



BASELINE PROTOCOL FOR CHILD ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of the baseline child assessments is to collect data on the sample children's skills at the beginning of the impact evaluation and process study. These data will help us ensure there are no differences between the research groups at baseline. These data will also be used as covariates in any analyses – increasing the precision of impact estimates and permitting an examination of gains in skill over the year and to define subgroups of interest to explore how the impacts and relationships of quality to child outcomes might vary based on children's entering skills.

Direct Child Assessments

Overview: Assessors will visit all classrooms participating in the VIQI Project to conduct direct child assessments. Baseline assessments will take place during fall of the study year and will last about 30

minutes per child. Prior to beginning assessments, field staff will follow the protocol outlined below to schedule assessments with school staff.

SCHEDULING PROTOCOL

Scheduling with School Staff: Field staff will contact Program Administrators, Center Administrators, and teachers to schedule assessments. They will communicate with participants via letters, emails, and phone calls.

Program Administrator Communications: Field staff will call or send a letter to Program Administrators to give them information about the direct child assessments. The following information will be included in communications with Program Administrators to schedule assessments:

- Notification about the upcoming child assessments
- A reminder about the VIQI Study, stressing the study background, importance of the study, and the study sponsors
- A detailed description of all components of the child assessment visit
- The data collection schedule
- The VIQI Study website
- The toll free study number and study email account for questions

Center Administrator Communications: Field staff will email Center Administrators to give them information about the assessment data collection procedures. This email will include details about the child assessment visit and the timeline for assessments.

Teacher Communications: Field staff will email teachers to give them information about the assessment data collection procedures. This email will include details about the child assessment visit and the timeline for assessments and will request potential target weeks for when assessments can be conducted.

ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

Assessment Procedures: On the day of direct child assessments, observers will meet with teachers to explain the assessment procedures, using the talking points listed below. Assessors will ask teachers to introduce them to the children being assessed in the classroom. Assessors will make small talk with children in the classroom, beginning to build rapport, before bringing them to the assessment room (a predetermined spot in the classroom where assessments can be conducted without interruption or distractions). Throughout the assessment, assessors will offer children stickers and breaks as the child needs them.

Teacher Talking Points:

- Overview: We will conduct child assessments with selected children in your classroom who have consented to participate in the VIQI Study. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB

control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0508 and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to [Contractor Contact Name]; [Contractor Contact Address].

- Assessment Purpose: These assessments will be used to help us build evidence about how to best improve the quality of early child care and education.
- Assessment Experience: The assessments are structured as games, similar to ‘Simon Says.’ Children will be asked to do things like sort pictures and count objects.
- Assessment Length: The assessments will take approximately a half-hour for each child in the study.
- Privacy: The research team will do everything possible to keep the identity of the children and classroom private, to the extent permitted by law. Only the research team will view the assessment data. Child and classroom names will never be named in reports or other publications or presentations.
- Voluntary: The child assessments are voluntary. The child and his or her parents choose whether to participate or not, and may opt out at any point in the study. By being on my list for assessments, this indicates that the parent or guardian already gave permission for this child to participate in assessments.

Example Child Assessment Introduction Script: Before administering the child assessment, assessors will briefly explain what the activities will entail. The script assessors will use is provided below. This explanation will not only tell the child what the assessor will be doing and that some of the activities may be difficult, but it will also be a way of obtaining the child’s assent. The assessor will use the following script at the start of assessments to introduce the process to children:

“Hello, [CHILD NAME], my name is [ASSESSOR NAME]. Today, we will be playing some games. I will have some pictures to show you and some things I will ask you to do. Please listen carefully and do the best you can. Some of the things I will ask you to do are hard, even for older kids. So, don’t worry if you’re not sure about them. Just give it your best try. I have some stickers here for you when we are finished with the different parts. Are you ready to begin?”

If after the language screener, the child is routed into the Spanish versions of the battery, the assessor will introduce the process to children using the script above in Spanish.

Reluctant Respondents: We expect most children to be friendly and willing to cooperate, but it is expected that some may be hesitant or fearful of the process. Assessors will be trained to become skilled at identifying children’s reluctance before it escalates. When put into an assessment situation, some children may become stressed or anxious. Others may leave the table to run around. By being attentive to the child who is slow to warm up or easily distracted, assessors can potentially avoid a situation in which they are unwilling to continue. Assessors will learn to recognize when a child may need a break and that by stopping for a few minutes, the child may become re-engaged in the assessment and not end up refusing. Some children may just be having a bad day, so returning at another time may be an appropriate option.

Example Child Assessment End Script: Assessors will end the assessment by thanking children and giving them stickers. The assessor will use the following script at the end of assessments to thank children for their hard work:

“Congrats – we’re all finished! You did a great job. Thank you so much for your hard work! I have some stickers here for you. Please pick a few, and then I will bring you back to your classroom.”

BASELINE ASSESSMENT BATTERY

The team will administer the following assessments at baseline:

Language/Literacy

- CIRCLE Progress Monitoring/C-PALLS+ has subscales that assess phonological awareness, letter name and vocabulary skills in children aged 3 and 4.

Math)

- CIRCLE Progress Monitoring/C-PALLS+ math screener for children aged 3 and 4.

We will also collect the Simon Says and Art Show subscales of the preLAS as a language screener to determine whether the child receives the rest of the battery in English or Spanish.