

How to Observe a Child at Work.

During this document, you will see the different types of note taking I used whilst taking part in my observations in all three stages of the primary and early childhood age ranges. On completion of my observations, please find my notes for completed Running Records and Time Sampling observation. Please also find my observation Log for over 30 hours indicating use of a variety of recording processes (Anecdotal, Running Records, Time Sampling, Work Cycle Graphs etc).

The following timelines (Time Sampling) of observation were conducted at Inner Sydney Montessori School and were recorded in a Cycle 3 classroom during a 3 hour work cycle. The observational notes explain the actions of the children in question, and the graphs which follow, depict the concentration levels. These graphs will then be interpreted and matched alongside Montessori's theories to further understand the implications for the child and the teacher in question.

Date of observation – 11.10.17

Stage 3 - Inner Sydney Montessori School

Gender Female (Child x)

Age – 10

8.30 – Chatting with friend about book.

8.45 – Made a table in her maths book.

9.00 – Walking around room collecting data.

9.15 – Continued collecting data for her survey.

9.30 – Survey continued within the classroom.

9.45 – Left room to ask another class about favorite foods. Looked distracted and bored.

10.00 – Still absent from room in another class.

10.15 – Returned from another class and informed teacher about her findings.

10.30 – Teacher presented a maths material. Child was very focused.

10.45 – One on one Mathematics presentation continued.

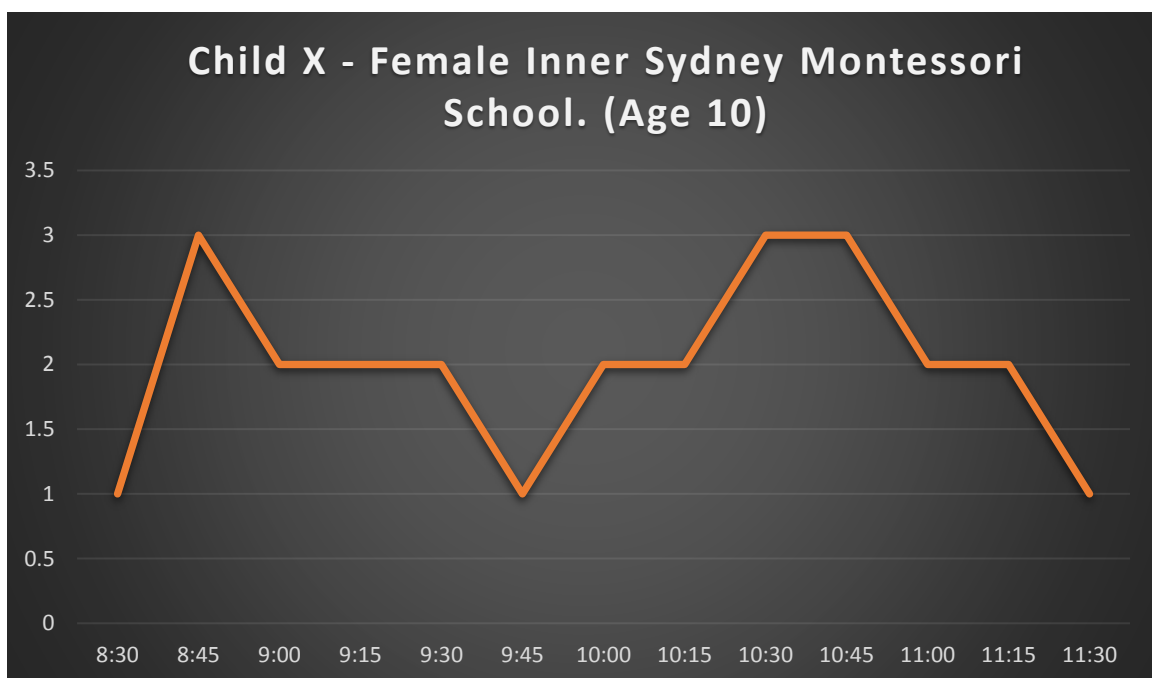
11.00 – Continued to work on maths independently

11.15 – Teacher returned to make sure student was implementing the materials correctly.

11.30 – Preparing for lunchtime.

From the observational notes and the following graph, we can deduce that Child X is at the stage of *Onset of concentration*. During her questionnaire, she became slightly fatigued and somewhat bored of her own research. After this period of fatigue, she was assisted by the teacher to regain a level of attention, where more difficult and interesting work was presented. Child X seemed to focus very well when work that is more difficult was presented to her on a one-to-one basis. The child was not allowed to regain her own levels of concentration due to a presentation by her teacher. It would have been interesting to see if she could've regained concentration independently. The environment plays a huge role at this point. Had the child been allowed to look for something else which may spark interest I am sure that we could've seen a new curve on this graph. Montessori speaks of the importance of the environment. *'Adults expect children to imitate them, they fail to realise that a child's life is such that it needs a different kind of environment and a different means of life.'* Montessori. M (205: 1966)

What Maria is saying here is that it is important that as teachers and adults, we do not underestimate the potential of the child to be able to sustain concentration and engagement. Rather than asking the child to follow our lead or imitate our behavior, we must adapt the environment to stimulate the senses of the child and spark his interest in the subjects at hand.



Date of observation – 12.10.17

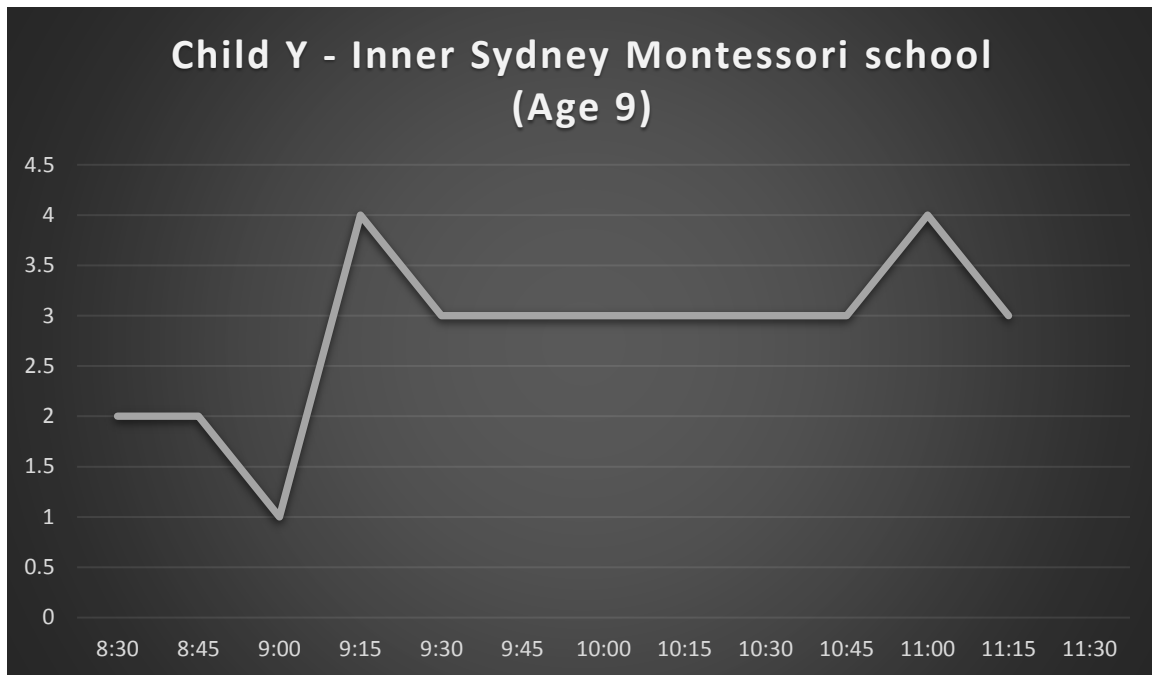
Stage 3 - Inner Sydney Montessori School

Gender Male (Child Y)

Age – 9

- 8.30 – Talking to another child about a book he is holding.
- 8.45 – Reading his own book whilst standing.
- 9.00 – Walking around room, looking at other children’s books.
- 9.15 – Sat at a table and started to write his own story whilst talking across the room.
- 9.30 – Focused on writing his own story independently and in silence.
- 9.45 – Teacher presented a lesson on sentence analysis. Good focus.
- 10.00 – Reverted to his story once teacher had left. Continued writing.
- 10.15 – Continued writing and illustrating his own story.
- 10.30 – Told his story to another child. Informed him of he storyline.
- 10.45 – Continued to write and illustrate his story.
- 11.00 – Another boy joined him to assist in illustrating his book.
- 11.15 – Negotiated the next stages of his story with his friends and continued to work.
- 11.30 – Preparing for lunchtime.

From the observational notes and the following graph, we can deduce that Child Y is at the stage of *Onset of contemplation*. He started slowly and lost focus slightly at the beginning of the work cycle. Soon he began to really think deeply about the work he was engaged in. His levels of concentration were sustained and as others came to join him, he embraced their input and included them in the activity. Embracing them as individuals who could offer support during the process of writing a story. He used thee skills presented to him by the director to enhance his text and even passed on this knowledge to his peers.



Running Record Observation

Date: 4/11/2017

Stage 1 (Group of 4 children, mixed ages) – Morning work cycle

1. Four boys are gathered around the sink filling containers with water and transporting them to the carpet.
2. They are taking turns to fill the plastic measuring cylinders of different sizes to transport them to the carpeted area, where a larger container is waiting.
3. One child is overfilling his tube and another boy is helping to show him not to fill it too high whilst the other two lay on the ground rolling around.
4. The two boys return to the carpeted area and the whole group sits upright around the cylinders.
5. They are preparing to pour all the water into one large container and take it outside for watering purposes.
6. One by one, the boys fill the bucket.
7. One boy is trying to rush and dominate the task. Another boy is upset because he missed his turn and he is turning his back on the group.
8. The other boys can see he is upset but they carry on regardless.
9. He is looking over his shoulder to see what is happening but the boys are completing the task without him.
10. The task is complete and the boys seek permission to take the water outside.
11. The director approaches and asks the children why the upset boy is starting to cry.
12. The bucket is taken outside and the discussion takes place between the teacher and the group.

Evaluation – During this process the group were all of a similar age. One of the boys was very dominant and took control of the situation concerning controlling the flow of water from

the tap, filling the largest containers and demonstrating how to fill smaller containers to a certain level without spilling. Two boys were very distracted after moving to the carpet, forgetting the whole process involved. The boys showed that there are distinct dynamics within each group in the classroom and that these moments offer great moments of learning, leadership development and responsibility in the classroom. If the group were of mixed age, I would've expected to see natural leadership take place with the older children demonstrating how to maneuver the water and cylinders. Because the group were all of a similar age, hierarchical ranking became competitive and thus, the dominant child took lead, causing distress to the less dominant child. Montessori advised teachers about the importance of a competition free classroom. *'Humans have developed and even more parallel drive than competition: teamwork. We have an unmistakable urge to build up our family and community in order to make the group more successful.'* Eissler.T (113: 2009)

This presents the perfect opportunity for the director to discuss the efficiency of good teamwork. It allows the director to observe the strengths and weaknesses of individuals in the group, but also the group as a whole. The dynamics of the individuals, which make up a group, are just as important as the group itself.

Observing the child from all perspectives as they progress towards maturity is a crucial component of educating the whole child. For it is these observations, that allow us to see the whole child as he or she moves about the world freely. The Montessori Method and the environment play a pivotal role in facilitating these observations to enable the director to cater for all aspects of the child's development. *'With great wisdom, life offers opportunities to progress along the rod of human growth, which is a process of daily discovery of our power of action in the environment.'* Montanaro. S (43: 1991)

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Montessori.M. (1966) The Secret Of Childhood. New York: Fides Publishers Inc.

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