

Using AEPS®-3 Assessment Activities

The AEPS-3 Test is designed to assess children from birth to age 6 and to monitor their developmental progress over time. The preferred method for completing the Child Observation Data Form (CODF) is through observation, though it is also acceptable to score items by using reported information or by testing the skill directly. Because using a comprehensive measure like the AEPS-3 Test can be time consuming, programs may need ways to streamline initial assessment and subsequent progress monitoring of children. AEPS-3 offers assessment activities for both home- and center-based programs to help meet this need. Using these activities can save staff significant time while still providing accurate information on the current developmental status of individual children or groups of children. In addition, the information from these activities can help staff select appropriate goals and outcomes as well as teaching and intervention content for children.

AEPS-3 Assessment Activities are semistructured activities created to help teams use observation as the primary method of gathering information. The intent of the assessment activities is to help individuals and teams observe targeted skills by embedding AEPS-3 items to be assessed into commonly occurring home and classroom routines and activities. Assessment activities can be used to assess a single child across more than one area of development or to assess groups of young children across developmental areas. Home-based assessment activities are designed primarily for assessing a single child across more than one area of development but can be used for multiple children. Center-based assessment activities are designed primarily for assessing groups of young children across developmental areas. With center-based activities, children with a wide range of abilities can participate and be assessed during common activities. Center-based assessment activities can easily be incorporated into the structure of a playgroup, a child care center schedule, or a preschool classroom's typical routine. The sections that follow describe the content and organization of the AEPS-3 Assessment Activities, offer guidelines for completion, and highlight use of information generated by the assessment activities.

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES CONTENT

AEPS-3 has two sets of assessment activities, listed in Table 4.1, one featuring home-based activities (see Appendix 4A for activity overviews) and one featuring center-based activities (see Appendix 4B for activity overviews). Individual assessment activities center around a specific scenario, such as storytime, and are designed to elicit an array of target skills across developmental areas. A complete set of assessment activities includes all AEPS-3 Test items only once, so by using the 10 activities in one set (home-based or center-based), professionals assess all items that appear across all eight areas of the AEPS-3 Test. As children engage in an assessment activity, team members score the test items that specific activity addresses. For example, the home-based Outdoor Play assessment activity highlighted in Box 4.1 provides potential opportunities to assess a variety of skills as children engage in play related to more than 40 items from the Gross Motor, Social-Emotional, Social-Communication, and Cognitive areas.

Table 4.1. AEPS-3 Assessment Activities in Appendices 4A and 4B

AEPS-3 Assessment Activities—Home-Based (Appendix 4A)	AEPS-3 Assessment Activities—Center-Based (Appendix 4B)
*Blanket Play (37 items)	*Blanket Play (36 items)
*Book About Me (39 items)	Book About Me (53 items)
Conversations with Familiar Adults (43 items)	Classroom Routines & Transitions (42 items)
*Counting Precious Objects (41 items)	Conversations with Familiar Adults (40 items)
Daily Routines & Transitions (45 items)	Dramatic Play (29 items)
Eating & Mealtime (37 items)	Eating & Mealtime (45 items)
Mystery Box (35 items)	Outdoor Play (42 items)
*Outdoor Play (48 items)	Playdough & Manipulatives (27 items)
Quiet Time (54 items)	*Store (41 items)
Rough & Tumble (28 items)	Story Time (52 items)

*New to AEPS-3.

Each set of AEPS-3 Assessment Activities (home-based and center-based) follows these guiding principles:

1. All test items are included in each set (home-based or center-based).
2. Each item is in only one activity per set.
3. Item sequences, to the extent possible, are preserved to facilitate scoring.
4. Very simple and very complex skills, to the extent possible, do not appear in the same activity.
5. Each activity assesses skills from a maximum of four AEPS-3 areas. In general, there are two primary areas and two supporting areas per assessment activity.

Each assessment activity has a cover sheet with a description of the activity, suggested materials and procedures, and a list of target test items, as well as a data collection form for the AEPS-3 Test items that can be assessed and scored with that activity. The brief description provides an overview of the activity and the types of developmental skills that can be assessed. Suggestions regarding materials include examples of common toys and objects related to the activity or those needed to successfully assess items targeted. Suggestions regarding procedures include examples of how to elicit demonstrations of the targeted AEPS-3 items through the choice of key materials, the actions of familiar adults and peers, or verbalizations by adults and peers. Each assessment activity follows this format:

- Activity title and type (home-based or center-based)
- Basic identifying information (date, observer, program, and children assessed)
- Description of the assessment activity
- List of suggested materials
- List of suggested procedures
- List of target skills likely to emerge in the activity—test items by area, strand, and goal or objective number
- The data collection form for the test items that can be assessed and scored with that activity, listed in order by area and strand, with space to enter scores for each item for up to five children

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES COMPLETION GUIDELINES

Recommendations for using the AEPS-3 Test also apply to using the assessment activities for completing the test. The AEPS-3 Test can be completed by observing one child or by observing several children at the same time as they engage in a group activity. However, beginning users should start by focusing first on one developmental area with one child and gain familiarity with that method before moving on to assess more than one child simultaneously or one child across several developmental areas

Being outdoors and engaging with the natural world is a healthy, positive activity for young children. Outdoor activities such as playing in a sandbox and discovering nature are often included in children's daily schedules at home. Outdoor play can involve child- or adult-directed games and may include imaginary play. Nature discovery activities offer children multiple opportunities to explore the environment by

- Making observations ("A bucket filled with leaves is lighter than a bucket filled with rocks")
- Generating and testing hypotheses ("If I throw a leaf and a rock with the same force, I think the rock will go farther")
- Explaining their understanding of the phenomena ("The rock goes farther because it weighs more")

Observers may have opportunities to see and document a variety of developmental skills as children engage in and talk about outdoor play activities:

Gross Motor

- Bounces ball with one hand
- Kicks ball
- Throws or rolls ball at target with two hands

Social-Emotional

- Plans and acts out recognizable event, theme, or storyline in imaginary play
- Maintains cooperative activity
- Maintains engagement in games with rules

Social-Communication

- Responds to comprehension questions related to *why*, *how*, and *when*
- Uses language to initiate and sustain social interaction
- Provides and seeks information while conversing using words, phrases, or sentences

Cognitive

- Draws plausible conclusions about events beyond personal experience
- Anticipates outcome of investigation
- Investigates to test hypotheses

Box 4.1 Developmental Skills in AEPS-3 Home-Based Outdoor Play Assessment Activity

simultaneously. Once experienced, users are better able to assess small groups of children across several developmental areas.

Following are basic guidelines for getting started using the AEPS-3 Assessment Activities:

- Identify the child or children to be assessed.
- Review the assessment activities, with the goal of selecting ones that seem most appropriate for the child or group of children to be assessed.

- Review the assessment items included in the assessment activity's data collection form to prepare.
- Consider the child's or children's interests and the areas in which it is most important to collect information when choosing activities.
- Make any modifications necessary to ensure that the assessment activities fit the program's and the participating children's needs, target areas of concern, and hold children's interest.

Team members have many options for structuring and using the assessment activities. One possibility is to assess a group of children in a center-based program over several days by organizing assessment stations, conducting a different assessment activity at each station, and having small groups of children rotate from station to station during the day. Another possibility is for the team to first set up one activity area and assign small groups of children to it each day until observation and data collection for all children are complete, and then introduce a new assessment activity and have the children rotate through the area again, continuing until all children have been assessed. The team should explore options to find the most useful way to obtain important assessment information efficiently. Assessment activities can be used both to obtain initial assessment information and to collect progress monitoring information by having children participate in the activities repeatedly over time.

The data collection form for each assessment activity lists all the goals and objectives that activity addresses by strand and area, with space to score each item for up to five children. Figure 4.1 shows an example from a completed form. The scoring criteria are identical to those of the AEPS-3 Test (2, 1, and 0), with the same scoring notes associated with a score of 1 (A, I, and AI) and the same general notes (C, M, Q, and R). See Volume 2, Chapter 2, for a detailed discussion of the scoring guidelines. Observing and scoring a child's or children's performance is flexible and can be done 1) live, with information entered directly on the data collection form; 2) by videotaping and scoring at a later time; or 3) by taking notes during the observations and assigning scores and notes through retrospective conversations and debriefings.

Once the child or children have completed an assessment activity and the team has reviewed the scores for all items, the next step is to transfer the data to each child's CODF. This can be done manually using a print version of the CODF. AEPSi supports using a set of assessment activities to observe a child or group of children. Once the assessment activities are complete, the system will populate and score an individual CODF for each child assessed. Whether the team observes one child or a group, there is no need to manually transfer data.

USING THE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES WITH FAMILIES

Families and other familiar adults should be invited to participate throughout the assessment process and can be involved in using assessment activities in many ways. First, family members and other caregivers can provide information useful to scoring AEPS-3 Test items that may be difficult to observe. Second, families can participate in administering the assessment activities by engaging their children in the activities and eliciting behaviors related to specific test items. Third, families can participate by helping to compare the child's performance to the stated item criteria, including assigning a score, summarizing assessment information, and interpreting results. Both the home- and center-based assessment activities include one additional activity, Conversations with Familiar Adults, that is designed to help assess items that may be difficult for teams to observe. This activity provides a way to involve those who are most familiar with the child in the assessment process.

USING INFORMATION FROM THE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Viewing a child's performance data on the CODF not only helps the team better understand a child's developmental status in each area but also provides helpful guidance in selecting teaching and intervention goals and objectives. If the team has used the assessment activities to collect progress monitoring information, they can review these new findings on the child's CODF and then make comparisons to determine child changes over time.

AEPS-3 home- and center-based assessment activities help providers efficiently collect children's baseline or initial developmental information as well as subsequent progress monitoring data. Staff can readily adjust how data are collected and recorded to best fit their needs and resources. Assessment activities are designed to be flexible and can be of great assistance in meeting program requirements while maximizing use of staff time and resources.

CENTER-BASED ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY		aeps3	
Story Time			
Score Key		Note Key	
Mastery performance 2	Emerging performance 1A = Assistance 1I = Incomplete/Incomplete	No performance 0	C = Conduct M = Modification Q = Quality R = Report
Name: Manuel G	Name: Julia H	Name: Kim W	Name: Rehan P
DOB: 10-27-16	DOB: 12-5-16	DOB: 3-7-17	DOB: 6-30-17
Fine Motor			
D. Use of Electronic Devices			
1. Uses finger to interact with electronic device	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
1.1 Uses finger to interact with simple electronic game	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
1.2 Uses finger to interact with touch screen	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
Cognitive			
B. Imitation and Memory			
2. Imitates novel words	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
2.1 Imitates novel vocalizations	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
2.2 Imitates familiar vocalizations	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
Literacy			
A. Awareness of Print Concepts			
1. Participates in shared group reading	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
1.1 Participates in shared one-on-one reading	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
2. Demonstrates understanding that text is read in one direction and from top to bottom of page	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
2.1 Turns pages of book from beginning toward end	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R
2.2 Holds book or other printed material with pictures correctly oriented	Target	Score	Notes
		2	C M Q R

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Figure 4.1. Example completed page of assessment activity data collection form.