



**Beyond Bubbles and Blocks**

Information for EI Home Visitors

**Why are we now using the *Battelle Developmental Inventory, 3rd Edition* (BDI-3) in Massachusetts (MA)?**

In January 2025, Massachusetts Early Intervention updated its statewide evaluation tool for determining if children are eligible for early intervention (EI) and monitoring children’s development while they are in EI, from the Battelle Developmental Inventory 2nd Edition (BDI-2, 2005) to the Battelle Developmental Inventory-3rd Edition (BDI-3, 2020).

Switching to the BDI-3 aligns with the American Psychological Association *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2017) which states that “decisions or recommendations should be based on an instrument’s most current norms” (BDI-3 Manual, p.2) and test specifications should be amended or revised when new research, data, significant changes in the domain represented, or newly recommended conditions of test use may reduce the validity of test score interpretations (American Educational Research Association [AERA], the American Psychological Association [APA], and the National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 2014). Using an outdated assessment can lead to under-qualifying or over-qualifying children in certain areas, which is a disservice to the children being assessed (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014).

**What changed from the BDI-2 to the BDI-3?**

Differences in the BDI-3 are a result of “changes in population demographics, updated state standards, new research in early childhood development, and other factors such as a need for new, more child-friendly artwork” (BDI-3 Manual, p.1).

Main differences include:

* **Demographic:** Based on normative sample of 2500 children representative of predicted 2020 US Census with notable increases in percentage of the population identifying as Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and with at least some higher education.
* **Test Blueprint:** The number of subdomain scores has changed. Test items were repositioned in different domains or subdomains or have been reordered.
* **Test Content:** Additional items have been added to better align to new research on the developmental abilities of children at each age level.
* **Item Scoring:** Revisions were made to the scoring rubrics to add greater objectivity and precision. Multiple data sources were added to allow for a more complete evaluation of the child’s abilities in different environments and with different people.
* **Score Differences:** The magnitude of the score differences is seen at the domain level, with slightly higher BDI-3 scores than BDI-2, Normative Update (NU-the 2014 updated version between the BDI-2 and the BDI-3). Scores are within 1/3 of a standard deviation.



**How can you incorporate BDI-3 results in your day-to-day work?**

**The BDI-3 is administered during an initial evaluation to establish a baseline understanding of the child’s overall development. The BDI-3 can also be used to inform functional assessment. More specifically, throughout the evaluation you are gathering information about the child and the family through observations during structured and unstructured tasks. You see how a child responds to specific materials and prompts, as well as to unfamiliar people. You see how known disabilities impact their performance.**

**You are also learning about the child and family through the formal interview questions of the BDI-3 as well as through additional questions. Through the initial evaluation, you learn about the child’s strengths and needs. You also gain valuable information about the family’s perspective and learn more about their specific concerns and priorities. You also learn about the dyad—how do the child and family interact? How is their match? What strategies are the family already using to support their child’s learning and development?**

Along with ongoing functional assessment, the BDI-3 is used to formally track the child’s progress over time. During follow-up evaluations (e.g., annual evaluations), you can share the updated results with families, helping them see how their child is developing and where more support may still be needed. This ongoing feedback helps families stay engaged in the process and reinforces their role in supporting their child’s development. It’s also important to involve families in the reflection process through encouraging them to share their observations and insights into their child’s development and how they see progress at home. This collaborative approach ensures that families are not passive recipients of information, but active participants in their child’s developmental journey.

**How can you use the BDI-3 results to guide Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs)?**

The data from the BDI-3 can help inform family-centered discussions during the development of the initial IFSP. The BDI-3 helps identify specific areas of developmental delay. You can use the results in conjunction with information gathered through functional assessment to create measurable and individualized outcomes. Once outcomes are established, you can use the BDI-3 results as one piece of information to tailor an individualized intervention plan. You can provide families with practical, evidence-based strategies that they can incorporate into everyday life. For example, if the BDI-3 highlights a need in communication skills (and this is also a concern/priority for the family), you can share simple activities or routines, such as reading together, singing songs, or using picture cards, that can help build the child’s vocabulary and understanding of language.

**Conclusion**

The BDI-3 is more than just an eligibility evaluation tool—it provides valuable insights that can directly inform your approach to service planning and intervention. By incorporating BDI-3 results into your day-to-day work, you can provide tailored, evidence-based strategies that empower families and ensure that every child receives the support they need to thrive. Progress made throughout EI can be a powerful data source for you, your families, as well as for EI service programs across the state as reported to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). As MA’s Child Outcomes tool, the BDI-3 provides evidence to families, schools, the public, and OSEP that EI in MA is a high-quality program that provides services that improve the lives of children and families with disabilities.

**Reflecting on your practice**  
As you consider your work with families, take a moment to reflect on the following questions:

* In what ways can I make the BDI-3 results more meaningful for the family, considering their unique cultural and personal values?
* **What specific strategies from the BDI-3 results can I suggest to families that align with their priorities, daily routines, and interests?**
* **In what ways can I incorporate family concerns and priorities into the development and adjustment of IFSP outcomes?**
* What steps can I take to foster a collaborative approach among team members in reviewing and discussing the BDI-3 results, ensuring that we provide a cohesive and unified support plan for the child and family?
* How can I use the BDI-3 data to reflect on my own practice and make improvements to better serve the families I work with?
* **How can I make the progress tracking process more collaborative so that families feel involved and informed every step of the way?**

**References**

BDI Program Director Webinar, March 2025

Newborg, J. (2020). *Battelle Developmental Inventory, 3rd Edition: Examiner’s manual.* Riverside Assessments, LLC.