
House Public Education Committee Testimony on Developmental Reading Assessment

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Introduction

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) provides teachers the opportunity to identify students' reading abilities and develop targeted instruction to meet their individual needs. The DRA does this by providing data about three critical areas of reading: Reading Engagement, Oral Reading Fluency, and Comprehension.

Reading Engagement

The first element the DRA addresses is student reading engagement. Through the use of a student's book box and reading log, a teacher can identify the type and level of books students are reading. The teacher analyzes each student's book box to determine if the student is selecting books on the appropriate reading level, or if the books are too challenging or too easy. The teacher also looks to see if students are consistently reading a variety of genres. The teacher then confers with students to identify a specific reading goal. Through these conferences with students, teachers can also tell how they view themselves as readers. Knowing students' reading engagement allows teachers to encourage the students and strategically support them going forward.

Oral Reading Fluency

Oral fluency is a critical part of the DRA. As the teacher listens to a student's oral reading, he or she evaluates how the student problem solves the text. First, the teacher identifies if the student is decoding based on the words (visual cues) or if the student relies more on the pictures (meaning). Next, the teacher identifies what types of fluency mistakes the students are making (e.g. confusing long/short vowel sounds or the sound associated with a particular letter blend; words missed because of a visual mistake such as another word that starts with the same letters; substituting a word based on context rather than actually reading the word). Then the teacher watches and listens to assess the student's

reaction to his or her mistakes (e.g. does the student notice his or her mistakes; does the student correct the mistakes). After analyzing each of these points, the teacher is able to develop a plan to support students at their appropriate reading levels.

Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the third component assessed by the DRA. Because the assessment is administered on each student's individual reading level, it provides a more accurate picture of reading comprehension. The students' written responses serve as an effective assessment of the students' depth of understanding. The DRA allows students to encounter and use a variety of reading skills, including using text features, making predictions, summarizing, comprehending, interpreting, and reflecting. Each of these behaviors are necessary in order to become a strong reader. If a student struggles on any of these components, the teacher can develop a plan to provide targeted instruction and timely feedback to the student.

Conclusion

Throughout the year, teachers assess their students using the DRA to ensure they are progressing in their reading skills. The teacher is able to intervene quickly and strategically because the teacher understands his or her students as readers. The Developmental Reading Assessment provides teachers with a rich background on their students as readers at regular intervals throughout the year and much more information than the one-day STAAR.