

SCREENING OVERVIEW

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) would like to provide readers with an overview of screening as providers prepare for next year. In New York State, each school district must conduct a screening for all new entrants. Establishing a screening process for early childhood classrooms is important since the majority of new entrants to a district are students entering prekindergarten or kindergarten.

For the purposes of [Part 117](#) of the Commissioner’s Regulations, screening is the use of a brief procedure designed to provide information that allows the district to distinguish from the general population those children who fit into one or more of these three categories: possibly gifted, suspected of having a disability, and possibly limited English proficient. Please note that this screening is only performed once during a school year and should not be confused with universal screening within a Response to Intervention (RtI) model that may be performed three times per year.

Similarly, the National Research Council defines screening as “the use of a brief procedure or instrument designed to identify, from within a large population of children, those who may need further assessment to verify developmental and/or health risks.”¹ Screenings do not typically provide diagnostic information. For example, vision and hearing screenings are generally conducted on children right after they are born. The information obtained from a vision screening will indicate that a child’s vision is within a normal range or that further evaluation is needed. The results from a vision screening would typically not provide enough information for a medical diagnosis. The child may need to see a specialist, who would perform additional assessments to determine if there is truly a vision problem, the cause of the problem, treatment, etc.

Screenings in early childhood settings serve the same purpose. The goal of screening is to identify potential issues so that, if needed, proper supports and services can be put into place to ensure children’s success. Some scenarios are listed below.

Screening for:	Results show:	Further evaluation may be completed by:	Potential outcomes:
Motor development	Not within normal range	Occupational Therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child receives occupational therapy services • Teacher, with suggestions from specialist, provides supports in classroom and monitors student progress
Cognitive skills	Within normal range	Classroom teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child continues to meet developmental benchmarks • Teacher has concerns, provides supports in classroom, and monitors student progress
Cognitive skills	Not within normal range	Classroom teacher School psychologist Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child participates in a gifted and talented program • Teacher provides individualized instruction to meet student needs and monitors progress

¹ National Research Council. (2008). *Early childhood assessment: Why, what and how*. Snow, C.E., & Van Hemel, S.B. (Eds.). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

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When planning for the future, it would be helpful to reflect on these points regarding screening:

- Screening is intended to identify children who may need further assessment.
 - When needed, there should always be referrals for further assessment.
- Screening instruments must be valid and reliable.
- Staff administering screenings should be sufficiently trained.
- Screening results, alone, do not provide enough information to determine children’s strengths and needs.
- Screening results should not be used to:
 - diagnose children as having special needs.
 - preclude children from participating in a program.
 - evaluate program effectiveness.²

FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

- Screening
- Developmental Baseline
- Progress Monitoring
- Summative Assessment

Screening is just one form of assessment that may be used in early childhood settings. The [Universal Prekindergarten regulations](#) state that “school districts shall establish a process for assessing the developmental baseline and progress of all children participating in the program.” Districts are also responsible for reporting “annually the percentage of prekindergarten children making significant gains in language, cognitive and social skills” and may use summative assessments to determine such gains. Assessment tools should be: developmentally appropriate; aligned with standards and curricula; and valid and reliable. Valid tools accurately

measure what they are intended to measure. Reliable tools provide similar results when administered as a re-test to the same student or provide similar results with similar student cohorts.³

Assessment is essentially collecting information and determining students’ strengths and needs. The use of appropriate assessments is an important component of the teaching and learning process. How does a teacher address the needs of children without identifying their needs? How does a director plan professional development for teachers without establishing where support is needed? Teachers should utilize data to inform their instruction and better meet the needs of students. Leaders should use data to evaluate program effectiveness and better support teachers and children. Assessments in early childhood settings look different from older students taking written exams, but the information obtained from formal and informal assessments is required for effective teaching and student success.

² National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. (2003). *Early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation: Building an effective, accountable system in programs for children birth through age 8. Position statement with expanded resources*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

³ Snow, K. (2011). *Developing kindergarten readiness and other large-scale assessment systems*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved from the National Association for the Education of Young Children website:

<http://www.naeyc.org/resources/research/kreadinessassessment>

EVALUATING STUDENT PROGRESS

An OEL Resource on Assessment in Early Childhood Programs

FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

- Screening
- Developmental Baseline
- Progress Monitoring
- Summative Assessment

The [May OEL Newsletter](#) provided an overview on screening. Screening is just one form of assessment that may be used in early childhood settings. This resource includes information on other forms of assessment and evaluating student progress. The [Universal Pre-kindergarten \(UPK\) regulations](#) state: “school districts shall establish a process for assessing the developmental baseline and progress of all children participating in the program.” Districts are responsible for reporting the progress of prekindergarten students and may use summative assessments to determine gains.

In addition, assessment tools should be: developmentally appropriate; aligned with standards and curricula; and valid and reliable. Valid tools accurately measure what they are intended to measure. Reliable tools provide similar results when administered as a re-test to the same student or provide similar results with similar student cohorts.¹ The use of appropriate assessments is an important part of the teaching and learning process. Teachers should utilize data to inform their instruction and better meet the needs of students. That being said, teachers require support from school leaders for the professional development, coaching, and time needed to interpret and analyze assessment data. Leaders should use data to evaluate program effectiveness and better support teachers and children.

FORM OF ASSESSMENT	DESCRIPTION	FORMAL OR INFORMAL	TIMEFRAME FOR USE
Developmental Baseline	While screening is intended to identify children who may require further assessment, the developmental baseline assessment is more comprehensive. It is a type of pre-assessment that provides a thorough evaluation of skill level, abilities, and/or knowledge that a child possesses prior to the beginning of formal instruction. With the results from a developmental baseline assessment, teachers can make informed instructional decisions. The baseline also serves as a comparative measure to determine the amount of student growth throughout the school year.	Typically formal	Beginning of assessment period (often at the beginning of the school year)
Progress Monitoring	The National Research Council defines progress monitoring as “assessment conducted to examine students’ academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress is monitored on a regular basis by comparing expected and actual rates of learning. Based on these measurements, teaching is adjusted as needed.” ² Progress monitoring must be closely aligned to a standards-based curriculum to ensure validity. Therefore, one assessment tool may not be appropriate for assessing a wide range of learning areas.	Formal or informal	Ongoing throughout the year
Summative Assessment	The National Research Council defines summative assessment as “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.” ² The same tool that was used to establish a developmental baseline would be suitable for a summative assessment.	Typically formal	Typically at the end of the school year

¹ Snow, K. (2011). *Developing kindergarten readiness and other large-scale assessment systems*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved from the National Association for the Education of Young Children website: <http://www.naeyc.org/resources/research/kreadinessassessment>

² National Research Council. (2008). *Early childhood assessment: Why, what and how*. Snow, C.E., & Van Hemel, S.B. (Eds.). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

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The following table lists the names of the most frequently-used, commercially-available assessment tools as reported by UPK grantees for the 2013-2014 school year.

Screening	Language & Literacy Skills Progress Monitoring	Cognitive Skills Progress Monitoring	Social-Emotional Skills Progress Monitoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages and Stages (ASQ) • Ages and Stages Social-Emotional Questionnaire (ASQ-SE) • American Guidance Service/ Pearson Early Screening Profiles • Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) • Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development • Brigance Early Childhood Screens • Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL) • Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brigance Inventory of Early Development • Creative Curriculum/Teaching Strategies GOLD Developmental Continuum • HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) • mCLASS: CIRCLE • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) • STAR Early Literacy • Work Sampling System (WSS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) • Brigance Inventory of Early Development • Creative Curriculum/Teaching Strategies GOLD Developmental Continuum • HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) • mCLASS: CIRCLE • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) • STAR Math • Work Sampling System (WSS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) • Brigance Inventory of Early Development • Creative Curriculum/Teaching Strategies GOLD Developmental Continuum • Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) • HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) • mCLASS: CIRCLE • Work Sampling System (WSS)

The State Education Department does not approve or recommend particular assessment tools. Subpart 151-1.3(b)(1) of the Commissioner's Regulations require that: (i) the instrument(s) used for assessment must be valid and reliable; and (ii) assessment information must be used to inform classroom instruction and professional development. A program should consider its curricula, alignment with the Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core, and students' needs when selecting a tool.

Additional Notes on Validity and Reliability

Research suggests that for young children, it is difficult to obtain valid and reliable assessment data. Early learners develop at varying rates, and their performance is greatly influenced by their emotional states and the assessment conditions.³ However, there are steps that can be taken to increase an assessment tool's validity and reliability:

- Align the assessment tool to standards and instruction.
- Ensure there is an appropriate level of rigor to measure what students know and can do.
- Verify that assessment items are clear, accurate, and measure students' knowledge and skills.
- Avoid bias by considering student demographics.
- Be thoughtful about scoring practices.⁴

The Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation, in collaboration with the Reform Support Network, developed an [Assessment Design Toolkit](#) to support teachers and leaders in designing assessments, or modifying existing assessments, to increase validity and reliability. Please explore the modules for more comprehensive information.

VALID AND RELIABLE COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENTS

While an assessment tool may claim to be valid and reliable, always consider:

- the purpose for which it is used (e.g., a screening tool should not necessarily be used for progress monitoring);
- the population to which it is given (and the language in which it is administered);
- and fidelity of implementation (e.g., sufficient training was provided to those implementing the tool).⁵

³ Epstein, A.S., Schweinhart, L.J., DeBruin-Parecki, A., & Robin, K.B. (2004). *Preschool assessment: A guide to developing a balanced approach* (Policy Brief Issue 7). Retrieved from National Institute for Early Education and Research: <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/7.pdf>

⁴ The Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation & The Reform Support Network. *Assessment design toolkit: Part II: Five elements of assessment design*. Retrieved from: <http://www.csai-online.org/spotlight/assessment-design-toolkit>

⁵ Halle, T., Zaslow, M., Wessel, J., Moodie, S., and Darling-Churchill, K. (2011). *Understanding and choosing assessments and developmental screeners for young children: Profiles of selected measures*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.