

# FAMILY RESOURCE

C O N N E C T I O N

A publication created by and for New Horizon Academy • [www.NewHorizonAcademy.net](http://www.NewHorizonAcademy.net) • Phone: 763-557-1111



## Parent-Teacher Conferences:

### *The Importance of Assessment in the Early Childhood Classroom*

Twice a year you will be given the opportunity to sit down with your child's teacher and learn how your child is doing at New Horizon Academy. Parent-teacher conferences are an important step in building a relationship with your child's teacher and in learning and sharing more about your child. You play a key role in the overall assessment of your child's progress. Your observations and feedback will ensure that your child's experience at New Horizon Academy will provide the foundation for success in school and social situations and the successful development of your child's self-esteem. By all means, take this opportunity and sign up for a time for a conference.

#### What is assessment?

You are thinking, "My child is only two years old. Do I really need to attend a parent-teacher conference? And what does it mean to have my child 'assessed'?"

Assessment is the basic process of finding out what your child is doing in their early childhood environment, individually and as a group. It is a way to learn what your child knows and can do in relation to their optimum development and to the goals of the program. With that knowledge, you and your child's teacher(s) can work together to plan appropriate experiences and instruction for your child at home and at school. By working together, specific instructional strategies can be shared that will help your child develop and learn, while monitoring your child's progress along the way.

The term "assessment" has been used loosely as a broad label for any and all of the varied ways we might determine "where a child is" in their development and learning. This may include a brief observation, a fine motor skills checklist, a diagnostic reading test, or a height and weight measurement.

“You play a key role in the overall assessment of your child's progress.”



#### Mission

To open "New Horizons" of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!



Assessment at New Horizon Academy has a much more specific meaning: Assessment is the process of gathering information about a child from several forms of evidence, (i.e.; observations, art experiences, conversations, etc.) and interpreting and sharing that information.

In other words, effective child assessment is not based on just one single measure. Fortunately, everyday classroom experiences present many opportunities for children to demonstrate their development and learning. For example, we can appraise a child's verbal language development by listening to her talk with other children in a variety of work and play situations; talking with her informally; checking on her contributions to group discussions; evaluating her ability to follow oral directions; seeing whether other adults can understand her; and asking her to point to or name pictures in a book. All of these, collectively, are important; any one of these individual assessments would not provide enough evidence on its own.

Meaningful child assessment always involves our looking at information from multiple sources gathered over time before drawing conclusions about a young child's development and learning. Child assessment in the early childhood spectrum is not something new. The teachers at New Horizon Academy have always observed children; talked with them about what they were doing; noted interesting and unique things they did and said; recorded their accomplishments in development and learning; and shared information with families.

### Why assessment?

At New Horizon Academy, child assessment is an integral part of the success of our program. By assessing your child's progress, our teachers are able to establish individual and classroom goals to help us maximize learning opportunities and potential. The



teachers will assess your child each day by observing interactions with other children, talking with your child individually, and planning activities designed to promote your child's development. Twice each year, you will be invited to attend a conference for the purpose of reviewing your child's assessment and development. Informal discussions with your child's teacher throughout the year will also keep you well informed of your child's progress at New Horizon Academy.

### There are five guiding principles in our use of child assessment at New Horizon Academy:

1. Child assessment helps our teaching staff monitor each child's development and learning. Your child's strengths, interests, and needs will be carefully identified, which allows our teaching staff to customize daily activities and weekly plans to meet the unique needs of your child.
2. Child assessment serves as a guide in our program planning and decision-making. Child assessment offers our teaching staff the opportunity to understand what teaching strategies are best used to enhance learning potential. Our staff will also become aware

#### Mission

*To open "New Horizons" of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!*



of any environmental changes that could be made (for example, rearranging the classroom or a learning center) to create a more successful classroom.

3. Child assessment will help identify children who may benefit from additional services. Early intervention is crucial when a potential learning need is identified. Child assessment allows our teaching staff and director the opportunity to work with you in arranging further developmental screening and support services for your child, should a need be identified.

4. Child assessment leads to communication with others. Assessment information is always shared first with you. With your consent, assessment information may be shared with specialists and other staff who can help to develop a learning plan that will benefit your child.

5. Child assessment leads to program improvement. While assessment information is generally used to provide information regarding your child, the combined results for a group of children are also very important to us. New Horizon Academy will use group results to implement program plans that will best meet the needs of the entire class of children. Child assessment will also help us customize our staff training programs to ensure our teaching strategies support overall program quality.



## What are the assessment procedures?

*The New Horizon Academy assessment includes four steps or procedures:*

**1. Getting to know each child.** The assessment procedure involves our teaching staff in getting to know each child upon enrollment and over time, and observing each child in the setting of their classroom. An initial assessment/screening is completed within the first three months of a child's enrollment, using the assessment tool that reflects the child's age. The results will then be documented and used as the baseline for future assessments.

**2. Documentation.** Children's behaviors, interests, skills, and knowledge are recorded and documented to share with parents and the team of teaching staff who work most closely with each individual child. The staff shares information regarding the child's development and learning with the parents daily through written and verbal communication that details the child's day.

**3. Work sampling.** Work sampling items are collected over the course of a few months and shared at the time of conferences. Many work samplings are also often sent home on a daily or weekly basis to share the child's accomplishments with the child's family.

**4. Parent-Teacher Conferences.** Twice a year, the information is compiled so the results can effectively be shared with the parents in a more formal conference. Conferences are generally held in October/November and April/May; however, individual conferences can be scheduled at any time.

### *Mission*

*To open "New Horizons" of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!*





## How are the assessment results used?

The results, the child's accomplishments and successes, areas of strengths, and areas of developmental focus, are shared with you, the parents. Together, a plan will be put in place to help your child reach his or her fullest potential in accordance with their appropriate developmental level. You will also be provided with information regarding the developmental abilities of your child and ways that you can further that development at home.

New Horizon Academy administrators and teaching staff can offer guidance to you if your child may need additional services.

Please know that any information regarding your child is confidential and will only be released through your consent. Only program administration, teaching staff, and government agencies such as licensing, have access to your child's file and assessment information, unless your consent is obtained.

Finally, the assessment results will be used to assist the teaching staff in the development of the curriculum goals and learning activities for the children in the classroom. The teaching staff will utilize the Minnesota Early Indicators of Progress suggested teaching strategies and incorporate these into the daily routines and classroom curriculum. New Horizon Academy teaching staff can also help you learn about further strategies you can utilize at home to optimize your child's development.

It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. Nothing can be more evident than in these early childhood years. Together we can create a positive and supportive foundation through assessment and parent-teacher conferences that will bridge the learning that takes place between school and home. New Horizon Academy's team is here to support your great efforts at home in raising your child to reach his or her brightest potential.

“ It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. Nothing can be more evident than in these early childhood years. ”

### Mission

To open “New Horizons” of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!

