



3RD-6TH
GRADES

Assessment and Intervention Guide

For the Read Side by Side Reading Program

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Sarah Collinge**

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Introduction

It is late September in Mrs. Rivera's fifth-grade class at Dreyer Elementary School. Mrs. Rivera is looking at the assessment data she has collected across the first five weeks of school, her students' motivation surveys, reading interest surveys, and MAP (measure of academic progress) reading test data. Two students raise concern, each for different reasons. The first student, Melissa, reads frequently outside of class and is motivated to read by her own curiosity. Despite the amount of time Melissa spends reading, her MAP data shows she reads only at the 32nd percentile. The second student, Hudson, reads infrequently and seems to be motivated only by external rewards. It is not surprising that he scored at the 18th percentile on the MAP test. It is likely that Hudson's infrequency of reading prevents him from developing strong reading skill. Mrs. Rivera knows that to differentiate instruction for these students and others in her class, she will need to rely on assessment data to judge the strengths and weaknesses of each reader.

As we have learned in this vignette, Mrs. Rivera knows the value of formative assessment: any classroom activity that produces information leading to the modification of teaching. Firm evidence shows that formative assessment is not only valuable in raising standards of achievement (William & Black, 1998); it is essential to effective instruction and successful learning, because it is through the process of assessment that teachers learn who is making progress and how to guide instruction. Through assessment, administrators learn to monitor the effectiveness of reading programs, adjust curriculum, and target resources more effectively.

Formative assessment benefits students and teachers in significant ways. For students, formative assessment provides immediate feedback to drive the learner forward. As the teacher assesses, she sees how best to respond to the strengths and difficulties of the learner. In such an environment, students—especially those who are struggling—improve more rapidly (Black & William, 2009). Seeing students respond positively to instruction increases a teacher's passion and interest in the profession. In addition, both teachers and students feel their own confidence and self-efficacy grow.

We created this book as a guide to help teachers strengthen the practice of formative assessment as they teach the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*. We believe, based on research evidence, that focusing on formative assessment will lead to substantial learning gains for students, especially those who are low achieving.

Our goals are to:

- increase students' time in text by reducing the amount of testing that occurs outside of instruction;
- direct teachers' energy toward formative assessment—assessment that does not take away from instruction but is conducted *within* instruction;
- help teachers hone their teaching skill;
- engage students as active participants in the formative assessment process; and
- inspire a classroom culture of success, founded on the belief that all students can achieve.

In this guide, we will make recommendations for monitoring student motivation and interest, placing students in the appropriate book club book, and evaluating their oral and written work. We will demonstrate how to increase student engagement and reflection, using the reader's notebook and the book club notebook as a portfolio that presents evidence of a student's growth across the year. This portfolio will create a portrait of a learner, reflecting both strengths and goals for improvement.

Across the book, we will continue to share the stories of two of Mrs. Rivera's students—Hudson and Melissa—to act as case studies. Through their stories, we will demonstrate how to gather data and respond to it with instructional decisions and intervention supports.

Teachers will be instructed how to organize data using simple management tools, record-keeping forms, and report card documents. Because many school districts in the United States continue to use Common Core State Standards, or borrow heavily from them, we have organized tools according to the 10 anchor standards, with some slight modifications.

In the fifth chapter, we will provide intervention tools for working with students when they struggle, whether they are reading below, on, or above grade level. Tools will include instructional templates and scripts for supporting students in the areas of decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These tools will increase teachers' confidence to respond to assessment data with instructional supports to raise achievement.

Finally, we give attention to state-mandated assessments and how best to prepare students for these tests. We believe a short, well-focused unit on test preparation strategies is all your students will need to feel competent and confident. Therefore, we provide six lessons to teach test-taking strategies.

The techniques and tools provided in this guide, we believe, will improve the quality of teacher-student interactions, assist students in taking responsibility for their own learning, provide the needed support to students who have fallen into the trap of low achievement, and increase students' interest and motivation to read.

If these goals can be achieved, all students will see themselves as readers.