



McREL and Gesell Institute collaborate on technical study of child development tool

The Challenge

For decades, preschool and kindergarten programs have used the Gesell Developmental Observation (GDO) to determine a child's stage of development. Although the GDO has been studied and revised several times over the years, recent demand for scientific validation has sparked the need for a 21st-century update that documents its validity and reliability.

Strategic Solution

The Gesell Institute partnered with McREL in 2008 for a two-year technical study to provide evidence of the GDO's validity and reliability. It has been a true collaborative effort that draws on both partners' strengths: Gesell manages the recruitment, test administration, and data collection, and McREL handles the database, psychometric analyses, and technical consulting.

As part of the study, the team is piloting new items developed in partnership with McREL that focus on the whole child (including cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and adaptive areas of development). The new items will be used—along with tried-and-true Gesell items—in a new, more comprehensive instrument.

Results

Evidence of validity and reliability is being collected, so administrators of the updated GDO will have greater confidence in the child development scores. The new GDO will also provide insight into which items, at different ages, children are getting right and wrong and how subgroups perform.

The new child-development instrument will be easier to administer and score. It will also be easier for administrators to interpret scores, allowing the tool to be used on a wider scale.

Next Steps

The results of the data collection and analysis will be used by the Gesell team to produce a GDO technical manual, which will be distributed to early childhood educators nationwide.

About McREL services for

Providing whole-child student supports

At the preschool and kindergarten level, educators can set the stage for academic success by being aware of their students' stages of development and addressing cognitive, psycho-social, and academic needs. This is just the beginning of the journey to academic success—and McREL offers an array of services to help support students wherever they are along the way.

Early learning

Scaffolding learning is the basis of McREL's early learning services. We show you how to give children more support at the beginning stages of learning and less support as they become more proficient, in a way that builds their skills and confidence as independent learners. Schools nationwide, including Early Reading First grantees, have used McREL's scaffolding approach to literacy instruction to improve reading achievement. We also offer a variety of early learning workshops focused on topics such as school readiness, meeting standards for literacy and mathematics, and enhancing the literacy environment in the classroom.

Extended learning (out-of-school time programs)

In addition to giving young children the right start in the classroom, McREL can help your school system make the most of out-of-school time programs (afterschool and summer school) to ensure that the benefits of early childhood programs don't fade as students grow older.

Through expert consultation, custom services, and staff development, we can help your school or district use afterschool and summer learning as a way to motivate students; address social, emotional, and academic needs; and open new doors to learning.

For more information on our services related to early childhood education or extended learning, e-mail info@mcrel.org, or contact McREL at 800.781.0156.

