

Ongoing Child Assessment: Collecting and Using Work Samples

Narrator: Welcome to this short presentation on Ongoing Child Assessment: Collecting and Using Work Samples. The purpose of this presentation is to help teachers think about how to plan for, collect, and use children's work samples in their classrooms and programs. Work samples can be used to monitor children's progress and to inform our teaching. Work samples are also a useful and easy to understand way to share information about a child's development and learning with the child's family.

Ongoing child assessment is an important element of the house framework. By collecting information on an ongoing basis, we can get an answer to some important questions: How is the child doing? And, do I need to make changes to help this child keep making good progress? The module on work samples is part of our series on different ways to collect information on children's learning.

First of all, what is a work sample? It is an example of a child's work that illustrates effort, progress, and achievement over time. A work sample might be a child's drawing or painting, examples of writing, pages from the child's journal, photographs of a child's work, or audio or video recordings. There will be more about using video in another module.

Early childhood teachers have long collected examples of children's work. There are a number of advantages to this method of ongoing child assessment. The sample or product is part of the child's play or learning activity. The sample is created naturally from the activity, and thus provides authentic information. The use of work samples may be particularly appealing to parents. They'll understand it is their child's work. By collecting periodic samples of children's work, teachers and parents will be able to see changes in a child's performance over time. The work sample should be related to the child's individual learning objective or to the overall goals for all of the children.

To ensure that the sample makes sense when you go back to review it, attach a note that has the child's name, the date, and a little description about how and why the sample was collected. Organizing all the work samples takes some thought. Some teachers use binders or boxes; others use electronic portfolios. Regardless, the collection or portfolio needs to be organized and stored in a way that makes it easy to locate and review the child's work. Now let's listen to some teachers talk about how they use work samples in their classrooms.

Lyly Vu: Also, with this, I put it together. With this, it helps me where their development is; yeah. So I collect cutting samples, I collect drawings, I collect their language. When we do a home visit or conference, I take this. I share with them, say this is what I observe and this is what I write down for their language, for their literacy, and for their math and their cognitive and social, and I read it to them. Because the child said it in English or Vietnamese, I write it down. I tell the parents this will go home with them at the end of the year, but they're welcome to look at it anytime.

Allison Ferry: So this is something that is really used to document. I use it when I look at their skills when I document for assessment, but it's not just for assessment's sake. For – on this page, I'm looking at this child. Here's their name writing without a name card. Here, this child actually can sound out and spell the word "cars." Some children, they may have used a picture of a word, and then there's some children where, actually, the teacher wrote for them. So it's really integrated to where their skill level is, but they're books that will be paired – this is a book we're just starting to make. So we'll have the pictures in it, too, so it's an example for them of what we learned or what we did.

Narrator: In order to provide effective instruction, teachers need to observe, document, interpret, or make sense of the assessment information, and then use those understandings to plan or adjust instruction. Collecting samples of children's work is one way of documenting your observations about children's learning. Work samples can be a fun way to collect ongoing child assessment information.

Include this method in your plans for documentation. Collect samples often enough to keep track of children's progress and to tell you if you need to make changes to your teaching to help children achieve their goals. Learn more in our module on collecting and using work samples. We also have tips for teachers and helpful resources for you to use. Thank you for listening.