

Teacher Resource

You As An Observer: Striving for Objectivity



Observing has a very human side. No one can be totally objective. However, you can increase your objectivity significantly by differentiating between what you actually see and hear—the facts, and what you think you see—your own opinions and interpretations of these actions.

Differentiating between the facts and your own opinions and interpretations increases your objectivity, but you can also make room for your questions and interpretations. Your impressions and feelings can add rich insights. Just be sure to identify them as such.

“Because observing is such a personal endeavor, it is no wonder that sometimes it is more difficult to separate your experiences, feelings, and assumptions from what you are seeing.”

Strategies to help you be as objective and effective an observer as possible:

- **Tune in to individual children.** Tuning in to each child and observing for details can be a challenge for at least two reasons. First, you’re always on the go. Second, because you spend the majority of your waking hours in your classroom with the same children, it can be hard to pay close attention to what you see all the time. Observing details requires slowing down and looking with care.
- **Describe rather than label children’s behavior.** Labels can have a powerful ripple effect on a child’s self-esteem and the attitudes of others toward that child. Labels do not reveal the specific characteristics that make each child unique.
- **Listen to children.** Children can be an amazing source of information about what they are thinking and feeling—if we just take the time to listen and ask questions.
- **Learn from families.** Exchange information, ask questions, and listen to one another. See yourselves as partners with the child’s best interests as your shared concern.
- **Keep track of how you are doing.** Observing objectively requires ongoing vigilance.

SOURCE: Judy R. Jablon, Amy Laura Dombro, Margo L. Dichtelmiller. *The Power of Observation Birth to Age 8: Second Edition*. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc., 2007.