



COMMITTEE FOR EARLY GRADE SUCCESS

October 11, 2017

Early Childhood Assessment



Kelly Maxwell, Ph.D. and Sarah Daily, Ph.D.

Child Trends

October 11, 2017

Committee for Early Grade Success

Tallahassee, Florida

About Child Trends



Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that improves the lives and prospects of children and youth by **conducting high-quality research** and **sharing the resulting knowledge** with practitioners and policymakers.

We...

The image is a grid of six panels, each featuring a photograph of children and a text box with a core value. The panels are arranged in two rows and three columns.

- Top Left:** A photograph of a young boy in a blue shirt smiling. Text: "Study children in the real world" (orange background).
- Top Middle:** A photograph of a young girl with curly hair pointing. Text: "Value objectivity and rigor" (teal background).
- Top Right:** A photograph of a young girl with braids smiling. Text: "Pursue knowledge development and knowledge transfer" (green background).
- Bottom Left:** A photograph of a woman and a young boy playing with toys in a pink bin. Text: "Take a whole child approach" (red background).
- Bottom Middle:** A photograph of a young girl in a yellow shirt. Text: "Want children to flourish" (dark blue background).

Overview

Purposes of assessing young children (and why it matters)

- Overview of major purposes

Considerations and guidelines

- Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How?

State efforts

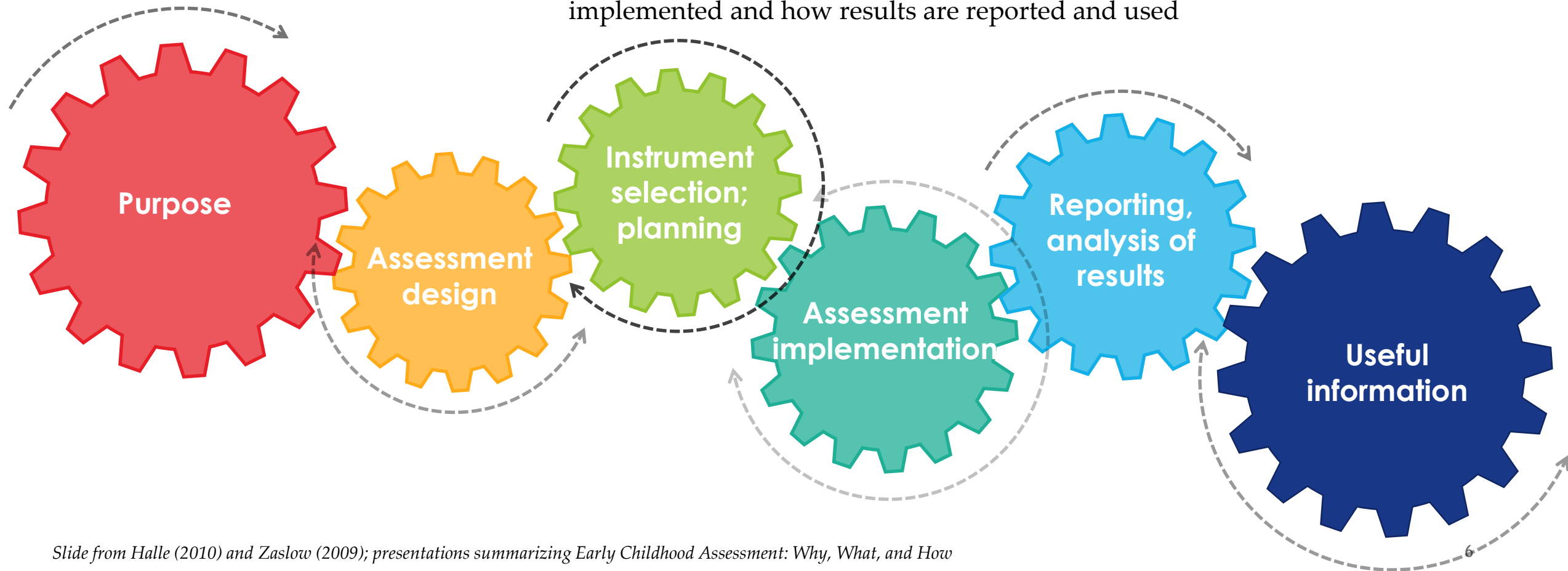




Purposes of Assessment

Purpose Drives Everything

Purposes: There are fundamentally different purposes for conducting early childhood assessments. The purpose of the assessment is critical to how the measure is designed, which measure is selected, how it is implemented and how results are reported and used



Assessment is Part of a Bigger System

Systems: Conducting the assessments is only one part of a system with multiple components that together can inform progress towards high quality ECE.



Four Major Purposes of Assessment

**Guide
children's care
and instruction**



**Identify special
needs**



**Monitor trends
/Evaluate services
(in aggregate)**



**High-stakes
accountability**



Purpose 1: Guide Care and Instruction



- *Who uses the data?* teachers
- *Methods:* observation, work samples
- Aligned with the curriculum
- Low stakes; used to make day-to-day decisions in classroom
- All children in classroom or program need to be assessed in order to inform care and instruction

Purpose 2: Identify Special Needs



- *Who uses the data?* parent, teachers, specialists
- 2-stages of data collection
 - brief screening (or referral)
 - In-depth assessment (if needed)
- Not aligned with curriculum
- Screenings used for referral for further assessment *only*
 - Not used to exclude children from programs or group children of low ability (tracking)

Purpose 3: Monitor Trends/Evaluating Services in Aggregate



- Examples: kindergarten skills every 3 years; quality of early care and education collectively
- *Who uses the data?* policymakers, public
- Moderate stakes
 - No decisions about individual children, teachers, programs
- Do not need to assess every child; sampling is sufficient
- Child assessments should not be the only source of data used to evaluate services

Purpose 4: High Stakes Accountability



- *Who uses the data?* policymakers, public
- “High stakes” = consequences for individual children, teachers, or programs/schools
- Principles & Recommendations report suggests delaying high-stakes assessment of children until 3rd grade
- Accountability @ Testing
- require monitoring of children’s skills
- require an intervention plan to support children who need extra help



Considerations

Perspectives on Assessing Young Children

- Children vary widely in their development
- The younger the child, the fewer the assessment tools—and the harder to find a tool with good reliability and validity
- Paper and pencil tests won't work
- Assessing younger children is harder than assessing older children
- School readiness or kindergarten entry assessments should cover multiple domains of development (e.g. cognitive, social-emotional, physical and motor development, language/literacy, approaches to learning)
 - Though we have more measures in some domains (e.g., language) than others (e.g., approaches to learning)
- Our assessment tools are very limited for children who do not speak English or have disabilities

Direct vs. Observational Assessments



Direct

- Presenting child with common set of questions
- Recording their responses
- Standardized and highly objective
- Often used in large-scale research



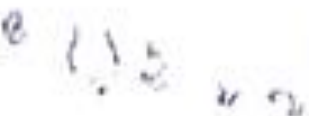
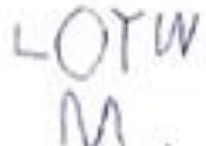
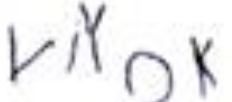
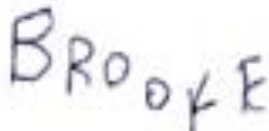


Observational

- Observations or ratings of children's knowledge, skills, or abilities based on performance, behavior, or work in the classroom
- Often criterion-referenced to determine whether the child knows particular content

Objective 19 Demonstrates emergent writing skills

a. Writes name

| Not Yet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---------|--|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| | <p>Scribbles or marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scribble writes deliberately • Makes marks that appear to adults to be in random order | <p>Controlled linear scribbles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scribbles lines, circles, or zigzags in rows • Often repeats action and forms | <p>Mock letters or letter-like forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes segments of letter forms, e.g., lines, curves • May use too many segments to create a letter, e.g., five horizontal lines on the letter E • May not orient letter segments correctly | <p>Letter strings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes some letters correctly • Writes letters in unconventional order | <p>Partially accurate name</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes all the letters of own name, although some may not be sequenced correctly • Writes all the letters of own name, but some of the letters are not formed or oriented correctly | <p>Accurate name</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes all the letters of own name in the correct sequence, form, and orientation • Uses uppercase or lowercase letters (or a combination of both) when writing name | |
| |  <p>Carolyn</p> |  <p>Lilly</p> |  <p>Paula</p> |  <p>Emma</p> |  <p>Vicky</p> |  <p>Brooke</p> | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

How many apples do you see:



Name these letters:

G W I K Y

Observational/Rating Assessments

Advantages

- No disruption in child's ongoing routine
- Multiple opportunities to demonstrate skills



Disadvantages

- Difficult to achieve agreement between 2 teachers/observers
- Usually does not allow for comparisons of child to others her age
- Teacher/observer bias if there are perceived consequences



Direct/Standardized Assessments

Advantages

- Usually allow comparisons of child to others her age
- Higher consistency across assessors
- Less teacher/observer bias



Disadvantages

- May not accurately reflect skills
 - One chance to demonstrate skills
 - Outside of the classroom routine
- Format may be unusual for child
 - May not stay engaged
 - May not be comfortable verbally responding to questions



Requirements for *Either* Type of Assessment



Early Childhood Assessment System Pieces

- **Standards:** for program quality and children's learning and development
- **Assessments:** of program quality and children's skills
- **Reporting:** Data and results available to stakeholders
- **Professional development:** Ongoing support for assessments and use of information
- **Opportunity to learn:** Procedures for assessing whether environments are high quality
- **Inclusion:** assessment works for all children
- **Resources:** ongoing financial support
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Monitoring to ensure that assessment & other pieces are working as intended



Some Considerations from *Early Childhood Assessment: What, Why, and How*

- The assessment strategy should match the purpose (p. 5)
- Consider the burden on children and teachers (p. 5)
- An assessment tool should have evidence of its reliability and validity for the intended purpose and population of children (p. 6)
- Decision-makers should provide an “audit trail” (i.e., documentation) for decisions made (p. 7)
- High-stakes decisions about teachers or programs should not be based on a single source of information (p. 356)



Use of Child Assessments in Program-Level Accountability


Should happen only when (p. 11)

Progress in children's skills is measured (not just gathered at 1 point in time, at the end of the program; p. 344)

Data about inputs are taken into account (e.g., child and family risk factors)

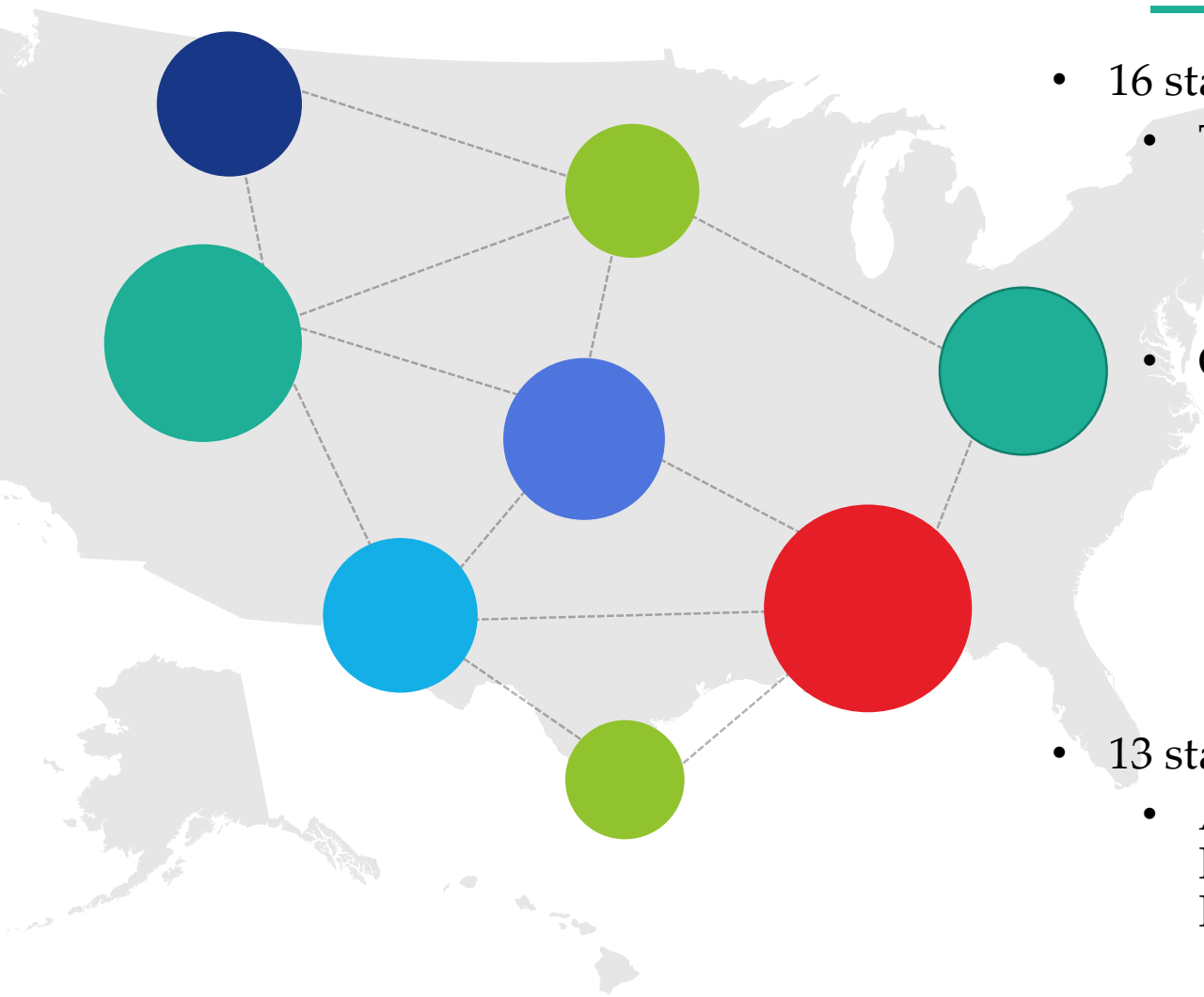
Information about program quality is also used along with child assessment data

Programs have the support they need to improve



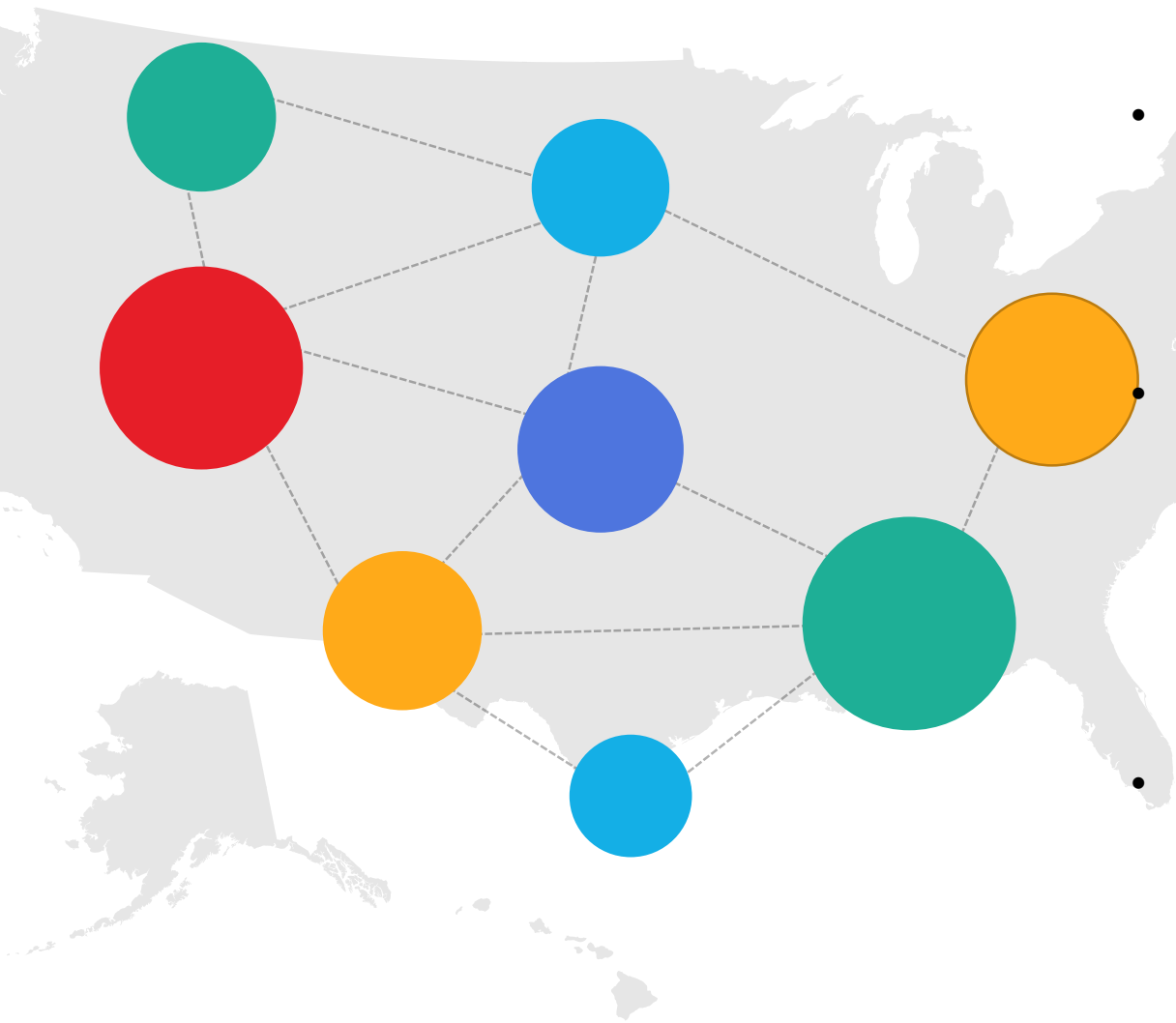
**What are
other states
doing?**

CEELO 2017 State Scan: Kindergarten Entry Assessments



- 16 states use commercially developed tools
 - Teaching Strategies GOLD used in 9 states
 - Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Washington
 - Other tools:
 - Brigance Early Childhood Kindergarten Screen, Desired Results Developmental Profile, Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening, Qualls Early Learning Inventory, STAR Early Literacy
- 13 states have developed their own tools
 - Alaska, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont

Enhanced Assessment Grant Consortia



- Maryland-Ohio Consortium: Connecticut, Maryland, Ohio, and Tennessee
 - Kindergarten Readiness Assessment plus Early Learning Assessment (36-72 months)
 - Designed to inform instruction
 - Teacher/computer-administered and observations
- North Carolina Consortium: Arizona, Delaware, DC, Iowa, Maine, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island
 - Formative K-3 assessment based
 - Designed to inform instruction
 - Observations
- Texas Consortium TX KEA
 - Designed to inform instruction
 - Mix of teacher-administered assessment and teacher surveys/observations

Final Thoughts

- No one “right” way
- Attend to the recommendations/guidelines/best practices as best you can
- Think about unintended negative consequences and what you might do to safeguard against them
- Invest in the assessment system, not just the tool(s)
- Give it time: Don’t use the data until there is evidence that it implemented at scale and as intended
- Include teachers, administrators, and families throughout the process
- More likely to succeed in the long term if you start small with changes or anything new



The Ideal (from Kelly's perspective)

- **To understand whether programs are effective:**
 - **Revise monitoring of individual programs:** Focus monitoring on key standards, including documentation that the program uses data to guide care and instruction. Do not use 1-time assessment of children for program accountability.
 - **Fund program evaluations:** Fund program evaluations that include data from a sample of programs, families, and children. Do not need to evaluate every type of service every year. Develop a long-term plan.
- **To support care and instruction of children:**
 - **Approve 1 or set of assessments to guide care and instruction:** Approve 1 or a small list of assessments that are aligned with FL early learning and development standards. Require programs receiving state funds to use one of these assessments.



The Ideal

To help identify children with special needs early:

Review tools used to screen for possible special needs: Identify organizations responsible for screening children B-5 and ensure that they are using screening tools that have evidence for their reliability and validity. Encourage other organizations to partner, not duplicate.



Resources

Principals and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessment (1998)

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED416033>

Early Childhood Assessment: Who, What, and How (2008)

<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/12446/early-childhood-assessment-why-what-and-how>

THANK

YOU

kmaxwell@childtrends.org

919-869-3251

