Resource List: Listening to Children
ACM InterActivity, 2019

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Methods for gathering children’s input

Ethics for gathering information from children and families:
JME article on ethical guidelines for museum evaluation (Joe Heimlich): https://tinyurl.com/y2nzdcxd
CAISE blog series on navigating IRBs and informed consent (Andee Rubin): https://tinyurl.com/yx92a4cc

Observations:
To answer questions like...
- What captures children’s attention? (first reactions, hold times)
- How do children choose/use/repurpose materials?
- How do children interact with other children, caregivers, educators?
- Emotional reactions (joy, surprise, frustration)

Tips:
Don’t try to observe everything. Identify specific behaviors you’re interested in. Focus on what you saw and heard, not your interpretations.

Interviews/Focus groups:
To answer questions like...
- How do children describe what they did?
- What did children find fun, interesting, frustrating?
- How does this experience relate to other aspects of their lives?
- What is most memorable about it to them?

Tips:
Progress from low-pressure questions (“Which thing did you like the best?”), to more open-ended prompts (“Tell me about what you were playing.”). Use physical objects to ground the conversation (objects they played with, drawings, photographs), or observations. Ask for negative feedback as well as positive (“What was the most interesting/fun part? The hardest/trickiest part?”).