

Teacher Time: Using Ongoing Child Assessment to Support Effective Infant and Toddler Teaching Practices

Treshawn Anderson: Welcome to Teacher Time, and happy Friday. Thanks for joining us today, perhaps on your day off or your teacher workday or maybe a busier Friday than most. We definitely appreciate you being here. I'm Treshawn Anderson, and joining me today is Judy Stevenson-Garcia. Hi Judy.

Judy Stevenson-Garcia: Hi, Treshawn. How are you?

Treshawn: I am good, just trying to survive this storm. I hope some of you guys aren't caught in this storm either, but how are you doing?

Judy: We're doing good. We've got a great spring day, and I'm happy that it's Friday, and I'm happy to be here talking about assessment because, you know, this is my favorite thing to talk about.

Treshawn: Oh, yeah, Judy is our data girl. Well, we're from The National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and we're excited to be here to talk to you today about using ongoing child assessment to support effective infant and toddler teaching practices.

Judy: Yes, I'm very excited. So, before we get started, we'll just talk a little bit about the features of our webinar platform, in case this is your first time joining us. So, at the bottom of your screen, you'll see there's a bunch of widgets that you can use to personalize your own screen. You can use the help widget if you need help around technical issues, if a video freezes or you can't see a poll or something that comes up that you need help technically.

You can go to that help widget, and then you also have a SlideDeck widget, which will show you the slides that we'll be talking about, a media player, which will let you see videos that we show, and then if you have any questions that come out during the webcast around the content that we're presenting, you can use the Q&A widget. It's the purple Q&A widget just to ask a question, and we'll do our best to get to your specific questions as we can throughout the webinar, and then we have additional resources and the resource list, which is that green widget at the bottom.

So, our PowerPoints and other resources that we're going to mention throughout the webinar, you can find in there to download, along with our viewer's guide, which we really encourage you to use that asks some thoughtful questions and allows you to take some notes about what we're talking about. And then we've seen lots of you have found the blue group chat widget.

So, open that one up. That's where we're going to ask you guys some questions, and we'll look for you to give us comments and feedback in that group chat widget. So, go ahead. If you haven't gone in there yet, say, "Hello." Tell us where you're from, and tell us what you are thinking about in terms of ongoing assessment today. You'll also find webinar tips and closed-captioning widgets in English and Spanish, and so each of these widgets. I've said, "widgets," 50 times now. They're all resizable and movable, so you can make your screen look however you

want. If something is bothering you, you can close it and open it up back later. You can make screens bigger or smaller so that it's comfortable for you. If you have any trouble technically, like, the first thing we'll suggest is just to refresh your screen.

You can either refresh it on your website or press F5, and make sure that you have other programs closed. If you have a VPN, exit out of it because that'll help the webinar run more smoothly. Today, we have Stephanie Hickman in our chat room. For those of you who have been with us this season, normally, Jan Greenberg is here, but she is out this week.

So, Stephanie is stepping in, and she's already been in here to say, "Hello." She'll send you some links when we talk about resources. So, hi, Stephanie. Thanks for being in the group chat for us. And then finally, at the end of the webinar, we'll post a link to an evaluation form. We really love your feedback, and then also when you complete the evaluation form, you can download a certificate of completion for your participation in the webinar, and if you're watching together with more than one person, and only one of you is registered for the webinar, you can forward that link to anyone who is watching the webinar with you, and they can complete the evaluation and get their certificate of completion as well.

So, we're looking forward to a busy interactive hour with you, talking about infant-toddler ongoing assessment. So, please feel free to chat away in the group chat, and, you know, just let us know what you're thinking and what your questions are, and hopefully, we'll be able to provide a lot of information about how to support infants and toddlers and teaching practices through ongoing assessment.

Treshawn: Thanks, Judy. I just noticed we've got the spring pink going on here, so yay for us.

Judy: Yeah, I'm feeling very springlike today, so I wore my pink. That's great. Go ahead.

Treshawn: So, let's — Thanks for saying all that. So, let's get into our topic for today: using ongoing child assessment to support infant and toddler teaching practices. So, if you've been with us this season for infant-toddler episodes, you know that we've pretty much based this season on our Framework for Effective Practice, or sometimes, we call it the House Framework, and so for our first infant-toddler episode, we talked about creating safe and nurturing learning environments for infants and toddlers, which was all about that foundation of the house.

And then our second infant-toddler episode was all about implementing curriculum with fidelity, and that was the topic related to the left side of the pillar, which is implementing resource-based curriculum and teaching practices, and our last episode that we had talked about supporting infants and toddlers and their families through transitions, and while transitions really help us to think about our teaching practices and our curriculum and individualization, we really used that episode to focus on the family and ways to support parents and families engage during transitions with their infants and toddlers, which relates to that center part of the house, and so for our final infant-toddler episode, sad to say this is our final infant-toddler episode of the season, we're going to be talking about using ongoing child assessment to inform effective teaching practices. So, the topics that we're going to talk about today will support this right side of the pillar, or this right pillar, which is screening and ongoing assessment.

Judy: So, ongoing child assessment is exactly what it sounds like. It's this system that we put into place, where we're collecting and documenting assessment information frequently enough so that we can really understand what our children's individual strengths and needs are, and I see in the chat room already, people are saying that they use their assessment information to individualize for each child and to strengthen teaching practices, which is great.

That's exactly what we want it to do. In Head Start, we use ongoing assessment tools that are either observation-based or direct. So, if the tool that you use in your program is observation-based, that means you'll be observing over time in different contexts and documenting what you observe about children's development and learning during their daily routines, during their play and as they learn throughout transitions and the interactions that you and other adults have with them. You'll also really, especially with infants and toddlers, want to make sure that you're communicating with families so that they can tell you about what they see about their children's growth and development as well.

Sometimes, you'll hear this referred to as authentic assessment. It basically means that we're paying attention to children and documenting what they know and are able to do in an authentic way in their everyday lives. Another option is a direct assessment. So, if you are using a direct assessment, you might have a kit or some kind of collection of materials and some specific instructions about what you should do with each child to figure out what they know and are able to do, and that's perfectly fine as well. So, we'll talk today a little bit about both of those, but really, our focus is going to be on the observation-based assessments.

Treshawn: Yeah, thanks. So, we want to know from you, you know, what ongoing assessment tool does your program use? And so here's a poll for you. So, looking at this poll, go ahead and select your program's ongoing assessment, and if you don't see it, try scrolling down because there's a lot of different ongoing assessment tools that you can use, and then if you're not sure, or yours isn't on this list, go ahead and select other and let us know in the chat box what you guys use. So, go ahead and pull up this poll, and if you don't see it, you might have to turn off your pop-up blocker, but most times you should be okay. Yeah, so we've got some people responding. Okay.

Judy: And we know from our regular data collection at Head Start that really a good majority of programs tend to use Teaching Strategies GOLD, but I'm interested in seeing how that's different, especially just with infant-toddler audience.

Treshawn: Yeah, great. So, let's take a look and see what our results are telling us. So, you're right, Judy. Ding, ding, ding. The majority of our fans here are using Teaching Strategies GOLD. We've got some users using HighScope, and then DRDP is another one. E-LAP is another one that's advanced, is also another one and some Frog Street. We've got some others, and so I see some people saying Ages and Stages in the chat box, some socio-emotional. My chat box is moving really fast. You guys are good. Okay, so if you happen to be listing developmental screeners instead of ongoing assessments, that's okay. So, while this is great, that your program is using developmental screeners, like the ASQ, on children, they are different than ongoing assessment tools. So, we're going to be talking about, or be sure to talk to your program director or your education manager about the different types of assessment tools that we use

in your programs, and don't worry. We'll be sure to talk about the difference later because I know it can be a little confusing sometimes.

Judy: Mm-hmm.

Treshawn: Excuse me. So, ongoing assessment process and the tools that you use also need to be appropriate for all of the children that we work with. So, for infants and toddlers who are learning languages other than English at home, you might want to ask your supervisor or your developmental specialist about how best to gather assessment information, if you don't speak the children's language that they're learning at home. You'll also need to assess what they know and are able to do in both languages, to the best of your ability, of course, because the Head Start program performance standards includes information about assessing children who are dual language learners, and that can really help guide you and your program through the important things that you should consider really relating to conducting assessments with children who are dual language learners.

And you may be in need of support of an interpreter or a local community member or even family members can help you to understand what children know and what they're able to do in their home language, so we're not leaving those children out. And then ongoing assessment tools will also support you in better understanding the individual needs of children who have suspected delays or identify disabilities.

So, if you work with infants and toddlers with those suspected delays or identify disabilities, you might want to ask for some support from your classroom team, from your supervisor, from your coach or even your child development specialist, the children's families and other people who also work with children, like your program's disabilities services coordinator or your specialists and therapists, and that was a lot of people that I just named that happen to work with children. So, if one of those sounds interesting to you or you know someone that you can work with and partner with to help children, you know, or gather information with children, call one of those people to help you in that. And so, the Head Start Program Performance Standards requires programs to meet all children's individualized needs, and so using this ongoing assessment it just one way to accomplish this.

Judy: Yeah, so today we'll talk about the process, and we'll talk about really kind of three main things. So, first, we are going to talk just a little bit about the difference between developmental screening and ongoing assessment, just so we're clear about those two different processes, and then we'll talk — What we're really going to spend most of our time talking about the ongoing assessment cycle. This is not something new that you have to do or something new that you have to learn, but it's a way of thinking about the process that we want to be engaged in, while we're collecting ongoing assessment information and using it to improve our teaching practices, and then finally, we'll talk a little bit —

Well, we're actually going to talk throughout about the importance of gathering assessment information from families to inform our ongoing assessment and also sharing information with families about what we observe and learn about their children's unique strengths and needs. So, first, let's get started with developmental screening and ongoing child assessment, just some differences and some nuances, just to make sure that we're clear. So, developmental

screening is really meant to be a snapshot of the child's development at a specific point in time, and for those of you who have worked with young children in the Early Head Start program, the developmental screenings are completed within the first 45 days of a child's enrollment, unless the program operates 90 days or fewer, such as a migrant seasonal Head Start program, in which case, they complete screenings within the first 30 days, and screening is meant to be conducted in complete collaboration with a child's parents, and the goal of that is really to identify whether children's developmental learning might need to be more carefully watched.

It could tell you if a child might be at risk for delay, or if a child might need some additional evaluation to determine if there is a delay. It doesn't tell you that there's a delay. It just will tell you that the child might be at risk and might need some additional evaluation or intervention. So, we don't really use screening information to make decisions about our teaching practices. We use screening information to make decisions about whether or not children might require some additional evaluation.

But on the other hand, an additional piece to our screening information is the information we collect through ongoing child assessment. That could really help us understand, if a screening tool is indicating that a child might have a delay or might have the need for some additional evaluation, our ongoing assessment information actually can help us understand that. So, ongoing assessment is this continual process we use, on a regular basis, to collect and record information over time about children's growth and development, and as I mentioned before, it can be observation-based or it could be direct, and as we saw in our poll, and I think you guys are representative of the larger Head Start community, the ongoing assessment tools are used more often are really observation-based, and this is important because this means that we're not kind of just checking things off a list or doing a test at one point in time and then not doing it again for another time.

When we think about how quickly infants and toddlers are developing, having that regular ongoing documentation of children in their everyday environments is really important. So, we're going to use this on a regular basis, both to understand their development, but then also to adjust the learning environments that we provide, the experiences that we provide and our interactions with children, which is really where our teaching practices are. We're going to adjust our teaching practices so that we're making sure we're better supporting children's individual development and learning.

Treshawn: Great. Thanks, Judy. So, it's really helpful to understand that difference between developmental screening and ongoing assessment. So, now we're going to check our knowledge, to see how much we've learned on these two concepts. So, I'm going to give you some scenarios, and you tell us whether each teacher is using or should be using a developmental screening or an ongoing assessment. So, first we have teacher Sylvia, who keeps a small notebook and a pen in her apron, and she jots down notes each week about how her toddlers are using their small motor skills while eating their lunch at the table. So, what is Sylvia doing? Is she doing a developmental screen or is she doing an ongoing assessment? Take a look at this poll, and let us know what you think. Let's see. All right.

So we're going to move quickly through these. Ongoing assessment, that's right. So, let's move onto the next one. Within the first 45 days of each infant's entry into her classroom, Carmen

uses her research-based standardized tools with children and families, to identify any developmental concerns. What is teacher Carmen doing, a developmental screening or an ongoing assessment? What do you think? These are kind of fun. All right. Let's see the answer. So, Carmen is doing a developmental screening because, again, it's that research-based standardized tool that she's doing within the first 45 days of children enrolling in her program.

Great. So, let's look at this one: So, teacher Shay regularly takes pictures of her toddlers as they use art materials, like paintbrushes and large crayons, and she also collects the artwork that the children are — is completing, and uses those pictures and arts to understand her children's, in her classroom, fine motor development. So, what is Shay using, a developmental screening or an ongoing assessment? Tell us what you think. And it's okay, if some of you guys are responding in the chat box and some are using this poll. That's great. So, right, she's using ongoing assessment because she's constantly taking and collecting the children's artwork.

So, last, but not least. You guys are doing an excellent job on this. During a teacher's home visit, one of Jasmine's new parents tells her that she's concerned that their older toddler is not talking as much as other children in their play group, and she's wondering if the child needs to be referred to a specialist, maybe. What will Jasmine's teachers suggest they do first, a development screening or an ongoing assessment? Tell us what you think, and if you're not seeing the poll, you might have to turn off your pop-up blocker, but lots of you have been responding so far, so thanks. Let's see what we've gotten. Developmental screening, yeah, that's right. That was a great exercise. Thanks, guys.

Judy: You have to make the questions harder next time.

Treshawn: I know. I know. We've got some sound producers in here.

Judy: So, okay, so we're good on developmental screening and ongoing assessment. So, we're going to shift our focus to ongoing assessment and the processes that we can use to really make sure that we're doing ongoing assessment in a way that's meaningful for children and impacts their learning and helps us be better teachers. So, making sure that we're collecting and recording assessment information for all of our children and communicating to parents about it can feel really overwhelming. I remember being overwhelmed when I was in the classroom, just with all the daily thing that I had to manage and then also documenting information about children was challenging.

So, today our goal is to give you just a few strategies to really help you think about planning for, collecting, understanding your assessment information and then using it and sharing it, both in terms of sharing with families and also using it to inform your instruction. So, to help us with that, we have a special guest expert with us today, and we're going to welcome Patricia Snyder. Oh, hi, Pat. How are you? She's from the University of Florida. It's good to see you, and I know you have some storms where you're at, too, So, we're very thankful that you're here and that you have power, and hopefully it will stay on for the next 40 minutes. So, you've brought some really helpful strategies today, to help us figure out how to use ongoing child assessments to improve our teaching practices. So, where do we get started on this?

Pat Snyder: Well, I think to get started, what we've found is really helpful, as you mentioned, is to think about ongoing child assessment as a continuous cycle, a cycle that begins with

preparing for the assessment. What information do I want to collect? When do I want to collect it? How do I want to collect it? And then we move onto actually collecting that assessment information. After we collect that information, we pull the information together, or as it's shown in the figure here, aggregate and interpret it, or what we might say is analyze our information. And then we use the information that we've collected, that we've worked so hard to collect, to help us make informed decisions about the interactions and teaching practices that we might implement with infants and toddlers, and then, as you mentioned earlier, Judy, sharing that information with others, such as parents and family members and other members of the team. So, there's an ongoing back-and-forth exchange of information about the child.

Treshawn: Great. So, there's four pieces to this assessment cycle, and we want to kind of break down each piece so that, you know, people get a clearer picture of how they can do this, you know, or if they're already doing it in their classrooms. So, let's talk about what happens in each stage and some examples related to each piece, to help our listeners. So, let's start with prepare. So, Pat, can you tell us what happens in that prepare stage?

Pat: Sure. So, I think, when we think about ongoing child assessment, the prepare stage is really the most important for making sure that you're going to have success in the rest of the cycle that we just spoke about. I think prepare involves several different things, and we'll talk briefly about each of them. We want to think about what we're going to assess, how we're going to assess it, who's collecting and documenting the assessment information, and then when or where that happens, and it's really important in planning to plan for all of these things up front so that you're prepared to collect your information in an ongoing way. In fact, we think a really helpful is to think about how when you're developing your daily and weekly lesson plans or your individualized plans for young children, how you include your plans for ongoing child assessment as part of your daily or weekly lesson plans or individual plans that you might be preparing for young children.

So, let's talk a little bit more about how each of these might work and some helpful strategies that we've come with as a team, to perhaps help us think about this overwhelming process sometimes of ongoing child assessment and how we can simplify it and really make it usable for all of us. So, as you think about what to assess, you really want to think about the individual goals that you've established for each child's development and learning, and, of course, as you all know, these are goals that we set in partnerships with children's families and other members of our team, and they definitely should be informed by and aligned with the domains in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework. You also — Look at your ongoing assessment tools, like Teaching Strategies GOLD or HELP or the other ones that were mentioned earlier in the webinar, and those are going to help you understand how you're measuring children's progress towards the goals that you've set and what's reflected in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework. Your assessment tool is going to help you clarify and the team clarify and families clarify what you're going to assess and when you're going to assess it, and depending on where you are at this point in the program year, you're probably getting to the point where you're collecting information about progress children have made over the course of the year.

So, for example, in the fall, if a toddler was taking a few steps while they were holding onto an adult's hand the last time you collected assessment information, what you might be doing now

is observing to see if the child is able to take a few steps independently, and so this is a what example that relates to a child's motor development in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, and of course we know on many of the assessment instruments that you all mentioned you're using, one important motor skill would be the ability to take a few steps independently. So, that's the what. Let's turn now to the how, and, really, when I think about the how, I think about multiple methods. That's one thing that might be helpful for you to think about, when you think about the how of assessment.

So, you're going to think about the multiple methods that you're going to use to collect information as part of ongoing child assessment. You want to prepare for that, and that's why it's so important to think about it as part of the prepare cycle because you want to think about, "Am I going to take written observation notes? Am I going to write anecdotes? Do I have a checklist that I'm going to fill out? Am I using photos or videos or audio recordings or work samples or samples of children's work?" So, it's really important to plan for having those things available, to make sure that they are available when you get to the collection cycle.

Judy: Pat, I think that —

Pat: Another thing — Yeah?

Judy: Ooh, sorry, I'm just going to interrupt you here because I do think this how piece is really important.

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Judy: And I think every teacher has their own kind of system or way of making that work.

Pat: Right.

Judy: And I would love it if people could share with us in the chat box just kind of what your most common methods of collecting are. Like, what is the thing you rely on the most? Do you use a notebook or a Post-It note or do you have some kind of technology, like a tablet, where you use to document information and stuff? You guys could share with us the how. How do you collect your assessment information? I think that would be really helpful for us to just to kind of understand what the common methods are for our participants here.

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Judy: And go ahead. So, I didn't mean to stop you. As people share, you can keep going.

Pat: No, I'm curious and interested to hear what the how methods are, and I think what we'll see is we'll see methods collect this information, from low-tech, as you mentioned, which are Post-It notes or pieces of paper that go into a notebook, all the way up to digital systems that people might be using or apps or tablets or computers or both. So, yeah, I think —

Judy: Yeah, but in the chat already, Josephina says she uses the GOLD app or her iPad, and Katie says she used Post-Its, so we have both ends of that extreme there.

Pat: Mm-hmm, right, and I think the really important point here around the how and the prepare is just to make sure that you are prepared to use the how methods that you've identified that you really want to use and being systematic about that because we all know. I

was a teacher myself, and I know that in the context of a busy day, if we're not prepared, then it's often difficult to really gather the assessment data when we really need to do that in the moment.

Judy: Exactly.

Pat: The next part of prepare is to really be thinking about who, and who obviously refers to the people who are going to be collecting the ongoing assessment information. Most of the time, if you're an infant and toddler teacher, you're probably the primary caregiver for three or four children. But if you're in a family child care situation, you may only have one or two infants, but you still will gather assessment information for these children, as well as the preschoolers in your group. And so, regardless of your role, you're going to be really the one who orchestrates, so to speak, how the collection of ongoing assessment information occurs and by whom, and so sometimes, there may be a colleague. Judy mentioned earlier there may be other members of the team, individuals who have special expertise.

For example, maybe your disability coordinator may help you gather assessment information for a child who has an IEP who's in your class or an IFSP who's in your program, an individualized family support plan for infants and toddlers who have identified disabilities, and of course you also want to involve families. We know that's so important, particularly for infants and toddlers, to involve families as individuals who can help collect and document assessment information about things their children are doing at home, to help us get a much more complete and integrated picture of the child. When and where, in terms of preparing for assessment, we want to think about different times of the day and different types of routines and learning experiences in transitions that our infants and toddlers are having, and we want to collect multiple times during the day, across settings and in different settings, and think about where there's a good fit between what it is we want to observe and document that what that we're focused on, and where we might have the best opportunity to really gather assessment information about how an infant or toddler is doing, in terms of the what that's the focus of our ongoing assessment.

I think it's particularly important, for example, if you were looking at how a young infant was regulating their emotions or their feelings, I'm not sure that right before nap time might be the best time to observe that kind of make that kind of assessment, gathering that ongoing assessment information. But it's certainly a wonderful time, during diaper time, for example, change time, or even during a small interaction during a book-reading time with a toddler, to really — how children are regulating their behavior, their emotions, etc. So, finding that good fit between what you want to observe and document and preparing for that and thinking about, "What are the activities that are the best fit for me, to be able to really collect and document information about the child's skills?"

Judy: Yeah, I wouldn't want anyone evaluating my self-regulation when I'm tired, either.

Pat: Right.

Treshawn: Or hungry.

Judy: Or hungry, exactly. That's really helpful. Okay, so that was when and where. Did you have an example around, like, thinking about how to use, like, the where, in terms of collecting information?

Pat: Well, I think, in terms of collecting the information, and that's really the next step. So, let's think about putting the what, the who, the where and when and the how into action, and that's really what you've prepared, then you're ready to really put those pieces into action. And so, as we think about doing that, I think it's important to think about two things.

One is, for infants and toddlers, sometimes when we collect ongoing assessment information, we want to identify activities or routines where we're going to observe, where we're going to watch what the child is doing, and we're going to collect information about what the child is doing. But more often than not, and particularly with infants and toddlers, as part of ongoing child assessment, we want to really observe and interact with infants and toddlers in those activities and routines because by scaffolding and interacting with children during those activities and routines, we're more likely to really be able to gather meaningful information about the child's development and learning. So, you want to think about doing that every day, of course, but you also may have examples where you really want to clarify how a child is doing in a particular area of development and learning. So, you plan to collect data at that particular time.

So, for example, if you have an infant or a toddler in your classroom or in your family care environment, where they're starting to experience some difficulties at drop-off time, when Mom and Dad are leaving, and you really want to see more about what's really going on, you might want to target, you might want to plan and collect information about the child's emotions and their interaction skills during drop-off. But you also might want to collect that information at a different time during the day, after the child has gotten more adjusted in the classroom or in the home, and also document what happens later on in the day so that you're not just basing your decisions or your information on the basis of collecting information in only one activity or one routine.

Judy: I think that makes —

Pat: Does that help —

Judy: Sorry. Yeah, it makes sense I think, in terms — Also you would want to make sure that whether or not this child is now struggling all the time, separating from a parent, or is it just your program where it's happening.

Like, they don't have a problem saying goodbye and going to grandma's house, or they don't have a problem saying goodbye, you know, in other locations, and it's just the program, or, you know, maybe a parent might say, "This child does not want to be separated from me at any point, and every time we have to say goodbye, no matter where we are, it's hard." Because those are two very different things. Right? Because then you think, "Well, is it my environment that's causing some kind of stress, or do we need to adjust the way that we do drop-off here, or is it part of a larger developmental — something that happens developmentally very commonly for young children, to develop some anxiety around that?"

Judy: And I think that's really helpful to think about, and one thing I know that you understand is very important, and we do, as well, is the quality of our documentation. So, maybe you can give us a little bit of information or help us think a little bit about what the — make these decisions about what children are — are doing.

Pat: Yeah, and I think you're absolutely right, Judy. I know we all agree that documentation is really everything. And Treshawn was mentioning earlier you're the data woman, and I think of documenting as data.

Pat: So, I think, you know, we all need data people, particularly when it comes to ongoing child assessments, and I think, again, as I mentioned earlier, sometimes we want to observe, as it says on this slide, and other times we want to both observe and document during, and we're still documenting while we're observing. But sometimes we want to observe, interact, and document as we're having interactions with young children. I think there are a variety of ways that I mentioned earlier, that you can collect documentation, and the polls showed people are using everything from low-tech to high-tech, so photos, videos, artwork, etcetera. So, rather than dwelling on the method, I think what really is important from this particular slide and from the discussion that we're having, is the importance of anecdotal notes, and anecdotes or anecdotal notes can either be short brief descriptions of what we see or hear the child do, or they might be a short story, that tells a story about some sequence of events that we've seen the child — we've heard or seen the child do. The most important thing is that our anecdotes should be objective, and that means that they don't describe what we think the child might be feeling. They don't describe us making judgments about the child's feelings or their actions, or their behaviors, or motivations, but rather they're objectively describing what we see or hear the child do. So, for example, we might write an anecdotal note that said, "Today, Eduardo jumped with both feet."

Pat: Or, "Today, Treshawn walked independently and took about five steps," or for a toddler, "Leshandra brought me a book to read and said, 'Book.'" Anecdotes, and that's really what we want to do and what we really want to continue to hold ourselves accountable to do as part of ongoing child assessment because then when we aggregate and analyze our data, those objective notes tell a much fuller picture and story about the child's abilities and skills and also stories about their needs, as you mentioned earlier, for additional supports and whether or not we're seeing patterns of behaviors or skills that are consistent or not consistent across different environments. So, I really would recommend people try not to be as subjective in their anecdotal note writing and really try to be objective.

Treshawn: Great. Well, Pat, we're going to give our audience a chance to practice. So, I'm going to show you guys an example anecdote on your screen, and I'll read it, too, just so you can hear both, and I want you guys to tell us if you'll see something pop up on your screen that will tell you to answer whether this anecdote is objective, or factual, or whether it's subjective, or opinionated. So, let's take a look. So, "Umar has a hard time when his mom brings him into the room. He doesn't like being put down on the floor, and he ignores his mom when she tries to read him a book. He crawls over to his friend Lettie, grabs the ball from her hands. He gets upset when his mom kisses him and says, 'good-bye' and leaves the room."

Do you think this anecdote was subjective or objective? Go ahead and use your poll or answer in the chat box what you think. So, let's see. There's subjective, objective or not sure. Those were the three options. Great, so I got some people answering. Let's see what we've come up with. So, most people think that this anecdote was subjective, and if that's the case, you're right. So, this is a subjective anecdote because it contains the teacher's assumptions and interpretations of Umar's behaviors. So, using words like "hard time" and "doesn't like" and "ignores" and "gets upset," well, those are all open to interpretation because how I think a hard time looks might be different than what Judy thinks a hard time looks. So, we want to be our best, to try to be objective or factual. So, let's look at the same anecdote, and see how we can make this anecdote objective because we don't want to leave you hanging. So, this is the same anecdote, but written objectively.

So, "Umar's mom carries him into the room, sets him down on the floor next to the book bin. Omar whimpers (no tears). Mom sits down next to him, picks a book from the bin, shows the cover to Umar and begins to read. Umar turns his head away. He sees Lettie holding and shaking a ball with the bell inside. He holds his arms out to her, crawls over and sits next to her. He takes the ball from her hands and shakes it. Mom goes to Umar, kisses him, says goodbye, walks out. Umar starts to cry, with tears this time." So, this anecdote really describes what the teachers sees or hears: Umar, his mom and Lettie do, rather than interpreting their behaviors. It also provides more information about his interactions with his mom and Lettie and really provides that much clearer picture about what Umar actually does during the arrival routine. So, now — I hope that was helpful. We're going to give you another chance to practice, this time looking at a video.

Judy: Oh, sorry, Treshawn. No, I was trying to talk to you, and I realized I was on mute because I had been typing earlier. So, I think, for the sake of time, we're going to move on to the next phase, so that Pat can help us think about aggregate-analyze, and so what I think we'll do is in MyPeers, we'll post a video, and I think you've already posted some practice anecdotes, and so we can post the video in MyPeers, where people can practice writing an objective anecdote, and I think that what you added here makes it really clear. Like, we want to make sure that we write down what the child does or what the child says, as opposed to what we think what they did means. So, it looks — Or, you know, instead of saying, "He was upset," we can say, like you said here, "He whimpered," or, "There were tears," because I think that's really helpful information. So, thanks for those examples. So, I want to make sure that we get to all of the stages in our ongoing assessment cycle. So, Pat, I wonder if you can tell us just a little bit about the — I'm sorry. I've lost my space here -- the aggregate and analyze stage, and why that's important and how it relates to kind of our preparation and our collection, as we've talked about it so far.

Pat: Right, and so I think you can start, if we have, if we've prepared, and now we've collected our ongoing assessment information, we can start pulling it together. That's what aggregate means, bringing it all together, and then analyzing it, and analyzing means asking questions, data, and that might start with asking yourself whether you've collected enough information, and if your assessment information, as we just talked about, is objective and accurate. And so, if you have enough information, then you can begin to think about, as I said, what the data are telling you about children's growth and development. But I want to make a really important

point: The data or the documentation tells you information, but it doesn't make the decisions for you. You and the teaching team and families make decisions based on the data and information that you've gathered. So, you want to ask yourself, the kinds of decision you want to make are things like, "Are children making progress? Do my data show me whether or not children are making progress toward their individualized goals?" or, "Do we see any patterns or trends or inconsistencies?"

So, the example we talked about earlier, are we seeing the same pattern in Umar's behavior over time or do we see it changing, as a function of him getting used to his mom coming and then leaving, right? When we look at, for example, if we were looking at a child's emergent literacy goals, we might think about how they've made progress, what data we have to show the progress they've made, or if they've made progress, about how they respond to books. Do the data tell us whether the child can now turn pages of a book by himself or herself?

The only way we know those things is if we can look at our data, look at our objective data and then make decisions to help us answer those questions and decide what to do next. We also can use our assessment data to help us think about children's interests and needs. What things do they seem to be particularly interested in? In the video tape that you'll have an opportunity to look at later, you'll see the child seems to have a really big interest in these — a yellow and a blue ball, and they have different textures. It's an infant, and they have different textures, and I invite you to look at that, and as you're looking at it, think about how your documentation could really tell you information about that child's interests at this developmental stage and his or her needs. This information is going to give you clues about how you're going to arrange your environment, how you're going to introduce new learning experiences for young children, and, most importantly from my perspective, how you're going to use those interactional and teaching practices, that you all have talked about throughout the year, as part of the house framework to facilitate children's growth and development.

So, I think we mentioned in the collect phase you want to use multiple sources, multiple methods. You want to have a plan for how you're going to do these things, and all of that information is important because when you bring it all together in the aggregate-analyze phase, it also helps you be a better decision-maker and a better detective and not rely on your subjective impressions or assumptions. And so I'll give you one example that I think is a really good one: You might have been observing sleep patterns of one of the infants in your care, and your feeling is that the child only sleeps for 15 minutes, and I've interacted, and I've said, when people have asked me when I was a teacher, "Oh, he only sleeps for about 15 minutes at a time." But if I do a good job of collecting data, in reality, when I look back at my notes, I see that his naps started out at 15 minutes, but now he's up to, like, 30 or 45 minutes. If I didn't have that objective information collected, I really would make wrong decisions when I was aggregating and analyzing. So, if that process of aggregating and analyzing, using the objective information, really helps keep us all honest for the benefit of the child and for the benefit of supporting the child's ongoing development and learning.

Judy: I think that's a really great example, Pat, and I know something that's implied in this phase of the ongoing assessment process is taking time to stop and really look at data and think about it, talk to a co-teacher or an ed manager or a director about it, and that, I understand, is a

luxury in the current systems that we teach within. Sometimes, we don't have time to really stop and be reflective, but when we think about our infants and toddlers who are developing at such a rapid pace, I think it's really important to make sure that we are stopping and thinking, not of just our last impression. Right? "What did this child do yesterday or today that kind of stood out to me?"

But to really document and then think, "Is there a pattern or is there some kind of shift that I should be paying attention to? He used to sleep all the time, and now he's stopped sleeping," or, you know, whatever it happens to be because we know that children, their development, is kind of ebbs and flows, and sometimes they do kind of go backward in their development a little bit before they make a major leap. So, I think, really,

And this goes back to the planning, right? Within our planning, we want to make sure we're planning to have time and to build in time to really stop and think about this information, and the final reason for that is because, you know, we're going to come back around in the cycle to using and sharing and thinking about the information we've collected and what does that mean for us as a teacher or for our families. Do we need to change something in our classrooms or in our family child care homes? The learning environments maybe need to be more challenging for our children who are demonstrating new skills or maybe they're too challenging, and so children are getting frustrated or not playing with materials, and so we want to make sure that it's meeting them at their level. So, maybe tell us just a little bit about some strategies that we can think about in terms of this last phase, or this phase before we move back into prepare, around sharing and using our assessment information.

Pat: Yeah, and I think the great thing about this cycle is when we get to use and share, if we've done a good job with preparing, and collecting, and aggregating and analyzing, then we want to share because we feel like we have really meaningful information to share, and we want to certainly do that both formally and informally. And so we might share information formally, during scheduled home visits or during parent-teacher conferences, but we all know that we also have a myriad of opportunities to informally share information with families and team members: when we're getting ready in the morning, putting activities together, when parents are dropping their children off in the morning or picking them up in the afternoon. I know a lot of people are beginning to use text-based updates to share information with families about how children's progress is occurring in classrooms or homes, phone calls, you know, multiple ways, again, to share information about what we've collected and what we are learning about the children's progress, as we do our ongoing child assessment.

And also sharing that information with team members, really important, particularly for specialists who work with your infants and toddlers, and I think it's really important for all of the teachers who are on the call today to know that they really have probably the best information to share with specialists about children's development and learning. Specialists come into your classroom or your home. They might not be spending as much time with the infants and toddlers that you're working with as you do, and you really have an important opportunity to share assessment information with them that will help them further refine the individualized supports and assessment information that they're gathering about children's development and learning. So, I think it's really important to share information with team

members and specialists and program leaders about what we're learning about our children, the ongoing child assessment, and again, you and, in my opinion, families, and teachers, are in the best position to provide the most comprehensive data about a child's development and learning. In terms of using the data, I think as you mentioned, Judy, I think it's important to think about, "Do our data help us make a decision that we need to change a learning goal for our child?"

So, in the earlier example today, if the child is walking independently, it's probably time to begin to think about what might be the next goal for that particular toddler. If the child has met the goal, we might want to move them to a higher level as I just mentioned, and because development is on a continuum, there's always more opportunities for our children to learn new skills. Perhaps we move from an emphasis on goals related to motor skills, and now, we're going to shift focus for a while and think about language skills, which might be a really important priority for a child and for a family. If the child hasn't met a goal, or we don't think — our data keep telling us, perhaps, that the child hasn't made progress, we might want to think about, "Well, is it time to back up and think about a simpler goal or giving the child more time to meet the goal?" Perhaps the child just needs a little bit more time. Sometimes, however, our data might tell us that the child needs a change in the environment.

So, for our earlier example about the child who became upset during drop-off or pickup time but seemed to settle down a little bit when a peer was nearby, maybe a strategy a teacher might use is to have that peer nearby for a while, while the child is being dropped off to help foster that sense of security. It seems for whatever reason that other toddler might be soothing or comforting to that particular child. For a child who's having — ready for more challenges in persistence and fine motor skills, we might add puzzle pieces, more puzzle piece or puzzles with more pieces in them. For a toddler who's using a walker, we might need to create more space and pathways, so he or she can move around the room and navigate more independently. So, there are a myriad of things we might want to think about, about the environments, our teaching strategies and our schedule, our teaching practices and, again, what goals we have set for the child. So, we want to use our data, bottom line, use our data to make informed decisions about all the other aspects of the house that you all have spent all semester talking about. Right?

Treshawn: Great. Thank you so much, Pat, for your helpful tips and strategies for using this ongoing assessment cycle. It seems like a really big thing to do, but, you know, when we broke it down, it really seems like it's a part of our day or, you know, it's feasible to be a part of our day. But at the end, it's really useful for helping children meet their learning goals in development, so that's great. And so we've talked a lot today about, you know, the importance of engaging with families in the ongoing assessment process. Oh, bye, Pat, sorry. Thank you for helping us out today.

Treshawn: No, it's okay. But we have talked a lot today about the importance of engaging families in this ongoing assessment process because, you know, parents are a child's first teacher, and it's really important to make sure that they are part of this process. So, this means during the prepare stage, you also plan for how you're going to regularly collect information from the parents and share information with them, both formally and informally, and you guys

have been using the chat box, really telling us how you engage with families with children's development. So, Karen, they're program uses Learning Genie, and then sometimes they have — Your agency has a set app that you use and share information with families. So, this is great. We've got some sharing going on with our families.

Judy: Yeah, and I would love for you, the audience, to tell us in the chat box what your best strategies are for communicating with families because I think every community and every program has a different way of making sure that we're not just telling families about what we've observed, but also, if you have ways of gathering information from families about what they've learned or what they know about their children's development, I think that would be really helpful, too. We want to make sure that the conversation goes both ways, and I see a question from Gavin. Yes, Pat is with the University of Florida, and she's still on with us, if you have a question for her. You can put it in the Q&A box, and she can help you.

Pat is still there, hanging out with us in the background while we wrap. But she'll be here, and she can respond to any questions in the Q&A box, as well, and even with her contact information, if she can share that. So, you know, we want to make sure that when we think about parents — and please keep telling us in the chat box. I see some daily communication happening — and with your families. When I was an infant-toddler teacher, I remember sometimes it was really all I did was say, "Here's how your child ate and slept, and here's when I changed their diapers, and they had a great day," you know, and that was really all the information, and I forgot to ask them about what they were seeing or what they were learning or really documenting things around children's development and goals for their development. So, we want to make sure that we have conversations not only just about development, but also about families values and their perspectives. As many of you may know, parents have different ideas about when children should be potty-trained or when they should be feeding themselves independently or, you know, when they should be sleeping.

I had a parent ask me to stop letting her 2-year-old take a nap because he wouldn't go to sleep at night, and I was like, "I don't think I — You know, let's talk about goals for your child's sleeping and how we can support that." So, I think it's really important to make sure that we're on the same page around goals for children, expectations. Some of them are culturally bound. Some of them are just kind of family tradition-bound or, "This is how I was raised and this is what I want for my child," and so communicating both what we know is developmentally appropriate and what — Using that ELOF as a guide, in terms of what we should be expecting for children at different ages can really be helpful and then sharing assessment information from our tools that say, "Here's the progress that your child is making. You know, they may not be where your expectation is for them, but here is some of the progress that we've observed over time." Oh, I like — We just had someone say they use a monthly newsletter for parents, which I think is great, like, kind of giving them that comprehensive overview of what's happening in the program. I see so many good comments here, but I know we're running out of time. So, thank you, guys, for sharing in the chat box how you communicate with your families. Those strategies are really helpful.

Treshawn: Yeah, so not only is important, you know, to communicate, you know, strategies in children's development with families, just so that everyone is on the same page, but really

having these ongoing conversations with families builds trust and that reciprocal relationship that we want, and that's really important for infants and toddlers and their teachers and families, too. And these relationships really help parents feel more comfortable about sharing what they observe and support at home, and then you may learn that children do and say things at home, but they don't do them necessarily in your care, in your classroom, your family child care center. That was the case for my daughter. She wasn't a talker to other people that she didn't know, but at home, she blabs away. So, the teachers had to ask us, you know, "What words is she using?" and we taught them a few signs that we were using with her, and that really, you know, just helped both our adjustment into the classroom and then her adjustment as well, and so this can be used for children that speak another language, that they're learning a different language other than English at home. You might want to talk with families about, you know, specific words or common phrases that they use that you can also use in the classroom, and so the child may know and understand, and communicate more than we actually realize, so really this relationship helps you build that trust with families and, reciprocate information and share information with them, and it will help you guys work together to really meet the needs of the children that you're serving.

Judy: Exactly, that's so important. Well, we've covered a lot today, and I don't know about you, but that hour went by. I think we entered some kind of time warp. That went by really quickly for me. We talked about developmental screening and ongoing child assessment, and you all are — You know the differences between those, which is great, and we focused on this cycle, and we're going to be talking more about this cycle in our MyPeers group.

So, if you haven't joined MyPeers, I would really love for you to join our community there because we really will be talking about, in the upcoming weeks and months, about the strategies and giving you some resources to do that. Pat gave us a great really quick and dirty overview of this ongoing assessment cycle. So, we'll make — We'll go to MyPeers and post the resources and some additional strategies for you to make sure because, actually, right now is a great time to start thinking, if you are in a program that starts again in the fall, you know, to start planning for how you can make some adjustments. If you're in a year-round program, it's still a good time to plan for how you can maybe make some changes in your processes to be more efficient and effective and make sure that you're using this information to impact your practices.

So, on the screen, you have some of the communities that are on MyPeers. If you're not already a member, you can join via the ECLKC. We have, I think, 58 different communities. There's a handout in your resources tab that describes the communities that we've highlighted here, so if you're interested in joining, you're definitely welcome to join there, and then for those of you who might not be coming back to see us again until we start our Teacher Time series next year, we want to just let you know:

If you haven't already joined, there's Text4Teachers is available, ELOF2GO. Those are free apps. The ELOF2GO is a free app. Text4Teachers is a texting service, where you'll get, a few times a month, some texts with information on strategies for you, and then our final episode of the season for Teacher Time, we're going to cover ongoing assessment again and focus on using it to inform teaching practices for those of you who work with preschoolers, so please join us on

May 17. That'll be our last episode of the season, and thank you so much for participating today in the chat room. We know it's a busy Friday for everyone, so we're really happy that you were here with us today.

Treshawn: Yeah, and then if you want to hang out for us a little bit, go ahead and fill out this evaluation link. That really helps us to see what you guys are learning or what you need, and it really helps us to inform our episodes as we're writing them for you. So, happy Friday. Have a great weekend. It was great seeing you guys and participating. We'll see you next season.

Judy: All right. Thanks, everyone. Bye.

Treshawn: Bye.