

Ongoing Child Assessment: Collecting and Using Anecdotal Records – Revised

Narrator: Welcome. In this short presentation, I will introduce you to the use of anecdotal records as one way to document your observations of children in your classroom.

Narrator: The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning uses the house framework to illustrate the effective everyday practices that support school readiness for all children. Ongoing child assessment is an essential feature of a comprehensive framework for quality teaching and learning.

Narrator: What are anecdotal records? You may already be collecting them. An anecdotal record is a written record or note of what a child says or does within the context of classroom activities and routines. The use of anecdotal records is one way to collect information about children's development and learning. These records or notes are one way to document your observations. In addition, collecting anecdotal records is an example of authentic assessment.

Narrator: The assessment information is collected in real-life learning experiences and activities: while playing at the sensory table, building with blocks, having a snack, or exploring the playground. Let's listen to teachers talk about how they collect and use anecdotal records in their own classrooms.

Denise Bega, Master Teacher: We do take anecdotal records. Lots of teachers use labels because they're easy to keep in your pockets or keep on the counter.

Child: Draw a line.

Yvonne Miramontes, Teacher: Draw a line.

Child: A.

Yvonne Miramontes, Teacher: A.

Child: M.

Yvonne Miramontes, Teacher: M.

Yvonne Miramontes, Teacher: Generally, what I do is I carry around a little clipboard, and I place these stickers on them, and each area is listed -- so I know what I need for that child specifically for this tool. So, I'd go around, and throughout the month, I'm collecting information on the children. And, so basically the teachable moments or the observations that I do, I'm jotting down this information. I'm sticking it on here, so I only have to do it one time. So, I write it on the sticker, and then I'll just come and place it where it belongs in our observation.

Yvonne Miramontes, Teacher: A.

Child: A!

Yvonne Miramontes, Teacher: Sierra, there you go!

Narrator: Teachers have figured out all sorts of ways to take anecdotal records in their busy classrooms. Teachers use clipboards and notepads, sticky notes, and mailing labels, just to name a few. Regardless, the note needs to include some basic information: the child's name or initials, the date, the time, and the setting, a clear description of the observation, and the name of the observer. Always include the child's name or initials and the date. You don't want to end up with a pile of notes but no idea who they were about. You also don't want to think that just one or two notes will be enough. By collecting anecdotal records on a regular basis, you are creating a record of the child's learning and progress over time.

Narrator: This cycle reminds us that effective teaching and effective ongoing child assessment require that the teacher observe, document observations, interpret their findings, and then use those interpretations or understandings in order to make teaching more purposeful.

Narrator: In this module, we've highlighted the use of anecdotal records or notes as one way to document your observations. But those notes only become valuable when you put them to use. Use the information to plan learning activities and experiences and then to change those plans as needed to make sure that the child or group of children take full advantage of the learning activities.

Narrator: For more information and tips for collecting and using child assessment by anecdotal records or other methods, see our series on Ongoing Child Assessment. For more information on how to use anecdotal records in your classroom, see the inservice on Collecting and Using Anecdotal Records.