



Early Childhood Assessment: Children's Classroom Environments

Est. Time: 6 Hours

Objective

To use measures for evaluating classroom environments to assess program quality and to identify potential child goals, thereby determining areas for improvement.

Overview

In terms of quality, too many early childhood classrooms fall into the “low” to “mediocre” range. There is little reason to believe that children in low-quality classrooms will acquire and be able to use the identified skills. Assessing the quality of classrooms is an important component of establishing a context for the provision of good early intervention services. Instructional program planning requires that teams evaluate the demands and expectations of children's environments and assess how well the environments meet those demands. Such assessments yield information about potential intervention objectives and modifications of the context.

Activity

Follow the steps outlined below to complete this activity.

1. Contact the classroom teacher to schedule (and later to confirm the scheduling of) three hours for classroom observations. These may take place on a single day or across multiple days, and they should span three different hours of operation, excluding naptime.
2. Identify an appropriate rating scale of classroom quality: (a) Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R) or (b) Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R). Each observer must complete the observation form, after which the group should meet to arrive at a consensus score. Some things to keep in mind include:
 - a. Before observing, read the manual for the selected scale to ensure that you understand the procedures and criteria for each item.
 - b. During the observation, complete the rating scale of classroom quality.
 - c. Use the rating scale to analyze the data on classroom quality.



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Activity [Cont.]

3. Read and become familiar with the data collection forms and procedures for the Ecological Congruence Assessment (ECA). Some things to keep in mind include:
 - a. During the observation, complete each column of the ECA. Be sure to note any transitions between activities.
 - b. Analyze the data for the ECA (see the steps listed in the results section).
 - c. Identify objectives for the child based on the ECA and informal observation.
4. List some recommendations that teachers and classroom administrators might implement to increase the quality of student participation and functioning (i.e., using the data collected by the ECA). Your report should contain the information listed below. Use the underlined words as headings and be sure to write in a style that is professional but that can be understood by individuals without advanced training.

Identifying Information (Who and where did the observation occur?)

- List the child's name, gender, date of birth, age in months, and diagnosis.
- Describe the classroom. Specify the age-level of the children, number of children enrolled, number of adults working in the class, and physical organization of the classroom.

Methods of Observation (What did you do?)

- Describe the context for measurement. List each activity, routine, and transition that took place during your observations. For each, list where it occurred (e.g., classroom, playground, gym), how many adults and children were present, dates of the observations, times and duration (in minutes), and the measure(s) used during each. This information can be presented in a table.
- Describe the rating scale used. Include the APA reference and a paragraph description about how it is used and its psychometric properties. Note: This is not a description of the *results* but rather a description of the rating scale and how it was used.
- Describe how the ECA observation was done (one paragraph).



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Activity [Cont.]

Results (How did the child do? How good was the classroom?)

- For the rating scale, provide a list of the scores from the subscales. Compose narratives for each subscale as well as for the overall scores, including the interpretation of those scores and why they were given. That is, if an environment is given a low score, explain why. Done properly, this will require several short paragraphs of three or four sentences
- For the ecological congruence assessment, analyze the data using the following steps and describe it step-by-step.
 - Step 1:* Identify and list the activities in which the behaviors of the child and his or her peers are different. Examine the data in the form's second column.
 - Step 2:* Determine whether the differences are acceptable and make a list of those in which unacceptable differences are present.
 - Step 3:* Identify and list the activities in which the child does not have the needed skills. Examine the form's third column. The list should identify the activities, routines, and transitions for which the child does not have the needed skills.
 - Step 4:* Identify the types of help that are given and needed across activities and make a list of them. This also comes from the form's third column.
 - Step 5:* Make a list of priorities to discuss with the team. These may be new objectives or changes to current practices.

Recommendations (How would you use the data?)

- For each classroom, describe recommendations for maintaining those aspects that you have identified as positive. Describe any changes you would recommend to teachers and administrators based on your data.
- For the child, list two objectives you would establish based on the ECA assessment. For each objective write a three-to-four sentence rationale and recommend specific intervention practices.

Note: Attach the completed rating forms, completed data collection sheets, and any notes you collected (these should not be typed; these are your raw data).