

**Being a perceptive reflective detective:
A multi-sensory approach to assessment and learning**

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“These new insights of neuroscience are exciting beyond measure, but there is always a certain danger that the simple art of observation may be lost, that clinical description may become perfunctory, and the richness of the human context ignored”

- Oliver Sacks “Musicophilia” (2007) Preface

Proposition 3

That a successful & appropriate educational program begins, and depends upon, skilled assessment which is flexible, on-going, and sensitive. Every child with deafblindness can be assessed successfully provided the people doing the assessment know what they are doing.

Types of Assessment Questions

- Will she be able to get a job/ drive a car/ live independently?
- Can he stack 3 one-inch blocks, sort shapes & colors?
- What do you do?

Why do people assess children with deafblindness?

Typical purposes of assessment

- To determine need, or eligibility, for services.
- To provide a baseline of current skills, knowledge, and perhaps experiences.
- To identify supports & services needed by the child.
- To provide a guide for intervention and instructional techniques to help the child develop more skills and knowledge.
- To measure the child’s growth and skills based upon normative standardized groups or results.
- To evaluate effectiveness of educational program.
- To present the child to other people.

David Brown (2014) “*What does ‘Follow the Child’ mean?*”. California Deafblind Services reSources, Volume 19, No. 1. Spring, 2014.

Julie Maier (2014). *Capacity or deficit? The lens we use to view students does a make a difference*. California Deafblind Services reSources, Volume 19, No. 1. Spring 2014.

“Assessing Communication and Learning in Young Children Who are Deafblind or Who Have Multiple Disabilities”

Edited by Charity Rowland, Ph.D. and published in 2009 by Design to Learn Projects of Oregon Health & Science University.

<https://www.designtolearn.com/uploaded/pdf/DeafBlindAssessmentGuide.pdf>

Challenges to the Assessment Process

- Deafblindness presents a very diverse and complex population of learners
- Deafblindness presents a wide variety of idiosyncratic behaviors
- People doing assessments usually only know one type of assessment process
- There are limited resources and assessment tools available
- People doing the assessment often forget “The reason why” of assessment

What might be going wrong with an assessment? (1)

- A focus on deficits rather than abilities
- Ignoring the child’s motivators
- The pacing is inappropriate for the child, their health, their alertness level, the time of day, the place, the activity, the people present, & the materials used
- The task is too complicated and too challenging
- Too serious – where’s the play?
- The expectation that the child will ‘Pass or Fail’

What might be going wrong with an assessment? (2)

- Inappropriate assessment tools
- Mimicry of standardized clinical assessment procedures (timing, positioning, materials, expected outcomes)
- Lack of a whole-child perspective
- The assessor is wearing blinders (“This is what I want to see, now!”)
- The assessor is assessing the wrong things
- What is a response?

Hypothetical children

- Flapping the hands
- Understanding spoken English yet preferring to sign rather than speaking
- Often getting flat on the back on the floor
- Walking on tip-toe more and more as the school day progresses
- Adopting extreme and unusual positions
- Always removing hearing aids in the bathroom

Why is all this so important, and why should we be observing for it?

- To understand the child’s challenges
- To gain a more accurate idea of the child’s needs
- To appreciate the child’s adaptive behaviors
- To be able to introduce the essential child to other people

