

INTRODUCTION TO THE "WE KNOW BEST"

T O O L K I T

Authors: Jon Law and Melanie Latson



The National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) is the preeminent voice for Black children birth to age eight and their families. Since 1970, NBCDI has centered Black joy, brilliance, and thriving children and families. Our work is grounded in the strengths of local Black communities through our National Village Network with more than 20 grassroots organizations across the United States. NBCDI's work is guided by Afrofuturism, the belief that the systemic changes necessary for the liberated future and present that Black people deserve must come from their collective imaginations and vision. This practice of Afrofuturism demands the future that Black children need and deserve, free from the limitations of what already exists. Our work is based on the power of Black families and communities who hold the knowledge to shape that vision.

Black families are powerful advocates and champions for their children, despite the barriers and challenges they must navigate in systems that are often created without them and their children in mind. They hold a wealth of knowledge about their children's brilliance, exceptionalities, dreams, and needs. In the earliest years during preschool, as children learn and grow in more formal settings, assessments serve as a mechanism to measure what children know, are learning, and can do. Yet the design, implementation, and use of preschool assessments for three- and-four-year-old children often overlook and exclude the nuanced experiences, knowledge, and needs of Black children—a direct result of Black families and children's marginalization from how assessments are created and used.

Imagining and building new systems is critical to achieving the future that every Black child deserves. Black parents need the tools, spaces, and networks to build and exercise the necessary power in the present to collectively identify and demand those changes now and into the future. The "WE KNOW BEST" toolkit (i.e., this introduction document, our preschool assessment guide, and the family journal) is the National Black Child Development Institute's way of tapping into the power you already hold as a parent, equipping you to lean into that power, and providing tools that strengthen your expertise. Guided by a vision of a better system of preschool assessments, the "WE KNOW BEST" toolkit is meant to harness the power of what you know best—your child. The toolkit is a way to build knowledge and power, not for the benefit of just your child but to help improve the quality of learning and assessments for all Black children through family advocacy.



INTRODUCTION TO THE "WE KNOW BEST"

TOOLKIT

The current preschool assessment landscape is shaped by these implicit beliefs about Black children and their families: (1) Black children should be measured against standards based on white children and white cultural norms and (2) Black parents' knowledge and expertise related to their children's lives, culture, and experiences is secondary to what educators know and teach. These beliefs have created a world where assessments pathologize, punish, and limit Black children. In this environment, assessments often fail to capture the rich vibrancy of the diversity, creativity, and brilliance woven throughout Black children's unique learning experiences in their homes and communities. As a result, Black children can be subjected to harsh and overused discipline, placed in inappropriate remedial tracks, and offered misaligned supports—all while their unique strengths and needs are overlooked.

NBCDI is actively working to advance a future where preschool assessments protect, affirm, and expand opportunities for Black children ages three to four and, as a result, all preschool children. In this world, assessments will enable families and educators to work together, and Black children are safe, supported, and affirmed. Black children will be recognized for the joy, genius, and love of learning they already embody, while experiencing the freedom to discover and grow into their full potential. To bring that vision to the present, there must be a new foundation of values, beliefs, and ways of thinking to build a new system of preschool assessments.

In collaboration with leaders from our Village Network—through a series of convenings, conversations, and visioning sessions—NBCDI has developed a set of mental models (i.e., values, beliefs, and ways of thinking) that we see as the necessary foundation upon which to build the future of preschool assessments:

- Assessments are rooted in educator and family partnerships that use diverse methods, measures, and tools to understand the whole child, including their strengths and needs through ongoing processes in the classroom, home, and community.
- Parents and families are key decision makers and co-creators of assessment mechanisms. They are partners throughout the process, which includes collaboratively determining how assessments are developed and used, instead of just being informed of assessment results.
- The expertise of parents and guardians about their child is honored. Assessments ideally expand and deepen knowledge about a child, while connecting parents' expertise at home with educators' expertise in the classroom.
- Assessment results are used to create alignment between the home and the classroom, identify key resources to support children and families, and strengthen parent-teacher partnerships to best support children's growth and well-being.

INTRODUCTION TO THE "WE KNOW BEST" TOOLKIT

Shifting toward these new Afrofuturist mental models creates a foundation to shape the actions and decisions of everyone involved in a child's education—parents and families, teachers, assessment designers, school administrators, policymakers, and more. Those decisions will create structures, systems, and policies that create new patterns, experiences, and outcomes.

NBCDI recognizes that Black families have the vision, knowledge, and experiences to advance the Afrofuturist beliefs needed to demand new systems. Although the current system of preschool assessments often marginalizes Black parents and families, those parents and families are not silent or powerless. Instead, Black families need the right tools, language, and guidance to harness the power they hold. The "WE KNOW BEST" toolkit is designed as a first step toward building and wielding that power. It is meant to empower Black parents and families by affirming your positions as leaders and advocates.

As you hold this toolkit in your hands, you also hold the possibility and potential for change. We invite you to use this toolkit to not only advocate for your child but to share this vision with your community through engaging with [your local Black Child Development Institute Village](#) or other community organizations to build collective power.

This toolkit is a living document, and NBCDI wants to continue improving it for the benefit of Black children and families. However, we need to hear from you. Knowing more about how this toolkit is being used—and how you believe it can further support your child's educational experiences—will allow us to continue to build and improve this valuable resource. Contact us at moreinfo@nbcidi.org to share your insights, ideas, and vision.





PRESCHOOL ASSESSMENT GUIDE

AUTHORS: KHAMIAH ALDERMAN AND ALYCIA HARDY

INTRODUCTION

The National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) firmly believes that every child is born full of wonder, brilliance, and genius. From the moment a child is born, their family nurtures these qualities while working to ensure their healthy growth and development. And for Black children, this also means nurturing a confidence that affirms their identity and cultivating an environment that protects their innate brilliance and creativity, in a world that does not always honor their culture, experiences, and strengths.

By the time Black children enter preschool, they already possess rich language, deep imaginations, and strong self-awareness—qualities that should be recognized, celebrated, and built upon. Yet too often, these strengths go unseen and misunderstood due to the bias built into education and assessment systems, a result of norms and standards that exclude or even penalize Black children and families (Curenton & Iruka et al., 2019) (Gay, 2018).



SYSTEMIC RACISM IN EARLY EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENTS

In early education, assessments are meant to measure children's development and guide educators in meeting their learning needs. However, many of these tools are created using research centered around white, middle- to upper-income children, positioning their development pathways as the standard while making other forms of knowledge invisible (MDRC, 2023) (Portilla & Iruka, 2024; Curenton, 2020).

As a result, Black children are measured by tools that were not designed to recognize their full range of skills, including their cultural strengths such as storytelling, creativity, expressive language, and self-awareness (Portilla & Iruka, 2024). These assessments can:

- * Perpetuate existing disparities within the early care and education (ECE) sector
- * Overlook Black children's strengths while overemphasizing "gaps"
- * Lead to misaligned learning or intervention services
- * Result in inaccurate predictions of a child's potential

EXCLUSION OF BLACK FAMILIES IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Black parents and caregivers, who are the fiercest advocates for their children, are often left out of the assessment and curriculum development process (McKoy, 2021; MDRC, 2022). Their voices, insights, and cultural assets are overlooked, when they should be central to shaping how children are evaluated and supported.



About THIS TOOLKIT

There is a critical need for deep systemic change in how assessments are developed, administered, and used to support children's learning, growth, and development. At NBCDI we believe the key to a future with fair, equitable, and culturally relevant assessments must include Black families and parents—not just with their children as the subjects of the assessments but as decision-makers and co-designers of assessments. A key step toward that future is Black families having access to the information, tools, and strategies

needed to critically engage with assessments and to ask questions, challenge bias, and advocate effectively. We acknowledge that families are not solely responsible for how these systems are shaped and how they must be changed, yet their vision and leadership are critical to the necessary changes. This toolkit provides the opportunity for you to build your power, amplify your leadership, and strengthen your knowledge to not only advocate for your child but join a movement of parents and families seeding change.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides foundational knowledge to help you advocate for your child in early education systems through:

- ✦ Key considerations about preschool assessments
- ✦ Ways to celebrate your child's strengths
- ✦ Examples of how bias might impact your child's results
- ✦ Sample questions and strategies to advocate for fair, culturally responsive tools



IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. This is a general resource; terminology, definitions, and assessment types vary by state, district, and even individual program.
2. This is an introductory guide rather than an in-depth resource; use it as a starting point to learn more about what assessment tools and measures are used where you are located.
3. You are the expert on your child! Use this toolkit to strengthen what you know your child needs, to ask informed questions, and to demand the tools that support who they are and what they need to thrive.

PRESCHOOL ASSESSMENTS:

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- **Who Creates Assessments?** Assessments are typically created by researchers, agencies, and private companies.
- **How Are Assessments Created?** Assessments are primarily based on studies using samples of mostly white, affluent children, often ignoring or devaluing the lived experiences of Black children (MDRC, 2022) (Portilla & Iruka, 2024).
- **The Result?** Many tests fail to capture Black children's full brilliance and misinterpret their unique knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking as "deficits" (Portilla & Iruka, 2024).

YOUR POWER AS A PARENT

You know your child best. That's why it is critical to:

1. Question assessments (e.g., "Are they fair? What is being measured?").
2. Engage educators, administrators, and school leaders (i.e., elevate the need for community discussions, family resources, and dedicated time for information sharing before, during, and after assessments).
3. Use results as a starting point—and not the ending point—for your child's potential.

PRESCHOOL ASSESSMENTS:

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Assessments can be valuable tools for identifying both your child's brilliance and areas where more support may be helpful (Acadecraft, 2023). However, systemic biases in how assessments are developed, administered, and interpreted can prevent them from capturing your child's full range of skills, potentially limiting the quality of their educational experience (Portilla & Iruka, 2024). This toolkit outlines strategies to help ensure your child's strengths are being recognized and their needs fully supported.

This section gives you the tools to:

1. Understand common assessment types
2. Partner with teachers to challenge bias
3. Use home learning to showcase your child's true potential beyond test scores



UNDERSTAND ASSESSMENT TYPES AND LIMITATIONS

Formative Assessments

PURPOSE:

Ongoing assessments that monitor a child's progress throughout the year; they guide classroom instruction and support individualized learning to meet a child's specific needs

WHY THEY MATTER:

Help teachers adjust teaching strategies to meet a child's needs in real time

EXAMPLES:

Teacher notes about your child's play

- Teachers may write notes to record how your child interacts with learning materials and peers during free play. This is a way for teachers to document a child's social-emotional skills and problem-solving approaches that a standardized test might miss.

Child Portfolio

- A portfolio shows creative growth over time through a collection of art work and class assignments. It provides insight into certain skills such as cognitive development (e.g., memory, attention, problem solving) and fine motor development (e.g., holding objects such as scissors and crayons, wrist and hand control, molding playdough) skills that show development beyond verbal responses.

Observation

- Teachers record their observations of students' behaviors and participation during classroom activities and lessons.

LIMITATION

Teacher training/preparation and assessment standards may not fully consider, measure, or understand the value and assets of Black children's cultural communication styles and may therefore identify their behaviors as "issues" (Goff & Jackson et al., 2014).

Summative Assessments

PURPOSE:

Evaluate a child's learning at the end of an instructional period by comparing their performance against benchmarks throughout the year

WHY THEY MATTER:

- Provide a picture of what a child has learned
- Help identify long-term learning gaps

EXAMPLES:

Standardized Test (e.g., BRIGANCE Early Childhood Screen)

- This test is a formal assessment that compares children’s progress to a larger population. This assessment is used to flag delays but may not account for cultural or linguistic differences.

Developmental Screening

- This tool, often using questionnaires or checklists, is used to assess a child’s progression within certain developmental areas, such as motor, cognitive, or social-emotional skills. A developmental screening is not used to diagnose children but instead helps identify potential areas where additional support is needed.

Year-end progress report

- This report provides a summary of a child’s growth across developmental areas, such as motor, cognitive, or social-emotional skills.

LIMITATION

Assessments are often designed using mostly white, middle- to upper-class kids as the “standard” (Portilla & Iruka, 2024) (MDRC, 2023). When Black children’s style of communication and engagement or cultural knowledge and experiences falls outside this norm, the limited range of what assessments can measure fails to capture what they truly know and can do. Benchmarks created through this narrow standard may generate results for Black children that are inaccurate, such as identifying the incorrect supports or suggesting supports that are not needed.

Screen Assessments (Early Identification)

PURPOSE:

Identify potential developmental delays and strengths

WHY THEY MATTER:

Help ensure that your child receives the right kind and amount of learning and developmental support in a timely manner

EXAMPLES:

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3)

- ASQ is a parent-completed checklist that measures communication, motor, problem-solving, and social skills. This test relies solely on a parent’s knowledge.

Early Screening Inventory (ESI-R)

- ESI-R is a 20-minute teacher-administered screening for cognitive, language, and motor skills.

Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI-2)

- BDI-2 is a play-based assessment that measures five developmental domains (key areas): Cognitive, Communication, Motor, Adaptive, and Personal - Social.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

- This assessment evaluates a child’s foundational skills (i.e., academic, social, emotional, and physical) prior to entering kindergarten, ensuring they meet state or district benchmarks for school readiness.

LIMITATION

Assessments, even parent-reported questionnaires, are formed without key knowledge and input from the diverse experiences, cultural norms, and unique knowledge of Black families. Instead, emphasis on the experiences of white, middle-class children and families can lead to mislabeling specific behaviors and norms of Black children and families as delayed or wrong (Portilla & Iruka, 2024).

Diagnostic Assessments

PURPOSE:

Identify specific strengths and areas of need in learning

WHY THEY MATTER:

Guide customized learning and support plans

EXAMPLES:

Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA-4)

- BSRA-4 measures foundational concepts such as colors, letters, and numbers.

Preschool Language Scale (PLS-5)

- PLS-5 evaluates auditory comprehension and expressive communication.

LIMITATION

Tests often assume mainstream cultural knowledge that may not reflect Black children's lived experiences (MDRC, 2022).

Social-Emotional and Behavior Assessments

PURPOSE:

To evaluate emotional regulation, social skills, and behavior

WHY THEY MATTER:

Identify strengths and areas in need of support

EXAMPLES:

Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)

- DECA is a strengths-based tool measuring initiative, self-regulation, and social relationships.

Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales

- This tool is used to evaluate a child's personal and social skills needed for everyday living.

LIMITATION

The educational system has been deeply shaped by bias rooted in anti-Black ideas of who Black people are and who they are raising their children to be. These biases are systemic and can shape how educators are trained—and how they are expected to manage their classrooms—as well as school culture and policies. These built-in biases, including adultification bias, where Black children are perceived as older or less innocent than their white peers, can lead to misinterpretation of Black children's behavior (Goff & Jackson et al., 2014) (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). For example, curiosity may be labeled as "defiance," or cultural communication styles may be looked down upon (Goff & Jackson et al., 2014). These biases show up in the ways assessments are developed, administered, and used, and they risk the reinforcement of inequities by misidentifying needs and overlooking strengths (Young, 2016).

BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS



Teachers play a critical role in the early development stages of children by supporting their learning, emotional growth, and social skills. However, Black children often face systemic barriers in early education programs, such as being mislabeled as “disruptive,” overlooked for gifted programs, or subjected to harsher discipline (Goff & Jackson et al., 2014) (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015) (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Building a strong relationship with your child’s teachers can help disrupt these patterns and ensure your child is seen, supported, and advocated for in the classroom.

Ideally, assessments should be tools that help you and your child’s teacher to work collaboratively to ensure your child is receiving a high-quality and equitable education. However, assessments can fall short of capturing and measuring your child’s full brilliance and range of needs. Below are a few suggestions to help build or strengthen your relationship with your child’s teacher.

- **Schedule parent-teacher conferences**

“Hi [insert teacher’s name], can we schedule a meeting or quick call to discuss how [child’s name] is doing socially and academically? What times work for you?”

- **Share information with teachers about your child’s interests, behaviors, and milestones outside of school**

“My child loves [insert hobby/book/topic]. Have you noticed them engaging with this in class? How can we connect it to their learning?”



Conversation Starter Table

When You Want To...	Try Saying...	Avoid...
Build rapport	“I’d love to partner with you this year on [child’s] growth.”	“You need to fix...”
Address concerns	“Help me understand what you’re seeing when...”	“You’re wrong about...”

Important Reminder: YOU are the expert on your child. If something feels off, trust your instincts. Phrases such as “Help me understand...” or “I’ve noticed...” can open collaborative discussions.

REINFORCE LEARNING AT HOME



Learning doesn't stop at school; it thrives at home! By reinforcing skills through play and observation, you not only boost your child's confidence but also gather evidence to advocate for their needs in the classroom. Here's how to make learning joyful and intentional.

Use play-based learning. Teachers typically use play to observe your child's learning. You can continue this learning at home by asking your child's teacher to share what activities, skills, and learning you can mirror at home such as:

- Building structures with blocks
- Completing puzzles
- Engaging in imaginary play

Track your child's progress. Keep a journal or folder of your child's work, advancements, and areas of need to share with the teacher or other school leaders. Also keep a folder of emails, report cards, and notes from meetings. If concerns arise (e.g., unfair discipline, overlooked learning needs, or missed gifted referrals), this record will help you to challenge assumptions with facts.

- Date samples of your child's learning and work at home and at school
 - "My child drew this picture in January. How can we nurture his creativity?"
 - "Last week we read a book she loved about how plants grow. What kinds of books do you have in the classroom to expand her curiosity?"

Align activities with individualized learning goals. After meeting with your child's teacher to discuss their learning needs and strengths, create activities at home to help nurture those strengths, such as reading, recognizing letters and numbers, counting, etc. As your child progresses at home, share that progress with their teacher to ensure that the skills and knowledge they display at home are captured and strengthened in the classroom.

Your home is your child's first classroom. If the school overlooks their potential, use your records to advocate on their behalf.

NAVIGATING BIAS: QUESTIONS & NEXT STEPS



Assessments can be powerful tools to gauge your child's developmental progress in preschool, but their limitations often fail to capture the full brilliance of Black children. These tests were not designed with or for Black children, and their narrow criteria overlook cultural strengths such as storytelling, curiosity, and self-identity. Instead of celebrating these gifts, biased assessments reinforce deficit-based views that already plague Black children's educational experience (Iruka et al., 2022).

The inequities within the assessment design process worsen systemic issues in early education, leading to:

- Disproportionate discipline for Black children
- Unrecognized strengths and capabilities
- Missed opportunities to demonstrate true competence

As a parent, you have the power to ensure your child's strengths are being celebrated rather than dismissed. The following strategies will help you challenge assessment bias, advocate for equity, and ensure that your child's education honors

Navigating Bias in Assessments

Questions to ask before the assessment

“What assessment tool will be used? What is being measured? How will the information be used?”

Why ask: It is important to identify which test is being used and how the results will be used to further your child's development and success. Having this information can help you ask the right follow-up questions, seek out more information, and better collaborate with your child's teacher.

“How will you observe my child's strengths during the assessment?”

Why ask: Framing surrounding Black children and assessments mostly focuses on the child's deficits rather than their strengths. Asking this question highlights how your child is excelling rather than “lacking.”

“Where can I find more information about this assessment?”

Why ask: In some programs, teachers may not be the primary contact for assessment data. Asking this question helps you identify the right source for information.

“How are you distinguishing cultural communication styles from behavioral issues?”

Why ask: This question addresses bias in interpreting Black children's expression.

“What does the process of assessing my child look like? What is the school's and school district's policy for conducting assessments and using the information to support my child? How frequently is my child assessed?”

Why ask: The answers to these questions give you insight into how assessments are used in your child's school and in their classroom, which will help you determine how to best advocate for their needs and monitor their growth and development.

“How is my child's assessment data stored and protected? Who has access to it (e.g., school district, third-party companies)? Is any data shared for research or other purposes?”

Why ask: The answers to these questions ensure you understand how your child's information is stored, who can access it, and whether it's shared for research or other purposes. For example, is the data used by the school only, or could it be accessed by private companies?

“If you [the teacher] cannot answer these questions, whom should I contact for clarity (e.g., program director, mentor teachers, data privacy officer)?”

Why ask: Sometimes teachers do not have the complete background or context for the assessments they're using because these decisions may happen at higher levels of leadership. If the teacher is unable to answer some questions, someone else should be able to.

Questions to ask after the assessment

“Can we review the results together, with specific examples?”

Why ask: *This information provides clear evidence of what the teacher is seeing and how you can work collaboratively to ensure your child is thriving.*

“What strengths did you notice in my child, and how can I continue building on them at home?”

Why ask: *Posing this question pushes back against the negative framing of what children lack.*

“How can we work to align the strengths and needs you see in the classroom with what I see at home?”

Why ask: *This question creates an opportunity to share your knowledge and experience based on what you see and know best about your child and to build a collaborative approach to learning with your child’s teacher.*

“I see there are a few areas that have been identified where my child could use additional support. What interventions are suggested, and how do they build on my child’s strengths while supporting their areas of need?”

Why ask: *When areas of need are identified, it is important that interventions also recognize and continue to build, honor, and celebrate your child’s strengths.*

Navigating Biased Results

Below is a list of possible scenarios that your child could experience within their school or program, including ways you can respond and advocate for your child.

Scenario 1: Over-Identification for “Behavioral Issues”

“I noticed my child was labeled as ‘disruptive.’ Can we discuss specific examples? At home, my child is really passionate about leading games; could this be leadership misread as aggression?”

Scenario 2: Under-Identification for Gifted Programs

“What opportunities exist for advanced learning? Here’s a portfolio of my child’s art and examples of the interests, skills, and abilities they show at home.”

What to Do If Results Feel Unfair

1. Request a meeting with the teacher, center director, principal, or administrator.
2. Bring and share evidence of your child’s strengths (videos or work samples).
3. Demand a re-evaluation or independent assessment if needed.



CONCLUSION: YOUR POWER, YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE

Assessments do not define your child's potential, but your advocacy shapes their future.

You now have the tools to:

- Begin decoding assessments and challenging bias—because numbers don't fully measure your child's brilliance.
- Partner with educators—through your leadership as the expert on your child.
- Track and celebrate your child's genius—at home and in the classroom.

Keep using your voice to:

- Track your child's progress. Your folder of work samples is proof of what they know and can do.
- Build collective power. Connect with other parents in your school/community and join [NBCDI's Village Network](#).
- Demand better systems.

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS WORK.
TOGETHER, WE'RE BUILDING A FUTURE
WHERE EVERY BLACK CHILD'S STRENGTHS
ARE SEEN, NURTURED, AND CELEBRATED.**

GLOSSARY: KEY TERMS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING

This glossary provides definitions of key terms and concepts to aid your understanding of the toolkit. With this knowledge, you'll be better prepared to support your child during their learning journeys in early childhood education.

Terms are grouped alphabetically by themes for easy reference. Use this glossary as you explore the toolkit to clarify key ideas and information.

Understanding Bias and Racism

Adultification/Adultification Bias: Flawed perception and/or discriminatory treatment of a child as if they were older than their actual age. It is a practice that includes attributing adult characteristics, capabilities, and motivations to a child, resulting in negative judgment of their behaviors and holding them accountable to a maturity level that exceeds their age and developmental stage. These discriminatory perceptions can result in treatment that affords Black children less nurturing and protection.

Conscious Bias: Opinions or attitudes that an individual is aware of and intentionally expresses toward a group or individual based on characteristics such as race, gender, or age.

Unconscious Bias: Prejudices or stereotypes that affect an individual's understanding, actions, and decisions without their conscious awareness.

Racial Bias: Preconceived attitude, belief, or assumption—often negative—about individuals or groups based on their race or ethnicity. These biases, whether conscious or unconscious, can lead to differential treatment, favoring or disadvantaging people in ways that reinforce inequalities. Racial bias may manifest in individual actions, policies, or societal norms, which results in unfair advantages for some groups and barriers for others.

Systemic Racism: Processes and outcomes of racial inequality and inequity that permeate a society's institutional structures, social structures, individual ways of thinking, and patterns of everyday interaction. Operating at multiple levels, it can emerge without intent to harm or awareness of its existence. Its power comes from being integrated into a unified system of racial differentiation and discrimination, influencing opportunities and outcomes across generations.

Deficit-Based View: Harmful lens that frames Black children's abilities, behaviors, and potential primarily through perceived shortcoming rather than strengths. This perspective overemphasizes learning gaps, ignores cultural assets, and perpetuates stereotypes.

Understanding “Assessment” Language

Assessment: Tool used to gather and provide educators, parents, and families with critical information about a child’s development and growth. The information is then used to inform education plans and activities, follow a child’s progress, and understand their strengths and challenges.

Benchmark: Specific and measurable standard that indicates a child’s expected progress in a developmental area (e.g., cognitive, social-emotional, and physical) at different ages or stages. It serves as a reference point to gauge a child’s progression, identify areas that need support, and inform education plans.

Cognitive Skills: Mental abilities individuals use for thinking, learning, remembering, and problem solving.

Curriculum: A content and teaching guide for all educators based on centralized standards, strategies, and learning goals that determine what is essential for student learning, growth, and development.

Developmental Screening: Brief and simple tool that assesses a child’s progress across various areas such as language, movement, thinking, behavior, and emotions.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment: Tool used to evaluate a child’s preparedness for the academic, social, and emotional demands of kindergarten.

Standardized Test: Assessment tool administered and scored in a consistent or formal manner.

Examples of Preschool Tools and Assessments

Age and Stages Questionnaire: Developmental screening tool used to assess a child’s progression in areas such as communication, motor skills, problem solving, and social-emotional development.

Anecdotal Record: Brief written account of specific noteworthy behaviors or events observed in a child.

Battelle Developmental Inventory: Comprehensive assessment tool used to evaluate the developmental progress of young children from birth to 7 years, 11 months.

Checklist and Rating Scale: Tools that track a child’s progress in all developmental domains, including physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional.

DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment): National standardized, strength-based assessment designed to measure social and emotional development in young children, specifically focusing on protective factors related to resilience.

Early Screening Inventory: Tool used to identify young children who may be at risk for developmental delays or disabilities.

Portfolio: Collection of a child’s work and documentation that demonstrates their learning journey, progress, and achievements over time.

Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale: Standardized assessment used to evaluate an individual's "adaptive behavior," which encompasses the skills needed for daily living and social interaction. This assessment is commonly used to diagnose intellectual and developmental disabilities, plan interventions, and track progress.

Observation: Method of gathering information about a child's behavior, interaction, learning, and development through watching and listening.

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Parent - Teacher COMMUNICATION JOURNAL



Child's Name:

School Year:

Monthly Log Pages

Date: _____

Conversation With: Teacher Specialist Administrator

Format: In-Person Email Phone

Key Questions Asked:

1. _____

Response: _____

2. _____

Response: _____

Follow-Up Needed:

Schedule next check-in (Date: _____)

Share work samples (Attach: _____)

Research policy (Note: _____)

_____)

PARENT - TEACHER COMMUNICATION JOURNAL

Bias Concern Tracker

Use this space to document moments when your child was mischaracterized, misunderstood, or excluded. Your voice is valid and powerful.

Date: _____

What Happened:

"My child was labeled as _____ when I believe they were actually _____."

Evidence I Have:

Work samples (Dates: _____)

Email threads (From: _____)

Video/audio/photo (Description: _____)

Next Steps:

Request meeting with _____ by (Date: _____)

Contact advocate/org: _____

PARENT - TEACHER COMMUNICATION JOURNAL

Strengths Spotlights:

(Counter deficit narratives)

Date: _____

This Week, My Child Showed:

Creativity in _____

Leadership when _____

Problem-solving by _____

A new skill through _____

How I Shared This With School:

"I told [Teacher's Name] about _____

_____ on [Date] _____.

Their response: _____

_____ "

PARENT - TEACHER COMMUNICATION JOURNAL

Word Bank

Use the space below to capture new terms and definitions that you encounter as you look up information, ask questions, and find answers.