

# Educator Observation Checklist: Identifying Reading Struggles

## GRADES 4-8

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.



# 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



# Grades 7-8

## Increasing Text Complexity Makes Reading Challenges Visible

Observe difficulties in comprehension, vocabulary, reading independence and general negative attitude about school.

### ACADEMIC

- ☐ Reads noticeably slower than classmates on grade-level or academic texts
- ☐ Difficulty with higher-order comprehension (themes, conclusions, connections)
- ☐ Limited academic vocabulary affects comprehension, participation and understanding
- ☐ Language development (e.g., vocabulary and complex sentence structure) is delayed by limited exposure to reading complex text
- ☐ Needs to reread passages multiple times to grasp meaning
- ☐ Avoids or procrastinates on reading-heavy assignments
- ☐ Reading challenges and poor performance carry over into other subjects
- ☐ Appears disengaged or embarrassed when reading in front of peers
- ☐ Difficulty organizing and composing grade-level writing assignments
- ☐ General academic performance is negatively impacted by reading difficulties

### SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

- ☐ Low self-esteem and confidence compared to peers
- ☐ Demonstrates frustration when asked to read academic texts
- ☐ Shows emotional withdrawal or apathy toward schoolwork
- ☐ Expresses hopelessness (“I’ll never be good at this”)
- ☐ Displays embarrassment or shame around reading

### BEHAVIORAL

- ☐ Refuses or delays participation in reading-intensive tasks
- ☐ Avoids homework involving reading and /or writing
- ☐ Increases off-task behavior during literacy instruction
- ☐ Withdraws from classroom collaboration or peer discussions
- ☐ Has signs of school disengagement — tardiness, missing assignments, sickness



# 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.



**Get in touch to see  
how WordFlight  
helps students.**

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