

**Announcement
ELRC #25-02**



Pennsylvania
**Office of Child Development
and Early Learning**

Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: 04/9/2025

Effective Date: Immediately

Expiration Date: N/A

Subject: OCDEL-Approved Curricula and Developmental Assessment Tools
in Keystone STARS

To: All Keystone STARS Providers; Early Learning Resource
Centers (ELRCs); and The Office of Child Development and Early
Learning (OCDEL) Early Learning Resource Center Program
Representatives

From:

Shante' Brown

Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE

The purpose of this announcement is to provide information on the approved curricula and developmental assessments for use by STAR 3 and 4 programs. This announcement makes obsolete the following announcement, in its entirety, effective immediately:

- [ELRC Announcement 22 #07 OCDEL-Approved Curricula and Developmental Assessment Tools in Keystone STARS](#)

BACKGROUND

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has an established internal process for the approval of curricula and developmental assessment tools for use by Keystone STARS providers seeking to earn points toward their STAR 3 or 4 designation. A component of this approval process requires the completion of a crosswalk aligning the curriculum and developmental assessment tool with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards (PA ELS). More information on the PA ELS can be found [here](#).

On December 1, 2022, OCDEL released [ELRC Announcement 22 #07](#) which outlined that only currently OCDEL-approved curricula and developmental assessments would be valid for meeting the requirements of STARS EC 3.4.1 and EC 3.4.2 for STAR 3 and 4 designations.

Historically, OCDEL released and maintained an annual listing of approved curricula and developmental assessment tools. The annual listing provided details of newly approved tools and those that were set to be discontinued at the end of the fiscal year.

As part of this process, curricula and developmental assessment tools were discontinued when any of the following conditions occurred:

- the vendor released an updated version of the tool;
- the vendor stated that they no longer supported a tool by offering training or professional development and would no longer offer the tool and related materials for sale; or
- the vendor did not respond to OCDEL's annual request to confirm the information on file for the tool.

Tools that were being discontinued at the end of a fiscal year could no longer be used for points toward a STAR 3 or 4 designation in future fiscal years.

DISCUSSION

Since the release of [ELRC Announcement 22 #07](#), OCDEL has been evaluating the curricula and developmental assessment tool approval process to determine its impact on early childhood providers. Internal discussions, ongoing reviews of updated tools, and feedback from stakeholders concluded that discontinuing a tool simply due to the release of an updated version by the vendor seemed unnecessary and posed a potential financial burden for providers.

In many cases, updates to previously approved curricula and developmental assessment tools that preserved the essential content and structure had no impact on the integrity of the material and alignment to the PA ELS. As a result, curricula and developmental assessment tools that were previously approved based on their alignment with the PA ELS, will remain available for use by providers.

It is important to note that while an older version of a curriculum or developmental assessment tool may remain on the approved listing, the vendor may no longer offer training, professional development, or the option to order additional materials. Providers should take these factors into account when deciding whether to continue using a curriculum or developmental assessment tool that is no longer supported by the vendor but remains on the approved OCDEL list.

Moving forward, OCDEL will only discontinue approved curricula and developmental assessment tools under the following conditions:

- The vendor fails to respond to OCDEL's annual request to confirm the tool's information on file;
- The PA ELS are updated, causing the curricula and developmental assessment tools to no longer align with the standards; or
- The curriculum or developmental assessment tool is updated, and the tool no longer aligns with the PA ELS.

To maintain consistency with previous practice, if a curriculum or developmental assessment tool is discontinued, the change would occur at the end of the fiscal year.

New Process for Communicating Changes to the OCDEL-Approved Listings of Curricula and Developmental Assessment Tools

OCDEL will no longer issue an annual listing of approved curricula and developmental assessment tools. Keystone STARS providers can refer to the listings on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) Early Learning Standards [website](#). The PDE Early Learning Standards website provides the most up-to-date information on approved curricula and developmental assessment tools. Discontinued and newly approved curricula and developmental assessment tools will also be announced in the PA Early Ed News (EEN).

Expectations for Keystone STARS Providers when Approved Curricula and Developmental Assessment Tools are Discontinued

OCDEL anticipates the new approval process will result in less curricula and developmental assessment tools being discontinued. Keystone STARS providers should subscribe to the [PA Early Ed News](#) and check PDE's [Early Learning Standards website](#) to stay up-to-date on approved curricula and developmental assessment tools. Discontinued and newly approved curricula and developmental assessment tools will be announced in the PA Early Ed News and PDE's Early Learning Standards website will have the current list of approved curricula and assessment tools.

STAR 3 and 4 providers who are using a curriculum or developmental assessment tool that is no longer approved by OCDEL will need to choose a new approved tool if they wish to continue meeting EC 3.4.1 and EC 3.4.2.

Providers will need to choose a new curriculum or developmental assessment tool and be effectively implementing it at the time of their next full Keystone STARS designation if they wish to meet the relevant STAR 3 and 4 Quality Indicators. To meet the relevant STAR 3 and 4 Staff Qualification Quality Indicators, (SQ 3.4.6 and SQ 3.4.8) all onsite leadership team members and teaching staff must complete the appropriate professional development in the new vendor-related tool by the time of their next full designation. Additional information on the types of approved professional development to meet these indicators can be found in the [Keystone STARS Program Manual](#).

NEXT STEPS

1. Keystone STARS Providers

- a) Review the information with your staff.
- b) Providers should [subscribe to the EEN](#) in order to receive updates to the approved listings of curricula and developmental assessment tools.
- c) Providers should refer to the listings on the [PDE Early Learning Standards website](#) to ensure the tools they are using continue to be approved as part of their annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan update and activities.
- d) Please direct any questions to your ELRC.

2. ELRCs

- a) Review and share with appropriate staff.
- b) Refer to the listings on the [PDE Early Learning Standards website](#) to become familiar with the current approved tools.

- c) As part of annual work with providers, ensure that the curriculum and developmental assessment tools providers are using to meet EC 3.4.1 and EC 3.4.2 remain approved.
- d) Please direct any questions to your program representative.