



# ***Observation:*** **The Heart of Authentic Assessment**

Participant Workbook

## Learning Goals

To enhance your observation skills by increasing your understanding of:

- Authentic assessment
- The essential role of observation in authentic assessment
- Key practices for effectively observing young children

## Agenda

Opening Activities

What is Authentic Assessment?

Key Practices for Effective Observation

1. Make observation a routine part of your work
2. Engage families in the observation process
3. Use strategies that match your purposes
4. Observe as objectively as possible
5. Document your observations
6. Reflect on and use your observations

Closing Activities and Evaluation

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## Observation: The Heart of Authentic Assessment



Notes:



Presented by



## Overall Goals for this Session

To enhance your observation skills by increasing your understanding of:

- Authentic assessment
- The essential role of observation in authentic assessment
- Key practices for effectively observing young children

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## What is Authentic Assessment?



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## Do We Really Want to Test Young Children?

There is widespread concern about the use of high pressure methods of testing or assessing young children

### Example:

An unknown adult pulls a child out of her familiar environment, sits her down at a table, and “quizzes” her on specific bits of knowledge or skill and expects to see this child at her best

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Notes:

## Authentic Assessment...

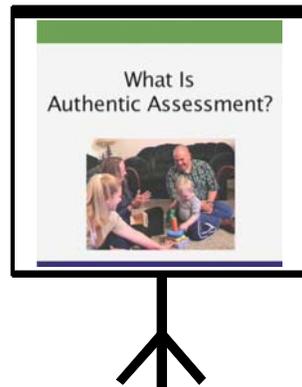
- Is an approach that is natural and non-threatening to children
- Gives us a more realistic understanding of what young children know and can do in their everyday lives



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## Let's Watch!



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## Authentic Assessment...

- Ongoing:** Is a natural part of what teachers do every day
- Whole child:** Helps us observe all areas of a child's growth and development
- Naturalistic:** Occurs as a child interacts with familiar materials, people and activities
- Multiple perspectives:** Uses information from a variety of sources
- Useful:** Helps teachers plan, measure progress, work with families and individualize curriculum

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Ongoing **observation** of children in their everyday routines and activities is at the heart of authentic assessment

Notes:

# Authentic Assessment...

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## Is ongoing

Is a natural part of what teachers do each and every day as they interact with young children

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## Involves the whole child

Helps us observe children in all areas of their growth and development

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## Is naturalistic

Takes place as children interact with familiar materials and people within everyday routines and activities

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## Considers multiple perspectives

Uses information from a variety of sources to develop a complete picture of the child

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## Is useful

Helps teachers plan curriculum, measure and describe progress, work with families and individualize curriculum to best fit each child's needs

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## Key Practices for Effective Observation



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Notes:

### Six Key Practices for Effective Observation

1. Make observation a routine part of your work
2. Engage families in the observation process
3. Use strategies that match your purposes
4. Observe as objectively as possible
5. Document your observations
6. Reflect on and use your observations

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Notes:

## Six Key Practices for Effective Observation

- 
1. Make observation a routine part of your work

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  2. Engage families in the observation process

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  3. Use strategies that match your purposes

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  4. Observe as objectively as possible

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  5. Document your observations

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  6. Reflect on and use your observations

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## Naturalistic observation means observing children...

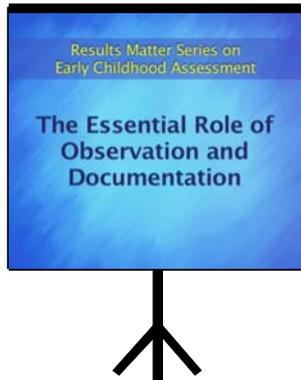
- as they interact with familiar toys, materials, and people,
- in the context of everyday routines, activities, and places,
- unobtrusively.



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Notes:

## Let's Watch!



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### Six Key Practices for Effective Observation

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### Be open to learning from families

- When families share their observations, we develop a more complete and accurate picture of the child
- Let families know that you value their observations and participation in ongoing authentic assessment



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Notes:

### Examples of ways to create opportunities for families to share their observations

- Give families concrete examples of the kinds of information you would like them to share
- Make portfolios accessible to families and invite them to contribute
- Place a basket at sign-in for families to drop off photos and notes for the teachers



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Notes:

### Six Key Practices for Effective Observation

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Notes:

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## Observation might help you ...

- Plan curricula and learning activities
- Document children's progress
- Share information with families
- Complete an assessment instrument
- Let children know that you value their work
- Share the good work of your program with the community



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## Examples of how purposes should influence how you go about observing

Purpose of Observation	Ways You Might Observe
Plan curriculum and teaching strategies	You might observe children participating in activities and jot down ideas for new activities and changes in the environment
Measure and describe children's progress	You might have an item in mind from a particular assessment tool and watch for children to demonstrate their level of mastery
Inform families about their children's learning	You might look for a specific aspect of a child's learning that the parents told you is of interest

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Notes:

Observation might be planned or spontaneous

Planned

Sometimes we intentionally plan our observations for specific purposes. When we do this, we might plan how, when, and where we will observe

Spontaneous

Other times, we observe spontaneously in response to something that is happening in the classroom that we want to capture and learn about

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Notes:

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**Describe what you see in this picture**

### Six Key Practices for Effective Observation

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Notes:

No two people will see the same child in identical ways. Two open and honest teachers can be asked to observe the same child. What they see and the interpretation they make will depend on what they decide to look for and on their own particular perspectives.

(Martin, S., *Take a Look*, 2007)

Notes:

# Objective vs. Subjective Descriptions

Objective	Subjective
<p>Descriptions of your observations provide the facts and details with as little interpretation as possible</p> <p><b>Example:</b> There was a crowd of about 50 people in front of the museum</p>	<p>Descriptions of your observations are influenced by your opinions, past personal experiences, and background</p> <p><b>Example:</b> There was an impatient crowd of about 50 people waiting endlessly to enter the museum</p>

## Are these descriptions objective or subjective?

1. Sarah puts dishes on table for the bear and the doll and says "you...one...you...one...ME!"
2. Julie sets the table, probably imitating how it happens at home.
3. Zack has been crying because he misses his mom and is afraid she won't come back. He clings to his blanket for comfort.
4. Luis kisses his mom goodbye and smiles. He cries after the preschool door closes and then crawls on Ms. S's lap.

When we reflect on our descriptions we need to remember that...

- We observed the child at only one point in time and we need to avoid jumping to conclusions
- We each have our own “filters” (values, beliefs, or feelings) that sometimes cloud how we interpret our observations



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Notes:

Observation Practice 1



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Notes:

# Observation Practice 1

**As you observe Henry:**

- Jot down your descriptions of what you see and hear him do
  - Describe what he does as objectively as you can and avoid subjective descriptions
-

Notes:

### Six Key Practices for Effective Observation

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### Examples of ways to document your observations

- Observation notes
- Work samples
- Photographs, video, and audio recordings
- Portfolios (traditional and online)



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Notes:

# Ways to Document Observations

## Observation Notes:

Observation notes are objective written accounts of what is seen and heard. Depending on the purpose of observation, notes might be very brief and are sometimes referred to as “anecdotes” or “jottings.” Other notes represent a longer and more detailed description or “running record”.

## Developmental Checklists:

Developmental Checklists are collections of statements or questions that describe certain indicators of development, usually organized by domains such as communication, motor skills, or social/emotional development. Checklists help organize observational information to be used for a variety of purposes. Examples of developmental checklists include brief screening tools completed by pediatricians at well child checks, questionnaires completed by families when registering for school, and assessment checklists completed periodically by teachers in order to monitor a child’s progress.

## Work Samples:

Work samples are collections of children’s work, including drawings, paintings, writing, and three dimensional constructions that represent the best examples of what a child knows and is able to do at a given point in time. Both adults and children collect work samples in the classroom and at home and include captions or observation notes that describe what was observed at the time the sample was collected. They are often organized in some type of portfolio, including electronic portfolios.

## Photographs, Video, and Audio Recordings:

Photos, video and audio recordings are useful in documenting child growth and learning. A still camera or video recorder might be used to capture a group of children in action or images of work that otherwise couldn’t be preserved such as block structures or sidewalk drawings. Video recordings allow teachers and children to revisit activities and notice details that may not have been documented if using observation notes alone. Audio recordings can be used to document language samples or to record children’s conversations in particular work centers. Children can use digital audio and video recorders to save and replay their reflections on their own work. The recent affordability of digital devices plus the decreased size of the digital files makes this kind of documentation a good choice for early childhood programs.

## Writing Effective Observation Notes

- Be Factual:** Describe only what actually happened
- Be Brief:** Keep it short, but provide enough detail that you will be able to remember and understand what happened
- Be Relevant:** Include key details such as direct quotes and information about the context

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Notes:

## Examples of Observation Notes for Henry

2/14/08

H. lifts cup in air... says "My cup!"

2/14/08

H. moved macaroni to spoon using pincer grasp.

2/14/08

H. lifts cup in the air... says "My cup!" Sets it down on other side of plate.

2/14/08

H. moved macaroni from plate to spoon using pincer grasp, then raking grasp, then pincer grasp.

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### Work Samples



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### Photographs

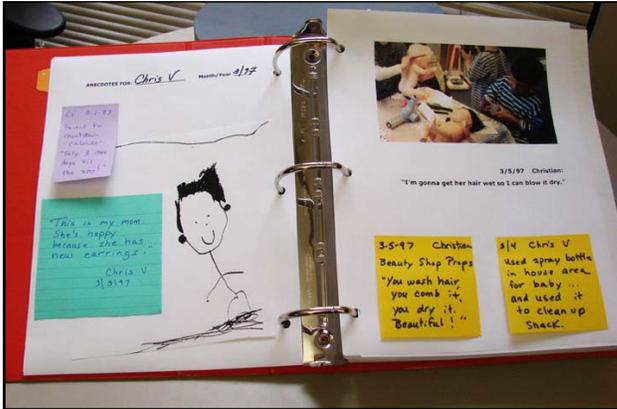


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## Traditional Portfolios



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## Online Portfolios (e.g. CC.net)

CREATIVE CURRICULUM.net

WELCOME LARRY EDELMAN (classroom teacher) | Home | parent site | my profile | log

Document & Assess | Planning Tools | Group Reports | Communications | Activity Library | Resources | Manage Classes | Administrator

Observation Notes | Portfolios | Progress Checkpoints

YOUR CLASSES

- Alice Early Learning Center (1/7)
- Alice Early Learning Center (P)
- Zaniya

Portfolio for Zaniya

Add a New File

Date	Work Sample	Type	Related Objectives	Source
1/31/2008	<a href="#">View: WAF - Zaniya says please and thank you</a>			<a href="#">Edit</a>   <a href="#">Delete</a>
1/31/2008	<a href="#">View: WAF - Zaniya says please and thank you</a>			<a href="#">Edit</a>   <a href="#">Delete</a>
1/31/2008	<a href="#">View: WAF - Zaniya says please and thank you</a>			<a href="#">Edit</a>   <a href="#">Delete</a>
1/31/2008	<a href="#">View: WAF - Zaniya says please and thank you</a>			<a href="#">Edit</a>   <a href="#">Delete</a>

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Notes:

## Observation Practice 2



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# Observation Practice 2

**Remember to be objective**

**Write your notes in ways that are:**

- Factual
- Brief
- Relevant

**Keep in mind the purpose of this observation:**

- You are observing Caul to gather information to share with his parents at an upcoming parent-teacher conference
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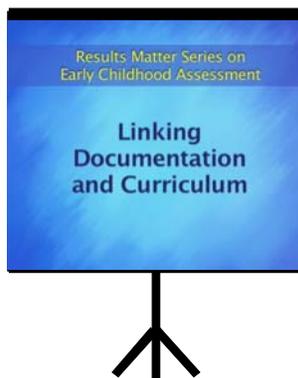
## Six Key Practices for Effective Observation

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Notes:

## Let's Watch!



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## Observation helps us...

### Understand individual children's...

- Interests
- Strengths
- Challenges

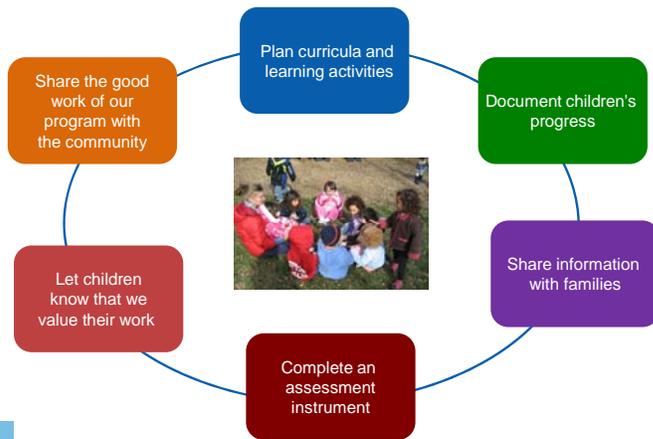


### Plan...

- The kinds of activities and materials to provide
- When and how to rotate activities
- How to expand on activities

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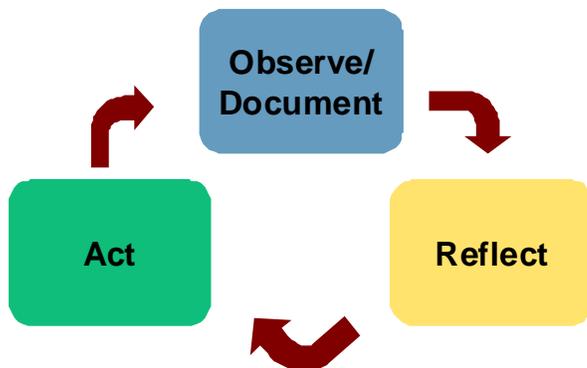
## We might use information we gain from ongoing observation to...



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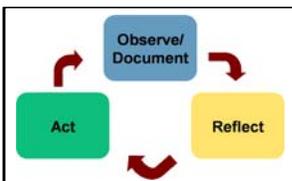
Notes:

## A Process for Reflection and Action



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Notes:



### Observe/Document

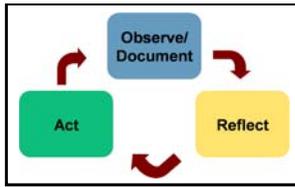
We document what we observe as objectively as possible:

- We note the things that we actually see and hear,
- We focus on facts,
- We try to remain nonjudgmental, and
- We avoid being subjective; we guard against allowing our personal views, values, feelings, or background to influence what we note.

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Notes:

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**Reflect**

Once we document our observations:

- We pause and reflect on what we observed to make meaning of what we have, and
- We put our observations in context of other things we know about the child.

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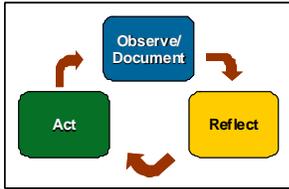
### Sample Questions to Guide Reflection

- What was my purpose for observing?
- What similarities or patterns do I notice?
- What do these observations seem to suggest?
- What else might be going on?
- What else do I want to observe or find out?
- How does this observation fit with other things that I know about the child from previous observations?
- How will I document my interpretations?

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Notes:

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### Act

Once we reflect on our observations, we decide what actions to take. For instance, we might decide:

- To do more observations,
- To rate an item on an assessment system, or
- Ways we want to individualize our teaching.

## Example 1 of Observe/Reflect/Act

### I observed:

Henry sometimes scoops macaroni independently with the spoon in his left hand and at other times uses his right hand for assistance.

### I reflected:

What is affecting Henry's ability to spoon the macaroni independently with one hand? Has he been demonstrating this skill long enough that I should expect him to be using it consistently? Should I do something to encourage his consistent and independent use of this skill or should I just wait for it to happen naturally?

### I acted:

When needed, I'll remind Henry to position his plate close to him so it will be easier to use his spoon independently. I'll continue to observe to see if this helps.

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Notes:

## Example 2 of Observe/Reflect/Act

### I observed:

Henry takes turns communicating with Teagan, using finger pointing and eye contact. He made sounds when pointing, but I couldn't tell if these were words.

### I reflected:

In what ways does Henry communicate differently with different people or during other activities? Have I observed Henry's communication often enough in different settings to have a good understanding of his skills?

### I acted:

I will make additional observations of Henry, at different times of the day, in different activities, and with adults as well as other children.

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Notes:

## Observation Practice 3



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# Observation Practice 3

**Remember to be objective**

**Write your notes in ways that are:**

- Factual
- Brief
- Relevant

**Keep in mind the purpose of this observation:**

- Kaleb's physical therapist asked you to give her a good idea about his skills as he moves about and uses various pieces of equipment on the playground
-

Notes:

**In Summary:**  
Six Key Practices for Effective Observation

1. Make observation a routine part of your work
2. Engage families in the observation process
3. Use strategies that match your purposes
4. Observe as objectively as possible
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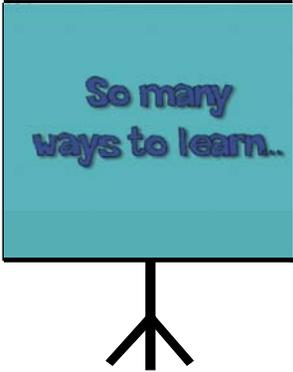
Ready, Set,...



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Let's Watch!



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Thank You!



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