

Definition

Observation: the act of careful watching and listening; the activity of paying close attention to someone or something in order to get information (Miriam Webster).

Documentation: the provision of documents in substantiation (Miriam Webster).



Observe
&
Document

Why is this component important?

Children are sometimes spontaneous, sometimes reserved; joyful now, sad later; friendly and reserved; competent and naïve; talkative and quiet. To be childlike is to experience an almost unpredictable array of discoveries, emotions, and levels of energy. Children are unique and complex and thus often difficult to comprehend. And they do not readily engage us in dialogue in order to explain the reasons for their caprice as they explore the world that surrounds them. Yet, as teachers, it is important for us to know our children deeply, to flow with their currents, and to extend their nascent theories about how the world works.

Given the delightful yet often enigmatic characteristics of young children, we learned decades ago that in order to comprehend children we must begin by **observing** them as they play. But what do we see as we **observe**, and how do we use our **observations** to enhance our effectiveness as teachers? (Foreman & Hall, 2005)

There are many types and purposes of **observation/documentation**:

What might it look like?

Developmental: This type of **observation** looks at the individual child. It begins with a framework of child development and looks at children through the lenses of domains. Developmental **checklists** are helpful tools to perform this type of **observation**. NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development is an excellent tool to use while **observing** domains

Social/Emotional: This type of **observation** looks at the social and emotional aspect of a classroom or a particular child. Tools to be used for this type of **observation** might include **frequency count, running records, class list log**, or **Foundations**.

Speech and Language: Foundations and or speech and language **checklists** are helpful in performing a speech and language **observation** and **documentation**.

Guidance Issues: **Time samples** to look at attention span, **running records** to look at interactions between children, **frequency counts** to look at emotional development, and **anecdotal records** to look at overall occurrences of behaviors and interactions.

Environmental: These **observations** look at the classroom or playground to determine if the environment is developmentally appropriate and safe as well as conducive as an effective learning environment. Tools used to observe might include **ECERS, ITERS, a self-designed tool**, and a **diversity checklist**.

In what courses would this capability be developed?

Students begin with general **observation** in EDU 119. Students look at the childcare facility and are exposed to various developmental levels. Most core courses have some element of **observation** and **documentation**. Types of **observations** and **documentation** practice a student might have in:

EDU 119 General, developmental, environmental
EDU 131 General, family
EDU 144 Developmental
EDU 145 Developmental
EDU 146 Developmental, environmental, guidance
EDU 151 Creativity, developmental
EDU 153 Environmental/safety
EDU 221 Environmental, guidance, developmental, family
EDU 234 Developmental, environmental
EDU 271 Technology
EDU 280 Speech and language, developmental
EDU 281 All types

North Carolina Formative Assessment tools?

All NC Formative Assessments begin with **observation** and **documentation**. Those tools are:

The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum for Ages 3-5
Galileo Pre-K Online
Gold
Preschool Observation Record (COR), 2nd Edition
The Investigator Club Prekindergarten Assessment and Intervention System

Resources

North Carolina Approved Early Childhood Formative Assessment Tools 2013
http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/pdf_forms/NC_Approved_Early_Childhood_Formative_Assessments.pdf

ECRP: Early Childhood Research & Practice: Wondering with Children: The Importance of Observation in Early Education. Forman & Hall, 2005.
<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v7n2/forman.html>

North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development
http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/pdf_forms/NC_foundations.pdf

Preschool Observation Form
<http://www.warrenk12nc.org/docs/staffforms/EC-212.pdf>

Quality Indicators of Inclusive Childhood Programs/Practices: A Compilation of Selected Resources, September 2010. The NECTAC Preschool TA Team: Debbie Cate, Martha Diefendorf, Katy McCullough, Mary Peters, Kathy Whaley
<http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/spp6-qual-ind-incl.pdf>

Resources

1. North Carolina Approved Early Childhood Formative Assessment Tools 2013
http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/pdf_forms/NC_Approved_Early_Childhood_Formative_Assessments.pdf
2. ECRP: Early Childhood Research & Practice: Wondering with Children: The Importance of Observation in Early Education. Forman & Hall, 2005.
<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v7n2/forman.html>
3. North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development
http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/pdf_forms/NC_foundations.pdf
4. Preschool Observation Form
<http://www.warrenk12nc.org/docs/staffforms/EC-212.pdf>
This tool looks at child behaviors, levels of interest and interactions with others.
5. Quality Indicators of Inclusive Childhood Programs/Practices: A Compilation of Selected Resources, September 2010. The NECTAC Preschool TA Team: Debbie Cate, Martha Diefendorf, Katy McCullough, Mary Peters, Kathy Whaley
<http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/spp6-qual-ind-incl.pdf>
This resource is a wealth of information about quality inclusion classrooms and practices.
6. Behavior Recording <http://behavioradvisor.com/BehRecord.html>
This resource gives ideas about how to use observational recording for behavioral issues.
7. Time Samples & Frequency Counts. Childcare Network, August 2010
<http://www.childcarenetwork.org/dnn/portals/0/training/Observing%20and%20Recording/1%20Time%20Sampling%20&%20Frequency%20Counts.pdf>
8. Week by Week: Plans for Documenting Children's Development, Barbara Ann Nilsen. Cengage Wadsworth Publishing, 2014.
This book has instructions and templates for the following kinds of observation tools: class list log, anecdotal records, checklists for physical development, running records, frequency counts, speech and language checklist, time samples, literacy rating scales. It also has information about observing for creativity, using technology for observation and portfolios usage for observation.

Example of F.A. Using Observation & Documentation

EDU 119: Students conduct observation in a childcare facility. They observe and document what they see. I provide some ideas of things they should begin to look for on this in initial experience of observation.

Prior to going on your observation you will contact the center by phone and ask to speak to a director or an assistant director. Please identify yourself as a student in EDU 119 and ask permission to visit their center for an observation. Schedule a date and time.

When you arrive for your observation, please present the director or assistant with the verification form which they will need to sign verifying your time of observation. Remember, you are a professional and should dress appropriately, be on time, be polite and organized. Please do not smoke prior to going to the facility or wear heavy

Example of F.A. Using Observation & Documentation

Remember, you are a professional and should dress appropriately, be on time, be polite and organized. Please do not smoke prior to going to the facility or wear heavy perfume. Be prepared with paper and pen to take notes. Thank the teacher for allowing you to observe. Try not to interact with the children too much as you need to observe the whole class, but of course, be kind about it. Do not take your cell phone in with you!

You will do two observations. You will choose one from each category:

1) Infants/Toddlers: This means that you can go to a childcare facility (not a preschool or family childcare home). It must be a licensed center with a minimum of a 3 star rating. Choose a class that falls within this category of birth to 2 years.

2) Preschool: This means you go to a childcare facility (not a preschool or family childcare home). It must be a licensed center with a minimum of a 3 star rating. Choose a class that falls within this category of age 3 to 5.

You will observe the class for a minimum of 1 hour.

You will report on the following:

the number of children and adult caregivers
the number of male and female children
what you see in the classroom such as centers, areas for learning, size of the classroom, lighting, exits
what you see in the classroom as far as the children interacting with each other and with their caregivers.
what sort of activities are the children doing?
what is the social/emotional atmosphere of the class?
do the children appear healthy?
do the children appear happy?
record any observation of how guidance is provided (discipline)
notice the voice intonation of the childcare giver.
reflect on your experience during the observation and write about it.
is there room for improvement and if so, how would you improve the environment or situation?

Write your report in a narrative (paragraphs) that addresses the above information in categories such as:

The physical structure of the classroom
The social/emotional interaction of the classroom
Activities/learning
Reflection

Your final report should be about 1-2 typed pages, **double spaced** with 1 inch margins and size 12 font. If you are less than one page then you need to go back and reflect on what you have seen and add to your report. If you are over 2 pages, you have included too much detail, and it needs to be shortened.

Example of F.A. Using All Areas of Assessment

Example of an assignment (or set of assignments which uses all areas of formative assessment)

The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education defines formative assessment as “systematic ongoing procedure to document, monitor and evaluate children’s progress, and plan appropriate learning experiences by:

- a. Observing, documenting and evaluating all children’s development, knowledge, skills, behaviors, strengths, needs and interests in all areas defined in North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development;
- b. Providing opportunity for communication and collaboration with families, teachers, and service providers regarding children’s interests, development, and learning; and
- c. Providing data that teachers can use to systematically plan and evaluate learning experiences and teaching practices based on documentation of the learning and development of a diverse group of children.”¹

EDU 146 Behavior Management Plan - Description of Benchmarks and Steps

(Benchmark 1) Observation and Parent/Teacher Interview

Observing, documenting, communication, and collaboration

Based on classroom lectures and activities and using case studies provided by the instructor, and with the assistance of the classroom teacher, identify a child whose behavior exceeds the “norm” (i.e. ADD/ADHD, etc.). Obtain permission from the teacher/parent to observe the child and develop a behavior management plan.

You are required to observe 2 times with a total of at least 3 hours (For example Initial Observation 1 hour, Follow up Observation 2 hours **OR** Initial Observation 1 hour, Follow up Observation 1 hour, Final Follow up 1 hour). You can decide what is going to work in your specific situation. It is suggested that you do second example if at all possible.)

Work with the host teacher to contact and request permission for the behavior management plan. Include a summary of a family/teacher interview before observing the child. This could be a phone interview if you can't meet face-to-face. (The parent collaboration is part of step 8 and is part of benchmark 8, but the interview needs to be done here in benchmark 1.)

Parent/Teacher interview questions can be developed in class and online collaboration with classmates.

Notes for Clarification: Collaboration with families is one of the required components of the Behavior Management Plan. You have to be able to demonstrate that you have mastered this skill even if you do not have parent permission and are unable to collaborate with a parent. You will have to interview the teacher rather than the parent to gain information (use the teacher’s collaboration with the parent as if it is you) so that you can address the collaboration piece.

Step 1:

- Identify child
- Gain permission, using documentation forms (cover letter, verification form, parent permission)
- Observe: choose an observation instrument (more than one may apply) such as time sampling, anecdotal records, event sampling etc. and observe the child. Establish a baseline of frequency, duration and intensity of behavior. Save the raw data for later use. Note: An anecdotal record may be a good way to start if you have never observed the child before for the initial observation.

Step 8: Parent or Teacher interview: Collaborate with the host teacher before observing the child to decide the best approach to use to learn about the family and the child. Get verification form signed and make sure to include a summary of your teacher or family interview.

Example of F.A. Using All Areas of Assessment

(Benchmark 2) Observation Assessment and Interview Analysis *evaluating*

Step 2:

Analyze your data and determine the suspected antecedent (cause) of the undesired behavior. What is it that you want the child to do in place of the undesired behavior? Determine what the desired behavior(s) is going to be and write behavioral goals for this child. You want to think about specific behavior goals that you want the child to be working toward. Bring your data and possible behavioral goals to class on 3/5 to discuss. Identify the suspected antecedent of the behavior. Write about the behavior, the situation leading up to the behavior, suspected causes of the behavior. Relate the data to the hypothesized cause

(Benchmark 3) Behavior Goals *plan*

Step 3: Identify behavior goals: What are the desired behaviors? Set a realistic goal that is measurable.

(Benchmark 4) Strategies *plan*

Step 4: List strategies for modifying the child's behavior. How and who will implement these strategies? Are Parents included in the implementation of these strategies? What will teacher do, what will parents do?

(Benchmark 5) Reinforcement *plan*

Step 5: Forms of reinforcement.

What will you do to reinforce the desired behavioral goal? What are the strategies for modifying the child's behavior and forms of reinforcement? How are you going to help this child attain expected behavior(s)? What will parents do to reinforce the desired behavioral goal?

(Benchmark 6) Data Collection *observing, documenting*

Step 6: Gathering data: Design an instrument that you will use to gather data that measures the progress of the desired behavioral goals.

Develop a behavior chart to record undesired behaviors. Chapter 10 will help you come up with some different ways to record data. This will help you to determine the intensity, frequency, and duration of the child's behavior.

From the data you will be able to determine the suspected antecedent (cause of the behavior). Your chart needs to be developed on or before March 18. You will begin recording data on the chart for at least 3 weeks beginning on or before Monday, March 25. You must include method of recording data (example: behavior chart). Data can be recorded by you, an assistant, or the child's teacher or family member. You can begin gathering data before this date if you want, but no later than March 25!

(Benchmark 7) Analysis *evaluating*

Step 7: Analysis

What strategies would you suggest for the integration/practice of the new appropriate behavior skill(s)? Keep in mind that we want the child to continue to demonstrate the desired goal so you can't take your intervention out of the picture. Also, think about an alternate plan if the first plan does not work.

Evaluate the data and compare it to the original data that established a baseline. Consider the following:

Evaluate whether or not strategies and techniques are effective in modifying behavior.

Would you fade out prompts?

Would you change techniques?

Would you go back to the "drawing board" and reevaluate a different antecedent?

(Benchmark 8) Family Involvement *communication and collaboration*

Step 8: Family Involvement.

Work with the host teacher to contact and request permission for the behavior management plan. Include a summary of a teacher/family interview before observing the child (You already did this part in Benchmark 1 😊).

Example of F.A. Using All Areas of Assessment

Reflection:

Communication, collaboration, and evaluating

*After completing the Behavior Management Plan, collaborate with the host teacher and share your recommended behavior management strategies to use at home and/or school. Reflect on this process and write about this reflection in closing as you conclude the final draft of your behavior management plan.

Final Behavior Management Plan

This is a culmination of all of the benchmarks into one document. Your paper will be organized into the headings of *Observation, Assessment and Interview Analysis Behavior Goals, Strategies, Reinforcement, Data Collection, Analysis, Family Involvement, Reflection* (Do not use headings using Benchmark 1, 2). You will make 2 hard copies of this final paper providing the instructor with a hard copy of all the benchmarks in order as one final submission. It does not need to be in a notebook or protective sleeves; just print and staple. Make sure you have a cover page with identifying information i.e. name, course, Behavior Management Plan Title. The instructor will not return the copy you submit rather provide you with a grading sheet on the last day of class. You will keep the other copy for your records. This is one of the key assessment pieces required for graduation portfolio so you are going to want to have a copy on hand. I suggest saving a copy on a thumb drive or disc as well.