

Standard 4: NAEYC Accreditation Criteria for Assessment of Child Progress

Program Standard: The program is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on children’s learning and development. These assessments occur within the context of reciprocal communications with families and with sensitivity to the cultural contexts in which children develop. Assessment results are used to benefit children by informing sound decisions about children, teaching, and program improvement.

Rationale: Teachers’ knowledge of each child helps them to plan appropriately challenging curricula and to tailor instruction that responds to each child’s strengths and needs. Further, systematic assessment is essential for identifying children who may benefit from more intensive instruction or intervention or who may need additional developmental evaluation. This information ensures that the program meets its goals for children’s learning and developmental progress and also informs program improvement efforts.

Definition of Assessment of Child Progress: Assessment is the process of observing, recording, and otherwise documenting what children do and how they do it as a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child. Assessment procedures should be consistent with the 2003 Joint Position Statement from NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, “Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation: Building an Effective, Accountable System in Programs for Children Birth through Age 8” (see appendix C). Assessment involves the multiple steps of collecting data on a child’s development and learning, determining its significance in light of the program goals and objectives, incorporating the information into planning for individuals and programs, and communicating the findings to families and other involved people. Assessment of child progress is integral to curriculum and instruction. In early childhood programs, the various assessment of child progress procedures that are used serve several purposes: (a) to plan instruction for individuals and groups, (b) to communicate with families, (c) to identify children who may be in need of specialized services or intervention, and (d) to inform program development.

4.A. Creating An Assessment Plan

4.A.01 U I T P K
Programs conduct assessments as an integral part of the program. Programs use assessments to support children's learning, using a variety of methods such as observations, checklists, rating scales, and individually administered tests.

4.A.02 U I T P K
The program has a written plan for assessment that describes assessment purposes, procedures, and uses of the results. The plan also includes

- conditions under which children will be assessed,
- timelines associated with assessments that occur throughout the year,
- procedures to keep individual child records confidential,
- ways to involve families in planning and implementing assessments, and
- methods to effectively communicate assessment information to families.

4.A.03 U I T P K
The program's written assessment plan includes the multiple purposes and uses of assessment including

- arranging for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment when indicated,
- identifying children's interests and needs,
- describing the developmental progress and learning of children,

- improving curriculum and adapting teaching practices and the environment,
- planning program improvement, and
- communicating with families.

4.B. Using Appropriate Assessment Methods

4.B.01 U I T P K

Programs use a variety of assessment methods that are sensitive to and informed by family culture, experiences, children's abilities and disabilities, and home language; are meaningful and accurate; and are used in settings familiar to the children.

4.B.02 U I T P K

Assessments obtain information on all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, health, and physical development (including self-help skills).

4.B.03 U I T P K

Norm-referenced and standardized tests are used primarily when seeking information on eligibility for special services or when collecting information for overall program effectiveness. When formal assessments are used, they are combined with informal methods such as observation, checklists, rating scales, and work sampling.

4.B.04 U I T P K

If the program uses published instruments, it evaluates information from the publisher about the standardization sample, standardization procedures, scoring, reliability, and validity to ensure that the results obtained with the instruments are valid for the program's purposes.

4.B.05 U I T P K

Staff-developed assessment methods

- are aligned with curriculum goals.
- provide an accurate picture of all children's abilities and progress.
- are appropriate and valid for their stated purposes.
- provide meaningful and stable results for all learners, including English-language learners and children with special needs.
- provide teachers with clear ideas for curriculum development and daily planning.
- are regularly reviewed to be certain that they are providing the needed information.

4.B.06 U I T P K

Staff share an understanding of the purposes, values, and uses of assessment in their program and can explain these to others.

4.C. Identifying Children's Interests and Needs and Describing Children's Progress

4.C.01 U I T P K

All children receive developmental screening that includes

- the timely screening of all children within three months of program entry;
- screening instruments that meet professional standards for standardization, reliability, and validity;
- screening instruments that have normative scores available on a population relevant for the child being screened;
- screening of children's health status and their sensory, language, cognitive, gross-motor, fine-motor, and social-emotional development;

- a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the screening program; and
- using the results to make referrals to appropriate professionals, when needed, and ensuring that the referrals are followed up.
- (This criterion is an Emerging Practice.)

4.C.02 U I T P K

Teachers assess the developmental progress of each child across all developmental areas, using a variety of instruments and multiple data sources that address the program's curriculum areas. Staff with diverse expertise and skills collect information across the full range of children's experiences.

4.C.03 U I T P K

Teachers refer to curriculum goals and developmental expectations when interpreting assessment data.

4.D. Adapting Curriculum, Individualizing Teaching, and Informing Program Development

4.D.01 U I T P K

Teachers or others who know the children and are able to observe their strengths, interests, and needs on an ongoing basis conduct assessments to inform classroom instruction and to make sound decisions about individual and group curriculum content, teaching approaches, and personal interactions.

4.D.02 U I T P K

Teaching teams meet at least weekly to interpret and use assessment results to align curriculum and teaching practices to the interests and needs of the children. (This criterion is an Emerging Practice.)

4.D.03 U I T P K

Teachers interact with children to assess their strengths and needs to inform curriculum development and individualize teaching.

4.D.04 U I T P K

Teachers and other professionals associated with the program use assessment methods and information to design goals for individual children as well as to guide curriculum planning and monitor progress.

4.D.05 I

Teachers talk and interact with infants to assess and encourage use of language (e.g., smiles, sounds, eye contact, and cooing).

4.D.06 I

Teachers observe infants to assess development and use these observations to modify the curriculum, interactions, and care.

4.D.07 T P K

Teachers talk and interact with individual children and encourage their use of language to inform assessment of children's strengths, interests, and needs.

4.D.08 T P K

Teachers observe and document children's work, play, behaviors, and interactions to assess progress. They use the information gathered to plan and modify the curriculum and their teaching.

4.E. Communicating with Families and Involving Families in the Assessment Process

4.E.01 U I T P K

Families have ongoing opportunities to share the results of observations from home to contribute to the assessment process.

4.E.02 U I T P K

Family members are provided information, either verbally or in writing, about their child's development and learning on at least a quarterly basis, with written reports at least two times a year.

4.E.03 U I T P K

Teachers, families, and relevant specialists have regular opportunities to participate in two-way communication conferences to discuss each child's progress, accomplishments, difficulties in the classroom and at home as well as to plan learning activities.

4.E.04 U I T P K

Staff work to achieve consensus with families about assessment methods that will best meet the child's needs.

4.E.05 U I T P K

Communication with families about their child's assessments is sensitive to family values, culture, identity, and home language.

4.E.06 U I T P K

The program staff provide families with information about the choice, use, scoring, and interpretation of screening and assessment methods that includes

- the purpose and use for which an assessment is designed and its programmatic purpose and use,
- the interpretations of the results and their meaning in terms of future learning opportunities for their child,
- the way teaching staff or others have been trained to use assessment procedures and interpret results as well as the conditions under which the child will be assessed (e.g., group size, time constraints, familiarity with adults involved), and
- access to or information about the specific instruments used.

4.E.07 U I T P K

The program staff provide families with a full explanation of confidentiality by

- listing the categories of individuals who will have access to individual child screening and assessment results as well as the reasons for their access.
- sharing regulations governing access to files and familial rights.
- describing the procedures used to keep individual child records confidential.
- explaining how and why children's individual screening results and assessment information will be represented, used, and interpreted.
- (This criterion is an Emerging Practice.)