



Taking a Running Record

TARGET

Elementary Middle School/High School

Teachers have always wanted a way to document how a student reads, and although it is possible to record a child's reading on audiotape or videotape, that solution is unreasonable considering how many students are in an average classroom. Another method is to make a written representation of the child's reading, commonly known as a *running record*.

Originally called *oral reading records*, running records can help teachers identify the current reading level of their students. To take a running record, the teacher sits next to a student, listens to the student read, and quickly and efficiently records the student's reading fluency using a series of checks, miscued words, and other symbols. (For an in-depth review of running records, see the references for further learning below.) Running records use a finely tuned set of books leveled from A through Z according to difficulty. (Books leveled A through I are generally thought to be at 1st grade reading level, J through M are 2nd grade level, N through P are 3rd grade level, and so forth.)

Teachers, alone or in partnership with a literacy coach, can study the written running records to better understand what students know, how they use that knowledge, and what they still need to learn. Running records can also provide teachers with data for grouping students by reading level and determining the difficulty of text appropriate for the reading groups. Finally, they can serve as a way to record individual students' changes and progress over time.

Running records and other documents, such as Reading Level Monitoring Forms (see "Appropriately Grouping Students" on page 81) and records of reading groups, can provide pivotal information that can guide teachers' decisions—as long they are organized in a logical way. One popular method is an assessment notebook, a three-ring binder with a section for each child and a section for the class as a whole. An assessment notebook can help teachers track students' progress over time, provide rich information to share at a parent-teacher conference, and determine whether students are making adequate progress.

There are many different types of running record forms, and the following Informal Running Record Form is only one example of a system that teachers can use to check for fluency. Regardless of the form you adopt, consistency across the school is important because people other than the teacher may need to look at the form to ascertain a student's fluency. A literacy coach might consider devoting time at a grade-level meeting to taking running records.

References for further learning

- Clay, M. (2007). *An observation of early literacy achievement*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2005). *The Fountas & Pinnell leveled book list, K–8* (2006–2008 ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

GOALS

- To create a written representation of a student's attempt to read a book alone.
- To provide a sample of text reading for the teacher to study and better understand the student's current level of literacy development and the instruction needed to move the student forward.
- To help the teacher match students with others who have similar strengths and needs for small-group or guided-reading instruction.
- To suggest what level of books the teacher should use for the student's reading instruction.
- To document students' progress over a given period of time.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Show teachers how to take a running record. Remind them that students don't have to read a whole book, just enough to get a picture of the child's reading. They should include page numbers in case they need to do a more in-depth analysis of the running record. If you plan to use the attached form, direct teachers to
 - Mark a check for each accurate word, a long dash for each skipped word, and the word itself if a student substitutes the wrong word.
 - Write down the number of running words (RW) in the text.
 - Count the number of errors, which include word substitutions, word omissions, word insertions, and any words the teacher has to read to the student.
 - Calculate the accuracy using the following formula:

$$\left(\frac{RW - \text{Errors}}{RW} \right) 100 = \text{Percent Accuracy}$$

2. Based on the accuracy percentages, help teachers plan what actions they will take, such as changing the student's reading group or book level.
3. Meet with the teacher to analyze the running records to look for patterns in student and group performance and for class trends. For example:
 - Examine a student's running records over a period of time. Is there a pattern in the kinds of behaviors the child exhibits?
 - Compare a proficient reader to a struggling reader. What are the differences in their reading behaviors?
 - Are there patterns in the reading behaviors of ELL students?
 - Look at the running records of four random students in a class. Do they reveal a pattern in the teaching emphasis? Does the teacher need to shift emphases? How will you help implement that shift?
4. Help teachers plan the most efficient routine for administering running records. Some teachers take one brief running record per day by having one student read a short passage by himself after his guided-reading group. Other teachers take a running record of each student every couple of weeks by listening to students read aloud within the small-group setting.
5. Suggest that the teacher keep a stack of Informal Running Record Forms in the guided-reading area to easily transition from working with a group to taking a running record. Keeping running records should only take a few minutes per day if the forms and the books are within easy reach.
6. At the end of one semester, meet with the teacher to evaluate the reading behaviors of an individual student across time. Based on a student's set of running records, what is the student's instructional level? What is the student's fluency level? How does the student's reading behavior change when reading informational text as opposed to narrative text? What is the student's rate of self-correction? What kinds of miscues does the student make?
7. Encourage teachers to share running records data with each other. Some choose one or two students at various levels of expertise and discuss their running records once a month with teammates.

REFLECTION, EVALUATION, AND PLANNING

1. How do teachers respond to using running records? Do their reactions suggest possible topics for professional development? Or would teachers with similar needs or interests be good candidates for a study group?

2. How often are teachers collecting running records? Discuss whether they need to take the same number of running records for all students or whether they need to more carefully monitor some students' progress.
3. How are teachers organizing the record keeping for these forms? Are they keeping assessment notebooks?
4. How are teachers analyzing the data from their students' running records? If they analyze alone, can you encourage them to use grade-level meetings to assess individual student progress as well as progress within the classroom and across grades?

Informal Running Record Form

Date _____	Book Title _____	(pp. _____ to _____)	Book Level _____
RW _____	Errors _____	Accuracy % _____	Action _____

Date _____	Book Title _____	(pp. _____ to _____)	Book Level _____
RW _____	Errors _____	Accuracy % _____	Action _____

Source: Adapted with permission from the work of Evelyn Acevedo-Nolfi, literacy coach at Avondale School, Chicago, Ill.

Example Informal Running Record

Date 10/1/08 **Book Title** Joshua James Just Likes Trucks **(pp. 4 to 21)** **Book Level** C

- 4. ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- 5. ✓ ✓
- 6. ✓ ✓
- 9. ✓ ✓
- 11. Shiny ✓
- 13. ✓ ✓ _____ ✓ ✓
- 14. ✓ ✓
- 15. ✓ ✓
- 16. ✓ ✓
- 19. ✓ ✓
- 21. ✓ _____ ✓ ✓

RW 29 **Errors** 3 **Accuracy %** 90% **Action** Work on monitoring for self-corrections

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