

Effective Assessment Procedures & Formal Assessments

Keys to Positive Outcomes

Considerations for the Assessor

- When conducting assessments for students with visual impairments & multiple disabilities the evaluator should have knowledge & an understanding of the unique developmental differences among students with visual impairments & the impact of vision loss & other disabilities on learning.

Considerations for the Assessor

- The school psychologist or educational specialist conducting the assessment should understand that formal or norm-referenced tests may lack validity or reliability for students with visual impairments
- The assessor should take into account the impact of the student's visual impairment when selecting & conducting assessments.
- The assessor should recognize that formal assessments may provide a baseline for understanding a student's abilities & skills.

Assessment Environment & Conditions

- Assessment of students with visual impairments & multiple disabilities may need to occur over a series of sessions.
- Assessment may occur in the natural environment, as well as a more formal setting.
- Allow the student to become familiar with the assessment environment.

Home Assessments

- Prior to conducting an assessment in the home, develop a rapport with the family.
- Be aware of the impact of the family's first language on a student's performance.
- Respect the family's culture belief & values.
- Prior to conducting a formal interview, interact with the family on a casual basis.
- Explain the purpose of the visit & the assessment to the family.
- Engage the family in the assessment process.

Home Assessment Continued

- Determine the student's involvement in daily routines & activities in the home.
- Determine the family's expectations for the student to develop academic and independent living skills.
- Determine the family's views regarding behavior & discipline
- Determine how the family views disability & planning for the future.
- Encourage the family to share strategies that work for teaching the students skills or chnging unwanted behavior.

Testing Considerations

- Ensure that all materials are in a format that is readily accessible to the student.
- Ensure that the presentation of materials meets the students visual, tactile, & physical needs.
- Ensure that the assessment takes place at a time that maximizes ability to achieve success.
- Provide time for the student to explore & feel comfortable with the testing environment.
- The assessment environment is free of auditory & visual stimuli, including the assessor's clothing.
- Allow the student to ask questions about the assessment & provide an explanation of what will take place during the assessment.

Formal & Informal Assessment

Formal Assessment

- Summative assessments that are given in one or two sessions.
- Formal assessments are usually standardized for students without disabilities.
- The assessment can be norm-referenced, but not always.
- The assessment measure some level of performance on skill acquisition or abilities.
- Formal assessments can be administered by teachers, but usually school psychologists administer these tests.

Types of Formal Assessments

- Intelligence tests
- Developmental scales
- Academic achievement tests
- Criterion Referenced tests
- Curriculum-based assessments

Adaptations for Administering Formal Assessments

- Adaptable response mode
- Flexible administration procedures
- Provision for partial credit or performance
- Provision of administering many items to determine increments of development or knowledge.

Informal Assessments

- Are not data driven but rather content and performance driven
- Informal assessment is a procedure for obtaining information to make judgements about children's learning behavior and characteristics
- Informal assessments should be used to inform instruction

Types of Informal Assessment

- Observation
- Rating Scale
- Checklist
- Work Sample
- Portfolio
- Interviews

Informal or Alternative Assessments

- Checklists
- Child Guided Assessment
- Ecological Inventory
- Activity Analysis
- Routine Task Analysis
- Preference Assessment
- Learning Styles Assessment
- Portfolio Assessment
- Communication Assessment

Choosing the Assessment Tool(s)

- There are no perfect assessments
- You will need to evaluate the assessment
- You may find that certain parts of an assessment work well with certain children
- You may find that using parts of several different assessments gives you the most useful information

General Guidelines

- Observe the child
- Identify the child's likes and dislikes
- Identify the child's strengths
- Identify the communication forms
- Identify the child's routines
- Gather information from parents and caregivers
- Ask parents what they hope to learn



Follow the Child

- What is the child interested in?
- What are the child's movements?
- Build from the child's strengths and interests

General Guidelines



- Use the child's interests to guide the assessment

Adapt your interests and emotions to the child's level & join in the child's activities

Child Guided Assessment

- Based on Zones of Proximal Development
- Child Guided Assessment respects the student's interests, preferences, & behavioral state.
- The evaluator creates the learning environment & observes what the student is doing, & may engage with the student, emphasizing what the student can accomplish, rather than evaluating deficit behavior or skills.

Benefits of Using the Ecological Approach

- Determines expectations in the natural environment (*promotes instruction in natural environments*)
- Determines critical skills needed in current and future environments
- Emphasizes the use of a team approach
- Promotes generalization of skills

Assessment within Natural Environments

- Student abilities are better demonstrated in familiar and comfortable environments
 - Natural environments
 - Natural routines
 - Familiar people

Enviornmental Inventory

- A form of assessment that teachers can use to determine authentic enviroments for teaching functional skills.
- Determine the instructional domain-home, school, community.
- Within each domain determine the environments in which instruction can occur
- Determine the sub-environments.
- Determine what activities can be taught within each sub-environment.
- Determine the skills needed to engage in each activity.

Activity Analysis

- Determine the activity
- Determine the steps involved in completing the activity.
- Observe & record what steps in the activity the student can perform independently & what steps will require an adaption.
- Determine what strategies will be used to adapt each step of the activity so that the student can engage in the activity with greater independence.

Preference Assessment

- Allows the teacher or assessor to determine what objects, experiences, or routines the student prefers.
- This form of assessment is used for students who exhibit the most severe disabilities.
- It allows the assessor to observe the student engaged in an activity over time to determine how to best teach the student a task, skills, or activity.
- This process allows the assessor to determine a student's learning style.

Communication Assessment

- Assessment Considerations
 - Distance student can receive information
 - Impact of limited visual field on receiving information
 - Impact of lighting
 - Amount of detail can the student see
 - Pace of receiving information
 - Ability to focus with & without glasses
 - Ability to track people's faces & recognize people
 - Maintaining good visual attention to an activity
 -

Portfolio Assessment

- Student portfolios are a sampling of work over time.
- The artifacts can be a variety of documents & photographs that represent the student's best work or a range of work samples.
- Student profiles provide a snapshot of the student's abilities & skills, as well as describe any behavioral needs the student may require to be successful in school, home, or community environments.
- Student portfolios can be a series of video clips demonstrating skills acquisition over time. This is often referred to as a video resume.

Functional Vision & Learning Media Assessment

Essentials for Instruction

Why Perform a Functional Vision Assessment

- FVAs are mandated by IDEA
- FVAs provide valuable information regarding how a student uses his or her vision in natural environment
- FVAs provide information about how a student accesses technology using vision
- FVAs provide educators information about a student's visual status: stable or progressive
- FVAs provide useful information about a student's ability to access printed materials for literacy activities

Elements of a Functional Vision Assessment

- Eye report from an eye care specialist
- Review of medical history
- Measurement of visual acuity for near & distance
- A measurement of visual field
- Information about color vision
- Information about contrast sensitivity
- Information about eye motility
- Information about visual motor behavior
- Information about visual perceptual abilities

Considerations for Performing FVAs for Students with Multiple Disabilities

- Much of the assessment process will involve observation
- Observations need to occur in a variety of environments over time
- Students' biobehavioral states need to be taken into account when evaluating a student's visual status
- Environmental factors such as lighting, noise, visual clutter need to be considered when observing a student's visual abilities

Additional Considerations

- When assessing a student who has multiple disabilities the assessor needs to pay attention to the following
 - Does the student exhibit head turns to view people, objects, or activities?
 - Does the students prefer bright or dim light?
 - How long can a student engage in a visual task?
 - What is the level of fatigue?
 - What level of contrast deos the student require?

Additional Considerations Continued

- The assessor needs to pay attention to the following behaviors
 - Does the student have difficulty with visual crowding or clutter?
 - How close does the student get to view objects, pictures, printed material, or people's faces?
 - How well does the student maneuver outdoor environments in bright or dim light?
 - Does the student avoid looking at people's faces or doesn't seem to recognize familiar faces?

Learning Media Assessment

Purpose of the Learning Media Assessment

- The LMA assists the assessor in determining the student's primary & secondary modes of learning.
- The LMA provides information about a student;s mode for literacy & functional literacy activities.
- The LMA determines if a student is a visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or kinesthetic learner

The Learning Media Assessment Process

- Review of educational history
- Review of Functional Vision Assessment findings
- Determine the primary & secondary channels for learning
- Determine the potential for reading & accessing literacy activities
- Determine tactile abilities for potential pre-braille & braille instruction
- Perform a comprehensive reading assessment to determine student's phonemic, comprehension abilities, & listening skills

Assessment Intervention



Where do we go from here?

Quality Indicators of Progress

- Increased consistency of response
- Increased independence of response/decreased assistance required
- Increased frequency of response
- Increased clarity of response
- Faster response time
- Partial participation in one step of a routine
- Ability to participate in an activity for longer periods of time
- Sustained attention to task
- Increased stamina
- Improved strength or accuracy of a motor response

Who is the student?

- Develop a student profile
 - What are their likes and dislikes?
 - What are their strengths and abilities?
 - How do they learn best?
 - What do they have difficulty with?
 - What are their disabilities?

Using Assessment Information

- The wealth of information collected during the assessment process can provide insight into a variety of factors that may have a profound effect on instruction
 - E.g., positioning, environment, teaching strategies

Using Assessment Information

- In the end the assessment process should yield specific educational goals and objectives
- What needs have been identified by the assessments?
 - How will you address these needs?
 - Need = defines the goal area
 - Skill development = defines the objective

Documenting Progress

- Another important objective of assessment is to document progress that the child has made over time
- Assessments can help you formalize your observations so that they can be systematically compared from one administration to another