**Reading**

Proficient readers experience reading as a seamless process. They must be able to competently use the skills of **phonemic/phonetic analysis, word analysis and recognition, and fluency** with word meaning and prior knowledge. Reading comprehension skills at both literal and inferential levels can only be acquired with these pieces in place. It is a multifaceted process that requires identifying the words in print **(word recognition),** constructing and understanding from them **(comprehension)** and coordinating the identifying of words and meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate **(fluency**). Proficient readers make sense of a text not just from the words and sentences on the page but also from the ideas, memories, and knowledge they have learned and/or experienced that the text brings back to their consciousness by reading it. Skills acquired such as sight word recognition and knowledge of relevant vocabulary are essential to successful reading but will not hold up as the only skills required to be a proficient reader especially when reading complex text such as that found in the school topics of science, history and literature.

Reading at best is a complex process and the ability to develop skills beyond word calling for full comprehension of a text is what makes a reader proficient and competent in the process of reading. For students to become proficient readers they must be able to break apart and manipulate the sounds in words (phonemic awareness), know how to apply their knowledge of letter-sound relationships to sound out words that are new to them (decoding), continuously add to the number of words they can identify automatically (sight vocabulary), expand their knowledge of a variety of topics and vocabulary (background knowledge and vocabulary), and develop a proficient level of accuracy, rate, phrasing and expression (fluency). Proficient readers use a balance of cues and strategies to gain meaning from print. This is why the prior section to this document included the most basic pre-reading skills necessary for competence and proficiency in reading: phonemic/phonetic analysis, sight word recognition and conceptual concepts.

When we read we are making connections to prior knowledge that we have of the topic, setting, memory or experience from other times and places. If you think about when you have read complex text about unfamiliar topics, you were trying to understand it, and most likely had to read at a slower pace and reread sections to understand what you read. At the same time, you were pulling from pre-existing knowledge and your understanding of other experiences in order to fully comprehend the new and unfamiliar text. New and unfamiliar words might have tripped you up and you found yourself accessing the skills of contextual clues trying to interpret them from the context. You may have seen a mental representation (picture) based on these contextual clues in order to understand the text.

Competent readers are able to make predictions about text using picture cues to support the meaning, using language structure to predict the text by using the visual feature of print, linking personal experiences with the text, self-correcting when the cues do not match, reading fluently with expression, retelling what they've read and using appropriate strategies to read different text structures.

When children enter our classrooms, as teachers, we make assumptions about prior knowledge, skills and abilities that they have. The students who have missed a skill such as word recognition or experienced a lack of prior experiences to relate to print text are at a distinct disadvantage and many times go to extreme lengths to hide their deficiencies to adults. Some students will even manifest as behavior children to avoid having an adult see that the real problem is that they cannot read at a level equal to their peers. Many times, the students have a repertoire of skills that looks much like a piece of Swiss cheese. They have many pieces of the reading process that they have picked up along the way, and the parts they never learned. This prevents them from putting the whole reading process together to become proficient and able readers.

Good readers are mentally engaged and motivated to read and to learn. Children who read accurately, quickly, and in phrased units, often do better on assessments of reading. Their attitudes toward reading are more positive and they are more likely to read for pleasure. If reading isn't pleasurable or fulfilling, children won't choose to read, and then don't get the practice they need to become fluent readers and aren’t motivated to read because “it is just too hard” and the cycle of a frustrated and struggling reader is created. Like any other skill we want to become proficient in (golf, tennis, baseball, painting, acting etc.), it requires practice, practice, practice. The challenge for the classroom teacher becomes how to make the reading process successful in small steps, each building on the one before, without frustrating and alienating the student in order to attain proficiency.

The assessment pieces in the prior section under phonemic/phonetic analysis, sight words, sentence copying and conceptual concepts will help the classroom teacher to determine where the holes are and to begin remedial instruction in those areas. For students who are competent in those areas the next section of assessment is the actual reading process in the areas of:

* Oral reading rate and fluency
* Silent Reading and rate
* Comprehension

**Oral Reading Rate and Fluency**

Oral reading rate and fluency is the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with expression. Observing a child read orally is a way of measuring fluency, rate, accuracy, and the use of reading strategies to discover what may be hindering a child's reading progress. Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly to help them gain meaning from what they read. Fluent reading is not the same as decoding. Fluency derives from the reader's ability not just to decode or identify individual words but also to quickly process larger language units. When readers are unfamiliar with the particular language structures and features of a text, their language-processing ability breaks down. This means, for example, that teachers cannot assume that students who fluently read narrative or literary texts will be equally fluent with expository texts or primary source documents. Fluency begins to develop when students have frequent opportunities to read texts that are easy for them. Perhaps most important for adolescent readers, fluency grows as they have opportunities, support, and encouragement to read a wide range of text types about a wide range of topics.

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When assessing oral reading fluency, two measures are necessary to assess a student’s level:

* Words per minute and
* Fluency characteristics (mispronunciations, substitutions, insertions, omissions, repetitions, and reversals)

Jan Hasbrouck and Gerald Tindal have completed an extensive study of oral reading fluency. The results of their work have been widely accepted in the educational field as the standard for assessing reading rate in the area of words per minute (wpm). The results of their study were published in a technical report entitled, "Oral Reading Fluency: 90 Years of Measurement," which is available in The Reading Teacher in 2006 (Hasbrouck, J. & Tindal, G. A. (2006). Oral reading fluency norms: A valuable assessment tool for reading teachers. The Reading Teacher, 636-644.).

The table below shows the mean oral reading fluency of students in grades 1 through 8 as determined by Hasbrouck and Tindal's data. Oral reading rates beyond the 8th grade level are not listed since we generally do not read faster than what we can read at an 8th grade reading level.

**Oral Reading Rates - Hasbrouck, J. & Tindal, G. A. (2006)**

**Grades Rate WPM**

**One 53**

**Two 89**

**Three 107**

**Four 123**

**Five 139**

**Six 150**

**Seven 150**

**Eight 151**

**Silent Reading and Rate**

**Silent Reading** is the end result of the reading process. It is the ability to read with sustained attention at an adequate reading rate with good understanding. The ability to summarize what is read (main idea), recall facts from stories (details), remember the order of events (sequence), determine the effect of actions in the passage (cause/effect), define contextual words (vocabulary), guess what will happen next (prediction) and read between the lines (inference) are the essential skills a competent silent reader can perform after silently reading grade level passages. The reader must also be able to locate a single piece of information in text and integrate and synthesize information from longer or more complex texts such as those found in everyday reading in the classroom.

The pre-reading skills of phonemic/phonetic analysis, sight words, sentence copying and conceptual concepts and fluency and background knowledge are the taught subskills of silent reading and comprehension. Mastery of these skills is required to be a competent silent reader which allows the student to comprehend grade level texts. Numerous studies have found high correlations between oral reading fluency and silent reading comprehension. Students must be fluent readers to interpret text they read silently. Hesitations caused by a need to decode unfamiliar words interrupt the flow of the author's intended meaning. Word Recognition must be automatic at grade level or higher for the student to read with ease, accuracy, and rate. Students who fluently read silently are able to obtain information independently and accurately from what they are reading and remember, evaluate, and adapt what they read.

When assessing silent reading skills, the main components are the rate at which the student is able to read grade level text and answer simple and complex comprehension questions. Rates for silent reading are crucial indicators about whether a student will be motivated to read. If silent reading rates are slow and belabored by the lack of pre-reading skills, a student will rarely pick up a book to read for pleasure and more often than not, never attempt to read a technical piece of reading such as a text book.

Beginning readers are focused on learning to decode and spend most of their instructional time in oral reading of words and text. Beginning readers, usually grades 1-3, should read silently with ease and understanding at the same rates at which they listen and speak. When beginning readers are reading silently at this level reading is enjoyable. Their reading material is designed to be familiar and predictable so that the emphasis is to master decoding and not have to work on comprehension skills simultaneously. **Intermediate level** students, usually grades 4- 8, are learning how to integrate their mastered pre-reading skills while reading silently to gain new information from technical reading found in textbooks. They read independently with some guided instruction in applying comprehension strategies. Beyond eighth grade, readers are expected to proficiently read and comprehend at grade level and integrate the skills of synthesis and analysis by summarizing complex text, considering different viewpoints and understanding types and purposes of different genre. The students who are able to do this will experience success in high school and have little difficulty attempting a college/university curriculum and completing reading assignments in a reasonable amount of time and efficiency.

Reading can be classified in three stages:

* **Independent** - the highest level a reader can independently read printed matter with very few errors (one or less word errors in 100 words of text) and understand what is read (100% accuracy) on comprehension questions about the story. This is easy reading for the reader and requires no adult assistance.
* **Instructional** - the highest level a reader can read with only a small amount of assistance usually requiring the help of a teacher. While the reader is not independent s/he has adequate background knowledge for a topic, and can access text quickly with no or few errors (2 to 5 word errors per 100 words of text) and understand what is read (at least 80% comprehension) on simple recall questions about the story. Most classroom instruction is at this level and the majority of text that a child reads during the school day should not exceed this level.
* **Frustrational** – text that is too hard for the reader. Word errors are over 5 per 100 words of text and comprehension questions are below 70% accuracy. This is text the reader does not have the criteria for instructional levels of accuracy and rate. The lack of knowledge or background to understand the topic easily interferes with the comprehension of the passage read. The reader is easily frustrated and often will not even attempt to read the passage.

National normative silent reading rates are based on a study by Taylor, et al. involving over 12,000 students for all grades. The chart below delineates the words per minute by grade level that students need to acquire to be successful silent readers.

(Taylor, S. E.; Frankenpohl, H.; Pettee, J. L. “Grade Level Norms for the Components of the Fundamental Reading Skills.” EDL Research and Information Bulletin, no. 3. New York: EDL/McGraw Hill (1960): 22

**Silent Reading Grade Norms/Goals (Taylor, S. E.; Frankenpohl, H.; Pettee, J. L., 1960)**

**Grades Adequate Rate WPM**

**One 125**

**Two 150**

**Three 180**

**Four 220**

**Five 250**

**Six 270**

**Seven 300**

**Eight 320**

**Nine 350**

**Ten 380**

**Eleven 420**

**Twelve 450**

**College 480**

**Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. It is an intentional, active process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing. The reader is involved in a complex set of cognitive processes. Awareness and understanding of phonemes, phonics and the ability to comprehend or construct meaning from the text are all skills the reader must have in place before comprehension of the text can be achieved. The reader must also be able to comprehend the vocabulary in the text being read and know the meanings of enough words to have the material make sense. Readers who have strong comprehension are able to draw conclusions about what they read and answer basic comprehension questions about main idea, facts, sequence, inference and cause/effect. As you can see, comprehension involves not only basic reading skills but also thinking and reasoning skills.

Understanding what is read is comprehension and it is important because without it reading does not provide the reader with any information. Reading comprehension strategies must be refined, practiced and reinforced continually throughout life. Readers need to learn new tools for comprehending more difficult texts as they move through the grades in school. Textbooks and newspaper, magazine and journal articles are just some of the different types of reading a student must master in school and each poses a different set of strategies for comprehension to come easily.

The assessment pieces that follow will be presented in a manner in which the classroom teacher can check for understanding (comprehension) in the areas of:

* Main Idea
* Details/Facts
* Cause/Effect
* Sequence
* Vocabulary
* Prediction/Inference

Readers should be able to comprehend passages at their instructional reading level with 90% accuracy and the wpm noted for oral and silent readers. Students not able to do this at their grade level in school are candidates for remedial instruction in the area of reading.

**Informal Reading Inventory (IRI)**

What is an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI)? IRIs are individually administered diagnostic assessments designed for use by classroom teachers to obtain quick, efficient and reliable information about a student’s reading level, diagnose some specific reading problems and learn about the skills, abilities, and needs of the student to design a reading program. Typically, an IRI will provide **quantitative** information (grade level equivalent scores, percentage of accuracy, word recognition accuracy, and percentage of correct answers to comprehension questions) and **qualitative** information (word recognition strengths and difficulties and comprehension strengths and difficulties). After administering an IRI, a teacher should be able to determine the Independent, Instructional and Frustration reading level for the student. For beginning readers, a listening comprehension level can also be determined.

Usually an IRI consists of graded word lists (found in a prior section of this document under Sight Words) and reading passages ranging from preprimary level to middle or high school levels. After reading each leveled passage, a student responds orally to follow-up questions assessing different areas of comprehension and recall (main idea, detail, sequence, cause/effect, prediction, vocabulary, inference).

With this information the classroom teacher can match a student with appropriate reading materials, place the student in a guided reading group, design instruction to address the student’s noted strengths and needs, and document reading progress over time. IRI’s are the most quick and efficient way to diagnose the gaps in the abilities of a student who is struggling in the classroom. Reading levels indicated by comprehension are Independent 90% or higher, Instructional 75-89% and Frustrational 50% or below.

Included in the following pages is an IRI of reading passages for Oral reading rate, fluency and comprehension, Silent reading rate and comprehension and Listening comprehension for prereaders. This IRI of reading passages is provided courtesy of Readworks ([www.readworks.org](http://www.readworks.org))

*The non-profit ReadWorks is committed to solving the nation's reading comprehension crisis by giving teachers the research-proven tools and support they need to improve the academic achievement of their students. ReadWorks provides research-based units, lessons, and authentic, leveled non-fiction and literary passages directly to educators online,* ***for free,*** *to be shared broadly. The ReadWorks curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the standards of all 50 states. Most importantly, ReadWorks is faithful to the most effective research-proven instructional practices in reading comprehension.* [View our most recent Performance Update](http://www.readworks.org/sites/default/files/pages/ReadWorks_Winter_2014_update_f_rgb.pdf) *to learn more about ReadWorks.*

For commercially available tests, 3 instruments will be reviewed. They are the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (BRLI; Bader, 2005), Classroom Reading Inventory (CRI; Wheelock and Campbell, 12th edition), and the Comprehensive Reading Informal Reading Inventory (IRI; Burns & Roe, 2007)

**Bader Reading and Language Inventory, (BRLI; Bader, 2005)**

The *Bader Reading and Language Inventory* presents a much-needed, highly authoritative model for ensuring K—12 readers’ growth, assessing the effectiveness of specific reading approaches, and diagnosing a wide range of literacy needs. In it, teachers, teachers of adult students, reading specialists, and clinicians get a flexible approach to carrying out every aspect of effective reading and learning assessment–from a quick screening through a comprehensive reading assessment. Included are personal interviews and student reflection, observations, informal and formal tests, and diagnostic teaching, plus valuable research-based tools and guides that complement the assessment model and provide a balance of assessment practice that doesn’t over-test students. Available from Amazon.com.

**Classroom Reading Inventory (CRI-SW; Wheelock and Campbell, 12th edition)**

[**http://www.classroomreadinginventory.com/**](http://www.classroomreadinginventory.com/)

The Classroom Reading Inventory is a quick, easy-to-use professional tool for classroom teachers and reading specialists to accurately diagnosis the reading levels of individual students. This official Classroom Reading Inventory website is designed to provide to the purchaser [downloadable scoring forms](http://www.classroomreadinginventory.com/forms.html) and reading [case studies](http://www.classroomreadinginventory.com/cases.html) of common reading and learning problems encountered by teachers. The Classroom Reading Inventory provides a step-by-step process so that a teacher can administer the inventory in 15 minutes or less to accurately and quickly diagnose a student’s reading grade level, listening capacity and individual skills. The Classroom Reading Inventory is an all-in-one assessment kit for all reading levels, and is suitable for administration to both children K-12 and to adults. It models and shows how the text is administered and scored and what the results mean for practical application and remediation. Alternate assessment forms give the teacher additional flexibility and options in re-testing remedial students and assessing their specific skill progress. The Classroom Inventory is specially prepared for teachers and pre-service students with little or no experience with informal reading inventories, making it an excellent text for professors of education responsible for reading and literacy courses. It meets the needs of practicing teachers in the field, pre-service teachers being certified in reading and graduate students returning to renew and upgrade their state accreditation. The Classroom Reading Inventory is a good professional investment for educators, and can be used throughout the teacher’s professional career.

**Comprehensive Reading Informal Reading Inventory (IRI; Burns & Roe, 2007)**

A popular classroom assessment tool, this supplement is widely used by pre-service and in-service teachers to assess or test students’ reading progress. It also serves as a practical guide for reading specialists and as a focus for in-service workshops. Unique to this text are its K–12 scope and its abundant strategies (including forms) for assessing students’ vocabulary, phonics, and comprehension of text. - See more at: <http://www.cengage.com/search/productOverview.do;jsessionid=7405C8ED1C961025BB19D64A11294B8E?N=16+4294947858&Ntk=P_EPI&Ntt=818144593127305444912181846571963917547&Ntx=mode%2Bmatchallpartial#sthash.lfbH5U0b.dpuf>

All of these commercially available tests are suitable for identifying reading problems in the classroom and assigning appropriate grade level reading materials. They are not designed to help a teacher plan lessons for the child but rather assign the appropriate level materials.