Look Again: Using Sensitive Skilled Observation in Your Program

Amanda Perez: Hello out there to everyone. On behalf of the Early Head Start National Resource Center, I want to welcome you to today's audio conference, Look Again: Using Sensitive Skilled Observation in Your Program. We are so happy to have you with us today. As Melissa mentioned, you can look forward to having this recorded call posted on our website and the ECLKC in the really near future. We've got program staff from all over the country on the line with us today, as well as federal staff and training and technical assistance providers. Interestingly, we got a lot of questions from you guys, too, and built as many of those as possible into the body of our call. But we will have a Q&A later, so wait for that. Melissa will come back on and let us know how to proceed with that.

Now, I know grantees have gotten quite a few resources for your libraries over the past several months. And today's audio conference, the final one in our 2011 series, will focus of course on observation. Observation is a topic particularly of the RIE resources sent in August; and most of recently, the two DVDs, "Learning through Observation" and "Space to Grow," which were sent to you this month. As you can see from the objectives on page 1 of the handouts that were sent to registered programs, today we'll talk about the why and the how of observation. And we'll also talk with you a little bit about how those materials that you have received can help you nurture sensitive skilled observation in you program. Now, we have a phenomenal faculty with us today to help us reach those objectives, and I'm going to give them each a moment to introduce themselves. And we're going to start today with Angela Fisher. Angela?

Dr. Angela Fisher: Good afternoon and thank you, Amanda. I'm Dr. Angela Fisher and I'm a developmental psychologist specializing in infant/toddler behavior. I'm also on staff here at Zero to Three as a senior writer/training specialist for the Early Head Start for Family Child Care Project. And in addition to my Zero to Three work, I'm a childbirth doula, parent/infant consultant, and professor in early childhood education at City University in New York. In my past, I've had the pleasure of serving as an infant/toddler teacher and interim director at various child care centers. So, it has really allowed me some amazing opportunities to see the complexities of this work firsthand.

And over the past decade, I've conducted numerous infant/toddler observations in my own doctoral research, where I have created a parent/infant observational tool that examines infant behavior prior to the age of 1. So, I've had the opportunity to really get inside Early Head Start programs, child care centers, and family child care homes. So, my research is really rooted in observation and the social-emotional development realm. And it is heavily influenced by my own RIE training beginning at Pacific Oaks, and again, continuing into my doctoral work. So I have a special passion to really serve all children, and particularly Early Head Start children because I myself was a Head Start child. So I feel very honored to sit on this panel this afternoon, and thank you so much for having me.

Amanda: Wow, Angela. I told you guys, phenomenal. We are so glad to have you with us today, Angela. And you have such an incredible breadth of skills and expertise here. Next, we have Ruth Anne Hammond. Ruth Anne?

Ruth Anne Hammond: Well, good afternoon and – everyone. I'm so glad to be here. I thought maybe I'd just start chronologically with how I got to be here. And the very first thing that happened that set me on this path was becoming a parent, because I was fortunate enough in my child birth class to be introduced to the RIE approach by my colleague now, Elizabeth Memel. And I was very intrigued and

pursued more information about that, and ended up in Magda Gerber's classes with both of my children and took the training that she was offering at RIE, and continued my training at Pacific Oaks College where she was on the faculty. And so, I completed my master's at Pacific Oaks in infant/toddler development and immediately was hired – to my great joy – as the master teacher in the parent/infant/toddler program. And I've been there for now 16 years, almost. And…

Amanda: Wow.

Ruth Anne: So I work with many, many families and I spend my days observing children, so this is a topic that is very near and dear to my heart. And in the scope of my work at Pacific Oaks, I teach in the human development department of the college as well, but I also have had the great honor to work with Early Head Start home educators who are conducting socializations for their groups in my infant/toddler center. So I'm a co-host, I guess, of the socializations for the Early Head Start group. And so, I've been doing that for a number of years too. And I study affective neuroscience with Allan Schore, who is a great resource to the field of early childhood and psychology. And I'm just super happy to be here.

Amanda: And you have a special connection, Ruth Anne, to one of our resources that we've sent out to programs, "Respecting Babies." Do you want to talk about that for a second?

Ruth Anne: Okay. Well, I was also very fortunate that Zero to Three asked me to write a book about RIE. And so, you have been sent a copy of that book, which is called "Respecting Babies: A New Look at Magda Gerber's RIE Approach." And I'm hoping that you'll find that it's very useful to you.

Amanda: Yeah, and I have to say that some folks might be familiar with your voice and maybe your face if you've – if they've seen the photo of you in our materials, Ruth Anne. You helped us recently with a webinar that was really more focused on, specifically, those RIE materials and sharing that particular RIE approach. So this audio conference has a different focus, but RIE and Ruth Anne obviously have a lot to teach us about observation and we are really glad that you're with us here today. Thanks for being here.

Ruth Anne: Thank you for having me.

Amanda: Finally, Robin Williams. Robin?

Robin Williams: Good morning, Amanda. Thank you. I am just honored to be on the call with my colleagues, Angela and Ruth Anne. I've been in a Early Head Start program since 1999. We're a Wave IV program. And over the years, we've developed Head – home-based programs. I supervise home visitors and also center-based programs. And I was lucky at the very beginning of my career here to be introduced to the RIE method. I was trained in the 10-day original RIE training, and it really influenced me in the way that I've developed the program here at the Educational Service District in Bremerton. It so nicely fits within the standards for – Program Performance Standards for Early Head Start and complements – they both complement each other so well because the idea of sensitive observation and slowing down and individualizing for all children and families just fits within both of those things. So additionally, I have a master's degree from Pacific Oaks College as well. And I'm just honored to be here.

Amanda: And we're really honored to have you, Robin; and your voice as a director is really so important to what we're hoping to cover here today as we look at sort of the practical aspects of nurturing observation within programs. I have to do one last piece of housekeeping before we sort of get started with our conversation. As a pre-activity, we asked participants to do a five-minute observation of a child,

and we didn't collect those unless you guys wanted to share. They're really for you to consider as we go to this conversation and we're going to refer to them a little bit throughout, but I want you to have those sort of in mind as we're going through

Let's set the stage here by talking about why observation is such an important skill for a staff in Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. I have to say, through these conversations and through this planning, I'm coming to understand in a way that I really regret that I didn't understand when I was a child care provider and then a home visitor. I'm coming to understand that observation is absolutely a foundational tool for the work staff are doing. What is it about it? Let's start with Angela.

Angela: Amanda, observation is a critical skill, as you know, for staff to use in their work with infants and toddlers because it really helps the adult to better understand a child's behavior, which in turn can support stronger adult-child attachment relationships. Observation, as we all know, is required in the Head Start Program Performance Standards. So I know the audience has received a copy of the Standards in their materials packet, so I won't, you know, take our time to reread them. But I do want to just simply bring everyone's attention to 1304.21(a) that speaks the child development education; and 1304.20(b), which is really around screening for developmental sensory and behavior concerns; and 1304.20(f) that speaks to individualization of the programs. So all of the Standards support observations of young children and discuss the requirement of screening and assessment within 45 days of a child's entry into a program.

And I also want to mention that observation is really so important to identify and better understand an infant's behavior because behavior itself really serves as a form of communication, particularly for those young nonverbal children. You know, young children often use behavior to communicate a need or a want. It's really a child's form of expressing themselves, sometimes without words. So if we really want a child -- to learn more about a child, there's really no better way than observation; and to use it as an opportunity to strengthen relationships, but also to track and measure the child's development of progress over time. So, it's really important.

Amanda: So many reasons that you brought in there. Those selected Standards, again, are on page 4 for folks that really want to take a look at those. And we know that it's not just understanding the child, but also developing those partnerships with families and building knowledge with that family input, of course, through observation. Ruth Anne, what would add here around why? Why observation?

Ruth Anne: Oh gee, there's so many things I could say about that. [Laughter] There's a concept that -- you know, that is really, really core and central to the RIE approach to observation. And just getting down on the floor and watching them is such a pleasure. You know, if you can set aside all of the other requirements that you have in a day and just sit down and be with them and watch them and let them lead your attention where they will, this is something that Magda Gerber called "wants nothing time."

"Wants nothing time" is when you don't have an agenda. You don't need to change their diaper and you don't need to get them to cooperate for a feeding. You're not asking anything of them. You're just being with them in an attentive way. And this is one type of sensitive observation that we really promote because we do think it's so – you know, it's money in the bank in terms of building a relationship with the child. And there – you can also observe during "want something time," during a bath or a diaper change or a feeding. I mean, you're always with the child, you're always observing. But that time that's just set aside to watch them play or interact with their environment of "want nothing time" is so

important. It tells the child that we value them for who they are and that their activities are important to us too.

And, you know, it's kind of like our pleasure in their accomplishments gives them the confidence to continue experimenting and learning. And within a program, like in an Early Head Start socialization, having the opportunity to sit down with other parents, with the home educators and the parents together, watching the children, it's like setting the tone for a lifelong – you know, a whole career of child, you know, enjoyment where parents sit down together and enjoy their children as a group, like watching a Little League game or a school play, or something like that. So, you know, it just sets the tone that enjoying your child's self-chosen activity is a valuable asset to the child, and to yourself and to the relationship. And...

Amanda: Yeah. Go ahead.

Ruth Anne: Go ahead. No, go ahead.

Amanda: Well, I was going to say, it's a huge part of the RIE approach, this idea about sensitive observation. I love the idea that you have, too, here about really sharing that observation as a community, really understanding that child and observing that child together as a community, or even as a home visitor and a parent together, child care provider and a parent together. There's a piece of that that really establishes for the child a community of adults who are watching and taking care of that child.

Ruth Anne: Maybe that's the village.

Amanda: Maybe that's the village, exactly.

Ruth Anne: Right.

Amanda: Robin, I know you agree and you also identified sort of a different opportunity that you seen in observation as well.

Robin: Yes. I find that observation is the – one of the best tools for learning about child development. And when you think about an infant and a toddler and learning about them and what they're doing, it really is the smallest little things that happen. And if you aren't watching and you aren't slowing down, you'll miss them because they are easy to miss. If you think about reading their cues that are both potent, really obvious, easy to see, and subtle, just those small movements or a small grimace on their face. And so, for – in our program, I really find that observation is a wonderful way to teach child development and for staff to really get to know the child. And then also with the home visitors or when parents are observing, if we can help them also to notice everything that's happening, it's just a way for everybody to get in tune with what the baby is doing, which is so much and so easy to miss.

Amanda: Yeah, the subtlety of development, you really get a sense of it when you can slow down and watch it. Very good. Angela, you wanted to make a final point here?

Angela: Yes. It's really just to echo both Ruth Anne and Robin, that -- when Robin was speaking about just the small little details that can be missed. And that's really just to emphasize that if behavior is

communication, then observation can really help us sort what is happening for a child whose behavior is also concerning us. So, it really allows for that opportunity as well.

Amanda: And as you're talking, I think it's important to bring in the responsive process here as well. I know many of you all in the audience have recently, or some of us not so recently, have attended the program for infant/toddler caregivers trainings. And we know you've heard about the responsive process. We're really not going to focus here, but just to connect that in. If we look at the responsive process on page 6 of your materials, you'll see of course that observation is the first step of this process, the watch piece. Of course, it's never quite clean to separate those steps out. We talked a lot about that in our calls. They kind of blend in together. But we're going to do what we can here to focus on this watch step as we move through.

One thing that really strikes me in this discussion is that there are a lot of different reasons to observe, right? There are even more listed in your handout. We know that there are a lot of reasons to observe. And I just want to make a side note that the – that observation can help you learn about environment as well, and how children and families are using it. So as we're thinking about the DVD that we sent, "Space to Grow," it really focuses here on this environment piece and offers lots of information and video opportunities sort of to observe children in their environments. I also have to just mention that I think we did something a little cruel. In the pre-activity that we sent to folks, we did not identify a purpose for the observation. We did not sort of identify a why, why are you observing? We only invited participants to observe. That was cruel but also intentional. We really wanted to raise this issue of how important it is to know why you are observing, to spend some time thinking about why that is. It can change over the course of a day. It can change over the course of five minutes, you know, what it is that you're looking for and what it is you're observing. But we observe differently, of course, as we know why it is, what it is that we're looking for. And so as you observe, it feels really important to start there.

But even if we know the why of every observation, as we prepared for this audio conference, faculty kept coming back to the how. How do we observe? And I think we identified some basic obstacles that often come up as we're thinking about observation. So what we're going to do is tease them out a little bit and have our panelists share some tips for addressing them. These are on page 7 of your handout. So the first obstacle, the first challenge that program staff and families have here, is that you guys have a lot on your plates. It is really challenging to deal with the realities of busy lives, busy work experiences to really do meaningful focused observation. I wonder if everyone in the audience was even able to make time for a five-minute observation or felt comfortable and supported as they took that time. Ruth Anne, can you talk a little bit about that?

Ruth Anne: Well, you know, one of the probably most important messages that Magda Gerber had for all the people she ever spoke with in her long career as an educator was the importance of slowing down. And, you know, that is a big, big thing to ask of people who have a lot on their plate and a lot to do. But what it does is it allows for us to get on the baby's wavelength or on the child's wavelength. They live at a different pace than we do. And when we're trying to get them to live on our pace, things don't go so well. When we can slow down and tolerate their slower pace, actually for me, I find the time goes actually more quickly. You know, people say, "Oh you have to be so patient to work with infants and toddlers." And maybe that's true, but that's now how it feels to me because I'm in the mode of slowing down to their pace and my day flies by. And letting go of that need for speed and -- it's a different mindset, you know. Seeing what choices a child is making and trying to understand their goals and appreciating their strategies for reaching those goals, to me it's so really fascinating. And I think, you know, if you're in the field, it's because you're also fascinated by children.

You know, also the opportunity to observe their problem-solving makes me hesitate before solving the child -- you know, stepping in to solve a problem for a child. I want to see what solutions they can invent. You know, I have a great example from my program because we have this beautiful yard that has – they push shopping carts and little cars through it, and there's a lip at a certain point at the concrete, between the dirt and the concrete. And the toddlers will be pushing along, pushing along, and they bump up against the two-inch lip. And oftentimes, you'll see a child look up at the nearby adult to say, "Hey, what are you going to do about this? You going to help me out?" And you know, as an observer – and I'm not just an observer, I'm a participant observer -- I might find myself saying, "Oh gee, it's stuck. I wonder how you can get it up?" And they have this opportunity to solve a child-sized problem. And you know – and it's only by observing would I know that, you know. So, you can't really be a good facilitator without also being a good observer.

Amanda: Well, and that really takes us to the first tip here, which is recognize the child's capacities. So what you're saying is that if we take the time to slow down and really observe, we can get a sense then of all that a child can do for him or herself. Really making – you're sort of really making space in the rush to let the child try and develop those new skills, right?

Ruth Anne: It's kind of like making a paradigm shift from being a teacher to being a facilitator of learning.

Amanda: But we know -- it's interesting that you say it that way, because we know at a program level that this really requires some attention. I mean, there has to be some thinking about this that goes before the observation itself. Robin, how do you set observation as a priority in your program?

Robin: We – one of the other RIE ideas is that we trust children to be initiators and explorers and self-learners, and so all of our staff are trained in those ideas. And then we have -- our ongoing assessment is the AEPS, which is the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System. And that requires staff to do a certain amount of observations on children to complete the portfolios and to meet the requirements and the standards for ongoing assessment. And so, what we found – what I found over the years is that if we train staff to recognize that if they slow down, they can get better observations, more accurate observations, more sensitive observations that – and then giving them the permission to do that, because a lot of times -- we live in this really busy world where there's an expectation that you move faster and faster and faster. And so, we have to put a lot of time and effort into helping staff to know it's okay to slow down and really just to be with the children. In fact, it's better than okay. It's required.

And so, that – because babies, like Ruth Anne said, they live in a different world. They live in a quieter time. They don't know the pressures that staff and parents and families are having, hopefully, and they want a more relaxed environment. And so we do that by, first of all, training our staff in our methods. And then we do reflective supervision with our staff and talk with them, you know, sensitively and responsively about what that feels like, you know, because staff feel pressured to be busy and they want to be seen as competent. And so, they have to really start to trust you as supervisor and us as a program that this really is what we want for children and families. And parents are the same way. When home visitors go into the home, you know, they're – they need to get things done or they want things to... I don't want to say hurry, but they want development to hurry. They want the time to go quick so they can move to the next thing. And what we want to do is, at least during that 90 minutes once a week, to help them for at least a part of it to slow down and really to get to know their child.

Amanda: Well, and one of the things that you were sort of saying in our planning too, Robin, is that, you know, if you look at your particular – the particular instrument that you're using -- and of course that's a particular kind of observation that folks are doing -- they're looking at this assessment, they're looking at developmentally what's happening with kids. You said that you all took the time to really break that down and understand how many observations were required of staff every week.

Robin: That's right. And so we – when we're developing our method, we're of course thinking about our teachers, our primary caregivers, and all the requirements that they have. And so, really, it is only one or two observations a week – I mean, per child. I'm sorry, per child. And which ends up, if they have four children that they're responsible for, it's eight observations in a week's time. When you help staff to think about it that way, they can relax a little bit and they can know, "Okay, I can do eight observations." And also, when there's, you know, two teachers in a classroom together, they can help each other. They can work together. Or if there's an assistant teacher, she can help with observations as well. And all people are trained in sensitive observation in our program. And so, I think really helping staff to think through and organize their time is a really useful tool in our program as well.

Amanda: And I think what you get to are sort of two things. I mean at the administrative level in your center-based program and in your home-based too, you're really given permission to folks. You've told them that observation is a key part of the work that they're doing, right? So they understand its value. They get support from their supervisors to do it. And the second thing you've done is really plan it out with the staff that you're working with. And I think it's important to say that again. And that's our second tip here. Because we really want to encourage folks to look at what's required in the assessment, to think about what it is that they want to get out of observation, what they want to do as a program, and take the time to plan that in, to recognize it as a key activity of the work that you're doing. So do you need additional staff, do you need additional resources, or is this really manageable within what you've already established?

Ruth Anne, you used a term earlier which I thought was interesting. You talked about being a "participant observer." And when we – when I sort of asked this question in the planning calls that we were having, you said, "Well, you know what? You don't have to be sort of – you don't have to have additional staff for this necessarily."

Ruth Anne: Well, you may not need additional staff. Occasionally, you might need additional time to document what you've observed, you know. That might be something that needs to be built in a little bit, is a little free time to sit down and write down those anecdotes. But being a participant observer means, you know, that you're using your whole self when you're being with the children. And you know, you've got your kind of global attention on what's going on in the program because you're responsible probably for more than that one child, and – but you also may have a need to find out something particular about this particular child. And so, you're also using your focused attention. You know, what I would call your left hemisphere focus, while you're using your more right hemisphere global being witness at the same time; you know, we're integrated. So, you don't have to separate out these functions necessarily. You can be there as a participant and an observer.

Amanda: And just sort of recognize the difference in that role, too.

Ruth Anne: Right.

Amanda: Yeah. Angela, what would you add here?

Angela: Well, I would add in regard to -- just simply the importance of also – of really trying to plan it out. I don't know if I'm getting ahead of you, but I would emphasize the importance of trying to plan it out. I mean, I think it's fantastic when we have the opportunity to just sit back and watch, And even as, you know, an invisible observer, but also as Ruth Anne mentioned, you know, from a facilitator approach. But I think it's just really important to plan it out, to set aside time to observe because of the – so many responsibilities from a caregiver perspective. So it depends on the purpose of the observation, that different times of the day may work differently. So I think that's important for the audience to keep in mind.

And also, for screening and assessment, you know, we really want to see children at their best, particularly in a child care type of setting. So it's particularly helpful if we – when we're considering the planning time, to observe. It's particularly important to look at or think about post-nap and post-feeding. And, you know, after the child is well rested and fully, you know, fed and just awake and ready to go. If there's a free playtime in the classroom that's set aside, this can also present a great window and an opportune time to schedule an observation and to just really simply watch. So I think it's really important to just try to keep that in mind as well.

Amanda: Well, it's interesting you say that because we had a question that came in about this from one of our participants. She was really asking when is a good time, and what you're saying is really pay attention to, you know, is the baby rested, is the baby fed, is the baby comfortable, you know, those kinds of pieces in the day. And that might be different for different children.

Angela: Yes. And it's also – if you're observing a child that is overly tired, you know, that is really in need of its nap time, and you're trying to do an observation, then you're not going to be able to observe that child at its best, which is in turn going to kind of give you a false reading for the behavior that's being displayed.

Amanda: Let me – and I just want to call folks' attention to tip number three here, which is pay attention to the time and setting. One piece that isn't on here, and I'm stepping away from the discussion guide that we developed for this planning call for just a second, Angela. But I just want to follow this because we had a question from somebody who said, "I did an observation of a child and I really didn't know the child very well. And when I talked with the teacher who did know the child well after, she said, 'Oh, the child was really thrown off because you didn't know her.'" And she wondered, you know, how you sort of pull that or how you sort of understand that within an observation. Is that an important component? Do you pay attention to that? And I wondered if you, Angela, had anything you wanted to say about that?

Angela: In terms of observing a child that you, for instance, don't have a prior relationship with?

Amanda: Yes.

Angela: I actually would recommend to really, if you can get an understanding of the child's developmental of chronological age, that is always helpful because you begin to not only look at behavior but, if you can get some kind of understanding -- is the child around six months, around nine months? -- then it will begin to allow you to look at the child across the domains of development to begin to see what is the child doing in terms of gross motor skills. Is the child crawling yet? Are they up on all fours or just on their, you know, two legs and they're kind in what I call sometimes a creepy crawl?

They haven't quite gotten it yet, but they're up and they're rocking back and forth. What – where is the child looking in terms of social-emotional skills. Are they constantly looking back at you as they're trying to crawl away? So you begin to look at language. You're beginning to look at that child. Aalthough you have no prior relationship with them, you're trying to look at them from a basic understanding of infant/toddler development, which really crosses all the basic developmental domains.

Ruth Anne: Can I interject something here?

Amanda: Please.

Ruth Anne: This is Ruth Anne.

Amanda: Please.

Ruth Anne: Something that came out for me about that because we had just talked about the idea of being a participant observer. But if I don't know the child, if the child doesn't know me, I try not to be a participant. I try to be a fly on the wall. You know? And so, recognizing what your role in the child's life is is an important factor in your demeanor as you are observing. So if you're – if you are tasked with observing a child who doesn't know you or has no reason to feel comfortable with you, if you can do it in the presence of a secure-based person for that child and you try to be as invisible as possible, you might get a better read.

Amanda: Absolutely.

Robin: And Amanda, is it all right if I add? This is Robin.

Amanda: Yes.

Robin: The one thing I would add is that is so key for parents. We think about – I think about our teen parent program especially, and then the more they can understand why a child might be hesitant or different when a stranger is around if they are in that -- you know, that developmental stage of stranger anxiety, it's such a useful tool to them to know, "Oh that's right; that's normal development. That's why they're acting a little afraid or scared." And it also gives this parent an insight into their child and their development.

Amanda: Yeah. Well, and as we're thinking about that insight too, you know, I'm going to bring us back a little bit to the discussion guide that we have for this call. We know that documentation can also be a particular challenge in programs. We certainly heard that from folks who wrote in. So Robin, can you talk a little bit about how you do that documentation piece in your program?

Robin: Yes. Documentation for staff is an ongoing organizational skill that they need to develop over time. And I think it's one of those things, like I talked about before, you have to have a system in place for staff that you can train them to, and then to follow through on that and then give them the tools that they need. So our home visitors, as well as our center-based staff, have all been trained in sensitive observation and using the RIE approach. And so during the home visits, they delight with the parents. And then they have a – just a simple one-page tool that they use in the home where they jot thing downs in observation form and – or a parent could write it as well, a parent or the home visitor. And then within our program, we do, as I said, one to two observations per child. And then over the course

of an assessment period, they – we develop portfolios. And the observations go into our portfolios, which is what we share with parents at our home visits and to show them and to document the growth and development of their child. And again, it's just that skill of how to do it, having it organized, and then providing them the training so that they'll know how to do it.

Amanda: And one little tip that you had there was that you kind of use sticky notes all around your classroom so that folks can just pick those up and write when they see something that they want to make sure it gets documented.

Robin: Right, and so that they don't miss those opportunities because they didn't have a piece of paper or a pencil or...

Amanda: And the other thing that you said, Robin, is that you also invite parents to contribute to those portfolios to contribute their observations there as well.

Robin: Yes. That's so important. That's another way that we meet the Performance Standards, is by helping parents to do observations of their child because they know their child best. And so, having them write the observation and include that in the portfolio is affirming to them and then they do recognize that we see them as a partner in our program.

Amanda: I want to call folks attention to the sample form that we have on page 8 of your handouts. This is a very basic form that sort of has this idea about, you know, you can write down what you see in terms of behaviors on the one side and then some interpretation pieces on the right. And this is similar, I think, to what you have in your program as well, Robin.

Robin: Yes. We have forms like this, yes.

Amanda: Just in terms of ease and convenience, Ruth Anne, you had another thought.

Ruth Anne: Well, in our program, we've often carried little spiral notebooks that are just two – you know, four inches by three inches and a little pencil in our pocket, you know, so that we can jot down an anecdote, you know, a particularly lovely interaction between two children or, you know, when we see a child doing something really interesting with the objects or, you know, overcoming an obstacle, solving a problem. You know, you get anecdotal stuff written down real quick and easy that way.

Amanda: I love it. It's part of the uniform, right?

Ruth Anne: Right. [Laughter]

Amanda: Well, and I think this gets to sort of tip number four, which is, you know, make documentation convenient. We know that this is a huge part of what we're asking staff to do, you know. It's hard to remember all of the details of the things that happen during the day. So the more that we can give folks opportunity to record those things during the course of the day, and then of course, have a way to share that information with families is really, I think, a powerful place to begin. Let's talk for a minute about home-based programs. We have some questions here, as well. Ruth Anne, in the home-based program that you work with, you use observation quite a bit.

Ruth Anne: Well, yes. I mean, my particular participation is during the socializations. But when I'm, you know, talking with the home educators, it also comes up how important it is to spend some of the time during a home visit doing a "wants nothing time" sort of an observation with the families of the child, you know, rather than using up the entire home visit with a lot of directed activity. To save a little time to just, you know, observe the child in their natural environment and see what they think is fun and interesting and engaging. You know, and the home educator can sit next to the parent and whisper, you know, little nuggets of observation like, "Oh look, isn't that really neat how he is looking at the balls and trying to figure out which one's going to fit in the hole best?" You know, just little things like that.

And you know, helping parents understand that they can spend this kind of time with their child when nobody's around and that if children have that experience of their parent's undivided attention during free play, that they feel a little filled up, you know, with attention and can tolerate their parent having to go off and do something else while they play independently. So that also works for caregivers in a full-day program too, that children who feel like they've had your eyes for some of the time can tolerate it when they're – you know, when you're busy with another child. So a little "wants nothing observation time" in any kind of setting goes a long way.

Amanda: Yeah. Well, and this is part of the Standards of course that, you know, staff really support families in building these observation skills. I love the idea of really building it in as a piece of home visits, making sure it's absolutely a part of that agenda every time or making sure that it's a part of the socialization agenda as well. Robin, what would you add here?

Robin: Are we moving on to tip five or are we still on tip four?

Amanda: We are. We're on tip five. So we're thinking about engaging families in shared observation. And we got some questions about how this is done. You know, how do you engage families here?

Robin: For me and for the program that I work in, I think when you walk into a room, you can really feel how people perceive you, so -- and same if somebody walks into your home. And I think when you're partnering with parents, you have to be really authentic because they know if you're not. So you have to really be aware as a provider of home visits or as a teacher whether or not you are going to really partner with families or not. And you really need to truly believe that it's something – that you have something to learn from them and that you also have something to share with them. And they're the ones that know their child best – their child best, better than anybody else. And so, we always need to remember that we're only going to be in the child's – in the family's life for a very short time, and so we want to empower them to feel good about who they are as parent. We want to help the children to grow and become independent and self-confident. And so we just have to be really clear as a program how we incorporate families and work with families into our program – in our program and also to get their input. How do we value their input? When they write it down, does it end up in the portfolio or does it end up someplace else? You know, how we respond to them I think is very important.

Amanda: Absolutely, and I think that's, you know, part of the richness of really engaging families in that shared observation rather than, you know, doing it once or twice; really making sure that it's a part of what you're doing on an ongoing basis and that you get the richness of it through relationship with them that really honors their role.

Robin: I – one other thing, I was thinking about in our teen parent program, we've had them actually write letters to their children on a monthly basis and then we include them in the portfolio. And we've

had parents come back, you know, four, five, six years later and just talk about how they saw their role then and how they see their role now and how those letters were invaluable to them being able to reflect back on what it was like to be a parent.

Amanda: Oh, I love that. So we've talked a little bit about home visiting and, you know, we could talk about families I think forever, but I think it's important that we talk a little bit about family child care for a second. Angela, in your role, I know that you think a lot about family child care and work with a lot of family child care folks. I imagine that planning for and making room for observation within that model poses some unique issues. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Angela: Yes. Well, we know that infants and toddlers and young children who are in family child care settings are in a particularly unique situation because of the intimacy of the home environment and, often, the inclusive and nurturing relationships developed with the child's providers. So in most licensed family child care homes, providers are all about quality and focusing on young children's behavior and development. So in terms of setting aside time to observe children, I don't think it necessarily has to present really necessarily specific unique issues, but it's more around a provider's ability to plan for it.

In many family child care homes, you know, you may have mixed age groups. So this may be – present a little – you know, a little bit of a different challenge. So a provider would have to possibly set aside and plan a time to observe the infants and toddlers perhaps differently than another time to observe the older children. So this – you know, this would be one unique opportunity. However, I think it's really a matter of just understanding the purpose of the observation and to plan it and then implement it. And in many family child care homes, providers typically have in place an area for documentation for parents. You know, as we were talking about, you know, documentation, whether in center-based or home-based, family child care providers also have areas for documentation when the parents, you know, come in and drop off their children.

So this same area could be used to hold clipboards and notebooks, you know, with the observation that has been documented for that child during a particular day. And the benefit of that is that it would allow the parents an opportunity, you know, as they're coming in to read on what the child – what activities the child engaged in, they could also read about the observation. And this would give them – the parents additional information for when they take their child home. They can kind of keep a watchful eye to look at any type of behaviors that may have come up for that child with the provider; they can look at it at home. So it really – it increases a shared opportunity for the parent and the provider to really just kind of discuss what's happening with the child during the day. And that in turn also, I think, really benefits the relationship between the provider and the parent.

Amanda: And how do you – I mean, what do you see sort of as the Early Head Start child care specialist role there?

Angela: Well, I think that the Early Head Start family child care specialists, they have a really unique role. You know, they can actually provide or give to providers particular strategy to support the observation process. Most Early Head Start family child care specialists are typically trained to observe infant/toddler behavior and are often familiar with several different screening and assessment instruments. So, the specialist can serve as a supportive partner to the provider. The specialist can offer suggestions for templates and forms, you know, to help document keen observations and really help strengthen the provider's skill in observing young children, along with, again, developing a relationship that could allow

for increment moments for even with selective dialogue and processing and the discussion of the observation.

And you know, one of the things that we haven't quite gotten to yet is the effects that can be brought up within the provider, you know, based on what they observe in a particular child. So the Early Head Start family child care specialist really can help serve as a partner and as a confidant for that provider to really begin to process any type of behaviors that they've seen within a child that maybe, perhaps, they haven't quite – they may not quite understand yet. So it serves that partnership, I think. And that additional support, I think, is key for the provider.

Amanda: And sort of that reflection – reflective supervision…

Angela: Absolutely.

Amanda: ...also, I think we've heard Robin talk about as well. Very interesting. But we know that even with careful planning, we know that observation is not easy. And this really leads us quickly into the second obstacle to observation that you all identified, that people are not always sure what they should be looking for. Again, we sent out that five-minute pre-activity and we purposely left it really vague. We know that that was hard, right? So that can be really hard, particularly for folks that haven't had a lot of experience with infants and toddlers. Angela, you work with students on observation. Can you talk about how you support them in beginning and prompting these kinds of observations?

Angela: Yes. It actually – it goes back to one of the questions that you said came in from the audience or the person who observed the child that they did not have a prior relationship with. So in that same strategy, I often have my students to become aware and become rooted in the developmental domains. Because again, you know, you're taking into account what's the purpose of the observation. But you have to be able to know in a sense what you're looking for. So being rooted in the child's age and temperament help, and also to begin to say, "Okay where is this child? I'm going to look in the area of cognitive development. I'm going to keep my eyes open in terms of language. Where is the child in terms of gross and fine motor skills? And where is the child, of course, in the social-emotional realm?"

But also, many adults -- we forget about sensory integration. So I often tell my students to keep in mind, if you begin – in an observation, if you notice a child who doesn't – let's say if a child is crawling and they seem to have an aversion to water or a rough surface or, you know, little things begin to kind of look out for. So the students, when they – when they're – and again, when they're just beginning to learn the skill of observation, it really helps them to know – to get a better understanding of where they should at least start with. Because otherwise, they're seeing – they're looking at an infant and/or a young toddler and they're watching and they're jotting the information down in terms of documentation, but if they know that, "Okay, I should keep – I can keep a lookout for is the child babbling or are they beginning to say two or three little short syllable words? Or are they just pointing for something that they may want when they are at an age where they could use their words?" So it begins to give them the foundation from which to start. It seems to help them.

Amanda: Yes. So it's really this is – and it's a tip, of course, on our list here that we really try and start concrete. For folks that haven't had a lot of experience in observation, it's possible to start concrete. I want to call folks' attention to some ideas that are listed on pages 9 and 10 of their handouts. This is not an assessment. It's not a checklist. It's not, you know, comprehensive. It's only a way to really help folks begin if observation feels a little uncomfortable at first. And I think this really ties in to tip number

seven, which is recognize observation as a skill. If we think of it that way, it really helps us to understand that it evolves in all of us over time. You know, it grows over time. We develop capacity for it over time and we have to practice. And it also requires – Robin, it also requires that we attend to staff support and development. Angela talked a little bit about this as she was talking about the family child care specialist. But could you talk a little bit about how you offer staff support and development in your program around observation?

Robin: Yes, I'd be glad to, Amanda. We have a training plan of course, as all programs do, and we really are thoughtful about how we're going to orient people to our programs. So it begins there with the orientation to the philosophy of our program. And we do follow the Resources for Infant Educarers philosophy in our infant/toddler program. We also use the Creative Curriculum; we use the AEPS, as I mentioned; and then the Ages and Stages and Ages and Stages Social-Emotional. So really taking the time to train staff in what the philosophy and the tools are that they're going to be using, and then supporting them along the way by coming alongside them in the classroom and providing support by having all staff -- we call them all staff trainings, where they come together and learn about concepts and ideas together by providing file reviews and by – and a portfolio review where you go in and sit with them and go through their work and reflect on that.

And then of course, the reflective supervision, they get an opportunity to talk about how things are going for them and how they're feeling about it. There's no question about it, in Early Head Start there's a tremendous amount of documentation and paperwork. But that's one of the reasons that we're such a high-quality program; because we can really demonstrate and show that we are following development of children. And so, staff need to know specifically what it is that you want them to do and what the program expects of them.

Amanda: Well, another tool – and I'm just going to throw this in here because is just gone out to programs, but another tool that folks might consider in terms of staff development is really looking at that "Learning through Observation" DVD, which really captures -- it's not – folks will not be observing vignettes of children -- only children and being able to practice some observation that way. But what they will observe is staff and children or families and children. And they'll have an opportunity to really practice some observation skills as they're looking at some of those dyads and triads, which I think is a really nice sort of safe way to practice some of those skills. And I would really just encourage folks to take a look at that DVD and see the resource that you have there in terms of staff development as well.

Robin, you also talked about the assessment tool. I know you talked about this a little bit earlier, but you selected this assessment tool specifically for your program because you thought that it would really help support staff in both observation and in learning about development.

Robin: That's right. We looked at lots of different assessment tools. And what – the reality for most places -- maybe not everywhere, and it's getting better -- is that in the beginning, there just weren't people who were trained in working with infants and toddlers. And so, the assessment -- it's called AEPS. Assessment, Evaluation, Programming Systems assessment tool really breaks it down to its smallest part. And it's – the thing that – for infants and toddlers, there's such small things that are happening, I know I said this earlier, that you can so easily miss it. And so, we wanted a tool that we could really slow ourselves down and really understand all the very significant things that are happening along the way and a tool that was very easy for staff to learn how to use and how to -- and also for parents to understand it's really a nice tool for parents as well.

Amanda: But, yeah. I just love the way you described it as really being sort of a dual-purpose tool that you can really do this assessment piece as well as real staff development as a piece of it. I have to say as the EHSNRC and as a representative here, I have to say that we are not, you know -- what's the word? We're not – we can't support any particular assessment over another, but it's interesting to hear a program's perspective on sort of what they found to be useful about the assessment that they're using. Thanks for that. And we know that there are a lot of tools out there. So as you're looking at tip number eight, which is really use tools, we know that those can again have that dual-purpose. They can really serve to support folks in building some of those observation skills as well as an understanding about development.

So, for the third sort of challenge that faculties saw in working around observation, we talked a lot about objectivity. Tip nine here is to be objective. We really want to have folks do observations that kind of have an opportunity to really look at the behavior that a child is showing without a lot of judgment, without a lot of interpretation. Angela, several participants actually wrote in to ask about how to stay objective when they observe. Will you talk for a second about what we mean by objectivity here and why that's important?

Angela: Absolutely. Objectivity is the approach to view someone or something free of interpretive bias or prejudice, when it's uncontaminated by the emotional aspects of personal assessment. And I'm going to break down what that really means. This is -- on the – on one hand, this – on the surface, this is important in the observation of infants and toddlers because we, the adults, are observing them to really learn about the child and discover what they're feeling, learning, and thinking. So if we remain as objective as possible, we are more likely to see with a keener eye and, as Robin mentioned, the subtleties versus being "colored" by our own sometimes biases and interpretations. When we're thinking about screening and assessment if that is the purpose of the observation, objectivity is key.

It's – there's a wonderful quote that I think will solidify the meaning of objectivity for the audience. So there's a wonderful quote that I often use to remind myself when I'm observing an infant or a toddler, and that quote is, "What you see with your eyes and hear with your ears can be colored by the condition of your heart." So it's important to take stock of the color of your heart. And to do that, to do what I call a self-check of one's own feelings and emotions before an observation, and this is what's leading into the objectivity. You know, so before you begin an observation, take stock of your breath and ask yourself: How do I feel? What happened to me today that might color my observation? How am I feeling about this child I'm observing? So as an observer, you want to be a "blank canvas," as free as possible of putting your emotions onto the child being observed.

An example is if you -- let's say were rushing to get to your program and you were trying to get your own children off to school, and some – the child missed the bus and everything is not going according to plan. So your breath is faster, you're anxious, your – you know, you ran into a lot of stoplights, and maybe there's a traffic jam. And you are -- basically, on the inside, you're really irritable now. So you get into your program, you get into your center, and now it's time for you to do an observation of an infant or a toddler. And so when we say to remain objective, it means to check your breath, check where you are, and check what you're feeling on the inside. So, try to begin to remove the "stuff" that you're having to deal with before you begin to observe the behavior of this little innocent person.

And let's be clear, this is not – it takes a lot of practice, you know, for the adult in self-awareness and emotional understanding, you know, for – to understand our own -- the root of our own behavior patterns. However, once we gain a deeper understanding of breath and space and our own

emotionality, then research shows that our objectivity increases and we begin – and we really begin to see the more subtleties in infant behavioral cues that maybe may have been missed during a previous observation. So it's not an easy process to learn, necessarily, but it is one that is well worth it. And it's almost like anything, you know, the more you practice it, of course the better you're going to become. Because the more aware you will become of your own feelings, your own emotions, and you are – you're less likely to project that onto the observation of the child. You become aware – more aware. And even through reflective supervision. If you have any prejudices or anxieties towards -- you know, children come into our program from many different cultural backgrounds and everything. So it's just becoming more aware of your own feelings and emotions and learning how to the best of your ability keep a certain amount of control over that; that you don't project it onto your observation.

Amanda: Well, and particularly when we're thinking about screening and assessment as the purpose, that's particularly important I think. But you're also talking about how it is with relationships. I mean, if we're doing an observation about learning about a child, it's really helpful too to have an understanding of sort of how you're feeling. We had a ton of conversation about this in our preparation. And on one hand, we really want to do what we can through observation to sort of step on our preconceptions, as Ruth Anne put it, and to really hold back on our interpretations long enough to experience what's happening from the child's perspective. But I think we also have to recognize that on the other hand, by itself, observation is not meaningful. Just knowing the behaviors are not meaningful. At some point, folks have to make a leap to interpretation and sort of wondering what's happening with the child and sort of understanding with happening with yourself as a part of understanding that child as well. So, we just have to reiterate this piece about purpose. What is your intention in this time you spend with a child? Ruth Anne, particularly in your role with RIE, this conversation was – about objectivity was a little complicated for you. Can you say more about that?

Ruth Anne: Yes, I sure can. And I can say that it's my role with RIE and it's also the studies I've done in regulation theory and a lot of new learning I'm doing on that front, too, that informs the thinking as well. But, you know, I think, you know, we may not really ever be able as a person to be a blank canvas because we're not video recorders. We're humans with feelings. And it's our empathetic awareness or our empathic awareness that helps us to really see the child. Of course, and I appreciate so much what Angela says about, you know, checking our own emotional state and checking our physical sensations and feelings so that we have self-awareness of some of our unhelpful feelings or maybe our biases. You know, and a good facilitator can self-regulate, can calm themselves down well enough. And then they can also, if they're with parents, help the parents to feel calmer to watch a child without overreacting to risk-taking or minor aggressions, you know, or, you know, help the anxious adult to feel more regulated, or the detached and bored adult to feel more engaged, you know, by helping them see from the child's perspective.

The best observers are comfortable inside their own skin and they have faith in the competence of the child. And just to add to that, you know, objectivity really does mean recognizing my biases and my fears and suspending them long enough to actually see the child that I'm with. And then I also have to refer back to my feelings to help me understand the meanings behind the child's behavior. So it's – you know, my body and my feelings are really important in the assessment and evaluation of what's going on with the child because without my intuitions I may not really be able to recognize when a child is thriving versus when a child needs help particularly in a developmental way.

Amanda: It is such a tight walk that we ask...

Ruth Anne: Right.

Amanda: ...such a tightrope that we ask people to walk. And I think that that – you know, I think that's an important message for participants here today, you know. We really – we're asking folks to do both, really. And it's very difficult to do. And so we have to recognize that there's an evolving process, as Angela said, to really being able to be objective and understand also the responses that we have in a way that are really helpful to the relationship that folks are building with young children. But this tip number 10 about monitoring your own responses is a piece of that. Really trying to get a sense of, you know, how am I responding to this child? What does it mean? You know? Those kinds of things are really important as well.

I want to invite Melissa on at this point to give us instructions for questions and answers. We know we have a final tip. We're going to get to that as we're waiting for those answers – for those questions to queue up and for you all to call in. But we want to make sure that there's lots of time for people to call in with questions and answers. So Melissa, would you come on and give us a few instructions about that?

Melissa: Certainly. To ask a question, today please press the star and then record your first and last name when prompted. Once the recording plays into the conference, your line is open you may proceed with your question. If you are using a speakerphone today, please un-mute your phone to allow your voice to be recorded. Again, please press *1 now if you'd like to ask a question.

Amanda: Well, and I had a conversation with Melissa about this. So if folks would rather be anonymous, that's fine. You can give us a fake name. You can do a lot of different things. We don't want people to really feel put on the spot, but you're also welcome to give us your full name if that feels more comfortable for you. As we're waiting, one piece that we know is really important to attend to an observation is this piece of what is happening in the moment, what happens before a behavior, what happens during the behavior, and what happens after the behavior. And Angela, I wondered if you could say more about tip 11 here?

Angela: Yes. I have found that a great strategy for this is the ABC method. And A -- it's really a great strategy to consider helping us to begin to interpret some of the answers to various questions that may arise when we observe infants and toddlers. So A stands for the antecedent, which means what happens before the behavior. And an example would be, how is the infant or toddler, you know, using their bodies? What do you see? B is for behavior. What specifically does the child do? So as A is the antecedent, what – another way to interpret that is what is leading up to the behavior and what do you see? And then B is what is the actual behavior, what I often call the full-blown effect. And then the C is for consequences, what happens after the behavior. And also, you know, what happens as a result of the behavior? Is the child having a complete meltdown now? What – does the consequences encourage or reward the behavior? And under the guidance of the ABC method, you know, ask yourself what exactly do you see, hear, feel, and smell. So these are, again, all points and strategies that you can begin to use to paint, hopefully, a more complete picture of the observation.

Amanda: Yeah, absolutely. Looking at sort of the context that the child is in before, during, and after I think is so important. Do we have any questions, Melissa?

Melissa: Yes, we do have a question on the phone. And the question will come from Candace Wade.

Candace Wade: Hi. Hello?

Amanda: Hi.

Candace: Hi. How are you?

Amanda: Great. How are you?

Candace: I'm fine, thank you. My question is, currently I supervise home visitors and they do observation during home visits. And those observations, they do share with the parents. Also, they do observations during socialization. They set aside a time to do the observations during socializations. Now I wanted to know, was it necessary to – because they're doing an observation of the socialization, is it necessary to also do a summary of the socialization activities and outcomes? Because currently, after they do the observation, what they then have to do is kind of go back, you know, do the whole reflection process. They go back, they look at the Creative Curriculum, and then they determine the child's skill level, which then allows them to plan better for the child the next time.

Amanda: So can you – I'm sorry, Candace, will you ask that question again? So you're interested in whether they also have to do a summary as well as documenting what...

Candace: Right.

Amanda: ...they've seen?

Candace: Right. Is it necessary to do a summary since they're already documenting – since you're already doing observation, since you're already doing the anecdote?

Amanda: And this is part of the Creative Curriculum?

Candace: This is just something that we have, the part of the Creative Curriculum where, you know, you do observations because we want to know how to plan better for the child. But I was just asking, since they're already doing observation, is it necessary to also do a summary?

Robin: This is Robin. What was – what's the purpose of the summary?

Candace: Well, the purpose of the summary was just basically to determine whether or not the socialization was a success for the kids and for the families. And this is really something that I inherited. And what I implemented was the observation because we are supposed to be observing, you know, what – where the child is.

Ruth Anne: Can I just – can I pipe in with a thought?

Candace: Yes.

Ruth Anne: This is Ruth Anne. Robin, am I stepping on you?

Robin: Not at all.

Ruth Anne: Okay. Well, in my training with Magda Gerber and the reflective supervision that I received from her and that I share also with my practicum students, after a class, which is similar to the socialization, we sit down and have a conversation. And the questions are: What was good for the children? What was bad for the children? What was good for the parents? What was bad for the parents? What was good for the facilitator? What was bad for the facilitator? And – you know, and that's just a function of, you know, being able to, as you say, you know, plan for the next time and try to fix the things that were bad and amplify the things that were good.

Candace: Right.

Ruth Anne: You know, and in terms of writing it down, you know, that depends on whether or not it will get acted on one way or the other. Right?

Candace: Right. I mean for me personally, I don't think it's absolutely necessary because they are doing observations and I'm also doing observations of the socializations. I'm doing observations of how the home visitors are interacting with the children and with the families. And that's something that I'm actively sharing with them, so I don't know that it's necessary to also have them do a summary of the socialization. But like I said, it's just something that I – you know, that I inherited. And then just hearing this conversation, you know, I'm sitting here thinking, well, they really don't need to do this.

Angela: This is Angela, can I make one point?

Candace: Yes.

Angela: Just add one thing? In my work, I think it – I agree with Ruth Anne. But I actually think that sometimes – and again, it depends on the type of anecdotal notes when you – if you look at the form that is in the packet. If during the observation the home visitors are just, you know, jotting down specifically just what they see without any type of interpretation, so it's more fact-orientated for... Okay. So sometimes, a summary can be -- actually be helpful if the home visitor is allowed to, you know, summarize and interpret and put their feelings and everything in that summary. Because in their observation, they may not be doing that. They may just be strictly, you know, reporting what they see, what went on. But if you add in the – make the summary more expressive where the home visitor gets to put in their emotions along with what's happening with the parents, you know, so it becomes a culmination of how the activity worked for everyone, even the home visitor who was observing. Does that make sense? It depends on what you're trying to get out of it. And then over time, the summaries, because they are, you know, more expressive in a different way and interpretive, it actually may give you a different and a much larger picture.

Candace: Okay.

Angela: It's just something to keep in mind. I know it may seem on one hand as redundant, but it depends on the depth that you allow the home visitors to go into in that summary. You may get more is all I'm trying to say.

Candace: Okay.

Amanda: Thank you so much for your question, Candace.

Candace: Thank you so much for all your feedback. I really appreciated that.

Amanda: Melissa, do we have other questions on the line?

Melissa: No, we have no questions at this time. But please press *1 now if you'd like to ask a question.

Amanda: Let me ask this question that came in from the field. Somebody was asking about photo documentation, sort of how pictures, I think, are being used to sort of document what's being observed. And I wondered if any of you sort of had any feedback on this? They – you know, it's not a question that's very pointed, but they just wondered if there were pieces about that that you found to be helpful or any tips that you wanted to share on that piece? Robin, is that something you do in your program?

Robin: It is. And one of the things we do when people enroll into our program is sign a consent permissions and releases, letting us know whether or not that's all right with them if we take pictures of their children and videos. And so, we use both things, pictures and videos. We haven't got sophisticated enough to actually upload videos into any sort of online portfolio, but we do put pictures in our portfolios. And it is a wonderful snapshot of what's happening with the child, especially -- you know, and maybe they're just -- the first time they reached to midline or they're just beginning to crawl or roll over, or they're experimenting with water or sand and things like that. So we do include pictures in our portfolio as part of our documentation.

Amanda: Great. Did anybody else wanted to add?

Angela: I actually... This is Angela. I just was going to echo, I'm glad Robin mentioned about the – Robin, I love the consent forms, which is always critical. But it's also – photos and videotaping is also an amazing way to track the behavior, and especially when you're trying to increase your staff's ability in observation. From of psychology perspective, we view – we use it heavily to really be able to – because you know, you can see and then you can rewind what's happening. You know, even looking at into that using that ABC strategy, it really helps you to capture in snapshot versions, but also if you are videotaping, what you miss. It's a form of strengthening your own ability to see the behavior itself.

Ruth Anne: And this is Ruth Anne. And I'll add that, you know, it gives you also after the fact access to some of the emotional salience of what's going on. And if you can, you know, see a child's expression as they're doing something that will, you know, inform your interpretation of that behavior, which you may have missed in the moment. You know?

Angela: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Amanda: Melissa, I think we have time for another question. Is there one in?

Melissa: Yes, we do have another question in the queue, and that question will come from Angie Laron.

Amanda: Hi, Angie.

Angie Laron: Hi. I am an Early Head Start home visiting supervisor. And I would just like the group to talk about, in the RIE approach, typically tummy time. There was a mistaken assumption that being put on their tummies their earliest weeks is maybe not helpful, and then they do start tummy time when

they're ready after having back time. I just want to just clarify those points and make sure we advise the right way.

Ruth Anne: May I speak to that? This is Ruth Anne.

Amanda: Please.

Ruth Anne: Because it's one of my passions. [Laughter] I can't hold back, I'm sorry. You know, I think that all of the intentions behind the advice to put babies on their tummies is excellent, that babies do need times on their tummies. But most people are unaware of the really deep importance of time on the back to prepare the child to be ready to be on the tummy. And this is based on very, very careful and deep research by Dr. Emmi Pikler, who was Magda Gerber's mentor and teacher in Budapest, who was a pediatrician who documented natural motor development of infants through the various stages. And there's a very, very clear pattern of development that occurs, that babies who are put on their backs during free movement time all turn over. They don't necessarily turn over all on the same schedule. And then they all move through the same stages of motor development, through, you know, scooting on their bellies to up on their knees to sitting. And sitting actually happens, usually, after they start crawling one way or the other and then to walking.

And it's putting babies into positions that they can't get themselves into or out of that promotes things like not crawling and not spending time on the tummy. But babies who are left on their backs until they find their way to their tummies – and I am talking about typically developing children. And you know, I think that children who have developmental delays sometimes need more time on their back to strengthen their abs and strengthen their – you know, all of their limbs so that when they do turn over, they're in a stronger position to not start internalizing tension in parts of their bodies that will become habitual that are not necessary if they are fully supported by their muscles when they get to that position. Did that make sense?

Angie: Yes, I guess usually we advise our girls that, you know, to try the tummy time but – and then be those careful observers as a child is feeling stressed or had enough that they do go on their back. And then we were just talking here just thinking about the trunk strengthening that happens when the child is on their tummy.

Ruth Anne: Right. And they do that for themselves one way or another.

Amanda: I'm so sorry to interrupt. This is Amanda. I – this is just... I'm in a pickle here because I certainly want to understand what Ruth Anne is saying. I – you know, she is certainly more expert on this piece than I am. But I do want to say that the American Academy of Pediatrics just a week ago sent out a piece on the importance of having children on their backs for, say, sleep. And one of the recommendations at that particular piece is that folks have – the babies have supervised awake tummy time, and they talk about that facilitating development. So I – you know, this – I think that this requires – you know, I think that -- I just want to put that out there because I think that that may be...

Ruth Anne: It's its own whole audio conference.

Amanda: That's right. [Laughter] That's right. And I just think in terms of -- you know, I think that we just need to be clear that there are different ideas about that. And so it would...

Ruth Anne: Right.

Amanda: It would be a good idea to sort of look into that a little bit more, perhaps. Yeah. And I'm looking at the time. It's – on that exciting note, its six – it's very close to our ending time. And I wanted to give all of our faculty an opportunity to say, you know, a few last words before we end. So I'm going to start, if it's okay, with Angela. Angela, will you say a few things?

Angela: I –

Amanda: Or even just one.

Angela: Just one is that -- just to remember... It's really a quote from Jeree Pawl, where it says for us just to remember, "We are mirrors for a baby that tell him who he is. We are also windows that tell him what he can expect." So I just appreciate that quote in terms of – even in terms of how we observe and see children. So to just be mindful; that's all.

Amanda: I love it. Ruth Anne?

Ruth Anne: Well, I was just getting over the chills from hearing Angela's quote of Jeree, who I am very fond of because she was the editor of my book. Yes. So, anyway... But I will add, let's see what is – that I want people to keep in mind that observation and assessment are not synonymous. They're not exactly the same thing, but that each one, you know, can support the other. And that sensitive, focused observation helps build our trust in the child, which then is essential in helping them to become confident, competent, and cooperative people.

Amanda: Oh, lovely. And Robin?

Robin: Just always to remember the babies and to know that they're watching us. And every moment that we can give to them to watch them, they appreciate and they notice.

Amanda: Thank you so much, Robin. Thank you so much to all of our faculty for being here. It has been an incredibly rich discussion. Thank you, Angela and Ruth Anne and Robin, for sharing your expertise with us today. I think it's been really helpful to get your thinking as folks are using observation in their programs. And I just appreciate you spending all this time with us.

For further information and resources on this topic, please refer to the resource list on page 17 and the other materials in your packet. We also hope that you'll have an opportunity to look more in depth now at those RIE resources that you have and the DVDs that we described when they come to you. They should be there, I'm hoping, already. We also hope that you will take some time as individuals or a group to reflect on what you heard today using the applying information – Applying the Information handout that you have in your packet. And of course, please, please send those evaluations into us either online or in paper. We definitely use those and they help guide our way for the next time.

Thanks again for being here today and for all the work that all of you do with the children and families that you serve. I'm going to turn it over to Melissa now to end the call.

Melissa: Thank you. That does conclude our conference call for today. Thank you for your participation.