K-3 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM

OVERVIEW OF A GROUNDBREAKING New Early Learning Project

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS

STATES

North Carolina *(lead)*

Arizona

Delaware

District of Columbia

Iowa

Maine

North Dakota

Oregon

Rhode Island

South Carolina

RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS

BUILD

Child Trends

SRI

Introduction

With support from a $6.1 million Enhanced Assessment Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, North Dakota has joined nine other states and three nationally recognized research partners in a consortium to enhance a state-of-the-art system for assessing young children's learning. North Carolina, the Consortium's lead state, is developing a K-3 formative assessment that includes a KEA. The K-3 assessment process will begin at kindergarten entry (KEA), generating a Child Profile of learning and development, and continue through third grade, making information available to both teachers and families to inform teaching and learning. Through this project, the Consortium will provide teachers, parents, students, policymakers and others who care about education in the critical early years a user-friendly, effective resource for generating clear information on where children are in their learning and where they need to go next. In order to realize this goal, the Consortium is designing an assessment process with the following essential features:

> "The K-3 assessment process will begin at kindergarten entry (KEA), generating a Child Profile of learning and development, and continue through third grade."

- **Formative in nature**– that is, rather than being used only to summarize what children already have and have not achieved, the assessment results will *guide instruction and give teachers and students a meaningful tool for adjusting teaching and learning to help schools meet the state's educational standards*.

  Stand-alone KEAs, which provide summary snapshots of children's functioning at one moment in time, are not designed to inform instruction going forward into the kindergarten year; the Consortium approach of embedding a KEA in a formative assessment process that extends to third grade will help to ensure that all assessment information, including KEA results, are viewed as part of the teaching and learning process – information that teachers can put to practical use in their classrooms and that families can use to support learning at home.

- **Defines learning holistically.** The assessment process will address five key domains of children's educational development. Consistent with this broad coverage, the formative assessment will draw on many different kinds of evidence (for example, observations, conversations, work samples, and tasks) from many different sources to shed light on students' learning progress.

- **Accounts for children's diverse learning styles.** The assessment process will be enhanced using a framework that integrates Evidence Centered Design (ECD), a well-researched and highly regarded approach to assessment development, and principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This approach will help meet the challenge of assessing all children by suggesting flexible materials, techniques, and strategies for the assessment process so that it is appropriate, relevant and useful for all children, including children with disabilities and English Language Learners.

- Useful for **multiple stakeholders to support children's learning**. The information gathered at kindergarten entry, which generates the Child Profile, will be expanded on during kindergarten and through third grade to help inform the teaching and learning process at the classroom level. Data gathered through the KEA Child Profile can help inform multiple audiences: teachers and students to shape instruction and learning, families to support children's learning and development, and coaches and principals to identify needs for professional development and curricular changes. Data from the Child Profile can also be incorporated into the overall longitudinal data system that each Consortium state maintains so that state and school district leaders can analyze the aggregate data to help shape decisions about the allocation of educational resources and what kinds of professional development to offer teachers.

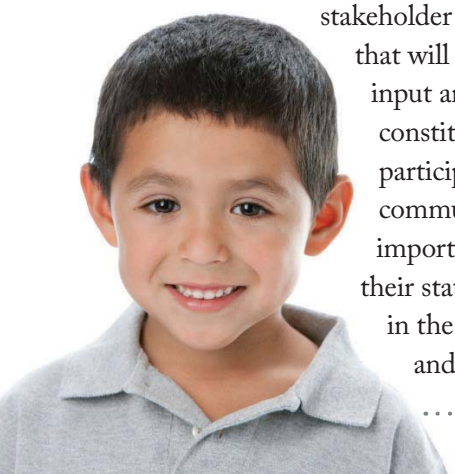
- **Teacher friendly.** The system will be designed specifically for teacher use and, as such, the assessment process and the data that are produced will be user-friendly for teachers. The assessment will utilize ***smart technologies*** – innovative technological solutions – to help collect, analyze, interpret, score, and access data. These technologies have the potential to reduce burdens on teachers who are asked to provide information to be used in the assessment process, but even more important, the technologies can make it easier for teachers to draw on assessment information to inform their practice. To ensure teachers are supported in using the assessment, the Consortium will develop professional development materials and each Consortium state will develop an implementation plan detailing how they will support the on-going successful use of the assessment.

- **Family and student friendly.** In recognition of families' unique knowledge of their own children and how they are developing, the K-3 assessment process will provide opportunities for families to contribute to the process, which will strengthen teachers' understanding of the children in their classroom. In addition, information gathered through the KEA Child Profile will be designed so that families can have a firmer grasp of ways in which they can support their children's development and learning.

5 Domains of Learning

1. physical well-being & motor development;
2. social & emotional development;
3. approaches toward learning;
4. language & literacy development; and
5. cognitive development & general knowledge.

- **Reflects a widely shared, common understanding of educational standards and of how best to measure progress on those standards.** In order to ensure that the KEA provides useful information in each state, the content of the participating states' early learning and development standards for pre-Kindergarten will be analyzed. This project, conducted separately from the Enhanced Assessment Grant work, will inform the development of the assessment process. In addition, Consortium states have agreed to work together to develop a core set of common, essential early learning standards which the KEA will assess. These states are also committed to developing an assessment process that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards, which all of the member states, including North Dakota, have now adopted.
- **Builds on existing state work to develop KEAs and other educational assessments.** North Carolina, the lead state for the Consortium, is developing a K-3 formative assessment that includes a KEA. As Consortium states join with North Carolina to design a common assessment process, they view the North Carolina assessment process as a starting-point upon which to build, refine, and enhance. A number of other participating states have experience working on early learning assessments; for example, four are now piloting KEAs and three have mandated K-3 literacy assessments. In addition, several of the Consortium states are participating in work related to formative assessment with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium or the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).
- **Relies on stakeholder engagement.** Notably, all of the Consortium states have convened statewide planning and/or working groups of leaders and other citizens concerned with early learning that are focusing on KEAs and other early learning assessments. This project will utilize the collective knowledge, expertise, and experience of all Consortium states to design a stakeholder engagement process that will build greater buy-in, input and support across diverse constituencies and assure that participating states consistently communicate and consult with important stakeholders within their state regarding key decisions in the assessment development and enhancement process.



How the Project Is Structured

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the lead agency and fiscal agent for the Consortium, has overall responsibility for managing the project. All Consortium states will share any relevant assessment resources they have developed and will regularly contribute to and review new materials that emerge from the project – standards, examples of evidence of learning to be used in assessments, professional development materials, evaluation data from KEA pilots, and drafts of the new assessment instrument, for example. To ensure continuity and collaboration, all states have agreed that at minimum they will participate in one in-person annual Consortium meeting, quarterly webinars, and bimonthly phone calls. In addition, all states will make concerted efforts to reach out to school administrators, teachers, families, institutions of higher education, and other concerned groups and individuals in their states in order to build understanding of and engagement in the K-3 formative assessment approach, and support the assessment development process.

In addition to the basic work of the Consortium, select states, including North Dakota, will take on other more specialized roles to help move the project forward. These activities will include participating in design teams and pilot- and field-testing activities, convening state experts to review assessment materials, and conducting focus groups and other in-depth forums with parents, teachers, administrators and other constituencies to explain and develop support for the assessments.

SRI, one of the three research partners for the project, is designing the enhanced assessment and technology and will lead the pilot and field-testing efforts. ***Child Trends*** is contributing to assessment design and pilot testing. ***BUILD*** is responsible for managing cross-state Consortium meetings, and along with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, both ***BUILD*** and ***Child Trends*** will help states with their in-state outreach. BUILD is managing a parallel, related process to identify common early learning and development standards across the states and create common, essential standards. This work will be led by Drs. Sharon Lynn Kagan from Teachers College, Columbia University and Catherine Scott-Little from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.