The Developing Child Observation Guidebook

Glencoe

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Using the Observation Guidebook Effectively

The *Observation Guidebook* provides the materials you need to make child observations rich learning experiences for your students. Reproducible handouts explain the role of observations in the study and care of children and teach basic observation skills. In addition, the booklet provides over 30 ready-to-use, reproducible observations. Choose those that fit your course and situation. Observations can bring the content in *The Developing Child* text to life for your students.

OBSERVATION SITES

The observations are designed primarily to be used with children ages three to five in early childhood education programs or child care centers. (The textbook and Teacher Wraparound Edition suggest other observation opportunities with different ages, and in a variety of settings.) The preschool level offers the best combination of opportunities to see rapid change, plus availability of children to observe.

You may be fortunate to have an on-site early childhood education or child care program. Some programs are designed to provide lab experiences for child development and/or child care students. Other on-site programs are meant primarily to provide care and education for the children of staff, and perhaps students. When this link exists, it facilitates arranging opportunities for student observations. In addition, the activities planned for the children can often be coordinated with the topics students need to observe.

If such a program is not available, contact programs in your community, particularly ones close to your campus. Arrangements can often be made to allow your students to observe in those settings. Be sure to check school policies that affect use of off-campus sites. Note that some of the observations can be adapted for use in less formal settings.

PERMISSIONS AND PRIVACY

Parental permissions must be obtained in order for children to be formally observed. Often school-based programs write this stipulation into their policies. If not, or if students will observe off-site, work with your administrator to develop a permission form. Children whose parents do nott give their permission in writing must not be used as subjects of students' observations.

Privacy policies go hand-in-hand with permissions. Parents need assurance that information about their children will be kept confidential. The "Ethical Behavior and Oberservations" section on page 19 suggests basic procedures and rules for student use. Students need to clearly understand the importance of privacy and the actions that can compromise it. Emphasize that talking about the children they observe can be potentially damaging to the children or their families. Remind students that the conclusions they draw as they learn to observe children may not be valid.

THE OBSERVATIONS

The observations in this booklet cover physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of preschoolers. Additional observations focus on various aspects of early childhood education. These help students learn more about early childhood programs, plus see how observations help educators make program improvements.

In all, nine different types of observation techniques are included. These range from anecdotal records to a rating scale and event samples. Many observations use a format of guided questions. This format is designed specifically to help students identify real-life examples of the child development theory and information they are learning. The questions in these observations incorporate higher-level thinking skills. Students are asked to interpret what they see and to consider important content-related questions. Note that all of the observations include some follow-up questions to extend learning.

Each observation is rated by difficulty level, with 1 being the easiest and 3 being the most difficult. Ratings take into consideration both the depth of the topic being observed and the level of observation skills needed.

For some topics, more than one observation option is included. For example, for fine motor skills, you may choose a Level 1 overview of physical development or one of two Level 2 observations—one using a developmental checklist and the other using guided questions.

The *Guide to Observations* chart that begins on page 7 will help you select appropriate observations for your students. It gives detailed information about every observation and suggests discussion questions to boost students' learning.

BUILDING SKILLS

The front section of the booklet contains reproducible handouts that provide the information students need to learn key observation skills:

- ***Why Observe Children?*** explains how both students and professionals use observations for learning about and helping children.
- ***Guidelines for Observing Children*** gives the basic information every student needs before observing—how to prepare, how to observe, and how to act in a professional manner.
- ***Separating Fact from Opinion*** clarifies the most basic element in observation—the distinction between factual information and interpretation.
- ***Ethical Behavior and Child Observations*** tackles professional behavior, privacy, and confidentiality concerns, giving specific examples. Students learn the reasons behind the rules.
- ***Comparing Types of Observations*** shows, in chart form, the major types of observations, their uses, advantages, and disadvantages. This can be helpful in distinguishing among similar observation types.
- **Observation samples and forms** provide models of written observations, plus blank forms of common observation types for your use. For example, the samples show the differences in what is written for a running record and an anecdotal record, even though the forms are similar. Use the blank forms for teacher-assigned and practice observations, and for students' working notes as they observe. Note that the blank forms may not match those in the observations exactly. For example, the frequency count sample and blank form are open-ended to accommodate a variety of situations. The frequency count forms in Observations 17 and 18 have charts tailored to the topics. A few types of observations, such as developmental checklists, always require a form individualized to each observation.
- **Developmental Milestones—Ages 2–5.** These charts provide quick reference for students on the skills and behaviors typical for children of each age. Although the observations are keyed to children ages three to five, some children will have skills above and below their age level.

OBSERVATIONS CD-ROM

Glencoe/McGraw-Hill has created an *Early Childhood Observations CD-ROM* (ISBN 978-0-07-869-81-9) as a potential companion piece for use with this *Observation Guidebook*. The CD-ROM helps students learn and practice the core skills of child observation as they see how development plays out in real life with video clips from actual child care settings.. The CD-ROM focuses on the development of preschoolers and kindergartners. It also contains observations of various aspects of early childhood programs. You can use the *Early Childhood Observations CD-ROM* for practice, training, and for observation opportunities—all without leaving the classroom. Its scope and flexibility allow you to use it again and again.

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Guide to Observations

#	Observation	Type	Level	Length	Discussion Questions
1	**Overview of Physical Development** The three "Overview" observations direct students to observe examples of the main topics in major areas of development. Good to use when observation opportunities are limited.	Guided Questions	1	20 min.	1. Based on physical skills, why is "toddler" no longer an appropriate term for three- and four-year-olds? 2. Under what circumstances would it be normal for a child to grow taller, but not gain weight? 3. Is good dexterity necessary in order for children to feed themselves? Explain.
2	**Assessing Physical Development** This observation focuses on growth and other physical changes of the period.	Guided Questions	2	30 min.	1. What are some reasons that today's children are more likely to be overweight than children in the past? 2. How does society view children who are taller than average? Heavier than average? 3. What are some ways society might help combat childhood obesity?
3	**Assessing Gross Motor Development** Observing during active play times (indoor and outdoor) will help students see more skills. This observation is more meaningful if it is repeated at least once.	Developmental Checklist	2	30 min.	1. Which is more difficult for a child, walking up stairs or walking down stairs? 2. What is the difference between skipping and galloping? Which is more difficult? 3. What factors might influence the age at which a child is able to ride a bicycle?
4	**Assessing Fine Motor Development** Having the materials involved with the fine motor skills listed available for children will enhance student's observations.	Developmental Checklist	2	30–40 min.	1. Which fine motor skills were the most difficult to observe? 2. What are examples of clothing that make it easier for children to undress than to dress? 3. How might a four-year-old be able to help prepare and serve a snack to the group?
5	**Observing Fine Motor Development** Using the question format gives more content-related information. Half the class might use the checklist (#4) and the others this format for a good comparison.	Guided Questions	1	30 min.	1. If you were buying a ball for a three-year-old, what size would you choose? 2. What are examples of clothing that make it easier for children to dress themselves? 3. Do most of the children use one hand exclusively, or do they switch back and forth?

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Guide to Observations (continued)

#	Observation	Type	Level	Length	Discussion Questions
6	**Evaluating Children's Clothing** This easy observation can be used outside of a formal setting. It also would be a good choice for learning basic observation skills.	Guided Questions	1	20 min.	1. What features would you look for when selecting everyday clothes for young children? 2. What does "cost per wearing" suggest about how to spend clothing dollars? 3. Do name brand clothes matter to preschoolers? If so, why?
7	**Overview of Emotional and Social Development** The three "Overview" observations direct students to observe examples of the main topics in major areas of development. Good to use when observation opportunities are limited.	Guided Questions	1	30 min.	1. How are social and emotional development interrelated? 2. How can adults teach children to express emotions appropriately? 3. How does the parent-child relationship impact a child's relationships with other adults?
8	**Assessing Emotional Development** Students learn to use a chart to record examples of temperament traits in two children. Then they make comparisons.	Guided Questions/ Chart	2	30–40 min.	1. Which personality trait was the easiest to observe? Most difficult? Why? 2. What activities could a teacher or caregiver plan to encourage preschoolers to think about others? 3. How does a child's temperament impact his or her ability to experience new situations?
9	**Expressing Emotions** This observation helps students identify observable behavior and speech (objective information) that they would interpret as specific emotions felt (subjective information).	Guided Questions/ Chart	2	30 min.	1. How does a child's temperament impact his or her expression of emotions? 2. How might a child's behavior mask the child's true emotion (for example, a child yells at another child out of jealousy, rather then anger)? 3. What observation tips and techniques would you recommend to someone trying to objectively observe children expressing emotions?

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Guide to Observations (continued)

#	Observation	Type	Level	Length	Discussion Questions
10	**Handling Negative Emotions** Students use the event sampling technique to record and compare incidents when children express negative emotions. Free-play time or outdoor play are good times to observe.	Event Sample	2	30 min.	1. What were the other children's responses to the negative emotions? How did their responses impact the child expressing the emotions? 2. How did teachers and caregivers model appropriate behaviors in expressing negative emotions? 3. What other observation type would be effective in observing how children handle negative emotions? Would the objective of the observation change with the different techniques? If so, how?
11	**Evaluating Self-Concept** Because signs of self-concept are subtle, this observation works best with experienced observers.	Guided Questions	3	40 min.	1. How does self-concept impact other areas of development—physical, social, and intellectual? 2. Can an observer make a fair assessment of a child's self-concept in one observation? Why? What are the limitations of a one-time observation? 3. In what ways might a child's appearance impact self-concept?
12	**Assessing Social Development** This observation guides students through various aspects of social development. The emphasis is on separating objective and subjective statements.	Guided Questions	2	30 min.	1. How can teachers and caregivers encourage children to take turns? Share toys? 2. In what ways is competition negative for preschoolers? Positive for preschoolers? 3. If parents wanted to assess a child's social development, what could they do?
13	**Tracking Social Interactions** Students create a sociogram, a diagram recording a child's interactions with others. For novice observers, this works best with a small group of children, such as those playing in a particular learning center, rather than with an entire class.	Sociogram	1	20 min.	1. In what ways was completing the sociogram easy? Difficult? 2. By using a sociogram, what did you learn about the child? Other children? Adults? 3. What other kinds of behaviors could be observed using a sociogram?

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Guide to Observations (continued)

#	Observation	Type	Level	Length	Discussion Questions
14	**Relating to Adults** To extend the comparisons from this observation, have students observe once in a structured setting (circle time, storytelling, etc.) and the second time in an unstructured setting (free time, outdoor play, etc.).	Anecdotal Records	2	20 min. × 2	1. How might a child's temperament impact how the child relates to adults? 2. What information and tips would be helpful to share with a person doing an anecdotal record for the first time? 3. What other observation techniques could you use to observe how a child relates to adults?
15	**Learning Social Skills** Students track one child's social relationships and skills. Learning can be enhanced through a follow-up class discussion.	Guided Questions	2	30 min.	1. Explain how basic manners and social skills help children play and work together. 2. In what ways did the boys and girls play differently? Act differently toward one another? 3. What activities prompt children to take on gender roles?
16	**Analyzing Play Patterns** Having a variety of activities available for the children will help students observe solitary, parallel, and cooperative play.	Time Sample	2	20 min.	1. How would you encourage a shy child to engage in play? 2. What examples of competition did you see? 3. How does a child's age and temperament impact the type of play he or she prefers?
17	**Evaluating Independence** Transition times, such as going outside or starting and ending center-based play, provide good opportunities for observing independence. This observation could be completed over more than one observation period.	Frequency Count	3	40 min.	1. What behaviors, besides those listed in the chart, would show independence? 2. How does the development of gross and fine motor skills impact independence? 3. What additional skills does a preschooler need to function with an adequate degree of independence in kindergarten?
18	**Identifying Friends** This observation works best during free play or outdoor play when children have the freedom to choose who they will play with.	Frequency Count	3	15 min. × 3	1. What differences did you see in how a child played with someone who seemed to be a friend versus a casual playmate? 2. Were most of the friendships same-sex or opposite-sex relationships? 3. Give an example of how some behaviors that indicate friendship could be considered negative.

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Guide to Observations (continued)

#	Observation	Type	Level	Length	Discussion Questions
19	**Resolving Conflicts** This observation is based on observing a conflict. To allow students sufficient opportunity to witness and record one, it is best to give out the observation at least two observation sessions before it is due.	Event Sample	2	40 min.	1. How would the way teachers and caregivers resolve conflicts impact how a child learns to manage conflict? 2. Why do some preschoolers like to fight? 3. What phrases can teachers and caregivers use to acknowledge children's efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully?
20	**Overview of Intellectual Development** The three "Overview" observations direct students to observe examples of the main topics in major areas of development. Good to use when observation opportunities are limited.	Guided Questions	1	30 min.	1. How does intellectual development relate to physical, emotional, and social development? 2. Why is a stimulating environment essential for intellectual development? 3. Does a child need to be able to speak before he or she can understand concepts? Why?
21	**Assessing Intellectual Development** If possible, have students use the skills checklist three different times, at least several weeks apart. This allows the students to see and assess the child's progress.	Developmental Checklist	3	30–40 min.	1. What is mastery? 2. What are the limitations of assessing a child's intellectual development through one observation? How many observations do you think would be needed for an accurate analysis? 3. Which intellectual skills should a child have before entering kindergarten?
22	**Observing Learning** If possible, plan activities that demonstrate the various methods of learning. Readiness to learn is sometimes called "approaches to learning."	Guided Questions/ Chart	3	30 min.	1. Which area of intellectual activity was easiest to observe? Why? Which method of learning was easiest to observe? Why? 2. What character traits support a child's readiness to learn? 3. How does learning how to learn help a child get ready for kindergarten?

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Guide to Observations (continued)

#	Observation	Type	Level	Length	Discussion Questions
23	**Identifying Multiple Intelligences** Try to coordinate this observation with a daily plan for children's activities that gives opportunities to observe the eight intelligences.	Analysis Chart	2	30 min.	1. How do physical, emotional, and social development impact multiple intelligences? 2. Give an example of a strength and an example of a weakness you observed in each of the eight intelligences. 3. What would you say to convince teachers to incorporate the eight intelligences into learning activities?
24	**Evaluating Language Skills** The running record requires careful attention and skillful note-taking. Before the observation, discuss ways to take notes efficiently, such as the use of abbreviations and symbols.	Running Record	2	10–15 min.	1. How do children use body language and facial expressions to communicate? 2. How do children learn the rules of grammar? 3. If any of the children had difficulty speaking or communicating clearly, how did the teachers and other children respond?
25	**Evaluating Concept Development** If possible, arrange for students to observe a number of guided activities that demonstrate concept development (such as items sorted by size, color, and shape and colored macaroni being strung by color or pattern). Even daily activities, such as calendar time, can teach and reinforce many concepts.	Guided Questions	3	30–40 min.	1. How does preoperational thinking help children develop pre-reading and math skills? 2. Give an example of how a child might develop a particular concept related to time, space, weight, color, or shape. 3. Compare examples of the most complex sentences recorded for the various children. What clues do these give about the sequence of language development?
26	**Dramatic Play** Before the observation, discuss the use of props in dramatic play. Point out that children often substitute a different object when what they need is not available.	Event Sample	2	10 min. minimum	1. Give two examples of how dramatic play encourages children's language development. 2. How does dramatic play develop the five senses? 3. Did children changes roles during their dramatic play? What did they do and say to communicate the change?

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Guide to Observations (continued)

#	Observation	Type	Level	Length	Discussion Questions
27	**Identifying Creativity** For each learning center, set out supplies, toys, and props that encourage creativity. Before the observation, discuss the many ways that creativity can be expressed.	Guided Questions/ Chart	2	30–40 min.	1. How does the amount of time a child has to engage in an activity impact creativity? 2. In what ways is creativity stimulated by the environment? How much comes from an inner need for expression? 3. What types of activities are most likely to encourage creativity? What types limit it?
28	**Analyzing Learning Centers** This observation should be done when children are playing in learning centers.	Guided Questions	2	30 min.	1. Which center among all those in the classroom seemed the most popular? What makes it popular? 2. Were special activities going on in any of the learning centers? If so, did this attract more children? 3. In what ways would having a teacher or assistant in a learning center be helpful? Are there any ways it could be a negative influence?
29	**Analyzing Toys and Equipment** This observation may be made when children are not in the classroom. If that occurs, the follow-up discussion could also be held there, looking at the actual items that students evaluated.	Analysis Chart	1	20–30 min.	1. Why is the equipment found in child care settings often different than what families have at home? 2. Which toys and equipment seem to promote dramatic play? 3. If there was an outbreak of illness, such as flu, how would toys and equipment need to be cleaned?
30	**Encouraging Learning** Observing an experienced teacher will help students identify a variety of techniques for encouraging learning. If the teaching skills of other students are observed, emphasize their strengths and focus on learning additional techniques.	Guided Questions	2	30 min.	1. How did the teacher or caregiver encourage learning in a variety of settings (for example, one-on-one, circle time, free play, guided activities)? 2. How might a teacher or caregiver encourage learning in a group setting versus one-on-one with the child? 3. Did you see a time when the teacher or caregiver tried to promote learning but it did not work well? If so, give an example, and tell why you think it did not work.

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Guide to Observations (continued)

#	Observation	Type	Level	Length	Discussion Questions
31	**Developing Language Skills** Before the observation, discuss why language-related skills are emphasized so heavily in early childhood programs. Point out a few examples of activities that are not obviously related to language but which help promote important related skills.	Guided Questions	2	30 min.	1. In what ways do picture cues give children direction in what to do or guidance about how to behave? 2. What types of books were available? Were the books age-appropriate? Why? 3. How did the teacher or caregiver encourage children to use books and printed resources throughout the observation?
32	**Reading Stories Aloud** Students could adapt and add to the rating scale to create one for use with students practicing reading stories aloud.	Rating Scale	2	20–30 min.	1. What additional criteria for reading stories would you add to the rating scale? Why? 2. How does reading stories aloud create a bonding experience for children? 3. How could a reader make story time a positive experience, even if the book assigned was a poor choice?
33	**Guiding Children's Behavior** Guidance is one of the biggest challenges for most students working with young children. If possible, tape a session of an early childhood program. Edit the tape to show examples of common behavior problems and how teachers deal with them. If used before the observation, students can write a sample anecdotal record based on one of the examples.	Anecdotal Record	2	30 min.	1. Did the teacher remind the children about a classroom rule? If so, what was the rule? How did the children respond to the reminder? What evidence of classroom rules or expectations did you see in the environment? 2. What factors in a classroom might cause discipline problems? 3. How does a teacher or caregiver determine the right amount of guidance without limiting the child's need to explore and try different things?

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Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Why Observe Children?

Observing children at play can be interesting, but is it worth the time and effort? For both child development students and professionals, the answer is "yes."

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

For students learning about children, observations are a way to see examples of physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. You can see how children progress from one stage to the next. Two-year-olds can only scribble with a crayon. By age four, many have the fine motor skills to stay within the lines as they color. Observing both age groups allows you to clearly see the development that occurs.

Well-planned observations usually focus on specific areas of development. You might look at children's language capabilities one time and concentrate on their social interaction the next time you observe.

Observation can also help you better understand how different areas of development are interrelated. Few activities and skills are purely physical or purely social, emotional, or intellectual. Most are a mixture.

Observing helps you recognize what behaviors are typical of various age groups. In turn, this understanding will help you have reasonable expectations if you someday work with young children or have children of your own.

Remember, however, that development is highly individual. Every child experiences spurts of development in different areas and at different times. Achieving a particular skill sooner than average does not mean a child is superior and does not predict the child's abilities in other areas.

Through observation you can also learn about working with children. By observing how teachers and caregivers interact with children, you can see what characteristics are needed and which techniques are most effective.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONALS

Professionals who work with children use observation for all these reasons and more. Teachers, child care workers, physicians, therapists, and researchers all use observation skills.

Observing children gives teachers and caregivers a helpful snapshot of the children in their care. It allows them to see individual children as they are. By identifying each child's strengths and weaknesses, adults can offer individualized activities and encouragement. They may even identify a developmental issue that needs to be addressed. Observation also helps teachers customize activities for the benefit of group.

Through observation, teachers can judge how effective their own efforts have been. They may find, for example, that one method of responding to a child's undesirable behavior causes the behavior to increase, while another causes it to decrease.

Many health care professionals use observation to diagnose developmental problems and to assess the effectiveness of treatments and therapies. Researchers use it to add to society's scientific understanding of child development. In all these ways and more, observation is a key tool.

How might the observation skills you learn help you in other aspects of life? How could the ability to analyze what you see help you as a parent? As a team member? As a physical therapist?

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Guidelines for Observing Children

You can learn a lot about young children and their development in class and from your textbook. However, only when you spend time with children will that information come to life. The experience of observing children of different ages will increase your understanding and appreciation of them. As you prepare to observe, keep the following points in mind:

- **Determine the place.** Some observations can be made in an informal setting, such as at relative's or neighbor's home or a public playground. In most cases, however, your observations will take place in an early childhood education class or child care program. Your teacher may arrange the time and place for your observations. If you must make your own arrangements with a program outside of school, start by contacting the program director. Explain that you are taking a class to learn about children and their development. Ask permission to visit the program and observe the children.
- **Schedule the time.** Arrange your observation sessions well in advance of their due dates. If you will be observing at a program in the community, phone ahead and schedule a convenient time to observe. Check the program's schedule against what you need to observe. Generally, free play periods, when children can choose from a variety of activities, give the best opportunity to see a range of behaviors. Avoid naptime and other times that are not convenient for the teacher or staff. If you are observing children at a program within your own school, you may need to sign up for a specific time, or you may be assigned one. Observing children at various times of day will give you the best overall picture of their development.
- **Know the objective.** Before you observe, be sure you understand the assignment. What specifically do you need to look for? To remind yourself, jot down key words in your notebook ahead of time, leaving space to fill in your observations about each point. For some types of observations, it may be easier to use an extra copy of the observation form for taking notes.
- **Familiarize yourself with typical development.** Review what behaviors and skills are typical for the specific age and area of development you will be looking for. If you know how preschoolers typically interact with one another, for example, you will be better equipped to notice details about the interaction of the three-year-olds you observe. You may want to bring along a list of the skills that are typical for the age group you will be observing.
- **Be respectful.** Arrive on time for your observation. Follow any sign-in procedures and other rules.
- **Keep a low profile.** While observing, do not call any unnecessary attention to yourself. Some facilities have separate observation rooms with two-way mirrors that allow observers to see children without being seen. Usually, however, you will need to find a spot away from the center of activity, but where you still can see and hear the children clearly. As children move around, you may need to quietly move as well.
- **Try not to interact with children.** Remember that your purpose is to observe children's typical behaviors. It is natural for some of the children to approach you and ask what you are doing. You can simply smile and say you are working. Try not to indicate that you are there to watch what they do. Doing so might influence their behavior.

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Guidelines for Observing Children

- **Start with basic information.** Recording the circumstances of your observation is the first step. Write down the date and time of the observation, the location, total number of children present, and the number of adults working with the children. List the number of children and their ages (in years and months, if possible). Identify the child or the children who are the focus of your observation. Indicate the setting, such as class or program. Include any other relevant information, such as the preschool class's theme for the week.
- **Record exactly what you observe.** Do not rely on your memory—quickly jot down your observations as you make them. Unless you are using a checklist or tally sheet, you will be writing a description of what you see and hear. Record events in the order in which they occur. It is helpful to jot down the time every five minutes in the margin of your paper. Write as many details as possible, including direct quotes of what the children say. To save time and maintain privacy, you can refer to a child by an initial. Record only what you see and hear, not your interpretation or opinion.
- **Notice specific details.** For example, if your assignment focuses on observing how a child interacts with adults, try to answer such questions as: Under what circumstances does the child seek out an adult? How does the child ask an adult for help? Does the child use words or gestures?
- **Be patient.** It may take awhile to find examples of the behaviors you are looking for. Allow children's actions to unfold naturally. Do not try to force or prompt particular behaviors. Sometimes you may not see all of the behaviors requested on the observation form. If this happens, write "Unable to observe" in the answer space.
- **Complete your observation.** The second part of observing happens after you have finished watching the children. Use the observation sheet as your guide. Begin by re-reading the objective and directions. The notes taken while observing typically look rough. Rewrite or type them, as needed, or use them to answer the questions listed on the observation sheet. You will be asked to interpret and draw conclusions about what you observed. Through class discussions, you may have a chance to compare your findings with those of your classmates.
- **Keep observations confidential.** The individuals you are observing and their families have a legal right to privacy. Never discuss your observations with anyone outside of class, including your family or friends. That means not sharing what you saw, your interpretations and conclusions, or even the names of the children you observed. Keep your notes in a safe place where others cannot read them.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Separating Fact from Opinion

As you observe, your notes must be *objective* rather than *subjective*. In other words, record facts instead of making judgments and expressing your opinions. After you observe, you will have an opportunity to interpret what you have seen.

An example of an objective observation is: "Josh told Steven he wanted a turn riding the tricycle. Steven kept riding, and then Josh said it louder and ran after him." A subjective observation of the same event might be: "Josh was being selfish and acting like a bully with Steven today."

Maintaining objectivity takes practice. Keep the following in mind:

- **Guard against making assumptions.** Do not assume you know what a child is thinking or feeling—that is a red flag that you are not being objective. "He feels sad" is subjective. How can you be sure the child is sad rather than afraid, angry, or frustrated? "He started crying" is objective.
- **Use descriptive words with care.** Adjectives and adverbs help you add important details to your observations. Just be sure you are using them to describe facts. "She is being *silly* today" is your opinion. "Robbie walked over to Courtney *shyly*" makes an assumption about how Robbie's feeling. In contrast, "Robbie walked over to Courtney *slowly*" is descriptive but objective.
- **Do not label children.** "Laura is an incredible artist for her age" and "Jared seems to be the class clown" put labels on children. More objective observations would be "Jared sang a made-up song about worms three times" and "Laura's picture showed a house with windows, flowers, and a dog."
- **Examine your own biases.** If a boy came to preschool with uncombed hair and a stained T-shirt, you might make assumptions about his family life. That could affect what you notice and record about his behavior. The truth is, you do not know the reasons behind his appearance. It should not affect your impressions.
- **Do not let background information impair your objectivity.** One observer wrote: "Jason talked baby talk at snack time (He has a new baby sister at home)." The way to record objectively would be: "At snack time Jason said 'Me want apple juice. Me need bottle.'" Save your interpretations for later.
- **Avoid favoritism.** While observing, Renée paid special attention to Sara because she resembled her young niece. As a result, Sara missed seeing what some of the other children were doing. Avoid focusing too much on children who are especially appealing or who seem more advanced in their skills.
- **Remain neutral.** Do not get upset by any emotional outbursts and conflicts you witness. Stay focused and record what you see and hear.
- **See children as they are.** Strive not to be influenced by what *you* think the child is like or what *you* think the child should be doing.
- **Realize your own limitations.** Learning to observe—and especially to accurately interpret observations—takes time and practice.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Ethical Behavior and Child Observations

Ethics refers to principles of conduct. Following ethical principles is important at any time, but especially when observing children. As an observer, you have a responsibility to represent yourself and your school well; to treat children, adults, and your fellow students with courtesy; and to respect the privacy rights of children and their families.

Professional groups in the child care and education fields have developed extensive ethical guidelines. Here are some basic points to be aware of and follow. Because observations take place in a wide variety of settings, these guidelines may need to be adapted to fit the situation. However, no matter what the setting, anyone who observes children is responsible for behaving in ethical ways.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

While you conduct observations, others may also be observing you. Any program directors, staff, and parents that you encounter will expect you to behave professionally. Remember that you represent not only yourself, but your school, program, and teacher.

For a professional appearance, dress neatly and conservatively. When visiting a facility in your community, arrive on time, introduce yourself to the staff, and thank them for allowing you to visit. Follow their rules and behave as a respectful guest.

If you are ill, call to let the staff know that you will not be coming. It would be irresponsible to spread germs to the children and adults.

Avoiding Comments

Kurt and Jala were observing a preschool class. "Look at him," Kurt whispered to Jala, motioning toward a boy. "He seems so hyper. It looks like the other kids try to stay away from him."

When several students are observing at the same time, it is tempting to make comments to one another. Doing so is unethical and unprofessional for several reasons. It distracts both you and your fellow students from what you are supposed to be doing. Sharing your opinion can also influence the way other observers view the children. Jala, for example, will find it hard to keep Kurt's interpretation from affecting her own observations. Children may overhear you or wonder what you are saying.

As you observe, focus on watching and listening, not talking. If you find it especially difficult to resist conversing, try not to schedule an observation at the same time as your friends.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Maintaining privacy and confidentiality has always been essential when working with children and their families. In recent years, with society's increased focus on privacy issues, laws protecting privacy have been strengthened. As a result, these ethical principles are even more critical.

When you observe children, you may gather sensitive information, often without even realizing it. Details about a specific child's behavior and development are normally not the business of anyone except the child's family and perhaps teachers or caregivers. When you are given permission to observe and record these details, you are entrusted with the responsibility to use the information only in ways that are appropriate and ethical.

Obtaining Permission

If you are observing in a formal program, it is likely that parents will have signed a form granting permission for their children to be observed. Check with your teacher or caregiver before you observe. In a public place, such as a park, you do not need written permission to observe. However, if parents are present, it is courteous to tell them what you are doing and ask for their approval. If they tell you that they do not want you to observe their children, respect their wishes. No matter where you are, never take photographs or make audio or video recordings of children, unless you are sure that specific written permission has been given to do so.

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Protecting Children's Identities

In one child development class, a student discussed a preschooler named Tyler. Afterwards a classmate told her, "I think that little boy you were talking about is my neighbor. He's really spoiled. He lives with his grandparents. His mom works two jobs and can't spend much time with him." Such background information is not relevant to your observation. More importantly, it does not respect the privacy of the child's family.

To keep identities confidential, you may be asked to refer to the children you observe by something other than their real names. For example, your teacher might ask you to make up names or use only first initials. Sometimes children are referred to by letters or numbers written on their name tags.

Keeping Observations Confidential

You may discuss your observations in class and with your teacher. However, you may not discuss them with others, including your own family and friends. Nor may you discuss them with your classmates outside the classroom. Be careful not to leave your observation notes and other materials where others can read them.

Interpreting Your Observations

Observations have two main parts. During the actual observation, you must remain objective. After completing the observation you will think about what you observed and draw conclusions. Remember, however, that interpreting observations is a skill that you are just learning. Your impressions may not be accurate, especially since you are seeing only a small part of a child's life. Your interpretations and conclusions, like your observations, should be kept confidential.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Comparing Types of Observations

Students and professionals use a variety of methods for observing young children. The method chosen depends upon the behaviors being checked or information collected, who is doing the observation, and how much time is available. Every type has advantages and disadvantages.

Observation Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Running Record A detailed written account of everything observed about the child for a period of time. Includes what the child says, plus relevant actions and responses of others.	• Gives the best detail of any observation method. • Everything that occurs is recorded as it occurs. • Allows others reading the account to understand the situation clearly. • Interpretation can be added later.	• Time consuming to do. • May be difficult to keep up with what is happening. • Behaviors observed may not be typical of those another time or day. • Impractical for a teacher to use.
Anecdotal Record Short, but complete, written descriptions of a specific, common behavior, event, or situation that the observer is tracking.	• Takes less time than running record, written only when the specific behavior, event, or situation occurs. • When well written, includes details about the when, where, and why of the incident, including what was said. • Best for tracking changes over time.	• Depends on accurate short-term memory. • Focuses on only one event, situation, or behavior. • Does not give immediate feedback, since must be interpreted with similar records accumulated over time.
Developmental Checklist A list of skills and behaviors children typically master or show at a certain age. Observer notes which have been achieved.	• Easy to record. • A good way to track each child's development, and areas of strength and weakness. • Can look for many skills at one time. • Can use to plan activities to improve areas of weakness.	• Tells what was observed but not why or how. • Skills need to be checked on a regular basis to identify those newly learned.
Guided Questions A series of questions guiding the observer to look for, record, and interpret development or behavior related to a particular topic.	• Good choice for those learning observation skills. • Can look for a variety of skills or behaviors in one observation. • Helps observer think through important questions related to topics observed. • Gives a real-life link to topic being studied.	• Does not result in information to act on. • Not used by teachers and other professionals.

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Observation Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Event Sample Each time a targeted event or behavior occurs, the observer captures, in writing, as many details as possible from the beginning of the event until the end.	• Useful for tracking behaviors that occur infrequently. • Records the circumstances surrounding the behavior. • Efficient use of time. • Teacher could use to gather information and track changes.	• Depends on accurate short-term memory. • Focus is limited to one event or behavior.
Time Sample A record that documents the frequency of a common behavior. Presence of the behavior is checked at certain, fairly short, periods of time, usually several times a day.	• Easy to do; requires little training. • Teachers could use this technique to track changes in frequency of specific behaviors.	• Only tells how often something occurred, not why or how. • Presence of behavior is tracked only during specific time periods. • Accurate interpretation of results depends on taking many samples over time.
Frequency Count Observer keeps track of how often one or more specific behaviors occurs.	• A tally mark is added each time the behavior being tracked occurs. • Gives a more accurate picture than time sample of overall frequency.	• Results are mainly the number of times something occurred, with little additional information. • Requires being attentive at all times.
Rating Scale Used to evaluate how well the child being observed meets a set of criteria related to a skill or behavior.	• Easy to record. • Gives information on the level of performance achieved for a number of aspects of a skill or behavior. • Each rating level is described.	• Ratings may be somewhat subjective, especially among different observers. • The focus is limited. • Does not give related information.
Sociogram A diagram showing social interactions that occur.	• Easy to use. • Provides a clear record of interactions being tracked.	• Does not give related information about the situations. • Requires interpretation to explain the meaning of the information gathered.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Running Record Sample

Observer Lauren Date Nov. 23 Time 9:15 to 9:25 a.m.

Location Parkland Child Care Center Children's Ages 4-year-olds

OBSERVATION OBJECTIVE: To observe children's social and emotional development during dramatic play.

Running Record

Description of Physical Environment:
The dramatic play center has a play kitchen, washer and dryer, table and four chairs, and various dishes, empty food containers, and play food. There is a desk with a computer keyboard and play phone. There is a mirror and a chest full of various clothes and hats for dress up.

Record of Children's Speech and Actions	Notes and Interpretations
Olivia calls to Grace, "Do you want to play 'kitchen' with me?" Grace walks in the play area and asks "Can I be the mom?" Olivia says, "No, I'm the mom. See, I have the apron on. You be the girl, okay?" Grace frowns and then says, "Okay, my name is Brittany. Our dog can be Spot. I'll feed him. He's hungry." Olivia gives Grace a bowl for the imaginary dog.	Olivia tends to tell everyone what to do. Both children have active imaginations and enjoy role playing.
Olivia plays with the dishes for a few minutes. She says, "Now we need to have breakfast. I'm going to cook oatmeal." She stirs a spoon in an empty bowl and puts it in the play microwave oven. Olivia tells Grace to sit down at the table because it's time to eat. "Be careful. It's hot," she says. Grace puts on a bib and says, "Me Do not want oatmeal. Me Do not like oatmeal." Olivia says, "Do not act like a baby, Grace." Grace reminds her, "I'm not Grace. My name's Brittany. I want eggs." Olivia sighs dramatically and pretends to fry an egg in a toy skillet.	Olivia uses future tense: "I'm going to cook…" Grace pretends to be younger by talking baby talk.
Gavin and Luis enter the area. Gavin asks "Can we play?" Olivia says, "Okay, you be the daddy, Luis. Gavin can be the boy. Gavin objects, "I Do not want to be the stupid-head boy. I want to be the dad. I never get to be the dad." He starts to put on a jacket. Luis says, "You be the dad. I Do not care." Luis sits down at the desk and types on the keyboard.	Olivia tells the boys what to do, but they agree on their own roles. Gavin acts stubborn about being the dad and uses "bad" word "stupid-head." Luis wants to please Gavin and lets him be the dad.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Anecdotal Record Sample

Observer Carolyn Pilon Location Sunshine Preschool

Child Kim Child's Age(s) 3

OBSERVATION OBJECTIVE: To observe the separation period and adjustment to preschool for Kim, a newly enrolled child.

Anecdotal Record	
Description	**Interpretation**
Date: October 7 Time: 9:00-9:05 a.m. Kim and her mom appear at the door holding hands. They stand in the doorway until Mrs. Green spots the teacher and as the teacher moves toward the pair, Kim leans closer to her mother. The teacher kneels down to Kim and says, "Kim, we're so glad you'll be staying with us a little while this morning while your mother goes to the dentist." Kim looks at the teacher but clings to her mother's leg.	This is Kim's first time to stay at the preschool. She seems a little scared and shy.
The teacher stands and says to the parent. "I'm sure she'll do fine." Kim's mother says, "I hope so. We've just moved here and I've never left her with a group of children like this. I hope she doesn't cry." Kim's eyes begin to water. Saying "I hope the other children will be nice," Mrs. Greene bends down to Kim. "Give Mommy a big hug and kiss." I'll miss you, but I'll be back real soon. As she hugs Kim, Kim really starts to cry. "Mommy, please take me!"	This might be giving Kim the idea to cry. The mother seems to be as anxious as the child.
The mother pulls Kim's arms away. "Now, Mommy will be right back." The teacher takes Kim's hand and says, "Would you like to paint a picture to show your mommy when she comes back to pick you up?" Kim's eyes scan the room. The teacher tells Mrs. Green that Kim will probably stop crying as soon as she is occupied in an interesting activity. The mother leaves.	Kim may have mixed feelings. She is interested in what's going on, but she is scared.
Kim is led to the art center, where the teacher asks her to choose an apron. Kim chooses by pointing her finger. She is still whimpering. The teacher helps Kim put on the apron, then sits in a chair and puts her arm around Kim. "You may feel a little scared here in this new place." The child and teacher are quiet for several minutes. "Let me show you how to wipe the brush." The teacher helps Kim get started painting, and now she has stopped crying.	The teacher shows that she accepts Kim's feelings but also wants her to get involved in an activity.

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Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Developmental Checklist Sample

Observer Todd Date March 19 Time 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.

Location Preschool Lab Child JP Age 3½

OBSERVATION OBJECTIVE: To identify and document JP's gross motor skills.

Gross Motor Skills: Age Three

	Attempted	Mastered
Walks steadily.		√ 3/19
Runs.		√ 3/19
Stops accurately when running.		√ 3/19
Skips.	√ 3/19	
Hops on one foot.		
Climbs ladder to slide.		√ 3/19
Alternates feet, going up stairs.		√ 3/19
Jumps off bottom step.		
Jumps up and down.		
Balances on one foot.	√ 3/19	
Rides tricycle.		
Throws a ball overhand.		√ 3/19
Kicks a large ball.	√ 3/19	
Catches large ball with arms out straight.		√ 3/19

Notes

3/19 JP seems average in her gross motor development. Games and outdoor play today allowed me to check many of the skills. Going up the stairs, she does alternate feet but still holds onto the railing. Her balance is shaky.

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Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Frequency Count Sample

Observer Candice Dates Dec. 7, 8, 10

Location Logan Preschool Child #12 Age 3

OBSERVATION OBJECTIVE: To observe how often child #12 is hurting other children.

Frequency Record //// *(One tally mark for each act)*

Notes and Comments

Dec. 7 11:15 a.m.: Grabbed doll from child #3 and hit her.

Dec. 8 3:08 p.m.: Hit child #2 with book and took same doll.
4:20 p.m.: Pulled child #6's hair. Wanted to be the one to feed gerbil.

Dec. 10 9:30 a.m.: Squashed child #5's fingers with block.

Three of the hitting acts were because of a disagreement over a toy—twice for a particular doll. She pulled child #6's hair when it was child #6's turn to feed the gerbil and she wanted to do it. No hitting occurred while the teacher was talking to the class or paying attention to child #12. The teacher made child #12 sit in the time-out chair only once for hurting her classmates. The other two times she saw her, she reminded her about the "no hitting" rule. The teacher did not see the hair-pulling, but she did witness child #6 crying and holding her head.

Summary and Interpretations

Child #12 seems to know that hitting usually gets her what she wants. The teacher seemed inconsistent in how she reacted to the hitting and hair pulling. Child #12 did not hit as long as the teacher was paying attention to her or could see her. She may be seeking her attention. The teacher could temporarily put away the doll that the girls do not want to share. Try new frequency count two weeks after teacher responds consistently to child #12's misbehavior in order to check progress.

Name *Candice Steel* Date 12-11

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Observation Objective: _____

Running Record

Description of Physical Environment:

Record of Child's Speech and Actions	Notes and Interpretations

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Observation Objective: _____

Anecdotal Record

Description	Interpretation
(For each incident, note the date and time, those involved, and the setting, along with your description.)	

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Observation Objective: _____

Event Sample

Descriptions	Notes and Interpretations
(For each incident, note the date, the start and end times, those involved, and their ages, along with your description.)	

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Observation Objective: _____

Time Sample		
Time	**Behavior**	**Description**

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Observation Objective: _____

Frequency Count

Frequency Record *(One tally mark each time observed)*

Notes and Comments

Summary and Interpretations

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Developmental Milestones: Age 2

The milestones listed in this chart are typically achieved by children between their 2nd and 3rd birthdays.

Gross Motor Skills

- Walks on tiptoes.
- Runs without falling.
- Tries to stand on one foot.
- Jumps off bottom step.
- Balances on one foot for a short time.
- Walks up and down stairs two feet on each step, holding onto railing.
- Uses two hands to catch a bounced ball.
- Kicks a large ball.
- Pushes self on wheeled toys.
- Pedals a riding toy.

Fine Motor Skills

- Makes horizontal, vertical, and circular lines with crayon.
- Turns pages of a book.
- Stacks 6–8 blocks.
- Opens doors by turning knobs.
- Uses a spoon and fork to eat most food.
- Helps dress and undress self.

Social/Emotional Development

- Plays briefly with other children.
- Watches other children play.
- Likes to play with adults.
- Begins to play house.
- Tells others what to do.
- Does not want to share.
- Is often negative and stubborn.
- Does best with a set routine.
- Has a sense of humor; plays tricks.
- Shows aggressive behavior.

Intellectual Development

- Combines two or three words.
- Identifies objects in pictures.
- Enjoys looking at books.
- Groups objects according to basic categories.
- Stacks rings and objects in order of size.
- Imitates others' behavior.
- Uses *I, me, you.*
- Answers simple questions.
- Follows one direction.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Developmental Milestones: Age 3

The milestones listed in this chart are typically achieved by children between their 3rd and 4th birthdays. Remember that all children progress at their own rate, however.

Gross Motor Skills

- Walks without watching feet.
- Walks backward.
- Runs well.
- Stops accurately when running.
- Begins learning to skip.
- Climbs ladder to slide.
- Balances on one foot very briefly.
- Jumps up with two feet.
- Jumps off low objects.
- Picks up objects by bending at the waist.
- Climbs stairs, alternating feet, while holding rail.
- Catches a large ball with arms out straight.
- Rides a tricycle.

Fine Motor Skills

- Draws a person with three parts.
- Draws recognizable pictures.
- Begins to print some letters.
- Holds crayons with fingers instead of fist.
- Cuts with scissors.
- Folds paper.
- Makes shapes from clay.
- Makes block tower of nine to ten blocks.
- Strings large beads.
- Puts together simple puzzles.
- Likes to take things apart and put them back together.
- Pours liquids from a pitcher.
- Washes and dries hands.
- Blows own nose when prompted.
- Unbuttons buttons and fastens large buttons.
- Undresses self but needs help with some dressing tasks.
- Feeds self with few spills.
- Spreads food with a knife.

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Social/Emotional Development

- Mainly engages in parallel play, some cooperative play.
- Tries to make friends.
- Chooses whom to play with.
- Participates in short group activities.
- May have an imaginary friend.
- Begins learning to share toys.
- Tries to solve disagreements.
- Begins to take turns.
- Sees things only from own point of view.
- Plays house and enjoys imaginary (dramatic) play.
- Learns to say *please* and *thank-you*.
- Shows affection.
- Likes to help.
- Wants to be rewarded for following rules and helping.
- Can say things to deliberately hurt others.
- May have fears (monsters, the dark, etc.).
- Stress may show up in nail biting or similar tensional outlets.
- Expresses some feelings verbally.

Intellectual Development

- Speaks in sentences of four or more words.
- Speech is clear enough for strangers to understand.
- Uses basic grammar rules.
- Understands *he, she, him, her.*
- Knows five to ten letters.
- Understands letters are used to make words.
- Learns many new words, four to six per day.
- Sorts by color and shape.
- Knows some colors.
- Counts to five.
- Tells short stories.
- Sings songs and repeats simple rhymes.
- Understands *in, out, on, over, under.*
- Understands time, including *yesterday/today/tomorrow* and *morning/afternoon/night.*
- Asks *why* and *how.*
- Thinks through simple problems.
- Can follow two related directions.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Developmental Milestones: Age 4

The actions listed in this chart are typically achieved by children between their 4th and 5th birthdays.

Gross Motor Skills

- Walks as well as an adult.
- Walks backward easily.
- Runs easily, including changing directions.
- Climbs on play equipment.
- Gallops.
- Tries to skip.
- Hops on one foot.
- Balances on one foot for 8–10 seconds.
- Able to jump forward from standing position.
- Alternates feet on stairs going both up and down stairs.
- Pumps legs while swinging on a swing.
- Throws a ball overhand.
- Catches a bounced ball with hands.
- Rides a bicycle with training wheels.

Fine Motor Skills

- Draws a person with four parts.
- Copies a square.
- Draws a circle and a cross.
- Prints several capital letters.
- Cuts near line with scissors.
- Builds complex block structures.
- Builds a bridge with three blocks.
- Completes puzzle with six to eight pieces.
- Pours liquids into small containers.
- Zips a separating zipper.
- Laces shoes or lacing toy.
- Brushes teeth.
- Uses a fork, knife, and spoon to eat.
- Dresses and undresses self.

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Social/Emotional Development

- Takes part in cooperative play.
- Plays some group games.
- Tries to be like peers.
- Tries to please friends.
- Compares self to others.
- Family still more important than friends.
- Imitates adult role models.
- Seeks adults' approval.
- Can be loving and affectionate.
- May fear imaginary dangers.
- Has conversations with others.
- Dramatic play is more complex.
- Shows awareness of others' feelings.
- Does not like advice.
- Wants to feel independent.
- More likely to ask for toys than just take them away.
- Shows off and may say bad words.
- Tests authority and limits.
- Can be defiant and stubborn.
- Often impatient.
- Tries to justify anger.
- May physically show anger or threaten to "get even."
- Begins to learn to control some intense feelings.

Intellectual Development

- Speaks in longer sentences with more detail.
- Pronounces most words correctly.
- Uses future tense and pronouns.
- Uses the correct past tense of most irregular verbs (*go/went* instead of *go/goed*).
- Remembers finger plays, rhymes, and songs.
- Uses past experiences to predict what will happen.
- Makes up stories.
- Has longer attention span.
- Asks *who, what, where, when*?
- Knows most colors and shapes.
- Knows the difference between letters and numbers.
- Knows most capital letters and learning lower-case letters.
- Identifies rhyming words and ones that start with the same sound.
- Counts to nine.
- Can identify the number of objects, up to six.
- Understands *same/different*.
- Understands size relationships *part/whole* and *bigger/same size*.
- Understands space relationships, such as *top/bottom, beside/on top of*.
- Can follow three related, or two unrelated, directions.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Developmental Milestones: Age 5

These actions are typically achieved by children between their 5th and 6th birthdays.

Gross Motor Skills

- Skips, alternating feet.
- Balances on one foot 10 seconds or longer.
- Hops on one foot 10 times.
- Balances while walking on a low wall or balance beam.
- Jumps over things without falling.
- Turns a somersault.
- Skates.
- Can coordinate movements to bike, swim.
- Throws and catches a small ball.
- Bounces and kicks a ball.
- Climbs fences.
- Tries to jump rope.

Fine Motor Skills

- Draws a person with body, head, legs, and arms.
- Copies a triangle and other shapes.
- Prints some letters.
- Prints first name.
- Holds crayon, marker, or pencil more like an adult.
- Cuts out pictures following their outlines.
- Builds three-dimensional block structures.
- Completes puzzles with 10 to 15 pieces.
- Likes to take things apart and put them back together.
- Uses right or left hand consistently.
- Uses a keyboard and mouse.
- Buttons clothes.
- Dresses self easily.
- Tries to tie shoelaces.

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Social/Emotional Development

- Plays cooperatively with other children.
- Prefers playing with children to adults.
- Has a best friend or special friends.
- May exclude others from group.
- Gossips about other children.
- Solves most conflicts without help from adult.
- Shows better awareness of others' feelings.
- Takes turns most of the time.
- Follows most rules.
- Likes dramatic play and may make own costumes or props.
- Can be sensitive to others' feelings.
- Wants to be first.
- Is willing to cooperate.
- Wants to make some of own decisions.
- Likes attention.
- Becomes competitive.
- Increases self-esteem through mastering new skills.

Intellectual Development

- Speech is understandable to everyone.
- Uses longer, more complex sentences.
- Knows alphabet and many letter sounds.
- Reads some words by sight, including own name.
- May read simple books.
- Asks meanings of words.
- Learns more technical words in areas of interest.
- Knows name and address.
- Likes jokes and riddles.
- Believes thoughts cause events to happen.
- Makes up imaginative stories.
- Tells stories about own experiences.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 1

OBSERVATION 1

Overview of Physical Development

During the preschool years, children continue to grow in height and weight and refine many of their physical skills. Although children follow the same general pattern of physical development, they vary in the age at which they accomplish different motor skills. Also, their abilities in one area may be more developed than in other areas. For example, a five-year-old might not yet be able to skip (a gross motor skill) but may be very good at drawing (a fine motor skill). When observing children's physical skills, keep in mind these variations in development.

Observation Objective: To identify and interpret one child's physical development.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 20 minutes. (If possible, find out from the teacher or caregiver the child's age in years and months.) Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and answer the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

> **Observation Tip:** This observation requires you to compare the child you are observing to other children in the group in several areas of physical development. Although your focus should be on the child you are observing, occasionally watch some of the other children as well to get an idea of how their development compares to that of the focus child.

PART 1: Physical Size. From ages three to five, children grow from an average of about 3 feet tall to 3 feet 7 inches tall. During this time, their weight increases from an average of about 31 pounds to about 40 pounds. Naturally, children vary widely in size and rate of growth, so many children's height and weight are above or below these averages.

1. How does the child's height compare to that of other children the same age? Describe the child's body type—is it slight, average, chubby, heavy? How does the child's body type compare to that of others the same age?

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Thinking It Through

Identify at least three factors that might be responsible for the variations in size and body type among children of the same age.

PART 2: Self-Care Skills. Throughout the preschool years, children become increasingly able to care for their personal needs, such as washing themselves, getting dressed, brushing their teeth, and toileting. Sometimes they need reminders to do some of these things, and they may need help with the more difficult tasks, such as fastening small buttons. Most children are very proud of their growing ability to do things for themselves.

2. What self-care tasks did you observe the child doing? Was the child able to complete these tasks independently? Explain.

3. Were the child's self-care abilities similar to those of other children the same age? Explain.

Thinking It Through

What factors might hinder a child's ability to perform self-care tasks? How might a parent, teacher, or caregiver encourage a child to become self-sufficient in personal care?

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PART 3: Gross Motor Skills. Preschool children have a lot of energy and enjoy activities such as running, jumping, and climbing. These skills and others that require the use of large muscles are called *gross motor skills.* From ages three to five, children learn how to throw a ball more accurately, alternate feet when climbing and coming down stairs, skip, and balance on one foot.

4. What gross motor skills did you observe the child using? Describe one activity in detail in which the child used a gross motor skill.

5. Did the child spend less than, more than, or about the same amount of time as the other children in gross motor activity? Would you rate the child's gross motor skills as similar to, better than, or not as good as those of the other children?

Interpreting the Facts

Based on the way the child used his or her body during your observation, what can you say about the child's muscle control, balance, and coordination?

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PART 4: Fine Motor Skills. Fine motor skills require dexterity, the skillful use of one's hands and fingers. At ages three to five, children learn many fine motor skills, including using scissors, drawing with more detail and hand control, writing letters and some words, and tying their shoes.

6. What fine motor skills did you observe the child using? Describe one activity in detail in which the child used a fine motor skill.

7. Did the child spend less than, more than, or about the same amount of time as the other children in fine motor activity? Would you rate the child's fine motor skills as similar to, better than, or not as good as those of the other children?

Learning from Observing: How does the environment in this classroom or center both encourage and hinder children's gross motor development? (*Example of encouraging:* Variety of equipment in outdoor play area. *Example of discouraging:* Limited indoor space for gross motor activities.)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 2

Assessing Physical Development

If you were to observe a group of toddlers at play and then a group of preschoolers, you would notice a big difference in the size of the children and physical capabilities of the preschoolers. From ages three to five, children's bodies straighten up and slim down, their balance and coordination improve, and their muscles gain strength, allowing them to accomplish things they could not before. Even among preschoolers of similar age, however, physical differences are noticeable: they vary greatly in height, weight, and body type. Children need good nutrition and lots of opportunities for active play in order to have healthy bodies.

Observation Objective: To identify the physical development characteristics of a group of preschoolers and possible reasons for differences.

Directions: Observe a group of children ages three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. (If possible, learn the children's ages in years and months from the teacher or child care provider, and try to observe children close in age.) Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

Observation Tip: Watch for any stereotypes that might bias your thinking about children. For instance, resist the temptation to view attractive, well-proportioned children in a better light than those who do not have these characteristics.

1. Which two children in the group were the tallest? Which two were the shortest? Were the tallest children the oldest and the shortest children the youngest? If not, what are at least three other reasons that might account for this?

Thinking It Through

What are some possible challenges facing a child who is "big for his or her age"? List at least three.

(Continued on next page)

2. Which two children appeared to have a small body frame and looked to weigh the least? Did this seem to affect their physical activity or skills? If so, how?

3. Other than consuming less food, what might account for children's small size relative to others their age? Give at least two factors.

4. Did any of the children appear overweight? If so, what percentage of the children in the group appeared overweight? [Note: One child in a group of four would be 25 percent.]

Thinking It Through

What are three causes of excess weight in children? How can teachers and caregivers help children reach and maintain a healthy weight? Offer at least two suggestions.

5. Had any of the children lost a front tooth? How many of the children? Did any of the children have a permanent tooth in place of a baby tooth?

6. Were there some children who did not engage in any physical activity or very little during your observation? What were they doing?

Interpreting the Facts

Based on your observations, what relationship, if any, can you see between size and/or weight and physical activity? Can you draw any conclusions from this? Explain.

Learning from Observing: How can preschoolers benefit from play opportunities that utilize physical activity? Identify at least one reason preschoolers today are less likely to be physically active at home than in past generations.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____

Location _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 3

Assessing Gross Motor Development

"Practice makes perfect" is true for all areas of children's development, including their gross motor skills. As children run, jump, climb, skip, hop, ride, and throw and catch a ball, their physical skills become refined.

One way to evaluate children's gross motor skills is by using a checklist. A *developmental checklist* is a list of behaviors a child should exhibit or skills a child should master at a certain age. The observer records the behaviors or skills he or she sees. Developmental checklists are a good way to track each child's development. Knowing each child's areas of strength and weakness, as well as those of the group as a whole, helps teachers and caregivers plan activities that encourage children's development in specific skill areas.

Observation Objective: To identify and document the gross motor skills of one child.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. (If possible, find out from the teacher the child's age in years and months.) Before you observe, read over the items on the checklist—particularly those for the child's age—so you are familiar with the behaviors you will be looking for. Also read the follow-up questions. During the observation, look for the skills on the list. When you see the child you are observing attempting or successfully completing any skill, put a check mark and record the date in the *Attempted* or *Mastered* column. Leave the columns blank for any skills you do not have an opportunity to see. After the observation, review your notes and write your answers to the questions. If possible, observe the same child at least one other day to see additional skills.

Observation Tip: Regardless of the age of the child you observe, watch for the skills listed for every age. A four-year-old may not have mastered all the skills listed for age three yet, and the same child may have already mastered a few skills typical of five-year-olds. In general, the closer a child is to the lower end of the age range listed for the skills, the fewer the skills the child will have mastered in that set.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Age 3 to 3 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Walks without watching feet.	_____	_____
Runs well.	_____	_____
Marches to music.	_____	_____
Hops on one foot.	_____	_____
Jumps up with both feet.	_____	_____
Balances briefly on one foot.	_____	_____
Climbs ladder of slide.	_____	_____
Climbs stairs, alternating feet, while holding railing.	_____	_____
Pushes self on riding toy.	_____	_____
Pedals tricycle.	_____	_____
Picks up objects by bending at waist.	_____	_____
Catches large ball with arms straight out.	_____	_____
Kicks large ball.	_____	_____

Age 4 to 4 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Walks on a straight line.	_____	_____
Walks backwards with ease.	_____	_____
Runs well, avoiding obstacles.	_____	_____
Hops on one foot.	_____	_____
Balances on one foot for 8–10 seconds.	_____	_____
Jumps up and down.	_____	_____
Jumps forward about 8 inches from standing position.	_____	_____
Climbs playground equipment.	_____	_____
Climbs stairs, alternating feet without holding on railing.	_____	_____
Throws ball overhand.	_____	_____
Catches bounced ball.	_____	_____
Pumps legs while swinging.	_____	_____

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Age 5 to 5 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Walks on balance beam.	_____	_____
Hops forward 10 times.	_____	_____
Skips, alternating feet.	_____	_____
Balances on one foot for 10 seconds or longer.	_____	_____
Jumps over objects.	_____	_____
Tries to jump rope.	_____	_____
Alternates feet, walking *down* stairs.	_____	_____
Throws small ball.	_____	_____
Catches small ball with hands.	_____	_____
Turns somersault.	_____	_____
Rides bike with training wheels.	_____	_____
Skates	_____	_____

1. What specific activities was the child doing that allowed you to observe the child's gross motor skills?

2. Did the child appear to show any pride in his or her gross motor abilities or frustration about ones not yet achieved? If so, give examples of what the child said or did.

(Continued on next page)

3. Describe any instances you saw of the child copying another child's movements or attempting to do something another child was doing. (*Examples*: Riding a riding toy, pumping legs on a swing, jumping from a low height.)

Interpreting the Facts

What role do you think a child's peers play in the child's gross motor development? Explain.

4. Young children often enjoy practicing a skill over and over again, especially when they are first learning it. (*Examples*: Throwing a ball into a container or walking backwards.) Did the child you observed show any of this repeated practicing? If so, describe what the child was doing. As he or she practiced, did the skill seem to improve? Did the child try out variations of the behavior? (*Examples:* Moving closer to or farther away from the container, taking larger steps backward.)

(Continued on next page)

5. List three skills from the checklist for the child's age that the child did not attempt or master. What activities could the teacher or caregiver plan to encourage development of these skills? Offer at least one idea for each skill.

Learning from Observing: Based on your observation and/or a comparison of checklists of other children the same age, how does the gross motor development of the child you observed compare with the development of other children in the group the same age? Would you rate the child's gross motor skills as "Below average," "Average," or "Above average"? Give specific reasons for your rating. (Take into consideration the child's age in months, as well as in years.)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 4

Assessing Fine Motor Development

Fine motor skills involve the smaller muscles of the body, such as those in the hands. These skills require both *dexterity*—skillful use of the hands and fingers—and *hand-eye coordination*—the ability to move the hands and fingers in coordination with what is seen. Children use their fine motor skills when they cut with scissors, button a button, or pull a string through a bead. As children use their small muscles in play and in activities teachers plan for them, they are developing important skills they will need later in school, such as printing and cutting out shapes or pictures. Some children enjoy these types of activities more than other children, and skills vary widely from child to child. Three-year-olds may find some fine motor tasks, such as cutting with scissors, frustrating because their skills are not well-developed yet. By the time children reach five or six, however, they can do precise tasks more easily.

One way to evaluate children's fine motor skills is by using a checklist. A *developmental checklist* is a list of behaviors children typically exhibit or skills children typically master at a certain age. The observer records the behaviors or skills he or she sees. Developmental checklists are a good way to track each child's development. Knowing a child's areas of strength and weakness, as well as those of the group as a whole, helps teachers and caregivers plan fine motor activities that encourage children's development in specific skill areas.

Observation Objective: To identify and document the small motor skills of one child.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for 30–40 minutes. (If possible, find out from the teacher or caregiver the child's age in years and months.) Before you observe, read over the items on the checklist—particularly those for the child's age—so you are familiar with the fine motor skills you will be looking for. Also read the follow-up questions. During the observation, look for the skills on the list. When you see the child you are observing attempting or successfully using a skill, put a check mark and record the date in the *Attempted* or *Mastered* column. Leave the columns blank for any skills you do not have an opportunity to see. After the observation, review your notes and write your answers to the questions. If possible, observe the same child at least one other day to see additional skills.

> **Observation Tip:** Regardless of the age of the child you observe, watch for the skills listed for every age. A four-year-old may not have mastered all the skills listed for age three yet, and the same child may have already mastered a few skills typical of five-year-olds. In general, the closer a child is to the lower end of the age range listed for the skills, the fewer the skills the child will have mastered in that set.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Fine Motor Skills Checklist

Age 3 to 3 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Stacks nine or ten blocks.	_____	_____
Strings large beads.	_____	_____
Cuts paper in half.	_____	_____
Holds crayon with fingers instead of fist.	_____	_____
Copies a circle.	_____	_____
Copies a vertical line.	_____	_____
Copies crossed lines.	_____	_____
Draws person with three parts.	_____	_____
Draws a face with features.	_____	_____
Completes puzzle with three to six pieces.	_____	_____
Drives pegs into holes.	_____	_____
Makes shapes from clay (snakes, balls).	_____	_____
Turns pages of book, one at a time.	_____	_____
Feeds self with few spills.	_____	_____
Spreads butter, etc., with knife.	_____	_____
Pours liquids.	_____	_____
Turns on sink faucet.	_____	_____
Unbuttons large buttons.	_____	_____
Takes off coat unassisted.	_____	_____

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Age 4 to 4 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Builds bridge with three blocks.	_____	_____
Copies a square.	_____	_____
Draws person with four or more parts.	_____	_____
Prints some capital letters.	_____	_____
Cuts on a straight line with scissors.	_____	_____
Holds crayon with first two fingers and thumb.	_____	_____
Flattens play dough with a rolling pin.	_____	_____
Uses cookie cutters with clay.	_____	_____
Completes puzzle with six to eight pieces.	_____	_____
Pours liquids into small containers.	_____	_____
Laces shoes or lacing toy.	_____	_____
Zips a separating zipper.	_____	_____

Ages 5 to 5 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Builds block house or other structure.	_____	_____
Follows outline when cutting out pictures.	_____	_____
Colors within lines.	_____	_____
Copies a triangle.	_____	_____
Prints first name.	_____	_____
Draws person with body, head, legs, and arms.	_____	_____
Completes puzzle with 10 to 15 pieces.	_____	_____
Takes objects apart and puts back together.	_____	_____
Uses fork and spoon for most foods.	_____	_____
Ties shoelaces.	_____	_____
Dresses self easily.	_____	_____
Buttons clothes.	_____	_____

(Continued on next page)

1. What specific activities was the child doing that allowed you to observe the child's fine motor skills?

2. Did the child appear to show any pride in his or her fine motor skills or frustration about ones not yet achieved? If so, give examples of what the child said or did.

3. Describe any instances you saw of the child copying another child's fine motor movements or attempting to do something another child was doing. (*Examples:* Drawing a shape, pushing golf tees into a foam board.)

4. Young children often enjoy practicing a skill over and over again, especially when they are first learning it. (*Examples:* Repeatedly putting small objects into a container and dumping them out, cutting paper into tiny pieces.) Did the child you observed show any of this repeated practicing? If so, describe what the child was doing.

(Continued on next page)

5. Were there fine motor skills for which the child needed assistance from the teacher or caregiver? Explain.

6. List three skills from the checklist for the child's age that the child did not attempt or master. What activities could the teacher or caregiver plan to encourage development of these skills? Offer at least one idea for each skill.

7. Compare the child's fine motor skills with another child of the opposite gender. Comment on any differences you observe.

(Continued on next page)

Interpreting the Facts

Child development specialists note that preschool girls generally have better developed fine motor skills than boys do. What might be some reasons for this? Do your own observations support these findings? Explain.

Learning from Observing: Based on your observation and/or a comparison of checklists of other children the same age, how does the fine motor development of the child you observed compare with the development of other children in the group the same age? (Take into the consideration the child's age in months, as well as in years.) Would you rate the child's fine motor skills as "Below average," "Average," or "Above average"? Give specific reasons for your rating.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 1

OBSERVATION 5

Observing Fine Motor Development

Although young children like to be physically active, most also enjoy activities like drawing, cutting, pasting, printing letters or their name, and building with blocks. These activities all involve fine motor skills. Children build fine motor skills simply through their daily play, but teachers and caregivers also plan specific activities to help children become more adept with their fingers and hands.

Observation Objective: Identify and learn more about one child's fine motor skills.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions that follow as soon as possible after you observe.

> **Observation Tip:** One of the best times to observe fine motor skills is when children are working with art materials, such as markers, scissors, glue sticks, paint brushes, collage materials, and crayons.

1. List all the activities this child engaged in during your observation that required the use of fine motor skills.

2. Describe one of these activities in detail. Exactly what did the child do? How did he or she do it? If other children were also taking part in this activity, how did the observed child's skill compare with that of other children?

(Continued on next page)

Interpreting the Facts

What conclusions, if any, can you draw about the child's fine motor skills based on the activities you observed?

3. Did you observe the child coloring, drawing, painting with a paint brush, or writing? If so, clearly describe the way the child held the crayon, marker, pencil, or paint brush. How did the child's grip compare to the way most adults would hold these tools?

Interpreting the Facts

What impact, if any, do you think the child's grip had on the process or on the finished product?

4. Did you observe the child cutting with scissors? If so, describe how the child used them. (*Examples*: Turned hand so scissors were toward self; used two hands, snipped bits and pieces; cut in continuous motion; cut along a straight line; cut something other than paper.)

(Continued on next page)

Thinking It Through

Identify at least six fine-motor tasks the child will need to be able to do skillfully as an adult.

5. Hand-eye coordination is the ability to move the hands and fingers in precise relation to what is seen. What activity, besides those already described, did you observe that required hand-eye coordination? (*Examples:* Fitting pegs into a pegboard, coloring inside the lines.) Explain how this activity required good hand-eye coordination.

Thinking It Through

How might a younger child, or one who was not as coordinated, have performed this same hand-eye coordination activity?

(Continued on next page)

6. Playing with small toys and games requires fine motor skills. At the same time, these skills are improved with the practice gained through such play. Using clay, building with blocks, putting together puzzles, and playing with lacing toys are examples. Explain how the child you observed used fine motor skills in playing a game or with a toy.

Thinking It Through

Play activities usually incorporate skills from more than one developmental area. What other area of development, in addition to physical, is involved when a child puts a puzzle together? Name some specific skills in that area needed for this activity.

Learning from Observing: What are three activities you could plan to encourage fine motor development for a child who does not like fine motor activities in general? Explain what you would need for each activity and how you would interest the child in each.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 1

OBSERVATION 6

Evaluating Children's Clothing

Children's clothes can be costly, especially when children are growing quickly. While many parents like to buy stylish clothes for their children, ease of care, comfort, and durability are more important considerations. For example, children should be able to move about freely in their clothes as they play. Some preschoolers like to choose their own outfits to wear, although they might have some difficulty knowing what goes together and what doesn't! Wise parents generally guide children in choosing coordinated clothing, but they also respect children's selections even if they seem a little mismatched.

Observation Objective: Observe and assess typical clothing of preschoolers.

Directions: Observe a group of children ages three to five in an early childhood education class or child care program for at least 30 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

Observation Tip: If possible, observe children during active play, such as outdoor time. This will give you an opportunity to evaluate how suitable children's clothing is for active play and/or variation in temperatures.

1. Describe the "typical" outfit(s) of children in the group. (*Examples:* Shorts and a T-shirt, jeans and lightweight jackets.)

2. Were any children dressed noticeably differently from the others, such as in more formal clothes? If so, describe what they were wearing.

Interpreting the Facts

Did any of these outfits have any impact on children's comfort or their ability to take part in physical activities? (*Example:* Difficulty running due to slippery dress shoes.)

(Continued on next page)

3. Were any children wearing clothes with visible brand names, logos, or cartoon figures on them? If so, did children comment on any of these? Describe anything they said or did.

4. Choose three children from the group and describe the style of their clothing and the types of fasteners on them. (*Examples:* Pullover, front opening, zippers, large buttons, elastic waists, or belts.)

Thinking It Through

Which of the outfits described above would be easiest for a child to put on and take off independently? What items or features might require an adult's help?

5. Describe the various types of shoes children were wearing. Include the way the shoes fastened. (*Examples:* Shoe laces, buckles, hook-and-loop tape.)

Thinking It Through

Based on the age of the children, would you expect that they could take their shoes off and put them on by themselves? What kind of shoes would be easiest for children to manage on their own?

(Continued on next page)

6. Describe any protective clothing that you observed, such as paint smocks, raincoats, windbreakers, or mittens. Were the children able to put these items on by themselves, or did they require help?

7. Record any comments the children made about clothes or shoes, indicating whether they like or disliked their own clothes or someone else's. Did any of the children seem concerned about keeping their clothes clean? If so, how did this impact their participation in activities?

Learning from Observing: Choose two children you observed and rate their clothing in four areas: comfort, ease of use, appeal to kids, and suitability for the weather/indoor temperature. Below, make a rating scale of 1 to 5 for each area, with 1 being "Poor" and 5 being "Excellent." Indicate on the scale each child's clothing in the three areas. Explain your ratings.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 1

OBSERVATION 7

Overview of Emotional and Social Development

Children generally follow patterns of emotional and social development. From ages three to five, children learn to recognize and express feelings, interact with children and adults, and participate in group activities. They begin to see that every person is unique and special. By observing a single child over a period of time, you can find clues to the child's development in these areas.

Observation Objective: To identify and interpret one child's emotional and social development.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five for at least 30 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and complete this observation sheet.

> **Observation Tip:** To accurately observe social and emotional development, you need to be alert to a child's tone of voice, facial expressions, and body posture. However, since feelings themselves cannot be directly observed, do not assume what the child may be feeling. Keep your descriptions factual and objective, reporting what the child says and does.

PART 1: Expressing Emotions. By age three, children are learning that they have feelings and are beginning to understand that there are appropriate ways to express these feelings. Throughout the preschool years, children learn to show affection, control frustration and anger, distinguish between real and imagined fears, and identify jealousy and sadness. Besides understanding their own emotions, they are learning how to identify and respond to other people's feelings.

1. What behaviors did you observe that you think indicate specific feelings?

Behaviors	*Feelings*

(Continued on next page)

2. Describe an incident in which this child reacted in some way to another person's feelings. What was the child's attitude?

Thinking It Through

What are two advantages and two disadvantages of a child freely expressing his or her emotions?

PART 2: Children, Adults, and New People. As young children develop, they become more comfortable interacting with unfamiliar children and adults. By age six, most children enjoy meeting new people and experiencing new places and events. However, in these situations they may feel more secure having a parent or other adult they know nearby. Friendships begin to develop during the preschool years. Girls tend to become friends with other girls and boys with other boys. Children seek attention and approval from their peers and adults. Young children often imitate adults and usually learn to accept their authority and supervision.

3. Give three specific examples of how this child responded to other children. What did you observe that seemed to indicate the child's confidence or lack of confidence in these situations?

(Continued on next page)

4. Did the child seem more at ease with adults or with children? Give an example of an interaction between the child and adult. Was the child cooperative and respectful?

Thinking It Through

How could a parent, teacher, or caregiver encourage a child to become comfortable with meeting new people and going to new places?

PART 3: Activities and Play. Children learn to start up play with others, play with a variety of other children and adults, take turns and share, and engage in different types of activities. They should experience a balance of individual and group activities. What children think and feel about themselves will be reflected in their activities, play, and interactions with others.

5. Give an example of how this child began playing with another child. Did the child make the first approach or wait until another child asked?

(Continued on next page)

6. What group activities did this child participate in? What individual activities did this child participate in?

Interpreting the Facts

Does the child seem more comfortable in group or individual activities? What makes you think so?

7. Imagine that the child you observed wants a toy another child is playing with. Based on what you have seen, how do you think this child would communicate that desire? Give reasons for your answer.

Learning from Observing: Describe how you think this child views himself or herself and how that impacts the way the child deals with others. Give examples to back up your interpretation.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____

Child A _____ Child's Age _____ Child B _____ Child's Age _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 8

Assessing Emotional Development

Egocentrism means that children view life from their own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Over time, they begin to develop *empathy*—the ability to understand how another person feels and views the world. Moving from being self-centered to taking into account others' thoughts and feelings is a slow, gradual process.

An important part of children's emotional makeup is their *temperament*, or their unique nature. Every child has a blend of nine different temperament traits that determine how he or she reacts to others and to the world:

- Intensity — Strength or weakness of emotional responses
- Persistence — Determination to complete actions
- Sensitivity — Intensity of a reaction to feelings or situations
- Perceptiveness — Awareness of what is going on around oneself
- Adaptability — Ease of adjustment to change and new situations
- Regularity — Following expected patterns of behavior
- Activity — Level of energy
- Approach — Responses to new situations
- Mood — State of mind; emotion

Looking at how a child expresses these temperament traits can help in assessing the child's emotional development. This enables adults to help children work through negative emotions, develop confidence, and get along with others.

Observation Objective: Identify the personality traits of two children and evaluate their emotional development.

Directions: Observe two children ages three to five for 30–40 minutes. When a child shows one of the temperament traits, record what the child did and said in the appropriate column in the chart. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

Observation Tip: The information you collect must be kept confidential. Avoid using a child's name during class discussions. Instead, identify a child by a numbering system or by the child's initials.

(Continued on next page)

Children's Expression of Emotional Traits		
Trait	**Child A**	**Child B**
Intensity		
Persistence		
Sensitivity		
Perceptiveness		
Adaptability		
Regularity		
Activity		
First reaction		
Approach		

(Continued on next page)

1. What activities did the two children participate in while you were observing?

   Child A:

   Child B:

2. For each child, which traits seemed the strongest? The weakest? (*Examples:* A child who gives up trying to uncap a marker after two attempts may show weak persistence. Another child may keep trying until he or she is successful; this child would show strong persistence.)

Interpreting the Facts

How can a teacher's understanding of children's temperaments help prevent clashes in the classroom? Offer at least two ideas.

(Continued on next page)

4. List two examples of a child showing egocentrism. Include the words and actions the child used. (*Examples:* "I had it first!" as a child grabs a toy from another child; "I'm gonna be the line leader!" as a child cuts in front of another child.)

5. For one of the above examples, how did an adult or another child respond to the child's focus on self?

6. Did you observe any examples of a child showing empathy? If so, describe the words and actions the child used. (*Example*s: A child tells an adult who comes to see why another child is crying, "Josh hit his knee. He's crying 'cuz it hurts"; a child offers a stuffed toy to a crying child.)

(Continued on next page)

Thinking It Through

What are two ways teachers and caregivers can help children view life from another child's perspective?

Learning from Observing: Choose the child of the two you observed who was the least adaptable. Make at least two suggestions for a teacher or caregiver who wanted to help the child make the transition from one activity to another more easily. Explain how your recommendations might help.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 9

Expressing Emotions

Preschoolers have strong emotions and often experience rapid mood changes. They may get excited about going to the park and then become angry when all the swings are being used. However, preschoolers are beginning to understand that there are appropriate ways to express these emotions. For example, when they are jealous or angry, they may realize they should not physically hurt anyone. However, they might hurt the person's feelings through their words and actions. Preschoolers also tend to have many fears, such as fear of the dark, fear of being left alone, and imagined danger. Their sense of humor also begins to develop. They laugh at funny faces and actions, nonsense words, and things they know are unusual (such as a pig that barks in a story).

Observation Objective: Identify and interpret behaviors that are linked to emotions.

Directions: Observe children ages three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. Look for examples of the children's behavior and language that seem to express the emotions listed in the chart. For example, a child throwing his arms around a caregiver's leg might be showing fear or love and affection. However: if the child is also smiling, you can eliminate fear as an option. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes, fill in the chart, and answer the questions as soon as possible after you observe. Write "Not observed" in any portion of the chart you cannot complete because it did not occur during your observation.

Observation Tip: Identifying an emotion is somewhat a subjective decision. By using a chart like the one that follows, you separate the facts—the child's behaviors and language—from your interpretation. For example, a child jumping up and down could be expressing excitement or frustration. However, a child jumping up and down, smiling, and exclaiming "Let's go to the park NOW!" is showing excitement. First describe the child's behaviors and language, and then interpret the emotion they convey.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Children's Expression of Emotions	
Facts (Behaviors and Language)	**Interpretation (Emotions)**
	Love and affection
	Joy
	Sadness
	Fear
	Anger
	Jealousy
	Other emotions expressed:

(Continued on next page)

Interpreting the Facts

In general, did the children show more positive or negative emotions? Why do you think this was true?

1. Children often express a variety of emotions during dramatic play activities. Describe a dramatic play activity involving one or more children. List all of the emotions that seemed to be expressed.

2. Give an example of how a child showed fear. Did the child's imagination encourage the fear? If so, how?

3. Describe a situation in which a child expressed an emotion inappropriately or in a way that hurt someone else physically or emotionally. How did the other person respond? Did an adult get involved in the situation? If so, what did the adult do or say?

(Continued on next page)

4. Relate any example you saw of a child trying to control an intense feeling. Did an adult help the child in any way? If so, describe what the adult did or said.

5. Give an example of how a child showed a sense of humor. What did the child do or say?

Thinking It Through

Explain how emotional and intellectual development are both involved as a child develops a sense of humor.

Learning from Observing: How did the children express their emotions verbally? Nonverbally? From what you observed, did the children generally express emotions in an appropriate way for their age? Give reasons for your answer.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 10

Handling Negative Emotions

Young children experience a wide range of emotions, including negative ones. They may get angry at a child who takes a toy and jealous when another child is occupying an adult's attention. Because young children feel these emotions strongly and lack the restraint that older children and adults have learned, they tend to express their feelings in ways that hurt other people, objects, or even themselves. Toddlers, for instance, show anger freely and may bite, hit, or kick others. Preschoolers tend to use less physical means of expression but may yell, scream, or intentionally hurt another person's feelings when angry. Preschool children tend to tattle, criticize, lie, or boast when they are jealous. With maturity and adult patience and guidance, children gradually learn to express their negative feelings appropriately.

Event sampling is an effective observation technique to document the way children express their negative emotions. In event sampling, when the behavior occurs, the observer captures in writing as many details as possible from the beginning of the event until the end. Later the observer adds his or her interpretations about the behavior or incident.

Observation Objective: To record children's expression of negative emotions and others' responses to them.

Directions: Observe children ages three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. As you are observing, watch for a child expressing a negative emotion. On the Event Record form, use descriptive language to record who is involved in the event, what is happening, and when and where it is happening. When possible, record exactly what the child, and anyone else involved, does and says. After the observation is over, add your comments and interpretations of what happened in the right column of the form. Repeat the process for each new incident. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

Observation Tip: When you are watching for a specific behavior, such as a child hitting or yelling angrily, you might not notice the event that preceded or caused the behavior. Observe carefully and try to notice children's behavior in the context of what else is going on.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Event Sample	
Description(s) of Negative Emotions	**Notes and Interpretations**
(For each incident, note the date, the start and end times, those involved, and their ages, along with your description.)	

(Continued on next page)

1. In the incidents you observed, how did the children express their emotions in similar ways? How did they express them differently?

Interpreting the Facts

Did the children respond as expected for their developmental age? Explain.

2. Give an example of how the environment may have contributed to each event. (*Example:* Crowded conditions at the water table led to two children pushing and shoving.)

3. Did you observe an adult helping a child express negative emotions in an appropriate way? If so, describe what the adult did and said, and how the child responded.

(Continued on next page)

4. Did you observe a child appearing to resent the attention another child received? (*Examples:* Teacher complimenting a child wearing a new sweater; the child's best friend playing with another child.) If so, describe what the child did and said.

Thinking It Through

How does a preschooler's egocentrism impact the way he or she handles negative emotions?

Learning from Observing: Based up your observation, list three conclusions about how young children handle negative emotions. Identify two ways you could help children develop the self-control to effectively manage their negative emotions, if you were a teacher or caregiver.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 3

OBSERVATION 11

Evaluating Self-Concept

During the preschool years, children become aware of the individual differences that make them unique and special. The way they view themselves, or *self-concept,* can be positive or negative. When they master new skills, they develop self-confidence which leads to a positive self-concept. A positive self-concept often leads to high *self-esteem*—how they value themselves. They believe they are capable and are more willing to try new things and learn from their mistakes. Children develop a sense of satisfaction, pride, and respect for who they are. They also develop an idea of what it means to be a boy or girl. Preschoolers begin learning male and female roles by watching people around them.

Observation Objective: To identify signs of a child's self-concept and factors that affect it.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 40 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions that follow. If your observation did not include an opportunity to see some of the situations mentioned, write "Not observed" in the answer space.

> **Observation Tip:** Observing self-concept can be difficult. Look for subtle clues in a child's body language for hints of positive or negative self-concept. For example, a child with a positive self-concept would look other children and adults in the eye and stand tall. A child with a low self-concept might have downcast eyes and slumped shoulders.

1. Describe what the child was doing during the observation. What tasks or skills did the child work on?

2. Which of the tasks or skills did the child show mastery of?

(Continued on next page)

3. Give an example of how the child showed confidence in doing a task or skill.

Thinking It Through

What are some reasons children of about the same age might vary in their self-confidence?

4. Which of the tasks or skills did the child appear to need more practice to develop mastery?

Interpreting the Facts

Did the child exhibit the same level of confidence when practicing a skill compared to doing a skill he or she had already mastered? Give reasons for your answer.

(Continued on next page)

5. Give an example of how the child showed pride in his or her ability to do an activity, task, or skill.

6. What words did the child use to speak positively about himself or herself?

Thinking It Through

How does a teacher's or caregiver's respect for a child impact the child's self-concept or self-esteem? How does a child's self-respect impact his or her self-concept and self-esteem?

7. Did a child make a mistake during the observation? If so, describe what happened and how the child reacted.

(Continued on next page)

8. What did the teacher or caregiver do or say to encourage the child in accepting the mistake?

9. Did you see evidence of gender identity in the child's play or interactions with others? If so, give at least one example.

Thinking It Through

What influences how a preschooler views the roles of men and women?

Learning from Observing: From what you observed, summarize how you think the child feels about himself or herself. Include comments on the child's self-concept, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 12

Assessing Social Development

At ages three, four, and five, children are learning to interact and cooperate with other children and adults, develop friendships, and follow rules. As children develop these social skills, they will learn to respect themselves, other people, and objects and materials in their environment.

Observation Objective: To identify and evaluate various aspects of social development in a group of preschoolers.

Directions: Observe a group of three to five preschoolers in an early childhood education class or a child care program. Allow at least 30 minutes for the observation. Before you observe, read over the questions on this observation sheet. Take careful notes during the observation, then review your notes and complete this observation sheet.

> **Observation Tip:** Observing children's interactions and behaviors requires you to look objectively at the children. As you write notes about what you see, avoid making judgments about the children's feelings, attitudes, and motives. Use factual words to describe what children do and say, such as "crying" instead of "sad," or "playing with another child" instead of "playing with a friend." You will have an opportunity to *interpret*—figure out the possible meanings of what you saw—after the observation.

1. Briefly describe the activities the children participated in while you were observing.

2. Give three examples of how the children interacted with one another. (*Examples:* Played together, shared toys, took turns.)

(Continued on next page)

3. Describe in more detail one child's interaction with another child. What activity were the children involved in? What did the two children say and do? Did one child play the role of the leader? If so, which one?

Interpreting the Facts

Preschool friendships are usually formed through play. It is difficult to identify friendships among children during one observation. However, by observing carefully, you may get a sense of children's relationships with one another. By describing how two of the children acted toward each other, give reasons why you think the children might be, or are unlikely to be, friends.

4. Give three examples of how the children interacted with adults. (*Examples:* Cooperated, showed respect, responded to instruction.)

Thinking It Through

Showing respect is a basic social skill children need to develop. What helps a child learn respect?

(Continued on next page)

5. Give an example you saw of each of the three types of play—solitary, parallel, and cooperative.

6. Describe what happened when an adult gave directions to the group. What did the adult do and say? What was the general response of the group? Choose one child and note how that child responded.

Learning from Observing: In general, do the children you observed get along with one another? Describe any situation you saw that might indicate ongoing or long-term difficulties among any of the children or between a child and an adult. How might the teacher or caregiver handle this type of situation if it does occur?

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child _____ Child's Age _____

Level 1

OBSERVATION 13

Tracking Social Interactions

As preschoolers develop, they become highly social. They enjoy other people's company and initiate conversation and play. However, personality and self-concept also influence social contacts. Some preschoolers interact freely with many children and adults, others with only a few. Extremely shy children may interact with only one or two others. By documenting the frequency and type of children's interactions, teachers and caregivers can better understand children's social development.

One way to document interaction is by creating a *sociogram*—a visual organizer showing the relationships among people in a group. The observer uses arrows and shapes, to symbolize the interactions. The sociogram on the next page is set up to show a child's interactions. The child is represented by a large circle in the middle. Other children are identified in one of the small ovals around the circle. Adults are identified in one of the rectangles. During the observation period, every time the child interacts with another person, the observer draws an arrow from the circle representing the child to the shape representing the other person. If a person interacts with the child, the observer draws the arrow from the person to the child. The patterns created indicate the frequency that the child interacts with others.

Observation Objective: To identify which people one child interacts with and how often.

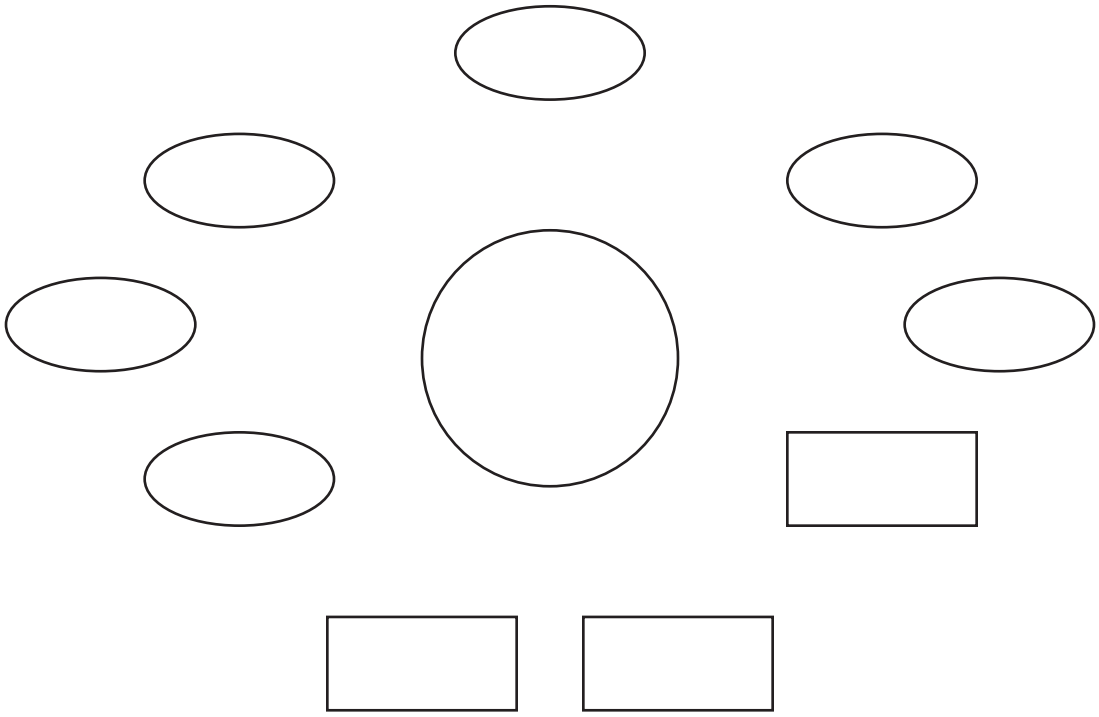
Directions: Observe one child ages three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 20 minutes. If possible, observe during a time when children are free to choose their own activities. Before you observe, label the center circle in the diagram as the child and the other shapes as each child and adult in the group. You might use the person's initials or an identifying code, such as one based on what each person is wearing. Add additional shapes, if needed. Also, read the follow-up questions before you observe. Track the interactions that occur during the observation on the sociogram with arrows. Then answer the questions.

> **Observation Tip:** Draw an arrow the first time a child interacts with another person. For each additional time the child interacts with the same person, place a tally mark beside or across the corresponding arrow. Repeat the procedure for each interaction. This keeps the diagram less cluttered but still allows you to count the number of interactions that occurred.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

SOCIOGRAM



1. How many different people did the child interact with?

2. Which children and adults did the child interact with most? In what ways did the child usually interact with those people?

(Continued on next page)

3. Which children and adults did the child interact with least? Did the child seem to deliberately avoid anyone? If so, could you tell why?

Interpreting the Facts

Which occurred more often, that the child initiated interaction with others or that others approached the child for interaction? Why do you think this happened?

4. What activities were going on in the classroom or center during the time you observed? (*Example:* Free time and water play.) How did the activities promote or discourage interaction among children?

Thinking It Through

If a sociogram was completed for every child in an early childhood class, how might the teachers use the information to enhance the children's social development?

(Continued on next page)

5. Did you observe the child in positive, friendly interactions? If so, with whom?

6. Describe any situation you observed in which the child had a conflict or displayed other negative behavior toward another person.

Learning from Observing: What social skills, such as taking turns and listening, did the child demonstrate? Overall, did others seem drawn to, and want to be with, the child? What conclusions can you draw about the child's interactions with others? Support your answer.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 14

Relating to Adults

The relationships children have with adults strongly influence children's social development. Children learn to appropriately seek attention and help, cooperate, follow directions, and show respect toward adults. As children become confident in these relationships, they feel more secure in interacting with new people they meet.

One way to document how a child relates to adults is to use *anecdotal records*. These are short, written descriptions of a specific, common behavior, event, or situation that the observer is tracking. In an anecdotal record, the *setting*—or situation in which the behavior happened—is important. The observer is careful to describe what occurred, and what was said and done. Later the observer adds his or her interpretations about the behavior or incident. Although the observer may not document every occurrence, the descriptions collected over time give a variety of information on which to base an assessment. The process might be repeated in several months to see whether there has been a change.

Observation Objective: To evaluate whether one child has the social skills needed to interact appropriately with adults in a kindergarten setting.

Directions: On two different days, observe the same child (age three to five) in an early childhood classroom or child care program. Each observation should last at least 20 minutes. Record the basic information on the Anecdotal Record form and read the follow-up questions before you observe. During the observation, record what occurs when the child interacts with an adult. For each occurrence you record, note the time, identify the people involved, and describe the setting. (For example, the interaction might take place at the coat rack while the children are getting ready to go home.) When possible, record exactly what the child and adult do and say. Repeat this process, adding to the form, each time the child has a new interaction with an adult. After the observation, complete the form, adding your comments and interpretations. Repeat this procedure for the second observation. Then answer the questions that follow. Attach all of your anecdotal records to this activity sheet.

> **Observation Tip:** The person who reads an anecdotal record should be able to picture the child's actions and "hear" the child's words. Use your eyes and ears like a video recorder. Write quickly to capture all the details. Focus on the child's words, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and body movements. Use descriptive words to express what you see, such as "the child hugged the adult tightly around the legs" or "the child whispered in the adult's ear." Also record the adult's responses.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Observation Objective: To evaluate whether the child has the social skills needed to interact appropriately with a teacher in kindergarten.

Anecdotal Record	
Description	**Interpretation**
(For each incident, note those involved, the date and time, and the setting, along with your description.)	

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Observation Objective: To evaluate whether the child has the social skills needed to interact appropriately with a teacher in kindergarten.

Anecdotal Record	
Description	**Interpretation**
(For each incident, note those involved, the date and time, and the setting, along with your description.)	

(Continued on next page)

1. Describe one way the child sought an adult's attention using *positive* behavior and one way using *negative* behavior. What was the adult's response to each?

Thinking It Through

How are a child's patterns of behavior with adults formed?

2. Describe any of the following situations that occurred as you observed:

- The child sought help from an adult.
- The child cooperated with an adult.
- The child followed directions given by an adult.
- The child showed respect to an adult.

(Continued on next page)

Interpreting the Facts

If the child interacted with more than one adult, what might account for differences in those interactions?

Learning from Observing: In which of the following ways, does the child show social readiness for kindergarten: 1) By asking for adult attention at appropriate times and in appropriate ways? 2) By asking for help, when needed? 3) By being cooperative? 4) By following directions? 5) By showing respect? Identify one social skill that the child needs to improve.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 15

Learning Social Skills

As young children play and work together, they learn important social skills. They gain experience in getting along in groups, working together to achieve a goal, negotiating, and compromising. They also learn basic manners and develop empathy for others. These are skills that children need not only in preschool, but throughout life.

Observation Objective: To evaluate one child's social skills with other children.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe. You may not see all of the requested examples. If you do not, note "Not observed." If you see an opposite and negative behavior from the one requested, describe that instead.

> **Observation Tip:** When observing children, find a place away from the activity, preferably out of the children's sight or where you will not distract children from their work and play. If a child you are observing moves around and changes activities, you may need to change locations. Move quietly to a different location, but be sure to remain close enough to hear what the child says.

1. List all the activities you observed in which the child played with one or more children.

2. Describe one of these activities in detail. Exactly what did the child do and say? How did he or she relate to the other child or children? How did the other child or children respond?

(Continued on next page)

Interpreting the Facts

Based on your observation, comment on the child's ability to play with others.

3. Describe a situation in which the child led other children or took charge of a play situation.

Thinking It Through

How does a child's personality play a role in the child's interest in being a leader? In a child's success at being a leader?

4. Describe a situation in which the child followed another child's lead.

5. How did the child show an ability to get along in a group or contribute to a group effort?

(Continued on next page)

6. Describe a situation in which the child responded positively to other children's feelings. (*Examples:* By showing compassion or appreciation.)

7. Did you observe the child excluding any other children from playing or from using toys and equipment? If so, explain what happened.

8. How did the child show courtesy and respect? (*Examples:* By taking turns, by saying "please.")

Learning from Observing: What specific social skills did you observe that help this child get along with other children and adults? How did this child's social skills compare with those of other children in the group?

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 16

Analyzing Play Patterns

Children go through a series of stages of play. Before 18 months of age, children mainly engage in s*olitary play*—that is, they play alone. Beginning around 18 months, children may play near one another without actually interacting. This is called *parallel play*. For example, several children may be playing in the sand side by side without talking to one another. *Cooperative play* occurs when children actually play with one another. They work in groups to build with blocks, act out a family dinner, or play a game such as duck-duck-goose. Children typically begin cooperative play at about age three. However, they still engage in solitary play and parallel play at times.

One way to collect information about a child's play habits is to observe using a *time sampling* technique. This observation uses a chart to record what types of play a child is involved in at specific times. While you can try to interpret the information you collect during one sample period, repeating the observation on other days or weeks would increase the likelihood that your findings are really typical of that child's play. Teachers might use this observation technique over a period of weeks to compare the play choices of two or more children.

Observation Objective: To analyze the types of play of a particular child and which types are most often used.

Directions: Observe one child age three to five in an early childhood program or child care center. Observe for at least 20 minutes during a time when the children are free to choose their own activities. Complete the time sample chart to determine the amount of time the child participates in each of the three types of play—solitary, parallel, and cooperative. Using a clock with a second hand, record the type of play the child is engaged in at the beginning of each minute of the observation. Use the *Description* column for notes describing what is happening during that time. If the child is not actively playing, write "Unoccupied" instead of a type of play. After the observation, answer the follow-up questions.

Observation Tip: Children are unpredictable. What they do today may be very different from what they do tomorrow. That is why teachers and researchers use multiple observations before making judgments or changes based on their findings and interpretations. Your single-time observations provide practice in recording and interpreting what you see. However, the conclusions you reach may not be correct, especially with such limited information. Besides privacy considerations, that is one of the reasons that sharing your interpretations outside of class is not appropriate.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

TIME SAMPLE		
Minutes	**Type of Play**	**Description** *(Activity, toys, other children, etc.)*
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		

(Continued on next page)

1. Calculate and record below how long the child engaged in each type of play.

Solitary: _____ *Parallel:* _____ *Cooperative:* _____

2. Which type of play did the child engage in the most?

Thinking It Through

How do certain activities tend to encourage certain types of play?

3. Which activity seemed to hold the child's interest the longest? What did the child seem to enjoy about the activity?

Interpreting the Facts

Based on your observation, what factors do you think might have influenced the child's play choices?

(Continued on next page)

4. Describe one situation in which the child changed activities. What seemed to have prompted this?

5. Who did the child play with most? Did the child actively seek out this person as a play partner?

Learning from Observing: If time samples for all of the children in a class of three-year-olds showed that the children spent most of their free-play time in solitary or parallel play, what could the teacher do to promote cooperative play?

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____

Child A _____ Child's Age _____ Child B _____ Child's Age _____

Level 3

OBSERVATION 17

Evaluating Independence

As children learn and grow, they increasingly want to do more things for themselves and make their own decisions. They rely less on adults for direction, encouragement, and attention. They are better able to adapt to new surroundings and unfamiliar people. This gradual, but steady, movement toward independence is one indicator of social and emotional development.

One way to assess a child's progress over time or to compare children's independence levels is to use a *frequency count*. This involves keeping track of how often a child shows specific behaviors. Additional notes can help the observer interpret the results of a frequency count. For example, if a child is not feeling well, the behaviors observed may not be typical of an average day.

Observation Purpose: To document examples of the behavior of two children in order to assess their levels of independence.

Directions: Observe two children in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 40 minutes. Each time one of these children shows a behavior listed on the chart, make a tally mark in the corresponding section for that child on the chart. Before you begin observing, become familiar with the behaviors you will be looking for, as well as with the follow-up questions. While observing, take notes about the situations related to the behaviors on the chart. Include descriptions of any other behaviors that show dependence or independence. Review your notes and complete this observation sheet.

Observation Tip: On the chart, the behaviors you will look for are listed in pairs. The first behavior in each pair is a *dependent* behavior. The second behavior is a corresponding *independent* behavior. Making a frequency count of the behaviors helps you compare the independence of the two children.

1. What activities were going on in the classroom or center during the time you observed? (*Examples:* Free time, snack, and outdoor play.) How did this impact which behaviors you were able to see?

2. Which child showed greater independence during your observation? Explain your answer.

(Continued on next page)

3. Explain how seeking more independence is linked to both social and emotional development.

Thinking It Through

What would be the benefits of observing the same two children, using the same chart, every two months?

4. What are four specific ways a preschool teacher or caregiver could help children become more independent?

Learning from Observing: Identify at least five reasons children of about the same age might vary in their degree of independence?

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Frequency Count Chart		
Behavior	**Child A**	**Child B**
Clings to an adult during activities or shows little interaction with peers during an activity.		
Interacts mainly with peers during an activity.		
Needs help with personal care such as toileting, blowing nose, and putting on or taking off clothing.		
Takes care of self-care needs independently.		
Waits and looks for teacher or other adult to suggest activities.		
Actively seeks out and participates in new activity.		
Puts toys away only when teacher instructs and supervises.		
Puts toys away without teacher supervision.		
Stays mainly in one location or resists moving from one place to another.		
Moves freely around room.		

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Child A—Summary of Observation Notes

Child B—Summary of Observation Notes

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 3

OBSERVATION 18

Identifying Friends

Young children form a variety of relationships with their peers. They look at their peers as friends, playmates, or not part of their lives. When preschoolers are friends, they typically seek each other out, choose to be together, and enjoy one another's company. Their time together is filled with positive play and emotions, and they mutually respond to one another. Identifying a child's friends normally requires observing the child's relationships on several occasions or over a period of time. It is also important to remember that friendships among children can change quickly.

Observation Objective: To gather data indicating friendship relationships and identify related social skills.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five playing with other children in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 15 minutes on three different occasions. Before each observation, write the initials or identifiers of the children in the group across the top of one chart, putting one set of initials in each box. Each time the child you are observing shows a behavior listed on the chart below, make a tally mark in the corresponding section for the second child involved. Before you begin observing, become familiar with behaviors you will be looking for and the follow-up questions. While observing, also take notes about situations related to the behaviors on the chart. Include descriptions of any other behaviors that indicate friendships between the child you are observing and the other children. Review your notes and complete the questions on the observation sheets.

Observation Tip: For children to be considered friends they need to show most of the behaviors indicated. Just showing one or two behaviors does not indicate friendship. You may also "sense" that children are friends beyond an actual behavior. Look for observable objective behaviors that support your hunch about the friendship.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Observation 1

Behaviors Indicating Friendships	Initials of Children Playing with Child							
Starts conversations.								
Asks child to play.								
Waits for child to go from one location to another.								
Touches the child (e.g., hugs, grabbing hand to go play, arm around neck or shoulder).								
Stands or sits next to child in line, in circle, or at table.								
Helps the child.								
Helps solve the child's problems.								
Shares toys.								

Observation 1: Additional Notes

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Observation 2

Behaviors Indicating Friendships	Initials of Children Playing with Child							
Starts conversations.								
Asks child to play.								
Waits for child to go from one location to another.								
Touches the child (e.g., hugs, grabbing hand to go play, arm around neck or shoulder).								
Stands or sits next to child in line, in circle, or at table.								
Helps the child.								
Helps solve the child's problems.								
Shares toys.								

Observation 2: Additional Notes

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Observation 3

Behaviors Indicating Friendships	Initials of Children Playing with Child							
Starts conversations.								
Asks child to play.								
Waits for child to go from one location to another.								
Touches the child (e.g., hugs, grabbing hand to go play, arm around neck or shoulder).								
Stands or sits next to child in line, in circle, or at table.								
Helps the child.								
Helps solve the child's problems.								
Shares toys.								

Observation 3: Additional Notes

(Continued on next page)

1. Which children would you consider to be friends with the child you observed? Explain your reasoning.

2. What differences exist between how the child you observed interacts with his or her friends and the other children?

Learning from Observing: Based on your observation, what social skills does the child have that will help him or her develop friendships? What skills does the child need to develop?

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 19

Resolving Conflicts

Conflicts are a natural part of human interaction, and young children are no exception. They may compete with another child for a toy, time on the computer, or an adult's attention. They may disagree over how a dramatic play scene should be played out or whether to allow another child to play with them. During conflicts, young children's emotions can run high, and they may act out their feelings physically. With adult patience and guidance, even young children can learn to settle their conflicts in more acceptable ways.

Event sampling is an effective observation technique to use to document typical behaviors, such as conflicts, that happen frequently, but not on a predictable schedule. In event sampling, when the behavior being checked occurs, the observer writes a description of what happened, from beginning to end. It is important that the observer's account gives an accurate picture of the event. The observer should also note any interpretations or ideas about what happened. Later, the records of all the event records can be analyzed and any appropriate steps taken.

Observation Objective: To record and interpret one or more examples of conflict among young children.

Directions: Arrange to observe a group of children ages three to five in an early childhood program or child care center for at least 30 minutes. Before you observe, enter the basic information on the Event Sampling form and read the follow-up questions. While observing, watch for any conflicts that arise. Note the children and adults involved and the start time. Write your description of the incident on the form or a notepad. Continue until the conflict is resolved, again noting the time. Add your own comments in the *Notes and Interpretations* column. Repeat this process each time a new conflict arises, using additional paper, if needed. Review your notes, making any corrections or additions, and complete this observation sheet.

Observation Tip: Everyone views conflict differently. Some people become uncomfortable and upset when watching a conflict and may even feel a need to get involved. If this happens to you, try to set aside your own thoughts and emotions about conflict and focus objectively on what you see and hear.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Event Sample	
Description of Conflict Situation(s)	**Notes and Interpretations**
(For each incident, note those involved, their ages, and the start and end times, along with your description.)	

(Continued on next page)

1. Briefly summarize the main points of one conflict you observed. Who was involved? When and where did the conflict occur? What sparked the conflict? What was it about? What happened during the conflict?

2. Describe two ways the children expressed their feelings during the conflict. Was this appropriate for their age?

3. Did any child show aggressive behavior? If so, what happened?

4. Describe any child's attempt to resolve the conflict through compromise, or in another appropriate way.

(Continued on next page)

Interpreting the Facts

Did an adult become involved in the conflict? If so, explain whether you think the adult's handling of the situation was or was not appropriate and why.

5. What were the behaviors and actions of those involved after the conflict was resolved?

Thinking It Through

What could the adults have done differently to either prevent the conflict from happening or reduce its impact?

Learning from Observing: Review your notes about the conflicts you saw. What did they have in common? What specific skills might the staff help the children learn that would improve their ability to resolve conflicts?

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 1

OBSERVATION 20

Overview of Intellectual Development

Children generally follow consistent patterns of intellectual development. They learn to talk well and understand others. They also understand concepts related to color, size, shape, space, and quantity. Between their third and sixth birthdays, children can learn at a fast pace. As children begin kindergarten, their readiness to learn math and reading skills are largely dependent on how they developed intellectually during their preschool years.

Observation Objective: To identify and interpret one child's intellectual development.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and answer the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

> **Observation Tip:** You may need to alter your location throughout the center or classroom when observing intellectual development. You need to be able to hear what the child you are observing says. At the same time, you need to be far enough away from the child to avoid distracting him or her. Move about the area as needed without attracting attention to yourself.

Part 1: Language comprehension and expression. Children first learn single words and then begin to put them together in complete sentences. As their language skills develop, they learn to follow directions and ask many questions. They usually enjoy making up and retelling stories. By the time they are ready for kindergarten, they typically have mastered basic grammar and learned to recognize letters and sounds.

1. How does the child show he or she understands language?

2. List three sentences the child said.

(Continued on next page)

3. How does the child keep a conversation with another person going?

4. What directions were given to the child? Did the child follow the directions? If so, what happened?

5. Did the child make up or retell a story? If so, what did the child say?

Part 2: Concepts. Children's learning of concepts related to color, shape, size, space, and quantity is gradual, but steady. While three-year-olds are just beginning to categorize objects and information, five-year-olds are quickly learning to match similar objects and sort by size. Their increased understanding or how objects relate to one another helps them sort through and store information.

6. How did the child show an understanding of:

- Color (*Examples:* Red, yellow, blue.)

- Shape (*Examples:* Circle, square, triangle.)

(Continued on next page)

- Size (*Examples:* Big, small, tall, short.)

- Space (*Examples:* Near, far, over there, behind.)

- Quantity (*Examples:* Amounts, measurements, empty, full.)

7. Describe an example of how a child organized objects, such as by size or color.

Part 3: Intellectual activity. A preschooler's mind is constantly at work. At any given moment, preschoolers are engaging their attention, memory, perception, reasoning, imagination, creativity, and curiosity. They learn to recall information, put puzzles together, solve problems, and predict what will happen next. They act out a variety of roles, create new activities, and constantly wonder "why" and "how" about things.

8. Describe the child's ability to focus on an activity or task.

(Continued on next page)

9. Describe how the child used his or her imagination in an activity.

10. Identify a problem the child experienced and tell how he or she solved it.

Learning from Observing: Describe a situation in which you saw learning take place. Where did it happen? Who was involved? What was learned? How was it learned?

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 3

OBSERVATION 21

Assessing Intellectual Development

During the preschool years, the pace of intellectual development is amazing. A child who has just turned three typically has a limited vocabulary. At age five, the same child can read some words, speak in fairly complex sentences, and count to 20.

Teachers and caregivers use a variety of methods to evaluate a child's development in different areas. Some of the most common tools at the preschool level are *developmental checklists.* These are lists of skills that most children of a specific age are able to do. The observer or teacher records the behaviors or skills he or she sees each child can do. Identifying children's intellectual skills helps teachers and caregivers plan activities that encourage children's development in specific skill areas.

Keep in mind that a developmental checklist is based on average development. Some children will learn each skill earlier, and some later, than the age given. In addition, the skills listed for a particular age are learned over a year's time. A child who is four years and one month old is likely to have mastered fewer four-year-old skills than a child age four years and eleven months.

Observation Objective: To document and evaluate one child's intellectual development.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. (If possible, find out from the teacher the child's age in years and months.) Before you observe, read over the items on the checklist—particularly those for the child's age—so you are familiar with the behaviors you will be looking for. Also read the follow-up questions. During the observation, look for the skills on the list. When you see the child you are observing attempting, or successfully using, one of these skills, put a check mark and record the date in the *Attempted* or *Mastered* column. Leave the columns blank for any skills you do not have an opportunity to see. After the observation, review your notes and write your answers to the questions. If possible, observe the same child at least one other day to see additional skills.

> **Observation Tip:** Regardless of the age of the child you will observe, watch for the skills listed for every age. A four-year-old may not have mastered all the skills listed for age three yet, and the same child may have already mastered a few skills typical of five-year-olds. In general, the closer a child is to the lower end of the age range listed for the skills, the fewer the skills the child will have mastered in that set.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Intellectual Developmental Skills Checklist

Age 3 to 3 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Speaks in complete sentences.	_____	_____
Identifies what objects are used for.	_____	_____
Pays attention to longer stories.	_____	_____
Tells short stories.	_____	_____
Explains things in proper sequence.	_____	_____
Sings songs and repeats simple rhymes.	_____	_____
Asks many questions.	_____	_____
Identifies some colors.	_____	_____
Counts to five.	_____	_____
Can follow two related directions.	_____	_____
Speaks in sentences of four or more words.	_____	_____
Understands space concepts such as *in, out, on, over, under.*	_____	_____

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Age 4 to 4 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Includes specific details when speaking about a topic.	_____	_____
Pronounces most words correctly.	_____	_____
Uses future tense verbs and pronouns.	_____	_____
Remembers finger plays, rhymes, and songs.	_____	_____
Makes up stories.	_____	_____
Identifies most capital letters and is learning lower-case letters.	_____	_____
Can tell the difference between numbers and letters.	_____	_____
Identifies rhyming words and ones that start with the same sound.	_____	_____
Identifies colors and shapes.	_____	_____
Counts to nine or ten.	_____	_____
Can put objects in order from smallest to largest.	_____	_____
Asks *who, what, where, what if?*	_____	_____
Asks when in the future things will happen.	_____	_____
Uses past experiences to predict what will happen.	_____	_____
Can follow three related directions or two unrelated directions.	_____	_____
Understands size concepts such as *part/whole* and *bigger/same size.*	_____	_____

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Age 5 to 5 years, 11 months

	Attempted	Mastered
Uses long, complex sentences.	_____	_____
Identifies many letter sounds.	_____	_____
Recognizes all capital letters and most lower-case letters.	_____	_____
Reads more words by sight, including own name.	_____	_____
May read simple books.	_____	_____
Asks meanings of words.	_____	_____
Knows name and address.	_____	_____
Makes up imaginative stories.	_____	_____
Tells stories about own experiences.	_____	_____
Has good long-term memory.	_____	_____
Knows the words to songs.	_____	_____
Makes up rhymes.	_____	_____
Concentrates on a story or activity for 15-20 minutes.	_____	_____
Suggests possible solutions to problems.	_____	_____
Can say numbers up to 20.	_____	_____
Counts up to 10 objects.	_____	_____
Can sort by size.	_____	_____
Asks *"what if"* questions.	_____	_____
Remembers a series of steps.	_____	_____
Understands common opposites such as *big/little, hard/soft, heavy/light.*	_____	_____

(Continued on next page)

1. What specific activities was the child doing that allowed you to observe the child's intellectual skills?

2. What skills appropriate for the child's age did the child attempt but not yet master?

3. Identify activities the teacher or caregiver could plan to encourage development of intellectual skills the child attempted but has not mastered.

Thinking It Through

Would you expect a child who has not participated in an early childhood education class or a child care program to show the same intellectual skills as a child of the same age who has participated? Explain your answer.

(Continued on next page)

Learning from Observing: Based on your observation and/or a comparison of checklists of other children the same age, how does the intellectual development of the child you observed compare with the development of other children in the group the same age? (Take into consideration the child's age in months, as well as in years.) Would you rate your observed child's intellectual skills as "Below average," "Average," or "Above average"? Give specific reasons for your rating.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Children _____

Level 3

OBSERVATION 22

Observing Learning

Children learn by doing. Through their play and everyday activities, they explore and discover ideas. To learn, children need a variety of activities and playthings, interactions with other children and adults, encouragement, and an interesting environment. Seven types of intellectual activity are used in learning. These are the mind's learning tools:

Types of Intellectual Activity	
• *Attention*	Focus; concentration on a task.
• *Memory*	Remembering the past.
• *Perception*	Learning through the senses.
• *Reasoning*	Understanding how things are related, making decisions, and solving problems.
• *Imagination*	Ability to form images and ideas in the mind.
• *Creativity*	Use of imagination to produce something original.
• *Curiosity*	Interest in learning about world.

Learning using these tools can happen in one of four different ways:

Methods of Learning	
1. *Incidental learning*	Unplanned learning.
2. *Trial-and-error learning*	Trying several solutions before finding one that works.
3. *Directed learning*	Being taught by others.
4. *Imitationlearning*	Watching and copying others.

As an example of how the tools and methods work together, imagine a child is learning the finger play, "Itsy, Bitsy Spider." The child must concentrate on the teacher to learn the words and hand motions (attention) and remember them (memory). The learning method is directed because the teacher is actively teaching how to do the finger play.

Observation Objectives: To document and evaluate types of intellectual activity and methods of learning.

Directions: Observe an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. Identify eight to twelve different examples of learning among the children in the group. For each, use the chart to briefly describe what the child is doing, to identify the intellectual activities at work, and to determine the method of learning used. (See the sample.) Try to find examples using as many different intellectual activities and methods of learning as possible. After completing the chart, answer the follow-up questions.

Observation Tip: When trying to find many different examples you might be tempted to make something you see fit one of the categories. Be patient. Wait for clear examples and then record them.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Learning Activity Analysis		
Description of Activity	**Intellectual Activities**	**Method of Learning**
Example: Riding a tricycle around an obstacle course	*Attention, perception, reasoning*	*Trial-and-error*
1.		
2..		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		

(Continued on next page)

1. What activities were going on in the classroom or center during the time you observed? (*Example:* Free time, circle time, art activity.) How did this impact the types of intellectual activity and methods of learning you were able to see?

2. How did the environment stimulate learning? (*Examples:* Toys and materials, activities, organization of play areas, use of color.)

3. Which areas of intellectual activity seemed most frequently used by the children? Why do you think this occurred?

4. Which methods of learning seemed most frequently used by the children?

(Continued on next page)

Thinking It Through

What are the disadvantages of a child using one primary method of learning? How might a teacher or caregiver help the child use other methods?

5. When children have a positive attitude toward learning and want to learn, more learning takes place. Describe an example of a child exhibiting a positive attitude and desire to learn.

Interpreting the Facts

How could a teacher or caregiver determine a child's attitude toward learning and a desire to learn?

Learning from Observing: Based on what you observed, what recommendations for promoting learning would you give the teacher or caregiver? Give reasons for your recommendations.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Children _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 23

Multiple Intelligences

According to psychologist Howard Gardner, every person has a blend of eight different intelligences, or aptitudes for learning in particular ways. By recognizing these intelligences, teachers and caregivers can develop children's individual strengths and increase their learning. For example, some children learn best with words. Other children respond more to music or body movement. Early childhood is an important period for strengthening the range of intelligences a child uses well. The eight intelligences are:

Types of Intelligence

• *Linguistic*	Ability to learn and use languages.
• *Logical-mathematical*	Ability to analyze problems using logic, perform mathematical operations, and explore issues scientifically.
• *Spatial*	Understanding of the potential use of space, thinking in three-dimensional terms, and imagining things in clear visual images.
• *Musical*	Skill in performing, composing, and appreciating musical patterns.
• *Bodily-kinesthetic*	Use of one's body to solve problems by using the mind to coordinate body movements.
• *Interpersonal*	Understanding the intentions, desires, and motivations of others.
• *Intrapersonal*	Understanding oneself, including fears, hopes, and motivations.
• *Naturalist*	Recognizing, categorizing, and drawing upon the natural environment.

Observation Objectives: To document and evaluate types of intelligences.

Directions: Observe children ages three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. Find examples of children showing as many of the types of intelligences listed as possible. For each example, describe what the child is doing and how you recognized the intelligence. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and answer the questions.

Observation Tip: Certain activities lend themselves to a child showing particular intelligences. For example, a child dancing to a drum beat may show musical and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. To complete your chart, check the activities in the learning centers or equipment linked to the various types of intelligence.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Types of Intelligence	
Intelligences	**Examples**
Linguistic	
Logical-mathemtical	
Spatial	
Musical	
Bodily-kinesthetic	
Interpersonal	
Intrapersonal	
Naturalist	

(Continued on next page)

1. What activities were going on in the classroom or center during the time you observed? (*Example:* Free time, outdoor play, center time.) How did this impact your ability to observe multiple intelligences?

2. Which intelligences did the children express most often?

3. Give an example of a child expressing more than one intelligence in a particular activity.

Interpreting the Facts

How would a teacher or caregiver determine a child's strongest types of intelligences?

Learning Through Observing: Based on what you observed, explain how you would incorporate at least three of the intelligences into a learning activity for preschoolers.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Child_____ Child's Age _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 24

Evaluating Language Skills

Preschoolers are constantly developing skills in understanding and expressing language. Through practice, they learn how to pronounce new words clearly and use proper grammar. Young children show they understand language when they ask and answer questions, follow directions, tell stories, and explain what they are thinking.

A *running record* is an effective observation technique to assess a child's language skills. To create a running record, the observer writes down everything observed for a specified period of time. The observer records what a child does and says, using direct quotes and spelling words the way they sound. In addition, the observer records the actions of, and responses given by, other children or adults. Because conversation goes very quickly, the observer may also have to decide what is important and what is not necessary to record. If, when reviewing the record, the observer finds an important response or conversation was left out, those details should be inserted in the appropriate place in the running record after the observation.

Observation Objective: To record one child's speech patterns in order to evaluate the child's language skills.

Directions: Prepare to observe by reading the questions that follow. On a separate paper or Running Record form, record everything that happens with the child for 10–15 minutes, using additional sheets as needed. Also write the responses of adults and other children. Review your notes and complete this observation sheet. Attach your running record. If you are unable to answer some questions because you did not see the behavior requested, write "Not observed" in the answer space.

Observation Tip: You may find it difficult to understand some children. They may have trouble making certain sounds. Others may lisp or have stuttering problems. The more you listen to and watch a child, the more likely you will correctly understand the child. During this observation, you might want to choose a child that you can understand or have had some past experience in listening to.

1. List each topic of conversation that took place during the observation time.

2. List three examples of the child mispronouncing words or having difficulty in making certain sounds.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Observation Objective: To record child's speech patterns in order to evaluate the child's language skills.

Running Record

Description of Physical Environment:

Record of Child's Speech and Communication	Notes and Interpretations

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Running Record (continued)

Record of Child's Speech and Communication	Notes and Interpretations

(Continued on next page)

3. List three examples of the child not using proper grammar.

Thinking It Through

How could a teacher or caregiver encourage a child having difficulty with pronunciation, or using proper grammar?

4. Record the child's most complex sentences.

Thinking It Through

What obstacles in learning English might a child learning English as a second language have?

5. List three questions the child asked. Who responded to the questions? What did that person say?

(Continued on next page)

6. Did the child appropriately answer others' questions? If so, give two examples.

7. Give an example of how the child followed directions.

8. Give an example of how a child explained what he or she was thinking. Was the explanation understood by others? If not, how did the child's words create confusion or misunderstanding?

Thinking It Through

How do intelligence and environment each impact a child's ability to communicate effectively?

Learning Through Observing: Based on all you observed, rate this child's language and communication skills in comparison to other children his or her age as "Below average," "Average," or "Above average." Give specific reasons for your rating.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 3

OBSERVATION 25

Evaluating Concept Development

One primary learning task for preschoolers is to master basic *concepts*—how objects and information fit into general categories. These key concepts range from identifying colors and shapes, to knowing the difference between *big* and *little*. Understanding such concepts prepares children for kindergarten, especially for reading, math, and science.

Children learn about concepts in a variety of ways. A parent or teacher might help a child learn numbers and then practice counting different kinds of objects. Sometimes teachers plan to teach a specific concept. For example, an activity might have children separating red checkers from black checkers. Children also learn on their own through experimenting and observing, particularly in play. When trying to build a tall tower of blocks, a child might discover that if bigger blocks are placed on top of smaller ones, the tower usually falls down.

Two important concept-development skills are classification and seriation. C*lassification* means grouping objects according to a particular quality the objects share. S*eriation* is the ability to arrange objects in order by size or number.

As children advance through the preschool years, they not only learn new concepts but also refine their understanding of concepts they already know. To a very young child, every woman may be "mama." Eventually, the child learns that "Mama" is a name for his or her mother. Still later, the child understands that other children have mothers, too. At a still higher level, a woman buying diapers, even if no baby is in sight, is recognized as a mother.

Observation Objective: To find examples of and evaluate concept development in a group of preschoolers.

Directions: Observe children ages three to five in an early childhood education class for at least 30–40 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe. If you did not observe a situation described in a question, write "Not observed" in the answer space.

Observation Tip: Look for items in different learning centers that promote concept development, such as blocks, buckets and shovels, pegs and pegboards, props for dramatic play, and computers.

(Continued on next page)

1. Give one example for each of the following ways you observed children learning about concepts.

- Through direct teaching. (*Example:* During calendar time, a teacher may talk about weather, the number of days in the week, or yesterday/today/tomorrow.)

- Through a planned activity. (*Example:* A sorting game may be set out in the math and science learning center.)

- Through free play or incidental learning. (*Example:* When playing on a climbing structure, a child may talk about being taller than the children on the ground.)

2. Give one example you saw of children *classifying* objects—grouping them according to some characteristic they have in common. (*Examples:* Taking out all the cars from a bucket of toys, sorting balls by color in a teacher-guided activity.)

(Continued on next page)

3. Give at least one example you saw of children arranging objects by size or number. (*Examples:* Lining up stuffed animals from smallest to biggest; making groupings of three blocks, then four blocks, then five blocks.)

Thinking It Through

List two examples of how a child might arrange objects by size or number in two different learning centers in the classroom.

4. Give one example of how a computer was used to teach a concept.

5. Describe an activity you observed in which the goal of the activity was to help children develop a specific concept. Give an example how a child learned about this concept during the activity.

(Continued on next page)

6. Give an example of something a child did or said that showed a basic understanding of a concept.

7. Give an example of how a child showed a higher or more complex understanding of a concept.

Thinking It Through

In what ways could children who have a better understanding of a concept help other children increase their understanding of the concept?

8. How does curiosity link to concept development? Give an example that supports your reasoning.

Learning from Observing: What concepts were the children developing? How did the children's interactions with objects help them understand and organize their ideas?

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 26

Dramatic Play

Dramatic play—also called imaginative or make-believe play—is very common among preschoolers. Children use dramatic play to imitate real-life situations by acting out their ideas and thoughts about life. For example, they may pretend to cook a meal or shop at a store. They may also act out fantasy scenes, perhaps pretending to be a superhero saving a "city" they have built from blocks. Children use dramatic play to make sense of the events around them and to gain a sense of power or control. Children often feel powerless in an adult world. Dramatic play requires many different intellectual skills, including imagination, creativity, perception, reasoning, and memory.

Children also use social and emotional skills in their dramatic play. If more than one child is involved, they must work together to assign roles and decide on a "script" as they go along. Children often feel safe expressing emotions during dramatic play. They sometimes can act out feelings during these episodes that they otherwise might not feel free to express. For example, a child who has mixed feelings toward a new sibling may not be allowed to express any jealousy or dislike toward the baby at home. The child may create a play situation in which he or she says to a doll, "Go away! I hate you!"

An *event sampling* can be used to document typical behaviors that do not occur predictably, such as dramatic play. Whenever such play occurs, it is noted and described. The observer writes down everything children do and say, capturing as many details as possible to get an accurate picture of the children during that time. After the observation, the observer checks for accuracy and adds his or her own comments and interpretations.

Observation Objective: To record and interpret examples of dramatic play.

Directions: Observe a group of children ages three to five. Look for a small group of children engaged in dramatic play. On separate paper or the Event Sample form, record everything you see, hear, and observe about their play. If the children's play lasts longer than 10 minutes, try to observe and record another group engaged in dramatic play. After the observation, add your notes and interpretations, and then answer the questions that follow. Attach your Event Sample record to this observation sheet.

> **Observation Tip:** Just as a dramatic television show revolves around a few lead characters and a situation, so does dramatic play. To take clear notes, focus on the situation and the children involved in the key roles. Identify each child by his or her initials or a code, and record what each child says and does.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Event Sample	
Descriptions of Dramatic Play Episodes	**Notes and Interpretations**
(For each incident, note those involved, their ages, and the start and end times, along with your description.)	

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Event Sample	
Descriptions of Dramatic Play Episodes	**Notes and Interpretations**
(For each incident, note those involved, their ages, and the start and end times, along with your description.)	

(Continued on next page)

1. Summarize the main points of the dramatic play. Who was involved? When and where did it occur? What sparked the ideas for the dramatic play?

2. List the props that were used in the children's play. For any props that were used in a *symbolic* way, indicate what these props represented. (*Examples:* A pan worn on the head represented a hat, a stuffed bear represented a new baby.)

3. Who decided which roles each child should play? Were any children told they could not join the play? If so, describe what happened.

4. Give an example of how the children worked together as a team during the play. Which children tended to lead others and decide what would happen in the story? Which children tended to follow the others?

Interpreting the Facts

Did the children you observed seem to have an appropriate balance of leaders and followers? Give reasons for your answer.

(Continued on next page)

5. Give two examples of how the children showed imagination in their play.

6. Give two examples of how the children imitated adult life in their play. (*Examples:* Baking a cake, mowing the grass.)

Thinking It Through

What evidence did you see of how the children's play may have been influenced by their experiences at home and elsewhere? Be specific.

7. List the emotions children seemed to express while playing. Then give an example of what one child did and said to express a particular emotion.

Learning from Observing: In what ways does dramatic play help children learn intellectual skills? Social and emotional skills? How can teachers and caregivers encourage learning through dramatic play?

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____

Location _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 27

Identifying Creativity

Creativity is the use of the imagination to produce something original. Young children express creativity when they imagine, pretend, invent, or design. They might create silly stories, paint designs, build structures with blocks, or make up songs or dances. Creativity does not always lead to a final product. Sometimes children show creativity through the process of exploring a material, a toy, or equipment, such as sand, a drum, or a child's hammer. Creativity is often expressed in solving a problem. A child who wants to build a structure with paper towel tubes, for instance, must figure out a way to get the tubes to stay together. Young children need opportunities for creative play, because it helps them learn to think for themselves, see things in new ways, be flexible and adaptable, generate original ideas, and come up with new solutions to problems.

Observation Objective: To identify examples of creativity among children in an early childhood education program.

Directions: Observe children ages three to five in an early childhood education class for at least 30–40 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

> **Observation Tip:** Sometimes you may start to daydream or doodle during an observation. Because these practices take your eyes off the children, they hinder the quality of the observation. If your mind starts wandering, refocus your attention on the children you are observing.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

1. Learning centers provide many opportunities for children to be creative. Use the chart below to record examples of how a child expressed creativity during a particular activity in at least six learning centers. List the supplies, toys, and equipment the child used.

Creativity During Play		
Learning Center	**Expression of Creativity**	**Supplies, Toys, and Equipment Used**
Block		
Dramatic Play/House		
Music		
Math and Science		
Computer		
Reading/Writing/ Language Arts		
Active Play or Outdoors		
Art		

(Continued on next page)

2. Which of the expressions of creativity you recorded in the chart were shown by children in a group? Which were shown by individual children?

Interpreting the Facts

What are two reasons children this age might enjoy creative activities?

3. Give an example of what an adult said or did to encourage creativity. What was the child's response to the suggestion?

4. Give an example of what an adult or a child said or did that hindered creativity.

5. Describe one way a child explored the use of supplies, toys, or equipment without the goal of making a final product. (*Examples:* Squeezing a big glob of glue onto paper in a circular motion; trying to stack pretzels at snack time.)

(Continued on next page)

6. Give an example of how a child's creativity was inspired by at least two of the five senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste). (*Example:* Adding small pebbles to playdough when pretending to make cookies because "my mom makes crunchy cookies.")

Thinking It Through

How does a child's curiosity impact creativity?

7. Describe a problem the children encountered while playing. How did they use creativity to solve the problem? (*Examples:* Using flat stones from the science area as plates for their "party" in the dramatic play area; turning upside-down a milk crate that holds toys and using it as a stepstool to reach supplies.)

Learning from Observing: Describe three additional activities encouraging creativity that you could offer children if you were a teacher or caregiver. How would those activities encourage creativity? What supplies, toys, and equipment would you need for each activity?

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____

Location _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 28

Analyzing Learning Centers

Learning centers—areas in the classroom set up for specific types of play—are often used in early childhood programs. Children have opportunities to choose what they want to do, while building a variety of skills. In a math and science center, children might find a counting game or observe a gerbil. In an art center, crayons, paper, paste and other supplies help children be creative.

Observation Objective: Analyze the set-up and use of learning centers in an early childhood education program.

Directions: Arrange to visit a early childhood education program that has learning centers. While there, you will be documenting information about learning centers and their use. You will draw a diagram, fill out charts, watch how children use the centers, and answer questions. Read over the entire observation sheet before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and complete this observation sheet as soon as possible after you observe.

> **Observation Tip:** In this activity, you will be observing in several areas of the classroom at one time. Setting up and following a plan will help you do this more effectively. For example, you might view what is in each learning center by looking around the center in a clockwise direction. Start at the entrance, scan around the area, and list what you see.

1. Draw a diagram showing the arrangement of the learning centers within the whole classroom space. Label each center with its name.

(Continued on next page)

2. Are learning centers in which play is often noisy located away from those with more quiet play? If not, suggest how the centers might be rearranged to achieve this.

3. Do any of the learning centers have special requirements, such as access to water or electrical outlets? If so, how might this affect the arrangement of the centers?

4. Choose two of the learning centers to observe more closely. For each, identify the name of the center and list the equipment and types of materials it contains. (Do not try to list every item.) Then observe the children at play in the centers for at least 20 minutes. Add a list of the activities you observed children doing in each of the two centers. Complete the charts by identifying the types of skills children playing in each center get a chance to practice.

Center #1: _____

Equipment and Materials:

Activities Observed:

Skills Developed Through Play:

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Center #2: _____

Equipment and Materials:

Activities Observed:

Skills Developed Through Play:

5. When the children are given time to play in the learning centers, are they completely free to choose which learning centers they will play in and for how long? If not, explain the method used to help children play in a variety of learning centers.

Thinking It Through

What would be the benefits and drawbacks of letting children spend their entire play time in just one learning center if they wanted to?

(Continued on next page)

6. Which of the two centers seemed most popular with the children?

Interpreting the Facts

What characteristics can you identify that you believe made it most popular?

Learning from Observing: Based on what you observed, explain how you would rate the way the learning centers are arranged in the available space. What recommendations can you make for improving one of the learning centers you observed?

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____

Location _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 29

Analyzing Toys and Equipment

Toys entertain young children and enable them to learn and master skills. Sometimes, because of the number of children using them, the toys and equipment selected for use in group settings are somewhat different than items that families would have at home.

Observation Objective: To evaluate the usefulness and durability of toys and equipment used with groups of young children.

Directions: Arrange to observe an early childhood classroom. Look around the room at the toys and equipment. Choose four items that differ from what children are likely to play with at home. (*Examples:* Sand and water table, easel, puppet theatre, special block sets, wood kitchen set, heavy-duty puzzles, magnifying glasses.) In the boxes provided, sketch a picture of the item; describe its purpose or multiple uses, including the skills it helps develop; and then comment on factors that make it durable for group use. If the children's apparent interest in the toy is observable, assign it a grade on a traditional grading scale of A, B, C, D, F. (A=excellent; F=failure)

Observation Tip: You can judge the top toys and equipment by watching where children gravitate in the room.

Toy/Equipment #1: _____

Purpose(s)—Skills Developed:

Durability Factors:

Interest Grade: _____

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Toy/Equipment #2: _____

Purpose(s)—Skills Developed:

Durability Factors:

Interest Grade: _____

Toy/Equipment #3: _____

Purpose(s)—Skills Developed:

Durability Factors:

Interest Grade: _____

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Toy/Equipment #4: _____

Purpose(s)—Skills Developed:

Durability Factors:

Interest Grade: _____

1. Which of the chosen items provide sensory stimulation? Explain.

2. Which of the toys promote development of the children's interpersonal skills? Explain.

Learning from Observing: Based on your observations, develop a list of characteristics that toys and equipment should have for use in a group situation.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Class or Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 30

Encouraging Learning

Teachers and caregivers play an important role in encouraging children to learn. They provide toys and materials that are tools for learning skills, ideas, and concepts. They also plan activities that build on what children already know to increase their understanding of the world and the way it works. When teachers ask *open-ended questions*—ones that require more than "yes" or "no" answers—and give feedback on children's answers, they encourage children to think and to solve problems. Teachers promote learning as they help children become independent and try new activities and skills. By showing curiosity themselves and a desire to learn, teachers encourage children to likewise be curious about exploring and discovering their world.

Observation Objective: To identify adult behaviors which encourage learning.

Directions: Observe a teacher or caregiver in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

Observation Tip: Take a careful look at the environment in the classroom or center. There are many ways the environment can be used to encourage learning, including the way toys and supplies are arranged, the posters and displays that are on the walls, and interesting items throughout the room.

1. Give three examples of how the environment promoted learning. (*Examples:* Variety of art supplies, labels for toys with words and picture cues, toys that can be used in many ways.)

(Continued on next page)

2. Identify two activities the teacher or caregiver planned to help children learn. Briefly describe each activity and tell what children could learn from it. (*Examples:* Observing a snake teaches about animal life and new words, such as "slither"; counting to ten teaches about numbers and putting things in a sequence.)

Activity 1:

Description:

Children can learn:

Activity 2:

Description:

Children can learn:

3. List two open-ended questions the teacher or caregiver asked the children.

4. List two questions the teacher or caregiver asked that the children answered with "yes" or "no" that could have been open-ended. Reword these to make them open-ended.

(Continued on next page)

Interpreting the Facts

Give an example of the responses the children gave to an open-ended question. How did this help the teacher or caregiver to get a better idea of what the children knew or understood?

5. Describe how the adult responded to a child who asked a question seeking information, such as why the boy in the story being read was sad or what number comes after ten.

Thinking It Through

How might always giving a direct answer when children are seeking information limit a child's ability to learn?

6. Describe a problem a child encountered. How did the teacher or caregiver encourage the child to solve the problem? What questions did the teacher or caregiver ask to guide the child through the problem-solving process?

(Continued on next page)

7. Give an example of how the teacher or caregiver encouraged a child to accomplish a task on his or her own or to try something new.

8. How did the teacher or caregiver show enthusiasm for learning? Give at least two examples.

9. Give an example of how a teacher or caregiver might have unintentionally discouraged learning.

Learning from Observing: In general, did the teacher's or caregiver's teaching style encourage children to explore and experiment, or did the adult seem more concerned that children follow directions and do things in the ways they were told? Give examples to support your answers.

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 31

Developing Language Skills

Most teachers try to develop children's language and reading skills. They may teach these skills indirectly by labeling items in the room or creating word walls. By making writing supplies and equipment available throughout the room, teachers encourage children to show interest in printing letters, numbers, and words. They may also teach language skills directly through activities that help children recognize letters, numbers, symbols, and words. Teachers often guide children in the use and understanding of language by the questions they ask when reading books. Some questions may relate to the storyline or characters, while other questions may be about predicting what happens next. When teachers review or retell stories, they reinforce language skills and understanding.

Observation Objective: To identify the variety of ways language skills can be developed and reinforced in early childhood programs.

Directions: Observe a teacher in an early childhood education class at least 30 minutes. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions that follow. For any topics that you did not see during your observation, write "Not observed" in the answer space.

> **Observation Tip:** While you are observing, children may want to interact with you. They may want you to help them, or they may ask what you are doing and why. Be gentle, but firm, in telling them that you are in their classroom to work and learn and they are not to interrupt you. Encourage them to go back to their activities or suggest an activity for them to do.

1. List all the different examples you see in the program environment that promote language skills. (*Examples:* Wall with words, calendar, labels, books, books on CDs.)

2. List at least 20 words written on labels around the room. Circle the words that also have picture cues next to the word on the label.

(Continued on next page)

Thinking It Through

Explain one way picture cues help develop reading skills.

3. Identify writing-related supplies available to children in at least one learning center.

4. Give an example of an activity in which the children wrote or copied letters, numbers, or words.

5. Describe one activity in which the teacher taught children how to recognize letter, numbers, symbols, or words.

6. List three ways the teacher encouraged language development when reading a story. (*Examples:* Asked guiding questions; requested children to repeat words or phrases, wrote on a big tablet the children's retelling of the story.)

7. Describe one way the teacher or caregiver used music in language development. (*Examples:* Sang a song that related to a story, put on ocean music while reading about the ocean.)

(Continued on next page)

8. Give an example of how computers were used to promote language development.

9. If you observed circle time, what specific techniques did the teacher use to encourage language skills?

10. Give one example of how the teacher encouraged children who were more advanced in their pre-reading skills to try reading-related activities.

Learning from Observing: How did the teacher use the environment in developing children's language skills? Identify three techniques the teacher used to directly help children develop language skills.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____

Location _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 32

Reading Stories Aloud

Young children love to explore books and to have adults read to them. When teachers or caregivers read stories aloud to children, however, they are doing more than entertaining children. They are also teaching, inspiring, and motivating children. Sharing stories with children helps them learn new words and how books work, understand their world, and associate reading with pleasure. Books can help children explore their feelings and understand their experiences, such as a new sibling or a fear of the dark. Books also introduce children to people, events, and objects they have not experienced first-hand—such as deep-sea creatures, children who lived long ago, and fantasy lands where people fly and animals talk. To make the most of each reading opportunity, it is important to choose interesting and age-appropriate books, read with expression, create interest in the story, and link the story to children's own lives. The more children enjoy books, the greater the chance that they will become better readers themselves.

Observation Objective: To evaluate key aspects of story reading.

Directions: Observe a teacher or caregiver in an early childhood education class or a child care program read at least one story to a group of children. Use the *Rating Scale for Reading Stories*, to evaluate the reader on each skill listed: choice of book, reading voice, creating interest, and extending learning. Before you observe, read the criteria for scoring levels 1–5 for each skill. (The criteria listed in the first column under each skill correspond to level 1; the criteria in the middle column to level 3, and the criteria in the last column to level 5. Criteria for levels 2 and 4 would be somewhere in between the criteria for these columns.) After you observe, record in the score column the number that corresponds to the level of performance for each skill (see the Performance Level Key). Then compute the total score. Read over the questions that follow before you observe. Take careful notes during the observation. Review your notes and write your answers to the questions as soon as possible after you observe.

> **Observation Tip:** If possible, listen to the teacher or caregiver read more than one story. This will give you a better idea of how effective he or she is at using books to help children learn and find pleasure.

(Continued on next page)

Rating Scale for Reading Stories

Reader_____

Performance Level Key:

1 = Inadequate 2 = Improvement needed 3 = Average 4 = Good 5 = Outstanding

1	(2)	3	(4)	5	Score
Choice of Book: Length; illustrations; story subject; appropriateness for age.					
A. Story is much too long for age group; children lose interest before end.		Story is somewhat too long; some children begin to get restless.		Story is appropriate length for children's attention.	
B. Illustrations are too busy, small, dull, and/or detailed.		Illustrations lack interest and color.		Illustrations are large, colorful, and vivid and have appropriate detail.	
C. Words and content are beyond preschoolers' understanding; theme not appropriate or unrelated to children's lives.		Some words and content are confusing to preschoolers; theme somewhat familiar to age group.		Words and content are familiar but challenging to preschoolers; theme relates to children's developmental stages and lives.	
Reading Voice: Clarity, volume, pace, and expression.					
D. Soft voice that children strain to hear.		Voice can be heard, but some words are not clear.		Strong, clear voice; easy to understand.	
E. No expression or enthusiasm in reading; uses one voice for all characters.		Some enthusiasm; sometimes uses varied voice for different characters.		Voice reflects tone of story and personalities of characters.	
F. Reading pace too fast for children's comprehension or too slow to keep children's attention.		Appropriate steady speed throughout entire story.		Appropriate speed for comprehension; pauses to build anticipation or to allow children time to think.	

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Rating Scale for Reading Stories (continued)

Reader_____

Performance Level Key:

1 = Inadequate 2 = Improvement needed 3 = Average 4 = Good 5 = Outstanding

1	(2)	3	(4)	5	Score
Creating Interest: Use of eye contact and body position; showing pictures.					
G. Begins reading book with no introduction.		Reads title and author name.		Creates enthusiasm for reading; explains why chose book; asks children to predict what story might be about.	
H. No eye contact with children while reading; sits in same position while reading entire book.		Glances at children two to three times while reading; shifts body position while reading book.		Frequently shifts eyes from book to children.	
I. Holds book facing self while reading; does not show pictures.		Holds book facing self; shows some pictures to children after reading.		Knows story well enough not to "read" every page, so children can see pictures.	
Extending Learning: Asking questions; responding to questions, linking to other activities.					
J. Does not ask children questions while reading book.		Asks questions after reading every page, disturbing flow of story.		Periodically asks questions related to comprehension, review, or prediction.	
K. Does not respond to children's questions; indicates that children should listen and save questions for later.		Responds to all questions, disturbing flow of story.		Responds to questions with a short answer and then transitions back to story.	
L. Reads book quickly and moves on to other books or activities.		Attempts to verbally connect book theme with other parts of preschoolers' lives.		Reinforces book content by discussing how it connects to preschoolers' lives and through activities such as music, finger plays, and other books.	
				Total Score: _____	

(Continued on next page)

1. How interested were the children in the story? What did they do and say that expressed interest or lack of interest?

Interpreting the Facts

Identify at least three factors that might have contributed to children's interest or lack of interest.

2. Give an example of how the book did each of the following:

- Gave pleasure to children. (*Examples:* Monkey's silly antics made children laugh; nonsense rhyming words produced giggles.)

- Connected with something in children's lives. (*Example:* Story about a child's fear of the dark.)

- Taught or explained something to children. (*Examples:* Snakes do not have bones; everyone feels lonely sometimes.)

- Inspired the children's actions or play. (*Example:* "I want to write a letter to my grandpa, like in the story!")

(Continued on next page)

Thinking It Through

List two ways the adult used the book to help develop the children's skills for reading. (*Examples:* Helped children discover meaning of new words; asked which words rhymed on a particular page.)

3. Does "linking the story to children's own lives" mean that adults should only read books about places or subjects children are familiar with? Should they not, for instance, read books about farms to children who live in the city? Explain your answer.

Learning from Observing: The range of possible total scores for the Rating Scale for Reading Stories is 12–60. Divide this range into sections and assign an evaluation to each section. (For example, total scores between 12 and 24 might indicate that the reader reads aloud inadequately.) How did the adult you observed rate, according to your scale? What suggestions would you give this teacher or caregiver for improving his or her reading technique?

Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ to _____

Location _____ Age Range of Group _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 33

Guiding Children's Behavior

Children are not born knowing how to behave appropriately, how to treat others, or how to express their feelings in acceptable ways. Adults help children learn these skills through the use of positive guidance techniques. These techniques include setting limits, communicating expectations, modeling positive behavior, reinforcing appropriate behavior, taking steps to prevent negative behavior, and dealing firmly yet gently with inappropriate behavior. When used consistently, these techniques help children learn to behave appropriately.

One way to observe the use of guidance techniques is to use anecdotal records. *Anecdotal records* are short, written descriptions of a particular behavior or incident that the observer is tracking. The observer writes down what happens every time the behavior or incident occurs. Later the observer adds his or her interpretations about the behavior or incident. When observers use anecdotal records to document a particular behavior over a period of time, they can get a clear picture of the pattern of behavior.

Observation Objective: To track how one teacher or caregiver uses positive guidance techniques to shape children's behavior.

Directions: Before you observe, prepare your notepad to match the Anecdotal Record form and read through the questions at the end of this observation. Then observe a teacher or caregiver interacting with a group of children ages three to five for at least 30 minutes. Each time the adult uses a positive guidance technique, note the date and time, followed by a description of who is involved in the interaction, what happens, and where it happens. When possible, record exactly what the adult and children do and say. Start a new entry for instance. After the observation, transfer the descriptions of the events to the left column of the Anecdotal Record form. Add your comments and interpretations of what happened in the right column. Then answer the follow-up questions.

Observation Tip: Adults' expectations for children's behavior, and the limits they set for children, should be linked to the age of the children. For example, because five-year-olds generally have a longer attention span than three-year-olds, a teacher or caregiver should not expect a group of three-year-olds to sit as long for a large-group activity as older children could. Before you observe, review the typical development of children the age(s) you will observe.

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

Anecdotal Record	
Description	**Interpretation**
(For each incident, note the date and time, those involved, and the setting, along with your description.)	

(Continued on next page)

Observer _____

(continued)

Anecdotal Record	
Description	**Interpretation**

(Continued on next page)

Observation Objective: To track how one teacher or caregiver uses positive guidance techniques to shape children's behavior.

1. Place a check in the space to the left of each behavior listed below that you observed the adult using with a child.

_____ Talked to the child at eye level.

_____ Used simple, clear, positive directions.

_____ Spoke in a calm, steady voice.

_____ Told the child what he or she *could* do instead of only what *not* to do.

_____ Prevented the child from hurting self or others.

_____ Gave the child a choice whenever possible.

_____ Modeled the desired behavior.

_____ Led the child by the hand away from a situation.

_____ Encouraged the child with positive feedback.

_____ Provided appropriate supervision to prevent misbehavior or dangerous situations.

_____ Provided appropriate activities, supplies, and equipment.

_____ Communicated age-appropriate expectations.

2. When using guidance techniques, why is it important to tell a child *why* his or her behavior is unacceptable?

3. Give two examples of how the adult communicated an expectation for behavior. (*Example:* Reminding a child to use an inside voice.) Were the expectations appropriate? Explain your answer.

(Continued on next page)

Thinking It Through

How does an understanding of child development help an adult set and communicate appropriate expectations?

4. List two choices the adult offered children who needed to change their behavior. (*Example:* Offering a child who wants a turn on the computer the choice of sharing the computer with another child now or coming back later when it is free.)

Interpreting the Facts

Why is it more effective to give children choices of acceptable activities rather than tell them not to do something?

(Continued on next page)

5. Give an example of how the adult redirected a child or intervened between children to prevent or discourage negative behavior. (*Example:* Staying a child who gets upset easily when playing with other children.)

6. Describe a situation in which the adult modeled positive behavior. (*Example:* Washing hands before snack time.) Did children seem to notice or respond? How?

Learning from Observing: What guidance techniques seemed to work most of the time for most of the children? In general, do the same guidance techniques work equally well for all children? Why or why not?