

Using Observation and Documentation to Support Exploration and Learning Participant Guide

2 Hours

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Training Evaluation

In a few days, you will receive an email from Develop asking you to complete an online training evaluation from this event called a Training and Trainer Evaluation Tool (TTET). We would really appreciate your input about trainer performance, the content, and the training environment so that we can make improvements along the way. We use your feedback when we revise courses and schedule training events.

Course Overview

KCF Content Area:

KCF Content Area: IV.A. Observing, Recording, and Assessing Development

CDA Subject Area:

CDA Subject Area VII: Observing and recording children's behavior

Course Description

Discuss the ways observation and documentation support responsive, child-centered practices in early childhood programs. Use assessment data to identify and interpret children's interests, strengths, and emerging skills. Create meaningful observation-based curriculum plans that inspire curiosity, strengthen learning, and support each child's unique needs as they explore the world around them.

Learning Objectives

Throughout this training, participants will:

- Describe how ongoing observation and documentation assist educators in supporting children's development and creating engaging, enriching learning experiences.
- Design meaningful curriculum plans that support child-led exploration and learning.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	15 minutes	Welcome/Introductions Objectives Review
B	30 minutes	Identifying High-Quality Program Practices
C	30 minutes	Moving from Observation to Reflection and Interpretation
D	30 minutes	Developing Responsive, Observation-based Plans
E	15 minutes	Course Summary

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Moving from Observation to Reflection and Interpretation:

Using observation data to support children's learning involves reflecting on several questions, including:

1. Where is this child spending the majority of his or her time?
2. Are the materials in the environment interesting and engaging to this child?
3. Are the activities I've implemented meeting the child's needs?
4. What changes or additions are needed?
5. What family input would help me to understand this child's learning or development more clearly?

Morning Play Observation Notes

Maria, Elias, and Usher are all four years old. They are gathered around the table in the sandbox. Maria grinds pieces of colored chalk into a fine powder using a mortar and pestle. Elias and Usher fill containers with water and stir in chalk dust to change the color of the water. The children predict what color their water will become before mixing different colors into their water. They take turns stirring and mixing, while discussing their observations with one another. When the container starts to overflow, they go to the supply shelf to find a larger bowl.

Kai and Sofia, age two, are playing side by side in the water table. Kai repeatedly scoops and pours water using a measuring cup, while Sofia floats a red boat in the water. At one point, Kai accidentally splashes water onto Sofia's shirt. Sofia becomes upset and begins to cry. Nyla, age 5, notices that Sofia is upset. She leaves the hole she is digging in the sandbox to help Sofia dry her shirt with a towel.

Mei, age 3, is sitting at the art table creating a picture using tempera paint sticks. She chooses different colors and makes lines, circles, and dots on the paper. She looks at the educator and says, "I make a rainbow garden!" She twists the dial on the paint stick when the paint runs out and continues working on her picture for several more minutes. When she is finished, she shows her picture to the educator and describes the pictures as flowers and butterflies.

Jacob, aged 7 months, sits on a rug with the educator. He stretches his hand out into the sun and twists, gazing intently at the shadow his hand makes on the rug. He turns to the educator and smiles, then looks back at the shadow and twists his hand again.

Interpreting Observation Data

Observation: What do we see and hear?	
Reflection & interpretation: What does this tell us?	
ECIPs learning domain: Circle one or more.	• Approaches to Learning • The Arts • Language, Literacy, and Communications • Mathematics • Physical and Movement Development • Scientific Thinking • Social and Emotional Development • Social Systems

Responsive, Observation-based Planning

Child/Group	Environment additions: arrangements or materials that invite children to explore	Ideas to support child-led initiatives: questions, materials, or changes that prompt deeper exploration, learning, or problem- solving	Educator-guided activities to extend their learning	ECIPs domain addressed
Maria, Elias, and Usher in the sandbox				
Kai, Sophia, and Nyla at the water table				
Mei at the art table				
Jacob on the rug				

Final Reflection

- What do I know about the children in the program? What have I recently observed about their development, needs, and interests? Think about what excites them, what they are interested in learning about and the questions they ask.
- What have my observations taught me about my program's environment, materials, routines, and activities?
- What information should I gather from families to support planning meaningful experiences for their children?

Personal Application:

- Describe one change you have made, or would like to make, based on your observations.
- What's one action you will take this week to improve your observation and documentation practices?

Resources

- [Early Childhood Indicators of Progress \(ECIPs\)](#)
- [NAEYC Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators](#)
- [American Psychological Association Inclusive Language Guide](#)