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CSAI Report

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Entry Assessments

What assessments are states and other similar jurisdictions currently administering at pre-kindergarten and kindergarten entry?

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The Importance of Early Childhood Education

Educational opportunities in early childhood provide an important foundation for a child's future success.^{1,2} To ensure that young children have access to high-quality educational experiences in early childhood, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)³ advocates that policymakers: (1) develop assessments that are guided by good early childhood practices and effective standards, and are valid and reliable; (2) implement curriculums that are developmentally appropriate, challenging, and engaging; (3) utilize assessment methods that are culturally responsive and tied to children's daily activities; (4) regularly evaluate early childhood programs about whether the program meet the standards; and (5) provide support and professional development to help early childhood educators implement high-quality curriculums.

The Role of Early Childhood Assessments

Early childhood assessments play an important role in ensuring that children are reaching goals for learning and development. The NAEYC^{4,5} provides a list of indicators of effective assessments: (1) assessment practices should be guided by ethical principles; (2) assessments are only used for their intended (validated) purposes; (3) assessments are appropriate for the ages of children being assessed; (4) instruments are valid and reliable; (5) assessments include developmentally and educationally important goals; (6) results of assessments are used to understand and improve learning; (7) assessments are conducted in realistic daily settings; (8) assessments use multiple sources of information over time; (9) assessments are linked to follow-up (if assessment identified concerns); (10) assessments use standardized approaches in appropriate situations (e.g., to identify

¹ Encyclopedia of Early Childhood Development. (2011). Child care - Early childhood education and care. Retrieved from <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/child-care-early-childhood-education-and-care>

² National Education Association. (2015). Research on early childhood education. Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/home/18226.htm>

³ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2003). Early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation: Building an effective, accountable system in programs for children birth through age 8. Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/pscape.pdf>

⁴ ibid.

⁵ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2009). Where we stand on curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/StandCurrAss.pdf>

disabilities); (11) educators are given resources or professional development related to assessment literacy.

The Pre-K/K Assessment⁶ tab of the State of the States⁷ section of the Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation (CSAI) website provides information to educators, administrators, and policy researchers about the implementation, development, and design approach of assessments in public, state-funded pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs. The map and state summary pages were developed in response to trends related to assessment practices in early childhood. Since 2010, an increasing number of state departments of education have been working on developing or enhancing assessment tools to measure the readiness of children when they enter kindergarten. The U.S. Department of Education has supported states' efforts to enhance their assessment systems through competitive grants, including Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) and the Enhanced Assessment Grants (EAG). The information presented in the tab is updated twice a year, in February and September. This report provides results from the most recent update of information about the early childhood assessment practices of individual states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.⁸

Types of Assessment Tools

As of the February 2016 update, 21 states have implemented or are planning to implement an assessment in pre-kindergarten, and 31 states have implemented or are planning to implement an assessment at kindergarten entry. A variety of assessment tools are used, which can be categorized into direct assessments, observation-based assessments, and assessments that utilize a combination of approaches. In some states, local education agencies have decision-making power about the precise assessment tools that are used, but the state provides some level of guidance.

Direct-assessment tools are composed of selected-response or performance-task items and require interactions between the assessment administrator (e.g., a teacher) and the child. Observation-based tools are composed of observational items and require the assessment administrator to observe the child in authentic situations to gather information about the child's skills, knowledge, and behaviors. The Pre-K/K Assessment tab contains a map view that provides a color-coded visual display of types of assessments used by each state, with options to select one or more assessment types.

⁶ Pre-K/K Assessment: http://www.csai-online.org/sos?t=early_childhood&m=

⁷ State of the States: <http://www.csai-online.org/sos>

⁸ CSAI derived the information reported in this summary from websites maintained by individual states, the District of Columbia, and territory departments of education; thus, the accuracy of this report is commensurate with the accuracy of those sources. The reported data are intended to be used as a general summation of current systems, not as a definitive report on any individual system.

At the pre-kindergarten level, 1 state uses a direct-assessment tool (Virginia), 17 states use observation-based tools (Alabama, Arizona, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington), and 3 states use a combination of direct-assessment and observation-based tools (Florida, Louisiana, and Minnesota). At the kindergarten level, 4 states use direct-assessment tools (Iowa, Mississippi, Utah, and Virginia), 17 states use observation-based tools (Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawai'i, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Washington), and 10 states use a combination of direct-assessment and observation-based tools (Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas).

Removal and Addition of Approved/Recommended Assessments (since September 2015)

Some states do not require a specific pre-kindergarten or kindergarten entry assessment tool, but instead provide a list of approved/recommended assessments for local districts to choose from. Arkansas, Kansas, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin changed their list of assessments since CSAI's September 2015 update. None of the states provided reasons for changing their list of recommended assessments.

- Arkansas's state-funded preschool program (Arkansas Better Chance [ABC]⁹), which provides services for children from at-risk or low-income families, has switched from using the Denver I assessment to using the Denver II.
- Pennsylvania¹⁰ removed BRIGANCE Early Childhood Developmental Inventory and Riverside Assessments from their list of approved assessment tools and added Teaching Strategies GOLD.
- Wisconsin¹¹ removed ASQ-SE, BRIGANCE, Early Screening Inventory (ESI), and Galileo Preschool Assessment Scales from their list of recommended assessments and added Work Sampling System, Hawai'i Early Learning Profile (HELP), and Focused Portfolios.

Preschool Development Grants

A new addition to the state summary pages is information about whether states have received funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Preschool Development and Expansion Grants program.¹² Development grants support states that do not have a Race to the Top—Early Learning

⁹ Arkansas Better Chance: <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dccece/Pages/ArkansasBetterChanceResources.aspx>

¹⁰ Pennsylvania: [http://www.education.pa.gov/Early Learning/Early Learning Standards/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.education.pa.gov/Early_Learning/Early_Learning_Standards/Pages/default.aspx)

¹¹ Wisconsin: <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/curriculum-assessment-child-assessment.php>

¹² Preschool Development and Expansion Grants:
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html>

Challenge grant and whose publicly funded preschool programs serve less than 10 percent of 4-year-olds statewide. Expansion grants support states that have been awarded a Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant and whose publicly funded preschool programs serve more than 10 percent of 4-year-olds statewide. As of the February 2016 update, 5 states have been awarded the Development Grant (Alabama, Arizona, Hawai'i, Montana, and Nevada) and 13 states have been awarded the Expansion Grant (Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia). If a state was awarded the grant, a link to their application is provided in the state summary. There is currently no public information how each state is using the grant, or what programs are being developed. States receiving the grant are required to submit an annual report that describes the progress goals, timelines, adherence to budget, and performance results compared to target performance established in the proposal.¹³ Any significant changes need to be reported to the U.S. Department of Education. When more information becomes available on the states' department of education websites, they will be added to the state summaries in a future update.

Other Updates

In addition to the major changes noted above, Table 1 shows all of the changes made to the state summary pages. For 8 states, the hyperlinks were no longer active (e.g., the webpage or document was not found) and the web addresses had been updated (Florida, Idaho, Maryland, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Wisconsin). For 5 states, links to the Preschool Development Grant application were added (Alabama, Arizona, Hawai'i, Montana, and Nevada). For 13 states, links to the Preschool Expansion Grant application were added (Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia). For 9 states, the language of the summary pages was revised or reorganized for clarity (Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and West Virginia). No changes were made to the summary pages for 18 states and territories (Alaska, American Samoa, California, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Georgia, Guam, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Oregon, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, South Carolina, U.S. Virgin Islands, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming).

¹³ U.S. Department of Education. (2014). Retrieved from Preschool development grants FY 2014 competition: Guidance and frequently asked questions for applicants. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/2014faq-preschldev.pdf>

Table 1: Changes in State Summaries and At-a-Glance

States and Territories	Changes in State Summaries and At-a-Glance
Alabama	Added link to Preschool Development Grant application.
Alaska	No update.
American Samoa	No update.
Arizona	Added link to Preschool Development Grant application. Assessment type: Kindergarten Developmental Inventory is an observation-based tool, and is projected to be implemented in 2017.
Arkansas	The ABC program now uses the Denver II (previously used the Denver I). Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
California	No update.
Colorado	Changed language/phrasing for clarity.
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	No update.
Connecticut	Added more information about the Enhanced Assessment Grants (EAG) program. Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
Delaware	Reorganized the summary for clarity.
District of Columbia	References to “2013 Pre-K Annual Report” changed to “2014 Pre-K Annual Report.” The name of the pre-kindergarten tool changed to “Early Development Instrument.” Kindergarten entry tool changed to N/A.
Federated States of Micronesia	No update.
Florida	Updated link for the VPK assessment.
Georgia	No update.
Guam	No update.
Hawai’i	Added link to Preschool Development Grant application.
Idaho	Updated link for Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) and Idaho Training Clearinghouse’s Early Childhood webpage. Added language that distinguishes IRI and KEA because it is administered at different times of the school year.
Illinois	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
Indiana	No update.
Iowa	No update.
Kansas	Added more information about the KELI assessment.
Kentucky	Kindergarten entry assessment type changed to combination.
Louisiana	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.

States and Territories	Changes in State Summaries and At-a-Glance
Maine	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
Maryland	Added more information about the Enhanced Assessment Grants (EAG) program. Pre-kindergarten assessment type changed to observation-based. Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application. Updated all links.
Massachusetts	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
Michigan	Revised language about the pre-kindergarten assessment guidelines for clarity.
Minnesota	Revised language about the use of grant funds for clarity.
Mississippi	Revised language about pre-kindergarten assessment information for clarity.
Missouri	No update.
Montana	Added link to Preschool Development Grant application.
Nebraska	Pre-kindergarten assessment tool name in the At-a-Glance changed to Teaching Strategies GOLD.
Nevada	Revised language about the Silver State Stars assessment for clarity. Added link to Preschool Development Grant application. Changed pre-kindergarten assessment type to Varies (i.e., varies by district/program).
New Hampshire	Changed kindergarten entry assessment type to Varies (i.e., varies by district/program).
New Jersey	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
New Mexico	Updated links for pre-kindergarten information.
New York	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
North Carolina	Updated link for K–3 Formative Assessment.
North Dakota	Updated link for K–3 Formative Assessment.
Ohio	Updated all links. Pre-kindergarten assessment type changed to observation-based.
Oklahoma	Revised language about pre-kindergarten assessment for clarity. Kindergarten entry assessment type changed to Varies (i.e., varies by local district/program).
Oregon	No update.
Pennsylvania	Removed BRIGANCE Early Childhood Developmental Inventory, Head Start Developmental Inventory, and Riverside Assessment from the list of approved assessments.

States and Territories	Changes in State Summaries and At-a-Glance
Puerto Rico	Added a note to indicate that the Puerto Rico Department of Education’s website is in Spanish, and that it is possible to view it in English using the browser’s translation function.
Republic of the Marshall Islands	No update.
Republic of Palau	No update.
Rhode Island	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
South Carolina	No update.
South Dakota	Revised language for clarity. Pre-kindergarten assessment tool type changed to N/A because state-funded pre-kindergarten is only offered to children with disabilities.
Tennessee	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
Texas	Reorganized structure of the summary so that pre-kindergarten information is after kindergarten information.
U.S. Virgin Islands	No update.
Utah	No update.
Vermont	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
Virginia	Added link to Preschool Expansion Grant application.
Washington	No update.
West Virginia	Revised language for clarity. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten assessment type changed to Varies (i.e., varies by local district/program).
Wisconsin	Previous link to ECAC Project Teams is no longer active; changed link to ECAC homepage. Changed ASQ assessment to ASQ-3. Removed ASQ-SE, BRIGANCE, Early Screening Inventory (ESI), and Galileo Preschool Assessment Scales from the list of recommended assessments. Added Work Sampling System, Hawai’i Early Learning Profile (HELP), and Focused Portfolios to the list of recommended assessments.
Wyoming	No update.