

How to Observe and Survey Families

Observing a Classroom: As you observe 2-3 children's ministry programs or areas, consider the following...

Choose a Setting-

- As a triad team, choose 2-3 classes or groups of children to observe. You may want to observe across age ranges, curricula, or ministry goals. For instance, if you observe early-elementary during the worship service, consider observing an upper-elementary class at your mid-week program or education hour.

Gaining Permission-

- Ask permission and share your purpose with teachers: A team has gathered to study ways to support children in the congregation; you would like to observe this group at various points through the month.
- Tell children's program leaders that you will be observing on specific days as you shadow children and their experience in church. Reassure them that you're not there to critique their teaching, but to gain a better understanding of children's experiences at church.

Observing-

- Try to remain inconspicuous- try to arrive ahead of time so you can observe the whole experience from drop-off to pick-up. Don't become too interactive in the process; you're not a guest teacher or a special visitor. The goal is to have as normal a day as possible!
- Make notes on the following:
 - Ease of drop-off and pick-up: Are children generally pleased to come? Do they seem to know the teachers or other children? Is there something interesting going on for children to engage with (toys, a game, leaders, etc.)?
 - The Lesson: Are most children able to engage with the lesson material? Do they have space to ask questions or reflect on material? Are children engaging with the Bible? With prepared materials? With the leaders?
 - Biblical Literacy: If this was a "typical lesson", would children be growing in knowledge of the Bible? Would they be learning how or where to find stories in Scripture? Would they know better how individual stories fit with the overarching narrative of Scripture?
 - Formational Activities: Are children engaging in personal prayer time? Is there any time for personal reflection, question asking, or private response? Does the group engage in group prayer, singing, or other meditative or reflective activity?

Surveying the Parents: Create a parent survey (printed or online) to get a better understanding of families' sense of involvement and community within the context of the church. This information will be helpful for you as you consider making future changes.

Use the following questions as a starting point:

- How would you describe your involvement in our church? Frequency, activities, past involvement, etc.
- Do you sense that your children feel known and cared for at church?
- Do you sense that your children are engaging in formation and growth at church? How?
- How has your family been shaped and formed by our church community?
- If you could change two things about our church's approach to children's ministry, what would they be?
- If you could never change two things about our church's approach to children's ministry, what would they be?