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Seventh Edition

WEEK BY WEEK

Plans for Documenting Children's Development

NILSEN



Seventh Edition



Week by Week

Plans for Documenting Children's Development




Barbara Ann Nilsen

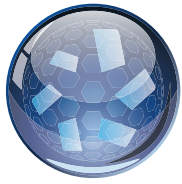


Week by Week: Plans for Documenting Children's Development, 7e

Standards Correlation Chart

The following chart is intended to help students and instructors easily see the correlation between chapter content and professionally recognized standards and practices from NAEYC's Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation (2011), Program Standards (2014), and Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) adopted in 2009.

NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation (2011)	NAEYC Program Standards (2014)	NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines
 <p>1 1a: Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs from birth through age 8. 3a: Understanding the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment – including its use in development of appropriate goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies for young children. 3b: Knowing about and using observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches, including the use of <i>technology</i> in documentation, assessment and data collection. 3c: Understanding and practicing responsible assessment to promote positive outcomes for each child, including the use of assistive technology for children with disabilities. 3d: Knowing about assessment partnerships with families and with professional colleagues to build effective learning environments. 6b: Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines.</p>	 <p>4.A.01a: Programs conduct assessments as an integral part of the program. Programs use assessments to support children's learning, using a variety of methods such as observations, checklists, rating scales and individually administered tests.</p>	 <p>4A: Assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, and purposeful. 4C: There is a system in place to collect, make sense of, and use the assessment information to guide what goes on in the classroom (formative assessment).</p>
<p>2 1a: Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs from birth through age 8. 2b: Supporting and engaging families and communities through respectful, reciprocal relationships. 3a-d: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families 6: Becoming a Professional—Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines.</p>	<p>1.A.03.b: Teachers communicate with family members on an ongoing basis to ensure a smooth transition between home and program. 6.B.01: All teaching staff evaluate and improve their own performance based on ongoing reflection and feedback from supervisors, peers, and families.</p>	<p>5A: In reciprocal relationships between practitioners and families, there is mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibility, and negotiation of conflicts toward achievement of shared goals.</p>
<p>3 1a: Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs from birth through age 8. 2a: Knowing about and understanding diverse family and community characteristics. 3a-d: Observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children and families. 6: Becoming a professional. 6b: Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other professional guidelines</p>	<p>1.B.08.a: Teaching staff support children's competent and self-reliant exploration and use of classroom materials 2.K.01.a: Children are provided varied opportunities and materials that encourage good health practices such as serving and feeding themselves, rest, good nutrition, exercise, hand washing and tooth brushing.</p>	<p>2F1: To help children develop initiative, teachers encourage them to choose and plan their own learning activities.</p>
<p>4 1a: Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs, from birth through age eight. 3.a-d: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families. 6b: Becoming a Professional—Knowing about and upholding ethical standards.</p>	<p>2.C.04: Children have varied opportunities and are provided equipment to engage in large motor experiences that: (a) stimulate a variety of skills, (b) enhance sensory-motor integration, (c) develop controlled movement (balance, strength, coordination). 9.B.01: Outdoor play areas, designed with equipment that is age and developmentally appropriate and that is located in clearly defined spaces with semiprivate areas where children can play alone or with a friend.</p>	<p>1D: Practitioners design and maintain the physical environment to protect the health and safety of the learning community members.</p>



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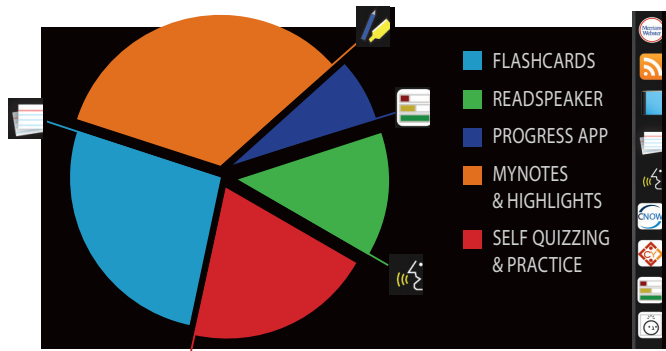
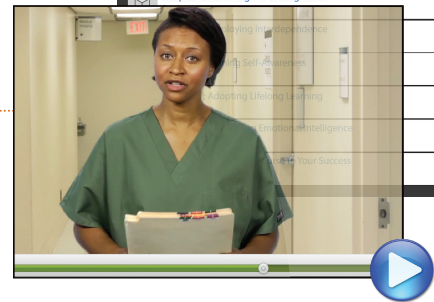
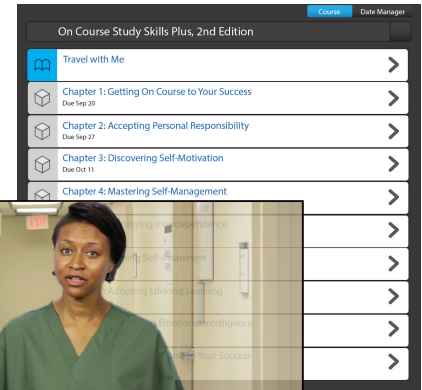
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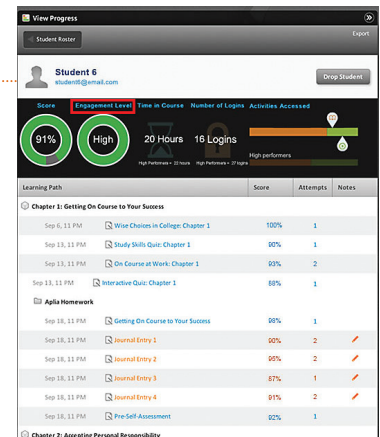
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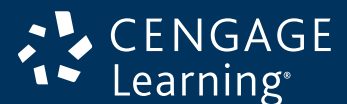
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Seventh
Edition

Week by Week

Plans for Documenting Children's Development

Barbara Ann Nilsen



Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

***Week by Week: Plans for Documenting
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Preface

Week by Week is a documentation system guidebook for students and practitioners in early childhood education who work with infants through second-grade children. Each chapter has two main parts: the documentation method (“Using the Observation Method”) and the child development overview (“Looking at Child Development Domain”) The purpose is to organize and plan intentionally, week by week, to build a Portfolio for each child, filling it with various pieces of evidence that document the child’s development and behavior. *Week by Week* presents a manageable plan that will help gather documentation on *all* the children in the class or group, in *all* the developmental areas.

Over the years, *Week by Week* has been used in a number of ways:

- Students in early childhood teacher preparation programs use the text for a course in techniques of documentation.
- Students in both associate degree and bachelor degree programs use the text for child development study and in field experiences.
- Students sometimes use this text in master’s teaching preparation programs.
- Classroom teachers use this text as a tool to help them organize their observations into meaningful Portfolios that document their children’s development.
- Practitioners use this text in Head Start, Even Start, child-care, and nursery-school settings.

How This Book Came to be Written

My original idea for the book was to share my system of child observations with practitioners like myself. As a preschool teacher, I was overwhelmed trying to document all children in all developmental domains, so I broke it down into weekly assignments for myself. As my teaching venue changed from the preschool classroom to the college classroom, the book became a textbook. The result is *Week by Week*, which *describes* a year-long systematic plan for teachers to document each child’s development by forming an extensive Portfolio of each child’s progress in all areas of development. It has been well received by students, and it is my hope that they will keep the book and renew their acquaintance with it when they have a classroom of their own. Then the full *Week by Week* plan will take on new meaning.

Week by Week for Students. As a college textbook, this book will be used for 13, 15, or 16 weeks. Each week, you will be introduced to a different method and given one assignment to practice that method. If you are in a field placement for the whole semester, you can incorporate the *Week by Week* plan as you participate in the classroom activities. If you are taking a course in observation methods, you can make weekly visits just for observation, or you may be able to plan three or four longer visits and do several of the practice assignments during each visit. In either of these two plans, you will miss the day-to-day interactions. This is just for practice—a simulation of what you will be doing when you have a classroom of your own. **CAUTION:** Seeing children intermittently makes it impossible to draw decisive conclusions about their development. Also, it is important *not to talk specifically* about a child, teacher, or program by name when you are in your college classroom, dorm, or out with friends. Confidentiality is a part of the ethical responsibility of professionals. You will practice this recording method by following the plans at the end of each chapter. You or your instructor may need to modify this depending on your field placement situation.

Week by Week for the Practitioner. Maybe you used this book in your college class and now have your own classroom. Or perhaps you found this book and decided to make a commitment to better organize your contributions to each child's Portfolio. The full week-by-week plan is inside the back cover, guiding you in observing each child at least three times in each developmental domain, using appropriate tools to document your observations. You observe, you assess, you plan, you implement, you observe, you assess, you plan. Remember that when you are totally responsible for the classroom, you will have to steal moments to write things down. That is the biggest hurdle to observing and recording. For help with this, note especially the "How to Find the Time" sections in each chapter. To achieve the goal of gathering a fairly equal amount of documentation on each child, use various methods and revisit developmental areas three times over a school year. This organizational system can be used to ensure that you are gathering an approximately equal distribution of Portfolio documentation on all children.

The teacher using the *Week by Week* system will gain skill in using various methods of recording observations, and will be reviewing child development and good teaching practices. Knowledge of child development, observation methods, and curricula are not separate from each other, but interdependent. One must know what to look for to be a good observer, and mindful teachers make decisions based on what they see. The *Week by Week* system will enable the teacher to document important information about each child, information that is usable for measurement and reporting, as well as accurate and objective.

New to This Edition

- This new edition includes current issues and new research to make the text as up-to-date and relevant to students and practitioners in the field. There is a discussion of the Common Core and its implications for early childhood education, focus on the importance of play on all areas of development, how the emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) can be incorporated into the early childhood curriculum, and advocacy for the authentic assessment of observation over testing.
- *Forms for observations.* The forms discussed in the text are now provided throughout and are also available as Professional Resource Downloads with MindTap. (See the Supplements listing on pages xx-xxii for more information about MindTap.) This allows students and practitioners to begin developing or adding to their personal library of professional tools they use in the classroom.
- *Standards.* Every profession has established ideals by which it operates. *Week by Week* is a professional development tool, so the professional standards relevant to the content in each chapter are listed in abbreviated form at the beginning of each chapter. In this book, that includes NAEYC's Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation (2011), Program Standards (2014), and Developmentally Appropriate Practice guidelines.
- *Learning Objectives.* Education is the change that takes place in knowledge, skills and attitudes. In order to measure that change, benchmarks are set as goals to achieve. The major sections in each chapter are now organized around specific objectives that the student will attain by mastering the chapter content.
- *Reorganized content.* Most of the content from the sixth edition is contained in this edition, but may be slightly moved around. This reorganization has made *Week by Week* more intentional in its focus. In early childhood education, we understand the importance of good beginnings. The content labeled as the "Introduction" in the sixth edition is now more appropriately called Chapter 1. We feared calling it an introduction made it seem less important, and more

likely to be skipped over, than an actual chapter. The contents of the new Chapter 1 set up the entire text by providing the rationale for using observation and recording as authentic assessment and describing how to institute the *Week by Week* plan to document children's development. It explains why the various methods described in the text are useful and how to use this book. Chapters 2–15 now present various observation methods and developmental domains. (These were chapters 1–14 in previous editions.) The content that previously made up a very brief Chapter 15 is now integrated into the new Chapter 15 in the seventh edition.

- *Key Terms defined in the margins.* The terminology associated with any profession is an important aspect of the field. Definitions of key terms now appear in the margins across from where the term first appears in the text, which assists the reader by providing definitions close to the context in which the term is found. No more flipping to the back of the book for definitions.

Enduring Features

The following popular features appeared in the previous edition and have been maintained in the seventh edition. Many have been updated and revised.

Exercises. This feature occurs periodically within the book, designed to personalize the concepts, involve the reader, and focus attention on what follows. You are invited to think about and write the answers to these exercises to build connections with the content. When applicable, answers to the questions can be found at the end of the chapter.

It Happened to Me. Vignettes of my classroom experiences are scattered throughout the book. There are millions that got away because I never wrote them down! These anecdotes illustrate points about child development and mistakes I have made that taught me what not to do. They are not all positive ones, but are included because we often learn best from our mistakes. I hope you will begin to collect your own stories that have taught you lessons about teaching and life.

Topics in Observation. Within each chapter there is a separate section that gives insight into a topic related to child development or observation. This is to stimulate your thinking about an issue or a concept to deepen knowledge.

Home Visiting. While many who use this textbook are or will be classroom teachers, the field of home visiting for the purpose of supporting, involving, and educating family members has grown nationwide. Some of you may find employment in this gratifying aspect of early childhood education; so where it is applicable, I have inserted sections from that viewpoint, assisted by friend and colleague Mary Haust, an expert in this field.

Emphasis on Using Technology for Observation. Almost everyone has a cell phone that takes photos, creates and stores text documents, and accesses the Internet. With each new advance in technology come never-dreamed-of applications. To some, using cell phones and hand-held computers in the classroom seems problematic, but their use, not abuse, can be one more tool for teachers.

Helping Professionals. When working with children and families, teachers are often the resource or intermediary between people who need specialized advice/services and the professionals and agencies that provide such help. This section is included at

the end of each chapter to acquaint the reader with the types of specialists to whom the teacher may refer the family.

Sharing with Children and Families. This feature, also at the end of each chapter, provides some ideas about talking with families about the child in the developmental domain highlighted in that chapter. This is included to illustrate how the teacher can talk with families about the child (students should refrain from doing this unless directed by their instructor.)

Other Methods. Each developmental domain can be observed and recorded using various methods. These are mentioned at the end of each chapter as a reminder that there are some methods better suited for some developmental domains than others.

Related Readings. This listing of helpful books and articles on selected topics is included at the end of the chapters. These are books or websites that may be useful in further exploration of a chapter's topics.

References. At the back of the book is a complete alphabetical bibliography of all the extensive references used to substantiate the content of the book and give credit to ideas and concepts.

Instructor and Student Supplements

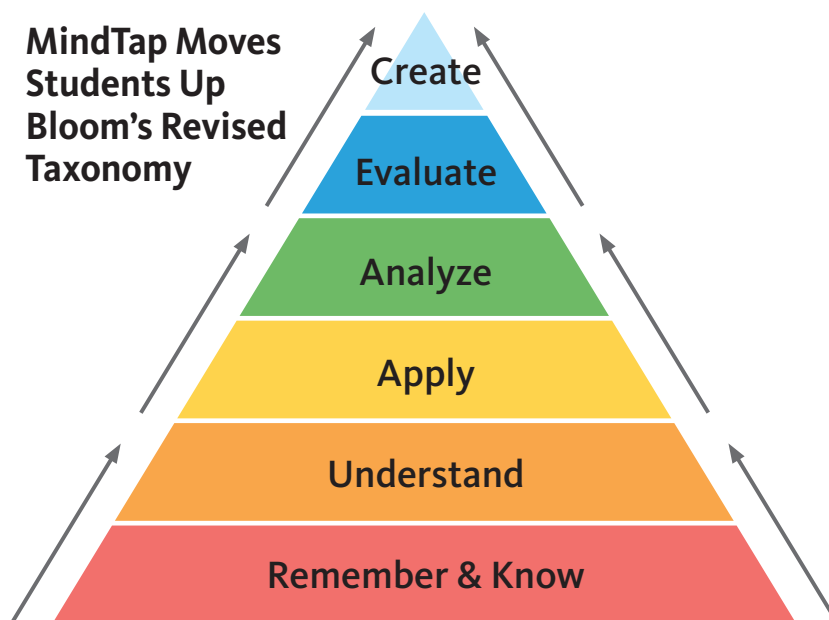
MindTap™: The Personal Learning Experience

MindTap for Nilsen's *Week by Week*, Seventh Edition, represents a new approach to teaching and learning. A highly personalized, fully customizable learning platform with an integrated electronic portfolio, MindTap helps students to elevate thinking by guiding them to:

- Know, remember, and understand concepts critical to becoming a great teacher;
- Apply concepts, create curricula and tools, and demonstrate performance and competency in key areas in the course, including national and state education standards;
- Prepare artifacts for the portfolio and eventual state licensure, to launch a successful teaching career; and
- Develop the habits to become a reflective practitioner.

As students move through each chapter's Learning Path, they engage in a scaffolded learning experience, designed to move them up Bloom's Taxonomy, from lower- to higher-order thinking skills. The Learning Path enables preservice students to develop these skills and gain confidence by:

- Engaging them with chapter topics and activating their prior knowledge by watching and answering questions about authentic videos of teachers teaching and children learning in real classrooms;
- Checking their comprehension and understanding through Did You Get It? assessments, with varied question types that are autograded for instant feedback;
- Applying concepts through mini-case studies—students analyze typical teaching and learning situations, and then create a reasoned response to the issue(s) presented in the scenario; and
- Reflecting about and justifying the choices they made within the teaching scenario problem.



Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. New York: Longman.

MindTap helps instructors facilitate better outcomes by evaluating how future teachers plan and teach lessons in ways that make content clear and help diverse students learn, assessing the effectiveness of their teaching practice, and adjusting teaching as needed. MindTap enables instructors to facilitate better outcomes by:

- Making grades visible in real time through the Student Progress App so students and instructors always have access to current standings in the class;
- Using the Outcome Library to embed national education standards and align them to student learning activities, and also allowing instructors to add their state's standards or any other desired outcome;
- Allowing instructors to generate reports on students' performance with the click of a mouse against any standards or outcomes that are in their MindTap course; and
- Giving instructors the ability to assess students on state standards or other local outcomes by editing existing or creating their own MindTap activities, then by aligning those activities to any state or other outcomes that the instructor has added to the MindTap Outcome Library.

MindTap for Nilsen's *Week by Week*, Seventh Edition, helps instructors easily set their course since it integrates into the existing Learning Management System and saves instructors time by allowing them to fully customize any aspect of the learning path. Instructors can change the order of the student learning activities, hide activities they don't want for the course, and—most importantly—create custom assessments and add any standards, outcomes, or content they do want (e.g., YouTube videos, Google docs). Learn more at www.cengage.com/mindtap.

Online Instructor's Manual with Test Bank

An online Instructor's Manual accompanies this book. It contains information to assist the instructor in designing the course, including sample syllabi, discussion questions, teaching and learning activities, field experiences, learning objectives, and additional online resources. For assessment support, the updated test bank includes true/false, multiple-choice, matching, short-answer, and essay questions for each chapter.

PowerPoint Lecture Slides

These vibrant Microsoft PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter assist you with your lecture by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook.

Cognero

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero is a flexible online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions; create multiple test versions in an instant; and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want.

Acknowledgments

My thanks and love to my family, who are my biggest supporters, my friends Carol and Marsha, who love me like a sister, my colleagues near and far who dedicate themselves to the care and education of America's children, and to the students who teach us something new every day.

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This text is dedicated to the busy hands, open minds, and caring hearts of all who work with young children. You bear the worthy name: Teacher. I welcome your communication by email at barnil246@gmail.com

Chapter 1

Getting Started



Standards Addressed in This Chapter



NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Profession Preparation (2011)

- 1a** Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs from birth through age 8.
- 3a** Understanding the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment—including its use in development of appropriate goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies for young children.
- 3b** Knowing about and using observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment tools and approaches, including the use of *technology* in documentation, assessment and data collection.
- 3c** Understanding and practicing responsible assessment to promote positive outcomes for each child, including the use of assistive technology for children with disabilities.
- 3d** Knowing about assessment partnerships with families and with professional colleagues to build effective learning environments.

- 6b** Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines.

NAEYC Program Standards (2014)

- 4.A.01a** Programs conduct assessments as an integral part of the program. Programs use assessments to support children's learning, using a variety of methods such as observations, checklists, rating scales, and individually administered tests.



NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines (2009)

- 4A** Assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, and purposeful.
- 4C** There is a system in place to collect, make sense of, and use the assessment information to guide what goes on in the classroom (formative assessment).

● Learning Objectives ●

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1-1** Name at least 10 reasons why teachers should observe their students.
- 1-2** Identify why it is important to write down (document) observations.
- 1-3** Discuss why it is useful to use different methods to observe and what role you play as an observer.
- 1-4** Justify using portfolios as an authentic assessment strategy for documenting young children's development.
- 1-5** Describe how this book will help you develop a comprehensive portfolio.

The word *observe* brings to mind the action of looking, seeing, and not participating, but viewing the action as an outsider. In any context, observing is just the first step in determining action. The first stage, taking in information, occurs simultaneously with evaluation and selection of a course of action. The clock is observed, usually not to admire the design but to determine the time. Looking inside a refrigerator may indicate that a trip to the store is needed or that the source of a foul odor should be investigated. The traffic light is a lovely shade of green, but its meaning is more important. That observation produces action: Go!

EXERCISE

Observe (or imagine): a clock; the inside of a refrigerator; and a traffic light.

Exactly what do you see? What are your observations telling you? What will you do as a result of what you see? Write down what you see. Write down what it means to you. Write down decisions you might make based on those observations. Write down a memory that something that you see brings back to you.

Everything we see is not just observed but also immediately interpreted for meaning. A decision is made either to do nothing or to act. The observation may be so insignificant that it is sensed but not acted on. Later it might

prove to be important, like that traffic light that was green, but the car in the cross street came through the intersection anyway. When filling out the accident report, those details are important. Our senses take in information that is connected with prior experiences, triggering knowledge and emotions. The teacher observes for many different reasons.

1-1 Why Observe?

When a teacher observes a child, information is collected and could be measured against a whole body of knowledge about child development in general and that child in particular (Figure 1-1). Information is then used to make decisions about the next actions. Someone has estimated that a teacher makes thousands of decisions in a day. Each decision is based on observations evaluated for meaning and the most appropriate responses. This *observe-decide-act* sequence is repeated over and over again throughout the day. Let's observe a child painting at the easel in Photo 1-1.

1-1a Safety

The most important reason for watching children is to keep them safe. Seeing a potentially dangerous situation and rushing to prevent an injury is the most basic example of observe-decide-act. A child waiting to paint may be observed trying to wrestle the brush away from the painter. With angry looks and harsh words, she is trying to gain control of the painting area. The teacher rushes over and intervenes before the painter is knocked aside or a brush is poked into someone's eye.



FIGURE 1-1 Why Observe?

1-1b Physical Health

Recognizing the signs of sickness or disease is another reason to observe, decide, and act. This also can protect the physical health of others. The teacher may notice a few small red spots behind the painter's ear. She casually pats the child's arm and feels bumps beneath the skin. These observations, along with the knowledge that the child's sister had chicken pox two weeks ago, prompt the teacher's decision to isolate the child and call the child's family to take the child home. For chicken pox, of course, it's already too late. Everyone's been exposed! Figure 1-2 shows artwork that the child painted on his return to school after having chicken pox.

1-1c Know the Child

The adult observes the child to discover interests. Watching a child choose a play area and talking with the child about the play is a friendly and affirming thing to do. It also is another way of building bridges from interests to planning, from home to school, and a way of making the curriculum relevant. Watching a child reveals personality and learning styles and could give clues to teaching strategies. By observing the painter, learning styles are indicated that will work better for him—maybe verbal directions, being shown, or trial and error. Reflective observation of the student's learning process leads the teacher to adapt teaching strategies to the child's styles and needs.

1-1d Assistance

Adults help children with tasks that are too hard for them. Observation may indicate that help is needed.

A child is observed preparing to paint at the easel. The teacher sees that the paper supply is gone. He gets more from the cupboard and shows the child how to attach the sheets with the big clips and where to hang the painting to dry. A diaper needs to be changed, a shoe needs to be tied, a spill needs to be wiped up, all needing responsive actions.

1-1e Curriculum Planning to Extend Learning

Teaching is building bridges, making connections between new information and old based on topics that are relevant and of interest to the group. The teacher plans related experiences and learning opportunities (the methods of learning, pedagogy) to help children explore and construct meaning of the content, subject matter, or skill. A knowledge of child development research with indicators of normal development for a certain age helps the teacher intentionally plan learning opportunities for the group as well as for the individual child based on assessments. The group has enjoyed and mastered easel painting, so the teacher plans that next week he will introduce watercolors, demonstrating the technique of washing the brush between colors, knowing that children of this age have gained enough small muscle control to accomplish this task.



PHOTO 1-1 Common activities yield knowledge of the child.

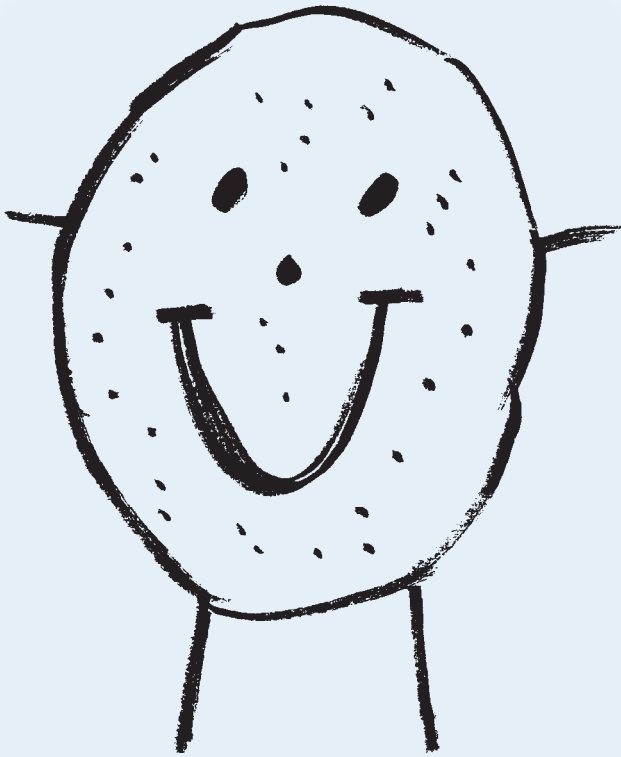


FIGURE 1-2 Observing a child's work, as well as the child as he works, gives valuable information.

Through observations, teachers can identify that teachable moment, that budding interest, and that blossoming skill. Providing materials, activities, and opportunities to build on that observed development will capitalize on it. From observing the painting filled with alphabet letters, the teacher decides this is a good time to bring out the alphabet magnets and invite the painter to play with them.

1-1f Communication with the Child

Teachers talk with every child. What better subject to discuss with them than the child's activities? Every child deserves the individual attention of the teacher. By discussing what the teacher observes with the child, the child can give the reason or explanation in a way that makes sense only if the teacher asks the child. That is the basis for Piaget's cognitive questioning method (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), to delve more deeply into children's "wrong" answers. In that way, thinking processes are explored. Results or answers are not simply considered incorrect, but teachers reflect on possible reasons for the answers to explain how the answer was derived. This may involve more conversation with the child, or the family, to get a better understanding of the background knowledge leading to the answer. The teacher says to the painter, "You worked hard on that painting. You used red, blue, and yellow, and you made straight lines and curved lines. Would you like to tell me how you did it? What did you do first?"

1-1g Communication with the Family

The point of interest between the teacher and the family is the child. The subjects of what the child has done that day, what the child is learning, how the child is progressing, what might be an area of concern are points of communication between the teacher and the family. Talking with the **family** about the child's daily activities communicates the following to them:

- Their child is under a watchful eye.
- This teacher observes and relates important developments in their child's actions, rather than giving the family a test score they might not understand how to evaluate.
- The family is included in the world that the teacher and their child share.

Unfortunately, many children and families have come to expect to receive only bad reports, phone calls, and notes from school, which bring a sense of dread. Too often, the only communications they receive about their child relate misbehaviors, failure to perform to expectations, or commands for the child or family to take remedial action. In contrast, discussing observations from the day's observed activities or documentation from the **Portfolio** with the child's family gives positive, substantive information about the child's progress, compared only to her previous work, not anyone else's. Observation gives descriptive accounts of the child's behavior and skills from the point of view of achievement rather than deficit—what she can or has done, rather than cannot or will not. Observations are shared with families in formal and informal ways.

family

the group of related or unrelated adults who are legally responsible for the child

Portfolio

a collection of documentation about the child's development

The paintings in the child's Portfolio previously were scribbles, and then they became pages filled with lines and deliberate designs. The teacher and child show her family the collection in the Portfolio. The family realizes that the teacher *knows and observes* their child's work from a different point of view.

1-1h Guidance

Occasionally (and sometimes often) the teacher sees a behavior situation that needs intervention before it happens or a quick response to prevent it from escalating. Prevention is always better than remedy. Young children are learning how to get along with others, and they sometimes go beyond the boundaries of safety and acceptable behavior. The teacher watches for impending struggles that may escalate into bad situations. Redirection is better than discipline or punishment. Through observation, potential problems can be averted. The painter's brush is approaching the wall. The teacher reminds the child, "Paint on paper," guiding the brush back to the paper on the easel.

1-1i Measure Progress, Assessment, Evaluation

Children change so quickly. Based on knowledge of child development, certain changes are expected and anticipated. Comparisons over time can measure that development. The teacher observes that the painter moved from experimentation with line and color to painting recognizable objects. He proclaims that the smiling face with dots is a picture of his sister who is just getting over the chicken pox. The teacher can see her control of small muscles and the frustration when the paint does not flow in the way the painter thinks it should. The child's social world is portrayed in the pictures he paints. Many areas of development can be observed in this one activity and in changes from paintings done a few weeks ago.

In order to measure progress, teachers watch children to gather information. That is **assessment**, the process of documenting a child's knowledge, skills, and attitudes in measurable terms. Assessment may take many forms, but the premise here is that observation is the best method. Naturalistic inquiry, studying children in their natural habitats, results in seeing the child "exhibiting the highest levels of competence," unlike in contrived situations where children are put into strange, anxiety-producing situations (Pellegrini, 1998). Information is gathered to measure the child's development against accepted stages or a set of developmental norms. Assessment measures where the child is at this point in time. It may alert the observer to unusually delayed or accelerated development.

Once the teacher has made an assessment of an area of development, **evaluation** is the decision-making step of assessment—probably the most precarious because it is the step that considers the information gathered through assessment upon which judgments are drawn and decisions made about future directions. Evaluation is based on prior knowledge and comparing observations with that prior knowledge. Knowing typical child development stages that include social, emotional, and cognitive domains gives the observer a lens through which to view the child.

The observer of the painter has collected paintings over several weeks and judges that this child is in the stage when children are beginning to represent thought, not just experimenting with the materials. A sticky note as to the importance of this example may be placed on the back of the painting, noting, "He has moved from making circles and controlled straight lines to painting faces, and was smiling and singing while painting." The teacher may decide to bring out a plastic skeleton for the science area or read a story about sick children to give the painter ideas about anatomy. A copy of this drawing is filed in the child's Portfolio for later comparisons.

For all of these good reasons, teachers observe children. That informed observation, measuring what is seen against what is known, is assessment and evaluation of the child's development and behavior.

assessment

process of observing, recording, and documenting a child's actions, skills, and behaviors to measure against a standard

evaluation

comparison of information gathered against a standard or set of criteria

1-1j Referral

Sometimes questions or even red flags arise when a teacher observes a child. Certain behaviors, actions, and skills—or lack of them—will send an alert calling for a closer look at a developmental area.

From the child's paintings, the teacher observes some alarming messages. The teacher may ask a probing question such as, "Would you like to tell me about your painting?" and the child's answers may lead only to more questions. It is important not to rush to conclusions (especially based on a child's art products).

Further reflection and closer observation of behavior over time may warrant discussing a concern first with the family or other professionals within the agency, and then perhaps suggesting a referral to the family. The **referral** may be for further evaluation in a specific area, such as hearing, speech, physical, or cognitive development. Family involvement and decision making in the referral process are the pivotal factors. Families are recognized and deferred to as the authority on the child.

There may be situations where it is necessary to report suspicions of neglect or abuse. Knowledge, careful judgment, empathy, and consideration are important skills for the teacher in all of these circumstances, for both referrals and reporting.

referral

a recommendation made for further evaluation by a helping professional

1-1k Self-Reflection

Observing is not just looking at a child but also thinking about our influence on the child and the child's effect on us. The teacher notices that no one is painting anymore and wonders what the cause could be. By observing and recording, questions can be answered and the teacher's own effectiveness can be measured. The interest a child has in the planned activities will indicate to the teacher if the activities are appropriate. Activities that are not challenging or too difficult will be avoided or abandoned by the child. By closely watching what keeps a child involved, the observer can learn what skills the child is working on and modify activities to meet those needs.

This type of observation is active research, constantly accumulating data to analyze for its meaning. Goodman & Owocki (2002) say "kid watching" involves "teachers who interact with students and who monitor class activities in order to understand more about teaching and learning, mostly learning" (p. 13). While the child is learning, the teacher is also learning, reflecting on how to be more effective as well as on personal feelings about what has happened.

1-1l Accountability

Data drives decisions, from the star ratings of movies to the walk/don't walk signals at a crosswalk. Collecting high-quality data through reliable child assessments is a way to view the child and the program objectively. Preschool programs are often funded through special governmental funding at the state and federal level, with private funds through foundations and organizations, and by the families of the children themselves. Initiatives that are expected to prepare children for school by enhancing social, language, and cognitive skills—especially for children from economically disadvantaged homes and for children of special needs—are under scrutiny to demonstrate their effectiveness. Is the teacher, curriculum, program, or school doing what it says it will do? Proof is needed to show that children are learning and meeting the standards and expected outcomes. This area of child assessment is the focus of close examination to prove the worth of early childhood programs.

Accountability takes on many forms. The program or school is accountable to the funding or sponsoring agency. Assessment for funders calls for statistical data gathered by research-based methods and showing demonstrable outcomes of groups of children. Policymakers also use this kind of assessment to measure the benefits of one type of program or initiative over another. The purpose is to maximize the investment for the greatest gain.

The type of accountability that is most often addressed in this text, however, is that of the teacher to the child and family. By systematically using observation, along with other types of assessment tools, the classroom teacher and caregiver can gather information to show each child's progress, raise an awareness of potential difficulties, and intentionally plan learning opportunities that will help the child develop and learn.

A teacher might observe the following: "This child's painting shows increases in small muscle control, attention span, interest in alphabet, and is increasingly detailed." The teacher's notes on the back of the painting relate the significance of this work in light of developmental progress. It shows the child is learning.

Documentation of all types can:

- provide evidence of children's learning in all domains.
- provide insight into learning experiences.
- provide a framework for recording each child's interests and developmental progress.
- emphasize learning as an interactive process.
- show advantages of concrete activities and materials as opposed to group testing situations.
- enable teachers to assess knowledge and abilities in order to increase the challenge to match the child's level. (Helm, Beneke, & Steinheimer, 2007)

1-2 Why Write It Down?

"I'll remember this and write it down later." Everyone has said this and then not written it down. It is lost with all the other details of life that intercede and blur the image, blotting out specifics and erasing the exact words.

Recording is used here to refer to a written account or notation of what has been observed. What are the reasons for writing down what has been seen? (See Figure 1-3.)

Teachers write down their observations to:

EXERCISE

List the kinds of writing (on paper and electronically) you do on a typical day and why you do it.

recording

a system or method of writing down what has been observed

1-2a Remember

The grocery list (Figure 1-4), even if it is left at home on the refrigerator door, sticks in the memory longer because it was written down. Many students copy their notes over or condense them as a study technique. There is a connection between writing and memory. The written words form a visual and kinetic or physical connection in the brain, assisting memory and recall even when the visual cues are not present.

1-2b Compare

A child's height is measured with a line on the wall, and it is surprising a few months later how much she has grown without anyone realizing it. If that mark had not been made, the change would not have been noticed. Children are expected to change, so a mark of comparison is needed. Relying on a memory of the child one, three, or six months ago is inaccurate and unreliable. By writing observations down, teachers have tangible comparison points. Portfolios, collections of the child's work, and written observations are becoming



FIGURE 1-3 Why Write?

Grocery List	
eggs	vegetable soup
milk	toothpicks
chocolate chips	paper towels
banking	
dry cleaning	
birthday card for Louise	

FIGURE 1-4 Write to Remember

accepted methods of documenting a child's progress. Written observations that are thorough, objective, regular, and done during daily routines and child-initiated play are accurate measures of the child's progress.

1-2c Amplify Later

Sometimes there is no time to write the whole incident, so a few strategic notes written and dated at the time can be just enough to jog the memory for a longer, more complete narrative written later.

1-2d Catch and Preserve Details

Details are quickly forgotten. Insurance companies want auto accident reports written at the scene because of the frailty of human memory. Fine details that seem so clear or so unimportant now can best be preserved by writing them down. These details can give clues to trends or correlations that are not seen at the time. On closer examination and comparison later, they gain significance. For example, keeping some data on which areas of

the classroom a child spends her free time in and how long she stays there gives much information about the child. Without some method of tracking, there is no way to recall details like these that can yield important information (Photo 1-2).

1-2e Serve as a Literacy Role Model

Children need to see adults writing. Literacy is an important concept to teach young children. The importance of the written word is emphasized when children see its usefulness and practical application by their role models, the adults in their lives. When an adult



PHOTO 1-2 Busy teachers jot short notes to amplify later.

It Happened to Me

All Eyes

The teacher shows a new song chart and has just said, “Look up here, all eyes on the chart.” Andrew asks, “What’s 16 plus 16?” A puzzled look comes over the teacher’s face, followed immediately by one of irritation for the interruption. Andrew repeats his question louder. “Thirty-two, now let’s look at this new song chart.” Andrew replies, “Oh, you want all thirty-two eyes looking at the chart.” This tells us about Andrew’s thinking, his beginning understanding of math concepts,

and it causes the teacher to vow to listen more closely to children’s questions. This is a wonderful incident to relate to Andrew’s family to demonstrate his thinking and his humor. The teacher just had time to write “eyes, 16, 32” with the ever-present pad and pen. That was enough to enable the teacher to fully write about the incident later.

How can we be more observant of children’s naturally simplistic way of thinking?

writes something down, a child often asks, “What are you doing?” A reply such as “I’m writing this down so I won’t forget” lays literacy foundations for the child. It shows that writing is a way to help memory, that what is written is constant, and it stirs the child’s desire to want to write himself. A literacy-rich environment is one with accessible writing materials to encourage him to do just that (Figure 1–5).

1-2f Document

Reliable research demands hard data. It is necessary to preserve in writing—to **document**—what has been observed to substantiate it. Recording methods that include facts rather than inferences along with the date and time of the recording are essential to meaningful documentation. The details must be preserved to see progress, trends, and correlations.

This is especially critical if a child discloses an incident of abuse. The reports must be accurate and show that the child was not led or influenced in order for the disclosure to be supportable evidence. One would like never to deal with this, but for the protection of the child it is important not to jeopardize the testimony by failing to document or keeping inaccurate records. You will read more about this in Chapter 13.

To accomplish this desirable goal, the task of documentation must be broken down into manageable segments, planned, and executed in a systematic manner.

document

document (verb) – the action of preserving data for later review;
documentation (noun) – the product that preserves the data (evidence, artifacts)

Dramatic Play Area—paper and pencil next to the play phone, sheets cut for grocery lists attached to a pad on the play refrigerator, calendars on which children can write important events to remember

Block Area—paper, markers, tape for signs on buildings

Large Motor—paper, markers, tape for signs signifying what the climber is today (a rocket ship, a house on fire, Jenny’s house)

Sand/Water—paper and pencil nearby to write down a mark to indicate what sinks or floats, draw pictures of what has been found hidden in the sand; paper to list who is waiting for a turn

Cubbies—paper and pencil to list what children say they want to do outside today, to decide which toys to load in the wagon

Group Area—chart paper, markers to take surveys of favorite things, lists of things to remember contributed by the group, safety rules

FIGURE 1-5 A Literacy-Rich Environment