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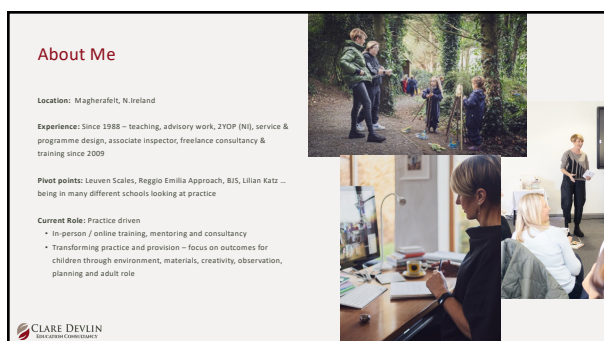
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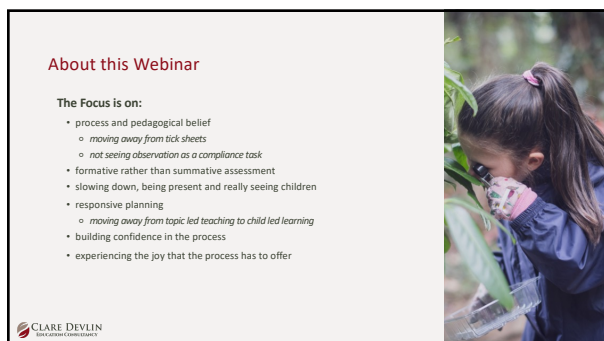
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**The Webinar will include:**

- Overview of the *What, So What, Now What Approach*
- How to Do an Observation
- How to Do an Assessment
- The importance of tuning into Involvement
- Managing the Observation & Assessment Process within a large group
- How to bring individual Assessments into your group plan

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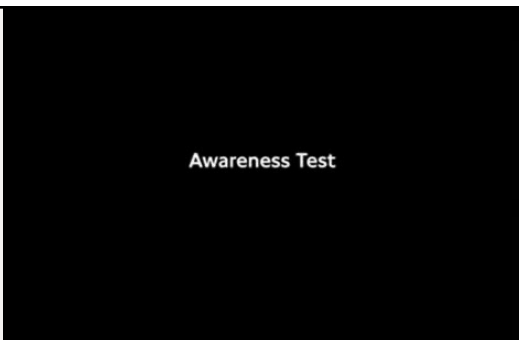
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Awareness Test

**Awareness Test**



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**Remember!**

**Look AT**

Rather than look FOR

*Otherwise we will miss the bear!*

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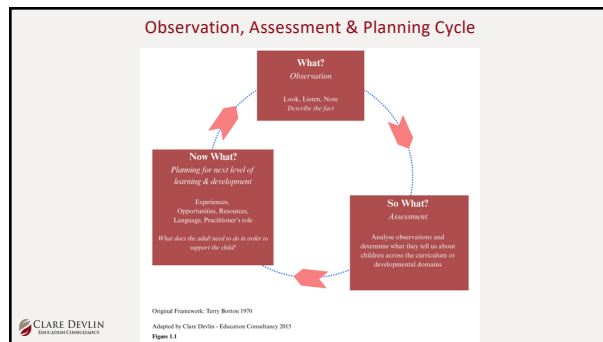
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Correct - Factual Observation
<p>Date: 23.09.19 Child: Joe (age 3:8)</p> <p>Approaches adult, taps her repeatedly on the arm and says "open, open, open, open" as he pushes a water bottle towards her. Adult says, "Would you like me to open the bottle for you?" Joe repeats, "open, open." He maintains eye contact with the adult. Adult opens the bottle. Joe takes the bottle and lid from the adult. Joe walks away and says nothing.</p> <p>BNV: H. M. L. Adult initials: LK Summary: Describes exactly what the child did and said without interpreting. Gives solid evidence that can later be analysed.</p>

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*"Separate what you see from what you think about what you see"*

Jen Selbstschka,  
Boulder Journey School, Colorado

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### When making observations, pay attention to:

- Social context – is the child within a large group, small group or by themselves?
- What form of communication are they using? Verbal, non-verbal or no communication (just focus on what they are doing/saying). Remember children can successfully communicate non-verbally
- Physical actions – fine and gross motor. Be specific. Also note facial expressions
- Cognitive – what is the child exploring, doing?
- Duration – how long has the child been engaged in this experience?
- Concentration level – is the child easily distracted or are they totally absorbed in their learning?
- Note your initials, date and involvement level



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DATE	TIME	DATE	TIME
What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)
What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)
What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)
What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)
What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you see? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)	What do you hear? (FACT - lang, social, <u>phys</u> , indep, cogn)

INV: H M L Adult Initials:



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### The Process

#### WHAT?

Describe what you observe the child doing (FACT) – *focus on ordinary everyday moments* which provide us with significant information. Collect a range of observations - not just those that you want to use to back up a concern

#### SO WHAT?

What are your observations telling you about the child's development across the curriculum/developmental domains? What are the child's abilities, understandings / misunderstandings?

We wonder ... / We are concerned about ...

#### NOW WHAT?

What is the next level of intended learning and development for the child? How does the adult support this? What does the adult need to do? This may be a slow process - children need time to develop their understandings and abilities



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Assessment aligned with curriculum headings –

Preschool (NI)

3–4-year-olds

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Observation, Assessment & Planning (Pre School)

Name of Child: Joe (34) Date of Assessment: 04 September 2024

WHAT? (Observation)	SO WHAT? (Evaluating)	NOW WHAT? (Planning)
<p><b>Describe what you observe the child doing as he/she moves through the session</b></p> <p>When you have completed the So What section – simply staple your observations on top of this box. Remember these observations are your evidence.</p> <p>You do not need to write anything in this box!</p> <p>See IPAD for additional observations and evidence</p>	<p><b>What are these observations telling you about the child's development across the 6 key areas?</b></p> <p><b>What are the child's understandings and misunderstandings?</b></p> <p><b>Personal, Social &amp; Emotional Development</b> Confident to approach an adult. Not aware of how to enter others' personal space. Social interaction skills not yet developed. Little persistence – needs help persistently.</p> <p><b>Physical Development &amp; Movement</b> Hand muscle appears to be weak</p> <p><b>Language Development</b> Limited vocabulary – using one word to convey meaning. Uses non-verbal gestures to communicate. Not good eye contact. Does appear to understand what is being said to him</p> <p><b>Early Mathematical Experiences</b></p> <p><b>The Arts</b></p> <p><b>The World Around Us</b></p>	<p><b>What is the next level of intended learning and development for the child? (link to planning with 2025 context)</b></p> <p>Hand and arm development skills – language and extending conversations to words and reduced word groupings &amp; phrases. (Dolls, goat hat, please ...) without prompting the request</p> <p>Provide scaffolded challenges just beyond his comfort zone (throw ball with him that are sufficiently light to the water trap)</p> <p>Encourage effort and persistence as you model how to hold the ball and open the basket</p> <p>Offer hand muscle activities: clay work, water bottles, identifying objects break over objects ...</p> <p>Start to know repeating math and writing table ...</p>
<p>Involvement Level – High/Medium/Low</p> <p>Well Being – High/Medium/Low</p> <p>Additional Information/Queries: We Wonder ...</p>		

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Assessment aligned with developmental headings –

Under Threes (NI)

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Observation (Under 3s)

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT? (Observation)	SO WHAT? (Evaluating)	NOW WHAT? (Planning)
<p><b>Describe what you observe the child doing as he/she moves through the session</b></p> <p>When you have completed the So What section – simply staple your observations on top of this box. Remember these observations are your evidence.</p> <p>You do not need to write anything in this box!</p> <p>See IPAD for additional observations and evidence</p>	<p><b>What are these observations telling you about the child's development across the 6 key areas?</b></p> <p><b>What are the child's understandings and misunderstandings?</b></p> <p><b>Personal, Social &amp; Emotional Development</b></p> <p><b>Physical Development</b></p> <p><b>Language &amp; Communication</b></p> <p><b>Exploring &amp; Thinking</b></p>	<p><b>What is the next level of intended learning and development for the child? (link to planning with 2025 context)</b></p>
<p>Involvement Level – High/Medium/Low</p> <p>Well Being – High/Medium/Low</p> <p>Additional Information/Queries: We Wonder ...</p>		

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Assessment aligned with curriculum headings –

Preschool (NI)

3–4-year-olds

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Observation, Assessment & Planning (Pre School)

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT? (Observation)	SO WHAT? (Evaluating)	NOW WHAT? (Planning)
<p><b>Describe what you observe the child doing as he/she moves through the session</b></p> <p>When you have completed the So What section – simply staple your observations on top of this box. Remember these observations are your evidence.</p> <p>You do not need to write anything in this box!</p> <p>See IPAD for additional observations and evidence</p>	<p><b>What are these observations telling you about the child's development across the 6 key areas?</b></p> <p><b>What are the child's understandings and misunderstandings?</b></p> <p><b>Personal, Social &amp; Emotional Development</b></p> <p><b>Physical Development &amp; Movement</b></p> <p><b>Language Development</b></p> <p><b>Early Mathematical Experiences</b></p> <p><b>The Arts</b></p> <p><b>The World Around Us</b></p>	<p><b>What is the next level of intended learning and development for the child? (link to planning with 2025 context)</b></p>
<p>Involvement Level – High/Medium/Low</p> <p>Well Being – High/Medium/Low</p> <p>Additional Information/Queries: We Wonder ...</p>		

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**Observation, Assessment & Planning (Primary)**

**Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT?	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?
<b>Observation</b> Describe what you observe the child doing as he/she moves through the day.  When you have completed this to What section – simply staple your observations on top of this book. You do not need to write anything in this box! See IPAD for additional observations and evidence.	<b>Documenting Learning</b> What are these observations telling you about the child's development across the curriculum areas? What are the child's understandings and misunderstandings?  The Arts  Language & Literacy  Mathematics & Numeracy  Personal Development & Mutual Understanding (Include TS & PQ)  Physical Development & Movement  The World Around Us (Include ICT)	<b>Planning</b> What is the next level of intended learning and development for the child? <small>(Link to planning with child's entries)</small>
<b>Involvement Level</b> – High/Medium/Low  <b>Well Being</b> – High/Medium/Low Additional Comments / We wonder about... / We are concerned about...		

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**What is Involvement?**

What are the indicators of Involvement?



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**Signals of Involvement**

- Concentration
- Energy (Cognitive)
- Creativity (Problem Solving)
- Facial expression and posture
- Persistence
- Precision
- Language
- Satisfaction



An "involved" child is gaining a deep, motivated, intense and long-term learning experience  
*Prof Ferre Loevers, Leuven University, Belgium*

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Indicators that tell us that this child is experiencing a high level of involvement

- has been here for 45 mins
- concentration
- facial expression
- not easily distracted
- creative - problem solving
- precision
- persistence
- energy



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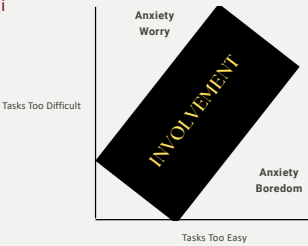
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Mihaly Csikszentmihayli  
“State of Flow”



(Conditions for flow adapted from Csikszentmihayli)

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**Child Involvement Scale**  
Adaptation of 5-point Leuven Involvement Scale

**Low Level Involvement (Attending)**  
The child is inactive

This level is characterised by children staring into space, appearing totally absent, doing nothing, displaying no energy and being passive.  
Also used to address moments when the child is apparently active but there is an absence of cognitive demand.  
The child is displaying simple, repeated, stereotyped activity.

*Make sure that your observations describe what this actually looks like.*

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### Child Involvement Scale


Adaptation of 5-point Leuven Involvement Scale

#### Medium Level Involvement (Participating)

Mainly continuous activity

The child is busy at an activity but it is at a routine level and the real signals for involvement are missing. There is some progress but energy is lacking and concentration is at a routine level.  
The child can be easily distracted.

*What does this look like?*



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### Child Involvement Scale

Adaptation of 5-point Leuven Involvement Scale

#### High Level Involvement (Interacting)


Sustained intense activity

The child displays continuous involvement which is demonstrated by the involvement signals  
Not all signals need be present but essential are:

- Concentration
- Creativity
- Energy
- Persistence

This intensity must be present for almost all the observation period

*What does this look like?*



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### Management of Observations in a Large Group

- Observe all of the children all of the time
- Target 3 children (max) per week (whole team focus on same 3 children - not key worker dependent at the observation stage). Work as a team at all times
- Make time for assessments and next steps (preferably as a team) – you will need approximately 15-20 minutes per targeted child. That is 3 children per week. Do assessments at the beginning of the week and adjust your planning and provision accordingly
- Key workers can complete assessments for their designated children, however, do confer with your team. This is where individualised planning takes place.
- The number of observations per child will vary - it is not about quantity
- You will have approximately 3-4 assessments per child per year (more if you have small groups of children)





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**Support Documents (NI)**

Preschool Transition Record - CCSEA Northern Ireland 2008/2009

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

**Wellbeing**

- finds it difficult to separate from parents
- is happy and confident to come to school
- finds it difficult to adapt to new situations
- can cope with routines and changes
- often seeks attention
- shows increasing confidence
- behaviour can be challenging
- usually demonstrates acceptable behaviour
- needs to develop an awareness of other people's needs/feelings
- is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others
- can express his/her own feelings and emotions
- shows pride in completed work
- responds positively to praise

**Relationships**

- is polite and well-mannered
- is more comfortable with adult company than that of his/her peers
- prefers to play alone
- seeks the company of other children
- relates well to both adults and peers
- is beginning to establish friendships
- forms friendships easily with other children
- occasionally has difficulty playing co-operatively with other children
- requires adult support to play co-operatively
- has made good progress in developing the ability to share resources and take turns
- plays co-operatively and shares resources
- takes turns and shares
- engages in collaborative play
- shows signs of leadership in group play
- knows when to seek help from friends/adults
- is developing respect for others
- is aware of how actions can affect others

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**Bringing Individual Assessments into Whole Class Planning**

- Make time for assessments and next steps - **this is where the joy happens** - when you pause to truly see children
- You will need approximately 15-20 minutes per targeted child. 3 children (max) per week. Key workers can complete assessments for their designated children (do confer with your team). This is where individual planning takes place.
- What **do you need to do** in order to support the child to progress in their learning and development?
  - Connect "individual next steps" to whole group planning – Place child's initials beside individual learning intentions. Curriculum priorities should sit comfortably alongside children's priorities - if focused on learning and development and not topics
- Progress will be picked up through spontaneous and future ongoing observations

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Short Term Planning should be responsive to the children and informed by their priorities. This should align, for the most part, with curriculum goals

*(Full plan on website)*

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**Short Term Plan - Child A: Adult Led**  
TIMEFRAME: 2 weeks

*This Short Term Plan builds on the assumption that strong Continuous Provision is already in place. At the start of the term, the learning environment has been thoughtfully planned to support how children naturally learn and is guided by the curriculum framework. The Short Term Plan focuses on adding enhancements to the existing Continuous Provision, helping children make connections and extend their previous learning.*

Curricular Area	Learning Intention <i>Focus from observations of children, evidence and AEP</i>	Initial <i>Experiences, resources, adult role</i>	Outcome <i>Experiences, resources, adult role</i>	Evaluation of Learning & Development <i>In relation to children's learning across the curriculum and development domain</i>
Personal, Social & Emotional Development	Express social communication skills - greeting & sharing (both, good bye, please, thank you) ... (1)	Adult model through behaviour. Adult modelling behaviour and greetings to children	→	→
	Develop persistence (2)	Provide water bottles of different sizes in water tray. Make this sufficiently light to offer challenge. Model opening and closing action and associated language	→	→
	Welcome and value praise (3)	Introduce leader of the day - where child takes on role such as helping prepare snack. Help with adult, get the permission, choose the tray	→	→
	Enjoy responsibility of carrying out small tasks (4, 5)	Model how to take items (1)	→	→
	Learn how to take items (1)	Learn to share resources (1)		

Short Term Planning

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Coming March  
2026



Information on *Book*  
*Support Materials* - Free to Download  
Access to *How to Do Observation Training*

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**OBSERVATION  
& ASSESSMENT  
MADE SIMPLE**



A Practical Guide for Early Years  
and Primary Educators

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Website  
[www.claredevlin.org](http://www.claredevlin.org)

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# OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT MADE SIMPLE

A Practical Guide for Early Years and Primary Educators

Clare Devlin

This practical guide presents a clear step-by-step approach to observation, assessment and planning in early years and primary education with one powerful aim: to ensure that no child goes unseen. It transforms observation from a paperwork task into a meaningful way of understanding children's learning through a simple "What? So What? Now What?" framework.

Drawing on classroom experience and years of mentoring educators, the book combines clear explanations with real-life examples and reflective prompts. It guides readers through noticing and recording children's learning, making sense of observations, and planning responsive next steps.

Chapters cover:

- The "What, So What, Now What" observation process
- Observing learning outdoors
- Embedding observation in daily practice
- Linking involvement, wellbeing and learning
- Making assessment work in practice
- Planning and creating the conditions for responsive practice

Offering a fresh approach to observation that moves beyond tick-boxes and encourages authentic engagement with children's thinking and development, this is an essential resource for students on Early Childhood and Primary Education courses and practicing educators.

ISBN: 9781138087637

£16.99, 148 Pages

Published 25 March 2026

[www.routledge.com/9781138087637](http://www.routledge.com/9781138087637)



## OBSERVATION & ASSESSMENT MADE SIMPLE



A Practical Guide for Early Years and Primary Educators

A David Fulton Book

CLARE DEVLIN

*Clare Devlin has taken a potentially dry topic of assessment and observation and turned it into a conversational sharing of practical strategies. She weaves research and best practice in and out of examples and case studies and guides the reader away from overwhelm to calm application of easy-to-follow steps and informed teaching. - Dr. Kathryn Murray*

*Using her extensive practical knowledge, Clare gets to the heart of the process, making the transition from 'tick-box' observations to understanding and implementing developmentally appropriate strategies for analysis and assessment. This is a universal and invaluable guide for every Early Years professional. - Kathy Brodie*