



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: Elizabeth Jones, Director
Office of Assessment

DATE: August 21, 2015

RE: Pre-Kindergarten Formative Assessments for 2015–16

This memorandum provides the most up-to-date information regarding formative assessments that will be administered to 4-year-old prekindergarten students in the fall of 2015 and the spring of 2016. Proviso 1A.77 was passed as part of the South Carolina 2015–16 Appropriations Bill. An excerpt of the proviso regarding the readiness assessment of prekindergarten students is provided below:

...The department, in consultation with the Office of First Steps, will select up to three formative assessments that analyze the early literacy and language development of children in publicly funded prekindergarten. Each school district and private provider participating in a publicly funded prekindergarten program will administer one of the formative assessments selected by the department to each child eligible for and enrolled in a publicly funded prekindergarten program during the first forty-five days of the school year and during the last forty-five days of the school year...

...The results of the assessment and the developmental intervention strategies recommended or services needed to address the child's identified needs must also be provided, in writing, to the parent or guardian. The assessment may not be used to deny a student to admission to prekindergarten.

The three selected formative assessments are *Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening* (PALS-PreK™), *Individual Growth and Development Indicators* (myIGDIs™), and *Teaching Strategies® GOLD™*. A brief overview of each assessment is provided below. More in-depth information can be found on each publisher’s website provided at the end of each description.

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS™) Pre–K, published by CaseNex, LLC is individually administered. The assessment measures preschoolers’ developing knowledge of important fundamentals in literacy skills: name writing ability, uppercase and lowercase alphabet recognition, letter sounds, beginning sound production, print and word awareness, rhyme awareness, and nursery rhyme awareness. The assessment reflects skills that are predictive of future reading success and offers guidance to teachers for tailoring instruction to children’s specific needs. More information is located on the publisher’s [website](#).

***** S.C. Specific Guidance for PALS:** *The teacher’s guide states in two sections of the PALS assessment to “only proceed” to the next section if the preschool child scores at a certain level. Disregard these instructions and complete all sections of the assessment regardless of what the child scores.*

Individual Growth and Development Indicators (myIGDIs™), published by Early Learning Labs, Inc., is individually administered and supports the identification of preschool children who require additional diagnostic assessment or intervention in oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and comprehension. This assessment can be used to measure developmental gains and inform instructional needs of individual children. More information is located on the publisher’s [website](#).

***** S.C. Specific Guidance for myIGDIs:** *The Administration windows in the teacher’s guide will differ from the administration dates required in South Carolina. The teacher will follow the administration instructions in the teacher’s guide for the “discontinue criteria” as specified. As specified in the teacher’s guide, the Alliteration section of the assessment is not to be administered in the fall. It is optional for teachers to administer the entire assessment in the winter, including the Alliteration section. This will be needed if the district’s goal is to measure growth in that area of phonological awareness. All sections of the assessment must be administered in the spring. Additionally, it is recommended that scores be entered directly on the score sheet rather than on the wipe off card to avoid errors when transferring scores.*

Teaching Strategies® GOLD™, published by Teaching Strategies, LLC, is an ongoing observational system for assessing children that helps teachers observe children in the context of every day experiences. The system is based on 38 objectives for development and learning that include predictors of school success; teachers use them to focus their observations as they gather information to make classroom decisions. More information is located on the publisher’s [website](#).

*** *S.C. Specific Guidance for Teaching Strategies® GOLD™*: Teachers will only be required to report to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) on the Objectives for Language and Literacy and will need to include all parts of objectives 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19.

Student Participation Guidelines

All students enrolled in a publicly funded prekindergarten program, including students with IEPs and 504 Plans, ESOL/LEP students, public charter school students, and virtual school students, must be tested with myIGDIs, PALS, or *Teaching Strategies GOLD*.

Parent Notification

Preparing students and parents for testing is important. Schools should make sure that parents or guardians are notified in advance about the test and the testing schedule.

Test Dates

Students must be assessed during the first 45 days of the 2015–16 school year and again during the last 45 days of the school year.

Testing Environment

Planning for and providing an appropriate test setting is essential to ensuring a standardized testing condition for all students. The testing area should have good lighting and ventilation with a reasonable temperature. Tests should be administered in a familiar classroom or setting to reduce student test anxiety and simplify test security.

School and District Assessment Materials

The publisher for each assessment will provide the test materials (kits, reporting tools, etc.) necessary to administer the assessments. Each district has already provided the SCDE with an estimate of the number of prekindergarten classrooms for the 2015–16 school year. This information has been submitted to each publisher and is being used to determine the number of kits and/or subscriptions which are needed for each school. If the number of prekindergarten classrooms submitted by the district is incorrect, the district test coordinator (DTC) should contact SCDE staff member Susan Creighton in writing (screight@ed.sc.gov) to place additional orders.

Teaching Strategies GOLD is a portfolio system completed online. A subscription is required for each student. Subscriptions have been purchased for districts in a quantity of 20 subscriptions times the number of classes estimated by the district. Districts must upload student-level data to the SCDE through a Precode extraction by August 25, 2015. Teaching Strategies will use the Precode data to populate the online system during the first week of September, enabling teachers to enter and record their observations for each student.

The publishers for myIGDIs and PALS are shipping testing kits to each district. Kits for PALS should have arrived in districts by August 14, 2015. Delivery of the myIGDIs kits is scheduled for early September. Assessment materials cannot be boxed by school because materials are being packaged before school-level Precode information is sent to them. Therefore, DTCs will need to determine the number of kits required by each school. Two kits are for the district to use in training and the remaining kits are for the schools.

Test Security

These assessments are formative and do not require the formal test security procedures that are typically implemented with the statewide assessments administered by the SCDE Office of Assessment. Districts are not required to have teachers and the School Test Coordinators (STCs) sign a confidentiality agreement; however, districts may choose to use agreements, at district or school option.

Schools do not have to return the kits. When not in use, teachers should keep the kits in a locked closet, drawer, room, etc., so that materials are not lost, copied, destroyed, or distributed outside of the school. Schools must take care of the kits and keep all parts of the kits together in the event that any of the assessments are administered by the state next year.

Access to the *Teaching Strategies GOLD* online system, as well as the other data entry systems, should be kept secure because student personal identification information is recorded and only the student's teacher and school administrators should have access to this information.

Data Entry

The online data management system for each of the three assessment programs is different. The systems must be used to upload student data/responses to the publisher. Teachers should enter data carefully and check for accuracy before submitting data to the contractor.

Training and Resources

Training for all three assessments began in July and will continue through August and September. A train-the-trainer model is being used; those teachers or administrators attending the training should be sufficiently knowledgeable of the assessment to train teachers and others in their school or district. Please contact Penny Danielson at pdanielson@ed.sc.gov, (803) 734-8251 if you need to set-up an additional training session for your district.

Precode and PowerSchool

Districts must submit PowerSchool data to the SCDE by 9:00 a.m. on August 25. The SCDE will send the data to the publishers on August 28. The contractors will use the precode data to populate each online management system. It is vital that each district submits its precode data on time since delays by individual districts could delay access to the assessment for all districts.

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Please contact Aaron Brown (803) 734-0874, ARBrown@ed.sc.gov, if you need assistance with precode information.

Early Learning Labs, Inc., has requested that schools with prior myIDGIs accounts wait for the company to populate data in the online system before student data is entered.

Enrich Assess

As part of its contract with the state, VC3 will provide the platform for loading myIGDIs, PALS, and *Teaching Strategies GOLD* data into the Enrich database system.

Accommodations

The SCDE is working with the test publishers about the participation of students with disabilities in these formative assessments and will provide information as soon as it is available.

If you have any questions about myIGDIs, PALS, or *Teaching Strategies GOLD*, please contact Susan Creighton, screight@ed.sc.gov or (803) 734-8535.