

## 6 Assessment



This part of the *Early Childhood (K-3) Syllabus Working Version* provides information about how assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching, methods for gathering information, recording assessment information and making judgements and reporting.



Please comment on the extent to which the information in this part of the syllabus:

- gives clear advice about the purpose of assessment in the Early Childhood phase of development
- gives clear advice about the process of assessment
- details clearly valid and practical principles of assessment
- gives practical advice on types and methods of assessment
- foregrounds sufficiently the place and value of teachers' professional judgements on assessment
- provides clear messages about sustainable approaches to assessment that take into account time efficiency
- clearly articulates the links between assessment and reporting.

Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching.

The purpose of assessment is to:

- monitor children's progress to inform teacher planning and student learning
- gather and interpret evidence that enables teachers to make informed decisions on children's achievement and progress as a basis for reporting.

Assessment relies on the professional judgement of the teacher. It is based on valid, comprehensive and reliable information about children's achievement that has been collected over time. Assessment tasks must be fair, challenging and educative.

Early Childhood teachers are expected to provide feedback to children on assessments, so that they know what to do to improve and teachers know what next to plan for in their teaching.

The scope and sequence statements in this syllabus have been developed with reference to information on children's progressive achievement of learning outcomes in the *Curriculum Framework Progress Maps* and the *Outcomes and Standards Framework*.

In planning and delivering learning, teaching and assessment programs using the scope and sequence statements, Early Childhood teachers will be supporting children to work towards or beyond what is described in

relevant standards. However, children with particular needs may require individual or group documented plans to support their learning.

Schools should have an assessment policy based on the principles of assessment in the *Curriculum Framework* and communicate this to children and the school community.

## 6.1 The process of assessment

Assessment involves:

- providing children with opportunities to demonstrate and apply what they know, understand and can do
- gathering and recording the evidence of children's demonstrations of their learning
- using evidence to make on-balance judgements about children's achievement.

Children learn best when they:

- understand clearly what they are trying to learn, and what is expected of them
- are given timely feedback about the quality of their work and what they can do to make it better
- are given advice about how to improve and continue their learning
- are involved in reviewing assessment information and setting learning goals.

## 6.2 Principles of assessment

Assessment should:

- be based on the belief that all children can improve in their learning
- be developed with reference to the principles of learning, teaching and assessment in the *Curriculum Framework*
- be referenced to common standards as described in the *Curriculum Framework Progress Maps* or the *Outcomes and Standard Framework*
- provide feedback to children about the progress of their learning, the quality of their work and the direction they need to take in future learning
- encourage children to think about their learning through questioning. This can assist children to identify their strengths and the next steps in their learning
- enhance the self esteem and motivation of children
- recognise and value the diverse backgrounds and experiences of children
- involve observing children during learning activities
- enable collaboration with colleagues, in and across schools, to evaluate evidence so that judgements about children's achievement are valid, reliable and comparable

- result in adjustments to teaching to take into account the information that assessment provides
- allow for input from children and parents/caregivers.

Early Childhood teachers do not need to assess every learning experience. Teachers will use their professional judgement to inform decisions about when to assess, whether the assessment evidence should be collected formally or informally, and which evidence provides the most valuable and reliable information about student learning.

## 6.3 Assessment in the Early Childhood phase of development

Assessment should reflect current knowledge of children in the Early Childhood phase of development. This will enable Early Childhood teachers to consider how individual children behave, think, interact and learn when planning, developing and implementing assessment tasks.

In the Early Childhood phase of development, assessment and monitoring processes enable the wide variance of achievement of children to be catered for. Assessment and monitoring ensures children's achievements are recognised and their needs are identified as early as possible. The physical and psychological security of children provided by warm, caring environments and characterised by trusting relationships is central to effective assessment.

Effective practice in the Early Childhood phase of development, focuses on children as competent learners recognising what children know, as opposed to what they do not know, as the basis for teaching. This recognition includes the sharing of information and observations with parents/caregivers and valuing the information parents/caregivers provide about their child.

Reliability and validity of assessment increase with children's age. Young children do not understand the purpose of formal testing. Information collection in relation to young children demands the inclusion of multiple sources of evidence collected in realistic settings and situations that reflect children's actual performance. This ensures the presentation of a clear picture of the child's learning. The effective use of more formal assessments increases with age but still needs to be balanced with a range of ways of gathering information in context.

Methods for gathering information about children's learning include:

- observations
- checklists
- attitude surveys
- child interviews
- concept maps
- demonstrations of skills in simulated and real contexts

- dialogue and listening
- individual discussions with students
- investigations
- journals and learning logs
- learning stories
- open-ended questioning
- open-ended tasks
- oral presentations
- photographs
- projects/assignments/reports
- reflective assessments
- role-plays
- running records
- self and peer assessment
- sketches and drawings
- structured whole or small group discussions
- portfolios
- tests
- video recordings
- work in progress
- work samples.

Early Childhood teachers analyse the information collected, for example by annotating observations and photographs, and use this information to direct teaching and to make judgements about the progress and achievement of children.

## 6.4 Recording assessment information

Early Childhood teachers can select from a range of published or teacher developed resources to record assessment information. Important principles for teachers to apply when recording are to select methods that:

- are time efficient
- are effective in assisting to inform children's learning
- enable assessment over a period of time
- accommodate a range of assessment types
- can be linked effectively to standards that inform reporting.

Methods of recording children's progress and achievement include:

- anecdotal records
- annotated work samples
- audio and visual (including photographic and video) recordings
- checklists
- documented plans (Individual Education Plans and Group Plans)
- marking keys
- observation notes
- portfolios
- reflection sheets, diaries or scrapbooks
- records of test results

- rubrics
- sample assessment items
- student/teacher journals.

Teachers can use the following frameworks to assist with recording assessment information:

- *Curriculum Framework Progress Maps*
- *English as a Second Language or Dialect (ESL/ESD) Progress Map*
- *First Steps Developmental Continua*
- *Kindergarten and Pre-primary Profile*
- *Literacy and Numeracy Net*
- *Outcomes and Standards Framework.*

### Making judgements and reporting

Teacher judgements are fundamental to assessment and reporting processes.

Early Childhood teachers assess using ways with which they feel comfortable to monitor children's progress and determine summative grades for reporting.

Early Childhood teachers do not have to level or grade every piece of a child's work.

Judgements about children's achievement are based on knowledge of the child and their work, accumulated over time and in a range of situations. The frequency, consistency and degree of independence shown by children in demonstrating learning provide a basis on which teachers can make on-balance judgements about assessment of outcomes.

Valid and reliable on-balance judgements can be supported by moderation processes within and between schools. Moderation processes should take into account individual staff differences and readiness.

Early Childhood teachers also refer to information from standardised tests to inform their judgments about children's achievement.

Teacher judgements inform summative grades for reporting. Reporting is a process, both formal and informal, for providing information about the progress of student achievement. It provides a vital part of developing and maintaining the partnership between school and home.

When reporting, care needs to be taken to give parents/caregivers information that:

- is free of jargon and complex technical language
- focuses on strengths and what the child has achieved in the learning period
- reports a child's achievement in relation to standards, including national literacy and numeracy benchmarks
- is reliable and valid within and across schools
- is comprehensible to them (this may require use of interpreters and/or translations).