

Up the Ladder Units: Accessing Grades 3–6 Writing Units of Study
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FAQ Video Transcripts

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Question: *How do teachers assess students in the UTL units?*

Hareem Atif Khan:

Built across the Up the Ladder units you're going to see student checklists that are much simpler than what you would find in the corresponding upper grade checklists, and they're really piecemeal, so teachers as well as students can really focus in on how do I look at writing just through the lens of structure? Versus how do I look at my writing just through the lens of elaboration and development? Versus how can I just look at my editing and my punctuation?

And that message of assessment isn't always going through so both kids and teachers will sometimes look at their writing and be overwhelmed by everything they see because the lens is just too broad. And so those checklists and even the way the entire book is structured, even the way the entire unit is structured, it really focuses skill upon skill upon skill, and it's easy to see which ones are structure lessons, which ones are development lessons, and which ones are where you're teaching the conventions, and to have a lens on each of those things separately as a way to teach and assess them.

Another thing that you're going to see on the Up the Ladder units is a lot of very deliberate coaching moves. Not just here's how you could coach kids, "you might, you might, you might," but the actual language, the actual verbiage of what you would say when you were doing a lean coaching prompt where you're giving formative feedback right there in the spot for "make sure that you are," "watch out for." Some of that tailoring assessment to on the spot what you're seeing in the kids' work feels a little daunting to teachers, and we feel like we've got to take all of this writing home to sit and assess it. The fact of the matter is a lot of assessment happens on the fly, and a lot of the teaching happens on the fly in direct response to that assessment in a way that's very fluid and on the go all the time within a classroom. So those little coaching moves that are in there should be really helpful to teachers because not only do they give you a lens for here's what you should be watching for, here are the predictable problems you could expect to see at the end of this bend, go in and coach in this way. So there's that tool in there that really should be a help.