

Here's what happened:

I listened to all of our teachers' complaints, and realized that in our program we already observe, plan and we reflect and wonder together; all of it focused on the children. Our documentation portfolios are top notch! But the DRDP still seemed to re-direct our attention from the children to paperwork. So we switched it up!

As a team, we shared what how we set up the environment everyday to promote children's play, curiosity and learning. And we cross-walked our learning goals with the DRDP measures. Each of us studied where, in our daily activities, experiences and planned environments we are most likely to find children demonstrating each of 43 DRDP measures. (*This tail was not going to shake our dog!*) Our first list was all over the place, but showed promise. Together, we re-discovered the values of our dramatic play areas, the sand box and play dough. We compared our lists, refined them together and came up with several ways we could do exactly what we always have done and secondarily see children demonstrating the measures! We started with our good practice and although we stayed open to discovering more about our work, we felt certain we could link each of the measures from the DRDP instrument to what we already do.

Initially I focused on Play Dough. I looked at what my goals are for the area, various ways we set it up overtime, and what kinds of learning we see as a result. Then reviewed at the Domains and Measures from DRDP. And selected the ones that I regularly observed being demonstrated at the play dough table. (I found that each domain was represented at the play dough table.)

After each of us observed our program areas (we gave a time frame of two weeks) for the selected regularly set up areas in our environment, we created a chart of the DRDP Domains and Measures. We checked off which measures could be reliably observed in the areas we'd studied. Then we wrote an example of the type of behaviors we observed there as related to the DRDP measure in another column. The chart was amazing. Everyone wanted a copy.

After awhile developing and refining our system to support teachers in identifying children's behaviors as related to the DRDP, we made beautiful little posters in each learning area listing possible learning outcomes that included these DRDP measures. We posted photos from our documentation folders and found that families frequently stopped and read them.

We continue to wonder about ways to make the assessment process meaningful to our work and to the young children and families in our program. But now the dog shakes her own tail. Our practice is first, assessment an outcome.