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How Do I Keep Track of My Students' Different Strengths and Next Steps as Readers?



Assessing is one thing. Keeping track of all your formative assessment observations, notes, and insights is another. The power of formative assessment will only be fully realized if you either use it to teach in the moment or have a record to refer to that will inform future teaching.

There are many methods for keeping track of your formative assessment notes. The best method for formative assessment note-taking is the method that you will stick with consistently over time. Some teachers prefer a digital route while others use paper and pen. Over the years, I have tried many different methods for note-taking, and only one has stuck for me: paper notes in a binder or on a clipboard.

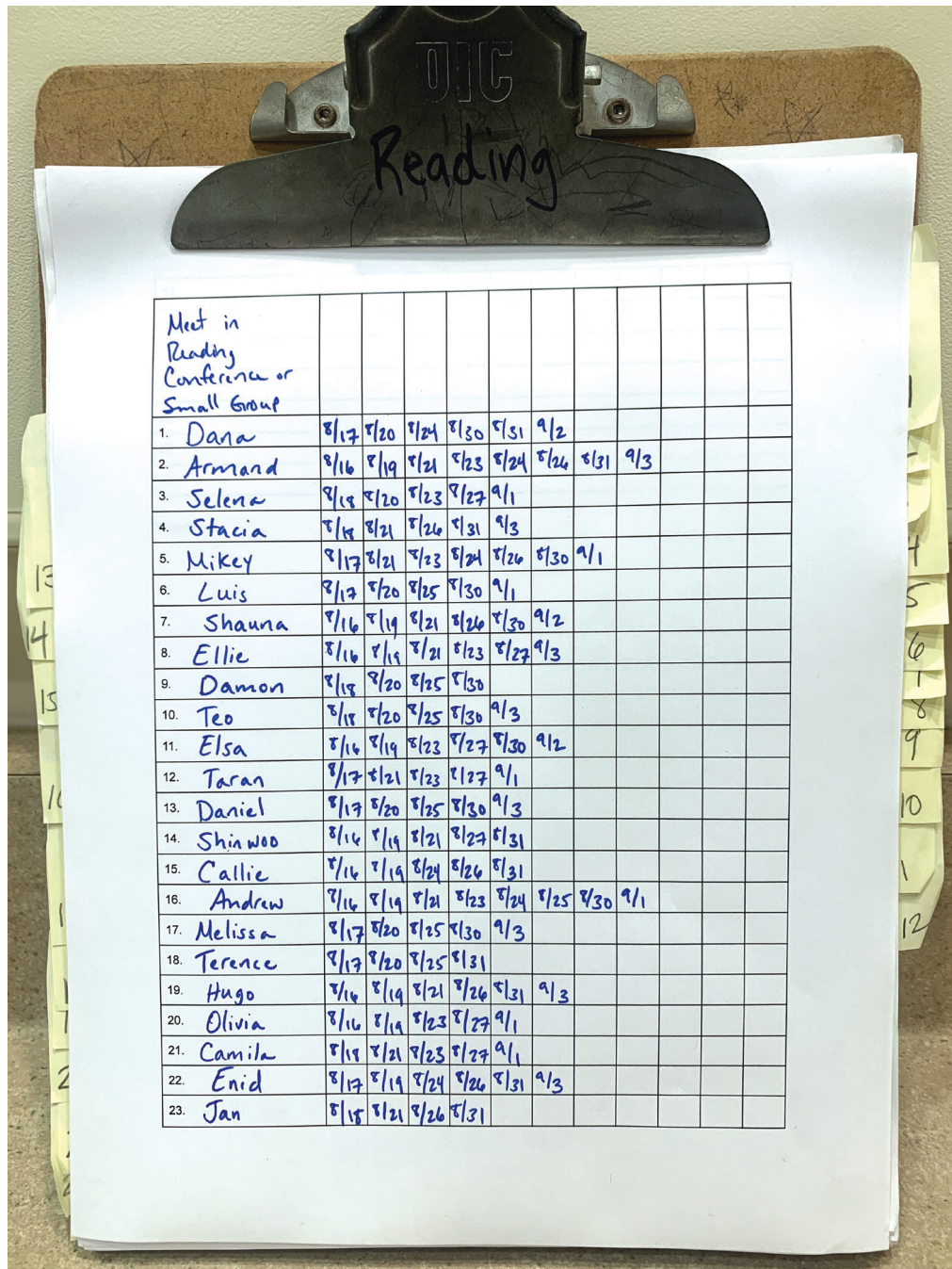
Keeping my trusty clipboard by my side during reading time has helped me take notes at a moment's notice. Whether I am working with students in small groups, engaging in a reading conference, or even listening in during a partner talk portion of a lesson, my clipboard is at-the-ready to house all of my ongoing formative assessment observations, notes, and insights.

I find three different forms to be useful and needed when keeping formative assessment notes. All of these are available in the appendices:

- 1 A class list with checkboxes
- 2 Three Goals Formative Assessment Form
- 3 Individual student assessment forms

CLASS LIST WITH CHECKBOXES

The class list with checkboxes (Appendix H) enables you to keep track of how often you have met with students. It's a great tool for jotting the date of each time you confer or meet in a small group with a student. What I find most useful about this tool is that you can easily see who you have and haven't met with each week. In the image on page 112, you can see which students I have met with most frequently and who I still need to meet with. Not all students will need to meet with you at the same frequency, but all students do need to meet with you in conferences or small groups each week.



Class checkbox grid over three weeks of conferring and small groups

THREE GOALS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT FORM

Before you start each reading unit, consider selecting three learning targets that your entire class will master by the end of the unit. While every student will work toward more than three goals and most will master more than three goals, the goals chosen before the start of the unit will be the ones your reading community collectively works toward as a group. At the start of the unit, formatively assess students and write their names in pencil in the appropriate boxes on the Three Goals Formative Assessment Form (see Appendix I). Depending on the goals you choose, this can usually be done with a quick check-in conference with each

student. As children grow and progress throughout the unit, erase their names and write them in the top box. The goal at the end of the unit is to have all children's names in the top boxes.

Reading 3 Goals Formative Assessment Form

Reading Unit Realistic Fiction Date(s) 9/2 -

Pencil in student names in the appropriate column based on formative assessment from observations, conferences, and small groups. As students show growth, move their name to the next column.

	Habit/Strategy/Skill Identifies Main Character	Habit/Strategy/Skill Names 1-2 character traits	Habit/Strategy/Skill Uses text evidence when making a statement
Student consistently demonstrates this habit, strategy, or skill.	Olivia Terence Hugo Melissa Taran Damon Teo Camila Elsa Stacia Luis Shauna Ellic	Damon Olivia Terence Taran Camila Luis Stacia Elsa Melissa Ellic	Camila Taran Damon Luis Olivia Melissa Terence
Almost there. Evidence is present, but use is not consistent yet.	David Selena Dana Mikay Shiwoo Callie Enid	Shaun Selena Teo Daniel Shiwoo Hugo Enid Callie	Stacia Selena Ellic Elsa Teo Daniel Callie
Evidence not present yet.	Armand Jan Andrew	Dana Armand Mikay Andrew Jan	Dana Armand Shaun Mikay Shiwoo Hugo Andrew Enid Jan
Need More information. The evidence is unclear.			

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Reading 3 Goals Formative Assessment Form

Reading Unit Realistic Fiction Date(s) 9/2 - 9/11

Pencil in student names in the appropriate column based on formative assessment from observations, conferences, and small groups. As students show growth, move their name to the next column.

	Habit/Strategy/Skill Identifies Main Character	Habit/Strategy/Skill Names 1-2 character traits	Habit/Strategy/Skill Uses text evidence when making a statement
Student consistently demonstrates this habit, strategy, or skill.	Dana Olivia Andrew Hugo Melissa Terence Damon Taran Camila Elsa Stacia Luis Armand Shauna Ellic	Teo Armand Shauna Selena Dana Olivia Damon Taran Camila Luis Terence Elsa Stacia Mikay Andrew Melissa Ellic	Stacia Ellic Ellic Teo Callie Camila Taran Selena Damon Jan Luis Olivia Mikay Shiwoo Hugo Melissa Dana Shauna Terence Andrew
Almost there. Evidence is present, but use is not consistent yet.	David Selena Dana Mikay Shiwoo Callie Enid	Shaun Selena Teo Daniel Shiwoo Hugo Enid Callie	Stacia Selena Ellic Elsa Teo Daniel Callie
Evidence not present yet.	Armand Jan Andrew	Dana Armand Mikay Andrew Jan	Dana Armand Shaun Mikay Shiwoo Hugo Andrew Enid Jan
Need More information. The evidence is unclear.			

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Note: Pull Andrew, Daniel in small group next week to focus on text evidence when making a statement

Three Goals Formative Assessment Form at the beginning and end of a unit. Notice how growth is recorded over time by moving the student names in the columns. Also notice that the teacher jotted next steps in the side margin after seeing that two students still need support in one area.

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT FORM

The assessment form I use to keep specific details about individual students' strengths and needs is the Individual Student Assessment Form (Appendix J). I keep one form per student on my clipboard. To easily find a student's page on the clipboard, I place a small sticky note with the student's name or number on the side of the page.

This form is adapted from a form Kari Yates and I created in *To Know and Nurture a Reader* (2018). The form is a four-square grid where you can keep assessment notes about four specific areas of reading. You will decide which four areas to formatively assess over a period of time, depending on your current reading unit or every month or so. Some general examples of what four things may be assessed are as follows:

- 📌 Book choice, reading habits, strategic process, authentic response (Yates & Nosek, 2018)
- 📌 Decoding, fluency, basic comprehension, extended thinking

There are times in the classroom when you'll need to be more specific with your formative assessment, so the terms you write in the grid will be less general, such as in these examples:

- Primary grades: reading material organization, reading stamina, talk about text, talk about own ideas
- Upper grades: stating a detailed opinion, using evidence to support the opinion, acknowledging a counter opinion, stating a reasoned rebuttal

Individual Student Assessment Form

Student Name Andrew Dates 8/16 - 9/10

<p>Area of Focus: Book Choice</p> <p>8/16 - Diary of a Wimpy kid 8/18 - "</p> <p>8/20 - New Diary of a Wimpy kid 8/23 - Moved on to Bones book 1 8/26 - " 8/31 - Bones book 2 9/2 - said he abandoned Bones 2 and is now reading Ghost - he loves it! 9/10 - loved Ghost, now onto ^{Pastina}</p>	<p>Area of Focus: Sustaining reading in one period</p> <p>8/18 - Seems distracted 8/20 - different reading spot - less distracted 8/31 - clearly is not interested in his book, but is trying to stick it out. Low interest = low focus 9/2 - loves new book, lots of engagement!</p>
<p>Area of Focus: Solving Unknown Words</p> <p>8/18 - read <u>drain</u> instead of <u>drape</u> <u>close</u> <u>clothes</u> 8/20 - Conferred around reading the whole word → big improvement! 8/26 - still see growth! 8/31 - Andrew is successfully reading through entire words words! Thinking he was speeding and not monitoring for ^{sense} earlier.</p>	<p>Area of Focus: Monitoring for Meaning</p> <p>8/23 - Conferred around monitoring for meaning - still needs practice 8/26 - modeled how to stop and think to check for understanding - still practicing 8/31 - Reminder of stop & think strategy - some growth 9/2 - stopping & thinking on his own! 9/8 - Consistently monitoring now!</p>

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Notes about formative assessment observations and teaching with one student

Consistent use of these three forms over time will support your work in spotting patterns in your students' strengths and next steps. Based on what you notice, you will be able to create more effective small groups and tailor your instruction to meet your students' unique strengths and needs. For example, if you notice after two weeks of consistent formative assessment note-taking that four students still need support with a specific skill that the rest of the class has mastered, you can form a small group of those four to support their specific needs.