



# Perspectives on kindergarten assessment

Towards a common understanding

## Article Summary

**Context:** The standards-based movement in U.S. public education has reached as far as kindergarten. Early primary teachers are increasingly required to teach academic standards in core subject areas, while engaging in increased levels of student assessment. In kindergarten, this growing emphasis on academic standards and student assessment is expected to operate alongside longstanding social and personal developmental expectations. However, recent research has identified a significant tension as teachers endeavor to negotiate a balance between traditional developmental programming and new standards-based academic curricula.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this scoping review is to synthesize research related to three kindergarten traditions—Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, and Montessori—to develop a common understanding of key tenets for kindergarten assessment that can inform policy and practice in public education contexts.

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**Research Design:** A scoping review methodology was used to analyze research on assessment practices native to three kindergarten traditions—Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, and Montessori. This methodology followed a five-stage framework: (a) identifying the research question, (b) identifying relevant studies, (c) study selection, (d) charting the data, and (e) summarizing and reporting the results. Guiding the collection of articles was the following research question: “What does the extant literature on practices native to the three focal kindergarten traditions tell us about the assessment of kindergarten (4–6-year-olds) students’ learning?” In total, 80 texts satisfied the inclusion criteria across all traditions and were included in this study.

**Conclusions:** Empirical and non-empirical literature pertaining to each tradition were analysed and considered in relation to their potential contribution to public education. In comparing across traditions, differences were evident based on their (a) assessment discourses and purposes, (b) reference systems, (c) assessment methods, and (d) uses of assessment information. However, the three traditions also maintained key commonalities leading to the identification of core tenets for kindergarten assessment. Specifically, three core priorities for kindergarten assessment were identified: (a) a commitment to child-centered and developmentally appropriate teaching, (b) a continuous embedded formative assessment approach, and (c) the use of multiple methods for gaining assessment information. In addition to core priority areas, results from this study suggest consistent processes that facilitate assessment practices at the kindergarten level. These four iterative processes are: (a) participation in teaching and learning, (b) reconstruction of teaching and learning, (c) engagement in assessment dialogues, and (d) integration of feedback for enhanced teaching and learning.

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