

# REVIEWS

**Griffiths, R. (2004)**

***Orbit WRAP:***

***An informal writing and reading assessment profile (Intermediate)***

Wellington, NZ.: Learning Media

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WRAP Intermediate provides a starting point for collecting data about students' reading and writing and offers ways of making sense of that data and designing classroom interventions to progress students' literacy learning. The kit includes a manual for teachers, cards which contain excerpts from a range of books – of different text types and difficulty levels – and a bundle of reading survey proformas. Whilst many teachers prefer to design their own assessment items, WRAP provides a structure that teachers, including beginning and pre-service teachers, would find useful. This resource could be used to begin the process of mapping students' progress in literacy learning in the middle years.

Drawing on a range of useful and recognised strategies for investigating and analysing students' reading and writing, the kit offers a flow diagram for 'how a typical W.R.A.P. assessment might be carried out' (p. 40) by teachers. This process includes:

- a reading survey, which allows teachers to ascertain attitudinal information from students as a class, group or individual activity;
- an investigation of students' reading, including reading aloud, reading behaviours, retelling and comprehension;
- an analysis of students' writing in relation to the reading task; and
- considerations of appropriate strategies to enhance students' reading and writing.

The reading assessment begins with a reading survey which establishes a sense of students' interests and motivations for reading, providing useful insights into the effect of this on their reading achievements (p. 6).

The student reading cards provide short graded excerpts from whole texts of a range of genres. Although the reading extracts are decontextualised, the materials offer suggestions for thinking about and developing context and they provide details of the original source of text. Students are offered a selection of cards from which they choose a text for reading. This process can provide further insight into how students see themselves as readers. Prior knowledge is given consideration in the orientation to the text, allowing students to draw on their knowledge of the world and knowledge of different text structures (p. 9).

Fluency and accuracy of oral reading are recorded on the proformas provided in the manual for teachers. Although one might question the requirements for students being

asked to read whole extracts aloud for the first reading of higher difficulty level texts, we recognise that teachers are able to vary the process to suit their own beliefs about assessing literacy learning. For example, in the case of a student choosing a first reading that appears too difficult, the resource suggests that the reading be stopped. We would suggest that a teacher might instead continue with a shared reading of the text, to give the students a sense of reading the whole text.

‘Read and retell’ and prompts through questioning are used as strategies for the comprehension of the reading. Students are able to access the text at any time, thus eliminating the need for memory recall in this task and allowing the student to process the text while responding to the prompts. The comprehension prompts are clearly identified in ‘levels’, drawing on four broad strategies (recalls information; makes inferences; determines important ideas; synthesises information) and include the print and illustrative text in the comprehension of the reading. While all four comprehension strategies are used throughout the materials, each reading extract draws on only two or three of these at a time, so several extracts would need to be used to cover strategy use in all four areas.

The WRAP kit states explicitly that ‘reading and writing go hand in hand’ (p. 30) and a writing starter sheet is provided for each of the reading cards. Teachers are encouraged to develop their own criteria for writing, but a simple criteria list is offered for analysing the writing sample collected as part of the WRAP assessment.

While many resources provide teachers with an implementation guide and a guide to the analysis of assessment tasks, particularly useful features of this resource are the case study exemplars to assist in the analysis of students’ work and the teaching suggestions about how to use the assessment information in future planning. These offer good reminders for experienced teachers and useful advice for beginning and pre-service teachers.

This assessment profile provides a ‘snapshot’ of students’ strategy use and understandings in both reading and writing at a particular point in time, and as such, should not be seen as a ‘test’, but as one of many useful data gathering techniques available to inform teachers as they make decisions about classroom groupings, planning and literacy pedagogy. We think *Orbit WRAP: An informal writing and reading assessment profile* would be a useful addition to the bank of assessment resources available to teachers.

