

Assessing Kindergarten Students' Emergent Literacy

SAMPLE



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Introduction

At the end of the day, Ms. Cavazos sits down at her desk to begin planning next week's lessons. She reflects on the students in her kindergarten classroom and reviews the notes and work samples she has collected. It is amazing how quickly the first three weeks of school have passed. In the beginning, there was a lot of crying from both parents and students alike. By now, however, the students seem to be used to the daily routine and have begun to settle down.

The students in Ms. Cavazos' class have entered school with a variety of background experiences and are at different stages in their literacy development. This is the first school experience for at least half of the students. Many have had very little exposure to books and other reading materials. They have difficulty using writing tools and are not sure how to work with the materials displayed in the centers. Because of this, Ms. Cavazos encourages the students who had attended prekindergarten to be role models for the others. She has them demonstrate how to use the materials in the centers, walk quietly in the hallways, and go through the cafeteria line. More important, she encourages these "old timers" to help the other students learn early literacy skills. For instance, she asks them to point out the letter names and sounds used in the morning message and daily news.

Ms. Cavazos has been teaching kindergarten for several years. She thoroughly understands the curriculum her students need to learn and enjoys the challenge of teaching children with such diverse backgrounds. This teacher knows all her students have the ability to learn and accepts the responsibility of instructing them appropriately wherever they are on their road to literacy (Clay, 1993). Ms. Cavazos frequently observes the children as they work in centers or are involved in daily activities and looks for authentic ways the students demonstrate their learning. For example, she notes in an anecdotal record the first time a student retrieves his name card from the word wall and refers to the card to write his name on his paper. She makes a copy of a student's journal writing and notes that the child attempted to sound out the words as she wrote them. Writing anecdotal records, taking photographs, and collecting work samples are excellent ways of documenting students' understanding of the curriculum. Ms. Cavazos keeps this documentation, along with assessments that monitor student's specific literacy skills, in individual portfolios. The portfolios are reviewed periodically and used to plan instruction that meets students' specific needs. "Taking the opportunity to reflect on completed portfolio items [can provide] a fuller picture of a child's strengths, interests, and areas of competence, as well as areas that are still in the process of developing" (Gronlund & Engel, 2001, p. 175).

Developing Portfolios

For the past few years, Ms. Cavazos and the other kindergarten teachers have been using portfolios to monitor their students' progress in learning to read and write. Before using portfolios, the teachers strictly relied on grades in the grade book and

report cards to gauge their students' progress. The grades were based on daily worksheets and paper and pencil tests designed by the district. At the end of each nine-week period, the teachers averaged the grades and marked *meets expectations* or *needs improvement* on the report card. Many times, it was seven weeks into the grading period before the teachers realized that some students had yet to learn the material that had been taught. In addition, some of the students who had started kindergarten with very limited exposure to reading and writing were not making sufficient progress. It became apparent that the teachers needed to monitor the students' literacy development more closely by using portfolios. This would allow them to plan instruction to meet students' specific needs and ensure that all students made adequate progress.

The teachers spent a great deal of time discussing and agreeing upon the information they wanted to acquire, how they would get it, and in what time frame. This discussion increased the possibility that the teachers would actually implement the portfolios (McAfee & Leong, 1997), and ensured that the portfolios would be "an organized, purposeful compilation of evidence documenting a child's development and learning over time" (McAfee & Leong, 1997, p. 100).

The teachers determined that they would include two types of information in the portfolios. Specific literacy skills acquired would be documented by using assessments developed by Region 4 Education Service Center. These assessments would allow the teachers to track the students' print conventions, letter knowledge and early word recognition, phonological awareness, reading comprehension, and writing. Other information specific to each student, such as anecdotal records, work samples, and photographs, would also be collected. By gathering both types of information, "each [portfolio would] tell a distinctive story and include the unique ways in which children show their accomplishments, interests, and personalities" (Gronlund & Engel, 2001, p. 4).

The intent of this manual is to give teachers a means to monitor their students' progress in learning to read and write and "to show teachers ways in which information from assessment can inform and improve classroom practice" (McAfee & Leong, 1997, p. 146). The manual provides a list of literacy goals for kindergarten students, as well as teaching strategies that can be used to help students accomplish these goals. A sample student portfolio is also provided as a reference for how the assessments, anecdotal records, work samples, and photographs can be used to monitor students' progress. By regularly reviewing the class summaries of the assessments and the items in students' portfolios, teachers should be able to plan instruction based on students' needs and thereby ensure that all students progress in their journey toward literacy.

Letter Knowledge and Early Word Recognition

Introduction

Research has shown that the ability of young children to recognize and name letters is a very good predictor of their future ability to learn to read (Schickedanz, 1999). For this reason, Ms. Cavazos helps her students acquire letter knowledge by providing them with many opportunities to work with a variety of materials during circle time, in centers, and through small-group instruction. The teacher writes the morning message in front of the students every day during circle time. She sounds the words out as she writes them and has the students reread the message when it is completed. As the year progresses, students offer suggestions on spelling and even write some of the text. After the morning message, the students participate in an interactive word wall activity. The teacher points to the alphabet cards on the word wall and encourages the students to chant the alphabet and identify the pictures on the alphabet cards. At the beginning of the year, the teacher will point to the alphabet cards as the students chant, "A, /ă/, apple; B, /b/, ball," Chanting the alphabet in different ways keeps the students motivated and focused on the letters, thereby assisting them in making letter/sound connections. After the chant, the class identifies students' names and high-frequency words on the word wall by listening to clues given by the teacher. The teacher might say, "I am thinking of a student's name that starts with the same sound as 'monkey' and rhymes with 'carry.' What is it?" After a student identifies the name being described, he or she is encouraged to point to the word on the word wall and spell it.

Center activities are also used to help students learn the names of letters. Students in Ms. Cavazos' class can be found enthusiastically writing letters in their journals, making words with letter stamps, and completing alphabet puzzles. One of their favorite center activities is sorting felt letters. Letters may be sorted according to the following categories: those with straight lines, curved lines, horizontal lines, diagonal lines, etc. The sorting activities help students distinguish one letter from another by focusing on the letters' attributes.

Ms. Cavazos teaches her students in small instructional groups. She plans instruction based on students' needs by reviewing the class summary sheet of the Letter/Sound Identification Assessment written by Region 4 Education Service Center. The class summary sheet helps her plan manipulative-based activities for groups of students who need to learn the same letters and/or sounds. Some of these activities include matching and naming letters in students' names, placing plastic letters on a preprinted alphabet, and matching letters with pictures that begin with the sound the letter represents. Because Ms. Cavazos uses the morning message, word wall activities, centers, and small-group instruction, her students have great success in learning the names and sounds of letters, thus increasing the likelihood that they will successfully learn to read.

Letter Knowledge and Early Word Recognition Goals	
1.	Identifies, names, and makes the most common sound of each letter of the alphabet, for both uppercase and lowercase letters
2.	Understands that letters represent the sounds heard in words
3.	Writes the letter that goes with its most common spoken sound
4.	Names a word that begins with a given letter or sound
5.	Writes phonetically by using the correct sequence of consonants to represent the sounds in a word
6.	Uses letter/sound connections when writing one-syllable c/v/c (consonant-vowel-consonant) words such as <i>man</i> and <i>bug</i>
7.	Reads and writes some high-frequency words

Adapted from Akhavan, N. L. (2004); Bergeson, T., Kelly, T. J., & Riggers, M. L. (2000); Bodrova, E., Leong, D. J., Paynter, D. E., & Semenov, D. (2000); Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2004); Clay, M. M. (1993); Freeman, M. S. (1998); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1996); Mississippi Department of Education. (2001); National Center on Education and the Economy, & University of Pittsburgh. (1999); National Research Council. (1998); Neuman, S. B., Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (2000); New Standards Primary Literacy Committee. (1999); New Standards Speaking and Listening Committee. (2001); Oklahoma State Department of Education. (2002); Texas Education Agency, (1999).

Teaching Strategies

1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with opportunities to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Name the letters in their names, in classmates' names, and in the words on the word wall.◇ Read and spell words in the morning message and daily news.◇ Point to, name, and give the sound of the letters of the alphabet.◇ Use letter manipulatives in a variety of ways.
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with opportunities to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Match letters to objects or pictures that begin with that letter.◇ Segment words into individual sounds.◇ Blend individual sounds together to make words.◇ Point to letters and make their most common sounds in order to read specific words.◇ Spell, write, and read words in the morning message and daily news.◇ Write text using invented spelling.
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with opportunities to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Sort and label objects or pictures by their beginning sound.◇ Write text using invented spelling.◇ Write words in the morning message and daily news.
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with opportunities to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Sort objects and pictures by their beginning letter or sound.◇ Name pictures on the alphabet cards found on the word wall.◇ Generate lists of words that begin with the same letter/sound.◇ Identify words found in alphabet books that begin with the same letter/sound.◇ Create class-made alphabet books.
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with opportunities to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Write text using invented spelling.◇ Spell, write, and read words in the morning message and daily news.
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with opportunities to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Write text using invented spelling.◇ Spell words in the morning message and daily news.◇ Learn to read and write words found in common word families.
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide students with opportunities to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Read high-frequency words used in the morning message and daily news.◇ Read and write high-frequency words on the word wall.◇ Read high-frequency words found in predictable text.◇ Read and write independently.◇ Read predictable text.◇ Read Level A and Level B books.

Letter/Sound Identification Assessment

Use this assessment to determine the letters a student can identify by name and by sound. Then use the assessment to determine whether the student can name a word that begins with a given letter. The student's results can be recorded in two places: the recording sheet for individual students and the class summary sheet. The recording sheet for individual students can be kept in the student's portfolio and used to monitor his or her progress. The results kept on the class summary sheet can be used to plan for small-group instruction that meets students' specific needs. The assessment should be given at least three times a year.

Directions: Have the student point to the letter on the assessment and answer the following questions:

- What is the name of the letter?
- What sound does the letter make?

During a second assessment have the student point to the letter on the assessment and answer the following question:

- Do you know a word that starts with that letter?

Record the student's responses using the checklists on pages 19–22 in this manual.

C	L	R	U	S	E
Q	X	A	K	P	W
M	F	Y	O	J	H
I	Z	N	V	B	G
T	D				
c	l	r	u	s	e
q	x	a	k	p	w
m	f	y	o	j	h
i	z	n	v	b	g
t	d				

Letter/Sound Identification Assessment Class Summary (Uppercase)

Directions: Make enough copies of this checklist to monitor the progress of all students in the class. Put a checkmark on the letter names and sounds each student says correctly. Refer to this summary to plan lessons for small-group instruction that meets students' specific needs.

Student Name	Teacher: _____ Date: _____																										Total	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	

Letter/Sound Identification Assessment Class Summary (Lowercase)

Directions: Make enough copies of this checklist to monitor the progress of all students in the class. Put a checkmark on the letter names and sounds each student says correctly. Refer to this summary to plan lessons for small-group instruction that meets students' specific needs.

Student Name	Teacher: _____ Date: _____																				Total						
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d

Individual Letter/Sound Identification Checklist (Uppercase)

Directions: Use this checklist to monitor an individual student's ability to name the letters of the alphabet and make the sound the letter represents. Put a checkmark on the letter names and sounds the student says correctly. Keep a copy of the checklist in the student's portfolio.

Student Name:																						Total						
Date:	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
Date:	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
Date:	Name	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
	Sound	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D	
Notes:																												

Individual Letter/Sound Identification Checklist (Lowercase)

Directions: Use this checklist to monitor an individual student's ability to name the letters of the alphabet and make the sound the letter represents. Put a checkmark on the letter names and sounds the student says correctly. Keep a copy of the checklist in the student's portfolio.

Student Name:																						Total						
Date:	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d	
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d	
Date:	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d	
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d	
Date:	Name	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d	
	Sound	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d	
Notes:																												

Beginning-Letter Word Identification

Directions: Use this checklist to monitor the student's ability to name a word that begins with a given letter. Referring to the checklist on page 18 of this manual, have the student point to a letter and say a word that begins with that letter. Write the word the student says in the appropriate space. Keep a copy of the checklist in the student's portfolio.

Student Name:					
Date:		Date:		Date:	
c		c		c	
l		l		l	
r		r		r	
u		u		u	
s		s		s	
e		e		e	
q		q		q	
x		x		x	
a		a		a	
k		k		k	
p		p		p	
w		w		w	
m		m		m	
f		f		f	
y		y		y	
o		o		o	
j		j		j	
h		h		h	
i		i		i	
z		z		z	
n		n		n	
v		v		v	
b		b		b	
g		g		g	
t		t		t	
d		d		d	
Total:		Total:		Total:	

High-Frequency Word List

Directions: Have a student point to and read the words that he or she knows. Use the checklist on page 25 to document the student's understanding and plan instruction.

a	am	an	and
at	can	do	for
go	he	I	in
is	it	like	me
my	no	of	see
so	that	the	to
up	was	we	you

Individual High-Frequency Word Checklist

Directions: Make a copy of this checklist for each student. Write the student's name in the space provided. Put a checkmark on each word the student reads from the High-Frequency Word List on page 23. Give the assessment at least twice during the year to monitor the student's progress. Students should be learning the words from participating in the morning message, the daily news, word wall activities, and from reading predictable texts.

Student Name:																												
Date:	a	am	an	and	at	can	do	for	go	he	I	in	is	it	like	me	my	no	of	see	so	that	the	to	up	was	we	you
Date:	a	am	an	and	at	can	do	for	go	he	I	in	is	it	like	me	my	no	of	see	so	that	the	to	up	was	we	you
Date:	a	am	an	and	at	can	do	for	go	he	I	in	is	it	like	me	my	no	of	see	so	that	the	to	up	was	we	you
Date:	a	am	an	and	at	can	do	for	go	he	I	in	is	it	like	me	my	no	of	see	so	that	the	to	up	was	we	you

Individual High-Frequency Word Checklist

Directions: Make a copy of this checklist for each student. Write the student's name in the space provided. Put a checkmark on each word the student reads from the High-Frequency Word List on page 23. Give the assessment at least twice during the year to monitor the student's progress. Students should be learning the words from participating in the morning message, the daily news, word wall activities, and from reading predictable texts.

Student Name:																												
Date:	a	am	an	and	at	can	do	for	go	he	I	in	is	it	like	me	my	no	of	see	so	that	the	to	up	was	we	you
Date:	a	am	an	and	at	can	do	for	go	he	I	in	is	it	like	me	my	no	of	see	so	that	the	to	up	was	we	you
Date:	a	am	an	and	at	can	do	for	go	he	I	in	is	it	like	me	my	no	of	see	so	that	the	to	up	was	we	you
Date:	a	am	an	and	at	can	do	for	go	he	I	in	is	it	like	me	my	no	of	see	so	that	the	to	up	was	we	you

High-Frequency Word Graph

Directions: Make a copy of the graph for each student. Using the list on page 23, have the student point to and read the high-frequency words that he or she knows. Record the number of words the student reads correctly. Keep a copy of the graph in the student's portfolio.

Name:				Comments
28.				1st Try:
27.				
26.				
25.				
24.				
23.				
22.				
21.				
20.				
19.				2nd Try:
18.				
17.				
16.				
15.				
14.				
13.				
12.				
11.				
10.				3rd Try:
9.				
8.				
7.				
6.				
5.				
4.				
3.				
2.				
1.				
				1st Try
				2nd Try
				3rd Try

Small-Group Anecdotal Records

Letter Awareness

Date:

Objective:

Directions: Refer to the Letter/Sound Identification Assessment Class Summary sheets (pages 19–20). Plan small-group instruction based on students' needs. Write the names of the students in the spaces provided. Keep notes as to how the students respond to the lesson. Refer to the notes to plan future instruction. Keep a copy of the notes in students' portfolios.

Name:	Name:	Name:
Name:	Name:	Name: