Authentic Assessment: Measuring My Child’s Growth and Development

What is authentic assessment?

Authentic assessment is a tool teaching teams use every day to understand:
- What children know and can do.
- How children are developing.
- What they can do to support children’s growth.

How does authentic assessment work?

At home, you assess things every day. You check to see if your child is feeling well enough to attend their program. You observe how they are getting along with friends when you go to the playground and what kinds of things they are interested in. These observations help you understand your child and how you can help them continue to grow. Your child’s teachers use authentic assessment in much the same way.

As teaching teams support children’s exploration, they observe, ask questions and take photographs of children to capture their learning throughout the day. Teaching teams use this information to understand how each child is doing and to plan activities that support their growth.

How is information from authentic assessment used?

Authentic assessment is used to understand children’s thinking, development and learning. It helps families, teachers and programs in different ways.

You can use insights from authentic assessment to:
- Understand how to best support your child’s growth and development.
- Understand how your child learns best.

Teaching teams can use insights from authentic assessment to:
- Understand your child’s abilities and make decisions about how to help him/her continue to grow.
- Plan daily activities based on your child’s skills and interests.
- Communicate with families during conferences.

Programs can use insights from authentic assessment to:
- Order materials to support the learning needs of children.
- Identify resources to help meet the learning needs of all children.
What areas of development are assessed?

Young children’s development is usually divided into five areas or “domains” for assessment:

- **Approaches to Learning** - how children engage in learning experiences. This is important because the way children approach learning influences their development across all domains.
- **Social and Emotional Development** - how children develop relationships as well as recognize and manage emotions. These are lifelong skills necessary for development and learning.
- **Language, Literacy and Communication** - how children listen, understand, and use language with their emerging literacy skills and other developing abilities to communicate.
- **Cognition** - the skills and concepts children use to understand and organize the world around them, including math, art, science, and social studies.
- **Physical Development and Health** - the skills and abilities children develop to physically maneuver and stay safe in their environment.

It is important for teaching teams to assess all of these areas through observations and documentation to best understand and provide individualized support for each child’s growth. Please note that the areas described above may be slightly different depending on your child’s age and the tool your program uses.

How can you help with authentic assessment?

You know your child best! Talk to your child’s teachers often. Working together can help make sure your child gets the support needed for the most learning and growth.

- You can share information about your child’s interests and skills with your child’s teachers.
- You can talk about your child’s development with their teachers. This helps you and your child’s teachers to work together to support your child’s growth.
- Ask your child’s teachers about authentic assessment and be open to their recommendations.