

Reflecting on Interactions & Learning

Read through the following scenarios and then answer the questions below. Think about the unique ways the preschoolers are interacting and developing thinking skills. Think about how you might respond.

You were recently hired and will begin working in a preschool classroom. As part of your orientation, your director asks that you spend time observing throughout the classrooms and getting to know the other staff, families, and preschool children. You feel quite excited about the opportunity and begin right away. The list below highlights some of your observations:

- On the playground, a staff member helps the children design an obstacle course. She cheers as a team of children runs around a cone, jumps over a rope, and crawls through a hoop. When a child asks how fast they ran, she suggests counting while they run the loop again.
- A staff member is kneeling near the art easel with a 4-year-old boy. She comments on his art, "Wow, I see you mixed yellow and blue, and it turned green. What do you think will happen now that you're adding red?"
- A 3-year-old girl is pretending to write a note to her mother. She fills the page with scribbles and squiggly lines. As the little girl reads her note out loud, a staff member writes down the girl's words and attaches it to the note. They put it in an envelope and place it in the girl's cubby.
- A group of children kneel to look at a beetle on the playground. The teacher joins in and asks, "What do you notice about the beetle?" Children begin to describe its size, color, shape, and body parts.

1. What thinking skills do you think each child is developing or showing?

Scenario 1: Children are learning to count and that time can be measured. Scenario 2: The child is experimenting with mixing colors. He is identifying colors and making predictions about their properties. Scenario 3: The child is learning that print has meaning and that she can communicate in writing. Scenario 4: Children are learning to observe the characteristics of living things. They identify and compare.

2. How is each child's cognitive development being acknowledged and responded to by the adult?

In all scenarios an adult is nearby. The adults make natural suggestions to solve problems the children identify (i.e., how do we know how fast we run?). The adults ask open-ended questions about the children's activities, and the adults give the children chances to do meaningful activities (i.e., write a letter to mom).

3. Would you do anything differently? What experiences might you offer?

You might use the children's interests as inspiration for planned activities. For example, maybe you could bring in a stop watch and let children try to get their "personal best" time. Or you could have children think of ways to change the obstacle course and see whether it makes their time faster or slower.

You could have art books available or materials to let children explore color in different ways. You could encourage children to write notes to each other and place a mailbox in the room. You could make a chart about the things children notice about insects on the playground, or you could give them clipboards and pencils to draw what they see.