Model for Reading Diagnosis and Instructional Planning

Chapter goals for the reader

• To become familiar with the theoretical, historical, and research bases of reading diagnosis
• To learn to apply a model of reading diagnosis
• To understand reading diagnosis as an integral part of ongoing classroom instruction
• To become familiar with class screening purposes and procedures
• To appreciate the importance of responsive instructional planning
classroom vignette

Tessa and Her Student, John

Tessa loves teaching fourth grade, and each year she understands her students better. This is her third year. But every year, five or six of her students pose challenges for her because of the difficulty they encounter reading some of the materials she assigns, particularly for social studies and science. Even though she has taken several courses and workshops in teaching reading and writing, she is still unable to assess her students’ specific areas of strength and difficulty. Thus, Tessa has decided to take a course in reading diagnosis. She hopes to acquire sufficient skill in assessment to understand her students’ reading as she meets with them daily and to learn how she can provide them with appropriate instructional support.

This year she is keeping her eye on a group of about seven students. Three of them are quite far behind; they are having difficulty reading selections from the third-grade reading series. The other four seem to do well on some days, but not on others. She is particularly curious about what John actually knows about reading and writing. She is asking the following questions: What are John’s strengths on which I can build? How can I help John feel that he is a part of the classroom group and encourage him to continue to develop his reading strategies?

chapter overview

The chapter is organized into four main sections. In the first, we consider the goals we had in mind as we wrote this book and describe our view of reading. We hope that our explanations and the sequence of case studies will provide the opportunities you need to develop your understanding of reading screening and diagnosis. Ultimately, we hope that you will develop your observational and interpretive skills during the course of ongoing instruction to better understand what your students need to become proficient readers.

In the second section, we consider reading diagnosis. We describe the long and distinguished history of reading diagnosis, mainly in clinical settings, and the more recent research literature. Building on this tradition, we argue that you and other classroom teachers are well positioned to diagnose the reading strengths and problems of your students. We describe a model for reading diagnosis and its major decision points. We believe this model will be particularly useful because it will help you to organize and make sense of the multitude of observations you will make about your students’ reading during the rapid give-and-take of classroom activities.
In the third section, we consider some approaches to class screening that are particularly useful at the beginning of the school year. From a variety of approaches, we focus on creating a class profile from standardized reading test results, graded word lists, oral reading samples, and cloze passages. These approaches provide a basis on which to organize class instruction and identify the special needs of certain children.

In the final section of the chapter, we consider reading instruction. We discuss current trends in the field of reading and the importance of developing instruction that provides appropriate support for student growth and permits students to share their ideas about what they are reading.

**Chapter Outline**

- Our Perspective on Reading and Instruction
  - Goals for Reading Instruction
  - Our View of Reading
- Reading Diagnosis
  - History of Reading Diagnosis
  - Reading Diagnosis as Part of Classroom Instruction
  - Model for Reading Diagnosis
  - Major Diagnostic Decisions
    - Case 1.1: John
    - Case 1.2: Mary
    - Case 1.3: Larry
    - Case 1.4: Tom
- Class Screening
  - Standardized Reading Test—Class Profile
  - Graded Word List—Class Profile
  - Oral Reading Passage—Class Profile
  - Cloze Sample—Class Profile
- Instructional Planning
- Summary
- Try It Out
- For Further Reading

**Our Perspective on Reading and Instruction**

- **Goals for Reading Instruction**

  Reading enriches our lives. We all know the thrill of reading a good story and the satisfaction of locating needed information. As teachers we are committed to helping our students use and appreciate the experiences reading affords. Our goals are twofold: (1) to instill in our students a love for reading and (2) to support their development of reading skill. As students acquire greater proficiency in reading and read material that interests them, they will begin to appreciate the power reading gives them to enrich their own lives.

  Achieving these goals is easy with some children. They learn to read easily, and the satisfaction they experience leads them to read often and with pleasure. Unfortunately, other children experience considerable difficulty in reading and view it as an unpleasant and undesirable activity. These are the children who worry us. The purpose of this book is to help you, as their teachers, develop the
understanding you need to help these children. What are your views of reading and reading instruction? How do you diagnose students’ reading strengths and difficulties? What do you need to know to provide them with appropriate instructional support? These questions are not easy to answer.

• Our View of Reading

What do we do when we read? Some literacy experts believe that the process of reading involves translating printed symbols into speech; they assume a direct correspondence between text and meaning so that comprehension occurs easily and automatically for the reader. This view ignores the active role of the reader in constructing meaning. It also neglects the ways written language differs from spoken language. In fact, readers must actively assign one meaning to text from a variety of possible meanings, based on their prior experiences and the context of the selection.

An opposing view of reading is that knowledge is in the minds of readers, who rely on print only to test their ideas. This view fails to acknowledge print as a vehicle for information. Through print, readers are led to construct not only familiar ideas but also innovative thoughts and lines of argument.

Our view of the reading process lies between these two extremes. We see reading as an interactive activity. Foundational research suggests that proficient readers process print in a thorough and efficient manner (Adams, 1990). However, they do not automatically assign meaning to what they read. Readers construct meaning from the print they perceive using context and prior experiences to interpret what they read.

Until recently, researchers have focused on aspects of reading pertaining to thinking and knowledge (cognitive dimensions), but affective dimensions related to the interests and feeling of students may be even more important. Some children, usually those who learn to read easily, find joy in reading exciting stories and in the challenge posed by new information and arguments. Other students, usually those who encounter difficulty learning to read or those for whom reading has become a chore, experience reading negatively. When their first encounters with reading are difficult or boring, they develop an aversion toward reading, and those students who avoid reading never discover its pleasures.

Research on reading programs shows that when children’s first experiences are with good children’s literature, they develop more positive attitudes and interest toward reading than when instruction focuses on reading skills. Interacting with books they enjoy and find interesting leads children into a positive motivational cycle, allowing them to develop increased interest in and pleasure through reading.

For these reasons, we view reading as an interactive process. It is supported by children’s knowledge of print, informed by their prior experiences
and knowledge of word meanings, facilitated by their comprehension strategies, and fueled by their love for reading. Throughout this book, we encourage you to think about the implications of this perspective for reading instruction.

Research on reading diagnosis and instruction provides much information that is useful to you in meeting the needs of your students. Nevertheless, you must be able to master it in such a way that you can use it during the active give-and-take of everyday instruction. Our challenge as authors of this book is to organize and sequence the fundamentals of diagnosis and instructional planning in a form that will be most useful to you. In this book, we present principles for you to follow and descriptions of development that provide an overview of the changes children undergo. But we also use these in the context of many case studies to convey the rich details of children’s lives. In the end, we hope that you develop ways for thinking and observing children’s reading that enable you to design instruction that lets your students make good progress in learning to read.

**Reading Diagnosis**

We begin our discussion with a brief history of reading diagnosis. Much of what has been learned about the nature of children’s reading difficulties has been learned in reading clinics, where clinicians work one-on-one with children. Nevertheless, classroom teachers have some important advantages in reading diagnosis; we consider these as we examine differences between the perspectives of reading clinicians and classroom teachers. Finally, we introduce a model to guide our diagnostic thinking. We show its usefulness in understanding the reading of several children, including John, the student mentioned in the introductory section of this chapter.

- **History of Reading Diagnosis**

Reading diagnosis as we use it in this book refers to “an astute analysis of the process by which [a student] gains meaning, significance, enjoyment, and value from printed sources” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 86). We view diagnosis as an ongoing process. Assessment is similar but refers to the “process of gathering data in order to better understand some topic or area of knowledge, as through observation, testing, interviews, etc.” (p. 22). Diagnosis depends, then, on careful assessment, but goes beyond it by involving judgments about the data.

Physicians were among the earliest specialists to undertake a form of reading diagnosis (e.g., Morgan, 1896). Early in the 20th century, two developments in the field of education converged to support the scientific study of reading difficulty. First, Huey (1898, 1908/1968) and others (Dearborn, 1906; Dodge, 1905, 1907) set the conceptual and empirical basis for understanding the psychology of reading. Second, advancements in psychometric theory laid the foundation for developing test instruments to measure human traits.
Before the 1920s, tests had been developed to assess school learning, and the results were used to identify the special needs of individuals (Uhl, 1916; Zirbes, 1918). The earliest diagnostic work was conducted in the school setting by teachers and other school personnel. The first professional book on reading diagnosis, *Deficiencies in Reading Ability: Their Diagnosis and Remedies*, written by Clarence T. Gray in 1922, relied in large part on what researchers had learned from school-based studies of reading difficulty.

At the same time, educators realized that more detailed study of students who were experiencing reading difficulty would provide insight into how the reading process operates. They began doing detailed case studies to develop more refined testing procedures and effective remedial instruction. Special educational laboratories and reading clinics were established in university settings for this purpose (see, for example, Fernald & Keller, 1926; Gray, Kibbe, Lucas, & Miller, 1922).

Other research in the 1920s and 1930s expanded and developed the knowledge gained through clinical case studies. Pelosi (1977) noted several developments during this period that contributed to the refinement of reading diagnosis. First, case study investigation became more elaborate and sophisticated and continued to be the dominant method of research. Second, precise diagnostic instruments and procedures were developed. Finally, there was an ever-increasing interest in the nature of reading processes and the causes of reading disability (Robinson, 1937).

During this period researchers in such related fields as medicine and psychology popularized the term *dyslexia* when referring to children with reading difficulties. Literally translated, it means a “dysfunction with words” (the Latin prefix *dys-* means “difficult” or “faulty,” and the Greek root *lexia* refers to “words”). Thus, the term is simply descriptive; it does not address the underlying nature of the difficulty. Further, research by Vellutino and his associates confirms that estimates of the incidence of difficult-to-remediate disability are highly inflated (Vellutino, Scanlon, & Jaccard, 2003). We believe that such labeling is not particularly useful, especially because it often carries the connotation that the child has a central functioning impairment. Similarly, we believe that other forms of labeling such as “visual learner,” “left-brain dominant,” and “perceptually handicapped” are of little help to teachers in planning appropriate instruction, and they may be misleading in that they imply simplistic remedies. As we show in the following sections of this chapter, we prefer to identify the nature of the reading difficulty and strength in a way that anticipates appropriate instruction.

Developments over the ensuing decades have influenced our thinking about reading diagnosis. First is the extensive research undertaken during the 1970s and 1980s on the nature of reading processes. In contrast to the behavioristic perspectives of earlier studies, this research showed that the characteristics of
Readers, in particular their knowledge and expectations, influence their comprehension—that is, readers actively construct their understandings on the basis of the knowledge they bring with them and the context of what they read.

Second, following this growth in knowledge about the reading process, many reading researchers turned their attention to classroom instruction. Their work showed that some of the problems children experience result from the way they are taught. How teachers organize children for instruction, what materials they have children read, how much time they provide for reading, and what level of instructional support they give all have a direct bearing on how well children learn (Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007).

Additional research has documented the important influence that students' writing has on their reading development. Writing enhances children's awareness of sounds in words and their skill as readers (Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax, & Perney, 2003). Writing in response to reading encourages students to reflect and deepens their understanding. Later we discuss the importance of student writing, an activity you need to consider both for assessment and in planning instruction.

Motivation is also essential in learning. Studies of literature-based and integrated curriculum classes show the important motivational consequences of having children read books they enjoy (Dahl & Freppon, 1991; Ivey & Broadus, 2001); including nonfiction (Guthrie, 2007). Helping children select high-quality books that are of interest to them not only has the immediate benefit of making instruction more enjoyable but also serves our goal of creating lifelong readers.

**Reading Diagnosis as Part of Classroom Instruction**

The approach to reading diagnosis presented in this book is based not only on clinical case studies and the research literature, but also on our understanding of the goals of classroom teachers. These differ somewhat from those of teachers in the clinical setting. Classroom teachers want to help their students acquire the skill necessary to be part of the mainstream of classroom reading instruction. In contrast, clinical teachers are more concerned about whether students are reading up to their potential levels for achievement. The comparison of actual and potential reading level, used in clinical settings, may occasionally be a useful approach for teachers, but generally in the classroom, teachers prefer an approach to diagnosis that identifies students as needing special support when they are unable to read the materials used for class discussion.

This is the path we follow in this book. While it is consistent with the goals of most classroom teachers, it does have several consequences. One result is that some children with limited knowledge will be identified to receive special attention. The focus of this attention will be to develop their word knowledge and general understanding so they will be able to participate in class discussion.
Using this approach also means that some students (with a discrepancy between potential and actual reading) may receive no special support since they are able to read the class materials.

There are other differences between classrooms and clinicians. Teachers who work with groups of students do not find it easy to undertake extensive testing with individual students. But because teachers have access to a wealth of evidence about the reading, writing, and language development of students on a daily basis, extensive testing is not needed. You have the opportunity to listen to children read orally, note their answers to comprehension questions, and observe how they think, write, and talk about a variety of topics. With the time advantage that comes from working with students for many months, you can develop working hypotheses about how children learn and revise these hypotheses as you continue to observe student reading and writing. Because you can collect evidence over time, it will not be necessary for you to attempt the detailed diagnosis that clinicians undertake. Most important, you have the opportunity to modify instruction and to observe how it works. Information about students’ interests and family support, along with your ongoing observations, enable you to plan instruction that is both conceptually and motivationally appropriate.

Nevertheless, the observations of teachers tend to be haphazard because of the complexity of their work. However, they may be haphazard because most teachers have not been taught useful methods for observation and interpretation. In this book we introduce these observational and interpretive strategies in a gradual manner through detailed case studies. We do not expect you to undertake such extensive case studies in the classroom, nor do we expect you to follow in a step-by-step fashion the procedures we have developed. We do hope that once you have done the detailed analyses outlined here, you will have gained the understanding necessary for more informal and ongoing observation in your classroom.

**Model for Reading Diagnosis**

Our view of reading diagnosis and instructional planning assumes that students are active problem solvers. Therefore, the manner in which they develop reading skill is influenced by the instructional tasks they confront from grade to grade. For example, if students are instructed with a systematic phonics program, they learn to solve a set of problems somewhat different from the ones they encounter if they are instructed with a literature-based program that emphasizes comprehension and writing. Similarly, if students are given considerable experience reading and answering questions on expository materials, they develop comprehension skills different from those they develop if they read mainly narrative materials.

Two implications follow from this view. First, diagnostic assessment must consider how students currently approach the task of reading in relation to the
reading tasks they have encountered in the past. Second, subsequent instruction must build on this foundation. Thus, diagnosis by a teacher who is familiar with the instructional history of students and who tests their response to current instructional materials provides an optimal basis for instructional planning.

What must you know in order to diagnose the nature of your students’ reading difficulty? A diagnostian is much more than someone who knows how to administer tests. The diagnostian is an active explorer whose search is guided by a carefully developed conceptual scheme. This scheme identifies the major decision points in the diagnostic process and then, once a particular decision is made, identifies certain subsidiary decision points. Through this sequential decision-making procedure, you can progressively evaluate plausible explanations for reading difficulty.

• Major Diagnostic Decisions

In the model of reading diagnosis shown in Figure 1.1, the central and most important process in reading is comprehension, the ability to reconstruct meaning from printed text. This means that the goal of reading is to comprehend the reading materials that are part of instruction. Certain underlying processes such as print skill and vocabulary knowledge are viewed as supporting effective comprehension. These underlying areas become important if a student is experiencing difficulty with comprehension. In this book, the main goal of reading diagnosis and reading instruction is to help all students develop effective strategies for comprehension.

Comprehending Text. The first decision you need to make is to determine whether your students comprehend the textual materials that are part of instruction; if they don’t, you can conclude that they are experiencing problems in reading. We believe that a student’s expected reading level—and whether he or she has a reading problem—should be established in terms of the level of materials used by the class or the student’s subgroup. If a student is able to read and comprehend classroom material, we conclude that he or she has no reading problem. The student can be assigned the appropriate materials and given suitable instruction during the daily reading lesson. However, when there is evidence that a student cannot adequately understand the materials used for regular class instruction, we consider that student to have a reading problem that warrants further diagnosis.
When there is evidence that a student has a reading problem, the second decision point requires you to identify the general nature of the problem. A student can have difficulties in three general areas that may interfere with comprehension: (1) inadequately developed print skill, (2) inadequate vocabulary knowledge pertaining to the ideas described in a passage, and (3) inadequately developed strategies for understanding text (see Figure 1.1).

Print skill refers to the ability of readers to translate printed symbols efficiently into spoken language or meaning. This area includes not only skill with phonics, structural analysis, and syllabication, which permit a student to identify previously unknown words, but also the acquisition of a set of words that are recognized instantaneously. It includes the proficient integration of word recognition and word identification with contextual information as a student responds to prose to develop fluency.

Most children acquire basic print skill during their early reading instruction, and this skill becomes integrated and automatic through a variety of home and school reading experiences. Note that the emphasis of early instruction can have a profound influence on the particular print concepts that students learn. Further, students who have difficulty acquiring print concepts that are taught explicitly also have difficulty inferring those that are not explicitly taught. For example, some reading programs emphasize the development of phonic concepts but do not teach the process of blending and the application of phonic knowledge in context. For students who do not spontaneously infer how to blend phonic values, a good knowledge of phonics may be of little value in identifying unknown words. Print skill is more fully described in the next two chapters.

Vocabulary knowledge refers to knowledge of the key words contained in particular reading selections as well as the encompassing concepts being conveyed and the ways word meaning is revealed by context. For example, to understand a passage about the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo, students must be familiar with the meanings of such words as planet and telescope; beyond these, the encompassing concept of “movement” is central to an understanding of how the solar system works. Students differ in the extent to which they can comprehend a passage without adequate knowledge of the concepts they are presumed to know. Vocabulary knowledge includes both general language concepts and specific literacy concepts concerning the functions of print, writing, and communication, as well as a knowledge of genre and grammar.

For students who speak English as a second language, assessment of prior knowledge is particularly important. Assessment needs to distinguish between a student’s knowledge of underlying concepts (in any language) and his or her knowledge of the specific English vocabulary associated with the concepts. The diagnostic model is useful for understanding the literacy development of bilingual students, but you may need to do a more extensive assessment and
interpretation in the area of prior knowledge than will be needed for English-speaking students. Prior knowledge is more fully considered in Chapter 4.

In addition to experiencing problems in print skill and/or vocabulary knowledge, students may have problems in their **comprehension strategies**. That is, a student may have no difficulty with print translation and may be familiar with the meanings of the words and concepts that are central to understanding a passage, but may still fail to comprehend the material. This failure may indicate that the student is having difficulty integrating information across a text. Whereas a writer begins with a conception of the message to be conveyed in a passage and then confronts the problem of how to write this in words, sentences, and paragraphs, a reader must reconstruct the author’s message by processing these units and recombining them into one or several arguments or descriptions. Some readers experience difficulty with this integration process as well as with the monitoring and fix-up strategies necessary to recognize and address these problems. For example, readers often encounter pronouns, nouns, or phrases that refer to a previously identified person or topic. These words or phrases are signals that more information is being provided about the same topic or person, rather than a new topic being introduced. Readers must also understand what to look for and how to reread and connect the information they missed on their first reading. Comprehension strategies are considered in Chapters 5 and 6.

**Identifying the Nature of the Difficulty.** As previously described, the second step in diagnosis is to determine whether a student is experiencing difficulty with print skill, vocabulary knowledge, and/or comprehension strategies. While these three areas are part of an integrated process, it is useful to consider them separately. Different sorts of information and assessment procedures are required to determine the status of each one. Print skill is typically assessed by having students read passages, words, or word parts aloud, whereas discourse processing is typically assessed by having the reader “retell” the passage content, think aloud during reading, or respond to comprehension questions based on a selection that has been read. Vocabulary knowledge assessment does not necessarily involve reading; rather, it uses questions to elicit a student’s understanding of selected terms. The three areas also differ in the types of instructional procedures that enhance their development. The instruction that is useful for helping a student develop word identification strategies is quite different from what is effective in facilitating discourse comprehension.

The model for diagnosis shown in Figure 1.1 assumes not only that these three areas can be considered separately but also that two of them—print skill and vocabulary knowledge—represent conditions that facilitate the effective employment of the third: comprehension strategies. Accordingly, if a student fails to comprehend a passage, it is important to examine the student’s print strategies
and vocabulary knowledge for problems. Problems in either of these areas could account for the observed difficulty in comprehension. Thus, it is difficult in such cases to ascertain whether the student is experiencing problems in comprehension over and above those that stem from deficiencies in print skill or vocabulary knowledge. Comprehension strategies constitute a central category within the model: Problems are assumed to occur in this area when comprehension is weak and both vocabulary concepts and print skill are adequately developed.

To begin thinking in terms of the diagnostic scheme, let us consider the strengths and difficulties of four students (Cases 1.1–1.4) who have encountered problems reading classroom materials. You are encouraged to consider the evidence and determine each student’s relative strength in the areas specified by the model. On this basis, you should be able to specify the area(s) in need of further diagnosis.

**Case 1.1**

**John**

John is nine years and two months old and is in the fourth grade. His teacher, Tessa, has found that he has considerable difficulty understanding not only his social studies and science textbooks but also the stories in the third-grade-level reading book used by her slowest-paced group. His oral reading, however, is flawless, and he even reads the social studies and science passages with considerable fluency. Tessa first noticed that he has extremely vague concepts pertaining to biological terms and then pursued his understanding of more common terms. She found that he knows only superficially, or not at all, words from his reading book such as *revenge, comrade, foundation,* and *craftsmen.*

**Diagnosis.** The oral reading evidence indicates that John has strength in the area of print skill. John’s inability to answer the questions posed by Tessa therefore seems attributable to inadequate vocabulary knowledge and/or poor comprehension strategies. The possibility that he is deficient in vocabulary knowledge is suggested by his lack of knowledge about terms known by his classmates. Thus, we tentatively conclude that...
vocabulary knowledge is John’s major problem area. It is possible that he also has comprehension difficulties, but this remains to be determined by having him read a passage for which his vocabulary knowledge is sufficient. Vocabulary knowledge, then, should be Tessa’s first area of focus.

case 1.2

Mary

Mary is seven years old and in the second grade. She is currently in the middle reading group, which uses second-grade-level materials. When she reads aloud during reading instruction, she does so fluently, making few errors. However, many of her answers to postreading questions show that she has not understood major events within the story. Her answers to questions about important terms within the story reveal that she has a good command of English and is more knowledgeable than other students in the group. ■

Diagnosis. Mary’s reading difficulty is not associated with inadequately developed print skill or vocabulary knowledge. Her inability to comprehend what she reads may therefore derive from sentence and paragraph comprehension inadequacies. Therefore, her teacher should consider further exploration of comprehension strategies.

case 1.3

Larry

Larry is ten years old and in fourth grade. He is in the slowest-paced group in the class, which reads from third-grade materials. Larry’s teacher had almost immediately noted his difficulty in reading aloud. Although Larry had developed familiarity with some common words, he would wait for the teacher to assist him on many other words, particularly those that were multisyllabic. His comprehension of stories that he read silently was extremely low; however, he comprehended well when the others in his group read aloud. He also demonstrated good understanding of key words in the reading selections; indeed, he was one of the most knowledgeable class members when it came to science activities and social studies discussions. ■

pause and reflect

Consider the following questions: Does Mary have any problems in reading, and if so, in what area(s)? What evidence supports these conclusions?
Diagnosis. Larry experiences difficulty in the area of print skill but also in comprehension of materials that he has read. He is strong in vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, we conclude that his comprehension difficulty reflects his poorly developed print skill. There is evidence to support this conclusion, namely, his good comprehension when he listens to others read. Once he acquires skill with print, he should become a proficient reader, given his well-developed vocabulary knowledge. Our task is to diagnose his print skill further in order to learn how to facilitate his development in this area.

Case 1.4

Tom

Tom is seven years and nine months old and in the third grade. In second grade he was with the middle reading group, and his third-grade teacher has continued that placement. His answers to comprehension questions indicate excellent understanding of what he reads, whether silently or aloud. Further, informal questioning about key vocabulary words indicates a breadth of vocabulary knowledge and fluency of expression. However, his oral reading is characterized by frequent substitutions of words. He seems to have developed extremely careless reading procedures.

Diagnosis. It is clear that Tom’s strengths are his good vocabulary knowledge and his adequate comprehension. Nevertheless, his print skill appears to be inadequately developed and should be explored further. Note that in terms of the model, Tom’s pattern of reading strengths and weaknesses is one that is unlikely to occur. The model suggests that adequately developed print skill is a prerequisite for adequate comprehension, and typically this is true. Exceptions occur, however, among students with extremely well-developed vocabulary knowledge. Such students, on the basis of this knowledge and minimal information from print, are able to make sense of a story or passage. While we may conclude that Tom has no reading problem at the present time, his print skill may become inadequate to the demands of reading as the materials become more technical and precise in their informational content. Therefore, it is appropriate to treat

Pause and reflect

Consider the nature of Larry’s reading. What do you consider to be his reading strengths and difficulties?

Pause and reflect

Consider how we might make sense of these reading characteristics. Does Tom have a reading problem, and if so, what is its nature?
Tom as having a reading problem in the area of print skill and to diagnose further the nature of his difficulty.

- **Diagnostic Patterns**

These cases show how the diagnostic model may be used to determine whether a student has a reading problem and to identify the areas in need of further diagnostic exploration. In a more systematic fashion, Table 1.1 shows the different patterns of reading skill that are possible when comprehension, print skill, and vocabulary knowledge are considered. For example, John, the first case we considered, with poor comprehension and vocabulary knowledge but good print skill, conforms to Pattern 3. The second case, Mary, with adequate print skill and vocabulary knowledge but inadequate comprehension, conforms to Pattern 2. The third case, Larry, represents Pattern 4, with poor print skill and comprehension but good vocabulary knowledge. Finally, Tom conforms to the relatively uncommon Pattern 6, with good comprehension and vocabulary knowledge but inadequate print skill.

In Pattern 1, reading comprehension and underlying print skill and vocabulary knowledge are all sufficient for the student to cope with his or her reading tasks. Because there appears to be no reading difficulty, further diagnosis is unnecessary.

Pattern 2 consists of adequate print skill and vocabulary knowledge but inadequate reading comprehension. Clearly, the potential for adequate reading comprehension strategies might also be an area of weakness. However, this area is directly explored only when vocabulary knowledge and print skill have been eliminated as major factors in reading difficulty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Common Patterns</th>
<th>Uncommon Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print skill</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary knowledge</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further diagnostic</td>
<td>Discontinue</td>
<td>Explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exploration(^a)</td>
<td>diagnosis</td>
<td>comprehension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)In Patterns 3, 4, and 5, comprehending strategies might also be an area of weakness. However, this area is directly explored only when vocabulary knowledge and print skill have been eliminated as major factors in reading difficulty.
comprehension is strong, but the student has not yet acquired some skills or organizing concepts for processing text. Further diagnosis in the area of comprehension is needed to determine the nature of the problem.

Pattern 3 is that of the student often identified as a “word caller”—the student who possesses adequate print skill but inadequate vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Where you see this pattern, you assume that limited vocabulary and concepts interfere with reading comprehension: The student’s limited experiences set a ceiling on what he or she can comprehend through print. Further exploration of the student’s prior knowledge is appropriate. For example, a student may have experienced certain situations or events but failed to acquire the pertinent verbal labels. The instruction recommended for this student would be very different from that recommended for a student who also lacked the experiential base.

Pattern 4 characterizes the student who has difficulty translating print into familiar language. Here you may assume that poor print skill accounts for poor reading comprehension. The student has the strength of good language development, as indicated by strong vocabulary knowledge. Further diagnosis should focus on how he or she identifies and recognizes words.

In Pattern 5, reading comprehension and both sets of underlying skills are inadequately developed. Further exploration of the student’s vocabulary knowledge and print skill is appropriate.

Because reading comprehension typically depends on the development of print skill and vocabulary knowledge, the remaining three patterns, in which comprehension is good whereas print skill and/or vocabulary knowledge are poor, occur infrequently. Pattern 6, as we have seen, occurs mainly for extremely able students with well-developed verbal skills. These students are able to compensate for rather poorly developed print skill by using a combination of contextual cues, minimal print cues, and past experience; as a result, they score at an adequate level in reading comprehension. For this pattern, further examination of print skill is recommended. Although the student will often tolerate the frustration of the reading task when working with you on an individual basis, he or she may avoid reading tasks when left to work alone. Although such students may be able to compensate for skill deficiencies at this stage, later they may be unable to comprehend more difficult reading material.

Finally, Pattern 7 rarely occurs. If it is observed, it probably reflects a kind of “production deficiency.” That is, a student, although able to summarize a passage or respond to questions based on it, may have difficulty generating definitions of terms or demonstrating their use. This pattern may sometimes be seen in English language learners (ELLs). Pattern 8, in fact, occurs rarely and if observed, probably reflects invalid measurement in one of the three areas.
The purpose of diagnosis is to examine each of the three reading skill areas shown in Table 1.1 and to determine its relative status. This procedure ensures that major problem areas will not be overlooked and that areas for more intensive exploration are identified.

- **Developmental Flexibility of the Model**

The diagnostic model is applicable to all levels of skill, from initial reading acquisition to mature reading proficiency. That is, it is useful in helping you understand the strengths and difficulties of a beginning reader as well as that of a college student. The flexibility of this diagnostic approach derives from its conceptualization of reading as having the three component areas: reading comprehension, print skill, and vocabulary knowledge. Each area represents a different pattern of development in accordance with the different problems posed by reading materials students are expected to understand at successive levels. These changing demands of reading materials, considered here briefly, are treated more comprehensively in subsequent chapters.

The first two years of reading instruction usually emphasize the development of skill for translating print to speech or meaning. Some reading programs focus on the development of phonic concepts, others on the development of a sight vocabulary, and still others on the orchestration of strategies. Most current programs develop print concepts through direct instruction and extensive reading of contextual materials. These contextual materials are generally narrative in form, with the characters (people or animals) performing acts and speaking thoughts that are familiar to young children. Accordingly, most children already possess the relevant vocabulary knowledge and have acquired the necessary comprehension strategies through listening to stories read to them. However, when students lack this knowledge or listening experience, these aspects of reading must become areas of instructional focus for them, along with print skill.

Students refine and integrate their print skill during subsequent years in several ways. They become able to tackle longer and more complex words, some of which they have never heard before. They become so familiar with the characteristics of print that processing becomes almost automatic for “easy” materials. As a consequence, their reading rates improve dramatically.

As their print skill is refined, however, new problems arise. Beginning in the third or fourth grade, students typically encounter new forms of printed materials. They are expected to read texts other than narratives—texts that are characterized by a markedly different paragraph structure. In subject areas such as science and social studies, paragraphs are organized around a major topic, with examples of supporting information, or structured in terms of temporal,
spatial, logical, or cause-and-effect relationships. Such structures differ not only from that of narrative materials but also, of course, from the oral language forms with which students are familiar. Once students encounter expository materials, they must acquire many new skills for processing information.

Along with these new genre-related processing problems, students encounter new demands on their vocabulary knowledge as they progress through the middle grades and high school. In sharp contrast to the primary materials, science, social studies, math, and more advanced literature introduce vocabulary and underlying concepts and text structures that go beyond the students’ prior experiences and vocabulary knowledge. Thus, students must learn how to obtain new knowledge from text. They must become independent readers in order to accomplish homework assignments and projects.

In sum, students must become increasingly efficient in processing print, learning to evaluate information from a variety of sources, and integrating it in sophisticated reports and projects. This brief discussion indicates some of the ways in which reading demands change over time. The point to remember, however, is that despite the changing nature of reading acquisition, the diagnostic model is able to account for reading difficulties at all levels.

Class Screening

Starting the school year with a new class is challenging for all teachers, especially those just beginning their teaching careers. Whether using themed trade book materials, a reading series, literature circles, a core literature book, or other approaches, you need to know the range of your students’ reading before you can choose appropriate materials. You also need to know which students might require extra support.

At the start of the school year, or when meeting a new group of students, it is helpful to take a quick “snapshot” of your class to establish starting points for more detailed diagnostic reflection. Just as a class picture on the first day of school can help you learn your students’ names and faces and give you an initial point of reference, class screening procedures can help you to acquire the “sense of the class.” There are many options for screening. We consider four reading tasks here in some detail: standardized reading tests, graded word lists, oral reading passages, and cloze samples.

This type of screening assessment is meant to supplement, not replace, more comprehensive indicators of your students’ reading throughout the course of the school year. The following chapters describe methods for authentic assessment based on classroom materials that are collected throughout the year. Just as a snapshot doesn’t capture the same full, rich “reality” as a video or home movie, so a screening measure provides only a small window on reading performance, a guide to help with later, more detailed assessment.
• Standardized Reading Test—Class Profile

One easy way to start the school year is to construct a class profile from data already on hand, typically standardized test data and the recommendations of the prior year’s teachers. Teachers typically receive standardized test results as part of the portfolio of information for an incoming class. The major purpose for testing is to meet school and district needs; however, these results can also provide a starting point for you to get to know your new class.

Let’s consider Tessa’s fourth-grade class to understand how teachers can use the information from standardized tests to start their instructional planning at the start of the school year. Tessa’s goal for the first month of school is to begin learning the reading and writing strengths of her students and the areas in which they need support. She looked over the test scores shown in Figure 1.2. This information helped her form questions about the reading strengths of her students.

**Figure 1.2** Standardized Test Results and Third-Grade Reading Group: Tessa’s Fourth Graders Tested at 3.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Reading Vocabulary</th>
<th>Reading Comprehension</th>
<th>Prior Year’s Third-Grade Group Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connie</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornelia</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dottie</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greta</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lottie</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tia</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanda</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of certain children that can be pursued further through informal observation during reading and writing instruction.

Typically, in examining test scores, you first see that some children receive low scores and others high scores relative to their peers. Remember that these scores are only estimates and that the children’s true levels of performance may be somewhat higher or lower. Tessa is particularly concerned about Lottie because of her low comprehension score. In addition, she wants to observe the reading of Dottie, Grace, Jean, John, Walter, and Wanda. She notes the relatively high scores of Dorothy and Jeff and wants to observe how independent they are when they do their classwork. Finally, she is concerned about the high discrepancy between vocabulary and comprehension scores for Carol, Donald, and Dorothy.

When she considers the third-grade group placement, she is puzzled by Carol’s placement in the low group. Further, the low-group placement of Ann surprises her. On the other hand, two of the children she is concerned about, Grace and Jean, were in the high and middle groups last year, so perhaps the test scores are not valid. Obviously, Tessa cannot draw conclusions solely on the basis of this information. It does, however, raise some questions and suggest which children may need special support or more challenging work.

Let us return to Tessa’s class to consider how she will organize her students for instruction. In previous years, Tessa grouped her students on the basis of their reading achievement. Typically, she forms two groups: one composed of children reading at the fourth-grade level and the other composed of children reading below grade level who need intensive instructional help to develop their reading strategies. In the past she chose to do this because the stories in the fourth-grade reading series were extremely difficult for some of the students in her class. Although she forms groups for reading instruction, every afternoon she provides 30 to 60 minutes of readers’ workshop. Children read books they have selected, either alone or with a partner or interest group, and keep a reading log or journal in which they record their reactions and ideas. Tessa reads and responds to the journals, as do the children’s reading partners. Finally, the entire class participates in a Friday session of readers’/writers’ workshop in which books, ideas, and ongoing activities are shared.

Tessa is thinking about using this organizational arrangement again this year. If she does, she will have a large group using the fourth-grade reading series and a smaller group using the third-grade materials. Yet, she will have some
Class Screening

pause and reflect

Consider the information included in Figure 1.2. How do you think Tessa will initially compose the two groups of students for reading instruction? Which students might be more independent in the large group? Which might need more guidance in the large group? Which might work best in a smaller group with lower-level materials? When you have finished, compare your judgments with those of Tessa.

activities in which she combines the two groups. For example, she may focus one of her thematic units on the special “challenges” faced by children because both levels of materials have selections appropriate for the topic.

Tessa’s initial decisions about the reading needs of her students will, of course, be modified as she learns more about her class. In considering the test scores, she places more weight on the comprehension score because it involves the reading of textual passages. She decides to form a small group composed of Dottie, Grace, Jean, John, Lottie, Walter, and Wanda. These are the children she had tentatively identified as needing special instructional support in the small group setting. Tessa’s goal is to have all these children reading with the rest of the class by the end of the year.

Tessa selects the remainder of the class to form the large group. Within this group, she identifies two children, Dorothy and Jeff, whom she will challenge with some independent book club activities. She is also going to find special and more demanding activities for David, who also shows strong comprehension. This initial grouping will be modified many times during the year. At different times Tessa forms focused trade book reading groups. For example, when the Holocaust is the topic of social studies, students read from a designated set of related trade books. The groups formed for this purpose are heterogeneous in composition. As needed, she provides any children from the class with special, small-group support.

Tessa’s grouping each Friday for the readers’/writers’ workshop includes all class members. This experience provides her the opportunity to see how well the children in the small group read more challenging materials. In the afternoon period for independent reading and writing, she observes the selections of children and the partners with whom they choose to work. She encourages children to form partnerships on the basis of their interests.

Although a profile based on standardized test results can be enlightening, many teachers prefer to collect a sample of reading performance to construct a class profile. Several different types of screening approaches will help you do this. In the following three sections, we discuss how you can develop a profile of your class using (1) a graded word list, (2) an oral reading passage, and (3) a cloze sample.

• Graded Word List—Class Profile

Word recognition, as well as automaticity of recognition, is a strong correlate of reading performance (Juel & Roper-Schneider, 1985), and the ability to recognize
words on a graded word list has often been used as a quick screening measure for students. Informal Reading Inventories typically start with graded word lists as a first measure to help place students in reading materials. There are also many word reading tests available commercially such as the Slosson Oral Reading Test-R3 (Slosson, 2002) and the Wide Range Achievement Test, Fourth Edition (WRAT-4; Wilkinson, 2006). In addition, graded word lists often accompany informal reading inventories such as the Analytic Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 2007) and the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 2010). Alternatively, word lists can be constructed by sampling the graded reading materials used in your program.

We recommend lists of graded words that include at least ten words at each grade level rather than those with a few words spanning a large range (such as the WRAT). This design provides a sufficient sample to provide information for analysis as well as screening. In addition to noting word identification strategies, you can also ask children about whether they know the meanings of selected words. This will provide insight in the background experiences and vocabulary knowledge of children.

To illustrate a class profile based on a graded word list, we consider the case of Eileen, a first-grade teacher whom you will meet again in Chapter 3. At Baker school, where Eileen teaches, many children come to first grade already reading. To understand their literacy development, she engages them in informal reading and writing tasks during the first weeks of school. On the first day, for example, she sees which children can recognize their own names to put on their cubbies. She notes which children actively engage in shared reading and writing activities. By the end of the first week, she has a fairly good idea which children are already reading. She has identified 10 of her 24 children that she believes are reading. To confirm her impressions, she had them read from the first few lists from the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 2010).

From the number of words Sam read correctly, we learn that he is reading quite well for a beginning first grader. He is able to recognize words that first graders are typically able to recognize in the spring of first grade. Since he recognized many of the correct words immediately, we can see that he knows these words well—automatically. There were five words that he did not know and three that he “sounded out” correctly. From this we learn that he already knows how to identify previously unknown words quite well (Figure 1.3).

After Eileen had given the ten students she thought were reading the word lists from the Basic Reading Inventory, she created a profile of the number of words they read correctly. To be counted as being able to recognize words
at a certain level, students had to recognize 14, or 70 percent, of the words on the list. She used the label “Emergent Reader” for children who were not able to recognize any words on the list. Some children were reading some of the words on the Primer list, although they did not reach the criterion of 70 percent. These she called “Beginning Readers.” The profile she developed is shown in Figure 1.4.

As you can see, two of the ten children, Latisha and Amy, were unable to read any words on the Preprimer list; they were, however, accomplished Emergent Readers, as indicated by Eileen’s other
informal tasks. Three children, Joshua, Denise, and Sasha, read some words and were ranked on the profile as Beginning Readers. One child, Marina, was reading at the Preprimer level, and two, Katie and Matthew, were successfully reading Primer words. However, their word recognition was often quite labored, and they showed little facility for recognizing unfamiliar words. Both Sam and Peter were reading quite independently. Their word recognition was rapid, and they were able to identify many words.

To screen the remaining 15 children in her class, Eileen assessed how well they recognized and could name the letters of the alphabet. She also administered a spelling test to assess their phoneme awareness and knowledge of letter-sound associations. Particularly at early stages of literacy development, different screening assessments may be appropriate, depending on the degree to which children have developed reading proficiency.

**Oral Reading Passage—Class Profile**

Oral reading measures are also a useful means for judging the accuracy and fluency of children’s reading (Strecker, Roser, & Martinez, 1998). Similar to the graded word lists, oral reading passages may come from sets of commercially constructed oral reading passages such as the *Basic Reading Inventory* (Johns, 2010), *Observation Survey—Text Reading* (Clay, 2006), the Qualitative Reading Inventory (Leslie & Caldwell, 2005), and the *Analytic Reading Inventory* (Woods & Moe, 2007). Alternatively, teachers can select one or several passages from the materials that are used as part of their instructional programs. We refer to this as “curriculum based” because you use a regular classroom text to collect a short sample of a student’s oral reading.

An oral reading sample is extremely useful as a screening procedure. For an example of an oral reading record, see Figure 1.5. From it, you gain evidence on oral reading accuracy (percentage of passage words read correctly) that will let you assess the development of a child’s sight word knowledge and word identification strategies. For somewhat more advanced students, you can gain information on fluency (the number of words read per minute). Fluency involves not only reading at a good rate, but also reading with a high degree of accuracy and proper intonation and phrasing (prosody or “sounding like language”). The ability to read fluently is highly correlated with many measures of reading competence (Shinn, 1989). Fluency requires that the reader possess good decoding skills, the strategies to orchestrate these skills in reading real text, and comprehension to monitor what is being read to make sure it sounds like language.

Oral reading samples are thus useful for gathering different types of information. They can help you achieve three different purposes: (1) getting a quick sense of how well your class reads in the fall, (2) identifying those students who
**Directions:** You are going to read part of a story about two people who meet while living in Japan. She was a Japanese schoolgirl named Aiko, and he was an American sailor named John.

Every day, my father, whose name was John, walked in the park with my mother, Aiko. They sat on a bench and talked. But my father was afraid to invite my mother to dinner.

If we go to a restaurant, he thought, I'll go hungry because I don't know how to eat with chopsticks. And if I go hungry, I'll act like a bear. Then Aiko won't like me. I'd better not ask her to dinner.

My mother wondered why my father never invited her to dinner. Perhaps John is afraid I don't know how to eat with a knife and fork and I'll look silly, she thought. Maybe it is best if he doesn't invite me to dinner.

So they walked and talked and never ate a bowl of rice or a piece of bread together.

One day, the captain of my father's ship said, “John, in three weeks, the ship is leaving Japan.”

My father was sad. He wanted to marry my mother. How can I ask her to marry me? he thought. I don’t even know if we like the same food. And if we don’t, we’ll go hungry. It’s hard to be happy if you’re hungry. I’ll have to find out what food she likes. And I’ll have to learn to eat with chopsticks.

So he went to a Japanese restaurant.

Everyone sat on cushions around low tables. My father bowed to the waiter. Please teach me to eat with chopsticks.

Of course, said the waiter, bowing.
may need special support and more time when working with grade-level mate-
rial, and (3) helping you to assist your students in selecting independent reading
material (Blachowicz, Fisher, Massarelli, Moskal, & Obrochta, 2000). In addition,
when oral reading samples are collected at the end of the school year, they are
useful in charting the progress that your students made over the course of the
school year.

To screen in this way, first you need to select reading material that is rep-
resentative of the materials you will actually be using in class. This could, for
example, be a core novel, an article from National Geographic World, or a short
selection from a magazine or basal anthology. Try to avoid highly technical
material or selections with unusual and exotic vocabulary. Choose a passage
that will take the students one or two minutes to read. Make a master that you
might laminate and a copy for each student being assessed.

Each student is assessed individually. Typically, students take about two
minutes to read the selection. A class of 25 students can be tested in a week,
if you work with about five students per day. Begin a session by sitting in a
comfortable place and introducing the student to the process and the text. The
directions should be something like: “I would like you to read this passage about
_______. (Add any sentences to prepare the students that you think are rel-
vant.) I’d like you to read this at a comfortable rate as accurately as you can.
You may start.”

You may either start timing immediately or you may let the students read
the first paragraph without timing or marking. At whatever point you being
timing (either the start of the first or the second paragraph) begin timing for
one minute. Each time the student makes a miscue, put a tick mark in the mar-
gin or over the word, or mark the exact miscue if you are a skilled recorder. At
the end of one minute, mark the last word read and let the student complete
the passage.

You may add a comprehension question or retelling task. Many teachers
also make anecdotal notes on each sheet to remind them of things they noticed
about each child’s reading, such as “Had to hold paper really close to face.
Glasses?” “Had lots of trouble dropping down each line,” “Very fluent . . . this
is way too easy for this child,” or “Raced through and couldn’t tell me anything
about what was read.” Teachers experienced in analyzing oral reading will also
note the types of miscues students make for later probing, such as “Had trouble
with all the multisyllable words.”

Count how many words were read in one minute and subtract the number
of errors a student made. This will give you a CWPM (correct words per minute
score). For example, using the oral reading sample for Alex shown in Figure 1.5,
how would you interpret his reading rate? Rates will vary based on the concep-
tual difficulty and structure of a text. Nevertheless, some common expecta-
tions may help you think about Alex and about your class. Typically, silent reading
Class Screening

Table 1.2 * Mean Words Correct per Minute Targets* for Average Students in Grades 1 through 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Fall “Target”</th>
<th>Winter “Target”</th>
<th>Spring “Target”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The targets are reported in round numbers.

Rates become slightly faster than oral rates as children develop proficiency in reading. These are shown in Tables 1.2 and 1.3.

We illustrate this screening procedure by showing you a profile, developed by Vanessa, of her fifth-grade class. For this screening at the beginning of the school year, she had her students read a short piece about Japan from a novel she had selected for her students to read. Her class profile based on the screening is shown in Figure 1.6. From this profile, Vanessa could see that Katie, Elizabeth, RJ, Scott, Diane, and particularly Jeanne were going to have significant trouble with the novel she had chosen as the unit core book. She would need to support them in their reading and also make sure they had extra time. She planned to monitor their reading more closely during instruction and to obtain further diagnostic information. She also considered giving them an Informal Reading Inventory to obtain a more detailed picture of their reading levels, strengths, and weaknesses.

In contrast, Katie, Jamie, Sara, Jeanette, and Canessa read the sample very rapidly. Vanessa decided to check their comprehension on their next reading. If the others were as fluent as they seemed on the snapshot, and they understood what they were reading, she would need to look for some challenging material for them to read in addition to the novel. With Vera, Vanessa suspected that comprehension was sacrificed for speed. She would use comprehension strategies such as the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) with her to model appropriate speed rather than rapid reading. Also, from the anecdotal comments Vanessa made, she could see that several students had trouble with multisyllable words. For these students, she would schedule a mini-lesson to do some diagnostic teaching on this topic.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentile</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>WCPM</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2,847</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>13,738</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>12,844</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>13,086</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>12,298</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>8,403</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4,205</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3,128</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Class Screening**

**Cloze Sample—Class Profile**

A cloze passage is typically constructed by deleting every fifth word in a passage and replacing it with a blank. A reader, on the basis of the context, must supply the missing words. Try to make sense of the passage shown in Figure 1.7.

What terms did you insert to make a sensible passage? For the first blank, the words experience or practice would make sense. The word cloze would make sense in the second blank. The following represent appropriate synonyms to complete subsequent blanks: (3) deletes/omits/leaves out, (4) passage/paragraph/text, (5) space/dash, (6) readers/students, (7) meaning/context, and (8) complete/create/finish/fill-in.

A reader’s ability to use the context in silent reading is highly correlated with general comprehension ability (Bormuth, 1967). To complete a cloze passage like the one in Figure 1.7, you need to use your knowledge of word meanings, sentence structure, passage meaning, and general world knowledge to predict meanings for unknown words so that what you read makes sense. Cloze passages force students to use all their cueing systems to make sense of what they are reading. Because cloze completion is a silent and untimed task, some feel it is a good measure for older readers who rely more on silent reading for their work. We talk more about using cloze procedures for instruction in Chapters 4 and 5.

After your students complete a cloze passage, you can make a class profile similar to the one in Figure 1.6. This would show the rank of your students in silent comprehension as measured by the cloze completion task. From this analysis, you can identify those students who might warrant further consideration. Because cloze passages are unusual, you need to teach students the process before using it for assessment. You might also want to include in the profile a column for qualitative comments indicating what kinds of difficulties students had with the process.

Screening is just a first look at the reading of a group of students to help identify those who may need further assessment. We have tried to share...
chapter 1  Model for Reading Diagnosis and Instructional Planning

**figure 1.7  • A Section of a Cloze Test**

| More direct instruction and _1_ with vocabulary may be given by using the _2_ procedure in its many modifications. A cloze passage _3_ selected words from the _4_ and replaces them with a line or _5_. Reading a cloze passage requires _6_ to use their knowledge of _7_ to supply appropriate words and concepts to _8_ a meaningful passage. |

types of screening using standardized test results as well as several that look at actual reading performances such as word recognition, oral reading of text, and cloze silent reading. The process of laying out class performance on a profile is a valuable learning experience. Early screening can help you identify students for early information gathering; this is the first step in efficient diagnosis. Some teachers become discouraged with the notion of reading assessment because they feel they need to do a full-blown diagnosis on each child in the class. Screening profiles can help you to prioritize and focus your time and effort.

**Instructional Planning**

In Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5, we describe ways in which the knowledge of children develops as they learn about print, word meanings, and comprehension strategies. In Chapter 9, we discuss ways in which assessment of these aspects of a child’s reading fit in the wider framework of school data collection and interpretation. This focus on development and learning processes may seem unusual in a book on diagnosis. However, we have emphasized these areas because we believe that you will not be able to plan appropriate instruction unless you have internalized an understanding of the ways children develop knowledge as they learn to read.

There was a time, not so long ago, when teachers typically assumed that children entering kindergarten or first grade knew little about reading. They were thought of as “empty vessels” or “blank slates” to be filled with sight words, phonics skills, and other skills. Teachers typically organized their reading instruction by following the suggestions in the manual that accompanied the basal reading series. Learning to read was defined in terms of acquiring a variety of skills. In other words, a behaviorist philosophy informed instruction.

In contrast to this view, studies of emergent literacy (see Chapter 2) have shown that children enter school knowing a great deal about literacy. They observe their parents reading, they enjoy being read to, they examine the labels on a variety of products, and they attempt to write. They do not simply memorize information, but they make sense of their new experiences in terms of their
previous experiences. Children do not passively receive knowledge as is assumed by a behavioristic perspective; rather, they make or construct their unique interpretations of events. This activity includes events about which they read. This view of learning is identified as a constructivist perspective.

Teachers who accept this perspective on how children learn know the importance of ensuring that selections children read “make sense” and that they relate directly to the experiences of children. This attitude accounts for the increased use of children’s literature in many classrooms, whether in the form of trade books or basal reading series that include children’s literature. To facilitate the reading development of children you should follow three related activities:

- Identify the knowledge that children have already acquired about print, word meanings, and comprehension strategies.
- Consider this knowledge in terms of a developmental view of literacy.
- Identify the interests of students and how you can build on them.

Appropriate instructional support involves selecting reading materials that are at an appropriate level of difficulty for students and providing instruction in areas where they need support. Such instruction will enable students to progress to the next stage of development. Central to instructional planning is the view that instructional support should be geared just beyond what children are able to accomplish independently in order to help them progress to the next level of proficiency (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

In the case studies in the following chapters, we describe instruction that is responsive to students’ developmental stages. We accept the position that learning develops in a social/cultural environment (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, we believe that learning in the classroom occurs interpersonally through social interaction before individuals should be expected to use strategies on their own. Accordingly, we recommend that new concepts and ideas be introduced and discussed with your support. Concepts and strategies developed in this manner will later be applied independently by individuals. We also recommend that you select instructional materials with students to reflect their areas of interest.

**Summary**

Reading diagnosis entails analyzing the process by which students gain meaning from text. Building on the insights and methods that have developed historically, we describe a model to guide the observations and judgments you will make about your students’ reading in the classroom.
The model draws your attention to three major decisions. The first decision concerns whether a student comprehends the materials being read in your classroom. If not, your diagnosis continues to the second decision point, where you consider whether difficulties in (1) print skill, (2) vocabulary knowledge, and/or (3) reading comprehension strategies are interfering with comprehension. The pattern of strengths and difficulties that students show in these three areas will influence your third decision concerning instruction. Your understanding gained through diagnosis and your observations concerning the interests and feelings of your students will help you to identify instructional materials that are appropriate for them in difficulty and interest and will assist you in providing them with needed instructional support.

**try it out**

1. **Reflection on Reading Patterns**: Look at Table 1.1 (p. 15), and think about children you know and have observed reading. Can you see reading patterns that describe their reading? Think about the data you used—what you observed—in drawing your conclusion. Given your tentative conclusions about their reading and your knowledge of their interests, what sort of instructional materials and support would be appropriate?

2. **Student Portfolio Ideas**: Ask students from your class to collect materials that reflect the three areas of the model in Figure 1.1. That is, have them reflect on their skill with print, their knowledge of word meanings, and their comprehension strategies. What from their work reflects their skill in each of these areas? As a class, discuss, compare, and evaluate what they choose to represent each area.

3. **For Your Teaching Portfolio**: Consider the assessment you already carry out in your classroom. Do you collect data reflecting all the relevant areas of Figure 1.1? Do you collect data on the interests and feelings of your students? Are there areas that you would like to make more explicit in the model by adding subheadings or new headings? File this as your model of diagnosis. Revisit it as you complete the book.

4. **Do a Class Screening**: Select ten students from the same classroom and develop a reading profile. Administer a graded word list, a grade-appropriate passage, or a cloze task. After scoring the screening results, chart the students on a graph ranked by performance, examine the variability among students in the class, and discuss the implications of this for instruction.
For further reading

