SECTION II — PRINCIPLES IN ACTION: PORTRAITS OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE

This section features a series of **Portraits** that follow the literacy development of three children from pre-kindergarten (PreK) through grade 2. The **Portraits** have been designed to illustrate different paths that these children take toward literacy, while simultaneously showing how a balanced early literacy assessment system (ELAS) can serve individual children. In the **Portraits**, each child enters PreK and continues their schooling journey with a unique array of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, experiences, interests, assets, and literacy-learning needs. You will see examples of ELAS features as framed in this Guide's five Organizing and Design Principles.

How to learn from these Portraits

These **Portraits** are designed to illustrate how some of the theories and principles recommended in this Guide might be applied by teachers in classrooms to respond to the literacy-learning needs of students.

As you explore and vicariously live through the experiences of the teachers and their students, reflect on the components of the assessment system that enable the district, and the teachers within the district, to serve the needs of students. Also attend to the larger systems within the district that make the early literacy assessment system effective in supporting the learning needs of students.

How to interact with the Portraits as you read

Examine the **Portraits** with colleagues and share your different insights and perspectives. Much can be learned from such dialogue and reflection. Also, consider how the particulars of the **Portraits** might generalize to situations you have encountered or could encounter.

As you study the Portraits consider the following:

Overgeneralization. These three **Portraits** cannot possibly depict the individual needs of all students and educators. Nor can they represent the full range of students' strengths and areas of needed growth. Despite these limitations, we do encourage practical application to your own experiences and the experiences of the children you serve as you see them reflected in the **Portraits**.

Context matters. Each school, district, and community has a unique context. These **Portraits** represent a limited number of contexts with an understanding that staffing, access to materials and resources, and background knowledge of educators can vary greatly. As mentioned, we urge that you take into consideration the similarities and differences of the classroom, school, and community contexts.

Diverse learners. Every child has a unique background, set of experiences, and assets that they bring to their learning. The authors of this work made conscious choices to select students with diverse backgrounds, races, and needs. We aim to acknowledge this diversity within the **Portraits,** while not stereotyping students who are often marginalized.

ONE CAUTION

The Portraits are not intended to prescribe a single approach or to describe every role assessment plays in an effective literacy instruction and intervention program. Nor do the Portraits attempt to describe every possible context or scenario a teacher might face.

How to interact with the Portraits as you process

The analytic process is at the heart of reading these **Portraits**. You are encouraged to get below the surface of the cases to see how relevant theories and practices are applied in real situations. Engaging collectively in an analysis of each **Portrait** will help you and your colleagues prepare for the *real* world where you are in constant action, making decisions.

Questions are provided below to guide analysis. As you dialogue about what you observe in the **Portraits**, listen to what others share, offer different perspectives, and deliberate points of view. Consider what you would have done in a similar situation. How is it similar to or different from what was done in the **Portraits**? Reflect on how you react to what you read. What does it say about your own assumptions and attitudes? The goal is for you to take away from this collective process a deeper understanding of the various ways teachers and other service providers engage in developmentally sensitive assessment. Remain open to the possibility of changing or broadening your own beliefs about teaching and learning. Adopting very different ways of engaging with the **Portraits** can also help you think differently about such issues in your own practice.

- First, try reading a **Portrait** rather quickly to get a general idea of what it is about: What happened? Which assessment processes and tools were used? How did teachers use the data to inform subsequent decisions?
- Then go back and read the **Portrait** again, this time more carefully. Begin to reflect on the questions below. Ask questions you have about the material and identify additional information you would like to have had that is not presented in the **Portrait**.

Questions to guide dialogue about the Portraits:

1. Is there evidence of coherence, comprehensiveness, and continuity of the overall assessment system, including assessment for learning and assessment of learning?

2. How do the teachers use assessment data/information to design individualized and small-group instruction?

3. What additional data/information did the teachers collect to develop and implement instruction and targeted interventions? Who else was involved in gathering data and designing interventions?

4. What mechanisms do you see for gathering information about children that go beyond what is typically thought of as "assessment"?

5. How are the teachers regularly exchanging data with colleagues and families?

6. What evidence is there that teachers engage students in the formative assessment process as described in the Formative Assessment Process Vignette? Where else might they have engaged students in the formative assessment process?

7. What district- and school-level systems support conversations and collaboration around teaching and learning based on data?

8. What examples in the Portrait show teachers using asset-based beliefs?

9. How might this dialogue influence your assessment practices in support of early literacy?

Introduction to the three children

This series of **Portraits** follows the literacy development, assessment, and instruction of three children – Emma, Ayesha, and Emmanuel – from pre-kindergarten to second grade. Each child enters pre-kindergarten and continues their schooling journey with a unique array of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, experiences, interests, assets, and literacy-learning needs. Throughout each of their school-based, early literacy learning experiences, their teachers and a constellation of other service providers strategically employ a variety of methods of observation and assessment of the children's literacy skills and practices in order to build upon their assets and target areas for needed growth in reading, writing, and oral language. The **Portraits** illustrate the many ways that children's literacy knowledge and skills can vary even when they are the same age. Furthermore, these **Portraits** illustrate the multiple contexts in which educators can acquire information that is useful in planning instruction.

It is important to note that this series of **Portraits** does not attend fully to all aspects of the three children's literacy development. Rather, the **Portraits** focus primarily on reading development, instruction, and assessment, with only limited attention to writing and oral language development. This does not suggest, however, that classroom teachers and other service providers should not provide systematic assessment and instruction in these crucial areas of literacy development in pre-K-3 classrooms.

Emma

Emma's family owns a local diner, where Emma loves to help out. She is very social with her classmates and loves to draw and perform. Emma also enjoys participating in read-alouds and songs during class, and is enthusiastic about sharing her ideas about books, both orally and through drawing detailed pictures. She loves for her family and teachers to read aloud to her many different kinds of books. Emma also likes reading with her friends in class.

Ayesha

Ayesha enjoys riding her bike, playing outside, playing with dolls, and building with Legos. Ayesha loves dogs and wants to be a "doctor for pets" when she grows up. Although she is very quiet during most class activities, she enjoys playing with her classmates. Ayesha seems to enjoy all class activities, listens attentively, and likes to read the books her teachers give her, especially books about animals.

Emmanuel

Emmanuel's family is originally from Haiti and, like his family, Emmanuel speaks Haitian Creole fluently in addition to speaking English. Emmanuel and his parents speak mostly Haitian Creole at home. He can be reserved around his classmates but becomes more animated and social when engaged in his favorite activities with friends. He is especially interested in superheroes and insects. Emmanuel is motivated by extra projects that extend what he is learning in class.

Throughout the **Portraits** and in other areas of this Guide, you will see references to Tiered Instruction or Interventions (i.e., Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3). This language comes from the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The heart of any RTI model lies in the use of tiered instruction. In the RTI framework, the instruction delivered to students varies on several dimensions that are related to the nature and severity of a student's difficulties.

- All students in Tier 1 receive high-quality, scientifically based instruction, differentiated to meet their needs, and are screened on a periodic basis to identify struggling learners who need additional support.

- In Tier 2, students not making adequate progress in the core curriculum are provided with increasingly intensive instruction matched to their needs on the basis of levels of performance and rates of progress.

- In Tier 3, students receive individualized, intensive interventions that target the students' skill deficits for the remediation of existing problems and the prevention of more severe problems.