

Part 2 – How Do We Evaluate Effectiveness of Instructional Efforts?

How to score and analyse a student's reading efforts



As with any intervention, it is important for teachers to assess whether reading fluency practise is improving students' performance. In this section we describe basic procedures for monitoring progress, identify important considerations for assessing effectiveness, and provide examples of what the progress-monitoring practises would look like.

Examining an Individual Student's Performance

By collecting regular reading performance of the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and examining patterns across multiple readings, teachers can identify individual student's needs. Teachers can use the following questions in making individual instructional decisions for students.

- **How fluent is the student's reading skills?** Fluency is determined by examining not only the number of words read correctly, but also accuracy. To determine accuracy, simply divide the number of words read correct by total words read (i.e. 45 words correct / 57 total words = 79% accurate, with 12 errors). What is the nature of the word reading errors? Patterns in errors can be determined by recording the mistakes students make while reading and examining the type and frequency of errors recorded. Word reading errors can be easily categorised in the following types: (a) decoding (student attempts to sound out), (b) omissions (i.e. after three seconds of hesitation, the teacher simply supplies the correct word),

(c) errors that preserve meaning (i.e. word read is highly related to actual text, such as reading “house” for home), and (d) errors that distort meaning (i.e. word read is unrelated to the text, such as reading “dip” when the passage is about dinosaurs). Students will sometimes self-correct (i.e. fix the word reading error within three seconds), which is not counted as an error and is an indication of comprehension monitoring. Also, students may re-read a phrase or word or two, which is not considered an error, but sometimes happens prior to a difficult word or when they feel the passage isn't making sense. See Figures 2 and 3 for examples of reading passages scored in this way.

Tanya's ORF Performance	
The Tenth Birthday Party	
For his tenth birthday, Carlos wanted to have a party at the neighborhood pool. Together, he and his mother made invitations for the party so that Carlos could send one to each of his friends.	12 20 33 35
On the morning of his birthday, Carlos ran outside to check the weather and was relieved to see a bright blue sky. His mother said, “Well, it looks like a perfect day for a swimming party. Now let's have breakfast, and then we'll get everything ready to take to the pool.”	46 59 71 82 86

Figure 2

Bill's ORF Performance	
The Tenth Birthday Party	
For his tenth birthday, Carlos wanted to have a party at the neighborhood pool. Together, he and his mother made invitations for the party so that Carlos could send one to each of his friends.	12 20 33 35
On the morning of his birthday, Carlos ran outside to check the weather and was relieved to see a bright blue sky. His mother said, “Well, it looks like a perfect day for a swimming party. Now let's have breakfast, and then we'll get everything ready to	46 59 71 82

Figure 3

- **What materials can be used in fluency instruction?** Teachers can use the results of ORF assessments to determine which materials would be appropriate for use in repeated reading sessions. Teachers should select materials that students can read with at least 95% accuracy and more than 20 words correct per minute. To maximise vocabulary and comprehension development and student motivation, we would like students reading as challenging and interesting materials as possible, within this accuracy guideline.

Examples of ORF Assessment

In this section we examine two examples of students with very different reading skills as a way to demonstrate the process of making data-based instructional decisions. Both Tanya and Bill are fourth graders who have similar ORF scores, and their reading performance was shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Although Tanya and Bill both read about the same number of words in one minute from the passage, their performances were quite different. Based on their readings, a teacher could develop a data-based description of their performance and even begin to make some plans for monitoring their progress. Table 3 shows important questions about their reading and how the answers lead to recommendations.

Table 3: Questions and answers for Bill and Tanya's ORF performance.

QUESTIONS:	BILL	TANYA
— How fluent is the student's reading skills?	Words Read Correct=56 Accurate but slow. He read a total of 59 words with 3 errors (95% accuracy); however, his score is significantly behind where typical fourth graders perform.	Words Read Correct=58 Inaccurate and slow. She read a total of 74 words with 16 errors (78% accuracy); however, her score is significantly behind where typical fourth graders perform.
— What is the nature of the word reading errors?	All errors were omissions and he self-corrected 3 times.	Word reading errors that primarily preserved meaning. She appears to guess the word based on the first letter and the context of the passage. Most errors were with multi-syllable words.
— What materials can be used in fluency instruction?	Fourth grade reading materials may be appropriate for using in fluency building because he is reading it accurately and may improve vocabulary and comprehension skills.	Fourth grade materials are too difficult for use in fluency building. May try second or third grade materials to determine accuracy and fluency rate.

Reference:

Teaching Tutorial 6: Repeated Readings to Promote Fluency

Beth Harn, Ph.D., University of Oregon and David Chard, Ph.D., Southern Methodist University

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