

Watch. Wait. Wonder: The Art of Observation

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Who am I?

MY NAME IS HEATHER WHITE

CERTIFIED MONTESSORI GUIDE

Early Childhood (3-6), Elementary I (6-9)

**EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT &
CONTENT CREATOR**

Support organizations including AMS, Guide &
Grow, and Mirus Toys

**MONTESSORI TEACHER TRAINER &
ADJUNCT PROFESSOR**

CGMS & Sarasota University



Together We'll Cover...

HIGHLIGHTS AND INSIGHTS

The foundations of observation in Montessori

What is observation?

Types of observation

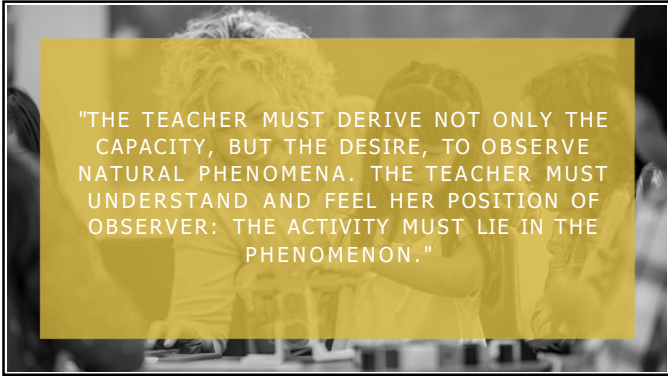
How to observe

What we can observe

What to do with these observations

What are the benefits of observation?









What is Observation?

SIMPLY PUT, WATCHING LIKE A CAMERA ON THE WALL

Observation is a hallmark of the Montessori philosophy that guides us as educators in discovering a child's interests, needs, and abilities.





DIRECT OBSERVATION

Remaining still and quiet to dedicate all of our attention to objectively watching the child.

INDIRECT OBSERVATION

Watching the child while being active with them and noticing how our interactions with them take place.

Self-Observation

PAYING ATTENTION TO OUR OWN FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, AND REACTIONS

CAN BE DONE IN MANY WAYS

With a journal, a therapist, a friend, a colleague, a partner, or just by yourself

INVOLVES UNDERSTANDING OUR OWN NEEDS

We need to identify and satisfy our basic and personal needs, so we can model this process for the children and be available to meet their needs as well.





The Stages of Observation

BY: WENDY CALISE

- **STAGE 1: THE ILLUSION STAGE**
Guides can multitask - giving lessons and observing at the same time.
- **STAGE 2: MOBILE OBSERVATION**
Guides multitask - observing while walking around or talking to children. Sitting down or remaining still is not necessary.
- **STAGE 3: THE PRISON GUARD**
Guides pause momentarily, but only to redirect behaviors or actions bothering them.
- **STAGE 4: THE CROOKED FINGER**
Guides recognize the need for stillness, but continue redirecting in the same ways, now beckoning children to their side while seated.

The Stages of Observation

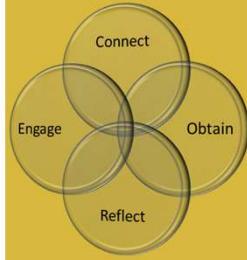
BY: WENDY CALISE

- **STAGE 5: THE STINK EYE**
Guides remain seated, using disapproving looks to redirect behavior.
- **STAGE 6: BUILD YOUR EGO**
Guides realize they shouldn't initiate interaction with the children while observing, but feel there is still a need to respond and help them.
- **STAGE 7: PAVLOV'S DOG**
Guides do not engage in any other activities while observing, but this inactivity remains their sole focus, rather than the observation itself.
- **STAGE 8: OBSERVER AS OBSERVER**
Guides remain wholly focused on only their observation.

The Observation C.O.R.E.

CONNECT, OBTAIN, REFLECT, ENGAGE

Using these observation practices daily allow observation to become much more than a system of recordkeeping; it becomes a way of life.



C.O.R.E. Elements

CONNECT

What are my interests; what do I want to study and learn?

OBTAIN

What information do I need to collect as I pursue my interests?

REFLECT

How will I understand what I have obtained?

ENGAGE

What will I do with these understandings?

How to Observe

PRACTICE SILENCE AND STILLNESS

Stillness calms our senses, enabling us to truly see and remaining silent allows us to truly understand.

REMAIN OBJECTIVE

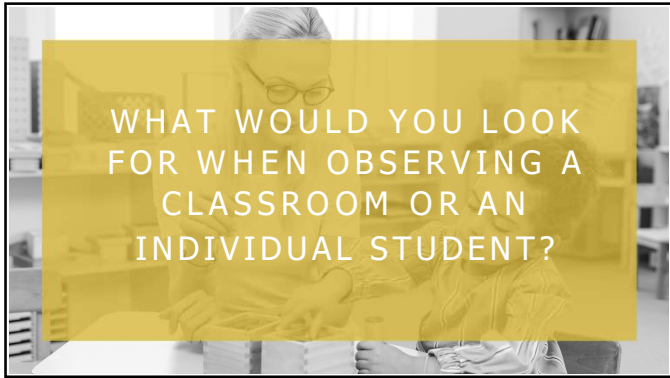
Remove any personal thoughts, biases, and analyses and record only what you see which includes removing how you feel.

HAVE A SPECIFIC FOCUS

Sometimes focusing on a specific child, subject, developmental area, or physical area can help us remain objective.

RECORD WHAT YOU WITNESS

Simply write down all the little details you see using factual language.



<p>FINE- AND GROSS-MOTOR SKILLS</p> <p>—</p> <p>The fine- and gross-motor skills they're practicing.</p>	<p>COMMUNICATION</p> <p>—</p> <p>How the child expresses themselves and how they respond when someone communicates with them.</p>	<p>COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>—</p> <p>The child's interests and what they're practicing and learning to master.</p>
<p>SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>—</p> <p>The child's interactions with others.</p>	<p>EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>—</p> <p>How the child expresses their emotions and what causes particular emotional responses.</p>	<p>INDEPENDENCE</p> <p>—</p> <p>The child's ability to perform tasks without assistance from others.</p>

Helpful Questions to Guide Your Observations

- Has the class progressed toward normalization?
- Is there a feeling of respect and community in the environment?
- Which materials are being used; which ones aren't?
- What stage of development is each child in? Is he working to master a material, or has he mastered it and is now working towards perfection?
- Does the child have a favorite material or activity she works with everyday?
- Is the child able to concentrate? For how long?
- Do other children or teachers protect the child's concentration?



Recording Methods

- JOURNALS
- PHYSICAL MAPS
- ANECDOTAL RECORDS
- RUNNING RECORDS
- CHECKLISTS
- RATING SCALES
- TIME SAMPLES


Analyzing Your Observations

CONSIDER WHAT MIGHT BE A JUDGMENT, RATHER THAN AN OBSERVATION

CONSIDER HOW THE THINGS YOU OBSERVED MADE YOU FEEL

IDENTIFY YOUR EMOTIONAL STATUS WHEN OBSERVING, RECOGNIZING THAT YOUR INTERNAL STATE MIGHT SKEW YOUR OBSERVATIONS


LOOK FOR EXAMPLES OF SENSITIVE PERIODS & HUMAN TENDENCIES

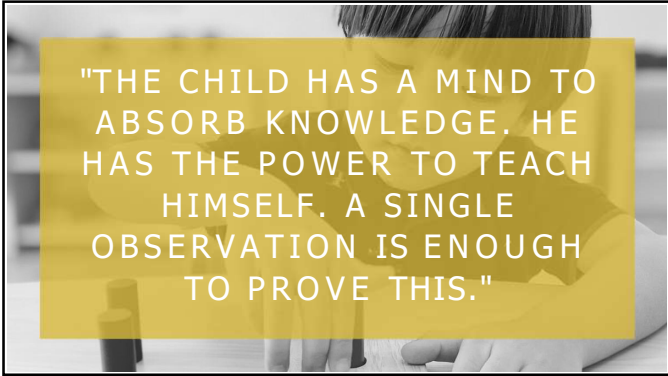


What to do With These Observations

CONSIDER ONE CHANGE YOU MIGHT MAKE BASED ON WHAT YOU'VE NOTED.
This allows you to reflect on where you are and how you might better meet a child's needs.

SOMETIMES NO CHANGE IS NEEDED.
From time to time, all that is needed is an acknowledgement of where you are and where the child is.







What are the Benefits of Observation?

- ALLOWS US TO OBSERVE A CHILD'S GROWTH DEVELOPMENTALLY
- ENABLES US TO GIVE THE CHILD SPACE FOR INDEPENDENCE
- EMPOWERS US TO TRULY SEE AND ACCEPT THE CHILDREN FOR WHO THEY ARE
- EMPOWERS US TO IDENTIFY AND MEET OUR OWN NEEDS AND DESIRES

What are the Benefits of Observation?

- IDENTIFY OBSTACLES
- ENABLES US TO DEVELOP TRUST IN THE CHILD
- EMPOWERS US TO TRUST OURSELVES

Practice the Art of Observation

ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF MAKING THE ART OF OBSERVATION A DAILY PRACTICE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Watch the children closely to identify their developmental growth, attune to their needs, and listen to your own as well.



Tips to Get Started

BE CURIOUS

Consider each student's needs and interests and what changes you can make to meet those needs or appeal to those interests.

BE OBJECTIVE

Make sure your own beliefs or pre-conceived ideas do not influence your observations.

AVOID ANALYSIS

Stay present in the moment while observing, then go back at a later time to review your observations and analyze their meaning.

Where to Learn More

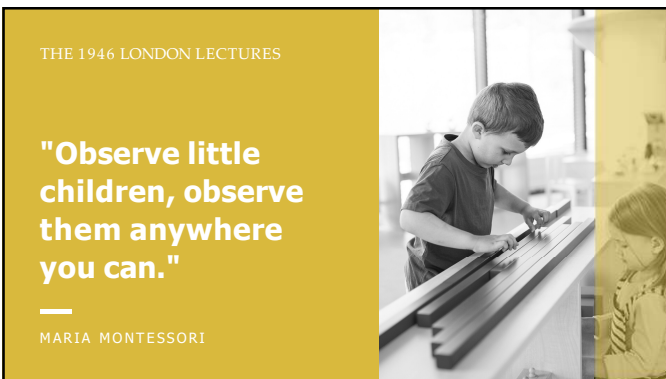


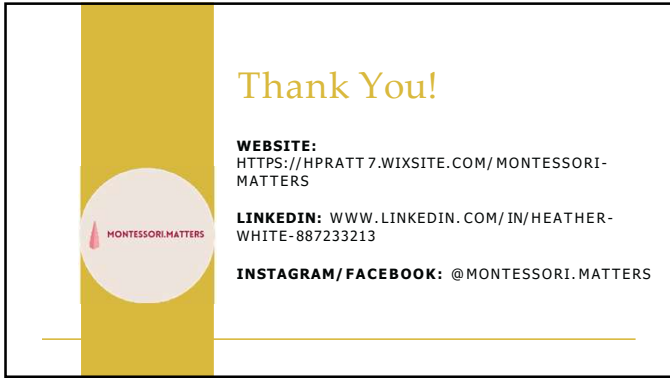
**AN OBSERVER'S
NOTEBOOK**
Paul Epstein

**THE MONTESSORI
NOTEBOOK**
Simone Davies

**THE 8 STAGES OF
OBSERVATION**
Montessori Print Shop







Thank You!

WEBSITE:
[HTTPS://HPRATT7.WIXSITE.COM/MONTESSORI-MATTERS](https://hpratt7.wixsite.com/montessori-matters)

LINKEDIN: [WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/IN/HEATHER-WHITE-887233213](http://www.linkedin.com/in/heather-white-887233213)

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Wendy Calise's 8 Stages of Observation



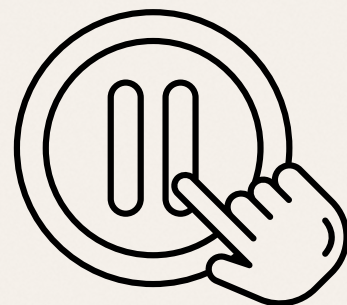
The Illusion Stage

Guides can multitask - giving lessons and observing at the same time.



Mobile Observation

Guides multitask, observing while walking around or talking to children. Sitting or remaining still is not necessary.



The Prison Guard

Guides pause momentarily, but only to redirect behaviors or actions that are bothering them.



The Crooked Finger

Guides recognize the need for stillness but continue redirecting in the same ways, now beckoning children to their side while seated.

Wendy Calise's 8 Stages of Observation



The Stink Eye

Guides remain seated, using disapproving looks to redirect behavior.



Build Your Ego

Guides realize they shouldn't initiate interaction while observing, but feel a need to respond and help children.



Pavlov's Dog

Guides do not engage in any other activities while observing, but this inactivity remains their sole focus, rather than the observation itself.



Observer as Observer

Guides remain wholly focused on only their observation.

STAGES OF OBSERVATION SELF-ASSESSMENT

BASED ON WENDY CALISE'S STAGES OF OBSERVATION

Instructions: Read each stage and reflect on your current observation habits. Select the stage that best matches your usual approach and provide examples or notes. Be honest—this is for your growth, not judgment.

N = Never S = Sometimes O = Often A = Always

STAGE 1: THE ILLUSION STAGE

DO I TRY TO GIVE LESSONS AND OBSERVE AT THE SAME TIME?

NOTES/EXAMPLES:

N	S	O	A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STAGE 2: MOBILE OBSERVATION

DO I OBSERVE WHILE WALKING AROUND OR TALKING WITH CHILDREN,
WITHOUT SITTING OR STAYING STILL?

NOTES/EXAMPLES:

N	S	O	A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STAGES OF OBSERVATION SELF-ASSESSMENT

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STAGE 3: THE PRISON GUARD

DO I PAUSE BRIEFLY ONLY TO REDIRECT BEHAVIORS THAT BOTHER ME?

NOTES/EXAMPLES:

N	S	O	A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STAGE 4: THE CROOKED FINGER

DO I STAY SEATED BUT STILL REDIRECT CHILDREN, BECKONING THEM TO MY SIDE?

NOTES/EXAMPLES:

N	S	O	A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STAGES OF OBSERVATION SELF-ASSESSMENT

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STAGE 5: THE STINK EYE

DO I REMAIN SEATED AND RELY ON DISAPPROVING LOOKS OR SUBTLE GESTURES TO REDIRECT BEHAVIOR?

NOTES/EXAMPLES:

N	S	O	A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STAGE 6: BUILD YOUR EGO

DO I AVOID INITIATING INTERACTION BUT STILL FEEL THE NEED TO "HELP" CHILDREN WHILE OBSERVING?

NOTES/EXAMPLES:

N	S	O	A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STAGES OF OBSERVATION SELF-ASSESSMENT

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STAGE 7: PAVLOV'S DOG

DO I STOP ALL OTHER ACTIVITIES WHILE OBSERVING, BUT MY FOCUS IS MORE ON DOING NOTHING THAN ON THE OBSERVATION ITSELF?

NOTES/EXAMPLES:

N	S	O	A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STAGE 8: OBSERVER AS OBSERVER

DO I REMAIN FULLY FOCUSED ON OBSERVING, NOTICING CHILDREN WITH INTENTIONAL AWARENESS AND MINIMAL INTERVENTION?

NOTES/EXAMPLES:

N	S	O	A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reflection Questions

1. Which stage do I find myself in most frequently?
2. What habits or distractions keep me from moving to the next stage?
3. What small practice can I try next week to progress toward being an *Observer as Observer*?
4. How can I use this awareness to improve my understanding of each child?

SELF-OBSERVATION

Reflection Log

Purpose:

To track observable adult behaviors in the classroom and refine professional practice through measurable awareness.

Use:

Complete 2-3 times per week immediately after a work cycle or specific interaction.

CONTEXT

Date:**Time of day:****Age group:****Type of moment observed:**

- Work cycle
- Transition
- Conflict
- Lesson presentation
- Redirection
- Other: _____

OBSERVABLE ADULT BEHAVIORS

*During the selected moment:***Wait Time**

- Did I pause before intervening?
 Yes No
- Approximate seconds I waited: _____

Tone of Voice

- Calm
- Neutral
- Directive
- Sharp
- Encouraging

Notes:

SELF-OBSERVATION

Reflection Log

OBSERVABLE
ADULT
BEHAVIORS
(CONTINUED)

Body Language

- At child's eye level
- Standing over child
- Open posture
- Arms crossed
- Relaxed

Notes:

Intervention Type

- Observed only
- Asked a guiding question
- Gave a reminder
- Redirected
- Re-presented lesson
- Solved problem for child

LANGUAGE
CHECK

Write one sentence you said verbatim:

“.....”

Was it:

- Objective
- Evaluative
- Directive
- Encouraging independence

ALIGNMENT
CHECK

Rate alignment with Montessori principles (1-5):

- Supported independence: 1 2 3 4 5
- Maintained respect: 1 2 3 4 5
- Allowed productive struggle: 1 2 3 4 5
- Protected concentration: 1 2 3 4 5

IMMEDIATE
ADJUSTMENT

One micro-adjustment for next time: