

Reflection: How can I assess literacy skills and needs?

In my practicum classroom, I haven't seen too much assessment of literacy skills yet, however my sponsor teacher does incorporate reading and writing (as well as the other language arts) into almost every activity. My sponsor teacher has mentioned that he has started to have the class read their silent reading books out loud all together in order to get the students comfortable with reading out loud; he also said that he would like us to take students out periodically during silent reading to have them read out loud to us. He didn't mention any form of formal assessment that he had planned for those instances, but I would imagine it would be done via running record (or some adaptation of it).

One thing we've been researching for our presentation is how to accommodate for different reading levels in a class and one activity that we liked was the "Daily 5". In this student directed activity, students choose between Word Work, Practicing Writing, Listening to Reading, Reading to Self, and Reading aloud. It is a daily program designed to cater to different levels and give each student, regardless of level, a chance to improve their literacy skills at their own pace. Today as I was telling my husband about this, he commented that it sounded like it would be hard as a teacher to keep track of. I thought about this for a minute and the wheels in my head started turning. The daily 5, to me, isn't so much an assessment tool as it is a tool students can use to improve their skills at their own paces. As a teacher however, it's important that we are

aware of our students' progress all the time and are constantly trying to ensure they are being appropriately challenged.

I thought of the idea of having Daily 5 duotangs where any Word Work or Writing Practice was put as well as recording and self evaluation sheets for the students. On the record/self-eval sheets, the students would record what books/sections of books (level dependant) they read that day, what reading activity they participated in, and how they felt about it. For younger students, I picture a "Red, Yellow, Green" system of self-assessment where if the student felt they really struggled they put a red sticker, yellow if they struggled but were able to read the majority of the words, and green if it was no problem. Ideally, students would be in a yellow/green zone (similar to reading records where you want them to be making mistakes so as to be challenging themselves, but not so many where it's frustrating and discouraging). For older students, you could adapt this to a more in depth self-assessment on a 1-4 scale, perhaps going into more detail about certain aspects of reading and how they felt about it (ie: being able to read the words, being able to understand the words being read, etc).

By having students self-assess each day for each activity, the teacher could go through the duotangs periodically and see how the students are doing both with writing and reading. For writing, the teacher can go through and see the work that the students have done and see if they need to work on any specific areas or if they need to be challenged more. For reading, the teacher can see what books the students have been reading and how they felt about it. If the books the student is picking are all Red levels for them, that may be an indication that the teacher should perform an assessment to

find out what reading level the student should be at to ensure they are being challenged appropriately. If a student is at all greens, this may be indication for the teacher to recommend some higher level books for the student. I think this could be a really good system for teachers to accommodate all reading levels in a class without making it obvious who is behind and while equally challenging all learners. I also like the idea of the duotangs so the teacher has all of their work and recording for this activity in one place and can track each student's individual progress throughout the year.

I think the Daily 5 is something I would like to implement in my own classroom one day, I'm sure I'll be tweaking and adjusting as I learn/experience more in the classroom and based on my students, but I like the idea of it a lot. I like the opportunity the Daily 5 has for assessment, variety, choice, and accommodation of all levels and I like the flexibility it has when it comes to assessment. I also see the value in knowing how the student feels they're doing with any particular text and knowing that the new curriculum places an emphasis on self assessment, I think the method described above could be really beneficial.