

How Do I Know if My Child Is Learning? Parent Guide #13

Parents wonder if their child is learning, can use his or her knowledge to solve problems, and is maturing socially and emotionally.

- Parents get information from a variety of sources. They ask for the thoughts of teachers, child care workers, and doctors. They listen to other parents' stories about the progress their child is making. They also look at any assessments (reviews) that have been completed for their child.
- There are different ways to assess students.
- There are also different reasons that children are assessed.
- Some assessments compare your child's performance to that of other children. This gives you an idea of how well your child is doing compared to others of the same age.
- Other assessments show if your child has mastered the skill being checked.

Each of the following methods can help determine your child's strengths as well as needs. The best approach is to use many ways of determining what your child knows and can do.

Reasons for Assessing Children

- A child assessment helps the teacher plan class activities. Sometimes child assessment scores for all children in a classroom are used together to find out if the teacher is doing a good job.

- A developmental screening helps a teacher find out if your child might need more help.

Types of Assessments

- **Informal assessment:** Some teachers have their own way of measuring what children know and can do. These are based on their experience and are not always accurate.
- **Formal assessment:** Other teachers use assessment tools that have been created by experts in child growth and learning. These tools have often been studied to show that they are accurate.

Ways of Assessing Children

- **Observation:** One of the best ways to find out what children know is to closely watch them play. Teachers use an assessment tool to interpret the play and plan what to do for your child's learning.
- **Parent input:** Teachers may also ask parents what their child does at home; this will help the teacher learn how the child acts in different places and with different people.
- **Testing:** Some assessments require teachers to ask children to answer questions or do a task.

Results of screenings or assessments should not be used to hold a child out of kindergarten.

- Formal educational programs, if set up to meet the developmental needs of children, are the best way to prepare for later success in school.
- Your child has a right to attend kindergarten if he/she turns five by the cut-off date noted in Parent Guide #1.
- Once school begins, your child may be assessed on an on-going basis in the classroom for the reasons listed above.
- Many school districts will begin to use the State of Michigan's Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) over the next few years. This assessment was selected to provide the state with information about what children know when they enter kindergarten. It will be completed early in the school year and must not be used to remove children from kindergarten classrooms.
- Ask the teacher about results of all assessments. Expect to be included in the goal-setting and planning for your child. Discuss your child's progress with the teacher.