

I'M JUST BLOWING BUBBLES

Key Focus: Physical Development

Observation: Mr. Connor is your co-teacher in an infant and toddler classroom. One day, you take pictures of the children engaging with bubbles. The photograph below is of Li, who is 30 months, with Mr. Connor. Li stayed with the activity longer than any of the other children who wandered off to play with the balls. Mr. Connor told you that Li would say “more bubble” whenever he put the wand back in the bottle. On a sticky label you record the date, “more bubble,” and a note that she stayed with the activity until it was time to put it away. You put the label on the back of the photograph after you print it out.



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 information does a photograph as assessment documentation provide?

Sample Responses: Photographs often capture the moment unlike any other documentation can. For example, photographs capture the environment of the observation, evidence of the mood of participants, and children's affect. They are particularly helpful for young children because, without your needing to write a lot of detail, they give a sense of children's motor movements that are often important prerequisite skills for later developmental abilities. With only limited notes on the back of the photo, you have gathered information about several areas of Li's development. It might have been helpful to know how long the activity was available as well: was it five minutes or 15 minutes?

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 Li from the observation?

Sample Responses: Li seems to be enjoying the bubbles. She seems to be focused on one or two bubbles in particular and directly reaches out to them, indicating good hand-eye coordination. Her actions appear both deliberate and concise. She is using an open hand to reach and pop. She uses a two-word combination to communicate her wants. She stayed with the activity the entire time it was available, indicating strong engagement.

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. The skills observed here represent early development in:

8B2 (Physical Health and Development/Fine Motor Skills) Grows in hand-eye coordination.

1B1 (Language Development/Speaking & Communicating) Develops increasing abilities to understand and use language to communicate information, experiences, ideas, feelings, opinions, needs, and questions, and for other varied purposes.

4A1 (Science/Scientific Skills and Methods) Begins to use senses to gather information, investigate materials, and observe processes and relationships.

4B4 (Science/Scientific Knowledge) Shows increased awareness and beginning understanding of changes in materials and cause-effect relationships.

7A1 (Approaches to Learning/Initiative & Curiosity) Chooses to participate in an increasing variety of tasks and activities.

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

Next steps for large group instruction:

**Help participants make connections between what they learn from the assessment and the next steps they want to take in instruction. If suggestions for instruction extend activities to new areas of learning, ask participants to consider what aspects of children's progress they would assess and how they would do so during those extension activities.*

Ask: What would you recommend that the teacher do next for the class as a whole?

**Responses will vary but might include:*

- Bubbles are naturally engaging materials. To elaborate children's interest, it might be possible to create your own bubbles with the class. Children can help you pour soap and water into a bowl. As you create your own bubbles, you can use different color dye to make different color soap to see if you could increase the time that other children spend engaged in popping bubbles.

- Moreover, you can purchase differently shaped and sized bubble wands (some large, some small) so that children can play and name sizes of bubbles (big bubbles, small bubbles). For children who are not as successful as Li at popping moving bubbles, you could catch a bubble on the wand and hold it for the child to pop.
- You can also talk about how bubbles can be “high” or “low” in the air.

Next steps for individualized instruction:

Ask: What would you recommend that the teacher do next for Li?

** Responses will vary but might include:*

- Demonstrate to Li how she can not only catch bubbles with her hands, but also blow the bubbles herself. Blowing bubbles provides an opportunity to coordinate breathing and movements with the mouth and tongue that are important for developing speech.
- Encourage Li to isolate her index finger to pop the bubble.

Additional Notes:

Send bubbles home to families so that they can spend time blowing and catching bubbles with their children. Ask them to check off on an index card if their child said “more,” “bubble,” “more bubble,” “big bubble,” or “little bubble,” or to indicate if the child was able to blow a bubble and if he or she popped a bubble with a hand or a finger.