

# Early Reading and the Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment™, Second Edition (ERDA™ Second Edition)

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# Early Reading and ERDA Second Edition

## Components of Reading

### Reading Components:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

For virtually all students, learning to read and write begins long before kindergarten. It is a complex and dynamic process. Together with writing, reading forms the foundation for learning and serves as the gateway to mathematics, science, and social science. Reading is fundamental to success in school and in life.

The key to developing successful readers can be found in the strategic instruction and integration of five research-based components of reading. These components are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Together, they create a road map to developing strategic readers.

### Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the individual sounds of spoken words. “Research evidence, from a variety of disciplines, provides unequivocal support for the critical role of phonological processes in learning to read” (Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, and Barr, 2000, p. 483).

According to the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading (CIERA), children who have phonemic awareness skills are likely to have an easier time learning to read and spell than children who have few or none of these skills (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). Phonemic awareness can be demonstrated in several ways. Children can show that they recognize which words in a group of words begin with the same sound. For example, the words “plum,” “parrot,” and “people” all start with /p/. Children can identify and verbalize the first or last sound in a word. For example, the beginning sound of “wig” is /w/, and the ending sound of “hat” is /t/. Children can combine, or blend, the separate sounds in a word to say the word, such as by combining /d/, /o/, /g/ to say “dog.” They can also break, or segment, a word into its separate sounds, such as by breaking “bat” into /b/, /a/, /t/.

Phonemic awareness is a subgroup of phonological awareness, a broader set of skills that includes larger parts of spoken language, such as rhymes, syllables, and rimes, as well as comprehension and other qualities of sound, such as rhyming, intonation, and alliteration. According to the National Institute for Literacy (2003), children may demonstrate phonological awareness in several ways. One such way is through a child's ability to identify and make rhymes such as "the boy has a toy." A second way is through a child's ability to identify the number of syllables in a word. Another skill that demonstrates phonological awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate onsets and rimes in spoken syllables or one-syllable words, as well as the ability to identify and work with individual phonemes in spoken words.

### **Phonics**

Phonics refers to the connection between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language. Through the use of phonics, children are able to understand that there is a predictable connection between written letters and spoken sounds. Once children understand this connection, they can recognize familiar words quickly and accurately and can decode new words (National Institute for Literacy, 2003).

To be most effective, phonics instruction should begin early in kindergarten and continue through first grade. For most children, two years of phonics instruction is adequate (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). A child is able to demonstrate an understanding of phonics in several ways. One way is by matching the corresponding letter sound to the letter that represents that sound, such as the sound /d/ and the letter "d." Children can also demonstrate their understanding of phonics by combining letters and sounds to form larger units of written language. For example, this skill is demonstrated when children blend the sounds of the letters "l," "e," and "t" to form the word /let/.

### **Fluency**

Fluency is the bridge between word recognition and reading comprehension. More specifically, fluency is the ability to read text accurately with prosody. Fluent readers are able to focus on the meaning of the text and do not have to concentrate on decoding individual words. Fluency develops gradually over considerable time and through substantial practice (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). "Increasing the amount of reading students do is important, because as words are encountered repeatedly, there are a number of beneficial outcomes, such as improvements in word recognition, speed, ease of reading, and comprehension" (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002, p. 174).

At the beginning stages of reading, children are still developing their decoding skills, and their oral reading is slow and laborious. Even as their decoding skills improve and more words are committed to their sight vocabulary, they may read word by word, without inflection or expression. Full fluency is demonstrated by good phrasing, the grouping or chunking of words into phrases and clauses, inflection, intonation, and attending to punctuation, as well as reading quickly and accurately. Fluency is also dependent upon a child's knowledge of word meaning.

Fluency should be formally and informally assessed regularly to ensure that a student is making appropriate progress (National Institute for Literacy, 2003, p. 30). Monitoring a student's progress in reading fluency can provide valuable guidance for planning instruction or intervention.

## **Vocabulary**

Vocabulary refers to a student's stock and understanding of words and meanings. There are many types of vocabulary. Typically, vocabulary is broken down into four areas: listening or receptive vocabulary, speaking or expressive vocabulary, reading or recognition vocabulary, and writing vocabulary (Harris and Hodges, 1995). Vocabulary is critical to reading comprehension. Sight word vocabulary affects fluency and comprehension. To interpret and learn information from more advanced text, students must raise their vocabulary level. Most children learn vocabulary indirectly through daily oral and written exposure to new words (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). However, the direct and in-depth teaching of vocabulary and the fostering of word consciousness are equally important for raising a student's vocabulary level.

In general, there are three levels of vocabulary understanding: unknown, acquainted, and established. In the unknown category, the word is completely foreign to the student; he or she has no understanding. An acquainted word has been introduced to the student and he or she has a basic understanding of its meaning. With established vocabulary, the student has complete understanding and ownership of the word and can quickly identify and use the word properly. These levels of vocabulary understanding can be assessed in a variety of ways. One way of assessing vocabulary understanding is to speak a word to a child and ask the child to identify a corresponding picture representing that word. Another way is to provide the definition of a word and ask the child to respond by identifying the appropriate word. One may also assess this understanding by stating a word and asking the child to provide the word's opposite, by stating a word and asking the child to respond with another word that has the same meaning as the stated word (a synonym), or by asking the child to define the word without assistance.

## Comprehension

Reading is thinking. Getting meaning from text is the ultimate goal of reading comprehension. Constructing meaning is an interactive process influenced by the content and structure of the text, the purpose for reading, the reader's prior knowledge and experience, and the fluent processing of text. Vocabulary and writing ability support and precede comprehension. "Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading" (National Institute for Literacy, 2003, p. 48).

When children monitor their own comprehension, they learn to recognize when they understand and when they do not. Children who monitor their comprehension are better able to develop strategies to address any lack of understanding when they come across difficult material (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). When children ask themselves why the information presented in the text makes sense, the text becomes more memorable (Kamil et al., 2000).

Asking questions of children and having children generate their own questions is another way to help children improve their comprehension. In addition to providing children with a purpose for reading, questioning can help them focus their attention on what they are reading. This technique can also assist children in thinking actively while reading and can encourage them to monitor their own comprehension. It also helps them to reflect on what they have read and to relate it to their current knowledge (National Institute for Literacy, 2003).

## Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment, Second Edition (ERDA SECOND EDITION)

Diagnosing a child's reading ability is essential to providing effective instruction. By accurately determining a child's reading strengths and weaknesses, a classroom teacher can develop an instruction strategy that best serves the child's needs. ERDA SECOND EDITION provides a comprehensive diagnostic tool that measures the five research-based building blocks of reading at kindergarten through third grade.

ERDA SECOND EDITION diagnoses understanding of phonemic and phonological awareness through a series of subtests that assess the child's ability to hear sound units in spoken language: phonemes, rhymes (kindergarten only), rime, and syllables. A child's understanding of phonemes occurs when the child first identifies the missing phonemes in a series of given words and then omits given phonemes from another series of words. The understanding of rimes is assessed by a child being asked to say a word with a targeted sound (rime) omitted—say "ball" without /all/. A child's proficiency with syllables is assessed

by instructing the child to say a word with a targeted syllable omitted—say “playful” without /ful/.

Letter recognition and pseudoword decoding are subtests that assess understanding and the use of the alphabetic principle. In kindergarten and grade one, ERDA SECOND EDITION assesses letter recognition by showing children a letter and then asking them to point to the letter or say the letter name. Syllable assessment is administered for kindergarten through grade three and uses a format similar to the one used in diagnosing phonemic awareness. Pseudoword decoding is administered in grades one through three. The child is provided with a list of pseudowords, which the child is asked to pronounce as quickly and as accurately as possible.

Word reading and passage fluency subtests at all grades, and RAN (Rapid Automatized Naming)-letters, RAN-words, and RAN-digits at grades two and three, assess automaticity and fluent reading. Word reading is assessed by presenting the child with a list of words that are read aloud. Passage fluency is assessed by listening to the student read aloud a series of brief, grade-appropriate narrative and informational passages. The passages are in ascending order of difficulty and scored for time and accuracy. Scores are also converted to one of the following reading levels: independent, instructional, or frustration. The RAN subtest predict a student’s response to reading instruction.

Seven different subtests are used to assess vocabulary. For example, receptive vocabulary is assessed by showing a student a set of pictures, saying a word, and asking the student to point to the picture that represents the word. Other indicators of the student’s vocabulary are also provided by an assessment of synonyms, word opposites, word definitions, and multiple meanings of words.

ERDA SECOND EDITION employs three types of reading comprehension to accurately diagnose a student’s comprehension skills: word items, sentence items with target words in context, and passage items. Word items at the kindergarten and first-grade level assess comprehension by having the student read one or two words and then point to a picture that correctly reflects what the word or words are describing. Sentence items with target words in context require the student to read aloud a sentence composed of high-frequency words and, in some instances, respond to a comprehension question. ERDA SECOND EDITION assesses reading comprehension by having the student read aloud functional, narrative, and informational passages and then answer different types of comprehension questions about the passage. ERDA SECOND EDITION also assesses listening comprehension. Table 1 summarizes the assessments used at each grade level for each component of reading measured by ERDA SECOND EDITION.

ASSESSMENT REPORT

**Early Reading and ERDA Second Edition**

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**Table 1. ERDA SECOND EDITION Reading Subtests by Component for Each Grade Level.**

<b>Reading Component</b>	<b>Grade K</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
<b>Concept of Print</b>	Observation Checklist	Observation Checklist		
<b>Phonological and Phonemic Awareness</b>	Phonemes Rhyming Syllables	Phonemes Rimes Syllables	Phonemes Rimes Syllables	Phonemes Rimes Syllables
<b>Phonics</b>	Letter Recognition	Letter Recognition  Pseudoword Decoding	Pseudoword Decoding	Pseudoword Decoding
<b>Fluency</b>	Passage Fluency  Target Words in Context	Passage Fluency  Target Words in Context  Word Reading	Passage Fluency Narrative Informational  Target Words in Context  Word Reading  RAN-Digits, Letters, Words, and Words and Digits	Passage Fluency Narrative Informational  Target Words in Context  Word Reading  RAN-Digits, Letters, Words, and Words and Digits
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Receptive/ Expressive	Receptive/ Expressive  Word Opposites	Receptive/ Expressive  Word Opposites  Synonyms  Word Definitions	Receptive/ Expressive  Multiple Meanings  Synonyms  Word Definitions
<b>Comprehension</b>	Story Retelling  Reading Comprehension	Listening Comprehension  Reading Comprehension	Listening Comprehension  Reading Comprehension	Listening Comprehension  Reading Comprehension

## Conclusion

The ability to read and comprehend language is fundamental to all academic learning. By teaching clearly the five components of reading, teachers provide students with the tools necessary to build a solid foundation for learning. ERDA SECOND EDITION was developed using evidence-based research and best practices to help teachers diagnose reading problems early and in sufficient detail to improve and focus instruction. ERDA SECOND EDITION helps teachers develop students' reading abilities by accurately diagnosing their strengths and weaknesses. This information provides teachers with a strategy for planning effective instruction. By using ERDA SECOND EDITION to guide the instruction of the elements of reading, teachers and administrators will be able to provide their students with a solid foundation for life-long learning.

## References

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