



Assessment

by Dr. Timothy Shanahan

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Importance of Assessment

Imagine that you are using a map to find your way along a hiking trail. What do you do first? Most likely you look at the map and find your starting point. You find your starting point because you must first consider where you are before you make a plan for where you want to go.

And so it is with teaching. You can't effectively figure out how to get where you are going without considering what your students already know and can do. That is what classroom assessment is all about: trying to figure out where kids are in relationship to where we would like to get them. No wonder research shows that the effective use of assessment with young children leads to greater gains in learning; teachers who recognize how their children are doing are better able to help them learn.

Developmental Benchmarks

Preschool teachers—and parents and physicians too—have long used developmental benchmarks to ensure children are growing properly. We can look at charts to see how tall a child usually is by a particular age or when they are likely to begin crawling, walking, and talking. There are no hard and fast rules. However, by matching a particular child's development against these normative benchmarks, it is possible to identify potential delays.

The use of academic learning benchmarks is useful in supporting appropriate child growth. An early childhood teacher who has a clear idea of the types of skills and levels of proficiency a child should attain prior to school entry is better able to recognize delays early, to provide beneficial instruction and reteaching as needed, and to offer parents more supportive advice in helping their child to succeed.

Appropriate Assessments

There are times when formal testing may be needed to determine if a child has particular skills. Although the majority of early childhood educators value formal assessment, most recognize that such testing is rarely the way to go with very young children. Assessment during the preschool years is more appropriately carried out by observing children carefully and purposely during particular kinds of activities. By monitoring student performance, a teacher can develop a firm understanding of student achievement. Then, by examining these achievements over time and matching them against benchmarks, learning targets, or the curriculum itself, the teacher can clearly identify instructional needs. Teachers share this information with parents and together they devise an educational plan that supports each child's growth and development.

Adjusting to Children's Needs

Effective teachers adjust or differentiate their instruction based on children's individual learning needs—providing greater support to some children while encouraging others forward to even more challenging tasks. Productive teachers alter the amounts of practice and help provided, and they do this based on assessments.

Of course, it can be difficult to monitor all the different kinds of learning that children need to do. The challenge lies in the range of skills and abilities that can be observed, including social and emotional development, physical and health development, motivation and approaches to learning, as well as performance in various academic skills. In addition, the need to carry out and remember ongoing monitoring for all children can be complicated. Given how rapidly young children change, it is crucial to observe their performance over time, during multiple tasks, to ensure the information is reliable.

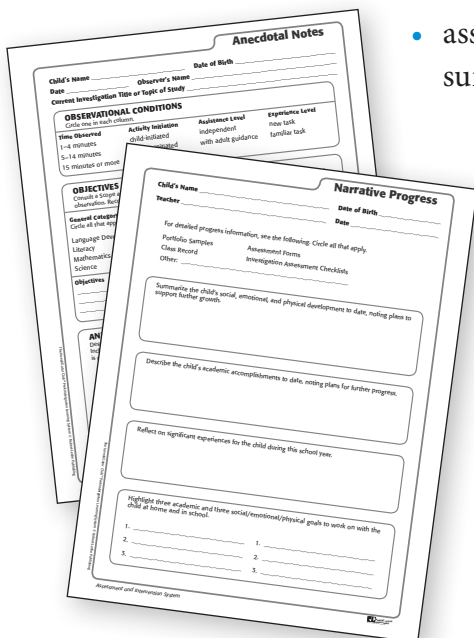
Keeping Assessment Records

Given these challenges, some kind of record-keeping is especially important. Preschool teachers need to keep anecdotal notes about student performance along the way so the information can be used later to make instructional decisions. Retaining a portfolio of these notes and examples of student performance is critical to making decisions about children that can make a real difference in their learning, and the use of this information helps teachers focus on what is most important instructionally.

Incorporating Dr. Shanahan’s Research and Philosophy

The InvestiGator Club® provides a comprehensive **Prekindergarten Assessment and Intervention System** that addresses the needs of children, teachers, and administrators. This system includes:

- benchmarks (called objectives) that identify learning goals in ten key domains.
- clearly labeled Teacher Guide features that provide opportunities for observational and performance-based assessment.
- ideas for creating and maintaining portfolios.
- assessment cards to aid teachers in identifying children’s levels of development.
- intervention strategies to modify and differentiate instruction at home or school so each objective can be met.
- assessment management tools, including assessment forms, records, and surveys.



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Assessment in the InvestiGator Club®

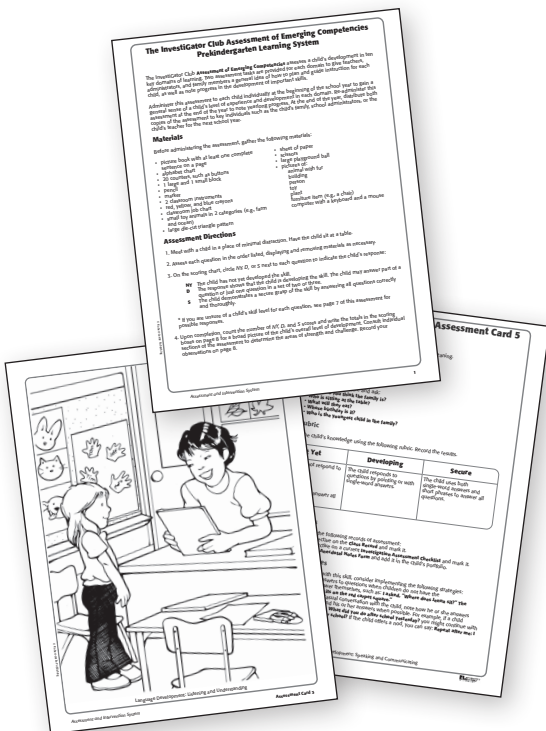
The assessment components of The InvestiGator Club® Prekindergarten Learning System aim to help each teacher:

- implement and document authentic and performance assessment as a means to support children’s learning and development.
- plan differentiated instruction for each child.
- utilize intervention strategies to further develop skills.
- include families in the assessment and planning processes.
- assess their own program and use the information to make adjustments and improvements.

The InvestiGator Club invites teachers to use authentic and performance assessment to provide an approach that is continuous, conducted in a natural setting, based on a child’s performance and growth over time, and directed by the teacher.

Authentic assessment aims to evaluate children’s abilities on real-life tasks or challenges in natural or authentic settings. Opportunities for authentic assessment are suggested throughout each Teacher Guide. Provided are suggestions for observing, questioning, recording anecdotal notes, and collecting representations of children’s learning in Small Group, Whole Group, and individual settings.

Performance-based assessments are designed to evaluate children’s abilities to use specific knowledge, skills, and work habits as they perform meaningful and engaging tasks. Children might, for example, perform, demonstrate, create, experiment, or produce something. In The InvestiGator Club, evaluating children’s learning in performance assessment includes the Assessment of Emerging Competencies (to be administered at enrollment and at the end of the year) and step-by-step instruction on assessment cards that include intervention strategies and rubrics for common levels of performance.



System Components

The **Prekindergarten Assessment and Intervention System** is a comprehensive system with authentic and performance assessment tools to help you measure and record a child's progress and guide instruction throughout the year. The system enables family members to provide their observations and input as collaborators in evaluating and planning for their children. The Teacher Guide for each Investigation also includes day-to-day assessment suggestions.

Assessment Card 15

Objective
Understand how to handle and care for books.

Materials
• Classroom bookshelf, rack, or tubs with picture books

Directions

1. Display the card back. Say: **This is Maya. Maya is taking a break from a library shelf. Maya is excited with books. Now it's your turn to choose a book. Listen to what I ask you to do.**
2. Give the following directions, reading after each one to note the child's book handling:
 - **Take a book from the bookshelf.**
 - **Listen to me hold the book.**
 - **Open the book and show me one of your favorite pictures.**
 - **Close the book.**
 - **Put the book back on the shelf.**


Scoring Rubric
Analyze the child's knowledge using the following rubric. Record the results.

Not Yet	Developing	Secure
The child does not follow the directions and shows little to no knowledge of how to handle or care for a book.	The child follows one or two directions and shows some knowledge of how to handle or care for a book.	The child follows all directions, showing knowledge of how to handle or care for a book.

Recording Results
Use one or more of the following records of assessment:
• Find the objective on the **Class Record** and mark it.
• Find the objective on a current **Investigation Assessment Checklist** and mark it.
• Complete an **Anecdotal Notes Form** and add it on the child's profile.

Intervention Strategies
If a child needs practice with this skill, consider implementing the following strategies:
• Watch the child in the Reading Center while the child selects, uses, and returns a book to the bookshelf.
• Invite the child to be your special helper when you read aloud to the class. Guide the child to correctly choose, carry, and put back the book.

Library: Book Knowledge and Appreciation



Library: Book Knowledge and Appreciation

Assessment Cards are used to measure a child's development of 100 skills across ten learning domains. Each card includes activity directions, a scoring rubric, intervention strategies, and a list of assessment records you can use to record results.

Anecdotal Notes Form can be used to record observations of a child's actions, words, or representations.

Anecdotal Notes

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth _____
 Date _____ Observer's Name _____
 Current Investigation Title or Topic of Study _____

OBSERVATIONAL CONDITIONS
Circle one in each column.

Time Observed	Activity Initiated	Assistance Level	Experience Level
1-4 minutes	child-initiated	independent	new task
5-14 minutes	teacher-initiated	with adult guidance	familiar task
15 minutes or more	with peers		

OBJECTIVES EVIDENCED
Circle all that apply. Check all that apply.

General Category	Circle all that apply	Circle all that apply	Circle all that apply
Language Development	Creative Arts	Social Studies	
Library	Social and Emotional Development	Technology	
Mathematics	Approaches to Learning		
Science	Physical Health and Development		

OBJECTIVES

ANECDOOTAL NOTES
Describe your observations of the child's learning in progress, including what the child did and said. Include information about your interaction with the child. Write on the back of this form if more room is needed.

PRESERVING INFORMATION
Attach these notes to relevant work samples, photos, audiotapes, or videotapes. Place the files in the child's profile for later analysis.

Narrative Progress

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth _____
 Teacher _____ Date _____

For detailed progress information, see the following. Circle all that apply.

Portfolio Samples	Assessment Forms
Class Record	Investigation Assessment Checklists

Other: _____

Summarize the child's social, emotional, and physical development to date, noting plans to support further growth.

Describe the child's academic accomplishments to date, noting plans for further progress.

Reflect on significant experiences for the child during this school year.

Highlight three academic and three social/emotional/physical goals to work on with the child at home and in school.

1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

Narrative Progress Form can be used before a parent-teacher conference or at any time during the year to record a child's progress and the plans for future learning.

At-Enrollment Family Survey

can be used to record and then share information about the child, the family, and the child's prekindergarten experiences. It is also available in Spanish.

At-Enrollment Family Survey

School Year: _____ School Name: _____ Teacher's Name: _____
 Child's Name: _____ State: _____ Parent/Guardian Name(s): _____
 Date: _____

DIRECTIONS
Please answer the following questions.

ABOUT YOUR CHILD

- Does your child have a nickname that you would like us to use? If so, what is it?

- What are your child's favorite activities?

- Does your child have a favorite toy? If so, what is it?

- What are your child's greatest strengths?

- What are your child's biggest challenges?


- What concerns, if any, do you have about your child?

- What would you most like us to know about your child?

- What are your greatest hopes for your child?

- What, if any, health conditions does your child have that require classroom modifications?

Assessment and Intervention System 1



ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

- Does your child have any siblings? If so, how many and what are their ages?

- Which family members are particularly involved or important in your child's life?

- Is there any other important information that you would like us to know about your family? What?

ABOUT THE PREKINDERGARTEN EXPERIENCE

- Has your child attended school in the past? If so, was the experience a positive one? Explain.

- What does your child look forward to this school year?

- What, if anything, is your child nervous about concerning this school year?

- What do you most want your child to learn this school year?

OVERALL

- What else would you like us to know? Do you have any questions we can answer for you?

At-Enrollment Family Survey
Assessment and Intervention System 2

End-of-Year Family Survey

School Year: _____ School Name: _____ Teacher's Name: _____
 Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

SCALE
NA = does not apply 0 = disagree 1 = neutral/no opinion 2 = agree

DIRECTIONS
Circle or write the number that most accurately reflects your opinion.

ENVIRONMENT

- I visited my child's classroom approximately _____ times. I felt welcomed and comfortable.
NA 0 1 2
- The classroom is clean, tidy, and safe.
NA 0 1 2
- The classroom has ample supplies and materials.
NA 0 1 2

INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- My child's teacher encouraged family involvement.
NA 0 1 2
- Through this program, I felt actively involved in the education of my child.
NA 0 1 2
- The teacher communicated with me in many ways, such as written messages and phone calls.
NA 0 1 2
- The teacher communicated with me in a clear and friendly manner.
NA 0 1 2


YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

- I feel that my child is more likely to be comfortable and successful in his or her next year of school than he or she would have been without this prekindergarten program.
NA 0 1 2
- I feel that my child has made progress during this school year in these areas.
(Please write NA, 0, 1, or 2 to indicate your opinion.)
 Language Development _____ Literacy _____
 Mathematics _____ Science _____
 Creative Arts _____ Social and Emotional Development _____
 Approaches to Learning _____ Physical Health and Development _____
 Social Studies _____ Technology _____

OVERALL

- I feel my child's academic and emotional needs were met through this prekindergarten program.
NA 0 1 2

Assessment and Intervention System 1



DIRECTIONS
Please answer the following questions.

- In your opinion, what are this program's greatest strengths?

- In your opinion, what are this program's greatest challenges?

- What are your suggestions for improvement?

- What five words or phrases describe your child's experience in school this year?

- What five words or phrases describe your experience with this year's prekindergarten program?

End-of-Year Family Survey
Assessment and Intervention System 2

End-of-Year Family Survey is a form you can use with family members to record observations about their child's development and the effectiveness of your prekindergarten program. It is also available in Spanish.

Individualized Education Plan

I. Student Data	II. Dates
Student Name: _____ DOB: _____	IEP Meeting Date: _____
Address: _____ Student #: _____	From _____ to _____
City: _____ Zip: _____ Grade: _____	IEP Duration Dates: _____
Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____	Re-Evaluation Date: _____
Home Phone: _____	
Mother Work: _____	
Father Work: _____	Purpose of the Meeting:
Other Phone: _____	Initial Addendum
Emergency Contact Person: _____	Annual Re-Evaluation
Emergency Phone: _____	Meeting Attendees:
ELL: Yes No _____	_____
Primary Language: _____ Language of Instruction: _____	_____

III. Present Levels of Education Performance
Clearly specify the child's current levels of performance in academic, nonacademic, social, and emotional areas.

IV. Consideration of Special Factors
Clearly specify any special needs of the child including those related to health, physical development, and language acquisition which might be considered when creating an instruction plan.

V. Instructional Plan/Recommendations
The following is a description of an Individualized Education Plan for the child:

Assessment and Intervention System

Individualized Education Plan is a form you complete in collaboration with family members which includes specific information about a child to help create an individualized plan for instruction.

Class Record is a form you can use throughout the year to record children's progress in each skill section of the program.

Class Record

KEY
NY = Not Yet D = Developing S = Secure

Assess each child several times throughout the year. Choose the child's level of progress after assessing. Record the date in the corresponding box to show child's level of progress.

Student Name	Plan and carry out a sequence of actions.			Listen for different purposes.			Listen to and understand conversations.			Listen to and understand stories.			Listen to and understand songs.			Listen to and understand finger plays.		
	NY	D	S	NY	D	S	NY	D	S	NY	D	S	NY	D	S	NY	D	S
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Assessment and Intervention System

The InvestiGator Club Assessment of Emerging Competencies

The InvestiGator Club **Assessment of Emerging Competencies** assesses a child's development in ten key domains of learning. Two assessment tasks are provided for each domain to give teachers, administrators, and family members a general idea of how to plan and guide instruction for each child, as well as note progress in the development of important skills.

Administer this assessment to each child individually at the beginning of the school year to gain a general sense of a child's level of experience and development in each domain. Re-administer this assessment at the end of the year to note yearlong progress. At the end of the year, distribute both copies of the assessment to key individuals such as the child's family, school administrators, or the child's teacher for the next school year.

Materials

Before administering the assessment, gather the following materials:

- picture book with at least one complete sentence on a page
- 20 counters, such as buttons
- alphabet chart
- 1 large and 1 small block
- pencil
- marker
- 2 classroom instruments
- red, yellow, and blue crayons
- classroom job chart
- small toy animals in 2 categories (i.e., farm and ocean)
- large die-cut triangle pattern
- sheet of paper
- scissors
- large playground ball
- pictures of:
 - an animal with fur
 - a building
 - a person
 - a toy
 - a plant
 - a furniture item (i.e., a chair)
 - a desktop computer
 - any CD-ROM disc

Assessment Directions

- Meet with a child in a place of minimal distraction. Have the child sit at a table.
- Assess each question in the order listed, displaying and removing materials as necessary.
- On the scoring chart, circle *NY*, *D*, or *S* next to each question to indicate the child's response:
 - NY** The child has not yet developed the skill.
 - D** The response shows that the child is developing the skill. The child may answer part of a question or just one question in a set of two or three.
 - S** The child demonstrates a secure grasp of the skill by answering all questions correctly and thoroughly.

* If you are unsure of a child's skill level for each question, see page 7 of this assessment for possible responses.

- Upon completion, count the number of *NY*, *D*, and *S* scores and write the totals in the scoring boxes on page 8 for a broad picture of the child's overall level of development. Consult individual sections of the assessment to determine the areas of strength and challenge. Record your observations on page 6.

Assessment and Intervention System

Assessment of Emerging Competencies is a broad-based assessment to be administered with each child at the beginning and end of the school year to identify strengths and challenges and to guide instruction.

Investigation Assessment Checklists, found at the back of each Teacher Guide, can be completed for each child during each Investigation to record progress.

Investigation Assessment Checklist

Let's Investigate!

Child's Name _____ Date _____

Procedure

1. Review the child's portfolio, including all work samples and **Anecdotal Notes Forms** from this investigation. Mark a level of development for each skill on the checklist.
2. You can also use **Assessment Cards** and record information here. After testing with an **Assessment Card**, use the rubric shown on the card to determine the child's level of development.
3. Transfer this information to a **Class Record** or place this checklist in the child's portfolio for use when completing a **Narrative Form**.
4. Share this information with parents and administrators.

KEY

NY – Not Yet (Child does not demonstrate knowledge or skill.)

D – Developing (Child is making progress toward demonstrating the knowledge or skill.)

S – Secure (Child readily demonstrates the knowledge or skill.)

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT			
Listening and Understanding	NY	D	S
Plan and carry out a sequence of actions.			
Listen to and understand conversations. (Assessment Card 1)			
Listen to and understand stories. (Assessment Card 2)			
Listen to and understand songs.			
Listen to and understand finger plays.			
Listen to and understand poems.			
Understand and follow directions. (Assessment Card 3)			
ELL: Listen to and understand English.			
ELL: Develop a vocabulary of object names and English phrases.			
Speaking and Communicating	NY	D	S
Use language to express routines and scripts. (Assessment Card 7)			
Identify objects in the environment.			
ELL: Speak in English.			
ELL: Use new language sounds.			
ELL: Engage in nonverbal communication.			
ELL: Use single words and simple phrases to communicate meaning. (Assessment Card 5)			
ELL: Use new vocabulary and grammar in speech. (Assessment Card 6)			

246 Investigation Assessment Checklist

Assessment

Observe children as they use the puppets. Note if children have trouble participating in an increasingly extended way. Record progress as anecdotal notes.

Assessment opportunity features appear throughout each Teacher Guide and provide suggestions for day-to-day assessment.

Assessment

Do children make reasonable predictions about what will happen next in the story?
Use **Assessment Card 19** to assess this skill and to implement intervention strategies.

Assessment

Can children identify and write the letters *Q* or *q*?
Collect writing samples for their portfolios.

Support for English Learners

In classrooms with English learners or multilingual learners, it is important to create space for students to participate across languages to help deepen understanding and equitably assess content area learning and development. As you observe these learners in your classroom, look for assessment opportunities that take into account language development and allow students to connect skills and concepts to their home language. Following are some suggestions that you can adapt to help scaffold formative assessment:

- Encourage students to participate in discussions and activities in their home language as well as in English.
- Help students figure out the meanings of new vocabulary words and have them draw pictures to show their understanding.
- Invite students to connect new words to their home language and share similar words or concepts they know in their home language.
- Give students time to practice new academic language independently or in small groups.
- Take anecdotal notes as students use new language in discussions.
- Have students who share a home language work in pairs or small groups to retell or act out parts of a story, and invite them to share with the class.
- Collect samples of student work in English as well as their home language.
- Invite students to make connections to concepts or activities based on their experiences.

Portfolios

Whether digital or physical, a portfolio is the “home” for a child’s representations and records of their progress. Building and keeping an organized portfolio makes assessment and record-keeping easier and more efficient. Following are some examples of portfolio items.

Physical Representations	Photographs
drawings paintings artworks writing dictated stories child-made books child-made projects computer printouts graphs, maps, diagrams	child engaged in a Learning Center or Investigation Station three-dimensional projects or structures collections of matched or sorted concrete objects child engaged in outdoor gross motor activities or outdoor play child engaged in indoor fine motor activities peer or adult/child interactions child engaged in dance or movement activities child engaged in health routines or daily routines
Audio	Video
singing conversations or interviews storytelling the playing of instruments	investigation and inquiry problem solving, trial and error puppet play or dramatic play conflict resolution indoor and outdoor play with peers
Completed Assessment Forms	Informal Notes and Observations
Anecdotal Notes Individualized Education Plans Narrative Progress Assessment of Emerging Competencies Family Surveys Investigation Assessment Checklists	lists of favorites, such as books, friends, foods, activities simple descriptions of teacher-child or peer interactions field trip observations positive turning points and milestones

Creating and Maintaining Portfolios

Whether digital or physical, a portfolio is the “home” for a child’s representations and records of their progress. Building and keeping an organized portfolio makes assessment and record-keeping easier and more efficient. Following are some examples of portfolio items.

There are many ways to create portfolios. Following are some suggestions that you can adapt to best fit your classroom environment:

- digital portfolios on computers and/or tablet devices
- accordion filing boxes
- artists’ portfolios
- cardboard banker’s boxes with file folders
- donated doughnut or pizza boxes
- folded corrugated cardboard cut from large boxes
- folded, taped pieces of poster board
- hanging file folders in a file cabinet
- plastic storage containers
- shoe boxes

Organize each child’s portfolio items logically, such as by subject area, date, or learning domain. (Note: Be sure to date every entry that goes into a child’s portfolio. This is key to noting growth over time.) Keep in the portfolios only the items that you will analyze to note progress. Regularly send home items that will not be used for assessment purposes in order to keep portfolios neat and manageable.

Analyzing Children's Portfolios

The InvestiGator Club provides teachers with all the tools they need to gather and analyze a child's progress and plan further instruction. To begin the process of analyzing, first develop a clear yearly plan. Decide how many times a year you will review children's portfolios. Will you do your analysis once in the fall, once in the winter, and once in the spring? after each Investigation? just before parent-teacher conferences?

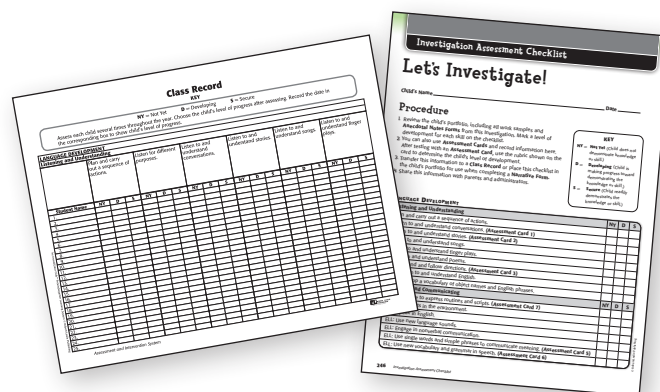
During each time of analysis, divide your workload, evaluating only a few portfolios at a time. Give yourself plenty of time to read, reflect, and record.

When you review a portfolio, carefully study all of a child's assessment forms and representations of their learning. Use the information to form a clear idea of the child's progress over time. Note areas of marked growth as well as areas that remain a challenge.

As you analyze a portfolio, study and complete your method of recording, such as your school's or center's report card, an Investigation Assessment Checklist from the back of a Teacher Guide, or the Class Record from the Assessment and Intervention System. Mark the child's progress in the areas you are reviewing.

- If you are using the Class Record, keep in mind that this form includes every skill covered in The InvestiGator Club and that these skills are taught over the course of an entire school year. In other words, children will not be exposed to every skill until the end of the year.
- A child's individual Investigation Assessment Checklist provides a list of skills taught during each Investigation.

When you have recorded the progress of each child in your class, use what you have learned to plan and differentiate instruction.



Planning and Differentiating Instruction

Once you have analyzed children’s portfolios and recorded their progress, you are ready to think about how you would like to proceed with further instruction for the class as a whole and for individual children. Begin by asking yourself questions such as the following:

- What skills present the biggest challenge for the majority of my class? Should the children already be secure in these skills, or are they developmentally on track? What can I do each day to reinforce these skills? Do I need to review these skills with explicit instruction?
- What skills are “secure” for the majority of children? Can I move away from teaching these skills for most of the class, focusing on them for only a few children? How can I meet with these few children on a regular basis to reinforce these skills?
- Do any of my students show special needs? Is it time to seek formal testing? Do I need to gather the child’s family and an administrator to create an individualized education plan? (Note: The **Assessment and Intervention System** provides an Individualized Education Plan Form.)

After considering children’s needs based on your analysis and findings, study your current Investigation Teacher Guide. Use the blank weekly lesson planners provided in the Teacher Guides and in the Planning tab of this guide. Carefully consider the model lessons and the choices to meet children’s needs based on your analysis and the requirements of your school’s or center’s program. Place self-stick notes over the IEP Notes in the Teacher Guide, marking on them instruction modifications for specific children.

Communicating Assessment Analysis

Share assessment analysis with families, administrators, and teaching personnel. How analysis is shared is often dictated by school or center policies, which should be carefully followed.

Families

- Invite families to be part of the assessment process with an “open door” policy, regular meetings with parents, and having families complete surveys.
- Encourage families to use the assessment information to help develop a plan that meets their child’s interests, needs, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Provide specific at-home activities to support the needs of each child. See the Intervention Strategies on the Assessment Cards for ideas.
- Explain authentic assessment, your record-keeping system, and the analysis process.
- Always share assessment analysis in a caring and positive way.

Administrators

- Provide administrators with access to portfolios, Investigation Assessment Checklists, and your Class Record.
- Share with administrators your record-keeping system and analysis process.
- Be thorough and on time when turning in your assessment records and lesson plans.

Teaching Personnel

- Pass along portfolio samples and completed forms to next year’s teachers.
- Coordinate efforts with speech pathologists, special education teachers, music teachers, art teachers, physical education teachers, and so on to provide added support in skills that children find challenging.

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