



Engaging in and Exploring Assessment Tools for Literacy Learning Matrix

The [Assessment Tools for Literacy Learning Matrix](#) identifies a selection of formal and informal literacy assessment tools. The matrix helps teachers to select literacy assessment tools for specific age groups and in specific aspects of literacy.

The teacher chooses an assessment tool depending on the purpose, the context and the individual learner. There is no one 'best way' to assess children's progress, or one 'best' set of literacy assessments.

The Resource Paper: [Differentiation through Assessment for Literacy Improvement](#) describes criteria that can be used for selecting assessment tools.



Understanding the Matrix Organisers

Assessment Tool – Each assessment tool has been selected according to the Assessment Tool Selection Criteria (see Differentiation through Assessment for Literacy Improvement paper).

Literacy Domain - Literacy skill development is identified in three Domains

Literacy Aspects - The particular assessment tool's skill focus is organised in the following categories:

- *Oral Language* - verbal communication skills needed to understand (listen) and to use (speak) language
- *Print knowledge* - concepts about print, letter identification and naming

- *Phonological awareness* - refers to the ability to hear, identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken words
- *Phonics* – the acquisition of letter-sound correspondence
- *Vocabulary* – repertoire of word knowledge and meaning and irregular or visual words such as said, was and saw
- *Conventions* - grammar, punctuation, handwriting
- *Fluency* – reading with speed, accuracy, and proper expression
- *Comprehension* – to draw meaning from the text through vocabulary development, intentional and thoughtful interaction between the reader and the text and the development and application of strategies to enhance understanding
- *Engagement* – interest, motivation, involvement and learner experience of wellbeing while participating in literacy learning.

Age Group - This section is organised by year levels of schooling and age in years. Organisation in these categories is indicative of the age appropriateness of the tool. There needs to be particular consideration given to deciding if the tool is appropriate for the learner's current stage of literacy development.

EDSAS Data Entry - All tests:

- with an alphabet code - supported in the EDSAS Standard Test Table
- with # - supported in their own EDSAS table
- without a code - not supported by EDSAS. It is recommended a customised site level recording system is developed.

There is an increasing level of DECD support to enter data on IT platforms. EDSAS updates are posted for:

- Schools at ICT support/ EDSAS information on <http://ssonet.sa.edu.au>
- Corporate at <https://ssonet.central.sa.edu.au/>.

Regional Toolbox – This section identifies the assessment tools that are available for borrowing from regional offices. Other assessment tests and resources are added to the Regional Toolbox throughout the year.

Formal Assessments

Standardised tests

Standardised tests are administered and scored in a structured, prescribed way to ensure consistency and reliability. Such tests often have scripts that are read out by the teacher / administrator. Standardised tests may be norm-referenced or criterion referenced. They are always formal assessments.

Norm referenced assessment

Norm referenced assessments are formal assessments that compare the performance of the student concerned to that of a reference group of peers. Test developers give the test to a large group of the 'norming' population in order to ascertain performance norms. Norm referenced assessments compare students to others, or rank them, often allocating a percentile or a stanine. Many of the standardised assessments available have USA or UK norms only, which many not be appropriate for local children.

Criterion referenced assessments

'A criterion-referenced measure compares a child's performance on a specific skill, grammatical structure, or linguistic concept to independently predetermined criteria' (Laing & Kahmi, 2003, pp., p.46). Criterion referenced assessments are often more sensitive to the needs of individual children because they can be related to the teaching program and context. Because they focus on outcomes they are also a useful means of informing appropriate teaching and learning programs.

Diagnostic assessments

Diagnostic assessment involves the gathering and careful evaluation of detailed data in order to understand individual students' literacy processes and to enable the planning of appropriate learning activities. Thus, diagnostic assessment is not necessarily reserved for children with 'difficulties', but can be used to diagnose strengths and areas of need in all children.

Progress monitoring assessments

Progress monitoring assessments measure children's 'growth' towards meeting specified literacy outcomes (Coyne & Harn, 2007). Progress monitoring assessments should be carried out with increased frequency for children who appear to be having difficulty in making progress, to help identify the appropriateness of the teaching and learning program (Coyne & Harn, 2007; Schumm & Arguelles, 2006).

Outcomes based assessment

Outcomes / achievement assessments are summative assessments, documenting what a child has learnt over a period of time, such as a school term. They measure long term growth (Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Informal Assessments

Informal assessments are an important component of all assessment systems, and are often formative assessments. Informal assessments include teacher made assessments, observations, conversations, and some commercial assessments such as Informal Reading Inventories (IRIs). It is suggested that informal assessments provide a broader picture of children's understanding and use of literacy, than decontextualised tests. Laing & Kahmi (2003), have suggested that informal assessments are particularly appropriate for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children, because teachers are able to take into account the relationship between cultural and linguistic factors and learning outcomes. Informal assessments can also be used to document information about the children's first languages and dialects.

Student self-assessment and peer assessment

Because often much assessment is done *to* and *for* students, and not *by* students, it does not encourage students to monitor their own progress (Afferbach, 2007a). As the development of meta-cognitive strategies has been identified as an important part of reading, helping students to set goals and evaluate success in achieving these goals is potentially an effective ways of supporting independence. Reflecting on progress is another means of helping students to identify areas of strength and areas of weakness.

Portfolios

A student portfolio can contain information from both formal and informal assessments, and is used to show a student's development across time; it is thus a longitudinal record of learning rather than a 'snapshot' of achievement at a particular moment in time. The processes and products of a child's literacy learning can be assessed using portfolios. For the most part, portfolio assessments are formative and informal, and this means that immediate feedback can be given to children to enhance their learning.

Selecting Assessment Types

Assessment tools differ from each other in a number of important ways. When selecting assessment tools it is important to consider what they measure, instructions for their use, the intended age range, scoring, interpretation and implications of results and the appropriateness for use with children from diverse social, cultural and linguistic families. Ultimately the quality of assessment will depend largely on decisions made by the teacher, before the assessment is undertaken.

Excerpts taken from Barratt-Pugh, C., Oakley, G., (December 2007), *The Identification of Assessment Resources to Support Children Learning to Read in the Early Years of School*. Report for the Department of Education WA Page 28-34, Edith Cowan University, Perth.