

A Process for Aligning Curriculum-Based Assessment Items with OSEP Child Outcomes

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires states report the progress of children participating in Part C and Part B (section 619) across three child outcomes. In an effort to meet this federal accountability mandate a series of crosswalks that show the alignment between assessment items and OSEP child outcomes are being developed (refer to <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/pages/whatsnew.cfm#crosswalks>). These crosswalks or alignment matrixes are designed to give teams an *at-a-glance* look at how a particular assessment covers or addresses the three OSEP child outcomes. Beyond the development of initial crosswalks, it is critical for teams to ensure that their selected assessment(s) not only align “on the face of it”, but that there is empirical support behind the alignment/crosswalk. Further, efforts should be made to examine if aligned items are sensitive to child change and can be used to produce trustworthy accountability data.

Below are the steps that can be taken to validate the alignment between a curriculum-based assessment and the three OSEP mandated child outcomes. While the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System (AEPS® - Bricker, 2002) was used in the following example, the process can be used with any curriculum-based assessment (CBA).

1. **Step one:** Personnel familiar with the assessment discuss and create a matrix where assessment items are aligned to each of the characteristics under the three child outcomes. See Figure 1 for an example of a matrix. Through this process, inclusion and exclusion criteria should be articulated and agreed upon. For example, can items appear in more than one of the three outcome matrixes?
2. **Step two:** Additional personnel familiar with the assessment as well as those unfamiliar with the assessment but considered experts in child development also discuss and create alignment matrixes. The inclusion and exclusion criteria developed in step one should be shared with personnel involved with step two.
3. **Step three:** All alignment matrixes are compared and disagreements discussed. This steps help to ensure that no items that should be considered are omitted from the alignment matrixes.
4. **Step four:** Final alignment matrixes are reviewed by direct service providers familiar with the assessment. The providers are asked to rate whether they agree or disagree with the inclusion of items with particular child outcomes.
5. **Step five:** The internal consistency of the items that are aligned with each of the child outcomes should then be examined.

OSEP Characteristics	Assessment Items
<i>Initiate and maintain social interactions</i>	
	Turns and looks toward person speaking
	Follows person's gaze to establish joint attention
	Initiates cooperative play
<i>Builds and maintains relationships with children and adults</i>	
	Responds appropriately to familiar adult's affect

Figure 1. Example of alignment matrix for the two characteristics associated with the positive social-emotional skills child outcome and AEPS® items.