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# Introduction

Assessment is a critical element of successful instruction. Assessment helps teachers determine if the instruction they provide students has resulted in adequate student progress. It allows teachers to identify students who can benefit from a more accelerated instructional program and those who need more intensive instructional intervention and support. And, if the assessment has sufficient precision, it allows teachers to identify a focus for their instruction. In a sense, assessment provides teachers (and schools and parents) with roadmaps that indicate where their children *are* academically, and where they need to go.

Research has indicated that assessment is critical to successful instruction. An international study of reading achievement, for example, found that regular assessment was a key factor associated with student success in learning to read (Postlethwaite & Ross, 1992).

In recent years, state and federal education mandates have required schools and school districts to more closely monitor student performance across a number of content areas and grade levels. These types of large-scale, typically norm-referenced assessments are most valuable for school administrators and policy makers in determining general trends in achievement and recommending policies and procedures at the national, state, and district levels for improving educational quality. For several reasons, however, these kinds of assessments cannot provide teachers with the information they need to make instructional decisions for individual students. One problem is timing—it frequently takes months for teachers to receive assessment results. In some cases a student has already moved on to the next grade before results are available. In addition, the scores on these tests do not lead naturally to instructional changes. Most often, scores simply tell whether or not a student has achieved “proficiency” rather than providing information about diagnostic needs or instructional direction.

Beyond the large-scale, general assessments that provide snapshots of achievement for a large number of children, a number of other reading assessments that lead to more precise instructional interventions are available. Some are commercial standardized tests such as the group-administered *Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test* and the individually administered *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test*. Others, such as informal reading inventories (IRIs) and running records (Clay, 1993) are more informal in nature and are based on teachers’ ability to interpret the reading behaviors that they record. Still others, such as the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (Beaver, 1997) and the *Qualitative Reading Inventory* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2000) are hybrids of commercial standardized tests that include a strong informal, teacher-interpretation component. Most of these assessments provide teachers with an in-depth view of their students as readers—their level of achievement and, to some extent, their various strengths and areas of concern in reading.

If there is one major drawback to these sorts of assessments it is time. These and many of the other formal and informal reading assessments that are available to teachers take a considerable amount of time to prepare, administer, and score. The full-scale administration of an informal reading inventory, for example, can take one to two hours to give to a student and another hour (at least) to score and interpret. Although the data obtained from such an assessment are valid and valuable, the amount of time needed to administer such an assessment to every student in a classroom is prohibitive.

in mind, we feel confident in stating that these passages are on grade level and are equivalent, within each form, in terms of difficulty.

A few additional notes about grade levels and the way we've set up these assessments: We recommend having students read passages at their assigned school-year grade levels because this will help you determine their level of performance on passages that they are expected to master during that school year. In other words, while one third grader may be reading comfortably at fourth-grade level and another at second-grade level, this assessment enables you to determine how well both students will be able to read the grade-level texts you use for instruction. Students whose grade-level performance is excellent may not need repeated assessment. Those who struggle with the grade-level passage will need additional diagnosis. Retesting these students on grade-level test passages throughout the school year will easily allow you to gauge their growth.

## Directions for Administering *3-Minute Reading Assessments*

Administering these assessments is simple and straightforward. You simply ask students to read a grade-level passage to you and ask them to recall what they remember from the passage after they've read it. While students read and recall the passage, you monitor their performance for word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Specific directions are outlined below:

1. Present the student with a copy of the passage from *3-Minute Reading Assessments* that corresponds to his assigned grade level. Ask the student to read the passage orally to you in the way he might normally read the passage. Tell the student that at the end of the reading you will ask him to tell you what he remembers about the passage.
2. The student reads the passage aloud for 60 seconds. If she stops at an unknown word and does not attempt to pronounce it for 2 seconds, or if she attempts the word but clearly has little chance of reading it correctly, tell her the word and ask her to continue reading. During the oral reading, keep your copy of the passage in front of you. Mark any uncorrected errors that the student makes by drawing a line through the missed word. Errors include words that are mispronounced or that you provide to the student and words that the student omits. If a student initially mispronounces or omits a word, but corrects it, write and circle a *c* above the word to indicate it was corrected (and do not count these corrected words as errors). At the end of the 60-second period, mark the point the student has reached in her reading of the text.
3. After the student has read for 60 seconds, direct his attention to the beginning of the text and ask him to follow along silently while you read the text aloud. Read the passage to the child in a normal and expressive voice. (We ask that you read the text to the student to remove any difficulties he may have had in word recognition or fluency that could hamper his comprehension of the passage. Listening comprehension is a good measure of the students' reading comprehension [Biemiller, 2003].)
4. At the end of your reading, remove the passage from the student's view and ask her to tell you what she remembers from the passage. After she has retold the passage, ask her if there is anything else she remembers about what she read. If the student is unable or unwilling to retell anything at all from the passage, you may ask for specific information (for example, "What is the main idea of this story?" or "What was described in this story?").

*Note:* If the student has made few oral reading errors and has not reached the end of the passage within 60 seconds, you may, as an alternative to reading the passage to the student, ask him to read the balance of the passage silently. At the end of the student's

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reading, remove the passage from view and ask him to retell what he remembers from the reading. Keep in mind, however, that a source of any difficulty in comprehension may be subtle or undetected problems in word recognition or fluency.

After the student has retold the passage, the assessment is complete.

## Scoring and Interpreting the Assessment

Scoring *3-Minute Reading Assessments* is simple and quick. The following procedures should be followed:

### Word Recognition Accuracy (Decoding)

Word recognition is determined by calculating the percentage of words read correctly in the 60-second oral reading. Divide the number of words read correctly by the total number of words read (correctly *or* incorrectly). For example, if the student read a total of 94 words in the 60-second reading and made 8 errors, the percentage of words read correctly would be reflected in the following fraction:

$$\frac{86}{94} \text{ (86 divided by 94) } = 91.5\%$$

In other words, the student read 91.5 percent of the words correctly.

Instructional reading level is normally marked by a word recognition accuracy rate of 92–98 percent. Independent reading level is normally marked by an accuracy rate of 99–100 percent.

A normally developing student should begin the school year reading grade-level material at an instructional level and, by the end of the school year, at an independent word recognition level. For example, a third grader's performance on a third-grade passage would be instructional at the beginning of the year but independent by the end of the year. Students who perform at the frustration level at the end of the school year, or who do not demonstrate good progress over the year, should be considered for additional assessment to confirm their decoding difficulty. Such students may benefit from specific instructional intervention in decoding (see pages 59–60).

Note that the above progression does not apply to first grade. Although first graders should be able to read first-grade material with 99–100 percent accuracy at the end of grade one, no expectations should be made for the first six months of grade one. During this period, students are just gaining initial decoding skills and should not be expected to decode first-grade material at an instructional or independent level.

### Reading Fluency-Automaticity

One way reading fluency can be measured is through reading rate. Reading rate provides a measure of the extent to which a reader can automatically decode words, thus leaving cognitive resources free for the more important task of comprehending a passage. To determine rate, simply count the number of words the student has read correctly during the 60-second oral read. Words read correctly include those words that were initially misread but corrected by the student. Then, using the appropriate grade level and time period, compare the student's performance against the reading rates shown on page 10.

A student whose reading rate falls within the appropriate range shown above is performing at grade-level expectations. Students who fall below the range may be considered at-risk in terms of fluency-automaticity. Additional assessment may be

### TARGET READING RATES BY GRADE LEVEL

Grade	Fall wcpm*	Winter wcpm	Spring wcpm
1	0–10	10–50	30–90
2	30–80	50–100	70–130
3	50–110	70–120	80–140
4	70–120	80–130	90–140
5	80–130	90–140	100–150
6	90–140	100–150	110–160
7	100–150	110–160	120–170
8	110–160	120–180	130–180

\*wcpm=words correct per minute

appropriate for students who perform poorly at the end of the school year or who do not show improvement over the course of the year. These students may benefit from instruction aimed at improving reading fluency (see page 60). Students whose reading rate is above the range limits may be considered to be performing well in fluency-automaticity. However, an important caveat must be noted: Students who read exceptionally fast without attending to punctuation and other phrase boundaries, and who read without sufficient expression may also be considered at-risk in fluency. The following assessment for fluency-expression should be used with all students to give you the fullest picture of a student's fluency skills.

## Reading Fluency-Expression

Reading fluency is more than just reading fast. It is also the ability to interpret a text with appropriate phrasing and expression. You can measure this dimension of fluency by listening to the student's 60-second oral reading and rating it on the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (see page 11). Initially you may need to tape record the student's reading and listen to it in order to provide a rating for each of the four scales. Soon, however, you will be able to score the scales on the spot.

At the beginning of the school year, it is not unusual for students to score in the bottom half of each of the fluency dimensions (i.e., to have a total fluency score of 8 or below). However, by the end of the school year, students should be rated in the top half in each dimension when they are reading grade-level material (i.e., they should be able to achieve a total fluency score of 9 or above). End-of-year ratings in the bottom half for any of the fluency dimensions, or a total fluency score of 8 or less, may indicate a need for additional assessment or instructional intervention (see pages 60–61). The Multidimensional Fluency Scale is also useful for helping students evaluate their own reading and in developing their own understanding of fluency in reading.

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL FLUENCY SCALE

Rating	Expression & Volume	Phrasing and Intonation	Smoothness	Pace
Circle one →	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
<b>1</b>	Reads words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tends to read in a quiet voice.	Reads in monotone with little sense of phrase boundaries; frequently reads word-by-word.	Makes frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts.	Reads slowly and laboriously.
<b>2</b>	Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas but not in others. Focus remains largely on pronouncing the words. Still reads in a quiet voice.	Frequently reads in two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of choppy reading; improper stress and intonation fail to mark ends of sentences and clauses.	Experiences several “rough spots” in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent and disruptive.	Reads moderately slowly or too quickly.
<b>3</b>	Makes text sound like natural language throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.	Reads with a mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and some choppiness; reasonable stress and intonation.	Occasionally breaks smooth rhythm because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures.	Reads with an uneven mixture of fast and slow pace.
<b>4</b>	Reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Varies expression and volume to match his or her interpretation of the passage.	Generally reads with good phrasing, mostly in clause and sentence units.	Generally reads smoothly with some breaks, but resolves word and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction.	Consistently reads at conversational pace; appropriate rate throughout reading.
<small>* This scale is an adaptation of one developed by Zutell &amp; Rasinski, 1991. Kimberly Monfort, a third-grade teacher at Bon View School in Ontario, California developed the format above for the scale.</small>			<b>Total Score:</b> _____	

## Comprehension

How well students understand what they read is the ultimate hallmark of proficient reading. You can get a good sense of a student’s ability to understand a text through the retelling. When you are satisfied that a student has told you as much as he or she can remember from the passage, rate the recall on the Comprehension Rubric (see page 12). As mentioned in the Directions for Administering section, under some circumstances you may wish to have the student himself or herself read the balance of the passage silently. Use the same comprehension rubric to score the retelling whether you read the passage aloud to the student or whether you allow the student to read the passage silently.

A score of 3 or below suggests inadequate recall and comprehension of the passage. At the beginning of the school year, it is not unusual for a student’s recall of a grade-level passage to be rated at level 3 or below. By the end of the school year, student performance should be in the upper half of the scale (levels 4–6). Scores in the lower half of the scale at the end of the year should signal the need for a more in-depth diagnosis and perhaps instructional intervention in comprehension. See pages 61–63 for suggested instructional ideas to use with students who may have comprehension difficulties.

We went to the park. My mom and dad took me. I had so much fun. The park was big. There was a lot to do. I went on the swings first. I flew high in the air. My mom said not to go so high. I told her birds fly higher than me.

Then we went on the slide. It was the little one. My dad went on with me. My mom said he looked silly. I thought so, too. I was afraid of the big slide. It was too big. My mom and dad went on it. I was still afraid.

We fed the ducks. All the

ducks quacked. They sounded like car horns. Then my mom and dad sat. I played in the sand. It was a great day. I want to go again.

Name of student \_\_\_\_\_ Date of testing \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade 1: Form A**

We went to the park. My mom and dad took me. I had so much fun. The park was big. There was a lot to do. I went on the swings first. I flew high in the air. My mom said not to go so high. I told her birds fly higher than me.

Then we went on the slide. It was the little one. My dad went on with me. My mom said he looked silly. I thought so, too. I was afraid of the big slide. It was too big. My mom and dad went on it. I was still afraid.

We fed the ducks. All the ducks quacked. They sounded like car horns. Then my mom and dad sat. I played in the sand. It was a great day. I want to go again.

**Word Count – 137****Scoring**

Word recognition accuracy:

$$\frac{\text{Words correct}}{\text{Total words read orally}} = \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \quad \%$$

Fluency-Automaticity: \_\_\_\_\_ wcpm

Multidimensional Fluency Scale

Expression and Volume: \_\_\_\_\_

Phrasing and Intonation: \_\_\_\_\_

Smoothness: \_\_\_\_\_

Pace: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Comprehension: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments and Observations:

## ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING AIDS

### Word Recognition Accuracy (Decoding)

Divide the total number of words read correctly by the total number of words read (correct and incorrect). For example, if the student read a total of 94 words in the 60-second reading and made 8 errors, the percentage of words read correctly would be reflected in the following fraction:

$$\frac{86}{94} \text{ (86 divided by 94) = 91.5\% of words read correctly}$$

Instructional reading level: 92–98%.  
Independent reading level: 99–100%.

### Reading Fluency-Automaticity

Count the number of words the student has read correctly during the 60-second oral reading. Words read correctly include those initially misread but corrected by the student. Use this chart to interpret results.

Grade	Fall wcpm*	Winter wcpm	Spring wcpm
1	0–10	10–50	30–90
2	30–80	50–100	70–130
3	50–110	70–120	80–140
4	70–120	80–130	90–140
5	80–130	90–140	100–150
6	90–140	100–150	110–160
7	100–150	110–160	120–170
8	110–160	120–180	130–180

\*wcpm=words correct per minute

### Comprehension

After the student has completed the 60-second oral reading and after you have read the entire passage to the student, remove the passage from view. Ask for a retelling of what he or she remembers. Next, ask if there is anything else the student can recall from the passage. If he or she is unable or unwilling to retell anything, you may probe for specific information (e.g., “What is the main idea of this story?”). When the student has told you as much as he or she can remember from the passage, rate the recall on the Comprehension Rubric.

- ◆ Student has no recall or minimal recall of only a fact or two from the passage. **Rating Score: 1**
- ◆ Student recalls a number of unrelated facts of varied importance. **Rating Score: 2**
- ◆ Student recalls the main idea of the passage with a few supporting details. **Rating Score: 3**
- ◆ Student recalls the main idea along with a fairly robust set of supporting details, although not necessarily organized logically or sequentially as presented in the passage. **Rating Score: 4**
- ◆ Student recall is a comprehensive summary of the passage, presented in a logical order and/or with a robust set of details, and includes a statement of main idea. **Rating Score: 5**
- ◆ Student recall is a comprehensive summary of the passage, presented in a logical order and/or with a robust set of details, and includes a statement of main idea. Student also makes reasonable connections beyond the text to his/her own personal life, another text, etc. **Rating Score: 6**

### Reading Fluency-Expression

Listen to the student’s 60-second oral reading. Rate it on the Multidimensional Fluency Scale.

Rating	Expression & Volume	Phrasing and Intonation	Smoothness	Pace
Circle one →	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
1	Reads words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tends to read in a quiet voice.	Reads in monotone with little sense of phrase boundaries; frequently reads word-by-word.	Makes frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts.	Reads slowly and laboriously.
2	Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas but not in others. Focus remains largely on pronouncing the words. Still reads in a quiet voice.	Frequently reads in two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of choppy reading; improper stress and intonation fail to mark ends of sentences and clauses.	Experiences several “rough spots” in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent and disruptive.	Reads moderately slowly or too quickly.
3	Makes text sound like natural language throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.	Reads with a mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and some chopiness; reasonable stress and intonation.	Occasionally breaks smooth rhythm because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures.	Reads with an uneven mixture of fast and slow pace.
4	Reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Varies expression and volume to match his or her interpretation of the passage.	Generally reads with good phrasing, mostly in clause and sentence units.	Generally reads smoothly with some breaks, but resolves word and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction.	Consistently reads at conversational pace; appropriate rate throughout reading.

\* This scale is an adaptation of one developed by Zutell & Rasinski, 1991. Kimberly Monfort, a third-grade teacher at Bon View School in Ontario, California developed the format above for the scale.

**Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_