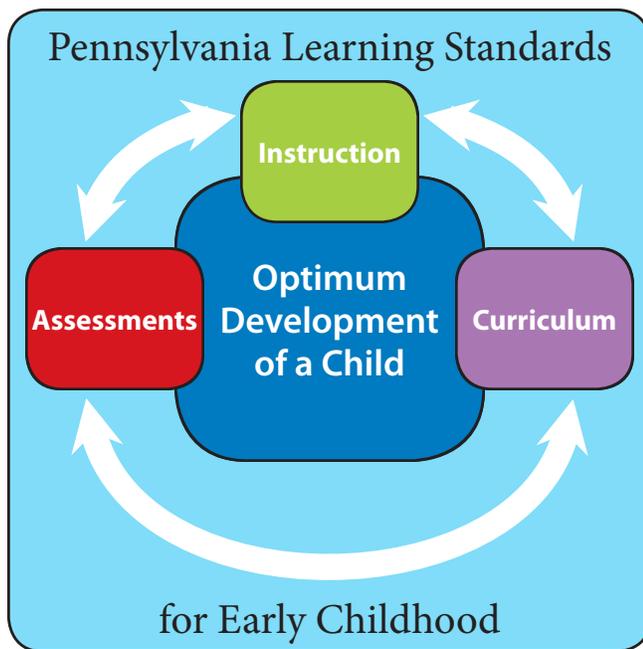


BASICS

BASICS ON ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, INFORMS AND CULTIVATES SUCCESS

BASICS ONE

Children are born with an incredible capacity and desire to learn. More than 40 years of research confirms the foundational importance of early education and care for children's school and life success. It is essential that children's first experiences are robust ones, steeped in activities that develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, a deep understanding about themselves in a social society, and age-appropriate content.



HOW • Assess individual and small groups of children, instructional practices, and the experiences provided by educators, administrators, and programs to determine how children are learning and/or making progress in skill development.

ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • A systematic process to measure or evaluate the characteristics or performance of individuals, programs, or other entities for purposes of drawing inferences.

WHY • Information gathered informs the design of the learning environments which will help a child grow to his or her optimum developmental potential, whether this is from birth to age eight or third grade. Learning environments: classrooms, curriculum, educators, and programs.

PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENTS

Support learning and instruction	Identify children who need additional services
Program and educator evaluations and to monitor trends	High-stakes accountability

CURRICULUM

WHAT • Curriculum is content or information that is going to be taught (daily-weekly) and methods that are used to teach that content. This content is built on learning standards and based on scientific research and reflects age, culture, and linguistically-appropriate skills and developmental stages of the children in the program.

HOW • Create or use a curriculum that is aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood, the program goals, and requirements or standards. Curriculum decisions come from three sources: children within the program, families, and the educators or adults with whom they interact.

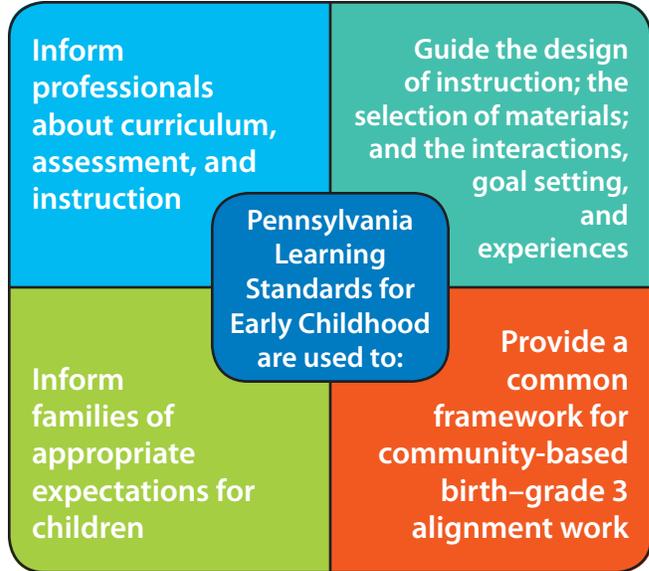
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PENNSYLVANIA LEARNING STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

WHAT • Learning standards provide the framework for learning and the foundational information for what children should know and be able to do. Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood build on information children learned previously, creating a continuum of learning that assures consistent and linked learning that begins in infancy, increasing in complexity as it extends through graduation.

HOW • Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood are research-based according to age and development, and form the foundation for curriculum, assessment, instruction, and intervention within early care and education programs.



KEY LEARNING AREAS



APPROACHES TO LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Constructing, Organizing and Applying Knowledge



LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

English Language Arts



MATHEMATICAL THINKING AND EXPRESSION

Exploring, Processing, and Problem Solving



SCIENTIFIC THINKING

Exploring, Inquiry, and Discovery



SOCIAL STUDIES THINKING

Connecting to Communities



CREATIVE THINKING AND EXPRESSION

Communicating through the Arts



HEALTH, WELLNESS AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Learning About My Body



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Student Interpersonal Skills



PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING

Families, Learning Environments, and Communities

WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE OPTIMUM CHILD DEVELOPMENT

“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.” Sydney Harris

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INFORMATION FOR EDUCATORS

Professionals interacting with young children have the critical task of providing rich information and experiences. Such experiences build skills and understanding in the context of everyday routines and within intentionally-designed play opportunities that capture children's interests and curiosity.

SEVEN ASSESSMENT SKILLS EDUCATORS NEED

Adapted from SERVE Center, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2004



1

DEFINE LEARNING GOALS

Define learning goals ahead of time. Learning goals are the basis of developing or choosing ways to assess children's learning and the effectiveness of instruction.

2

USE VARIETY OF ASSESSMENT TYPES

Use a variety of ongoing assessment types to gather different levels of evidence of children's learning

3

ANALYZE THE DATA AND ACT ON IT

How to analyze achievement data (both quantitative and qualitative) and make good inferences (e.g., decisions and plans) from the data gathered

4

PROVIDE FEEDBACK

How to provide appropriate feedback to children (and families)

5

ADAPT YOUR INSTRUCTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

How to make appropriate instructional modifications and decisions to help children improve

6

ENGAGE AND CAPTIVATE CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT

How to involve children in the assessment process (e.g., self and peer assessment) and effectively communicate results

7

ENHANCE OPTIMUM LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

And, most important, how to engineer an effective classroom assessment environment that boosts children's motivation to learn

BASICS

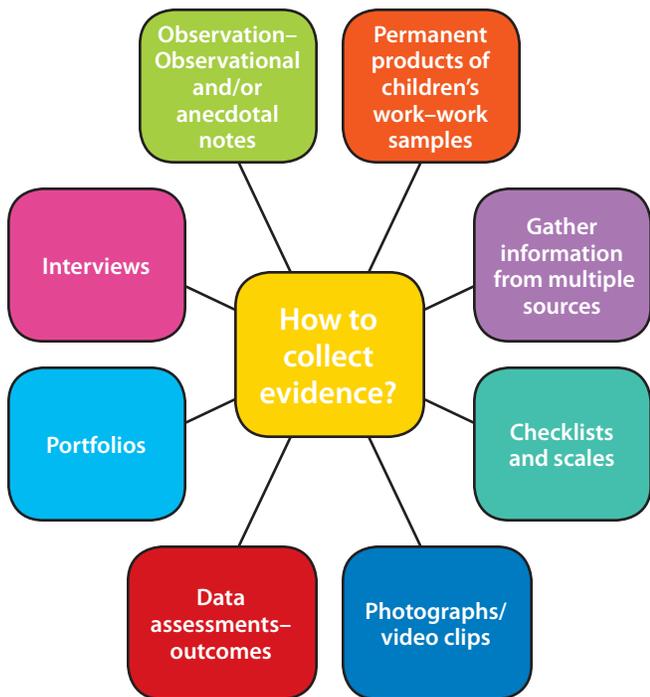
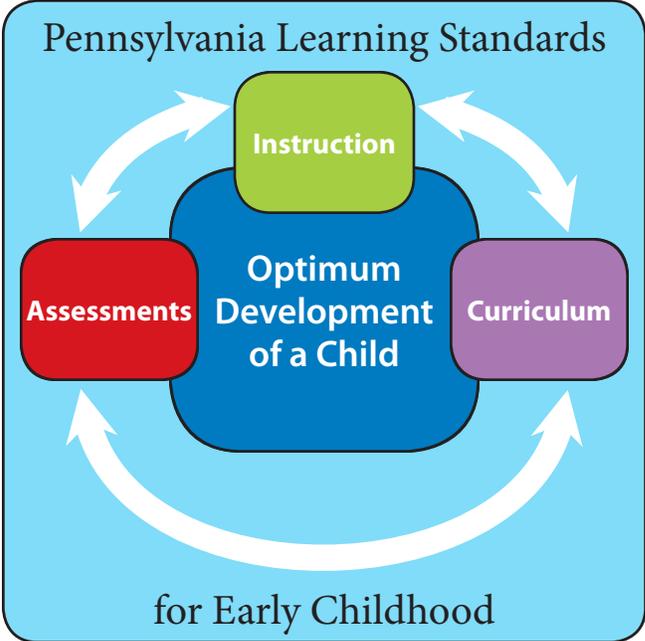
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LINKING ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment work together to provide the best learning experiences for children. Educators should assess children’s progress on the curriculum content presented and adapt the instruction based on the assessment results.

Curriculum and assessment work together to provide rich opportunities for learning and should be aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

Assessment is the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information, with evidence being an outward sign or indication of the child’s development or learning. Instructional practices must embed the domains of development—cognitive, language, physical, and social-emotional—with approaches to learning that enable children to explore, understand, and reach beyond the “here and now” to challenge themselves, experiment, and transform information into meaningful content and skills. Based upon assessment results, adapt your practices—Content (What), Materials (How)—and make them individualized.



EDUCATOR TIPS

- Ensure appropriateness of curriculum, assessments, and instruction for special populations.
- Engage in intentional evidence collection for every child on a continual basis.
- Summarize ongoing observation data for every child at least two times (preferably three times) per year to document the child’s progress over time.
- Implement chosen assessment and curricula-based manual (with fidelity*).
- Use assessment results to adapt both content and pedagogy** (how instruction is provided).
- Access specific professional development related to linking standards.***
- Review program requirements to ensure compliance with ongoing assessment and outcomes reporting.

* **Fidelity** is defined as adherence and devotion to following the guidelines and rules of your assessment and curriculum manual.

** **Pedagogy** may be defined as the practice (or the art, the science, or the craft) of teaching. (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004) Pedagogy is the overarching concept; it refers broadly to the deliberate process of cultivating development within a given culture and society. From this point of view, pedagogy has three basic components: (1) curriculum, or the content of what is being taught; (2) methodology, or the way in which teaching is done; and (3) techniques for socializing children in the repertoire of cognitive and affective skills required for successful functioning in society that education is designed to promote. (*Eager to learn, educating our preschoolers*, National Resource Council, 2000)

*** **Professional Development Core** training on PD Registry: Integrating the Early Childhood Standards into Curriculum and Assessment – 6 hours

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FOUR ASSESSMENT TYPES



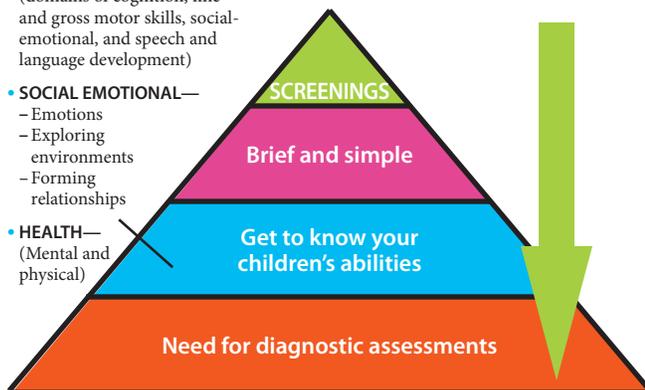
SCREENINGS ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • Screenings provide a quick snapshot of a child's health and/or developmental status.

WHEN • Within 45 days of new enrollment.

WHY • To assess if there is need for diagnostic assessment. Identifies potential difficulties that may interfere with expected growth, learning, or development that warrant further assessment, diagnosis, or evaluation, and that might necessitate adapted instruction, interventions, or special education services.

- **DEVELOPMENTAL**— (domains of cognition, fine and gross motor skills, social-emotional, and speech and language development)
- **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL**—
 - Emotions
 - Exploring environments
 - Forming relationships
- **HEALTH**— (Mental and physical)



DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • Diagnostic Assessment is a process that looks at areas of specific concern or looks at a broad range of development, as a result of screening data.

WHEN • After initial screening or when concerns are raised about the child's development that will affect the child's growth on learning and development.

WHY • To identify need for intervention and/or instructional strategies.

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS

Standardized for a large number of children	Related to other children of the same age, gender, and ethnic origin
Results: Intervention, instructional strategies, IEP, therapy, etc.	

ASSESSMENT KNOWLEDGE IS POWER WHEN YOU TURN IT INTO ACTION AND CHANGE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn." Ignacio Estrada

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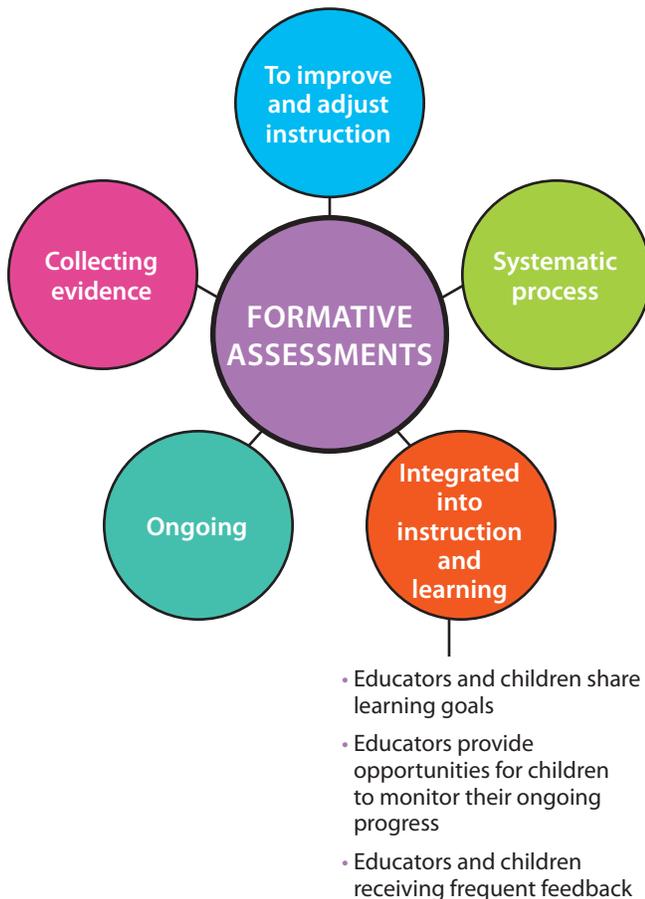
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FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • **Formative Assessment** is used by educators and children during instruction to provide feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve children's achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

WHEN • Ongoing.

WHY • Collecting ongoing evidence for learning to inform instruction, while the process involves educators, adults, and children.

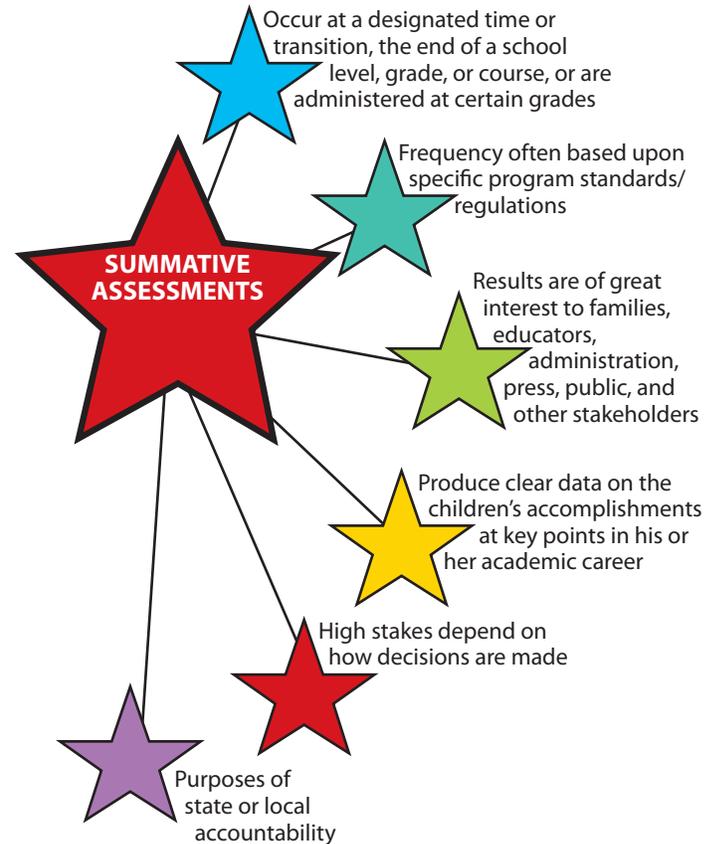


SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

WHAT • **Summative Assessment** seeks to make an overall judgment of progress made.

WHEN • At the end of a defined period of instruction.

WHY • To create a summary of learning. Summative data essentially looks back to see how effective the instruction, a part of the curriculum, or an intervention was. Summative data can be used for accountability, which is often considered high-stakes.



WATCH ME GROW

"A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in the pupils." Ever Garrison

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CHOOSING ASSESSMENTS

The Department of Education does not make specific recommendations with regard to assessment tools; rather, the Department provides guidelines for decision-making that would best adhere to the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood (birth to age eight).

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSIDERING ASSESSMENTS

1 What is the purpose for assessing?

2 What ages does the tool assess?

3 What is it going to cost?

4 Are there mandated requirements for certain programs or grants?
(e.g., Pre-K Counts, etc.)

5 What type of assessment(s) is the tool?

6 Can the assessment be used with any curriculum?

7 Technical dimensions—what is official research on
reliability, validity, and technical adequacy?

8 Technical dimensions—on what developmental
domains is it based?

9 Technical dimensions—are they aligned with Pennsylvania Learning
Standards for Early Childhood and/or Pennsylvania Core Standards?

10 Technical dimensions—is there sensitivity to children’s individual
backgrounds (ethnic, racial, language, and functional status)?

11 What online tools/reports are available?

12 How is training offered?

13 What supports are offered?

BASICS

SPECIFICS

SUPPORTS

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CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

The purpose of the child assessment and the audience(s) should be considered in determining what assessment is used and who administers it (collects the evidence). For example, if a funder wants to know whether their investment is improving child outcomes, then assessments might collect outcomes from a sample of children. By contrast, if educators want to screen children, plan instruction, or identify professional development needs, it is important that educators (with input from families) assess all children.

DEFINITIONS YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHEN CONSIDERING (STANDARDIZED AND PACKAGED) ASSESSMENTS

RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to the accuracy and stability of assessment scores.

- Assessment developers ensure reliability by testing the consistency of measurements, gauged by any of several methods, including when the testing procedure is repeated on a population of individuals or groups (test-retest reliability), or is administered by different raters (inter-rater reliability).
- A good measure of reliability is a score between 1.0 (perfect) and 0.50 (good*).

VALIDITY

Validity is an indication of how closely the assessment measures what it is intended to measure.

- An assessment has to be reliable to be valid. Assessment developers make logical hypotheses and analyze groups of test scores to see if the hypotheses hold. A screening instrument demonstrates validity if children who are identified by screening to have a problem also receive low scores on a comprehensive test of development.
- A good measure of validity is a score between 1.0 (perfect) and 0.50 (good).

TECHNICAL ADEQUACY

Technical adequacy describes the degree of demonstrated reliability and validity of a test.

- Technical information is often included in the assessment guide.
- Technical adequacy is an important consideration when selecting assessment instruments for any purpose, although norm-referenced** assessments generally have more information on reliability and validity than do criterion-referenced*** instruments.

* The **measures used for reliability** will create a score between 0 and 1. These numbers are referring to a ratio or fraction and are not to be confused with a test score. The value of a reliability estimate tells us the proportion of variability in the measure attributable to the true score. A reliability of .5 means that about half of the variance of the observed score is attributable to truth and half is attributable to error. And so on.
a. Measures a child's performance against a predetermined set of criteria, generally developmentally-sequenced or task-analyzed skills.
b. Children's response(s) is compared to a level of performance in an area of knowledge or skill, rather than to a group of children or normative group.

** **Norm-referenced**

- a. Compares a child's score to the scores of a group of same-age peers (norm-group).
- b. Refers to standardized tests that are designed to compare and rank test-takers in relation to one another (norm-group)

*** **Criterion-referenced**

- a. Measures a child's performance against a predetermined set of criteria, generally developmentally-sequenced or task-analyzed skills.
- b. Children's response(s) is compared to a level of performance in an area of knowledge or skill, rather than to a group of children or normative group.

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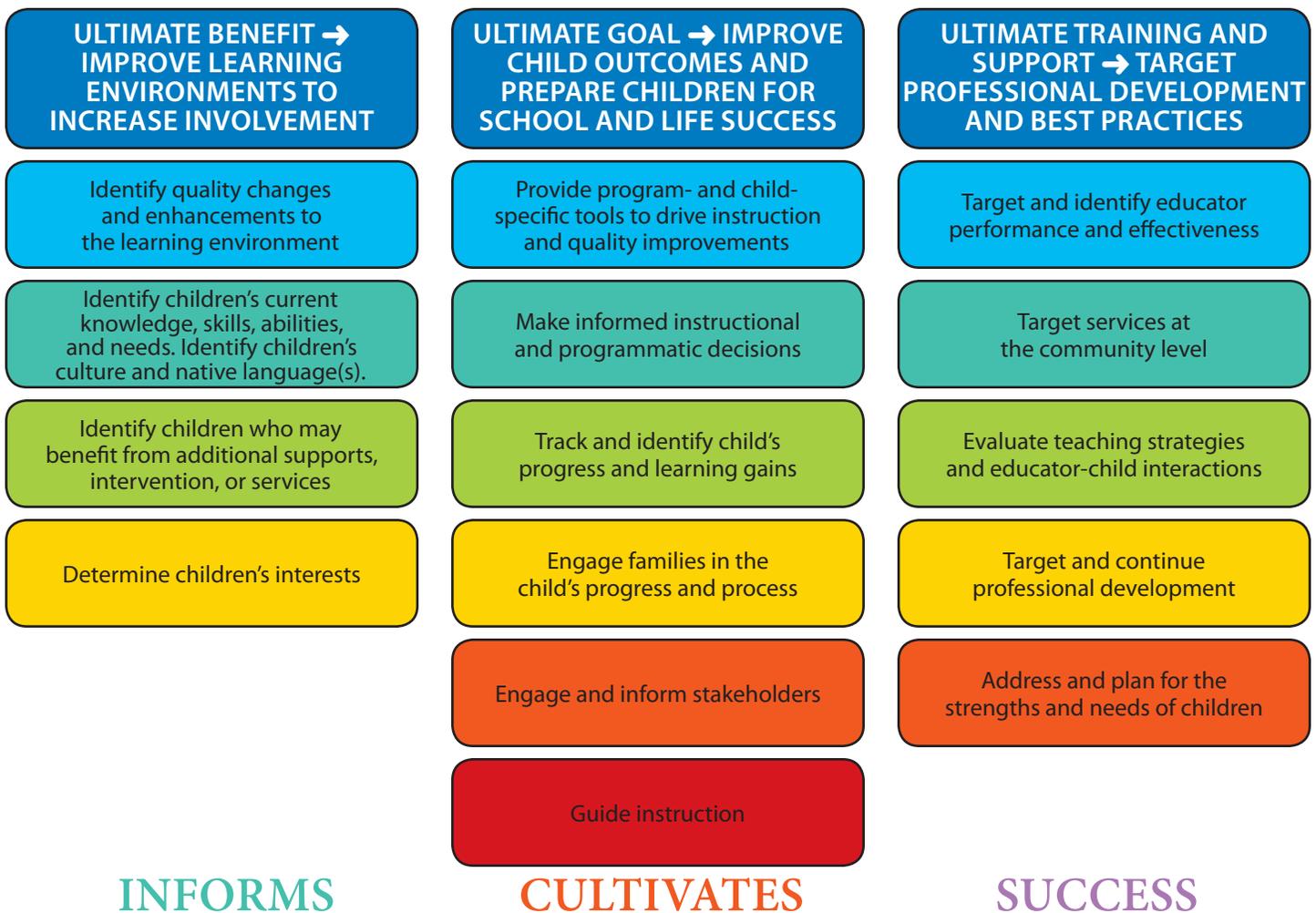
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OUTCOMES

WHAT • Outcomes are the recorded results of a well-balanced review of children’s skill development, based on educators’ assessments. Educators use reliable and valid assessment instruments to guide their collection and documentation of children’s progress for reporting.

An outcome should not be just a piece of information—it is important knowledge that should bring families and educators into action.

With proper resources and informed leadership (on all levels: educators, administrators, families, policymakers, and instructional leaders, and on a state level), best practices can be implemented, and policy decisions can be made on every level to support healthy development, early learning, and school success for all young children.



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER WHEN YOU TURN IT INTO ACTION AND CHANGE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change a child’s life, impact a family, change the community, and change the world. Anonymous

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MISUNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENTS/ AVOID INAPPROPRIATE USE OF ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT = TESTING

Assessment is often used as a synonym for testing. The field of early childhood education has historically used authentic informal assessments in the form of naturalistic observations and anecdotal records. Current recommendations from the field and professional literature indicate the need for assessment systems that **use ongoing, multiple methods for gathering information.**

CURRICULUM- BASED ASSESSMENTS ONLY

Curriculum-based observation is direct observation and recording of a child's performance in the local curriculum as a basis for gathering information. Note that **conducting ongoing authentic assessment provides the richest information** about the whole child.

EXCLUSION

Assessment is **NOT conducted to determine the child's "readiness"** for inclusion in an educational setting, and assessment is **DEFINITELY NOT** conducted to exclude the child from preschool or Kindergarten. It **IS** conducted to plan beneficial opportunities for each child, and to optimize their likelihood of success.

INAPPROPRIATE APPLICATION

Serious **misuse of testing** with young children occurs when assessments intended for one purpose are used inappropriately for other purposes.

HIGH-STAKE DECISIONS

High-stakes decisions about program or educator quality, effectiveness, or accountability (of either Kindergarten or preschool experiences) **should NOT be made.** This includes judging program quality, evaluating educator effectiveness, and funding decisions.

PREDICT POTENTIALS

Assessments are **NOT** used to predict future academic achievement and life success. Children develop at different rates, have different life experiences, and have different opportunities to participate in high quality early learning experiences. **An assessment, particularly a single test at one moment in time, is NOT a valid predictor of a child's potential.**

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PENNSYLVANIA'S COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

High-quality, early childhood education is supported by assessments aligned with instructional goals and approaches. Assessment, however, does not refer simply to the tool being used; it refers to an interconnected system of decisions and activities. Selecting an assessment tool or tools is one of those decisions. The system requires supports and procedures to effectively and appropriately administer the assessment, as well as selecting a data management and analysis system that captures the results of the assessments and allows the data to be used appropriately.

A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

WHAT • A coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments—each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used—that organizes information about the process and context of young children’s learning and development to help early childhood educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions.

HOW • A comprehensive assessment system addresses a full range of knowledge and skills expected by standards. It provides different users at different levels in the system (district, school, program, and classroom) with the right kinds of data, at the right level of detail, to help with decision-making.

WHEN • A continuous system provides ongoing streams of information about children’s learning throughout the year. Assessment data from a coherent, comprehensive, and continuous system help educators monitor children’s learning by establishing a rich and productive foundation for understanding children’s achievement.

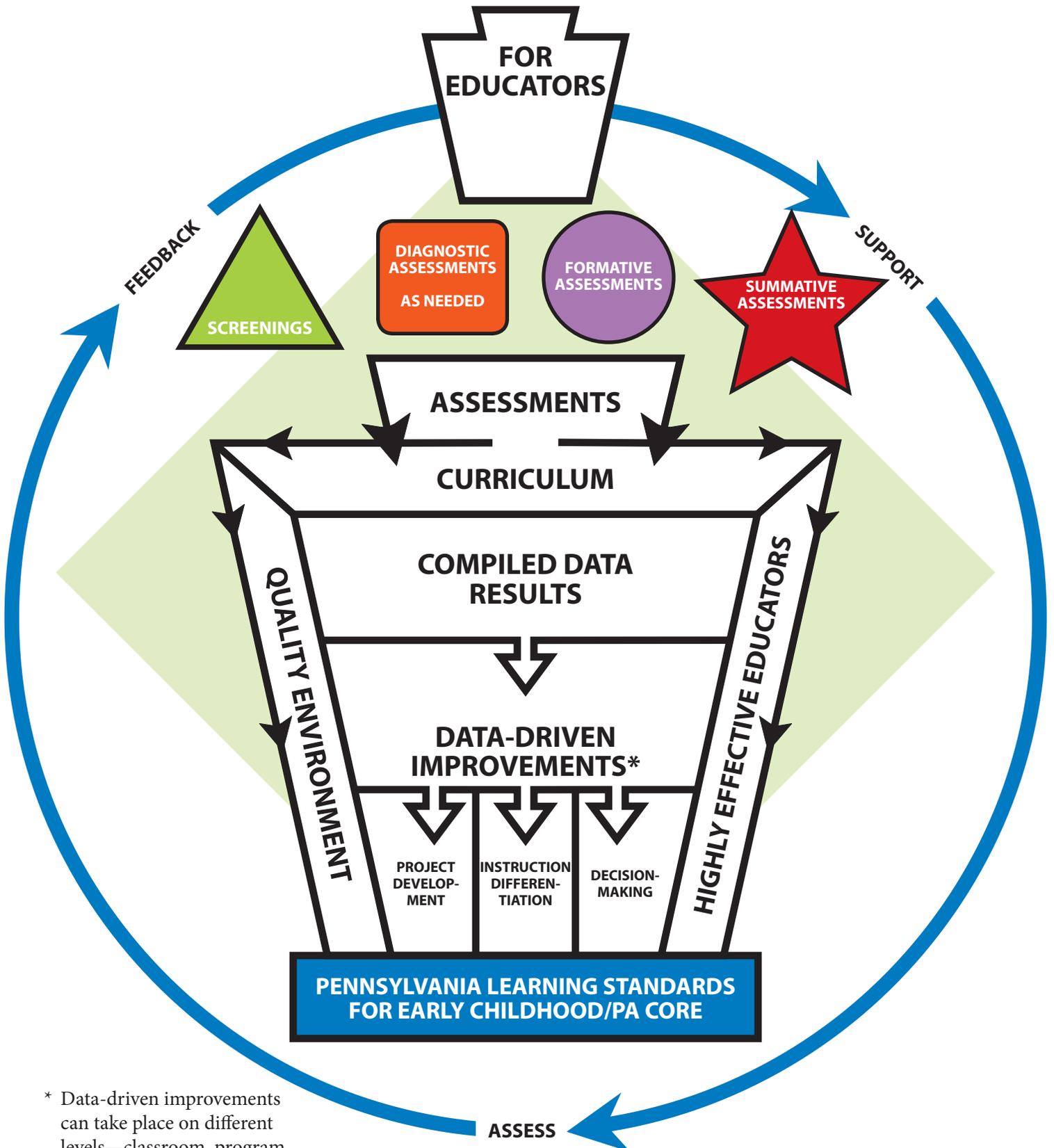
Visit Pennsylvania’s
Early Learning
Keys to Quality
website at
www.pakeys.org.

WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE OPTIMUM CHILD DEVELOPMENT

“The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one.” Malcolm Forbes

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* Data-driven improvements can take place on different levels—classroom, program, school, and district levels.