



November 9, 2015

State Board of Education Members:

***The ECLC sees kindergarten school readiness assessments as an important practice for the early childhood system.***

Early childhood is an extremely important period of human development, which substantially contributes to setting the foundation for future success in life. It is a time of immense cognitive and social-emotional growth, and is often considered to have some of the best returns on investments.

In the absence of readiness data, state agencies are often limited to either programmatic outputs (i.e., counting services provided) or to establishing other, and separate, school readiness outcome measures. Child-level assessment data have the potential to provide state agencies with an essential tool to ensure that they are responsible stewards of public dollars. Agencies may also determine whether their services improve the lives of the children and families they serve to the greatest extent possible. It is for these reasons, that the ECLC strongly supports the continued use of kindergarten school readiness assessments.

***The ECLC believes that assessments focusing on whole child development are important.***

Over the course of early childhood, a child must progress through developmental milestones in order to build a foundation for future success. Certain behavior, knowledge, and skills must be in place for a child to reach academic success.

Children start school with varying experiences and skills. Achievement gaps among children of limited opportunities are present on the first day of kindergarten but may not be accurately assessed until well after a child is in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Having appropriate assessment tools and data available early helps teachers to understand the behavior, knowledge and skills of each child. Armed with this information, they can better support a young child's learning and development starting in kindergarten.

The interconnected relationship of the academic and developmental domains is important to take into consideration. Each of the board-approved school readiness assessment tools measure the statutorily required domains of school readiness: physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension development, and cognitions and general knowledge. This allows teacher to meet each student where they are and to address challenges while setting realistic goals for each student.

***The ECLC believes at kindergarten readiness assessments offer an important glimpse into a child's education for parents.***

The board-approved assessment tools allow teachers to share concrete information with parents. Information may include reports, notes, photographs and videos. Teachers may use the results from the assessments to guide and plan during parent-teacher conferences. Together parents and teachers can develop a plan to address the child's behavior, skills and knowledge.

***The ECLC believes that data privacy and security are being addressed with current assessment options.***

The ECLC agrees that keeping individual student data confidential is critically important. All of the board-approved assessment tools have privacy and security policies that describe the protection of personally identifiable information. Each company includes language related to how they abide by federal law (specifically FERPA), industry standards, and best practices for data storage and privacy. Their policies also explain processes for the retention and deletion of personal information.

At the school level, parents may ask that their child not be videotaped or photographed as part of school readiness assessments.

***The ECLC is concerned about school readiness assessment waivers.***

While the ECLC understands the challenges of the current system, we are concerned with the kindergarten school readiness assessment waiver process. The board-approved assessment tools have been vetted and are in compliance with state statute. They are research-based, reliable and predictive. After reviewing numerous replacement plans that have been submitted and approved, we are concerned with the significant variability in the commitment to ensuring children are assessed in all required domains using valid and reliable tools. This variability will lead to inconsistency in data collection and tracking, perhaps jeopardizing meeting the statutory requirement to provide aggregate readiness data to CDE.

The ECLC recommends that when the Board does approve waivers for these assessments that they focus on the quality of the replacement plans to assure that all statutory requirements are being met.

Sincerely,



Anna Jo Haynes



Barbara B. Grogan