

# Handle With Care: Assessment Challenges with Diverse Populations

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# Content

- Context: Brief introduction to Acelero Learning Head Start
- Uses and challenges of assessing young children
- An illustration: Use with caution for evaluating teachers or programs
- An illustration: Performance-based, on-going assessment

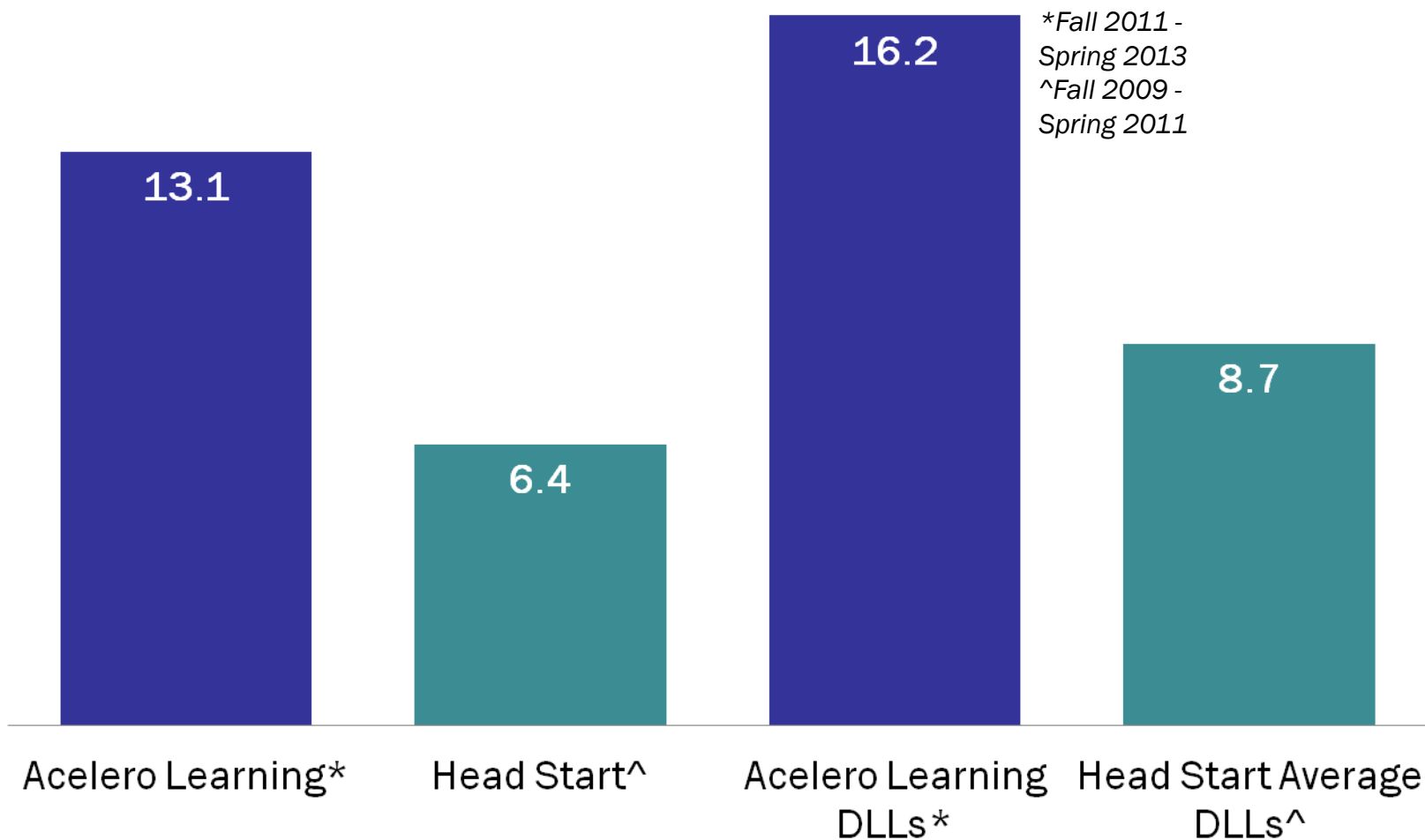
# Acelero Learning Head Start: One Core Value Is Data-Based Decision Making

- Collect and analyze data from each level of the program: child, classroom, center, delegate
- Annual program evaluation

# Our Children – Birth through 5

		Total	Delegate			
			MMC	CP	LV	WI
Ethnicity	Asian	2%	5%	-	1%	1%
	Black	34%	15%	63%	33%	75%
	Hispanic	55%	74%	35%	52%	8%
	White	5%	4%	1%	10%	15%
	Other	3%	3%	1%	5.0%	9%
Home Language	English	55%	31%	78%	60%	91%
	Spanish	42%	62%	22%	38%	1%
	Other	3%	7%	-	3%	8%

## Vocabulary Gains After Two Years of Head Start: Acelero Learning Compared to National FACES



*“You can’t fatten a pig by weighing it.”*

# Major Purposes for Assessment

All pose challenges with young children but amplified with diverse populations

- Will child benefit from a particular program (monolingual vs transitional)?
- Should child be referred for further diagnostic testing (screening)?
- Does child have a particular disability?
- What are the effects of the program?
- Measuring child progress to inform teaching and communicate with parents

# Challenges with Existing Tools

- Unavailable in languages of children
- If available, often simply a direct translation which does not account for:
  - major structural differences in languages,
  - dialectical variations within languages, or
  - the difference in the order of acquisition of specific vocabulary and grammar
- Rarely assess knowledge base across both languages
- Matching language(s) of assessment to language(s) of instruction



# Using Assessment Data to Evaluate Programs or Teachers

- Let's compare pre-post gains from three Acelero Centers
- Assessment tool: PPVT – a test of receptive vocabulary and concept knowledge
- The average child scores 100
- Our mission is to have our children at least score the average

# So . . . Which center is doing the best job?

Center	Pre-Post Gains	Mean Post-test Score	% DLL	% 4 yr	# Rooms
Waylon	3 pts	101	2%	51%	2
Sands	18 pts	87	85%	67%	7
North Urban	4 pts	93	10%	52%	4

- Based on pre-post gains we would say Sands
- Based on post-test outcome we would say Waylon
- But we can't compare because the centers serve different ages, in a different number of rooms, with different home languages and there are many other factors we don't have information on

# One Solution: Performance Based Assessment

- Continua of learning based on sequence of child development
- Teacher documents child's development through written observations and samples of the child's work
- Can assess what a child's strengths are across different types of situations
- Understandable to parents and parents can contribute
- Provides parents and teachers with a research-based roadmap

But there are still challenges . . .

# Center in the Midwest: An Illustration

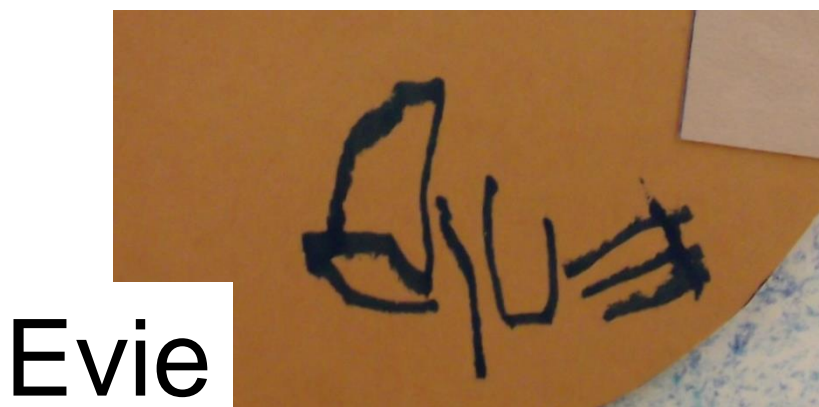
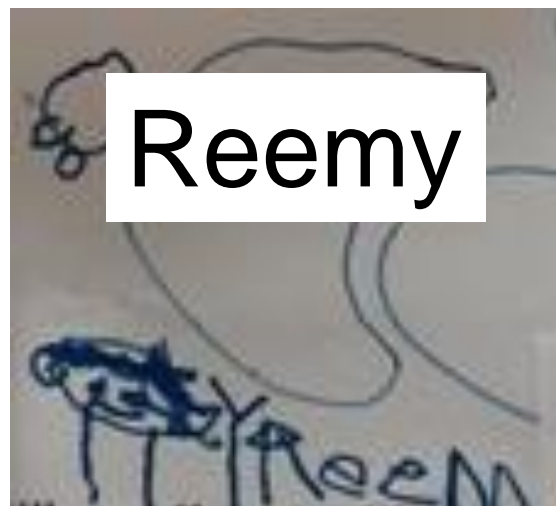
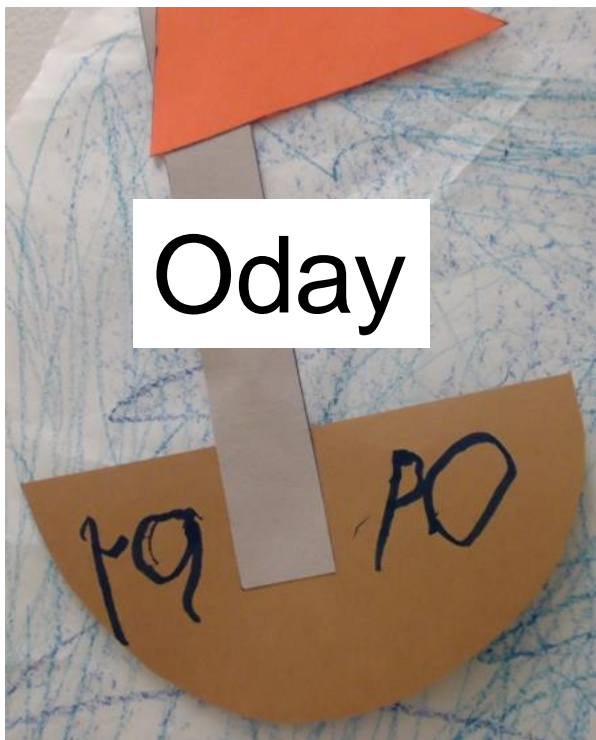
- Previous Head Start provider didn't know the languages or countries of origin of the families.
- We strive to have one adult in the classroom speak the home language of the children if over 20% - more difficult with new immigrant populations



# Home Visit Questionnaire

- What language do you use to talk to your child at home the majority of the time?
- What language(s) does your child use when speaking to you and others in the home?
- Are there any other languages spoken in your home? Which ones and who speaks them?
- What language do you read to your child in?
- Are there traditions, foods, holidays, and other cultural values that are important to your family that you would like us to know about?

# Challenges – An Example: Concepts of Print and Name Writing



# Challenges cont'd:

## Cultural Values

Our assessment tools and school readiness goals value, among other things:

- Gender equality
- Independence
- Dual language learning and support of home language
- But our families may not share these values

# Conclusions

- Assessments must match the purpose for which they will be used
- Multiple data sources should be used for any high stakes decisions
- We need sound assessments in all languages of instruction
- Teachers need professional development in cultural competence and in supporting second language acquisition