

April Text Study ~

Reifel, S. (2011). Observation and Early Childhood Teaching. *YC: Young Children*, March 2011, 62-65.

Observation and Early Childhood ~ Dr. Stuart Reifel

One of the key elements that sets the Ounce Scale aside from other tools, is it focuses observations. Observations have a long history connected to the early childhood years. The best way for us to understand what children know and think is to watch them in their play. It is through their play we will be able to see how they solve problems, think about life, engage with others, and so much more. Observations give us the windows into understanding our children's development. As a part of the Ounce Scale the teachers have been doing ongoing observations and documentation to ensure they are best assessing your child's development.

These practices can be done at home as well! Dr. Reifel, author of Observation and Early Childhood, suggests that in order to become a skilled observer you need to:

- **Know what you want to find out.** For example, maybe you are interested in knowing more about your 36 month olds fine motor development as you have been concerned it is an area that needs development.
- Identify different times during the day **when you can observe and what you could observe**. For example, perhaps you want to observe some in the morning and then other times in the evenings and see a blend of activities such as stringing large beads, using crayons and making dots or lines, tearing up pieces of construction paper, or using a dropper for a science experiment.
- **Know what to record from your observations.** In order to draw conclusions about a child's development or measure growth it is important to have details of what you see the child doing. These should be recorded with details such as date, time, and then specifically what you saw your child do. For example, on Saturday, March 26th at 10:30am Jill was sitting at the kitchen table with crayons and paper. She made light marks on her paper with various colors. Sunday, March 27th at 4:30pm Jill was trying to help her sister tear paper for a mosaic she was making. When it was just one piece of paper she was able to tear it, when she was holding two pieces of paper she was not able to tear it.

Reifel honors the time commitment and organization doing observations takes and thus reminds readers to pick specific things to observe. He also repeats that it is important to observe over time to ensure you get a true perspective, but also a chance to see growth. From looking at one or two notes you may have taken about your child's development it is difficult to draw conclusions; however when we have examples it is easier to see the big picture. He also adds that when you watch children in varied situations it allows you to see the depth in which your child has developed in a certain area.