

Observation Register: Windows on Learning



What is Observation?

Observation is an act of attentively watching or recognizing or noting (physically on paper or mentally) anything that is within vision. It is especially important in the field of teaching wherein facilitators create individualized lesson plans upon close observation of their students. It further aids facilitators to paint a picture of progress and outcomes.

If a facilitator wants to draw attention to the class meeting standards, she could use simple evidence like photographs of children segregating long and short things, their comments about why they find the object long or short, and background of how children learnt long/short concept.

Why is it important to show a developmental progress?

Recording individual growth requires a great deal of exploration first; the facilitator must collect as much information as possible about the individual

Things to Observe & Document

- Child's growth and development, such as cognitive development, Language development progression etc.
- Expected behavior noted during group time, while using toys and plays equipment and while eating together.
- Hand notes and photos of Events, Field trips, Celebration and Curriculum ideas.
- Evidence of meeting learning standards by posting work samples.

Evidence Required for Observation Assessment

- Facilitators' description and analysis of an event/field trip, e.g. Photographs and descriptions of field trip.
- Photographs of children at work- for example, conducting any simple science experiment.
- Sample of children's work, with their name and date on it.
- Children's comments while conducting the activity or on the Theme, e.g. "All the feathers are *soft* etc."
- Facilitators and parents comments on a classroom event, e.g. "It was fun helping the children measure ingredients for the sweets."
- Important observations or observations relating to an event, e.g. Sania has now overcome the fear of the slide and has started enjoying it."
- Portfolios with the child's name and all the art & craft items from the beginning of the year.

child to analyze the child's progress.

Importance of Portfolios

Portfolio is essentially the individual profile of a child within a school setting and maintained by facilitators.

Portfolios are used for individual assessment of children and make a particularly good format for recording overall developmental progress.

Portfolio Essentials:

- Maintaining a folder for each individual child. (Photo, behavior, art & craft items)
- Facilitators are to compile a narrative or summary of the child's abilities (not deficits) across various domains.
- Portfolio has to be shared in a private facilitator-parent meeting barring all comparison.



TEACHERS' TRENDS



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Stages of Observation Experience

Stage	Experience	Value
1. Deciding to record	Observers ask, "What should I record?" They collect artwork from every child but at first tend to clutter the bulletin board with too much information. With equity being a concern, many include every item rather than being selective.	Facilitators show pride in the children's work
2. Recording through technology	Observers explore how to use equipment/gadgets and photograph various experiences and events for display. The photos or video clips are shown to children and their parents.	Facilitators become technology competent. They show pride in the children's actions by displaying photos and video clips.
3. Focusing on children's engagement	Observers learn to record/ document specific things and events with the intent of capturing a piece of the story of children engaged in learning.	Facilitators are able to focus on important learning events and experiences.
4. Gathering information	Observers title specific experiences and begin to right descriptions that tell the story of the children's learning.	Facilitators begin to connect children's actions and experiences.
5. Connecting and story telling	Observers combine work samples, photos, descriptions and miscellaneous information in support of the entire learning event. The entire story of the children's learning is narrated with supporting art and craft work to parents.	Facilitators continue to record /note and use art and craft work to connect children's actions and experiences to curriculum and learning standards.
6. Observation decision making	Observers frame questions, reflect, assess, build theories and meet learning standards, all with the support of the observation register.	Facilitators become reflective practitioners who document meaningful actions/events, explain why they are important, and push themselves and others to continue thinking about these experiences.

P.S:

The facilitator is a researcher first, collecting as much information as possible to paint a picture of progress and outcomes.

Observation provides insight into children's thinking and helps drive the future curriculum.

Observation is a rewarding process when educators understand the value associated with collecting information and producing a summary or narrative of every child's holistic development.

"We cannot create observers by saying 'observe', but by giving them the means for this observation and these means are procured through education of the senses."

-Maria Montessori



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An Observation of K.S- a 3 year old boy:

K.S, a three-year-old boy gets a bucket that holds many different shapes and sizes of wooden beads. There are also a few 4 - 5" buttons with large holes for easy stringing and various lengths and thickness of string.

K.S reaches in and puts a bead on a string and pulls on it and the bead falls off the other end. He reaches down and quickly tries it again, but he gets the same result. He takes a breath and huffs it out in frustration and folds his arms at his chest. He reaches into the bucket and picks out a 5" yellow button. The button has four large holes and the boy tries to put it on the string. It also falls right off the other end. K.S sits down with the large yellow button and sews and weaves the string in and out so the button stays at the end of the string without slipping off. He reaches back into the bucket to pull out the bead he had tried before. This time it stopped at the end of the string where he had placed the yellow button. He smiled and said, "I put the bead on!" I replied, "Yes, you did!"

K.S took the next few minutes and filled the long string with many different beads. He took the string of beads and held it over the bucket and tried to get the beads to fall off of the end he was holding, but his hand was stopping his success. He then grabbed the middle of the string and half of the beads fell into the bucket, but the other half was still on the string. He reached way down and pulled the string high over his head and the rest of the beads fell off the string.

Then, K.S grabbed a red bead and put it on the string. Next, he looked a long time into the bucket and pulled out another red bead, and slid it on the string. He grabbed a blue bead, then another blue bead. He looked through the bucket for a while and pulled out a red bead again, and then another and sewed them on the string. He spent the next few minutes repeating this pattern. When he was about half way through, the beads were not falling all the way down the string. After several tries at pushing and shaking the string, he found that if he stood up and held the string over his head

after he put a bead on it, it would fall all the way down by itself. He worked until the string was completely full of his red and blue pattern.

Off K.S went, walking around the room pulling his beads behind him. "Look at my snake!" he proudly said. "Wow, that is a red and blue snake," I reflected.

After a few times circling the room with his "snake" following him, he sat down on the circle rug and put the two ends of the beads together. "A circle, Ma'am!" he proclaimed. "You made a circle, didn't you?" I reflected.

Then off around the room he went once again pulling the beads behind him. He took the string of beads over to the "**play kitchen area**" where he put it in the "**oven**" and baked it for a few minutes. I couldn't help but notice how much it looked like a string of sausages. He pulled it out of the oven and took it to the round "**restaurant**" table,

where he pretended to eat his bead food.

He pulled the string back onto the floor and it



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followed him to a small rug where he held the stringing end of the string way up high over his head. He pushed the string making it move back and forth gently. Then he moved his hand a little more making it swing higher and harder. "Tick-tock, tick-tock," he repeated over and over. Then he set the beads down. "These are heavy beads, Ma'am," the boy announced. "They are heavy?" I asked. "Uh Huh! I'm all done with the beads now." he told me while placing the string of beads back into the bucket and putting it back on the shelf!

What did K.S learn?

In this short period of time, less than ten minutes, this little boy made many learning discoveries all by himself.

He mastered fine motor skills through beginning sewing and engaged in strong imaginative play. The little boy also showed a great growth with problem solving (math and science) skills and focused attention span.

Here are the expanded lessons K.S learned:

Problem Solving -- by trying and trying again until he figured out how to keep the bead on the string, and

again with how to remove them.

Math and Science -- by using sorting, patterning, shape and color recognition to string the beads, and by experimenting with the way that weight and speed of movement changed the results.

Attention Span -- by focusing on playing and working with the beads for nearly a ten-minute span, which is a very long time for any 3 year old.

Imaginative Play -- by imagining what he wanted to create, and then playfully imagining all of the possibilities his string of beads represented - from a circle, to a snake, to a meal, to a clock, etc., he demonstrated that children learn through play.

Therefore make the time -- pick up a pen and paper and observe your student and record what they do. You will be amazed at what types of lessons come out of play. Here are some basic guidelines to follow:

1. Record when the child does not notice.

2. Write down only reflections of what is observed, eliminating any judgments or feelings that you might think.

Example:

Reflective: K.S picked up the ball and tossed it across the room. The ball hit the lamp. The lamp fell down and broke.

Non-reflective: K.S picked up the ball -- and because he does not understand about the problems with throwing a ball at things that will break -- he threw it across the room. I don't know how he wouldn't understand that the lamp would break, but it did!

3. Interact with your child as little as possible during this time.

4. Don't suggest things, just observe.

5. After you are done, you'll be surprised at how this observation exercise reveals more about your child than you knew before you tried it.

These observation techniques are useful when having difficulties with children. It opens up a window of understanding for teachers.

Have fun with this!

