

CLDDV 101
Observation in Early Childhood Settings

For this course, all observations must be of Preschool age children, between 3 and 6 years old, in center based Child Development Programs. NO OTHER environments are acceptable for these assignments. Please make arrangements to visit a child care center early in the semester to do your observations.

Why observe children:

A written observation provides a brief account of development as it occurs. A well-written observation report can give a provider and/or parents a good picture of how a child is getting along, learning, and progressing in a program. Observations, recorded over time, and representative of all domains of development can present a comprehensive picture of a child's development and become the basis for curriculum planning.

How to record your observation:

Find a position where you can observe without interfering or interacting with the activities of the classroom. Come prepared with your paper and writing implements so that you do not bother the staff. A clipboard or supportive binder is appropriate, so that you can write "on your lap." Keep a low profile.

Focus on the activity of one child. Follow the child as he/she moves, if necessary. Record all activity and speech, describing what the child does and says. Avoid inserting your judgments or conclusions. Record the events in the sequence in which they occur. This will require you to write very quickly!

Writing your observation report:

After completing your observation record, you will write an anecdotal or running record report. At the beginning of the report record the setting: Here is an example for you to follow. Follow it precisely.

Location of Visit: MJC Lab Preschool Program

Date and time of Visit: Tuesday, October 15, 2002 10:00 a.m.

Number of children present: 24

Age of subject: birth date if possible

Number of adults present: 5

Activity centers available to children during visit: Science, Art, Blocks and Manipulatives, Puzzles, Playdoh, Snack, Outdoor etc.

For the Running Record Assignment Only, briefly describe the center or classroom.

The MJC Preschool Lab is a large open center. Children are free to move about and choose their activities and use materials available to them. The doors to the outside are open, and children may be inside or out at all times except during circle. The snack time is part of choice time—children may choose not to eat a snack. Because of the number of adults, there are very few discipline problems. Student teachers and staff are available in every area of the classroom and use a supportive style of guidance, helping children to work out their problems and find appropriate solutions.

After the brief description of the program and the setting, your report should be written in paragraph form, in chronological order. **Include the age of the child, and the birth date if known.**

Write your report as a description of the child's interaction with the materials, the children and the adults in the program. Be as clear and descriptive as possible. **DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR OPINIONS.** When the reporting part of the observation is complete, you may write a summary conclusion.

Writing your summary conclusion:

In the conclusion, you will summarize the observation report and draw conclusions about the child's development, relationships and learning. Your conclusion will state what activities, materials and concepts need to be addressed in curriculum planning in order to provide for the learning needs of this child. Be specific, including domains of development and specific learning experiences that would support this growing child.