

GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENTS  
FOR EDUCATORS AND PROFESSIONALS

BIRTH TO AGE 8 (GRADE 3)



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August 2017

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENTS FOR EDUCATORS AND PROFESSIONALS

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*“A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.”* Henry Brooks Adams

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

### PENNSYLVANIA'S OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING (OCDEL)

Since its inception in 2007, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has focused on creating opportunities for the Commonwealth's youngest children to develop and learn to their fullest potential. This goal is accomplished through a framework of supports and systems to help ensure children and their families have access to high quality services.

OCDEL works with many partners to create opportunities for the Commonwealth's children. Families, schools, child care providers, Early Intervention Programs, Head Start, libraries, home visitation programs, community organizations, and other stakeholders have joined with the OCDEL to provide high-quality early childhood programs and effective prevention strategies to offset challenges faced by families that affect school readiness and academic success.

Starting in infancy, OCDEL strives to build a strong foundation for children through the establishment of a statewide standard for excellence in early care and education and the creation of financial and technical supports to achieve that goal. The success of the Commonwealth's efforts today will be seen in the development of Pennsylvania citizens who are strong, independent, and well prepared for the future.

### PENNSYLVANIA'S POINT OF VIEW

There has been much more attention in recent years to the importance of high-quality early childhood programs that provide children with experiences that nurture their development and prepare them for success in school and beyond. While much attention is paid to ensuring the quality of early childhood programs, there is an increasing focus on the role of assessment within early childhood systems, especially on the use of assessment by programs for improving teaching strategies and services in the classroom. There is a broad consensus that early childhood assessment plays a vital role in improving instruction within the classroom; however, how assessment of young children can and should (or should not) be used to determine program and teacher effectiveness is more debatable.

Pennsylvania has developed and implemented a Comprehensive Assessment System (as described in the pages to follow) to safeguard that its early education and care programs meet the quality expectations defined in program performance standards. This system is in place to ensure and educate about the importance of using information from child assessment in large-scale system improvement efforts. The development, implementation, and use of assessments should reflect research on child development. Assessments should take into consideration all indicators that impact children's development and learning, the importance of effective training and ongoing supports for early childhood educators, and adherence to best practices in the field.

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## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource has been designed primarily to support programs that are in the process of selecting or changing their assessment or screening tools. However, programs should not interpret this resource as recommending or requiring the use of any particular tools. It is anticipated that this resource can be helpful even to those programs not currently considering changing their assessment or screening tools by highlighting the types of information on reliability and validity the program managers should examine to determine the effectiveness of their assessment tools. This resource underscores that assessments as children enter kindergarten exist within the larger framework of efforts to improve both the birth-to-kindergarten span and the early elementary grades experiences of children. Viewing assessments in the context of the birth through third grade continuum and in the context of a Comprehensive Assessment System underscores how decisions made at one juncture, influence the assessment system and the education system elsewhere.

**Why are you reading  
this text?**

### 1. OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY

Reach more readers of different audiences with this information, such as families, teachers, principals, and district administrators and leaders.

To advocate for and promote the responsible and accurate use of assessments.

### 2. GUIDANCE

Provide guidance to different types of early childhood programs and to school districts on the alignment of assessment and curriculum to the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

### 3. AWARENESS OF AVAILABLE MATERIALS

Help make program personnel and those responsible for selecting and evaluating assessment or screening tools aware of available materials. These materials link directly to program content and goals, as well as Pennsylvania's standards for learning.

### 4. INFORM

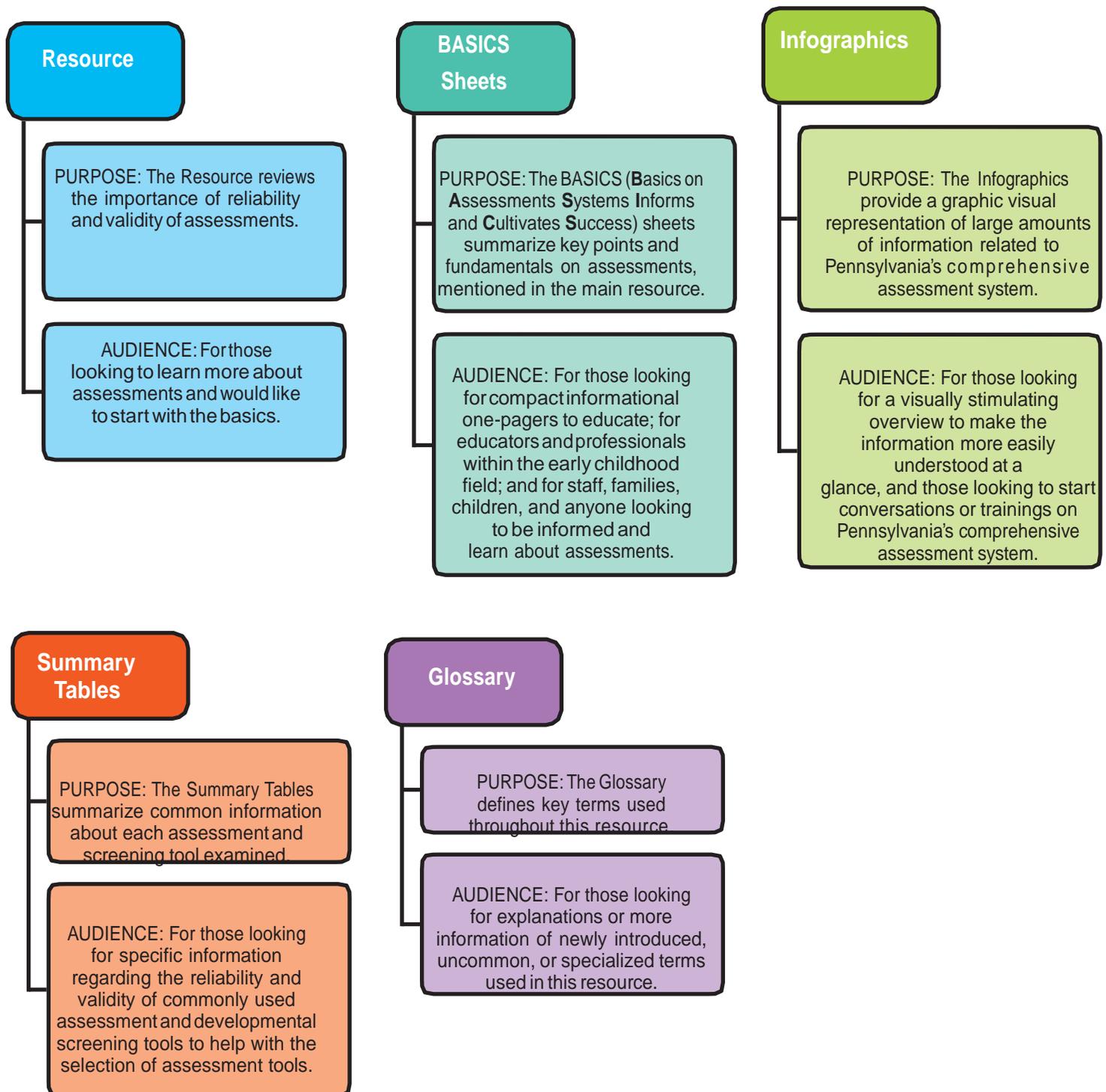
Give information regarding the reliability/validity of commonly used assessment and developmental screening tools to better help select appropriate tools for the populations they serve.

**Four purposes  
for this  
resource**

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It must be noted that it is not OCDEL's intention to make specific recommendations with regard to assessment tools. Rather, OCDEL wishes to provide guidelines for decision-making that would best adhere to the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood (birth to age 8). Given the many resources available on the market, there is a limited list of assessment tools in the accompanying document, which are evidence-based and have demonstrated technological adequacy for the 0–5 and elementary school-age groups, and are available at the time of this publication.

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## GETTING BACK TO BASICS

The information provided in this document emphasizes the importance of viewing assessment and curriculum development as a continuous process from birth to age eight. Presenting this document in three different tiers allows for the information to reach each individual on their level and needs. This resource provides comprehensive information about the importance of assessment, curriculum, and classroom observation to provide quality classrooms that enable children to succeed in school.

### WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

Assessment is defined as “A systematic process to measure or evaluate the characteristics or performance of individuals, programs, or other entities, for purposes of drawing inferences<sup>1</sup>” Assessment is a process which allows for understanding a child’s competencies and designing learning experiences and environments which will help a child grow to his or her developmental potential. The principles and philosophy of assessment that is applied to young children are part of a continuum that begins at birth and extends through kindergarten to third grade.

Effective programs assess individual children, the classroom as a group, instructional practices, and the experiences that are provided to determine how children are learning or making progress in skill development. Measurement (both assessment and evaluation) of the skills learned by young children must rely upon practices that fit expected learning skills and behavior, and then change as appropriate to support children as they grow and develop. Assessments that are implemented in the classroom and aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood (birth to age 8 or third grade) will help inform teachers. By determining adaptations or revisions that may need to occur to enhance learning, teachers adapt a curriculum that provides multiple learning opportunities that best suit how each child learns. Assessment should not be viewed as separate from instruction. That is, good instruction includes strategies that assess the extent to which children understood the content or achieved a certain level of proficiency. As such, assessment does not have to be a “test” or a tool. It can be an activity or a set of activities the teacher organizes as opportunities to observe and document children’s responses and behaviors.

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<sup>1</sup> American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (2014). Standards for educational and psychological testing. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

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## WHAT IS CURRICULUM?

Curriculum is a description of the content or information to be taught and the methods that are going to be used to teach the content. This content method and information is based on scientifically researched information and reflects age, culture, linguistically appropriate skills and developmental stages of the children in a program. While curricula provide teachers with the guidance and tools to help children reach learning standards, the adaptations each teacher makes to accommodate the uniqueness of that classroom's children makes curriculum fluid and individualized.

## WHAT IS MEANT BY COMPREHENSIVE?

A comprehensive assessment system is defined as “a coordinated and all-inclusive system of multiple assessments—each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used—that organizes information about the process and context of young children’s learning and development to help early childhood educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions<sup>2</sup>.” A comprehensive assessment system addresses a full range of knowledge and skills expected by standards. This provides different users at different levels in the system (district, school, and classroom) the right kind of outcomes at the appropriate level of detail to assist with decision-making. A system that is continuous provides ongoing streams of information about children’s learning throughout the year. Assessment outcomes from a coherent, comprehensive, and continuous system help educators monitor children’s learning by establishing a rich and productive foundation for understanding children’s achievements.

## FRAMING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT SYSTEM/ PENNSYLVANIA’S COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Pennsylvania’s comprehensive system of early childhood assessment includes screening tools, diagnostic assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments. This system of comprehensive assessment includes assessments that allow linkages between developmental and curricular benchmarks from birth to grade 3.

High-quality early childhood education is supported by assessments aligned with instructional goals and approaches. Assessment, however, does not refer simply to the tool being used; it refers to an interconnected system of decisions and activity. In addition to selecting an assessment tool or tools, the system requires procedures to effectively administer the assessment, as well as the outcomes management and analysis system that captures the results of the assessments and allows the outcomes to be used appropriately. These three components—selection, administration, and utilization—collectively comprise the assessment system.

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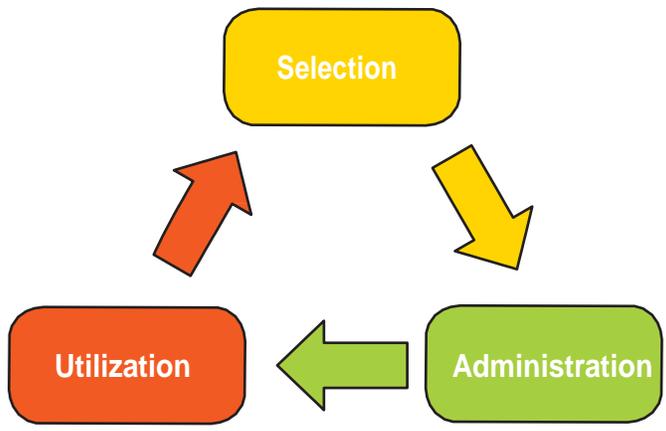
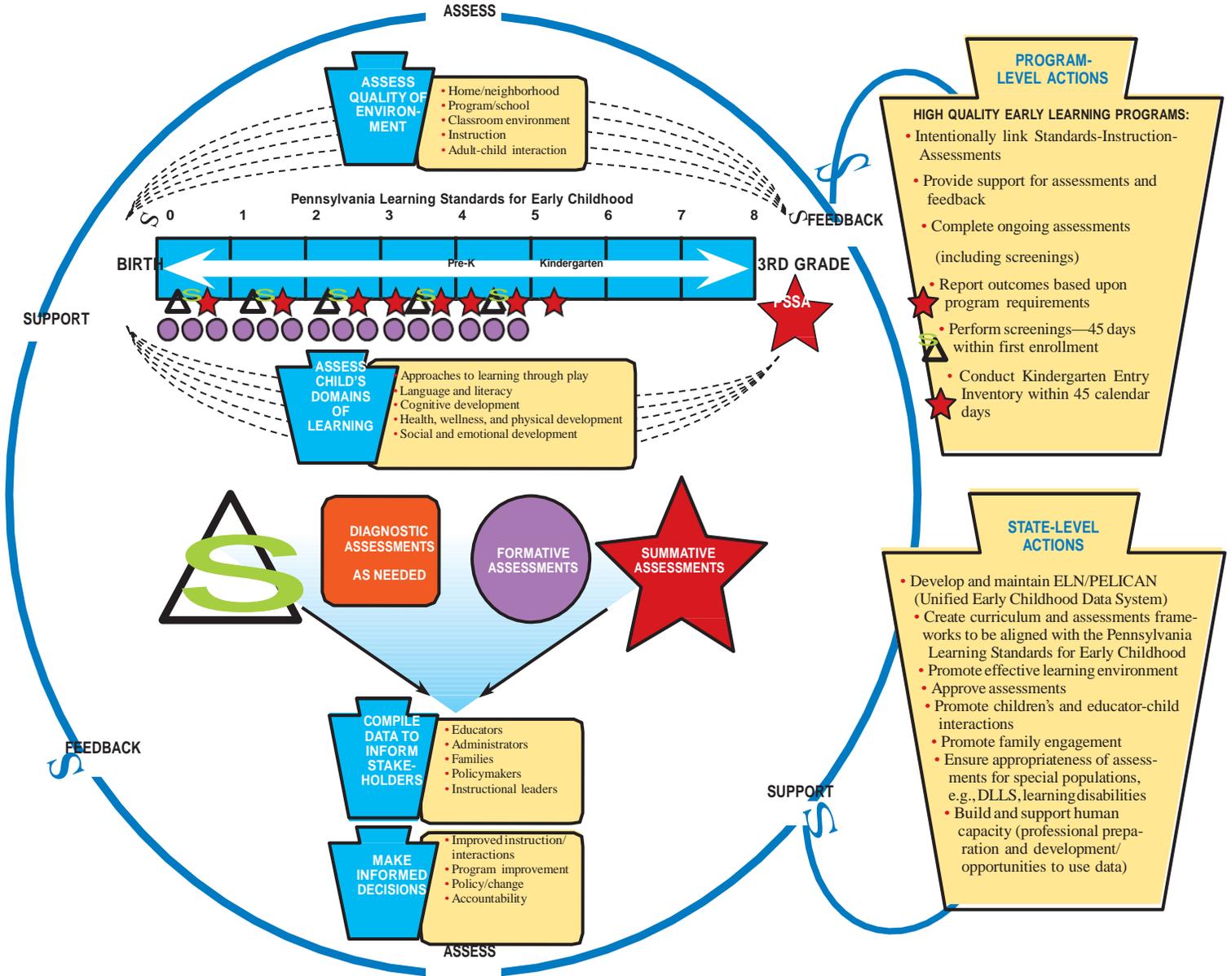
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT–ELC) Program/Definitions

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## FRAMEWORK FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND ALIGNED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM FOR PENNSYLVANIA



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Choices made relative to one component will have implications in each of the others. Understanding these implications allows for a purposeful and intentional assessment system that aligns with early childhood programs. Failure to do so creates the risk for misalignment with potentially unintended consequences. For example, a specific assessment may be selected because of its ease of administration, but result in outcomes too limited to inform instruction or evaluate a program's effectiveness. Likewise, an assessment may be administered to a sample of children served, rather than all children, to reduce costs or allow for more in-depth assessment, but these outcomes then cannot be used to inform instruction for all children or for any individual child.

## A S S E S S M E N T S

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT?

One critical feature of an effective assessment is a clear match between the purpose of the assessment and the intended use of the assessment. There are several types of assessments available and each type has a specific purpose.

A comprehensive assessment system addresses several purposes, each with implications for outcomes use. The National Education Goals Panel identified four purposes for assessment. These purposes include:

1. Assessments used to support learning and instruction (screening, diagnostic, and formative);
2. Assessments used to identify children who may need additional services (screening, diagnostic)
3. Assessments used for program evaluation and to monitor trends (summative); and
4. Assessments used for high-stakes accountability (summative).

Write down the names of the assessments used per each purpose. Does each purpose have a specific assessment?

### Use of assessment outcomes to ensure developmentally appropriate early education

The first two purposes for assessment articulated by the Education Goals Panel (1995) focus on individual children—using assessment to guide instruction and using instruction to identify children who may be in need of special services. Assessments to inform instruction provide outcomes that can guide teachers toward instructional approaches to reach children's learning needs. These assessments provide teachers with valuable feedback on their instruction and allow them to tailor their instruction to more effectively support children's development. Likewise, assessments used to screen for possible special service needs should lead directly to a response; in this case, a more thorough assessment.

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Assessments used to inform instruction or screen for potential challenges are invaluable for improving early education for children, but are not well suited for other purposes.

## Use of assessment outcomes for evaluation and accountability purposes

The third and fourth purposes for assessment outlined by the National Education Goals Panel focus on the use of assessments to evaluate program effectiveness and program accountability. While there is agreement that early childhood programs should be accountable, there is growing concern about the appropriateness of some early childhood assessment measures used to evaluate programs in the context of high-stakes assessment. As the National Academy's report, *Eager to Learn*<sup>3</sup>, noted, "uses of assessment data for purposes external to the classroom, rather than to improve educational practice directly, place a particularly heavy burden both on the assessment instruments and on the responsible adults." One consequence is assessments designed to inform instruction, are adapted, modified, or even misused for evaluation and accountability purposes. High-stakes decisions about program or teacher quality, effectiveness, or accountability should NOT be made. This includes judging program quality and program effectiveness, evaluating teacher

effectiveness, and funding decisions. "There are not many tools designed for large-scale program evaluation, so tools designed for other purposes often are adapted (e.g., shortened or administered differently) out of necessity, without sufficiently investigating the validity of the adapted tools in their new form and for their new purpose."<sup>4</sup>

Review the tables in the appendix to determine how closely aligned your materials are to Pennsylvania's Standards. If your investigation demonstrates that your curriculum resources are not comprehensive (or do not address all or most of the Standards' Key Learning Areas), you may need to supplement your current materials with additional resources. You may also choose to explore alternate curriculum resources that are more fully aligned with the whole of children's development and with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

Not only is it essential to use outcomes for the correct purpose(s), but the collection procedures and the content also must be appropriate for the children for whom the assessment is administered. The first step is to look at the developmental appropriateness for the children's age level. For example, when assessing children of a specific age range, consider the assessment's content alignment with what is expected of children of this age. Also ask whether the

assessment provides an enough range of development to describe children developing at expectation, above expectation, and below expectation. Next, examine the procedures used to collect outcomes to assure they are age-appropriate and sensitive to children's developmental stages.

The sensitivity to children's individual backgrounds, including such factors as primary language of the child, is also a critical consideration in determining an appropriate assessment for young children. If a program has a high percentage of children whose first language is not English, then the tool or approach must be sensitive to this distinction.

<sup>3</sup> Bowman, Donovan, & Burns 2001

<sup>4</sup> Snow and Van Hemel (2008)

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If the assessment will be used with children who have special needs, then the administrator must be aware of the level of increments of development that are shown on the assessment to assure its appropriateness. Of course, the tool should be clear of any bias or discrimination against any group of individuals.

## FOUR TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS

These assessments can further be classified into four types:

1. Screening tools
2. Diagnostic assessments
3. Formative assessments
4. Summative assessments

### 1. SCREENING TOOLS

All children may not reach developmental milestones at the same time. Development that does not happen within an expected time frame can raise concerns about developmental disorders, health conditions, or other factors that may negatively impact the child's development. Early frequent screening of young children for healthy growth and development is recommended to help identify potential problems or areas needing further evaluation. By recognizing developmental issues early, children can be provided with treatment or intervention, and additional developmental delays may be prevented. For developmental screening to be effective, it should begin early in a child's life; be repeated throughout the early childhood years; and use reliable, valid screening tools appropriate to the age, culture, and language of the child.

The criteria for developmental screening tools are generically defined by the characteristic of being brief, cursory, objectively scored, reliable, and valid<sup>5</sup>. Screening tools should be used to briefly and simply identify potential developmental problems in infants and young children. Screening tools, because they are brief, are often used when large groups of children need to be evaluated. The results generated from a screening tool are not useful for informing teaching. Although it may be useful to teachers to be aware of results from a screening tool, results are used by schools/programs to identify children who may need to receive more extensive (diagnostic) assessment for determining developmental delays or special needs. Screening tools are often inappropriately used as readiness tests for children. School districts are not permitted to deny children entry to kindergarten based on the results of a readiness test.

Developmental screening is the early identification of children at risk for cognitive, motor, communication, or social-emotional delays that may interfere with expected growth, learning, and development, and may warrant further diagnosis, assessment, and evaluation.

- a. **Developmental screening** tools include (at least) the domains of cognition, fine and gross motor skills, speech and language, and social-emotional development.

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<sup>5</sup> Meisels, with Atkins-Burnett, 1994

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- b. **Social-emotional screening** is a component of developmental screening of young children that focuses on the early identification of possible delays in the expected development of a child's ability to express and regulate emotions, form close and secure relationships, and explore his/her environment and learn.
- c. **Mental health screening** is the early identification of children at risk for possible mental health disorders that may interfere with expected growth, learning, or development that warrant further diagnosis, assessment, or evaluation.

## 2. DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

Diagnostic assessment tools are typically standardized for a large number of children. Diagnostic tools typically reflect a child's performance related to other children of the same age and may result in a diagnosis of a developmental delay or disability. Persons administering diagnostic assessment tools must meet state and national standards, certification, or licensing requirements. Some diagnostic assessment tools used for identifying developmental issues include the Battelle Developmental Inventory or the Developmental Assessment of Young Children.

## 3. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING)

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2008) defines formative assessment as follows: "Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and children during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve children's achievement of intended instructional outcomes." The primary purpose of the formative assessment process is to provide evidence that is used by teachers to inform instruction and learning. Effective formative assessment involves collecting evidence about how children's learning is progressing during the course of instruction so that instructional adjustments can be made to close the gap between children's current understanding and the desired goals. Kindergarten and elementary aged children are often actively involved in the formative assessment process by monitoring their own progress. Formative assessment is not a supplement to teaching, but integrated into instruction to provide frequent feedback to teachers.

- a. Formative assessment should be regarded as a process rather than a particular type of assessment. There are a number of formative assessment strategies that can be implemented during classroom instruction. These range from informal observations and conversations to purposefully-planned, instructionally-embedded techniques designed to elicit evidence of children's learning to inform and adjust instruction.

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- b. The formative assessment process should involve both teachers and children. As appropriate for their age, the children should be actively involved in the systematic process to improve their learning. Teachers should share learning goals with children and provide opportunities for children to monitor their ongoing progress.

Pennsylvania defines formative assessment as classroom-based assessment that allows teachers to monitor and adjust their instructional practice to meet the individual needs of children.

- Formal assessments are defined as highly valid and reliable standardized tools that have standards of Comparison.

*“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”*

Benjamin Franklin

These tools usually emerge from research studies published by a national company.

- c. Informal assessments usually do not follow standard conditions or use standard materials. They often do not have documented reliability and validity. They may be published, but they can also be teacher- or program-developed. Ongoing authentic assessments fall under the definition of informal assessments and are usually considered to be criterion-referenced.

The ideal method of assessing children is through observation – based observations that occur on an ongoing basis. The observations should occur during daily activities, teaching, and care routines and should describe the development and learning of children. Methods for ongoing assessment include portfolios, observations, anecdotal notes, and checklists. These methods are used over time to document progress and growth. Observation - based assessment tools use each child’s previous performance as the reference point to make individual comparisons about progress and gains due to the program and/or curriculum being implemented.

The key to success in using a formative assessment lies in how the results are used. Results should be used to shape teaching and learning. Formative assessment broadly includes instructional formats that teachers utilize to get information that, when used, alter instructional practices and have a direct impact on children’s learning and achievement<sup>6</sup>. Under this definition, formative assessment encompasses questioning strategies, active engagement check-ins (such as response cards, white boards, random selection, think-pair-share, popsicle sticks for open-ended questions, and numbered heads), and analysis of children’s work based on set rubrics and standards (for older children including homework and tests).

When teachers know how children are progressing and where they are having trouble, they can use this information to make necessary instructional adjustments, such as re-teaching, trying alternative instructional approaches, or offering more opportunities for practice.

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<sup>6</sup> Black and Wiliam (1998)

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## 4. SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING)

Summative assessments seek to make an overall **finding (or result)** of progress made at the end of a defined period of instruction. These assessments may occur at the end of a school level, grade, or course, or are administered at certain grades for purposes of state or local accountability. These are often considered high-stakes assessments. Summative assessments

look back to see how effective was the instruction, a part of the curriculum, or intervention. These assessments are designed to produce clear documentation of the child's accomplishments at key points in his or her academic career. Scores on these assessments often identify whether or not the child has fallen short of, met, or exceeded the expected standards. Whereas the results of formative assessments are primarily of interest to children and teachers, the results of summative assessments are of great interest to families, program staff, and the public at large. Public accountability systems are often based on the results of summative assessments. If the results of these assessments are reported with reference to standards and individual children, they can be used as diagnostic tools by teachers to plan instruction. Families can use the results of summative assessments to see where the child's performance lies compared to either a standard or to a group of children. Teachers and schools can use these assessments to identify strengths and challenges of curriculum and instruction, with improvements affecting the next year's/term's children. A summative assessment tends to have the least impact on improving an individual child's understanding or performance.

*"If an assessment asks students to evaluate and create but our instruction asks only that they remember and comprehend, then we've taken a wrong turn."*

Mike Fisher

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## LINKING ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM

Assessments, curriculum, and instruction join together to help educators provide the best learning experiences for children. The Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood are the foundation of the assessment-curriculum-instruction cycle. All components of the cycle should link to the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

Standards serve as the guide for what children should know and do as they prepare for entrance into formal schooling. The information collected through outcomes reporting can be used to guide instruction at the child level, target professional development for staff, identify needed quality enhancements in the classroom and program, and target services at the community level.

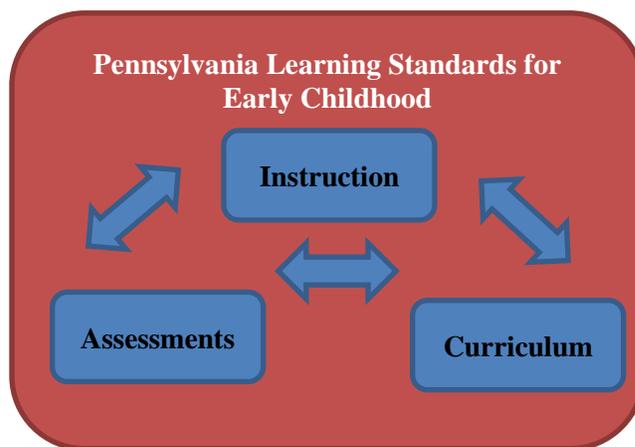
The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early

Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education’s<sup>7</sup> position statement on curriculum, instruction, and assessment underscores the need for a systemic, integrated approach for linking assessments with curriculum and instruction. This approach was furthered by the National Academy of Science (NAS) panel on early childhood assessment<sup>8</sup>, which stated explicitly “... that a primary purpose of assessing children or classrooms is to improve the quality of early childhood care and education by identifying where more support, professional development or funding is needed and by providing classroom personnel tools to track children’s growth and adjust instruction.” Aligning assessments with curriculum and instruction ensures that the intended outcomes are addressed and monitored. Misaligned systems cannot ensure that intentions (through standards, curriculum, and instruction) are being met<sup>9</sup>.

Within Pennsylvania there is variation in the curricula used by early learning programs and elementary \ schools. These variations mean that aligning an assessment system with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood may or may not also mean the assessment is aligned with a locally implemented curriculum.

It is recommended that educators use curriculum content resources and assessment measures that work together to provide rich opportunities for learning. Both the curriculum content resources and the assessments should be aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning continues to develop professional development events that focus on assessment, curriculum, and standards.



<sup>7</sup> NAECS/SDE 2003

<sup>8</sup> Snow & Van Hemel 2008

<sup>9</sup> Martone & Sireci 2009

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## O U T C O M E S

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Outcomes are the recorded results of children’s skill development based assessments. The purpose of the child assessment outcomes collection and the audience to use the outcomes should be considered in determining who collects the outcomes. For example, if a funder wants to know whether their investment is improving child outcomes, then evaluators might independently collect outcomes from a sample of children. By contrast, if teachers want to screen children, plan instruction, or identify professional development needs, it is important that teachers, with input from families, assess children.

Teachers use reliable and valid assessment tools to guide their collection and documentation of children’s progress for reporting. Assessments can often yield numerous amounts of outcomes. It is the **quality** of the outcomes, not the quantity of outcomes that is important to make meaningful changes to instruction for individual children. Outcomes can and should be used by various stakeholders: teachers, administrators, families, policymakers, and instructional leaders.

Outcomes should represent the full breadth of developmental domains that are critical to academic and long-term success. The outcomes should be used to support learning, developmental and instructional domains target specific goals, check for progress, identify learning gains, notice strengths and challenges, and transform curricula.

Outcomes used by policymakers and instructional leaders inform decision-making in different settings and for different purposes (e.g., improving instruction, changing policies, and investments).

### **The quality of education, learning outcomes, and economic growth from a state level perspective**

Pennsylvania’s educational system is based on the principle that education quality is defined by its contribution to the development of cognitive skills and behavioral traits, attitudes, and values that are necessary for good citizenship and productive life in the community. Over the last 10 years, research has been able to demonstrate that the quality of education has a statistically significant and positive economic effect. Ignoring the quality of education limits economic growth.

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Administrators' and legislators' attention should move increasingly from inputs to outcomes; i.e., what children should ultimately have learned at the end of their educational experience. While it is important to know how much money is being spent on such issues as teacher education and physical facilities, legislators recognize that it is equally important to know what children are learning in the classroom: What kind of knowledge, skills, and attitudes does the education system develop? How do assessed learning outcomes reflect the stated goals and objectives of states' educational systems? What factors are associated with children's achievements? Do particular groups in the population perform poorly? How well are children being prepared to succeed in an increasingly knowledge-based economy? Legislators dispute that children will need higher levels of knowledge and skills, particularly in the areas of **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics** if they are to participate meaningfully in the world of work.

Ultimately, information on learning outcomes assists us making informed decisions about interventions to improve educational quality and help policymakers monitor trends in the nature and quality of children's learning over time.

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## T E A C H E R E V A L U A T I O N

There is a growing awareness that having an effective teacher in every classroom (including early childhood education) is critical to ensuring that every child learns. Assessment is a component of teacher evaluation; however, child-based assessment should not be used as a solitary measure of teacher effectiveness. Measures of teacher effectiveness are important to quality and there are assessments designed to specifically measure teacher effectiveness, performance, classroom environment, and (child) interactions.

An effective evaluation system must inform and provide a foundation for the ongoing professional development of teachers and administrators. The cornerstone of a teacher evaluation system is to improve teacher practice, increasing teachers' effectiveness and increasing children's achievements.

Pennsylvania supports Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching for effective instruction by certified teachers in the Commonwealth. The model focuses the complex activity of teaching by defining four domains of teaching responsibility: 1. Planning and preparation; 2. Classroom environment; 3. Instruction; and 4. Professional responsibilities

Early childhood and school-age professionals come from diverse backgrounds including many different degrees, experiences, and types and amount of Professional development. The research about outcomes for children when teachers have high quality professional development in early childhood content is compelling. Working with young children is a profession that requires knowledge of how children grow and develop, as well as the skills to communicate effectively with children and families. Educator preparation (both pre-service and in-service) significantly predicts program quality. The education and specialized professional development opportunities of educators are critical to sustaining high quality early learning experiences for children.

Knowledge expectations of early childhood professionals are identified in **Pennsylvania's Core Knowledge Competencies for Early Childhood and School-Age Professionals (CKCs)**. It identifies a set of content areas that help define the knowledge expectations for professionals in settings within the early childhood education and school-age field. These core competencies, linked to Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood, specify the scope of skills and knowledge that guides those who work with children to facilitate child learning and development and support strong partnerships with families. It supports children's preparation for entry into the field of early childhood and school-age care as well as professionals' commitment to lifelong learning through ongoing professional growth. The CKC is an essential component of Pennsylvania's professional development system, which professionals can also use to self-assess their professional development needs.

Professional development consists of facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional, collaborative, and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, ethics/values, and dispositions, as well as the application of this knowledge in practice to benefit all children and families.

(PA Professional Development System Framework)

For more information please use the following link: [http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Career\\_CBK](http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Career_CBK)

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## C L A S S R O O M O B S E R V A T I O N T O O L S

Classroom observation refers to occasions when learning and teaching activities are observed for a specific purpose by someone other than the daily class teacher and support staff. Complementing child assessment outcomes with classroom quality outcomes can make outcomes more useful. Effective classroom observation is proven to improve teaching and raise levels of attainment. Research indicates the following classroom observation tools produced reliable scores. Meaningful, predictable associations have been found between scores on the classroom observation measure and teachers' self-reported practices, teaching goals, relationships with children, and perceptions of children's ability to be self-directed learners on the other.

### **Classroom observation measures: CLASS, ELLCO, and ECERS-R**

- The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) measure, the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation tool (ELLCO), and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Three (ECERS-3) are all valid and reliable measures of classroom effectiveness. Although there is some overlap, each assessment tool was designed to measure different aspects of effectiveness.
- The CLASS observation tool is a measure of

the effectiveness of teacher-child interactions in the classroom. Teacher-child interactions fall into three domains: emotional support, instructional support, and organizational support.

- The ELLCO tool is a measure of the effectiveness of literacy instruction that takes into account the physical classroom environment and teacher-child interactions that facilitate language learning and literacy.
- The ECERS-3 is a rating system that incorporates physical space, provisions for indoor and outdoor activities, scheduling, hygiene, opportunities for professional development, and teacher-child interactions into a broad definition of effectiveness.
- TPOT is a s an observation tool that measures the implementation of classroom practices specifically related to promoting young children's social-emotional competence and addressing challenging behavior in the preschool classroom

Each classroom observation tool provides a unique perspective on classroom quality. Multiple tools could be implemented in the same classroom to provide a more global assessment of quality. Alternatively, one assessment tool may be most appropriate, depending on the goals of the observation.

### **Eight questions to ask when choosing and assessment tool?**

1. What type of assessment (s) is the tool?
2. What does the tool assess? And which ages?
3. What are the technical dimensions?
  - a. Aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood?
  - b. Reliability, validity, and technical adequacy?
  - c. Sensitivity to children's individual backgrounds?
4. What online tools/reports are available?
5. How is training offered?
6. What supports are offered?
7. Can the assessment be used with any curriculum?
8. What is the cost of the tool?

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## C O N C L U S I O N

Well-planned and effective assessment can inform teaching and program improvement and contribute to better outcomes for children. Assessments can make crucial contributions to the improvement of children's development, but only if they are well designed, implemented effectively, developed in the context of systematic planning, and interpreted appropriately. The value of assessments, therefore, requires fundamental attention to their purpose and the design of the larger systems in which they are used.

Assessments of children may be used for purposes as diverse as determining the level of functioning of individual children, guiding instruction, or measuring functioning at the program, community, or state level.

Different purposes require different types of assessments. As the consequences of assessment findings become weightier, the accuracy and quality of the tools used to provide findings must be more certain. Decisions based on an assessment that is used to monitor the progress of one child can be important to that child and her family and thus must be taken with caution, but they can also be challenged and revisited more easily than assessments used to determine the fate or funding for groups of children such as those attending a local child care center, an early education program, or a nationwide program like Head Start. When used for purposes of program evaluation and accountability, often called high stakes, assessments can have major consequences for large numbers of children and families, for the community served by the program, and for policy.

### Seven assessment skills educators' need:

1. How to define clear learning goals, which are the basis of developing or choosing ways to assess children's learning.
2. How to make use of a variety of assessment methods to gather evidence of children's learning.
3. How to analyze achievement data (both quantitative and qualitative) and make good inferences from the data gathered.
4. How to provide appropriate feedback to children and families.
5. How to make appropriate instructional modifications to help children improve.
6. How to involve children in the assessment process (e.g., self and peer assessment) and effectively communicate results.
7. And, most important, how to engineer an effective classroom assessment environment that boosts children's motivation to learn.

*Adapted from SERVE Center, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2004.*

*"Teachers are reservoirs from which, through the process of education, students draw the water of life."*

Sathya Baba

It is critical to incorporate the information attained from assessments into the curriculum and classroom activities. Thoughtful planning based upon the principles in these guidelines and the accompanying documents can lead to assessment systems and curriculum plans that meet schools' needs; comply with the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood; and benefit children, teachers, and families in the process.

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If decisions about individual children or programs are to be defended, the system of assessment must reflect the highest standards of evidence in three domains: the psychometric properties of the tools used in the assessment system; the evidence supporting the appropriateness of the assessment tools for different ethnic, racial, language, functional status, and age group populations; and the domains that serve as the focus of the assessment. In addition, resources need to be directed to the training of assessors, the analysis and reporting of results, and the interpretation of those results.

The purpose and system principles apply as well to the interpretation, use, and communication of assessment outcomes. Collecting outcomes should be preceded by planning how the outcomes will be used, who should have access to it, in what decisions they will play a role, and what stakeholders need to know about them. Ideally, any assessment activity benefits children by providing information that can be used to inform their caregivers and teachers, to improve the quality of their care and educational environments, and to identify child risk factors that can be remedied.

Pennsylvania's OCDEL is committed to the use of early childhood assessment systems, properly developed and implemented, that contribute greatly to the success of early childhood programs.

Systems that inform a teacher's instruction better allow for targeted instruction and support to further children's learning and development. Systems that provide a portrait of skills children have as they enter public school systems can inform curriculum decisions, and assessments that can provide evidence of growth tied to participation in programs can guide implementation and policy decisions.

"All Pennsylvania families will have access to high-quality care and education for their children, fostering successful futures in school and in life"

Pennsylvania Educational System Vision

In designing early childhood assessment systems, fundamental decisions made about tool selection, administration, and outcomes utilization are interconnected, and decisions made about one aspect of an assessment system can drive other options. Using assessments aligned with the Learning Standards for Early Childhood, the professional development system, and the intentionally designed comprehensive assessment system for assessing young children are necessary components of Pennsylvania's effective early childhood programs.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENTS FOR EDUCATORS AND PROFESSIONALS

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## A L P H A B E T I C A L L I S T O F A S S E S S M E N T S T O O L S

(mentioned within this resource or appendix)

The current state of the field in early childhood assessment is captured by the National Academy report (Snow & Van Hemel 2008). While there are hundreds of assessment products for young children on the market today, there is unevenness in the degree to which they cover important domains of school readiness, as well as the degree to which they are appropriate for diverse populations, primarily those children who are English language learners (ELLs) or children with disabilities. Available assessments also vary in their quality as measures (reliability and validity). The variation in assessments along these multiple characteristics needs to be carefully considered when selecting specific assessments.

<b>A</b>		APFCCH..... Assessment Profile for Family Child Care Homes	
AAB-S .....	Academic Achievement Battery-Screener	ATI..... Assessment Technology Incorporated (Galileo)	
ASEBA .....	Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment	<b>B</b>	
ABAS-2.....	Adaptive Behavior Assessment System II (III released in 2015)	BSSI-3..... Basic School Skills Inventory	
ASQ-3 .....	Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3rd Edition	BDI-2..... Battelle Developmental Inventory-2nd Edition	
ASQ-SE .....	Ages and Stages Questionnaire Social/Emotional	BSID-3 .....	Bayley Scales of Infant Development-3rd Edition
APEEC.....	Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary	BESS..... Behavioral and Emotional Screening System	
APECP .....	Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs	BRIEF .....	Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function

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- BRIEF-P..... Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Preschool version
- Boehm-3..... Boehm Test of Basic Concepts-3rd Edition
- BBCS-3 ..... Bracken Basic Concept Scale-3rd Edition
- BITSEA..... Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment
- BECDI-III..... Brigance Early Childhood Developmental Inventory-3rd Edition
- BECS-III..... Brigance Early Childhood Screens-3rd Edition
- BHSDI ..... Brigance Head Start Developmental Inventory
- BAS ..... Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care
- C**
- CIS..... Caregiver Interaction Scale
- CCPSN ..... Carolina Curriculum for Preschoolers with Special Needs
- ChAMP ..... Child and Adolescent Memory Profile
- CCATR..... Child Care Assessment Tool for Relatives
- CCIS ..... Child Caregiver Interaction Scale
- C-COS ..... Child-Caregiver Observation System
- CC-HOME..... Child Care Home Inventories
- CDPES ..... Child Development Program Evaluation Scale
- CDR-PQ..... Child Development Review-Parent Questionnaire
- COFAS ..... Child Observation Form and Scale
- COR..... Child Observation Record (High/Scope)
- CHELLO..... Child/Home Early Language & Literacy Observation
- CIRCLE-A..... Circle Assessment
- CASEBA ..... Classroom Assessment of Supports for Emergent Bilingual Acquisition
- CLASS..... Classroom Assessment Scoring System
- CLASS-PreK..... Classroom Assessment Scoring System for Pre-K
- CLASS-T..... Classroom Assessment Scoring System for Toddlers
- CIRCLE..... Classroom Code for Interactive Recording of Children’s Learning Environments
- CLEO..... Classroom Language and Literacy Environment Observation
- COEMET ..... Classroom Observation of Early Mathematics Environment and Teaching
- CPI..... Classroom Practices Inventory
- CIBS-K..... Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills (Brigance)
- CTOPP-2..... Comprehensive Test of Phonological and Print Processing-2nd Edition
- CTF..... Coaching to Fidelity
- D**
- DAYC-2..... Developmental Assessment of Young Children 2nd Edition
- DIAL-4 ..... Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning-4th Edition
- DRDP-2015..... Desired Result Developmental School Readiness (California) full continuum
- DRDP (K) 2015 Desired Result Developmental Kindergarten
- DOCS ..... Development Observation Checklist System
- DECA ..... Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Program
- DELV ..... Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation
- DIBELS-6..... Dynamic Indicators of Basic Emergent Literacy Skills-6th Edition
- E**
- ECCOM..... Early Childhood Classroom Observation Measure
- ECERS-E..... Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Extension
- ECERS-R ..... Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised Edition
- ECERS-3..... Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-3rd Edition
- ELLCO ..... Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation
- ELLCO-ELL..... Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation-Addendum for English Language Learners
- ELLCO-Pre-K..... Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation-Pre-Kindergarten

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- ELOR ..... Early Learning Outcomes Reporting  
ELS ..... Early Learning Scale  
(Lakeshore-NIEER)  
E-LOT ..... Early Literacy Observation Tool  
ELSA ..... Early Literacy Skills Assessment  
ESI-R ..... Early Screening Inventory-Revised  
ESP-R ..... Early Screening Profiles-Revised  
EAS..... Emerging Academics Snapshot  
ES ..... Emlen Scales: A Packet of Scales for  
Measuring the Quality of Child Care  
from a Parent's Point of View  
EDDT-PF ..... Emotional Disturbance Decision  
Tree-Parent Form  
EPAO..... Environment and Policy Assessment  
and Observation  
ERS..... Environment Rating Scale  
(University of North Carolina:  
ECERS, ITERS, FCCERS, SACERS)  
EMC ..... Every Move Counts
- F**
- FCCERS-R ..... Family Child Care Environment  
Rating Scale-Revised Edition  
FAR..... Feifer Assessment of Reading  
FAR-S ..... Feifer Assessment of Reading-  
Screener  
FirstSTEP ..... First Screening Test for Evaluating  
Preschoolers
- G**
- GRTR.....Get Ready To Read!
- I**
- inCLASS ..... Individualized Classroom  
Assessment Scoring System  
IDI..... Infant Development Inventory  
ITERS-R..... Infant-Toddler Environment Rating  
Scale-Revised Edition
- K**
- K-ABC ..... Kaufman Assessment Battery for  
Children, Expressive Vocabulary  
Subtest  
K-SEALS..... Kaufman Survey of Early Academic  
and Language Skills
- L**
- LISn..... Language Interaction Snapshot  
LISn-EVR ..... Language Interaction Snapshot End  
of Visit Rating  
LAP-3..... Learning Accomplishment Profile-  
3rd Edition
- O**
- OMLIT..... Observation Measure of Language  
and Literacy Instruction  
ORCE ..... Observation Record of the  
Caregiving Environment  
OS ..... Ounce Scale (Pearson)  
OWLS..... Oral Written and Language Scales  
OPPC-BVI-6 ..... The Oregon Project for Preschool  
Children Who Are Blind or Visually  
Impaired-6th Edition
- P**
- PEDS..... Parents Evaluation of Developmental  
Status  
PEDS-DM..... Parents Evaluations of  
Developmental Status and  
Developmental Milestones  
PDDBI ..... PDD Behavior Inventory  
PDDBI-SV ..... PDD Behavior Inventory Screening  
Version  
PBRS ..... Pediatric Behavior Rating Scale  
PEDI-CAT..... Pediatric Evaluation of Disability  
Inventory-Computer Adaptive Test  
PPVT-4..... Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-4th  
Edition  
PSC-35..... Pediatric Symptom Checklist  
PALS-1–3..... Phonological Awareness Literacy  
Screening 1st–3rd Grade  
PALS-K..... Phonological Awareness Literacy  
Screening Kindergarten  
PALS-PreK..... Phonological Awareness Literacy  
Screening Preschool  
PreLAS..... Pre-Language Assessment Survey  
PKBS-2..... Preschool and Kindergarten  
Behavior Scales-2nd Edition  
PCI..... Preschool Classroom  
Implementation Rating Scale  
PLS-5 ..... Preschool Language Scale-5th  
Edition  
PMHCS ..... Preschool Mental Health Climate  
Scale

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PQA-2..... Preschool Program Quality  
Assessment-2nd Edition  
PRISM ..... Preschool Rating Instrument for  
Science and Math  
PAS..... Program Administration Scale  
PITC-PARS ..... Program for Infant/Toddler Care  
Program Assessment Rating Scale  
PQA-HighScope High-Scope’s Program Quality  
Seessment Tool

## Q

QELI ..... Qualls Early Learning Inventory  
Q-CCIIIT ..... Measuring the Quality of Caregiver-  
Child Interactions for Infants and  
Toddlers  
QUEST ..... Quality of Early Childhood Care  
Settings: Caregiver Rating Scale

## R

ROLE ..... Ramey’s Observation of the Learning  
Environment  
RSA ..... Ready School Assessment  
RCDS-2:SF ..... Reynolds Child Depression Scale-  
2nd Edition: Short Form  
RIAS ..... Reynolds IntellectualAssessment  
Scales  
REAL-HS ..... Riverside Early Assessments of  
Learning Head Start (Houghton  
Mifflin Harcourt)  
REAL-KR ..... Riverside Early Assessments of  
Learning Kindergarten Readiness

## S

SACERS..... School Age Care Environment  
Rating Scale  
SCBE ..... Social Competence and Behavior  
Evaluation  
SEARS..... Social Emotional Assests and  
Resilience Scales  
SEARS-SF ..... Social Emotional Assests and  
Resilience Scales-Short Form

SSIS ..... Social Skills Improvement Program  
SCAS ..... Spence Anxiety Scales  
SSEGA..... Supports for Social-Emotional  
Growth Assessment  
SELA ..... Supports for the Early Literacy  
Assessment  
SWBYC..... Survey of Well Being of Young  
Children

## T

TBRS ..... Teacher Behavior Rating Scale  
TKA ..... Teacher Knowledge Assessment  
TPOT ..... Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool  
for Preschool Classrooms  
TSG ..... Gold (Teaching Strategies LLC)  
TABS ..... Temperament and Atypical Behavior  
Scales  
TEMA-3 ..... Test of Early Mathematics Ability-  
3rd Edition  
TERA-3..... Test of Early Reading Ability-3rd  
Edition  
TEAM..... Tools for Early Assessment in  
Mathematics

## V

V-II-ABS ..... Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales  
V-SEEC..... Vineland Social Emotional Early  
Childhood Scales  
VAS-E/VAS-R.... Vocabulary Assessment Scales  
Expressive and Receptive

## W

WPPSI-III ..... Wechsler Preschool and Primary  
Scale of Intelligence-3rd Edition  
WSS-4..... Work Sampling System-4th Edition  
(Pearson)  
WSS-HS ..... Work Sampling System for Head  
Start

## Y

YCAT ..... Young Children’s Achievement Test

*“The purpose of education  
is to replace an empty  
mind with an open one.”*

Malcolm Forbes

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## G L O S S A R Y   O F   T E R M S

Many of the measures included in this resource assess features of quality within early care and education environments that reflect administrative structures and practices as well as supports for staff development. There are several areas related to structure, including business practices, family involvement, activities/scheduling, classroom organization, and classroom materials. There are also several areas related to administration, including internal communications and leadership/management. Finally, quality features related to monitoring/improvement include professional development, assessment/monitoring of children, and program/staff assessments. Examples of each of these aspects of quality are offered below:

**Accommodations** • Adaptations in assessment tools and standards to permit children with disabilities or English language learners to show what they know and can do. Adjustments may be made, for example, in the way a test is administered or presented, in the timing, in the language, or in how the child responds. The nature of the adjustment determines whether or not what is being measured or the comparability of scores is affected (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).

**Activities/scheduling** • The condition in which things are happening or being done (i.e., circle time, outdoors time) and/or general schedule planning and facilitation (i.e., a schedule, schedule flows and good transitions, procedures for hand-washing, snack time, etc.).

**Achievement test** • Tests that examine skills that the child has already acquired; a testing tool, typically standardized and norm-referenced, used to measure how much a child has learned in relation to educational objectives (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).

**Adaptation or accommodation** • A convenient arrangement; a settlement or compromise; a change in the way screeners are presented or in how the child is allowed to respond so that children with disabilities or limited English proficiency can be assessed or screened. For example,

one might include Braille forms for blind children (adaptation) or allow more time for children whose primary language is not English (accommodation). This term generally refers to changes that do not substantially alter what is being measured.

**Administration** • The process or activity of running a business, organization; the day-to-day administration of the company; the people responsible for this, regarded collectively as the management team/leader.

**Alignment** • The proper positioning or state of adjustment of parts in relation to each other; the process of linking content and performance standards to assessment, instruction, and learning in classrooms.

**Alternative** • A term sometimes used loosely to refer to one or more things available as another possibility. In a narrower sense, assessment refers to information from multiple indicators and sources of evidence that is organized and interpreted and then evaluated.

**Assessment** • An ongoing process of observing a child's current competencies (including knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes) and using the information to help the child develop further in the context of family and caregiving and learning environments. Not a "test," but rather a systematic procedure/process for obtaining information from observation, interviews,

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portfolios, projects, tests, and other sources that can be used to make judgments about children's characteristics. There are many purposes of assessment. Tools designed for one purpose are in most cases inappropriate to use for a purpose other than that which they were intended. It is used to measure skills and abilities, which could help to determine progress over time.

**Authentic assessment** • A type of performance assessment that uses tasks that are as close as possible to real-life practical and intellectual challenges and the child completes the desired behavior in a context as close to real life as possible.

**Battery** • An array of similar tools intended for use together, such as “a battery of assessments” for different developmental areas.

**Business practices** • Program has a method for keeping business records (financial or programmatic) or has sound, consistent business practices, policies, and procedures.

**Classroom materials** • Classroom has either specific materials (i.e. blocks, books), a variety of materials, and/or materials that are developmentally appropriate.

**Classroom organization** • Refers to the physical layout of the program (i.e., well-defined spaces for different activities, specific areas are present—dramatic play area, outdoor playground—or materials or facilities are in good condition).

**Competencies** • The concepts and facts that a professional must learn to become competent in each area of practice. This knowledge becomes the cognitive foundation for the skills and behaviors implemented in the professional's work with children.

**Concurrent validity** • This term describes the relationship between two separate

measures of similar constructs which, when administered at the same time, provide results that are consistent with one another. Note: Sometimes manuals refer to this as convergent criterion validity, which could be interpreted to mean that the two tools concur or agree in the measurement of a particular construct.

**Construct** • An idea or theory containing various conceptual elements, typically one considered to be subjective and not based on empirical evidence.

**Construct validity** • The extent to which a tool measures a clearly defined theoretical concept. The tool should be based on a theory, and scores from the tool should reflect what would be expected based on that theory.

**Content validity** • The extent to which a tool reflects the range of possible skills or behaviors that make up the domain or construct being assessed. This is often determined through expert review.

**Convergent validity** • A subtype of criterion-related validity. This term indicates the degree to which a tool correlates with other tools assessing the same construct.

**Criterion-referenced** • Children's response(s) is compared to a level of performance in an area of knowledge or skill, rather than to a group of children or normative group.

**Criterion-referenced assessments** • An assessment tool in which the test-taker's performance (i.e., score) is interpreted by comparing it with a pre-specified standard. Specific content or skills are designed to measure a child's performance against a fixed set of predetermined criteria or learning standards—i.e., concise, written descriptions of what children are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. Results are typically

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reported as levels of proficiency, such as emerging skill or mastery.

**Criterion-related validity** • A criterion-related validation study can be either predictive of later behavior or a concurrent measure of behavior or knowledge. The degree to which the scores of one tool are related to the scores of another existing tool which measures the same construct. The comparison between the tool and the criterion can be done either concurrently (i.e., concurrent validity), or later in time (i.e., predictive validity).

**Curriculum** • A body of material that defines the content to be taught and the methods to be used. Information organized on a specific topic; a set of topic specific information created for a defined group.

**Curriculum-based assessment** • Form of criterion-referenced measurement wherein curricular objectives act as the criteria for the identification of instructional targets and for the assessment of status and progress. The term curriculum-based assessment (CBA) means simply measurement that uses “direct observation and recording of a child’s performance in the local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions. The process of CBA has also been referred to as direct assessment of academic skills, and many different models all have in common the basic assumption that one should test what one teaches. Typically, these approaches have emphasized direct, repeated assessment of academic target behaviors. In each academic area, probes are developed and are used to collect data on a child’s performance. These probes are developed from the books or materials that make up the child’s curriculum.

**Data** • Data are facts, outcomes, and statistics collected together for reference or analysis. Data can be individual facts,

a body of facts, statistics, or items of information.

**Developmentally appropriate** • Decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge: that are age-appropriate, culturally-appropriate, and individually-appropriate for each child. What is known about child development and learning; what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group; and knowledge of the social and cultural context in which children live.

**Developmental delay** • A delay in the appearance of some steps or phases of growth and development.

**Developmental norms** • Standards by which the progress of a child’s development can be measured relative to the development of a representative cross section of children, i.e., the norm. For example, the average age at which a child walks, learns to talk, or achieves toileting independence would be a standard used to judge whether the child is progressing normally. While norms are usually thought of as age-related, norms can also be tied to other developmental variables such as race, ethnicity, and gender. Norms can inform teachers, families, and others in judging the appropriateness of certain types of activities for different children.

**Diagnostic** • A tool to provide information on a child’s development or health status.

**Discriminant or divergent validity** • A subtype of criterion-related validity that indicates the degree to which the tool is less

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closely related to measures of theoretically different constructs.

**Documentation** • The process of keeping track of and preserving children’s work as evidence of their progress.

**Domain** • A set of related skills, behaviors, or information that is classified as a single area of study or development. Domains typically cover multiple related constructs within a broad area of study or development, such as fine motor development or approaches toward learning.

**Early Learning Standards** • Statements that describe expectations for the learning and development of young children birth to five years of age. Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood are research-based according to age and development, and form the foundation for curriculum, assessment, instruction, and intervention within early care and education programs.

**Early Learning Outcomes Reporting (ELOR)** • Early Learning Outcomes Reporting links high quality learning standards with assessment and instruction for children birth through transition to kindergarten. Child outcomes reported to the state consist of outcomes that align to specific Pennsylvania Learning Standards. The specific standards chosen within the outcomes framework represent those standards which most directly predict later school success and align with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood. Within the framework of outcomes reporting, early learning programs select an OCDEL-approved vendor assessment instrument. Outcomes from the selected tool are translated into age-specific Early Learning Outcomes reporting frameworks within the PELICAN system.

**Factor analysis** • A procedure used to examine the relationships among items or questions to see whether the items group together, or are distinct, in expected ways. Researchers sometimes describe this as how well items being measured “hang together,” a process in which the values of observed data are expressed as functions of a number of possible causes to find which are the most important.

**Fidelity administration** • Individuals demonstrate consistency in the skill and accuracy with which they administer a screening tool to children. Such accuracy is verified through regular checks on faithful administration, using training materials or guidance from the developer of that tool.

**Family involvement** • There are specific practices in place to ensure communication with and/or involvement of families. Family involvement is viewed as important. “Family involvement” is defined as the participation of families in every facet of children’s education and development from birth to adulthood, recognizing

For additional information, please visit <http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=ELOR>

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that families are the primary influence in children's lives. The purpose of the family involvement component is to engage families as partners in the educational process.

**Formal assessment** • A procedure for obtaining information that can be used to make judgments about characteristics of children or programs using standardized tools. Formal assessments are tests that systematically measure how well a child has mastered learning outcomes.

**Formative assessments** • Formative assessment, also referred to as “educative assessment,” is used to aid learning. Assessments that examine children's learning for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching and children's learning and not for evaluating individual children. The formative assessments aim to see if the children understand the instruction before doing a summative assessment. An assessment designed to monitor progress toward an objective and used to guide curricular and instructional decisions. Formative assessments can take the form of diagnostic, standardized tests; quizzes; oral questions; or draft work.

**Guidelines** • A description of suggested elements aimed to accomplish a defined activity.

**High-stakes testing** • A high-stakes test is any test whose results are used to make important decisions about children, educators, schools, or districts, most commonly for the purpose of accountability.

**High-stakes assessment** • Tests or assessment processes for which the results lead to significant sanctions or rewards for children, their teachers, administrators,

schools, programs, or school systems. Sanctions may be direct (e.g., retention in grade for children, reassignment for teachers, reorganization for schools) or unintended (e.g., narrowing of the curriculum, increased dropping out).

**Implementation** • The process of putting a decision or plan into effect; execution; taking a planned curriculum, assessment system, or evaluation design and making it happen in ways that are consistent with the plan and desired results.

**Indicators** • A thing, especially a trend or fact, that indicates the state or level of something; questions included in the tool that are related to the developmental skill or ability being measured.

**Informal assessment** • A procedure for obtaining information that can be used to make judgments about characteristics of children or programs using means other than standardized tools.

**Internal communication** • Leadership communicates well with staff and/or staff communicate well with each other.

**Internal consistency reliability** • How closely items or indicators within a construct are interrelated.

**Knowledge areas** • Define the depth and breadth of information that a professional must learn to be a competent early childhood or school-age professional. Eight knowledge areas identify specialized knowledge that shapes early childhood and school-age educators' and administrators' professional practice.

**Leadership/management** • The action of leading a group of people or an organization. Program director or principal plays an active, positive role in the functioning of the program, there is strong internal leadership, or teachers manage the program well.

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**Monitoring** • Observe and check the progress or quality of (something) over a period of time; keep under systematic review. Progress is measured on a regular basis (e.g., weekly or monthly) by comparing expected and actual rates of learning. Assessment conducted to examine children’s academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Based on these measurements, teaching is adjusted as needed.

**Naturalistic observation** • Refers to the collection of data without manipulation of the environment. The goal of naturalistic observation is to study/observe the behavior of a human (including an organism) in natural settings.

**Norm-referenced assessment** • A standardized testing tool by which the test-taker’s performance is interpreted in relation to the performance of a group of peers who have previously taken the same test. The group of peers is known as the “norming” group. Norm-referenced refers to standardized tests that are designed to compare and rank test-takers in relation to one another. Norm-referenced tests report whether test-takers performed better or worse than a hypothetical average child, which is determined by comparing scores against the performance results of statistically selected group of test-takers, typically of the same age or grade level, who have already taken the exam.

**Outcomes** • Desired results for young children’s learning and development across multiple domains.

**Pennsylvania Early Learning Network (ELN)** • A comprehensive, unified data system for assessing individual-level child

outcomes across multiple programs. It links existing data systems by child identifier and will collect additional information on child and family services across a program area. When fully implemented, the data will be used to inform state policy decisions, investments, and improvement efforts for early educational programs from birth to third grade.

For additional information, please visit <https://www.pakeys.org/uploadedcontent/docs/eln/ELN%20Parent%20Flyer.pdf>

**Pennsylvania’s Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN)** • PELICAN is the Departments of Human Services and Education’s initiative to combine the state’s early learning programs under a single management information system. All early learning services information is managed in PELICAN. The PELICAN system includes the following: Certification, Child Care Works, Keys to Quality, PA Pre-K Counts, Early Learning Network, Early Intervention, and Provider Management.

For additional information, please visit <http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=PELICAN>

**Performance** • Behaviors exhibited while putting into the action or process of carrying out or accomplishing an action, task, or function.

**Performance assessment** • Measures children’s skills based on authentic tasks such as activities, exercises, or problems that require children to show what they can do. In some cases performance tasks are used to have children demonstrate their understanding of a concept or topic by applying their knowledge to a particular situation. Finding out what children know and can do by observing how they perform certain tasks. Usually

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uses tasks as close as possible to real-life practical and intellectual challenges. Because performance assessments require children to actively demonstrate what they know, they can be a more valid indicator of children's knowledge and abilities than other assessment methods.

**Policy** • The definite course of action adopted for a program, business, facility, political party, or government.

**Population** • The total number of all possible subjects or elements which could be included in a study. If the data are valid, the results of research on a sample of individuals drawn from a much larger population can then be generalized to the population.

**Portfolio assessment** • A collection of work, usually drawn from children's classroom work, which, when subjected to objective analysis, becomes an assessment tool.

**Practitioners** • A person engaged in the practice of a profession, occupation, etc. within education.

**Professional development** • In education, the term professional development may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. Professional development is supported and/or specific professional development opportunities (internal or external) are made available to staff.

**Professionals** • A person who belongs to one of the professions, especially one of the

learned professions within education.

**Program/staff assessments** • Program completes assessments or monitoring of the program and/or the staff (can refer to specific published assessment tools or to program-specific techniques).

**Readiness** • The state of being fully prepared for something.

**Readiness test** • A testing tool designed to measure skills believed to be related to school learning tasks and to be predictive of school success.

**Reliability** • The consistency of measurements, gauged by any of several methods, including when the testing procedure is repeated on a population of individuals or groups (test-retest reliability), or is administered by different raters (inter-rater reliability). There is no single, preferred approach to quantification of reliability. The consistency of an assessment tool (being free of error); important for generalizing about children's learning and development. A term which describes whether a tool produces consistent information across different circumstances. Scores will be stable regardless of *when* the tool is administered, *where* it is administered, and *who* is administering it. Reliability is represented by a figure between .00 and 1.0, such that values closer to 1.0 indicate better reliability.

**Sample** • A subset of a population. Samples are collected and statistics are calculated from the samples so that one can draw conclusions about the total population. A *representative sample* refers to a carefully chosen number of representatives of a specific group, such as children of a certain age, race/ethnicity, or income status, whose characteristics represent as accurately as possible the entire population of children with these characteristics.

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**Screening** • The use of a brief procedure or tool designed to evaluate whether a child may be at risk for a developmental delay and who may need further assessment to verify developmental and/or health risks.

**Sensitivity** • Valuing and respecting diversity and being sensitive to cultural and/or developmental differences.

**Skills** • The particular ability to do something well; the ability of children to use knowledge effectively and readily in performance; the ability to transform knowledge into action.

**Specific** • Clearly defined or identified.

**Standardized** • An assessment with clearly specified administration and scoring procedures and normative data.

**Standardized test** • A testing tool that is administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard manner. It may be either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced. A standardized test is any form of test that (1) requires all test-takers to answer the same questions, or a selection of questions from common bank of questions, in the same way, and that (2) is scored in a “standard” or consistent manner, which makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual children or groups of children.

**Standards-based assessment** • An assessment using criteria that are derived directly from content or performance standards.

**Standards-based instruction** • Instructional practices designed to help every child achieve the standards.

**Summative** • A tool that documents how much learning has occurred at a point of time.

**Summative assessment** • Assessment that summarizes children’s learning to

gauge if children have met program goals and objectives. Most standardized tests are summative and are not designed to provide feedback during the learning process. These types of assessments are usually conducted at the end of the school year.

**Summative assessment** • An assessment that typically documents how much learning has occurred at a point in time; its purpose is to measure the level of child, school, or program success. Summative assessments are used to evaluate children’s learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Generally speaking, summative assessments are defined by three major criteria: the way they are used—i.e., to determine whether and to what degree children have learned the material they have been taught; given at the conclusion of a specific instructional period, and therefore they are generally evaluative, rather than diagnostic; and results are often recorded as scores or grades that are then factored into a child’s permanent academic record.

**Typically** • The essential characteristics, forming a specific type, in a typical manner, on a typical occasion in typical circumstances. Children who pass a set of predictable milestones at expected times as they grow and develop, conforming to a particular type.

**Validity** • Producing the desired result. A term which describes whether a tool assesses what it is supposed to assess and indicates that scores are accurately capturing what the tool is meant to measure in terms of content. For example, if a child performs well on a vocabulary test, a valid measure would mean there is confidence that the child is good at word comprehension. An assessment or screener cannot be valid if it is not reliable. The

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extent to which a measure or assessment tool measures what it was designed to measure. This is represented by a figure between .00 and 1.0, such that values closer to 1.0 indicate better validity.

**Validity (of an assessment or tool)** • The extent to which a tool measures what it purports to measure; the extent to which

an assessment's results support meaningful inferences for certain intended purposes.

**Variable** • A quality, characteristic, or attribute that may change depending on the sample being studied. For example, commonly used variables include age, gender, race/ethnicity, poverty status, or levels of education.

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