

ANECDOTAL NOTES

Anecdotal notes (also known as anecdotal records) are informal observational notes that document what students are learning, academic performance, learning behaviors, and social interactions. The teacher observes students in a learning situation, looks for evidence of understanding and literacy development, and makes written notes about students' comments and behaviors. Anecdotal notes allow teachers to record the abundant detail available in ongoing and cumulative observations of literacy processes and products in a flexible, open-ended, and unrestricted approach. Anecdotal notes are short recordings of a single learning situations. However, the records are most helpful when gathered over time to observe meaningful patterns of learning development that can help planning and differentiated instruction.

When taking anecdotal notes, it is important for teachers to record only what they see and hear without making interpretations or judgments. Anecdotal notes can be used in any content area, but are especially important during independent literacy activities. Since proficient readers use many complex strategies during reading, it is important to provide this alternative assessment of taking notes to document observations of learning. These observations allow teachers to assess students' understanding of skills, strategies, and concepts. An adaptable way of including anecdotal notes in a balanced literacy classroom is to use a seating chart using "Post-It" notes. On the "Post-It" write the child's name. Any time a teacher, teacher's aide, or literacy volunteer observes a behavior, an anecdotal note may be written under the "Post-It". The notes become easily accessible and private. Upon assessment and reflection of the lesson, teachers may record any important notes in the student's portfolio.

FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR ANECDOTAL NOTES: READING (PRIMARY)

TYPE OF TEXTS/RANGE

1. Does the student read pattern books? Beginning early-reader books? Harder early-reader books? Beginning chapter books?
2. Does the student independently choose books at an appropriate reading level?

READING ATTITUDE AND SELF-EVALUATION

3. Does the student show a positive attitude toward reading?
4. Does the student listen attentively to books?
5. Does the student choose books and have favorites?
6. Does the student see him/herself as a reader?
7. Does the student read for pleasure? Information?
8. Does the student read silently? For 10 minutes? 20 minutes? 30 minutes? Longer?
9. Does the student reflect on his/her reading and set goals with guidance?

READING STRATEGIES

10. Can the student read some environmental print?
11. Does the student pretend to read books? Memorize books?
12. Does the student use illustrations to tell a story? Rely on pictures + print? Rely primarily on print?
13. Does the student recognize some/most letter names and sound?
14. Does the student recognize some words/names in context? Simple words? Sight words?
15. Can the student match one-to-one (point to words) while reading?
16. Does the student use phonetic cues? Sentence structure cues? Meaning cues?

COMPREHENSION/RESPONSE/STORY STRUCTURE

17. Does the student participate in the reading of familiar texts?
18. Does the student share ideas during literature discussions?
19. Does the student make connections to personal experience? Other books? Other authors?
20. Does the student listen to others' ideas during literature discussions?
21. Can the student retell the main idea of the text? Plot? Characters?
22. What different forms of response does the student try (writing, art, performance arts, etc.)?

FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR ANECDOTAL NOTES: READING (INTERMEDIATE)

TYPE OF TEXT/RANGE

1. Does the student read medium chapter books? Challenging children's literature? Young adult literature?
2. Does the student independently choose books at an appropriate reading level?
3. Does the student read a variety of genres with guidance? Independently?
4. Does the student use reference materials to locate information with guidance? Independently?

READING ATTITUDE AND SELF-EVALUATION

5. Does the student show a positive attitude toward reading?
6. Does the student select/read/finish a variety of materials with guidance? Independently?
7. Does the student read silently for 20 minutes? 30 minutes? Longer?
8. Does the student reflect on his/her reading and set goals independently?

READING STRATEGIES

9. Does the student read and understand most words?
10. Does the student self-correct for meaning?
11. Does the student use reading strategies appropriately?
12. What strategies does the student use when encountering a new word?
13. Does the student consult a dictionary when appropriate?

COMPREHENSION/RESPONSE/STORY STRUCTURE

14. Can the student retell the main idea of the text? Plot? Characters?
15. Does the student make connections to personal experience? Other books? Other authors?
16. Does the student discuss literature in terms of genre? Writer's craft?
17. Does the student interpret deeper meaning in literature with guidance? Independently?
18. Does the student share during literature discussions when asked? Voluntarily?
19. Does the student respond to/elaborate upon other's ideas during literature discussions?
20. Does the student evaluate/interpret/analyze literature critically?
21. What different forms of response does the student try (writing, art, performance arts, etc.)?

INTERMEDIATE-GRADE CHECKLIST OF TEACHER OBSERVATION
OF A CHILD'S COMPREHENSION SKILLS

Name _____ Grade _____ Teacher _____

Elements of Overall Comprehension Skills

Use of Prior Knowledge

- ___ Has adequate prior knowledge (background experience) to interpret most narrative material at the appropriate reading level
- ___ Has adequate prior knowledge to interpret most expository (content) material at the appropriate reading level
- ___ Usually activates prior knowledge possessed when reading material
- ___ Usually contributes useful, accurate information to group or class discussions prior to reading narrative or expository material

Use of Prequestioning Skills

- ___ Is able to formulate his own textually explicit (literal) comprehension questions prior to reading a narrative or expository passage
- ___ Is able to formulate his own textually implicit (interpretive or critical) comprehension questions prior to reading narrative or expository text
- ___ Is able to formulate his own purposes for reading a narrative selection
- ___ Is able to formulate his own purposes for reading an expository selection

Use of Prediction Strategies

- ___ Is able to predict the content of narrative or expository material from its title
- ___ At appropriate stopping points in a narrative story, is able to accurately predict what is going to happen next
- ___ Is able to evaluate his hypotheses prior to reading were accurate upon completion of the text
- ___ Usually formulates hypotheses prior to reading which were determined to be accurate following reading

Use of Metacognitive Skills (Self-Monitoring Skills)

- ___ Is able to understand the purpose of reading
- ___ Is able to generate his questions while reading
- ___ Usually self-corrects his word identification errors while reading
- ___ Is able to modify reading strategies for different purposes
- ___ Is able to consider how new information relates to what is already known
- ___ Is able to know which strategies to use when the reading material is not understood well
- ___ Is able to determine the important information in a passage
- ___ Is able to determine after reading how well the material has been understood
- ___ Has a positive attitude toward reading and a good self-perception about his reading ability

Semantic Networking Skills

- ___ Understands the purpose of semantic networking (webbing or mapping)
- ___ Is able to formulate a semantic map or web from narrative material at the appropriate reading level
- ___ Is able to formulate a semantic map or web from expository material at the

appropriate reading level

Use of sensory imagery

- Is able to make useful sensory images while reading narrative material
- Is able to make useful sensory images while reading expository material

Textually Explicit (Literal or Factual) Comprehension Skills

- Is able to answer textually explicit (literal, recall, or factual) comprehension questions from narrative material at the appropriate reading level
- Is able to answer textually explicit (literal, recall, or factual) comprehension questions from expository material at the appropriate reading level
- Is able to understand the purpose of whom what, when, where, and why questions
- Is able to retell in a competent manner with or without teacher probes
- Is able to locate the directly stated main idea and/or topic sentence in a paragraph
- Can write a statement of the main idea of a tradebook, basal reader story, or expository selection in an acceptable manner
- Can read and carry out directions at the appropriate reading level effectively
- Is able to locate significant details in a paragraph at the appropriate level
- Is able to locate irrelevant details in a paragraph at the appropriate level
- Understands the meaning of specialized vocabulary terms in the content areas of social studies, science, and mathematics at the appropriate level
- Understands that "Right There" questions are examples of textually explicit, literal, factual, or recall questions

Textually Implicit (Interpretive or Inferential) Comprehension Skills

- Is able to answer textually implicit (interpretive or inferential) comprehension questions from narrative material at the appropriate reading level. These questions call for interpreting, inferring, drawing conclusions and generalizations, predicting outcomes, and summarizing
- Is able to answer textually implicit (interpretive or inferential) comprehension questions from expository material at the appropriate reading level
- Is able to summarize in writing narrative or expository material in a paragraph or short passage
- Is able to apply comparison-contrast relationships
- Is able to apply cause-effect relationships
- Is able to determine an author's purpose for writing a narrative or expository selection
- Can verify in writing the hypotheses about a selection which were made before reading it
- Is able to locate the implied main idea in a paragraph
- Understands the "Think and Search" questions are textually implicit (interpretive or inferential) comprehension questions

Textually Implicit (Critical or Evaluative) Reading

- Is able to answer questions which call for critical (textually implicit or evaluative) responses from narrative material at the appropriate reading level
- Is able to answer questions which call for critical (textually implicit or evaluative) responses from expository material at the appropriate reading level
- Is able to distinguish between fact and opinion
- Is able to compare material from several different sources such as a content textbook and an encyclopedia
- Is able to read parts of the newspaper critically such as the editorials, letters to the editor, and the advertisements
- Is able to evaluate the actions of an individual or group
- Is able to determine an author's biases in writing a selection of any type

___ Understands that "Think and Search" questions are one kind of textually implicit (critical or evaluative) question

Scriptally Implicit (Creative) Reading Skills

- ___ Is able to combine his own prior knowledge (experiences or scripts) with the printed material in the understanding and application of what is read
- ___ Is able to relate what he has read in some ways which contributes to his own improvement
- ___ Is able to relate reading and writing activities in a creative manner
- ___ Understands that "On My Own" questions are examples of scriptally implicit or creative questions

Other Important Elements of Comprehension

- ___ Observes punctuation marks such as period, comma, exclamation point, semicolon, and colon while reading
- ___ Understands anaphoric relationships such as: The old man and *his* old neighbor woman both had to walk to the grocery store since neither *he* or nor *she* owned a car anymore.
- ___ Is able to complete such variations of the cloze procedure as traditional cloze, random deletion cloze, and cloze procedures emphasizing omitted nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs at the appropriate reading level
- ___ Is able to understand and apply such elements of *story grammar* as the setting, including characters and location, the basic theme, a few episodes in the plot, and the resolution of the problem that motivated the characters to action
- ___ Is able to understand and apply such elements of text structure as cause/effect, sequence, compare/contrast, question/answer, description, and enumeration
- ___ Understands figurative language such as the metaphor, the simile, and hyperbole
- ___ Is able to interpret figurative language such as the following: *Don't put all your eggs in one basket.*
- ___ Is competent in the use of context clues (semantic clues) as an aid to comprehension
- ___ Is competent in the use of word order (syntactic clues) as an aid to comprehension
- ___ Is able to use such typographical aids as bold print, italics, headings, subheadings as an aid to comprehension
- ___ Is able to use a teacher's prompts (guidance) after giving the incorrect answer to a comprehension question

Name: _____
Book Title: _____

Reading Level: _____ Date: _____
Genre: fiction nonfiction chapter book fairy tale biography
Autobiography mystery poem favorite author

Affective Strategies

Oral Reading

- ___ sounds out most words
- ___ word-by-word
- ___ hesitantly
- ___ selection is too hard
- ___ fluently

Reads with expression yes no

Approx. word errors per page _____

Shows enthusiasm for reading yes no

Selects appropriately leveled books yes no

Book Selection: too hard too easy appropriate

Sustains SSR for duration yes no

Comprehension

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----|----|
| Understands characters | yes | no |
| Understands setting | yes | no |
| Relates Story Events | yes | no |
| Understands Plot | yes | no |

Questions answered:

Detail questions ___ out of ___

Comprehension questions ___ out of ___

Predictions make sense yes no

Sequences events yes no

Decoding Strategies

Utilizes picture clues

Sounds out:

uses only 1st sound

combines 1st sound with word chunks

Looks for little words in big ones

Uses word shape/length

Draws upon contextual clues

Self-corrects miscues with no prompting

Skips unknown and keeps reading

Skips unknown, reads to the end, goes back (backtracks and reads again)

Recognizes high frequency words (word wall words)

The student uses strategies with teacher is prompting, "Try something"

COMMENTS:

Here are some questions that teachers might ask to improve reading if TRY SOMETHING doesn't work.

Strategies For Constructing Meaning

Visual prompts:

Does it look right?
What would you expect to see
 at the beginning, middle, end?
Do you know a word that starts/looks like that?
Try that again and get your mouth ready.
Does this sound right?

Meaning prompts:

Does this make sense?
Look at the pictures.
What happened in the story when ____?
Can you reread this and think what it might be?

Structure prompts:

Did that sound right?
Can you reread that?
Can you say it that way?
What other word might fit here?
Go back and read it again.

Early Behaviors

Directionality prompts:

Where do we begin?
Teacher helps student with finger pointing.

One-to-One prompts:

Read it with your finger.
Did it match?
Were there enough words?
Teacher helps child with pointing.

Locating Known and Unknown Words prompts:

Show me the word ____
Show me a word you know.
What letter would you expect to see at the beginning of ____

Self-Monitoring Prompts:

Why did you stop?
What did you notice?
Were you right?
Look at the picture.
Point to each word, make them match.

Cross-Checking Prompts:

It could be, but look at the picture.
It could be, but does that sound right?
It could be, but look at the way the word begins.
It could be, but look at the way the word ends.

Self-Corrections Prompts:

Can you find the tricky part?
You read _____. Was that right?
Could it be _____?
How did you know that word was _____?