OEL Newsletter

NYSED awards $30m for 3- and 4-year olds

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) announced $30 million in awards for the Expanded Prekindergarten for Three- and Four-Year Old Students in High-Need School Districts grant.

34 high-need school districts will increase access to high-quality prekindergarten programs by establishing new full-day placements, converting existing half-day placements to full-day, or creating new half-day placements for three-and/or four-year old students.

Seven school districts will utilize grant funding for three-year old students, 17 school districts will operate four-year old programs, and 10 school districts will have programming for both.

More information about the Expanded Prekindergarten for Three- and Four-Year Old Students in High-Need School Districts grant and the list of tentative awardees can be accessed on the NYSED website here.

OEL UPDATE

The OEL is happy to introduce its new team members:

Brianna Bailey-Gevlin

Jane Fronheiser

Michele Kinzel-Peles

Alice Roberson

Tina Rose-Turriglio

Inside this issue:

Webinar for early childhood leaders

In collaboration with Head Start and the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children, the New York State Education Department's Office of Early Learning has developed a webinar to provide guidance to school leaders on promoting best practice in early childhood education. In this 35 minute webinar, listeners will hear from two veteran principals about how to lead and support high-quality learning experiences for young students.

The webinar is based on the first of five briefs that provide research-based guidance on key practices that support children in Prekindergarten through Grade 3 and cover the following topics: Leadership, Environment, Curriculum, Interaction, and Assessment. The next brief will focus on Family Engagement. The briefs may be downloaded from the New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council website at www.nysecac.org.

EVALUATING STUDENT PROGRESS

An OEL Resource on Assessment in Early Childhood Programs

FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

● Screening
● Developmental Baseline
● Progress Monitoring
● Summative Assessment

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

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

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

[1] Snow, K. (2011). *Developing kindergarten readiness and other large-scale assessment systems.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved from the National Association for the Education of Young Children website: http://www.naeyc.org/resources/research/kreadinessassessment
[2] National Research Council. (2008). *Early childhood assessment: Why, what and how.* Snow, C.E., & Van Hemel, S.B. (Eds.). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

EVALUATING STUDENT PROGRESS

An OEL Resource on Assessment in Early Childhood Programs

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

Screening	Language & Literacy Skills Progress Monitoring	Cognitive Skills Progress Monitoring	Social-Emotional Skills Progress Monitoring
• Ages and Stages (ASQ) • Ages and Stages Social-Emotional Questionnaire (ASQ-SE) • American Guidance Service/ Pearson Early Screening Profiles • Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) • Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development • Brigance Early Childhood Screens • Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL) • Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)	• Brigance Inventory of Early Development • Creative Curriculum/Teaching Strategies GOLD Developmental Continuum • HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) • mCLASS: CIRCLE • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) • STAR Early Literacy • Work Sampling System (WSS)	• Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) • Brigance Inventory of Early Development • Creative Curriculum/Teaching Strategies GOLD Developmental Continuum • HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) • mCLASS: CIRCLE • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) • STAR Math • Work Sampling System (WSS)	• Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) • Brigance Inventory of Early Development • Creative Curriculum/Teaching Strategies GOLD Developmental Continuum • Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) • HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) • mCLASS: CIRCLE • Work Sampling System (WSS)

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

Additional Notes on Validity and Reliability

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

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

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

VALID AND RELIABLE COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENTS

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

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

[3] Epstein, A.S., Schweinhart, L.J., DeBruin-Parecki, A., & Robin, K.B. (2004). *Preschool assessment: A guide to developing a balanced approach* (Policy Brief Issue 7). Retrieved from National Institute for Early Education and Research: http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/7.pdf
[4] The Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation & The Reform Support Network. *Assessment design toolkit: Part II: Five elements of assessment design.* Retrieved from: http://www.csai-online.org/spotlight/assessment-design-toolkit
[5] Halle, T., Zaslow, M., Wessel, J., Moodie, S., and Darling-Churchill, K. (2011). *Understanding and choosing assessments and developmental screeners for young children: Profiles of selected measures.* Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

The below topics are to reflect on as families, teachers, and leaders begin a new school year.
What goals can you set for yourself in the coming year? Do you have practical advice for others that you'd like to share?
Email us at OEL@nysed.gov.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"What's your name?" can become a complicated question for students with culturally- and linguistically-diverse names. Students' names may be unintentionally mispronounced or, in an attempt to be helpful at the onset of the school year, some educators may simplify or "Americanize" students' names. These name changes often start with a child's first experience at school and can be very difficult to rectify. Whether a mistake or intentional, a name change can make students feel confused and families uncomfortable, questioning why such an important part of their identity has been altered.

In the American culture, we would expect parents to insist on the correction of their child's name. However, this type of advocacy in other cultures is often mitigated by families' utmost respect for educators. To avoid rocking the boat or coming across as ungrateful, many multinational parents and students decide to live with feeling marginalized.

Educators have a responsibility to learn how to spell and pronounce their students' names, as well as to model and teach them to all students. In this new school year, pass along this seemingly simple, yet important, message as our youngest students are transitioning from their family communities to our school communities.

Read more about this topic here.

CREATING ENVIRONMENTS THAT WELCOME FAMILIES

The Office of Early Learning recognizes the importance of forming attitudes and instituting practices that engage families from the start.

♦ It is incumbent upon schools to create warm and welcoming environments that support families who may be unsure of how to navigate school systems in a new capacity. Be mindful that for many parents, bringing their child to Prekindergarten or Kindergarten is the first time they have interacted with a school since they were students.

♦ A welcoming environment must be created by all building staff—classroom, administrative, security, and custodial—to foster and maintain positive relationships. For students transitioning into a new setting, leaders and teachers should work to build relationships with families prior to the start of school.

♦ Meaningful family engagement is the outcome of home-school partnerships based on trusting relationships. Families should be viewed as resources and assets that have much to contribute in energy and ideas. In their book, *Building Parent Engagement in Schools*, Larry Ferlazzo and Lorie Hammond (2009) explain that meaningful parent engagement can be more sustainable than asking busy staff to plan numerous parent activities, take on extra responsibilities, and dig even deeper into their energy reserves. Additionally, families will be more invested in outcomes if given the opportunities to shape activities and programs that help families.

♦ Creating a culture that supports family engagement comes from the top. School leaders set the tone and vision. School leaders who speak about families as valuable resources and provide time in schedules for staff to cultivate relationships with families will set the appropriate tone upon which trusting relationships can be built.

Ferlazzo, L. & Hammond, L. (2009). *Building parent engagement in schools.* Santa Barbara, CA: Linworth .

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) is responsible for a wide range of educational programs and works closely with parents, early care and education agencies, schools and state agencies to coordinate programs and resources with the goal of making New York's early learning system as comprehensive and seamless as possible. The OEL is tasked with implementing over $800 million per year in State and Federal grants for prekindergarten programs with the goal of providing high-quality programs for early learners to all children.

For more information and helpful resources, please visit our website at:
http://www.p12.nysed.gov/earlylearning/

Preschool Development Grant update

New York City, Port Chester, Uniondale, Watertown, and Yonkers have begun the first year of serving prekindergarten students through the federal Preschool Development Grants (PDG) program. The five school districts are serving a total of 1,867 children across 69 sites in high-need communities—the districts and the Office of Early Learning are excited for these programs to be up and running!

Check out this Early Learning Language and Literacy Series of professional development modules, available through the PDG Technical Assistance website.

Pre-K Foundation for the Common Core Tool Kit

The Office of Early Learning, in partnership with the Northeast Comprehensive Center, developed a set of tools to support the implementation of the Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core in New York State's early childhood education programs. The tools are intended to support teachers, coaches, specialists, and school leaders in reflecting on current practices for each early learning domain: Approaches to Learning; Physical Development and Health; Social and Emotional Development; Communication, Language, and Literacy; and Cognition and Knowledge of the World.

The following tools are complete, and we are in the process of developing more for the remaining domains.

Approaches to Learning Teacher Resources for Self-Reflection and Planning

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Observation and Reflection Tool for Administrators

Creating Rich Language and Literacy Environments for Young Learners

Have you used any of these tools? What works and what does not? We would appreciate your feedback and would love to know about your experiences. Email us at OEL@nysed.gov!