

Achieving Literacy

Assessment Appropriate for Beginning Readers

The measurement of early literacy behaviors is complex and requires a commitment to careful and systematic observation. *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2002, 2005, 2013) provides a systematic way of capturing early reading and writing behaviors and is the primary assessment tool used in Reading Recovery. All of the tasks were developed in research studies to assess emergent literacy in young children.

The Observation Survey is also widely used by classroom teachers and researchers. The Observation Survey is a teacher-administered standardized assessment that adheres to characteristics of sound measurement instruments: standard tasks, standard administration, real-world tasks to establish validity, and ways of knowing about reliability of observations.

Reading Recovery teachers receive extensive training in the administration, scoring, and interpretation of the Observation Survey. Exit testing is conducted by a teacher other than the one who worked with the student.

How is the Observation Survey used in the evaluation of Reading Recovery?

Each child in Reading Recovery is assessed using the Observation Survey before entering the intervention, when leaving the intervention, and at the end of the school year.

What other assessment tools are used in Reading Recovery?

To observe change over time in children's literacy development, Reading Recovery teachers regularly and systematically use a range of instruments for recording and describing each child's behaviors and emerging competencies. These include daily running records, daily lesson records, writing books, weekly records of text reading levels, and weekly records of reading and writing vocabulary. Careful observation and systematic recording of behaviors informs daily teaching decisions.

NCRTI Documents Validity and Reliability of The Observation Survey

The Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement was reviewed and rated as a screening tool by the National Center for Response to Intervention (NCRTI) using a composite score for all six tasks. NCRTI assigned the highest possible rating -- Convincing Evidence -- in all categories: classification accuracy, generalizability, reliability, validity, and disaggregated data for diverse populations. Thus, the Observation Survey can be used by school psychologists, special educators, and others as an evidence-based screening instrument to identify children at risk for literacy failure.

What is measured?

The Observation Survey includes six literacy tasks, all of which are necessary for describing a young child's emerging reading and writing behaviors:

- **Letter Identification** to determine which letters the child knows and the preferred mode of identification
- **Word Test** to determine if the child is building a personal resource of reading vocabulary
- **Concepts About Print** to determine what the child knows about the way spoken language is represented in print
- **Writing Vocabulary** to determine if the child is building a personal resource of known words that can be written in every detail
- **Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words** to assess phonemic awareness by determining how the child represents sounds in graphic form
- **Text Reading** to determine an appropriate level of text difficulty and to record what the child does when reading continuous text (using a running record)