

Chapter 11

Moderations of Students' Learning Records

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The moderation process ensures that placement of students is consistent across teachers, schools, and districts. It provides accountability by making public information about the effectiveness of using the Learning Record to inform and improve teaching and learning. Specifically, the purposes of the Learning Record Moderation process is:

- to provide a picture of student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics across schools and grade levels,
- to share with others beyond a single school site ways to improve student achievement,
- to provide trustworthy evidence that individual students at LR-registered schools are meeting, exceeding, or not yet meeting set standards, and
- to create and maintain consistent interpretations of standards among faculties from diverse sites.

For registered schools, the Center for Language in Learning serves as the external agency to validate Learning Record use for public accountability.

“Mockerations”

“Mockerations” are trial moderations held as practice and calibration exercises before the Site and Inter-Site Moderations are held. “Mockerations,” which are conducted by the LR coach and/or the site liaison, are especially important for teachers new to the Learning Record. Teachers learn from their peers what and how much evidence other teachers need if they are to match classroom teacher scale placements.

Site-Level Moderations

During the third quarter, three students' Learning Records from each teacher are randomly selected for moderation. To ensure a random selection as a safeguard against bias, the Center for Language in Learning provide a specific protocol for selecting records each year. For example, in 2003, beginning with student #2 in classroom rosters, the Learning Records from every fifth student in the class roster were chosen for teachers with one mathematics class; and, for teachers with more than one class, every seventh student from three class rosters was chosen. Teachers using the LR for the first year may choose any three students in their classes.

The teacher prepares the Learning Records of these students for outside review by summarizing the student's mathematical learning for the year thus far and placing the student at a level of each of the LR Mathematical Scales. A signed Parent Permission Form is collected and included with each record. The last name of the student and the teacher are masked for moderations. Three copies of one student's record are made and two copies of the other two student's records.

These records and student records from other teachers are reviewed at an on-site or regional moderation in March. The LR coach, in collaboration with site staff, conducts the Site Moderation.

Teachers, working in grade span pairs, calibrate their placements using copies of the Comment Form (see page 4), LR scales, and exemplars provided by the CLL. (Note: Exemplars for mathematics are not yet available.) Then, in small groups, for further calibration, one Learning Record provided by each originating teacher is reviewed using the following procedure.

- Each teacher introduces his/her student using the LR and the 3 copies.
- The group reads and discusses (in pairs) the scale placement of each LR.
- The group then discusses each teacher's LR—where the student was placed on the LR scale(s) and why. Discussion topics include (1) evidence for placement on a particular level of the scale(s) and (2) what other evidence might have been included to place higher on the scale.

Teachers in the small group then determine the scale placement and collaboratively write a summary of the comments on the student's Comment Form and remove the blue page. This record is now ready for sending to the Inter-site Moderation.

Following this calibration, in grade span pairs, teachers read the remaining LRs. Following the procedures modeled in the group, teachers go through the submitted records, analyze the contents, and then make a judgment, based on the evidence they see in the portfolio, about the LR level placement(s) for the student. Feedback to the originating teacher is written on the Comment Form.

Inter-Site Moderations

A similar process happens at the Inter-Site Moderation, where teachers representing all the registered LR schools review the submitted samples of students' Learning Records. Comparisons are made between the level placements made at the school (by the originating teacher and the site-moderation reviewers) and the placement made at the inter-site moderation. If there is a discrepancy between one of the site placements and the Inter-Site reviewers, the record is reviewed by an expert reader, i.e., an experienced one, at the Inter-Site Moderation. At each stage, the reviewers add their response to the Comment Form. (Comments of earlier reviews are masked.) The Comment Form, which includes feedback from all the reviewing pairs of teachers, is returned to the originating teacher following the inter-site moderation.

Results of the inter-site moderation are summarized each year in a report to provide a concerned public with information about the effectiveness of using the learning Record to inform and improve teaching and learning. This external validation allows the Learning Record to be confidently used for accountability purposes. (Note: Since there has been no full moderation held for the mathematics component of the Learning Record, the annual report contains information related only to literacy.)

Teachers who participate in a moderation find it is an extremely valuable professional development experience. The opportunity to review Learning Records

from other teachers' classes and to discuss what constitutes evidence of student learning with other teachers provides teachers with many ideas and much impetus for improving learning in their own classrooms.