Screening in Preschool-3rd Grade Classrooms: **A Joint Position Statement of the Massachusetts Departments of**

**Early Education and Care, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Higher Education**

Early childhood screening, a quick way to identify children who may benefit from more in-depth assessment, is a critical component of a comprehensive assessment system. Screening’s primary purpose should be for determining when referral for further evaluation is warranted, though the results may also be used as a baseline to assess children’s developmental progress over time. As research continues to emphasize the interrelatedness and importance of each domain of development,[[1]](#footnote-1) the most effective screening processes include screening a range of skills across all major domains of development: cognitive, language, social-emotional/behavioral, physical (gross and fine motor), comprehensive health (including perceptual motor, vision, hearing, and medical history), general knowledge and approaches to learning. While some tools are designed to assess across multiple domains of development, the need to screen across many domains may require the use of multiple tools and sources of information, and should always include family input. The use of screening tools ideally helps by informing initial planning and information-sharing with families.

Developmental screening is distinct from universal screening, a component of Response to Intervention (RTI). Universal screening tools are targeted to particular skills or behaviors in academic and social areas (e.g., DIBELs for reading, Number Sense Screener for math, or the Preschool Self Regulation Assessment: *see Note below*) and administered using a specific RTI timeline. Developmental screening (e.g., use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ): *see Note below*) is not intended nor should it ever be used as the basis for disability diagnosis or labeling, high-stakes accountability or evaluation of children or educators. In addition, it is not appropriate to use screening results “to create barriers to school entry [to retain in a grade level, or delay school entry], or to sort children into what are perceived to be homogeneous groups”.[[2]](#footnote-2) Assessment should clearly link with benefits to children in terms of improved program quality; screening should identify needs either for further evaluation or direct services, or it should not be conducted.

When selecting screening tools, districts and programs should consider many factors including standards for reliability and validity; professional development required for effective use; scope of the domains assessed; strategies for supporting family involvement; appropriateness of the tool to the development and experience of the child; sensitivity to the culture and language of the child and/or family; and appropriate use of screening data to determine referral or further evaluation..

At the early childhood level, coordination of screening activities between public schools, health, mental health, family support and early education and care programs is essential.  This coordination is necessary to ensure that the child is not screened too often and that the needs of the child and family are effectively being met.

*NOTE: Reference to specific screening tools does not reflect a joint mandate or recommendation by the Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Early Education and Care, and Higher Education; they are simply offered as examples to explain the distinction between developmental screening and universal screening.*

# Research Reviews: References for Screening in Different Domains

**Comprehensive Developmental Screening (Multiple Domains: including physical/motor, cognition, language, and social-emotional development)**

Moodie, S., Daneri, P., Goldhagen, S., Halle, T., Green, K., & LaMonte, L. (2014). *Early childhood developmental screening: A compendium of measures for children ages birth to five* (OPRE Report 2014­ 11). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Online: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/early-childhood-developmental-screening-a-compendium-of-measures-for-children-ages-birth-to-five>

Halle, T., Zaslow, M., Wessel, J., Moodie, S., and Darling-Churchill, K. (2011). *Understanding and Choosing Assessments and Developmental Screeners for Young Children: Profiles of Selected Measures*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Online: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/screeners_final.pdf>

*Developmental Screening in Early Childhood: A Guide*. S. J. Meisels & S. Atkins-Burnett. (2005). Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Ohio Department of Education, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness*. Catalog of Screening and Assessment Instruments for Young Children Birth Through Age 5.* 2010, 2nd Edition. Online: <http://www.esc-cc.org/Downloads/Catalog_Screen_assessment2.pdf>

Ringwalt, S. (2008). *Developmental screening and assessment instruments with an emphasis on social and emotional development for young children ages birth through five*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. Online: <http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf>

**Math: Universal screeners**

Gersten, Clarke, Jordan, Hewman-Gonchar, Haymond & Wilkins. “Universal Screening in Mathematics for the Primary Grades: Beginnings of a Research Base*”. Exceptional Children*, 78(4), 2012: 423-445. Online: <http://ecx.sagepub.com/content/78/4/423.full.pdf>

**Reading: Universal screeners**

Jenkins, Joseph & Evelyn Johnson. “Universal Screening for Reading Problems: When and How Should We Do This?”1999-2016.RTI Action Network: National Center on Learning Disabilities. Online: <http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/assessment/screening/readingproblems>

**English Language proficiency screening**

See pages 8-11 of [Guidance on Identification, Assessment, Placement, and Reclassification of English Language Learners](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance_laws.html), (August 2016), the top document on the ESE webpage for English Language Learners: Guidance and Laws. This document provides a detailed description of the required screeners to be used with MA pre-k and kindergarten students to determine English language proficiency (Note: the purpose of these screeners is not to determine language development overall, which may differ between the child’s home language and English). A table describing the approved screeners, with characteristics, training requirements, and contact information/publishers for each tool, is also provided in Appendix Q of this document (pages 101-102).

**Language development for dual language learners**

Please note: A number of authorities agree there is a need for more research and development to reliably screen language development in young ELLs. As Espinosa and Garcia 2012, see below) report, there are many reasons that “the use of culturally and linguistically appropriate screening tools and procedures is a challenge when conducting screenings with young DLLs…”. Currently no comprehensive review of recommended tools to screen DLLs was found. When seeking linguistically and culturally appropriate assessment practices for screening the language development of young dual language learners, the following resources are recommended:

Bandel, E., Atkins-Burnett, S., Castro, D. C., Wulsin, C. S., & Putman, M. (July 2012). Examining the use of language and literacy assessments with young dual language learners. Research report #1. Center for Early Care and Education Research-Dual Language Learners (CECER-DLL). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.

CLAS Early Childhood Research Institute. *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Review Guidelines for Material Selection: Child Assessment*. 2001. Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Online: <http://clas.uiuc.edu/review/ChildAssessment.pdf>

Espinosa, L.M., & Garcia, E. (November 2012). *Developmental Assessment of young dual language learners with a focus on Kindergarten entry assessment: Implications for state policies*. Working paper #1. Center for Early Care and Education Research- Dual language learners (CECER-DLL). Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Children Development Institute.

Bandel, E., Atkins-Burnett, S., Castro, D. C., Wulsin, C. S., & Putman, M. (July 2012). *Examining the use of language and literacy assessments with young dual language learners.* Research report #1. Center for Early Care and Education Research-Dual Language Learners (CECER-DLL). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. Online: http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/reports-and-policy-briefs/FPG\_CECER-DLL\_AssessingDLLs.pdf

**Social emotional development**

Kendziora, Kimberley, Roger Weissberg, Peter Ji, & Linda Dusenbury. “*Strategies for Social and Emotional Learning: Preschool and Elementary Grade Student Learning Standards and Assessment*”.  2011. Newton, MA: National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, Education Development Center, Inc. On CASEL website: <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/513f79f9e4b05ce7b70e9673/t/53063624e4b0c6a4f3335f56/1392916004591/stategies-assessment-SEL-EDC.pdf>

Denham, Suzanne, Peter Ji, & Bridget Hamre. [*Compendium of preschool through elementary school social‐emotional learning and associated assessment measures*.](http://www.casel.org/s/compendium-of-preschool-through-elementary-school-social-emotional-learning-and-associated-assessmen.pdf) 2010. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and Social and Emotional Learning Research Group, University of Illinois at Chicago. Online: <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/513f79f9e4b05ce7b70e9673/t/527815bbe4b057bbfd8adb2e/1383601595064/compendium-of-preschool-through-elementary-school-social-emotional-learning-and-associated-assessment-measures.pdf>

*Chart of MassHealth Approved Standardized Behavioral Health Screening Tools for Children Under the Age of 21*: http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/cbhi/screening-for-behavioral-health-conditions/behavioral-health-screening-tools/chart-of-masshealth-approved-screening-tools.html

**Approaches to Learning**

Barbu, Otilia C., Yaden Jr., David B., Levine-Donnerstein, Deborah, & Marx, Ronald W. ”Assessing Approaches to Learning in School Readiness: Comparing the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment to an Early Learning Standards-Based Measure”. *AERA Open* July-September 2015, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 1–15 Online; <http://ero.sagepub.com/content/1/3/2332858415593923>

**Approaches to learning** measures are also specifically reviewed in the following:

D. Berry, L. Bridges, & M. Zaslow (2004). *Early Childhood Measures Profiles*. Child Trends. Online: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/ECMeasures04/report.pdf>.

**Health: (including vision, hearing, medical history/physical health, and perceptual-motor development)**

**Vision screening**

Massachusetts Health and Human Services: *Preschool Vision Screening Protocol*. Online;

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/school/preschool-vision-protocols.pdf>

**Hearing screening and Medical History** are included in the required School Health Record/Physical Examination form

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/community-health/primarycare-healthaccess/school-health/school-health-screening.html>

See also:

Early childhood Hearing Outreach (ECHO) Initiative. *Screening Children 3 – 5 Years of Age for Permanent Hearing Loss: Factors to Consider with Pure Tone and Otoacoustic Emissions Screening Methods.* 2016. National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM). Utah State University, Logan, UT.

Online: <http://www.infanthearing.org/earlychildhood/docs/pt-oae-screening-considerations.pdf>

**Perceptual-motor development screening is included many multi-domain screeners; reviews of these include:**

Ringwalt, S. (2008). *Developmental screening and assessment instruments with an emphasis on social and emotional development for young children ages birth through five*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. Online: <http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf>

Other resources for motor developmental screening:

American Academy of Pediatrics. *Physical Developmental Delays: What to Look For*. An online screening tool for parents and others, developed by the cooperative agreement number 5 U38 OT000183, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the American Academy of Pediatrics and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services. Online: <http://motordelay.aap.org/>

1. NAEYC. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Birth through Age Eight*. (Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2009). Position statement adopted 2009, [www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDAP.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDAP.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. NAECS/SDE. *STILL Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement A position statement developed by the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education* (Dover, Delaware: NAECS/SDE, 2000 Revision and Update). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)