

Summary of State Policies Related to School Readiness Assessment Practices

Taylor Koriakin Emily Auerbach Amy Briesch Sandra Chafouleas

Katherine Connolly Alexandra Cascio Sarah Charbonneau Danielle Stern

INTRODUCTION

- Preschool is rapidly being incorporated into public education schools with rapid growth in funding and development for public preschool programs.¹
- As the scope of public education shifts to include younger ages, evaluation of school readiness (SR) has grown.
- There is not a universal definition of SR²; however, it generally includes skills across domains including academic, social, emotion, and/or behavioral functioning.
- The purposes of SR assessment vary greatly including screening individual student strengths and weaknesses, planning whole class instruction, and evaluating the effectiveness of early childhood programs or public preschool.
- According to a 2010 review, 29 states had state-wide SR assessment procedures.³
- The purpose of the present study is to provide an updated review of state policy guidance related to school readiness assessment practices.

METHODS

Policy document identification

- An initial search to identify documents related to SR assessment, kindergarten entry assessment, and pre-K/K screening practices was conducted in July-August 2016.
- Two research assistants conducted Google searches and searches of state department of education websites. Searches were conducted independently for each of the 50 states plus Washington DC.
- Additional searches were conducted in January 2017 to identify updated documents for the 2017-2018 school year.
- For states with no updated documents for the 2017-2018 school year, documents from the most recent school year available were utilized.
- A coding scheme was developed to identify key features of SR assessment practices.

RESULTS

- Table 1 provides information related to status of statewide implementation of SR assessment. Forty-five states (88%) are either implementing or piloting SR assessment measures.
- Figure 1 presents data related to when students engage in SR assessment. Measures are most frequently administered in kindergarten with 67% of states implementing conducting SR assessments in this timeframe.
- Figure 2 presents domains evaluated by SR assessments. Domains most frequently assessed are social, emotional, behavioral (SEB), language, physical/motor development, and academic skills.
- A majority of states ($n = 25$, 56%) utilize observational assessments. Eight states (18%) utilize performance-based assessments and 11 states (24%) use a combination of observational and performance-based assessments.
- Of the 45 states implementing or piloting SR measures, 23 (51%) do not explicitly specify a response to student screening or assessment data.

Figure 1. Timing of SR Assessment

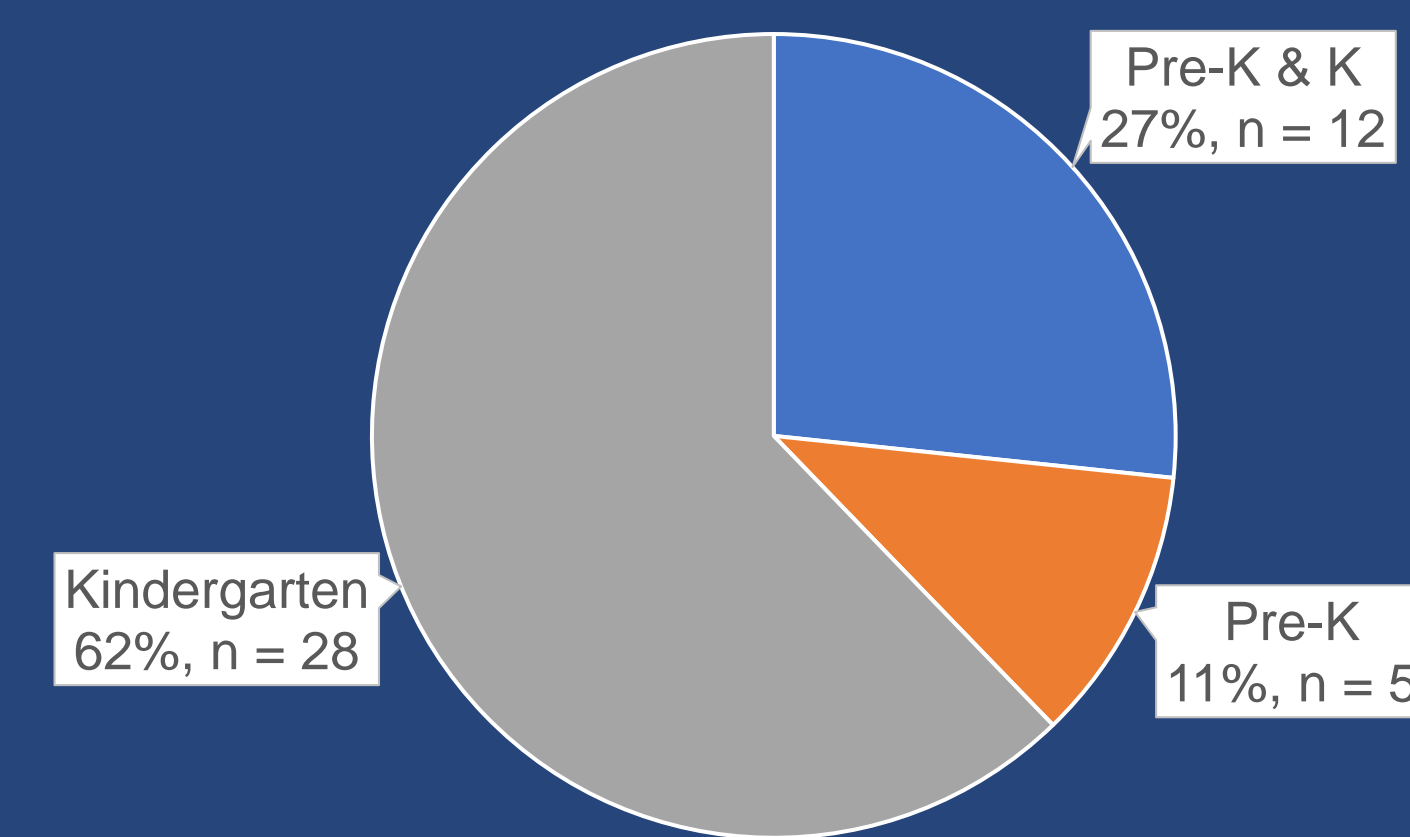


Figure 2. Domains Assessed by SR Assessments

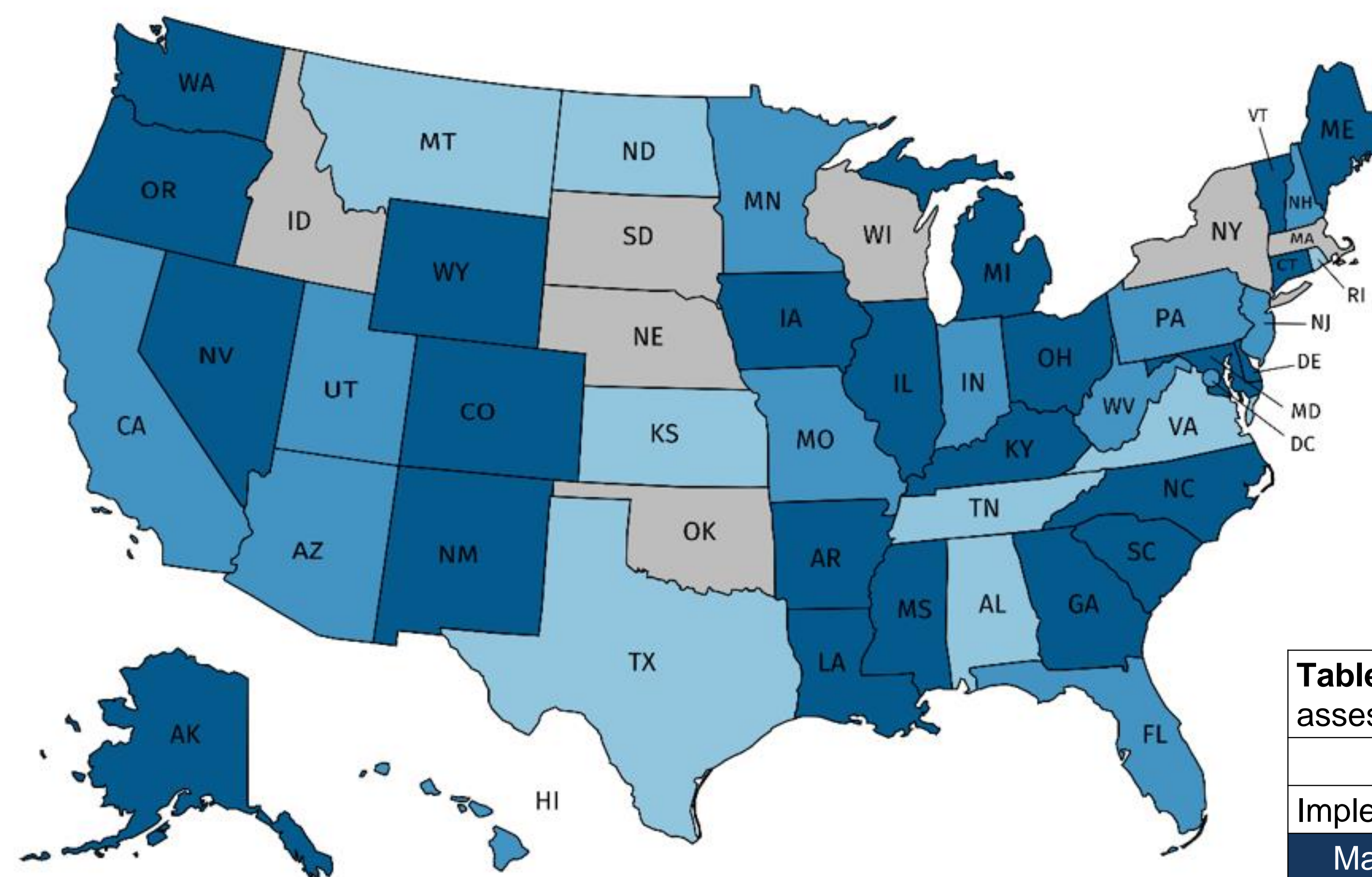
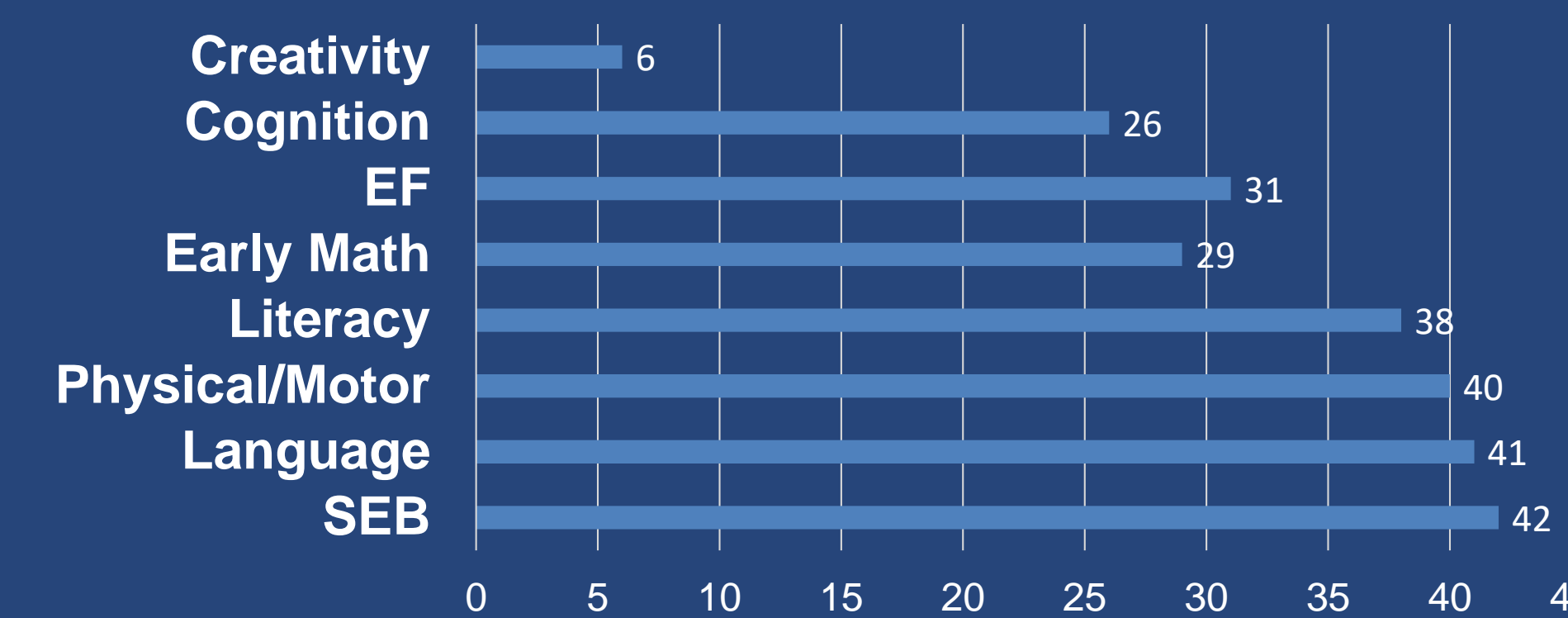


Table 1. Status of state-level SR assessment policy

Status	N (%)
Implementing	34 (67%)
Mandated	22 (43%)
Recommended	12 (24%)
Piloting	10 (20%)
No SR Assessment	7 (14%)

METHODS (cont.)

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

Policy documents were included in our review if assessment practices met the following inclusion criteria:

- Occurs in preschool or kindergarten
- Targets general populations, not specific populations (e.g., special education preschool)
- Measures skills across domains (e.g., kindergarten reading screening practices were not included)
- Explicitly states that the purpose of assessment is to evaluate SR

DISCUSSION

- Findings indicate national growth in SR assessment practices; for the 2009-2010 school year only 29 states had state-wide SR assessment procedures³ compared to 45 states identified in the current review.
- Only six states do not have state-wide assessment practices in line with our definition of SR assessment; however, all of these states engage in some early childhood assessment including literacy screening or preschool developmental screening.
- The landscape related to SR assessment is rapidly changing and shifting with several states implementing one assessment practice while also developing new assessments or participating in multi-state SR consortiums to develop new measures.
- While states have expanded SR assessment practices, policies related to responding to student assessment remain limited. Few states mention a response to screening data or students identified as at risk in policy documents. It is important that school staff implementing SR measures have clear guidance related to the purpose assessment and response to assessment data to best meet student needs.