

### Criteria for Diagnostic Levelled Reading Assessments

The following document outlines the required criteria for the selection of a levelled reading program, as well as the rationale for such programs to be used for the assessment of Grade 1-3 student reading levels. All categories are supported by research, with the documentation of sources attached.

Criteria	Rationale
<b>Levels of reading</b>	In order for students to experience effective growth in reading and receive valuable and useful instruction, readers must have opportunities to engage with texts that are motivating enough to stimulate growth and engagement, but not too difficult for them to enjoy. Access to levelled text frees teachers from dependency on grade-level materials that may not meet the instructional needs of all students. Levelled texts are only one part of an entire literacy program, but as teachers become familiar with available levelled books, they may be better able to attend to challenges and supports needed for a variety of classroom resources. The levels assigned to texts are an approximation of the text's complexity, and provide help for the teacher and the student in text selection.
<b>Real books used in assessment</b>	In order for literacy assessment to be authentic, tasks need to resemble reading and writing in school and in the real world. For example, authentic assessments ask students to read real texts, to write for authentic purposes about meaningful topic and to participate in authentic literacy tasks such as discussing books, keeping journals, writing letters, and revising a piece of writing until it works for the reader. Both the materials and the assessment tasks look as natural as possible, and the process is valued as much as the product.
<b>Text levelling/Text complexity</b>	According to the Standards' approach (2002) there are three important parts to text complexity. <i>Qualitative dimensions</i> refer to those aspects that are best measured by a human reader, and include things such as meaning or purpose of the text and clarity of language. <i>Quantitative dimensions</i> can typically be measured by computer software and refer to text complexity elements such as word length and frequency, sentence length and text cohesion. Finally, <i>reader and task considerations</i> regard variables specific to particular readers, for example, motivation, knowledge and experiences. This final dimension is best assessed by teachers as they use their professional judgement, experience and knowledge of their students.
<b>Text types/ Culturally responsive texts</b>	According to the Saskatchewan Curriculum, Grades 1, 2, and 3 students should have access to picture books, pattern books, chapter books, non-fiction, children's classics, poetry, folk tales, and traditional narratives. Culturally responsive teaching requires sensitivity to diverse students, and the need to find materials that enable students to make connections with the subject matter. Teachers need to use instructional methods that suit the setting, the students, and the subject; and in doing so, they increase chances for student success. It is mandated that First Nations and Métis content, perspectives, and ways of knowing are incorporated into Saskatchewan curricula, and therefore it follows that assessment practices should incorporate this cultural diversity as well.

<b>Measures comprehension, including oral retelling and probing questions</b>	<p>Retelling is an effective instructional strategy for assessing the comprehension of varying reading abilities. As students are asked <i>general</i> questions, they are given opportunities to formulate their thoughts and express a true understanding of what they have just read. Having students talk about their reading in a free-recall may give teachers a better “big picture” understanding than by having students answer specific questions which may or may not carry with them the teacher’s assumptions of what the student really means. Probing questions can follow retelling and can provide insight into the mental processes a student uses through effort to deepen the student’s understanding of the content. Questions such as “How did you know that?”; “Does that remind you of another problem?”; and “What if...?” are valuable for assessing student’s ability to think critically about the text.</p>
<b>Measures fluency (one-on-one assessment; miscue analysis/running record)</b>	<p>In order for students to understand the message of the text, they must be able to read the words accurately in order to avoid misinterpretation or lack of understanding of the message. Miscue analysis, developed in 1966 by Ken Goodman, assists professionals in gaining insight into reader proficiency. This oral reading assessment can be used to understand students’ linguistic knowledge and strategy and help professions evaluate the suitability of reading materials for a reading program.</p>
<b>Instructional supports provided with selected instrument</b>	<p>Once the assessment is completed and the data analyzed, teachers need to access instructional supports in order to further assist their students as developing readers. The supports suggested by the curriculum as well as those indicated by the assessment tool itself will aid in meeting student needs.</p>
<b>Concepts about print</b>	<p>The “concepts of print task” is a way for teachers to discover what children already know about the way print texts operate. It is an observation task that assesses directionality (left to right progression and return sweep; left page is read before right page), that print and not the picture is the part to be read, and concepts of letters, words, and punctuation. Determining what students know of these concepts will enable teachers to advance students’ understanding in how to comprehend a variety of texts.</p>