

ZERO TO THREE

Moderator: Amanda Perez
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2:00 pm CT

Operator: Good day and welcome to the Zero to Three Observations conference call. Today's conference is being recorded.

At this time, I'd like to turn the conference over to Ms. Amanda Perez. Please go ahead ma'am.

Amanda Perez: Thank you so much, Melissa and 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. And as Melissa mentioned, you can look forward to having this recorded call posted on our Web site in the ECL - 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 on our 2011 series will focus of course on observation.

Observation is a topic particularly of the RIE resources sent in August and most 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 to with you a little bit about how those materials that you have received can help you nurture sensitive skilled observation in your 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?

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.

And in my past I've have had the pleasure of serving as an infant/toddler teacher and interim director at various childcare 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 of 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 Perez: 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 Memo).

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 as Pacific Oaks College where she was on the faculty.

And so I completed my Masters 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 sixteen years almost and...

Amanda Perez: Wow.

Ruth Anne Hammond: ...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 groups. And so I've been doing that for a number of years too.

And I study effective neuroscience with (Alan Shore) who is a great resource to the field of early childhood in psychology. And I'm just super happy to be here.

Amanda Perez: And you have a special connection Ruth Anne to one of our resources that we sent out to programs respecting babies. Do you want to talk about that for a second?

Ruth Anne Hammond: 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 too.

Amanda Perez: Now 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 you're with us here today. Thanks for being here.

Ruth Anne Hammond: Thank you for having me.

Amanda Perez: 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 an Early Head Start program since 1999. We're a Wave IV program. And over the years we've developed Head's 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 a ten 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's so nicely fits within the standards for 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 Perez: 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 through 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 staff in Early Head Start in (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 Fisher: 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 relationship.

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 1304.21A that speaks to child development education and 1304.20B which is really around screening for developmental sensory and behavioral concerns and 1304.20F that speaks to individualization of the programs.

So all of the standards support observation 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 developmental progress over time. So it's really important.

Amanda Perez: 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 you add here around why, why observation?

Ruth Anne Hammond: Oh gee, there's so many things I could say about that. There is a concept that, you know, 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 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, 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 a 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 some 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 activities is a valuable asset to the child and to yourself and to the relationship and...

Amanda Perez: Yes, go ahead. Go ahead.

Ruth Anne Hammond: No go ahead.

Amanda Perez: 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 childcare, 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 Hammond: Maybe that's the village.

Amanda Perez: Maybe that's the village, exactly.

Ruth Anne Hammond: Right.

Amanda Perez: Robin I know you agree. And you also identified sort of a different opportunity that you see in observation as well?

Robin Williams: 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 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 Perez: Yes, 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 Fisher: 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 allows for that opportunity as well.

Amanda Perez: 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 a 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 blended together. But we're going to do what we can hear 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 is we know why it is, what it is that we're looking for. And so as you observe it, it feels really important to start there.

But even if we know the why of every observation as we prepare 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 Hammond: Well, you know, one of the probably most important messages that Monty 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 not 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 the 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, it's also the opportunity to observe their problem-solving makes me hesitate before solving the child's, 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 on, pushing on and they bump up against that 2 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? Are 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 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 Perez: Well and that really takes us to the first tip here which is recognized 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 Hammond: It's kind of like making a paradigm shift from being a teacher to being a facilitator of learning.

Amanda Perez: 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 Williams: 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 responsibly about what that feels like, you know, because staff feel pressure to be busy. And they want 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 oh 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 Perez: 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 it developmentally what's happening with kids.

You said the you all took the time to really break that down and understand how many observations were required of staff every week?

Robin Williams: That's right. And so we - when we were developing our method, we're of course thinking about our teachers, our primary caregivers and the - 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 its 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 all. 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 Perez: And I think what you get to are sort of two things. I mean at the administrative level in your center-based program and your home base too you've 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 it's 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.

But 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 for 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 Hammond: 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 those functions necessarily. You can be there as a participant and an observer.

Amanda Perez: And just sort of recognize the difference in that role too?

Ruth Anne Hammond: Right.

Amanda Perez: Yes. Angela what would you add here?

Angela Fisher: Well I would add in regard to just simply the importance of also of really trying to plan it out. And 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, a - like a facilitator approach.

But I think it's just really important to plan it out to set aside time to observe because of the response, so many responsibilities from a caregiver perspective.

So it depends on the purpose of the observation. At 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 childcare 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 is just awake and ready to go.

If there's a free play time 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 Perez: Well it's interesting you say that because we had a question that came in and 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 Fisher: 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 Perez: Let me - and I just want to call folk's 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 I when I talked with the teacher who did know that child well after she said oh, that 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 Fisher: In terms of observing a child that you for instance don't have a prior relationship with?

Amanda Perez: Yes.

Angela Fisher: I actually would recommend because really if you can get an understanding of the child's developmental or 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 of what I call sometimes a creepy crawl or 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 those 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. Although 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 Hammond: Can I interject something here?

Amanda Perez: Please.

Ruth Anne Hammond: This is Ruth Anne.

Amanda Perez: Please.

Ruth Anne Hammond: Something that came up 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 an important factor in your demeanor as you are observing.

So 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 Perez: Absolutely.

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

Amanda Perez: Yes.

Robin Williams: The one thing I would add is that as the sole 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 it's stranger is around if they are in that, you know, that developmental stage of stranger anxiety, it's such a useful to them to know oh that's right, that's normal development. That's why they're acting a little afraid are scared. And it also gives this parent an insight into their child and their development.

Amanda Perez: Yes. 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 Williams: 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 staffs 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 things down 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 Perez: 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 Williams: Right, and so that they don't miss those opportunities because they didn't have a piece of paper or pencil or...

Amanda Perez: Well 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 Williams: Yes that's so important. That's another way that we meet the performance standards is by helping parents to do observations with 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 Perez: I want to call folk's attention to the sample form that we have on page 8 of your handouts. This is just 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 Williams: Yes we have forms like this, yes.

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

Ruth Anne Hammond: Well in our program we've often carried little spiral notebooks that are just 2 - you know, 4 inches by 3 inches and a little pencil in our pocket, you know, so that we can jot down anecdotes, you know, of 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 can get anecdotal stuff written down real quick and easy that way.

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

Ruth Anne Hammond: Right.

Amanda Perez: 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 the details of the things that happened during the day. So the more that we can get folks opportunities 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 had some questions here as well.

Ruth Anne, in the home-based program that you work with, you use observation quite a bit.

Ruth Anne Hammond: Well yes I mean I'm - my particular participation is during the socialization. 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 doing 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 this balls and trying to figure out which one's going to fit in the whole best, you know, or just little things like that.

And, you know, helping parents understand that they can spend this time of 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 care givers 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 little wants nothing observation time in any kind of setting goes a long way.

Amanda Perez: Yes 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 Williams: Are we moving onto tip five or are we still on tip four?

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

Robin Williams: 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 are 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's best that - 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 Perez: 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 like 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 Williams: 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 with that 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 Perez: 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 worked with a lot of family child care folks.

I imagined that planning for and making room for observation within that model poses some unique issues. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Angela Fisher: 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 the (solely) 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 you're in and 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 over what the child - what activities the child engaged in they can also read about the observation.

And this would give them - the parent 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 our 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 Perez: And how do you - I mean what do you see sort of as the Early Head Start child care specialist role there?

Amanda Perez: Well I think that the Early Head Start family child care specialist, they have a really unique role. You know, they can actually provide and - or give to providers particular strategies to support the observation process.

Most Early Head Start for family child care specialists are typically trained to observe infant/toddler behavior and are often familiar with several different screen and assessment instruments.

So the specialist can serve as a supportive partner to the provider. This specialist can offer suggestions or templates and forms, you know, to help document keen observations and really helps strengthen the provider's skill in observing your children along with again, developing a relationship that could allow for increment moments for even with selective dialogue and processing and a discussion of the observation.

And, you know, one of the things that we haven't quite gotten to yet is the affects 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 the 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 Perez: And sort of that reflection - reflective supervision...

Angela Fisher: Absolutely.

Amanda Perez: ...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 as quickly into the second obstacle, the observation that you 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 Fisher: 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 helps 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 growth 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 if you 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 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 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 Perez: Yes. So it's really this - 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 and observation it's possible to start concrete.

I want to call folk's 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 way to really help folks begin if observation feels a little bit uncomfortable at first.

And I think this really ties into tip number seven which is recognize observation as a skill. If we think of it that way it really helps us to understand that evolves in all of us over time.

You know, it grows over time. We develop capacity for it overtime 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 Williams: 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 orientation to the philosophy of our program. And we do follow the resources for infant edu-cares philosophy in our infant/toddler program.

We also use on 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 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 is 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 Perez: Well and 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 be 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 developments.

Robin Williams: 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 Perez: But yes and I just love the way you described it as really being 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 a 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 used 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 Fisher: Absolutely. Objectivity is the approach to view someone or something free of interpretive bias or prejudice. It - 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 used 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've 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's 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 as 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 Perez: Well and particularly when we're thinking about screening and assessment is 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 Hammond: 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 I, 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 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 meaning 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 Perez: It is such a tight walk that we ask...

Ruth Anne Hammond: Right.

Amanda Perez: ...such a tightrope that we ask people...

Ruth Anne Hammond: Right.

Amanda Perez: ...to walk. And I think that that, you know, I think that's an important message for participants here today is, 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 ten 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?

Operator: 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 star 1 now if you'd like to ask a question.

Amanda Perez: 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 feel really 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 Fisher: 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 Perez: Yes 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?

Operator: Yes we do have a question on the phone. And the question will come from (Candace Wede).

(Candace Wede): Hi. Hello?

Amanda Perez: Hi.

(Candace Wede): Hi. How are you?

Amanda Perez: Great. How are you...

(Candace Wede): 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 observation during socialization. They set aside a time to do the observations during socialization.

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 Perez: So can you - I'm sorry (Candace), will you ask that question again? So you're interested in whether they also have to do is summary as will documenting what...

(Candace Wede): Right.

Amanda Perez: ...they've seen?

(Candace Wede): 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 Perez: And this is part of the creative curriculum?

(Candace Wede): 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 Williams: This is Robin. What was - what's the purpose of the summary?

(Candace Wede): 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 Hammond: Can I just - can I pipe in what a thought?

(Candace Wede): Yes.

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

Robin Williams: Not at all.

Ruth Anne Hammond: 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 Wede): Right.

Ruth Anne Hammond: 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 Wede): 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 Fisher: This is Angela can I make one point?

(Candace Wede): Yes.

Angela Fisher: Just add one thing? In my work I think it - I agree with Ruth Anne and. But I actually think of 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 so - 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 parent, 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?

(Crosstalk)

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 interpreted it actually may give you a different and a much larger picture.

(Candace Wede): Okay.

Angela Fisher: 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 Wede): Okay.

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

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

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

Operator: No we have no questions at this time but please press Star 1 now if you'd like to ask a question.

Amanda Perez: 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 Williams: It is. And one of the things we do when people enroll into our program is signed 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.

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 midline or they're just beginning to crawl or rollover 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 Perez: Great. Did anybody else wanted to add?

Angela Fisher: 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 video taping 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 - you know, even looking into that using that
ABC strategy it really helps you to capture in snapshot version but also if you are videotaping
what you miss. And it's a form of strengthening your own ability to see the behavior itself.

Ruth Anne Hammond: 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?

Female: Absolutely.

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

Operator: Yes we do have another question in the queue. And that question will come from?

(Angie Laron): (Angie Laron).

Amanda Perez: 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 right approach, typically tummy time.

There was of 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 clarify those points and make sure that we advise the right way.

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

Amanda Perez: Please.

Ruth Anne Hammond: ...because it's one of my passions. 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 Pickler who was Monty 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 backs 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 body 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 Laron): 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 Hammond: Right. And they do that for themselves...

Amanda Perez: Well and...

Ruth Anne Hammond: ...when they ((inaudible)).

Amanda Perez: 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 require- you know, I think that I just want to put that out there because I think...

Ruth Anne Hammond: Its own whole audio conference.

Amanda Perez: That's right. 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...

Ruth Anne Hammond: Right.

Amanda Perez: ...would be a good idea to sort of look into that a little bit more perhaps.

Yes. And I'm looking at that time. It's - on that exciting note. It's 6:00 - 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 Fisher: I...

Amanda Perez: Or even just one.

Angela Fisher: ...just one is that just to remember it's really a quote from Jeree Paul where it says for us just to remember we are mirrors for a baby that tell him who he is. We're 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 Perez: I love it. Ruth Anne?

Ruth Anne Hammond: 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 focus observation helps build our trust in the child which then is essential in helping them to become confident, competent, and cooperative people.

Amanda Perez: Oh lovely. And Robin?

Robin Williams: 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 Perez: 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, 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.

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

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