

Using Observation and Documentation: *Observing with Purpose*

OBSERVATION IN ACTION

In this activity, we'll join Juana as she observes Miguel, a three-year-old in her class, in the dramatic play area. Follow along as the dialogue is read aloud.



Vignette: Observing Miguel in the Dramatic Play Area

Juana: What are you cooking, Miguel?

Miguel: I'm making soup.

Juana: I see that you are making vegetable soup. What kind of vegetables are you putting in your soup?

Miguel: Carrots, tomatoes, and this green thing.

Juana: This green thing is called broccoli. How are you making the soup?

Miguel: I'm mixing it all together. See, like this. And then I cook it.

Facilitator: Gina, another child in the class, comes into the kitchen area and asks, "What are you making?"

Miguel: We're making vegetable soup.

Facilitator: Miguel pretends to pour some soup into a bowl for Juana, and she pretends to try it.

Juana: Mmm, delicious. You can try it too and tell me what it tastes like.

Miguel: It's cold. And it's sweet.

Facilitator: Juana thinks to herself: "Miguel is really developing his language skills. Miguel used specific vegetable names and referred to them as vegetables. Miguel used descriptive verbs, like 'mixing.' He also used words to describe the soup. I should make a note of this when I have a minute."

Discuss these questions with the group:

- What aspects of Miguel's language skills did Juana observe?
- How did Juana observe Miguel as part of her daily routine?
- What other windows of opportunity (spontaneous, targeted, or prompted) can Juana use to observe Miguel's language skills? In what other contexts? During what other times of the day?
- What did Juana do to make this observation objective? What else might she have done?