

social, math. This helps the student to transfer the skills and strategies to read with comprehension to a variety of learning contexts and content areas. **The ultimate goal, of course, is to have every child be a successful reader in all learning contexts.**

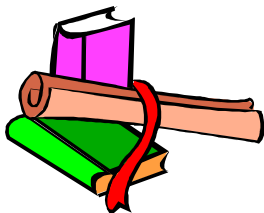
How are informal reading assessments related to school improvement?

Many districts, our district included, are looking at using common diagnostic reading assessments in order to not only set goals for reading improvement, but also to examine student improvement in reading over time. **It is understood that not all students will reach the same target at the same time and that results from only one assessment instrument depends on variety of variables.** It is critical to remember as well, **that it is not only the reading level that is being assessed, but the multiple reading behaviors explained earlier that give a well-rounded picture of the reader.** However, using a common instrument within and across schools allows teachers to evaluate student progress over time and set appropriate learning targets based on student need. **The results of informal diagnostic reading assessments will never to be used to compare or rank students, classrooms, teachers or schools.**

How do I get more information?

This information is intended to help you understand and support your child, your teacher and your school as we work towards understanding all our students as readers. You are encouraged to speak with your child's classroom teacher first regarding your child's reading strengths and areas of need. If you require information on your school's goals related to reading, contact your school's administration or a member of your school's leadership team.

We look forward to working together for your child's reading and learning success!!



Parent **TIP** Sheet #6

INFORMATION LETTER—INFORMAL READING ASSESSMENT



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INFORMATION LETTER—INFORMAL READING ASSESSMENT

What are informal reading assessments?

The PM Benchmark (Nelson) and the Basic Reading Inventory (Jerry Johns) are **informal (classroom teacher administered) individually administered diagnostic assessment tools in reading**.

These two assessment tools are being utilized within our school communities to better understand our students as readers. The PM Benchmark is typically used with students in grades 1 through 6. The PM Benchmark is composed of 30-leveled texts (small, authentic books) which the student reads aloud while the teacher records the student's reading behavior. The PM Benchmark is currently available in three versions - two in English and one in French. The Basic Reading Inventory (Jerry Johns) is comprised of graded passages from Pre-primer (emergent reader level) through to grade 12 and has four forms in English at each level. The Basic Reading Inventory is being utilized primarily with students in grades 6 to 12 in our district.

Why conduct informal reading assessments?

One goal of informal reading assessment is to **determine the student's instructional reading level**. The instructional level is the level in which the child reads with less than 10% errors AND can demonstrate adequate comprehension (understanding) of the text. It is within the **instructional level** that teachers can most effectively teach strategies to students to improve the student's reading. A second **equally important goal** of reading assessment is to **observe reading behavior**. Many reading behaviors can be assessed during informal reading assessments such as the following: the number and type of errors the student makes, the types of strategies the student uses while reading, whether or not the student monitors comprehension while reading, whether or not the student self-corrects errors that are made, how smoothly the student reads (fluency), and comprehension of the text as assessed through answering comprehension questions and through retelling the story in his/her own words. **The purpose of collecting this information is to design effective classroom-based instruction for the student, building on the strengths that the child is already displaying while reading, and also by addressing areas of need.** Strategies that will most effectively help a given student or group of students learn to read and rep-

resent their understanding of what is read can be selected by the classroom teacher and planned into the overall classroom instruction.

How will the reading assessment information benefit my child?

Learning to read and reading effectively with comprehension are complex learning behaviors. **Effective reading instruction is also complex and must be based on student need.** These assessment tools are one way to more clearly understand your child's needs. As educators, we want to **build a common language and common set of strategies** related to effective reading instruction. Utilizing common assessments is one way to build that shared language and those shared practices. In addition, many of our schools are working on **literacy-related school goals**, such as improving student's comprehension of text; improving student use of effective reading strategies; and/or improving student's ability to respond to comprehension questions that reflect higher-level thinking. Individual schools have selected specific targets in reading that are reflective of student need at that school. A common assessment helps an individual school evaluate and monitor their progress towards attainment of school goals. In order to be truly successful in meeting school level goals, we want all our parents to be informed and supportive of the learning that both the students and educators are engaging in order to improve student learning outcomes.

How does reading assessment fit into our direction as a District?

In Grande Prairie and District Catholics Schools we have been endeavoring to meet our **district goals of improving assessment for learning, improving our use of effective instructional strategies, and improving our curriculum planning and implementation**. Informal reading assessments are one of many assessment tools teachers are learning to use effectively in order to plan for differentiated learning experiences for our students. **The power of these individually administered assessments is that the teacher can actually observe and record reading behavior so that effective instructional strategies can be selected to meet student need.** This information allows the teacher to weave these reading strategies into a variety of content areas such as science,