

Tools of the Mind

Visitor Observation and Discussion Form

Date:

District / Class Observed:

What To Look For	Observations
ENVIRONMENT- The Environment should be organized into 6 learning centers. Toys should be plentiful and accessible to children. Children’s work should be posted around the room. A Play “theme” should be obvious (e.g. doctor, restaurant, space etc.)	Observations:
OPENING GROUP- Large group time should last no more than 15 minutes and should stress the active mental engagement of all students (e.g. no waiting, no individual “helpers”). Students should participate in: “Share the News”, “Message of the day” “Timeline Calendar” and “Weather Graphing” “Freeze Dance”	Observations:
TRANSITIONS- All transitions should have a “pretend” element to them (e.g. children all “walk like mice” etc.) or incorporate a song/finger play. Lining up and waiting is avoided.	Observations:
PLAY PLANNING- Children sit in 2 groups and draw a plan for their play that day. Teachers circulate and individualize instruction to the needs of each student (i.e. one student may need help learning to draw a representation of themselves while another works on writing the letters in their message). Students should be released from the table to play as soon as the teacher has finished working with them.	Observations:
MAKE BELIEVE PLAY TIME- Students go to centers and play different roles (e.g. mommy, doctor, fireman etc). Teachers circulate and support pretend play by offering ideas, expanding language, modeling play scenarios and helping children play together. Students remain engaged in play for up to 60 minutes at a time.	Observations:
SMALL GROUP TIME- Literacy and Math/Science groups happen daily. Groups last no longer than 10 - 15 minutes and the active mental engagement of every child is stressed. Teachers support children to work collaboratively with the use of external mediators (e.g. the person with the “hand” card solves the math	Observations:

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<p>problem while the student with the “check” card checks the work for accuracy) Examples of Tools of the Mind small groups include: Graphics Practice, Buddy Reading, Patterns with Manipulatives, Making Collections, Science Eyes etc.</p>	
<p>LARGE GROUP READ ALOUD- Students engage in 1-2 large group read aloud experiences each day. Fiction and non-fiction titles are used. At the end of the story students discuss questions in pairs or as a group.</p>	<p>Observations:</p>
<p>CHAPTER BOOK READING AT NAP- The first 10-15 minutes of nap should be devoted to reading age - appropriate Chapter Books.</p>	<p>Observations:</p>