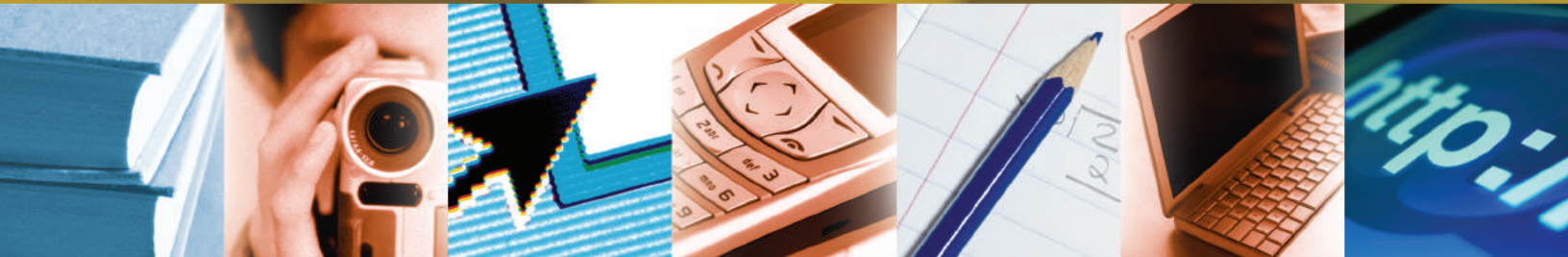


A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction

Grades 4 to 6



VOLUME TWO
Assessment

A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6

Volume One: Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner

1. The Junior Learner
2. Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy
3. Principles of Effective Literacy Instruction

Volume Two: Assessment

Subsequent volumes in the series will cover a range of topics, including planning instruction; the classroom environment and resources; instructional approaches in oral communication, reading, writing, and media literacy; and technology as it supports instruction and learning.

A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6

A Multivolume Resource from the Ministry of Education

VOLUME TWO
Assessment

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Une série de publications équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant :
Guide d'enseignement efficace en matière de littératie de la 4^e à la 6^e année.

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INTRODUCTION

A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6 is organized into several volumes. The first three volumes provide the foundation for effective literacy instruction and literacy learning in the junior grades. Subsequent volumes go more deeply into what to teach – and how – in order to help all students experience success.

Volume 2, “Assessment”, provides an in-depth discussion of assessment, including its role in literacy instruction and the various methods and tools for gathering, recording, interpreting, and communicating assessment information. A variety of practical assessment strategies and tools are described in detail. These are intended to help teachers to plan instruction, provide feedback to students, and adjust instruction to meet students’ evolving needs.

In each volume in this series, teachers are reminded of the key messages, listed in the chart on page 2, that are intended to help them address the goals of the junior literacy program. The key messages are the fundamental ideas that underlie all of the approaches, strategies, and tools described in this guide. They answer the question, “Why am I teaching this material, in this way, to this group of students, at this time?” Teachers can use these key messages to guide their practice.

Diversity and Effective Instruction

A Vision for Equity in Ontario Classrooms

School classrooms represent the world in miniature; they mirror our larger society. The diversity that exists in our classrooms has helped to shape our vision for education in Ontario today. All children, regardless of their background and/or ability, deserve opportunities to learn and to grow, both cognitively and socially. The challenge is to reach more children more effectively. To do this, we need to create a vision for learning that makes every child feel included.

To develop the right learning conditions for each individual child, we must allow for a variety of cultural experiences and multiple perspectives, so that all children feel valued in the classroom.

Key Messages for Teachers and Students

Effective literacy teachers in Grades 4 to 6 understand that:		Successful students in Grades 4 to 6 understand that:
Literacy instruction must be driven by equitable ongoing assessment.	→	Assessments are a way for the teacher and for me to understand how well I am learning.
Literacy instruction must be explicit and relevant to students' lives.	→	I learn best when I am reading and writing for a real purpose.
Literacy instruction must be differentiated, inclusive, and respectful of all students.	→	Some tasks will be difficult, but I can learn the strategies that I need to succeed.
Students' unique identities and diverse experiences can contribute greatly to a rich learning environment.	→	I have valuable knowledge and experiences that I can share with my classmates.
Talk is the foundation for literacy.	→	Accountable talk helps me to improve my reading, writing, and thinking.
Reading, writing, talking, listening, thinking, viewing, and representing are reciprocal literacy processes.	→	Reading will make me a better writer, and writing will make me a better reader. Talking, listening, and thinking will make me a better reader and writer.
Students need to become proficient in "multiliteracies", involving texts of all types.	→	I need to use my literacy skills to work with texts of all types.
Students need to learn that their literacy skills are transferable to all content areas.	→	I can apply the strategies and skills that I learn in Language to all subjects.
Students learn best when they are motivated and actively engaged in their learning.	→	If I am actively involved in making meaning when I read and write, I will improve my learning.
Explicit feedback given immediately after assessment leads to improved levels of student achievement.	→	The teacher's feedback will help me to improve my learning.
By gradually releasing responsibility for learning to students, teachers help students improve their learning and develop a greater level of independence.	→	The strategies I am learning will help me become a proficient and independent reader, writer, and communicator.
When students are encouraged to assess their own work and set their own goals, they take ownership of their learning.	→	I need to think about my learning and set goals for my learning.
Authentic literacy experiences help students develop skills and attitudes that will serve them throughout their lives and improve the quality of their lives.	→	Knowing how to read, write, and communicate effectively will help me be successful during my school years and throughout my future.
Metacognitive skills give students a growing awareness of themselves as learners and a greater degree of independence.	→	Thinking about my thinking will help me understand what I have learned, make decisions about my learning, and become a more independent learner.
Critical-thinking and critical-literacy skills are the tools students need in order to develop into active, responsible participants in the global community.	→	I need to think critically about all the texts I encounter, and ask myself questions about the accuracy and fairness of the stories or information in these texts.
Professional collaboration and ongoing learning help teachers develop a deeper, broader, more reflective understanding of effective instruction.	→	Working with others gives me new ideas and helps me to reflect on and expand my own thinking and learning.

Diversity, Equity, and Student Achievement

Effective learning environments are those that consistently foster student achievement. The performance of all students is strengthened when the diversity of the class is recognized and valued.

Acknowledging students' different backgrounds and experiences is best accomplished by weaving appropriate examples throughout lessons in all subject areas. Learning occurs when students are exposed to the unfamiliar. Discussing viewpoints and sharing aspects of different cultures, customs, and languages are powerful tools for learning.

Being committed to inclusion means empowering students to use their voices and experiences in building their knowledge and understanding. The diversity of students' voices must be reflected in learning materials, discussions, problem solving, and learning applications. Teachers who recognize and build on the diversity of their students adopt flexible approaches, maintain high standards, and bring concepts alive by presenting them in contexts that students perceive to be real and meaningful.

For instance, in developing a social studies unit on early settlers in Upper Canada (Grade 3), or a history unit on the development of Western Canada (Grade 8), teachers need to ensure that stories of pioneers who established Black communities, such as Dresden and Buxton in Ontario, or Breton, Wildwood, Maidstone, and Campsie in Alberta and Saskatchewan, are included in the readings and pictures they choose for students. Similarly, in science programs, the achievements of scientists and inventors who are women or who come from Aboriginal, Black, or other minority backgrounds must be celebrated. Pictures and examples should illustrate the accomplishments of all members of society, so that children will see themselves in the curriculum.

Being open to students' diverse experiences and points of view increases opportunities for teachers to seize teachable moments that support effective learning.

"Literacy is closely linked to culture. The texts that children see, use, and create in the junior grades send a strong message about the culture of learning in their school and in Ontario. Students who see themselves reflected and affirmed in classroom texts and in instruction (that is, those who experience language, culture, and identity *engagement*) come to appreciate that reading and writing are genuinely *for* them and *about* them. In addition to having their own identity affirmed in this way, junior students learn about the cultures and identities of others in the classroom and in the community, and begin to appreciate the richness and diversity of Canadian society. From this firm foundation, students learn to live with respect and intellectual vigour in a multicultural world, and they build the higher-order thinking and critical-literacy skills they need for responsible citizenship and lifelong learning in the twenty-first century."

(Literacy for Learning, p. 6)

Supporting Diverse Learning Styles

Student self-esteem is fostered through the creation of competencies. Helping students to develop competencies empowers them and creates an *intrinsic* motivation to learn.

Success in supporting student learning depends, in part, on taking into account the diversity of learning styles among students in the classroom. Many teachers use Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences to respond effectively to the diverse learning styles of their students. "Multiple intelligences", as identified by Gardner, reflect the following ways of demonstrating intellectual ability: Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Musical/Rhythmic, Visual/Spatial, Bodily/Kinesthetic, and Naturalist. When teachers take these intelligences into account in their lesson design and their assessment of student achievement, they can focus on a range of student strengths that reflects the varied abilities of the class as a whole.

Creating an Environment Conducive to Learning

An environment that helps promote learning is critical to engaging students in school-work and class activities. Learning is a social activity. However, the ways in which students respond to the social environment in the classroom may vary considerably. For some students, the environment may be as integral to learning as the actual learning activities in which they participate. When students are comfortable and feel secure in their learning environment, their true potential will be reflected in their performance. Recognizing and valuing diversity strengthens students' capacity to work both independently and within a collaborative setting.

Recognizing Diversity in Its Many Forms

Diversity takes many forms and exists in all Ontario communities. In addition to cultural diversity, classrooms will have students of different gender, intellectual and physical ability, religious and social background, and sexual orientation.

Children will experience diversity throughout their lives. Their capacity to develop awareness and empathy early on will influence their future actions considerably.

"Aboriginal communities in Ontario are seeking to preserve and develop their languages through community-based literacy learning. As well, Ontario has a long tradition of growth through immigration, with many people from around the world bringing their language, culture, and experiences to this country. With increasing globalization and the shift to an information economy, the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all people become a resource base that can enrich life and benefit all Ontarians."

(Literacy for Learning, p. 7)

“Diversity Lenses”: Bringing Equity Into Focus

Success in engaging all students in their learning ultimately depends on teaching lessons from multiple perspectives. By wearing “diversity lenses” when planning lessons and during class discussions, teachers create a vision for equity in education that permeates the classroom, leaving an indelible imprint on young minds. When as much of society as possible is represented in that vision, teachers succeed in dismantling feelings of alienation and exclusion and instead build feelings of respect and acceptance.

The checklist on the following pages will assist teachers as they reflect on and prepare lessons. Not every item may be applicable to every classroom. The checklist represents a “lens” through which teachers can view their own instructional strategies and approaches, ensuring that diverse realities are reflected in their students’ experiences in the classroom.

CHECKLIST FOR AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Be sure to take the following considerations into account in planning classroom instruction and assessment.

ATMOSPHERE

- Create an atmosphere where all aspects of the classroom honour equity and inclusion and respect gender differences; diverse ethnocultural and faith communities, family structures, student abilities and needs; and differences in socioeconomic status.
- Take care that all students feel accepted and gain a sense of belonging.
- Convey your belief that all students can learn and succeed.
- Provide, for each student, a balance of challenge and support to scaffold new learning.
- Convey openness and warmth and encourage students to interact with others in the same way.
- Emphasize and model values of fairness, empathy, acceptance, kindness, respect, and responsibility to and for other people.
- Create an atmosphere of respect for the school community and foster positive connections between the school and students’ home and community cultures.
- Recognize and value student improvement and celebrate success for each individual – e.g., best work of all students is displayed; new learning, improvement, and success are celebrated inside and outside the classroom; commitment, perseverance, helpfulness, and intrinsic motivation are recognized and valued.
- Challenge any and all stereotypical comments and jokes and inappropriate behaviours.

ENVIRONMENT

- Provide images and visual displays in the classroom that are gender balanced and reflect the diversity of the community and the world outside the classroom.
- Provide texts, resources, and learning materials in the classroom that reflect diversity of culture, ethnicity, faith, and language, and differences in socioeconomic status, physical ability, and family structure.
- Establish classroom routines that are sensitive to the individual needs and cultural norms of students.

(continued)

CHECKLIST FOR AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY – CONTINUED

- Take care that assignments of classroom responsibilities are inclusive, gender balanced, and not stereotyped.
- Give all students opportunities to display their best work.

COMMUNITY

- Value and celebrate diversity in the community by encouraging activities such as family literacy events, visits to classrooms, and storytelling and games from various cultures.
- Create and plan literacy events using culturally diverse texts and learning materials.
- Use storytelling, games, and performing arts to engage students and their families in the enjoyment of learning together.
- Invite community involvement in displays of books and materials appropriate for junior learners.
- Take care that all parents/guardians receive invitations in their own language as needed.
- Invite parents to share their insights, experiences, and concerns within the context of the classroom curriculum.
- Invite guest speakers from various organizations, arts groups, etc. who represent the diversity of the local community and of the larger community in Ontario.

RESOURCES

- Use resources that value and reflect diversity – e.g., poems, rhymes, songs, dance, and music from a variety of cultures; audio-taped books in a variety of first languages.
- Provide resources that appeal to both boys and girls.
- Use resources that reflect the interests and perspectives of both genders and present characters from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds in non-stereotypical roles.
- Use a range of resources that reflect the diverse cultures, social backgrounds, and experiences of students in the class – e.g., that include topics of cultural and social relevance.
- Provide resources that accurately reflect the history, culture, and realities of Canada's Aboriginal peoples.
- Use resources that present both local and global images and perspectives.
- Provide dual-language books and books in students' first languages.
- Provide a variety of resources with a range of reading levels for students, including English language learners, at different stages of reading development.
- Take care that financial considerations do not prevent students from participating in class trips and other school-sponsored experiences.

READING

- Provide opportunities for reading experiences that enable students to build on their own experiences, language, and culture.
- Select texts that show situations, problems, solutions, and experiences in a variety of cultural settings.
- Select texts that show both male and female heroes, role models, and leaders from a variety of backgrounds.

CHECKLIST FOR AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY – CONTINUED

- Select texts, such as fairytales and fables, that invite comparison of similar plots, storylines, and characters across a variety of cultures.
- Arrange text sets to include universal themes – e.g., hope, struggle, survival, courage, family – presented from a variety of different viewpoints and experiences.
- Arrange text sets of fictional and informational material that address topics of social relevance – e.g., immigration, poverty, homelessness, war, social justice.
- Use texts to create role-play opportunities that enable students to experience the world through the eyes of another.
- Use fictional and informational texts to help students identify stereotypes of individuals, cultures, and social backgrounds.
- Present picture books that enable students to explore images of gender, ethnicity, or physical disability.
- Include a range of texts that present the contributions to society, industry, science and technology, the arts, etc. of people from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds and from different parts of the world.
- Provide texts by local and international authors from a variety of cultures, social backgrounds, and historical time periods, and written from a variety of viewpoints.
- Use discussion and oral activities to help students make explicit connections between what they read and their own background and experiences.

WRITING

- Provide opportunities for writing experiences that enable students to build on their own experiences, language, and culture.
- Provide models of writing from culturally diverse sources.
- Provide opportunities to explore oral and written language across a variety of cultures – e.g., oral storytelling, written stories; narrative techniques, language patterns.
- Provide supports for students who are challenged by various aspects of writing and spelling – e.g., graphic organizers, tape recorders, use of a scribe, allowing students to do tasks or make presentations in alternative ways.
- Provide students with the opportunity to compose orally before writing.
- Engage students in an exploration of writing across cultures and time – e.g., alphabets, writing forms and purposes, pictographs, materials, conventions.

LANGUAGE

- Respect and value the language students bring to school.
- Tap into students' family language and culture as foundations for learning.
- Provide classroom activities that enable students to learn that different language forms and styles and structures are appropriate to different situations – e.g., home, church, business meeting, school council, interview, parent–teacher interview, telephone conversation.
- Give students opportunities to consolidate their ideas verbally prior to writing where appropriate.
- Provide opportunities for ESL/ELD students to use their first language to formulate and/or express their thoughts orally and in writing.

(continued)

CHECKLIST FOR AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY – CONTINUED

MEDIA/POPULAR CULTURE

- Guide students in examining stereotypes and bias in media works from a variety of sources.
- Use media texts to develop students' awareness of diversity (e.g., in beliefs, values, traditions, gender roles, family structures) among cultures, faiths, and people from different social backgrounds.
- Use media texts from different cultures to develop students' awareness of how cultural perspectives influence presentation of the same topics or events.

TEACHING PRACTICES

- Plan for differentiated instruction based on the different stages that students have reached in the reading process and their individual progress.
- Help each student choose topics of high interest and engagement for independent reading, writing, and inquiry.
- Provide appropriate opportunities to explore issues of bias and stereotyping related to language, culture, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, family structure, age, and physical and cognitive ability.
- Use technology to provide additional visual, oral, aural, and/or physical supports for students who need them.
- Use instructional strategies that reflect diverse learning styles.
- Make strong links to students' prior knowledge and interests.
- Tap into students' family, language, and culture as foundations for learning.
- Group students in ways that are sensitive to students' varying comfort levels with group interaction.
- Respect culturally diverse expectations and practices with regard to group work – e.g., willingness to ask questions, express disagreement, take initiative.
- Use a variety of grouping strategies –e.g., use same-gender or mixed-gender groups; group students with mixed abilities, interests, and backgrounds; with similar reading levels or interests; with the same first language.
- Take care that homework assignments are equitable – e.g., recognize that assignments that require access to technology or use of libraries may result in inequities and create barriers to success for some students.

ASSESSMENT

- Use assessment methods that reflect the diversity of students' learning styles, language, and culture.
- Use a variety of assessment tasks so that students with different learning styles can achieve success.
- Take into consideration cultural expectations and behaviours that may have an effect on assessment – e.g., shyness in answering questions, expressing opinions.
- Provide accommodations for students who require extra time or additional explanations.
- Provide information about the results of student assessments, classroom events, celebrations, etc. to all parents, including those for whom English is not their first language.
- Use evaluation methods that are equitable and take into account the diversity of students' life experiences and learning needs – e.g., refugee experience, amount of previous schooling.

ASSESSMENT

THE ROLE AND FOCUS OF ASSESSMENT IN LITERACY INSTRUCTION

“Assessment is the ongoing, systematic gathering, recording, and analysis of information about a student’s achievement, using a variety of strategies and tools.”

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 12.3)

The Goals of Literacy Instruction and Assessment

Assessment supports and furthers the broad goals of literacy instruction, which are to enable each student:

- to become a strategic reader, writer, and oral communicator;
- to expand thinking skills (including metacognitive and critical-literacy skills), developing the necessary habits of mind;
- to deepen the motivation to learn;
- to develop independence as a learner.

Literacy instruction must be driven by equitable ongoing assessment.

Fair and Equitable Assessment

Schools must work to ensure that all students, regardless of their background or ability, receive fair and equitable education. Assessment that is fair and equitable should maximize students learning and is a pivotal component of literacy instruction.

To be fair and equitable, assessment must be as free as possible of biases based on ethnic group, gender, nationality, religion, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, or physical disability. In developing their assessment strategies, teachers must be aware of the effects of cultural and gender conditioning as well as the sources of difficulty students can encounter in learning to read and write. Teachers also need to develop productive approaches to accommodate cultural differences and the challenges encountered by students of different backgrounds and ability.

The Uses of Assessment

Teachers use ongoing assessment to help them design and deliver literacy programs that maximize learning opportunities in an equitable but differentiated fashion for all students. Specifically, assessment provides the following types of information to be used in the following ways:

1. It provides information about the spectrum of individual strengths and needs in the class. Teachers can use this information in programming to:
 - establish the level at which to begin instruction;
 - select resources suited to individual students' needs;
 - design program accommodations and modifications.
2. It provides information about how students learn, what they have learned, and how they apply their knowledge and skills. Teachers can use this information to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, and to give students feedback that will guide their efforts to improve.
3. It provides information about the effectiveness of the instructional practices being used. Teachers can use this information to adapt programming to the emerging strengths and needs of students in order to facilitate their continued learning and improvement.

The Focus of Assessment

Assessment should focus on measuring student progress and achievement in relation to the *content standards* and *performance standards* identified for the particular subject and grade.

Content Standards

Content standards are described in the curriculum expectations for reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing as outlined in the curriculum document for Language, Grades 1–8. The curriculum expectations guide planning, instruction, and assessment. Teachers identify the expectations that are relevant to each of the classroom learning activities and tasks provided for students, and refer to these expectations when assessing the learning students demonstrate in performing the activities and tasks.

Performance Standards

Performance standards are outlined in the achievement chart provided in the curriculum document for Language, Grades 1–8, which describes four categories of knowledge and skills and four levels of achievement. The achievement chart is a standard province-wide guide to be used by teachers. It enables teachers to make judgements about student work that are based on clear performance standards and on a body of evidence collected over time.

The achievement chart is designed to:

- provide a framework that encompasses all the curriculum expectations for Language for all grades;
- guide the development of assessment tasks and tools (including rubrics);
- help teachers to plan instruction for learning;
- assist in providing meaningful feedback to students;
- provide various categories and criteria with which to assess and evaluate student learning.

For a detailed discussion of the categories of knowledge and skills and descriptions of performance at the four levels of achievement, consult *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 2006*.

Learning Skills

In addition to assessing and evaluating students' achievement of the curriculum expectations, teachers must also observe and report on students' overall demonstration of *learning skills*, as identified on the Ontario provincial report card. In this regard, teachers consider such things as students' ability to work independently, show initiative, complete homework, use information effectively/appropriately, cooperate with others, resolve conflicts, participate in classroom activities, solve problems, and set goals to improve performance (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 11).

Assessment in Relation to Evaluation

“Teachers understand the difference between assessing student learning and evaluating independent student work, and they delay the judgement associated with evaluation until students have had frequent opportunities to practise and apply learning and to refine their control of the skills and strategies they are developing.”

(Literacy for Learning, p. 13)

Assessment and evaluation are often discussed in conjunction with one another. The two are related and complementary, but they occur at different times and serve different purposes.

Assessment is ongoing and provides pertinent information designed to further instruction and student learning at the various stages of the teaching/learning process. The different types of assessment and uses of assessment information throughout this process are described in the following section, “The Literacy Assessment Cycle”.

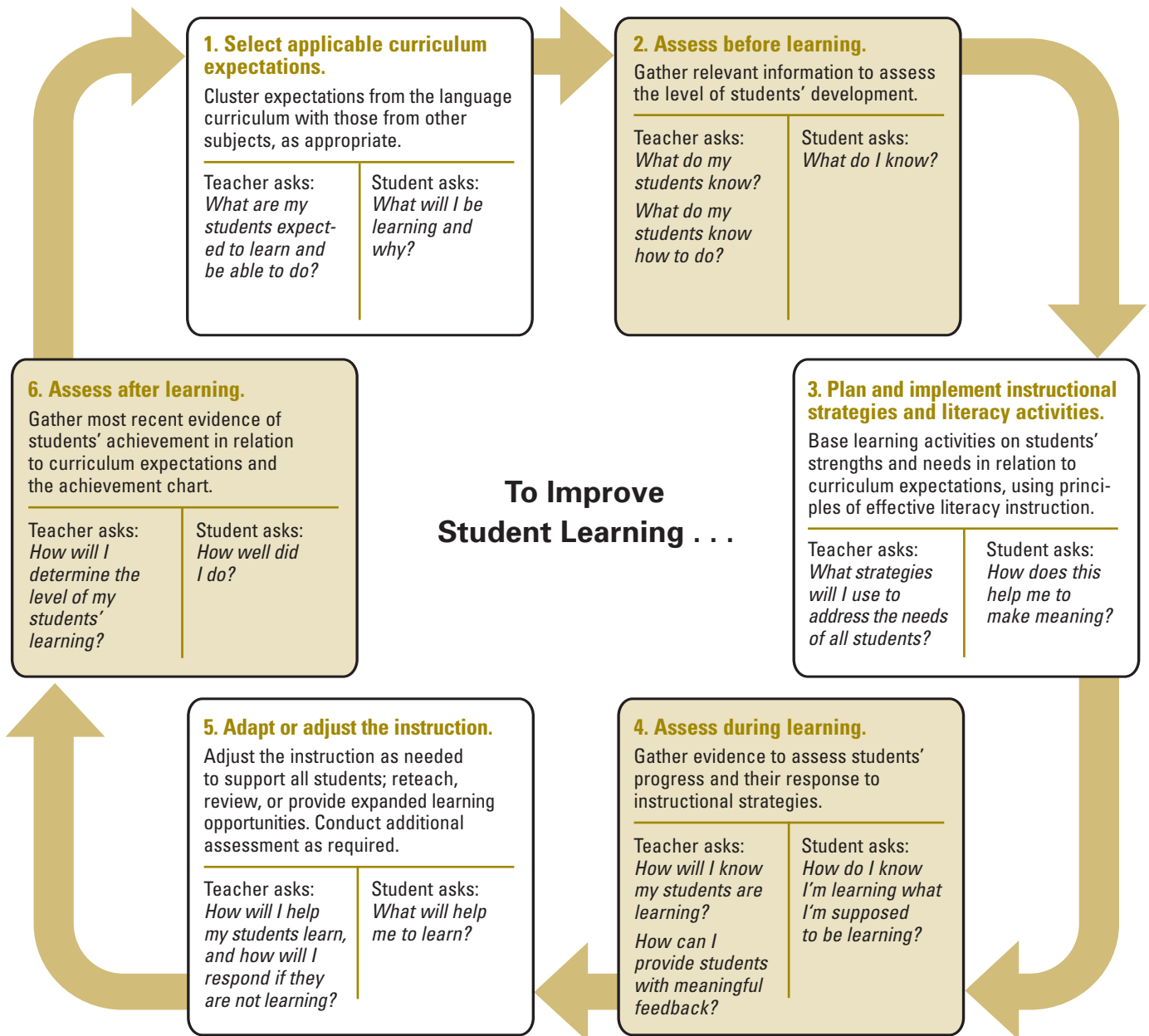
Evaluation occurs at a particular time, most often at the end of a unit of study or a term. “Evaluation involves making a judgement about the level of a student’s achievement on the basis of assessment data, and assigning a level, grade, or mark. The judgement is based on the student’s best and most consistent performance” (Ontario Ministry

of Education, 2003, p. 12.3). Evaluation is concerned not with the student’s progress during learning but with the student’s achievement, for reporting purposes, in relation to the content standards, performance standards, and learning skills described in the Ministry of Education’s policy documents.

THE LITERACY ASSESSMENT CYCLE

Literacy assessment is a continuous process or cycle within a larger assessment, planning, and instruction cycle. The figure below provides an overview of this larger cycle.

The Literacy Assessment, Planning, and Instruction Cycle



From an assessment standpoint, teachers begin the cycle by asking themselves the following questions:

1. What do I need to know?

- students’ knowledge and skills and the strategies students use to read, write, listen, speak, view, and represent
- students’ interests and their attitudes towards reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing
- grade-level expectations and standards of performance

2. How will I find out what I need to know?

- by using a variety of assessment strategies and tools *before, during, and after* learning

3. What will I do with the information?

- analyse, reflect, and take action based on the data
- provide appropriate scaffolding, modifications, and accommodations
- report the information to students and parents

4. How will I use this information in my teaching?

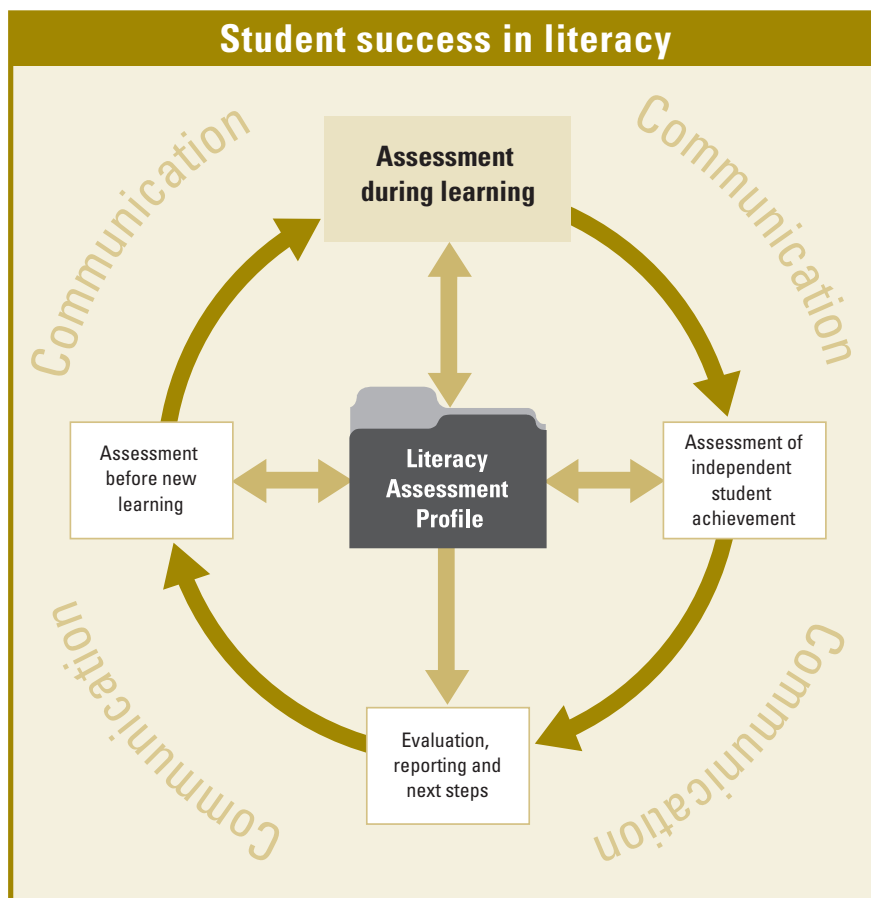
- by following the *gradual release of responsibility* model (see Volume 1 of this guide, Chapter 2, p. 80)
- by establishing an effective classroom environment and selecting appropriate resources
- by collaborating with support staff

The assessment cycle itself consists of assessment before new learning; assessment during learning; assessment of independent student achievement; and evaluation, reporting, and next steps (see the figure on page 14, “Framework for Literacy Assessment in the Junior Grades”).

Effective assessment is ongoing and fully integrated into the teaching/learning process. *Before new learning* begins, it ascertains students’ prior knowledge, strengths, and needs. Assessments conducted frequently *during learning* determine how well students are progressing and help teachers plan the instructional steps to be taken next. And assessments conducted *after learning* gather information to use as the basis for further teaching and next steps and/or evaluation and reporting, as required. The majority of assessment time should be spent on assessment during learning.

Before new learning begins, at the outset of the school year, a term, a new unit of study, or any new instruction, teachers conduct assessments to identify individual students’ prior knowledge, strengths, and needs. The information gathered before learning directs teachers’ planning, the determination of student groupings, the instructional

Framework for Literacy Assessment in the Junior Grades



strategies required to meet individual needs, and the selection of appropriate resource materials. Information gathered before learning should also be communicated to *students*, to make them aware of where they stand with respect to the expectations set out in the ministry's curriculum documents, in Individual Education Plans, and in the stages of English language learning. Being aware of their own strengths and the areas in which they need to improve prepares students to identify personal learning goals and the strategies needed to achieve them.

During learning, teachers conduct assessments on a continuous basis to monitor student progress. Teachers have a responsibility to adjust their instructional practices and, if necessary, provide additional support to help individual students achieve the curriculum

expectations; assessments conducted during learning provide teachers with the information they need to do this. These assessments should include multiple and varied opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning so that teachers can determine their next instructional steps and can also guide individual learners by providing them with immediate and explicit feedback.

"The largest proportion of assessment time should be spent on assessment during learning."

(Literacy for Learning, p. 46)

After learning, at the completion of a unit or term, teachers conduct assessments to provide information for teachers, the student, and parents about the individual student's independent achievement. This information may be used to help teachers plan further teaching and next steps and/or for the evaluation of student learning in relation to the curriculum expectations and performance standards. As with assessments conducted before and during learning, assessments after learning should be of diverse types to give students adequate opportunities to demonstrate their achievement. Assessment after learning is guided by the expectations the student is required to achieve (i.e., as set out in ministry curriculum documents, the student's Individual Education Plan, or the stages of English language learning, as appropriate). When teachers evaluate student achievement with a view to assigning a grade or mark, they use assessment data that are based on the student's most recent, consistent performance results.

Explicit feedback given immediately after assessment leads to improved levels of student achievement.

ASSESSING LITERACY

Assessing Student Learning Through Talk

“Development in any one area of communication – reading, writing, or oral communication – is inextricably linked to development in the others” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 3.4). Because of the interconnectedness of literacy learning, many learning activities or performance tasks provide opportunities for assessment of all four strands of literacy learning.*

For example, activities that involve *student talk* are admirably suited to assessment of student learning in many areas – not only in literacy but in the understanding of subject content as well. Forms of talk that are suitable for assessing students' reading and writing skills as well as understanding of subject content include discussion groups, writer's circles, “author's chair”, student–teacher conferences, literature circles, pair work, interviews, and book talks. As students engage in such activities, teachers listen for and observe students' ability to explain, retell, summarize, synthesize, reflect on, and produce texts of many types.

Talk is the foundation for literacy.

Student talk also provides a vehicle for teachers to assess listening, speaking, viewing, and representing skills. Forms of talk that are suitable for this purpose include oral presentations, storytelling, and debates.

*The expectations in the 1997 curriculum document for Language, Grades 1–8, were organized into three strands: Writing, Reading, and Oral and Visual Communication. The 2006 revised curriculum document includes four strands: Oral Communication, Reading, Writing, and Media Literacy. References to strands in this guide reflect the organization of strands in the 2006 curriculum document.

Assessing Literacy in Each of the Four Strands

Reading, writing, talking, listening, thinking, viewing, and representing are reciprocal literacy processes.

Although there is a wide range of activities that provide opportunities for assessing all dimensions of literacy together, students' development of literacy skills may be uneven, so that a student may show more strength in one area of literacy than in another. To be sure of providing appropriate instruction that promotes students' development in each strand, teachers may need to focus their attention on assessing one dimension of literacy to the exclusion of the others, in order to obtain useful information about a student's achievement in that strand. Thus, while a task may involve *learning* in all four strands, the teacher's *primary assessment purpose or focus* will sometimes be on the student's performance in relation to a single strand.

The sections that follow outline, in broad terms, the types of learning activities and performance tasks that allow teachers to assess each of the dimensions of literacy and the type of information they gather in relation to each. These outlines are not intended to be exhaustive.

Teachers use this information to give students regular feedback about their performance and to adjust and adapt instruction to keep pace with students' development or to address learning gaps or other difficulties. Teachers need to keep a record of the feedback they give to students and follow up with further assessment to see if students' performance improves as a result.

Reading

Reading assessments are used to gather information about how students read different types of texts at different levels of difficulty. Texts should be cross-curricular – that is, covering a variety of topics from different subject areas – and should include examples of imaginative and informational material from a range of media, both print and electronic.

In assessing students' reading, teachers gather information about such things as:

- students' ability to select reading materials;
- students' ability to “*make meaning*” from different forms of texts and texts at different levels of difficulty;
- students' ability to *select and/or adjust their reading strategies* to meet the demands of different forms of texts and texts of different degrees of difficulty;
- students' facility in using reading strategies already taught;
- students' ability to read independently;
- students' ability to respond to what they have read;
- students' ability to connect what they read to their own experience;
- the breadth and quality of students' reading choices;
- students' improvement following instruction and feedback.

Writing

Writing assessments are used to gather information about students' written products and about students' use of the writing process. Teachers focus on students' ability to write in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes and audiences.

In assessing students' *final written products*, teachers look for evidence of such things as:

- ability to select appropriate topics for real audiences and authentic purposes;
- understanding of the topic and purpose for writing;
- understanding of the needs of the audience to be addressed;
- development of content and ideas;
- choice of a form of writing suited to the content and purpose for writing;
- logical organization of material, with ideas clearly connected to the topic and an effective beginning and end;
- use of a distinctive voice;
- use of expressive, interesting language and/or an authoring technique that is appropriate to the topic and the audience;
- use of a variety of sentence structures and sentence lengths, giving an impression of ease and fluency in writing;
- accurate use of conventions, with correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing;
- effective presentation, using an appropriate, legible, and attractive format.

In assessing students' use of *the writing process*, teachers gather information about such things as:

- students' ability to plan and develop a piece of writing using appropriate tools (e.g., brainstorming, mind mapping, organizers);
- students' ability to assess the effectiveness of their writing as to its purpose and intended audience and revise it as needed;
- students' ability to edit and polish their writing before sharing and/or publishing it;
- students' growing understanding of the writing process and when and why writing needs to be revised and edited.

The information from writing assessments should be used not only to further students' development as writers but also to promote students' active involvement in setting goals for their own development as writers, assessing their own written work, and reflecting on and taking responsibility for their own writing.

Oral Communication

Assessments of students' listening and speaking skills are used to gather information about how students function in learning situations that depend on or require competence in oral communication.

The assessment of students' oral language skills is usually based on ongoing observations of students as they work in groups or pairs, engage in conferences, or make presentations. In observing students' behaviour during such activities, teachers need to be aware of students' cultural backgrounds and take into consideration that certain behaviours that are encouraged in Canadian classrooms are regarded as inappropriate in some cultures. Such behaviours may include:

- making eye contact or looking directly at the speaker or audience;
- contributing to group conversation without being invited;
- showing feelings/sharing ideas;
- asking questions;
- inviting other people to contribute to the discussion;
- taking turns;
- volunteering to begin the dialogue;
- addressing a difference of opinion.

In assessing students' listening skills, teachers gather information about:

- students' ability to interact with others in the give and take of conversation, problem solving, and drama;
- students' understanding of the relationship between context and content and the listener's stance;
- students' ability to appreciate the ideas of others;
- students' capacity for flexibility and open-mindedness (willingness to change their opinion);
- students' willingness to consider and/or respect perspectives different from their own;
- students' understanding of content-specific vocabulary and concepts;
- students' awareness of a speaker's tone and style;
- students' ability to detect bias (critical-listening ability);
- students' understanding of the codes of effective communication for different contexts and different people.

In assessing students' formal oral presentation skills, teachers gather information about:

- students' understanding of the relationship between purpose, content, and audience and the speaker's stance;
- students' ability to adopt a speaker's stance appropriate to the purpose, content, and audience;
- students' ability to recognize and avoid sexist or other inappropriate language;
- students' ability to structure statements to promote thinking and understanding;
- students' ability to use language for maximum effect (e.g., through choice of descriptive words; through use of imagery);
- students' ability to use talk to clarify their thinking;
- students' ability to project a distinctive voice;
- students' ability to use non-verbal aspects of oral communication (e.g., facial expression, intonation, pitch, gestures) to enhance the effect of speech.

The checklist on page 20 may be used by students and teachers to assess students' speaking proficiency.

Media Literacy

Media literacy assessments are used to gather information about students' understanding of media messages and techniques and how students use those techniques to create a variety of media texts containing print, still and moving images, audio, and/or interactive elements. These texts should cover a variety of topics in different subject areas and use various media forms to allow for the comparison of forms, techniques, and content.

In assessing students' understanding of media texts and how they are created, teachers look for evidence of the students' ability to:

- make meaning from various forms of media texts;
- identify the purpose and audience for a variety of media texts;
- identify both stated and implied messages in media texts;
- apply comprehension strategies already taught to meet the demands of various forms of media texts;
- analyse ideas, themes, values, opinions, issues, and experiences presented in media texts;
- recognize that media texts reflect a variety of perspectives and points of view, and identify any bias or stereotypes in media texts;

SPEAKING PROFICIENCY CHECKLIST

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Task: _____

DESIRED BEHAVIOUR

The student:	Met	Not Yet Met	Comments
• uses talk to clarify thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• connects his/her learning to prior knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• expresses thoughts and ideas clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• contributes to group conversations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• shares ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• considers alternative points of view	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• listens attentively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• demonstrates thinking and oral skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• builds on the ideas of others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• promotes and extends classroom dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• asks probing questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• synthesizes information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• analyses information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

- assess the accuracy of media messages, their suitability for the intended audience, and their potential consequences;
- identify the main characteristics of a variety of media forms and describe their similarities and differences;
- explain how symbolic and technical conventions (e.g., colour, font, camera placement) are used to create meaning in media texts;
- comment on the quality of media texts.

In assessing students' creation of media texts, teachers consider both the process students use to plan and develop their media work as well as the media products students eventually create.

With regard to the process, teachers look for evidence of the students' ability to:

- create and/or plan a variety of media texts and/or mock-ups using images, text, music, sound effects, and/or graphics;
- plan and develop a media text or mock-up using appropriate tools (e.g., brainstorming, mind mapping, organizers);
- plan and develop a media text or mock-up using appropriate symbolic and technical conventions;
- reflect on and assess the effectiveness of their media texts as to their purpose and intended audience and revise as necessary;
- edit and polish their media work before sharing, presenting, or distributing it.

With regard to the products created (both drafts/mock-ups and final products), teachers look for evidence of the students' ability to:

- understand the topic and the purpose for production;
- understand the needs of the audience to be addressed;
- explain why the topic and the media form selected are suited to the purpose and intended audience;
- make appropriate use of symbolic and technical conventions;
- develop content and ideas;
- organize material logically, with ideas clearly connected to the topic.

Assessing Thinking Skills

Students' ability to use a variety of higher-order thinking skills has an important influence on their ability to demonstrate achievement of the literacy curriculum expectations.

In reading, for example, students' ability to interpret and "make meaning" from texts is improved when they can use analytical and critical-thinking skills to detect bias or to assess whether an argument is logically developed and adequately supported by evidence. In informational writing, students' analytical, organizational, and critical-thinking skills help them to develop and present ideas in a logical sequence; in creative writing, their ability to synthesize information and develop ideas is important. In listening, speaking, viewing, and representing, higher-order thinking skills help students clarify their own and others' thinking, resolve disagreements or misunderstandings, and solve problems through analysis and evaluation.

Critical-thinking and critical-literacy skills are the tools students need in order to develop into active, responsible participants in the global community.

Assessment of students' progress and performance in the four strands, therefore, necessarily involves assessment of their higher-order thinking skills. As with other literacy skills, teachers need to provide explicit instruction in these skills and ensure that students have ample opportunities to practise them. Teachers should ensure that some assessment of students' ability to use higher-order thinking skills (e.g., inferring, analysing, making connections) takes place.

For a more detailed discussion of higher-order thinking skills and their importance in literacy instruction and learning, see Volume 1 of this guide, Chapter 2, pages 55–64.

Assessing Skills of Students With Special Education Needs

Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2005 describes a set of principles, based in research, that should guide all program planning for and assessment of students with special education needs. Teachers planning language programs need to pay particular attention to these principles, which are as follows.

Program planning for students with special education needs:

- is premised on the belief that all students can succeed;
- incorporates evidence-based best practices for effective instruction;
- involves a support team for the classroom teacher that includes the principal, other teachers, and professional resources (families and community agencies should be active contributors);
- incorporates universal design;
- involves differentiated instruction.

The Ontario curriculum offers guidance for the assessment of the achievement of students with special education needs, including those who have not reached the expectations for the grade and those who have exceeded the expectations. In any given classroom, students may demonstrate a wide range of learning styles and needs. Teachers plan programs and assess students in ways that recognize this diversity and give students assessment tasks that respect their particular abilities so that all students can derive the greatest benefits possible from the teaching and learning process.

In planning programs for and assessing students with special education needs, teachers should examine both the curriculum expectations for the appropriate grade level and the needs of the individual student to determine which of the following options is appropriate for the student: no accommodations or modifications, accommodations only, or modified expectations with the possibility of accommodations. All accommodations or modifications must be suited to the individual student's strengths and needs.

If the student requires either accommodations or modified expectations, or both, this information must be recorded in his or her Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP also identifies how the student's progress will be assessed and reviewed. For a detailed discussion of the ministry's requirements for IEPs, see *Individual Education Plans: Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation, 2000*. More detailed information about planning programs for exceptional students can be found in *The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide, 2004*. (Both documents are available at www.edu.gov.on.ca.)

The student's achievement of learning expectations and his or her progress towards meeting the goals identified in the IEP should be monitored and assessed continuously, using a wide variety of methods and techniques. The assessment procedures and strategies normally used may need to be adjusted to give students with special education needs the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the expectations. If a student requires "accommodations only", assessment and evaluation of his or her achievement will be based on the appropriate grade-level curriculum expectations and the achievement levels. If a student requires modified expectations, assessment and evaluation of his or her achievement will be based on the learning expectations identified in the IEP and on the achievement levels. When reporting student achievement on the report card, the teacher should include relevant information on the student's demonstrated learning of the modified expectations as well as next steps for the student's learning in the subject.

Accommodations

"Accommodations refer to the special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and /or individualized equipment required to enable a student to learn and to demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter the provincial curriculum expectations for the grade."

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 25)

Modifications

"Modifications are changes made in the age-appropriate grade-level expectations for a subject in order to meet a student's learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level and/or increasing or decreasing the number and /or complexity of the regular grade-level curriculum expectations."

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004, pp. 25–26)

Examples of methods and accommodations to use in assessing students with special education needs include the following:

- permitting students to demonstrate learning in ways that may differ from those used by the rest of the class (e.g., using various technologies, using a scribe, giving oral instead of written responses to test questions)
- using open-ended questions and performance tasks that allow for a variety of responses
- administering tests individually or in small groups
- providing a quiet environment in which assessment may take place
- allowing extra time for students to write tests or complete assignments
- simplifying the language used in teaching and the instructions and questions used in assignments and tests
- encouraging students to evaluate their own progress

(Adapted from Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000b, p. 14)

For a more detailed description of differentiating assessment for students with special education needs, see *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2005* (pp. 117–122), as well as *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 2006* (pp. 24–26).

Assessing Skills of English Language Learners

English language learners “are often unable to demonstrate their true competence in other subjects because they lack the necessary language skills to understand the lessons or to produce written or oral work. They need to be given time to develop their skills in English before their achievement can be assessed by the criteria used for other students” (*The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 1997*, p. 7). The role of the school is to assist such students in acquiring the English skills they need to participate in learning activities on an equal basis with their peers and to meet the expectations of the Ontario curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 6). For these students, teachers use the stages of second-language acquisition to identify reading, writing, and listening and speaking skills. The stages of acquisition of English as a second language and English literacy development (ESL/ELD) are organized developmentally to reflect the normal progression and acquisition of English-language skills. It is important to note that, as with all other learners, development of these skills is unique to the learner and may reflect skills in more than one stage at any given time.

The curriculum-related strengths and needs of English language learners can be assessed through observing students engaged in a variety of skill-building exercises and by using many of the assessment strategies and tools described in this chapter, once the student’s

stage of English-language development has been ascertained. Teachers should consult the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum resource document *English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development: A Resource Guide, 2001* for detailed information about the stages of second-language acquisition and guidance in assessing the learning of students for whom English is an additional language.

It is critical for teachers to consider the student's overall stage of English-language proficiency when selecting and reviewing assessment materials for cultural bias and accessibility of language and format. Adjustments may need to be made to both the assessment materials and the assessment process in order to help individual students to develop communicative competence in English. Adjustments may include but are not limited to:

- chunking tasks;
- providing extra time;
- allowing use of first-language and/or multilingual dictionaries;
- pre-teaching the format of questions;
- explaining culturally specific terminology and/or experiences;
- developing culturally neutral assessment norms;
- use of oral assessments.

THE LITERACY ASSESSMENT PROFILE

A literacy assessment profile is a purposeful collection of key evidence about a student's level of achievement and progress in reading, writing, and oral/visual communication. Teachers use a literacy assessment profile to track individual student progress and to record results for evaluation, reporting, and future planning. The literacy assessment profile may include anecdotal notes, observations, and/or checklists. It may also be appropriate to include data gathered from the Ontario Student Record, parents, or previous teachers, as well as interest inventories. In its most expansive form, the literacy assessment profile is particularly useful in planning for and monitoring the learning of students with special education needs. (For a list of suggested components of a literacy assessment profile see *Literacy for Learning*, p. 48. For a description of the steps in creating an individual learning profile see *Education for All* [Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2005, p. 34].)

INVOLVING STUDENTS IN ASSESSMENT

“Junior students need to be actively involved in the assessment process and encouraged to reflect on how they can improve their literacy skills.”

(Literacy for Learning, p. 45)

In order to become independent, competent communicators, students need to develop the ability to monitor their own learning, recognize their strengths and needs, and determine next steps. The ability to participate in the assessment process will serve students well during their school years and beyond.

For literacy assessment to truly improve student learning and achievement, students must be directly involved in the assessment process. Teachers can involve students by providing them with authentic, engaging learning and assessment opportunities – activities and tasks that students see as having meaning and value in the world beyond the classroom (see *Literacy for Learning*, p. 46). For example, students could be asked, for purposes of both instruction and assessment, to read newspaper articles about a local concern and explain the issue in their own words, or to write a letter to the editor to express a concern. The authenticity of a task motivates students to take ownership of their learning and to become more independent about determining the steps needed to progress to the next stage.

When students are encouraged to assess their own work and set their own goals, they take ownership of their learning.

Teachers can also involve students by ensuring that they understand how and why they are being assessed. Junior students, with their maturing understanding, capabilities, and attitudes, need to know and understand the curriculum expectations, the skills and behaviour that will be assessed, and how assessments will be conducted. Knowing what knowledge and skills will be assessed, what specific criteria will be used in each assessment, and what areas of strength and need are indicated by the results of assessments helps students focus on the steps required to achieve curriculum expectations, reflect on their progress, and set learning goals for themselves.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to discuss task criteria with students before teaching begins, to provide students with exemplars, and to inform them about how rubrics are designed and used to guide assessments of their work. One effective way of doing this is to involve students in the development of rubrics before a new learning task begins.

Rubrics

Rubrics use brief statements, based on the components of a process, product, or performance, to describe achievement at different levels. The power of a rubric lies in its clarity. Rubrics provide students with a clear picture of what they are doing well, where they need to improve, and what the next steps for learning might be. The effectiveness

of rubrics is enhanced when they are developed cooperatively by grade partners and support staff, such as teacher-librarians, ESL teachers, and special education teachers, with input from students.

Rubrics may be used by students as a guide to review and revise an assigned task for completeness and other defined characteristics. Students benefit from being involved in the creation of rubrics, since the experience deepens their understanding of what is being assessed and what is expected of them.

Rubrics developed with students before a task is assigned help students succeed by ensuring that they know which expectations are being assessed. Students may use the rubrics during the task to ensure that they are on the right track. In writing, for example, students may use a rubric during the revision stage to highlight areas of focus or check off the required components. The pattern of highlighting or checkmarks on the rubrics will show them the areas where they are meeting the expectations and the areas where they need to improve.

For a detailed discussion of rubrics, see Ontario Ministry of Education, *The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner: Assessment Strategies Companion*, 2002 (www.ocup.org/resources/documents).

Student Self-Assessment

Providing opportunities for students to engage in *self*-assessment also promotes literacy learning. Self-assessment involves students in reflecting on their own learning, helping them identify their strengths and needs and areas where they need to improve, and enabling them to set goals and identify next steps for learning. The practice of self-assessment fosters the development of metacognitive skills and helps students grow into independent, self-directed learners. All aspects of literacy learning – knowledge, skills, processes, attitudes – may be the focus of student self-assessment.

Before engaging in self-assessment activities, students need to have a clear understanding of what is being assessed and on what basis. Clear criteria related to the expectations and achievement levels for a task or activity need to be established prior to instruction and communicated to the students, and appropriate assessment tools need to be developed that will provide students with clear guidance during the self-assessment process. Tools for self-assessment may include surveys, interest inventories, checklists, reader's notebooks, conferences, and sentence stems to guide reflection (see Appendices 1–5 for samples of some of these self-assessment tools).

Criteria-based checklists, such as rubrics, may be created for use by the students alone, to help them to assess their own progress in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, or representing. The sample rubrics on the following pages provide frameworks that students might use to assess (a) their competence in persuasive writing and (b) their ability to contribute to reaching group consensus, respectively. (Note: These frameworks can be adjusted for use in assessing any literacy task.)

(a) Sample Rubric for Writing

SELF-ASSESSMENT: PERSUASIVE WRITING

Name: _____ Date: _____

Writing Task: _____

Criteria	Strong	Developing	Limited
<p>Clarity of ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear point of view • strong voice • coherent development of ideas • logical organization of ideas • effective vocabulary 			
<p>Presentation of ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas and thoughts expressed in a thoughtful manner • complete sentences • ideas developed in paragraphs • connecting words pulling thoughts together • variety of sentence types and lengths • writing conventions that support the reader/audience • effective use of punctuation • correct spelling and grammar • neat handwriting 			
<p>Overall impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appeals to audience • hold audience’s interest • writing has its desired effect 			

(b) Sample Rubric for Group Work

SELF-ASSESSMENT: REACHING GROUP CONSENSUS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use the following ratings to assess your performance:

1 - rarely 2 - occasionally 3 - most of the time 4 - consistently

Thinking Processes/Skills	Rating	Evidence
I defend my opinions.		
I am flexible in my thinking and willing to change my views.		
I respect the opinions of others.		
I am able to suggest and make compromises.		

Another way to involve students in the assessment process is to encourage their participation in selecting work for their literacy portfolio – a collection of samples of their work in the four strands drawn from a broad range of assignments and representing their progress and best efforts over time. This activity not only gives students practice in assessing their own work but also provides them with information about their development of literacy skills, making them more aware of themselves as learners and helping them learn to set goals for their future learning. The literacy portfolio is more a student-managed than a teacher-managed assessment tool. The literacy portfolio provides a focus for ongoing self-assessment and goal setting. The literacy portfolio as an assessment tool is discussed in further detail on pages 47–49 of this document.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment offers students opportunities to consolidate their learning through dialogue and interaction with their peers. They are able to clarify their own understanding and build on the ideas of others while supporting their peers.

In order for peer assessment to be successful, students must know how to provide constructive, explicit feedback that is based on clear criteria. Before involving students in peer assessment activities, teachers need to ensure that certain skills, strategies, and understandings are in place. Teachers model and explicitly teach these skills, strategies, and understandings and provide many opportunities for students to practise participating in peer assessment tasks/sessions. Students are ready to engage in peer assessment when they:

- understand their role;
- know the purpose of the assessment;
- are clear about the criteria for assessment;
- have the vocabulary to participate in the assessment;
- have enough knowledge of content to give explicit feedback;
- have good listening skills;
- know and can use appropriate strategies to remember and record significant information;
- have seen numerous teacher demonstrations and modelling of how peer assessment works;
- know how to assess their own participation in peer assessment activities.

Jeffrey Wilhelm, in his book *Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension* (2002), discusses three frameworks that he teaches his students to use when engaging in peer assessment. These frameworks are intended to encourage students to dig deep for meaning, make connections, and find relevance in their learning:

What? So What? Now What?

What? *I learned ...*

So What? *What I learned is important because ...*

Now What? *The implication of what I learned is ... I need to learn more about ... and then we need to ...*

Praise, Question, Polish

Praise *I really liked ...*

Question *One question I have is ...*

Polish *Here are some suggestions I have ...
I wonder what would happen if ...*

Contributions

My contribution to the peer assessment conference was ...

My partner's contribution to the peer assessment conference was ...

In future I will ...

Tip for Teachers

Involving Students in the Assessment Process

- Use language that students understand.
- Use authentic tasks that engage students.
- Link assessment to the curriculum to help students focus on the steps needed to achieve the curriculum expectations.
- Engage students in brainstorming the criteria (e.g., rubrics) for exemplary products and performances.
- Share models of expected products and performances (e.g., exemplars) with students.
- Teach students how to select work samples for their literacy portfolio.
- Provide students with continuous, constructive feedback and suggest “next steps”.
- Encourage students to set goals for their future learning.
- Have students engage in self-assessment and peer-assessment activities.
- Use home response journals to encourage home–school connections.
- Encourage students to explain their thinking, not only to acquire insight into their strengths and needs but also to involve them in the assessment process.
- Plan and hold teacher–student conferences – using the student’s literacy portfolio as a focus – in part to provide feedback and in part to develop students’ ability to discuss their goals and achievements with the teacher, their parents, and their peers.
- Design student-led conferences where students discuss their personal or class literacy learning goals and achievements with their peers or their parents.
- Design celebrations of learning and achievement, including “open classroom” events to which students and teachers from other grades, parents, or the community are invited, as a way of motivating students to learn.

COMMUNICATION OF ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

“A whole-school approach to the management of assessment information helps teachers and school administrators make the best use of the extensive data they gather during ongoing literacy assessment.”

(Literacy for Learning, p. 45)

Continuous communication is an essential component of literacy assessment in the junior grades. Communication of assessment is reciprocal and cyclical and involves teachers, students, and parents. At all stages, teachers communicate assessment information to students and parents. As well, teachers in the school communicate with one another and with the administration to ensure, first, that literacy data gathering is both consistent across the school and/or board and appropriate for the students’ literacy needs, and second, that assessment results are used on a school-wide and/or board-wide basis to help students achieve success in meeting the goals of the junior literacy program.

It is recommended that stakeholders work together to ensure that all parties share a common understanding of the meaning of the terms they use to discuss the literacy program and literacy issues.

SUMMARY: CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LITERACY ASSESSMENT

Effective literacy assessment:

- is linked to planning and instruction;
- encourages *all* students to succeed;
- involves students in the assessment process;
- involves all stakeholders.

Linking Assessment to Planning and Instruction

The teacher:

- explicitly teaches the material to be learned, models relevant skills, and provides multiple and varied opportunities for students to practise and demonstrate their newly learned skills and knowledge;
- uses a range of assessment strategies and tools to gather information about how students are learning and to provide explicit, timely, relevant feedback to students about their performance;
- uses assessment data to inform instruction and planning.

Encouraging *All* Students to Succeed

The teacher:

- ensures that assessment is fair, equitable, and developmentally and culturally appropriate by taking into account each student's age, gender, stage of development, cultural background, and technological ability;
- selects varied and multidimensional assessment strategies and tools, taking into account the needs of individual students as suggested by theories of multiple intelligences and variations in learning styles, as well as any needs of special education and ESL/ELD students.

Involving Students in the Assessment Process

The teacher:

- ensures that assessment tasks are engaging and embedded in authentic learning – that is, learning that is related to the students' world beyond the classroom;
- clearly communicates to the students, and ensures that they understand, what is to be assessed, what the assessment criteria are, and the relevance of any rubrics and exemplars used during assessment;
- includes opportunities for student self-assessments and involves students in the selection of sample work for their portfolio;
- includes opportunities for peer assessments.

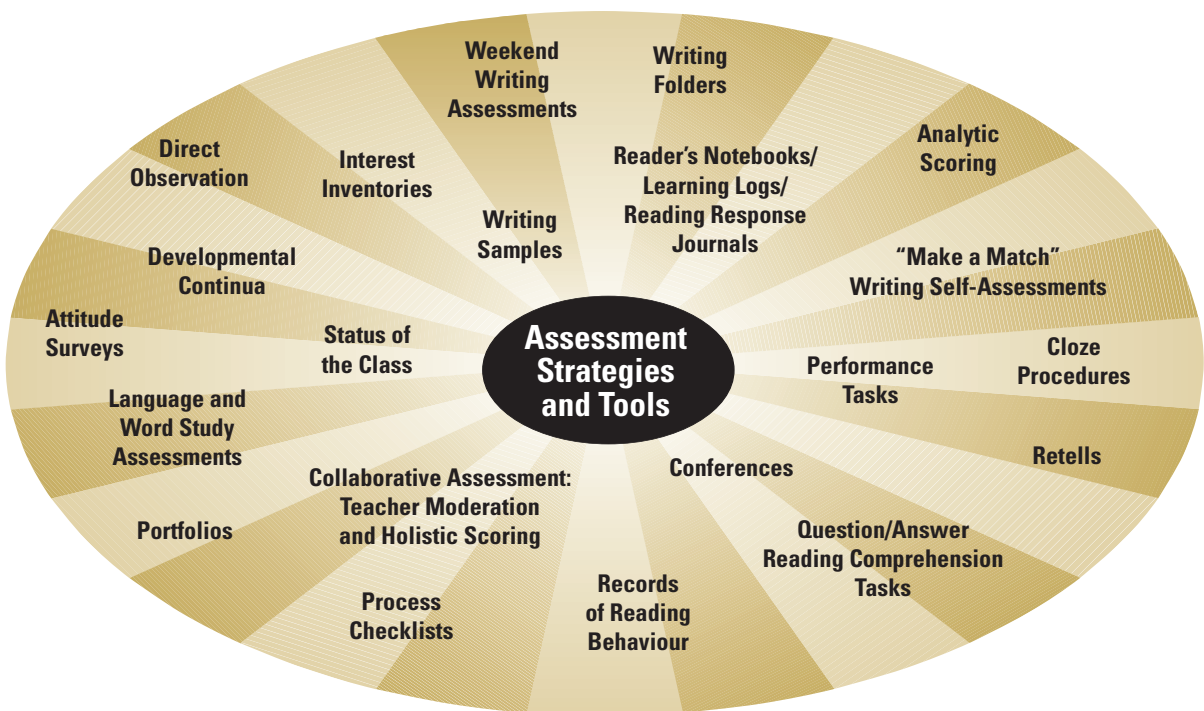
Involving All Stakeholders

At all stages of the assessment cycle, all members of the educational community – students, parents, teachers, and administrators – have a voice in the assessment process.

- Students communicate their assessment of their strengths and weaknesses as learners to teachers and parents.
- Parents communicate valuable knowledge of their children's development through ongoing dialogue with teachers (written, oral – in person or by phone).
- Teachers communicate their understandings of student learning to students and parents.
- Administrators communicate with teachers in the school and with the school board administration to ensure that literacy data gathering is consistent across the school and/or board and appropriate for students' literacy needs.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

The remainder of this chapter describes a variety of assessment strategies and tools that teachers can use to gather, record, and organize information about the development of students' literacy skills (see the accompanying figure, "Assessment Strategies and Tools"). *Strategies* are the methods teachers use to assess students' progress (e.g., listening to responses to texts, examining written products, observing students' selection of texts for independent reading). *Tools* are the instruments teachers use to record and organize the data collected (e.g., checklists, anecdotal records, rubrics, developmental continua). For example, a teacher may use an observation strategy to determine how a student responds to a text, then use any one of a variety of tools, such as a checklist or an anecdotal record, to record the observation, and then use another tool, such as a developmental continuum, to determine exactly where the student is in his or her development. At this point, the teacher will know the teaching that should be undertaken next.



All assessment strategies involve observing students' behaviours while they are reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, or representing. Effective teachers plan to conduct observation-based assessments on a regular basis, and they determine when and how these assessments will occur. They develop clear criteria, based on the curriculum

expectations, and then determine what they are looking for. It is important to share that information with their students. At times, the criteria may be established collaboratively with students.

Effective teachers also take advantage of spontaneous opportunities to observe students. For example, observing students engaged in purposeful talk about texts they are reading gives teachers information about the students' comprehension levels. Observing the way students apply the writing process helps teachers see students' writing strengths and weaknesses. Observing students working collaboratively to produce a multimedia text allows teachers to determine the students' abilities to express their ideas and support their points of view. Often these spontaneous opportunities to observe students at work are also opportunities to provide students with immediate and explicit feedback that will lead to development. Both planned and spontaneous assessments should be conducted throughout the course of each school day.

For assessment to play a significant role in improving student achievement in literacy, teachers need to do much more than simply observe their students. It is not sufficient only to make *mental* notes of the behaviours observed. Teachers need to systematically record their observations and then analyse them to determine trends, student strengths, and areas in which students need to improve. Teachers provide students with specific and meaningful feedback and then make informed instructional decisions based on their assessment. The appendices for this chapter include samples of assessment tools and templates. These appendices and the strategies and tools described in this chapter are samples only. Teachers may wish to design their own assessment strategies and tools, based on the curriculum expectations, to fit the particular focus of their programs and the particular needs of their students.

By effectively analysing the data collected from a variety of assessments, teachers determine patterns and trends, areas of strength, and areas that need improvement, and, ultimately, reach an evaluation of each student's performance. Based on assessment findings, teachers make informed decisions about the instruction, practice, and resources needed to build on students' individual strengths and to meet students' individual needs.

Finally, teachers need to share the results of assessments with students as soon as possible, offering observations, analyses, and suggestions and inviting students to share their own views and self-assessments. Students need to understand that literacy skills are transferable and useful in all content areas, and that assessment strategies and next steps are relevant in all subject areas. This dialogue models the kind of thinking and collaborative determination of next steps that moves students closer to becoming independent learners. It also encourages students to take ownership of their learning and, ultimately, leads to improved levels of achievement.

Aside from direct observation, which is the first strategy outlined and the most fundamental assessment strategy, the strategies and tools described below are not listed in order of importance. General strategies and tools are described first, then those primarily related to reading skills and those primarily related to writing skills, with some overlap. Strategies for collaborative assessment, scoring, and tracking students' progress in relation to the whole class conclude the section.

Several of the assessment strategies and tools described in this chapter are based on skill-building strategies and tools (e.g., teachers instruct students in how to build and maintain a portfolio of their work, and then assess the portfolio contents). Wherever applicable, the descriptions of individual strategies and tools in this chapter include information that is intended to help teachers use them as skill-building strategies and tools as well.

Direct Observation

Direct observation of students responding to, interacting with, and writing or presenting texts provides teachers with invaluable information to use for programming purposes. Direct observations can be made to assess the learner's growth in all areas – physical, intellectual, social, and emotional – and in all types of literacy skills – reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing. They are used to assess strategies and skills that have been taught and that students have had multiple opportunities to practise. As a strategy, direct observation is purposeful and focused on only one or two behaviours at a time. Selecting only one or two students to observe at a time makes the strategy manageable.

Engaging students in various kinds of purposeful talk offers teachers many opportunities to observe the students' reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing skills, and how well students are using these skills in interrelated ways. Examples of opportunities where observing purposeful talk can be used to assess students' work include the following:

- pair work
- discussion groups
- interviews
- storytelling
- debates
- author's chair
- writer's circles
- book talks
- literature circles
- oral presentations
- student–teacher conferences

Collaborative learning also presents many opportunities to assess students through direct observation. (However, teachers should not *assume* that students possess the skills of collaboration; these skills need to be explicitly taught and practised by the students.) In particular, observation of collaborative learning activities can provide the following information about students' literacy skills:

- the strategies and skills they use
- their organizational skills
- their ability to express ideas clearly
- their social skills, as demonstrated during collaborative learning and at other times when interaction and purposeful talk are essential

Observations can be made while interacting with students or simply while watching them. Observations can be planned, or the teacher can take advantage of the many opportunities during the school day to make spontaneous observations of students at work. For example, teachers can observe students reading, writing, listening, and speaking, both individually and in groups, to determine the following:

- the strategies they use
- their attitude to reading and writing
- the kinds of connections they make between reading and writing
- their effectiveness in interacting with one another and in building on one another's learning
- the culture of the class
- the effectiveness of the strategies being taught
- the appropriateness of the instructional strategies, tools, and timeframes being used

Students must be made aware of what behaviours and skills the teacher is assessing so that they can consciously demonstrate their learning. Sharing with students what is observed, how the information is analysed, and what next steps are indicated, and inviting students to share their perspectives in return, can lead to new insights for everyone.

Teachers record their direct observations systematically, using a variety of tools. Two frequently used tools for recording observations are the *checklist* and the *anecdotal record*.

A **checklist** is a list of actions, criteria, descriptions, or key attributes that the teacher or students check off as a particular action or attribute is observed or a criterion is achieved. The checklist can list skills, understandings, behaviours, processes, and/or attitudes that might or should be demonstrated in a given situation. For example, a comprehension strategies checklist (see Appendix 6 for a sample) can be used to

record observations made during a conference with a student about reading; a reading observation checklist (see Appendix 7 for a sample) or an oral language and listening skills checklist (see Appendix 8 for a sample) can be used to record observations in a variety of situations involving student–student or student–teacher interaction.

If the same checklist is used more than once, the series can reflect a student’s improvement over time.

An **anecdotal record** is a brief, written description of student behaviour and performance in a particular context at a particular time. For example, a reading/writing tracking sheet can be used to record observations made while observing a student reading/writing without interacting with him or her. An anecdotal record can also consist of observations made during a reading conference. Observations are recorded in an objective manner, without using judgemental language or including personal opinions or reactions. Anecdotal records can be written informally (e.g., as a series of notes on a label grid: each label can be peeled off when used and placed in the student’s file) or on pre-designed forms.

Cumulatively, the anecdotal records kept during a unit of instruction, term, or year provide a picture of student progress over time. Such anecdotal records help the teacher to recognize patterns of student growth and can provide a point of reference for future planning.

Both planned and spontaneous observations are recorded as soon as possible after the observation, and the record includes the time, date, and setting, as well as the behaviour observed. Where talk is involved, recording a student’s language verbatim can give teachers a detailed picture of the student as a learner. To effectively plan and implement next steps, teachers ensure that their records include observations of both positive behaviours and achievements and those that indicate a need for improvement.

When to use direct observation

- daily and throughout the course of the school day
- as planned assessments
- spontaneously, as opportunities arise

Information provided by direct observation

- invaluable descriptive information of skills and behaviour (e.g., strengths, needs, level of engagement, collaborative skills) observed in authentic contexts before, during, and after learning

Before direct observation

The teacher carefully plans:

- the evidence of learning to be assessed, taking into consideration the expectations of the Ontario curriculum, a student's IEP, or the ESL/ELD stage of language acquisition;
- how that information will be used to improve student learning;
- which students are to be observed;
- the information to be shared with those students;
- the recording tools to be used (ensuring that a variety is used);
- opportunities to observe, in various ways, students who are engaged in various activities throughout the day and week. (Assessment should not be based on one-time observations.)

During direct observation

The teacher:

- observes learning behaviours while interacting with students and as a spectator;
- observes in an objective fashion;
- records observations as soon as possible, and avoids using judgemental language or recording personal opinions or reactions;
- describes exactly what was observed, including the time, date, and setting, as well as the learning behaviour;
- notes the student's strengths, areas where improvement is needed, and if the student is ready for new learning.

After direct observation

The teacher:

- examines the information collected from multiple and various observations of each student to determine patterns of behaviour;
- uses the information from these and other assessments to provide feedback to each student;
- uses information from observations to reflect and to make the adjustments to instruction needed to move students forward.

The "Sample Reading Conference Anecdotal Record" that follows shows a sample anecdotal record taken after a teacher has observed the behaviours of a Grade 6 student who had finished reading the book *Number the Stars*, by Lois Lowry.

Sample Reading Conference Anecdotal Record

Student Name: Mark **Date:** February 13

Reading Task: *Number the Stars*, by Lois Lowry (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1989)

- enjoyed the story – he couldn't put the novel down because so many exciting events happened throughout
- reflected clear understanding of storyline – able to connect it to real historical events that took place in Denmark in the 1940s
- saddened by many of the events – grateful that we live in a free and safe country
- loved the suspense that the author built when describing police dogs sniffing the linen handkerchief
- read his favourite part (three paragraphs from the "afterword" section, which explains what was true in the story and what was made up by the author)
- favourite character was Annemarie – felt she was brave and a true heroine
- novel changed the way he thinks about war, peace, and appreciation of family
- interested in reading other novels by Lois Lowry
- selected the book because it won a Newbery Medal – had good experiences with other Newbery winners
- read a part that required interpretation of figurative language, but gave a literal interpretation – "For Kristi, the soldiers were simply part of the landscape, something that had always been there, on every corner, as unimportant as lampposts, throughout her remembered life." – said that the soldiers looked like lampposts, standing straight and tall (needed some support to discuss this quote)

Analysis of the Conference

Mark has good comprehension of the overall storyline, characters, and important events. He is able to identify with the characters and respond emotionally to the various historical events that took place. He has met a range of expectations appropriate to Grade 6 reading.

Next Steps

Mark requires explicit teaching in how to interpret various literary techniques, such as similes, analogies, and other figurative language. He would benefit from discussions about literary techniques, about how authors use them to convey meaning, and from examining various figurative language examples drawn from what he is reading.

Developmental Continua

Developmental continua are tools for tracking students' progress over time (developmental stages and developmental continua are discussed in Volume 1 of this guide [Chapter 2, p. 67 and following]). The development of reading, writing, and oral communication knowledge and skills is characterized by identifiable stages. Indicators describe the knowledge, skills, and behaviours of the learner at each stage of his or her learning, including language acquisition. The stages are not discrete but are part of a continuum of learning that varies with each student's individual rate of development. Resources that offer developmental continua for reading, writing, and oral communication may give different names to the stages, and the stages may vary from resource to resource. However, the common purpose of developmental continua is to provide a standard against which to map the development of students' literacy skills, track their progress, and plan literacy programming. Developmental continua may also be useful in helping teachers communicate students' progress to parents.

Beginning teachers, teachers who are new to teaching junior students, and teachers of students for whom English is an additional language will especially benefit from the use of a developmental continuum as an assessment tool, as it will promote their understanding of the development of junior students' literacy skills. At the end of the year, teachers may pass students' continua to their next-year's teacher, so that each student's progress and achievement can be tracked year by year.

When to use a developmental continuum

- once per term, or as needed to determine how a student is progressing and the instructional steps needed next
- at the beginning of the school year to predict the predominant phase of development in the class

Information provided by a developmental continuum

- general information about the way in which junior students develop literacy skills, including descriptions of the common stages students pass through
- specific information about individual students' literacy skills over time
- in some cases, appropriate teaching strategies to move students forward

Before using a developmental continuum

The teacher:

- examines and becomes familiar with the continuum, the descriptions of or criteria to be met for the various stages, and the purpose of the continuum as an assessment tool;
- shares the continuum with students, if and when appropriate;
- determines the evidence of learning that will be used to assess students' position on the continuum.

During the use of a developmental continuum

The teacher:

- places each student in a stage of the continuum on the basis of the evidence of achievement demonstrated by the student.

After using a developmental continuum

The teacher:

- shares the assessment with students where appropriate;
- conducts conferences with students to help them set specific goals for moving forward;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to the students, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan the teaching needed to move each student forward;
- closely monitors and provides necessary supports for any students considered to be at risk, to ensure that they continue to progress;
- documents the growth of each student over time;
- shares the information with parents where appropriate.

Attitude Surveys

Assessing students' attitudes towards literacy is an important component of getting a complete picture of students as learners. The attitudes of students in the junior grades affect their motivation to develop their literacy skills and can therefore have a strong influence on their level of achievement. Attitude surveys can be conducted informally throughout the year, using direct observation or purposeful discussion, or formally at certain times of the year, using survey forms (see Appendix 9 for a sample form for surveying students' attitudes to reading).

When to use an attitude survey

- formally, early in the school year and again at mid-year
- informally, throughout the year

Information provided by an attitude survey

- students' attitudes towards themselves as readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and viewers
- students' attitudes towards reading, writing, and oral/visual communication (including public speaking), and towards various text forms

Before the attitude survey

The teacher:

- observes individual students' responses to various literacy-based tasks;
- on the basis of informal observations, carefully selects or develops an attitude survey for students;
- informs students about the survey and how it will benefit them;
- states that there are no wrong answers, and encourages students to answer honestly.

During the attitude survey

The teacher:

- reminds students that there are no wrong answers.

After the attitude survey

The teacher:

- examines students' responses to the survey;
- where attitudes are negative, tries to ascertain why;
- holds individual conferences with students to discuss how to engage their interest in literacy;
- uses the information from these and other assessments to provide feedback to the students, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan specific strategies that will encourage positive attitudes towards literacy and literacy activities.

Interest Inventories

Interest inventories enable teachers to gather important information about students' interests in a variety of texts and text forms. With this information, teachers can ensure that the classroom resources contain texts that are appropriate, relevant, and motivating for students. In addition, they can use the information for programming purposes, such as grouping students with similar interests, developing themes of interest to students, and determining the focus of lessons. Interest inventories provide information that can be very helpful in meeting the needs of reluctant or struggling readers, such as boys or girls who have the ability to read but choose not to because of a lack of interest. By providing choices that take into consideration students' personal interests, teachers are able to entice reluctant readers to read. Such inventories also help to encourage readers to be more reflective and selective about their reading choices.

"An important prerequisite for providing engaging instruction is to find out more about your students as readers and writers, to investigate their reading and writing habits, interests, and attitudes."

(Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 9)

When developing the interest inventory, teachers should consider that some of the terminology may be unfamiliar to students who are new to Ontario schools.

When to use an interest inventory

- early in the school year
- again at mid-year, as junior students' interests may change

Information provided by an interest inventory

- topics, text forms, and genres that are of interest to students

Before the interest inventory

The teacher:

- develops or selects an interest inventory appropriate for the students;
- discusses the inventory with students, establishing its purpose and how it will be used, and ensuring that students know there are no wrong answers;
- determines whether to have the whole class complete the survey at the same time or to administer the survey in individual conferences with students.

During the interest inventory

The teacher:

- reminds students that there are no wrong answers.

After the interest inventory

The teacher:

- examines the responses of individual students;
- summarizes the class interests;
- ensures that the classroom resources reflect students' interests;
- provides feedback to the students;
- reflects on possible adjustments to the literacy program and plans next steps.

Performance Tasks

Performance-based assessments enable teachers to assess various aspects of students' literacy development as students "perform" an authentic literacy-related task in a realistic situation. Meaningful, active tasks engage students in learning for a purpose and help students realize the relevance of what they are learning. Examples of opportunities for performance-based assessment include the following:

- oral presentations (e.g., presenting a proposal to the school council)

- drama activities (e.g., an in-role interview with an author, in preparation for meeting that author)
- library research assignments (e.g., researching an issue related to body image and collaboratively creating a set of posters that contain positive body-image messages)
- literature circles
- book talks (e.g., a sales pitch to a bookseller)
- author's chair (sharing work as an author during a public reading)

Authentic literacy experiences help students develop skills and attitudes that will serve them throughout their lives and improve the quality of their lives.

Performance-based assessments may be spontaneous, with teachers taking advantage of opportunities to observe and record students' responses to specific literacy experiences (e.g., assess students' interpretations of a text during a literature circle discussion). When performance-based assessments are planned, the criteria for them should be developed and discussed with students (e.g., if the teacher will be assessing students' oral reports on their research findings, teacher and students could develop a rubric and view videotaped exemplars).

When to use a performance task for assessment purposes

- as appropriate during a learning block to allow students to demonstrate understanding

Information provided by a performance task

- attitudes towards literacy
- level of skill development
- knowledge of subject matter
- competence in applying specific strategies

Before a performance task

The teacher:

- discusses and develops the assessment criteria in collaboration with students;
- clearly communicates to students the purpose and benefits of the task and the procedures, guidelines, and timelines to be followed;
- determines the assessment tools to be used (e.g., rubrics, checklists, anecdotal record forms).

During a performance task

The teacher:

- observes students' attitudes towards literacy, as well as students' level of skill development and knowledge and the learning strategies they use;
- records observations.

After a performance task

The teacher:

- examines his or her observation/assessment notes;
- engages students in reflection on and self-assessment of their performance;
- determines students' strengths and the areas in which improvement is needed;
- provides students with feedback, including specific strategies for improvement;
- uses the information to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program and to plan next steps.

Portfolios

Portfolios are collections of samples of student work that students, with teacher support, carefully select and add to on an ongoing basis to track what they learn throughout the year. Both teachers and students assess the work in portfolios. Because students are asked to actively reflect on their learning in order to choose the samples that will go into the portfolios, portfolios are an especially powerful self-assessment tool.

The portfolios that are most effective as assessment tools include work that represents a variety of the student's learning experiences, such as a work sample that proved to be the most challenging for the student or a series of samples that show improvement in a particular area over time. The work selected for a student's portfolio does not have to be only the student's best work. A more important criterion is how useful the work has been in causing the student to reflect on his or her learning. At least some of the work placed in the portfolio should therefore demonstrate the student's *progress* towards achieving the curriculum expectations. Students place work in their portfolios when they have a piece that reflects a significant aspect of their learning, and they date each selection.

Gail Tompkins (2004, p. 150) describes an accordion-folder portfolio that is divided into three sections: language arts, mathematics, and theme studies. As students select items to place in the portfolio, they write a reflection about the piece and why they are choosing it. At the end of the year, students review their portfolios and select one-fourth of the writing to be passed on to the next teacher. They review the remaining writing and create a "take-home portfolio" to share with their family. The teacher writes a covering letter for each take-home portfolio, commenting on the year's writing and encouraging families to celebrate the student's writing.

Literacy Portfolios

Students' literacy portfolios may include work that represents all aspects of literacy learning: reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing; or students may maintain separate portfolios for each aspect. Students may also maintain portfolios in other subject areas – mathematics, science, art, and so on – or they may maintain one portfolio that represents their literacy learning in all subject areas. For example, Judy Davis and Sharon Hill (2003, p. 15) describe a portfolio that includes evidence of growth in writing in every subject area. In this case, the portfolio is a binder with a section for each content area. A coloured sheet is placed in front of each writing sample to indicate the focus of the cycle of writing (e.g., a six-week cycle on how to write a procedural report), to provide an introduction to the sample, and to explain why the sample was selected for inclusion in the portfolio. Following each writing sample are related notebook entries or rough drafts, revisions, and an assessment sheet where the student notes his or her reflections on the piece. Portfolios may also include electronic elements, such as videotapes and audio clips.

As students move on to a new grade, their portfolios, or selected samples from them, may be passed on to their new teacher to be maintained in a continuum over several grades.

To help make students' portfolios effective, teachers work with students to establish the purpose of the portfolios and the vocabulary that will be used when discussing them. Teachers model, perhaps in a conference, how to select material for the portfolio, and model and provide frequent opportunities for students to use the vocabulary associated with portfolios. Teachers also give students opportunities to think and talk about their portfolios and to have an active role in managing their portfolios. Students should review and reflect on the work in their portfolios on a regular basis (e.g., every two weeks; at the end of a unit of study), with a view to understanding what they have learned and setting new learning goals.

When teachers and students work together to establish the purpose of the portfolio, guidelines for selecting material, and evaluation criteria, they should ask themselves the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the portfolio?
- Who will be the audience?
- What samples will be included in the portfolio?
- What are the criteria for selecting or removing a piece of work?
- Who will determine the items to be included?
- How will the contents be organized?
- Where will the portfolio be stored?
- What will be the criteria for evaluation and feedback?

When to use a portfolio for assessment purposes

Teachers assess a student's portfolio:

- on a regular basis (e.g., every two weeks; at the end of a block of learning).

Teachers review a student's portfolio:

- in preparation for conferences with students and/or their parents.

Information provided by a portfolio

- a representation of the student's learning and progress over time
- chronological and developmental assessment information for student–teacher, parent–teacher, and student–parent conferences
- insight into students' attitudes towards learning and towards themselves as learners

Before examining a portfolio

The teacher:

- establishes the purpose and focus of the portfolio and the vocabulary for conferences;
- establishes guidelines for the selection of material, for assessment criteria, and for maintenance and storage of the material;
- uses think-alouds to clarify the guidelines for students and model appropriate ways to reflect on their own work;
- maintains a focus on the regular use of portfolios;
- provides students with opportunities to select work to add to the portfolio;
- provides students with opportunities to share their selections and the reasons for their choices with their peers;
- ensures that students do reflect on and discuss the work in their portfolios, and assists them where necessary.

During the examination of a portfolio

The teacher:

- examines the evidence of learning relative to curriculum expectations and to previously established individual student goals for learning;
- examines the student's progress over time in terms of attitudes towards literacy learning and knowledge and skills related to the curriculum expectations.

After examining a portfolio

The teacher:

- conducts regular conferences with students to discuss the work they have selected, to support them in their self-assessments, and to help them set goals for their learning;

- determines the areas where students need to improve;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to the students, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, to reflect on the effectiveness of the portfolio process, and to plan the instruction needed to move each student forward;
- uses the information revealed by the portfolio contents when reporting to parents.

Conferences

Conferences are brief, scheduled meetings (three- to five-minute sessions) between the teacher and a student to discuss the student’s progress, work, and goals. Longer conferences (of about ten minutes) may also be scheduled. Conferences enable teachers to find out about students’ own perceptions of their learning and achievements and to obtain a deeper understanding of students’ progress.

In order for students to have a successful conference experience, they need to clearly understand the purpose of the conference and what is expected of them. They also need to have the vocabulary with which to discuss their literacy learning. Effective teachers model how to engage in a conference and offer many opportunities for students to practise the relevant skills. Posting questions or discussion stems on an anchor chart is of benefit to students at the conference planning stage or for students who need extra support during the process. A conference planning sheet, achievement chart, or rubric can be useful to help students think through what they might focus on during a conference. Such a planning sheet could be as simple as the following form:

CONFERENCE PLANNING FORM

Name: _____

Conference date and time: _____

Conference partner: _____

Purpose of the conference: _____

Points I want to discuss / Questions I want to ask:

Portfolio samples I want to share:

Teachers set aside time, on a daily basis, to confer with a number of students, while the rest of the class is engaged in literacy learning, and they aim to confer with each student at least once a week. In addition to holding scheduled conferences, teachers take advantage of spontaneous opportunities to confer briefly and informally with students as often as possible.

With planned conferences, teachers establish the purpose of the conference and determine their questions beforehand (see the “Tip for Teachers” boxes on pages 51, 52, and 54 for sample questions). Carefully designed questions encourage students to reflect on their work; their learning strengths, needs, and preferences; the learning strategies they use; and their achievements. Questions should be designed both to meet the specific needs of individual students and to fit the purpose of the conference. The needs of the individual student should take priority. The teacher should be flexible and willing to modify the focus of the conference and the questions as the student’s needs require.

If conferences are being held to discuss reading, the teacher can use it to learn about students’:

- attitudes towards reading;
- attitudes towards themselves as readers;
- reading interests;
- comprehension of the text;
- ability to express ideas and to offer supporting evidence for those ideas from the text;
- use of appropriate vocabulary;
- ability to use text features to enhance comprehension;
- ability to apply reading strategies;
- ability to form relevant questions;
- understanding of text forms and genres and literary techniques;
- ability to use higher-order thinking skills to analyse and critique ideas and themes in the text.

See Appendix 6 for a sample comprehension strategies checklist to use for recording observations during a conference that begins with the teacher observing a student reading.

Tip for Teachers

Sample Questions About Reading

- What did you read this month?
- How did you decide what to read?
- Did you read mainly for enjoyment or for information?
- Were there any parts that were difficult to read? If so, what did you do?
- What was your response to this text (what meaning did it have for you)?
- What did you learn about yourself as a reader?

The following broader sample questions about reading could also be adapted and assigned to students as an end-of-term or end-of-year reflection and self-assessment activity:

- Who are your favourite authors?
- What are your favourite types of books (e.g., adventure stories, mysteries, science fiction, biographies, histories, informational texts)?
- What do you like to read other than books (e.g., magazines, comics, online articles, blogs)?
- What do you do if you find a text hard to understand?
- What do you do if you are not sure an informational text is accurate or fair?
- What are your plans for further reading?
- How do you decide whether or not to read a particular text?
- When and where do you like to read?

Gail Tompkins (2004, p. 155) describes eight types of conferences related to writing, all of which require the teacher to assume the stance of listener and guide. She emphasizes how much the teacher can learn about students' writing ability by listening as they discuss their work. The eight types of conferences are:

1. On-the-spot conferences
2. Pre-writing conferences
3. Drafting conferences
4. Revising conferences
5. Editing conferences
6. Instructional mini-lesson conferences
7. Assessment conferences
8. Portfolio conferences

Writing conferences may be held at different stages of the writing process and to discuss a student's portfolio (see above, page 47). Teachers use these conferences to learn about students':

- ability to use a writing process;
- understanding of the writer's craft;
- ability to make connections between texts they have read and texts they are writing;
- ability to choose the correct form for the purpose and audience;
- ability to write for a specific audience;
- facility in reflecting on their writing and in assessing their own work.

Tip for Teachers

Sample Questions About Writing

- What motivated you to write this piece?
- What challenges did you encounter?
- What part of this piece do you think is strongest?
- What did you learn about yourself as a writer?
- What goals did you set for yourself when writing this piece?
- Did you accomplish your goals? How?
- What are your goals for your next piece?

The following broader sample questions about writing could also be adapted and assigned to students as an end-of-term or end-of-year reflection and self-assessment activity:

- How many writing tasks have you completed so far?
- What writing project are you working on now?
- What text forms do you prefer to write in?
- Is there a new text form that you have tried that you found useful or fun to work with?
- What do you do well as a writer?
- What areas do you want to improve in as a writer?
- What authors or texts have you found to be good mentors for you as a writer?
- What piece of writing do you think is the best you have done so far? Why do you think it is the best?

Conferences to discuss students' listening, speaking, viewing, and representing skills may be held during or after the learning process to discuss the students' perceptions of themselves as communicators. During such conferences, the teacher and the students gain information about the students' ability to:

- express their ideas coherently;
- reflect on their learning;
- use talk to think through a problem;
- connect listening and speaking to reading and writing as learning tools;
- use strategies for summarizing and synthesizing orally;
- use voice, tone, volume, and pace for emphasis and to add interest.

See Appendix 8 for a sample oral language and listening skills checklist.

Regardless of the purpose of the conference, students should do most of the talking. Teachers encourage students to express their views in detail, and they ask probing questions to promote deeper thinking and more expansive responses from students.

When to use a conference for assessment purposes

- once a week for most students
- more frequently (twice a week) for students who are experiencing difficulty in achieving expectations in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing, ensuring that clear goals and strategies for meeting these goals are set during these conferences
- when a student requests a conference (Note that students may request conferences, and should be encouraged to do so.)
- spontaneously, as opportunities arise

Information provided by a conference

- students' perceptions of their learning and achievements
- a deeper understanding of individual students' literacy progress; the reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing strategies they use; the problems they encounter; and the goals they set and strategies they use to improve their achievements

Tip for Teachers

Sample Questions About Listening, Speaking, Viewing, and Representing

- What motivated you to communicate in this way?
- What challenges did you encounter?
- How did you solve your problems?
- What part of your presentation do you think is strongest, and why?
- What did you learn about yourself as a presenter?
- What goals did you set for yourself when developing this presentation?
- How did you accomplish your goals?
- How did you keep the attention of your audience?
- What kind of multimedia texts do you find most effective, and why?
- What techniques do you find most effective in conveying meaning visually?
- What techniques do you find most effective in conveying meaning orally?
- What techniques do you use in order to avoid being manipulated?
- What strategies help you focus as a listener?

The following broader sample questions about listening, speaking, viewing, and representing could also be adapted and assigned to students as an end-of-term or end-of-year reflection and self-assessment activity:

- What presentation strategies do you apply most effectively?
- How do you ensure that you are contributing effectively during group discussions?
- What questions help you gain a critical perspective when viewing, listening, or reading?
- Describe how you might build on the ideas of others during collaborative learning sessions?
- How do you remember key points that you need to comment on during a discussion?
- Which presentation strategies or tools do you find to be the most effective, and why?
- How have you used visuals this term to enhance your work?
- What criteria did you follow in order to select appropriate visuals to suit your purpose?
- When working with multimedia texts, what questions do you ask of the texts?
- What would you caution consumers to look for in multimedia texts to avoid being manipulated?
- What kinds of non-print texts do you enjoy the most? Why?
- What examples of non-print texts have you found to be the most effective in communicating their message? Why?
- What specific techniques do you use when deconstructing media?
- What questions would you encourage people to ask when they are interacting with media?

Before conducting a conference

The teacher:

- determines the time and purpose of the conference and its focus (e.g., writing, reading, portfolio review, presentation review);
- carefully plans the questions to use to prompt the student to “dig deeper” in providing responses.

During a conference

The teacher:

- makes the student feel comfortable and establishes the purpose of the conference;
- encourages the student to express his or her views, prompts the student with questions as necessary, and records the student’s comments and responses;
- helps the student set attainable goals, and supports the student by suggesting strategies that will help him or her achieve those goals.

After conducting a conference

The teacher:

- reviews the student’s responses;
- notes the student’s strengths and the areas in which the student needs to improve;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to the student, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan the instruction needed to move the student forward.

Process Checklists

Reading process checklists and writing process checklists can be useful tools to help students develop and maintain an awareness of the various steps in the reading and writing processes. The use of a process checklist supports the use of metacognitive strategies during reading and writing.

Metacognitive skills give students a growing awareness of themselves as learners and a greater degree of independence.

When to use a process checklist for assessment purposes

- with assignments that require students to apply the steps in a reading or writing process in order to complete the task successfully

Information provided by a process checklist

Students learn:

- what the steps in the process are;
- what is involved in applying each step in the process and how easy or difficult it is for them to do so.

Teachers learn:

- students' competence in applying the process.

Before using a process checklist:

The teacher:

- uses modelling and explicit instruction to ensure that students are familiar with all stages in the process.

During use of a process checklist:

The student:

- uses the checklist to guide and monitor his or her progress in understanding and completing the task;
- makes notes about how easy or difficult it is to apply each step.

After use of a process checklist:

The student:

- reflects on his or her assessment notes and performance;
- identifies strengths, areas that need improvement, and possible next steps;
- discusses his or her performance and assessment findings with the teacher.

The teacher:

- assesses the student's efforts at revising, editing, and publishing;
- discusses with the student the student's areas of strength, areas that need improvement, and next steps;
- uses the information to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program.

Reading Process Checklists

“Reading in the junior grades is an interactive, problem-solving process, with the primary purpose of making meaning” (*Literacy for Learning*, p. 61). The reading process is not linear. The reader decodes text by moving back and forth between stages in the process, applying different strategies when appropriate. (For a detailed outline of the reading process, see Volume 1 of this guide, Chapter 2, p. 41.) A reading process checklist can help students develop and maintain an awareness of the steps and strategies used before, during, and after reading. Using a reading process checklist can also help teachers and students to identify areas for additional support. The following is an example of a reading process checklist.

READING PROCESS CHECKLIST		
Student Name: _____ Date: _____		
Text Title: _____		
	Student's Comments	Teacher's Comments
Define a purpose for reading		
Select a suitable text		
Preview the text		
Activate prior knowledge		
Read, using appropriate strategies for the type of reading material		
Assess and reflect on the text		
Additional comments: _____ _____ _____		

Writing Process Checklists

Proficient writers understand how to follow the steps in the writing process. Like the reading process, the writing process is recursive; the results of one step may require the writer to go back to previous steps to refine his or her thinking and expression. Revision may occur throughout the writing process as writers rethink and make changes to their work. (For a detailed outline of the writing process, see the writing process chart in Volume 1 of this guide, Chapter 2, p. 43.) The following is an example of a writing process checklist.

WRITING PROCESS CHECKLIST		
Student Name: _____ Date: _____		
Theme/Topic/Task: _____		
	Student's Comments	Teacher's Comments
Prewriting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• read three mentor texts• list characteristics of the text form or genre to be written• create a writing web		
Drafting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• write a first draft		
Revising <ul style="list-style-type: none">• revise with a partner• make at least one major revision		
Editing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• proofread with a partner• check spelling and grammar		
Publishing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• decide on an appropriate format		
Sharing with an audience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• share the published piece• reflect on its effectiveness		
Additional comments: _____		

Records of Reading Behaviour

By making and analysing records of students' reading behaviour, teachers can monitor and assess students' level of reading comprehension and the strategies they use to comprehend text. Several record-taking and analysis processes have been developed for teachers to use, including running records and miscue analyses.

In general, the teacher has a student read aloud a text that is neither too difficult nor too easy (i.e., a text that is at the reader's instructional level), while the teacher uses a standard code to record the student's "miscues" or departures from the text. These miscues may or may not be errors (e.g., a student could substitute a word with a similar meaning, or self-correct while reading). After the reading, the student retells the text, first unaided and then aided by the teacher, to provide the teacher with more information about the student's level of comprehension. Because the retells are an essential part of the record and later analysis, they should not be omitted. (Retells are discussed as a separate assessment strategy on pages 69–71) Finally, the teacher analyses the record.

"Do we agree, then, that all readers will make miscues unless they're going so slowly that they lose efficiency? What's of most interest is the types of miscues that they make, since good readers tend to make miscues that preserve meaning, to self-correct when meaning is damaged, and to have a range of strategies to apply when they get stuck.

"How do we learn about what people do when they read? ... Oral reading ... is a window on the reading process, which we can then examine through miscue analysis."

(Wilde, 2000, pp. 28–29)

When to take and analyse a record of reading behaviour

- once a month for students whose progress in reading is a matter of concern

Information provided by analysis of a reading record

- specific information about students' strengths and the difficulties they are having in reading
- information about which reading strategies students are using, whether they are relying on these strategies too much, and which strategies they are not using

Before taking a record of reading behaviour

The teacher:

- selects a text that:
 - engages the student's interest;
 - is not so difficult that the student is unable to maintain a consistent flow of meaning, yet not so easy that no miscues occur;
 - is complete and cohesive (usually an entire story, chapter, or article) to facilitate the student's comprehension of the content (with longer texts it is not necessary to analyse all the miscues that occur, but it is important to note patterns);

- becomes familiar with the text in order to assess the student’s understanding of its content and focus during the retell;
- may make a copy of the text on which to record miscues directly (double-spacing and numbering the lines for ease of coding);
- may set up a tape recorder to tape the student’s reading for later reference;
- discusses the nature of the task with the student to ensure that the student feels comfortable with it. (Before taking a record of the reading behaviour of a student for whom English is an additional language, teachers may want to take the student on an introductory “book walk” to introduce the characters’ names, the setting, or difficult or unfamiliar concepts.)

During the recording of reading behaviour

The teacher:

- listens to the student read and records the student’s miscues using a standard coding system (for samples of miscue analysis coding see the accompanying chart; for an alternative template for taking a record, see Appendix 10);
- immediately after the reading, asks the student to retell the text unaided, to determine the student’s level of comprehension (the teacher may use prompts such as, “Tell me what you remember.”);
- prompts the student with questions about the text after the unaided retell, to help the student recall the text in more detail;
- has the student retell the text again, this time offering scaffolded support to provide the student with a learning experience.

After taking a record of reading behaviour

The teacher:

- analyses the types of miscues the student made and determines the comprehension strategies used by the student;
- determines the *patterns* and *trends* revealed by the miscues (*Note that* analysis of a record of reading behaviour is *not* intended to be used to establish the student’s reading level – for example, by counting the number of miscues.);

- conducts different and multiple types of analysis (e.g., clusters similar kinds of miscues and determines which ones affect meaning and which do not, to identify whether a student for whom English is an additional language is making certain miscues repeatedly);
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to the student, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan the instruction needed to move the student forward.

Samples of Miscue Analysis Coding

Miscue	Description	Example
<i>SUBSTITUTION</i> (top is what student says, bottom is text)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one word is substituted for another • the substitution is a non-word (Place a "\$" in front of the word.) • the student says only part of the word (Place a dash to show the part of the word that is deleted.) • one word is substituted for two 	<p><u>computer</u> commuter</p> <p><u>\$comanter</u> commuter</p> <p><u>comm-</u> commuter</p> <p><u>I've</u> I have</p>
<i>OMISSION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • word[s] are omitted (Circle the omitted word[s].) 	Asia is <u>in</u> the East.
<i>INSERTION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • word[s] are inserted (Use a caret to show the inserted word[s].) 	she ...and walked away. ^
<i>REPETITION AND CORRECTION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the student repeats and goes back over part of the text (Insert "(r)" before the repeated words.) 	Stephanie's father (r) registered her for dance class.
<i>PAUSE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a long pause indicates that the student is stuck (Insert "(P)" where the pause occurs.) 	Joe doesn't collect normal (P) artefacts like rocks or insects.
<i>INTONATION MISCUE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the student's intonation sometimes causes miscues in the text (e.g., when two sentences are read together as if they are one) 	

(Adapted from Wilde, 2000, pp. 38–41)

Cloze Procedures

Cloze procedures involve having students read passages from a text from which certain words have deliberately been deleted. The procedures require students to supply suitable words to fill in the blank spaces and are used both to develop students' comprehension skills (that is, as an instructional strategy) and to assess students' comprehension skills. Cloze procedures can be administered to individual students, small groups, or the whole class. The text chosen is at the students' independent reading level or slightly above, to ensure that students are required to apply problem-solving comprehension strategies.

For students such as ESL/ELD learners, who are learning vocabulary, cloze procedures are often difficult. For such students, teachers need to accept all meaningful substitutions, or they need to provide initial letters or blends.

There are two basic forms of cloze procedures:

- **Random-cued cloze procedures** have words, or parts of words, deleted at random. In some cases, the initial letter of each deleted word is revealed, and the number of letters in the word is also revealed. In random-cued cloze exercises, there is only one correct response for each answer (e.g., in the sentence “Every morning, farmer Steven milked the dairy c--- before he ate his b-----”, the correct responses are *cows* and *breakfast*).
- **Formal cloze procedures** have every fifth word in a selected passage deleted. In this version, teachers carefully consider the words to be deleted to ensure that students will not find the blank spaces ambiguous. Some words, such as proper nouns, dates, and numbers, create ambiguous gaps when omitted. If the fifth word is ambiguous, then the next appropriate word is deleted. In formal cloze procedures, unlike in the random-cued form, initial letters and the number of letters per word are generally not revealed. As a result, more than one word may fit the space and can be accepted by the teacher, as long as the student has maintained the meaning (e.g., in the sentence, “When Kiana finally met Asia, she became overwhelmed with joy, as her face _____ brightly”, possible responses include *lit up*, *shone*, and *beamed*).

When to use a cloze procedure for assessment purposes

- early in the school year, at mid-year, and at the end of the year, using different passages for each test

Information provided by a cloze procedure

- students' ability to use specific context clues in a passage, and the effect of that ability on students' level of reading comprehension

Before a cloze procedure

The teacher:

- models the cloze procedure several times before using it for assessment purposes;
- uses “think-alouds” to demonstrate comprehension strategies that help fill in the blanks created by deleted words;
- conducts several shared reading lessons where students engage in cloze procedure activities;
- provides students with several opportunities to practise cloze procedures independently;
- carefully selects a passage that students are comfortable reading (at or slightly above students’ independent reading level);
- makes approximately fifty deletions in the passage, but does not delete any words in the first and last sentences and does not delete any punctuation.

During a cloze procedure

The teacher:

- gives students ample time to complete the cloze procedure (the assessment should not be timed);
- observes students’ behaviour as they complete the procedure.

After a cloze procedure

The teacher:

- scores students’ responses (for a passage with fifty deletions, generally a score of 40 per cent or more indicates a satisfactory level of comprehension);
- pays close attention to the specific words that individual students found challenging, determines if there are patterns in the errors, and explores the possible reasons for incorrect choices;
- notes the specific context clues students are using;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to the student, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan the teaching needed to move each student forward.

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000a)

The following is a sample of a student-completed random-cued cloze procedure. A sample teacher's analysis of this student-completed cloze procedure is provided on page 66.

Sample Student-Completed Random-Cued Cloze Procedure

Jack and His Slingshot

Julie Ann

It was the first day of the summer holidays. Eric and Sin-Yu were going to spend the day

with Mohammad. They were planning a race for their homing pigeons.

Sin-Yu and Eric were just in front of Mohammad's house when a bicycle came

speeding along the sidewalk. It nearly knocked hit Eric.

The rider of the bicycle looked back and laughed as he sped off.

Mohammad ran out over to meet his friends. "That was Jack Miller," he said. "He's

just moved in next door and he's a bully and a trouble-maker. Since he came, there

have been been a lot of broken windows and porch lights in the neighbourhood.

Everyone says its Jack, but no one has caught him yet."

The children went through the back garden to see the pigeons. Mohammad and

his father had many fine racing pigeons in their loft above the garage. The birds

were flying about around in the chicken-wire pen.

A beautiful hen came out over to exercise. She was dark blue, splashed with

white. "That's Star," said Mohammad. "She's won a lot of races. My father's

really proud of her, and she has two fine squabs in her nest right now!"

Just then⁽³²⁾ there was⁽³³⁾ a sound of rattling⁽³⁴⁾ leaves, then a big boom⁽³⁵⁾ followed by
 a loud⁽³⁶⁾ screech. Star had been⁽³⁷⁾ hit by something! She lay limp and hurt on the
floor⁽³⁸⁾ of the loft.
 For a second⁽³⁹⁾, Mohammad, Eric and⁽⁴⁰⁾ Sin-Yu stood in stunned silence⁽⁴¹⁾ shocked⁽⁴²⁾.
 Suddenly, there⁽⁴³⁾ was a terrified shout⁽⁴⁴⁾ coming from the big⁽⁴⁵⁾ tree beside the⁽⁴⁶⁾
 garage, and Jack Miller tumbled over⁽⁴⁷⁾ of it. He fell to the ground⁽⁴⁸⁾ in Mohammad's
 backyard. All the children⁽⁴⁹⁾ were shocked to see⁽⁵⁰⁾ him. Jack lay there on the
 ground groaning in pain!

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(Adapted from Ontario Assessment Instrument Pool, 1990, p. 173)

Sample Teacher's Analysis of Student-Completed Random-Cued Cloze Procedure

Analysis of Julie Ann's Random-Cued Cloze Assessment

Julie Ann scored 25/50 = 50%

Field testing from the OAIP cloze assessments indicated that a score of 40 per cent or higher represents satisfactory progress in the development of comprehension skills. Therefore, Julie Ann's result is considered to be satisfactory.

Julie Ann's overall results demonstrate good comprehension of the passage. She left a few spaces blank and indicated that she was really stuck on these words: "front", "next", "children" (2 times), "loud", "floor", "for", "second". Despite missing these words, she understood the overall meaning of the passage.

For the most part, she selects vocabulary that maintains the meaning of the text and is consistent with the syntax and grammar - e.g.:

- over/out
- lamps/lights
- around/above
- bountiful/beautiful
- rattling/rustling
- boom/bang
- sound/shout
- garage/ground

This indicates that Julie Ann is reading for meaning and is using a variety of cueing systems (meaning, structural, and visual) when attempting to complete the cloze procedure.

Next Steps

Model problem-solving processes of cloze procedures to expand vocabulary during several shared reading lessons. Use more challenging texts that will encourage rich vocabulary development. Model the use of think-alouds to identify a variety of words that would make sense when filling in a cloze blank. Discuss why these words maintain meaning and how they are the same parts of speech, such as prepositions, adverbs, and adjectives.

Question/Answer Reading Comprehension Tasks

Oral or written questions and answers provide ways of assessing understanding of content and also competence in oral or written communication. Questions may be posed by students or the teacher. Posing questions helps teachers and students clarify the purpose for learning and enables them to link previous information with new understandings. Questioning also encourages the development of critical literacy, and examining the questions students create allows the teacher to assess critical-literacy skills.

Question/answer reading comprehension tasks are a specific form of the question-and-answer strategy. These tasks help teachers understand individual students' reading comprehension abilities by requiring students to respond, orally or in writing, to questions about a short but specific unfamiliar passage. In general, junior students are able to respond to questions in writing, but accommodations may be required for students who are unable to do so. In these cases, oral responses or brief jot notes in a one-to-one situation are suitable alternatives to consider.

Tip for Teachers

Questions to Ask Yourself When Developing a Question/Answer Task

- Will my questions elicit responses that demonstrate each student's thinking processes and comprehension of the text?
- Are all questions open-ended, or are there any for which there is only one correct answer? If so, how can I modify those questions to encourage unrestricted responses to the text?
- Do my questions enable students to demonstrate the ability to do the following?
 - explain their thinking
 - justify their opinion
 - locate relevant and important information in the text
 - make connections between the text and their own life experiences, other texts, and/or the world at large
 - identify the main idea in the passage
 - summarize the plot or the information (as appropriate)
 - synthesize the ideas or information in the text
 - make inferences based on the text
 - critically analyse the text
 - make judgements based on the text
 - think beyond the text
 - identify text features and the organization or structure of the text

The tasks are administered individually, with the chosen passages tailored to the individual student's abilities. Teachers develop a list of pertinent questions about a passage related to the reading knowledge and skills they want to assess. Generally, questions are open-ended to require students to demonstrate their thinking processes and their understanding of the text. Questions that have only one "correct" answer are limiting, because they do not encourage students to reflect and to make connections, inferences, and judgements about the passage. For example, if the specific skill being assessed is the student's ability to make connections between the text and the student's own life experiences, other texts, and/or the world at large, a good sample question would be: "Lau and Gerry were embraced by their mother when they finally made it home. What did this part of the text remind you of?"

When to use a question/answer task for assessment purposes

- early in the school year as a diagnostic assessment to gather information about students' reading strengths and needs
- as well, once per term, using different texts each time, to review individual students' progress and to plan programming according to students' needs

Information provided by a question/answer task

- students' ability to respond independently to a short but specific unfamiliar reading passage
- the breadth and depth of students' comprehension of the passage, based on their responses to the questions

Before a question/answer task

The teacher:

- ensures that he or she has taught students the vocabulary associated with this form of assessment, has modelled think-alouds and how to answer questions, and has given students sufficient opportunities to answer questions so that students are familiar with the process;
- reviews potential passages that the individual student is not familiar with and that are at the student's independent reading level (i.e., that the student will be able to read without frustration);
- encourages the student to browse through several passages and, on the basis of interest and prior knowledge, select a passage to read silently;

- informs the student that he or she will be responding to a few questions related to the text;
- determines whether the responses will be in written form or given orally (or using a scribe, as appropriate).

During a question/answer task

The teacher:

- observes students' behaviours as they respond, noting particularly their ability to use higher-order thinking skills, to make connections, to express their thoughts, and to use appropriate vocabulary;
- provides appropriate accommodations for students with special education needs (e.g., additional time, use of a dictionary, use of a laptop computer).

After a question/answer task

The teacher:

- assesses the student's written or oral responses using an appropriate tool (e.g., a rubric, an exemplar);
- determines the student's comprehension strengths and the areas where improvement is needed;
- gives the student feedback and helps the student set goals for improvement;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to the student, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan the teaching needed to help the student improve his or her comprehension skills (e.g., use of think-alouds to demonstrate strategies for identifying the main ideas in a text).

Retells

Asking students to “retell” a text they have read reveals how well they have understood the text, its form and purpose, and the main ideas in it. The focus of retells may vary. For example, when a student is retelling a narrative, the teacher will want to assess the student's understanding of the elements of a story, including plot, setting, characters, conflicts, and resolutions (see Appendix 11 for a sample template for recording observations made during a student's retelling of a narrative text). When a student is retelling an informational text, the teacher will want to know if the student can identify the text form and text features and understand their purpose, and can identify and understand the major concepts in the text.

When to use a retell

- twice a month, using various text forms
- more often (weekly) for students who are experiencing comprehension difficulties, along with follow-up lessons intended to help those students develop comprehension strategies and strategies for reading for meaning
- following the administration of miscue analysis to identify and analyse the ability of the reader to comprehend the text

Information provided by a retell

- students' comprehension abilities
- students' ability to express ideas coherently
- students' ability to remember important details
- students' vocabulary skills
- students' understanding of the different purposes of various text forms (e.g., informational, narrative, procedural)

Before a retell

The teacher:

- selects a passage that is at the student's independent reading level (i.e., that the student will be able to read without frustration);
- sets a purpose for the reading by asking the student questions such as, "What would you like to know about this article?" and "What do you think this story is going to be about?";
- instructs the student to read the passage silently;
- observes the student reading silently;
- asks the student to retell the text (and lets the student do so unaided, at least at first).

During a retell

The teacher:

- takes notes of the student's responses, recording them verbatim where appropriate;
- asks the student questions about aspects of the text that the student did not retell.

After a retell

The teacher:

- examines his or her notes of the student's retell and determines the student's comprehension strengths, ability to recognize text form and purpose, and any areas in which improvement is needed;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to the student, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan the teaching needed to move the student forward.

Reader's Notebooks/Learning Logs/Reading Response Journals

A learning log is an ongoing record kept by students during the learning process. It shows progress and growth over time and provides opportunities for reflection and goal setting. It can provide a focus for a conference. The number of columns and the headings will vary on a learning log and be determined by such things as the students' prior experiences and the purpose of the log.

A reader's notebook is a form of learning log. Students use a reader's notebook to keep a record of the texts they have read and their responses to those texts. The texts may include material used in read-alouds, shared reading, and guided reading, as well as material read independently in class or at home. Students use their reader's notebooks to record what they have learned, their reflections on a text, and their impressions of themselves as readers, and to develop their ideas about what they have read. They may include quotations or excerpts from favourite texts. Teachers encourage students to review what they have read by writing about it in their notebooks. They also encourage students to balance their reading diet by varying the forms of texts they are reading and to set personal goals in reading. (Students can list texts they want to read in their notebooks, as well as those they have read.)

Another way for students to record responses to their reading is by keeping a reading response journal. As students read, they write thoughtful, personal responses. They state their thoughts and feelings about situations, characters, settings, plots, and any other elements of a story. They say what they liked and didn't like, and what was confusing or interesting, and may include a brief summary of what they read each day. Students also write about the strategies they have used – for example, predicting what will happen in a story, making connections between the text and other experiences, or building on their familiarity with an author's style. Teachers can thus use response journals to assess students' understanding of reading strategies.

Teachers emphasize to students that reader’s notebook, learning log, and reading response journal entries are not “right” or “wrong” but rather a record of the student’s growth as a reader. Teachers encourage students to make entries whenever they find a text engaging, to write their personal feelings about texts freely, to make predictions and connections, and to ask questions about what they read. Teachers also encourage students to use various frameworks to organize their thoughts (see, for example, “Sample Framework and Prompts for a Reader’s Notebook” on pages 74–75) and to use quotations and illustrations to enhance their responses.

When to use a reader’s notebook for assessment purposes

- once or twice a week, or whenever appropriate

Information provided by a reader’s notebook

- students’ interests; their favourite text forms, genres, authors, and topics; their comprehension skills; the development of their thinking; their attitude towards themselves as readers; their writing abilities; and their ability to connect reading and writing as learning tools

Before examining a reader’s notebook

The teacher:

- establishes the purpose of the reader’s notebook;
- explicitly teaches and models how to respond to texts, how to write personal responses to texts, how to make predictions and ask questions about texts, and how to describe connections made between the text and one’s own life, other texts, and the world at large;
- posts models for future reference;
- establishes clear routines and expectations for writing in reader’s notebooks, the time for doing so, and the various formats in which students can write;
- establishes the criteria by which the notebooks will be assessed;
- offers students choices about the texts to which they are required to respond.

During the examination of a reader's notebook

The teacher:

- observes students' interests and favourites and whether they are reading a variety of authors, genres, and text forms;
- examines students' comprehension skills, the development of their thinking, their attitude towards themselves as readers, their writing abilities, and their ability to connect reading and writing as learning tools;
- exercises some flexibility in assessing the above elements, to encourage students to express their ideas honestly and openly without being overly influenced by the teacher or their peers;
- writes comments on students' work on sticky notes or a response sheet that is inserted into the notebooks (rather than writing directly in the notebooks), providing positive and specific feedback and suggesting further reading.

After examining a reader's notebook

The teacher:

- analyses responses using a rubric or checklist;
- offers students an opportunity to discuss their written responses to texts during a student-teacher conference or with other students;
- shares examples of high-quality responses with the class;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to the students; to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program; and to plan the teaching that will encourage deeper and more thoughtful responses, promote a lasting interest in reading, and refine students' writing skills, particularly in the area of self-expression.

Sample Framework and Prompts for a Reader's Notebook

Retell

Some things to write about:

- Retell what you have read.
- Summarize what you have read.
- Describe the major ideas.
- List the sequence of ideas or events.
- Describe the most significant and relevant parts.
- Describe parts that you find confusing, attempt to work out their meaning through your writing, and formulate questions about them for discussion during a conference with the teacher.

Some possible prompts:

- This was about ...
- I noticed that ...
- The most significant idea/event was ...
- An event that I especially liked was ...
- I particularly liked/valued/enjoyed ...
- An idea that captured my interest was ...
- Words that I found particularly effective were ...
- An idea that inspired me was ...
- The author's style is ...
- The plot/setting/characters/mood are important to the text because ...
- I didn't understand this part because ...

Relate

Some things to write about:

- Make connections between the text and your own life (e.g., personal experiences, feelings), other texts (e.g., books, music, films, television programs, websites), or the world at large (e.g., current events).
- Relate your thoughts about the characters and their perspectives to your own life, giving examples.

Some possible prompts:

- This character reminds me of ...
- Something I identify with is ...
- The plot/setting/explanation makes me feel ...
- The style of this book helps me ...
- What I found especially meaningful or significant was ...
- This text relates to my life in the following ways: ...
- This book, compared with others by the same author, is ...
- This book, compared with others on the same topic but by other authors, is ...
- The characters that I relate to best are ... because ...
- The plot in this story is similar to my experience when ...
- What is described in this text is very much like what is happening today in ...

Sample Framework and Prompts for a Reader's Notebook – Continued

Reflect

Some things to write about:

- The reasons you selected this text
- Why this text is important to you
- The author's conclusions
- Your judgement about the text/author's conclusions
- Your opinions about the ideas/events in the text
- Your opinions about the style of this text compared with the style of other texts on the same topic
- Your judgement about the credibility of the text
- Whether you feel the text is current and/or accurate
- Whether reading the text has changed the way you feel or think about something, and if so, how
- Any relevant questions you have
- Anything about the text that still confuses or frustrates you
- How reading this text has or has not helped you meet the learning goals you set for yourself
- The reading/comprehension/writing skills that you still need to work on
- Any new goals you are setting for yourself

Some possible prompts:

- The passages that I find the most meaningful are ... because ...
- One particular character [name the character] was motivated by ...
- I think that ...
- I wonder why or what if ...
- I realize now that ...
- How ...?
- This author's style differed from ... on the same topic in the following ways ...
- This information is very different from what I read in ...
- What is the author trying to make me think/do?
- I wonder why I feel so ...
- Reading this text changed the way I think and behave because ...
- A question raised in my mind is ...
- My predictions about this text were ...
- Something that pushed my thinking was ...
- This text was a challenge for me because ...
- I learned that ...
- I changed the way I think/feel about ... because ...
- I think that I will investigate other points of view because ...
- An idea that inspired me was ... because ...
- The characters that interested me the most were ... because ...
- The author wrote the story with an underlying message that is ... because ...
- This book is so popular because ...
- I would recommend this book to a friend or to a reader who is especially interested in ...

(Adapted from Schwartz and Bone, 1995, pp. 26–33)

Reader's Notebook Response Entry Format

Date	Title/Author	Topics	Reader's Reflections

Reader's notebook pages may be blank or may have headings provided by the teacher so that students can fill in appropriate information where it is needed. A chart listing possible topics for response may be jointly developed by the teacher and students, posted in the classroom, and added to on an ongoing basis, as appropriate.

Language and Word Study Assessments

Language and word study assessments give teachers information about the strategies students are using to solve unknown words. When assessing students' daily writing, teachers take note of misspelled and misunderstood words and develop lists of words that each student needs to study. Teachers may also wish to conduct a "pre-assessment test" to determine the words that are difficult for students and the words they already know, so that time is not wasted having students study words they already know. The word list can include commonly misspelled words and words related to a common theme. Teachers can ask students to add words to their individual lists as well.

Working with established lists, students engage in exploring how language and words work. Building on what students already know, teachers use explicit instruction and model word-solving strategies that focus on patterns, word families, roots, prefixes, and suffixes. After the language and word study period is over, teachers have students demonstrate their learning in a pairs activity (the assessment itself), where each student dictates his or her partner's vocabulary list to the partner. Students assess their own work and report the results to the teacher.

Assessment strategies such as teacher observation help teachers plan additional word study activities to address and promote students' word-solving skills, fluency, and competence in the use of words in reading, writing, and oral/visual presentations, and to deepen students' understanding of patterns and structures in language so that they become more independent readers, writers, and oral communicators.

Following is a sample word list for the developing junior learner. It includes high-frequency words and words commonly used in junior students' reading, writing, and oral/visual presentation activities.

Sample Word List for the Developing Junior Learner

Word List									
between	learn	brought	notice	heavy	possible	remember	question	centre	
suddenly	beautiful	problem	distance	quite	although	system	already		
understand	instead	strong	probably	complete	perhaps	especially			
practice/practise	huge	weight	certain	among	please	rather	length	except	
suppose	reason	different	strange	choose	trouble	minute	eight	necessary	
direction	afraid	wrong	amount	difficult	guess	attention	various	contain	
farther	exercise	separate	appear	familiar	opposite	similar	ancient	happen	
equal	product	bread	particular	neither	knowledge	original	affect/effect		
develop	variety	express	future	provide	further	beneath			

(Adapted from Toronto District School Board, 2000b)

Students can use word lists in a variety of ways – for example, to think about patterns in words and features of words, and as a place where content vocabulary can be found.

When to use a language and word study assessment

- on an as-needed basis (However, language and word study activities should occur every day.)

Information provided by a language and word study assessment

- strategies students use to solve unknown words
- students' fluency in reading, writing, and oral/visual presentations

"I assume the role of a well-informed guide of word/language knowledge for my fifth-grade students. I am deliberate as I think through what word knowledge is and where, when, and how this knowledge is to be used and taught. I guide students as they develop an eye for noticing word features, increasing their vocabularies while applying knowledge purposefully for the myriad of reasons students read, write, and spell each day."

(Brand, 2004, p. 7)

Before a language and word study assessment

The teacher:

- assesses students' daily writing and/or conducts a "pre-assessment test" to determine students' spelling and vocabulary skills, and uses these preliminary assessments to generate lists of individual students' commonly misspelled and misunderstood words;
- encourages students to add words to their individual lists;
- plans and implements a variety of language and word study lessons that include both explicit instruction and modelling and that build on students' existing knowledge, exploring word structures and the way language works to promote the use of various word-solving strategies, fluency, and competence in the use of words in reading, writing, and oral presentations;
- demonstrates word-solving strategies, using think-alouds, in the context of authentic reading, writing, and oral/visual presentation activities.

During a language and word study assessment

The teacher:

- observes as students test each other by dictating a partner's word list to the partner;
- has students assess their own work and report the results to the teacher.

After a language and word study assessment

The teacher:

- determines the words that continue to be difficult for students to spell, adds new words to the lists after examining students' recent written work and by conducting other observations and/or tests, and plans future instruction;
- makes students aware of their results;
- supports students by providing them with strategies to improve their spelling and their understanding of how language works.

Writing Samples

Junior writers develop an expanded understanding of text forms and writing for a specific audience. They also develop an expanded ability to use effective language and a distinctive voice in their writing. This development may be assessed through an examination of the writing samples students produce on a regular basis.

Writing samples may encompass a wide range of text forms that illustrate different aspects of students' knowledge and skills in writing. A prose composition, for example, may be used to assess students' understanding of complex information and/or their ability to organize ideas in a concise and coherent manner, with creativity and originality. A lyric poem would be used to assess quite different types of skills and understandings from those demonstrated in a prose composition. Since students have diverse learning styles, they need to engage in diverse types of writing to ensure that they have sufficient opportunities to demonstrate achievement.

Teachers assess students' knowledge and skills in writing by examining students' writing on a daily basis in subjects across the curriculum. In using this assessment strategy, teachers determine the learning that will be assessed and the ways in which this learning can be demonstrated by students. The evidence of writing proficiency that teachers are looking for needs to be closely related to the skills and strategies that have been taught, and also should be based on the grade-appropriate expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language*. For ESL/ELD learners, an opportunity to record their initial thinking in point-form notes or a graphic organizer, or using their first language, may provide the support required to bridge the gap between cognitive and linguistic capacity. Teachers use a variety of tools to assess students' writing, such as writing developmental continua (e.g., the *First Steps* series book *Writing: Developmental Continuum*, 1999), rubrics, and exemplars (e.g., the Ministry of Education publication *The Ontario Curriculum – Exemplars, Grades 1–8: Writing*, 1999).

When to examine a writing sample

- daily, in a variety of cross-curricular contexts, or less often as appropriate (One sample from each of five students is a manageable number to assess at a time.)

Information provided by a writing sample

- students' knowledge of written text forms
- students' ability to identify the audience and purpose for various text forms
- students' ability to use effective language, vocabulary, and style and a distinctive voice in writing
- students' ability to research relevant information to support their writing
- students' revising and editing skills

Before examining a writing sample

The teacher:

- determines expectations on which to focus;
- determines the criteria for assessing evidence of learning;
- selects the tools to be used in the assessment;
- shares the assessment methods and criteria with students (e.g., rubrics, exemplars, checklists).

During the examination of a writing sample

The teacher:

- carefully assesses students' strengths, areas where improvement is needed, and the level of achievement of expectations, as demonstrated in the written work;
- looks for evidence of students' skills in the following areas, using the achievement chart in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language*, where appropriate:
 - knowledge and understanding – the grade-appropriate subject-specific content (knowledge) acquired, and the comprehension (understanding) of its meaning and significance;
 - thinking – the use of critical and creative thinking skills and/or processes;
 - communication – the ability to convey meaning in various text forms;
 - application – the use of knowledge and skills to make connections within and between various contexts;
- notes words and areas of language usage where students may be weak, for use in language and word study lessons and assessments (see pages 76–78 for language and word study assessments).

After examining a writing sample

The teacher:

- determines patterns in students' writing abilities;
- provides students with feedback about their strengths and the areas in which they need to improve, and helps them set goals for improvement;
- schedules regular conferences with students to discuss their written work;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to students, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan teaching that will move each student forward.

Writing Folders

Writing folders contain pieces of students' writing at different stages of completion in the writing process. For example, a student's writing folder may have lists of story ideas and/or graphic organizers indicative of the planning stage. The writing folder may hold early drafts at various stages of revision as well as some final drafts. Unlike the portfolio, in which selected writing samples are chosen primarily for purposes of assessment and evaluation, the writing folder is essentially an organizational tool to support the student's progress through the writing process. However, it is included here because it can function as an assessment tool in allowing the teacher to track and assess students' strengths and needs in writing. Moreover, because students need to actively reflect on their learning in order to choose the samples that will go into their folders, the writing folder is also a powerful self-assessment tool.

Early in the school year, teachers explain the purpose of the writing folders and the kinds of written work to be selected for them, establish routines and organizational procedures for maintaining writing folders, and model the process of selecting samples to deposit in the folder. Students place samples of their writing in all subject areas, not just Language, in the folder on a daily basis throughout the year, and use the folder to reflect on their development as a writer on a continuous basis.

When to use a writing folder

- during the beginning weeks of school to gather baseline data
- regularly throughout the term to assess student progress
- at term ends (using the most recent evidence) for evaluation purposes

Information provided by a writing folder

- students' understanding of the writing process, text forms, and the relationship among audience, purpose, and form
- students' ability to use language, style, and voice effectively in writing
- students' ability to research relevant information to support their writing
- students' revision and editing skills
- students' understanding of themselves as writers

Before examining a writing folder

The teacher:

- teaches students the purpose of a writing folder, how to use a writing folder to organize their written work, and how to select work to deposit in the folder;
- explains how the folder will be used for assessment purposes.

During the examination of a writing folder

The teacher:

- makes notes of students' understanding of the writing process and their writing skills in terms of content, process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, publishing), organization, use of various text forms, and use of language, style, and voice.

After examining a writing folder

The teacher:

- conducts regular conferences with students to discuss particular pieces of writing and particular aspects of individual students' writing;
- uses the information provided by this and other assessments to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program and to plan the teaching needed to move each student forward.

Weekend Writing Assessments

Judy Davis and Sharon Hill (2003, p. 41) suggest that teachers arrange for students to take a sample of their writing home with them on a weekend to show it to and discuss it with a parent. The teacher provides a form for student and parent to fill out (in English or their first language) after the discussion/conference, or asks the student to write in his or her writer's notebook about the feedback from the parent and the student's thoughts about the feedback. This form of assessment offers students an opportunity to share their work with an authentic audience, keeps the family informed about the student's progress, and encourages students to be reflective about their writing.

When to use a weekend assessment

- throughout terms two and three

Information provided by a weekend assessment

- feedback from parents regarding their child's interest and involvement in writing
- students' ability to verbalize their thinking about their writing, their understanding of the writing process, and their impressions of themselves as writers

Before a weekend assessment

The teacher:

- establishes the purpose of the student–parent conference;
- offers parents suggestions about appropriate comments they might make and questions they might ask.

During a weekend assessment

The student:

- shares the writing sample with the parent, explaining the purpose of the writing, the approach taken (the student's thinking about the work), and examples of use of the writer's craft;
- notes the parent's responses on the form provided or in the writer's notebook;
- determines, and notes, on the form provided or in the writer's notebook, the steps needed to improve the work, if any, and any other reflections on the work.

The parent:

- comments on the writing sample, asks questions about it, and makes suggestions from a reader's perspective.

After a weekend assessment

The teacher:

- reviews the student's notes;
- helps the student make connections between the desired effect and next steps and supports the student in taking the next steps by providing instruction in and modelling relevant strategies;
- uses the information from this and other assessments to provide feedback to students, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan the teaching needed to move each student forward.

“Make a Match” Writing Self-Assessments

To prepare for “Make a Match” writing self-assessments, the teacher works with small groups of students or the whole class to deconstruct an effective piece of writing, identifying those aspects of the writing process, the writer's craft, and features of the text form that make the piece effective. Each student is given a copy of the text. After reading it, students work in pairs to reflect on the text and to discuss the elements that they find effective, marking their observations on their copies. They then reassemble in a group. As students report on their observations about the text, the teacher marks up a copy of the text on a transparency that is projected overhead so that everyone can see it, indicating each significant element that is found to make the text effective. The teacher then posts a neat, large version of the deconstructed text in the classroom for reference.

Following the deconstruction, students work individually. They create a piece of writing using the same text form and keeping in mind the effective elements discussed during the deconstruction. When they have completed their drafts, they match their writing to the deconstructed sample for ideas on how to refine their work and then take the time to refine it. The teacher offers support as necessary and provides students with time to reflect on their grasp of the writing process, writing techniques, and text forms, as well as on what they need to do to improve their writing.

By administering the “Make a Match” self-assessment, the teacher acquires insight into students’ writing abilities and ascertains the strategies students need to learn to improve those abilities.

When to use a “Make a Match” assessment strategy

- during lessons on the writing process, to offer students guidance and support

Information provided by a “Make a Match” assessment strategy

Students learn:

- what good writing looks like;
- how to improve their writing;
- what they need to learn or master to move to the next level of writing ability.

The teacher learns:

- students’ level of understanding of the writing process, the writer’s craft, and the features of specific text forms;
- students’ level of confidence and ability to express their thinking;
- students’ ability to make connections between their own writing and high-quality samples of writing;
- aspects of writing that should be the focus of future lessons.

Before a “Make a Match” student self-assessment

The teacher:

- establishes the purpose of the deconstruction activity;
- provides students with copies of a text, explaining the text form and the focus of the lesson;
- forms students into pairs and gives them time to complete their analysis of the text;
- facilitates students’ deconstruction of the text by marking up an overhead;
- creates a large, neat version of the deconstructed text for display.

During a “Make a Match” student self-assessment

The teacher:

- supports students as they create a piece of writing and compare it with the deconstructed text;
- observes students analysing and refining their own work.

After a “Make a Match” student self-assessment

The teacher:

- uses his or her observations about the students’ analysis, as well as information from other assessments, to provide feedback to students, to reflect on possible adjustments to the literacy program, and to plan the teaching needed to move each student forward.

Collaborative Assessment: Teacher Moderation and Holistic Scoring

Teacher moderation involves a team of teachers who pool their collective wisdom about writing assessment. Teams may be composed of grade partners or teachers from several grades. Team meetings are opportunities for professional dialogue about the complexities of assessing writing. Participants begin to use a common language for discussing writing and may share this common language with students and the community. The benefits of this practice may include increased consistency and coherence in assessment practices across a grade or division or even the whole school.

Holistic scoring sessions help teachers to verify the appropriateness of their own assessment practices. Teachers bring samples of student writing to be assessed. Each piece of writing is read in its entirety by each teacher. Then the samples are sorted into four piles, from weakest to strongest, based on a determination of the overall writing performance demonstrated in each piece. Multiple reviewers read several papers from each pile to select “anchor” papers that are representative of each level. All pieces are read by at least two people.

Analytic Scoring

Teachers assess writing based on pre-established lists of criteria related to the specific form of writing being assessed. Often the teacher separates mechanics from content and varies the weight given to each. Setting clear criteria establishes what is important, and involving students in the process increases their understanding and helps keep the focus on learning (Gregory, Cameron, and Davies, 1997, p. 59). Students know the criteria ahead of time and therefore know what skills they need to demonstrate in their writing. The checklist that follows lists criteria for a procedural writing task. The criteria will vary, depending on the task.

PROCEDURAL WRITING CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Writing Task: _____

	Met	Not Yet Met
Content Title is interesting and appropriate. Effective lead captures the reader's attention. Details are logically developed and specific. Ending leaves the reader with a clear understanding of the procedure.		
Style and Organization Voice is active. Nouns are specific. Format is clear and easy to read. Visual presentation is appropriate and functional.		
Conventions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information is easy to read, with clearly marked divisions.• Sentences are complete.• Punctuation is appropriate.		

Status of the Class

This strategy provides a quick way of scanning the entire class to determine that each student is purposefully engaged in appropriate learning and that each student is moving forward at a reasonable rate. It is an effective tool for tracking a student's progress both in carrying out a task and in relation to the rest of the class. The teacher writes the class list on graph paper and uses a code to record each student's present status in relation to a specific task. A status sheet tracking students' work on a writing task might look like the following sample:

STATUS OF THE CLASS							
Codes for writing task							
	P = planning		PC = peer conference				
	D = drafting		TC = teacher conference				
	R = revising		C = completed version				
	E = editing						
Student	Date	07/5	10/5	11/5	14/5	16/5	17/5
Jane A.		P	D	D	PC	R	TC
Veronica B.		PC	R	E	TC	R	TC
Mei C.		P	P	D	D	PC	R
George D.		PC	TC	R	E	E	R
Bill L.		P	PC	D	D	PC	R
Jason M.		P	P	D	D	D	PC
Jill S.		R	R	E	E	TC	C

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Appendix 1. Self-Assessment Survey: A Portrait of Myself as a Reader, Writer, and Speaker

Student Name: _____

Think about yourself as a literacy learner and indicate the number beside each statement that best reflects you as a learner.

1 – not at all like me

2 – sort of like me

3 – a lot like me

Speaker

I enjoy discussing ideas and issues with others. _____

I enjoy doing oral presentations. _____

I can explain ideas and information clearly. _____

I am comfortable presenting in front of others. _____

I would rather talk about ideas than read or write about them. _____

I speak clearly and can easily be heard by others. _____

Writer

I am a good writer. _____

I like to use lots of description and new words in my writing. _____

I like to write in point form or fill in charts. _____

I only write in school. _____

I use e-mail and chat rooms on the computer. _____

I like to write things like newspaper articles or informational pieces. _____

I like to write imaginative narrative stories. _____

When I write I try to spell all the words correctly the first time. _____

I keep changing and improving my writing. _____

Appendix 1. Self-Assessment Survey – Continued

Reader

I am a good reader. _____

If I have trouble reading I use lots of different strategies to understand. _____

I find reading non-fiction texts easier and more interesting. _____

I take a long time to read things. _____

I read outside of school. _____

I read more on the Internet than in books. _____

I read sports books or how-to books to learn about things that interest me. _____

I would rather read magazines than books. _____

When I read I see pictures in my head. _____

When I read I worry about saying the words just right. _____

Circle the types of reading you enjoy.

Fantasy

Mystery books

Comics

Adventure

How-to books

Sports stories

Riddle and joke books

Real-life stories

Stories set in the past

Humorous stories

Newspaper articles

Fact books

Magazines

Animal stories

E-mails

Romance stories

Legends and poems

Websites

Novels

Note: For self-assessment questionnaires for junior students, see Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, Appendices 52 and 53.

Appendix 2. Group Skills Checklist for Literature Circles

Student Name: _____	
During Literature Circles:	Examples of my behaviour:
<input type="checkbox"/> I attend to the topic.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I participate actively in the group.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I listen carefully.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I ask questions.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I connect my ideas to the comments of others.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I allow all members of the group to participate.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am constructive when I disagree.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I support opinions with evidence.	
My goal(s) are:	
Actions to reach my goals are:	

Appendix 3. Sentence Stems for Self-Assessment: My Writing

Student Name: _____
My favourite piece of writing is ... because ...
My favourite genre as a writer is ... because ...
Something I learned about writing is ...
My writing is really improving because ...
An area I need to work on is ...
My goal for next writing cycle is ...

Appendix 4. Sentence Stems for Self-Assessment: Oral Presentation

Student Name: _____
Today I presented ...
My preparation was evident because ...
I was focusing on the following criteria ...
I was most successful when ...
The part I enjoyed presenting was ...

Appendix 4. Sentence Stems for Self-Assessment: Oral Presentation – Continued

<p>The strategy I used most successfully to convey meaning was ...</p>
<p>Evidence of making a connection with my audience was ...</p>
<p>Overall I think my presentation was ...</p> <p>because ...</p>
<p>I need to improve in the following area ...</p>
<p>The next time I make a presentation, I would like to try ...</p>

Appendix 5. Sentence Stems for Self-Assessment: Exit Slips

Exit slips give students an opportunity to reflect on their learning and to express their thoughts in writing. It is a way of holding students accountable for their learning and encouraging them to synthesize their ideas. Exit slips encourage self-assessment and give the teacher a window into students' thinking.

Method

1. Allow two or three minutes at the end of a session for students to record one important idea they learned, something they are puzzled by, or a question they are curious about.
2. Have students hand in the exit slips as they leave the class.

Sample Exit Slip

Exit Slip
Today I learned ...
I am very confused by ...
I wonder ...
Signed _____

Appendix 6. Comprehension Strategies Checklist for a Reading Conference

How to Use This Checklist: The teacher observes a student's responses to the text during a reading conference. After discussion with the student, the teacher places a checkmark in the box that most closely represents his or her assessment of the student's use of each comprehension strategy listed. For ESL/ELD students and students with an IEP, it is important to consider the student's linguistic proficiency and/or the information contained within the IEP when completing this assessment tool and considering appropriate programming needs.

Reading Conference		
Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____		
The Proficient Reader	Met	Not Yet Met
Demonstrates awareness that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making meaning is the goal of reading • reading is an active process 		
Demonstrates that he or she <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinks about the topic before reading • establishes a goal for reading • considers the difficulty, author, topic, genre, and form when selecting text 		
Demonstrates his or her ability to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw inferences • make connections • visualize • ask questions 		
Demonstrates awareness of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the organizational structures of various text forms • how to identify relevant information 		
Demonstrates the ability to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-correct • use strategies such as examining the context, note-taking, marking the text, rereading, and using a dictionary 		
Indicates an interest in reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to discover something new • for enjoyment 		
Demonstrates an understanding that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading adds value to one's life 		

Appendix 7. Reading Observation Checklist

Student Name: _____		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> + consistently <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> usually <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - sometimes (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) rarely		
Behaviour		Comments
Talks about favourite books and authors		
Engages in a wide range of independent reading		
Selects reading as a choice activity		
Sets a purpose for reading		
Makes reasonable predictions based on title, pictures/context		
Uses personal experience and text information to make supported inferences		
Answers a range of questions about text		
Makes miscues that make sense and sound right in relation to the text		
Identifies high-frequency words automatically		
Reads fluently and at an appropriate pace		
Self-corrects on the basis of meaning and visual cues		
Reads with expression and appropriate intonation		
Knows which comprehension strategies he/she was able to use		

Appendix 8. Oral Language and Listening Skills Checklist

The following could be used as an observational checklist or simply as a guide for teacher observation and anecdotal note taking once these skills have been modelled and explicitly taught.

Student Name: _____		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> + consistently <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> usually <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - sometimes (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) rarely		
Performance Indicator		Date and Comments
Uses talk to guide the thinking process		
Uses talk as a problem-solving tool		
Uses talk to clarify understanding		
Contributes to conversations and group discussion		
Shares ideas and retells anecdotes in a clear, organized manner		
Asks questions for clarification		
Articulates responses clearly		
Speaks clearly and expressively		
Listens to learn		
Listens for enjoyment		
Builds on the ideas of others		

Appendix 9. Reading Attitude Survey

Name: _____ Grade: _____											
Term: _____ Date: _____											
<p>Circle the number that indicates how much you agree with each statement.</p> <p>Remember, there are no “wrong” answers!</p>											
My attitude towards reading ...	Disagree Agree										
1. I enjoy listening to someone read aloud.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
2. I like to talk about ideas and information after I have read something.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
3. I enjoy reading at home.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
4. I think that non-fiction is easier to read than fiction.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
5. Other people think that I am a good reader.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
6. I read for enjoyment often.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
7. I feel good about how fluently I read.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
8. I only read for school work.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
9. Reading well means being able to say all the words correctly.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
10. Reading is important for subjects like science, mathematics, writing, social studies, and art.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
11. When I like a book, I read other books by the same author.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
12. I would rather do other things than read.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
13. I read to find out about new things.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											
14. I like to read books that other people have recommended.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	→				
1	2	3	4	5							
→											

Appendix 10. Sample Template for Taking a Record of Reading Behaviour

Text	Errors	Analysis

Appendix 11. Unaided Text Retell: Narrative

Title: _____			
Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____			
Text Elements	Student's Responses	Connections to Life Experiences, Other Texts, or Student's Knowledge of the World	Teacher's Comments
Setting			
Characters			
Problems/Conflicts			
Other significant events			
Resolution			
Other			
Additional questions to ask if the student requires encouragement to discuss the text			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 			
Comments			

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♻️ Printed on recycled paper

06-013

ISBN 1-4249-0245-2 (vol. 2)

ISBN 0-7794-9031-2 (set)

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