BASICS

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

BASICS ONE
B-1 and **B-2**

INFORMATION FOR EDUCATORS
A-1 and **A-2**

FOUR ASSESSMENT TYPES
S-1 and **S-2**

CHOOSING ASSESSMENTS
I-1 and **I-2**

OUTCOMES
C-1 and **C-2**

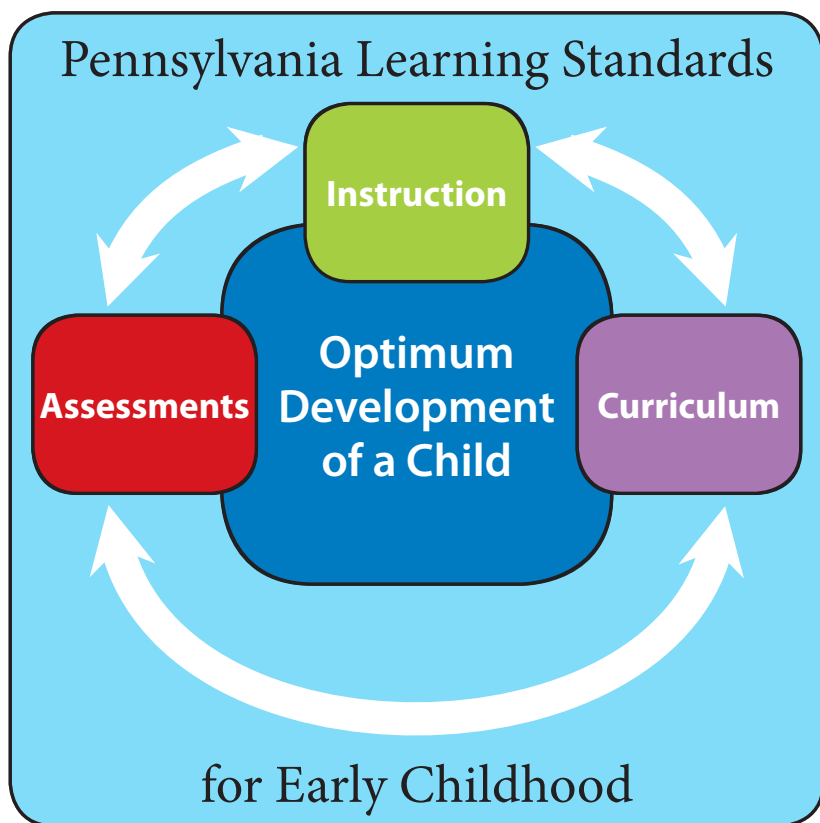## PENNSYLVANIA'S COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
S-1 and **S-2**

B A S I C S

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

B A S I C S   O N E

Children are born with an incredible capacity and desire to learn. More than 40 years of research confirms the foundational importance of early education and care for children's school and life success. It is essential that children's first experiences are robust ones, steeped in activities that develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, a deep understanding about themselves in a social society, and age-appropriate content.

Pennsylvania Learning Standards

Instruction

Assessments

Optimum Development of a Child

Curriculum

for Early Childhood

HOW • Assess individual and small groups of children, instructional practices, and the experiences provided by educators, administrators, and programs to determine how children are learning and/or making progress in skill development.

CURRICULUM

WHAT • Curriculum is content or information that is going to be taught (daily–weekly) and methods that are used to teach that content. This content is built on learning standards and based on scientific research and reflects age, culture, and linguistically-appropriate skills and developmental stages of the children in the program.

ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • A systematic process to measure or evaluate the characteristics or performance of individuals, programs, or other entities for purposes of drawing inferences.

WHY • Information gathered informs the design of the learning environments which will help a child grow to his or her optimum developmental potential, whether this is from birth to age eight or third grade. Learning environments: classrooms, curriculum, educators, and programs.

PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENTS

Support learning and instruction

Identify children who need additional services

Program and educator evaluations and to monitor trends

High-stakes accountability

HOW • Create or use a curriculum that is aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood, the program goals, and requirements or standards. Curriculum decisions come from three sources: children within the program, families, and the educators or adults with whom they interact.

BASICS

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

PENNSYLVANIA LEARNING STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

WHAT • Learning standards provide the framework for learning and the foundational information for what children should know and be able to do. Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood build on information children learned previously, creating a continuum of learning that assures consistent and linked learning that begins in infancy, increasing in complexity as it extends through graduation.

HOW • 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.

Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood are used to:

Inform professionals about curriculum, assessment, and instruction

Guide the design of instruction; the selection of materials; and the interactions, goal-setting, and experiences

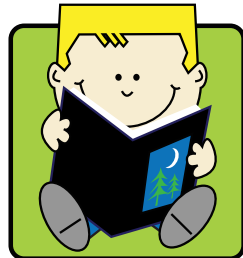Inform families of appropriate expectations for children

Provide a common framework for community-based birth–grade 3 alignment work

KEY LEARNING AREAS

APPROACHES TO LEARNING THROUGH PLAY
Constructing, Organizing and Applying Knowledge

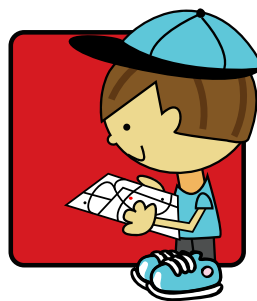**LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**
English Language Arts

MATHEMATICAL THINKING AND EXPRESSION
Exploring, Processing, and Problem Solving

SCIENTIFIC THINKING
Exploring, Inquiry, and Discovery

SOCIAL STUDIES THINKING
Connecting to Communities

CREATIVE THINKING AND EXPRESSION
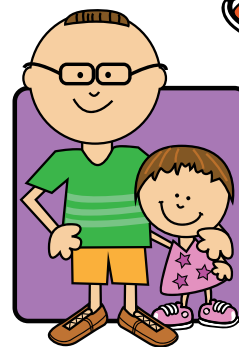Communicating through the Arts

HEALTH, WELLNESS AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
Learning About My Body

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Student Interpersonal Skills

PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING
Families, Learning Environments, and Communities

WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE OPTIMUM CHILD DEVELOPMENT

"The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows." Sydney Harris

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INFORMATION FOR EDUCATORS

Professionals interacting with young children have the critical task of providing rich information and experiences. Such experiences build skills and understanding in the context of everyday routines and within intentionally-designed play opportunities that capture children's interests and curiosity.

SEVEN ASSESSMENT SKILLS EDUCATORS NEED
Adapted from SERVE Center, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2004

ASSESSMENTS = GETTING TO KNOW CHILDREN

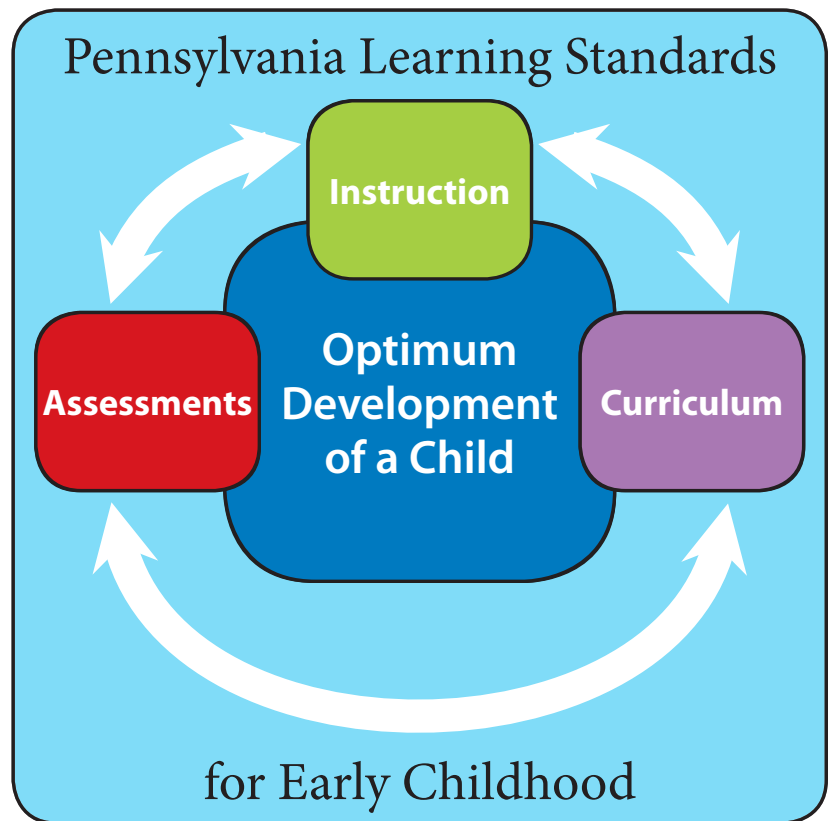| 1 | DEFINE LEARNING GOALS | Define learning goals ahead of time. Learning goals are the basis of developing or choosing ways to assess children's learning and the effectiveness of instruction. |
2	USE A VARIETY OF ASSESSMENT TYPES	Use a variety of ongoing assessment types to gather different levels of evidence of children's learning
3	ANALYZE THE DATA AND ACT ON IT	How to analyze achievement data (both quantitative and qualitative) and make good inferences (e.g., decisions and plans) from the data gathered
4	PROVIDE FEEDBACK	How to provide appropriate feedback to children (and families)
5	ADAPT YOUR INSTRUCTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES	How to make appropriate instructional modifications and decisions to help children improve
6	ENGAGE AND CAPTIVATE CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT	How to involve children in the assessment process (e.g., self and peer assessment) and effectively communicate results
7	ENHANCE OPTIMUM LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	And, most important, how to engineer an efective classroom assessment environment that boosts children's motivation to learn

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LINKING ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment work together to provide the best learning experiences for children. Educators should assess children's progress on the curriculum content presented and adapt the instruction based on the assessment results.

Curriculum and assessment work together to provide rich opportunities for learning and should be aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

Assessment is the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information, with evidence being an outward sign or indication of the child's development or learning. Instructional practices must embed the domains of development—cognitive, language, physical, and social-emotional—with approaches to learning that enable children to explore, understand, and reach beyond the "here and now" to challenge themselves, experiment, and transform information into meaningful content and skills. Based upon assessment results, adapt your practices—Content (What), Materials (How)—and make them individualized.

Pennsylvania Learning Standards

Instruction

Optimum Development of a Child

Assessments

Curriculum

for Early Childhood

How to collect evidence?

- Observation–Observational and/or anecdotal notes
- Permanent products of children's work–work samples
- Interviews
- Gather information from multiple sources
- Portfolios
- Checklists and scales
- Data assessments–outcomes
- Photographs/video clips

EDUCATOR TIPS

- Ensure appropriateness of curriculum, assessments, and instruction for special populations.
- Engage in intentional evidence collection for every child on a continual basis.
- Summarize ongoing observation data for every child at least two times (preferably three times) per year to document the child's progress over time.
- Implement chosen assessment and curricula-based manual (with fidelity*).
- Use assessment results to adapt both content and pedagogy** (how instruction is provided).
- Access specific professional development related to linking standards.***
- Review program requirements to ensure compliance with ongoing assessment and outcomes reporting.

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*   **Fidelity** is defined as adherence and devotion to following the guidelines and rules of your assessment and curriculum manual.

** **Pedagogy** may be defined as the practice (or the art, the science, or the craft) of teaching. (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004) Pedagogy is the overarching concept; it refers broadly to the deliberate process of cultivating development within a given culture and society. From this point of view, pedagogy has three basic components: (1) curriculum, or the content of what is being taught; (2) methodology, or the way in which teaching is done; and (3) techniques for socializing children in the repertoire of cognitive and affective skills required for successful functioning in society that education is designed to promote. (*Eager to learn, educating our preschoolers,* National Resource Council, 2000)

*** **Professional Development Core** training on PD Registry: Integrating the Early Childhood Standards into Curriculum and Assessment – 6 hours
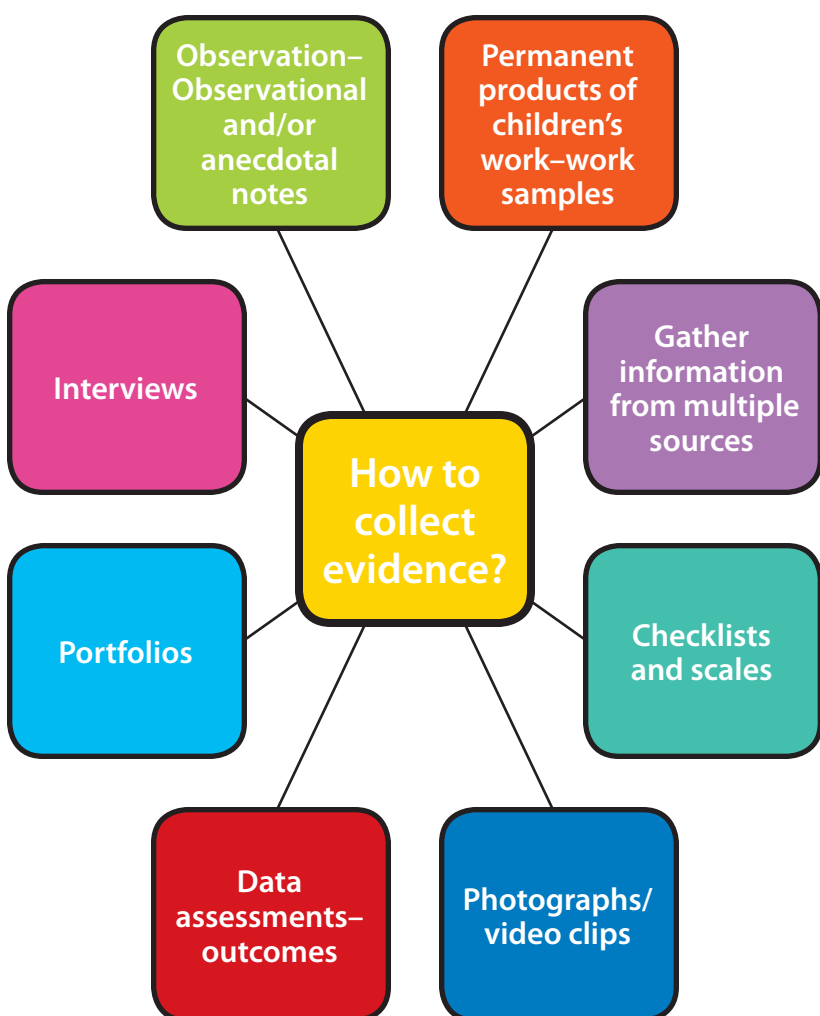
B A S I C S

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

FOUR ASSESSMENT TYPES

SCREENINGS

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS AS NEEDED

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS**

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

SCREENINGS ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • **Screenings** provide a quick snapshot of a child's health and/or developmental status.

WHEN • Within 45 days of new enrollment.

WHY • To assess if there is a need for diagnostic assessment. Identifies potential difficulties that may interfere with expected growth, learning, or development that warrant further assessment, diagnosis, or evaluation, and that might necessitate adapted instruction, interventions, or special education services.

- **DEVELOPMENTAL—**
  (domains of cognition, fine and gross motor skills, social-emotional, and speech and language development)

- **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL—**
  – Emotions
  – Exploring environments
  – Forming relationships

- **HEALTH—**
  (Mental and physical)

SCREENINGS

Brief and simple

Get to know your children's abilities

Need for diagnostic assessments
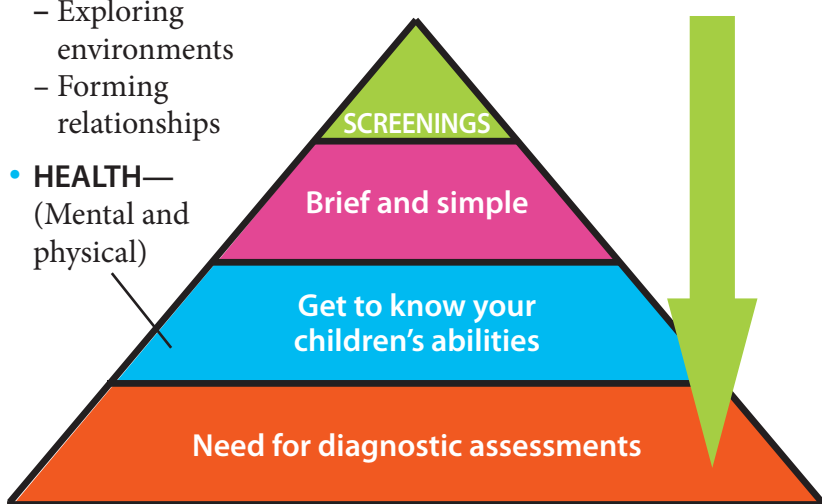
DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • **Diagnostic Assessment** is a process that looks at areas of specific concern or looks at a broad range of development, as a result of screening data.

WHEN • After initial screening or when concerns are raised about the child's development that will affect the child's growth on learning and development.

WHY • To identify need for intervention and/or instructional strategies.

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS

Standardized for a large number of children

Related to other children of the same age, gender, and ethnic origin

Results: Intervention, instructional strategies, IEP, therapy, etc.

ASSESSMENT KNOWLEDGE IS POWER WHEN YOU TURN IT INTO ACTION AND CHANGE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

*"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn."* Ignacio Estrada

B A S I C S

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • **Formative Assessment** is used by educators and children during instruction to provide feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve children's achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

WHEN • Ongoing.

WHY • Collecting ongoing evidence for learning to inform instruction, while the process involves educators, adults, and children.
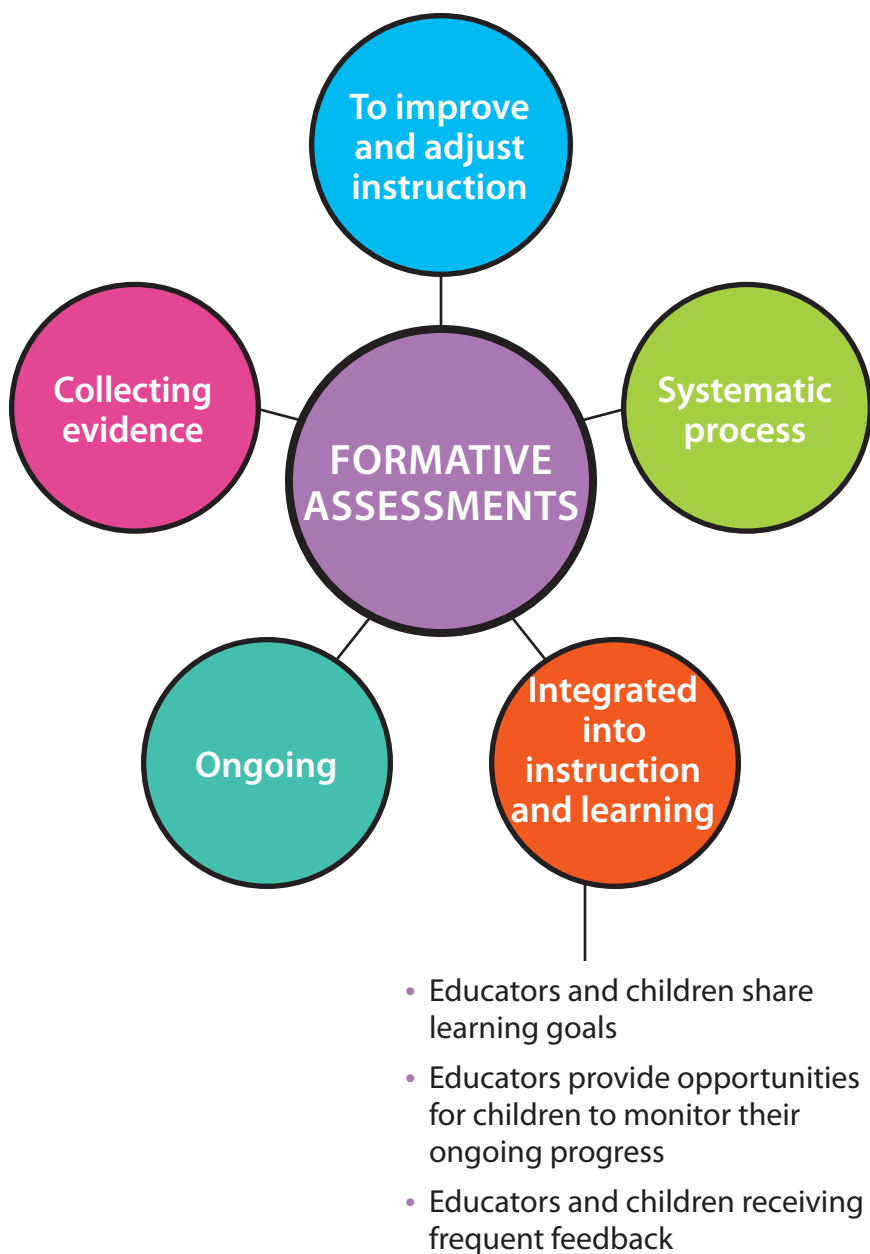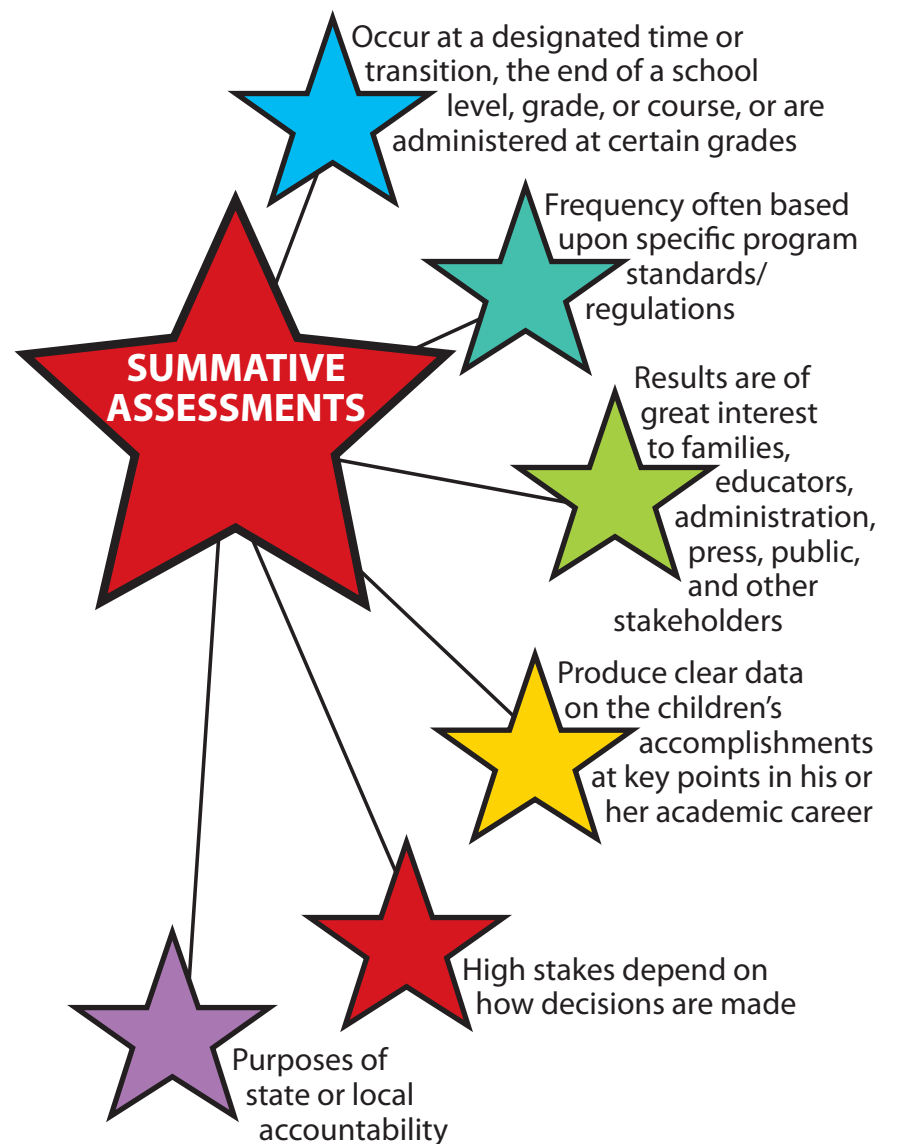
SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • **Summative Assessment** seeks to make an overall judgment of progress made.

WHEN • At the end of a defined period of instruction.

WHY • To create a summary of learning. Summative data essentially looks back to see how effective the instruction, a part of the curriculum, or an intervention was. Summative data can be used for accountability, which is often considered high-stakes.

To improve and adjust instruction

Collecting evidence

Systematic process

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Ongoing

Integrated into instruction and learning

• Educators and children share learning goals
• Educators provide opportunities for children to monitor their ongoing progress
• Educators and children receiving frequent feedback

Occur at a designated time or transition, the end of a school level, grade, or course, or are administered at certain grades

Frequency often based upon specific program standards/regulations

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Results are of great interest to families, educators, administration, press, public, and other stakeholders

Produce clear data on the children's accomplishments at key points in his or her academic career

High stakes depend on how decisions are made

Purposes of state or local accountability

WATCH ME GROW

"A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in the pupils." Ever Garrison

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BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

CHOOSING ASSESSMENTS

The Department of Education does not make specific recommendations with regard to assessment tools; rather, the Department provides guidelines for decision-making that would best adhere to the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood (birth to age eight).

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSIDERING ASSESSMENTS

1	What is the purpose for assessing?
2	What ages does the tool assess?
3	What is it going to cost?
4	Are there mandated requirements for certain programs or grants? (e.g., Pre-K Counts, etc.)

BASICS

5	What type of assessment(s) is the tool?
6	Can the assessment be used with any curriculum?
7	Technical dimensions—what is official research on reliability, validity, and technical adequacy?
8	Technical dimensions—on what developmental domains is it based?
9	Technical dimensions—are they aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood and/or Pennsylvania Core Standards?
10	Technical dimensions—is there sensitivity to children's individual backgrounds (ethnic, racial, language, and functional status?

SPECIFICS

11	What online tools/reports are available?
12	How is training offered?
13	What supports are offered?

SUPPORTS

B A S I C S

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

LINKING ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM

The purpose of the child assessment and the audience(s) should be considered in determining what assessment is used and who administers it (collects the evidence). For example, if a funder wants to know whether their investment is improving child outcomes, then assessments might collect outcomes from a sample of children. By contrast, if educators want to screen children, plan instruction, or identify professional development needs, it is important that educators (with input from families) assess all children.

DEFINITIONS YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND
WHEN CONSIDERING (STANDARDIZED AND PACKAGED) ASSESSMENTS

RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to the accuracy and stability of assessment scores.
• Assessment developers ensure reliability by testing 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).
• A good measure of reliability is a score between 1.0 (perfect) and 0.50 (good*).

VALIDITY

Validity is an indication of how closely the assessment measures what it is intended to measure.
• An assessment has to be reliable to be valid. Assessment developers make logical hypotheses and analyze groups of test scores to see if the hypotheses hold. A screening instrument demonstrates validity if children who are identified by screening to have a problem also receive low scores on a comprehensive test of development.
• A good measure of validity is a score between 1.0 (perfect) and 0.50 (good).

TECHNICAL ADEQUACY

Technical adequacy describes the degree of demonstrated reliability and validity of a test.
• Technical information is often included in the assessment guide.
• Technical adequacy is an important consideration when selecting assessment instruments for any purpose, although norm-referenced** assessments generally have more information on reliability and validity than do criterion-referenced*** instruments.

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*   The **measures used for reliability** will create a score between 0 and 1. These numbers are referring to a ratio or fraction and are not to be confused with a test score. The value of a reliability estimate tells us the proportion of variability in the measure attributable to the true score. A reliability of .5 means that about half of the variance of the observed score is attributable to truth and half is attributable to error. And so on.
   a. Measures a child's performance against a predetermined set of criteria, generally developmentally-sequenced or task-analyzed skills.
   b. 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.
** **Norm-referenced**
   a. Compares a child's score to the scores of a group of same-age peers (norm-group).
   b. Refers to standardized tests that are designed to compare and rank test-takers in relation to one another (norm-group)
*** **Criterion-referenced**
   a. Measures a child's performance against a predetermined set of criteria, generally developmentally-sequenced or task-analyzed skills.
   b. 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.
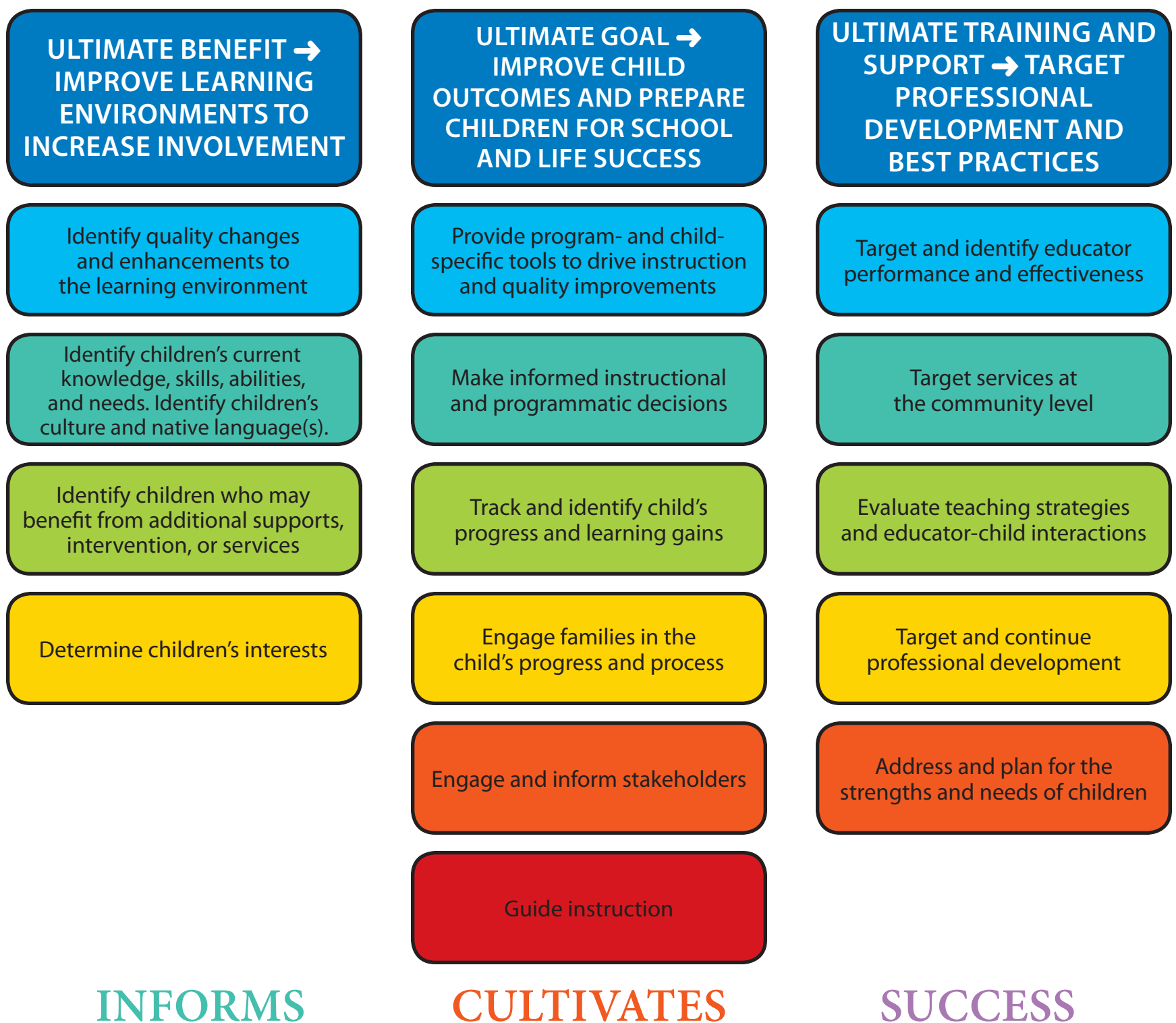
B A S I C S

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

O U T C O M E S

WHAT • **Outcomes** are the recorded results of a well-balanced review of children's skill development, based on educators' assessments. Educators use reliable and valid assessment instruments to guide their collection and documentation of children's progress for reporting.

An outcome should not be just a piece of information—it is important knowledge that should bring families and educators into action.

With proper resources and informed leadership (on all levels: educators, administrators, families, policymakers, and instructional leaders, and on a state level), best practices can be implemented, and policy decisions can be made on every level to support healthy development, early learning, and school success for all young children.

ULTIMATE BENEFIT ➜ IMPROVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS TO INCREASE INVOLVEMENT	ULTIMATE GOAL ➜ IMPROVE CHILD OUTCOMES AND PREPARE CHILDREN FOR SCHOOL AND LIFE SUCCESS	ULTIMATE TRAINING AND SUPPORT ➜ TARGET PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND BEST PRACTICES
Identify quality changes and enhancements to the learning environment	Provide program- and child-specific tools to drive instruction and quality improvements	Target and identify educator performance and effectiveness
Identify children's current knowledge, skills, abilities, and needs. Identify children's culture and native language(s).	Make informed instructional and programmatic decisions	Target services at the community level
Identify children who may benefit from additional supports, intervention, or services	Track and identify child's progress and learning gains	Evaluate teaching strategies and educator-child interactions
Determine children's interests	Engage families in the child's progress and process	Target and continue professional development
	Engage and inform stakeholders	Address and plan for the strengths and needs of children
	Guide instruction	

INFORMS   CULTIVATES   SUCCESS

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER WHEN YOU TURN IT INTO ACTION AND CHANGE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

"Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change a child's life, impact a family, change the community, and change the world." Anonymous

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MISUNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENTS/ AVOID INAPPROPRIATE USE OF ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT = TESTING

Assessment is often used as a synonym for testing. The field of early childhood education has historically used authentic informal assessments in the form of naturalistic observations and anecdotal records. Current recommendations from the field and professional literature indicate the need for assessment systems that **use ongoing, multiple methods for gathering information.**

CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENTS ONLY

Curriculum-based observation is direct observation and recording of a child's performance in the local curriculum as a basis for gathering information. Note that **conducting ongoing authentic assessment provides the richest information** about the whole child.

EXCLUSION

Assessment is **NOT conducted to determine the child's "readiness"** for inclusion in an educational setting, and assessment is DEFINITELY NOT conducted to exclude the child from preschool or Kindergarten. It IS conducted to plan beneficial opportunities for each child, and to optimize their likelihood of success.

INAPPROPRIATE APPLICATION

Serious **misuse of testing** with young children occurs when assessments intended for one purpose are used inappropriately for other purposes.

HIGH-STAKE DECISIONS

High-stakes decisions about program or educator quality, effectiveness, or accountability (of either Kindergarten or preschool experiences) **should NOT be made.** This includes judging program quality, evaluating educator effectiveness, and funding decisions.

TECHNICAL ADEQUACY

Assessments are NOT used to predict future academic achievement and life success. Children develop at different rates, have different life experiences, and have different opportunities to participate in high quality early learning experiences. **An assessment**, particularly a single test at one moment in time, **is NOT a valid predictor of a child's potential.**

B A S I C S

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

PENNSYLVANIA'S COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

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 activities. Selecting an assessment tool or tools is one of those decisions. The system requires supports and procedures to effectively and appropriately administer the assessment, as well as selecting a data management and analysis system that captures the results of the assessments and allows the data to be used appropriately.

A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

WHAT • A coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments—each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used—that organizes information about the process and context of young children's learning and development to help early childhood educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions.

HOW • A comprehensive assessment system addresses a full range of knowledge and skills expected by standards. It provides different users at different levels in the system (district, school, program, and classroom) with the right kinds of data, at the right level of detail, to help with decision-making.

WHEN • A continuous system provides ongoing streams of information about children's learning throughout the year. Assessment data from a coherent, comprehensive, and continuous system help educators monitor children's learning by establishing a rich and productive foundation for understanding children's achievement.
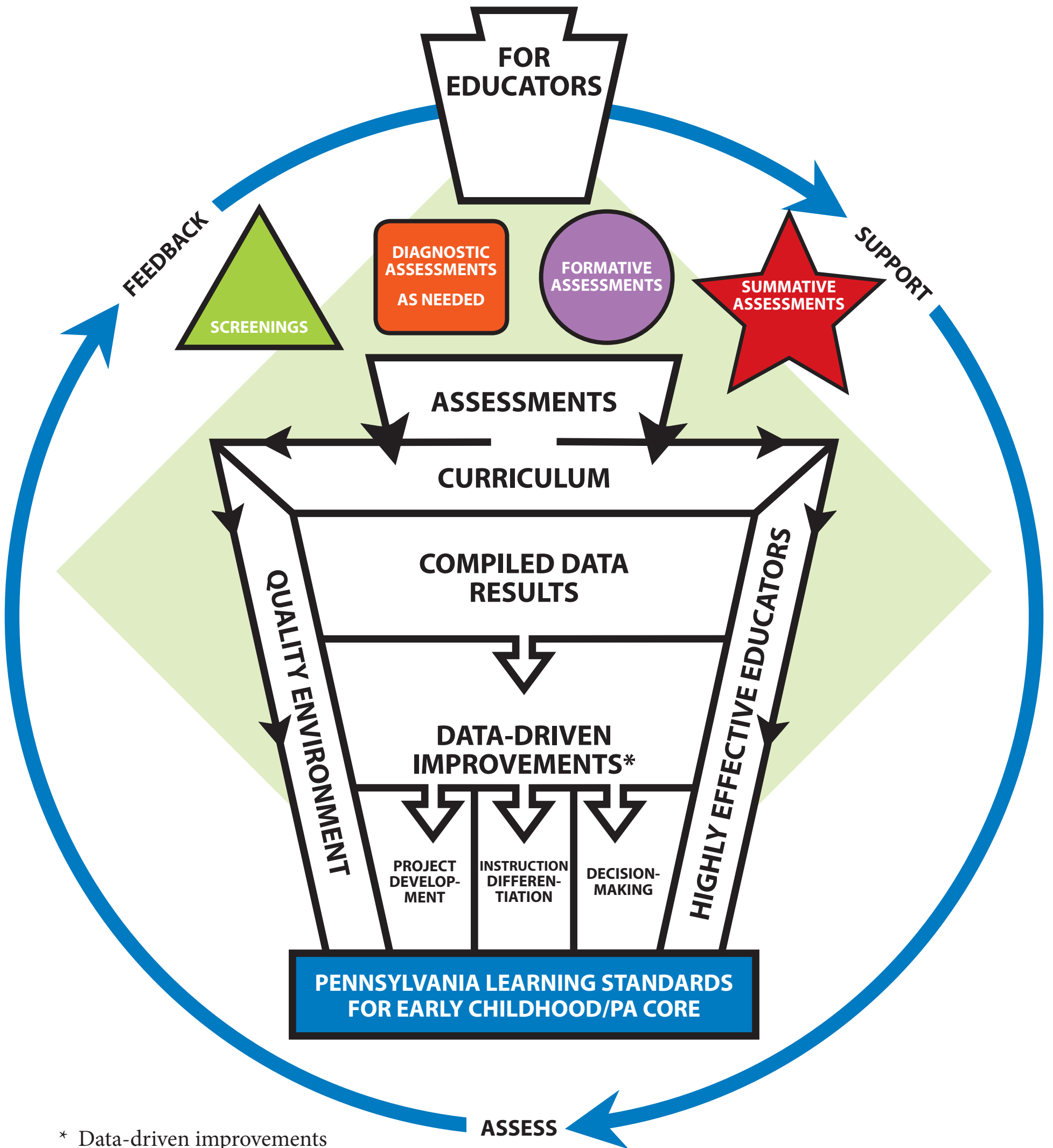
Visit Pennsylvania's Early Learning Keys to Quality website at www.pakeys.org.

WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE OPTIMUM CHILD DEVELOPMENT

"The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one." Malcolm Forbes

B A S I C S

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FOR EDUCATORS

FEEDBACK

SUPPORT

SCREENINGS

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS AS NEEDED

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

ASSESSMENTS

CURRICULUM

COMPILED DATA RESULTS

QUALITY ENVIRONMENT

DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENTS*

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS

PROJECT DEVELOP-MENT

INSTRUCTION DIFFEREN-TIATION

DECISION-MAKING

PENNSYLVANIA LEARNING STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD/PA CORE

ASSESS

* Data-driven improvements
   can take place on different
   levels—classroom, program,
   school, and district levels.

pennsylvania
OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
AND EARLY LEARNING

S-2