LOUISIANA'S PRE-K THROUGH THIRD GRADE GUIDEBOOK

FOR SITES & SYSTEM LEADERS

June 2018

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION AND VISION

The years between pre-K and third grade are vital for creating the foundation for later school success. The **skills** our students develop at one age level or grade must be built upon and reinforced in later grades. Furthermore, for our students to sustain gains made in one grade, they must continue to receive high-quality teaching in subsequent grades.

Despite our growing efforts to expand quality pre-Kindergarten opportunities for 4-year olds and to close early achievement gaps, many young children in Louisiana still lack access to a high-quality continuum of learning that could make a difference in positive, long term achievement outcomes. Gaps and disparities in learning exist even as children enter pre-Kindergarten and these persist and grow larger throughout early elementary school. In fact, recent results for LEAP show fewer than 50% of third graders achieve mastery in reading or math. This picture is even more troubling for our most vulnerable youth.

2015-2016 THIRD GRADE LEAP RESULTS

● BASIC   ● MASTERY

ELA: 62% (BASIC), 36% (MASTERY)
MATH: 74% (BASIC), 46% (MASTERY)
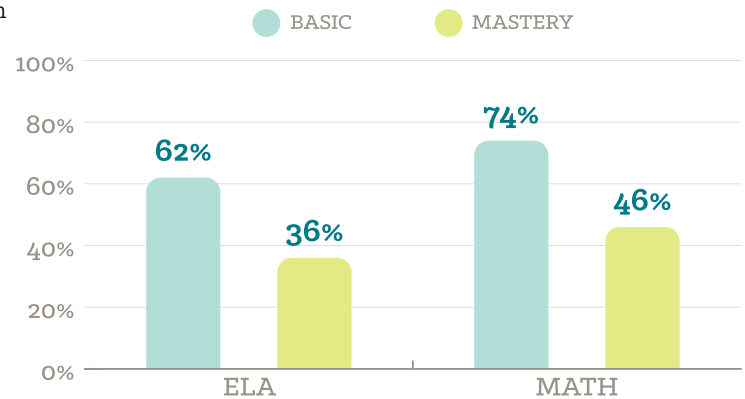
Though both early childhood community networks and school districts across Louisiana are working hard on many fronts to improve the quality of education in pre-K through third grade, challenges remain. These include:

- Different beliefs about what and how children should learn across the progression
- Misaligned curriculum programs or ineffective implementation of quality programs
- Disconnected assessment methods (e.g., screening and progress monitoring)
- Conflicting goals and priorities for professional development
- Inconsistent use of teacher observation systems
- Lack of family engagement and awareness of support services available for children and families

To eliminate these barriers, we need to **build a seamless support system for early learning - one that prepares all of our children to achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond**. Achieving this vision will require implementers at all levels -- from site and system leaders to classroom teachers - to embrace policies and practices that support a consistent, coherent approach to children's education that provides continuous, enhanced learning opportunities from pre-K through third grade.

Research identifies a number of strategies that have been and continue to be critical to alignment efforts in effective pre-K through third grade system. Successful systems

1. implement high-quality curricula;
2. use meaningful assessment methods, including early and accurate identification;
3. create shared curriculum and content-specific professional development between pre-K and K-3 teachers;
4. use teacher observation systems effectively; and
5. provide positive support systems for children and families.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STANDARDS & CURRICULUM

ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide site and system leaders with information and guidance on creating strong plans for their schools that ensure quality and continuity of proven practices across pre-K through third grade so children and families experience smooth and effective transitions, thrive in the early elementary years, and achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond.

STRATEGY 1: IMPLEMENT HIGH-QUALITY CURRICULA

Curriculum is the set of formal materials the teacher uses to deliver instruction to students. It includes daily lesson plans and other tools, including instructional practices to support teachers in developing the knowledge and skills children need to master the standards.

High-quality curricula ensure that teachers

- cover relevant content in a coherent way that supports how students best learn;

- adopt practices that actively promote learning and engagement; and

- provide consistent expectations for what children should be learning.

The **learning environment** is the starting point for implementing a high-quality curriculum. A physical setting that is safe, comfortable, and well-designed to promote learning helps children to fully engage in classroom activities. High-quality curricula generally provide guidelines for setting up the learning environment.

High-quality curricula also use play as a context for instruction to help children learn important skills and understandings. Though play influences all areas of development, it functions and develops differently in high-quality curricula as children grow older. For example:

- Preschoolers engage in playing "house" or "dress up," often interacting with one another, which is important for language development while applying and modifying their current knowledge about the real world. Children at this age also become familiar with words by playing with books or other materials that have letters on them. Moreover, interest and exploratory learning centers abound and address learning in all developmental domains.

- Kindergarteners play with language by creating silly rhymes and nonsense words. They also use physical materials to solve simple addition and subtraction problems, like how many cookies they will have left after they have shared some with a friend. Learning centers focus on a set of key learning goals across developmental domains.

- Children of primary grade age enjoy rule-regulated games that build grade-level skills and understanding in fun and motivating ways. For example, first-grade children enjoy playing a variety of letter-sound games while third-grade children enjoy playing word games that build vocabulary and knowledge. Learning centers at this level tend to be literacy based and become more focused on research as the child approaches third grade.

KEY COMPONENTS OF CURRICULUM THAT PROMOTE LEARNING

High-quality curricula share several principles that promote learning. In Louisiana, high-quality curricula

- fully align with state standards for early learning, English Language Arts (ELA), and math;

- cover learning domains in a sequenced, progressive manner;

- contain meaningful, connected tasks that build student knowledge;

- use a combination of child-focused and teacher-directed strategies, including whole group, small group, and centers;

- include highly interactive, developmentally appropriate learning experiences;

- provide guidelines on how to scaffold activities to support different levels of need;

- include ongoing assessment to monitor children's progress and inform future learning activities; and

- provide materials for families to support their children's learning and development.

In pre-K and the early elementary grades, acquiring a solid foundation of reading skills and expressing understanding of texts read aloud or alone are equally important. Site and system leaders ensure students get the full spectrum of reading exposure and instruction by providing teachers with curricula that do both.

RECOMMENDED CURRICULUM OPTIONS

Research confirms that curricular choices matter. The shift from a weak curriculum to a strong one can make significant difference for a child in just one year. Further, consistent use of a high-quality curriculum over multiple years of a child's early learning years could have a major cumulative impact.

Louisiana provides **rigorous rubrics** and **annotated reviews** to help site-based and system leaders choose high-quality curricula that will best meet the needs of their children across the pre-K through third grade continuum. Materials are rated on a three-point scale: Tier 1 exemplifies the highest level of quality, Tier 2 represents some quality, and Tier 3 has limited quality.

Site-based and system leaders can use the reviews to

- inform decisions about purchasing;
- build understanding of what standards-aligned materials look like; and
- evaluate previously purchased materials to identify necessary modifications.

A list of Tier 1 recommended curriculum options for pre-K and K-3 children, along with contract pricing for materials, can be accessed here.

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION SCALE

The **Curriculum Implementation Scale** is a Louisiana tool that leaders use to assess the degree to which they are implementing high-quality curricula and equipping teachers with the tools to effectively use these curricula. The scale is scored from zero to four, with zero meaning a high-quality curriculum has not yet been selected and four meaning a high-quality curriculum is in place and teachers take full ownership for maximizing student learning, including using information about gaps and progress in learning to modify the curriculum.

Level 0: Site/system does not consistently meet criteria for Level 1.

Level 1: Teachers have access to Tier I curriculum.

Level 2: Teachers have basic training that equips them to use the curriculum "as written."

Level 3: Leaders help teachers modify the curriculum to better meet students' needs.

Level 4: Teachers use student data to drive modifications to the curriculum.

In Louisiana, every publicly funded pre-K site receives an **Early Childhood Site Performance Profile**. The performance profile provides information on the site's quality, including the quality of curriculum it uses with children, to help parents make smart choices about pre-K for their children. In addition, the **Early Childhood Network Performance Profile** provides the percentage of sites using a high-quality curriculum.

The Department uses the **Curriculum Implementation Scale** to assess which schools are using Tier 1 curriculum, particularly in grades K-3, and to support sites in implementing high-quality curriculum.

> The best sites provide all teachers in all classrooms with access to a Tier 1 curriculum and help them to use it well so all children achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond.

TABLE 1: Self-Assessment, Key Actions, and Resources - Curriculum

SELF-ASSESSMENT	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
1. At which age/grade spans do all teachers have access to Tier 1 curriculum? Which content areas (for example, Integrated for pre-K, ELA, Math)?	• Ensure teachers have access to Tier 1 curricula and all of the materials necessary to implement those curricula.	**Annotated Reviews**
2. Which level on the **Curriculum Implementation Scale** best reflects the site's current status for each age/grade span and content area?	• Diagnose where your school is along the path to providing teachers with support that helps them use their curricula effectively.	**Curriculum Implementation Scale**
3. What are you going to do to move to the next level or sustain the highest level of implementation on the Scale?	• Create an intentional sequence of curriculum-based PD based on identified needs.	**Professional Development Planning Guide**
4. How do you help teachers use curriculum resources to maximize children's opportunities to learn?	• Identify vendors with proven track records of success who can help your teachers navigate and use their curriculum effectively.	**Vendor Professional Development Course Catalog**
5. How do you engage families with the curriculum and related resources to promote children's learning?	• Implement family engagement strategies included in Tier 1 curriculum.	Tier 1 Curriculum

STRATEGY 2: USE MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENT METHODS, INCLUDING EARLY AND ACCURATE IDENTIFICATION

When looking across the spectrum of measures designed to examine what young children know and/or can do, two types of methods surface: **direct assessment and observation-based assessment.**

Direct assessments are formal measures that are typically standardized. This means that during their administration, all children are presented with the same parallel questions (e.g., "What letter is this?") or task directions (e.g., "Point to the letter S."). Timing, if applicable, and use of sample items and/or prompts also occurs in the same or parallel fashion.

Observation-based assessments, on the other hand, are informal, authentic assessment approaches in which teachers observe children on a daily basis while they are engaged in everyday program activities and within natural settings. Teachers use anecdotal notes and student work samples to document children's learning performance and progress over time.

TABLE 2A: Characteristics of Observation-Based and Direct Assessments

| CHARACTERISTICS	ASSESSMENT METHOD	
	OBSERVATION-BASED	**DIRECT**
Purpose	Instructional	Some designed for instructional uses; some designed for evaluation purposes
Type	Informal	Formal
Administration	Driven by moment-to-moment decisions	Regulated by a set of rules (e.g., all children are presented with the same parallel questions or task directions)
	Teacher or other adult (e.g. assistant/ paraprofessional, speech therapist, etc.) conducts	Teacher conducts or, in some cases, (e.g., diagnostic) a professional who has been extensively trained to use the assessment conducts
	Not timed	Sometimes timed
Activities	Interactive, hands-on	Typically paper-pencil
Tools/Scoring	Rating scales, checklists, learning tasks or work samples	Tests for grading purposes, assessments that provide cut scores
Documentation	Portfolios that capture photos, work samples, videos, audio clips, and text notes	Students' answers to questions
Occurs	Typically during instruction	Typically before or after instruction
Frequency	High frequency	Moderate or low frequency

A well-constructed assessment, whether direct or observation-based, is:

- appropriate to the development and experiences of young children;
- aligned to the standards and student learning goals; and
- conducted in the language children are most comfortable with and includes other accommodations, as appropriate

However, unlike observation-based assessments, direct assessments do not always yield useful data about what a 4-year-old knows or can do. This is particularly true for formal, paper-pencil assessments. This is because preschoolers may not be able to remember the directions, stay focused on the task at hand, and/or regulate their behavior in terms of sitting for any length of time. For these reasons, all publically-funded pre-K classrooms in Louisiana use *GOLD®* or another high-quality assessment to observe and document children's developmental progress.

A sound rule to remember is: **the younger the child, the more appropriate it is to use observation as the mechanism for gathering assessment information**. In pre-K and K, especially, observation measures allow children to demonstrate a behavior or skill in multiple settings and across time. **As age increases, the frequency of more direct assessments could increase, but these should still be balanced with informal methods**.

For example, assessment practices in pre-K should generally be around 100% observation. For Kindergarten, assessment practices should be around 75% observation and 25% direct. For First Grade, there should be close to a 50% balance between observation and direct assessments. In Second Grade, direct assessments should increase to around 75%. When the child reaches third grade close to 100% of assessment practices should be direct.

0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
PRE-K	KINDERGARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND GRADE	THIRD GRADE

INCREASED USE OF DIRECT ASSESSMENT
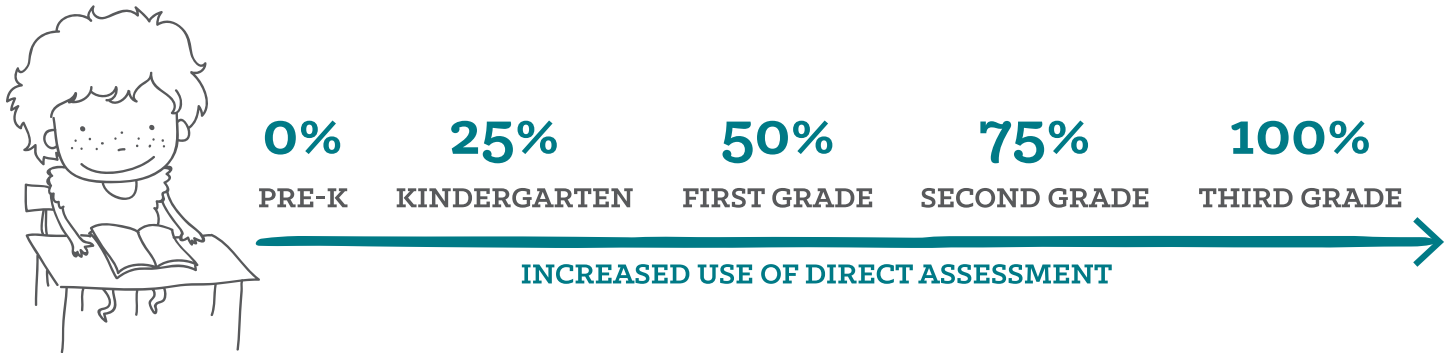
COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PLAN

No single assessment can tell teachers all they need to know to make well-informed instructional decisions. A comprehensive assessment plan uses multiple methods and sources of information and involves a collaborative effort between teachers, specialists, and parents to accurately assess students' instructional needs. Site and system leaders cultivate a culture of shared decision making to ensure assessment helps all children reach their highest potential.

A comprehensive assessment plan for young children has three main purposes:

1. To **screen** children at the beginning of the year to identify those who may be at risk for delayed development or academic failure and need additional support or intervention to achieve age- or grade-level standards by the end of the year.

2. To **diagnose** the specific needs of at-risk children that will be helpful in providing additional instruction or services to meet their most critical learning needs.

3. To **progress monitor** children during the year to determine whether they are making adequate progress and to identify those who may be falling behind.

When assessments are carried out, families should be informed in advance about their purposes and focus. When assessments are for screening purposes, families should be informed promptly about the results, in particular whether they indicate a need for further diagnostic assessment.

The table below outlines details on each type of assessment, including which assessments Louisiana recommends or requires.

TABLE 2B: Types of Assessments

TYPE OF ASSESSMENT	PURPOSE	WHEN	WHO	RECOMMENDED TOOLS	METHOD	MEASURES
Screening Assessment	Identifies potential problems in development; ensures development is on target	Beginning of school year	All children	**Pre-K GOLD®***	Observation	All facets of development
				Kindergarten Entry Assessment* **GOLD®** **DRDP-K** DSC	Observation	All facets of development
				K-3 Literacy Screeners*	Direct	Literacy

NOTE: Screening assessments are REQUIRED by state law or policy. **Click here for a list of K-3 literacy screening options.**

TYPE OF ASSESSMENT	PURPOSE	WHEN	WHO	RECOMMENDED TOOLS	METHOD	MEASURES
Formal Diagnostic Assessment	Diagnoses severity and nature of special needs	After screening	ONLY those children who performed poorly on screener *and* who do not make sufficient progress with additional support.	**Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Third Edition** (KTEA-3) (pre-K through third grade)	Direct	Language/Literacy and Math
				Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) Rating Scales (pre-K through third grade)	Direct	Behaviors such as Empathy, Engagement, and Self-Control, and Disorders such as Hyperactivity/Inattention and Autism

NOTE: Formal diagnostic assessments are designed for diagnosing early learning challenges or special education needs. They should be given only to those children who perform poorly on a screener AND who do not make progress after additional support is provided. They are designed for diagnosing early learning challenges or special education needs. These assessments are typically administered by school or clinical psychologists, special education teachers, educational diagnosticians, reading specialists, counselors, and others within these and related fields. Two recommendations include the KETA-3 and SISS. Use the KETA-3 to identify a child's specific weaknesses in Language, Literacy, and/or Math. Use the SSIS to identify a child's Social-Emotional issues. See Flow Chart below and section on Early and Accurate Identification for additional guidance.

TYPE OF ASSESSMENT	PURPOSE	WHEN	WHO	RECOMMENDED TOOLS	METHOD	MEASURES
Progress Monitoring Assessment	Informs, supports, and monitors learning	Regular intervals	All children	**GOLD®*** (pre-K)	Observation	All facets of development
				EAGLE (K-3)	Direct	Literacy or Math
				Tier 1 Curriculum Assessments (pre-K through third grade)	Observation and Direct	All facets of development (pre-K) OR Literacy or Math (pre-K through third grade)
				Guidebooks (K-3)	Observation and Direct	Literacy
				Formative Instructional Tasks (K-2)	Observation and Direct	Literacy and Math

NOTE: Progress monitoring is REQUIRED in pre-K only. Sites must use *GOLD®*.

Progress monitoring is RECOMMENDED in K-3 to track student progress towards grade-level goals and to target instruction to meet student needs.

In pre-K, Tier 1 curriculum and curriculum-based assessments complement *GOLD®* and actually make it much easier to document evidence in the *GOLD®* reporting system.

For example, a Tier 1 curriculum lesson in which children write their names, or individual letters or a string of letters to represent words in response to a story prompt, can be used as evidence to document whether the child met the *GOLD®* Objective 16a. Likewise, an assessment provided in a Tier 1 curriculum that measures children's recognition of letter sounds can be used as evidence to document whether the child met the *GOLD®* Objective 16b. This eliminates redundancy and creates a much more meaningful and efficient approach to using the *GOLD®* assessment.
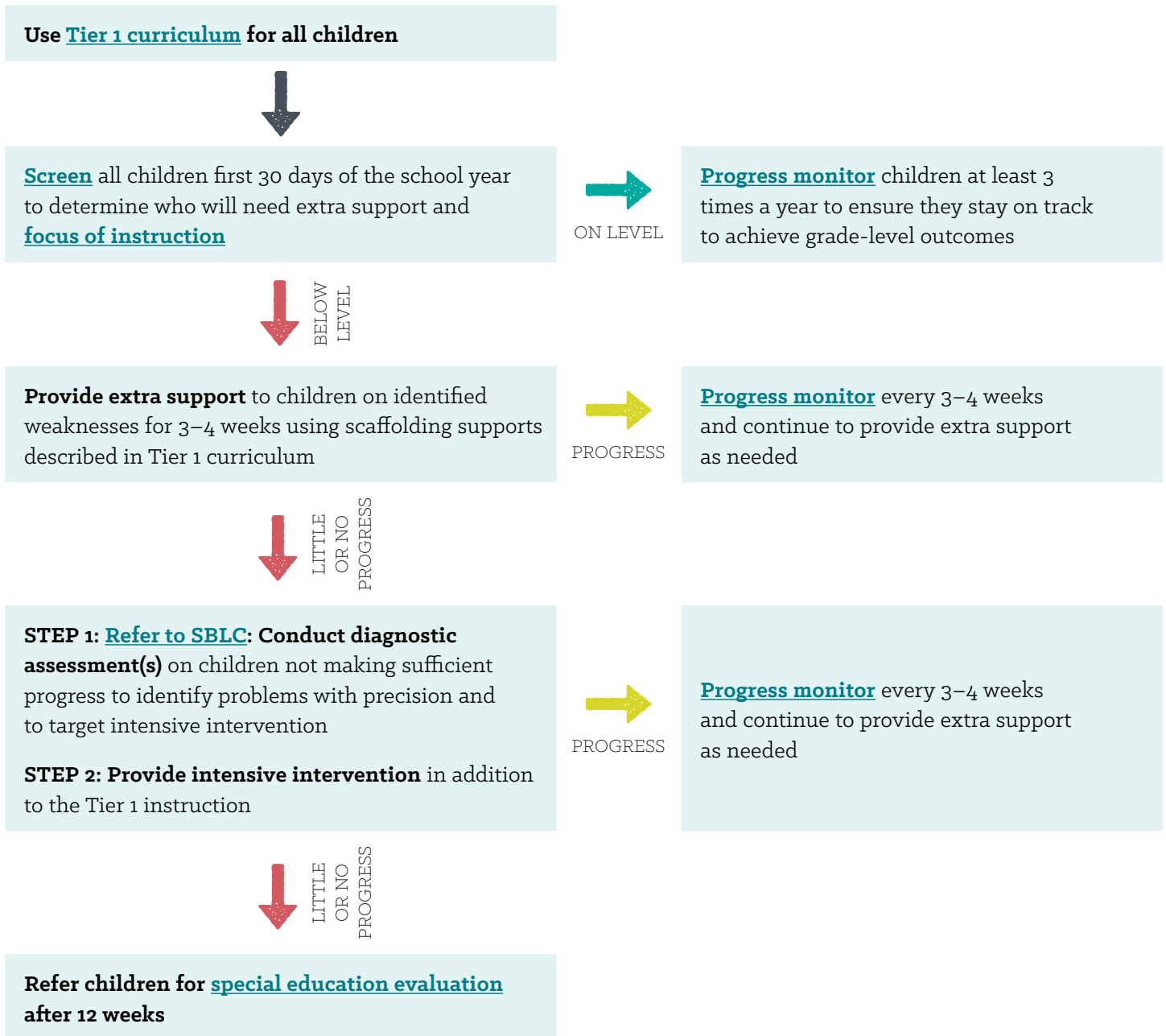
*Required assessments

This **two-page document** lists

• which assessments are required by law and policy;

• which assessments are recommended;

• assessment options for both required and recommended assessments;

• instructions on how to submit data from required assessments; and

• dates when data from required assessments are due.

The following Flow Chart describes a decision making process for providing additional supports and determining eligibility for special education.

The best sites use data from a limited number of standards-aligned assessments to track how well students are meeting the outcomes of high-quality curricula so all children achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond.

Assessment Flow Chart for pre-K through Third Grade

Use **Tier 1 curriculum** for all children

↓

Screen all children first 30 days of the school year to determine who will need extra support and **focus of instruction**

→ ON LEVEL → **Progress monitor** children at least 3 times a year to ensure they stay on track to achieve grade-level outcomes

↓ BELOW LEVEL

Provide extra support to children on identified weaknesses for 3–4 weeks using scaffolding supports described in Tier 1 curriculum

→ PROGRESS → **Progress monitor** every 3–4 weeks and continue to provide extra support as needed

↓ LITTLE OR NO PROGRESS

STEP 1: Refer to SBLC: Conduct diagnostic assessment(s) on children not making sufficient progress to identify problems with precision and to target intensive intervention

STEP 2: Provide intensive intervention in addition to the Tier 1 instruction

→ PROGRESS → **Progress monitor** every 3–4 weeks and continue to provide extra support as needed

↓ LITTLE OR NO PROGRESS

Refer children for special education evaluation after 12 weeks

EARLY AND ACCURATE IDENTIFICATION

Early and accurate identification is critical for student success. The sooner that students are *accurately* identified with a disability, the sooner they receive targeted services and supports.

Developmental issues can emerge early in childhood. However, maturation is a powerful force at this stage. For example, the typical range of knowledge and skills from "just four" to "almost five" is quite substantial.

Eligibility determination for special education, therefore, is not the only or best solution for early learning problems, because for some children, differences and delays in skills and abilities are temporary.

Following the Flow Chart above, one sensible approach for early identification of developmental delays or academic problems is to use screening assessments. A child whose results indicate potential concerns then receives extra support in the problem areas.

For example, if a child's screening results in pre-K or kindergarten indicate problems with phonological awareness skills, the child's teacher would provide extra help in this area using prescribed activities offered in a Tier 1 curriculum.

Continuing to follow the Flow Chart above, if extra support during classroom instruction is unsuccessful in catching the child up, a trained professional then conducts a diagnostic assessment to identify an **intervention program** to address specific needs. The intervention teacher monitors the child's progress bi-weekly to ensure the intervention is working or to make modifications. If the child still does not progress after several weeks or months or a year, depending on age and severity of the problem, special education is considered.

With this approach, children with developmental delays or academic problems receive the additional help they need, and diagnostic assessment is reserved for those children who continue to fall behind. This method also meets the **Child Find** mandate, which requires schools to evaluate all children with disabilities and provide services to meet their unique needs.

To accurately meet children's needs, site and system leaders should ensure diagnostic procedures always include multiple sources of information, with special attention to the family perspective in gathering information and understanding the results. This includes the use of health screenings and other supports for children and families, discussed in detail below under Strategy 5.

TABLE 2C: Self-Assessment, Key Actions, and Resources - Assessment

SELF-ASSESSMENT	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
1. Are there multiple assessments that give the same information? Which ones could be eliminated?	• Conduct an audit of the current assessment system to determine the number and purposes of assessments administered, identify redundancies, and eliminate those that do not meet essential purposes.	**Student Assessment Inventory**
2. Are all teachers trained to use required assessments effectively? How do you know?	• Conduct focus groups or surveys with teachers to gain their perspectives on the level and quality of training they have received.	**Sample Focus Group and Survey Materials**
3. What process does the school/site use to determine if children need special support or services? Could the process be improved?	• Compare current processes with steps and guidance provided above on early and accurate identification to identify gaps and improvements needed.	**BESE Bulletins 1508, 1530, and 1706**
4. How do you engage Child Find staff and special education personnel in the assessment process?	• Assess current methods to locate, identify and evaluate **all children** with disabilities and determine what changes are needed to ensure early and accurate identification.	**BESE Bulletins 1530, 1706 and 1508**
5. How are families included in the assessment process?	• Develop clear strategies to involve parents in the assessment process.	**Family Support Toolbox**

STRATEGY 3: CREATE SHARED CURRICULUM AND CONTENT-SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN PRE-K AND K-3 TEACHERS

Providing shared curriculum and content-specific professional development for teachers may be the most important thing site and system leaders can do to improve student learning. Site and system leaders can serve as a catalysts for pre-K through third grade alignment by creating opportunities for "vertical teams" where teachers regularly engage in joint planning and curriculum and content-specific professional development. These opportunities help teachers

- build a shared understanding of early childhood development and where students need to be by the end of grade 3;

- facilitate more effective transitions between grades and programs;

- establish more developmentally appropriate strategies; and

- broaden their knowledge of student learning across age groups.

According to **research**, shared curriculum and content-specific professional development can have a significant impact on teaching and learning when it:

- aligns with standards-based curricula and assessments;

- focuses on content pedagogy;

- is informed by teacher observation results or student assessment data;

- fosters opportunities for active learning of new teaching strategies;

- provides the chance for teachers to collaborate; and

- includes follow-up and continuous feedback.

Site and system leaders incorporate these principles of professional development when they:

- First and foremost, ensure all professional development is curriculum focused and content specific.

- Create a process for teachers to identify and communicate their professional development needs and set targets for improvement.

- Identify and provide high-quality, continuing education opportunities for staff that include a variety of experiences such as classroom observations, webinars, workshops, mentoring/coaching, individual consultations, technical assistance, visits to other programs, and attendance at conferences.

- Ensure professional development does not provide conflicting advice or information.

- Create opportunities for job-embedded professional development where teachers within and across age/grade levels have frequent opportunities to

  » share resources;

  » plan transition activities;

  » discuss data;

  » reflect on new learnings; and

  » receive coaching over an extended period of time

- Track the impact of professional development and continuously improve their approach to meet the needs of their teachers by using data from observations, assessments, and use of curriculum to inform professional development choices and offerings.

Site and system leaders **should not support** professional development activities that

- only involve one-shot workshops or trainings;

- only occur before or after school hours;

- focus on topics unrelated to using high-quality curriculum and assessment well;

- fail to use data and reflection to improve teaching and learning;

- use random providers; and

- create separate structures for pre-K and K-3 teachers to learn and plan.

The **Professional Development Planning Guide** is a resource to help site and system leaders create a strong plans for shared curriculum and content-specific professional development, which include tapping into **Teacher Leaders** to support their peers.

The **Vendor Professional Development Course Catalog** is a tool to make it easier for site and system leaders to identify vendors who provide shared curriculum and content-specific professional development to

- help teachers use **high-quality curricula**;

- build teachers' content knowledge; and

- provide teachers with the opportunity to practice skills and receive feedback.

The best sites ensure professional development helps teachers use high quality curriculum effectively and provides frequent opportunities for pre-K and K-3 teachers to learn and work together so all children achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond.

TABLE 3: Self-Assessment, Key Actions, and Resources - Professional Development

SELF-ASSESSMENT	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
1. Have you developed a **professional development plan** for the current school year? Does it explicitly state the instructional change it is driving toward with teachers?	• If you have not developed a plan for the current school year, use the Professional Development Planning Guide to develop one.	**Professional Development Planning Guide**
	• If you have developed a plan, evaluate the strength of the plan using the professional development plan checklist.	**Professional Development Plan Checklist**
2. Is the plan designed to help teachers use **high-quality curriculum** and assessment effectively? In what ways?	• Create a prioritized list of content- and curriculum-specific and assessment-specific issues. • Determine how well your plan addresses these issues. • Refine the plan accordingly.	**Professional Development Planning Guide**
3. Are there opportunities for teachers to collaborate within and across age/grade levels? How often?	• List all current opportunities teachers have to collaborate. • Develop strategies to increase collaboration both within and across age/grade levels. • Incorporate these strategies in your professional development plan.	**Professional Development Planning Template**
4. Does the professional development plan leverage existing structures (e.g., teacher planning times, faculty meetings, school-based professional development days)?	• Identify existing structures you can use to deliver professional development. • Use these structures to develop or refine your professional development plan.	**Professional Development Planning Guide**
5. Does the plan leverage local educators (e.g., Teacher Leaders) and **vendors** with proven track records of success? Do providers complement each other and provide a consistent message?	• Identify local expertise and vendors who can help teachers use high-quality curriculum effectively. • Develop or refine your professional development plan to include these experts.	**Vendor Professional Development Course Catalog**

STRATEGY 4: USE TEACHER OBSERVATION SYSTEMS EFFECTIVELY

With **research** highlighting the connection between children's struggles in the early grades and high dropout rates, efforts to elevate the teaching of young children are a high priority. In their formative years, from preschool up through third grade, children need teachers who can engage them with new concepts and content, attend to skills that need further development, and spark their desire to learn.

For this reason observation systems are used to measure the quality of classroom instruction.

In Louisiana, when used well, observation systems across early education programs (Head Start, pre-K, and child care) and up through kindergarten and the early elementary grades create a common language for teachers to talk about their teaching and foster a shared vision of high-quality practice. Teachers in one setting, such as a pre-K classroom, "speak the same language" and share values related to high-quality teaching with teachers in another setting, such as a kindergarten or first-grade classroom.

Observations need to paint a fair and accurate picture of teachers' strengths and development areas in the classroom. Although accurate use of an observation system or tool ultimately matters more than the design, a better design makes it more likely that it will achieve the desired results.

ROBUST TEACHER OBSERVATION SYSTEMS

According to a **national report**, a robust teacher observation system

- covers **classroom performance areas most connected to student outcomes;**
- sets **high performance expectations for teachers;**
- tells observers **exactly what to look for;**
- requires **direct evidence of student engagement and learning; and**
- is **easy to understand and use.**

TABLE 4A: Recommended Observation Systems

TOOL	AGES	KEY STRENGTHS
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (*CLASS®*)	0-8	• Sets high performance expectations for teachers • Tells observers exactly what to look for • Requires direct evidence of student engagement and learning
Compass	4-17	• Covers classroom performance areas most connected to student outcomes • Requires direct evidence of student engagement and learning • Is easy to use and understand
TAP System	4-17	• Covers classroom performance areas most connected to student outcomes • Sets high performance expectations for teachers • Requires direct evidence of student engagement and learning

When site and system leaders use teacher observation systems effectively they

- understand what high-quality teacher-child interactions and instruction look like;
- conduct ongoing observations and provide teachers with frequent feedback;
- ensure teachers are familiar with the observation tool and understand what great teaching looks like;
- ensure all observations are aligned to the same quality indicators so teachers are not receiving conflicting information;
- build a team of reliable observers to ensure accurate data collection;
- use observation findings to drive curriculum changes that will support children's growth;
- create professional development plans based on teachers' needs;
- help teachers improve their practice using methods such as tiered model of supports and coaching; and
- create a common language for talking about what constitutes quality teaching across grades.

In Louisiana, K-2 teachers are required to set student learning targets (SLTs), which count for 50% of their evaluation. These **resources** support leaders and teachers as they work together to identify methods for setting such goals.

CLASS® IN LOUISIANA

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®**)** assesses three broad domains of effective interactions—Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support—that characterize students' classroom experiences in grades pre-K through third grade. Each domain is comprised of multiple dimensions of effective interactions known to contribute to students' success in school, such as Teacher Sensitivity, Behavior Management, and Quality of Feedback.

> The best sites have a system to ensure ongoing accuracy and consistency in all classroom observations and use classroom observation data to help all teachers improve their practice so all children achieve mastery in reading and math in third grade and beyond.

- **CLASS® in pre-K.** In Louisiana, all publicly-funded pre-K classrooms use CLASS®, and **Early Childhood Networks** are responsible for ensuring every classroom receives two CLASS® observations each year for program evaluation. These observations are used to establish a performance rating on the **Early Childhood Network Performance Profile** and **Early Childhood Site Performance Profile** as required by state policy, so they are subject to strict rules, including that observers are certified by CLASS®. Third party CLASS® observers verify local observation results. These additional requirements help ensure a high bar for instruction, and support teachers to understand where they are and how they can improve their interactions.

  Pre-K CLASS® results from all publicly funded early childhood classrooms, including pre-K, Head Start, and child care, during the 2015-2016 academic year show

  » nearly all of pre-K classrooms provide a warm, positive environment with responsive teachers that run the day smoothly with clear expectations and organization; but

  » pre-K classrooms score much lower in the instructional areas.

  Similar to national trends, results indicate that Louisiana children would benefit from more consistent and effective learning activities that encourage analysis and reasoning, with less of a focus on rote recitation (e.g., naming a letter, color or shape). Additionally, more opportunities for back-and-forth dialogue between teachers and children are needed to build critical thinking skills, encourage connections between concepts and ideas and prepare children cognitively for kindergarten.

  Recent research in Louisiana demonstrates why improving instruction is critically important. Researchers from the University of Virginia Education School found that children in pre-K classrooms in Louisiana with higher CLASS® scores actually learned more (as measured through direct literacy and math assessment) than their peers in other classrooms. Ensuring more children enter kindergarten with the skills needed to be successful in K-3 thus hinges on improving instruction in pre-K.

- **CLASS® in K-2.** Louisiana has been examining metrics of school quality that support best practices and drive improvement in the early elementary years and contribute to overall school quality, such as the use of CLASS® in K-2. During the 2016-17 school year, Louisiana piloted CLASS® in 120 K-2 classrooms in five school districts located in different regions in the state. All observers participated in a two-day training to become CLASS® reliable before using the instrument on their teachers. Additionally, all teachers participated in a one-day training to learn about the CLASS® framework and the types of teacher-child interactions that support learning.

  Each K-2 teacher was observed once in the fall and once in the spring using the CLASS® tool. Preliminary results from all K-2 pilot classrooms during the 2016-2017 academic year show

  » High levels of emotional support are associated with growth in reading and math achievement at the kindergarten level;

  » Kindergarten children are more engaged and exhibit greater self-control in classrooms offering more effective teacher-child interactions; and

  » Kindergarten children at risk for school failure perform on par with peers, both socially and academically, when exposed to classrooms with effective teacher-student interactions.

The pilot has been extended for the 2017-2018 school year to specifically explore the benefits of using CLASS® in Kindergarten classrooms. The pilot includes 185 teachers in 28 school districts.

TABLE 4B: Self-Assessment, Key Actions, and Resources - Teacher Observation Systems

SELF-ASSESSMENT	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
1. How do you create a common language for talking about what constitutes quality teaching across grades, especially if you use different observation systems at different age levels to observe teachers?	• Examine quality indicators on the observation tool(s) used at the school/site to identify key concepts and establish a common language on instructional practice for teachers.	**Examining a Teacher Observation Tool**
2. How often do you conduct classroom observations and provide feedback to teachers?	• Conduct multiple observations and feedback sessions, varying the number based on teacher performance (effective vs. ineffective).	**Ensuring Accurate Feedback from Observations**
3. How do you ensure ongoing accuracy and consistency in classroom observations?	• Examine ways to strengthen current processes for ensuring accuracy and reliability of observations, including group calibration events and paired observations.	**Ensuring Accurate Feedback from Observations** **How to Use Classroom Observations Most Effectively**
4. How does the observation system support student learning?	• Identify and prioritize performance areas on the observation tool(s) that have the greatest impact on student learning.	**Examining a Teacher Observation Tool**
5. Do you use observation results to drive decisions about curriculum? In what ways?	• Use observation results to determine which elements of the curriculum teachers are having trouble implementing successfully and/or consistently.	**Professional Development Planning Guide**
	• Create an intentional sequence of professional development based on identified needs.	**Annotated Reviews**
6. How do you use observation results to provide teachers with individualized support to improve their practices?	• Determine how to best support each teacher throughout the year.	**Principal Guidebook** **Using Classroom Observations to Support Teachers**

STRATEGY 5: PROVIDE POSITIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT

There are multiple forms of positive behavior support that reinforce positive learning. **Research** cites the importance of creating clear behavioral expectations and using effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior. This includes clarity of rules that govern relationships with others, time, space and materials.

Classroom rules should be condensed down to a small number, so that students can remember them. In pre-K through third grade environments, clear classroom rules are

1. consistent with school rules;
2. developmentally appropriate;
3. doable so children can follow them;
4. easily monitored;
5. applicable and consistent across situations;
6. framed positively; and
7. stated behaviorally, beginning with a verb.

TABLE 5A: Classroom Rules

TRADITIONAL RULES	MORE EFFECTIVE RULES
Don't run.	Walk in the hallways.
Respect authority.	Follow directions.
Think before responding.	Ask questions.
Don't interrupt.	Work quietly.
Keep your things to yourself.	Share materials.

Consequences often follow student behavior, and serve to either increase or decrease student behavior. Building on the **philosophy** of positive behavior support, effective consequences preserve the children's dignity and increase their motivation and work best when they are

- clear and specific;
- directly related to rules and procedures;
- arranged in a hierarchy; and
- natural and logical.

It's important to have a continuum of positive consequences, ranging from frequent (e.g., verbal praise, smile, stickers) to longer term (e.g., extra free time, student of the week), to encourage and maintain appropriate behavior.

These strategies have demonstrated associations with student learning. For example, **research** supporting pre-K-3 *CLASS*® found that classrooms with positive strategies for preventing and redirecting behavior tend to have students who make greater academic progress. Taken together, clear behavioral expectations and attention to the positive set the stage for learning in pre-K-3 classrooms.

HEALTH SCREENINGS AND SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Research shows that the availability of proper health screenings for young children to identify progress in meeting **developmental milestones** could have implications beyond their physical health. This includes their ability to cope with challenges, feel less frustrated or overwhelmed in the classroom, and communicate with peers and educators more effectively.

Site and system leaders ensure processes are in place to detect and manage conditions that could impede a child's growth and development. For example, they should ensure

- public preschool children receive vision and hearing screenings as required by **state program assurances**; and
- children entering kindergarten for the first time and first graders receive vision and hearing screenings as required by **legislation**.

Proper screenings help children develop more successful long-term learning strategies than children whose health needs may be left unaddressed.

The **Developmental Screenings Guidebook** is a resource for leaders, teachers, and families with information, resources, and support services related to healthy development for children up through age 5, including a table that outlines various types of screenings and the periods in a young child's life when they typically occur. Also included is information on how to talk with families about a child's developmental progress and recommendations when there are concerns about a child's development. **Resources for middle childhood (ages 6-8), including developmental milestones and positive parenting tips, can be found here**.

Site and system leaders should also provide families with information on how to access

- **Mental Health Services**, including counseling for trauma, family disruptions, and behavior challenges;
- Guidance for the state's Medicaid program (**Healthy Louisiana**) and resources regarding **eligibility and coverage options** and the **application process** (since most children in Louisiana are eligible for coverage);
- **Parenting Classes**; and
- Public Health Resources, including the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition (**WIC**) Program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (**SNAP**).

In addition, Child Find staff from school districts serve as a resource by following Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guidelines to identify, locate, and evaluate all pre-K through third grade children with disabilities or suspected of having a disability. Families can also request that a child be evaluated if they suspect a disability.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

There is considerable evidence showing that parental involvement in a child's education is a driving factor for student success, regardless of ethnicity, economic background, or grade level. **Studies** show that the positive effects of parental involvement increase when involvement starts early in a child's education and engages parents in working directly with their children at home.

For example, parent participation in **transition activities** prior to the new school year is strongly associated with children's self-confidence, liking of school, and overall happiness in school.

Furthermore, when the transition to kindergarten includes opportunities for children and their families to learn about the new setting, build relationships, and experience continuity in curriculum, assessments, and relationship quality across their changing settings, children show

- greater school readiness;
- reduced stress at the beginning of school; and
- stronger academic growth during the kindergarten year and beyond.

Site and system leaders take an integrated approach to engaging parents as equal partners by

1. Developing a welcoming environment on campus
   - » offering an inviting space where families can gather to connect with school and community resources;
   - » recognizing the role culture plays in interactions with families; and
   - » designing programs that meet the wide-ranging needs and interests of parent.
2. Increasing families' in-school participation
   - » providing ongoing opportunities for them to engage in school activities at their own pace and on their own terms; and
   - » engaging them in the decision-making processes (for their child and for the school).
3. Increasing families' at-home participation
   - » equipping parents with the knowledge and skills they need to understand what their child is learning during the school day by providing guidance on how they can **help with homework**, offering **tips** on how they can reinforce learning at home in fun ways, and sharing free online **tutoring resources**; and
   - » establishing effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication channels.

> The best sites implement positive behavior supports in all classrooms and create structures that engage all families in their child's education so all children achieve mastery in reading and math in Third Grade and beyond.

TABLE 5B: Self-Assessment, Key Actions, and Resources - Support Systems

SELF-ASSESSMENT	KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
1. Do pre-K through Third Grade teachers use positive strategies to manage student behavior? What are some specific examples?	• Use observation results to determine which elements related to behavioral management teachers are having trouble using.	**Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)** **PBIS Blueprint, Briefs, Tools**
2. Are pre-K through Third Grade teachers familiar with the Developmental Screenings Guidebook and other resources described in this section? How do they use the guide and resources to support children and families?	• Ensure teachers are familiar with and use resources to support children and families.	**Developmental Screenings Guidebook** **Child Development Resources** **Parenting Classes**
3. Does the school/site have a dedicated family center where parents can spend time together and learn about community supports?	• If one does not already exist, create a family center with parent-friendly resources.	**Family Support Toolbox Library**
4. What opportunities does the school/site offer to engage families in unique ways?	• Develop new and creative ways to engage families	**Family Support Toolbox Library** **Six Types of Parent Involvement**
5. What strategies do you use to smooth transitions for all children and their families?	• Develop strategies to use at school, with families, and in the community to help ease the transition into kindergarten and the early grades.	**Strategies to Support Smooth Transitions**
6. What are some specific strategies the school/site uses to connect to and involve hard-to-reach parents?	• Develop practical strategies to involve hard-to-reach parents.	**Communication Tips**