

Standards and Assessments in Early Childhood

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Chris Maynard for The New York Times

Maggie Brown, left, a kindergartner at Osborn Hill School in Fairfield, Conn., works on patterns with blocks.

No Time for Napping in Today's Kindergarten

The Littlest Test Takers

Preschoolers can be thrown off their games by a stomachache or an itchy shirt. Assessment can be highly unreliable. And yet there it is. **BY SUSAN BRENNAN**

IN this era of testing and accountability, preschool is the last frontier. Most preschool educators are coming to accept that with more states getting into the business of educating 3- and 4-year-olds, the political demands for accountability — for showing that preschools and kindergartens work — are inevitable. This means that children as young as 3 have to be observed, evaluated and in some way tested.



Laura Pedrick for The New York Times

tional and physical well-being of the children? I think the answer is both." But it is much harder to develop a test of social and emotional skills than to test how well children count, or if they can match a vocabulary word to a picture, Mr. Bruner says.

The most reliable tests of social and emotional abilities, he adds, are ones designed to diagnose developmental problems in young children, and they are expensive and time-consuming to administer. There are well-researched as-

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SEPTEMBER 12, 2007 ■ EDUCATION WEEK

States Move Toward Closer Scrutiny of Preschools

Texas' system tracks how well a program's alumni do when they get to kindergarten.

...THIS WEEK
WE TOOK A TEST
TO SEE IF WE'RE
READY FOR THE
TEST THAT TESTS
OUR TEST SKILLS...



... WAIT UNTIL
KINDERGARTEN!...

Our Goal

To focus on how standards and assessments can be used to enhance learning and improve the teaching of those working with young children.

Three Types of Standards

- 1. Program standards**
- 2. Content standards**
- 3. Performance standards**

Program Standards

- **Primarily describe the form or the structure of the early childhood setting.**
- **Not directly related to what children are taught, or how they are taught it.**

Content Standards

- **Knowledge, skills, and competencies children are expected to master.**
- **Define what children should know and be able to do in different domains.**

Content Standard

**“Children will read
with understanding
and fluency.”**

Performance Standards

- **Concrete examples of competent, skilled, or knowledgeable behavior.**
- **Often associated with a rubric, or scoring framework that provides performance criteria.**

Performance Standard

**“Children will identify
labels and signs in the
environment.”**

The critical issue about standards in early childhood is not whether to have them, but how specific they should be.



How to Best Link Standards and Assessments

Observational Assessments

**Assessments based on
information obtained
from children's typical
classroom activity.**

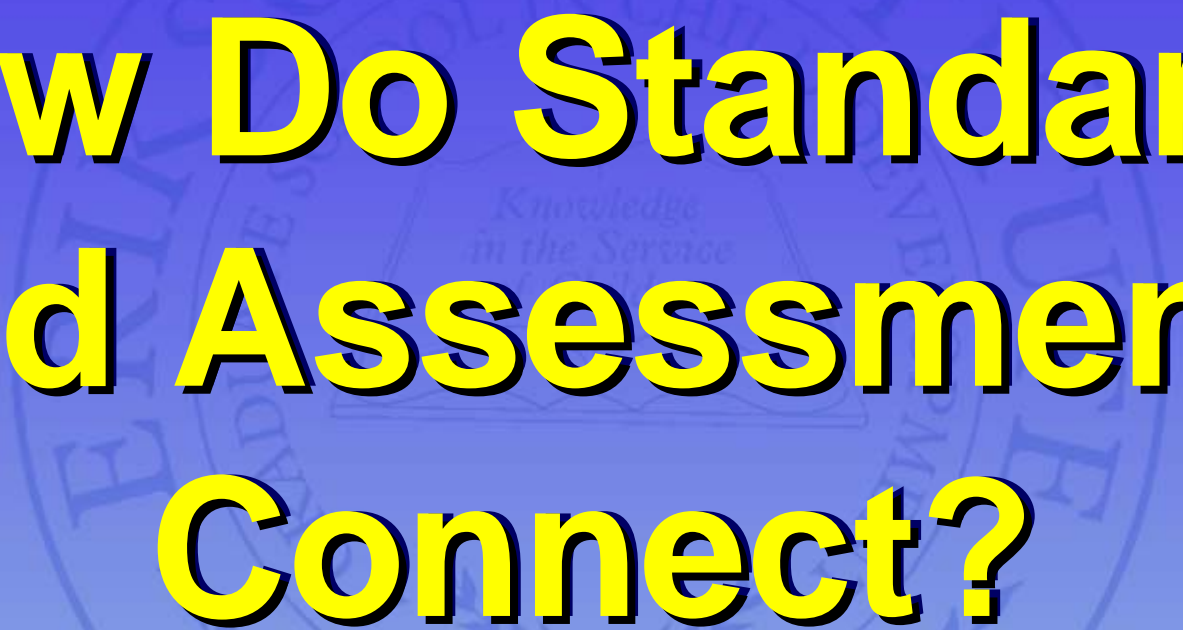


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What Standards-Based Observational Assessments Can Teach Us

- **What children are learning and have begun to master**
- **How well children are doing in relation to learning goals and expectations**
- **How to guide instructional decision-making**





How Do Standards and Assessments Connect?

Work Sampling Illinois®

Illinois Early Learning Assessment Developmental Guidelines

Illinois State Board of Education:
Division of Early Childhood Education



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Language Arts



STATE GOAL 1:

Read with understanding and fluency.

Learning Standard A:

Apply word analysis and vocabulary skills to comprehend selections.

BENCHMARKS

- 1.A.ECa** Understand that pictures and symbols have meaning and that print carries a message.
- 1.A.ECb** Understand that reading progresses from left to right and top to bottom.
- 1.A.ECc** Identify labels and signs in the environment.
- 1.A.ECd** Identify some letters, including those in own name.
- 1.A.ECe** Make some letter-sound matches.

Preschool 4: “Gains Meaning by Listening”



Language and Literacy

A Listening

1 Gains meaning by listening. (p. 5)

Not Yet

In Process

Proficient

2 Follows two- or three-step directions. (p. 5)

Not Yet

In Process

Proficient

3 Demonstrates phonological awareness. (p. 5)

Not Yet

In Process

Proficient

Listening and Understanding

“Gains Meaning by Listening”

NOT YET

- **Has difficulty listening to picture books for more than a few minutes or regardless of the type of text.**
- **Does not retell, dramatize, draw about, or discuss stories, even very simple ones.**
- **Does not express preference for favorite books.**

Listening and Understanding

“Gains Meaning by Listening”

IN PROCESS

- **Listens to a picture book for about 5 - 10 minutes at a time.**
- **Demonstrates partial comprehension of stories comprised of one or two events and characters by retelling, dramatizing, drawing, or discussing.**
- **Identifies one or two favorite books.**

Listening and Understanding ***“Gains Meaning by Listening”***

PROFICIENT

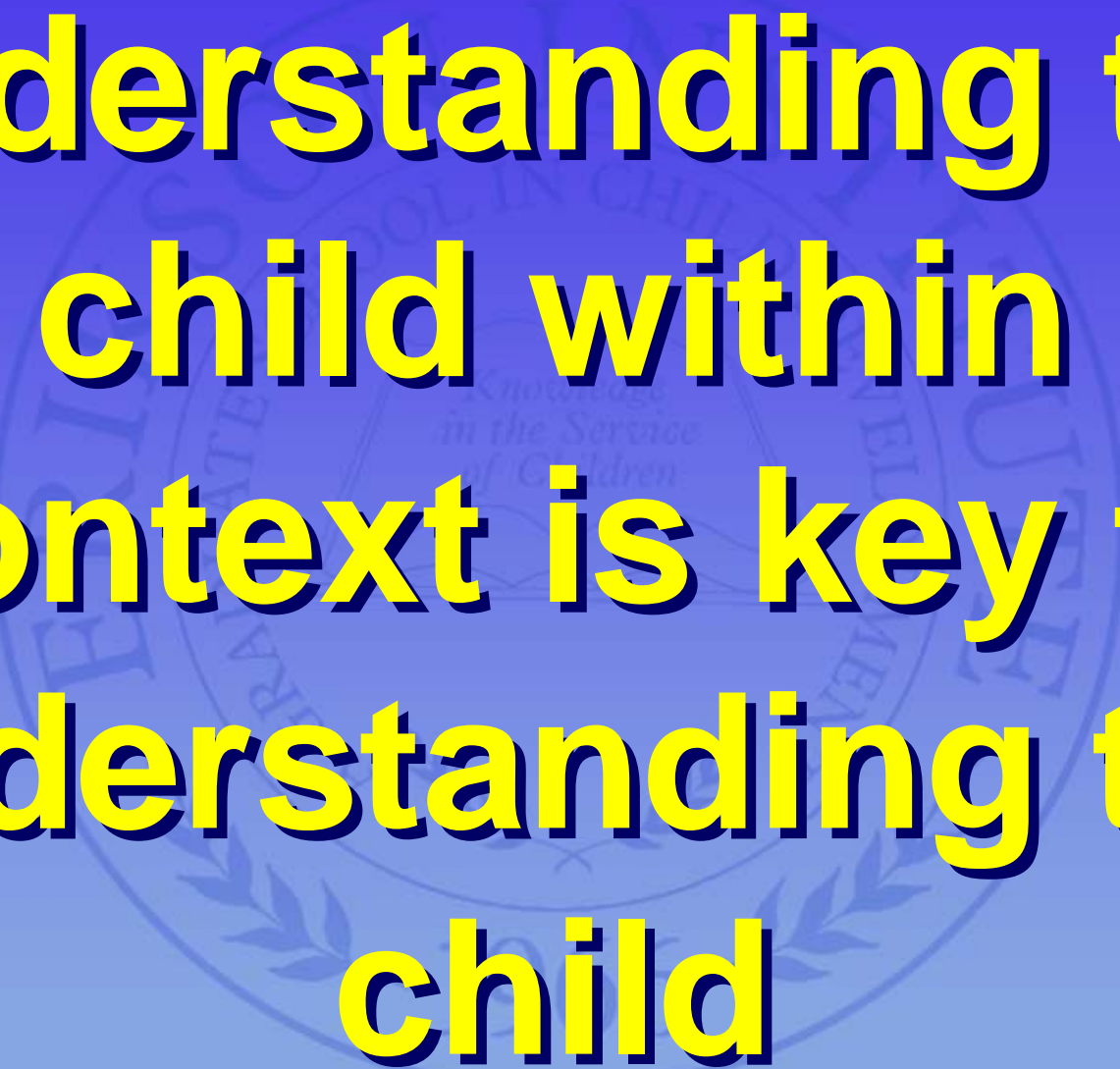
- **Listens to a variety of texts, such as folk/fairy tales, contemporary fiction, humor, poetry, science and nature for more than 10 minutes at a time.**
- **Demonstrates comprehension of stories made of several events and characters by retelling, discussing, dramatizing, drawing,**
- **Identifies, talks about, and enjoys hearing specific books, authors, and/or illustrators.**



The best way to evaluate a child's performance is to study performance, not something else.

**The best way to
improve a child's
performance is to
teach the child, not
test the child.**

**Understanding the
child within
context is key to
understanding the
child**





In this presentation Dr. Meisels mentions several assessments. He is an author of one of them—the Work Sampling System—and a consultant to the company that publishes it, Pearson Early Learning. These assessments will be cited solely to illustrate the points raised in the lecture, rather than to promote the assessments or imply an endorsement by any particular institution.

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