Sharpening The Point: GOOD, BETTER, BEST - Observation & Assessment

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“Do I get partial credit for simply having the courage to get out of bed and face the world again today?”
Quality Assessment Practices in ECEC

According to the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

- Ethical, appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment should be a central part of all early childhood programs.
- Quality assessment practices assess young children’s strengths, progress, and needs; are developmentally appropriate; culturally and linguistically responsive; tied to children’s daily activities; supported by professional development; inclusive of families; and connected to specific, beneficial purposes.
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The purposes of doing assessment are:

1. making sound decisions about teaching and learning,
2. identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and
3. helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions.
Purposes of assessments are:

- **Screening**: Screening is a process designed for the purpose of identifying potential problems in learning or development.

- **Instructional**: This level of assessment yields information about what children know and are able to do at a given point in time, guides “next steps” in learning, and provides feedback on progress toward goals.
Purposes of assessment are:

• Diagnostic: the purpose of identifying specific learning difficulties and delays, disabilities, and specific skill deficits.

• Program evaluation: Focuses on the performance of groups of children. In addition, program evaluations routinely address variables, such as the quality of personnel and the physical environment, effectiveness of parent involvement, and community collaboration activities.
Methods of Assessment Practices in ECEC

• Formal: Involves a predetermined set of assessment items that represent “standards” of knowledge and/or skills and may be norm or criterion referenced. Items are presented to all children in the same sequence, using the same administration procedures and materials.

• Informal: Procedures for obtaining information that can be used to make judgments about children's learning behavior using means other than standardized instruments. Observations, checklists, and portfolios are just some of the informal methods of assessment.
Common Misunderstandings about Children and Assessment

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P7hOPJ1Pb4
OBSERVATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
Five Blind Men & an Elephant

• Five blind men wanted to find out what an elephant was. They had one brought to them. Surrounding the elephant, each blind man reached up to touch it. The first blind man grabbed the elephant's trunk. He said, "Aha! So an elephant is like a snake." The second blind man, holding one of the elephant's legs said, "Oh, no, it's like a tree trunk." The third grabbed the elephant's ear and said, "How can you say that? An elephant is clearly like a fan." The fourth, clutching the animal's tail, said, "No, no, no! The elephant is a like a rope." The fifth, climbing up the side of the elephant, said, "You're all wrong! The elephant resembles a small hill."

• --Indian folk tale
COMMON ERRORS IN OBSERVATION
Making Assumptions:
How can you rephrase this statement?

• Annie never shares
Labeling Behavior: How can you rephrase this statement?

• Tommy is mean.
Making Conclusions you are not Qualified to Make:

How can you rephrase this statement?

• Billie can’t do anything by himself because he is the youngest in a large family and they do everything for him.
Comparing Children:
They develop at different rates.
How can you rephrase this statement?

• Tommy does not ride his bike as well as the others.
FOUR KEY POINTS ABOUT OBSERVATION
Learn to LOOK

Learn: Learn about yourself and the children you work with

Outlook: Be objective and factual

Observe: Collect the facts

Keep track: Keep track of the data, summarize it and share
METHODS FOR COLLECTING DATA
TIMED SAMPLING:

Observations taken at set intervals.

• Every 5 minute
• Every 10 minutes
• Or every 20 minutes.
TALLIES:

• Provides a record of how often behavior happens over time.

John: Nov. 2, 2003
Aggressive Behavior:
9:00
9:30
10:10
11:05
12:00
EVENT SAMPLING: (Incident Records)

• Documenting exactly what happens during a particular event or time of day.

  – Provides information about when and how a particular behavior occurred.
CHECK LIST:

• The simplest form of observation where the observer checks off listed behaviors.
NARRATIVE:

• A written summary of the conclusions of the observations or activities of the day.
ANECDOTAL RECORDS

• Teacher records observations of child’s behavior.
  – Helps test hunches about reasons for behavior.
  – Identify conditions that reinforce behavior by noticing what happens prior to behavior.
  – Gain feedback about what children may have learned from a lesson.
PORTFOLIO:

A COLLECTIONS OF THE CHILD’S WORK, PICTURES OF THE CHILD, OR VIDEO-RECORDINGS, INCLUDING WRITTEN OR RECORDED OBSERVATIONS ABOUT WHAT THE CHILD IS DOING.

Portfolios Provide:

• A way to communicate with parents.
• A way to assess individual progress.
• Evidence for teacher accountability.

May contain teacher observations & notes.
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Children are sometimes spontaneous, sometimes reserved; joyful now, sad later; friendly and reserved; competent and naïve; talkative and quiet. To be childlike is to experience an almost unpredictable array of discoveries, emotions, and levels of energy. Children are unique and complex and thus often difficult to comprehend. Yet, as teachers, it is important for us to know our children deeply, to flow with their currents, and to extend their budding theories about how the world works. Given the delightful yet often mysterious characteristics of young children, we learned decades ago that in order to comprehend children we must begin by observing them.

*George Forman & Ellen Hall, 2005*