



Using Observation and Documentation

Partnering with Families to Support Observation as Part of Ongoing Child Assessment

LEARN FROM FAMILIES

Families know their children better than anyone else and have valuable information to share with you.

- Invite families to share what they observe about their children. Ask specific questions to learn about their children. For example: “Does Gustavo play a lot with his brothers?” or “How does Gustavo let you know what he needs?”
- Ask families about their children’s interests and preferences at home.
- Talk with families about any questions or concerns they have about their children’s development.
- Observe children’s interactions with family members during pick-up and drop-off.

SHARE WITH FAMILIES

Sharing information with families helps them become actively involved in their children’s development and learning.

- Share your observations of children with their families regularly. Describe the behaviors to families by saying what the children said and did.
- Explain to families the reasons why you observe their children and what observation tools you use to assess children’s development.
- Show and discuss children’s portfolios, photos, and videos with their families. Use portfolios to illustrate observations that you have made and projects that the children have worked on.

COLLABORATE WITH FAMILIES

Remember, families are your partners in supporting children’s development and learning.

- Ask families to observe certain skills or behaviors at home and share with you what they notice. Write down families’ observations and place them in their children’s portfolios.
- Review and reflect on your observations with families and ask for their input and perspectives. For example, “I have noticed that your child smiles and laughs a lot during story time. What have you seen during story time at home?”
- Work together with families to plan learning opportunities for their children.
- Ask families about their learning goals for their children, and brainstorm with them ways to meet these goals.

For more information on sharing appropriate and meaningful observations, developmental profiles, portfolios, and other forms of documentation with families, explore the article, [Appropriate and Meaningful Assessment in Family-Centered Programs](#), from *Young Children*:

http://www.naeyc.org/yc/files/yc/file/201307/Appropriate_and_Meaningful_Assessment_Elicker.pdf



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Taking It Home—Partnering with Teachers/Providers in Assessment

OBSERVE AND LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD

Slow down and pay close attention to your child's behaviors and interactions.

- Notice what your child is saying and/or doing. For example:
 - What types of toys or objects is your child interested in exploring?
 - What activities does your child really enjoy?
 - How does your child behave when interacting with other children or adults?
- Write about or take a picture of what you see your child doing and saying.

SHARE YOUR OBSERVATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER/PROVIDER

Your child's teacher or child care provider can benefit from knowing what you see and hear at home.

- Bring pictures or notes from observations or activities to show your child's teacher/provider during pick-up or drop-off.
- Ask your child's teacher or child care provider about what he or she sees in the classroom. Does he or she see the same behavior that you notice at home? For example, you might say, "I have noticed that Gustavo is sharing more with his brothers. Have you seen that here?" or "I wonder when Gustavo will start walking. What do you see in the classroom?"
- Share your child's interests, preferences, and favorite activities with the teacher/provider.

COLLABORATE WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER/PROVIDER TO CREATE LEARNING GOALS FOR YOUR CHILD

- Share your goals for your child. If you're not sure, ask the teacher/provider to share what goals for the near future he or she has in mind.
- Suggest some activities that your child enjoys at home that he or she could do in the classroom.
- Discuss some activities that you can do at home to support your child's development and learning with your child's teacher/provider.

For more information and tips about using observation in the home, check out the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)'s article, [Observation: The Key to Understanding Your Child](http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/observation-key-understanding-your-child): <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/observation-key-understanding-your-child>