



National Exploration of Emotional/Behavioral Detection in School Screening Project

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State policies related to school readiness assessment practices

Background

In the past two decades, early childhood education has expanded significantly as federal funding and preschool attendance rates have continued to increase.¹ As a result, school leadership and policy makers have become interested in the skills associated with successful transitions into formal education, specifically school readiness skills. School readiness has shown to be associated with multiple student outcomes, including academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral health.² School readiness assessments have been recognized as a means of measuring individual student skills to inform instruction, policy, and systems-level decisions. In addition to academic skills, school readiness assessments typically measure physical development and social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) functioning.³ Despite the potential uses for school readiness assessments, previous studies found that many states lack guidance policies related to school readiness assessment practices.³ Therefore, the purpose of this project was to provide an updated review of the status of state school readiness assessment policies, as well as evaluate components of the assessment practices.

Review of State-Level Policy Documents

To complete the review of state policies, two online searches were conducted in July and August of 2016 and January of 2018. State-level policy documents related to school readiness assessment, kindergarten entry assessment, and pre-K/K screening practices were considered if they were created by or specifically for the state department of education. The most recent school readiness assessment policy documents, which were primarily for the 2017-2018 school year, were then coded to identify key features of the practices for each state.

Key Findings

Most states and the District of Columbia (86%) included school readiness assessment practices in state-level policy documents. Further analysis of the policy documents from these states found that:

- **Social, emotional, and behavioral functioning** was the domain most frequently evaluated by school readiness assessments.

Domains Assessed in School Readiness Assessments	
Domain	# of States
SEB functioning	41
Language	40
Physical/motor development	39
Literacy/reading	37
Executive functioning	30
Early math skills	29
Overall cognitive functioning	25
Creativity	5

¹Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Weisenfeld, G. G., Kasmin, R., DiCrecchio, N., & Horowitz, M. (2018). *The State of Preschool 2017: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

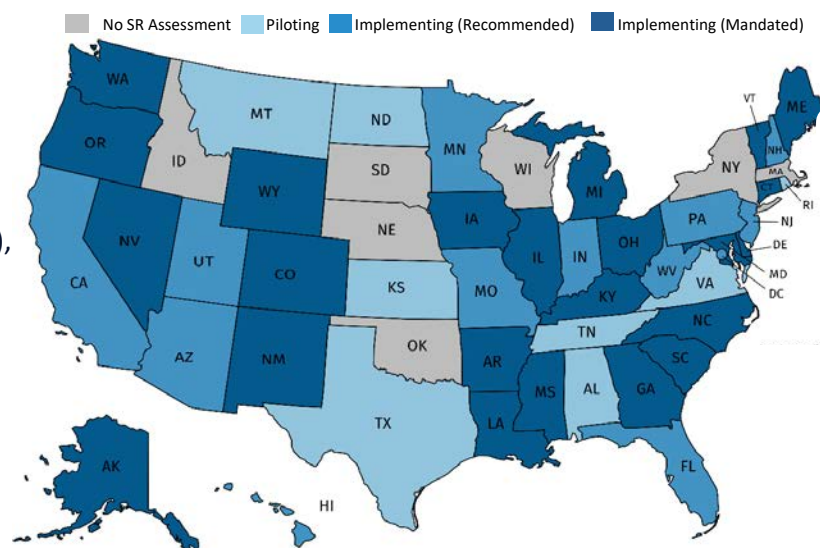
²Romano, E., Babchishin, L., Pagani, L. S., & Kohen, D. (2010). School readiness and later achievement: Replication and extension using a nationwide Canadian survey. *Developmental Psychology, 46*(5), 995-1007. doi:10.1037/a0018880

³Daily, S., Burkhauser, M., & Halle, T. (2010). A review of school readiness practices in the states: Early learning guidelines and assessments. *Child Trends Early Childhood Highlights, 1*(3). Retrieved from www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_06_18_ECH_SchoolReadiness.pdf

- Skills associated with **language, physical development, reading, math, executive functioning, and overall cognitive functioning** were also assessed in most states using school readiness assessments.

- The majority of states (64%) **administered assessments in kindergarten**, while others administered in preschool (11%) or in both preschool and kindergarten (25%).

State-level Implementation and Mandate of School Readiness Assessments



- About half (52%) of the states utilized either a **standardized assessment** or an **assessment specifically developed for the state**. Other states used an assessment developed by a consortium of states (17%), offered districts a choice of measures (11%), or used multiple measures (5%) to evaluate school readiness.

- More than half (57%) of states used **observational assessments**, whereas the remaining states used performance-based assessments (18%) or both observational and performance-based assessments (25%).

- School readiness assessments were typically **administered by classroom teachers**.
- Only a **few states mentioned school psychologists or student support personnel involvement** in school readiness assessment procedures.
- Half of the states (50%) **did not explicitly specify a response** to the assessment data or students identified as at risk. The most common responses to school readiness assessment data were to provide tiered interventions or supports (48%) and/or to notify parents or guardians (48%).

For Additional Information

Koriakin, T., Connolly, K., Auerbach, E., & Chafouleas, S. M. (2019). *Summary of State Policies Related to School Readiness Assessment Practices*. Manuscript under review.



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