

Webinar 2: Handout 13

Guidance on field testing early grade reading materials

Field testing is a key step in the early grade reading materials development process. Field testing is the process by which prototypes (or initial versions) of the materials are trialed in classrooms before they are considered publishing-ready. Field testing provides valuable information about a variety of key indicators of book quality and the potential value of book use in early grade reading instruction, including:

- Appropriate level of difficulty for the target population
- Engagement and interest of learners in the materials
- Ability of teachers to use resources successfully for a variety of instructional purposes (e.g., teacher’s guide, story read alouds, etc.)
- Appropriate language
- Appropriate cultural context
- Inclusivity and positive representations and language related to gender, ethnicity, religion, ability or other characteristics
- Accessibility for students

Information on these indicators should be gathered in a systematic way from both teachers and students, using a common data collection tool across schools and data collectors. Feedback received should be used to modify the resources developed to ensure that the books are of the highest quality possible.

Field testing can take place at multiple points during the resource development process, and not all resources need to be field tested concurrently. For example, a materials development team may field test an initial prototype of the lesson plan structure in the teacher’s guide to verify that the layout and other aspects of design are acceptable by teachers. This means the team could develop only one or two complete lessons for a small group of teachers to “try out” and give feedback. Later, the team could field test completed stories to get children’s input on their content. As such, field testing should be viewed as an embedded, ongoing and iterative activity throughout the materials development process.

Steps in the field testing process

Before field testing:

- Prepare the materials to be field tested
- Prepare a tool for collecting information during field testing
- Prepare a protocol for field testing materials (what data collectors do when they arrive at the school, key activities, etc.)
- Train data collectors and others involved in field testing on how to field test materials and record feedback
- Select and contact schools and teachers
- Arrange transportation and other logistics

During field testing:

- Observe teachers and students using resources
- Record information on the field testing data collection tool

- Interview/conduct focus groups with students and teachers about their experience using the materials

After field testing:

- Compile feedback collected across field testing sites
- Analyze the feedback
- Share and discuss feedback amongst the materials development team
- Identify what may need to be modified with respect to the resources field tested
- Modify field tested materials based on findings
- Update field testing protocol and data collection tools, as appropriate, for next round of field testing

Additional resources:

Enabling Writers Workshop Program. (2016). Book Field Testing Toolkit. Available at <https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/resources/enabling-writers-workshop-program-guides-and-toolkits><https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/resources/enabling-writers-workshop-program-guides-and-toolkits>