

# Task Force on Early Childhood Assessment

Final Report



Senate File 2284

## Iowa Department of Education

Grimes State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146



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## Senate File 2284

This report was prepared pursuant to the directive contained in Senate File 2284, which established a Cross Agency Assessment Instrument Planning Group, hereafter referred to as the Task Force on Early Childhood Assessment, to:

- Study and select one standard multidomain assessment instrument for implementation by all school districts for the purposes of Iowa Code 279.60.
- Select an instrument that may be administered at least at the beginning and end of the school year to measure student skills and academic growth.
- Select an instrument that is aligned with state and national curriculum standards.
- Study all costs associated with implementing a universal assessment instrument.

In 2012, additional language was added to Iowa Code 279.60, subsection 1, charging the Iowa Department of Education with prescribing a kindergarten readiness assessment to be administered to all prekindergarten or four-year-old children enrolled in each school district. The new language required an assessment aligned with state early learning standards and encouraged districts to administer the assessment at least at the beginning and end of the preschool program.

Based on its study, the task force was directed to report its findings to the Iowa General Assembly by November 15, 2012.

## **Task Force Membership**

Angie Squires, Keystone Area Education Agency, Elkader

Barb Merrill, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children, Des Moines

Betty Zan, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls

Caitlin Suginaka, Iowa Department of Public Health, Des Moines

Celeste Kelling, Des Moines Public Schools, Des Moines

Charlie Bruner, Child and Family Policy Center, Des Moines

Cindy Duhrkopf, Early Childhood Iowa State Board, Carroll

Cindy Chettinger, Northwest Area Education Agency, Sioux City

Colleen Anderson, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines

Diane Moore, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines

Erin Clancy, Iowa Department of Human Services, Des Moines

Gayle Luze, Iowa State University, Ames

Jaci Pins, Iowa State Education Association, Des Moines

Jeannie Wade-Nagel, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, Cedar Rapids

Jennifer Schreck, Child Care Resource & Referral, Des Moines

Jim Christensen, Early Childhood Iowa State Board, Waterloo

John Hosp, University of Iowa, Iowa City

Joyce Vermeer, Northwest Area Education Agency, Sioux City

Kate Bennett, Polk County Early Childhood Iowa, Des Moines

Kathie Readout, Mid-Iowa Community Action Head Start, Marshalltown

Kere Hughes-Belding, Iowa State University, Ames

Kimberly Johnson, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines

Kristen Missall, University of Iowa, Iowa City

LauraBelle Sherman-Proehl, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines

Leone Junck, Early Childhood Iowa State Board, Ogden

Lou Ann Gvist, Iowa Association of School Boards, Des Moines

Michelle Hosp, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines

Mike Bunde, Early Childhood Iowa State Board, Denison

Mike Bergan, HAWC Early Childhood Iowa, Decorah

Pam Elwood, Green Hills Area Education Agency, Council Bluffs

Pam Vogel, East Union Community School District, Afton

Scott Frohlich, Harlan Community School District, Harlan

Shanell Wagler, Iowa Department of Management, Des Moines

Stacie Prevo, Southern Iowa Economic Development Association Head Start, Ottumwa

Vickie Williams, Homes of Oakridge, Des Moines

## **Non-Voting Task Force Membership**

Amy Williamson, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines

Lisa DuBois, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines

Penny Milburn, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines

Scott McConnell, University of Minnesota

## 2012 Meeting Schedule

Date	City	Facility	Time
August 16	Johnston	Heartland AEA	9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
September 11	West Des Moines	West Des Moines Learning Resource Center	9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
October 9	West Des Moines	West Des Moines Learning Resource Center	9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

## Introduction

The charge of Senate File 2284 was to create a diverse task force of Iowans to study and recommend a kindergarten readiness assessment. Iowa's commitment to understanding the readiness of children at kindergarten entry began in 2005, when legislation was passed requiring school districts to assess all children entering kindergarten using a Department of Education-approved benchmark literacy assessment(s). Since this legislation, many initiatives have come together to move kindergarten entry assessment forward, including the development of the comprehensive Iowa Early Learning Standards, which address all the areas of development; improved assessment instruments in the field of early childhood; and increased access to preschool for four-year-old children. The recommendation of this diverse task force will improve communication and cooperation about early childhood education.

The Task Force on Early Childhood Assessment met three times with representation from a diverse group of Iowans dedicated to understanding the status of young children. David Tilly, Deputy Director of the Iowa Department of Education, began the process by reviewing the new focus of the agency. Penny Milburn and Amy Williamson of the Iowa Department of Education took responsibility for coordinating the work of the task force. Dr. Scott McConnell, University of Minnesota, and Dr. Charles Bruner, Child and Family Policy Center, provided national expertise related to assessment issues in early childhood education.



## Executive Summary

During the meetings, experts on early childhood assessment, measurement, and early childhood programs presented research to the task force. Task force members interacted with questions, answers, and discussion about a wide variety of related topics. The task force explored ideas related to assessment, such as:

- Considering current practices in early childhood assessment;
- Reviewing school readiness indicators;
- Considering characteristics of quality assessment; and
- Discussing criteria for reviewing assessments.

Finally, the task force set forth the following purposes of assessment:

- ▶ Provide educators with information on the skills and growth of individual children to inform instruction; and
- ▶ Provide the state and school districts with data to inform instruction and professional development.

The task force continued to explore state and national trends, considered components of good assessment, and determined characteristics of quality assessment. During the second meeting, the task force suggested characteristics of assessment that formed the basis of a rubric to review the recommended assessments and tasked a small group with reviewing the following assessments:

- GOLD
- Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs)
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- Brigance Early Developmental Inventory
- Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)
- Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening ( PALS Pre-K)
- Child Observation Record (COR)
- Assessment Evaluation Program System (AEPS)
- Get Ready to Read

- Kindergarten Readiness Test
- Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)
- Work Sampling System (WSS)

The small group spent three days reviewing and providing descriptive information on each of the assessments prior to the final task force meeting. During the third meeting, the task force reviewed the requirements of the legislation listed below and considered how well each assessment addressed the requirements.

- Multidomain assessment;
- Aligned with the Iowa Early Learning Standards;
- Administered at the beginning and end of the school year; and
- Measure student growth and academic skills.

The task force determined the GOLD Assessment System was able to meet these requirements. In addition, computer entry and online training were available, and nearly 80 percent of school districts were implementing this assessment system to guide decisions about instruction. Given these factors, the task force finalized a recommendation and directed the Iowa Department of Education to develop a plan related to the cost of implementation of the GOLD assessment system.

Members of the task force emphasized several issues related to large-scale assessment of four-year-old children. Issues included reliability, criterion validity and ongoing support for professional development. Members indicated classroom teachers and administrators must receive ongoing professional development in the administration of the assessment and the use of the data. In addition, professional development should include training to achieve and maintain inter-rater reliability. Supports to improve instruction, including professional development regarding strategies, as well as coaching, were considered imperative. Simply adding a state assessment would not improve outcomes for children. Access to data was also discussed. The task force indicated access to data and support to appropriately use data would be important for teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

## Our Recommendations

### 1) Implement the GOLD assessment system

According to the information presented to this task force, the GOLD online assessment system provided the best fit related to the legislation and the purpose of the task force. Approximately 80 percent of the Iowa school districts providing the preschool program currently use the GOLD online assessment system. This system provides access to data at the local and state level. The GOLD online assessment system assists teachers in individualizing instruction and planning lessons. The system also allows families to view assessment information, and it generates reports for teachers to share with families.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Cost of Implementation

### **GOLD Online Assessment System**

<b>State Umbrella Agreement</b>	\$10,000
Subtotal	\$10,000

### **Per-Child Cost for Children Participating in District Preschool Programs**

• Preliminary Number of Children Fall 2012	23,193
• Cost Per Child	\$10.45
Subtotal	\$242,367

### **Cost of Training**

• Number of Teachers	1,600
• Cost of Training (\$2,225 per day for 2 days)	\$4,450

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Subtotal

\$137,950

**Total**

**\$390,317**

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