

FIFTH EDITION

# OBSERVING YOUNG CHILDREN

TRANSFORMING EARLY LEARNING THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE



KRISTINE FENNING

SALLY WYLIE

# OBSERVING YOUNG CHILDREN

TRANSFORMING EARLY LEARNING  
THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

FIFTH EDITION

**KRISTINE FENNING**

*Humber Institute of Technology  
and Advanced Learning*

**SALLY WYLIE**





**Observing Young Children: Transforming Early Learning  
through Reflective Practice, Fifth Edition**

By Kristine Fenning and Sally Wylie

**Vice President, Product and  
Partnership Solutions**  
Anne Williams

**Publisher:**  
Lenore Taylor-Atkins

**Marketing Manager:**  
Terry Fedorkiw

**Content Development Manager:**  
Liisa Kelly

**Photo Researcher and Permissions  
Coordinator:**  
Karen Hunter

**Senior Production Project Manager:**  
Natalia Denesiuk Harris

**Production Service:**  
MPS Limited

**Copy Editor:**  
Marcia Gallego

**Proofreader:**  
MPS Limited

**Indexer:**  
Judy Davis

**Design Director:**  
Ken Phipps

**Managing Designer:**  
Franca Amore

**Interior Design:**  
Cathy Mayer

**Cover Design:**  
Cathy Mayer

**Cover Image:**  
Cultura/Aurelie and Morgan David  
De Lossy

**Compositor:**  
MPS Limited

**COPYRIGHT © 2016, 2012** by Nelson  
Education Ltd.

Printed and bound in the United  
States of America

1 2 3 4 18 17 16 15

For more information contact  
Nelson Education Ltd.,  
1120 Birchmount Road, Toronto,  
Ontario, M1K 5G4. Or you can visit  
our Internet site at  
<http://www.nelson.com>

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.** No part of  
this work covered by the copyright  
herein may be reproduced,  
transcribed, or used in any form or  
by any means—graphic, electronic, or  
mechanical, including photocopying,  
recording, taping, Web distribution,  
or information storage and retrieval  
systems—without the written  
permission of the publisher.

For permission to use material from  
this text or product, submit  
all requests online at  
[www.cengage.com/permissions](http://www.cengage.com/permissions).  
Further questions about  
permissions can be emailed to  
[permissionrequest@cengage.com](mailto:permissionrequest@cengage.com)

Every effort has been made to  
trace ownership of all copyrighted  
material and to secure permission  
from copyright holders. In the event  
of any question arising as to the use  
of any material, we will be pleased  
to make the necessary corrections in  
future printings.

**Library and Archives Canada  
Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Wylie, Sally, author  
Observing young children :  
transforming early learning through  
reflective practice / Kristine Fenning  
(Humber College Institute of  
Technology and Advanced Learning),  
Sally Wylie. — Fifth edition.

Revision of: Wylie, Sally. Observing  
young children.  
Includes bibliographical references  
and index.  
ISBN 978-0-17-658077-3 (paperback)

1. Observation (Educational  
method). 2. Early childhood  
education. 3. Child development.  
I. Fenning, Kristine, author I. Title.

LB1139.3.C3W94 2015 372.21  
C2015-904662-9

ISBN-13: 978-0-17-658077-3  
ISBN-10: 0-17-658077-8

*I begin my dedication of this fifth edition with a thank-you to my amazing family. I am blessed to be able to pause, reflect, and appreciate who they are and enjoy the beauty of each moment with them. They instill a passion in me every day. I am forever grateful to Sally Wylie, my mentor, friend, confidante, and inspirational educator-leader who has led me down many wonderful paths, one of which is this amazing text. I am proud to carry on what Sally has so wonderfully begun. To my Humber family: I am fortunate to have your support as I follow my writing passions. The Humber ECE team and department continue to be leading edge, and I am grateful to be amid such greatness. I am also thankful to be supported by the amazing leadership of Lisa Teskey and Jason Powell, who empower me in so many ways. To our early childhood students, professional educators, children, and families in the community: I look forward to continuing to collaborate and co-educate with you in order to co-transform and give back to our community, for you are our leaders of the future.*

*Kristine Fenning*

*I dedicate my last edition of this text to the students of early childhood education and educators practising in our profession, knowing you will be the recipients of much random joy, the nurturers of the next generation, and the memory-makers for children and their families. I also dedicate this edition to my family and friends, without whose support I would not have completed the five editions. But most of all, I dedicate this edition to my grandchildren, through whose wondrous eyes I continually see life's delights anew. I leave further editions of this text in the most capable, dedicated, and worthy hands of my friend, colleague, co-editor, and visionary, Kristine Fenning.*

*Sally Wylie*



# BRIEF CONTENTS

**Foreword xv**

**Preface xvii**

**About the Authors xxx**

**Acknowledgments xxxii**

## **PART 1 WHAT IS OBSERVATION? 1**

**CHAPTER 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION 3**

**CHAPTER 2 PREPARING TO OBSERVE 43**

**CHAPTER 3 LEARNING TO DOCUMENT THE ACTIVITY OF CHILDREN 87**

## **PART 2 HOW IS OBSERVATION DOCUMENTED? 133**

**CHAPTER 4 OBSERVING AND RECORDING UNANTICIPATED BEHAVIOURS 135**

**CHAPTER 5 OBSERVING AND RECORDING TARGETED BEHAVIOURS 189**

## **PART 3 THROUGH THE LENS OF REFLECTIVE, TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICES 235**

**CHAPTER 6 INFORMING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE THROUGH THE LENS OF REFLECTION 237**

**CHAPTER 7 INFORMING PRACTICE THROUGH THE LENS OF EARLY IDENTIFICATION 287**

**CHAPTER 8 REFLECTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE: OBSERVER AS LEADER 333**

**Glossary 371**

**References 388**

**Index 412**

# CONTENTS

**Foreword xv**

**Preface xvii**

Observing Young Children: The Fifth Edition xviii

Structural Organization of the Fifth Edition xx

Changes to the Fifth Edition xxii

Special Pedagogy to Support Learning xxvii

**About the Authors xxx**

**Acknowledgments xxxii**

## **PART 1 WHAT IS OBSERVATION? 1**

### **CHAPTER 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO OBSERVATION 3**

Focus Questions 5

Observation and Appreciation 5

Observation and Appreciative Inquiry 6

Why Is Observation Important? 9

Why Observe Children? 9

Reasons for Observing Young Children 9

Observation and the Responsive, Inclusive Educator 14

The Essential Partnership 16

Family Centredness 17

Relationships with Families 17

Family Diversity 18

Culture and Transformation 19

Observations of Children during Play 22

Framing What Has Been Observed 26

Principles of Development 28

Areas of Child Development 30

Rates of Development 32

Norms and Developmental Guidelines 32

Observation and Pedagogical Documentation 33

The Special Role of Observation in Different Philosophies 38

Observation in Research: A Brief Historical Perspective 39

Observation in Research: A Current Perspective 40

**Summary 41**



## **CHAPTER 2** PREPARING TO OBSERVE 43

### Overview 44

Focus Questions 44

### Two Levels of Observation 44

Personal Level 44

Professional Level 45

### Defining a Systematic Process of Observation 46

The Process of Watching and Listening to Children 48

### The Cycle of Observation 49

### Variations of the Cycle of Observation 52

The Cycle of Observation as an Interactive Process 54

Inquiry: A Vital Part of the Cycle of Observation 57

Pedagogical Questions 58

Questions of Self-Reflection 59

### Asking the Questions: Why, How, Who, When, Where, and What 61

Why Observe Children? 61

Other Reasons for Observing Young Children 62

How to Observe Children 66

Spectator Mode 66

Participatory Mode 66

Whom Will You Observe? 68

When to Observe 68

Where to Conduct Observations 69

What to Observe 69

### Challenges to Effective Observation 70

The Time Challenge 70

Other Challenges 71

Problem Solving and Teamwork 72

### The Rights of Children 75

### Code of Ethics 76

Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice 76

Ethics and the Observation Process 79

Observation and Identity 80

Ethics, Pedagogical Documentation, and the Observer 82

### Consent and Confidentiality 83

Office Files 85

Getting Permission for Observations 85

### **Summary 86**

## **CHAPTER 3** LEARNING TO DOCUMENT THE ACTIVITY OF CHILDREN 87

Overview 88

    Focus Questions 89

Getting Started 90

    Increasing Accessibility: Sharing Responsibility for Observing  
        and Documenting 90

    Learning to Record and Understand What We Are Observing 92

    The Documenting Process 92

    Observer Guidelines in the Community 93

The Role of the Observer and Language Usage 98

    Adapting Your Communication Style in Early Childhood 98

    Using Descriptive Language 99

    Developing Vocabulary 101

    Semantics and Pragmatics 101

Learning to Document 103

    Documenting Observations: A Unique Style of Writing 103

    Lecture Note Taking versus Recording Observations 103

    Rough Notes and Rewriting: Reproducing Thoughts 104

    Writing with Confidence 106

    Translation and Documentation 106

    Self-Evaluation 108

Examining Three Basic Concepts in the Observation Process 110

    Searching for a Definition of Behaviour 110

    Internal Conditions 112

    Characteristics 113

    The Three Concepts: How Are They the Same/Different? 113

    Characteristics and Labels 114

    Variables Affecting Behaviour: Changes in Environment, Situations, or Time 116

    Areas of Child Development/Domains 118

Understanding and Interpreting Observations 121

    What Are Interpretations? 121

    Variations within Interpretations 123

Forms of Bias in Our Observations 124

    Ensuring the Presence of Ethics in Our Observation Practices 124

    Being Aware of Bias 124

    Forms of Bias 127

    Bias and Perceptions 129

Portfolios	130
What Is a Portfolio?	130
What Is the Purpose of Developing a Portfolio?	130
What Is in a Portfolio?	131

## **Summary 131**

## **PART 2 HOW IS OBSERVATION DOCUMENTED? 133**

The Main Categories	133
---------------------	-----

### **CHAPTER 4 OBSERVING AND RECORDING UNANTICIPATED BEHAVIOURS 135**

Overview	136
----------	-----

Focus Questions	138
-----------------	-----

Anecdotal Records	138
-------------------	-----

Purpose and Unique Feature	138
----------------------------	-----

Format of Anecdotal Records	139
-----------------------------	-----

Anecdotal Interpretations	142
---------------------------	-----

Interpreting Expanded Observations	145
------------------------------------	-----

Interpretations as an Evaluative Function	146
---	-----

Adapting Anecdotal Records	146
----------------------------	-----

Combinations and Adaptations	148
------------------------------	-----

Perceptions and Cultural Inferences	149
-------------------------------------	-----

Running Records	151
-----------------	-----

Purpose and Unique Feature	151
----------------------------	-----

Format of Running Records	151
---------------------------	-----

Diaries: A Type of Record Similar to Running Records	155
--	-----

ABC Analysis	155
--------------	-----

Purpose and Unique Feature	155
----------------------------	-----

ABC Analysis and the Behaviourists	156
------------------------------------	-----

Format of ABC Analysis	157
------------------------	-----

Adapting ABC Analysis	158
-----------------------	-----

ABC Analysis and Curriculum Development	159
---	-----

Photographs	161
-------------	-----

Purpose and Unique Feature	162
----------------------------	-----

Format of Photographs	163
-----------------------	-----

Pictorial Combinations: Photographs and Text	164
--	-----

Visual Communication and Children with Extra Support Needs	165
--	-----

Photographs and Other Documentation Methods	165
---	-----

Photographs and Documentation Panels	166
--------------------------------------	-----

Photographs and Pedagogical Documentation: Reflections and Considerations	166
Ethics and Photo Documentation: Ethical Dilemma or Not?	168
Audio/Digital Voice and Sound Recordings	169
Purpose and Unique Feature	170
Format of Audio/Digital Recordings	170
Audio/Digital Voice Recordings and Children's Portfolios	172
Video Recording	172
Purpose and Unique Feature	172
Format of Video Documentation	176
Video Recording with a Specific Purpose: Socioemotional Development	177
Is Video Recording an Effective Method?	178
Learning Stories	179
Purpose and Unique Feature	180
Format of the Learning Story Narrative	182
Section One: Capturing and Developing the Story	182
Section Two: Reflecting upon and Interpreting the Learning That Took Place	183
Section Three: Discussing Next Steps, Future Opportunities, and Extensions of Learning	183
Technology-Enabled Learning Story Formats	185
<b>Summary</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 OBSERVING AND RECORDING TARGETED BEHAVIOURS</b>	<b>189</b>
Overview	190
Focus Questions	191
Making Decisions	192
What Could Be Other Considerations?	192
Frequency versus Duration	193
Designing an Observational Tool	194
Checklists	195
Purpose and Unique Feature	195
Format of Checklists	196
Developmental Sequence of Skills	198
Knowledge of Children within the Group	199
Knowledge of Children within the Context of Their Environment	200
Making Checklists User-Friendly	200

Prepared/Commercial Checklist Examples	201
Adapting Checklists	203
Interpreting and Reflecting upon Information from Checklists	204
Rating Scales	205
Purpose and Unique Feature	205
Format of Rating Scales	205
Commercial Examples of Rating Scales	206
Rating Scales in Early Childhood	207
Adapting Rating Scales	207
Rating Scale Design Considerations	208
Interpretation of Information from Rating Scales	208
Behaviour Tallying and Charting	209
Purpose and Unique Feature	209
Behaviour Tallying	210
Format of Behaviour Tallying	210
Using a Conventional Graph	212
Textbook/Internet Examples	213
Interpreting Observations, Charts, and Graphs	213
Examples of Behaviour Tallying Adaptations	214
Participation Charts	215
Purpose and Unique Feature	215
Format of Participation Charts	216
Adapting Participation Charts	217
Interpreting and Reflecting upon Participation Chart Information	219
Profiles	220
Purpose and Unique Feature	220
Format of Profiles	221
Adapting Profiles	222
Reflecting upon Profiles	226
Pictorial Representations	227
Pictorial Representation with a Global Focus	229
Sociograms	229
Sociogram Variations: Ecomaps	230
Mapping	232
<b>Summary</b>	<b>234</b>

## **PART 3 THROUGH THE LENS OF REFLECTIVE, TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICES 235**

### **CHAPTER 6 INFORMING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE THROUGH THE LENS OF REFLECTION 237**

Overview 237

    Focus Questions 238

Appreciative Inquiry Revisited 239

    Finding a Pedagogical Framework 240

Reflective and Transformative: Revisiting the Cycle of Observation 242

    Variations of the Cycle of Observation 242

    The Cycle of Observation as Community Building 246

    Joining the Cycle: A Community Response 248

    The Cycle of Observation: A Transformational Process 249

    Collaboration and Co-Inquiry 250

    Mutual Education 251

The Reflective Educator: Responding to and Sustaining the Observation Cycle 253

    A Focus on Reflection 253

    Creating Time for Documentation and Reflection 254

    Reflection, Appreciation, and Inquiry 255

Webbing: A Multipurpose Tool 258

    Webbing and Emergent Documentation 260

    “Thinking and Wondering” in Pedagogical Documentation 260

Portfolios and E-Portfolios: An Important Part of the Cycle of Observation 262

    What Constitutes an Artifact? 263

    Portfolio Preparation, Stages, and Content 264

    Roles of the Educator, Child, and Family 268

    Roles of the Supervisor, Director, or Principal 270

    Portfolio and Authentic Assessment: Types and Forms 271

        Display or Showcase Portfolios 272

        Working/Developmental Portfolios 272

        Assessment Portfolios 275

        E-Portfolios/Digital Portfolios 275

    Portfolios and Accessibility 278

        E-Portfolios and Voice-to-Text Programs 278

    Portfolios: Supporting Children’s Metacognition 280

Portfolios and Professional Standards, Frameworks, and Documents	282
<b>Summary</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7</b> INFORMING PRACTICE THROUGH THE LENS OF EARLY IDENTIFICATION	<b>287</b>
Overview	287
Focus Questions	288
The Cycle of Observation and Early Intervention	288
Beginning with Observation	291
Creating an Observational Plan	292
What Are Early Intervention and Early Identification?	293
Early Intervention and Identification: Where Does the Process Begin?	293
Theories Underpinning the Early Intervention and Identification Process	296
Understanding Early Identification as a System	297
The Role of the Resource Professional	299
Early Intervention, Identification, and Interprofessional Education	301
Children’s Health and Well-Being	302
Reporting Child Abuse	302
Family-Centred Approach and Early Intervention	304
Foundations of Family Centredness: Building Relationships	307
Early Identification and Intervention: Sharing Personal and Sensitive Information	307
Family-Centred Conversations: Finding the Right Time	310
Special Needs: A Multifaceted Term	312
Teams: Collaborating and Creating	313
Assessment	315
Three Stages of Assessment	318
Assessment Tool Terms or Jargon	319
Who Administers Assessments?	322
Screening Tools	322
Commonly Used Screening Tools in Canada	323
Functional Assessment Tools: How Are They Initiated?	324
The Role of the Early Childhood Professional in the Assessment Process	324
What Is an Individualized Plan?	325
Individualized Strategies and Programs	326
Observation and Assessment: Informing Adaptations	328
Evaluation: Summative and Formative	328
<b>Summary</b>	<b>332</b>

## **CHAPTER 8** REFLECTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE: OBSERVER AS LEADER 333

Overview 333

Focus Questions 334

The Environment Defined 335

Responsive Relationships and the Socioemotional/Psychological Tone of  
an Environment 335

The Physical Environment 339

Early Childhood Frameworks and Environmental Assessments: Beginning with  
a Question 345

Environmental Assessment Tools and Measures 347

Environmental Assessment: Stakeholder Contributions 349

Environmental Assessment, Pedagogy, and Context: Voices of Children and  
Adults 354

Community Capacity Building: Educating and Preparing for Future Early  
Childhood Observers 354

Interprofessional Collaboration 355

The Observer as Pedagogical Leader 357

Observer as Mentor: The Important Role of Mentorship 360

Observer as Lifelong Learner: The Importance of Professional Development 361

Pedagogical Documentation and Educator E-Portfolios 363

E-Portfolio Design and Considerations 364

Observer as Researcher 364

The Educator-Observer: Longitudinal Studies and Ethnographic  
Research 365

Observation and Pedagogical Documentation Trends 366

Blogs 367

Wikis 368

Twitter 369

Instagram 370

**Summary 370**

**Glossary 371**

**References 388**

**Index 412**



# FOREWORD

The idea that observation is crucial to understanding diverse populations is hardly new to the early childhood community. Yet, to simply say that it is important to our practice understates its unparalleled significance to our work. From daily health and safety checks to determining potential foci for program planning, the employment of a critical eye has become the very foundation of all that we do! Consequently, learning how to observe in a systematic way is the cornerstone of programs for prospective early childhood educators. While these formative years of training cultivate a variety of skills, early childhood preparatory programs are especially committed to laying the groundwork for a professional journey that routinely incites the power of observation to facilitate a deeper awareness of the children and families we serve.

Although purposeful observation is a long-standing tradition in the field, its continued use in many early childhood settings should not be restricted to determining children's play interests and identifying and supporting related developmental milestones. While these functions are important to our work, they operate in tandem to tell but one part of a multifaceted story, a narrative rich with possibilities that can be illuminated only through the integration of a repertoire of observation-based strategies that make all aspects of a child's thinking visible (Wien, 2013). Researchers refer to this process as *pedagogical documentation* and argue that its transformative potential resides in its insistence upon seeing beyond development to capitalize on the complexity and diversity of teachable moments. Where conventional approaches to observing produce accounts of significant events that validate the perspective of the educator, pedagogical documentation celebrates countless ways of being, thinking, and doing and draws children, families, and educators together as co-constructors of knowledge. Together, they become capable, competent, curious, and critical thinkers (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014) whose mutual collaboration generates innumerable theories to help make sense of the world. In this way, pedagogical documentation emerges as a mechanism for unmasking a tale otherwise constrained by conventional approaches to observation, which tend toward chronicling a series of seemingly random, isolated events without probing deeper to expose the common thread that binds them. In light of this limitation, the use of pedagogical documentation has gained increasing momentum in recent years. It is a shift that has transformed early childhood practitioners into pedagogical storytellers, whose partnerships with children, families, and colleagues produce inquiry-based learning journeys that honour the perspectives of all parties (Yu, 2008).

I'm proud to have been a member of the early childhood profession for nearly 15 years, an experience that has given me first-hand knowledge of the value of pedagogical documentation to transforming practice, primarily through my work as an early childhood program supervisor with a large urban institution. As our approach to planning revolved around children's emerging interests, conducting observations that captured these was our highest priority. Most staff became adept at doing so and routinely crafted experiences that were logically connected to the developmental continuum. After years of approaching curriculum design in this way, planning for emerging interests became second nature. So, too, was the ability to apply developmental rationale to all pedagogical decisions. Despite this aptitude, however, I sensed we were somehow missing the bigger picture—that significant pieces of learning stories were being silenced through engagement with a process for planning that positioned the educator as the expert.

As I continued at that time to grapple with this sense of unease, I happened upon an article on pedagogical documentation in a graduate course I was taking (Seitz, 2008). Of the numerous claims made, it was the authors' link between pedagogical documentation and the rights of individual learners that most resonated with me, especially when much of my own writing and research was committed to social justice issues. And so it came to be that learning stories were introduced to the programs I supervised, forging necessary links between multiple observations composed of details contributed by educators, children, and families alike. Suddenly voices once silenced by traditional curriculum practices were heard, generating questions for exploration and related hypotheses that reflected multiple perspectives and produced a depth of investigation our programs had never before seen. And just as that article suggested, this profound shift in process seemed to benefit, in particular, children and families from marginalized groups. In fact, collaborative inquiry and its subsequent chronicling built bridges across difference and partnerships in practice through which educators, children, and families became co-authors of learning stories with no finite ending, tales that could be told and retold in a continuous cycle of collaborative meaning-making. For populations who'd grown accustomed to alienation from mainstream educational practices, pedagogical documentation's valuing of a plurality of ideas and voices ushered in a new way of thinking and doing within our organization—a process through which what it meant to be an educator and a learner was necessarily disrupted, leaving no one member of our learning community profoundly unchanged. Never underestimate the power of observation!

Ryan Campbell, R.E.C.E., B.A. (ECE), M.A. (ECS), Ph.D.(c)  
*Professor, Humber College Early Childhood Education*

# PREFACE

The primary focus of this text is to promote observation and encourage pedagogically sound observational practices. Through observation and the creation of pedagogical documentation, we learn about, appreciate, and make visible the daily experiences of children: their dizzy play, their ability to create, their curiosity, how they understand their world, their capacity for wonder, and how, over time, they grow and change. Change happens to those who observe and document as well, and that is another exciting focus of the fifth edition of this text, *Observing Young Children: Transforming Early Learning through Reflective Practice*. Through the lens of appreciative inquiry and the cycle of observation, we invite you to create a new space in your mind where you can develop transformative ways of teaching and learning with children, families, the early childhood profession, your own community, and the global village.

This text provides a comprehensive investigation of the topic of observation and pedagogical documentation for students, educators, administrators, parents, and consulting professionals or clinicians (such as resource professionals, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, or physiotherapists) who are involved with young children. It is particularly relevant for educators of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers; children in junior or senior kindergarten; and children who are in private home daycare, after-school programs, elementary school, and other settings.

Throughout this text, the process of observation and pedagogical documentation of children is examined, along with the aspects of practice that support and influence the dimensions of an early learning environment. Through appreciative inquiry and reflection, professionals and families are brought together to form collaborative learning communities where mutual education takes place. Inquiry forms the basis for this process, asking questions such as, “What elements compose quality, responsiveness, and inclusiveness in early learning communities or environments?” and “How will self-reflection be valued or promoted within the day?” This investigative and reflective process can be truly transformational as it takes us to new places of thought and practice. Seeing new possibilities that can transform any practice is exciting and rewarding, especially knowing that through a new lens, the observer is able to better perceive the children’s learning, a newcomer family’s experiences, or the ways that community resources can build capacity and provide for enriched experiences for children and their families.

As students and professionals of early childhood education, you will explore and discover the world of children with this text and learn about families and communities. You will be amazed, surprised, and rewarded, for this journey and career is both a deeply personal and a professional process. We hope that, by studying and applying the content of these chapters and the online site, you will find a meaningful way to tell your own story, as well as the stories of children and families. We invite you to join in Chapter 1 and stay with us as the dialogue continues into the last chapter, where we explore the important role of observer as leader and mentor, as well as new directions of observation and pedagogical documentation involving technology and social media.

We are excited about your journey as you develop your observation skills and your sensitivities and abilities to document the world of children, portraying their experiences as meaningfully as you can. Once this process has begun, it leads to a lifelong pursuit of learning.

## **OBSERVING YOUNG CHILDREN: THE FIFTH EDITION**

The fifth edition of *Observing Young Children: Transforming Early Learning through Reflective Practice* has been updated to reflect the changes occurring in the early childhood profession, such as the growing synthesis between early childhood programs and the role of public education. Benefiting from the global reach of innovative educational practices, the early childhood community in Canada has seen significant shifts and begun new ways of observing and documenting children's thinking and expression. We, the authors, have changed as well, deepening our beliefs in responsive, inclusive practices that reflect what is meaningful in children's lives and in the lives of their families and communities. Observation is still at the centre of our inclusive and responsive practice, reflecting who we are, what we believe, and how we reveal this to ourselves and others. How observation informs practice through appreciative inquiry is reflected in subjects such as family-centred practice, team relationships, capacity building, the environment, early intervention, and early identification.

Observing and documenting children's learning, growth, and experiences is a responsibility as well as a joyous practice. To support your learning, in this text you will find ideas, examples, guidance, strategies, and adaptations that are current and relevant, and that will be of benefit to you now and in the future. Many of the chapters have exhibits and links to various frameworks across Canada and internationally (including the Ontario Early Learning Framework, *How Does Learning Happen?*),

enabling educators to draw connections between observing and pedagogical documentation with links to practice. You will note that some of the chapters are about skill building and have an informational focus, while other chapters explore philosophical practices such as the ethics of observation, concepts of mutual education, and the inclusive concept of environment.

For the seasoned educator, some of the content will be familiar, yet the appreciative inquiry approach and cycle of observation may give you a flexible and inspiring framework for creating or continuing to build sound observation and pedagogical documentation practices that engage all educators, children, families, and communities.

Part 1 focuses on observation in a broad sense, examining one of the most complex educational practices in the field of early childhood. Observation plays more than a vital role—it is the substance of all pedagogical documentation. It is still the primary means of acquiring the knowledge we have about children and all aspects of our professional practice. It is also in this portion of the text that we introduce the observer to the rights of children and the important ethical considerations we must reflect upon as we prepare pedagogical documentation.

Our current professional practice requires educators to be innovative, creative, and co-constructive in their approach. The documentation, presented primarily in Part 2, serves to demonstrate that with a wide variety of choices, observers can gather information that supports a holistic portrayal of any child. Premised on a pedagogical approach to documentation, these chapters highlight the importance of children, families, and educators co-observing, co-documenting, and making visible the voices of all in the learning environment. Each method in this text includes the practice and approach of appreciative inquiry and facilitates the use of inquiry, reflection, and interpretation within a team approach. Explored in depth are current and trending documentation methods, all of which can be technologically produced, prepared, accessed, and shared. Furthermore, these methods support choice and discussion; they can be adapted to support any philosophy or practice; and when these methods are combined or used alongside traditional observation or assessment methods, educators are better equipped to support transformation of their practices no matter where they are in the world.

Part 3 continues with the topic of pedagogical documentation, introducing curriculum and portfolio development (e-portfolios and hard-copy portfolios), as well as examining early intervention and early identification. New directions in social media and technology conclude this section, giving educators, families, children, and administrators a potentially new forum for co-documenting and making sense of what we see and hear, as well as for co-educating, co-constructing,

and co-planning. Administrators of early childhood programs who are working to develop responsive, inclusive programs will find expert advice and innovative ideas as they consider the best possibilities in collaboration with their learning community for their centre, school, or agency.

This fifth edition emphasizes the links between observation and appreciative inquiry; observation and pedagogical documentation; responsive, inclusive practice and the cycle of observation; diversity within communities and capacity building; early identification/early intervention and professional relationships; and personal beliefs/values and the development of meaningful curriculum and environment. Using the cycle of observation, each link is examined to illustrate how observation may begin like a stone dropped in the water—beginning with the observation of a child, which sends ripples out in all directions to reach the community and even global shores.

## **STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OF THE FIFTH EDITION**

The structural organization of the text remains the same as in previous editions.

**Parts 1, 2, and 3** serve to organize content into three main parts.

**Part 1.** Observation reveals how children see their world, what they think about it, how they use the things that are in it, and whom they trust, play with, and want to be around. Observation is setting-independent, serving no one particular philosophy, and is used by educators the world over. Observation is still the most important investigative methodology we have to discover how young children grow and develop.

Part 1 is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of observation and appreciative inquiry and illustrates why observation is important in all aspects of education, regardless of pedagogy and philosophy. Play, family, diversity, and culture are examined as a context for observation, along with a look at the role of the educator in responsive, inclusive practice. Chapter 1 briefly examines areas of child development, rates of development, and developmental guidelines and principles. It includes the topic of observation in research, both historical and current perspectives. The chapter provides a foundation from which further learning can be pursued, linking current practice to all aspects of the observation process.

In Chapter 2, one of the most important concepts is introduced—one that you will see throughout the entire text—the cycle of observation. The basic questions of observation—who, what, how, when, where, and why—are also explored. Topics related to the observation process, such as occupational standards and challenges to effective observation, are investigated. This chapter is also about getting ready to begin the actual process of observation and relevant concepts to reflect upon, such

as the rights of children, the Code of Ethics, and confidentiality—concepts and ideas that will lay the foundation for ensuing chapters.

Chapter 3 is about pedagogical documentation. In this chapter, you will learn the influence that bias and judgment have upon the observation and documentation process. An expanded section on bias will assist you with exploring the very real world of perception, values, and bias and their impact on your development as a professional. Expanded significantly in this chapter is the interpretation process. Chapter 3 will explain how different documentation methodologies require us to approach interpretations in different ways.

Another area thoroughly examined in this chapter is the actual writing process, with concrete, practical examples, guidelines, and suggestions. Few texts in the field of early childhood provide relevant information on the unique writing process that is pedagogical documentation. Even fewer texts address the concerns of mature students who have been away from school or those of newcomer students from other countries. This chapter will support their development as observers and writers of observations.

**Part 2** introduces two major categories of documentation methods and is composed of two chapters illustrating a wide variety of ways in which to document and interpret the growth, learning, and experiences of young children. Chapter 4 speaks to the narrative, open style of pedagogical documentation, such as the anecdotal record, photographs and text, learning stories, audio recordings, and video recordings. The closed types of records illustrated in Chapter 5 include those that target specific behaviours, such as the checklist, or track the social play of a child, such as the participation chart.

Part 2 is the most pragmatic section in the text, as it provides numerous practical, current, and popular ways of gathering, documenting, and making visible the learning of children. We have tried to encompass a wide spectrum of documentation, from a basic checklist to examples of pedagogical documentation embraced and practised in schools and early childhood centres across Canada and around the globe. We do not promote one type of record above others; rather, we propose a variety of choices so that reflection may prompt an inquiry, new questions, a discussion, or, after reflection, the adoption of new pedagogical documentation methodologies that support and reflect the children and families in one's learning community.

The text and the online site provide numerous methods for documenting the experiences of young children, the interactions and relationships of adults and children, and the environment. The examples found in these two chapters can be used with different age groups, as well as with populations of children who may require

adaptations or extra supports. An advantages/disadvantages chart of the methods is included in MindTap to allow for quick comparison.

The comprehensive exhibit examples in these chapters and online illustrate real student work that exemplifies the notion that through observation, students can construct their own meaningful documentation. We hope these examples will encourage you as you begin your journey as a student-observer.

The purpose of **Part 3** is to look through the lens of the cycle of observation to reflect and see new possibilities, creating a new space in your mind that can transform what you see and believe. Part 3 is about reflective practice—a key concept fundamental to observation, particularly when living in a society that is ever-changing, with research and practices that constantly evolve and reframe our thinking. Change invited us to create this fifth edition, where the vibrant process of investigating, learning, and reflecting continues to encourage dialogue, sharing, and discovery of innovative ways to observe and document the lives of children.

In Part 3, we explore how our beliefs and practices around observation are reflected in day-to-day interactions, families, communities, and the global village. With the immediacy of social media and the Internet, it is no wonder that we look not only to our own neighbourhoods but also outward to others for their philosophy and practices regarding children and families. Guided by responsive, inclusive practices, educators look to models and their principles, goals, and core values to reaffirm, discover, and reflect. Exploring alternative methods that assist us in creating the most useful, meaningful ways of sharing the learning and development of children is necessary.

## CHANGES TO THE FIFTH EDITION

This text is the fifth edition of *Observing Young Children: Transforming Early Learning through Reflective Practice*. The first edition was published in 1999, the second in 2004, the third in 2009, and the fourth in 2012. Major changes in each edition reflect the changes in the field of early childhood, our knowledge base, legislation, and society, and an overall transformation of the pedagogy of education and play.

The general changes to each chapter are as follows:

- An overview is presented at the start of each chapter.
- Focus questions at the beginning of each chapter are included to prompt inquiry and discussion of key topics in the chapter.
- A summary is provided at the end of each chapter.



- Key terms are highlighted in each chapter and a glossary of these terms is provided at the end of the text.
- Each chapter incorporates exhibits designed to highlight a concept or provide a specific example of chapter material.
- The new colourful design with outstanding colour photos and print makes this edition visually interesting and engaging.
- An Advantages/Disadvantages section for each of the observational methods in Chapters 4 and 5 has been included in MindTap to allow readers to determine which best suits their purpose for observing.

## **CHAPTER 1**

Chapter 1 begins Part 1 and has been revised to include new research, topics, terminology, exhibits, and concepts that reflect current and leading-edge early learning observational practices. Chapter 1 begins with the image of a child and details why this focus is all-important in the process of observation.

In this edition, the relationship between observation and appreciative inquiry is explored in depth to look for the “possibilities” where the voices of children can be heard. Inspired by sociocultural theory, inquiry-based thinking forms the catalyst for learning and pedagogical documentation. Reasons to observe are covered as in previous editions, but references to new inquiries, such as ethnographic research, illustrate the changing methodologies used to capture not only information but also the relationships of information and what that means. The content in Part 1 speaks to the educator as part of a responsible early learning community and highlights the importance of understanding the complex nature of the observational process. Using a responsive and inclusive lens for observation, this chapter strengthens the reflective practices of today’s educators and further emphasizes the role of the educator as a partner in a broader early learning community.

## **CHAPTER 2**

In this chapter, the key concept of the cycle of observation is introduced and explored in further detail than in previous editions, connecting this content to all chapters throughout the text. The observation cycle includes children, families, educators, the environment, the community, and much more. This concept is not new, but how it is used to support the main themes of this text is new and visionary; it is the primary vehicle for reflection and inquiry. New to this chapter are the deeply explored topics of the rights of children and ethical issues in observation and pedagogical documentation, and how these topics relate to the observer and the ethical

and confidential process of observing and documenting the experiences of children. Chapter 2 has also been revised with new research, exhibits, photos, and examples.

### **CHAPTER 3**

Chapter 3 separates this text on observation from all others as it clearly addresses the complicated task of writing, documenting what is seen or heard. As writing observations in the field of early childhood offers its own set of challenges, this chapter clearly addresses those challenges and the often-asked question, “How do I write this?” It tackles some of the main issues of writing: lack of confidence, writing when you have been out of school for some time and are returning as a mature student, and writing as an English-language learner. Writing observations in early childhood settings offers its own set of challenges, whether it is with the use of electronic devices or pen and paper. Student examples in the text demonstrate what is possible while providing strategies and ideas. The Chapter 3 focus on skill development is supported by dozens of closed-captioned videos featuring a wide range of age groups from the online Instructor’s Manual. This chapter also explores the topic of bias, cautioning students to document their observations in such a way that represents children fairly and equitably. Chapter 3 also includes new photos, key terms, exhibits, and topics.

### **CHAPTER 4**

Chapter 4 begins Part 2, introducing observational narrative methods that are open-ended, flexible, and focused on capturing the spontaneous learning and experiences of young children. In this edition, this chapter has been expanded to include methods that favour the practices of responsive, emergent, or play-based curriculum, focusing on the spontaneous learning opportunities in the early childhood setting. The choice we make reflects the inquiry. Creation of the documentation and subsequent revisiting by the educator and/or families and children shape what is important. These observational tools form one of the major groupings that can be represented in a child’s portfolio. This chapter helps answer the question, “What are the advantages of the visual alternatives to print-dependent methods used to document the activity of children?” Using these observational methods offers ways to discover what is new about children, uncover what had been previously unknown, or begin to develop information about a story or project. Technology plays a role in the way we document the experiences of young children, and this chapter, along with Chapter 8, illustrates with examples the changing nature of observation.

Pedagogical documentation allows students to see their own learning through their observations, which gives them another benchmark for their success besides tests and assignments. Students and instructors are again privy to resources and links for this chapter online. Chapter 4 also contains new research, photos, examples, and exhibits.

## **CHAPTER 5**

Chapter 5 offers many types of methods that target behaviours or experiences seen by educators as a means to learn specific information about a child or situation. In this edition, Chapter 5 examines these methods more clearly and in more detail, explaining why they are useful and giving examples that are meaningful for an educator. These methods have been streamlined with new content and examples that more thoroughly explain their possible adaptations. These observational methods are presented to invoke discussion and reflection regarding how educators might use them to inform their practice. For Chapters 4 and 5, a chart listing each documentation method's advantages and disadvantages is provided in MindTap.

## **CHAPTER 6**

Chapter 6 is the first chapter of the last section: Part 3. Chapter 6 has been completely revised since the last edition. This chapter asks and answers the question, “How do we determine a framework in which to organize our pedagogical documentation, and how do we share that information?” Chapter 6 is the application of previous chapters. This chapter takes a broad look at how the cycle of observation opens the door to the mutual education of educators, families, and the community through reflection, inquiry, and appreciation. New research, exhibits, and content highlight how reflection and observation build self-awareness in educators, how mutual education between children and adults facilitates “possibility” thinking, and the importance of building our own pedagogy of observation and documentation. Chapter 6 prompts the reader to use a number of responsive and inclusive perspectives when observing young children, looking beyond the traditional developmental lens to consider many other approaches, such as those of sociocultural and psychological influences. Approximately half of this chapter is devoted to the development of portfolios. The investigation of portfolios reveals a comprehensive look into relevant subtopics such as e-portfolios, stages and content of portfolios, how to link documentation and information to professional standards and frameworks, and the various types and forms of portfolios. In addition, resources online provide examples, research, and related topics.

## **CHAPTER 7**

Chapter 7 connects the learning from previous chapters and describes how early identification and early intervention transform practice with the cycle of observation. This chapter explores the complex process of both topics, starting with family-centred practice, interprofessional education, assessment tools, individual planning for a child with special needs, and the terminology associated with the individualized planning process.

Chapter 7 affirms the notion that observation is integral to everything we do as educators, especially when it involves children and families who need extra supports and services. In this edition, we realized that involvement in the observation cycle takes us beyond the corridors of early childhood settings and schools out into the community, both local and global; it causes us to step out to look back in and be involved in appreciative inquiry that involves assessment, teams, collaboration, and mutual education. The cycle of observation leads to discussion of referrals, adjustments and adaptations, environmental design, and the ways that children and families can draw assistance from the knowledge and skills of educators and the community. Integral to this chapter are further resources and examples provided online.

## **CHAPTER 8**

Chapter 8, more than any other chapter in this text, introduces new terms, exhibits, and content. College and university instructors will be pleased to see this content included in the fifth edition. This chapter begins with an exploration of the role of environment as co-educator and co-play partner with children. Understanding that a quality environment is much more than just the physical attributes of a space is important; educators must observe a number of environmental aspects, including relationships and the psychological tone of the space, to understand its role and interactions with children.

Chapter 8 carefully weaves together all previous chapters in this text; the role of the educator has transformed so significantly that it is important to challenge our current professional paradigms of practice. Opportunities are vast for educators to take on the role of leader and mentor in evolving observational practices to reflect both pedagogical documentation methodologies and the necessary components within the cycle of observation that is discussed throughout this text. Examples are available online of educator leaders in the profession who are innovative in social media documentation methods in order to function in a co-education role with children and families.

Chapter 8 also explores trends in social media documentation, as there is much to learn about this social media technology, its ability to include the voices of children and families in real-time learning experiences, and its ability to make children's learning visible. To be a transformational observer, it is important to maintain currency in one's knowledge and skills regarding observation and documentation. Participation in ongoing professional development and communities of practice is important for educators, as is the documentation of one's own growth and development in a portfolio as an educator. Researcher and lifelong learner, participant in ongoing professional development, and contributor to community capacity-building are all-important roles that educators must assume to further support and promote innovative observational practices.

## SPECIAL PEDAGOGY TO SUPPORT LEARNING

### INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCES

These online instructor's resources provide password-protected content for use by any instructor, and are especially helpful to part-time instructors or instructors new to this course material. Included in the resources for each chapter are expected content such as a test bank of informal and formal assessment items, Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentation slides, and an instructor's guide that contains key concepts, engagement strategies, reflective questions, internet and video exercises, and annotated lists of recommended resources, such as articles, texts, videos, and websites. The instructor's manual also includes sections on student motivation and challenges to learning, engagement strategies, and reflections on teaching.



The **Nelson Education Teaching Advantage (NETA)** program delivers research-based instructor resources that promote student engagement and higher-order thinking to enable the success of Canadian students and educators. Be sure to visit Nelson Education's **Inspired Instruction** website at <http://www.nelson.com/inspired/> to find out more about NETA.

The following instructor resources have been created for *Observing Young Children*, Fifth Edition. Access these ultimate tools for customizing lectures and presentations at <http://www.nelson.com/instructor>.

## **NETA Test Bank**

This resource was written by Kristine Fenning and Sally Wylie. It includes approximately 40 multiple-choice questions written according to NETA guidelines for effective question construction. Also included are more than 40 short answer and 80 essay questions that, together, cover the full scope of the text.

## **NETA PowerPoint**

PowerPoint lecture slides for every chapter have been created by Kristine Fenning and Sally Wylie. There is an average of 18 slides per chapter, many featuring key figures, tables, and photographs from *Observing Young Children*. NETA principles of clear design and engaging content have been incorporated throughout, making it simple for instructors to customize the deck for their courses.

## **NETA Instructor's Guide**

The Instructor's Guide to accompany *Observing Young Children*, Fifth Edition, has been prepared by Kristine Fenning and Sally Wylie. This manual is organized by chapter and contains sample lesson plans, learning objectives, suggested classroom activities, and a resource integration guide to give instructors the support they need to engage their students within the classroom.

As with the text, the Instructor's Guide represents a complete update of previous instructor manuals for this text. A key highlight or added value is that while students are using documents available online, instructors are able to access their own resources that connect to students' understanding of content explored within their text and online. This coordinated approach to learning and teaching offers a rich hybrid experience of research, examples, and content for all involved.

## **Day One Slides**

Day One—Prof InClass is a PowerPoint presentation that instructors can customize to orient students to the class and their text at the beginning of the course.



## **MindTap**

Offering personalized paths of dynamic assignments and applications, MindTap is a digital learning solution that turns cookie-cutter into cutting-edge, apathy into engagement, and memorizers into higher-level thinkers. MindTap enables students to analyze and apply chapter concepts within relevant assignments, and allows instructors to measure skills and promote better outcomes with ease. A fully online