

Types of Observations

Anecdotal Observations

An anecdote is a short account of a particular incident or event. Anecdotes are useful for taking quick, simple notes that have been observed throughout the day. Essentially an anecdote tells story of what the observer has seen.

Example:

Date: 1/11/14 Time: 9:15am Child/Children: Jai (4.1 yrs.) Liam (4 yrs.)

Jai and Liam were playing "cooking" in the sandpit. Jai filled up his pots with sand while Liam stirred up a batch of rocks and sand at the toy stove. Jai said "Liam can you bake my cake". Liam said "in a minute...my cake's not done yet". Jai said "Can I see?" and he went over to the stove to see Liam's pot. "My cake has chocolate in it...see" Liam points to the mix. Jai giggles..."Yum" and grabbed a handful of the mix and pretended to eat it whilst dropping the sand to the ground. Liam laughed "You can't do that...you have to wait till it is cooked!"

Interpretation (*What learning is occurring*):

Liam and Jai have developed a good friendship and are interacting together well. This activity showed that they enjoy dramatic pretend play of an activity they probably have both observed at home.

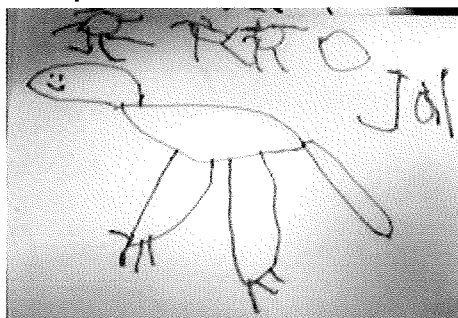
Opportunities:

To leverage Jai & Liam's interesting in cooking into a mathematical cooking experience for counting and weighing ingredients.

Work Samples, Photographs & Folios

Work samples of children's work can provide concrete evidence of children development overtime. They also provide an opportunity for children, families and educators to share and appreciate the learning as it is occurring. Pictures can tell a thousand words and are one of the simplest ways a provider can quickly capture and review learning at a later date. Providers can make notes about what the children said or did at the time, which also further enhance opportunities for later reflection and insight.

Example:



February 2014

Jai said "This is a monster with big claws...Grrrrahh!"

Interpretation (*What learning is occurring*):

Jai is just starting to write his own name from memory and is experimenting with writing other letter he is forming into his own picture of words

Running Records

These are very detailed descriptions of an event or behavior which is recorded as it happens. They are recorded in present tense and provide step by step commentary of what is observed. They can be very helpful for closely analyzing interactions or a child's progress at acquiring particular skill/learning. Typically a running record records time in increments, although this is not always the case. The key objective is to be very detail and factual about what you see, recording things that at the time may seem meaningless, but could later help an observer breakdown or better understand the learning that is occurring.

Example:

Date: 1/11/14 Time: 9:15am Child/Children: Jai (4.1 yrs.) Liam (4 yrs.)

(9:15am) Jai is sitting in the sandpit. He is using a shovel in his right hand to dig sand and pour loose sand into an old cooking pot. He groans and digs again, lifts the spade (losing half of the sand) and pours into the pot. He digs again and lifts a scoop of damp sand and lifts it to the pot (his arm wobbles but he does not drop the sand). He swaps hands and digs with his left hand, but lifts the spade with his right hand (dropping sand again). Jai groans. Jai shovels the sand again with his right arm. Jai drops the shovel and pats the sand with his left hand and then his right. He picks up the shovel with his left hand, scoops a large scoop (wobbles and drops some sand) as he puts into his pot. He pats the sand again with this right hand and shovels with his left hand.

(9:19am) Jai looks up to see his friend Liam at the toy stove. He is watching Liam stir his pot.

(9:21am) Jai says "Liam can you bake my cake". He gets up then squats and picks up his pot. Jai carries it to Liam. Jai drops the pot on the table with a heaving sigh. Liam looks at Jai and smiles and says "in a minute...my cake's not done yet". Jai walks over to the stove and looks in Liam's pot. He is on his tippy toes Jai says "Can I see?" "My cake has chocolate in it...see" Liam points to the mix. Jai giggles..."Yum" and grabs a handful of the mix, stepping away from the pot (about 3 paces) and pretends to eat it. The sand mix falls to the ground, Jai steps back as it falls. Jai walks forward with his hand reaching for the mix again (Jai is smiling). Liam steps in front of his pot (Liam is smiling) "You can't do that...you have to wait till it is cooked!"

Interpretation:

Liam and Jai have developed a good friendship and are interacting together well. This activity showed that they enjoy dramatic pretend play of an activity they probably have both observed at home.

Jai shows a preference for using his right arm/hand but is experimenting with his left.

Opportunities:

To leverage Jai & Liam's interest in cooking into a mathematical cooking experience for counting and weighing ingredients.

To provide other gross motor activities to build strength in Jai's left arm.

References

"Anecdote" (n.d) retrieved 7 November 2010 from Dictionary.com

Ryan, K. "Learning stories" (nd.) retrieved 26 February 2011 from

<http://www.familydaycare.com.au/forms/feature%2041%20-%20Learning%20Stories.pdf>