

1  **Unit 4****The Teacher's Role**2  **Introduction**


In this unit, we describe how teachers can put together knowledge of child development with the content they want to teach. The *Creative Curriculum*® teacher is engaged in an ongoing cycle of observing, guiding learning, and assessing children's progress. During this cycle teachers interact with children continuously and make decisions about when and how to respond to meet individual and group needs.

3  **We will discuss:**

- Observing children: how teachers look at and listen to children to learn about them, using the *Developmental Continuum* as a guide.
- Guiding children's learning: How teachers use a range of teaching strategies to interact with individual children, children with special needs, and with the group as a whole.
- Assessing children's learning: How teachers track children's progress using a systematic approach that supports learning.

4  **Observing Children**


- How, When, What to Observe
- Knowing children begins with observation. (Rapport Building)

5  **Why is it important to observe and record children's behavior in the classroom setting?**

- We cannot use standardized tests or questionnaires to get to know young children: how they think, what they know, how they relate to others. Careful observation is the only source of this information.
- We can't rely on children to explain themselves or their behavior, They may not know and often cannot tell us why they behave as they do.

6  **When should teachers observe children? What can we learn about them during these times?**


- Arrival, departure, toileting, transitions, wash-up, clean-up, story time, choice time, indoors, outdoors, alone, with other children, with adults.
- Teachers learn about children's preferences and interests, temperament, comfort level in different situations, and level of competence. Observation and documentation should be a regular part of the classroom day.

7  **Is it important to observe children on multiple occasions?****Why or why not?**

Children do things differently at different times of the day and during different activities. They have different temperaments and interests or may be more alert at certain times of the day. Observing children on multiple occasions gives a more realistic picture of what they know and can do.

8  **Is it necessary to document your observations?****Why or why not?**

- It is essential to document objective observations over time in order for patterns of behavior to emerge. In addition, parents enjoy hearing personal examples of what their child did.
- Without documentation, teachers would have no evidence upon which to base their evaluation of a child's development and learning or to make instructional decisions.

9  **Observation**

- 1 • We observe many things throughout our daily lives. Unless we have a focus or know what we are looking for, it is difficult to really observe.
- Children reveal themselves (what they know, what they think, what they can do, and how they feel) in many special ways.
- 2 • Human development is complex and no teacher can observe or assess everything. Deciding

what to observe and assess requires us to focus, select, and sample.

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- It is important that we gather good clues or evidence that will help us get to know children better. Recalling observations from memory often yields faulty results, while focused, firsthand observations give a more accurate picture of who children are and what they can do.
- In order to use observations effectively, they must be written down.

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Observations Cont'd

- 1 • Documentation needs to be objective and factual.
 - Which one is correct?
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- 2 • Michael stacked 5 blocks with no assistance from the teacher or peers.
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 - Michael wouldn't stack blocks because he was being lazy.
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Activity 1: Observing Children: Why, When, What and How to Observe

The purpose of this activity is to recognize the role of observation in the preschool classroom and to explore effective methods of observation.

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The first step in the process is to reflect on the observation about the child.

- 1 • What did you learn about the child?
 - Which objectives and developmental steps seem to be reflected in the behavior?
 - Does it show a special interest, a particular learning style, or a challenge?
- 2 • What are the developmental steps related to this objective?
 - How can I use this information as I interact with this child?
 - What questions can I pose or what comments can I make?
 - What materials can I provide?
 - How might I involve the family?
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Summary

- Observation is an objective look at what a child does and says.
- Children show us what they know and can do in a multitude of ways in the context of regular classroom activities. We have to know what we are looking for, make time to observe children, and document what we see.
- Firsthand observations yield a wealth of information about a child.
- To be useful, observation notes should be objective.
- Factual observations, collected over time, enable you to draw more accurate conclusions.
- Writing objective observations takes time and practice.

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Summary cont'd

- Most observations occur during the course of daily activities as you work with children and as you take note of what they do and say.
- The behaviors you see are likely to relate to many of *The Creative Curriculum*[®] objectives.
- Using the *Developmental Continuum* as a guide enables you to:
 - Organize what you see.
 - Consider how you might respond.
 - Consider how you will plan and interact with individual children and the group.
 - Think about what teaching strategies you will use.

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Guiding Children's Learning

- Now that we know more about how to observe children and what we can learn through

observation, we can think about what to do with this knowledge.

- Because children are unique, what works to introduce, reinforce, and extend learning in one child may be ineffective in another. Therefore, good teaching requires a range of teaching approaches and the ability to individualize.

17  **Educational Approaches to Preschool Education**


Reggio Emilia Approach, Montessori, Waldorf and High Scope Perry

18  **Different Approaches to Teaching**

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- Think about the action verbs ("-ing" words) to describe what teachers do when teaching preschool children.

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- "Child-Directed Learning" / "Teacher-Directed Learning"
 - Organize the collection of "-ing" words to create a continuum of involvement, from the least amount of teacher involvement to the most.

20  **Child-initiated learning and teacher-initiated learning**

- Is there is a place for each approach in the preschool classroom?
- Teachers plan for child-initiated learning by preparing the environment with rich and interesting materials. However, teachers don't leave learning to chance.
- What works with one child or in one situation might not work in another.
- Effective teachers know when to observe, when to offer encouragement, when to step in with guidance, and when to intervene or facilitate to help children overcome an obstacle.
- They also know what, when, and how some skills or content must be explicitly taught.

21  **Adapting Instruction for Children with Special Needs**

- Adapting Instruction for Children with Special Needs
 - The purpose of this activity is to take a closer look at the specific needs of a child in your class to determine how you can best support and guide this child's learning.

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- Think about a personal label you have been given (e.g., quiet, outgoing, strong willed, smart, stubborn).
- Reflect briefly on how this label has helped, hindered, pressured, or limited you.
- Labels can affect a teacher's view of a child.

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- Labels sometimes limit our thinking about what a person can do and therefore are not always helpful. It is difficult to accurately observe a child's abilities when we see the label first.
- As you develop a relationship with a child with special needs, as with any other child, you come to know how to respond and which strategies seem to be effective in different situations.

24  **Think about a child in your classroom whose situation challenges you.**

- It may be a child who is gifted, has a disability, is learning a second language, and so forth.
- Fold the paper in half.
- List all of this child's special needs on one side of the paper.
- Next, think about what you need in order to work successfully with this child to guide learning. List your needs on the other side of the paper.
- Refer to p. 179-183 for ideas on working with children with special needs.
- Work with others in your group to brainstorm ways to meet or balance these needs.

25  **Summary**

- 1 • Children are more alike than different.
- Observation is an important tool in planning for the individual needs of children.
- Teachers, parents, and specialists need to have ongoing communication.
- The more programs address the needs of children with special needs, the better programs

- become at meeting the needs of all children.
- 2 • Children in inclusive classrooms:
 - demonstrate increased acceptance and appreciation of diversity;
 - develop better communication and social skills;
 - show greater development in moral and ethical principles;
 - create warm and caring friendships; and
 - demonstrate increased self-esteem. (NAEYC)
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- 26  **Promoting Learning in Interest Areas**
- The learning opportunities we are discussing today happen primarily in the interest areas.
 - They also provide teachers the opportunity to teach important content as children explore materials that are interesting and appealing.
- 27  **Exploring Content in Interest Areas**
- Pages 188 – 189.
 - Review how your content type is supported by each interest area.
 - Identify the most surprising combination of content and interest area .
- 28  **Assessing Children's Learning**
- Assessment in the preschool classroom is very different from what we normally think of when we think about assessment of children in later years of schooling.
 - Assessment is simply what we have been discussing throughout this unit:
 - Observing children.
 - Reflecting on what observations tell about each child's abilities and interests.
 - Responding to children to support further development.
 - Recording observations and the plan for each child.
- 29  **How to organize and store observations about children to facilitate planning**
- Pages 199 – 208.
- 30  **Final Thoughts**
- The teacher's role includes observing, guiding and assessing work in a continual cycle to support children's learning.
 - The *Developmental Continuum* gives a framework for what to observe in children's behavior.
 - Teachers have a spectrum of possible responses to children as they go through their days, ranging from child-directed activities to teacher-directed activities. The choice of how to respond and guide a child is based upon the ongoing observations, which inform the teacher about the child's developmental level.
- 31  **Final Thoughts Continued**
- Observation also informs teachers as to how to guide and support development with special needs children.
 - Assessment is woven through the cyclical process of teaching preschool children. Teachers can organize records of observations and use them to plan to meet the developmental needs of individual children and for the group.
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- 32  **Class Discussion/Reflection**
- Room arrangement: Did you make any changes to resolve disruptive behavior due to room arrangement?
 - Whole class problem: Did you use the information in the Curriculum to solve any whole class problems?
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