

# **GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPING AND SELECTING QUALITY ASSESSMENTS IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM**

A PART OF THE ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT



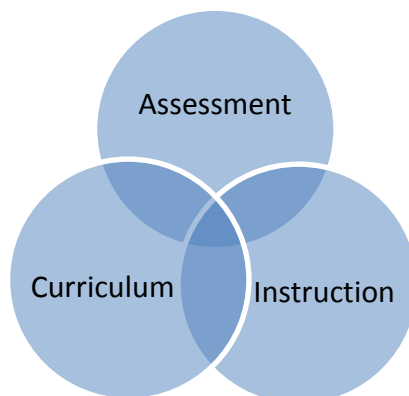
**RIDE** Rhode Island  
Department  
of Education

“If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there,”  
observed the Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland

## Purpose of this Guide

This “How-To” Guide for *Selecting and Developing Quality Assessments in the Primary Classrooms* is intended to assist teachers and school administrators in understanding the critical role that assessments play in the classroom. Assessments are used to gather evidence of learning for a variety of different audiences, including students, teachers, parents, school districts, and state and federal departments of education.

Assessments include a variety of different methods that allow children to demonstrate evidence of learning and can range from observations, student writing samples, performance tasks, to large-scale standardized tests. Decisions about which assessment to select will depend on its purpose and the audience of the data. This guide is not intended to be a lengthy review of all aspects of assessment nor all the different assessments that are available for the classroom teacher, but rather an introduction to understanding how assessments are directly linked to teaching and learning.



***Effective teachers use evidence of learning (assessment) to inform what they teach (the curriculum) and how they teach (instruction).***

With this in mind, this guide will provide information on:

- specific assessments appropriate for the K-2 grade span,
- purpose of the assessments,
- advantages and disadvantages of the assessments,
- considerations for a comprehensive assessment system that include daily classroom assessments, local or district developed assessments, and state assessments, when applicable.

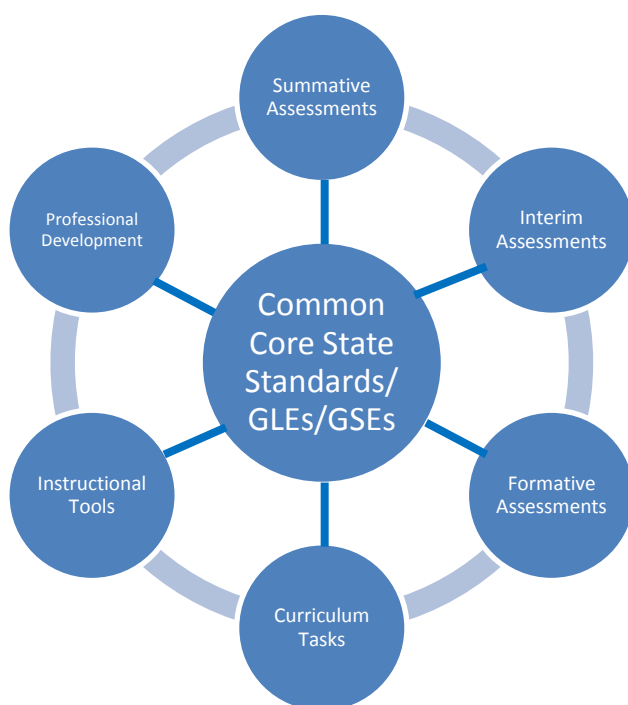
Also included at the end of this document is a bibliography of references to help guide you as you delve deeper into the world of assessment!

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## A Comprehensive Assessment System

A well-constructed comprehensive assessment system provides continuous, coherent, and high-quality information on student performance that teachers, school leaders, and district and state administrators could use to improve teaching and learning and meet their decision-making needs. At the heart of a comprehensive assessment system is a clear understanding of and alignment to the knowledge and skills and their range of complexity as required by the standards, grade level expectations, and grade span expectations. These standards should be central to all assessments, instruction, and professional development related to teaching and learning. In a comprehensive assessment system, summative assessments, interim assessments, and formative assessments are utilized in a planned and purposeful manner. Teachers play an important role in a comprehensive assessment system by assessing student performance, developing and reviewing tasks, scoring them accurately and reliably, developing and employing effective formative assessments to track student knowledge and skills over time, interpreting assessment results, and modifying instruction based on assessment results. Diagnostic assessments or language proficiency assessments are not the focus of this resource.



## Distinguishing Assessments

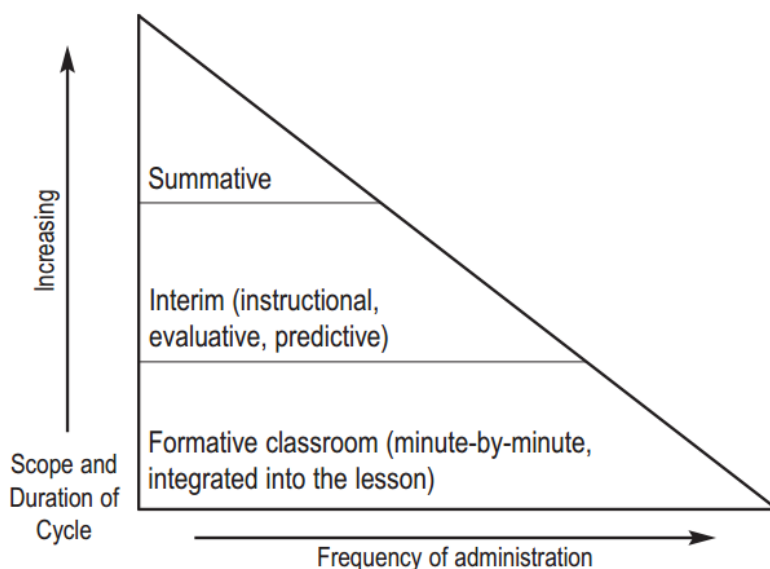
**Formative Assessment:** *A process that teachers and students use to gather information during, as opposed to after, the learning process and to make adjustments accordingly.*

**Interim Assessments:** *Assessments administered during instruction that are designed to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of goals to inform decisions in the classroom and beyond.*

**Summative Assessments:** *Formal assessments that are given at the end of a unit, term, course, or academic year.*

The following illustrates the frequency and scope of assessments. Formative assessment occurs at a **high frequency** and focuses on **specific content**. They occurs regularly during instruction allowing for a descriptive feedback exchange between the teacher and student regarding specific objectives and learning disposition. Interim assessments occur on a **scheduled basis** during a break in the instructional flow. They measure and record learning of **specific content** at particular points in time, but are broader than formative assessment. Summative assessments occur less **frequently** and cover a **wide scope** of content.

**Figure 1. Tiers of Assessment**



Source: Policy brief by Aspen/Achieve/Center for Assessment

The following table illustrates the characteristics of different types of assessment. Note that it is not the name or format of an assessment that signifies what type of assessment it is. Rather, its purpose is identified by the ways in which it is administered, interpreted, and how the results are used. The same assessment can be used in different ways, for different purposes. For example, writing samples can be used formatively throughout the year, and then as a summative assessment at the end of the year. The information below may assist the classroom teacher in determining the assessments to be used in a primary classroom's comprehensive assessment system.

Dimension	Type of Assessment		
	"Assessment for Learning"	"Assessment of Learning"	
	Formative	Interim	Summative
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most designed for managerial uses</li> <li>Some designed for instructional uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managerial</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driven by moment-to-moment decisions; generated or selected by teacher; individualized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulated by a set of rules developed in or out of the classroom; teacher-generated or externally generated</li> </ul>	
<b>Timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During instruction</li> <li>High frequency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After instruction or during a break in instructional flow</li> <li>Moderate frequency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After instruction</li> <li>Low frequency</li> </ul>
<b>Scope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrow; one or very few learning objectives at a time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate; a manageable number of objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broad; comprehensive set of objectives</li> </ul>
<b>Audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom (i.e., students, teachers, and parents)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration and/or</li> <li>Classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public</li> <li>Administration</li> <li>Classroom</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student ↔ teacher</li> <li>Descriptive/narrative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School System → audiences</li> <li>Mostly evaluative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School System → audiences</li> <li>Mostly evaluative</li> </ul>

Talbot, T. (June 2011), *Comprehensive Assessment Systems: Purposes and Implementation*

## Assessment in the Primary Classroom

Assessment can be challenging during the early grades as children are developing physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally at different paces and at unique rates. Assessing young children accurately is much more difficult than for older students and adults, because of the nature of early learning and because the language and literacy skills needed to participate in formal assessments are still developing. Creating a comprehensive assessment system for a primary level (K-2) classroom requires thinking about a host of principles for designing and choosing assessments. The following **principles, objectives, questions, and examples** have been designed to assist the primary classroom teacher with developing a comprehensive assessment system for his or her classroom that will lead students on a path to success and college and career readiness.

A comprehensive assessment system of primary students should address the following principles and objectives:

<u>Key principles</u> for selecting assessments:	<u>Major objectives</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The results of assessments should be beneficial for students (e.g., gain services for children with special needs, to inform instruction by building on what students already know, to improve programs, etc.).</li> <li>▪ The content of the assessments should allow students to demonstrate progress toward important learning goals and be aligned with the subject matter in emergent literacy and numeracy.</li> <li>▪ Assessment must be appropriate to the development and experiences of young children.</li> <li>▪ The selected assessments should fit the identified purpose.</li> <li>▪ A variety of assessment types should be utilized to measure student achievement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To identify students at the beginning of the year who may be “at risk” or who may need extra instruction or intensive interventions if they are to move toward grade-level standards by the end of the year.</li> <li>▪ To monitor all students’ progress during the year, to determine whether “at risk” students are making adequate progress, and to identify any students who may be falling behind.</li> <li>▪ To collect information about students that will be helpful in planning instruction to meet their most critical learning needs.</li> <li>▪ To assess whether the instruction provided is sufficient to help students achieve the standards by the end of each year.</li> </ul>

When considering the selection of assessments for a comprehensive assessment system, there are five key questions to consider:

1. What are the **best types** of assessments to select for measuring the learning?
2. Are the assessment items and/or expectations **aligned** to the standards? Consider whether the assessment will actually measure what it is supposed to measure.
3. Are the assessment items and/or expectations appropriately **rigorous** (DOK levels aligned to standards) and have an appropriate level of difficulty?
4. Are there **multiple opportunities** throughout the quarter, semester, and year to assess students on the same concepts, using different types of assessments?
5. Are the **directions and vocabulary** clear, ensuring that they don't detract from what students know and are able to demonstrate?

When developing and/or selecting the assessments for classroom progress monitoring, it is important to think about these questions as they will ensure the development and selection of quality assessments. The assessments used by the classroom teacher should be **valid**, **reliable**, and **fair** for all students.

A **valid assessment** provides an accurate picture of what students know, understand, and are able to do. It should be aligned to grade appropriate content and the intended level of cognitive rigor.

A **reliable assessment** provides a consistent picture of what students know, understand, and are able to do no matter who scores the assessment.

A **fair assessment** ensures that students are measured only on the basis of the knowledge and skills being measured.

The following assessment approaches are identified as formative, interim or summative; however many of them could be used formatively, as an interim, or summatively. It is important for the classroom teacher and school administrators to determine the purpose for assessing and which assessments would help reach the expected goals.



## Formative Assessment for Classroom Progress Monitoring

Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. Formative assessment, both formal and informal, as a way to monitor students' progress is one piece of a comprehensive assessment system.

*Methods of collecting assessment data include direct observation of children during natural activities; looking at drawings and samples of work; asking questions either orally or in writing; or asking informed adults about the child. The younger the child, the more appropriate it is to use observation. As age increases, especially by third grade, the frequency of more formal assessment "events" should increase, but should still be balanced with informal methods. Across this early childhood age span, children should be introduced to and become comfortable with the idea that adults ask questions and check on understanding as a natural part of the learning process. (Shepard, L., Kagan, S., Wurtz, E., *Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessments*, The National Education Goals Panel by Goal 1 Early Childhood Assessments Resource Group)*

The following are some examples of classroom assessment methods that can assist teachers in identifying where students are in their learning, where gaps in their knowledge exist, and to help determine how to improve student learning.

### 1. Observation Checklists

A well-defined checklist identifies learning objectives and behaviors, which may be arranged in categories, and are used to determine whether a student exhibits the behaviors or skills listed. The observations associated with the items on the checklist allow the teacher to have a clear sense of what the student is able to do at a specific moment of time. On an **informal** checklist, a teacher observes a child retelling what happened on a trip to the zoo, and the teacher adds a check mark for that child in the space next to the "expressive language" category on her checklist. This is a truer measure of oral language skills than asking the child to retell an unfamiliar story. However, it is important to note that a teacher created checklist is not standardized, and the results are not comparable to a norm.

Checklists can focus on objectives that assess student strengths and weaknesses in:

- language (oral and written) and literacy
- personal and social development
- physical development
- mathematical thinking
- scientific thinking
- social studies concepts

A widely known and used example of a **formal** Kindergarten observation checklist is Marie Clay's, *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (2005). This standardized observation checklist focuses on letter identification, concepts of print, word tests, writing, and hearing and recording sounds in words. This observational tool results in scores that are comparable to a norm.

Teachers can develop their own checklists by identifying skills that are directly aligned to standards to be included, listing target behaviors, arranging the desired actions (and likely errors, if desired), and creating a simple procedure for checking each action as it occurs. Using expected skills and behaviors from learning progressions, curriculum documents, or other developmentally appropriate learning expectations will assist in creating checklists.

**Example:**

Language Categories			
Standard:	Date:	Date:	Date:
<p>Uses language to communicate preferences, choices, "wants", or needs. Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child says "Blocks" instead of pointing when asked what center s/he wishes to work in that day.</li> <li>Child says to another child "I want to use that car." instead of taking it.</li> <li>Child says to another child or adult at the art center "I'm going to use the green paper."</li> <li>Child asks, "Can you get that for me? I can't reach it."</li> </ol>			
<p>Uses language to enter into ongoing play or join an activity. Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child says, "I'll be the baby, okay?" after observing children in the social dramatic play center pretending to be a family.</li> <li>Child says, "Can I play?" Or "Can I have a turn?" when joining children involved in a game or activity.</li> <li>Child asks, "Are you guys making a bridge? I'll help." as s/he enters the block center.</li> </ol>			
<p>Uses language to plan, develop, or maintain the play or group activity. Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child says, "We're out of groceries. We need to go shopping." during social dramatic play in a house center.</li> <li>Child says, "I know, let's make a door here so cars can go in the garage."</li> <li>Child says, "Okay. It's your turn." when working on a mural or playing a game with others.</li> </ol>			
<p>Uses language to resolve or avoid conflicts. Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child says, "I don't like it when you call me that." in response to name-calling.</li> <li>Child says, "I'll trade you. You can have my car if you give me that truck."</li> <li>Child says, "I was here first. You have to go behind me." to a child trying to push her/him out of the way.</li> </ol>			

Language Categories (continued)			
Standard:	Date:	Date:	Date:
<p>Uses language to entertain, describe a past event, or tell or retell a story (may incorporate language from favorite books).</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child says to another child during an activity, "I went to my grandma's last night and we had popcorn and watched a movie."</li> <li>In response to the teacher's question about what each child did during Center Time, child says, "I played with Cheryl. We read a book and drew pictures about the characters in the story."</li> <li>Child says, "First we rode on the bus, then we got to the farm, and I saw a pig. An enormous pig." during the making of an experience chart about a trip to a farm.</li> </ol>			
<p>Uses language to find things out, wonder, or hypothesize.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child says in response to another child or adult, "Why did you do that?" or "What for?"</li> <li>Child talks to self while playing with a water wheel, "What makes it go?"</li> <li>Child says in response to an event in a story book, "I bet he's going to get in trouble!"</li> </ol>			
<p>Other literacy behaviors noticed. Such behaviors include the voluntary use of reading or writing materials provided in a center, as part of a display, etc.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child is in the house center and says "We need to get groceries. I'll make a list." and begins to write a grocery list.</li> <li>Child in the block center gets a book about castles and says, "Let's make one like this."</li> <li>Child brings a book to Sharing Time and says, "My auntie got me this. I know how to read it." and proceeds to demonstrate.</li> </ol>			

### Tips for Using and Developing Observation Checklists:

1. Determine specific outcomes that are aligned to standards to observe and assess.
2. Decide what to look for – write down criteria or evidence that indicates the student is demonstrating the outcome.
3. Target the observation by selecting four to five students per class and one or two specific outcomes to observe.
4. Develop a data gathering system – yes/no, checkmark, examples, etc.
5. Collect observations over a number of classes during a reporting period and look for patterns of performance.
6. Document all observations.

7. Share observations with students, both individually and in a group. Make the observations specific and describe how this demonstrates or promotes thinking and learning. For example, “Eric, you contributed several ideas to your group’s Top Ten list. You really helped your group finish their task within the time limit.”
8. Use the information gathered from observation to enhance or modify instruction.

Observations and Checklists	
Advantages	Potential Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enables teachers to observe and easily check off what children know and are able to do</li> <li>▪ Easy to use and update</li> <li>▪ Requires little training</li> <li>▪ Available whenever evaluation is needed</li> <li>▪ Flexible and can be used with a variety of assessment strategies</li> <li>▪ Behaviors can be recorded frequently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Subjectivity involved in the observation</li> <li>▪ Overlooking behaviors not on the instrument</li> <li>▪ Less detail about the specific behaviors</li> <li>▪ Can be time consuming</li> <li>▪ Some teachers find it difficult to adapt teaching and evaluation behaviors to include checklists</li> <li>▪ If there are too many checklists, the teacher can be overwhelmed with assessment and record keeping</li> <li>▪ Teachers may not consider assessments with checklists as valid measures</li> <li>▪ Checklists may not indicate how well a child performs in all situations</li> </ul>

## Anecdotal Records

Anecdotal records are a way for teachers to keep track of student progress over a period of time in a chronological manner. They are a way for teachers to “tell a story” as they describe behavior, complete with verbal responses in a narrative style. An anecdotal report contains brief observations of the student’s attitude, working habits, and understanding or application of information. Comments may deal with knowledge, attitudes, or skill development. These records allow teachers to note areas of strength and needs, and particular areas in which students need additional help or instruction. Comments may be short or longer narrative descriptions of student behaviors and skills over time.

### **Guidelines for Writing Anecdotal Records:**

- Start with a standard and a statement of focus and identify name of the child, date, time of day, and setting (if applicable; e.g., on the playground). Recording the focus helps to trigger a recommendation for instruction.
- Describe the child’s behavior NOT what you think of the behaviors.
- Use details of the child’s actions as evidence of what the student did.
- Write down the exact words used in the conversation, as well as other students’ responses.
- Record only what is observed or heard, dealing only with the facts.
- Most complete episodes have a beginning, middle, and end. Documenting this helps for understanding to be more complete.

### **Example 1:**

Anecdotal Record				
Day	Kaitlin	Aiden	Shana	Jacob
Monday	<i>Tried three different arrangements of tools to get water to go through funnel and tube into a container.</i>	<i>Counted 4 blocks as he stacked them when building a structure. He made sure all of his towers were the same height by counting to see that each had the same number of blocks.</i>	<i>Cleaned up play area without reminders to follow the classroom routine.</i>	
Tuesday	<i>Wrote name without assistance.</i>			<i>Wrote the word “the” without assistance</i>
Wednesday		<i>Used pointer to locate letters he recognized on classroom chart. These letters included the ones in his name in addition to those we have reviewed as a class.</i>	<i>During show and share, I asked her to tell us about what she bought. She said it was her zebra. I prompted her to tell us more, and she said she got it when she went to the zoo with her mom.</i>	
Thursday				<i>When friend took cars away that he was playing with, he asked friend to please give them back and said he would share them.</i>
Friday			<i>Needed help writing “s”.</i>	

**Example 2:**

**October 4, 2012.**

*During math work time, Chris seemed to be having some trouble with the concept of addition problems using manipulatives. He wrote out an answer to the problem without recording the equation, or demonstrating one-to-one correspondence with his counting. He got the correct answer for 2 out of 4 addition problems. He asked me for help on one of the problems saying he didn't know what to do with the extra manipulatives. I explained the problem to him demonstrating one-to-one correspondence (one number for each manipulative), and worked through the problem with him. He was able to finish the problems accurately and for each manipulative, he counted one number. He finished all of the problems on the worksheet correctly and remained on task throughout the lesson.*

**Tips for Using and Developing Anecdotal Records:**

1. Observing children requires planning and preparation. In order to address the time constraints of the classroom, select which students and which concepts to observe ahead of time. Avoid attempting to observe everybody all at once. Consider dividing the students into four groups with five to seven in each group. Monday through Thursday of each week, observe a different group. On Fridays, observe the students who were absent or require further observation.
2. Prior to observation, establish a standards-based focus. This directs the attention of the teacher to persistently observe what students know and do with regard to specific instructional content. In addition, the verbs within the standards help focus the observation (e.g., *describing* key events or *using* addition to find the total number of objects).
3. Periodically **analyze** the compiled record for each student
  - Analyze approximately every six to eight weeks, focusing on the various standards that were selected to guide the observations.
  - Code the records by marking an **S** to indicate an area of strength, **N** to indicate an area of need, and **I** for point of information. Other coding can be used based on the needs of the teacher and students.
  - Once the records are coded, create a summary list of strengths and needs to detect patterns exhibited by the student and the class.
  - Identify specific instructional strategies to be employed based on the analysis. For example, *provide guidance in sorting words into families of -ar, -er, -ir, -ur*. It would not be sufficient to identify “work with Word Walls” as this will not help to get at the heart of the students’ needs.

Anecdotal Records	
Advantages	Potential Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assesses development in all areas: physical, social, cognitive, and emotional</li> <li>▪ Learn more about the child as an individual</li> <li>▪ Identify interests for the group and/or the individual</li> <li>▪ Allows for documentation of accurate information</li> <li>▪ Shows progress and allows for sharing information</li> <li>▪ Assesses the curriculum</li> <li>▪ Gather data to drive various decisions</li> <li>▪ Allows teachers to track children’s progress over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Only records events of interest to the person doing the observing</li> <li>▪ Quality of record depends on the memory or skill of the person doing the observing and recording</li> <li>▪ Incidents can be taken out of context</li> <li>▪ May miss out on recording specific types of behaviors.</li> </ul>

## 2. Work Samples and Student Portfolios

An on-going assessment technique for young children is a systematic collection of **authentic** student work placed in a student portfolio. We define **authentic** work as an application of knowledge and skills that reflect situations and problems addressed in the “real” world. Portfolios are valued as an assessment tool because they contain representations of classroom-based performance and supplement instruction. The key to effectively collecting student work is establishing criteria to guide the selection. These criteria should be based on:

- the knowledge of research-based child development milestones
- the goals of the educational program
- creating a “timeline” of progress that reflects students’ success

Because young children learn by touching and manipulating objects, building and creating in many media, listening and acting out stories and everyday roles, talking and singing, and moving and playing in various ways and environments, the demonstration of what young students can do often comes in ways other than traditional paper and pencil assessments. Therefore, some examples of authentic work samples for a portfolio can include:

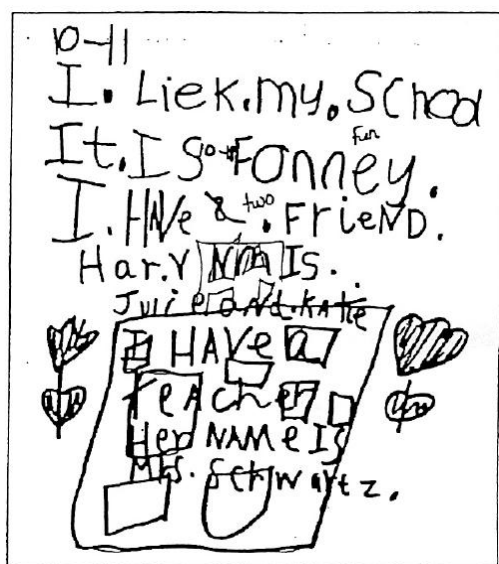
- samples of writing, such as journals, writing from classroom centers (e.g., menu design from the ‘restaurant’ in the dramatic play center)
- art work
- photographs of block towers
- photographs of cooperative work such as on the on-going record keeping and analysis of the temperature for a month

Example of a first grade student portfolio writing samples:



Sample #1  
September 4<sup>th</sup>

This is a sample of writing during the student's second week in writing workshop. The picture represents major places, moments, and/or relationships of the writer's life. This student has clearly defined letters and some distinguishable names in the writing and some strings of letters representing words.

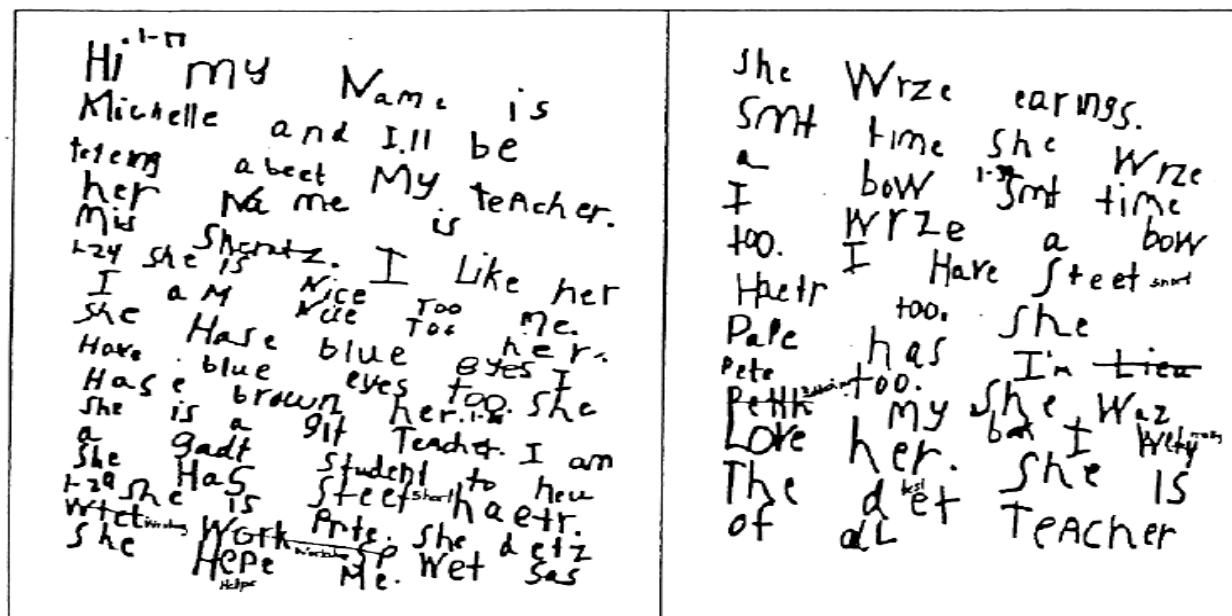


Sample #2  
October 11<sup>th</sup>

This writing sample is from the student's second month in writing workshop. There are 26 words in this sample as compared to 18 in her previous sample (above), almost one-third more. The spelling has progressed in a month from vaguely phonetic to fairly close to the mark. The more difficult words (e.g., school, friend, teacher) were accessed through reading, Word Wall, or other resources. Periods are being over used, which may indicate that this form of punctuation was recently taught.

"I like my school. It is fun. I have two friends. Her name is Julie and Katie. I have a teacher. Her name is Mrs. Schwartz."





"Hi my Name is Michelle and I'll be telling about my teacher. Her Name is Mrs. Schwartz. I like her she is nice to me. I am nice to her. She has blue eyes I have blue eyes too. She has brown hair. She is a great teacher. I am a good student to her. She has straight short hair. She is pretty. She does writing workshop with us. She helps me. She wears earrings. Sometimes she wears a bow. Sometimes I wear a bow too. She was publishing my book I wrote (i) love her. She is the best teacher of all."

Sample #3  
January 17<sup>th</sup>

This student now demonstrates an understanding of beginnings and endings with a summary state for emphasis. She is getting a sense of the writer's ability to craft the shape of a piece of writing.

The collection of this student's writing creates a revealing "timeline" of her writing progress.

### Tips for Using and Developing Work Samples and Student Portfolios:

1. Determine specific standards, big ideas, and concepts in content areas to monitor and analyze over time.
2. Determine the types of student work that will be placed in the portfolio (e.g., student created such as writing samples, videotapes, performance tasks, science investigations, etc.).
3. Develop criteria for students to understand and use when looking at their own or other students' work.
4. Involve students in the selection of materials, in the analysis of their work using established criteria, and in expressing their progress.
5. Use the information gathered from observation to enhance or modify instruction.

In order for portfolios to be a valid assessment for student learning it must be a thoughtful collection of materials that documents specific learning over time.

Student Portfolios	
Advantages	Potential Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides documentation of a child's achievement in specific areas over time</li> <li>▪ Can include anecdotal records, writing work samples, videotapes, etc.</li> <li>▪ Are adaptable to different levels of assessments, purposes, and types of materials</li> <li>▪ Can tell where students are and how they got there</li> <li>▪ Provides information likely to be used to adjust instruction</li> <li>▪ Engages students, parents, teachers, and administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can be labor intensive</li> <li>▪ Can be cumbersome to store</li> <li>▪ Requires carefully defined criteria for review</li> <li>▪ Requires training for reviewers</li> <li>▪ It can be difficult to control outside influences on the product such as parental assistance and access to resources like computers</li> <li>▪ Not standardized, therefore stakeholders may not know the nature of the assignment, help that was provided, or the quality of other students in the group (although a scoring rubric can help alleviate this challenge).</li> </ul>

### 3. Running Record for Reading Performance

A running record is an assessment method that allows the teacher to gather information of how a student approaches the reading process. The running record uses standard recording and scoring procedures to accurately and objectively record what a young student says and does while orally reading continuous text. This authentic assessment allows students to read in the same way they are asked to read during their reading group within the classroom. Running records allow teachers to:

- Determine what students are doing as they are reading
- Observe the strategies students use while they are problem-solving
- Make informed reading and grouping instructional decisions
- Observe changes over time in a student's learning and reading performance

Student Information Gained from Running Records	Analyzing a Running Record by Sources of Information	Instructional Decisions from a Running Record
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading fluently or word-by-word reading</li> <li>• Using single phonemes to sound out words</li> <li>• Attention to meaning</li> <li>• Using first letter cues and not attending to detail in words or ignoring first-letter cues</li> <li>• Not self-correcting errors</li> <li>• Re-reading</li> <li>• Problem Solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaning (M) - If the student was led by the meaning of the messages of text</li> <li>• Structure (S) - If the student's responses were influenced by the syntax or structure of the sentence</li> <li>• Visual Information (V) - If the student was influenced by visual information from the print</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the Running Records showing a balance in the use of sources of information (M, S, V)?</li> <li>• Are the students reading at instructional reading level in the classroom program?</li> <li>• Am I using the Running Records to group students who could work together at this moment in time?</li> <li>• Are the Running Records showing a balance in what is being emphasized in the literacy program?</li> <li>• Am I using prompts to support teaching and learning?</li> <li>• Am I looking for evidence the student is comprehending and asking myself if the student is driven by meaning?</li> </ul>

Running Records	
Advantages	Potential Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details a normal segment of time in the day, giving a more authentic and natural view of a student's oral reading</li> <li>• Reveals many different areas of reading development in one recording</li> <li>• Captures progress over time</li> <li>• Assesses text difficulty and ensures that texts are well matched to students</li> <li>• Groups learners with similar needs</li> <li>• Allows for individual instructional needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student may feel "watched", causing discomfort or change in behavior which may invalidate the recording</li> <li>• Because it is a snapshot in time it may not reveal what normally occurs in reading behaviors, thus trends over time need to be evaluated</li> <li>• Intense listening by the teacher may cause inability to observe the rest of the classroom</li> </ul>

**Example of a Running Record**

(Clay, M., p 23)

**RUNNING RECORD SHEET**

Name: Sam Date: 4.2.00 D. of B.: 1.5.94 Age: 5 yrs 9 mths  
 School: Westleigh Recorder: C.B.

Text Titles	Errors Running Words	Error Ratio	Accuracy Rate	Self-correction Ratio
Easy		1: _____	_____ %	1: _____
Instructional <u>Dogs (Highgate/P.M.)(seen)</u>	<u>3</u> <u>34</u>	1: <u>11.3</u>	<u>90</u> %	1: <u>2</u>
Hard		1: _____	_____ %	1: _____

Directional movement

**Analysis of Errors and Self-corrections**

Information used or neglected [Meaning (M), Structure or Syntax (S), Visual (V)]

Easy \_\_\_\_\_  
 Instructional Meaning and structure are used predominantly for substitutions with some attention to visual information. Repetition with visual information led to three self-corrections.  
 Hard \_\_\_\_\_

Cross-checking on information (Note that this behaviour changes over time)

Meaning & structure cross-checked with visual information like <sup>dogs little</sup> small

Page	Title	Count		Analysis of Errors and Self-corrections	
		E	SC	Information used	Information used
		E	SC	E	SC
		MSV	MSV	MSV	MSV
2	<u>s- Some   T</u> ✓ ✓ ✓	1		M S V	
3	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓				
4	✓ ✓ ✓ <u>scary growly</u>	1		(M) S V	
5	↓ ✓ <u>dogs   R   sc</u> ✓ ✓ <u>like    </u>		1	(M) S V	M S V
6	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓				
7	↓ ✓ ✓ ✓ <u>little   R   sc</u> <u>small    </u>		1	(M) S V	M S V
8	↓ ✓ ✓ <u>dog is   R   sc</u> ✓ ✓ <u>dog's    </u>		1	(M) S V	M S V
	↓ ✓ ✓ <u>biggest   R   A</u> ✓ ✓ <u>cuddliest     T</u>		1	(M) S V	
Read slowly with some intonation.		3	3	5 5 2	1 3

## Interim Assessments

Interim assessments are assessments administered at specified times during a curriculum sequence, to evaluate students' progress of meeting the knowledge and skills relative to standards and grade-level indicators. In addition to progress monitoring, other applications of interim assessments include predicting a student's ability to succeed on a large-scale summative assessment, evaluating a particular educational program or pedagogy, or diagnosing gaps in students' learning. The design and choice of interim assessments is driven by the purpose, intended users, and uses of the instruments. Interim assessments are often created and distributed by government or commercial groups, such as a State Education Agency or a testing company, or are developed locally. Interim assessments may function as an intermediate level between summative purposes and providing affirmation of what has been documented through formative assessment.

While formative assessment is embedded in daily classroom instruction, interim assessment occurs outside of daily classroom instruction. Nevertheless, it should be strategically located and administered within the school's and/or district's curriculum scope and sequence. Interim assessments are often uniform in timing and content across classrooms and schools, and results can be aggregated at the classroom, grade, school, and district levels. These data can then be used to make decisions on how well students are learning, and to determine what action may be needed to accelerate progress toward annual goals.

### Scenario:

*Consider, for example, one district's first quarter mathematics interim assessment. In the first quarter, first grade students learned about place value and that the digits of a two-digit number represent amounts of tens and ones (e.g., 76 equals 7 tens and 6 ones). They also studied the conceptual models for representation using bundles of ones and tens and how they are related. The teacher has been using formative assessment to determine student understanding of these concepts and adjusting instruction. An interim assessment that identifies good information for planning instruction would provide data on how well students have learned these concepts and can apply them. Ideally, the assessment would also diagnose challenges students encountered in each focus area. For example, the student has the alternative conception of two-digit numbers and sees them as numbers independent of place value. She reads the number 32 as "thirty-two" and can count out 32 objects to demonstrate the value of the number, but when asked to write a number sentence decomposing 32 into tens and ones, she writes  $3 + 2 = 32$ . This selected interim assessment would not include items or concepts not taught, such as the addition and subtraction of 3-digit numbers.*

Teachers can use the results from the first quarter interim assessment to plan subsequent math instruction. When administered across classrooms, grade levels, or content areas, interim assessment results provide teachers an opportunity for collaborative reflection, analysis, and action. Leadership teams and school administrators can also use interim assessment results to plan and target specific program interventions to support student learning.

### Types of Interim Assessments

There are a wide variety of privately-created interim assessments available, many of which

provide performance targets that teachers can aim for in order to ensure that their students are on track for meeting grade-level standards by the end of the school year. Examples<sup>1</sup> of widely used interim assessments are the Acuity (Common Core Language Arts and math), GAINS Interim Assessments (reading and math), Writing Roadmap (online assessment for developing writing skills), NWEA MAP assessments (reading, mathematics, language use, science), and the new Rhode Island Interim Assessments<sup>2</sup>. These assessments help to establish performance targets, or “benchmarks” for different points in the school-year (i.e., beginning, middle, and end) that provide progress-monitoring information or predict success in meeting grade-level standards by the end of the year. When administered at the end of the school year, these tests also identify students who will likely have trouble meeting grade-level standards at the end of the next school year unless they receive extra help. The resulting information is used to adjust instruction for personalized instruction or intervention. Some potential drawbacks of privately-created interim assessments include that they are generally not tied to any one curriculum, they often have few items that assess a high depth of knowledge, and they often do not have any constructed-response items.

On the other end of the spectrum are locally-developed interim assessments. These might include using an item bank, such as the Rhode Island Test Construction Tool, to develop grade-level assessments, or writing original items with a content-alike group to create shared benchmark assessments. In general, developing appropriate interim assessments takes time and practice. Some challenges with this task include creating or selecting a sufficient number of items to provide useful information (e.g., more than one item is included per standard assessed), including a variety of item types, and including items that represent a range of depth of knowledge. In addition, when developing interim assessments, clear rubrics that demonstrate expectations for student work must be created. When done well, the resulting assessments can be of high utility and fully aligned with the score and sequence of the curriculum.

### **Tips for Selecting and Developing Interim Assessments:**

1. Interim assessments must be designed to serve their intended purpose. The assessment should be directly aligned to standards, should serve as an instructional planning tool for teaching and reteaching the content, and measuring a range of complexity and problem solving applications that students should know and be able to demonstrate in a specific content area and at a specific grade level.
2. These assessments should provide diagnostic feedback on student strengths and weaknesses to help identify the source of difficulty.
3. Results of the assessment should be consistent regardless of who scores the test or when.
4. The interim assessment should include:
  - Reasonable testing time
  - Reasonable cost
  - Appropriate training for administration
  - Useful score reporting and analysis
  - Clear understanding of how the results fit with other assessments
  - Clear understanding of who will use the results

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The assessments listed here are not necessarily recommendations, but rather are examples.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Rhode Island Interim Assessments visit [www.ride.ri.gov/Interims](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Interims)

Interim Assessments	
Advantages	Potential Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide feedback on the academic areas that individual students need the most assistance</li> <li>• When created in alignment with standards, they enable teachers to more accurately gauge student performance against grade level expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be aligned with standards, state tests, or pacing calendars</li> <li>• Assessments are not given frequently enough to have much impact on instruction</li> <li>• May encourage teaching to the test</li> <li>• May be challenging to create locally at the school- or teacher-level, especially if not using an item bank</li> <li>• Extended scoring time may reduce the value of the assessment data for instruction</li> </ul>

## Summative Assessments

Summative assessments provide information at the student, classroom, and school levels. A defining characteristic of effective summative assessment is a clear alignment between assessment, curriculum, and instruction. When objectives are clearly specified and connected to instruction, summative assessment provides information about a student's achievement of specific learning outcomes. Summative assessments can provide critical information about students' overall learning as well as an indication of the quality of classroom instruction, especially when they are accompanied by other sources of information and are used to inform practice.

### **End-of-Unit Summative Assessments**

A well-designed end-of-unit assessment that is aligned to standards provides teachers with information about individual students (identifying any student who failed to meet the outcomes or surpassed the expectations), as well as provides an overall indication of classroom instruction. End-of unit summative assessments should be created prior to instruction to capture and identify both the content and process of learning that represent the desired outcomes. In this way, summative assessments can serve as a guide for directing the curriculum and instruction. Summative assessments may be created by the teacher, a team of teachers, or may be part of a program or kit (e.g., Full Option Science System-FOSS).

### **Annual Standardized Summative Assessments**

Standardized summative assessments (i.e., NECAP, PARCC) are not sufficiently accurate to use for high-stakes decisions about individual children in the primary grades. Therefore, high-stakes assessments intended for accountability purposes are delayed until the third grade and are not discussed here.

## Assessment Informs Instruction

A consistent feature of research findings on formative assessment is that attention to the interactive nature of formative assessment can lead to significant learning gains (Black & William, 1998; Herman et al., 2006). Reviews of research on formative assessment processes support the use of questioning, observation, and student self-assessment. Frequent monitoring of student progress to a determined goal and performance level results in higher achievement for students, particularly when teachers use the data collected to inform their instructional practices (Stecker et al., 2005).

Formative assessment can be most directly used at the individual student level because it measures how a particular student is progressing in the instructional program and identifies where support may be needed. Focusing on the individual provides immediate feedback to the student and teacher on the student's progress within the curriculum. Formative assessment may also be evaluated at the classroom level to inform teaching practices because it reveals how many students may be experiencing difficulty. If several students are having difficulty, then perhaps a more general change in instruction is needed.

Interim assessment data can provide teachers with information of what concepts students have learned and the potential to provide follow-up for struggling students. Interim assessments can be analyzed and used to provide feedback to students, to allow for the re-teaching of necessary foundational skills or concepts, differentiating instruction, and rethinking the way in which a concept was taught. Interim assessments can provide a structured and systematic strategy for examining overall achievement and to identify areas of need that may be overlooked in everyday classroom interactions.

Summative assessment informs instructional practices in a different yet equally important way. Critics of large-scale assessments argue that they are disconnected from instruction and are not useful in the instructional process (Shepard, 2001). However, summative assessment can serve both as a guide to teaching methods and to improving curriculum to better match the interests and needs of the students. A primary use of assessment data is in planning curricula. For example, if a school's performance on a state assessment indicates high percentages of students who do not meet standards in writing, then the school could collect more information on its writing curricula, student writing performance (through portfolios or other classroom work), and professional development needs for its teachers. After collecting such information, the school may then review and adopt new writing curricula as well as provide professional development to its teachers in order to support stronger student achievement in writing. Ongoing evaluation of the writing program would be conducted through the use of formative and summative assessment. In this manner, when summative and formative assessments are aligned, they can inform the instructional process and support both the daily instructional practices of teachers as well as the longer-term planning of curricula and instruction.

Assessment entails a collection of procedures that inform the learning process. Formative, interim, and summative assessments each have a place in the larger system of assessment, instruction, and curriculum. When formative assessments are used in conjunction with interim and summative assessments, the potential exists to improve outcomes for all students. Assessments can only serve this purpose, however, when teachers are supported to make appropriate adjustments in their instruction (Herman et al., 2006; Marsh, 2007).



### An Example First Grade Comprehensive Assessment System

Assessment Tool	Type of Assessment	Timeframe	Use of Results
Reading Ability and Level • Running Record • DRA 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formative</li> <li>▪ Interim/Benchmark</li> <li>▪ Summative</li> </ul>	<b>Running Record:</b> every 6 weeks <b>DRA2:</b> December, March, June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Determine reading groups</li> <li>▪ Inform instruction</li> <li>▪ Share results with administration, students, &amp; families</li> </ul>
Early Literacy Skills • Checklists • DIBELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formative</li> <li>▪ Interim/Benchmark</li> </ul>	<b>Checklists:</b> throughout the year <b>DIBELS:</b> September, January, May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform instruction</li> <li>▪ Share results with administration, students, &amp; families</li> </ul>
Writing Samples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formative</li> </ul>	Throughout the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform instruction</li> </ul>
Portfolio Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formative</li> </ul>	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform instruction</li> </ul>
District-wide Writing Interim Assessments & rubrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interim/Benchmark</li> <li>▪ Summative</li> </ul>	January & May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform instruction</li> <li>▪ Share results with administration, students, &amp; families</li> </ul>
Math Performance Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formative</li> </ul>	Throughout the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform instruction</li> </ul>
District-wide Math Performance Assessments & rubrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interim/Benchmark</li> <li>▪ Summative</li> </ul>	January & May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform instruction</li> <li>▪ Share results with administration, students, &amp; families</li> </ul>
Anecdotal Records: • Reading • Problem-Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formative</li> </ul>	Throughout the year – every 4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform instruction</li> </ul>
* Science Unit Summative Performance Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summative</li> </ul>	End of unit – every 6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Share results with administration, students, &amp; families</li> </ul>
* Social Studies Unit Summative Performance Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summative</li> </ul>	End of unit – every 6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Share results with administration, students, &amp; families</li> </ul>

**\* Note: Every LEA will make decisions on which content area assessments are appropriate for use in their comprehensive assessment system.**

This first grade comprehensive assessment system example includes a **blend of formative, interim, and summative** assessments that measure a **range** of written and performance tasks and observational information. **Various** assessments administered at multiple times during the year allow for monitoring and measuring progress of standards and grade level expectations. In addition, the assessments allow for examining skills in both an isolated manner, as well as

through application in a performance task which increases the expectation of **complexity and rigor**.

### **Creating a Comprehensive Assessment in your Class**

- 1) **Take stock** – What types of assessments do you currently use in your classroom, your school, and your district? What are the overlaps? What are the gaps? For example, consider whether all the reading assessments used focus on foundational skills (print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency), but not on comprehension. There may be overlaps and gaps.
- 2) **Identify appropriate assessments available** – Determine which assessments can be eliminated and what assessments need to be added. Be sure to consider whether these assessments are the best type to measure the intended learning and whether they are valid and fair assessments (see page 8). To learn more about the different assessments, refer to the reference section on the following pages and to the RIDE website to help you learn more about assessments appropriate to the grade you teach.
- 3) **Develop an assessment schedule** – ensure that there is appropriate time between assessments to allow for grouping students based on instructional needs, formative assessment built into the daily instruction, and time to adjust instruction and provide feedback to students based on the data. Then, considering the type of assessment, determine the appropriate times to implement the assessment.

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