

Part C Eligibility and Data Based Assessment Decisions

Tools of the Trade: The Driving Force Behind Data Based Decisions

Included in the hard copy version of this packet is the article:

McConnell, S. R. (2000). Assessment in early intervention and early childhood special education: Building on the past to project into our future. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 20(1), 43-48.

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Aligning Standardized and Curriculum-Based Assessments to Provide Optimal Assessment Results

Both standardized and curriculum-based assessments assist us in collecting data about infants and toddlers with special needs. However, many standardized assessments do not help us make determinations about appropriate intervention targets and ongoing progress monitoring. In turn, curriculum-based assessments do not always assist us in determining eligibility accurately because there is no standard score. To optimize best practices, both of these tools can be used in conjunction with each other. Thus, the curriculum based assessment (CBA) is to be used to corroborate the decisions made by the standardized assessment. Feedback from early intervention personnel cite three reasons to use both tools: 1) the CBA results expand both the depth and breadth of developmental information on children; 2) time savings of not having to use a second standardized measure (multiple measures are required by IDEA), and; 3) information from a curriculum-based assessment assists in the development of quality IFSP outcomes, activities/strategies.

Assessment Tools for Functional Data Collection

- ✱ **Curriculum-based:** assesses the percentage of material mastered in a given curriculum or within developmentally appropriate activities.
- ✱ **Criterion-referenced:** to ascertain whether or not a child has acquired a pre-determined set of skills.
- ✱ **Normed-referenced or standardized:** to compare a child with a norm or a standard group.
- ✱ **Portfolio assessment:** a systematic collection of a variety of teacher observations and child/family products, collected over time, that reflect the child's progress and developmental status. Examples are collected in a natural setting which reflect his/her true attainment of skills.
- ✱ **Work samples:** a snapshot of the child's functional abilities in natural settings which can include photographs, drawings, or stories or anecdotes from the parent/caregiver about the child.
- ✱ **Language samples:** quotations and dictations of the child's language and/or the child and caregivers' language interaction.
- ✱ **Routines-based assessment:** the family and/or child care provider map out the child's daily routines, participation level and developmental needs in each routine (Boone & Crais, 2002).
- ✱ **Functional assessment:** the process of determining the relationship between events in a person's environment and the occurrence of behaviors.
- ✱ **Specialized tools:** a tool used, by team decision, in the event of limited data collection through traditional means. These tools are used to gain more information for IFSP development and intervention planning. Examples would include a child with a low functioning level, sensory impairment, social-emotional delay/attachment disorder or specific diagnosis such as autism.

Adapted from:

Boone, H. & Crais, E. (1999). Strategies for family-driven assessment and intervention planning. *Young Exceptional Children* 3(1). 2-11.

Zero to Three. (n.d.) *New visions: A parent's guide to understanding developmental assessment*. Retrieved March 24, 2004, from <http://www.zerotothree.org/visions.html>