

## Standards, Assessments, and Young Children

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## Four Reasons to Assess Young Children

1. Identification of special needs
2. Instructional improvement
3. Program evaluation
4. Accountability

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## Developmental Screening

A brief assessment procedure designed to identify children at risk for school failure.

- brief
- efficient
- inexpensive
- objectively scored
- reliable
- valid
- culture-fair
- broadly developmental in focus

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## What Screening Can Do

1. Assist teachers in getting to know their children at the outset of school;
2. Identify children who may be in need of further evaluation;
3. Help prevent severe delays or disorders through early identification.

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## Observational Assessment

***Standards-based  
assessments of children  
performing tasks that are  
part of their daily experience.***

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## *What Observational Assessment Consists Of*

- Observing
  - Recording
  - Evaluating
- } in relationship to standards

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*In this presentation Dr. Meisels will mention several assessments. He is an author of one of them—the Work Sampling System—and a consultant to the company that publishes them, Pearson Assessments. 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.*

## What Observational Assessments Can Do

- Evaluate a wide range of children's skills and knowledge
- Provide data for teachers to differentiate their teaching and include diverse students
- Demonstrate student progress over time
- Inform parents about their children's learning
- Keep the focus on instruction, *not* high-stakes

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## What Policymakers Want to Know

“Are Children Learning?”

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“Are public funds being used wisely?”

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## Problems with the *Common Core Standards* for Young Children

1. Top down construction
2. Sky high expectations
3. Performance, not content
4. Relevance to ELL and Sped
5. Potential for misuse

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## Critical Issues About Standards in Early Childhood

- How flexible, adaptable, and open to individual *variability* they are.
- *Content standards* should show the “what” of performance.
- *Performance standards* should assess the “how” of performance.

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## A Better Way to Answer Policymakers' Questions

Conduct program evaluations that are faithful to the contexts of teaching and learning

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## What Program Evaluations Can Do

- Demonstrate that program variations are related to child outcomes
- Show how the program interacts with various child, family, and community contexts
- Determine if the services delivered produce anticipated outcomes

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*Elements to Include in a  
Program Evaluation*

- **Child outcomes**
- **Structural variables**
- **Dynamic variables**

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**Accountability vs.  
Program Evaluation**

- *Accountability* focuses on how well children perform in relation to a normative sample.
- *Evaluations* show how effectively a program is achieving its goals.

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

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

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