Dear *GOLD®* Administrators,

We have heard your calls for guidance on using *GOLD®* in this unprecedented back-to-school environment. We know that no two providers, schools, districts, or states are dealing with identical circumstances. So of course, there is no one solution that is best for all. Instead, we want to help you decide what is best for your program. The following guidance outlines your options for assessment and the effects of each option on *GOLD®* scoring and reporting functionality.

As always, ***Teaching Strategies recommends assessing children's development and learning with the full set of objectives for learning and development*** because doing so ensures teachers understand the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the whole child. Using the full item set also ensures area-level scores and reporting are as accurate and precise as possible. Nevertheless, we understand there is a tradeoff between assessment and other demands on teachers' time, a tradeoff that will be particularly difficult to manage this coming school year. We also recognize that current events have especially impacted children's social-emotional development. For that reason, ***no matter your circumstances, Teaching Strategies strongly recommends assessing children's social–emotional development with all nine items under the area***.

If you decide that assessing children's development and learning through a smaller number of items is the best course of action for your program(s) this year, the following sections provide guidance on selecting items, including details about how each option affects area-level scoring/reporting. Please note that ***if your stakeholders use* GOLD® *for reporting to the Office of Special Education Programs***, users must assess all items under each outcome area for the system to produce entry and exit scores. Additionally, ***if your stakeholders use* GOLD® *for reporting on school readiness goals to the Office of Head Start***, users must ensure enough items are assessed under each outcome area to provide information for reporting on students' progress.

First, know that **no matter what your item set looks like, it will not affect dimension-level reports**. Fully functioning Class Profile Reports, Individual Child Reports, Development and Learning Reports, Report Cards, Snapshot by Dimension Reports, and Documentation Status Reports will be available to all users. Fully functioning Goals Reports will also be available to administrators. The only effect of using a smaller item set on dimension-level reporting is clear: where there is no rating (i.e., where a teacher enters "not observed"), there will be no data for that dimension.

Second, before deciding on an item set, it is important to understand that assessing a smaller number of items affects the precision of area-level (i.e., Social–Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Mathematics) scores because our system estimates ratings for items that are marked "not observed" in order to calculate widely held expectations and scaled scores. While area-level scores produced from estimated ratings are still valid, measurement error does increase due to estimation. In other words, assessing fewer items reduces confidence that the score has precisely captured a child's overall knowledge, skills, and abilities in that area. Teaching Strategies will release more information on confidence intervals for area-level scores produced from partially estimated ratings this fall. For now, know that the more items users assess, the more precise area-level scores are. Also know that any scores rolled up to the site, program, or organization level will be more precise than individual child-level scores. This is good news if your end goal for area-level scores is to report on aggregated data.

TeachingStrategies®

Teaching Strategies's recommendations for selecting a smaller item set:

If your stakeholders require area-level reporting for the Social–Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and/or Mathematics areas, users must meet the requirements for each area as outlined in the following table. Some of you may know these requirements as our "70% rule." Meeting the rule in all areas means users will have access to fully functioning area-level Snapshot (by Area) Reports, Snapshot (Birth Through Third Grade) Reports, Comparative Reports, and Growth Reports. But when the rule is not met for an area, area-level reports will be blank for that area.

Domain	Requirement for area-level reporting	Domain	Requirement for area-level reporting
Social–Emotional	7/9 items	Cognitive	7/10 items
Physical	4/5 items	Literacy & Spanish Literacy	12/16 items
Language & Spanish Language	6/8 items	Mathematics	9/12 items

As the intent of *GOLD*® is to assess the learning and development of the whole child, Teaching Strategies cannot provide specific recommendations for smaller item sets. We can, however, offer general advice intended to meet the needs of your program(s) while preserving the whole-child assessment approach:

- As you decide between items:
  - Ask yourself which are most developmentally germane to the group of children your program(s) serves.
  - Ask yourself which items best align with your district's and/or state's standards.

- Select at least one dimension from each objective (or select the objective itself if it does not have dimensions). For example, to meet the 70% rule for the Physical area, we recommend assessing Objectives 4, 5, and 6 and either 7a or 7b for Objective 7.

- Items where the developmental expectation for children is "Not Yet" are relevant to understanding where a child is headed. Nevertheless, when using a smaller item set, we recommend selecting the items most likely to capture children's current knowledge, skills, and abilities. That means if your program serves infants and you are deciding between Objectives 7a and 7b, you may want to choose Objective 7a because the developmental expectation for infants under Objective 7b is "Not Yet."

If meeting the "70% rule" for any area still seems too burdensome for your users, choose items according to your best judgment with the understanding that users will have full access to our dimension-level reports. Dimension-level information is ultimately what teachers and other providers should use to individualize instruction for each child.

Our primary goal here at Teaching Strategies is to support you in fulfilling *your primary goal* to support children. We hope this guidance gives your teachers the flexibility to have a successful school year, no matter the environment.

TeachingStrategies®