

Assessment requirements in reading have always been robust but, with more stringent requirements facing districts, meeting the assessment challenge is like trying to hit a moving target. As new and old assessments add up for classroom and special education teachers, it is difficult for pre-service teachers to sort out what and why. By the time new teachers enter the schools, state and district provided in-services for new assessments have come and gone. New teachers must be able to apply what is required without the familiarity of experienced teachers. The challenge to faculty in undergraduate preparation in reading is to help the upcoming teacher “hit the classroom running.”

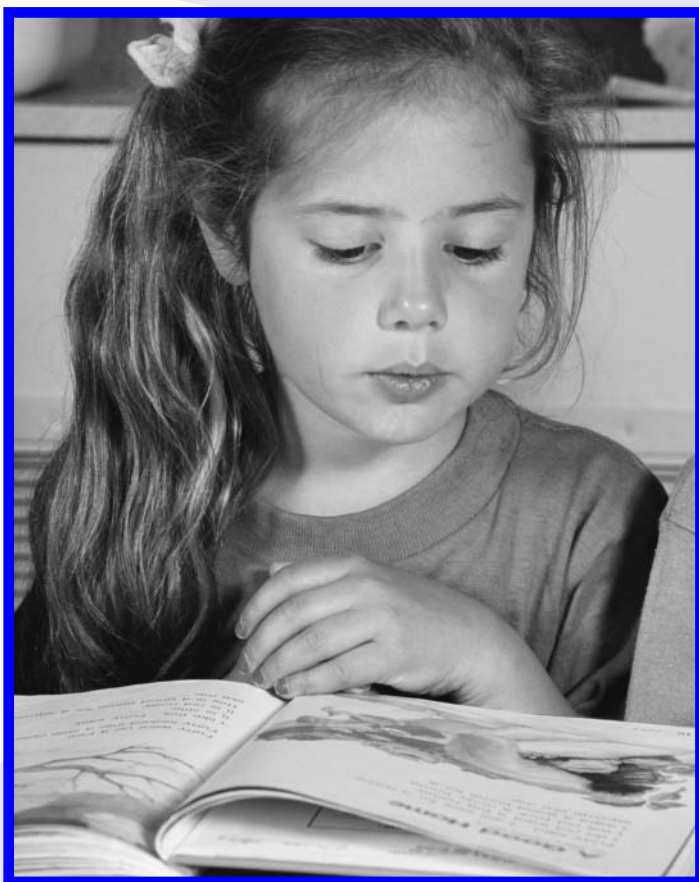
Screening

First step in identifying children who may be at high risk for academic failure and, in need of further diagnosis of their need for special services or additional reading instruction.

Diagnosis

Helps teachers plan instruction, providing in-depth information about students’ skills and instructional needs.

Assessments in Reading: Hitting the Classroom Running



Progress Monitoring

Determines through frequent measurement if students are making adequate progress or, if they need more intervention to achieve grade-level.

Outcome Assessment

Evaluations of effectiveness of the reading program in relation to established performance goals.

Placement

Compares performance to national standards, interpreted through standard scores.

The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised (WRMT-R) (Woodcock, 1998) was examined for two reasons. First, with reading difficulties, it can be used for getting started with instruction in that it provides diagnostic (strength and challenge) information. Secondly, it meets criteria for placement in that it is a recognized norm-referenced tool. Because the emphasis is on instruction as opposed to testing, the WRMT-R fulfills the two purposes, diagnosis and placement.

For informal diagnostic procedures, the Qualitative Reading Inventory-3 (QRI-3) (Leslie & Caldwell, 2001) was selected as well as the alternative, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) (Beaver, 2001). Both of these forms provide a diagnostic and well-rounded view of reading as well as gradient levels for beginning instruction.

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, DIBELS, (Good & Kaminski, 2002) was used to show a general screening assessment and progress monitoring. It is worthy to note, however, that DIBELS evaluates a child’s oral reading performance according to grade level and does not provide a gradient level to act as a cue for starting instruction.

In helping the pre-service teacher understand assessment, the authors sought to simplify or organize the information; and, by doing so, seek to offer that organization for other educators as well. First, assessments are categorized in terms of function and then examined in a grid describing reading instruction features.

For the functional grouping, the Reading First categories were chosen as outlined by Donaldson (2004) and a separate category, placement, was selected. These categories are described below.



Figure 2. Key Reading Features and How QRI-3, DRA, WRMT-R, & DIBELS Assessments Address Those Areas.

For outcome assessment, the Core Assessment CRT (criterion-referenced test) and the Stanford Achievement Tests (a norm-referenced test) were selected. Figure 1 shows this brief list of assessments and how they are organized in terms of function.

Figure 1. Functional Categories and Assessment Examples.

	Screening	Progress Monitoring	Diagnostic	Outcome Assessment	Placement in Special Education	Comments
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised			✓		✓	*Identifies Strengths & Challenges @ instructional level
DIBELS	✓	✓				*1 Minute Measures @ grade level
QRI-3 & DRA			✓			*Utah adopted diagnostic inventories providing instructional levels
Stanford Achievement Tests			✓	✓		* Once a year, Norm-Referenced providing some diagnostic data
Core Assessment CRT				✓		* Once a year, Criterion-Referenced

Figure 1. Functional Categories and Assessment Examples.

A grid was created to represent nine areas of development that readily transform into reading instruction. The following features help determine foundation abilities, such as working with the alphabetic code and phonemic awareness and other areas that represent accuracy (word recognition and word attack skills), fluency (in oral and silent reading), and comprehension (including background, vocabulary knowledge, retellings, and strategies for monitoring and managing instruction). Figure 2 compares QRI-3 and DRA, the Woodcock Johnson, and the DIBELS for instructional suggestions.

Key Reading Features	QRI-3 & DRA	WRMT-R	DIBELS
Alphabetic Code		✓ Letter Identification	✓ Initial Sound Fluency ✓ Letter Naming Fluency
Phonemic Awareness Segmenting & Blending			✓ Phonemic Awareness Fluency
Sight Words (in isolation)	✓ Graded Word List PP-HS (QRI only)	✓ Word Identification	
Sight Words (in passage reading)	✓ Miscue Analysis in Context (both)	✓ Paragraph with Cloze	✓ 1 minute sample @ Grade Level in Context
Word Attack Skills	✓ Miscue Analysis (both)	✓ Nonsense Words	✓ Nonsense Word Fluency
Oral Reading Fluency	✓ Timed @ Instructional Levels (QRI) (DRA 4-8 only)		✓ 1 minute sample @ Grade Level
Silent Reading Fluency	✓ Timed @ Instructional Levels (QRI)		
Language, Conceptual, & Vocabulary Knowledge	✓ Concept Questions & Predictions (both)	✓ Vocabulary Knowledge in Word Associations	
Retelling & Responding to Text	✓ Retelling (both) ✓ Explicit & Implicit Questioning (QRI only) ✓ Rubrics (DRA only)		✓ 1 minute retelling sample
Strategies to Monitor & Manage Reading	✓ Think aloud (QRI) ✓ Comprehension rubric for K-3 rd Grade(DRA) & Student Engagement Record for 4 th -8 th grade		

New and practiced teachers not only need to view their assessments by functional category but by what they can tell us in terms of instruction. Both categories help to make a difference. The functional categories help to remind educators why we assess what we do. The instructional categories in reading guide us in keeping the strong tie to reading instruction for our students—no matter our years of experience. ■

References available upon request from the Utah Personnel Development Center.

