Science Notebook Entry Types

Science notebooks contain information about the students' classroom experiences and are used much as scientists would, before, during, and after all investigations. They are a place where students formulate and record their questions, make predictions, record data, procedures, and results, compose reflections, and communicate findings. Most importantly, notebooks provide a place for students to record new concepts they have learned.

By reviewing hundreds of actual student notebooks, a group of education leaders from Washington State explored how teachers were asking students to record their ideas in their science notebooks. Analysis of the student work revealed eight distinct strategies or "entry types," used most frequently by practicing K12 teachers. This handout describes those eight entry types and offers a rationale for why a teacher might select a given entry type. The samples come from students of all grade levels, demographic groups, and geographic regions.

Entry Type	Definition and Purpose
Drawings	**Definition** Student generated drawings of materials, scientific investigation set-up, observations, or concepts. Three common types of drawings used in science notebooks include: 1. Sketches: Informal pictures of objects or concepts created with little detail. 2. Scientific Illustrations: Detailed, accurate, labeled drawings of observations or concepts. 3. Technical Drawings: A record of a product in such detail that someone could create the product from the drawings.
	Purpose Students use drawings to make their thinking and observations of concrete or abstract ideas visible. Drawings access diverse learning styles, allow entry to the writing process for special needs students and emergent writers, and assist in vocabulary development (e.g. oral explanations, group discussions, labels).
Tables, Charts, and Graphs	**Definition** Formats for recording and organizing data, results, and observations.
	Purpose Students use tables and charts to organize information in a form that is easily read and understood. Recording data in these forms facilitates record keeping. Students use graphs to compare and analyze data, display patterns and trends, and synthesize information to communicate results.

Graphic Organizers	**Definition** Tools that illustrate connections among and between ideas, objects, and information. Examples include, but are not limited to, Venn diagrams, "Box–and-T" charts, and concept maps.
	Purpose Graphic organizers help students organize ideas to recognize and to communicate connections and relationships.
Notes and Practice Problems	**Definition** A record of ideas, observations, or descriptions of information from multiple sources, including but not limited to direct instruction, hands-on experiences, videos, readings, research, demonstrations, solving equations, responding to guiding questions, or developing vocabulary.
	Purpose Students use notes and practice problems to construct meaning and practice skills for current use and future reference.
Reflective and Analytical Entries	**Definition** A record of a student's own thoughts and ideas, including, but not limited to initial ideas, self-generated questions, reflections, data analysis, reactions, application of knowledge to new situations, and conclusions.
	Purpose Students use reflective and analytical entries to think about scientific content from their own perspective, make sense of data, ask questions about their ideas and learning processes, and clarify and revise their thinking.
Inserts	**Definition** Inserts are artifacts placed within a notebook, including, but not limited to photographs, materials (e.g. flower petals, crystals, chromatography results), and supplemental readings (e.g. newspaper clippings).
	Purpose Students use inserts to document and to enrich their learning.
Investigation Formats	**Definition** Scaffolds to guide students through a controlled investigation, field investigation, or design process. Examples include, but are not limited to investigation planning sheets or science writing heuristics.
	Purpose Students use investigation formats to guide their thinking and writing while they design and conduct investigations. Students also use these formats to reflect on and discuss their findings and ideas.
Writing Frames	**Definition** Writing prompts used to focus a student's thinking. Examples include, but are not limited to, "I smelled…I felt…I observed…","My results show…", "The variable I will change is…", or "I think that because…".
	Purpose Students use frames to organize their ideas, prompt their thinking, and structure their written response. Frames help students become more proficient in scientific writing and less reliant upon the prompts.