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Evaluation of the New York City *Pre-K for All Initiative*, 2014–15

Implementation Study Report: Using Data for Programmatic and Instructional Purposes

Submitted to:
New York City Center for Economic Opportunity and the New York City Department of Education

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Pre-K for All 2014-15 Evaluation Response Memo

Pre-K for All is New York City's historic initiative to provide every four-year-old with access to free, full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten through a two-year expansion that began in the 2014-15 school year. Before Pre-K for All, only 19,287 four-year-olds were enrolled in full-day pre-K in New York City; as of the 2015-16 school year, enrollment was 68,647.

The City implemented the rapid, at-scale universal pre-K program within a short two-year timeframe because filling the gap in access to full-day pre-K was crucial—four-year-olds eligible to enroll in September 2014 would not get another chance to attend pre-K. The City secured funding and quickly began to prepare for the 2014-15 school year. In the summer of 2014, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) and partner agencies worked closely with pre-K providers to ensure they were ready to open their doors on the first day of school. At the same time, the City launched an unprecedented grassroots campaign to recruit and enroll families. This included establishing an Outreach Team of dedicated pre-K enrollment specialists to call families and canvas local communities.

The City's comprehensive approach was grounded in creating a sustainable, high-quality, full-day pre-K model. From its inception, the expansion focused not only on ensuring access but also on investing in pre-K quality. The City built a single system of free, full-day, high-quality pre-K and developed a quality infrastructure to support long-term sustainability and quality improvements. The DOE's model provides all pre-K programs with differentiated support at the classroom- and program-level that focuses on implementing research-based instructional and family engagement practices. Some examples include: free and targeted professional learning for leaders, lead teachers, assistant teachers, and paraprofessionals; on-site support for leaders and teachers from Instructional Coordinators (ICs) and Social Workers (SWs); and guidance through online tools and other resources.

The first year of the expansion marked the beginning of a rigorous two-part research study of this work. The DOE, in conjunction with the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity, collaborated with Westat, Metis Associates, and Branch Associates, with supplemental support from the New York University's Institute for Human Development and Social Change, to undertake a study to inform future years of program delivery as well as lay the foundation for long-term research in the future. The Year 1 evaluation of Pre-K for All included an evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation process and a snapshot of student learning in the first year of the Pre-K for All initiative.

This memo summarizes the findings of the Year 1 evaluation of Pre-K for All and concludes by outlining accomplishments and improvements made in the 2015-16 school year that address many of the report findings.

Year 1 Evaluation Overview

The analysis conducted over the course of the 2014-15 school year was based on surveys, focus groups, interviews, and assessment data from a variety of stakeholders including parents, teachers, principals, site directors, DOE staff, and staff from other City agencies. The evaluation covered seven areas of Pre-K for All's implementation and are captured in separate reports:

1. Family perceptions of the program
2. Family engagement and communication

3. Curriculum and instruction
4. Using data for programmatic and instructional purposes
5. Expansion rollout
6. Program supports
7. Executive functioning and academic skills

Overall, the studies found:

- 92 percent of surveyed parents rate the quality of their child's pre-K program as "good" or "excellent" and 83 percent of surveyed parents report that Pre-K for All improved their child's learning and behavior "a lot."
- Sites offering Pre-K for All report using a variety of family engagement and communication practices.
- Sites offering Pre-K for All report that they feel supported by the DOE in implementing curriculum.
- Sites offering Pre-K for All report using a wide variety of data to inform instruction and make programmatic decisions.
- Most providers that applied to offer free, full-day Pre-K for All report that the application process was clear and well-supported.
- Nearly 80 percent and 88 percent of site leaders report that staff recruitment and staff retention, respectively, did not pose significant challenges.
- A majority of site leaders and teachers report using each type of support provided by the DOE (*ex: coaching, professional development*, *etc.*). In general, Pre-K for All sites report that these supports are helpful.
- A positive impact on students—across income levels, race, and home language status—was seen through their gains in executive functioning skills and academic skills over the course of the study period.

Year 1 Evaluation Report Summaries

1. Report on Family Perceptions

- 92 percent of surveyed families rate the quality of their child's pre-K program as "good" or "excellent," and 83 percent report that Pre-K for All improved their child's learning and behavior "a lot."
- Nearly 80 percent of surveyed families report receiving resources from their Pre-K for All program to support learning at home.
- Families report that the availability of Pre-K for All affected decisions about child care and labor force participation.
    - Of the families that were surveyed, more than half (56 percent) report a decrease in spending on childcare from 2013-14 to 2014-15. Surveyed families report an average decrease of $78 per week in spending.
    - Of the families that reported that Pre-K for All affected the number of hours they worked, half report an increase in hours worked, which they attribute to the availability of full-day pre-K.

2. Report on Family Engagement and Communication

- Overall, sites report undertaking a variety of family engagement and communication practices as a component of Pre-K for All. These include, but are not limited to: using face-to-face communication, providing updates on students' achievements, having accessible program staff and multi-lingual staff, translating communications, using family input to make decisions, and providing opportunities for families to be involved with the program.
- Survey and interview findings also demonstrate that site leaders and instructional staff express a commitment to involving families in the education of their children.

3. Report on Curriculum and Instruction

- Overall, Pre-K for All sites report using a range of curricula to meet the needs of their students and that curriculum satisfaction is high among staff.
- The large majority of site staff report that their curriculum is vertically aligned to kindergarten and beyond, either to a moderate or large extent.
- Pre-K for All sites report using their curricula effectively and confidently to meet students' needs; however, program staff also report requests for continued training and support to improve quality.

4. Report on Use of Data for Programmatic and Instructional Purposes

- Overall, Pre-K for All sites report using a wide range of data to inform site-level programmatic decisions and classroom-level teaching practices, which include: authentic assessments of children's learning, program quality assessments, and feedback from DOE support staff and families.
- Authentic assessment data is a valuable data source for children's learning and development and 89 percent of sites report using these data for a variety of purposes. However, sites' perceived comfort with the authentic assessment systems vary by site type.
- 89 percent of site leaders report that their site uses data to engage families to a moderate or large extent.

5. Report on Pre-K for All Expansion Rollout

- Most providers that applied to offer full-day pre-K report that the application process was clear, easy to navigate, and well-supported. In general, sites report understanding how to be in compliance with DOE and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) expectations.
- Key stakeholders report that the engagement of a large number of key players and City agencies, increases in City agency capacity and infrastructure, and collaboration within and between City agencies, demonstrated a high-level of commitment to reach the initiative's goals and were major successes.
- Nearly 80 percent and 88 percent of site leaders report that staff recruitment and staff retention, respectively, did not pose significant challenges.
- On average, lead teachers report having five years of experience in a pre-K educational setting and almost 13 years in any educational setting. Approximately eight out of every ten lead teachers report having the NYS Early Childhood certification and almost all of those who did not have certification were currently pursuing it.
- Overall, the large majority of surveyed pre-K instructional staff report being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their pre-K teaching experience in 2014-15.

6. Report on Program Supports

- A majority of site leaders and teachers report receiving or using each type of support provided by the DOE *(ex: coaching, professional development, etc.)*, and a majority also report that each type of support was "moderately" or "very" helpful.
- Nearly all site leaders (96 percent) report that they or their staff participated in the DOE-sponsored training that took place four times during the year. Overall, the large majority of site leaders and instructional staff (80 percent) report finding each of these professional development opportunities to be helpful.

- Sites report using a variety of resources and materials to support implementation of their Pre-K for All program. Nearly all site leaders (96 percent) report that their site used the DOE website to access units of study, lesson plans, and guidelines for the daily schedule, among other resources. They report the website is useful.

7. Report on Executive Functioning and Academic Skills

- A unique feature of this study is the collection of data on children's executive functioning skills, a set of skills that includes their inhibitory control, working memory, and ability to shift between pieces of information, that together support children's self-regulation. Executive functioning skills were measured by two widely-used assessments known as the Pencil Tap task and the Hearts and Flowers task.
- Statistically significant fall-to-spring gains were observed in both measures of executive functioning. The gains in the percentage of correct responses in the Pencil Tap and Hearts and Flowers tasks were 10 percent and 18 percent, respectively.
- Children attending Pre-K for All made statistically significant gains across all academic skills (Letter Recognition, Pre-writing, and Early Math) over the course of a 5.5-month testing window. By the end of this time period, Pre-K for All children outpaced the learning of four-year-olds nationally and were classified as being in the average range across all academic skills.
- This study featured a pre-post design without a comparison group, which means that observed gains in child learning cannot be attributed solely to participation in Pre-K for All. Children naturally learn and develop over time, and the study design means that these gains are confounded with the effects of the Pre-K for All program. Therefore, we cannot estimate the extent to which Pre-K for All was responsible for the children's learning and development.

2015-16 | Year 2

Updates

The accomplishments and improvements in the second year of the expansion build on the work done in Year 1 to develop a high quality Pre-K for All system. They were informed by the results from the 2014-15 evaluation of Pre-K for All, feedback from Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) field staff, ongoing program assessments, and partnerships with early childhood education experts.

In the second year of the expansion, the DOE introduced the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards (PQS), which define the DOE's vision for high-quality Pre-K for All programs in NYC. The PQS describes the key practices of family engagement, rigorous and developmentally appropriate instruction, professional collaboration, and leadership that support children in gaining the knowledge and skills outlined in the NYS Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core (NYS PKFCC). The PQS establishes a shared set of expectations for all pre-K programs; the DOE, leaders, educators, and families all use the PQS to understand and advance program quality.

EXPANSION AND POLICY

- The 2015-16 school year marked the first time that every four-year-old in New York City had access to free, full-day, pre-K. As of the 2015-16 school year, 68,647 children were enrolled across all Pre-K for All programs—a number more than triple the number of children who were enrolled before the expansion and larger than the entire school population of major cities like Boston. Enrollment is high across every community, with the highest participation among low-income families.

- The DOE introduced a streamlined pre-K enrollment process for families, which provides one application for families to apply to pre-K programs. Overall, 88 percent of families received a pre-K offer to one of their top three choices through the new streamlined application process.
- The DOE developed and shared critical policy guidance for NYC Early Education Centers (NYCEECs) to ensure they are adequately supported as they join or continue as Pre-K for All partners.

DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORTS: In 2015-16, the DOE continued to advance its differentiated supports to all programs, tailoring support to each program's needs in order to meet Pre-K for All's Program Quality Standards.

Instructional Tracks and Lanes

- The DOE launched its Pre-K for All Instructional Tracks, providing every pre-K site with differentiated professional learning through a Summer Institute for teachers and leaders and a series of four teacher sessions and three leader sessions during the school year. Based on a variety of factors such as interest, demonstrated need, recommendations from Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers, site quality, and geography, sites were selected to participate in one of the following professional learning tracks and lanes:
    - *NYC Pre-K Explore*: Pre-K sites that participated in the Explore track used the evidence-based Building Blocks math curriculum together with the Pre-K for All Interdisciplinary Units of Study. Paired together, these materials provide a comprehensive, developmentally-appropriate approach to learning in pre-K.
    - *Advancing Social Emotional Development*: Pre-K sites in this lane advanced ways to support pre-K learners in developing social emotional skills needed to build a positive sense of self, form positive relationships, self-regulate, and adapt to change.
    - *Using Data to Inform Instruction*: Pre-K sites in this lane moved each child forward by learning new strategies to identify and meet each learner's needs, using authentic assessments and other data points.
    - *Supporting Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners*: In this lane, pre-K sites built on the diverse backgrounds and languages children and families brought to the classroom, with strategies for developing learning environments in which all children can thrive and all families are strong partners.

Coaching

- The DOE expanded its cadre of staff to provide on-site support to programs, including Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers.
- To more effectively differentiate support, in the 2015-16 school year, Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers conducted over 1,800 Foundational Support Visits (FSVs) to pre-K sites. Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers used information from these initial visits, ongoing observations, and pre-K program quality assessments to tailor their supports.
- The DOE established partnerships to provide specialized coaching for programs in targeted areas such as the Building Blocks math curriculum and using data to inform instruction.

Interdisciplinary Units of Study

- The DOE created the Pre-K for All research-based Interdisciplinary Units of Study to support student learning in all domains using developmentally appropriate practice. Throughout the year, the DOE released ten interdisciplinary units grounded in the NYS PKFCC.

PROGRAM MEASUREMENT AND USE OF DATA

- Because of its commitment to consistent quality measurement through program assessments, the DOE increased its capacity to provide more frequent program assessments, the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The DOE committed to a three-year cycle for each assessment by the 2016-17 school year for ECERS-R and the 2017-18 school year for CLASS.

OTHER KEY INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS

- The DOE partnered with researchers at New York University to develop a system of differentiated support that utilizes data on program needs and quality levels; the purpose of this system is to make decisions about the supports each program in our system receives across various aspects of the Pre-K Quality Standards. This is part of an ongoing partnership between DECE and NYU.
- In 2015-2016, the DECE continued its partnership with the Office of Special Education to develop resources and professional learning opportunities so that Instructional Coordinators, Social Workers, teachers, and leaders further strengthen their work to ensure that all children are successfully supported in achieving high expectations for their learning and developmental progress.
- The DOE launched a historic Teacher Incentive Program to support NYCEECs in recruiting and retaining top talent. Through the Pre-K for All Lead Teacher Incentive Program, there are two types signing incentives for certified lead teachers in Pre-K for All classrooms: the Retention Incentive Program for returning certified lead teachers and the New Hire Incentive Program for newly-hired certified lead teachers.

YEAR 2 EVALUATION

The Year 2 evaluation will produce actionable findings that will inform how the DOE can support pre-K programs to advance student learning. The Year 2 evaluation seeks to inform:

- How programs can better support students of different backgrounds and needs and how differentiated supports can serve students with special needs, students whose home language is a language other than English, and students living in poverty.
- The impact of the Pre-K for All's coaching models and professional development to understand how well the DOE is targeting sites for the right kinds and dosage of support based on the areas of growth identified in Year 1 and the Foundational Support Visit.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Westat, Metis Associates, and Branch Associates are conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the *Pre-K for All* initiative in New York City to assess the implementation and outcomes of this effort. As a demonstration of its commitment to learning and quality improvement, the City—the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and the New York City Department of Education (DOE), in cooperation with the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS)—undertook this evaluation beginning in 2014 as a means of gaining actionable information to inform implementation. Work in this area is expected to continue into the future.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. *To what extent do sites use data to inform their practices?*
   a. *Which data sources are used most frequently? For what purpose?*
   b. *What challenges, if any, do sites experience in collecting, analyzing, and using data? What additional supports do they need?*

2. *To what extent, and how, do sites use authentic assessment data?*
   a. *Which authentic assessment systems do sites use? And how prepared are teachers to administer and use the authentic assessment tools?*
   b. *Do they use the online modules and, if so, how helpful are they? How could they be improved?*
   c. *What challenges, if any, do sites experience in using authentic assessment data? What additional supports do they need?*

3. *To what extent, and how, do sites use data to engage families?*
   a. *What challenges, if any, do they experience in using data for this purpose? What additional supports do they need?*

This report presents implementation findings on the topic of using data for programmatic and instructional practices from the perspective of *Pre-K for All* site administrators and instructional staff. Sources of data include surveys of site administrators and instructional staff from a sample of 201 sites and in-depth interviews with administrators and staff at 40 of these sites, as well as from a review of available documentation. The sites included in the study were sampled to be representative of all *Pre-K for All* sites and recruited to participate in the evaluation. Findings are based on self-reported data; the use of data was not directly observed. Survey response rates were 91 percent for site administrators and 69 percent for instructional staff.

In addition to presenting survey and interview findings across all study sites, selected data are reported for the following subgroups of programs and respondents:

- **Site type.** This includes three categories, two of which include programs known as New York City Early Education Centers (NYCEECs) operated by independent organizations under contract to DOE (DOE NYCEECs) or ACS (ACS NYCEECs). The third category is district schools. Because of the small sample size, results for charter schools are not presented separately, but are included in the aggregate.
- **Program length.** All *Pre-K for All* sites operate full-day programs. In this report, sites are categorized as: "existing or expanded" (full-day program that maintained their same size enrollment or expanded the number of seats), "conversion" (programs that converted from a half- to a full-day),

and "new or newly contracted" (district schools or NYCEECs operating a pre-K program for the first time as well as programs in existence for various lengths of time prior to contracting with the DOE or ACS).

- **Staff position.** This includes site leaders (i.e., school administrators or site directors), lead teachers, and teacher assistants who may be teacher aides or paraprofessionals.

This report presents evaluation findings in the three areas: using data for decisionmaking and to inform instructional practice, using authentic assessment data, and using data to engage families.

BACKGROUND

Pre-K for All sites are expected to collect, review, analyze, and interpret various types of data to support their programmatic and instructional decisionmaking. Each of these data sources is described below.

Sites are required to **conduct an initial diagnostic screening** on all eligible *Pre-K for All* students using a valid and reliable developmental screening tool. The purpose of the diagnostic screening process is to help sites identify potential developmental delays and language acquisition needs among pre-K students at the beginning of the school year. Approved screenings include: Early Screening Inventory—Revised (ESI-R), provided by DOE free of charge; Ages and Stages Questionnaires – Third Edition (ASQ-3), and Brigance Inventories System II. The tools are designed to assist educators in learning about the various aspects of a child's development such as language, cognition, perception, and motor development. Sites are required to have a plan in place for followup on these screenings.

All sites are also required to **adopt and implement a valid and reliable authentic assessment system.** In 2014–15, sites were asked to choose a DECE-approved assessment—Work Sampling System, Teaching Strategies GOLD, and High Scope Child Observation Record—or another approved system. The approved assessments cover all the development domains as outlined in the New York State Pre-K Foundation for the Common Core (PKFCC). According to the guidance provided by DECE, sites are expected to have a plan for collecting and analyzing student assessment data at least three times during the year. To support the assessment process, DECE recommends that site leaders and staff meet regularly to gather, analyze, and share information on program quality and student learning outcomes in order to understand site and student progress over time. In addition, sites are expected to use authentic assessment data to inform lesson planning and instruction to ensure that individual student needs are met.

In addition, DOE contracted with external vendors to **conduct a programmatic assessment** of *Pre-K for All* sites during the 2014–15 school year, using either the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) or the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), the latter used only in NYCEECs. Both are used to assess the quality of interactions in the classroom.

District schools may use data from the **DOE Quality Review (QR)** to inform planning and instruction. Conducted by an experienced educator over one or two days, the QR assesses how well a school is organized to support student achievement through classroom observations and talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders. As a school-level report, the QR does not provide data specific to pre-K, and, as a result, it would be unusual for the QR to include feedback specific to pre-K. It should be noted that some district schools may not have received a QR recently.[1]

Finally, programs are also expected to use data from **administrator observations** and **feedback from various stakeholders**, including from DECE coaches/instructional coordinators (from here on referred to

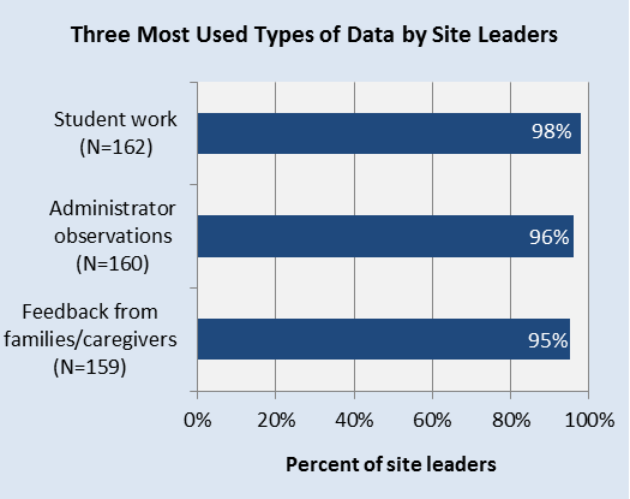
[1] http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/review/default.htm.

as DECE coaches) and DECE social workers (who primarily worked with district schools), as well as families and caregivers, to inform decisionmaking and instructional practices. In addition to seeking families' feedback on programming, sites may also use data to engage families in other ways, such as sharing authentic assessment and screening data with families to engage them in goal-setting discussions and using data such as families' home language or preferred method of communication to shape family engagement practices.

USING DATA FOR DECISIONMAKING AND TO INFORM INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

Evaluation findings indicate that overall, *Pre-K for All* sites reported using a wide range of data to inform site-level programmatic decisions and classroom-level teaching practices.[2]

Site Leader Practices



- Site leaders were most likely to report using data from their observations of classroom instruction (96 percent) and from a review of student work (98 percent) for making programmatic decisions. During site visits, several site leaders described how they review student work several times a year to ensure that students are making progress and identify students who may be in need of additional services. Reviews of student work were not limited to those conducted as part of the authentic assessment process. Student work might include collages or mosaics created by students to demonstrate fine motor skills as well as drawing and writing samples.
- About 90 percent of surveyed site leaders also reported using feedback from the DECE coach. During site visits, they noted, for example, that the coaches provided suggestions for improving the classroom environment, reinforced concepts on which the pre-K teachers had received training, and helped sites refine their daily schedules. Overall, these respondents felt that the assistance provided by the coach was useful and supported them in meeting the *Pre-K for All* requirements and expectations. In the words of one site leader, "I think that's the best feedback we get…the DECE coach is really a treasure for me."

Instructional Staff Practices

- Results indicate that each type of data was used by at least 90 percent of teachers. Ongoing reviews of student work, data from authentic assessments (which also include reviews of student work that are scheduled three times a year), and feedback from families and caregivers were the most widely used sources of data teachers used in making programmatic decisions. Almost all or all teachers reported using these three types of data to inform their practice, including 98 percent, 89 percent, and 88 percent, respectively, who reported using these data *to a moderate or large extent*. During the site visits, staff from a number of sites offered examples of how they incorporate feedback from

[2] Although authentic assessment data were also used to inform programmatic and instructional decisions, results related to use of this type of data are presented in the next section, which focuses exclusively on this topic, including their use, perceptions of quality of the tools, staff preparedness, and challenges.

parents, for example, by seeking information about a child's interests or needs from their parents in order to address a particular issue occurring in the classroom.

- Almost all instructional staff (93 percent) also reported using data from the diagnostic screening tool. During site visits, a number of staff discussed how they find the diagnostic screening data to be helpful and accurate, in particular for identifying student needs and informing student grouping. As one teacher stated, the Early Screening Inventory – Revised (ESI-R) was "right on target."

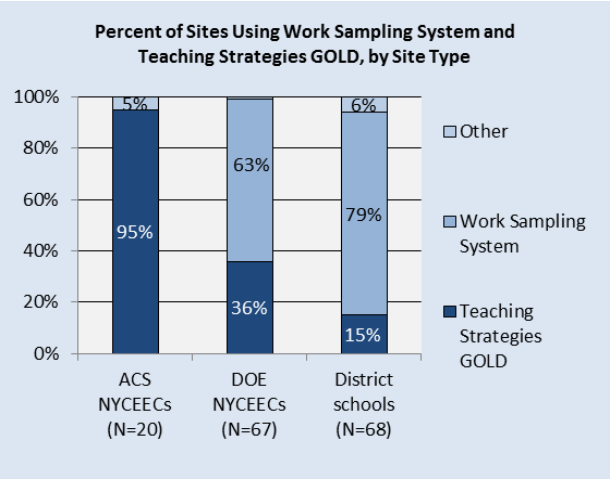
Challenges and Additional Supports Needed

- Many sites experienced minimal challenges in using data to make instructional decisions or inform instruction. Nearly half of site leaders (46 percent) reported that using data this way was *not at all challenging;* approximately one-third felt it was *a little challenging;* and about one-sixth indicated it was *moderately challenging* (16 percent). Very few site leaders reported that using data to inform planning and instruction was *very challenging* (4 percent) or *extremely challenging* (3 percent).
- ACS sites reported fewer challenges to using data than both types of DOE sites (NYCEECs and district schools).
- Although most site leaders (78 percent) did not report a need for additional supports in using data to inform instructional planning and decisionmaking, the majority of instructional staff (71 percent) indicated that they would like assistance in this area. For example, teachers reported that they need additional training and support in using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) and would like to receive these data earlier in the year.

USING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT DATA

The authentic assessment system used by sites varied by program type.

- Nearly all ACS NYCEEC sites used Teaching Strategies GOLD (95 percent), while most district schools used the Work Sampling System (79 percent). Approximately two-thirds of DOE NYCEECs used the Work Sampling System (63 percent); just over one-third of them used Teaching Strategies GOLD (36 percent).



Note: Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

Authentic assessments are a valuable source of data, with most sites using them for a variety of purposes.

- The large majority of teachers (86 percent) and site leaders (76 percent) reported using authentic assessment data *to a moderate extent* or *to a large extent*.
- Sites reported using authentic assessment data for tracking student progress, identifying areas of need, differentiating instruction, and providing information to parents. During site visits, staff spoke extensively about the ways in which they use these data.

Sites were generally satisfied with the authentic assessments and online modules. Respondents using Teaching Strategies GOLD reported a higher level of satisfaction than those using Work Sampling System.

- Nearly two-thirds of the site leaders (57 percent) using Teaching Strategies GOLD felt the tool was *excellent* at measuring student progress compared to only 32 percent of the respondents using the Work Sampling System.

Sites using Teaching Strategies GOLD felt better prepared to use authentic assessment data than staff using the Work Sampling System.

- More than two-thirds of site leaders (70 percent) and teachers (67 percent) from sites using Teaching Strategies GOLD indicated that staff were *well prepared* or *very well prepared* to use the tool compared to less than half of site leaders (41 percent) and staff (44 percent) at sites using the Work Sampling System.
- When considering the findings related to authentic assessment systems, it is important to note that ACS sites have been using Teaching Strategies GOLD for many years, while the Work Sampling System has only been implemented in many of the DOE sites for a year.

> ***[Teaching Strategies GOLD] gives me information about what I have to do differently with every child. It defines [my] instruction.***
>
> ***Work Sampling System gives you ways to assess children to be sure, that they are reaching certain goals and it gives you a guideline on how to [do] that. I find it tremendously helpful.***
>
> ***Pre-K Teachers***

Challenges and Additional Supports Needed

- Just over one-fourth of site leaders (28 percent) and 39 percent of instructional staff found administration of the authentic assessment *moderately to extremely challenging*. Although only 18 percent of site leaders requested additional support for selecting and administering the authentic assessment, nearly three-quarters of instructional staff (71 percent) indicated a need for additional support for using authentic assessment data to inform instruction.
- Of the interviewed site leaders and staff who reported challenges associated with data use, most described challenges related to the use of the authentic assessments. In particular, the Work Sampling System was seen as requiring a level of detail in the evidence that was not realistic or practical. Challenges may also stem from the fact that many sites have just begun using this comprehensive authentic assessment system and therefore may be learning about it as they implement it.
- Overall, ACS sites reported far fewer challenges related to use of the authentic assessments than other types of sites, according to data from surveys and interviews.

USING DATA TO ENGAGE FAMILIES

It should be noted that the surveys included a generic question about sites' use of data to engage families, a practice that may have been interpreted by respondents in different ways. Sites may have shared authentic assessment and screening data with families to engage them in goal-setting discussions, used feedback from families as a way to empower them (and inform programmatic and instructional decisions), and/or used data such as families' home language and preferred method of communication to inform family engagement practices.

Site leader survey findings indicated that most sites (89 percent) use data to engage families *to a moderate* or *large extent.* For example, site visit findings indicate that sites reported using data from

authentic assessments and diagnostic screenings to keep parents informed about their child's strengths, needs, and progress throughout the school year.

Site leaders from ACS NYCEECs reported using data to support family engagement more frequently than leaders of the DOE sites. For example, nearly three-quarters of ACS NYCEEC site leaders (72 percent) reported using data to engage families *to a large extent,* while this percentage was much lower among leaders of DOE NYCEECs (43 percent) and district schools (59 percent). Use of data to engage families by ACS NYCEECs may be related to the inclusion of parents in the ACS site self-assessment process. In addition, some ACS sites are Head Start programs, which have specific requirements for family engagement.

Sites did not view the use of data to engage families as a challenge; nevertheless, the majority of instructional staff (57 percent) indicated that they would benefit from additional supports. The topic of family engagement is discussed in greater depth in a separate report.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation findings from surveys and site visits indicate the following:

- **Site leaders and teachers reported using multiple data sources to inform programmatic and instructional decisions**. The most commonly reported data sources were student work, observations of instruction by administrators, and feedback from families and caregivers.
- ACS NYCEECs used Teaching Strategies GOLD as their authentic assessment data system, while the majority of district schools and some DOE NYCEECs used the Work Sampling System. Overall, **sites using Teaching Strategies GOLD were more satisfied with the quality of the tool, felt better prepared, and reported fewer challenges in administering the tool**. These results seem to indicate a need for additional training on the Work Sampling System. Several interviewed site leaders and teachers offered suggestions, including providing training earlier in the year; adding hands-on, interactive activities and ongoing support to the existing trainings; establishing a forum for cross-site sharing of best practices; updating the online modules to make them more user-friendly; providing teachers with data tablets to ease the burden of data collection; and providing more training on how to help parents interpret the authentic assessment results.
- Most sites reported no challenges or minimal challenges in using data to inform decisionmaking and instructional practices. **Teachers seemed more likely to encounter challenges than site leaders, and a larger proportion of teachers requested additional assistance and training in this area**. Most of their suggestions were related to the Work Sampling System, although several also indicated a desire for additional training on the ECERS-R and would like to receive data from the programmatic assessments, such as CLASS and ECERS-R, earlier in the year. It should be noted that the DOE's most extensive professional development track for Year 2 (2015–16) will focus on authentic assessments and using data to inform instruction and family engagement.
- **All sites reported using data to engage families. ACS sites seemed to use data for this purpose more extensively.** DOE should consider providing additional venues for sites, including ACS sites, to share their most effective practices in using data to foster family engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Westat and Metis are conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the *Pre-K for All* initiative in New York City to assess the implementation and outcomes of this effort. The implementation study consists of an ongoing assessment of New York City's *Pre-K for All* expansion efforts, both in terms of processes, structures, and policies that are in place to support and monitor the rapid expansion, as well as on-the-ground program implementation and delivery. Results from this study will help identify successful practices, challenges, and areas for growth.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. ***To what extent do sites use data to inform their practices?***
   a. ***Which data sources are used most frequently? For what purpose?***
   b. ***What challenges, if any, do sites experience in collecting, analyzing and using data? What additional supports do they need?***

2. ***To what extent, and how, do sites use authentic assessment data?***
   a. ***Which authentic assessment systems do sites use? And how prepared are teachers to administer and use these tools?***
   b. ***Do they use the online modules and, if so, how helpful are they? How could they be improved?***
   c. ***What challenges, if any, do sites experience in using authentic assessment data? What additional supports do they need?***

3. ***To what extent, and how, do sites use data to engage families?***
   a. ***What challenges, if any, do they experience in using data for this purpose? What additional supports do they need?***

The implementation study uses multiple methods and data sources, including interviews with key agency stakeholders; a survey of staff of the NYC Department of Education (DOE) Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE); surveys of site leaders, instructional staff, and families at a sample of sites, and interviews with site leaders and staff at a subsample of these sites; and a review of documentation. The evaluation instruments were developed by Westat/Metis in collaboration with staff of the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and DOE.

This report presents implementation findings on the topic of sites' use of data for programmatic and instructional purposes. Findings are based on self-reported survey and interview responses from site administrators and instructional staff, as well as a review of documentation provided by DOE. The program sites included in the study were sampled to be representative of all *Pre-K for All* sites and recruited to participate in the evaluation. A total of 201 sites agreed to participate in various aspects of the study, with 40 agreeing to site visits.

- From March through June 2015, Westat/Metis administered an **online survey[3] to site leaders and instructional staff** (teachers and teacher assistants). A total of 183 site leaders responded, for a response rate of 91 percent. The response rate for instructional staff was 69 percent (*N* = 742) based on email addresses provided for 1,080 staff at the selected sites.
- **Site visits** were conducted at 40 programs from March to May 2015. In-depth interviews with site leaders and interviews or focus groups with instructional staff were conducted at each of these sites.

In addition to presenting survey and interview findings across all study sites, selected data are reported for the following subgroups of programs and respondents:

[3] To increase response rates, paper surveys were mailed to nonrespondents in June 2015.

- **Site type.** This includes three categories, two of which include programs known as New York City Early Education Centers (NYCEECs) operated by independent organizations under contract to DOE (DOE NYCEECs) or ACS (ACS NYCEECs). The third category is district schools. Because of the small sample size, results for charter schools are not presented separately, but are included in the aggregate.
- **Program length.** All *Pre-K for All* sites operate full-day programs. In this report, sites are categorized as: "existing or expanded" (full-day program that maintained their same size enrollment or expanded the number of seats), "conversion" (programs that converted from a half- to a full-day), and "new or newly contracted" (district schools or NYCEECs operating a pre-K program for the first time as well as programs in existence for various lengths of time prior to contracting with the DOE or ACS).
- **Staff position.** This includes site leaders (i.e., school administrators or site directors), lead teachers, and teacher assistants who may be teacher aides or paraprofessionals.

See Appendix Table A-1 for the distribution of sites that participated in the study.

Pre-K for All sites are expected to collect, review, analyze, and interpret various types of data to support their programmatic and instructional decisions. The data sources, described in detail in the executive summary, include:

- Diagnostic screenings (the Early Screening Inventory – Revised (ESI-R), provided by DOE at no charge, Ages and Stages Questionnaires – Third Edition (ASQ-3), or Brigance Inventories System II are approved by DOE);
  - Authentic assessments (Work Sampling System, Teaching Strategies GOLD, or High Scope Child Observation Record;
  - Curriculum-embedded and staff-developed assessments;
  - Administrator observations;
  - Student work;
  - Programmatic assessments (such as Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)); and
  - Feedback from DECE instructional coaches/coordinators (from here on referred to as DECE coaches) and DECE social workers (who primarily worked with district schools), site leaders, and families and caregivers.

This report presents evaluation findings in the three areas: using data for decisionmaking and to inform instructional practice, using authentic assessment data, and using data to engage families.

Using Data for Decisionmaking and to Inform Instructional Practice

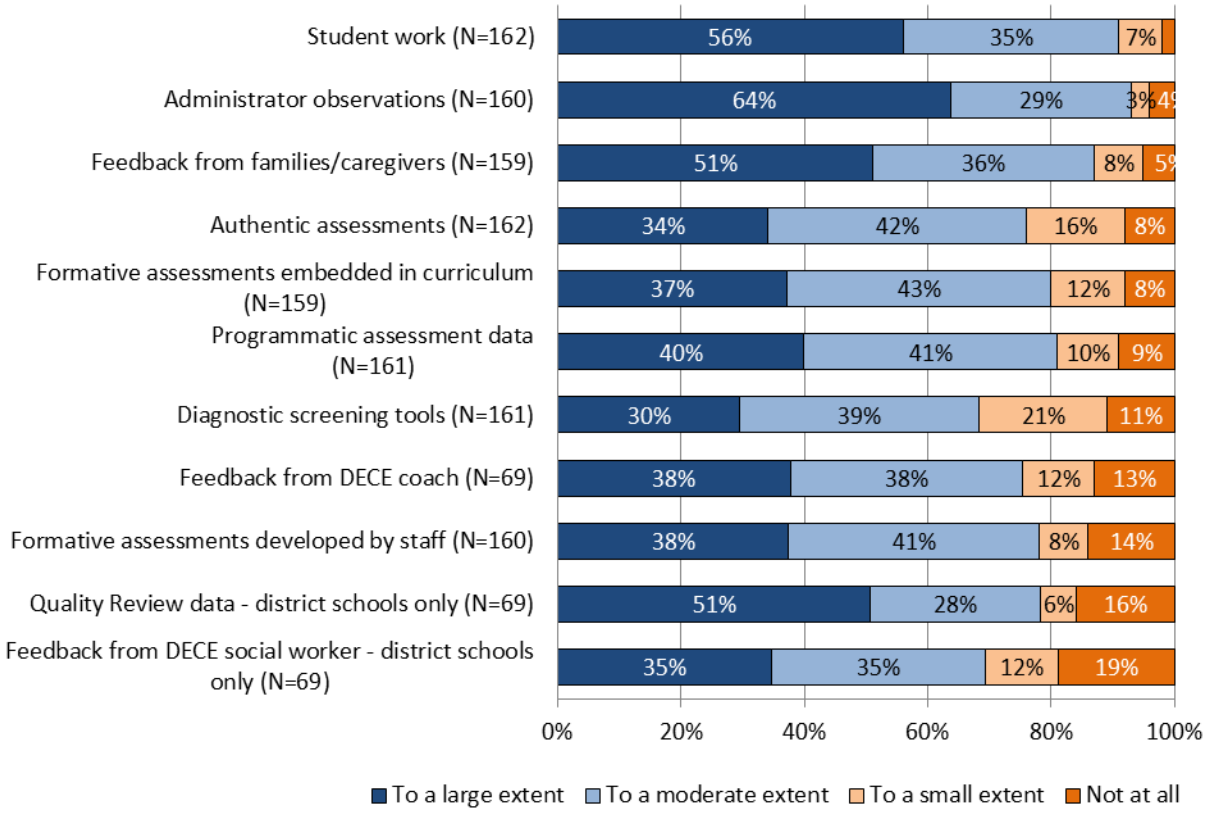
Site Leaders' Practices

Survey results indicate that while site leaders consult various data sources to inform their decisionmaking and instructional practices, they prefer to use some types of data more frequently than others. The most frequently used data came from observations conducted by administrators and reviews of student work, which may not be

Site leaders were most likely to use their own observation data and student work in making programmatic decisions.

limited to those conducted during the authentic assessment process). Other data sources used by at least 90 percent of the sites included feedback from families/caregivers and data from authentic assessments, formative assessments embedded in the curricula, and programmatic assessments. Survey results are presented in Figure 1 and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Figure1. Types of Data Used by Site Leaders



Note: Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Almost all site leaders indicated that they use their own **observations** (93 percent) and **student work** (91 percent) to a *moderate* or *large extent*. During site visits, for example, several site leaders provided examples of how they review student work a few times per year to ensure that students are making progress and to identify students who may be in need of additional services or intervention. In most cases, they reviewed student portfolios that teachers maintain for each student, which include work samples (e.g., student writing samples, self-portraits) as well as the teacher-generated authentic assessment data from the entire year.

> ***We find that parents' suggestions about their own children are very supportive and helpful, because obviously they know their child best of all.***
>
> ***[Parents] are constantly giving me feedback as to how the program is going and where improvements need to be made, their suggestions.***
>
> ***Pre-K Site Leaders***

Almost all site leaders also reported using **feedback from families and caregivers** to inform their decisionmaking, including 87 percent to a *moderate* or *large extent*. During the site visit interviews, site leaders spoke extensively

about the ways in which they seek out families' and caregivers' input both formally (e.g., through surveys, in-person meetings, and scheduled family events) and informally (e.g., during pick-up and drop-off) and use this information to inform decisionmaking and instructional practices at their sites.

Interview findings indicate that site leaders considered parent feedback to be extremely valuable, with one respondent calling it "the most important thing" and another stating "They are the number one in the child's life so everything they say is important." Several site leaders also noted that they have an "open-door policy" when it comes to parents and that they invite them to visit the classroom, observe lessons, and provide feedback on the curriculum and instruction. An in-depth discussion of these topics is presented in a separate report on family engagement.

More than 9 in 10 site leaders also reported using data from **authentic assessments** to inform programmatic decisions, including 76 percent who do so to a *moderate* or *large extent*. Results related to use of this type of data are discussed in more detail in the next section, which focuses exclusively on this topic, including their use, perceptions of quality of the tools, staff preparedness, and challenges.

Separate from the authentic assessments, the large majority of site leaders also reported using **curriculum-embedded and staff-developed formative assessments** at least with moderate frequency (80 percent and 79 percent, respectively). A few interviewed site leaders reported that they used data from formative assessments, such as teacher-developed assessments, end-of unit assessments, or other assessments from online resources such as EngageNY, to track student progress and identify student needs.

The majority of survey respondents also reported using **programmatic assessment data**, such as results from the CLASS or ECERS-R, including 81 percent who use these data with at least moderate frequency. At the time of the site visits (March through May 2015), many sites had not yet received a CLASS or ECERS-R review, and therefore had not had a chance to utilize those data. Among the sites that had received a visit, many had not yet been provided with the findings and thus had not yet had the opportunity to use those data. Nevertheless, site leaders who had received their data generally found them to be helpful, particularly with regard to classroom organization, classroom climate, and parental access to the classroom. In the words of one site leader,

> *We looked at the assessment, we went over each part, we talked about the things that we thought we could change or couldn't change…we're always looking through the [data] to see what it is we can do, what they think we're missing in the instruction, and how we can incorporate that into our plans.*

Most site leaders also reported using data from **diagnostic screenings**, including two-thirds (69 percent) to a *moderate or large extent*. During the site visits, approximately half of the interviewed leaders spoke about their use of diagnostic screening data. Site visit findings suggest that most sites used the ESI-R (which was provided by DOE free of charge) to screen newly enrolled pre-K students, while a smaller number of sites reported using ASQ-3. Sites administered the diagnostic screening to all students within 45 days of the first day of school and then again eight weeks later for students who required a follow-up assessment. As one site leader explained,

> *All of our children are screened within 45 days. Based on their screening the teachers identify any possible developmental delays that the children may have. They disclose the results to the parent and if there is a need to refer a child for further evaluation, they do it. If not, they work together*

with the parents to develop different strategies for how they can help the child do better in specific areas.

On the whole, site leaders were satisfied with ESI-R and found it to be a sufficient tool, although a few site leaders found it to be too broad to provide an accurate screening of every child. With regard to ASQ-3, site leaders noted that it can be a challenge to get parents to complete the assessment in a timely manner.

The majority of respondents reported using **feedback from their DECE coach**, including more than three-fourths (76 percent) who used the feedback with at least moderate frequency. About half of the site leaders who were interviewed spoke about how they have used the feedback from the DECE coach. They noted, for example, that the coaches provided suggestions for improving the classroom environment, reinforced concepts that the pre-K teachers had been trained on, and helped sites refine their daily schedules. Overall, the site leaders felt that the assistance provided by the DECE coach was useful and supported them in meeting the *Pre-K for All* requirements and expectations.

> ***I think that's the best feedback we get…the DECE coach is really a treasure for me.***
>
> ***[The DECE coach] came once and gave us a whole report for myself…and the teachers. We did implement a lot of the things that she suggested. We're still working on some others.***
>
> ***[The DECE coach] has been very helpful because she really knows what she's doing.***
>
> ***Pre-K Site Leaders***

Sources of data **applicable only to district schools are the DOE Quality Reviews and feedback from a DECE social worker.** Most district school leaders indicated that they used these types of data to a *moderate* or *large extent* (79 percent and 70 percent, respectively).

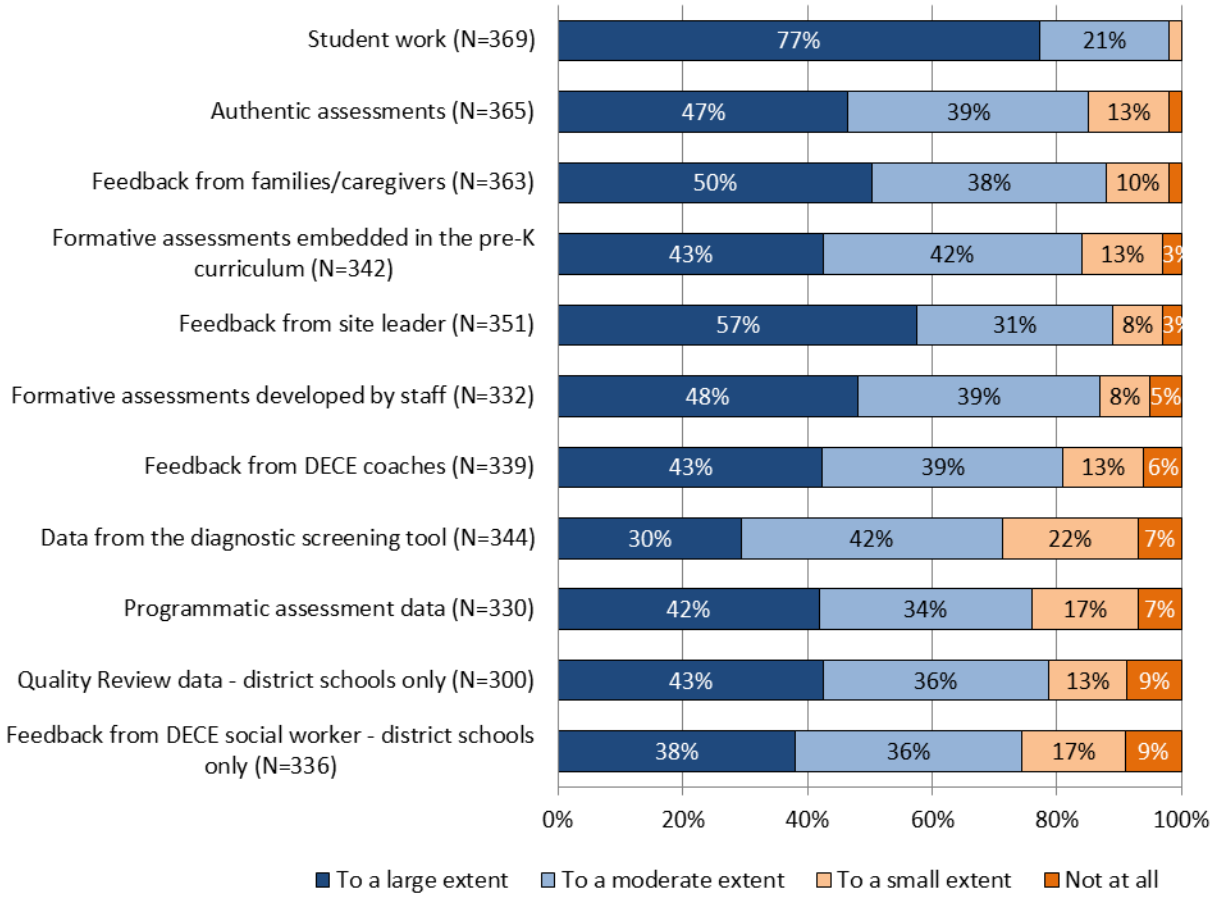
Instructional Staff Practices

Results indicate that teachers use a wide range of data sources when making instructional decisions, with each type of data being used by at least 90 percent of teachers. Student work, authentic assessment data, and feedback from families and caregivers were the most widely used sources of data. Results are presented in Figure 2 and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Teachers were more likely to use student work, authentic assessment data, and feedback from parents when making programmatic decisions.

Staff at the newly contracted sites were more likely to use data from the diagnostic screening tool and DECE coach feedback than staff at conversion and existing sites, respectively.

Figure 2. Types of Data Used by Instructional Staff



Note: Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

As shown in Figure 2, teachers considered their students' work to be a particularly valuable source of data. **All teachers (100 percent) reported on surveys that they use student work to inform their practice,** including 98 percent of them who reported using these data to a *moderate* or *large extent.* Student work might include collages or mosaics created by students to demonstrate fine motor skills as well as drawing and writing samples.

Site visit interviews corroborate these findings, with teachers and teacher assistants providing examples of how they used student work to inform their practice. Instructional staff from several sites noted that they maintain portfolios of student work samples throughout the year—some of these as part of the authentic assessment process. They reviewed the contents of the portfolios periodically to see if children have made progress, for example, in their motor skills as evidenced by the quality of their writing or drawing samples. As one teacher explained,

> *I had the children do a self-portrait in September and then again…in January or February, and the pictures now look different. Some children's [drawings] that did not have limbs or may have only had a circle and arms now have a circle, arms, and two legs.*

A teacher from another site illustrated how she used student work:

> *I was able to use [work] from one child who had a lack of fine motor skills, noticing he wasn't putting enough pressure on the crayon, that totally gave me an alert, like, okay, you need to work more on fine motor skills with him. Just looking at the work compared to the other children [indicated] that he had really weak fine motor skills.*

Almost all teachers also use **authentic assessment data** to inform their instruction, including 86 percent who do so to a *moderate* or *large extent*. As noted earlier, results related to use of this type of data are discussed in more detail in the next section of this report.

Staff clearly value the feedback provided to them by their students' parents, as evidenced by the fact that nearly all teachers reported using **feedback from parents and families** to inform their practice, including 88 percent who do so to a *moderate* or *large extent*. Staff from a number of sites offered examples of how they incorporate feedback from parents; for example, they may seek information about a child's interests or needs from their parents in order to address a particular issue that is occurring in the classroom. As one teacher commented,

> *[I have] one kid who's having a little difficulty this year and might need an IEP [individualized education program]. His mom told me what he likes. [I used this information] when I needed him to try to find a center and not be all over the place, I found his interest and that helped.*

> ***The parent teacher conferences are what I would think of as the formal one because that is when we get a chance to sit down and discuss the whole child's development. When we sit down with them, we have a good amount of time to discuss, this is what we've been noticing and then they tell us what they've been noticing; then we create a formal plan.***
>
> ***Pre-K Teacher Assistant***

Another teacher described a similar practice: "How do we know a student is in need of assistance? Sometimes we talk to the parent. And there's a parent questionnaire that goes with the diagnostic screening to see if there were any past problems we need to know about."

A teacher from another site also reported using surveys to seek feedback from parents: "We give them surveys throughout the year (What's your child's favorite memory, what did your child learn, what did you like about our school) and we post them around the school."

Teachers also value the feedback provided to them by their site leader, as indicated by survey results showing that nearly all teachers use this type of data, and many use these data *to a large extent* (57 percent). Most teachers also use results from **curriculum-embedded** formative assessments (85 percent) and **staff-developed assessments** (87 percent), as well as feedback from the DECE coach (82 percent), with at least moderate frequency.

> ***We try to do [diagnostic screening] within the first two weeks of school and then we use that data to form groups. For example, if a certain group of children needs more practice in math, we work with them on that.***
>
> ***Pre-K Teacher***

Almost all instructional staff also reported using data from **diagnostic screening tools**, including 72 percent to a *moderate* or *large extent*. During site visits, a number of staff discussed how they used diagnostic screening data. Consistent with the site leaders, instructional staff were satisfied with the diagnostic screenings and found the data to be helpful and accurate. As one teacher stated, the ESI-R "gave me a lot of information about the

children," while another teacher found the screening "to be right on target." Another teacher appreciated that the ESI-R "targets so many different things, [including] critical thinking, drawing skills, [and] fine motor skills. I really like it."

Most staff also reported on surveys that they use **programmatic assessment data,** including 76 percent to a *moderate* or *large extent.* However, as already noted, many sites where staff were interviewed had not yet received a CLASS or ECERS-R review or had not received their findings. A small number of teachers provided feedback on the programmatic assessments. Two teachers felt these assessments provide feedback that was "helpful" to their practice; however, in general, respondents were critical of the ECERS-R, as explained below.

Similar proportions of teachers at the district schools utilize **feedback from a DOE Quality Review and their DECE social workers,** including 79 percent and 74 percent, respectively, who use these data sources at least to a *moderate extent*. In the interviews, some staff noted they used feedback from social workers to identify and support students with special needs. Sites' feedback on the supports they received from DECE social workers is covered in greater depth in a separate report on program supports.

Survey results reveal some differences by length of program. Specifically, a larger proportion of staff at newly contracted sites reported using data from the diagnostic screening tool (82 percent) compared to staff at conversion sites (68 percent). In addition, newly contracted sites used DECE coach feedback (92 percent) more than staff at existing sites (75 percent).

Challenges and Additional Supports Needed

Most site leaders and instructional staff reported experiencing minimal or no data-related challenges; however, the majority of teachers and teacher assistants would like additional support in this area.

Most sites experienced minimal to no challenges using data to make instructional decisions or inform instruction.

ACS sites reported fewer challenges than the both types of DOE sites (NYCEECs and district schools).

Among instructional staff, over one-third (38 percent) of respondents reported that using data to inform their practice was *not at all challenging,* and 32 percent said it was *a little challenging.* Less than one-third of staff reported this area to be *moderately* (21 percent), *very* (7 percent), or *extremely challenging* (2 percent). Site leaders were also generally comfortable using data for various purposes and on the whole did not consider it to be a challenge. This is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows that nearly half of site leaders (46 percent) found it *not at all challenging* to use data to make instructional and programmatic decisions, and another 32 percent only found it *a little challenging*. Such data-driven decisions might include working with teachers to determine lesson content and sequencing, determining student groupings, and identifying and addressing staff's professional development needs.

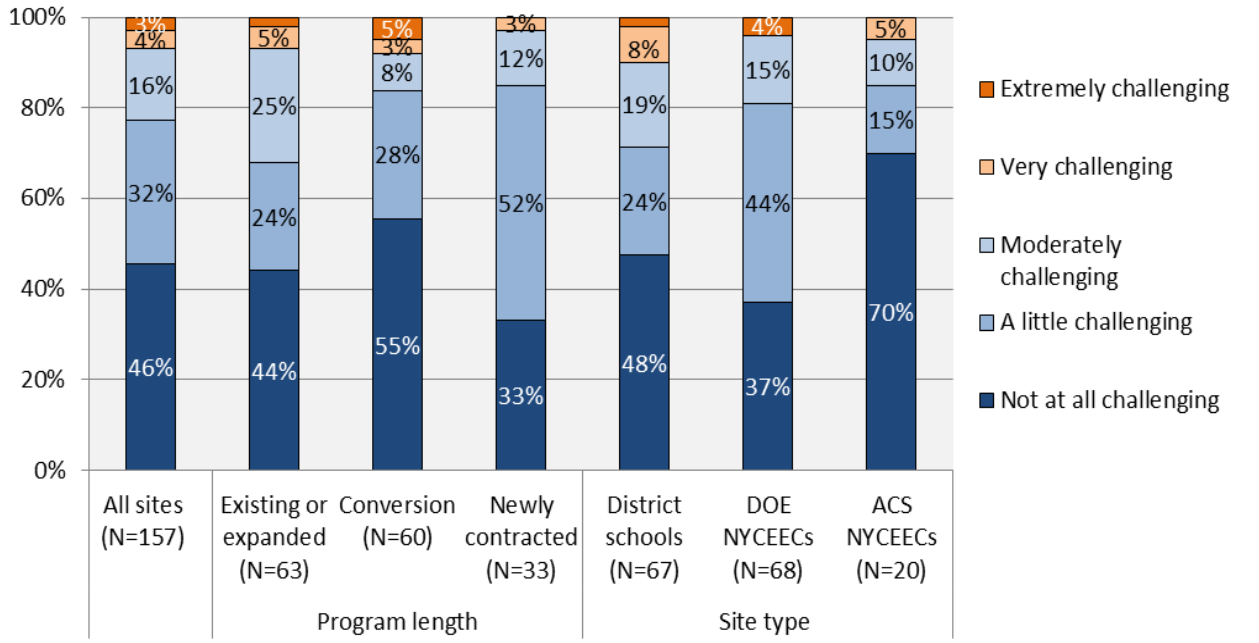
Information from site visits support the survey findings, with few site leaders and teachers reporting challenges related to the use of data for instructional decisionmaking (with the exception of challenges related to the authentic assessment data, which are described in detail in the next section of this report). A few sites, however, indicated concerns with using ECERS-R. Namely, a few respondents felt that the instrument was poorly aligned with the characteristics of urban schools, particularly with regard to classroom size, outdoor space, and surrounding noise. As one site leader noted, "I feel that the

[ECERS-R assessors] always give us a low score because of the fact that we are in a city…but we [are located] in the projects, we can't help that…they should recognize where we are."

Several respondents noted that sites would benefit from in-person training on the ECERS-R, in addition to the webinars that were provided this year. A few respondents also mentioned that teachers should receive the programmatic results earlier in the year so they are able to use the data to inform planning and decisionmaking in the current year.

Survey data on challenges were also disaggregated by length of program and site type. As shown in Figure 3, newly contracted sites were more likely to report experiencing at least some data-related challenges; however, the proportion of newly contracted sites that experienced moderate to extreme challenges was similar to that of conversion sites and lower than that of existing/expanded sites (15 percent, 16 percent, and 32 percent, respectively). Overall, ACS sites reported far fewer data challenges during the site visits than both types of DOE sites (NYCEECs and district schools), which is also consistent with the survey results. This may be due, in part, to the fact that many DOE sites used authentic assessment data from the Work Sampling System, which seemed to be more challenging to administer, whereas ACS sites used Teaching Strategies GOLD (see next section for additional information).

Figure 3. Site Leaders' Perceptions of Extent to Which Using Data for Instructional and Program Decisions Is a Challenge



Note: Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled. Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

It should also be noted that most site leaders did not report on surveys that they need additional supports with regard to using data (78 percent); in contrast, the majority of instructional staff indicated that they would like some assistance/supports in this area (71 percent). Suggestions offered by interviewed staff included additional assistance in administering the authentic assessments (described in detail in the next section), additional training on the ECERS-R, and more timely sharing of the programmatic assessment results.

USING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT DATA

As described previously, sites are required to select and implement an approved authentic assessment tool. The large majority of sites used Teaching Strategies GOLD or Work Sampling System. The Work Sampling System is an early childhood assessment tool that allows teachers to evaluate the skills of children age three through third grade. Students demonstrate what they know through a series of evaluations, which allows their teachers to make informed decisions about how to guide instruction.

Nearly all ACS NYCEEC sites used Teaching Strategies GOLD, while most district schools and a majority of DOE NYCEECs used the Work Sampling System.

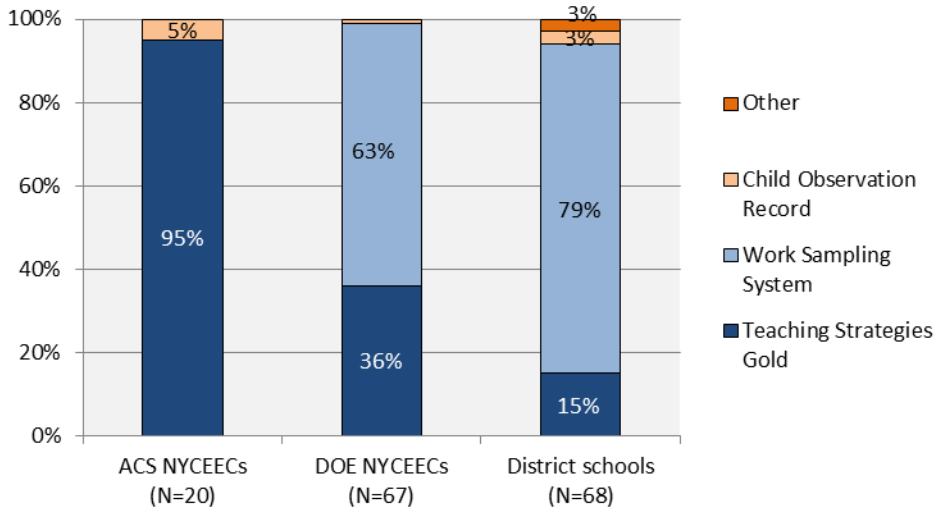
Overall, a majority of staff felt well prepared to use these tools and were satisfied with the quality of the tools.

Sites using Teaching Strategies GOLD reported a higher level of satisfaction and felt better prepared to use the tool than those using the Work Sampling System.

Teaching Strategies GOLD is an observational assessment system for children from birth through kindergarten. The system may be implemented with any developmentally appropriate curriculum. It blends ongoing observational assessment for all areas of development and learning with performance tasks for selected predictors of school success in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

Nearly all ACS NYCEEC sites (95 percent), but only 36 percent of DOE NYCEECs and 15 percent of district schools selected Teaching Strategies GOLD. Most district schools (79 percent) and a majority of DOE NYCEECs (63 percent) selected Work Sampling System. Very few sites opted to implement Child Observation Record or another authentic assessment tool. These findings are presented in Figure 4.

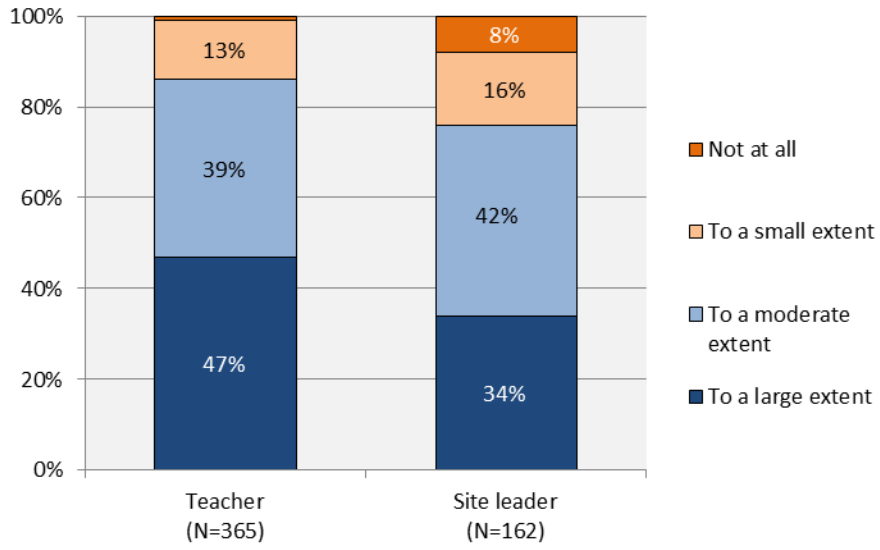
Figure 4. Site Leaders' Reports of the Authentic Assessment Used, by Type of Site



Note: Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

As shown in Figure 5, nearly all teachers (99 percent) and the large majority of site leaders (92 percent) indicated that they use authentic assessment data at least to some extent. Teachers reported using these data more extensively, with 47 percent of them reporting to a *large extent*, compared to 34 percent of site leaders.

Figure 5. Site Leaders' and Teachers Report of the Extent of Use of Authentic Assessment Data

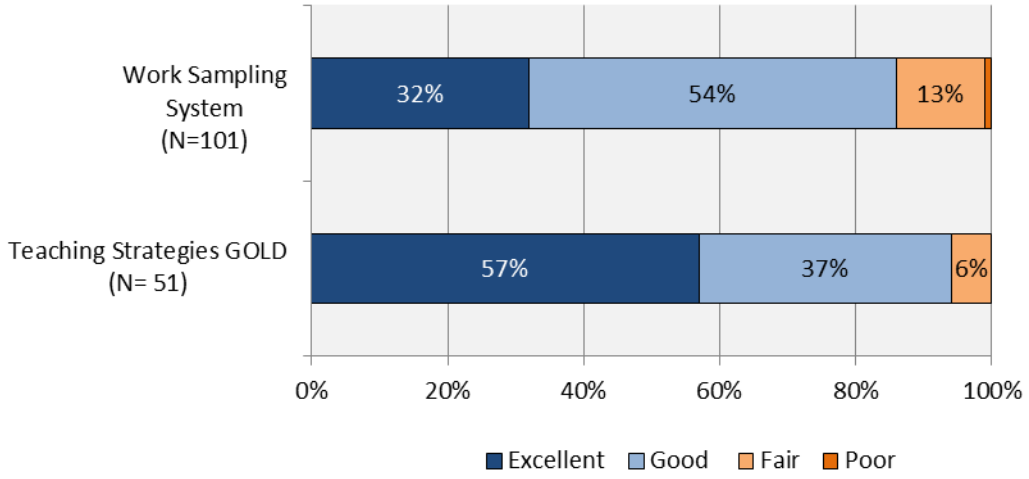


Note: Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

When looking at the use of authentic assessment data by program length or site type, results show that nearly all ACS NYCEEC site leaders (95 percent) reported using authentic assessment data to a *moderate* or *large extent*, while less than two-thirds of district school leaders (62 percent) reported using the data to the same extent. This could be because district schools, which primarily used the Work Sampling System, experienced more challenges in using this tool (and were less satisfied with the quality of the tool), compared to ACS sites that used Teaching Strategies GOLD. These findings are discussed next.

Overall, site leaders were satisfied with the quality of authentic assessments in measuring student progress. However, respondents using Teaching Strategies GOLD reported a higher level of satisfaction than those using the Work Sampling System. As shown in Figure 6, more than half of the site leaders using Teaching Strategies GOLD (57 percent) felt the tool was *excellent* at measuring student progress compared to only 32 percent of the respondents using the Work Sampling System.

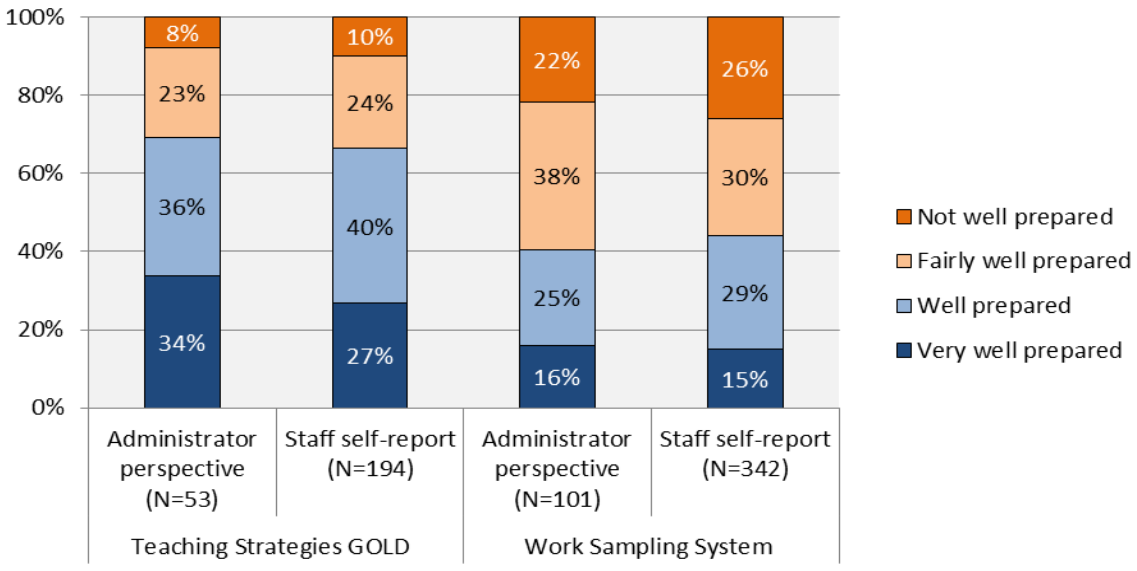
Figure 6. Site Leaders' Views of the Quality of Authentic Assessments in Measuring Student Progress



Note: Responses from site leaders who used Child Observation Record or other authentic assessments are not included in this graph because the number of respondents was fewer than 10. Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

Site leaders and instructional staff were asked to report on staff's preparedness to use the authentic assessment. **Staff using Teaching Strategies GOLD felt more prepared to use the tool than staff using the Work Sampling System.** As shown in Figure 7, more than two-thirds of site leaders (70 percent) and staff (67 percent) at sites using Teaching Strategies GOLD indicated that staff were *well prepared* or *very well prepared* to use the tool compared to less than half of site leaders (41 percent) and teachers (44 percent) at sites using the Work Sampling System.

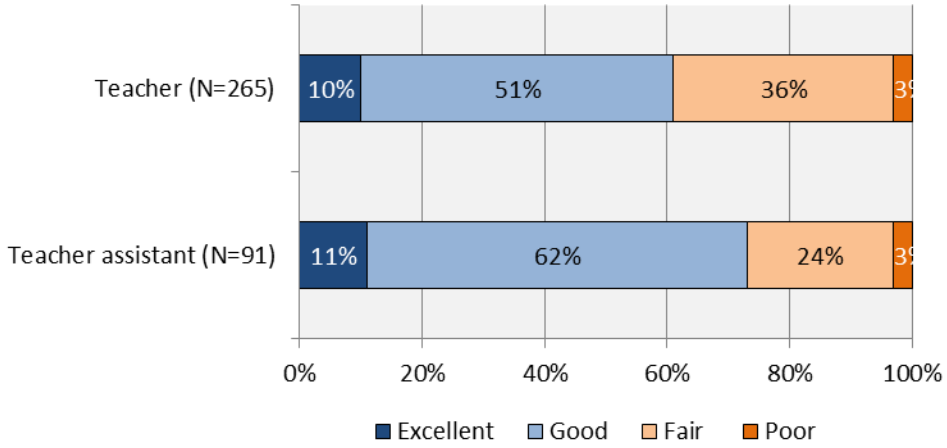
Figure 7. Site Leaders' and Instructional Staffs' Views of Staff Preparedness to Use Authentic Assessment Data



Note: Responses from site leaders who used Child Observation Record or other authentic assessments are not included in this graph because the number of respondents was fewer than 10.

More than three-fourths of teachers (77 percent) used the online assessment modules. This practice was much less common among teacher assistants, with only 37 percent of them using these modules. As shown in Figure 8, most staff who reported using the modules viewed them favorably, including 61 percent of teachers and 73 percent of teacher assistants who reported that the quality of the modules was *good* or *excellent*.

Figure 8. Instructional Staffs' Views of the Quality of the Online Assessment Module



Site visit data provided additional evidence to support the notion that sites are using the online modules and generally found them to be useful. It was reported to be common for teachers to print out and share student data reports with parents. In addition, the online platform allowed teachers to review the data in a centralized place, which supported their instructional planning. As one site leader said, "They look at the [data] online...if we want to make a new [student] grouping based on the reports, it's easy to see. That's what I like."

Although some site leaders reviewed and discussed these data with their teachers on a regular basis, others only reviewed the online modules to monitor teachers' data entry and ensure that they were meeting assessment and data entry deadlines. Respondents from sites that were using an authentic assessment system for the first time this year noted that they may need more time and training to fully understand the capacity of the system. As a site leader explained: "We're still in the first year of it so…we're really not that familiar with it. I could see it being useful when we get to be comfortable with it."

There seemed to be some variation in data entry practices, with some sites requiring teachers to enter authentic assessment data into the online modules monthly, while other sites entered the data more or less frequently, ranging from every few days to three or four times per year. A small number of sites using the Work Sampling System noted that they did not use the online modules, instead maintaining their student portfolios in hard copy format. Reasons for this practice included lack of access to the technology or Internet or because they used a system carried over from previous years.

Site leaders and staff spoke extensively during site visits about the ways in which they have used data from the authentic assessments to inform and enhance planning and instruction. The most common

practices were to track student progress and identify areas of need, differentiate instruction, and provide information to parents.

- **Tracking individual student progress and identifying areas of need**—Sites used authentic assessment data to monitor the development of individual students. This progress includes various age-appropriate skills, such as letter and number recognition, motor skills, social-emotional development (e.g., interactions with other students), and English language development (among linguistically diverse students). Engaging in ongoing student-level assessment allowed teachers to pinpoint each student's areas of strength and weakness at various points in the school year.

  Some respondents found the authentic assessment data useful as a means of substantiating their perceptions of students. As one teacher explained, "It confirms your ideas of what might be going on with the child."

> ***[I use Teaching Strategies GOLD] to modify what I'm doing for a particular child…. For instance, I noticed that a student had tantrums every week. [I reviewed my observation notes] and figured out it was always during a transition moment. He wasn't comfortable cleaning up when I didn't prepare him. So, I started…giving him a five-minute notice. It really works…inputting the data, seeing the scale of progression. It gives you a better idea of where you want them to be.***
>
> ***Pre-K Teacher***

- **Driving instructional decisions and differentiating instruction**—Using authentic assessment data to determine the areas in which students may need more intensive intervention, as described above, enables teachers to tailor their instruction accordingly and extend learning for certain students if necessary. This was a common practice among the *Pre-K for All* sites.

  For example, teachers reported that they often used assessment data to inform how they form or modify student groupings. They reported using the data to identify student needs and then modified their lessons accordingly. In the words of one teacher, Teaching Strategies GOLD "gives me information about what I have to do differently with every child. It defines [my] instruction." Another teacher, also using Teaching Strategies GOLD, commented,

  > *even though there are kids that may be...the same age, developmentally they're not. And you kind of have to curtail your lessons to include everyone and understand that not everyone is going to be at that point. GOLD can help you see that.*

  A site leader described how the teachers at his/her site use authentic assessment data to differentiate instruction.

  > *If [students] are falling behind...the teachers will create or add into their planning to address the issue. For example, if they see children are not progressing in...number recognition, they will add in games or activities that will reinforce [that skill], and it will be done as a group activity because there's always more than one child who will need that reinforcement. So whatever they see is missing or is not progressing, they will add it into the curriculum.*

Another site leader offered a similar example,

> *The teachers are able to…see if any of the children are low in a particular area and that helps them focus their lessons to that particular area. For example…in the beginning [of the year] after the first [assessment], we noticed a number of the children in each of the classes were*

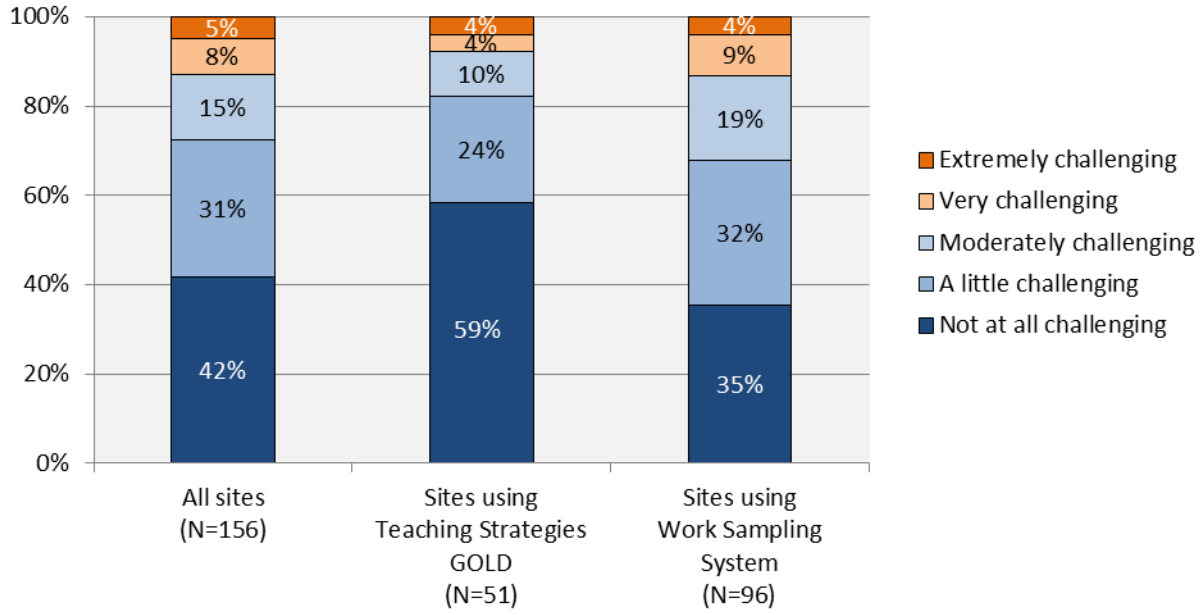
very low in fine motor skills, so they created more activities that [allowed] the kids to…fine tune their fine motor skills to help them write. So that was helpful.

- **Informing families about their child's progress**—An advantage of the authentic assessment systems, according to the interviews, is that they provide teachers with individualized progress reports and other useful data that can be shared and discussed with parents, thereby supporting the home-school connection. These data-driven discussions with families typically occurred during parent-teacher conferences, although some teachers may also share data on student progress with parents at other points throughout the year. As one site leader noted, teachers "have used [the data] in meetings with the families…there is a whole parent piece that they can print out…for the families to [show how] they are doing…it's been very helpful, a nice visual." A teacher noted that "parents love" the assessment data; another teacher found that "the assessment tool, having that component, ties in a lot with our data with our parents." In the words of one site leader: "It makes it very helpful when my teachers are doing parent-teacher conferences. Because you can generate reports that show the parents exactly what their progress is, areas of strength [and] weakness, so the parents can then follow up at home."

Challenges and Additional Supports Needed

Approximately one-quarter of site leaders (28 percent) found administration of the authentic assessment *moderately* to *extremely challenging*. Among site leaders using the Work Sampling System, approximately one-third of respondents felt administering the assessment was *moderately* to *extremely challenging* (32 percent) compared to 18 percent of site leaders using Teaching Strategies Gold (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Site Leaders' Views of Challenges in Administering Authentic Assessments

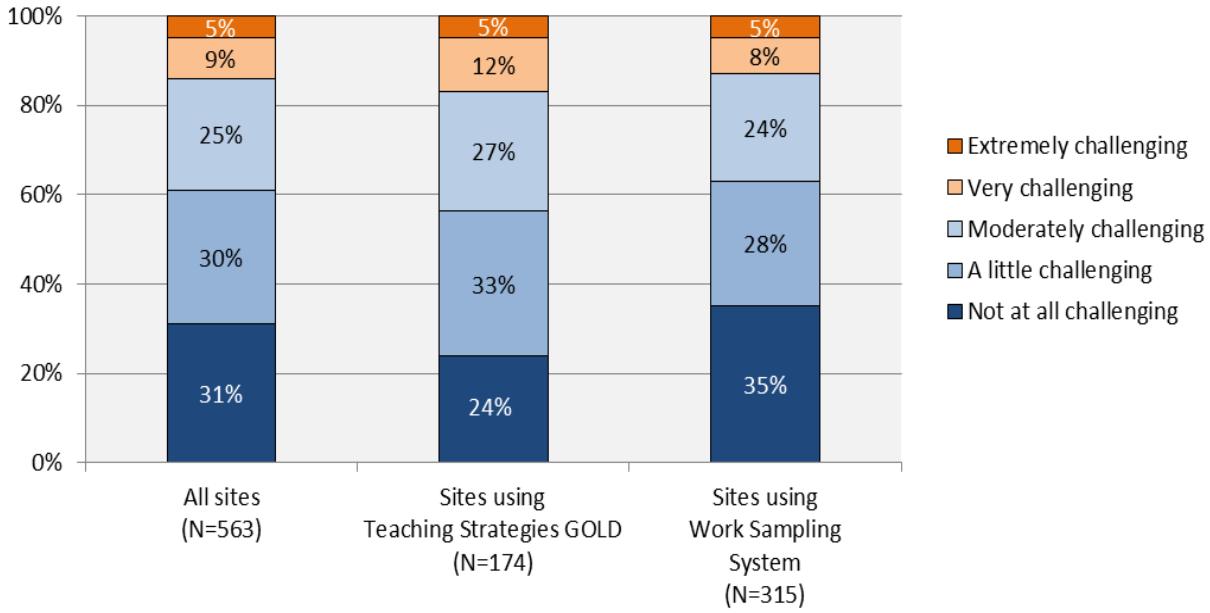


Note: Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Findings from instructional staff surveys suggest that staff may have found administration of the authentic assessment to be more of a challenge than their site leaders did. For example, as shown in

Figure 10, 39 percent of staff found this activity to be *moderately* to *extremely challenging*. In contrast to the site leader reports, a lower proportion of staff using the Work Sampling System (37 percent) found this activity to be *moderately* to *extremely challenging,* compared to those using Teaching Strategies GOLD (44 percent).

Figure 10. Instructional Staffs' Views of Challenges in Administering Authentic Assessments



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Overall, 18 percent of site leaders requested additional support for selecting and administering the authentic assessment. When the data are examined by the type of assessment used, a larger proportion of site leaders using the Work Sampling System (20 percent) requested additional support compared to the leaders of the sites using Teaching Strategies GOLD (13 percent). Instructional staff also indicated a need for additional support for using authentic assessment data. For example, approximately three-quarters of staff reported a need for support for using authentic assessment data to make instructional decisions (71 percent). Findings were generally consistent among staff using the Work Sampling System (68 percent) and Teaching Strategies GOLD (76 percent).

Approximately half of the site leaders and staff who were interviewed described challenges they experienced related to the use of data. Overall, the vast majority of the challenges cited by respondents were related to the use of the authentic assessments, in particular the Work Sampling System.

Numerous teachers described how the Work Sampling System data collection requirements are burdensome and very time-consuming, requiring a level of detail in the evidence that is not realistic or practical. In the words of another teacher, the process is "extremely draining. [We] don't have enough staff support to complete the work that is required." Teachers also noted that the process requires extensive observation of students, which prevents them from interacting with their students as much as they would like to. As one teacher described: "There will be weeks where all I'm doing is work sampling, and all I really want to do is work with my kids. I feel like the work sampling prevents me from [doing that]. Instead of concentrating on them, I'm concentrating on [data collection]." It should be noted that

the Work Sampling System is designed to help teachers weave interaction and observation seamlessly together.

Several site leaders echoed teacher reports about the Work Sampling System, describing how their teachers did not receive adequate training and preparation to use the system, have struggled with time management issues, and do not find the data reports to be useful. In the words of one site leader, whose site used Work Sampling for the first time this year,

> *…it's not something that we have found useful in terms of informing instruction. Right now, it's just a compliance piece, and I think that we might change to something different next year because teachers have found it to be burdensome and more [focused on] compliance than informing teaching.*

> ***We don't have any prep time so we're going home and doing [work for the Work Sampling System] on our free time. I go home and I'm doing work until 8 o'clock at night, even on the weekends. And then I have to plan my lessons, it's overwhelming. We know our children, and we know what their abilities are. I think we get lost [in the data collection].***
>
> ***What they want us to do for the Work Sampling System, it's overwhelming…I understand the need to log certain information. However, I don't know if it has to be that lengthy…it's not helpful.***
>
> ***Pre-K Teachers***

A small number of site leaders and teachers described challenges related to Teaching Strategies GOLD. One site leader noted that while Teaching Strategies GOLD is "useful and efficient," it is also highly focused on academic outcomes. This respondent also noted that the parent reports generated by Teaching Strategies GOLD are confusing, particularly for non-English-speaking parents: "Trying to explain [the reports] to parents…is overwhelming for us."

Nevertheless, a fairly small proportion of site leaders requested support with selecting and administering authentic assessments. Overall, less than a fifth of site leaders (18 percent) reported that they need additional support in this area. However, a substantially larger proportion of district school leaders (26 percent) desired additional support in this area compared to leaders of the DOE and ACS NYCEECs (9 percent and 5 percent, respectively). These results point to the need for additional training for sites using the Work Sampling System.

Respondents who requested additional support for the authentic assessments during site visits—which included approximately five site leaders and instructional staff from approximately 10 sites—indicated that they would benefit from additional training and support. Specifically, leaders and staff from several sites (most of which are using the Work Sampling System) requested the following additional supports and resources for completing the authentic assessments:

- Provide additional training and preparation for teachers that:
  - starts at the beginning of the school year and continues throughout the school year;
  - includes hands-on training, interactive, step-by-step tutorials, and ongoing support in addition to webinars and lecture-style presentations;
  - is provided by trainers with teaching experience; and
  - includes training on effective observation and note-taking strategies and practices.
- Establish a forum for cross-site sharing of feedback and best practices on the different authentic assessment systems used by the *Pre-K for All* sites.
- Update the Work Sampling System online modules to make them more intuitive and user friendly.

- Provide teachers with data tablets to facilitate easier data collection and tracking during class time.
- Offer more workshops for parents on interpreting and understanding the assessment results.

USING DATA TO ENGAGE FAMILIES

In addition to seeking feedback from families to inform programmatic or instructional decisions (discussed in the first section of this report), site leaders and staff were asked to report on the extent to which they use data to engage families. Findings are briefly described in this section. The topic of family engagement is discussed in greater depth in a separate report.

All site leaders and staff reported using data to engage families, with the majority using data for this purpose *to a large extent*.

Site leaders from ACS NYCEECs reported using data to support family engagement more frequently than leaders of the DOE NYCEECs and district schools.

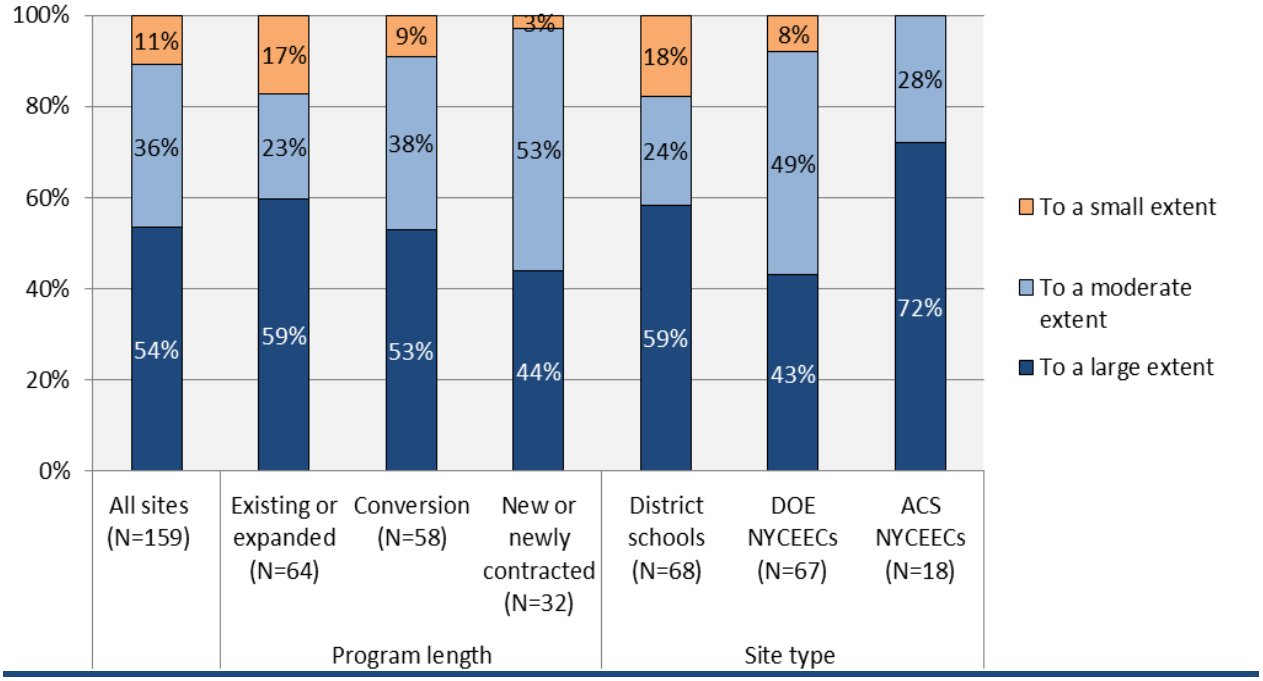
Sites did not view the use of data to engage families as a challenge; however, many staff indicated that they would benefit from additional supports in this area.

It should be noted that the surveys included a generic question about sites' use of data to engage families, a practice that may have been interpreted by respondents in different ways. Sites may have shared authentic assessment and screening data with families to engage them in goal-setting discussions, used feedback from families as a way to empower them (and inform programmatic and instructional decisions), and/or used data such as families' home language and preferred method of communication to inform family engagement practices.

Site leader survey findings indicate that all sites use data to engage families to some extent at least. As shown in Figure 11, approximately half (54 percent) of the sites reported using data to engage families to a *large extent* while another 36 percent reported using it this way to a *moderate extent*. In interviews, sites reported using data from authentic assessments and diagnostic screenings data to keep parents informed about their child's strengths, needs, and progress throughout the school year and engage them in goal-setting discussions.

Findings also suggest that **site leaders of ACS NYCEECs may be using data to support family engagement more frequently than the leaders of both types of DOE sites (NYCEECs and district schools).** All ACS NYCEEC site leaders (100 percent) reported using data to engage families, with nearly three-quarters of respondents using the data to a *large extent*. Smaller proportions of leaders from the DOE NYCEECs (43 percent) and district schools (59 percent) reported using data in this capacity to a *large extent*. Use of data to engage families by ACS NYCEECs may be related to the inclusion of parents in the ACS site self-assessment process. For example, during site visits, site leaders of two ACS NYCEECs described how parents played a key role in the site's self-assessment process. As one site leader described, "our parents play a major role. We have our parent committee [and] they meet on a monthly basis." As part of their role, parent committee members conducted "class observations [and] interview staff, other parents, and community representatives" to gather information for the self-assessment. In addition, some ACS sites are Head Start programs, which have very specific requirements around family engagement.

Figure 11. Site Leaders' Reports of the Extent to Which Data Are Used to Engage Families



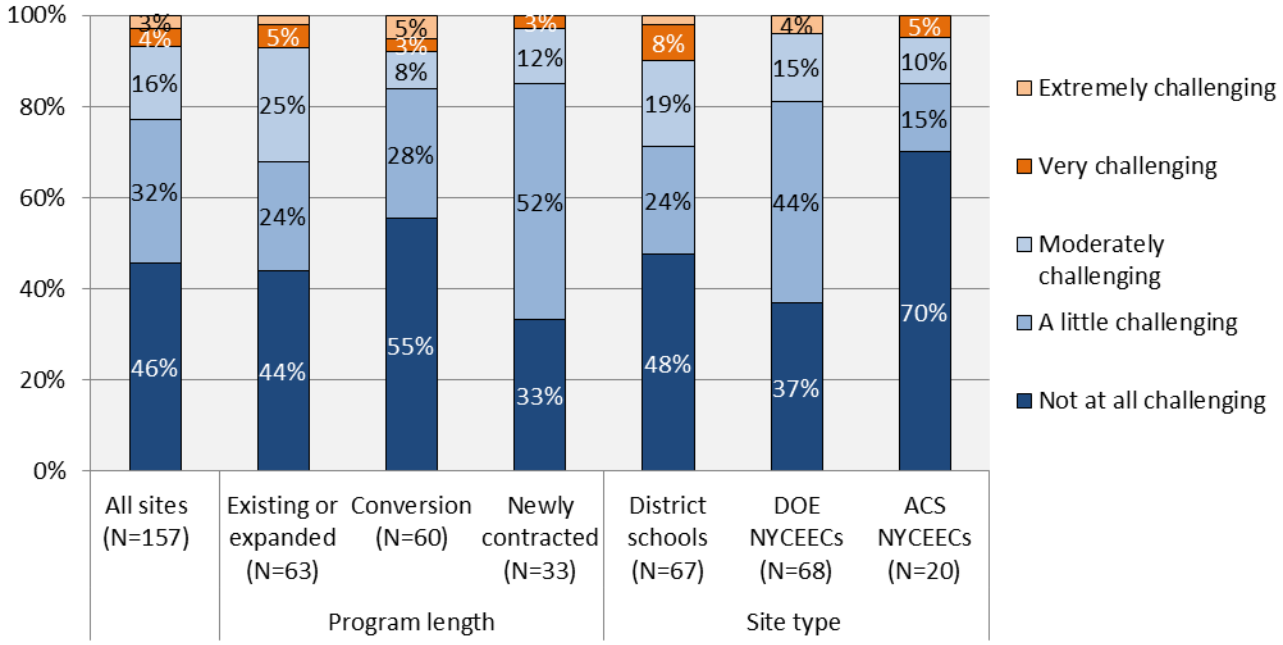
Note: The response *Not at all* was not selected by any respondents. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Challenges and Additional Supports Needed

In general, sites did not view the use of data to support family engagement practices as a significant challenge. As shown in Figure 12, nearly half of the site leaders (46 percent) reported on surveys that using data to engage families was *not at all challenging*. Site leaders of the conversion sites were less likely to experience challenges in using data to engage families compared to leaders of the existing or newly opened sites. Half of conversion site leaders felt it was *not at all challenging* to use data to engage families (55 percent), while smaller proportions of the leaders from the existing (44 percent) or newly contracted sites (33 percent) felt this way.

In addition, two-thirds of ACS NYCEEC site leaders (70 percent) felt this type of activity was *not at all challenging* while smaller proportions of site leaders of DOE NYCEECs (37 percent) and district schools (48 percent) responded this way.

Figure 12. Site Leaders' Views of Extent to Which Using Data to Engage Families is a Challenge



Note: Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled. Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Survey findings also indicate that most instructional staff did not think using data to engage families was particularly challenging. A substantial proportion (40 percent) of these staff reported that it was *not at all challenging*.

The majority of interviewed instructional staff and site leaders did not request additional supports in their use of data to engage families. However, on surveys, **a majority of teachers (57 percent) indicated that they would benefit from additional support for using data to engage families.** For example, in interviews, teachers requested additional training on how to assist parents in understanding the results from the authentic assessment data reports.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation findings indicate that overall, *Pre-K for All* sites reported using a wide range of data sources to inform site-level programmatic decisions and classroom-level teaching practices. Site leaders and teachers indicated that they frequently used student work to inform programmatic and instructional decisions. In addition, site leaders reported using observation data very frequently, while teachers used site leader feedback to inform their practice.

The type of authentic assessment used varied by program type, with nearly all ACS NYCEEC sites using Teaching Strategies GOLD, and most district schools and DOE NYCEECs using Work Sampling System. In general, sites reported using the authentic assessments often and for various purposes, including tracking student progress and identifying areas of need, differentiating instruction, and providing information to parents.

Sites were generally satisfied with the authentic assessments and online modules, although sites using Teaching Strategies GOLD reported a higher level of satisfaction and felt better prepared to use the tool than staff using the Work Sampling System. Furthermore, district school leaders were more likely to request additional support for administering the authentic assessment and using these data than leaders of the NYCEECs. It is important to note that the ACS NYCEECs have been using Teaching Strategies GOLD for many years, while the Work Sampling System is relatively new to the DOE sites.

Findings indicate that all site leaders and staff reported using data to engage families, with most using this type of data extensively. Site leaders from ACS NYCEECs reported using data to support family engagement more frequently than leaders of the DOE sites.

Although findings confirm that the *Pre-K for All* sites are effectively and confidently using data in a variety of ways to support their practice, results also suggest that sites may benefit from additional training and supports around data use, particularly around implementing and using data from the Work Sampling System. Suggestions from study participants included providing authentic assessment training earlier in the year; adding hands-on, interactive activities and ongoing support to the existing supports; establish a forum for cross-site sharing of best practices; updating the online modules to make them more user friendly; providing teachers with data tablets to ease the burden of data collection; and providing more training on how to help parents interpret the authentic assessment results. Some site leaders and teachers also suggested additional training on ECERS-R and requested receiving data from these programmatic assessments earlier in the year.

Furthermore, since results suggest that ACS NYCEECs may be using data to engage families more frequently than other sites, DOE should consider providing additional forums for these (and other sites) to share their most effective practices. It should be noted that the DOE's most extensive professional development track for Year 2 will focus on authentic assessments and using data to inform instruction and family engagement. This professional development track will provide an important avenue for sites to share challenges and effective strategies in the use of multiple forms of data for various purposes.

APPENDIX

Table A-1. Participation in Evaluation Activities, by Type of Site and Program Length

Characteristic of Pre-K Sites	Number of Surveys[1]		Site Visits
	Site Leader	Staff	
ACS New York City Early Education Center	20	74	7
DOE New York City Early Education Center	68	249	19
District school	70	321	13
Charter school	1	3	1
New or newly contracted programs	33	117	11
Converted from half to full day	60	227	15
Existing or expanded full day	66	303	14

[1] Site identification was missing for 24 site leaders and 23 staff.