



An Introduction to Valid and Reliable Screening and Assessment Tools for NYS Administered Prekindergarten Programs

Commissioner’s Regulations 151-1.3 and 117 require districts and agencies operating State Administered Prekindergarten programs to screen and assess student progress using valid and reliable assessment tools.

This document aims to provide guidance on conducting these assessments.

Form of Assessment	Description	Administration
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A brief assessment to identify, from within a large population of children, those who may need further assessment to verify developmental and/or health risks	Once upon student entry
Assessing Student Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An interim progress assessment is used to examine students’ academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.The first administration will establish a student’s developmental baseline.The last administration will serve as an outcome assessment to document how much learning has occurred throughout the year.	Two to three times per school year

What does Valid and Reliable Mean?

A **valid** form of assessment is one which measures what it is supposed to measure. The data taken from valid assessments can be used to draw conclusions that are appropriate and meaningful. **Reliability** is a measure of consistency. This means the assessment has consistent results regardless of who is scoring the assessment or when the assessment is administered. A reliable assessment will produce the same results on re-test and will produce similar results with a similar cohort of students, so it is consistent in its methods and criteria¹. Assessment tools that are valid and reliable will have research-based evidence verifying the validity and reliability.

A Note Regarding Locally-Created Assessment Tools

If a school district chooses to use a locally-developed assessment, it must partner with an organization, typically, a university, to go through the psychometric process (typically two years of developing targets of measurement, performance level descriptors, field testing, data review, evaluation, and analysis of resulting field test scores) to deem the assessment valid (measures what it is supposed to) and reliable (consistent scoring results). **As per Commissioner’s Regulations 151-1.3(b), until a school district’s locally developed assessment is deemed valid and reliable, it is required to use assessments that have already been deemed valid and reliable.**

If a tool is deemed valid and reliable, this information will be readily available on the publisher’s website.

Screening

In New York State, diagnostic screening is used to identify whether a child is meeting their developmental milestones. This assessment is designed to evaluate a broad range of abilities, including intellectual, emotional, social, and motor abilities. The results of this screening are used to determine if further evaluation is needed.

¹ The Center on Standards & Assessment Implementation (March 2018). Valid and Reliable Assessments. CSAI Update. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED588476.pdf>



An Introduction to Valid and Reliable Screening and Assessment Tools for NYS Administered Prekindergarten Programs

School districts are required by Commissioner's Regulations (Part 117.3) to develop a plan for the screening of all new Prekindergarten entrants using a valid and reliable screening tool. The purpose of this screening is to determine which students are possibly gifted, are suspected of having a disability, and/or level of English proficiency. The screening must be conducted by appropriately trained or qualified staff, and in the student's native language, if the language of the home is other than English.

Screening shall take place for new entrants prior to the school year, if possible, but no later than December 1st of the school year of entry, or within 15 days of student transfer.

Screening must include²:

- Language and literacy skills, motor development, mathematical skills, and cognitive development
- a determination of the child's home language (e.g., [EML Language Profile](#))

Although not required, it is recommended that a baseline of social emotional skills and interpersonal skills be established during the screening process.

Assessing Student Progress

In New York State Administered Prekindergarten programs, assessing progress refers to the interim assessments that take place two to three times per year. More frequent assessment (formal or informal) may occur throughout the year as needed.

A child's developmental baseline is typically established by the first administration of the interim assessment tool. This provides a comprehensive evaluation of the level of skills, abilities, and/or knowledge that a child possesses prior to the beginning of formal instruction. The last administration of the interim assessment tool for the year can also be used as the summative/outcome assessment showing how much learning has occurred at a point in time. Its purpose is to measure the level of child, school, or program success.

According to Commissioner's regulations 151-1.3, school districts shall establish a process for assessing the progress of all children participating in the UPK program. This process must provide for on-going assessment throughout the year in the development of language, cognitive, and social skills. The tools used for assessment must be valid and reliable.

In many instances the tools used for assessing student progress are different from what is used for screening purposes. However, some screening tools are designed to be additionally administered several times per year to measure student progress. LEAs are responsible for reaching out to individual assessment publishers to clarify if individual tools are designed to be used for screening and/or assessing student progress.

Please Note: The New York State Education Department (NYSED) is a non-endorsing state agency. This means that NYSED does not endorse vendors, products, services, or local curriculum. NYSED also does not require, recommend, or advise on specific programs or products. Instead, local districts make all instructional decisions.

² Commissioner's Regulations Part 151-1.3(b)(1)