

SECTION 2

Answer Key

CHAPTER 1

Observation: An Introduction

Answers to Focus Questions

1. Why do educators think that observation is important?

Educators believe that they can make a difference to the experience of the child. Observing children will help them to learn more about the needs and developmental patterns of children. Individual children can be observed so that their style, characteristics, skills, and needs can be identified and understood.

2. Of the informal observations you have already made, what have you already learned about observing children?

(The learner will describe what he or she has learned about observing children). Responses could include learning how to record details in the observation, trying to observe objectively and/or interpreting the information collected in addition to other components addressed in Chapter 1.

3. What rules should there be about making observations of other people's children?

There are several rules that should be made when observing other people's children. Firstly, it is crucial to act in a professional manner at all times. It is important to get parents' consent, be respectful, attempt to be objective and be mindful of why you are observing their children. If possible, try to observe the children on several occasions using all of your senses. Lastly, any inferences should be supported with specific examples of the behaviour.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. perception, c; method, d; behaviour, a; bias, e; authentic assessment, b
2. professionalism, d; evaluation, a; confidentiality, e; objectivity, c; subjectivity, b
3. naturalistic, c; developmental domain, b; respect, e; portfolio, d; ethics, a

B.

1. F; 2. F; 3. F; 4.T; 5. F; 6. F; 7.T; 8.T; 9.T; 10.T; 11.T; 12.T

C.

1. b; 2.b; 3.d; 4.c; 5.b 3; 6.b; 7. b; 8.a; 9.d; 10.a; 11.a; 12.d; 13.b

D.

1. See answer to Focus Question 1.
2. Naturalistic observations, which include where the observation took place, can be completed by both the educator and the parent(s). Through authentic and current observations, the educator can notice growth in the child's development or areas where programming changes are required. If formal testing is necessary, the other professionals (e.g., speech pathologist) often seek out and incorporate the educator's observations as part of their report.

3. The ten core reasons include: to be active participants in the lives of children and families, learning about child development, uncover our own early childhood experiences, identifying and addressing causes of concern regarding a child, celebrate each child's family, community and culture, track developmental patterns, determining our role in the child's life, design curriculum, organize environments, creative opportunities, and collecting data and making good decisions for children.
4. Spontaneous activity can tell adults much about the children's interests, motivation, concentration span, play patterns, emotional well-being, physical skills, social interactions, moral understanding, and cognitive functioning. Operating without direction, children are more likely to show their true competence than they might in structured testing situations.
5. When professionals and parents come together they can share their observations about a child. By combining a variety of perspectives, it helps to make sure that perceptions are similar. At the same time, the team can develop a program plan that helps meet the individual developmental needs of that child.
6. Respect, purpose/intention, roles and responsibilities, professionalism, truth, perception and bias, focus, a stable backdrop for observational practice, practice, centrality. These must be followed to ensure that objective, unbiased and professional observations are conducted to provide for the optimal development of the child.
7. Naturalistic observation allows us to see a child in an everyday, natural setting rather than a formal testing situation. The child is more likely to perform at an optimal level and will not be as stressed. Authentic assessment allows information to be gathered about a child in a naturalistic way. Contextual and health information allows development to be seen in relation to "who" the child is. Also, this approach views evaluation as a series of personal progressions. Authentic assessment leads to practical support of emerging development.
8. Every individual sees things from a different angle and through a different lens or perspective. Although it is usually desirable to be as objective as possible, the reality is that observers see behaviour from their own perspective - which is biased to some extent. This perspective has formed over years of experience and thought, so even through tremendous effort, some assumptions and obvious judgments will remain.
9. The validity of interpretations must always be checked before they are relied upon. The objectivity of the observation itself is the primary source of concern; inaccuracy in recording will inevitably lead to inappropriate conclusions. Interpretations are frequently made on the basis of too little information.
10. Ethics influences all aspects of an educator's role. Educators need to behave in a professional manner at all times; this includes how, when and why they are observing children. Information should be gathered by following the appropriate protocols. Educators should strive to establish ethical relationships with all people who are involved with the children in their care.
11. One conclusion that could be made is that elderly individuals are slow and make shopping more time consuming. It's not accurate since not all elderly individuals move more slowly than anyone else. Another example could be that about an individual's appearance or actions. Most conclusions will be general statements about a particular group of people and can be assumptions.
12. Students can comment on any bias—age, race, gender, ability, sexual preference/orientation and will provide an example of how it could influence their authentic assessments. Ex. Same sex parents will not be able to provide an optimal environment for their child, since their child won't receive information and teachings from the opposite sex. This will color assessments since it's a bias that will prevent the observer from seeing all the positives that a child will receive from their parents.

E.

Answers will vary.

F.

1. You are attending a staff meeting at your place of work—an early learning and education centre. The purpose of the meeting is to plan for formal assessments of the children in your care. Parents have never been involved in the assessment process before and you would like to include them. What points will you put forth to support your stance?

Parents play a significant role in the lives of their children and are party to various skills/experiences/information about children that early childhood educators might not know about. The information that parents can provide is of utmost importance to the early childhood educator and needs to be valued. Sharing information about children with parents, and vice versa, can begin and continue a strong relationship with parents. When we listen to parents, this can lead to parent's improvement in confidence and risk taking. Involving parents helps build connections between key adults in the child's life. It can provide the opportunity for there to be insights into parental priorities. It can facilitate the creation of shared meanings about the child and their behaviour. It can help enlighten educators about the child's home and lifestyle. Including parents can enable better understandings of what is happening within the program. It will offer a platform for sharing information and problem solving in a positive manner. It will also allow us to give concrete examples wherever necessary instead of vague statements of praise or concern

2. You are reviewing for your test and your study partner says "I just don't understand objectivity and subjectivity. It's so confusing". What would your answer be?

Early Childhood educators strive for objectivity—the quality of an approach that is undistorted, impartial, unbiased, analytical and reliable. It means that you try to approach a situation with a blank and open mind, holding back any bias that you might have. It is important so that you can really see the situation and participants for what it is, rather than what you think it is. It is not possible to be completely objective.

Subjectivity and objectivity are on the same continuum (p.33); one at each end.

CHAPTER 2

Lenses and Filters

Answers to Focus Questions

1. If you are working with a toddler who is new to child care, and you think of her as being ‘smart’ as you observe her knocking down the blocks you stack for her, does that image of the child as being competent make any difference?

No, we probably wouldn’t see the same thing because we would be viewing this situation with our own set of lenses and filters. Our observations are value-laden due to our personalities, emotions, experiences, beliefs and so forth. For example, one person may think that it is a grandmother babysitting her granddaughter because the parent is working; whereas another person may see this as two generations choosing to spend time together. He or she might make a personal connection to his or her own family dynamics and may believe that elders should be seen as a source of wisdom. Our life experiences vary from person to person and consequently, so does the way we see and interpret relationships around us. What we believe about our world makes a big difference to what we see in it, or how we make sense of it. Consequently, our own personal history, culture, family and experiences will influence what and how we perceive the lunch to represent.

2. Why do you think that understanding your own culture and values impacts what and how you observe?

Based on your prior life experiences, family and cultural associations, you will naturally see events and people through a set of cultural lenses and filters. Consequently, you may judge people and situations differently than somebody from a different cultural group. It will impact our attitudes, what we observe, and what we consider to be important. It will also influence how we later interpret that information. Therefore, by understanding our own culture and values we begin to uncover the lenses we use and become more mindful of how it influences our perceptions.

3. Think of examples of where two or more people see the same thing but make different meanings from it.

Any number of examples could be perceived differently, such as positively or negatively, depending on the observer’s point of reference and previous experiences which have shaped his or her lenses and filters. Examples could include seeing a man sitting on a park bench wiping tears from his eyes – one person concludes he is crying, the other thinks he has allergies or something in his eye. In a public place two people are talking with raised voices. Are they arguing? Another example could be when two people witness a crime. What details are recalled or thought to be important after the incident? Another example could be two people walking together. One person may think they are family member or friends while another person may believe the two people are in a relationship and going on a date. What of a person standing at the bus stop? One viewer may interpret this situation as somebody that cannot afford a car while other person believes taking the bus was a positive choice to help the environment or to save money. What we see and the reasons behind it are based on our personal lenses and filters.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. lens, c; filter, b; objectivity, a; bias, e; culture, d
2. gender, a; judgemental, c; values, e; morals, d; assumption, b
3. anti bias, b; race, e; teacher directed, d; beliefs, c; individuality, a

B.

- 1.F; 2.F; 3.F; 4.T; 5.F; 6.T; 7.T; 8.T; 9.F; 10.T, 11.F 12. F

C.

- 1.c; 2.c; 3.a; 4.b; 5.d; 6.c; 7.d; 8.d; 9.d; 10.a

D.

1. See answer to Focus Question 2.
2. In order to do a good job when observing children it is necessary that we move from being a casual observer to a more disciplined observer. This will happen as the educator develops the necessary skills and professional knowledge. It also involves refining his or her lenses in order to know what is important to capture through an observation.
3. An observer's lenses are shaped by knowledge. This is influenced by formal learning (for example, post-secondary education) and information learning (through everyday experiences). What an educator believes about the world has huge ramifications in terms of what we choose to see around us and how we make sense of it. Each person's life experiences and knowledge of the world varies and therefore, we see and interpret situations differently through these lenses. Our emotions also play a role in what we see. Using a professional perceptual lens might involve revisiting an observation to draw different conclusions as a result of additional training. However, we must be mindful that we are not too quick to interpret what we see.
4. As humans, it is extremely challenging to make an observation that is objective and written using neutral language. When using our senses to participate in observations there are strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the individual, level of focus, considerations and variations in professional expertise. Part of the strength comes from the ability to narrow in on watching one child to create holistic, detailed observations in an authentic experience. Using our expertise, we can select the best observational tool to focus on areas of the child's needs and interpret the observations. The drawbacks or potential weaknesses pertain to these same issues. The demand on our time and effort required to make detailed observations. Based on our differing lenses, other challenges include the wide-range of possible things to observe and our potential to be biased in our recordings and interpretations.
5. An educator's family provides him or her with their genetics and then the family content forms part of the foundation of his or her life experiences. Most people assume that other families are similar to their own. Most Canadians live within some kind of family unit; but, every family has its own structure, specific needs, interactions, as well as, beliefs, goals, morals, responsibilities and acceptable behaviours. These factors shape how we define families. For example, if the educator comes from a dysfunctional family this might limit his or her appreciation for the potential positive experiences that can occur when a family supports and nurtures its members. In order to understand how it influences the educator's lenses, he or she needs to analyze his or her own family so that the educator is aware of how it slants his or her perspective. Otherwise, an educator may be looking for situations that are similar to his or her own experiences without realizing it.

6. The lens of personality reflects the preferences and choices we decide to repeatedly gravitate towards. The five big factors are openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Each of these is a double-ended continuum of opposites. For example, extroversion is on one end and introversion on the other end. Although many aspects of our personality are genetic, we evolve based on our preferences and choices. By knowing ourselves it helps us to determine how we go about observing others. If we are mindful of our choices it helps to highlight why we perceive the world and the people in it a certain way. We need to remember that some choices are really unconscious and we should keep this in mind rather than making assumptions.
7. A cultural lens is strongly tied to one's family and upbringing. Culture includes shared common stories, artifacts, beliefs, rules, status, celebrations, music and forms of communication to name a few. Our personal beliefs and values are influenced by these aspects of our cultural lens. These are important because we use this lens to process information about people and situations in the world around us. As we learn more about ourselves through this lens we may need to readjust it and reflect upon this as the cultural lens evolves over time. Many aspects of family exist in the realm of culture. Therefore, our cultural lens strongly influences what we see around us and how we interpret this information.
8. Culture is not static and neither are people. Bronfenbrenner's five bioecological systems consist of concentric circles, each representing one system. His theory helps to capture the changing processes of culture within our lives. Each person is in the middle of a complex series of social sub-systems. The individual interacts with each of these subsystems over time. The microsystem is made up of the individual's biology as well as family and friends. Then next ring is called mesosystem which connects people through relationships and experiences. Thirdly, the exosystem reflects the external community which impacts the individual's experiences. The macrosystem is the larger culture in which the individual lives. Lastly, the chronosystem describes the interconnectedness between the other systems and how they function and interact over time.
9. It is really important to fix cracked lenses and filters in order to advance as a professional observer. As humans observe, we are influenced by our personal characteristics such as family, culture, personality, emotions and choices. We need to be cautious that we do not use our previous experiences to reach premature conclusions that include blanket statements about an entire group of people. We need to avoid making inferences. Instead, we need to keep our filters clear when we observe children in any setting and try to limit assumptions about their background. We may be able to fix our lenses by asking questions in appropriate ways, seek out information to become well-informed, address personal biases, check our perceptions for assumptions and biases and finally attempt to avoid making inferences unless they are valid and supportable.
10. If an educator believes that children's rights and freedoms are important that means that everything we see will be processed through that lens. The children's rights will become an embedded attitude rather than an added component of an educator's philosophy. This lens will alter every observation. By wearing this lens, the educator chooses to help children's voices be heard and attempts to support individual children to reach their full potential in a safe and supportive environment.

E.

Answers will vary.

F.

1. Values the ECE might hold are: modesty, age appropriate dress, childhood is important and the child shouldn't be rushed to grow up, individualism, simplicity, moderation, dignity etc. Values the parent might hold are: hero worship, independence, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, exploration, Playfulness, confidence etc.

Values influence each party's actions. It is important to look at actions and try to determine the values and/or perspective that influenced those choices. We may even hold the same values but express them differently.

CHAPTER 3

Observing Through the Lens of Early Childhood Development

Answers to Focus Questions

1. Imagine a child you encountered recently who you didn't know---they could be any age. You can observe some of their characteristics and behaviours, but what are the things that have contributed to making them the way they are today?

We need to appreciate the individuality of children but acknowledge that some aspects of their development are similar in pattern. This development is influenced by a variety of factors including genetic inheritance, life experiences, and social contexts.

2. Can you recall how any adults described your own development as you grew up?

By using our “lens of development” we tend to see the children in a very detailed way and attempt to notice as much as possible about every aspect of their abilities and physical characteristics according to each of the developmental domains. These observations aid us to better understand “who” the child is above and beyond the physical development and the behaviours that we can directly observe. We can enter the child’s world through participatory observation or observe from a distance. Research aids us in uncovering why children behave the way they do. Using the “lens of development” helps educators to better understand attachment, self-regulation, emotional expression, social relation social learning, and play behaviours.

3. If you were a four-year-old, what would you want an adult to know about you, or understand, before they started observing you in your preschool program (supposing you could put it into words)?

The more we know about how children develop, the better sense we will make of what we see. Our learning often starts with studies of normative development. Our experience working with children also helps build this knowledge base. Biological information is particularly helpful in comprehending children’s behaviour. Further in-depth studies, reading research, exploring theories of development, or conducting research are necessary for a greater understanding of development. Conditions that drive developmental progress also need to be reviewed. Finally, sociological, political, and economic issues that influence development must be studied so the context of the child’s development can be appreciated.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. physical development, b; cognition, d; sexual development, c; personality development, e; emotional development, a
2. self-regulation, d; milestones, a; emotional intelligence, e; temperament, c; maturation, b
3. neuroscience, e; early intervention, c; norms, a; scaffolding, b; proprioception, d

B.

1.T; 2.T; 3.F; 4.T; 5.F; 6.T; 7.T; 8.T; 9.F; 10.F; 11. F; 12. T

C.

1.a; 2.b; 3.c; 4.d; 5.d; 6.b; 7.b; 8.a; 9.b; 10.c; 11. C; 12. b; 13. c

D.

1. See answer to Focus Question 1.
2. Looking at children's behaviour with some understanding of typical developmental patterns is helpful. The most obvious way to do this is to consider each developmental domain: physical development, language and communication, social interactions, emotional development, personality, moral development, cognition, and, possibly, spiritual development. Some developmental domains are easier to perceive and interpret than others. Several behaviours can reveal a child's level of development and, because of interactions among the developmental domains; behaviours may indicate several areas of development at once.
3. Observing children in an open-ended way allows the observer to learn about particular children and children in general. The observer might see interesting things we had not expected or anticipated. It offers opportunities for the observer to make sense of what they saw.
4. See answer to Focus Question 3.
5. Physical skills allow a child to touch, feel, explore, and be mobile. Consequently, the presence or absence of these skills will influence her ability to learn about the world. Similarly, the level of physical skill will shape her ability to make relationships and play, both of which are essential early learning skills. Self-concept and self-esteem will both be affected by the child's ability to become independent and fit in with her peers; if she lacks physical skills, these areas of development will likely also suffer. There may be an emotional toll on the child if she is physically different from other children; although others may be accepting, her abilities may exclude her from many activities. In the case of physical disability, the child will need to learn to compensate for the lack of physical skills, and the adults will need to provide appropriate support.
6. Each child's experience, skills, thought processes, motivation, and physical appearance are all unique to that child. Consequently, each child's needs are also individual, although they may be observed within a group. Even the way children function within the group will differ from one to another. When we plan for the whole group, we need to be mindful of individual differences in style, intellectual level, and so on. Educators work with groups of children but need to observe and support the individual differences amongst the children in their care.
7. Thought processes are hard to determine because they are unseen; they can only be inferred from the child's behaviour. When a child is counting, for example, we may have some idea of his concept of numbers, or when he makes a mistake in using tenses, we may appreciate the limitations of his thinking; however, these are only informed guesses. We need to have an idea of what cognitive skills are typical for the child's age and stage, but even then we may make inferences that are incorrect. Cognitive theories can help us explain observed behaviours, but theories sometimes contradict each other or may be misapplied. Understanding the child's cognitive processes requires in-depth analysis.
8. Piaget's theory of developmental psychology is a constructivist approach to learning based on his detailed observations. He believes children build meaning (learn) through direct experiences. He saw that a child progressed through a series of stages the first one being sensory-motor period. In this phase, the infant builds internal schemes of understanding. At around two years of age a child will use symbols as part of the pre-operational stage. During this stage a child's thinking tends to revolve around himself (egocentric thought). Over time, the child builds a conceptual understanding of the world and is in the stage of concrete operations when he is between seven to eleven years old.
9. Scaffolding is the process by which an adult provides supports to assist a child's learning. The process requires the adult to observe the child closely and move to provide assistance at the correct point. Then the child will move into a new realm of understanding. Bruner first coined the term "scaffolding" to describe how mothers helped children acquire language.

10. Emotional Intelligence is a term coined by Daniel Goleman and describes the ability to understand and use an individual pattern of responses to personal achievement. EI will include such skills as self-regulation, self-motivation, and the ability to control one's impulses, empathy and social competence in interpersonal relationships. These skills are seen as critical today, and were not included in development previously. Some schools and early learning facilities focus on these skills as much as they do any other area of development. EI has a significant impact on resilience in children.

E.

Answers will vary.

F.

1. Spiritual development, or the spiritual domain can be a controversial domain for many individuals, including parents. Most often people think about religion when the domain of spiritual development is discussed. However, it is much more than that.

Topics that could be addressed in this answer include:

- definitions of spiritual development
- aesthetics
- increased understanding of the world
- as a part of holistic development
- philosophy
- death, dreams, nightmares
- nature and spiritual development
- rituals, holidays, symbols etc.

CHAPTER 4

Observing Children Through the Lens of Play

Answers to Focus Questions

1. What is special about children's play? Recall a baby or child you have seen playing. What were they doing and what do you think they got out of this?

Children play to explore and learn about the world around them. Young children predominantly use their senses to gain information about objects and experiences. This exploration provides children with knowledge as well as the satisfaction of exploring items and using them in many different ways.

2. What is your reaction to the phrase "Playing is learning"? When you look at children playing do you see learning, or something else?

At first, when you look at children playing, you may just see that—playing. However upon deeper reflection and observation, you will soon learn that playing is the child's task during childhood. Play is their vehicle to explore the world and to learn about objects, people, places and events in their lives.

4. Why might it be challenging to observe and record children's play in a useful way?

There are many reasons for this. Observation is a skill that needs to be learnt and practiced in order for it to be used in the most advantageous way possible. It can be complicated to choose which behaviour(s) to choose to observe. It can also be hard to determine when and where to observe children.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. small world play, e; rough play, d; child directed, a; adult-guided play, b; risky play, c.

B.

1. F; 2. T

C.

1. b; 2. d; 3. b

E.

Answers will vary.

F.

1. Choose another student and create a debate based on this statement: Child-directed play provides more developmental opportunities for growth than adult-directed play. Each participant will have 5 minutes to convince the audience of their point of view, and will have one minute of rebuttal.

Child-directed: voice of the child is heard, sees the child as competent, protects the nature of play

Adult directed: scaffolded learning, teacher knows best, structured learning is best, adults take control of the experiences, relationship based learning, play partnership

CHAPTER 5

Narratives

Answers to Focus Questions

1. How can you record a child's behaviour to capture every detail of action, reaction, posture, gesture, and communication, without using a video camera?

Only a rich, full narrative description of the child's behaviour will offer sufficient detail that, when read, provides a "picture" of what was observed.

2. What can you discover by describing in detail a randomly selected sequence of a child's play activity?

An open-ended, nonfocused observation will record any behaviour that happened to occur at the time the recording was made. If the activity observed was a spontaneous play sequence, any of the following may become evident: interests/motivation; concentration span; play patterns; social interactions (child–adult or child–child); language abilities; gross/fine motor skills; expression of feelings; cognitive activity; response to materials; creativity or use of imagination.

3. Writing down particular incidents in which a child is involved may be amusing, but how can you choose really significant episodes to record?

Anecdotal records involve the selection, by the observer, of significant incidents. Observers need to have sufficient understanding of child development to know what is relevant and thus know what to observe and record. Significant episodes may include mistakes made by a child, examples of behaviours that are typical or atypical in terms of developmental norms, anecdotes that offer an insight into the child's humour or individuality, or scenarios that demonstrate a newly acquired skill or evolution in what the child understands.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. narrative observations, a; running records, e; diary records, d; specimen records, e ; anecdotal records, c
2. empirical evidence, b; inference, d; emerging skill, e; data, a; contextual information, c
3. spontaneous play, b; play patterns, d; personal narrative, a; learning stories, e; learning stories, c
4. inner narrative, b; subject, a; observer effect, d; cultural stories, c; teaching stories, e

B.

1.F; 2.F; 3.T; 4.F; 5.F; 6.T; 7.T; 8.T; 9.T; 10.T

C.

1.d ; 2.b; 3.b; 4.b; 5.a; 6.b; 7.a; 8. a; 9.b; 10.d

D.

1. The observer can practice his/her skills to improve the detail of the data they record. Practice provides more details about the subtleties of communication. The use of meaning and descriptive language will help. Looking at the smaller details of behaviour will help the recorder pick up minute details that may have been missed during previous attempts.
2. Child Development Focus box

3. It is best to review a recording soon after it is done. You might look for the following: spelling errors; consistency of tense; clarification for parts that are unclear; changing from a code or short form to complete sentences; or sequencing of information. If you remember the flow of activity, you might include extra description. Other suggestions include; deleting inconsequential parts, removing any assumptions and altering any judgments. Read the recording out loud and act it out to be sure that it makes sense and that there are no gaps in the flow of the recording. Summarize the recording, categorizing the information by developmental domains and then finally, type a clean copy. P207-8
4. You might like to keep note cards, Post-it notes, or a notebook on hand for casual observations. You might prepare charts for anecdotal records so that you can jot them down as you work and note who has not been observed in a while. As a team, you might plan to take turns having time for nonparticipatory observation. Parents, assistants, or volunteers may also be able to assist the children so that you can be temporarily “off program” and observe. If you work with older children, you might have them participate in observation and record keeping by having them observe each other. With younger children, you may be able to catch up with recordings at naptime or when the ratios can be maintained with additional staffing. Teachers in the school system may have larger classes, but they have a shorter day; observations can be written up before or after the day’s work with the children. More than any other strategy, a commitment to the process will make it work. P215
5. Learning stories are important assessments because they can reveal real life experiences which may not be seen when using other types of observations. A child’s spontaneous, real-life performance is more significant and useful than a skills-based test. Learning stories also look at the child’s assets. They can also focus on the child’s learning dispositions or approaches to learning. Learning stories support the child’s learning as it occurs in a natural unhindered way. Learning stories provide a contextualized view of more complex behaviours. P224

E.

Answers will vary.

CHAPTER 6

Methods of Observing and Recording

Answers to Focus Questions

1. Rather than record everything you see, how might you choose which of a child's behaviours to record?

Samplings are useful for determining patterns of behaviour. A sampling could reveal patterns of play, wakefulness and sleep, challenging behaviour, or any other behavioural repetition or sequence. Time samplings are open-ended observations that record a "snapshot" of the child's activity at chosen times; they will, depending on the time intervals selected, help the adult see any patterns in the child's behaviour. Event samplings focus on a particular behaviour or behavioural category. The observer identifies this behaviour, defines it in an operational (practical) way, and then records examples of that behaviour when it is demonstrated. Analysis of event samplings may, in addition to establishing a pattern; help the observer attribute possible cause(s) for the behaviour. The duration of each behavioural episode, the frequency of its occurrence, and the severity or degree to which it is significant may also be assessed.

2. When you reveal a pattern in a child's behaviour, what might it tell you?

Where patterns of behaviour become apparent, there may be an indication of what brought about the behaviour, although a trigger or cause should not be decided on from a single observation. Where a *trigger* is identified, the adult would need to consider removing that trigger, making attempts to desensitize the child to whatever precipitates the behaviour, or allowing the situation to continue. Where the observation highlights the *cause* of behaviour, the teacher or caregiver might want to evaluate the situation and consider possible changes to the program or guidance strategies. The cause of behaviour may be outside the adult's influence; in this case, the adult should reflect on how to help the child make accommodations. The variety of possible causes is wide, so the response would have to be appropriate to the situation. Parental input is necessary at all times so that the needs of the child can be met sensitively and so that home and agency work effectively together.

Patterns of behaviour can reveal a wide range of information. A pattern may be determined by any of the following: developmental stage of the child; personal or learning style; previous experiences; reaction to the program, staff, or peers; or state of health and well-being. Patterns will frequently be the result of two or more of these factors.

3. If you have a list of behaviours and you go look for them in a two-year-old in the toddler room where you work, how well do you think the observation will go?

It will be very difficult and time consuming for the observer to search out instances for all the behaviours on the list. Depending on what the child chooses to be involved in, their mood, sleep levels, hunger, growth, etc., the behaviours may or may not be seen.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. validity, b; sampling, a; reliability, e; charts, d; event sampling, c
2. antecedent event, c; consequent event, e; tally, a; time sampling, b; regression, d
3. work sampling, c; reinforcement, a; checklist, b; group checklist, e; ecomap, d

B.

- 1.F; 2.F; 3.T; 4.T; 5.T; 6.T; 7.F; 8.F; 9.F; 10.T; 11. T; 12 T; 13 F

C.

1.c; 2.c; 3.d; 4.a; 5.a; 6.d; 7.a; 8.a; 9.a; 10.d

D.

1. The fastest, but not always the most accurate, way of recording developmental information is to check off items on a checklist. The checklist items should be developmentally appropriate and cover the areas that the observer is seeking.
2. Event samplings are useful because they are a quick and efficient way of recording exactly the information you are seeking. Charts can be prepared in advance, which can reduce the amount of time taken away from the children. The recording takes only a few moments to write but can lead to some useful inferences about the frequency, duration, severity, and causality of a behaviour. A wide range of behaviours can be recorded, both positive and negative. The event sampling is useful for behaviour modification, strategy development and can lead professionals to make appropriate interventions.
3. Mapping available space can help teachers find out how the space is being used, where the children and adults are moving, how traffic flow could be better regulated, what is of interest to individual children, or how much time children spend in different areas of the space. Mappings can help resolve difficulties such as adults and children colliding with one another, noise that interferes with quiet activities; messy play materials spreading to “clean” areas such as book corners, accidents occurring because of slippery floors, or a variety of other safety issues. Teachers can draw furniture and materials on a bare plan of the room to try to configure an ideal arrangement to promote safety and improve access to important activities and learning centers.

A detailed map of the whole area and its contents can be copied and tracking lines added to indicate the movements around the room of some or all of the children. Alternatively, acetate sheets can be overlaid on the map and used to draw what was tracked. Layering the acetates can then show the spots where the greatest activity is occurring; frequently, these are the places where accidents occur. Adults can assess the environment based on the results. When individual children are tracked on the map, information about their interests, movement within the group, gross motor skills, and concentration span may become evident.

4. A valid and reliable checklist might be the most efficient way of gathering a large amount of information. The checklists may vary because of the children’s developmental differences. You should select a checklist for each child based on her or his overall skill level. If there is not the budget available to purchase prepared checklists, you could develop your own group checklist using a good normative profile or covering the skills you want to record.
5. It is possible that the checklist did not record the child’s creative skills because she did not happen to demonstrate them within the time frame when the behaviours were being recorded. She may also have been aware that she was being observed and therefore, felt unusually stressed; possibly she didn’t like an adult seeing her creative work. If the child is interested in artwork, you could provide a range of developmentally appropriate activities for her to choose from. If she is not very interested in these, try to find alternative activities using other creative media that might interest her, such as three-dimensional modeling, pottery, sewing, or other crafts. If inquiries are being used with the group, observe the child’s interests and try to provide a scaffold from them to some kind of art activity. You could also try some outdoor activities, such as mud pies and drawing in sand, to provide the fun needed to encourage her to use her imagination. Stories might also prompt her interest; she might like to be creative in language arts. If she does not want to be involved in creative activities, do not put stress on her by pushing her into them.
6. See answer to Focus Question 3.

7. For a culturally diverse group, you should select a checklist that
 - is not heavily dependent on the use of spoken English
 - avoids the use of domestic items with which the children may not be familiar
 - looks at competence in appropriate areas rather than specific skills such as the ability to use a knife and fork (rather than chopsticks)
 - avoids the use of “testing” questions that use monocultural images
 - allows all the children to be considered successful within their own context
 - uses a culturally broad sample of children in the development of its norms or other criteria
 - does not have items that are socially learned behaviours typical of only one culture
8. A “homemade” checklist is a useful tool for educators to record developmental information about one or more children quickly and efficiently. The educator can create his or her own checklist that lists the desired behaviours which can later be used to record information about a child or children’s skill acquisition. The “homemade” checklist can be used to check off observed behaviours in either a naturalistic or contrived situation when a prepared checklist does not contain the specific criteria that the educator is interested in observing.
9. When using checklists or any other form of observation, it is important to be aware of our personal lens. Good practices means to be mindful of cultural and contextual sensitivity, be professional and confidential with the information. Use authentic assessment where possible and put the children’s needs first in the developmental exemplar.
10. When determining if the prepared checklist is suitable the educator needs to ensure it covers the areas/domains/types or categories of behaviour he or she wishes to record and that the items represent a suitable developmental span of behaviours. There should be scope for contextualizing the data collected. The hope is that the checklist will fit the educator’s purpose in the form of the report, record keeping, program planning, and identify a concern. Lastly, is that a sufficient blend of behaviours will be recorded in order to show a pattern rather than simply revealing whether the behaviour was present or absent.
11. A functional assessment is a variation of an event sampling and has similar features. One way functional assessments can be used is to observe and record an individual’s ability to function and perform self-help and self-care skills, and to manage to perform the necessary tasks of domestic living. A second way they can be used is to observe and record challenging or dysfunctional behaviors of an individual and to determine their purpose and to try to change their patterns.

E.

Answers will vary.

CHAPTER 7

Observing and Evaluating Children's Environments

Answers to Focus Questions

1. Based on what you already know about children and observing their unfolding development, what role do you think a child's environment has in the developmental process?

The environment plays a crucial role in the developmental process. The child's environment includes family, housing, economic status, social relationships, and resources. If some of these aspects of the child's environment are lacking it may impede the child's development. Through observation and our knowledge of child development, educators can create a safe, welcoming and stimulating environment. In fact, we can provide materials and experiences that help to scaffold learning as educators program for each child's next steps along the developmental continuum.

2. If you were to imagine an ideal environment for young children, what would it look like?

Educators can provide children with exemplary environments in which they can learn. As these children grow they will take on responsibility as adults to help save the environment at both the local community and global levels. An ideal environment can take on many looks. What you choose will depend on your own personal philosophy of learning and that of the early learning environment within which you work. An ideal environment should provide places for children to freely explore, with developmentally appropriate risk and that will enhance a child's development in all domains.

3. Can you think of ways in which you might observe and record information about the child's learning environment?

Yes, there are a wide variety of techniques that can be used for gathering environmental data. Narrative observations, photographs, video recordings, mappings, trackings, checklists, rating scales, and questionnaires can all help in the process of gathering information about the child's learning environment.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. environmental evaluation, d; Hidden curriculum, a; quality indicator, b; environmental observation, e; inclusion, c
2. basic needs, b; action plan, d; developmentally appropriate practice, e; zone of proximal development, d; greening, a
3. diversity, c; role model, a; psychological needs, b; resilience, e; well-being, d

B.

1.F; 2.F; 3.T; 4.T; 5.F; 6.T; 7.F; 8.T; 9.T; 10.F; 11.T; 12.T

C.

1.c; 2.a; 3.d; 4.a; 5.d; 6.b; 7.c; 8.c; 9.a; 10.b

D.

1. Looking at the child's environment can give you some critical information that would be missing if you focused only on the child. Evaluating the child's whole experience will enable you to acknowledge some of the child's personal context, understand the effect the child's experiences have on the child, and take responsibility for the creation, maintenance, or change of any aspect of the environment over which you have control.
2. See answer to Focus Question 1.
3. Observation of the child's environment is possible in any aspect or situation to which the teacher or caregiver has access. The most significant settings for the child are usually the home environment and the child care agency or school; other elements of the child's surroundings may be important but are rarely open to the educator for evaluation. Assessment of a home environment is usually undertaken to help the educator appreciate the individuality of that context and make appropriate accommodations in the agency or school to bridge the gap. Social workers may make home evaluations as part of an attempt to help the family make changes that would support its functioning. Many components of the child's environment can be evaluated. The educator might find it useful to assess indicators of quality, inclusion, physical well-being, nurturance, and learning. Each of these should be addressed according to well-researched criteria. Agency or school environment evaluations help the teacher set up and program effectively.
4. See answer to Focus Question 2.
5. A child's environment matters for many reasons. The child learns from her surroundings, and she will maximize her potential if in an appropriate environment. Her safety and physical needs depend on her environment, as does her emotional and social well-being. The child establishes values and beliefs on the basis of what she sees and experiences in her environment. When educators get to know the child better and get a sense of the child's home environment, they can better program and set up the school or child care environment to be safe and supportive.
6. Environmental observation involves identifying the characteristics of the environment. Environmental evaluation also involves reviewing the observed data and making judgments about the environment's suitability, appropriateness, and effectiveness in meeting the goals or directions set by the program. The process of evaluation itself does not improve the environment. If, however, some characteristics are found to present a challenge, then they can be addressed through an action plan. Specific examples of how an environmental evaluation can lead to action are given in #7 below.
7. Environmental evaluation needs to lead to action. The following examples show the types of change that may result:
 - re-arranging furniture to make better use of space
 - improving the display of children's art or other work
 - introducing new policies and practices, such as anti-bias approaches
 - accommodating children whose needs have not been met
 - supporting first-language learning more directly
 - accommodating children with diagnosed special needs
 - ensuring potential hazards are removed
 - introducing a more comprehensive portfolio process for assessment
 - devising a way to communicate more effectively with parents
 - finding ways to include parents in activities
 - addressing areas of the curriculum that are underrepresented
 - increasing activity choices for children in some curriculum areas
8. See answer to Focus Question 3.

9. Essential elements of quality practice are listed on pages 238 of the text. They include the necessity for small group size and a low adult–child ratio. Individual needs must be met. An appropriate and stimulating learning environment is required, with developmental appropriateness of design, activity, and guidance. There should be a high degree of staff training as well as parental involvement and partnership. Interactions with the children should have a positive quality. Positive communications among staff are important too. The practice should promote optimal health, safety, and nutrition. Regular program evaluation is needed.
10. The environment is everything that happens to the child (an individual’s surroundings, including places, objects, and people) whereas the curriculum is the part of that experience that is planned by the teacher or caregiver. The curriculum usually involves the content of how and what will be learned based on a written document. The curriculum is delivered within an environment. We need to be mindful of the child’s actual experience, what we plan for children to experience and the subtle messages that are sent to the child as a result of the hidden curriculum.

E.

Answers will vary.

CHAPTER 8

Observations That Give Cause for Concern

Answers to Focus Questions

1. Based on the methods of observation you already know, how might an educator document a young child's repeated challenging behaviours?

There are several ways of documenting repeated challenging behaviours. Open-ended narratives such as running records, anecdotal records, diary records, and specimen records could be useful, but the best approach would be to use time or event samplings. These would offer a glimpse into the patterns of behaviour that you want to document. You may get to determine the cause, trigger, severity, significance, and duration of these incidents. This can give you the best data on which to plan your response.

2. Do people of all ages and abilities have equal rights?

Yes, although there are some groups of people or individuals who have 'special rights'. All children are afforded a set of rights listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, other children may need special rights to ensure that educators focus on their strengths and choose to use a people centred approach to help these children develop more competence and potential.

3. Why do you think it is better to write down what you see as concerns about a child's health rather than remember and tell her parents at the end of the day?

It is better to write down your concerns so that you do not forget and you are able to recall all of the information clearly and accurately if it is written down. By recording health, information you might see patterns or be alerted to an escalating health issue that you could mention to the parent(s) if appropriate. An educator should also be aware of the policies and procedures in the workplace that relate to a child's health.

4. Based on the methods of observation you already know, how might an educator document a young child's repeated challenging behaviours?

The educator will consider the following: the purpose of the child's behaviour; special developmental needs a child may have; reframe their view of the behaviour to see it as a sign of resilience; and involve the team of educators in observation.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. vestibular, b; trauma, d; neglect, e; abuse, c; medically fragile, a
2. intuition, d; pathology, e; sign, a; red flag, d; symptom, c
3. stereotype, c; failure to thrive, a; cause for concern, b; mental health, e; exceptionality, d

B.

1.T; 2.F; 3.T; 4.T; 5.T; 6.T; 7.F; 8.T; 9.T; 10. T

C.

1.b; 2.d.; 3.c.; 4.d; 5.b; 6.a; 7.c; 8.a; 9.a; 10.a; 11. c; 12. d; 13. c

D.

1. Day to day health concerns are probably the most frequent issues that arise. These may be mild fevers, minor accidents resulting in scrapes and cuts, and similar challenges. They often require more emotional support than medical aid, but parents should be called whenever something significant occurs. Depending on the group of children there might also be fairly frequent challenging behaviours. But those giving real cause for concern are less likely to show themselves as frequently as health issues.
Developmental concerns may appear over a period of time in most cases. Only the most obvious developmental issues will present themselves quickly. Cases of potential child abuse and neglect occur rarely in most agencies. Where there are systemic problems that communities face the incidence might be slightly higher but, abuse and neglect occur in all socio-economic groups, so it should not be assumed that only those of lower socio-economic status show their frustrations or other issues by harming their children.
2. See answer to Focus Question 1.
3. Because we care about the children in our care we can have an investment in them that is counterproductive if we don't remain professional. Asking parents questions, or even asking the child herself questions can lead to children offering responses that they think the educator wants, thereby skewing their thinking and confusing later investigations. While gathering information is essential, it should be done in an open-ended manner using objective observations rather than questioning. Artwork and other items of the child's work and activities may be useful supplementary material but, it should never be created as a prompt from an educator.
Projecting your fears for a child onto him (or others) can easily be detected by the child even if he does not know exactly what is happening. The child may or may not know that abuse or neglect has occurred; most children of a young stage will tend to accept what happens to them as the norm. You may be unlikely to hear children speaking about abuse because it may be absorbed into their sense of normality; they may not speak other than fondly about an abusive parent or other person for the same reason, and they may easily feel an attachment to them – whatever they have done. So it is wise not to delve into such issues and leave those discoveries to the child protection worker.
If your own emotions are affected because of a case of actual or potential abuse you will need to take time and, perhaps, some counseling, to deal with how you feel and how you deal with those feelings. At the same time, it is not wise to become detached from the child who is the possible victim. Her need for emotional security would be even greater at this point. A balance needs to be sought and that might require professional input which is something an agency might supply for those touched by such a difficult situation.
4. See answer to Focus Question 2.
5. It is difficult to imagine something like this could happen, but, unfortunately it can and does – but infrequently. The question asks about how you might feel; perhaps shocked, dismayed, betrayed, and doubting the professionalism of others. You might even doubt your own performance, even though you have nothing to be concerned about.
You might imagine being confronted with the questions of child protection agency staff, and think about answering questions that are difficult. Should you have had any inkling that there was a problem you might feel bad about not having responded to your own hunches. If you knew or had any evidence, and did nothing, you might have some reason to berate yourself. Denial is a common reaction to such serious issues, so you would need to talk about those feelings to someone who has specialized skill in counseling in these situations.
Another reasonable concern might be how you might respond to the questions of any parents; you need to seek support to do this appropriately, and to understand and follow the parameters of confidentiality. Questions of people outside your place of work, outside the agency that is mandated to make inquiries, and with other colleagues, may also be challenging and necessitate support. To say that you would manage those feelings as a professional may be a good intention, but you should be realistic about the strong impact such a situation would have upon you.
6. Environmental observation involves identifying the characteristics of the environment. Environmental evaluation also involves reviewing the observed data and making judgments about the environment's suitability, appropriateness, and effectiveness in meeting the goals or directions set by the program. The process of evaluation itself does not improve the environment. If, however, some characteristics are found to present a challenge, then they can be addressed through an action plan. Specific examples of how an environmental evaluation can lead to action are given in #7 below.

7. With what we know about early development and the enormous strides children take in their earliest years, we could reasonably assume that these early years must be the time when early intervention would probably be most effective. When an effort is made to identify problems early and to respond to them quickly it is probable that the intervention would need less time, and might be more effective. Although it was the opinion of many people that leaving children alone to see if their developmental challenge sorted itself out, that is now shown to be incorrect. For example, for children whose language is delayed a hasty intervention with speech and language therapy not only helps to improve the situation, but it also allows the child to acquire language in ways that do not prevent him from learning in other domains. For children who experience other developmental challenges, the outcomes are also likely to be better at responding to those interventions if they get referred for early support. The interdependence of each developmental domain on the other provides a good reason why early intervention works. (The student might offer other examples of the effectiveness of early intervention).

Another reason why early intervention tends to work has to do with the brain and its plasticity in the early years. Whatever can be learned early in life is more easily absorbed and more readily accepted. The brain's capacity for learning has been underestimated in previous years. Now we understand that many types of learning can occur early, and if early experiences help the child overcome an initial difficulty, this is more than likely to benefit the child. At the same time, medical advances have shown us the amazing capacity of the brain to rewire itself so that damaged parts can be compensated for and undamaged areas can take over the function of lost attributes.

8. See answer to Focus Question 4.

9. It is better to be wrong than to be negligent in checking out a cause for concern. If there were observations that you made that led you (in your professional wisdom and experience) to think that there was a reason for concern, and that it needed a further investigation, of course you must follow up. There is no need to apologize for this; but, there is a need to talk to the parents to address their negative feelings. Using an analogy might be helpful rather than speaking directly about their situation (it might be too highly charged to encourage a rational discussion). Perhaps suggest a situation where a parent took a child to the ER because she had fallen and hurt herself during a sports practice. It may be unlikely that there is any real concern, but checking it out is advisable. The parent would be in the same place as an educator; she knows her child, but a medical professional might be the best to counsel on matters outside her realm of expertise. Wouldn't it be better to have several false alarms, even if they were costly in time and expense, than to risk anything that had the potential to be serious?

Parents feel very strongly and can be extremely protective about their children, and it is reasonable for you to accept that there are occasions when they are displeased – even if it is unfair and you were doing a good job. On the other hand, some parents can think that some actions are unnecessary; they may have had several children who have had similar symptoms with no resulting problem. However, it is for you, as an educator, to act on your knowledge and the best practice you know; your actions may need to be defended, but, that can be part of every professional's life. Rather than be defensive in attitude, explain what you did and why, and then leave the parents to say what they think. Rather than re-stating your position and possibly escalating the emotions of the parents, leave the situation. If it becomes necessary you may need to have a senior staff member to mediate, but this is unlikely if you are both open and professional. It can also help to show empathy to the parents and acknowledge their annoyance.

10. See answer to Focus Question 5.

E.

Answers will vary.

CHAPTER 9

Authentic Assessment and Portfolios

Answers to Focus Questions

1. What might be the problem if a young child was tested unfairly? Maybe you recall a time when a teacher made an incorrect judgement about you?

The validity and authenticity of the test and its proposed findings would be in question. Skilled and focused observations are integral to authentic assessment.

2. Why might you think that a scrapbook containing a child's artwork and a few sticky notes might not seem very professional if presented to a parent that way?

As professionals, we have a particular way of viewing documents and presentations to parents. We view them from a scholarly standpoint. While there is nothing wrong with this viewpoint, parents may be more focused on the 'tangible' items a child makes (like a painting, representation etc.) and may or may not understand the scholarly observational data. Whatever the form of the documentation, it is the educator's role to present the materials to parents, for example, in its best light, highlighting the successes and skills that the child has achieved.

3. When would a child be able to contribute to record keeping about his or her own experiences and learning?

As soon as children are aware that records are kept, they should be able to make contributions. Some very young children may want to know what you are writing about them. Frequently, you might be able to share your observations with them, giving them a sense that you value what they are doing. Four-year-olds may offer pictures for inclusion and will want a place to keep their "best work". School-age children who have some basic writing skills may be able to contribute to a learning log.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. portfolio, c; child study, d; baby book, e; life book, a; record of achievement, b
2. portfolio philosophy, e; external assessment, e; contextual information, a; health information, d; formative assessment
3. aesthetics, a; inquiry-based learning, d; rating scales e; project approach, c; learning log, b

B.

- 1.F; 2.F; 3.F; 4.T; 5.T; 6.T; 7.T; 8.T; 9.F; 10.T; 11. T; 12. T

C.

- 1.c; 2.d; 3.a; 4.b; 5.a; 6.b; 7.c; 8.a

D.

1. See answer to Focus Question 1.
2. Some programs may not use portfolio assessment because the administrators or teachers fear the unknown and resist change. They may be concerned about the time required to change to a new system. For those who believe in standardized tests, the criteria for assessment in the portfolio system may not be clear. Some may link portfolio assessment with educational or philosophical principles with which they disagree or of which they are suspicious, such as outcome-based education, competency-based learning, and the state's influence on children's lives, authentic assessment, or religious concerns. Other people may have concerns regarding documentation and confidentiality, such as where the information is to be stored, who will have access to the information, or whether the data might be used for social reasons outside the scope of the program. There may also be questions about teachers' knowledge of how best to support a child's development or about their assessment skills.
3. In compiling a portfolio, a student teacher will learn how to collect information, how to use standard observational methods to observe and record pertinent data, and how to review material for possible inclusion. He might have the opportunity to create systems to manage the information. He will learn how to work effectively with parents, gathering and sharing information, and how to include the child in the process. In assessing a portfolio, the student teacher will practice summarizing data, making and validating inferences about the child's development, and incorporating contextual information into an assessment. He will also learn how to create an individualized program plan. In learning how the portfolio process works in practice, he might gain the knowledge needed to advocate for portfolio assessment. Finally, if he learns the process well, he may also discover how to celebrate a child's life and accomplishments and experience the joy of working effectively to support development.
4. Record keeping should aim for a fair representation of the child's interests, abilities, growth, changes in circumstances, and development. To be complete and thorough, the records should be made regularly and systematically, and should track significant changes as they occur. Documentation should always include a range of observations made at different times. The most successful records are portfolios that include a variety of information-gathering techniques and samples of the child's work.
5. See answer to Focus Question 2.
6. A baby book may provide basic information about a child's home and family that explains her behaviour: her place in the nuclear and extended family, the key people in her life, living accommodations and socio-economic background, and early experiences. It may offer birth information that is fundamental to understanding later developmental patterns and information about any particular health concerns. A baby book may offer cultural information that helps you understand family beliefs, practices, and ways of thinking, as well as specific religious practices and rules for behaviour. The child's nutritional patterns and food preferences may be described, and lists of her favorite items can help you build on her interests.
A baby book may provide a link with the child so she can share information with you. It can provide a focus for discussions about families or other related topics and an opportunity for highlighting similarities and differences in appropriate ways. If the conditions are right, the child might like to show the book to peers.

E.

Answers will vary.

CHAPTER 10

Documentation and Reflection

Answers to Focus Questions

1. If you were to demonstrate to other people what you had learned from a visit to a museum, or a walk in a forest or some unfamiliar neighborhood, how might you do that?

This could be accomplished in many ways. You may collect items (leaves, branches, etc.) that caught the child's interest for display at the centre. Pictures could be taken and communication recorded for display in a panel presentation. After returning from the experience, reflection about that experience can be recorded from both the educator and the children's perspectives.

2. When you meet someone new, how do you get to know them? How do those strategies apply to observing, listening to, and getting to know a child?

The techniques we use to get to know other adults are the same techniques we can use to get to know children. We may watch others from afar. We will notice things about their appearance, what they do and what they say. We will ask questions and listen to their answers. All these techniques are observational strategies used informally. Using these techniques in an informal basis, allows the observer to practice the skills, get comfortable with them in comfortable settings. By doing this the observer will have a baseline of skills and knowledge of the child, and can then move forward to observe the child in more depth, or for a specific reason.

3. How does your own experience of being observed, viewed, judged, assessed, tested, listen to, or understood make a difference to how you think we should get to understand the experience of children's lives and learning today?

Adults view being observed as a very formal, stressful process. You may remember being observed by a doctor in a medical test, or by a school teacher during a physical assessment in gym class. It can be an uncomfortable experience, especially when we become aware of the things we cannot do, or the things we cannot do at the level we would like to do them at. Of course, educators do not want children to experience these feelings. Educators will use naturalistic observation to help alleviate some of these problems. When we experience negative events, as adults we want to alleviate or mitigate these when working with children. We are caring people.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. Panel, b; mosaic approach, a; project approach d; constructivism e, experiential learning,

B.

- 1 T; 2. T

C.

1. c; 2. b; 3. c

D.

1. All three approaches use documentation to validate children's learning and their particular philosophy. The documentation gives life to the children's learning. Documentation occurs in different ways within each philosophy, but at the core, documentation is a critical and important piece of work.

CHAPTER 11

Analyzing Observations and Evidence and Responding to Findings

Answers to Focus Questions

1. What does the word ‘analysis’ mean to you? Does it have any associations?

Analysis can mean many things. To the average person, it can be associated with tests, school work, professional people (such as psychiatrists or medical specialists) and high education.

2. Why does the collection of information, samples, and observations about one child in a portfolio not “speak for itself”?

Everyone viewing a portfolio’s contents will construe the material differently. Although it is a pleasing experience to view the collection of materials, for educational purposes the portfolio needs to be used as a tool for assessment. Its contents provide evidence for making appropriate inferences.

3. Where do you think you can start in making sense of the materials you have gathered?

You can start making sense of the materials by reviewing what pieces of information, documentation or artifacts you have acquired on a particular child. Sort the information by date or type of data. Check to make sure the information is complete and free from unsupported inferences while also ensuring you have a thorough picture of the whole child across several developmental domains. Summarizing the information is the next step in this process.

Test Item File Answer Key

A.

1. summary, c; individual education plan, b; inference, a; analysis, e; Individual program plan, d
2. triangulation, e; reflection, b; contextualized, c; rubric, d; critical thinking, a
3. validate b; norm of development, a; co-inquiry, d; objective, c; evidence, e

B.

1.F; 2.F; 3.T; 4.T; 5.T; 6.F; 7.F; 8.T; 9.T; 10.T

C.

1.c; 2.b; 3.a; 4.a; 5.a; 6.b; 7.d; 8.c; 9.d; 10.b 11. D; 12. b

D.

1. A good naturalistic assessment process demands critical thinking on the part of the assessors. In standardized testing protocols this is rarely required. Critical thinking demands comparing and contrasting ideas, incorporating a multitude of factors into a single decision, supporting a position, using a rubric or framework for ideas, validating what you say, and many more higher-order thinking skills. Observation and portfolio assessments start from collecting data. They then need to be sorted using the most significant structure- this needs a critical process. The inferences that are made are the most difficult part of the thinking process. Validating the inferences can be an even harder task, especially if you have to deconstruct your inference and create another in its place. Pulling these things together offers the child a much broader assessment - that focuses on his skills rather than his deficits, and allows him to continue with his play, rather than be pulled out of a program for formal testing.

2. See answer to Focus Question 1.
3. Analyzing observations or whole portfolios requires a series of several steps to review, organize, and then assess the child's performance. Ideally you would check to see if the material you have presents a whole picture of the child – if parts are missing then these should be filled before progressing any further. Then it is sensible to see if the different parts of the portfolio are sending the same message – do they offer a similar image of the child? This will help you to know if the observations and other evidence are worthwhile and complete. Checking for any bias or subjectivity is another step. Remember that portfolio assessment is an ongoing cycle rather than a one-time procedure. The most important part of assessments are, sorting and categorizing the information – using a structure such as developmental domains or learning outcomes as your framework. After sifting through all the observations and artifacts, list evidence of skills under the pre-assigned headings. This represents your summary of skills and should be as objective as possible. Making inferences about the child's performance is the next step. These statements should be checked; they need to be verifiable. Most inferences will be stated as either comparisons of the child's skills with those of the norm for her age, or theoretical explanations for why the behaviour appeared the way it was. Checking the inferences is essential. They need to hold up against your evidence. Also, the inferences must be sensitive and take into account the child's background, family, culture and experience. You need to use both critical thinking and reflection to ensure that you are making assessment statements that are appropriate. Each inference must be validated using reliable material such as published norms or accepted theories of development.
4. The beginning of the process of analysis starts with sorting the material – usually using developmental domains to structure the answer. That is the summary: the organization of the observed behaviours. The analysis involves the whole assessment process.
5. See answer to Focus Question 3.
6. A good naturalistic assessment process demands critical thinking on the part of the assessors. In standardized testing protocols this is rarely required. Critical thinking demands comparing and contrasting ideas, incorporating a multitude of factors into a single decision, supporting a position, using a rubric or framework for ideas, validating what you say, and many more higher-order thinking skills. Observation and portfolio assessments start from collecting data. They then need to be sorted using the most significant structure- this needs a critical process. The inferences that are made are the most difficult part of the thinking process. Validating the inferences can be an even harder task, especially if you have to deconstruct your inference and create another in its place. Pulling these things together offers the child a much broader assessment - that focuses on his skills rather than his deficits, and allows him to continue with his play, rather than be pulled out of a program for formal testing.
7. Rubrics can be used in many ways when assessing a portfolio. They can be used to assess the actual creation of the portfolio itself. The rubric can be used to determine what materials should be included within it. It will also tell the assessor whether the portfolio has met the pre-determined criteria for success. A rubric can also help skills development—from beginning to mastery. Lastly, a rubric can assist in curriculum development and/or program plans.

E.

Answers will vary.

