

Directions for Administering the Graded Passages

The versions (A—D for grades 9-12; A and B for adult literacy students at grades 1-8) of Graded Passages are about different topics but similar in length and readability. This will enable you to test students at different points throughout the school year. Each passage is labeled with grade level as well (e.g., 9A is the ninth grade passage in Set A). Two copies of each passage are provided, one for the student to read and another (marked with word counts, scoring blanks, and readability information) for you to use.

Administering the Graded Passages is simple and straightforward. You simply ask students to read a grade-level passage to you and ask them to recall what they remember from the passage after it has been read. While students read and recall the passage, you monitor their performance for word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. The specific directions are outlined below.

1. Present the student with a copy of the passage from Graded Passages that corresponds to his or her assigned grade level. Adult literacy teachers may want to use the grade level that best corresponds with the student's TABE score. (We ask students to read at their assigned grade levels in order to determine their level of performance on passages that they are expected to master during that grade level.) Ask the student to read the passage orally to you in a normal manner. Tell the student that at the end of the reading you will ask him or her to recall what was read.
2. Have the student read the passage aloud for 60 seconds. If the student stops at an unknown word and does not attempt to pronounce it for 2 seconds, or if the student attempts the word but clearly has little chance of reading it correctly, tell the student the word and ask him or her to continue reading. During the oral reading you should have a copy of the passage in front of you. Mark any uncorrected errors that the student makes by drawing a line through the missed word. Errors include words that are mispronounced or omitted or that you provide to the student. If a student mispronounces or omits a word, but later corrects it, write and circle a "c" above the word to indicate it was corrected. At the end of the 60-second period, mark where the student is in the text.
3. After the student has read for 60 seconds, direct his or her attention to the beginning of the text and ask the student to follow along silently while you read the text aloud. Read in a normal and expressive voice. (You read the text to the student to remove any word recognition or fluency difficulties that may hamper the student's comprehension of the passage. Listening comprehension is a good measure of reading comprehension). At the end of your reading, remove the passage from view and ask the student to tell you what he or she remembers from the passage. After the student has retold the passage, ask if he or she remembers anything else.

Especially if the student has made few oral reading errors, you may, as an alternative to reading the passage to the student, ask him or her to read the rest of the passage silently. At the end of the student's reading remove the passage from view and ask for the retelling. Keep in mind that a source of difficulty in comprehension may be problems in word recognition or fluency. After the student has retold the passage, the assessment is complete and needs to be scored.

Scoring and Interpreting the Graded Passages

Scoring the Graded Passages is simple and quick. The following procedures should be followed:

- **Word Recognition (Decoding).** Word recognition is determined by calculating the percentage of words read correctly in the 60-second oral reading. Divide the total number of words read correctly by the total number of words read (correct and incorrect). For example, if the student read a total of 94 words in 60 seconds and made 8 errors, the percentage of words read correctly would be reflected in the following fraction:

$$86 / 94 \quad (86 \text{ divided by } 94) = 91.5\%$$

In other words, the student read 91.5% of the words correctly.

Instructional reading level is normally marked by a word recognition accuracy rate of 92-98%. Independent reading level is normally marked by an accuracy rate of 99-100%. Word recognition scores at or below 91% indicate that the student will find material at this level much too difficult to read.

A normally developing student might begin the school year with an instructional reading level at a certain grade and end the year with an independent reading level at the same grade. For example, a ninth grader's performance on a ninth-grade passage might be instructional at the beginning of the year but independent by the end of the year.

Students who perform at the frustration level on this assessment or who do not demonstrate good progress over the year should be considered for additional assessment to confirm their decoding difficulty. Such students may benefit from specific instructional intervention in decoding.

- **Reading Fluency-Automaticity.** One way reading fluency can be measured is through reading rate. Reading rate provides a measure of the extent to which a reader can automatically decode words, thus leaving cognitive resources free for the more important task of comprehending a passage. To determine rate, simply count the number of words the student has read correctly during the 60-second oral read. (Words read correctly include those words that the student initially misreads but then later corrects.) Then compare the students' performance against the reading rates shown below for the appropriate grade and time within the year.

Target Reading Rates by Grade Level

| <u>Grade</u> | <u>Fall</u> | <u>Winter</u> | <u>Spring</u> |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 | 0-10 wcpm | 10-50 | 30-90 |
| 2 | 20-80 | 40-100 | 60-130 |
| 3 | 60-110 | 70-120 | 80-140 |
| 4 | 70-120 | 80-130 | 90-140 |
| 5 | 80-130 | 90-140 | 100-150 |
| 6 | 90-140 | 100-150 | 110-160 |
| 7 | 100-150 | 110-160 | 120-170 |
| 8 | 110-160 | 120-170 | 130-180 |
| 9-10 | 120-170 | 130-180 | 140-190 |
| 11-12 | 130-180 | 140-190 | 150-200 |

Students whose reading rate falls within the appropriate range shown above are performing at grade level expectations. Students who fall below the range may be considered at risk in terms of fluency-automaticity. Students whose reading rate is above the range may be considered to be doing well in fluency-automaticity; however, students who read exceptionally fast without attending to punctuation and other phrase boundaries, who read without sufficient expression, or who read quickly at the expense of comprehension may also be considered at risk in fluency. Additional assessment may be appropriate for students who perform poorly on this assessment or who do not show improvement over the course of the school year. Students considered at-risk in fluency may benefit from instruction aimed at improving reading fluency.

- **Reading Fluency-Expression.** Reading fluency is more than just reading quickly. It is also the ability to interpret a text with appropriate phrasing and expression. You can measure this dimension of fluency by listening to the student's 60-second oral reading sample and rating it on the Multidimensional Fluency Scale below. Initially you may need to tape record and listen to the student's reading in order to use the Scale. Soon, however, you will be able to score on the spot.

At the beginning of the school year it is not unusual for students to score in the bottom half of each fluency dimensions (i.e., to have a total fluency score of 8 or below). However, by the end of the school year, students should be rated in the top half in each dimension (i.e., to have a total fluency score of 9 or above). End-of-year ratings in the bottom half for any of the fluency dimensions or a total fluency score of 8 or less may indicate a need for additional assessment or instructional intervention.

The multidimensional fluency scale is also useful for helping students evaluate their own reading and in developing their own understanding of fluency in reading.

Multidimensional Fluency Scale*

| Score | Expression & Volume | Phrasing | Smoothness | Pace |
|-------|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | Reads words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tends to read in a quiet voice. | Reads in monotone with little sense of phrase boundaries; frequently reads word-by-word. | Makes frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts. | Reads slowly and laboriously. |
| 2 | Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas but not in others. Focus remains largely on pronouncing the words. Still reads in a quiet voice. | Frequently reads in two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of choppy reading; improper stress and intonation; fails to mark ends of sentences and clauses. | Experiences several "rough spots" in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent and disruptive. | Reads moderately slowly. |
| 3 | Makes text sound like natural language most of the time. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text. | Reads with a mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and some choppiness; reasonable stress and intonation. | Occasionally breaks smooth rhythm because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures. | Reads with an uneven mixture of fast and slow pace. |
| 4 | Reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Varies expression and volume to match | Generally reads with good phrasing, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate | Generally reads smoothly with some breaks, but resolves word and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction. | Consistently reads at conversational pace; appropriate rate throughout reading. |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------|--|--|
| | his or her interpretation of the passage. | attention to expression. | | |
|--|---|--------------------------|--|--|

This scale is an adaptation of one developed by Zutell & Rasinski, 1991.

- Comprehension. How well students understand what they read is the ultimate hallmark of proficient reading. You can get a good sense of the student's ability to understand a text through the retelling. Rate the retelling on the Comprehension Rubric below. A score of 3 or below suggests inadequate recall and comprehension of the passage. At the beginning of the school year it is not unusual for a student's recall of a grade-level passage to be rated at level 3 or below. By the end of the school year, student performance should be in the upper half of the scale. Scores in the lower half of the scale should signal more in-depth diagnosis and perhaps instructional focus on comprehension.

Comprehension Rubric

1. No recall or minimal recall of only a fact or two from the passage.
 2. Student recalls a number of unrelated facts of varied importance.
 3. Student recalls the main idea of the passage with a few supporting details.
 4. Student recalls the main idea along with a fairly robust set of supporting details, although not necessarily organized logically or sequentially as presented in the passage.
 5. Student recall is a comprehensive summary of the passage, presented in a logical order and/or with a robust set of details, and includes a statement of main idea.
 6. Student recall is a comprehensive summary of the passage, presented in a logical order and/or with a robust set of details, and includes a statement of main idea. Student also makes reasonable connections beyond the text to his/her own personal life, another text, etc.
- Recording scores. After administering and scoring the Graded Passages you will want to record students' scores. A simple grid that allows you to record scores for decoding accuracy, fluency rate, fluency expression, and comprehension several times over the course of a school year should work fine. You may want to address areas of concern with additional assessment and instruction and bring them to the attention of parents, school administrators, or other teachers.