Section 2: Individualization & Authentic Assessment

Reflection (5/15/19):

Thomas enjoyed playing with the large exercise ball. He especially enjoyed pushing it back and forth with me. He would probably enjoy exploring pushing different sized balls back and forth as well.

Anecdotal Note (6/18/19):

Samantha grasped the handles of the rolling pin with both hands and pressed it onto the playdough. She pushed it back and forth. Her eyes focused on the rolling pin while doing so.

Individualizing the Gee Whiz Curriculum

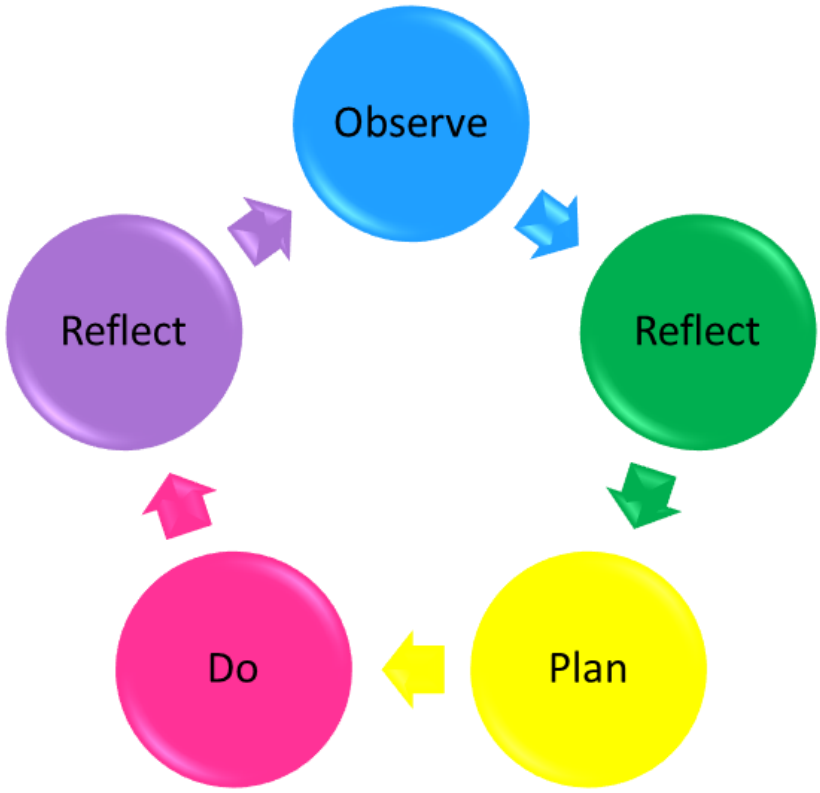
At Gee Whiz Education, we understand that curriculum needs to be responsive and ever-changing. Research has shown that children are more engaged in learning if the activities presented to them center around their interests and are also aligned with their unique needs.

At the same time, we also understand that many educators need a helping hand with planning a curriculum. With days filled from morning to night and paperwork galore, the time required to put together a comprehensive approach that integrates many developmental areas in each activity can be a challenge … to say the least!

Who says that the best approach needs to be one way or the other? Why not blend the two… activities centered around the children's interests WITH a planned curriculum?

The following pages detail exactly how to achieve this goal!

A 5-Step Approach



Individualizing in 5 Easy Steps

STEP #1 - Observing & Recording

As you are well aware, children's interests and development change all the time. Keeping up with these changes challenging!

To make the most of your observations, it is important to jot down notes. These are called anecdotal notes. These notes do not need to be lengthy or detailed. Instead, they are just meant to trigger your memory when it comes time to plan activities and/or evaluate development. The important thing to remember is to record these notes without your opinion or interpretation. For details on how to do this, please see page 13.

And finally...be sure to ask parents/caregivers to share their feedback as well. This input is critical when planning experiences.

STEP #2 - Reflect on Your Observations

Now that you have a strong understanding of each child's interests and level of development, it is time to think to reflect on the information you gathered. Where is the child developmentally in the area/areas observed? How are you going to incorporate his/her level of development and interests into your curriculum? At Gee Whiz, we recognize the power of reflection and have tools to help you build this into your program. Please see page 14 for details on how we accomplish this goal.

STEP #3 - Plan Experiences

So...now what do you do with the knowledge you now have about each child's interests and developmental levels? How do you use it to plan activities related to those interests that also integrate Gee Whiz Education? Our Individualization Web is just one tool you can use to help you adapt and modify the curriculum to incorporate the children's interests and address their individual needs including the needs of children with disabilities, suspected developmental delays or other special needs. Please see pages 16 and pages 20-21 for detailed information on how to use this helpful tool.

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Individualizing in 5 Easy Steps

STEP #4 - Do

Now the hard part is behind you and the fun part begins! As you work your way through the daily activities in the Gee Whiz curriculum, integrate those you planned specifically for each child when they seem to fit the best. This will take a little bit of time on your part but will be well worth it. Make sure to record anecdotal notes and observations as the children complete these experiences. You will need this information.

STEP #5 - Reflect Again

That's right! Now you have to take a step back and reflect, yet again, on what you observed. Was the child engaged in the experiences you planned? If not, why? Did the experiences address the developmental area you hoped they would? Why or why not? Again, use our helpful Observe & Reflect Grid (see pages 17-18) to help you. This reflection is very, very important and will help you better address the individual needs of the children in your group.

After completing Step #5, guess what?
The entire process starts all over again!

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Anecdotal Notes

What is an anecdotal note?

An anecdotal note is a factual, written record of a child. It includes who, what, how and sometimes where and when. It is written so that the reader can picture exactly what happened without interpretation. It does NOT include what you think a child is feeling or what you think a child was thinking. Instead it is simply based on EXACTLY what you observe. At Gee Whiz, we view anecdotal notes as an authentic assessment tool.

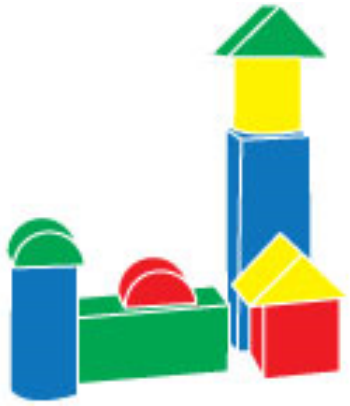
Why are anecdotal notes important?

Anecdotal notes are very important because they are based on fact. They help teachers plan experiences for children based on what they know about their levels of development in all areas. They are also very helpful when talking with parents/caregivers because they are based on facts...not opinions.

What does a good anecdotal note look like?

A strong anecdotal note includes the following:

1. A brief description of the setting
2. A summary what happened
3. Direct quotes...if possible
4. ONLY the facts!



The best way for you to learn how to write good anecdotal notes is to give you an example. Here is one:

Date: March 15, 2019

Thomas and Jose are playing side-by-side in the block area. Thomas has a stack of 5 plastic blocks in front of him. He picks up another block and puts it on the top of the stack. The stack wobbles slightly. Thomas watches the stack and when it stops wobbling, he smiles and says to Jose, "Look how tall my stack of blocks is now!" Jose nods his head and picks up a block and puts it on top of another one. The block falls off. Jose bends his head downward toward the ground.

Now that you have your anecdotal note, you are ready for the next step... REFLECTION!

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Anecdotal Notes & Reflections

Reflections

What are reflections?

A reflection is based on your observations and anecdotal notes. It is your chance to sit back and think about what you saw and heard. What does this information tell you about the child (e.g., developmental level, interests, etc.)? This is where you get to put on your thinking cap!

Why are reflections important?

Reflecting on observations is a critical part of planning experiences for young children as well as adapting and modifying curriculum. Your reflections will help you plan future activities, address individual needs and much more.

What does a good reflection look like?

A strong reflection is quite simple...your interpretation of an event along with what you learned from it. Let's look at the anecdotal note from the previous page. Here is an example of what a reflection might look like:

Reflection based on anecdotal note for Thomas dated 3/15/19:

Thomas appears to have strong fine motor control because he was able to stack six blocks without difficulty. He also appeared to be quite proud of his accomplishment as he spoke to Jose. His expressive language skills reflect his ability to form complete sentences without hesitation.

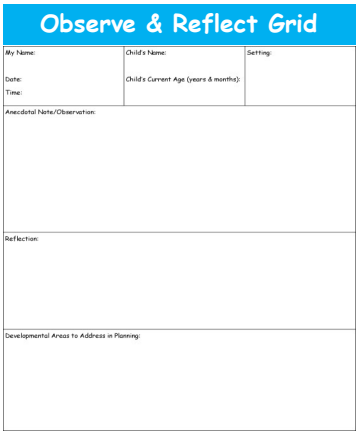
Reflection based on anecdotal note for Jose dated 3/15/19:

Jose struggled to stack two blocks without them falling. His fine motor skills are still developing in this area. In addition, he appeared to be frustrated/upset when his blocks fell down.

Now that you have your reflections, you are ready for the next step... PLANNING!

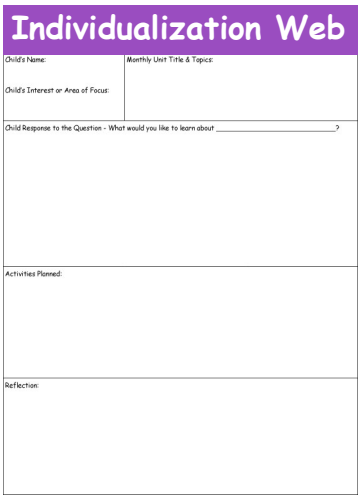
Planning Based on Anecdotal Notes & Reflections

Now that you've done your anecdotal notes and your reflections, it is time to take what you've learned and use it when individualizing curriculum and planning additional experiences. At Gee Whiz, we have three tools to help you achieve this goal: our Individualization Web, Observe & Reflect Grid and Customized/Individualized Lesson Planning Sheet.



Observe & Reflect Grid

My Name:
Date:
Time:
Child's Name:
Child's Current Age (years & months):
Setting:
Anecdotal Note/Observation:
Reflection:
Developmental Areas to Address in Planning:



Individualization Web

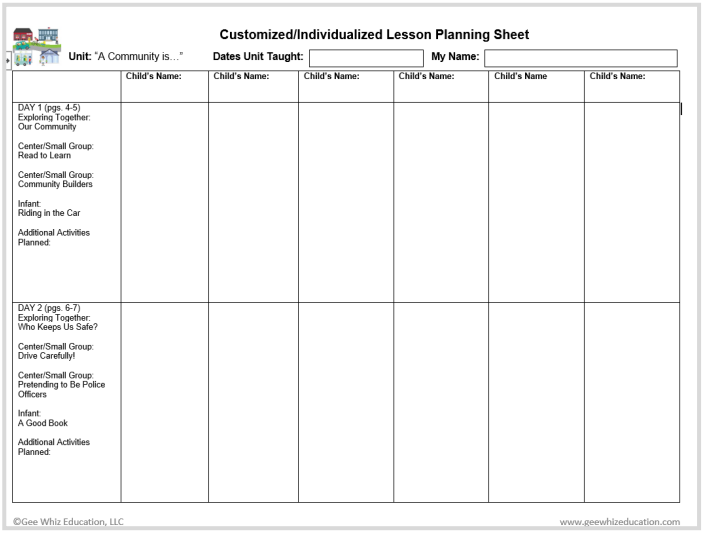
Child's Name:
Child's Interest or Area of Focus:
Monthly Unit Title & Topics:
Child Response to the Question - What would you like to learn about _____?
Activities Planned:
Reflection:

The Observe & Reflect Grid is a tool you can you to help you keep on-going anecdotal notes and reflections for each child in your group. To make organization easier, we recommend putting these in a 3-ring binder for each child. That way, you will have everything you need in one place. You will find a blank copy of this tool on the following pages. Feel free to make as many copies as you need. To help you get started using this tool, you will find a completed Observe & Reflect Grid on page 18.

The Individualization Web is tool you can use to help you adapt and modify the Gee Whiz curriculum to meet the individual needs of the children in your group. The Observe & Reflect Grid works hand-in-hand with the Individualization Web. A blank web can be found on page 18 with a sample completed web on page 19.

NEW! Customized/Individualized Lesson Planning Sheet

Each Gee Whiz unit now includes a Customized/Individualized Lesson Planning Sheet you can use to help you record how you plan to adapt and individualize the Gee Whiz experiences + add your own. This planning sheet will come in extremely handy as you work with children with disabilities, suspected developmental delays or other special needs. This form is included in the program files for each unit. It is available in Word (so you can type in the boxes) or PDF (if you prefer to write).



Customized/Individualized Lesson Planning Sheet

Unit: "A Community is…" Dates Unit Taught: My Name:

	Child's Name:	Child's Name:	Child's Name:	Child's Name:	Child's Name	Child's Name:
DAY 1 (pgs. 4-5) Exploring Together: Our Community Center/Small Group: Read to Learn Center/Small Group: Community Builders Infant: Riding in the Car Additional Activities Planned:						
DAY 2 (pgs. 6-7) Exploring Together: Who Keeps Us Safe? Center/Small Group: Drive Carefully! Center/Small Group: Pretending to Be Police Officers Infant: A Good Book Additional Activities Planned:						

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Authentic Assessment - Putting It All Together

They say that, "Practice makes perfect." This is especially true when it comes to recording anecdotal notes, reflecting and then planning activities to individualize. The more you do it, the easier it becomes! The next few pages have both blank and sample grids/webs to help you get started. As mentioned previously, keeping a 3-ring binder for each child is a great way to stay organized! Feel free to print as many of the blank grids/webs as needed, keeping in mind that a new Individualization Web is included with each unit.

At Gee Whiz, we view anecdotal notes, reflections and the use of the Individualization Web as ways of gathering key information about each child in an authentic way. Because you are observing and recording notes as children play, what you see and hear is an accurate representation of their developmental level and abilities. By keeping notes on these observations and building from them, you are not only assessing children as they play and grow but also planning experiences to build upon their strengths and address areas for development.

Formal assessments do have a place and can be used in conjunction with the Gee Whiz approach (see page 22). That said, we truly believe that recording anecdotal notes and reflecting upon them is THE best way for you to get a true picture of each child's level of development in all areas on a regular basis.

Observe & Reflect Grid

My Name: Date: Time:	Child's Name: Child's Current Age (years & months):	Setting:
Anecdotal Note/Observation:		
Reflection:		
Developmental Areas to Address in Planning:		

Sample Observe & Reflect Grid

My Name: *Alicia Torres* Date: *March 21, 2019* Time: *9:35 AM*	Child's Name: *Francisco* Child's Current Age (years & months): *3 years, 7 months*	Setting: *Outdoor playspace*

Anecdotal Note/Observation:

Francisco walks over to the tricycle. He puts one leg over, sits on the seat and then lifts up his other leg. He puts both of his feet on the pedals. He pushes with his right foot but not with the other. He holds the handlebars with both hands. He looks down at his feet. He pushes with his right foot again but not his left foot. He grunts as he pushes. The tricycle moves forward about 3 inches. Francisco looks down at his feet again. He pushes the right foot on the pedal and the tricycle does not move. He hits the handlebar with his left hand, gets off the tricycle and runs to the sandbox.

Reflection:

Francisco appears to be interested in learning to ride a tricycle. It appears that he does not know how to use both feet to pedal. This seems to frustrate him as shown by his action of hitting the handlebars

Planning - Developmental Areas to Address and Activities to Try:

Gross Motor Skills - pedaling a tricycle -

Activity: Have a tricycle available during outdoor playtime and when Francisco shows interest, help him learn how to push both feet to pedal.

Social/Emotional Skills—appropriate ways of sharing emotions

Activity: Read books with Francisco about emotions (including frustration) and use them to open the door to talking about feelings.

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Individualization Web

Child's Name: Child's Interest or Area of Focus:	Monthly Unit Title & Topics:
Child Response to the Question - What would you like to learn about _____?	
Activities Planned:	
Reflection:	

Sample Individualization Web

Child's Name: *Francisco*

Child's Interest or Area of Focus:

Vehicles (including tricycles)

Monthly Unit Title & Topics: I Am Special!

* My Name
* Things I Can Do
* My Uniqueness
* My Feelings & Kindness
* Things I Want to Learn How to Do
* My Family
* Easy/Difficult

Child Response to the Questions:

What would you like to learn about *vehicles*?:

Francisco's response:

How things go and how fast they can go.

What makes them go?

How I can make things go fast!

About cars and trucks and buses and trains and tricycles.

Activities Planned:

Invite Francisco to bring in a photo of the vehicle he/she rides in each day to come to school.

Provide blocks for Francisco to use to build garages for vehicles.

Add a variety of vehicles to the blocks area as well.

Based on a previous observation, help Francisco learn to ride a tricycle (e.g., something he wants to learn to do + how things go).

Note how Francisco can make different types of vehicles go (e.g., things he can do)

Reflection:

Francisco really enjoyed building garages for vehicles with blocks. As he built, he talked about the people he knows who have a garage and the types of vehicles they drive. This was an excellent way for him to build his expressive language skills. He was also very excited about learning to ride a tricycle and was fascinated by the way the pedals made the wheel turn. We turned the tricycle upside-down so he could see how it worked. In addition, on his own, Francisco built several vehicles with interlocking blocks. This not only helped him to build his fine motor control, it also increased his self-esteem because it was something he could do on his own.

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Gee Whiz & Standardized or Structured Assessment Instruments

At Gee Whiz, we are asked all the time, "Does Gee Whiz contain an formal assessment?" The short answer is, "No" BUT this is intentional by design.

When we designed the Gee Whiz curriculum, we looked at state standards from all over the United States as well as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. We dug deep to see what skills and areas of development these standards addressed and the designed Gee Whiz to address them in a comprehensive way.

Then, we looked at the most commonly utilized formal assessment tools such as Teaching Strategies GOLD®, Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, The Ounce Scale, DRDP, etc.* We examined what those assessments evaluate and compared that with the skills/developmental areas addressed in the Gee Whiz curriculum.

The result? Because Gee Whiz takes such a comprehensive approach and because we utilize picture codes and a detailed chart to link experiences to goals/objectives, providers can choose to use ANY formal assessment tool along with the Gee Whiz curriculum. In fact, we have several 5 star providers in different states that take this approach. At Gee Whiz, we felt there was no need to "reinvent the wheel" when there were many wonderful formal assessment tools already available to providers. So instead of spending a great deal of money to create our own, we made sure that our curriculum addressed all of the areas these assessment look at. According to feedback from Quality Specialists and nationally accredited providers in many states, this approach is working and appreciated by many because they can choose the formal assessment tool they feel works best for their children and themselves.

Do you need developmental checklists?

Please visit our website www.geewhizeducation.com and look under the FCC Tools tab. There you will find developmental checklists for ages Birth through 4. Here is a link directly to that page:

https://geewhizeducation.com/fcc-tools/developmental-checklists-birth-four/

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