

Results Matter: Early Childhood Formative Assessment

Results Matter is a national model of high quality early childhood assessment developed by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to foster the use of developmentally appropriate assessment in early childhood education. Results Matter informs instruction for children, is used by administrators of early childhood programs for quality improvement and enables state and federal accountability reporting.

Users

Teachers

Results Matter provides training and support so teachers can develop individualized plans and adjust their teaching to support positive outcomes for students.

Administrators

Administrators use assessment information to understand how students are faring and to plan program quality improvement activities such as professional development opportunities for teachers.

Other

CDE uses statewide summaries of assessment information to inform the Colorado General Assembly about the effects of the Colorado Preschool Program and to meet outcomes reporting requirements of the Office of Special Education Program at the U.S. Department of Education.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why assess young students?

Traditional assessment methods such as the paper and pencil tests administered to older students are not appropriate for young children and do not provide an accurate picture of a young child's strengths and abilities. Best practice in early childhood assessment calls for methods that take into consideration the unique characteristics of very young children. High quality early childhood assessment:

- Takes place in the child's everyday routines, activities and places;
- Considers a child's learning and development over time rather than a single point in time;
- Includes observations and work samples that are gathered over time to inform instructional decisions for teachers and families;
- Focuses on children's strengths, on what they know and can do, rather than things they are not yet able to do; and
- Allows input from a variety of sources including teachers, families and other caregivers.

Reports on Preschool Program Outcomes

Colorado Preschool Program

The Colorado Preschool Program is required to annually report preschool results to the Colorado General Assembly. Examples can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1VDkGrr>. This information helps assure the Legislature that public school finance funds are helping children with certain risk factors in their lives stay on track for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Preschool Special Education

Under the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), school districts are required to provide a preschool program for young children with disabilities. States are mandated to provide a free and appropriate public education within the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities ages three-21.

In addition to serving students with disabilities, IDEA rules and regulations require states to collect valid and reliable information as needed to demonstrate the growth children with disabilities are making.

The Results Matter program is used by CDE for this purpose. CDE must report child outcomes data to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs for preschool children who receive special education services each year. This report is part of the Annual Performance Report process. Examples can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1JQce1g>.

What assessments are used in Results Matter?

Currently, the *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® assessment system is used in Results Matter. Other assessments are reviewed periodically. Even when other assessments have been available in Colorado, participating programs choose to use *Teaching Strategies GOLD*®. For more information about the TS GOLD assessment tool, please visit: <http://teachingstrategies.com>.

What does this assessment tell a teacher or parent?

Results Matter assessments measure a child's development and progress in language, cognition, social-emotional and physical development and in literacy, math, science, social studies and the arts.

What types of things are measured in the assessments?

- *Language* pertains to the child's ability to listen and understand, to express his/her thoughts and needs and to engage in appropriate conversations.
- *Social-emotional* includes the child's ability to follow limits, make friends and take care of his or her own needs – all of which are important skills that contribute to the ability to participate effectively in a kindergarten classroom.
- Being able to persist with learning tasks, solve problems, use symbols and organize information are important *cognitive* skills that set the stage for later academic learning.
- And, *physical* looks at a child's ability to use small and large muscles in order to engage in learning activities and to meet his/her own needs.

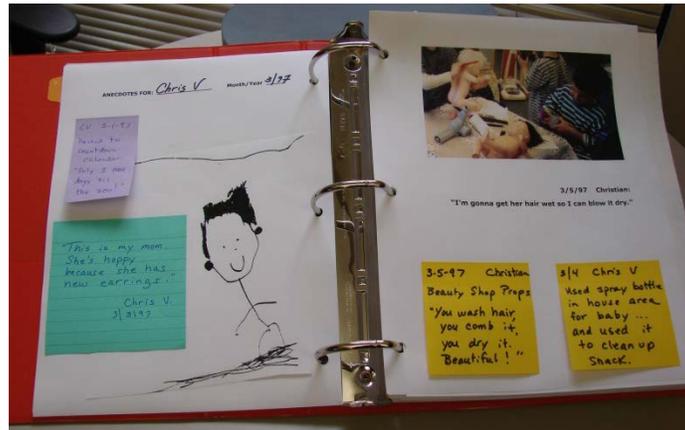
Why is it important to measure developmental progress in young children?

Academic success is only possible when crucial developmental foundations are firmly in place. For example, it is not possible to make good progress in reading and writing unless a child's oral language skills as well as his/her ability to understand spoken language are developing at an age appropriate rate.

How does early childhood assessment work?

Teachers assess developmental progress by making observations and collecting work samples in student portfolios. Teachers use this information to guide instruction and share with families.

For decades, early childhood teachers have identified creative ways to organize the observations, work samples and other forms of documentation they gather to show evidence of the progress young children make. It was common to see stacks of boxes labeled with children's names on the windowsills or rows of ring binders on a classroom bookshelf that contained documentation of each child's learning and development.



Now, teachers use secure electronic portfolios for these collections. Access to these portfolios is provided only for authorized individuals who have been provided a unique username and password. In addition to added security, these electronic portfolios allow teachers to give parents a username and password so that they may view items in their own child's portfolio at any time and add to the portfolio if they choose.

How are portfolios used?

Portfolios allow teachers and families to reflect on the progress children make. Evidence collected allows teachers to make informed decisions about how to plan effective instruction and support for children. The portfolios also allow the child to view the work, discuss progress and participate in goal setting for what they want to work on next.

Is portfolio development the only component of early childhood assessment?

Result Matter, teachers continuously review and reflect on evidence collected within a child's portfolio and use this information to complete assessment checklists three times per year. These checklists provide a progression of knowledge and skills based on age expectations for the child and include examples to help teachers reflect on each child.

When reviewing these results with families, teachers illustrate the progress a child has made and plan next steps so that families and teachers can work together to support continued learning and development. By studying classroom trends, teachers can make sound decisions about how to improve their curriculum, instructional environment and day-to-day teaching practice.

How is assessment information used?

The primary uses of assessment information are to guide instructional planning and communicate with families. Ongoing assessment allows teachers to develop a deeper understanding of the child in their care so that they can provide more responsive and individualized support.

Administrators help teachers look at classroom-level trends from semester to semester and year to year to help improve instruction. Administrators also use building-wide or program-wide trends to help make decisions about how to allocate resources such as professional development funds.

CDE uses statewide summaries of assessment results to inform taxpayers, the General Assembly and other funders about the short-term and long-range effectiveness of Colorado's early childhood programs. These summary reports include statewide information, never individual student information.

**Where is assessment information stored? Is it secure and private?**

Teaching Strategies GOLD® has a secure online system that creates efficiencies for teachers and provides new ways for families to engage in their child's education. The online system is accessible only by authorized individuals with a unique username and password provided by an administrator. Information entered into the online system is stored in a state-of-the-art server that uses industry-standard security tools. For more information about assessment system security, visit:

Teaching Strategies GOLD® Security & Privacy Policies:

(Customer Records) <http://teachingstrategies.com/support/privacy-policy/>

(Child Portfolios) <https://gold.teachingstrategies.com/Gold/admin/privacyPolicy.cfm> Note: Must be logged in to GOLD online to view

What other information can be stored in the secure online system?

Districts using *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® decide what data to collect and store and who is authorized to use and/or view it. CDE does not require local programs to utilize photos or videos.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® has online functionality that creates efficiencies for teachers within a secure environment. Users decide what functionality they want to use in the system. *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® has the functionality to maintain basic demographic information on students, assessment ratings, work samples and teacher/parent communication. The online assessment system does NOT contain a child's phone number, physical address, or social security number. Any confidential information that is collected about a child is not used for marketing purposes by assessment vendors. Assessment vendors are prohibited from using child information for marketing purposes.

Who has access to the online assessment system?

Authorized individuals with a unique username and password can access the system. The local assessment license holder, usually a school district, BOCES, Head Start or child care agency, makes decisions about who is provided access and at what level. Teachers can only view children in their classroom, site administrators can only view data in classrooms within their site and program/district administrators can only view data in sites within their program.

What policies has CDE put into place to protect the privacy of children and families?

Results Matter data security policies align with CDE's data privacy and security policies. For instance:

- Experts on data privacy from the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems and the Privacy Technical Assistance Center have reviewed Results Matter program assurances so that they fully comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and nationally recognized data privacy and security standards.
- All CDE Office of Early Learning and School Readiness staff members are required to complete annual data security training and two levels of training on FERPA.
- All early childhood staff must read and sign a detailed data privacy and security agreement outlining required safeguards, rules and procedures.