

Evaluation of assessments used in early childhood education



There will be three key topics that we will be addressing in this training presentation today. The three items that we will be discussing are the following:

1. How are standardized test used with infants and young children.
2. The purpose of assessment in early childhood education.
3. Different meanings of the term " Assessment".

Let's look at topic number 1.

Standardized Testing.

There are several tests available for young children to be tested on. First, we need to test the child's ability, which is the current level of knowledge for that individual. There are three types of psychological test.

a) Intelligence Test-this type of test will measure the child's ability in motor, language, social and cognitive skills. The Bayley's Scales of Infant Development is used to diagnose delays in development.

Achievement Test-this is used to measure the child's achievement related to a specific earlier instruction.

The Peabody Individual Achievement Test is used to measure achievement in mathematics, reading recognition, reading comprehension, spelling and general information.

Aptitude Test- this test is designed to predict future learning or performance on a task. An aptitude test will also measure learned abilities. A personality

test is used to find out how a person acts. This test is also used to diagnose a child's emotional strengths and needs.

Several authors have stated that " the reason that Standardized instruments are essential because they provide information that is not provided by other kinds of instruments. Standardized instruments are the only tool for obtaining objective quantitative information about the child's development from the child." (Visser, Ruiter, & Van der Meuler, 2012).

Tests for Infants.

When testing an infant, tests can be quite challenging because the child's developmental stages are limited. They can be hard to evaluate because of their short attention span. Plus, their period of alertness is very brief. And most of all the infant's developmental changes so fast. Making the test results to change constantly. At birth a test is preformed called the Apgar Scale, which will assess the health of the newborn. This test will evaluate the heart ratio, respiratory effort, muscle tone and reflex irritability. Each of these characteristics are scored on a points scale to determine how healthy the infant is.

The Brazelton Neonatal Behavior Assessment Scale,

this test will be able to determine variations in temperament and will be able to locate mild neurological dysfunctions. The Ounce Scale is used from birth to 6 years old. This scale can help parents and caretakers observe developmental milestones.

Infant and Toddlers Development Test.

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Symbolic play and constructive play are measured with this assessment called Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales Development Profile . Symbolic play is when the infant can use objects and actions to represent other actions or ideas as play. For example, is the child able to move a toy car around on the floor. The child is also tested on constructive plays, which is an organized form of play. This type of play is goal oriented and makes the child use thought in their play. For example, are they able to build a tower out of blocks. By placing one block on top of one another.

Diagnostic Tests are used to identify developmental or physical disorders in an infant and toddler.

Testing Preschool Children

Screening test are used to find out if the child has a developmental issue, if the child does than more tests need to be administrated to them to find out what strategies will be needed to be taken. One screening tool that is used is called the Denver, this tool will be able to determine and identify any developmental delays. The following are items that will need to be used in the screening test.

Language Development.

Is the child able to identify objects and pictures. When placing an object under a chair, will the child be able to identify that the per say item is indeed under the chair. Is the child able to answer personal questions, such as “ Do you have a mom?” When given an array of pictures is the child able to identify them correctly.

Cognitive Development

Is the child able to answer simple questions about concepts. Is the child able to identify and name colors and shapes. Are they able to sort and classify pictures. Are they able to count objects out. If the teacher points to a body part, is the child able to recall that part of the body.

Motor Skills

Fine Motor Skills

Is the child able to cut, write their name, draw simple shapes and build with blocks.

Gross Motor Skills

Is the child able to walk a straight line, run, jump, skip and hop. These are all items that need to be addressed when the child is in the early learning stages of their learning.

The next step after the screening test is the Diagnostic Test. This test focuses on adaptive behavior, which refers to the behavior that enables a person to get along in their environment and have the least amount of conflict with others. The two categories that are assessed are the following:

Social Behavior

Does the child display self-abusive behavior. Does the child show any signs of Hyperactive? Do they show trustworthiness.

Independent Living

Does the child show an Independent function, are they able to prepare a task by themselves. Or can they play by themselves.

Language Development-is the child able to say what they want and be able to express themselves. Are they hitting all their milestones that they should be.

Physical Development- is the child at the correct weight and height. Is the brain and nervous system developing. Is the child using all their motor skills.

The Health of the Child-

Does the child show any signs of a developmental delay, anxiety or any other illness.

The last test is the Language Test.

This is super important, because language helps with the child's reading abilities. Also, several children come from homes where English is not spoken. So, it is important to have a bilingual program available for the children. Studies have shown that " tests and instruments for use with young children are generally of lower technical quality than those for use with older children. Measurement experts have made this observation and the point has also been shown in systematic reviews of tests." (Haney & Gelberg, 1980).

Section 2: The Purpose of Assessments

“ In the field of early childhood education, assessments are needed for four reasons:

- 1) to identify children with special problems and determine the need for additional service.
- 2) to determine the level and rate of Young Children's learning.
- 3) to monitor children's progress, and
- 4) to evaluate program quality." (Gao, 2008).

Assessments are very important because they provide families, teachers and parents critical information about their child's development. The following are several reasons why it is important to test infants and toddlers.

Assessments show a record of the child's growth.

In all the developmental areas, such as language, large and small motor skills, cognitive development and their social and emotional learning. The assessment can identify if children will need to receive any support services. The tests also helps teachers to plan for instruction in the classroom. It is used as a tool to see what stage the children are at. Assessments can identify the strengths and weaknesses within a program. The assessments will also be able to show, teachers and family what strategies are needed to support their aid.

3. Different terms of Assessment.

Assessments are a variety of tools that are used by teachers to evaluate and document their students' academic learning process.

Standardized Assessments, these tests are administered and scored in a consistent manner. These tests are administered to a large student population and the scores are compared across the country from individuals to small groups of students. There are several high quantity assessment tools for early education. One tool that is approved is called "Gold by Teaching Strategies." Majority of the preschool programs that use public funding will use the "Gold System". The Gold Teaching Strategies is a teacher guided observation system. This gives program gives the teacher and the parents the opportunity to see their child's progress through the areas of school readiness. This system provides activities that are targeted to the student.

Learning Goals.

The system will generate reports that will help the parents and teachers to understand the child's growth and development. It is important to have concrete assessment data. "policymakers want data to determine what works and to identify gaps in children as early learning experiences. Parents and teachers want information to monitor children's progress and to make instructional decisions." (Roskos, 2004). By using the Gold Assessment tools, they will provide a parent portal for them to log in and check out information that is related to their child. It is so important to communicate the milestones in the student's development to their families. Also, it's important

to work together with the student's family. By doing this it will help support the child as they grow.

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