

A review by
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Interactive Online Assessment Options: A Review of the AEPSi

Abstract

This article is a review of an online data management tool called the Assessment Evaluation and Programming System for Infants and Children Interactive (AEPSi). Professionals working with young children are in need of efficient assessment options to meet the ever increasing demands of their work. The AEPSi is a curriculum-based assessment for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers designed to assess a young child's development and learning, as well as provide intervention content via the curriculum. The review covers information about how the AEPSi can assist professionals in their work with young children and families.

Key words: Curriculum-Based Assessment, Early childhood, Infant/toddler/preschooler.

Professionals working with young children are in need of efficient assessment options to meet the ever increasing demands of their work. The Assessment Evaluation and Programming System for Infants and Children (AEPS) is a curriculum-based assessment for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The system is designed to *assess* a young child's development and learning, as well as to provide *intervention* content via the curriculum. The AEPS allows staff to write appropriate goals, plan individualized intervention, and monitor children's progress over time. Validity, reliability, and utility studies have been conducted using the AEPS and there is evidence to suggest that it has strong psychometric properties.

An online companion to the AEPS is now available, which allows users to measure developmental and educational outcomes via a web-based data management system called the *AEPS Interactive* (AEPSi). The AEPSi can be accessed on the web around the

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clock. Webinars, webcasts, and face-to-face training options are available to professionals. Professionals can use the AEPSi with children and families.

AEPSi and Child

The AEPS has six developmental areas: adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, social, and social-communication. The AEPSi protocol with automatic scoring is used by professionals to gather information about children's skills. It is called the Child Observation Data Recording Form (CODRF). Over 200 items from the AEPS are arranged in developmental sequence to consist of goals and objectives. The hierarchical arrangement of goals progress from easy to difficult (i.e., goals become difficult as a child progresses through the test). A goal is a composite of objectives. In order to score a goal, all of the objectives within the goal must be scored. The arrangement of objectives flow from difficult to easy (i.e., objectives become more difficult leading to the goal).

The AEPS is scored using a three point rating scale: 2 = mastery, 1 = emerging skill, and 0 = not yet. It is used to identify skills and areas needed for intervention. The AEPS can be administered using multiple methods which may include: (a) observation in naturalistic settings, (b) direct test, and (c) parent or familiar caregiver report. Qualifying notes can be used with the scoring system in order to supplement the numerical data collection. The following abbreviations qualify, or provide additional information, about children's skills:

- A = Assistance (*help is given to the child to perform the task*)
- B = Behavior (*performance is influenced by the child's behavioral repertoire*)
- R = Report (*parent or someone familiar with the child provides input*)
- M = Modification/Adaptation (*the task was altered to meet the child's needs*)
- D = Direct Test (*directly prompting the child to perform the skill*)
- Q = Quality (*appearance of the skill*)

The AEPS can be modified to accommodate children with disabilities and to ensure assessment practices are culturally and linguistically relevant. Adaptations can be used to change the criterion or directions. Criterion adaptations include changes to the rate and manner of performance. Professionals are able to produce information for one child at a time, or the entire class/group of children. Some of the AEPSi resources for an *individual child* or *group of children* include: child journal, progress reports (i.e., IEP/IFSP, eligibility, Office of Special Education Programs), and assessment activities for individual or group assessment. Two unique features of the AEPSi are the addition of cut off scores for eligibility determination, as well as the ability of the interactive system to report outcome data for accountability purposes.

Cut off scores aid users in making decisions about a child's eligibility for special educational services. The latest feature of the AEPS includes cut off scores for each of the developmental areas. The cut off scores are obtained by adding up all of the AEPS goals for all six developmental areas. The score totals for each area is then compared to a table of age intervals which provides cut scores for each area (e.g., social, adaptive,

etc). If a child's performance is at or below the cut off score, then he/she may be eligible for special services. Alternatively, if a child's score is at or above the cut off score for his/her chronological age, then the child may not be eligible for special services.

Professionals are required to report child outcome data to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for the young children they are serving who receive IDEA services. Professionals are able to use the AEPSi to report child outcome data for state and federal accountability systems. Once a professional has entered data into the AEPSi, the program has a function for calculating children's scores to produce reports.

AEPSi and Family

To facilitate communication, the AEPSi includes a team calendar, tutorials and a discussion board. The AEPSi contains a Family Report tool used to gather information from parents/caregivers. The AEPSi Family Report is divided into multiple sections. In the *activities* section, parents respond to open-ended items about: (a) *daily activities* (i.e., eating, sleeping, dressing, bathing/showering, toileting, playing and interacting, and communicating with others), (b) *family activities*, and (c) *community activities*.

In the *developmental areas* section of the AEPSi Family Report, a series of questions are presented to parents across the six developmental areas (e.g., social, adaptive) whereby they indicate if their child is performing the skill, performing the skill sometimes, or not yet performing the skill. The scoring format corresponds to the 2 (*mastery*), 1 (*emerging*), or 0 (*not yet*) rating scale used for the CODRF. Items are written as questions; provide the reader with more explanation; sometimes accompanied by an illustration of the skill; and uses family-friendly language compared to the more technical wording of the CODRF. There is a section for parents to indicate *intervention priorities* so that parents can introduce additional information about skills they would like their child to learn.

The AEPSi yields relevant information that can be used to formulate developmentally appropriate programs for young children and their families. Assessment and curricular components are linked to offer a seamless system. The AEPSi is an authentic assessment which measures children's functional skills and can also be used with the families of young children.

References

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AEPS Interactive Website: <https://www.aepsi.com/aepsi/>