In the Fall…Prior to November Assessment

Starting in the 2015-16 school year the required testing intervals for the F&P Benchmark Assessment were changed. This change helped to reduce the number of required assessments during the Beginning of the Year (Sept-Oct). Fountas and Pinnell has designated 4 times (aka Intervals) during the year this assessment CAN be administered. These intervals are August-September, November-December, February-March and May-June. See our F/P Benchmark chart or Assessment Calendar for our required windows.

By moving the first required assessment period to the 1st Interval (Nov-Dec) teachers have time at the beginning of the year to get to know students as readers using other methods such as observation, conferring, reading interest inventories, etc.

Using all of the information collected during the Beginning of the Year (Sept-Oct) and using the previous Spring exit F&P data teachers can determine a place to start testing in November.

If a teacher chooses to administer the F&P Assessment to a student prior to the First Required Interval Testing Period the appropriate Interval to use is Aug-September.

Assessment

Q: Can I tell a parent what a child’s reading level is?

A: F&P Levels are not scores. They are representative of a set of reading behaviors a child controls that allow them to effectively read and comprehend text at varying levels of complexity. Our focus is on reading strengths and goals. (add an example)

Q: Can the student look back in the book as you have your comprehension conversation?

A: Yes. Leave the book in front of the student during the comprehension conversation. Do not suggest that the child look in the book. However, it is acceptable if s/he initiates looking back in the text. In the non-fiction books, some of the prompts ask the children to look at certain text features, so using the book during these conversations is necessary. You may also address the idea of looking back in a book for information during your mini-lessons during your literacy block, and in preparing students for testing you can remind them that looking back in the text is something readers can do.

Q: If I need to provide a lot of prompts during the comprehension conversation, should that affect the score?
A: No. It is acceptable to use probes and prompts to elicit answers. You may rephrase the question so the child understands it, and ask follow-up questions. The goal is to see what the student understands about the story.

Q: Can I prompt the student to make a connection in order to give them the opportunity to earn the additional point?
A: Yes.

Q: There are two books per level. Can I use the same book with a student more than once?
A: The book should be a ‘cold’ read - one that the child has not read before, or has been read only once before. If a text was frustrational for a child, it is acceptable, after a period of instruction, to use the same text again. A book should only be read a maximum of two times with a student.

Q: I have a really strong reader in my class. How far should I assess him/her?
A: You are expected to assess the student until you find his/her highest Instructional level.

Q: Should I use the fiction or non-fiction book for the required district assessments?
A: You should alternate fiction and non-fiction during each testing period until you find the highest instructional level to ensure that all students are tested in both fiction and non-fiction. Highlight “fiction” or “non-fiction” at the top of the running record to indicate which type of text the child read.

Q: The F & P Assessment Guide refers to finding three levels on each student. Do I have to do that?
A: No. The VASD requirement is to find each child’s highest Instructional level however, you need to continue testing until you are sure you have reached the highest instructional level for each student and have reliable teaching points. You may need to continue assessing until you are sure you have found the highest instructional level. If the first text you choose for a child turns out to be independent, you should try another text to arrive at the Instructional level. When you report data on this student, report his/her highest Instructional level. Use the number conversion chart for entering data into Pearson Inform. This chart can be found at the bottom of the VASD Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark form.

Q: How do I know where to start assessing a student?
A: See the introduction at the top of this document. Use data from Spring of previous school year as a starting point. Along with the level consider if the last tested book was fiction or nonfiction and be sure to alternate.

Q: While testing a student, if I sense a book is too easy or too hard for a student, do I need to finish it?
A: No. Use your professional judgment. Feel free to stop a child and tell him/her you have a different book to read. You may skip over levels as needed until you find the instructional level.

Q: What are some ways that I can find time to assess each student?

A: Some grade levels or teacher partners combine classes for a read aloud which lasts several days. One teacher reads to all the students while the other teacher/s assess/es individual students. Some teachers organize a parent volunteer Math Day with games that rotate among groups of students. Some grade levels or teacher partners show a movie related to curriculum. One teacher supervises the students while the other/s assess. Some teachers do one assessment a day while their other students read independently or do center work. If you have other ideas, please share them with your LRC and she can add them to this list.

Q: Is there a way to shorten the running record?

A: Yes! Use the “Quick and Easy Plan:” Take a running record on the first 100 words only. If the 100 word mark appears mid sentence, let the child finish the sentence aloud, and then have the child read the rest of the story silently (or orally, if s/he chooses). Remember that 90% accuracy is instructional for levels A-K. 95% accuracy is instructional for levels L and beyond.

Q: Do I have to give the writing portion of the assessment?

A: No, that part of the assessment is optional.

Instruction

Q: How can I use the assessment to get my next teaching points?

A: You can use the Meaning-Structure-Visual (MSV) analysis to help you understand a child’s errors and determine next teaching points. Ask your LRC or reading specialist if you’d like help with MSV analysis. You can also often notice patterns as you listen to the child during the assessment or during your literacy block. Another good resource is the Fountas and Pinnell Continuum. This book is included in each kit and has a wealth of information on appropriate skills/strategies for each reading level.

Q: What level should a child read during Independent Reading/Daily Five?

A: Independent Level may be appropriate depending on the goals you set with your student or any text that allows a student to practice the skills, strategies and/or conceptual understandings targeted as learning goals.

Q: What level should a child’s “take home” books be?

A: Independent Level OR anything that has already been read during guided reading. Please check with your LRC/TLC regarding sending books from the Leveled Library home with students.
Scoring

Q: What are some common scoring confusions?

A: Here are a few. Remember, that proper nouns only count as one error, even if the student misses it throughout the text, or if a child says the noun incorrectly multiple ways. Also, if a student is sounding out the word, but says it correctly “rab--rabbit” for example, that counts as a correct word, not a self-correction.

A: Please be sure to use the scoring conventions set by F&P so your notations are ‘readable’ by another teacher. See your LRC or Reading Specialist for a copy of these conventions or look on the back inside cover of the resource titled, Assessment Guide found in your Benchmark Assessment Kit.

Q: What do I do if a child is reading and inserts a word in a different language?

A: Record what the child says. Then ask the child to “try that again.” Mark what is read the second time following the code “TTA.” If corrected, as in the example below, count as correct. If not corrected, count as an error.

Example: boca / TTA / mouth
Mouth

Q: What if a child scores a Z on F&P?

A: If the child read a fiction text, try Z on a non-fiction text, and visa versa to make sure s/he passes both types of text (you may also look at past assessments to see how many fiction and non-fiction assessments the child did. Were there more of one genre?). If you are looking for instructional strategies some ideas you may consider:

● refer to the Struggling Readers chapter on comprehension (encouraging students’ strategic actions of analyzing and critiquing)
● consult with your LRC or Reading Staff, and/or
● refer to NWEA’s Learning Continuum.

To show growth, you can use written work/responses to text and/or RIT scores for MAP Reading.

Reporting

Q: Can I assign a child two levels on the district reporting sheet, such as I/J?

A: No. Only one level - the highest Instructional Level - should be reported to the school. If you have conflicting information for a student, try using the section in the Assessment Guide called “Finding Benchmark Levels When the Numbers Do Not Match Up Perfectly,” on pages 49-51 of the green book and pages 50-52 of the blue book, or talk to your LRC about this student. Be sure to include the running record form of the reported instructional level in the Literacy Record Folder.

Q: If a child shows 100% accuracy and solid comprehension at level L and is frustrational at level M, what do I report on Pearson? Where do I instruct?
A: M is too hard for instructing this reader, and L is obviously an easy text. Try the reader on the alternate level M text/assessment just to check whether there is a particular difficulty with content.

L = Independent Level
M = Frustrational Level
L = Instructional level to report on Pearson

The student may read some books on level L as independent reading. It is important to move the student quickly to level M for instructional text with appropriate scaffolding for support. Check in with your reading staff if you have questions.

Q: What do I do with all of the students’ running record forms?
A: Include the spring running record from their HIGHEST instructional level in the Literacy Record Folder in the Pass-On Portfolio. If a student is beginning and developing, it is helpful to include other running records from throughout the year.

Q: What if my question isn’t answered in this document?
A: There is a Frequently Asked Questions section in the Assessment Guide, starting on page 162 in both the green and blue books, so your question may be answered there. If not, please contact your LRC.

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