The Center for Early Childhood Professional Development (CECPD), Early Reading First, and the Early Literacy Quick Assessment: a brief history and supporting data

The Center for Early Childhood Professional Development (CECPD) and the Education Training, Assessment, and Measurement (E-TEAM) departments of the Public and Community Services Division of the University of Oklahoma Outreach developed the first iteration of the Early Literacy Quick Assessment (ELQA) in 2003 for teachers participating in our Early Reading First (ERF) grants. The original paper and pencil, “teacher-friendly” ELQA was implemented by over 100 teachers with phenomenal success. The teachers were excited to have a simple, easy-to-use formative assessment to help them monitor their children's progress. As we progressed toward the end of our final ERF grant, we used the hardcopy tool as a starting point to build a software program to assist teachers in assessing and using the results from the assessments to differentiate their instruction. The ELQA software was developed during the 2009-2010 school year. The ELQA web application was launched in August 2014.

From 2001 to 2009, the University of Oklahoma received four federal Early Reading First grants to 1) enhance teacher effectiveness by providing high quality, meaningful, and intentional professional development, including instructional coaching, 2) create centers of educational excellence, 3) improve child outcomes by preparing young children to enter Kindergarten with the necessary language and literacy skills for school success, and 4) close achievement gaps. CECPD partnered with Oklahoma City Public Schools, private child care centers, and Head Start centers across Oklahoma to accomplish the goals of these Early Reading Firsts grants. Through the duration of the grants, approximately 3200 children and 600 teachers/child care providers participated in the grants.

By regularly implementing progress monitoring we achieve more precision in classroom instruction by differentiating instruction to the individual needs of the children. Our goal is for teachers to enhance their effectiveness by using data to understand when more intense instruction is needed to help a child move forward.

In our Early Reading First (ERF) intervention classrooms, teachers assessed children four times a year using the Early Literacy Quick Assessment. Initially the instructional coaches in our program administered these assessments to model the process for teachers. Ultimately, the progress monitoring process was turned over to the teachers as they developed their assessment skills. Formative progress monitoring data become part of each child’s assessment portfolio and were integrated with child work samples to provide a broader picture of each child’s progress.
Before implementing the ELQA:

The chart below displays the data after Year 1 and before implementing the ELQA. The outcomes for both the Early Reading First intervention children and the comparison children increased, but there was no difference between the two groups.

The decision was made that we could best enhance teacher effectiveness by developing and providing teachers with an easy-to-use progress monitoring tool.

After implementing the ELQA:

We developed and implemented the ELQA and accelerated learning opportunities for small groups and individual children based on progress monitoring data. As the data clearly indicate below, our outcomes increased significantly in Year 2 forward.

All areas indicate statistically significant increases.

You will notice that acceleration has taken place and the gap has been closed.