

# A Guide to the Developmentally Appropriate Assessment of Young Children

## Instructional Strategies

The assessment of young children often focuses on the following skills and behaviors related to the academic school curriculum:

- General Knowledge
- Oral Communication
- Written Language
- Math Concepts
- Work Habits
- Attentive Behavior

The next several pages share specific instructional strategies that can be used if your results indicate that students show signs of developmental delay in any of these areas critical to future academic success.

## General Knowledge

Sample Assessment Item:

Does the student follow progression from left-to-right, top-to-bottom, front-to-back?

Never     Rarely     Sometimes     Often

**General Knowledge skills and behaviors are the extent to which a student possesses general information and facts expected of young children. Teaching strategies for children who appear delayed in this area should be directed toward a variety of approaches, such as:**

- Focusing on the concept of magnitude through concrete examples. For children having trouble with magnitude, instruction should use objects and numbers that are common and familiar.
- Demonstrating basic progressions such as left to right, top to bottom, or up to down by practicing with printed media or manipulatives.
- Promoting multiple, related skills through oral reading. The importance of reading stories aloud to young children is underestimated. Group reading with oversized books can introduce students to a wide range of knowledge. In addition to promoting good listening skills and comprehension, read-alouds also create a greater awareness of the format and functions of print.

## Oral Communication

Sample Assessment Item:

Does the student retell, re-enact, or dramatize simple stories after listening to them more than once?

Never     Rarely     Sometimes     Often

**Oral Communication incorporates the willingness to communicate and the competence in communication, and can be fostered through activities such as:**

- Discussing shared classroom activities or common non-school experiences—all critical to participation and sharing. A routine for such discussion will promote meaningful contributions from all students.
- Encouraging careful listening by retelling a familiar story while leaving out some of the details. Ask students to tell what is missing.
- Reading aloud, pausing frequently to ask questions or draw analogies.
- Breaking multiple-step directions into pieces and finding concrete, visual ways to communicate the proper sequence.

## Written Language

Sample Assessment Item:

Does the student match simple words with pictures (i.e., cat, child, door)?

Never     Rarely     Sometimes     Often

**For young children, Written Language skills often relate as much to writing as they do to reading, but many are central to both skills. Students who show delay in letter and word formation and recognition may benefit from these activities:**

- Recognizing individual letters quickly and accurately is essential to being able to recognize words. Having students write letters promotes visual discrimination, and copying letters provides practice in recognition. Have students trace over dot-to-dot printed words to promote letter recognition, letter formation, and left-to-right progression.
- Involving multiple tools—pencil, chalk, crayon, and magnetic letters—orients a child’s sense of print and helps them realize that the same letter combinations always make the same words.
- Developing sight vocabulary by using printed labels on objects or notes on student drawings. Index cards can serve as each student’s personal sight word bank. Matching printed words to classroom objects enhances word recognition.

## Math Concepts

Sample Assessment Item:

Does the student measure objects using a self-defined unit (e.g., finger, stick)?

Never     Rarely     Sometimes     Often

**Math Concepts for young children cover a range of topics, including a basic understanding of numeration, geometry, money, and measurement. Students who show delay in numeration concepts may benefit from these activities:**

- Developing and comparing their own measurement systems (ex: using craft sticks, pencils, sheets of paper, or pieces of string to measure length).
- Playing numeration games—such as having children say the number just before or just after a given number.
- Helping students understand that the answer to the question “How many?” is the last number stated when counting objects.

## Work Habits and Attentive Behavior

Sample Assessment Item:

Does the student wait for directions before beginning an assignment?

Never     Rarely     Sometimes     Often

**Work Habits and Attentive Behavior are often viewed as separate, but related, areas that are critical to future academic success. A list of suggestions to develop these behaviors is provided:**

- Use a clear signal to get children’s attention in the classroom. Consistency in its use is important to its long-term effectiveness.
- Develop a classroom schedule that is stable and predictable allows students to develop a routine needed for learning. Schedules can be displayed on a poster using symbols, pictures, and simple words.
- Provide immediate feedback for both positive and negative work behavior. When doing so, state the behavior observed so students know what to change or what to repeat.
- Promote careful listening to details through the use of games such as “Simon Says.” Such games also promote attentiveness and following directions, and can provide relief to young children who have trouble sitting still.
- Repeat a question if a student responds in an irrelevant way. Reword the question before asking it again, or inquire about their response.