

SHARING STORIES

Key Focus: Literacy

Observation: Erica strongly believes that, as part of her role as a home visitor, she has a responsibility to educate everyone in the home about child development and the importance of working with young children around language and literacy. Erica has been visiting with Molly (who is two years old) and her family for over a year and has developed a strong relationship with Molly's mother, father, and older brother (who is in kindergarten). At the beginning of every visit Molly asks someone in the home to read a book with Molly. On the day she took the pictures, Molly's brother pointed to and named each of the pictures in her book. Molly then imitated what he did as they read independently side-by-side (note that the activity may have stopped for a moment so that Molly could put on a sweatshirt).



Reflecting on the Documentation:

**Participants may quickly shift from reflecting on the documentation to interpreting the observation or suggesting strategies for extending learning. Remind participants to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the documentation technique.*

Ask: What does a series of pictures offer that one picture alone does not?

Sample Responses: A series of pictures creates more of a “movie” than a single snapshot. That is, by including multiple pictures in order, it is easier to develop a chronology of the events that occurred and contextualize the meaning behind actions observed.

Ask: What information would you want to have noted on the pictures?

Sample Responses: The date and the order in which the pictures were taken. Perhaps how long they read together. Whether Molly’s brother read the entire book to her. Whether Molly named the pictures as she read her book. Whether Molly turned one page at a time (a picture of her turning the page would also be nice).

Interpretation of the Observation:

**Remind participants that in their interpretation they are looking for patterns, critical incidents, or errors. It is important to stick to the data.*

Ask: What can you learn about the children from the two pictures?

Sample Responses:

In the first picture, Molly has her book laid out in front of her while she sits on her knees. Molly appears to have a clear interest and fondness for books. Molly appears to have the balance to sit in different ways. The sitting position in the second picture required more balance than the position in the first picture (“w sitting”). In the second picture, she balances while pointing to pictures. If we assume that the brother read her the entire book and then she read alongside him, we would conclude that Molly has control over her attention. Molly’s brother points to a page in the book using his index finger. Molly appears to be an avid participant, listening intently to what her older brother is telling her.

In the second picture, Molly changes her seating pose and places the book in her lap. In the same way that her brother pointed with his index finger, she points to a page in the book. This demonstrates that Molly is beginning to adopt the style and strategies of a reader. Note the way Molly holds the book in the second picture with the pages upright; her imitative behavior suggests that she understands that the words and picture in the book convey meaning.

Relating Your Observation to the Child Outcomes Framework:

**Although participants can defend other interpretations, there should be general consensus that this observation demonstrates:*

The Child Outcomes are for preschoolers. With appropriate notes accompanying the photos, these photos provide early evidence in the following areas:

2B1 (Literacy/Book Knowledge and Appreciation) Shows growing interest and involvement in listening to and discussing a variety of fiction and non-fiction books and poetry.

2B2 (Literacy/Book Knowledge and Appreciation) Shows growing interest in reading-related activities such as choosing to look at books and engaging in pretend-reading with other children.

2C3 (Literacy/Print Awareness and Concepts) Demonstrates increasing

awareness of concepts of print, such as that reading in English moves from top to bottom.

1A1 (Language Development/Listening and Understanding) Demonstrates increasing ability to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems.

6A2 (Social and Emotional Development/Self-Concept) Shows a growing capacity for independence in a range of activities, routines, and tasks.

6D1 (Social and Emotional Development/Social Relationships) Demonstrates increasing comfort in talking with and accepting guidance and directions from a range of familiar adults.

7B1 (Approaches to Learning/ Engagement and Persistence) Grows in abilities to persist in and complete a variety of tasks.

7B3 (Approaches to Learning/ Engagement and Persistence) Shows growing capacity to maintain concentration over time on a task.

8B2 (Physical Health and Development/ Fine Motor Skills) Grows in hand-eye coordination by turning the pages of the book.

Next steps for large group instruction:

[Not Applicable to home visitors]

Next steps for individualized instruction:

Ask: What would you recommend that the home visitor do next for the individual child?

**Responses will vary but might include:*

- Continue to give Molly opportunities to physically manipulate and handle books and talk with her about the pictures she sees in a story.
- She might also begin to help Molly think about the differences between words and pictures. For example, she could take Molly on a walk throughout the neighborhood trying to find letters on billboards and in signs on windows. At the next book reading session, she can point out how words and letters are also in books.
- She might also read books with Molly that lend themselves to puppetry or have characters that the home visitor can make come alive. For example, if she reads a book about a farm, bring in toy animals that are similar to those in the book and have Molly act out the sounds and actions that different animals make. She could observe whether Molly can retell a story in sequence.

Additional Notes:

You might begin to document which concepts of print Molly has, such as the cover and back of the book, and directionality of text. You might consider asking her to show you the front of the book, the back of the book, to point to pictures (“Where is the picture of the ___?”), and to point to words on pages (“where does it say___?”). This will give you additional information about what she does and does not know.

You might also document which pictures she names in books to see if she is extending her vocabulary beyond familiar objects in the home as well as

whether she recognizes and names action words (jump, sleep), descriptive words (big, small, old, new, wet, dry), and names of categories (animal, toy, food).