Ongoing Child Assessment: Children with Disabilities

Narrator: Hello, and welcome to this short presentation, Ongoing Child Assessment: Children with Disabilities. The purpose of this presentation is to highlight how to plan and use ongoing child assessment information to provide high-quality teaching and learning for children with disabilities. The information may also be useful for meeting your assessment concerns for other children with specialized learning needs. This is one in a series of modules about ongoing child assessment. The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning uses the House Framework to describe the effective everyday practices that lead to school readiness for all children.

Ongoing child assessment is fundamental to effective teaching. Regular assessments of children's learning help us know if children are making progress, if our teaching practices are working, and whether or not we need to make adjustments to help children make better progress. This presentation focuses on assessment practices for children with disabilities or other special needs. You'll see that we usually use the same sorts of methods for collecting assessment information for all children, methods such as checklists or counts or work samples or notes. And we use the information to help us make decisions about teaching.

But we may need to collect information, or data, more frequently. Let's listen to teachers and administrators talk about ongoing child assessment with children who have IEPs, IFSPs, or other special learning needs. How do they incorporate children's individual goals and objectives into daily activities and assessment plans?

Chris Walker: We truly believe, truly, truly believe, that data needs to drive what you're doing in the classroom.

Allison Ferry: We the staff are conscious of how are we embedding the things that are their family's goals, or the things that maybe a speech therapist has said. Those are embedded into the weekly lesson plans.

Shelby Jackson: When we plan, we usually go forth seeing what the activity is and then how we're going to get that to be embedded with their IEP goals. We have lots of modifications as far as the materials we have. So some students may use different materials depending upon their needs and depending upon their skill level.

Narrator: Many of our reasons for ongoing child assessment for children with disabilities are the same as for all children. We use the data to keep track of children's progress. We use the data to inform our teaching. The data help guide us as we plan lessons and make modifications. We share our observations and other data with families to get a better picture of the child's progress.

Teacher: Can I keep these? And I will show them to your mom when I meet her.

Narrator: And for children with disabilities and other special needs, we also share our observations and data with specialists, like the consulting teacher or therapist. Teachers work together with the specialists to help them know how the child is doing in between visits.

Kelsey Milne: Okay, so I've been looking over the results of the evaluation, and it looks like vocabulary, expressive vocabulary, so being able to pull out specific words and use them, is really an area of need. So that can be something that I think we can really focus on in the classroom.

Narrator: Planning for assessment for children with disabilities may take some extra effort and may involve suggestions from the specialist. Sometimes the IEP or IFSP or other individual plan has annual goals that are just too big to be meaningful to everyday teaching. The teacher and specialist can work together to break down the annual goal into smaller intermediate steps that lead to the goal. Take data on the steps to keep track of the child's learning and progress toward the goal. Often it will be necessary to collect data more frequently, weekly or even daily, to truly gauge the child's learning and the effects of teaching, particularly more specialized teaching. So make a plan. Gather information in ways that are feasible and informative, and organize and summarize the data in ways that show families and specialists how the child is learning. Now use the information to make adjustments to teaching. If the child is making progress, keep doing what you've been doing. If the child is not making progress, make a change. Break down the skill into even smaller steps or adjust the teaching approach. And if the child has accomplished the goal, celebrate and move on to a new goal. The assessment instructional cycle that we follow for all children works for children with disabilities and other special learning needs. We just sharpen our focus. Observe and focus on smaller steps. Document, but document more frequently. Interpret and collaborate with families and specialists to get a better understanding of the child's learning. Instruct. Provide individualized teaching within the context of your lessons, routines, and activities. Let the data tell you that your teaching works. And repeat the cycle. In this module, we've highlighted some of the ways that ongoing child assessment is both similar to and different from our usual ways of collecting and using child assessment information. It requires a bit more planning and it requires a bit more collaboration, but it is so important and so exciting to see a child who has struggled learn something new. Thank you for listening. Learn more about ongoing child assessment for children with disabilities in our longer in-service suite. Look at all the suites to learn more about the various ways to collect child data. Our tips, tools, and resources can provide you with more ideas to support ongoing child assessment and high-quality teaching and learning. [End video]