

## **Teachers' Manual for the NJ Early Learning Assessment System**

Welcome to the New Jersey Early Learning Assessment System (NJELAS) Teachers' Manual. The purpose of this manual is to introduce performance based assessment and to provide instructions for using the NJELAS for language arts/literacy.

The ELAS Teachers' Manual will aid both the preschool and kindergarten teacher new to performance assessment and those teachers who are already implementing performance assessment in their classrooms. With the ELAS, teachers will learn the "how-tos" of observation, documentation and evaluation using the NJ Preschool Language Arts Literacy Program Expectations or the Kindergarten Language Arts/Literacy Core Curriculum Content Standards. Once teachers have implemented the ELAS into their classroom practice, they can supplement the language arts/literacy ELAS with other complimentary assessments, such as the Child Observation Record, the Work Sampling System, or the Developmental Continuum for other areas of growth and development.

## **HOW THIS MANUAL IS ORGANIZED:**

### **I. NJ ELAS FOR PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN**

1. Topic 1: What is performance based assessment and what purposes does it serve?
2. Topic 2: What are the NJ Language Arts Literacy Teaching and Learning Expectations and Core Curriculum Content Standards and how do they fit into your curriculum?
3. Topic 3: What is the purpose of the NJELAS and how is it organized?
4. Topic 4: How do teachers assess children using NJELAS?
5. Topic 5: How do you score?

### **II. GLOSSARY**

### **III. RESOURCES**

### **IV. NJ ELAS FORMS (see attached documents)**

Preschool Age by Age Accomplishments  
Kindergarten Age by Age Accomplishments  
Preschool Profile  
Kindergarten Profile  
Preschool and Kindergarten Matrix  
Preschool Anecdote  
Kindergarten Anecdote  
Preschool and Kindergarten Work Sample  
Preschool and Kindergarten Literacy Prompt  
Month by Month Checklist

## **Topic 1: What is performance based assessment and what purposes does it serve?**

### ***A. What is assessment?***

Young children’s developmental growth and learning is rapid, variable, and influenced by numerous factors. For these reasons, effective assessment of young children must be ongoing; relying on different types of information from multiple sources.

Performance based assessment is the ongoing process of gathering evidence that documents what children know and understand in order to make informed instructional decisions. Performance based assessment is made up of two processes: documentation and evaluation.

Documentation focuses on identifying, collecting, and describing evidence of children’s learning in an objective, nonjudgmental manner. Teachers use documentation to respond to children and to plan for materials, interactions and activities. Teachers document evidence of children’s learning in individual, small- and large-group situations. Evidence may include:

- ✓ anecdotal records of children’s conversations and behavior during play, routines and activities
- ✓ annotated samples of artwork, drawing, and writing
- ✓ photographs, recordings or other annotated records of children engaged in activities

Evaluation is the process of comparing documentation to a standard in order to make a decision or a judgment about the child’s skills and how to support them.

### ***B. What is performance based assessment?***

Performance based assessment means that children are assessed in “real-life” situations, using typical classroom activities. Documentation for performance assessment is collected as children play and work in their natural classroom environment. Teachers observe and document what children know and can do by watching them, talking with them, and studying the work they create. Performance assessment is an effective way to assess young children because it occurs in a familiar setting, with familiar activities, alongside of other children, and familiar adults.

There are two types of performance assessment: on-demand and curriculum-embedded.

On-demand assessments give children one chance to show what they know. On-demand assessment of young children yields potentially misleading results. Children’s poor

performance may not be because of factors such as not understanding the question or being tired or hungry.

Curriculum-embedded assessment, or observational assessment (ELAS is this type of assessment), occurs in the midst of everyday classroom activities. Children's daily actions and responses are the basis of the assessment. When children's development and learning is tracked in the context of daily activities, the results of the assessment are likely to be more accurate and representative of children's achievement.

### ***C. What types of assessments are typically used in early childhood settings?***

There are many types of assessments. Assessment should be tailored to a specific purpose and should be used only for the purpose for which it has consistently demonstrated reliable results. Two types of assessments are commonly used in early childhood programs.

Performance assessments and observational assessments measure children's progress in the context of their daily classroom interactions and activities. Documentation for the assessment is collected on a daily or weekly basis, and then summarized periodically for the purposes of evaluation and adjustments to instruction. Instructional planning is derived from direct evidence of children's learning such as anecdotal records of their language and samples of their work.

Developmental screening is a type of assessment designed to identify children who might need more in-depth evaluation. Screenings are brief tests usually administered at the beginning of a program. Individual developmental screening measures may be used in the first step of the assessment process to identify children who have major impediments to learning, such as problems in the development of language, or with vision, or hearing. In such cases, the results of screening measures should be used to determine whether a child needs further, more comprehensive diagnostic assessment. Information received from a single developmental assessment or screening should never serve as the basis for major decisions affecting a child's placement or enrollment.

### ***D. What are some reasons it is important to use assessment for instructional planning?***

Teachers who use performance based assessment will:

- ✓ Respond more easily and effectively to demands for accountability,
- ✓ Teach more effectively, using interactive experiences that enhance children's development,
- ✓ Make more productive instructional planning decisions (e.g., how to set up the classroom, what to do next, what questions to ask, what resources to provide, how to stimulate each child's development, and what external support systems are required),
- ✓ Meet more of children's special needs within the classroom. The ongoing process of collecting and applying classroom-based evidence can help the teacher to become more aware of and develop a broader repertoire of instruction strategies, and
- ✓ Identify the most appropriate learning experiences for children.

**Topic 2: What are the NJ Preschool Language Arts Literacy Teaching and Learning Expectations and the Kindergarten Core Curriculum Content Standards and how do they fit into your curriculum?**

These documents set standards and expectations for child learning and teaching that result in high quality, effective preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Developmentally appropriate practices are central to the expectations and standards and are based on what we know about how children learn and develop, variations in development that may occur, and how best to support children's learning and development. They guide instructional planning and teaching, and serve as the basis for New Jersey's Early Learning Assessment System.

**PRESCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY EXPECTATIONS**

Literacy learning has a profound and lasting effect on the social and academic lives of children. Their future educational opportunities and career choices are directly related to literacy ability. Since early childhood is the period when language develops most rapidly, it is imperative that young children be provided with a variety of literacy and language experiences throughout each day and that the classroom environment is rich with language and print. Early childhood teachers have the responsibility to understand the developmental continuum of language and literacy and to support each child's literacy development.

Literacy learning begins at birth and develops rapidly during the preschool period. The main components of literacy - listening, speaking, reading and writing - should all be encouraged through participation with adults and peers in conversations and activities that are meaningful to the child. Each child's interest and motivation to engage in literacy-related activities are evident before that child is able to read or write conventionally. Children should be provided with environments that encourage literacy exploration, and their emergent reading and writing behaviors should be valued, encouraged and fostered by their teachers.

It is essential that the literacy component of a preschool program provide children who do not speak English with opportunities for listening, speaking, reading and writing in both their native language and English. Programs that help children to communicate proficiently in their home language also help to develop the capacity of the children to learn a second language. It is important for the teacher to recognize the need to make modifications in the presentation of vocabulary, directions, storytelling, reading, and other oral language communication when working with children who do not speak English as their native language. These modifications may include the use of culturally appropriate visual aids, scaffolding, repetition, rephrasing and modeling.

**EXPECTATION 1:** Children listen and respond to environmental sounds, directions and conversations.

EXPECTATION 2: Children converse effectively in their home language, English or sign language for a variety of purposes relating to real experiences and different audiences.

EXPECTATION 3a: Child demonstrate emergent print awareness.

EXPECTATION 3b: Child demonstrates knowledge and enjoyment of books.

EXPECTATION 3c: Child demonstrates phonological awareness.

EXPECTATION 4: Children demonstrate emergent writing skills.

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EXPECTATION 1: Children listen with understanding to environmental sounds, directions and conversations.

*Preschool Teaching Practices*

- ✓ Give progressively more complex directions.
- ✓ Play listening games in which children identify common objects through the sounds they make (e.g., a phone ringing, a truck passing by or blowing its horn, animal sounds, musical instruments, voices of peers in room, etc.).
- ✓ Provide a variety of listening activities including stories, songs, rhymes, chants and individual conversations.

*Preschool Learning Outcomes*

- 1.1 Follows oral directions that involve several actions.
- 1.2 Identifies sounds in the environment and distinguishes among them (e.g., a phone ringing, a truck passing by or blowing its horn, animal sounds, musical instruments, voices of peers in room, etc.).
- 1.3 Listens for various purposes (e.g., demonstrate that a response is expected when a question is asked; enter into dialogue after listening to others; repeat parts of stories, poems, or songs).
- 1.4 Shows interest, pleasure and enjoyment during listening activities by responding with appropriate eye contact, body language and facial expressions.

EXPECTATION 2: Children converse effectively in their home language, English, sign language or a foreign language for a variety of purposes relating to real experiences and different audiences.

### *Preschool Teaching Practices*

- ✓ Engage in many individual and small-group conversations with children throughout the day (e.g., lunch-time, playground, tooth-brushing), as well as during formal instructional time.
- ✓ Interact with children using rich vocabulary words, descriptive language and somewhat more complex language structures than children typically use.
- ✓ Extend children's language by asking them to make connections between present knowledge and new vocabulary (e.g., "Why do you think that it's called a spider plant?")
- ✓ Organize a variety of activities that encourage oral language development (e.g., joining in pretend play, encouraging children to talk about their experiences in small groups, providing hands-on science activities).
- ✓ Provide materials that encourage oral language development in all areas of the room (e.g., flannel board stories in the library area, puppets and props in the dramatic play area, small plastic figures in the block area).
- ✓ Provide opportunities for children to converse with peers throughout the day and help children initiate the conversations.
- ✓ Introduce songs, finger plays, chants, and engage children in retelling and inventing stories.
- ✓ Ask children to explain their ideas and plans.

### *Preschool Learning Outcomes*

- 2.1 Describes previous experiences and relates them to new experiences or ideas.
- 2.2 Asks questions to obtain information.
- 2.3 Uses language to express relationships, make connections, describe similarities and differences, express feelings and initiate play with others.
- 2.4 Listens and responds appropriately in conversations and group interactions by taking turns and generally staying on topic.
- 2.5 Joins in singing, finger plays, chanting, retelling and inventing stories.
- 2.6 Uses language and imitates sounds appropriate to roles in dramatic play and sets the stage by describing actions and events.
- 2.7 Uses language to communicate and negotiate ideas and plans for activities.
- 2.8 Uses new vocabulary and asks questions to extend understanding of words.
- 2.9 Connects new meanings of words to vocabulary already known (e.g., "It's called bookend because the books end.").
- 2.10 Uses complex sentence structure such as compound sentences, if-then statements, and explanations (e.g., "I wanted to make a long snake but Mimi has the scarf." "If I set the table, then you can eat." "Pigs wouldn't like it on the moon because there isn't any mud.").

EXPECTATION 3: Children demonstrate emergent reading skills.

*Preschool Teaching Practices*

Developing Print Awareness

- ✓ Help children recognize that the written word is represented by symbols through using them in activities and in the environment (e.g., rebuses, picture recipes, traffic signs).
- ✓ Provide literacy props (e.g., empty food and household containers, menus, recipe cards, phone books, order pads) and place books in all classroom centers.
- ✓ Display child-generated print at the children's eye level.
- ✓ Present functional print in the environment (e.g., labels on objects throughout the classroom, and signs with clear meaning that are placed on children's eye level).
- ✓ Use varied, integrated methods to help children learn to recognize letters (e.g., help a child locate his/her artwork by finding the first letter of his/her name, reading alphabet books, or playing games that contain alphabet letters).

Developing Knowledge and Enjoyment of Books

- ✓ Create cozy, comfortable reading areas with a variety of printed materials (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers, catalogs, circulars, letters and other mail items).
- ✓ Place books that could extend play in different interest areas of the room (e.g., a book about bridges is available in the block area).
- ✓ Provide books and materials that reflect the identity, home language, culture and interests of the class.
- ✓ Read to children daily using age-appropriate, high-quality literature (e.g., picture books, fantasy, big books, books that are predictable and repetitive, informational, and culturally diverse).
- ✓ Invite children's participation during storybook reading (e.g., analyzing visual cues, making predictions, and making personal connections).
- ✓ Read to children individually, as well as in small and large groups.
- ✓ Call attention to the functions and features of print both while reading and incidentally throughout the day (e.g., two children are arguing over the job of snack helper, and the teacher points out that the person whose name is on the helper chart starts with an uppercase R. While reading a story, the teacher points out that the words are separated by spaces.).
- ✓ Provide opportunities for children to listen to and participate in stories, rhymes, poems, and songs in various languages.

Enhancing Phonological Awareness

- ✓ Lead activities and stories that have repetitive patterns, rhymes and refrains.
- ✓ Draw children's attention to the sounds they hear in words (e.g., asking children whose names start with the "S" sound to go wash their hands for snack, using rhythm sticks to tap out the syllables in their names).

## *Preschool Learning Outcomes*

### Print Awareness

- 3.1 Identifies the meaning of common signs and symbols (e.g., pictures, recipes, icons on computers, or rebuses).
- 3.2 Recognizes print in the local environment (e.g., exit sign, area labels, written directions such as the steps for hand-washing).
- 3.3 Recognizes that a variety of print letter formations and text forms are used for different functions (e.g., grocery list, menu, store sign, telephone book, newspaper, and magazine).
- 3.4 Identifies some alphabet letters by their shapes, especially those in his/her own name.
- 3.5 Recognizes own name in a variety of contexts.
- 3.6 Recognizes that letters form words.
- 3.7 Recognizes that it is the print that is read in stories.

### Developing Knowledge and Enjoyment of Books

- 3.8 Displays book handling knowledge (e.g., turning the book right side up, using left to right sweep, turning one page at a time, recognizing familiar books by cover).
- 3.9 Exhibits reading-like behavior (e.g., pretend to read to self and others and read own writing).
- 3.10 Uses a familiar book as a cue to retell their version of the story.
- 3.11 Shows an understanding of story structure (e.g., comment on characters, predict what will happen next, ask appropriate questions and act out familiar stories).
- 3.12 Asks questions and makes comments pertinent to the story being read and connects information in books to his/her personal life experiences.

### Phonological Awareness

- 3.13 Engages in language play (e.g., manipulate separable and repeating sounds).
- 3.14 Makes up and chants own rhymes (e.g., when playing in the water table, saying "squishy, wishy, dishy soap," or at lunchtime, children are conversing and say, "A light is for night.").
- 3.15 Play with alliterative language (e.g., "Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater")

EXPECTATION 4: Children demonstrate emergent writing skills.

### *Preschool Teaching Practices*

- ✓ Encourage children's interest in writing using enjoyable and engaging methods (e.g., having children dictate stories, helping children make books, encouraging them to attempt to write their names on their own work, joining a child to make a list of ingredients needed for a cooking project.)
- ✓ Respond positively to all writing efforts (e.g., scribbling, letter strings, and non-conventional spelling).

- ✓ Provide a variety of writing tools (e.g., pencils, crayons, chalk, markers, rubber stamps and computers) and surfaces (e.g., paper, cardboard, chalkboard, wood and concrete) in many areas of the classroom.
- ✓ Provide children the opportunity to choose and use writing implements daily.
- ✓ Model writing in a variety of genres (e.g., lists, messages, dictated stories and charts) and explain the connection between spoken and written words.

#### *Preschool Learning Outcomes*

- 4.1 "Write," messages as part of play and other activities (e.g., drawing, scribbling, making letter-like forms, using invented spelling and conventional letter forms)
- 4.2 Attempts to write own name on work.
- 4.3 Attempts to make own names using different materials, such as magnetic letters, play dough, rubber stamps, alphabet blocks, a computer.
- 4.4 Asks adults to write (e.g., asks for labels on block structures, dictation of stories, and list of materials needed for a project).

## **KINDERGARTEN LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT STANDARDS**

### *Reading*

#### A. Concepts About Print

1. Realize that speech can be recorded in words (e.g., his/her own name; words and symbols in the environment).
2. Distinguish letters from words.
3. Recognize that words are separated by spaces.
4. Follow words left to right and from top to bottom.
5. Recognize that print represents spoken language.
6. Demonstrate understanding of the function of a book and its parts, including front and back and title page.

#### B. Phonological Awareness (includes phonemic awareness)

1. Demonstrate understanding that spoken words consist of sequences of phonemes.
2. Demonstrate phonemic awareness by rhyming, clapping syllables, and substituting sounds.
3. Understand that the sequence of letters in a written word represents the sequence of sounds (phonemes) in a spoken word (alphabetic principle).
4. Learn many, though not all, one-to-one letter-sound correspondences.
5. Given a spoken word, produce another word that rhymes with it.

#### C. Decoding and Word Recognition

1. Recognize some words by sight.
2. Recognize and name most uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet.
3. Recognize and read one's name.

#### D. Fluency

1. Practice reading behaviors such as retelling, reenacting, or dramatizing stories.
2. Recognize when a simple text fails to make sense when listening to a story read aloud.
3. Attempt to follow along in book while listening to a story read aloud.
4. Listen and respond attentively to literary texts (e.g., nursery rhymes) and functional texts (e.g., science books).

#### E. Reading Strategies (before, during, and after reading)

1. Begin to track or follow print when listening to a familiar text being read.
2. Think ahead and make simple predictions about text.
3. Use picture clues to aid understanding of story content.

4. Relate personal experiences to story characters' experiences, language, customs, and cultures with assistance from teacher.
5. "Read" familiar texts from memory, not necessarily verbatim from the print alone.

#### F. Vocabulary and Concept Development

1. Continue to develop a vocabulary through meaningful, concrete experiences.
2. Identify and sort words in basic categories.
3. Explain meanings of common signs and symbols.
4. Use new vocabulary and grammatical construction in own speech.

#### G. Comprehension Skills and Response to Text

1. Respond to a variety of poems and stories through movement, art, music, and drama.
2. Verbally identify the main character, setting, and important events in a story read aloud.
3. Identify favorite books and stories.
4. Retell a story read aloud using main characters and events.
5. Participate in shared reading experiences.
6. Make predictions based on illustrations or portions of stories.

#### H. Inquiry and Research

1. Locate and know the purposes for various literacy areas of the classroom and the library/media center.
2. Choose books related to topics of interest.

### *Writing*

#### A. Writing as a Process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, postwriting)

1. Recognize that thoughts and talk can be written down in words.
2. Observe the teacher modeling writing.
3. Generate and share ideas and experiences for a story.
4. Attempt to put ideas into writing using pictures, developmental spelling, or conventional text.
5. Write (print) own first and last name.
6. Participate in group writing activities such as experience stories, interactive writing, and shared writing.
7. Begin to sequence story events for writing using pictures, developmental spelling, or conventional text.

#### B. Writing as a Product (resulting in work samples)

1. Show and talk about work samples containing pictures, developmental spelling, or conventional text.
2. Begin to collect favorite work samples to place in personal writing folder.

### C. Mechanics, Spelling, and Handwriting

1. Use letter/sound knowledge in attempting to write (print) some words.
2. Spell own name.
3. Recognize and begin to use left-to-right and top-to-bottom directionality and spacing between words when writing.
4. Gain increasing control of penmanship, including pencil grip, paper position, and beginning strokes.
5. Write all letters of the alphabet (uppercase and lowercase) from teacher copy.

### D. Writing Forms, Audiences, and Purposes (exploring a variety of writing)

1. Communicate personal response to literature through drawing, telling, or writing.
2. Show and talk about favorite work samples (drawing or writing) with teacher and family.

## *Speaking*

### A. Discussion

1. Share experiences and express ideas.
2. Participate in conversations with peers and adults.
3. React to stories, poems, and songs.

### B. Questioning (Inquiry) and Contributing

1. Share in conversations with others.
2. Use oral language to extend learning.

### C. Word Choice

1. Use language to describe feelings, people, objects, and events.
2. Suggest rhyming words during word play, songs, or read-aloud.

### D. Oral Presentation

1. Sing familiar songs and rhymes to promote oral language development.
2. Begin to use social conventions of language.

## *Listening*

### A. Active Listening

1. Listen fully to understand instructions or hear daily messages.
2. Listen to identify main characters and events in stories.
3. Listen to rhymes and songs to begin developing an understanding of letter/sound relationships.

### B. Listening Comprehension

1. Listen attentively to books teacher reads to class.
2. Answer questions correctly about books read aloud.

### *Viewing and Media Literacy*

#### A. Constructing Meaning

1. Make predictions about visual information (e.g., pictures in books).
2. Discuss favorite characters from books, film, and television.

#### B. Visual and Verbal Messages

1. Begin to sequence a series of pictures or images to tell a story.
2. Show understanding of purpose for pictures in books.

### **Topic 3. What is the purpose of the NJELAS and how is it organized?**

#### ***A. What is the NJELAS and what purposes does it serve?***

The New Jersey Early Learning Assessment System is a comprehensive approach to early childhood assessment for children between the ages of three and kindergarten. The primary purpose of this assessment is to support learning. Teachers document learning to gain insight about what children know and can do, their strengths and interests, as well as areas of concern. They use this documentation to determine how they can more responsively plan instruction. A secondary purpose of this assessment is to provide information to the state about children's performance on the Expectations and Standards.

Drawing on principles of effective early childhood assessment, NJELAS is an ongoing, curriculum-embedded performance assessment that relies on observations and work samples as the documentation for the assessment. To use the NJELAS, teachers follow three steps:

1. observe and document children's learning daily during everyday classroom activities and routines
2. collect, organize and reflect on the documentation during three collection periods (approximately 2 and a half months each) using Documentation Forms and the Child Folio
3. interpret, compare and evaluate the documentation using the Age by Age Accomplishments and the Child Profile.

Evaluation of documentation onto the profile occurs three times during the year at the following intervals:

*Fall:* mid November

*Winter:* end of February

*Spring:* early June

Teachers use what they learn from assessment to support children's learning throughout the year. They modify the environment, adjust their interactions with children, design meaningful learning experiences, and communicate with families. At the end of the spring collection period, teachers submit the scores for all children to the Office of Early Childhood Education at the NJDOE.

#### ***B. How is the NJELAS organized?***

NJELAS has the following four parts:

1. Age by Age Accomplishments
2. Child Profile
3. Documentation Forms
4. Child Folio

## 1. Age by Age Accomplishments

- ✓ describes child accomplishments in the area of Language Arts Literacy based on the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations and Kindergarten Core Curriculum Content Standards
- ✓ provides the criteria for teachers to use to compare the documentation they collect on each child in order to fairly and systematically evaluate children's performance
- ✓ is organized by age group (preschool and kindergarten)
- ✓ uses a continuous mastery continuum ranging from emergent (1) to competent (4) to show the range of children's performance within an age group
- ✓ describes each expectation/standard:

### Features of the Age by Age Accomplishments

Questions are used to frame the indicators within the expectation/standard

A set of 4 descriptive levels (emergent to competent) is provided for each expectation/standard

Examples of ways to document each expectation/standard are provided

- 2. Child Profile** is the data and scoring form used by teachers to score each child's performance for each 10 week data collection period. Teachers need one Child Profile for each child.

### Features of the Child Profile

Has a place to keep track of how each child is doing. Teachers record scores (1, 2, 3, 4) for the collection period

Provides space to organize documentation by date when it's time to score

## 3. Documentation Forms

There are four ways to document children's progress; Class Matrix, Anecdote Form, Work Sample Form, Literacy Prompt Form. These organize and streamline the NJELAS assessment process, provide a structure for studying children's learning and encourage teachers to ask the questions: what does the documentation tell me about what the child knows and what the child can do.

### Class Matrix

The matrix tracks documentation for each child, determines what to collect, and allows teachers to reflect on instructional planning weekly, monthly, and at the end of a collection period

#### **Features of the Class Matrix**

Shows at a glance the documentation collected (or needed) for the entire class (all children's names are written on the left column)

Is arranged by month and type of documentation (anecdote, work sample, literacy prompt) and has boxes to check or date as documentation is collected

Anecdote Form is the primary means of collecting information about children. Observations of children's interactions are written in a factual way, and linked to expectations/standards.

#### **Features of the Anecdote Form**

Organizes anecdotes for each child

Links written anecdotes to Expectations/Standards

Ensures that documentation has been collected for all Expectations/ Standards

Is the primary means of collecting information about children, with 6-8 anecdotes collected each period

Work Sample Form provides a place to describe or explain the learning evident in the child's work. These can be photos of children's work or the work itself.

#### **Features of the Work Sample Form**

Provides a place to check the primary Expectations/ Standards and any additional Expectations/Standards that are demonstrated in the work

Allocates space to record how the work was completed, the child's language and thinking, and additional comments, when appropriate

Makes the work meaningful for assessment purposes

Is attached to work samples and photographs and kept in the Child Folio

Makes up 3-4 of the pieces of evidence for each collection period

Literacy Prompt Form enables the teacher to document children's learning during an informal book reading and to focus on a child's understanding of the content of the book.

**Features of the Literacy Prompt Form**

Provides guidelines for effective instruction including ideas for questions to ask children

Provides a way to gather meaningful documentation related to specific Expectations/Standards

Is used 1 or 2 times with each child during each collection period

Should be used during lessons or activities done individually or in small groups, but not with the entire class at the same time

**4. Child Folio** is the place to store each child's assessment documentation. It usually consists of a folder with the child's name, and all of the ELAS forms. Approximately 12 pieces of documentation by the end of each 10 week collection period should be in each child's folio:

**After 10 weeks, each child's folio will have:**

6 – 8 anecdotes (an anecdote is a brief factual description of child's behavior and language)

3 – 4 work samples (attached to work sample forms)

1 – 2 literacy prompts (with form)

## Topic 4. How do teachers assess children using NJELAS?

### A. How do teachers use NJELAS?

To use the NJELAS, teachers observe and document children's learning, reflect on what they see and document in relation to standards, and use it to teach more effectively. As a curriculum-embedded performance assessment, the process of using or "administering" the NJELAS occurs in an ongoing manner and in the midst of everyday life in the classroom.

The process of using NJELAS involves 3 steps. As teachers do each step, they apply what they learn from assessment to guide interactions with children and their daily, weekly and long-term instructional planning. Here's what is involved in each of the 3 steps.

#### STEP 1

##### Plan ahead!

- ✓ Focus on 3 –5 children each day so that by the end of the week 1 to 2 pieces of documentation are collected per child
- ✓ Use the formula: # of children in the class ÷ # of days in the week
- ✓ Prepare materials in advance (have forms ready by preparing them during weekly planning, put names on mailing labels, keep documentation materials in different areas of the classroom)
- ✓ Share observation collection responsibilities with other adults in the room (assistants, parent volunteers, resource teachers)

##### Begin to collect evidence.

- ✓ observe and document when leading activities, interacting with children, or by stepping back and watching them as they work and play
- ✓ observe and document facts (just what you see and hear, not what you think you see and hear)
- ✓ use different methods and tools that match what children want to learn

#### Methods and Tools for Observations

Anecdotes can be written while interacting with children or when watching children

Mailing labels and post-it notes are handy for recording anecdotes

Use cameras to show children's work or interactions

## **Make the documentation work for you!**

### **Anecdotes should be....**

Brief and factual, with the date recorded

Written directly on the Anecdote Form, on mailing labels or on post-it notes- whatever if convenient for you.

Connected to multiple Expectations/Standards. Use the anecdote form to check off relevant Expectations/Standards

### **Work samples should include...**

Writing, drawing, photographs, painting, collages, block structures...

Photographs of children's work such as a child setting the table for snack, a pattern block design, or a child partner reading with a peer.

### **Literacy prompts should be...**

Done individually or with 3 - 5 children at a time, as part of the daily routine. Use one during free play, small group time or choice time.

Responses to stories that are geared toward a child's developmental level

## **STEP 2**

**Collect, organize and reflect** on the documentation to learn about children and enhance instruction using Documentation Forms and the Child Folio.

Organize the documentation:

- ✓ collect and store documentation, including anecdotes, work samples, and Literacy Prompts in the Child Folio
- ✓ using the Child Profile and Matrix, collect documentation that you will need based on the Language Arts Literacy Expectations/Standards (you're not creating a scrapbook of children's work)

**Documentation you should have in the folio at the end of the collection period:**

6 – 8 anecdotes (with completed anecdote form)

3 – 4 work samples (with completed annotation on work sample form)

1 – 2 literacy prompts (with completed literacy prompt form)

**Periodically check for gaps:**

Reflect weekly and monthly on what you have collected, and what it tells you about how to adjust the environment and plan activities

**STEP 3**

**Compare the documentation to the The Age by Age Accomplishments** and use the **Child Profile** to assign a score.

- ✓ interpret documentation by connecting it to specific Expectations/Standards
- ✓ compare documentation to the descriptions of performance in the Age by Age Accomplishments
- ✓ determine the level that best describe the child’s overall performance (how the child is doing now) in relation to each specific Expectation/Standard
- ✓ evaluate the child’s performance using a score of 1 to 4 (Emergent to Competent)
- ✓ record the child’s scores on the Child Profile at the end of each collection period (Fall: mid November; Winter: end of February; and Spring: early June)

**Sharing the Results**

Select 3-4 pieces from Child Folio that represent different expectations and show where the child is now; plan in advance how you will talk about this documentation with the family (don’t share scores)

At the end of the year, select about 3 representative pieces of documentation to send to the next teacher along with the Child Profile

## Topic 5: How do teachers score using NJELAS?

### Helpful Hints:

- ✓ Reflect on each child's folio at the beginning of the scoring month to ensure evidence for all Expectations/Standards
- ✓ Look for areas that are not well documented. Collect documentation for Expectations/Standards that are not being addressed
- ✓ Use documentation for multiple Expectations/Standards whenever possible
- ✓ Use at least three pieces of evidence for each Expectation/Standard. More may be necessary
- ✓ Start process early and check for holes at the beginning of the month of the scoring period
- ✓ Keep notes of Expectations/Standards covered (by documentation) on matrix

### Scoring:

- ✓ Review all the documentation in the child's folio
- ✓ Use the accomplishments as reference to interpret the documentation
- ✓ Reflect on each child's folio at the end of the scoring month to ensure evidence for all Expectations/Standards
- ✓ As a rule of thumb, have at least three pieces of relevant documentation for each Expectation/Standard
- ✓ Read the Things to Consider at the top of the accomplishments; they should serve as a guide as to which Expectation/Standard the documentation informs
- ✓ Review the descriptions of behavior to determine the child's level of development based on each piece of evidence
- ✓ Score holistically for each Expectation/Standard; this means that you review your documentation, taking into account what you know about the child
- ✓ Review the age by age accomplishments and what the supporting documentation tells you to determine which score (1, 2, 3, 4) best reflects the child's overall performance

### Scoring Rules

- ✓ Complete the Child Profile in November, February, and June (or as determined by your district)
- ✓ Completing the Child Profile means enter a score for each Expectation/Standard
- ✓ If a child shows a range of behaviors across all levels, assign a score in the middle (e.g. 2)
- ✓ If a child shows a range of behaviors predominantly across two levels, assign the lower score
- ✓ For the first collection period, if you do not have enough evidence (less than 3 pieces) for a particular Expectation/Standard, do not score that item (record on the Profile, "not enough evidence" as the score). If time permits, collect more data, if there is not enough documentation to make a decision
- ✓ If you have documentation to support many of the Things to Consider, you can score. If you have documentation for only one or two, get more evidence

## II. RESOURCES

### Books

Bredenkamp, S & Rosegrant, T. (1995). *Reaching Potentials: Transforming Early Childhood Curriculum and Assessment Volume 2*. Washington, DC: NAEYC

Curtis, D., & Carter, M. (2000). *The art of awareness: How observation can transform your teaching*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Gronlund, G. (1998). *Portfolios as an Assessment Tool: Is Collection of Work Enough?* *Young Children* 53 (3): 4-10

Helm, J. H., Beneke, S., Steinheiner, K. (1998). *Windows on learning: Documenting young children's work*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Jablon, J. R., Dombro, A. L., & Dichtelmiller, M. L. (1999). *The power of observation*. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies.

Krechevsky, M. (1998). *Project Spectrum: Preschool assessment handbook*. New York: Teachers College Press.

MacDonald, S. (1997). *The Portfolio and its use: A road Map for assessment*. Little Rock, AR: Southern Early Childhood Association.

Nilsen, B.A. (1997). *Week by week: Plans for observing and recording young children*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers.

### Video

*Observing Children's Learning, Teaching Strategies*

*Observing Kindergarten Children, Pearson Early Learning*

### III. GLOSSARY

**Age by Age Accomplishments** is the tool of the NJELAS that describes child accomplishments in the area of Language Arts Literacy. It is based on the Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality, and the Kindergarten Core Curriculum Content Standards.

**Anecdote Form** is a tool to help teachers link their written anecdotes to the expectations/standards.

**Anecdotes** are brief factual descriptions of child's behavior and language.

**Assessment** is the ongoing process of gathering evidence in order to make informed decisions.

**Child Folio** provides a place to collect documentation that informs assessment. Teachers create and maintain a Child Folio for each child.

**Child Profile** is the form on which teachers score/evaluate children's performance.

**Class Matrix** an organizational tool that allows teachers to keep track of the documentation they have on each child, determine what they need to collect, and determine how to adjust instruction

**Collection period** means the time period in which teachers collect documentation before making evaluations. There are three collection periods, each lasting approximately two and a half months. They are referred to as:

- Fall: mid November
- Spring: early June
- Winter: end of February

**Continuous mastery continuum** ranging from emergent (1) to competent (4) is used to show the range of children's performance within an age group. Performance is continuous from age level to age level.

**Curriculum-embedded** performance assessment means that the data for the assessment is collected during the ongoing activities of the classroom.

**Documentation** is a preliminary stage in the assessment process and focuses on identifying, collecting, and describing the evidence of learning in an objective, nonjudgmental manner. Teachers use documentation to identify new curriculum strategies.

**Evaluation** is a secondary stage in the process of comparing documentation to a standard in order to make a decision or a judgment.

**Expectations and Standards** are learning outcomes defined by the state of New Jersey.

**Literacy Prompt Form** enables teachers to gain meaningful documentation related to specific expectations/standards

**Literacy prompts** are one type of documentation used in the NJELAS. The purpose of the literacy prompt is to elicit specific types of learning from the child.

**NJELAS** is The New Jersey Early Learning Assessment System, a performance based assessment designed around state standards and expectations.

**On-demand assessment** means that children have one chance to show what they know and can do. For young children, the results of on-demand assessments have potentially misleading results.

**Performance based assessment** means that children are assessed in “real-life” situations, using typical classroom activities on an ongoing basis.

**Performance** means a child’s current level of behavior, skills, or accomplishments at a particular point in time.

**Progress** is how children have changed from one time to another.

**Reflection** is the process of studying, thinking about, and making decisions about the documentation teachers collect.

**Score** means the rating of a child’s performance on the Child Profile. With the NJELAS, teachers rate performance as a 1, 2, 3, or 4 from emergent to competent.

**Work Sample Form** is an organizational tool that provides a means for including meaningful annotation (description/explanation) of children’s products and photographs.

**Work samples** are illustrations of children’s learning. They may be drawings, writing, photographs or other work.