

Observing Your Child in Preschool



Parents often are invited to observe their children in a preschool classroom. Sometimes, a teacher wants a parent to observe because a child is having some difficulty. Some programs let parents visit and watch their children any time. Many parents wonder how to get the most out of watching their children in the classroom. Here are parent-tested hints for observing children in preschool.

Talk to the teacher about when to observe your child.

- Set a time to observe that works for you and the teacher. Remember that if you don't make an appointment, the class might be gone on a walk or field trip when you get there.
- Ask if there is something the teacher especially wants you to see, and decide together how much time to spend observing.
- Find out if you will be inside the room or if there is a special observation area.

Let your child know that you will be at school.

- You might say, "I want to know more about what happens at your school, so I will be there today to watch for a short time."
- Remind your child that you won't be playing with her when you observe, since you want to see what she usually does at school.

Make a list of questions ahead of time.

- You might want to use some questions other parents often ask: "What does my child do that most other children do? What does he do differently from the others? Who are my child's usual playmates? What are some things she does alone? What does my child do to deal with conflict? Are there times of the day when he seems very comfortable or happy? When does he seem less comfortable?"
- Take your list with you so you can take notes in answer to the questions. Be ready to jot down other ideas or questions you have while observing.

Stay focused on your child while you observe!

- Remind yourself to pay attention to what your child is doing—or you may become distracted by other things going on in the classroom.
- Remember that your child is probably excited that you're there. You may need to encourage him to keep doing what he usually does.
- Say goodbye to your child when you leave.

Follow up after your observation.

- Keep in mind that the teacher will probably be too busy to meet with you right away. Arrange to talk later in person or on the phone. The notes you took will come in handy when you and the teacher talk.
- Invite your child to talk with you about some of the things you noticed.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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