

MORNING MESSAGE

Key Focus: Literacy

Observation: During circle time Ms. Jones asks Cherrie to help complete the morning message, which reads, "Today is _____." She says, "Monday." Then Ms. Jones asks Cherrie to help write it and she responds, "I don't know how." Ms. Jones says the word again, emphasizing the first sound and asks her what she hears. After some hesitation, Ms. Jones repeats the word and elongates the first sound, and Cherrie says, "M." Ms. Jones asks her to come take the marker and write the letter on the wipe board. She writes a "W" and a few children say that it isn't correct. Max writes the correct letter.

Reflecting on the Documentation: **Participants may quickly shift from reflecting on the documentation to interpreting the observation or suggesting strategies for extending learning. Remind participants to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the documentation technique.*

Ask: Instead of writing an anecdotal record about Cherrie, how might Ms. Jones have planned for this observation using a checklist?

Sample Responses: Before writing the morning message, the teacher can leave the initial consonant of six different words empty. For example, "Today is __ onday. It is a __unny __ay. Today we will read a book by our favorite author Ezra __ack __eats." She can choose six children for whom she is interested in knowing whether they can successfully identify the first letter of a word and set up a grid ahead of time:

Child	Word attempted	Letter written
Max	Monday	M
Cherrie	Monday	W
Robert		
Isabelle		
Heather	sunny	s
Jennifer		

Alternatively, the teacher can create a checklist with the words she plans to use, and then fill in the children's names next to the appropriate words:

Child	Word attempted	Letter written
Cherrie	Monday	W (said M)
Heather	sunny	s
	day	
	Jack	
	Keats	
Max		M (corrected Cherrie)

Interpretation of the Observation:

**Remind participants that in their interpretation they are looking for patterns, critical incidents, or errors. It is important to stick to the data.*

Ask: What does this interaction tell you about Cherrie's early literacy development?

Sample Responses: From this observation, we learn a lot about Cherrie. First, we know that she has some knowledge of the routine, realizing that a day of the week is needed to complete this sentence. For example, she did not say "car." However, we also know that she does not immediately feel confident talking about initial consonant letters. Her first response to the question of what "Monday" starts with is, "I don't know." With some help segmenting the sound, she is able to link M to its sound. With encouragement, Cherrie persisted at the writing task, despite her initial response that she "didn't know." However, when writing, she reverses the orientation of the letter.

Relating Your Observation to the Child Outcomes Framework:

**Although participants can defend other interpretations, there should be general consensus that this observation demonstrates:*

2A1/2/4/5 (Literacy/Phonological Awareness): Shows increasing ability to discriminate and identify sounds in spoken language. Shows growing awareness of beginning and ending sounds of words. Shows growing ability to hear and discriminate separate syllables in words. Associates sounds with written words, such as awareness that different words begin with the same sound.

2D4 (Literacy/Early Writing): Progresses from using scribbles, shapes, or pictures to represent ideas, to using letter-like symbols, to copying or writing familiar words such as their own name.

7B1 (Approaches to Learning/Engagement and Persistence): Grows in abilities to persist in and complete a variety of tasks, activities, projects, and experiences.

Next steps for large group instruction:

**Help participants make connections between what they learn from the assessment and the next steps they want to take in instruction. If suggestions for instruction extend activities to new areas of learning, ask participants to consider what aspects of children's progress they would assess and how they would do so during those extension activities.*

Ask: What would you recommend that the teacher do next for the class as a whole?

**Responses will vary but might include:*

- You can talk with the class about how "W" and "M" are letters that look alike, and generate lists together with the class of "W" words and "M" words, giving them pictures (like Water and Mountains) to associate with the actual letters.
- Use a memory aid—like saying that the M looks like a mountain and the W holds two cups of water.
- Have all of the children make the letter in the air with you and talk about how it is formed

Next steps for individualized instruction:

Ask: How can you build Cherrie’s skill in identifying initial sounds?

* Responses will vary but might include:

- Select two very different initial sounds (/s/ and /b/) and have her sort picture cards under the correct letter.
- Sing songs, play games, or read books where you substitute a sound at the beginning of each word [like the song *Willaby, Wallaby, Woo* or the book *Hungry Thing* (Slepian, Jan and Ann Seidler, 2001)].

Additional Notes:

Periodically throughout the year it makes sense to sit with each child in the class one-on-one and ask him or her to name the letters and the sounds the letters make. This can be a quick 5-10 minute assessment in which you ask children to identify random letters of the alphabet that you’ve written on cards that you can mix up. Keep track of how children progress with their letter and sound knowledge throughout the year.

Send home a list of words for children to practice identifying letter sounds at home. Ask parents for feedback that indicates for which words and how often children could identify the letter that makes the sound they hear at the beginning of the word

For dual language learners, include some words in their home language.

Record whether children know the letter name, the letter sound, and the date you did the assessment.

	Max		Cherrie		Robert		Isabelle		Heather		Jennifer	
	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound
A												
Date												
Date												
Date												
B												
Date												
Date												
Date												
C												
Date												
Date												
Date												
D												
Date												
Date												
Date												
E												
Date												
Date												
Date												
F												
Date												
Date												
Date												
G												
Date												
Date												
Date												

...OR have a separate sheet for each child (with all the letters on it)

Max	Date:		Date:		Date:	
	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound	Letter	Sound
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						
I						
J						
K						
L						
M						
N						
O						
P						
Q						
R						
S						
T						
U						
V						
W						
X						
Y						
Z						