

Observation to Action: Helping Staff Strengthen Observation and Collection Facilitator's Guide



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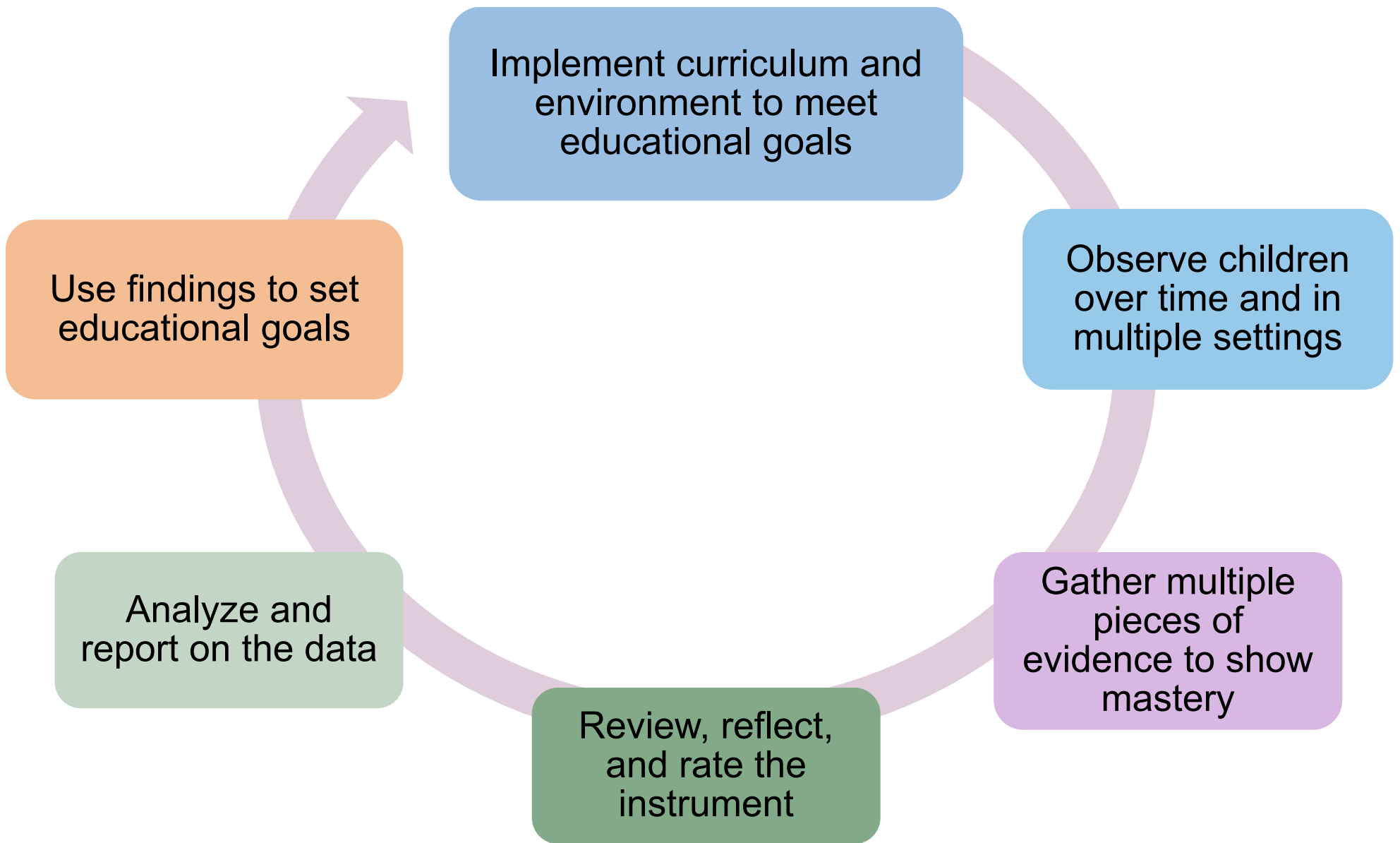
Links

- Observation, Screening, Assessment, and Documentation
<https://bit.ly/4jb7yPR>
- DRDP (2025) Observation And Documentation for Infants and Toddlers
<https://bit.ly/4zpJVrF>
- DRDP (2025) Preschool–Transitional Kindergarten–Kindergarten (PTK) Observation and Documentation
<https://bit.ly/4jJbo2H>

Handouts

- DR Continuous Improvement
- Open-Ended Questions
- DRDP (2025) IT Watch Me Grow
- DRDP (2025) PTK Watch Me Grow
- DRDP (2025) Infant and Toddler (IT) Measures at a Glance
- DRDP (2025) Preschool (PTK) View Measures at a Glance
- IT/PTK Measures Embedded Observations (for IT session only)
- PTK Measures Embedded Observations
- DRDP (2025) Glossary & Appendices
- Observation and Documentation
- Teaching Strategies

DRDP (2025) Assessment Cycle





**Can you think of
another way?**



**What might you try
instead?**



**Where could we do
that?**



Tell me about your...



**What can you tell me
about...?**



**What does it remind
you of?**



**What does this make
you think of?**



**What are some
different things you
could try?**



**What would happen
if...?**



**What do you think
would happen if...?**



How did you think of that?



What can you tell me about the things you have?



How are you going to do that?



Show me what you could do with it...



Is there anything else you could do/use?

These open-ended questions/statements can be written on sentence strips and place up high on the wall of the room or the list can be placed on a clipboard in an interest area as a quick reference for adults who are interacting with children.



Open-Ended Questions and Statements

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Watch Me Grow – DRDP (2025) Infant/Toddler (IT) View

☐ ATL 1: Engagement, Attention, and Persistence ☐ ATL 2: Curiosity, Interest, and Initiative ☐ ATL 3: Problem-Solving ☐ SED 1: Self-Awareness ☐ SED 2: Social Awareness ☐ SED 3: Relationships and Reciprocal Interactions with Familiar Adults ☐ SED 4: Relationships and Interactions with Peers ☐ SED 5: Emotional Knowledge and Regulation ☐ FLD 1: Understanding Language (Receptive) ☐ FLD 2: Using Language (Expressive) ☐ FLD 3: Shared Communication and Conversation	☐ COG 1: Imitation ☐ MATH 1: Spatial Thinking ☐ MATH 2: Classification ☐ MATH 3: Number and Counting ☐ SCI 1: Cause and Effect ☐ SCI 2: Inquiry Through Observation and Investigation ☐ PD 1: Perceptual-Motor Skills and Movement Concepts ☐ PD 2: Gross Locomotor Movement Skills ☐ PD 3: Gross Motor Manipulative Skills ☐ PD 4: Fine Motor Manipulative Skills ☐ HLTH 1: Safety ☐ HLTH 3: Personal Care Routines: Hygiene* ☐ HLTH 4: Personal Care Routines: Feeding* ☐ HLTH 5: Personal Care Routines: Self-Dressing*

* Health measures 1 and 3-5 must be completed for children with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) or an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan). Based on observations, complete Health measures 1 and 3-5 to document progress or plan this child's learning activities and supports.



Watch Me Grow—Preschool-Kindergarten-Transitional Kindergarten (PTK) DRDP (2025)

☐ ATL 1: Engagement, Attention, and Persistence ☐ ATL 2: Curiosity, Interest, and Initiative ☐ ATL 3: Problem Solving ☐ ATL 4: Planning ☐ SED 1: Self-Awareness ☐ SED 2: Social Awareness ☐ SED 3: Relationships and Reciprocal Interactions with Familiar Adults ☐ SED 4: Relationships and Interactions with Peers ☐ SED 5: Emotional Knowledge and Regulation ☐ FLD 1: Understanding Language (Receptive) ☐ FLD 2: Using Language (Expressive) ☐ FLD 3: Share Communication and Conversation ☐ FLD 4: Foundational Literacy Skills ☐ FLD 5: Alphabetics and Print Knowledge ☐ FLD 6: Writing ☐ ELD 1: Comprehension of English (Receptive English)* ☐ ELD 2: Self-Expression in English (Expressive English)* ☐ ELD 3: Understanding and Responding to English Literacy Activities*	☐ Math 1: Spatial Thinking ☐ Math 2: Classification ☐ Math 3: Numbers and Counting ☐ Math 4: Number Operations ☐ Math 5: Measurement ☐ SCI 1: Cause and Effect ☐ SCI 2: Inquiry Through Observations and Investigation ☐ SCI 3: Documentation of Communication of Inquiry ☐ PD 1: Perceptual-Motor Skills and Movement Concepts ☐ PD 2: Gross Locomotor Movement Skills ☐ PD 3: Gross Motor Manipulative Skills ☐ PD 4: Fine Motor Manipulative Skills ☐ HLTH 1: Safety ☐ HLTH 2: Understanding Health and Wellness ☐ HLTH 3: Personal Care Routines: Hygiene** ☐ HLTH 4: Personal Care Routines: Feeding** ☐ HLTH 5: Personal Care Routines: Self-Dressing**

* ELD measures are completed only for preschool-age children whose home language is other than English and whose family has identified spoken English as a method or mode of communication for their child.

** Health measures 3-5 must be completed for children with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) or an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan). Based on observations, Health measures 3-5 may be completed if determined to document progress or plan this child's learning activities and supports.

Measures at a Glance—DRDP (2025) Infant-Toddler (IT) View

Domain Name: Approaches to Learning (ATL)
ATL 1: Engagement, Attention, and Persistence
ATL 2: Curiosity, Interest, and Initiative
ATL 3: Problem-Solving

Domain Name: Social and Emotional Development (SED)
SED 1: Self-Awareness
SED 2: Social Awareness
SED 3: Relationships and Reciprocal Interactions with Familiar Adults
SED 4: Relationships and Interactions with Peers
SED 5: Emotional Knowledge and Regulation

Domain Name: Foundational Language Development (FLD)
FLD 1: Understanding Language (Receptive)
FLD 2: Using Language (Expressive)
FLD 3: Shared Communication and Conversation

Domain Name: Cognition (COG)
COG 1: Imitation
MATH 1: Spatial Thinking
MATH 2: Classification
MATH 3: Number and Counting
SCI 1: Cause and Effect
SCI 2: Inquiry Through Observation and Investigation

Domain Name: Physical Development (PD)
PD 1: Perceptual-Motor Skills and Movement Concepts
PD 2: Gross Locomotor Movement Skills
PD 3: Gross Motor Manipulative Skills
PD 4: Fine Motor Manipulative Skills

Domain Name: Health (HLTH)
HLTH 1: Safety*
HLTH 3: Personal Care Routines: Hygiene*
HLTH 4: Personal Care Routines: Feeding*
HLTH 5: Personal Care Routines: Self-Dressing*

* Health measures 1 and 3-5 must be completed for children with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) or an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan). Based on observations, complete Health measures 1 and 3-5 to document progress or plan this child’s learning activities and supports.

Measures at a Glance—DRDP (2025) Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten (PTK) View

Domain Name: Approaches to Learning (ATL)

ATL 1: Engagement, Attention, and Persistence
ATL 2: Curiosity, Interest, and Initiative
ATL 3: Problem-Solving
ATL 4: Planning

Domain Name: Social and Emotional Development (SED)

SED 1: Self-Awareness
SED 2: Social Awareness
SED 3: Relationships and Reciprocal Interactions with Familiar Adults
SED 4: Relationships and Interactions with Peers
SED 5: Emotional Knowledge and Regulation

Domain Name: Foundational Language Development (FLD)

FLD 1: Understanding Language (Receptive)
FLD 2: Using Language (Expressive)
FLD 3: Shared Communication and Conversation
FLD 4: Foundational Literacy Skills
FLD 5: Alphabetics and Print Knowledge
FLD 6: Writing

Domain Name: English Language Development (ELD)

ELD 1: Comprehension of English (Receptive English)*
ELD 2: Self-Expression in English (Expressive English)*
ELD 3: Understanding and Responding to English Literacy Activities*

Domain Name: Math (MATH)

MATH 1: Spatial Thinking
MATH 2: Classification
MATH 3: Number and Counting
MATH 4: Number Operations
MATH 5: Measurement

Domain Name: Science (SCI)

SCI 1: Cause and Effect
SCI 2: Inquiry Through Observation and Investigation
SCI 3: Documentation and Communication of Inquiry

Domain Name: Physical Development (PD)

PD 1: Perceptual-Motor Skills and Movement Concepts
PD 2: Gross Locomotor Movement Skills
PD 3: Gross Motor Manipulative Skills
PD 4: Fine Motor Manipulative Skills

Domain Name: Health (HLTH)

HLTH 1: Safety
HLTH 2: Understanding of Health and Wellness
HLTH 3: Personal Care Routines: Hygiene**
HLTH 4: Personal Care Routines: Feeding**
HLTH 5: Personal Care Routines: Self-Dressing**

* ELD measures are completed only for preschool-age children whose home language is other than English and whose family has identified spoken English as a method or mode of communication for their child.

** Health measures 3-5 must be completed for children with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) or an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan). Based on observations, Health measures 3-5 may be completed, if determined, to document progress or plan this child’s learning activities and supports.



DRDP (2025): Embedding Observations into the Environment Infant-Toddler (IT) View

Measures	Changes I need to make to the environment
Approaches to Learning (ATL)	
ATL 1: Engagement, Attention, and Persistence	
ATL 2: Curiosity, Interest, and Initiative	
ATL 3: Problem-Solving	
Social and Emotional Development (SED)	
SED 1: Self-Awareness	
SED 2: Social Awareness	
SED 3: Relationships and Reciprocal Interactions with Familiar Adults	
SED 4: Relationships and Interactions with Peers	
Foundational Language Development (FLD)	
FLD 1: Understanding Language (Receptive)	
FLD 2: Using Language (Expressive)	
FLD 3: Shared Communication and Conversation	

Infant-Toddler (IT) View (continued)

Measures	Changes I need to make to the environment
Cognition (COG)	
COG 1: Imitation	
MATH 1: Spatial Thinking	
MATH 2: Classification	
MATH 3: Number and Counting	
SCI 1: Cause and Effect	
Physical Development (PD)	
PD 1: Perceptual-Motor Skills and Movement Concepts	
PD 2: Gross Locomotor Movement Skills	
PD 3: Gross Motor Manipulative Skills	
Health (HLTH)	
HLTH 1: Safety	
HLTH 3: Personal Care Routines: Hygiene	
HLTH 4: Personal Care Routines: Feeding	
HLTH 5: Personal Care Routines: Self-Dressing	

Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten (PTK) View

Measures	Changes I need to make to the environment
Approaches to Learning (ATL)	
ATL 1: Engagement, Attention, and Persistence	
ATL 2: Curiosity, Interest, and Initiative	
ATL 3: Problem-Solving	
ATL 4: Planning	
Social and Emotional Development (SED)	
SED 1: Self-Awareness	
SED 2: Social Awareness	
SED 3: Relationships and Reciprocal Interactions with Familiar Adults	
SED 4: Relationships and Interactions with Peers	
SED 5: Emotional Knowledge and Regulation	
Foundational Language Development (FLD)	
FLD 1: Understanding Language (Receptive)	
FLD 2: Using Language (Expressive)	

Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten (PTK) View (continued)

Measures	Changes I need to make to the environment
Foundational Language Development (FLD)	
FLD 3: Shared Communication and Conversation	
FLD 4: Foundational Literacy Skills	
FLD 5: Alphabets and Print Knowledge	
FLD 6: Writing	
English Language Development (ELD)	
ELD 1: Comprehension of English (Receptive English)	
ELD 2: Self-Expression in English (Expressive English)	
ELD 3: Understanding and Responding to English Literacy Activities	
Math (MATH)	
MATH 1: Spatial Thinking	
MATH 2: Classification	
MATH 3: Number and Counting	
MATH 4: Number Operations	
MATH 5: Measurement	

Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten (PTK) View (continued)

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Measures	Changes I need to make to the environment
Science (SCI)	
SCI 1: Cause and Effect	
SCI 2: Inquiry Through Observation and Investigation	
SCI 3: Documentation and Communication of Inquiry	
Physical Development (PD)	
PD 1: Perceptual-Motor Skills and Movement Concepts	
PD 2: Gross Locomotor Movement Skills	
PD 3: Gross Motor Manipulative Skills	
PD 4: Fine Motor Manipulative Skills	
Health (HLTH)	
HLTH 1: Safety	
HLTH 2: Understanding of Health and Wellness	
HLTH 3: Personal Care Routines: Hygiene	
HLTH 4: Personal Care Routines: Feeding	

DRDP (2025): Embedding Observations into the Environment

Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten (PTK) View

Measures	Changes I need to make to the environment
Approaches to Learning (ATL)	
ATL 1: Engagement, Attention, and Persistence	
ATL 2: Curiosity, Interest, and Initiative	
ATL 3: Problem-Solving	
ATL 4: Planning	
Social and Emotional Development (SED)	
SED 1: Self-Awareness	
SED 2: Social Awareness	
SED 3: Relationships and Reciprocal Interactions with Familiar Adults	
SED 4: Relationships and Interactions with Peers	
SED 5: Emotional Knowledge and Regulation	
Foundational Language Development (FLD)	
FLD 1: Understanding Language (Receptive)	
FLD 2: Using Language (Expressive)	

Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten (PTK) View (continued)

Measures	Changes I need to make to the environment
Foundational Language Development (FLD)	
FLD 3: Shared Communication and Conversation	
FLD 4: Foundational Literacy Skills	
FLD 5: Alphabets and Print Knowledge	
FLD 6: Writing	
English Language Development (ELD)	
ELD 1: Comprehension of English (Receptive English)	
ELD 2: Self-Expression in English (Expressive English)	
ELD 3: Understanding and Responding to English Literacy Activities	
Math (MATH)	
MATH 1: Spatial Thinking	
MATH 2: Classification	
MATH 3: Number and Counting	
MATH 4: Number Operations	
MATH 5: Measurement	

Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten (PTK) View (continued)

Measures	Changes I need to make to the environment
Science (SCI)	
SCI 1: Cause and Effect	
SCI 2: Inquiry Through Observation and Investigation	
SCI 3: Documentation and Communication of Inquiry	
Physical Development (PD)	
PD 1: Perceptual-Motor Skills and Movement Concepts	
PD 2: Gross Locomotor Movement Skills	
PD 3: Gross Motor Manipulative Skills	
PD 4: Fine Motor Manipulative Skills	
Health (HLTH)	
HLTH 1: Safety	
HLTH 2: Understanding of Health and Wellness	
HLTH 3: Personal Care Routines: Hygiene	
HLTH 4: Personal Care Routines: Feeding	

	CDSS Child Care and Development Division (CCDD)	CDE Early Education Division (EED) Programs	CDE Special Education Division (SED) Programs
Which instrument view is used	Children are assessed with the DRDP (2025) with necessary accommodations, even if a child has exceptional needs and is enrolled for less than 10 hours per week: • Children from birth to three years of age are assessed with the IT View. • Children three to five years of age are assessed with the PTK View. • Children aged two years and nine months and older may use the PTK view if enrolled in a preschool classroom.	All CSPP children enrolled in the program for at least 10 hours are assessed with the DRDP (2025): • Children from birth to two years eight months are assessed with the IT View. • Children two years nine months to five years of age are assessed with the PTK View.	All children with IFSPs and IEPs are assessed with the DRDP (2025). • Children with an IFSP are assessed with the IT View. • Children with an IEP are assessed with the PTK View.
Where to submit DRDP data	Assessment data are uploaded to DRDP Online for secure data storage and to obtain psychometrically valid reports.	Assessment data are uploaded to DRDP Online for secure data storage and to obtain psychometrically valid reports.	Submit assessment data in one of two ways: • Into the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)'s IEP data collection system (such as Special Education Information System (SEIS) or Siras Systems) or • Into the DR Access Reports (https://draccessreports.org/) secure data system
How to obtain reports of results	Psychometrically valid reports are available in DRDP Online. Coordination with local Management Information Systems is available. Visit drdponline.org for more information. Contact DRDP Online customer service (help@DRDPOnline.org) for assistance.	Psychometrically valid reports are available in DRDP Online. Coordination with local Management Information Systems is available. Visit drdponline.org for more information. Contact DRDP Online customer service (help@DRDPOnline.org) for assistance.	• Psychometrically valid reports are available upon entry of assessment data from DR Access Reports. • Coordination with local Management Information Systems is available. Contact reports@draccess.org for assistance.

For More Information:

Desired Results Training and Technical Assistance Project
Email: desiredresults@wested.org
Website: www.desiredresults.us
Phone: (800) 770-6339

Appendix C: Strategies for Observation and Documentation

The DRDP (2025) is administered through observation in natural settings by educators, including teachers, special education professionals, family child care providers, and other service providers in classroom, center, and home-based environments, as well as by family members in home and community settings. Observations are embedded into typical, ongoing routines and activities throughout the day. The process of observation requires advanced planning on the part of educators and service providers. As you review the measures of the DRDP (2025), consider specific routines or activities during the day where you would be able to observe more than one measure or more than one child.

Strategies for Effective Observation

Observation should be ongoing throughout the year. The assessment windows for the DRDP (2025) provide a period of time to ensure that educators and service providers have sufficient documentation for each measure in time to submit DRDP data. Observing children’s behaviors in naturalistic or authentic environments will provide the information needed to rate the DRDP. Many observation and documentation job aids, including resources to support naturalistic, authentic assessment, can be found at **Desired Results for Children and Families** (<https://www.desiredresults.us/desired-results-system>) and **DR Access** (<https://draccess.org/learn>). The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center developed a helpful **Authentic Child Assessment Practice Guide** (<https://ectacenter.org/decrp/type-pgpractitioner.asp>) linked to the Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices (DEC) to support authentic child assessment.

Strategies for Effective Documentation

A variety of methods are available for recording information gathered through naturalistic observations, including:

- **Anecdotal Records** – An anecdotal record is a written note documenting a child’s behavior or comments during a typical or routine activity. Anecdotal records provide brief descriptions of observed behavior.
- **Event recording (tallies)** – In event recording, the observer records each instance of the behavior being observed so that an indication of frequency is obtained. Usually, this is done with tally marks, but it may also be recorded using a code such as “+” for correct and “-” for incorrect.

- **Checklists** – Checklists are lists of specific skills or behaviors that can be used during observation to check off the behaviors observed in a group of children. Some of the measures lend themselves to using a checklist to supplement other observation techniques.
- **Learning Walls or Panels** – Learning walls are displays of photos, quotes, and children’s work in the learning environment. These make learning visible and foster dialogue among children and educators.
- **Digital Documentation Platforms** – These digital tools are an electronic way to store, share, and organize documentation. These platforms can streamline communication with families and service providers.
- **Work Samples** – Documentation can also include the collection of 2 or 3-dimensional products that children have produced, such as drawings, writings, or 3-dimensional constructions the child has made, such as playdough, clay, or other materials.
- **Videos or photographs** – Use cameras to capture movement, engagement, interactions, and language of children. When necessary, enhance the photo or video with a caption of what happened before or after the event.

Ten Strategies for Naturalistic Observation

1. **Know the instrument** – Be familiar with the instrument, including the domains and measures being observed.
2. **Observe naturally** – Observe the child in the context of typical routines and activities, interacting with familiar people, in familiar places, and with familiar materials.
3. **Observe objectively** – Focus on what the child does. Be as objective and detailed as possible. Avoid using labels, qualitative descriptors, or stereotypic expectations that may bias your observations.
4. **Observe strategically** – Observe for skills that correspond to the DRDP measures and record your observations. You may be able to gather information on multiple measures during a single observation.
5. **Observe daily or routinely** – When observations are part of the daily routines, children become accustomed to being observed and seeing notes being recorded.
6. **Observe variety and consistency** – Be aware of a child’s overall performance, even when focusing on a single aspect of behavior. Observe the child over time and during different routines and activities.

7. **Be specific and complete** – Intentionally and purposefully record the specific details of what you observe as soon as possible. Details are important and can easily be forgotten.
8. **Plan ahead** – Include observations as part of your weekly lesson planning. Plan to observe during activities that do not require your full assistance, or plan for someone else to observe and document.
9. **Allow time** – Allow adequate time for the child to complete any task they are engaged in, even if it requires more time than one might expect.
10. **Use appropriate adaptations** – Ensure that appropriate adaptations, as determined by the IFSP or IEP team, are in place when observing the child.

Consider the following for planning and collecting documentation:

- Choose methods of documentation that can be embedded into a program's environment, structure, and routines.
- Plan ahead for materials needed for documentation, such as electronic devices, sticky notes, or pre-printed labels with children's names for anecdotal records, or clipboards with checklists. Materials should be strategically located throughout the classroom.
- Observe children's behaviors throughout the day and record documentation while observing.
- Date each piece of evidence for future reference.
- Collect documentation over time. Documentation over time strengthens the validity of ratings.
- Organize the collected documentation immediately after gathering it.
- Keep assessment information confidential. Store the DRDP materials, including notes, in a secure location to ensure confidentiality for each child.

Organizing Documentation

A portfolio of evidence is a useful way to organize formative assessment and show each child's learning and progress over time. It can be kept in either paper or electronic format, depending on what works best for the educator and the setting. The portfolio includes samples of the child's work, photos, observations, and reflections that show their growth and achievements. By reviewing this evidence, educators and families can see what the child has learned and plan the next steps in their learning journey.

Portfolios: Portfolios are a helpful way to organize information. Portfolios may contain anecdotal notes, children's work samples, photos of children's activities, audio or video recordings, and transcripts of the child's language. The portfolio methods selected should work well for the program.

Electronic Portfolios: If notes are entered into a computer, an electronic portfolio can be produced to summarize the evidence. Please check with a local administrator for procedures regarding consent for photography and video.

Collaboration to Support Effective Documentation

A central goal for educators and service providers who use the DRDP (2025) is to obtain measures of the child's developmental progress based on typical day-to-day behaviors. It is challenging to imagine one individual having access to all the various learning opportunities that a child encounters throughout each day. Therefore, it is very helpful to seek input from individuals who have ongoing contact with and know the child well to obtain the most complete and accurate picture of the child's skills and abilities. It is important to consider how and when collaborating with others will support and inform the accurate rating of measures for the DRDP (2025).

Although direct observation of a child is the primary method for informing ratings, other sources of evidence should be used to supplement observations. Gathering information from others who know the child well, such as family members, caregivers, or other service providers, often provides a wealth of additional information about a child's skills, knowledge, and behaviors. This also provides the additional benefit of observations across different settings. There are numerous ways others can collaborate to share information, such as written observations, conversations focused on a child's development, or viewing short videos or recordings that illustrate a child's behavior in typical routines and activities.

Planning ahead can make the collaboration process more effective. Identify early on in your relationship with the child's family who else might provide helpful information to assist in documenting their child's development. Ensure that the family is well-informed about the purpose of the DRDP (2025) and the critical role they can play in sharing their observations about their child. With the family's permission, communicate with other individuals who know the child and strategize with them on how they might be able to share information with you.

Communication is key to successful collaboration. For a more detailed look at collaboration and the assessment process, please refer to Appendix F.

For More Information

- Information on strategies for observing and documenting observations can be found on the **HeadStart website** (<https://headstart.gov/search/eclkc?q=observation+strategies>).
- Observation resources are available on the **Desired Results for Children and Families website** (<https://www.desiredresults.us/resources/observation-resources/drdp-observation-resources>).

Appendix D: Accommodations or Adaptations for Children with Disabilities

For children with disabilities, accommodations or adaptations reduce barriers and support equitable access to everyday learning and participation. Through the appropriate use of accommodations and adaptations, children can demonstrate what they know and can do as they engage in familiar routines, activities, and interactions.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), children must receive the accommodations they need to participate meaningfully in instruction and assessment. Within a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, educators extend these accommodations by designing environments that provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. Accommodations and adaptations are individualized within the UDL framework so that each child can participate authentically in observation-based assessments, such as the DRDP (2025).

Accommodations or adaptations that are in place for the child during the normal course of the day should also be in place during observations for the DRDP (2025).

Accommodations and adaptations vary for each child and may include:

- Information or material presentation to child (oral, tactile, print),
- Mode a child can respond (speaking, signing, gesturing, device),
- Environment (lighting and noise),
- Information observed at different times of the day
- Adaptive equipment (walker, functional seating, slant board, pencil grips, AAC device)

Related to Children using AAC

Some children with significant communication needs may require augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) to communicate.

Related to Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Children with autism often show distinct patterns of growth that reflect differences in sensory processing, social information processing, and communication preferences. From early infancy, these differences may influence how children with autism perceive and interact with others. For example, while a child without a disability might demonstrate perspective-taking through verbal acknowledgment of others’ identities, a child with autism might show awareness through careful observation, parallel play, or non-verbal recognition. What may appear to be a “lack of awareness” may instead reflect a different processing time. Children with autism may be highly aware of others, but they may express that awareness in various ways.

Related to Understanding Echolalia as Communication

Echolalia, the repetition of phrases and words, may serve multiple developmental purposes. The purposes would be determined individually for each child and addressed individually through the child’s IFSP or IEP. Some children with autism learn language in multi-word phrases rather than single words, using echolalia to practice and generalize these phrases. Echolalia may also support self-regulation and help manage emotions and transitions. Some children with autism may use echolalia as a way to remain engaged when coming up with original responses feels overwhelming. Sometimes, when echoed phrases are slightly different, it may also reflect active meaning-making.

Appendix E: Resources for Working in Partnership with Families

A central goal of the DRDP is to identify a child’s developmental progress based on typical, day-to-day behaviors. It is advisable to seek input from individuals who have ongoing contact with the child and are familiar with them. Family members’ descriptions of their child’s behavior in the home or community settings will help educators and service providers know more about the child’s behaviors across settings, particularly for those skills the child may not routinely demonstrate in the educational

setting, and help educators and service providers obtain more comprehensive information to make accurate ratings for the **Family members may participate in the DRDP assessment in several ways:**

- Inform the child's educators and service providers of the child's history for a more complete picture of the child.
- Share the skills they see their child using in typical activities, and might share these skills via stories, photos, drawings, observations, and/or video clips.
- Share the child's strengths, areas they wish to focus on, and areas of growth they observe.
- Become informed about the next steps in their child's development.
- Help determine which adaptations will help their child participate in everyday activities (for children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP)) and share with the team the adaptations the child uses at home, at school, and in other settings.

Below are resources to help families learn more about the DRDP (2025) and the skills it assesses, as well as resources to support educators and service providers in collaborating with families during the assessment process.

Resources for Families

All About Young Children (<https://allaboutyoungchildren.org/english/18-months-to-36-months/>)

A website for families describing skills that help children learn, including how they learn language, how they learn about feelings and relationships, how they learn about numbers, and how they become skillful at moving their bodies. (Available in eight different languages.)

California MAP to Inclusion and Belonging (<https://cainclusion.org/camap/family-engagement/>)

The MAP Project website supports the inclusion of children with disabilities and delays ages birth to 21 in child care, after-school, and community settings. It includes links to resources on families and children with IFSPs and IEPs. The website contains a statewide interactive directory by county of Family Resource Centers (FRCs), Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA), Regional Centers, Head Start, and more for families of children with IFSPs and IEPs.

Resources for Educators and Service Providers

Family Engagement and Ongoing Child Assessment (<https://headstart.gov/publication/family-engagement-ongoing-child-assessment>)

This document addresses the perspectives of parents and program staff on sharing child assessment information through partnerships and suggests strategies to bring those perspectives together.

Engaging Families as Assessment Partners (https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/PG_Asm_EngagingFamiliesasAssessmentPartners_prac_print_2017.pdf)

This document is linked to the DEC Recommended Practices, which include methods and strategies for gathering information from families and promoting their participation during assessment.

Child Care and Development Quality Initiatives (<https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-and-development/quality-improvement-initiatives>)

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)-funded quality initiatives serve as a webpage that provides learning and care resources for the early learning and care workforce and community. CDSS administers CCDF to support quality initiatives through infrastructure, professional development, advocacy, and statewide administration.

Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

CDE Homeless Education (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>)

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homelessness as a lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition also includes individuals who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; who may be living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, shelters, public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; or who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

Children and youth experiencing homelessness have the right to access the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschools, as provided to other children. The website above addresses these rights and provides educational information and resources for families and educators. It also provides guidance from the California Department of Education on supporting children and families

experiencing homelessness, ensuring their full participation in early learning and assessment. It is included to help DRDP (2025) users understand their responsibilities for identifying and engaging families whose living situations may affect assessment participation.

California Early Childhood Online (CECO): Responsive Early Education for Young Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness (https://www.caearlychildhoodonline.org/en_home.aspx)

To support early childhood educators, CECO offers modules based on information and best practices, all in a centralized location, meeting the ever-changing needs of the early childhood field. This module series, available in English and Spanish, consists of three modules: Module 1: Overview of Homelessness, Module 2: The Diversity of Families Experiencing Homelessness, and Module 3: Supporting Classroom Practices for Children Experiencing Homelessness. Early childhood educators may earn three professional development (PD) hours for completing these modules on the **CECO learning portal** (https://www.caearlychildhoodonline.org/en_home.aspx).

Supporting Children in Foster Care

CDSS Emergency Child Care Bridge for Children in Foster Care Program (Bridge Program) (<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calworks-child-care/ecc-bridge-program>)

The Bridge Program aims to increase the number of children in foster care successfully placed in child care settings, increase the capacity of child care programs to meet the needs of children in foster care and children who have experienced trauma, and maximize funding to support the child care needs of eligible families.

The Bridge Program consists of three parts:

- Emergency child care voucher: Eligible families receive a time-limited child care voucher or payment to help pay child care costs for children in foster care.
- Child Care Navigator: The local resource and referral (R&Rs) agency provides a child care navigator to assist with finding a child care provider, securing a subsidized child care placement, completing child care program applications, and developing a long-term child care plan.
- Trauma-Informed Care Training and Coaching: Child care providers participating in the Bridge Program receive access to trauma-informed care training and coaching from their local resource and referral agency.

- The **Bridge Program website** (<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calworks-child-care/ecc-bridge-program>) provides information about childcare services for foster children.

CDE Foster Youth Services (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/>)

The CDE administers the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs (FYSCPs) through county offices of education (COEs) to provide support services to foster children who experience the traumatic effects of displacement from their families and schools, as well as multiple placements in foster care. These FYSCPs have the ability and authority to ensure that health and school records are obtained to establish appropriate placements and coordinate instruction, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, vocational training, emancipation services, training for independent living, and other related services. The FYSCPs increase the stability of placements for foster children and youth. These services are designed to improve children's educational performance and personal achievement, directly benefiting them while also providing long-range cost savings to the state. The **CDE Foster Youth Services website** (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/>) addresses the rights of foster children, providing educational information and resources.

California Early Childhood Online (CECO): Culturally Responsive Trauma-Informed Practices (https://www.caearlychildhoodonline.org/en_home.aspx)

This CECO series, available in English, Spanish, and Chinese, consists of five modules on trauma-informed practices that support wellness. Modules include: 1) Trauma-Informed Practice, 2) The Prevalence of Trauma and the Traumatic Impact of Racism, 3) Promoting Resilience and Healing, 4) Responsive Practices, and 5) Sustainable Wellness Practices. Early childhood educators may earn ten PD hours for completing these modules on the **CECO learning portal** (https://www.caearlychildhoodonline.org/en_home.aspx).

For More Information

- For **CDSS-funded Early Education programs** (<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-and-development>)
- For **CDE-funded Early Education programs** (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/>)
- For **CDE-funded Special Education programs** (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/>)
- For **Desired Results Training and Technical Assistance Project** (<https://www.desiredresults.us/>)
- For **SED Training and Technical Assistance: Desired Results Access Project** (<https://www.draccess.org/>)

Appendix F: Collaboration to Complete the DRDP (2025)

Collaborating with Others Who Know the Child Well

Our understanding of young children is strengthened when we commit to partnerships with individuals, including family members, who know the child well and in different settings. Collaboration in gathering and sharing information is important because it affords us windows into a child's life and offers perspectives that enhance our understanding of a child's skills and behaviors. Identifying and communicating with the individuals who can collaborate on rating the measures of the DRDP (2025) is an essential step in this process.

Through collaboration, educators and special education service providers each bring their skills and perspectives. Early educators contribute by providing a picture of the child in a classroom setting. Special education providers contribute by identifying perspectives on a child's unique learning needs and a specific understanding of the child's disability, including materials that should be made available and adaptations that should be implemented. This lays the foundation for educators and service providers to complement one another's work in assessing a child's skills and development. Shared information can build relationships that lead to joint decision-making not only about the assessment process but also about curriculum, instruction, supports, and services that educators, providers, and families make for individual children and groups of children.

Collaboration to share assessment observations and evidence for completing the DRDP (2025) is built on relationships and a commitment to ongoing communication. It is developed over time with an understanding of each person's role. Aim for multiple, informal strategies that can be used on a daily basis. Identifying mutual interests in supporting the child is important. Some questions that address joint interests include:

- What are the goals for the child?
- What specialized equipment or adaptations are used?
- How will the goals be infused into the child's day and into learning activities?
- How will we know our strategies are working?

Collaborating with others in the assessment process is especially important when multiple providers are involved in a child's care. For example, a child may attend an early education program and also receive special education services, such as

speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and/or physical therapy. Educators and special education providers can work hand in hand to complete observations and DRDP (2025) ratings for children who are dually enrolled in both programs. How this collaboration will take place – who will be involved and what roles each individual will play – will vary depending on the situation. Educators and service providers have reported the following helpful strategies:

- Sharing information, including observations, adaptations, curriculum, and program goals, and IFSP outcomes or IEP goals
- Providing anecdotal notes
- Sharing work samples and portfolios
- Reviewing reports of DRDP (2025) results together

With DRDP Online, educators and service providers can use features such as a shared portfolio with rating recommendations and collaborate to complete the DRDP. The ability to share a child's record with the provider helps educators collaborate, along with using technology such as email, phone conferences, and free web conferencing platforms. Within DRDP Online, once ratings are completed and locked, reports can be shared with both the educator and the provider. Local policies on device use should be followed, and child information should not be sent via email.

The educator and special education service provider responsible for completing the DRDP (2025) should each take the lead in partnering with others who work with the child. The general educator is responsible for entering DRDP data into DRDP Online. The special educator is responsible for reporting and entering assessment data for children with IEPs or IFSPs to the SELPA. However, except for data reporting, both educators can complete the assessment together, and each of them holds a copy of the Rating Record for their respective reporting. Suggestions to help get started working together include:

- Make an initial plan detailing areas to be observed directly and those areas in which others may have a more thorough knowledge of the child. The general education educator can provide information on all domains. A speech-language therapist might inform measures in the Foundational Language Development domain. Families and special education providers, including physical and occupational therapists, are good sources of information on measures in the Physical Development and Health domains.

- Contact the individuals who will collaborate to discuss the mutual goal of completing the assessment and to develop a plan for working together.
- Develop a timeline that is acceptable to all partners, including identifying deadlines and strategies to meet timelines.
- Collect any signature requirements for sharing child information from the family.
- Gather multiple perspectives and consider input from family and others who know the child during assessment.
- Determine when and how communicating about updates and results will occur.

Collaborating with Families

Families are essential partners in understanding a child's development and learning. Research suggests that family observations are reliable and valid and should be considered an essential component of a comprehensive assessment process. Inviting parents and other family members to share observations of their child's development and behavior is required for CCDD and EED programs. It is good practice in all early childhood settings and programs. CCDD and EED programs work in partnership with families to learn about each child's development and behavior across home and program settings. Listening to and using family observations is a core part of equitable, high-quality assessment in every early childhood program.

When families collaborate with educators and service providers to share their observations of their child's behaviors in the home or community settings, it provides a richer, broader view of the child. When families and educators, or service providers, work together to share observations about a child's development and behavior across home, community, and program settings, they gain a more complete and authentic understanding of the child. Information from families helps identify skills and behaviors that the child may not routinely demonstrate in the educational setting. For example, an educator or therapist may not regularly observe a child's dressing or other self-help skills. However, families have repeated opportunities to observe their child's self-help skills both over time and in different settings. Family observations support more accurate reporting about a child's skills. Families contribute essential insights about how their child uses skills and behaviors in everyday routines and relationships. Their observations reflect the child's competencies across familiar settings, such as home and community, and complement what educators and service providers

observe in educational environments. When families and professionals share what they each observe, they build a more accurate and complete picture of the child's development.

Strategies for partnering with families in the assessment process include:

- Make sure that families understand the skills and behaviors described in the DRDP (2025) measures. Educators and service providers understand expected sequences of child development and are trained about how items on the DRDP (2025) reflect these sequences. It may be useful to provide families with examples of the kinds of behaviors to look for, as well as the routines and activities that might provide a context for these behaviors. For example, rather than ask a family member to describe a child's grasping pattern, inquire about how a child picks up small pieces of cereal during mealtime.
- **Build shared understanding of the DRDP (2025).** Engage families in conversations about how the measures reflect children's everyday learning and development. Emphasize that both family and educator observations contribute to the same picture of the child's growth.
 - **Use examples that connect to each family's daily routines and culture.** Work together to identify moments—such as mealtime, play, or community activities—where a child naturally demonstrates knowledge and skills. This allows both educators and families to recognize competencies in meaningful, familiar contexts.
 - **Exchange observations as part of an ongoing dialogue.** Rather than collecting one-time reports, create multiple opportunities for families to share what they see and to reflect together on what those behaviors mean for the child's learning and support. Make this a part of your routine with families, not just a one-time interview.
- It is reasonable for the observations of families and practitioners to differ across the range of behaviors being rated. A child's behavior during activities and routines that occur in the classroom setting may differ from the same child's behavior in activities and routines in home or community settings. Family observations provide a different perspective that should be considered when assessing the child's developmental level.

Ongoing conversations with families during everyday interactions are essential opportunities to build shared understanding about a child's learning and development. These exchanges help both families and educators notice how the child uses skills across different settings and routines. When educators and families take time to reflect together on everyday activities, they can connect what each has observed and develop a fuller picture of the child's competencies. The ongoing conversations we have with family members during our typical interactions with them are rich opportunities to learn about their child. Leading a focused conversation with a family is particularly important for obtaining information on measures you have not had the opportunity to observe. During these conversations, *focusing on routines and activities* provides a very useful context for asking a family about their child's everyday learning opportunities and skills. The four steps in the resource listed below will guide you in planning and leading focused conversations with families to help complete the DRDP (2025). If this is the first DRDP (2025) assessment that you will be completing with a particular child, be sure that you have spent enough time getting to know the child by observing the child's skills during typical routines/activities and by having conversations with the family.

For More Information

DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education 2014 (https://edn.ne.gov/cms/sites/default/files/u1/pdf/DEC_RPs_%204-12-14R.pdf)

Developed to guide practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes and promote the development of young children, birth through age 5, who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The purpose is to help bridge the gap between research and practice by highlighting those practices that have been shown to result in better outcomes for you.

Practice Improvement Tools: Practice Guides for Practitioners (<https://ectacenter.org/decrp/type-pgpractitioner.asp>)

A comprehensive set of practitioner tools to support the DEC Recommended Practices is available on the **Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center website** (<https://ectacenter.org/decrp/type-pgpractitioner.asp>). Resources related to collaborating with families include:

- **Engaging Families as Assessment Partners** English (https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/PGP_ASM2_engagingfamilies_2018.pdf) | **Engaging Families as Assessment Partners** Spanish (https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/PGP_ASM2_engagingfamilies_2018_es.pdf)
- **Authentic Child Assessment** English (https://ectacenter.org/%7Epdfs/decrp/PGP_ASM3_authentic_2018.pdf) | **Authentic Child Assessment** Spanish (https://ectacenter.org/%7Epdfs/decrp/PGP_ASM3_authentic_2018_es.pdf)

Data Dialogue: Tips for Educators on Sharing Student Data with Families (<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/15/11/data-dialogue>)

Find tips on how teachers and schools can safely and productively discuss children's data with their families, written by Leah Shafer from the Harvard Graduate School of Education for the Usable Knowledge series.

Talking With Families (<https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/talking.asp>)

This resource provides practices for talking with families about the outcomes measurement process, encouraging and utilizing family input in gathering information about the child and family, and sharing results with families.

Desired Results Training and Technical Assistance Project

Website: www.desiredresults.us

Email: desiredresults@wested.org

Phone: (800) 770-6339

Desired Results Access Project

Website: <http://www.draccess.org>

Email: info@draccess.org

GOOD

1. Block Area

Child: Aaliyah (4 years old)

Aaliyah spent approximately **20 minutes** in the block area with **Marcus and Sofia**. She used large wooden blocks to build a tall tower. After adding several blocks, she said, *"Look how high it is! It's bigger than me!"* When the tower fell, she laughed and said, *"Let's build it again, but stronger."* Marcus helped gather blocks while Sofia added blocks to the base. The children worked together and continued rebuilding until cleanup time.

2. Dramatic Play Area

Child: Mateo (5 years old)

Mateo played in the dramatic play area for **25 minutes** with **Jasmine and Eli**. The children pretended to run a restaurant. Mateo wrote pretend orders on a notepad and said, *"What would you like today?"* When Jasmine ordered soup, Mateo replied, *"Okay, your soup will be ready soon."* He carried play food to the table and encouraged Eli by saying, *"You can be the cook."* Mateo remained engaged throughout the activity.

3. Art Area

Child: Priya (4 years old)

Priya spent **15 minutes** at the art table with **two classmates, Noah and Lucia**. She selected markers and paper and drew a picture of her family. While drawing, she pointed to a figure and said, *"This is my grandma. She makes pancakes with me."* Noah asked about another figure, and Priya explained, *"That's my little brother."* Priya remained focused on her drawing until she finished and then shared it with her peers.

4. Outdoor Play

Child: Jamal (5 years old)

Jamal participated in outdoor play for **30 minutes** with **three peers**. He rode a tricycle around the path and later joined a game of chase. As he pedaled, he told a friend, *"Watch how fast I can go!"* When another child asked to use the tricycle, Jamal responded, *"You can have a turn when I'm done going around one more time."* He followed the agreed-upon turn and continued playing cooperatively.

5. Sensory Table

Child: Mei (3 years old)

Mei spent **18 minutes** at the sensory table with **Aiden and Zara**. The table contained water, cups, and funnels. Mei poured water from one container to another while saying, *"It's filling up!"* She watched water flow through the funnel and said, *"Look, it's coming out the bottom."* Zara joined her, and the two children took turns using the larger measuring cup. Mei remained actively engaged until the group transitioned to circle time.

Okay

6. Puzzle Area

Child: Noah

Noah worked on a puzzle. He put several pieces together and finished most of the puzzle independently. He seemed interested in the activity.

7. Reading Corner

Child: Sofia

Sofia looked at books in the reading corner. She turned pages and pointed to pictures. She stayed focused on the books and appeared to enjoy the activity.

8. Music and Movement

Child: Elijah

Elijah participated during music and movement. He danced to the songs and followed many of the motions. He joined the group activity appropriately.

9. Loose Parts Exploration

Child: Zara

Zara explored materials such as pinecones, sticks, and stones. She moved items around and created arrangements with them. She remained engaged during the experience.

Needs Some Help

10. Cleanup Time

Child: Lucas

Lucas was a **good helper** during cleanup time. He happily put toys away and was one of the best children in the classroom at following directions. He had a positive attitude throughout the routine.

11. Circle Time

Child: Nia

Nia was **very happy** during circle time. She was a **wonderful listener** and did an excellent job participating. She was clearly one of the most attentive children in the group.

12. Science Center

Child: Amir

Amir was a **good boy** in the science center today. He was very interested in the materials and did a great job exploring them. He appeared much more cooperative than some of the other children.

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Observation, Screening, Assessment, and Documentation

Introduction

Observation, screening, and assessment include processes for gathering, interpreting, applying, and sharing information in a manner that recognizes children's strengths and builds upon their previous experiences. They are important tools for understanding children individually and in groups, and for the purposes of planning environments, curriculum, and other learning experiences. For example, to support effective observation and assessment practice, the CDE has developed a tool called the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), which is aligned with the preschool learning foundations and the infant/toddler learning and development foundations.* In general, this competency area addresses the knowledge and skills that early childhood educators need in order to conduct responsible, ethical, and effective observation, screening, and assessment of young children and the identification of special needs. It includes an understanding of the goals, uses, benefits, and limitations of various assessment approaches. Also included are the importance of, and strategies for, working with families when using observation, screening, and assessment; principles of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically sensitive, and individually meaningful observation, screening, and assessment; the relationship between observation, screening, assessment, and decision making and planning; program evaluation; confidentiality and privacy; and the role of early childhood educators or other professionals in these processes.

*For children who are typically developing, the DRDP 2010 is the appropriate assessment instrument; visit <http://www.wested.org/desiredresults> for more information. For children with disabilities who receive preschool special education services, the appropriate instrument is determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, which includes the family and the child's preschool teacher. All three-, four-, and five-year-old children who have an IEP and receive preschool services, regardless of instructional setting, must be assessed using either the DRDP or the DRDP *access*, which is an alternative version of the DRDP. The DRDP *access* includes measures that have an expanded range for assessing preschool-age children with disabilities. Visit <http://draccess.org> for more information.

Key Concepts

- Knowledge of development, learning, and individual differences is the foundation for observation, screening, assessment, and documentation.
- Observation is essential for gathering information and assessing children's development and learning.
- Observation should be ongoing (conducted daily and over time), across settings, and should include input from families or other significant adults.
- Assessment encompasses a variety of strategies that provide information about children's development, learning, interests, strengths, and needs.
- Assessment should be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate; focused on all domains of development; conducted over time; and used for the purpose for which it was designed.
- Observation, screening, assessment, and documentation include input from families and reflect cultural understanding.
- Observation, screening, assessment, and documentation are used to inform planning for individual children's learning and development.

Dispositions

- Values the importance of observation, screening, appropriate assessment, and documentation
- Respects children's individuality and the cultural diversity of all families
- Reflects on how personal perspectives or biases influence the use of tools and instruments and the process of gathering and interpreting information about children and families
- Values observation as a basis for decision making

Performance Areas

1. Observation
2. Screening and Referral
3. Assessment
4. Documentation
5. Interpretation, Planning, and Implementation

PERFORMANCE AREA 1

Observation

Topics	Competency Contexts			
	Supporting Early Learning and Development	Planning and Guiding Early Learning and Development	Creating and Maintaining Program Policies and Practices	Advancing the Early Childhood Profession
Concepts of observation	Demonstrates understanding of basic concepts of observation. Refers family members to appropriate colleagues when families have questions about observation.	Initiates discussions with colleagues about the principles of observation. Describes to families the role of observation in understanding each child's learning interests, strengths, and needs, and seeks their input. Supports the planning process and develops appropriate activities based on observation of children in the group.	Develops program policies and communicates with families about principles of observation. Explains the role of observation information* in program planning that is intended to support the learning and development of all children.	Advocates and facilitates discussions among early childhood educators and families on the benefits and limitations of observational information. Addresses the need for systemic strategies to provide adequate staffing, paid planning time, professional development, and appropriate work space.
Observational practices	Knows that formal and informal observations are ongoing and part of everyday practice. Identifies nonverbal cues, gestures, and moods through observation. Refers questions or concerns about children's behavior to appropriate colleagues.	Understands the knowledge required to conduct observation. Conducts formal and informal observation of children across settings and over time, and includes in the process other adults who are important to the child. Identifies children in the group who should be observed in their home language in addition to English.	Provides professional development and support to colleagues on conducting formal and informal observations and eliciting input from families. Arranges staffing patterns and schedules to facilitate observations. Provides resources for observations that may require specific tools.	Develops resources for professional development in the observation of children. Collaborates with early education programs to provide observation opportunities for students or pre-service early childhood educators.

*Information gathered during the observation process.

Performance Area 1. Observation *(continued)*

Topics	Competency Contexts			
	Supporting Early Learning and Development	Planning and Guiding Early Learning and Development	Creating and Maintaining Program Policies and Practices	Advancing the Early Childhood Profession
Observation	Contributes ongoing observations to understand children's behavior, maintaining confidentiality.	Gathers observations from the home, group, staff, colleagues, families, and service providers to inform the planning process for individual children and the group. Initiates discussion with colleagues about the principles of observation. Responds to questions from colleagues and families about children's behavior or refers to appropriate staff.	Develops program guidelines and provides professional development regarding observation of children's behavior, including observational strategies, objectivity, confidentiality, and the interpretation and application of observations. Provides support—such as small groups, low staff-to-children ratios, and paid planning time—for the documentation and analysis of observations. Communicates with families about the program's approach to observation.	Collaborates with early childhood educators, families, and service providers to develop guidelines for the implementation, interpretation, and application of observations in a variety of early education settings. Addresses issues related to support for observation, such as structural quality, professional development for early childhood educators, space, and equipment in early education settings.

Documentation

Topics	Competency Contexts			
	Supporting Early Learning and Development	Planning and Guiding Early Learning and Development	Creating and Maintaining Program Policies and Practices	Advancing the Early Childhood Profession
Strategies for documentation	Demonstrates an understanding that documentation is an important part of the assessment process. Assists in gathering artifacts and other materials for use in documentation. Maintains the confidentiality of children and families in documentation.	Documents observations in a clear, objective, and timely manner. Initiates discussions with staff and colleagues about strategies for documentation and applies those strategies to the selection of samples, artifacts, or other information to include in documentation. Maintains current and confidential documentation of children's development, including information gathered from staff, colleagues, and families. Respects family preferences regarding documentation, especially if information is shared with the public.	Supervises documentation, data collection, and data storage. Ensures completion, accuracy, thoroughness, confidentiality, and timeliness. Collaborates with families and colleagues to develop documentation policies that support children's learning and development. Ensures that confidentiality is maintained for all documents. Facilitates reflection on documentation for curriculum and program planning. Provides tools and strategies to support timely documentation.	Provides leadership to colleagues on developing systems for conducting timely assessments and for gathering sophisticated comparative-analysis data. Also provides leadership on the use of assessment information for planning purposes, which includes time to reflect on and analyze information gathered. Addresses the need for adequate staffing, paid planning time, professional development, and work space. Facilitates discussions among early childhood educators and families to protect children's and families' right to privacy.
Modes of documentation	Demonstrates an understanding that documentation can serve different purposes and has different intended audiences. Is familiar with the different types of documentation processes commonly used in early education settings, including anecdotal records, work samples, video clips, photographs, and dictations.	Understands the benefits and limitations of various modes of documentation and adapts the mode and content to the intended purpose and audience. Plans developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to participate in documentation of their experiences.	Selects documentation tools appropriate for the types of information to be gathered. Provides professional development to colleagues on how to convey to families the specific uses of various documentation tools. Ensures that sources of data and documentation are appropriate.	Analyzes documentation tools for appropriateness in a variety of early education settings. Assists colleagues in learning and understanding that there are many modes of documentation, including noninterventional types such as observation of play and other activities in natural settings. Stays current on research about various uses for documentation tools.

Teaching Strategies

The following is a list of teaching strategies:

- **Observing Before Intervening**
Slow down to notice what is happening before responding to children's behavior. Intentional observation helps adults understand children's cues, emotions, and needs so responses are thoughtful rather than reactive.
- **Understanding Developmental Expectations**
Align adult expectations with what is developmentally appropriate for young children. Recognizing that big emotions and impulsive behavior are part of learning supports more realistic responses.
- **Environment as a Support or Stressor**
Use the physical environment to promote play, engagement, and regulation. Thoughtful arrangement of space, materials, and sensory elements can help children feel safe, engaged, and ready to learn.
- **Adult Responses and Emotional Co-Regulation**
Model calm, connection, and emotional safety through adult behavior. When adults remain regulated and responsive, children learn how to manage emotions and problem-solve in supportive ways.
- **Reframing Behavior as Communication**
View children's behavior as a form of communication rather than defiance. This perspective encourages curiosity, reflection, and the identification of unmet needs that guide supportive planning.
- **Supporting Choice, Agency, and Autonomy**
Provide opportunities for children to make meaningful choices and feel respected. Supporting autonomy builds confidence, cooperation, and a sense of belonging within the learning environment.



HOW TO HOST A PRESCHOOL TEACHER BOOK STUDY

Focus: The Power of Observation

PURPOSE

Create a space for educators to read, reflect, discuss, and apply ideas to classroom practice. Observation helps us understand children's interests, development, strengths, needs, and ways of learning.

BIG QUESTION

How can intentional observation help us better understand and support the children in our care?

1. CHOOSE YOUR BOOK

Select a book that connects to early childhood observation, documentation, child development, or reflective teaching. Look for a book that is practical, relevant to preschool classrooms, encourages reflection, and offers strategies teachers can try immediately.

2. SAMPLE 4-SESSION PLAN

SESSION	FOCUS	DISCUSSION / ACTION
1 — SEE	What does observation really mean?	Separate what we see and hear from what we assume. Share a recent observation.
2 — UNDERSTAND	What can observations tell us?	Explore interests, development, strengths, and questions that emerge.
3 — REFLECT	How do our beliefs shape what we notice?	Examine assumptions and practice strengths-based observation.
4 — APPLY	How will observation change practice?	Choose one strategy to try and identify evidence of its impact.

3. USE A SIMPLE MEETING FORMAT

CONNECT · 5 MIN	Opening question: <i>Think of a child you observed recently. What did you learn by slowing down and really watching?</i>
DISCUSS · 20 MIN	What stood out? What surprised you? What connections did you make? What questions remain?
PRACTICE · 15 MIN	Analyze a short observation and identify what was actually seen or heard versus what was interpreted.
APPLY · 10 MIN	Complete: This week I will... and name one change to try in the classroom.

4. OBSERVATION ≠ INTERPRETATION

WHAT I SAW / HEARD	WHAT I MIGHT INTERPRET
Jayden puts three puzzle pieces together.	Jayden is very smart.
Sofia moves away when the group becomes loud.	Sofia doesn't like group activities.
Amir watches the demonstration and then tries it independently.	Amir is a visual learner.

Remember: Observation = What did I see or hear? Interpretation = What do I think it means?

5. END WITH REFLECTION

I noticed...	_____
I wondered...	_____
I learned...	_____
I want to try...	_____

FACILITATOR TIPS

Create a safe space • Keep conversation connected to classroom practice • Protect children's privacy • Encourage curiosity • Use real examples • End with one practical action

THE BIG TAKEAWAY

OBSERVE → REFLECT → QUESTION → RESPOND

When teachers slow down to observe children carefully, they gain information that can guide meaningful relationships, intentional teaching, and responsive classroom experiences.