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“The MisMeasure of Young Children”

The assessment tool is a very well practiced part of education. Teachers are now assessing children of all ages even in the early childhood stage. The question remains whether children should be assessed at such a young age. Why do they assess children? What are teachers looking for? Are children being mismeasured and therefore denying them beneficial opportunities? These are all very good questions that this article discusses.

Children are assessed only if it is evident that there are some sort of problems or learning disabilities. The article states, “of course, routine screening programs and research projects involve assessment of children with typical development, as do accountability efforts to track child achievement. Yet, assessment becomes important or ‘high stakes’ when problems are suspected or predicted” (199). Basically, assessment is for all children of all ages, but it mainly focuses on the children who have problems learning.

Why do teachers assess children? There are four major assessment purposes. They are “screening and eligibility determination, individualized program planning, child progress monitoring, and program evaluation” (199). Teachers are not only supposed to evaluate the child’s progress, but also the progress of the program and the techniques used to help the child learn and develop.
The article states that “misrepresenting children through mismeasuring them denies children their rights to beneficial expectations and opportunities” (198). Now, based on our history of mismeasurement, we need to evaluate and assess whether or not how we are assessing children is accurate or not. The article states that “we contend that much of conventional early childhood measurement has been used to diagnose, label, and sort young children, based on more inference and theory, and have resulted in questionable placements and service delivery” (199).

The article discusses 5 points stating that they are not against early childhood measurement, but these are their beliefs on the situation. First, “measurement in early childhood continues to be dominated by conventional norm-referenced testing practices to the detriment of young children” (199). These “norm-referenced” tests are not benefiting children, but possibly harming them. Second, these norm-referenced tests have not been developed for children with disabilities. Therefore, these “have no evidence-base in early childhood” (199). Third, some assessments are unrelated to children’s everyday natural routines therefore, they do not capture the “true” capabilities of young children. Fourth, “conventional testing must be abandoned within early childhood fields for every purpose” (199). This is saying that most assessing should not be done in the early childhood fields. Fifth, “only authentic or other alternative, observational assessment forms that meet current recommended practice standards of the Division for Early Childhood, should be promoted in early childhood fields” (199). Observational methods may be used, but only if they are recommended by the DEC. These methods need to follow their standards.
Overall, assessing children at an early age is allowed and a good practice as well as it follows the standards of the DEC. Some methods that are being used now need to be revised and see that they are focusing on the needs of the children, not just the progress of children with disabilities and the program. Assessment is a very important tool in a child’s developmental learning process, therefore it needs to be an accurate and worthwhile assessment.