

A Family Guide to Understanding Authentic Assessments for Young Children

What are Authentic Assessments?

Authentic assessments are systems that teachers use to understand what children know, how they are developing, and to guide curriculum and instruction. Authentic assessments give a picture of how your child is growing and learning based on average growth for four and five year olds. 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 how to help children 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 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 families, teachers and programs in different ways.

You 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 lesson plans based on your child's skills.
- Select specific books for story time or to put in class libraries to help your child understand a particular skill/concept or to understand information.
- Choose particular activities 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 as 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.
- Communicate to families their child's development and need for possible support services.
- Inform teacher professional development.

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What are the domains of development that are typically assessed?

Authentic assessments are aligned to the Pre-K Foundation for the Common Core domains and standards that outline skills that four and five year old children will work towards.

The five Pre-K Foundation for the Common Core domains:

- 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
 - How children understand, create, and communicate 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 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.

There are many great resources for families. Don't be afraid to find out early how you can help your child.

For more information on the skills your child is developing in the Pre-K year, please visit:
http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/pdfs/nyslsprek.pdf