COMMITTEE FOR EARLY GRADE SUCCESS:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A COORDINATED EARLY CHILD ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN FLORIDA

DECEMBER 1, 2017

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UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Florida Committee for Early Grade Success (Committee) was created during the 2017 legislative session. The Committee developed a series of recommendations to guide the development of a coordinated early childhood assessment system for publicly funded programs, birth through kindergarten entry, with the following attributes:

- Screen children birth through age five to see what, if any, developmental concerns should be further assessed.
- Provide practical, useful, actionable information to teachers and parents on children's growth birth through kindergarten, helping them to provide individual care and instruction to better meet each child's developmental and academic needs.
- Evaluate children's skills upon entry to kindergarten.
- Provide an integrated system so data can efficiently follow children birth through third grade, ensuring rigorous privacy protections, to optimize children's growth and learning.
- Inform broader program accountability, helping to ensure Florida's early childhood investments are working as intended to support children's development.

The Committee recommends the following to strengthen Florida's early child assessment system:

- **Maintain the screening requirement** that all children who participate in the School Readiness program be screened within 45 days of enrollment and a minimum of annually, typically in their birth month. This is to assess development and identify what, if any, issues may require further attention to identify and treat special needs.
- **Procure an observation-based assessment for children birth through age five** that will be used among School Readiness and VPK participants. This tool will be used to measure growth in specific areas of development by age and used to inform individualized care and instruction.

- **Use the same direct assessment tool(s) and processes at the beginning and end of VPK and upon kindergarten entry.** The tool(s) will be used to measure child growth and inform individualized care and instruction. These results also will help inform accountability and program effectiveness.
- **Modify the current readiness rate calculation.** Currently, the kindergarten readiness assessment is the sole data point used to determine the effectiveness of VPK programs. Given there is a 90-day gap between the end of VPK and the beginning of kindergarten, it is recommended that accountability move to measuring growth during the VPK year. Measuring growth is essential for Providers that serve students entering the program severely behind so they can show the progress made, even though the students may not have reached "readiness".
- **Invest sufficient resources** in the assessment tool(s), training, and outside spot checks to ensure fidelity/quality assurance, and commensurate, appropriate payment rates to ensure early childhood providers can pay for staff professional development, planning and implementation time.
- **Stage implementation with sufficient time** for the new assessment system to be successful. A five-year implementation plan is broadly outlined; in a state as large and diverse as Florida this will help ensure reliable, consistent results and appropriate accountability. Current practices and work would stay intact and be modified on a rolling basis during the five-year implementation period as appropriate.
- Ensure the **tool(s) used meet the guiding principles and recommended domains of development** outlined in this report. This may require new tools or additions to existing tools to ensure all domains are appropriately addressed.
- **Rigorously and regularly analyze the results** from the child assessment tools to inform ongoing improvement.

The 17-member Committee from across the state met four times between October 11 and November 30 to develop the report of recommendations. Staff support was provided by the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, with support from the Helios Education Foundation. For more information, please contact Dr. Abby Thorman at athorman@coe.ufl.edu or Lara Glaser at lglaser@coe.ufl.edu.

COMMITTEE FOR EARLY GRADE SUCCESS

The Committee for Early Grade Success (Committee) was created during the 2017 legislative session and charged with submitting a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2017. The committee's proposal must include legislative recommendations for the design and implementation of a coordinated child assessment system, including, but not limited to the items below. Each topic is addressed in this report:

- The purpose of a child assessment, with a focus on developmentally appropriate learning gains (page 8)
- Attributes for tool selection that provide guidance on procurement policies (page 13)
- An implementation schedule and protocols, including the frequency of data collection and a timeline for training to ensure reliability of the system (page 16)
- The methodology for collecting and analyzing data that define reporting requirements (page 21)
- A budget for the system, including cost analyses for purchasing materials and the necessary technology, training to ensure reliability, and data system management (page 22)
- Considerations for student privacy and tracking child development over time (page 24)

The Committee was fully appointed on September 27, 2017. Member names, representation as specified in HB 7069, and professional roles are provided below.

Member Name	Member Representation	Member Professional Role
David Lawrence, Jr. *CHAIR	Representative with subject matter expertise in early learning, early grade success, or child assessments	Chairman, The Children's Movement of Florida
Rep. Erin Grall *VICE-CHAIR	Member of the Florida House of Representatives	Member, Florida House of Representatives
Sen. Dorothy Hukill	Member of the Florida Senate	Member, Florida Senate
Dr. Brittany Birken	Representative with subject matter expertise in early learning, early grade success, or child assessments	CEO, Florida Children's Council
Dr. Holly Lane	Representative with subject matter expertise in early learning, early grade success, or child assessments	Associate Professor and Director School of Special Education, School Psychology and Early Childhood Studies; UF College of Education
Cari Miller	Representative with subject matter expertise in early learning, early grade success, or child assessments	Policy Director, K-3 Reading for the Foundation for Excellence in Education

Ellyn Bogdanoff	Private provider representative	Executive Director, FACCM
Rodney MacKinnon	Representative from the Office of Early Learning	Director, Office of Early Learning
Richard Myhre	Representative from the Department of Education	Executive Director of Just Read, Florida!, FLDOE
Aruna Gilbert	Representative of an urban early learning coalition	Chief Program Officer, Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach
Matthew Guse	Representative of a rural early learning coalition	Chief Executive Officer, Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend
Patience Dussault	Representative who is a kindergarten teacher with at least five years of teaching experience	Kindergarten Teacher, Classical Preparatory School
Yvette Lerner	Representative of a rural school district	Academic Analyst, Kate Smith Elementary School
Dr. Bethany Quisenberry	Representative who is an elementary school principal	Principal, Franklin Park Elementary School, Lee County
Dr. Pauline Ward	Representative of an urban school district	District Supervisor, Reading/ Language Arts Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Theresa Little	Representative of a faith-based early learning provider	Director, Christ the King Child Care Center
Elizabeth Moya	Parent of a child who is 3 to 6 years of age	Director of Legislative Affairs, Office of Early Learning

** Note: per HB7069, the Committee was required to select a Chair with subject matter expertise in early learning, early grade success, or child assessments. The Committee was further required to select a Vice-Chair who was a member appointed by the President of the Senate or Speaker of the House of Representatives, who is not one of the four members who are subject matter experts in early learning, early grade success, or child assessments.*

The Committee met twice face-to-face on October 11 and on November 14 for all day meetings, and twice virtually on October 31 and November 28. Committee members had multiple opportunities to weigh in on portions as well as the full report.

The Helios Education Foundation provided support for the Committee, covering Committee travel, staff/consultant, and related costs. Staff support and overall project coordination was provided by the University of Florida's Lastinger Center for Learning, with Dr. Abby Thorman and Lara Glaser providing primary leadership. Child Trends, which is a nonpartisan national research organization, provided expertise on early childhood assessment and other state child assessment systems. Michele Watson of Watson Policy Solutions completed the cost modeling. All questions about this report and its content can be directed to Dr. Thorman at athorman@coe.ufl.edu or Lara Glaser at lglaser@coe.ufl.edu.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF FLORIDA LANDSCAPE

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) in the Florida Department of Education administers early learning funding in Florida. OEL administers an annual budget of $1,061,473,476. This budget includes $608,427,228 in federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding and state match to draw down the federal CCDF funds, and $396,812,611 in state Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) education program funding.

Florida's local governance model administers this investment. Thirty local Early Learning Coalitions administer child care tuition subsidies (called School Readiness funds that are funded primarily through the federal CCDBG funds and the required state match), the state Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education program (funded through state general revenue) and other services designed to support children and their families.

- A total of 127,433 children birth through age five participate in early learning programs through School Readiness funds; these services are provided through 5,112 centers, 1,477 family child care homes, and 530 school-based programs (September 2017 data: http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/oel_resources/fact_book.aspx.)
- A total of 169,842 four-year olds participate in VPK (representing 96% of four-year olds in Florida); these services are offered through 4,683 centers, 65 family child care homes, and 1,047 school-based programs. (2016-2017 year-end data, http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/oel_resources/fact_book.aspx.)

The School Readiness and VPK programs have these child assessment requirements:

SCHOOL READINESS

Screening

Children ages birth to five who are enrolled in the School Readiness program are required to be offered a developmental screening, with parental permission. The developmental screening is designed to capture the child's development at entry into the School Readiness program. Annually, the child must receive an updated screening. The screening is conducted by either (or a combination of) the parent, the early learning coalition, or the child care provider. Results are shared with the parents. (http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/statewide_initiatives.aspx/)

Florida is the only state in the nation that requires screening on all children entering the child care subsidy program. These data helps identify children who may have more severe learning or developmental needs so they can be assessed in more detail and connected to appropriate services. All early learning coalitions in Florida use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, ensuring all children receiving subsidized child care are screened consistently. This questionnaire is research-based, reliable and can take less than fifteen minutes to administer.

Assessment

State law requires OEL to review and select child assessments that are valid, reliable and developmentally appropriate to use as pre- and post-assessments. OEL approved use of three formative assessment tools to document children's development over time to inform individualized care and instruction. See Appendix A for more detail on the three approved tools. Using these tools is now voluntary; as usage is voluntary, the level of use across the state is not known.

Through the Early Learning Performance Funding Project, participating programs in Tiers 3-5 may complete child assessments using one of these tools to receive a reimbursement differential; at the current time there are 930 early learning programs participating.

VPK

Pre/Post

Florida law requires all private and public VPK providers to administer a pre- and post-assessment to all children attending a VPK program (Section 1002.67(3), Florida Statutes). The requirements for 2016-17 include the use of VPK Assessment. All VPK providers are responsible for complying with administration and reporting results by specified deadlines. There are two rules that pertain to VPK pre- and post-assessment: Rule 6A-1.09433, Florida Administrative Code, identifies the instruments to be used for pre- and post-assessment, who can administer the instruments and training assessors must have. Rule 6M-8.620, Florida Administrative Code, outlines how to order materials, reporting results, deadlines, responsibilities of each early learning coalition and consequences for non-compliance.

The VPK Assessment includes progress monitoring measures in the areas of print knowledge, phonological awareness, mathematics, and oral language/vocabulary that are aligned with the Standards for Four-Year Olds. The Department of Education has developed the VPK Assessment Online Reporting System so teachers may use this information to guide instructional decisions in the VPK classroom.

The VPK Assessment Online Reporting System is available to all registered providers free of charge. This system allows VPK teachers to enter each child's assessment results and then analyze children's data in order to plan lessons that meet the individual needs of all children.

The VPK Assessment Online Reporting System has the capacity to:

- Create individual, classroom and center-level reports to track progress.
- Link the assessment data to instructional strategies and resources that are aligned with the Standards of Four-Year Olds.
- Create a letter to parents about their child's performance on each assessment measure.

http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/providers/provider_menu/vpk_pre-_and_post-assessment.aspx

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Readiness Screener

The purpose of the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) is to gather information about a child's overall development and address each student's readiness for kindergarten based on the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds. Consistent with Florida law, FLKRS is used to calculate VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rates, which measure how well a VPK provider prepares 4-year-olds to be ready for kindergarten. Florida law outlines requirements for statewide kindergarten screening and calculating kindergarten readiness rates. Statewide kindergarten screening is administered within the first 30 days of kindergarten. Children who participated in VPK and attend kindergarten in a nonpublic school can also participate in screening.

http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/about_assessments_in_vpk_and_kindergarten_screening.aspx

Florida was among the first states to invest in early childhood assessment and to recognize the importance of using early childhood data to inform an understanding of program investments and to inform instruction. However, there have been many changes since the enactment of early childhood assessment and the system of assessment has become disjointed.

Florida currently uses three separate assessments that are not integrated or aligned within a larger early childhood assessment system. Multiple, disconnected assessments make it difficult to make sense of progress over time and to get an aggregate picture of how well Florida's children are doing overall. These assessments also were designed for multiple assessment purposes:

- To screen to determine what, if any, special needs require further assessment
- To inform care and instruction
- To inform parents of their child's progress
- To capture learning gains made in the VPK program
- To determine whether children entering kindergarten are "ready" to learn
- To hold Providers accountable for preparing children for kindergarten with Kindergarten Readiness results currently used to calculate the readiness rate, identify low-performing providers and provide extra support to ensure all children receive quality care and instruction, and remove program funding for consistently low-performing providers

This paper outlines guiding principles to create a seamless, coordinated childhood assessment system birth through kindergarten that addresses each purpose.

PURPOSE OF CHILD ASSESSMENT

Child assessment is an important tool to understand children's development. It provides information to better meet children's developmental and learning needs. As investment in early childhood grows, there is strong interest in ensuring the investments are having the desired impact on children's development, preparing them for success in school and beyond. Early childhood assessment systems focus on children birth through age eight and provide information on the skills and behaviors of children.

Young children are unique in their development during the first eight years and the assessment tool(s) need to be selected carefully and administered to capture their skills and understanding of the world. With K-3 assessments typically in place, states need to develop aligned child assessment systems for children birth through age five to have integrated early childhood assessment systems. A number of factors need to be considered when developing an early childhood assessment system.

- Young children's development can be sporadic (e.g., they might exhibit a skill one day but not the next) and they do not have the verbal or writing skills to communicate in the same way that older children do.
- Young children tend to have short attention spans and are more easily distracted.
- Assessment tools must be appropriate for children from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Children use their experiences to make sense of assessment tasks, and language and culture are key aspects of those experiences.
- Most important, the assessment information gathered on young children should be used to benefit them and inform how to best meet their individual developmental and academic needs.

Thus, it is important that assessments used with young children be developed specifically for young children, have evidence that the assessments are valid (measure what they claim to measure) and are reliable (measure the data in a consistent way).

Determining the purpose of the assessment and how the data will be used has implications for decisions such as: who should be assessed, what approach is used for conducting the assessment, and who should receive the information about assessment results. Four different purposes for early childhood assessment are described in the National Education Goals Panel report, Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessments. These were considered and the Committee recommendations reflect appropriate adaptations for Florida's unique context. The four general purposes of early childhood assessment include:

1. **Assessment to guide care and instruction:** When assessment data gather information on children's progress in learning specific skills and behaviors to tailor instructional approaches to the needs of individual children and groups of children. For this purpose, teachers gather data and information about children through a mix of direct assessments, observation and work samples. These data are collected from all children throughout the course of the school year to inform decisions about their care and instruction.

2. **Assessment to identify special needs:** To identify those children who may need more support in their development. For this purpose teachers or program specialists may collect data and information about children's development in order to determine if a more in-depth assessment may be needed. Data collected through a developmental screening should never be used to exclude children from programs or to group children of low ability.

3. **Assessment to monitor trends/evaluate services (in aggregate):** To determine whether specific initiatives or new models intended to strengthen early care and education programs are having the intended effects. For example, data collected from kindergarten entry assessments may be included as one source used to determine if the quality of early care and education provided by a state is supporting expected improvements over time.

4. **Assessment for accountability of programs:** To determine if state investments in early childhood programs are yielding the desired outcomes. These data are used primarily by policymakers and may have specific consequences for programs/ schools. The National Academies of Sciences report, Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How, cautions that child assessment data should happen only when progress in children's skills is measured (not just gathered at one point in time) and that information about inputs and program quality also are used.

ELEMENTS OF A STRONG SYSTEM OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT

Child assessment should be a part of a broader system that should have these elements:

- **Purpose:** System is driven by a clear and unifying purpose for conducting assessments in early childhood.
- **Assessments:** The system includes multiple approaches to assessing children's development. The system also may include assessments of the quality of programs that serve young children. Different assessment tools are used for different purposes.
- **Standards:** Includes both 1) early learning and development standards reflecting developmentally appropriate skills for young children, and 2) program quality standards.
- **Reporting:** A protocol for documenting data and developing reports for various users and purposes, with the data infrastructure that can support the development of such reports.
- **Professional Development:** A system of professional development and ongoing support for practitioners, administrators, program directors and policymakers that supports their understanding of the standards and assessments, and that provides support on the appropriate (and inappropriate) uses of early childhood assessment data.
- **Facilitate and Support Learning Gains:** High-quality programs support children's development and provide children with opportunities for experiential learning. Assessment documents child progress in key developmental areas and helps parents and teachers individualize learning. Most other system components focus on the assessment (e.g., reporting of findings, professional development to ensure that the assessment is implemented appropriately).
- **Inclusion:** Methods and procedures for ensuring that all children served by the program will be assessed appropriately for their unique needs, regardless of language, culture, or disabilities, and with tools appropriate for development and learning.
- **Resources:** Assurance that the necessary funding and other resources needed to ensure the development and implementation of the system components are available.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Procedures for continuously analyzing and using the data to ensure it is operating effectively and all elements are working together to serve children.

ROLE OF DIFFERENT ASSESSMENT METHODS: BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS

There are two primary types of assessment used in the early childhood years:

- Formative observation data collection methods
- Formative direct data collection methods

To be most effective, both types of assessments should be criterion-referenced, meaning they allow for comparison of children's performance against criteria for what children their age should know.

Formative observation data collection methods are used by teachers to generate documentation of children's knowledge, skills, or abilities based on their performance, behavior or work in the classroom or other settings. Observation is a strategy commonly used by teachers during the natural course of the day to collect ongoing information on the progress of individual children. That information then can be used for planning instruction and communicating with parents. Generally, observational assessments are criterion-referenced, meaning they allow for comparison of children's performance against criteria for what children their age should know. [1]

In early childhood, observational data collection methods are considered a developmentally appropriate approach to assessment for these reasons:

- Observational assessments are conducted in "natural" contexts (e.g., within children's normal everyday classroom routines) and as such, they are often the least obvious or intrusive assessments, and are often less time-consuming than direct assessments that require individual administration to each child.
- Assessing young children's characteristics or progress from real-world classroom or family contexts helps ensure that the evidence collected is consistent with children's culture, language, and experiences. [2]
- Observational assessments also allow the child multiple opportunities to demonstrate a behavior or skill in multiple settings with multiple partners, objects, and materials, resulting in a more valid estimate of ability. [3]

Limitations of formative, observational assessment include:

- It takes extensive professional development, time and reliability checks with teachers to achieve reliable agreement about an individual child's skills and development between two teachers/observers.
- These assessments allow for comparisons of child to others of the same age only if interval level data are part of tool construct.
- There can be teacher/observer bias if there are accountability consequences based on the assessment results.

1 National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force (2007). Taking stock: Assessing and improving early childhood learning and program quality.

2 National Association for the Education of Young Children (2003). Early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation: Building an effective, accountable system in programs for children birth through age 8. A joint position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE).

3 Fewell, R.R. (2000). Assessment of young children with special needs: Foundations for tomorrow. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 20, 38-42.

Formative direct data collection methods involve presenting individual children with a common set of questions or tasks and recording their responses. The goal of direct assessment is to measure specific behaviors that are defined ahead of time. These assessments are given in a standardized way and are highly objective in nature. That means that children's performance on the assessment should not vary from one teacher or care provider to another.

Benefits of direct assessment include:

- The ability to compare results across same-age children
- Higher levels of consistency with the implementation of the assessment across assessors
- The design of the assessment reduces the potential for teacher/observer bias
- Requires initial and ongoing training but typically less than observational data collection methods

Limitations of direct assessment include:

- Children often only have one chance to demonstrate their skills, which may be challenging as these assessments are typically conducted outside the typical classroom routine and may be conducted by an outside assessor with whom the child is not familiar. (Note: the Committee recommends all assessments are conducted by the teacher, not an unfamiliar person, to eliminate this additional potential challenge for the child).
- The format of the assessment administration may be unusual for the child. They may not be able to stay engaged in the assessment task or feel comfortable verbally responding to questions.

Both types of assessment can be useful and an assessment system might rely on both types of assessment to accomplish multiple goals. The benefits and limitations of each type of assessment should be weighed when choosing assessment tool(s).

The Committee identified what domains of child development should be assessed, at what age, using which type of tool. The Committee recommends:

- **Procure an observation-based assessment for children birth through age five** for use in the School Readiness program. This tool will help teachers document children's developmental progress through regular experiential learning routines in a valid and reliable way. It will be used to measure growth in specific areas of development by age (outlined in the table below) and used to inform individualized care and instruction. This tool also will enable Florida to measure children's growth over time, enabling more effective and targeted investments in programs.
- **Use the same direct assessment tool at the beginning and end of VPK and upon kindergarten entry.** Currently a different tool is used during progress-monitoring for VPK and when children arrive at kindergarten. This tool should be used to inform individualized care and instruction during VPK to help ensure children's individual learning needs are met. The same tool should be used to measure child growth over the course of VPK and when children arrive at kindergarten to measure program impact consistently.
- Ensure the **tool(s) used meet the guiding principles and recommended domains of development** outlined in this report. This may require new tools or additions to existing tools to ensure all domains are appropriately addressed.
- **Modify the current readiness rate calculation.** The way child assessment results are used relates to the Committee work and is essential to create a unified early childhood assessment system. Currently, the kindergarten readiness assessment is the sole data point used to determine the effectiveness of VPK programs. There is room to strengthen this for a number of reasons.

» First, summer creates a 90-day gap between the end of VPK and the beginning of kindergarten, during which there is a well-documented decline in many children's skills (of all ages).

» Second, the readiness rate is calculated only on an assessment of children at one point in time, which is not considered representative of actual skills. The committee believes a more accurate, appropriate readiness rate calculation should measure children's progress during the VPK year, based on measuring children's skills at the beginning and end of VPK as well as skills at the beginning of kindergarten.

» Third, measuring growth is essential for Providers that serve students entering the program severely behind. Measuring growth can show the progress that Providers have had with students severely behind, even though the students may not have reached "readiness".

Thus, it is recommended that accountability move to measuring growth during the VPK year in addition to kindergarten readiness.

If a VPK program fails to document sufficient progress, OEL should develop appropriate measures to drive targeted support, including meaningful quality improvement plans. Clearly there are times when early learning programs are high quality but cannot make the desired gains or achieve kindergarten readiness due to serving specific populations of children at greatest risk of school failure.

Appropriate remediation/termination procedures, including targeted professional development and timeline for required program improvement, should be determined based on the collective picture of child gains, kindergarten entry skills, and program quality.

The following table outlines these recommendations.

RECOMMENDED DOMAINS AND METHODOLOGY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT SYSTEM			
0-36 months	**3 year olds**	**4 year olds**	**Kindergarten Entry**
Domains to Assess: • Language • Social/ Emotional Assessment Method: Observation 3x/year Who is assessed: All SR children; completed by teacher/provider who will care for/instruct child	Domains to Assess: • Language • Executive Functioning (critical thinking, decision making) Assessment Method: Observation 3x/year Who is assessed: All SR children; completed by teacher/provider who will care for/instruct child	Domains to Assess: • Language • Pre-Literacy • Executive Functioning (critical thinking, decision making) • Early Math Assessment Method: • Direct Assessment* 3x/year: Language, Pre-literacy, Early Math • Observation and/or Direct Assessment 3x/year: Executive Functioning Who is assessed: All VPK and all SR; completed by teacher/provider who will care for/ instruct child	Domains to Assess: • Language • Early Literacy • Executive Functioning (critical thinking, decision making) • Early Math Assessment Method: • Direct Assessment* • Observation and/or Direct Assessment: Executive Functioning Who is assessed: All kindergarten students; completed by teacher/provider who will instruct child

** Same direct assessment tool should be used at beginning of VPK and end of VPK to measure gains and kindergarten entry to assess kindergarten readiness. All districts use the same kindergarten entry assessment as required by current law.*

ATTRIBUTES FOR TOOL SELECTION TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON PROCUREMENT POLICIES

The Committee identified five distinct priorities for a coordinated early childhood assessment system for children birth through grade three in Florida, which were informed by research,[4] best practices, and Florida needs. The system should accomplish the following in Florida's publicly funded early learning programs:

- Screen children birth through age five to see what, if any, developmental concerns should be further assessed.
- Provide practical, useful, actionable information for teachers and parents for children birth through kindergarten, helping them to provide individual care and instruction to better meet each child's developmental and academic needs.
- Evaluate children's readiness upon entry to kindergarten.
- Provide an integrated system so data can efficiently follow children birth through third grade, ensuring rigorous privacy protections, to optimize children's growth and learning.
- Inform broader program accountability, helping to ensure Florida's early childhood investments are working as intended to support children's development.

By implementing an early childhood assessment system that meets these priorities, Florida will maximize investments in the critical early years with greater effectiveness and efficiency, and many more children could experience early grade success.

Decisions must be made throughout the assessment phases. At the beginning, decisions must be made about the tool(s) that will be selected and how the data will be collected. Next, decisions must be made about how to use and report the assessment information. Guiding principles for each of these phases are outlined below.

TOOL SELECTION AND USE

1. The assessment tool(s) must be developmentally appropriate and provide pertinent information to teachers and parents to best meet the needs of children.

2. The tool(s) must have: 1) the capacity to measure the core domains of early childhood development -- language and literacy, mathematical thinking, social-emotional development including executive functioning skills (critical thinking, decision making) approaches to learning, and physical development -- on an integrated, developmentally appropriate continuum; and 2) flexibility to focus first on the domains that most strongly indicate future academic success -- specifically language, literacy, math and executive functioning skills -- without negatively impacting the validity or reliability of the data.

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4. National Research Council. (2008). Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How. Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children, C.E. Snow and S. B. Van Hemel, Editors. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.

Scott-Little, C., & Maxwell, K. L. (2015). Improving systems of learning through the use of child standards and assessments. In Dichter, H., and Hibbard, S., Rising to the challenge: Building effective systems for young children and families. Available at:http://www.buildinitiative.org/OurWork/StateandLocal/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx

Regenstein, E., Connors, M., Romero-Jurado, R., & Weiner, J. (2017). Uses and misuses of kindergarten readiness assessment results. Chicago, Ill: Ounce of Prevention. Available at: https://www.theounce.org/resources/publications

3. The tool(s) selected must have interval level and criterion-referenced data that measures equivalent levels of growth across domains and can be used for determining developmentally appropriate learning gains. This will facilitate measurements of child growth both informing instruction and being used to understand children's outcomes for accountability.

4. To meet the needs of Florida's diverse young children, the tool(s) should be available in multiple languages to the extent appropriate.

5. Assessment must not be overly burdensome to teachers, children or parents. For example, 1) teachers must not be required to complete time-intensive assessments and 2) if technology is used, the administration of the assessment must be child-friendly (e.g., touch screen capability).

6. The same direct assessment tool should be used at the beginning and end of VPK to measure gains as well as the beginning of kindergarten. This will enable children's growth to be measured over time as well as to measure program impact.

7. Given the complexities of implementing a coordinated child assessment system, adequate time must be provided for successful implementation. The Department of Education and Office of Early Learning must carefully monitor implementation, implement appropriate quality assurance measures, and address challenges with appropriate training, support, and technical assistance to ensure the data are reliable and valid as quickly and efficiently as possible.

8. OEL and key partners must review data and feedback from users at least annually, using the information to continuously improve how the assessment is implemented; strengthen professional development and other support provided to teachers/assessment administrators, program directors and other stakeholders; and refine how the results are communicated.

9. The tool(s) must be used for the purpose for which they can be used with validity. For example, tools used to guide instruction and document developmentally appropriate learning gains must be designed for both capabilities.

10. If multiple tools are determined to meet the requirements and are selected, the data across all tools must be able to appropriately aggregate into consistent, reliable and valid data statewide.

11. The tools must have evidence of their reliability and validity for the age and characteristics of children Florida intends to assess (e.g., children with disabilities, English- and Spanish-speaking children).

12. The assessment tools must align with the state standards.

13. Assessment data must provide practical, actionable and useful data for teachers, administrators and parents. The value of the data for administrators, teachers, providers and parents must be balanced appropriately with the investment of teachers' time to administer the assessment.

14. Families are partners in the assessment. Families must have the opportunity to contribute, sharing their own insights about their children's development, strengths and needs. Information from the assessment system will also be shared in a way that is easy for families to understand. Data will provide information about their child's individual growth and development aligned to expected benchmarks and development.

15. The initial and ongoing costs of the assessment and related costs -- such as training, technology, and ongoing implementation -- are reasonable and result in improved child outcomes.

16. Ongoing costs should include appropriate payment rates to providers so as not to put an additional unfunded mandate on providers who already have among the lowest payment rates in the nation.

17. Training materials must be available for teachers (and program directors/principals). Appropriate support (such as training, technical assistance, coaching) is provided during the initial and ongoing implementation to ensure consistent, reliable and valid implementation of the assessment.

DATA COLLECTION, REPORTING AND USE

1. Data should be gathered by teachers three times a year and used to identify individual strengths and needs and measure children's development and learning over time.

2. An option must be available for using an online system to enter information. For teachers and programs without technology access, appropriate assistance should be provided such as access to computers.

3. A system must be in place to check periodically the reliability of individuals completing the child assessment.

4. Data systems with strict privacy controls in place must be connected in a way that information can seamlessly transition as children develop and move between programs (e.g., from school readiness into VPK into kindergarten) and if children move within Florida.

5. Strict privacy controls must be enforced. When a child is enrolled in a classroom, teachers and program directors/principals will be authorized access to children's individual assessment data from the time of their enrollment in School Readiness, VPK or K-3; they will not be granted access to any information beyond the minimum necessary to identify the child.

6. Teachers and appropriate administrators will be trained in how to review individual child data and use it to inform the individualized care and instruction they provide to each child. Access to individual child data will only be available to parents and the individual teacher/program director/principal during the time a child is actively enrolled in a classroom and the minimum time necessary to allow for the transition/transmission of accurate data.

7. Data systems must be connected so population-level, anonymous data can be analyzed to assess overall trends over time.

8. Data systems must enable data analysis across age groups, from early childhood through kindergarten entry to the early elementary years, to measure child growth over time and inform measures of program impact.

9. Data systems must enable analysis at the state, regional and local levels by OEL and the early learning coalitions. Data analysis must be in a format that can inform quality improvement and investment decisions.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND PROTOCOLS

SCHOOL READINESS

1. Family approved for School Readiness funds.
   - During application, family agrees that the child will have assessments documented to inform individualized care and instruction.
   - Family role/responsibility: review the data, provide input either online or in person to teachers to help inform individual child's learning needs.
2. Each child has a unique student identifier assigned upon enrollment that stays with that child throughout K-12, providing continuity of data.
3. Teacher completes assessments on targeted domains within 30 days of enrollment and at regular intervals at least two more times over a calendar year.
4. If children move from one program to another, teachers will be able to access data recorded by previous teachers to build on this foundation as they provide individualized care and instruction.
5. Data system will have appropriate protections for data security and privacy, ensuring only authorized users (director, teacher) have access to individual child assessment data during the time the child is enrolled in a specific program.
   - Parent can access his or her child's individual results at any time.
   - Teacher can access child assessment results for individual children enrolled in their classroom if the assessments were completed by 1) that teacher or 2) previous teachers.
   - Center director will have access to child assessment results, both individually and by program, during the time each child is enrolled in the center.
   - Teacher and center director cannot access any other information on the child (e.g., income, address, race).
   - Access to individual child data will only be available to parents and the individual teacher/program director/principal during the time a child is actively enrolled in a classroom and the minimum time necessary to allow for the transition/transmission of accurate data.
   - Local early learning coalitions will have access to coalition-wide, county and individual program and classroom data that will be de-identified.
   - Early learning coalitions will have restricted use of child-level data. Only authorized users will have access to these data and will observe strict protocols around its use.
   - OEL will have access to statewide, coalition-wide, county and individual program and classroom data that will be de-identified.
   - OEL will have restricted use of child-level data. Only authorized users will have access to these data and will observe strict protocols around its use.
6. OEL, early learning coalitions and other stakeholders annually analyze child assessment data, along with program assessment data, to determine program effectiveness. This will be done showing population-level trends, never the results of individual children. These data also will be used to inform broad and targeted overall program, quality improvement and professional development strategies and investments.

VPK

1. Family enrolls in VPK.
   - Family agrees as part of participation that child will have observations and/or direct assessments documented to inform individualized care and instruction (note: this is current practice).
2. If not a participant in School Readiness, the child will have a unique student identifier assigned upon enrollment that will stay with him or her throughout K-12, providing continuity of data.
3. If child participated in School Readiness, the VPK teacher will review previous assessment data within 30 days of enrollment to inform individualized care and instruction in VPK.
4. Teacher completes direct and/or observational assessments on targeted domains within 30 days of enrollment and at regular intervals at least two more times over a calendar year.
5. Data system will have appropriate protections for data security and privacy, ensuring only authorized users (center director/VPK program director/principal, teacher) have access to individual child assessment data during the time the child is enrolled in a specific program.
   - A parent will be able to access his or her child's individual results at any time.
   - A teacher can only access child assessment results for individual children enrolled in their classroom if the assessments were 1) completed by that teacher or 2) completed by previous teachers.
   - A center director/VPK program director/principal will have access to child assessment results, both individually and by program, during the time each child is enrolled in the center.
   - A teacher and center director/VPK program director/principal cannot access any other information on the child beyond the minimum necessary to identify the child.
   - Access to individual child data will only be available to parents and the individual teacher/program director/principal during the time a child is actively enrolled in a classroom and the minimum time necessary to allow for the transition/transmission of accurate data.
   - Local early learning coalitions will have access to coalition-wide, county and individual program and classroom data that will be de-identified.
   - Coalitions will have restricted use of child-level data. Only authorized users will have access to these data and will observe strict protocols around its use.
   - OEL will have access to statewide, coalition-wide, county and individual program and classroom data that will be de-identified.
   - OEL will have restricted use of child-level data. Only authorized users will have access to these data and will observe strict protocols around its use.
6. OEL, early learning coalitions and other stakeholders annually analyze child assessment data, along with program assessment data, to determine program effectiveness. This will be done showing population-level trends, never the results of individual children. These data also will be used to inform broad and targeted overall program, quality improvement and professional development strategies and investments.

KINDERGARTEN

1. Teachers complete kindergarten readiness assessment on all children within 30 instructional days of kindergarten entry per current practice.

2. If a child participated in School Readiness and/or VPK, the kindergarten teacher uses previous observational and/or direct assessment data within 30 days of enrollment + kindergarten entry assessment data to inform individualized care and instruction in kindergarten.

3. Data system will have appropriate protections for data security, ensuring only authorized users (principal, teacher) have access to individual child assessment data during the time the child is enrolled in a specific program.
   - Parent can access his or her child's individual results at any time.
   - Teacher can only access child assessment results for individual children enrolled in their classroom if the assessments were 1) completed by that teacher or 2) completed by previous teachers.
   - Principal can access child assessment results, both individually and by classroom, only during the time each child is enrolled in the school.
   - Access to individual child data will only be available to parents and the individual teacher/principal during the time a child is actively enrolled in a classroom and the minimum time necessary to allow for the transition/transmission of accurate data.

4. OEL/Florida Department of Education early learning coalitions and other stakeholders annually analyze 1) growth during VPK + kindergarten readiness as measured by the direct assessment(s) to inform accountability, 2) child growth during School Readiness participation as measured by the observational assessments, and 3) growth overall from birth through kindergarten entry to help inform accountability. This will be done showing population-level trends and results from individual programs, never the results of individual children.

EARLY ELEMENTARY GRADES

1. Teachers in grades 1-3 can access child results from previous grades/publicly-funded early learning programs for children within their classroom.

2. DOE will use early childhood, K and 1-3 assessment results to measure child growth over time and analyze birth through third grade results and produce a report.

FREQUENCY OF DATA COLLECTION

There will be regular and ongoing collection of data.

- School Readiness: Observations will be completed by teachers and documented in data system at least three times yearly, once within 30 days of enrollment or the start of the school year, and at least two other times at regular intervals during the calendar year.
- VPK: Direct and/or observation-based assessments will be completed by teachers and documented in the data system at least three times during the school-year VPK programs, with more often preferred or required under certain circumstances. The first assessment will take place within 30 days of enrollment, one time around the middle of the VPK session, and once within the last 45 days of enrollment. Summer VPK programs will include an initial assessment within 15 days of enrollment and once in the last 15 days of the program.
- Kindergarten: The child will be assessed within the first 30 instructional days of kindergarten using direct assessment.

TIMELINE TO ENSURE RELIABILITY OF SYSTEM

The Committee recommends a staged implementation that builds statewide capacity incrementally. This timeline includes major benchmarks around administration, early learning coalition training and capacity building, and teacher/director training and capacity building, as outlined in the table below.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE				
Year 1 2018-2019	**Year 2 2019-2020**	**Year 3 2020-2021**	**Year 4 2021-2022**	**Year 5 2022-2023**
ADMINISTRATION				
Legislature charges OEL with rule promulgation and procurement of tool(s) (5 years)	Rule promulgated Procurement complete	Initial report to Legislature on child assessment system implementation	Second report to legislature on child assessment system implementation and preliminary outcomes	Third report to legislature on child assessment system implementation and child outcomes
TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION				
Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs)				
Coalitions make preparations to have staff with capacity to implement with fidelity	ELCs trained. ELCs provide training and technical support on tool(s); provide coaching and community of practice support to directors and teachers Ongoing training and support to ELCs from tool developer(s), OEL	ELCs provide training and technical support on tool(s); provide coaching and community of practice support to directors and teachers Ongoing training and support to ELCs from tool developer(s), OEL	ELCs provide training and technical support on tool(s); provide coaching and community of practice support to directors and teachers Ongoing training and support to ELCs from tool developer(s), OEL	ELCs provide training and technical support on tool(s); provide coaching and community of practice support to directors and teachers Ongoing training and support to ELCs from tool developer(s), OEL

Teachers /Programs will be clustered in three groups based on willingness, good standing with their local Early Learning Coalition, and proven capacity to effectively implement the child assessment system and sufficient time to scale up full implementation. Each group will equal 20%-40% of the Coalition's providers to ensure 100% of providers are implementing by Year 5.				
GROUP 1	Group 1 Teachers receive specific training on child assessment tool(s); implement 2x/ year; training and targeted support provided	Group 1 Teachers implement child assessment tool(s) 3x/year; training and targeted support provided	Group 1 Teachers implement child assessment tool(s) 3x/year with fidelity	Group 1 Teachers implement child assessment tool(s) 3x/year with fidelity
GROUP 2		Group 2 Teachers receive specific training on child assessment tool(s), implement 2x/ year; training and targeted support provided	Group 2 Teachers implement child assessment tool(s) 3x/year; training and targeted support provided	Group 2 Teachers implement child assessment tool(s) 3x/year with fidelity
GROUP 3			Group 3 Teachers receive specific training on child assessment tool(s), implement 2x/ year; training and targeted support provided	Group 3 Teachers implement child assessment tool(s) 3x/year; training and targeted support provided

METHODOLOGY FOR COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA THAT DEFINE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

DATA COLLECTION

Early childhood teachers/providers will complete the assessments according to the schedule outlined in the previous section. The data will be in an integrated, statewide system.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

To ensure the early childhood assessment system has the desired impact, these data will be collected and documented in an integrated data system:

- Unique student identifier for each child in a publicly funded program, with strict privacy controls
- Assessment data linked to each child's unique student identifier
- County of residence
- Early childhood program, updated when/as children change programs
  - » For School Readiness and non-school based VPK providers: DCF license number
  - » For school-based VPK: school and school district
- Child assessment data from direct and observational measures
- Measure of child gains and outcomes

DATA ANALYSIS

These data will enable the following analysis to be completed by OEL/Department of Education annually in a report to be provided to the Legislature, Governor's Office, and other stakeholders:

- Number of children assessed
- Data on gains for groups of children by program, county, early learning coalition, district, statewide, local comparisons to statewide averages
- Percent of kindergarten readiness
- Outcomes of specific populations, such as children with special needs, dual language learners, children who have participated in other publicly funded programs (e.g., children in VPK who have participated in School Readiness; results of children in programs in projects like Performance Funding Project compared to peers)
- Early childhood learning gains and readiness outcomes related to third grade achievement
- Trends over time

Data will be available only to users based on strict privacy controls (outlined on page 24).

Information for parents and teachers on individual child data (child level data not available to OEL/Department of Education). The data parents and each user type will be able to access is outlined on page 26.

BUDGET FOR SYSTEM

Cost modeling was used to determine an approximate fiscal note based on the Committee's recommendations. Publicly available data on participants in School Readiness and VPK programs and kindergarten students as well as an estimated number of classrooms based on historical data were used.

Program Type	Children	Classrooms/ Teachers who will participate in Direct Assessment Training	Early learning coalition or school district staff needed to conduct Observation-Based training
Kindergarten	201,061	12,569	N/A
VPK	169,081	12,691	890
School Readiness	99,699	28,591	525

The average costs for direct and observational assessment tools and training were determined by contacting multiple tool developers that met the Committee's recommendations. It is important to note that the costs used were publicly available costs and would likely be negotiated down as part of the procurement process for large-scale use. Cost factors for the tool implementation, training and implementation included:

- Annual per child license fee for completion of selected tool(s)
- Initial training costs to early learning coalition or school district staff and/or early childhood and kindergarten teachers (depending on model)
- Indirect training costs for payments to early childhood teachers time to attend training, cost of a substitute teacher, and paid in-service time for kindergarten teachers
- Technology costs per classroom, assuming that every classroom would need new technology to implement new assessment protocols

The estimated aggregate costs of a complete child assessment system may be allocated over multiple years, as recommended in the implementation plan (page 16) to ensure adequate preparation and fidelity of implementation. Furthermore, some of the costs outlined in the modeling, such as those for technology or indirect training costs, may better be absorbed through an increase to the base student allocation or other methodology.

It is important to note that current funding for kindergarten or VPK assessment is **not** reflected in any of the cost estimates as these funds are subject to annual legislative appropriation. It is also important to note that the cost of technology (more than half of the estimated total cost) could also be addressed elsewhere, such as through an increase in the BSA.

The detailed cost modeling and assumption notes are provided in Appendix D.

Total Cost= $58,892,327

This model assumes:

- All kindergarten students are assessed with a direct assessment that is aligned to direct assessment in VPK.
- All children in VPK and 4 and 5 year olds within the School Readiness program are assessed with a direct assessment and an observation-based assessment.
- All children in the School Readiness program birth through age four are assessed using an observation-based assessment.
- Kindergarten, VPK, and School Readiness four and five year old teachers trained by tool developer directly on direct assessment tool.
- Existing staff at early learning coalitions and school districts trained by tool developer to train early childhood teachers on observation-based tool implementation.
- Early childhood and kindergarten teachers paid to complete training if applicable.
- Each classroom would need at a minimum one tablet or computer to administer both direct assessment or observation based assessment.

An increase in administrative costs for the VPK and School Readiness programs should be considered to cover the costs of ongoing training to providers, supporting implementation of the tool within programs, and other support. This should be dependent on the finalized implementation plan and would need to be accounted for in future appropriations.

Program Type	Observation-based assessment costs*	Direct assessment costs*	Initial training costs**	Initial indirect training costs**	Technology costs***
Kindergarten	N/A	$1,809,549	$1,822,505	$2,425,314	$7,541,400
VPK	$2,367,134	$1,521,729	$2,774,695	$4,223,818	$7,614,600
School Readiness	$1,395,786	$264,312 (4 and 5 YO only)	$1,164,312	$6,812,758	$17,154,413
Total	**$3,762,920**	**$3,595,590**	**$5,761,512**	**$13,461,890**	**$32,310,413**

* Denotes recurring annual cost for the per child assessment license
** This summarizes total initial training costs. These could be spread over 2-3 years.
*** Technology costs assume one device per classroom. Any refreshes to technology would need to be contemplated in future appropriations.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENT PRIVACY AND TRACKING DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME

Strict child and family privacy controls will be provided throughout the system. There is existing language in place for children's information for both the School Readiness program that serves children birth through school age and VPK. For both, personally identifiable information is confidential and protected from disclosure and would cover the expanded child assessment recommendations. Information may be shared with other entities to administer the programs, conduct audits and other program functions. Any party that receives the information must maintain its confidentiality and not disclose it publicly.

The relevant statutes include:

- For School Readiness: 45. C.F.R. 98.15(a)(13), Section 1002.97, Florida Statutes: https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2017/1002.97
- For VPK: Section 1002.72, Florida Statutes: https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2017/1002.72

Further, as outlined in the Implementation section of this report (page 16), the data system will have appropriate protections for data security and privacy, ensuring only authorized users (center director/VPK program director/principal, teacher) have access to individual child assessment data during the time the child is enrolled in a specific program.

- A parent will be able to access his or her child's individual results at any time.
- A teacher can only access child assessment results for individual children enrolled in their classroom if the assessments were 1) completed by that teacher or 2) completed by previous teachers.
- A center director/VPK program director/principal will have access to child assessment results, both individually and by program, during the time each child is enrolled in the center.
- A teacher and center director/VPK program director/principal cannot access any other information on the child beyond the minimum necessary to identify the child.
- Access to individual child data will only be available to parents and the individual teacher/program director/principal during the time a child is actively enrolled in a classroom and the minimum time necessary to allow for the transition/transmission of accurate data.
- Local early learning coalitions will have access to coalition-wide, county and individual program and classroom data that will be de-identified; coalitions will not have access to child-level data.
- OEL will have access to statewide, coalition-wide, county and individual program and classroom data that will be de-identified; OEL will not have access to child-level data.

APPENDIX A

OVERVIEW OF OBSERVATIONAL ASSESSMENTS TOOLS APPROVED BY OEL

As noted on page 16 of this report, OEL has approved three observational assessment tools for voluntary use in School Readiness programs. While most programs use GOLD®, exact levels of use across the state are not known. A brief overview of each is outlined below.

GOLD®

GOLD® combines authentic observational assessment with performance tasks for selected objectives in literacy and numeracy. It can be used with any developmentally appropriate curriculum and is available in toolkit form and online. The online version can aggregate data for groups of children at the class, program, site, or district or ELC level. According to recent research (Heroman et al., 2010; Lambert, Taylor & McGee, 2010), this system has been found to yield highly reliable scores and teachers are able to make valid ratings of the developmental progress of children. While GOLD® is created for age birth through five, the new MyTeachingStrategies® system allows assessment up through third grade (www.teachingstrategies.com). The instrument assists teachers in planning appropriate experiences, individualizing instruction, and monitoring and communicating child progress to families and other stakeholders. The measure can be used reliably with English-language learners, children with disabilities, and typically developing children and those who demonstrate competencies beyond developmental expectations.

GOLD® has five components: (1) Objectives for Development and Learning (birth through kindergarten); (2) Child Assessment Portfolio; (3) Assessment Opportunity Cards; (4) On-the-spot Observation Recording Tool; and (5) Family Conference Form (Teaching Strategies, 2013). Objectives for Development and Learning anchors this assessment system, and shows expectations for age-groups and for classes/grades, as well as explains how the various elements work together. Color bands are used to show "widely held expectations" for development and learning by indicating where most children (within a national norm) of a particular age or grade are likely to be at the beginning and end of a program year (Teaching Strategies, 2013). There are 38 objectives based on research of what predicts school success and are part of many states' early learning standards (Dichtelmiller, 2011).

These objectives are organized into nine areas of learning and development: social-emotional; physical; cognitive; language; literacy; mathematics; science and technology; social studies; and the arts. A tenth objective, English language acquisition, is used to determine if the child is an English language learner, and these acquisition objectives are mobilized to assess the child's receptive and expressive language skills (Teaching Strategies, 2013). Tools such as the Child Assessment Portfolio, Assessment Opportunity Cards, On-The-Spot Recording Tool, and Family Conference Forms provide and document evidence of learning related to each objective. Unlike the other two assessment systems used in Florida, GOLD® uses the same materials and procedures to assess children from birth through kindergarten. Therefore, for providers that serve infants, toddlers, preschoolers and kindergarteners, all staff members use the same tool, and data collection for each child can follow them through several years of growth and development (Dichtelmiller, 2011). This assessment tool also was used to measure direct child outcomes for this evaluation study, which will be discussed in the following quantitative instruments section.

Assessment Technology-Galileo (Galileo).
This assessment system provides early childhood educators and other stakeholders a complete and fully integrated assessment, curriculum and reporting system that links assessment, planning, individualization and program progress. Galileo uses the Instructional Intervention Cycle and provides users with reliable and valid data to base learning opportunities and program management decisions. Developmental domains addressed in the assessment include creative arts, approaches to learning, early math, language and literacy, nature and science, physical health practices, fine and gross motor development, and social and emotional development. The cycle begins with goal-setting and planning and is followed by implementation, then evaluation (data gathering and analysis). Evaluation results inform decisions guiding the next goal-setting and planning stages (www.ati-online.com).

High Scope Educational Research Foundation-Child Observation Record (COR).
The COR assessment is based on six child development categories that represent broad domains of child development. For the Preschool COR, these categories are initiative; social relations; creative representation; movement and music; language and literacy; and mathematics and science. The Infant-Toddler COR has a parallel set of six categories: sense of self; social relations; creative representation; movement; communication and language; and exploration and early logic. Within each category, children are assessed on three to eight COR items that describe developmentally important behaviors. (The Preschool COR has 32 items, the Infant-Toddler COR has 28). Each item has five levels that indicate a typical developmental sequence for that behavior, enabling COR users to assign precise ratings to their observations of children. To carry out the assessment, teachers or caregivers spend a few minutes each day writing brief notes (called "anecdotes") that describe significant episodes of young children's behavior. They record their notes on printed forms or in computer files, and then classify and rate them according to the COR categories, items, and levels (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2015). The COR is based on the same developmental framework as the HighScope curriculum, and while indicators are not tied to age levels, they do represent a continuum of development in an area (Dichtelmiller, 2011).

(Rodgers, M.K., Leite, W., & He, J., 2017. Child Assessment Implementation Report. Gainesville, FL: Lastinger Center for Learning)

APPENDIX B

VPK CHILD ASSESSMENT

As noted on page 6 of this report Florida law requires all private and public VPK providers to administer the pre- and post-assessment to all children attending a VPK program. A brief overview of each is outlined below.

Florida law requires all private and public VPK providers to administer pre- and post- assessments to all children attending a VPK program. All VPK providers are responsible for administering the assessments and reporting results by specific deadlines. There are two rules that pertain to VPK pre- and post-assessments: Rule 6A-1.09433, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), identifies the instruments to be used for pre- and post-assessment, who can administer the instruments and training required for assessors. Rule 6M-8.620, FAC, outlines how to order materials, reporting results, deadlines, each early learning coalition's responsibilities and the consequences for not complying.

Description of VPK Assessment Measures
The VPK Assessment includes progress monitoring measures in print knowledge, phonological awareness, mathematics and oral language/vocabulary areas that are aligned with the Standards for Four-Year Olds. You will find background information and a history of VPK Assessment data in this document: Florida VPK Assessment: An Overview (May 2016) (PDF, 140 KB).

VPK Assessment Online Reporting System
A VPK Assessment Online Reporting System provides teachers a user-friendly tool to track children's progress in attaining skills in the Standards for Four-Year Olds. Teachers are able to use this information to guide instructional decisions in the VPK classroom. The online reporting system is available to all registered providers free of charge. VPK teachers can enter each child's assessment results and analyze children's data to plan lessons that meet individual needs of all children.

The system has the capacity to

- Create individual, classroom and center-level reports to track progress.
- Link assessment data to instructional strategies and resources aligned with the Standards for Four-Year-Olds.
- Create a letter to parents about their child's performance on each assessment measure.

From OEL website: http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/about_assessments_in_vpk_and_kindergarten_screening.aspx

APPENDIX C

As noted on page 7 of this report, Florida law outlines requirements for statewide kindergarten screening and calculating kindergarten readiness rates. Statewide kindergarten screening is administered within the first 30 days of kindergarten. Children who participated in VPK and attend kindergarten in a nonpublic school can also participate in screening. A brief overview of each is outlined below.

The Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener, or FLKRS, is administered to kindergarten students within the first 30 days of the school year. Kindergarten teachers use the results to help understand each child's readiness for school and plan lessons to meet individual needs. The Office of Early Learning (OEL) also uses the results to calculate kindergarten readiness rates for VPK providers.

The Florida Department of Education selects the screening instrument, which assesses how prepared each student is for kindergarten based on performance standards the department adopted for VPK. The department selected the Star Early Literacy® assessment to begin this past fall (2017). Some school districts already use this to screen kindergarten students in the first 30 days.

Star Early Literacy is an online, "adaptive" assessment that students take by themselves in about 15-20 minutes. Star Early Literacy contains 27 items that assess early language and number skills. The assessment aligns with the Standards for Four-Year-Olds (2011) and covers the same areas as the VPK Assessment

- phonological awareness
- alphabet knowledge
- vocabulary
- number sense

Children take the assessment by themselves on a computer. It is in a game-like format similar to apps children may use. The assessment is adaptive, meaning that questions get harder or easier based on how children respond. The computer "knows" which question to ask next based on a child's previous response. Children typically complete the assessment in 15-20 minutes. Star Early Literacy practice questions and a computer mouse tutorial are available so children can become used to the format before taking the assessment. A practice resource is also available at http://www.renlearn.com/lp/Florida%20K-Readiness%20Practice/.

Florida has used state kindergarten readiness assessments for approximately 20 years since before VPK started. Assessments have varied over the years, but there has been an instrument that focuses specifically on emergent literacy skills since VPK began. Those skills are considered strong predictors of child's later reading abilities. This is consistent with VPK's statutory emphasis on emergent literacy and Florida's emphasis on reading. While young children are more than the sum of their emergent literacy skills, assessing these skills has been an important part of understanding the VPK child's growth in this area, since they grow similarly in other developmental areas. Children who are doing well globally, including in social and emotional skills, are generally able to attend to the pre-academic skills they learn in VPK.

From OEL website:
http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/vpk/about_assessments_in_vpk_and_kindergarten_screening.aspx

APPENDIX D

COMMITTEE FOR EARLY GRADE SUCCESS

COST MODELING NOTES

This model assumes that every child in the school readiness and VPK program is assessed utilizing teachers or child care instructors that have been trained by an early learning coalition or school district, except for direct student assessment which assumes training will be delivered directly to the teacher or child care instructor. Direct student assessment is utilized for kindergarten entry, the VPK program utilizes both observation based and direct student assessment, and the school readiness program utilizes observation based assessment and direct student assessment for 4 and 5 year olds only.

Demographics

- Data used was from the completed 2016-2017 school year/program year.
- The number of School Readiness classrooms was calculated by dividing the number of children served by age group by Department of Children and Family licensing ratios for each age group and multiplying by 3 to account for the fact that there are not School Readiness classrooms.
- The number of early learning coalition and school district staff was determined by utilizing data provided by the Early Learning Coalition of Big Bend. The coalition currently employs 6 staff and supports a total number of 1163 student observations. Since the coalition is made up of 7 counties the analysis did not account for geographic distance. To determine the number of needed staff the total of 1163 was divided by 6 to determine an average of 190 child assessments per 1 staff person. Subsequently the number of students was then divided by 190 to determine the number of staff needed. This methodology was used for both the VPK and School Readiness programs.

Assessment Costs

- The model assumes a mixture of observation based assessment and direct student assessment for the state's VPK program. For the School Readiness program it only assumes direct assessment for 4 and 5 year olds and observational assessment for children birth to 4 years old.

- Average time to complete both Observation Based and Direct Student Assessments averaged 15 minutes per student/child.

Training Costs

- Training costs are assumed to be the most comprehensive training offered by developers and administered to early learning coalition or school district staff only.
- Each face-to-face training accommodates 30 participants. For modeling the assumption was made that 20 coalition or school district participants would attend on average to make up for any geographic disparity.
- Online course are assumed that coalition or district staff may need 2 courses at a price of $150.00 each for observational assessment.
- Direct Student Assessment training will be delivered directly to teachers and child care instructors. Online professional development is offered but due to pricing structure an average price was not delivered as developers stated that access is often negotiated based on a number of factors.

Indirect Training Costs

- Indirect training costs assumes that for the VPK and School Readiness programs that both the cost of the child care instructor to be paid for training as well as the cost of a substitute was calculated using the average salary rate from the Bureau of Labor Market Statistics for child care instructors and Florida's minimum wage for substitutes.
- For observation based assessment training delivered by an early learning coalition or a school district only 6 hours of paid training was assumed as the other 6 hours could be eligible as part of the 10 hours of required in service training that are required annually for child care instructors in accordance with rule 65c-22.001, F.A.C.
- The full cost of direct student assessment training for teachers and child care instructors was calculated in the model.

Infrastructure Costs

- The model assumes that every VPK and School Readiness classroom would need new technology.

Regional Level Fidelity Costs

- The model does account for the cost of a school district or an early learning coalition to monitor for fidelity checks as part of job duties included in staff responsibilities. However this model assumes that early learning coalitions and school districts already have staff on hand to complete this work as part of program support. If this assumption is false than the administrative costs associated with the VPK and School Readiness program may need to be adjusted to account for any new training and fidelity requirements.

State Level Infrastructure Costs

- The model does not account for the cost of an interface with statewide data sources. Developers have data repositories that capture and store data for reporting that often comes with access as part of the per student/ child assessment cost. However developers did not feel comfortable providing an interface price without knowing the complexities of Florida's technology platforms.

APPENDIX E

COST MODELING FINAL TOTALS

Kindergarten	$13,598,768
VPK	$18,501,977
School Readiness	$26,791,582
All Programs	**$58,892,327**

LOCAL TRAINING MODELING

Demographics			Assessment Costs	
				Direct Student
Kindergarten			**Observation Based**	**Assessment**
Number of Students	**201,061**			**$1,809,549**
Number of Classrooms	**12,569**			
			Total	**$1,809,549**
VPK				
Number of Students	**169,081**		**$2,367,134**	**$1,521,729.00**
Number of Classrooms	**12,691**			
Number of Coalition/ School District Staff	**890**		**Total**	**$3,888,863.00**
School Readiness				
Number of Students	**99,699**		**$1,395,786.00**	**29,368**
Number of Classrooms	**28,591**			**$264,312**
Number of Coalition Staff	**525**		**Total**	**$1,660,098.00**
Infant	6,695	5,021	**$93,730**	
Toddler	16,612	8,306	**$232,568**	
2 YO	22,421	6,115	**$313,894**	
3 YO	24,603	4,921	**$344,442**	
4 YO*	23,462	3,519	**$328,468**	
5 YO	5,906	709	**$82,684**	
Total	**99,699**	**28,591**	**$1,395,786**	
			Total All Programs	**$7,358,510.00**

Direct Training Costs				
Kindergarten	Observation Based		Direct Student Assessment	
Initial Training	$0	**$0**	$2,900	**$1,822,505**
Online Training	$0	**$0**		
Fidelity Training	$0	**$0**		
On-Going Training	$0	**$0**		
	One Day $3300			
	Total	**$1,822,505**		
VPK	Observation Based		Direct Student Assessment	
Initial Training	$5,000	**$222,500**	$2,900	**$1,840,195**
Online Training	$150	**$267,000**		
Fidelity Training	$5,000	**$222,500**		
On-Going Training	$5,000	**$222,500**		
	One Day $3300			
	Total	**$2,774,695**		
School Readiness	Observation Based		Direct Student Assessment	
Initial Training	$5,000	**$131,250**	$2,900	4,228
Online Training	$150	**$157,500**		**$613,062.90**
Fidelity Training	$5,000	**$131,250**		
On-Going Training	$5,000	**$131,250**		
	One Day $3300			
	Total	**$1,164,312.90**		
	Total All Programs	**$5,761,512.90**		

Indirect Training Costs									Infrastructure Costs	
Kindergarten	OBA Hours To Complete		Teacher Hourly Rate			DSA Hours To Complete			**Kindergarten**	Technology Cost by Classroom
Initial Training	0		$32.16		**$0**	6	**$2,425,314**		**Total**	**$7,541,400**
Online Training	0		$32.16		**$0**			
Fidelity Training	0		$32.16		**$0**			
On-Going Training	0		$32.16		**$0**			
				Total	**$0**	**Total**	**$2,425,314**			
VPK		Child Care Instructor Hourly Rate			Substitute Teacher Hourly Rate		DSA Hours To Complete		**VPK**	Technology Cost by Classroom
Initial Training	6		10.39	**$791,157**	8.10	**$616,782.60**	6	**$791,156.94**	**Total**	**$7,614,600**
Online Training	0		10.39	**$0**	8.10	**$0.00**		**$616,782.60**		
Fidelity Training	6		10.39	**$791,157**	8.10	**$616,782.60**	**Total**	**$1,407,939.54**		
On-Going Training	0		10.39	**$0**	8.10	**$0.00**				
			Total	**$1,582,314**	**Total**	**$1,233,565.20**				
School Readiness		Child Care Instructor Hourly Rate			Substitute Teacher Hourly Rate		DSA Hours To Complete		**School Readiness**	Technology Cost by Classroom
Initial Training	6		10.39	**$1,782,344**	8.10	**$1,389,507**	6	**$263,575**	**Total**	**$17,154,413**
Online Training	0		10.39	**$0**	8.10	**$0**		**$205,482**		
Fidelity Training	6		10.39	**$1,782,344**	8.10	**$1,389,507**	**Total**	**$469,057**		
On-Going Training	0		10.39	**$0**	8.10	**$0**				
			Total	**$3,564,687**	**Total**	**$2,779,015**				
			Total All Programs	**$13,461,891.29**					**Total All Programs**	**$32,310,413**