

### Observing and talking with a Teacher: Assignment 3

Debbie Chessin

For this assignment, I chose to observe the kindergarten teacher at my Religious School. The reason I chose this teacher because I wanted to see how she was going to implement a new lesson that she had developed related to Israel.

Briefly, C (teacher's initial) wanted the children to understand how and why Jews emigrated from Europe to Israel, and how well they assimilated into Israeli society. In the weeks prior to this lesson, the students had been learning about the Ashkenazi Jews in Europe. "C" wanted the children to understand how and why the Jews left Europe and then went to Israel. She used a combination of games, a book and art activities to teach this lesson. Using the outline of the lesson, I created the following table. As I recorded my observations, I then began writing questions based upon my notes.

Questions I am asking about the lesson	Observations that give rise to the questions	Why this matters to me
1. "I notice that you used the alphabet travel game, can you tell me why you used this game?"	1. Students began naming items they would take on a trip.	1. Does this game help the children understand the immigrant experience? How can they make the connection between items they would take and the immigrant experience?
2. "What were you thinking when you decided to read the book about immigrants coming to America?" Did you feel it might be challenging for the students to make the connection between the American immigrant vs. Israeli immigrant experience?"	2. After finishing the travel game, the teacher began to read the students a story about a family immigrating to America.	2. Is the immigrant experience the same for people coming to the US vs. Israel? Will the children understand the difference? How will the teacher explain this to her students?

I used the observational record to allow me to record the students and teacher's actions and reactions to one another, and to see if the teaching materials and games used would allow the teacher to achieve her goals for this lesson. I wrote began asking questions that would help guide me in my post observation conversation with "C".

The questions were designed to help me clarify some of my observations and at the same time challenge "C" about why she chose a particular activity and whether the particular activity was successful in achieving her teaching goals. I found that using this record and preparing questions in advance provided me an opportunity to have a meaningful yet non evaluative conversation with "C". She also had the chance to reflect upon her own teaching methods and discuss whether the lesson worked for her students.

Additionally, observing, taking notes and preparing questions in advance, made it easier for me to have a meaningful conversation with "C". I used the notes and observations to develop thoughtful yet probing questions that were designed to make "C" think about her lesson, and whether her goals for her students had been achieved.

Overall, I found this method of classroom observation to be extremely beneficial to both myself and the teacher. It is one that I would use again in the future.