



National Center for Infants,
Toddlers, and Families

**National Research Council Committee on
Developmental Outcomes and Assessments
for Young Children Public Forum
July 6, 2007**

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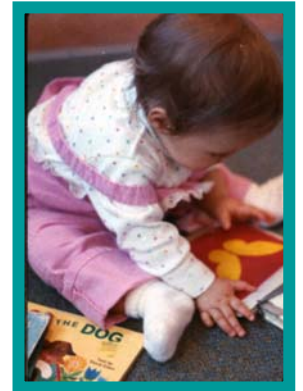
Our Mission

To support the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers and their families. We inform, educate and support parents, professionals and policy makers—the adults who influence the lives of very young children.



Research that Informs our Perspective: Core Concepts of Development *(National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000)*

- Human development is shaped by a dynamic and continuous interaction between biology and experience.
- Culture influences every aspect of human development and is reflected in childrearing beliefs and practices designed to promote healthy adaptation.
- Children are active participants in their own development, reflecting the intrinsic human drive to explore and master one's environment.



Research that Informs our Perspective: Core Concepts of Development *(National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000)*

- Human relationships, and the effects of relationships on relationships, are the building blocks of healthy development.
- The broad range of individual differences among young children often makes it difficult to distinguish normal variations and maturational delays from transient disorders and persistent impairments.
- The development of children unfolds along individual pathways whose trajectories are characterized by continuities and discontinuities, as well as by a series of significant transitions.



Developmental Assessment Defined

*A **process** designed to **deepen understanding** of a **child's competencies and resources**, and of the **caregiving and learning environments** most likely to help a child make fullest use of his or her developmental potential. Assessment should be an **ongoing, collaborative process** of systematic observation and analysis. This process includes **formulating questions, gathering information, sharing observations, and making interpretations in order to form new questions.** (Greenspan & Meisels, 1996, p.11).*

Benefits Include

1. Comprehensive understanding of the child
2. Insights about how environment contributes to the child's development
3. Ability to generate hypotheses about how to individualize care/education to support individual children



Misuses Include

1. Use of data to create a “high stakes” testing atmosphere in early care and education.
2. Use of individual items on developmental assessments to inform curriculum activities/experiences.
3. Use of data to form a “static” picture of a young child’s development.



Assessment Instruments: How to Measure?

For what domains/outcomes/functions do we not have useful, valid, and reliable assessment tools at this time?

1. Relationship-based Assessments
2. Dimensions of Social-Emotional Development

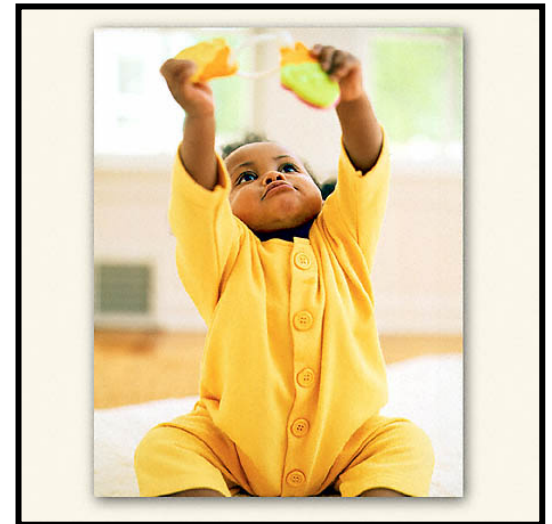


Assessment Implementation: How to Perform Assessments and Use the Results

Who should be assessing children? Teachers, caregivers, parents, or others?

Adults with whom young children have relationships with:

- Parents
- Teachers
- Other relevant caregivers



Assessment Implementation: How to Perform Assessments and Use the Results

What training and supervision do the assessors need?

1. Depth of training depends on the tools selected and skill level required for users
 - Formal/structured
 - Informal (on-going observations)
2. Content/focus of training: child development, observation, working and forming effective relationships with parents, tool adaptations

Assessment Implementation: How to Perform Assessments and Use the Results

What can be done to assure that results are used in beneficial ways? What training do users of assessment results need?

Hands-on, individualized coaching and mentoring to assist early childhood educators as they work to apply what they learn from assessment activities to what they do on a daily basis with young children.

Challenges that must be tackled:

1. Workforce stability and development issues
2. Limited capacity for reflection and planning in many early care and education programs



Achieving Quality...Wise Words from our Canadian Neighbors

“ ... it will not be enough to establish a College of Early Childhood Educators and a recruitment campaign, if the system does not address the fundamental issue of wages and working conditions. **It will not be enough to set quality standards, if the system is not funded at a level to support quality.** It will not be enough to increase education requirements for practitioners without providing appropriate education programs and accessible, meaningful opportunities for professional development. It will not be enough to upgrade practitioner qualifications if practitioners do not have the resources, learning environments and supports they need to deliver high quality, inclusive, evidence-based programs”
(Investing in Quality: Policies, Practitioners, Programs, Parents, p. 11)...

Keeping the Ultimate Goal in Mind

Developmental assessment activities are a critical component of quality early care and education programming. Ongoing observations about children's circumstances, strengths, and needs allows parents and early childhood educators to partner on behalf of the young children in their care, and *increases the likelihood that each child is given the best chance to reach their full potential.*