

Assessment

Assessment helps educators identify children's strengths and areas of their learning and development where they may require further support and nurturing (McLachlan, 2022). From my courses and experiences in the classroom, I have learned more about different types of assessments, how to use them with fidelity, and how to track student progress so I can adjust my teaching and interventions. At the beginning of my career, I used both formative and summative assessments with my students, but I did not use them in an intentional way. Throughout my graduate courses, I have learned the importance of using assessments to track student progress so I can make changes to my teaching. According to McLachlan (2022), assessment for learning occurs when teachers use inferences about children's progress to inform their teaching. Now, I can properly place students into small groups, plan my lessons around what my students need to learn, and create meaningful interventions for my students.

The first artifact is a Data Tracking Plan slideshow I created for EDSP 5730: Diagnostic Assessment. This presentation explains how I track student progress in my classroom and how I use assessments. This is based on what I learned in the course and what I have implemented in my own classroom. In my classroom, I use several formative and summative assessments with my students, which include observations of students during play, one-on-one activities, small-group activities, and large-group activities. It also includes one-on-one conversations with students, student work examples, and verbal exit slips. Formative assessment allows teachers to make instructional decisions based on student needs (Cornelius, 2013).

The summative assessments I use include (Individualized Education Programs) IEP progress monitoring, Curriculum-Based Assessments (CBAs), and progress reports. Using assessments and analyzing data from them helps ensure students are making progress. This is true for all students in my classroom, but it's especially important for my students who

have IEPs to keep track of their progress on their IEP goals. If a student is not making progress, then the intervention(s) might need to be used more explicitly, used more frequently or for a longer duration, or a new intervention needs to be used altogether. This slideshow showcases how I intentionally use assessments in my classroom to track student learning.

The second artifact is the grade card I helped create for my school district's preschool program last school year. I took the lead on this project, but I received input and feedback from the other preschool teachers and elementary administrators. Our previous grade card was outdated since it was not up to date with the current state standards, and it was missing some areas of development that were important to have included. It now provides a comprehensive outlook on the student's progress to cover all areas of development: social-emotional, adaptive, fine motor, gross motor, and academic skills. It is "graded" by assigning an A for achieving, D for developing, and E for emerging. This approach is used so parents clearly understand if their child can perform the skill expected, or if it is a skill they are working on.

Families are not given their child's first grade card until after the first parent-teacher conference to ensure they understand it completely. The grade card helps summarize all the formative and summative assessments I use with children, so parents clearly understand where their child is. I also included a comment section so I can explain to parents other things the grade card may not reflect, such as mentioning if a child has a helpful attitude, goes out of their way to be a kind friend to others, or is really engaged in school activities. I also use this section to give suggestions to families on things they can work on at home with their child to help support their learning. Friend (2022) explains that families should have readily understood information about their child's educational needs and resources to support them.

The third artifact is the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness assessment (Heggerty Assessments, 2020), which I use with my students four times a school year. This

assessment specifically looks at children's phonemic awareness skills. It is administered orally with students one-on-one. As a class, we practice phonemic awareness skills daily during large group activities, following the Heggerty program. At least once a week, students also participate in a small group activity focused on phonemic awareness skills. The assessment measures if children can identify rhyming words, initial sounds, and final sounds, segment/blend compound words, and segment/blend syllables in words. These are important skills for a child to develop to help them read. At the beginning of my teaching career, I did not tackle phonemic awareness with much fidelity. As I learned more about the importance of students learning these skills, I began teaching the Heggerty program daily and assessing more frequently to make sure my students are making progress. First, the assessment helps me determine if they are making progress, and second, it helps me group students in literacy small groups based on their skills. For example, I have some students who are still working on identifying initial sounds, and others who are working on identifying final sounds in words. Teaching students in small groups helps me focus on the specific skills that the group of children needs to work on.

The fourth artifact is a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)/Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) I completed for EDSP 5710: Functional Behavior Assessment. The FBA is an assessment process used when children are displaying unsafe and/or inappropriate behaviors at school. The assessment involves tracking the behaviors, along with the antecedents and consequences. Next, the evaluator determines the function of the behavior, or the reason behind the behavior. This is used to create a desired behavior for the child to do instead of their challenging behavior. After this information is obtained and analyzed, a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is implemented. Once the behavior plan has been implemented with fidelity, the child's behaviors are again tracked to see if the intervention is effective. Understanding this process is very important for educators. Now that I have gone through this process, I know how to use an FBA and BIP with my own students. This will help with changing behaviors in my classroom by determining the function of the child's

behavior, creating a meaningful intervention to use, implementing the intervention, and tracking the child's behaviors to make sure they are making progress. This process allows for more targeted and effective interventions, leading to more meaningful and lasting behavior change. Lewis et al. (2017) points out, "You would not take students making math errors as a personal affront; you would assess why they are making the error, reteach the concept, provide opportunities to practice, and acknowledge and celebrate when they master the skill" (para. 24).

Assessments are an essential part of education. Although some assessments are standardized, many assessments in early childhood are formative. Children are assessed through observation, conversations, work examples, and more. This information can be gathered and analyzed to track a student's progress. This is true for both the state standards we are trying to teach and progress towards IEP goals. Educators can use information from assessments to make changes to their teaching. It indicates if it is necessary to reteach, break content down into smaller chunks of information, practice with the student more frequently, or use a different approach altogether. Learning more about assessments in my graduate program, I have been able to put my knowledge into practice with my own students. I have noticed a difference in the way I approach assessments and how I use them to benefit both my students and myself.

References

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