

# Frequently Asked Questions about

## COMPLETE *Comprehension*

ASSESS • EVALUATE • TEACH

### FAQ

*Hi everyone,*

To help you answer your customers' queries, I've collected and provided answers to the following questions from teachers who have used this resource. I've grouped the questions under **ASSESS**, **EVALUATE**, and **TEACH**, the three steps in the *Complete Comprehension* instructional model. These FAQs are also located in the front of the appropriate resource guides in *Complete Comprehension*.

Thank you for all that you do for *Complete Comprehension* and all of my resources.

*- Jen*



## Assess



### **Why does this assessment cover Levels J–W and not A–Z?**



Level J is the first level at which students are unlikely to read a whole book during a running record assessment. It is also the level at which many students have strong print and fluency skills, and running records begin to offer less help for the teacher to know what to focus on for instruction. This is not true for all students—some students reading books at Level O, P, or Q may need support with print and fluency skills and should be assessed with a running record—but it is true for many students. A whole-book assessment like this one is meant to look at how students use skills that cannot be assessed in shorter texts. It helps teachers to notice how students reading chapter books and chapter-book-length nonfiction texts handle challenges, and it allows teachers to track students' progress throughout fourteen text levels and across several grade levels.

*Complete Comprehension* ends at Level W because students who can read Level W texts—students who have received proper and complete instruction around comprehension skills and strategies—should be able to read flexibly at higher levels, often beyond Level W. This resource helps track their progress throughout elementary school and into middle school benchmark levels (though some students will be reading at those levels into later middle school and even high school).



### **How do I fit this into my schedule? Do I assess everyone at once or a few students at a time?**



It's up to you. Some teachers take a break in between units to create a few assessment windows throughout the year. For example, if you're just wrapping up a unit you can take a couple of weeks to do this assessment (which, of course, involves lots of independent reading), before moving into the next unit. This will give you periodic up-to-date assessment information to share with parents at parent-teacher conferences or to use on report cards. Assessing a few times a year provides this up-to-date information.

Alternatively, you can assess students on a rolling basis as needed. You might decide to assess a student when they are new to reading books at a certain level to determine goals as they read books at and around the new level. Or you might decide to assess a child who seems stuck at a level for a while to figure out what's holding him or her back.

You can use this assessment as many times as you like. It is even possible to assess a student with both books at the same level, if that information would be helpful for planning your instruction.



### **How long will it take to administer the assessment?**



The first time you introduce the assessment it'll take about five minutes to orient your class to what it is and what's expected. When you introduce the book choices, expect to spend an additional five minutes per group.

Depending on the level and length of the books students choose and the number of minutes your class can sustain independent reading each day, the assessment should take *students*—not you— somewhere between one hour and several days to complete. While some students in your class are reading the assessment books and completing the Response Forms, you can continue providing small-group or individualized instruction to children who are not engaged in reading an assessment book.

Once your students are experienced with the assessment, it shouldn't take any more of your instructional time. Students will be able to read the books and respond to prompts on their own. Your greatest time commitment will be devoted to analyzing student responses and planning your instruction based on what you find, as explained in *Evaluate*. Analyzing responses will probably take about ten to fifteen minutes per student at first, but less time as you become familiar with the assessment, the books, and the rubrics in *Evaluate*.



### **At what point should I use this assessment—when students first read books at a new level or when they have been reading books at the level for a while?**



Using the assessment at either of these points could be beneficial. When a student is ready to read more challenging texts (meaning they have shown strong comprehension within all goals at the previous level and/or have shown the ability to read a text with fluency, accuracy, and comprehension when reading for a running record), you're likely looking for some new ideas for what to teach. When you're not getting enough information from your current reading assessments, or when a child seems stuck, this assessment could help you pinpoint what skills to focus on so you know what area of comprehension could be strengthened.



### **What leveling system was used to determine the levels of the twenty-eight books in this resource?**



I chose to rely on the qualitative leveling framework called the F&P Text Level Gradient™ (Fountas and Pinnell 2016). To determine a book's level, each is evaluated by trained experts who study the text using ten characteristics; genre, text structure, content, themes and ideas, language and literary features, sentence complexity, vocabulary, illustrations, book and print features.

For the purpose of consistency, all books in this resource were leveled through [www.fountasandpinnellleveledbooks.com](http://www.fountasandpinnellleveledbooks.com). Their leveling system is used by others across other leveling sites and apps, but that website is the only official source. If you use another leveling source, or rely on a different leveling system without an official source, you may find discrepancies. At times a publisher of one of the books in this resource may print a level on the cover that is at odds with the F&P level. In all of these cases, I have defaulted to F&P's official database.



### **What if more than one of my students wants to read the same book?**



Record each student's choices and allow one student to begin. As the desired book becomes available, give it to the next student on the list. This is a good option if your goal is to assess many or all students during a particular assessment window.

Another option is to acquire more copies of the books and print the labels that go inside from the online resources (or mark the pages with sticky notes or other labels you have on hand). If you choose to do this, be sure to acquire paperback editions of the books with the same ISBNs as those that came with your kit so that the page numbers for the prompts match; other publishers' editions may not have a one-to-one prompt-to-content match. Just be aware that it's not advised to have many students reading assessment books at the same time as there won't be anyone left to teach.



### **How do I determine the level of book to give a student to start?**



Ideally you will offer students books that are close to the level you think is appropriate for them when they read independently. Perhaps you've taken running records to get a sense of where each student reads a short text comfortably, with fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. If it is the beginning of the year, you may have information from each student's prior teacher, which will help you choose a starting level.

If you're still uncertain, you might schedule a one-on-one conference in which you ask a student to read aloud a passage from a self-selected independent reading book; then you could ask a few comprehension questions about the passage. The book is probably a good choice if the child reads at least 97 out of 100 words correctly, with fluency, and provides evidence of literal and inferential comprehension.

When a student begins an assessment, you can always take a glance at the Response Form as they work through the first few prompts, checking to see that the responses make sense. If the child seems to be laboring through the book or is disengaged or confused, stop the assessment early and have him or her switch to a book at a lower level.



**What if the student chooses a book that he or she has already read independently or heard read aloud?**



In my research I've found that whether the book is new to students or not, their responses to the prompts in this assessment reveal valuable information about their comprehension across the board. Therefore, it is likely that even if a student has already read the book independently, or a teacher has read it aloud, you'll still get a lot of valuable information from the assessment.

That said, going forward, it would be good practice to choose alternate books to read aloud to students and reserve the *Complete Comprehension* titles for assessment purposes only.



**What if the assessment books are already in my classroom library?**



You may choose to remove them to limit access prior to the assessment. As the year progresses, and you become confident that you no longer need them for assessment purposes, you can reinstate them. Another option is to turn those classroom library copies into extra assessment copies, as long as those library copies are the same edition as the ones included in the kit. If they're not, the page numbers may be off.



**Does it matter which of the two books a student picks? Will I get the same information from both?**



As discussed in *Understanding Texts & Readers* (Serravallo 2018) leveling books is not a perfect science. There are differences between the two assessment books at every level. Some books tend to be more challenging because of an implicit main idea, and others will be harder because of busy-ness of text features or a plethora of challenging vocabulary.

So I encourage you to allow students to choose without worrying too much about the differences between them. The student should choose a book because it is the one they will most enjoy.



**The overall number of prompts and the number of prompts within each goal vary from book to book. Why is that?**



The authors of the authentic children's books in this resource did not have assessment in mind when they wrote. Books that are considered to be the same level vary for a number of reasons. Some books are determined to be a certain level based on their challenging vocabulary, whereas others are based on the complexity of their ideas. So while although it would have been tidier to create the same number and types of prompts in every book, it would not have been true to the authors' intent—and would not have taken into account how those variables can affect comprehension.



The same kind of considerations resulted in books of varying length. I chose titles that would appeal to different types of readers, therefore I had to sometimes choose texts that were shorter than average for a given level or longer. Overall, I expect that when given the choice, readers will choose the types of books that they gravitate toward during independent reading. When students are motivated to read a book, you will gain more reliable information from the assessment.



**What if a student starts reading the book only to tell me they don't like it? Should I make the student finish it, or should I offer the other book at the same level?**



Use your judgment, but in general, I would say allow the student to abandon the book and note the point at which they do so. The student's point of frustration or boredom and the responses they have given so far on the Response Form may offer you insight into the kinds of books they like or the kinds of challenges they don't enjoy as a reader.

My philosophy is that children should read books they find enjoyable and interesting and that foster a high level of engagement. Since this assessment is meant to offer a window into what readers naturally do when they read independently, it's best if they're reading a book they like.



**How much help can I provide students when they're taking this assessment?**



For this to be a valid assessment of what children can do independently, you need to refrain from offering too much assistance. On the other hand, you don't want students to become frustrated or to hit a stumbling block that they're unable to overcome. I advise you to assist them as little as possible—just enough to keep them moving forward and working through the assessment on their own.

In the development of the assessment, I tried my best to ensure that the prompts are worded to be understood by most children reading a given level of text. I kept the vocabulary and syntax of the prompts in line with the sorts of syntax they'd be expected to encounter in a book at that level. Nonetheless, there may be an instance where a child does not understand what's being asked of them. Although you should refrain from helping the child make sense of the book, it's OK to tell a student the meaning of words—such as *explain*, *theme*, *plot*, *main idea*, *details*, and *describe*—that will help him or her to understand the prompts, so that the assessment is helping you understand more about their comprehension of the book, rather than whether they understand the prompt itself. Later, you can review the challenging academic vocabulary from the prompts since the student will no doubt encounter them again and again throughout their school experience.

Notice how much persistence and perseverance children have in responding to the prompts, especially those that challenge them. If a student is unable to move forward, it tells you something about them as a reader. When students have difficulty reading, do they usually just plow ahead? What strategies do they have for monitoring comprehension and for fixing misunderstandings? I recommend planning instruction around anything you notice that would support their growth as readers.

All that said, if you notice that a student is coming to you for help a lot while reading a book, you may decide to have them try an easier book to avoid creating negative associations with this assessment. Bottom line: an independent reading book is supposed to be enjoyable and understandable. If a child is struggling, it's a signal that the book is too challenging.



### **How complete do the responses need to be?**



You can tell from the rubrics and sample student responses in *Evaluate* that an exceptional response varies by level in terms of the amount of writing. You may want to take a peek at the rubrics in *Evaluate* to get a sense for this. Usually, a child needs to write more than a word or phrase to demonstrate strong comprehension. Be aware, though, that sometimes a student uses many words in a response, yet says nothing of substance, and therefore likely warrants an “approaching” score. Don’t tell students to “write a lot.”

Instead, tell them to write as much as they need to respond to the prompt completely. The writing spaces on the Response Form are compact, to encourage quick, but substantive, jotting. It’s important that the reader writes quickly and gets back to reading.



### **Could responses be given orally instead of in writing?**



Sure. However, the assessment is designed to require a bare minimum of instructional time and teacher involvement, to allow the teacher to continue working with other students while one or some take an assessment. Having students give their responses orally instead of in writing would take up a considerable amount of your time. If a student has an assistant, a paraprofessional who works alongside them on a regular basis, it is fine for the assistant to scribe the student’s responses as the student speaks them as long as no help with content is provided. If a child wants to dictate responses into an app, use speech-to-text software on a laptop or tablet, or use a handheld digital recorder, that, too, is fine.

Be sure the student is responding to the prompts during reading. That is, when the student encounters a sticker in the book, they should read to the end of that page, and then stop and respond to the prompt on the Response Form. Any modification to the assessment that allows children to record their responses in a way that accurately represents their thinking is fine as long as this procedure is kept in mind.



**Some of the students I work with are emergent bilinguals. What accommodations do you recommend?**



The aim of this assessment is to help teachers evaluate student comprehension of whole texts, so it's important to make the accommodations necessary to get the best read on your students' understanding as possible.

For some students who speak two or more languages, receptive and productive language abilities may not be completely in sync. In other words, some students will be able to read and comprehend texts with more depth than they are able to express orally or in writing in English. Many bilingual education scholars and researchers have suggested that children be encouraged to use their strengths and the full linguistic repertoire during formative assessments; this means they would respond in whatever language they feel most comfortable in, or in a combination of languages (Ascenzi-Moreno 2018; Abedi, Hofstetter, and Lord 2004). Think of it this way—one question type in this assessment asks students to describe characters. An emergent bilingual student may be able to read about and understand the character, and to think deeply about the kind of person the character is, but when it comes to writing about it, they might not have the English vocabulary necessary to give a complete response. Instead of writing that the character is “generous” and “thoughtful” a student might just write “nice” because it is a word they know in English, even if they do have a more nuanced understanding of the character. By forcing students to respond only in English, we miss an opportunity to learn about their thinking, and this may skew the results. If they write their answer in the language they are most comfortable with, we can then see that they are doing the thinking work required of that prompt, that they have the skills they need to infer about the character, but that they need support with vocabulary for character traits in English.

If you choose to allow students to respond in a language other than English, or in a combination of English and another language, you could use Google Translate or other software to translate the student's work before moving on to evaluate their responses.





### **Can I use this assessment in place of running records?**



The teachers across the country who piloted this assessment have remarked that they liked to replace running records with this assessment once children begin to read books at and around Level J, or that they use both running records and this assessment for J and K, and then transition into only this assessment for L except in cases where the running record would provide helpful information for students reading texts beyond Level L (i.e., students who are still working on print and fluency skills). They found that a whole-book assessment offered a more complete picture of the reader than a short-passage assessment.



### **Is this the only tool I should use to assess my students' reading?**



I would advise against making finite conclusions about student performance based on the results of only one assessment tool. Reading comprehension is complicated and nuanced, and the more sources of information you have from which to glean teaching ideas, the better. Once you know what you want to teach, watch the child and follow up; look at what they are doing in independent reading, how the data you got from this assessment matches and/or departs from standardized test results, listen carefully to responses during lessons, and so on. Confer, conduct small groups, drop in on conversations, collect and read reading notebooks, and read what students write in the margins of their books and on sticky notes. Ongoing, continuous assessment and tweaking of your teaching are the best ways to meet the needs of each of your students.



### **When might I use this assessment a second time with a student?**



Once the student has completed the assessment and you've evaluated their responses, you'll have a conference during which you establish a goal together. Through a mixture of whole-class, small-group, and individual lessons, you'll coach the student as they work on the goal over time.

Working toward a goal may last weeks or more than a month, depending on the levels of text the student is reading, the length of time they have been reading.

## Evaluate

**Q If a student's response is unclear, can I ask follow-up questions to clarify what they've written?**

**A** Absolutely. Bear in mind, however, that asking the child to explain their responses from earlier in the book after they have completed the entire book may be challenging or confusing, since the prompts were designed to capture in-the-moment thinking while reading. If a child has read more text than is needed to adequately respond to the prompt in the spot where the prompt appears, the student might end up supplying information that contradicts the rubric samples.

**Q If I can't see any similarities between my student's responses and the sample responses provided on the rubric, what should I do?**

**A** The responses that were chosen to serve as exemplars were selected because they were the most typical and because they are good examples of the qualities of that level of response.

The best way to proceed is to read the book and/or the book summary, which includes the key information you need to evaluate a particular response. You might also skim a page or two leading up to the prompt to get a feel for what happened in the text up to that point. You can also look at the rubric descriptor (in bold above each sample response) for help in evaluating the qualities of the response.

If the response seems strange, doesn't address the prompt, and/or doesn't align with your understanding of the text, chances are it is incorrect.

**Q I just assessed all my students and am about to get started evaluating their responses. Do you have any advice?**

**A** I recommend evaluating Response Forms as you receive them, not waiting until you have an entire class stack. You'll want to move quickly from evaluating to having a conference with the student to help them choose an appropriate goal. Having the experience fresh in their mind will help them be more involved and able to reflect.

I also think it's important to establish a filing system for assessments if you haven't already. You may choose to file them using any ongoing note-taking system you've developed. Since you'll be asking students to read a new book in the future, such a system will help you see student progress over time.



### **Do you have any advice for expediting the evaluation?**



As you evaluate the responses, try not to overthink individual ones. Study the bolded descriptors and the sample responses in the rubric, and within a few moments decide where the student's response falls. Circle the **E**, **P**, **A**, or **I** beneath the response lines and then move on to the next prompt. If you're having a hard time deciding between two categories on the rubric, err on the side of caution and circle the lower of the two.



### **What is the most organized way to go about evaluating a Response Form?**



Most teachers prefer to assess all responses within one goal and then move on to all responses in another. In doing so, they immerse themselves in the descriptors and gain a holistic sense of how the student fared with that comprehension area. The icons to the left of each prompt number allow you to easily scan for all the prompts within a goal.

However, if you'd prefer to go through the Response Form prompt by prompt instead, that is fine! Just be aware you'll need to flip between the four rubrics instead of flipping between the pages in the Response Form. The Planning Form will help you to look at the entire Response Form goal by goal.



### **I have *Complete Comprehension: Fiction* and am used to asking kids to keep a reading log as they read their fiction assessment book. There is no log in *Nonfiction*—why?**



The purpose of the reading log in *Complete Comprehension: Fiction* is to offer teachers information about page per minute rate, which could give some indication of how engaged a student was during the reading of the book. Recommended page per minute rates are based on the word per minute rate research of Harris and Sipay (1990). When reading fiction chapter books, children mostly encounter full pages of print (with some exceptions at Levels J–L/M where pages include some pictures). When students read nonfiction texts, they should be spending time reading words and studying the pictures. Texts vary with regards to how much of the page is text versus pictures, and there isn't research into reading rates of pages that include text and pictures. For these reasons, it seemed like an unnecessary exercise to ask children to log their reading as they read, since the data we'd receive isn't particularly actionable. There is a line at the top of the Response Form for students to enter a start date and an end date so you can track how long they spent reading the book and answering questions. I also encourage you to observe students while they are reading and answering the questions, looking for outward signs of engaged reading to help inform your goal setting.

## Teach



### How can I plan for teaching over time?



Once your students know their goals, you'll be ready to plan for ongoing instruction. My first recommendation is to try to see your class at a glance, using a simple form, like the Class Profile in the **TEACH** guide, and available in the Online Resources. On this form, record your class list, the text level or level range each student reads, and the primary goal you want to work toward with each student. This enables you to identify students with common goals. You can also think through whole-class lesson ideas and small-group lesson ideas and then record them at the bottom of the form.

### *Grouping Readers*

In general, when I group students, I am less concerned about them all reading books at the same level than I am about whether the strategies I choose are applicable to all of them. In the **TEACH** guide, you'll find more than 100 lesson ideas, most of which are appropriate for students reading books of any level. Those strategies that are best for a particular level range (e.g., J–M or N–R) are indicated as such.

See next page for example from *TEACH: Nonfiction*



# Grouping Readers

Even if you have not yet assessed every student, get started right away with your teaching plans.

Class Profile	
Whole-Class Lesson Ideas	
Focus for the week - Determining Main Idea	
MI.2 - What/so what	
MI.4 - Understand clever headings	
MI.9 - Text Feature Addition	
MI.15 - Scan Table of contents	
Small Group	
Names	Lesson Ideas
Drucella, Kamil, Jason, Joseph	vocab - V.3 Leano 11 text features
Doridan, Anthony, Shayna	comp contrast - K.D. 18 - venn Diagram
Dean, Janelle	text features - connect to text T.12 visualize Map by connecting to text

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Class Profile		
Name	Level	Goal and Notes
Pharaoh	✓ R	vocab - in complex sentences
Jose	✓ R?	* assess
Sammie	✓✓ P	engagement
Elijah	✓✓ L	vocab - context
Richard	✓✓ M	MI - part I
Drucella	✓✓ N/O	vocab - use TF
Angel	✓ S/T	
Jeremiah	✓ T	* assess
Destiny	✓ Q	* assess
Kamil	✓✓ M	vocab - use TF
Ezekiel	✓ R	MI - whole book synthesis
Justin	✓✓ M	
Daisy	✓ P?	
Jason	✓✓ L/M	MI - part / vocab
Nayeli	✓✓ K	MI - whole
Doridan	✓ M	K-D - compare/contrast
Wilson	✓✓ M	Key Details
Homayris	✓✓ N	Engagement
Jason	✓✓ O	vocab - using features
Joseph	✓✓ M	vocab / TF
Hazel	✓✓ K	MI + KD
Dean	✓✓ K	text features - study photos
Anthony	✓✓ L	KD - compare/contrast
Ingrid	✓ P	KD - supporting MI
Shayna	✓ M/N	KD - compare + contrast
Janelle	✓ M	TF - synthesize w/ main text
Semaj	✓ L/M	MI - supporting / proving

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When grouping students, be mindful of their goals and the levels of the texts they are choosing to read. The rubrics in *Evaluate* and recommended level ranges indicated in the margins next to each strategy in this book will help you to make good lesson choices.

Notice that the students in this text features group are reading books at Levels K-M. They were grouped in part because the demands on readers at these levels are similar.

## Planning Your Week

Now it is time for the detailed planning of your week. I plan on a daily whole-class interactive read-aloud and minilesson. The read-aloud typically lasts about twenty minutes, and I use a small number of strategies during that time. The minilesson typically lasts about ten minutes, during which time I focus on just one specific strategy that would benefit most of my students. You might choose small-group lesson topics based on student goals, as a result of Complete Comprehension or other assessments, or possibly use that time to support goals from your reading curriculum.

Strategy lessons, one-on-one conferences, small-group read-alouds, and guided reading are the places where I differentiate instruction. How many of these structures I use each day will vary based on the needs of my class. For example, if many of my students have common goals, then I'll support them with those during the whole-class minilessons. If most of my students' goals are unique, and the range of levels of books they are reading is wide, then I'll probably do lots of one-on-one conferring. Also, each week might look a little bit different, again, based on the needs of my class. One week I may find myself doing many strategy lessons, and the next week mostly one-on-one conferences.

As a rule of thumb, I try to see every student in a one-on-one conference at least *twice a month* and to see every student either in a small group or one-on-one at least *twice a week*.

I enter students' names in the Planning Your Week form, starting with those who have common goals and are reading similar levels of text, and organize them for small-group lessons. Then I add the names of students for partnership and book club conferences. Finally, I record who I plan to see in individual conferences. I keep an eye on how much time I've allotted for all of my conferences and small groups. If you'd like to read more about the teaching structures mentioned here, see the **TEACH** guide. You can view video examples of each structure in the Online Resources.

See next page for example from *TEACH: Nonfiction*



# Planning Your Week

**Planning Your Week**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Minilessons (every day— 10 minutes)	MI. 2 - What/ So/ what	MI. 4 Heading	Repertoire repeat 2, 4.	MI. 9 Text Features Additra	MI. 15 Scan TOC
Strategy Lesson (10 minutes)	Drucella Kamil Jason Joseph V. 3 (10)		Derian Anthony Shayna K.D. 18 (10)	_____ _____ _____ (TBD)	Dean Janelle T. 12 (10)
Strategy Lesson (10 minutes)		Homaynist Sammie (10)	_____ _____ _____ (TBD)	Homaynist Sammie (10)	_____ _____ _____ (TBD)
Conferences (5 minutes each)	Destiny Ezekiel Wilson (15)		Kamil Jason Hazel Dean (15)	Justin Elijah Drucella Joseph (20)	Nayeli Anthony Richard Wilson (20)
Guided Reading (15-20 minutes)	/	/	/	/	/
Other (12 minutes)	Elijah + Samiy (5) Daisy + Ingrid (5)	/	Pharaoh + Jose (5) Justin + Richard (5)	/	Nayeli + Hazel (5) Angel + Jeremiah (5)
Read-Aloud (every day— 20 minutes)					

40 minutes

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Plan for small-group teaching first by looking for trends on the Class Profile. Check off student names as you go.

Record the number of minutes you plan to spend with each group or individual. Try to stick to your planned pacing.

Even though some students have yet to be assessed, you can still work with them, based on what you've noticed they could use support with from other observations or assessments.

If you have time allotted for partnerships or book clubs, seize the opportunity to capitalize on ready-made small groups. Plan with whom you will want to confer during that time.

Don't schedule every minute of your time. Allow some flexibility so you can be responsive.



### **How do I choose model texts for teaching?**



Any picture book, article, or nonfiction book can work as a model text in your lessons. A good rule of thumb, however, is to choose one that is familiar to you and your students. That way, students will be able to focus on the lesson topic rather than on figuring out the content of the book. Short texts, such as articles, are great to use as models, since they allow you to zoom in on a bit of text that elucidates your teaching point. However, do not use books that are part of *Complete Comprehension*, because they may be used later by some students during assessment, and studying the text as a class may give you a false read on how much a student is able to understand independently, without instructional support.

You may notice that occasionally the model text that I have selected to use in the How I'd Teach It section of each strategy page is outside the range of levels suggested for the strategy. That is because the text I read to students and use in lesson examples needn't always be the same level as the texts students are choosing to read. It is possible to do deeper thinking in a lower-level text, and sometimes, choosing shorter texts for demonstration saves time in the lesson and helps children return to their independent reading more quickly.



### **While I'm working with students in small groups and conferences, what is the rest of the class doing?**



I'm convinced that reading is the best activity for students to be engaged in while you're doing your differentiated instruction. Not centers, not worksheets, not writing responses—reading! Ideally, that reading is of their own choosing and is a text they can read with accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. This will help in more ways than one:

- First, it allows students time to practice the strategies you've taught them, which will help them reach their individual goals.
- It allows students to work on their stamina and read a high volume of texts. Voluminous reading supports growth.
- It frees you up to immerse yourself fully in the work of supporting individuals and groups. In a typical reading block of thirty-five to forty minutes, I try to support about ten readers. I can't be that focused or productive if I'm trying to manage what the other readers in the class are doing; they need to be taught to read and work independently toward their goals.





### **What's the best way to keep track of my assessments and teaching over time?**



I recommend that you establish a note-taking and record-keeping system—one that makes sense to you and that you are able to use and maintain easily. I like to be able to see each child's learning over time at a glance. So I keep a separate folder for each student, in which I store all my individual assessments, along with anecdotal records I write during conferences and small-group lessons.

Other teachers find it helpful to create a notebook or section in a binder for each student, or store notes in a bin or file. When it comes time to meet with a particular student for a conference or in a small group, you can simply pull the notebook/folder/binder from its storage space and bring it to wherever the teaching is happening. Keeping notes this way also allows you to share them with other teachers who work with your students (e.g., English as a second language teachers, resource room teachers, intervention specialists).

Some teachers prefer taking notes online or with apps such as Google Drive, Pensieve, Confer, or Evernote. If utilizing an online note-taking system, it will be important to find one that has cloud-based storage to allow any teacher who is working with a student to access their notes.



### **I know what my student needs. How and where do I begin?**



Setting clear goals has been shown by many researchers to be one of the most influential things you can do as a teacher (Petty 2006; Wiggins and McTighe 2001; Pink 2009). Goals are motivating, help us maintain clear focus, establish the conditions for faster progress, and allow for instant accountability of ourselves and our students. For that reason, the goal-setting conference is key; during this meeting, I lead students to reflect on their written responses about reading, support them in choosing a goal, and get each student started with a new goal. I hope you'll confer with each student before moving ahead with ongoing teaching. Learn more about the goal-setting conference by watching a video example in the Online Resources.