

Don't you marvel at kids? They are amazing! What is going on in their head, why did they say that, how do they problem solve with those little hands (and sharp minds!)?

Learning to look at children, and learning how to see what they are showing us requires us to slow down, create space, and listen closely. Take the stance of an observer of the phenomenon of childhood.

View the PowerPoint presentation [MakingAList.ppt](#) from this collection of Observation Resources

<http://faculty.tamuc.edu/jthompson/observation/>

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE OBSERVATIONS

Many child development textbooks have adequate explanations of what constitutes a meaningful child study. Read the Trawick-Smith chapter on Research and Assessment (in 2018, 7th ed., this is chapter 2). In the MakingAList.ppt, note the 3 purposes for observation: 1) to know an individual child, 2) to mark progress over time, and 3) to evaluate a program. **THE PURPOSE OF THIS ASSIGNMENT IS 1) TO KNOW ABOUT INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN, ACROSS THREE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT.**

How many ways are there to "kid-watch"? Which of these will you use for your field observation? Evaluate the advantages of intentional, systematic observation. How will you implement the observations in your field work?

These notes are taken from Puckett & Black (2005) *The Young Child: Development from prebirth through age eight. (fourth edition)*. Pearson. Pp. 32-33, 38-39, 46-48.

Four behaviors are important to the teacher/observer:

1. Perspective-taking: the ability to understand one's own or another's viewpoint.
2. Reflecting-in-action: an ongoing process in which educators think about and critically analyze their own and their student's performance

3. Teacher-as-learner: process by which educators continue to learn
4. Teacher-as-researcher: process by which EC professionals elaborate on their observations

Informal Approaches to Assessment

- Performance – what children do and how they demonstrate their capabilities
- Processes – what strategies children use to pursue information, acquire skills, or solve problems
- Products – the types of constructions that children create and produce

Practical Matters - Your Field Observations

YOUR OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT: Observe three children in three different stages of development. The first child will be an infant or toddler, from birth to age three. The second, in Pre-K or Kindergarten, three to six years old. Finally, a child in elementary stage of development, six to nine. Perhaps you will find a child in your community, or a Childcare Center, perhaps the Children's Learning Center on campus in Commerce, or, most likely, a licensed facility in your neighborhood. The minimum time spent on each observation is one hour, preferably in the morning.

Explanation: Create a NARRATIVE OBSERVATION – a written description of your observation of the child in her natural setting. Use ANECTODATAL RECORDS, the qualitative observation method most often used by teachers. Also use a RUNNING RECORD, a type of narrative observation that records all behaviors in sequential order as they occur. Use a spiral, or notebook to write and contain your field notes. Include the following:

- On the cover, write the name of the school or family, type of program, a contact person and phone number, date and time of your visit, and ask the contact for her/his signature to confirm your presence in that school on that day. I will randomly select some of these field notes to examine, and I will call the contacts for confirmation of your visit.
- Describe the setting, including the time the observation began and the activity that is taking place. Who else is in the room (on the playground, wherever)?

- Record information in a detailed, sequential, and unbiased manner. Information must be factual and objective, recording only what actually happened. Anticipate what normal behaviors look like by reviewing child development texts to understand the age and stage of this child. Consider each of six domains: physical, language, aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, and social.
- Suggestions: take pictures, make maps, use TIME SAMPLING and EVENT SAMPLING to aid your RUNNING RECORD.

After the observation, in the quiet of your study (or the computer lab), reflect on what you saw. Type a reflection (one – two pages) containing three sections.

- Background of the observation. Tell about the child, her age and developmental stage, her family and siblings, and her daily childcare arrangements. Include here the location and setting of this observation, and the contact info for your host.
- Describe the observation. Quickly tell what you saw the child do (performance), using descriptive language to talk about how the child did what they did (processes), and finally, include clear descriptions of what the child created or produced (products).
- Make an interpretation, using comments and analysis, drawing inferences and conclusions based on objective facts included in your field notes.

Before going into the field, plan your observation:

- For infants and toddlers, read chapters 6-9. What are the characteristics of different domains of child development?
- For pre-k and Kindergartners, read chapters 10-13.
- For the primary aged, elementary child, read chapters 14-17.

Final Thoughts - You can do this, and you can do this well.

