

## Informal Assessments

Dr. K. A. Korb  
University of Jos

## Overview

- **Informal Assessment:** Assessment of child development and learning that is ongoing, in many contexts, usually designed and carried out by the teacher
  - Occurs on a daily basis
  - Occurs in natural activities
- Sometimes also called *Authentic Assessment* because it is done as children engage in daily classroom activities
  - Children are learning as they are being assessed
- The purpose of informal assessment is to understand children's knowledge, learning, and development to inform instruction
- Informal Assessment is done to gather information about all domains of development

## Informal Assessment can be conducted in...

- Playtime
  - Interests by what they play with
  - Social skills and character by interactions with other children
  - Cognition in their level of play
  - Self-regulation of behavior
- Daily routines
  - How well do they communicate their wants/needs
  - Gross and fine motor development
  - Cooperation and obedience
- Participation in instructional activities
  - Cognitive abilities in learning tasks
  - Self-regulation of behavior

## Effective Informal Assessment: Reliability and Validity

- **Reliability:** Consistency of results
  - Young children's behavior is naturally inconsistent from day to day due to low self regulation abilities
  - **Reliability** in informal assessment requires collecting information about a child at many occasions over time
  - **Inter-rater reliability:** Collect information from multiple sources (e.g., teacher, parents, teaching assistants)
- **Validity:** Measuring what is supposed to be measured
  - Assessment should be related to learning objectives and/or developmental benchmarks

### Effective Informal Assessment: Objectivity

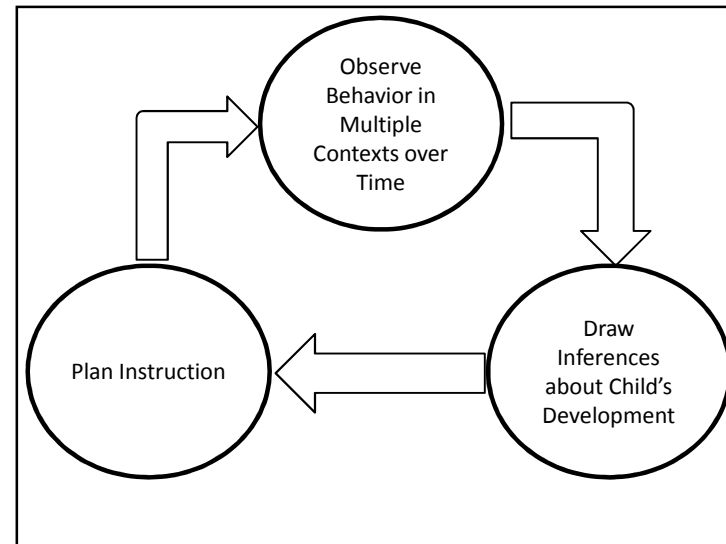
- **Objectivity:** Ability to collect information about a child that is free from personal feelings or bias
- Requires sensitivity and awareness to potential bias from:
  - Liking or disliking the child
  - Judgment about one domain (e.g., behavior) may influence judgment in another domain (e.g., literacy skills)
  - Judgments can be influenced by the observer's fatigue, stress, or other distractions

### Observation

- A key tool in assessing a child's development is observation
- **Observation:** Action of closely observing a child's *behavior*
- Assessment via observation of behavior requires inference, an attempt to provide a logical *explanation for behavior*
  - Examples: Misbehavior leads to inferences about social/emotional development
    - Performance in naming letters leads to inferences about literacy skills
  - These inferences/explanations may or may not be accurate
- Inferences are best made by observing behaviors over time in multiple contexts

### Observation

- **Observation:** Action of closely observing a child's *behavior*
  - Observation is a key tool in assessing a child's development
- Assessment via observation of behavior then requires inference about the child's development
  - **Inference:** An attempt to provide a logical *explanation for behavior*
  - Examples: Misbehavior leads to an inference about social/emotional development
    - Performance in naming letters leads to inference about literacy skills
- It is important to differentiate between observation and inference



## Observation

- Both making good observations and then inferences about children's development are skills that requires considerable time, energy, and practice
  - It is important to distinguish between behavior that is observed and the inference – the interpretation of the event

## Observation and Inference

### Observation

1. Child A hits Child B
2. Child C does not put away his art supplies when directed to
3. Child D struggles to hold a pencil.
4. Child E shares her indomie with Child F
5. Child G opens a picture book and describes the pictures

### Inference

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Observation

- Skilled observation entails:
  - Knowledge of child development
  - Avoiding jumping to conclusions without collecting enough information
  - Empathetic to the child (assumes the best)
  - Avoiding preconceived ideas and bias
  - Forming hypotheses and then observing for verification or rejection
  - Generating a plan for further intervention or instruction

## Incidental Observations

- **Incidental:** Occurring by chance in connection with something else
- **Incidental Observations:** Observation of a child that occurs naturally in classroom activities
  - Facial expressions
  - Responses to questions
  - Interactions with other children

### Focused Observations

- **Focused Observations:** Observation using a prepared format (e.g., checklist) to systematically record observations
- Can (but not necessarily) observe a child in a set activity for the child to complete (e.g., reading a storybook)

### Observation Record

Childs Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Approaches to Learning	Social/Character Development
Language/Literacy	Cognition: Mathematical Thinking
Cognition: Scientific Reasoning	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

### Focused Observations

- Good observations include:
  - Clearly stated goals for the observation
  - Clearly defined target behavior(s) to observe
  - Well designed instrument to record observations
  - Enough time to conduct the observation
  - Clear scoring procedures (if scoring is necessary)

### Anecdotal Record

- **Anecdotal Record:** Short description of a child's behavior
  - Could include either typical or unusual behavior
- Purposes:
  - Track children's behavior over time
  - Make instructional decisions
  - Provide evidence when communicating strengths or concerns to parents

## Anecdotal Record

- Include in the Anecdotal record:
  - Identifying information (name of child, date and location of observation)
  - Description of the context (other children involved, materials, etc.)
  - Description of child's behavior
  - Interpretation is separate from the behavior observed

## Anecdotal Record

- Observation of behavior should be accurate, objective and specific.
- Do not make assumptions/interpretations when recording the behavior.
- Anecdotes should be on a variety of children and activities.
- Ask yourself the following question when observing: "Would anyone viewing the same scene write it in the exact same way?"

## Anecdotal Record Examples

Child's Name: Tina C.  
Date & Time: 4/2/15 8:45 am  
Place: Nursery II classroom-free play

**Observed Event & Behaviors:**  
Melissa sat next to Tina at the reading table. Tina greeted Melissa with "Hi, Melissa! Want to read a book with me?" Melissa said that she couldn't read. Tina replied, "We can look at the pictures."

**Interpretation:** Tina demonstrates an interest in reading storybooks. She also initiates cooperation with other children.

Child's Name: Holley J.  
Date & Time: 4/10/15 10:20 am  
Place: Playground & snack

**Observed Event & Behaviors:**  
Holley and Kimberly were pretending to be riding on their horses. They galloped around the playground and pretended to feed them at snack time.

**Interpretation:**

## Checklist

- **Checklist:** Observation guide to record the presence or absence of specific behaviors or skills
  - Can include developmental milestones or learning objectives
- Four steps in making a checklist
  - Identify skills to be included
  - List separately behaviors to be observed
  - Sequence checklist in order of difficulty
  - Develop simple format for record keeping

## Checklist of Language and Literacy

(Enz & Morrow, 2009)

### Listening Comprehension

- Listens with increased attention
- Understands simple oral directions
- Listens to and engages in conversation

### Vocabulary

- Shows an increase in listening and speaking vocabulary
- Uses new vocabulary in daily communication
- Refines understanding of words
- Increases listening vocabulary

### Motivation to Read

- Demonstrates an interest in books and reading
- Enjoys listening to and discussing books
- Requests being read to and re-reading the same story
- Attempts to read and write

### Knowledge of Literary Forms

- Predicts what will happen next in a story
- Imitates special language in a book
- Asks questions about the information or events in a book
- Connects information and events in books to real life

## Rating Scales

- **Rating Scales:** Observer makes judgments about the child's knowledge, skills, or development

## Early Learning Observation & Rating Scale

(ELORS): Social and Emotional

[http://www.getreadytoread.org/images/content/downloads/ELORS\\_forms/2606\\_parent\\_childform2010.pdf](http://www.getreadytoread.org/images/content/downloads/ELORS_forms/2606_parent_childform2010.pdf)

Behavior and Skills	Little or no Concern			Great Concern
Making Friends	1	2	3	4
Playing cooperatively with other children	1	2	3	4
Participating in social activities	1	2	3	4
Using turn-taking in play	1	2	3	4
Labeling emotions of others (e.g., angry, happy)	1	2	3	4
Expressing anger appropriately	1	2	3	4
Expressing frustration appropriately	1	2	3	4
Functioning independently of adult attention	1	2	3	4
Maintaining friendships	1	2	3	4
Showing a range of emotions	1	2	3	4
<b>Average</b>	1	2	3	4

**Participation Chart:** Track what the child participated in during free time

Child's Name	Activity During Free Time				
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri

## Other Types of Informal Assessment

- **Daily performance work samples:** Student-created products to document performance
  - Include name, date, and learning objective
- **Conferences:** Parents, teacher and sometimes child discusses what child has learned, what the child can do well, and where improvement is needed. Suggestions are made on how the child can be helped at home. Parents are allowed ask questions
- **Self-Assessments:** Short interviews for children to discuss and talk about how they think they are progressing in a particular area.
  - “How well do you cooperate with other children?”

## Portfolio

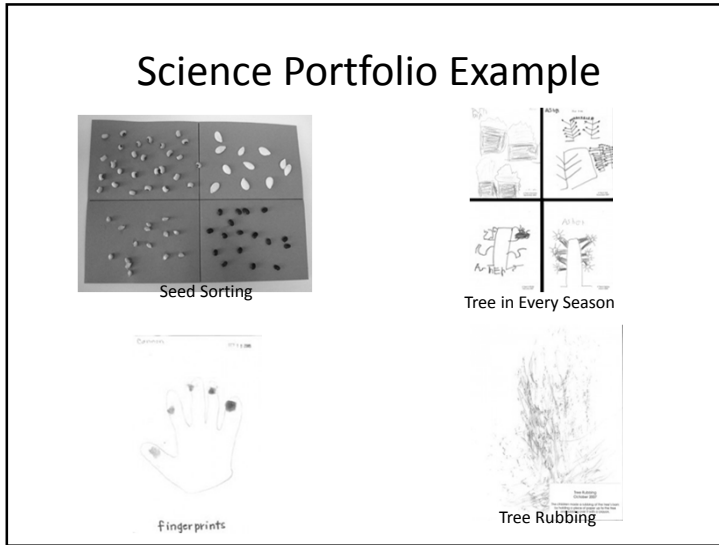
- **Portfolio:** Collections of information regarding each child’s developmental progress
  - **Working portfolio:** Folder in which both the student and teacher place work that reflects a student’s typical achievement over time
  - **Showcase portfolio:** Few carefully selected samples of work that illustrate best effort, progress, and achievements

## Portfolio

- Demonstrates student progress over time
- Can contain material from students, teachers, parents, peers, and school materials
- Systematic effort to collect meaningful student work
- Students should be actively involved in selecting pieces for portfolio

## Portfolio

- Steps in portfolio development
  - Establish a policy: Guidelines on what will be saved and how material is used
  - Collect work samples
  - Take photographs
  - Conduct learning log conferences: Includes records of plans and accomplishments of individual children written by the teacher and child
  - Conduct portfolio conferences: Child, parent, teacher to review portfolio and discuss progress and areas of improvement



### Evaluating Children's Performance

- **Rubric:** Scoring guides that describe the criteria in each level of performance
  - Useful for teachers to make marking more objective
  - Useful for children to know what they should aim for

### Example Rubric: Physical Development

Objective	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Locomotion	Always skillfully utilizes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumping backwards</li> <li>• Hopping</li> <li>• Skipping</li> <li>• Leaping</li> </ul>	Usually skillfully utilizes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumping backwards</li> <li>• Hopping</li> <li>• Skipping</li> <li>• Leaping</li> </ul>	Occasionally skillfully utilizes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumping backwards</li> <li>• Hopping</li> <li>• Skipping</li> <li>• Leaping</li> </ul>	Rarely skillfully utilizes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumping backwards</li> <li>• Hopping</li> <li>• Skipping</li> <li>• Leaping</li> </ul>
Movement	Always performs rhythmical actions skillfully and with ease	Usually performs rhythmical actions skillfully and with ease	Occasionally performs rhythmical actions skillfully and with ease	Rarely performs rhythmical actions skillfully and with ease