

A Parent Guide to Understanding Authentic Assessments for Young Children

What are Authentic Assessments?

Authentic assessments are tools that teachers use to understand what children know, how they are developing, and what they can do better to guide curriculum and instruction. Authentic assessments give a picture of how your child is growing and learning based on expected growth for children the same age. Evidence for authentic assessments is collected in natural contexts throughout the year. Teachers collect children's work, photographs of children and observation notes during every day classroom activities and experiences (e.g. like center time, outdoors, small groups). Teachers then use this information to determine children's progress in all domains of development.



At home, you assess things every day. You check to see if your child is feeling well enough to attend school. You observe how they are getting along with friends when you go to the playground or if they are interested in books. In each situation, you are taking stock by gathering information and using that information to make a decision about how to go forward. Authentic assessments are used the same way in your child's education.

How is information from authentic assessments used?

Authentic Assessments are used to understand children's thinking, development and learning. They are helpful to parents, teachers and programs in different ways.

Parents can use data from your child's authentic assessments to:

- Understand how to best help your child.
- Understand how your child learns best.

Teachers can use authentic assessment data to:

- See what your child can do and decide what they need to teach or re-teach your child for them to progress.
- Plan daily activities based on your child's skills.
- Select specific books for story time or in class libraries to help your child understand a particular skill, concept or understand information.
- Choose particular games during outdoor time that encourage your child to use skills to work with others in a fun way.
- Lead discussions on topics that will help your child develop needed knowledge and skills such understanding why friendships are important, how others feel and how to work with others.

Programs can use authentic assessment data to:

- Order materials to support the learning needs of children.
- Hire personnel to support children and learning.

What are the domains of development that are typically assessed?

- *Approaches to Learning* - How children become involved in learning and acquiring knowledge
- *Physical Development and Health* - Children's physical health and ability to engage in daily activities
- *Social and Emotional Development* - The emotional competence and ability to form positive relationships that give meaning to children's experiences in the home, school and larger community
- *Communication, Language and Literacy* - Children's understanding, creating, and communicating meaning
- *Cognition and Knowledge of the World* - What children need to know and understand about their world and how they apply what they know.

It is important for teachers to assess all of these areas so that they can understand your child's development holistically.

How can you help with authentic assessments?

- You can provide information about your child to the teacher.
- You can find out about your child's development by talking with the teacher. This helps you and your child's teacher to work together to help your child improve.
- If concerns are brought to your attention, try to listen closely and find out what should happen next. It might be a referral to someone or somewhere to help you gather more information to help your child. Take the time and find out.
- If there are concerns about your child, it is wise to look into them early.

Learn more about how to support your child's learning by reading our other parent guides including our "Learning at Home and On the Go" series. There are many great resources and help for families. Don't be afraid to find out early how you can help your child.

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