

## **Teacher Time: Using Ongoing Child Assessment to Support Effective Preschool Teaching Practices**

Treshawn Anderson: Hi, everyone. Happy Friday! And welcome to our season's last episode of "Teacher Time." I'm Treshawn Anderson, and joining me today is Judi Stevenson-Garcia. Hi, Judi.

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hi, Treshawn. How are you today?

Treshawn: I'm doing good. Happy it's Friday. So, we're from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. And we're so glad that you joined us today to talk about using ongoing child assessment to support preschool teaching practices.

Judi: Yep. It's going to be a good hour. Before we get started, I just want to let you know some things about our platform, in case this is the first time that you've used it. At the bottom of your screen, you'll see a bunch of widgets that will help you kind of navigate through the webinar. You can find answers to some of your technical issues in that yellow help widget at the bottom of your screen.

You also have a slide deck widget that will show you the slides that we're discussing. So, you should keep that one open. You also have a media-player widget, which we'll use to show you videos. And you can move that around — because, sometimes, when we watch videos, we ask you to chat in the chat box while we watch the videos. So, you can move it so that you can see the video and chat in the chat box.

If you have any questions during the webcast, you can submit them through the purple Q&A widget. That's really for questions and answers. We capture all of the questions, and if we have time, we'll get to some of your questions. But you definitely can submit them there, or you can put them in the chat box -- whatever is easier for you. I see many of you have found the group chat box, and are introducing yourselves.

So, hi, it's nice to see everyone in there saying "hello" from all over the country. I see some friends from Puerto Rico and California. So, we're really happy that you're here. Also, there's a copy of today's slide deck and some additional resources in the resources list. And that's the green widget. So, please, open that up, and download the resources and the viewer's guide that we've put in there for you.

You can also find webinar tips and closed captioning widgets in both English and Spanish. So, all of your widgets are re-sizeable and moveable. You can kind of move everything around, so that you can get comfortable, and make sure that this is a good experience for you. If you have any trouble with technology — a video won't play, or we stop talking for some reason — you can try to refresh your screen by using the F5 — control-F5 — on your computer. And just make sure you have everything logged off, closed down. If you have a VPN, close it. It just kind of makes the webinar viewing a lot easier.

So, in our chat room, I think Jan has maybe already been in there to say, "hello." Jan Green ... Jan Greenberg is our chat-room facilitator, so she's in there. She'll be chatting with you. And if

there are questions that you guys post in there, she sends them over to us so we can see them. Because sometimes that chat box moves really quickly.

And then, finally, at the end of the webinar, we post a link to an evaluation form. And Jan will put it in the chat box, but it'll also be on the slide deck. So, please, we really appreciate your feedback. We use this information to improve our future "Teacher Time" episodes. And then, also, when you complete the evaluation, you can download a certificate of completion for your participation in this webinar. And if you're viewing the webinar together with friends, and only one of you is registered, you can forward that link to your friends. They can complete the evaluation, and then they can also get a certificate of completion.

So, we're hoping to have some good interaction and conversation today around ongoing assessment. We have a guest expert who's going to be joining us to give us some strategies and tips. Jan's in the chat room. So, I think we're good to go.

Treshawn: Yeah. That's great. Thanks Judi, for setting us up. So, we're going to set the stage for our topic today. And if you've been with us this season, then you'll know that we've been basing our season — our episode — on the framework for effective practice. And sometimes, we call it the "house framework."

So, in our first preschool episode, we talked about creating safe and nurturing learning environments for preschoolers, which was all about that foundation of the house. Our second preschool episode was all about implementing curriculum with fidelity. And that was a topic related to the left pillar — implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices. And then, the last time we talked about supporting preschoolers and their families through transitions. And while transitions do help us think about teaching practices, and curriculum, and individualization, we used that episode to focus on the family, and ways to support parents and family engagement during transitions with their preschoolers. So, that related to the center of the house framework.

And so, now, for this final episode, we are going to be talking about ongoing child assessment, or using ongoing child assessment to inform effective teaching practices. And so, the topics discussed today will support this orange right pillar, which is screening and ongoing child assessment.

Judi: Exactly. So, today, we've got three main topics. First, we're going to start with just a little discussion around the difference between developmental screening and ongoing assessment, to make sure that we're all on the same page there. Then, we'll talk about the ongoing assessment cycle. This is not something new. This is something, I can tell from your comments, a lot of you are already engaged in. But it's just a way of thinking about the process, and the steps that we have to go through, to make sure that we're really using ongoing assessment the way that it's intended.

And then, the last thing is, we'll discuss the importance of communicating with families, both to inform our ongoing assessment and also to share with families about what we observe and learn about their children's unique strengths and needs.

Treshawn: Great. So, we're gonna talk about each of these individually. So, first, let's start off with developmental screening versus ongoing child assessment. So, developmental screening is really just a snapshot of the child's development at a specific point in time. And in Head Start programs, developmental screenings are completed within that first 45 days after a child first attends the program — unless the program operates on 90 days or fewer, such as the migrant and seasonal Head Start programs. In which case, they complete their screenings within 30 days.

And so, screenings are conducted together with a child's parent, and it's used to learn whether children — whether children's development and learning might need to be a little bit more carefully watched, or if a child might be at a risk for a delay, or if a child might need some additional evaluation to decide if there's a delay. It may require an intervention or special services. So, information that we use from these screening tools should not be used to make decisions about their teaching practices. That's what we're going to use ongoing child assessments for.

Judi: Exactly. And I like that you mentioned migrant or seasonal Head Start. I see that someone just said, "Hello." Diana Soto from migrant and seasonal Head Start in Caldwell, Idaho. So, it's nice to mention ... And actually, Diana, it would be great to hear your feedback and response as we go through today, because I know that there are unique challenges that migrant and seasonal Head Start programs have, in terms of both screening, but also ongoing assessment, because sometimes, the periods that they ... That period of time that we have with children in those programs is short because of the way the programs run. So, we'd love to hear from you, and your thought.

So, we've got developmental screening and then, ongoing child assessment is exactly what it sounds like. It's a system of collecting and documenting assessment information frequently enough so that you really are understanding your children's individual strengths and needs. And then, use that information to make decisions about how to individualize for each child, and how to strengthen your teaching practices.

So, we know that ongoing assessment can be observation-based or direct. Most Head Start and migrant and seasonal Head Start programs use an observation-based assessment tool. If your ongoing assessment tool is observation-based, that means you're going to be carefully observing children, engaging with them, documenting their development and their learning during their daily routines, during your playing learning experiences, during transitions, and then, all of the interaction that you have with them, that they have with other adults in your program, and with other children in the group. And you're also, as part of this, regularly communicating with families, to make sure that you're collecting information from them about what they observe about their children's development, and sharing information with them about what you observe.

And so, a lot of times, we call this "authentic assessment," because it's really capturing children in their natural environment, and figuring out what they know, and are able to do over time. If your program uses a direct assessment, you might have a kit, or a booklet, or a tool that you use that gives you all the materials that you'll need to complete assessments with each child individually, or maybe in a small group, at certain points in time. So, regardless of the tool that

you use, you want to make sure that your program is using a tool that's appropriate for all of the children that you work with — for your preschoolers who are dual language learners. You might want to make sure that you talk to your supervisor, or your child-development specialist, about how to best gather assessment information, and ask what to do if you don't speak the languages that children are learning at home. And you'll also want to make sure that you're assessing what they know and are able to do in both of their languages.

So, you might need the support of an interpreter, or work with a local community or family member, to help you understand what children know and are able to do in their home language. And then, finally, your ongoing assessment tool also is a great tool to support you in better understanding the individual needs of children who have suspected delays or identified disabilities.

So, if you work with these preschoolers, make sure you ask for support from your classroom team, or administrators, so you can better understand how to collect and use assessment information to really inform individualization for each child.

Treshawn: Yeah, so, you guys have been pretty busy in the chat box, and I want to give you guys a chance to respond to some of the things we've been talking about. So, I'd like to know from you what ongoing-assessment system or tool your program uses. So, I'm going to show you guys a poll. And there is a whole slew of resources, or tools, and assessment systems that your programs could possibly use.

So, go ahead and take this poll, and check off which one your program uses — which ongoing assessment your program uses. And if you don't see it go ahead and check "other," and then, tell us in the chat box what that tool is. We'd like to get to know that, as well.

Judi: They might have to scroll down. I think they can scroll, right, to see all the options. There's a lot of choices.

Treshawn: There are a lot of choices. So, we have got some people ... Teaching Strategies GOLD. That's probably going to be the most popular one. It is so far. HighScope, DRDP. We've got some others. Alright.

Judi: Acuscreen.

Treshawn: Acuscreen.

Judi: IGDI.

Treshawn: Great. So, let's take a look at what people are responding to. So, most of you guys are using the Teaching Strategies GOLD, which is common for Head Start programs to be using. HighScope, the DRDP. The Ounce Scale. We've got some people using [Inaudible], there. And then, we've got some others. And so, some other ones I've seeing in the chat box have been Work Sampling, Acuscreen. I'd like to know more about that.

Judi: Mm-hmm. I know that one.

Treshawn: Yeah. The Orange System. Yeah. OK. Great, guys. Thanks for that.

Judi: So, that's interesting, to see the variation. I think it's a smaller percentage — a slightly smaller percentage — than we had in the infant toddler of using Teaching Strategies GOLD. So, there's a slightly wider variation with our preschoolers.

Treshawn: Yeah. Yeah, that's cool. So, OK. So, now, we're going to give you a chance to practice understanding the difference between screening and ongoing assessments — because sometimes it can be a little confusing, and you might use one versus the other in your programs. But we want to give you guys a chance of practice, so you get to know what the difference is.

So, first, here's a little picture of a girl and her friend climbing on the play structure. And her teacher Silvia keeps a small notebook and a pen in her apron, and jots down notes each week about how her preschoolers are using their gross motor skills while climbing on the play structure. And so, what do you think teacher Silvia is doing? Is she doing a developmental screening or an ongoing assessment? So, go ahead and take that poll. What do you think teacher Silvia is doing with her small notebook and pen? Alright. We'll give you another chance to practice, too. Are you guys ready to see the answer?

Judi: Yes. Let's see. So, most of you guys chose "ongoing assessment," And that's right. So, she's using an ongoing assessment because she's using her small notebook. She's taking daily notes about how children are using their gross motor skills, and watching each week, you know, what her preschoolers are capable of doing. So, good job, if you answered "ongoing assessment."

Let's look at our next example. So, during a teacher home visit, one of Jasmine's parents tells her that she is concerned that their 4-year-old is not interacting with the other children in their play group, and is wondering if the child needs to be referred to a specialist. What will Jasmine's teacher suggest they do first — a developmental screening or an ongoing assessment?

So, here's another poll. Here's another chance. So, what do you think Jasmine's teacher will suggest they do first — developmental screening or ongoing assessment? Getting some responses, here. You guys are getting good at this. Alright. Let's see the answer. And most of you guys picked "developmental screening," which is correct. Yeah, so, we would want to do a developmental screening on this child first, to see if there is any risk factors, or anything — developmental delays that we need to be concerned about — before we refer them to a specialist. So, good job if you've answered "developmental screening."

Judi: Nice. Thanks, Treshawn. Those are great examples. So, we know that it can feel overwhelming to make sure that we're collecting and recording assessment information for all of our children, and regularly communicating with parents about it. So, today we're going to give you just a few strategies to take with you to help you plan for your assessment, collect and document information, to understand your assessment and your tools, and then, ways to use and share your ongoing assessment information.

So, to help us with that, we have a very special guest with us today. So, we are going to welcome Mary McLean. She's coming to us from the University of Florida. And I think she'll pop on her video. Oh, there she is. Hi, Mary. How are you?

Mary McLean: Hello. I'm fine, thank you, and I'm happy to be here.

Judi: Thank you so much for coming. So, we know you've brought us some really helpful strategies to help us figure out how to use ongoing child assessment, so that we can really make sure that our teaching practices are informed by it, and we're meeting the individual needs of children. So, help us, and let us know where we should start.

Mary: Well, what we have found helpful is to think about ongoing child assessment as a continuous cycle. And that cycle begins with preparing for assessment. And then, we collect assessment information by observation, and documentation of our observations. After we collect assessment information, we aggregate it, or pull it all together, so that we can analyze it, and interpret, and then apply it. So, then we're ready to use the information to help make decisions about teaching practices and also, to share the information with parents, and families, and other members of our team.

Judi: That's great. I think, as I mentioned, at the beginning, a cycle is really a helpful way to just kind of think about the process in steps, so that it doesn't seem so overwhelming. So, let's, let's start with "prepare." That seems like a good place to start. So, tell me what's involved there.

Mary: You need to begin with what you will assess. And you should start by identifying goals for each child's development and learning. These are goals that you set in partnership with the families — with the children's families — and should be informed by and aligned with the domains of The Early Learning Outcomes Framework. You will also look to your ongoing assessment tool, which helps you measure children's progress toward the goals that you set.

Depending on where in the school year you are, you probably always have access to some assessment information that you have collected, and you can use that information to help you think about additional, or the next information, that you need — that you want to collect — about a child's development and learning. For example, if you have an older preschool child who you have observed writing a long chain of letters, you might begin to think about whether or not you would start using and doing some invented spelling with that child.

The "what" in this example is literacy, right. It's a goal that relates to literacy. Planning how to assess is really about the methods and the organization system that you're going to use, such as written observation notes, or anecdotes, checklists, photos, videos, audio recordings, and work samples — samples of children's work. This also includes the digital system that you will use for documenting the information you collect. Whether that's an app on a tablet or on a computer or, or all of those. It's important to prepare for how you will document what you observe. It's very important.

Treshawn: That's great, Mary. So, we want to hear from you guys. Tell us in the chat box — what's the best way that you collect your data, and how, how, how ... Sorry, which way is most helpful in regularly documenting what you've observed about children? So, do you guys use tablets? Are you just a regular pen and paper kind of person in your apron? Do you have, like, a nice filing system that you have? So, tell us, what do you guys use to document what you observe about children?

Judi: I think this was the hardest part for me, when I first started teaching, was figuring out a good system to kind of document everything I needed. Sometimes, I would just write everything down, and then, I'd end up, at the end of the day, with a long page of notes that I couldn't always interpret or remember what happened. I see Amber uses checklists, which is great. Checklists are a great way to kind of not have to write everything down, but kind of, like, check some things off as you're observing children. I see Amber is also saying, "online." I wish we had ... I didn't have an online option back when I was teaching, when I first started.

Treshawn: I was a post-it note kind of girl. I just had post-its everywhere. Then, I'd, like, stick them in the child's folder, you know?

Judi: Yeah.

Treshawn: I didn't file everything. Yeah, but a lot of people are saying they use tablets, which is really great, because that's a great way to integrate technology in the classroom. Children see you using it, too. Checklists. That's big.

Mary: A checklist you could even ... A group of children. Checklists are very helpful.

Judi: Yes.

Treshawn: Oh, and then Kelly says she's using the Teacher Strategies GOLD app. So, I wonder how many of you guys are using that.

Judi: Yeah. The app is really helpful. The app has some checklist built into it, as well, which are really useful.

Treshawn: Yeah. That's great. So, thank you guys for responding, and keep sharing, because I'm sure people are getting some helpful information in here. So, Mary, can you tell us about what's next in the "prepare" stage.

Mary: Sure. So, once you know what and how you're going to assess — and that's, that's a big, a big part, two big parts — we need to think about who we will assess, and who will collect the assessment information. So, as a preschool teacher, you probably want to coordinate with your assistant or co-teacher. And you also might want to figure out who will document assessment for which children. That can be so helpful, if we know who is responsible for what areas, for what children. If you're a family child care provider, you may have a mixed age group that requires you to gather assessment information for children at very different stages of development. And there may also be times when you want a colleague or a specialist to join you in observing a child, and times when you want other colleagues to observe children while you are engaging with them.

You might also want to ask parents to observe, and document what they observe with their children at home, to ensure that you're getting that insight from families, and getting a full picture of the child's knowledge and skills.

Judi: Yeah, Mary, I think that's really important, to talk with families. And this seems like a good place to plan for children who are dual language learners, or children who have suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities, just to make sure that we're planning to collect information about what they know and are able to do, and to think about what supports you might need to

help communicate with children who are a dual language learners, in case you don't share a language. Maybe you'll have to change some of your teaching practices, providing some visual cues to augment the language interactions. We might need to bring in an interpreter, or another staff member, to help us understand what children are understanding, and what they know and are able to do. Maybe we'll ask parents to document at home some examples of their child's emerging home language skills, or other skills. So, I think it's really important, like you said, to think about who's going to be doing the collection. And it might be you, or your assistant, but it might also be a member of the community, or a family member.

And then, also, which children we need this information on. And this is a good way to individualize not just our teaching practices, but also our assessment practices. So, OK. So, we have ... I have "what." What we're assessing, how we're going to assess, what methods are going to use to assess, and then who. So, what else do we need to make sure we're covering in our preparation for our assessment?

Mary: Two more "wh" words. Teachers in family child care providers are expected to observe and document regularly, right, and often enough to have meaningful data that informs their interactions and the learnings experiences that they provide. So, "when" refers to preparing for when you will collect and document data. And then, also, where. And where refers to the settings in which you will observe. These are really important things to have a handle on. And you'll find that different times of the day, and different locations, give you opportunities to observe and document different kinds of knowledge and skills.

As you think about when and where, think about the fit — the fit between what you want to observe and in which activities routines, transitions, or other environments you're most likely to see children using the behaviors and skills that are the focus for the ongoing assessment. So, you're going to try to arrange your observations so that you will take advantage of when children are already engaged in activities that will lead to the kinds of skills or knowledge that you're looking for, instead of pulling children aside to watch them do things that aren't part of an activity. So ... And it will help you plan, if you think about where and when will certain activities occur, and then, which children will we observe at what times of the day.

So, some settings are easier to observe certain skills. An obvious example is gross motor skills. If you need to observe gross motor skills, you'll want, probably, to be observing on the playground, or in a gym, where children are engaged in those kinds of skills. So, collecting and documenting over time, and in different settings, such as indoors and outdoors — but even different parts of the classroom, and different activities that happen in the classroom — are important to consider both at home and at school. And if you do that, it will allow you to see a total picture of children's knowledge and skills.

One helpful tool is just to draw a matrix that will have your schedule down the left-hand column, and what you want to observe across the time, and then, plot it out. Think about "Where and when will I be observing which skills?"

Treshawn: That's great information. I'm just looking at the picture on the left of your screen, of the little girl looking — either she looks really bored or she is really intent. As far as teachers thinking about this when and where, you know, if the child's really not into the activity, then it



may not be a good time to document what this child knows because they may not be giving you her all, or wants to do something different, you know, for the day.

Mary: Exactly. Exactly. And that kind of observation, when you are in the moment with an activity that's part of your routine, then really helps inform you for identifying what to teach, and how to teach. So, it helps you lean right into where is the best time of the day, and where at the best activities to actually then teach the next skills.

Treshawn: Yeah, great. So, we're going to watch a video of two teachers working together to plan for this — what, how, who, when, and where. It seems like a lot, but you'll see in this one-minute clip that teachers are going to be doing this. So, as you listen, pay attention to each of these parts — the who, what, where, why, when, and how -- and tell us in the chat box how a plan like this really contributes better assessment information. So, let's watch.

[Video begins]

Teacher No. 1: Okay.

Teacher No. 2: Okay.

Teacher No. 1: So, like, based on our assessment calendar for today, what are the things we really want to focus on? Snack is — that snack is that conversation piece — the back and forth conversation, whether or not they're kind of have ... Using it — doing it in socially appropriate manner — looking at the person, taking turns, the back and forth, talking about something on topic — things like that.

So, I was thinking, since it's going to be at snack, maybe we can think about dividing up the data collection to the different stack tables since we have four to give kids per table. And just have the teacher who's leading that table be responsible for those four to five kids.

Teacher No. 2: So, the lead will be responsible.

Teacher No. 1: Yeah. At each table, rather than having one person be responsible for the whole class. Would that be easier, or do you think ...?

Teacher No. 2: No, I think that would be good, because then we can just have that one person responsible, and get it all in, and then, come back at the end of the day, and look at it.

Teacher No. 1: Yeah. And I was thinking, for a lot of the conversation skills, we'll jot down maybe anecdotal notes on what the kids said, So, we can get at some of those vocabulary and grammar — the data for those — the assessment for those. And then, for the other things, like whether or not they're oriented weather or not making eye contact, using the correct volume — those things we can just check off with this checklist here.

[Indistinct talking]

Teacher No. 2: So, I see the checklist there. OK. That works.

Teacher No. 1: So, it's kind of a balance between having to write down what they said ...

Teacher No. 2: So, we're going to be doing pretty much both.

Teacher No. 1: Yes.

Teacher No. 2: Then, you get a whole picture of it.

Teacher No. 1: Yeah.

Teacher No. 2: Looks good. [Video ends]

Treshawn: Great. So, in this video, the teachers really talked about, you know, the what, and that is assessing children's conversational skills — you know, taking turns — and back and forth exchange of information. They talked about how they are going to do it. So, they have a checklist ready. They're gonna write down their anecdotal notes. They talked about who is going to do it. So, they, you know, organize a lead teacher that's gonna be at each table, documenting the conversation skills. And then, when and where is gonna be at snack time, and at the snack-time tables. So, in that minute and a half or so video, they really discussed all of this how we need to do, to prepare for ongoing assessments.

Judi: Yeah, I think that's great to ... And I'd love to hear in the in the chat box ... Yeah, I see some people already responding ... If you guys do any planning like this, or if you have a different way of planning that gets at this. I know some teachers say that, when they do their lesson plans, they also write down an assessment plan.

So, if, in their small group — kind of similar to what the teachers were doing here — in their small group, they know what a small-group activity is, so they think about who the kids are, and what kinds of assessment information they can collect during that small-group activity. And they go through the same process. So, it's really nice to see teachers sitting and doing it. So, if you guys are ... If you do anything similar, or if you have other methods for preparation, I would love to hear from you in the group chat. But for the sake of time, we'll move on to our next phase, which is, "collect." And so, if we've done a really good job preparing for everything, we've covered all of our bases in the preparation phase, then we need to make sure that we're collecting assessment information that'll be helpful to us. So, Mary, tell us a little bit about what we should be focusing on as we begin to collect assessment information.

Mary: Sure. For collect, it's important to remember that, depending on the "what" — meaning what you want to assess — the method of collecting that information might be simply to observe versus to interact and observe. For example, if you're watching — social interactions are a great example, here — you're watching for social interactions between peers, or self-regulation skills.

But lots of times, we want to observe within the context of our interactions with children. So, we aren't just sitting and watching. We are interacting with them as they are engaged in everyday activities and routines, and document what we notice that they say or do in those routines and activities. And the most important part of the "collect" stage is our documentation. We write down notes about what we see or hear. These documentations are also known as "anecdotes" or "anecdotal notes." And teachers are very busy, as you know, so it's really important to record what you observe clearly and accurately, and to include the date and location of the observation.

If you think you're going to remember, you won't. We have data, we have research, that clearly demonstrates, because your minds are so busy while you're doing a lot of different things, you

[Indistinct] most likely be able to remember. So, it's really important that you that you accurately document things, so you can look at them later. When you come back to the point of making decisions, or if you're using the information to share with others, you will have the most accurate information available to you, then. Anecdotes can be brief.

Here's an example: "Leshawnda engaged with peers by asking 'Can I play with you?' " And so, that's a very quick note that can be written on a sticky note, or wherever, whatever your system is. But anecdotes can be longer, if they need to be. And so, you can more fully describe what you've observed if that gives you the information you need. And it might turn out to be, like, a short story — a short description of what happened, with the beginning and a middle and an end.

Sometimes, you combine notes with pictures, right, that show the child doing this skill, or show what the child has built, or a drawing that would be helpful, as well. High-quality anecdotes are objective. And what that means is that they describe what the child did or said, and they don't include any assumptions, or opinions, or judgments about what the child was feeling, or about the child's behaviors, or the motivations for their behavior. So, objective anecdotes are the most useful, because they clearly and accurately document what the child did, and what the child knows.

And if you think about this, an anecdote is subjective when it includes your thoughts and feelings about what the child is doing, or why the child acts a certain way. So, subjective anecdotes are less helpful, because they're not focused on what the child actually did, or knows, but rather, they're focused on how you felt about what the child did, and what you think about it. So, very important distinction between objective and subjective anecdotes.

Treshawn: Great. So ... Sorry. So ... So, you're absolutely right about these anecdotes, and being subjective and objective. And I can't even remember my own grocery shopping list when I'm at the grocery store, so writing things down just so that you can be accurate. That's going to be the most helpful way that we can collect information about children's development.

So, now, we're going to practice a little bit, and we're gonna put up an anecdote. And after I read it, I want you to tell me if it's objective or subjective. So, we're going to practice with these two different terminologies.

So, first. "So, Nola is pretending to be a doctor, but has a hard time sharing the doctor's coat in the dramatic play area. She doesn't like when Matthew puts it on. Nola ignores teacher Rick's efforts to try to talk her through waiting her turn. Instead, she screams because she's mad that Matthew won't take off the jacket. Matthew notices that Nola is upset. He takes off the jacket — the coat — and gives the coat to Nola, who puts it on, and is happy again."

So, do you guys think this anecdote was subjective or objective? So, look at this poll, and tell us. Go ahead, and click on your answer.

Mary: And some people are responding in the group chat, as well. What do you guys think?

Treshawn: Alright. We've got some answers rolling in. Yeah. You brave souls are answering in the chat box. [Laughter] That's great. So, this anecdote was subjective. So, you're right, if you chose that one. And the reason why it's subjective is because it contains a teacher's

assumptions about, and interpretations of, Nola's behavior. So, using words like "hard time," and "doesn't like," and "ignores" — and even describing the feelings, like "mad" or "happy" are all open to interpretation. Because how one observer defines "hard time" or if a child is happy might be different than how someone else observes it, or defines it. So, we want to do our best to be objective, or factual.

So, I'm going to use the same observation, and make it objective. And let's read it together. So, it says "Matthew joins Nola in the dramatic play area, and puts on the doctor's coat. Nola begins to cry, pointing to Matthew, and shouting 'mine.' Teacher says, 'I see you really want the doctor's coat. When Matthew is all done, it'll be your turn.' Nola turns her head away, and begins to kick and scream. Matthew looks at Nola, takes off the coat, and gives it to Nola. Nola puts the coat on, smiles, and asks Matthew to be the patient."

So, do you see the difference? This anecdote really describes what the teacher sees or hears Nola and Matthew doing, rather than interpreting their behaviors. It also provides more information about her response to Matthew putting on the doctor's coat, and it gives a much clearer picture about her interactions with both Matthew and teacher Rick without those assumptions in there. And it supports the teacher's needs to provide help to Nola as she's entering this play scenario. [Indistinct talking] Oh, sorry.

Judi: I was going to say, also, one great thing about this anecdote is I see that there's a date and a location, which the other anecdote did not include. So, it's really helpful. I think, Mary, you mentioned making sure that you put a date, so you know when that happened. And we also know — I think we can tell from here how much support is needed — that Nola needs from the teacher.

Because, sometimes, children might be able to resolve this conflict on their own. But this one says Nola needs some support from the teacher to resolve the conflict. So, I think all of that information is really helpful.

And like you said, the feelings aren't there. I think it's OK, later, for Rick to think, "What was Nolan maybe feeling? Or maybe she was tired." Or maybe this is something that's really starting to happen more frequently. So, all of those things can ... All of those thoughts and feelings are not bad, they are just ... They should be in the reflection opportunity, to think about what the meaning is of this anecdote, as opposed to saying, you know, "Nola is always angry in the dramatic play area," which is not, as you said, Mary, it's not necessarily helpful later, when we're trying to make a decision about what's happening.

So, Mary, can you just give us ... So, this is anecdotal record. We know these are hugely important, and a major piece of our collection. But what other things ... I think we've talked a little bit about checklists. Are there other ways that we can collect information in a way that's really meaningful and helpful?

Mary: Sure. Well, checklists are great, and I'm glad to hear that people are using them because you can have very specific steps, you can observe a number of children, you know, in an activity with a checklist. So, checklists are very helpful.

You can also collect work samples — and some of you, I think, mentioned this, too. So, a work sample is a physical example that is a representation of what a child was able to do, or what they know. So, art creations, block structures that you take pictures of, or a drawing that the child has made, can be collected. And parents and family members can send you things, as well, that the chi ... And pictures that ... of things that the child has done that can be helpful.

Another one is photos, which we mentioned, but also audio and video recordings. And those are really helpful. When you want to, to have access to an objective — that's very objective — an objective representation of what children do and say, videos are great for that. Parents can share videos, as well. And that's ... Many parents like to do that. That's a great way to engage families. Because they can take a picture with their phone, and send it to you, right? It's an easy and effective way to gather information.

So, sometimes, when you're working with children who are dual language learners, you can record interactions in their home. This is a great idea. Record interactions in their home language, and then, you can play that back to somebody who can help you, or a staff member, or a family member, who can help you understand what it was that the child said. So, a lot of great ways to think of using videos, and pictures, and so forth.

Judi: Technology has really brought assessment a long way, I think I know I have, you know, family members who would show me a video, and say, "Hey, look at my kids it over the weekend," you know? And that's just, like, immediately, you know, you get to look at it, and see it. So, it's fantastic. That's great. So, OK. So, we have prepared, and we have collected a lot of information.

And sometimes, we have a ton of information. And I know this is the hardest part — I hear this all the time from teachers — the time to sit down and reflect on our information. And we call it "analyze and aggregate," which sounds very, like, Excel files, or something. But really, it's a sitting down and thinking, "What is this information tell us about children? And how are we going to use this information to make changes in our teaching practices or individualized?" So, what do we need to do in this part of the cycle?

Mary: This is a very, very important part. I think they're all very, very important. But this one lets you actually see what your ... What information you have, and pull it together, and then, really helps you make decisions. So, again, you're not just relying on your memory, but you've got to summarize, somehow, what you've collected.

One of the first things to think about is whether you've collected enough information, and whether you're ready to make a decision based on your ... And whether your information is accurate, and objective, as we said. If you do think, "I've got enough information about this now," then you think about what it tells you about each child's growth and development. And there are several things that might be happening. Is the child making progress toward their individual goals? Do you see any patterns, or inconsistencies, or trends? Some children ... You might think about children — for children who are dual language learners — are they making progress in emergent literacy goals? Right? Which is very important to consider. Do you need more information from the families, or from co-workers, who speak the same home language as the children that you have in your classroom who are dual language learners?

So, very important questions that you can answer with your assessment information — including dates, times, and locations, as we've said several times — will help you, because you'll be able to look back, and see how long you've been looking at a particular behavior, and where you observed that behavior each time.

So, for example, you might have been observing social skills with a preschooler during free play, and you think that you have only seen him playing by himself. But in reality, when you look at your notes, what you notice is that you do have observations of him engaging in cooperative play with other children. So, very important to be sure that you're reviewing your information, so that you can pull together what will help you make decisions for your next steps, right, with, with a child — with all of the children.

Judi: So, taking this time to look at our data is really helpful because, like you said, it's going to help you make decisions. So, this is kind of our final step in this cycle, which is continuous and ongoing, and like you said, sometimes, if you don't have enough information ... If the answer to the question "Do I have enough information?" if the answer is "no," you might have to go back, and collect some more information before you can make a decision.

So, it takes us to this kind of final step in this cycle, which is using and sharing. So, maybe just give us some strategies about using information we've gathered, and sharing it with families, or with other staff.

Mary: Alright. Well, I'll talk about sharing first. So, if you're sharing information, you want to use both formal and informal opportunities to have a conversation with the families, and exchange information. So, you no doubt have scheduled parent-teacher conferences, when you have a time to sit down, and talk with family. But you also might have informal opportunities, like when — if the parents dropped their children off in the morning, or when they pick them up in the afternoon, or phone calls. Or you might be able to share and exchange information through the online aspect of their assessment tool, as well. So, there are a variety of opportunities to share information with family members.

Others who work with your preschoolers will also benefit from the information that you can share. For example, your classroom team members obviously need to have that information. Supervisors and program leaders — it's important to share with them. And also, any specialists that work ... A speech-language pathologist, or other providers who work with your children. So, sharing that assessment information will help you use your data to make informed decisions to best support each child in your care, and help you prepare for what to collect and document next. For using data, sometimes our data tells us that we need to update some goals.

There are a variety of decisions that might be made here, when you're making decisions based on your data. If some children have already met their goals, then, you plan to support them in moving forward toward the next level, the next step, the more challenging level. Because development, as we all know occurs, in a continuum, there's always more for children to learn.

So, we should always be thinking about "Well, they've got that down. What should we work on next?" If a child hasn't met a goal, maybe it's too difficult, and maybe you need to think about a simpler version, or a smaller step, for that child to work on. Right? Or, maybe you think it'll just take more time for this child to meet that goal.

Sometimes, the data tells us that we need to change things about the environment in the classroom, or the schedule, or adjust our teaching practices. So, that's a very important use of data, as well. For a child who's ready for more challenges, for example, in persisting with a task, and in perceptual and motor skills, you might add puzzles that have more puzzle pieces, so that those are available for that child, and he can move forward in those areas. Or, for a preschooler who uses a walker, or walks with crutches, you might think about creating more space in your classroom — moving things around just a little bit, so there are more pathways that that child can use to move around, and explore learning centers more independently.

Treshawn: This was all such great information, Mary ... I mean, just the wealth of knowledge that you've shared with us. And we're so glad that you're here to actually walk us through this cycle, because it can seem a little bit daunting, you know, at times, for teachers, you know, to kind of go to the cycle, and go back, and, you know, go back and forth, in that sense. So, we want to thank you for your helpful tips and strategies for using the ongoing assessment cycle. This was so helpful. So, do you have any remaining thoughts?

Mary: Yeah. I would like to encourage everybody who is listening to think about what you're doing — what you're doing well in terms of ongoing assessment, and also think about what else you could do, how you might improve. As we've said several times, this can be challenging. And that is the truth. It can be challenging. But with a very important goal of improving our teaching — because that's what assessment does for us. It helps us improve our teaching practices and meet children's need. [Audio cuts out] ... Or your director for some strategies that you can put into place. And remember that preparation is the key. So, make sure that you are spending some time preparing a plan for assessment.

Treshawn: Great. Thanks so much. Bye, Mary. Thanks for hanging out with us today.

Mary: You bet. Bye.

Treshawn: So, we're gonn ... Yeah, bye. So, we're gonna continue this conversation. We've talked a lot already today about the importance of engaging with families in the ongoing-assessment process, because, you know, parents are a child's first teacher, and it's really important to make sure that they are a part of this ongoing-assessment process, too. And this means that, during the "prepare" stage, you plan for how you're going to regularly collect information from parents, and share information with them, both formally and informally.

Judi: Yeah. That's right. We know that parents have valuable information. And we want to make sure that we're not just giving them information about what we've observed, but also asking them for their input to help us understand each child's unique context, to help us understand and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate learning environments, experiences, and interactions that are going to support each child's development and learning.

Every child comes from their own unique place, and brings their own unique perspective and understanding to our programs. And we want to make sure that we're honoring that. So, for example, I mean, right up front, in setting goals for children, sometimes parents have goals in mind for their child about when they should be getting dressed independently, or when they should begin to learn to read. It's important to have conversations with families about their

values, and their perspectives, and how we, as teachers, are supporting children's development toward the learning goals that we have in place for them.

So, if you could list ... I'm looking for some comments in the chat box. What are some ways that you have developed, or learned, or maybe what are some of your challenges in communicating with families. I think, having this kind of back and forth conversation is really important. But I know, sometimes, it's really hard, depending on, you know, if all of your children arrive on a bus and leave on a bus, you may not be able to see families every day. Or some parents may have work schedules that really make it challenging for you to have a conversation — even on the phone.

I saw some people say that they use Learning Genie. And I know — I have some friends who like Learning Genie for themselves, for their kids, because it feels like they can stay in touch with their teacher, and understand what's going on during the day. So, if you have strategies, please share them with us in the chat box. We'd love to hear what is working for you now in terms of communicating with families about ongoing-assessment information.

Treshawn: Yeah. So, as you guys are sharing your ways that you engage families in the ongoing-assessment process, we want to keep in mind that having ongoing conversations with families about their goals for their child's development and learning really helps build this trusting, reciprocal relationship. And that kind of brings us back to that foundation of the house.

It's all about relationships. And these relationships really help parents feel more comfortable about sharing what they observe, and support at home. You may learn that children do and say things at home, but not in the classroom or family child care home. And the child may know, and understand, and communicate much more than you realize. And this is especially useful for children that are learning other languages other than English at home. But the relationship you build with these families will help you work with them together to help meet the needs of all the children.

Judi: Yeah. That's so important. I see Amber as saying she talks to parents at drop-off and pickup, but uses email and phone calls occasionally. I think that's fantastic. I know, as a parent, I appreciate all of those kinds of communication for my kids. [Indistinct talking] "The more we talk with parents ..." Yep. ... "The more they talk with us." Yeah. Oh, a family activity. What a great idea — to have family activities. "Parents like to text." I'm one of those. I really ... I love to text.

Treshawn: That's, like, the easiest way. Just send me a quick picture. Thank you.

Judi: Thank you, guys. These are great, great ways to engage. Well, we've covered — we covered a lot today. This hour flew by. And an hour is only, like, the tip of the iceberg when we talk about assessment. We hope you've learned a couple of strategies. Thank you for sharing your strategies for using ongoing assessment to help support decisions about your interactions and your teaching practices with all of your children, and also, to individualize for each child. You showed us with the knowledge check that you are ... You understand the difference between "screening" and "ongoing assessment."



And then, Mary help us walk through the ongoing-assessment cycle, and some strategies for each phase. Hopefully, this will help you in planning, maybe for your upcoming school year, to do some more preparation, so that you have a more successful cycle of collecting, and aggregating, and analyzing, and using your information.

And then, obviously, making sure that we plan to keep families engaged in a back and forth conversation. Communicating regularly is really key to helping us inform our decisions about children's goals, and how we can support them in reaching these goals. So, thank you for joining us today.

Before we go, I just want to leave you — because this is our last episode for the season — I want to leave you with some resources to help you as you continue on your journey as a teacher or a family child care provider. I want to connect you to some communities on MyPeers. If you're not there already, you should be. This is a great resource, and a great place for you to interact with each other, and learn from each other. You can connect with other teachers, you can get resources, tips, you can ask any question. People ask all kinds of questions on MyPeers — things that will help you out in your classroom. And its people who are doing your work. And I think that's one of the most valuable resources.

So, just because "Teacher Time" is over this season, it doesn't mean we have to stop engaging, and learning from each other. So, join us on MyPeers. And I are there all the time If you're not already a member of MyPeers, you can join by going through the ECLKC, and looking for "MyPeers." There are 58 open communities on MyPeers, with thousands of members. So, these are just a few of the communities. But go through and find some communities that are interesting to you.

And on the "Teacher Time," in the "Teacher Time" community, we like to post some polls, and some quizzes, and I know Treshawn is going to post some videos. So, for those of you who weren't quite sure about subjective versus objective in your anecdotes, she'll give you some videos so that you can practice that. And then, we can support each other in writing better anecdotes. So, thanks for being here.

Treshawn: Yeah. And we also have a video with teachers actually going through this planning process, too. So, if you are want to see how it looks in real time, and not just here on the PowerPoint, then join us on MyPeers, and then, we'll show you some videos, as well.

And so, we've got some other quick resources we wanted to tell you about, since this is our last season. You can still stay connected ... Not our last season, our last episode of the season. You can still stay connected with the Text4Teachers app on your phone. It sends you free messages. They come right to your phone. They're really handy. It's some tips and research and resources to really help strengthen and support your teaching practices. And then, there's the ELOF2GO, available in English and Spanish. You can download it right to your phone. You don't have to carry around that book if you don't like to have that. So, that's also free for you to have.

And then, we just want to give you some information about some new things that are happening. So, the interactive curriculum consumer report is now up and live. And this is just a review of lots of different curricula ... Maybe ones that you guys are using in your program. And it gives you a rating of a specific curriculum, as well. So, check that out on the ECLKC.

And finally, we wanted to share — because we do have some home visitors here in "Teacher Time" today — we wanted to share the Home Visitor e-Institute Leave the Bag Challenge. So, you can copy and paste that link that's on your screen to register for that event. And it's about four 10-minute courses that help you build your capacity to support parents' use of everyday materials in the home.

And so, the next slide that we're going to show you is our evaluation link. Please go ahead, and fill that out. Like we said earlier, that helps us with our ... Developing our other "Teacher Time" webisodes. And we just want to say thanks for attending this webinar. It's been great.

Judi: Thanks, everyone.