



ENSURING FLN COMPLIANCE THROUGH NIPUN LAKSHYAS: THE PARADIGMATIC ROLE OF ANECDOTAL RECORDS AND PORTFOLIOS IN THE FOUNDATIONAL STAGE ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the NIPUN Bharat Mission have firmly established Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) as the highest educational priority in India's school system. The NIPUN Lakshyas are grade-wise, measurable learning benchmarks for children in Balvatika, Grade 1, and Grade 2, which define the irreducible minimum competencies every child must demonstrate before transitioning to Grade 3. However, a critical challenge in realizing this vision is assessment: the Foundational Stage explicitly avoids formal written examinations, yet systematic monitoring of FLN mastery is indispensable. While several qualitative assessment tools exist, including learning diaries, rating scales, checklists, running records, and observation schedules, this article makes a focused argument for leveraging two tools that are already institutionally established and professionally familiar to every teacher: anecdotal records and student portfolios. Rather than introducing new assessment instruments, the article proposes that these existing tools, when deliberately and systematically aligned with the NIPUN Lakshyas, can serve as powerful, teacher-friendly mechanisms for monitoring FLN compliance in every child. Drawing on empirical research from the past decade and key Indian policy documents, including NEP 2020 and NCF-FS 2022, the article examines how anecdotal records and portfolios can be repositioned from generic developmental documentation tools into targeted FLN compliance trackers—ensuring that no child crosses into Grade 3 without demonstrable mastery of foundational skills.

Keywords: NIPUN Bharat Mission, NIPUN Lakshyas, foundational literacy and numeracy, FLN compliance, anecdotal records, portfolio assessment, qualitative assessment, NEP 2020, NCF-FS 2022, Foundational Stage

INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places the attainment of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) at the apex of India's educational priorities. It states unequivocally that achieving universal foundational literacy and numeracy in all primary school children must be the highest priority of the education system, and that this goal must be accomplished as a national emergency (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020). This declaration reflects a global consensus: foundational reading, writing, and mathematical skills are not merely early academic objectives but the structural prerequisites upon which all subsequent learning is built (World Bank et al., 2022; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

The urgency of this mandate is borne out by disturbing global and national data. Even before the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 57 percent of children in low- and middle-income countries were learning poorly, unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of ten; by 2022, this figure had climbed to approximately 70 percent (World Bank et al., 2022). In India, while enrollment in primary schooling has achieved near-universality, the quality of foundational learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy, remains a matter of serious concern. Children who exit the early primary grades without adequate FLN competencies carry hidden academic deficits that often surface dramatically, as they advance through the school system and curricular demands intensify.

To operationalize the FLN mandate, the Government of India launched the *NIPUN Bharat Mission* (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) in 2021 (Department of School Education and Literacy [DoSEL], 2021). At the heart of this mission are the *NIPUN Lakshyas*, a set of precisely defined, grade-wise learning benchmarks that specify the minimum FLN competencies every child must attain across Balvatika-3, Grade 1, and Grade 2. These Lakshyas are derived from the comprehensive competency framework of the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022 and represent a carefully filtered set of non-negotiable foundational skills that determine a child's readiness for meaningful entry into Grade 3 and beyond (NCERT, 2022).

The NIPUN Lakshyas are a well-designed framework. But a framework is only as effective as the means through which it is implemented and monitored. And herein lies a significant practical challenge: the Foundational Stage, by design and by policy, excludes formal written examinations (NCERT, 2022). The NCF-FS 2022 and NEP 2020 both recognize that high-stakes testing is developmentally inappropriate for young children—that it narrows pedagogy, induces anxiety, and privileges performative recall over genuine understanding (Black & Wiliam, 2018; MoE, 2020). Without formal examinations, how are teachers to determine whether each child has genuinely mastered the NIPUN Lakshyas? The answer lies in qualitative assessment.

There is no shortage of qualitative assessment tools available to the early childhood teacher. Running records, learning diaries, rating scales, observation schedules, developmental checklists, peer assessment tasks, structured play observations, and teacher-made inventories all offer legitimate pathways to understanding children's learning. Each has its own strengths and pedagogical applications. Yet the realities of the Indian classroom, large class sizes, significant administrative workload, variable levels of pre-service training in assessment, and limited time for documentation, constrain the meaningful integration of qualitative assessment tools into everyday classroom practice.

This article argues that the most effective strategy for ensuring FLN compliance at the Foundational Stage is not to introduce new assessment instruments but to leverage the two tools that are already institutionally embedded in every school and professionally familiar to every teacher: anecdotal records and student portfolios. These tools are not theoretical proposals; they are part of the existing school documentation ecosystem. The critical move is to align them deliberately, systematically, and school-wide with the specific competency framework provided by the NIPUN Lakshyas. This alignment transforms tools that teachers already use into targeted FLN compliance-monitoring mechanisms, without adding a new assessment burden.

To develop this argument systematically, the article is organized around five interconnected thematic pillars. First, it examines the nature and significance of the NIPUN Lakshyas as a competency-based framework for ensuring Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) compliance. Second, it reviews the landscape of qualitative assessment practices in the Foundational Stage and establishes the rationale for focusing on anecdotal records and learner portfolios as authentic sources of assessment evidence. Third, it explores the mechanisms through which these assessment tools can be aligned with the NIPUN Lakshyas to document, interpret, and validate learner competencies. Fourth, it positions the Grade 2 to Grade 3 transition as the critical accountability checkpoint for verifying FLN attainment and readiness for progression. Finally, it identifies the systemic conditions necessary for the effective implementation of this assessment paradigm, including teacher capacity, assessment literacy, documentation systems, academic support structures, monitoring mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement. These five thematic pillars collectively constitute the conceptual framework that guides the analysis presented in this article (Figure 1).



Note. The five pillars are interconnected and collectively ensure that every child achieves FLN competence by the end of Grade 2, enabling FLN compliance upon entry to Grade 3.

Figure 1. Five thematic pillars underpinning the assessment paradigm for ensuring FLN compliance through NIPUN Lakshyas, anecdotal records, and learner portfolios in the Foundational Stage.

THE NIPUN LAKSHYAS: AN FLN COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE FOUNDATIONAL STAGE

The NCF-FS 2022 presents a holistic and developmentally grounded vision of early childhood learning across five domains: Physical, Socio-Emotional-Ethical, Cognitive, Language and Literacy, and Aesthetic/Cultural Development (NCERT, 2022). Within this expansive framework, it specifies detailed curricular goals, competencies, and learning outcomes for each stage of the Foundational Phase. This breadth reflects a sophisticated understanding of child development as multidimensional and integrated, recognising that no domain of early childhood growth can be treated in isolation.

Within this broad framework, the NIPUN Lakshyas occupy a uniquely critical position. They represent the irreducible minimum of foundational learning—those specific literacy and numeracy competencies that are so prerequisite to all subsequent academic engagement that their attainment must be treated as mandatory rather than aspirational. The Lakshyas span three areas: oral language and reading (including phonological awareness, decoding fluency, reading with comprehension, and vocabulary development), emergent writing, and foundational mathematics (including number sense, basic arithmetic operations, measurement, and spatial reasoning). These are specified as grade-wise progressions across Balvatika-3, Grade 1, and Grade 2 (DoSEL, 2021).

The design of the Lakshyas as sequential, grade-wise benchmarks carries important pedagogical implications. First, it creates a developmental progression that allows teachers to track individual children's growth systematically and to identify precisely at which point and in which competency area a child requires additional support. Second, it establishes a clear accountability standard: a child who has met all NIPUN Lakshyas by the end of Grade 2 can be considered FLN compliant—genuinely ready for the learning demands of Grade 3 and beyond. A child who has not met them is not yet ready, regardless of how well they may be performing in other curricular domains.

This distinction is crucial and often misunderstood. A child may demonstrate competence across 90 percent of all NCF-FS competencies while still not having attained two or three NIPUN Lakshyas related to reading comprehension or number operations. From a conventional reporting perspective, this child appears educationally successful. From an FLN compliance perspective, this child is educationally vulnerable because the competencies they are missing are not parallel to other competencies but prerequisite to them. FLN skills are the medium through which virtually all other learning occurs: the child who cannot read with comprehension cannot access written instructional materials across any subject domain; the child without number sense cannot meaningfully engage with quantitative reasoning wherever it arises in the curriculum (Kim et al., 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Children who enter Grade 3 without attaining foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) proficiency are vulnerable to what educational researchers describe as the *Matthew Effect*, whereby early deficits in reading and numeracy do not diminish through routine curricular progression but instead accumulate and intensify over time, leading to widening learning gaps and increasing educational disadvantage. (Stanovich, 1986; Pfof et al., 2014). Research also demonstrates that children who begin schooling with weak foundational skills rarely catch up with their better-performing peers. Instead, early learning deficits tend to persist and widen across successive grades, creating a cumulative pattern of educational disadvantage described as “starting behind and staying behind” (Spaull & Kotze, 2015). The NIPUN Lakshyas are designed to interrupt this cycle at its earliest stages by ensuring that every child acquires the foundational literacy and numeracy competencies required before exiting the Foundational Stage, thereby establishing the essential learning foundation needed for success in subsequent stages of education.

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT IN THE FOUNDATIONAL STAGE: THE LANDSCAPE AND THE CASE FOR FAMILIAR TOOLS

The Foundational Stage presents a distinctive assessment context. Formal written examinations, which are the dominant assessment modality in most of the school system, are explicitly proscribed by NEP 2020 and NCF-FS 2022 on grounds of developmental appropriateness and pedagogical soundness (MoE, 2020; NCERT, 2022). This is a sound policy, and research has consistently demonstrated that high-stakes testing in the early years is associated with curriculum narrowing, reduced time for play-based and experiential learning, heightened anxiety, and the displacement of formative assessment by preparation for summative performance (Black & Wiliam, 2018; OECD, 2023).

The absence of formal written examinations in the foundational stage (NCERT, 2022) does not signify the absence of assessment; rather, it represents a paradigm shift from high-stakes testing to continuous, child-centred, and developmentally appropriate assessment practices conducted through systematic observation, analysis of children's work and artefacts, interactions, and other authentic means that inform teaching and support learning. On the contrary, the early years demand richer and more sustained assessment than any other phase of schooling, because the stakes of undetected developmental gaps are highest at this stage and because the complexity of early childhood learning resists reduction to paper-and-pencil tasks. What is required is qualitative, continuous, and formative assessment: assessment that is woven into the daily fabric of teaching and learning rather than imposed upon it at periodic intervals.

The repertoire of qualitative assessment tools available to the early childhood teacher is extensive. Running records capture children's oral reading behaviors with precision and provide detailed diagnostic data on decoding strategies, fluency, and comprehension. Learning diaries allow children to reflect on and document their own learning experiences, developing metacognitive awareness alongside literacy skills. Rating scales and developmental checklists enable teachers to systematically map children's progress across multiple competency areas against predefined criteria. Observation schedules provide structured frameworks for purposeful classroom observation. Structured play observations capture mathematical and linguistic reasoning in naturalistic, child-centered contexts. Teacher-made inventories assess specific FLN competencies such as letter-sound correspondences, sight word recognition, or number identification through brief, targeted tasks embedded within daily instruction.

Each of these tools has genuine merit. Each can, in principle, be aligned with the NIPUN Lakshyas to generate evidence of FLN compliance. Yet the practical realities of the Indian foundational classroom—large class sizes, heavy administrative workloads, variable pre-service training in assessment literacy, and limited dedicated time for documentation and create significant barriers to the uptake of assessment tools that are unfamiliar, technically complex, or administratively demanding. The introduction of new assessment systems, however well designed, risks being received as an additional burden layered upon an already stretched professional landscape, resulting in superficial compliance rather than genuine practice.

This is precisely why this article makes a focused and deliberate argument for two specific tools: anecdotal records and student portfolios. These are not new proposals. They are already familiar to every teacher from pre-service training; they are referenced in school documentation frameworks; they are part of the institutional vocabulary of foundational education. They do not require specialized equipment,

digital infrastructure, or extensive additional training. What they do require and what they have often lacked is a deliberate and systematic alignment with the specific competency framework provided by the NIPUN Lakshyas. That alignment is the paradigmatic shift this article proposes.

ANECDOTAL RECORDS AS FLN COMPLIANCE TRACKERS

An anecdotal record is a brief, factual, written account of a specific observed incident that illuminates an aspect of a child's learning, behavior, or development. As an assessment tool, its power derives from its grounding in authentic, contextualized observations, it captures what a child actually did or said in a real learning situation, rather than how they performed under the artificial conditions of a test. A teacher who observes a child independently applying a decoding strategy to an unfamiliar word, explaining a mathematical pattern to a peer, or demonstrating phonemic awareness during a story-reading activity possesses evidence of foundational competency that is both richer and more reliable than a test score.

The key to transforming anecdotal records from generic developmental narratives into targeted FLN compliance instruments lies in their alignment with the NIPUN Lakshyas. Currently, many teachers who maintain anecdotal records do so in an undifferentiated manner, noting observations as they arise, without a systematic framework to determine which observations are most significant or how they connect to specific learning targets. This approach, while better than no documentation at all, does not yield the kind of structured evidence needed to determine FLN compliance.

A Lakshya-aligned approach to anecdotal recording organizes observations around the specific FLN competencies defined for each grade level. A teacher of Grade 1, for example, would maintain observation records organized under the Lakshyas relevant to that grade—oral language fluency, phonological awareness, decoding, reading with comprehension, emergent writing, number sense, and basic operations. Each anecdotal entry is tagged to one or more of these Lakshyas, creating an evidence base that directly maps onto the compliance framework. Over the course of a term, the teacher can review these records to determine which Lakshyas each child has demonstrated mastery of, which are emerging, and which have not yet been observed and can adjust instructional priorities accordingly (Black & Wiliam, 2018).

This approach respects the organic and naturalistic character of anecdotal recording while giving it a structural purpose. Teachers continue to observe children in the flow of daily classroom life; what changes is the intentionality with which they observe and the organizational framework within which they record. Schools can support this by providing teachers with simple observation templates aligned to the grade-wise Lakshyas—templates that serve as both a recording structure and a reminder of the specific competencies to watch for. Incorporating anecdotal record review into regular academic monitoring cycles and creating collaborative professional spaces where teachers discuss their observations, further strengthens the practice.

The cumulative power of systematically maintained, Lakshya-aligned anecdotal records cannot be overstated. Over the three years of the Foundational Stage, a teacher or a school possessing such records for every child has a longitudinal, evidence-based portrait of each child's FLN developmental trajectory. Patterns of strength and need become visible across time, enabling proactive intervention before gaps solidify into entrenched deficits. At the critical transition point between Grade 2 and Grade 3, this evidence provides the documentary basis for a structured FLN compliance review without any formal examination, and without any additional assessment activity beyond what skilled, intentional teaching already generates.

PORTFOLIOS AS FLN COMPLIANCE EVIDENCE REPOSITORIES

A student portfolio is a purposeful, cumulative collection of a child's work samples accumulated over time, selected to illustrate the child's learning progress and competency development. In the Foundational Stage context, a portfolio might include samples of children's drawings and emergent writing at different points across the year; records of books read independently or with support; worksheets and activity sheets illustrating mathematical reasoning and numerical understanding; teacher annotations

documenting observed competency demonstrations; transcripts or brief written records of oral reading performances; and reflective notes from parent-teacher conversations about the child's learning at home.

The strength of portfolios as FLN assessment tools derives from their longitudinal and multi-modal character. A single anecdotal observation provides a snapshot of a child's competency at a specific moment; a portfolio provides a trajectory showing not just where a child is but how far they have travelled, at what rate, and with what patterns of strength and difficulty. This longitudinal dimension is particularly valuable for FLN monitoring because foundational skill development is cumulative and progressive: later competencies build on earlier ones, and growth that appears slow at one point may accelerate significantly at another. A portfolio allows this developmental arc to become visible in a way that isolated assessments cannot.

Like anecdotal records, portfolios achieve their potential as FLN compliance tools when they are deliberately aligned with the NIPUN Lakshyas. An unaligned portfolio is just a collection of work samples without explicit connection to learning targets and provides evidence of the activity but not necessarily of competency. A Lakshya-aligned portfolio, by contrast, is organized to demonstrate progress toward specific FLN benchmarks. Work samples are selected and annotated by teachers with explicit reference to the Lakshya they evidence. A piece of writing is included not simply because it is representative of the child's written expression but because it demonstrates an emergent understanding of sentence structure, punctuation, or vocabulary that maps onto a specific literacy Lakshya. A mathematical worksheet is included because it provides evidence of number sense or operational understanding defined by a numeracy Lakshya (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Portfolios also serve multiple stakeholder functions simultaneously as a feature that amplifies their value as institutional tools. For teachers, they provide organized, documentary evidence for professional judgment about FLN compliance. For parents and caregivers, they make children's learning progress visible and comprehensible, supporting family engagement with the FLN mission. For children themselves even at the Foundational Stage portfolios can foster early metacognitive awareness: the practice of reviewing one's own work samples, however gently guided, builds the habit of reflection that is foundational to self-regulated learning. For school leaders, portfolios provide a body of evidence that can be reviewed at the system level to understand patterns of FLN attainment and need across classrooms and grade levels.

Critically, portfolios are tools that schools already possess. Every school that has children producing work has the raw material for portfolios. The task is not to create a new documentation system but to organize and annotate existing work samples within the framework provided by the NIPUN Lakshyas. This is a shift in purpose and structure, not a shift in workload. And it is a shift that can be implemented gradually and collaboratively, with school leaders and teacher teams working together to develop shared understandings of what Lakshya-aligned portfolio evidence looks like at each grade level.

THE GRADE 2 TO GRADE 3 TRANSITION: FLN COMPLIANCE AS A SYSTEMIC CHECKPOINT

The transition from Grade 2 to Grade 3 is one of the most consequential junctures in a child's educational career. It marks the boundary between the Foundational Stage and the Preparatory Stage, and it corresponds to a fundamental shift in the nature of learning itself: from the explicit acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills to the application of those skills as instruments for content learning across multiple disciplines. Grade 3 and beyond assume that children can read independently to access information, write to express and organize ideas, and perform mathematical operations to engage with quantitative concepts of increasing complexity.

A child who crosses this boundary without meeting the NIPUN Lakshyas enters a curricular environment that is structurally inaccessible to them. The consequences of this mismatch are well documented in the research literature: children who cannot access classroom materials disengage; disengagement leads to avoidance of learning tasks; avoidance deepens skill deficits; deepening deficits erode academic self-concept; and eroded self-concept reduces the effort and persistence that learning requires (Stanovich, 1986; Pfof et al., 2014). Without deliberate intervention, this cascade tends toward

grade repetition and eventual school dropout—outcomes that represent not only individual tragedy but significant systemic failure (UNICEF, 2023; World Bank et al., 2022).

The Grade 2-to-Grade 3 transition must therefore be treated as a systemic FLN compliance checkpoint, a moment at which every school verifies, through documented qualitative evidence, that every child has attained the NIPUN Lakshyas before progressing. This is precisely where the paradigmatic power of Lakshya-aligned anecdotal records and portfolios is realized. A school in which teachers have maintained systematic, Lakshya-referenced anecdotal records and portfolios across the three years of the Foundational Stage is a school that possesses, at the end of Grade 2, a rich and organized evidence base for every child's FLN compliance status without having conducted a single formal examination.

The transition review process based on this evidence is straightforward in design, though it requires institutional commitment in practice. Teachers review each child's anecdotal record file and portfolio, mapping the documented evidence against the complete set of NIPUN Lakshyas for Grade 2. Children for whom all Lakshyas are evidenced can be confirmed as FLN compliant, and transition to Grade 3 can be made with confidence. Children for whom gaps are identified receive a targeted remediation plan: structured, intensive, individualized or small-group instruction focused on the specific unattained competency, designed to be implemented either before the transition, during a structured intervention period, or with continued support in Grade 3. The evidence base provided by the anecdotal records and portfolio also informs the Grade 3 teacher, enabling them to begin the year with a clear, individualized picture of each child's FLN competency profile.

This process does not require new assessment infrastructure. It requires organized, accumulated qualitative evidence, the very evidence that Lakshya-aligned anecdotal records and portfolios are designed to generate, and the professional judgment to interpret that evidence in light of the compliance framework. What it does require is institutional commitment: school leaders who treat the Grade 2 to Grade 3 FLN compliance review as a genuine priority, create structured time for it within the academic calendar, and ensure that every teacher has the professional support to conduct it well.

SYSTEMIC CONDITIONS FOR THE ASSESSMENT PARADIGM TO WORK

The argument this article makes is grounded in a recognition of what is realistically achievable within existing institutional structures. Anecdotal records and portfolios are familiar, low-technology, institutionally embedded tools. But their transformation into systematic FLN compliance tracking mechanisms requires enabling conditions at multiple levels of the education system.

Teacher Capacity and Professional Development

The most critical enabling condition is teacher capacity. Qualitative assessment, even using familiar tools, requires professional skills that are not always adequately developed through initial teacher education: the ability to observe purposefully and analytically; to document observations with precision and economy; to interpret evidence of learning in relation to specific competency frameworks; and to translate assessment evidence into instructional decision-making. Professional development programs must build these skills explicitly, and must do so through embedded, school-based formats rather than one-time workshops, connecting assessment practice directly to the classroom realities of individual teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

School Leadership and Institutional Culture

School leaders play a decisive role in establishing the assessment culture within which teachers work. Where school leaders treat anecdotal records and portfolios as bureaucratic compliance activities—forms to be filled, files to be maintained for inspection, then teachers will engage with them superficially. Where school leaders treat them as professional tools that generate evidence for instructional decision-making and FLN compliance monitoring, reviewing them regularly, discussing them with teachers, using them to understand learning patterns across the school, then teachers are far more likely to engage with them substantively and consistently. Building this culture requires explicit, sustained leadership attention to the purpose and quality of qualitative assessment practice.

Alignment of Assessment With Instruction

Qualitative assessment, when divorced from instructional practice, risks becoming a mere administrative exercise with limited educational value. The paradigmatic shift advocated in this article requires anecdotal records, observational notes, and learner portfolios to be understood not as tasks separate from teaching, but as integral components of the teaching–learning process. When embedded within everyday classroom interactions, these assessment practices provide meaningful insights into children's progress, inform instructional decisions, and enable teachers to respond effectively to individual learning needs. Teachers who observe children with the NIPUN Lakshyas in mind are also teaching with the Lakshyas in mind: their observations of where children are relative to the Lakshyas directly inform the instructional choices they make in response. This integration of assessment and instruction is the essence of formative assessment practice and is the engine of the paradigm (Black & Wiliam, 2018; OECD, 2023).

Remediation Pathways

The identification of FLN gaps through anecdotal records and portfolios is valuable only if it is followed by substantive instructional response. Schools must have clearly defined, resourced remediation pathways: structured intervention materials aligned to the NIPUN Lakshyas, time within the school day for targeted small-group or individual instruction, and guidance for teachers on evidence-based approaches to foundational skill development. Identification without remediation is, at best, a missed opportunity and, at worst, a source of documented failure without support (Spaull & Kotze, 2015; Kim et al., 2023).

Family Engagement

Finally, portfolios in particular offer a powerful mechanism for family engagement with the FLN mission. Sharing portfolio evidence with parents and caregivers at regular intervals for explaining what the Lakshyas are, what the evidence in the portfolio demonstrates, and what families can do at home to support FLN development, extends the reach of the assessment paradigm beyond the school. Families who understand what foundational learning looks like, and who can see their child's progress toward it in concrete, artifact-based terms, become partners in the compliance effort rather than passive recipients of school reports (UNESCO, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The NIPUN Lakshyas represent India's most precise and ambitious commitment to ensuring that every child acquires the foundational literacy and numeracy competencies essential for lifelong learning. However, a commitment without a robust monitoring mechanism remains largely aspirational. Achieving genuine FLN compliance for every child, in every classroom and every school, requires systematic, reliable, and sustainable assessment of progress toward these learning goals. In the foundational stage, where formal examinations are neither appropriate nor prescribed, qualitative assessment assumes critical importance. Through continuous observation, documentation, interactions, and analysis of children's work, teachers can generate meaningful evidence to monitor learning and guide timely instructional support.

The qualitative assessment landscape is rich and diverse. Running records, learning diaries, checklists, rating scales, observation schedules, and structured play assessments all have legitimate roles to play in the Foundational Stage. But the practical realities of the Indian classrooms, the demands on teacher time, the scale of the enterprise, the variability in assessment training all call for a focused strategy: one that maximizes impact through the deepening of existing practice rather than the addition of new systems. Anecdotal records and student portfolios are that strategy. They are already in every school. They are already familiar to every teacher. They are already generating, in unaligned and often underutilized form, the very evidence that FLN compliance monitoring requires. The paradigmatic move is alignment: the deliberate, systematic, school-wide calibration of these familiar tools to the specific competency framework of the NIPUN Lakshyas.

When this alignment is achieved, anecdotal records become FLN compliance trackers which are longitudinal, contextualized, teacher-generated records of each child's progress toward every Lakshya.

Portfolios serve as FLN evidence repositories—cumulative, multi-modal, and stakeholder-accessible collections that document what each child knows and can do over time. Carefully aligned with foundational competencies, they provide a comprehensive picture of progress in literacy, numeracy, language, and broader developmental domains. Together with systematic observations and anecdotal records, portfolios create a robust assessment infrastructure that supports instructional decision-making and accountability. Through this evidence-based approach, the transition from Grade 2 to Grade 3 becomes not merely a bureaucratic promotion process but a meaningful FLN compliance checkpoint, where every school demonstrates that every child is adequately prepared for the next stage of learning.

The NIPUN Lakshyas are not targets to be met on paper. They are a promise made to every child who enters the Indian school system: that the system will not allow them to fall through the cracks of the foundational stage; that it will see them, assess them, support them, and equip them with the literacy and numeracy foundations they need to engage with the world of learning that awaits them. Anecdotal records and learner portfolios, thoughtfully aligned with the Lakshyas and sustained through institutional commitment, provide the practical means to monitor progress, identify learning gaps, inform instruction, and ensure accountability. Through them, the vision of universal FLN compliance can move from policy aspiration to classroom reality.

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