

Michigan Department of Education
Office of Great Start

Child Assessment Approval Process Overview

Great Start Readiness Program



Letter from the Michigan Department of Education

Dear families, providers, administrators, policymakers, and partners,

Michigan has a rich history of providing high-quality, State-funded preschool to the state's most vulnerable children through the Great Start Readiness Program, known as the GSRP. Since 1985, the Michigan Department of Education—MDE—has worked closely with providers across the state to ensure Michigan offers a high-quality learning experience to all children participating in the GSRP. As the program has improved and evolved, early childhood partners and the MDE have worked together to maintain essential markers of quality. Over the past several years, the MDE has implemented a redesigned curriculum-approval process to regularly review and update the list of State-approved curricula to align with best practices and state standards.

Now that this systematic process has been successfully deployed to vet GSRP curricula, the MDE will be applying a similar approach to update the list of approved child assessment tools. These tools allow educators to gather critical information about children's development and growth to make certain that instruction aligns with their needs. While it is important for children to have access to high-quality curricula, it is equally important for them to be assessed using a comprehensive, authentic, developmentally appropriate, evidence-based, standards-aligned, and thoroughly vetted instrument.

This document explains how the state reviews and approves child assessment tools for use in GSRP classrooms. While written primarily to support assessment tool vendors as they complete the approval process, the MDE encourages all partners to review the materials to better understand how the State considers comprehensive and authentic child assessment instruments.

The MDE updates these materials regularly to ensure clear communications between the department and its partners. If you have questions about the process or have suggestions for improving our materials, please contact [Pat Sargent](mailto:sargentp@michigan.gov) at sargentp@michigan.gov, GSRP manager.

Thank you for all you do to improve opportunities and outcomes for young children.

Sincerely,



Richard Lower
Director
Preschool and Out-of-School Time Learning
Office of Great Start

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Background

Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program is a high-quality, State-funded preschool program that primarily serves low-income four-year-olds. Although the program is implemented by intermediate school districts, or ISDs; school districts, including local education agencies and public-school academies; and community-based organizations, the Michigan Department of Education has important oversight authority, including the approval of GSRP child assessment tools.

In this role, the MDE must ensure that all assessment tools are developmentally appropriate, research-based, and designed to provide educators critical information about children's development and growth.

This document describes the child assessment tool approval process for the GSRP, including how tools are submitted for consideration, reviewed, scored, and approved.

Note: Vendors interested in submitting a comprehensive, authentic child assessment tool for consideration should review this document in full.

Qualities of Comprehensive and Authentic Child Assessment Tools

GSRP providers are required to use a comprehensive, child-focused, constructivist curriculum model for all enrolled children. A comprehensive and authentic child assessment tool is a critical supplement to this curriculum. The approval process outlined in this document is designed to ensure that every GSRP provider is utilizing a high-quality, comprehensive child assessment tool.

The main purposes for assessment are to:

- Support learning and development for both individual children and classrooms of children
- Identify children who may need additional services
- Aid in effectively communicating progress or concerns with parents
- In ongoing, authentic assessment systems, staff observe, document, and analyze children's abilities exhibited in the classroom in both child- and adult-initiated activities as children apply their understandings and skills integrating what they have learned. Authentic assessment combines teaching, learning, and assessment to promote higher-ordered thinking, learning, and the full participation of children through all portions of the daily routine.

The State does not identify one best child assessment tool. Instead, the MDE uses this approval process to assess alignment with the Michigan's Preschool Child Assessment Tool Evaluation Rubric.

Process Overview

The MDE accepts, reviews, and approves child assessment tools on a regular basis. Only child assessment tool vendors can submit an instrument for approval. They are referred to as "vendors" throughout this document.

How to Submit an Assessment Tool for Review

Vendors must submit their assessment tool and supporting materials electronically for review. In addition, the vendor must complete the assessment tool alignment rubric to explain how their instrument meets Michigan's requirements.

Once materials are received, the MDE will review the application to ensure all materials and forms are included. The MDE will follow up with vendors if there are questions about the materials.

How Assessment Tools Are Reviewed

The child assessment tool approval process is supported by the MDE; however, the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC), made up of experts and practitioners representing a diverse set of early childhood education perspectives, is responsible for conducting fair and thorough reviews. The CRC was established to support the curriculum-approval process with the understanding that its scope could be expanded to assess other programming elements for children eight years old and younger, including infant and toddler curricula or child assessment tools.

Curriculum Review Committee

Charge

The CRC's charge is to review, score, and approve GSRP-related content using the appropriate rubric developed by the State of Michigan.

Structure

The CRC consists of nine members serving in three-year terms. Members represent the following perspectives:

TABLE 1.

Perspective	Number of Members	Sample Members
GSRP providers	3	Potential members include administrators with certification in early childhood and relevant experience working with the GSRP from ISDs, school districts, public school academies, community-based providers, and Head Start.
Early learning and education experts	2	Potential members include professionals with expertise across a broad spectrum of early childhood education and development, such as infant and toddler development, child assessments, or developmental screening tools.
Higher education	2	Potential members include university or community college researchers or administrators with expertise in prekindergarten or early education policy, programming, or curriculum.
K–3 educators	1	Potential member is an educator or administrator with certification in early childhood and relevant experience working with GSRP graduates in K–3 classrooms.
MDE	1	Potential member could include staff with expertise in early childhood education and development, GSRP program administration, or curriculum implementation.

Appointments

When the CRC was first established, the MDE committed to identifying highly qualified individuals to serve on the committee. Individuals were able to submit themselves or recommend a colleague for appointment to the CRC. As the CRC continues to operate, the MDE will solicit recommendations as needed.

To serve on the CRC, individuals must:

- Demonstrate they represent one or more of the perspectives above
- Demonstrate a strong background in early learning and development
- Commit to three years of service to the CRC

The deputy superintendent of P–20 systems and student transitions is responsible for appointing members that represent each perspective.

Conflict of Interest

To avoid any appearance of or actual conflicts of interest, all CRC members must sign an agreement asserting their commitment to adhere to the following statements.

- I agree to review GSRP curricula or other related content in an objective manner based on the established rubric and process developed by the MDE.
- I agree to maintain appropriate confidentiality before, during, and after the review process.
- I agree to declare current affiliations with the GSRP and recuse myself from any decision that may present a conflict of interest.
- I confirm that neither I nor any family members have a direct or indirect financial interest in any publisher of preschool curriculum or other related content.
- I agree to recuse myself from the evaluation of any curriculum or other related content that will give an appearance of impropriety and in this way compromise the review process, thereby eliminating and avoiding any potential conflict of interest in the review process.
- To further avoid a conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety, for a period of 12 months after completion of my duties as a reviewer, I will not seek or accept employment from, nor become directly or indirectly financially interested in, any newly approved publisher of GSRP curriculum or other content that I have reviewed.

Compensation

CRC members are not compensated. However, to ensure that a wide range of regional perspectives can participate, the MDE is able to reimburse members for some expenses when travelling significant distances.

Review Process

Each child assessment tool will be assigned to several members of the CRC who will independently evaluate and score it based on its ability to meet or exceed the criteria established in the rubric. An average score is then calculated, and a recommendation is made to the full CRC. If there is a disagreement on scoring between the original three reviewers that will lead to a tool being approved or denied, those issues will be brought to the full CRC for consideration.

Decisions

Following CRC review and scoring, a proposed assessment tool will receive one of two determinations.

TABLE 2.

Determination	Explanation
Approved	The assessment tool meets all standards for approval and is approved for use statewide.
Denied	The assessment tool does not meet the criteria for approval. Vendors may appeal this decision or reapply after the deficiency identified by reviewers has been addressed.

Communications

Vendors will receive their decision letter and a consensus scoring rubric electronically.

Appeals Process

The MDE is committed to identifying high-quality, aligned assessment tools for use in GSRP classrooms. If a vendor feels the CRC's decision did not accurately reflect the materials submitted, a vendor may appeal to the CRC.

The formal appeal process described below is in accordance with the MDE appeals policies and procedures, with clearly outlined eligibility requirements, instructions for submission, and a review process designed to reduce the burden on the vendor and reviewers.

How to Submit an Appeal

To be granted an appeal, the vendor must submit an appeal within ten days that includes the following elements:

- The criteria/subcriteria the vendor believes were not scored correctly
- The documentation in their original proposal that substantiates their claim—no new information may be submitted for an appeal
- A description of how a change in scoring could result in the assessment tool reaching the threshold for approval

The intent to appeal, with formal appeal documents, must be submitted to [Richard Lower](mailto:Richard.Lower@michigan.gov) at lowerr@michigan.gov, director for preschool and out-of-school time learning.

How Appeals Are Reviewed

The MDE will review each formal appeal to ensure timelines are met and to confirm that a change in scoring would result in the assessment tool reaching the threshold for approval. CRC members will review the disputed section or sections and develop a revised consensus score. The CRC members who evaluated and scored the assessment tool during the initial phase will serve in advisory capacity. The final decision will be made by the remaining members. After an appeal, the CRC's decision is final. If the assessment tool is denied, the assessment tool may be resubmitted for consideration in the next review cycle, along with documentation that the program has been changed or updated to address the previously identified issues.

Communications

The CRC's final decision letter and updated scoring rubric are provided to the vendor electronically.

Approved Assessment Tool List

The MDE will publish the list of approved assessment tools. All GSRP providers must use one selected from the approved list during the following school year.

Future Updates

This approval process document will be reviewed and updated, as needed, in advance of each review cycle. The document will be publicly available year-round on the GSRP website. Questions about these materials can be directed to [Pat Sargent](mailto:sargentp@michigan.gov) at sargentp@michigan.gov, GSRP manager.