

## Classroom Observation Forms and Ideas

In considering a developmental support program for a child, the broader, deeper and more objective that observations can be, of course the better. Also, carefully observing every child – not just the ones “we know” need remedial attention – never fails to reveal new understanding.

On the following pages you will find a collection of observation points, forms and resources that I have used over the years to supplement the First Grade Readiness Screening and the Second Grade Extra Lesson Developmental Assessment processes that are standard at my school. These can be filled out by the class teacher and/or remedial teacher. A team effort is always the best!

### THE INVENTORY OF READINESS FOR CLASSROOM TASKS

On pages 4 and 5 you will find a matrix meant to help class teachers take a step back from the thousands of impressions that build up for each child, and assign an objective value to aspects of capacity for learning. One way to approach this observation project would be for the class teacher to complete a form for one student a day.

### CLASS PENCIL GRIP & POSTURE INVENTORY

On page 2 and 3 I've provided a matrix for observing other interesting aspects, explained below. This form can be completed by the class teacher, assistant, or a visiting subject teacher.



#### Pencil Grip

As noted by Audrey McAllen in “The Extra Lesson”, a relaxed, coordinated, mature pencil grip has the ends of the thumb and index finger facing each other. This grip allows for fine and gross motor movements to be in

balance. In order to more easily record a class-full of pencil grips, the pictures on page 2 provide a numbered system. **Grip #1** is the desired grip as described by McAllen. **Grip #2** is close to this goal, but the middle finger also wraps over. **Grip #3** is also close to the desired grip, but the thumb wraps too far over. **Grip #4** can be recorded for any version of multiple fingers over. **Grip #5** can be coded for a “claw grip” similar to the one in the photo, or for any other clumsy grip.

#### Hand Position for Writing

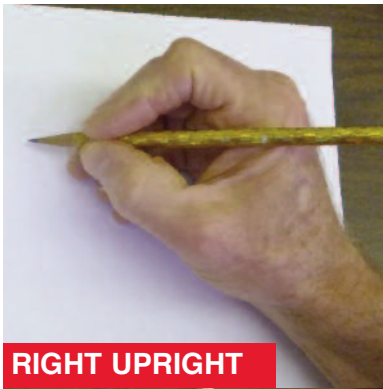
The position of the student's hand may be a pointer to whether the child tends to be predominantly a detail-oriented or big-picture thinker. According to the research cited on the last page of this document, writing with the hand in the (most-common) upright position indicates that language processing is centered on the opposite side of the brain, i.e. a **Right Upright** position indicates language processing taking place predominantly in the left brain, a **Right Hook** indicates that language processing is predominantly on the same (right) side. A further note on this topic is on page 6 of this document.

#### Hair Whorls

Limited scientific research supports a theory that hair whorls on humans point to laterality, possible learning challenges, and other personality traits. While the research with humans is far from conclusive, it is



interesting to note that very many horse owners believe that whorl placement and rotation direction provide an excellent predictor of a horse's temperament and trainability. In one study, for instance, Irish researchers identified a unique link between equine motor laterality, or “handedness,” and specific characteristics of facial hair



**RIGHT UPRIGHT**



**RIGHT HOOK**



**LEFT UPRIGHT**



**LEFT HOOK**



**CLOCKWISE**



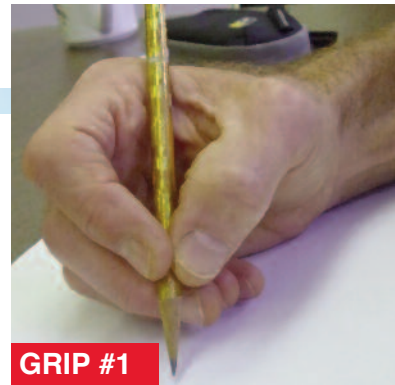
**COUNTERCLOCKWISE**

whorls: right-handed horses had significantly more clockwise whorls, whereas whorls were more likely to flow in a counterclockwise direction in left-handed horses.

The majority of humans have a single, clockwise whorl at the crown of the head. My suggestion is only that you might want to observe this feature over time as a research project.

### **Desk Size and Sitting Posture**

Spaces are also provided on the form for noting whether the student's desk is too tall or too short for ease of working; and for a few words about posture (e.g. slumps, wraps legs around chair, leans down to write, etc.).



**GRIP #1**



**GRIP #2**



**GRIP #3**



**GRIP #4**



**GRIP #5**



**Inventory of Readiness for Classroom Tasks**

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = no problem, 5 = significant difficulty)      1   2   3   4   5

**Constitutional observations**

Unusual diet, e.g. a lot of soft foods, or refusal of an entire category of foods; strong aversion to some common textures, tastes or smells	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mouth breathing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allergies, asthma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appears physically immature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seems over- or under- stimulated (circle one)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lost on a cloud, or over-aware of environment (circle one)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tired, sickly, stubborn, nervous (circle as applicable)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other					

**Behavior observations**

Quick to feel attacked/bothered, e.g. when in line	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoids eye contact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeks excessive physical contact; or avoids physical contact (circle one)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hesitation or refusal to participate in group activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Slow with tasks or work; reluctant to move to next activity; fixates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rushes ahead with tasks or work; difficulty with transitions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trouble with spoken directions, multi-step directions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trouble with written, drawn or moved directions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other					

**Movement observations**

Falls off chair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tucks feet under legs or twists around chair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twirls body	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Makes noises or twitches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fidgets, plays with objects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clumsy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulty or avoidance of personal care items like shoe tying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Itching, picking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soft speech or baby talk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Messiness - work or clothes, desk, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uncertain laterality; switches hand use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tries to shake hands with left hand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Movements appear immature, i.e. toddler-like movements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mirrors movements (3rd Gr. & up) i.e. uses left hand when you hold up right	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can't stay in rhythm or tone with marching, clapping, singing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other					

(1 = no problem, 5 = significant difficulty)

1 2 3 4 5

**Movement for reading and writing observations - Grades classroom**

Letter, number reversals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tension or difficulty with pencil grip	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Letter and/or number reversals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Messy or disorganized handwriting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulty with form drawing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Holds reading close to eyes, or leans way in to desk work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moves work or torso to one side so work is only on one side (which: )	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rubs eyes, blinks, frowns, tires quickly with eye tasks or gets headaches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other					

**Language observations - Early Childhood (or Grades)**

Home background for vocabulary, talking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family background of dyslexia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does not talk in complete sentences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Auditory discrimination, hearing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor grasp of concept of same/different, bigger/smaller, longer/shorter, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does not listen to stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does not desire to understand stories; can't recall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seems uninterested in books	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does not engage in dramatic play	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other					

**Capacity observations - Grades (or Early Childhood)**

Questions re general intelligence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifests fear, dislike or frustration about writing/reading activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feels like a failure at writing/reading activities, or overly aware to ability comparisons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifests fear, dislike or frustration about math/numeracy activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feels like a failure at math/numeracy activities, or overly aware to ability comparisons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents not with program - too much pressure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents not with program - too little expectation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disparity in ability levels, i.e. any inconsistency such as emotionally aware but moves like a toddler, OR much brighter in math than reading or vice versa, verbal but not reading (note below)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marked interest in mechanical objects, taking things apart	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asks a lot of questions, or none	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Needs directions repeated many times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other

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### A further note about...

#### Hand Position for Writing

Following is an abstract from a research on this topic, together with a pointer to further research in case you're interested.

**Variations in cerebral organization as a function of handedness, hand posture in writing, and sex**, from Journal of Experimental Psychology, by Levy and Reid.

*“During the past century, it has become increasingly apparent that there is a great deal of variation in the direction and degree of cerebral lateralization, a plurality of people having language and related functions strongly specialized to the left hemisphere and visuospatial functions strongly specialized to the right, with substantial minorities manifesting various deviations from this pattern. In particular, in 35%-50% of sinistrals and 1%-10% of dextrals, the right hemisphere is specialized for linguistic skills, and in some unknown fraction of the two handedness groups, verbal and/or spatial abilities are, to varying extents, bilateralized. Levy (1973) suggested that the hand posture adopted during writing might be an index of the lateral relationship between the dominant writing hand and the language hemisphere, a normal posture indicating contralateral language specialization, and an inverted posture indicating ipsilateral language specialization. In the present investigation, two tachistoscopic tests of cerebral lateralization, one measuring spatial functions and one measuring verbal function, were administered to 73 subjects classified by handedness, hand posture during writing, and sex. Among both dextral and sinistral subjects with a normal writing posture, language and spatial functions were specialized to the contralateral and ipsilateral hemispheres, respectively, and lateral differentiation of the brain was strong. The reverse was seen in subjects having an inverted writing posture. In all groups, females were less laterally differentiated than males. In 70 out of 73 subjects, the direction of cerebral lateralization was accurately predicted by handedness and hand posture. The 3 subjects (2 females and 1 male) who failed to manifest the predicted relations were all left-handers having an inverted hand posture. In this group, lateral differentiation was so weak that the reliability of the tachistoscopic tests was reduced, and we attribute these three predictive failures to this cause. Thus, almost all of the variation in the lateral organization of the brain was accounted for by handedness, hand posture, and sex.*

For more detail on this topic, the above study is cited in the book “Sex Differences in Cognitive Ability” by Diane F. Halpern (Lawrence Erlbaum Publishing, 2000).