

Week 6: Work Samples & Photography

I. Highlights

- A. Anecdotal records are written in the past tense. Running records are present tense and usually much longer.
- B. Work samples are examples of what your child is creating or discovering. For preschool, maybe a painting or block tower. For infants/toddlers, maybe an experiment with shaking or dropping objects.
- C. For physical descriptions, remember to use objective words, not “perfect” or relative words like “lighter.”
- D. Photos for photo documentation must be straight, sequential, and meaningful.

II. Homework

- A. Remember to go back and answer any questions classmates leave you in their replies to your online posts.
- B. Optional CDTC (Child Development Training Consortium) forms are due to Leslie by October 6th. Make sure your facility license number is on there.
- C. Due Wednesday 10/8 at 3 pm: Discussion forum post on Cohen Chapters 4, 5, 6 and the handout
- D. Due Thursday 10/9 in class: Read Nilsen Chapter 10
- E. Due Wednesday 10/15 at 3 pm: Submit a photo of a work sample from your case study child to the dropbox on ANGEL
- F. Remember to get a permission slip signed by your case study child’s parent or director.

III. Anecdotal Records: Reflections on our experiences

- A. One of the hardest parts is keeping up, recording/ noticing details while the action is still happening in real time
- B. It takes practice to develop a method that works for you.
- C. It takes focus to keep it an anecdotal record, not turn it into a running record. Stay focused on this one story with a beginning, middle, and end.
- D. Pair up with a partner and read each other's anecdotal record. Write on it with feedback:
 - 1. Is it in complete sentences, paragraph form?
 - 2. Does it have a clear beginning, middle, and end to the "situation" or story?
 - 3. Is it written in the past tense?
 - 4. Is the context included (or embedded)?
 - 5. Does it use direct quotes to document language used?
- E. Anecdotal vs. Running Records
 - 1. Anecdotal record means you watch the child for a while to get a sense of what's happening, then choose one incident to write about. Record it in as much detail as possible. Write it in the past tense.
 - 2. Running record means you start whenever you feel like it and write everything in as much detail as possible for 20 minutes. Write while it is happening. Write in the present tense.
- F. You can use this anecdotal record in your final portfolio, or you can do more if you don't like this one. It's okay to do more of everything and then turn in your best ones.

IV. Work Samples

- A. Textbook definition: "Work samples" is the term for any of the child's products, including but not limited to drawing and painting, clay, blocks, or any material the child uses to construct or express meaning. (Nilsen page 269)
- B. Purpose of a work sample is capturing the child's creativity, emphasizing process over product (more about the experience than what the end result looks like)
- C. Could be a painting, drawing, block construction, etc.
- D. For infants/toddlers, it's more about their actions than creating anything specific. Page 282 says it's "Making something happen, rather than making something."
 - 1. Because infants/toddlers are still learning about their environment, focused on the effect they can have on the physical environment
 - 2. Examples: grab and shake an object to see if it makes a sound, slide an object off the table to see what will happen when it hits the floor, etc.
 - 3. Preschool-age children can be focused on making things happen sometimes too, such as mixing dirt into a bucket of water and examining the thick new texture of the mud
- E. Assignment due October 15th online: photograph of a work sample from your case study child
 - 1. Capture one photo of the end result of the child's work
 - 2. Example: a block castle, a Lego helicopter, a painting, a clay sculpture, etc.
 - 3. Consider different points of view, different perspectives/angles, to see different information about the end result. Choose one photo to submit, but you should take several so you can choose the best.
 - 4. Submit a photo into the ANGEL dropbox and include a brief explanation of how this photo is significant in your understanding of the child.
 - a) It can show one or two domains of development, or maybe all four, it varies by situation

- b) The explanation should be 2-3 sentences, not an essay. Type it into the “message” box in the dropbox.
 - c) The photo should be focused on the product, not the child. Your child doesn’t even have to be in the picture. We’re submitting a photo because we can’t upload a clay sculpture through ANGEL.
5. By the end of the semester, your case study portfolio will need four total work samples showing different products created on different days. (If your child is super focused on one type of activity, then at least look for four different products of that same type, such as four different block structures.)
- F. Chapter 10 (Nilsen) explains the stages of children’s art and stages of block building. As you’re observing children’s art or block/3-D creations, this gives us a way to analyze our observations. See which stage of art or block development they seem to be in.

V. Physical Descriptions

- A. Focus on what’s there, not what isn’t there. Remember to think that the glass is half full. Examples:
- 1. Instead of “not wearing any shoes,” say she was barefoot
 - 2. Instead of “not wearing clothes,” say he was naked
- B. Use the child’s body as a frame of reference when talking about hair length. Saying it’s “not too long or too short” is too vague. Does that mean shoulder-length? hip-length? a buzz cut? Be specific.
- C. Beware of “comparative vocabulary,” such as saying he has “lighter blue eyes” or “a chunkier build.” That -er on the end of the word means you’re comparing it to something. Lighter than whose eyes? Chunkier than whom? Just say “light blue eyes” or “a chunky build.”

- D. Beware of the word “perfect.” What does a perfect nose look like? That’s a personal judgement. Is it petite? flat? round? compact symmetrical nostrils? Describe what’s there.
- E. When you revise this description for your final portfolio version at the end of the semester, just start with the case study child’s name. For example, “Mark is a child who is three years old and approximately four feet tall...” Leave out the explanation of, “My child’s name is Mark and I chose him because...” That’s not relevant here.

VI. Photo Documentation

- A. Assignment due later in the semester (before Thanksgiving)
1. This is an opportunity to visually capture what you would otherwise have written about. Let the camera capture the little details you usually have to describe in words.
 2. Capture the child engaged in a process of some kind, maybe leading to an end product or maybe not.
 3. This should be a sequence of 12-18 pictures that “tell a story” so there’s an obvious order to the pictures without having to number them.
 4. It’s better if you take pictures of free choice play instead of a teacher-directed activity. The sequence of events is more meaningful when it’s child-directed.
 5. We’ll see examples next week of the final produced poster.
 - a) Must be neatly arranged with high-quality printed photos.
 - b) Photos must be 3.5x5” minimum size. Remember the larger your pictures, the larger mounting board you’ll need.
 - c) Minimum 12 pictures, maximum 18.
 - d) The pictures don’t have to be rectangular. It’s okay to crop them into 4-inch squares or circles.

- e) Can be a mix of vertical and horizontal orientations.
 - f) Make them all color, all black & white, or all some other funny developing method, as long as they're all the same.
6. You should capture more pictures than you'll need in the end. That way you can throw out the blurry ones and choose only the best shots.
- B. www.themetapicture.com/these-pictures-are-what-dreams-are-made-of/
- 1. This slideshow is for inspiration only. Ours don't have to look this amazing.
 - 2. Notice how the pictures can capture/convey so much meaning, show a relationship or experience for this child without any words.
 - 3. Capturing emotion and expression vividly
 - 4. Details surrounding the child make a big difference. The scene makes you want to be there.
 - 5. Look for children in motion, in process, doing something or pausing and looking meaningfully at something. The cute "say cheese" smile-for-the-camera shots are not useful here.
- C. This assignment is partly about "making friends with your camera," getting to know its capabilities. Learn to really think about what you see in the viewfinder before you click the shutter.
- D. Criteria for eliminating or keeping photos:
- 1. Horizontal or vertical lines are not parallel to the edge of the photo = eliminate!
 - a) A crooked photo makes the viewer dizzy and distracts from the scene you're showing.
 - b) This has to do with how you hold the camera. Keep it straight before you click the shot.
 - c) Today most photos are horizontal because of the orientation of our cameras. Experiment with some vertical shots, just to see how it goes.

- d) Cropping is one of the most powerful tools you have to make pictures better. Crop to make the picture straight, centered, and uncluttered.
2. The background is too busy = eliminate!
- a) You often can't tell this until you see the printed copy. Then you realize how cluttered the classroom has gotten!
 - b) Take a moment to move the trash can out of the way, straighten up the countertop, etc. if you can't crop those things out of the photo.
 - c) The angle at which you hold the camera lets you choose how much background to include. From the child's height you see everything on the shelves, but from above you can focus more on the child.
3. Objects are included which are distracting = eliminate!
- a) Examples: someone else's hands, the thumb over the lens, the camera strap hanging in the way, etc.
 - b) This could be a large cup of supplies in the way of (or just next to) what you're photographing, a second child who's equally big and in focus but not related to your case study child, a cart in the corner, a toilet in the background...
 - c) Be aware of the "linear geometry of photography," which means that straight lines will direct your eyes like an arrow. The cup of paint brushes is pointing directly to the toilet in the background in the example photo. Solve this by moving the paint brushes and/or closing the bathroom door and/or rotating your shooting angle.
 - d) Remember that it is okay to include other children or adults in the photos if they're part of what's happening. It doesn't have to be exclusively your case study child. If the child is in a small group playing together or interacting with a teacher, that's part of the photograph sequence.
4. Including a perspective of the adult which is not flattering = eliminate!

- a) Underwear showing, picking her nose, yawning...
 - b) Teacher's butt as she bends over right next to your child...
 - c) Be professional and respectful. Don't publish photos you wouldn't want published if it were you.
5. Lighting and color
- a) Beware of sharp shadows/contrast, such as an outdoor picture at high noon where the background is so bright it's almost whited out and the foreground (where the child is painting) is in dark shadow, with a sharp line between the two.
 - b) You could crop the white part out so the whole painting is the same lighting (which you can adjust when you print the photo) or move yourself to take the photo from a different angle.
6. Experiment with different perspectives.
- a) Human beings have selective vision/perspective; cameras do not.
 - b) Spend time experimenting with different perspectives before you go into the classroom to take your photos.
 - c) Try from eye level, chest level, child's eye level, sitting on the floor, standing on a chair in the corner and shooting overhead, etc.
7. Avoid random/pointless shots.
- a) These are shots that do not convey any information about what the children are learning.
 - b) Examples:
 - (1) Standing and smiling and saying, "Cheese!" at the camera
 - (2) Back of the head, looking down, but we don't know what they're looking at or why
 - (3) Subject is too far away or behind something
 - c) Shots that don't contribute to a cohesive series of photos

E. A sequence of photographs

1. Represents an order of events
2. Is a visual sequence that tells a story so you can tell which should come first, second, third, etc. without having the pictures numbered.
3. Enhances everyone's understanding of what occurred, what the child experienced.
 - a) This is "making learning visible."
 - b) You may do two different sessions of photography with different activities, then choose the best. To tell which is best, ask yourself, "Does this showcase what the child is learning so the viewer will understand it better?"

F. Remember to turn off the date stamp. It's ugly and distracting.