

included one sentence for each main idea from the reading, whether she links clauses using a sentence frame, and whether she uses propositional phrases.

Checklist for Kia

A simple checklist like this would be a useful tool to assess Kia's writing.

Kia	Yes	No
Uses one sentence for each idea	✓	
Links clauses using a sentence frame		✓
Uses propositional phrases		✓

In a conference with the student, a teacher can quickly go over a checklist like this to provide the student with feedback and plan next steps.

Rating Scale

Another tool, a rating scale, moves beyond “yes” and “no” to indicate how well something was done. For example, Kia could judge whether what she read in her social studies book was “very clear,” “somewhat clear,” or “not clear.” A rating scale can also indicate student performance on a continuum from “most of the time” to “not at all.” Here we show a simple rating scale for Kia.

Kia	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Not at All
What I read is clear to me.			
I write complete sentences.			
I include propositional phrases.			

It is easy to construct rating scales like this, and they provide students with more detailed information than simple checklists.

Rubrics

Rubrics, the final tool, are more detailed and outline the criteria students should meet in various areas. For Kia a rubric could list that a good paper has one sentence for each main idea from the reading, that the ideas are linked using a sentence frame, and that some sentences include a prepositional phrase that adds details. Developing checklists, rating scales, and rubrics helps teachers make expectations clear and allows students to know exactly what they need to do to succeed.

When teachers develop rubrics for assignments and share the rubrics with students before they complete the assignment, the rubric provides a guide for the students as they work. The teacher can then use the rubric to provide formative feedback. Students can also work in pairs or small groups and assess each other's assignments using the rubric. In addition, writing the rubric helps the teacher to think through the assignment carefully and decide exactly what he or she expects the final student product to include. Here we include a rubric Kia's teacher could use to assess reports like the ones that Kia and her classmates wrote. This rubric is for students who are at intermediate or advanced levels:

	1	2	3
Genre components	Lacks a title, no statement of the components, information on only one or two subtopics, and no conclusion	Includes a title and a general statement on the topic, names one or two components, gives information on one or two subtopics, and conclusion	Includes a title, a general statement naming the components, information on each subtopic, and conclusion
Text structure	Lacks general statement that names components, has no clear subtopics, and paragraphs not connected by signal words	Some components named in general statement, one or two subtopics clearly developed, and some use of signal words to connect subtopics	Components named in general statement with each developed as a subtopic and sections connected by signal words, showing addition

	1	2	3
Grammar	Verb tense not consistent, sentences not complete, no use of prepositional phrases	Most verbs in present tense, most sentences complete, one or two sentences with prepositional phrases	Verbs written in present tense, complete sentences, some sentences with prepositional phrases
Vocabulary	Uses one or two technical words and no general academic vocabulary	Uses some technical vocabulary and some general academic vocabulary	Uses appropriate technical vocabulary taken from the reading and some general academic vocabulary

CONCLUSION

Teachers can use formative assessments to help ELLs and SELs increase their academic language proficiency. These assessments are designed to help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses and to determine next steps in instruction. The cycle for formative assessment begins with developing content and language objectives and then designing and teaching lessons. Next it moves to sampling student performance, analyzing the sample, and providing feedback. Teachers can use checklists, rating scales, and rubrics as tools for analysis of student work. They can also use these to have students evaluate the work of their peers. Throughout this process, teachers can involve students to ensure that they understand how they can continually improve their academic literacy.

REFLECT AND APPLY

We described different formative assessment tools including checklists, rating scales, and rubrics. Try developing each of these tools for different reading and writing assignments you give to your students. Be sure to include in the tool genre components, text structure, and grammatical structure and vocabulary. Use the tools to evaluate your students. Which tools were most helpful? Did the tools help you see how you could modify your instruction?