



Assessment for **Learning** in the **Early Years** **Foundation Stage**

Jonathan Glazzard, Denise Chadwick,
Anne Webster & Julie Percival



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Abbreviations

APP	Assessing Pupils' Progress
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CLL	Communication, Language and Literacy
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Science
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECM	Every Child Matters
EEL	Effective Early Learning
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-school Education
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
EYPS	Early Years Professional Status
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LCT	Language Communication and Thinking
NAA	National Assessment Agency
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PSED	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
PVA	Polyvinyl Acetate
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
REPEY	Researching Effective Pedagogy in Early Years
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests

SCSE	Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem
SEAD	Social and Emotional Areas of Development
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TAC	Team Around the Child

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About the authors

Jonathan Glazzard is a Senior Lecturer and Course Leader for Primary Education (Qualified Teacher Status – QTS) at the University of Huddersfield. Prior to this he worked as a primary schoolteacher for 10 years. He champions the importance of formative assessment in his teaching and the need to use assessment to inform planning and teaching. His research interests lie in the area of special and inclusive education.

Denise Chadwick is a Senior Lecturer in early years education and Course Leader for Childhood Studies at the University of Huddersfield. For more than 20 years she taught in primary school environments, working with children in the early years. She believes passionately that the care and education that children receive in their earliest years will without question influence all that they are and achieve in their later years. It is because of this she feels privileged to have taken part in this journey with so many children.

Anne Webster works as a nursery teacher and a local authority consultant. She has extensive experience of working with very young children. She firmly believes that all children have the right to quality pre-school education and has worked tirelessly towards this aim over the past 20 years. She has also supported trainee teachers and she has contributed to training sessions in the university.

Julie Percival is Course Leader for the postgraduate routes to Early Years Professional Status and teaches on the Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years at the University of Huddersfield. Julie has been teaching (and learning) for over 20 years and has supported children in a variety of contexts, including special schools, maintained schools, pre-school playgroups and private day nurseries.

Preface

How to use this book

Current education policy stresses the importance of formative and summative assessment in finding out about what children know and can do. This text supports the notion that every child is a unique learner and that children have different starting points in their learning which are often influenced by specific earlier experiences such as home environments and pre-school. Assessment for learning should therefore be positive and celebrate children's achievements. Current educational policy in the early years emphasises the importance of ongoing formative assessment as a way of celebrating individual achievements, children's interests and next possible steps in learning. This text supports this approach and argues that assessment should be informal, regular and should inform future planning.

Theoretical perspectives, key theories and leading pedagogical approaches are addressed in this text. We emphasise within this text a values-led approach to assessment. We stress that children are holistic learners and that practitioners must adopt a principled approach to their practice.

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework (DCSF 2008c) emphasises the importance of practitioners observing children's learning, sharing interpretations and making use of this information to plan for their possible next steps in learning. Assessment should be the starting point for all planning and practitioners should use observation to find out about children's interests, learning needs and achievements (DCSF 2008c). This information can then be used to identify a range of future learning needs. This text addresses the range of ways through which children's achievements can be documented, including the use of self and peer assessment.

It is crucial that practitioners find respectful and innovative ways of involving parents, carers and extended family members in assessment. Parents and carers in particular should be encouraged and supported to contribute to their child's assessment profile and they should have access to these assessment records. The voice of the

child within assessment is also paramount and practitioners should privilege the views of children in the assessment process. This text addresses these important issues and provides practical suggestions for involving parents, carers and children in assessment.

The use of summative assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is discussed and this text provides practitioners with useful guidance on ways in which summative assessment data can be analysed. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is discussed in terms of what it is and how it can work. The role of assessment for identifying and supporting children with Special Educational Needs is also considered.

The current move to increase the emphasis placed on teacher assessment within Key Stage 1 is welcomed. Practitioners working within Key Stage 1 should document children's achievements in a range of ways rather than relying on the outcomes of formal tests. There is real potential to learn from best practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that Key Stage 1 practitioners are able to build on the approaches to assessment used within the early years. This text offers some practical suggestions for ways in which each child's assessment journey can be continued.

Within this text we make use of several key features. These are listed below:

Case Studies: The case studies presented in this book draw on examples of practice from a range of settings, including playgroups, nurseries and schools.

Reflective Activities: Reflective activities enable students to think critically and rigorously about their practice. They invite readers to draw on their understanding of the purpose and process of assessment and challenge their practical application of this learning to a range of activities. The activities are creatively designed to engage readers in a range of assessment strategies and encourage skills in making personal reflection on their learning, for further professional practice.

Key Points: The key points are included as a way of challenging understanding about the concept of assessment and the wider discussion of this topic that exists within each chapter. They have been thoughtfully written to encourage consideration of certain aspects of teaching and learning that impact upon making effective assessment, such as organisation of the learning environment and systems

for gathering assessment. The points identify useful reminders about making observation of children in learning contexts, promoting discussion with other professionals about evidence that is gathered and making forward planning to enhance children's opportunities for further learning.

Further Reading: The authors have included signposts to additional texts and literature that offer additional understanding and opinion about early years practice and related theory, linked to making assessment with children.

Useful Websites: The websites that have been listed at the end of each chapter are often linked to the specific chapter content and present an opportunity for making extended personal research.

This book is directed at students on a range of (QTS) Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and early years courses. The aim of the text is to deepen students' understanding of assessment for learning and to stimulate their thinking about how they might approach assessment within their own practice.

1

Assessment for learning: theoretical perspectives and leading pedagogy

Jonathan Glazzard and Julie Percival

Chapter Objectives

This chapter focuses on:

- The ideas of key theorists and the implications of this body of knowledge for your own practice.
- Leading pedagogical approaches and the use of these approaches in your own practice.



Why is it important to include a chapter on theorists, theories and leading pedagogy? As a practitioner, you might question the relevance of theory to your own practice. All you really want are ‘tips’ that will help you to do your job better. However, there is a significant difference between being a practitioner and being a reflective practitioner. It is vital that you have knowledge of the underpinning theories upon which your practice is based. This helps to articulate your practice more effectively, and, more importantly, knowledge of the underpinning theories helps you to know *why* you are doing *what* you are doing. Clearly, within one chapter it is not possible to cover all the theories and this chapter does not seek to do this. Instead, this chapter focuses on a small selection of ideas that have the potential to have a major impact on your practice.

Leading approaches and theories

This section does not attempt to focus on all the approaches and theorists who have relevance to early years education. Instead this section provides a brief synopsis of well-known approaches to early years practice and key learning theories which underpin effective practice. The relevance of these approaches and theories to assessment will be highlighted.

The Montessori approach

Montessori was born in 1870. Montessori emphasised the importance of children learning through their senses through practical tasks, which children worked through individually. She introduced a range of self-correcting teaching apparatus, which enabled children to correct their mistakes. You may have seen plastic trays for sorting shapes into specific compartments. This is an example of the Montessori approach. The role of the adult within this approach is to observe children and guide them through their misconceptions. Careful assessment is therefore central to the Montessori approach.

The Steiner approach

Rudolph Steiner set up his first school in Stuttgart in 1919 for the children of the cigarette factory workers. Steiner emphasised the importance of nature in early education. He believed that children should be encouraged to play in the mud and sand and that they should explore the properties of water. He emphasised the importance of children learning through their senses and the importance of rhythm, song and rhyme. Steiner believed that the formal process of learning to read should begin after the age of 7. He stressed the importance of learning through play, especially imaginative play, and the importance of cookery in the curriculum. Steiner emphasised the importance of play that is unstructured by adults.

The role of the adult within this model is to act as a guide and mentor to young children. Therefore adults may play alongside children and children will learn through imitation. Thus, in an art activity a practitioner might work alongside children creating their

own painting. In this example, the adult models key skills discretely and the children absorb these, thus moving their learning forward. The adult acts as a mentor within the Steiner model and this has implications for assessment.

It is not difficult to see elements of this approach interwoven in the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. Therefore, as a student it is important that you plan frequent opportunities for children to learn in the outdoors and that you value the learning which takes place through play. The role of the adult within children's play is also important within this model. Steiner believed that adults should not direct or control children's play. He believed that children should set their own agendas for their play. However, within this model, practitioners should support the play and children will then learn through imitation. You may be familiar with the term *child-initiated, adult-supported learning* and this is an application of Steiner's model.



Reflective Activity

Imagine that a group of children are engaged with fantasy play based around the Gingerbread Man. You observe their play closely and you notice that some children are not using expressive language and not taking turns in their communication. You ask the children if you can play with them and you decide to be one of the characters in the story. You start to model the use of expressive language. You speak in a similar way to the characters in the story and you model turn taking in communication.

- How important is the assessment process in this scenario?
- How did the practitioner support the children's learning?

Reggio Emilia

Loris Malaguzzi (Malaguzzi 1996) was the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach. He believed that there are a hundred ways in which children learn and express themselves. Assessment should therefore seek to capture all the 'languages' of expression, and learning can be evidenced through a range of forms including play, language, art, drama and the written word. Within this approach it is the role of the practitioner to co-construct learning alongside the child. Assessment is used to identify where support is needed. There is no

written curriculum. Instead, the child is seen as the starting point for the curriculum. Practitioners can therefore use assessment to identify children's interests.

Te Whariki

Te Whariki is the national curriculum for early childhood in New Zealand and it was developed by Margaret Carr and Helen May. Literally translated, 'Te Whariki' means a woven mat on which everyone can stand. The mat represents central principles, strands and goals into which each setting is able to weave its own curriculum to meet local needs. The curriculum is mandatory in all government-funded settings. The broad *principles* focus on empowering the child and a focus on the holistic learner. Positive relationships and strong partnerships with families and communities form part of the core principles. The five *strands* include developing a sense of well-being, developing a sense of belonging, and making contributions to learning, communication and exploration. Thus, play-based learning and active learning are central to the curriculum. This approach draws on sociocultural theory, which assumes that learning is socially constructed between children and adults and between children and their peers. The role of the adult is to scaffold the child's learning. Therefore accurate assessment is necessary so that learning tasks can be pitched at the correct level within the child's capabilities. 'Minute by minute' adults are asked to listen, watch and interact with a child or groups of children. In addition, 'intelligent' observational assessment gathered over time, plays a crucial role in enabling practitioners to identify missing links within a child's learning journey. Appropriate intervention, scaffolding and support can then be provided to enable the child to progress. The curriculum is not fixed and through evaluation of provision and careful application of principles, the programme will be modified to better meet the needs of particular communities of children.

Vygotsky: a social constructivist perspective

Vygotsky proposed that children could reach higher levels of understanding if someone who is more able supports them through their *zone of proximal development*. This is the gap between what children can do unaided and what they can potentially do if they are

supported. Essentially, an adult or peer *co-constructs* the learning with the learner until the learner is able to complete the task independently. Vygotsky believed that children's development (cognitive, social and language development) is enhanced through social interaction. This contrasts with Piaget's views of the child as a solitary learner. Jerome Bruner used the metaphor *scaffolding* as an analogy to explain how adults or more able peers can support children's learning. The *scaffolder* supports the child by supporting, guiding, modelling and questioning until the child is able to complete the task independently. The role of the scaffolder is to co-construct the learning with the child until the child is able to function without the support. Learning in this way takes place in a social context and language exchanges facilitate learning. Vygotsky highlighted the role of language in learning and the importance of language as a tool for constructing thinking. He believed that social interaction is a vital part of the learning process.

What are the implications of this approach for assessment for learning? As a student on placement, it is essential that you plan tasks which are within the child's zone of proximal development. You need to know where children are in their learning (actual developmental level). This knowledge is derived from your assessments of each individual child. You therefore need to track children's progress against the EYFS framework. You need to plan challenging tasks that are pitched slightly above the child's actual level of development in order to move children through their respective zones of proximal development. You can do this by identifying the child's 'next steps', using the EYFS framework. Providing that adult or peer support is available you can then provide support to enable children to reach their proximal levels of development. The learning is essentially co-constructed between the adult and the child. This is a fundamentally different concept to the learning being 'directed' by a more knowledgeable other.



Reflective Activity

Your observations show that Matthew is able to select the correct numerals to represent 1 to 5. You now want to move him forward in his learning.

(Continued)

- Use the EYFS framework to identify Matthew's actual development.
- Use this same framework to identify the next steps for Matthew.
- Think carefully about how you will support Matthew to reach his proximal level. How will you introduce the new concepts in a way that allows both you and Matthew to co-construct the learning rather than you directing the learning?
- How will you assess Matthew's progress?



Key Points

- Use observation and other forms of assessment to identify children's actual levels of development. Use the EYFS framework to plan their next steps. Plan activities to address children's next steps. Activities should be pitched at a level higher than the child's actual level of development to ensure sufficient challenge. However, some consolidation or reinforcement tasks will also be necessary.
- Observe children engaged in child-initiated and adult-led learning. Identify any misconceptions and provide appropriate support to enable children to progress through their respective zones of proximal development.



Case Study: Parents as partners: local authority context

Read the following case study of a local authority project. A local authority practitioner has written the case study, As you read the case study think carefully about how social constructivist theory has been draw on to support work with the parents. (As you may know, Petwari is the local dialect of Punjabi.)

The practitioner devised workshops for small groups of parents where they listened to 'sounds from home' boxes. Everyday cardboard boxes were filled with a range of different materials that could be found in the home: for example, pasta, rice, wooden pegs, stones, spoons and coins. The parents were encouraged to shake the boxes, talk about the sounds they could hear and make phonic links with the words describing the materials. No graphemes were introduced, as the point was to encourage parents to 'tune into sounds'.