



*“Planned observations can capture evidence of early progress.”*

— Clay, 2002, 2006

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## The Observation Survey

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, 2006) 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.

### Are assessment measures used in Reading Recovery valid and reliable?

Validity and reliability for all tasks of the Observation Survey have been documented (Clay, 2002, 2006; Denton, Ciancio, & Fletcher, 2006) and the Observation Survey highly correlates with the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* (Rodgers, Gómez-Bellengé, Wang, & Schultz, 2005) and (Tang & Gómez-Bellengé, 2007). National norms have been developed to assist in interpreting scores (Gómez-Bellengé & Thompson, 2005). 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.

### What is assessed with the Observation Survey?

The Observation Survey incorporates 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)

## 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. (See Measuring Outcomes.) Data for each child are sent to the National Data Evaluation Center for evaluation purposes.

## 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.

### References

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