

DESIRED RESULTS DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE: DOES IT INCREASE STUDENT
LEARNING?

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ABSTRACT

This study was completed to find if there is an increase in student learning through naturalist observation assessment and teacher planning using the Desired Results Developmental Profile. It is very important in an early childhood classroom, that the students are learning and being assessed in their most natural environment. And with preschoolers, this means play. The idea of Desired Results Developmental Profile is to take away formal assessments with preschoolers and introduce teachers to an assessment that assesses children while they are playing. It then teaches teachers how to use those scores to plan lessons and centers that allow the children to have significant growth in their learning by the end of year when the teacher assesses the students again. But does it work? Does it really do what it says it does? This study was done comparing the scores of the Desired Results Developmental Profile and formal assessments to answer that question. Data was collected through both the Desired Results Developmental Profile and another test that was given to the students. Both of these assessments were given twice a year, once in December and once in May. Then the teacher looked at the tests and compared the scores between the two groups of students: The ones who participated in the Desired Results Developmental Profile and those who did not to see if those who participated in the Desired Results Developmental Profile had more student learning. After all the assessments were given, the findings concluded that Desired Results Developmental Profile does make a significant difference in student learning. The group who were involved in the Desired Results Developmental Profile made significant progress throughout the year with their average scores growing by 8.34. On the other hand, the group were not involved in the Desired Results Developmental Profile did not make significant progress throughout the year with their average scores only growing by 5. In the middle of the year, the gap between the two groups was not all

that different from each other, but after the Desired Results Developmental Profile was implemented, by the end of the year, the gap was much greater.

INTRODUCTION

Background, Issues and Concerns

There was a study done using the Desired Results Developmental Profile. The idea of Desired Results Developmental Profile is to take away formal assessments with preschoolers and introduce teachers to an assessment that assesses children while they are playing. It then teaches teachers how to use those scores to plan lessons and centers that allow the children to have significant growth in their learning by the end of year when the teacher assesses the students again. This study was done because, it is something that was being implemented new in an early childhood classroom this year and the teacher wanted to see how it differs from other assessments that she has done in the past and if it helps impact her instructional and center time with her students. One concern that she has is actually doing the assessing part. She does not have a lot of experience or training in doing naturalistic observation/play-based assessment and doesn't feel very comfortable with it. Another concern that the teacher has is that she will only be assessing six of the ten students with this assessment, but the problem is that she only have just the six two times a week, the other three days; she have at least one more, if not all four more. She feels think this will make things difficult when she is assessing them. To only assess those six and not the other four that are there that day could prove difficult.

Practice under Investigation

The teacher wanted like to see if using the Desired Results Developmental Profile increases student learning through naturalist observation assessment and teacher planning.

School Policy (practice) to be Informed by Study

This study will affect her classroom a great deal. This study will inform the things that she does do in her classroom, because it is an assessment. It will affect her planning, her instructional time, her center time and many other parts of her day.

Conceptual Underpinning

Educators such as Friedrich Froebel and Maria Montessori strongly believed in the importance of play. Froebel designed the first kindergarten and to him, play was an extremely important route to learning. Montessori developed curriculum that incorporated natural play activities, letting children decide how they wanted to play and learn. John Dewey also had strong opinions regarding play; that the interests and needs of children should come first. His ideas have become the foundation for many current views of play. Dewey advocated an education for young children that was embedded in their current experience in the world that surrounded them. He thought play could be used to help children reconstruct their experience and to gain meaning from it. If children are able to explore and try to find meaning in the world around them through play, they are learning more than they would by simply sitting and listening to a teaching telling them what they need to know. Children need the freedom to discover and question what they see in order to grow in their development.

Statement of the Problem

The students are currently only being assessed through formal assessment which means what they know in that snap-shot of time. Desired Results Developmental Profile was created

to be a naturalist observation tool to help assess students in a more natural realistic environment. There is also a lot data and collecting evidence throughout the process, so it is not a snap-shot. It is truly what the students are mastering during that time period.

Purpose of the Study

The teacher wanted to see if using the Desired Results Developmental Profile increases student learning through naturalist observation assessment and teacher planning.

Research Question

Is there a significant difference in student learning between students involved in Desired Results Developmental Profile and students not involved in Desired Results Developmental Profile?

Null Hypothesis(es)

There is not a significant difference in student learning between students involved in Desired Results Developmental Profile and students not involved in Desired Results Developmental Profile.

Anticipated Benefits of the Study

The hope in doing this study is that it will help the teacher to assess her students in a more naturalistic environment and increase student learning. She also hopes that it will give her information about where her students are to help her better plan lessons/centers.

Definition of Terms

Desired Results Developmental Profile= the teaching staff assesses each child's overall growth and development using the Desired Results Developmental Profile. It is an observation tool for teachers to record individual progress toward the achievement of four Desired Results for children: Children are personally and socially competent, Children are effective learners, Children show physical and motor competence and Children are safe and healthy. The Desired Results Developmental Profile list behaviors that, when fully mastered would indicate the achievement of these desired results for children. The assessment of children drives the curriculum which in turn, supports the learning and acquisition of skills in preparation for Kindergarten.

Naturalistic Observation= is a research tool in which a subject is observed in its natural habitat without any manipulation by the observer

Play-based Assessment= is a tool used while a child is playing usually in his/her natural environment. The observer is able to see the interactions between the child and peers as well as noting speech and language and motor abilities.

Summary

To summarize this all up; A study will be done about naturalistic observation and play-based observation to see if it has an impact on student learning. This study will be done over the course of the year to see if after giving the assessments the first time and having those

results will affect the students learning and scores the second time around at the end of the year.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Play is the leading occupation of a child and vital for the development of the child's cognitive and social skills (Lautamo, 2011). Play is a complex behavior that appears deceptively simple (Stagnitti, 2004), so much so that adults don't understand what is really happening when a child is playing. But in fact, play is so important to a child's growth and development. According to author Stagnitti (2004), Play is regarded as an all-encompassing activity that helps develop skills in cognition, socialization, communication, self-awareness, problem-solving and sensory-motor function. Play facilitates flexibility in thinking, adaptability, learning, problem-solving, exploration to gain a sense of mastery over one's environment, integration of information from the environment, and development of social, intellectual, emotional and physical skills (p. 9). Play is also defined as exploratory in nature, and consisting of a variety of activities that involve movement and manipulation in relation to the environment (p. 5).

For this reason, the assessment of children's play ability provides us with very important knowledge about children's performance abilities and the interaction between a child and his/her environment (Lautamo, 2011). However, much too often, driven by the atmosphere of high-stakes testing in K-12, the administrators and curriculum development experts overemphasize cognitive skills, worst example is that many children are retained in kindergarten or in a K-1 transitional setting because of their low scores on a reading readiness test in kindergarten. Yet longitudinal studies show that children with high scores on kindergarten readiness tests do not necessarily continuously perform well in K-12. Instead, children's social behavioral competencies are the stronger predictor for children's early learning as well as future success. For example, children's early interpersonal behavior;

learning-related social-emotional skills; cooperation as well as self-control and self-regulation were found to be the very powerful predictors of early school success (Bagnato, 2006). While the high-stakes testing movement has not been fully applied to early childhood education, the various early childhood fields have been dominated, nevertheless, by conventional norm-referenced testing practices to the detriment of young children who are at developmental risk; mischaracterization, assignment to special education circumstances, exclusion, and retention have been the major consequences of developmental inappropriate testing procedures (Bagnato, 2006). Conventional tests and high-stakes testing procedures are decontextualized for the typical daily activities and routines of young children in home, center, classroom and community settings. Young children do not display their competencies by sitting quietly at tables, responding on demand, and pointing to pictures on flip cards. Rather, preschool children learn and display their skills appropriately through play, both unstructured and structured (Bagnato, 2006). Bagnato (2006) feels that high-stakes testing is a violation of the professional standards for evidence based practice in the early childhood fields and should be abandoned and replaced by more developmentally appropriate forms of authentic assessment of development, social behavior, and early learning skills (p. 25). A form of performance assessment known as “authentic assessment has been used in the early childhood fields and is gaining popularity as the premier form of measurement for young children. “Authentic assessment refers to the systematic recording of developmental observations overtime about the naturally occurring behaviors of young children in daily routines by familiar and knowledgeable caregivers in the child’s life. Authentic assessment is a deliberate plan of investigating the natural behavior of young children” (p. 29). It requires professionals or

teachers to assess children's behaviors repeatedly and periodically throughout the year. That is, children would be evaluated at different times during a day and different months within a year. Continuous and repeated measurements of children's behavior provides educators, researchers and professionals the most complete and accurate information regarding children's real abilities and progress overtime. Finally an informative and individualized instructional and/or intervention plan should be planned and developed according to the "authentic" outcomes of children's real abilities. In this context, children and families are not the only recipients of benefits. Researchers, teachers, service providers also benefit from it in that authentic assessment provides clear and useful information for them to create high quality programs as well as evidence based practice when they tailor teaching, care and individualized services to children and families (p. 35).

There are many types of authentic assessments. One type of authentic assessment is Play-Based Assessment (PBA). This approach was developed by Linder and focuses on collecting developmental information through a child's play in a familiar environment. PBA consists of 6 phases: Unstructured Facilitation, Structured Facilitation, Child-Child Interaction, Parent-Child Interaction, Motor Play, and Snack. A PBA session follows the child's lead. In addition, materials and activities are offered that build on a child's strengths, emerging skills and individual interests to encourage spontaneous play and interactions. The phases are not implemented in a specific sequence and are not mutually exclusive. For example, a child is observed taking turns during a spontaneous dramatic play activity with two peers. This interaction encompasses at a minimum, the Unstructured Facilitation and Child-Child Interaction PBA phases. Structured

Facilitation is only utilized if a child does not engage in a specific activity or material(s) (Bruns, 2010).

Another type of authentic assessment is the Desired Results Developmental Profile. According to Karelitz (2010), developmental assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of children's progress in multiple domains over time (p. 1). The overall goal is to use information gathered to enhance child development and learning (p. 2). The Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) is a set of assessment instruments designed to track children's progress in three age groups: Infants/Toddlers (I/T), Preschool (PS) children, and School-age (SA) children from kindergarten through 12 years old (p. 3). The DRDP has 4 indicators: children are personally and socially competent, children are effective learners, children show physical and motor competence, and children are safe and healthy (p. 3-4). The DRDP is a curriculum embedded observational assessment tool, firmly grounded in research on early childhood education and designed to measure progress of children from birth through 12 years old. The DRDP is designed for teachers in child development programs. During daily interactions and program activities, teachers have multiple opportunities to observe children while they naturally exhibit behaviors associated with different developmental domains. Teachers are trained to take anecdotal observation records and collect evidence. The DRDP helps teachers reflect on each child and rate him or her on a comprehensive set of age-specific measures of development of individual children. The rating is done twice a year for each child and is supported by the evidence collected in the preceding weeks (p. 4). Teachers rate children at a particular level if they observe them performing the behaviors described for that level easily, confidently, consistently and in different settings (p. 5). The main goal of the DRDP is for teachers to internalize the

process of collecting information and reflecting about children under their care. Teachers use this information to support the growth of individual children and communicate with parents during parent-teacher meetings. Moreover, the intent is for programs to use information from the DRDP to evaluate and improve their curriculum to enhance services they provide for children (p. 7). The idea is for a teacher to use the instrument to gather information about the students' current state and identify areas that need further attention. She may find that the majority of the students' have not yet reached the highest levels of the literacy indicator, which may lead her to adjust the frequency or quality of the program's literacy-based activities (p. 8).

To assess students in any other authentic assessment model, data collection is very important. In developing a system for managing data collection, data analysis and use of data, it is important to consider practicality and fit, such as the logistics of gathering, managing and analyzing the data, striving to "keep things simple, clear and understandable." To support this process, it is suggested that teaching staff formally schedule data collection into their weekly lesson plans, focus on specific activities and times of the day, and that staff be clearly assigned to the data collection schedule (Brawley, 2014). Ongoing data collection, combined with the analysis of students' acquisition of a skill or concept, tied to an intervention or to instruction is very important in an early childhood setting (Brawley, 2014).

Learning takes place within an interpersonal context whereby warmth and responsiveness of the caregiver are of critical significance. The caregiver's roles include creating learning environments, selecting learning events, focusing children's attention on those events that are important and also following the children's lead, and encourage skills development (Barnett, 1993).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

For the study, the teacher broke up her ten students into 2 groups. The first group is the six students that will be assessed with the Desired Results Development Profile and the second group will be the four students who will not be assessed with the Desired Results Development Profile. The teacher also gave all ten of her students a different test that is the same test for everyone. There will then be a comparison of the scores of the two groups. The independent variable is the status of the student participates; the two groups. The dependent variable is the scores.

Study Group Description

The classroom is an early childhood pre-k classroom make up of ten 4 and 5 year olds. There are four boys and six girls. The classroom is located in the Early Childhood wing which is housed in the Junior High building of the school District. Five of the classrooms in this wing (including this classroom) are on a self-funded program with funding coming from the parents. The other three classrooms in this wing are early childhood special education classrooms that are mainly funded by the state. Within this classroom of 10 students, all 10 are Caucasian, with only 1 qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Data was collected through both the Desired Results Developmental Profile and another test that was given to the students. Both of these assessments were given twice a year, once in

December and once in May. Then the teacher looked at the other test and compared the scores between the two groups of students: The ones who participated in the Desired Results Developmental Profile and those who did not to see if those who participated in the Desired Results Developmental Profile had more student learning.

Statistical Analysis Methods

A T-test was used for this study.

FINDINGS

A T-test was conducted to decipher whether there was a significant difference in student learning between the students who were involved in the Desired Results Developmental Profile and the students who were not. The following information and charts will show collected data and findings based on assessment scores of the students.

A t-Test Analysis Result for December's Assessments:

Source	Mean	Mean D	t-test	df	p-value
DR	38.33				
Non-DR	28.50	9.83	1.11	8	0.30

Note: significant when $p \leq 0.25$

According to the data received by the December assessments, class 1 (group of six) had an average score of 38.33 while class 2 (group of four) had an average score of 28.50. The Mean D, or difference between the two groups was 9.83. The t-test showed a 1.11 and the degree of freedom was 8. The Null hypothesis must be accepted because the p-value, 0.30, is greater than the alpha level required of .25. There is not a significant difference. Class 1 did not have significantly higher scores than Class 2.

A t-Test Analysis Result for May's Assessments:

Source	Mean	Mean D	t-test	df	p-value
DR	46.67				
Non-DR	33.5	13.17	1.6	8	0.15

Note: significant when $p \leq 0.25$

According to the data received by the May assessments, class 1 (group of six) had an average score of 46.67 while class 2 (group of four) had an average score of 33.5. The Mean D, or difference between the two groups was 13.17. The t-test showed a 1.6 and the degree of freedom was 8. The Null hypothesis must be rejected because the p-value, 0.15, is lower than the alpha level required of .25. There is a significant difference. Class 1 did have significantly higher scores than Class 2.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What these findings show us is that Desired Results Developmental Profile does make a significant difference in student learning. According to the data received by the December assessments, class 1 (group of six) had an average score of 38.33 while class 2 (group of four) had an average score of 28.50. The Mean D, or difference between the two groups was 9.83. The t-test showed a 1.11 and the degree of freedom was 8. The Null hypothesis must be accepted because the p-value, 0.30, is greater than the alpha level required of .25. There is not a significant difference. Class 1 did not have significantly higher scores than Class 2. However, according to the data received by the May assessments, class 1 (group of six) had an average score of 46.67 while class 2 (group of four) had an average score of 33.5. The Mean D, or difference between the two groups was 13.17. The t-test showed a 1.6 and the degree of freedom was 8. The Null hypothesis must be rejected because the p-value, 0.15, is lower than the alpha level required of .25. There is a significant difference. Class 1 did have significantly higher scores than Class 2. Class 1, the group who were involved in the Desired Results Developmental Profile made significant progress throughout the year with their average scores growing by 8.34. Class 2, on the other hand did not make significant progress throughout the year with their average scores only growing by 5. In the middle of the year, the gap between the two groups was not all that difference from each other, but after the Desired Results Developmental Profile was implemented, by the end of the year, the gap was much greater.

As stated in the conceptual underpinning, play is extremely important to learning. The findings of this study confirm this theory. The Desired Results Developmental Profile is an assessment that uses play in the importance of learning. It helps teachers incorporate learning

literacy (and many others) concepts into the child's play. It is also for teachers to observe and assess children through their play and not through formative assessments. Instead, of calling a student over and drilling them through cards and papers, it puts the teacher right in the child's play to see how they are growing and learning. It is the most natural environment for the child to be in and can therefore show that they know more things. Everything about the Desired Results Developmental Profile confirms what was said in the conceptual underpinning, there are no differences.

I would recommend the Desired Results Developmental Profile in every early childhood classroom. It is a great way for the students to learn and be assessed through naturalistic and play-based learning. It showed a significant change in my students' learning throughout the year. For this particular study, literacy was the specific thing that was studied with the Desired Results Developmental Profile. For future studies, maybe math could be focused on, or gross motor, or any of the other specific areas that are within the Desired Results Developmental Profile. Or are there other forms of assessments that are just as good as or even better than the Desired Results Developmental Profile, that assess children in their natural environment?

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