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Assessment in Preschool
and Kindergarten

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ASSESSMENT IN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN

Jan Hasbrouck

Between the ages of 3 and 5, many children entering preschool and kindergarten are given tests. Reasons for testing may differ, but all assessment of preschool- and kindergarten-aged children must be treated apart from tests performed in the elementary classroom. In part, this is because both physical and emotional development are assessed. Also, young children's verbal and fine motor skills, as well as their attention spans, are not as refined as those of older children.

The issues involved in the assessment of preschool and kindergarten children are sometimes similar and sometimes different from those involving assessment of older students. Some of these issues are discussed in the following section.

ISSUES

How tests are used can be quite controversial. Intelligence tests that are administered to bilingual and minority students, the awarding of merit pay to teachers based on their students' standardized achievement tests scores, and the placement of students into special programs based on the results of tests whose technical adequacy is questionable are among the most debated topics today related to test use. The assessment of young children is another. Although there is general agreement that the implementation of some kind of systematic assessment of such children is vital to the success of early childhood education programs, the form that this assessment should take is hotly debated.

Numerous issues can be considered in testing preschool- and kindergarten-age children. One involves the desire to identify children with special needs as early as possible to provide them with necessary support services while simultaneously attempting not to label and possibly misclassify these children. Other areas that concern those testing young children include the limited availa-

bility of valid and reliable measures, the administration of tests and interpretation of results by unqualified examiners, and the lack of relevant instructional information from test results because of a mismatch between assessment and curriculum.

Early Identification of Children

The testing of young children to identify special needs has increased since the early 1970s as a result of (a) increased interest in early childhood education (Gallerani, O'Regan, & Reinherz, 1982), (b) legislation authorizing federal appropriations for the development of compensatory early education programs such as Head Start and Follow Through (Abbott & Crane, 1977), and (c) implementation of Public Law 94-142. Early detection of learning problems and placement of children into special program is a popular topic of debate (Reynolds, 1979). On one side, it is argued that early intervention is a valuable asset in remediation and a potentially strong tool to prevent learning and behavior problems throughout the school experience. Several studies have shown that the best time to work with low-performing and handicapped children to improve their chances for future school success is in the years from birth through early childhood (Linder, 1983), especially when intervention programs are specifically matched to the deficits of individual children. The argument is made that early intervention can significantly alter the abilities and developmental potential of many children who are at risk while very young (Meisels & Anastasiow, 1982; Reinherz & Griffin, 1977; Schweinhart & Weinkart, 1986), and in some cases, can provide for total or near-total remediation of these problems prior to children entering first grade (Reynolds, 1979). Helping children obtain early intervention services contributes to the eventual reduction of the number of children who expe-

rience school failure and who need special services in later years (Meisels, 1985). Schools have found it less costly and usually more effective to prevent academic, developmental, and behavioral problems than to remediate them (Harrington & Jennings, 1986).

The opposing side of this argument maintains that even if the opportunity is available to help children with special needs, the potential for misidentifying students as "handicapped" or "at risk" is too great and the consequences too serious to take the risk. Stringer (1973) suggests it is difficult to assess which children are most vulnerable and in greatest need of intervention. Shepard and Smith (1986) caution that cognitive domains sampled at young ages are related only moderately to cognitive skills demanded later for reading and other academic tasks.

Bricker (1978) argues against the labeling and classification of young children as handicapped for many reasons, including the impact of society's predominantly negative view of "the handicapped." Placements of children into alternative programs rarely address the possible effects on their self-esteem or on parents' perceptions (Gredler, 1984).

Technical Adequacy of Tests

Another concern regarding the testing of preschool children is the lack of available assessment instruments that meet the basic requirements of reliability, validity, and practicality (Abbott & Crane, 1977; Bagnato & Neisworth, 1981; Levin, Henderson, Levin, & Hoffer, 1975; Meisels, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1988; Wolf & Kessler, 1987). The development of most assessment instruments for young children has not been based on research findings (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1982).

Many early childhood tests vary in the way they measure similarly named areas (Bailey & Wolery, 1984), which makes interpretation of test results difficult at best. Tests of developmental milestones are suspect because young children are highly individualistic in their progression through the developmental stages (McLoughlin & Lewis, 1986). Consequently, their developmental deficits cannot be picked up until they have definitely missed a major milestone (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1982). This can delay the identification of at-risk students. Also, up-to-date norms on general preschool development are not available; information that is widely used today was collected more than 40 years ago from a narrow sampling of children (Barnes, 1982). Another concern is that tests are not

sensitive enough to measure the expression of young children's abilities accurately across socioeconomic or cultural lines (Day, 1983).

Bagnato and Neisworth (1981) question the reliability and validity of preschool tests that require standardized administration. They claim that because of young children's limited behavioral repertoire, distractibility, and transient responsiveness, adapting procedures while testing is often necessary. Shepard and Smith (1986) point out that young children experience developmental bursts and inconsistencies that defy normative comparison. These authors also state that "none of the available tests is accurate enough to screen children into special programs without a 50% error rate" (Shepard & Smith, 1986, p. 80). Therefore, they say, results should be interpreted cautiously. These same authors also suggest that readiness tests identify a disproportionate number of poor and minority students as "unready" (Shepard & Smith, 1988).

In Minnesota, the Early Childhood Assessment Project began offering free health and developmental screening to all 3 1/2- to 5-year-olds in the state in 1977. Since then, the project has tested over 45,000 children using a variety of screening instruments. Thurlow, O'Sullivan, and Ysseldyke (1986) report tremendous variability exists in the percentages of children identified between school districts involved in this project. Some found problems in *all* children screened, while others did not find problems in *any* child. Referral rates for further testing ranged from 0% to 86%. These figures certainly indicate a lack of accuracy and stability of test results.

Test Administration and Interpretation

Accompanying the increasing emphasis on assessment of young children is the increasing need to develop teachers' skills in administering tests and interpreting the results. Early childhood teacher training programs usually do not include courses in assessment techniques (Southworth, Burr, & Cox, 1980), so teachers lack measurement and assessment skills (Abbott & Crane, 1977). This means that teachers are being called upon to make critical decisions about students without adequate knowledge to select appropriate tests, judge their quality, or correctly interpret results.

Test administration can affect children as well. Test taking always involves a certain level of anxiety and stress, even in young children, who generally are not good "test takers." In its position state-

ment on the testing of young children, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1988) states that too often tests are administered to young children (a) in large groups, (b) in unfamiliar environments, and (c) by strange people, perhaps during the first few days at a new school or under other stressful conditions. Children are asked to perform unfamiliar tasks for which the reasons often are not explained.

Instructional Information from Test Results

Teachers often express frustration about the dearth of instructionally useful information that emanates from testing. Although tests can be helpful in locating children with learning and/or developmental problems, there often is no connection between assessment and teaching. Durkin (1987) states that the reason for testing young children is to provide teachers with information about what children know in relation to the content of an instructional program, but she found that teachers seldom use test results to adapt instruction to individual needs. She discovered that regardless of test results, teachers taught the same content to all children in the same manner. Bagnato and Neisworth (1981) believe that traditional practices in early childhood assessment—which emphasize the exclusive use of global, norm-referenced, intellectual measures—are inappropriate because they lack precision in evaluation and are ineffective in creating a direct link between diagnosis/assessment and intervention/teaching.

Matching Assessment to Programs

The link between testing and teaching is the underlying cause of controversy about testing preschoolers. A fundamental difference of opinion exists among professionals concerning the “correct way” to teach young children (Barnett, 1984; McLoughlin & Lewis, 1986) and the “correct way” to test them. Bagnato and Neisworth (1981) outline five diverse types of instructional programs used with preschool children and the type of assessment most suited to that program, including the basic skills, psychological constructs, preacademic, remedial, and developmental tasks approach.

Basic Skills Approach

Emphasizes the teaching of key fundamental skills and knowledge including socialization, spoken language, attention, fine and gross motor

skills, self-help, problem solving, and retention. Assessment is focused on determining attainment of skills within each instructional area.

Psychological Constructs Approach

Emphasizes the development of psychological processes including motivation, self-concept, locus of control, cognition, achievement motivation, and creativity. Here, the purpose of assessment is to determine each child’s level of development on a particular trait.

Preacademic Approach

Concerned with getting children ready for the academic content of the regular school. Training in language, reading, numbers, arts and science is provided as a downward extension of public school curricula. Assessment furnishes information about children’s standing in each academic area being taught.

Remedial or Diagnostic-Prescriptive Approach

Involves identifying students’ skill strengths and weaknesses and measuring progress toward improved skills (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1985). This is the model with the strongest link between assessment and curriculum. It is a frequent choice for programs for handicapped preschoolers.

Developmental Tasks Approach

Traditional nursery school programs for the “whole child” involving instruction and experiences from all basic developmental domains including communication (speech and language), socialization, self-care, fine and gross motor competence, and affective and intellectual development. Assessment involves observation for attainment of skills from a task analysis of the skill being assessed.

Many early childhood programs are combinations of the five approaches. An example of an instructional program for preschools is one that combines comprehensive skill analysis with a developmental approach. This type has been called “developmental prescriptive” (Anastasiow & Mansergh, 1975). Curriculum planning for such an approach is based on comprehensive skill assessment and developmental sequencing. Ecelectic or holistic programs, which combine features of several different program types, are the most common (Barnett, 1984).

Logically, a test should be selected on the basis of the intervention strategies available and the general philosophical intent of the program (Reynolds, 1979). When the assessment used within a

program does not match the program's goals or methodologies, testing can be useless and even detrimental.

Purposes for Testing Preschool and Kindergarten Children

This monograph does not contain a thorough discussion of the various types of early childhood programs mentioned above, nor will an argument be presented for the adoption of one type of program over another. The assumption will be made that an instructional program is in place, and the issue remaining for a teacher is, "What kind of assessment is most appropriate for the information I need to gather about my students?"

Assessments of young children are conducted for many reasons but primarily to make individual decisions about their instructional programs (Baginato & Neisworth, 1981), either current or future. The type of decisions to be made dictates the kinds of skills that will be assessed and the types of measures selected. The following purposes usually guide assessment: (a) screening and identification of children with special needs, (b) comprehensive assessment and program placement, (c) individualized instructional planning, and (d) child progress and program evaluation.

Domains of assessment for preschool (McLoughlin & Lewis, 1986; Reynolds, 1979; Roscoe, 1979) children include the following:

1. Physical-Motor (neurological status, general health, gross and fine motor skills).
2. Speech-Hearing-Language (auditory and visual acuity, language and communication skills, articulation patterns).
3. Academic-Intellectual (concept formation and other cognitive functions such as memory, problem solving, creativity, etc.; general aptitude and specific learning abilities; school readiness).
4. Social-Emotional (affective development; self-help and adaptive skills; social skills).

Assessment of 3- to 5-year-olds most often is multidimensional, involving the synthesis of developmental information from several measures and sources and across the domains mentioned above. The emphasis on multidimensionality is essential in early childhood because of the lack of reliable instruments for young children undergoing rapid behavioral and developmental change (Paget, 1987).

THREE TYPES OF TESTS

Tests for young children used most often in preschools and kindergartens fall into three categories: (a) developmental screening tests, (b)

school readiness tests, and (c) general achievement tests.

Developmental Screening Tests

Developmental screening in early childhood can be defined as "a brief assessment procedure designed to identify children who, because of the risk of a possible learning problem or handicapping condition, should proceed to a more intensive level of diagnostic assessment" (Meisels, 1985, p. 1). Developmental screenings are used to provide information to determine quickly and efficiently whether a child should undergo further assessment and evaluation. Screening serves as the first step in an evaluation and intervention process intended to help a child achieve his/her maximum potential. Screening can be seen as a continuum of opportunities available for a child's development (Paget & Cox, 1987). Early testing can identify those children for whom school is inappropriate. Alteration of a child's environment then can be undertaken to provide readiness activities that insure future school success (Reynolds, 1979).

A common error made in the discussion of early childhood tests is confusing "developmental" tests with "developmental screening" tests. Developmental tests involve age-related and norm-referenced assessment of skills and behaviors that children have acquired compared to other children of the same chronological age. These tests include those used by the Gesell Institute such as the Gesell Preschool Test (Haines, Ames, & Gillespie, 1980). These developmental tests sometimes are used as a *part* of a developmental screening.

Criteria guidelines for selection of a screening instrument and procedures to be used include the following (Barnes, 1982; Bloom, Madaus, & Hastings, 1981; Meisels, 1985; Levin et al., 1975; Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1985; Zeitlin, 1976):

1. Screening tests should sample the domain of developmental tasks, rather than the domain of specific, academic readiness accomplishments.
2. The focus should be on children's performance in a wide range of areas of development.
3. Tests should include normative data (including the date of the norms) along with the reliability and validity of the instrument.
4. Test items should be appropriate to the age range of the child being assessed.
5. Instruments should be inexpensive and cost effective.
6. Procedures used should be fast and paced to hold the attention of the child. Zeitlin (1976) suggests tests of no more than a half-hour duration.

7. Procedures should be nonthreatening to the child being screened and should include opportunities for the child's movement and provisions for short attention spans.

8. Test items should be as culture-free as possible (avoiding discrimination on irrelevant grounds yet discriminating on relevant ones [Hegarty & Lucas, 1978]; identifying children on the basis of school-related factors rather than cultural, ethnic, or other factors unrelated to school success [Kunzelmann & Koenig, 1981]).

9. Testing should be done individually.

10. Scoring should consist of "pass," "no pass," or "questionable."

11. Tests should be easily administered and scored by trained nonprofessional personnel.

12. Results should be able to identify at-risk children with predictive accuracy and be noncategorical (identifying potentially high-risk children regardless of the reason for the potential learning problem).

Areas often assessed in a developmental screening include (a) visual-motor/ adaptive skills: fine motor control, eye-hand coordination, memory of visual sequences, drawing two-dimensional visual forms, reproducing three-dimensional visual structures, (b) language and cognition skills: language comprehension, verbal expression and articulation, reasoning, counting remembering and repeating auditory sequences, (c) gross motor/body awareness: balance, large motor coordination, imitating body positions from visual cues, and (d) social/emotional development: usually assessed through observation and parent interview.

As noted previously, care must be taken in the interpretation of results from developmental tests because children normally attain developmental milestones at widely varying times, and accurate identification of a "missed" or "delayed" milestone must happen well after a child has definitely passed the expected developmental period. Developmental capabilities of young children can be validly assessed if measures are developmentally based, survey functional skills across multiple developmental domains, are derived from multiple-source perspectives, and contain tasks that match what is taught in the curriculum (Bagnato & Neisworth, 1981). Single scores do not provide an accurate basis for prediction of later developmental function and do not offer information that is specific enough for use in planning intervention strategies (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1982; Zeitlin, 1976). Besides the score obtained from the admini-

stration of a test, information obtained from observations of the child being assessed can provide important details relevant to placement, instructional and evaluative decisions (see section on *Informal Assessment Techniques*).

Assessment with developmental scales should emphasize current functioning only because that is what these instruments reliably measure. Problems arise when "prediction" is misconstrued as the primary purpose for developmental assessment. When assessment is specific to a child's actual deficits and strengths, it can be used to pinpoint instructional targets within a program curriculum (Bagnato & Neisworth, 1981).

Readiness Tests

The term readiness generally is used to mean ready academically and socially for successful entry into school. Tests to measure readiness differ from developmental screening tests in that they serve different purposes and measure different sets of skills and abilities. The primary difference between the two is that developmental screening tests focus on a child's *ability* to acquire skills, while readiness tests focus on skills *acquired* (Meisels, 1985). Readiness tests typically are administered before school entry or during kindergarten and are used to predict initial school success and identify those in need of remedial or compensatory educational programs or delayed school entry (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1985).

Typical skills often measured on readiness tests include:

1. Understanding of general concepts important to school success such as location, direction, quantity, time, etc.

2. Visual discrimination, including the recognition of similarities and differences in letters, numbers, and shapes.

3. Auditory discrimination, including the identification of sounds in letters and words.

4. Verbal comprehension, including the demonstration of an understanding of words and sentences and the ability to follow directions.

5. Recognition of letters, words, and numerals.

6. Reproduction of symbols, including drawing or copying geometric forms, letters, or numbers.

7. Social and adaptive skills, often assessed through interviews and/or observations, include following directions of adults, cooperating with peers, using self-help skills such as toileting, etc.

Readiness tests sometimes are used for both placement and curriculum planning decisions. Results are used to determine whether or not a child should enter kindergarten or first grade, or into which instructional group she or he should be placed. Results from readiness tests also can be used at the item level to guide teachers' decisions about instruction. If testing indicated that a child did not know how to count to 10 or could not identify the colors black, brown, and purple, the teacher can use this information to plan instruction in these skills for the child.

Gallerani et al. (1982) tested 777 students to determine what skills best predicted readiness for first grade. They found five areas that related to children's future success in school. These areas, which are typical of many of the areas assessed in readiness tests used in preschools and kindergartens, include the following:

1. Information processing. Children's ability to process information within three learning modalities: language (auditory), visual-perceptual motor, and body awareness and control. These reflect children's ability to perform in a classroom environment.
2. Verbal reasoning. Measures children's ability to understand and express language.
3. Attentive behavior.
4. Parental ratings of speech development and aggression.
5. Motor activity (children with higher activity levels are identified as problematic).

Criteria guidelines for the selection of a readiness test are equivalent to the 12 listed in the previous section on *Developmental Screening*:

1. Readiness tests should sample the domain of specific, academic readiness accomplishments rather than the domain of developmental tasks.
2. The focus should be on children's performance in a wide range of skills and knowledge areas.
3. Tests should include normative data (including the date of the norms) along with the reliability and validity of the instrument.
4. Test items should be appropriate to the age range of the child being assessed.
5. Instruments should be inexpensive and cost effective.
6. Procedures should be fast and paced to hold the attention of the child.
7. Procedures should be nonthreatening to the child being screened and should include opportunities for the child's movement and provisions for short attention spans.
8. Test items should be as culture-free as possible.

9. Testing should be done individually (in groups only if consideration for the unique needs of young children is made [see Criterion 7]).

10. Scoring should consist of "pass," "no pass," or "questionable."

11. Tests should be easily administered and scored by trained nonprofessional personnel.

12. Results should give teachers information about the skills children have and don't have, and guidelines should be provided for interpretation of the results.

As with all tests used with young children, readiness tests must be used and interpreted with caution. In a comprehensive review of research on school readiness assessment, Shepard and Smith (1986) state that "it is not possible to make highly accurate assessments of school readiness" (p. 84). They report that readiness tests do not have sufficient reliability or validity to support special placement decisions (such as the decision to enter a student in a "pre-primary" or "junior first grade"). Shepard and Smith (1988) also state that readiness tests identify a disproportionate number of poor and minority children as unready for school. Additionally, they raise the point that the concept of being "unready" to learn implies school is a fixed and rigid entity. Saying students are "unready" means they are unready for the specific curriculum a school is prepared to teach. These same authors note that most publishers of tests being used to determine students' readiness for school are careful about the claims they make for their tests, and few maintain that their test will accurately predict which students will succeed and which will fail to make progress in school.

Achievement Tests

Achievement tests are the most common form of evaluation in primary school assessment (Abbott & Crane, 1977) and usually are used with students in kindergartens and first-grade classrooms (Southworth et al., 1980). The results of these group-administered tests do not provide teachers with specific information to use in individualizing instruction or improving learning for children. Instead, they provide teachers with comparative information about students' overall achievement. This differentiates "achievement" tests from "readiness" tests because results of readiness tests often are used by teachers directly for instruction.

Standardized achievement tests presently available are appropriate for use in primary-grade classrooms that use a curriculum emphasizing

academic skills. Abbott and Crane (1977) criticize standardized achievement tests because they seldom include items that measure achievement in problem-solving skills, affective development, and creativity, all of which are emphasized in discovery-oriented programs. Because achievement tests do not take into account the process used to arrive at answers, children may be penalized for creative thinking.

To address some of these matters, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1988) adopted a position statement on testing of young children in November 1987. The group stated its concern that administration of standardized tests to young children has increased in recent years, with many schools routinely administering tests for admittance to kindergarten or promotion to first grade. The state of Georgia, for example, now requires 5-year-olds to take a standardized achievement test before they can be promoted to the first grade (Seligmann & Murr, 1988).

The NAEYC (1988) proposed seven guidelines to be followed when young children are tested:

1. All standardized tests used in early childhood programs must be reliable and valid according to the technical standards of test development of AERA, APA, and NCME.
2. Decisions that have a major impact on children such as enrollment, retention, or assignment to remedial or special classes should be based on multiple score of information and should never be based on a single test score. Appropriate sources of information may include: systematic observations, work samples, observations and anecdotes from family members, and appropriate test scores.
3. Standardized tests must be used only for the purposed for which they are intended and for which supporting data exist.
4. Test results must be interpreted accurately and cautiously.
5. Selection of standardized tests should be based on how well the tests match locally developed theory, philosophy, and objectives of the specific group. If no existing test matches the curriculum in use, it is better not to use a standardized test.
6. Testing of young children must be conducted by individuals who are knowledgeable about and sensitive to the developmental needs of young children and who are qualified to administer tests.
7. Testing of young children must recognize and be sensitive to individual diversity.

INFORMAL ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

An important trend in early childhood assessment has been toward the increased use of informal techniques such as parent questionnaires and interviews, teacher ratings, and direct observations of children in both free play and more structured environments (Abbott & Crane, 1977). Many teachers realize that multidimensional measurement of young children is necessary to assess young children reliably, and they desire to use measures other than tests, which have been widely questioned as to their technical adequacy, to gather information about their students. "Naturalistic" observations and interviews form the cornerstone of nontest-based preschool assessment (Paget, 1987).

Observations often are considered more useful than standardized measurement in early childhood settings because they can be used unobtrusively and can yield information that more formal testing instruments cannot. Observations also provide valuable supplemental information in such areas as application of knowledge, use of reasoning skills (synthesis or analysis), problem solving, and in the affective domain such as development of positive self-concept, interpersonal communication and social skills (Abbott & Crane, 1977).

Sylva, Roy, and Painter (1980) detail a formal system for observing young children that they say they "stole in a respectable, scientific way" (p. 231) from zoologists and others who observe animal behaviors. The authors distinguish the formal observing of young children from casual watching. In more formal observations, the observer takes detailed "field notes" that are thoroughly examined following the observation period and are coded, quantified, and analyzed.

The use of a form can guide note-taking during formal observations. A portion of a completed form is exemplified in Figure 1, while a blank copy of the entire form is provided in Appendix A. In a preschool or kindergarten, observations can be made during successive periods of 1 minute each. In the sample form, each numbered row stands for a 1-minute observation period. During the observation, the observer attempts to write down exactly what the target child is doing and saying, without selective interpretation.

Abbreviations suggested by Sylva et al. (1980) include TC for the target child (the child being

Figure 1: Sample Recording Form

Observer:		Target Child:		Sex:	Age:	Date/Time:	
• OBSERVATION FIELD NOTES •				• ANALYSIS •			
SETTING/BEHAVIORS		LANGUAGE		ACTIVITY		GROUPING	
1.	all at piano, sitting on floor	TC/all singing		music/ rhythms		Large group	
2.	TC moves to play area	TC sings to self		cruising betw. activities		single child	
3.	TC joins "B" playing with puzzle	TC → C I have that puzzle		social interaction		pair	

Note. Adapted from *Childwatching at Playgroup and Nursery School* by K. Sylva, C. Roy, and M. Painter, 1980, London: Grant McIntyre.

observed), C for any other child, A for any adult, and → to show an interaction. These abbreviations are particularly helpful when observing verbal interactions:

TC	All	(Group singing)
TC		(Sings to self)
TC	C	I have that puzzle.
C	→ TC	It's too hard. I can't do it.
A	→ TC/C	Can you help "B" work this puzzle?
TC	→ A	O.K.
TC	→ C	(Conversation)

Anecdotal records are also important sources of information about children. Anecdotal records are accurate descriptions of events that a teacher observes directly. Those incidents the teacher believes to be meaningful in relation to the overall development of the child are recorded. To increase accuracy and objectivity, anecdotes are recorded as soon after the event as possible. The teacher's interpretation of the event is clearly distinguished from the factual description. A compilation of a series of anecdotes over time can assist teachers in forming an accurate picture of a child's development and achievement in many areas.

Skills checklists and rating scales are other forms of observation used by preschool and kin-

dergarten teachers. Day (1983, p. 275) suggests a seven-part behavioral checklist that can be used (and adapted) by teachers when observing a child. An example is provided in Figure 2.

This checklist of 33 behaviors subsumed into seven categories of behavior was developed and revised after piloting. Although Day acknowledges that the checklist does not constitute an exhaustive account of children's behavior, it does reflect collective judgments about important developmental behaviors of young children from a diverse group of practitioners (Day, 1983). This, or another, checklist can be used by teachers for recording children's behaviors a number of times on successive days or at different times during a single day. In order for this instrument to have reliability, the definitions of each behavior would have to be clearly defined by those using the checklist.

Reinherz and Griffin (1977) conducted a series of studies on children who had failed in school and had academic, social, and emotional problems. They found that signs of forthcoming problems were noted by teachers and parents beginning in kindergarten. This information could have been obtained through interviewing these teachers and parents and used to design appropriate instructional and remedial programs for the children.

However, Gallerani et al. (1982), whose test of students in a prekindergarten screening included observations, teacher ratings, and parent question-

Figure 2: Preschool/Kindergarten Behavioral Checklist

To use as a behavioral checklist, note when and how often behaviors occur on successive days or at different times during a single day.

To use as a rating scale, rate each behavior on the following 5-point scale:

(1) never occurs (2) rarely occurs (3) sometimes occurs (4) occurs regularly (5) occurs frequently

Task Involvement

Focuses on a task
Resolves a problem
Completes a task
Leaves a task
Is inattentive
Wanders about the room

Cooperation

Seeks participation with a child or adult
Is involved with a child or adult
Joins an activity with a child or adult
Takes turns

Autonomy

Selects an activity
Asks permission
Works independently
Chooses to join a group activity
Chooses not to join a group activity
Rejects requests to join an activity

Verbal Interaction

Talks with a child or adult
Requests information from others
Responds to a child or an adult
Speaks to self

Materials Use

Uses materials in an activity
Combines materials from different areas
Abuses or misuses materials

Maintenance

Takes responsibility for picking up
Volunteers to help in a maintenance activity
Helps an adult prepare an activity
Waits for a teacher to prepare an activity

Consideration

Observes the activity of other without disruption
Respects the physical space of others
Shares materials with others
Helps or offers sympathy to a child in distress
Disturbs the activity of others
Threatens or strikes another child

Note. From *Early Childhood Education: A Human Ecological Approach* by D. Day, 1983), Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, & Co.

naires, reported that although developmental histories of the children were collected, the resulting information appeared less useful than more current information. They concluded that the use of lengthy interviews could be eliminated. DeHirsh, Jansky, and Langford (1966) attempted to identify which of a battery of 37 tests administered in kindergarten would best predict reading and writing problems in the second grade. They found there was no association between family history and second grade reading and little connection between end-of-second-grade achievement and various measures of environmental stimulation. The need to obtain as much useful information on children as expeditiously as possible could be seen as an indication to use interviews and developmental

histories as part of an assessment battery infrequently and only if the information is seen as relevant to the decisions being made.

TEACHER-MADE TESTS

Many teachers and school districts construct their own tests to screen students for program placement and/or instructional planning. Stiggins (1985) reported that the information teachers use and need most to teach does not come from standardized tests but from tests they make themselves and from structured performance samples. In theory, locally made tests have the advantage of increased relevance and utility. However, Meisels (1985) reported findings of a survey in which only 16 of 150 different teacher-made screening instru-

ments or procedures were even minimally appropriate for screening decisions. If a test is to be developed, it should be based on some knowledge of evaluation and test construction and should meet acceptable criteria of standardization, reliability and validity. If high technical standards are not met, test results must be used with caution. Instruments that do not undergo an acceptable test development phase may lead to the misidentification of children (Meisels, 1985).

Salvia and Ysseldyke (1985) suggest that tests be normed longitudinally on local students to determine if children with poor scores on a screening or readiness test perform poorly during actual schooling. Meisels (1985) also suggests developing local norms (even if national norms are available). The use of local norms only provides no external reference for comparison of program results. This can be addressed by having criteria for performance based on a set of goals and objectives directly related to external goals and objectives. Then test items can be selected to be similar to those of some recognized tests or procedures (Zeitlin, 1976).

An example of a teacher-made screening test designed to be used as a pre- and post-test with kindergarten students is given in Appendix B. Test results provide the teacher with information about what students know and what skills they have upon entering kindergarten, and for end-of-year decisions regarding students' placement in the fall.

SELECTING APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Although three areas of early childhood assessment were delineated in the previous sections, the division between them often is unclear. Experts on the assessment of young children use different terminology for similar types of tests. For example, a published test may include the word "readiness" in its title, but be used by a school district as part of its "screening" process. Abbott and Crane (1977), in fact, consider readiness tests as a form of achievement tests while others put them into distinctly different categories. "Developmental" tests can be used to assess the "readiness" of children to enter first grade.

Frequently, teachers use a combination of formal and informal tests to make important decisions about preschool children. Bagnato and Neisworth (1981) declare that because early childhood development is characterized by a limited behavioral repertoire that is predominantly sensorimotor in nature and that early developmental skills are quantitatively and qualitatively different from

later skills, it is necessary to include multiple factors when assessing young children. Lewis and Brooks-Gunn (1982) state that the use of single scores, which hypothetically reflect the overall functioning of a child, do not provide a basis for prediction of later function. Therefore, when selecting instruments to assess students' "readiness" or to screen students for possible future diagnostic testing, it is important to consider both the content of the test itself and the ability of the test results to answer the questions being asked.

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APPENDIX A
PLAY OBSERVATION FORM

PLAY OBSERVATION FORM

Observer: _____ Target Child: _____ Sex: _____ Age: _____ Date/Time: _____

observation codes

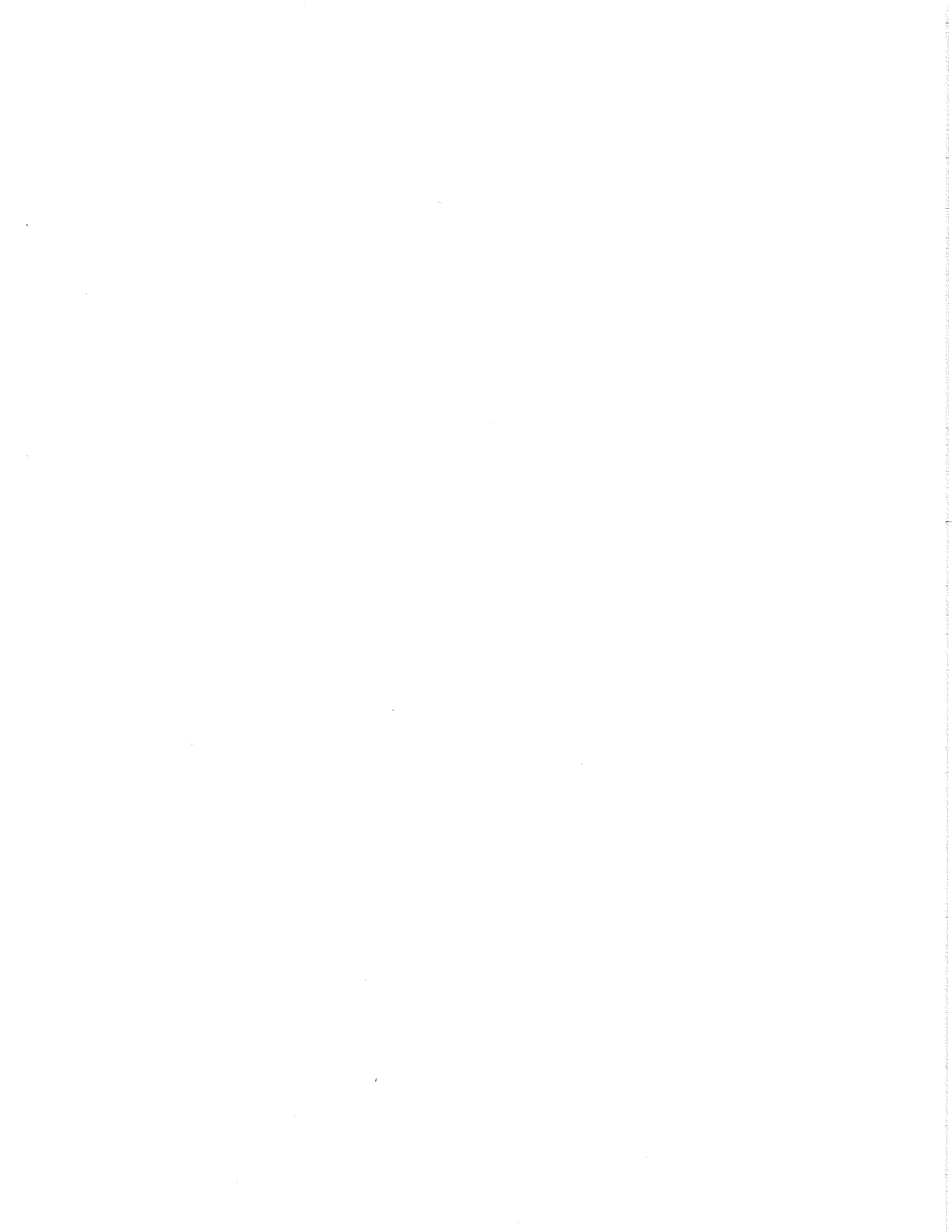
TC: Target child C: other child A: adult → : Speaks to

Grouping Codes
 SNG: single child
 PR: pair (TC + other)
 SG: small group (3-5)
 LG: large group (6+)

• OBSERVATION FIELD NOTES •		• ANALYSIS •	
SETTING/ACTIVITIES/ BEHAVIORS	LANGUAGE/ VERBAL BEHAVIORS	ACTIVITY CODE	GROUPING CODE
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

ACTIVITY CODES
LMM: Large Muscle Movement **LSC:** Large scale construction **SSC:** Small scale construction **ART:** Painting, drawing, cutting, etc. **Man:** Manual play with clay, sand, water, sorting **ADM:** Adult-directed art/manual activities **SM:** Structured materials **3r's:** Reading, writing counting **EX:** Examination **PS:** Problem-solving **PRE:** Pretend **SVT:** Scale-version toys **IG:** Informal games **FG:** Formal games **MUS:** Music/rhythms, singing, dancing **SINP:** Social interaction, non-play **Palga:** Passive, adult-led activities **DB:** Distress behaviors **P-NP:** Passive, non-purposeful activities **A-NP:** Active, non-purposeful activities **CR:** Cruise between activities **PM:** Purposeful movement **W:** Waiting **WA:** Watching **DA:** Domestic activities

Note. Adapted from Childwatching at Playgroup and Nursery School by K. Sylva, C. Roy, and M. Painter, 1980, London: Grant McIntyre.



APPENDIX B
SCREENING TEST



Kindergarten Assessment: Directions for Administration

INTRODUCTION:

This Kindergarten Assessment is a pilot instrument. It was constructed in part to respond to a need expressed by some kindergarten, first grade and Chapter I teachers who felt that it would be helpful to have a single screening instrument for making grouping decisions and instructional decisions about their students.

During interviews with some of these teachers, it was learned that each teacher was using some kind of screening instrument, all of which assessed very similar skills but were each unique. When it was proposed that a single instrument could be developed to test students' skills in a similar fashion to the way they were already being tested, these teachers responded very positively about the resulting consistency which would allow for better communication between teachers and others (administrators, specialists, parents, even students themselves).

MATERIALS FOR TESTING:

(1) One copy of the **Kindergarten Assessment: Teacher Copy** for each child to be tested.

(2) One copy of the **Kindergarten Assessment: Student Copy** for each child to be tested.

(3) One set of **Assessment Materials** pages 1-4; these should be put into plastic covers or laminated for ease of use. (Enough copies of **Assessment Materials** page 1A should be made to provide a circle for each student to cut in Item 12).

(4) A pencil for the student to use to write.

(5) One stopwatch.

(6) A list of each child's birthday, address, and phone number to check for accuracy of responses on Items 3-5.

(7) A pair of scissors for the student to use for Item 12.

(8) One each: red, yellow, blue, brown, black, orange, purple, pink, and green crayon for Item 14.

(9) One can and 20 pennies for counting in Item 16.

(10) Objects to zip, tie, lace, button, and buckle; ball to catch; and a jump rope for Motor/Self-help Skills.

(11) Optional: copies of Assessment Materials pages 5-7 to use as a form for behavioral observations of students.

MARKING PROCEDURES

For each item on the test, the examiner will mark students' responses according to the written directions. In most cases you will either be directed to circle correct responses or X all incorrect responses. If students give no response or state that they don't know the answer to a question, mark No Response or NR. If the task was not administered to a student, mark Not Administered, or NA. NOTE THAT ALL ITEMS NEED NOT BE ADMINISTERED TO ALL CHILDREN. Teachers are encouraged to use their judgment about the appropriateness of items to their individual students.

ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

In order to be able compare students' performances after they all have been tested, it is important that standard procedures be followed when administering this screener. **Familiarize yourself with the test before giving it for the first time.**

Take a few moments before beginning the test to explain to each of the students what will be taking place. Avoid using the word "test" but encourage them to do their best. Then administer each appropriate task to the student, marking responses as above. The test can be broken into separate administrations if a student appears to be tiring. It is a good idea to make comments beside each item for future reference, especially observations made of students' behavior or skills during testing including any language or speech impairments, difficulty in attending to the task at hand, apparent vision problems, etc.

When a student's assessment is complete, attach the Student Copy to the back of the Teacher Copy for that student as a permanent record of all aspects of the assessment.

Please note that although this assessment does not involve any physical or health screening, this should be considered a part of any complete early childhood assessment.

INTERPRETATION OF TEST RESULTS

The Kindergarten Assessment instrument was developed using teacher input and a review of existing screening tests, relevant research and literature on the assessment of young children. The items on the test are divided into six sections:

- 1) Knowledge of self
- 2) General knowledge
- 3) Beginning number skills
- 4) Beginning literacy skills
- 5) Motor/Self-help skills
- 6) Social/Interpersonal skills

After the piloting of this test, it is possible that it may be normed so that a comparison of students' scores could be made. At this point however, the results will only yield criterion-referenced information: what skills/knowledge does a student have. Results of this assessment, in addition to other formal and informal assessments conducted in the classroom, can then be used by the teacher to make both placement and instructional decisions about individual children.

Kindergarten Assessment: Teacher Copy

Student: _____

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

School: _____

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF: ITEMS 1-81) **WHAT IS YOUR FIRST NAME?** Correct Incorrect No response (NR) Not Administered (NA)

(If students correctly say first name, have them WRITE it on the Student Copy, Page 1)

+ Note hand preference: Right Left

2) **WHAT IS YOUR LAST NAME?** Correct Incorrect No response (NR) Not Administered (NA)

(If students correctly say last name, have them WRITE it on the Student Copy, Page 1)

3) **WHAT IS YOUR ADDRESS?** ALL Correct Part Correct Incorrect NR NA4) **WHAT IS YOUR PHONE NUMBER?** ALL Correct Part Correct Incorrect NR NA5) **WHAT IS YOUR BIRTHDAY?** ALL Correct Part Correct Incorrect NR NA6) **HOW OLD ARE YOU?** ALL Correct Part Correct Incorrect NR NA7) **SHOW ME YOUR RIGHT HAND.** Correct Incorrect NR NA8) **SHOW ME YOUR LEFT HAND.** Correct Incorrect NR NA**GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: ITEMS 9-14**9) **SAY THE DAYS OF THE WEEK** (X incorrect responses):

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

All Correct With help Without help NR NA

10) **SAY THE MONTHS OF THE YEAR** (X incorrect responses):

January February March April May June July August September October November December

All Correct With help Without help NR NA

Use Assessment Materials, Page 1 "SHAPES" for Items 9 & 11

11) **WHAT SHAPE IS THIS?** point to each shape (X those named incorrectly):

square rectangle triangle circle diamond oval All Correct NR NA

12) USE YOUR SCISSORS AND CUT OUT THE CIRCLE

HOLD: OK Needs Practice CUTTING: NR Needs Practice OK Skill Mastered NA

13) COPY EACH SHAPE AS I POINT TO IT (students copy shapes on their copy, Page 1). NR NA

Use crayons.

14) SHOW ME THE _____ CRAYON (X those incorrect or omitted):

red yellow blue brown black orange purple pink green All Correct NR NA

BEGINNING NUMBER SKILLS: ITEMS 15-18**15) HOW FAR CAN YOU COUNT? (Last number said in correct sequence; up to 100 _____)**

NR NA

Use 20 pennies and a can.

16) COUNT THESE PENNIES AS YOU PUT THEM INTO THE CAN.

(Last number said correctly _____) NR NA

Use Student Copy, Page 2.

17) WRITE THE NUMBER I SAY TO YOU ON THE LINE. (X those written incorrectly or omitted):

9 7 3 6 2 10 1 5 4 8 All Correct NR NA

NOTE: If the student wrote all numbers from Item 17 above correctly SKIP
number dictation: Item 18; go on to Item 19

Use Assessment Materials, Page 2

18) WHAT IS THIS NUMBER? (X all numbers named incorrectly or omitted)

9 7 3 6 2 10 1 5 4 8 All Correct NR NA

BEGINNING LITERACY SKILLS: ITEMS 19-25**19) SAY THE ALPHABET (ABC's) (X all letters named incorrectly, omitted or out of sequence):**

A B C D E G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y

All Correct NR NA

Use Assessment Materials, Page 2 for Items 20 & 21

20) WHAT LETTER IS THIS? (X all letters named incorrectly or omitted)

d j s w g o f l y a m q h c
n b i t z x v k e p r u

All Correct NR NA



ITEM 21 IS TIMED

21) WHAT SOUND IS THIS? (X all sounds named incorrectly or omitted)

d j s w g o f l y a m q h c
n b i t z x v k e p r u

All Correct NR NA TIME: _____

Use Assessment Materials, Page 3

22) WHAT LETTER IS THIS? (X all letters named incorrectly or omitted)

D J S W G O F L Y A M Q H
C N B I T Z X V K E P R U

All Correct NR NA

Use Student Copy, Page 2.

23) COPY THESE LETTERS IN THE BOXES. NR NA

Use Assessment Materials, Page 4

24) CAN YOU READ / SOUND OUT THIS WORD? (X all words read incorrectly or omitted)

fin rub mop wet sad dog

All Correct With help Without help NR NA

Use Student Copy, Page 2.

25) CAN YOU WRITE THIS WORD? (Dictate each word)

fin rug mop wet sad dog NR NA

MOTOR/SELF-HELP SKILLS

Student can: NR Needs Practice OK Skill Mastered NA

Zip					
Tie					
Lace					
Button					
Buckle					
Hop					
Skip					
Gallop					
Balance					
Walk Backwards					
Jump Rope					
Catch Ball					

COMMENTS:

SOCIAL/ INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

(See Behavior Checklist for Kindergarten Students in ASSESSMENT MATERIALS, Pages 5-7 for additional information and suggestions. The skills listed below are taken from the Springfield Public Schools Progress Report; Kindergarten).

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
ADJUSTS EASILY TO NEW AND DIFFERENT SITUATIONS				
SHOW SIGNS OF CONFIDENCE				
SHOWS SELF-CONTROL				
PARTICIPATES COOPERATIVELY IN SMALL GROUP AND LARGE GROUP ACTIVITIES				
UNDERSTANDS AND ABIDES BY SCHOOL RULES				
LISTENS WHILE OTHERS TALK				
SOLVES PROBLEMS INDEPENDENTLY AND WITH A GROUP				
SHOWS INITIATIVE IN FINDING MATERIALS OR CHOOSING ACTIVITIES				
PARTICIPATES IN A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES				
SHOWS PERSISTENCE ON TASK				
USES MATERIALS APPROPRIATELY				
ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR CARE OF MATERIALS AND ROOM				
ATTEMPTS NEW THINGS WILLINGLY				
UNDERSTANDS AND FOLLOWS DIRECTIONS				
ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR OWN BEHAVIOR				
PARTICIPATES COOPERATIVELY IN LIBRARY				
CONTRIBUTES TO GROUP PLANNING AND CONVERSATION				
SPEAKS WITH EASE TO OTHERS IN CONVERSATION				

COMMENTS:

**Kindergarten Assessment:
Student Copy**

Item 1: First name

Item 2: Last name

Item 13: Copying Shapes

Item 17: Number Writing from dictation

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Item 23: Letter Copying

a	t	f	y	n	p

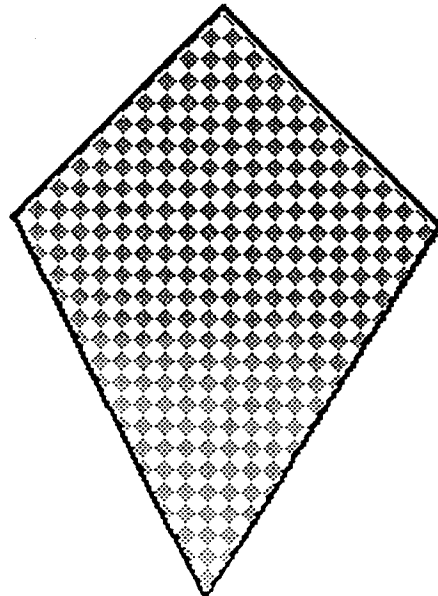
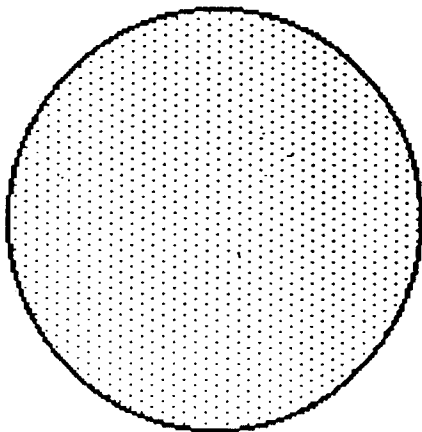
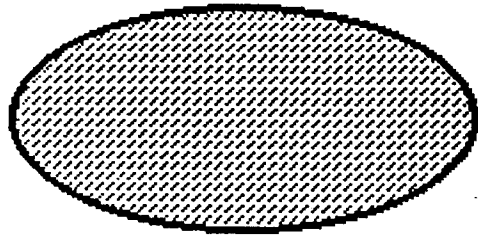
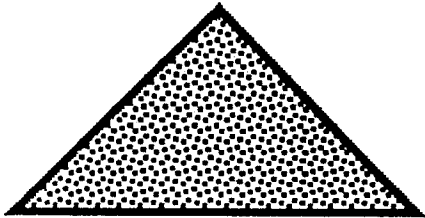
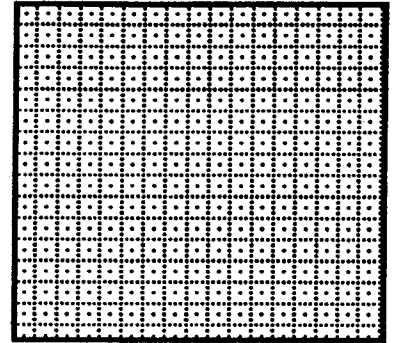
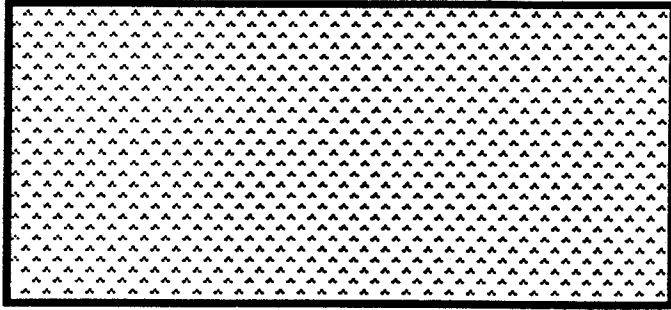
d	b	r	u	s	g

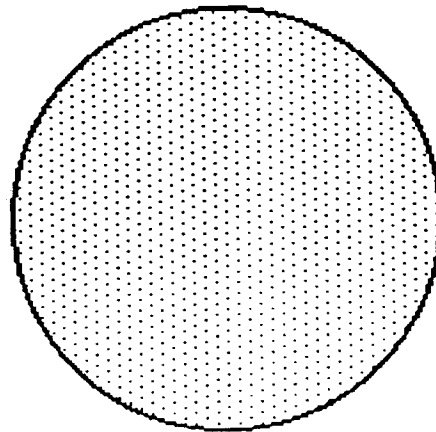
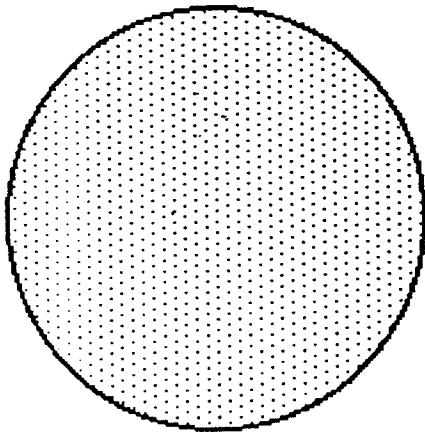
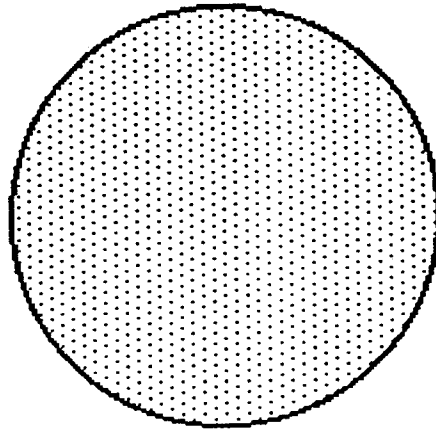
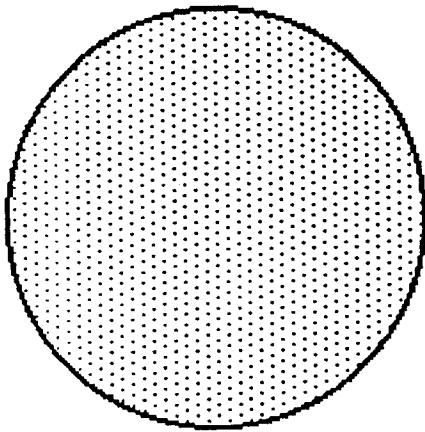
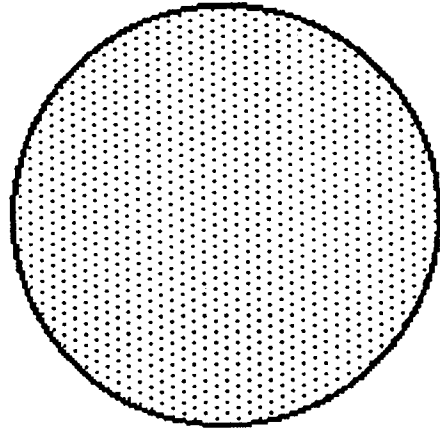
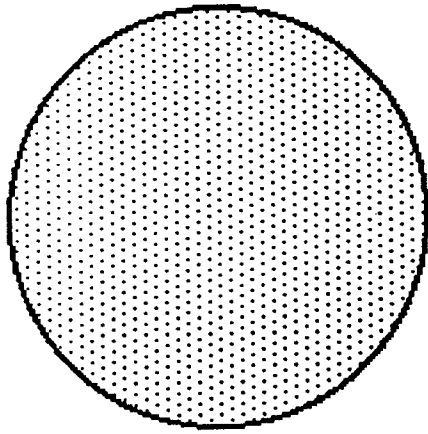
NOTE: When assessment is completed, attach this Student Copy to the back of the Teacher Copy for a complete record of the results.

Item 25: Writing Words

NOTE: When assessment is completed, attach this Student Copy to the back of the Teacher Copy for a complete record of the results.

SHAPES





Item 18: Number Recognition

9 7 3 6 2 10

1 5 4 8

Items 20 & 21: Letter / Sounds Recognition (Lower Case)

d j s w g

o f l y a

m q h c n

b i t z x

v k e p r

u

Item 22: Letter Recognition (Upper Case)

D

J

S

W

G

O

F

L

Y

A

M

Q

H

C

N

B

I

T

Z

X

V

K

E

P

R

U

Item 24: Reading /Sounding Out

fin

rug

mop

wet

sad

dog

BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

adapted from: Day, D. E. (1983). Early childhood education: A human ecological approach. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, and Co.

This behavior checklist was developed by David Day from research conducted in day care programs considered to be of high quality. It is not meant to be a "exhaustive account of children's behavior" (Day, p. 274), but it reflects the results of research, judgments about the developmental behavior of young children, and goals of early education accepted by a diverse group of practitioners.

This checklist can be used as an observation instrument to guide a teacher or trained observer in a classroom setting on a daily or more infrequent basis. Use the list of behaviors to guide observation of behaviors which are demonstrated by students **CONSISTENTLY, SOMETIMES, RARELY, or NEVER**. Anecdotal recordings of observations and comments can be made, recorded, and later summarized.

(1) TASK INVOLVEMENT: Student becomes absorbed in activities, completes games and tasks, attends appropriately to what s/he is doing.

Focuses on a task

Resolves problems appropriately

Completes tasks

COMMENTS:

(2) COOPERATION: Student engages in cooperative activities with adults and other children.

Seeks participation with a child or adult

Accepts a request to join an activity with a child or adult

Joins in group activities

Takes turns

Shares toys, materials, equipment with others

COMMENTS:

(3) AUTONOMY: Student makes choices about what s/he will do.

Selects activities

Asks permission as necessary

Works independently

COMMENTS:

(4) VERBAL INTERACTION: Student initiates and participates in appropriate conversation with other children and adults.

Talks with a child or adult

Requests information from a child or adult

Responds to a child or an adult

COMMENTS:

(5) MATERIALS USE: Student uses material and equipment effectively and appropriately.

Uses materials in activities appropriately and carefully

Uses materials in activities creatively

COMMENTS:

(6) MAINTENANCE: Student helps to organize activities of the program, assisting with arranging equipment, distributing materials, and cleaning up when necessary.

Takes responsibility for picking up

Volunteers to assist a child or teacher in a maintenance activity

Helps prepare an activity

COMMENTS:

(7) CONSIDERATION: Student is considerate of other children and their activities.

Observes the activity of others without disruption

Respects the physical space of others

Helps or offers sympathy to a child in distress

COMMENTS:

