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Assessment is at the heart of effective early years practice. It plays a vital role in ensuring parents, carers and practitioners recognise children's levels of development and progress over time. Through ongoing assessment, practitioners will grow to understand children's levels of achievement, interests and learning styles. They will then be able to
plan relevant and appropriate learning experiences for each child. Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interactions with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert
professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence. When a child's learning is embedded and secure, they are likely to demonstrate what they know and can do consistently, independently and in a range of situations. Barriers to learning For those children who are not progressing or accessing your
curriculum, you may have to observe more to identify barriers to learning and then decide how to address them. Persistent learning and development needs should be addressed between parents/carers and any other relevant professionals. Parents and carers must be kept up to date with their child's progress. The Early Years Service provided
briefings in the summer of 2021 covering the main changes across all three sections of the revised EYFS. Assessing children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOs may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOS may find it challenging to identify current development and track the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOS may find it challenging the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOS may find it challenging the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOS may find it challenging the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOS may find it challenging the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOS may find it challenging the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOS may find it challenging the progress of children with SEND Many SENCOS may find it challenging the progress of children with sent and the progress of children with the progress of children 
range of resources to help them accurately identify where a child is in their development (link to the bands remain a helpful measure of progress and while not required for all children, you might want to continue to use a range of
resources which reference age bands to support you in your role. If settings feel that using a band system is beneficial, they are welcome to continue to use it. If they feel an alternative method of recording progress is better for their setting, the new framework allows flexibility. Suggested reading about changes to assessment under the Revised EYFS
(2021) The following articles were written by Julian Grenier, who wrote Development Matters (2021) and was part of the advisory group for the EYFS reforms. The articles may be useful for settings who are reflecting on their assessment practices. Children will develop at their own unique rates and not every child will follow a "typical" pattern of
progression of development, this however does not limit a child's ability to make progress or take away from focusing on the child's individual strengths. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets out information and requirements in relation to proactively observing and assessing children as it is crucial to building your understanding of the whole
child and their individual characteristics, skills and interests. Assessment of children in the early years can help you to promptly recognise any gaps in learning and allow you to implement appropriate support at the earliest point, ensuring the needs of both the child and their family are met. Starting point - an initial assessment, completed with
parent and or carer views when a child begins attending your setting. This is not included in the EYFS and is not a statutory requirement. Formative assessments - this is your ongoing assessment and is vital in the learning and development process. It involves you understanding your setting. This is not included in the EYFS and is not a statutory requirement.
then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. This includes observations, which is the continuous process of noticing what a child knows, understands and can do in order to build knowledge of each individual child. There is no requirement in the EYFS to keep written records in relation to the formative
assessment. Summative assessments - these are often written at predetermined points of the year and provide you and the parents and or carers with a summary of what the child knows, understands and can do at a particular point in time. There are two statutory summative assessments that take place in the EYFS: Progress check at age two - when
a child is aged between two and three, you must review their progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short, written summary of their child's development in the three prime areas. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - at the end of Reception Year, each child's development must be assessed against the 17 early learning goals
(ELGs) set out in the EYFS. There is another statutory assessment point within the EYFS, the Reception Baseline Assessment completed within the EYFS, the Reception Baseline Assessment completed within the EYFS. There is another statutory assessment point within the EYFS, the Reception Baseline Assessment completed within the EYFS.
cohort of children through primary school. Support for all children in your setting starts with the careful planning and development. For any child who needs more help to progress, you should adapt your approaches, teaching, learning and play to meet
individual needs. If a child with potential or known SEND then needs further support, they will benefit from a more detailed assessment of their progress, in line with the assess, plan, do, review cycle (the graduated approach). It may be through your observations and assessments you recognise that a child is not meeting the expected developmental
milestones. It is through this early recognition that we can implement effective support for children in the Early years child development training (EYCDT) Module 7: Effective curriculum and assessment; and more about the graduated approach and
how you can support children with differences and needs in Module 8: Supporting individual differences and needs. When recording observations and assessments for a child with SEND it is beneficial to use strengths-based language. Child: Aislinn Practitioner: Charlie Date: 27/02/2024 As you can see, this observation has captured what the child was
able to do and how they expressed themselves and communicated their need for support throughout the interaction. When observed is relevant to the child's individual needs. Observations like this could be recorded in any format you prefer (notebook, clipboard,
online journal system). It is useful to make note of the important learning that you observe, which can include characteristics of effective learning, the Leuven scale (see further reading) or other support tools you feel are beneficial for reviewing the child's development. What you observe, and your knowledge of the child, will be crucial when using the
tools in this guidance, formative and summative assessments. It is important to remember that observation and assessments to plan appropriate activities and experiences that promote children's
learning and development. Practitioners use observations and formative assessments to identify children's interests, and areas for development in areas where they need additional support. The planning cycle in the early
years is a continuous process that involves four key stages: observing and assessing, planning, implementing, reviewing. Practitioners use this cycle to continuous process that involves four key stages: observing and development, and evaluate the effectiveness of their provision. The first stage of the
planning cycle in the early years involves observing and assessing children's learning and development. This stage is critical, as it provides practitioners with important insights into children's learning and development, which can inform subsequent planning. Practitioners use a range of tools and methods to carry out observations
and formative assessments, such as anecdotal notes, checklists, and learning stories. These tools enable practitioners to gather a wealth of information about children's learning and development, and emotional development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development, and personal, social, and emotional development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development, and personal, social, and emotional development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication and language, physical development in different areas, such as communication are development.
assessments allow practitioners to gain a holistic view of children's learning and development, taking into account their unique strengths and experiences are tailored to individual needs and interests. For example, if a practitioner observes that a child is
particularly interested in animals, they might plan activities that focus on learning about different animals, such as visiting a local farm or creating a role-play area based on a zoo. This approach ensures that activities and experiences are engaging and relevant to children's interests, promoting their overall motivation and enjoyment of
learning. Observations and formative assessments also enable practitioners to identify areas where children may need additional support. For example, if a practitioner observes that a child struggles with their fine motor skills, they might plan activities that specifically target these areas, such as playing with manipulatives or using scissors to cut out
shapes. The second stage of the planning cycle in the early years involves using the information and assessment stage to plan appropriate activities and experiences that promote learning and development. Practitioners use this information to create a curriculum that is tailored to the unique needs and interests of each
child. Practitioners consider the different areas of development, when planning activities and experiences. These areas include physical development, iteracy, and mathematics. They use this information to create activities that promote learning and development in each of
these areas. When planning activities and experiences, practitioners also consider the different learning styles of children. Some children learn best through visual stimuli, while others may respond more to auditory or kinesthetic stimuli. Practitioners try to incorporate different learning styles of each child. Planning
appropriate activities and experiences also involves considering children's interests and preferences. Practitioners take into account children's enjoyment of learning and helps to foster a positive attitude towards learning. The third stage of the
planning cycle in the early years involves implementing the planning stage come to life. Practitioners use a range of teaching methods and strategies, such as play-based learning, to engage children in meaningful and purposeful
activities that promote learning and development. Play-based learning is a common method used in the early years, as it allows children to explore and experiment with the world around them in a fun and engaging way. Through play, children can develop their imagination, creativity, problem-solving skills, and communication skills. Practitioners use
different types of play, such as construction play, and physical play, to provide children with a wide range of learning experiences. Other teaching methods and strategies used in the early years include storytelling, role-playing, and group activities. These methods help to foster children's communication and social skills, as well as
promote their overall learning and development. In the implementation stage, practitioners also adapt their teaching methods and strategies to meet the needs of individual children who are more advanced in their
learning and development. Practitioners also promote positive attitudes towards learning by providing positive feedback and encouragement to children. This approach helps to build children's confidence and self-esteem, encouraging them to take risks and explore new ideas. The final stage of the planning cycle in the early years involves reviewing
the effectiveness of the provision. This stage is critical as it allows practitioners to assess the impact of the planned activities and experiences on children's learning and development. Practitioners use a range of methods, such as observations, and feedback from parents and carers, to gather information about the effectiveness of the
provision. Observations and evaluations provide practitioners with valuable insights into the effectiveness of the planned activities and experiences. They help practitioners to identify areas where children have made progress and areas where they may need further support. For example, if a practitioner observes that a child has made significant
progress in their language development, they may plan more activities that focus on development. This feedback from parents and carers to gain a more complete picture of children's learning and development.
outside of the early years setting. It also helps to identify any areas where parents and carers may need additional support. Using this information, practitioners can then make informed decisions about future planning. They can adjust the curriculum to better meet the needs of individual children, ensuring that activities and experiences are tailored to
their individual needs and interests. This approach helps to ensure that all children are supported to reach their full potential. Assessment, a crucial component of Early Years education, plays a pivotal role in understanding and supporting a child's
progress, strengths, and areas that need further attention. Assessing children's development is a crucial part of working in an Early Years setting. It is inescapable too when watching little ones! Every new step, new word, or new discovery is potentially notable and it can be hard to decide which observations should be recorded formally and which do
not need to be. The concept of assessment can sometimes be daunting, raising questions about its purpose and the best practices to implement. Assessment in the Early Years refers to the ongoing process of observing, documenting, and analysing a child's learning and development. It involves collecting evidence of a child's experiences, interactions,
and achievements, and using this information to tailor instruction and interventions that support each child's holistic development. There are two main types of assessment in
Early Years Education, formative and summative. Plymouth.gov.uk's article on EYFS assessment principles and practice briefly explains the different types. We have included excerpts from the article below: "Formative assessment is central to effective early years practice and is ongoing. It involves practitioners observing as they play and interact
with children which contributes to a practitioner's knowledge of a child." "Formative assessment is used to understand how a child is learning and developing. It informs planning so that adults can meet children's needs and support and extend the learning of all children." "At points in time settings may find it useful to pull together insights from
formative assessment and information about the child from listening to the child from listening to the child is supported. This is known as summative assessment. Summative assessment provides a holistic summary of a child's progress, strengths, needs, interests, how the child learns and how the child is supported. This should not be a
time- consuming process and should provide a clear overview to parents and other professionals. Summative assessment and learning." Assessments hold significant importance within an Early Years setting and can impact other aspects of Early Years
Education. Let's explore some of these: Early years assessment allows educators to identify any development. Assessment
information aids in designing effective curricula and educational activities that align with the developmental stages and interests of the children. This ensures a more engaging and relevant learning experience. Assessment provides a structured means for educators to communicate with parents about their child's progress, achievements, and areas
for improvement. This partnership fosters a collaborative approach to supporting the child's development. The following excerpt has been taken from high-quality interactions with adults. Ofsted do not want the assessment of young children
to take you away from this important work. Rather than looking at information about children are making with you. Inspectors will want to discuss the progress that children are making with you want them to discuss the progress that children are making with you. Inspectors will want to discuss the progress that children are making with you. Inspectors will want to discuss the progress that children are making with you.
Inspectors will not expect this information to be recorded in any particular way. You can choose to record it in the way that works best for you. For example, a small setting may know their children's current learning and progress. A larger setting might decide to keep records if they wish."
Oddly enough, this advice comes from the section on Reducing paperwork. It is important to note that not all activities and assessments within Early Years settings are solely for the purpose of meeting Ofsted's requirements. However, having an assessment strategy will make it easier for your setting. There are several strategies that help build up an
Early Years assessment. Here are some of the key ones: Regular observation of children during play and activities offers valuable insights into their interests, social interactions, and problem-solving abilities. Observations should be documented through notes, photographs, and videos to create a comprehensive picture of the child's progress. Learning
Journeys are a collection of a child's work, observations, and achievements over time. They serve as a visual representation of the child's growth and development, allowing educators and age-appropriate behaviours. They help
educators identify any potential areas of concern and ensure that a child is on track with their peers. Anecdotal records, also known as 'wow moments', involve jotting down specific incidents, conversations, or interactions that highlight a child's skills, challenges, and growth. These records provide rich context for assessing a child's development.
While assessment is essential, finding the right balance is key. It's important to ensure that assessment practices are developmentally appropriate and align with the principles of play-based learning. A child's growth should not be reduced to mere data points; rather, assessment should reflect the holistic nature of their development. In a busy
setting with multiple staff, formal recording and evidencing becomes essential. Even if a child has a consistent key worker every day, it is important to maintain accurate records in the event the key worker is absent and other staff members need to find out something about a particular child. Parents also expect a certain amount of information: "Did
my child eat all of their lunch?" "Have they been on the potty today?" "Did they have a nap?" For all of these questions and more, Early Years staff cannot rely on just their memory, particularly if lots of parents are picking up their child at the same time! This makes recording information important - whether Ofsted wants to see it or not. But how can
staff avoid paperwork taking over from the most important elements of Early Years Education? Research suggests that spending time with adults is the most effective way for children to achieve developmental milestones. Therefore, it is essential to strike a balance between administrative tasks and providing individual attention to children. This is
one of the reasons we have developed eylog, observation and assessment software, so that practitioners and important parts of the day really quickly without adding to their admin time away from the nursery room (most childcare practitioners did not go into the job to spend time in an office!). It is certainly not the quantity of
recording which is important - it is the quality of those recordings. And with eylog in hand, it is easy to take a quick photo or video to really show what is happening without trying to explain it via multiple post-it notes! Tagging quickly into your chosen curriculum makes it even more powerful and cuts down admin later too, as it is easy for any staff to
quickly look at an individual child, see where they are at, and plan appropriate activities for them. This formative assessment - where it is used to inform our practice on a day-to-day basis - is what becomes really powerful. Ofsted has already explained they do not need to see all of this recording. But having these available to staff makes those
conversations easier as everyone can easily see how each child, and group of children, is doing. They will know not just what they have done and all of the achievements on the way so far, but also see where they are heading and be able to tie that into the forward planning being done. Technology is not the answer to everything of course - but for
oversight of formative assessment, it can certainly take the strain from the memory of busy childcare practitioners and leave them to focus on the child rather than the pile of paper! Overall, assessment in early years education is a powerful tool that empowers educators to nurture each child's potential. When implemented thoughtfully and with a
focus on individuality, assessment can provide valuable insights that guide learning environment where every child can flourish. Find out how
eylog can empower your team and easily capture every child's story. This guidance has been produced following the DfE Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) reforms, 2021. It sets out the statutory requirements for assessment in the EYFS and provides some principles for effective assessment. Statutory requirements
The Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage 2021 sets out what early years settings must do. Principles for effective assessment Effective assessment Effective assessment Puts the child at the centre Every child is known and included. Recognises that every child is unique Each child brings with them their own individual experiences and personal
histories, needs and interests, knowledge and skills. Is built on trusting and honest relationships A collaborative process with the voice of the child, the parent/carer, practitioners and other professionals. Provides a celebratory model Focuses on strengths and what a child can do. Helps the child to think about what they have learned and experience
success. Is underpinned by good child development knowledge and understanding of how children learn through play Based on practitioners knowing key developmental milestones and understanding that a child's learning does not always go in a straight line; it is like a spider's web. Warm, responsive and supportive adults are key. Is purposeful
interacting with children. The process of assessment There are two main types of assessment; formative and summative assessment is central to effective early years practitioner's knowledge of a
child. It is sometimes recorded. However, not everything that a practitioner observes needs to be written down or documented with photos or videos. Formative assessment is used to understand how a child is learning and developing. It informs planning so that adults can meet children's needs and support and extend the learning of all children
strengths, needs, interests, how the child learns and how the child is supported. This should not be a time- consuming process and should provide a clear overview to parents and other professionals. Summative assessment can inform improvements to provision and practice which enhance children's development and learning. The diagram on the
Birth to 5 Matters website shows how information can be gathered to inform summative assessment and then used effectively. There are three EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) statutory assessment points: Progress check at two yearsReception Baseline Assessment (RBA)Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) In addition to ongoing
 assessment, schools and settings may decide that further summative assessments are useful: to share with parents / carersto recognise and support quality improvement Reflective questions What are the general levels of
well-being and involvement? How is the child learning? (Characteristics of Effective Learning) What is the child learning? (Three prime and four specific areas of learning? What are the barriers to their learning? What does the child need
to learn next in order to make progress?Which children need more help? Partnership with parents / carersFormative assessment - moment by moment interactions Talking with the child about their learning and developmentConversations with colleagues Decide how to respond and support learning in the moment and over timeDocument what is
important to the child, to prompt memory or provide more detailFor some children more detailed diagnostic assessment is necessary to share with parents / carers and other professionals Evaluate the quality of provision and make improvements Documentation can be helpful: To make learning visibleAs an aide-memoireTo support professional
conversations, review children's learning and understand what action needs to be takenTo help children reflect on and celebrate their own learning for professional development and quality improvement Some examples of how: one page profiles, learning journeys, learning stories floor books, displays flexible planning summative overviews of
development and progress Plymouth, Devon and Torbay Early Communication and Language monitoring tool (PDF) Plymouth Early Comm
support identification of children's needs in the Early Years Foundation Stage as part of the Graduated Approach to Inclusion. The purpose of this tool is to help assess a child's level of development in order to make informed decisions about what the child needs to learn and be able to do next. The tool can help practitioners to notice whether a child needs to learn and be able to do next.
is at risk of falling behind in their development and supports early identification of the need for referral for specialist support. Planning in the early years is a cyclical process that involves using assessments to plan appropriate activities and experiences that promote children's learning and development. Practitioners use observations and formative
assessments to identify children's interests, strengths, and areas for development. They then plan activities and experiences that build on children's interests and strengths and support their development in areas where they need additional support. The planning cycle in the early years is a continuous process that involves four key stages: observing
and assessing, planning, implementing, reviewing. Practitioners use this cycle to continually assess children's progress, plan appropriate activities and experiences that promote learning and development, and evaluate the effectiveness of their provision. The first stage of the planning cycle in the early years involves observing and assessing children's progress, plan appropriate activities and experiences that promote learning and development, and evaluate the effectiveness of their provision. The first stage of the planning cycle in the early years involves observing and assessing children's progress, plan appropriate activities and experiences that promote learning and development, and evaluate the effectiveness of their provision. The first stage of the planning cycle in the early years involves observing and assessing children's progress, plan appropriate activities and experiences that promote learning and development, and evaluate the effectiveness of their provision.
learning and development. This stage is critical, as it provides practitioners with important insights into children's interests, strengths, and areas for development, which can inform subsequent planning. Practitioners use a range of tools and methods to carry out observations and formative assessments, such as anecdotal notes, checklists, and
learning and development, taking into account their unique strengths and challenges. Practitioners use this information to inform planning, ensuring that activities and experiences are tailored to individual needs and interests. For example, if a practitioner observes that a child is particularly interested in animals, they might plan activities that focus
on learning about different animals, such as visiting a local farm or creating a role-play area based on a zoo. This approach ensures that activities and experiences are engaging and relevant to children's interests, promoting their overall motivation and enjoyment of learning. Observations and formative assessments also enable practitioners to identify
information gathered during the observation and assessment stage to plan appropriate activities and experiences that promote learning and development. Practitioners consider the different areas of development when planning
activities and experiences. These areas include physical development, communication and language, personal, social and emotional development in each of these areas. When planning activities and experiences, practitioners also consider
the different learning styles of children. Some children styles of each child. Planning appropriate activities and experiences also involves considering children's
interests and preferences. Practitioners take into account children's likes and dislikes to ensure that activities are engaging and motivating. The third stage of the planning cycle in the early years involves implementing the planned
activities and experiences. This stage is where the learning and development opportunities identified in the planning stage come to life. Practitioners use a range of teaching methods and strategies, such as play-based learning is a
common method used in the early years, as it allows children to explore and experiment with the world around them in a fun and engaging way. Through play, children can develop their imagination, creativity, problem-solving skills, and communication skills. Practitioners use different types of play, such as construction play, imaginative play, and
physical play, to provide children with a wide range of learning experiences. Other teaching methods and strategies used in the early years include storytelling, role-playing, and group activities. These methods help to foster children's communication and social skills, as well as promote their overall learning and development. In the implementation
stage, practitioners also adapt their teaching methods and strategies to meet the needs of individual children. They provide support and guidance to children who are more advanced in their learning and development. Practitioners also promote positive attitudes
towards learning by providing positive feedback and encouragement to children. This approach helps to build children's confidence and self-esteem, encouraging them to take risks and explore new ideas. The final stage of the planning cycle in the early years involves reviewing the effectiveness of the provision. This stage is critical as it allows
practitioners to assess the impact of the planned activities and evelopment. Practitioners use a range of methods, such as observations, evaluations, and feedback from parents and carers, to gather information about the effectiveness of the provision. Observations and evaluations provide practitioners with
valuable insights into the effectiveness of the planned activities and experiences. They help practitioner observes that a child has made significant progress in their language development, they may plan more activities
that focus on developing communication skills. Practitioners also seek feedback from parents and carers to gain a more complete picture of children's learning and development. This feedback helps practitioners to understand the impact of the planned activities and experiences outside of the early years setting. It also helps to identify any areas
where parents and carers may need additional support. Using this information, practitioners can then make informed decisions about future planning. They can adjust the curriculum to better meet the needs of individual children, ensuring that activities and experiences are tailored to their individual needs and interests. This approach helps to ensure
that all children are supported to reach their full potential. Key points: Formative assessment is an integral part of teaching young children know, understand, and can do. Children and adults construct the curriculum
together. Observation, assessment and planning is part of professional practice. Summative assessment involves stepping back to gain an overview of children's development and progress. Reliable summative assessment involves stepping back to gain an overview of children's development and progress.
learning. Summative assessment serves several purposes that can enhance development and learning opportunities for children, including by informing improvements to provision and practice in the setting. Formative assessment is an integral part of teaching young children. Children's development and learning is best supported by starting from
the child, and then matching interactions and experiences to meet the child's needs. The observation, assessment and planning (OAP) cycle describes what is frequently called assessment for learning, or formative assessment and planning (OAP) cycle describes what is frequently called assessment for learning (OAP) cycle describes what is frequently called assessment for learning, or formative assessment and planning (OAP) cycle describes what is frequently called assessment for learning, or formative assessment for learning, or formative assessment and planning (OAP) cycle describes what is frequently called assessment for learning, or formative assessment for learning, or formative assessment and planning (OAP) cycle describes what is frequently called assessment for learning formative formative assessment for learning formative formative formative formative formative formative formative formative formative form
all activity, which is most often held in the mind of the practitioner but may sometimes be documented, using this rich information to understand how a child is developing, learning and growing, and then planning the next steps for the adults in supporting and extending the learning. Practice starts with the child, and grows in partnership. Effective
practice begins with observation, tuning into the child and then building a relationship. Professionally informed knowledge of child development then supports understanding children's interests, development and learning, and planning for next steps. This process should involve the child, parents and carers, and other professionals. From the earliest
 age children should be involved in choices about their own learning. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 states the right of the child to express their views and observations about the child's development and being involved in planning what
opportunities and experiences to offer the child next. Working in partnership with other professionals, community and support groups connects everyone who is involved with the child and family, bringing a clearer picture of the child's needs and rights. Each child's own unique pathway of development and learning involves many elements woven
together in a holistic form. Observation, assessment and planning (OAP) makes this holistic development visible, so children themselves. Responsive pedagogy is needed to recognise what children know, understand, and can do. In a supportive
and challenging enabling environment children demonstrate their learning and understanding in a wide range of contexts that have meaning to them. Responsive adults tune into their play, interactions and thinking, identifying how best to support their ideas, interests and priorities. Sensitive interactions involve listening, guiding, explaining, asking
appropriate questions and helping children to reflect on their learning in a playful, co-constructive partnership. The process of OAP is central to being attuned to children and to understanding what they can do with support, as well as what they know and can do without adult direction. When children apply the skills and concepts they have
mastered in a variety of different ways in their independent play and activities, their understanding is clearly embedded. Children and adults construct the curriculum together. Keeping the OAP cycle at the heart of our practice enables practitioners to build on children's motivations and interests to support and extend their development and
learning. The curriculum is co-constructed between children, practitioners and families through this process. Children bring funds of knowledge-based interests to the setting, and they are motivated to learn through connecting new experiences to what they already know and can do. Practitioners can support these interests while also keeping in
mind that they need to introduce children to new ideas and knowledge and sensitively support and guide their learning in all areas, including the Characteristics of Effective Learning and Development which summarise some of what children learn. The curriculum must, however, be more
than a list of skills and knowledge to be achieved. The EYFS principle says every unique child is "constantly learning". Children learn from all their experiences, not just in the Areas of Learning and Development, but also in how they see
themselves as learners and how they are building the strong foundations for lifelong learning described in the Characteristics of Effective Learning. How children learn often helps practitioners to see what children
understand. Observation, assessment and planning is part of professional practice. Throughout the OAP cycle and summative assessment, informed decisions about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible, calling on the variety of information about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible, calling on the variety of information about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible, calling on the variety of information about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible, calling on the variety of information about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible, calling on the variety of information about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible, calling on the variety of information about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible, calling on the variety of information about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible, calling on the variety of information about the child's development, learning and progress need to be as objective as possible.
reflective and ongoing process which enables consideration of children's development and how to support individual children through effective practice. It supports quality improvement as practitioners use their knowledge, skills and evidence gathered from OAP to reflect on the quality of education and care the children receive, and think about how
to improve practice. Summative assessment involves stepping back to gain an overview of children's development and learning. At certain times it is important to step
back, to pause and reflect, and create a summative assessment which takes a holistic overview of the child's development, learning and progress. Summative assessment points in the EYFS - the 2-year-old progress
check, and the EYFS Profile at the end of the EYFS. Settings may decide on further summative assessment points. Reliable summative assessment grows out of formative assessment. Summative assessment and then
making a professionally informed decision about the child, together with reviewing any notes, photographs or other records that may be held, alongside what is known from the child, parents, colleagues and other professionals. This process is an excellent
opportunity for professional reflection and discussions with colleagues to moderate decisions about progress and build a stronger understanding of children's development in all aspects of learning. Young children's development does not follow a
predictable step-by-step sequence, and each child will have their own unique pathway, progress in terms of whether it is typical for their age, for example learning to talk. Practitioners need to consider overall development within
these aspects and not rely on matching every element in a list of statements to judge children's progress. It is important to take a holistic, professionally informed view to determine whether a child is roughly on track or developing more slowly or more quickly in particular areas. A holistic summary will give attention not just to areas of knowledge
and skills, but also to the child's emotional wellbeing and connections, and development of attitudes and dispositions for learning (Characteristics of Effective Learning). Summative assessment informs improvements to provision and practice, to enhance children's development and learning. Leaders and managers can use the information
strategically to improve provision and practice. For example: Are some children? How are we further supporting these children? Should opportunities, resources or support within some areas of the curriculum be improved? Is there a professional
development need for individual staff members, or the setting as a whole? Information can be communicated clearly in a summary form to inform discussions with parents, other agencies, or professionals involved with the child and family. Transitions can be supported so that children's journeys of development and learning continue smoothly.
Resources Bibliography Previous page: The wider context | Next page: Overview of Characteristics of Effective Learning and Development This guide will help you answer 2.2 Describe how, when and why to conduct the observation, assessment, and planning cycle to analyse and respond to children's development and interests
Understanding the observation, assessment, and planning cycle is a core part of an Early Years Practitioner's role. It helps support children's development and interests. This cycle ensures that every child is valued and given opportunities to progress and thrive. In this guide, we will look at each part of this process to explain how, when, and why it is
done. Observations are the foundation of understanding a child's needs and interests. These can be conducted in several ways, depending on the purpose. Each method provides valuable insight into the child's needs and interests. These can be conducted in several ways, depending on the purpose. Each method provides valuable insight into the child's needs and interests. These can be conducted in several ways, depending on the purpose. Each method provides valuable insight into the child's needs and interests.
child at regular intervals and recording what they are doing. Event sampling: Focusing on specific behaviours, often triggered by particular events or interest. Post-it/comments-based observations: Writing short, specific notes about observed
behaviours or achievements. Choose your focus - Decide what you are observing, such as communication, physical skills, or social interaction. Prepare materials - Use observation sheets, post-it notes, or digital tools, depending on your setting. Position yourself appropriately - Observe in a way that does not interrupt the child's natural behaviour
Record what you notice - Stick to objective observations, describing what the child says or does without making assumptions. For example, instead of saying, "Ben was upset," record what Ben did, such as "Ben folded his arms, turned away, and said, 'I don't want to'." Observations
should happen regularly in natural, everyday situations. Waiting for planned moments may overlook spontaneous learning opportunities. Key times for conducting observations include: When a child is playing freely. During planned activities, such as storytime or craft sessions. When the situation highlights strengths or challenges in development
(e.g., trying a new skill). After introducing new resources, materials, or themes. Using a mixture of planned and spontaneous observations creates a rich picture. It ensures that the child's abilities and preferences are viewed comprehensively across various contexts and scenarios. Observations help practitioners identify: Individual strengths and
achievements. Developmental progress in relation to frameworks, such as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in England. Specific needs, such as areas where extra support or challenge is required. Emerging interests that can guide future planning and engagement. They are also essential for spotting potential concerns. For example, delays in
speech may need input from a speech therapist or involve creating strategies to foster language development. Assessment involves analysing the information gathered through observations. This step helps practitioners understand what milestones the child has reached and what areas need attention. Link to developmental frameworksComparing
observations to EYFS Development Matters or other guidance ensures expectations are realistic and age-appropriate. Look for patternsReviewing multiple observations helps identify consistent behaviours, skills, or interests. Consider the whole childAssess not only intellectual skills but also emotional, physical, and social development. Take a
collaborative approachWork with parents/carers and other team members to reflect on the child's development. Document findingsInclude observations, notes, or Learning Journals that track a child's progress over time. Assessments should be ongoing. They occur after observing and regularly reviewing information collected. Examples of key times
include: At the end of each term to summarise progress. Before meetings with parents, in preparation for effective discussions. When concerns arise about the child's development. When a child transitions to a new room, setting, or school. Regular assessments ensure that parents and professionals stay informed about how the child is progressing.
They also help maintain accurate and useful records. Assessments: Highlight what a child has achieved and any areas where they are falling behind. Help practitioners plan appropriate next steps for learning at home. Support early intervention if
additional help or specialist input is required. Sharing assessment outcomes lets everyone involved in the child's care work together. Once assessments are complete, practitioners must plan activities to improve learning opportunities. Planning involves adapting the environment and teaching methods to match developmental goals. Set learning
inclusivityEnsure all planned activities work for children with different needs or abilities. Create a flexible structureWhile planning is important, you may need to adapt if the child's Learning Journal or a shared planning document so your team follows the same steps
Planning is an ongoing process. It happens after assessments and often feeds into weekly and daily lesson plans. Times to plan include: After noticing consistent interests (e.g., helping with early number recognition). Following a review - for example, where gaps in learning
have been identified. Planning doesn't have to be time consuming. What matters most is how practitioners tailor activities cover a wide range of developmental areas (e.g., cognitive, social, and physical). Children feel supported but also
challenged. Learning becomes meaningful and builds on what the child already knows. Resources, time, and space are being used wisely. It makes learning becomes meaningful and builds on what the child already knows. Resources, time, and space are being used wisely. It makes learning becomes meaningful and builds on what the child already knows. Resources, time, and space are being used wisely. It makes learning becomes meaningful and builds on what the child already knows.
basis to support continual learning. Observe child repeatedly stacks boxes while playing. Assess They demonstrate problem-solving and early mathematical skills, such as balancing and sizing. Plan Provide more opportunities for stacking, pattern-making, or constructing towers. Include resources like counters or bricks. Reassess with nev
observations By continuing observations, practitioners see whether the new activities extend the child's skills. This cycle ensures that practitioners remain responsive to the changing needs and interests of the child. Involving families in this cycle ensures that practitioners remain responsive to the changing needs and interests of the child. Involving families in this cycle ensures that practitioners remain responsive to the changing needs and interests of the child.
their child's development. Encourage them to share what their child enjoys at home. This way, planning will reflect the child's full picture of development. This cycle supports all children, including those with additional needs. Practitioners can work with external agencies (e.g., speech therapists or occupational therapists) to make sure that planning
includes specialist strategies when required. The observation, assessment, and planning cycle brings thoughtfulness to child-centred learning. It helps practitioners recognise the child's abilities, potential, and personality, while responding flexibly to strengths, needs, and interests. Building this cycle into your daily practice supports both the child
and their family effectively. Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. The statutory assessment requirements in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework are: ongoing assessment; the progress check at age
two; the reception baseline assessment (RBA); and the EYFS Profile. It is important to remember that assessment in the EYFS should not require prolonged breaks from your interactions with children or excessive paperwork. Ongoing assessment, which is also known as formative assessment, is an integral part of the learning and
development process. It involves practitioners understanding children's interests and what they know and can do, and then shaping teaching across the EYFS. In your interactions with children, you should make and act on your own day-to-day observations
about children's progress, as well as the observations. Progress check at age two The progress check happens in an early years setting when a child is aged between two and three. This involves practitioners reviewing a child's progress and
providing parents and/or carers with a short written summary of their child's development in the prime areas. It is up to you what further information, beyond the prime areas, you would like to include within the summary must celebrate the child's progress, identify areas where further support might be needed and where there might
be a development delay, and describe how you will address any concerns. The progress check at age 2 guidance supports practitioners in completing the progress check. Reception baseline assessment is conducted by a child's teacher in the first six weeks of a child starting reception. It is used to form the starting
point for cohort-level school progress measures. Data from the RBA is compared to key stage 2 outcomes to form the overall progress measure for a school. The reception baseline assessment framework provides further information on the RBA. Early Year Foundation Stage Profile should be completed by a child's teacher in the final
term of the year a child turns five, this is usually reception year. You must assess each child's level of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels and are assessed as 'emerging'. The purpose of this
is to support a successful transition to year 1. The EYFS Profile handbook helps support teachers to complete the EYFS Profile.
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