

DOCUMENTING LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Observation and assessment are essential components of an effective play-based program. Teachers need the knowledge and skills to identify and describe the learning that is taking place in order to assess student performance and make appropriate changes to the program plan. For the most part, this can be accomplished through well organized documentation.

Documentation consists of:

- anecdotes based on day-to-day observations;
- on-going developmental review;
- representative samples of student work;
- visual records of the learning in progress, as well as the products;
- notes from conversations with colleagues, parents, and other professionals.

Documentation is particularly important for reporting learning through play. Standardized tests and other forms of quantifiable evaluation do not capture the richness of learning that occurs during play. Qualitative assessment through participant observation has long been accepted as a valuable means of collecting data on significant human behavior. Teachers need to have training in this important strategy for evaluating the students' learning through play.

This type of documentation is also important for student reflection and assessment as they view, for example, the visual records of their learning (work samples, photos, video) from start to final product. It allows students to chart their progress, to see where they started, where they finished, and what happened along the way. This kind of documentation is the 'memory' of what happened and provides a 'history' of development.

Children may also be involved in documenting their learning as a way of recording what they have done to share with others.

