

Early Childhood Assessment: Classroom Environments

Est. Time: 6 Hours

Objective

Use measures for evaluating classroom environments to assess program quality, and 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 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 to the environment.

Activity

In groups of two or three, conduct classroom observations of an early childhood environment. Follow the steps outlined below to complete this activity. To avoid issues with confidentiality, use the child’s initials or a pseudonym instead of the child’s full name on the forms you complete.

1. Before Observations

- a. Identify a child with a disability to observe.
- b. 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 nap time.
- c. 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). Read the manual for the selected scale to ensure that you understand the procedures and criteria for each item.
- d. Read and become familiar with the data-collection forms and procedures for the Ecological Congruence Assessment (ECA).

2. During Observations

- a. Each observer should complete the rating scale of classroom quality.
- b. Each observer should complete each column of the ECA, making sure to note any transitions between activities.

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3. After Observations

- a. As a group, discuss and analyze each observer’s data for the rating scale of classroom quality and arrive at a consensus score.
- b. As a group, discuss and analyze each observer’s 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.
- d. List some recommendations that teachers and administrators might implement to increase the quality of student participation and functioning (i.e., using the data collected by the ECA).

4. Report

- a. Write your report using the headings identified in the table below. Keep in mind:
 - Only one report should be submitted for each group.
 - Each report should include all of the required information outlined in the table below.
 - The report should be written in a style that is professional yet can be understood by individuals without advanced training.
- b. Attach the completed rating forms, data-collection sheets, and other notes (raw data). These should not be typed.

Headings	Required Information
Identifying Information <i>Who and where did the observation occur?</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. List the child’s: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • Gender • Date of birth • Age in months • Disability b. Describe the classroom. Specify the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-level of the children • Number of children enrolled • Number of adults working in the class • Physical organization of the classroom

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<p>Methods of Observation <i>What did you do?</i></p>	<p>a. Context—Describe the context for measurement. This information can be presented in a table. Make sure to list each activity, routine, and transition that took place during your observations. For each, list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where it occurred (e.g., classroom, playground, gym) • How many adults and children were present • Dates of the observations • Times and duration (in minutes) • Measure(s) used <p>b. Rating scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a paragraph about how the rating scale 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.) • Include the rating scale in the reference section (use APA style). <p>c. ECA observation—Write one paragraph describing how the ECA observation was done.</p>
<p>Results <i>How did the child do? How was the classroom?</i></p>	<p>a. Rating Scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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<p>Results <i>How did the child do? How was the classroom?</i> (CONT.)</p>	<p>b. Ecological Congruence Assessment—Analyze the data using the following steps and describe it step-by-step.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Step 2: Determine whether the differences are acceptable and make a list of those in which unacceptable differences are present.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Step 5: Make a list of priorities to discuss with the group. These may be new objectives or changes to current practices.</p>
<p>Recommendations <i>How would you use the data?</i></p>	<p>a. For the classroom, describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations for maintaining those aspects that you have identified as positive. • Any changes you would recommend to teachers and administrators based on your data. <p>b. For the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.