

Outcomes
Study

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE
Gold Standard

Linking Curriculum and Assessment

*The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool
and Teaching Strategies GOLD®*

Summary Findings of a Study Conducted on the Use of
The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool in Conjunction with
Teaching Strategies GOLD®

Linking Curriculum and Assessment

The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool
and *Teaching Strategies GOLD®*

Study Summary

This paper describes research exploring a comprehensive authentic assessment tool—*Teaching Strategies GOLD®*—as used in conjunction with *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool*. A nationally representative sample of 3- and 4-year-olds (N=11,280) was studied within an academic year, all of which used both *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* and *Teaching Strategies GOLD®*. Teachers collected assessment information as children engaged in daily activities and rated their progress in developmental and content areas. Research findings indicated that *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* effectively detected children’s growth and development over time. Further, children enrolled in programs using *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* made expected progress on knowledge, skills, and behaviors in the areas of development and learning assessed by *Teaching Strategies GOLD®*.

Introduction

Appropriate child assessment linked to well planned and implemented curriculum is a critical component of any high-quality early education program (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003). Effective assessment can aid in the early identification of children with developmental delays, other disabilities, and unique needs (McConnell, 2000; Sandall, McLean, & Smith, 2000; Snow & Van Hemel, 2008). It can inform teaching and contribute to better outcomes for children of all economic, cultural, language, or disability statuses (Hirsh-Pasek, Kochanoff, Newcombe, & de Villiers, 2005; Snow & Van Hemel, 2008). Well-designed assessment measures are based on findings from research, meet accepted standards for reliability and validity, and are appropriate for the diversity of children with whom they are used (Gullo, 2005; Snow & Van Hemel, 2008).

Increasing attention is being paid to the benefits of assessment that is embedded within a specific curriculum (Barnett, Jung, Yarosz, Thomas, Hornbeck, Stechuk, & Burns, 2008; Meisels, Jablon, Marsden, Dichtelmiller, & Dorfman, 2001). Authentic, curriculum-embedded assessments, like *Teaching Strategies GOLD*®, which occur within typical classroom activities, have several advantages: teachers' instructional practices can be improved, opportunities to individualize instruction can be increased, and state and agency standards can be met through curriculum–assessment links (Grisham-Brown, Hallam, & Brookshire, 2006). This paper describes research findings on a comprehensive, authentic assessment system—*Teaching Strategies GOLD*®—as used in conjunction with *The Creative Curriculum*® for Preschool.

The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool is a widely used, comprehensive curriculum based on child development and early education research and theory (Dodge, Durham, Duckett, & Stover, 2011). The components of the curriculum guide teachers through planning and implementing developmentally appropriate, content-rich programs for children with diverse backgrounds and skill levels. The curriculum is based on the same 38 objectives for development and learning as *Teaching Strategies GOLD*®; these objectives include predictors of school success and are linked to essential early learning standards. Embedded within the curriculum guides and resources are frequent references to these objectives, including opportunities for daily, guided observation of children's progress toward learning objectives.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® is an authentic assessment measure designed for teachers to gather information on children ages birth through kindergarten. Although the measure is closely aligned with *The Creative Curriculum*® for Preschool, it can be used in any early education program that is using a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Previous research studies provide support for the reliability and validity of *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® (Kim, Lambert, & Burts, 2013; Kim

.....

& Smith, 2010; Lambert, 2012; Lambert, Kim, & Burts, in press; Lambert, Kim, Taylor, & McGee, 2010; Soderberg, Stull, Cummings, Nolen, McCutchen, & Joseph, 2013).

The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool and *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* are based on 36 objectives for development and learning organized within the areas of Social–Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Mathematics. Two additional objectives relate to English-language acquisition. Objectives were developed from research-based predictors of school and life success.

Methods

This paper describes the educational progress over one academic year of 3- and 4-year-old children enrolled in Head Start, child care, and school-based programs that used both *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* and *Teaching Strategies GOLD®*. Teachers were trained to use *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* and completed an interrater reliability check. A stratified random sample was used that reflected current estimates of the ethnic and racial diversity of the national population of children ages birth to 5. A total of 11,280 children were included in the study. Approximately 50% were female and 50% male; 35% were eligible for free or reduced lunch; 13% had an IEP or IFSP; and 30% were English-language learners (ELLs).

Analyses and Findings

Growth curve modeling, a special case of hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), was used to build the statistical models for the study. Separate models were created using children's scale scores (e.g., Social–Emotional, Physical, Literacy, etc.). The results of the growth curve models were used to estimate fall, winter, and spring scale scores to examine whether *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* ratings can accurately detect children's growth and development. Ratings of the 3-year-old children increased about 80 scale-score points across the academic year. Ratings for 4-year-olds increased about 100 scale-score points. Findings also showed that a child's age in months predicted both initial development and learning status and growth rate for all areas of development and learning as expected. Children's knowledge, skills, and behaviors were rated about 4 or 5 points higher at every additional month of age.

Other variables were included in the models as covariates to statistically control for initial differences that prior research identifies as factors influencing children's development and learning. The covariates were gender, economic disadvantage (free or reduced lunch), special needs (having an IEP or IFSP), and ELL status. Boys, children with special needs, children receiving free/reduced lunch, and ELLs began with lower scores and their patterns of growth over the school year followed research-based expected rates and directions of development.

.....

We referred to the dataset used for this study to illustrate how children in programs using both the assessment system and *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* scored relative to the expectations based on developmental theory and research. The percentages of 3-year-old children who met or exceeded the *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* criterion for each area ranged from 71% for Mathematics to 91% for Cognitive and Literacy. For the 4-year-old children, the percentages ranged from 60% for Mathematics to 83% for the Physical area.

Discussion and Implications

The field of early childhood education has struggled to make available assessment protocols that are reliable and valid, meaningful to multiple audiences, valuable to teachers for curriculum development, and respectful of children. Current findings, along with previous studies, indicate that *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* and *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* make distinctive contributions to the field of early childhood. Findings demonstrate that together, *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* and *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* are sensitive to children's growth and development and children have high learning outcomes for the areas of development and learning.

In recent years, many have lamented that inappropriate assessment practices have detrimentally impacted the quality and appropriateness of curriculum (Hatch & Benner, 2010; Rose & Rogers, 2012). In contrast, findings from this study imply that *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* and its linked assessment, *Teaching Strategies GOLD®*, can in fact effectively support the development and learning of children from diverse backgrounds, produce positive child outcomes, and provide growth for all children.

References

- Barnett, W. S., Jung, K., Yarosz, D. J., Thomas, J., Hornbeck, A., Stechuk, R., & Burns, S. (2008). Educational effects of the Tools of the Mind curriculum: A randomized trial. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23*(3), 299–313.
- Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth to age 8* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Dodge, D. T., Durham, R. S., Duckett, P., & Stover, R. (2011, June). *Supporting teachers at all levels to teach effectively, intentionally, and responsively: Sharing real-world experiences in implementing a comprehensive, detailed curriculum*. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children Professional Development Institute, Providence, RI.
- Grisham-Brown, J., Hallam, R., & Brookshire, R. (2006). Using authentic assessment to evidence children's progress toward early learning standards. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 34*(1), 45–51.
- Gullo, D. (2005). *Understanding assessment and evaluation in early childhood education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hatch, J. A., & Benner, S. M. (2010). From the editors: Accountability and early childhood teacher education. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 31*, 1–3.
- Hirsh-Pasek, K., Kochanoff, A., Newcombe, N. S., & de Villiers, J. (2005). Using scientific knowledge to inform preschool assessment: Making the case for “empirical validity.” *Social Policy Report, 14*(1), 1–19.
- Kim, D.-K., Lambert, R. G., & Burts, D. C. (2013). Evidence of the validity of *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* assessment tool for English language learners and children with disabilities. *Early Education and Development, 24*(4), 574–595.
- Kim, D., & Smith, J. D. (2010). Evaluation of two observational assessment systems for children's development and learning. *NHSA Dialog, 13*, 253–267.
- Lambert, R. G., Kim, D.-K., & Burts, D. C. (in press). Using teacher ratings to track the growth and development of young children using the *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* assessment system. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*. doi:10.1177/073482913485214
- McConnell, S. R. (2000). Assessment in early intervention and early childhood special education. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 20*(1), 43–48.
- Meisels, S. J., Jablon, J. R., Marsden, D. B., Dichtelmiller, M. K., & Dorfman, A. B. (2001). *The work sampling system*. San Antonio, TX: Pearson.
- NAEYC & NAECS/SDE. (2003). *Early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation: Building an effective, accountable system in programs for children birth through age 8*. Joint position statement retrieved January 4, 2013, from www.naeyc.org/cape
- Rose, J., & Rogers, S. (2012). Principles under pressure: Student teachers' perspectives on final teaching practice in early childhood classrooms. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 20*(1), 43–58.
- Sandall, S., McLean, M. E., & Smith, B. J. (2000). *DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Snow, C. E., & Van Hemel, S. B. (2008). *Early childhood assessment: Why, what, and how*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Soderberg, J., Stull, S., Cummings, K., Nolen, E., McCutchen, D., & Joseph, G. (2013). *Inter-rater reliability and concurrent validity study of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)*. Unpublished report prepared for the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
-

