

### Reading passages and reading bands

Three different reading record tasks were included in the reading assessments. One task used fiction passages drawn from a range of children’s literature. The second task used passages from non-fiction books and included a variety of topics such as disasters, scientific phenomena, cooking and cultural events. The third task used text from a range of non-book sources including food packets, brochures, posters, newspaper articles and posters. All of the passages were drawn from authentic published materials.

Each of the three tasks was based on a set of 18 passages, chosen to represent a wide range of text complexity and readability. Each set was arranged into six national monitoring reading bands, each band containing three passages of similar readability in terms of vocabulary and content. One of the three passages from each band on each task is released with this report, to illustrate the range of texts that were used.

The six reading bands, coded by number and folder colour, differed systematically in the complexity of words and ideas. Band 0 contained passages with very basic vocabulary and ideas supported by picture clues, while band 5 used the most challenging vocabulary and textual composition. Bands 1 to 4 represented intermediate steps of vocabulary and content complexity. The material was selected in the expectation that year 4 students of average capability would be able to handle readings in band 2, and that year 8 students of average capability would be able to handle band 4 material.

Students were assigned to their final reading bands according to word reading accuracy in running text. The goal was to identify the highest band in which the student read with 90 to 95 percent accuracy (counting self-corrected words as correct). This level was chosen so the students’ reading could be analysed to obtain information about word analysis strategies and comprehension. It is important to note, therefore, that the reading proficiency of students on any given band is predominantly at an instructional rather than fluency level. The highest and lowest bands were exceptions: many students classified in band 5 read fluently at this high level, and a few students classified in band 0 made more errors than would be appropriate for instructional level text.

### Using the NEMP reading band indicator

The purpose of the Reading Band Indicator is to enable the teacher administrator to obtain an initial indication of the student’s reading band.

There are 6 colour-coded bands: 0 buff; 1 yellow; 2 pink; 3 green; 4 blue; 5 purple.

### Instructions for administering the reading band indicator

1. Introduce the chart:  
“In this activity I want you to read some passages to me, so that I can get an idea of the skills you use when reading. This chart is to help us decide which reading passages to use. I’ll ask you to read a few of the patches to me starting with this one” [point to a yellow patch].
2. Select a patch to read at each progressive band/colour through to the point when one or more word reading errors occur. If no errors are made, direct the student to the next higher band (colour).
3. When an error is made, direct the student to read the other patches at the same band/colour to ascertain whether this is the appropriate band.
4. The appropriate band on the indicator is the one where the student makes one or more errors on at least two of the three patches for a band/colour.
5. Once the student has reached the appropriate band, discontinue the Reading Band Indicator and proceed to the reading passages in the folders.

### Selecting and reading passages

Once the starting band had been identified, students were given the folder containing the three reading passages for that band. Students were invited to choose one passage to read out loud to the teacher. During the oral reading, the teacher monitored errors to see if they were within the preliminary target range of 1 error per 7 to 12 words. Unless the passage was clearly far too hard, the teacher asked the five listed comprehension questions for that passage. Students were then asked to read a second passage, in the same band or the next higher or lower band depending on the error rate observed in the first reading. Again, this reading was followed by five comprehension questions. About 14 percent of students moved up a band for their second reading, about 80 percent stayed in the same band, and about 6 percent moved down a band.

### Instructions to students

A standard set of procedures was followed with every passage. The teacher introduced the passage by giving a brief account of context, followed by instructions on the oral reading:

“I want you to read this book [/story/passage/part] to me [from this dot to the next dot] and to think about it as you read. If you come to words you don’t know, do what you usually do when you try to work out new words. Try to work out the words **aloud** so that I can find out how you do it. Don’t worry about mistakes but stop and correct them if you are able to. I will keep quiet and let you work things out unless you get badly stuck. Think about the story/information as you read. When you have finished I will ask you to tell me about it, and I will ask you some questions.”

### Scoring and analysis

Each oral reading was examined using standard techniques for taking running records. Words that appeared in a passage many times were only counted once, as were highly specialised words. A whole line omitted was counted as a single error. Self-corrections were identified and recorded. The number of errors was converted to a percentage of the number of words in the marked passage, and the number of self-corrections to a percentage of the total number of errors that could have been corrected. Responses to comprehension questions were also marked (correct/incorrect, or out of two).

Some students were asked to read more than two passages, usually because their initial passage was judged by the teacher to be too easy or difficult for them and therefore not useful. Where this happened, the final two readings were used in the scoring process.

Students were classified into reading bands on the basis of errors in the two readings, considered against the target range of 90 to 95 percent accuracy. The decision rules were:

#### TWO READINGS, SAME BAND:

- one or both in target range — choose that band;
- both with fewer errors than target range — choose that band;
- both band 0 and more errors than target range — choose band 0;
- both above band 0 and more errors than target range — cannot assign a band

#### TWO READINGS, DIFFERENT BANDS:

- both in target range — choose higher band;
- more errors than target in higher band, fewer than target in lower band — choose lower band;
- more errors than target in both bands, lower is band 0 — choose band 0;
- more errors than target in both bands, neither is band 0 — cannot assign a band;

#### ONLY ONE READING:

- in target range or fewer errors than target range — choose that band;
- more errors than target range, band is 0 — choose band 0
- more errors than target range, band is not 0 — cannot assign a band.

The Reading Record tasks provided a wealth of information about students' reading skills and abilities. In this chapter, we focus on the students' band classification, as a good indication of their ability to read words in context. Running records and the responses to comprehension questions are available for more detailed analysis in later probe studies. Also, researchers wanting greater detail could re-examine the videotaped performances.

Because each task involved 18 different reading passages, each with their own five comprehension questions, it is not feasible concisely and meaningfully to report the comprehension results here. Chapter 4 provides extensive information on students' reading comprehension using other tasks.



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