



Teaching Guides & Tools

What Is an Anchor Chart?

(originally posted January 22, 2010)

Effective literacy teachers consciously develop and nurture the environment in their classrooms. They realize the classroom environment often acts as a 'second teacher', enhancing the development of student independence. "The way we set up our classroom gives our students a clear message about the culture of the classroom, the kind of work they will do and the expectations we have for them" (Sibberson and Szymusiak, 2003).

To promote literacy skills and encourage independence, you will want to make strategic and purposeful use of print resources such as posters, signs, lists, charts, and student/teacher writing samples in your classroom. One tool in particular, the anchor chart, is very effective in promoting student success. An anchor chart outlines or describes procedures, processes, and strategies on a particular theme or topic and is posted in the classroom for reference by students. Examples of anchor charts include: what to do in an interview, tips on using commas, what readers need to do when they infer, how to choose 'just right' books, or how to write a literature response.

Grade 3 Example:

- Commas separate the parts of a date (e.g., Friday, January 22, 2010)
- Commas take the place of "and" in a list (e.g., Devon invited Sarah, Jason, Rafia, and Clayton to his party.).
- Commas can join short sentences together into a list to make a longer sentence (e.g., At bedtime I get into my fuzzy pyjamas, I put my electric blanket to seven, and I turn my reading light on).

Anchor charts are very different from teacher-generated materials or purchased posters because they are created *with* students. The teacher acts as the scribe while students brainstorm ideas. Chart paper and markers or an interactive white board can be used to capture students' suggestions. If using an interactive white board, ensure that students can easily access charts when required. Because students have collaborated in the creation of the charts, they are more apt to make use of the information contained on them. Since anchor charts are open-ended in nature, both students and teachers can make additions or modifications as a unit progresses or during the course of the year. In this way, anchor charts are an important means for synthesizing ideas and demonstrating learning.

Anchor Charts in *Literacy Place for the Early Years*

In the *LPEY* lesson plans, you will see many references to various types of anchor charts. Use the suggested examples as starting points for what a chart might look like once created. For example, on the "**Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record**" found in the *Reading Guide*, you will see suggestions about what readers do when they use a particular strategy. These ideas form the basis of what you will want to demonstrate for students. After listening to your think alouds, students can make contributions in 'kid-friendly' language and these are recorded on a chart explaining what to do when using the strategy. As you progress through the unit, your chart will expand as students collect other ideas during Shared and Guided experiences. Ultimately, you want students to refer to the anchor chart while applying the strategy during independent reading.

Things I Need to Demonstrate

- What do I already know about this topic?
- Terminology that focuses on concrete information (e.g., *It's right there in the text. You'll find it on the page. The information is on the chart.*)
- How you can find information about a topic in more than one place—model skimming for information
- How to find explicitly stated main ideas (e.g., in the first sentence of a paragraph)
- How to jot down facts about a topic
- How to find facts in visual features and text features

Comprehension Strategy: Analyzing

When analyzing, readers:

- think about what they know about the topic before reading
- find information "right there" on the page
- find the main idea the author wants you to know
- look at pictures, graphs, charts, and illustrations to find information

When teaching a **Text-type Writing Study**, create an anchor chart so that students are aware of the purpose, organization, and text features of the particular form and format of writing. As students study the text form in Shared Reading and continue examining it during Modelled/Shared Writing, their observations can be recorded for reference when writing independently.

Grade 1 Example

Things to Include in a Recipe:

- goal or title
- ingredients and amounts
- tools
- steps (what to do)
- pictures and labels

If you have a question you would like answered, please email your request to: workshops@scholastic.ca.