

## CIRCLES, CIRCLES, CIRCLES

**Key Focus:** Language Development

**Observation:** Children are using different-shaped stamps and colored ink to create a picture of their choice. You ask children about what they are doing and record their responses:

- *I use lots of circles. Circles, circles, circles.*
- *I makin' this.*
- *This is a square and a triangle. They are shapes.*
- *I'm drawing a picture.*
- *This is my picture.*
- *Teacher, can you help me make this (pointing to the rectangle)?*
- *I'm making shapes, too.*
- *I like circles. And I like other shapes.*

**Reflecting on the documentation:** *\*Participants may quickly shift from reflecting on the documentation to interpreting the observation or suggesting strategies for extending learning. Remind participants to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the documentation technique.*

**Ask:** What advantage does a verbal vignette like this offer?

**Sample Responses:** It allows the teacher to capture children's language and their ability to express themselves and comment on their work. It gives a sense of the length of their sentences, and the extent to which they use varied and descriptive vocabulary when talking about what they are doing. It indicates that some children are familiar with the names of basic shapes.

**Ask:** What do you lose from a verbal vignette that some of the other documentation techniques capture?

**Sample Responses:** There is very little context—in this case you can't tell if all the comments are directed at the teacher or at peers as well. Children who are shy may not respond when asked in a group setting. You don't know if they correctly named the shapes. Writing each of their comments on the children's drawings would have given more context.

**Interpretation of the observation:** *\*Remind participants that in their interpretation they are looking for patterns, critical incidents, or errors. It is important to stick to the data.*

**Ask:** What can you learn about the children from their statements?

**Sample Responses:** Children's expressive language in this class is varied. Of the eight children, three are able to use specific names for shapes they use (circles, squares, triangles). Three children specifically refer to the word "shapes" to show that they have a sense of the overarching categorization. Three children use more than one sentence. One child is not able to describe what he/she is doing, but uses a question format to ask for help. This child does not know the name of the rectangle. Two children use the word "picture" but are not very specific. One child's language is very nonspecific: "I makin' this." Most of the utterances (things children said) were short—four to five words. Through this activity children use different art media and materials for creative expression.

Relating your observation to the Child Outcomes Framework:

*\*Although participants can defend other interpretations, there should be general consensus that this observation demonstrates:*

**1B3 (Language Development/Speaking and Communicating):** Uses an increasingly complex and varied spoken vocabulary.

**1B4 (Language Development/Speaking and Communicating):**

Progresses in clarity of pronunciation and towards speaking in sentences of increasing length and grammatical complexity.

**3B1 (Mathematics/Geometry and Spatial Sense):** Begins to recognize, describe, compare, and name common shapes, their parts and attributes.

**5B1 (Creative Arts/Art):** Gains ability in using different art media and materials in a variety of ways for creative expression and representation.

Next steps for large group instruction:

*\*Help participants make connections between what they learn from the assessment and the next steps they want to take in instruction. If suggestions for instruction extend activities to new areas of learning, ask participants to consider what aspects of children's progress they would assess and how they would do so during those extension activities.*

**Ask:** What would you recommend that the teacher do next for the class as a whole as a result of what is contained in the verbal vignette?

*\*Responses will vary but might include:*

- Ask children to tell you more about how they made the shapes the next time you are doing this.
- At large group time, read a book about shapes and talk about the particular shape. For example, draw a circle and ask children to expand on what they notice (for example, that it is round, that there are no straight lines, and so on). Then the next day look at a square and talk about how it has four lines, etc. You can then compare the two shapes for the children.
- Use magnetic shapes and put them together in different ways. Talk about how they fit together to create different objects (triangle on the square looks like a house...)
- Go on a classroom walk throughout the preschool building and identify different shapes.

Next steps for individualized instruction:

**Ask:** What would you recommend that the teacher do next for individual children?

*\*Responses will vary but might include:*

- Conduct this activity again in a few days, but this time sit with children and extend their vocabulary. For example, with the child who says, "I makin' this" say, "Yes, you are making a circle." Provide the children with the language they need in the context in which they are using it.
- During this activity, you can also pair children who have more extensive vocabulary with those who do not.

Additional Notes:

As a home extension, ask children to find different shapes in common everyday objects in their homes.