

#1 Assessing and Monitoring Children's Literacy Behaviors



Guiding Principle

Assessment is central to knowing students' progress and achievement. It helps teachers construct understanding of how students are developing as readers and writers and provides critical information to make important teaching decisions. (see the Guide, pages 36–37)

The emphasis in this toolkit is on assessing and monitoring literacy behaviors of primary-grade students over time. It is specifically designed for classroom teachers and interventionists. Administrators, coaches, and support personnel will gain a better understanding of assessment/monitoring practices to strengthen a comprehensive plan that promises literacy for every child.

The number of sessions needed for this toolkit will depend on the current understandings and interests of staff members. Several sessions may be required to build a foundation for effective assessment and for monitoring progress of each child over time.

For all sessions, a crucial component will be opportunities for participants to apply what they learn in their own settings and then to share experiences with others in the professional learning community.

Reading Recovery-trained teachers will be a valuable resource for promoting high-quality literacy assessment through close observation of children. As appropriate, they may take a role in structuring the learning while involving participants to explore ideas together. The Reading Recovery teacher leader may be a resource as well.

Professional Learning Toolkits

are an extension of *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System*, Second Edition (RRCNA, 2022), referred throughout this document as the Guide. Be sure to read “An Introduction to RRCNA Professional Learning Toolkits” prior to using this specific toolkit.

Intended Participants

This learning toolkit is appropriate for classroom teachers, literacy interventionists, coaches, assessment personnel, and administrators. The intent is to emphasize that the relationship between assessment, teaching, and student progress is essential.

PLANNING YOUR SESSIONS

Invite participants to read pages 36 and 37 in the Guide and to use the rating scale on pages 38–39 to begin thinking about literacy assessment and monitoring practices in the school.

► First Session Suggestions

1. Participants can share their ideas about current assessment practices in the school. Which ones succeed in guaranteeing that instruction is based on students' literacy behaviors? Which ones ensure that progress is monitored in a timely fashion? Refer to information on pages 38–41 to guide this discussion.
2. Show a short video, “Effective Literacy Practices - Assessing Through Close Observation,” available on RRCNA's YouTube channel, and use the downloadable reference guide to initiate group discussion.
(See RRCNA Resources: Videos and Reference Guides.)

3. Invite participants to identify assessment and monitoring issues in the school that need further study.
4. Suggest that participants read one or more of the additional resources listed at the end of this learning toolkit before the next session to build a knowledge base for further learning.

► Ongoing Sessions (see RRCNA Resources)

Ongoing sessions will depend on participants' current knowledge and expertise. RRCNA offers many resources related to assessing and monitoring literacy behaviors of children. Choose those that meet the needs in your school. For each session, ask participants to follow up by applying the learning in their professional settings and allow time for the professional learning community in the school to share experiences.

► Final Session

Participants will return to the Guide. Use pages 36–39 to evaluate progress with literacy assessment and monitoring practices in the school. What changes have been made? What changes need further exploration? What is next? What else do we need?

The professional learning community will likely explore assessments beyond those listed here. Ongoing study of effective assessments and tools for progress monitoring will strengthen the possibilities for meeting the needs of all children.

RRCNA RESOURCES FOR USE IN PLANNING SESSIONS

Interactive Leader-Directed Professional Learning Modules (20% discount for RRCNA members)

Detailed professional learning modules are available for An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement and the Record of Oral Language. Additionally, the Running Record Professional Learning Packages provide a series of modules for learning to administer, score, analyze, and use running records. All modules are available for purchase from RRCNA and provide detailed information about procedures and use of assessment and monitoring tools for primary grades. Each of these learning modules includes suggestions for teachers to apply their learning to practical experiences.

Assessing Oral Language with the Record of Oral Language

DVD — 2 sessions with practice between (\$147)

This module focuses on a technique for observing a child's control of the structures of the English language and for monitoring changes in control over time. The module includes video examples of concepts described in the *Record of Oral Language* book by Marie Clay and colleagues. Videos show the full administration of the Record of Oral Language with two students and additional examples for deeper learning. (Participants will need the book *Record of Oral Language* (2007) by Marie Clay et al., available from Heinemann.)

Professional Learning Package: Observation Survey

DVD — 2 sessions with practice between (\$168)

This module focuses on the six tasks of the Observation Survey — a tool for planned systematic observation to capture evidence of early progress in literacy learning and rated highly as a screening tool for response to intervention (RTI). The module includes video examples of Observation Survey tasks and videos of administrations of the survey. Record sheets provide opportunities to observe and discuss administration, scoring, and interpretation. (Participants will need the book *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* by Marie Clay, preferably the 2013 edition, available from Heinemann.)

Running Record Part One:

3 CDs — 1 or 2 sessions with practice between (\$94)

Learning the Conventions and Basic Scoring Procedures

If running records are new to participants, begin with Running Record Part 1. This package provides training for classroom, pre-service, and Reading Recovery and other intervention teachers. It introduces the conventions and basic scoring procedures for taking a running record. (Participants will need the book *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* or *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*, both by Marie Clay and available from Heinemann. Page numbers may vary if using the 2013 edition.)

Running Record Part Two:

2 CDs — 1 or 2 sessions with practice between (\$105)

Analysis of Running Records of Text Reading

Part 2 is for participants who already know how to take running records but need support with analyzing the records. Building on Part One, this package helps teachers learn to interpret running records in order to analyze errors and self-corrections. Through video and PowerPoint, teachers observe a child's reading behaviors and two educators interpreting and analyzing those behaviors. (Participants will need the book *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* or *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*, both by Marie Clay and available from Heinemann. Page numbers may vary if using the 2013 edition.)

Running Record Part Three:

DVD — 2 sessions with practice between (\$145)

Using Running Records to Make Teaching Decisions

Part 3 is for participants who know how to take and analyze running records, but want to know more about using them to plan teaching decisions. The package explores ways to use running record analysis to guide teaching decisions when working with individuals or with groups of children. Flash video includes in-depth teacher and leader discussions as well as demonstrations of individuals and groups of students reading. (Participants will need the book *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* or *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*, both by Marie Clay and available from Heinemann. Page numbers may vary if using the 2013 edition.)

Videos and Reference Guides (see Introduction document for Technical Notes)

Assessing Through Close Observation (link to video)

8 minutes (FREE)

This module focuses on close, systematic observation as a way to assess rapid change in literacy learning of young children. A 2-page PDF reference guide accompanies this video and includes definitions and other important information, key points for teachers, and resources. Reading the reference guide prior to viewing the video will enhance your learning experience.

[Direct link to PDF option](#)

Journal Articles (click titles to open/download)

Clay, M. M. (Spring 2004). [Talking, reading, and writing](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 3(2), 1–15.

D'Agostino, J. (Spring 2012). [Technical review committee confirms highest NCRTI ratings for Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 11(2), 53–56.

DeFord, D. (Spring 2010). [Marie Clay: Changing the face of assessment](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 9(2), 24–33.

DeFord, D. (Fall 2007). [Remembering Marie](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 7(1), 101–103.

- Fried, M. (Fall 2013). [Activating teaching: Using running records to inform teaching decisions](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 13(1), 5–16.
- Kaye, E. L. (2006). [Second graders' reading behaviors: A study of variety, complexity, and change](#). *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 10(2), 51–75.
- Kaye, E. L., & Van Dyke, J. (Spring 2012). [Interpreting the running records: Reexamining common practices](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 11(2), 5–21.

RRCNA Website (click title to open webpage)

[Clay's Observation Survey](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Askew, B. J. (2009). Using an unusual lens. In B. Watson & B. Askew (Eds.). *Boundless horizons: Marie Clay's search for the possible in children's literacy* (pp. 101–130). Auckland, New Zealand: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (2000). *Running records for classroom teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (Fall 2007). Concepts about print in English and other languages. *The Journal of Reading Recovery* 7(1), 78–85. [Reprinted from *The Reading Teacher*, 42(2), 268–276 – January 1989. Not available in JRR online.]
- Clay, M. M. (2013). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement* (3rd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M., Gill, M., Glynn, T., McNaughton, T., & Salmon, K. (2007). Record of oral language: Observing changes in the acquisition of language structures. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Johnston, P. H. (1997). *Knowing literacy: Constructive literacy assessment*. York, ME: Stenhouse. (See Chapters 21–22 co-authored with Marie M. Clay.
- Schmitt, M. C., Askew, B. J., Fountas, I. C., Lyons, C. A., & Pinnell, G. S. (2005). *Changing futures: The influence of Reading Recovery in the United States*. Worthington, OH: Reading Recovery Council of North America. (See chapter 5 on assessment and monitoring.)



Reading Recovery
Community

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