



**Universal PreK (UPK) Café:
Special Series Issue #5
Child Find, Universal Screening and Assessment
May 28, 2021**

Dear Friends,

The Early Education Team is excited to share its fifth issue of the UPK Café Special Series. The series focuses on recovery, reconnection, and resources to support school district recovery and implementation plans. This issue of the UPK Café provides resources for Child Find, Universal Developmental Screening and Assessment to ensure Prequalified Universal PreK Public and Private Programs utilize best practices when building partnership agreements.

The Agency of Education's Early Education team recognizes your dedication and the incredible work you have done this school year to ensure the safety and health of each and every child, their family and staff. We thank you and wish you and your family a much-deserved fun-filled and safe summer.

Child Find

Child Find is a component of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requiring states to have a comprehensive system to identify, locate, and evaluate all children (birth to age 21) who are in need of early intervention or special education services (34 CFR §300.111).

Child Find is a continuous process of public awareness activities designed to ensure that children with disabilities have access as early as possible to a free appropriate public education, including special education and related services, designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education.

Vermont School Districts must implement Child Find policies and activities to ensure that it identifies, locates, and evaluates all children with disabilities who may be in need of special education and related services. Child Find activities include universal developmental screening and on-going assessment practices which are highlighted below.

It is highly recommended that school districts work with partnering private PreK programs to clearly articulate the district's Child Find referral process and on-going screening activities.

Universal Developmental Screening and Assessment

Universal developmental screening and assessment involves establishing a process to gather information from a variety of sources including the child's family. Processing and understanding of patterns in a child's social, emotional, and development is critical in effectively implementing evidence-based teaching practices that prioritize children's social, emotional, and learning needs.

As many as one in four children through the age of five are at risk for a developmental delay or disability. Early identification allows programs to intervene earlier, leading to more cost-effective resources and interventions during the preschool years ([Agency of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families](#)).

Screening helps educators and families better understand a child's development, and ways to support healthy development in children. Screening shows when a child has reached important milestones and helps to identify the first signs of when a child is having challenges or difficulties. [Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!](#) is a coordinated federal effort to encourage healthy child development and universal screening for children, support for families and providers who care for them.

There can be some confusion about the difference between screening and assessment in early childhood settings. This infographic helps illustrate key characteristics for each type of tool: [Screening and Assessment in Early Childhood Settings](#).

The Difference Between Screening and Assessment

Screening

- Provides a quick snapshot of a child's health and developmental status.
- Does not capture the full range of development, skill, or capacity among children.
- Only indicates a possible presence of developmental delay or difference and cannot definitively identify or describe the nature or extent of a disability.
- Must be followed by a more comprehensive and formal evaluation process in order to confirm or disconfirm any red flags raised by the screening procedure.

Assessment

- Assessment is a continual process of observing, gathering, recording, and interpreting information to answer questions and make developmental and instructional decisions about children.
- Assessment can be used to serve several purposes, such as documenting children's developmental progress or helping early childhood practitioners plan to meet the individual needs of children; whereas screenings are used only to monitor whether children are at risk for delays in their growth and development.
- Assessment measures young children's performance over time rather than attempting to measure their skills and abilities at one point in time.
- Assessment is often a lengthier process than screening and may require collecting information about children from multiple sources in order to create a comprehensive picture of their skills and abilities.

Screening Tools

Ages and Stages Questionnaires

[Help Me Grow: Ages & Stages Questionnaires Online](#) - Help Me Grow is Vermont's integrated system that helps communities identify vulnerable children through routine developmental monitoring and screening for all young children. The impact on a child's long-term success is greatest when developmental concerns are discovered and addressed as early as possible. Help Me Grow Vermont provides parents and caregivers with information about child development, trains professionals to conduct developmental screening, and links families with children ages eight and younger to community resources.

[Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition \(ASQ-3\)](#) may be offered to children ages one month through 5½ years and will provide families and educators with a quick check a child's development. Families will be asked to answer questions about some things their child can and cannot do. The questionnaire includes questions about the child's communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal social skills. The ASQ-3 assesses the five major areas of development: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social.

[Ages & Stages Questionnaire, Social-Emotional, Second Edition \(ASQ:SE-2\)](#) was developed to monitor a child's social and emotional development including self-regulation and interactions. The questionnaire may be offered every 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36, 48, or 60 months of age. Families are asked to answer questions about some things their child can and cannot do. The questionnaire includes questions about a child's ability to calm down, take direction and follow rules, communicate, perform daily activities (e.g., eating, sleeping), act independently, demonstrate feelings, and interact with others.

Assessment - A Process of Gathering Information to Make Decisions

[The Division of Early Childhood Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\) recommended practices \(RPs\) in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014.](#)

Assessment informs intervention and, as a result, is a critical component of services for young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays/disabilities and their families. In early intervention and early childhood special education, assessment is conducted for the purposes of screening, determining eligibility for services, individualized planning, monitoring child progress, and measuring child outcomes. Not all of the practices that follow apply to all purposes of assessment. We recommend the following assessment practices to guide practitioners:

- A1. Practitioners work with the family to identify family preferences for assessment processes.
- A2. Practitioners work as a team with the family and other professionals to gather assessment information.
- A3. Practitioners use assessment materials and strategies that are appropriate for the child's age and level of development and accommodate the child's sensory,

physical, communication, cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional characteristics.

- A4. Practitioners conduct assessments that include all areas of development and behavior to learn about the child’s strengths, needs, preferences, and interests.
- A5. Practitioners conduct assessments in the child’s dominant language and in additional languages if the child is learning more than one language.
- A6. Practitioners use a variety of methods, including observation and interviews, to gather assessment information from multiple sources, including the child’s family and other significant individuals in the child’s life.
- A7. Practitioners obtain information about the child’s skills in daily activities, routines, and environments such as home, center, and community.
- A8. Practitioners use clinical reasoning in addition to assessment results to identify the child’s current levels of functioning and to determine the child’s eligibility and plan for instruction.
- A9. Practitioners implement systematic ongoing assessment to identify learning targets, plan activities, and monitor the child’s progress to revise instruction as needed.
- A10. Practitioners use assessment tools with sufficient sensitivity to detect child progress, especially for the child with significant support needs.
- A11. Practitioners report assessment results so that they are understandable and useful to families.

Assessment Tools

Act 166 requires all prequalified public and private prekindergarten education (PreK) programs to collect and report annual student progress monitoring data to the Agency of Education.

Teaching Strategies Gold® (TSG) is Vermont’s approved assessment tool.

[Teaching Strategies GOLD®\(TSGOLD\)](#) is used to assess children from birth through kindergarten. Extensive field tests have shown it to be both valid and reliable. Available online, the system can be used with any developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum. Grounded in 38 research-based objectives that include predictors of school success and are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, Vermont Early Learning Standards, and the Head Start Child Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Teaching Strategies GOLD® helps teachers focus on what matters most for school readiness. It can be used to support all types of learners, including children with special needs and children with advanced knowledge and skills. Teaching Strategies Gold has been adopted as the progress monitoring tool for Universal PreK.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TSGold/TSG) Resources

[My Teaching Strategies GOLD® 2020-2021 Requirements and Guidelines](#)

[Teaching Strategies GOLD® Transfer Request 2020-2021](#)

[School Year Teaching Strategies: Alignment With Vermont Early Learning Standards - Birth Through Third Grade](#)

[Teaching Strategies: Classroom Connect](#) - Stay connected with families and help support children's learning at home with resources that includes: Healthy at Home, a website specifically designed for families with resources and activities to support learning at home.

[Teaching Strategies: Family Observations for Documentation](#)

Vermont's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System Framework

The purpose of [Vermont's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System \(VECCAS\)](#) is to provide a framework of currently utilized assessments and current initiatives that support child assessment and screening, as well as an initial plan for implementation of a statewide early childhood comprehensive assessment system for Vermont. The VECCAS framework is intended to be referenced and used over an extended period of time for reflection, self-evaluation, and improvement in early childhood (birth-grade 3) efforts. This framework helps to address key questions facing those who are developing birth-grade 3 assessment approaches in their schools, districts, and communities.

Resources for Educators:

Recognition and Response

The [Recognition and Response](#) approach is designed to be a systematic problem-solving process with early childhood educators and families who work collaboratively to recognize and identify concerns that may be attributed to trauma and/or possible signs of developmental delay. PreK programs respond to data collected by implementing evidence-based practices, strategies and necessary resources that address each child's individual needs so the child is able to fully participate and be successful in age appropriate learning activities within a high quality inclusive early childhood setting.

Early Multi-tiered System of Supports

[Social-Emotional Screening of Young Children: Early Identification is Essential to Healthy SEL](#) - Assessment and intervention experts, Erin Barton, PhD and Elizabeth Steed, PhD, describe the purpose of social-emotional screening of young children in the context of promoting social-emotional development and identifying children at risk for social-emotional difficulties. This webinar provides an overview of specific social-emotional screening tools and how one might pick a tool for their program's use.

[Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! Website](#) Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! is a coordinated federal effort to encourage healthy child development, universal developmental and behavioral screening for children, and support for the families and providers who care for them.

[Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! A Compendium of Screening Measures for Young Children](#)

[Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! An Early Care and Education Provider's Guide for Developmental and Behavioral Screening](#)

[Help Me Grow Vermont](#) - The goal of Help Me Grow Vermont is to create strong families, which helps promote healthy child development, and ensure that all children reach their greatest potential.

Additional Resources for Families:

[Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive - Families](#)

[CDC Milestone Tracker](#) - A free and parent-friendly app from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to track a young child's development from ages 2 months through 5 years.

[Parent Milestone Checklist](#) - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed milestone checklists for parents and caregivers to use with children between the ages of two months to five years.

[Translated Materials](#) - Vermont has translated the Milestones Brochure into several languages: Arabic, Bosnian, Burmese, French, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili.

If you have received this issue from a coworker and would like to be placed on the UPK Café listserv, please email Leslie at leslie.freedman@vermont.gov.

Be well and stay healthy,
The Early Education Team