

Title: "STAIR: A System for Recording and Using What We Observe and Know About Our Students"

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Synopsis: This article presents a system teachers can use to record classroom observations that will help them diagnose difficulties and plan instruction for their students who are having problems reading. STAIR (System for Teaching and Assessing Interactively and Reflectively) can be used to record observations, make and revise hypotheses about student strengths and needs, and structure observations so that they can be presented to students, parents, and others.

On a STAIR form, the teacher records a hypothesis about a student's needs in reading, along with sources of information for the hypothesis and proposed instruction to address the hypothesis. The teacher implements the instruction and then fills out a form that records what the student read and did and whether the hypothesis was refined, upheld, or abandoned. On this form, the teacher again proposes instruction to address the hypothesis and continues through the cycle several more times. The observations recorded provide the teacher with a strong base for talking to the student and his/her parents about the student's strengths and needs.

Quote(s): "As teachers, our proximity to the action of literacy allows us to observe students' growth and development in reading. Information gathered from this privileged perspective can inform instruction and help gauge student growth and teaching effectiveness. Although observations can produce much that is valuable, this information may not be put to its best use if it is not carefully recorded, easily accessed, or readily communicated." (p. 260)