



## Universal PreK (UPK) Café Issue 4 - January 16, 2025

### Early Education Team Purpose Statement

Each and every young child and their family are diverse in culture, language, geography, values, beliefs and circumstances. To support individual growth, development, and continuous learning over their lifetime, the AOE is committed to fully including each and every child in a continuum of high quality, evidence-based early learning experiences from birth through grade three.

### Back-to-Basics

Back-to-Basics is the theme selected for this school year UPK Café issues. When we speak of getting back-to-basics, we mean the core teaching practices of high-quality developmentally appropriate education including lesson planning, intentional teaching, observation techniques, assessment (data collection and analysis), teacher reflection (feedback loop), supporting children at risk of, with and without disabilities and Early MTSS response plans. The Early Education team hopes that early childhood educators and support staff will find the Back-to-Basics issues helpful and supportive of continuous improvement of their teaching practices.

This fourth issue highlights the importance of the partnership between assessment and observation for collecting child progress assessment documentation, and analysis for informing instructional practices for each and every child.

### Observation, Assessment and Intentional Practice

In the UPK Café Issue 3 we discussed how to observe objectively and without bias, and different types of observation techniques and why it is important for observations to be on-going. When we put child observations together with child development assessments the analysis of the two promotes (equals) intentional teaching practices. In education there are two types of assessment practices: **formative** and **summative**.

- **Formative Assessment** is **ongoing** data collection through observations, work samples, and other documentation that teachers utilize daily to make adaptations to their practice.
- **Summative Assessment** is a collection of formative assessment data and analysis used to assess and or make an evidence-based determination if children are **progressing towards or demonstrate they have met** the learning objectives.



In early education development is a spectrum progressing from “not yet ready” through “performing independently” developmental learning objectives. The line graph below is reference from the [Ready for Kindergarten \(R4K\)](#) criteria that the AOE Early Education team prepares yearly for summative assessment of prekindergarten education outcomes. Most assessments have a developmental rubric that maps developmental milestones defined by age. The [Vermont Early Learning Standards \(VELS\)](#) is a great reference document for determining age appropriate learning and behavioral milestones. **Tip:** For meeting children where they are at developmentally use the VELS to determine the age domain a child is demonstrating competence at and make accommodations using universal supports to promote a sense of belonging. Please note that children who may be practicing in one domain area may present not yet ready in another domain area. Teachers are encouraged to use the [Pyramid Model Framework](#) with universal supports for all children, and moving towards targeted supports as needed.



## Early Childhood Assessment for Teachers and Families

The purpose of assessment in early childhood is to determine a child’s strengths and set goals for instruction. Assessments support the ability to provide individual instruction for children across all areas of development to inform teacher practice and families about their child’s development. A reminder for UPK prequalified programs that two family conferences are required annually (fall and spring) to share information with families about their child’s developmental progress. During these family conferences child work samples, teacher observations, child assessments (TS Gold) and developmental screeners (ASQ) are recommended documentation.

The following information references resources found on the [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center \(ECTA\)](#).

### ECTA assessment Guides for Practitioners

Each ECTA practice guide features a recommended practice, describes how to do the practice, offers an illustrative vignette and a short video of the practice, and lists suggestions for additional resources. Five assessment Practice Guides for Practitioners are currently available (i.e., engaging in informed clinical reasoning, engaging families as assessment partners, authentic child assessment, building on child strengths, and identifying child strengths) in web and mobile device formats.

### Engaging Families as Assessment Partners

As referenced in the [Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\) Engaging Families as Assessment Partners](#) it is vital to engage families in the assessment process as they know their child best and were their child’s first teacher. Engaging families as partners

in their child's assessment includes methods and strategies for gathering information from families and promoting their participation during the assessment. Gathering information from families is critical for identifying a child's strengths and needs and for making informed decisions about the goals and objectives on intervention plans. Practitioners ensure that family members play an important role in their child's assessment when they listen to family members, encourage them to share their knowledge, and clarify their concerns, priorities, and goals for their child.

### **Sharing data**

Sharing student data with families can help build partnerships that focus on addressing challenges and identifying strengths. This data can also help families make informed decisions and set high expectations for their children's learning.

### **Involving families**

Involving families in the assessment process can help ensure that the skills or behaviors targeted are meaningful to the child and family. Families can also provide critical information about their child, such as their temperament and physical needs.

### **Providing information**

Assessment results can provide valuable information about a child's learning and development. Parents can use this information to guide learning activities at home.

### **Supporting families**

Families should be supported in their efforts to communicate concerns and discuss goals, placement options, and other relevant information.

### **Improving outcomes**

When families are involved in the assessment process, there can be better outcomes for both children and parents. Assessments help teachers communicate important data-driven insights to help understand learning outcomes and student progress.

Assessments Provide Information for Evaluating Program Quality and Inform Policy.

Programs evaluate success by continuously monitoring children's development and responding to their individual needs. By assessing overall performance, directors/administrators can determine specific areas of program need and identify staff professional development to improve their ability to support all children.

## **Child Developmental Assessments**

The following are developmental child assessments that are used to collect information and data for determining where a child is at on the developmentally. Some assessments include a family section to complete. For all assessments it is recommended that family collaboration and bi-directional communication be a priority for bridging the home to school connection for best outcomes for each and every child. UPK prequalified programs are required to provide two annual family conferences preferably in the fall

and spring to show children’s developmental progression using assessment data and analysis.

### **Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)**

The Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition (ASQ®-3) is a developmental screening tool that pinpoints developmental progress in children between the ages of one month to 5 ½ years. Its success lies in its parent-centric approach and inherent ease-of-use—a combination that has made it the most widely used developmental screener across the globe. This screener utilizes family input for completing the assessment.

Evidence shows that the earlier development is assessed—the greater the chance a child has to reach his or her potential.

**Resource:** [VT Help Me Grow ASQ Online](#). Blog and resource library and assessment information for both practitioners and families.

### **Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-SE) -Social and Emotional Learning**

Early identification of social-emotional challenges can make all the difference to a young child. The proof is undeniable: the earlier a behavioral concern is identified, the greater the chance a child has for reaching his or her full potential in life. This is the driving force behind Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ®:SE-2)—a parent-completed, highly reliable system focused solely on social-emotional development in young children. Accurately identifying behavior through ASQ:SE-2 paves the way for next steps—further assessment, specialized intervention or ongoing monitoring, for examples—to help children reach their fullest potential during their most formative early years.

**Resource:** [VT Help Me Grow ASQ Online](#). Blog and resource library and assessment information for both practitioners and families

### **Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG)**

Teaching Strategies GOLD® is a formative assessment intended to assess the whole child from birth through third grade. It enables teachers to collect documentation on an ongoing basis to identify the best placements for individual children across a series of developmental progressions. Teachers collect evidence during regular activities in natural child environments. Teachers compile portfolios of evidence for each child, reflect upon and analyze the evidence, make preliminary ratings on a rolling basis, and finalize ratings at specified points during the year to continue an ongoing assessment. Teachers and administrators may then use this information to inform instruction and to facilitate communication with parents and other stakeholders. The primary intent of GOLD® is to help teachers observe and understand child progress, plan instruction, and support child growth and development

#### **Resources:**

[Teaching Strategies GOLD SmartTeach Ready.Set.Go!](#)

Assessment tutorial videos and articles.

Information and resource links.

[UPK Café: Special Series Issue 5 Teaching Strategies](#) (May 31, 2024)

Assessment information within the TSG framework.

## Ready for Kindergarten – (R4K!S)

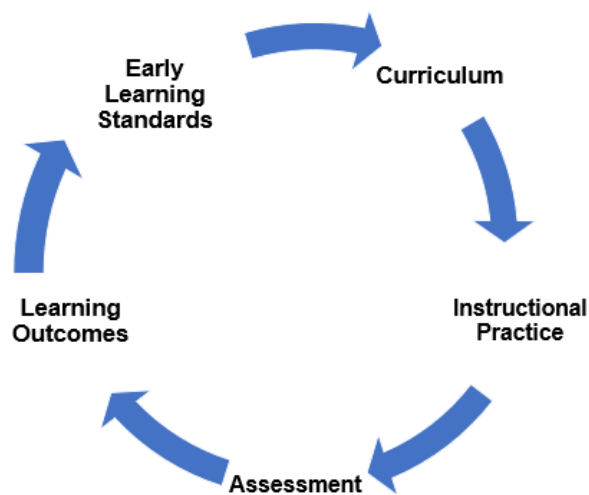
Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S) is a readiness assessment of children entering kindergarten about students' knowledge and skills after entering school.

The R4K!S is used to gather baseline data and promote data-based decision-making on children's development and can also identify if evaluations or assessments are needed. The data can help to identify SU/SDs that may need more support to help children achieve educational outcomes. Statewide R4K!S data also helps administrators understand what types of PD may be most helpful for teachers to achieve essential early learning outcomes for young children. The Agency of Education collects R4K!S data and aggregates it into several reports, including the statewide outcomes report.

**Reference:** [Vermont Agency of Education, Ready for Kindergarten Reports.](#)

## VELS Assessment and Data Collection Loop

Building upon our previous back to basics UPK Café issues for promoting high-quality teaching practices and positive learning outcomes, early learning standards, such as the VELS, need to be aligned with an evidence-based assessment, like Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG). The alignment of VELS and TSG creates a partnership that promotes both. The success of the curriculum feedback loop is an educator who routinely reflects upon their practice and **child assessment data** to implement additional strategies and or supports for equitable, and inclusive universal and targeted supports for each and every child.



Assessment informs instructional practice for additional strategies or supports for positive learning outcomes.

Child assessment data collection may come from multiple assessments and documentation that is analyzed to provide a snapshot of where each child is currently at on the development spectrum. Ongoing data collection is vital for showing a child's progress or if there is a delay. It is important to remember that different assessments "assess" for different child developmental progress, and that a child may demonstrate different abilities depending on the assessment being used.

**Resource:**

[Institute of Education Sciences: Making Sense of Educational Assessment](#)

## **Child Developmental Delays**

While collecting and analyzing assessment data teachers may find a delay in development or gap in skill or knowledge. When it is recommended that teachers confer with colleagues for consensus and then schedule a meeting with the child's family to discuss the assessment data analysis to allow the family to make an informed decision for whether or not to have their child referred for a special education evaluation. Remember, teacher can share the assessment data analysis, but it is the family a family decision to act upon it. Teachers may accommodations both universal and targeted to support the child. The two resources listed below provide an overview of the Early Childhood Special Education system for promoting high quality practices and environments for young children.

[Vermont Agency of Education Early Childhood Special Education Orientation: ECSE 101](#) provides an overview of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal and state special education laws and regulations focusing on Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) for children ages 3 through 5. It includes an introduction of IDEA Part C Children's Integrated Services (CIS)/Early Intervention (EI) and the collaborative relationship with IDEA Part B (3 through 21), ECSE developmental domains, and State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) indicators. Additionally, this training webinar includes foundational documents including the Vermont Guiding Principles and Equity Statements, which promote inclusive, high-quality practices and environments for young children.

**Vermont Agency of Education Early Childhood Special Education [Creating High-Quality Inclusive Environments](#)** This webinar presentation gives an overview of early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and high-quality practices that support the right of each and every young child and their family in Vermont. The purpose of this webinar is to assist LEAs, administrators, educators, special educators, service providers, and early childhood programs and community partners in identifying, developing, and sustaining high-quality inclusive opportunities and environments for each and every child with and without disabilities.

## **Conclusion**

In the past four back-to-basics issues we have demonstrated the relationship between lesson planning, curriculum aligned with the VELs, observation techniques, types of assessments for collecting child progress data, and data analysis for informing instructional practices for each and every child. In this assessment issue we have

highlighted multiple child developmental assessments, including TS Gold required of all UPK prequalified programs, and the importance of assessment data collection and analysis for sharing with families.

## **Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Education**

If you have a resource or idea you would like to share for the **UPK Café** or have been forwarded this issue and would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact us at [aoe.upk@vermont.gov](mailto:aoe.upk@vermont.gov).

Thank you!

**Tammy, Katie, Amy, Wendy, Michele, Teresa and Thalia**

### **Resources**

[Vermont Universal Prekindergarten \(padlet.com\)](#) includes teaching best practices, Early MTSS and Teaching Strategies Gold information and resources.

[Vermont Agency of Education Early Education webpage](#)

[VELS Manual](#)

[Universal PreK Program Handbook](#)

[Act 166 Universal Prekindergarten: Changes to Prequalified Program](#)

[UPK Cafe](#)