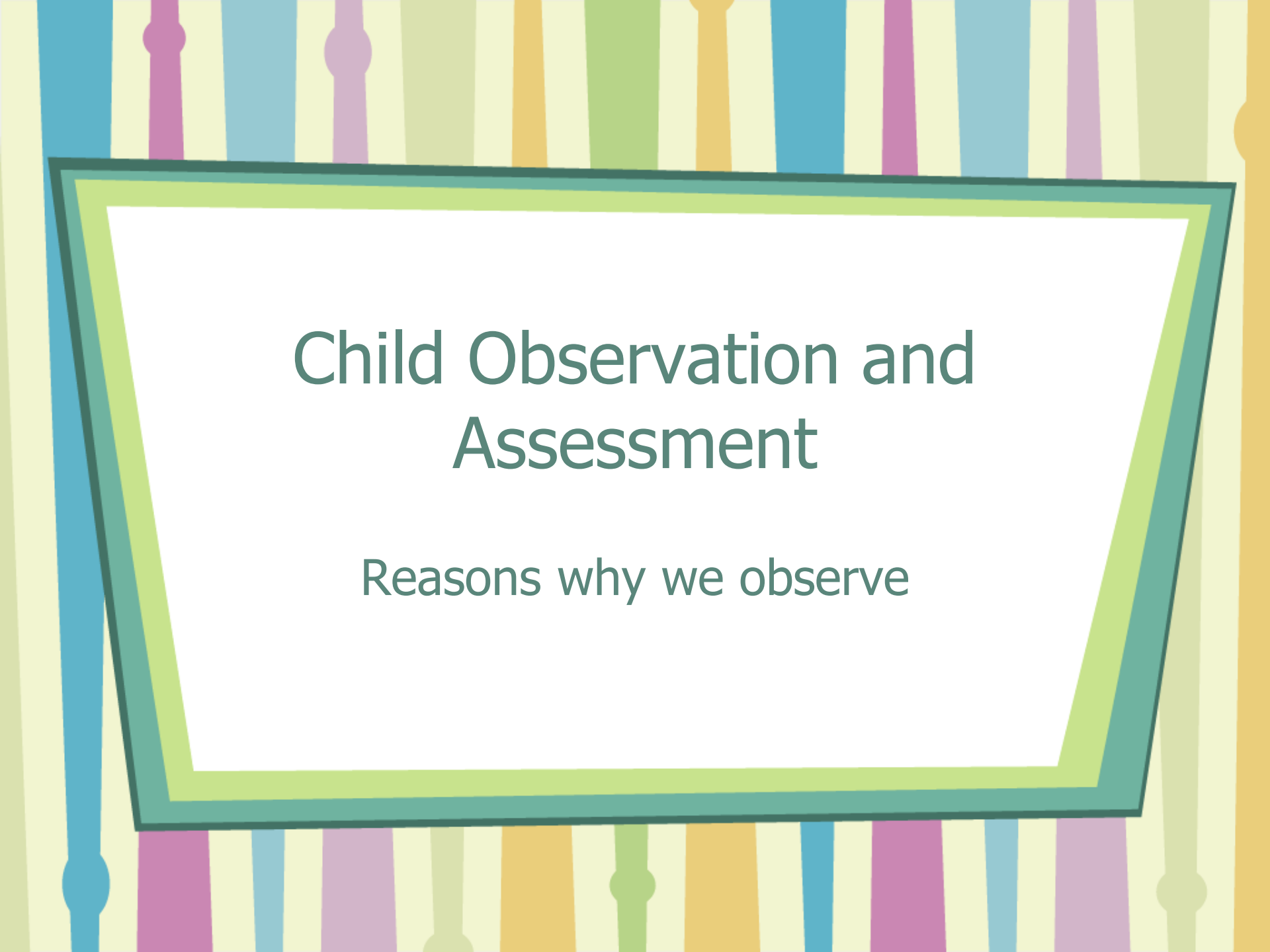




Child Observation and Assessment

Reasons why we observe

Learning Outcome

- In this session you will learn about the reasons why child observations and assessments are undertaken.



Child Observation and Assessment

“Observation of children should be used to inform and strengthen our support for all aspects of child development in every care and educational context. The skill of a practitioner is in recognising and acting upon all aspects of children’s development through a holistic and integrated approach.”

(MacLeod-Brudenell, 2004:272)

Child Observation and Assessment

“Observation and assessment is an effective way to understand children’s learning and development.”

(Neaum, 2016:140)

Child Observation and Planning

“Effective planning and observation are fundamental to ... children’s learning and development. Learning opportunities for children need to be relevant for their age group, realistic and challenging”

(Bradford 2012:)

Why Observe?

“By observing children while they are involved in activities, practitioners will find out how the children’s skills are developing and what they are able to do. Practitioners will also be able to gather information on what the children know and understand, as well as their personal preferences”

(Welsh Assembly Government, 2008)

Why Observe?

- When we watch children carefully and sensitively, we see them learning. When approaching observation with an open mind we can observe the richness of children's play and interaction.
- Observation enables us to become aware of what children can do to enable us to ensure that what we provide and how we interact is closely linked to children's abilities and needs.

(Neaum, 2016:139)

Why we observe children

- Click on the link below to watch the video (approximately 2 minutes), then continue with the presentation.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DY8rgtZ1S0>

Why Observe?

- There is a need for a systematic way of making observations within the learning environment.

Observations:

- Are the structured way of studying children
- Inform pedagogy and curriculum structure
- Underpin the planning of everyday activities of the classroom/setting
- Can become the tool for multi-professional collaboration and research (Palaiologou, 2012:46)

Why Observe?

The purpose of observation:

- To enable adults to identify and gain greater understanding of the needs of children/young people.
- Children/young people have unique qualities.
- In order to meet their individual needs effectively it is essential adults recognise their differences and acknowledge that children/young people have a right to be treated with respect.

Why Observe?

- Children/young people want to share their achievements with adults.
- Observing them can help practitioners to share their achievements and empathise with the child/young person's positive feelings.
- Children/young people should however, never be placed into situations which cause them distress or could be deemed unethical.

(Riddall- Leech, 2008)

Why Observe?

The purpose of observation:

- To record in order to inform our response to the needs of children/young people.
- More than looking and seeing.
- Recording is linked to considered reflection and analysis.
- Monitor activities and use of resources.
- Sound reflection enables practitioners to evaluate their own roles, thus enhancing professional practice and aiding understanding of children/young people.

Why Observe?

- Knowledge gained about the children/young people should underpin all the work practitioners do.
- Ensure best possible care and education for each individual child/young person.
- However, without sensitive interpretation and analysis of the information obtained, an observation is merely a description of what the observer has seen.
- To be of use observations must inform practitioner responses to the needs of children/young people, develop understanding of children/young people and ultimately benefit them.

How Easy is Observation?

- Observing children is not as easy as it sounds, but it is a skill that students and practitioners can develop.
- A group of child development students were sent to observe a group of three year olds for a period of one hour. They informed their tutor on their return that the children had done nothing. The tutor was surprised and asked if they had gone at sleep time. This was not the case. The students were sent back again. This time one or two students saw one or two children doing some things. After the third hour, remarkably all the children performed many and varied tasks!
- The children had not changed – but the students had become better at observing due to their opportunities to practice observing children.

(Adapted from Mercer 2018: 3-4)

Online Activity 1 – Reasons why we observe children

Access the module on Moodle and click into the session Reasons for Child Observations tile to access the activities for this session.

Complete the Padlet activity by adding at least one reason why we undertake observations. Try to provide a different suggestion to those provided by other students if you can.

Make some notes in your Class notebook in Teams, then continue with the presentation.



Reasons for Observation

- To determine if the baby, child or young person is developing/learning according to developmental norms and assess progress.
- To share information with parents or carers.
- To plan effectively for the continuing care and development of the baby, child or young person.
- To share, informed, accurate and objective information with other professionals on a need to know basis.

Benefits for Practitioners

- Enhances our knowledge and understanding of how children develop and learn.
- Detailed, careful attentive observation, followed by well informed assessment, show us:
- How children make meaning in their world.
- How children use and develop language to enable them to communicate with others and to think.

Benefits for Practitioners

We can learn:

- How children develop and maintain relationships.
- How children develop emotionally and morally.
- A dynamic approach to observation and assessment enables us to go beyond the idea of normative developmental expectations and outcome measures and enable us to really see and celebrate children as individuals.

(Neaum, 2016:139)

Top Tips for Learning

Observation and assessment enables practitioners to:

- Know the individual child/young person and highlight his/her strengths, interests and needs.
- Identify and plan for the child/young person's progress.
- Highlight children/young people's progress, strengths and abilities across all areas of development and learning.



Top Tips for Learning

- Provide a graduated response and specific help to children/young people whose progress is not adequate and who may be on a continuum of additional learning needs (ALN Code of Practice Wales).
- Inform children/young people of their achievements and next steps in their learning.



Top Tips for Learning

- Inform staff and parents/carers of children/young people's achievements and next steps for their learning.
- Identify, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum provided (where appropriate).
- Inform transitions between different settings, stages of learning e.g. between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2.

(WAG, 2008)



Summary

“Observing learning, [and] getting close to children’s minds and ...feelings is part of our daily work in striving for quality ... Our careful observations of children’s learning can help make ... provision better. We can use what we see to identify strengths and weaknesses, gaps and inconsistencies in what we provide. We can identify significant moments in a child’s learning and we can build on what we see.”

(Drummond 1998:105 in Palaiologou 2012:41)

Learning Outcome

- Having undertaken this session you should now have a better understanding about the reasons why child observations and assessments are undertaken.



References and Further Reading

- Bradford, H. (2012) *Planning and Observation of Children Under Three*, London: Routledge
- Drummond, M. (1998) Observing Children in Smidt, S. (Ed) *The Early Years: A Reader*, London: Routledge
- Macloed-Brudenell, I. (2004), *Advanced Early Years for Foundation Degrees and levels 4/5*, Oxford: Heinemann.
- Mercer, J. (2018) *Child Development: Concepts and Theories*. London: Sage



References and Further Reading

- Neaum, S. (2016) *Child Development for Early Years Students and Practitioners*. London: Sage
- Palaiologou, I. (2012) *Child Observation for the Early Years*, 2nd Edition, London: Sage
- Riddall-Leech, S (2008) *How to Observe Children*, Harlow: Heinemann
- Welsh Assembly Government (2008) *Observing Children*, Cardiff:WAG

