

## Scribe's Record

*Determined to change her students' response of "nothing much" when parents asked what they did that day, Aleta came up with Scribe's Record.*

By capturing what your students most want to remember learning, you can accomplish a number of goals that support an Inspired Learning Environment. You'll strengthen students' skills of analysis and synthesis. You'll build productive habits of mind so that students think, each day, "What are the critical ideas or activities I want to remember from today's class?" – as opposed to thinking, "Is this going to be on the test?" And you'll get consistent feedback, on what students value, enjoy, ponder, and recall about each day's class activities, as well as what's interesting and what's not.

Filling the walls with student work, questions, and accomplishments – like what they are learning – helps students take ownership over the space. They benefit from spending time in a classroom that reflects both their intellectual and emotional development and their potential for future growth.

### What you will need:

*Time estimate:* Budget at least 5 minutes to teach, daily or weekly

*Materials:* Chart paper (optional), paper/ index cards, pens/ pencils, tape/ staples

### Directions:

1. *Set up:* Find a place to accommodate one sheet per day or week of the school year – on the walls, across the ceiling, in a publicly accessible scrapbook/ binder, etc.
2. Tell students that at the end of each day / class period / week you will ask them to select 3 things they have learned or done or ideas they have investigated that they want to remember from that day / class period / week.
3. Brainstorm on chart paper or a white board. Then have students vote on the three they would like to capture.
  - If time permits, you can engage students in a reflection on the day's work, asking questions like, "Which was more important, this test or that unplanned discussion?"
4. Assign or ask a student to volunteer to be the Scribe. (This role should rotate throughout the year so that every student is the Scribe at one point.) Once the three items are chosen, the student fills out the Scribe's Record for the day / class period / week and places it in a designated location in the classroom.
5. At the end of each unit, each month, each school year, offer students the opportunity to review what they've learned: Do a gallery walk, spark a discussion reflecting on what the class has accomplished, and/ or have students turn the papers into a binder to take home.

### Resources

- Read Aleta's story about creating this activity with her class.

## Aleta's Story

In my first month of teaching sixth grade, my students and I accomplished a lot. We...

- designed and performed an experiment to find out if toothpaste actually makes your mouth cleaner;
- learned to write some characters in cuneiform, an early form of writing used by the ancient Mesopotamians
- wrote, rehearsed, performed, and filmed screenplays of pivotal moments from the novel we were reading;
- engaged in a whole class debate on the question, 'Are pronouns our friends or our enemies?'

I taught in a middle school in which the sixth grade teachers taught every subject, including Ancient World History, so we did a lot in a day!

However, when I met with my students' parents and guardians during back to school night, very few of them knew about any of the activities we'd done. I was surprised--and, I admit, a little disappointed. I asked, 'Do you ask your children what they did in school each day?' Most parents said they did, but that the answers they received could more or less be summarized as, 'Nothing much.'

I was determined to change this. My students had been particularly interested in cuneiform, the very early form of written language in Mesopotamia, and the role of the scribe, the person responsible for writing down so much of the civilization's history. So I challenged them to do for our class what the ancient scribes did for their society: keep track of the things we valued.

And so Scribe's Record was born. My students and I spent some time debating how to capture what we did each day, and how much to capture, recognizing that some days would be more exciting or memorable than others, and some activities or ideas would be more important to one student than to others. We decided to end each day by brainstorming a list of the things we'd done and ideas we'd discussed that day. When time allowed, students would have the opportunity to advocate for a particular item--i.e. present reasoning for why getting locked outside of the building after the fire drill was more exciting/important to remember than taking our math test. Then (with or without the advocacy step), students would vote on the top three activities or ideas they wanted to remember for the day.

I sent a letter home to families explaining Scribe's Record and suggesting, 'Please ask your child what the class chose to put on the Scribe's Record each day?' Not only did students and their families start talking about what they'd done in school, students started focusing more thoughtfully on their work and synthesizing their learning in order to pare their days down to three important activities or ideas.