Vignette: Adapting

Myra is a new teacher, and she wants to do well. The students in her new class are eager and respectful. However, the class presents some challenges because the children's developmental levels are widely varied, and some of the children have obvious special needs. Myra is nervous because her school has educational standards for all children. Nevertheless, Myra begins observing her children carefully and devising teaching strategies based on what she observes.

Eventually, Myra begins the next steps of assessment and evaluation. She documents the progress of her students with pictures and videos. She keeps copies of sample work. She assesses several domains of each child's development such as cognitive, language, and social. She administers some standardized assessments and some teacher-designed assessments. All the while she is adapting her teaching techniques to meet each child's needs.

By the end of the year, all of Myra's children are performing at the appropriate level according to the educational standards of the school where she teaches. Myra believes that her first year of teaching has been a success. She looks forward to the next year when the process will begin anew.

Professionalism and professional responsibility in the area of assessment are controversial. However, as the early childhood field garners more attention and support, assessment and increased accountability are becoming more typical and common. The question is no longer whether we should assess young children and as a result assess their teachers, but how we should assess young children and their teachers. Best practices in assessment today include a team of experts involved in the assessment. These experts may include educational psychologists, occupational therapists, and nurses. Teachers and others in the field are conducting more novel, unique, and authentic assessments including the use of curriculum-based assessment, judicious use of naturalistic observation, and optimal use of videotaping. The authors of this text want this chapter to demonstrate to you as the teacher some of the positive aspects of assessment. We want you to come to understand how assessment can help you with your teaching duties. Some issues and concerns with assessment will also be shared.

The first five chapters of this text have relayed foundational knowledge about the early childhood education field by covering early childhood elements such as theories, milestones, and history. The next section of the text contains four chapters that will help prepare you for instructing children in the early childhood classroom, and guide you in applying the foundational knowledge along with some new information as you prepare to meet and teach the children in your class.

Key Elements for Becoming a Professional

NAEYC DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRINCIPLE 3

Development and learning proceed at varying rates from child to child, as well as at uneven rates across different areas of a child's individual functioning.

NAEYC DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRINCIPLE 8

Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.

Interpretation

When observing young children for assessment and evaluation purposes, a professional teacher keeps these principles in mind. The stakes are quite high for the children and teacher involved in assessment and evaluation because of accountability measures. Therefore, observation must be done objectively and sensitively.

NAEYC STANDARD 3: OBSERVING, DOCUMENTING, AND ASSESSING TO SUPPORT YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

a. Understanding the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment—including its use in development of appropriate goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies for young children

b. Knowing about assessment partnerships with families and with professional colleagues to build effective learning environments

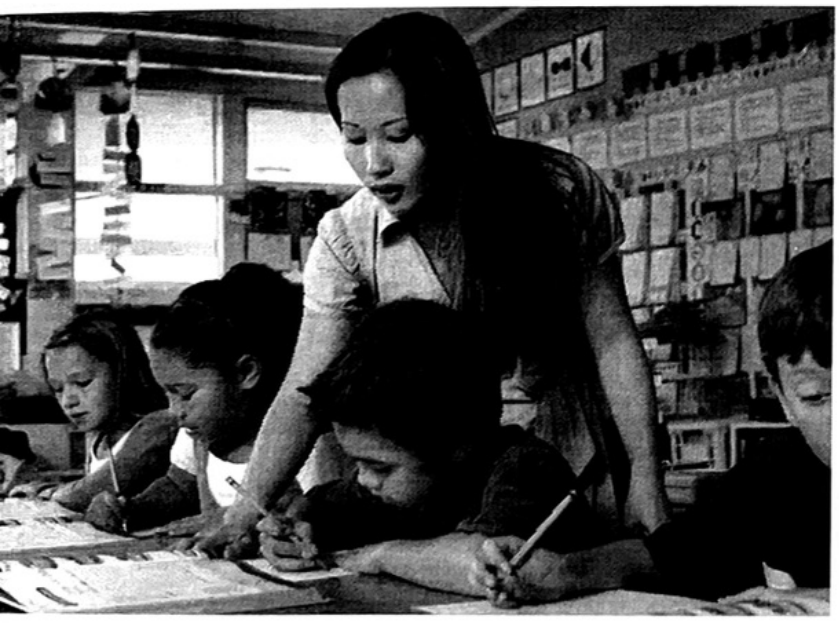
c. Knowing about and using observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches, including the use of technology in documentation, assessment, and data collection

This chapter, the sixth, focuses on observation, assessment, and evaluation. It addresses why we carry out these important procedures and how to put them into practice. It also discusses common concerns of assessment and evaluation such as the following:

- Psychometrics
- Sensitive, supportive, and inclusive parental communication
- Accountability and high-stakes testing
- Test bias
- Age at assessment
- Environmental assessment

Although observation, assessment, and evaluation can be time-consuming and controversial, these processes are some of the most important in the endeavor of teaching young children. **Observation** is seeing, noting, and recording specific behavioral phenomena. **Assessment** is observation that is more systematic and structured. Additionally, assessment checks to see if goals and objectives are being met and places a value judgment on the behavior being observed. **Evaluation** takes observation even further. Evaluation judges the worth and value of the behavior, event, program, or teaching strategy based on what is observed. If observation, assessment, and evaluation are completed competently and sensitively, they can tremendously enhance the education of young children. You as a teacher can obtain the same satisfaction that Myra experienced with her successful first year teaching young children.

WHY AND HOW DO TEACHERS OBSERVE YOUNG CHILDREN?



Good, detailed observation is the foundation of evaluation and assessment.

Careful and sensitive observation underlies effective teaching, assessment, and evaluation of children. Wise teachers know that in order to observe young children, they have to be aware of their own observational filters, or biases, and endeavor to be as objective as possible. Teachers' observations of their students can impact the children's developmental and educational trajectory. Therefore, it is important to observe objectively, yet to be careful and sensitive as seen in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position statement in Table 6.1.

One Reason for Observing

The main reason teachers observe young children is to assess their interests, development, educational progress, and behavior. Observational perceptions are then used to interact with the children more effectively in teaching, guiding, and evaluating them. At the beginning of the observational process, it is important to have a certain purpose that is stated as a clear **objective** (Bentzen, 2000; Brandt, 1972), or a specific and practical aim for your observation. This helps you to focus your attention and select the most important behavior and emotional expression to fulfill your reason for observing. Once your reason and objective for observing are clear, you can begin the observation.

Table 6.1 Excellent Teachers and Assessment

Excellent teachers should use assessment to

1. monitor children's development and learning;
2. guide planning and decision-making;
3. identify children who might benefit from special services and supports; and
4. report and communicate with others (including families).

Developmentally appropriate assessment requires attention to

1. appropriateness for child's age and developmental status;
2. appropriateness for child's individuality; and
3. appropriateness for child's culture.

Assessment decisions require partnerships with family members by

1. making family members feel welcome in the classroom and inviting their participation in the program;
2. working to create a relationship that allows for open dialogue;
3. maintaining frequent, positive, two-way communication; and
4. acknowledging parents' choices and goals for their child and responding with sensitivity and respect to their preferences and concerns.

Source: Adapted from NAEYC (2009).

Types of Observations

There are numerous types of observation methods. The most common ones are as follows:

- Reflective journal or diary
- Narrative description
- Time sampling
- Event sampling
- Frequency count
- Duration record
- Checklist
- Rating scale
- Photographs
- Videotaping

The first two observation types listed are more informal, and the last four are more formal. The ones in the middle may be either depending on how they are created and conducted. **Informal observations** are free-flowing and less structured, while **formal observations** are more structured and controlled (Goodwin & Driscoll, 1980, 1982). Whether an observation is formal or informal, it is important to not use the child's full real name. Use only a pseudonym (false name) or just the child's first name. Some observations, such as photographs and videotapes, require parental and child permission.

A **reflective journal or diary** (Billman & Sherman, 2003) selects and describes a particular behavior or emotional expression of the child and then reflects on the meaning or interprets the behavior or expression. This reflection or interpretation is informal and may change after repeated

objective observations. The date and time are also noted, along with a name or another identifying reference for the child. The defining elements of this type of observation are the selected behavior or expression and an interpretation of it. (See Figure 6.1 for an example.)

Narrative descriptions are informal observations as well. They differ from reflective observations in that they are more general and basic. They are written descriptions of general behavior (Lay-Dopyera & Dopyera, 1982) rather than observations of a specific behavior. Narrative descriptions can become more formal in nature if they are very detailed and have a strong and strict objective (Bentzen, 2000; Irwin & Bushnell, 1980). However, they keep their general nature (see Figure 6.2).

Time sampling is observation that seeks to quantify the number of times a specific behavior occurs during a specified amount of time (Irwin & Bushnell, 1980; Wortham, 2005). For instance, you can count the number of times a young child says "bye-bye" during 10 intervals of 15 minutes each throughout the day. Time sampling is usually used when the behavior or expression of interest occurs frequently.

Another type of sampling is **event sampling**. Event sampling is used when the focus of the observation occurs less frequently or rarely. Perhaps there is a young child who engages in power struggles with his or her teachers, but not very often. Then you can observe using event sampling, a richly descriptive recording of an infrequent behavior or expression every time the behavior or

Figure 6.1 A Journal Account

A Journal Account

March 16. When I first got there, I gave K. (nine-month-old female) her bottle and she fell asleep between my legs, so I had to be careful and put her in the playpen and still have her sleep. She did open her eyes, but I just rubbed her stomach and she fell back to sleep . . . She hadn't eaten any breakfast and they (the other teachers) thought that she was either cutting some teeth or was sick.

March 23. K. had a fall today on the slide. She climbs up the steps, then sits on the top, but when she slides down, she loses control. She hit her head and got a rug burn. (The other teachers) told me that she's a daredevil. She keeps on climbing up the slide even though she has fallen down a couple of times.

April 1. Today when I got there I set up the water table. They were all so excited. It was amazing to see them get excited about just water. It's not just water to them; it's something new and different. They must all like to take baths. They even screamed when I was pouring the water in. They had a good time splashing in the water. Sometimes they would get carried away and splash each other in the face . . . K. would get so excited that she would scream and, boy, does she have a scream. (The teacher) says that she likes to hear her own voice.

April 20. K. was aggressive today. She hit C. and made her cry . . . Today we played some music while they were playing. It seems to calm them down. Today, though, they were all aggressive. They have a soft, cushiony tunnel that they like to play with. Both E. and K. were trying to get into it at the same time. They were wrestling each other, laughing most of the time; but then the hitting and hair pulling started.

April 27. K. was my buddy today for a while. She wanted me to help her go up and down the slide. I must have done it about five times. She is having problems with her teeth so she wanted (the teacher) to give her bottle today, not me.

May 6. K.'s mom came in worried because she saw blood on K.'s car seat. R. told her she had a paper cut when she came in. (Her mom) took K. with her for an hour before she had class.

May 11. Today was such a nice day out that we decided to take the infants for a walk after we had snack and changed diapers . . . K. fell asleep in the back of the wagon. Her head was leaned way back and everyone would look at her as we were walking through campus. We just told everyone that she had a bad night. Our walk lasted about forty minutes.

May 13. K. is going all day without a bottle now. She will be one on the 24th of May. Her mom told us that she thought it would take her longer to get K. off the bottle. To get her to sleep, we usually just rock her.

Source: Billman and Sherman (2003).

Figure 6.2 Narrative Description

Observer's Name Alice Thompson (Teacher)

Child/Children Observed Melissa L.

Child's/Children's Age(s) 4 years, 3 months Child's/Children's Sex Female

Observation Context (home, child care center, preschool, school) Children's Delight Preschool

Date of Observation January 10, 1999 Time Begun 9:20A.M. Time Ended 9:30A.M.

Brief Description of Physical and Social Characteristic of Observation Setting

Children are busily engaged in various free play activities. The overall mood seems upbeat. Of the usual 15 children who are enrolled, only 12 are here today—three are ill, according to the parents' telephone communications with the director this morning. Although the children's moods seem good, they are more quiet than usual—not as much loud talking as sometimes takes place.

Objective Behavioral Descriptions (OBD) and Interpretations: *Narrative Description*

OBD 1: [Time Begun 9:20A.M. Time Ended 9:22A.M.]
Melissa (M.) arrives about 35 minutes after the other children have arrived and started their activities. She puts her coat in her cubby and then stands in the doorway of the main classroom and looks around; she remains motionless for about ½ minute, moving only her eyes as she glances at other children and their activities.

Interpretation 1:
Melissa seems shy, almost withdrawn. From moment of arrival, she seemed reluctant to enter into things. May be because she didn't want to come in first place; her reluctance was mentioned by her mother several days ago. No specific reason was offered.

OBD 2: [Time Begun 9:22A.M. Time Ended 9:24A.M.]
M. walks towards reading area on far side of the room from the cubbies. As she walks, she scrapes the toe of her right foot at each step, doing this for about 5 feet. She passes by the puzzle table where 2 children are seated; no communication is exchanged. She walks to a table with some books lying on it. Tina, José and Miguel are seated at the table; Jose and Miguel are sharing a book, Tina (T.) is watching them "read." Melissa says nothing to the three children as she sits down.

Interpretation 2:
Melissa still seems uncertain: even her motor behaviors seems restricted; she walks slowly, shuffling, as though unsure of herself and of her relationship with the other children or her environment. Seems to have trouble deciding what to do. Not at all communicative; makes no overtures to any of the children who were "available" for such.

OBD 3: [Time Begun 9:24A.M.] Time Ended 9:29A.M.]
José and Miguel don't look up or acknowledge Melissa in any way. Tina says "Hi, Melisa, wanna read a book with me?" M. cocks her head to one side and says, "I don't know how to read." T. replies "We can look at the picture." M. looks over towards the big block area and without looking at T., says, "OK." Tina smiles and goes to a shelf containing a number of books. M. picks up one of the books already on the table and flips through the pages. T. returns with a books and says, "I like this one, let's look at this one." M. merely nods; T. sits down close to M., but M. moves slightly, keeping a distance of about 6–8 inches between her and Tina.

Interpretation 3:
Tina seems outgoing and friendly as Melissa approaches; M. is still uncommunicative; still seems shy and uncertain; speaks softly as though afraid of being heard. Tina persists in spite of M.'s apparent lack of enthusiasm. M. also seems distractable or inattentive. She shies away from T.'s efforts to get close physically. Tina moves at a quick pace—much more energetic than M.

OBD 4: [Time Begun 9:29A.M. Time Ended 9:30A.M.]
José looks up and says, "Hey, you two, wha' cha doin'?" Tina tilts her head upward, thrusts out her chin slightly and says, "Never mind, we're busy." Melissa says nothing, but gets up from the table and walks toward big block area. Miguel still reads.

Interpretation 4:
Tina is much more outgoing and sure of himself than M. T. didn't interact too much w/ José and Miguel; may have felt left out of their activity. T. definitely seemed pleased to see M.; displayed no unfavorable response to M.'s "unsocial" behavior. T.'s response to José was quite assertive, but in a friendly way; almost like she claimed Melissa as her playmate, may be in retaliation for the two boys ignoring her earlier. M. still seems uninterested, even uncertain of what to do.

Source: Bentzen (2000).

expression occurs (Gander & Gardiner, 1981; Wortham, 2005). You may also want to note what happens before and after this behavior or event in order to understand it better, which can help with subsequent assessment, evaluation, communication, and teaching.

A **frequency count** is simple and usually informal. You simply count the number of times a behavior or an expression happens during the observation. This observation method may be used to establish a baseline of a behavior or an expression. A frequency count is often followed or accompanied by a **duration record**, which is the recording of how long a behavior or an expression lasts (Goodwin & Driscoll, 1982).

A **checklist** is always prepared beforehand and linked to a specified context and, therefore, is a formal observation method (Bentzen, 2003; Brandt, 1972). The checklist observation method lists the presence or absence of a characteristic or an action in a given context (Bentzen, 2003; Brandt, 1972). A checklist seems simple, but must be prepared ahead of time (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 "Concepts About Print" Checklist

COMPETENCIES	FALL	MIDYEAR	SPRING
1. Book Concepts			
1.1 Front cover			
1.2 Back cover			
1.3 Title			
1.4 Title page			
2. Book Handling Skills			
2.1 Holds the book right-side up			
2.2 Turns pages from the front			
3. Directionality			
3.1 Left-to-right page sequence			
3.2 Left-to-right sentence			
3.3 Top-to-bottom			
3.4 Return sweep			
4. Reading Concepts			
4.1 Understands that print carries specific meaning			
4.2 One-to-one correspondence (points to each word)			
5. Letter Concept			
5.1 Points to a letter			
6. Word Concept			
6.1 Points to a word			
7. Precise Literacy Terms			
7.1 Title			
7.2 Author			
7.3 Illustrator			

Source: Adapted from Clay, M. M. (1993).

With a **rating scale**, a value or judgment of relative degree is placed on a behavior or an expression. Rating scales usually have at least three levels of value degree but may have as many as seven or more (Bentzen, 2003; Wortham, 2005). The rating scale in Figure 6.4 has three levels of value degree. Rating scales may be used to observe and judge characteristics or actions, as well.

Photographs and videotapes are used in everyday life and, hence, easily defined. However, they have only recently been accepted as valid observational methods. Photographs and videotapes are permanent and vivid records of behavior and expressions. As mentioned above, permission should be obtained from the parents and perhaps the children themselves. Photographs and videotapes can capture examples of focus behavior and/or expressions, and then the photograph or videotape can be interpreted or explained with another more traditional method.

Figure 6.4 "Concepts About Print" Rating Scale

Code: 1 = No Evidence 2 = Developing 3 = Mastered

COMPETENCIES	1	2	3
1. Book Concepts			
1.1 Front cover			
1.2 Back cover			
1.3 Title			
1.4 Title page			
2. Book Handling Skills			
2.1 Holds the book right-side up			
2.2 Turns pages from the front			
3. Directionality			
3.1 Left-to-right page sequence			
3.2 Left-to-right sentence			
3.3 Top-to-bottom			
3.4 Return sweep			
4. Reading Concepts			
4.1 Understands that print carries specific meaning			
4.2 One-to-one correspondence (points to each word)			
5. Letter Concept			
5.1 Points to a letter			
6. Word Concept			
6.1 Points to a word			
7. Precise Literacy Terms			
7.1 Title			
7.2 Author			
7.3 Illustrator			

Source: Adapted from Clay, M. M. (1993).

Choosing which observation method to use is a very important decision for you as a teacher to make. The observation method you use may highlight or bring to life a certain behavior or expression that might not be noticed at all with another type of observation. And, most naturally, what you observe will be an influence on your teaching style, methods, and philosophy.

Observation, assessment, and evaluation are aids in instructional planning and practice.

How Observations Influence Teaching

As a teacher you can utilize observations to uncover patterns of behavior and expression in children. You may then interpret these patterns and compare them with appropriate norms and expectations of development (Wortham, 2005). It is very important to be as sensitive and objective as possible when observing. It is also important to be sensitive when interpreting the observations and to realize that interpretations may change after successive objective observations or further reflection. As a trained teacher, you can rely on your education and experience with children to help you interpret the observation. After observing, interpreting, and reflecting, take this information and use it to enhance the development of the child or children. Observations allow you to know where children are positioned along the developmental continuum and where they need to go next to further their development. Then you as a teacher provide the appropriate experiences to assist the children with growing, learning, and developing (Dodge, Heroman, Charles, & Maiorca, 2004). You create, arrange, or plan for experiences and lesson plans that help further the children's development.

HOW DO TEACHERS ASSESS AND EVALUATE YOUNG CHILDREN?

Observation, interpretation, and reflection occur over and over again at various time points during the teaching of young children. At one point, the interpretative step becomes more of an assessment or evaluation as a value or judgment comes into play. Some teachers of young children are uncomfortable with assessment and evaluation and wish they were not necessary. This is because young children grow and change constantly at varied rates. However, if done objectively, sensitively, and professionally with an awareness of the teacher's own filter, assessment and evaluation can aid young children as they grow, develop, and learn.

In all actuality, you as a teacher are already "assessing" young children when you observe them because we all have an observation filter that we use to "make sense of" or value/judge children's behaviors and expressions. But more formal assessment furthers the observation and assessment process because with assessment some criteria or standards are used to judge children's behavior, some decisions are made, and some actions are taken. An evaluation is a more involved assessment with more than one piece of evidence. Evaluation criteria or standards are more inflexible; the

evidence is stronger and more numerous, and the value judgment is more consequential and final. Evaluation also examines the educational program in which the young children are learning. The differences between observation, assessment, and evaluation are differences of degree. With observation, you as the teacher try to be objective, but acknowledge you have your own filter. Assessment provides criteria or standards upon which you as the teacher judge children's behavior and expressions. Decisions and actions also come into the picture with assessment. Evaluation is assessment taken to another degree where the value judgment is more inflexible, consequential, and final. Evaluations are concrete, far-reaching, and definitive. Evaluations also judge the young children's educational program.

Types of Assessments and Evaluations

When trying to decide how to assess and evaluate children, there are many types of assessments and evaluations from which to choose, including criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments. **Criterion-referenced assessments** are based on some outside objective criteria or standards and compare young children with those criteria or standards. Teachers usually create these criteria based on some information or skill or ability they think the children they are teaching should have mastered. Examples might include a spelling test in first grade or an assessment of gross motor skills or language ability in preschool. An assessment is **norm-referenced** if it compares young children with other typically developing children who are the same age and at the same developmental level. Most norm-referenced assessments are also standardized. **Standardized assessments and tests** have standard and averaged, norm-referenced scores that are derived by giving the assessment or test to a large number of young children who are representative of all young children in the nation.

There are also alternative and performance assessment methods. With **alternative assessments**, students actually create a response or an answer instead of choosing a premade answer or response from a list. Open-ended questions, interviews, and portfolios are examples of alternative assessments. For example, you as a teacher may want to gain an understanding of how well children process emotions. You can observe them on the playground and in the classroom as they process their emotions, or you can give them an interview about processing emotions. You can also create an "emotional processing" portfolio. Introduced in Chapter 4, a portfolio is an example of a student's work, which can include standardized test scores, interview transcripts, pictures, and videos.

With **performance assessment** the children are required to emit some type of "real-world" behavior. Perhaps you will have them write and recite a poem or story, or demonstrate a science experiment. Grading of performance assessments by its nature is a bit subjective and complicated. It is akin to judging a figure skating contest. Figure skating judges make very fine-tuned subjective judgments based on their knowledge, personal tastes, and experiences. However, by creating the judgment criteria beforehand and allowing for flexibility, performance assessment can give the teacher and children a more "real" understanding of the children's abilities.

In terms of evaluation, there are formative and summative evaluations. **Formative evaluations** allow for change in the educational program or more learning and growing by the children evaluated. Midterm grades in elementary school can be seen as formative. **Summative evaluations** are final, with major decisions and actions following. Examples of summative evaluation are final, end-of-the-year grades and state criterion-referenced standards tests upon which grade promotion and funding decisions are sometimes made in high-stakes environments. Evaluations can also be standardized, just as assessments are standardized. Standardized evaluations make use of standardized measurement instruments. However, the capacity for change and flexibility exists no

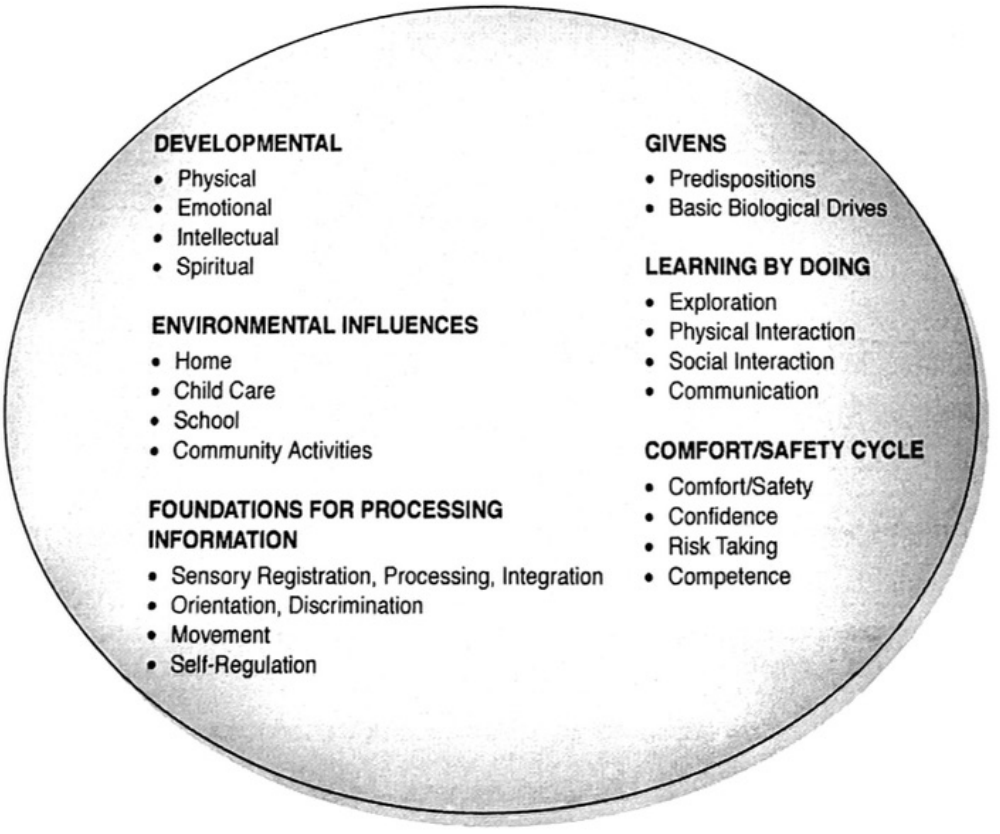
Promoting Optimal Development

The New TeamS Assessment Model

A current trend in assessment is a team of professionals conducting the assessment with input from family members. In 1996, the federal government sponsored such a model of assessment, TeamS, that was to link assessment with intervention (instruction in an educational setting). This new TeamS model also helped to answer questions that teachers and parents had about particular cases of child learning or development that were complicated (Westby, Dominguez, & Oetter, 1996). This new TeamS model is for children from birth to age 6 years and requires attention to the neurological (relating to the brain and nervous system) underpinnings of performance, assessments carried out in natural/realistic environments, consideration of the whole child, and a team of professionals who share ideas, write collaboratively, and provide services. The team of professionals includes psychologists and medical doctors. There is an observational framework that guides the team (see Figure 6.5).

Using this type of framework and approach can aid in uncovering the supportive factors and risks that impact a child's development. This type of approach and model can assist you as a teacher as you strive to utilize observations, assessments, and evaluations to promote optimal development in the children you teach.

Figure 6.5 The Child Quality of Life Membership: Personal Sense of Competence



Source: Adapted from Westby (1996).

matter what type of assessment or evaluation is utilized. As a teacher of young children, you may find it helpful to think of every evaluation as formative and to allow for change as you and the child grow and learn after it is administered.

Young children are assessed and evaluated in many domains of their development, and some assessments and evaluations cover multiple domains. Young children are assessed and evaluated in the physical, cognitive, linguistic, social/emotional, mathematical, health/wellness, and other domains. Some assessments and evaluations cover multiple domains (see Table 6.2).

The assessments in Table 6.2 cover multiple domains and have more than a single score. Some of the domains covered are socioemotional development, self-help skills, and even academic areas such as spelling and mathematics. Some assessments exist, however, that only cover one domain or academic area (see Table 6.3).

A variety of evidence and tools can be used to observe, assess, and evaluate. In addition to taking notes, teachers can collect pictures, writing samples, and video footage with consent.

The previous set of assessments and tests (Table 6.3) measure a single domain/area of child development. Most often these single tests measure an entity called **intelligence**. Intelligence is one's ability to reason and solve problems cognitively. Any subscales in the previous set of assessments are a limited number of items that measure the same ability or skill or domain in relation to an assessment of some larger or overarching domain.

The assessments and evaluations above are some of the most common ones used that are seen as valid for middle-class European Americans (Whites). However, their validity for ethnic minorities has been questioned for many decades (Boone & Adesso, 1974; McCullough, 1992), even though ethnic minorities are becoming more familiar with and scoring better on these tests in general (Butler-Omololu, Doster, & Lahey, 1983). Nevertheless, other tests and testing systems have been created to be more culture-specific or culture-fair. Even the NAEYC (2009b) recognizes the importance of this concern as it continues into this decade.

Some Assessments and Evaluations for Ethnic Minorities

The second edition of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2008) is known to be culture-fair. The KABC can be utilized with children aged 3 to 8 years and beyond. This test was normed with children from various ethnic groups, and only slight differences in scores were found between them. This may be because verbal responses and cultural content are minimized with this test and because there are two models of interpretation that can be used. The first model of interpretation includes culturally sensitive scoring of verbal responses, and the second model excludes verbal ability altogether. This is a test of cognitive ability or intelligence with five scales: simultaneous intelligence, sequential intelligence, planning skill, learning skill, and knowledge.

There is also the Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) that was developed by Feuerstein (1980) in Jerusalem. The LPAD is another viable assessment tool for minorities. A dynamic assessment that highlights a young child's learning potential, it is considered dynamic because of its flexibility in scoring. It also points out possible intervention methods that may be necessary. For instance, if a child has multiple or severe developmental delays, then intervention may be necessary.

Table 6.2 Common Assessments and Evaluations With Multiple Domains

NAME	COVERAGE	ADMINISTRATION
Denver II (Frankenburg & Dodd, 1990)	Screening test that covers self-help skills, social development, and language development, as well as fine and gross motor skills	Administered to children from infancy to 6 years and has the reputation of being easy to use and quick
DIAL III (Diagnostic Indicators for the Assessment of Learning) (Mardell-Czudnowski & Goldenberg, 1998)	Assesses motor, cognitive, and language areas	Easy and quick to administer and is usually used to screen young children aged 2 to 6 years
Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) (Bricker & Squires, 1999)	Assesses language, fine and gross motor skills, and social/emotional development	Administered by parents or caregivers and is fast to complete—mostly used to uncover delays in development that children aged 4 months to 5 years may have
Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development–Revised (Brigance, 1991)	Assesses self-help skills, fine and gross motor skills, language skills, and cognitive skills	Teachers can administer the Brigance to children from birth to 7 years of age with some training, or a psychologist or counselor can administer the Brigance
McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities (McCarthy, 1983)	Assesses cognitive, verbal, and quantitative reasoning ability; perceptual/performance problem-solving ability; memory; and motor development	Utilized with children aged 30 months to 8 years of age—aids in the identification of children with slight disabilities
HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) (HighScope, 2003)	Assessments of seven developmental domains (initiative, creativity, social skills, language skills, mathematics, musical aptitude, and movement)	Viewed as an alternative assessment method—assesses children 30 months to 6 years of age and requires you as a teacher to take extensive notes
Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI-2) (Newborg, 2003)	Covers five areas of child development (social/emotional domain, adaptive/self-care domain, motor domain, communication, and cognition)	Administered by a team of professionals to children from birth to age 8 years
Peabody Individual Achievement Test–Revised (PAIT-R) (Markwardt, 2008)	Assesses academic achievement in six content areas (general information, reading recognition, reading comprehension, mathematics, spelling, and written expression)	Normative scores for this assessment were recently updated for children in kindergarten through third grade and beyond

The SOMPA is a testing system that is fully named the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment. It is normed separately for Black, White, and Hispanic children aged 5 to 11 years. What is unique about this assessment is that it includes a parent interview. This system of standardized tests must be interpreted by trained professionals. It measures a young child's ability in cognition, sensorimotor skills, and adaptive behavior. It has been shown to be helpful in placing young children in special education and gifted education classes (Talley, 1979).

The last test to be discussed is the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity (Williams, 1972). This is a culture-specific, vocabulary-type intelligence test. Black children usually score higher on it than White children or children from other ethnic/racial groups, because it is based on their

Table 6.3 Common Assessments of Single Domains

NAME	COVERAGE	ADMINISTRATION
Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) (Wechsler, 2002)	Verbal IQ, a performance IQ, and the full-scale IQ	Professional counselor or psychologist must administer and interpret this test; administered to children aged 30 months to 7 years and 3 months
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition (WISC–IV) (Wechsler, 2003)	Test has four composite indices and a full-scale IQ score—four composite indices are verbal comprehension, perceptual reasoning, processing speed, and working memory	Used with children aged 6 years to 8 years and beyond by a trained professional
Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales for Early Childhood (Roid, 2003)	Assesses five domains of cognitive intelligence—fluid reasoning (flexible problem solving), knowledge, quantitative reasoning, visual-spatial processing, and working memory (only computes a single IQ score)	Administered by a trained professional to children aged 24 months to 7 years and 3 months
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT–4) (Dunn & Dunn, 2004)	Focuses on vocabulary	Quick to administer and can identify certain developmental delays and disabilities—used with young children aged 30 months to 8 years and beyond

Source: Hudson, R. F., Lane, H. B., & Pullen, P. C. (2005). Reading fluency assessment and instruction: What, why, and how? *Reading Teacher*, *58*(8), 706. Published with permission by Wiley.

culture and linguistic style. This test was developed to ameliorate environmental differences and test bias against Black children on other intelligence tests (Boone & Adesso, 1974). Since it is a culture-specific test, it is not recommended for children of other cultures.

The tests and assessments mentioned above are some of the most common that are marketed and utilized with young children today. There exist other assessments and evaluations and tests that are still being developed and researched or are used mostly in research settings. These newly created and developing assessments measure various areas of child development, academic achievement, and intelligence as well. Some of these are mentioned briefly in the next section.

Current Research Assessments and Evaluations

Researchers who work with young children assess children's development much like teachers of young children do. These researchers have utilized some assessment methods and instruments that teachers may not consider using. However, well-informed teachers may want to use them to supplement assessments they may already be using. These assessments measure development in areas such as social skills/friendships, cognitive development, competence and social acceptance, movement, literacy, and mathematics. Since they are newer and under development, the criteria for and evidence of these assessments are different than those for some of the more traditional assessments.

In the area of social development, teachers and researchers often use peer assessment in research settings with preschool and early elementary children (Yugar & Shapiro, 1996, 2001). These ratings are used to assess social skills and friendships. In general, these assessments ask peers to nominate, rate, and answer questions about networking concerning other young children/peers in

Professionalism & Policy

Curriculum-Based Assessments

Should the use of curriculum-based assessments be strongly advocated as a recommended practice in early childhood and early elementary settings? Assessment researchers Neisworth and Bagnato (2000) define curriculum-based assessments as "a form of criterion-referenced measurement wherein curricular objectives act as the criteria for identification of instructional targets and for the assessment of status and progress" (p. 20).

Curriculum-based assessments are often nonstandardized, but many more standardized and commercial ones are becoming available (Pretti-Frontczak, Kowalski, & Brown, 2002). These types of assessments often are child-centered and activity-centered, which means they focus on the child and the actual curricular activities the child completes as part of the learning experience. They allow for teaching that is individualized and based upon children's strengths, interests, and emerging skills (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). However, these types of assessments are not used as often as is optimal (Pretti-Frontczak et al., 2002) because they are usually not standardized, and that makes comparison of children harder. However, some still advocate that these types of assessments should be developed more by researchers and teachers in the early childhood field and that their use should be more strongly encouraged by policy advocates.

The social skill level of young children can be seen through naturalistic observation.

their classes. These types of assessments do not always match with teacher or parent ratings of young children's social skills or friendships. These ratings can, however, be stable and reliable when quality of the relationship is taken into account. Therefore, peer assessments can be useful to teachers in that they give a more multidimensional picture of social development in young children.

Naturalistic observation is one of the best methods for measuring social skills (Merrell, 2001), and occurs when young children are observed without manipulation in their naturally occurring daily routine. The PLAY naturalistic observation system measures social (and cognitive) competence in preschool children (Farmer-Dougan & Kaszuba, 1999). It is shown to be both **reliable** and **valid**. It is reliable because the assessments that different teachers and researchers give are in agreement. It is valid because it correlates well with other standard measures such as the Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) (Harrington, 1985). The BDI has been a long-standing and recognized assessment. Since the PLAY assessment is based on naturalistic observation, it promotes an ease of translating the findings into learning and educational activities and strategies for young children.

It should be noted that the PLAY observational assessment also measures general cognitive competence (Farmer-Dougan & Kaszuba, 1999). Utilizing the observational assessment in this manner is also reliable and valid. This represents another possible assessment you can use to measure cognition in the young children you teach to get a broader picture of their abilities.

BEST Practices Naturalistic Observation When Assessing Social Skills

Naturalistic observation is one of the best methods for measuring social skills. Naturalistic types of observation are especially needed for later stages of screening and identification (Merrell, 2001). In other words, screening young children and identifying the children's educational needs after the preschool years and during the early elementary school years is critical. We have presented a specific method that is reliable and valid for measuring social competence in children. However, there are some potential issues with observational assessments that can be overcome with sensitive and objective observation. Some of these issues and possible solutions are listed in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Some Potential Threats to the Validity of Behavioral Observations, and Possible Solutions to These Threats

PROBLEM	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES	POSSIBLE SOLUTION
Poorly defined observational domains	Observational recording system is either too cumbersome or too vague.	Carefully define and select behaviors to be observed based on assessment problem and intervention goals.
Unreliability of observers	Observers drift from original definitions; interrater reliability decreases.	Provide high quality initial training; conduct periodic reliability checks and retraining.
Lack of social comparison data	Interpretations of behavior are not based on a normative perspective; deviancy may be under- or overestimated.	Include typical or randomly selected participants in the same setting for behavioral comparison.
Observer reactivity	Participant behavior is influenced by the presence of the observer.	Select and participate in observational settings in a discrete, unobtrusive manner.
Situational specificity of behavior	Interpretations of observational data may not represent the larger picture.	Conduct observations in multiple settings; do not overgeneralize from limited data.
Inappropriate recording techniques	Behaviors are not adequately depicted; inappropriate conclusions are reached.	Select recording systems to carefully match the behavioral domain.
Biased expectations of the observer	Borderline behaviors may be systematically coded in a biased manner.	Resist pressure to confirm expectations of persons with vested interest; remain scrupulously objective in coding behavior.

Source: Adapted from Merrel, K. W. (2001). *Assessment of children's social skills: Recent developments, best practices, and new directions.* Pg. 8. Copyright © 1999 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

There exists another measure of competence and social acceptance of young children in the research literature, namely the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children (PSPCSAYC) (Harter & Pike, 1984). This scale is from the child's point of view and is designated for children aged 4 to 7 years. This scale utilizes a series of pictures and questions and purports to "interview" the children. It is generally well accepted in the literature, but not for assessing low-income, urban children (Fantuzzo, McDermott, Manz, Hampton, & Burdick, 1996), for whom the scores of this assessment are not reliable and valid.

There also exists an assessment titled the Movement General Outcome Measurement for infants and toddlers from birth to age 3 years (Greenwood, Luze, Cline, Kuntz, & Leitschuh, 2002). This measure, used mostly by researchers, is important because it relates to physical, social/emotional, and cognitive development. It only takes 6 minutes to administer and measures movement skills and growth in correspondence with age. Teachers of young children could use this measure to supplement other assessments of infants and toddlers because it is reliable and valid (Greenwood et al., 2002).

Other research assessments are available. For instance, researchers have developed a rubric as a performance-based assessment of student writing in early elementary grades (second and beyond) (Novak, Herman, & Gearhart, 1996). **Rubrics** are scaled assessments that judge whether students can perform a certain task. This rubric is somewhat reliable and valid but still needs some development. However, the rubric is highly usable by teachers of young children. As the rubric is used more and developed further, it may be suitable for widespread, standardized assessment.

In addition, reading fluency has been shown to be an important literacy skill (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). The main reason reading fluency is important is its relationship to reading comprehension. However, it is not usually contained in traditional standardized tests and assessments of young children. Table 6.5 shows five assessments that are recognized in the research literature on reading fluency. Some are standardized, and some are more observational in nature.

Measuring number sense in young children aids teachers in assessing early mathematical understanding (Clarke & Shinn, 2004). There exist four experimental research measures that are currently reliable and valid. These four measures are also sensitive enough to identify children who may be at risk in the area of later mathematics achievement. These four experimental measures are simple and are usually included in the general mathematics curriculum in first grade. The measures are oral counting, number identifying, quantity discriminating, and missing number naming. These task measures are easily defined with the exception of quantity discriminating. The quantity discriminating measure task consists of the first graders deciding which number is bigger based on visually shown representations of numbers—for instance, asking a child what number is bigger: a visually represented display of 3 or a visually represented display of 10.

The research and current methods of assessment presented here are not meant to be exhaustive. There are many more assessments in the research and experimental literature that teachers of young children may want to explore to gain a fuller, richer picture of the development, skills, and abilities of the children in their classrooms. The methods mentioned here just reveal the possibilities for other reliable and valid assessment options that exist for the teachers of young children.

How to Use Effective Assessment to Improve Teaching

Much is said currently about intentional teaching (Epstein, 2009; Jeske, 2010; NAEYC, 2009b). Mentioned in the first section of this textbook (see Chapter 1), intentional teaching is helping children learn through both child-centered and adult-centered interactions. The NAEYC (2009b) states that intentional teachers purposefully and thoughtfully choose when to be child-centered or adult-centered. In fact, intentional teachers are purposeful and thoughtful in all decisions (Epstein, 2009; Jeske, 2010; NAEYC, 2009b). In relation to assessment, intentional teachers use formative

Table 6.5 Reading Fluency Assessments

ASSESSMENT	PUBLISHER	DESCRIPTION
AIMSweb Standard Reading Assessment Passages (RAPS)	Edformation	AIMSweb RAPS provide teachers with passages for quick but accurate formative assessment of students' oral reading fluency. These assessments are a curriculum-based measurement (CBM) system that is intended to assist teachers in making instructional decisions and monitoring student progress. RAPS have been field-tested and validated. The AIMS web system includes a web-based software management system for data collection and reporting.
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	University of Oregon and Sopris West	DIBELS contains a subtest of Oral Reading Fluency and Retail Fluency for students in the first through third grades. The Oral Reading Fluency is standardized and individually administrated. Students read a passage aloud for one minute. The number of correct words per minute. Students read a passage aloud for one minute to provide the oral reading fluency rate. The Retail Fluency is a measure of comprehension that accompanies the Oral Reading Fluency assessment.
Gray Oral Reading Test, Fourth Edition (GOR–4)	PRO-ED	The GORT–4 is a norm-referenced measure of oral reading performance. Skills assessed include rate, accuracy, fluency (rate and accuracy combined), comprehension, and overall reading ability (rate, accuracy, and comprehension combined)
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Fluency Scale	National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)	The NAEP Fluency Scale provides a descriptive guide for oral reading performance based on the student's "naturalness" of reading. The student's performance is rated on a 4-point scale, with emphasis placed on phrasing of words, adherence of syntax, and expressiveness. Accuracy and rate are measured and determined by calculating the correct words read per minute.
Reading Fluency Monitor by Read Naturally	Read Naturally	The Reading Fluency Monitor is an assessment instrument that allows teachers to monitor students' progress. Fall, winter, and spring administrations are recommended. Grade-level passages are available for Grades 1–8, as well as a software program for reporting and record keeping.

Source: Hudson, R. F., Lane, H. B., & Pullen, P. C. (2005). Reading fluency assessment and instruction: What, why, and how? *Reading Teacher*, 58(8), Pg. 706. Published with permission by Wiley.

assessment and other informal assessments to guide their teaching of young children. The results of these formative and informal assessments allow the teachers to know where the children may have misunderstood or where the children have some delays. Then the teachers can make informed, intentional lesson plans to enhance the learning of the children they are teaching.

Additionally, Epstein (2009) suggests that certain skills are better taught as child-centered and certain skills are better taught as adult-centered. For instance, with language development, conversational skills are learned better if children guide their own learning. However, vocabulary

is learned better with adults guiding the children's learning (Epstein, 2009). A professional teacher will assess these skills and then implement lessons and activities appropriately to teach these skills. The assessment allows the teacher to know where the child is developmentally and which method to take in teaching the skill, whether child-centered or adult-centered.

Using assessment intentionally to subsequently teach a young child is also supported by the NAEYC (2009b). The NAEYC supports teachers purposefully adapting and planning curriculum based on careful observation and documentation as a manner of improving teaching. Indeed, assessment is seen as an integral part of intentional and effective teaching by many in the field of early childhood education.

WHAT ARE SOME ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION CONCERNS?

Throughout this chapter, the authors have relayed to the reader the importance of observing and assessing as objectively and sensitively as possible. It is important to acknowledge that we all have an observational filter that influences our judgments and assessments of young children. Our filters are a major concern related to all categories of observation and assessment that are mentioned and discussed in this section of the chapter. The concerns to be discussed are psychometrics (statistics), communicating with parents, accountability, test bias, age at assessment, and environmental assessment. All of these concerns are critical considerations when making and utilizing observation and assessment techniques with young children.

Psychometrics

Statistical concerns about observation, assessment, and evaluation have been mentioned throughout this chapter. Concerns such as reliability and validity have been mentioned and defined briefly in relation to naturalistic observation. Those issues are mentioned again and expanded upon here.

Reliability concerns the issue of whether or not a measure computes the same score again and again. For example, if a young child completes a rating scale on Tuesday at 9 a.m., will the score be statistically the same when the child takes the same test on Friday at 1 p.m.? There is also the issue of **inter-rater reliability**, which refers to whether or not different people utilizing a certain measure get the same score. Inter-rater reliability is really important when using teacher-devised tests or more performance-based tests, such as judgments of oral presentations, reflective journal writing, or portfolios. These types of tests (evaluation methods) are not standardized or normed on large populations of young children. Performance-based tests, in particular, are based considerably on the judgments or values of individual scorers/graders. Therefore, establishing inter-rater reliability is quite necessary. Rubrics help with inter-rater reliability of qualitative or performance-based assessments. Rubrics are scoring/grading frameworks that relay criteria and standards for scoring or grading work and behavior.

Validity is another psychometric issue/concern when conducting observations, assessments, and evaluations. Validity is a determination of whether or not a test measures the entity it purports to measure. In other words, does an assessment of socioemotional development measure that dimension, or does it measure some other dimension such as cognitive development or science knowledge? There are varying types of validity, just as there are varying types of reliability such as general reliability and inter-rater reliability. There is **face validity**, which determines whether or not an assessment looks like it measures what it purports to measure. There is also **content validity**, which establishes whether or not the material on the assessment covers and includes the appropriate information for the domain or developmental area it purports to cover. **Construct validity** is another type of validity that concerns whether or not the items or questions on different sections of

an assessment stay together statistically. For instance, an assessment of mathematical and scientific knowledge should have two statistical constructs. The mathematical items should stay together statistically, and the science items should stay together statistically. The items should correlate. The last type of validity to be discussed is **concurrent validity**. This type of validity concerns whether or not two assessments of the same content correlate with each other and is important when creating a new measure or assessment. It is important to gain concurrent validity with an already established measure or assessment.

As with reliability, validity is a special concern with qualitative or performance-type assessments. Face validity and content validity are easier to establish than construct or concurrent validity with performance-based assessment. This is because with performance-based assessment, young children are actually acting and behaving in direct relation to the content. For instance, assessing a young child's athletic ability by how well the child performs has face and content validity. It is important to note that standardized assessments may sometimes have a considerable amount of construct and concurrent validity, but less face or content validity. This is because with standardized assessments, children are usually sitting and writing down answers. In this instance, assessing a young child's athletic ability with a paper-and-pencil test has great construct and concurrent validity, but less face or content validity.

It is very important that the observations, assessments, and evaluations that you as a teacher utilize be both reliable and valid. These measures have a great impact on the young children you teach. They also impact how you communicate with and relate to parents, as well as the accountability standards on which you may be judged.

Communicating With Parents and Family

At some point, you as a teacher will find it necessary to talk with parents or other family members about the growth and development of the young children that you teach. Perhaps a child is developing typically, or maybe a child is below or above the average/norm expectations. Whatever you are communicating to the parents, it is important that you know very well both the child and the assessments used; that you collect a variety of assessments, which are qualitative/nonstandardized and quantitative/standardized over time; and that you be sensitive and respectful in your communications. One way of aiding in this communication process is to videotape children's behavior and development. Be sure to get the parents' permission and to conduct the videotaping objectively, sensitively, and respectfully (Hundt, 2002). An example of this is sharing videotapes of children's behavior with parents.

A video of a child's behavior can capture the child's ability and developmental level (Hundt, 2002). It is also useful for capturing social/emotional expressions and interactions. Videos take place in a given context that is real, play-based, and performance-like. Usually, videos of this type are not conducted in a controlled laboratory. Moreover, videos can aid in your communication with parents during parent-teacher conferences and increase parent communication in general (Hundt, 2002). The videos can directly illustrate points about children's behavior or development.

Here are some tips, from Hundt (2002) and the authors of this textbook, to help you as a teacher when you share videos with parents and family members as a communication tool:

- Establish that the video is one piece of evidence in the child's portfolio.
- Communicate sensitively with parents the objectives of the videotaping.
- Give the parents a context when sharing the video.
- Realize that videotaping is time-consuming.
- Allow parents to videotape their child at home and share these recordings with you.
- Allow parents to communicate their perspectives and viewpoints to you.

With sensitivity and planning, sharing with a family about a child's development can be a positive experience.

Communicating with parents and other family members about young children's development and assessment results takes sensitivity, patience, and understanding. You as a professional teacher have to consider culture, language, special needs, your own filter, and other concerns. It is important to respect the needs, fears, and positions of the children's family members.

There are a number of other ways to improve communication with parents such as newsletters, photographs, the judicious use of e-mail, parent boards and councils, and parent surveys. All of these methods can, in some ways, be used to communicate assessment and evaluation information. You as a teacher may also be prepared with suggestions for activities and strategies for the parents and family members to interact with the child at home. It is important to remember that communication is a two-way street. It is also important to remember to be objective, sensitive, and respectful. Realize, too, that parents and families have their own set of experiences, expectations, philosophies, and standards just as you as the teacher do. For example, you may think that celebrating a child's birthday with cupcakes is a good thing. The families of the children you teach may not agree with celebrating birthdays at all, or they may want healthier food served at the celebration. Observing and assessing young children from these families during a birthday celebration at the school may not be optimal.

Accountability and High-Stakes Testing

Not only do you as the teacher have to communicate with parents; you must also communicate the results of your assessments and evaluations to other stakeholders and interested parties, such as politicians, school board members, and taxpayers. You will be held accountable for the progress, learning, and development demonstrated by the children you teach. There are standards that you as a teacher and the children you teach have to meet. Most states have or are in the process of developing early learning foundations for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Most states have standards for the early elementary grades up to third grade and beyond.

This level of responsibility may seem to be a lot of pressure to put on you as a teacher and the children you teach. However, there are positives to assessment and accountability. When assessment is done correctly, it can be an aid in improving instructional practices and strategies. Assessment and accountability can be utilized to make sure that all children are treated fairly despite their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or special need. Assessment and accountability can illustrate the wonderful tremendous work that you as a teacher of young children have accomplished. The opening vignette illustrates just such an example of how assessment can aid teaching.

In order to ensure that observations, assessments, and evaluations are used appropriately, you as a teacher of young children must become knowledgeable about the assessments you utilize. You must learn how to communicate the results of assessments to all stakeholders. Most important, you must conduct your assessments objectively and sensitively. Remember that the future of the children you teach, the families you serve, and your own career path depend on the results of your teaching as assessed by observations, assessments, and evaluations.

Test Bias

Observations, assessments, and evaluations can be biased whether they are standardized or not. Even qualitative and performance-based assessments can be biased because we observe from our filter of experience, culture, and philosophy. The cultural bias of standardized tests is well

Consider This Assessing the Development of Infants

Melinda, a concerned, loving grandparent, has a grandson who was born prematurely. At birth, he had a low weight, could not eat without assistance, and could not regulate his body temperature. When it was recommended that her infant grandson be assessed, Melinda thought that prospect was ridiculous. She wondered what a premature infant could demonstrate. But now she sees that the professional making the recommendation wanted to help her grandson reach his full potential. The professional wanted her grandson to "be all that he can be." Testing is part of that process, and after the assessment Melinda and her daughter knew what to do to help further his development.

How do you as an early childhood professional feel about assessing infants? Why do you think some family members and early childhood professionals do not agree with assessing young infants?

documented (Santos, 2004). It is hard to make a test that is culture-free (Wortham, 2005), but some tests are more culture-fair. These tests have been mentioned previously in this chapter.

There are several things that teachers can do to minimize the effects that test bias has on students' performance records. Allowing multiple assessments of various types to go into a child's portfolio will help ameliorate test bias. Allowing parents to advocate for their child and have some input into the testing process will also help ameliorate test bias. The authors suggest that there are two important considerations to take into account when assessing young children: (1) Try to be as objective and sensitive as possible, and (2) try to treat each assessment as a formative one (not a summative one) that informs as to how to help a young child grow and develop.

Age at Assessment

At what age should we begin assessing young children? That is another question of concern with observations, assessments, and evaluations. There exist assessments of children as infants, and some of these assessments are mentioned in this text. As mentioned before, California is in the process of creating early learning foundations for infants. Assessment of early elementary-aged children is quite routine in most states, counties, and school districts. The key thing to remember is that in the early years, development sometimes occurs slowly and sometimes occurs rapidly and in spurts; additionally, there is a lot of individual variation in the developmental rates of young children (NAEYC, 2009b). Utilize assessments that are as developmentally appropriate as possible. Also, remember that development is quite fluid and variable in young children.

The Environment

The last concern to be addressed is the environment. Just as a child's age should be considered when conducting observation, assessment, and evaluation and using its results, the environment should also be considered. The child may behave differently in separate environments, such as home and school or home and educational center. The child may behave differently depending on the people in his or her environment at that time. Therefore, it is important to consider the child's environment. Thelma Harms, a well-known and celebrated early childhood professional, and her colleagues have developed some standardized observation assessments that measure the child's care and educational environment. These assessments/scales measure infant and toddler environments, early childhood environments, school-age environments (mostly for after-school care environments), and family child care environments. These assessments also gather information about special needs and

diversity. There are also two standardized assessments by Bradley and Caldwell (1977, 1979) that measure the home environment: one for infants and toddlers, and another for early childhood/preschool-aged children. Recent research shows that these assessments can also be used to measure the environment of family child care homes (Bradley, Caldwell, & Corwyn, 2003). Conducting these assessments can aid in understanding and communicating with parents and families. For example, scores on environmental assessments might uncover that a young child acts differently at school than at home. With this information, the child's family and teacher can cooperate to aid the child by making the two environments more similar and suitable for promoting optimal development. Using all of these environmental instruments to assess the environment at home and at school can give you as a teacher important insight into why a young child in your care may be developing or behaving in a certain manner.

Summary

Professional and knowledgeable teachers can learn so much just by observing the children they are teaching. They can come to understand where the children are in each developmental domain. They can also understand what skills they have taught well and what skills still need more practice. Acute observation is important because in today's educational environment both formative assessment and summative assessment are unavoidable. All quality assessments are based on good observations.

Professional assessment may be detailed, but if carried out meticulously and carefully, it can help you as a teacher to complete your duties. Assessment can help you to further the development of the children you teach. It can also help you to gain support and validation for your efforts. The key to assessment is carrying it out sensitively and objectively and using the right type of assessment for your purpose. With patience and some work, assessment can actually become a friend to the professional early childhood educator.

Key Terms

Alternative assessments 149
Assessment 142
Checklist 146
Concurrent validity 159
Construct validity 158
Content validity 158
Criterion-referenced assessments 149
Duration record 146
Evaluation 142
Event sampling 144
Face validity 158
Formal observations 143
Formative evaluations 149
Frequency count 146
Informal observations 143
Intelligence 151
Inter-rater reliability 158
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Naturalistic observation 154
Norm-referenced 149
Objective 142
Observation 142
Performance assessment 149
Rating scale 147
Reflective journal or diary 143
Reliable 154
Rubrics 156
Standardized assessments and tests 149
Summative evaluations 149
Time sampling 144
Valid 154
Validity 158

Reflection, Application, and Analysis Questions

1. Name and describe three positives to assessment in terms of how it can aid you as a teacher when working with young children and their families.
2. Early childhood educators will use formative assessment the most, but can you think of a situation when it would be wise to use summative assessment? Name and describe the situation, and then delineate three reasons why this choice would be made.
3. Name and describe three positives about normative standardized assessments.

4. Create a rubric that you as a teacher could use to assess a child's performance in language production.
5. Should ethnic minorities be assessed with the typical and usual assessments, or should there be alternative assessments for them? Please state your beliefs, and then support your beliefs with three fully described reasons.

Extension Activities

1. Go to a place that has lots of children such as a mall, a playground, a park, or a zoo. Pick a place where you can see plenty of children. Then try to observe one or two children intently and take notes. Try applying what you have learned from this textbook so far to what you see the children doing. Record the terms and concepts from this textbook in your journal, by describing them in action from the children's behavior. Watch the children for an hour or two, and apply all of the terms that you see emerge from the children's actions.
2. Interview a preschool or early elementary school teacher in your local neighborhood by asking five basic questions. Ask this teacher how he or she assesses the children he or she teaches. Then ask the teacher how he or she uses those assessments and what are the results of those assessments. Then ask the teacher how the school, school district, and public use those assessments and how that impacts his or her classroom and the children he or she teaches. The teacher's answers to these five questions will be illuminating to you as you learn more about early childhood education.

Additional Readings

Assessing young children is an important task. A teacher has to be prepared and objective. These additional readings can assist teachers as they carry out this duty.

Billman, J., & Sherman, J. (2003). *Observation and participation in early childhood settings.* New York: Merrill.
This book gives general information about different types of assessment and observation methods. It also teaches how to interact with children. Activities are included in each chapter.

Witte, R. H. (2012). *Classroom assessment for teachers.* New York: McGraw-Hill.
This book provides up-to-date information about classroom assessment. It is based on the inquiry-oriented approach and demonstrates the relationship between assessment and teaching. It also discusses contemporary issues in assessment.

Wortham, S. C. (2012). *Tests and measurements in early childhood education* (6th ed.). New York: Merrill.
The sixth edition of this book provides general information about assessment in young children. It also discusses how to assess, and presents principles for identifying quality assessments in, young children.

On the Web

American Institutes for Research - *http://www.learningpt.org/*
This website created and monitored by the American Institutes for Research contains evidence-based information about the process of assessing and assessments, and is good for teachers and parents.

Council of Chief State School Officers - *www.ccsso.org*
The Council of Chief State School Officers website explains who the organization is and what it does. Information about state and some federal assessment systems is available.

National Association of School Psychologists - *www.nasponline.org*
This is the official website of the National Association of School Psychologists, which publishes a number of assessments used in schools around the country. This site is also good for teachers and parents.

Student Study Site

Visit **www.sagepub.com/gordonbiddle** to access several study tools including eFlashcards, web quizzes, links to SAGE journal articles, web resources, video resources, lesson plan templates, and more.

Lesson Plan:

"Do I Know Who I Am?"

Subject:

General realization you are separate from others and are your own person.

Focus:

Recognizing oneself in the mirror.

Overview:

Around 15 to 21 months of age, children begin to recognize themselves in the mirror. This new awareness comes about because of cognitive advances. This new awareness also marks basic observation and evaluative skills.

Purpose:

To help infants/toddlers become aware of themselves in the mirror. This represents cognitive and evaluative advances in addition to social and emotional advances.

Objectives:

1. Assist with obtaining self-recognition.
2. Assist with obtaining general self-awareness.
3. Advance cognitive development and, in turn, social and emotional development.
4. Advance basic observation and evaluative skills.

Resource Materials:

- Several mirrors.
- Red lipstick.
- A visually interesting hat.

Activities and Procedures:

1. Stand the mirrors on the floor at the child's eye level in several strategic places.
2. When the child notices a mirror, put some lipstick on the child's nose.
3. See if the child touches his or her nose or the nose in the mirror.
4. Let the child explore and experience the situation, giving the child time to notice the lipstick on the mirror image.
5. Verbally ask the child questions such as "Who is that?" and "Where is that red nose?"
6. If the child still doesn't seem to notice anything, repeat the same steps with the visually interesting hat.

Tying It All Together:

This is a fun and interesting activity for both the child and the teacher. With infants/toddlers who don't react to their mirror image, you may want to repeat the activity after a few weeks. Eventually, the child's development combined with the repeated experience will facilitate skill development. Although elements of emotional and social development are present in this activity, basic observation and evaluation skills are also present. Remember that all the domains of children's development are interrelated, especially at this young age.

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Lesson Plan:

"Did I Count That Right?"

Early Childhood
(3 to 5 yrs)

Subject:

Basic counting ability and evaluation.

Focus:

Checking to see if you have counted the objects correctly.

Overview:

With the emergence of one-to-one correspondence, young children can count small numbers of objects accurately.

Purpose:

To help young children remember to check the accuracy of their counting by simply counting the objects again.

Objectives:

1. To learn, practice, and reinforce basic counting skills.
2. To learn to be careful when counting and to check one's accuracy.
3. To develop basic observation and evaluation skills by simply checking counting accuracy.

Resource Materials:

- A set of three to five manipulatives such as LEGO bricks, checkers, or dominoes.

Activities and Procedures:

1. Place the set of manipulatives in front of the preschooler.
2. Ask the child how many there are.
3. If the child dos not automatically count them by pointing to each one, ask the child to count them.
4. If the child still does not count them by pointing to each one, ask the child to count and point to each one while counting.
5. Then ask the child if the number is correct.
6. Then ask the child to recount them being sure to point to each one while counting.
7. Then ask the child if he or she is sure the number is correct.

Tying It All Together:

Most preschoolers can count at least three objects, and some can count five or more. The skill to emphasize in this lesson is checking to see if the counting is accurate. This is a basic observation, assessment, and evaluation skill that preschoolers can develop.

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Early Elementary
(5 to 8 yrs)

Lesson Plan:

Peer Assessment of Spelling Quizzes

Subject:

Spelling, language arts.

Focus:

Obtaining an understanding of assessment processes through peer assessment.

Overview:

Being able to observe, assess, and evaluate is a good skill set to develop. In the right classroom environment with positive and supportive relationships among peers, children can begin to develop these skills in the context of language arts.

Purpose:

To help children develop observation, assessment, and evaluation skills.

Objectives:

1. To help young children create a positive and supportive environment among peers.
2. To develop observation, assessment, and evaluation skills.
3. To increase spelling accuracy.

Resource Materials:

- A spelling list from the current unit of study.
- Written and verbal models of the current word list spelled accurately.
- A positive and supportive classroom environment.

Activities and Procedures:

1. Complete the spelling test as normal, but change the assessment process.
2. Have the children grade each other's spelling tests.
3. The children must be prepared to know that this type of assessment is coming.
4. The children must be given a rubric or some guidelines for assessing the spelling test.
5. Be sure the children understand the rubric or guidelines before grading each other.
6. Check the accuracy of the children's assessment before recording the final grades.

Tying It All Together:

Peer assessment is a wonderful experience for students if completed in a positive and supportive classroom. This experience will no doubt develop the students' observation, assessment, and evaluation skills. However, this experience will enhance their social and emotional development as well.

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