

Early Support for Infants & Toddlers



Practice Guide:

Using Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs) to Inform Functional Child

"We already have to conduct comprehensive evaluations across each developmental domain for eligibility determination. Why should we do it all again with a CBA?"

"I don't have time to assess each infant/toddler with a comprehensive curriculum-based assessment (CBA), and the information isn't useful."

"Why would we use CBA when the new IFSP requires functional assessment of participation in daily routines instead?"

Initial evaluation is required to establish eligibility and ongoing assessment procedures are required to identify the child's unique strengths and needs along with appropriate services to meet those needs, according to §303.321(2)(i) and (ii). Part C requirements for comprehensive evaluation and functional assessment of participation in daily routines can be addressed by using a curriculum-based assessment (CBA). CBAs provide essential information for accurate assessment of participation in routines, allow for efficient interventions, and are very different than the standardized tests required for eligibility determination.

Child Development Matters for Participation in Routines

A child's participation in daily family routines can be informed with more specific developmental information from curriculum-based assessments. Think of participation as the visible culmination of infant/toddler development across domains. Like a skeleton, a child's profile of developmental skills provides the underlying support and structure necessary for infants and toddlers to move throughout their daily routines. Basic developmental skills in the various domains determine to a large extent whether a young child will be successful in their participation.

The Tools

CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENT	ELIGIBILITY EVALUATION
Content is a specific set of functional skills necessary for successful participation, in each domain	Content is a set of skills derived empirically after statistical analysis of norm group test results
Assessments are generally administered observationally in familiar environments with familiar materials, and include parent components and parent involvement in actual assessment	Tests are generally administered in clinical settings with standardized materials, and often do not include parent components or parent involvement in actual assessment activities
Assessment results provide skill profiles and inventories of what children know and are able to do in each domain, interpreted to guide teaching/intervention on a logical and developmental sequence of outcomes	Test results are numerical scores that compare a child to typically developing peers, interpreted to determine if a child's delays are severe enough to warrant early intervention services
Assessment results can be compared over time to show specific developmental progress across specific skills and developmental areas	Test scores are designed to be interpreted against objective criteria (such as % delay or sd below the mean) at a point in time, rather than compared over time

The Process

With CBA	Without CBA
Observe child in context of daily routines, using skill sequences and data protocols from CBA to record and document strengths and problems in developmental performance and participation across daily routines	Observe child in context of daily routines, using note-taking guide to record and document strengths and problems in participation across daily routines
Use Family Report component of CBA (parent completed or/or interview) to organize and document further developmental information in the context of family routines	Use an interview protocol to gather input on child development skills in the context of daily routines
Use Family Report component of CBA to structure and document family priorities, concerns, and resources related to early intervention services	Interview parents/family members using interview protocols to gather input on family priorities, concerns, and resources related to early intervention services
Interpret CBA results to identify foundational, emerging, and next skills across areas of development, and associated participation in daily routines	Interpret interview results to identify developmental skills and associated participation in daily routines
Combine family assessment information with developmental information to determine IFSP outcomes and associated intervention planning goals	Combine family assessment information with developmental information to determine IFSP outcomes
Provide early intervention services to meet family and child needs, using CBA Curriculum Component as a resource for methods and strategies to address development of skills necessary for successful participation in daily routines addressed in IFSP outcomes	Provide early intervention services by addressing methods and strategies designed to improve participation in daily routines addressed in IFSP outcomes
Use repeated measures of CBA to evaluate progress on specific skills across developmental domains that are aligned with IFSP outcomes	Evaluate progress toward IFSP outcomes by ...??

An example:

Mealtimes at Brandon’s house are a struggle. His family has a priority for him to participate during meals by sitting with support in his chair, using signs or words to make requests and choices of food, and feed himself with his fingers and a spoon. They have also developed a less urgent outcome that he enjoy bath time with his older brother Jared by playing with toys and using signs to request and choose toys, while sitting in a supportive bath chair. Brandon likes the water, but gets stuck on splashing and splashing to the point where he tips the chair over.

Brandon's eligibility evaluation shows that he has significant delays in gross and fine motor areas, as well as in communication and cognition, but the skills in the tests used have little to do with eating and bathing.

A CBA conducted using parent interview and observation during bath time and meal time shows that Brandon can (among many other skills):

- Sit with support at his lower back
- Grasp hand-sized objects
- Point to make requests and indicate choices
- Imitate familiar motor gestures
- Say "No" "Go" (word approximations)
- Understand the words "Mommy", "Daddy", "Jared", "eat", "drink", in addition to "No" and "Go"
- Explore objects with his hands using basic actions and mouth (banging, throwing, sucking)

The progression of skills on the CBA indicates that Brandon should next be learning to:

- Sit independently
- Grasp cylinder shaped objects (like toys with handles, and spoons)
- Grasp pea-sized objects (like cheerios)
- Point & vocalize/sign to make requests and indicate choices
- Imitate unfamiliar motor actions and familiar words
- Activate simple interactive toys
- Manipulate objects in a purposeful way using eyes and hands together

Brandon's interventionist combines her assessment of his participation in eating and bathing, with the specific developmental information from the CBA she administered, to suggest the following strategies for his family:

- Provide cheerios and similar sized food for Brandon at meal times, along with large crackers and other foods that he can pick up with his whole hand. A suggestion in the Curriculum Component of the CBA suggests using an empty egg carton at first to help Brandon grasp the small bits of food.
- Point at each food choice while saying the word and wait for Brandon to point and/or vocalize for the one he wants. After consultation with the speech-language pathologist, the interventionist suggests using only those signs Brandon already knows.
- Scoop food with a spoon and hand it to Brandon to guide it to his mouth, helping him grasp the handle of the spoon only as much as he needs to get it to his mouth.
- Provide hand-sized water toys and toys with handles for him to use easily in the tub, and have Jared label the toys and show Brandon how to hold and use them for pouring as an alternative to splashing.
- During all daily routines, support Brandon at his lower back and periodically allow him to maintain an independent sitting position, returning the support as soon as his balance begins to slip.
- During all daily routines, label objects and actions as they happen, encouraging Brandon to imitate signs and/or words.
- When opportunities present themselves, show Brandon how to use simple objects in daily routines, such as a spoon at meals, pulling out the plug in the tub, turning on and on the lights with a switch, and encourage him to imitate using specific actions to match specific objects.

Using the CBA to indicate specific sequences of skills allows the interventionist to support participation in priority routines, **while also offering many additional opportunities throughout the day for Brandon to develop sitting, communication, imitation, and object skills across all routines.**

Resources

Guide to Assessment in Early Childhood: Birth to Age Eight, (2008). OSPI
http://www.k12/wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/assessment_print.pdf

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