



Department of Early Education and Care

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EEC Child Care Licensing

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: Progress Reports for School Age Children

Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) regulations require that early education and care programs serving school age children prepare a written report annually documenting the progress of each child in the program. The program must provide a copy of each report to the child's parent(s) and offer parents an opportunity to discuss the report.

Progress reports in school age child care can be an important tool in developing a partnership between educators and parents to promote the child's growth and development. In addition, they can focus the educator's attention on each individual child, and can be useful in planning activities to meet the needs of individual children. Finally, because they can focus on developmental domains other than cognitive they offer parents a more complete picture of their child's growth and development than may be seen in the child's periodic school reports. This allows the child an opportunity to highlight skills outside of the academic realm, and may be helpful to parents in choosing future out-of-school time programs for the child.

Progress reports for school age children will vary depending on the program's focus. After school programs that are designed to place an emphasis on homework help and academic interests will likely include more comments about the child's cognitive abilities. Programs that focus heavily on athletic interests will include more comments about the child's gross motor skills, while programs focusing on the arts may focus on fine motor skills. Whatever the program's focus, all programs will be able to make observations and offer comments about the child's social/emotional growth, language and life skills, in addition to the program's focus areas.

Since all children grow at their own rate and developmental norms vary widely between the ages of 5 and 14, the skills and developmental indicators noted on a progress report will vary widely, depending on the ages of the children served. In every case it will be necessary to establish a baseline of the child's development at the time of enrollment against which the child's progress can be measured. This can be done by talking with parents at the time of enrollment and by observing the child in a variety of activities during his/her early weeks in the program.

To create an authentic, useful progress report requires observation and data collection over time. Because child development is not smooth or even, and because performance will vary if the child is feeling tired or ill, or is concerned about a problem with friends or

family on a given day, it is important not to rely on observations made on a single day or in a single week.

One method of recording children's progress is to take "anecdotal notes" of the child's activities at several points during the program year. These notes simply and briefly describe what the child is doing; for example, is the child interacting with other children or working alone? Is the child reading, drawing, writing, playing computer games, cooking, playing basketball or softball? Did the child choose her own activity, or respond to a suggestion from an educator or an invitation from another child? Notes should be as specific as possible; for instance, what type of literature is the child reading; what medium is the child using for art; did the child organize and lead the activity, or join in as a team member? Observations should be documented at least monthly so that the information will be reliable and progress can be noted over time.

Another way to document children's progress is by developing portfolios of their work. Each child should have a folder or a large envelope in which s/he can put samples of his/her writing and drawing, as well as photographs or videotapes of the child engaged in other activities. School age children should be encouraged to choose which work samples are included in their portfolios, and whenever possible to write a brief explanation of why each sample was included.

A third way to document children's progress is to use a skills checklist at different times during the program year. It can be completed both by parents and by educators, based on how they see the child in their own environment. This can form the basis of conversations that lead to new insights about children as they begin to test and express new behaviors and skills, and as they express different parts of their developing personalities. School age child care programs are in a particularly strong position to offer parents information about the child's social skills development, since they provide regular exposure to a large peer group.

Depending on the age of the child, it may be useful to include the child in an assessment of his/her growth during the program year. If the child has kept a portfolio, the child can look back to tangible examples of his/her work at the beginning, middle and end of the year and make his/her own observations about change. Even without the evidence that a portfolio provides, older children can be encouraged to think reflectively about ways they have changed or skills they have learned during the year, and to set personal goals for skills they would like to learn during the next year. This process encourages the child to develop analytical skills, reflect honestly on their own performance, and take responsibility for change as they grow and mature.