

Authentic Assessment in Early Intervention (EI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

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What is authentic assessment?

A process of learning what a child knows and can do by looking at naturally occurring behaviors:

- In daily routines and activities
- With familiar adults
- In the places where the child spends time



How can information about the child be collected?

- By parent report
- By professionals observing the child (with the child or virtually)
- Through photographs or audio/video-recordings of the child
- From examples of the child's work (such as a portfolio)

This information can be summarized through tools that document naturally occurring behaviors or through narrative descriptions.



Why should EI and ECSE programs use authentic assessment?

- Authentic assessment produces more accurate information about what the child knows and can do than direct testing does
- Authentic assessment is a recommended practice in early childhood



How is authentic assessment different from direct testing?

Unlike authentic assessment, direct testing involves:

- Learning about the child with a standardized assessment tool that involves the use of scripted language and specific items and test materials
- An assessor (such as a psychologist, therapist, educator) or team asking the child to respond to a series of tasks and questions

Direct testing can involve testing the child in a clinic or other setting not familiar to the child.

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