READING CHECKLIST

Emergent Reader Behaviors

- Enjoys listening to stories, rhymes, songs and poems
- Eagerly participates in group stories, rhymes, songs, and poems
- Approaches books with enthusiasm
- Revisits some books
- Knows that his or her language can be written and then read
- Understands how to handle books for reading
- Is able to make predictions and follow plot
- Knows some print conventions (period, question mark)
- Knows some book conventions (front cover, back cover, title page)
- Uses reading in play activities
- Uses pictures to help create meaning
- Is developing finger, print, and voice matching
- Identifies some words
- Is beginning to use graphophonic cues
- Is beginning to develop strategies to use when meaning fails

Developing Reader Behaviors

- Eagerly attends to long books in reading and listening
- Shows an interest in meeting challenges of texts
- Displays confidence as a reader; is willing to take risks and make predictions
- Is eager to share ideas with others
- Has increasing knowledge of book and print conventions
- Understands how background knowledge contributes to meaning
- Appreciates the value of predicting, confirming, and integrating
- Has several strategies to invoke when meaning fails
- Increasingly makes more accurate predictions
- Reads increasingly more complicated texts across a range of genre
- Chooses to read independently

Fluent Reader Behaviors

- Expects books to offer a variety of meanings, some satisfying, some not
- Is confident as a reader
- Eagerly participates in book discussions, author studies, and other forms of response to literature
- Appreciates the power of reading
- Uses the cueing systems that best meet the reading needs and demands of the text
- Understands the role of purpose in reading
- Knows how to use the library to get information and meet needs
- Knows how to use electronic media to get information and meet needs
- Demonstrates increasing sophistication in prediction, sampling, confirming, and integrating as a reader
- Is developing study skills and can use textbook features
- Is able to summarize, outline and retell in detail (Harp, 1996)

Figure 13.2

You may find it useful to add columns to the checklist so that you can record the dates of your observations or add qualifiers to your observations. For example, if the checklist called for observing whether a child chose a book that was appropriate for independent reading, then a rating scale might add "not yet," "some of the time," or "most of the time."

All of the observations you make and the materials you select to illustrate those observations can be stored in a portfolio. Portfolios can be invaluable to a teacher in planning instruction and conferencing with parents and learners.

Portfolios

Portfolios can be described as a systematic means of collecting information that will document the child's progress in the development of literacy and inform the planning for instruction. Examples of a child's work can be collected that specifically demonstrate a given skill or ability. For example, running records made on a regular basis provide the teacher with knowledge of the child's sight vocabulary, his ability to decode unknown words, and his ability to apply reading strategies. These records can also indicate the fluency with which the child reads and the richness of retellings. As children write, many of the other objectives of a good literacy program can be observed. The writing piece through which the ability is demonstrated can be placed in the portfolio. For example, a child may leave a space between words in her writing for the first time. This piece can be dated and placed in the portfolio with a short note explaining why it has been saved. As children write more accurately (employ more of the conventions of print), samples of their writing are placed in their portfolios.

The danger of a portfolio is that it can easily become so unwieldy that the teacher cannot organize it or make sense of it. One way to avoid that pitfall is to keep a list of the objectives on the front of the portfolio and mark each entry to match the objective. If the entry does not match any of the objectives, perhaps it should be eliminated. On the objective list, you can record a tally mark when you have included a sample to illustrate one of the objectives. Objectives without tally marks should be readily apparent, and teachers can then pay attention to collecting samples for those objectives.

The portfolio should be evaluated every few weeks so that old examples can be removed and new, up-to-date examples of abilities added. A short summary of the child's growth (with specific references to pieces in the portfolio) can be written every few weeks and new goals set for the child. Even very young children should participate in setting the new learning goals. For example, with a kindergarten child, it would be appropriate to review with the child what he has learned and talk about what he can learn next. If Raymond has learned the directional principles of print, then the teacher might help him plan to learn to match spoken words to print. Older children can see that they are using more conventional writing and set a goal to learn to write in a new genre or for a new audience.

All anecdotal records and checklist information can be placed in a portfolio. The goal of keeping all of these observations is to form an accurate picture of the child and the child's growth in literacy. Keeping careful records for each child will help teachers know more about the child's progress and ensure that no child slips through the cracks and fails to make progress.

A final component of an effective portfolio is the child's self-assessment. Children can either write or dictate what they have learned and what they are interested in learning. Such self-evaluations can be linked to attitude or interest surveys, which can be revisited so that the child can make comments on any changes in them or link an interest to an area of growth.

Attitude and Interest Surveys

Attitude surveys are sets of questions used by teachers to assess children's feelings toward particular subjects. A number of attitude surveys have been published. Surveys that assess attitude typically make statements to which children respond indicating the strength of their feelings in response to given statements. Statements on reading attitude surveys typically include: I like to read at home; Reading is fun at school; I like reading more than watching TV; I enjoy going to the library; I like to get books as gifts. Writing attitude surveys typically include such statements as "I am a good writer," "I like to write," "I like it when other people read my writing," "I like to get help when I am writing," "I like to write at home." Other surveys include open-ended questions to which children are asked to respond. They might ask "What do you

like to read most?" or "What kinds of writing do you like to do?"

Interest inventories are questionnaires aimed at tapping into each child's interests so that the teacher can choose materials or activities that would engage the child. Interest inventories in reading and writing could ask "What are your favorite books?" "Where do you like to read?" "What do you think you should do to become a better reader?" "What do you like to write?" "Where do you like to write?" "What should you do to become a better writer?" Such inventories could also ask what the child likes to read about, what parts of school he or she likes best, and any other questions that might aid the planning of instruction. If the child likes books about dogs or fantasy books, then the teacher makes such books available. If the child likes to write at home more than at school, then the teacher might try to determine how to make the school environment more conducive to writing.

Putting Research Into Practice: Assessing and Evaluating Reading

In this section we offer suggestions about how to meet some of the assessment goals listed in Figure 13.1. Each assessment strategy or tool is linked to specific goals.

Concepts About Print (Goals 4 and 6 in Figure 13.1)

Children come to us in kindergarten and first grade with widely varying experiences and understandings about print and how it works. Some have benefited from many hours of being read to at home and have had many experiences with paper and writing instruments. Others, unfortunately, have had very limited experiences with print. One early assessment and evaluation task is to learn what these children understand about print and how it functions.

One way to assess children's concepts about print is to perform a series of tasks designed by Marie Clay, using either of two small paperback books, *Stones* (Clay, 1979) or *Sand* (Clay, 1972). The tasks, done one-on-one with a child, take about 10 minutes to complete. The purpose of the tasks is to help you understand what the child knows about print and how it is used in books. You hand the child the book and then observe his or her behavior as you ask a series of questions. You will be able to determine what the child knows about how to hold books, whether the child knows that print, not pictures, carries the meaning, what the child knows about directionality with print, and the child's concepts of letters and words, as well as other important information. Complete instructions for administration and scoring are found in Marie Clay's *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (1993).

This assessment and evaluation tool is only one in an array of tools you can use to learn more about children as readers. In New Zealand, Clay's surveys on print tasks are used as one way to obtain information about each 5-year-old as he or she enters school. When you discover that a child does not know how to orient a book for reading, does not know that we read from left to right and from top to bottom, or does not know the difference between words and letters, you can use this information to structure lessons using big books and shared reading. After introducing these understandings in shared reading, you can then reinforce them when working one-on-one with children.

Phonemic Awareness (Goal 2 in Figure 13.1)

In addition to children's concepts about print, research supports the importance of phonemic awareness in beginning reading. We must carefully assess and evaluate children's growth in this important aspect of learning to read. Both the NRC report and the IRA/NAEYC joint statement underscore the importance of phonemic awareness in learning to read. The NRC report (1998) defines phonemic awareness as "the insight that every spoken word can be conceived as a sequence of phonemes. Because phonemes are the units of sound that are represented by the letters of an alphabet, an awareness of phonemes is key to understanding the logic of the alphabetic principles and thus to

the learnability of phonics and spelling" (p. 52). Cunningham (1988) defined phonemic awareness as the ability to manipulate the sounds of language independent of meaning. Phonemic awareness is not one skill that a child has or does not have; it is a cluster of skills. For example, a child may be able to recognize rhyming words, then be able to manipulate the beginning sounds of words, and finally to segment all the phonemes in a given word. The research evidence suggests that phonemic awareness is strongly related to success in reading and spelling acquisition.

Hallie Kay Yopp has developed the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation, first introduced in the September 1995 issue of *The Reading Teacher* (pp. 20–29). It measures a child's ability to separately articulate the sounds of a spoken word in order. For example, when you pronounce the word *dig*, the child should respond with three separate sounds: /d/-/i/-/g/. To get credit for the item the child must produce the individual sounds, not the letter names. The test has 22 items and takes about 10 minutes to administer. The items are shown in Figure 13.3.

The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation may be used to give you an idea of how phonemically aware your learners have become. Performance on this test will likely vary greatly across a group of 5- or 6-year-olds. A child who correctly responds to all or nearly all of the items is demonstrating considerable phonemic awareness. The child who correctly segments some of the items is demonstrating emerging phonemic awareness. There are many instructional activities you can provide for children who need to develop phonemic awareness. Following are some examples.

YOPP-SINGER TEST OF PHONEME SEGMENTATION

Student's Name: ____________

Date: ____________

Score (number correct): ____________

Directions: Today we're going to play a word game. I'm going to say a word and I want you to break the word apart. You are going to tell me each sound in the word in order. For example, if I say "old," you should say "/o/ - /l/ - /d/." (Administrator: Be sure to say the sounds, not the letters in the word.) Let's try a few together.

Practice items: (Assist the child in segmenting these items as necessary.) ride, go, man

Test items: (Circle those items that the student correctly segments; incorrect responses may be recorded on the blank line following the item.)

1. dog	______	12. lay	______
2. keep	______	13. race	______
3. fine	______	14. zoo	______
4. no	______	15. three	______
5. she	______	16. job	______
6. wave	______	17. in	______
7. grew	______	18. ice	______
8. that	______	19. at	______
9. red	______	20. top	______
10. me	______	21. by	______
11. sat	______	22. do	______

Figure 13.3

Song Charts: Children learn to sing a song by rote and then to follow the lyrics as they are presented on a chart and subsequently in individual copies. Once the children have mastered the one-to-one matching of words to print, the teacher can manipulate the print by changing the beginning sounds to create new words to sing. If the children learned "Row, row, row your boat," then the manipulation might be to sing *float, coat, moat, goat,* and so on (emphasizing the fact that some inventions are nonsense).

Rhyming Books: After reading books with rhyming texts, the children can fill in the rhyming words as teachers read the book, stopping before the rhyming words. A chart of other words that rhyme with each of the words in the story could be created. For example, after reading *In the Tall, Tall Grass* (Fleming, 1991), a chart

of the words to rhyme with lunch, sip, hum, flap, and so on could be created. As the teacher reads the lists of rhyming words, the children can be asked to identify the beginnings of the words as well as the rhymes.

Environmental Print: Children can bring labels from items they eat or use at home and a large bulletin board can be created with a section for each letter of the alphabet. The words can be reviewed whenever a new label is brought to school so that the children can decide where it should be placed. Children who indicate that they understand the first letters could be asked to arrange items into sections that end with the same sound (not all 26 letters, since English words do not end in vowels except silent *e* and *y* or *w* when they represent vowel sounds, nor do they end with the consonants *q*, *v*, or *j*).

Taking Dictation: As teachers record words or sentences dictated by the children, they emphasize each of the phonemes as they are recorded. Because it takes a few seconds to write each word, this exercise provides an opportunity for stretching out the sounds in a more authentic use of language than drills conceived for this purpose.

Running Records (Goals 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 14, in Figure 13.1)

When children begin reading connected text, we need to carefully monitor their progress. We find running records a very useful tool for this purpose.

Marie Clay (1993) invented running records as a method for closely observing and recording children's reading behavior. Running records are observations of a child's oral reading behavior. The markings follow a standard set of conventions so that any teacher familiar with running records would be able to reconstruct exactly what the child did while reading. Running records are not tests in the usual sense of the word; they are used to plan instruction and to communicate to the child (and others) goals for an individual child. The analysis will record what the child can do and what cueing systems are used; evaluative words such as good and bad are not part of the running record.

Space limitations prevent us from offering a detailed discussion of how to make and analyze running records. However, we view running records and their careful interpretation as a critical part of good primary grade assessment and evaluation in reading. We refer teachers to *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Behavior*, by Marie Clay, for a detailed discussion of running records.

For young children (kindergarten through second grade), running records should be made every 3 to 4 weeks. The child at this age is typically making such rapid progress that a running record is out-of-date in a short time.

Putting Research Into Practice: Strategies for Assessing and Evaluating Writing

As young children begin writing, the scribbles they produce reflect their attempts to gain control of the form—to make the writing instrument make a line where they want it to mark. Most children then begin to scribble in forms that look like the writing of their communities. When a child is an English language community, the writing often resembles wavy lines going across the page. Next the child will begin to add letters, numerals, or symbols to his writing. With a little more experience, the child begins to write mostly letters and believes that the letters can be read. This stage, called random letter writing, leads to phonetic writing, in which the child records sounds with specific letters. In the next stage, the child spells some words conventionally and some words phonetically. Finally, the child spells most words conventionally. As the young child is learning about how words are recorded, he is also learning other writing rules. For example, children learn that English is written from left to right and top to bottom and that sentences begin with capital letters and end with periods. They continue to learn about the functions of print as they leave messages, write explanations, compose stories, and make lists.