

## MS. GWENDOLYN AND THE BIG BOOK

**Key Focus:** Literacy

**Observation:** At the beginning of the school year Ms. Gwendolyn wants to know which children can recognize the letters of the alphabet. She asks children to identify letters in a Big Book while reading and records the following:

Date	Child	Letters
September 2	David	D
September 3	Susan	S
September 4	Alex	A, X
September 8	Nora	N
September 10	Hayley	H, Y
September 12	Mollie	M
September 13	Jared	J
September 15	Will	W

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:** What are the advantages of using a checklist such as this?

**Sample Responses:** Neatly organizes information; some patterns become obvious; allows the teacher to know what letters children know in context of connected print (not printed on a separate card, but within a word).

**Ask:** What is missing from the checklist?

**Sample Responses:** We don't know if there were letters that they did not recognize. We don't know if they recognized the letter only at the beginning of a word or when it came at the middle or end of a word. We don't know how she prompted them—did she name the letter and ask them to point to it in the book or did she point and ask them to name it?

**Ask:** What are some other ways to record this information?

**Sample Responses:** You could have a sheet with the names of the 2-6 children that you plan to ask that day, include all the letters of the alphabet on it, cross out those the child could not find and circle or underline those the child named or recognized. Or you could use a chart set up by letter where you record the day on which each child named or pointed to letters. (See handout or presentation for examples.)

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 checklist begin to tell you about these children's recognition skills?

**Sample Responses:** Each child recognized at least one letter and associated them with their shapes; all the children are recognizing initial letters of their first names; two of the children are recognizing other letters in their first names. Children in this class show some understanding that letters are a special category of visual graphic.

Relating your observation to the Child Outcomes Framework:

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

**2E1 (Literacy/Alphabet Knowledge):** Shows progress in associating the names of letters with their shapes and sounds.

**2E4 (Literacy/Alphabet Knowledge):** Knows that letters of the alphabet are a special category of visual graphics that can be individually named.

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:*

- During storybook reading, continue to identify individual letters in words that have particular significance.
- As part of regular morning routines, ask the children to match their names to their picture to represent that they are present in school. Alternatives to this activity include having children match the first letter of their name to their picture or match other words that begin with the letter of their first name to their picture.
- Go over this chart at morning meeting so that all children are exposed to the different letters in children's names.
- Ask the children to take turns taking attendance by putting children's names on the bulletin board after holding up the card with each child's name on it and asking the group to say if that child is there that day (recognition of name rather than letters).

Next steps for individualized instruction:

**Ask:** What would you recommend that the teacher do next for individual children?

*\*Responses will vary but might include:*

- Set up a center at the writing table at which children read small books one on one with a teacher that center around particular letters. Ask children to manipulate letters on alphabet magnet boards.

- Play a game (like Memory) that helps children learn names of letters in their own name and the names of the other children in the class, starting with a small number of letters and gradually adding more. Name the letters as they play, for example: “You turned over a D like in David.”

Additional Notes: