

 **How is child assessment defined for school-age programs?**

The Council on Accreditation-After School is the national accreditor for after-school programs. COA-After School’s definition of assessment is: “Evaluate by using expertise and skills to understand and describe the nature of strengths, needs, and other factors”.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the world's largest organization working on behalf of children ages zero through eight years old, defines child assessment as: “The process of observing, recording, and otherwise documenting what children do and how they do it as a basis for the variety of educational decisions that affect the child”.

 **What are the key components of child assessment?**

- It is ongoing, continuous and integrated into the classroom.
- It reflects research and best practice in the school-age field.
- It is based in children’s daily experiences.
- It integrates multiple types of information gathered over time (a multi-method approach).
- It is based on appropriate developmental objectives and expectations.
- Information collected is objective and factual.
- It is performed by staff familiar with assessment.
- It is used to inform curriculum and program effectiveness.
- It includes follow-up if concerns are identified.
- It informs and includes family input/communication.
- It is culturally-relevant and considers the child in the context of his/her culture.

What is the difference between assessment and screening?

Assessment determines how a child is progressing across developmental domains in order to plan individualized curriculum.

Screening is meant to identify and document developmental concerns for referral to appropriate services and systems.

 **Why is child assessment considered an important indicator of quality school-age care and education?**

- Child assessment strengthens individualized curriculum.
- Research has shown that children are best prepared for school and do well socially and academically when their teachers use a comprehensive assessment system effectively.
- Information gathered about children through child assessment enhances the teacher-child relationship. A trusting relationship between the child and the caregiver is the foundation for all other learning.

(Why is child assessment important continued...)

- Child assessment can be used to support and enhance family communication. Open, trusting and respectful communication between families and caregivers is an indicator of quality that is recognized as a marker for excellence in child care and education.
- The National AfterSchool Association *Core Knowledge and Competencies for AfterSchool and Youth Development Professionals* states that: “systematic observations, documentation, and other effective and appropriate assessment strategies—in partnership with families and other professionals serving the same children— positively impact the development and learning of children and youth”.
- Child assessment in school age programs supports data-driven program management, ensuring that decision making is more accurate and related to high quality standards of care.



How does BrightStars assess child assessment?

BrightStars assesses both child assessment and curriculum. BrightStars looks for evidence that a program “systematically and routinely gathers information about each child in order to meet the individual needs of children and provide differentiated learning experiences”. All programs must meet the RI Department of Children, Youth & Families licensing requirements by keeping a program plan book which details program planning for at least one month in advance. At Level 4, BrightStars reviews the program plan or curriculum and looks for evidence of weekly opportunities for each of the following: Active physical activity, creative expression, and academic support. At Level 5, the program plan or curriculum must include two or more different opportunities for each of the above activities. At Level 4, programs must also gather information about each child through at least one of the following: Observations, checklists, interest inventories, family/child surveys or interviews, school performance information, or other assessment tools. At Level 5, programs must gather information about each child using at least two of the assessment tools listed above.



How is child assessment related to curriculum?

Child assessment and curriculum inform each other. A quality, comprehensive curriculum uses child assessment as a guiding tool. Assessments can be conducted in order to determine the strengths and needs of individuals, or to determine the special needs of a defined population within the program. Assessments can also be conducted on a program-wide level, in order to determine priorities of program planning and service development for the program as a whole (COA-After School, 2008). Assessment informs the next steps and ensures that children are making progress toward goals outlined in the curriculum.

Resources:

Brandy, T. Burkhauser, M. & Metz, A.J.R. (2009, June). *Data-driven decision making in out-of-school time programs* (Publications No. 2009-34). Retrieved from Child Trends website: http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2009_06_23_RB_Decision-Support.pdf

Council on Accreditation. (2008). *After School Accreditation Guidelines. After School Programming and Services*. Retrieved May 24, 2011, from http://www.coafterschool.org/standards.php?navView=private&core_id=13.

National Afterschool Association.(2011, September). *Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals*. http://www.naaweb.org/downloads/Competencies/NAA_Core_Competencies.2012.Feb.pdf

NAEYC Accreditation Performance Criteria (2008), "Teacher Child Ratios within Group Size".