



CONNECTICUT



**Documentation & Observation  
for Teaching System (CT DOTS)**

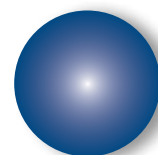
# User's Manual



2018



Connecticut Office of  
Early Childhood



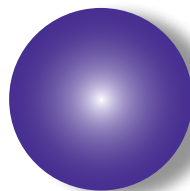
# CONNECTICUT



## Documentation and Observation for Teaching System

**The Connecticut Documentation & Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS) was developed by the CT Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in collaboration with many partners. The OEC worked closely with the University of Connecticut Neag School of Education in the development of CT DOTS. The UConn Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities also provided support and expertise that contributed to this work.**

The OEC would also like to thank the many programs and early care and education providers who participated in focus groups and the CT DOTS Pilot. Your contributions helped to inform the development process and improve initial drafts of CT DOTS. In addition, the OEC would like to thank the following committee members who provided time and expertise throughout the development process.



Carol Annette  
Elizabeth Aschenbrenner  
Linda Bamonte  
Paige Bray  
Andrea Brinnel  
Kimberly Brown  
Betsey DeWolf  
Adrenna D'Orlando  
Harriet Feldlaufer  
Jessica Goldstein  
Andy Gonzalez  
Lee Helmerich  
Cindy Jackson  
Jennifer Johnson  
Michelle Levy  
Amanda Mathieu  
Ann Perzan  
Iris Rich  
Donna Rooney  
Katherine Sandgren  
Bethanne Vergear



# Table of Contents

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	3
<b>CONNECTICUT DOCUMENTATION &amp; OBSERVATION FOR TEACHING SYSTEM (CT DOTS) AT-A-GLANCE</b> .....	5
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	7
CT DOTS Purpose .....	7
<b>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</b> .....	8
The Use of CT DOTS Supports Young Children .....	8
The Use of CT DOTS Supports Providers, Families and Communities.....	8
CT DOTS is Implemented in an Appropriate and Effective Manner.....	9
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	10
Standards, Curriculum and Assessment .....	10
A Cycle of Intentional Teaching.....	11
Planning and Implementing .....	11
Observing and Assessing .....	12
The Role of Early Learning Environments in a Cycle of Intentional Teaching.....	13
Home Environments .....	13
School or Center Settings .....	13
Community Settings.....	13
The Role of the Family in a Cycle of Intentional Teaching.....	14
Engaging Linguistically Diverse Families.....	14
<b>STRUCTURE OF CT DOTS</b> .....	15
Age Bands .....	15
Description and Examples.....	16
Naturalistic Observation.....	16
Planned Experiences .....	16
Guidance for Family Input.....	18
<b>USING CT DOTS</b> .....	18
Take Stock.....	18
Consider the Child(ren).....	18
Sharpen Focus .....	19
Plan to Gather Data .....	19



Gather Data.....	20
Naturalistic Observation.....	20
Planned Experience .....	20
Family Input .....	21
The Physical Health Observation Progression.....	21
Reflect on the Data .....	21
Summarize the Evidence .....	22
Narrative Summary .....	23
Child Summary Form .....	23
Class/Group Summary.....	24
Using Data from the Summary Forms .....	25
Reflecting on the Data.....	25
Communicating with Families.....	25
Communicating with other Professionals.....	26
<b>ENSURING EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Using CT DOTS with ALL Children.....	27
Dual Language Learners .....	27
Diverse Learners.....	28
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>28</b>
 <b>Appendix A:</b> Observation Progressions across the Age Bands.....	 29
<b>Appendix B:</b> Observation Planning Forms .....	31 - 33
<b>Appendix C:</b> Reporting Forms.....	35 - 40



## Connecticut Documentation & Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS)

# At-A-Glance

### Description

The Connecticut Documentation & Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS) is a framework to guide early care and education providers in a process of monitoring children's progress on the skills, abilities and behaviors in the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS). CT DOTS supports early care and education providers to observe children in naturally occurring situations and to plan engaging experiences that allow for more intentional observations. CT DOTS also provides a structure for providers to partner with families in sharing information about individual children.

### Sources of Evidence

- *Naturalistic Observations* occur when children are engaging in everyday routines and activities.
- *Planned Experiences* provide opportunities to observe specific behaviors or skills.
- *Family Input* is valuable information about how children behave and use skills at home and in the community.

### Use of Information from CT DOTS

- For immediate support of children's learning
- To communicate with families about children's learning and development
- To share a summary of learning and development based upon evidence that has been collected across settings and contexts
- To plan additional supports (e.g., curriculum, instruction, professional development, family activities, adult support) and communicate about common goals for children

### Non-Uses of Information from CT DOTS



- To evaluate the effectiveness of a program or teacher
- To compare children to each other
- To determine the need for services
- To make decisions about grades or classrooms

## How Information from CT DOTS is Shared

- The *Narrative Summary* allows early care and education providers to describe what they have observed using CT DOTS, noting a child's strengths and growth, next steps in learning and development, areas of interest and some general information about a child's physical health status.
- The *Child Summary Form* offers a way to visually show what skills and behaviors have been observed and documented. The shaded areas on the *Child Summary Form* show a child's learning and developmental progress based on the information that was collected during each observation period using CT DOTS. To the right, the number and types of the individual pieces of data (data points) used to determine progress are noted.

### Child Summary Form Example

Domain	Progression		0-3 months		3-6 months		6-9 months		9-12 months		12-18 months		18-24 months		24-36 months		3 to 4 years		4 to 5 years		Data Collected		
			E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	Naturalistic Observations	Planned Experiences	Family Input
Cognition	Cognitive Flexibility	Observation Period 1																			2	0	1
		Observation Period 2																			2	0	2

### Child Summary Rubric

Designation	Description	How this is Noted on Summary Chart						
Emerging (E)	The described behaviors have been observed in some situations or settings and/or occur with adult support but are not used consistently.	First column is shaded <table><tr><td colspan="2">9-12 months</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>C</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	9-12 months		E	C		
9-12 months								
E	C							
Consistent (C)	The described behaviors are exhibited consistently across multiple settings with limited adult support.	Both columns are shaded <table><tr><td colspan="2">9-12 months</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>C</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	9-12 months		E	C		
9-12 months								
E	C							

- The *Class/Group Summary* can be used to look at learning and development across a group of children. The information on the *Class/Group Summary* can help for planning curriculum and/or teaching strategies for a group and can highlight when individualized strategies and supports may be necessary.



# Introduction

## **CT DOTS Purpose**

The Connecticut Documentation & Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS) is a framework to guide early care and education providers in a process of monitoring children's progress on the skills, abilities and behaviors in the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS).

## **Used in conjunction with the CT ELDS, CT DOTS is a foundation for:**

- gathering data about children's skills, abilities and behaviors,
- planning additional supports (e.g., curriculum, instruction, professional development, family activities, adult support),
- summarizing evidence of children's progress and
- communicating around common goals.

CT DOTS supports early care and education providers to observe children in naturally occurring situations and to plan engaging experiences that allow for more intentional observations. CT DOTS also provides a structure for providers to partner with families in sharing information about individual children.

## **Information from CT DOTS can be used to:**

- provide immediate support of children's learning,
- communicate with families and/or other professionals about children's learning and development,
- share a summary of learning and development based upon evidence collected across settings and contexts,
- plan additional supports (e.g., curriculum, instruction, professional development, family activities, adult support) and
- communicate about common goals for children.

## **Information from CT DOTS Is NOT to be used to:**

- evaluate the effectiveness of a program or teacher,
- compare children to each other,
- determine the need for services or
- make decisions about grades or classrooms.



## Guiding Principles

All children benefit from rich learning environments in homes, communities and early care and education settings. The Connecticut Observation and Documentation for Teaching System (CT DOTS) is designed to bring families, communities and schools together to support children's early learning and development in conjunction with the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS). The following principles guided the development of CT DOTS and must be considered when observing, documenting and reviewing data using CT DOTS.

### The Use of CT DOTS Supports Young Children

**CT DOTS supports children's learning and development.** Evidence is gathered during daily routines or planned learning experiences, allowing children to continue learning as the assessment process unfolds.

**CT DOTS is an authentic assessment tool that relies on observations during daily routines and developmentally appropriate learning experiences as evidence of children's learning and development.** Authentic assessment involves observation in commonly experienced situations. Early care and education providers and families gain an accurate sense of learning and development when children are using and applying skills based on their interest and engagement.

**CT DOTS is used to document children's progress toward developing the learning and skills set forth in the CT ELDS.** The CT ELDS set forth what children from birth to age five should know and be able to do. CT DOTS provides a framework for monitoring children's progress on the skills, abilities and behaviors in the CT ELDS. CT DOTS is not a curriculum, nor does it include everything that children should know and be able to do as they learn and grow.

**CT DOTS is designed for use with ALL children.** Children with differing abilities are able to exhibit functional skills in alternative ways and whenever possible a child's first language is used as a basis for determining current skills and development.

**CT DOTS supports and reinforces the Essential Dispositions outlined in the CT ELDS.** Children, providers and families are encouraged to be creative, inquisitive, flexible, purposeful and reflective throughout the assessment process. They are also encouraged to use critical thinking and to be social learners.

### The Use of CT DOTS Supports Providers, Families and Communities

**Families are full partners in CT DOTS.** Families are involved in both the collection of evidence and the review of children's learning and development to the fullest extent possible.

**CT DOTS is integrated into daily routines or classroom activities.** Because assessment occurs as a part of commonly occurring situations, CT DOTS can be used across settings and curricular approaches. CT DOTS is especially suited to settings and curricular approaches that integrate learning across domains, build on children's interests and foster critical thinking.



**CT DOTS is designed for use by providers across settings.** CT DOTS is appropriate for use in homes, schools or center-based settings. Because observations occur during daily routines or developmentally appropriate experiences, they can be done in any setting, by a variety of providers. Family input is also appropriate across all types of early care and education settings.

**CT DOTS involves multiple sources of information about children's learning and development.** Observing children in different circumstances over time allows for the collection of valuable information about how children use skills in different contexts. The collection of data across multiple contexts fosters communication about strategies to support learning and development over time.

**CT DOTS provides a means of communicating across sectors.** Reporting formats provide information that is easily understood, support smooth transitions to any new setting and allow for easy and consistent discussions about children's learning and development.

## **CT DOTS is Implemented in an Appropriate and Effective Manner**

**Data from CT DOTS support planning for individual children and for program improvement efforts.** Information about individual children supports individualization and planning. Information about classrooms or groups of children supports curriculum planning and adjustments. Data from larger groups, such as programs, inform planning for professional development and other quality improvement efforts.

**CT DOTS is designed to support the use of the CT ELDS.** Together, the standards (CT ELDS), assessment (CT DOTS) and implementation guidance (Supporting All Children Using the CT ELDS) comprise an interconnected system to support curriculum development and individualization.

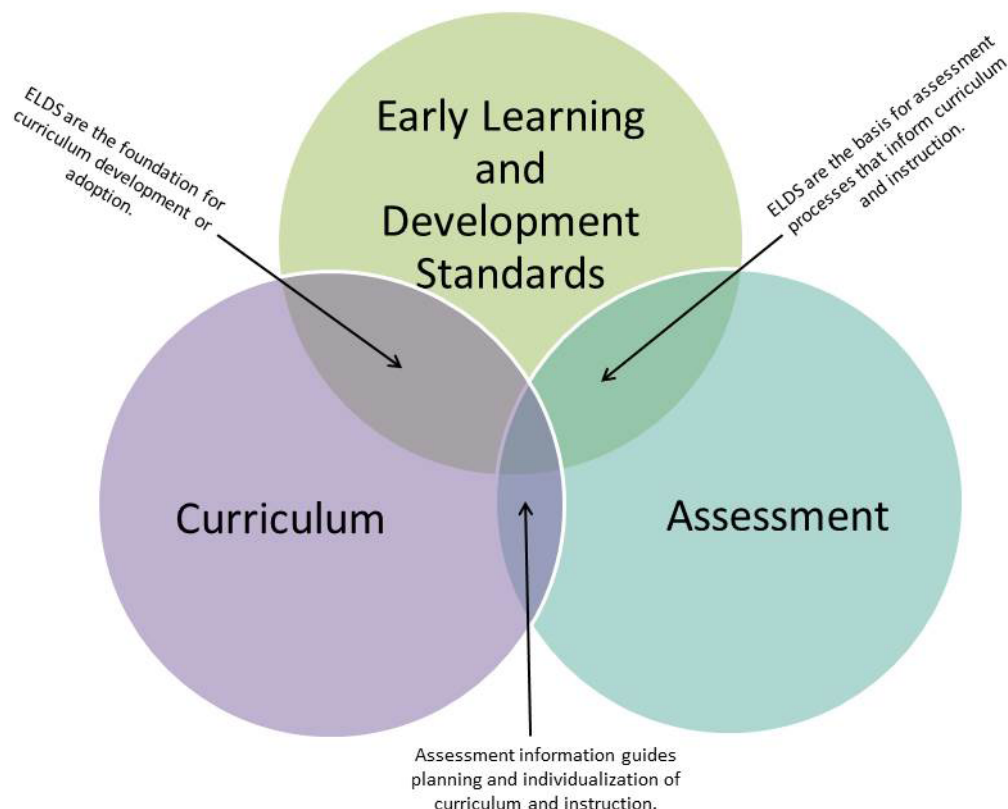
**The use of CT DOTS must be supported by ongoing professional learning opportunities including training, coaching, learning communities and planning/meeting time.** When providers are supported in the use of CT DOTS, it can increase knowledge and understanding of child development and the appropriate implementation of standards, curriculum and assessment.

# Background

## Standards, Curriculum and Assessment

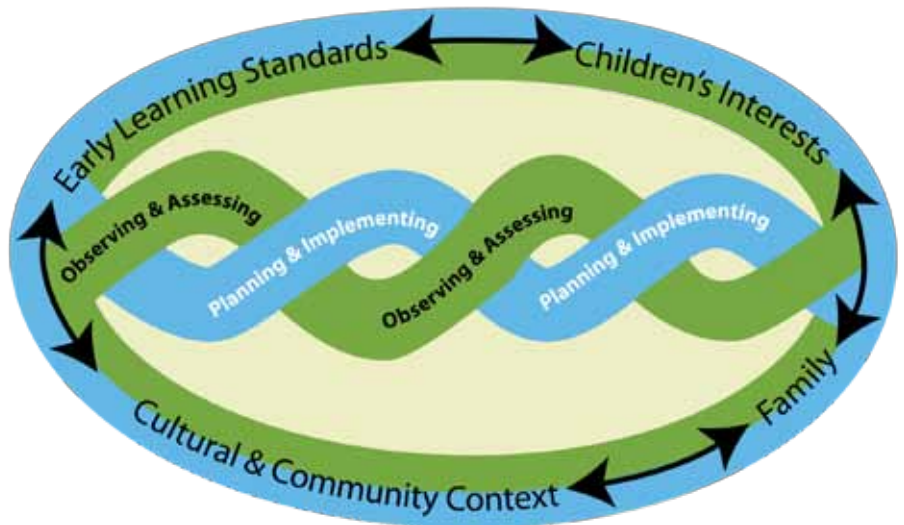
Early learning and development standards, curriculum and assessment are important components of high quality early care and education programs. These three components should be aligned and each should support the other components as shown in the graphic below. The CT ELDS inform and guide curriculum. In addition, assessments that are used for the purpose of informing curriculum and instruction for either groups of children or individuals should be based upon or aligned to the CT ELDS. CT DOTS was built specifically for this purpose. CT DOTS addresses the learning progressions in the CT ELDS and is designed to be used in conjunction with the CT ELDS to plan curriculum and instruction. It should be noted that there are CT ELDS learning progressions that are not incorporated into CT DOTS that should still be addressed as a part of the curriculum.

*History:* Upon release in 2013, the CT ELDS replaced the *Preschool Curriculum Framework* (CT PCF) and *Connecticut's Guidelines for the Development of infant and Toddler Early Learning* as the state's early learning and development standards. CT DOTS is a replacement for the *CT Preschool Assessment Framework* (CT PAF) as an assessment system aligned to the state early learning standards and designed to support curriculum and instructional planning. In addition to CT DOTS replacing the CT PAF, CT DOTS covers broader developmental ranges and is appropriate for use with children from birth through age five.



## A Cycle of Intentional Teaching

A cycle of intentional teaching involves planning experiences to support children's development, gathering information about how they are progressing and adjusting curriculum and supports based upon this information. CT DOTS is a framework for this process, allowing early care and education providers to focus and organize their observations, documentation and communication with families.



## Planning and Implementing

There are multiple research-based approaches to planning and curriculum. A cycle of intentional teaching involves consideration of the CT ELDS, children's interests, family preferences and characteristics and the cultural and community context in the planning process. In addition, information about the group and individual children's development is collected and incorporated into the planning process. Depending on the approach used and the types of information available, the process of planning for curriculum, instruction and observation may start in different places.

A few examples of the ways in which a program might plan a learning experience that involves children making tickets for a train ride on a pretend train are listed below. Although not discussed within the individual examples, trains are a common form of transportation within the communities involved and opportunities for family engagement in the unit of study are incorporated in each program.

- A teacher decides to focus on two CT ELDS learning progressions that had not yet been incorporated into small group plans: conveying meaning through drawing, letters and words; and cardinality. The teacher uses the children's interest in trains to plan an engaging and interesting experience addressing these standards.
- Using an emergent curriculum approach, a teacher creates a planning web based on the children's interest in trains and then plans experiences that integrate multiple learning progressions from the CT ELDS.
- After reading books on transportation as a part of an evidence-based literacy curriculum, teachers note children's interest in the topic and plan a related experience to address learning progressions in other domains from the CT ELDS.
- A program has adopted a curriculum that they have determined is aligned to the CT ELDS. They are implementing a unit of study on trains from the curriculum this month. The children begin incorporating train travel into their dramatic play. Based upon data collected using CT DOTS, teachers adjust the experiences within the adopted curriculum and plan specific teaching strategies to support individual children. In addition, a teacher joins in the dramatic play area and works with the children to make train tickets, reinforcing several learning goals from the CT ELDS.

Each of these different approaches to planning involves intentionally addressing skills from the CT ELDS and builds upon child interest. Such intentional planning also involves considering any relevant assessment or observational data in order to plan for teaching strategies and/or adjustments to address individual learning and development.

## Observing and Assessing

In a cycle of intentional teaching, information (or data) about children's learning and development can be gathered and used to adjust what is being done immediately. Below are two examples of an immediate use of observational data.

- A parent observes their child sucking on the toothbrush and then models an up and down motion for brushing teeth.
- A teacher provides a child with a bigger paint brush after observing her struggle to grip and control a thin paint brush.

Data is also gathered over time and summarized for sharing and reflecting on progress over time. This process of summarizing children's observed learning and development is helpful when planning learning experiences or deciding which supports might be appropriate to continue, change or add. Two examples of using summarized observations are included below.

- A toddler teacher notices that several children have made little progress in symbolic representation and decides to intentionally plan dramatic play experiences that draw upon children's interests. The plans include adults modeling the use of items to represent other similar items, based upon individual children's skills (e.g., using a pretend telephone with children who aren't pretending yet but using an object that resembles a phone with children who already use realistic props to pretend).
- Teachers in a public school meet regularly in grade level groups. The preschool teachers periodically summarize the data they have collected using CT DOTS and review it as a group, sharing ideas and strategies to support individual children as well as addressing any trends.

Observation, documentation and reflection are essential parts of providing rich early learning experiences for children. Adults observe children and use data in order to provide relevant learning experiences for young children as they grow. CT DOTS was designed for this purpose in alignment with the Indicators of Effectiveness in the Assessment of Young Children (NAEYC & NAECS-SDE, 2009).

## Indicators of Effectiveness in the Assessment of Young Children

- Ethical principles guide assessment practices.
- Assessment instruments are used for their intended purposes.
- Assessments are appropriate for ages and other characteristics of children being assessed.
- Assessment instruments are in compliance with professional criteria for quality.
- What is assessed is developmentally and educationally significant.
- Assessment evidence is used to understand and improve learning.
- Assessment evidence is gathered from genuine, naturally occurring settings and situations that reflect children's actual performance.
- Assessments use multiple sources of evidence gathered over time.
- Screening is always linked to follow-up.
- Use of individually administered, norm-referenced tests is limited.
- Staff and families are knowledgeable about assessment.

(NAEYC & NAECS-SDE, 2009)

## The Role of Early Learning Environments in a Cycle of Intentional Teaching

The skills, abilities and behaviors in CT DOTS can be observed in a variety of environments, including home, school or community settings. In every setting, adults are a key part of the environment. The materials, room arrangement and experiences are also key aspects of early learning environments.

### Home Environments

Home environments offer an opportunity to observe how children use their skills, abilities and behaviors in a natural setting. Children may be observed in a home-based childcare setting or with family members in their own home. When a home visitor or early interventionist is in a child's home, *naturalistic observations* and *family input* may be the most appropriate ways of collecting data. High quality home-based early care and education providers already work with families to plan learning experiences that build on young children's skills and incorporate materials that are culturally and linguistically relevant. Incorporating experiences that provide opportunities to both support learning and observe children's skills is a natural fit for home-based providers.

### School or Center Settings

Early care and education settings in schools or community-based programs also offer opportunities to observe children's learning and development. High quality early learning environments are ideal for observing children's skills, abilities and behaviors, as these environments offer children opportunities for learning and applying their skills within engaging and developmentally appropriate experiences. Such environments integrate learning across domains while intentionally supporting the development of specific skills and behaviors. Adults in high quality learning environments support learning in the context of trusting relationships, provide a range of supportive interactions and ask questions to promote children's thinking and curiosity. In high quality learning environments, children are actively engaged in culturally and linguistically relevant experiences that draw upon interests and allow them to explore and engage with topics or materials over time. High quality environments allow children to use their most advanced skills, abilities and behaviors.

Early care and education programs continuously work to improve practice and are at various stages in their progress toward providing a high quality learning environment. Observing children in natural settings provides valuable information about what they know and are able to do in their current environment. Observation and documentation in the settings where children spend their time can provide valuable information about how the early learning environment can be adjusted and/or improved to support children's learning and development.

### Community Settings

Community settings offer an opportunity to observe children in a variety of situations. Community settings may include the library, playground or grocery store. In order to gain a good sense of children's skills, abilities and behaviors, the community setting should be familiar and children should be in the presence of trusted adults. Families are a valuable source of information about how their child uses their skills, abilities and behaviors in community settings.

## The Role of the Family in a Cycle of Intentional Teaching

In addition to the CT DOTS guiding principles that address how the use of CT DOTS supports providers, families and communities, the guiding principles of the CT ELDS address the key role of families in young children's learning and development. The CT ELDS guiding principles that specifically address the role of families are:

- **Families are the primary caregivers and educators of young children.** Families lay the foundation for their children's success through their relationship with their children and by providing experiences that are critical for their children's growth and development.
- **Families are critical partners in early learning environments.** It is important for families to be actively engaged with their child's early care and education. Ongoing communication and an active partnership are necessary to ensure positive outcomes; therefore, families must be supported as partners in all early learning environments.

CT DOTS provides a framework to support ongoing communication between families and early care and education providers that is focused on children's learning and development. Families have valuable information about children's history and their current use of skills and behaviors across a variety of settings. By communicating about children's learning and development, families and early care and education providers can coordinate their efforts to support children, build stronger relationships and learn from each other.

## Engaging Linguistically Diverse Families

High quality early care and education programs support all families to be engaged in the assessment process, including those who speak languages other than that spoken by providers. High quality early care and education programs already have processes in place to communicate with all enrolled families. Current communication processes can be expanded to include the exchange of information about learning and development and ensure that families are full partners in the assessment process. Develop a plan for those languages that are common in your community and consider ways to address communication for families who speak less common languages. Use plain language, consider local organizations and electronic resources that can help with translation and consider how family members with English skills might play a role.

It is beyond the scope of this document to detail principles and practices of working with culturally and linguistically diverse families. Two resources that provide guidance for engaging families from a variety of backgrounds and which may be useful for planning related to implementing CT DOTS are: *NAEYC Where We Stand: On Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity* (NAEYC, 2009) and the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education* (2016) Policy Statement on Family Engagement from the Early Years to the Early Grades.



# Structure of CT DOTS

There are 27 CT DOTS *Observation Progressions*. CT DOTS includes nine age bands spanning from birth to five years of age. Each CT DOTS *Observation Progression* describes a skill across the relevant age bands. In the youngest age bands there are 17 relevant *Observation Progressions*, with nine additional *Observation Progressions* that begin at a later age band. A list of the *Observation Progressions* and the age bands addressed is included in Appendix A.

The Physical Health *Observation Progression* has a different structure and is described in greater detail in another section.

## Age Bands

AGE BANDS	0 – 3 months	3 – 6 months	6 – 9 months	9 – 12 months
-----------	--------------	--------------	--------------	---------------

The age bands in CT DOTS generally align to the age bands within the CT ELDS; however, between birth and one year of age, two additional age bands have been added to promote the gathering of meaningful information during this time of rapid learning and development. The age bands within CT DOTS represent developmental ranges. The descriptions and examples in each age band generally represent what might typically be observed toward the end of the age range for each *Observation Progression*. However, children develop at varying rates and may not demonstrate the skills or examples aligned to their chronological age. While a pattern of skills that is not consistent with a child's chronological age might raise some questions, CT DOTS was not designed as a developmental screening tool and does not yield age equivalencies or standardized scores. Summaries of children's learning and development using CT DOTS and/or documentation of children's progress over time provide valuable information to guide planning for curriculum, instruction and supports but should be interpreted with caution.

## Description and Examples

DESCRIPTION	Uses a variety of facial expressions and sounds	Uses sounds and cries to engage adults	Use varied sounds and gestures across different circumstances	Communicates wants and needs through a combination of crying, babbling, word approximations, and/or gestures
EXAMPLES	Smiles and coos with familiar caregivers Vocalizes open mouth vowel sounds ("ahh" or "ooo") Uses distinct cries for different needs (e.g., hungry, wet, tired)	Babbles using a variety of sounds when interacting with familiar caregivers Cries with different intensities and tone depending upon circumstances Laughs during play Vocalizes excitement and displeasure	Imitates tone and inflection Engages in back and forth exchanges with sounds with familiar adults Engages in verbal play, stringing syllables together ("mamama" or "babababa") Claps hands or waves "bye-bye"	Uses hand and facial gestures to indicate "more" or "no" Vocalizes (babbling or cries) in a manner that shows an intent to communicate Babbles using a variety of sound similar to common words May begin to use first word or gesture for family or objects (e.g., "da" or "dada" for Dad)

For each *Observation Progression*, there is a general Description of the behavior or skill to be observed for each relevant age band.

Below the *Description*, there are more specific *Examples* of how a child might exhibit the skill reflected in the *Description*. These *Examples* are included to help clarify observable behaviors or skills that align to the general *Description*. Keep in mind that these represent a small set of *Examples*. It is not expected that all of the listed behaviors will be observed. In addition, there are many other behaviors not listed that a child may engage in that demonstrate the skill in the *Description*.

## Naturalistic Observation

<b>NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION</b>	Observe child during interactions with primary caregiver(s) and when a child's need arises (hunger, discomfort).	Observe child during interactions with primary caregiver(s) and when a child's needs arise (hunger, discomfort).	Observe child during interactions with familiar adults. Note vocalizations, paying attention to tone, inflection and repeated syllables.	Observe child with familiar adults. Note efforts to communicate interest, needs or wants, including efforts to use gestures (e.g., reaching or pointing) or other physical means to gain shared attention.	Observe when tan and when familiar but wait for context to show they want
---------------------------------	--	--	--	--	---

*Naturalistic Observations* offer an opportunity to observe children's spontaneous use of skills or behaviors within common everyday circumstances. The guidance for *Naturalistic Observations* includes situations in which the described behaviors are likely to be observed, but does not include ALL situations in which the behaviors may be observed. In many *Observation Progressions*, suggestions to help focus observations are also included.

## Planned Experiences

<b>PLANNED EXPERIENCES</b>	Plan for primary caregiver to interact with the child, making eye contact and talking or cooing to child. Observe for child's response, noting sounds and facial expressions.	Have familiar adult make eye contact and make simple babbling sounds (e.g., "be, be, be"). Observe whether the child responds by imitating. Pause and see if the child initiates further babbling.	Interact with child (or ask primary caregiver to do so) by repeating simple syllables (e.g., "ma ma ma" or "ba ba ba"). Wait, watch and listen for child's response. Repeat with different sounds and gestures (e.g., waving goodbye).	During a familiar routine (e.g., mealtime, diapering) pause during the activity and wait to see if child uses a word or gesture to prompt caregiver to continue with activity (e.g., reach or point, saying "um um" for more food).	Plan a situation in additional items. Request the items, model language "more" or "back" is able to use one putting words together response.
----------------------------	---	--	--	---	--

*Planned Experiences* offer the opportunity to observe skills, abilities and behaviors while supporting learning and development at the same time. By intentionally planning experiences that use the skills, abilities or behaviors from one or more *Observation Progression*, data are easily collected. This type of experience also allows the opportunity to observe skills that require adult support or prompting. The guidance provided for each age band includes suggestions for planning learning experiences and providing prompts or supports to determine if skills are emerging in a particular area. For certain *Observation Progressions* and/or age bands, *Planned Experiences* may not be appropriate. When *Planned Experiences* are not appropriate for a particular set of skills, the cells in the document are marked "Not Applicable."

## Family Input

<b>FAMILY INPUT</b>	How does your child respond when you interact with him/her? Does he/she make different sounds when he/she is comfortable or uncomfortable? Describe how your child's facial expressions change when he/she is upset or uncomfortable.	How does your child respond when you look at him/her and smile? How does he/she respond when you talk to him/her? Does your child show you he/she needs something using facial expressions or crying? Does your child have cries that are different depending upon the circumstances?	Describe how your child "talks" to you. Does he/she repeat simple sounds you make (such as "da da da" or "ba ba ba") or other sounds specific to family's primary language? Does he/she wave hello or goodbye? Describe other times or ways that your child uses his/her voice.	What does your child do to show you he/she is interested in or wants something? Does he/she use body language or gestures to let you know when he/she wants something or doesn't want something? What does your child do when he/she is upset? Does your child make sounds or signs that are used in your home?	Tell me about her to communicate point? Does you show they want I have names for a
---------------------	---	---	---	---	--

*Family Input* offers an opportunity to gather valuable information about the skills, abilities and behaviors children use at home and/or in community settings. Involving families in the CT DOTS process provides a focused way to engage families in discussions about their child's learning and development.

The questions in the *Family Input* section include yes/no questions that require a quick response and which may also provide families with some information about skills in a particular area of development. There are also open-ended questions which encourage families to describe children's behavior in greater length. While it is not necessary to use all of the questions with each family, consideration should be given to the intent of the two types of questions included in CT DOTS.

The questions included in *Family Input* are designed as suggestions to be adjusted for each child or family. When engaging in a conversation with families, using a child's name, including information about a child's interests and using the appropriate pronoun will support a strong relationship with families. It is also important to consider how the skills, abilities and behaviors fit within each family's cultural context. Open dialogue as well as knowledge about culture and family priorities will support the effective use of *Family Input*.

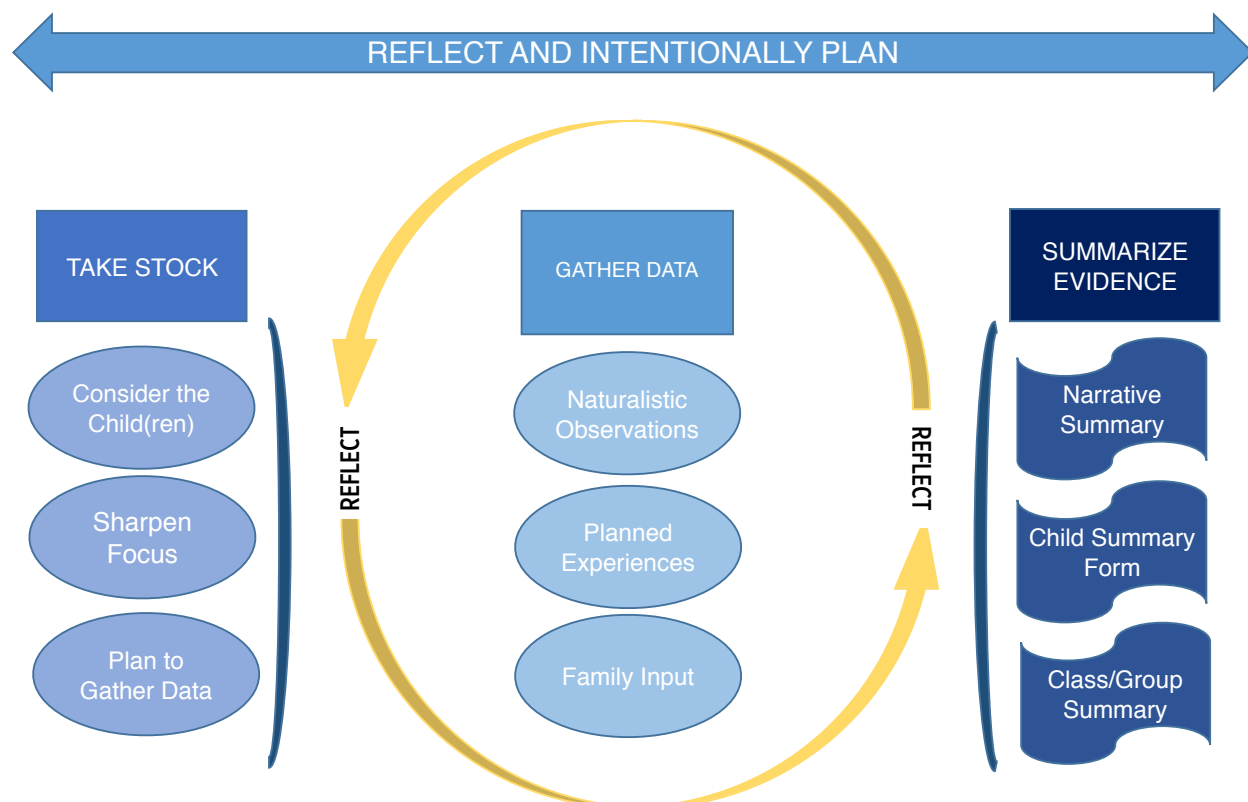


Both the structure of the early care and education program and family preference will influence the extent to which *Family Input* is used to collect data, as well as the format in which data are collected. The *Family Input* questions were initially designed for use during a conversation or conference with the family, but can be shared in writing, depending on the program structure and family preferences. Supplementary *Family Input* booklets are available by age band and domain and may be used to gather written input from some families.

For some early care and education providers, *Family Input* may be the primary type of information collected using CT DOTS. For these providers, additional questions may be used to extend the discussions. In addition, depending upon the structure and focus of the program, family priorities may be used to determine the *Observation Progressions* that are the focus for discussion. All programs using CT DOTS should work to include *Family Input* in their process; however, some families may be unable to contribute information or may choose not to participate in this process. This process is not intended to be a burden or requirement for families and **individual family preferences and needs must be respected**. No matter how the *Family Input* is adjusted to meet the needs of the families served, it provides an opportunity to gather valuable information and strengthen communication between families and early care and education providers.

# Using CT DOTS

CT DOTS provides a framework to guide early care and education providers through a process of collecting and summarizing data on children's growth and development. The picture below provides a visual representation of this process, which is described in the following sections.



The CT DOTS process begins when you *Take Stock* so that the *Naturalistic Observations*, *Planned Experiences* and *Family Input* are focused appropriately for the children involved. To focus the CT DOTS process, consider both the *Observation Progression* and the child(ren) to be observed. After taking stock, *Gather Data* using one of the three options (*Naturalistic Observations*, *Planned Experiences* or *Family Input*). Reflect on the data to inform current practice and help focus future *Naturalistic Observations*, *Planned Experiences* and *Family Input*. Repeat this process over time. Finally, reflect on all of the data collected and *Summarize the Evidence* about what each child knows and can do.

The following sections provide detail on the CT DOTS Process.

## Take Stock

### Consider the Child(ren)

The first step in the data collection process is to think about what you know about the child(ren). This information may include:

- age(s),
- information shared by families on intake forms,
- anecdotal information from families,

- informal observations,
- any known disabilities or special needs that might affect learning and development in a particular area and/or
- assessment information from other tools.

Use this information to identify the CT DOTS age band that is the most appropriate starting point for observations. Remember, this age band may or may not correspond to the actual age of the child(ren).

When CT DOTS is used to observe an individual child, it is possible to consider current information about the child rather easily. When planning to observe or implement a planned experience with a group of children, it will be important to consider the group more generally and then tailor the process to individual children. For example, a teacher may know from intake forms that most children in a preschool classroom speak English and their families do not have concerns about their language development. However, this teacher may have one child who is learning English as a second language and another child whose family has concerns about his language development. This teacher may plan an experience to observe expressive language aligned to the age bands that are relevant to most children in the classroom, but will also plan how to adjust the questions asked and tailor the observation for both the child who is learning English as a second language and the child whose family has concerns about his language development. Just as learning experiences are often planned for a group of children and adjusted for children's varying skills, the CT DOTS process can be used to address both group and individual needs.

## Sharpen Focus

Once you establish a general starting place for an *Observation Progression*, review the Description for the age band(s) identified, as well as the age bands immediately before and after the identified band(s). If you are observing a group of children, you may have an age band that corresponds to the group and another that is appropriate for an individual child. The reviewed *Descriptions* will shape data gathering or help to *Sharpen Focus*. Reviewing the *Descriptions* will also help develop a deeper understanding of learning and development across the age bands over time.

In reviewing an *Observation Progression*, remember that the *Examples* are included to clarify the Description. It is not expected that data be gathered for each *Example*, or that data be limited to the specific *Examples* provided.

When you *Sharpen Focus* on the most relevant age band you ensure that the data collected are relevant and provide an accurate picture of a child's skill/developmental level.

- If all of your information indicates that a child is consistently displaying skills in a particular age band, it will also be important to observe whether children also display skills in the next higher age band. This process is sometimes referred to as “finding the ceiling” since you are working to determine the most advanced skills that a child uses.
- The data collected should provide evidence of what a child can do. It is not sufficient to state that a described behavior is not yet exhibited. If a child is not likely to exhibit behaviors at a particular developmental level, begin observations at the preceding age level.

## Plan to Gather Data

Early care and education providers continually observe children's learning and development; however, taking the time to carefully plan for and document observations increases intentionality, focuses attention, organizes information and promotes reflection. The process of

gathering and documenting data about learning and development takes part within the larger learning environment and may include the home, a center/school setting or the community. In the context of CT DOTS, the word *Data* simply refers to information about children's learning and development that is documented in one way or another. The term *data point* is used to refer to an individual note or artifact that is documented as an example of a skill or behavior demonstrated by a child. *Data points* may take a variety of forms of objective information regarding children's observed behaviors.

Some examples of *data points* are:

- A photograph illustrating a child's behavior during a daily routine (e.g. eating, sorting laundry)
- A family's description of their child's behavior at home
- Artwork created by a child
- Video recording of a child building a block structure
- Notes objectively describing a child's responses during a planned experience
- Audio recording of a child speaking.

Using the guidance for *Naturalistic Observations*, *Planned Experiences* and *Family Input*, develop a plan for gathering data about learning and development. Plans should include how and by whom the information will be gathered and documented.

In addition to planning to gather data for individual children and/or groups of children, it will be important for early care and education providers to have an overall plan for gathering and tracking data over time to ensure that there is sufficient evidence of learning and development to summarize periodically. Sample forms for tracking the collection of data are provided in Appendix B.

## Gather Data

CT DOTS supports providers to gather data from three different sources: *Naturalistic Observations*, *Planned Experiences* and *Family Input*. While an early care and education provider will have many informal observations of children's learning and development, the general goal for CT DOTS is to document three pieces of data for each *Observation Progression* prior to summarizing. Guidance for each possible source of information across the age bands is included for each *Observation Progression*.

Below are descriptions of the three ways of gathering data.

**Naturalistic Observations** occur in the course of the typical daily routine. Providers may plan times for conducting observations so that they are likely to observe specific skills. While adults may be present and interacting with children, the experience and/or interaction has not been specifically planned in order to elicit a particular skill. In addition, notes or artifacts may be gathered when specific skills are spontaneously displayed and noticed.

**Planned Experiences** are intentionally designed to support children's learning and development, but are also structured in a way that allows for observation of a specific skill or skills. *Planned Experiences* should be of high interest to children. Because most engaging experiences involve multiple areas of development, it may be possible to conduct observations for multiple progressions during the same experience. These experiences may take place as a part of a larger topic of inquiry, during a daily routine, in one-on-one situations or during small or large groups. A sample form is included in Appendix B to assist in planning observations during a *Planned Experience*.

**Family Input** might be gathered in a variety of ways including in-person discussion, telephone conversations and/or through written or electronic methods. Providers should plan how to use or adapt the provided questions to gather information, as well as to facilitate open discussion and build relationships with families. The questions should be adapted to what is already known about each child and family and presented in a method that is aligned with a family's preference for communication.

As you collect information about children's learning and development, you will want to briefly note which data collection method was used. This may be documented on a form by checking a box or by briefly noting the type of data collected. Documenting the number of pieces of evidence and the type of data collected provides important information to assist in interpreting the summary of a child's skills.

## The Physical Health Observation Progression

The *Observation Progression* for Physical Health includes guidance for gathering information about children's overall health status. Because health status has a significant impact on learning and development across domains, it is important to consider this information on an ongoing basis and to communicate with families about children's health. However, because of the nature of this progression, the process of collecting data and summarizing evidence is not the same as for other *Observation Progressions*. Instead, providers will make general observations about activity levels, eating and overall health, noting any concerns on an ongoing basis. Providers may also review records provided by physicians or families. Periodically, providers should request *Family Input* and review any notes or communication to note trends or concerns. A review process should take place as data from other *Observation Progressions* is summarized and can be noted on the *Child Summary Form*.

## Reflect on the Data

Reflection is an important part of a cycle of intentional teaching. After each observation, reflect on how the information adds to the current understanding of each child's learning and development. This process may involve reflecting with families, especially as *Family Input* is being shared. Individual pieces of data, or data points, provide valuable information that can be used to adjust the learning experiences for a particular child immediately. This might involve an adjustment to the materials (e.g., using a bigger crayon), the use of a different teaching strategy (e.g., modeling) or the introduction of a new related experience (e.g., painting at an easel). As more information is gathered, you will reflect and revisit the process of *Sharpening Focus* to ensure that additional data collected add to a complete picture of a child's skills. Data that are collected and the summary that is eventually completed provide valuable information for planning learning experiences and supports for children.

The data gathered support providers and families in understanding each child's learning and development. The data that has been gathered are considered as evidence of children's progress relative to the CT DOTS *Observation Progressions* and the aligned CT ELDS *Learning Progressions*. Multiple data points are necessary to present a clear sense of learning and developmental progress.

It is always necessary to gather data about the presence of the behaviors described in CT DOTS. It is not sufficient to state that described behaviors are not yet exhibited. This means that if a child does not exhibit behaviors described within a particular age band then observation and documentation should be focused on the preceding age band, if available.

The data collected about children's learning and development using CT DOTS is summarized periodically. This may occur either once sufficient data is collected or at specified points

in time. The summary(ies) that are completed can be used to reflect on individual children's progress over time and areas of strength, to communicate with families and other professionals about children's learning and development and to plan for groups of children.

## Summarize the Evidence

Summaries of the evidence collected about children's learning and development should be completed periodically and provide important information about patterns of strengths and/or areas in which a child might benefit from support. An overall plan to gather data across *Observation Progressions* should be in place in order to ensure that sufficient data is collected for the purposes of summarizing. The term *evidence* is used to describe the data collected as it is used to summarize what this information tells you about a child's learning and development.

The decision regarding how often to summarize the *evidence* that has been collected will be influenced by several factors. No matter how many times per year an early care and education program or provider decides to summarize child data, it is critical that there is sufficient time to collect meaningful and relevant data and reflect upon this data. While the default form includes two observation periods, this may be adjusted based upon individual provider, program or district factors.

- **Children's age/developmental Level:** Infant development occurs at a rapid pace and may warrant more frequent summarizing of evidence. In addition, the lower number of Observation Progressions in this age range may make it possible to collect sufficient evidence for a meaningful summary in a shorter time frame.
- **Length of time elapsed:** Observation periods should be planned so that the data collected is still relevant and meaningful at the time it is summarized. If too much time has passed between the first observations and when the evidence is summarized, the summary may not reflect an accurate picture of children's learning and development.
- **Structural considerations:** Early care and education programs associated with a school district may have set reporting periods that align with other grade levels or programs may have reporting periods or reflection cycles that inform how frequently data is summarized. Programs that operate only for the school year may find that two reporting periods are sufficient while programs that also operate for the summer should also collect and summarize data about learning and development over the course of the summer learning opportunities.
- **Family Input:** Early care and education programs may adjust the number of observation periods based upon family input and need. CT DOTS involves ongoing family input and communication. Therefore, the number of summaries completed may not need to be as frequent as in the past since the summarizing process is not the main point of communication with families about children's learning and development.
- **Teacher Factors:** Program administrators need to consider teachers' familiarity with CT DOTS and their competencies related to observation and assessment when determining the number of observation periods and/or *Observation Progressions* that will be used.

When summarizing the evidence for a particular *Observation Progression* the goal should be to have at least three documented data points from multiple situations or settings. To the extent possible, include data from *Naturalistic Observations*, *Planned Experiences* and *Family Input* for each *Observation Progression* to be summarized. In some circumstances it may be more appropriate to collect multiple data points from one source. For example, Birth to Three (early intervention) providers are most likely to collect data through *Naturalistic Observations* and *Family Input* given the nature of the services they provide. There are three options for

summarizing data collected using CT DOTS: the *Narrative Summary*, the *Child Summary Form* and the *Class/Group Summary Form*.

## Narrative Summary

The *Narrative Summary* offers an opportunity to describe the evidence that was collected related to a child's learning and development using CT DOTS in a narrative format. The *Narrative Summary* includes sections to address a child's strengths and growth, next steps in learning and development and areas of interest. Programs may want to consider completing each of these sections across the various domains of development addressed in CT DOTS. There is a section included for noting Physical Health Status, which is not included on the *Child Summary Form*. This form can be used alone or can be used together with the *Child Summary Form*. If for some reason the evidence used to complete the *Narrative Summary* does not include *Family Input*, providers may want to consider how the form might be modified to include *Family Input* as a part of the summary.

## Child Summary Form

The *Child Summary Form* offers a graphic summary of the evidence of an individual child's learning and development relative to CT DOTS (and thereby the CT ELDS). For each *Observation Progression*, consider the evidence collected and whether it indicates that the child exhibits the described skill consistently, whether the child requires adult support to exhibit the behavior and whether the skill was observed across multiple situations or settings. Based on the evidence collected, use the rubric below to complete the form.

Designation	Description	How this is Noted on Summary Chart						
Emerging (E)	The described behaviors have been observed in some situations or settings and/or occur with adult support but are not used consistently.	First column is shaded <table><tr><td colspan="2">9-12 months</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>C</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	9-12 months		E	C		
9-12 months								
E	C							
Consistent (C)	The described behaviors are exhibited consistently across multiple settings with limited adult support.	Both columns are shaded <table><tr><td colspan="2">9-12 months</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>C</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	9-12 months		E	C		
9-12 months								
E	C							

It is also important to document the number and type of data points that provide evidence for the summary. On the *Child Summary Form* note the number of *Naturalistic Observations*, *Planned Experiences* and instances of *Family Input* used as the basis for the summary. Documenting the evidence that was used to complete the summary is important for the following reasons:

- Those reviewing the summary will know what data has been collected as evidence to inform the summary.
- If a summary is completed with fewer than three data points, there is clear information about the amount and source of the evidence that was used for the summary.
- If particular types of data are not available, those reviewing the summary can reflect on why certain types of data are not included and consider ways to gather additional information to develop a well-rounded summary of a child's skills.



Below is an example of a completed summary for the *Cognitive Flexibility Observation Progression*. In this example, the person completing the summary reviewed the data at the end of the first observation period. This data consisted of two separate *Naturalistic Observations* and one example of behavior provided by the family. In this example, the evidence reviewed showed that the child exhibited the cognitive flexibility skills described in the 9-12 month age range at home and on one occasion in their early care and education with adult support. The provider completing the summary determined that the evidence collected indicated that the child showed emerging skills in the 9-12 month age band.

Domain	Progression		0-3 months		3-6 months		6-9 months		9-12 months		12-18 months		18-24 months		24-36 months		3 to 4 years		4 to 5 years		Data Collected		
			E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	Naturalistic Observations	Planned Experiences	Family Input
Cognition	Cognitive Flexibility	Observation Period 1																			2	0	1
		Observation Period 2																					

The gathering of data regarding children's learning and development may begin at different ages; therefore, providers will not always have evidence of learning and development across all prior age bands. Because learning and development across the age bands is generally cumulative, many children will have progressed through the phases described in previous age bands. While it is ideal to have evidence of learning at previous stages, in most cases collecting this evidence is not a realistic or helpful endeavor. It is suggested that the following steps be taken to accurately represent how available evidence is aligned to the *Observation Progression*:

- If there are concerns about gaps in learning and development along a particular *Observation Progression*, target observations and gather data about the skills described in the younger age bands.
- When summarizing evidence, note any prior CT DOTS assessment reports on the summary form. If no earlier reports are available that provide information about prior time periods, there is an assumption that the child consistently demonstrates the behaviors in prior age bands despite not having direct evidence of these behaviors.

## Class/Group Summary

In order to plan curriculum and instruction, it may be helpful to summarize data regarding learning and development for a group of children. The *Class/Group Summary* may be used for this purpose. Such information may be used to guide curriculum and instructional planning for the group. This information may also be helpful in planning professional learning opportunities for providers.

Domain	Progression	0-3 months		3-6 months		6-9 months		9-12 months		12-18 months	
		E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
Cognition	Cognitive Flexibility							2	3	2	

To complete the *Class/Group Summary*, simply tally the number of children in the group at each age band and level and input this number in the corresponding column. In the example below, an infant room at an early care and education center has evidence that shows for three (3) infants the data showed emerging use of the skills in the 9-12 month age range, for two (2) infants evidence was aligned with consistent use of skills at this age range, and for the final two (2) infants in the group, evidence was aligned with emerging use of skills at the 12-18 months age range.



Caution should be used when interpreting data from *Class/Group Summaries* and any use of group data should align with the purposes for which this tool was designed.

## Using Data from the Summary Forms

### Reflecting on the Data

Data from an individual *Child Summary Form* provides information about patterns across the various areas of development and reflects a child's progress over time when multiple observation periods are included. Data on the *Class/Group Summary* provides an opportunity to reflect on possible areas of focus for curriculum and instruction, as well as ways to support the learning and development of a group of children. Early care and education providers should have dedicated time to review both individual and group data about learning and development with other professionals and to use this data to plan for curriculum, instruction and/or supports.

When reflecting on the summaries, consider both the information about children's learning and development and the data regarding the types of evidence collected. The following are examples of how data about the types of information collected might be considered:

- If data was not collected using *Naturalistic Observations*, consider whether providers have had the opportunity to conduct *Naturalistic Observations*.
- If there are no *Naturalistic Observations* for an individual child, consider whether a child is able to use a particular skill independently.
- If no data from *Planned Experiences* is included as a part of the evidence and *Planned Experiences* are appropriate for the providers' role, consider whether there is sufficient time for providers to plan experiences and/or whether additional support is needed for planning experiences that promote learning and provide opportunities for data collection.
- If no data from *Family Input* is included as a part of the evidence, consider *Family Input* has been sought, how family preferences are determined and consider additional ways to engage families.

### Communicating with Families

CT DOTS is intended to enhance communication about children's learning and development. *Family Input* is an important part of gathering data, but it is also important to review and reflect with families once the evidence of learning and development has been summarized. It is not necessary to share both the *Narrative Summary* and the *Child Summary Form*. Instead, programs should consider which forms best fit with the program philosophy, structure and approach to family engagement. In addition, individual family factors and preferences should be considered when deciding which forms will support meaningful communication about children's learning and development.

It is recommended that programs that opt to share the *Child Summary Form* with families involve families in the CT DOTS process prior to sharing the completed form. Families may contribute input, thus gaining insight into the skills and behaviors discussed in CT DOTS. Programs might also introduce families to the form and how CT DOTS is used in the program prior to sharing individual child data. These efforts will support families in understanding the information that is captured on the *Child Summary Form*. The *CT DOTS At-A-Glance* document included at the beginning of this manual may help in sharing this information with families.

It is possible for programs to modify the forms that are provided to fit with program or family needs and preferences. Some possible modifications to the forms include:

- altering the number of observation periods on the form,
- showing only the completed observation periods on the *Child Summary Form*,
- phasing in new *Observation Progressions* as providers become proficient with using CT DOTS or
- removing the ages from the *Child Summary Form* so that discussion with families is focused on progress and next steps instead of a child's skills in relation to the age bands.

## **Communicating with other Professionals**

CT DOTS can also be useful in communicating with other early care and education providers or specialists about a child's learning and development. The *CT DOTS At-A-Glance* document included at the beginning of this manual can be used to familiarize people with the CT DOTS process and reporting. Appendix C includes reporting forms described in prior sections which can be used to communicate about children's learning and development, including the *Narrative Summary* and the *Child Summary Form*. Communicating with other professionals can help to coordinate services and supports and/or can promote smooth transitions. When transitions from one environment to another commonly occur, such as transitions from early care and education centers to kindergarten, professionals from across the settings may benefit from using a common format and process for sharing information.



# Ensuring Effective Assessment Practices

## Using CT DOTS with ALL Children

CT DOTS is designed for use with ALL children (see the *Guiding Principles*). CT DOTS provides a process and common descriptions of learning and development as a basis for observing and documenting children's current skills and progress over time. However, children may display the learning and development described in a variety of ways. Examples are provided in order to illustrate common ways in which children might display a certain skill or ability and to assist in understanding the description; however, the examples provided are not exhaustive. The ways in which a particular child demonstrates a skill outlined in a CT DOTS *Observation Progression* may be influenced by several factors, including culture, prior experience, language development, linguistic background, disability and/or temperament. It is important that those using CT DOTS work to maximize a child's opportunities to display their skills and abilities by providing multiple means of expression, providing culturally and linguistically relevant materials and by allowing modifications to support individual children.

## Dual Language Learners

It is important to consider information about children's development in each language they are learning when looking at their skills and progress across domains. Observing children's skills or behaviors while using their primary language(s) will provide the most accurate information about their skills. If the provider does not speak a child's primary language(s), there are several steps that may help in gathering valuable information about a child's skills.

- Consider how a child might demonstrate skills in non-verbal ways (e.g., matching shapes instead of naming them, using sign language).
- Gather family input about a child's use of skills in their home language in order to compare with the child's skills using English.
- Engage staff or family members to use the child's language and/or to translate the child's vocalizations.
- Conduct *Naturalistic Observations* of the child with a peer or relative who speaks their primary language. Translate vocalizations as needed to understand child's skills.
- Include notes about what language the child used and describe any nonverbal communication.

There is wide variation in the experiences and skills of children who are learning a second language. The degree to which children's use of their first or second language is supported at home and in other environments impacts their language development, as does the age at which they begin to learn a second language. All of these factors influence how language development will impact the use of skills across domains. CT DOTS is designed as a tool to support planning and communication among providers, families and communities. Reflecting on children's language development across any languages they are learning and considering the impact of language development on the skills they demonstrate will help in planning meaningful learning experiences to support further learning and development.

## Diverse Learners

CT DOTS is designed as a framework for observing and documenting children's progress on the skills, abilities and behaviors outlined in the CT ELDS. When planning for the use of CT DOTS, it is important to consider children's individual learning styles, needs and ability to respond. Observations may involve a child demonstrating their understanding in an alternative manner (e.g., pointing in response to a question instead of verbally responding) or may involve a child using an adaptive behavior to achieve a modified goal (e.g., using a wheelchair or walker to get across a room instead of walking). When considering the appropriate ways for a child to demonstrate a particular skill given their individual needs, it is important to communicate with the child's family and any other providers or specialists who support the child or family. It may also be helpful to review the aligned CT ELDS learning progressions in order to consider the intent and overarching purpose of the progression.

For children with an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individual Education Program (IEP), goals may be aligned to the CT ELDS and observation and documentation using CT DOTS may provide valuable information about progress toward individual goals. Other professionals who are a part of the child's team may help to develop additional goals for learning and development or may determine intermediate steps or goals to document a child's progress. It is important to consider that any child with an IFSP or an IEP should be supported in their learning and development across all domains and skills addressed in the CT ELDS, whether or not these areas are addressed within their individual plan. Because CT DOTS addresses all domains within the CT ELDS it can be a valuable tool for considering children's overall development.



## References

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2009). Where We Stand: On Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity. Available at: [\*\*https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/diversity.pdf\*\*](https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/diversity.pdf)

National Association for the Education of Young Children & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. (2009). Position statement: Early childhood curriculum, assessment and program evaluation. Washington, DC: NAEYC. Available at: [\*\*https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/StandCurrAss.pdf\*\*](https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/StandCurrAss.pdf).

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Policy Statement on Family Engagement from the Early Years to the Early Grades. Available at: [\*\*https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/policy-statement-on-family-engagement.pdf\*\*](https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/policy-statement-on-family-engagement.pdf)

	0-3 months 17 Progressions	3-6 months 17 Progressions	6-9 months 17 Progressions	9-12 months 17 Progressions	12-18 months 20 Progressions	18-24 months 25 Progressions	24-36 months 27 Progressions	3-4 years 27 Progressions	4-5 years 27 Progressions
Cognition	Cognitive Flexibility								
	Initiative/Motivation								
	Engagement in Learning								
	Logic and Reasoning								
Social and Emotional Development	Symbolic Representation								
	Regulation								
	Emotional Expression								
	Sense of Self								
Physical Health and Development	Relationships with Adults								
	Relationships with Peers								
	Gross Motor								
	Fine Motor								
Language and Literacy	Self-Help								
	Physical Health								
	Receptive Language								
	Expressive Language								
Creative Arts	Literacy								
	Appreciation and Engagement in the Arts								
	Counting and Cardinality								
	Number Operations								
Mathematics	Measurement								
	Geometry								
Science	Scientific Practices								
	Social Studies								



● Note that this form includes only very general information regarding the CT ELDS learning progressions addressed and the CT DOTS *Observation Progressions* that would be easily observed during experiences. This form may be helpful in developing an overall plan for gathering evidence and/or conducting *Naturalistic Observations*. Further detail would be necessary for individual *Planned Experiences*, including materials, the role of the teachers, individualized supports, etc.

**TOPIC OF INQUIRY:**

Questions or areas of exploration:

Learning Experiences:

CT ELDS Learning Progressions Addressed:

Data to be Collected:

CT DOTS Observation Progressions:

Plans to continue or extend learning:

## Sample Observation Plan — Toddlers

### TOPIC OF INQUIRY: Cleaning

#### Questions or areas of exploration:

What tools do we use for cleaning?

What works for wet messes and what works for dry messes?

Exploration of pretend cleaning tools (play vacuums, small brooms and dustpans, buckets and sponges)

Learning Experiences:	CT ELDS Learning Progressions Addressed:
Washing windows-children will use buckets of water and towels or sponges to wipe off the large glass doors/windows. Dry towels will be used to dry the windows.	Vocabulary Self-concept and competency Large muscle movement and coordination Matter and its properties
Sweeping-small brooms and dustpans to clean the paper dots from hole-punching from the floor and/or to sweep up small amounts of sand from the sensory table or bin to get it ready for water	Vocabulary Self-concept and competency Large muscle movement and coordination
Pretend vacuums and cleaning supplies available for dramatic play	Symbolic representation Language comprehension Language for Interaction
Data to be Collected:	CT DOTS Observation Progressions:
Notes on child utterances (by provider and from families)	Expressive Language
Photo of using hand broom and dustpan together	Large Muscle
Photo of children interacting with items for pretend play	Symbolic representation

#### Plans to continue or extend learning:

Incorporate other cleaning tools (e.g. sponges in the water table/bin), ask families for information about children's involvement in cleaning at home and about specific tools used which might be appropriate to include, have messy play opportunities (e.g. shaving cream on a table) and make cleaning up a part of the experience.



## Sample Observation Plan— Preschoolers

### TOPIC OF INQUIRY: Train Station

#### Questions or areas of exploration:

How do train stations operate? What are the jobs involved in running a train station?

What do people who want to go somewhere on a train need to do to get where they want to go?

Learning Experiences:	CT ELDS Learning Progressions Addressed:
Making train tickets (cutting paper into small rectangular shapes and drawing or writing to make “tickets”)	Drawing and Writing Written Numerals Symbolic Representation
Selling tickets (counting out tickets, pretending to take money)	Number Names Cardinality Drama
Building train (Painting cardboard to build components of train, moving chairs for seating, planning for storing luggage)	Visual Arts Large Muscle Movement and Coordination
Data to be Collected:	CT DOTS Observation Progressions:
Sample of tickets made by children (beginning writing or drawing)	Print Concepts Fine Motor
Notes on counting and “adding to” and “taking away” for some children	Counting and Cardinality Number Operations
Notes on pretend play (roles taken, use of props)	Symbolic Representation
Notes on moving large objects and coordinating movements to build train, move “luggage”, etc.	Gross Motor

#### Plans to continue or extend learning:

Add pretend money to provide further opportunities for counting and working on recognizing written numerals. Create maps for train station wall after planning and researching destinations.



CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_ (YEARS) \_\_\_\_\_ (MONTHS)

TEACHER(S): \_\_\_\_\_ PROGRAM/CLASSROOM: \_\_\_\_\_

REPORT DATE \_\_\_\_\_ LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME: (Circle primary language if applicable)

**ATTENDANCE:** (Days attended/days open) \_\_\_\_\_

**NARRATIVE SUMMARY BASED ON:** (check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ Naturalistic Observations      \_\_\_\_\_ Planned Experiences      \_\_\_\_\_ Family Input

**STRENGTHS AND GROWTH**

**NEXT STEPS IN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Narrative Summary Form page 2

CHILD'S NAME

DATE OF BIRTH

PRIMARY LANGUAGE

PHYSICAL HEALTH STATUS

☐ Some concerns noted

☐ No concerns noted

Describe strengths noted by provider or family:


Describe concerns noted by provider or family:

Describe the information used to determine Physical Health Status:

PLANS FOR SUPPORTING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

PLANS FOR ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT

# Child Observation Summary Form



## Child Observation Summary Form

**KEY**

**E** = Emerging    **C** = Consistent

Child's Name	Primary Language										Child's Age	Completed By	Attendance (Days attended/days open)									
DOB											Observation Period	Turn-up										
											1											
											2											
Domain	Progression	0-3 months		3-6 months		6-9 months		9-12 months		12-18 months		18-24 months		24-36 months		3 to 4 years	4 to 5 years	Data Collected			Comments	
		E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C			Materials/ Observations	Planned Experiences	Ready Input		
Cognition	Cognitive Flexibility	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Initiative/Motivation	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Engagement in Learning	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Logic and Reasoning	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Symbolic Representation	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
Social and Emotional Development	Regulation	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Emotional Expression	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Sense of Self	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Relationships with Adults	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Relationships with Peers	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
Physical Health and Development	Gross Motor	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Fine Motor	Observation Period 1																				
		Observation Period 2																				
	Self-Help	Observation Period 1																				
Observation Period 2																						

Child Observation Summary Form

E = Emerging

C = Consistent

Child's Name	Observation Period	Child's Age	Completed By	Attendance (days attended/days open)																
DOB	1																			
	2																			
Domain	Progression	Primary Language						Data Collected	Comments											
		0-3 months		3-6 months		6-9 months				9-12 months		12-18 months		18-24 months		24-36 months		3 to 4 years		4 to 5 years
Language and Literacy	Receptive Language	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
	Expressive Language	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
	Literacy	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
	Print Concepts	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
	Phonological Awareness	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
	Drawing and Writing	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
Creative Arts	Appreciation/Engagement in the Arts	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
Mathematics	Counting and Cardinality	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
	Number Operations	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
	Measurement	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
	Geometry	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
Science	Scientific Practices	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		
Social Studies	Social Studies	Observation Period 1																		
		Observation Period 2																		

Directions: Tally the number of children in the group at each level and age band and input the number in the corresponding column.

## Class/Group Summary Form

**E** = Emerging    **C** = Consistent

Domain	Progression	0-3 months		3-6 months		6-9 months		9-12 months		12-18 months		18-24 months		24-36 months		3 to 4 years		4 to 5 years	
		E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
Cognition	Cognitive Flexibility																		
	Initiative/Motivation																		
	Engagement in Learning																		
	Logic and Reasoning																		
	Symbolic Representation																		
Social and Emotional Development	Regulation																		
	Emotional Expression																		
	Sense of Self																		
	Relationships with Adults																		
Physical Health and Development	Relationships with Peers																		
	Large Muscle																		
	Small Muscle																		
Language and Literacy	Self-Help																		
	Receptive Language																		
	Expressive Language																		
	Literacy																		
	Print Concepts																		
	Phonological Awareness																		
	Drawing and Writing																		
Creative Arts	Appr./Engagement in the Arts																		
Mathematics	Counting and Cardinality																		
	Number Operations																		
	Measurement																		
Science	Geometry																		
	Scientific Practices																		
Social Studies	Social Studies																		



450 Columbus Blvd.  
Hartford, Connecticut 06103  
[www.ct.gov/oec](http://www.ct.gov/oec)