

Student Observation Checklist

_____ **Is there a difference between the nature of behaviors in a structured setting i.e. classroom and an unstructured setting i.e. playground?**

This factor may shed light on the child's need for a more structured environment in which to learn. Children who do not have well developed internal control systems need a highly structured environment to maintain focus and appropriate behavior. Some children cannot shift between structured and unstructured and back again. They may not possess the internal monitor which regulates conformity and logical attendance to rules. These children may be more successful in a structured play setting set up by teachers during the lunch hour.

_____ **Does the child seem to respond to external boundaries?**

This factor is important to the teacher since it is a monitor of potential learning style. If a child who lacks internal controls does conform to external boundaries i.e. time out, teacher proximity during work time, then this factor needs to be taken into consideration when prescribing classroom management techniques. When the child conforms to such boundaries, then his/her behavior is a message for what works for him/her.

_____ **What is the child's attention span during academic tasks?**

Attention span at different ages is measured normally in minutes or hours. You should become aware of the normal attention span for children of all ages and compare the child over several activities and days to see if a pattern of inattention is present. If the attention span is very short for someone of his/her age then modifications to work load i.e. shorter but more frequent assignments may have to be included.

_____ **Does the child require constant teacher supervision or assistance?**

A child who requires constant teacher supervision or assistance is a child who may be exhibiting a wide variety of possible symptomatic behavior which may be resulting from but not limited to attention deficit disorder, processing problems, emotional difficulties involving need for attention, need for control, high anxiety, internal stress, limited intellectual capacity, hearing problems etc. All of these areas need to be checked out and a good evaluation should determine the root of such behavior. However the key is always the frequency, intensity and duration of such symptoms.

_____ **Does the child interact appropriately with peers?**

Observing children at play can tell us a great deal about self esteem, tension levels, social maturity, physical development, and many other factors. Social interaction is more common in children over the age of 6 or 7 while parallel play is still common in younger children. Appropriate social interaction gives us insight into the child's own internal boundaries and organization. A child who always needs to control may really be masking high levels of tension. The more controlling a child is the more out of control they are feeling. A child who can appropriately conform to group rules, delay his/her needs for the good of the team, conform to rules and various changes or inconsistencies in rules, may be a child who is very self-assured and has low anxiety levels. The opposite is most always typical of children at risk. However, one should always consider developmental stages since certain behaviors, such as control, may be more typical at early ages.

_____ **Is the child a high or low status child?**

Observing a child in different settings allows us the opportunity to see the social status of the child and its impact on his behavior. Low status children as often seen in children with learning disabilities are more apt to feel insignificant and therefore fail to receive positive social cues which help reinforce feelings of self esteem.

Regardless of the form used you will need to be very familiar with this part of the process if you are called upon by the team to gather this information.