

CHLD101: Introduction to Early Childhood Education

Heartland Head Start Observation

Learning Outcomes	3. Compare and contrast funding sources, organization’s structure, program practices and legal requirements, and policies for diverse early childhood settings and programs. 6. Discuss state and federal rules and regulations, including health and safety regulations, as they impact early childhood programs. 9. Identify observation, screening, and assessment techniques and demonstrate competencies in observation techniques, synthesis, and analysis by observing in diverse early childhood programs and analyzing information gathered with respect to the role and influence of culture, linguistic, and ability diversity.
DEC Recommended Practices	C1. Physical space and materials are structured and adapted to promote engagement, play, interaction, and learning by attending to children’s preferences and interests, using novelty, using responsive toys, providing adequate amounts of materials., and using defined spaces. PP31. Field experiences occur in a variety of community–based settings in which children with and without disabilities and their families receive EI/ECSE services, including natural environments and inclusive programs.
NAEYC Standards	1c. Using developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environments.

“**Heartland Head Start** is a unique program providing comprehensive educational, health and social services for low income pre-school age children and their families in Livingston and McLean Counties. Since its beginning in 1965, the goal of Heartland Head Start has been to improve quality of life for the families it serves. The program is funded by the federal government, United Way of McLean County, United Way of Pontiac, and various civic organizations.” (Heartland Head Start web site) The purpose of this observation is to provide you with an opportunity to become familiar with the local Head Start program and their approaches to meeting the developmental needs of a diverse population of children.

To prepare for this field experience:

- Review Chapter 4: Understanding Development.
- Study the Heartland Head Start web page. Available from: <http://www.heartlandheadstart.org>
This web page will familiarize you with the national program and allow you to gather information about the local center to use later in your description of the setting.
- Call (309) 662-4880 and schedule an appointment. Indicate to the staff that this is your observation for CHLD 101: Introduction to Early Childhood Education.
- Print a copy of the “**Field Experience Verification Form.**” This form will need to be signed by the classroom teacher where the observation takes place.

Part I: Program Visit. Be prepared to observe within the environment for an hour. While observing, take objective notes on what you observe using one of the observation methods outlined on the class handout “**Common Observation Strategies.**”

Please remember: When you are undertaking a field experience within an ECE environment, you are looking at one point in time. As a result, what you see may be a specific response to a unique situation

and not always reflective of common practices. Therefore, field experiences must be conducted with an open mind.

Part II: Reflection. Based on your observation completed during Part I, please respond to each of the following:

- Questions pertaining to method:
 - What method of observation did you use to collect data?
 - What did you see as the strengths and weaknesses of this method?
- Questions pertaining to environment:
 - Describe the setting you were observing within, including:
 - Type of facility and classroom
 - Number of children
 - Number of staff
 - Activities occurring during observation time period
 - Other relevant information (whether families were in the room, how children responded to strangers, etc.)
 - What environmental and interaction strategies are used to support child and family diversity?
 - What did you see as the environment's strengths?
 - What did you see as the environment's challenges?
- Questions pertaining to children:
 - Describe the diversity-related characteristics of children within the classroom environment.
 - How were children interacting with the environment?
 - Did you feel there was a sense of classroom community?
 - Did the children seem engaged?
 - Would you suggest any strategies to support further engagement?
- Questions pertaining to staff:
 - How was the staff interacting with the children and each other?
 - Did the staff seem engaged?
 - Would you suggest any strategies to support further engagement?
- Questions specific to Heartland Head Start:
 - What practices do you observe that enhanced each domain of children's development?
 - Physical
 - Social/emotional
 - Cognitive
- Links to your learning:
 - In what ways did your field experience complement what you have learned in the course?
 - In what ways did your field experience contradict what you have learned in the course?
 - How do observed practices reflect evidence-based practices you have learned about in the course?
 - Did you feel the program was individually and developmentally appropriate?

After you complete your field experience:

1. Submit your objective notes collected in Part I and your Reflection developed in Part II to your instructor. Also submit the signed "**Field Experience Verification Form.**"