

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

Key Focus: Social and Emotional Development

Observation: *Mr. Gill is concerned that children in his class are fighting too often. He decides to write down all “random acts of kindness” that he can find in his classroom throughout the day so that he can recognize and better reinforce positive behavior. He records the following:*

1. *Ricardo picks up Jaquan’s hat that he accidentally dropped while putting his jacket in his cubby.*
2. *Melissa turns on the faucet for Christy who is washing her hands in the bathroom.*
3. *Jordan moves over so that Elizabeth can have a seat during circle time.*
4. *Jack opens Llewelen’s milk for him.*
5. *Kathy shows Bill how to place the letter “A” right-side-up so that he can finish his puzzle.*
6. *Geoffrey helps clean up in the block area even though he didn’t have a chance to play at blocks that day.*
7. *During rest time, Robert is upset. Michelle puts her arm on his and says, “It’ll be okay, your mom’ll come soon”.*

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 event sampling like this offer?

Sample Responses: This approach allows the teacher to capture particular events that occur throughout the day and provides a positive picture that might not otherwise have had an opportunity to surface. It shines a spotlight on an area of behavior that might not have otherwise come through. If the teacher decided to do something to increase these behaviors (for example, increase the times that he comments positively on these behaviors), he would have a starting point for comparing if it increases the frequency with which children exhibit these behaviors.

Note: Event sampling is particularly useful for low frequency behaviors. Sometimes it is just done as a count of how often an event occurs within different time periods. In this case, the additional information about the context and what actually happened is also helpful. For example, children may be more apt to be kind to peers who are more friendly or quieter, or with whom they share a stronger relationship. By knowing about all of the children involved one can interpret some of what occurs and form questions to investigate further.

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 these observations?

Sample Responses: Although the teacher thinks that fighting is a problem in this classroom, this observation shows that in fact there are a number of positive interactions that are taking place as well. All children mentioned here interacted positively with peers by sharing and helping. Michelle and Ricardo responded sympathetically to peers who were in need, upset, hurt, or angry by expressing empathy or caring. Other children may have done so as well, but the description is not clear enough to know if the assistance was needed or desired by the recipient children.

Relating your observation to the Child Outcomes Framework:

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

6C1 (Social and Emotional Development/Cooperation): Increases abilities to sustain interactions with peers by helping, sharing, and discussion.

6D3 (Social and Emotional Development/Social Relationships): Develops increasing abilities to give and take in interactions; to take turns in games or using materials; and to interact without being overly submissive or directive.

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?

**Responses will vary but might include:*

- Read the list of positive behaviors to the class and discuss how the initiator and recipient of the good deed must have felt.
- Make a book of all these pro-social behaviors, adding pages over the course of the year.
- Read books about pro-social behaviors and talk about how good the participants feel.

Next steps for individualized instruction:

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

**Responses will vary but might include:*

- Next time Mr. Gill witnesses a random act of kindness, he can intervene and positively reinforce the behavior both through language and by action. He may then sample again on another day and see if his reinforcement is increasing the behaviors.

Additional Notes: