

Early Childhood Assessment Survey and Focus Group Report

2018



COLORADO
Department of Education

Early Childhood Assessment

Developmentally appropriate assessment that provides valid, meaningful, and representative information about young children is at the heart of a quality educational experience. Both the Results Matter and the School Readiness systems are intended to improve outcomes for Colorado's youngest children by helping teachers, administrators, families, and other education stakeholders use authentic assessment data to inform classroom instruction as well as program and policy decision-making.

Results Matter is a statewide program that promotes the use of ongoing, developmental, observation-based assessment in early care and education settings, and serves as Colorado's child and family outcomes measurement system for ages birth-five. Results Matter participants are currently able to choose from two assessment tools: *GOLD*[®] and COR Advantage. Both assessments provide an authentic, ongoing, observation-based assessment system that meet the state's accountability reporting needs for the Colorado Preschool and Special Education programs. The Results Matter assessments use online platforms to document child measures and allow educators to link assessments and curriculum.

Colorado's School Readiness initiative incorporates a school readiness assessment that promotes the school success of each child by recognizing that a strong start in school can lead to greater outcomes in a student's academic experience. Senate Bill 08-212, Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), passed in 2008. The act includes provisions related to school readiness for the purpose of assessing and monitoring school readiness in kindergarten to understand each child's strengths and needs across developmental and academic domains. The Colorado State Board of Education was required to define school readiness and to adopt one or more assessments aligned with the definition of school readiness.

The State Board of Education has approved three school readiness assessment tools:

- Desired Results Developmental Profile for Kindergarten (DRDP-K)
- HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) for Kindergarten
- *GOLD*[®] by Teaching Strategies

Each of the school readiness assessments measures the six required areas of development and learning defined by school readiness legislation: physical well-being and motor, social and emotional, language and comprehension, cognition, math, and literacy.

In order to support continuous improvement for the Results Matter and school readiness assessment systems, the P-3 Office conducted stakeholder outreach regarding state early childhood assessment requirements and user experiences. The process included a survey and focus groups across the state during winter of 2017-18. Survey invitations went to over 10,000 educators, administrators, and other related service providers throughout Colorado. About 10 percent of invitees responded to the survey including staff in a variety of roles such as teachers, special education service providers, administrators, coaches, and technology specialists.

Upon completion of the survey, respondents were invited to attend follow-up focus groups. The 2½ hour focus groups, supported by CDE team members, were held in four regions across the state with a total of 81 participants. The focus groups provided CDE with an opportunity to obtain richer feedback from participants.

Overall Results Summary

In the survey, respondents were asked to give input related to Results Matter and the school readiness assessment, to questions regarding which assessment tools were used, their level of satisfaction with the tool, if the tool met the needs of the children they served and if they would likely explore other assessment tools if added to the menu options. During the focus groups, respondents were provided overview information and discussion questions. The goals of the discussion questions were to: review history and programming of Colorado's School Readiness Initiative and Results Matter, identify strengths and gaps in implementation and systems for early childhood assessment, brainstorm recommendations for improving the alignment of programs, use of assessment data, and data reporting, and gather input on assessment implementation, selection criteria, and program values.



In both the focus groups and the survey, participants and respondents had the opportunity to respond to the question, “What other feedback would you like to share about your experience with Results Matter and/or Kindergarten School Readiness assessments?” CDE reviewed feedback from the surveys and the regional focus groups. After the review it was clear that five central themes emerged throughout the responses: assessment system technical challenges and efficiencies, data use and data sharing, family and school connections, alignment to standards, and training and implementation with fidelity.

Assessment System Technical Challenges and Efficiencies

Respondents spoke about persistent technical issues with the *GOLD*® online system for school readiness assessment and Results Matter. Respondents reported the assessment felt burdensome and time intensive. An example of technical challenges included slow online system response times especially around checkpoint season (fall, winter, and spring finalization deadlines). At the same time, respondents shared an appreciation for technical efficiencies and time-saving features such as the Documentation App and On-the-Spot Tool. Approximately 23% of the comments from respondents addressed this theme.

Data Use and Data Sharing

When discussing data use and data sharing, respondents noted the importance of, and challenges with, using and sharing data. Respondents also expressed concern about how CDE uses and reports assessment data, particularly the Kindergarten School Readiness (KSR) assessment data, and requested that CDE clarify how the data are used. Approximately 15% of comments addressed this theme.

Family and School Connections

Respondents expressed a critical need for the connection of assessment information across communities, families, and school systems. For example, the limited number of reports available in Spanish and the use of more technical language within reports may make the accessibility of reports challenging for families. Approximately 7% of comments referenced these concerns.

Alignment to Standards, READ Act, and Grades P-3

Participants addressed the issue of alignment in several areas: alignment with the READ Act, alignment across grades P-3, and alignment to preschool and kindergarten standards. Although respondents understood that alignments between early childhood assessments and Colorado standards exist, they stated the information was difficult to find. Approximately 34% of comments from respondents referenced this.

Training and Implementation with Fidelity

Respondents posed questions about to the subjectivity, validity, and reliability of assessment tools and the process of using data to inform instruction. Respondents expressed concern about implementing the tool with fidelity especially among inexperienced staff. They also noted a need for ongoing training and support for all staff to ensure the tools are implemented with fidelity. Nearly a quarter of comments (21%) referenced training, and of those comments on training, about a quarter referenced a change in teaching practices.

Next Steps for CDE

The results of the survey and focus groups, outlined in the previous pages, have been reviewed and discussed with P-3 Office leaders as well as Unit and Division leaders at CDE. As a result, CDE commits to the following prioritized actions over the course of the 2018-19 school year to address stakeholder concerns:

- 1. Share this report with vendors to support their product and training development and with relevant policy makers to inform policy development.**
- 2. Establish a regular timeline for reviewing additional assessment tools for preschool/Results Matter.**
- 3. Refine the Request for Information criteria used to evaluate additional assessment tools.**
- 4. Clarify and disseminate training options available by vendors and CDE field support staff.**

Where can I learn more?

- [Results Matter](#) home page
- [Kindergarten School Readiness](#) home page
- [Contact CDE Staff](#)