

Guidance for Choosing/Developing Assessments in School Age Programs

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Programs in YoungStar with school age children (5 – 12 years old) are encouraged to use developmental child/youth assessments tools appropriate to the age of the school age child to understand each child's developmental strengths in all developmental domains and their individual interests and their need for continued growth and support. When selecting or developing an assessment, it should provide the program with information for selecting and providing curriculum activities. This guide will assist programs that wish to develop their own child/youth assessment tools or assist programs in choosing a tool.

Programs should be able to use what is learned from the assessment process to establish lesson plans and program areas where they aim to improve child outcomes. Child outcomes can describe the knowledge and skills children should acquire by the end of the year. The year is determined by the program (end of school year, calendar year, or year of age). Comprehensive child outcomes define the range of knowledge and skills that children should master. They can also extend beyond knowledge and skills, describing the kinds of habits, attitudes, and dispositions children are expected to develop as a result of a classroom or group experiences. Outcomes for school-age children might be determined by program as:

- Children demonstrate age-appropriate social skills,
- Children demonstrate problem-solving skills,
- Children demonstrate knowledge about healthy lifestyles, and
- Children acquire and gain new knowledge and skills that are reflected from a child's approaches to learning.

Programs may develop other outcomes that capture the unique aims of the program. The outcomes used should reflect the program's philosophy and goals.

The child assessment process used for school age programs should have three components:

- Child questionnaire and/or interview process
- Parent/ family questionnaire
- Program staff observation

For the **child interview/questionnaire** part of the assessment process, the process should be completed by the child alone or with assistance from the program staff either or by interview with the child. The process should include the following:

- The child should indicate their curriculum interests. This could be done by an inventory of the child's interests in each content area identified by the curriculum framework. It should include opportunities for ranking favorite interest areas.
- The child should offer their perspective on his/her comfort level with peers, interactions with adults, values of caring, respect, responsibility, and self-esteem. This should give the staff a picture of the child's social/emotional development.

- The child should indicate their approaches to learning. The child's perspective on his/her interest in learning and the ability to be defective and successful as a learner will assist the staff to develop curriculum that will support the approaches.
- The child should indicate their perspective on personal health and wellness. This provides the program staff with the child's perspective and knowledge about healthy choices and understanding of what contributes to wellness.

For the **parent/family questionnaire** part of the assessment process, it must be completed by the family which will give them the opportunity to be engaged in the process and either through interview or take home assessment checklist the family will be able to offer the program information about the child from the perspective of family members who are most familiar with the child. The family should have an opportunity to share their observations and concerns on the following:

- the child's social or emotional development,
- about any areas of learning and the family's knowledge of special areas of interest/aptitude the child may have,
- the family's commitment to supporting their child in healthy choices, and
- the family's knowledge of resources outside of the immediate family that their child might have access to (teachers, coaches, etc.)

In the **program staff observation** process, this process should be based on observation and be completed at least twice annually of the following:

- the child's social/emotional and character development. Observation will assist staff to address issues like the child's ability to engage with other children, empathize with others, manage conflict and work on communication skills.
- the child's approaches to learning. Program staff can address child's skills in their ability to manage and complete tasks, take interest in learning new things, and gain independence in learning and practice problem-solving.
- the child's personal health and wellness. This should address factors such as the child's understanding of choices and habits that contribute to good health and wellness practices.
- the child's support system. This gives the program staff opportunity to address what is observable about the child's access to people, systems and materials that support his/her wellbeing and learning.

Guidelines for designing assessment tools:

1. Observations should only be for items that are directly observable during the time the child is in the program.
2. When asking questions in the interview or on the questionnaire, the questions should be stated positively (strength-based) to children or the families.
3. The use of both questions and observations is preferable in order to offer the opportunity for a range of responses rather than simple yes or no answers.
4. Consider the child's age and ability to respond when asking questions on a questionnaire or in interviews with children.
5. Assessment components for both children and for families must consider cultural and linguistic diversity.