

*Iowa DE/AEA Early Childhood Network*

*Fact Sheet*  
*on*  
*Assessment*



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## Assessment Fact Sheet

### Definition:

Assessment is the process of gathering evidence of what a child knows and is able to do. To clarify; evaluation is the process of interpreting that evidence and making judgments and decisions based on that evidence.

### Collecting Evidence:

Ways to collect authentic evidence include: observation of child, observation of child's products, and conversations and conferences with child and parents. Organization and management of assessment evidence can be a key to time involved and to the richness and variety of samples. Teachers need to find strategies and documentation processes that work for them.

*The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland*, contains helpful information in the section "Assessment and Evaluation," including sample documentation tools in Appendix B of the section.

### Assessment Tools Recommended for Young Children:

- Collections of children's work (writing, artwork, project work) - provide authentic evidence of children's learning.

Examples: photographs of projects, video taped presentations, audio tapes of readings, reading logs, writing folders, computer disks.

- Checklists - require a "yes" or "no" response regarding the acquisition of the skill being monitored. Should be based on observations made during regular activities.

Example: Child is able to state home phone number. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

- Rating scales - are useful for gathering information on a learning that develops along a continuum.

Example: Child resolves conflicts with peers. 1 = rarely observed, 2 = sometimes observed, 3 = frequently observed.

- Anecdotal records - should be non judgmental and factual. If interpretation is given as insight, it should be labeled as such. Useful for recording progress over time.

Example: Jason Smith, 2/18/98, Mrs. Green, observer. (Jason has typically not participated much in group activities, preferring to just watch others.) Today during circle time, Jason sang and did the motions to "Hokey Pokey." He was standing next to Zachary. (Jason's mom told me Zachary has been over to their house to play, and Jason has also been invited to Zachary's house. I think this friendship is making Jason more comfortable participating in group activities.) Note: teacher's inferences are in parentheses.

- Interviews and conference notes - can be an easy and effective means of gathering information. When a child is asked an open-ended question, much can be learned about the child's thinking.

Example: Tell me why you wrapped tape around your paper boat before you put it in the water. Parents are an invaluable source of information. By talking and listening to parents, teachers can learn much about the child.

Example: Tell me about your child's reading habits at home.

Information from parents can be obtained through surveys, parent observations, conferences, and work samples from home, as well as informal conversations.

### **Best Practices:**

- \* Assessment reflects typical classroom activities, rather than contrived, artificial situations.
- \* A variety of assessment tools are used.
- \* Assessment takes place in a safe, nurturing atmosphere.
- \* Assessment takes place over time; regularly and periodically.
- \* Children are encouraged to assess their own work and progress.

### **Standardized Testing:**

Professional organizations including NAEYC and ACEI take the position that standardized achievement and ability tests designed for and administered to groups is inappropriate for preschool through primary grades. Because these tests evaluate in abstract ways, they do not match the cognitive development of children this age. Standardized testing also is incongruent with the best practice of avoiding contrived, artificial situations.

### **Identifying Children With Special Needs:**

Individual diagnostic assessment is used to identify children with special needs to ensure the maximum benefits of early intervention. A brief assessment or screening may be conducted to provide a recommendation for more extensive diagnostic work. If such a need exists, trained professionals then use a variety of sources and tools to determine what services best meet the child's needs.



## **Resources and References:**

*Guidelines for Appropriate Curriculum Content and Assessment in Programs Serving Children Ages 3 Through 8, Position Statement NAEYC and NAECS/SDE, Young Children, March 1991.*

Davies, A. *Together is Better*. Peguis Publ. 1992.

Grace, Cathy. *The Portfolio and Its Use: Developmentally Appropriate Assessment of Young Children*. ERIC Digest. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Johnston, S. ED. et. al. *The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland*. Office of Child Development, Nebraska Department of Education, Lincoln, NE, 1993.

Meisels, S. *The Work Sampling System: An Authentic Performance Assessment*. Principal, 72(5), 5-7.

*Performance Assessment: A Teacher's Way of Knowing*. (video) Davidson Films, Inc. 231 E Street, Davis, CA 95616, Phone (916) 753-9604.

Perrone, Vito. *On Standardized Testing*. ERIC Digest. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

