

# Porter County School Readiness Assessment Guidelines & Protocols

The following guidelines, protocols and procedures are for all participating Porter County School Readiness partners.

The goal of this section is to provide all early childhood school readiness partners with materials to help assess the early learning landscape in Porter County. These assessments are designed to assess the following outcomes:

## **Short-term goals and outcomes:**

1. Improve child’s cognitive skills.
2. Improve child’s school behavior skills.
3. Improve child’s social development skills.
4. Improve parenting practices.

## **Long-term goals and outcomes:**

1. Increase science and math skills and prepare for future continual learning success by looking at mid-year kindergarten test results and beyond.
2. Increase third-grade reading skills by looking at third-grade reading assessments.
3. Increase parent engagement by looking at parent engagement survey data.

For long-term goals and outcomes, United Way of Porter County and Purdue University Northwest will work with Porter County school districts to evaluate in-school test data.

If there are questions, program partners should contact United Way of Porter County at 219-464-3583 or [info@unitedwaypc.org](mailto:info@unitedwaypc.org).

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# Assessment Guidelines and Protocols

## Overview

Assessment in early childhood environments is a serious undertaking. It is important to evaluate program effectiveness as well as children's growth and development. Guidelines and protocols must be established to assure proper assessment practices and to generate accurate and useful results. The well-being of the child is the primary concern, so safeguards must be in place to provide a positive experience for all participants.

This section of the manual provides an overview of recommendations, guidelines, assessment protocols and the assessment tools along with associated scripts and scoring sheets. Please review the guidelines and protocols thoroughly before engaging in any assessment activities.

## Recommendations

- Obtain consent from the guardians and child before administering assessment.
- Allow the child to remove themselves from assessment at any time or to refuse participation.
- Keep the experience as short as possible.
- Administer the assessment in a one-to-one setting.
- Assure that the child is familiar with the environment and the administrator of the assessment. The teacher typically administers the assessment. If the child does not know the administrator, plan to conduct warm-up activities.
- Encourage and reinforce the child's efforts throughout the assessment experience.

## Guidelines

*This is a synthesis from early childhood education research experts in the field. For a full list of sources, see the references section.*

- Assessment **MUST** be age and developmentally appropriate. Assessing young children is very different from assessing older children. Young children construct knowledge through experimental, interactive and hands-on ways. Express learning and assessment of young children's learning must be done using authentic experiences in a natural environment rather than traditional paper and pencil methods.
- Use a variety of assessments which address the development of the whole child. Young children develop in all domains: physical/motor, psychosocial, cognitive, language and literacy. Use assessment tools that measure more than academic or cognitive development. Multiple sources of information should be considered while making an assessment.
- Understand the purpose for the assessment. Assessments are used to support children's learning, identify special needs, evaluate a program and monitor trends. Select assessment tools to meet a specific purpose. Assessments of young children should not be overly or unnecessarily used.
- Select valid, reliable and fair instruments. Utilize assessment tools that are high quality and have been established as accurate and reliable for use with children. High stakes assessments (i.e. ISTEP) should not be administered until at least grade 3.
- Allocate adequate time for high quality assessment practices. Administering individual assessments takes time. Educators should plan time for assessments and take care not to disrupt the child's regular activities.

- Consider the uneven growth patterns of young children. Individual children’s development is rapid, uneven, episodic and influenced by the environment. Use assessment tools which respect the backgrounds, environmental factors and contexts in which the assessment is administered.
- Assess the program in addition to the children. The learning environment, quality of instruction and teacher-child interactions greatly impact children’s learning outcomes. Ensure that these factors are evaluated, too.
- Value parents as an important source of assessment information. Engage families because they often have key information to share about the child which can be helpful when conducting assessments.
- Follow ethical guidelines regarding the use of assessments. Communicate the purpose, timeline and use to parents and staff. Professionals who conduct assessments should be trained to use the protocols and appropriate methods, including confidentiality.
- Align assessments to the state’s early learning and development standards. The Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards are the guidelines for developmentally appropriate content and skills. Any assessments used should be aligned to the Foundations.

## **Assessments**

Three assessments have been vetted as valid, reliable and useful instruments to evaluate the impact of partner programs on a child’s kindergarten readiness. These specific assessments follow the guidelines for developmental appropriateness, variety, validity and reliability.

1. **Get Ready to Read!** – screens early print knowledge and linguistic awareness abilities.
2. **Head Toes Knees Shoulders (HTKS)** – measures inhibitory control, working memory and attention focusing. (see page 12)
3. **Behavioral Observation Checklist** – monitors social and emotional attributes.

**Note:** Prior to administering assessments an IRB release form must be filled out for every child. IRB release form is found online at [UWPCSTEAM.org](http://UWPCSTEAM.org).