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Focusing on Strength-Based Assessments in Pediatrics: Empowerment, Capacity Building and Global Health Perspectives

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- Strengths-based approach focuses on discovering and then employing a child's abilities and strengths to help a child move toward their hopes and dreams.
- Strengths-based means working collaboratively and inclusively by including child, parents, and teacher.
- Recognizing strengths empowers children to use the skills they possess and supporting them helps them to expand their skill set.



Abilities Create Opportunities

All children have competencies, internal and external assets and resources

Perspective on Disability Focused Assessment

Focus on disability



Medical model

Traditionally focuses on disability and underline skill deficits



Low Expectations

Typically excludes the hopes, dreams and current skills of the child



Deficit Based Assessment

Lack of connection to occupational performance & function



Fixing a Deficit

Isolated treatment
Assuming that fixing the deficit results in improved function



Intervention in Isolation

Child misses valuable social & peer interactions and potentially academic skills



Participation, Self-Determination, Quality Of Life & School Success

Focusing on abilities simply means including assessments that target participation, interests, skills, and family/personal goals



Participation
in all aspects
of life,
including
school

Asking about
interests, roles,
routines, goals
and dreams for
participation at
school



Contextual
features

Consideration of
the physical
environment,
temporal/time,
cultural aspects
of participation



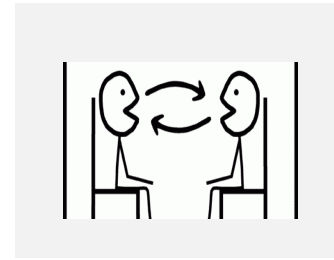
Skills

Identifying
strengths and
interests while
using positive
language to
describe



Strengths Based Assessment

Examples of Assessment Tools that Support a Strengths Based Approach



Interviews

Conducted with the child, the teacher, and the parents



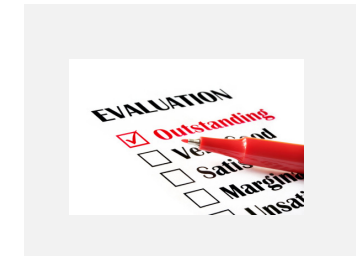
Record review

Identifying strengths and educational assets and positive comments



Observation

In a contextually relevant environment, with appropriate materials and adults and peers present



Formal and informal assessment tools

Determine a strengths-based component in assessment tools

Reword and Reframe: RES (pect)

Impact of language and how language can empower or marginalize

Reword

- What do you enjoyed doing?
- Describe your best school experience
- What are your strengths?
- Give me some examples of the things you do outside of school
- Resilience
- Empowerment
- Self-determination

Reframe

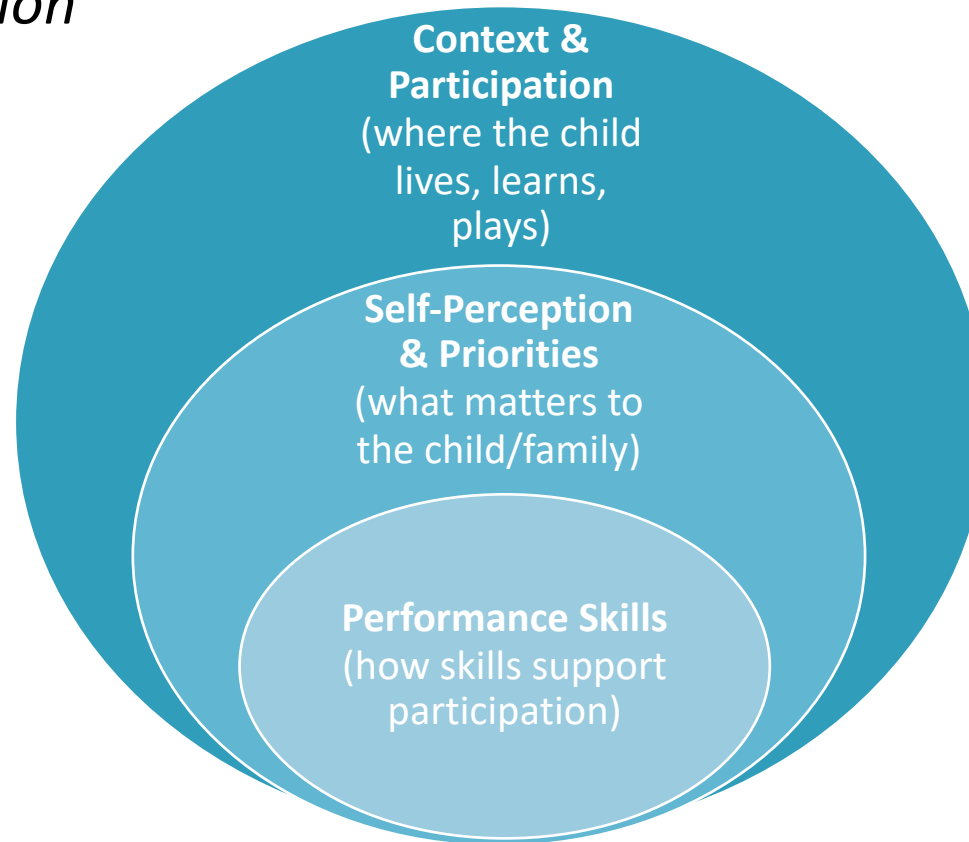
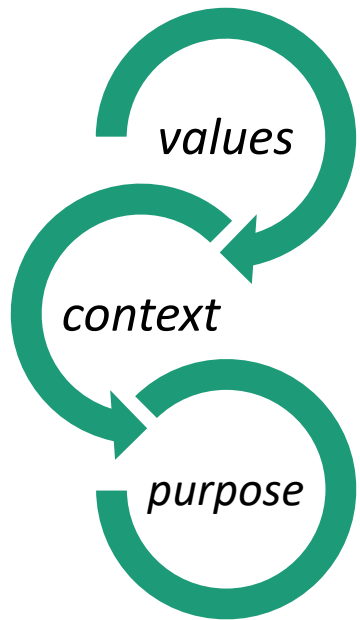
- Build or rebuild the evaluation process or protocols around **what is working** rather than trying to fix what is not working
- Be **student centered** use an intentional way of asking questions that focus on strengths to promote positive change
- Requires organizational change
- Respect students concerns



Assessment Continuum

A Strengths-Based Assessment Continuum

Assessment selection reflects:



Clinical Reasoning: Connecting Assessment to Action

Strengths-based assessment supports better decisions when clinicians ask:

- What is working for this child in real contexts?
- Which environments support or limit participation?
- How do strengths guide goal setting and supports?

A young green plant sprout with four leaves is growing from a crack in a weathered, circular wooden log cross-section. The wood shows concentric growth rings and a cracked, textured surface. The plant is positioned in the center-right of the frame, casting a shadow to the right.

Participation & Environment

Participation-Focused Measures

Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth (PEM-CY;)

Participation amidst environmental challenges

PEM-CY

PEM-CY
Participation &
Environment Measure
Children & Youth

Parent Report

- Assesses **participation** and **environmental factors** influencing engagement
- Emphasizes participation as essential to **health and quality of life**
- Applicable for children **ages 5–17**, with or without disabilities

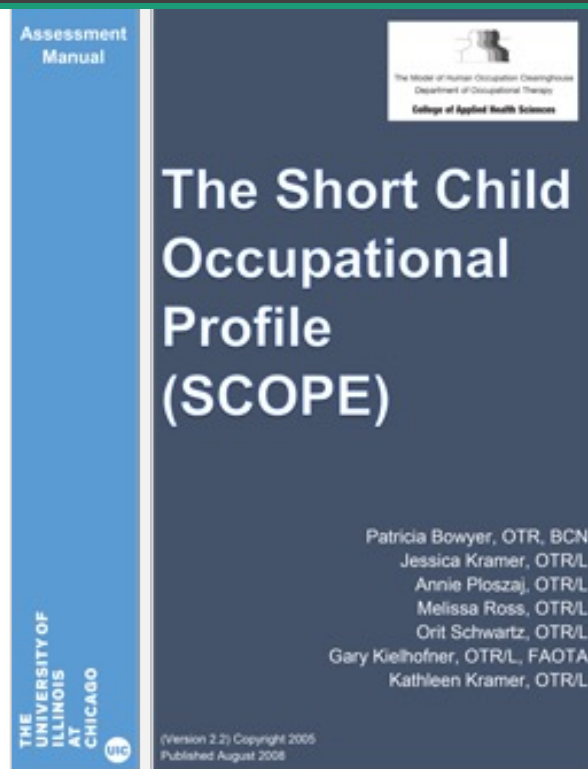
Participation Evaluation

- Incorporates **family perspectives** across **home, school, and community** contexts
- Includes **25 activity types**
- Administration time: **25–40 minutes**

Short Child Occupational Profile (SCOPE; Bowyer et al., 2011)

Parent and child perspectives on participation & interests

SCOPE



Observations, Interview, Chart Review, Other

- Applicable for children and youth **birth–21 years**
- Supports **OT screening and progress monitoring**
- Captures **strengths and challenges**

Identifies Supports & Barriers to Participation

- Ratings reflect the child's **individual developmental trajectory**
- Identifies **current and emerging capabilities** based on age, experience, and environment

Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM 5th Ed.; Law et al., 2014)

Semi-structured interview captures personally relevant performance on activities of daily life

COPM



Interview

- **Client-centered** assessment tool
- Supports individuals in **identifying** and **prioritizing** meaningful everyday performance issues
- Considers **lifespan development** and **personal life circumstances**

Self-Identification of Performance

- Focuses on performance across **self-care, leisure, and productivity**
- Measures **change over time** based on **mutually established goals** (child, family, team)
- Efficient and easy to administer with child and family
- Includes **performance** and **satisfaction** ratings

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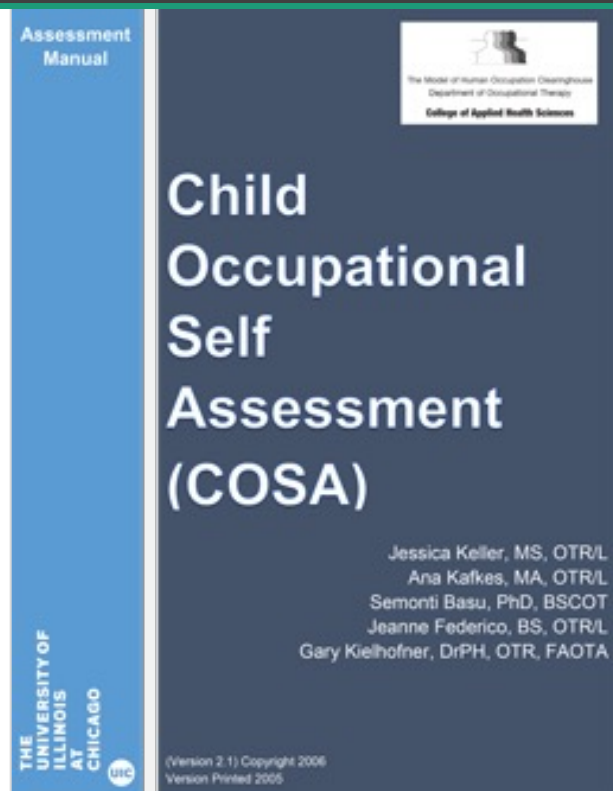
Performance /Activity-Level Measures & Goal Identification

Performance-Based & Activity-Level Tools &
Child/Family Voice in Assessment

Child Occupational Self-Assessment (COSA 2.2; Kramer et al., 2014)

Self-report on engagement in everyday activities and self perception of competence

COSA



Self Report Measure

- Captures the child's perceptions of occupational engagement
- Reflects sense of competence and personal importance of everyday activities
- Identifies participation in meaningful occupations

Applicable to a Range of Abilities

- Simple statements focused on daily participation
- Includes tasks across school, home, and community contexts
- Multiple administration formats
 - With symbols
 - Without symbols
 - Card-sorting option

Goal-Oriented Assessment of Lifeskills (GOAL™; Miller et al., 2013)

Activity Level

GOALS



Standardized Assessment

- For kids 7-17, includes 7 tasks based on daily life
- Standardized, psychometrically sound
- Linked to intervention targets to help develop goals

Natural Flow

- Contextual assessment approach
- Uses school-based, real-life tasks
- Identifies what the child **CAN do** (strengths-focused)
- Captures strengths within standardized testing conditions



Sensory-Focused Tools

Sensory Patterns & Environmental Supports

Sensory Processing Measure-2 (SPM™-2; Parham et al., 2010)

Understanding how sensory challenges and strengths are affected by environment

SPM



Rating Scales

- To determine if sensory integration difficulties influence a child's behaviors in school, at home, and in the community.
- To identify if and how the sensory qualities of an environment affects the child's functioning
- SPM and SPM-P can evaluate children 2-12 years of age

Focuses on Sensory

- Normative-with typical, some problems
- 15-20 minutes for each form-classroom, home, and school environments (PE, cafeteria, bus)
- Parents, teacher and other school personnel contribute information on sensory scores

Sensory Profile 2 (SP2; Dunn, 2014)

Standardized with a clear benefit to a strengths-based approach

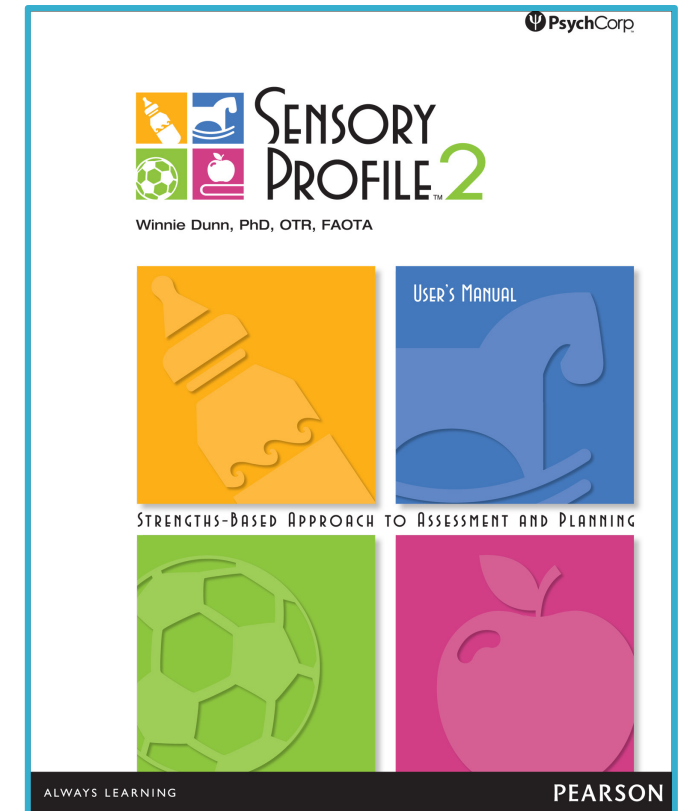
Sensory Profile

- Provides valuable information about a child's sensory learning style
- Gives a strengths-based interpretation
- Insight into how a child will perform in a classroom setting
- Since 2014 includes the school companion

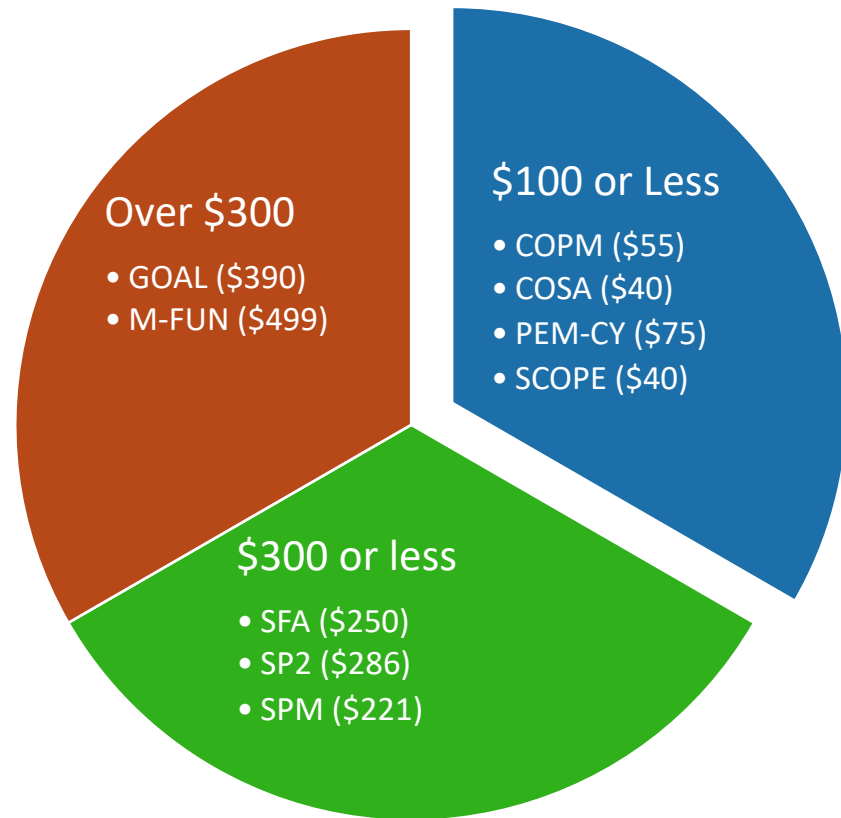
Standardized Assessment

- Helps develop a student's sensory traits or tendencies
- Focuses on alterations to the environment
- Indicates supports that will allow a child to perform best

Sensory Strengths



Costs associated with assessment



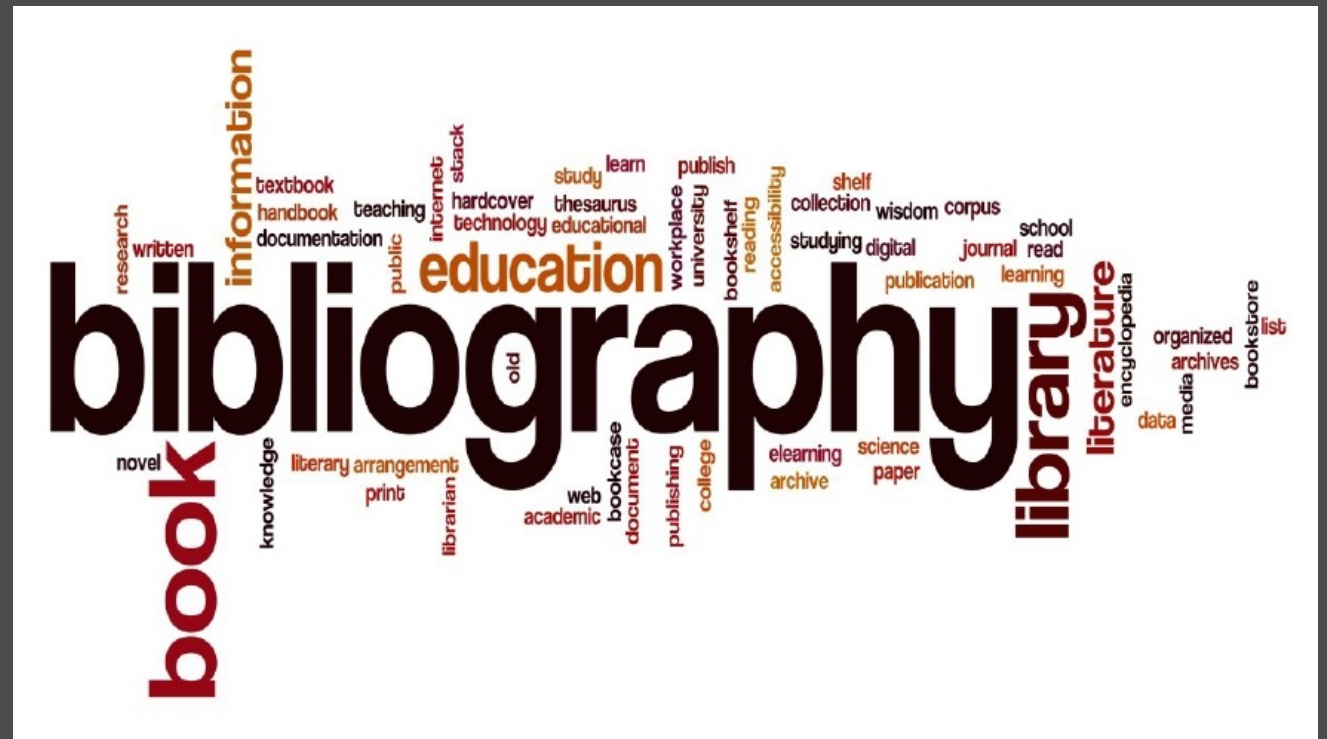
Cost included manual, tool kit and forms

From Assessment to Decision-Making

Reflection Questions

- How do your current assessment practices reflect strengths?
- Which tools best capture participation in your context?
- What changes are feasible in resource-limited settings?

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Lives in the Balance

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