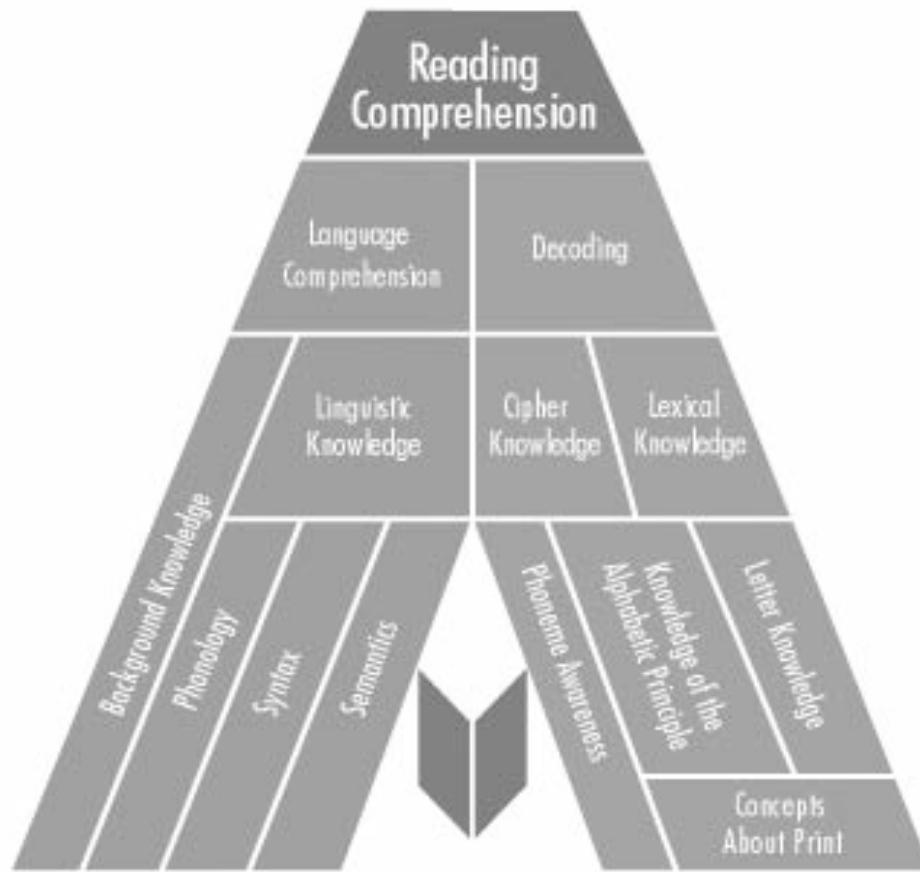


# How to Use the Literacy Profile



Deborah Jinkins and Sebastian Wren

## Graphical Representation of the Reading Framework



For a complete explanation of the framework, see **The Cognitive Foundations of Learning to Read: A Framework** by Sebastian Wren. It may be found online at [www.sedl.org/reading](http://www.sedl.org/reading).

Reading instruction begins with assessment. By using a diagnostic approach to assessment and by monitoring student performance and recording useful data, teachers' instructional decisions become more focused. Each child's individual learning needs are more likely to be met. The Literacy Profile is a tool created to help teachers systematically collect and record individual student reading data,

both formal and informal, over time to help teachers organize and monitor student growth. The profile also provides a way for teachers in vertical teams to communicate the literacy progress as each child moves through the program—this can help create greater instructional coherence within a school.

The structure of this profile was inspired by the cognitive elements that research has shown to be essen-

tial in developing good reading skills. These cognitive elements are outlined in SEDL's cognitive framework of reading acquisition, *The Cognitive Foundations of Learning to Read: A Framework*. The framework can be viewed in an interactive format on SEDL's Web site at [www.sedl.org/reading](http://www.sedl.org/reading), or a PDF version can be downloaded and printed out.

Teachers who use SEDL's

framework of reading acquisition as a guide for early reading assessment will find that the literacy profile is a useful tool for tracking essential student data and for informing instructional decisions.

As they use the profile, many teachers and schools may discover gaps in the student data they collect through reading assessments. SEDL has created a resource, *The Reading Assessment Database*, that can be used to help decide which K–2 reading assessments are suitable. The interactive database includes information on more than 125 early reading assessments and is available online at [www.sedl.org/reading](http://www.sedl.org/reading).

## Overall Description of the Literacy Profile

The profile was designed as a tool to help teachers

- record student assessment data, evaluate the data, and note progress and mastery, and
- collect student assessments and work samples to support evalu-

ations and serve as evidence of progress toward benchmarks/mastery.

Teachers should maintain a profile for each student in the class and may want to use the profile as part of an overall portfolio assessment system.

The profile can be used to record both formal and informal student assessment data. District assessment performance data are maintained on the front of the file where space is provided for baseline, formative, and summative assessment. The inside and back of the profile provide space for the teacher to note observations and progress for the student in the cognitive elements described in SEDL's framework of reading acquisition.

## How to Use the Literacy Profile

The literacy profile provides a different approach to tracking data than many teachers use, so some

teachers may find they need to examine it carefully and practice filling out a few profiles before using them with the whole class. Teachers should read the following instructions carefully before filling out a child's literacy profile.

## Front Cover

This portion of the profile is used to record formal assessment data over the course of the year. Results from district assessments, basal unit tests, state-mandated tests, etc., are to be recorded here. Many districts use a combination of tests and sub-tests to assess student reading ability. This profile provides a method of recording each student's reading progress based on the fifteen elements of the cognitive framework of reading. Ideally, the district will create or adopt and acquire assessments so that all elements are evaluated.

The cognitive elements of the framework are listed down the left side of the profile. Across the top are three identical sections labeled "Baseline Data," "Mid-Year Data," and "Summative Data." Each section provides space to record:

1. the name and, if appropriate, the level of the assessment,
2. the raw score and percentile correct,
3. student strengths identified in the assessment, and
4. the identified next teaching points.

After recording the title and

The image shows a sample of the Literacy Profile form. At the top, it is titled "LITERACY PROFILE". Below the title, there are three main columns for data collection: "BASELINE DATA", "MID-YEAR DATA", and "SUMMATIVE DATA". Each of these columns has sub-columns for "Raw Score" and "Percentile". To the left of the grid, there is a list of "COGNITIVE ELEMENTS" including: Reading Comprehension, Decoding, Oral Knowledge, Letter Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, Morphology, Letter Knowledge, Spelling, Language, Spelling, Phonics, Spelling, and Background Knowledge. Below the grid, there are rows for "Student", "Teacher", and "Observer" with columns for "Name", "Date", "Level", "Assessment", "Score", "Percentile", and "Comments".

level of your district's assessment, note the raw score and calculate the percentile. Using the mastery levels for each sub-test established in the assessment manual, determine which elements are strengths for the student and mark those boxes with a ✓. After reviewing the remaining elements, determine one (possibly two) elements that you will target over the next grading period. Mark these with a ✓ under the "Teaching Points" column.

The teaching points identified in this assessment will be refined in informal assessments made through teacher observations, evaluations of running records and writing samples, and other informal methods. After focused instruction and careful monitoring, future formal assessments should indicate mastery in these areas. These informal assessment/evaluations will be recorded on the back cover and in-



side the literacy profile.

Also on the front cover below the data collection table, we created an outline for a small graphical chart of student progress. The cognitive elements of the framework appear across the top of the chart and three stages of progress—emerging, developing, and proficient—appear on the left. Teachers will use the baseline, mid-year (if appropriate), and summative data from school or district assessments to mark the child's growth graphically on the chart. Districts or campuses will determine what criteria to use for the three stages of progress. We recommend using grade level benchmarks or criteria from the assessment instrument. By color-coding the child's data as they are graphed on the chart, a picture emerges, over time, which illustrates the child's literacy development in each of the cognitive elements. This can be a powerful tool in parent conferences and administrative evaluations to demonstrate student achievement.

### Back Cover

On the back cover, student data can be entered for assessments taken in five of the cognitive elements described in SEDL's cognitive framework of reading acquisition. These are:

1. Concepts About Print,
2. Alphabetic Principle,
3. Letter Knowledge,
4. Phonology, and

### 5. Phoneme Awareness.

These elements are grouped together on the back cover because children tend to develop some mastery of these elements early in the literacy acquisition process. Each section provides mastery indicators for each element and space for assessment data and teacher observations or comments.

For example, assume your district uses the "Concepts About Print" sub-test from the *Observation Survey* (Clay, 1993). The teacher would note this information along with strengths and teaching points related to print awareness that will be the focus of instruction for this child. Perhaps the child's response indicates clear mastery of items 1–13, 16, 19, and 21–24 but demonstrates uncertainty on items 14, 15, 17, and 18. The teacher would note strengths, such as the child's being able to recognize or understand the following: parts of the book, directionality, one-to-one matching, that print contains messages, words, and letters. Identified teaching points would be noted, too, such as the child's inability to distinguish changes in word order, question marks, comma, and quotation marks. This knowledge provides focus for the teacher's instruction. After observing as the teacher models the reading and writing processes for the group and participating in individual writing conferences where these topics are ad-

dressed, the student likely will begin to demonstrate mastery in his or her own writing and reading. The teacher should remember to hold the child accountable to use what he or she knows independently before determining final mastery. When the child demonstrates mastery of the element, consistently and independently, the date of the assessments should be indicated, final teacher comments should be made, and the “mastery” box in the lower right-hand corner should be marked.

A similar approach should be applied for the sections on “Alphabetic Principle,” “Letter Knowledge,” and “Phoneme Awareness.”

The phonology section should be considered early in the year. The student will either have the ability to easily distinguish sounds of speech or have some difficulty with specific sounds. If progress is not noted after regular, focused instruction on the targeted sounds, the student should be referred to an audiologist and possibly a speech and language specialist. In order to document the initial observations and instructional efforts, comments and dates are recommended.

### Inside Left

Five cognitive elements appear on the inside-left of the portfolio:

1. Reading Comprehension
2. Language Comprehension
3. Linguistic Knowledge
4. Background Knowledge



### 5. Syntax

When assessing reading comprehension, your district may use a retelling following a running record or other oral reading, or may select a reading inventory (for example, the *Initial Reading Inventory* or the *Qualitative Reading Inventory*) with implicit/explicit comprehension questions as the preferred assessment. This section of the profile provides six spaces for recording teacher observations of these assessments and any diagnostic statements made from the evaluation. The actual copy of the running record or reading inventory should be kept on file, perhaps in the student’s portfolio. Over time, students will progress through the emergent, developing, and proficient stages noted in the lower, right-hand corner. For non-readers, it may not be appropriate to give a reading comprehension assessment as it is beyond their ability (for example, students who do not yet

know the letters of the alphabet or who do not yet have phoneme awareness). In this case, the teacher might note “Not Assessed” and provide a comment as to the reason for this assessment.

Students demonstrate a great deal of linguistic knowledge and ability to comprehend communication before they enter the school doors. It is beneficial to future learning when the teacher makes observations and careful notes of the student’s receptive and expressive language strengths. By building on the child’s existing oral language skills, the teacher increases opportunities to accelerate the learning of both reading and writing. Linguistic knowledge is evident as semantics, syntax, and phonology come together in authentic language situations. By analyzing which of these cognitive elements the child relies upon and which are still emerging, the teacher is able to plan and present appropriate language mod-

els that build on the known while taking the student to new levels of understanding and usage. Rather than evaluating for proficiency, the teacher is looking for appropriate development for the individual child based on his or her baseline data.

Listening to the child's oral language and evaluating written constructions can be used as syntax assessments. The student's ability to demonstrate subject/verb agreement, use referent pronouns, use past tense endings for irregular verbs, etc., are all indications that the child is gaining control of English syntax. When making informal observations of a student's use of syntax, it is helpful to record as much of the student talk as possible so that progress can be monitored over time. Written samples, along with the accompanying evaluations, should be kept on file for later reference, again, perhaps in the student's portfolio. Clearly mark on the samples the cognitive element assessed and the date. More formal assessments should be given to complement teachers' observations and diagnostic statements (SEDL's *Reading Assessment Database* may be useful to select appropriate assessments of syntax).

The section on background knowledge is provided to note areas of interest or knowledge that the child brings to the learning situation or that develop as a result of instruction. These notations might

be useful in motivating and guiding students' independent reading or in generating topics for writing.

### Inside Right

Data on the remaining four cognitive elements outlined in SEDL's framework of reading can be tracked on the inside-right area of the portfolio:

1. Semantics
2. Decoding
3. Cipher knowledge
4. Lexical knowledge

As in other sections, assessment indicators are provided for each element.

There are many issues to consider when assessing student semantics. Questions might include:

- Does the child use vocabulary that is age appropriate?
- Is there evidence of advanced vocabulary development in a specialized area (sports, dinosaurs, etc.)
- How quickly does the child learn and use new vocabulary after instruction?
- Does the student adapt vocabulary choices to the situation?
- Does the student understand roots and affixes and their impact on word meaning?
- Does the student connect details into a fuller meaning in longer or more complex discourse?

By listening to the child's conversation and responses during in-

struction, the teacher can evaluate strengths and can identify teaching points in order to plan and present adequate language models. Teacher observation notes and diagnostic statements can be recorded in the space available.

Decoding describes the student's ability to accurately identify words with no conscious effort. Often "sight-word" lists are used for decoding assessments, but these lists can be somewhat misleading. Often children memorize specific words, and these sight-word lists are more of a reflection of their memorization skills than of their ability to decode words. Decoding assessments should contain a mix of both regular and irregular words that are within the child's vocabulary (leveled appropriately), but that are not sight-words for that child.

The sections on cipher knowledge and lexical knowledge follow this same format and should be used accordingly. In assessing student control of these cognitive elements, teachers might look for connections between the student's use in writing and spelling and the transfer to reading or vice versa. These transfers demonstrate growing mastery and control of letter clusters, spelling, and pronunciation patterns in authentic applications. Student progress can be recorded over time by marking "emergent," "developing," and, finally, "proficient" in the boxes



found in the lower right-hand corner of each box. It is possible, even likely, that some students will not reach proficiency levels within a single school year. Progress from the 'emergent' category to the 'developing' category is still forward progress and is to be applauded even if proficiency is not achieved. If these areas are not assessed for any reason, make the notation "Not Assessed" and provide comments for clarification.

### **Staff Development Considerations**

District and campus personnel charged with implementing and monitoring literacy programs are reminded that the literacy profile was created to complement SEDL's cognitive framework of reading acquisition. In order for the profile to be of optimal use for teachers, we recommend that staff participate in a formal introduction to

SEDL's *Cognitive Foundations of Learning to Read*. The framework document is easily read and makes a good subject for facilitated study sessions. As mentioned previously, *Cognitive Foundations of Learning to Read* may be downloaded at <http://www.sedl.org/reading>. A full-color print version is also for sale. Ordering information may be obtained by calling SEDL's publications department at 1-800-476-6861.

Over several weeks, the content of the framework will become familiar to teachers, and with support, they will begin to incorporate their understanding of the cognitive framework in their classroom practice. When principals and reading specialists observe instruction, the framework may serve to focus the observation session and guide the follow-up conference emphasizing how lesson components aligned with the elements of the framework, how instructional decisions were assessment based, or how the teacher had identified new learning steps for individual students using her knowledge of the cognitive elements.

For more information about any of SEDL's reading resources, visit our Web site at [www.sedl.org/reading](http://www.sedl.org/reading) or contact Sebastian Wren at 800-476-6861 or by e-mail at [swren@sedl.org](mailto:swren@sedl.org).

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