE community, birth through third grade, will help to ensure that the assessment system is completed efficiently and reflects best practices. A written record or plan is recommended to clearly outline the agreed upon process and implementation of all assessments, including the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved.

While working to utilize a comprehensive assessment system, stakeholders may have varied implementation challenges. Teachers and principals may find multiple parts challenging and may require additional professional development in areas such as: the components of assessment, reasons for assessment, what assessment looks like in practice, how to build a successful assessment system, and how to utilize the data collected. In addition, educators and administrators may encounter a challenge in understanding each of the learning domains and trajectories referenced within a given assessment. Another topic programs have identified that can be challenging is finding ways to engage families. These are all topics that should be discussed so the community can develop strategies to address these identified challenges. Additional concerns to discuss may include the following:

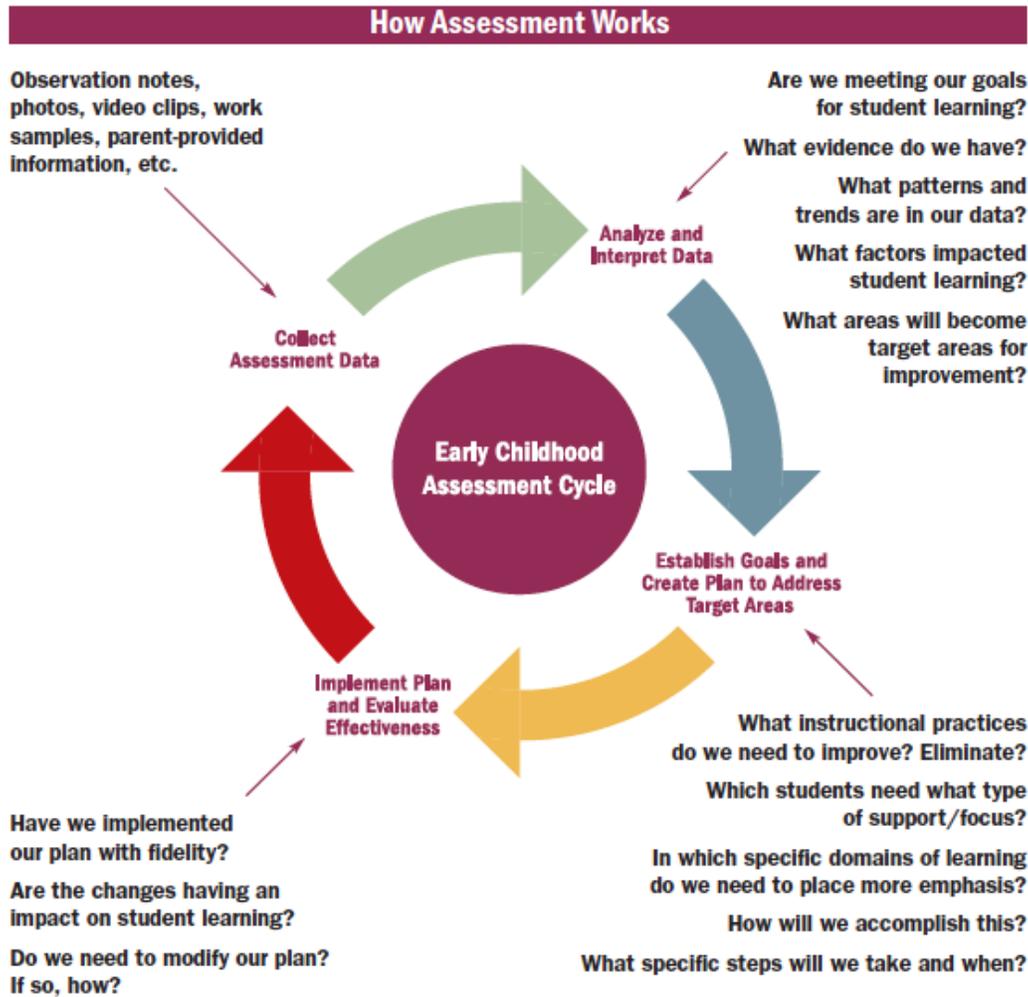
- How will staff be trained on the use of each assessment tool? And followed up with to ensure the training was effective?
- What type of coaching may be available for support?
- Who will collect data?
- Who is responsible for entering data?
- What steps will be taken to ensure the quality of data?
- Who is responsible for analyzing and summarizing data?
- How often will the information collected on individual children be analyzed and summarized?
- How will the data be aggregated?
- When does data need to be received by program administration?
- What are important data entry dates for each assessment at the local level?
- If a student receives itinerant services, who is responsible for data collection?
- Who is responsible for each assessment tool?
- How will the program ensure high quality education and assessment for children?



- Does data need to be shared between collaborative partners and what is the system going to be for that?
- What steps will be taken to measure the reliability of data?
- How do programs ensure the reliability of the observers and how often?
- How will programs share information to other partners in the community?
- How will programs ensure fidelity of the Assessment tool?
- How are we going to screen children who are over 5 and did not participate in Child Find?



PreK-Grade 3 Assessment Cycle



After reviewing the assessment cycle and discussing any areas of concern, communities can reference this guide for recommendations on three assessment practices: screening, formative assessment, and kindergarten entry assessment (KEA). Programs should discuss as a team which assessment(s) they will use in each area of practice (screening, formative assessment, KEA). By selecting and utilizing an assessment in each of these areas, programs can ensure their assessment data is organized to best represent the child and make use of teachers' time.

In addition to collecting data on the children, it is also important to collect data on the program. Examples of program data collection tools can be found in *Arizona's Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten* (Program Guidelines). Some tools that are currently being used in the field are the *Environmental Rating Scales (ERS)*: infant-toddler (*ITERS-R*), preschool-kindergarten (*ECERS-R*), and family- home settings (*FCCERS-R*); the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (*CLASS*) tool; and Program Guidelines.

Recommendation #1: Screening Measures



A screening procedure is a short, economical, easily-administered measure designed to determine whether a more comprehensive evaluation is needed. A screening is not a diagnostic assessment. A screening can be accomplished using a tool that has already been standardized. A district may choose to design their own screening procedures to screen, but all five developmental areas must be screened. To ensure fair and reliable results, a district must be consistent in the screening process for all children. **A screening tool cannot be used as part of an evaluation or comprehensive developmental assessment (CDA).** For more information regarding screening in Arizona, please refer to the *Help for Early Learning Professionals (HELP)* manual, available at www.azed.gov/earlychildhood.

Screening procedures should include vision, hearing, and consideration for the five developmental areas, which are cognitive, communication, motor, social or behavioral, and adaptive development. Screenings may also include observations from child care providers and families, family interviews, review of medical data, and development or educational records.

Districts are encouraged to accept screening information from other agencies rather than conducting another screening (i.e., information provided by a local Head Start). If data reveals an inordinate amount of referred children do not qualify for services from that outside screener, then the district should work with the referring agency to ensure more reliable referrals.

Screenings are to be used to identify children who need more intense assessment to determine the potential for intervention services. This is the “first alert” to answer questions like, “who is at risk?” and “who needs close monitoring?” When referencing the Program Guidelines, guideline 3.7, indicators I-K are recommended best practices when discussing screenings in an early childhood program.

Child Find is a component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires districts to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities, aged birth through 21, located within their geographical boundaries who are in need of early intervention or special education services. It is helpful to some districts to schedule screenings periodically, but no more than 45 calendar days apart to meet this requirement. This obligation does not cease in summer months, and it may require that districts schedule at least one day in June or July to conduct screenings. Larger districts may have the capacity to hold screenings weekly to reduce the amount of time from receiving phone calls/referrals to conducting screenings, while smaller districts may have the ability to schedule a screening within a week of receiving a referral. Private providers should have working relationships with local school districts to ensure their families are aware of and have the opportunity to attend these scheduled screenings.

Key Features of a Screening Tool

1. Should include multiple sources of information, including family perspective in gathering and reviewing the results, and
2. Should be standardized in the administration and scoring, and
3. Must be culturally and linguistically relevant, and
4. Should only be used for the purpose for which they are developed, and
5. Should be used to identify children who could benefit from further assessment

Some examples of screeners are:

- DIAL 4-Development Indicators for Assessment of Learning
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- Brigance: Early Childhood Screener
- DIBELS-Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
- AIMSWEB
- E-Lap Early Learning Accomplishment Profile
- Battelle Developmental Inventory Screening Test
- Peabody Developmental Motor Scales

Questions to consider in your local assessment system for screening:

- When? (At the _____ of the school year)
- How often? (and every ____ days after that)
- Who? (____students will be screened)
- By whom?
- Purpose? (To identify children who may be at-risk for academic failure without supports, or, who need intervention or enrichment)
- How can the program utilize one of these tools to screen children age five, but not yet served in a kindergarten setting?



Recommendation #2: Formative Assessments



“Formative assessment is a dynamic, interactive process involving ongoing assessment of how learning is evolving, and subsequent adjustments to teaching and learning to meet students’ immediate learning needs” (Heritage, 2013).

When thinking about assessments, it is important to think about putting a plan in place to improve early childhood education learning and instruction through more efficient and effective use of student-centered assessments. The early childhood years can represent a pivotal period in educational development. Achievement gaps that grow during the preschool years are either solidified or eliminated during their primary years. (Graves, 2006; Reynolds, Ou, & Topitzes, 2004). In order to optimize student learning, teachers and administrators need to utilize a formative assessment process that is able to identify the depths of a student’s knowledge in all areas of growth.

Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended instruction outcomes (CSSO FAST SCASS, 2006). In recent years, formative assessment has received considerable attention in the United States. A formative assessment is not a quiz administered several times a year, but rather should be included as a component of the assessment system along with summative and interim/benchmark measures (Heritage, 2004).

A formative assessment is defined as a low stakes assessment that is used to monitor student learning. It provides ongoing descriptive feedback that can be utilized by instructors to improve their teaching, as well as help teachers recognize where a student is struggling and address problems immediately. Effective formative assessments also allow for peer and self-assessment for students to create learning goals for themselves. These assessments allow students to use metacognitive thinking about their learning, by using criteria such as a rubric that indicates what successful performance looks like. These could be teacher-created rubrics, or students could utilize picture rubrics; these would be a program’s decision and up to the program to develop. Using this method allows a student to adapt their learning to achieve their own goals and successes.

Formative assessment planning should include:

- Obtaining an ongoing progress monitoring assessment instrument
- Assessment training-ensuring data integrity
- Conducting the assessment/collecting evidence
- Analyzing and utilizing the data

Formative assessment must provide concentration to the learning and development of the whole child. In order to effectively assess a child holistically, collaboration must take place. This is including but not limited to, a child's culture, family, health, and prior experiences. A classroom culture in which teachers, students, and families are partners in learning should be established. This assessment should be an organic part of instruction and a child's learning process. Ideally, the assessment system should engage teachers and students, but also include input from parents, families, school support staff, and other stakeholders that are involved in a child's life. Ongoing interactions about learning goals, achievements, and adjustment to learning activities should be occurring collaboratively with teachers, students, parents, and other learning professionals involved in the child's education.

The benefits of a more holistic view, when assessing children, can reach far beyond just the content areas of learning. *All* aspects of the child's growth and development are important to lifelong success. When each area is addressed in a child's assessment, the likelihood of that child being prepared for a career or for the rigor of college increases. When wholly supported, children will be better prepared to overcome current and future challenges, as well as find opportunities in our global world.

It is important to notice in the assessment system, progress within learning domains does not take place in isolation. Development in one area of learning will influence the development in other areas as well. Just as holistic teaching is best practices, so is assessment of the whole child.

The assessment should have multiple forms of evidence such as detailed observations, student work samples, conversations in written form, and pictures or videos of instructional tasks. The assessment system should be an ongoing and integral part of the instruction and learning process that teachers and students use to guide lesson planning for individual children. It should be designed to inform learning and guide daily instruction.

Through this process, students should be better able to meet the AZCCRS. The standards define what all students are expected to know and demonstrate; it does not define how teachers should teach. Through on-going assessment, the teacher will be able to assess what the children know at any moment, and make an effort to differentiate instruction to best scaffold the child's learning. In doing so, teachers can supplement the standards with various strategies to help children achieve their learning goals. For instance, the AZCCRS state, "the use of play with young children is not specified by the standards, but it is welcomed as a valuable activity in its own right as a way to help students meet the expectation of the standards" (AZCCRS, page vii). In very young learners, hands-on experiences should be used to help students make sense of abstract concepts presented by some standards.



When referencing the Program Guidelines, guideline 3.7 states, "children's growth in all developmental areas is routinely assessed in an on-going manner. Appropriate assessments of children are used for program and curricular planning and implementation, communicating with parents, and identification of children with special needs." The emphasis here would be the on-going use of an appropriate assessment to inform decisions at a local level. The Program

Guidelines provide additional recommended indicators of appropriate assessments for children in high-quality programs and how they should be bridged to Kindergarten, first, second, and third grade.

The data gathered through an on-going assessment is entered into a student's portfolio or profile. The data will help a teacher be able to identify where each child is on the learning progression in relation to instructional goals. The data will also be entered into the state's SAIS system and used in the state's longitudinal data system. This collected data allows the state to fulfill data requests and share the data with partnering agencies. An example of how the data is used is the summative assessment reporting made to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). For programs receiving federal *Individuals with Disabilities Act* (IDEA) funds, an Annual Performance Report (APR) is reported to OSEP annually. Appendix A covers in detail the OSEP reporting and is specific to programs serving children with special needs.

The following sections detail the components described above in planning for a successful formative assessment component:



Select an Ongoing Progress Monitoring Assessment Instrument

For programs receiving IDEA-Preschool funds, a common assessment tool is used across all programs. A formal procurement process takes place at the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to ensure a tool is chosen that assesses students in a holistic manner, and meets the needs of educators and administrators. Other early childhood programs can choose to adopt the same tool or pick a different instrument based on the needs of their children. This guidance document can be used in the process of selecting a tool or tools.

In birth to third grade programs, an evaluation of assessment tools should be conducted to discover what instruments are used by the program to assess children. Programs should consider if one tool is assessing multiple areas of development, rendering another tool unnecessary; or, if a tool is not comprehensive, what combination of tools would present a more complete picture of a child's development. Screeners should also be considered at this time. Programs should evaluate how much data they received from the initial screening and what assessment is the correct next step for the student.

Formative Assessment Capacity-Building

It is critical to ensure that all teachers and observers receive professional development on the implementation of the assessment tool chosen by the program to ensure they are administering the assessment in the same way. In many cases this will also include teacher assistants, paraprofessionals, or therapists, as they are responsible for collecting, uploading and reporting data, too. The integrity of the data collected is dependent on the knowledge of the persons collecting the data, as well as the consistent use of a selected tool. Thus, formative assessment capacity-building should be given intentional consideration.

For the purpose of statewide data reporting and comparisons, integrity in the use of the assessment tool is important. All of the on-going progress assessment tools require collection of anecdotal notes, samples of children’s work and other forms of authentic, qualitative information. Professional development opportunities should focus on the skill of accurately documenting observations, organizing and interpreting the data, then using the data to make decisions about instruction. Therefore programs need to plan, dialogue, and monitor for the consistent collection of the data.

Conducting Assessments and Collecting Evidence

In order to gain a deeper insight into students’ needs and measure students’ growth, teachers must collect data throughout the year. Teachers and students need to collect evidence so together they can clearly understand where they are on the developmental trajectory. “To gain a robust understanding of students’ learning needs, teachers need to collect data from a variety of sources (WestED, 2006).” Sources that are available to review student data are in state assessment tools, curriculum based assessments, classroom projects, and teacher-child interactions.

Interim assessments should be done at regular intervals, in a consistent manner across grade level and content areas. This type of data allows teachers to gain immediate feedback about their students learning, which could lead to differentiation of instruction for groups of students. For example, a teacher assessing and collecting data on students’ phonological awareness abilities could show that some students are struggling with this skill set and require additional small group instruction. The teacher would continue to assess and determine if the intervention was successful.

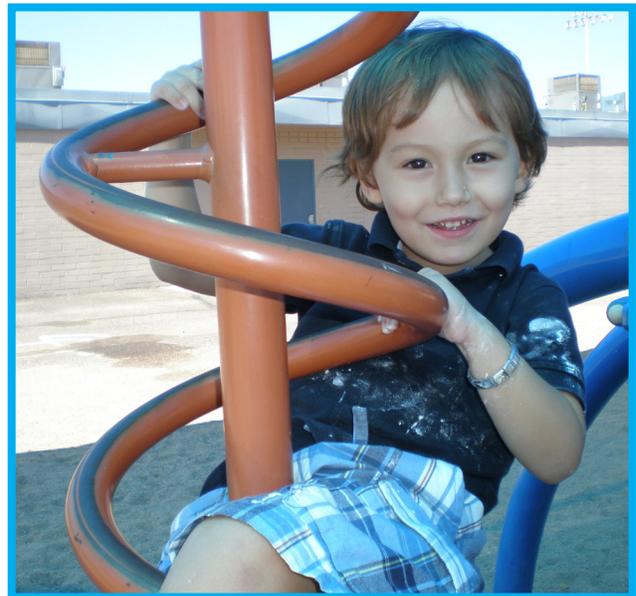
Some questions to consider:

1. What evidence should be collected?

Varied approaches are utilized throughout the assessment process to collect evidence of children’s development. These forms of evidence collected may include but are not limited to:

- Observational notes
- Photos of the child
- Pictures or drawings done by the child
- Writing samples by the child
- Language samples
- Video or audio recordings of the child

Efforts should be made by all staff to ensure that collectors of evidence or those conducting the assessment are provided with tools to write, document, and organize quality assessment data in ways that naturally fit into the environment and routine of the child. Assessments should be able to be repeated and sensitive to small changes over time so the data can be used to inform and evaluate daily instruction.



The amount of evidence collected for each child will vary depending on the assessment tool, local policy, and the accepted best practices at the local level. The early childhood administration and educators should decide what best practices are for those children in the program at that time. For additional guidance with best practices in a high-quality environment, please refer to guideline 3.7 in the Program Guidelines.

2. Who is assessed with a formative assessment?

The early childhood ongoing progress monitoring assessment is intended for all children. All participating children in preschool programs through grade 3 benefit from an ongoing progress monitoring system. In addition, all state funded ECE programs that include an enrolled child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will use the state mandated assessment tool. A formative assessment tool may serve as a successful option in meeting this requirement. It is important to note that regardless of the requirements a program must meet, all children should still be assessed with the same tool.

3. When does formative assessment occur?

Instructional staff should begin collecting data in all areas of development at the beginning of the child's enrollment. At a minimum, all children should have a baseline assessment completed within 45 days. It is best practice to complete the baseline assessment as close to the first day of enrollment for that child. The baseline assessment should be done once the child has acclimated to the teacher, acclimated to other students, and acclimated to the environment and routines.

4. Why should we assess?

The final piece to formative assessment is the ability to analyze and utilize the assessment data. The intent of the formative assessment is to gather information about children in order to best meet their needs and provide descriptive feedback. Knowledge of children's abilities will assist instructional staff and IEP teams to plan developmentally appropriate curriculum, goals, and effective instructional strategies. The teacher, student, family, and other educators in the child's life should review the data and discuss how to best support the student. The wealth of information generated from using ongoing progress monitoring and a formative assessment should drive decision making within individualized instruction, classroom lesson planning, and program-wide changes. The decision-making should have a cause and effect on individualized instruction, classrooms, and programs.



Analyzing and Utilizing the Data

After collecting the data, programs need to analyze the data to improve instruction for all children. It is recommended that programs utilize the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model. This model encourages programs to individualize instruction for children based on data. MTSS is the foundation for improving student performance because children will be able to receive interventions and supports quickly. Students can have enrichment and re-teaching in areas where they are struggling or extension for students who are already proficient. MTSS works best when programs frequently analyze their data and have data teams to interpret the data. Data teams are created at the local level with personnel the ECQUIP team would find valuable in data analysis. In some programs utilizing the MTSS model it has been found that putting students into small groups has had significant improvement on outcomes for all students. Programs are encouraged to keep groups fluid and frequent data analysis should be used to ensure that students are in the right groups at the right times. Thus, a cycle of reviewing data to drive instruction to improve outcomes for all children is created.

While reviewing the data, programs should be asking questions both about the data itself and about the assessment tool they are utilizing to establish goals and to create plans to address target areas.

While reviewing the data, programs should be asking questions about the assessment tool that will be able to establish goals and create plans to address target areas. For example:

1. Are we meeting our goals for students' learning with this tool?
2. What evidence do we have to show we are meeting our goals?
3. What patterns or trends do we notice in our data?
4. What factors are impacting student learning?
5. What areas can we target for improvement?
6. How often should we continue to review this data?



Once the data has been reviewed and analyzed, programs should plan the next steps, taking into consideration plans for individualized student support and program-wide systemic changes. Programs should be able to establish goals and create plans to address target areas. When analyzing the data to make instructional decisions, some questions to consider are:

1. What instructional practices do we need to improve or eliminate?
2. Which students need a different type of support?
3. How can I group students most appropriately?
4. In which specific learning domains do we need more emphasis?
5. In which area(s) do we need further professional development?
6. How will this be accomplished? What steps do we need to take to do this and when?

Quality Adult-Child Interactions



“Teachers need to be conscious of what students are learning, how a student’s learning is evolving. Then teachers can adapt instruction, be responsive and meet the needs of the wide range of learners they will have in their classrooms.”
~Margaret Heritage, 2012

Young children act and interact in shared experiences with others; those social interactions play a key role in how children learn to think, reason, and communicate. It was Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky who first explained this vital connection between interactions and learning. Vygotsky explained, “for this reason, the range of knowledge and skills that a child can develop interacting with an adult or peer is greater than the child can gain alone (Vygotsky, 1978).” Since the days of Vygotsky, there has been much evidence to support this methodology as an effective construct for learning.

“Interactions are exchanges in words and gestures that you have with others. They are the exchanges that a teacher has with young children. (Dombro, Jablon, Stetson, 2011).” Each day, there are many opportunities for a teacher to be engaged in meaningful interactions with children. An interaction may take place in a small group, whole group, or individually with children. Interactions may include comments, instructions, requests, acknowledgment of a child’s effort, a hug, a greeting, or asking questions. What is important to recognize as a teacher, when working with young children is that each interaction holds the potential to make a positive impact on how a child feels about themselves and about learning (Dombro, Jablon, Stetson, 2011). Each interaction is to be a rich moment of learning that is supported and scaffolded by a teacher-thus improving a child’s feeling about him/herself & learning.

According to Program Guideline 2.2 in Arizona Program Guidelines for High Quality Education: Birth to Kindergarten Entry, “Early education programs provide well-established routine and a climate of respect to support children’s development of self-confidence, independence, problem-solving, and social skills.” The indicators within that guideline address the social interactions that teachers should be having with children daily.

Early Childhood programs, including birth through Grade 3 programs, will need to assess the quality of their adult-child interactions periodically throughout the school year. A program wants to ensure that personnel are responding to children’s needs quickly, in a way that appropriately provides comfort and assistance, as well as having high



quality conversations. Programs may need to define what a “high quality conversation is”. The recommended tool for assessing teacher-child interactions within a program is the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

The CLASS tool is an observation based instrument developed to assess classroom quality in birth through grade 3 classrooms. The CLASS tool has different manuals available that are specific to age grouped classrooms. For example, the infant CLASS tool is available for use in only infant classrooms. The CLASS tool is available in different sections and manuals.

The PreK CLASS tool has three dimensions of quality which include Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. Each dimension is broken down into indicators and each indicator is scored on a 7-point range. The scale is divided up into Low Levels (1,2 points), Medium Levels (3, 4, 5 points), and High Levels (6,7 points). The indicators for Emotional Support are positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives. The indicators for Classroom Organization include behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats. The last dimension, Instructional Support, has indicators entitled concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling. The K-3 CLASS tool although similar in nature will have different domains and dimensions, as does the infant and toddler CLASS tool.

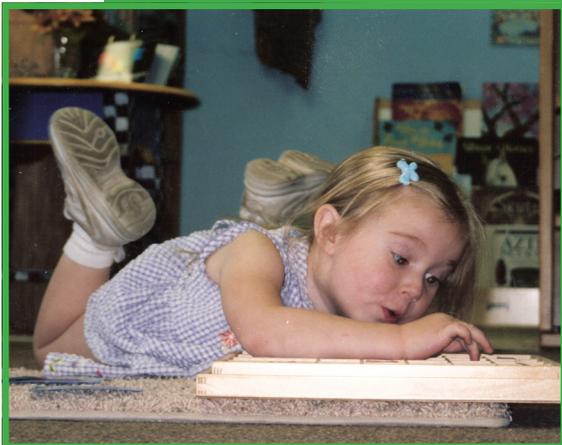


The CLASS tools are not checklists and should not be used as so. Observers should view dimensions as holistic description of classrooms. In many cases, it is not necessary to see indicators of all markers presented in the description of a given range to assign a score in that range. It is crucial that training be given around the tool and how to administer the tool if the program chooses to utilize it.

The CLASS dimensions are based on developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between students and adults are primary mechanisms of student development and learning. The CLASS dimensions are based on interactions between and among teachers and students in the classroom. In the CLASS, the focus is on what teachers DO with materials, not the materials available, as well as the interactions the teachers have with the students with the materials.

The CLASS tool has been used in thousands of classrooms, with students ranging from infancy through high school. Results from studies conducted by researchers at the University of Virginia, the Gates Foundation’s Measures of Effective Teaching Study, and elsewhere prove that CLASS scores are reliable and valid. (Teachstone)

Recommendation #3: Kindergarten Entry Assessment



Part of the program's assessment should include an understanding of the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry. A program should be committed to using data to inform classroom instruction to ensure all children read at grade level by the third grade.

Programs should be using a formative assessment tool to monitor students' progress from the early years of school through all grade levels. To support programs in this continued monitoring, ADE collaboratively, with the consortium led by North Carolina, created a Kindergarten Developmental Inventory (KDI). The goal of the consortium is to develop a formative assessment system that begins with a KDI and continues into third grade. This consortium (North Carolina, Arizona, Delaware, District of Columbia, Iowa, Maine, North Dakota, Oregon, and Rhode Island, and South Carolina as a collaborating state) is supported by three research partners (SRI International, the BUILD Initiative, and Child Trends).

Arizona, as a member of the consortium, will have the opportunity to forge partnerships and relationships within and across partner states, and will use the knowledge gained through participation in the Consortium to guide decisions about the KDI and formative assessment for Arizona's students in kindergarten through third grade. The enhanced K-3 assessment is referred to as the Enhanced Assessment for the Consortium (EAC) and where the discussion applies only to the KDI portion, it is referred to the EAC-KDI.

The consortium's theory of action sees assessment as a powerful tool for improving student outcomes. The overall purpose of the EAC assessment system is to provide information for teachers and students to guide instruction and learning - this primary purpose will guide the development of the assessment. The purpose of the KDI, the first assessment point in the continuous assessment system, is to provide teachers with information to improve instruction while providing families with information on children's skills and knowledge.

The KDI will be available to adopt as a common statewide kindergarten assessment for all children. Such an assessment will measure children's skills and competencies across all Essential Domains of Learning, per *Arizona's School Readiness Framework*. It will also deliver relevant data to kindergarten teachers and parents, to inform instruction, provide feedback, show the impact statewide and community-level system-change efforts, and link assessment results from preschool with assessments from the K-12 setting. The KDI is essential for examining varying levels of development in children by reviewing the different background characteristics (e.g. race, ethnicity, culture, language, identified disabilities or special needs, geographic location, parental education, participation in different early learning programs and

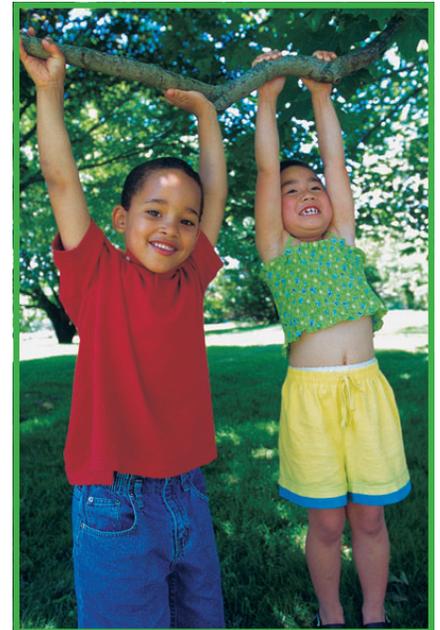


services). The KDI will allow teachers and administrators to determine where there is a particular need for additional attention in the early learning years, particularly in closing gaps for children with high needs.

Additionally, the KDI will also address the needs of other users including principals, district and regional administrators, state policymakers, and advocates, such as providing aggregate data to monitor trends across cohorts of children.

A KDI, which is useful in planning educational experiences that address children's needs throughout the school year, is limited in the ability to inform on-going teaching and learning because it is administered once at the beginning of the kindergarten year. Developing a formative assessment process that builds on information gathered at kindergarten entry and spans kindergarten through third grade will improve continuity across the grade span and significantly influence student achievement. The KDI is not meant to be used as a pencil and paper test that children take in order to enter kindergarten, but rather is an inventory that is completed within the first 6-8 weeks of kindergarten. The KDI is an assessment across all learning domains, including social-emotional, approaches to learning, language development, cognitive, and physical/motor development. The KDI is not to be used as a gate-keeper for kindergarten entry for children, but as a tool to help teachers assess the whole child through a formative assessment process.

Finally, another feature that Arizona will emphasize is the use of the KDI to strengthen parent and family engagement in the process and, where possible, to draw upon the expertise of parents about their children's special abilities and skills. Arizona sees the KDI as a tool that teachers can use in communicating with parents and enlisting them as partners in their child's educational development. One advantage of a multi-dimensional KDI is that there are almost always positive features about a child's development to convey to parents and there also are opportunities for the parents to share information that the teacher does not necessarily observe in the classroom (particularly when the child is of a different cultural or language background than the teacher).



Key Features of a K-3 Assessment Plan

1. The use of universal screening tools for all students to provide baseline data that may be used to assess which students meet identified benchmarks, and those who do not.
2. The use of a diagnostic tool for students who are not at benchmark, and for whom additional information is necessary, to determine which areas a student needs intentional targeted instruction.
3. Progress monitoring tools, that are formative assessment based, to provide information to help determine effectiveness of instruction, student progress, and plans for intervention.
4. Assessment with the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA), is required for k-12 students who have a primary or home language that is other than English. The assessment plan should include the administration of the AZELLA for eligible students entering an Arizona public school. All Arizona public school districts and charter schools have an AZELLA District Test Coordinator who should be included in K-3 assessment planning.

Collect Assessment data:

- Provide supports that foster a data-driven culture within the school
- What factors are impacting student learning?
- Collect observation notes, photos, video clips, work sample, parent provided information, screening results, and information from all stakeholders involved with the child
- Interpret data and develop hypotheses.

Create a common mission for school wide data use by analyzing and interpreting data:

- Need a data team. Develop and maintain a districtwide data system.
- Develop a written plan and professional development for teachers on the data system.
- Provide ongoing leadership, follow up, and training
- Discuss what areas are target areas for improvement
- Find out what data is available? The look for trends in the data. Are we meeting students goals?

Putting Assessment into Daily Practice

Make data part of teacher's ongoing cycle of instructional improvement:

- Are the changes having an impact on student learning?
- In which specific domains of learning do we need to place more emphasis?
- What instructional practices do we need to improve? Eliminate?
- Do we need to modify our goals and plan for improvement?

Create goals and construct a plan to address the target areas:

- Decide what specific steps will we take and when to address the target areas of improvement?
- Teach students to examine their own data and set learning goals for themselves
- Discuss which students need what types of supports
- Provide students and teachers feedback and tools
- Use student analyses to guide instructional changes.

Ways to Use Data for Change

1. Data can uncover problems that might otherwise remain invisible.

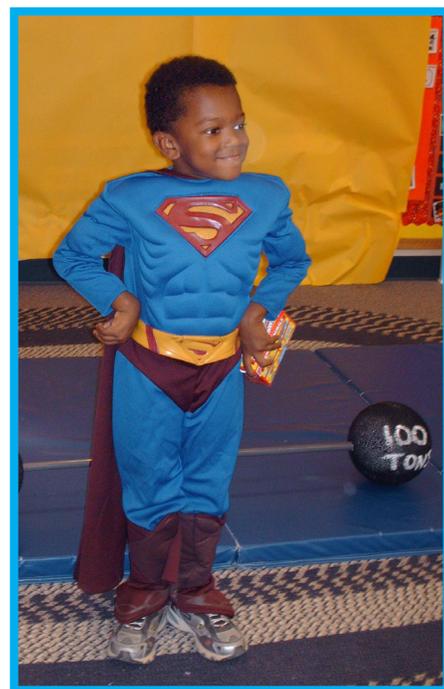
When data is disaggregated, or separated out, by student groups, the data can be especially helpful. For example, when a program disaggregates data by particular demographics on funding sources, the program can target and assist children and families in meeting their needs more individually, rather than lumping data as a whole.

2. Data can provide evidence for needed change.

Teachers and administration can review data and it can be quite compelling. For example, a group of teachers at an elementary school might work with teachers from a middle school to see how their former students were doing. They discovered through this collaboration that the majority of their bilingual students are not progressing in special education or English language tracks. The elementary school teachers became motivated to monitor and intentionally track more of the bilingual students' progress in the elementary years. Data can act as a "wake up call," alerting teachers and administrators to the need for more intentional, differentiated intervention to meet student needs.

3. Aggregated data can get to the root of problems, pinpoint areas where change is needed most, and guide the use of resources for intentional planning.

As an example, although student progress is monitored throughout their academic career, districts are observing that 80% of their high school graduates are not completing college. The district assumed it was a social problem, and therefore spent a great deal of time and money on professional development for their teachers in the area of social-emotional development/ support for high school students. However, one year the administrators conducted a survey on high school seniors to gain students' insight on what was their biggest concern after graduating high school. The survey yielded a result that most high school students were worried about their reading and writing skills. As a result, and in response to purposely utilizing their data, the district then focused time and money into developing seniors' reading and writing skills and confidence. This focused attention resulted in a greater amount of high school seniors completing their college careers.



4. Data can help schools evaluate their programs effectiveness and maintain a focus on positive outcomes for students.

As schools and districts are under constant pressure from internal and external forces they can begin to lose sight of the ultimate goal of student success. To maintain this vision, schools need an effective way of tracking student learning outcomes, monitoring their results, and evaluating their programs effectiveness. By tracking student achievement and surveying teachers' attitude, programs can expand on necessary areas of improvement.

5. Data can provide the feedback teachers and administrators need to stay on course or provide early interventions.

Data can be very empowering for schools and teachers. It can drastically energize and motivate staff. For example, using a rubric to test how students are learning language and literacy several times a year will show how effective the instruction is. Teachers and administrators should recognize that when the scores go up, they should celebrate and continue doing what is working. In addition, when scores decline, teachers can reevaluate their curriculum, instruction, and individual needs of the child to either provide additional supports or brainstorm alternate strategies.

6. Data can prevent overreliance on standardized test scores.

Standardized test scores only provide a single snapshot of a school's success or challenges. Therefore, there are many other views of data that schools miss when they focus solely on standardized test scores. When focusing on only one snapshot in time, school administration can miss several opportunities for improvement or celebration. Other good data sources may include: performance assessments, disaggregated results, enrollment figures, and information about differentiated instructional gains.

7. Data can prevent one-size-fits-all and quick fix to solutions for children.

Data can help schools and teachers dig deeper and more fully understand a problem before stepping into action. For example, if an administrator notices math scores declining for students, they might purchase several sets of manipulatives for each classroom. Although these materials will be valuable, if the teacher is not comfortable utilizing them through a hands-on instructional approach the students' outcomes will not improve. On the other hand, if an administrator utilizes a set of data collected at multiple times throughout the year, they can better determine which area in math the students are struggling... counting and cardinality...geometry... algebraic thinking... etc. By using this type of classroom level data, the administrator can see where the focused level of support needs to be.

8. Data can build a culture of inquiry, improvement, and accountability.

When people are committed to working together to change schools and improve learning, they can remain current on school data. In addition, the data is going to inform the community of areas of improvement, understand education initiatives, and learn if their strategies for improvement are working. Data review is essential in school reform and a staple for the most successful schools.



Frequently Asked Questions



Q: Some of our children with special education needs attend a Head Start for their services. Do we have to assess all of the children in the Head Start and our children with special needs?

A: When an IEP team determines a child will receive her/his services in a Head Start classroom (or other setting), the district is still responsible for the submission of data on that student. Since the child may not be seen by district personnel on a regular basis, it is important to determine the responsibilities of each part to ensure the on-going assessment is being completed and is submitted to ADE. You may consider outlining these responsibilities in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Q: Head Start already assesses all of the children in their classrooms including children with special needs. Do we need to reassess the children for which we need the information?

A: If Head Start is using one of the state mandated assessment tools for the state, you do not need to reassess. However, you do need to make sure there is a letter from the parent giving you permission to share information between the two programs. You will need to determine which agency will submit this data to ADE.

Q: Who is responsible for collecting assessment data for children receiving itinerant services?

A: The ultimate responsibility lies with the school district. The itinerant service provider should collect the data with the help of parents and input from any other caregivers the child may come in contact with.

Q: I have a student with severe autism. How can they be assessed?

A: No child is exempt from OSEP requirements. Instructional staff will still utilize the chosen assessment tool and give the student the score that best describes their stage of development. It is recognized that students with more severe needs may demonstrate incremental growth that is not captured by the rating scales used by the assessment tools.

Q: Do I file the OSEP report?

A: No. Data submitted through the online assessment tool is used for the statewide OSEP report and is submitted by ADE. A program's part within the OSEP is to ensure the OSEP exiting data has been submitted to ADE in a timely manner.

Q: Can we use DIBELS?

A: Yes. However, It is important to remember that this collection, DIBELS, is meant for children ages greater than 5 and is a screener. We want to assess a child as whole, and although DIBELS is very valuable as a screener for literacy, we want to make sure we are assessing ALL parts of a child. DIBELS can give you the data you need for the literacy portion of the KDI.

Q: The assessment tool recommends that we aggregate data three times a year. Do we submit to ADE 3 times a year?

A: Preschool programs that are receiving state funds will have checkpoints through the year including, submission of baseline data for a student after six weeks in a program and exit data on last day of enrollment or participation in a program. However, best practices recommend that teachers take time to look at evidence frequently for purposes of planning and meeting individual needs.



Appendix A

In order to meet the federal 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 report annually for all preschool children receiving special education services funded by IDEA.

OSEP Reporting

Arizona State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (APR)

In the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, the U.S. Department of Education OSEP office identified several indicators that all states must include in the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Reports. Within this report is an indicator that is specific to preschool, which is Indicator B7: Preschool Outcomes.

Indicator B7: Preschool Outcomes is made up of three outcomes:

1. Positive social and emotional skills
2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy)
3. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet the child's needs

The data collected breaks these three outcomes down into five subcategories:

- Category a: Percent of preschool children who did not improve functioning
- Category b: Percent of preschool children who improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers
- Category c: Percent of preschool children who improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it
- Category d: Percent of preschool children who improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers
- Category e: percent of children who maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers



In February of 2010, Arizona Department of Education (ADE) included performance targets and state baselines. Since February 2010, ADE has included these two targets for the three outcomes in the OSEP Indicator B7.

- A. The percentage of children who entered the program below age expectations and subsequently increased their rate of growth by the time the children exited preschool special education.
- B. The percentage of children who were functioning within age level expectations by the time they exited preschool special education.

In order to get these targets, there is a formula that is used to calculate these accurately.

- The formula used to calculate the percentage for Target A is:

$$\frac{(\text{Category C} + \text{Category D})}{(\text{Category A} + \text{Category B} + \text{Category C} + \text{Category D})}$$

- The formula used to calculate the percentage for Target B is:

$$(\text{Category D} + \text{Category E})$$

For more information about the OSEP reporting requirement please visit:

The Office of Special Education Programs <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/index.html>

Early Childhood Outcomes Center <http://ectacenter.org/eco/index.asp>



Appendix B

Definitions

Assessment- The process of documenting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior in a student. Assessment can focus on the individual learner, the learning community, the institution and educational system.

CLASS-Classroom Assessment Scoring System-a classroom tool developed to assess classroom quality at different age and grade levels.

DIBELS- The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills.

Early Childhood Education programs- any program serving children birth through 3rd grade, including programs that serve PreK-Grade 3.

Formative Assessment- is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures employed by teachers during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment. It is commonly contrasted with summative assessment.

Interaction- Interactions are exchanges in words and gestures that you have with others. They are the exchanges that a teacher has with young children.

MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports)- The multi-tiered system of supports is a comprehensive system of differentiated supports that includes evidence-based instruction, universal screening, progress monitoring, formative assessments, research-based interventions matched to student's needs, and educational decision making using student outcome data. MTSS can be used for making decisions about general, remedial, and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction that is guided by student-outcome data.

OSEP- Office of Special Education Programs.

Progress Monitoring- a scientifically based practice that is used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and making necessary changes. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class.



Scaffolding- temporary guidance or assistance provided to a student by a teacher, another adult, or a more capable peer, enabling the student to perform a task he/she otherwise would not be able to do alone, with the goal of fostering the students capacity to perform the task on his or her own later.

Screening tool- Any brief assessment done to determine if broader, more in-depth comprehensive testing is necessary.

Summative assessment- refers to the assessment of participants, and summarizes their development at a particular time. Summative assessment is characterized as assessment **of** learning and is contrasted with formative assessment, which is assessment **for** learning.



Appendix C



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The contents of this publication were developed with funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Education under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-17).

The Arizona Department of Education is an equal opportunity employer.

Printed in Phoenix, AZ by the Arizona Department of Education.
Copies: 300, Total Cost: \$148.00, Unit Cost: \$.50, Date: 3/16

