

Barbara Ann Nilsen Ed.D.

Week by Week

Plans for Documenting
Children's Development

8th Edition



Week by Week: Plans for Documenting Children's Development, 8e

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 Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (2020), NAEYC Early

Learning Program Accreditation Standards and Assessment Items (2019), and Developmentally Appropriate Practices (2020) (DAP) adopted in 2009.

NAEYC Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (2020)	NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards and Assessment Items (2019)	NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2020)
NAEYC	NAEYC	DAP
<p>1 1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.</p> <p>3a: Understand that assessments (formal and informal, formative and summative) are conducted to make informed choices about instruction and for planning in early learning settings.</p> <p>3b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.</p> <p>3c: Use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child.</p> <p>3d: Build assessment partnerships with families and with professional colleagues.</p> <p>6b: Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines.</p>	<p>4B Using Appropriate Assessment Methods: Obtain information on all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, health and physical development (including self-help skills). P 55</p> <p>4D Adapt Curriculum Individualized Teaching and Informing Program Development: Child assessments should be regularly conducted to inform classroom instruction, and to make sound decisions about curriculum content, teaching approaches, and personal interactions. P 57</p>	<p>3A: Observation, documentation, and assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, reflective, and purposeful.</p> <p>3C: A system in place to collect, make sense of, and use observations, documentation, and assessment information to guide what goes on in the early childhood setting.</p>
<p>2 1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.</p> <p>2b: Collaborate as partners with families through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engagement.</p> <p>3b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.</p> <p>6b: Know about and uphold ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines.</p>	<p>7 Families. 7.A: Knowing and Understanding the Program's Families. Classroom staff should communicate with families often about shared caregiving issues, including parent-child separation at drop-off, special needs, and the food served and consumed. P 92</p> <p>6 Staff Competencies, Preparation, and Support</p> <p>6.BB.01: Professional Development Plans and Procedures. The individual evaluation process should support administrative staff and teaching staff to evaluate and improve their own performance, using ongoing reflection and feedback from supervisors, peers, and families. P 84</p>	<p>2A: Educators take responsibility for establishing respectful relations with and among families.</p>
<p>3 1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.</p> <p>2a: Know about, understand, and value the diversity of families.</p> <p>3a–d: Understand that the primary purpose of assessment is to inform instruction and planning in early learning settings, use observation, documentation, and other appropriate assessment approaches and tools and use screening and assessment tools in ways that are grounded and developmentally, culturally, ability, and linguistically appropriate to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child.</p> <p>6b: Know about and uphold ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines.</p>	<p>2. Curriculum. 2K Health and Safety.: The curriculum and daily routines of a classroom can provide toddlers and older children with many opportunities to establish and practice habits to promote good health, such as serving and feeding themselves, getting enough rest, good nutrition, and exercise; washing fruits and vegetables before consumption; hand washing and tooth brushing. P 30</p> <p>3. Teaching. 3.D Using Time, Grouping and Routines to Achieve Learning Goals.: Routine care times (e.g., diapering, handwashing, feeding or eating, tooth brushing) can be used to facilitate children's self-awareness, language, and social interaction. P 44</p>	<p>4.F: Educators know how and when to scaffold children's learning.</p>
<p>4 1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.</p> <p>3b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.</p> <p>6b: Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines.</p>	<p>2. Curriculum 2.c: Preschoolers and kindergartners should be given equipment they can use to engage in large motor experiences that stimulate a variety of skills. . . . Fine motor development proceeds when young children have many different developmentally appropriate opportunities to use their hands and fingers to act on their environment. P 33</p> <p>9 Physical environment. 9.B Outdoor Environmental Design.: Outdoor learning environments should be designed with equipment that is age appropriate and developmentally appropriate for the children being served by the program. P 108</p>	<p>1D: The physical environment protects the health and safety of the learning community members and it specifically supports young children's needs for play, activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, and nourishment.</p>

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<p>5 1a: Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.</p> <p>3a–d: Understand that the primary purpose of assessment is to inform instruction and planning in the early learning setting.</p> <p>6: Becoming a professional.</p>	<p>1.C Helping Children Make Friends.: Teachers play a role in the development of friendships between children; they design opportunities that promote peer engagement, help children sustain and enhance play, and help children resolve conflict.</p> <p>2.I Social Studies.: They must have opportunities to feel part of a classroom community, so that each child feels accepted and gains a sense of belonging. 1.C.02</p>	<p>1B: Relationships are nurtured with each child, and educators facilitate the development of positive relationships among children.</p>
<p>6 1: Child Development and Learning in Context</p> <p>3: Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment</p> <p>6: Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator</p>	<p>1.F Promoting Self-Regulation.: With toddlers and older children, teachers actively teach social, communication, and emotional regulation skills including helping children to use language to communicate their needs, appropriately expressing their emotions, and taking turns when speaking with each other.</p> <p>2.B Social and Emotional Development.: Children have varied opportunities to learn to understand, empathize with, and take into account other people's perspectives.</p>	<p>1C1: Educators help children develop responsibility and self-regulation.</p> <p>1C4: Educators listen to and acknowledge children's feelings, including frustrations, using words as well as nonverbal communication techniques.</p>
<p>7 4–c: Engaging in genuine, reciprocal conversations with children, eliciting and exploring children's ideas, asking questions that prove and stimulate children's thinking.</p> <p>5–b: Teachers have a deep understanding of the bilingual language development process in young children.</p>	<p>1.B Building Positive Relationships between Teachers and Children.: Teachers show respect for children by listening to them, answering their questions, and engaging them in meaningful conversations.</p> <p>2.D Language Development.: The goals and objectives for language acquisition address both verbal and nonverbal communication and are rooted in ethnic and other community traditions.</p>	<p>4D5: Educators created language-rich environments that focus on the diversity and complexity of language in children's communities.</p> <p>4E6: To enhance children's conceptual understanding, early childhood educators use various strategies including conversation and documentation which encourage children to reflect on and revisit their experiences in the moment and over time.</p>
<p>8 3–b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.</p> <p>6–b: Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines.</p>	<p>3.F Making Learning Meaningful for All Children.: The curriculum covers all content and developmental areas and supports the development of daily plans and learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate.</p> <p>3.G Using Instruction to Deepen Children's Understanding and Build Their Skill and Knowledge.: Activities may be expanded or simplified based on student needs and interests.</p>	<p>4F1: Educators recognize and respond to the reality that in any group, children's skills will vary and they will need different levels of support.</p> <p>4F2: Scaffolding can take a variety of forms such as giving a child a hint, providing a cue, modeling the skill, or adapting the materials and activities.</p>
<p>9 3–b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.</p> <p>4–b: Understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child, recognizing that differentiating instruction, incorporating play as a core teaching practice, and supporting the development of executive function skills are critical for young children.</p>	<p>2.A Essential Characteristics.: The classroom materials and equipment used to implement the curriculum (books, music, dolls, puzzles, toys, dramatic play props) should be representative of the lives of the enrolled children and their families.</p>	<p>3F: Decisions that have a major impact on children, such as enrollment or placement, are made in consultation with families.</p>
<p>10 3–b: Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.</p> <p>4–c: Use a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, anti-bias, evidence-based teaching skills and strategies that reflect the principles of universal design for learning.</p>	<p>2.E: Early Literacy. Literacy development needs to be an element of all early curricula, including those for infants and toddlers.</p> <p>2.E: Preschool and kindergarten children should have multiple and varied opportunities to write.</p> <p>2.E: Preschool and kindergarten children need to develop phonological awareness as part of learning to read and write.</p>	<p>3B: Assessment focuses on children's progress toward developmental and educational goals.</p>

NAEYC Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (2020)	NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards and Assessment Items (2019)	NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2020)
<p>11 4-a Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices.: Integrating young children's home language and cultures into the environment and curriculum through materials, music, visual arts, dance, literature, and storytelling.</p> <p>5-a Understand Content Knowledge.: They value engagement in the arts as a way to express, communicate, and reflect upon self and others and upon culture, language, family, community, and history.</p>	<p>2.J Creative Expression and Appreciation for the Arts.: The curriculum for children of all ages must provide opportunities to learn about visual arts, the music, dance, and the dramatic arts of diverse cultures.</p> <p>4.C Identifying Children's Interests and Needs and Describing Children's Progress.: Staff who know and work with the children in different ways can collect information across the full range of children's experiences.</p>	<p>3D: The methods of assessment are appropriate and include results of their observations of children, clinical interviews, collections of children's work samples, and children's performance on authentic activities.</p> <p>5 Planning and Implementing an Engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals.: The curriculum should also provide windows on the world so that children learn about peoples, places, arts, sciences, and so on that they would otherwise not encounter. In diverse and inclusive learning communities, one child's mirrors are another child's windows, making for wonderful opportunities for collaborative learning.</p>
<p>12 5a: The arts—music, creative movement, dance, drama, visual arts—are primary media for human inquiry and insight.</p> <p>6c: Use professional communication skills, including technology-mediated strategies, to effectively support young children's learning and development and to work with families and colleagues.</p>	<p>2.J: The classroom materials and equipment used to implement the curriculum (books, music, dolls, puzzles, toys, dramatic play props) should be representative of the lives of the enrolled children and their families.</p> <p>2.J: The curriculum for children of all ages must provide opportunities to learn about the visual arts, music, dance, and dramatic arts of diverse cultures.</p>	<p>3A Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Children's Development and Learning.: Observation and assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, reflective, and purposeful.</p>
<p>13 1c: Early childhood educators understand how trauma and stress experienced by young children and their families, such as violence, abuse, serious illness and injury, separation from home and family, war, and natural disasters, can impact young children's learning and development.</p> <p>6b: They uphold their professional obligation to report child abuse and neglect, and their practice is informed by the position statements of their professional associations.</p>	<p>6A.10: Staff handbook and parent materials include a written policy and procedure for reporting child abuse and neglect.</p>	<p>3. Core Considerations to Inform Decision Making.: Recognizing that children's experiences may vary by their social identities (for example, by race or ethnicity, language, gender, class, ability, family composition, and economic status, among others), with different and intersecting impacts on their development and learning.</p> <p>1. Community of Learners. 1.c5: This includes monitoring their own behaviors for potential implicit biases or microaggressions on the basis of race and ethnicity, gender, disability, or other characteristics that unfairly target children or adults in the early learning setting, undermine an individual's self-worth, or perpetuate negative stereotypes. Educators can make adaptations to affirm and support positive development of each child's multiple social identities.</p>
<p>14 4: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Practices.</p> <p>4b: Understand and use teaching skills that are responsive to the learning trajectories of young children and to the needs of each child.</p> <p>6: Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator.</p> <p>6b: Early childhood educators can find and use professional guidelines, such as national, state, and local child-care regulations, special education standards and regulations, and professional health and safety practices.</p>	<p>10.F.2: Program Evaluation, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement.</p> <p>10.2B: All components of program operation must be guided by written policies, and they are carried out through articulated plans, systems, and procedures that enable the program to run smoothly and effectively.</p> <p>10.F: When the annual comprehensive program evaluation is completed, program staff, families, and advisory or governance board members are given a report of the findings.</p>	<p>3: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Children's Development and Learning.</p> <p>3.A: Observation, documentations, and the results of other formal and informal assessments are used to inform the planning and implementing of daily curriculum and experiences, to communicate with the child's family, and to evaluate and improve educators' and the program's effectiveness.</p>
<p>15 2. Family–Teacher Partnerships and Community</p> <p>2b: Early childhood educators take primary responsibility for initiating and sustaining respectful and reciprocal relationships with children's families and other caregivers.</p> <p>6. Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator</p> <p>6b: They uphold high standards of confidentiality and privacy, sensitivity, and respect for young children and their families and for their colleagues.</p>	<p>4.E Communicating with Families and Involving Families in the Assessment Process</p> <p>4E.2: Your written child assessment plan states that families are provided written reports about their child's development and learning at least two times a year.</p>	<p>2. Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families and Fostering Community Connections. 2E: Educators and the family share with each other their knowledge of the particular child and understanding of child development and learning as a part of day-to-day and other forms of communication (e.g., family get-togethers, meetings, support groups).</p>

Sources: NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators. (2019). National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington, DC: Author. NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards and Assessment Items. (2020). National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington, DC: Author. NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice. (2020). National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington, DC: Author.

**Eighth
Edition**

Week by Week

Plans for Documenting Children's Development

Barbara Ann Nilsen, EdD



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

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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, in research that is called *closing the loop*. 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, updated references, and new research to make the text as up-to-date and relevant to students and practitioners in the field. There is a stronger emphasis on the effects of culture woven into each chapter rather than separated as a topic. Children's differences can be attributed to a vast array of influences so those are included rather than segregated. The digital age has also affected how we live and teach so this has become a thread throughout the book, both as it affects children and how documentation is accomplished electronically.
- *Forms for observations.* The forms discussed in the text are provided throughout and are also available as Professional Resource Downloads in the digital eBook and as online resources for instructors and students. (Find pages xx-xxii for more information about instructor and student resources.) 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 itemized at the beginning of each chapter. In this book, that includes NAEYC's Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (2020), Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards (2019), and Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines (2020).
- *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 seventh edition is contained in this edition, but may be slightly rearranged. 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 "Getting

Started” explains 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 present various observation methods and developmental domains, not as exclusive to that observation method but to come full circle into Chapter 15 where we see the whole child and share that view with the family.

- *Key Terms defined in the margins.* The terminology associated with any profession is an important aspect of the field. Definitions of key terms 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 and in the Glossary at the back of the book for additional reference.

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 to document, store, and share information about the child.

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.

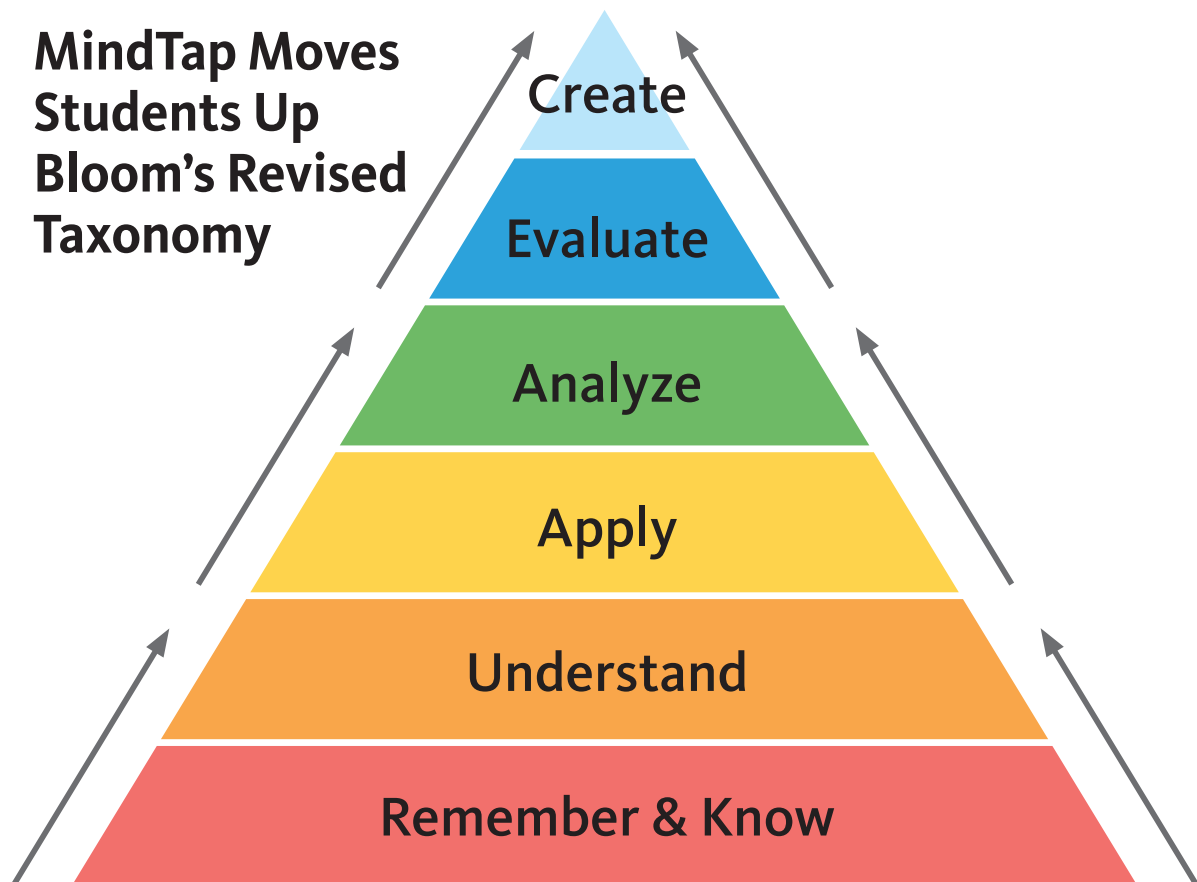
Sharing with Children and Families. This feature, also at the end of each chapter, provides some ideas about talking with families about the child in the developmental domain highlighted in that chapter. This is included to illustrate how the teacher can talk with families about the child (students should 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.

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. They can be used for further related reading.

MindTap

MindTap. MindTap for Nilsen's *Week by Week*, Eighth Edition, is a fully customizable online learning platform with interactive content designed to help students learn effectively and prepare them for success in the classroom. Through activities based on real-life teaching situations, MindTap elevates students' thinking by giving them experiences in applying concepts, practicing skills, and evaluating decisions, guiding them to become reflective educators. Learn more at www.cengage.com/mindtap.



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.

Instructor and Student Resources

Additional instructor and student resources for this product are available online. Instructor assets include an Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint® slides, and a test bank powered by Cognero®. Student assets include Professional Resource Downloads. Sign up or sign in at www.cengage.com to search for and access this product and its online resources.

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Barbara Ann Nilsen taught in the early childhood classroom, then in the college classroom and online as professor and chair of the Teacher Education and Early Childhood Department at SUNY Broome Community College in Binghamton, New York. She retired from that role in 2008 where she received the title, Professor Emeritus. She continued her involvement in the early childhood community with consulting and advising. She had extensive experience teaching online courses, held leadership roles in community, state, and national involvement in early childhood education, and worked with community colleges for program improvement. She was also the grant director of a state-wide online course collaborative and the Early Learning Opportunities federal project for Building Brighter Futures for Broome. The author received her EdD in Early and Middle Childhood from Nova University (now called Nova Southeastern University) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She has been active in local, state, and national early childhood professional development initiatives such as New York State Career Pathways, New York State Children's Program Administrator Infant/Toddler, Family Child Care Credentials, and NAEYC's Early Childhood Associate Degree Program Accreditation project. She is the co-author, with Virginia Albertalli, of *An Introduction to Learning and Teaching: Infants through Sixth Grade*, and the author of *the Observation and Assessment Professional Enhancement* text.

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



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** Project how the Reflective Journal will provide an outlet for your private ideas and feelings.
- 1-6** Describe how this book will help you develop a comprehensive portfolio.

Standards Addressed in This Chapter

NAEYC

NAEYC Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (2020)

- 1a** Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.
- 3a** Understand that assessments (formal and informal, formative and summative) are conducted to make informed choices about instruction and for planning in early learning settings.
- 3b** Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.
- 3c** Use screening and assessment tools in ways that are ethically grounded and developmentally, ability, culturally, and linguistically appropriate in order to document developmental progress and promote positive outcomes for each child.
- 3d** Build assessment partnerships with families and with professional colleagues.
- 6b** Know about and uphold ethical and other early childhood professional guidelines.

NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards and Assessment Items (2019)

- 4B Using Appropriate Assessment Methods** Obtain information on all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive skills, language, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, health and physical development (including self-help skills). P 55
- 4D Adapt Curriculum Individualized Teaching and Informing Program Development** Child assessments should be regularly conducted to inform classroom instruction, and to make sound decisions about curriculum content, teaching approaches, and personal interactions. P 57

DAP

NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2020)

- 3A** Observation, documentation, and assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, reflective, and purposeful.
- 3C** A system in place to collect, make sense of, and use observations, documentation, and assessment information to guide what goes on in the early childhood setting.

Exercise

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

Write down exactly what you see. What does it mean? How does it make you feel? What will you do as a result of what you see?

What you see is compared to what you know from prior experiences. You then determine the meaning and what you need to do about it, if anything. You will probably have a positive or negative reaction about what you saw and form a memory to perhaps think about again later.

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!

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 can 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.

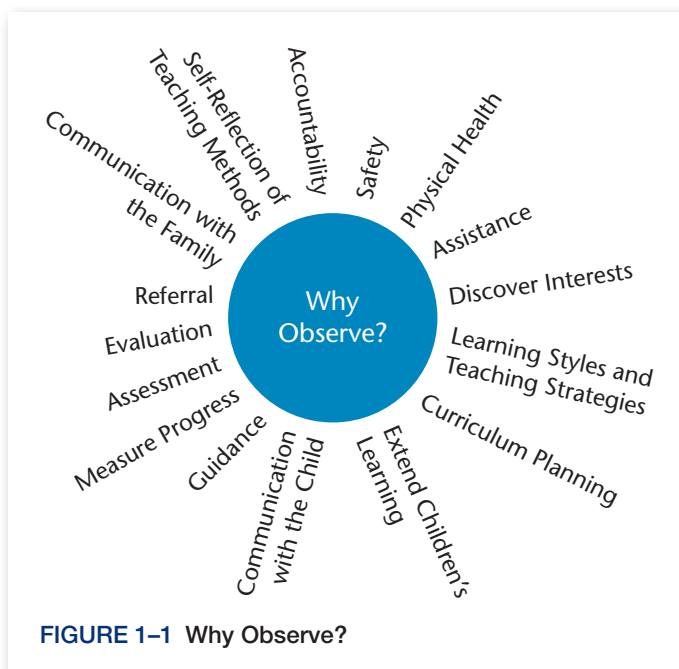


FIGURE 1–1 Why Observe?

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 paint brush away with angry looks and harsh words, 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. Disaster averted.

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!

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 connections from interests to planning, from home to program, 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. The child's interactions with materials and with other children help provide evidence of the child's development and learning.

Many factors influence a child's behavior. Part of knowing the child is trying to determine what those influences are. Each child has biological factors, a family, a culture, all of which determine the child's behavior. Uncovering the unique aspects of the child makes the teacher more effective in assisting the child's learning.

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, not necessarily solving every problem but determining what level of assistance the child needs.

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.

Through observations, teachers 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.



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

pedagogy

systematic instruction based on principles and methods of teaching

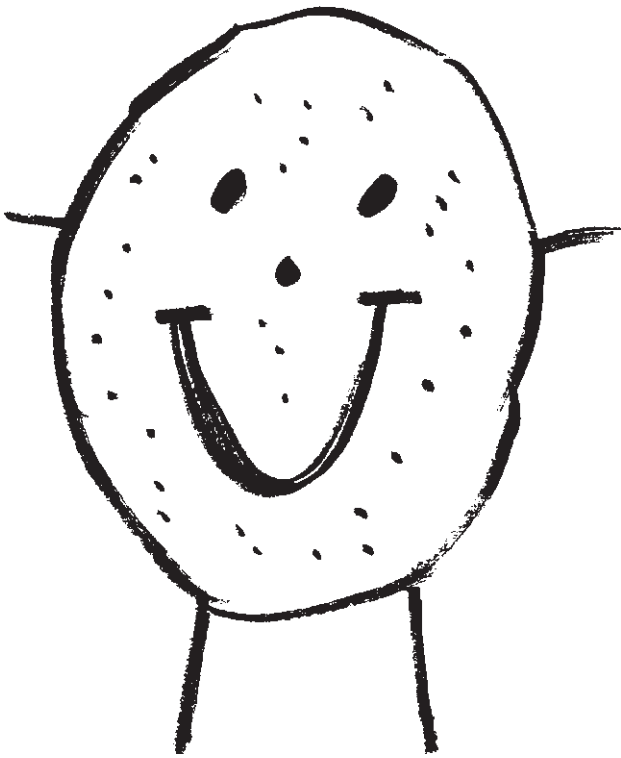


FIGURE 1-2 Observing a child's work, as well as the child as he works, gives valuable information.

1-1f Communication with the Child

Teachers communicate 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 describing what the teacher observes with the child, the child might give the reason or explanation in a way that makes sense only if the teacher asks the child "My sister has chicken dots" (Figure 1-2). The child's actions provide substance for communication between the child and the teacher about the materials, activities, and approach. 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?"

When talking with a child during observations consider these guidelines:

Ask a child for permission to take a photograph.

Explain to the child the reason you are watching and writing about him.

Keep a reasonable space between you and the child so that the child does not feel intruded upon or uncomfortable at being closely observed.

When appropriate, read back observations or transcripts of your documentation to the child for comment or clarification.

Observe and document during the child's regular activities, not requesting they perform.

Show the child the Portfolio from time to time to talk about the changes that have taken place, giving respect to the child.

See each child as an individual with their own cultural context, belief system, and values (Robinson & Elam, 2020).

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

family

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

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 do or has done, rather than cannot or will not. Observations are shared with families in formal and informal ways.

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.

Portfolio

a collection of documentation about the child's development

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 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. There are four types of assessments:

assessment

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

Screening Tools. Children reach developmental milestones at different times, but there is a range of expectations for various ages. When development does not happen within that range, "red flags" can be raised and further examination for the cause is needed. Developmental screening tools that look at cognition, fine and gross muscle skills, speech and language, and social-emotional development are available to identify children at risk for harmful delays. These warrant further evaluation.

Diagnostic Assessments. These are typically standardized for a large number of children with performance compared to performance of other children of the same age, resulting in a diagnosis and plan for remediation or therapy.

Formative Assessments. These are used to gather evidence to inform instruction, implement learning opportunities, and measure a child's learning. These are gathered during daily activities and routines.

Summative Assessments. Commonly these are used periodically or at the end of a school year to measure a child's academic performance. In early childhood these are

primarily used to evaluate a program's effectiveness in providing high-quality care. Local and state licensing and national accreditation base ratings on summative assessments.

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.

evaluation

comparison of information gathered against a standard or set of criteria

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.

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.

referral

a recommendation made for further evaluation by a helping professional

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.

1-1k Self-Reflection

Teaching is an art, not a standard prescription, but expanding the see, decide, act progression. 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, the teacher can question and seek answers about his own effectiveness.

This type of observation is **action research** (Lewin, 1935), constantly accumulating data to analyze for its meaning. 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. This is one of the principles of collaboration widely used in the famous Reggio Emilia, Italy, preschools. Many schools across the country have adopted the practices of teacher inquiry using reflection on observations documented in a narrative. The reflection asks what happened, what learning is taking place, and what are the opportunities for expanding the learning (Kroll & Meier, 2018). Teaching is often a lonely profession, but teachers using this model meet together, bringing these learning stories to discuss, wonder, and support one another. Using the Reflective Journal, discussed later in this chapter, teachers are not merely collecting an accumulation of data on children's development, but with these skills they are able not only to assess and plan for the child but to consider how learning comes about and what the teacher's role is in that learning.

action research

gathering data, making and implementing a plan of action, observing and measuring results

1-11 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 levels, with private funds through foundations and organizations, and by the families of the children themselves. Initiatives that are expected to prepare children, especially special populations, for school by enhancing social, language, and cognitive skills 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 initiatives.

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 the 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.

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. A word of caution. Written notes about any child for any purpose, student, teacher, or helping professional must be protected from viewing by people not authorized to see them. Protect the confidentiality of your records for the privacy of the child and family by keeping them in a secure place at all times.

What are the reasons for writing down what has been seen? (See Figure 1-3.)

Teachers write down their observations to:

recording

a system or method of writing down what has been observed

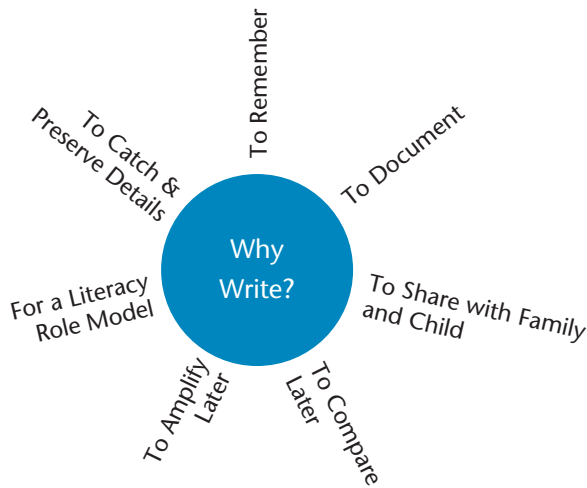


FIGURE 1-3 Why Write?

Exercise

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

Grocery List

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

FIGURE 1-4 Write to Remember

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 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.

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 evidence. The verb or action of gathering is to preserve facts—to **document**—what has been observed in order to substantiate it. Recording methods that include facts rather than inferences along with the date and time of the recording are

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

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 meaningful 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?

essential to meaningful documentation. The details must be preserved to see progress, trends, and correlations.

This is especially critical if a child discloses an incidence 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 by keeping inaccurate records. You will read more about this in Chapter 13.

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

1-3 Why, When, and Who

You have seen why observe and why write it down, but why do you need different methods, when should these observations take place, and what is the role of the person who is observing? This next section answers those questions.

1-3a Why Use Different Observation Methods?

You can see that this book presents different observing and recording methods. Think of it this way: Why are there so many ways to cook a chicken? Because there are different end results from each method. The cook may be looking for a certain consistency, lowering calories, tenderizing, or cooking it within a short period of time. While the various methods are very different from each other, they are seeking the same result, an appetizing and flavorful chicken. Similarly, there are many different methods of recording observations because the end result from each method is the same: to know the child, to better assist in change, and for the teacher to become more aware of the influences and outcomes of that learning. This book presents many different methods for recording (preserving) what has been observed.

Yes, they are all based on observing the child and measuring the observation against standards in order to make decisions about immediate and future actions, but they differ in technique, content, and approach. Each chapter of *Week by Week* presents a different observation method, along with a review of a developmental area. It is important to note here that the link between recording method and child development is not limited to recording only that particular area. A strong foundation of child development principles gives a lens through which to view the child. In the cooking example above, once

the technique of frying or stewing or microwaving is mastered, it can be applied to other foods and modified for a variety of desired results. Just like cooking, once a recording technique is mastered, it can be applied to other developmental areas and modified to fit the recorder's style and selected outcome. While the recording methods in *Week by Week* are paired with a specific area of child development, most of the methods can be used for assessment of any area of development. The recording methods can be classified using a web design (Figure 1-6).

Types of Recording Methods. Each method is a technique to focus on a behavior, skill, or action of an individual child or the whole group. The **narrative** recordings, such as Class List Logs, Anecdotal Recordings, Running Records, and Interviews, tell a story. They bring the reader along by providing the actual details of actions, words, and results. Because they are just recording the details as they happen, they are considered **objective** recording methods. The **criterion-referenced** methods, such as Checklists and Rating Scales, provide a predetermined skill or standard to look for and measure against. They are considered **subjective** methods because the observer interprets what he sees, makes a judgment as to whether or not that behavior or skill meets the criteria, and marks it accordingly. The **quantitative** recordings, such as Time Samples and Frequency Counts, provide a numerical count of individual or group actions that then can be interpreted in various ways. These methods lose most of the raw data, the actual details that narratives preserve, but are useful for certain purposes, so in some ways they are both objective and subjective.

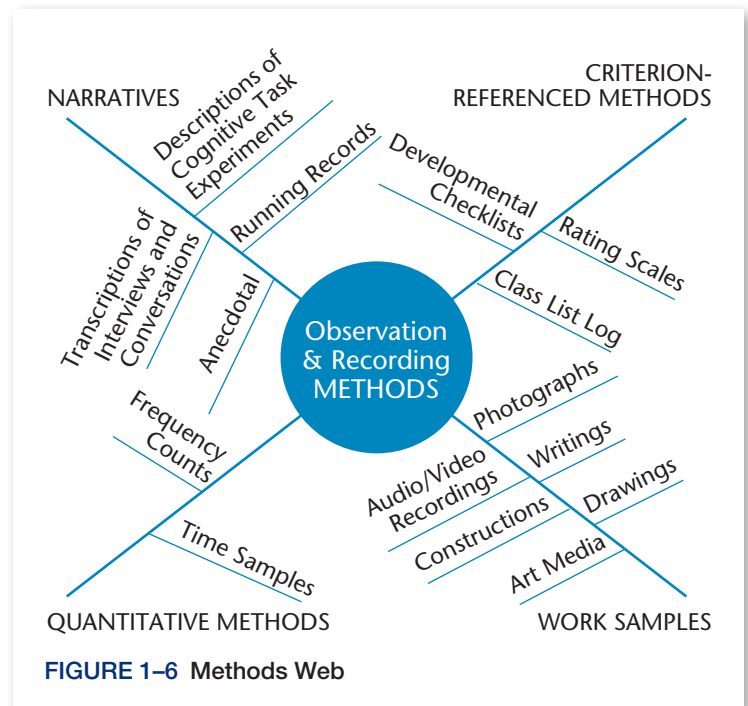
The **Work Samples**, such as drawings, writings, constructions, sculptures, and media-preserved work (audio or video recordings or photographs), give a visual account of the child's activities from which assessments are made. Each category and method within the category is distinctive and useful, with its own specific technique, advantages and disadvantages, and best applications.

1-3b When to Observe?

From what you have read so far, you see that observing children in their natural setting, while they are actively participating, gives us the best indicators of their capabilities. This means that while children are engaged in play they gain knowledge, organize their world, and develop their bodies, minds, emotions, social skills, and language. In play, children can be themselves, with their behavior speaking the language of who they are and what they think and feel. While observing play, every domain of development can be assessed by documenting behavior and analyzing it for indicators of development. In the chapters that follow, documentation methods are presented along with a review of child development so that the observer will look at children's play as an opportunity to measure attainment, support forward progress, and plan the environment and curriculum to help achieve it. *Week by Week* is a play-based assessment system.

1-3c What Are the Roles of the Observer?

You may have various roles, reasons, or situations for observing, either while directly working with children or just watching.



narrative

method that tells a story, includes all the details of an incident

objective

detached, impersonal, unprejudiced, data-only recordings

criterion-referenced

method that provides a predetermined standard or guideline to look for and measure against

subjective

influenced by state of mind, point of view, inferential

quantitative

method that provides a numerical count of individual or group action or a numerical score

Work Samples

children's work such as drawings, writings, constructions, audio/video recordings, or photographs

Participant Observer. The participant observer is actively engaged with the children, but observing and taking notes at the same time.

- **Student teacher**

In field experience classes student teachers practice the skills they will use when they have classrooms of their own. Under a supervisor, student teachers plan, implement, and self-assess their own teaching while learning about the children in the group they are working with, and about children in general. This learning opportunity should include written observations of how lessons were carried out, how children were involved in the lesson, and self-reflections of what the student teacher learned about teaching from the success or difficulties encountered. The student teacher is actively engaged.

- **Teacher**

If you are a teacher, then you observe children all the time, for many of the reasons given earlier in the chapter. In order to remember, you will need to have paper and pen handy (or electronic devices such as laptops, smart phones, tablets, or video/audio recorders) at all times to be sure to preserve important details (remember, writing aids the memory). Teaching demands full attention to the children while thinking on another level about what is important about what just happened and how to make note of it to remember. Sometimes the teacher plans the environment for observing—for example, setting up an obstacle course to observe children's large muscle coordination, or sitting at the snack table, taking note of children's small muscle coordination as they eat, or listening carefully to their language. Using routine times in the day, play times, or specially constructed activities allows the teacher to be unobtrusive and yet carefully observe.

- **Home visitor**

Many early childhood professionals work as itinerant home visitors, calling on children and families in their homes through organized programs to help families with children's learning. Home visitors are observers of children and the interactions within the family as they participate in learning activities. They make detailed records and use specific assessment tools prescribed by the program in which they work. For those students and practitioners working in the home, your program has likely already defined what record keeping is required and what, in addition, is useful. Experienced educators have found that, if families are comfortable, videotaping the visit as it happens, tape recording and/or writing on sticky notes the key observations after the visit, or writing short observations during the visit are all helpful tools when completing the visit narrative. Sometimes making notes during a visit makes the family uncomfortable, so writing notes as soon as the visit is concluded is necessary. Some home visitors use voice recording reflections during transit from one visit to the next.

Non-Participant Observer. Sometimes observers are in the classroom for specific purposes. Such a person has the luxury of having no responsibility in a classroom other than observing and recording. The non-participant observer finds a place in the classroom that is out of the way, but where the observer can see and hear what is happening. Some early childhood programs (especially lab schools) have an observation booth where students, family members, or other professionals can observe children without being seen. This nonintrusive vantage point does not influence the children's behavior. However, sometimes vision or clear sound may be hampered by the placement and technology available. Recordings of classroom activity are another way of observing. This will be explored in Chapter 12.

- **Student**

Early childhood students may be in courses that require just observation. This may be to practice various recording methods or to observe certain domains of development. The classroom teacher can assist you in finding the right spot. Try to avoid letting any child "feel" watched by gazing around the room rather than staring. Avoid eye contact

or conversations with the children, but appear friendly and nonthreatening. Answer the children's questions about what you are doing directly by saying you are writing down what is happening in the classroom and go back to your work.

- **Visiting teacher**

Teachers sometimes visit someone else's classroom to learn teaching strategies or to participate in a collaborative learning community to improve their teaching and learning. With prior permission, a visiting teacher can see the classroom with objective eyes, perhaps giving advice, if requested, on ways to improve. It is not for evaluation but for assistance.

- **Family member**

Family members of prospective students may visit a classroom to see if it is the right fit for their child. They will experience the environment, observe the teacher's interactions with the children, and learn about the routines and policies, to come to a decision whether to enroll in the program. Family members whose child is already in the classroom may visit to get a better idea of what takes place in the classroom and to see their child in action. Sometimes family members are participant observers, helping in the classroom as extra hands or sharing special knowledge or experiences with the class.

- **Other professionals**

Researchers and certain consultants are non-participant observers who make observations and gather specific data on children, taking meticulous notes for analysis later, specific data on one child, or children in a certain population.

1-4 Building Child Development Portfolios

When the radiologist shows the X-ray of a broken bone to the parents of the crying child, the parents look at it but may not *see it as radiologist does*. They are looking at the same visual image but understand it at a different level. The teacher needs the specialized knowledge base of child development in order to understand the recorded events. Without a foundational knowledge of child development, behavior is observed, seen, but not recognized for its importance. For that reason, each chapter includes an overview of a developmental area discussing influences, milestones, terminology, and key theories. There is an emphasis on the child's observable skills and behaviors that demonstrate progress. This is not a comprehensive child development text, but it does present and review each developmental domain as it relates to that chapter. Knowledge of child development helps you to understand what typical children of this age know and can do. Your observations will help you know what this particular child knows and can do. When you put those two together, you have evaluated the child and now can individualize the curriculum so it is not so hard that it is frustrating nor so easy that it is boring. Like Goldilocks, it will then be "just right." What you observe and write down is seen through the lens of child development. Part of each chapter also discusses one domain or area of child development so you will know what to look for when you are observing; that is, what you are recording is each child's development.

1-4a Child Development

The word **development** is an important one to understand. It is more than just change. Some important developmental principles include the following:

1. Development and learning are shaped positively and negatively by biology and the child's experiences, the family, social and cultural groups, and events in the child's world such as trauma.

development

change that takes place in a predictable sequence, from simple to complex, but at a different pace for individual people

2. All areas of development, physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language, are important influences and are conversely influencing each other.
 3. Play promotes knowledge and development across physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language areas, essential for children birth through age eight.
 4. The optimal, orderly progression of development and learning is the same for all children, but variations occur in individuals from experiences and cultural context.
 5. Children are active learners from birth, creating meaning from relationships and experiences with adults and other children.
 6. Children's motivation to learn is greatest where they feel safe and valued, building on knowledge and abilities from all experiences.
 7. Children learn from and apply experiences in all subject areas, not as silos but as lattices, moving across each other.
 8. New experiences just beyond a child's ability, with many opportunities to practice, help them learn and develop.
 9. Children can use technology to learn when it is appropriate and used intentionally.
- (Adapted from Principles of Child Development and Learning, NAEYC, 2020)

All through the discussions of child development, as you are practicing various methods to record and assess a child's development, research-accepted milestones are used that describe the typically developing child at each age level. While these are useful, it is important to understand that each child is unique in their biological makeup and even more unique in their life experiences. Sometimes children get labeled as disadvantaged, non-English-speaking, gifted, rural, or privileged. These stereotypic labels keep us from seeing each child as an individual. By using observation and documentation methods, each child's unique knowledge, skills, and behavior are identified.

1-4b Portfolio Assessment

Any long-term project begins with a plan that has small steps along the way, leading to the completion of the project. Some long-term projects may seem impossible until they are broken down into manageable steps.

Teachers of young children *know* they should be keeping written records on each child's behavior for many good reasons, but there is one seemingly insurmountable obstacle: *time*. This book begins with the premise that writing down observations of children's activities is the preferred method of assessing and documenting children's development.

"But I don't have time!" Every busy adult working with children has said it. The teacher's priority is to applaud the climb to the top of the ladder, redirect that arm ready to throw a block, or give a thoughtful response to a family member as she hurriedly says on her way out, "He's running a little fever and had a touch of diarrhea this morning, but he says he feels fine." The role of the teacher is to provide physical and psychological safety and intellectual challenge to each child. The teacher also strives to maximize the teachable moment and expand on the child's interests and conversations.

Those two responsibilities, accurate record keeping and responsiveness to the needs of each child, along with the monumental job of presenting learning opportunities for a group of children, seem incompatible. Time and attention for record keeping are minimal. Teachers who know they should be making written records are caught in a bind. They recognize the importance of keeping accurate records on which to base evaluations or plan individualized curricula. The difficulty, and for some the impossibility, is doing this while interacting with children.

Major accomplishments require time and planning. A meaningful Portfolio of a child's development and work is not gathered in a few days. A Portfolio is not a scrapbook or folder full of unrelated pieces of paper or even a collection of written observations, no matter how meticulously they were written. These are meaningless without an organization and application for their use. Authentic assessment is achieved when each child's

development is systematically observed and documented objectively and periodically. Researchers call this a longitudinal study, watching over time, gathering evidence. The systematic gathering of information about the child is Portfolio assessment.

One way to organize the pieces of documentation that describe and measure the child's development, gathered over a period of time, can be indexed on the example of a **Portfolio Evidence Sheet** that notes the area of development that it describes.

The results of systematic Portfolio building are strategies to facilitate the child's progress to the next developmental level through intentional teaching. There is a cycle of observe, record, assess, plan, implement, evaluate, and record. This is repeated in each developmental area for each child. This is an authentic performance-based assessment system that is useful, valid, and dependable.

Portfolio Evidence Sheet
index of pieces of documentation
contained in the Portfolio

1-4c Why Use Portfolio Assessment Rather Than Testing?

Much has been written about the use and misuse of standardized tests on young children. One method or measure alone on any one day does not present a picture of the whole child. Portfolio assessment is a philosophy and system that meets that objective, using Portfolios as an authentic, reliable way to assess children's development (Martin, 2019; NAEYC DAP, 2020). A review of the benefits of Portfolio assessment includes its ongoing purposeful assessment done during authentic activities (play) in a naturalistic setting without diverting children from natural learning processes.

Portfolios can be a valid, reliable replacement or augmentation for standardized testing. Organizations such as the NAEYC and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) take this position on assessment: "To assess young children's strengths, progress and needs, use assessment methods that 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" (NAEYC, 2020, p. 2). They call for more authentic assessment methods that provide documentation gathered from multiple sources over a period of time in the child's natural environment (Photo 1-3).

Here are eight principles for guiding the decision on how to assess children (Neisworth & Bagnato, 2004, pp. 204–208):

- *Utility*—Can the assessment be used to guide the individualized curriculum?
- *Acceptability*—Is the assessment socially and culturally relevant?
- *Authenticity*—Does it yield information about the child's typical behavior in natural settings?
- *Equity*—Does the assessment collect and interpret findings fairly?
- *Sensitivity*—Does the assessment provide for the measurement of a full range of abilities?
- *Convergence*—Does the assessment look at all the domains of development?
- *Collaboration*—Does the assessment gather information from several sources, with the family as the authority on the child?
- *Congruence*—Does the assessment make allowances for differing abilities; is it evidence based?



PHOTO 1-3 Close observation of routine events helps the teacher evaluate and make decisions.

TOPICS in OBSERVATION • Ethics of Documentation

Exercise What do you think about the following observations?

“Ethan bit Trevor on Tuesday or Wednesday.”

“Kara is the cutest child in the class.”

“I think that Alex is autistic.”

“I keep writing about Dominic’s behavior so that he’ll be moved out of my group.”

“Lillie talks about that horror movie all the time. I can’t believe you let your child watch that movie.”

“When I told my friend about what happened at school yesterday, she said that it sounded like Lydia has been abused.”

Ethics should guide documentation in the following ways.

Accuracy. With every method of observation, there is a responsibility to record the raw data (facts) as accurately as possible. This is done by making notes as completely and as promptly after observing as possible because memory and details slip as time passes.

The best recording is done as *the behavior is observed*. Some methods you will learn about are strictly factual, while others do have elements of judgment inherent in them. Carefully choose those methods and use them wisely.

Objectivity. Methods that preserve the raw data (just record the facts) are more **objective** (without bias or opinion) than others. That does not mean that one method is better than another or that biases and opinions can’t enter into any recording. It is the responsibility of the recorder to

use each method for its intended purpose, recognizing the disadvantages of each. Again, the methods will contribute to the recording of data or interpretation. Be aware of that possibility. Objectivity also includes the practice of regularly gathering data on each child in the group because each child deserves an equal representation in observing practices. The *Week by Week* plan seeks to make that selection of subjects more arbitrary, thus equalizing the number and topics of the documentation added to each child’s Portfolio.

Labeling. We all sort and categorize the information we take in. That is how we attempt to make sense of the world. It is important not to draw premature conclusions or diagnoses about a child based on limited information or to label a child or behavior. Our observation methods are designed to document the facts and to try to avoid categorizing a child as “bold,” “hyperactive,” or “shy.”

Observer’s Purpose. Students write about children for the purpose of observing and interpreting milestones in child development, seeing theories in action, and practicing recording methods. These documents are for practice, not for making judgments about a child. The teacher or practitioner will use them for their intended purpose. Documentation should not be used to build a case against a child for any reason or to threaten or humiliate a child or family.

Confidentiality

Students will mask the identity of the children they observe by using only initials or some other neutral identifier. No last names should ever appear

on any student’s recording. Permission from a family member may be required by the school or program. It is the student’s responsibility to inquire about the policy and abide by it. The file must keep the documentation private from anyone other than the instructor, the child, the child’s family, and those who have a legal “right to know.” College policy will dictate the final distribution of the documents and child’s work gathered by the student so that no unintentional breaches of **confidentiality** or inferential and biased statements can be made by the practicing student.

Writing enhances memory. This point has been strongly emphasized as the reason for writing down observations. Discussions outside the classroom with friends, or one’s own family, require discretion. Sometimes stories are related for illustration, but they should never include children’s names or details that could identify the child or their family. Complaining, satirizing, or criticizing children or families is unprofessional.

Professional behavior is guided by wisdom, kindness, and, most of all, respect for an individual’s privacy. Let’s make a commitment to uphold the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct* (NAEYC, 2011).

How do these points on ethics apply to the quotes in the exercise?

objective

detached, impersonal, observed, unprejudiced, data-only

confidentiality

the professional attitude and practice of preserving the privacy of information

The *Week by Week* systematic plan for Portfolio building will enable the user to gather data to meet the needs of authentic assessment as outlined in the eight principles above in a manageable way. It meets the guidelines for appropriate assessment for planning instruction and communicating with families, identifying children with special needs, and for program evaluation and accountability. You can find the full NAEYC position statement on the NAEYC website. Many kinds of scientists—sociologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, biologists—gather field data on their subjects, carefully describing and cataloguing to make meaning of their specimens later. Teachers are just such scientists, taking the **ecological view** by studying children in their naturalistic settings, not a controlled laboratory, but in an environment that is just a part of the child's world that centers around the family and the community.

Exercise

Mark these phrases S for subjective or O for objective.

- _____ jumped from 18 inches
- _____ very smart
- _____ nice boy
- _____ grabbed toy and said, "Mine!"
- _____ doing fine
- _____ she's a challenge
- _____ polite
- _____ counted to 8
- _____ recognized name
- _____ called someone a bad name
- _____ clapped to "Bingo" song
- _____ enjoyed music time

Check your answers on page 50.

1-5

Using the Reflective Journal

You might be wondering, "But what about what I think or feel? I need a place to record that." The **Reflective Journal** is a teacher's place for recording personal thoughts. It is like a **diary** in that it is private, with the word reflective bringing the image of deliberating, wondering, pondering, thinking, and rethinking (Figure 1-7). Its purpose is *not* intended to provide documentation of children on which to assess their development; rather, it is a place to think about yourself in your daily interactions with children. It is a place for venting feelings, but more importantly it is a place for self-examination. Teachers have biases absorbed and internalized from the social world in which they grew up. Those biases influence the teacher's interactions with children and families, often without realizing the stereotypes that are unconscious. Reflecting on feelings in a journal is a vehicle for discovery, uncovered through reading and collaborating with others. Teachers can uncover prejudicial ideas through this type of introspection. "Teachers are on a continual journey of self-discovery as they work with children, families and coworkers" (Derman-Sparks, Edwards, & Goins, 2020).

We are reminded from Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of the impact first of the immediate family, peers, neighborhood and school, the extended family and neighborhood, as well as media, agencies, and the economic situation. The child is also influenced indirectly by the attitudes

ecological view

consideration of all aspects that influence a human being

Reflective Journal

private, written record of thoughts and feelings about self, a child, family, workplace

diary

thoughts, recollections

9/10	<i>The First Day! It's a large class with many more boys than girls. They're going to give me a run for my money! They seem to have adjusted well for the first day 😊 and are eager to learn the routines, especially to explore the classroom. Carter was already in the Teacher's Cupboard. Said "What else ya got in here? Can I have that?" He's so cute. I'm especially interested in who makes friends. Today Jeff, Pia, Maurice, Jan & Chanique played together. I think this clearly will help me be a better observer. I'm so tired!</i>
9/20	<i>Day 2: I found out today that I need to find ways to separate Scott & Jeff - together they're dynamite! They had me so busy doing damage control. I can't remember what the other children did. Oh yes, Casper left to visit another class for 45 min before I realized he was gone!</i>
12/3	<i>Wow has it been that long since I last wrote. I have parent conferences in two weeks. I better start better record keeping!</i>

FIGURE 1-7 This diary example was written at the end of the day. It was difficult to remember details about every child.

culture

shared way of life including beliefs, values, behaviors, symbols, and language of a group of people, communicated from one generation to another

ethnocentrism

tendency to judge people and cultures by our own

reflections

thoughtful consideration of past events

and ideologies of her **culture** and by environmental changes over time. We must view ourselves and the child in the context of each of these realms and explore our feelings where our culture and the child's collide. We have a tendency to judge people and cultures by our own and believe our behavior, customs, norms, values, and characteristics are correct while those of others are unnatural. This **ethnocentrism** gets in the way of understanding a child and family respectfully.

The Reflective Journal (while private) can also be the basis for sharing thoughts and feelings with others to collaborate on best practices, wondering about the meaning of a child's behavior, ethical dilemmas, program and policy decisions, and personal and professional development. Seeing children in their natural setting, including the observer as a participant and a partner in the research, takes time and effort, sometimes suspending adult agendas to consider events of deeper significance (Curtis & Carter, 2017). Thinking and wondering about the child, the teacher's role, the classroom environment, and the policies of the child-care center all help the teacher to evaluate and transform what needs to be changed or modified. Teachers need opportunities to inquire into their own experiences and to tell their own stories as a method of action research, collecting and analyzing data, and coming to conclusions. These **reflections** may be private or shared with a mentor and discussed for further reflection. The following are some resources discussing such inquiries:

- *Learning from Young Children in the Classroom: The Art and Science of Teacher Research* (Meier & Henderson, 2007) contends that teachers' reflections on the classroom experiences are research, an inquiry for deeper understanding based on gathering data.
- *Learning Together with Young Children: A Curriculum Framework for Reflective Teachers* (Curtis & Carter, 2017) contains natural classroom episodes that demonstrate how observation is used to plan curricula and give deeper insight into the child and the teacher.
- *Twelve Best Practices for Early Childhood Education: Integrating Reggio and Other Inspired Approaches* (Lewin-Benham, 2011) contains practical applications of the Reggio philosophy.
- *Learning from the Children: Reflecting on Teaching* (Villareale, 2009) is a collection of a teacher's Anecdotal Recordings and her reflections on them and the lessons she learned.



FIGURE 1-8 The Reflective Journal is like a mirror.

1-5a The Reflective Journal Mirror

The Reflective Journal is like looking into a mirror (Figure 1-8).

- *External view.* When looking into a mirror, the viewpoint is from the outside, as others see the person. The Reflective Journal is an opportunity to explore the view that others see and compare it to the inner, deeper meaning. It helps the observer see as others see.
- *Quick check.* Often the mirror is used for a quick, overall glance to see that clothes and hair are satisfactory. A Reflective Journal can be a place for a cursory overview of performance, feelings, or events of the day without getting into deep analysis.
- *See changes.* Changes in appearance are identified by looking in the mirror. Gray hairs (or disappearing ones) or extra pounds are noticed visually when reflected in the mirror. The Reflective Journal can help the writer notice changes in thinking and attitudes.

- *Close examination.* The mirror can be used for a concentrated examination of a certain area. It may be a changing spot on the skin, clothing alignment, or a new wrinkle that has appeared overnight. The Reflective Journal can be a private place to self-examine a troublesome area. It may be premature or too private to discuss with someone else. An attitude toward a child or coworker, a creeping doubt about one's ability, or a hidden prejudice or stereotype that has come into one's consciousness can be closely examined in a journal.
- *Make changes.* When a look in the mirror shows something is askew, missing, or undone, the resultant action is an adjustment to correct the problem. Reacting to visions in the mirror is one of the purposes of looking. Writing in a Reflective Journal raises issues that call for change and presents the opportunity to resolve to take action. The Reflective Journal becomes an agent of change.
- *Done repeatedly.* Glances in the mirror are done many times a day, sometimes using substitutes such as windows in storefronts to re-examine certain areas. The Reflective Journal brings the teacher to an inward examination again and again, whether in writing or in thinking.
- *Reflection becomes a memory.* The vision in the mirror is remembered. Looking internally through a Reflective Journal to examine values, beliefs, and feelings also forms memories. Those become as real as physical experiences. Reflection is more than daydreaming. It can be a life-changing experience.
- *Smudges and distortions.* Sometimes there are imperfections in the mirror that keep the reflection from being a clear image. Biases and stereotypes about groups of people because of race, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status may keep one from seeing someone from that group objectively. A Reflective Journal may be the place for introspection about the biases, their beginnings, and strategies to overcome them. Those smudges and distortions may also be hidden personal preferences that also may influence how we see the child or the family, some religious group, physical features like our own, or even a disability that brings out pity or sympathy.

Exercise

Try some Reflective Journal writing.

When I enter a new place for the first time I feel . . .

Writing about myself is . . .

An area I would like to explore about myself is my . . .

I chose to work with children because . . .

I feel uncomfortable around this kind of family.

In the *Week by Week* plan, open-ended questions are posed in the Reflective Journal to guide a teacher's thinking about the events of the week.

Uses. Just like a personal diary, the teacher's Reflective Journal is a place to express emotions, make judgments, and form hypotheses (Figure 1-9). It is not a part of the child's file but the personal property of the writer, which provides a healthy outlet for emotions. This type of recording must be kept separate from the assessments of the development of the child. *For privacy, it must be kept at home, away from the work site.* The Reflective Journal is personal. It is important to maintain trust that what is written there will not be read by anyone. Make a habit of writing in it every week. Go beyond the guided questions in the *Week by Week* plan and use it to vent your feelings, questions, ideas, and theories. Keep it safe.

The Reflective Journal is useful (Table 1-1)

- to express emotions or questions; to let off "steam"; to express anger, frustration, or elation; or to express worry concerning a child or the child's family, a coworker, supervisor, or self.
- for self-examination of attitudes, biases, or prejudices.
- to pose theories about a child's behavior that are from intuition.
- to explore remedies, strategies, advantages, and disadvantages of possible solutions.

9/10	<i>I'm so excited about the first day of school. I wonder if having so many boys in the class will affect behavior & class management? Hey -- do I expect a difference? I guess I do! How can I keep my "active boy" bias from influencing what I see? Maybe these new methods of recording will help. I think I'll look for some things to read about sex differences and behavior.</i>
9/13	<i>I heard Mary & Ted next door talking about my new room arrangement breaking down the barrier between blocks and dramatic play. Do I let blocks go in the "oven"? Or in purses & briefcases? What about high heels and cowboy boots in the block area? We'll see!</i>
9/20	<i>Boy, this nit-picking is getting to me. Today Mary made me so angry when she said to the director, "my orderly classroom."</i>

FIGURE 1–9 Reflective Journal Example

1-5b Home Visitation Programs

Week by Week can be used by people working in all kinds of early childhood settings. This includes those who work as home educators with the families and children. Observation and recording are still major components of this career setting, just as it is in school or child-care settings. While the adult is caring for and teaching children in his home, principles of observing and documenting children's everyday activities and how they relate

● Home Visiting: Reflective Journal

For practitioners and students working in a home setting, the value of a Reflective Journal cannot be overstated. The nature of the work requires considerable independent thought and action; there are no colleagues immediately available to share ideas and observations, as in a classroom setting. Evidence-based programs have protocols for the visits, but reflecting in a journal at the end of each day gives the home educator a practical method of "replaying the day" and validating the work accomplished, while identifying topics that might be explored with a supervisor, mentor, or colleague. Some widely used programs are:

- Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI) is a parent involvement, school readiness program that helps parents prepare their two- to five-year-old children for success in school and beyond. The home visitor provides carefully developed curricula, and models activities to strengthen their children's cognitive skills, early literacy skills, and social/emotional and physical development.
- Parents as Teachers Born to Learn incorporates home visiting as a component that has demonstrated results promoting child development, positive parent-child relationships, and early identification of delays or health issues.
- Early Head Start, available in many communities, seeks to engage families with their child in home visits, helping families to become teachers of their children.
- Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHVP) is a federal program designed to promote early learning in the home, with an emphasis on strong communication between parents and children that stimulates early language development.

TABLE 1-1 Method Recap

Reflective Journal	
The Reflective Journal is useful for recording private thoughts and recollections.	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>The Reflective Journal is useful as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an outlet for emotions. • a vehicle to work through theories and to clarify and expand thinking. • a record of professional development. 	<p>The Reflective Journal is not useful for assessing children's development because it is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written after the event when facts are lost. • highly inferential and emotionally based. • not comprehensive in recording information remembered on each and every child, only those who stand out.

to the child's development are important. There are many well-known home visitation programs that deliver parenting education and seek to reduce child abuse.

1-5c How to Find the Time

The Reflective Journal, because it is personal and not used for direct assessment, takes personal time. This is done after the workday has ended or at home. For many people, writing is a chore; for those people, this task may be difficult. For others, writing is therapeutic and the task may be enjoyable. In either case, setting aside the time will result in time well spent.

Using Technology. Many people read electronic communications several times a day. Getting in the habit of entering a Reflective Journal entry is a convenient way to record thoughts, preserving them in a computer electronic document, and printing them out periodically to review them. If you find that you can think and write better at the computer or on a smart phone, you can write or even dictate in the document window, note the date, and let your thoughts flow. Save it in a folder or copy it to a disk or memory device where only you can access it. A private reflection in an electronic form of a journal can be used in the same way as the Reflective Journal. It is inappropriate to make your blog public when it contains information about the children you teach, as is publishing your own Reflective Journal. A Reflective Journal entry is only for you.

1-5d What to Do with the Reflective Journal

Because of the confidential, subjective nature of the Reflective Journal, it must be:

- kept secure and private, away from the workplace.
- used as an emotional release that may not be possible in any other form.
- used to take a measurement of your personal and professional development in working with children and their families and with coworkers.
- used to explore questions, develop theories, and examine biases.
- reviewed at intervals to examine changes in thinking and attitudes and measure professional development.

1-6 How to Use This Book

This book is meant to be the basis for teaching and practicing various observation and recording methods. In a classroom they can comprise a weekly plan for recording observations of each child's development and to be used as a guide for intentional teaching. The outcome of this week-by-week plan is a meaningful, comprehensive Portfolio.

It Happened to Me

Picky Mother

Was she ever a picky mother! She gave me strict instructions on how the child's socks needed to be pulled up over the snowsuit legs before the boots were put on. The mittens were to be on before the snowsuit so the cuffs were pulled down over the mittens. The hat had to be snugly down over the ears before the hood was pulled up. And "be careful not to knot the scarf on top of the snowsuit too tightly and remember to move the knot and the ends to the back of the hood." Can you believe it! And we had 15 other children to get ready as well.

It helps just to write about recalling the irritation I felt. That's the value in writing a Reflective Journal, the place where your feelings can be expressed and dissipated, at least somewhat. Are you in the habit of writing in a diary or journal every day? If not, think about what is preventing you from doing so. If you feel like you just don't have enough time, review some of the strategies for finding time discussed above.

1-6a Standards

Every chapter begins with a list of applicable NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (2020), so you can see what the profession expects of you, and also the pertinent Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards and Assessment Items (2019), and NAEYC's Principles of Child Development and Learning (2020), to see what is expected of early childhood programs and teachers. Almost every profession has established standards for itself and its constituents to describe the guiding principles and practices. *Week by Week* seeks to assist in meeting these standards, whether for accreditation, preparation program improvement, or for more qualified early childhood professionals. Child performance standards guide early childhood program administrators, teachers, and curriculum planners in areas such as physical, social, emotional, language, literacy, and creativity. These standards are often available on the Internet and in publications from the organizations as well as individual states' education departments. There is a cross reference of standards that are related to chapters in *Week by Week* on the inside cover.

Professional Preparation Standards. In professional preparation, whether in the initial licensure of early childhood teachers or in associate degree programs, observation and assessment of children's development is an integral part. We are guided by the *National Association for the Education of Young Children's Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* (2020). See the key elements of Standard 3, "Observing, documenting and assessing to support young children and their families," in Table 1-2 and how *Week by Week* helps the student meet the elements of the standard.

1-6b Learning Objectives

There are learning goals listed at the beginning of each chapter so that you can see what learning is expected of you as you complete each chapter. At the end of the chapter, you have an opportunity to review them to see if you have understood the content and to assess your own learning.

1-6c Using the Recording Method

Each chapter presents a different method of gathering data in the early childhood setting during the regular activities and routines of the day as they are happening. The uses for each method are explained, and examples are provided to illustrate what they look like. The advantages and disadvantages are reviewed, and suggestions are given for how

TABLE 1-2 Key Elements of Standard 3**How *Week by Week* Meets the Key Elements of Standard 3**

3a.—Understanding the goals and benefits, and uses of assessment—including its use in development of appropriate goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies for young children.

Week by Week—explains the reasons why observation of all developmental domains is important in assessing and planning for the young child.

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.

Week by Week—introduces and leads practice of several methods of documenting observations, pointing out the benefits and disadvantages of each. It presents information on standardized assessments and their proper use as well as how technology can collect and manage documentation.

3c.—Understanding and practicing responsible assessment to promote positive outcomes for each child, including the use of assistive technology for children with disabilities.

Week by Week—stresses the **ethics** of equitable, factual, and confidential documentation.

3d.—Knowing about assessment partnerships with families and other professional colleagues to build effective learning environments.

Week by Week—provides guidance in sharing documentation with the child, the family, and specific helping professionals in each weekly plan. (See inside cover for correlation chart of *Week by Week* chapters and these standards.)

ethics

the moral principles and practices under which an individual operates

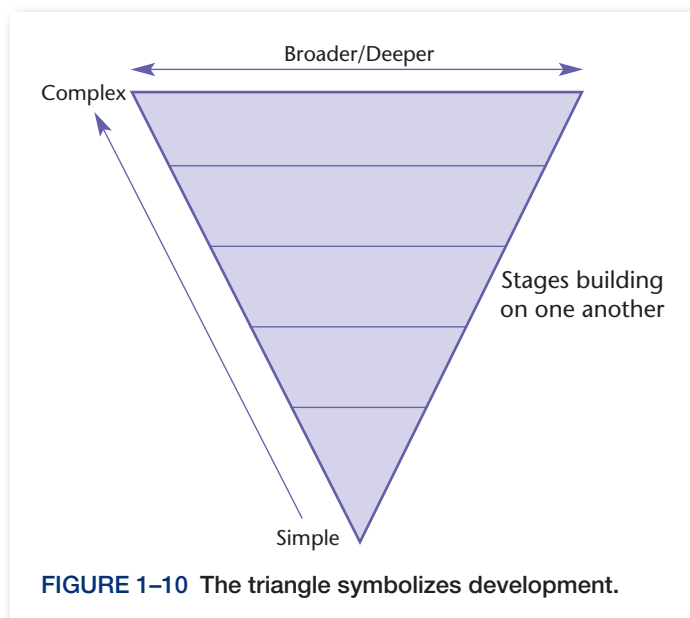
to find the time in a busy classroom to use the method efficiently. Included also in each chapter is a section on using technology.

1-6d Looking at . . . Child Development

Each chapter also presents a discussion of one domain or area of child development so you will know what to look for when you are observing. The observation method is not limited to this developmental domain. The triangle (Figure 1-10), illustrating the expanding nature of development, is used throughout the book to represent the expansion of skills and knowledge that begins in a limited, crude way, but broadens and builds upon prior experiences, moving wider and deeper.

1-6e Features within the Chapter

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. These anecdotes illustrate points about child development from children I have known and mistakes I have made that taught me what not to do. Some are observations my college students have written. Others are humorous stories related to me. All are stories, incredible, yet true. There are millions that *got away* because I never wrote them down! Many of these are remembered because after reflection on the real meaning of the incident they taught me a lesson. The stories are not all positive ones, but they are included because we often learn best from our mistakes. Many events became more important than I thought they were at the time. 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.

1-6f Features at the End of the Chapter

Helping Professionals. When working with children and families, teachers are often the resource or intermediary between people who need specialized advice and services and the professionals and agencies. This section is included in each chapter to acquaint the reader with the types of specialists to whom the teacher may refer the family. Each program should have a list of specific referral agencies and professionals from which the family can choose, with guidance from the people they trust.

Sharing with Children and Families. This feature gives some ideas for talking about observations with the family or the child. Talking about what has been observed is an important professional activity, but for students, sharing with the family is only done under the direction of and with the approval of the teacher. For practitioners, observations should be related to parents using tact and much deliberation about how they will be received.

Talking to the child in front of the family should also be done considerately. Sometimes children want privacy and a sense of being a person apart from the family. The teacher could ask the child, “May I tell your family about how long you painted today when we show them the painting?” Sometimes the child needs to hear his accomplishments related to the family. Discussing misdeeds or concerns, however, should be done in private, away from the child and other families.

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. There are many tools in the toolbox, but it is important to use the right tool for the job.

1-6g A Word about Some Words

Teacher. In *Week by Week*, when the word *teacher* is used, it refers to the recorder who is documenting the child’s behavior. It may be the early childhood student in a practicum experience, a teacher in a child-care setting, a teacher in a classroom setting, or a home visitor from a formalized program. The recorder may have the minimum required hours of in-service training, a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, associate degree to advanced degrees, or teacher certification. Whatever the qualifications of the adult, student, CDA, or college degree, the children call this person “teacher” because she is in the teacher role, and she will be called by that worthy name in this text.

Family. You will probably notice the shift in language from *parent* to *family*. This term includes all the different constellations of parents and close family members who provide primary care for the child. As professionals we endeavor to be respectful and inclusive in our interactions and language.

Key Terms. Every profession has terms that are common to people who work in that field. Throughout the chapter, important words appear in bold type to draw your attention. Their definitions appear in the margins of the pages for you to use as a self-check to be sure you understand their meaning, and an alphabetical list of all Key Terms is in the Glossary at the end of the book.

1-6h The Week by Week Plan

The *Week by Week* plan, if you were to use it in a real early childhood setting, guides the observer so that all developmental areas are observed at least once. The areas must be revisited repeatedly to accomplish the objective of seeing change over time, so the plans are extended to 40 weeks in the total plan. Care has been taken to observe each child equally in all developmental areas using a variety of methods.

Setting Up Portfolios. The creation of Portfolios involves systematic designs for organizing developmental information. Following this system, the classroom teacher will compile many examples of the child's development over the course of time. As students, the Portfolios you develop will be samples of your observations and in no way a complete portrayal of the child, but they should have the same components. It will, however, give you an opportunity to practice the various methods and to see how the system could work for you in your classroom. See Figure 1–11 for a diagram of the Portfolio construction.

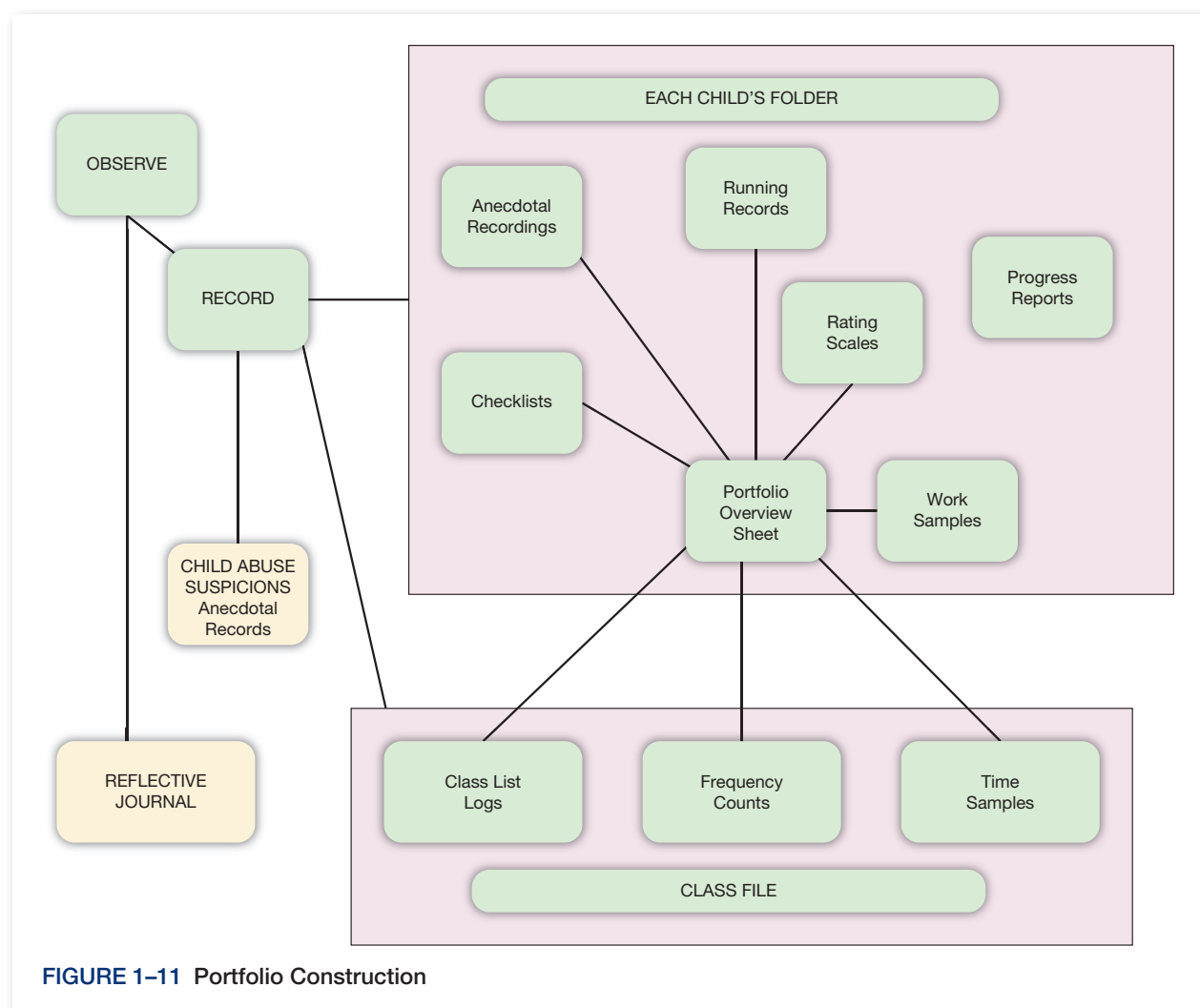


FIGURE 1–11 Portfolio Construction

Portfolios are easy to set up if you are systematic about it:

1. You will need a new file folder for each child in your class or group, plus a few extras for new children throughout the year. Write names on tabs, last name first, and place the folders in alphabetical order. In each folder place any information supplied by the family. This folder called Portfolio will hold all the documentation in the form of observation recordings that pertain to that child. With older preschoolers, you may want to introduce the folder to each child to inform them that you are writing about them. You may find it interesting to ask the child to draw a self-portrait on one side of the folder and then three more times throughout the year. It is a representation of their development.
2. Copy the Portfolio Evidence Sheet (Figure 1–12) for each Portfolio. This is an index of all the recordings in the Portfolio so that the reader can see at a glance what is contained there. Place this sheet in each Portfolio. A note is made in each child's folder on the Portfolio Evidence Sheet whenever an observation in that particular developmental area has been made and where it resides, either in the child's Portfolio or in the Class File. When observation recordings are focused on a particular child, that observation is placed in that child's Portfolio and a note made on the Portfolio Evidence Sheet.
3. Label another folder "Class File." The recording methods that gather information on all the children on the same form such as the Event Sample and Time Sample are filed in the Class File. For confidentiality reasons, these folders that contain information on many children are kept separate from the individual Portfolio. A note is made on the child's Portfolio Evidence Sheet of the existence of data about the child.
4. Each person who views the file, including the family members, other than the teacher(s) of the group, signs the **File Access Log** (Figure 1–13) in each file, providing the date, identity, agency represented, and reason for looking at the file. This is an ethical way to keep the information private except from those who have a need to know.
5. For the *Week by Week* system of documenting each child several times during the year with various documentation methods in all developmental areas, the names of the children in your classroom are divided into four groups, A, B, C, D, or fewer if your group is smaller than 12. The *Week by Week* plan is a system to observe and document all the children in the class, but it is systematized to be manageable by dividing the work over the course of 40 weeks, observing the whole class with recording methods that are quick and easy and observing small groups with recording methods that are more focused and take more time. That is where the plans for your smaller group plans for A, B, C, and D will guide you. Following the *Week by Week* plan over the course of the 40 weeks, you will have a Portfolio for each child with documentation on all developmental domains taken at least three times during the 40 weeks to see the progress the child has made. The documentation plan makes each week's assignment for observation management timewise, giving the assurance of equitable and thorough documentation for authentic assessment based on hard data.

File Access Log

a form in the Portfolio that records the name, purpose, and date of each person who views the file

This introduction sets the stage, gives you the background, and acquaints you with the format of the book. The next steps are yours. Complete the exercises and adapt the plans for your particular group of children. At the end of 14 weeks, you will have accumulated a sizable Portfolio on each child, with documentation in each developmental area. If you continue the plans throughout the year, you will see the progress the children make and you will become a better observer, recorder, and teacher.

PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE OF CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

NAME _____ **PROGRAM** _____

List the pieces of documentation in this Portfolio that include information about each developmental domain. Make notes for further reference, curriculum planning, or questions for further research.

Evidence Type	Date	Recorder	Notes
PHYSICAL – the child's large and small muscle development, abilities in self-care routines			
SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL – the child's social and emotional development, self-concept			
SPEECH/LANGUAGE – the child's speech and language development			
LITERACY – the child's interest and interaction with reading and writing including work samples			
CREATIVITY – the child's creativity and sociodramatic play, including work samples			
COGNITIVE – the child's cognitive development including science, math, technology, attention span			
ADJUSTMENT TO GROUP – the child's separation and adjustment to the program and interacting in groups as well as interactions with adults			

FIGURE 1–12 Portfolio Evidence Sheet Example

Source: Nilsen, B. (2013). *Week by Week: Plans for Documenting Children's Development*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

The record of _____ was reviewed by the following:
(child's name)

DATE	NAME/TITLE	AGENCY	REASON	SIGNATURE

FIGURE 1–13 File Access Log

Professional Resource Download

Plans for Recording. The plan for 40 weeks, which is listed on the inside back cover, provides you with a week-by-week plan for observing and recording individual children and the whole group on a specific developmental domain. This book focuses on the first 14 weeks. By looking at the chart on the inside back cover, you can see the different recording methods you will learn about and use with small groups of children or a whole group. When you observe and document children’s development week by week, you will become a better observer, recorder, planner, and teacher.

Chapter

2

Using the Class List Log to Look at Separation and School Adjustment



Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 2-1** Identify the characteristics of Class List Logs as an observation tool.
- 2-2** Explore plans to help children and families adjust to school or groups.
- 2-3** Examine strategies to include all children in school adjustment.
- 2-4** Identify warning signs of separation difficulties.

Standards Addressed in This Chapter

NAEYC

NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators Professional Preparation Standards (2020)

- 1a** Understand the developmental period of early childhood from birth through age 8 across physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic domains, including bilingual/multilingual development.
- 2b** Collaborate as partners with families through respectful, reciprocal relationships and engagement.
- 3b** Know a wide range of types of assessments, their purposes, and their associated methods and tools.
- 6b** Know about and uphold ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines.

NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards and Assessment Items (2019)

7. Families. 7.A Knowing and Understanding the Program's Families. Classroom staff should communicate with families often about shared caregiving issues, including parent-child separation at drop-off, special needs, and the food served and consumed. P 92

6. Staff Competencies, Preparation, and Support

6.BB.01 Professional Development Plans and Procedures. The individual evaluation process should support administrative staff and teaching staff to evaluate and improve their own performance, using ongoing reflection and feedback from supervisors, peers, and families. P 84

DAP

NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines (2020)

- 2A** Educators take responsibility for establishing respectful relations with and among families.

Exercise

Make a list of all the people you have had contact with today. Were they right-handed or left-handed?

2-1 Using the Class List Log

Was it easy to remember some people and not others?

Could you remember small details about each one, like which hand they were using? Some assumptions can be made about the list in the preceding exercise. It is easy to remember more significant people but more difficult to list every person one is with. It also may be difficult to remember which hand each person was using, especially for casual contacts. It would have been easier if you knew at the beginning of the day what the assignment was and what you were to be looking for. At the end of the day, or after the fact, recall is more accurate concerning some people and some facts than others. Memory might fail regarding people who demanded no attention and received none.

The teacher's clearest recollection at the end of the day is usually of those children who did memorable things. The memory might be a child splashing paint across the room or one singing every song from the latest Disney movie. Children who cause no trouble or draw no attention to themselves might not be remembered at the end of the day.

A system is needed to guide the teacher to record information about every child in the class to make sure no one is missed. Everyone is important, but you can't write down everything about everyone. One method is a **Class List Log** used to record one or more short, important-to-know pieces of information about each child as you are observing it. This allows for objective records, directly from observation. Memory cannot be trusted for accuracy or remembering a specific behavior or action about each child. When general notations are made from what you *know* of the child, it is a subjective observation without hard data or evidence to demonstrate how you know.

It is more equitable and organized to collect data on all the children in the group. The Class List Log is designed to be quick and easy—something every teacher is looking for—and it provides information on every child in the group. It records facts that may be interpreted later or incorporated into another type of developmental comparison over time. Since the Class List Log only preserves facts or data on one small, specific aspect of development, it is a method that augments many other ways of documenting a child's development or behavior. The Class List Log criterion is determined in advance and is the same for each child and used several times over time to document change (Figure 2-1).

Prepare Class List Log forms by compiling a list of the children by first names arranged alphabetically, making it quicker to take notes. Make a line at the top for the date, the recorder's name or initials, and another line on which to write the skill or behavior you will be observing on each child that day. Leave as much space between names as possible, making two columns vertically on one page. Keep several copies of the form on hand for various purposes. Once completed, the short notes can then be copied over or cut apart and stapled into each child's file. Sets of mailing labels make this transfer of information easier. The availability of the Class List Log form is essential to its usefulness.

2-1a Uses

Class List Logs might be completed on a developmental skill such as "uses finger and thumb to pick up objects," "stacks four blocks on top of one another," "recognizes name." The criteria may be from any developmental area, selected for age-appropriate expectations. While the children are engaged in play or an organized activity, the teacher uses the Class List Log to record information on one preselected skill or behavior and records a small bit of description of this information for each child in the group. That information can form a baseline for working on a skill or recording a specific type of behavior.

Class List Log

method for gathering a specific piece of information on every child in the group

CLASS LIST LOG		Date <u>9/10/16</u>
Observing	<u>Arrivals & First Day</u>	Recorder <u>BAN</u>
Amy	<u>Kissed mom good-bye, ate, napped.</u>	
Bajic	<u>Watched father from window. Quiet. Ate part of lunch. Cried at nap time.</u>	
Carter	<u>Brought by Grandma. Pushed her out the door. Ate. No nap.</u>	
Howard	<u>Absent. No show? Moved. <u>Phone later.</u></u>	
Pattie	<u>Quiet good-bye to Mom. Played alone? Ate? Napped? (Can't remember)</u>	

Always record full date, including year.

Include recorder's initials.

Be short and specific. Same theme or topic of notes.

List arranged alphabetically by first name to find name quickly.

Notes to self.

All right to note no memory.

FIGURE 2-1 Class List Log Example

Potential developmental criteria with age-appropriate criteria include:

- separation from family member upon arrival
- large muscle—specific skills such as stands on one leg for five seconds, walks the length of the balance beam, alternating feet coming down stairs, hops on one foot for 3 feet, dribbles a ball
- small muscle—cuts with scissors, prints first name, rolls a ball, folds a napkin or paper in half, puts together a puzzle of a certain number of pieces, writes first name
- language—recites nursery rhymes; responds to vocabulary such as over/under, small, bigger, biggest; relates a story in sequence
- literacy—looks at a book from front to back, “reads” pictures
- math—counts to 10 accurately, uses one-to-one correspondence, adds two figures
- science—places items in sequence, sorts items by color or size, follows directions for a lab experiment (primary)
- art—paints lines, circles, human figures, alphabet letters (use Class List Log at the easel; could tally each time a child chooses to paint in a week), sings a familiar song
- blocks and dramatic play—takes a role in dramatic play, can make a block bridge (Table 2-1)