2025

BUILDING SKILLED READERS:

BEST PRACTICE IN READING INSTRUCTION

SESSION 3:

Assessing Reading Progress: Standardised, Diagnostic, and Formative Tools for Success

- Jacinta Conway

AND

Language Comprehension: A pathway to proficient reading

- Nancy Hennessy

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Language Comprehension: A Pathway to Skilled Reading

Nancy Hennessy
LDA Australia
nehennessy44@gmail.com

Currituck Sound
Kitty Hawk, North Carolina

Right to Read-Responsibility to Teach!






Literacy begins at birth. It is rooted in early social interactions and experiences that include regular exposure to oral language and print. ***Strong roots tend to produce stronger readers.***

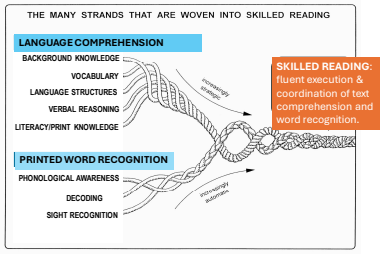
Ten Maxims

Reid Lyon

https://www.thereadingleague.org/media/what-we-have-learned-from-50-years-of-reading-science/

Gratitude

The Reading Rope, 2001
"A Visual Metaphor"



The Foundation

Even if the pronunciations of all of the letter strings in a passage are correctly decoded, the text will not be well comprehended if the child (a) does not know the words in their spoken form; (b) cannot parse the syntactic and semantic relationships among the words; or (c) lacks critical background knowledge or inferential skills to interpret the text appropriately and "read between the lines." Note that in such instances, ***"reading comprehension" deficits are essentially oral language limitations.***

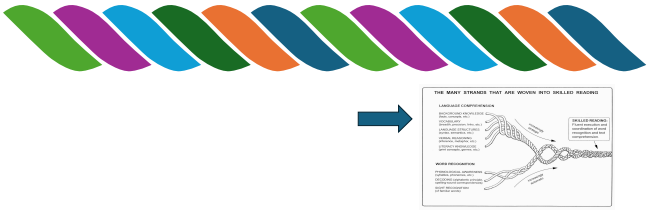
Scarborough, 2001

Wise Words...

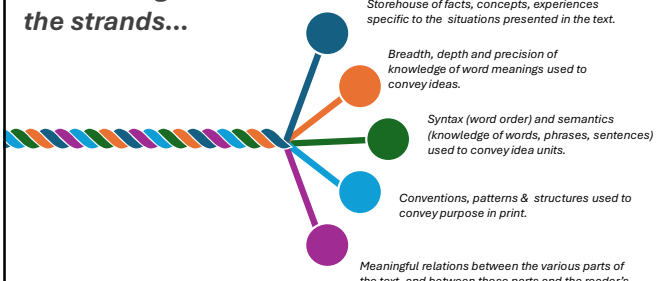
It is customary to consider separately the strands involved in recognizing individual printed words from those involved in comprehending the meaning of the string of words that have been identified, even though ***those two processes operate (and develop) interactively*** *rather than independently.*

Scarborough, 2001

The Language Comprehension Strands



Connecting to the strands...



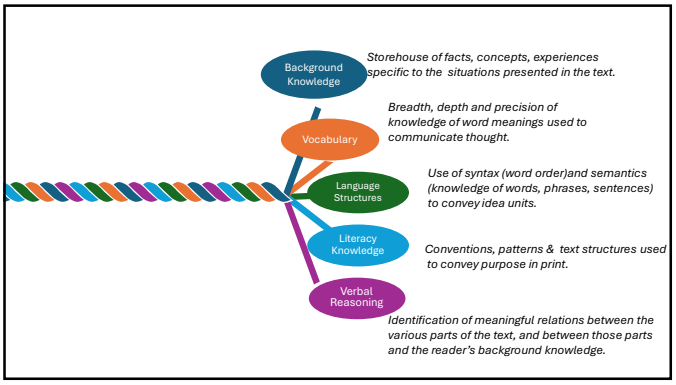
Storehouse of facts, concepts, experiences specific to the situations presented in the text.

Breadth, depth and precision of knowledge of word meanings used to convey ideas.

Syntax (word order) and semantics (knowledge of words, phrases, sentences) used to convey idea units.

Conventions, patterns & structures used to convey purpose in print.

Meaningful relations between the various parts of the text, and between those parts and the reader's background knowledge.



Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension

...is not a skill someone learns and then can then apply in different reading contexts. It is one of the most ***complex behavior****s that we engage in on a regular basis and our ability to comprehend is dependent upon a* ***wide range of skills and knowledge.***

Catts, 2021-2022

...it is the ***orchestrated product*** *of a set* ***of linguistic and cognitive processes*** *operating on text and* ***interacting with background knowledge, features of the text, and the purpose and goals of the reading situation.***

Castles, Rastles & Nation, 2018

The Rand Reading Study Group Report Heuristic, 2002

Comprehension involves a dynamic interaction between the reader, text, task & context…

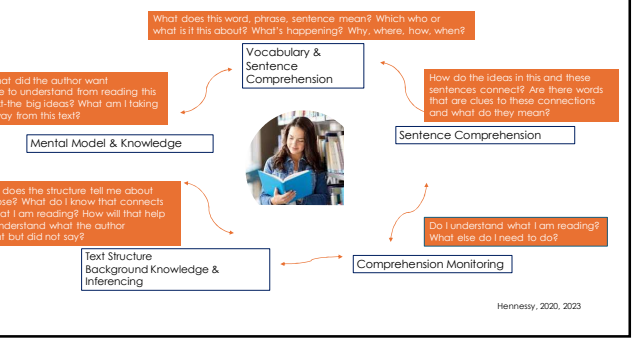
And then they arrived -- the minister's family and all my relatives in a clamor of doorbells and rumpled Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.
Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table, dipping them into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and their family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fisheye and plucked out the soft meat. "Amy, your favorite," he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

Amy Tan
Fish Cheeks, 1987

Meanings of words like clamor, grunted, existence, despair, platters, murmured, grimaced, plucked…

Knowledge of Chinese culture, holidays, manners…

Understanding personal narrative use of point of view…



Ultimate Goal: Knowledge

At the word level, the reader must decode individual word… access *meaning of the words* they hear or read.

At the sentence level, the comprehender needs to *work out the syntactic structure and sense of each sentence*. Simply deriving the meanings of individual words and sentences is insufficient.

In order to construct a mental model of the text, the comprehender needs to *integrate information from different sentences* to establish local coherence and to *incorporate background knowledge and ideas* (retrieved from long term memory) to *make sense of* details that are only *implicitly mentioned*."

Oakhill & Cain, 2007

The All-Encompassing Environment: The Socio-Cultural Context

While we tend to think of the classroom as the primary environment for learning, our students bring varied experiences that are shaped not only by school but also by their social and cultural surroundings.

Differences in these surroundings are often related to income, race, ethnicity, native language, or neighborhood.

An awareness of these differences and possible related challenges is critical to providing effective instruction that is based in the science and responsive to the needs of diverse learners.

Connections to Comprehension Instruction

How do we "teach comprehension"?

"Comprehension will suffer if a word has been incorrectly recognized, if the text includes words that are not in the reader's oral vocabulary, if the linguistic structure of the sentence is overly complex, or if the topic of the reading material is so unfamiliar that the reader cannot make inferences ("read between the lines") that are necessary to understanding the text".

Snow, C. E., Scarborough, H. S., & Burns, M. S. (1999). What speech-language pathologists need to know about early reading. *Topics in Language Disorders, 20*(1), 48–58. (p.51)

Weakness in ANY strand can disrupt reading, and weakness in SEVERAL strands can disrupt reading more.

Scarborough, 2018

Reflects fidelity with evidence

Curriculum agnostic

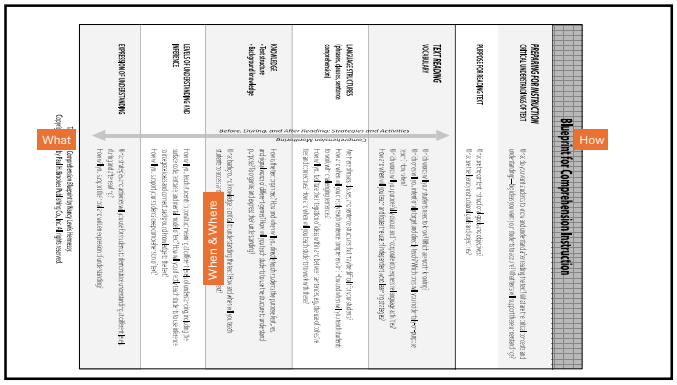
Identifies critical competencies for both processes & products

Calls for informed routines, strategies & activities

Structures & scaffolds instruction

Recognizes the ultimate goal of comprehension

The Reading Comprehension Blueprint



Vocabulary

Which words will your students need to know?
Which are worth knowing?

Which ones will you intentionally target and directly teach?

Which ones will you incidentally-on-purpose teach?
How? When?

How and when will you directly teach and foster the use of independent word learning strategies?

Which words will you purposefully discuss and incorporate into expressive language activities?

Informed Framework

Intentional Instruction	Incidental on Purpose Instruction	Intentional Independent Word Learning Strategies Instruction
✓ **Word Choice** ✓ **Simple Instructional Routine: Definitional & Contextual Information** ✓ **Complex Instructional Routine: Processing & Practice Activities**	✓ Structured Point of Contact Teaching ✓ Structured Teacher-Student Talk ✓ Structured Shared Reading ✓ Structured Independent Reading	✓ Using the Dictionary ✓ Using Context Clues ✓ Using Morphemic Analysis
Word Consciousness	**Word Consciousness** *Purposeful Activities*	**Word Consciousness**

Background Knowledge

What background knowledge is critical to understanding the text?

How & when will I explicitly teach students to access, build their knowledge and integrate it with the text?

General Guidelines

Focus on Skills & Content
-Literacy & Content Goals

→ **Focus on Big Ideas**
-Critical understandings
-Themed/topic units
-Integrated concepts/ curriculum

→ **Use Multiple Genres**
-Purposeful Reading
-Cohesive text sets
-Integration of texts

Provide Intentional Opportunities for Language
-Oral & written opportunities

→ **Distribute Reviews**
-Cumulative review of information/big ideas less to more complex

→ **Focus on Word Knowledge**
-Intentional building of vocabulary words conceptually related to big ideas

Based on Based on Neuman, 2019 & Cabell, 2023

Reflect & Connect…

Does your curriculum and /or instruction explicit address:

__ the acquisition and use of word meanings

__ the comprehension of ideas conveyed by sentences?

__ the role of text structures and signal words in making meaning?

__ the activation, assessment, building & integration of necessary background knowledge.

__ inference making at the sentence & text level?

__ the development of big ideas, themes conveyed by the text?

Reading & writing are tools for learning!

Ultimate Goal of Comprehension: Knowledge

What?

So what?

What's next?

Gratitude!

nehennessy 44@gmail.com

Learning Difficulties Australia

Learning Difficulties Australia is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to assisting students with learning difficulties through effective teaching practices based on scientific research.

www.ldaustralia.org

enquiries@ldaustralia.org

@LearningDifficultiesAustralia

@LD_Australia

Jacinta Conway

M. Learning Interventions (SLD), B.Ed Primary Education Consultant, Owner Impact Tuition, LDA Consultant

Experienced Educational Consultant & Literacy Specialist – Over 20 years of experience across diverse school systems in Australia and the UK, specialising in evidence-based literacy instruction.

Expert in Curriculum Development & Data-Driven Assessment – Focused on bridging research and practice, supporting Tier 3 interventions, RTI strategies, and inclusive education.

Director of a Thriving Tuition Business – Leads a team of tutors providing personalised learning, student acceleration, and targeted interventions.

Passionate About Transforming Educational Outcomes – Committed to empowering educators with impactful teaching strategies that support every learner's success.

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this country where we are meeting today. Our conference is being held on the lands of the Wurundjeri people, part of the Kulin people, and I wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners.

I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may be here today.' I also extend this respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in attendance today.

Jacinta Conway
EDUCATION CONSULTANT

Assessing Reading Progress

Standardised, Diagnostic and Formative Tools for Success

Why Reading Assessments are Crucial

- Identify struggling readers early to provide timely support.
- Guide teachers in tailoring instruction using data.
- Inform school-wide literacy planning and curriculum decisions.

The Purpose of Assessment

- Assessment is a process of drawing inferences about student learning.
- It serves both **formative** (guiding instruction) and **summative** (measuring achievement) purposes.
- The validity of an assessment depends on how its results are interpreted.

Validity, Reliability, and Common Pitfalls

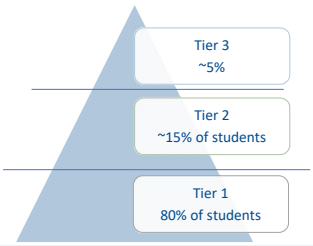
- Validity is about **how well** an assessment measures what it claims to measure.
- Common threats to validity: **Construct Underrepresentation** – The test doesn't fully assess the skill.
- **Construct-Irrelevant Variance** – Unrelated factors affect scores (e.g., poor reading skills in a maths test).
- Reliability vs. validity trade-off: Increasing reliability can sometimes reduce depth.

Assessment Design & Decision-Making

- **Assessments should match their intended purpose.**
- Standardised tests are often misused to judge school performance.
- Measuring student **progress** over time is challenging due to score fluctuations.
- All assessments involve trade-offs: Time assessing vs. time teaching.

Multi tiered Systems of Support

- **MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support)** is a framework that helps schools provide different levels of support to students based on their needs. It includes academic, behavioural, and social-emotional interventions to ensure all students succeed.

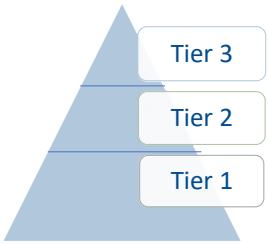


Types of Reading Assessments

Standardised	Formal, norm-referenced tests comparing performance to norms
Diagnostic	In-depth tests to pinpoint specific reading difficulties
Formative	Ongoing progress checks (often curriculum-based) to inform daily instruction

Types of reading assessments

- Screening
- Placement tests
- Curriculum-based Measures
- Progress Monitoring
- Norm-referenced
- Diagnostic



Assessment Schedules

Assessments in an RTI Framework

List of Assessments

- Align assessments to evidence
- Phonemic Awareness
- Systematic Phonics and Word Recognition
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Comprehension

Whole School Assessment Schedule

Whole School Assessment Schedule

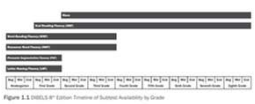
Administration, Tiers, Timings

Assessments

Assessments in an RTI Framework

DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)

- **Measures:** Key early literacy skills through short one-minute fluency tests. For example: letter naming, phonemic segmentation, nonsense word decoding, and oral reading fluency.
- **When to Use: Universal screener and progress monitor** for grades K–8. Administer to all students at least three times a year (e.g. Fall, Winter, Spring) ; administer weekly or biweekly to at-risk students for progress monitoring. Quick and easy, typically given by classroom teachers or support staff.



DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)

Interpreting Results: Each subtest has benchmark goals; compare student scores to grade-level benchmarks to identify risk status (e.g. below benchmark indicates need for intervention). Use **trend data** from repeated assessments to see if interventions are helping (are scores improving towards the goal?). Low scores in specific areas point to what skill to target – e.g. low nonsense word fluency suggests phonics deficit, low oral reading fluency suggests need for fluency practice.

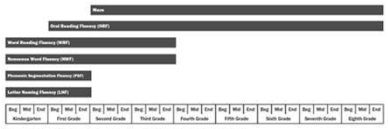


Figure 1.1 DIBELS 8th Edition Timeline of Subtest Availability by Grade

DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)

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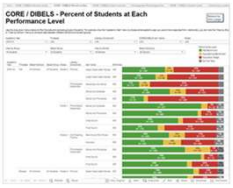
  *(Visual: **Placeholder for a DIBELS chart or screenshot of progress monitoring graph**)*

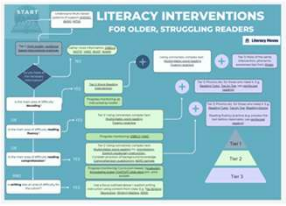


Assessment & Learning - Some reflections (2017)

- Disconnect Between Assessment and Learning Theories
- The Role of Assessment in Learning
- Types of Assessment and Their Challenges
- Assessment Design & Validity
- Assessment for Learning (AfL) & Formative Feedback
- Implications for Schools & Policymakers

Aligning Assessments with MTSS/RTI

- **Tier 1 (All Students):** Universal screening at beginning of year to identify risk; end-of-year outcome assessments.
- **Tier 2 (Some Students):** Diagnostics for at-risk students to target interventions; regular progress monitoring (e.g. bi-weekly).
- **Tier 3 (Few Students):** Intensive diagnostics (e.g. specialised evaluations) and very frequent progress checks to adjust individualized support.



De Haan, M. (2025). *Building skilled readers: Best practice in reading instruction.* [Webinar handout]. Learning Difficulties Australia. Webinar conducted on March 11, 2025.

WIAT-III (Weschler Individual Achievement Test) Reading

- **Measures:** Broad reading achievement – e.g. single-word reading, decoding of nonsense words, reading comprehension, oral reading fluency.
- **When to Use:** Standardised test administered individually (often by specialists) to get a comprehensive reading profile; typically used for in-depth evaluation or annually.
- **Interpreting Results:** Provides norm-referenced scores (percentiles, age/grade equivalents). Look for significant gaps between subtests (e.g. decoding vs comprehension) to identify specific needs.

Pearson Clinical. (2025). *Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - Third Edition (WIAT-III) Australian and New Zealand Standardised.* [Image of assessment materials]. Retrieved March 11, 2025, from https://www.pearsonclinical.com.au/en-au/Store/Professional-Assessments/Academic-Learning/Reading/Wechsler-Individual-Achievement-Test%2C-Third-Edition%2C-Australian-and-New-Zealand-Standardised/p/P100010035

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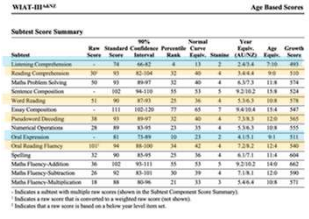

WIAT-III ANZ — Age Based Scores

Subtest Score Summary

Subtest	Raw Score	Standard Score	90% Confidence Interval	Percentile Rank	Normal Curve Equiv.	Stanine	Year Equiv. (AU/NZ)	Age Equiv.	Growth Score
Listening Comprehension	–	78	66-82	4	13	2	2.4/3.4	7-10	493
Reading Comprehension	30*	93	82-104	32	40	4	3.4/4.4	9-0	510
Maths Problem Solving	30	93	89-97	32	40	4	6.3/7.3	11-8	574
Sentence Composition	–	102	94-110	55	53	5	9.2/10.2	15-8	524
Word Reading	51	90	87-93	25	36	4	5.3/6.3	10-8	578
Essay Composition	–	111	102-120	77	65	7	9.4/10.4	15-4	547
Pseudoword Decoding	38	93	89-97	32	40	4	7.3/8.3	12-0	565
Numerical Operations	28	89	83-95	23	35	4	5.3/6.3	10-8	555
Oral Expression	–	81	73-89	10	23	2	4.1/5.1	9-1	511
Oral Reading Fluency	101†	94	88-100	34	42	4	7.2/8.2	12-4	540
Spelling	32	90	85-95	25	36	4	6.3/7.1	11-4	604
Maths Fluency-Addition	36	102	93-111	55	53	5	9.2/10.2	14-0	662
Maths Fluency-Subtraction	26	92	83-101	30	39	4	7.1/8.1	12-0	590
Maths Fluency-Multiplication	18	88	80-96	21	33	3	5.4/6.4	10-8	571

* Indicates a subtest with multiple raw scores (shown in the Subtest Component Score Summary).
† Indicates a raw score that is converted to a weighted raw score (not shown).
‡ Indicates that a raw score is based on a below-year-level item set.

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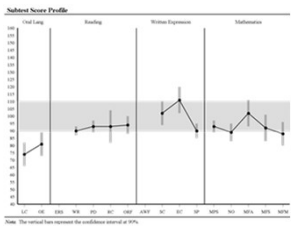
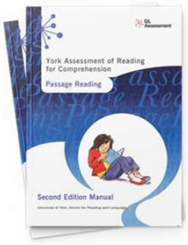


YARC (York Assessment of Reading Comprehension)

- **Measures**: Reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension in detail. Provides separate scores for decoding and comprehension aligned to the "Simple View of Reading".
- **When to Use:** One-on-one diagnostic reading test for various ages (versions for early years, primary, secondary). Often used after initial screening to diagnose specific reading weaknesses or to monitor progress post-intervention (has parallel forms for re-testing).
- **Interpreting Results:** Yields reading ages/standard scores for different components. Analyse whether decoding or comprehension is lower – a discrepancy can guide targeted support (e.g. vocabulary instruction if comprehension lags decoding). Use progress data from re-tests to evaluate intervention impact.
(Visual: Placeholder for YARC test materials or example student reading passage)



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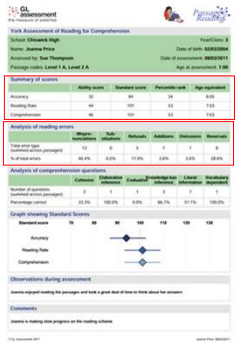

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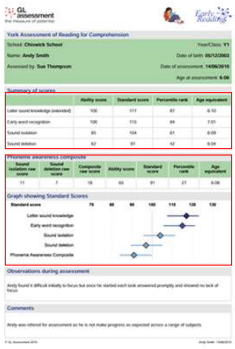
GL assessment

York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension

School: Chiswick School — Year/Class: Y1

Name: Andy Smith — Date of birth: 05/12/2003

Assessed by: Sue Thompson — Date of assessment: 14/06/2010

Age at assessment: 6-06

Summary of scores

	Ability score	Standard score	Percentile rank	Age equivalent
Letter sound knowledge (extended)	106	113	81	6-10
Early word recognition	106	113	81	7-01
Sound isolation	85	104	61	6-09
Sound deletion	82	91	42	6-04

Phoneme awareness composite

Sound isolation raw score	Sound deletion raw score	Composite raw score	Ability score	Standard score	Percentile rank	Age equivalent
11	7	18	85	91	27	6-06

Graph showing Standard Scores

Standard score: 70 80 90 100 110 120 130

Letter sound knowledge

Early word recognition

Sound isolation

Sound deletion

Phoneme Awareness Composite

Observations during assessment

Andy found it difficult initially to focus but once he started each task answered promptly and showed no lack of focus

Comments

Andy was referred for assessment as he is not make progress as expected across a range of subjects.

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  (Visual: Placeholder for YARC test materials or example student reading passage)


GL assessment

York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension - Secondary

School: Chiswick School — Year/Class: Y1

Name: Medley Thompson — Date of birth: 07/09/1996

Assessed by: Sue Thompson — Date of assessment: 10/06/2010

Passage codes: Supp. 1, Supp. 2 — Age at assessment: 13-09

Summary of scores

	Ability score	Confidence intervals	Standard score	Percentile rank	Age equivalent
Single Word Reading (SWRT)	37	29 to 54	<70	2	08-00
Reading Rate	74	73 to 75	89	23	10-05
Comprehension	73	70 to 75	116	86	Above 16-00
Accuracy (Supplementary passages only)	43	42 to 44	74	4	08-01

Please note that this is a raw score value

Graph showing Standard Scores with Confidence Intervals

Standard score: 70 80 90 100 110 120 130

SWRT

Reading Rate

Comprehension

Accuracy

Analysis of reading errors (Supplementary passages only)

	Misproduction	Substitutions	Refusals	Additions	Omissions	Reversals
Total error type (summed across passages)	0	10	0	1	0	13
% of total errors	0.0%	41.7%	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%	54.2%

Summarisation scores

	Ability score	Confidence intervals	Performance band
Summarisation	76	73 to 79	Above average

Observations during assessment

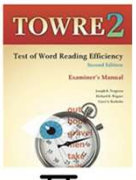
Medley read slowly and inaccurately but was quick to give full answers to the comprehension questions

Comments

Medley was referred for assessment for access arrangements.

TOWRE (Test of Word Reading Efficiency)

- **Measures:** Word-level reading **fluency** – two rapid subtests: **Sight Word Efficiency** (timed real word reading) and **Phonemic Decoding Efficiency** (timed pseudoword reading).
- **When to Use:** Quick (~5 minutes) standardized screening tool for ages ~6 through adult. Ideal for benchmarking basic reading skills or monitoring progress in interventions focused on decoding/fluency. Can be re-administered periodically (alternate forms available) to track growth in automatic word recognition.
- **Interpreting Results:** Yields standard scores and percentiles for word reading speed and accuracy. Low scores on TOWRE indicate difficulty with rapid word recognition (a hallmark of dyslexia). Use results to identify students who need fluency practice or phonics reinforcement; improving TOWRE scores over time reflects gains in reading automaticity.



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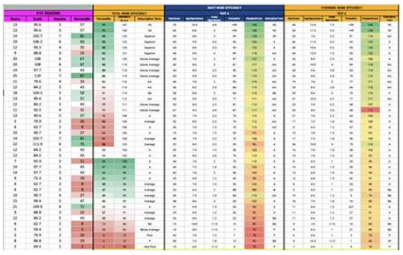
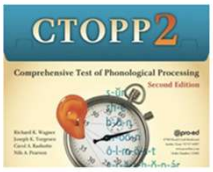


CTOPP (Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing)

- **Measures:** Underlying phonological skills critical for reading: phonological awareness (e.g. blending, segmenting), phonological memory, and rapid naming (quick retrieval of names for letters/numbers/colours).
- **When to Use:** Diagnostic assessment for students with suspected reading disabilities (like dyslexia). Administered individually by specialists to identify deficits in sound processing. Not a routine test for all students – used when a student struggles with decoding or fluency despite intervention, or as part of a special education evaluation.
- **Interpreting Results:** Examine composite scores (PA, memory, rapid naming). Low scores indicate specific phonological processing weaknesses (e.g. poor phonemic awareness or slow naming speed). These results help target instruction (e.g. intensive phonemic awareness training if PA composite is low) and can support identification of dyslexia (significant below-average performance relative to age). Progress can be tracked by re-testing after intervention to see improvement in these foundational skills.



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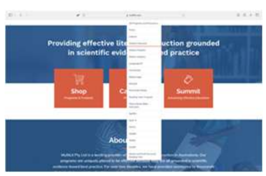
Descriptive Terms Corresponding to Scaled and Index Scores

Subtest	Subtest Description	Cognitive Ability measured	Scaled Score	Percentile Rank	Qualitative Description
1. Elison	Remove individual phonological segments from spoken words.	Phonetic Coding (PC): ability to process speech sounds (e.g. identifying, isolating, and blending) and general ability to learn phoneme-grapheme correspondences – similar to aspects of phonemic awareness and phonological sensitivity.	7	16	Below Average
2. Blending Words	Blend individual sounds to form words.		8	25	Average
3. Phoneme Isolation	Isolate individual sounds within words.		10	50	Average
4. Memory for Digits	Listen and repeat a sequence of digits of increasing difficulty.	Phonological Memory	6	9	Below Average
5. Rapid Symbolic Naming (RAN/LA)	Rapidly name numbers	Rapid Automatised Naming/Lexical Access (RAN/LA): The ease and automaticity with which objects, letters, numbers and quantities can be named.	7	16	Below Average
6. Rapid Digit Naming	Rapidly name letters.		8	25	Average
7. Blending Non-Words	Combine individual speech sounds to make non-words.		8	25	Average
8. Segmenting Non-Words	Say separate speech sounds that make up a non-word.		11	63	Average
			Composite Score	Percentile Rank	Qualitative Description
		Phonological Awareness	73	3	Below Average
		Phonological Memory	82	12	Poor
		Rapid Symbolic Naming	82	12	Below Average

MultiLit Literacy Assessment Suite

- **Measures:** A collection of tests covering key reading skills. For example, **WARP (Wheldall Assessment of Reading Passages)** for oral reading fluency, **Neale Analysis** for reading accuracy and comprehension, **Burt Word Reading Test** for single-word recognition, and **Martin & Pratt Nonword Test** for phonics (decoding) skills.
- **When to Use:** Part of the Australian *MultiLit* intervention program. Used to **diagnose the specific skill deficits** of struggling readers and place them at the right instructional level. Often administered at program entry (for placement), periodically to monitor progress, and at exit to measure gains. Useful for any structured literacy intervention framework to get a full picture of a student's reading profile.
- **Interpreting Results:** Look at each component test result to see where the student is strong or weak. For instance, a low WARP score (fluency) combined with a low nonword reading score indicates a decoding issue affecting fluency. If the Burt word reading score is low, the student's overall word recognition is below expectations. These diagnostics directly inform which reading components to target (phonics, fluency, comprehension, etc.). Progress is seen when each score improves—e.g., the student reads more words per minute on WARP after fluency practice.
*(Visual: **Placeholder for a composite image of MultiLit assessments – e.g. sample fluency passage and word list**)*



BURT Word Reading Test

- **Measures: Single-word reading ability**. Student reads aloud a graded list of words that increase in difficulty, without context. Often used to estimate a child's reading age (based on how far they get in the list).
- **When to Use:** Quick screening or placement test. Can be given one-on-one in a few minutes. Useful at the start of the year or intervention to gauge general reading level, or periodically to track growth in word recognition. Suitable for a broad age range (typically primary through early secondary years).
- **Interpreting Results:** Count the number of words read correctly and convert to a **reading age or standard score**. If a 8-year-old reads at a 6-year reading age, they are behind and need support. Watch for **error patterns** (e.g. frequent misses on longer words or specific phonics patterns) – though it's not a detailed diagnostic, errors can hint at phonics gaps or sight word gaps. An improving Burt score over time (e.g. reading age rising from 6 to 8 years within a year) indicates progress in overall word recognition ability.
*(Visual: **Placeholder for an image of a student reading from a word list or sample Burt test word list**)*

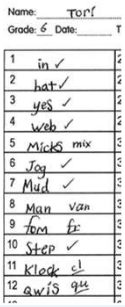
Core Phonics Survey

- Measures: A battery of phonics skills assessments – letter naming, letter sounds, reading and decoding of various phonics patterns (short vowels, blends, digraphs, long vowels, etc.), and some basic phonemic awareness/spelling tasks. Essentially, it checks which phonics patterns a student has mastered and which they have not.
- When to Use: Ideal for K–3 students. Often administered to all students in early grades 2–3 times a year (fall, mid-year, spring) to guide phonics instruction. Also used as a diagnostic for any student (even older) who is struggling with decoding – to pinpoint gaps in phonics knowledge. It's one-on-one and takes about 10-15 minutes per student.
- Interpreting Results: The survey is mastery-oriented. For each category (e.g. short vowels in CVC words, consonant blends, long vowel patterns), see which items the student missed. Any pattern where the student makes errors indicates a need for instruction in that area. Teachers use the results to form small instructional groups by need (for example, a group of students who haven't mastered digraphs). Progress is evident when, on the next administration, those categories show improvement (fewer errors or complete mastery). Ultimately, the goal is for the student to eventually get all or nearly all items correct, demonstrating a solid phonics foundation.
(Visual: Placeholder for a phonics survey record sheet showing skills categories and checkmarks)


CORE Phonics Survey – Teacher Record Form

Waddington Diagnostic Spelling Test

- Measures: Spelling proficiency across a range of word difficulties. Students spell a list of words (from easy to challenging) that assess knowledge of phonetic patterns, orthographic rules, and common spelling conventions. The test is standardized and provides a spelling age and diagnostic information about error patterns.
- When to Use: As a diagnostic tool for students with spelling difficulties or as a yearly benchmark for spelling skill. Often administered in late primary or early secondary grades to identify students needing spelling intervention. Could be given at the beginning and end of the year (or intervention period) to measure improvement in spelling.
- Interpreting Results: Convert the raw score to a Spelling Age and compare to the student's chronological age to determine if they are ahead, at, or below expected level. Analyse the types of errors made (e.g. phonetic errors, rule-based errors like dropping 'e' in "hopping" vs "hoping"). A significantly lower spelling age indicates the need for targeted spelling instruction. Successive administrations showing the spelling age rising or error patterns diminishing indicate progress.
(Visual: Placeholder for an image of a student writing a spelling test or a sample answer sheet with marked spelling errors)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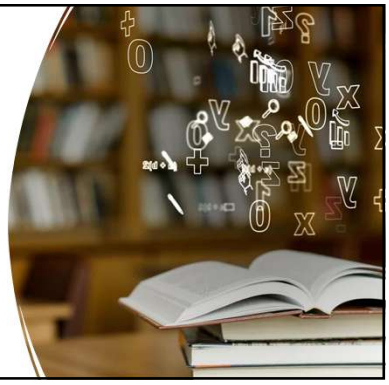
Waddington, N. J. (2019). *Waddington Diagnostic Spelling Test*. Waddington Educational Resources Pty Ltd. ISBN 1 875382 40 2.

Integrating Assessments

Into a Literacy Framework

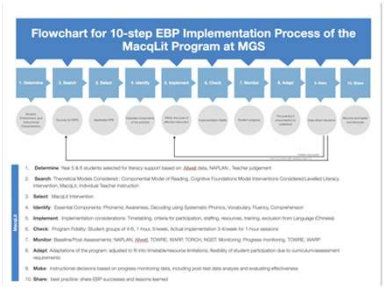


Implementation Assessments

- Holistic Planning
- Consistency and Training
- Data Management
- Collaboration

Holistic Planning

- **Holistic Planning:** Use a **combination of assessments** to cover all reading components (decoding, fluency, comprehension, etc.) – no single test gives a complete picture.



Torres, C., Farley, C. A., & Cook, B. G. (2012). A special educator's guide to successfully implementing evidence-based practices. *Council for Exceptional Children, 45*(1), 64-65.

Consistency & Training

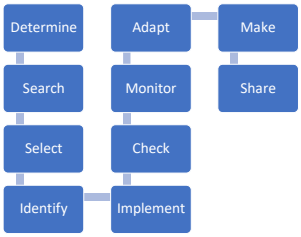
- Establish **standard procedures** for assessment administration and ensure staff are trained to administer and interpret each tool correctly. Make assessment a routine part of the literacy program, not an add-on.

Data Management

- Implement a system (spreadsheets or software) to record results from all these assessments in one place. This enables educators to easily see a student's profile and track growth over time, facilitating data-driven discussions.

Collaboration

- Regularly bring teachers, reading specialists, and administrators together to review the assessment data.
- Integrate assessment results into Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings or data meetings to plan instruction and interventions collectively.



Integrating Assessments

- Holistic Planning
- Consistency and Training
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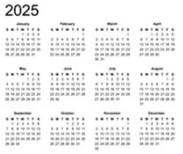
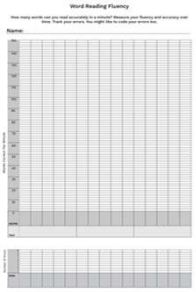
Building an MTSS Assessment Schedule

- **Beginning of Year: Universal screening** for all students (e.g. DIBELS benchmark, Burt Word test). Identify students for Tier 2/3 support. For those below benchmark, administer diagnostics (e.g. CORE Phonics, YARC) early in term to pinpoint needs.
- **Mid-Year** Second round of **screening/benchmark assessments** for all to check progress. Review Tier 1 effectiveness (most students should show growth). Tier 2 students: assess progress with tools like DIBELS progress monitoring or a fluency probe; consider additional diagnostics if making insufficient progress. Adjust intervention groups based on data.
- **Throughout Term: Progress monitoring** for Tier 2/3 students happens regularly (weekly or bi-weekly). Use quick measures (DIBELS, WARP) to track if interventions are working. Schedule team meetings every 6-8 weeks to review this data and regroup students or change strategies as needed.
- **End of Year: Summative assessments** for all (could be a standardised test and/or third DIBELS benchmark) to evaluate if grade-level outcomes were met. Tier 2/3 students might also re-take diagnostic tests (e.g. WIAT reading or Waddington Spelling) to measure growth due to interventions. Use this data to plan summer support or inform next year's grouping.



Using Assessment Data to Drive Instruction

- **Targeted Instructional Groups:** Use data to form **homogeneous groups** for specific skills. For example, group students who struggle with phonemic awareness for extra practice, based on CTOPP or CORE Phonics results. Regroup as data updates (flexible grouping).
- **Instructional Adjustments:** Let results inform what and how you teach in class. If a majority of the class shows weak comprehension (YARC results), increase focus on vocabulary and reading strategies in Tier 1. If an intervention group's progress monitoring is flat, try a new method or program for those students.
- **Setting Goals and Monitoring:** Establish **clear goals** for improvement (e.g. "By next month, John will read 50 WPM" or "Class average on phonics quiz will be 90%"). Use assessment data as the yardstick. Celebrate when data shows goals met; problem-solve when not.
- **Student Involvement:** Where appropriate, share simplified data with students to build ownership. For instance, show a student their growth chart in reading fluency or spelling. Teach them to set personal goals ("I want to increase my reading rate from 40 to 60 WPM"). This can motivate and make assessment less abstract.



Case Study - Improving Literacy Outcomes with Structured Assessment

- Step 1 = Universal Screening Overhaul
- Step 2: Targeted Intervention
- Step 3: Data-Driven Adjustments
- Results

Key Takeaways for Schools

- **Balanced Assessment System:** Employ a **mix of assessment types** (screening, diagnostic, formative, summative) to capture all aspects of reading. Each serves a purpose; together they ensure no student's needs are overlooked.
- **Early and Often:** Assess **early in the year and frequently** thereafter. Early identification of issues (through tools like DIBELS or Burt) prevents "waiting to fail," and regular progress checks keep interventions on track.
- **Data-Driven Culture:** Foster a school culture that values data. Teachers and leaders should regularly examine assessment results and be willing to adjust instruction. Use data meetings and collaborative analysis to turn numbers into action.
- **Professional Development & Support:** Invest in training staff to administer and interpret assessments. Ensure teachers have time and support to analyse data. Knowledgeable staff can select the right assessment for a question and use results effectively (e.g. knowing when to use CTOPP vs. when to use a simple phonics check).
- **Student-Centred Decisions:** Always tie decisions back to student benefit. Whether deciding on purchasing a new assessment or shifting an intervention, ask: "How will this help us help students read better?"

Conclusion & reflection

- **Choosing the Right Tools:** Align assessment choices with your goals and student population. Consider practical factors (time to administer, cost, training required) and **pick assessments that will yield actionable insights**. Quality over quantity – better to effectively use a few good tools than to collect data no one uses.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Treat your assessment framework as evolving. Solicit feedback from teachers – what's working, what's burdensome? – and be willing to adjust. The aim is a sustainable system that consistently helps students.
- **Reflect on Current Practice:** *Are we identifying struggling readers as early as we could? Do our assessments pinpoint why students struggle? How effectively are we using the data we collect?* Engage your team in these questions. Small changes (like adding a phonics survey, or instituting data meetings) can make a big difference.
- **Commitment to Action:** Encourage each participant (educator or leader) to decide on one improvement to make in their reading assessment approach. It could be trying a new progress monitoring method, or ensuring to review data after each test. Collective commitment will drive school-wide progress.
- **Final Thought:** The ultimate goal is to **empower every student to become a confident reader**. Assessments, when used thoughtfully, are powerful tools to guide us on that journey – they illuminate the path from where a student is to where they need to be. Let's use that light to ensure all our students thrive in reading.

Questions