If Kg. Entry Assessments Are the Answer, What Is the Question?

Tom Schultz
Council of Chief State School Officers
thomass@ccsso.org

NCSL Early Learning Fellows
Denver, CO – May 2, 2013
KEAs answer key questions about how young children are doing

3 options for state KEAs: Adopt, Adapt, Develop

Key issues for states
Where I Am Coming From

Assessment Projects:
- National Research Council ECE Assessment Panel
- Head Start National Reporting System
- Early Childhood Accountability Task Force
- 11-State Early Childhood Assessment Consortium
- Kg. Entry Assessment Project (IA, MO, NV, AZ)
- MD/OH Assessment Project Advisory Committee

See assessment as powerful tool to improve programs, teaching, outcomes
Assess children at Kg. entry in 5 areas:

- Language development/early literacy
- Social & emotional development
- Approaches to learning
- Physical health & development
- Cognitive development (math & science)

Teachers observe children and use a rating system to record what they know & can do.

Used to report on trends for all children, guide teaching in kg., report to parents.
KEAs Tell Legislators How Young Children Are Doing

- What all young children know and can do when they enter Kindergarten?
- Are trends improving over time?
- How are different groups of children doing?
- What priorities should we target for early childhood/Kg.–Grade 3 teacher training and program improvement?
KEAs Are 1 Piece of An Early Childhood Assessment System

- Screening Children for Health & Special Needs
- Ongoing Assessments of Children’s Progress
- Assessing Classroom/Teaching Quality
- Data on Families/Family Engagement
KEAs: “Fulcrum” between 0–5 and Kg.–Grade 3 Assessments

Feedback to ECE
- Status of all children in multiple domains.
- Target professional development/T/TA

Inform teaching in K–3
- Plan curricula & individualize learning opportunities
- Help families understand their child’s strengths & weaknesses

Kg. Entry Knowledge & Skills
KEAs Add Value to Comprehensive Assessment Systems

- **Scope of KEAs is unique:**
  - Data on all children for the 1st time since birth records
  - Multiple domains of development & learning

- **Timing of data is strategic:**
  - Baseline on what children know & are able to do at the beginning of K–12
  - Where children stand based on birth–age 5 early learning opportunities
Comprehensive Systems Add Value to KEAs

- KEAs † Ongoing assessments of children → Show children’s progress over time

- KEAs † Assessments of programs, schools, workforce, family engagement → Show us what works and how to improve
State KEA Efforts – 2010

- 25 states with Kindergarten assessment

- Areas of children’s development assessed
  - 11 comprehensive assessments
  - 9 reading only
  - 2 reading & mathematics

- Many additional states developing KEAs based on state legislation and Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge funding
State KEA Approaches

- **Adopt**
  - CO, NJ, NV & others Teaching Strategies GOLD
  - MD, MN Work Sampling System
  - MO field test/piloting several options

- **Adapt**
  - DE/WA adapt GOLD to state standards
  - IL adapting DRDP
  - MA working to support multiple assessments

- **Develop** New Tools: MD/OH; CA; NC
Innovations

- KEA within ongoing formative assessments
  - MD/OH PK–Kg.
  - NC in Kg.–Grade 2

- Develop assessment tasks/questions for children on tablets/laptops (MD/OH)

- Multiple assessment/common metric (MA)

- Dept. of ED funding for KEA development
4 Key Issues for States

- Aligning with preschool & Kg. standards
- Ensuring high quality assessments
- Moving from data collection to data use
- Preventing misuse of KEA data
  - Evaluation of Kg. teachers
  - Funding local early childhood programs
Cautions in Using KEAs to “Look Back” at ECE Programs

- KEA data can provide feedback on how children from different ece programs compare on a common measure.
- KEA outcomes don’t reflect children’s status when they enter an ece program – or how much progress they made.
- ECE programs serve varied types of children.
- Children often attend multiple programs or programs with multiple funding sources.