

Title: “The Importance and Decision-Making Utility of a Continuum of Fluency-Based Indicators of Foundational Reading Skills for Third-Grade High-Stakes Outcomes”

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Subject(s): Assessment, Intervention, Fluency

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Synopsis: [Authors’ Abstract] “Educational accountability and its counterpart, high-stakes assessment, are at the forefront of the educational agenda in this era of standards-based reform. In this article, we examine assessment and accountability in the context of a prevention-oriented assessment and intervention system designed to assess early reading progress formatively. Specifically, we explore the utility of a continuum of fluency-based indicators of foundational early literacy skills to predict reading outcomes, to inform educational decisions, and to change reading outcomes for students at risk of reading difficulty. First, we address the accountability era, discuss the promise of prevention-oriented assessment, and outline a continuum of fluency-based indicators of foundational reading skills using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills [DIBELS] and Curriculum-Based Measurement Oral Reading Fluency [CBM ORF]. Next, we describe a series of linked, short-term, longitudinal studies of 4 cohorts examining the utility and predictive validity of the measures from kindergarten through 3rd grade with the Oregon Statewide Assessment-Reading/Literature as a high-stakes reading outcome. Using direct measures of key foundational skills, predictive validities ranged from .34 to .82. The utility of the fluency-based benchmark goals was supported with the finding that 96% of children who met the 3rd-grade oral reading fluency benchmark goal met or exceeded expectations on the Oregon Statewide Assessment, a high-stakes outcome measure. We illustrate the utility of the measures for evaluating instruction, modifying the instructional system, and targeting children who need additional instructional support to achieve benchmark goals. Finally, we discuss the instructional and policy implications of our findings and their utility in an active educational accountability environment.” (p. 257)

Quote(s): “The results of this study support accuracy and fluency with connected text as an important foundation for reading competence. Students who read grade-level material at a rate of 110 words correct per minute or better were likely to meet or exceed expectations on the OSA [Oregon Statewide Assessment]. Students who were able to read less than 70 words correct per minute on grade-level material were not likely to meet expectations on the OSA.” (p. 283)

“Fluency was a common denominator of the measures used to assess foundational reading skills. As Fuchs et al. (2001) reported, fluency-based measures of connected text were better discriminators than accuracy-based measures of connected text and correlated more strongly with measures of general reading competence.” (p. 284)

“Results of this study underscore the utility of fluency-based indicators of foundational reading skills to inform instructional decisions early enough

to change outcomes before reading problems become too large and established.” (p. 285)

“In an era of high-stakes assessment, an assessment system that can be used in concert with instruction to prevent pervasive and enduring long-term reading difficulty holds extraordinary potential.” (p. 285)