Educator Observation Checklist: Identifying Reading Struggles

GRADES 2-6

This checklist is a guide to help educators recognize observable signs of reading struggles. These observations can be used in conjunction with data collected from assessments and progress monitoring tools to better support struggling readers.

Once struggles are identified, use the **Educator Action Steps** to support these students in your classroom.

WordFlight™

Grades 2–3

Transition from "Learning to Read" to "Reading to Learn"

Look for the following signs during classwork, oral reading, and assessments:

ACADEMIC

- ☐ Oral reading is slow, choppy, or effortful
- ☐ Frequent sound-by-sound decoding with little blending or word recognition
- ☐ Labored word-by-word reading in connected text with little intonation or phrasing
- ☐ Struggles with multi-syllable or irregularly spelled words
- ☐ Inconsistent recognition of previously taught sight words
- ☐ Avoids volunteering to read aloud or shows frustration during reading tasks
- ☐ Has difficulty retelling or summarizing simple passages
- ☐ Reading comprehension is weak, especially when decoding demands are high

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

- ☐ Self-image as a reader and learner is diminishing
- ☐ Behavior problems exhibited, especially during reading and writing instruction
- ☐ Shows frustration or discouragement during reading tasks
- ☐ Expresses embarrassment when reading aloud
- ☐ Displays anxiety or avoidance when called to read or withdraws from participation in reading activities
- ☐ Low confidence or self-esteem related to learning ("I'm dumb," "I can't do this")

BEHAVIORAL

- ☐ Avoids reading-related tasks by asking to leave or changing focus
- ☐ Distracts others during reading or writing lessons
- ☐ Frequently gives up quickly when challenged
- ☐ Appears disengaged during small-group reading or interventions

Grades 4–6

Reading Across the Curriculum

Watch for issues in independent work, subject-area reading, and fluency checks. Be sensitive to students who avoid reading activities, act out, disengage from school work, and attend school less.

ACADEMIC

- ☐ Takes significantly longer to complete reading assignments compared to peers
- ☐ Can't retain new information and skills (Common observation: "Seems to have it today but can't remember tomorrow")
- ☐ Avoids reading aloud in class or shows visible anxiety when called on
- ☐ Often loses meaning in the middle of reading longer passages
- ☐ Struggles to identify main ideas, key details, or inferences from text
- ☐ Spelling shows persistent foundational gaps
- ☐ Writing conventions, skills, and/or composition are below grade level
- ☐ ELA or content-area test scores are below expectations relative to effort

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

- ☐ Expresses negative attitude toward reading activities
- ☐ Peer-acceptance becomes more relevant than academic performance
- ☐ Increasing hesitancy to read and engage; anxiety about reading tasks
- ☐ Disconnecting from instruction (bathroom breaks or locker trips during reading time)
- ☐ Diminishing self-confidence as a learner and reader
- ☐ Students are aware that they are unsuccessful and avoid participation

BEHAVIORAL

- ☐ Distancing or disengaging from school work
- ☐ Difficulty maintaining social relationships
- ☐ Increasing absence from school
- ☐ Behavioral problems (acting out) often interrupt learning

Educator Action Steps

Supporting their Reading Journey

Review data regularly

- ☐ Monitor oral reading fluency regularly across grade levels with digital or teacher-delivered resources. Some free resources include the ROAR and DIBELS.
- ☐ Review assessment data for gaps in decoding, word recognition, fluency and comprehension.

Create and implement a plan

- ☐ Share with students what they are missing and make a shared plan to fill in the gaps.
- ☐ Help your students realize the value of reading and writing through authentic exchanges (read notes of encouragement, write stick-it-notes to reflect and remember tasks to do).
- ☐ Make sure that students have success every day—small wins mark their progress and support their willingness to continue on a journey that they buy into and articulate.
- ☐ Use tools like the **WordFlight Screener** to pinpoint word recognition issues.
- ☐ If appropriate, provide targeted intervention or refer for additional reading support.
- ☐ Communicate with parents early about observable concerns and supports available.

QUESTIONS? We're here to help.

About WordFlight

WordFlight is a research-based literacy intervention designed to help students achieve reading fluency and build their confidence in reading.

Through the engaging, structured and systematic practice combined with teacher-led instruction, WordFlight makes learning stick.

WordFlight

Get in touch to see how WordFlight helpsr students.

For more information, please visit wordflight.com, email info@wordflight.com, or call (888) 701-3009