Arizona’s Early Childhood Assessment System

for On-going Progress Monitoring

Teaching Strategies GOLD

2012-2013
Arizona Department of Education
Early Childhood Education
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Phoenix, AZ 85007
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Introduction and History

In order to meet requirements in the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education identified specific outcome indicator data that all states must annually report for all preschool children receiving special education services funded by the IDEA.

Outcome 1: Positive social emotional skills
Outcome 2: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills
Outcome 3: Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

Following best practices, in 2005, the Arizona Department of Education Early Childhood Education unit created a system of assessment based on on-going, authentic assessment. To address the federal requirement, the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education issued a request for proposals and conducted a rigorous evaluation process in the spring and summer of 2006. This process resulted in the selection of four assessment instruments for use in district preschool programs statewide. District personnel were instructed to choose one of the four instruments and then attend training sessions from their specific vendor on how to use the instrument. In the fall of 2006, districts began collecting data and submitting data to the Arizona Department of Education Student Accountability Information System (SAIS).

Contracts with the four vendors were scheduled to expire in the summer of 2011. In anticipation of this expiration, the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education unit conducted focus groups and sent online surveys to early childhood district personnel in 2008 to examine the strengths and concerns of their chosen assessment instrument and process. The strengths gathered included teachers taking observational assessment data in an ongoing manner to drive instruction and provide program, classroom and individual child improvement based on data. Opportunities identified to improve the ongoing progress monitoring system included the need for ensuring the data collected was comparable for all students, that when students moved from district to district data was not lost and create a more efficient system of uploading the data without the need for SAIS. Information gathered from these groups and surveys guided the creation of the request for proposals. The review process was conducted in the spring and summer of 2010, resulting in the selection of a single instrument, Teaching Strategies GOLD. The State Board of Education approved
this selection in August 2010. Regional training sessions were held in the spring of 2011 and teachers began using the instrument to facilitate the assessment of children beginning in the fall of 2011.

The Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education unit has focused on building a system of assessment that will allow all children participating in Arizona preschool programs to benefit from ongoing progress monitoring assessment that drives program improvement, guides instructional practices and informs parents and community stakeholders of how children are progressing. The Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education unit is collaborating with Local Education Agencies, First Things First, Head Start, Tribal communities, and varied Child Care settings such as faith-based, for profit and non-profit programs that serve preschool children in order to create a system of ongoing progress monitoring and assessment for all preschoolers.

The contract with Teaching Strategies GOLD is available for use by all early childhood programs that have a collaborative relationship or are willing to enter into a collaborative relationship with the Arizona Department of Education. As approved by the Arizona State Board of Education, all programs are required to use the online version of the instrument, which renders the most useful information allowing programs to compile data in multiple ways in order to drive program, classroom and individual child improvement. There is no longer the requirement to upload data to the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS). Rather, the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education will retrieve data directly from GOLD for all programs statewide.
“For data to be most useful, teachers need to understand the purpose for collecting data, use valid procedures for collecting data, and ensure opportunities to analyze and interpret findings.”

Best Practices in Early Childhood Assessment

What is Assessment?

Assessment is the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information...the basic process of finding out what the children in our classroom, individually and as a group, know and can do in relation to their optimum development and to the goals of the program. With that knowledge of those children, we can plan appropriate curriculum and effective instructional strategies to help them develop and learn, monitoring their progress along the way.

(‘Basics of Assessment: A Primer for Early Childhood Educators, NAEYC, pg. 3)

Understanding the Purpose for Collecting Assessment Data

Assessing children in early childhood programs is essential to “making sound decisions about teaching and learning, identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions.” Though collecting data to meet state and federal requirements is necessary, educators and administrators must ultimately remain focused on the critical role of assessment in guiding instruction and improving outcomes for children.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers eleven Indicators of Effectiveness in assessment practices. To cite just four, effective assessment uses multiple sources of evidence gathered over time, assesses what is developmentally and educationally significant, is used to understand and improve learning and includes evidence gathered from realistic settings and situations that reflect children’s actual performance. This last indicator suggests the model known as authentic assessment and reflects best practices in assessing young children.

Key Practices of Authentic Assessment

1. Assessment for young children should follow an on-going cycle.
   Step 1: Collect evidence
   Step 2: Analyze and evaluate the evidence
   Step 3: Plan for each child and the whole group
   Step 4: Report on children’s progress
2. Assessment should cover all the developmental domains and content areas, measure developmentally appropriate skills as outlined in the Arizona Early Learning Standards, the Arizona Academic Standards for Kindergarten and the Infant/Toddler Developmental Guidelines (expected to be published in FY13).

3. Data collection should be conducted in varied, natural, authentic situations. Children should be assessed as they are engaged in hands-on activities, and interacting with their physical and social environment.

4. Assessments should result in information that can be used to make accurate and useful decisions. Teachers (and other team members) should be able to use the information to identify children’s individual needs, plan appropriate activities and intervention, accurately monitor children’s progress, and modify effective instructional strategies.

5. Assessment practices should involve multiple observations, and should involve multiple informants such as paraprofessionals, therapists, and family members. Given the complexities of early development and the variability with which children perform, gathering information from multiple sources, across time, and with varied forms of documentation ensures a convergence of ideas and a more holistic view of the child.

Best practice in assessment of young children recognizes the need for multiple forms of documentation to obtain a true picture of a child’s progress. Teaching Strategies GOLD, the state-approved instrument, is well designed for all of Arizona’s children, including English language learners, children with special needs and children from diverse cultural backgrounds. GOLD aligns with the domains and content areas in the Arizona Early Learning Standards and Kindergarten Standards (see link: GOLD Alignment to Arizona Early Learning Standards)

Using Valid Procedures for Collecting Assessment Data

Assessment data must be collected on children in an on-going manner using a variety of documentation methods and multiple adults. This may include paraprofessionals, parents and therapists. This is essential in capturing the most comprehensive “picture” of a child’s development over time, in various contexts.

Observation is the basis of all good teaching and the foundation of any assessment system. To learn about a child, you look and listen objectively to what he or she does and says (Jablon, Dombro, & Dichtelmiller, 2007). For some objectives, seeing a child perform a skill once is sufficient to make an informed decision. Other objectives need more evidence and documentation. It may also be necessary to document a skill as it develops over time. Documenting the words and actions of children serves as the evidence on which educators base their decisions about the development and learning of the children in their classrooms. This evidence is required to determine where a child is along the continuum of development. This evidence also helps educators determine where they can begin to support this child toward the next developmental stage. The number of observations collected for each objective and dimension for each child will vary depending on what is being assessed and the local program policy requirements. In general, an adult
should observe a child demonstrate a particular skill or behavior multiple times in different contexts in order to accurately rate the child’s abilities in that skill/behavior. Local programs should create policy recommendations based on generally accepted best practices in the field of early childhood education.

In order for the State of Arizona to verify data for federal reporting, all districts and programs under ADE’s license in GOLD are required to enter documentation online. Maintaining only hard copies of observations and documentation is not permitted. Randomly-chosen child files will be reviewed by ADE to verify compliance.

When implementing an on-going progress monitoring system into your classroom remember to keep the documentation simple. Documentation may be collected in the action, out of the action, and after the fact. Set up simple systems to make collecting observation notes as convenient as possible.

Suggested collection tools:
Mailing labels, Legal pads, Index cards, Calendar pages, Masking tape, Post it notes, Digital cameras/camcorders, voice recorders, tablets

Implementing an assessment system takes intentional planning. Document who and when you plan to observe the children in your weekly plans. Set goals for collecting evidence by all the adults working with the children. A common expectation would be to collect three or four pieces of evidence a day. Remember that you don’t need to record everything that happens and every word a child says. Focus on collecting information that addresses your plan and the individual needs of a child.

Documentation Methods:
• Anecdotal notes—These are short, objective, factual notes about what you hear and see. Quality anecdotal notes are factual, objective and focus on what the child does or says that include the location and date observed, direct quotations of language and descriptions of actions, gestures, facial expressions, and creations. Work to eliminate your feelings or judgments from your statements.
• Photographs—Take pictures of children’s constructions, artwork, or examples of how they are demonstrating knowledge and skills related to an objective. Label each photo with the date and a brief note that explains the context in which it was taken. When uploading photos to online child portfolios, be sure to include a brief, written explanation of what is taking place in the photo.
• Video- and audio clips—Keep clips short. Capture just enough information to show an example of what the child knows and can do. Lengthy clips are difficult to store and locate.
• Samples of children’s work—Select the writing and art samples that relate best to particular objectives, take a digital photo, upload to online portfolio. Be sure to include a brief statement about the child’s work (i.e. what the child said about the work, context in which it was created, etc.).
• Diagrams or sketches—in the child’s portfolio, include sketches of his or her block structures or other constructions.

Additional documentation tools include: Checklists, participation lists, frequency counts, running records, rating scales, time sampling, behavior inventories and/or interviews.
Ensuring Opportunities to Analyze and Interpret Findings

The final step of the assessment cycle is one of the most important steps, but it is often neglected. It involves summarizing what you know, basing plans for individual children and the group as whole on that knowledge then communicating with those outside your classroom to explain what children are learning. It is at this point that you make a clear link between curriculum and assessment.

You make many decisions each day as you observe children and respond in appropriate ways. Your observations often lead you to ask questions as you reflect on what you learn about a child and consider how best to provide support. Planning for children on the basis of assessment information is an art. There are no formulas or quick solutions. It would be wonderful to be able to say that a child will progress to the next level if you do a particular activity. However, it takes time, practice, and reflection to determine what support a child or group of children needs.

As you make your daily, weekly, and long-range plans, refer to the assessment information you’ve gathered. Your documentation will inform the types of experiences you offer to children. Plan for the particular needs of individual children. Think about what you know about children and the expected outcomes included in Teaching Strategies GOLD, which are tied to the Arizona Early Learning Standards/Arizona Academic Standards for Kindergarten. Use this information to shape what you do each day. Your assessment information and the progressions of development and learning should guide how and when you adapt an activity to make it simpler or more complex.

Involve others in planning for the children in your class. Review assessment information with your paraprofessionals, families, therapists and colleagues to consider how to best guide a child’s learning. Think about the assessment information as you plan changes to your physical environment. Are the materials you include challenging yet manageable for the children in your group? Has your assessment information revealed that a child has a particular interest you want to nurture? Do you need to adapt some materials so that children can use them more easily?

For more information on conducting child assessment, please see page 34 of Arizona’s Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten.

Inter-rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability is the extent to which two observers score an observed situation the same. Put another way, inter-rater reliability is the degree to which an assessment yields a similar score or rating for the same child being assessed by more than one rater. Teaching Strategies states that to be considered “reliable” raters, two individuals observing the same child in the same moment in time must select the same rating, or a score within one level of each other, on a particular assessment item. Teaching Strategies currently offers an online certification in inter-rater reliability at no additional cost to users of GOLD. For more information on this course, contact ADE Early Childhood Education at 602-364-1530.
Early Childhood Assessment Cycle

Collect Assessment Data

Analyze and Interpret Data

Establish Goals and Create Plan to Address Target Areas

Implement Plan and Evaluate Effectiveness

Observation notes, photos, videos, work samples, parent-provided information, formal evaluation results, IEP Present Levels and goal progress

Have we implemented our plan with fidelity? Are the changes having an impact on student learning? Do we need to modify our plan? If so, how?

What instructional practices do we need to improve / eliminate? Which students need what type of support / focus? In which specific domains of learning do we need to place more emphasis? How will we accomplish this? What specific steps will we take and when?

Are we meeting our goals for student learning? What evidence do we have? What patterns and trends are in our data? What factors impacted student learning? What areas will become target areas for improvement?
Teaching Strategies GOLD in Arizona

Administrator Responsibility
ECE Administrators have the added responsibility of creating a quality assessment system. Administrators must ensure that teachers and other related ECE staff are implementing GOLD with fidelity. ECE administrators should also create a local procedures manual that outlines expectations for staff. The ECE administrators should view random student portfolios to ensure quality. Finally, ECE administrators should review data to determine training needs and create a professional development plan that supports successful implementation at the local level.

Creating Local Program Practices and Procedures
Though the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education provides guidance on some aspects of GOLD, local programs will need to determine many policies and procedures that best serve their particular staff, children and families. Documenting and disseminating local practices and procedures to all staff helps ensure consistency and sustainability in the assessment process over time. Written practices and procedures also ensure continuity in the event of staff turnover and can be modified as needed.

Some items that need to be addressed at the local program level include, but are not limited to:
Roles and responsibilities of specific program/district personnel regarding:
- Who has what level of access to child data in GOLD?
- What method/means will be used in collecting and entering documentation in child portfolios?
- Who will finalize data for each child by three checkpoint dates?
- Who will make changes to child portfolios as needed (adding children, transferring, archiving, exiting)?
- What is the assessment process for children not in district classroom (i.e. Head Start, itinerant provider) and who is responsible?
- Who will purchase new online subscriptions throughout the year/ renew each year?

District/Program practices regarding:
- Deadline dates or calendar for any/all tasks related to GOLD
- Use of child name, photos and videos in documentation
- Use of Spanish Language and Literacy objectives
- Granting online access and sharing information with families – extent and format
- Amount and types of documentation required for each objective
- Use of weekly planning forms
- Appropriate use of “Not Observed” rating (**Note*** Choosing “Not Observed” for any objectives/dimensions will prevent a child’s data from being included in federal report to Office of Special Education Programs. Please only use this option in situations of excessive child absences.)
The following section provides information on the Arizona Department of Education/Early Childhood Education unit policies and expectations in the use of GOLD. All features and functions of the GOLD assessment and how to use them are thoroughly explained through a variety of means including narrated training modules, brief tutorials, live webinars and printable instruction guides, all of which are easily accessible through an online account. Shown below are features and functions that require Arizona-specific guidance.

Creating and Managing Child Portfolios

Purchasing Subscriptions
To purchase per-child subscriptions to GOLD online, contact Teaching Strategies at 1-301-634-0818 or email implementation@teachingstrategies.com. New subscriptions can be purchased throughout the year at a pro-rated cost. Teaching Strategies will not provide refunds for unused portfolios.

Managing Child Demographic Information

**SAIS ID #**: Please enter each child’s SAIS ID number in this field. If the child does not yet have a SAIS ID number, you can continue completing this page and return at a later date to add the number when it has been issued. District-generated student ID numbers are not acceptable. See page 23 for more information about SAIS ID numbers.

**CTDS#**: County/Type/District/School. Every program in Arizona using GOLD under the Arizona Department of Education license is required to have a CTDS number. This includes programs that are not considered school districts. Programs can apply for this number through this online application: https://www.azed.gov/schoolfinance/FAQs/CTDS_District/EntityProfileForm.pdf. To find out if your program already has a CTDS number, contact ADESupport@azed.gov or call 602-542-7378.

*CTDS# - Program of Attendance/Service Provider* – the number entered in this field should be the number that has been assigned to the program where the child attends or receives services on a regular basis. This could be a district, a Head Start program, a private child care or a variety of other program types. **This field is required.**

*CTDS# - Responsible District* - a number is required to be entered in this field **ONLY** if a child is the responsibility of a district but is placed or receives services in a program outside of this district. This circumstance most commonly applies to children with special needs.

**Age or Class/Grade**: The Age or Class/Grade field requires that you select an age range for each child. This selection determines the widely held expectations of development and learning that will be applied to each child as you conduct the assessment. **For children age 3 and older**, the child is assigned to a Class type that is designated as **Preschool, Pre-K, or K**. Each child is then assigned a Class/Grade by the teacher. The teacher can choose to assign the child to:
• 3 to 4 year olds (preschool 3 class/grade) (Green),
• 4 to 5 year olds (pre-k 4 class/grade) (Blue),
• or Kindergarten (Purple).

Birth-1 year  1-2 years  2-3 years  3-4 years  4-5 years  5-6 years

The Class/Grade for the children in the Preschool, Pre-K, K classes is **not based on the child’s birth date, but on the class/grade assigned by the teacher for the entire school year.** That’s because children typically remain in the same group with the same teacher for the year. In most programs, all children in a Class will have the same Age or Class/Grade, but the ability to assign the Age or Class/Grade for each child allows programs to have classes with mixed ages.

Even if the child is technically a few months shy of the age level (or a year or two above the age level in the case of a child with developmental delays) the child is in the “class/grade” and her skills are evaluated at the color band of the expectations for that year. If the child’s skills do NOT meet expectations for that color band, the reason may be obvious – she’s a bit young for the grade and we don’t worry if she needs more time. Or, in the case of a child with delays, it is a wonderful way to show she is making progress. In a Kindergarten class, children are held to the expectations of the purple band (Kindergarten) whether they are 4-, 5-, or 6-years-old.

**When you evaluate each child’s skills in order to select the level that best describes these skills related to the objectives and dimensions, you select a level based on your documentation of what a child knows and can do—his skills, knowledge, and behaviors—regardless of the Age or Class/Grade to which the child has been assigned. In that way you are able to see whether a child’s skills are below, meeting, or exceeding expectations.**

**Infants, Toddlers and Twos (birth to 36 months):** For these age groups, the child is added to a group based on age. For example, a 10-month-old child is assigned to Birth to 1 year olds (Red). When she turns 2 in November, she is updated to 1 to 2 year olds (Orange). Thus, the assigned group for a child under the age of 3 might change during the course of a year based on the child’s birth date. vi

**First Day in Program:** This date should reflect the child’s first day of attendance in the program/classroom, even if it was a year or more prior to the current school year in a different program or classroom. This date should reflect the earliest known date that the child began attending preschool in your district.
Program Participation: Though a child may be supported through various funding sources, please select the source that represents the program in which the child is participating.

IEP: This box should only be selected if a child has a current Individualized Education Plan on file in a school district in Arizona. After clicking this box, a field will pop up that requires an “Entry Date to Part B”. This date should reflect the first day that the child received or will receive special education services, not the date that the IEP was written. For instance, if a child’s IEP is created in May but the child does not receive any services until August, the August date is the “Entry Date”. This date will help determine the amount of time a child receives special education services. Even if the IEP was transferred from another district, the date should reflect the first day that the child received special education services. This entry date should only be entered ONCE and will remain the same throughout the duration of a child’s GOLD portfolio.

Free and Reduced Lunch: Please check this box if your program has this information available. First Things First Pre-K Scholarship programs are required to select this box for the children to whom it applies.

Assess this child using the Spanish Language and Literacy Objectives: For children whose home language is Spanish, a Spanish-language version of the language and literacy objectives is available for use to help teachers track language and literacy development in Spanish. These objectives are very similar to the English version of these language and literacy objectives, but adaptations were made to reflect patterns of development unique to Spanish language and literacy. The decision to use these objectives in preschool programs is left to the discretion of the local program. The adult using these objectives to assess a child must be able to fluently read and speak Spanish. The use of these objectives in kindergarten classrooms is not permitted.

Complete Home Language Survey: Completing this survey will help determine whether a child should be assessed using the two additional objectives 37-38 under the area of English Language Acquisition. This information assists teachers in planning ways to support children’s language and literacy acquisition and in basing instruction on children’s strengths and needs. The Home Language Survey should not be completed by teachers without input from parents or other family members. The data gathered with this “Home Language Survey” should not be used to label children or identify them for special services. It should be used to help the teacher determine how to assess children most accurately and support their development and learning. The “Home Language Survey” is a resource of the Teaching Strategies GOLD™ assessment system, not a requirement. Consider incorporating the completion of this survey with the Primary Home Language Other Than English Survey and/or with the screening process for children with special needs.
Documentation and Checkpoints

Self-Care Dimensions for Social Emotional, Objective 1c
The self-care dimensions under the area of Social-Emotional, Objective 1c: Takes Care of Needs Appropriately specifically assesses the abilities of children in the tasks of feeding (1c1), toileting and personal hygiene (1c2) and dressing (1c3). Programs must include these three dimensions in the assessment of all children.

Physical Dimensions
Objectives 4, 5, 6 under the area of Physical include dimensions that break these objectives down into more discrete skills. These dimensions show the sequence of development for walking, running, galloping and skipping, jumping, hopping, throwing, catching and kicking. Using these dimensions can provide greater insight into how a child is developing with regards to the widely held age expectations for these particular skills. Programs must include these three dimensions in the assessment of all children.

Science/Technology, Social Studies and the Arts
The Arizona Early Learning Standards (ELS) serve as the basis on which educators will select ratings. The Early Learning Standard, indicators and examples that align to these GOLD objectives can be viewed within GOLD for further support. For the objectives in these three areas, children can be rated as showing “no evidence yet”, “emerging” or “meeting program expectations”. Collecting and entering documentation for these content areas should follow the same process as all other areas in GOLD and should serve as the evidence to support the chosen ratings.

“Not Yet” versus “Not Observed” Ratings
A colored band in the “Not Yet” column shows that a child of that age is not yet expected to demonstrate a particular skill or behavior. Marking a child at the “Not Yet” level may apply to a child with a disability or developmental delay who is not yet demonstrating a particular skill or behavior.

“Not Observed” should be used only on rare occasions such as if a child has had significant absences during the checkpoint period. Choosing this rating prevents the measurement of progress for children in the areas in which it is selected. “Not Observed” should not be selected in instances where a teacher has not yet collected any documentation or has not attempted to observe this particular objective/dimension. The system requires that a reason be given when this box is selected. Administrators must discuss and define acceptable reasons for choosing this rating with their staff.

***Note*** Choosing “Not Observed” for any objectives/dimensions will prevent a child’s data from being included in federal report to Office of Special Education Programs. Please only use this option in situations of excessive child absences.
Entering Documentation using GOLD online

- The collection of documentation can begin at the point of intake or initial eligibility evaluations of children. Information from evaluations and screenings can serve as documentation for the related objectives and dimensions in GOLD.
- A single observation that documents the language and behaviors of multiple children at a single moment in time can be entered once into Teaching Strategies GOLD online and populated in the portfolios of each child instantly, saving time previously needed to document this same information for each child separately. However, information specific to individual children should be noted within this single observation.
- Further, a single observation that is captured with rich and thorough detail can serve as documentation for multiple objectives and domains. Teachers and paraprofessionals can then edit each portfolio as needed to individualize this documentation for each child. It is important to consider child confidentiality when using these methods. Instead of a child’s name, you can use initials when entering documentation into a single child’s portfolio. Take the necessary steps to protect confidentiality when typing notes and uploading photos that include multiple children.
- In addition to typed notes, digital photos of children, photos of work samples, can be uploaded to a child’s portfolio online and serve as documentation as it pertains to specific objectives and dimensions. Photos and work samples should include context statements to illustrate how it relates to the chosen objectives. Video clips, voice recordings and voice transcription/dictation software and smart phone applications are also efficient ways of documenting children’s development and learning.
- Paraprofessionals, related service providers and parents can observe and document children’s development and learning in a variety of ways that assist teachers. These individuals can provide verbal or written documentation to be entered in the child’s portfolio by the teacher. These same individuals can also be given personal login information to GOLD online that provides access only to the portfolios of particular children. The names of these individuals will appear next to any documentation they enter but they cannot score these observations. Only designated teachers have the ability to score observations.
- Use the “On-the-Spot Observation Recording Tool” available in GOLD online to quickly assess children on 13 objectives. This method can be used for Objectives 4-7 and 15-23. Teachers can print a copy of this recording tool for each objective with children’s names automatically populated on each sheet. See link for more information: [http://www.teachingstrategies.com/content/gold/helpitems/On-the-Spot%20Observation%20Recording%20Tool_bw.pdf](http://www.teachingstrategies.com/content/gold/helpitems/On-the-Spot%20Observation%20Recording%20Tool_bw.pdf)
- A report within GOLD online titled “Documentation by Objective and Dimension” can be found under the “Documentation” tab. This report allows teachers to view the amount of documentation that they have collected and entered for each child under each objective and dimension. Teachers can check in at any time to see which areas they still need to collect and enter documentation and plan accordingly to focus on these particular areas and objectives.
### Checkpoint Dates for Arizona

#### Requirements for Data Submission

Starting in the fall of 2011, districts will no longer be required to upload early childhood assessment data to the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS). NOTE: Children must still have a SAIS ID number. See page 23 for more information. The Arizona Department of Education/ Early Childhood Education unit will now export data directly from Teaching Strategies GOLD online. This requires that all programs have data entered and finalized for every child by three “checkpoint” dates.

#### Checkpoints for 2012-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season/Start Date</th>
<th>Date to begin collecting observations and entering documentation in GOLD Online</th>
<th>Checkpoint Date (Date by which teachers must finalize ratings for all areas in GOLD Online)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Fall</em></td>
<td>1st Day of Program</td>
<td>October 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Winter</em></td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>February 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Spring</em></td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>May 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer (optional)</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>July 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On-going progress monitoring requires that teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers observe children and document these observations on a daily and weekly basis. “Checkpoints” are simply three points in time at which teachers will stop to reflect upon and rate this documentation. All documentation should be entered into GOLD online by these dates to ensure that it is included when ADE/ECE exports the data for all programs. Special education staff will want to use data at approximately the mid IEP juncture to monitor goal progress and at the annual review timeframe to drive strengths, needs and goals for the next IEP.

*First Season in GOLD is “Baseline” Season

Regardless of when a child begins attending preschool or receiving special education services, his/her first season of data in GOLD is considered the baseline season. The purpose of data collected and ratings given at the first checkpoint date is to serve as a baseline for a child by which to measure
progress. Therefore, teachers can enter initial ratings as soon as they have sufficient documentation for all areas for each child. For children that have been evaluated for special needs, information from formal evaluation reports can be used as documentation and should be entered as soon as possible into GOLD. This first set of observations and documentation show us where a child is along the continuum of development before any instruction and intervention has been provided*. In an attempt to collect baseline information and subsequently show the greatest amount of progress, ratings for a child’s first season in GOLD should be based on the earliest observations and information available. **Teachers do not need to wait for the first checkpoint date to finalize their baseline data in GOLD.** After entering ratings in this first season in GOLD, staff can continue entering documentation and ratings to be calculated in the next checkpoint date.

**New Children Enrolling Throughout the School Year**

ADE recognizes that children may enroll in programs throughout the year. For children that start at various points during the year, staff should begin entering documentation as soon as the child starts. This may mean that some documentation exists in two different seasons in GOLD online. For example, if a child began attending a program on September 26th and a teacher begins entering documentation for that child in his/her online portfolio, then any documentation added before October 14th is saved in the Fall season in GOLD. The teacher is not required to finalize data for this particular child by October 14, but rather within 45 days of their first day in the program (see chart below). Any documentation added after the Fall checkpoint date of October 14th for this particular child is saved in Winter in GOLD.

Following this same scenario, the teacher must finalize data for this child by November 9th, 45 calendar days from the child’s first day of September 26th. **This finalized data will serve as the baseline data. This finalized data will also serve as the Winter Checkpoint.** The teacher will NOT finalize data again for this child until February 10th. Documentation can continue to be added and will exist within the Winter season. The next checkpoint for this child will be the Spring season. It is important to remember that all documentation will be available in each child’s portfolio for your review any time you need it.

**Verifying Submission of Finalized Data**

Following each checkpoint date, ADE/ECE will verify that each district has finalized data in all nine areas using the Assessment Status Report. Administrators can generate this same report for individual classes, sites and entire program at any time and teachers can generate this report for their individual classes. This report can be found by clicking on the Checkpoint tab and then selecting “Assessment Status Report”. Teachers and Administrators are encouraged to generate this report at least a week prior to each checkpoint date to verify that data will be finalized for all children on time.
Conducting Assessment with Preschool Children with Special Needs Placed in Least Restrictive Environments

All preschool children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are the responsibility of the school district in which they reside, regardless of their placement, the type or extent of special education services provided and their status as being dually enrolled in two different programs (e.g. Head Start in the morning, district preschool in the afternoon). This responsibility includes ensuring that assessment data for children with IEPs has been entered accurately and on time for children placed in least restrictive environments such as Head Start programs, private placements and children receiving services on an itinerant basis.

The educator or service provider that has the greatest degree of interaction with the child should be responsible for completing the GOLD assessment. This should be verified by the team that serves the child as to who will have primary responsible for final ratings based on data that is entered from all team members. Document the name(s) of the person(s) responsible for conducting the assessment in the IEP. In the case of Head Start, community education classroom and private preschool, this would typically be the classroom teacher. In the case of itinerant services, this would typically be the speech-language pathologist. In all cases, district administrators can be given access to the online portfolios of children with special needs.

In the case of children enrolled in both Head Start and district preschool, dually-enrolled children should only have ONE online portfolio in GOLD. Staff from both programs should agree upon and document their process and procedures for mutually completing assessments for these children. This information should be included in district/Head Start Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). Staff from the district and the Head Start should reach consensus regarding the checkpoint ratings chosen for children enrolled in both programs.

Sharing Access to Child Portfolios

Each child should only have one online portfolio in GOLD. Program administrators can grant online access to multiple professionals that are working with particular children if desired, including related service providers and paraprofessionals. Using functions such as Team Central, these professionals can contribute documentation electronically to a child’s portfolio. If a child in your program also attends another program on a weekly basis, please communicate with this program to ensure that only one online GOLD portfolio will be maintained for this child.

Verifying Finalized Data of Children with IEPs in Placements Outside of District

In the case of preschool children with special needs, staff of the program where children are placed will have full access to the portfolios of these particular children, enabling them to enter documentation and rate children’s progress. Since the responsibility for meeting assessment requirements ultimately belongs to the school district in which the child resides, administrators at the responsible district can be given access to these particular online portfolios. If a child’s GOLD portfolio is not maintained under a district license, districts must verify that the Head Start or other placement has met this requirement at all three checkpoint dates for any children with IEPs placed in these programs. While districts may choose to request hard copies of child data from Head Start (e.g. Individual Child Report or other report type), an online feature in GOLD enables district administrator to
generate reports for the children placed in other programs. This feature is intended to simplify a district’s ability to verify that GOLD data has been submitted as well as make use of the data in IEP reviews and communicate this information with parents. Using this particular feature, district administrators are only able to see finalized data for these particular children and are not able to enter any information. Other methods, such as Team Central, exist to allow greater levels of access and communication between districts and LRE placements. See directions below to gain and/or grant this access between a district and a LRE placement. This enables both the district and the program serving the child to be accountable for the assessment process.

If your district is responsible for a child that is placed in a program outside of your district, an administrator within your district may receive access to this child’s finalized data and various reports within GOLD. Please email Holly Ford at holly.ford@azed.gov with the name of the administrator that needs to receive this access.

If a child is placed in a program that is not within a district as his/her least restrictive environment:
1. Under “Administration” tab, select “Manage Children”, “Children”.
2. Find name of child to whom you are granting the district administrator access, then click on “GO” to the right of their name.
3. Click on drop-down button on right side of screen labeled “Action”, then click “Edit Details”
4. Beneath section labeled “Program Participation”, see drop-down menu shown in screen shot below.
5. From the drop-down menu to the right of the text “If this child is placed in your program....”, choose the responsible school district.

Districts are responsible for the cost of each child subscription for children with IEPs unless other arrangements have been agreed upon between both programs. Such arrangements should be established and documented, along with roles and responsibilities of each program, in a Memorandum of
Preventing Duplicate Portfolios
The existence of more than one portfolio per child is problematic to accurately reporting data. Before creating a child portfolio for newly-enrolled children, please check with the child’s previous district and/or ADE Early Childhood Education unit to verify whether a portfolio already exists and can be transferred to your district/program. If a child is enrolled in your program as well as another program in Arizona (dually enrolled), please communicate with staff from the other program to agree upon a process and procedures for sharing a portfolio. See pages 18-19 to for information on sharing access to a single portfolio with another program.

Archiving Child Portfolios
If a child leaves a program, do not delete his/her portfolio. Child portfolios can be saved in the online system through a process called ‘archiving’. This simply means that all of the documentations and ratings collected on a child can be stored online even if the child has left the program. This is an important feature of GOLD that allows a child’s portfolio to be reactivated if he/she returns to the program or enrolls in another district within Arizona. (See “Transferring Portfolios” below.) Archiving portfolios must take place through Administrator access to GOLD.

Archiving portfolios of children who have un-enrolled also allows the program to now use this “open slot” to start a new portfolio for a new child without requiring the purchase of a new subscription. Each program has the ability to archive a certain percentage of their total purchased subscriptions at no additional cost. After reaching this maximum number of archived portfolios, Teaching Strategies charges a small fee for each additional archived portfolio.

Transferring Portfolios
If a child is known to be transferring from one program or district to another that is also located in Arizona, this portfolio can be transferred to the new program/district. Click on link to be directed to the electronic request form: http://www.azed.gov/early-childhood/files/2011/11/gold-child-portfolio-transfer-request-fy-13n.pdf.

Creating New GOLD Portfolios for Soon-to-Be Kindergarteners
Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool was approved by the Arizona Board of Education for programs serving Birth through Kindergarten. While it is NOT a required assessment instrument for kindergarten, it is an option for local education agencies (LEA) to consider. In instances when an LEA has not chosen to use GOLD in kindergarten, information collected at the preschool level should be shared with the family and considered part of the child’s educational record. Evidence collected at the preschool level can be used to provide kindergarten staff with information about a child’s educational needs and thus inform instruction and intervention methodologies. Information about a child’s developmental growth and work samples can become part of the quality kindergarten transition plan.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires data on preschool children with special needs that have received special education for at least
6 months. As a result, preschool children that are identified during the Spring season in GOLD and will be transitioning to Kindergarten in the fall are not required to have a GOLD portfolio created. These children will not have the opportunity to participate in preschool special education for at least 6 months, therefore no data will be submitted to OSEP for these particular children. This exception ONLY applies to the use of GOLD for preschool children with special needs. However, it is recommended that programs create and maintain GOLD portfolios for these children as a means of providing comprehensive information on their development to parents and kindergarten teachers at the conclusion of their participation in preschool special education. Information and data collected in GOLD is part of a child’s educational record and should be maintained accordingly.

Conducting Assessment with Children Receiving Itinerant or Home-based Services

Many preschool children in Arizona receive special education services on an itinerant or home-based basis only. This means that children do not participate in a preschool classroom in which a teacher can observe their development on a daily basis. In this scenario, the related service provider or home-based visitor may be the only professional that sees the child regularly and is responsible for conducting the assessment. This service option will require ECE providers to be intentional, thoughtful and creative in completing the GOLD assessment. Below are suggestions for service providers responsible for conducting assessments:

- Plan therapy sessions based on play activities so that developmental skills might naturally be observed, independent of direct interventions. Observe for multiple measures during a single activity.
- Replace a few individual 1:1 sessions for children with services for children in small groups and in various settings, e.g. park, library activity groups. This would allow for the observation of skills, generalization of skills, and opportunities for peer interactions. Set up play groups offering typical children a preschool environment as typical peers. If available, spend one day per week providing services in the classroom/center/common site to allow data gathering in a typical daily environment.
- Explain to parents the type of information you want to gather about their children and why. Create a plan to regularly collect information from parents via email, phone, in person or other means. Ask families to share photos, drawings, or other examples of a child’s skills to inform ratings of specific measures.
- Use intake information to inform ratings, e.g. referrals from Head Start might include information that addresses all developmental domains. Include questions on intake forms for parents and referring teachers targeted to specific measures.
- Think about where children spend their time and identify potential collaborators that can share observations, work samples, photos, etc. (i.e. child care provider, teacher at faith-based center).
- During IEP development, under “Time,” identify a specific number of days for direct sessions and a specific number of days for consultation/collaboration. Plan to work a portion of the time in a variety of settings and identify these settings on the IEP. Identify in the IEP that one week a month is dedicated to diagnostic observations of a child.

These suggestions were adapted from California’s Napa County Office of Education. More suggestions can be seen at: draccess.org/assessors/guidancefordrp/StrategiesToSupportSLPs.html
Mandated Federal Reporting for Children with Special Needs

Federal Reporting to OSEP (Office of Special Education Programs)
During the course of the program year and especially at the end of the year, a Part B Exit Request must be completed for particular children with IEPs. This process is essential to ensuring that assessment data will be reported to the Office of Special Education Programs. ONLY children with IEPs that have received special education services for at least six months and are exiting preschool special education because: The child has been dismissed from special education AND/OR the child will be transitioning to kindergarten (with or without an IEP). For step-by-step instructions with screen shots click on link: http://www.azed.gov/early-childhood/files/2012/05/gold-nuggets-issue-7-may-2012.pdf

Important to Note:
• This process must be completed by a person with Administrator access to GOLD. To support Administrators in this process, teachers can indicate online which children need to be exited from their classes. See Page 4 of Screen Shots for instructions.
• Before an Administrator can process this Exit Request, each child needing to be exited must have finalized checkpoint data for each area for two checkpoint periods and no objectives/dimensions can be marked “Not Observed”.
• Only children that have at least six months between their Part B Entry and Exit dates are considered eligible for reporting to OSEP.
• Completing an exit request in GOLD for a child does not mean that the child’s data is deleted from the system. This process simply flags the child’s data to be included when federal reports are run.
• If the child is continuing in preschool but is no longer receiving special education services, the child’s portfolio is maintained and can continue to be used for progress monitoring in the system even though they have been “exited” for federal reporting purposes.
• If the child is transitioning to kindergarten, please wait until Spring data has been finalized. Then, after processing the Part B Exit, the child portfolio should be archived.
• If the child’s status is not changing at the end of the program year and they will be returning to the preschool special education program, finalization of the checkpoint data is the only action required. NO PART B EXIT REQUEST IS NECESSARY.

Exceptional Student Services (ESS) Data Review
The data reviewed for unified and elementary school districts now include Early Childhood Outcomes/GOLD information (SPP/APR Indicator 7). The data review influences the PEA monitoring type that will occur in Year 4 of the monitoring cycle. Criteria are based on whether or not a district is meeting the required checkpoint deadlines for early childhood data submission. For more information see Monitoring Alert: http://www.azed.gov/special-education/files/2012/03/monitoringalert-ece.pdf
SAIS ID Numbers

SAIS, the Student Accountability Information System, is the current student data system at the Arizona Department of Education. The purpose of a SAIS Identification number is to serve as the single unique child identifier. In the event that a child shares the same name and even birth date with another child, the SAIS ID number enables ADE to differentiate between these two children. In order to collect and track data over time for each child in Arizona, it is crucial that SAIS ID numbers be entered accurately in GOLD. District Administrators and Teachers, please verify that every child you serve has a SAIS ID number and that it has been entered in GOLD correctly.

Preschool programs such as community education, tuition-based, First Things First, Head Start and private child care programs can now receive SAIS ID numbers for children. If your program uses an electronic database to manage student information, it may be possible to generate SAIS ID numbers for your students through an automated process.

To get started, programs must first verify or request to receive the following items:

1. A CTDS Number assigned by ADE
2. At least one staff member with access to Common Logon (a web-based portal that requires a username and password)
3. SAIS Online as a menu option within this Common Logon account

If you need assistance verifying or requesting the above items for your program, please contact ADE Support Center at ADExSupport@azed.gov or call 602-542-7378. You may also contact the ADE Support Center for assistance in generating SAIS ID numbers for the preschool children in your program.
Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Who is qualified to conduct the assessment?**
   All those that are in contact with the child can contribute to observations/work samples. Collecting quality data may require additional training from those with more experience. Parent interview/parent observations should be treated as valid information that can contribute to ratings. One person is designated to finalize ratings based on observations that are recorded in GOLD.

2. **When must children be assessed?**
   On-going progress monitoring requires that teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers observe children and document these observations on a daily and weekly basis. “Checkpoints” are simply three points in time at which teachers will stop to reflect upon and rate this documentation. See Checkpoint tab in GOLD or refer to chart on page 16 for exact dates. All documentation should be entered into GOLD online by these dates to ensure that it is included when The Arizona Department of Education/ Early Childhood Education unit exports the data for all programs.

3. **If a child has been privately placed by his/her parents, are we required to assess this child?**
   Any preschool child with an IEP must be assessed regardless of their placement. For all other children, programs that do not receive state or federal funding may choose to use GOLD to assess children.

4. **If a child is only receiving itinerant therapy services, does he/she have to be assessed?**
   YES. Any child with an IEP must have assessment data recorded in GOLD. See page 21 for guidance. Collecting parent observations, child care teacher and other adults that interact with the child are valid methods of collecting data.

5. **Why are districts required to enter data for fall, winter and spring (or beginning, middle and end of IEP)?**
   Arizona is building a state-wide system based on best practices that drive instruction and program improvement. By rating documentation in the winter (mid-year), teachers can reflect on the data to make instruction or program modifications that will support each child toward the next level of progress during the remainder of the program year. In the case of children with special needs, this mid-year rating will support documentation of progress toward IEP goals or assist in developing the next IEP.

6. **What does it mean when we say a child has “exited”?**
   This means that a child has been dismissed from special education by the IEP team, has transitioned to Kindergarten, moved out of state or has withdrawn from preschool and not enrolled in another Arizona program. See page 22 for more information. If the child continues in an Arizona preschool program after being dismissed from special education, data should continue to be collected as a means to monitor the child’s progress, alert to developmental issues that hinder the child’s development and be a means of reporting progress to parents.
7. Can I transfer a child portfolio to a new program or district if a child moves?
Yes. See page 20 for instructions on how to transfer an online portfolio to a child’s new program or district.

8. I Finalized Data in Early Spring for New Students….Now What?
Programs have 45 days to finalize data for children that start at various points during the year. Children who started less than 45 days before the Winter checkpoint date will have their first set of finalized data in early Spring (late February/early March). Since finalizing data early in the Spring season means they won’t have to finalize again by the regularly scheduled Spring checkpoint date, this presents the issue of what should be done with this child’s portfolio for the remaining months of the school year. It is recommended that teachers continue collecting observations and assign preliminary levels for these children in May. Setting preliminary levels allows teachers and administrators to generate reports and measure progress made by these newly-enrolled children at the end of the school year.

9. How do I know if I am rating children’s progress accurately?
See page 8 for information on taking an inter-rater reliability certification course within GOLD online at no cost.

10. Where can I find more training and support in GOLD online?
   a. Under the Professional Development tab, click on “Courses” to view four narrated training modules.
   b. Under the Professional Development tab, click on “Sandbox” to view a practice portal.
   c. Click on GOLD symbol with magnifying glass to the left of the screen to enter the real ADE site.
   d. Click on yellow link titled “Record Orientation” to view a previous webinar.
   e. Click on “A Teacher’s Quick-Start Guide to TS” icon.
References


v Teaching Strategies GOLD Objectives for Development and Learning, Introduction pg. xxii

vi Teaching Strategies GOLD, online resource library

Contact Information
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