

Florida's *Reading First* Assessment

# Principal's Guide 2005

A guide to help principals set up  
and carry out the assessment  
requirements of Reading First.

Florida Center for Reading Research  
<http://www.fcrr.org>





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# Principal's Guide for Florida's *Reading First* Assessment

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## Introduction and Purpose of Guide

Anyone who has worked as a teacher or principal in an elementary school understands the value of reliable and valid assessments of early reading progress. Timely and reliable assessments tell us which children are falling behind in critical reading skills so we can help them make better progress in learning to read. Reliable and valid assessments also help us monitor the effectiveness of our instruction for all children. Unless we regularly assess the progress of our children in learning to read, we cannot know which children need more help or whether our instructional plan is working for them. Because scientific studies have repeatedly demonstrated the value of regularly assessing reading progress, one of the critical goals of the *Reading First* initiative in Florida is to increase the quality and frequency of reading assessments for all children in the early elementary grades.

This Guide is designed to acquaint school principals with the assessment requirements of their *Reading First* grant. In order to successfully implement the assessment requirements of *Reading First*, each school should:

- have a team trained in the assessment procedures required by the grant;
- have one or more assessment team members skilled in training others in the assessment procedures;
- be able to organize the school for the assessment activities, working with teachers and administrators to meet the timelines for assessment;
- be prepared to enter assessment data into a web-based data management system, interpret data reports produced by the data system; and
- modify instruction and educational practices through an analysis of the student, classroom and grade-level reports generated by the web-based data management system.

This Guide provides a plan for principals to follow in setting up and carrying out these assessment responsibilities. Principals of schools that do not have a *Reading First* grant but want to follow this assessment plan will find this Guide essential to effective implementation. The following pages explain the *Reading First* assessment requirements, the training model for preparing school staff to carry out the assessments, the procedures for ensuring that the student data are reliable, and the resources for interpreting and reporting the data.

# Requirements

## Reading First Assessment Requirements

Every school that receives *Reading First* funds must have a coordinated plan to use four types of reading assessments to guide instruction and program evaluation in the school. These types of assessments are designed to capture the students' skills in the essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies.

The four types of assessment required by *Reading First* are as follows:

**Screening** – Screening tests provide the teacher a beginning assessment of the child's preparation for grade level reading instruction. They are a "first alert" that a child will need extra help to make adequate progress in reading during the year.

**Progress monitoring** – Progress monitoring tests keep the teacher informed about the child's progress in learning to read during the school year. They are a quick sample of critical reading skills that will tell the teacher if the child is making adequate progress toward grade level reading ability at the end of the year.

**Diagnostic** – Diagnostic tests can be used to measure a variety of reading, language, or cognitive skills. Although they can be given as soon as a screening test indicates a child is behind in reading growth, they will usually be given only if a child fails to make adequate progress after being given extra help in learning to read. They are designed to provide a more precise and detailed picture of the full range of a child's knowledge and skill so that instruction can be more precisely planned.

**Outcome** – Outcome assessments are given at the end of the year for two purposes. First, they can help the principal and teachers in a school evaluate the overall effectiveness of their reading program for all children. Second, they are required in *Reading First* schools to help districts evaluate their progress toward meeting the goal of "every child reading on grade level" by third grade. Schools must show regular progress toward this goal to continue receiving *Reading First* funds.

Table 1 provides a summary of the Reading First assessment requirements, when they are administered, which students will be assessed, and how the results can help the teacher and principal in making effective decisions about reading instruction in the classroom and school. The flowchart on page 5 portrays the yearly schedule for the four *Reading First* assessments and other required assessments for K–3 students in Florida.

**Table 1: Summary of *Reading First* Assessment Requirements**

Required Assessment	When Administered	Who Is Assessed	Probable Decisions To Be Made
Screening	Beginning of year	All K-3 students	Establish risk status Determine groups
Diagnostics	As needed	Non-responders to interventions	Plan instruction
Progress Monitoring	4 times a year at specified intervals	All	Differentiate instruction Re-adjust groupings
Outcome	End of year	All	Determine impact of reading program

### Screening and Progress Monitoring

The Florida *Reading First* grant requires the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to be used as the progress monitoring measure. DIBELS are able to be used for both screening and progress monitoring. They are reliable and valid and, when administered at the beginning of the school year, can fulfill the screening as well as initial progress monitoring requirements. The progress-monitoring schedule specifies four assessment times at 45-school-day intervals. The DIBELS measures and assessment times are shown on the flowchart and listed below.

#### Kindergarten

- Letter Naming Fluency (Assessment 1, 2, 3, 4)
- Initial Sounds Fluency (Assessment 1, 2, 3)
- Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (Assessment 3, 4)
- Nonsense Word Fluency (Assessment 3, 4)

#### First Grade

- Letter Naming Fluency (Assessment 1)
- Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (Assessment 1, 2, 3, 4)
- Nonsense Word Fluency (Assessment 1, 2, 3, 4)
- Oral Reading Fluency (Assessment 1, 2, 3, 4)

#### Second Grade

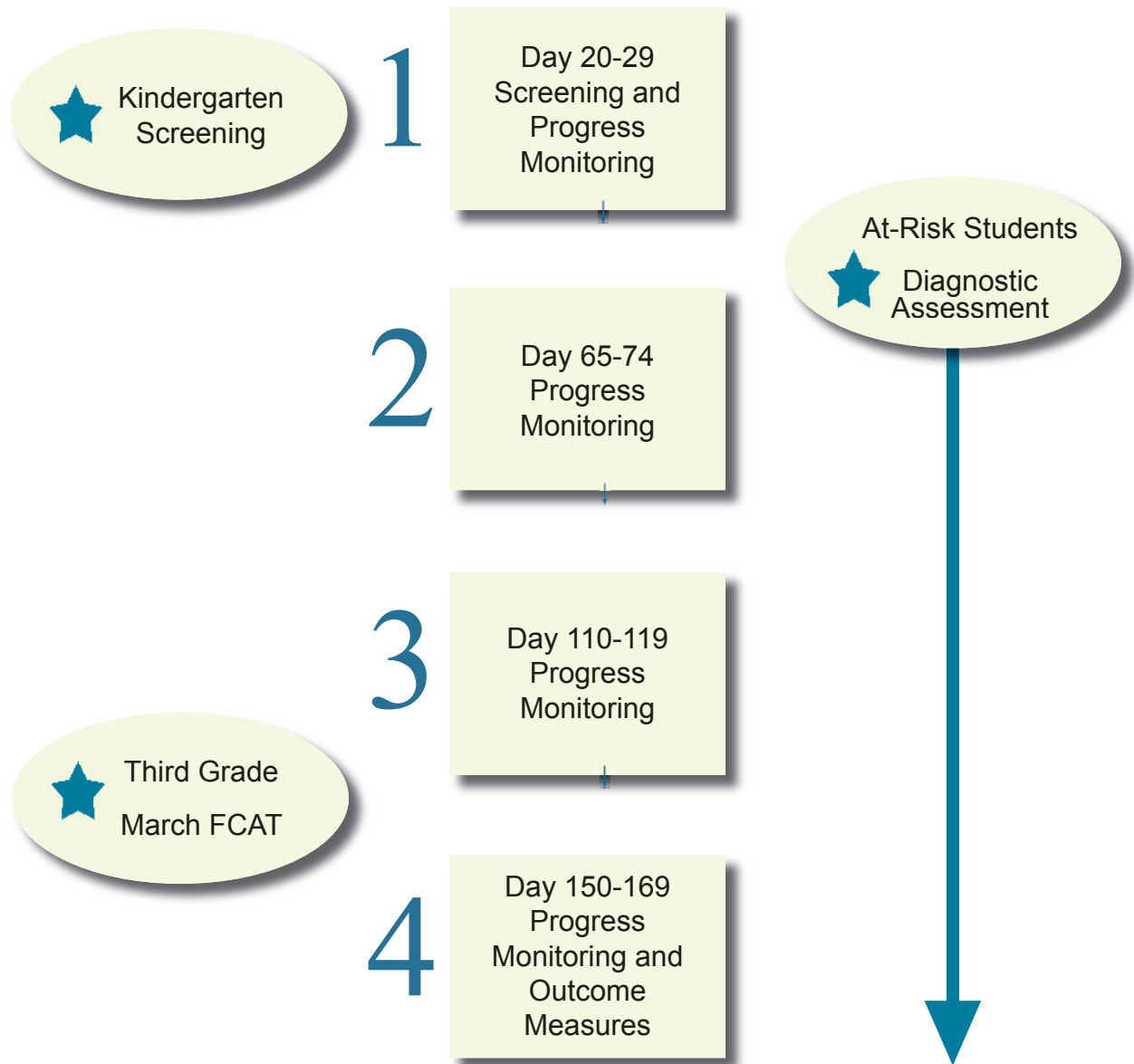
- Nonsense Word Fluency (Assessment 1, 2, 3, 4)
- Oral Reading Fluency (Assessment 1, 2, 3, 4)

#### Third Grade

- Oral Reading Fluency (Assessment 1, 2, 3, 4)

# Flowchart

## Flowchart of *Reading First* Assessments and State-Required Assessments



Brief descriptions of these progress-monitoring tests are as follows:

**Letter Naming Fluency** – this test assesses how fluently children can give the names of letters on a page. Students are shown upper- and lower-case letters arranged in random order. They are asked to name as many letters as they can in one minute.

**Initial Sounds Fluency** – this is a measure of early phonemic awareness. Children are presented with pictures and asked to say the first sound of a word depicted by one of the pictures and indicate pictures that begin with a particular phoneme or sound.

**Phoneme Segmentation Fluency** – this is a slightly more advanced measure of phonemic awareness. It tests children’s ability to pronounce the individual phonemes (sounds) in words that have three and four phonemes (e.g., cat, man, rest).

**Nonsense Word Fluency** – this is a measure of children’s knowledge and skill in applying the alphabetic principle. Children can earn points either by giving the individual sounds represented by the letters in simple non-words or by blending the sounds together and pronouncing the non-word as a whole word (i.e., bim, ral, stob).

**Oral Reading Fluency** – this is a measure of children’s ability to read grade level text fluently and accurately. Children receive a score based on the number of words in a passage they can read accurately in one minute.

**Time to Administer:** Most DIBELS measures take one to two minutes to administer. A kindergarten student can be assessed in five to ten minutes depending on the number of measures that are administered; a first grade student can be assessed in eight to nine minutes; a second grade student will require five to six minutes to assess; and a third grade student can be measured in four or five minutes. Therefore, a classroom of 20 students will require from one and one-half to three hours for the kindergarten assessments, three hours for the first grade measures, and one and one-half to two hours for a classroom of second or third grade students.

# DIBELS Assessments



# Diagnostic

## Diagnostic

In writing the *Reading First* grants, school districts were able to choose from a large selection of diagnostic measures with the provision that the measures meet the requirements for reliability and validity. The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) and the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) developed a menu of diagnostic measures meeting exacting standards for reliability and validity. Many districts used this resource in making their selections. That list of diagnostic measures is posted on the FCRR web site at <http://www.fcrr.org/assessment/pdf/files/diagnostictools.pdf>.

**When to Administer Diagnostics:** Diagnostic measures assess in greater depth one or more of the five essential components of reading. The decision to administer diagnostic test(s) should be based on the nature of the student's difficulties in acquiring the prerequisite reading skills essential to grade-level performance and if intensive instructional interventions are not meeting with measurable success. The selection of a specific diagnostic measure for an individual child may be guided by responses to the following questions:

- (a) What is the suspected area of reading weakness or strength that needs further clarification?
- (b) Is the diagnostic measure appropriate for the age and/or grade of the student?
- (c) Is the measure designed for individual administration, or can more than one student be tested at a time?
- (d) How long does it take to test the student, and is the information gained of sufficient depth to answer the teacher's concerns?
- (e) Are there less costly tests that provide the same information and that are available at the school?

For more information on the use of diagnostics; see "Recommendations for the use of Diagnostic Tests in Reading First Schools," written by Dr. Joe Torgesen, Director of the Florida Center for Reading Research, located in the appendix to this guide.

**Assessment Skill Requirements:** Diagnostic assessments typically require a moderate level of expertise in assessment. This expertise can be obtained through training or extended study and practice. School principals should be certain that individuals responsible for conducting diagnostic assessments are provided with sufficient training to competently perform this function.

Most diagnostics require a certain expenditure of resources to administer and score. It is important that principals review the availability of school assessment resources so that students most in need of further evaluation are given priority in the diagnostic assessment process.

**Time to Administer:** The time to administer and score diagnostic measures can vary from as little as ten minutes to over one hour.

# Outcome

## Outcome

The federal *Reading First* program requires that end-of-year outcomes be measured in each of the five critical areas of reading growth that are appropriate at each grade level (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Florida's *Reading First* assessment plan requires all *Reading First* schools to give a common set of outcome measures each year from kindergarten through third grade. The measures used are as follows:

### Kindergarten

Phonemic Awareness - Phoneme Segmentation Fluency

Phonics - Letter Naming Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency

Vocabulary - Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (PPVT III) - individually administered oral language vocabulary test

### First Grade

Phonemic Awareness - Phoneme Segmentation Fluency

Phonics - Nonsense Word Fluency

Fluency - Oral Reading Fluency

Vocabulary - PPVT III

Comprehension - Stanford Achievement Test, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition (SAT-10) - group administered reading comprehension subtest

### Second Grade

Phonics - Nonsense Word Fluency

Fluency - Oral Reading Fluency

Vocabulary - PPVT III and Gates MacGinitie Reading Test (GMRT) - group administered reading vocabulary subtest

Comprehension - SAT-10

### Third Grade

Fluency - Oral Reading Fluency

Vocabulary - GMRT and PPVT III

Comprehension - FCAT NRT Reading

**Vocabulary:** The Florida assessment plan requires a measure of oral language vocabulary at the end of each year through third grade. In second and third grade, there is a measure of both oral vocabulary and reading vocabulary. Since vocabulary development is such an important issue for the majority of children in *Reading First* schools, and since vocabulary growth is so important to the development of reading comprehension, it will be very useful to schools and districts to have a measure of vocabulary development that is not confounded with word reading ability. This will allow schools to determine whether their methods of support for vocabulary growth are sufficient to accelerate vocabulary growth in the children they serve. This reading vocabulary test is administered just before the fourth progress monitoring assessment and the oral language vocabulary test is administered during this fourth assessment period.

**Comprehension:** Assessing Reading Comprehension is another requirement of the Florida assessment plan. First and second grade students will be administered the SAT 10 reading comprehension measure during the week of FCAT administration or within a subsequent two month window. The FCAT (a highly developed and valid measure of reading comprehension) will serve as the comprehension test for third grade students. The SAT 10 in first and second grade and FCAT Reading in third grade will assess gains in reading achievement and allow an examination of growth in reading comprehension using a common format across the grades.

**Time to Administer:** The oral vocabulary measures will be individually administered and scored and will take approximately 15 minutes to assess each student. It is recommended that schools use the school-based assessment team to administer and score these measures.

The reading comprehension and reading vocabulary measures will be group administered in the classroom by the classroom teacher. These measures will take approximately 30 minutes to administer. Scoring of the comprehension and reading vocabulary measures will be the responsibility of the test publisher.

# Growth

## Training and Technical Assistance

FCRR is responsible for providing technical assistance to schools in the development and implementation of their *Reading First* assessment plans. The Assessment Program staff at FCRR provides several kinds of assistance to districts and schools as they design and implement their plans.

- First, staff is available to provide consultation about assessment procedures appropriate for inclusion in *Reading First* assessment plans and that may be needed for specific reading problems.
- Second, FCRR provides training to districts and schools in the administration of the progress monitoring and outcome assessments.
- The FCRR also provides all the materials (testing forms, stopwatches, administration and scoring directions, calculators, etc. ) to *Reading First* schools necessary to implement the DIBELS progress monitoring assessments during the four assessment periods.
- Finally, technical assistance is available by phone, e-mail, or on-site consultation.

**DIBELS Progress Monitoring Training:** Stage One training is designed to train individuals in the administration and scoring of DIBELS. The training is six hours in length and is followed by an optional half day to allow trainees to practice the measures with students. This initial Stage One training in DIBELS is generally provided to a team of district level staff knowledgeable in the areas of reading and/or assessment and the reading coach at each of the *Reading First* schools. These individuals are selected to participate in the initial first-stage training because, following a period of intense experience with testing students at each of the four grade levels with DIBELS, they return for Stage Two training.

Stage Two training prepares educators to present Stage One training to teams at each *Reading First* school. Stage Two training, often referred to as Facilitator Training, is a day-long experience where participants become familiar with using a scripted guide and the training materials to successfully conduct Stage One training.

**School-Based Assessment Team Training:** Each *Reading First* school principal will identify approximately five individuals to form the school's assessment team. Likely candidates for a school-based team would be the reading coach, school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, guidance counselor, media specialist, retired or substitute teachers, and assistant principal. Participants selected for DIBELS and other *Reading First* assessment training should be individuals who will implement these assessment procedures with fidelity; that is, they must always follow the standard administration and scoring procedures. Any deviation from those procedures could have an unknown impact on a student's performance and, ultimately, their access to remedial interventions.

**Principal and Faculty Training:** It is very beneficial for the school principal to attend DIBELS training or attend an overview of DIBELS. By doing so, he or she will learn how the information from the DIBELS and the web-based data management system can be beneficial in making administrative decisions about the school's reading program.

Finally, teachers and school staff should be provided with an overview of DIBELS and how these measures will be able to guide decisions made in the classroom and school. The FCRR has provided each participating school with a presentation about DIBELS and the other assessment requirements of *Reading First*. Teachers can request training in selected DIBELS measures. Following this training, they will be able to more closely monitor the progress of students receiving immediate intensive interventions. The reading coach, if he or she has attended the Stage Two training, is an excellent resource for this teacher training.

**Outcome Measure Training:** The FCRR has developed district-level training on the selected outcome measures (PPVT-III, GMRT, SAT-10). This training should take place in the early spring of the first year of the district's *Reading First* grant and will be conducted through a prepared CD and training script provided by FCRR. Attendees should be district-level assessment team members who will be able to train school-based teams in the administration and scoring of the oral vocabulary test and train teachers in the group-administered outcome measures in reading vocabulary and reading comprehension.



# Support

## Summary

This *Reading First* training design was developed to ensure that schools and school districts would be able to build capacity for training teams at current and future *Reading First* schools as well as other district schools wishing to follow the *Reading First* assessment plan.

The FCRR maintains a database of all individuals who have participated in DIBELS training, both Stage One and Stage Two. Principals may request information regarding the database by contacting [assessments@fcrr.org](mailto:assessments@fcrr.org).



## Reading First Assessment Process and Time Frame

The following chart provides an overview of specific activities that will be necessary to implement each school's *Reading First* assessment plan. Greater detail on this process is made available to Reading Coaches and district level reading contacts for the *Reading First* program.

## Reading First Assessment Process and Time Frame

Time Frame	Activity
During the spring/summer after districts/schools receive their Reading First grants	FCRR trains the district level assessment teams in the progress monitoring tests for grades K-3. All materials required for the tests will be provided by the FCRR
20-29 school days into the school year	Initial progress monitoring tests administered by district level team or school based teams if they have been trained
As testing is completed in each class/school	Data from the progress monitoring tests are entered into the PMRN
After assessment data are entered	Reports for individual children and classes will be available immediately to teachers, parents, principals, and district staff
October	As needed, FCRR trains members of district level teams to train additional personnel in the progress monitoring tests
November	District training Facilitators train school level assessment teams for school progress monitoring
65-74 school days into the school year	School based assessment teams administer second progress monitoring tests in their school with assistance from district level teams where necessary
As testing is completed in each class/school	Data from the progress monitoring tests are entered into the PMRN
After assessment data are entered	Reports for individual children and classes will be available immediately to teachers, parents, principals, and district staff
January	Districts will order the required assessment materials for end-of-year outcome assessments in oral and reading vocabulary and reading comprehension  FCRR provides district training materials to staff in administration procedures for the end-of-year outcome assessments
110-119 school days into the school year	School based assessment teams administer third progress monitoring tests in their school with assistance from district level teams where necessary
As testing is completed in each class/school	Data from the progress monitoring tests are entered into the PMRN
After assessment data are entered	Reports for individual children and classes will be available immediately to teachers, parents, principals, and district staff
February - April	District Facilitators train school level teams and classroom teachers on outcome assessments
March - May	Teachers administer reading vocabulary and reading comprehension measures
5 Days After Testing Completed	Schools/districts submit reading comprehension and reading vocabulary test forms to designated publisher(s)
150-169 school days into the school year	School level teams administer the fourth and final progress monitoring assessment and oral vocabulary outcome assessment
As testing is completed in each class/school	Data from the progress monitoring tests are entered into PMRN
After assessment data are entered and scores on outcome tests are received by the publisher	Reports containing progress monitoring and outcome assessment data will be available immediately to teachers, parents, principals, and district staff



# Reliability

## **Reliability Procedures Addressing Administration and Scoring**

The FCRR will be determining the reliability of DIBELS measures beginning with the second assessment period in Year 1 of each district grant. In years following the first year, reliability of measurement will be assessed at selected assessment periods. The purpose of this reliability process is to ensure accuracy in the administration and scoring of the DIBELS measures. The reliability procedures will be a test-retest process occurring within one month of the end of the scheduled assessment period for the district. Students from one grade level will be selected from the PMRN database according to a random selection procedure. Each school will be provided with names for a minimum of 5 students (maximum of 50 students) for the selected grade levels. Schools will be provided with an equivalent form of DIBELS by the FCRR. Schools will assign an examiner to retest the student; this examiner will be different from the one who performed the original assessment. Reliability reassessments must be completed within a five-day window, and the data from the reliability measures will be entered into the PMRN according to procedures outlined by FCRR. A report will then be available to the school district indicating the level of reliability for each test at each grade level in the district. FCRR will provide technical assistance to all districts having reliability coefficients outside the acceptable range.



## Using Data to Inform Instruction

Reading First in Florida is based on a data driven model requiring educators to use data from all assessment sources to make decisions related to instruction. These decisions are carefully guided by the information gathered from screening, diagnostics, progress monitoring, and outcome measures. The Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) facilitates this process by providing several kinds of reports for teachers and principals to use as they make important decisions regarding instructional practices for students.

Questions have been raised about the use of DIBELS to determine student promotion or retention, to evaluate teachers for continued employment or to determine if a teacher should be recommended for merit pay based on student scores on DIBELS measures. DIBELS was not designed for any of these purposes. Certainly the performance of a student on any measure of reading readiness or reading achievement is an important consideration when determining how a student's educational needs can best be met in future years. However, the DIBELS subtests should only be one aspect of a broad array of information that is used for making these important decisions.

Teachers should be supported for using DIBELS as a reading progress monitoring measure, for applying the DIBELS data to decisions about grouping, instruction, and remedial strategies and for taking frequent DIBELS measures during the implementation of interventions. The use of individual or group DIBELS data as a teacher evaluation information source should be avoided.

Principals will find the following PMRN reports useful in making decisions regarding student class assignments, teacher assignments, professional development and resource allocations:

- **School Status Report** shows the percentage of students at each risk level on a grade-level and a class-by-class basis on the most recent assessment. These data can assist the principal in determining what skills need to be emphasized, where resources should be allocated and the need for professional development. This report is also useful in judging the probability of acceptable FCAT performance by third graders.
- **Recommended Level of Instruction Report** combines the performance of all DIBELS measures administered during a single assessment period to provide an overall level of need for instructional support. This report provides data on the percentage of students at each Recommended Level of Instruction in each grade level and by teacher. Pie charts assist the principal in determining which teachers are faced with the greatest challenges. Principals can then make important decisions about the best use of resources and professional development. For example, a principal may want to encourage two teachers to work together so a more skilled teacher can work with and share ideas with a less skilled teacher to build his/her capacity in a particular area. The principal may also have the literacy coach provide more scaffolding and modeling for some teachers based on data from this report.

# Data-based Decision Making

• **School Summary Report** provides details on the performance of an entire school on each of the DIBELS measures administered during the assessment interval. In contrast, the **School Grade Summary Report** provides the same information for a single class. These two reports are designed to show the performance of the selected population on each DIBELS measure. These reports provide useful information to help identify areas where intensive assistance by teachers may be beneficial. Reading coaches may be able to assist teachers develop skills with more effective reading strategies to move students towards achieving reading goals.

• **School Progress Report** shows the progress of all students in the selected grade level on a selected measure. It is used to identify progress toward reading goals by grade, by measure. In addition, it aids in determining the trajectory for meeting the next benchmark and where acceleration of instruction is needed. Finally, it can be used to judge the effectiveness of the core reading program.

• **School Demographics Report** displays students' performance on reading assessments within their demographic classification of gender, ethnicity, free or reduced lunch, exceptionality, Limited English Proficiency and 504 status. This report helps schools gauge how certain subgroups of students are progressing towards their Adequate Yearly Progress goals. The School Demographics Report can help a principal identify strategies that will be most effective given the characteristics of students.

• **School Historical Report** gives a view of the performance of a grade level at the school over time. The report compares student scores during the current assessments to scores from the same assessment period in previous years.

• **School Year-End Outcome Report** uses pie graphs to display the percentage of students in each of the percentile rankings for each of the three outcome measures, i.e., Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), SAT-10 Reading Comprehension, and Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary. The color green represents student performance at the 40th percentile and above; yellow represents performance between the 20th and 39th percentile; and the color red represents performance below the 20th percentile on these outcome measures. Reports display the grade level and the number of students in that grade level. Principals might use these data to make decisions concerning professional development for teachers in the area of vocabulary and comprehension development strategies. For example, if a high percentage of students performed in the yellow or red percentile ranges on the PPVT in first grade, it may indicate a need to provide professional development to staff on ways to enhance students' vocabulary development.

• **Class Year-End Outcome Report** uses a modified Risk-Level box format to show Year-End Outcome test data by class. All three outcome measure results (in percentile rankings) are displayed and coded by the red, yellow and green indicators of risk-levels. Principals may use this report to assist in evaluating student performance and determining instructional needs of students for the following school year. The Class Year-End Outcome report serves as a tool to determine where professional development efforts and other resources should be focused during the summer and in subsequent years.

**Teachers** will find useful information about the status of their classroom by accessing the following PMRN reports. When discussing PMRN reports with teachers, the principal may want to review these reports available to teachers. These reports, incidentally, also can be viewed by the school principal.

- **Class Status Report** gives a snapshot of the students' performance in a classroom on the DIBELS measures. It provides the Recommended Instructional Level for the students which can serve as a guide in making decisions about how to group for instruction. In addition, it helps teachers to determine the levels of support needed for various students, i.e., which students are profiting from the core reading program, which skills should be emphasized for particular students, which students would benefit from additional practice, and which students need immediate, intensive intervention.

- **Class Summary Report** provides detail on the performance of an entire class on a specific skill at a single assessment period. This report combines the scores of all students to provide a single picture of the range of performance of an entire class on individual assessments. It allows the teacher to see if there is greater diversity of skills in one area than others. This report also provides one indication of the effectiveness of classroom instruction toward having all students above the benchmark. These data can be used to make decisions about instructional practices related to specific skill areas. Other reports accessed from the Class Summary Report are as follows:

- ♦ **Class Progress Report** shows the progress of a class on a specific selected measure at all completed assessment periods in the current school year. The Box and Whiskers graph indicates a target line, a class median line, and the distribution of student scores on the individual measures. Pie charts represent the percentages of students in the class at different risk levels.

- ♦ **Teacher Historical Report** gives an overall view of the performance of an individual teacher's classes over multiple years. It provides a summary of the progress of classes for different years in achieving grade-level reading and early literacy benchmarks.

- **Progress Tracking Report** displays the progress of each student in a class on a single skill for all assessment periods to date. This report provides an excellent visual representation in bar graph format of an individual student's progress and the level of support indicated. This report assists teachers in making instructional decisions about support as soon as there is a need indicated from the data.

• **Ongoing Progress Monitoring (OPM)** is very beneficial for tracking progress in smaller increments of time with students who are receiving intensive or strategic support. Changes in the type or level of support can be considered if the student is not showing adequate progress on weekly or bi-weekly DIBELS measures. OPM can be conducted off grade level, and these data can be entered into the PMRN. After scores have been entered into the PMRN, they will appear on the Student Ongoing Progress Monitoring Report (See User's Guide for the PMRN, <http://www.fcrr.org/pmrn> to find specific directions to access OPM reports). If interested in more information about OPM, please contact FCRR at [assessments@fcrr.org](mailto:assessments@fcrr.org).

• **Class Year-End Outcome Report** uses a modified Risk-Level box format to show Year-End Outcome Test data by class. All three outcome measure results (in percentile rankings) are displayed and coded by the red, yellow and green indicators of risk-levels. The color green represents student performance at the 40th percentile and above; yellow represents performance between the 20th and 39th percentile; and red represents performance below the 20th percentile for the three outcome measures. Teachers can use this report to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction to meet the vocabulary and comprehension needs of their students and to determine if students who were placed in immediate, intensive intervention have met important grade-level reading goals in the five critical elements of early literacy development.

# Data-based Decision Making

## Ongoing Progress Monitoring With DIBELS

Ongoing progress monitoring with the DIBELS measures is an excellent way for teachers to get continuous feedback on the effectiveness of interventions with struggling students. It involves doing frequent, repeated assessments with alternate forms of DIBELS measures to monitor growth on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis. For example, if a second grade student has performed poorly on both Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), the teacher might institute additional instruction in word attack skills. Then, on a weekly basis, the teacher could assess the student's skills in NWF and enter the data into the PMRN. The teacher might continue to work on phonics skills development for about four weeks, assessing growth with an alternate form of NWF each week. At the end of the month, or earlier if the teacher chose to do so, the student's oral reading fluency, using first or second grade probes, would also be measured and entered into the PMRN. The teacher would receive a report of the progress that the student was or was not making and make a decision about continuing, modifying or discontinuing the phonics lessons depending on the student's response over the month. Teachers who want to obtain frequent measures on one or more of the students should contact the reading coach to discuss training in the administration and scoring procedures for DIBELS measures appropriate to the grade level they are instructing.

Note: If interested in learning more about Ongoing Progress Monitoring please contact FCRR at [assessments@fcrr.org](mailto:assessments@fcrr.org).

# Monitor Progress



### Options For Non-Reading First Schools

The FCRR and the Just Read, Florida! office encourage all Florida elementary schools to use the DIBELS measures to document student progress in important reading skills. Requests for training in DIBELS, DIBELS assessment materials, and access to the PMRN should be sent to [assessments@fcrr.org](mailto:assessments@fcrr.org). Additional information on *Reading First* assessment may also be obtained on the web site for the Florida Center for Reading Research: <http://fcrr.org/assessment>, by calling the Assessment Program Office at (850) 644-9352, or by e-mail at [assessments@fcrr.org](mailto:assessments@fcrr.org).

The Florida Department of Education provides materials for four times per year for Kindergarten students as part of the kindergarten readiness screening project.

## ***Principal's Reading First Assessment Checklist***

### **General Procedures**

- ✓ Identified coordinator for school's Reading First assessment program
- ✓ Identified data entry personnel for PMRN
- ✓ Dates for four progress monitoring assessments received and posted on school calendar
- ✓ Faculty presentation given on assessment requirements, procedures and dates (see FCRR web site for powerpoint presentation provided to school-based team)
- ✓ Optional: Interim presentations provided to faculty using school progress monitoring data reports

### **Screening and Progress Monitoring: DIBELS**

- ✓ School-based assessment team identified and trained by third week of school
- ✓ Testing forms received and organized
- ✓ Review DIBELS measures prior to each assessment window
- ✓ Testing completed (4 times during year)
- ✓ Scores entered into PMRN by data entry personnel (4 times during year)
- ✓ Teachers notified that reports are available (4 times during year)
- ✓ Teachers implemented instructional groups and other changes, as appropriate, based on all screening and progress monitoring data
- ✓ Reliability testing notification received from FCRR
- ✓ Reliability testing assigned
- ✓ Reliability testing forms received
- ✓ Reliability testing completed and scores entered into PMRN
- ✓ Teachers notified of availability of training for Ongoing Progress Monitoring

### **Diagnostic: Test(s) to be used (insert names) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_**

- ✓ Procedures established for teacher or others to request diagnostic assessment
- ✓ Identified tests are on hand at school
- ✓ Identified who will administer and score tests
- ✓ Training provided for administration and scoring
- ✓ Reporting system in place to inform classroom teachers of results and implications
- ✓ Process for using data in IEPs, AIPs, 504 plans in place

### **Outcome Measures: PPVT-III, GMRT, SAT-10**

- ✓ Training provided to teachers for reading vocabulary and comprehension measures
- ✓ Training provided to school-based assessment team for oral vocabulary
- ✓ Test dates determined
- ✓ Tests administered and forms returned to district coordinator of assessment
- ✓ Scores entered into PMRN (oral vocabulary)

### **End-of-Year Wrap-up**

- ✓ Faculty meeting on school results of progress monitoring and implications for next school year (faculty discussion)
  - Staff development needs identified and discussed
  - Effectiveness of interventions for struggling readers identified and discussed

# Appendix

## Recommendations for the Use of Diagnostic Tests in Reading First Schools

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### Purpose and Overview

This paper is written to provide guidance for the use of diagnostic reading measures in Reading First schools. The four sections will address: 1) the purposes of diagnostic assessments; 2) the use of diagnostic measures within the context of the other assessments that are part of each school's Reading First assessment plan; 3) research evidence on the validity of various diagnostic approaches in reading instruction; and, 4) summary and examples of the use of diagnostic tests for specific purposes.

#### Purpose of diagnostic assessments in Reading First

The major purpose for administering diagnostic tests to K-3 children in Reading First schools is to provide information that is useful in planning more effective instruction. Diagnostic tests should only be given when there is a clear expectation that they will provide new information about a child's difficulties learning to read that can be used to provide more focused, or more powerful instruction. Because they are expensive and time-consuming to administer, diagnostic tests should not be given routinely to every struggling reader in a class or grade. Rather, they should only be given in special cases in which insufficient information is currently available to guide instruction.

An example of an appropriate use of a diagnostic instrument would be to discover which components of reading are impaired in a child who has performed below grade level on a year-end test of reading comprehension. In this case, it would be useful to know if the child is impaired in reading fluency or accuracy, knowledge of word meanings, general background knowledge, or use of efficient comprehension strategies. It might also be helpful to know if the child has special difficulties on group administered, multiple choice tests (if that is the kind of test used in the year-end outcome assessment). If the diagnostic test revealed that the child was a very dysfluent or inaccurate reader, that would suggest a need for instruction to strengthen these areas.

In another example, if a child was struggling to acquire fluent and efficient phonemic decoding skills (phonics), it would be useful to know something about the child's level of phonemic awareness and letter knowledge. An important note here is that most reliable and valid diagnostic reading tests do not provide complete information about which letter/sound correspondences are unknown, or which specific phonemes the child might be struggling with. Rather, diagnostic tests typically provide information about the relative level of skill a child has across several different components of reading or intellectual functioning. Information at a very specific level (i.e., which letter/sound correspondences are known fluently) must typically be obtained through administration of an informal reading inventory or a classroom or curriculum based test.

### *Diagnostic measures in the context of the overall Reading First Assessment Plan*

All Reading First schools are required to administer four types of reading assessments as part of their Reading First plan. These assessments are:

1. Screening instruments for the early identification of children who may need various levels of instructional intervention in order to maintain adequate growth in reading.
2. Classroom assessments, or progress monitoring assessments, to provide information about the child's progress in acquiring critical reading skills.
3. Diagnostic assessments to provide specific information to help focus instruction most effectively for individual children.
4. Outcome assessments to monitor the extent to which children have met grade level expectations in reading.

If schools are implementing screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessments in a reliable and valid way, diagnostic measures may be necessary only in unusual circumstances. For example, there are reliable and valid screening and progress monitoring measures available in K-3 for phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, phonics, and reading fluency. If these constructs are reliably assessed several times a year with screening and progress monitoring instruments, there should be little need for additional assessment of these areas with a diagnostic test in cases where children have participated fully in the assessment plan throughout the school year. If vocabulary (knowledge of word meanings) and reading comprehension are reliably assessed in the yearly outcome assessment, information about these constructs will also be available, and they need not be reassessed using a diagnostic instrument unless there is some question about the validity or reliability of the outcome assessment. Before a diagnostic assessment is given, the child's teacher and grade level team should determine whether the diagnostic assessment that will be given actually can provide more information about the child's strengths and weaknesses in reading than they already possess. If it will provide additional information, then they also need to ask whether this new information will be useful to them in planning additional instruction for the child.

One obvious case in which a diagnostic assessment might be useful would occur when a child who had not been participating in a Reading First assessment plan moves into the school. If the child appears to be a struggling reader, then a diagnostic assessment might provide a useful way to measure a range of reading skills so that the child could be properly placed within the ongoing instructional program of the class. Even here, however, a diagnostic assessment might be superfluous if the teacher or school was using valid and reliable screening or progress monitoring measures to identify the immediate instructional needs of students. Alternatively, the teacher might be using a core reading program that has its own placement tests that would allow the child to be integrated efficiently into ongoing instruction in the classroom.

To summarize the main point of this section, the other elements of a good Reading First assessment plan (screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessment) often provide valid and reliable "diagnostic" information related to the child's instructional needs. Because they are time consuming and expensive to administer, complete diagnostic reading tests should typically be administered only in unusual circumstances. A more common occurrence might be to use specific



subtests from diagnostic instruments to provide information in areas not assessed by screening, progress monitoring, or outcome assessments. For example, if word knowledge (vocabulary) is not reliably assessed in screening or progress monitoring measures, and the teacher desires a mid-year assessment to determine whether her instruction has been effective for a child with low vocabulary scores from the previous year-end outcome measure, then a diagnostic test of vocabulary knowledge might appropriately be given.

### **Research based information about instructional utility of various diagnostic measures**

The use of diagnostic tests in Reading First schools should be guided by current research on the instructional utility of various types of diagnostic assessment. For example, there are many tests that claim to diagnose specific cognitive or language skills that are important for reading growth. These tests measure such constructs as verbal short-term memory, visual processing ability, auditory processing ability, rapid automatic naming skill, spatial or visual memory, etc. Although some of these constructs may have strong or moderate predictive relationships with reading growth, there is no compelling evidence that knowing a child's score on any of these tests can help teachers provide more effective instruction in reading. These constructs are sometimes assessed to determine whether a child has a "learning disability" in reading, but, according to the preponderance of evidence from research, they do not help plan more effective instruction for students with learning disabilities. For example, children who perform poorly on measures of rapid automatic naming of digits and letters frequently have difficulties acquiring fluent reading skills. In fact, very low performance on this measure can indicate the presence of a learning disability in reading. However, there are no interventions available to directly improve children's performance on this construct. Rather, what is currently indicated by low performance on this measure is the need for careful attention to the acquisition of fluency at all stages of learning to read. If fluency on phonemic awareness tasks, letter knowledge tasks, phonemic decoding tasks, and text reading is regularly monitored during reading instruction, then teachers will be alerted in a timely fashion to students who require more support for the development of reading fluency.

The current research base indicates that diagnostic assessments in reading should focus on measuring language/reading skills that can be directly taught, and that make a difference to reading outcomes. These constructs have been identified as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary (word knowledge), and comprehension strategies. Currently, we have available reliable and valid measures of four of these constructs (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary) but not the fifth. We can, of course, reliably measure reading comprehension itself, but there are currently available no standardized procedures for determining the extent to which a child actively and efficiently uses appropriate reading strategies to increase comprehension. Other things that likely make a difference to individual differences in reading growth are motivation and attitudes about reading, parental support, extent and richness of the child's knowledge base, language ability, and general intelligence. Some of these constructs, such as motivation and parental support, are not usually assessed with "diagnostic tests" and others, such as the child's general knowledge base or intelligence, are not a specific part of reading instruction. Although teachers are encouraged to activate the parts of a child's knowledge base that might be helpful to understanding a given reading selection, this is a strategy used to help a child use what is already known about a specific topic, not to provide all the background knowledge required to understand the nuances of the selection.

## Summary points and examples to guide the use of diagnostic assessments in Reading First schools

The four most important points from the foregoing discussion of diagnostic measures in reading first schools are:

1. Diagnostic measures should be used only in cases where there is a high probability they will provide new information to help plan more effective instruction.
2. In cases where a full Reading First assessment plan is being reliably implemented, the information typically provided by diagnostic assessments may already be available from screening, progress monitoring, or outcome assessments.
3. Not all information provided by “diagnostic tests” in the reading area is actually useful for planning instruction.
4. Diagnostic assessments should focus on areas of reading and language knowledge/skill that can be directly taught, and that will have an impact on reading growth if they are taught more effectively.

### Examples to guide use of diagnostic measures in Reading First schools

#### **Kindergarten**

*Example 1* – Johnny B. has received small-group instruction for 30 minutes three times a week to build phonemic awareness and letter/sound knowledge because the screening test in September indicated that he was particularly low in this area. On the December general progress monitoring assessment, he still performed in the “high risk” categories on these measures. Should a formal diagnostic test be given?

Answer: Probably not. If the concern is that Johnny has not made adequate progress in acquiring phonemic awareness and letter/sound knowledge, a diagnostic test is not likely to provide information beyond what is already known. A diagnostic test will show that Johnny is low in phonemic awareness and letter knowledge, which is already known from the progress assessments. Although a diagnostic test might break phonemic awareness down into different kinds of tasks (i.e. segmenting, blending, elision, rhyming), these tests are highly correlated with one another, and the teacher should already know which kinds of tasks Johnny struggles with based on her instruction. The most effective course of action at this point will likely involve increasing the intensity of the instruction, or changing to a more explicit and systematic method of teaching.

*Example 2* – Sara R. is making good progress in February in acquiring phonemic awareness and phonics skills, but she seems less able to respond appropriately during class discussions that emphasize the meaning of selections that the teacher reads to the students. Should a formal diagnostic test be given?

Answer: Perhaps. Sara’s difficulty comprehending passages read by the teacher may signal a seriously underdeveloped vocabulary, or other lack of facility with language comprehension. A diagnostic test that assessed vocabulary or listening comprehension would provide information not already available from screening or progress monitoring tests (unless these skills were, in fact, assessed as part of the progress monitoring assessment). Low performance on a measure of oral language vocabulary might indicate the need for very focused and systematic instruction in this area.

## First Grade

*Example 1* – In the February progress monitoring test, Shakira performed in the “high risk” category for oral reading fluency, even though she had been a member of the smallest instructional group in her first grade class since the beginning of the year. She also performed in the “high risk” group on the assessment of phonemic awareness and phonemic decoding fluency that were part of the progress monitoring assessment. Should a diagnostic test be given?

Answer: Probably not. In Shakira’s case, her teacher already knows she remains weak in phonemic awareness and phonics, which are both prerequisite skills to the growth of oral reading fluency. A diagnostic test might be used to confirm these weaknesses, but it is unlikely to provide additional information beyond that available from the progress monitoring assessment. Her teacher might also wonder about Shakira’s general word knowledge as it affects her ability to understand the meaning of what she reads. If Shakira was in a Reading First school the previous year, there should be information available from the outcome assessment about her oral language vocabulary. If the teacher questioned that assessment, or desired more current information about vocabulary growth, then the vocabulary subtest from a diagnostic measure might be given. Shakira’s most urgent need at this point, however, is to master the alphabetic principle so that her reading becomes more accurate and she is more capable of reading independently.

*Example 2* – Alex’s teacher feels that he has made tremendous progress since the beginning of the year in becoming a more fluent and accurate reader. He has been receiving 1:3 instruction in a special group that has received instruction focused on building reading accuracy and fluency. However, when the February progress assessment was done, Alex’s score in the reading fluency category was still in the “high risk” category. His scores on the measures of phonemic awareness and phonics are in the “low risk” category. Should a diagnostic assessment be done?

Answer: Probably not. A diagnostic assessment at this level will likely give scores in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The teacher already knows that Alex is doing well in both phonemic awareness and phonics, but remains deficient in text reading fluency. Administration of a measure of Rapid Automatic Naming might indicate if Alex has a specific disability that might predict continued difficulty in the reading fluency area, but it would not help the teacher plan more effective instruction. At this point in Alex’s growth, the best predictor of future reading fluency growth is the current assessment of fluency in the progress monitoring measures. Alex should be provided ample opportunities to build fluency in reading through repeated reading practice that focuses on building a “sight word” vocabulary of frequent and high utility words.

## Second Grade

*Example 1* – Tanisha’s second grade teacher notes that Tanisha performed substantially below grade level on the reading comprehension and vocabulary measures at the end of first grade. The first progress assessment in second grade (which can also be considered a screening assessment) indicates that Tanisha is currently performing in the “high risk” category in phonemic decoding fluency and oral reading fluency. Should a diagnostic test be given?

Answer: Probably not. A diagnostic reading test is unlikely to provide more information than is already available about Tanisha’s reading skills. The teacher knows that Tanisha is still struggling with basic word level reading skills, and that she is also lagging behind in the growth of her vocabulary. All these factors are the most probable explanation for her poor performance on the reading comprehension measure at the end of first grade. The information currently available indicates that Tanisha should receive immediate and intensive intervention that works to build her accuracy and fluency in reading text, as well as her vocabulary and effective use of reading comprehension strategies.

*Example 2* – In the progress monitoring assessment in December, Tony R. continues to perform in the “high risk” category on the oral reading fluency measure. He also performs at the “high risk” category on the measure of phonemic decoding skills. Tony R. moved into the Reading First school this fall, so detailed data about his reading progress in kindergarten and first grade is not available. Should a diagnostic test be given?

Answer: Perhaps. Since Tony is new to the school, and he is clearly struggling in reading, it might be useful to administer a diagnostic measure of phonemic awareness, as well as a measure of oral language vocabulary. If Tony performs poorly on the measure of phonemic awareness, this will alert the teacher to the full extent of Tony’s problems acquiring alphabetic reading skills, and that more “in depth” instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics may be needed than is typically provided in her second grade classroom. If Tony performs adequately on the measure of vocabulary, this will alert the teacher to focus on increasing Tony’s reading accuracy and fluency as the highest instructional priority for him.

### **Third Grade**

*Example 1* – In October, Elvira’s teacher notices that she is continuing to struggle with understanding the main ideas from passages that she is asked to read in class. Compared to most of the other children in the class, Elvira is not able to adequately comprehend the meaning of the third grade passages they are reading together in class. Should a diagnostic test be given?

Answer: Probably not for purposes of guiding instruction. Elvira has been a student in this Reading First school since kindergarten, so the teacher has available a relatively complete record of her growth in the knowledge and skills necessary for reading comprehension. The second grade outcome measures indicate that Elvira is very weak in general vocabulary, and the beginning of the year progress test (or screening test) showed that she is still performing in the “high risk” category in reading fluency. The last progress assessment in second grade also showed that she continued to struggle with phonemic decoding fluency. From the information the teacher has currently available, it is apparent that Shakira needs small group instruction that provides systematic and explicit support for the growth of basic word reading skills, as well as vocabulary and comprehension strategies. The teacher might want to give a placement test if she is using a remedial program that has a test for this purpose, or she might want to administer an informal reading inventory to determine the specific extent of Elvira’s letter/sound knowledge, sight word knowledge, and text reading skills in order to develop a more detailed picture of her instructional needs in these areas. If the teacher and school believe that Elvira cannot receive the instructional support she needs within a regular classroom setting, then a diagnostic test may be required to establish Elvira’s eligibility for extra support from a Special Education teacher.

*Example 2* – Jackie’s initial screening (progress monitoring) assessment in September indicated that she was performing in the “moderate risk” category in oral reading fluency. She is new to the school district, having moved in from another state. Her records indicate that she was mildly below grade level on the reading comprehension test she took at the second grade in her previous school. Should a diagnostic test be given?

Answer: Probably not. Although not very much is currently known about Jackie’s reading skills other than the fact that she is moderately below grade level in reading fluency and reading comprehension, Jackie’s teacher will learn a lot more about her reading capabilities during the small group instructional period in the 90 minute reading block. Based on her “moderate risk” reading fluency score, Jackie should probably be assigned to one of the smaller instructional groups in her classroom, one in which the teacher will have ample opportunities to observe her reading and discussing written material. From these observations, the teacher should be able to determine Jackie’s instructional needs more accurately than through the administration of a formal diagnostic assessment.

# Appendix

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