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Research Snapshot No.19

Authentic Assessment for Early Childhood Intervention: In-Vivo & Virtual Practices for Interdisciplinary Professionals

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*In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of
country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.
We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to
all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.*



*Presented by Trish Wachtel,
Developmental Educator.*

What you need to know

The paper focuses on outlining a step-by-step model for authentic assessment which supports developmentally appropriate practice quality standards for both in-vivo and virtual practices.

Standards are proposed for natural environments; observational methods; family centred practice' interdisciplinary teamwork; and the essential link between assessment and intervention.

The paper was motivated by the 'lessons learned' from the COVID pandemic about implementing authentic assessment for early childhood intervention (ECI) and infuse the results from the LINK forum research to shape the proposed step by step process.

What is this research about?

This research explores how interdisciplinary professionals can effectively assess and support young children with developmental delays or disabilities.

It emphasises the use of authentic assessment, which involves real-life, developmentally appropriate, and individualised evaluations rather than standardised tests.

The study highlights the importance of integrating both in-person (in-vivo) and virtual practices to support a holistic approach for assessment linked to intervention.

What did the researchers do?

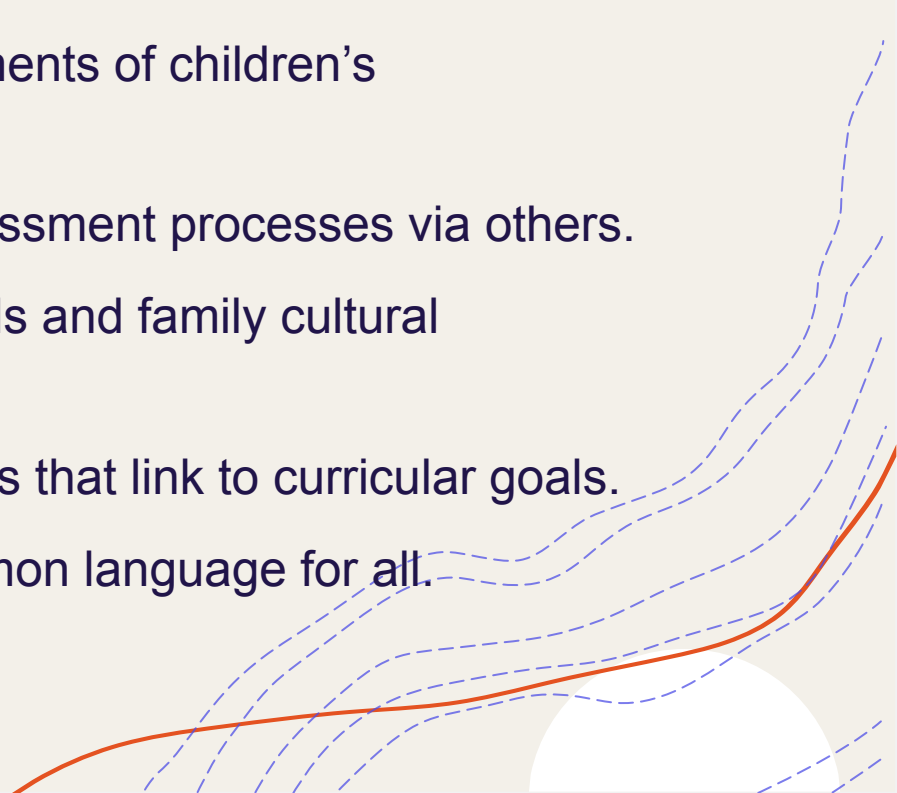
The researchers synthesised findings from the LINK Forum, which brought together international and interdisciplinary experts to establish consensus on best practices for authentic assessment.

They developed a step-by-step model that incorporates observational methods, natural environments, family-centered practices, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The model also integrates technology to enhance assessment without replacing in-person observations.

What did the researchers find?

The step-by-step model for authentic assessment in early childhood intervention includes the following key components:

1. Use technology as the basis and integral feature for all assessments of children's competencies.
 2. Reframe the assessor's role as "Orchestrator" of authentic assessment processes via others.
 3. Choose a teamwork model with parents that fits the child's needs and family cultural preferences.
 4. Select a developmental profile to record functional competencies that link to curricular goals.
 5. Employ "family-friendly" materials that are jargon-free and common language for all.
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What did the researchers find?

6. Observe first children's natural competencies in play/classroom routines.
7. Record videos of child's play to validate and archive observations of status/progress.
8. Observe/record child capabilities across multiple settings, people, and occasions using multiple methods.
9. Partner with Parents and Caregivers.
10. Partner with Teachers and Team Members.
11. Engage in child play to probe specific skills.
12. Select familiar toys/peers to prompt child play.
13. Interview caregivers about child competencies and needs.
14. Use clinical judgment and consensus team decision-making.

How can you use this research?

This paper is relevant to any person involved in ECI that is involved in assessment for intervention.

Practitioners can apply the step-by-step process for authentic assessment by:

- Conducting assessments in natural environments where children feel comfortable.
- Using observational methods during everyday routines to capture authentic behaviours.
- Engaging families as active partners in the assessment and goal-setting process.
- Collaborating with interdisciplinary teams to interpret data and plan interventions.
- Integrating technology such as video recordings and virtual platforms to supplement in-person assessments.
- Linking assessment findings directly to individualised intervention plans.
- Continuously monitoring progress and revising goals based on the child's development.

Where to from here?

This research presents an opportunity to rethink how assessment and intervention are approached in early childhood intervention.

This is a call to action for practitioners, planners, and policymakers to prioritise child voice, family partnership, and evidence-based practices in all aspects of early childhood intervention.

About the researchers

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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!