Literacy Secretariat

Literacy is everyone's business

Engaging in and Exploring
Running Records

An assessment of oral reading of continuous text

This resource has been designed to assist classroom teachers reflect on and inquire into their approach to the assessment of oral reading of continuous text using Running Records.

It is one of a series of resources produced by the Literacy Secretariat and should be read in conjunction with *Engaging in and Exploring Reading in the early years*.

The importance of Running Records

The most powerful teaching in classrooms takes place when teachers use the information gained from observations and assessments of children's literacy development to plan their teaching. However teachers recognise, too, that observations can sometimes be subjective and influenced by what they already know or believe about the students and their literacy development, so it is important to add data from more formal assessments to their observations.

Tests of alphabet knowledge, phonics, phonemic awareness, and sight words form part of reading assessment but they don't provide the whole picture of how a student approaches the reading process. Gathering information from a Running Record, which gives a reliable and valid assessment of text reading, and adding this information to other assessments enables a teacher to gain a richer and more comprehensive assessment of a student's reading ability.

Developed by Marie Clay, Running Records use standard recording and scoring procedures to accurately and objectively record what a young reader said and did while orally reading continuous text. The task is 'authentic' in that the students are asked to read in just the same way as they are asked to read in the reading program in the classroom situation.

A Running Record is a tool for coding, scoring and analysing a child's precise reading behaviours.

(Fountas & Pinnell, Guided Reading p 89)

The collection of Running Records provides an effective resource for analysing and reflecting on the teaching and learning in schools.

Running Records are designed to be taken on any text as a child reads orally. When used appropriately, and taken on an on-going basis, they provide informative records which enable teachers to:

- determine what students are doing as they are reading
- observe the strategies students use while they are problem-solving
- make informed teaching decisions
- observe changes over time in a student's learning
- report to parents.

How can we make sure our Running Records are reliable?

Teachers need to be taking the Running Records, making sure they are:

- using standard ways of recording
- using any 'seen' text, ie one which has been previously introduced and read by the student, but not one which has been taken home to practice
- using a blank piece of paper or a Running Record form eliminating the need for additional preparation
- noting all attempts or parts of attempts the student makes when reading the book
- not intervening while the student is reading
- inviting the student to read a passage of 100–200 words, or the entire book if the book has less than 100 words
- recording, at the end of the Running Record, how the reading sounded eg whether the reading was smooth and phrased or read word by word.

How to take a Running Record

1. Select a text at the student's appropriate reading level and one that has been previously introduced and read.
2. Invite the student to read the text.
3. As the student reads, use the conventions to note the student's reading behaviours.
4. Score and analyse the Running Record.
5. Use this information to plan for future teaching.

Why do we take Running Records?

While the same procedure for taking a Running Record is always used, the information we gain from the Running Record is used for two distinctly different purposes:

1. Site report data collection
2. Informing our classroom programs.

1. Site report data collection

Schools are asked to collect data about reading levels for Year 1 and 2 students by taking Running Records.

- Using this data enables teachers to monitor the progress of learners; and leaders can monitor the effectiveness of the agreed whole site approach to literacy improvement.
- Combined with other evidence, this data supports to continuously inform our practices and decisions at the learner, site, regional and system level.

Literacy Achievement for All Learners in All Communities: A Model For Literacy Improvement.
(Literacy Secretariat Paper, Draft August 2010 p 6)

2. Informing our classroom programs

As well as the Running Records we take for data collection, we also analyse and reflect on other Running Records taken regularly in our classrooms. These Running Records assist us in our classroom teaching and help us to bring about change in our outcomes.

Running Records taken for our classroom programs inform and guide teaching and help to:

- capture progress
- assess text difficulty
- show reading behaviours by allowing us to see HOW learners read independently
- ensure texts are well matched to students
- group learners with similar needs
- cater for individual differences
- provide explicit feedback to students and their parents.

A Running Record is a documentation of a child's actual reading of text, providing both quantitative and qualitative information.
(Fountas & Pinnell, Guided Reading p 78)

Self review – a collaborative approach

As a staff, look at your school's Running Records data together and discuss:

1. *What did your school's results show this year?*
2. *Is there a pattern in your data?*
3. *Are you seeing a change over time in your data?*
4. *How did your school's results compare with your expectations?*
5. *What goals can you set yourselves for your next data collection?*

Why do we determine the accuracy level of a Running Record?

We need to check if student's are reading texts at appropriate levels of difficulty. By taking and quantifying, or scoring, the Running Record we can determine the level of difficulty of the text for a particular student. Texts a student is reading should offer an appropriate level of challenges for the student's learning and should be neither too easy nor too difficult.

Accuracy level	
95% – 100 % accuracy	Easy
90% – 94% accuracy	Instructional
89% and below	Hard

Texts read at an easy or instructional level allow teachers to observe how a student is processing. Students reading texts at a hard level tend to lose the meaning of the text they are reading.

The self-correction ratio also needs to be calculated to determine if the student self-corrects errors without any prompting from the teacher.

How do we analyse a Running Record?

To help us work out what **sources of information** the student is attending to as s/he reads a text, it is important to analyse both the errors and self corrections in the Running Record.

Analysing and interpreting errors and self corrections on a Running Record shows us which sources of information has been used:

- **Meaning (M) –** If the student was led by the meaning of the messages of the text.

  To determine if the student is using meaning, ask 'Does the substitution reflect what the author intended?'
- **Structure (S) –** If the student's responses were influenced by the syntax or structure of the sentence.

  To determine if the student has used structure, ask 'Does the substitution reflect acceptable English language usage?'
- **Visual Information (V) –** If the student was influenced by visual information from the print.

  To determine if the student used visual information, ask 'Does the substitution look like the word in the text?'

Refer to Figure 1 on page 4.

What can a Running Record show us?

In addition to helping to determine which sources of information students are using or neglecting when they are reading, Running Records show:

- What strategies are used for solving unknown words
- If the student is monitoring or self-checking
- If there is a high number of appeals with no attempt, or few attempts, to problem-solve
- If the student is rereading to check, confirm and maintain meaning
- If the student is rereading to search for further information and problem-solve
- If there is a high self-correction rate
- The rates of fluency and phrasing
- The comprehension or understanding, as evidenced by:
  – the student engaging with the text by making little asides/ comments or personalizes the text
  – the student being able to retell the story
  – the student using punctuation, expression and intonation.

This information can then be used to plan classroom teaching and address any areas being neglected or over-emphasised.

Using Running Records effectively
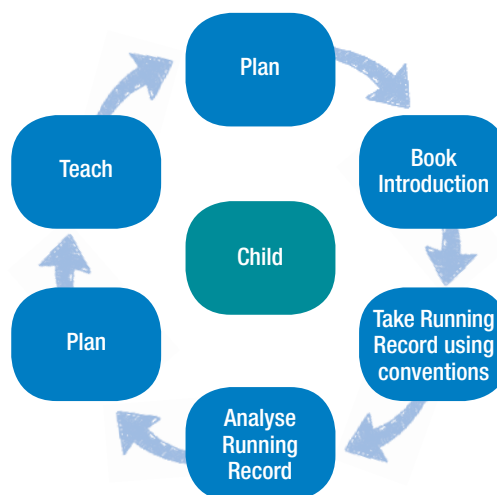
Self review – reflecting on practice

Gather some Running Records you have taken, making sure these have been scored and analysed.

Look at the Running Records and ask yourself:

1. *Are the Running Records showing there is a balance of the use of sources of information?*
2. *Are the students reading at instructional reading level in the classroom program?*
3. *Am I using the Running Records to group children who could work together at this time?*
4. *Are the Running Records showing there is a balance in what is being emphasised in the literacy program?*
5. *Am I using prompts to support teaching and learning?*
6. *Am I looking for evidence the student is comprehending and asking myself if the student is driven by meaning?*

How can we use Running Records to inform our teaching?

We can use the information we gain from Running Records to determine if students are:

- Reading fluently or word-by-word reading
- Resort to using single phonemes to sound out words
- Not attending to meaning
- Ignoring first-letter cues or only using first-letter cues and not attending to detail in words
- Not-self correcting errors
- Rereading
- Problem-solving.

Running Records show the emphases and neglects of our classroom reading programs and help us plan how to use this information to address students' needs.

Figure 1: Example of a Running Record taken on the Running Record Sheet

(Taken from Clay, M.M., p 23)

How can we address students' needs?

At the end of a Running Record, or during classroom reading time, teachers could use some of the following prompts to help students to problem-solve:

To help students use meaning, say:	To help students use structure, say:	To help students use visual information, say:
• Did that make sense? • Look at the picture and think what would make sense. • Read it again and think what would make sense. • You said…did that make sense?	• Did that sound right? • Can we say it like that? • Read it again and think what would sound right. • You said…did that sound right?	• Did that look right? • What could you try? • Do you know a word that starts with those letters? • Do you know a word like that? • What do you think it could be?
To help students check on themselves (self-monitor) say: • There was a tricky part there – you find it. • Are you right? • You made a mistake there, try that again.	To help students self-correct, say: • I like the way you found out what was wrong all by yourself. • You made a mistake on that page (or in that sentence) can you find it? • Nothing!!! Allow time for the child to self-correct.	To help students cross-check, say: • It could be…that would make sense, but look at… • Could it be…or…or? • Check it – does it look right and sound right to you?

(Adapted from Clay M.M.)

For further information

Clay, M.M. 2000, *Running Records: for classroom teachers*. Heinemann, Auckland.

Fountas, I.C. and Pinnell, G.S. 1996, *Guided Reading: good first reading for all children.* Heinemann, Portsmouth N.H.

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