

Rectangle Exercise (i.e., We're in the Money)

Observing to Learn

We're going to do an exercise to think about how we want to collect information about children and how they change over time.

The Rectangle Activity

- In 2001 and again in 2003, the U.S. Bureau of Engraving made changes to the front and back of the \$20 bill to improve its security.
- Take a sheet of paper and draw two large rectangles on it.
 - In the first rectangle, draw everything that you remember about the front of a new \$20 bill.
 - In the second rectangle, draw everything you remember about the back of a new \$20 bill.

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Take a few minutes to write or draw everything that you remember.
Feel free to ask others what they remember.

Compare Your Drawing to the \$20 Bill

Source: The United States Treasury Bureau of Engraving and Printing



Now, let's look at a \$20 bill. Compare your drawing to the actual bill. Look at the color, numbers, pictures, and words.

Consider the kinds of things you did not remember or remembered incorrectly.

[Note to presenter: The white lettering on the screen indicating that this is a "SPECIMEN" (i.e., not a real bill) is not part of the actual \$20 bill.]

Consider...

- Next to the \$1 bill, there are more \$20 bills in circulation than any other bill.
- Most ATM machines use \$20 bills to provide cash.

Yet we still don't remember many details of the \$20 bill!

Even though we have seen many \$20 bills, it is hard to remember everything because we have never carefully observed the bill.

Unfocused vs. Focused Observation

- **Unfocused observation = seeing what may stand out at the moment or things that are obvious to you**
- **Focused observation = closely looking for specific information or evidence.**

For most of us, our past observations of \$20 bills were **unfocused**. With unfocused observations, one tends to see what stands out at the moment or things that are most obvious. While we definitely noticed the number on the bill—its most obvious feature—we were less likely to notice details like colors or symbols unless someone drew our attention to them. For your drawing, you used information from an unfocused observation. This level of observation may be similar to noticing whether a child is cooperative or exhibiting challenging behaviors.

For **focused** observation, we focus on specific characteristics—in this case, things like the size, color, or placement of the number 20, which national building is on the back, and what words are found on the bill. When you compared your drawing to the actual \$20 bill, you probably used focused observation. With focused observation, we actively pay attention to and document details; we look closely for specific information or evidence. This level of observation is similar to noting whether a child is able to sort all the blocks onto the correct place on a shelf. You are paying closer attention to something that might happen often, but does not stand out.

Two Sets of Eyes

- Did it help to ask another person for help and share your drawing with them?
- Did you each remember different parts of the bill?

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Having another set of eyes—like getting the views and observations of another member of the teaching team or the perspectives of parents—often helps you to fill in the outlines of a child’s behavior or abilities.

Changes Over Time

- How does the new \$20 bill differ from the old \$20 bill?
- Does it help you remember if I tell you what types of changes they made?
 - Colors
 - Symbols of freedom
 - President's portrait
 - The "20"
- Is it still difficult to remember the details?

Now that we know what the new bill looks like, let's think about how it has changed over time.

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Before and After

- It is easier to see change when you have the old and the new in front of you.
- Small but important changes can be easy to miss.

Source: The United States Treasury Bureau of Engraving and Printing

Because there are still some older bills in circulation, we can compare the old and the new by putting them side by side.

However, we can't have two versions of a child present at the same time—for example, the child as he or she was in the fall and the child as he or she is in the spring. So we have challenges in comparing information at two time points.

What if you had a classroom full of currency?

	Color-Shifting Ink	Purple Ink	Symbol of Freedom: Eagle	Shoulders Blend Into Border of Bill
\$1				
\$5				
\$10				
\$20				
\$50				
\$100				

What if you had a classroom full of currency? What if you had to collect information on each bill that so you could figure out what changes still needed to happen to make it more secure? What if you then wanted to report this information to other people?

This checklist outlines some of the information we might want to collect. It would be very difficult to fill out this checklist without having all of the bills in front of us.

Teachers actually deal with this difficulty all of the time, because teachers have a classroom full of currency...

Children: The Currency in Your Classroom

- Teachers deal with this difficulty when trying to assess children's progress.
- What lessons can we apply to assessment?
 - Focused observation works best.
 - Collaborate when collecting information (other teachers, parents, etc.).
 - Prepare to identify growth and change:
 - ♦ Write down what you observe and when.
 - ♦ Record information as soon as possible.

Children are the currency in your classrooms!

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[Note to presenter: Consider filling this slide out with the specific agenda for your training session. Alternatively, just verbally review what your session will address.]