

Collecting Child Data through Observation

Child Observations for Learning Activities

- Be objective. Write what you see or hear.
- Writing brief notes about each child's participation in a learning activity and their meeting the learning activity goals.
- Observation documentation during the learning activity (pictures of children engaged in the learning activity or child work samples, video clips of a group of children working together, written notes are also a form of documentation).
- Reflect on observation notes and documentation collected. Did each child meet the learning activity goals? If not, what modifications to the learning activity plan are necessary for the child to master the learning activity goals? Modifications include teacher practice, the setting, and learning styles (visual, auditory, sensory, or a combination). Use information from reflection notes and documentation to make modifications or accommodations for the next learning activity plan.

Observations for a Specific Child

Sometimes teachers need to collect data for specific children who are exhibiting developmental delays and/or challenging behaviors. Teachers may use the same observation techniques and documentation collection they use during a learning activity. It is important for teachers to be objective observers of what they see and hear, and not subjective observers, what they "interpret" the child as doing/feeling. Below are some example observation questions for individual children.

Observation Question Examples

Example Questions Observation #1 Routines--Snack Time

What is the setting?

What is the child's reaction to the eating situation (casual, picky, timid)?

What and how much does he eat?

What is the manner of eating (utensil use, messy, concerned not enough food, comfortable)?

Do they socialize and how much (with whom, can they eat and socialize at the same time)?

Do they show interest in food? In what way?

What is the stimulus (routine)? Does the teacher ask or prompt the child?

How does the child react?

Do they comply or resist? Complain?

Does the child take the process seriously?

How does the child handle themselves (clumsily, skillfully)?

Is their ability/development equal to the task?

Are the skills age appropriate or not?

What are the skills/abilities do they have?

Transitions between routines?

Behavior in relation to the group (withdrawn, silly, disruptive)?

Teacher expectations?

Does the child complete what is being asked?

How do they behave towards the other children?

Example 2 Questions Observation #2 Circle Time

What is the setting?

What is the stimulus (routine)? Does the teacher ask or prompt the child?

How does the child react?

Do they comply or resist? Complain?

Does the child take the process seriously?

How does the child handle themselves (clumsily, skillfully)?

Is their ability/development equal to the task?

Are the skills age appropriate or not?

What are the skills/abilities they do have?

Transitions between routines?

Behavior in relation to the group (withdrawn, silly, disruptive)?

Teacher expectations?

Does the child complete what is being asked?

Example 3 Questions Observation #3 Use of Materials

What is the setting?

What is the stimulus (how does the child come to use the material)? Does the teacher ask or prompt the child (self-directed or suggestion by another child)?

Describe how the child is using the materials.

Length of time using materials?

Describe the child's emotional responses (physical, verbal, expressive) while using the materials.

Is there any socializing with other children while the child is using the materials?

What are the child's reactions to the adults while using the materials?

How does the experience end?