

ELCC 2100

Practicum 3

- Observations for Emergent Planning



Objectives

After this topic presentation and in class work, you should be able to:

- Recognize the components of observation skills
- Practice seeing the details of an observation
- Demonstrate observation and documentation techniques.

Observations



“If we want our programs to be child centred, developmentally appropriate, and responsive, we need to try to see the world from the child’s point of view and take on a stance of wondering”

(Stacey, 2009, p. 34)

“Nobody sees a flower – really – it is so small it takes time – we haven’t time – and to see takes time”

(O’Keeffe, as cited in Curtis, 2017, p. 3)

Why Observe Children

- To learn about children and their development
- To better understand each individual child and each child within a group
- To understand children’s strengths
- To recognize group dynamics
- To inform emergent curriculum
 - Uncover the intent of their play
- To support communication with families
- To strengthen your skills as a co-researcher

Types of Observations



Sampling Observation

An observation in which (a) examples of behaviour are recorded as they occur, (b) behaviours are recorded as they are demonstrated at previously decided intervals, or (c) “work” samples are gathered.

Types of Sampling Observations

- **Time Sampling** – a record of specific behaviours within a given period of time
- **Event Sampling** – a record of occurrences of behaviours including frequency, duration, causality, severity, and triggers.

Types of Observations



Narrative Observation

A written sequential account of what is perceived

Types of Narrative Observation

- **Running Record** – includes everything possible that the child says and does.
- **Anecdotal Record** – a brief account of a selected incident or behaviour written soon after it occurs. A snapshot.
- **Diary Record** – is a day-by-day written account

“When educators closely observe children’s play, they can plan further opportunities for children to create and test theories within active and social play situations”

(Makovichuk et al., 2015, p. 58)

Types of Observations



Types of Observations used for Planning Emergent Curriculum

- Running Records
- Anecdotal Recording
- Digital Photograph
- Videotaping
- Audiotaping



The Objectivity Continuum

Objective



Subjective

- There are no absolutes
- All observations fall between two opposites
- Objectivity is usually desirable
- Subjectivity is not always “wrong”
- Appreciation of the reasons for the degree of objectivity is always essential

Skills for Observation



Objective

- Objective observations are based on what we observed using our senses. We record exactly what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell
- Objective information is based on the facts we gather. If we don't see it, we don't report it. We report only details and provide vivid descriptions

Subjective

- Subjective observations are often influenced by our past events, personal experiences and opinions, and can be biased based on our cultural backgrounds
- Subjective information is based on our opinions, assumptions, personal beliefs, prejudice feelings or can be based on suspicions, rumors and guesses

Objective

OR

Subjective



1. Stephanie loved to hug her dolls.
2. Doni stayed in the block corner building with little unit blocks.
3. Joti coloured out of the lines after the teacher told her it is okay to do so.
4. Sandra screamed because she wanted to play with the blue car.
5. Lori stayed quiet and didn't talk to anyone.
6. John likes it when rock music is on.
7. Emanuel plays too many video games at home.

**Be
Prepared**

Planning for Observation



- Have your observation tools on hand
- Choose a familiar and informal setting, something that is natural to the child
- When learning, choose a familiar child
- Define the purpose – why are you observing?
Having a focus supports you in knowing what to record and when to record
- Choose a strategy (running record, anecdotal)
- Plan a time
 - Do you have extra support in the room?
 - When are children engaged in child-initiated play?
 - Is there a quiet time?

Capturing Children's Ideas



- Take observations of children engaged in play
 - What are they playing at?
 - What is the intent of the play?
 - Do they seem to have a repetitive idea that they keep coming back to?
- Listen carefully and write down their dialogue
- Watch for how children use materials
- Watch for changes in play
- You don't need to wait for development milestones

“Seeing children is about seeing the details of their remarkable ideas and actions... the secret to seeing children is to understand that most seemingly ordinary events have great significance if you stop to notice and study them”

(Curtis, 2017, pp. 3, 5)



(Edmonton Public Library, 2021)

seeing children's lively minds at work

by Deb Curtis

We overestimate children academically and underestimate them intellectually.

— Lilian Katz

One of my worries about the growing focus on academics and school readiness in programs for young children is it keeps many teachers from seeing children's innate, lively minds at work. When teachers are overly concerned about teaching the alphabet and other isolated skills and facts, they may miss children's serious approaches to tasks and voracious quests to understand the world around them. As Lilian Katz's quote above suggests, children are more apt to be interested in intellectual pursuits than academic lessons. I think clarifying the difference between the two can help teachers see and appreciate children's thinking, and in turn offer meaningful experiences that engage their lively minds.

Deb Curtis is a toddler teacher at the Burlington Little School. She is co-author with Margie Carter of the book *Learning Together with Young Children* (Redleaf Press, 2007) from which this article was adapted. She and Margie have been leading professional development institutes to help teachers study with the Thinking Lens. She dedicates this article to Tom Hunter who always noticed and delighted in the details.

Webster's dictionary defines academic as "very learned but inexperienced in practical matters," "conforming to the tradition or rules of a school," and "a body of established opinion widely accepted as authoritative in a particular field." And intellectual is defined as "given to study, reflection, and speculation," and "engaged activity requiring the creative use of the intellect." Obviously it is important for children to learn appropriate academic skills and tasks, but rather than overly focusing on these goals, I strongly claim and enjoy my responsibility to help children become engaged thinkers, excited about the wonders around them. Young children bring an eager disposition to learn all of the time, so it's my job to find ways to really see, appreciate, and further their intellectual pursuits.

Take children's actions seriously

It's easy to dismiss children's explorations because they move quickly, make messes, and put themselves in seemingly risky situations. I have developed the practice of waiting before jumping into a situation to determine what the thinking might be underneath a child's behavior. I have come to see that with most everything children do they have

something in mind; a purpose or question they are pursuing. When I take even their smallest actions seriously, I am astonished at children's deep engagement with the simple wonders around them; I notice they are studying and speculating, engrossed in the moment. Notice nine-month-old Maddie's lively mind at work in the following photos and story.

Sounds and sparkles

Maddie was captivated with the shiny, crinkly paper that she found in a basket. She grabbed the paper and began to shake it with excitement as it made a loud, crackling noise. Then she pinched it with her fingers and explored it with her mouth. She quickly began to shake the paper again. I was curious as she put the paper up to her eyes and then went back to shaking it. Was she noticing the light reflecting off the surface of the paper? Did she see the transparency of the paper?



Maddie's joy in her investigation was obvious as she smiled and laughed with me as she tried each new action. Her favorite activity was shaking the

Observations



Read the article, *Seeing Children's Lively Minds at Work*, by Deb Curtis

Reflective Questions

- What lines stood out to you?
- What did you notice about the observations of children's play?
- How will you bring this into your work?

Cultivating the Ability and Skills to See Children

- Slow down
- Notice and suspend adult agendas
- Study photos to see more
- Pay attention to the small details of children's intentions
- Try out what children are doing
- See children's strengths
- Use a Thinking Lens ©

A Thinking Lens



A Thinking Lens for Reflective Teaching



Knowing yourself

How am I reacting to this situation and why?
What in my background and values is influencing my response to this situation and why?
What adult perspectives, i.e. standards, health and safety, time, goals are on my mind?



Examining the physical/social/emotional environment

How is the organization and use of the physical space and materials impacting this situation?
In what ways are the routines, adult behaviors and language undermining or strengthening the children's ability to demonstrate their competence?
How could we strengthen relationships here?



Seeking the child's point of view

How do I understand the children's point of view in this situation?
What might the child be trying to accomplish?
What developmental themes, ideas or theories might the child be exploring?



Finding the details that engage your heart and mind

What details can I make visible to heighten the value of this experience?
Where do I see examples of children's strengths and competencies?
What is touching my heart and engaging my mind here?



Expanding perspectives through collaboration and research

What other perspectives could enhance my understanding of the meaning of this situation, i.e., perspectives of families, co-workers, colleagues?
How might issues of culture, family background or popular media be influencing this situation?
What theoretical perspectives and child development principles could inform my understandings and actions?



Considering opportunities and possibilities for next steps

What values, philosophy and goals do I want to influence my response?
How can I build on previous experiences of individuals and the group?
Which learning goals could be focused on here?
What action should I take from my teaching repertoire and why?

Observation Practice





Observation Practice



Descriptions	Interpretations

Observation Practice



Descriptions	Interpretations
Two children are squatting on the grass outdoors near some bushes with a white plastic bin between them containing various cut leaves and branches.	- The interaction between the two children suggests a collaborative or parallel play scenario. - The bin contains a mix of colourful leaves and small branches, indicating that they have been working on this activity for some time.
Both children are holding blue plastic scissors.	
The boy is extending his hands and fingers while he holds the scissors as if to open and close them.	He is skillfully examining the scissors to see how they work for cutting plant material
In the second photo, the girl is looking closely at the yellow leaves and smiling slightly.	- The girl is focused on examining the leaf, perhaps considering its size, shape, or texture. - She is enjoying herself

Components of Observations



- Descriptive **details** to support your interpretations
 - Consider actions, facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice
 - Use adjectives, verbs, and adverbs
- Objectivity and observer bias
- Specificity
- Directness
- Mood
- Completeness

Components of Observations



(Susie, 2024)

Joshua squats on the grass outside next to Georgia at the beginning of our afternoon free play. He begins exploring a bin filled with vibrantly coloured leaves, cedar fronds, and small twigs. He gently picks up one light-green leaf. Pinching it in two locations, he twists the leaf towards him and away from him several times. He then picks up a pair of blue scissors. He moves the scissors closer to his face and he begins to open and close them. After several minutes of repeating this action he positions the light-green leaf between the scissors' blades and cuts the leaf in half. *"I can cut the leaves so well with these!" he call out.*

(Curtis & Carter, 2013)



Observation Practice

Practice Writing an Anecdotal Observation



1. Watch the video

2. Write a one paragraph objective observation

- *Remember to set the context:*
 - Location, date & time*
 - Name of children involved*
- *Give your reader a complete picture of what happened – you need a beginning, middle, and an ending*
- *Keep everything in the correct sequence*
- *Include direct quotes*
- *More specific and relevant details = a better observation*
- *Use objective language – only what you see & hear (NO feeling or opinions)*

**Remember, this is a
snapshot – not a
running record**

3. Share your observations in small groups

Practice Observation Writing



- Watch the video then write an observation.
- Share your observations in small groups

It is just after snack in the childcare centre. Ben and Lane, both 4, are using Unifix cubes.

Observations – Step #1 – **WHAT/Noticing**

Small Group Sharing



Did the observation include context:

- *Where is this happening*
- *Who is involved (Ben & Lane)*
- *Date & time*

Did the observation paint a clear and detailed picture of what happened?

(what did you **see**, what did you **hear**)

Did the observation have a beginning, middle, and an ending

Was the observation specific?

Did the observation use objective language?

Did the observation contain direct quotes

Early Learning and Child Care Program Practicum
Observation Workbook

Practicum Level: P3

ELCC #: ELCC 2100

Section (e.g., A06) E12/W12

Student Name: Marnie McMasterson

Site Supervisor: Patel Kaur

NorQuest Instructor: Melanie Moodle

WIL Career Coach: Jaxon Paxter

Why Observe & Reflect?

- Continuous professional improvement & growth mindset
- Enhance observation skills, reflective practice, documentation & planning
- Benefits relationships with children, families & colleagues
- Shared goal: Quality Care!
- 10 Observations minimum; see Instructor for details
- 15 - 20 Observations maximum depending on course & evaluation of student work



ELCC Observation Workbook

Student Requirements

Observation #1 – between Sept. 16-27
(due Oct. 02 at 8:00 AM)

- Observations will need to be typed and uploaded to Moodle
- 10 (at minimum) **quality** observations
- 2 (at minimum) **quality** peer reviews

Observation: # 1

Date & Time: 1/4/2024 10:00 AM	Location of Observation: Click here
WHAT? Notice (Learn)	Context: - Where is this happening? - Who is involved? - Date & time Specific and Objective Details: - What did you see? (Use ACTION words: e.g., jumping, rolling, grasping) - What did you hear? Observation to have a beginning, middle, and an ending



Reflection

SO WHAT? Name (Research)	What is significant, important, or interesting about this moment? What is this telling you or showing you about this child(ren)? What dispositions do you observe? (i.e. seeking, persisting, caring)	NOW WHAT? Nurture (Possibilities)	What have you learned from this moment that will impact your practice going forward? I now feel /think /realize /wonder /question
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Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Feedback			
Needs more work ☐	Developing ☐	Capable ☐	You got it! ☐
Words of Encouragement/Areas of Growth:			
Reviewed by Student ☐ Click or tap to enter a date.	Reviewed by Site Supervisor ☐ Click or tap to enter a date.	Reviewed by Instructor ☐ Click or tap to enter a date.	

Observation: # 1



DATE & TIME: 9/8/2023 10:30 AM	LOCATION of OBSERVATION: Outside
WHAT? <i>Notice</i> (Learn)	What do you see ? What do you hear ? Who (i.e. Child A, Educator B)? Where? When? Does it have a beginning, middle, end? Use ACTION words (i.e. jumping, rolling, grasping) What dispositions do you observe? (i.e. seeking, persisting, caring) Are you specific? and are <u>you</u> objective?

It is free play in the playground. Emily has been outside for approximately 10 minutes.

Standing beside the sand table, Emily is clutching a small shovel with both hands. Her eyes appear to be locked onto a pair of large buckets, one filled with coarse sand and the other empty. I ask Emily if she wants a bucket – she nods silently, and I hand them both over. Emily dips the shovel into the full bucket of sand and, steadying the shovel with both hands, she very slowly lifts it up, shifts her body over, and tilts the shovel downwards, allowing the sand to cascade into the empty bucket.

She repeats the process over and over, slowly moving the sand from the full bucket to the empty one. Her eyes follow the shovel as she works, and her eyebrows are slightly furrowed. She continues this for quite some time, seemingly undisturbed by her peers who move throughout the space around her.

After several minutes of silently transferring sand from one bucket to another, Emily pauses and looks up at me with a small smile. She places the shovel down and begins to smooth the surface of the sand in the nearly full bucket with her palms. Nearby someone calls her name. Emily glances up at them, stands up, brushes the sand off her hands, and walks over to join them.

Example Observation (Step #1)

WHAT? Notice



Example Observation

Reflection:

SO WHAT?		NOW WHAT?	
Name	What is significant, important, or interesting about this moment?	Nurture	What have you learned from this moment that will impact your practice going forward?
(Research)	What is this telling you or showing you about this child(ren)?	(Possibilities)	I now feel /think /realize /wonder /question
Emily appeared deeply engrossed in this repetitive pouring activity. She didn't seem to be interested in any other toys or interactions with her peers during this time. Her facial expression was one of focus and determination. She didn't react to the nearby laughter and playing of her friends, demonstrating a strong interest in her work.		I was drawn to Emily's play because of the focus that she was showing as she explored. I wonder what it was that really captivated her? Was it the appearance or the sound of the sand as it flowed from her shovel. Was it her ability to manipulate the materials? Would she be just as interested <u>it</u> I swapped out the sand for water?	
"Children persist when they are able to pursue their own questions and theories in play (Makovichuk et al., 2014, p. 132)."		To better understand Emily's interest, I will extend this exploration by bringing in a couple of different sizes of funnels and a funnel stand.	
Emily's persistence in this activity was evident. She showed patience and concentration as she carefully poured the sand, controlling the flow from one container to another.			
Feedback			

(Step #2)

(Step #3)

Now
WHAT?
Name

So WHAT?
Nurture

For further reflection

- Slow down - pay attention to the details revealed in children's problem-solving skills, creativity, and emotional responses

Consider, how these observations can inform your curriculum planning?

Post-Assessment



1. What is one thing you learned from this class?
2. Do you have any lingering questions

Homework



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