



January 10th, 2016
Jane Student
DOB: 01/01/2011

Classroom Observation
(Sample report)

Socialization: Observation and Limited Exposure

Examples: When I walked into the classroom I noticed four tables that children were sitting at. Two were groups of two children and two were individual children. Jane Student was sitting as an individual at the beginning of the observation. Jane Student seems drawn to the teachers more than her fellow peers during her work cycle. On multiple occasions I observed Jane Student seeking out the adult closest to her. Jane Student chose to sit at a table across from her teacher but also was comfortable remaining there when the teacher removed herself and assisted other children in the classroom. I observed Jane Student sit across from five different children while I was in the classroom. Three were girls (2 older and 1 same aged) and two were boys (1 older and 1 same aged). The only social interaction she made was with one boy and one girl, both older than her and both looking for assistance from her. Jane Student did a wonderfully remarkable thing. She was sitting alone at one point and an older girl walked over to her and exchanged words that I could not hear. Jane Student looked at the boy sitting at a table across from her and explained that this older girl would like to sit with him. He cleared his materials from the center of the table and the older girl sat down. The fact that an older child sought out Jane Student to seemingly ask for assistance in sitting where she wanted to sit is amazing. Jane Student has an ere of maturity that potentially allows her to be emotionally above many of the children in her classroom, even those older than her. I witnessed an older boy reach into Jane Student's pencil jar and Jane Student, rather than getting upset inquired about what he needed and helped him find it. Her social interactions are very mature for her age. When I observe Jane Student it reflects the observation of an older child, both in her ability to remain focused regardless of distraction and in her assistance and interactions with other children.

I observed that Jane Student does not seem to seek out or look for social interactions. One example was when Jane Student needed a piece of paper and there was a group of children

standing between her and the paper. Jane Student used her body to reach past the children and get what she needed but did not verbalize needing space or assistance in getting the paper. I have witnessed how verbal Jane Student can be and so this tells me that she is choosing to by-pass the social interactions (distractions) and choosing to remain focused in what she is doing and on what she needs to complete her work. I saw three other examples of this type of focus while observing Jane Student. Jane Student would be so engaged that children attempting to speak with her or to engage with her were not a distraction for Jane Student. I want to also make note of the fact that Jane Student is very respectful of her peers in the classroom space. She does not distract or pull the attention of her peers away from them. At her age this is a wonderful display of respect and awareness of boundaries.

Temperament: Happy and Engaged

Examples: Jane Student spent on average 17-20 minutes doing work that she chose within the classroom environment. The time span that Jane Student is able to spend on work is more than double that of her age average. This shows exceptional attention and engagement for a child Jane Student's age and displays Jane Student's ability to focus on, and remain engaged with a task until it is completed or until she feels she has explored it fully. Gray, 1991; Rothbart & Bates, 1998 did a study which showed children who feel emotionally supported and comfortable are able to engage in an activity far longer than children who are in less supportive environments. I saw multiple examples of Jane Student being so engaged in her work that even when peers would attempt to extract her attention she would remain absolutely focused on what she was doing. There was one instance where the young girl sitting across from her stood up and walked over to Jane Student in order to show off her work and Jane Student was so engaged in her own coloring that she did not even seem to notice this peer speaking with her.

Jane Student seems extremely comfortable, confident and happy in the classroom environment. One example I observed on multiple occasions was that Jane Student would be singing while working or while filing her work away. At one point Jane Student was walking around the classroom and she stopped next to a table where two older children were working and she just began smiling while observing them. It was wonderful to see. She seems to enjoy very much watching older children work on more challenging materials like the maps, or language work. Jane Student seems very happy and comfortable observing older children and engaging with the adults in the classroom. This is very typical for some children because of their exposure to adults for a majority home life.

I observed that Jane Student sits with her left leg off to the side of her chair, this is something she did at Lullaby school as well and displays her ability to ground herself while working. For adults this is equivalent to having the music, cup of coffee or environment we need most to work as best we can. I noticed that after 45 minutes in the work cycle Jane Student sat straight in her chair, letting her feet dangle and at this point she began engaging in social conversation more, looking around the room more and engaging in social behavior more regularly. I believe that Jane Student is so engaged with her work that she sets herself up for absolute focus and success by grounding her feet, holding her head close to the desk and engaging 100% in what she is doing. At some point she breaks this engagement and allows herself to absorb the environment around her. Jane Student seems very happy with all of her teachers. I observed Jane Student walk up to one of the teachers, show them her coloring work, explain what it was a picture of, gift the coloring work and then give the teacher a hug. Her comfort level is exactly where it should be for a first year child in a new environment. She appears to be acclimated, comfortable and trusting of the environment and adults around her.

When I am observing a child in a classroom environment I look for signs of insecurity, edginess, restlessness, or frustration. These elements of a child's temperament can be signs that a child is not acclimating well to the environment around them. I did not see any of these red flags with Jane Student.

Strengths: Task Completion and Attention to Order and Detail

Examples: When I first walked into the classroom Jane Student was sitting at a table doing sorting work. Sorting is something that children with a love for organization and detail with gravitate towards because of the ability to organize materials again and again with control. I was observing Jane Student doing cutting work; she was very focused on cutting directly on the lines of the paper. A small scrap of paper flew to the ground. Jane Student immediately stood up, pushed her chair in, picked up the scrap of paper, placed it on her work tray, pulled her chair out, sat back down and began right where she left off with cutting. Jane Student's attention towards every aspect of the work she is doing is beyond average for her age. Another example was that Jane Student was sitting at her table doing coloring work. Her jar of pencils tipped over and fell on the ground. Jane Student did not ignore the mess, as many children her age might do. Jane Student did not get upset at this disruption. Rather Jane Student stood right up, organized all her pencils back in her jar and began coloring right where she left off. Jane Student's attention to order is outstanding. Many children her age would not have the awareness of order and would be disrupted by messes, noises or peers. I watched Jane Student complete three materials during my observation. Jane Student completed cutting work, coloring and play dough.

Work Style: Self Motivated and Paced

Examples: One of the questions I had after observing Jane Student at Lullaby was “If Jane Student is engaged in a material will she self complete and move on, or does she wait for instruction from a teacher or older peer?”. Today I saw three clear examples of Jane Student completing a work, putting it away and moving on to something else she wanted to do. While Jane Student clearly has the internal drive to stop work when she is finished and to begin something new she also has a need for permission before beginning a new set of work. I watched Jane Student after each work completion cycle seek out a teacher before beginning new work. I inquired about this after the observation and was told that Jane Student will ask permission to do a new work set after she has completed each work set she is doing. This shows me that Jane Student has the self motivation and drive to complete new work. I believe that this is something Jane Student will age out of.

Jane Student did not rush through any work cycle that I observed her in. She paced herself with each material, exploring and expressing it as much as it could be before cleaning up and moving on. Jane Student seems very proud of her work and had a tendency to want to display her completed work to a teacher before putting it away. This tells me that Jane Student is proud of what she is doing, is not rushing through anything and is calmly exploring each new material she engages with.

Preferred activities within the classroom:

Jane Student certainly gravitates towards open ended, creative materials. I observed Jane Student work with sorting beads, coloring sheets, cutting work and play dough/clay manipulation. The classroom is filled with these materials and I noticed Jane Student’s ability to seek out these materials throughout the classroom and engage in each one wonderfully.

Jane Student seems to enjoy working alone. I would suggest that this is due to her desire to focus on her work without distraction and to explore her work in as many ways as she desires. Often times children who crave group work routines are looking for support, creative input or assistance. It is my opinion that Jane Student has so much confidence in her own ability to explore and complete work that she prefers working alone.

Jane Student seems to enjoy observing the older children and the teachers in the classroom. I observed that Jane Student was watching older children who were working with maps and language and was observing teachers instructing lessons or giving direction to older children.

Questions:

1. Does Jane Student separate her work time from her social time? Does she play at recess and become hyper-focused in the classroom?
2. Do you want Jane Student in an environment where social interaction is offered more readily?
3. Does Jane Student ask for lessons of new material or does she wait until it is offered to her?
4. Is Jane Student left handed? - cuts and draws with left but picks up materials with right.
 1. Is this being supported in the classroom?

Social Emotional Maturity- Research on children's friendships shows that when asked to pick qualities that determine what makes a best friend, average children, ages four to seven, associated friendship with sharing materials or activities, or offering assistance, defense against others and other friendly behavior. Older children, above age ten or so, chose sharing interests, private thoughts and feelings, having a mutual sense of respect and affection. As children grow older they increasingly understand friendship in terms of reciprocity and mutuality. Friendships become interdependent (people need each other), last over time, and imply an understanding of thoughts, feelings and personalities of the individuals (Selman, 1981).

Social or Emotional Skills: What's Normal- By 3 years, kids usually:

- Show interest in other children
- Get more comfortable being apart from parents or caregivers
- Can keep good eye contact

Social Skills-There are several types of social skills that must be mastered for a child to be socially adept. These range from the ability to initiate, maintain and end a conversation to reading social signals to more complex skills such as solving problems and resolving conflict. The following examples represent some of the fundamental principles of relating well to others. Children with social skill deficits can be taught these skills directly by parents, teachers and/or professionals using the strategies of modeling, role-playing, rehearsal and practice.

- **Greetings.** Children develop relationships with peers by interacting with them. The first step in a social interaction is greeting someone. We not only greet others with words like "Hi!" or "How are you?" but with facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures such as a nod or a wave. Children with social inability may not say hello to people they know. They may walk right past them and not even look at them. If they do speak, they may not

make eye contact and may simply look down at the floor. If they do say hello, it might not be in a very friendly tone of voice or with a smile. The nonverbal parts of greeting someone are just as important as the words. It's not so much what you say but how you say it that lets people know you are glad to see them.

- **Initiating Conversation.** After you have greeted someone, you usually have a conversation with them. In order to carry on a conversation, a child must be able to initiate the conversation, maintain it and close it appropriately. This requires good listening and attentional skills, as well as the ability to take turns and probe for missing information. Sometimes children cannot think of anything to talk about. When you can't think of anything to say, it can be good to ask the other person a question. The question can be about them or what they think about a movie or event that everyone is talking about. Sometimes when children don't know what to say, they begin by talking about themselves or about something that the other person is not interested in. If they keep talking without giving the other person an opportunity to enter the conversation, or if they keep talking about themselves or something uninteresting to the other person, the person is likely to get tired of listening. He may walk away and even avoid future conversations with the child. Being a good conversationalist requires turn-taking and reciprocity. You have to listen as well as talk. If you don't show an interest in what the other person has to say, he probably won't be interested in talking to you. Impulsive children often have trouble knowing when to talk and when to listen.
- **Understanding the Listener, Part I.** Once a conversation is initiated, in order to maintain it, it is important to understand the audience you are talking to. Children with social inability often have difficulty adapting what they say to their listener. A socially adept child quickly and unconsciously identifies and categorizes his listener, measures what she planned to say against the anticipated response of the listener, and then proceeds, alters or avoids what she had planned to say. She knows that you don't talk to authority figures in the same way that you talk to peers. Socially inept children can't change their words or tone of voice to match their audience. For example, saying goodbye to a teacher with "Catch you later, dude!" would be inappropriate and could result in a detention. Adults often call children who have problems reading their audience disrespectful. Other students may view them as strange if they use stiff and formal language that is more suitable to conversations with adults than peers. A misread of the listener often leads to a misunderstood message and potential social rejection.
- **Understanding the Listener, Part II.** To converse in a socially appropriate manner, children must be able to take the perspective or point of view of the other person, i.e., think the way they think. To do this a child must pretend that he is the listener and think about what he needs to hear to understand what is being said. For example, a child might say, "I finally got finished." and not provide the details of what he started. Many children assume that other people think and feel the way that they do. These children may appear insensitive and selfish, although this is not their intent. They may also appear "dingy" because they seem to be coming from another planet when they speak. When your audience has to guess what you are talking about, they are apt to feel uncomfortable and may be reluctant to converse with you.

- **Empathizing.** Empathy is similar to perspective taking but means that you are able to feel what the other person feels. Empathy allows you to really connect with other people. For example, if a student got an A on a math test and her friend got a D, she wouldn't brag about her A to her friend because she knows it will make her feel bad because she didn't do well. She could empathize with her by saying something like "That's a bummer." Other children often think of children who lack empathy as mean, unkind or self-centered.
- **Reading Social Cues.** It is very important to read social cues in a conversation. Cues are the hints and signals that guide us to the next thing to say or do. Social cues can be verbal or nonverbal. Verbal cues are the words that the other person is saying. Tone of voice is an important part of verbal cues. For example, "Oh, great!" can mean that something is really terrific, or if said sarcastically, can mean that something is awful. Nonverbal cues are things that we see rather than hear in a conversation, such as body language and facial expressions. For example, if a friend's facial expression changes from a smile to a frown and his body gets stiff when you are talking about a new CD that you bought, you might want to change the topic or ask him if what you said upset him. Good detectives pay very close attention to nonverbal cues.
- **Previewing.** Conversations also require that you preview or think about what effect your words or actions may have on your listener before you say or do them. If you think that the impact will be negative, you can adjust what you might say or do. Impulsive children often have trouble with previewing and are unable to stop and think before they say or do something. For example, if a group of children was talking about the football game last week, it would be inappropriate to interject a sentence about the math exam next week. When you walk in on the middle of a conversation, it is always a good idea to listen for a few minutes before entering the conversation. If your friends were complaining about not being able to drive their parents' cars to the dance on Friday, it wouldn't win any points with them to say, "Get real! Did you really think that your parents would let you take their car to the dance?" Doing this would be tactless and insensitive.
- **Problem-Solving.** Problems and conflict are often a part of social interactions. Someone may not agree with you, get angry at something you say, insult you or become aggressive toward you. How you react to these conflicts depends on how good your problem solving skills are. Children who are not good social problem solvers have trouble settling conflicts and disagreements. They get mad easily and may not speak to someone because they are mad at them. It has to be "their way or the highway". They always want to win no matter what the cost, even if that means losing a friend. It often also means making an enemy, which creates additional social problems. Conflicts cannot be avoided and are often necessary to "clear the air". Turning a conflict from a "win-lose" situation to a "win-win" situation is the best way to resolve conflict. This requires negotiation and compromise, give and take, but results in a situation that all parties can live with and helps maintain friendships.
- **Apologizing.** Everyone makes social mistakes at one time or another. A person with good social skills is confident enough to make a sincere apology for his error. This is a courageous act and is the quickest and easiest way to correct a social blunder. Children

with weak social skills may have trouble saying they are sorry because they can't lose face. They are afraid that others may see them as weak. They might also be too proud, or feel stupid or foolish if they apologize. In reality, other people usually have a higher opinion of someone who apologizes for making a mistake.

Teaching Social Skills

Children with verbal and nonverbal learning disabilities often have social problems at school. These children struggle academically and socially. While schools address children's learning problems, they often neglect children's social needs and rely on parents and/or professionals to handle these problems. A lack of social skills and the inability to connect with others, form friendships and resolve conflicts can lead to more failure and distress for students than academic problems can.

- **How Parents Can Help.** Parents typically play the major role in teaching children social skills. Many children acquire social skills on their own. They don't really need help. For children who do need help, there are many good self-help books on the market to assist parents in improving their child's social abilities. Parents can directly teach social skills by modeling, role-playing and providing opportunities for their child to rehearse and practice new skills. Parents should encourage and praise the child for successfully using a new skill. Professionals typically intervene only when children are having substantial social difficulty with peers. These individuals can implement structured, guided and effective programs that often involve group work with peers. Children must then generalize the skills they learn in the group to school and other personal social situations.
- **How Teachers Can Help.** School is the place that children spend the majority of their time with peers. It is, therefore, a natural and perfect setting for children to learn and practice social skills. While teachers don't have to teach a class in social skills, they can take advantage of every opportunity to help children improve their social skills. They should be alert to teasing and bullying and aware of children that are rejected or ignored by their peers. They should work cooperatively with the children's parents to prevent the humiliation, embarrassment and distress that befall these children. Teachers can be valuable facilitators in helping children gain social competency. Pairing a socially inept child with a socially adept child, involving children in cooperative instead of competitive learning exercises, identifying and acknowledging the strengths of all children, understanding social weaknesses and creating an environment in which diversity is accepted and celebrated can greatly enhance all children's social abilities, sense of belongingness and self-esteem not just in the classroom but in life.