THE NATIONAL CENTER ON Quality Teaching and Learning

PRESENTER NOTES
COLLECTING AND USING WORK SAMPLES

This guide offers suggestions for presenting ***Ongoing Child Assessment: Collecting and Using Work Samples***. This in-service suite includes a PowerPoint presentation and supporting materials. Please use and adapt these materials as needed for specific audiences.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- PowerPoint presentation (20 slides)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
  - » *Selecting Curriculum Areas*
  - » *Interpreting Work Samples*
  - » *Using Photos to Document*
  - » *Selecting Work Samples to Inform Teaching*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Teachers
  - » *What to Record Today*
- Tools for Supervisors
  - » *Help Teachers Assess the Quality of their Work Samples*
  - » *Help Teachers Interpret Work Samples*
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper, and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to help participants learn practical and simple methods for collecting work samples, and specific steps for using them to inform instruction.
- This is one in a series of in-service suites about ongoing child assessment.
- Work samples, along with checklists, anecdotal records, and video, are one way to collect information on child progress. The in-service suites on these assessment methods can be used alone or in combination to provide professional development regarding ongoing child assessment.
- Learning activities include practice in planning how and when to collect work samples, and organizing them to use in the assessment-instructional cycle. Handouts include blank forms for teachers to use in their own classroom.
- Consider bringing in different examples of work samples to share with participants.
- Suggestions of potential follow-up activities for participants are provided at the end of this document.

NOTE

These documents provide support and additional documentation for the ideas in this presentation:

Bredekamp, S. (2011). *Effective practices in early childhood education.* (Chapter 11, pp. 343–344, 345–347, 348, 350–352). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Dichtelmiller, M. L. (2011). *The power of assessment: Transforming teaching and learning.* (Chapters 5, 6, and 10). Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies.

McAfee, O., & Leong, D. J. (2011). *Assessing and guiding young children's development and learning (5th ed.)*. (Chapters 4, pp. 49–52, 63–69; 5, pp. 73–76; 6, pp. 100–101; 7; and 9.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

SLIDE 1:
ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT: COLLECTING AND USING WORK SAMPLES

Introductions:

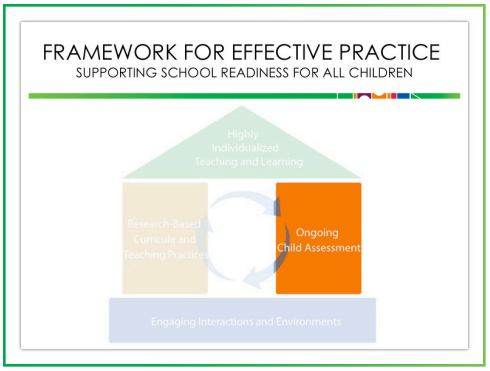
- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.
- Conduct an icebreaker activity to promote participation.

Examples:

- Ask participants to share their definition of ongoing assessment.
- Ask participants to name one strategy they use to collect information about children's progress in their classroom.
- Ask participants to share examples of what a work sample can be.

Introduce the topic.

This presentation is about using work samples as a way to collect information on child progress. Documenting information on child progress can help teachers become more effective.



SLIDE 2:
NCQTL'S FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Introduce NCQTL.

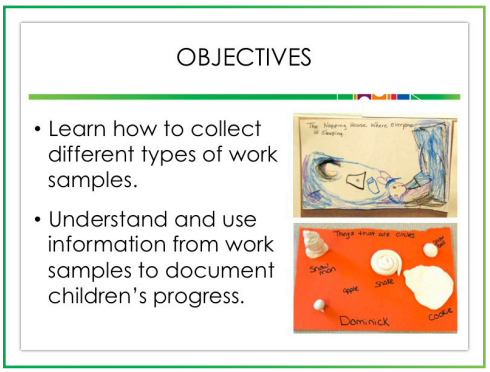
The four components of the House Framework support school readiness for all children:

- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices, and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All four components interact with each other and are essential to effective practices.

This in-service suite is part of the *Ongoing Child Assessment* pillar of the House. It focuses on how teachers can use work samples to document children's progress and collect child assessment information. Assessment information helps teachers evaluate kindergarten readiness and effective teaching practices.

NOTE

Remind participants that any record of child progress (including video, work samples, and photographs) must be treated consistently with their program's record-keeping policies, especially in regards to ensuring appropriate confidentiality of information.



EMPHASIZE

Children aren't automatically learning just because they're present in a program.

SLIDE 3:
OBJECTIVES

The children in your Head Start classroom have to learn many things in order to be ready for kindergarten. How do you know they're learning what they need to know? By observing them during everyday activities in your classroom. Ongoing child assessment is necessary to understand children's progress and is important to quality teaching and learning.

In this presentation we will discuss:

- How to collect different types of work samples.
- How to understand and use the information from work samples to assess children's progress and guide teaching.

EMPHASIZE

Work samples help teachers keep track of how children are learning and developing.

SLIDE 4:
DEFINITION

Work samples are records of children at work! They may include:

- Original items that children make (drawings, artwork, writing).
- Photographs of temporary objects that children make (block buildings, clay or playdough figures).
- Photographs that show children engaged in daily activities or everyday social interactions.

A work sample is a strategy for documenting observed behavior when the goal is to have lasting evidence of a child's progress. The original examples or photos that you collect are related to the child's learning goals.

Length of video: Approximately 6 minutes and 16 seconds

EMPHASIZE

All adults in the classroom work together to observe and document observations.

SLIDE 5:
VIDEO: COLLECTING AND USING WORK SAMPLES

Introduce the video.

This video shows how teachers collect and use work samples in the classroom.

Ask participants to think about the following questions as they watch the video:

- Why do the teachers collect samples and photos of children's work?
- How do they decide what to collect and when?
- How do they make it easier to organize the samples and photos?

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share their comments and answers to the above questions.

Points to highlight from the video:

- Teachers collect work samples and photos of children's work to have **authentic and specific examples** of what children can do.
- Teachers select areas that involve **tangible products** (such as drawing, writing, or cutting), or skills that are easier to illustrate with a photo than to describe with words or a checklist (like social skills).
- Teachers **plan** how they will collect work samples during daily activities and at regular times throughout the year.
- Teachers **organize work samples** into individual children's binders to show a child's learning from the beginning to the end of the year. They select examples that best illustrate progress over at least three assessment periods. Some teachers also combine work samples by different children into a book that shows how, at a specific point in time, children are working at different skill levels.
- Teachers make sure they **add notes and dates** on the work samples. Some teach the children how to use a date stamp to date their own work and make collecting work samples part of their daily schedule (a daily Plan-Do-Review).
- Teachers find that binders of children's work are easy to **share with families** during home visits, at family-teacher conferences, or during informal meetings.

SLIDE 6:
KEEPING TRACK

Now that we've heard from some classroom teachers, let's share ideas. How do you currently collect samples of children's work in your program?

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share examples of the ways they use work samples to keep track of how children in their program are progressing.

Record ideas on a large sheet of paper and refer to them during the presentation, as appropriate.

PURPOSES OF
ONGOING ASSESSMENT

- Monitor progress toward goals.
- Inform teaching.
- Share children's progress with families.
- Exchange information with specialists.
- Support children's development beyond the classroom.

EMPHASIZE

Work samples can be used to document evidence of children's progress.

SLIDE 7:
PURPOSES OF ONGOING ASSESSMENT

The information collected from work samples is used in the following ways:

Monitor progress toward goals

Are children meeting curriculum goals and learning standards? The information from work samples can help teachers monitor children's progress toward their goals.

Inform teaching

Information from work samples can help teachers improve classroom instruction. By looking at the facts or data, and using them to plan instruction, teachers can make changes in their teaching methods to better ensure that every child will learn.

Teachers can analyze work samples to help them learn why a child might not be making good progress and what could be changed. For example, work samples can be used to figure out what support might be provided, or how an activity could be changed slightly, to help the child be successful.

Share children's progress with families

Examples of children's work are easy to share with families. Families can also share examples of children's work from home. Are parents and teachers seeing similar progress?

Exchange information with specialists

Specialists can refer to a child's binder to see examples of work done on a daily basis in the classroom or at home. This can help specialists decide which supports are needed to help a child make progress on a learning goal.

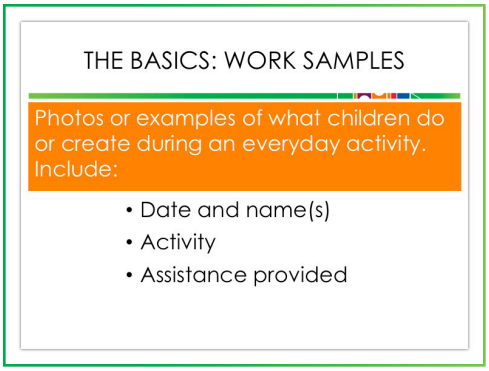
Support children's development beyond the classroom

A child's work samples can be shared with family and specialists to show tangible examples of how a child is learning. Sharing information will help children make better progress both inside and outside the classroom. What strategies can be used at home and in other settings to help a child progress?

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share examples of their own assessment practices based on the purposes listed above.

Add examples of assessment based on your own experiences.



EMPHASIZE

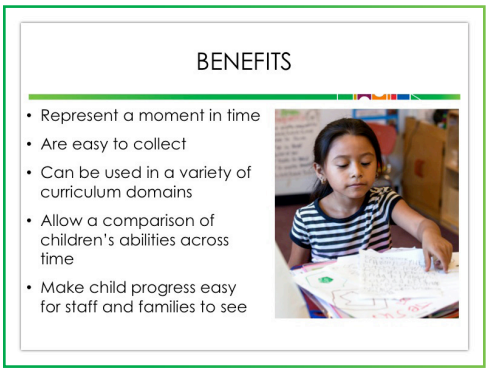
Always include the date, because you are monitoring children's progress over time.

SLIDE 8:
THE BASICS: WORK SAMPLES

A work sample is an example, or a photo, of what children create, or do, during an everyday activity.

Here are some important basic steps to take as you collect work samples:

- On each work sample, write the date and the name of each child. It's essential to know who did the work, and when.
- Collect work samples from different activities and play areas. Note which activity the samples are from.
- Note if the children had assistance from adults when they made the work samples.



SLIDE 9:
BENEFITS

Here are some of the main benefits of collecting work samples:

- They represent lasting evidence of a moment in time.
- They're easy to collect while interacting with children.
- They can be used in a wide variety of curriculum domains.
- They allow a comparison of children's abilities across time.
- They make child progress easy for staff and families to see.

EMPHASIZE

It's important to plan for the collection of work samples and collect them over time.

SLIDE 10:
PLAN TO COLLECT WORK SAMPLES

These steps can help you plan to collect and use work samples:

- At the same time as your daily lesson and activity planning, plan to collect work samples.
- Identify which areas and skills from program curricula and assessment tools are best documented using work samples.
- Collect samples that are easy to document, such as drawings, writing samples, and other creations.
- Take photos to record children's work that cannot be kept (such as block structures and playdough figures).
- Take photos of children engaged in activities and interacting with others.
- Take work samples of the same skill over time. Look for changes that show evidence of the child's learning. This will help teaching teams keep their focus on how children are learning, and how they can make adjustments to their teaching.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: SELECTING CURRICULUM AREAS

In this activity, participants practice planning how to use work samples to monitor children's progress on learning goals from selected curriculum domains and/or assessment instruments.

This learning activity can be done individually or in small groups.

HANDOUT

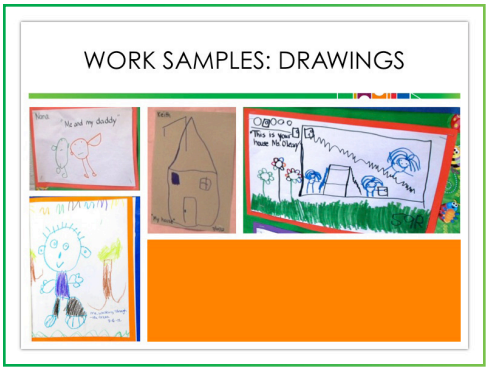
Distribute the *Selecting Curriculum Areas* learning activity, which includes a form titled *Plan for Using Work Samples for Ongoing Child Assessment*, and review directions.

DISCUSSION

Ask volunteers to share their answers with the larger group.

Points to highlight:

- Work samples can document different types of work, activities, or interactions.
- Set up a way to organize work samples before you start collecting them.
- Work samples can be shared with families or specialists.



SLIDE 11:
WORK SAMPLES: DRAWINGS

Many teachers find it useful to collect additional information to keep with children's drawings and other work samples.

Here are some tips:

- Make labels or forms ahead of time, printed with each child's name. This helps ensure that samples are gathered for every child. Forms can also remind the teaching team to record important information (name, date, situation, teacher observations) that will not be obvious from the sample itself.
- Ask children about their drawings, in order to collect information about what they know and what they do not know.
- Record in quotation marks exactly what children say about their drawings and other work. Children's own words provide information about what the work represents, and their underlying thought processes.
- Record the curriculum area or areas (e.g., This work sample highlights fine motor skills, symbolic representation, and expressive language).

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Ask participants to look at the two drawings of figures on the left and discuss how they show one child's progress over time. Do the same with the two drawings of a house.

Possible responses:

- In both later drawings, there are more details and more complex language is used: in the figure drawings, "Me walking through the trees," compared to the earlier "Me and my daddy."
- The later house drawing shows a map of the interior of a house (symbolic representation).

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
INTERPRETING WORK SAMPLES

In this activity, participants practice interpreting work samples to inform their teaching.

Divide the large group into smaller groups.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Interpreting Work Samples* learning activity and review directions.

DISCUSSION

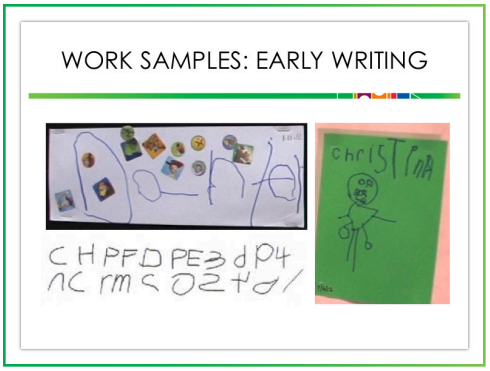
Ask volunteers to share their answers with the larger group.

Possible examples:

- In the first drawing, the child uses lines and circles to draw a simple generic stick figure. In the second drawing, the child uses a variety of shapes and lines to represent figure details and movement.
- The second drawing shows more complex fine motor coordination, understanding of spatial relationships, and knowledge of body parts.
- In addition to the child's name and the date of the work, the teacher could have included observations of the child's approach to completing the drawing (eagerness, persistence, self-direction) as well as a transcription of what the child said about the drawing.

Points to highlight:

- Work samples can illustrate children's progress.
- Work samples can be interpreted to answer questions about what a child is learning in a variety of curriculum domains.



SLIDE 12:
WORK SAMPLES: EARLY WRITING

Teachers can collect samples of early writing as children write their names, add writing to their drawings, use a writing center, and create signs and labels in a variety of classroom centers.

Samples of early writing can help you know how the children are progressing in a number of areas.

Here are some examples:

- Literacy Knowledge & Skills domain
  Alphabet Knowledge, Print Concepts & Conventions, and Early Writing
- Mathematics Knowledge & Skills domain
  Number Concepts & Quantities
- Approaches to Learning domain
  Persistence & Attentiveness
- Logic & Reasoning domain
  Symbolic Representation

SLIDE 13:
WORK SAMPLES: PHOTOS OF 3-D STRUCTURES

One reason to keep a camera handy in your classroom is to document children's activities, interactions with others, and temporary creations that cannot be saved.

Projects like this block structure can be easily documented with a photo.

Photos effectively highlight children's learning in a number of domain areas. Here are some examples:

- Cooperation
- Reasoning & Problem Solving
- Scientific Skills & Method
- Fine Motor Skills
- Symbolic Representation

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Ask participants how they would describe the children's behaviors in a note to accompany this photograph.

Possible responses:

The teacher's note for this photo describes how these children worked cooperatively, discussed how to place the blocks, and experimented to make a structure that wouldn't fall. The note also includes children's names and date of block-building event.

SLIDE 14:
WORK SAMPLES: PHOTOS OF ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTIONS

Work samples that are collected on a same skill over time are the most helpful.

[Reveal the three photos one at a time.]

Ask participants how photos can show this child's progress in social and emotional development during the school year.

[Reveal notes below the photos one at a time.]

These photos and the notes below them illustrate a child's progress in social–emotional development. Over time, she advances from playing alone or near other children to, with teacher support, observing other children play. The last photo shows her playing with another child.

To show a child's progress, work samples need to illustrate the same skill, in a same situation, over multiple points in time. In the example above, the photos focus on the child's social interaction with her peers during dramatic play.

By collecting work samples on a regular basis you will be able to:

- Note children's growth over time.
- Share this progress with families.

Collecting work samples is a shared responsibility:

- All team members collect work samples.
- Specialists collect work samples.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Ask participants: When could it be helpful for a child's family to collect a work sample?

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
USING PHOTOS TO DOCUMENT

In this activity, participants identify opportunities to take photos of children's activities and learning, to use as part of ongoing child assessment.

Divide the large group into smaller groups.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Using Photos to Document* learning activity and review the directions.

DISCUSSION

Ask volunteers to share their answers with the larger group.

Points to highlight:

There are real benefits to collecting photos as work samples.

- Photos can show learning in different curriculum domains.
- Photos can be used as evidence of children's progress, in order to inform teaching.

SLIDE 15:
ORGANIZING WORK SAMPLES: PORTFOLIOS

Many teaching teams use a portfolio system to organize the samples and photos of children's work collected in the classroom.

Portfolios include a variety of work samples that, in addition to the child's name and date, may include the following:

- Children's drawings with teacher's notes about the activity, and quotes from children explaining their work. Photos are helpful to document the drawing process.
- Writing samples that show children's progress over time. Teacher's notes can document the circumstances of the writing, and quotes from children can explain the meaning of their writing.
- Samples of a child's scissoring efforts, with notes about the type of scissors used and any assistance provided.
- Samples unique to individual children's interests and abilities:
  - » One child's portfolio, for example, might include drawings of many kinds of dinosaurs labeled with names dictated to the teacher.
  - » Another child's portfolio might include a photo of the child sitting at a table neatly set for friends, with dishes and toy food.
- Children can help choose samples that they are especially proud of.

When including a sample to go in a child's portfolio, it is sometimes helpful to add a brief note describing the reason why it was selected.

EMPHASIZE

Collect examples unique to individual children's interests and abilities.

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share any experiences they have had using portfolios.

- How do you store portfolio contents—in files, binders, folders, boxes, electronically?
- How often do you select and/or organize items for portfolios?
- Do you ask children to play a role in selecting, dating, making notes, and filing portfolio material?
- How do you share portfolio information with children's families?

NOTE

In addition to work samples, portfolios may include other types of ongoing assessment information, such as anecdotal records, samples of language, checklists, and video clips. Assessment information should be organized on a regular basis so that it doesn't pile up.

Portfolios not only inform classroom instruction, they serve as a record of progress for families. They may contribute to positive relationships with families. Families may also make contributions to portfolio contents.

SLIDE 16:
ORGANIZING WORK SAMPLES: ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIOS

As an alternative to a traditional portfolio, your program's curriculum assessment tool may include an electronic, or e-portfolio system.

Some systems are able to accommodate a range of information, such as anecdotal notes, scans of children's work, photos, and video clips. Teachers can upload information, and if families have access to the Internet, teachers and families can share digital photos and videos with each other.

Teachers may find that electronic portfolio systems make it easier to organize the assessment information they have gathered. For instance, a work sample that includes information about more than one developmental domain may be linked to several learning objectives.

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share any experiences they have had using e-portfolios.

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
SELECTING WORK SAMPLES TO INFORM TEACHING

This activity gives participants an opportunity to look at different work samples and select the ones that would best inform teaching.

Divide the large group into smaller groups.

HANDOUT

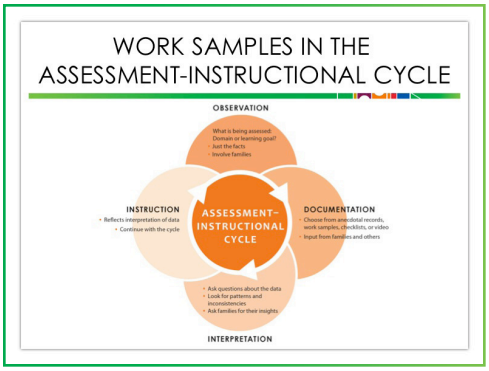
Distribute the *Selecting Work Samples to Inform Teaching* learning activity, and review directions.

DISCUSSION

Ask volunteers to share their answers with the larger group.

Point to highlight:

- The more information you include, the more useful a work sample will be in helping you make decisions about teaching.



EMPHASIZE

The steps in the assessment-instructional cycle repeat continuously for each child.

SLIDE 17:
WORK SAMPLES IN THE ASSESSMENT-INSTRUCTIONAL CYCLE

The assessment–instructional cycle refers to the ongoing and interrelated decision-making process that takes place during child assessment. Teachers continually make informed decisions about what to observe and why, and they choose the best ways to gather and document information about children's behaviors. They also decide how to organize, interpret, and use the information to guide and adjust their instruction. Throughout the process, teachers seek input from families and share information with them.

Here are four points to keep in mind:

Observation

You've learned about the importance of deciding in advance what to observe and how to plan for collecting information during regular classroom activities and routines.

Documentation

One way to document your observations is to collect work samples.

Interpretation

For work samples to be valuable, the teaching team needs to collect, label, and store them in a portfolio. After documentation, the teaching team, together with the child's family, interprets the information by looking at the facts or data, discussing possible meanings and underlying causes of behaviors, and summarizing findings. Changes in skills shown by work samples collected over time can reveal useful information about a child's development and learning.

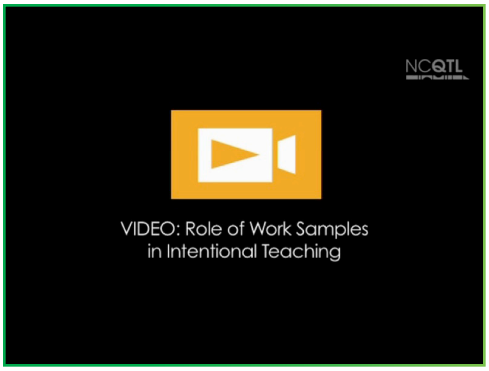
Instruction

The teaching team, with input from the child's family, uses information from work samples to plan instruction and to make changes in teaching, so that every child will learn.

DISCUSSION

As the presenter, share examples from your own experience of documenting and interpreting observations that lead to teaching improvements.

Ask participants to share examples of when they have changed their teaching, based on what they have observed.



Length of video: Approximately 43 seconds

SLIDE 18:
VIDEO: ROLE OF WORK SAMPLES IN INTENTIONAL TEACHING

Introduce the video.

This is a short clip from the video we watched earlier in this session. As we watch it again, we will focus on the benefits of work samples for intentional teaching.

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share their comments about the video.

- What are the benefits of using work samples?
- Do you think differently about work samples now, after watching the second video?

SUMMARY: COLLECTING AND USING WORK SAMPLES

- Provides a record of what children do during everyday activities
- Helps keep track of what children are learning
  - Include the date and name(s). If needed, add the activity and assistance provided.
- Makes it easy to share information with families
- Informs teaching

EMPHASIZE

Teachers use work samples as evidence of what children do and create.

SLIDE 19: SUMMARY: COLLECTING AND USING WORK SAMPLES

Work samples document what children create or do, during an everyday activity.

- Work samples may be used to document a variety of children's skills, activities, and interactions.
- Work samples can be collected in creative ways. For example, it may be useful to collect a combination of information: a photograph of a child during an activity, a drawing the child made of the same activity, and a quote from the child about the activity.

When gathered on an ongoing basis, samples or photos of children's work help the teaching team keep track of what children are learning.

- Work samples help document progress so that you know whether children are learning what they need to know.
- Work samples should include the date and children's names. When it is important to know the activity or assistance children received, you should also make a note of these.

Some teachers use a portfolio system to organize work samples in order to keep track of children's progress toward learning goals. Teachers also use work samples they have gathered over time to share children's progress with families.

Collecting, interpreting, and sharing work samples is a documentation strategy that will help you make informed teaching decisions.

HANDOUT

Distribute handouts if not distributed during the presentation.

Based on participant roles:

- Distribute and review *Tips for Teachers*. This handout briefly highlights material covered in this in-service suite.
- Distribute and review *Tools for Teachers: What to Record Today*. This handout includes an example of a completed classroom activity matrix, along with a blank activity matrix that teachers can use as a planning tool for recording observations and collecting assessment data.
- Distribute and review *Tools for Supervisors*. These handouts are meant for participants who are supervising programs or grantees. They give practical ideas for assisting teachers as they collect and use work samples.
- Distribute the *Helpful Resources* handout and highlight how the list can be used.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

SHARE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS:

- Work with a colleague to develop a system for organizing work samples.
- Consult with a more experienced teacher.
- Discuss with teaching teams, on a regular basis, how to use work samples to make adjustments to your teaching.
- Set up meetings with families in order to discuss their child's progress, goals, and assessment, based on collected work samples.

SLIDE 20:

CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources to support effective assessment and teaching practices in the classroom.