Child Development II

Unit 3: Observing Children

Instructional Activity 1: Why Observe Children?

When you observe you, you *pay attention*. One of the major benefits of observation is that it puts you in the present. It keeps you in touch with the here and now. Observation is more than just watching. It is paying attention with all your senses in order to understand. It is making the invisible visible and also being aware of what’s not happening as well as what is. This type of understanding comes through analyzing and interpreting what you perceive.

Observation is an important part of any teacher or early childhood professionals’ job. The younger the children the fewer communication skills the child has, the more important it is to continually observe. Those who work with children never stop observing. Early care and education professionals record the details of observations and put the details to use in various ways. Early childhood professionals observe to:

* **Know individual children better**. Observations help care providers learn about each child’s abilities, interests, and level of development.
* **Identify special needs**. Observation records help determine whether a child needs special services or programs, such as speech therapy, counseling, or a gifted program.
* **Address specific problems**. Observing children helps early educators respond wisely and sensitively to problem behaviors
* **Guide curriculum development**. Observing the play, interests, and abilities of children helps care providers plan more motivating experiences.
* **Document progress and assess skill development**. Care providers and parents want to know how children are progressing in their development. When observation records are kept, development can be tracked. This information helps guide activity planning.
* **Evaluate, or determine the value of the program**. Observations help staff determine whether all the program goals are being met effectively and efficiently.
* **Learn about child development**. Even the most experienced early childhood staff members gain deeper understanding of children from firsthand observation.