

Professional Analysis of Developmental Appropriateness for Terrific 3 Portfolio

Patricia St. John

Dr. Nikum Pon

Seattle Pacific University

The item to be reviewed in this paper is a developmental assessment for 3 year olds called Terrific 3 Portfolio. This portfolio is available from the blog [LovelyCommotion.com](http://LovelyCommotion.com).

The assessment consists of a parent assessment of child cognitive, motor, language and motor skills, with a social emotional component as well. There is a teacher checklist of developmental skills is quite complete and covers cognitive, language, motor skills and social emotional skills at the time of assessment. There is also a large portfolio section that uses a combination of easily marked tests for children such as counting six objects, or determining which item doesn't belong. There are also pages that collect artifacts, such as cutting, drawing one's self, and areas for dictation from verbal questions. The portfolio is 38 pages long, with areas for showing growth over the year by providing multiple pages for self portraits, cognitive growth questions, and small motor growth as well.

This item is intended to show growth in a variety of developmental areas for children of a specific age. It is to be used several times over the year and there are similar portfolios for ages 2 and 4 that can help show progression over time. This particular portfolio is intended to be used on children aged 3 years old.

The target population of this portfolio is any three year old child, being intended to show if children are developing correctly and show any areas that could cause concern. This portfolio works well for the ELL population as it has many artifacts and teacher observation to support the findings in the portfolio. The portfolio is also open ended enough that the verbal sections can easily be translated by a trained professional and assessment can take place in a child's native language.

Developmental considerations for the age group include gender, especially when assessing language skills (BOUCHARD, TRUDEAU, SUTTON, BOUDREAULT & DENEULT, 2008), actual age in years and months, native language and English proficiency (Washington Department of Early Learning, 2009, p. 2), how the assessment is administered, and if it is “ethical and appropriate for young children” (Petersen, Jones, &McGinley, 2008, p. 3). When questioning why we need to assess the developmental level of children we know that “children grow and learn very rapidly from birth to age three. Infants and toddlers have no time to lose when they need early intervention to enhance development and learning” (WA DEL, 2009, p.1). Therefore it is important that we assess children at different intervals so that intervention services made are made available at the earliest possible time (WA DEL, 2009).

This particular developmental assessment has much strength over a non-portfolio style assessment. In particular it provides authentic assessment that is also developmental in form and can be tailored to fit the needs of a student, teacher or school. A portfolio can also be supplemented with additional artifacts and anecdotal information and still remain cohesive (Huffman, 2008). In addition to being authentic in the form of assessment that is being done the assessment also provides a lot of developmental information coming from check lists. These are simple and easy to use and a lot of children can be assessed quickly, making this assessment practical for teachers and fun for children.

In addition to teacher generated checklists, parents are also encouraged to fill out a developmental checklist on their own to contribute to the portfolio. This is important because parent involvement in developmental assessments leads to a more complete view of the child and provides information that may not otherwise be available or as accurate (SeokHon, 2006).

Other strength of the assessment is that many of the checklist items are supplemented with a portfolio assessment page. This allows for notes by the teacher and individual assessing if necessary. Many children may seem to perform well in a group situation, but are not yet developed enough in the area to perform certain tasks on their own. Other children may be influenced by their peers when demonstrating skills and need to be assessed individually. This supplementation also provides an artifact that can be used to build a portfolio style assessment for the children. Specifically the sequencing, small motor skills and cognitive pages give evidence of a child's ability at the time of the assessment.

One particular item that is a great strength is for language development is that the child is asked open ended questions that aren't set down as specific questions. Sample open ended questions are provided and can be used, modified or changed as the goal of the questions is to get the child to talk, tell stories and demonstrate grammar and sentence length abilities. In this area a teacher might know of an area of interest that the child will talk about to demonstrate language development, instead of having to use the provided questions. This provides for a more authentic experience for the child and will build a stronger portfolio.

As mentioned previously an assessment must be ethical and appropriate for the age that is being used for. Many assessments are used to help create guidelines for the state and other such legislation (Petersen, et al., 2008), and those guidelines are used by centers to see if children are generally developing in a normal manner and to identify any areas of concern. To be sure that you are using the guidelines effectively, you must use an appropriate assessment more than once a year. This particular assessment is designed to be used three times during the year, providing a clear picture of a child's development in an ethical and appropriate manner.

One particular weakness of this particular document is that it does not cite the developmental standards set out by Washington Department of Early Learning, or other governing body. This document is designed to be used as a developmental assessment but does not provide any information on what typical development is and the ranges of abilities that children may display at given ages. When assessing children for developmental abilities it is important to understand that there is a scale and not all children will develop at the same rate (WA DEL, 2011). The particular problem with a checklist, regardless of how it is worded, sends forth the message that ‘yes, this child can do this task’ or ‘no, this child cannot do this task.’ Many people, parents in particular, may take this information out of context and worry needlessly that their child isn’t developing normally, or may push children to perform tasks they are not ready to perform. Providing the developmental guidelines can help caretakers to understand the developmental process and focus on what the child can do.

The issue mentioned above about a checklist is that there is subjectivity when assessing the developmental stages of a child. Many children are building skills and not quite capable of a skill, but are not yet performing the desired task. Instead of a checklist that only has two options of ‘yes’ and ‘not yet’ there should be a scale that shows progression, and can show progression over time. It would also show the developmental process better than a simple yes/no answer.

This issue extends to the parent information sheet; they are also checklists with a simple yes/no answer. Many skills and developmental areas are subjective and without a common background the assessments may not yield the information desired. Before assessing any child there needs to be clear and defined guidelines that will be used by everyone assessing the child. This could be in the form of simple descriptions of age ranges, lists of things to expect from

children at typical ages coupled with specific examples of what is acceptable for the skill and what is not acceptable.

Specific changes to this developmental assessment have already been touched upon. To be a comprehensive document that shows growth and development there needs to be developmental guidelines included as part of the document. The guidelines should come from an accredited agency such as WA DEL, or the National Association for the Education of Young Children. They should be laid out in a separate area as a guideline to be used during the assessment. There should also be specific guidelines laid out in the assessment with examples of what is considered to be successful and what is still in progress. Specific directions should be given for the assessment so as to provide a consistent evaluation from child to child.

Instead of checklists for developmental skills there should be a scale with at least three options to choose from. These scales could be labeled in the friendly fashion that is prevalent in the current document with a 'yes' 'still in progress' and 'not yet' as the choices. The parents should not be provided with checklists unless they are accompanied by the aforementioned guidelines. Rather than a checklist from the parents it would be better to get anecdotal evidence, with parents writing a sentence or two describing the child's actions or abilities. These could then be evaluated by the educator and a set of guidelines can be applied to using the information to determine how the child is progressing at home versus in the school environment as laid out by the WA DEL (2011).

Though there are many areas that could use improvement the Terrific 3 Portfolio has a lot to offer to those who chose to use it. A portfolio is a wonderful thing to have and look back on, as well as an excellent way to show progress and development. Having this tool to use and work

with will be a great advantage in the classroom, and provide the teachers with a deeper understanding of where the students are on a developmental scale.

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