

Appendix A
Glossary of Terms Related to Early Childhood Assessment

Accommodations	Adaptations in assessment tools and standards to permit children with disabilities or English language learners to show what they know and can do. Adjustments may be made, for example, in the way a test is administered or presented, in the timing, in the language, or in how the child responds. The nature of the adjustment determines whether or not what is being measured or the comparability of scores is affected (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Achievement test	A testing instrument, typically standardized and norm referenced, used to measure how much a child has learned in relation to educational objectives (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Alternative assessment	See performance assessment
Assessment	A term sometimes used loosely to refer to any type of appraisal of young children. In a narrower sense, assessment refers to information from multiple indicators and sources of evidence that is organized and interpreted and then evaluated to make an appraisal (McAfee, Leong, and Bodrova, 2004).
Authentic assessment	A type of performance assessment that uses tasks that are as close as possible to real-life practical and intellectual challenges and the child completes the desired behavior in a context as close to real life as possible (McAfee et al., 2004).
Construct-irrelevant variance	Variance in assessment results that reflects variables other than the construct the assessment is intended to measure. An example is the variance in a mathematics assessment that may occur if the child being assessed lacks the language skills to understand the assessment items.
Criterion-referenced assessment	A testing instrument in which the test-taker's performance (i.e., score) is interpreted by comparing it with a prespecified standard or specific content and/or skills. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Curriculum-based assessment	Form of criterion-referenced measurement wherein curricular objectives act as the criteria for the identification of instructional targets and for the assessment of status and progress (Bagnato and Neisworth, 1991).
Developmental assessment	An ongoing process of observing a child's current competencies (including knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes) and using the information to help the child develop further in the context of family and caregiving and learning environments (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Developmentally appropriate	Regarding practices, including assessment, that are age appropriate, culturally appropriate, and individually appropriate for each child (McAfee et al., 2004).
Dynamic assessment	Assessment approach characterized by guided support or learning for the purpose of determining a child's potential for change (Losardo and Notari-Syverson, 2001).
Formal assessment	A procedure for obtaining information that can be used to make judgments about characteristics of children or programs using standardized instruments (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Formative assessment	An assessment designed to monitor progress toward an objective and used to guide curricular and instructional decisions.

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High-stakes assessment	Tests or assessment processes for which the results lead to significant sanctions or rewards for children, their teachers, administrators, schools, programs, or school systems. Sanctions may be direct (e.g., retention in grade for children, reassignment for teachers, reorganization for schools) or unintended (e.g., narrowing of the curriculum, increased dropping out).
Informal assessment	A procedure for obtaining information that can be used to make judgments about characteristics of children or programs using means other than standardized instruments (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Naturalistic assessment	See authentic assessment.
Norm-referenced test	A standardized testing instrument by which the test-taker's performance is interpreted in relation to the performance of a group of peers who have previously taken the same test. The group of peers is known as the "norming" group (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Performance assessment	Finding out what children know and can do by observing how they perform certain tasks. Usually uses tasks as close as possible to real-life practical and intellectual challenges (McAfee et al., 2004).
Portfolio assessment	A collection of work, usually drawn from children's classroom work, which, when subjected to objective analysis, becomes an assessment tool (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Progress monitoring	Assessment conducted to examine students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress is measured on a regular basis (e.g., weekly or monthly) by comparing expected and actual rates of learning. Based on these measurements, teaching is adjusted as needed (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008)
Readiness test	A testing instrument designed to measure skills believed to be related to school learning tasks and to be predictive of school success (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008)
Reliability	The consistency of measurements, gauged by any of several methods, including when the testing procedure is repeated on a population of individuals or groups (test-retest reliability), or is administered by different raters (inter-rater reliability). There is no single, preferred approach to quantification of reliability (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999).
Screening	The use of a brief procedure or instrument designed to identify, from within a large population of children, those who may need further assessment to verify developmental and/or health risks (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Standards-based assessment	An assessment using criteria that are derived directly from content or performance standards adapted from (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).
Standardized test	A testing instrument that is administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard manner. It may be either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).

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Summative assessment	An assessment that typically documents how much learning has occurred at a point in time; its purpose is to measure the level of child, school, or program success (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008)
Validity (of an assessment or tool)	The extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure; the extent to which an assessment's results support meaningful inferences for certain intended purposes.

SOURCES

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