

Florida Center for Reading Research

Reading: Assessment

What is Reading: Assessment?

Beacon Educator has developed a series of online professional development courses intended to meet the requirements of Florida's Reading Endorsement. *Reading: Assessment, Parts A and B* was designed with the goal of satisfying competency three of the Reading Endorsement. Specifically, this course was developed to help teachers understand assessment and its purpose in any reading program. The content is designed to assist teachers as they examine different types of assessment, along with the concepts and characteristics of assessment. It provides the knowledge and skills necessary to administer, interpret, and use formal and informal reading assessments for diverse groups of students. The courses are 30 hours each and are to be taken sequentially. The prerequisite to this course is the completion of Reading: Language & Cognition, Parts A and B or an equivalent knowledge base. The focus of this report is *Reading: Assessment, Parts A and B*.

Reading: Assessment, Part A is designed to develop an understanding of basic measurement concepts, the four levels of assessment (screening, diagnosing, progress monitoring, and outcome), and purposes of assessment for reading instruction. This is addressed within the framework of the five components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The concepts and characteristics of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment are also discussed. Following the introduction, session two focuses on "Basic Measurement Concepts and Assessment Types." This includes characteristics and uses of criterion-referenced tests and terminology in standardized assessment. Session three discusses "Assessing Reading Growth" by having participants identify test formats and types of assessment items that match each of the five components of reading. Session four focuses on "Informal Test Results" to increase participants knowledge of informal tests used for screening, diagnosis, and progress monitoring. Assessments discussed include Informal Reading Inventories, observations, running records, cloze tests, and self-assessments. Session five concentrates on "Quantitative and Qualitative Instructional Assessments" with an emphasis on participants gaining knowledge to identify characteristics, administration purposes, and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative assessments in screening, progress monitoring, diagnosis, and outcome measures. Many sessions include additional information, case studies, and examples of assessments teachers can download and use in their classrooms.



Reading: Assessment, Part B provides instruction regarding how to interpret the assessment data collected on students. Utilizing case studies and plausible classroom scenarios, participants are asked to interpret data and determine how the findings will impact reading instruction. Session one provides the background necessary to connect Part A to Part B, session two "Analyze Data to Identify Trends" focuses on specific assessment tools one would use to assess each of the five components of reading across the four levels of assessment. Session three concentrates on how one can "Use Data to Differentiate Instruction." This section focuses on Florida's Reading Formula: $5+3+ii+iii = \text{NCLB}$ as the model for participants to understand the levels of intervention and formation of instructional groups. Session

four provides information regarding how to “Interpret Data with Application of Instruction.” Topics discussed include analyzing individual student data to make instructional decisions such as areas in need of additional instruction, grouping strategies, and web-based instructional resources. Session five focuses on “Criteria for Selecting Portfolio Materials.” This session addresses the varying purposes of portfolios and distinguishes between a portfolio for monitoring student progress and one that meets state requirements for promotion. Session six clarifies common terminology surrounding students with Limited English Proficiency and specific assessment issues and techniques in “Assessment Techniques for LEP Students.”

What processes are in place in Reading: Assessment?

The goals and objectives in the course are clearly defined. Each session begins by identifying the Florida Reading Competency Indicator addressed in the content followed by session objectives, topics, strategies and assessments or exercises. Then the course moves the participant through reading passages which are formatted with bold printed headings, bulleted lists, and some images and graphics. Special learning features such as links to online articles are offered to provide a “Closer Look” at the content. Case Studies and visual representations of student data are presented for participants to analyze. After the participant has completed the foundational portions of each session, he is required to complete application exercises designed to promote a more thorough understanding of the new content. Exercises require participants to complete tasks such as analyze student data, make individual student recommendations based on data, and utilize data for making instructional decisions in the classroom (e.g., grouping decisions) with facilitator feedback. The student data presented is representative of real classroom experiences and provides participants with support in selecting assessment tools and interpreting findings.

Session objectives are assessed through the exercises which are designed to reinforce and extend the content. Participants keep track of their exercises on the course log which keeps a printable and viewable record of each exercise. The items in the log are evaluated by a trained course facilitator to document successful completion of the course.

The course content is delivered entirely online; however, select exercises require applications of content and strategies with student case studies to promote the development of the skills taught in the course. An opportunity to collaborate and share information with other course participants is provided through an online discussion group. If participants have questions concerning course content or assignments, they can contact the course facilitator by accessing the Facilitator Contact link on the course’s Navigation Bar.

Follow-up is addressed in several ways. Course exercises measure participants’ understanding of the content addressed by the course objectives. Facilitators use quality criteria built on the reading endorsement indicators to evaluate each assignment submitted. If the assignment does not meet the quality criteria, the facilitator provides coaching to help the participant learn and demonstrate the required skill/knowledge. The online content and required assignments provide a mechanism for participants to continue interacting with the new content over many weeks. As this occurs, the online discussion board provides an avenue for collaboration that encourages sharing of ideas and feedback on implementation. Even after course completion, participants continue to have access to the discussion group and can continue to post new questions and comments and get feedback from others.

Does Reading: Assessment address the context in which it will be implemented?

Expectations regarding certain requirements necessary for successful course completion are clearly delineated on Beacon Educator's website. For example, technical requirements for successfully accessing and completing a course are provided in the course syllabus. Information on receiving inservice credit is also provided in the course syllabus. These requirements are accessible prior to registration through a "preview course" link that allows potential participants to view the course syllabus, table of contents, resources and a very helpful section entitled "Navigating Beacon's Online Courses". Because the course is designed to meet the requirements for Florida's Reading Endorsement Competency 3, it could very possibly be taken simultaneously by many educators at a school site and across a school district. Beacon Educator recommends that districts offer at least an initial face-to-face meeting with participants to explain the program as a whole and to answer technical issues up front as well as to begin building relationships among the participants. Beacon Educator will provide guidelines for additional face-to-face meetings, if requested by the customer.

Currently, all facilitators for the course are reading coaches, mentors or Nationally Board Certified Teachers. They were selected by Beacon Educator based on their recognized expertise in reading and professional development. First-time facilitators complete an orientation course to ensure mastery of the course tools, content, and to enhance the communication skills of the prospective facilitator. All first time facilitators are mentored by a master facilitator who oversees their work and provides feedback and assistance as needed. They participate in periodic reviews of course content, assessments, criteria, and work samples.

Materials for the online course may be printed for convenience. The online navigation within the course content is clear and well-defined; the text is well written and links are operational.

Research Support for Reading: Assessment



As stated in the course introduction, the National Reading Panel findings provide the structure for the course. The content of the course is clearly intended to enable teachers to be successful in administering and interpreting reading assessments using the five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) as the framework for assessment. A matrix was provided by Beacon Educator that crosswalks Florida's Reading Competency 3 indicators and the course activities and assessments. Course content clearly aligns with the Reading Endorsement competency and Part B builds upon the content of Part A. However, no research is currently available to indicate how well the course accomplishes its objectives for a representative sample of teachers.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Reading: Assessment*:

- The course objectives are well matched with Florida's Reading Competency 3 indicators.
- The design of the course's online delivery is efficient, flexible, and ensures fidelity of content.
- The use of the discussion boards provides educators from across the state with opportunities to discuss course content.

Weaknesses of *Reading: Assessment*:

- None were noted.

Which Florida districts have participated in Reading: Assessment training?

Bay	850-872-7700	Nassau	904-321-5881
Calhoun	850-674-5927	Okaloosa	850-833-3109
Charlotte	941-255-0808	Orange	407-317-3202
Citrus	352-726-1931	Pinellas	727-588-6011
Duval	904-390-2115	Santa Rosa	850-983-5010
Gadsden	850-627-0401	Sarasota	941-927-9000
Florida Virtual School	800-447-1636	Seminole	407-320-0006
Hendry	863-674-4642	St. Johns	904-819-7502
Highlands	863-471-5564	Sumter	352-793-2315
Leon	850-487-7147	Volusia	386-734-7190
Manatee	941-708-8770	Walton	850-892-1100
Miami-Dade	305-995-1430	Washington	850-638-6222

For More Information

<http://www.beaconeducator.com>

References

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Washington, D.C.



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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

For more information about FCRR go to: www.fcrr.org