Getting Ready to Get the Most out of Your Child Assessments

Why Do We Assess?

- Improve children's learning
  - Meet the needs of children who are struggling
  - Challenge children who are excelling
- Identify key challenges in our classrooms
- Figure out what resources we need

Objectives

1. Preparation:
   - Planning for assessment
   - Organizing for assessment
   - Assuring assessment quality

2. Examine how to use information from assessments to support children's growth

Additional Resources

- *But What Does It All Mean? Key Concepts for Getting the Most out of Your Assessments*

Planning for Assessment: Key Questions

- What do I need to learn:
  - About individual children?
  - Classrooms?
  - The center/program as a whole?
  - Key subgroups?

- What types of assessments should I conduct?
  - Choose assessment tools that respond to what you need to learn
  - Use a variety of techniques

Planning for Assessment: Key Questions, Cont.

- How often should I conduct assessments?

  - Assessments should be ongoing.

  - Perhaps identify one or two techniques (e.g., checklists, work sampling, the assessment that accompanies your curriculum) and work on developing teachers' expertise.

Planning for Assessment:
Key Questions, Cont.

- How often should I analyze assessments?
  - Analysis provides opportunity to adjust instruction to meet children's needs.
    - Comparing fall and winter scores is especially important—*time left in the year to adjust instruction!*
    - Comparing spring with winter or fall scores helps plan for next year.
    - Ongoing analysis allows for frequent, smaller scale changes.

Planning with Teachers

- Work with teachers to make sure all important information is captured:
  - For assessments that teachers or other staff members need to directly administer to children, identify when this will occur.
  - Plan together how they will systematically integrate assessments into their activities.

Organizing for Assessment: Help Teachers Get Ready

- Make sure teachers have the resources they need to conduct assessments.
  - Charts, notebooks, files, etc.
  - Access to the computer
  - Support from other staff

Organizing for Assessment: Set Aside Time for Reflection

- Plan sessions in which managers can work together to analyze assessments.

- Make time to review assessments at the classroom level.

- Set periodic meetings:
  - For you to discuss issues with specific teachers
  - For teachers to work together to understand assessments and plan responses

Assuring Assessment Quality:
What You Get When You Assess

- Data = Information you collect about children, families, and classrooms
  - Information on children's progress for reporting purposes
  - Ongoing observational assessments
  - Attendance records
  - Information about families
  - Etc.

- In other words, any information you can use to improve child learning!

Assuring Assessment Quality: Accurate Data

- The birth date problem:
  - The birth year on record would mean the child is 12
  - Parent says birthday is different than what is in your records
  - Two different birth dates recorded for one child

- Quality data avoids the birth date problem. It is:
  - Correct
  - Complete
  - Consistent

Tips for Assuring Data Quality

- Train (new) teachers in:
  - Your program's methods for recording important information (e.g., birth dates) in program records.
  - Recording information in assessments.
  - Interpreting assessment results.

- When reviewing data, look for unusual patterns.

- Ask questions such as:
  - Do I believe the results?
  - Is there enough information for different teachers to come to the same conclusion?

Objectives Revisited

✓ Preparation:
  ✓ Planning for assessment
  ✓ Organizing for assessment
  ✓ Assuring assessment quality

→ Examine how to use information from assessments to support children's growth

Draw on All of Your Data

- A variety of assessments
  - Observational assessments (e.g., *Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum, High/Scope COR*)
  - Standardized assessments (e.g., *Learning Accomplishment Profile [LAP]*)
  - Portfolios
  - Information from ongoing assessments

- Family and child background info (birth date, home language, disability information)

- Attendance records

Identify Formats Easy to Interpret

- Automatic reports (if available) that summarize information:
  - At the classroom, program, or center level
  - For different subgroups of children (by age, home language, disability status, etc.)

- Summary tables (checklists, spreadsheets, etc.) for whole classes

- Standard scores from standardized assessments that allow for comparisons to other groups of children

Reflecting on the Data

- Are there *patterns* in the data? For example:
  - Do classrooms or the program as a whole continually improve in one area while lagging in another?
    - For example, literacy outcomes continue to improve, but no growth in mathematics
  - Do certain classrooms always score the highest or lowest on average?
    - For example, one classroom always has the lowest vocabulary scores
  - Do classrooms have particular strengths?

Reflecting on the Data, cont.

- Do I see *growth over time*?
  - Where are children's scores relative to their own scores earlier in the year?
  - Key question!!!

- How do children's scores compare to:
  - Other children in Head Start?
  - National averages?
  - Expectations for achieving certain milestones or standards?

Reflecting on the Data, Cont.

- What is the story beyond averages?
  - What is the distribution of scores? In other words, do most children score near the average, or are the scores spread out?
  - Are there extreme scores (low or high)?

- Which children (individuals or groups) are learning the most and which children are scoring the highest?
  - Not necessarily the same child/group!

Reflecting on the Data, Cont.

- What might patterns and growth reflect? For example:
    - Curriculum emphasis
    - Teacher experience
    - Characteristics of children such as age, home language, or disabilities
    - Need for services

- Consider alternative explanations.

Reflecting on the Data, Cont.

- *Always ask:* Do I have any concerns about data quality? Is it:
  - Correct ? Has information been accurately recorded?
  - Complete? Am I missing important parts of the story?
  - Consistent? Do different sources of information tell the same story?
    - Different assessments
    - Different teachers/assessors

Reflecting on the Data, Cont.

- Special questions for special groups

  - Example: Dual language learners
    - What language(s) are the assessments in?
    - How well do children understand concepts in their home language?

  - Example: Children with disabilities
    - Impaired motor development: Are children making progress in key motor tasks such as putting on jackets, running smoothly, or jumping in place?
    - Language delays: Are vocabulary scores improving? Are language delays slowing growth in other areas?

Subgroups:
Dual Language Learners (DLLs)
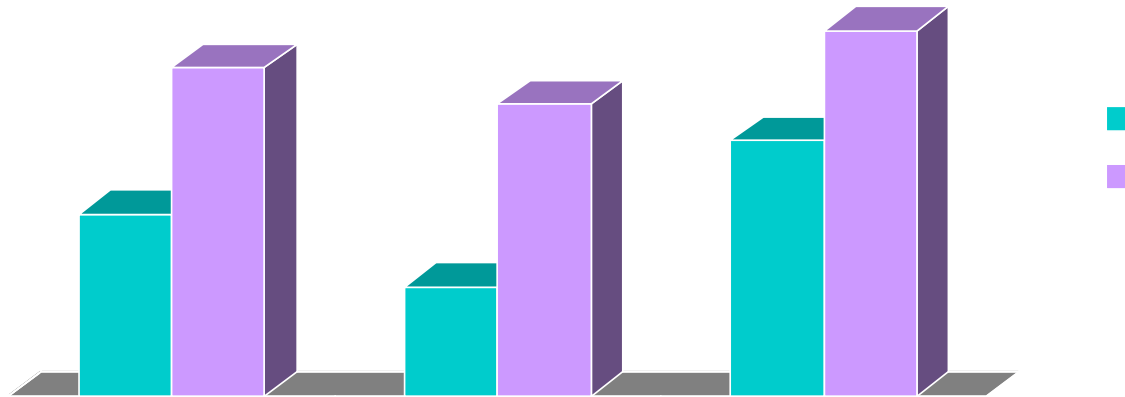
Vocabulary Scores

Distribution of Vocabulary Scores: Transportation Unit

Where and how are gains happening?

	Average	≥5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25
		Number of Words Correct				
Start of Unit	**4.5**	**68%**	**27%**	**3%**	**2%**	
End of Unit - 1	**13.1**	**3%**	**10%**	**84%**	**1%**	**2%**
End of Unit - 2	**13.1**	**7%**	**30%**	**43%**	**11%**	**9%**

Distribution of Vocabulary Scores: Transportation Unit

Where and how are gains happening?

		Number of Words Correct				
	Average	⬚5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25
Start of Unit	4.5	68%	28%	3%	2%	
End of Unit - 1	13.1	3%	10%	**84%**	1%	2%
End of Unit - 2	13.1	7%	30%	43%	11%	9%

Distribution of Vocabulary Scores: Transportation Unit

Where and how are gains happening?

	Average	◻5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25
		Number of Words Correct				
Start of Unit	**4.5**	**68%**	**28%**	**3%**	**2%**	
End of Unit - 1	**13.1**	**3%**	**10%**	**84%**	**1%**	**2%**
End of Unit - 2	**13.1**	**7%**	**30%**	**43%**	**11%**	**9%**

Calculating Percentages

Percentage = (Number of children in each category) divided by (Total number of children)

Total number of children: 100

	Number of Words Correct at Start of Unit			
	⬚-5	6-10	11-15	16-20
Number of children in each category	68	28	3	2
Calculating the percent in each category	=68 / 100	=28 / 100	=3 / 100	=2 / 100
Percent in each category	68%	28%	3%	2%

Examine Curriculum Content

Program A

- Self
- Our families
- Thanksgiving
- Food
- Cars
- Furniture

Program B

- Self
- Our families
- Animals
- Careers
- Tools
- Farms

Examine Curriculum Content: Vocabulary in Units on Self

Program A

- Body parts (knee, foot, leg, eyes, ears, mouth, elbow)

- Emotion words (happy, sad, mad, worried)

- Comparisons (bigger/smaller)

- Descriptive words (basic color words, pretty, strong)

Program B

- Body parts (chin, earlobe, hip, spine, pupil)

- Emotions (proud, excited, contented, gleeful, silly, confident, upset, frustrated, disappointed)

- Comparisons (longer/ shorter; faster/slower; louder/quieter)

- Descriptive words (colors – primary and secondary; exquisite, gorgeous, strong/weak, energetic)

Key Questions on the Curriculum

- Is the curriculum meeting the needs of or appropriate for:
  - All children?
  - Specific subgroups?
  - Individuals?

- Are teachers using data to inform the amount of time and support children need with different activities within the curriculum?

- Is the curriculum being implemented with fidelity (that is, correctly and completely)?

Develop an Action Plan

- When children in a program do not show acceptable levels of progress (relative to other groups or specific criteria/milestones):
    - Look at the program planning
    - Share ideas among teachers
    - Consider how resources are being used
    - Consider if additional services are needed

- Decide when changes are needed:
    - For individual children
    - At the classroom level
    - At the program level

- Show sensitivity for teachers
- Celebrate successes

Plan to Assess Progress

- Look at the ongoing data collection:
  - What concepts and skills are you documenting?
  - How are they changing over time?
  - Are you checking that the children generalize the skills or concepts to new situations?
  - Do children use the skills or concepts in different contexts?
  - Do they practice skills in multiple ways?

Check Out Additional Resources

- For teachers:

  - The presentations "Ongoing Assessment" and "Documentation Tools" provide additional information about how to collect data and do instructional assessments using observation and various documentation techniques

  - Guided practice exercises give teachers an opportunity to reflect on, interpret, and practice using various documentation techniques

Check Out Additional Resources

- For you:

  - *But What Does It All Mean? Key Concepts for Getting the Most out of Your Assessments*

  - Additional resources for learning about assessment, including other training materials, are described in the annotated bibliography on the website

Objectives, Revisited

- ✓ Preparations:
    - ✓ Planning for assessment
    - ✓ Organizing for assessment
    - ✓ Assuring assessment quality

- ✓ Examine how to use information from assessments to support children's growth