

ASSESSING VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN KINDERGARTEN

May 22, 2003

Understanding, describing and Assessing Children's Development: A Workshop for Teachers, Parents and Significant Others in Children's Lives.

Presenter: Marianne McTavish, Primary teacher; Pro-D Coordinator, Vice-president of the BC Primary Teachers' Association; Sessional instructor, UBC, Department of Early Childhood.

1. Introduction
2. What is Vulnerability? Who is the vulnerable kindergarten child? (Playing the detective)
 - Looking at the whole child
 - Primary Program description and explanation
 - o/h of goals of PP
 - o/h kindergartner expectations/widely held expectations in each goal area
 - "at risk" definitions
3. Issues in Assessing Vulnerable Children in Kindergarten. (Playing the game)
 - a) Philosophical issues
 - standardized testing
 - Decontextualization of testing – formal and unfamiliar, time limits, unfamiliarity with types of tests, restrictions on moving about, talking or asking for help, a prohibition on responding in different ways, stressful for children, not helpful for ld kids
 - Developmental issues "wait and see"
 - time
 - b) Political issues
 - raising scores, (reading, writing, numeracy FSA),
 - data driven
 - no child left behind
 - early intervention,
 - funding and providing services
 - labelling
 - screening devices
 - non support for teacher judgment

- standards movement

c) Research Issues

- brain research
- early reading – phonemic awareness

d) Publisher issues

- bandwagon – phonemic awareness, data driven

4. What do Kindergarten Teachers Do to Assess Vulnerable Children?

- assessment in context, triangulation O/H, examples, dynamic assessment, performance assessment
- assessment for learning, assessment of learning - quote
- DA assessment
- -judgements of children’s learning progress have implications for immediate intervention. Teachers have numerous opportunities to observe children’s learning
- teacher’s accuracy in assessing academic abilities is well documented
- informed about what is known about children’s development quote “effective teaching uses information gained through a comprehensive plan of assessment and evaluation to make thoughtful, informed instructional decisions and to design interventions as required”
- consideration of the whole child in context of family and community
- unique learning styles
- developmental differences in boys and girls
- maintain high expectations
- performance standards – reading, writing, numeracy, social responsibility
- teaching and learning cycle
- adherence to the PP – a guide to effective practices for primary educators
- foundation and adherence to the five areas of the PP O/H
- collaborative assessment – teachers, parents administrators, LA, school psychologists – team approach - teacher has the prime responsibility

5. Implications for the Practice- policies and structures that promote success for all children

- early intervention
- O/Hs of approaches to address vulnerability using the Primary Program and in particular, literacy

6. Conclusions