The Appropriate use of Assessment in a High Quality Classroom Helps Young Children Learn

Assessment includes the strategies teachers use to understand students’ learning, how teachers track children’s growth, and how teachers adjust instruction to help all students succeed. Assessment helps teachers know what students can do and what tasks they can use to learn. This knowledge is essential to the teaching and learning process, as teachers use it to plan lessons, track children’s progress, and adjust instruction to meet children’s needs.

Assessment should support teachers in making informed decisions to improve instruction and support student learning and growth. Best practices in assessment include:

- Valid tools are designed to provide information about children’s abilities it intends to collect. Valid tools are designed with a child’s development in mind so that they are able to provide reliable and valid information about the child. When assessing students, it is important to ensure that the assessment is valid and reliable. Validity means that the assessment is accurate and the results are consistent. Reliability means that the assessment results are consistent when repeated.

- Authentic assessments use multiple methods to evaluate children’s knowledge and skills. Authentic assessments are grounded in naturally occurring school activities. These assessments are designed to build on children’s interests and abilities. Authentic assessments can be used to inform instruction, track children’s progress, and support their development.

- Students enrolled in classrooms that use a curriculum-based assessment-based instruction showed greater gains in reading.

- In 3rd and 2nd grades, teachers typically use formal or standardized assessment to provide information about children’s achievement. Formal assessments provide information about children’s knowledge and skills in specific areas.

- The New York State Learning Standards promote college and career readiness and provide teachers with information about children’s progress.

- Teachers are both learners and decision-makers. They need to be taught how to interpret and use assessment data to inform instruction. To do so, teachers will need to be able to use standardized testing in the spring to track children’s progress. Teachers also need to be able to use other assessment tools.

- Teachers can use formal and informal assessments to inform instruction and support student intellectual development. To do so, teachers will also need to be able to use formal and informal assessment to inform instruction.

- The New York State Learning Standards support teachers in delivering high-quality instruction. The latest standards support the development of interdisciplinary higher order thinking, creativity, and the use of language and literacy skills. These standards also support the use of formative and summative assessment tools.

- Teachers can use assessment data to inform instruction. Assessment data can be used to adjust instruction, provide feedback, and support student learning.

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Effective Use of Appropriate Assessments in Prekindergarten through 3rd Grade: Building a Strong Foundation for the New York State Learning Standards

As members of the NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council, the NYS Head Start Collaboration Office, the NYS State Education Department, and the NYS Association for the Education of Young Children are providing guidance to support our youngest students, their families, teachers, and leaders by highlighting key features of high-quality early childhood teaching. We firmly believe that young students can best meet New York State Learning Standards when they have effective teachers who use intentional, experiential, and developmentally and culturally appropriate practices. This brief provides helpful strategies related to setting up a classroom environment that will help to put the State’s young learners on a path to social and intellectual success as they master the foundational skills to meet the New York State Learning Standards.

Photo courtesy of New York City Department of Education

As pre-kindergarten the teacher takes the time to assess the children’s knowledge and skills, and their environment as well. “If I take away one car how many do you have? How do you know that?”

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Photo courtesy of New York City Department of Education

To learn more and view the other briefs in this series that address curriculum, the classroom environment, instruction and interactions, assessment and family engagement, behavior and play, please visit the New York ECAC website at www.nysecac.org or contact us at ecac@ccf.ny.gov

Resources
- New York State Education Department Assessment Guidance for Early Learning (prekindergarten to 3rd grade)
- Preschool Assessment: A guide to Developing a Balanced Approach National Institute for Early Education Research
- Beyond Outcomes: How Ongoing Assessment Supports Children’s Learning and How It Shapes Classroom Practice Diane Trister Dodge, Cate Heroman, Julia Charles, and Jessica Maiorca
- New York State Education Department

Sources
- This section is guided by the recently published “New York State Education Department assessment guidance for early learning (prekindergarten to grade 3).” For the full guidance, please visit www.p12.nysed.gov/earlylearning/