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## A Word About Readability Determination

As described above, four different passages for each grade level are presented in separate grade-level booklets. We have spent considerable time checking the readability of these passages before designating each to be at a specific grade level. In doing so, we applied either all or several of the following formulas: the Flesch Reading Ease Formula; the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Formula; the Fry Readability Graph; the Spache Readability Formula; and the Dale-Chall Readability Formula. As well, we tapped our own expertise as professors of literacy and researchers to level the passages.

In the end, readability is often a matter of judgment. It is well known that readability results will vary depending on which formula is used and that each formula has its own limitations and drawbacks. That said, there are currently no better alternatives that offer a more accurate or efficient approach to determining grade level for a particular reading passage. Thus, with all this 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.

- 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].)
- 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 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 57–58).

## 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 below.

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 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 pages 58–59). 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.

**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

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

**Grade 5: Form D**

John has been my friend for as long as I can remember.	12
Our houses are next to each other. In the winter, when the last of the leaves are off the trees, I can see into his family room from my window.	24 38 42
When I first met John, he was as shy as a field mouse. He got nervous every time I came near and seemed terrified of me. Once we got to know each other better, John came out of his shell. We discovered that we liked all the same things and disliked the same things, too. My mom said we should have been born brothers because we're so similar.	55 65 76 88 99 109 110
John and I play together every day now. Depending on how we feel, we either play at my house or his, or lots of times we venture outside to find something interesting to do. Together John and I make a great team. Someday we will open a detective agency and solve mysteries. For now we just pretend, and it is great fun.	120 134 143 154 164 172
We are no longer in the same class at school, but we still get together every day. Homework is not as much fun since we can't do it together anymore, but John still is my best friend. There is nothing as good as a friend like John.	184 195 207 219

**Word Count – 219****Scoring**

Word recognition accuracy:

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

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

Multidimensional Fluency Scale

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

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

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

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

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

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

Comments and Observations: