

DART Assessment Information

Background

DART stands for District Assessment for Reading Team. The assessment began more than ten years ago in Campbell River at the request of the superintendent, for a district assessment of reading. Faye Brownlie was contacted by Campbell River and Mission school districts to update and expand the Campbell River Reading Assessment. By the fall of 2003, thirteen other districts joined the consortium to field test and provide input to the test design. There are now close to forty districts involved.

Description

The DART is focused on providing information to teachers that is closer to the context of the classroom. Teachers wanted an assessment that could be used in the fall to gather assessment **for** learning data and in the spring to gather assessment **of** learning data. The DART includes the use of the Reading for Information BC Performance Standard Quick Scale. The focus is reading non-fiction/information text; this is considered to be generally less developed than the skills for reading fictional materials. In addition:

- Data gathering in the fall helps teachers determine what should be the focus for instruction.
- This is a process that can be repeated by teachers throughout the year to monitor student progress, collect information for reporting out, guide instruction, and gauge the effectiveness of their teaching and of student learning.
- Tied to the grade level Performance Standards for Reading for Information so teachers are teaching ‘with the end in mind’
- Parallels the format of the end-of-the-year spring assessment OF learning, so the students will be familiar with the format of the assessment
- Can be used to provide baseline data for schools wishing to track the students’ progress against the Performance Standards, over the course of the school year.
- Can be used to provide recommendations to middle or secondary schools receiving a group of students about strengths and areas of instruction
- Can be used to provide recommendations for September for the receiving teacher(s) and/or support resource staffing (learning assistance, literacy, etc.)

Reading Passages

Pearson Canada has granted the DART consortium special permission to use the DRA Canadian Edition informational text reading passages at each grade level. These have been specially packaged in bundles of 30 for districts affiliated with DART and who had a DRA kit in each school. Faye has written new reading passages for grade 3 and 4.

In the spring of each grade, students read the first half of the booklet for that grade.

In the fall of each grade, the students read the entire booklet from the previous grade.

For example:

Grade Level	Fall (level)	Spring (level)	BC Performance Standard
3	Hike on Bowen Island (2)	Our Mighty Fraser River (3)	3
4	Cycling (3)	Pack of Wolves (4)	4
5	Pack of Wolves (4)	Storm Chasers (5)	5
6	Storm Chasers(5)	One Brave Heart (6)	6
7	One Brave Heart (6)	Thrills and Chills (7)	7
8	Thrills and Chills (7)	Surtsey–Birth of an Island (8)	8
9	Surtsey-Birth of an Island (8)	The Dragon Caves (9)	9

- The grade 5 – 9 passages are informational passages from the Canadian DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment for individual students)
- Students will reread the text which they will have read during the spring assessment of learning, then read on to read the entire text. For example, a grade 5 student in September will read “A Pack of Wolves” entirely, having read the first five pages when she was in grade 4. The questions and the oral reading passage in the fall are from the second half of the booklet.
- Students in grades 3 and 4 have new passages to read, created for this assessment.
- Students always have access to the passage during the assessment and are encouraged to reread.

- If further information is needed on a particular student, an individual assessment can be conducted using an individual reading inventory tool.

Assessment Forms

- There is a two page question sheet for each reading passage. All sheets finish with a question about the material (was it easy or hard) and for an explanation.
- There is a running record for each piece (from the first half of the piece in the spring, and from the second half of the piece in the fall).
- There is a conference sheet for each piece, asking about word and meaning strategies being used, and about connections and ideas learned from the piece.
- Students have a 5 minute introduction to the piece, called accessing background information. Students read the questions with the teacher before they read the text. Students are shown which passage they will be asked to read orally.
- Protocols (teacher scripts) are provided for teachers. For valid or consistent results, teachers are strongly urged to follow the protocols.
- Students are encouraged to seek and make note of the answers as they read and to refer back to them when answering the questions. Post-it notes are used to assist students in marking their places.
- Advise the students not to mark the text with anything other than post-it notes; the texts will be used with other classes and groups.

Questions

- There are always five questions in Grades 4-9:
 - Note taking and detail in the text.
 - Reading graphs, charts, pictures and maps.
 - Presenting material in a different way – elaborating, extending, connecting, comparing, or showing the relationships among ideas.
 - Personal connections, reasoning, reading beyond the lines
 - Difficulty of the text and how they managed in reading it.
- Grade 3 students answer 4 questions and answer an oral question about maps, graphs and pictures.

Scoring

The BC Performance Standards for Reading will form the basis for evaluation. The Quick Scales are available at: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/

Use the **Reading for Information Quick Scales**. Teachers will want to score their own classes, preferably with the help of their support teacher, and/or in grade-level teams to encourage conversation about their students' strengths and needs and to begin collaborative instructional planning.

Coding

The term 'coding' is used, rather than 'scoring', to emphasize that the results are qualitative, not quantitative. There are two options for coding:

- Using the DART provided Scoring Guide for each piece/grade. This provides an overall statement (not yet within expectations, minimally meets expectations, fully meets expectations, exceeds expectations) and corresponding number (1 to 4) on the student's comprehension and analysis. This is summative, and does not provide sufficient detail to plan for instruction. Furthermore, using the labels (e.g. not yet within expectations, etc.) is inappropriate in the fall because the labels are based on student work in March/April.
- Using the BC Performance Standards for Reading for Information Quick Scale to provide detailed information on each of the three aspects (Strategies, Comprehension, Analysis) and the specific skills and processes being used. This Quick Scale can be used with highlighter pens and used to track student growth throughout the year. It can also be tallied and used to provide a class profile for planning for instruction, allowing the teacher to prioritize and plan specific areas for instruction.

Timelines

The Fall Assessment should occur in late September or early October, to assist in planning. It is recommended that Grade 3 students write in late October.

The Spring Assessment should occur in May.

The Disk

The booklets have been given to each school. A disk with all the supplemental materials has been given to each school. On the disk are the student conference, question, scoring and oral reading forms for each grade, spring and fall.