

APPENDIX C: ASSESSING READING AND LITERACY SKILLS



Tool Kit

Resources

MA DOE Office of Reading Web site:
www.doe.mass.edu/read/

MCAS can provide useful information on the weaknesses in students' skills and knowledge. However, before drawing conclusions about other skills, the planning team must first determine whether students have the reading or literacy skills necessary to comprehend the MCAS passages and questions. Students' poor reading skills may confound their ability to demonstrate performance on other learning standards. If analysis of MCAS data suggests that students may lack reading skills, the team must gather data to sort out the complex relationship between reading skills and the other knowledge and skills necessary to answer MCAS questions.

The approaches that schools take in understanding more about the reading skills of their students will differ depending on the literacy focus of the school or district, including, for example, the particular curricula, instructional methods, and assessments they employ.

The five components of reading instruction



The report of the National Reading Panel¹ identified the following five areas as the essential building blocks of reading instruction:

- 1. Phonemic awareness instruction teaches students to notice, think about, and work with (manipulate) sounds in spoken language, and is linked to improving students' ability to read words, improve their reading comprehension, and improve their spelling.**
- 2. Phonics instruction teaches students the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language and teaches students to use these relationships to read and write words.**
- 3. Fluency instruction teaches students to read a text accurately and quickly. Fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers can focus their attention on what the text means, make connections among the ideas in the text and between the text and their background knowledge.**
- 4. Vocabulary instruction improves students' oral vocabulary (words used in speaking or recognized in listening) and reading vocabulary (words recognized or used in print). Research reveals that while most vocabulary is learned indirectly, some vocabulary must be taught directly.**
- 5. Text comprehension is the goal of reading. Good readers have both a purpose for reading (such as research or pleasure) and can**

1. Armbruster, B.B., Lehrer, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). Put reading first: *The research building blocks for teaching children to read*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

read actively (i.e., understand what they read, remember what they have read, and communicate with others about what they read). Reading research indicates that the following six teaching and learning strategies are important in text comprehension:

- a.** Monitoring strategies help students understand what they read and provide them with tools in resolving problems with their understanding as they arise during reading.
- b.** Metacognitive strategies help students think about what they are reading with respect to a specific purpose.
- c.** Graphic and semantic organizers illustrate concepts and interrelationships among concepts in a text, using diagrams or other pictorial devices.
- d.** Answering questions about text allow students to build their literal and inferential skills. Questions should be:
 - Text explicit (stated explicitly in a single sentence);
 - Text implicit (implied by information presented in two or more sentences); or
 - Scriptal (not found in the text at all, but part of the reader's prior knowledge or experience).
- e.** Recognizing story structure helps students organize the content and events of a story into a plot. In story structure instruction, students learn to identify the categories of content (setting, initiating events, internal reactions, goals, attempts, and outcomes) and how this content is organized into a plot.
- f.** **Summarizing** synthesizes the important ideas in a text, and requires students to determine what is important in what they are reading, to condense this information, and to put it into their own words.

Understanding and using reading assessment data



Data from formal reading assessments can help determine which component reading skills students struggle with. For example, if data from assessments of oral reading fluency, such as the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), indicates that students read slowly with many errors, then they may lack skills in phonics, sight word identification, or structural analysis. If the assessment shows that students are slow but accurate readers, students may need practice in improving their fluency skills.

Data gleaned via informal methods—such as techniques that teachers might use in the classrooms—may likewise be useful in identifying gaps in students’ reading skills and knowledge. Instructional strategies such as the use of graphic and semantic organizers can provide important information to the teacher about the extent to which students are mastering comprehension skills.

Reading assessments may be classified according to four general categories:

- 1. Screening Assessments, typically administered at the beginning of the year, help to identify students who may need additional instructional support.**
- 2. In-depth Diagnostic Assessments are administered to students who are not making adequate progress to identify the specific skills and knowledge they struggle with.**
- 3. Progress Monitoring Assessments enable teachers to monitor progress on benchmark skills as frequently as necessary throughout the year.**



- 4. Outcomes assessments, typically administered at the end of the year, are used to measure overall growth in relation to a norm or criterion.**

On the next few pages is a list of common reading assessments, the specific skills they measure, and their appropriate applications. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive and is for reference only. Furthermore, some assessments may be used off-grade by a trained teacher for different purposes.

Table C.1: Reading assessments

Assessment	Skills Measured	Application
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) - 5th Edition	Phonemic awareness	Screening (K-1)
	Phonics	Screening (K-2)
	Fluency	Screening (1-3)
	Fluency	Diagnostic (K-3)
	Phonemic awareness	Progress monitoring (K-1)
	Phonics	Progress monitoring (K-2)
	Fluency	Progress monitoring (1-3)
	Phonemic awareness	Outcomes (K-1)
	Phonics	Outcomes (K-1)
Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE)	Listening Comprehension	Screening (K-12)
	Listening Comprehension	Diagnostic (K-12)
	Listening Comprehension	Outcomes (K-12)
	Vocabulary	Screening (K-12)
	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (K-12)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (K-12)
	Reading Comprehension	Screening (K-12)
	Reading Comprehension	Diagnostic (K-12)
	Reading Comprehension	Progress monitoring (K-12)
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)	Reading Comprehension	Screening (K-12)
	Reading Comprehension	Diagnostic (K-12)
	Reading Comprehension	Outcomes (K-12)
Test of Phonological Awareness (TOPA)	Phonemic awareness	Outcomes (K-1)

Table C.1: Reading assessments

Assessment	Skills Measured	Application
Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)	Phonemic awareness	Screening (Ages 5-24)
	Phonemic awareness	Diagnostic (Ages 5-24)
	Phonemic awareness	Progress monitoring (Ages 5-24)
	Phonemic awareness	Outcomes (Ages 5-24)
Phonological Awareness Test	Phonics	Screening (K-2)
	Phonemic awareness	Diagnostic (K-1)
	Phonemic awareness	Outcomes (K-1)
	Phonemic awareness	Screening (K-2)
	Phonics	Diagnostic (K-2)
	Phonics	Outcomes (K-2)
The Phonological Awareness & Reading Profile	Phonemic awareness	Diagnostic (Ages 8-14)
	Fluency	Diagnostic (Ages 8-14)
	Spelling	Diagnostic (Ages 8-14)

Table C.1: Reading assessments

Assessment	Skills Measured	Application
Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)	Phonemic awareness	Screening (K-1)
	Phonics	Screening (K-2)
	Phonics	Diagnostic (K-2)
	Fluency	Screening (1-2)
	Vocabulary	Screening (K)
	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (K)
	Reading comprehension	Screening (1-2)
	Reading comprehension	Diagnosis (1-2)
	Phonemic Awareness	Diagnosis (K-1)
	Phonemic Awareness	Progress monitoring (K-1)
	Phonics	Progress monitoring (K-2)
	Fluency	Diagnostic (1-2)
	Fluency	Progress monitoring (1-2)
	Vocabulary	Progress monitoring (K)
Reading comprehension	Progress monitoring (1-2)	
Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation	Phonemic awareness	Screening (K-1)
	Phonemic awareness	Diagnosis (K-1)
	Phonemic awareness	Outcomes (K-1)
Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment (ERDA)	Phonics	Screening (K, 1-2)
	Phonemic awareness	Diagnostic (K-1)
	Phonemic awareness	Outcomes (K-1)
	Phonics	Diagnostic (K, 1-2)
	Phonics	Outcomes (K, 1-2)



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Assessment	Skills Measured	Application
Letter Sound Fluency	Phonics	Screening (K-1)
	Phonics	Diagnosis (K-1)
	Phonics	Progress monitoring (K-1)
	Phonics	Outcomes (K)
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	Phonemic awareness	Diagnostic (K-1)
	Reading comprehension	Diagnosis (1-3)
	Phonemic awareness	Outcomes (K-1)
	Phonics	Outcomes (K-2)
	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (K-3)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (K-3)
Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Test	Phonemic awareness	Diagnostic (K-1)
Stanford Achievement Test - 9th Edition (SAT-9)	Phonemic awareness	Outcomes (K)
	Phonics	Outcomes (K-1, 1-2)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (K-3)
	Reading Comprehension	Outcomes (1, 1-3)
Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE)	Phonics	Screening (1-2)
	Fluency	Screening (1-3)
	Phonics	Diagnostic (1-2)
	Fluency	Diagnostic (1-3)
	Phonics	Progress monitoring (1-2)
	Fluency	Progress monitoring (1, 3)
	Phonics	Outcomes (1-2)
	Fluency	Outcomes (1-3)
	Vocabulary	Screening (K)

Table C.1: Reading assessments

Assessment	Skills Measured	Application
Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement	Phonics	Screening (1-3)
	Reading comprehension	Screening (1-3)
	Reading comprehension	Diagnosis (1-3)
	Phonics	Diagnosis (1-3)
	Phonics	Progress monitoring (1-3)
	Phonics	Outcomes (1-3)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (1-3)
	Vocabulary	Screening (1-3)
	Vocabulary	Progress Monitoring (1-3)
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test - Revised (WRMT-R)	Reading comprehension	Outcomes (1-3)
	Phonics	Screening (K, 1-2)
	Phonics	Diagnostic (K, K-2)
	Reading comprehension	Screening (K-2)
	Reading comprehension	Diagnostic (K-2)
	Phonics	Outcomes (K, K-2)
	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (1-2)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (K-2)
Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - II (WIAT-II)	Reading comprehension	Outcome (K-2)
	Reading comprehension	Diagnostic (1-3)
	Phonics	Diagnostic (K-2)
	Phonics	Outcomes (K-2)
	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (K-3)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (K-3)
Reading comprehension	Outcomes (1-3)	



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Assessment	Skills Measured	Application
Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement	Vocabulary	Screening (1-3)
	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (1-3)
	Vocabulary	Progress monitoring (1-3)
	Phonics	Screening (1-3)
	Phonics	Outcomes (1-3)
Slosson Oral Reading Test - Revised (SORT-R)	Phonics	Outcomes (1-2)
CBM Oral Reading Fluency	Fluency	Screening (1-3)
	Fluency	Progress monitoring (1-3)
	Fluency	Outcomes (1-3)
Gray Oral Reading Test IV (GORT-IV)	Fluency	Screening (1-3)
	Fluency	Diagnostic (1-3)
	Reading comprehension	Screening (1-3)
	Reading comprehension	Diagnostic (1-3)
	Fluency	Outcomes (1-3)
	Reading comprehension	Outcomes (1-3)
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - 3rd Edition (PPVT-3)	Vocabulary	Screening (K-3)
	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (1-3)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (K-3)
Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals - 3rd Edition	Vocabulary	Outcomes (1-3)
Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)	Reading comprehension	Diagnostic (2-3)
	Reading comprehension	Progress monitoring (2-3)
	Reading comprehension	Outcomes (2-3)
Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment (ERDA)	Reading comprehension	Diagnostic (1-3)
	Reading comprehension	Outcomes (1-3)

Table C.1: Reading assessments

Assessment	Skills Measured	Application
TerraNova - CAT	Vocabulary	Outcomes (1-3)
	Reading comprehension	Outcomes (1-3)
Test of Language Development - Primary: 3rd Edition	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (1-3)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (1-3)
Test of Word Knowledge (TOWK)	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (Ages 5-17)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (Ages 5-17)
Gates Mac-Ginitie	Vocabulary	Screening (K-12)
	Vocabulary	Diagnostic (K-12)
	Vocabulary	Outcomes (K-12)
	Reading Comprehension	Screening (K-12)
	Reading Comprehension	Diagnostic (K-12)
	Reading Comprehension	Progress monitoring (K-12)
Test of Sight Word Reading Fluency (TOSWRF)	Fluency	Screening (Ages 5-24)
	Fluency	Diagnostic (Ages 5-24)