

# Observation Guidelines

## **If you are observing at a program other than your own:**

- Find out what time free play or art time is and plan to be there for that entire time period in order to observe an art activity from beginning to end.
- When you arrive, check in with the appropriate person (office, teacher, etc.)
- Be unobtrusive. In most cases, you will be a visitor in an unfamiliar place and children will not know you. Being unobtrusive means:
  - Finding a place to sit which is not in the way of children or teachers; moving from place to place as little as possible
  - Observing quietly-- do not initiate conversation with the children. Speak with them only if they engage you first. Remember that you are unfamiliar to them, and also that they may be deeply involved in their work
  - Watching-- help or interact only if the children or the teachers engage you in the activity
- Sit close enough that you can observe easily and hear conversations well

**If you are observing at your own program, be sure that you are not responsible for supervising the children while you are doing your observation. It is hard to play both roles.**

## **For all observations, consider the following questions:**

- Observe the environment in which the activity is taking place: What part of the classroom is it in? What materials have been set out for the children? How are they arranged? Is there a table? Chairs? Is there a sink nearby? Are the children provided with all the materials they need to do the activity? What other aspects of the environment do you notice?
- What do you notice that relates to some of the art topics we have covered in class? This may include:
  - Philosophy of the art education program (or at least, what you can gather from what you see...)
  - Aesthetics of the environment and materials

- What children are learning about art
- Developmental level of children
- Who is engaged in the activity? How many children? Boys or girls? Approximate ages...?
- What are the children doing? How do they interact with the materials? What do they say?
- Is this a social activity for the children (talking with each other, interacting) or a solitary activity (quiet, not communicating)?
- You may choose to focus on one particular child for a period of time. If so, observe the process that child goes through in creating their art. What words would you use to describe your child's behavior (i.e. quick, methodical, thoughtful, interactive, cursory, etc.)? How does his or her process compare with the other children's?
- What is the role of the teacher? What does the teacher do and say during the activity? What are her interactions with the children like?

**Make sure to take notes that will help you remember specifics for your paper.**

## **Observation Write-Up**

**All students who choose the Observation assignment are required to turn in a paper that includes the following:**

- Summary of the observation using the questions above as guidelines
- Answers to the following questions:
  - What did you think about the activity you observed? How did you feel about it?
  - How did the teaching practices you observed relate to what we have learned in class?
  - How did the children's reactions to the activities relate to what you have learned about child development in this class and in other classes?
  - What did you gain from this observation that will be useful to you in your learning about art education?