

ASSESSMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS



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WHY??



WHY ASSESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD?

- Optimize learning for children
 - Assessment pulls time and resources from instruction
 - Benefit in services to child or improved quality of program
- Guides decisions for teaching and learning
- Progress monitoring
- good data drives higher quality outcomes for children. To allocate limited resources with care, one must know who needs what as well as which efforts actually succeed in meeting each individual child's needs. When resources go to sound, effective prevention and intervention efforts, early education offers leverage that is massive in comparison to efforts in the older grades
- Possible negative outcomes come from EC assessments if used for purposes they were not designed for

WHY ASSESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Look for strengths, progress, and needs
- Assessments should be developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, tied to children's daily activities and connected to specific purposes:
 - Making sound decisions about teaching and learning
 - Identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children
 - Helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions

APPROPRIATE PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

- Child does not lose access to appropriate instructional programming
- Most of the instruments used to establish readiness have been found to be wanting, leading to incorrect recommendations about half the time (NRC Committee on Early Childhood Assessment)
- "Using readiness tests to make recommendations about children's access to kindergarten is especially troublesome because many of the children recommended for delayed entry are the ones who would most benefit from participation in an educational program" (NRC Committee on Early Childhood Assessment, 2008, p. 31)
- Readiness tests call upon largely discredited models of development, which essentially presume that cognitive development must precede learning in an area like reading (NRC Committee on Early Childhood Assessment)
 - This view fails to draw from social constructivist views now more predominant in early childhood education—which suggest that development is prompted through interaction with instructional experiences
- REMEMBER: Readiness assessments are ONE piece of data at ONE point in time

APPROPRIATE PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

- Assessment data that identifies areas of risk calls for immediate action
- Preventative framework that uses early and ongoing assessment to drive instruction and intervention substantially reduces number of children who qualify with learning disabilities later
- Assessments should not be given without clear plans for follow-up steps that use the information productively and appropriately

HOW??

CURRENT

SUCCESSFUL

PRACTICES &

OPPORTUNITIES FOR

GROWTH



KEY COMPONENTS

Variety of Methods

- Record review/developmental history
- Interviews
- Observations
- Checklists/rating scales
- Portfolios
- More formal assessments

KEY COMPONENTS

Variety of Methods:

- Match assessment purpose to assessment tool
- Good assessment practices provide evidence about what children can do and how they think about concepts
 - Behavior and cognition important to developing comprehensive picture
- Are we assessing what a child **CAN** do and is **READY** to do, or only what they **CANNOT** do?
- Observations can also show what children can do and how they learn/approach a task
- Interviews allow teachers insight into child's thinking
- Assessment of young children should balance the task approach, observations, and interviews to capture what students understand and can do

KEY COMPONENTS

Authentic Assessment

- Most reliable outcomes for young children are generated when tools are used within an authentic assessment model
- Authentic assessment includes observations and tasks that occur in the context of regular play or activities, in settings typical to the child
 - Child-centered and interactive
 - Authentic assessments capture "a large number of behaviors across multiple domains...[and] allow the child multiple opportunities to demonstrate a behavior or skill in multiple settings with preferred and multiple partners, objects, and materials, resulting in a more valid estimate of developmental status"
- When students' performance on standard tasks is complemented with observations about what a child can do in real-world environments or with particular people, the resulting rich data may offer educators more insight into each child's unique strengths and needs

WHAT TO ASSESS



Emotional/Social: expressing feelings, forming friendships, resolving conflicts with others



Language: listening and talking



Physical: using pencils (fine motor skills), climbing and running (gross motor skills)



Cognitive: numbers, colors, and patterns



Approaches to Learning: curiosity and excitement about learning and ways of learning new information

KEY COMPONENTS

- Methods of assessment should recognize that children need familiar contexts in order to be able to demonstrate their abilities. Abstract paper-and-pencil tasks may make it especially difficult for young children to show what they know.
- Each child's first- and second-language development should be taken into account when determining appropriate assessment methods and in interpreting the meaning of assessment results.
- Parents should be a valued source of assessment information, as well as an audience for assessment results. Assessments should include multiple sources of evidence, especially reports from parents and teachers. Assessment results should be shared with parents as part of an ongoing process that involves parents in their child's education.

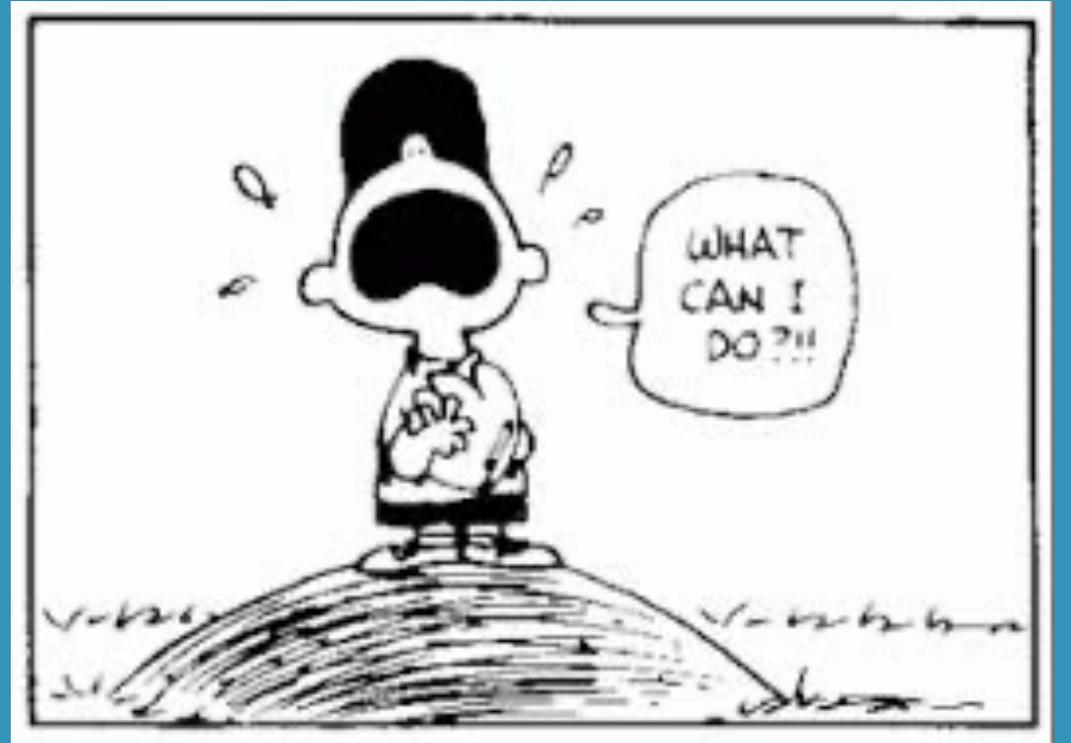
KEY COMPONENTS

- Assessments should be tailored to a specific purpose and should be reliable, valid, and fair for that purpose. Assessments designed for one purpose are not necessarily valid if used for other purposes.
- Assessment policies should be designed recognizing that reliability and validity of assessments increase with children's age. The younger the child, the more difficult it is to obtain reliable and valid assessment data.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Kindergarten - 12th grade assessment places emphasis on academic knowledge
- Early childhood assessment places emphasis on all aspects of a child's development
- A well-designed assessment system:
 - Considers all domains of child development
 - Is developmentally appropriate
 - Aligned with your curriculum and the state's early learning standards
 - Reliable, valid, and fair
 - Captures growth over a period of time
- Consider if pre-packaged option aligns with your program's goals and structure

NOW WHAT??



NOW WHAT??

- Identify each area of focus (ex. literacy skills)
 - Identify if area of focus will be taught and/or assessed (ex. Vision screening–vision is assessed but not a skill taught)
- Which purpose does assessment fall under?
 - Eligibility (identifying which student are at-risk for a skill)
 - Instructional Planning (in which specific area(s) does the child need support)
 - Effectiveness (how much progress is being made)
- Identify assessment tools available that meet the purpose

NOW WHAT??

- For each assessment tool listed, consider:
 - What is the assessment method used (observation, portfolio, etc.)
 - Where/how is it administered
 - What information does it provide about the student (what they CAN do, CANNOT do, or READY to do)
 - Which features of the tool reach toward authenticity (realistic and every day situations used, incorporates interaction)
- Do assessment tools available cover the needed domains, different methods, and provide for authenticity?

RESOURCES

- Ages and Stages–FREE from Easter Seals
 - <https://www.easterseals.com/mtffc/asq/>
- Survey of Well-Being of Young Children
 - <https://www.tuftschildrenshospital.org/The-Survey-of-Wellbeing-of-Young-Children/Overview>
- Headstart Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF)- **looks at 5 key areas that should be assessed
 - <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/elof-ohs-framework.pdf>
- Acadience Learning PELI (Preschool Early Literacy Indicators)
 - <https://acadiencelarning.org/acadience-reading/prek-peli/>
- Understanding and Choosing Assessments and Developmental Screeners for Young Children Ages 3–5
 - https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/screeners_final.pdf
- Early Childhood Assessment: Implementing Effective Practice
 - <http://info.nwea.org/rs/nwea/images/earlychildhoodassessment-implementingeffectivepractice.pdf>
- Early Childhood Assessment: What, Why, and How (download for free on right side of the page)
 - <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/12446/early-childhood-assessment-why-what-and-how>

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