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# Introduction to the Process of Bridging

## Chapter Outline

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**B**ridging: *Assessment for Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood Classrooms, PreK–3* presents a performance-based, curriculum-embedded assessment tool (hereafter referred to as Bridging) designed for early childhood teachers. Using familiar curricular activities, the Bridging assessment process provides a practical approach for understanding individual children’s learning within daily classroom activities. It helps teachers determine each child’s progress in relation to developmental changes in different curricular areas between the ages of three and eight. With a fresh, individualized perspective, teachers adapt ongoing curriculum planning to further children’s learning in areas of strength as well as those where they will benefit from experience, intervention, and practice. The result is improved learning and teaching.

### — Curriculum-embedded assessment —

Teachers observe, document, and analyze children engaging in classroom activities from different curricular areas that serve as a window for gauging their developmental progress.

## ASSESSMENT AND TEACHING

One of the most difficult and most important tasks in becoming a teacher is learning how to accurately assess individual children and use the results to inform curriculum planning and teaching. James Popham, an educational psychologist at the University of California at Los Angeles says, “Teachers who can test well will be better teachers” (2005, p. 1). By this he means that when teachers are careful observers, they know what children can do, what children are working on, and when and how to introduce new challenges to support children’s learning. Appropriate assessments, including careful listening and observing, help teachers monitor students’ progress, clarify their instructional intentions, and determine the effectiveness of instructional practice. Understanding assessment and knowing how to use it appropriately are crucial to effective teaching.

Early childhood teachers, however, for the most part, dislike assessment and testing, and in many ways, for good reasons. Traditional assessments take time away from children’s play and their engagement in sustained projects and activities. Numbers do not tell the whole story of a child’s development, particularly because young children

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### Assessment

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A global term for gathering information for the purpose of decision making.

For classroom teachers, assessment is the process of listening, observing, and gathering evidence to evaluate the learning and developmental status of children in the classroom context.

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do not reliably perform well on standardized testing formats. Furthermore, one-time testing cannot accurately measure young children’s learning because their skills are in flux and development can be sporadic. In terms of performance-based assessment, classroom observation is useful, but connecting it to curriculum and methods of teaching can be challenging. Some teachers find it difficult to know what kinds of materials to collect for portfolios and what criteria to use to evaluate them. These concerns and criticisms are

legitimate. Overall, the assessments currently available to early childhood teachers have not fulfilled the promise of integration with learning and teaching processes.

If the purpose of assessment is to improve classroom learning by informing teachers about each student’s progress in relation to learning standards, assessment cannot be an add-on task that takes place occasionally throughout the year. It must become part of daily learning activities. By the same token, assessment results cannot require outside experts to interpret them. To be useful, the results must be transparent to teachers and immediately useful in curriculum planning and teaching. Bridging addresses these teacher concerns. Teachers document their observations of children in core curricular activities in a way that provides feedback on each child’s progress, while simultaneously informing a teacher’s planning for furthering the learning of individuals as well as the whole group.

## BRIDGING IN CLASSROOMS

Mrs. Rogers and her colleague, Ms. Williams, in the classroom next door each have 24 kindergartners in their classrooms. They meet once a week to discuss their children’s learning progress and needs, and to plan the curriculum. Since the opening days of school, several activities have been staples in their school day. An estimation activity is one of them.

Mrs. Rogers is at the door greeting her kindergartners as they arrive in the classroom on a chilly October morning. "Good morning, Edward! Hi, Sam! Hang up your coats and come see what you find in the counting bowl!" The first 8 to 10 minutes of the morning are a bustle of activity as children put backpacks and lunch boxes away and then visit the display table, which holds a clear glass bowl with approximately two dozen dominos in it. By the glass bowl is a clipboard with the children's names listed and a space for each to enter their response to the question, "About how many?" printed at the top of the page.

Later in the morning, when the children gather for morning meeting, one of the activities includes reviewing children's estimates and discussing strategies they used to make their estimates. Mrs. Rogers then has the children assist in counting the number of objects in the bowl, represent the total number in several ways, and then compare their various estimates to the actual number.

This estimation activity reflects a deliberate choice by the teachers; it organizes and focuses children's entry to the classroom at the beginning of the school day, and it meets learning goals for mathematics. The activity is also good assessment in that it provides the teachers with a daily record of their children's learning that can guide teaching. These goals are accomplished in an environment and context that meet children's social and emotional learning needs: these teachers greet each child by name, welcome them to the classroom in conversational exchanges, and guide the children into a learning activity that is developmentally appropriate and responsive to the level of challenge for which the children are ready.

In Mrs. Rogers's kindergarten, and in the early childhood division for her district including preschool through third grade, curriculum goals are set for literacy, math, sciences, the arts, and health and physical development. Learning is conceptualized as a dynamic of children interacting with peers and materials under the teacher's guidance to accomplish learning goals that have meaning, purpose, and challenge for children. Assessment completes the curriculum equation informing teachers' next steps. It provides the evidence teachers use to gauge on a daily basis how learning is going for the children. It also guides teachers in seeing where adjustments need to be made within the classroom setting in order to facilitate further learning for individual children as well as the class at large.

The children's responses to the estimation activity are assessment data that Bridging makes available to these teachers. Every day these teachers gather information on their children's emerging understanding of how to estimate number quantity through the process of learning to account for the size of the objects in the bowl and the amount of space they occupy, while at the same time considering information from previous counts of estimated objects. Critical to a teacher's ongoing work with this activity is (1) knowing the challenges and goals the activity holds for children; (2) having a clear understanding of the developmental continuum for estimation skills and concepts represented in this task; (3) organizing the school day to include regular opportunities for children to practice these emerging skills; (4) paying close attention to children's work and recording observations of what each child does as well as how each child engages in the task; and (5) intervening to coach and guide children's efforts based on this ongoing careful review of their efforts in the activity.

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These kinds of activities and the record of progress that can be seen by the children, teacher, parents, and administrators are at the heart of the Bridging approach to assessment and curriculum. Bridging activities are good curricular activities that provide a window into a child's developmental progress on a continuum of learning that spans not just weeks or months but several years.

### OVERVIEW OF BRIDGING

Bridging is a performance-based and curriculum-embedded assessment tool designed to help teachers identify intellectual strengths and construct learning profiles of individual children between the ages of three and eight. It uses teachers' observation of children engaged in activities in their classrooms. Bridging's 15 classroom activities

#### — Curriculum planning and teaching —

Within each subject area, teachers have a planned sequence of activities guided by a theory of what and how children master concepts, knowledge, and skills.

Curriculum planning is the process by which teachers monitor the needs of the students in relation to the path of learning in the content area they are pursuing.

represent diverse curricular areas, including language arts and literacy, visual arts, mathematics, sciences, and performing arts (see Table 1.1). It provides early childhood teachers, both pre-service and inservice, with a means of gathering, organizing, and interpreting observations to inform curriculum planning and teaching.

Because no one task samples all of the concepts and skills in an area, *Bridging* includes three activities in each of the five curricular areas. The three activities in each area are carefully chosen to complement one another. They represent varied aspects of learning in a subject

area. Together, they use a variety of materials for the expression of ideas in that curricular area. For example, a child's narrative skills and knowledge in language arts and literacy are assessed in the child's reading of a book, story dictation, and dramatization of narratives. The child's ability to create visual images is assessed through the use of different media, such as pattern blocks, pencil, and crayons. Each material offers distinctive representational qualities that children use to convey a range of artistic expressions and understandings. The design of multiple activities using a variety of materials helps to ensure that the Bridging assessment process more accurately portrays a child's current level of development.

As an assessment instrument, Bridging produces a profile of a child's learning from two perspectives:

The *content* of the child's learning—that is, their understanding of key concepts and their mastery of particular skills in a subject area;

The *process* of the child's learning—that is, their working approach or how they engage in tasks, including such qualities as goal orientation, pace of work, and sense of humor.

Thus, Bridging guides teachers in determining both **what** a child has learned and **how** the child goes about learning. In so doing, teachers identify the child's strengths as well as areas where specific instruction, intervention, and practice will help further their learning.

**Table 1.1** Bridging Assessment Areas and Activities

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Language Arts and Literacy	<p><b>Reading a Book (Child's Choice and Teacher's Choice)</b>—Each child reads two books to the teacher: his or her “favorite” book in the classroom followed by one that the teacher chooses appropriate to the child's level. While the child reads, the teacher keeps a running record of the child's reading behavior.</p> <p><b>Dictating a Story</b>—The teacher invites a child to tell a story, writes the story down, and then reads it back to the child.</p> <p><b>Acting Out a Story</b>—Children act out stories composed by individual children during the story dictation time.</p>
Visual Arts	<p><b>Experimenting With Crayon Techniques</b>—Children use crayons to experiment with varied artistic effects and then use these techniques to create pictures.</p> <p><b>Drawing a Self-Portrait</b>—Children use a pencil to create a self-portrait showing themselves in a setting, such as home or school.</p> <p><b>Making Pattern Block Pictures</b>—Children use pattern blocks to construct representational pictures on black construction paper.</p>
Mathematics	<p><b>Creating Pattern Block Pinwheels</b>—Children view and discuss examples of “pattern block pinwheels” showing radial symmetry and then construct their own pinwheels using pattern blocks.</p> <p><b>Solving Pattern Block Puzzles</b>—Children arrange pattern blocks on preprinted puzzle sheets and work to cover successively more difficult puzzle forms.</p> <p><b>Exploring Number Concepts (Counting, Subtracting, Fair Share, Estimating)</b>—Children participate in a story where bears are on a picnic eating cookies, and within the story, they solve a series of math problems related to number concept.</p>
Sciences	<p><b>Exploring Shadows and Light</b>—Children explore making shadows with a flashlight using different objects and materials that are opaque, transparent, and translucent.</p> <p><b>Assembling a Nature Display</b>—Children classify a variety of objects collected through nature walks.</p> <p><b>Building a Model Car</b>—Children build small model cars using a variety of recycled materials.</p>
Performing Arts	<p><b>Moving to Music</b>—Children listen to recorded music with a definite beat in various styles and then improvise movement to the music.</p> <p><b>Playing an Instrument</b>—Children explore and use a variety of classroom musical instruments and then create an instrumental accompaniment to recorded music.</p> <p><b>Singing a Song</b>—Using a plastic microphone, children take turns singing a song they know.</p>

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The goal of Bridging is for teachers to use children's learning profiles to inform their instructional decision making in the classroom. Because the assessment activities sample from a range of curricular areas, teachers can use assessment results to set appropriate levels of challenge in daily planning. Teachers can also use results to guide selection of materials that children prefer. Referring to children's learning profiles, teachers make informed decisions about what is most

likely to engage and support each child's participation in classroom activities. In this way, assessment findings inform teaching and learning, making both continuously more effective.

Bridging assessment is a process. It begins with the teacher observing children while they engage in activities in varied curricular areas. Teacher observation is guided by specific rubrics that detail the developmental trajectories of children's learning and understanding in different subject areas. The

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**Rubrics**

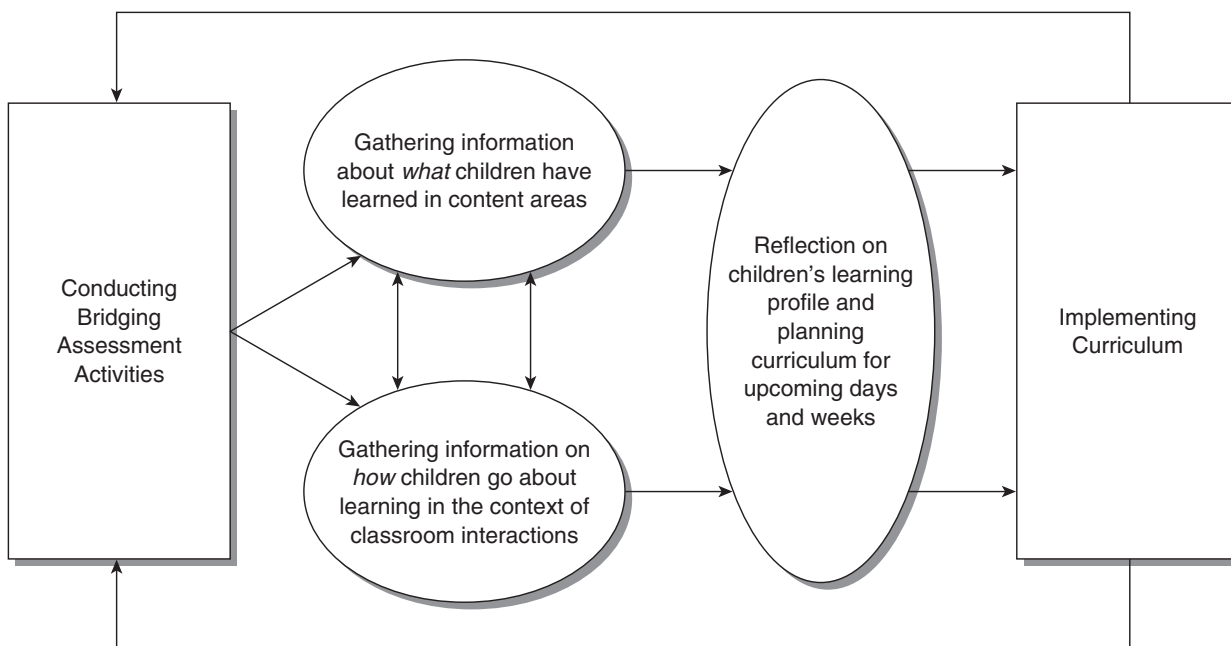
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Behavioral indicators that describe different levels of performance in a range of curricular activities. Each level of performance marks a developmental step toward mastery of specific skills or concepts.

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teacher continues the process by planning and implementing curriculum that is based on the newly acquired knowledge of children and their status in the content areas assessed. Of particular importance in Bridging is the direct connection between assessment results and classroom practice, a process that guides continuous refinements in teaching (see Figure 1.1). Thus, Bridging spans the often-wide chasm between assessment and curriculum by directly connecting assessment to the daily activities teachers carry out with children.

**Figure 1.1** Overview of Bridging Assessment Process



## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF BRIDGING

There are five ways that the Bridging assessment process helps teachers become more proficient in their daily work with children. Bridging helps teachers to:

1. **Identify a child's developmental progress** in relation to key concepts, knowledge, and skills in five broad areas of school curriculum;
2. **Describe a child's working approach**, including the child's attentiveness throughout the task, preferred social interaction patterns, experience with different materials, and expression of individual characteristics when engaging in activities;
3. **Construct a child's learning profile**, a visual map portraying a child's current level of development across a range of areas, as well as the child's disposition toward learning in each curricular domain;
4. **Select curricular activities and teaching methods** that match the learning needs of individual children as well as the classroom as a whole; and
5. **Study and reflect on key concepts and skills** in various curriculum areas and how they develop over time during the early childhood years.

As an assessment tool, Bridging supports teachers achieving these goals by means of five unique characteristics: scope, focus, method, approach to assessment, and curriculum connection (see Table 1.2). The interrelationships among these characteristics make Bridging effective for both assessment and for improving teaching and learning over time.

**Table 1.2** Distinctive Features of Bridging

<i>Features</i>	<i>What Bridging Is</i>
Scope	It identifies a child's developmental progress in relation to key concepts, knowledge, and skills in five broad areas of school curriculum.
Focus	It assesses how children learn (process) as well as what they learn (content).
Method	It uses classroom activities as a structured means for observing and documenting children's learning.
Approach	It engages in an ongoing process that is authentic to daily classroom learning.
End goal	It integrates assessment with curriculum planning to continuously improve teaching and learning.

### Scope—Attending to Broad Curricular Areas and a Wide Age Range

Bridging is designed to identify young children's strengths and approaches to learning in five broad curriculum areas: language arts and literacy, visual arts, mathematics, sciences, and performing arts. Within each of the five curricular areas represented, Bridging assessment activities reflect essential key concepts outlined by national standards for the early childhood period. Instead of focusing primarily on children's language and mathematical abilities as most traditional school-based tests do, Bridging equips teachers to observe and document each child's engagement

#### Developmental continuum

A developmental continuum describes changes in skills and concepts in an area of development (for example, learning to read) over a span of years. A developmental continuum characterizes the qualitative and quantitative shifts that mark the growth and changes in a content area.

in a wide range of learning areas. Attending to the breadth of curriculum areas, Bridging makes it possible to detect the many ways a child can be "competent," "skilled," and "capable."

Bridging activities are appropriate for children ages three to eight in preschool, kindergarten, and primary classrooms. In addressing this five-year span, Bridging activities make it possible to locate each child on a developmental continuum, thereby recognizing the wide variability in levels of achievement that are inevitable in any group of

young children at any moment in time. This span also helps teachers recognize continuities from one point in development to another.

### Focus—Looking at the Content and Process of Learning

As an assessment tool, Bridging is unique in that it examines two aspects of children's learning: what they learn (content) and how they learn (process). The content aspect of learning focuses on children's mastery of key concepts, knowledge, and skills in different subject areas. The process aspect of learning includes a detailed examination of individual children's working approaches. Assessment of both the content and process of learning is sensitive to the influence of several additional factors on children's performance, for example, whether the child understands the goal of specific tasks and is open to help from peers and teachers when needed.

In the field of child assessment, what children learn and how they learn are rarely examined together. However, understanding a child's working approach can provide important insights when interpreting a child's performance level. Working approaches help pinpoint the circumstances under which a child shows strengths

#### Working approach

A process dimension of children's learning that describes how a child interacts with materials and responds to the demands of a task in a specific subject area.

or vulnerabilities. Classroom teachers know that the social arrangement of an activity—whether smaller groups or large group—is an important variable in the performance of some children. For other children, however, the same variable matters little. Recognizing varied working approaches helps teachers create the conditions under which each child will thrive as a learner.

### Method—Using Curricular Activities

Bridging provides a structure that elicits children's knowledge and skills while supporting teacher observation and documentation of performance. This structure is



a set of 15 specially selected curricular activities. Using such activities represents a significant departure from the methods of most existing assessment instruments. Teachers assess children in the context of classroom learning, not separate from it. They examine the social interactions that elicit, encourage, and mediate children's performance and progress in school. Attending to children's work and behavior in one activity at a time, teachers' observations are organized, purposeful, and content specific. Bridging helps teachers learn how to assess while teaching, and how to look for evidence of developing key concepts and skills in children's performance.

### **Approach—Providing Multiple Ways to Demonstrate Mastery**

In Bridging, children have opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of concepts and skills in a variety of ways both within a curricular area and across curricular domains. For example, a child's development of mathematical knowledge and problem solving is viewed through a series of activities focused on number concepts and geometry. A child's performing arts skills may be seen through dramatization of stories, singing, and moving to music.

Bridging activities can be carried out in a variety of ways. Some activities can be implemented in a large group, providing an efficient way to engage the entire class in an activity while focusing on a few children for assessment purposes. Most activities can also be carried out in small groups or in dyads to allow for a more detailed view of children's thinking. As such, Bridging uses social situations that mirror the classroom's learning environment and that can be responsive to the children's developmental needs. Teachers can make choices that fit a particular moment in time for their children.

### **Goal—Integrating Assessment With Curriculum Development and Teaching**

Bridging informs and supports curriculum development in several ways. First, it covers five subject areas commonly featured in early childhood classrooms. The alignment with school curricular areas enables teachers to more readily translate Bridging assessment results into curriculum plans. Second, Bridging activities are based on curriculum activities familiar to most early childhood teachers. Use of these activities helps teachers integrate assessment results with curriculum planning and instruction. Assessment and curriculum are two sides of the same coin. Each is more effective when they are integrated to form a continuous teaching-learning process.

Additionally, Bridging can be used as a tool for curriculum analysis. It identifies key concepts to be taught, learned, and evaluated in preschool through third grade. With an in-depth understanding of key concepts and skills, teachers become more confident using them to plan learning experiences. Further, Bridging's rubrics specify indicators of children's learning and mastery in varied content areas. Using performance rubrics, teachers can pinpoint the skills a child currently possesses as well as those the child is currently developing in various curriculum areas. The child's zone of proximal development—that is,

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#### **Zone of proximal development**

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Introduced by L. S. Vygotsky, this term describes a child's development in relation to the skills and concepts that are already mature and mastered as well as those that are in the process of unfolding, developing, and on the way to maturity.

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those skills and knowledge currently undergoing change in specific content areas—is revealed in the assessment process.

Finally, to support linking assessment to curriculum, each Bridging assessment activity includes guidelines for further promoting children’s development in that subject area during the school year. Teachers can tailor curricular experiences by using assessment results to support and challenge children’s learning at particular levels in diverse areas.

### **BRIDGING FOR PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE TEACHERS**

The research and development process for Bridging extended over seven years. Experts in different subject areas—math, literacy, the arts and sciences—contributed to the process, and hundreds of early childhood preservice and inservice teachers have field-tested the system, both in the United States and in China. With preservice teachers, Bridging can be integrated into coursework and student teaching experiences. In the teacher education program at Erikson Institute in Chicago, we introduce Bridging to teacher candidates in assessment, curriculum, and methods courses. They implement Bridging activities, document children’s behavior, and interpret results to guide their ongoing work with children in classroom learning.

During student teaching, each teacher candidate selects several children to focus on for assessing while carrying out all 15 Bridging activities. At the end of the student teaching period, teacher candidates write a reflection paper describing their experience using Bridging to learn about individual children, changes in their content knowledge in different curricular areas, and how they used insights from the assessment process to inform their teaching.

For use in inservice teacher professional development, we have developed two models. One is to invite teachers from different schools to a central location for professional development. Using this model, we have provided yearlong seminars to approximately 300 early childhood teachers, preparing them to use the Bridging assessment process in their classrooms. We meet with participating teachers (25 in a seminar) once a month. Between seminar sessions, teachers implement Bridging activities in their classrooms, focusing on detailed documentation of two to four children. During seminar sessions, we study and analyze Bridging activities, examine the implementation process, and discuss the experiences of children in each activity as well as the pattern of experience for individuals across the full range of activities. Finally, teachers discuss how their views of children and views of their own teaching are changing as a result of the Bridging implementation process.

The second model of professional development is to engage all of the teachers within a single school that serves PreK–3 in carrying out the Bridging assessment process over the school year. To date, we have field-tested this approach with two schools in the Chicago Public Schools System. In contrast to the first model, where teachers come to us for a professional development class, in the second model we carry out all work with teachers in their classrooms merging the use of Bridging into the different school cultures. In this model, the Bridging assessment process is adapted to meet the specific needs of the school. Teachers within each of the schools work together, reviewing their teacher professional development and school

improvement plans in light of what they are learning about children's development and their teaching needs.

The teachers we have worked with are diverse in many ways—they work with children in PreK–3 classrooms; they represent varied ethnic groups and have different educational backgrounds; and they serve highly diverse student populations—diverse in cultures, languages, and special needs. Teacher feedback helped us to refine Bridging and to confirm its usefulness, particularly in guiding teachers to systematically learn about children who are unfamiliar or inexperienced with typical school tasks and activities.

In the chapters that follow, we include anecdotes from these classrooms to highlight teachers' thinking while using the Bridging assessment process. In addition to working with preservice and inservice teachers, we have collected Bridging assessment data from 156 children in PreK–3 classrooms. The analysis of data from these children is also introduced in several chapters to illustrate the type of outcomes and insights possible when using the Bridging assessment process.

## OVERVIEW OF THE *BRIDGING* HANDBOOK

### Section I: A Guide for Teachers

The *Bridging* handbook includes Section I: A Guide for Teachers, and Section II: Implementation of Assessment Activities. Section I provides an overview of the Bridging assessment system, its theoretical underpinnings, and different components of this assessment tool and process. Chapter 2 focuses on how Bridging assesses the content of children's learning. Drawing from Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, the chapter establishes the basis for sampling a wide range of curricular areas referencing key concepts and skills identified for each. The chapter includes a detailed description of how Bridging's performance rubrics assess the content of children's learning and how to construct a child's learning profile. The chapter concludes by discussing why it is critical to view the content of children's learning as a continuous process from the past, to the present, and to the future through curriculum planning and teaching.

While in Chapter 2 we look at ways to assess what children learn, in Chapter 3 we focus on how children learn. We introduce a new idea to guide teacher observations of the process of children's learning—the concept of working approach. The chapter defines the concept and then elaborates it by describing two kinds of working approaches: evaluative approaches and descriptive approaches. The former refers to a child's way of approaching tasks that enhances or hinders learning, whereas the latter describes a child's working approach that specifies salient individual differences. We present assessment results from our work with children that demonstrate the fact that working approach is not a stable trait located within an individual child. Rather, a child's working approach is a profile of tendencies describing the interaction of children within specific activities. The discussion also helps illustrate the impact of a child's working approach on children's performance scores.

#### Learning profile

A visual map portraying a child's current level of development across a range of areas, as well as the child's working approaches while engaging in tasks.

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Chapter 4 highlights a central premise of the Bridging assessment process—observing the development of a child while that child is engaged in a meaningful activity, a notion proposed by Russian psychologists L. Vygotsky and A. Leont’ev. In this conceptual framework, children are not taken outside of the learning context to have their performance and abilities observed and analyzed in isolation. Instead, children are observed in activities where their learning and development take place, that is, through interactions with adults, peers, tasks, and materials. This chapter also describes the criteria we used to develop and select Bridging assessment activities, and how the dynamic relationship between teachers and children that emerges when engaging in an activity becomes the unit of analysis in the assessment process.

Chapter 5 provides a more detailed account of task parameters in the Bridging assessment process, including (1) the goal of the task, the stated outcome for the task

————— **Key concepts and skills** —————  
 Ideas, principles, procedures, or strategies  
 that are central to a child’s eventual  
 proficiency in various content areas.  
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as presented to the child; (2) the key concepts and skills, indicating the organizing ideas from the curriculum area that are embodied in the activity; (3) materials involved in carrying out the activity; (4) the structure of the activity on a continuum from teacher-directed to open-ended; and (5) social arrangements or grouping for

activities such as large and small groups as well as one-to-one interactions. We take a close look at each of these task parameters for how they might influence children’s performance. We discuss how teachers can arrange and adjust many of these task parameters to create optimal conditions to support children’s learning.

Chapter 6 focuses on the teacher’s role in the Bridging assessment process. We delineate five salient roles: decision maker, participant, observer, interpreter, and translator. In traditional assessment practice, teachers have little flexibility in carrying out assessment tasks, constructing expected performance levels of their children, and adjusting task parameters to meet children’s learning needs. In the Bridging assessment process, teachers play an active role that draws on their experience and requires expertise in each of these areas. Bridging relies on teachers to know how to elicit a child’s best efforts and how to use the assessment information to guide teaching and learning experiences in subsequent days and weeks. Bridging guides teachers in the challenge of integrating assessment, curriculum, and teaching practice. In doing so, teachers grow in their confidence and skills as teachers.

### **Section II: Implementation of Assessment Activities**

This section includes one “how to” chapter, five activity chapters, and a Facilitator’s Guide. Chapter 7 provides a step-by-step guide to what the teacher is doing with children in the classroom when implementing Bridging assessment activities. It details the logistics to be considered when planning to use Bridging in an early childhood classroom. It offers suggestions for how to interpret the assessment results and connect them to teaching. Whenever necessary, we describe the implementation process separately for preservice teachers and inservice teachers, taking into account their different teaching situations, requirements, and constraints.

Following Chapter 7 is a description of the 15 Bridging assessment activities with detailed protocols for implementing each. Activities are grouped according to the five subject areas addressed in most school curricula: language arts and literacy, visual arts, mathematics, sciences, and performing arts. We introduce each curriculum

area by answering three questions: What do we know about development in this area? What does Bridging provide classroom teachers to assess this development? Why were these three particular activities chosen? Each introduction offers teachers a brief but essential understanding of the subject area as well as rationale for the specific Bridging activities selected.

Following the introduction to each subject area, we include a table of national early childhood learning standards for the curricular area and how the Bridging activities relate to them. The table reinforces the importance of national learning standards for teaching, learning, and assessing content knowledge as it develops in the lives of young children. It makes it clear that the design of Bridging is in alignment with standards set by various professional organizations.

Teachers should use Section II during the assessment process as a guide to implementing each activity and to assist with subsequent curriculum planning. Procedures for implementing each activity within the school day are presented. The Bridge to Curriculum describes follow-up activities for teachers when using assessment findings to differentiate and fine-tune learning experiences to individual children's needs.

Following the five activity chapters is a Facilitator's Guide describing ways Bridging can be used in preservice and inservice teacher professional development programs. It presents guidelines for the use of Bridging in specific courses and time frames and provides foci for discussion and study as teachers use Bridging to understand their children and strengthen the effectiveness of their teaching.