

Using *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® to Make the Most of Your Planning Time

By using *Teaching Strategies GOLD*®, you, your colleagues, and the children's families have collected extensive documentation of what the children in your class did and said. Now what? How do your observation notes and work samples relate to the objectives for development and learning? How can you use the information to plan and individualize appropriate learning experiences?

An organized system for working with documentation can save time, maximize your resources, and help you plan responsively. It is important to decide what system will work best for you and your team and fit with your program's policies and procedures. Keep the following tips in mind:

- Divide responsibilities for observing the children so that each member of the teaching staff can focus his or her observations on a smaller number of children.
- Divide responsibilities for focusing on particular objectives and dimensions so that each member of the teaching staff can focus his or her observations on a smaller number of objectives and dimensions.
- Divide documentation duties by familiarity with the technology. When staff members are comfortable working online, consider making them responsible for entering notes and uploading other documentation into *Teaching Strategies GOLD*®. Those who are not as comfortable with the technology can then assume the task of composing notes and taking photos and videos.
- Provide a paper copy of *On-The-Spot Observation Recording Tool*™ for teaching staff members who do not have access to *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® online or who do not have experience with composing informative, objective observation notes.
- Each day, set aside at least 5–10 minutes to enter notes and other documentation into *Teaching Strategies GOLD*®. Consider entering documentation when children are napping or playing outdoors with other teachers.
- As you enter documentation each day, be sure to jot down changes to planned activities on the printed “Weekly Planning Form.” You can also record your ideas in the “Reflecting on the Week” section of the online or printed form.
- When planning for the coming week, use the *Teaching Strategies GOLD*® “Activity Library” and the various resources of *The Creative Curriculum*® for Preschool. Think about how to individualize the activities on the basis of your observations, analyses, and evaluations.
- As you plan for the week, decide who will be responsible for leading each activity and how the environment can be enhanced in order to support children's learning.
- Focus on collecting group documentation that relates to several children and to multiple objectives and dimensions.