

# K-3 FAP Research Update



# FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY: PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES ON A STATEWIDE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY ASSESSMENT

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# Background

In the fall of 2014, researchers from UNC Charlotte conducted case studies at 8 schools piloting a new kindergarten formative assessment known as the North Carolina Kindergarten Entry Formative Assessment Process (KEA). The purpose of this research was to provide feedback to the NC Department of Public Instruction regarding teacher and administrator perspectives on all aspects of the KEA in order to inform changes to the assessment prior to its statewide implementation in 2015. The following presentation is a summary of these findings.

# Presentation Overview

- Pilot Participation and Process
- Study Methods and Data Sources
- Summary of KEA Pilot Findings
- Implications
- Continued Research

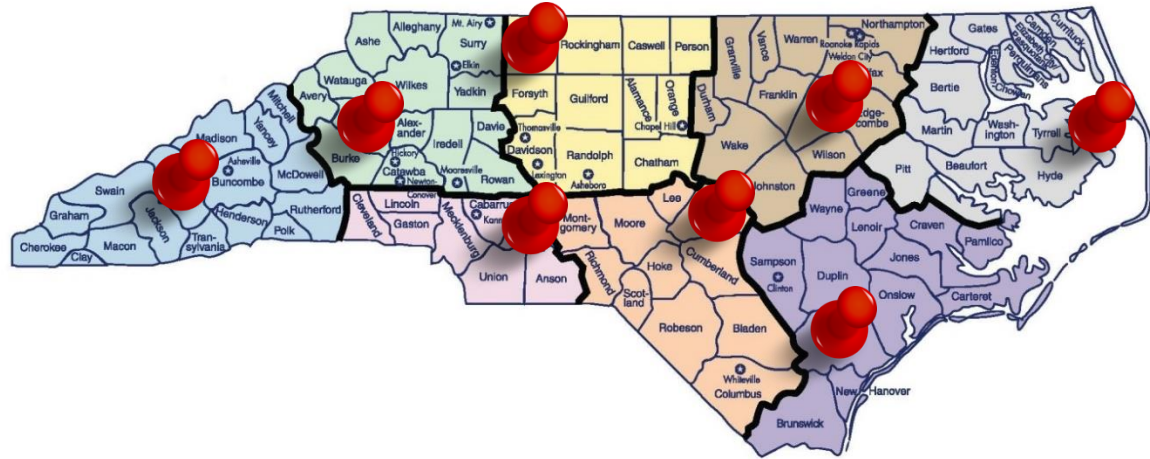
# KEA PILOT OVERVIEW

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# Pilot Participants

## Full KEA Pilot

193 Active Pilot  
Teachers  
51 Pilot Districts



## Case Studies

8 Schools (1 per SBE region)  
23 Teachers  
7 Principals  
4 Districts Administrators  
4 Instructional Coaches

	State	Sample
<b>Urbanicity</b>	Diverse	Diverse
<b>STR</b>	15.06	15.57
<b>% ELL</b>	6.64	3.85
<b>% IEP</b>	12.57	13.87
<b>% FRL</b>	52.21	62.58
<b>% Minority</b>	50.74	45.63

# Pilot Process

- Teachers gathered 'evidences' of learning.
- Evidences were used to denote the 'learning status' of students along different construct progressions:

Domain	Construct
Approaches to Learning	Engagement in Self-selected Activities
Socioemotional Development	Emotional Literacy
Health and Physical Development	Grip and Manipulation
	Hand Dominance
	Crossing Midline
Cognitive Development	Object Counting
Language Development and Communication	Book Orientation
	Print Awareness
	Letter Naming
	Following Directions

- Teachers uploaded the evidence to an online platform that housed individual student portfolios.

# RESEARCH DESIGN

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# Data Sources

- Case Studies:
  - 6 schools visited twice, 2 schools visited once
  - 23 interviews (approx. 27 hours recorded)
  - 17 classroom observations
- Electronic Survey:
  - 72 total responses
    - 52 Teachers, 16 Administrators, 4 Instructional Coaches
  - 18 closed-ended questions (yes/no, Likert Scale)
  - 26 open-ended questions

# Data Analysis

- Used a grounded discourse approach.
- Uploaded observation, interview, and survey data to NVivo 10.
- Used the data to generate a codebook for analysis.
  - 119 unique codes
  - 3952 individual references to those codes.
- A team of 3 researchers coded the data to ensure inter-rater reliability.
- Code frequency and cross-reference analysis used to identify major themes/patterns.

# FINDINGS

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# A Spectrum of KEA Implementation

## Implementing Classrooms

- Small class sizes: 14 student average
- Students easily transitioned from one activity to another independently
- School/District had a strong background in the use of formative assessment
- Teachers used self-created implementation resources to assist KEA documentation
- Teachers worked collaboratively
- Schools had strong PLCs with a continual focus on data driven instruction

## Non/Minimally Implementing Classrooms

- Large class sizes: 22 student average
- Students struggled to transition independently between classroom activities
- Teachers often preoccupied with behavioral interventions
- School/District did not have a strong background in the use of formative assessment
- Teachers conceptualized and implemented the KEA as a summative assessment
  - Created new/additional activities to “test” each child’s ability rather than using current instruction or assessment data

# Training

- Greater focus is needed in the application of KEA data (i.e. how to make meaningful planning and instructional decisions based on the evidences and progression ratings). (39 References)
  - 57% of surveyed teachers stated they could not make meaningful instructional decisions from the evidence and progression ratings they entered.

*“I’m putting all of this information in, but I’m getting nothing out. How is this supposed to help me get my students to [where they need to be] in reading? That’s all administrators and parents care about.”*

# NC KEA Content

- 71% of survey respondents felt the content was developmentally appropriate for kindergarten.

*“This really validates what we do and deal with everyday...there’s so much that needs to happen before you see a lot of academic changes. These young children are going to be growing socially tremendously [in the beginning of the year] and administrators need to understand we have all this other stuff to get in place before they can start moving academically.”*

- 49 references to the need for school and district administrators to receive additional training in early childhood education.

# NC KEA Content Continued

- The NC KEA is developmentally appropriate *BUT...*
  - 34 cross references between code “KEA Instrument> Developmentally Appropriate” and code “KEA in Practice> Misalignment with Current Curriculum and Assessment Practices”

*“Is this developmentally appropriate? Yes, but to be honest we don’t have the ‘freedom’ to use it. We are mandated by so many other expectations for our children that there is no way to do the KEA the way it should be done and still be responsible for the content we must teach and then assess them on [in other state mandated summative tests].”*

# NC KEA Content Continued

- Teachers also worried about how their administrators would interpret the integration of activities to evaluate socioemotional and physical development, and how that might negatively affect their performance reviews (10 references).

*“What if my principal walks by my classroom and sees my kids dancing as I evaluate crossing midline, or acting out a scene from a story as I evaluate emotional literacy? Our district removed our dramatic play centers, our sand tables, and other creative centers and we’ve been told there is no more play in kindergarten. How can I justify doing this when our administrators are so directly focused on literacy?”*



# Online Platform

- Teachers misunderstood the purpose of the online platform and saw it as a potential liability rather than a useful instructional tool. (39 references)
  - “Who at DPI is looking at all of this data?”
  - “What if my administrator disagrees with my interpretation of this evidence?”
- Teachers went as far as entering evidences simply for the sake of appeasing this unseen “big brother”.
  - “I’m trying to get these evidences uploaded, I promise. It’s just taking a really long time!”
  - “Did I say that right? Is that the type of information you’re looking for?”...typed at the end of an anecdotal record.

# IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

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- Professional development for the KEA needs additional focus in areas outside of the assessment's core content:
  - Early childhood education
  - Using the electronic platform
  - Qualitative data collection and its use to drive instruction
- Schools and districts vary widely in the supports needed to effectively implement given their current capacities and resources.
- New initiatives are not implemented in a vacuum.
  - Agencies need to be transparent about how they intend to use any data generated by this type of assessment in order to gain practitioner buy-in.

# Future Research

- KEA Implementation Follow-up (completed August 2015 – January 2016)
- K-3 Usability Study (March – December 2016)
- To follow the continued evolution of this research:
  - <http://ceme.uncc.edu/ceme-technical-reports>
- Direct questions or suggestions to:
  - Angela Ferrara – [aferrar2@uncc.edu](mailto:aferrar2@uncc.edu)
  - Rich Lambert – [rglamber@uncc.edu](mailto:rglamber@uncc.edu)