

ASSESSMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD



Delays in the provision of intervention based upon the identification of young children's educational and developmental needs can have significant impact on learning, attention, behaviour and self-esteem. For example, without intervention, many young children who have difficulty following directions and attending grow into older children, and often adults, with the same difficulties. Screening is initial assessment to identify areas of concern which could interfere with or possibly restrict a child's development and learning.

Screening should:

- be functional - requiring abilities, skills and concepts which will generalise across the children's school and daily life tasks,
- be based on familiar activities to observe what children know and are able to do spontaneously and independently, and with help,
- use information from results to adjust instruction to needs.

Spontaneous responses are free of hesitation, needing no extra information. Independent function is when abilities, skills and concepts can easily be adapted and transferred to new activities without having to think 'how-to' (such as controlling a pencil and writing). Identification of independent function underpins the term 'individually appropriate'.

VISUAL PROCESSING DIFFICULTIES

Physical Observations

- red, sore, or itching eyes
- jerky eye movements, one eye turns out
- squinting, eye rubbing or excessive blinking, tires easily, sensitive to glare
- blurred or double vision
- headache, dizziness, or nausea after reading
- head tilting, closing or blocking one eye

- clumsiness / left/right confusion
- poor tracking

Performance Observations

- avoids: near work / sports - ball games
- frequent loss of place when reading
- omits, inserts, or rereads letters / words
- confuses similar looking words
- not recognise same word in the next sentence
- poor concentration when reading
- mistakes and/or slow in copying
- poor spatial orientation of written figures;
- misaligns digits in number columns

AUDITORY PROCESSING DIFFICULTIES

Physical Observations

- history of middle ear infections
- turns head toward speaker / favours one ear
- poor tolerance for loud sounds
- mouth breathing
- watches speakers lips
- monotone speech / unnatural voice pitch
- complains of ringing / buzzing sounds in ears
- listens with blank or tense facial expression
- inaccurate sound discrimination

Performance Observations

- speech & language (vocabulary) delay
- appears to hear, but not to understand
- inappropriate use or substitution of words
- need physical or visual cue to follow directions
- slow to respond / prefers to play alone
- repeats directions to understand
- easily frustrated / inconsistent behaviour
- present interpretation not related to past experience

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