

10 Record keeping and reporting

Introduction

In this section we provide some ideas on how to keep a record of and report children's progress. The richest and most informative records of a child's progress are kept in the child's portfolio, which should form the basis of your reports on the child's progress. The reports should also be included in the portfolio, and become part of the child's overall assessment during portfolio review. When children keep their reports in their portfolios, they can study your feedback whenever they wish to, thus taking stock and keeping their efforts focused in the right direction. Finally, it allows them to compare their results at different points in the year and evaluate their progress.

Reports to children can usually be addressed to the parents as well, but there may be cases where children and parents could receive different reports, for example, with very young children who cannot read extensive comments even in their mother tongue. You can give them reports with very little or no language but pictures instead. Reports addressed to parents should avoid technical terms and should both inform parents on the children's progress and invite their participation in the learning and assessment process. Reports addressed to children and/or parents can provide space for feedback from them. Both children and parents can use this opportunity to indicate that they understand the assessment outcome as well as to make suggestions to the teacher or perhaps add their own opinions of the report results.

This chapter offers a variety of examples of record keeping and reporting. We do not expect that you will adopt all the reports as they are. Rather, you can easily adapt them to suit your particular needs and settings, and create your own reports if necessary. How often you give reports depends on your teaching situation, but it usually takes place two to four times a year. You will decide which reports to use depending on the goals of your course, the number of children, the duration of the course, your educational system and philosophy, and, of course, your own personal preferences.

10.1 Term/semester report

Rationale

This report provides space for you to comment on skills and attitudes as well as on other possible categories such as homework. If your coursebook emphasizes specific skills or other categories you can adjust the report. Reporting on attitudes means making use of observation as well as other assessment methods.

Space is also provided for the children's and parents' comments, since this is a way to encourage their active involvement in the assessment process and gets them thinking seriously about the learning process. As a result, the children can develop an understanding of their weaknesses and may use the comments section to commit themselves to a course of action or simply express their feelings about their assessment. Parents, on the other hand, may use their comments to show their appreciation of the teacher, comment on their own perception of their child's progress, or state their willingness to be more involved.

How to use it

- 1 Photocopy Worksheet 10.1 at the back of the book. You can use this report at the end of each term/semester and/or at the end of the year. In the 'skills' section you may want to write comments on the children's progress in a particular skill and include evidence from your observations as well as other assessments of this skill, make references to work samples in the children's portfolios and, if relevant, suggest a course of action. In the attitude section you can comment on the children's attitudes to English, their behaviour in class, and their co-operativeness or lack of it.
- 2 The report provides a space for a mark or grade and also for additional comments that may not correspond to any of the other categories (you might, for example, want to comment on the children's progress since their last report).
- 3 Give the report to the children, preferably when the parents are also present, so that you can discuss it with them and clarify anything that is not clear. In this way you avoid misunderstanding, or misinterpretation, of your comments on the part of the children or parents.
- 4 The discussion can also help and prepare the children and parents to complete their comments on the report. Younger children may not be able to comment on their assessment or if they do, their comments may not be substantial. In this case, omit the section for children's comments. If, however, children and parents do comment on the report, respond to them promptly while the report is still fresh in their minds. The report can then be kept by the children in their portfolios.

10.2 Term report with emphasis on attitudes

This report provides space for rating the four skills as well as six categories on attitudes and motivation. You may find it more useful for the first years of language learning because the emphasis on these non-linguistic categories demonstrates to the children how important they are in language learning. Understanding their importance at an early stage can potentially speed up the learning process in the long run.

At the same time the inclusion of general descriptors (very good, good) may be less threatening and consequently more motivating to young learners than a letter or number grade.

How to use it

- 1 Photocopy Worksheet 10.2 at the back of the book. On the basis of your records, tick the most suitable description. Add comments on any aspects you consider necessary. More general comments can be included in the overall comments section.
- 2 Again, this form of report highlights the importance of involving the children and the parents and provides space for their own comments. These comments can be added after a discussion with you.

10.3 Class progress chart

Rationale

It is often useful to have a progress chart for the whole class. One look and you can spot who is falling behind, who is keeping up, and who seems to be racing ahead. This enables you to prepare additional work for the children who seem to need more, as well as extra work for those who need to be stretched. An overall progress chart is also a good way of evaluating your own work. If, for example, the majority of the children do not seem to have achieved the aims you set for the term, you perhaps need to look at factors other than the children themselves. It may be that the materials you use, your teaching pace, your methodology, and/or the way you implemented it have influenced the outcome.

The sample class progress chart given here is designed to be used throughout the year and covers progress on attitudes, the four skills, and learning skills and strategies. (See photocopyable Worksheet 10.3 at the back of the book.) In this chart, progress in the four skills is based on the profile of a child in his/her second year of learning English. The points in the attitudes and learning skills categories can be used for children of any age or level. You may need to change or adapt the various categories to suit your particular needs.

How to use it

- 1 Photocopy Worksheet 10.3 at the back of the book. The chart has room for you to record progress for up to 15 children. If you have a larger class, you can make more copies or add more columns (each column corresponds to one learner).
- 2 Since the chart reflects the children's progress throughout an academic year, you could complete it at the end of each term, indicating the children's progress with practical symbols such as ★ (excellent progress), ✓ (very good progress), or ✗ (unsatisfactory progress) or other symbols which may be more meaningful and practical for you. Progress symbols for each term/semester could be registered in different colours, for example, red for autumn term/semester, etc.
- 3 Although it is possible to assess the achievement of many of the aims with the help of the portfolio and other assessment tasks, there are aims for which your decision will be based on your observations of the children.
- 4 The class progress chart can be kept in your file for your own reference but can also be used when you need to report progress to other colleagues or the school management. It can also be handed to the teacher who will be taking over your class next year. There may be times when you need to show the chart to parents, for instance, when you are discussing a learner's lack of progress and need to produce some comparative evidence. In this case, be careful not to show the parent the other children's names. What is important is not individual names but evidence of overall class progress.

10.4 Report focusing on an individual skill: speaking

Rationale

Sometimes we want to report on a single skill so as to focus and report progress on that particular skill, analysing the children's development in detail. It also helps to draw the parents' and the children's attention to that skill, making them understand its importance and the work involved in its development.

Although you may think it is a lot of work to fill in four different reports, one for each skill, it is not necessary to do it very often. You might only do them twice a year, once at the end of the first term/semester to focus the parents' and children's attention on the individual skills, and once at the end of the year to report progress. However, if children are particularly weak in a given skill, it may be a good idea to complete reports on that skill more regularly to encourage progress. Here we include an example of a report focusing on speaking. Other skills can also be assessed with similar reports.

How to use it

Photocopy Worksheet 10.4 (below). This report is open-ended. The sections include:

Attitudes towards communicating orally in English. Attitudes are perhaps more important in oral communication than in any other area. Negative attitudes towards the teacher, the class, English itself, or even fear of using the language if they don't feel competent, may result in children refusing to speak. Children have to feel comfortable expressing themselves orally from very early on. Assessment points to include in the report are the children's willingness to participate in the classroom, to volunteer answers, to initiate conversation, and their enjoyment of rhymes or songs.

Speaking skills development level. This section can be completed on the basis of the aims you set for a specific term. You can comment on what the children have achieved and what they still need to work on, for example, *Svetlana can recite rhymes and she can say short sentences in English.* You may sometimes need to simplify the aims so that they are comprehensible and relevant to the parents.

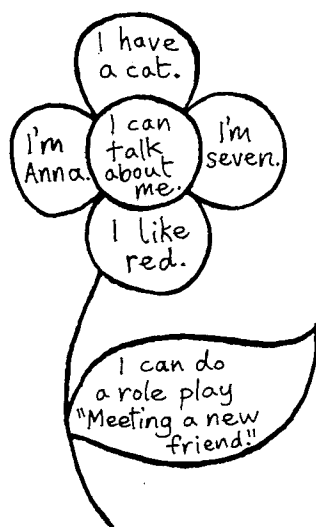
Strategies used. The strategies used in speaking are an important part of speaking ability. They are essential, even for native speakers. Children may start by using strategies such as asking for help, coining a word, or using gestures. They may also resort to their mother tongue in the early stages. This is acceptable provided we also encourage them to use strategies based on the target language.

Goals to be achieved. Set manageable goals for the children to aim for and include ideas on how parents can get involved. If children are shy, you might suggest getting them started with songs and rhymes, which they almost always enjoy and which may give them greater confidence in speaking. Other ideas are for the parents to help their children to record themselves when practising, or to act out little sketches with them.

Worksheet 10.4

Name _____	Term/semester _____	Class _____	Date _____
1 Attitude to communicating orally in English			
2 Speaking skills development level			
3 Strategies used			
4 Goals to be achieved			
Teacher's signature _____			

10.5 Child-oriented report A: Happy flowers



Rationale

The Happy Flowers report is an example of a child-oriented report. (See Worksheet 10.5 at the back of the book.) Although this particular design may appeal more to very young children or older girls, the same kind of report can be designed differently, with three or more trees, beach umbrellas, houses, clowns holding balloons, etc.

Child-oriented reports acknowledge children's right to be informed on their progress and to be treated as equal partners in the learning process. These reports also encourage children to view their progress critically and to recognize what they are expected to be able to do versus what they can do. The visual aspect of the report also helps children to quantify and visualize their knowledge.

Worksheet 10.5 (see back of book) can be used for all four skills by inserting the name of the skill in the blank, for example, *I can speak/listen to/read/write English*. The example given here focuses on speaking.

The aims are simplified so that they are meaningful to the child and so that even weaker children can complete it and be proud of their achievements. Some children may be able to talk about six things, for example, but even with four a child can complete a flower. Below that level, however, the children will recognize their weaknesses and realize they have to try harder. They can always go back and complete their flower the following term.

The report can show the children's development over a term/semester or an academic year. If you use it for a whole academic year, each flower includes the aims for a term/semester (three flowers correspond to three terms). The same report design can, of course, be adapted to different courses and syllabi. It can also be used in topic-based courses: each flower then represents things a learner can do around a particular topic. The report can be given to the child at the end of three topic units. The aims achieved can be inserted on the leaves or the centre of the flowers. The petals can be used for the children to add examples (see the illustration). Use the leaves to show aims that the children won't have concrete examples for.

How to use it

- 1 The report can be used at the end of each term/semester. It remains in the children's portfolios so that they can easily access it for review. The report can be completed in the following ways:

Teacher-completed report

When you are completing the report, add the aims the child has achieved (these aims may spread over two or more flowers/terms). Discuss it with the child who, in turn, colours in the aims achieved.

However, you can only complete the main aspect of the aim achieved, for example, '*I can ask and answer questions*'. Find time to conference with the child, discuss the report, and ask him/her to help you to complete the petals by giving you specific examples of what he/she can do (see the conference extract below, where a child and teacher are talking about the aim '*I can say ...*'). You are thus enabling the children to contribute so that the report becomes personalized and expresses what the children think they can do.

Conference extract

- Teacher** So I wrote this here because I think you can say a lot of things. What can you say? Can you tell me a few things in English?
- Child** Ball, cat ...
- Teacher** Yes ... Shall we write these down? In the flower petals?
- Child** Yes.
- Teacher** OK, I'll write what you say on this paper and then you can copy it. OK?
- Child** OK.
- Teacher** Ball, cat ... what else?

Child-completed report

The children can complete the report in two ways. You can give them either the report with the aims already completed or a blank report.

- 2 When the children are involved in preparing their reports, it is best not to let all of them do it at the same time, or class chaos ensues. Divide the class into groups. Each group completes the report while the rest of the class is busy with silent activities. This gives you time for individual conferencing.
- 3 If you use the report with the aims filled in, ask the children to read the report and decide which things they can do. When they are ready, chat with them and check their perceptions, helping them to be realistic. Once the aims are decided the children can colour them in. Then encourage the children to give you examples of what they can do in relation to these aims, for example what they can say, what songs they can sing (see conference extract above). Write down the examples they give you so that they can copy and complete their reports.
- 4 If you use a blank report, write the main aims on the board, divided into the three sections/terms corresponding to the flowers. Ask the children to think about what they can do. After discussing it with you, they copy the main aims on to their reports. Continue as in Step 3.

10.6 Child-oriented report B: Athletes on the podium

Rationale

This is another example of a child-oriented report (see 10.6 at the back of the book). The only difference is that this format includes only the aim, not examples. This time the design may appeal more to boys, but again it can be modified to suit your children's interests. The benefit of this design is that every child becomes a medal winner. Even if children do not manage to cover all the aims by the end of the year, they may still feel that something has been achieved because they are bound to have reached a medal stage, whether it is gold, silver, or bronze. Present the children with prizes, such as paper medals on a string, to reward their achievement. By the end of the year, children may have achieved different levels in each term. They get the medal from the highest one, unless you decide that they worked less hard one term, for example.

How to use it

- 1 Photocopy Worksheet 10.6. If the report is kept in this or a similar format, it can be completed at the end of each term/semester and the children can keep it in their portfolios. The aims you write on each podium represent the aims of each term/semester (i.e. 3 podiums = 3 terms).
- 2 Complete this report in the same way as 'Child-oriented report A: Happy flowers report' (see Worksheet 10.5). Either you complete it and give it to the children or they complete it themselves.
- 3 If the children are completing it themselves, write up the aims for each term on the board so they can choose which ones they have achieved. After they conference with you they write them down.
- 4 Alternatively you could give the children a completed report on which they mark the aims they achieved.

10.7 Course-specific progress report

Rationale

Most of the examples of reports and record keeping in this book are based on children's anticipated language development, the basic stages they go through, and the basic skills that need to be developed. Nevertheless, we often use course-specific reports, and Worksheet 10.7 (see back of book) is an example, based on the assessment of Units 1 and 2 of *Happy Street 1* by Julia Maidment and Lorena Roberts. Course-specific reports can be used at the end of a certain number of textbook units, at the end of a term/semester, or at the end of the year.

Such reports include the objectives of the course, which can be reported in terms of what the child can do, for example, *Soren can ask the way*. This makes the report relevant and meaningful to the children and their parents. The children can also see a direct relationship between their work in class and their progress report. Assessment results should be motivating by being expressed in positive statements indicating how well a child can perform.

This sample report focuses on progress in all four skills because the units themselves deal with all four skills simultaneously. But you could choose to spend less time on a particular skill or not assess it at all, in which case omit the particular skill from the report. If, for example, the child's mother tongue uses a script radically different from the Latin (for example, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Thai, etc.), you may prefer to delay assessing writing.

Course-specific reports should also include comments on children's attitudes and effort. These aims are essential in education. There is no better way for children to recognize their importance than to see them featuring first on their progress report.

How to use it

- 1 In order to prepare a course-specific report, use the instructional goals which appear in the coursebook syllabus.
- 2 Circle one of the three faces in each category to indicate the children's progress. Base your judgement on the results of assessment tasks you have used, observations you have made, and the children's portfolio entries.
- 3 Before distributing the report, explain what each face represents. For example, you can say ☺ means that you are very pleased with the children's performance and that the children have achieved the particular aim very well. ☹ means that the children are doing OK, though there is still room for improvement, and ☹ means that the children are having problems in this area and should try harder.
- 4 The children study the report, discuss it with you, and add comments if they wish to.

10.8 Class observation

Rationale

During any lesson we observe children all the time and obtain important information on all aspects of their performance, attitudes, and motivation. When it comes to attitudes and motivation, observation yields much better results than any questionnaire. To create a learner profile, information from observation should complement other assessment tasks. Observation can also help you to identify children who react

negatively and fail in paper-and-pencil assessments, although they regularly succeed in performing the same tasks in class.

We cannot be completely fair to children and parents unless we systematically record our observations. It is easy to remember times when children were particularly disruptive or angelic, but it is all too easy to forget the behaviour of average children or the times when usually unprepared children made special efforts in their work or class contribution. In large classes it is also possible to overlook the quiet children at the back of the class.

We can usually solve these problems if we use a written observation record rather than trying to keep mental notes. Worksheet 10.8 is an observation record sheet with categories for attitudes, learning, and communication skills, as well as the four language skills. The first three can be used with any level, whereas the four skills categories in this example are more closely linked to the developmental stage of a Year 2 learner and limited to categories that can be easily and adequately assessed through observation.

How to use it

- 1 If observation notes are going to be part of your assessment, it is a good idea to tell the children so at the beginning of the year. It is important for them to know what counts in their assessment. They also need to know that what makes a good learner is not just the results of assessment tasks but their performance in class as well.
- 2 The record sheet is designed to be used with five children at a time. (See photocopiable Worksheet 10.8.) It is difficult to focus your attention on a large number of children and make valid observation notes. It is better to concentrate on a small number of children each lesson who are sitting in the same area of the classroom. This makes observing easier and is more practical if you want to observe them during group work.
- 3 Be ready to record any interesting information about children who did something worth noticing on another day. For this, it is useful to keep the observation sheets in your file.
- 4 The record sheet has a large number of categories. It is unlikely that you can report on all the categories after only one lesson. You may find you need to come back to a group of children a number of times, so put the date at the top of the column for each observation entry you make.
- 5 Add your observation notes using practical symbols such as:
 - = adequate achievement of this aim
 - + = moderate achievement of this aim
 - = inadequate achievement of this aim
 - ? = there were no opportunities to observe performance in this aim.

- 6 You may sometimes be able to jot down a note while still in class, but most of the time this will not be possible. Do, however, allow yourself time to complete your observation record as soon as possible after the class and preferably before you start the next class.
- 7 You could collaborate with a colleague to cover each others' classes while you are making observations.
- 8 You could also video your class if you have the equipment.

10.9 Speaking task report

Rationale

This example is used to report on children's performance in an interactive speaking task for pairs or groups. It is presented here in two variations. 10.9a is suitable for beginners and elementary level children, and 10.9b is more suited to pre-intermediate children and above. (See photocopiable Worksheets 10.9a and b at back of book.)

The lower-level speaking task report (10.9a) concentrates on three categories: fluency, task achievement, and pronunciation.

The higher-level speaking task report (10.9b) has two additional categories: appropriateness and discourse management.

- Both reports divide each category into three performance levels and describe the child's performance in each category so that it is easy for you to decide the child's performance level.
- You can use blank columns if you want to avoid a child seeing his/her performance in relation to other levels or if you want to include other aims or details in the categories.

Both reports allow you to add your comments either for a particular category or generally on the child's speaking skills or attitudes to speaking. They also allow you to suggest a course of action for improvement.

How to use it

- 1 It is impossible to assess the speaking performance of a whole class at the same time. Try to focus on and assess a few groups or pairs of children at a time.
- 2 You can either use recordings of the children's performance or assess them while observing them carrying out the task.
- 3 Once you are familiar with the report and the different levels of performance it is very easy to use while, or just after, observing the children. The practical benefit of this report is that it incorporates a marking scheme. By ticking the level the child has attained and adding a few comments, the report is ready.

10.10 Writing task report

Rationale

Although younger learners may not yet be able to write beyond sentence level, 10–12-year-olds are often able to write paragraphs or simple stories. If the writing task includes an element of freedom, a marking scheme and report are useful.

This report deals with four aspects: accuracy, task achievement, handwriting, and mechanics. At different stages we may need to emphasize different aspects of writing and you can adapt the report to suit your needs.

This report is useful when you are assessing writing at paragraph level and above, and are not simply using writing as a means to assess grammar and/or vocabulary.

How to use it

- 1 Photocopy Worksheet 10.10 at the back of the book. You can adapt it to suit your needs, then tick the child's performance in each area. You can add further comments relating to specific areas in the right-hand column, and overall comments at the bottom.
- 2 You can complete the 'Action suggested' section after a discussion with the child, in which case the child can also sign the report.