Improving Teaching Through Standards-Based Systematic Assessment: Development of the Early Learning Scale

Shannon Riley-Ayers, NIEER
Ellen Frede, NIEER
Gera Jacobs, USD
Judi Stevenson Boyd, NIEER

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### MATCHING PURPOSE AND TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Types of Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness to benefit from program</td>
<td>Readiness tests - criterion referenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify child who needs diagnostic test</td>
<td>Screening test with follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine sp. ed. classification</td>
<td>Diagnostic/developmental*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To evaluate child progress</td>
<td>Standards-based achievement tests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Use Observation-Based Performance Assessment?

• Standardized tests may be misused
• Children are not “reliable” – captures children’s skills and knowledge in real life over time
• Compares children to themselves, is comprehensive and focuses on strengths and interests
• Understandable to parents and informs teaching
Why the ELS?

• A pre-emptive strike against state-wide testing

• Need for focused, manageable instrument based on state standards

• Research derived and validated
The Early Learning Scale

- Systematic assessment for preschool children
- Conceptually derived from NJ ELAS
- Performance-based assessment scale
- Across domains
- Informs instruction with data
The Assessment Process

Early Learning Scale

- Observing
- Investigating
- Documenting
- Reflecting
- Analyzing
- Evaluating
- Hypothesizing
- Planning
- Instructing
What ELS Offers

• 10 items across domains
• Developmentally appropriate continuum
• Not curriculum-specific
• Directly related to learning standards
• Focused and manageable
What’s Included in the ELS

- Must be measurable, develop on a continuum, and critical to present and future learning
- Math
- Science- Content Vs. Process
- Social Emotional Development
- Social Studies
- Language Arts Literacy
- Creative Arts
- Health, Safety, and Physical Education
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math/Science</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Number and Numerical Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Geometry and Measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Observation and Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Scientific Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Emotional/Social Studies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self-regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Arts Literacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Oral Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Phonological Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Print Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Observation and Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observation and Classification

• Observation
  - Paying attention to detail – leads to asking questions
  - Allows children to develop communication skills and create mental representations

• Classification
  - Using observations of attributes to order objects
  - Requires inductive reasoning and problem solving skills
  - Prepares children for future experiences with numerical operations and concepts of probability
Play

- Helps children develop self-regulation
- Social pretend activities lead to more cooperative and longer lasting interactions among children
- Promotes memory development
- Extends vocabulary
- Results in thinking that is more imaginative and flexible
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality and Attributes of Sociodramatic Play</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not engage with materials independently; Is not engaged during free play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explores and experiments with a wide variety of materials; Engages in purposeful activity for most of the time while moving independently from one activity to another</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pretend play is simplistic; Uses objects to stand for other objects in pretend play</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality and Attributes of Cooperative Play</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usually plays alone; May engage in parallel play- plays near another child with similar materials, but not influencing the other’s play</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Successfully enters into play when a group of children are already involved; Expresses ideas for activities and acknowledges actions and accomplishments; Negotiates roles and sets up events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages in associative play- engages in separate activities, but interacts by sharing toys or commenting on each other’s play</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality and Attributes of Constructive Play</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively uses actual objects for intended purpose in pretend play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Play has defined roles and story lines such as familiar story books, family life and community roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretend play is simplistic; Uses objects to stand for other objects in pretend play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Writing

• The purpose of writing is to communicate

• Children bridge their oral and written worlds through drawing, scribbling, making lines, letter-like forms, conventional letters, and various combinations of these

• Writing can be a meaningful component of play
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(10) Writing</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composing</strong></td>
<td>Does not give meaning to writing; Does not engage in labeling or dictation with adult</td>
<td>Labels pictures; Engages with adult when asked for dictation</td>
<td>Uses symbols for a purpose and gives meaning to the writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production</strong></td>
<td>Draws or scribbles</td>
<td>Makes forms that resemble letters; May write own name</td>
<td>Strings conventional letters together (other than their name)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roy took the teacher’s order of 1 pizza slice.
Irvin drew a picture of his family and labeled each person with the teacher.
Ressie wrote the recipe for her soup in her restaurant and talked about each symbol she wrote, “That’s a cup of flour, flour’s in it, see. See the noodle line, put that in too. That’s an egg, put that in. That’s a mixing thing, mix it. Three cups- one for you, Michelle, me.”
Marcel wrote and drew apple ice cream.
**Scoring Procedures**

- Organize and examine evidence
- Place evidence on the continuum for each strand in an item (1, 3, or 5)
- Examine the placement and assign an appropriate score for the item
- The scores of 2 or 4 are utilized when the strands are not equivalent
Training Approach

- Detailed guidebook
- Training Modules
- Workgroups
- Reliability assessment and feedback
Guidebook

• System description

• Using the system and scoring procedures

• Each item is supported by
  - Research base
  - Continuum descriptions
  - Ideas for teaching and documenting
  - Sample anecdotes
  - For further reading

• All necessary forms
  - Anecdotal record forms
  - Class record form
  - Child Accomplishments Summary
Training Modules

• Train the trainers or direct training

• Training sessions
  - Introduction to the system: Focus on observing and documenting
  - For each domain: Research, description of continuum, teaching ideas, practice with the instrument
  - Using the instrument: Focus on analyzing (scoring) and planning
Workgroups

- Monthly collegial meetings of 5-6 teachers with a teacher leader for 1 ½ hours
- 2 teacher presenters
- Protocol
  - Introduction
  - Presentation
  - Clarifying questions
  - Warm and cool feedback
  - Reflection
  - Debrief
- Feedback questions and summaries
Feedback From the Field

I am so pleased with the genuineness of the participants, the willingness to share perspectives and personal experiences, and the high level of educational discussions that took place today.

Master Teacher
Passaic, NJ
The important thing I learned while using ELS is that environment plays a critical role in children’s learning and development.

Before I had done ELS I thought about myself as a good teacher who can set up the classroom and activities in the way that support children’s development and learning across all domains. Now, I know that I was wrong.

After I have done ELS I realized that some of my children’s needs are not met. I realized that I am responsible not only for children’s language and literacy development but also for children’s learning across all domains. I noticed that every day students in my classroom are willing to explore mathematical concepts but I need to add more concrete objects in my classroom areas. I need to provide materials that my students can explore and reflect upon.

Teacher
Passaic, NJ
Reliability Process

- 6 folios developed at NIEER by creators of the instrument
- Folios based on field data
- True scores determined by a group of experts
- Teachers were given 2 hours to score 3 folios at one time
- Exact agreement with the true scores calculated for each teacher
Research: NJ Reliability

- 2 assessments of trained teachers from one NJ district
- 57 teachers
  - First assessment directly following training
  - Second assessment completed after 1 or 2 score periods of using the instrument
## NJ Reliability Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Items</th>
<th>Poor Items Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Reliability</strong></td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Below 60% <em>Need retraining</em></td>
<td>9 (16%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers between 60 and 68% <em>Need support</em></td>
<td>16 (28%)</td>
<td>15 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers at 70% or Higher <em>Independent</em></td>
<td>32 (56%)</td>
<td>41 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Trainers’ Reliability</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ELS in South Dakota

• South Dakota was developing statewide training for their Early Learning Standards
• Wanted a DAP authentic assessment to measure children’s progress toward meeting the standards that could be included with the training
• Learned about the ELS at a previous PDI conference
• Met with NIEER staff to discuss the ELS
ELS in South Dakota

• Compared ELS with SD standards and found they matched very well

• The ELS covered major areas and helped to focus on important skills and understandings that could be measured

• Decided to incorporate the ELS in the Early Learning Guidelines Training to give teachers/providers an authentic assessment to help children make progress toward meeting standards
ELS in South Dakota

- Received training from NIEER on the instrument
- Incorporated the ELS into the Early Learning Guidelines Statewide Training
- Trained trainers as well as teachers in a Pilot PreK Program and offered the training for credit
# Research: SD Reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Description</th>
<th>Agreement Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29 Trainers received 10 hours of training via distance as part of the Early</td>
<td>Average Agreement 77.5 ± 3.92, Range 53 – 93, 24 trainers at 70% or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Guidelines Trainers Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Pilot PreK teachers and 2 Pilot PreK Administrators went through the ELS/ELG</td>
<td>Average Agreement 76.8 ± 4.88, Range 70 – 90, 9 teachers at 70% or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training face-to-face</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Practicum students went through the ELS training as part of practicum seminars</td>
<td>Average Agreement 73.5 ± 3.92, Range 53 – 97, 9 students at 70% or above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reliability of Similar Instruments

- Child Observation Record (COR): High/Scope
  - .69-.73 agreement between 10 pairs of teachers and teaching assistants rating the same 41 children
  - .93 agreement for 10 research assistants

- Work Sampling System: Meisels, et. al
  - .88 raters’ codes with each other on 33 summary reports
  - .68 & .73 for 2 raters’ codes with teachers codes on the same summary reports

- Developmental Continuum: Creative Curriculum
  - No inter-rater reliability data
Research: Validity

• Cronbach Alpha .91
• Concurrent Validity
  – 285 children from 57 teachers across 10 schools
  – Trained classroom teachers conducted the ELS from November to February
  – Children assessed by NIEER assessors February to April:
    • Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA)
      – DeBruin-Parecki (2005)
    • Child Mathematics Assessment (CMA)
      – Klein & Starkey (2000)
    • No assessment for Social Emotional/Social Studies and Science
Validity Results: Correlations

• Math/Science
  - ELS Math/Sci. total and CMA total .46**
  - ELS Math/Sci. total and CMA subscales .17*-.43**
    • Lowest *Equiv. Sets and Division*
    • Highest *Counting*
  - CMA total and ELS Math/Sci. items .35**-.46**
    • Lowest *Observation*
    • Highest *Number*

*p<.05; **p<.01
Validity Results: Correlations

• Language Arts Literacy
  - ELS LAL total and ELSA total .39**
  - ELS LAL total and ELSA subscales .16**-.37**
    • Lowest Phonological Awareness
    • Highest Alphabetic Principal
  - ELSA total and ELS LAL items .23**-.33**
    • Lowest Writing
    • Highest Print Awareness

*p<.05; **p<.01
Validity of Similar Instruments

• Child Observation Record (COR)
  - Concurrent validity with Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery
    • COR total moderately correlated .46-.62

• Work Sampling System
  - Concurrent validity with Woodcock Johnson Revised
    • WJ-R subscales with WSS checklist and Summary Report were .36-.75

• Developmental Continuum
  - Internal consistency .97
Contact Information

• Shannon Ayers, NIEER
  – sayers@nieer.org
  – 732-932-4350 ext. 232