



School Readiness and the Assessment of Children with Disabilities

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OSEP Reporting Requirements: the Outcomes



- Positive social emotional skills (including positive social relationships)
- Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication [and early literacy])
- Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs



OSEP Reporting Categories



Percentage of children who:

- a. Did not improve functioning
- b. Improved functioning, but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers
- c. Improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it
- d. Improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers
- e. Maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers

3 outcomes x 5 "measures" = 15 numbers

The wrong question



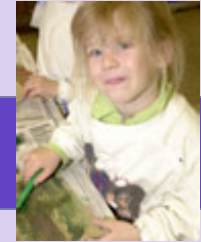
What is the best assessment to use
with children with disabilities?

Starting point



- Good EC assessment is good EC assessment
- Principles that apply to typically developing children apply to children with disabilities
 - See NAEYC position statement
 - <http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/cape>

Considerations Related to Assessment Selection



- Purpose
- Type of assessment
- Some key concepts
 - Construct irrelevant variance
 - Universal design/accommodations
 - Floor effects
 - Sensitivity





EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT

WHY, WHAT, AND HOW



Children
with special
needs:
Pages 260-280

Purposes from NAS report



- Determining the level of an individual child's functioning
 - Screening, diagnostic testing, readiness determination
- Guiding intervention and instruction
- Evaluation
 - Program effectiveness, program impact, social benchmarking
- Research

Common Purposes for CWD



- Eligibility determination (diagnosis)
- Intervention/instructional planning
- Program evaluation and accountability
- Social benchmarking

Types of assessments



- Standardized, norm-referenced, direct assessment
- Observation-based assessment
 - Criterion referenced or curriculum based
 - Authentic or naturalistic assessment
 - Teacher checklists

Features of standardized assessments



- Child is asked to perform or respond to a series of assessor administered tasks
- Tasks must be administered the same way to all children
- Child may or may not be familiar with the assessor
- Examples: Bayley Scales of Infant Development, PPVT

Features of observation-based assessment



- Multiple ways for child to show mastery of the item or objective
- Assessor is familiar with the child; not a stranger.
- “Authentic” refers to activities that are meaningful to the child and that occur naturally in the child’s life (not contrived).
- Examples: Developmental Continuum (Creative Curriculum), High Scope COR, Work Sampling

Interesting dilemma



- Observation-based assessment widely regarded as the better way to assess young children
- Many large scale assessment efforts (especially program evaluations) use standardized measures.
 - Few notable exceptions: statewide efforts in KY, CO, NE, PA.

****Standardized assessments pose far more problems for assessing children with disabilities****

Purpose and Assessment Type for CWD

	Type of Assessment	
Purpose	Standardized	Observation-based
Eligibility determination	Interest is individual child results	Most do not provide norm-referenced data
Instructional planning	Not useful	Interest is in individual child results, also aggregated to classroom level
Program evaluation, program improvement, accountability, social benchmarking	Aggregated data <i>-one set of problems-</i>	Aggregated data <i>-a different set of problems-</i>

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Construct Irrelevant Variance



- Child has the concept but does not get credit for the item because
 - Can't point
 - Can't speak
 - Can't attend for even short periods of time
 - Can't understand the instructions
 - Etc.
- Major problem with standardized assessments because of the standard administration.
 - **Standardizing the conditions does not standardize the experience for the child.**

Universal Design and Accommodations



- Develop assessments to allow the widest range of participation; minimize the need for accommodations
 - E.g., refer to “communication,” not “spoken language”
- Accommodations – modifications in presentation, response format, timing, setting (Some of which assessors do in EC anyway)
 - Validity of accommodations
- Example:
Desired Results Developmental Profile – Access
 - <http://www.draccess.org/index.html>

Floor effects and sensitivity



- Floor effects – not enough or any items for children who are lower functioning
 - E.g., assessment is for 3-5s – developmentally the child is 2
- Lack of sensitivity – increments between items too large to capture growth of children who progress slowly

Large scale assessment



- Exclusion of children with disabilities is not an acceptable option.
- All children and their families are entitled to know if the program works for them, if they are making progress, etc.

The right questions



- Why is the assessment being administered?
- Is the interest in individual child data or aggregated child data?
- Is there a way to use an observation-based assessment?



Resources



- www.the-eco-center.org
- Promoting Positive Outcomes for Children with Disabilities: Recommendations for Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation
 - Available free from the Division for Early Childhood (DEC)
http://www.dec-sped.org/About_DEC/PositionConcept_Papers/Promoting_Positive_Outcomes
- Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, How
 - Available from the National Academies Press
 - http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12446