

Module: Supporting Decisions with Assessment

Exercise for Interim Assessment

Example Prompt Response and Commentary

We'll start our response in this exercise by thinking about what Selena's family and other families might be most interested in. We want to be an ally for Selena and her family, and build a partnership for the year. Families vary greatly in their diversity—some will be very invested and want to strategize with you, while some will be disengaged, ready to get the conference over as soon as possible. Some will be relaxed; some will be anxious. You will have fellow teachers as your students' parents. You will have recent immigrants with little comfort communicating in English. Even within this diversity, however, you are likely to find a lot of commonality around three questions—how is my kid doing? Where do they need improvement? What can I do to help them? We will use these three questions to frame our response.

First, let's get oriented. You will find most interim assessment reports provide a lot of information that you will not need in your discussion with the family. For example, testing professionals recognize that no test is perfect, and it is very important to them to communicate the amount of uncertainty around each test score. That is why on this report you see a statement about a range for the total score and those little wings coming off the markers for strand-level scores. This information can be very important, for example, when you are deciding whether or not a student is eligible for special services, but it is less important when you are talking with families about general performance in school. So the best thing to recognize—and maybe convey to parents—is that children will have good days and bad days, and the report tries to capture that.



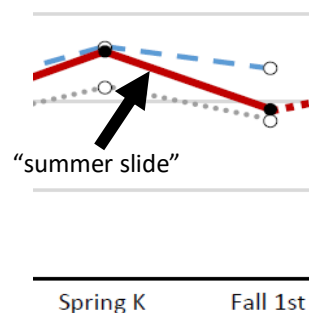
A child's score can vary if they take the same test several times. If your child was tested again, they would likely earn a score between 195 and 225.

Communications of score uncertainty in the report

How is Selena doing?

Focusing on this first question, we see the report provides a score for Mathematics, 210, and for Reading, 195. Those scores on their own are unlikely to mean much to anyone outside of those who work directly on the technical aspects of the test. So let's move past them, and see what else we have.

We see two graphs. If we look at the red lines, it looks like Selena demonstrated some progress in both Math and Reading last year, and then had a drop in scores to start 1st grade. This is a common phenomenon, known as the “summer slide” or “summer slump”. Most school districts operate on some form of academic year running between August and May or June, with a longer break between grades in the summer. During this time, many kids are not as engaged in academic pursuits, and so when they come back to school at the end of



summer, they are not able to demonstrate academic skills like they were in the spring. A summer slide is not necessarily something to be alarmed about, but it can help us plan our communication.

Where does Selena need improvement?

It looks like the drop was bigger in Reading than in Math. We see that in the red lines on their own and also in how the red lines compare to the other lines on the graphs. It is common for test reports to provide information about peer groups. Use this information very carefully. Research has demonstrated that feedback that references peer groups, instead of learning goals, can de-motivate students and lead to lower academic outcomes. In this report, however, it is helpful to see that the peer groups also demonstrated summer slides. In Math, Selena's slide was actually less than in her peer groups. In Reading, however, her slide was greater than in her peer groups. So, as we are looking for an area of potential improvement to communicate to Selena's family, we might choose to focus on Reading.

If we look at the strand-level information beneath the Reading graph, we see Selena's weakest area appears to be Informational Text, followed by Literature. Foundational Skills and Writing look to be strongly on-grade-level.

	Below Grade Level	On Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Foundational Skills		◆	
Informational Text	◆		
Writing		◆	
Literature	◆		

Informational Text and Literature appear to be areas of opportunity for Selena

As you make these determinations about a student, make sure not to get test tunnel vision. If you were Selena's teacher, you would have rich knowledge about her. Do the results of the interim assessment align with what you have seen of Selena over the last two months? Do they confirm what you have seen? If so, maybe you can pair this report with an artifact from class. If not, maybe your classroom assessment has been better aligned with state learning standards or more culturally responsive. Or maybe it hasn't and this is an opportunity to improve your classroom practice. Of course, since Selena's report is just an example, we do not know these things, but you do know the students in your class. Maybe you have seen how they have grown since they took the test. Maybe you know that a student can demonstrate certain skills when they are put in a particular setting (that is different from the test setting). Also consider that in the early grades it is common for test instructions and questions to be read to the student. If a student's listening skills are different than their reading skills, the test could over- or underestimate their growth. Use what you know about the student to help you navigate the report and summarize their test performance.

What can I do to help?

Let's focus on Informational Text as an area of improvement. If we provide the family a strategy for this area, it should raise Selena's scores and maybe curb some of the summer slide, especially if the strategy is something that can build academically oriented habits in the home. To connect the Informational Text score to content, we can look at relevant learning standards. The Common Core State Standards for Grade 1 include the following expectations for working with informational text:

- Ask and answer questions about key details
- Identify the main topic and retell key details
- Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information
- Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases
- Know and use various text features to locate key facts or information
- Distinguish between information provided by pictures/illustrations and information provided by words
- Use illustrations and details to describe key ideas
- Identify the reasons an author gives to support points
- Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic
- Read informational texts, with prompting and support

The Student Growth Report does not tell us which of these standards Selena struggles with the most, so we need to think about what we see of Selena in the classroom. Where have we seen her demonstrate proficiency with these skills? Where have we seen less proficient demonstration? Maybe we have seen that locating key information and describing key ideas can give Selena trouble. In that case, we might provide options like the following to her family:

- Go to the library and let Selena pick a book on a topic she wants to learn about (e.g., a favorite animal). Then browse the book with her, and ask her what she thinks she will learn about.
- Let Selena help in the kitchen. Share a recipe with her, and have her help find the ingredients and measurements. She could also look for key words in the directions, like *cut* and *stir*.
- While reading with Selena, use this question bank:
 - Where is the table of contents? What does it tell you?
 - How does that picture help you understand the words?
 - What does that word mean? Can you find it in the glossary?
 - What do you think the author wants you to know?

Providing a hard copy of these at-home options—probably no more than two—can help Selena’s family remember them after they step outside your classroom. A single page that can be taped to the refrigerator and is no more than three-quarters full of text is generally well received. If desired, a second activity or other message can be printed on the back. This page could contain the provided options as well as brief instructions (e.g., for finding suitable books). Pairing the recommendation(s) with a message of gratitude can work well. Consider something like, “Thank you for affording me the privilege of partnering with you and with Selena in the learning process.”

The better you know Selena and her family, the better you can tailor your recommendations and messaging to them. Again, as a guiding beacon in your work, think about how the interim assessment report can be a way for you to be an ally and build a partnership with the family for the school year.