Preschool Assessment Kit

Activity probes for the *Preschool Sequence* critical skills packed in a teacher friendly assessment kit!

118 Assessment Activities
covering Autonomy and Social Skills, Oral Language, Early Literacy Skills in Reading and Writing, Math and Science.

Detailed Guidance
and rating criteria for assessing each skill.

Non-Consumable Manipulatives
needed to assess each skill are included in the kit.
## Materials List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Assessment Binder</td>
<td>Includes: Introduction, Activity cards, Conversational Checklist, ABC cards, Numeral cards, Writing Stroke Assessment, Sample Checklists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 set</td>
<td>Story Illustration Cards</td>
<td>The Three Little Pigs, The Gingerbread Man, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, The Little Red Hen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 set</td>
<td>Color Picture Cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 set</td>
<td>Color Pattern Cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ribbon Pieces</td>
<td>lengths: 4&quot;, 8&quot;, 12&quot;, and 16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cassette Tape</td>
<td>Sounds and Noises That We Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Unifix Cubes</td>
<td>10 each light blue, blue, orange, white, black, brown, maroon, green, yellow, 15 red, 1 purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Attribute Blocks</td>
<td>Circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, hexagons (small and large, thick and thin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pair</td>
<td>Rhythm Sticks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Small Ziplock Bags</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Assessment in an Early Childhood Setting?

Purposes and Types of Assessment

Historically, the use of assessment during the preschool years has been viewed by early childhood professionals with mixed emotions, often for very good reasons. In the not-so-distant past, it was common practice to administer “readiness tests” to young children prior to the start of kindergarten. In some instances, children who performed poorly on such tests were refused entry into kindergarten, with the recommendation that it would be best if they were to delay entry into kindergarten for a year, since they were not yet “ready for kindergarten.” With our current understanding that readiness to learn is, in fact, based on prior experience, we now recognize the tragic consequences of such practices — in effect, the very children who most needed school experiences were denied access to those experiences.

It is not difficult to find other examples of ways in which assessment has been misused at the preschool level. Poorly designed assessments administered by individuals who failed to take into account the developmental and attention span levels of preschoolers have done little to advance the case for including assessment at the preschool level.

Unfortunately, there are also many instances in which assessment has been “mandated,” without a real understanding of the purpose of such evaluations or how the data derived from such assessments might be used. Often, administrators and teachers have conducted the assessments to satisfy a requirement, then filed the results away and forgotten about them.

However, these misuses of assessment at the early childhood level should not be taken as an indictment of assessment itself. Rather, these past experiences are an indication of a failure on the part of early childhood professionals to fully understand the purposes, roles, benefits, and limitations of assessment. Only when these facets of assessment are truly understood, can assessment then become an integral, and invaluable, part of preschool instruction.

Purposes of Assessment

There may be a variety of plausible reasons for which assessments are conducted with preschool children. Prior to any assessment, it is essential that early childhood professionals clearly identify the purpose for which the assessment is to be completed. What is the aim of the assessment? How will the results be used? Answers to these questions must be taken into consideration in selecting the assessment tools that will be used.

At the preschool level, the following are all possible reasons for performing assessments.
Identification of children with special needs
According to state and federal laws, children with handicapping conditions are eligible for special services. In order to qualify for these services, certain conditions must be met. Specially trained professionals, such as school psychologists, speech and language therapists, physical therapists, etc. administer an array of standardized, norm-referenced tests to determine whether a child qualifies for such services. Many factors must be taken into consideration in administering and interpreting these kinds of assessments, particularly when used with preschool children. Usually, these tests are administered at a specific point in time; in other words, they are not a part of continuous, ongoing testing.

Program Evaluation and Accountability
In a time when increasingly large sums of money are being spent on early childhood programs, assessment is sometimes conducted to evaluate whether or not a given program is effective, in terms of child outcomes and money spent. In such assessments, the goal is not so much to look at individual children as it is to examine overall group performance, often in comparison with a control group that has not participated in the same program. For this type of assessment, the preferred assessment tools usually include a battery of reliable standardized tests. These norm-referenced tests provide data that permit the sophisticated statistical comparisons needed in order to evaluate program effectiveness. As noted above, specially trained professionals must administer and interpret these types of tests. Typically, they are administered twice a year, usually at the beginning and then at the end of the school year.

Curriculum Evaluation
Early childhood educators are faced with a variety of options when choosing a curriculum for a preschool program. Administrators, teachers, and parents more and more are insisting on proof that a particular curriculum is effective. As is the case with program evaluation, the focus here is on the effectiveness of the curriculum with the group of children as a whole, not the individual child. While such evaluations may include the use of norm-referenced tests, as in program evaluations, they also usually include very specific assessments tied to the curriculum itself to measure whether children are learning what the curriculum purports to teach. Again, these tests are usually administered at the beginning and end of the school year.

Assessment of Each Individual Child’s Learning
Assessment of an individual child’s learning is designed to answer the question of whether or not a particular child is mastering the specific goals and objectives of the curriculum. Assessment in this context is a very different process than that described in the examples above, in that it is an ongoing process that is designed to inform the day-
to-day instructional decisions that a teacher makes relative to each child. At the elementary school level and beyond, we are all familiar with the concept of testing children to determine whether certain knowledge and skills have been mastered. At the preschool level, however, this type of assessment must assume a format other than what we typically think of as a “test,” because of the developmental level, skills, and attention span of very young children.

Nonetheless, when designed and administered appropriately, such assessments are a critical component of an instructional process that may be represented as a cycle:

In such a cycle, an initial assessment may be conducted prior to starting instruction for a particular concept or skill in order to determine where an individual child is, in terms of his knowledge or mastery of this concept or skill. Depending on the child’s prior experiences, perhaps he is already well on his way along the path towards learning the concept or skill. On the other hand, perhaps this child lacks even the prerequisite skills and knowledge needed before attempting this new challenge. In either case, this type of information has important implications for the kinds of instructional experiences that the teacher will offer this child.

Once instruction has been initiated, progress monitoring becomes an ongoing task in order to determine whether the child is advancing, step-by-step, toward the educational goal. Once again, the information obtained through these assessments allows the teacher to make informed decisions about the nature and pace of future instruction.

A summative evaluation is generally conducted at the end of an instructional sequence to determine if in fact the child has learned what was intended. At the preschool level, summative evaluations, unless carefully designed and repeated over time, can be rather misleading. Most preschool teachers know all too well the experience of thinking that a child has “learned”
something one day, only to find out several days later that the child may be unable to satisfactorily complete the same task.

To sum up, there are clearly many reasons to include appropriately designed and administered assessment at the early childhood level. However, different assessment tools are appropriate for different purposes. It is therefore critical that early childhood professionals:

- Be explicit about the purpose of a given assessment
- Be familiar with a variety of assessment tools, how to use, and interpret them
- Make informed decisions, based on their needs, in selecting assessment instruments

Types of Assessment

As has already been noted, assessment at the preschool level differs, by necessity, from the traditional types of assessment that come to mind when we think of older children. Preschoolers often have difficulty attending to any task for more than 5-10 minutes. They are easily distracted by others. They can’t write well enough to take paper and pencil tests. And of course they can’t read.

For these reasons, the most common assessment technique used in preschool classes is quite simply the direct observation of children’s everyday behaviors. One practice often used by preschool teachers is to complete anecdotal or running records, in which they note exactly what it is that they see a preschool child or group of children doing during a particular observation period. Such observations have the advantage of taking place in a completely naturalistic setting that is familiar to the children. Were a teacher to have the luxury of being able to observe in this way for extended periods of time, chances are that he would collect a wealth of information about the knowledge, skills, and competencies of the child or children observed. Unfortunately, few teachers have the time needed to observe each and every child in his class in this way on an ongoing basis.

Direct observation can be made more efficient, in terms of the teacher’s use of time, by identifying and targeting in advance those specific behaviors that the teacher wants to observe either for an individual child or a group of children. The objectives of the Preschool Sequence, both explicit and specific, lend themselves to completing this task.

To further refine the observation of specific behaviors, some teachers find it helpful to identify focus questions that help direct their attention to particular behavioral indicators. Other teachers use various checklists, participation charts, and other graphic organizers to guide their observations.

Another assessment technique, useful at the preschool level, is known as portfolio collection and involves collecting samples of children’s work. Drawings, paintings, samples of dictated
work, and journal entries all may be collected to illustrate a child’s skill level and competency in a particular area. Photographs and audio recordings may also be included to document children’s work.

One additional assessment practice that can further extend the opportunity to observe a child engaged in a specific behavior is an activity probe. An activity probe, as the name implies, is the presentation of an activity, similar to those in which the child participates on a day-to-day basis, which permits the observation of a child performing a particular skill or demonstrating particular knowledge. Well-constructed probes will incorporate the use of the same kinds of manipulative, concrete materials and tasks that children have been working with to learn the new skills and knowledge. The Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Kit includes activity probes for each of the critical skills in the Preschool Sequence.
What are Preschool Assessment Kit and the CK-PAT?

The Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Kit is a specially packaged kit containing activity probes for each of the critical skills in the Preschool Sequence and the non-consumable materials required to conduct the activity probes. The assessed knowledge and skills included on the activity probes are directly derived from the objectives of the Preschool Sequence. As in the Preschool Sequence, there are Level I objectives and assessments that will be used primarily with 3-4 year olds and Level II objectives and assessments for 4-5 year olds.

The CK-PAT is both a software management system and an assessment tool linked directly to the Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence. Unlike many early childhood data management systems currently on the market, the CK-PAT is also a detailed assessment tool. The CK-PAT contains the same activity probes as the Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Kit. The activity probes have been specifically designed to measure and document the learning of individual children who are participating in Core Knowledge preschool programs.

The CK-PAT management system allows teachers to enter activity probe data for each child in the class, relative to his or her mastery of the various objectives of the Preschool Sequence, at three distinct times corresponding to the start, middle, and end of the school year. The software is able to generate a variety of reports, summarizing the progress of individual students, a class, or an entire center.

For purposes of the Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Kit and the CK-PAT, the objectives of the Preschool Sequence have been further differentiated into “Critical Assessment Objectives” and “Supplemental Assessment Objectives.” In an ideal world, where preschool teachers had sufficient time and assistance, the teacher would evaluate all of the Preschool Sequence objectives, i.e., the “Critical Assessment Objectives” and the “Supplemental Assessment Objectives,” on an ongoing basis for each child. However, given the present realities of most preschool classes, many of which are half-day programs, this would be an impossible task in many classrooms. Therefore, we have designated certain objectives as “Critical Assessment Objectives,” i.e., the objectives that are most important to assess for each child.

It is important to understand that, in terms of instruction, day-to-day classroom activities and experiences should still address both the “Critical Assessment Objectives” and “Supplemental Assessment Objectives.” The distinction that is being made is in regards to assessment, not instruction: if time does not allow for the individual evaluation of all Preschool Sequence objectives, then, minimally, the “Critical Assessment Objectives” should be assessed. (Of course, if time limits are less serious, teachers are certainly encouraged to assess the supplemental objectives and enter this data in the CK-PAT software; subsequent progress reports will reflect this information.)

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In addition to including very specific and explicit objectives as the targets of assessment, the Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Kit and the CK-PAT also includes clear and detailed strategies for assessing the “Critical Assessment Objectives,” as well as suggested criteria for evaluating a child’s performance relative to each objective. This level of specificity and detail again differentiates the CK-PAT from many other curriculum based assessment tools. It is this very level of specificity that ensures that the CK-PAT is a reliable and valid assessment tool.

In order to be considered reliable and valid, assessments should meet the following specifications:

- The assessment must provide a specific, explicit description of what is being evaluated in clearly observable terms that describe specific responses by the child and/or specific products created by the child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific, Explicit Description</th>
<th>Vague, General Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child will blend two spoken syllables to say a single word.</td>
<td>The child will demonstrate phonological awareness skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The criteria that will be used to evaluate the child’s performance as satisfactory or unsatisfactory are clearly identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description with Criteria</th>
<th>Description Without Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child will blend two spoken syllables to say a single word. (8 words, 85% accuracy)</td>
<td>The child will blend two spoken syllables to say a single word.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The assessment must be systematic, frequent and repeated. A “one time only” observation or an isolated sample of a child’s work may not be representative of what a child does on a day-to-day basis. A child’s performance must therefore be assessed on a number of different occasions. Even “mastered” knowledge and skills should be practiced, reviewed and re-evaluated from time to time to ensure continued mastery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeated Assessment</th>
<th>One-time Only Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child will blend two spoken syllables to say a single word. (8 words, 85% accuracy, on 3 different occasions)</td>
<td>The child will blend two spoken syllables to say a single word. (8 words, 85% accuracy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, the Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Kit and CK-PAT foster reliable and valid assessment, by gathering information about individual children relative to the objectives of the Preschool Sequence on a continuous basis throughout the year. The teacher then enters this assessment data into the CK-PAT software management system three times during the year in order to generate a variety of progress reports that may be used to inform future instruction.
Using the Preschool Assessment Kit

As noted previously, many different types of assessment techniques may be used to gather data relative to each child’s mastery of the *Preschool Sequence* objectives. Anecdotal records, focus questions, checklists and other graphic organizers can be used to guide and organize direct observation. Collecting representative samples of each child’s work in a portfolio can also document his or her level of competency. Finally, activity probes can also be used to ensure that all assessment questions relative to the objectives of the *Preschool Sequence* have been addressed. By using a variety of assessment techniques, teachers can be sure that they have obtained a comprehensive and accurate summary of each child’s knowledge and skills.

The pages that follow list each of the “Critical Assessment Skills” for Level I and II, along with very detailed instructions as to how each “Critical Assessment Skill” might be evaluated. In each example, the instructions list the following:

- **Materials** – the materials that are listed are those that would be found in most preschool classrooms; when pictures of items are recommended, these pictures are included in the *Core Knowledge Preschool Assessment Kit* and provided on the CK-PAT CD.

- **Assessment Opportunity** – suggestions are made as to when, during a typical preschool day and classroom routine, the teacher might most efficiently and effectively incorporate an assessment of this particular objective. Certain activities, times and routines lend themselves to the assessment of particular objectives. By planning ahead and making judicious use of opportunities, teachers will be able to make the best use of their time, conducting assessments quickly and unobtrusively. This section also identifies those assessments that are best conducted on a one-on-one basis, as well as others that can be conducted in a group setting.

- **Assessment Task** – a detailed description is included of what the teacher should do and say in assessing the particular objective.

- **Criteria for Evaluating the Child’s Performance** – specific guidance is provided to assist the teacher in determining the most appropriate rating for the child’s performance — Not Yet, Progressing, or Ready.

It should be clearly understood that the assessment strategies and criteria described for the “Critical Assessment Skills” include only a few of the many possible ways in which the skills might be assessed. The strategies included here are intended to provide guidance for preschool teachers who may have limited training and experience in assessing preschool children, or limited time to develop assessment strategies of their own. The intent is not to imply that these are the only ways to measure children’s progress relative to the *Preschool Sequence* objectives.
General Guidelines for Assessing Preschool Children

The following guidelines should be respected when assessing preschool children, regardless of the assessment techniques or tools being used:

- Teachers should plan and prepare for assessment in the same way that they plan and prepare for instructional activities. They should include notations on lesson plans about the specific objectives and children that will be the target of assessment that week and consider which objectives may be grouped together for assessment purposes in order to make the best use of time.

- The assessment should be presented in a relaxed, natural manner. To the extent that it is possible, the assessment should resemble the everyday activities of the classroom: the more similar it is to everyday activities, the more accurate and revealing it is likely to be.

- A single assessment should not take more than 5-10 minutes. It is important to remember that young children have limited attention spans. If preschoolers are assessed for extended periods of time, i.e., beyond 15 minutes, it is highly likely that what is being assessed is their ability to attend, rather than their knowledge or ability to perform a particular skill.

- If a child begins to show signs of stress, frustration, or lack of concentration during any assessment, the teacher should attempt to reassure and encourage the child to simply do the best he or she can. If these assurances do not allay the child’s stress, the assessment should be stopped. It is preferable to attempt to complete the assessment at another time, if necessary, rather than insist that a child complete an assessment.

- In some instances, when a teacher assesses a child on particular objective, she may find that a child is literally unable to perform any of the tasks requested. If this occurs, consider “dropping back” to the assessment of a lower level or prerequisite skill. For example, you may be assessing a 4 ½ year old on a Level II objective such as whether he or she can carry out multi-step oral directions. If the child seems unable to respond, it may be wise to drop back to the related Level I objective, following single step oral directions, to see whether or not the child has mastered this skill.

- Some young children are particularly susceptible to distractions. For these children, in particular, it is important to be sure that the assessment is conducted somewhere in the classroom where the noise level and activities of other children are controlled.

- Remember that the purpose of the assessment is to find out what the child knows or is able to do. While the natural tendency of most teachers, if children hesitate or respond incorrectly, is to automatically intervene and provide some assistance, such intervention may make it difficult to determine what a child really does know or can do. For purposes
of assessing what the child can do on his own, it is important to allow the child to respond independently, without help from the teacher.

However, as will be discussed in greater detail in the section on how to use information from the CK-PAT, once the child’s independent level of functioning has been rated as Not Yet, Progressing, or Ready, the teacher may want to modify the assessment and try providing some help to obtain additional information that may be valuable for instructional planning.

- In addition to observing and making notes as to each child’s actual response(s) in performing an assessment task, note also how the child approaches and performs the task. Are there certain circumstances in which he can perform the task and others in which he cannot? For example, does the child count objects successfully if they are arranged in an orderly row, but have difficulty counting objects that are displayed in a random array? While these kinds of observations are not used in determining the Not Yet, Progressing or Ready ratings, they can prove invaluable in providing hints for future instruction.
I-MR1.2a  Sort objects by color.
3KD-MR-A2A

**Materials**
Select seven cubes of each color: red, yellow, blue, white and 2 ziplock bags. Place one cube of each color in a “teacher” bag. Place the remaining in the “student” bag.

**Assessment Opportunity**
Individual or small group, if each child has his own bag of cubes and is sufficiently separated from others so as not to copy other children.

**Assessment Task**
Choose the red cube from the teacher set. Say, “Find all the cubes in your bag that are red, like this one. Put them on the table in front of you.” When child is finished, return the cubes to the bag and make a note of the child’s response. For example, if the child only selected 4 red cubes from the bag, you might note 4/6 red; if he found all of the red cubes, but also added other colors, you might note 6/6 red + others; a correct response, indicating sorting of only all the red cubes would be 6/6 red.

Continue in the same manner with the remaining 3 colors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Not Yet</strong></th>
<th>Successfully sorts 0-1 color.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child does not yet demonstrate this skill, knowledge or behavior.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Progressing</strong></th>
<th>Successfully sorts 2-3 colors.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child sometimes demonstrates this skill, knowledge or behavior, but not on a consistent basis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ready</strong></th>
<th>Successfully sorts all 4 colors.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child consistently and independently demonstrates this skill, knowledge or behavior.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tip** Assess with I-OL9.8 or I-OL9.7.
I-OL9.8  Name the colors (black, blue, brown, green, orange, purple, red, white, yellow).

Materials  Unifix cubes—one of each color: black, blue, brown, green, orange, purple, red, white, yellow

Assessment  Opportunity

Assessment  Task  Show the child one object at a time and ask him or her to name the color.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Names 0-4 colors correctly.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child does not yet demonstrate this skill, knowledge or behavior.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progressing</th>
<th>Names 5-8 colors correctly.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child sometimes demonstrates this skill, knowledge or behavior, but not on a consistent basis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ready</th>
<th>Names all 9 colors without hesitation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child consistently and independently demonstrates this skill, knowledge or behavior.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tip
(1) Assessment of this skill may be discontinued if the child misidentifies 5 colors. An assessment of I-OL9.7 should be conducted instead.

(2) If a child scores at the Ready range on I-OL9.8, it is not necessary to administer the additional activity probe below for I-OL9.7. Instead, a Ready rating may be automatically assigned to I-OL9.7. This is based on the assumption that a child who is able to name colors will also be able to point to the colors if they are named by someone else.

(3) Assess with I-MR1.2a.