Recommended Practices for Assessing Communication and Learning Skills in Young Children Who are Deafblind

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Dr. Deborah Chen, California State University, Northridge
Dr. Robert Stillman, University of Texas at Dallas
Dr. Harvey Mar, Columbia University
Dr. Charity Rowland, Oregon Health & Science University
National Family Association for Deafblind

Contact Information:

deborah.chen@csun.edu

Web site:

http://www.ohsu.edu/oidd/d2l/com_pro/db_assess_ab.cfm
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Challenges of Assessing Young Children Who Are Deafblind

- May not use conventional forms of communication
- May use very subtle means of expression
- Professionals often inexperienced
- Assessment instruments may not be appropriate

Areas of Focus

- Deafblind (definition in U.S.A)
- 2-8 year old children who are nonspeaking and have significant intellectual limitations
- Communication and cognitive development

Activities/Studies

- Nationwide survey of parents
- Nationwide survey of professionals
- Expert query
- Family specialist query
- Poll of state projects
- Focus groups
- Collection of assessment and IEP data on 0-5 year olds

Parent Survey (74)
Most satisfactory aspects of my child’s latest evaluation

- 40% - Child is making progress
- 13% - Child treated respectfully, supportive, caring
- 13% - Gave parents information on child’s development
- 13% - Evaluator cared about parent input
- 10% - Everyone worked together as team for child
- 8% - Parents given information on what to do for child, goals for child
- 5% - Tried to adapt test to fit child

Parent Survey (74)
Least satisfactory aspects of my child’s latest evaluation

- 40% - Tests inappropriate, underestimated child
- 20% - Evaluation didn’t provide helpful facts or suggest things to try
- 15% - Lack of progress of child
- 13% - Tests focused on what child can’t do, rather than progress
- 10% - Evaluator didn’t know child
- 5% - Didn’t like how child was handled
Parent Survey (74)
Most frequent suggestions for assessment process

- 40% - Evaluators should get to know child
- 35% - Get input from parents and classroom
- 28% - Evaluations should help parents understand how to set goals and move forward
- 20% - Use tests appropriate for child who is deafblind
- 15% - Tell parents names of assessments, what for, what doing during assessment
- 10% - Start with child’s strengths and reasonable goals
- 5% - Child’s needs should be paramount—not costs or difficulty of trying new things

Criteria for “Short List”

- High ratings by 135 professionals who completed survey
- Designed for assessment of 2-8 year olds
- Include sections on cognitive and/or social-communication skills
- Readily available
- Other instruments developed specifically for population also included

“Short List” of Assessments

- Callier-Azusa (Stillman) *
- Carolina Developmental Profile (Johnson-Martin, Attermie & Hacker)
- HELP-Hawaii Early Learning Profile (Parks & Furuno)
- Infused Skills Assessment (Hagood) *
- INSITE (Morgan & Watkins) *
- Oregon Project (Anderson, Boigon, Davis & deWaard)
- Vineland (Sparrow, Balla & Cicchetti)
- Communication Matrix (Rowland)
- Dimensions of Communication (Mar & Sal)
- Home Talk (various authors) *
- School Inventory of Problem Solving Skills (Rowland & Schweigert)*

Qualitative Data Sources

In-depth Interviews (14)
Focus Group Interview (10)
Survey of Family Specialists (12)

Qualitative Findings
Interviews and Surveys

Challenges:
- Appropriate assessment tools
- Expertise of assessment team
- Time to conduct assessment
- Accuracy of assessment report
- Relationship to program planning

Recommendations:
- Family involvement
- Multiple and skilled observations
- Natural situations
- Familiarity with child
- Interview skills
- Interdisciplinary approach
In other words, use an “authentic” approach
Authentic Assessment

A multidimensional, team-based approach which seeks to:
- Capture the richness and complexity of a child’s cognition and behavior
- Understand the child in the context of his/her natural social and physical environment
- Integrate the family’s perspective with those of professionals
- Apply the information to enhance the child’s development and acquisition of skills.

The Planning Phase

Assembling the Team

Getting the Family Involved

Selecting Appropriate Assessment Instruments

- Define the questions and the scope of the assessment
- Multidisciplinary
- Include individuals with deepest knowledge of child

Selecting Appropriate Assessment Instruments

- Helps structure observations:
  - What to look for
  - How to interpret
  - Compare across observers
- Accuracy, Applicability, Convenience
- May use parts of several instruments
- See reviews in our assessment guide
- What about standardized tests?

Getting the Family Involved

- Meet with the family in advance
- Address their questions and concerns
- Identify any obstacles to participation

- Prepare questions and identify your goals and concerns in advance.
- List your child’s special skills and interests.
- Ask about the instruments and procedures, and who participates in the assessment.
- Suggest possible times that a team member might observe your child at home or in other familiar settings.
- Complete any parent questionnaires or assessments so that the team can better understand your child’s abilities.
Observing in Natural Contexts and Staged Situations

**Natural**
- Gather information about the child in everyday contexts and routines
- Identify typical and optimal skills
- Multiple perspectives

**Staged**
- Manipulate the natural context to encourage specific behaviors
- Fill in gaps in knowledge and validate impressions

Involving Specialists
- Vision specialists
- Hearing specialists
- Physical therapist
- Occupational therapist
- Speech-language pathologist
- Health professionals

What Questions Should an Authentic Assessment Address?

Expressive Communication
What existing communication behaviors should be promoted and what new skills should be targeted?

Receptive Communication
What forms of communication does the child understand? How can we best communicate with this child?

Social Interaction
What opportunities exist to enhance the child’s social interactions, play, and communication with others?
**Hearing/Vision**

What adaptations and accommodations are needed to support the child’s use of hearing/vision for communication?

**Sensori-motor Skills**

What adaptations are needed to support the motor behaviors and tactual experiences needed for communication?

**Preferences**

What activities, materials, people, and contexts motivate the child to communicate and learn?

**Temperament**

How does the child’s temperament affect learning and communication? How can we use this information to develop effective interventions?

**Final Products**

- Guidelines for the Assessment of Young Children who are Deafblind
- Data Summary
- PowerPoint DBI conference 2009

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