

First Grade

Portrait of a Model Assessment System: FIRST GRADE

AUGUST (BEFORE FIRST GRADE BEGINS)



Reviewing Data: Leadership Team

In the summer, the school leadership team reviews their previous year's data and plans instructional supports for the school year according to the common profiles they see. These planned supports include continuation of their core English language arts (ELA) and literacy instruction, including research-informed differentiated instruction during Tier 1 small-group time, and availability of additional small-

group instruction during What I Need time (Tier 2 intervention and enrichment time) in each of the following areas available to first-grade students: sheltered instruction (for English learners), phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, language comprehension instruction, combined phonics & language comprehension instruction, math instruction, intensive vocabulary and content knowledge building, and enrichment.

SEPTEMBER

Reviewing Data; Meeting and Learning About Children and Families: Phone Calls

During the first week of school, Ms. Jones makes phone calls to families to learn about her students. She learns that Emma enjoys having books read to her and she likes to draw pictures about the books being read to her. Her mom shared her concern that Emma continues to avoid reading books by herself and expressed that her goal for Emma this year is to have her attempt to read the words on her own.

Ms. Jones learned that Emmanuel and his parents speak mostly Haitian Creole at home and that there are children's books in both Haitian Creole

and English in the home. When Emmanuel visits the neighborhood library, he chooses books about superheroes.

Ms. Jones also reviews the notes and data from her students' kindergarten binder and uses those for her initial formation of small groups for literacy instruction. For the first four weeks of first grade, Emma, Ayesha, and Emmanuel learn the classroom routines in Ms. Jones' classroom for each area of the classroom (e.g., rug, classroom library, computer stations) and each part of the schedule (e.g., whole-class instruction, and when the teacher is meeting with small groups or working in pairs).

Assessments

After routines are established during the first four weeks of school, students participate in the fall benchmark computer adaptive assessment that provides a reliable and valid screening score (identifying who is at risk of falling behind) as well as scores for word reading and language

comprehension (to determine which students need which Tier 2 interventions established by the school team).

On the fall assessment, Emma's scores showed weakness in word reading (scoring at less than the 10th percentile) and strength in language



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SEPTEMBER *continued*

Assessments *continued*

comprehension (scoring at the 70th percentile). During the English language arts (ELA) and literacy block, she receives small group differentiated instruction tailored to build on her strength in language comprehension and address her needs in word reading. She continues working with Ms. Robins, the reading specialist, during What I Need time.

Ayesha scores at the 60th percentile in word reading and the 45th percentile in language comprehension. Over time, Ms. Jones places Ayesha in small groups during Tier 1 instruction that address one or both of these areas. From an interest inventory, Ms. Jones noticed that Ayesha is among a group of children who are very interested in crafts. During What I Need time, Ayesha and several other children participate in a small group in which they read about traditional crafts from many cultures and follow instructions from procedural texts to make their own crafts, while working on decoding.

Emmanuel scores at the 85th percentile in word reading and at the 70th percentile in language comprehension. During small-group reading time in the ELA and literacy block, Ms. Jones monitors Emmanuel's mastery of the specific phonological awareness skills and letter-sound patterns that were taught, and quickly moves to

more challenging components. For example, the class works on distinguishing the /ă/ in oral and written words like *mad* from the long /ā/ in *made*. Ms. Jones notes that Emmanuel has mastered this, and she provides explicit instruction to distinguish these sounds in words that integrate blends and common orthographic patterns like *cake* and *crack*. Given the speed with which Emmanuel demonstrates mastery of these patterns, Ms. Jones spends most of her time with Emmanuel working on fluency, particularly prosody, discussing important vocabulary words that he needs to know in order to comprehend the texts he is reading, and, as in all groups, engaging in higher-order text discussion. During What I Need time, Emmanuel works on an extension of the science unit that the rest of the class is working on, in which they are learning to integrate ideas from their first-hand investigations and texts focused on core science ideas from the unit, which supports his reading comprehension development.

During the ELA and literacy block small-group time (Tier 1), Ms. Jones uses what she continually learns from observation/notetaking to pair children for partner reading. For example, she pairs Emma and Ayesha, seeing that Emma can support Ayesha's weaker language comprehension while Ayesha supports Emma with her weaker word reading.

OCTOBER – JANUARY

Continued Observation

After the children return from winter break, Ms. Jones continues to observe them regularly during one-on-one, small-group, and whole-class activities. During these times, she looks for opportunities to leverage individual students' literacy strengths and support their needs in

particular areas. For example, Ms. Jones looks for opportunities to build on Emma's strengths in language comprehension with increasingly challenging text and to address her needs in word reading. For Ayesha, Ms. Jones looks for opportunities to build on her strengths in word

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OCTOBER – JANUARY *continued***Continued Observation** *continued*

reading with increasingly challenging text and to address her needs in language comprehension. For Emmanuel, Ms. Jones continues to look for opportunities for him to work on oral reading fluency and comprehension with increasingly challenging text.

Ms. Jones observes and assesses the children in her class regularly and records key observations of their literacy strengths and areas of needed growth in her data binder.

Assessments

Sometimes, Ms. Jones needs to have more systematic, formal assessment information than she can get from observation and curriculum-based learning checks alone. In late January, students again take the winter computer adaptive benchmark assessment to monitor their growth since the fall. This assessment serves three purposes, each of which is important for making sure all children in the class are receiving instruction that targets their learning needs:

1. screening to determine whether students might need intervention,
2. identifying broad domains of strengths and needs for instruction, and
3. providing information about trends in individual students' and whole-class growth over time.

On the winter benchmark assessment, Emma's scores show continued weakness in word reading (scoring at the 20th percentile) and strength in language comprehension (scoring at the 75th percentile). During What I Need time, Ms. Robins continues to work with Emma to build her phonological, and especially phonemic, awareness. She notes that Emma has mastered rhyming and is able to identify the initial and last sounds but has difficulties identifying the medial sound of one-syllable words. Ms. Robins, as well as Ms. Jones, use picture card sorting activities

and other techniques to give Emma practice with differentiating words with different short- and long-vowel medial sounds. Emma is eager to show her family how she does this activity at the school open house.

Ayesha scores at the 65th percentile in word reading and the 40th percentile in language comprehension. Ms. Jones places Ayesha in small groups that leverage Ayesha's and other group members' interest in animals, while targeting language comprehension. For example, Ayesha and her small group read informational texts related to their current science unit, in which they are learning how parents and offspring interact to help young animals survive.

Emmanuel's parents alert Ms. Jones that Emmanuel developed pneumonia over winter break, which results in his missing the first two weeks of school in January. He returns to school just in time to take the winter benchmark, on which his percentiles drop dramatically from the fall (to the 45th percentile in word reading and 50th percentile in language comprehension). Ms. Jones makes a note in the assessment system that Emmanuel has been out with pneumonia. Because his performance on the winter benchmark assessment is lower than anticipated, Ms. Jones closely observes Emmanuel's performance during whole-class and small-group literacy activities. Using evidence collected



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OCTOBER – JANUARY *continued*

Assessments *continued*

during this daily use of the formative assessment process, she determines that his performance is similar to before the break and, therefore, she does not need to re-administer the winter benchmark assessment. In addition to continuing to work on prosody and engaging in higher-order discussion of ideas in text, Emmanuel also joins the small group that is focused on targeting language comprehension through reading about

and discussing animals. During What I Need time, Emmanuel is sometimes paired with Emma to practice fluency, particularly prosody, and he enjoys paired reading. Ms. Jones notes that when Emmanuel reads with Emma, he is more likely to go back and correct his reading errors, which provides a good model of self-monitoring while reading for Emma.

Planning

Ms. Jones' district ensures that she has daily planning time, and also encourages some planning hours to be used as "data days," in which teachers use the information in their data binders to inform their planning of individual, small-group, and whole-class lessons. For example, Ms. Jones reviews data from observations, learning checks, interest

inventories, reading and writing attitude surveys, and benchmark assessments to identify individual and class-wide trends in the data, to rearrange small groups for literacy instruction, and to make notes to consult with the reading specialist about any students who may need additional assessment to be evaluated for Tier 2 support in literacy.

Conferences

Ms. Jones' "data days" also help her prepare for conferences with her students' families, which occur twice each year. In these family-teacher conferences, Ms. Jones meets one-on-one with each child's family member(s) for an extended conversation about the child's progress, next steps for development, and celebrations. Ms. Jones also shares writing and other work samples. With all families, Ms. Jones asks many questions about each child's interests both in and out of school, from the perspective of the family member(s) and elicits any questions or

concerns they would like to share with her about their child's literacy development. For example, Ms. Jones and Ms. Robins share information regarding Emma's progress on word reading, both in the classroom and during What I Need time, and they share activities Emma's family can do with her at home to provide additional practice. Emma's parents share that Emma is very excited right now about a community theater production she is practicing for and that she continues to love acting.

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FEBRUARY – MAY

**Assessments**

Emma, Ayesha, and Emmanuel continue to enjoy first grade.

Emma's spring benchmark scores show continued strength in language comprehension (scoring at the 70th percentile). After working with Emma for a few months, Ms. Robins (the reading specialist) is pleased to report improved number of words read correctly on progress monitoring (meeting Emma's individualized improvement goal). However, Emma's spring benchmark score in word reading is still below the school's spring benchmark cut score. These two pieces of information combined suggest that Ms. Robin's services are helping Emma and that they should be continued. Ms. Robins continues working with Emma on differentiating words with short- and long-vowel medial sounds during What I Need time. During individual and small-group instruction, Ms. Jones provides many opportunities for Emma to apply the skills she is practicing with Ms. Robins during oral text reading.

Throughout the spring, Ayesha enjoys working with her peers and reading books that connect to their science unit, in which the class is investigating and reading about animals' survival. Her scores on the spring benchmark assessment reveal a similar pattern in comparison

to her winter scores: weakness in language comprehension (scoring at the 35th percentile), and strength in word reading (scoring at the 70th percentile). Ms. Jones continues to look for opportunities to provide instruction to target comprehension during individual and small-group work with Ayesha, with an emphasis on using multiple comprehension strategies, building and using background knowledge, and vocabulary. Ms. Jones also targets each of these areas in the context of whole-class, text-based discussions during interactive class read-alouds. As in other years, Ms. Jones keeps her classroom library stocked with books that reflect the interests and cultural backgrounds of students in her classroom, bringing in books from the school or public library when needed.

Emmanuel again scores highly on all components of the spring benchmark assessment. In addition to continuing to work on prosody and engaging in higher-order discussion of ideas in text, Emmanuel also joins the small group that is focused on targeting language comprehension through reading about and discussing animals' survival, connecting to the class' current science unit.



Grade

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FEBRUARY – MAY *continued***Planning**

Ms. Jones continues to use data collected in the fall and winter to meet with children in needs-based reading groups, in which all children practice skills and have opportunities to apply those skills while reading. In addition to needs-based small groups, all children have many opportunities to engage with text throughout the day. Ms. Jones reads aloud throughout the day to support children's learning about literature, science, social studies, mathematics, and social-emotional skills. The class discusses the ideas in texts and talks about the meaning of unfamiliar

words. The children also read and write across the school day, both individually and with partners.

Based on the classroom-based formative data collected in class and Ms. Robins' data from her sessions with Emma, Emma's teachers recommend that she attend summer school to support continued growth in word reading. Emma's parents are supportive of this idea and get Emma excited about continuing to practice her reading during the summer and getting to see some of her friends at summer school as well.

JUNE

Celebrating Growth

Emma, Ayesha, and Emmanuel all loved first grade and are looking forward to the spring end-of-year celebration to share how much they learned with their families.

At the end-of-year celebration, children's work across content areas is displayed around the

room, such as drawing and writing they have done to share their learning in science and social studies. Children also have opportunities to demonstrate to their families the skills they have been working on in small-group reading instruction—skills such as decoding and fluent reading.

Data Sharing

At the end of the year, Ms. Jones completes transition forms to share with the children's upcoming second-grade teacher. The forms include descriptive information about the child, as well as the child's spring computer adaptive benchmark assessment data and a few samples of student writing from the spring. Ms. Jones makes sure to highlight key information about each child that she thinks will be helpful to next year's teacher, such as specific skills they

were working on during small group reading instruction near the end of the year and their interests. She also includes a note that the second-grade teacher should contact Emma's summer-school teacher to learn about her progress during summer school. After the end of the school year, the school holds transition meetings for teachers so that, for example, first-grade teachers can share important observations and data about their students and the second-grade teachers can ask questions about their incoming class of students.