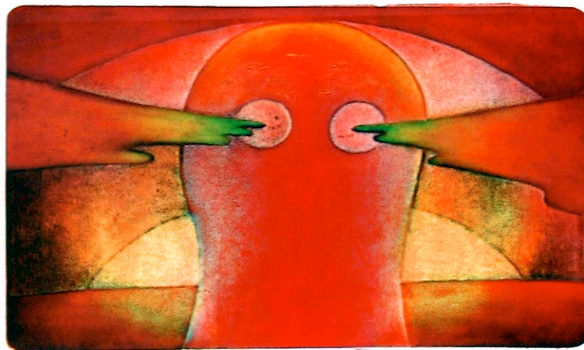


Anecdotal Observations



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it's all about seeing

RRC ECE Workplace
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About Anecdotal Records

1. What are they?

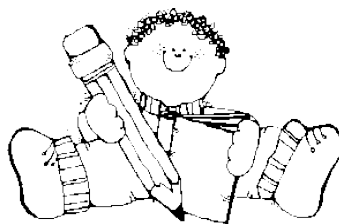
Anecdote: - a short story
- a sketch
- an illustration

(J. I. Rodale, *The Synonym Finder* (1978) Rodale Press)

Anecdote: - a brief account of an important developmental event (Billman, 1996, pg. 19).

Anecdotal Record:

- "The written account or *word picture* of one episode in the child's life" (Draper, 1977, pg 10).



2. Why use them?

Anecdotal records are a handy way to capture children's spontaneous and natural behaviours. They can be used:

- To record children's behaviour and play - as it occurs in their natural environment.
- To record children's level of development.

- To better understand individual interests and needs of children.
- To form the basis for planning and implementing experiences that will enhance each child's development and extend each child's learning.

Advantages of Anecdotal Records

- Very little preparation is required - you need only a pen and paper.
- The behaviour observed is unanticipated.
- Samplings of behaviour over a period of time provide a rich reserve of information about a child - where the child is at developmentally in all domains.
- A full range of typical behaviours are likely to be captured since the child is participating in familiar surroundings.

(Wylie, 1999, pg. 93, 94)



3. How to document anecdotal records

An anecdotal record tells an interesting story. This story must be written in such a way that it is completely clear to the reader.

"Stories are inherently interesting, and all cultures use them to communicate information." (Billman, 1996, pg. 19).

While each ECE Workplace anecdotal record assignment will look for content specific to the Com Pac in which it is found, the basic rules and format for writing up an anecdotal record do not change.

There are generally 3 parts to a written anecdotal record:

A beginning:

We call this **FORMAT**. This provides a description of the setting in which the story occurs. The beginning includes:

Child's name or children's names:

Date of birth:

Age:

Observer Name:

Date:

Time:

Setting: usually includes number and age range of children involved, number of adults in the area, materials or equipment used and where it takes place.

A middle:

We call this DATA. Events are recorded in the sequence in which they occur. Use descriptive, but objective language - record only what is observable.

Objective example:

Cory laid his head down on the big brown Teddy, shut his eyes tightly and lay very still.

This is objective, because it describes only the actions that are observable.

Subjective example:

Cory laid his head down on the big brown Teddy and pretended to sleep.

This is subjective, because what a child is pretending in their mind is not observable.

- Include direct quotes of dialogue that emphasizes the play theme and supports the context - not all conversation will be relevant and need not be recorded.
- Focus on the children's play and behaviour - child/adult interactions do not usually add information to your story, unless this is the specific subject of the observation.
- Keep all rough notes as part of your record, but transcribe into properly written anecdotes as soon as possible after the observation is made.

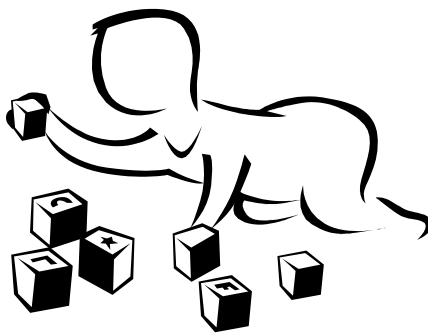
An end:

We call this INFERENCE, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION or COMMENTS. This section includes personal and professional interpretations, beliefs and judgments based on the data. These comments are reflective of the specific information in the data section.

There are cases in which “**An end**” is not needed. For instance, the photo with an anecdote on page 9 is self explanatory. Also, when planning play experiences from an anecdotal record “**An end**” is not always necessary. In other cases, a collection of short anecdotes or other documentation is gathered and only one summary is used for all.

“Anecdotes recorded over time and representing all developmental areas can give a comprehensive picture of a child’s development and become the basis for planning.”

(Billman, 1996; pg. 19)



Sample Anecdotal Record to Document Play

Child's name or children's names: Rosa

Date of birth: August, 3, 2001

Age: 4 years 2 months

Observer Name: Susan

Date: August 30, 2005

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Setting: Rosa plays alone in the water table under the tree in the back yard during outdoor free play.

Rosa is playing with a boat at the water table under the shade tree. She slowly pushes the boat down and looks as the drops of water gradually fill it. She watches it sink, whispering, "Come up now." She lifts it up. She collects small rocks and bark chips from the base of the tree and fills the boat with six large bark chips. "Here you go - Toot! Toot!" she adds three rocks and the boat slowly begins to take on water. Quickly, she piles on two more rocks and the boat sinks. The rocks go down with the ship, but the bark chips come floating to the top. "Pop! Pop!" Rosa pushes one of the chips down again and watches as it pops up as soon as she lets it go (Van Hoorn, 2003. pg 144).

Conclusion: In this anecdote it seems that Rosa is curious about the concept of sink and float.

This is a good point from which to plan play experiences for Rosa that reflect her interest, extend her learning and will challenge her thinking skills. One play idea that comes out of this anecdote is to introduce all kinds of objects into the water table, ex. sponges, corks, driftwood, foam blocks, sea shells, buttons, etc. so Rosa can continue exploring the sink and float idea. A further idea is to set out materials for her to chart her discoveries.

NOTE: How **play-based anecdotes** are to be used is determined by the content of the Com Pac. Sometimes these anecdotes will be used to determine the types or styles of play a child participates in most often. Or, as in the example above, to plan play experiences specific to a child's interests or needs.

Sample Anecdotal Record to Document Development

Child's name or children's names: Andrew

Date of birth: December 4, 2002

Age: 2 years 10 months

Observer Name: Andrea

Date: October 10, 2005

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Setting: Andrew plays with a ball during free play, outdoors near the chain link fence surrounding the playground.

Andrew kicks the ball in the direction of the chain link fence. The ball hits the fence, then rebounds, lands and rolls directly in front of him. Grinning from ear to ear he throws his left arm up into the air shouting, "Yeah!" He repeats this two more times, each time with the same response. After the third time, Andrew leaves the ball where it lands. He runs directly toward the fence, pumping his little legs hard. Then, "Whoosh!" he plows the full length of the right side of his body forcefully into the chain link fence, bouncing back a few feet, and falling to the ground much as the ball had done. With a look of surprise he hops back up onto his feet, shoots his left arm high into the air, and shouts, "Yeah!" He hops onto a nearby tricycle and rides it slowly toward the fence. He runs the tricycle into the fence. Bike and Andrew bounce back a short distance. He peddles backwards a distance and just at the point that he begins his forward run an ECE approaches calling his name.

Inference: From this anecdote it seems that Andrew is interested in the concept of rebounding. He tests out his idea by using his own body to bounce off the fence, which shows also that he is still in the sensory motor stage. It is interesting that his thinking skills allow him to transfer his discovery to a third form, the tricycle. Andrew demonstrates strong skills in the physical domain. He is adept at running, picking up good speed in a short distance and maintains his balance well, even on uneven ground. Balance and agility are evident also in the accuracy with which he kicks the ball into the fence at nearly the same spot three times in a row. It appears that Andrew is left-handed, since he consistently uses his left arm in any playful gestures.

Sample Photo With Anecdotal Record to Document Development

Photos with brief, descriptive anecdotes are a very effective, efficient method of documenting many aspects of a child's play, behaviour and development.



Joseph, age 20 months, uses his left hand to manipulate the buttons on the pop-up box.

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