

ASSESSING KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' EFFECTIVENESS IN DELIVERING READING INSTRUCTION TO STUDENTS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES

by:

MARIA VIRGINIA A. AGUILAR
Teacher II, Luakan Elementary School

The transition to literacy begins in kindergarten, when foundational skills in phonological awareness, phonics, and vocabulary are developed. For students who show early signs of reading difficulties, the quality of instruction from their kindergarten teacher is the single most important factor determining their future academic trajectory. As a result, the systematic evaluation of kindergarten teachers' effectiveness in providing targeted reading instruction to these struggling students is more than just an administrative exercise; it is a necessary measure to ensure equitable educational outcomes.

Effective reading instruction for young students who are struggling is defined by a specific set of research-backed instructional practices. This approach should be explicit, systematic, and diagnostic. Teachers must be able to deliver direct instruction across the five pillars of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), with a particular emphasis on the first two.

In this context, effectiveness means the teacher's ability to precisely identify a student's specific deficit (for example, inability to segment sounds versus inability to decode CVC words) and adjust the instructional pace and complexity as needed. A truly effective teacher uses frequent checks for comprehension and immediate, corrective feedback to create a high-fidelity learning environment in which basic skills are overlearned.

Furthermore, artifact analysis, which involves reviewing lesson plans, instructional materials, and documented small-group differentiation strategies, can provide insight into a teacher's diagnostic planning process. A highly effective teacher's artifacts will demonstrate clear evidence of data-driven grouping and modifications tailored to individual student needs, as well as pedagogical content knowledge that extends beyond simple curriculum execution.

In the end, student outcomes must be used to evaluate teacher effectiveness. This assessment is structured according to the Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. Effective teachers in Tier 2 and Tier 3 small-group settings produce demonstrable growth in student performance, as measured by reliable, valid, and frequent progress monitoring assessments (for example, benchmark screeners and weekly mastery probes).

If students with reading difficulties consistently fail to meet their growth goals despite receiving instruction, the instructional practice must be deemed ineffective, necessitating a targeted intervention to improve the teacher's skills. This data-driven, cyclical assessment ensures that teacher evaluations are directly linked to the core mission of closing achievement gaps before they widen.

To summarize, evaluating kindergarten teachers' effectiveness in supporting students with reading difficulties is a multifaceted process that includes instructional fidelity, pedagogical expertise, and, most importantly, measurable student achievement. Administrators can identify areas of strength and growth by implementing structured observation tools, analyzing instructional planning, and using student progress monitoring data. This diagnostic approach allows districts to target professional development and coaching resources precisely where they are needed, ensuring every kindergarten student receives the expert instruction necessary to become a proficient reader.

References:

<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=kinder+teacher&id=ED628607>