

## Pre-Kindergarten Assessment Tool Kit

Dear Teachers,

A question many have asked is, “What report card do we use for our pre-kindergarten children?” Assessments and progress reporting (APR) in early childhood education are not topics we take lightly in the Southern Union. There is much debate in the world of early childhood education over what is useful and appropriate for young children. The Southern Union Early Childhood Advisory and two subcommittees have spent some time over the past few years reviewing research and practices on this, and have now created a Tool Kit for evaluating and assessing development, tracking progress, and sharing it with parents.

First, let’s understand together what ‘assessment’ is. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Educators in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), it is “A systematic procedure for obtaining information from observation, interviews, portfolios, projects, tests, and other sources that can be used to make judgments about children’s development.” What this tells us is... there’s a variety of appropriate practices that should be used in a variety of ways for young children. And, we in the Southern Union agree with this. Data and information should be collected in a way that is developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate ways.

Let’s also remember what the point of assessment and information collected from ongoing assessments enable teachers and parents to learn more about their progress over time, plan for their continued learning, and report effectively to each other.

So, to do this...

- 1—To learn more about the children: What are the children thinking and doing?
- 2—To track their progress over time: Are they making reasonable performance?
- 3—To plan for their continued learning: How can we nurture more growth and development?
- 4—To report effectively to each other: Am I making connections with parents? Am I communicating why I’m doing what I’m doing with their children and program?

In this Pre-Kindergarten Assessment Tool Kit, you will find tools for maintaining a portfolio of authentic assessments, that is, assessments of children engaged in personally meaningful tasks, in real-life contexts, and grounded in naturally occurring learning opportunities. Authentic assessments encompass evaluating motivation, achievement, and attitudes. And, authentic assessments provide information to be used to guide teaching and enhance learning. (Spotlight on Young Children and Assessment -NAEYC© 2004)

In this Pre-Kindergarten Assessment Tool Kit, you will find tools for tracking progress through the standard skills, as well as obtaining anecdotal notes from parents, evaluating developmental levels, collecting objective observations and recording dialogues, identifying different approaches to learning, and collecting children’s work samples and photographs of their activities.

Now for a few notes and instructions regarding the Tool Kit:

You should maintain a portfolio of authentic assessments, i.e., the Pre-Kindergarten Assessment Tool Kit, for each pre-kindergarten child.

The 'Nuts and Bolts' section of the Kit provides the basic tools we recommend being used at a minimum.

Collecting 'Work Samples' from each child is essential. This is in no means asking for teachers to give worksheets or paper-and-pencil tasks to the children--that should be kept to a bare minimum! But, on the occasion in which they're drawing portraits of their family members in a lesson activity on relationships, for example, that could be a work sample to save in the portfolio. Since much of the children's work is in their play, taking photos of them working in a learning center (e.g. in the block area or at the art table with play dough), printing a copy of the photo and placing it as a work sample in their portfolios is also highly recommended.

Finally, the 'Teacher Tools' section contains additional tools which add to the variety teachers should use in their authentic assessments.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: The enclosed forms are not to be thought of as 'report cards' in any way should any one of them be considered a device to determine if a child passes into kindergarten or not.**

The only tools we regret we cannot supply teachers with are cell phone recorders. We can't be certain that every teacher has access to one whether it is on her cell phone or belongs to the school for general use among the staff, or comes from some other source.

Last but not least, we recommend that teachers share the beginning of the year (perhaps at the beginning-of-the-year Open House) to make a brief but meaningful presentation on what an assessment system looks like for pre-kindergarteners of the Southern Union, i.e., the Pre-Kindergarten Assessment Tool Kit —Share it with parents, colleagues, and constituents who care. Point out the learning goals to be tracked, the parents' part in reporting observations, and have a personal anecdote (see the options) that can help them to understand more about developmental practices in early childhood education.

We wish you a wonderful school year, and want you to feel free to share feedback with us regarding this new Pre-Kindergarten Assessment Tool Kit.

Sincerely,

Tamara Libonati and four Southern Early Childhood Advisory Members  
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And, special thanks to additional Task Force Member, Tiffany Swinney