Welcome to the seventh issue of *New Developments*, a quarterly e-newsletter from SRI International’s Center for Education and Human Services. Earlier issues are available on our website. In this issue, we highlight a review of best practices for implementing a kindergarten assessment process.

**Best Practices for Kindergarten Assessment**

Because school readiness is related to later educational outcomes, states and school districts across the United States are increasingly focusing policies and funding on building and improving early childhood systems. To inform accountability efforts, many states have implemented or are developing some form of a kindergarten assessment process in order to achieve the following:

- Understand the school readiness of kindergartners
- Support transition and alignment between early education programs and K-12 schools
- Guide individual instruction for children

In a report to Washington State’s Department of Early Learning (DEL), SRI provided recommendations for developing a statewide kindergarten assessment process (KAP) based on a review of literature related to assessment practices, including position papers, policy briefs, and journal articles. SRI also based its recommendations on two surveys: a survey of stakeholders about their priorities for a KAP and a survey of schools and districts about their current KAP practices. Articulating a set of best practices of an assessment process, understanding the priorities of stakeholders for a KAP, and knowing the current KAP processes used by districts before developing a KAP is more likely to help states develop a KAP that will produce more accurate and useful information about children’s skills and competencies. Below are some of the most important best practices found in the literature review. Recommendations for how best practices, stakeholder priorities, and current practices should guide development of Washington’s KAP are available in the full report.

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**Best Practices For Development of a Kindergarten Assessment Process**

1. **Benefit children and do no harm.** An assessment process should identify a child’s positive skills and unique strengths that can serve as a basis to build new and better skills. It should not be used to keep children from entering kindergarten or used to deny children opportunities or services.

2. **Use only for the purpose(s) for which the assessment process is designed.** The purpose(s) of the assessment process must be clear up front before tools can be selected. Purpose is important because assessment tools are typically developed for a single purpose and cannot be easily used for other purposes.

3. **Collect information on multiple areas of development.** Measures should include a range of skills, across multiple areas of development. The National Education Goals Panel (NEGp) identified five areas of children’s development and learning that are important to school success: (1) physical well-being and motor development, (2) social and emotional development, (3) language development, (4) approaches to learning, and (5) cognition and general knowledge.

4. **Include multiple sources of information, including family participation and input.** Gathering information from multiple sources, such as kindergarten teachers, trained assessors, parents, and early care and education (ECE) providers, is recommended for best understanding young children’s skills and competencies.

5. **Make appropriate for the population being assessed, including being culturally and linguistically responsive.** Assessment processes should be designed and validated for use with the ages, cultures, languages, socioeconomic levels, and abilities and disabilities of the children who are being assessed. Using assessment tools or processes that are inappropriate may underestimate children’s true abilities and competencies and thus lead to inaccurate conclusions.