Early Childhood Assessment

Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education
Division of Adult Education Policy

Subject: **Early Childhood Assessment**
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POLICY STATEMENT
Children from birth to age five who are enrolled in a family literacy program must be properly assessed using state-approved early childhood assessment instruments.

PURPOSE
Assessments are used to inform curriculum and instruction and determine school readiness. Early childhood assessments are an important part of the learning environment and should be used to benefit young children's growth and development. Assessment results should also be used to inform parents of their children's development and help them to support their education.

GUIDANCE
Family literacy programs should develop collaborative relationships with local early childhood providers in an effort to integrate the services provided by both programs. These collaborations should include sharing pertinent information regarding the families served, especially early childhood assessment data to be used to inform parent education and ILA instruction.

Family literacy programs providing their own early childhood education must use one of the following instruments in each age group that is appropriate for the population of children that they serve.

Assessments for Children Who are Birth to 3 Years of Age
- **Infant and Toddler Child Observation Record (IT-COR):** Infant and Toddler Child Observation Record (IT-COR): The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation developed the IT-COR. This instrument is appropriate for children who are birth to 2 years 6 months. The IT-COR is designed to be used three times throughout the year with each child. The information for the IT-COR ratings comes from daily, ongoing, anecdotal notes kept by staff.

- **The Early Learning Accomplishment Profile (ELAP):** This instrument was developed through the Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project. The ELAP is designed for children birth to 3 years of age. The ELAP is administered by working with children individually to determine accomplishment of particular behaviors.

- **The Ounce Scale (Ounce):** The Ounce Scale is an assessment system used to document infant and toddler development (birth to 42 months of age). The assessment focuses on every day, naturally occurring behaviors and accomplishments that are easily recognized by parents and caregivers. There are three elements to the Ounce Scale, which include the Observation Record (daily observations by the caregiver of the child's behavior), the Family Album (parent observations), and the Development Profile (comparison to specific performance standards). All three pieces together provide an assessment system to understand better where the child is developmentally as well as how to best support the child's growth and learning.

Assessments for Children Who are 3 to 5 Years of Age

- **Preschool Child Observation Record 2nd Edition (COR):** The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation developed the Child Observation Record. It is appropriate for children 2 years 6 months to 6 years 0 months. The COR is designed to be used three times throughout the year with each child. The information for COR ratings comes from daily, ongoing, anecdotal notes kept by staff. Training for COR includes guidelines for note-taking. Although the COR is based on the High/Scope Curriculum, it has been revised so that it can be used in early childhood programs that do not use this curriculum.

- **Teaching Strategies GOLD:** "Teaching Strategies GOLD is grounded in 38 objectives that guide teachers throughout the assessment cycle. They are based on research, include predictors of school success, and are aligned with the *Head Start Child Development* and *Early Learning Framework* and early learning standards for each state. The objectives are organized into 10 areas of development and learning, including broad developmental areas, content areas, and English language acquisition. Many of the objectives also include dimensions that guide teachers' thinking about various aspects of that objective and help clarify what the objective addresses." (*Teaching Strategies GOLD® Birth Through Kindergarten Touring Guide.* Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2011, p. 4)

- **Learning Accomplishment Profile-3 (LAP-3):** The LAP-3 is designed for children who range in age from 3 to 6 years. The instrument is administered by working with children individually to determine accomplishment of particular behaviors. If this instrument is of interest, be sure to obtain the LAP-3 and NOT the LAP-D (the screening instrument).

- **Work Sampling System (WSS):** The WSS documents children's skills, knowledge, behavior, and academic accomplishments to enhance instruction and improve learning. The instrument is a valid, research-based performance assessment that uses three inter-related elements – developmental guidelines and checklists, portfolios, and summary reports – to understand and communicate what children are learning, what they are beginning to master, and what they still need to work on. The WSS is designed for children 3 to 11, although the

division only requires data from children below grade-school age. While there are three complementary components of the instruments, the division is primarily interested in the developmental checklists.

Partnering Agency Assessments
Programs that are utilizing partners to provide the early childhood education component must ensure that they meet the following requirements regarding early childhood assessments:

- If a division-funded family literacy program is collaborating with an early childhood partner under the umbrella of Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), and that partner has obtained the level of Keystone Star 3 or above OR is a Head Start program, the early childhood assessment being used by that partner will be accepted and identified under the option of "Other" in eData.*

- If a division-funded family literacy program is collaborating with an early childhood partner under the umbrella of OCDEL, and that partner has obtained the level of Keystone Star 1 or 2, the OCDEL program may or may not be using an early childhood assessment. If they are assessing, the assessment being used by that partner will be accepted and identified under the option of "Other" in eData.* If they are not assessing, the family literacy program must assess children using one of the instruments listed in the policy.

- If a division-funded family literacy program is collaborating with an early childhood partner that is NOT under the umbrella of OCDEL, and that partner is using an assessment that is approved for use by OCDEL or family literacy programs, the early childhood assessment being used by that partner will be accepted and identified under the option of "Other" in eData.*

- If a division-funded family literacy program is collaborating with an early childhood partner that is NOT under the umbrella of OCDEL, and that partner is using an assessment that is NOT approved for use by OCDEL or family literacy programs, the early childhood assessment being used by that partner will NOT be accepted. The family literacy program must assess children using one of the instruments listed in this policy.

Hard copies of all assessment data must be kept by the family literacy program.

*If using an OCDEL-approved instrument that does not require a Time 2, programs must request an exemption from their advisor.

School Readiness Assessments
The requirement to administer school readiness assessments is suspended for PY 2023-24. Programs may continue to use the assessments below and enter them in eData following the directions in this policy.

- **Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III or IV (PPVT):** The PPVT is a screening tool designed to measure a person's receptive (hearing) vocabulary. The test is appropriate for

individuals who are between 2½ and 90 years. It is easy to administer, highly reliable, and fair for nonreaders. The instrument is individually administered and has illustrations that are clear, content modernized, and ethnically and gender balanced.

- **Phonological Awareness Literacy Scale for Pre-Kindergarten (PALS Pre-K):** The PALS Pre-K measures young children's understanding of emergent literacy fundamentals. The instrument is a direct means of matching early literacy instruction to specific literacy needs. It is appropriate for children who are in the year prior to beginning kindergarten (primarily 4 year olds).

The PPVT and PALS Pre-K are used to determine children's readiness for school in terms of language and literacy development. Both instruments can be used in the fall of the program year to assess children's strengths and to determine those areas that may need more focused attention and in the spring of the program year to determine children's school readiness. These instruments are to be administered to children when they are entering the year prior to beginning kindergarten (typically between 48 and 72 months old).

Assessments for school-age children (kindergarten through third grade)
- **End of Year School Progress Report:** The End of Year School Progress Report (EYSPR) measures school-age children's school attendance and academic achievements. School attendance is measured by reporting the number of unexcused absences at school for each child enrolled in the family literacy program. School achievement is measured by determining each enrolled child's overall school performance at the end of the school year in reading, writing, and mathematics using the categories of Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Two additional questions ask about each enrolled child's accomplishments while participating in the family literacy program and if the child will be promoted to the next grade level or retained.

Programs will provide the most updated copy of this form to teachers at the end of the school year and enter the information provided by the teachers into the eData system. Programs are expected to have regular communication with children's school teachers, as this may result in a higher number of EYSPR's returned to the family literacy program.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE GUIDANCE
Assessments for children birth to 5 years of age should be ongoing, particularly when using observational methodologies. To ensure sound assessment practices and to obtain accurate data, all programs that are administering early childhood assessments must have at least one individual that has completed the appropriate training procedures. Programs are encouraged to have multiple staff members trained and to have staff repeat the course to refresh their understanding of early childhood assessment in compliance with each publisher's guidelines. Programs may be responsible for training costs and should work with the professional development system to determine training needs and availability.

Guidance for Children Assessed with the IT-COR, ELAP, COR, LAP-3, or WSS
- All developmental domains in the selected instrument must be assessed.

- Use an assessment instrument that matches the age of the child for most of the program year (regardless of the instrument).
- The same assessment instrument must be used at Time 1 and Time 2 within a program year. NOTE: ELAP at Time 1 and LAP-3 at Time 2 is NOT a match.
- Time 1 and Time 2 assessments should be separated by no fewer than 90 days for all assessment tools.
- If a child stops participating in the program for two months or longer, the child must be reassessed when they begin participating again.
- Time 1 assessments may be dated prior to the start of the current year but no earlier than May 1. Time 2 assessments must be dated during the current program year. Although the Time 1 assessment may be dated prior to the start of the current year, it is not acceptable to wait until the end of program year (i.e., May-June) to assess child again. Assessments are ongoing and are to be conducted periodically throughout the year.
- If a child enters a program in April, conduct a Time 1 assessment only, since not enough time remains in the program year for a second assessment. If a child enters in January, they must have a Time 1 and Time 2 assessment before June 30.

Guidance for Children Assessed with the Ounce Scale
- Complete each booklet that corresponds to the age of the child.
- Booklets with the titles "Babies I" to "Babies IV" require an ongoing assessment over a four-month period for greater accuracy.
- Booklets with the titles "Toddlers I" to "Toddlers III" and "Preschoolers" require an ongoing assessment over a six-month period for greater accuracy.
- All areas of development must be assessed for each booklet that corresponds to the age of the enrolled child.
- If a child enters the program halfway through a booklet, the assessment should begin with the booklet that corresponds to the child's age.
- Every attempt should be made to gather the Family Album data with the family to:
  - Provide a greater overview of the child's development for the early childhood program; and
  - Develop ILA and parenting activities.

Guidance for Children Assessed with the PPVT and PALS Pre-K
- Complete the PPVT and PALS Pre-K for all children who are entering the year prior to beginning Kindergarten (typically between 48-72 months old). Use the scoring sheet provided in the [eData Support section](#) of the Pennsylvania Adult Education Resources website.
  - For the PALS Pre-K, complete all six sections on the state reporting form.
  - For the PPVT, place the raw score at the bottom of the sheet in the space provided.
- proficiency Those children who are not English language proficient (i.e., cannot understand the instructions in English) do not have to be assessed.
- Children who have severe language and hearing delays do not have to be assessed.
- Children who are administered a paper and pencil format type assessment instrument for over an hour will probably not present their best results. The PPVT should not take that long, but the PALS Pre-K may. If a child takes a while to do each section, break the test

administration into two sessions, administering sections 1 through 3 one day and sections 4 through 6 another day.

- The PPVT requires a Time 1 and Time 2 assessment during the program year to determine gains. If possible, have a minimum of a six-month time period between pretest and posttest for both instruments.
- The PALS Pre-K requires only a spring or Time 2 assessment. This assessment must be administered between April 1 and June 30 of the current program year. However, it is strongly encouraged that the PALS Pre-K fall or Time 1 assessment be administered to assess children's strengths and to determine those areas that may need more focused attention.
- The PALS Pre-K spring or Time 2 assessment must be administered to children who are in families that have reached enrolled status and who are participating after April 1. A child who exits prior to April 1 does not need to be assessed.
- All six sections of the PALS Pre-K must be administered to all children who are entering the year prior to beginning kindergarten (typically between 48-72 months old) who are in families that have reached enrolled status and are participating after April 1.
  - Children are expected to meet or exceed the developmental scores on four of the six tasks listed below at the spring or Time 2 assessment.
  - One of the four tasks must be the Upper-Case Alphabet Recognition task.
  - The Lower-Case and Letter Sounds subtasks will not be included in the calculation of the standard. However, they should be administered based on the scoring criteria in the PALS Pre-K manual.