



SPECIAL EDITION: Universal PreK (UPK) Café Issue 5 – May 31, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

During this fifth month of 2024, the Early Education Team is continuing our theme of sharing historical insights into the 10th Anniversary of Act 166. We hope you enjoy this special edition of the UPK Café featuring the history of UPK assessment, Teaching Strategies (formerly known as TS Gold).

Teaching Strategies History

The Agency of Education (AOE) initial contract with Teaching Strategies began long before Act 166. It actually started in 2009! This began with implementation sites, trainings and collaborations throughout the state from amazing PreK programs. Since then, all UPK prequalified programs are actively utilizing Teaching Strategies, the state approved developmental child assessment. Over the years, Teaching Strategies has added many great resources such as a Teaching Strategies curriculum and program system innovations.

Act 166 of 2014 provides access to publicly funded prekindergarten education for Vermont students. All UPK prekindergarten education programs, including Head Start and public school-operated programs, must meet specific requirements to operate in Vermont. The Vermont State Board of Education created administrative rules to guide Act 166 implementation by the Agency of Education and the Agency of Human Services. Teaching Strategies falls under Act 166 requirements of establishing a process for documenting the progress of children enrolled in prekindergarten education programs. UPK prequalified programs are required to use the Teaching Strategies assessment to individualize instruction, improve program practice; and collect and report child progress data to the AOE.

- Rule 2606 (d) conduct child development assessments of each child enrolled using the assessment tool approved by the AOE at least two times a year, (December 15th and June 15th) and reports the results of those assessments to the AOE.

Teaching Strategies

Teaching Strategies is an authentic, ongoing observational system for assessing children from birth through kindergarten. It helps teachers to observe children in the context of everyday experiences, which is an effective way to learn what they know and can do.



Why Ongoing Assessment?

Developmentally appropriate, ongoing, observation-based assessment occurs when teachers are observing children during regular, everyday activities on a continuous basis throughout the year. Unlike formal or standardized assessments, which offer a narrow picture of a child’s ability at a given moment, ongoing assessments offer a broad, more meaningful picture of development.

Ongoing Assessment Is

- Happening during regular, everyday activities.
- Implemented on a continuous basis throughout the year.
- Helping teachers meet children where they are.
- Helping children meet challenging and achievable learning goals.
- A broader and more meaningful picture of development.

Ongoing Assessment Is Not

- Formal or standardized assessment.
- A narrow picture of a child’s ability at a given moment.
- A one-dimensional measure of ability.
- Performed outside of everyday activities.
- A screening tool.

Why Do We Use Teaching Strategies?

Teaching Strategies helps teachers create a developmental profile of each child to answer the questions, “What does this child know? What is he or she able to do?” It supports teachers through every step of the ongoing assessment cycle by understanding what to focus on, why it’s important, how to gather and interpret assessment information, and how to use that information to plan meaningful learning experiences.

Observe and Collect Facts

Teaching Strategies offers easy-to-use tools to help teachers focus their observations on children, document facts, and organize the information.

Summarize, Plan, and Communicate

Reports, the activity library, and weekly planning forms are just a few of the tools that help teachers summarize, plan, and share information with families, administrators, and other community partners. Teachers have everything they need to discuss each child’s development and learning with others and to make informed decisions about the best ways to support each child’s development.

Analyze and Respond

Teaching Strategies provides teachers with the support they need to answer these questions: “What does this information mean?” and “What do I do next?”. Teacher’s “tag” each piece of documentation with related developmental objectives. Often, one rich piece of documentation can address many objectives and dimensions—there’s no

need to enter a unique observation for every objective. When it comes time to evaluate children’s progress, the system will use these tagged objectives and dimensions to help teachers make informed decisions.

Evaluate

Teaching Strategies guides teachers through the crucial process of evaluating children’s knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Color-coded progressions of development and learning make it easy for teachers to compare each child’s knowledge, skills, and behaviors to widely held expectations for most children of the same age or class/grade. To make evaluations simpler and easier, all documentation that teachers tag with the objectives on the documentation screen are gathered on this screen as evidence to help teachers make their decisions.

Teaching Strategies and Supporting Children with Disabilities

Teaching Strategies can be used successfully to assess children with disabilities by explaining what progress looks like in a way that allows all children to show their strengths. The system focuses on a child’s current developmental levels and the progress the child makes over time. And, because Teaching Strategies is strengths-based, children can demonstrate what they can do!

For children with significant disabilities, teachers may need to use a supplemental assessment in addition to Teaching Strategies in order to identify incremental changes that are taking place for objectives skills and behaviors in many ways, even if there are developmental delays in a particular area.

Teaching Strategies: Objectives

The thirty-eight objectives at the heart of Teaching Strategies guide teachers through the assessment cycle, helping them to link observable behavior to essential early learning requirements and predict likely next steps in every area of development and learning. The objectives cover ten areas of development and learning, including broad developmental areas, content areas, and English language acquisition. Many of the objectives also include dimensions that guide teachers’ thinking about various aspects of a given objective and help clarify the behavior it addresses.

These objectives are aligned with Common Core State Standards, Vermont Early Learning Standards, and Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

An important piece of information to remember – Teaching Strategies requires nine Areas to be completed for checkpoints.

These include:

- Social Emotional
- Language
- Cognitive
- Physical

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- And the Arts

Teaching Strategies Alignment with Vermont Early Learning Standards

This [document](#) is a crosswalk showing the alignment of Teaching Strategies and the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS).

Upcoming Teaching Strategies News

Coming soon! Watch for upcoming Teaching Strategies in-person trainings!