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## IEA PREPRIMARY PROJECT: An Observational Study of Early Childhood Settings—Instruments

### *Combined Observation Systems*

**CHILD ACTIVITIES OBSERVATION SYSTEM (CA)** The Child Activities Observation System illustrates the activities and interactions of the target child(ren) in a given setting. The purpose of the instrument is to record the activities in which each target child is engaged, the amount of time spent in different activities, and the type of group structure (e.g., a large group of 10 children) and frequency and type of interaction (e.g., playing with two children) in which each target child is involved. The observation also includes a procedure for recording the frequency of each target child’s verbalizations. Observation of a child’s activities provides data to investigate how the activities and interactions a child engages in affect his/her growth and development and the quality of his/her experience in different settings.

**ADULT BEHAVIOR OBSERVATION SYSTEM (AB)** The Adult Behavior Observation System illustrates the behaviors of the primary adult (e.g., the main/lead teacher or parent) in a given setting. The purpose of the instrument is to note the general behaviors of the primary adult and the nature of the adult’s general involvement with the child(ren) (e.g., supervising but not directly interacting, participating actively). Observation of the adult’s behaviors gives the researcher a source of data to study how these behaviors affect a child’s experiences, and therefore the quality of life for him/her, in different types of settings.

**MANAGEMENT OF TIME OBSERVATION SYSTEM (MOT)** The Management of Time Observation System provides a thorough picture of how the primary adult in a setting organizes the child(ren)’s time. The purpose of the instrument is to record the activities the adult proposes for the child(ren), the time of each proposed change of activity, and the proposed group structure for the activity (e.g., 2 small groups). The data from the Management of Time observation allows the researcher to examine the relationship between the types of activities proposed for the child(ren) and the quality of the child(ren)’s experiences in the setting. In addition, the researcher may compare types of settings to determine if certain settings provide opportunities to engage in activities and interactions that promote a better quality of life than other settings.

### *Child Developmental Status Measures*

By administering assessments at age 4 and again at age 7, researchers will be able to examine the child(ren)’s growth between assessments and compare the development of children across set-

tings to determine if certain types of settings promote growth and development of the different skills more than other types of settings.

**LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENTAL STATUS MEASURE** The Language assessment measures the level of development of the child(ren)'s verbal skills. The assessment requires the child(ren) to perform a variety of tasks, such as telling stories, answering questions, matching pictures to words or phrases, and repeating statements to test both receptive and expressive language skills.

**COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL STATUS MEASURE** The Cognitive assessment tests the child(ren)'s knowledge and skills in such areas as spatial relations, quantity, and time. The assessment requires the child(ren) to demonstrate understanding of a wide variety of concepts by performing an action, pointing to a picture or responding verbally.

**FINE MOTOR SKILLS MEASURES** The Fine Motor Skills assessment measures the child(ren)'s small muscle coordination. The tasks in this test include asking the child to copy several shapes, to touch the fingers of each hand to the thumb of the same hand, and to make shapes with clay.

**SOCIAL COMPETENCE MEASURE** The Social Competence assessment is divided into 2 parts. The first part involves adult ratings of the child(ren)'s social skills, while the second part involves asking the child(ren) "social thinking" questions intended to measure knowledge of such concepts as oneself and one's family, other people's roles or feelings, and socially acceptable behavior.

**PREACADEMIC SKILLS MEASURE** The Preacademic Skills assessment is designed to measure the level of development of the child(ren)'s school readiness skills. The assessment involves asking the child(ren) to complete several tasks in each of 3 skills areas; number (e.g., rote counting), pre-writing (e.g., copying letters), and pre-reading (e.g., visual perception).

## Questionnaires

**EXPECTATIONS** The Expectations Questionnaire explores parents' and teachers' beliefs about the areas of development that they consider important for 4-year-old children. The questionnaire asks parents and teachers what skills they believe are important for 4-year-olds to learn, which skills teachers believe their children's parents think are important and vice versa, and who is primarily responsible for teaching the child various skills. The data collected with the questionnaire will indicate if, in actual practice, teachers and/or parents take into account their developmental expectations for 4-year-olds when designing or choosing specific learning activities for them. The data can also be used to examine the theory that the degree of consistency between teachers' and parents' expectations may affect the nature and quality of children's experiences in different settings.

**FAMILY BACKGROUND** The Family Background Questionnaire is designed to collect information about family characteristics of the target child(ren). The questionnaire addresses such areas as household composition (e.g., number/ages of siblings), household amenities (e.g., indoor plumbing, television), parents' educational attainment, and employment and income. The information obtained from this instrument will allow researchers to study relationships between various family characteristics and characteristics of the types of settings parents choose for their children.

**PROVIDER SURVEY (LARGE AND SMALL GROUP SETTINGS)** The Provider Survey is a questionnaire for the teachers/caregivers of the target child(ren). The surveys focus on the organizational aspects

of a given setting, such as physical description (e.g., number/size of rooms, furnishings), management (e.g., administrative policies, staff structure), parent involvement, teacher/caregiver characteristics (e.g., education and training), enrollment characteristics (e.g., number/ages of children in the setting), and the kinds of materials available for the child(ren) to use. The data obtained from the survey will allow researchers to examine and compare the effects of the characteristics of different types of settings on the quality of children's experiences in those settings while also studying the relationship between choice of setting and family characteristics.

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