

Excerpt from the
**Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality
for Prekindergarten**
for the
2009 Michigan Collaborative Early Childhood Conference

Child Assessment and Program Evaluation

Young children present special challenges for assessment. Growth and development is most rapid during early childhood and is often uneven and greatly influenced by children's environments. Young children do not understand testing in the same way older children do. Children may be harmed if the wrong instruments are used in the wrong way. Such inappropriate practices often result in the use of faulty information to make program placements or to alter children's learning opportunities. Options for gathering and reporting information are numerous. It is critical that the methods selected are sensitive to cultural, racial, class, gender, linguistic, and ability differences among children and families.

Knowing how children are doing as a result of participating in a program or set of services is of critical importance to teachers, parents, program leaders and local, state and federal agencies having responsibilities for the programs. Each of these stakeholders may have different reasons for needing the information quality child assessment can bring, but in the end, the most important stakeholder is the child (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2003).

1. Program Standard: *The program uses information gained from a variety of child assessment measures to plan learning experiences for individual children and groups.*

A Quality Program:

1. Uses sound developmental and learning theory to plan and conduct child assessment.
2. Uses assessment tools and processes that are continuous, ongoing, cumulative, and in the language that the child understands.
3. Primarily uses children's involvement in ordinary classroom activities, not artificially contrived tests, to gauge children's growth.
4. Uses a variety of instruments and processes to document children's growth, development, and learning over time (e.g., observation and anecdotal reports; teacher questions; parent, provider, and child interviews; products and samples of children's work; teacher-constructed or standardized checklists; children's self-appraisals).
5. Arranges assessment so that it does not bring added stress for children or teachers.
6. Uses assessment results from a variety of sources as a guide for curriculum and teaching decisions and the need for intervention for individuals and classrooms.
7. Uses results from more than one assessment method to determine the need for and plan of intervention.

2. Program Standard: *The program uses information from child assessments to effectively communicate children's progress with their parents.*

A Quality Program:

1. Recognizes that parents have essential information about their children's growth and development that can help staff work effectively with their children.
2. Frequently shares information with parents on both a formal and an informal basis about reasonable expectations for children's growth, development, and learning.
Michigan ECSQ 37
3. Uses a combination of methods to share information about children's progress and challenges at formal and informal parent/teacher conferences (e.g., work samples, anecdotal records, photos, narrative reports).
4. Arranges to share information about children's progress with non-custodial parents.
5. Uses newsletters and Web pages to convey information about the program's activities and projects that support children's learning and growth (e.g., descriptions of assessments used).

3. Program Standard: *The program uses appropriate assessment tools to help identify children who may require additional specialized programs and interventions.*

A Quality Program:

1. Uses valid and reliable screening tools and procedures to determine whether children require further evaluation.
2. Informs parents of the types and purposes of the screening in advance of the screening, the results of those screenings, and the purposes and results of subsequent evaluations.
3. Uses specialists to evaluate and diagnose children whose growth and development falls outside age appropriate guidelines as determined by screening processes.
4. Gives parents the opportunity to review their child's records in a timely manner and secures written consent if additional evaluation is proposed.
5. Uses reliable and valid standardized assessment tools for meeting requirements for federal funding accountability or other purposes.
6. Uses teacher observations and parent feedback to supplement data collected by standardized instruments.

4. Program Standard: *The program implements program evaluation processes to learn how the program can be improved and be accountable.*

A Quality Program:

1. Bases its annual program evaluation on its current program philosophy, goals and objectives.
2. Involves families, staff and a variety of community members in an annual review of all program components and uses program evaluation results to develop and implement a plan for improvement.

3. Uses child assessment results, program assessment, and other data to evaluate how well the program is meeting its goals.
4. Evaluates teachers and administrators with methods that reflect the program's philosophy and curriculum, and develops professional goals based on these evaluations.
5. Regularly reviews the improvement plan and assesses progress throughout the year.
6. If applicable, cooperates in providing data required by legislation and/or agencies administering the program.

5. Program Standard: *Assessment tools used for any purpose are those which are best suited for the purpose, which meet professional standards, and which are used in an appropriate manner.*

A Quality Program:

1. Assures that teaching and administrative staff have expertise related to the most appropriate assessment measures and procedures needed for the particular assessment.
2. Seeks assistance from knowledgeable professionals when selecting and using assessment tools.
3. Uses instruments only for the purpose(s) intended (e.g., does not use screening tools to make decisions about placement or to assess progress).
4. Uses the least intrusive tools needed for the specific purpose of the assessment (e.g., avoids using standardized tests for decisions about curriculum and teaching or to convey information about children's progress to their parents).