

# Iowa GOLD® Assessment Procedures

## Purpose

This technical assistance document is intended for use by teachers, practitioners, and administrators who are responsible for measuring and reporting child and program outcomes in Iowa. Unless otherwise noted, these requirements apply to all children birth to age five enrolled in any public-school district (hereafter referred to as district), accredited nonpublic school, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) licensed child care center or preschool, Head Start agency or Area Education Agency (AEA) early intervention program and/or service under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement for GOLD® on the SmartTeach™ (formerly known as MyTeachingStrategies®) platform. The information included here is specific to Iowa users.

## Acknowledgement

The Iowa Department of Education extends a message of appreciation to Teaching Strategies for their support in reviewing this guidance for the GOLD® assessment system users in Iowa.

## Requirement

[Iowa Code § 279.60](#)

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# SmartTeach™ Support Portal

Users can access the [SmartTeach™ Support Portal](#) by clicking on the “?” icon in the upper header within SmartTeach™. Users can quickly and easily find information about how to navigate the GOLD® system by browsing articles, watching videos, or typing in the “Ask a Question” box provided.

**The information included in this document is specific to Iowa guidelines and not included in the SmartTeach™ Support Portal.**

## General Information

### A. Children required to be assessed with GOLD®

Programs are required to assess preschool children enrolled in district programs with GOLD®. [Iowa Code 279.60](#) was amended in 2013 to include the administration of the GOLD® assessment *for every resident prekindergarten or four-year-old child whose parent or guardian enrolls the child in a district program*. This includes all children whose participation is funded by Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP), Shared Visions Preschool Program (SVPP) or Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) funds.

All children enrolled in Shared Visions Preschool Programs are required to be assessed with GOLD® per the [Child Development Coordinating Council Policy Regarding Child Assessment and Student ID Numbers](#).

### B. GOLD® Subscription

Any public-school district, non-public accredited school, registered or licensed child care/preschool, registered child development home, Head Start agency, or AEA in Iowa is eligible to participate in the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement with Teaching Strategies for GOLD®. A program does not need to be operating in partnership with a district or AEA to establish a program account.

All district-sponsored programs, SWVPP, and SVPP must establish an account under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement. Either the district, Head Start, or community partner may establish this account.

### C. Registering for the Iowa GOLD® subscription

By registering for GOLD®, the local agency agrees to the following:

1. Program administrators understand GOLD® data are protected by FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g) and that personally identifiable information may not be disclosed except in compliance with FERPA, such as through parental consent or a legal exception to parental consent.
2. Program administrators acknowledge that one FERPA exception is reporting to the Iowa Department of Education (Department) under FERPA’s exception for audits and evaluations.
3. Program administrators designate the Department as the authorized representative to receive GOLD® data.
4. The records to be disclosed are GOLD® data required by [Iowa Code § 279.60](#) to be included in the statewide longitudinal data system.

5. The purpose of the disclosure is to comply with the requirement that GOLD® data be included in the statewide longitudinal data system. That system is used in furtherance of audit, evaluation, enforcement and compliance activities.
6. ***The SmartTeach™ system will be used to monitor compliance and improve performance in Iowa's early learning environments.***
7. The data will not be destroyed, as it is required to be maintained in a longitudinal manner.
8. The statewide longitudinal data system will not re-disclose personally identifiable information and has adopted policies and procedures to prevent inappropriate use and authorized disclosure. These data may only be used for audit and evaluation purposes consistent with [Iowa Code § 279.60](#).
9. As a subscriber under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement, the program administrator agrees to maintain accurate registration and default administrator contact information, and to communicate changes to this information to the Department.
10. As a subscriber under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement, the program administrator will ensure the assessment is implemented across all classrooms, including at a minimum the completion of the spring checkpoint. Programs are encouraged to complete three checkpoints: fall, winter and spring in order to implement a systematic ongoing procedure for obtaining assessment information. Please note that spring checkpoint data will be used in IDEA/DA processes and determinations. Therefore, districts are required to complete the spring checkpoint. Three complete checkpoints are also necessary to administer the assessment in a valid and reliable manner. Yearly checkpoints are established by the Department and can be found within the SmartTeach™ system.
11. As a subscriber under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement, the program administrator aids in the implementation of state level activities in data hygiene, as explained in the Data Hygiene section, and agrees to follow data cleanliness routines as described by the Department.

In order for Teaching Strategies to activate SmartTeach GOLD® subscriptions, local programs will need to register by completing the [online form](#). Teaching Strategies will contact all potential subscribers upon completion of the registration form to set up the local contract.

The Department renews the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement with Teaching Strategies annually. While new subscribers may choose to activate a subscription at any time, activating in July or August at the beginning of a new program year is recommended.

## Renewing the GOLD® Subscription

Subscriptions should be renewed annually. Renewing typically occurs in the spring to avoid interruption in services. Subscribers should watch for the new agreement to arrive electronically, then return the agreement with electronic signature and payment. The number of child records needed is estimated at the local program level based on class rosters or registration. Program administrators should consider the number of child records the prior year when anticipating the number of the upcoming year. Contact Teaching Strategies directly if additional child records are needed mid-year. Subscribers may **renew** the local contract with Teaching Strategies by completing the [online renewal form](#). Program administrators may check or troubleshoot their renewal status by emailing [Renewals@TeachingStrategies.com](mailto:Renewals@TeachingStrategies.com).

## Data Hygiene

Data cleanliness routines are critical in any data system. Subscribers to the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement have responsibility to ensure the accuracy of data entered into the GOLD® system. Each subscriber establishes a SmartTeach™ Administrator responsible for [GOLD® implementation](#) and the establishment of routines to regularly address data hygiene for their program data to ensure:

- All child demographic information matches information in other state reporting systems (e.g., Student Reporting in Iowa/Certified Enrollment).
- Child enrollment is accurate for each classroom; records for children who have left the program are either transferred or archived accordingly. Receiving classrooms should ensure child records are updated and accurate (i.e. funding source, IFSP/IEP status)
- There is only one child record per child, with exceptions for children who are dually enrolled in different programming (e.g., enrolled in an am Head Start classroom and a pm SWVPP classroom).
- All staff demographic information matches information in other state reporting systems (e.g., Fall BEDS Staff, Board of Educational Examiners)
- Staff access is maintained as appropriate for current users, and accounts for users no longer connected to the local program are marked inactive in the system.
- All program, site, and class demographic information matches information in other state reporting systems (e.g., School Information Update, Preschool Desk Audit – Session ID information).

Note: Once final reports have been run and child records have been mass archived, classroom information (i.e. class name and associated teachers) can be edited to reflect the new school year. Renaming classes ensures that lesson plans associated with a particular teacher's class will remain associated with that class for the upcoming school year. Classrooms from prior years that are no longer being utilized should be deleted. If there are one or more students associated with the classroom, the delete option for the classroom will not be available. All child records must be moved to another classroom or archived in order to delete a classroom.

## Getting Started

The subscriber establishes a SmartTeach™ Administrator as the point of contact who assumes responsibility for overseeing all data entry, reporting, and information updates related to the management of [GOLD®](#). Examples of SmartTeach™ Administrators may include a superintendent or principal, program coordinator, child development home care provider, or director. It is recommended that someone other than a teacher is assigned as the contact.

The responsibilities of the SmartTeach™ Administrator include:

- Completing the yearly subscription process;
- Managing and overseeing the full implementation of [GOLD®](#);
- Communicating updates and changes related to [GOLD®](#);
- Requesting the Department transfer children between districts/agencies;
- Overseeing the data entry process to ensure that reliable and valid information is provided by teachers and other practitioners;
- District reporting;
- Maintaining data integrity routines.

## A. Creating Programs, Sites, and Classrooms

For detailed information about creating programs, sites, and classrooms within the SmartTeach™ system, go to the SmartTeach™ Support Portal. Information to get started with common tasks is below:

- [How do I add a site?](#)
- [How do I add a class as an administrator?](#)
- [How do I add a teacher?](#)

As applicable, ensure program and site information entered in SmartTeach™, including building and program names, match data reporting systems such as the Preschool Desk Audit – Session ID Information in the Consolidated Accountability and Support Application (CASA) and the School Information Update to assist with data matching. Programs affiliated with a district, including ECSE, or receive state funding through SWVPP or a SVPP grant should follow the guidelines below for naming programs, sites, and classrooms.

### Program

- School District – enter the full school district name as the program
- SWVPP community partner - enter the full name of the program
  - Private early childhood programs – Enter the full program name
  - Head Start – Use the name of the agency
- Shared Visions – Enter the name of the *Program/Organization Name* as stated on the document titled [Shared Visions Preschool Grant Awards](#) located on the Department website.

### Site

- School District – enter the full building name as the site.
- SWVPP community partner - enter the name of the location
  - Private early childhood programs - enter the name of the location
  - Head Start - enter the name of the location
- Shared Visions – A Shared Visions funded grantee would refer to the document titled [Shared Visions Preschool Grant Awards](#) located on the Department website and enter the *Classroom Location* as the site.

### Classroom Name

As applicable, ensure class names entered in SmartTeach™ match all class names included in data reporting systems such as the Preschool Desk Audit – Session ID Information in CASA in order to assist with data matching. Use the following format for class names in SmartTeach™.

Name classes with the teacher's last name followed by an indication of the class meeting times. For example:

- “Smith AM” and “Smith PM” for a teacher with a morning and an afternoon class
- “Smith MW” and “Smith TTh” for a teacher with a class meeting on Monday and Wednesday and another class – with different students – on Tuesday and Thursday
- “Smith M-F” for a teacher with a class meeting Monday through Friday

## B. Entering Child Information

When adding new children, it is required to enter complete information to ensure accurate and valid child data and in order to meet State and legislative reporting requirements. All information entered must match the student information system or information submitted for state reporting (e.g., Student Reporting in Iowa/Certified Enrollment, when applicable) unless otherwise indicated below.

For more information, including how to use a CSV template to import child information, go to the [SmartTeach™ Support Portal](#).

### Required Fields for Iowa Users

Enter the requested information in all of the following fields in the new child record, unless otherwise stated:

#### Select Class

- Site
- Teacher
- Class

#### Class Details

- Age or Class/Grade
- First day in program

#### Child Details

- **First name** – use the child’s *full legal first name* as indicated on a birth certificate or other legal document. Do not enter any other letters, placeholders, nicknames, abbreviations, or variations on the child’s first name.
- **Middle initial (optional)** – If the child does not have a middle name, enter “NMN” (no middle name).
- **Last name** – Use the child’s *full legal last name* as indicated on a birth certificate or other legal document. Do not enter any other letters, suffixes, placeholders, nicknames, abbreviations, or variations on the child’s last name.
- **Nickname (optional)**
- **Identifier** – Do not insert information here. This will be populated by the Department.
- **Gender**
- **Birth date**
- **Primary language**
- **Ethnicity level 1** – Enter information that matches the student information system or information submitted for state reporting (e.g., Student Reporting in Iowa/Certified Enrollment, when applicable).
  - Select *Spanish/Hispanic/Latino* if the child is a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. If *Spanish/Hispanic/Latino* is selected, **Ethnicity level 2** is also required. Select the specific culture or origin for this child.
  - Otherwise, select *Not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino*.

- **Race** – Enter information that matches the student information system or information submitted for state reporting (e.g., Student Reporting in Iowa/Certified Enrollment, when applicable).
- **Student ID (optional)** – Programs may insert a local or program child ID here.
- **Funding sources** – Check the boxes indicating all funding sources that support this child. More than one funding source should be selected, if applicable. Funding sources checked should match information in the student information system or information submitted for state reporting (e.g., Student Reporting in Iowa/Certified Enrollment, when applicable).
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** – Indicate if the child has an IEP for special education instructional and/or support services. (If a child is less than three years of age and has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), check “yes” for IFSP in order to populate additional fields for IFSP.)
- **Free or reduced lunch (optional)**

## C. Home Language Survey

The administration of a [home language survey](#) is a requirement under federal civil rights law for all preschool children enrolled in preschool programs under the authority of the Department. Preschool programs may use the Home Language Survey within SmartTeach™ or the Iowa Home Language Survey on the [TransAct website](#). The Home Language Survey assists programs in meeting civil rights obligations. It also assists teachers in planning for language acquisition and in determining the use of the English Language Acquisition objectives in GOLD®, Objectives 37 & 38. In addition, the Home Language Survey is useful in completing the data element Potential English Language Learners (PELL) in Student Reporting in Iowa.

## D. Accessing Child Data

Once data is entered into the online system, data is secure within the system. It is accessible only by those who have a user ID and password for the program’s online account.

The Department has administrative access to all accounts under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement. Only authorized Department and AEA personnel with an assigned user ID and password have access to the Iowa SmartTeach™ system.

# Documentation and Checkpoints

## A. Required Child Documentation

At least one piece of documentation is required for each objective and dimension at minimum, excluding those objectives indicating Not Yet for the corresponding color band/age or class.

Documentation for science, technology, social studies and the arts objectives is optional.

## B. Preliminary Levels

It is recommended for programs to have a routine of setting preliminary levels. This will ensure reports include the most current formative assessments and allow those to be used in making instructional decisions.



## C. Completing Checkpoints

The Department establishes checkpoint dates on an annual basis. Programs under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement must adhere to the state determined checkpoint dates published in the SmartTeach™ system. Support for [completing checkpoints](#) is found in the linked article.

## Team Members

Specialists who are working with a particular child may be added as [Team Members](#) in order to collaborate in the assessment process and share information. For example, a child who is receiving speech and language services and support could have documentation added to his/her child record by the Speech Language Pathologist (SLP).

Note: Team Members are only able to add or view documentation for specific children for whom they have been assigned. Teachers should not be assigned as a Team Member for children within their own classroom. Teachers may be assigned as a Team Member for children enrolled in classrooms other than their own as needed.

## Family Area

The [Family Area in SmartTeach™](#) provides opportunities for two-way communication between teachers and families. Teachers can use the Family Area to involve family members in the assessment process, keep family members up to date on their child's development and learning, to extend classroom learning at home, and to review shared observations from home to use as GOLD® documentation. For further information on the Family Area, refer to the SmartTeach™ Support Portal.

## Reporting

Information on [how to access and create reports](#) is available on the SmartTeach™ Support Portal.

Many, but not all, reports allow for the inclusion of archived child records. Programs should run reports prior to mass archiving at the end of a year and as needed to align with individual program requirements.

## Archiving, Deleting, and Reactivating

Information on how to archive, delete, and reactivate child records is available in the SmartTeach™ Support Portal.

Archiving, deleting, and reactivating child records are functions performed by a person within the local program who has Administrative access. Users with Teacher access do not have the ability to archive or reactivate child records in SmartTeach™.

### A. Archiving

Archiving children's records will allow users to store and reactivate the data at any time during the program year.

- Each program receives unlimited free archives. It is recommended that child records be archived rather than deleted.
- At the end of the program year, all child records under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement will be mass archived.



- If a child is gone from the program for more than a couple weeks and attempts to locate the child are unsuccessful, the child should be archived in SmartTeach™.
- At the end of the program year, the teacher will complete the final checkpoint and run final reports before children's records are mass archived.

\*Note: All administrative reports can include archived files.

## B. Deleting

- **Deleting Child Records**

While archiving child records is recommended, deleting child records may be necessary if:

- A record was created for a child that never attended the program
- Child records contain no data
- Duplicate child records were created in error and contain no data
- Duplicate child records are merged (Note: After all information is moved to the child record to be maintained, the other record(s) will need to be deleted.)

- **Deleting Classes**

Deleting a class will permanently delete all weekly plans associated with that class. In most cases, we recommend editing the name of the class instead of deleting the class. For more information on editing and deleting classes, see the SmartTeach™ Support Portal.

## C. Reactivating Archived Child Records

All child records under the Iowa State Umbrella Agreement will be mass archived at the end of the year. Therefore, child records for those returning to the program will need to be reactivated and placed in the current classroom. Do not create a duplicate child record for those returning to the program or for whom a child record already exists. For more information, go to the SmartTeach™ Support Portal.

## Transferring Child Data

For information on transferring child records within a program, refer to the SmartTeach™ Support Portal.

### A. Transfer between Programs

- If a child is transferring to another site outside of the program, complete the [Iowa transfer form](#). If a child is transferring but information about the receiving program is not available, archive the child's record in SmartTeach™.
- All transfer requests between programs must be sent to the Department. Enter all the information requested in the [Iowa transfer form](#).

### B. Merging SmartTeach™ Records

When a child has multiple child records, but is only attending one program, it is recommended the child records be merged. Programs should follow the procedures in the SmartTeach™ Support Portal for Merging Child Files.

- When a transfer request between programs is received, the Department completes a search for all child records in SmartTeach™. All of the child's records will be

- transferred to the receiving program; except in the case where a child attends two separate preschool programs.
- The Department will notify the receiving program that a child has been transferred to their program with multiple child records and request that they be merged into one complete record.
  - Programs should follow the procedures in the SmartTeach™ Support Portal for Merging Child Files.

## Managing Children with an IEP/IFSP

### A. Exit Requirements for Children with an IEP/IFSP

If a child is exiting Part C Early ACCESS or Part B Early Childhood Special Education, then the child must be exited from those services in the SmartTeach™ system. See the SmartTeach™ Support Portal for procedures on how to exit a child from an IEP/IFSP.

\*Note: If a child exits Part B Early Childhood Special Education services in the middle of a school year, but the child will continue to attend the preschool as a general education student, then the SmartTeach™ record should still be accessible and the teacher can continue to enter data and checkpoints for the remainder of the school year. Exiting a child from Part B does not automatically delete or archive a child, it just assigns an exit date for Office of Special Education Programs reporting purposes.

### B. Transferring from an IFSP to IEP

If a child is transferring from Part C Early ACCESS to Part B Early Childhood Special Education and the child was assessed using GOLD® in Part C, then the following must occur:

- The child must be exited from Part C in SmartTeach™ using the procedures described in the previous section.
- A transfer form must be completed to transfer the child from Part C Early ACCESS to the Part B Early Childhood Special Education preschool program (see section “Transfer Between Programs”).

### C. Assigning Color Bands for Children on an IFSP/IEP

If a child is on an IFSP and assigned to a class that is Infants, Toddlers and Twos, then a color band is automatically assigned by date of birth when the birthday is entered on the demographic profile. The color band automatically changes on the child’s birthday.

If a child is on an IEP and attending a preschool classroom (ages 3-5), the teacher assigns a color band according to the age of the child:

- Green color band – A child who is 3 years old by September 15<sup>th</sup> of the current school year
- Blue color band – A child who is 4 years old by September 15<sup>th</sup> of the current school year
- Purple color band – A child enrolled as a kindergartener and participating in kindergarten programming. If a kindergarten age-eligible child is enrolled as a preschooler in a preschool program, the child is assigned the blue color band.
- The color band is never changed during the school year when a child is in preschool. A child in preschool must be in the same color band all year, regardless of the child’s birthday.

\*Note: If a child is entering a preschool program while still two years old, the child's color band is green for the remainder of that school year and all of the following school year. The SmartTeach™ system does not allow a child to be assigned a yellow color band (2 years old) if the child is assigned to a preschool classroom.

Example: A child on an IFSP is turning 3 on November 1 of the current year. The child is going to transfer from Early ACCESS and start ECSE preschool programming on October 1 at the age of 2 years, 11 months. The child will be assigned a green color band for the current school year as well as the following school year.

## Professional Development

Teachers and program administrators are encouraged to explore the Quorum area within SmartTeach™ and take advantage of embedded professional development. Note that there may be an associated cost with some courses.

It is highly recommended that teaching staff complete the [Interrater Reliability \(IRR\) Certification](#) to support reliable use of GOLD® within the SmartTeach™ system.

## Contacts

### A. Iowa Department of Education

- Mary Breyfogle: [mary.breyfogle@iowa.gov](mailto:mary.breyfogle@iowa.gov) or 515-326-1030
- Marcie Lentsch: [marcie.lentsch@iowa.gov](mailto:marcie.lentsch@iowa.gov) or 515-419-2088
- Amy Stegeman: [amy.stegeman@iowa.gov](mailto:amy.stegeman@iowa.gov) or 515-868-1675

### B. Teaching Strategies

- TS Tech Support (Iowa dedicated line): 866-246-5352
- TS Tech Support (general): [online form](#) or 866-736-5913