***Assessment in the World of Child Development***

As a child development professional, helping children develop into socially responsible beings is one of our main goals. In doing so, we as professionals need to have some sort of documentation of the child's growth and development and this is where assessment comes into play. The purpose of assessment is to collect information that is necessary in order to make important life decisions about children's developmental and educational needs. Assessment tools allow teachers to enhance the opportunities for a child to grow, develop and learn. Not only can different forms of assessment be used to screen for developmental delays and disabilities, they can be used to determine kindergarten readiness, develop curriculum and daily activities, and provide feedback to parents about their child.

There are two main types of assessment that professionals use, either formal or informal assessment. Formal assessment is what we think of as tests, which usually entail some sort of recorded scores and standardization. Informal assessment relies more on observations and work sampling techniques that focus on the children's performance and development over time. For both types of assessment, it is important to keep in mind reliability and validity. Reliability refers to how consistent an assessment strategy is, in that it produces the same results for the same child from one administration to the next. Validity confirms that an assessment or test measures what it claims to measure. Professionals want to make sure that their form of assessment is both reliable and valid before administering it to children. In this era of child development, especially in early childhood education, professionals focus heavily on informal assessment tools such as observation notes, checklists and parent conferences.

In order to effectively assess children, the assessment tool should focus on individual strengths and development in all the developmental domains. The Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) is a widely used informal assessment tool and provides valuable information on a child's development and growth over time. The main technique used for this tool is observation notes on children throughout the semester. When observing children, professionals can fill out different assessment forms and analyze where a child is at developmentally. The DRDP emphasizes emerging development in all developmental domains including; physical/motor, psychological, cognitive, language and literacy, history and social sciences, and visual and performing arts. All these measurable domains make it an effective assessment tool and is the reason why it is so widely used.

Teacher’s use assessment and the many forms it comes in, in order to identify children's skills, abilities and needs. Assessing children allows teachers to make lesson and activity plans based on the needs and likes of the children in the classroom and allows teachers to implement appropriate activities that are supported by their assessments. With appropriate assessment taken into consideration, a classroom can then develop cohesively and in an organized manner. One important factor in being an effective teacher is getting to know the children in your classroom on a personal level. Assessment is critical in aiding teachers to understand their children better and to develop effective curricula. Without assessment tools, professionals would be going off of their gut feelings and as a child development professional, I have learned that you have to have concrete evidence to support your claims.