Assessing and Guiding Young Children's Development and Learning

Sixth Edition

Oralie McAfee · Deborah J. Leong · Elena Bodrova

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Preface

Authentic assessment, done in the familiar context of the classroom, is at the heart of teaching and learning in the early childhood programs. Only through knowing children's current capabilities can we provide experiences that build on their strengths and support continued development and learning. The purpose of this text is to demonstrate how to do authentic classroom-based assessment, and then how to interpret and use that information to plan curriculum responsive to and supportive of children's learning. Specific sections describe teachers' legal, ethical, and professional responsibilities in assessment, how to organize for summary assessments and formative assessments, how to understand standardized assessments, and how to communicate with parents. There is a special appendix to help teachers design assessments in all developmental domains with suggested behaviors to observe as well as developmental continua in these domains to help teachers identify the next steps in learning and development. The sixth edition of *Assessing and Guiding Young Children's Development and Learning* has been revised and updated to reflect the rapidly developing concepts of appropriate assessment, the expected educational outcomes, the way young children develop and learn, how the authentic assessment process relates to the use of formal state-mandated assessments, and what the early childhood teacher's responsibilities are in assessment.

New to This Edition

- The book has been converted to a digital format. In the Pearson etext, students will find the following digital assessments within each chapter:
  - *Check Your Understanding* questions associated with major topics in the chapter have been added along with feedback; correct answers as well as incorrect answers are explained after the student selects the best answer.
  - *Media Connections* that give living examples of the major concepts in the chapters have been added with questions that the students should think about as they view the videos. Students then respond and are provided expert feedback on their responses.
- The Glossary terms can be clicked on in the Pearson etext to reveal definitions.
- One-page examples of assessment forms of commercially available assessments that are available on the web have been replaced with online references so that students can find these websites and explore the most up-to-date versions of the full assessments.
- Information about the Common Core State Standards has been added to all discussions of state and local standards.
- Learning Outcomes that mirror the major headings in each chapter have been added.

Underlying Themes

The underlying themes of the content are congruent with national trends in early childhood education and in assessment at all levels.

Assessment as a "Work in Progress"

This text presents assessment as an evolving, expanding aspect of teaching and learning. We show how formative assessment can improve children's learning and we also explain its relationship to more traditional summative evaluation. Sections on "Standards," "Benchmarks," and related vocabulary define and describe how these concepts relate to assessment. Guides and examples show how teachers can be sensitive to linguistic, social, cultural, and individual diversity in a rapidly changing society. The legal framework relating to assessment is outlined, and its meaning for teachers is discussed. Current best thinking and terminology are incorporated throughout.

Assessment as Classroom-Based and Authentic

The focus is classroom assessment—ways of finding out about and keeping track of children's development and learning that are a natural part of ongoing classroom life and typical activities of children. Such assessment can be used by people working with young children in varied early childhood programs. The extensive section on portfolios reflects their popularity with teachers, children, and parents. Standardized testing is treated from the perspective of the classroom teacher.

Assessment as a Process

Assessment is presented as a flexible, practical process that enables readers to organize the information they need to learn as well as what they will need to do as teachers. The process begins with the "why, what, and when" of assessment; progresses through data collection and recording; and then shows how to compile, interpret, and use the results. Numerous examples from different developmental and curriculum areas show how each step is carried out with young children.

Assessment as a Professional Activity

Assessment is treated as a highly professional activity, not something done casually, haphazardly, or simply because it is required. The text is designed to help teachers improve "the conceptual and procedural foundations for assessment" (Hiebert & Calfee, 1989, p. 50). There are suggestions for improving the reliability, validity, and fairness of assessment; for meeting ethical and legal responsibilities; and for communicating with others about assessment results. Most important, we emphasize the teacher's professional responsibility to interpret and use assessment results to help all children learn. The concepts and procedures that are presented are grounded in sound conceptual and scientific bases from many related disciplines. They follow the guidelines for appropriate classroom assessment outlined by major professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.

We recognize that learning to assess children and use that information to guide classroom decision making is not easy. It requires learning new concepts and making fine distinctions, such as between collecting information and recording it. It implies conscious control over the way teachers interact with children,

so they can ask questions, make suggestions, and present tasks that respond to children's needs and support children's learning.

Child Assessment and Its Link to Child Development and Learning

One of the most difficult aspects of assessment is not collecting and summarizing the data but understanding how to use the data to inform instruction. To do this, the teacher must understand how a particular behavior, concept, or skill grows in children. To help bridge this gap, a set of developmental continua are provided to assist teachers in identifying what scaffolding and support might be offered to a child as an individual or to a group of children with whom the teacher is working.

Philosophical Orientation

Although the assessment procedures presented can be used with any approach to early childhood education, the examples reflect our convictions about young children's growth. We see development and learning as an integrated process that fuses the universal yet variable process of human development with an individual child's personal encounter with the social and cultural world. We see adults and other children as active participants in that development and learning—assessing, instructing, responding, modeling, guiding, assisting, and scaffolding in developmentally appropriate ways. We see learning "processes" and "products" as equally important as children develop and learn in a supportive, responsive environment.

Organization

Topics and chapters are organized to provide readers maximum flexibility in meeting their own learning needs. Chapters can be read in order: Part I (Chapters 1 and 2) prepares teachers to approach assessment professionally; Part II (Chapters 3 through 9) takes teachers through the steps in the assessment process; and Part III (Chapters 10 and 11) takes assessment beyond the classroom—to what an early childhood teacher needs to know about standardized testing in today's society. It also discusses how to communicate and collaborate with parents, other professionals, and the larger community. Each part and chapter also stands alone so that readers may select topics to meet their own needs.

Features

Current Expectations of Teachers

The changing emphasis in educational assessment—from sorting and ranking children to helping them learn—is incorporated throughout the text. The reality of numerous required assessments and increased expectations of early childhood teachers is recognized. The impact of a diverse society's commitment to educate all children is addressed, with practical guidance for teachers.

Legal, Ethical, and Professional Responsibilities

The social, demographic, legal, ethical, and professional context of assessment of young children is summarized, with emphasis on ways teachers can collect and use information that is reliable, valid, and fair to all children.

Assessing the Assessments

A chapter on standardized tests and other published assessment instruments distills this lengthy topic into what early childhood teachers need to know to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in education today.

Assessment and Analysis Guides

Easy-reference assessment and analysis guides in Appendix A present development and learning accomplishments and continua for major child development and curriculum areas. These are ready for readers to use as references for interpreting assessment and for curriculum planning in response to assessment.

"Red Flags"

Appendix B lists developmental "red flags" that alert teachers to patterns of behavior that signal the need for a closer look.

Self-Check Questions, Reflection, and Study and Discussion Prompts

Each chapter presents an item called *Check Your Understanding*, which gives readers an opportunity to review their understanding of the chapter's content by answering questions and comparing their answers with our feedback. The features referred to as For Personal Reflection and For Further Study and Discussion bring the teacher as a person into the concepts under consideration. For Further Study and Discussion prompts, along with the questions in the *Media Connections*, promote complex thinking about the application of assessment concepts and principles in early childhood classrooms

Summaries and Suggested Readings

Summaries highlight important points in each chapter. The Suggested Readings related to the subject of that chapter show readers where to find additional information.

Glossary

The glossary defines current assessment, testing, and curriculum terminology in clear, nontechnical language.

Examples and Applications

Numerous charts, figures, forms, and illustrations make clear what is being discussed and link the topics to the real world of children and schools. Examples from teachers' classroom data collections as well as examples of children's work from the range of early childhood programs show how assessment is carried out at all levels.

A Sourcebook for Teachers

The text recognizes that when students become teachers, they need information they can refer to easily and in a timely manner. In that regard, *Assessing and Guiding Young Children's Development and Learning* functions as a sourcebook as well as a text. Teachers can refer to the developmental continua and learning progressions; "red flags"; recording forms; and the many guides for assessment, analysis, and planning.

This text is grounded in our own teaching and learning experiences, including teaching young children and working with parents from all socioeconomic levels and diverse cultures and languages. We expanded that teaching and learning to preservice and in-service early childhood personnel in a variety of settings, helping them learn about assessment and curriculum and how to create classrooms that are responsive to children. The examples and illustrations we share are real, but the names and places are fictitious. To avoid the problems presented by the lack of a gender-neutral pronoun for *child* and *teacher,* we use *he* and *she* alternately because children and teachers come in both genders. To recognize the diverse structures of families, the terms *parents, families,* and *guardians* used interchangeably.

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CHAPTER 1

Assessment in Early Childhood: A Work in Progress

Learning Outcomes

1. Define the various types of assessment in early childhood education and the terms associated with each.
2. Explain the role of teachers concerning assessment in early childhood settings.
3. Name the main factors contributing to current practices in assessment.
4. Describe teachers' responsibility with regard to using assessment.

Early childhood teachers in classrooms throughout the United States study and assess children's development and learning. They observe children at work and play, and record information about what they observe. They collect and analyze samples of children's work, and set up portfolios to display children's competence. They ask children to explain and describe their thinking processes. They may administer teacher-made or published tests, or evaluate each child's general progress as required by a school or a program. They may give tests that focus on diagnosing children's strengths and needs in mathematics or literacy. They document children's learning through checklists, rubrics, narratives, photographs, recordings, and other means.

Teachers assist in identifying children who may need special services because of a disability. They work with families to help them understand their child's development, and with other teachers and specialists to share information and knowledge. They may evaluate their classrooms and the experiences they offer children using a locally developed or published scale. They compile and study the information they have obtained and seek to understand what it means for a child or for a group of children.

All these activities, and more, are part of assessment. Not every school or child-care center will require or expect that teachers do each of these things. What teachers are expected to do will vary depending on the age and grade levels of the children, the sponsoring agency (public or private school, specialized prekindergarten), and the requirements placed on the school or center. Regardless of the setting, effective early childhood education includes appropriate assessment of children's development and learning.

Assessment Vocabulary

The term *assessment* refers to almost any form of measurement and appraisal of what children know and can do, including tests, observations, interviews, reports from knowledgeable sources, and other means. The term is frequently used to refer to one appraisal or one measure, or to avoid the negative connotations of words such as *test*, *testing*, and *evaluation*. For example, a "test (or inventory) of basic skills" might become an "assessment of basic skills," and an "evaluation of a child's ability to interact with other children" might be called an "assessment." Some sources use *test* or *measurement* interchangeably with *assessment* (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002; Popham, 2000).

Assessment is also used in a specific way to mean "the process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information" (McAfee, Leong, & Bodrova, 2004). In this usage, assessment involves several sources of information gathered at different times and in different situations, then recorded, integrated, and interpreted by people sensitive to children's learning (Russell & Airasian, 2011).

This text focuses on *classroom assessment* of children—how to gather and document the information teachers need to identify the strengths, needs, and progress of the children in their classrooms so they can help those children learn. However, teachers frequently do other types of assessment: assist in developmental screening, give standardized tests of different types, fill out official reports on each child's progress, and inventory and report on their own classroom environment and practices. The text includes information to help teachers fulfill these other assessment responsibilities.

The terms connected with different approaches to classroom assessment can be confusing. Measurement experts make fine distinctions among terms

that are often used interchangeably by others. *Alternative assessment* refers to almost any type of assessment other than standardized tests and similar developmental inventories and achievement tests. Sometimes such assessment is referred to as *informal assessment,* as opposed to *formal assessment* when using standardized and other published instruments. *Performance assessment* refers to a specific type of assessment in which children demonstrate a skill or create a product that shows their learning (Chappuis, Stiggins, Chappuis, & Arter, 2011). If motor coordination is being measured, the child performs an appropriate action. If writing is under consideration, the child writes. The term *authentic assessment* applies to assessment as part of children's ongoing life and learning in the classroom, playground, hallway, lunchroom, and other typical school and center settings. In authentic assessment, tasks are as close as possible to "bona fide practical and intellectual challenges" (Finn, 1991, p. 10). For instance, instead of underlining a picture or "bubbling in" a circle as evidence they can match, sort, and classify pictures of objects, in authentic assessment children match, sort, and classify actual objects or information in school projects. Instead of counting dots or pictures on a page, children count to solve a classroom or individual problem.

Watch the video "Authentic Assessment" for an overview of authentic assessment and a discussion of its use in special education. Examples of authentic assessment used in this video are from upper elementary or middle school classrooms. What examples from early childhood classrooms would you use to illustrate concepts addressed in this video? (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_gibuFZXZw)

Formative assessment refers to gathering information that is then used to shape and improve—to help in the formation of—an instructional program. It is assessment *for* student learning as well as assessment *of* their learning (Stiggins, 2008). Most classroom assessment is done for formative purposes. *Summative assessment* or evaluation is done at the end of a period of time, such as a school year or grading period, to determine and document how much children have learned or the effectiveness of a program. Grades and accountability tests or evaluations are summative assessments.

The video "Formative and Summative Assessment" explains the uses of formative and summative assessment in the context of training for a triathlon. How would you apply the explanation of these two forms of assessment to children's learning of academic skills such as reading and writing? (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vN9xq90JCfE)

Assessment should be aligned with the program's curriculum and expected outcomes—what is taught and what children are expected to learn. *Curriculum-based assessment* implies that children are assessed on what is taught. *Curriculum-embedded assessment* suggests assessment that is integrated with teaching and learning experiences, in contrast to tests that require children to perform on demand. These and other vocabulary terms related to assessment are defined in the glossary and explained further in the text.

Expectations of Teachers

Professional organizations, policy makers, parents, the general public, administrators, specialists, and other professional educators have high expectations of teachers as assessors of children's learning.

Professional Organizations

Leaders of organizations focusing on the care, development, and education of children expect teachers to be competent in assessment as an integral part of teaching. In its position statement on early childhood professional preparation, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2009) outlines what people who are preparing to teach young children should know and be able to do to use assessment effectively.

In a statement issued jointly by the National Education Association, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the American Federation of Teachers (1990), teachers' competencies in educational assessment are identified in more detail. These professional organizations, for example, expect competent teachers to be able to meet seven standards that address all steps in the

assessment process—from choosing an appropriate instrument to communicating assessment results to various audiences.

Policy Makers, Administrators, Parents, and the General Public

Federal, state, and local policy makers, parents, and the general public hold schools and teachers responsible for children's school-related achievement. Under the general term **accountability**, educators are expected to report their procedures and results. Large-scale accountability reports, such as those required by federal and state laws and regulations and by many large school districts, depend heavily on standardized test scores. Even when accountability tests are not given to children before third grade, as is recommended by most professional organizations, assessment practices with younger children are likely to be influenced. School personnel are sensitive to expectations that children do well on accountability tests. Teachers may be expected to administer tests or compile other results to track children's progress, and to explain those results to others. Administrators use student assessment results as one of the sources of evidence when making instructional or personnel decisions. Accountability assessment results are available to parents and the general public, and are often highly publicized when they are reported (Popham, 2013).

Other Educational Professionals

Other professionals expect teachers to understand and contribute assessment information about children's development and learning to staff meetings and conferences, and to any data the school is required to supply. For example, teachers must have well-documented information ready to present if they intend to make a contribution to a team that assesses and makes recommendations about children with special needs. They must be able to provide specific examples if they ask a specialist for help or seek guidance from fellow teachers. The short notes that teachers often make as reminders to themselves may not be sufficient for people unfamiliar with the task, context, or child (Valencia, Hiebert, & Afflerbach, 2014). Teachers are also expected to understand assessment terms that others use.

Many families relocate frequently. Teachers need to understand and use any assessment information children bring with them, and to send with each departing child information that will help the next teacher plan appropriately for that child. As children go from prekindergarten to kindergarten to first and second grade, their records should help the receiving teacher know each child's strengths and needs.

Factors Contributing to Current Practices in Assessment

Political, demographic, social, and educational trends contribute to current practices in assessment. These trends include

- Required testing and assessment
- The diversity of children and families
- Concepts about children's development and learning
- Concepts about the place of assessment in teaching and learning
- Limitations and inadequacies of standardized testing

Required Testing and Assessment

The development of educational *standards* by professional organizations and states was accompanied by mandated assessment of children's progress toward those standards. Every state in the United States has developed standards for K–12 education and mandates assessment, usually testing, at designated grade levels to determine if children meet those standards. Many states have adopted *Common Core Learning Standards* in language arts and mathematics for grades K–12 and have piloted assessments aligned with these standards at some grade levels. Although no Common Core standards exist for preK, these standards affect new revisions of state early learning guidelines and related assessments. Federal testing and reporting requirements influence state and local requirements and expectations. Early childhood teachers, whether in preschool or primary, feel the increased pressure and implied threat of such wide-scale, high-stakes accountability testing. States and local districts have their own testing and assessment requirements. Children are retained in their current grade or recommended for summer school based on the outcomes of tests. The test scores of schools, school districts, and different population groups are publicized and compared. Federal-, state-, and district-required testing is almost universally dreaded by teachers and children, and is regarded as misguided and inappropriate by assessment specialists. However, it is praised by policy makers who regard testing for accountability as central for improving education.

The Diversity of Children and Families

Children in early childhood programs mirror the diversity of the larger society. They are diverse in almost every way: race, ethnicity, culture, and language used in the home; household income and family structure; educational level attained by parents; urban, suburban, or rural home setting; and how often families move from place to place. Continued immigration from countries around the world and differing birthrates among groups indicate that diversity will continue to increase (Castro, Garcia, & Markos, 2013; Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2009). Assessment that yields a true picture of what children from diverse backgrounds know and can do is essential (Bowman, 1992; Bowman & Ray, 2012; Snow & Van Hemel, 2008).

Linguistic differences present a special challenge. In 2011, the number of children over the age of 5 whose home language was Spanish reached 37.6 million out of a record 50.1 non-English speakers (Motel & Patten, 2013). These millions of children are learning to comprehend, speak, read, and write a new language. Spanish is spoken by around 75% of dual-language/English-language learners in the United States. In addition, more than 100 other native languages add to this linguistic diversity (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2009). These include Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese, Urdu, Tagalog, Arabic, Navajo, Hindi, and other languages from around the world.

The type and number of prior educational experiences children have varies. Some children entering kindergarten or first grade may have been in group child care since infancy. For others, kindergarten or first grade may be their first experience in a group. Some children will have attended every "enrichment" experience available—swimming classes, soccer teams, science workshops, and music lessons. Others will have had none of these experiences.

Inclusion of children with disabilities increases the diversity in early childhood classrooms. Assessing their strengths and needs requires flexible assessment practices that include a child's functioning in everyday life (Gargiulo &

Kilgo, 2013). Diversity among families and children in the United States is increasing, not decreasing, as is that diversity's influence on assessment practices.

Concepts about Children's Development and Learning

Children are expected to learn more at an earlier age than in years past. Every state has a document (or documents) that specifies what that state expects children to learn in kindergarten through high school—these are called the state's *standards*, or *essential learnings*. Every state that funds prekindergarten programs specifies what children are expected to learn in those programs—its *early learning standards*. Head Start, the federal early childhood program for low-income children, has Child Outcome Statements that identify expected outcomes for children. These outcome statements are listed in the revised Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework that is posted on the Head Start website.

Several important research syntheses summarize knowledge about young children's learning and urge greater attention to cognitive as well as noncognitive skill development (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Cross, Woods, & Schweingruber, 2009; Kendziora, Weissberg, Ji, & Dusenbury, 2011; National Institute for Literacy, 2008; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). National and state policy makers emphasize an early focus on academic skills related to school readiness and school success. For example, research on preventing reading difficulties identifies specific skills and knowledge that help young children learn to read: phonological awareness, concepts of print, vocabulary, as well as letter name and letter sound knowledge. These are expected outcomes of early learning and part of the curriculum in many kindergarten and prekindergarten programs.

There is also more information about *how* young children learn. Children actively construct knowledge within a social context that affects what and how they learn. They do not acquire knowledge and skills all on their own, automatically developing more complex skills, ideas, and understandings as they mature. Nor do they simply learn what is taught and "reinforced"—the behaviorist psychology that once dominated learning theories. Learning and teaching are complex enterprises in which children, adults, the things children work and play with, language interactions, and all aspects of the child's life—in and out of school—interact to influence that learning (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Children don't simply learn more and more discrete facts and skills. Rather, they try to organize information, develop theories, see relationships, and "develop their own cognitive maps of the interconnections among facts and concepts" (Shepard, 1989). Assessment practices should mirror the active learning processes implied in this complex, dynamic, and holistic view of child development and learning.

Concepts about the Place of Assessment in Teaching and Learning

Historically, teachers assessed children's development and learning primarily for the purpose of making comparisons, assigning grades, sorting into "high" or "low" groups, or determining who "passed" and who "failed." Unfortunately, many began to fail in preschool and kindergarten, where such failure placed them at a severe disadvantage in the complex technical society of the United States. One approach to this concern is to hold teachers and schools "accountable" for children's learning through large-scale testing, as described earlier in the section titled "Required Testing and Assessment." Another is to use assessment as a way to help teachers determine what children need to learn and how

to coach and support their progress. This concept of how assessment can enhance student learning is called variously *assessment for learning, assessment in the service of instruction, formative assessment,* or other terms that indicate the shift in thinking that we emphasize throughout this text. Information from ongoing classroom assessment is used for intentional instruction to help children learn, which may include changes in instructional strategies, classroom organization, curriculum emphasis, adult–child interaction, or other variables that influence children's learning. The information from formative assessment is used to *form,* or shape, the learning opportunities children have. It is not a type of test, checklist, or rating scale. It is a process of identifying, through assessment, what children know and can do in relation to expected outcomes and, if needed, adjusting the learning experiences to help them learn (McMillan, 2008; Popham, 2009; Shepard, 2008). Chapter 8 focuses on ways teachers can make those needed adjustments.

The essential difference between *formative assessment* and *summative assessment* lies in what the assessment information is used for. Summative assessment is usually "assessment *of* learning." It is used to evaluate children's progress at a given point in time toward the expected outcomes of the program—typically on report cards, reports to funding agencies, or placement decisions. The assessment is usually relatively formal, even when it is done by a classroom teacher for grading purposes. Teachers of primary-age children separate the information they get to correct and guide children's learning (formative) from the information they gather to mark report cards (summative). There is no reason that information cannot be used to help children learn. However, its primary purpose is to summarize and report. The results, particularly from large-scale tests, often come long after children need the help, and in a form that is difficult to relate to classroom learning.

Both formative and summative assessments are needed in today's schools and centers. Greater emphasis on assessment to identify what is needed to help children develop and learn (assessment *for* learning) holds the promise of better results when teachers assess to document and report (assessment *of* learning).

Limitations and Inadequacies of Standardized Testing

Standardized tests are the focus of much of the criticism of testing and assessment. Standardized tests are administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard manner. They include developmental inventories, prekindergarten developmental screening tests, reading tests and inventories, academic readiness tests, diagnostic tools for special needs, group aptitude and achievement tests, and tests in almost any developmental or curriculum domain. They are usually developed, published, and distributed by commercial publishers. Criticisms of these commercial tests include the power given to them by political and educational policy makers and by society, the overuse and misuse of tests and test results, and problems with the quality of the tests. For example, items may be poorly constructed, ambiguous, and open to several interpretations, only one of which is "right." Scoring, analyzing, and reporting the results of these large-scale tests are subject to error. Other concerns are the tests' unsuitability for a young culturally and linguistically diverse population, and the undue influence of tests and testing on children's learning (Snow & Van Hemel, 2008). Early childhood teachers need to know about standardized tests and testing; how such tests are constructed and scored; and how to evaluate them, prepare young children to take them, and explain the resulting scores to others.

Professional Responsibility

Teachers carry out assessment responsibilities concurrently with their other teaching responsibilities. Demands on their time and expertise can become great. For instance, it takes time and effort to develop the knowledge and skill to assess well, to integrate sound assessment practices into instruction, and to use those results to help children learn. When testing and assessment for other purposes are also added to teachers' existing responsibilities, assessment may seem burdensome. However, there is no easy way to make required accountability testing and assessment vanish, even when their sometimes adverse effects are recognized. Educators must balance the public's need to know the outcomes of educational programs with a teacher's need for different information to guide classroom decisions.

Likewise, there are no easy testing or assessment techniques to tell teachers all they need to know to make good instructional decisions; there are, however, many ways to increase the amount and quality of information teachers have about children. Regular use of classroom assessment to guide decision making may help educators and parents regain faith in their own educational judgment and wisdom and in their ability to sensitively appraise, understand, and assist in the development of young children. Researchers have argued that those in the field of education need to resist allegiance to any one type of technology or assessment instrument and must insist on a thoughtfully select set of assessments that include different kinds of assessments (Haney & Madaus, 1989).

The purpose of this text is to help teachers learn about those different kinds and mixes of appraisals. Our hope is that teachers will then take the initiative to integrate assessment and instruction into a coherent, responsive curriculum that enhances and supports children's development and learning.

Summary

Teachers in schools and centers throughout the United States assess children's development and learning in a wide variety of ways and use that information for different purposes. An assessment vocabulary has been developed to describe and distinguish these different approaches to assessment. The focus in this text is on authentic classroom assessment: finding out what children know and can do and discovering their attitudes, interests, and approaches to learning, in order to guide and assist children's growth, development, and learning—not simply to grade, rank, sort, or group children.

Teachers are expected to be competent in assessment. Professional organizations have set high standards for assessment literacy and professional practice. The general public and policy makers expect teachers to be accountable in their work with children, and to provide information needed for large-scale assessment, as well as that designed for classroom use. Communicating with other professionals requires that teachers be able to document and explain assessment results.

Factors contributing to current practices in assessment include required testing and assessment; the diversity of children and families served by early childhood education; concepts about children's development and learning; concepts about the place of assessment in teaching and learning, and the limitations and inadequacies of standardized testing.

Teachers have a professional responsibility to know about and thoughtfully select assessment strategies appropriate to the young children and families they

are working with, then to use that information to guide and support the youngsters' development and learning.

Check Your Understanding 1.1: Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

Media Connections 1.1: Click here to apply your understanding of chapter concepts.

For Personal Reflection

1. Reflect on your concept of "teachers and teaching." In what ways is it congruent with the expectations of "teachers as assessors of children's learning and development" as described in the section Expectations of Teachers? In what ways is it incongruent? What are the implications for you at this point in time?
2. You have just accepted a teaching position in the first grade in Lakeshore School District, your first choice. In meetings before school you find that the school board has adopted a policy requiring summer school for first grade children who do not pass the new proficiency exams given at the end of the school year. What are your personal reactions?

For Further Study and Discussion

1. Demographic, social, educational, and political forces influence assessment practices. In what ways are these forces influencing assessment in education in your community? Substantiate your conclusions with current evidence from newspapers, radio or television news, school newsletters, or personal experience.
2. Interview a kindergarten teacher about kindergarten entrance policies. Are any formal or informal tests used to determine children's readiness? If so, what are they? What other considerations go into determining "readiness"? In what ways do these policies conform to or deviate from current research and recommendations regarding school entrance and retention?
3. Explore the diversity of the young children in your state, town, or community. Consider visiting some classrooms if needed. Explain the implications of your findings for assessment.
4. A study of teachers' assessment practices showed that assessment's primary purpose was "judging students' achievement for assigning grades" (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992, p. 47). Discuss this finding, relating it to current thinking about the purposes of assessment.

Suggested Readings

Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2007). *Tools of the mind: The Vygotskian approach to early childhood education* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Pearson Education/Merrill.