

1 **Planning for Individualized Instruction**
2 **Discussion Paper**

3 **Background**

4 High-quality early childhood education programs often include the use of child progress
5 monitoring tools to support instruction that is tailored each child’s individual developmental
6 progress. TWC has supported the implementation of these tools through the statewide activity,
7 Planning for Individualized Instruction. Other early childhood education programs, including
8 public prekindergarten and Head Start, require child progress monitoring to inform
9 developmentally appropriate, individualized instruction.

10 Since the early 20th century, developmental and educational psychologists have understood the
11 importance of individualized approaches. In the mid-1930’s, developmental psychologist, Lev
12 Vygotsky, coined the term, “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). The ZPD is the area of a
13 child’s development where they have not yet mastered a skill but can perform the skill with the
14 assistance of an adult or more advanced peer. This zone is considered optimal because it is the
15 area where children most readily learn new skills while building off those they already have.

16 Child progress monitoring tools can help teachers understand where a child is developmentally
17 and what skills they are primed to learn next with instructional support. Technological
18 improvements have also led to the development of tools that provide robust assessment reporting
19 features and built-in linkages to evidence-based instructional activities that align with the
20 developmental needs of children individually and within groups.

21 On July 17, 2017, the Texas Workforce Commission’s (TWC) three-member Commission
22 (Commission) approved \$1.5 million in funding for a 24-month statewide initiative.
23 Subsequently, the Commission approved budgeting \$750,000 to support the initiative in Fiscal
24 Year 2020 (FY’20).

25 The intention of the Planning for Individualized Instruction initiative was to improve the quality
26 of early learning in subsidized child care using child progress monitoring tools and related
27 instructional materials. This initiative has the following goals:

- 28 • Support early childhood professionals’ use of observable, valid, and reliable assessments of
29 children’s developmental progress
- 30 • Provide teachers standard instructional materials that align with the developmental areas
31 addressed by the Texas Rising Star program, the Texas Infant and Toddler Early Learning
32 Guidelines, and the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines
- 33 • Help teachers develop intentional classroom activities for individual children as well as
34 groups of children
- 35 • Help teachers meet the individual needs of children with disabilities
- 36 • Increase kindergarten readiness and support healthy child development

37 Child progress monitoring is required for Texas’s public prekindergarten programs. TEA’s rule
38 §102.1003(d) specifies that public prekindergarten programs must monitor student progress
39 using a TEA-approved, multi-domain child assessment tool.

1 TWC’s Planning for Individualized Instruction initiative aligns with TEA’s requirements,
2 providing a critical support for Texas Rising Star providers who may wish to partner with
3 independent school districts (ISDs) to provide public prekindergarten services.

4 **Issue**

5 For the 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2019), education was a priority, resulting in the
6 passage of House Bill 3, also known as the “school finance reform bill.” This bill includes a
7 requirement for full-day prekindergarten for the state of Texas. The bill focuses on student
8 progress monitoring for prekindergarten through third grade. Given the increasing attention to
9 high-quality early education, TWC fully supports the state’s commitment to fostering high-
10 quality early education through the funding of child assessments that result in planning for
11 individualized instruction.

12 TWC awarded a contract to the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children and
13 Teaching Strategies for conducting individualized assessments of children from birth to five
14 years of age. The contract will expire in June 2020. The project has gained momentum over the
15 course of the contract, with the number of participants served increasing each quarter. The
16 contract is set to be fully expended by January 2019, with six months remaining in the contract
17 period. To continue supporting these efforts, a new competitive procurement is required.

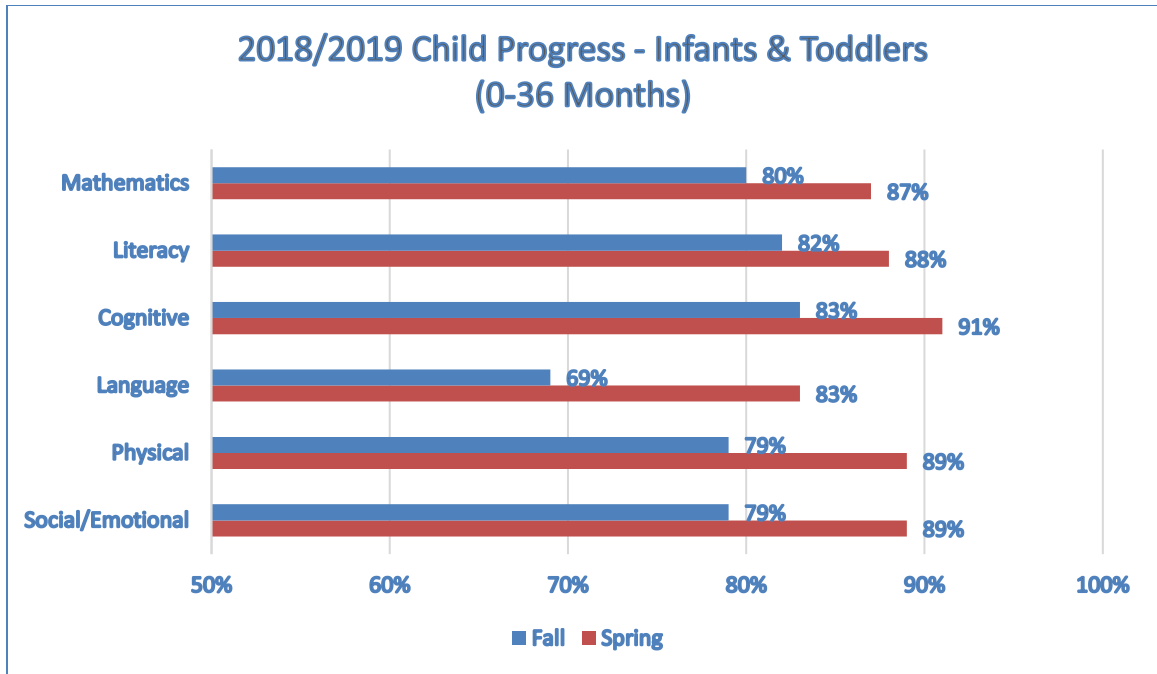
18 These funds support developmentally appropriate assessment tools in child care classrooms to
19 help teachers plan individualized instruction.

20 Project activities can include:

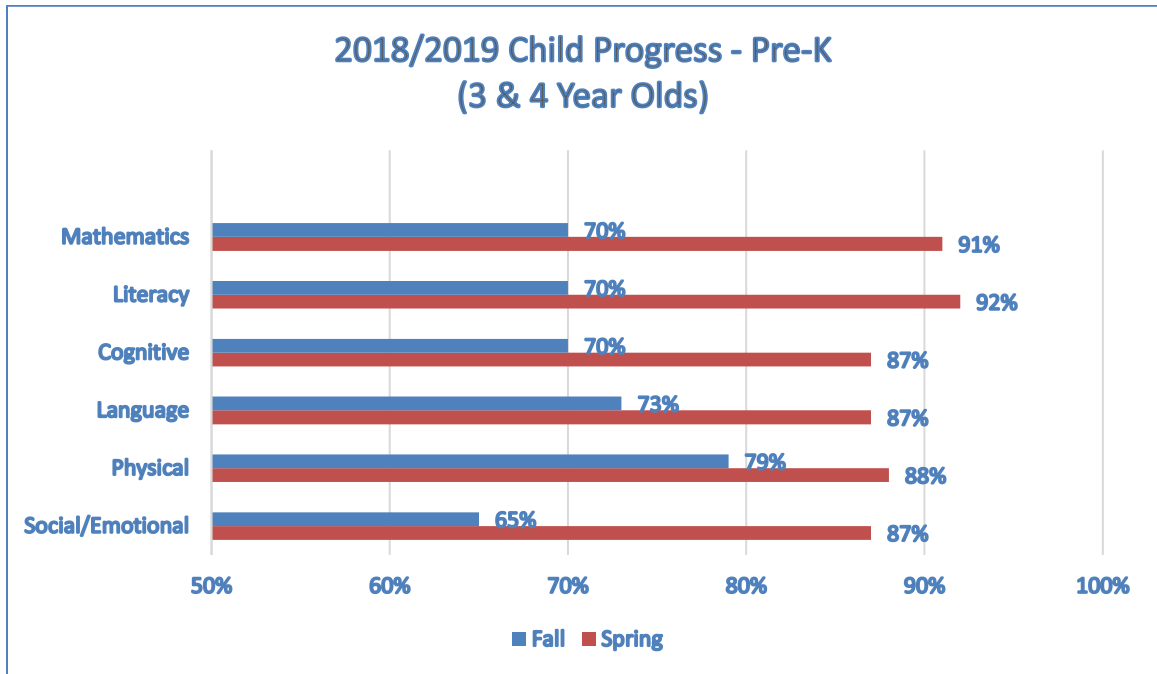
- 21 • recruiting provider staff and teachers;
- 22 • providing instructional tools for children ages birth through five years of age;
- 23 • providing instructional tools for school-age children;
- 24 • training teachers, directors, and owners of child care centers to use assessment software; and
- 25 • developing strategies for individualized and group instruction based on assessment results.

26 As of September 2019, under the current initiative:

- 27 • 1,555 teachers and administrators from 204 child care programs have received training on
- 28 the use of standardized tools to develop individualized classroom instruction; and
- 29 • 16,128 children have been taught and assessed using the tools.
- 30 • Prekindergarten children who have received individualized instruction have shown the
- 31 following average growth:



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4 **Decision Point**

5 Staff seeks direction on:

- 6 • increasing the FY'20 approved amount for the Planning for Individualized Instruction
- 7 initiative by \$1 million in CCDF funds;
- 8 • committing \$1 million for FY'21; and
- 9 • extending the contract for an additional two years based on availability of funds and
- 10 successful performance of the awarded grantee.