

NAME THAT TUNE

Key Focus: Language Development

Observation: Over the past few weeks you have gotten the sense that while some children in your class know the words to many of your daily songs, there are others who are not singing or do not seem to know the words. You decide in advance to test out your hypothesis. You create the following checklist:

	Does not produce any language	Uses the melody and produces words, but they are not correct	Uses words and sings them clearly
Yun-jin			
Asia			
Mike			
Tyler			
Sierra			

During circle time the next day you lead the children in a song that you have been using every day for the last week. When you stop the music and ask Tyler what comes next, he is silent. Other children chime in with their responses; some are correct and others are not. You continue the music and ask Sierra when you stop the music next. She sings the correct response. The next time you stop the music, Asia responds with a nonsense word that makes the other children laugh.

Your checklist looks like this after you have done this activity with the entire class:

	Does not produce any language	Uses the melody and produces words, but they are not correct	Uses words and sings them clearly
Yun-jin			X
Asia		X	
Mike			X
Tyler	X		
Sierra			X
Isabella		X	
Tabitha		X	
Ronald			X
Hong	X		

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 is the advantage of setting up a checklist like the one here?

Sample Responses: A checklist allows you to pre-plan what it is you are looking for. The teacher in this example knows what she is trying to figure out—namely, which children sing and know the words and which others do not. By writing in all the names of children in her class ahead of time and anticipating responses, she quickly and efficiently captures data and is able to better understand some of the trends in her classroom.

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 these observations?

Sample Responses: Out of the nine children in class that day, four children knew the words and sang them clearly, three knew the melody but created nonsense words and two remained silent. Overall, it appears most children are singing. However, not everyone sings the words to the song, and there are a few children who are not singing. This provides a much more “concrete” sense of the singing in the class, than the “feeling” that not all children are singing.

Like many observations, when children do not perform as expected, we have questions and hypotheses to consider: Some children may not have responded due to shyness or difficulty organizing a quick response in front of the class. You could check with the parents to find out if the child sings the songs at home, or try singing individually with the child when in the art or block area.

For the children who are not singing, more investigation is needed to determine if this is an issue of language (perhaps English is not the child’s first language; you may find out if the child sings songs in his or her home language), memory, or perhaps shyness. Without more information, you do not know why a child in this situation would not sing. It is important for the teacher to observe this child over other periods of the day as well, in other situations when different kinds of memory skills would be needed.

Children who invent the words to the song are showing flexibility in dealing with not knowing the words to the song.

Relating Your Observation to the Child Outcomes Framework:

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

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

5A1 (Creative Arts/Music): Gains ability in using different art media and materials in a variety of ways for creative expression and representation.

7C1 (Approaches to Learning/Reasoning and Problem Solving): Develops increasing ability to find more than one solution to a question, task, or problem.

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:*

- The teacher can write out the words of the song on large chart paper and go over them with the class, pointing to the words as they are sung (this helps with the concept of a word—something that you might want to assess by counting how many words or for how many lines of print the child could correctly point to individual words from left to right).
- Have children tell a partner what the next line is before calling on them.
- Allow a pair of children to sing together.
- Perhaps act out the meaning of part of a song.
- Play other types of memory games such as “I’m going on a vacation and I’m packing my bear, _____” with each children repeating what the child before said and adding another item to take on vacation.
- Try a finger play and see if the child remembers the words. Maybe use flannel board pictures to help support memory.

Next steps for individualized instruction:

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

** Responses will vary but might include:*

- Consider whether there might be other times during the day when children who remained silent might be more likely to sing the words and demonstrate them. For example, if you sing them on the playground while engaged in a game, will Tyler then show that he knows the words to the song? Perhaps he

was just too shy to sing in front of the entire class.

- Perhaps find a song that builds on a personal interest.

Additional Notes:

Recommend sending home the words (or if possible, the tape of the children and you singing the songs) so that parents can practice the songs and melodies at home with their children. Ask parents to let you know when their child can sing an entire verse alone.