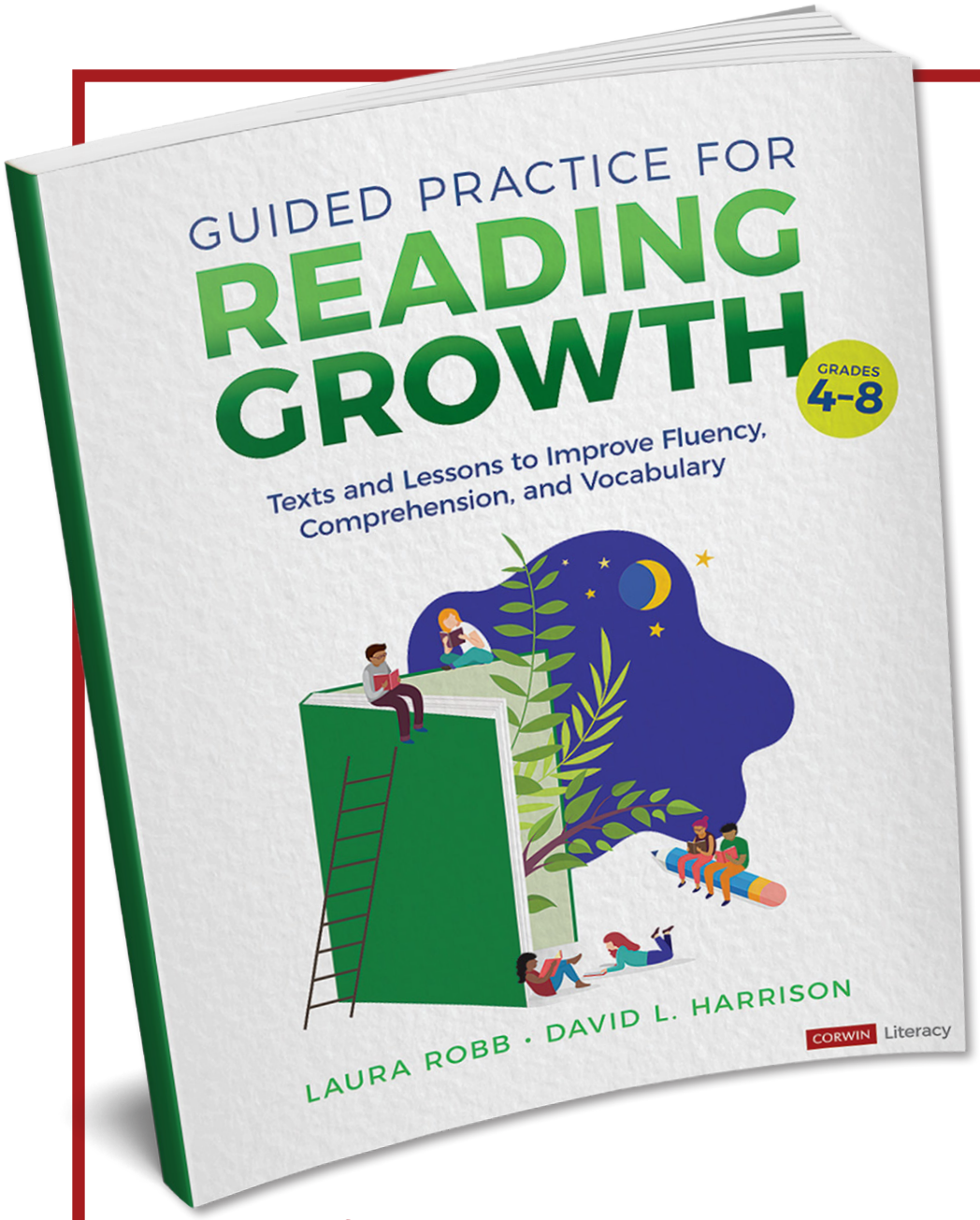


Thank you

FOR YOUR INTEREST IN CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Guided Practice for Reading Growth, Grades 4-8,* by Laura Robb and David Harrison. In this excerpt, the characteristics of developing readers in middle grades is discussed.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents, and Reviews.

CORWIN Literacy

CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPING READERS IN MIDDLE GRADES

Year after year when students make little to no progress in reading, they can develop characteristics that prevent their growth and progress. Stacey, Bridget, and I identified ten characteristics based on the middle-grade developing readers we taught. These students:

- lack self-confidence
- feel embarrassed reading *easy books* in front of peers
- have difficulty decoding multi-syllable words
- choose challenging books so peers think they can read
- have learned the art of fake reading
- don't read at school or at home
- can't read grade-level materials and don't receive alternative materials
- have developed an "I can't do it" outlook
- become quiet, silent, and hope no one will call on them
- don't dream of what they want to be or do beyond school years

One of our goals was to teach students about the Power of Yet (Dweck, 2007), explaining that they might not be able to reach a goal *yet* today, but with practice, hard work, and our support, they could achieve it. During our bi-monthly study group, we discussed personal and collective efficacy, the belief that with skilled teaching we could reverse the pattern of little to no reading progress for these students (Donahoo, 2016). That year, the fifth grade team not only improved their teaching skill by learning from students, but they also made a commitment to professional learning and becoming evolving teachers who continually grow and improve their practice.

DEVELOPING READERS NEED SKILLED TEACHERS

Skilled teachers create an environment where choice and negotiation are daily options for students. In addition, they recognize the importance of ongoing professional learning as a powerful pathway to develop, adjust, and refine their theory of learning to make decisions that boost students' progress.

Skilled Teachers Observe Students Carefully

Watching and listening to students can deepen your understanding of what they do and don't comprehend as well as their ability to explain ideas to peers, follow directions, use independent work time well, be active listeners who respond to what peers say, and their level of engagement in a learning experience. The eight tools that follow enable you to see each student as a unique individual and deepen your knowledge of how each one communicates, works with a team, analyzes material, listens, connects ideas, and transfers learning to different situations.

Kidwatching: Be relentless with observing students during interactive read-alouds, guided practice, instructional reading, student-led paired and small group discussions, and independent reading of self-selected books. You can notice and note whether students are listening, participating in discussions, talking out of turn, have materials for a lesson, frequently get up to sharpen pencils, or ask for a bathroom pass.

Listening: Tune your ears to whole class, small group, and partner discussions, and learn how students express their ideas and cite text evidence to support their thinking. You'll also note how frequently they participate, whether they value diverse interpretations of texts, and how they react to peers who challenge their thinking.

Raising questions: Skilled teachers have a questioning mindset and wonder about students' motivation, attitudes toward learning, and book choices. They encourage students to pose questions about how and what they are learning, knowing that students' queries can make visible concerns and confusions.

Conferring: Short, scheduled conferences between the teacher and student can reveal attitudes toward reading, past experiences with reading, the amount of independent reading completed at home, and students' comprehension and recall.

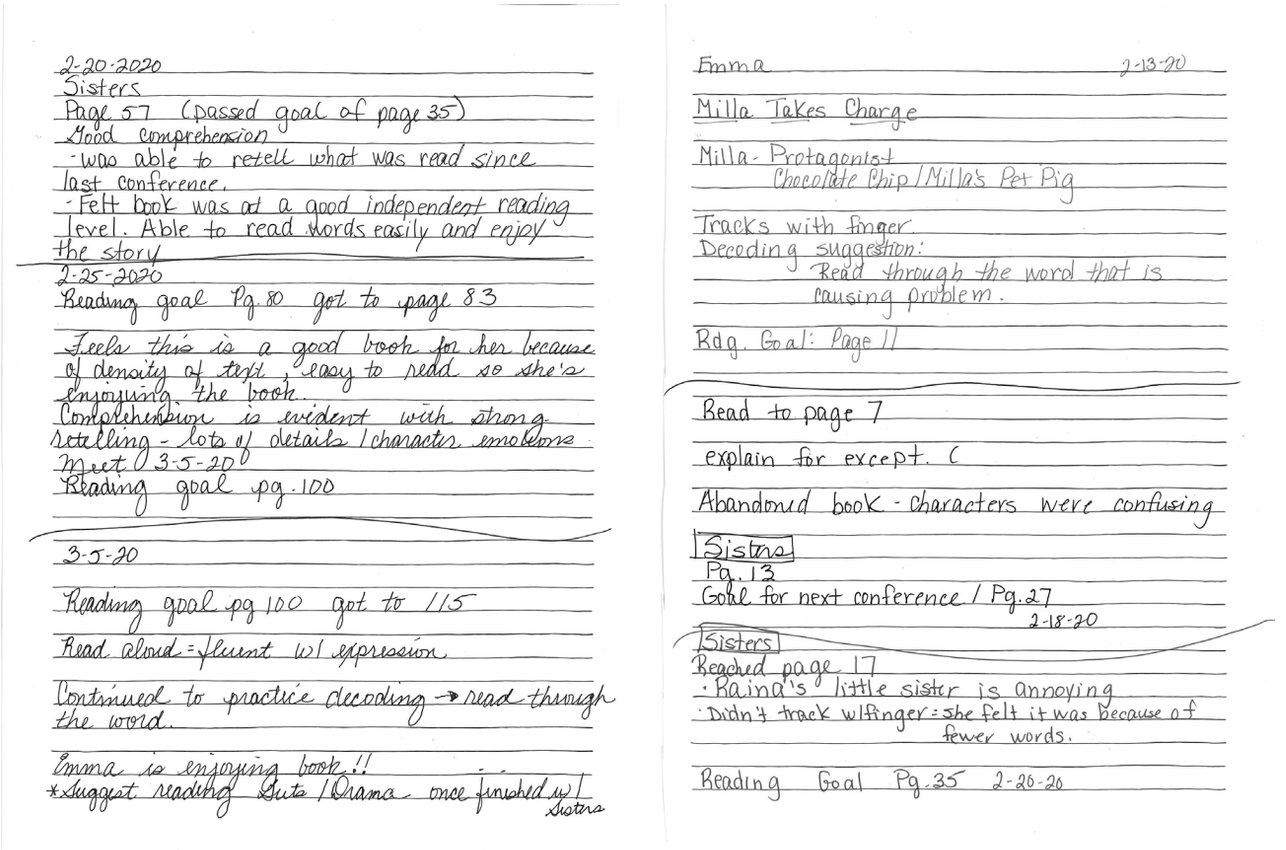
Fifth grade teacher Stacey Yost uses conferences to maintain the momentum of reading, so a student who never completed a book reads an entire self-selected book. Each week, Stacey confers with the student about a section completed and closes the conference inviting the student to decide how many pages he/she can read by their next meeting (see Figure 1.2 for a glimpse at Stacey's notes). "Students choose the book and set their own pace and goal," she says, "and that invests them in the reading. Most of the time, the student exceeds his/her goal and that offers me an opportunity to celebrate success. A student's weekly goal rises as success continues. Once they experience the joy of completing a book, they're ready and eager to read another one."

Interacting: Even brief interactions that occur during daily read-alouds, or as you circulate around the room during independent reading and stop to answer a student's question or listen to a discussion, can deepen your knowledge of what students understand and whether they require extra support. It's also beneficial to chat with students during lunch and recess as the sum of your interactions can build positive relationships that in turn enable students to accept and/or seek your support.

Reading students' writing: What students write in notebooks reveals what they understand and recall from their reading (Barone & Taylor, 2006; Robb, 2017). Alana, a fifth grader in Wanda Waters's class, started the year by listing facts from a book. By March, her notebook entries showed her ability to identify a problem and its solution (See Figure 1.3).

Keeping a teacher's notebook: When students see you writing in a teacher's notebook, they develop a mental model of expectations for writing about reading. Your teacher's notebook can show them what a written response looks like. Most developing readers are also developing writers who need models for how to write about texts they listen to and read independently (see pages 25–26 for more information).

FIGURE 1.2: NOTICE HOW STACEY SCHEDULES FREQUENT MEETINGS TO HELP THE STUDENT COMPLETE THE BOOK.



2-20-2020
Sisters
Page 57 (passed goal of page 35)
Good comprehension
- was able to retell what was read since last conference.
- Felt book was at a good independent reading level. Able to read words easily and enjoy the story
2-25-2020
Reading goal Pg 80 got to page 83
Feels this is a good book for her because of density of text, easy to read so she's enjoying the book.
Comprehension is evident with strong retelling - lots of details / characters, emotions
Meet 3-5-20
Reading goal pg. 100

3-5-20
Reading goal pg 100 got to 115
Read aloud = fluent w/ expression
Continued to practice decoding → read through the word.
Emma is enjoying book!!
*Suggest reading Suite / Drama once finished w/ Sisters

Emma 2-13-20
Milla Takes Charge
Milla - Protagonist
Chocolate Chip / Milla's Pet Pig
Tracks with finger
Decoding suggestion:
Read through the word that is causing problem.
Rdg. Goal: Page 11

Read to page 7
explain for except. C
Abandoned book - characters were confusing
Sisters
Pg. 13
Goal for next conference / Pg. 27
2-18-20
Sisters
Reached page 17
- Raina's little sister is annoying
- Didn't track wlfinger = she felt it was because of fewer words.
Reading Goal Pg. 35 2-20-20

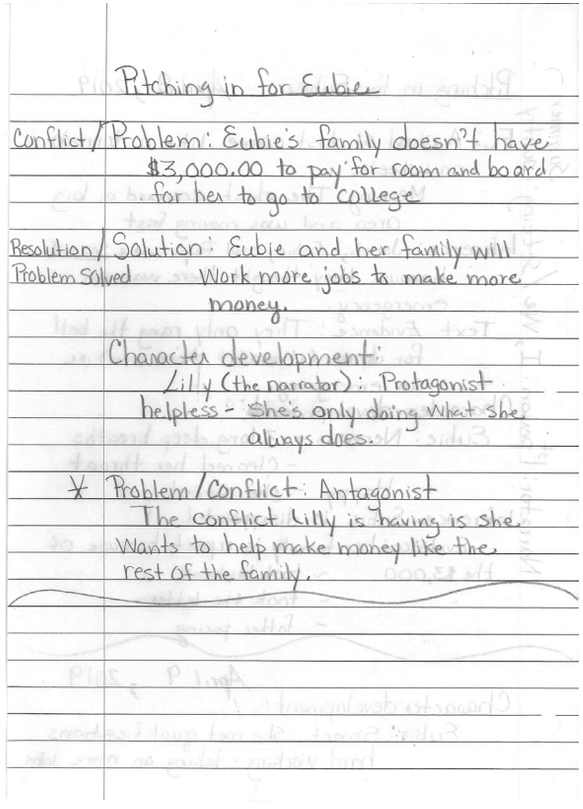
Seeking feedback from others: There will be times you'll want to discuss a student with a colleague, reading resource teacher, the school's media specialist, or guidance counselor. By inviting fresh eyes to review students' work and your kidwatching notes, you can gather intervention suggestions that didn't occur to you. Always ask for feedback when the support you're offering isn't working well or when you'd like to have extra ideas for intervening in reserve.

Teachers who continually refine and adjust these tools can transform developing readers into confident readers who choose to read at school and at home. Having a written record of your observations supports this goal as you weigh decisions about next steps for a student and target the kind of support you'll provide.

Skilled Teachers Take Notes to Help Differentiate Instruction

Early in my teaching career, I learned the importance of jotting notes to record my observations of students during daily interactive read-alouds and while students work independently, with a partner, or with me in a small group. Notes became my memory, and in conjunction with students' notebook writing, they offered information about students' progress. Notes help you make informed decisions about the instruction your students need, allowing you to differentiate with more confidence and impact. Moreover,

FIGURE 1.3: THE TEACHER MODELS PROBLEM SOLUTION (SEVERAL TIMES), AND THEN ALANA TRIES THE STRATEGY WITH HER INSTRUCTIONAL READING BOOK.



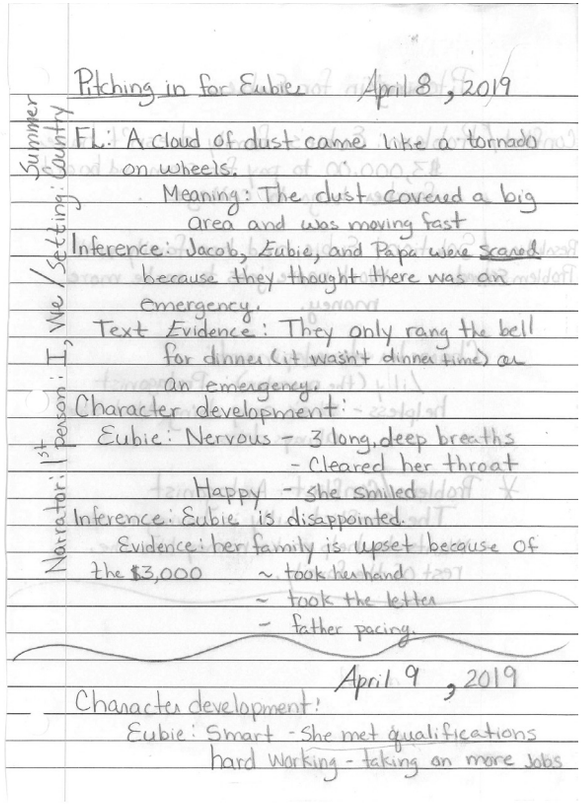
Pitching in for Eubie

Conflict / Problem: Eubie's family doesn't have $3,000.00 to pay for room and board for her to go to college

Resolution / Problem Solved / Solution: Eubie and her family will work more jobs to make more money.

Character development:
Lilly (the narrator): Protagonist
helpless - she's only doing what she always does.

* Problem / Conflict: Antagonist
The conflict Lilly is having is she wants to help make money like the rest of the family.

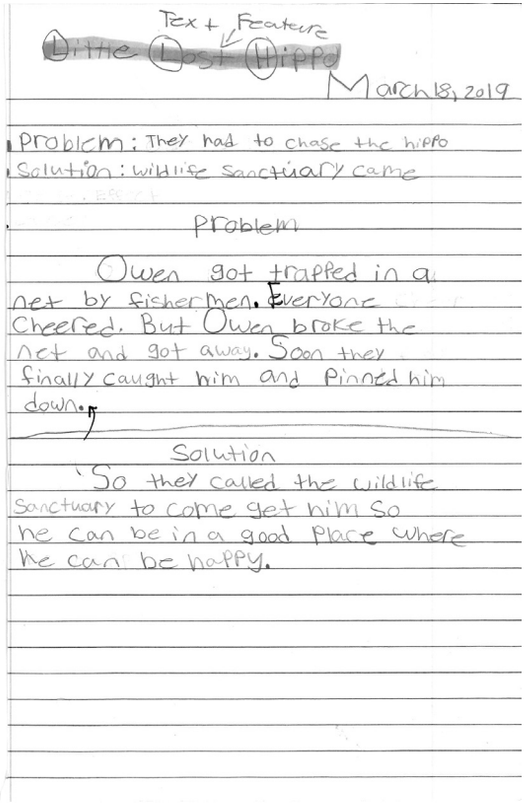


Pitching in for Eubie April 8, 2019

Summer / Setting: Country
Narrator: 1st person: I, We

FL: A cloud of dust came like a tornado on wheels.
Meaning: The dust covered a big area and was moving fast
Inference: Jacob, Eubie, and Papa were scared because they thought there was an emergency.
Text Evidence: They only rang the bell for dinner (it wasn't dinner time) or an emergency.
Character development:
Eubie: Nervous - 3 long, deep breaths
- Cleared her throat
Happy - she smiled
Inference: Eubie is disappointed
Evidence: her family is upset because of the $3,000
~ took her hand
~ took the letter
- father pacing.

April 9, 2019
Character development:
Eubie: Smart - she met qualifications
hard working - taking on more jobs



Text + Features
Little Lost Hippo
March 18, 2019

Problem: They had to chase the hippo
Solution: Wildlife sanctuary came

Problem

Owen got trapped in a net by fishermen. Everyone cheered. But Owen broke the net and got away. Soon they finally caught him and pinned him down.

Solution

So they called the wildlife sanctuary to come get him so he can be in a good place where he can be happy.

notes can support recommendations during IEP (individual educational plans) meetings. Here are some tips for streamlining and organizing daily notes.

Notice and note: Place dated sticky notes on several sheets of blank paper and attach to a clipboard. Avoid editorializing and keep notes as objective as possible because you'll frequently find yourself sharing your notes with students during conferences. Figure 1.4 is an example of my notes for students after a guided practice lesson. Notice how I jot positives in addition to areas needing support. I do this to help students notice small increments of progress that they don't always see.

Storing daily notes: At the end of each day, transfer your notes into a loose-leaf binder or Google doc. Use dividers to separate the ELA sections you teach. In each section, note a student's name on about three sheets of paper—you can add more once you've filled the front and back of each sheet.

TEACHING TIP

Set aside time, every two to three weeks, to review the notes for each student. Start with students who aren't making enough progress and see if your notes offer clues for moving that child forward. For example, I noticed that fifth grader Jaylinda's poetry reading, at the end of each week, wasn't fluent and expressive, even though there was time for daily practice with a partner. A review of my notes revealed she had not read her poem to her partner during the last two weeks. Instead of making this a behavior issue, I observed Jaylinda and her partner every day for a week. When her fluency and expression improved, I conferred with her and discussed the benefits of daily practice. Having the notes pinpointed the issue and enabled me to design a positive intervention instead of calling attention to what she wasn't doing and risk enlarging her frustration and anger.

While working with developing readers, the temptation to move from mini-lessons to reading books is powerful. However, I have learned that it's best to slow down and invest in guided practice, so students can develop skill applying a strategy you've modeled during a mini-lesson. Having time to practice can improve students reading, writing, and discussions.