

OBSERVING AND DOCUMENTING

1. **When should I start observing? When should I stop?**
Observation is ongoing. Observing children is a part of a teacher's daily practice. Begin observing as soon as you get to know the children.
2. **How can I be sure my observation is an accurate representation of a child's ability?**
Documentation should reflect the current level of the child, so you will not document the first time you see a skill demonstrated. Observe a child's skills several times before you write the documentation. You will capture a child's typical behavior in that activity so that it will be an accurate representation.
3. **What should I do if a child is not at First Steps?**
A five point rubric has been developed. A new rubric entitled *Not Yet* has been added. If a child is not yet at First Steps, *Not Yet* would be the logical rubric choice.
4. **Can I ask the children questions to get them to talk about their family/ community/ culture?**
Of course. Try to capture authentic discussions as they naturally occur, and be careful of setting up unnatural testing situations.
5. **What if a child doesn't talk?**
Document how the child does communicate and what the child can do.
6. **How can I document an observation in the child's first language if I am a monolingual English speaker?**
Programs serving children and families who do not speak English or are English language learners must have adults working in the classroom that speak the language of the child and family. (Note: If programs are not able to recruit and hire teachers with the above qualifications, teachers and educational assistants not meeting the above Standards will be expected to include work toward meeting these requirements in their professional development plan and make continuous progress toward meeting these requirements within five years of employment.) In the interim, it will be helpful to use family members use as a resources.
7. **How can I keep observations from taking away from my time with children?**
Observation is best done when integrated within the normal routine of a day. With practice, observation becomes an enhancement instead of a hindrance. Contact your PreK mentor for guidance in managing observations.
8. **Does a child have to say "There are five" or "I have six" to be marked *Accomplished* for Essential Indicator #9, Numeracy?**
No. All that is needed is a description

of the child counting correctly.

PORTFOLIOS

9. **Can I use the same observation for more than one portfolio sample? For more than one child?**

No, you may *not* use the same observation for more than one Essential Indicator (for example, you could not use the same documentation for both EI 4 and EI 9.) However, you *can* use the same observation for two or three children as long as the documentation describes each individual child's abilities and behaviors. For example, EI 4 often describes children engaged in dialogue with one another.

10. **What information goes on the Portfolio Documentation Cover Sheet?**

The name of the program, name(s) of teacher(s) submitting samples (be sure to submit only one cover sheet per classroom), the total # of NM PreK children being served, the total # of samples submitted, and the # of missing samples for EIs 4, 9, 14, 16. For example, if there are 20 children in the classroom, and all the samples are submitted, the total submitted would be 80 (20 children x each of the 4 EI's). If one sample is missing for each of the 4 EI's, the total submitted would be 76 (80 -4). Contact information including mailing address, phone, email and best time to be contacted is also needed.

11. **Who reads the four required Portfolio Collection Forms?**

Assessment coaches read the observations and send feedback to teachers, but family members are the first and most important recipients of this documentation.

REPORTING

12. **Do I have to send an Early Learning Outcomes Report Form on children who attend erratically?**

Yes. Make every effort to observe children when they are in school.

13. **Where should I send Early Learning Outcomes Report Forms? And where should I send the four Portfolio Collection Forms?**

Submit Early Learning Outcomes Report Forms electronically at www.newmexicoprek.org. Mail the four required Portfolio Collection Forms (EI 4, EI 9, EI 14, EI 16) to assessment coaches (see the training manual for contact information).

14. **Should I send the original Portfolio Collection Forms to assessment coaches?**

No. Send *copies* of observations, student work samples, and photos. Originals go in the teacher's file to be shared with family members.

15. **When should I submit documentation?**

Required Portfolio Collection Forms (EIs 4, 9, 14, 16) and Early Learning Outcomes Report Forms (database entries) are

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submitted twice a year: November 15 and May 1.

16. **Can I have my program coordinator deliver Portfolio Collection Forms to assessment coaches at quarterly meetings?**

No. These forms must be mailed. Assessment coaches do not normally attend the quarterly meetings.

17. **Should I submit report forms for a child who is no longer attending my program?**

No, but document why the child has not been observed (moved, left the program, etc.).

18. **Should I submit optional Portfolio Collection Forms to assessment coaches?**

No. You do not need to submit optional Portfolio Collection Forms. These are to share with families.

19. **Do portfolios have to be received by assessment coaches by the deadline or just postmarked by the deadline?**

Portfolios must be *postmarked* by the deadline.

WORKING WITH FAMILIES

20. **How many home visits are required?**

At least one home visit early in the year is a requirement. However, you are advised to follow recommendations of your school's program director or administrator.

21. **How many parent teacher conferences are required?**

Three parent teacher conferences are required each year.

22. **How should I respond to family members who are critical of the use of language other than English?**

Cite research findings or facts that support the idea that children learn most effectively in their first language.

23. **How can I explain the concept of play in early childhood education?**

Cite research findings; share your knowledge about why children learn best through play.

CURRICULUM

24. **How can I link Essential Indicators to my curriculum?**

While observing children, notice what engages them. Build the curriculum around their interests and needs. Your mentor is a great resource if you need help.

25. **Should I work on a different Essential Indicator each week?**

Not necessarily. Observing for Essential Indicators is entirely about what works for each

individual teacher.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

26. What is the difference between a monitor, mentor, and assessment coach?

State monitors deal with contract and program standards compliance, along with limited technical training and assistance. NM PreK mentors visit programs on a regular basis to offer support for observational assessment collection, curriculum development, and other issues. NM PreK assessment coaches facilitate trainings, review Portfolio Collections for the four required Essential Indicators (4, 9, 14, and 16) and provide written feedback on portfolio documentation to teachers.

27. Is feedback sent by assessment coaches be used for teacher evaluation?

No. The intent of feedback is to support teachers in enhancing their documenting skills and not to evaluate or judge performance.

28. Who enters reports into the PreK database?

Typically the teacher or the program administrator enters data into the database.

29. Are Educational Assistants supposed to attend trainings and do observations?

If the teacher and program supervisor require the educational assistant to document observations, that person must attend trainings.

30. I'm a new teacher. Do I have to submit Portfolio Collection Forms?

Yes. Every effort is made to provide training, but if further assistance is needed, contact NM PreK mentors.

RESOURCES / HELP

31. Whom should I call if I have questions and where do I find this information?

Each program has access to assessment coaches, mentors, and state monitors. This information can be obtained in the New Mexico PreK Observational Assessment Tools Training Manual on the page listed as NM PreK Contact Information. State monitors are also listed at www.newmexicoprek.org under *PreK PED/CYFD Contact & Program Information*.

32. Where can I find my assessment coach's address?

Contact information is found in the training manual. Assessment coaches also send letters prior to reporting deadlines with pertinent information, such as updated contact information.

33. Where can I find updated documents?

Documents are located on the New Mexico PreK website at www.newmexicoprek.org



Frequently Asked Questions

under *PreK Materials*. If the needed document is out of date, ask your NM PreK mentor to help you locate it.

34. I don't have a cover sheet, where can I get one?

Cover sheets are found in the training manual and also on the NM PreK website at www.newmexicoprek.org under *PreK Materials*.

35. I need new Essential Indicators to display in my room. Where can I find them?

Essential Indicators are in the training manual and on the NM PreK website at www.newmexicoprek.org under *PreK Materials*. The most up to date copy of Essential Indicators is always on the website. Simply print and enlarge them for display in your classroom. Ask your NM PreK mentor for further help if needed.

36. Can I get Essential Indicators in Spanish?

Yes. Go to www.newmexicoprek.org. Under *PreK Materials* and click *Spanish*.