

they get to make a judgment and do not generally show the other observations on which the rating scale is based. Disadvantages include the great possibility of personal bias because the observer does not give supporting data. Many observers tend to rate every child at the middle of a rating scale, effectively rendering it useless.

Teachers should use rating scales only after they have observed a child in some other way then want to make an overall statement about some aspect of guidance. For example, if a teacher has completed several objectively written anecdotal records about a child's peer relationship attributes, then a rating scale on the same topic would be a good way to present the data. The teacher could use the rating scale when talking with parents, saying that it was completed only after observing carefully using other methods. The teacher might show the rating scale along with captioned photos showing the child in thoughtful work groups with others, playing a board game with a friend, or greeting another child during morning meeting.

Event Sampling

Event sampling does not tell a story and is therefore a non-narrative form of observation. **Event sampling** is an effective way to observe one aspect of a child's development or learning. An observer identifies a specific target, such as "positive nonverbal interaction with other children." An important step is to define the category precisely. For instance, the teacher defines *positive nonverbal interaction* as "nodding; smiling; waving; or giving thumbs-up, a high-five, or other positive gesture of greeting." Then the teacher observes the child and records instances only of the defined behavior—nothing else.

Event sampling is a very focused type of observation and is quite useful (Brassard & Boehm, 2007). Suppose a teacher, when using the Social Attributes Checklist, did not check an item such as "usually approaches others positively." The teacher wants to know more about this social skill for the child and decides to do an event sampling, which would zero in on that aspect of behavior. The major advantages of event sampling are that the focus is on something so specific and that a bit of detail is encouraged. A potential drawback would arise if the teacher did not define the behavior well.

Figure 6.5 is an example of an event sampling form. In addition to the information about the date and child's name, you will see that there are three essential things to record. First is what

Event sampling

Formal method for identifying specific categories of behavior