

Achievement Teams

K-5 Sample Common Formative Assessments - ELA

Purpose: These are discussion samples for teacher teams. They are not intended to replace district curriculum or adopted assessments.

A useful common formative assessment is short enough to give and score quickly, tightly aligned to the learning intention and success criteria, and designed to produce evidence a team can actually discuss. The goal is not simply to generate a score. The goal is to help a team identify patterns, determine what students need next, select an instructional response, and later evaluate its impact.

How to Use These Samples in an Achievement Teams Meeting

Before the assessment: Agree on the learning intention, success criteria, and what evidence will count as meeting the expectation.

Give the common assessment: Use the same core task and scoring expectations. In K-2, directions and text may be read aloud when decoding is not the skill being assessed.

Bring the evidence: Bring student responses, not just percentages. Select a few examples that represent different levels of understanding.

Sort and notice: Look for students who exceeded, met, are approaching, or are not yet meeting the success criteria. Identify patterns and misconceptions.

Respond: Choose the next instructional move based on the evidence. Decide what to reinforce, reteach, extend, or change.

Check impact: After the instructional response, collect another small piece of evidence and ask: What changed in student learning?

Design note for K-2: The early-grade samples intentionally reduce the reading load. Teachers can read prompts and answer choices aloud, use picture cards or familiar classroom images, and allow students to point, draw, dictate, or respond orally. This keeps the evidence focused on the ELA target rather than on independent decoding.

Design note for Grades 3-5: Each sample contains 10 items: 5 selected-response items, 3 true/false items, 1 fill-in-the-blank item, and 1 brief constructed-response item. The final response gives teams richer evidence than a score alone.

Grade K Sample Common Formative Assessment

ELA Focus: retell key details and identify important parts of a story

Sample Standard Focus: Literature: key details and retelling

Learning Intention: We are learning to retell key details and identify important parts of a story.

Success Criteria: I can show what I understand using words, pictures, oral responses, or written responses as appropriate.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Teacher Read-Aloud

Read a short familiar picture book or a teacher-selected text. Tell students: "Listen for who the story is about, where it happens, what happens first, and what happens at the end."

Student Evidence Tasks

1. WHO? Point to or name the main character.
2. WHERE? Point to or name where the story happens.
3. FIRST: Choose the picture that shows what happened first.
4. NEXT: Choose the picture that shows what happened next.
5. END: Choose the picture that shows what happened at the end.
6. Tell your partner or teacher one important thing that happened.
7. Draw one important part of the story. Tell why it was important.

Quick Teacher Recording

Evidence	Yes	Not Yet	Notes
Identifies character	☐	☐	
Identifies setting	☐	☐	
Sequences key events	☐	☐	
Retells an important detail	☐	☐	

Team Discussion

What do students understand about story structure? Where did they need prompting? What is the next small instructional move?

Grade 1 Sample Common Formative Assessment

ELA Focus: retell a story using key details and identify its central message

Sample Standard Focus: Literature: retelling, key details, central message

Learning Intention: We are learning to retell a story using key details and identify its central message.

Success Criteria: I can show what I understand using words, pictures, oral responses, or written responses as appropriate.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Teacher Read-Aloud

Use a short grade-appropriate story. Read it aloud so decoding does not interfere with the target. Tell students: "Listen for the important events and what the character learns."

Student Evidence Tasks

1. Circle or point to the character the story is mostly about.
2. Circle or point to the place where most of the story happens.
3. Put three teacher-provided picture/event cards in order: first, next, last.
4. Finish orally: First, _____. Next, _____. Last, _____.
5. Which detail was most important? Choose one of three teacher-provided choices.
6. What did the character learn? Tell your answer to a partner or teacher.
7. Draw or write one detail that supports what you think the character learned.

Teacher Look-Fors

☐ Retells events in a logical order ☐ Includes key details ☐ Identifies a reasonable lesson/message ☐ Connects a detail to the message

Team Discussion

Which part was strongest: sequencing, selecting key details, or identifying the message? What evidence led us to that conclusion?

Grade 2 Sample Common Formative Assessment

ELA Focus: recount a story and determine its central message using key details

Sample Standard Focus: Literature: recounting and central message

Learning Intention: We are learning to recount a story and determine its central message using key details.

Success Criteria: I can show what I understand using words, pictures, oral responses, or written responses as appropriate.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Sample Passage - The Extra Umbrella

Maya looked outside before school and saw dark clouds. She put two small umbrellas in her backpack. At recess, rain began to fall. Leo had forgotten his jacket and stood under the roof watching everyone run through the rain. Maya handed him her extra umbrella. They walked back to class together. Leo smiled and said, "Tomorrow, I'm bringing an extra one too."

Student Evidence Tasks

1. Who are the two important characters?
2. What problem did Leo have?
3. What did Maya do to help solve the problem?
4. Put these events in order: rain began; Maya packed umbrellas; Maya shared an umbrella.
5. Which message fits the story best? A. Rainy days are boring. B. Helping someone can encourage more kindness. C. Everyone should own two umbrellas.
6. Tell or write one detail that supports your answer to Question 5.

Teacher Look-Fors

☐ Recounts important events ☐ Distinguishes important from minor details ☐ Identifies a defensible central message ☐ Uses a story detail as support

Team Discussion

Did students struggle more with recounting the story or moving from details to a central message? What would we teach next?

Grade 3 Sample Common Formative Assessment

ELA Focus: determine the central message of a story and explain how key details support it

Sample Standard Focus: Literature: central message and supporting details

Learning Intention: We are learning to determine the central message of a story and explain how key details support it.

Success Criteria: I can show what I understand using words, pictures, oral responses, or written responses as appropriate.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Read the Passage - The Missing Poster

Nora spent all evening making a poster for the class science fair. The next morning, she could not find it. She checked her backpack, her desk, and the car. Nora wanted to give up, but her brother reminded her that she had carried several things into the kitchen after dinner. Nora returned to the kitchen and found the poster beneath a stack of newspapers. She arrived at school just before the fair began. Nora was relieved that she had kept looking.

Selected Response - Choose the Best Answer

1. What problem does Nora face?

A. She dislikes science. B. She cannot find her poster. C. Her brother takes her poster. D. She is late for dinner.

2. Which detail best shows that Nora does not give up?

A. She made a poster. B. She checked several places. C. Her brother was in the kitchen. D. The fair was at school.

3. What is the central message?

A. Posters are difficult to make. B. Asking for help is always necessary. C. Persistence can help solve a problem. D. Science fairs should start later.

4. Which event best supports the central message?

A. Nora made the poster at night. B. She looked again after wanting to quit. C. Newspapers were in the kitchen. D. Her brother spoke to her.

5. Why is the final sentence important?

A. It shows the result of Nora's persistence. B. It introduces a new character. C. It explains how to make a poster. D. It changes the setting.

True or False

6. True / False: Nora immediately knew where the poster was.

7. True / False: Nora's actions help the reader understand the story's message.

8. True / False: The story suggests that giving up quickly is the best response to a problem.

Fill in the Blank

9. One detail that supports the central message is _____.

Brief Constructed Response

10. What is the central message? Explain how one detail from the story supports your answer.

Grade 4 Sample Common Formative Assessment

ELA Focus: determine a theme and explain how story details support it

Sample Standard Focus: Literature: theme supported by details

Learning Intention: We are learning to determine a theme and explain how story details support it.

Success Criteria: I can show what I understand using words, pictures, oral responses, or written responses as appropriate.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Read the Passage - One More Try

Eli had practiced his trumpet piece for two weeks, but one section still sounded rough. During rehearsal, he missed the same notes again. He considered choosing an easier piece for the concert. His music teacher asked him to slow the difficult section down and practice only four measures at a time. Eli followed the advice each afternoon. By Friday, he could play the entire section without stopping. At the concert, he was nervous, but when he reached the difficult measures, his practice carried him through.

Selected Response - Choose the Best Answer

1. What challenge does Eli face?

A. He loses his trumpet. B. He struggles with part of his music. C. He misses the concert. D. He dislikes his teacher.

2. Which action contributes most to Eli's improvement?

A. Choosing a new instrument. B. Practicing the difficult section in smaller parts. C. Waiting until Friday. D. Playing faster.

3. Which theme is best supported by the story?

A. Talent matters more than practice. B. Difficult work becomes easier when we avoid it. C. Persistence and a thoughtful strategy can lead to improvement. D. Performances are always stressful.

4. Which detail best supports the theme?

A. Eli practiced for two weeks. B. His teacher spoke to him. C. He practiced four measures at a time until he could play them. D. The concert was on Friday.

5. Why does the author include Eli's concert performance?

A. To show the outcome of his effort and strategy. B. To introduce the setting. C. To show he wants a new song. D. To explain how trumpets work.

True or False

6. True / False: Eli solves his problem by avoiding the difficult section.

7. True / False: The teacher's advice changes how Eli practices.

8. True / False: The ending provides evidence that Eli's practice had an effect.

Fill in the Blank

9. A detail that supports the theme is _____.

Brief Constructed Response

10. State a theme of the story and explain how two details help develop that theme.

Grade 5 Sample Common Formative Assessment

ELA Focus: determine a theme and explain how characters respond to challenges

Sample Standard Focus: Literature: theme, character response, and evidence

Learning Intention: We are learning to determine a theme and explain how characters respond to challenges.

Success Criteria: I can show what I understand using words, pictures, oral responses, or written responses as appropriate.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Read the Passage - The Garden Plot

The fifth-grade garden club was disappointed when its first row of seedlings wilted. Several students wanted to pull everything out and start over. Amara suggested that they first figure out what had gone wrong. The group checked the soil, reviewed their watering schedule, and noticed that the plants closest to the wall received very little morning light. They moved the containers, adjusted the watering schedule, and planted a second set of seedlings. Two weeks later, new green leaves appeared. The club had not avoided failure, but it had learned how to use failure to make a better decision.

Selected Response - Choose the Best Answer

1. How does Amara respond to the club's problem?
A. She quits the club. B. She suggests investigating the cause before starting over. C. She blames the other students. D. She buys new plants immediately.
2. Which detail best shows that the students use evidence to solve the problem?
A. They are disappointed. B. They check the soil, watering, and sunlight. C. They belong to a garden club. D. New leaves appear.
3. Which theme is best supported by the passage?
A. Failure can provide information that helps us improve. B. Gardening is easy with enough water. C. Groups should always agree. D. New plants grow quickly.
4. How does the ending contribute to the theme?
A. It shows that the students' adjustments led to improvement. B. It introduces a new problem. C. It proves Amara did all the work. D. It explains why plants need soil.
5. Which statement best describes the change in the group?
A. They move from frustration to evidence-based problem solving. B. They move from confidence to confusion. C. They stop working together. D. They decide gardening is not worthwhile.

True or False

6. True / False: The club immediately throws away the first plants without investigating.
7. True / False: The students change more than one condition after examining the problem.
8. True / False: The passage supports the idea that mistakes can contribute to future success.

Fill in the Blank

9. One piece of evidence showing that the club learned from the problem is

Brief Constructed Response

10. What theme does the passage develop? Explain how the students' response to the failed seedlings supports that theme.

Teacher Key and Achievement Teams Evidence Guide

These keys are intended to support team calibration. For open responses, teams should agree on acceptable evidence before scoring.

Grade 3

1-B 2-B 3-C 4-B 5-A 6-False 7-True 8-False

9: Accept a relevant detail showing Nora persisted. 10: Look for a defensible central message plus at least one accurate supporting detail.

Grade 4

1-B 2-B 3-C 4-C 5-A 6-False 7-True 8-True

9: Accept a relevant detail showing persistence and/or strategic practice. 10: Look for a defensible theme supported by two accurate details.

Grade 5

1-B 2-B 3-A 4-A 5-A 6-False 7-True 8-True

9: Accept evidence such as checking conditions, moving containers, adjusting watering, or successfully growing new seedlings. 10: Look for a defensible theme plus an explanation connecting the students' response to that theme.

Achievement Teams Analysis Protocol

1 | CLARITY

Did the assessment actually measure the learning intention and success criteria? Which item gave us the clearest evidence?

2 | EVIDENCE

What patterns do we see across student responses? Which misconceptions or partial understandings appear repeatedly?

3 | SORT

Which students exceeded, met, are approaching, or are not yet meeting the success criteria? What evidence supports our placement?

4 | STRATEGY

Based on the evidence, what do students need next? Which instructional strategy best matches that need - and why?

5 | RESPONSE

What will we reinforce, reteach, extend, or change? Which students need a different response?

6 | IMPACT

What small piece of evidence will we collect next to determine whether our instructional response worked?

A Final Question for the Team

Can we explain what changed in student learning - and what we did that contributed to that change?