

I'M A BIG KID NOW

Key Focus:

Observation:

Physical Development

Bea is a home visitor and has been working with Jana and her family for nearly two years. Jana is now 20 months old and the youngest of five children. She lives with her two older brothers, both of whom are in elementary school, a sister in middle school, and one in high school. Bea usually visits with Jana and her mother in the morning while the older children are at school, but because of scheduling difficulties, makes her visit instead at 4:00 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon in February. Bea brings a camera with her because she wants to take the opportunity to take pictures of Jana's brothers and sisters if they are home.

When she gets to Jana's apartment, Bea sees Jana sitting at a table with her two older brothers, who are doing their homework. Bea takes the following picture of Jana:



After she leaves the apartment, Bea notes in Jana's journal:

"2/26 It was interesting to interact with Jana with her brothers in the house. She would look over at them and then try to do what they did—make a line on the paper, turn a page. Her mother explained that "Jana insists on doing 'homework' at the table with her brothers."

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: How do the home visitor's notes help enrich what the photograph documents?

Sample Responses: The notes help provide context to the picture and help to provide additional information about what Jana is doing as well as help with identifying what is happening in the picture. Without the note you might think that Jana's mom is pressuring her to perform beyond her developmental level.

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 does this photograph tell you about Jana? Think of the different developmental domains.

Sample Responses:

This picture demonstrates Jana's gross and fine motor abilities. She is able to hold her arms, shoulder, and body upright at the table so that she can work on her notebook. The way she grasps her pencil is also telling. It shows that she has enough control over her left hand to grasp the pencil. She is using the fist grip you expect to see at her age. Jana shows beginning eye-hand coordination, as her eyes are focused on the pencil and what her hand is doing.

The picture and the note provide evidence of Jana's concentration and motivation. She is involved in an activity that she believes older children do. She imitates the behavior of her older siblings.

The note and picture also provide evidence that Jana imitates the actions of others and suggests a positive relationship with her siblings.

Jana is learning about cause and effect and early writing. She moves the pencil on the paper and a mark appears. She is holding the pencil with eraser up to write.

Relating Your Observation to the Child Outcomes Framework:

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

These child outcomes are for preschoolers. The skills observed here represent early development in:

8A3 (Physical Health and Development/Fine Motor Skills) Progresses in abilities to use writing, drawing, and art tools, including pencils, markers, chalk, paint brushes, and various types of technology.

8B1 (Physical Health and Development/Gross Motor Skills) Shows increasing levels of proficiency, control, and balance in walking, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching, and galloping.

2D3 (Literacy/Early Writing) Experiments with a growing variety of writing tools and materials.

4B4 (Science/Scientific Knowledge) Shows increased awareness and beginning understanding of changes in materials and cause-effect relationships.

6A2 (Social and Emotional Development/Self Concept) Develops growing capacity for independence in a range of activities, routines, and tasks.

7A1 (Approaches to Learning/Initiative and Curiosity) Chooses to participate in an increasing variety of tasks and activities.

Next steps for large group instruction:

**Responses will vary but might include:*

[Not Applicable to home visitors]

Next steps for individualized instruction:

Ask: What would you recommend that the home visitor do next for Jana?

* Responses will vary but might include:

- It might be interesting to work with Jana on putting marks on paper with other writing and drawing tools (for example, markers, crayons, color pencils, paints and paintbrushes, chalk, etc.) to give her an opportunity to grasp different types of writing tools and witness their properties.
- You might also work with Jana on developing the pincer grasp in different contexts so that she can strengthen her finger muscles. For example, bring play dough on the next home visit and encourage Jana to pinch it. Pick up clothespins and drop them in a container. Build with 1-inch cubes. Squeeze eye droppers in water play.
- While Jana is drawing, you can also take this opportunity to talk with her about cause and effect. For example, when she puts the pencil to the paper (cause) it produces an effect (a mark): “You made a line!” You can demonstrate this with a variety of different writing tools. You can also talk about size—long line, short line.

Additional Notes:

This is a perfect opportunity to engage Jana’s mother in a discussion about best ways for children to develop literacy to assure that her interpretation of this behavior agrees with what we know about how children develop. The home visitor can also talk to her mother about the cognitive development that is evidenced here: the ability to imitate another child and the cause-effect relationship in making a mark. Share information about how children develop strength and control over muscles used for writing by using their arms and hands in a variety of activities that strengthen control and help the child to learn about space.

Parents might assume this behavior means the child is ready to copy letters, a skill which is not developmentally appropriate for Jana. Bea can use this opportunity as a teaching moment to talk with Jana’s mother as well as to provide and model activities that Jana and her entire family can do together (like giving Jana other tools to develop visual motor skills, singing songs with her, telling stories) that are critical to literacy development. You want to encourage the mother in her efforts to foster literacy by talking with her about the ways that young children develop early literacy skills: sharing books, telling stories, singing songs, talking to one another, or pointing out and naming objects.

You can learn more about young children’s early literacy development at:

http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key_language