

## Observation of the Early Childhood

An observation was held in the children's wing of Tarrant County Junior College. A variety of children between the ages of two to six were observed in activities ranging from physical and motor to social and cognitive development. Specifically I mean that whether it was leadership skills or lack of, running, climbing and jumping, drawing and writing, or anything that could fall between, it has been seen, done and accounted for in the following observation.

First let's start with the physical and motor development. Please say hello to Karligh and Bethany, my first volunteers of the observation. Both girls are in the four-year olds. The first activities under physical and motor development that I'm going to observe them performing are the large muscle/gross-motor skills. The large muscle/gross-motor skills include: climbing across the monkey bars, riding bigwheels (or tricycles), and running through a built-in obstacle course on the playground.

Starting with the monkey bars, it's clearly obvious that Karligh is physically stronger upperbody-wise than Bethany. With surprising ease, Karligh crossed the monkey bars using nothing but her arms to perform this task. Bethany on the otherhand was shaky and uncertain from the start. After hanging from the first bar, she quickly swung her feet over to the side for leg support. She was able to cross but only with a great deal of assistance from me.

Karligh also showed mastery in riding the big wheel. Her speed and turning ability seemed to surpass anyone else on the playground. Bethany chose to ride only after a piece of candy bribery. Her tricycle skills were somewhat sluggish but more or less average. However, once again Bethany was victorious.

The last large muscle activity was completing the obstacle course. The obstacle course involved running up a slide, crawling through a tunnel, crossing a shaky bridge and then walking along a balance beam. Karligh ran up the slide with a considerable amount of effort. She quickly crawled through the tunnel and crossed the shaky bridge with little effort. She crossed the balance beam more quickly than I'd seen any child do that whole day. Bethany climbed up the slide in a time that was a bit quicker than Karligh's. The crawling through the tunnel was done quickly and she was first stalled on the shaky bridge. She managed to cross the bridge in a modest time but she hit some trouble at the balance beam. After slowly completing about ten percent of the travel across the beam, she turned her feet sideways for the remainder of the crossing, which took about two minutes.

The second area in the physical and motor development involves the use of small muscle or fine motor skills. For the observation, these skills include writing, and playing the drums (the only two fine motor skills I saw both children perform). These children are four years old so when I say writing I of course am not talking about paragraphs or even sentences. More simply, my writing section only involved writing their names. Karligh was able to produce her name on paper in a legibility that was impressive for someone four years of age. Bethany too was able to write her name but just not quite as nice as Bethany.

After observing the two children playing the drums, I think it's unlikely for either girl to win a scholarship for college as a percussionist. Bethany's playing was sporadic and entirely inconsistent but hey, she's only four. Karligh's drumming skills were a bit more impressive since she managed to lay down and keep a beat for a short amount of time.

In judging overall competence in gross and fine-motor skills, it's obvious Karligh was better at both, but for most children competence seemed to lean more on one than the other. The "strong kids" on the playground who were the fastest tricycle riders, the highest jumping and so on, seemed to shy away from more of the finer fine motor skills. As for the kids that seemed significantly dominate in fine-motor skills, they were more likely to be seen playing in the sand box or just taking it easy as opposed to climbing, jumping, etc. This didn't always hold as true. As mentioned before, there were exceptions such as Karligh.

Now we're on to the second half of the observation, which involves social and cognitive development. This section includes sociodramatic play, drawing pictures, counting and identifying leadership skills or the lack of. The first half of this section takes place in the kindergarten's room where all of the kids are five or six years of age.

The sociodramatic play I saw involved two kids (Matt and Tyler), three wooden box-like objects and a board that was close to the size of a board seen on a seesaw. The three wooden boxes are spaced about eight inches apart, side by side, with the board lying across all three boxes. The board hangs past the boxes approximately three feet. So what do you have???? That's right, a spaceship. No specific movies or TV shows are mentioned in this play. We simply have Matt as the pilot and Tyler as the copilot as the two fly over the galaxy fighting other spaceships. Now the children are landing the spaceship at an airport where Matt says he's going to work on it. The children hop off the ship and shift the board and climb back on the ship to "go fight some other guys." In the middle of a battle Miss Williams, the teacher, announces that it's cleanup time and she pops the clean up song in the tape player. Without hesitation and in fact enthusiastically, Matt and Tyler hop off their spaceship, as it once again becomes three wooden boxes and a long board, and proceed to put the objects away as they sing the "clean up song."

The second part of the social and cognitive development section is where I observed a child drawing a picture. William is the five year old artist I observed. William is making a noble effort trying to draw an airplane. Probably the most interesting part of William's drawing is the human characteristics he gives to the airplane. The airplane is standing upright with its tail, which looks much like a person's legs planted firmly on the ground. The wings go straight out, side to side and carry the resemblance of a person's arms. The head of the plane has an overall accurate shape to that of a real airplane. On the head of the plane, William has drawn in two eyes and a smiling mouth. The only thing left out (reasonably speaking that is when taking into consideration that a five year old child is drawing this) is a fully developed tail. William was unwilling to give up his picture for my project.

The counting section was short and sweet. Once again the observation is back in the four year olds age group. Karligh, Madison, Lincoln and Zann were the four participants in the counting contest. The rules are simple, count till you can't count no more. Our first dropout of the contest was the physical and motor development queen, that's right, Karligh. Karligh couldn't go past twelve. Madison hung on until twentythree and Zann lasted until that evertricky thirtynine. Zann was our champion who kept going and going and going until I stopped since I felt 156 was sufficient.

The leadership skills I noticed during various free play times tended to come from the four year olds and the kindergarteners. The younger age groups, especially the two year olds, tended to stick to themselves. The solitary playtime seemed to happen less and less as I observed the older age groups. Matt, the spaceship pilot, seemed to be an all around leader no matter what the scenario was. On the playground, Matt led a squadron of about seven kids up and down the slides, across the monkey bars and wherever else he chose to go. He would occasionally stop running around and he would proceed to give orders to each of his group. Most of the time, the children would accept and follow the orders without hesitation.

Robby is the best example I could find for children that seem to be lacking in leadership skills. At the end of story time the teacher radomly picks a child and gives that the child the oppurtunity to decide whether boys go to the bathroom and girls go to the sink or vice versa. On this occassion, the teacher picked Robby. Robby showed reluctance or perhaps confusion when asked to lead the children. He finally did but only after a good amount of hesitation. On the playground Robby tends to stick with himself. At one point, he rode the tricycle around in a sluggish fashion. For the most part, Robby stayed in the gravel pit and played with buckets of gravel ignoring the kids that run around and over him.

Hopefully this observation can give some insight of the preschool age group.

Although this was only a sample, perhaps some conclusions can be drawn on the development and behavior of these children.