

FIGURE 6.1 Anecdotal record format.

**Goal for this observation:** Jerry's social development

**Date/day:** Thursday, May 20

**Time of day:** 8:00 a.m.

**Focus child, if appropriate:** Jerry (J)

**Other children involved?** Sarah (S)

**The anecdote:** S had gone to the art center immediately after putting things in her cubby. She asked Jerry to play there, too. He walked over to the center but just stood, watching as Sarah chose a marker. She turned to him, offering a marker. He smiled and took it, and then they worked on drawing together.

**Comment:** Jerry often, but certainly not always, hesitates before beginning to play, even when another child has issued a clear invitation. He seems to be very cautious but also seems to enjoy playing with others, and he usually responds in a very positive way.

\*Fill in the comments section only when you have detected a pattern after several observations. Do not feel obligated to comment on every anecdote.

## Running Record

### Running record

A longer narrative method for observing; tells a longer story; gives more detail than an anecdotal record

Running records tell a story; therefore, they are a narrative form of observation. A **running record** is like the anecdotal record in that it tells a story, but it is also different because it gives more detail. Greater detail gives more information that should help a teacher understand some developmental issue, such as how a child expresses feelings. Having a clear focus is important here. For instance, a teacher might focus on one child's attempt to enter an ongoing work group, or on the class's general reaction to a classroom rule after the class discusses an issue.

Running records take only about 5 to 10 minutes and tend to produce much usable information if the observer sticks to objective, descriptive phrasing. They allow a teacher to see an incident in detail. For example, in a 5-minute segment of observing on the playground, Mr. Russo watched Hector as he was greeted by four other children and all five approached the climbing wall. Mr. Russo documented Hector's continued positive interaction with the others. A clear drawback is that a teacher cannot interact with the children in his class while observing.

Figure 6.2 shows the format for running records. There are three columns. Use the Context/Background/Time column to record brief notes on the setting: Where did the incident take place? Was there something going on that affected the context? For instance, were there sirens blaring outside? Did the mood of the group seem important for this observation? It is a good idea to record the time you begin to take notes and the time you end.

Most of the writing takes place in the second, the Intensive Observation, column. Here, a teacher gives an objective and somewhat detailed account of the episode, and records both the child's speech and action. It is important to use descriptive phrasing to record only observable data—facts, what you saw and heard—not your opinion.

In the next example, the observer has stated an opinion—that is, used subjective phrasing, which cannot be backed up by what she has recorded. Teachers should refrain from making such judgments.

**EXAMPLE** “Sammy was selfish. He took the last piece of fruit.” This is an opinion.

First, we do not have the right to judge others, and there simply is not enough information presented for the teacher to conclude that Sammy is “selfish.” This is one observation, and it is not ethical to draw conclusions on such an unconvincing amount of data.

It is advisable to record only what you see or hear, as the next example shows.

**EXAMPLE** “Sammy had eaten two apple slices already when John joined the group. There was one slice left, Sammy watching it closely. Just as John reached for the plate, Sammy swept the