



Getting Off to a Good Start: Using Assessment to Drive Instruction

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At the onset of the new school year, it is important to ascertain students’ prior knowledge, strengths, and areas for growth before new learning begins. Assessments completed at this point in time provide baseline information that will act as a signpost to measure further growth. Most importantly, the information gathered before learning occurs focuses instructional planning. It targets a starting point for the strategies required by the whole class, small groups, and individuals. Beginning-of-the-year assessments also help with the selection of appropriate resources and in determining student groupings.

What Assessment Tools and Strategies Are the Most Helpful?

Literacy Place for the Early Years can assist you in getting a good picture of your students’ abilities in all areas of literacy. Specifically, you will want to determine what students know and are able to do in the areas of reading, writing, working with words, and oral language development. In the first six weeks of school, spend time with students on an individual basis during reading and writing conferences to determine literacy proficiencies. Also you may want to administer tasks to the whole class that will provide useful data about skills and strategies. The following chart provides suggestions for beginning-of-the-year assessments. In combination, these strategies will give a comprehensive view of your students’ understandings and skills.

Assessment Strategy	Assessment Tool	Information Provided	Where to Find in <i>LPEY</i>
–Record of Oral Reading –Retell	–running record –Fiction Comprehension Rubric –Non-fiction Comprehension Rubric	–accuracy rate, fluency, level of appropriate text, decoding strategies –comprehension, reading strategies	–detailed information found on LPEY website (www.lpeyresources.ca) – <i>Reading Guide</i>
–Letter Identification (K and Grade 1)	–Letter Knowledge Checklist	–recognition of letters of the alphabet (reading and writing)	– <i>Working with Words Guide</i>
–Developmental Guidelines for Phonological and Phonemic Awareness (p. 6) (K and Grade 1)	–Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Record Sheet	–awareness of rhythm, rhymes, onsets and rimes, syllables and phonemes	– <i>Working with Words Guide</i>
–High-Frequency Words Drill	–High-Frequency Words Review List	–recall of high-frequency words from previous year (reading and writing)	– <i>Working with Words Guide</i>
–Writing Sample	–Rating Scales found in the Text-type Studies	–knowledge of text forms, ability to write for an audience/purpose, use of elements of writing, spelling skills	– <i>Writing Guide</i> – <i>Error Analysis of Spelling Principles and Patterns sheet</i> (see below)
–Observations during class discussions and personal conversations	–Oral Language Development Checklist (use prior grade)	–skills/understandings in language for social relationships, language for learning, and language structures	– <i>Planning and Program Guide</i> (p. 81-92)

Once you have an overall picture of what students know and are able to do, you might want to plot this information on a developmental continuum. In the *Program and Planning Guide* on pages 59–80, you will find a continuum of development for each of the areas of literacy: Oral Language, Reading, Writing, and Working with Words. Plotting students on a continuum provides you with next steps for focused instruction and a way to monitor growth and progress during the year. Remember it is not necessary to use the continua for all students, only those who you feel will benefit from such a thorough summary of progress.

*Reminder—All of the above assessment tools can be accessed through the *LPEY* website (www.lpeyresources.ca) and have the ability to add text before printing.

The following page is a PDF version of the “Error Analysis of Spelling Principles and Patterns” sheet. Analyzing students’ strengths and weaknesses from writing samples at the beginning of the year provides useful information to direct your Working with Words lessons throughout the year.

If you have a question you would like answered, please email your request to: workshops@scholastic.ca.

Error Analysis of Spelling Principles and Patterns

Procedure:

1. Have students complete a writing sample at the beginning of the year.
2. Read the writing sample and highlight any words that are spelled incorrectly.
3. Record the word and the student's spelling in the first column on the 'Error Analysis of Spelling Principles and Patterns' sheet.
4. Determine the type of error and record this information in the appropriate column.
5. Read down the columns and look for patterns.
6. Decide on what the student needs to learn next about spelling principles and patterns.
7. Complete a sheet for each student and then compile information for whole group sessions based on class needs.

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Title of Writing Sample: _____

Student's Spelling and Correct Word	High-Frequency Words	Initial/Final Consonants, Clusters/Onsets and Rimes	Long/Short Vowels, Patterns, y as a vowel	Plurals, Contractions, Compounds	Base Words, Prefixes, Suffixes, Inflected Endings	Homophones, Homographs	Other (e.g., letter form, letter order, silent letters)
<i>ther/their</i>	<i>their</i>					<i>their</i>	