

Anecdotal Records (Observations)

An anecdote is an account of an event in a child's day. The record of this event can be detailed or brief. These short reports describe, in a *factual way*, the incident, its context, and what was said or done by the participant(s). In most cases, anecdotes focus on very simple, everyday interactions among children, children and adults as well as children and materials in the environment.

Ideally, the observation record should be recorded as it unfolds or immediately after. However, observation records usually have to be written later at the end of the day. Keeping brief notes on index cards or sticky notes carried in your pockets can be helpful. Jotting one-word reminders or short phrases on the cards about the event can provide a set of reminders when the observation is written.

Characteristics of Observation Records:

- Simple reports of behavior
- Results of direct observation
- Accurate and specific
- Gives context of child's behavior
- Records typical or unusual behaviors

Purpose:

Observations capture the richness and complexity of the moment as children interact with one another and with materials. These records of child behavior and learning accumulated over time enhance the teacher's understanding of the individual child as patterns or profiles begin to emerge. Behavior change can be tracked and documented, and placed in the child's portfolio resulting in suggestions for future observations, curriculum planning and student or parent conferences.

Examples:

Child's Name: Melissa C.

Date & Time: 4/23/11 9:15am

Place or Learning Center: Preschool Classroom self-selection

Melissa sat next to a child at the reading table. The child greeted Melissa with "Hi, Melissa! Wanna read a book with me?" Melissa said that she couldn't read. The child replied, "We can look at the pictures."

Child's Name: Catherine W.

Date & Time: 11/16/11 8:45am

Place or Learning Center: Block Center

In the block center, Catherine and another child began to argue over who would drive the dump truck. The other child said, "Nobody can be my friend if I'm not the driver." Catherine suggested that there were two other trucks and an airplane and she could be the pilot and everyone else could drive a truck.

Child's Name: Destiny H.

Date & Time: 12/20/11 1:30pm

Place or Learning Center: Library

Destiny sat in the library looking at pictures for 5 minutes. She pointed to a picture of a cat. I asked her what she was looking at. She said, "I found a cat." Then she walked over to another child and said, "Look, I found a cat."

Child's Name: Troy B.

Date & Time: 1/3/12 3:05pm

Place or Learning Center: Art

Troy was in the art area during self-select time. He was making letters, rolling the paper and then he tied the paper roll with a string. He demonstrated this process to three other children who were also in the art area.

Child's Name: Sonia M.

Date & Time: 2/3/12 2:45pm

Place or Learning Center: Large Group

During project group time, the children were painting a mural. Sonia asked a friend to help. Her friend said she was not ready. Sonia replied, "Don't worry, we'll wait."

Child's Name: Holley J.

Date & Time: 4/2/12 10:20am

Place or Learning Center: Playground

Holley and a friend were pretending to be riding on their unicorns. They galloped around the playground and pretended to feed them a snack.

Child's Name: Alex P.

Date & Time: 6/6/12 9:30am

Place or Learning Center: Literacy Group

During Literacy Group, Alex listened to another child read the Dinosaur Book. When the child finished reading, Alex picked up a piece of art paper and drew a picture of a red dinosaur.

Helpful Reminders:

- Observations should be **accurate, objective, and specific**
- **Do NOT** make assumptions or use subjective language
- Observe a variety of activities