

High Frequency Word Assessment

Purpose:

The purpose of this assessment is to determine the number of high-frequency words that students know. LaBerge and Samuels (2006) calls this automatic recognition of high frequency words part of *automaticity*. He states that when these words are instantly recognized, the short term memory is not overloaded and is freed to focus on comprehension of what is going on in the story. Therefore, this assessment can be used throughout the year to record students' growth in automatic word recognition. Ehri (1998) found students eventually *encapsulate* the letters of word into a bonded unit that is recognized immediately. For assessment purposes, the words are read out of context and in isolation, because they should be instantly recognizable as encapsulated units by students. If a student has to stop and "tap out" or "say the sounds of each letter in the word" before saying it correctly, this should be noted.

Directions:

The following is a list of recommended starting points by grade level:

- Kindergarten winter and spring start with List A
- Grade 1 fall start with List A and move on to List B, C, and D when ready
- Grade 2 fall start with List B and move on to List C and D when ready. Try List A if List B is too hard.

Place the list of words on the table in front of the student. If a student cannot recognize at least 5 words in a row on a list or misses 8 in total on a list, ask him/her to read the previous list.

As the year progresses and a student masters all words on a list, you have the option of asking him/her to read the list for the next grade level.

Scoring:

A student must read the word correctly to score a point. Self-corrections are counted as correct. Record all attempts at a word, and analyze them to note the features in a word a student notices.

Remember, a student can often remember a word in isolation, but cannot read that same word s/he sees it in text or writes the word. We need to identify the situation in which the student knows words. Of course we hope that s/he reads words in isolation, reads it in context, writes it in isolation, and writes it in context. Only then will a student achieve the *automaticity* with words that will contribute to comprehension and fluency. By examining the student's performance on the Spelling Assessment, the Text Reading Subtest, and your own observations during the various balanced literacy components in your classroom, you can notice if the child reads the words in context, writes them in isolation, or writes them in context.

Benchmark scoring rubrics can be found at the Reading and Writing Project website. The Benchmarks for Primary Assessments document gives benchmarks for five different periods across the year.

Ehri, L.C. (1998). Grapheme-phoneme knowledge is essential for learning to read words in English. In J.L. Metsala & L. C. Ehri (Eds.), *Word Recognition in beginning literacy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Samuels, S. J. (2006). Toward a model of reading fluency. In: S. Jay Samuels and A.E. Farstrup (Eds.). *What research has to say about fluency instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, Pp.24-46