

Creating an Informal Reading Inventory for Your Content Class

An informal reading inventory is a tool that assists in determining the reading strengths and weaknesses of an individual student. It is important for every teacher to know if their students can comfortably read the texts used in their class or if they need additional assistance. This is a quick tool to help identify students who struggle with decoding and/or comprehension with your specific text materials.

Reading Levels:

	Word Recognition	Comprehension
Independent	95%	90%
Instructional	90%	80%
Frustration	Less than 90%	Below 80%

When a student reads at the Independent Reading Level, he or she is able to read text on his or her own without assistance. They can quickly decode the text and understand ninety percent or more of the content.

When a student reads at the Instructional Reading Level, he or she needs guidance from the teacher or another person in order to fully read and comprehend the text. This is the level of learning that is expected in the classroom. It is within the students, Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky) and is slightly challenging, but still readable.

When a student is reading text at their Frustration Level, it is too difficult and is not the best learning situation.

Creating an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) with your texts.

1. Select a section of text in your textbook that has approximately 100 words.
2. Read it through and determine 3-4 questions that you feel a student should be able to answer after reading the section. You may wish to have a mix of literal and inferential questions.
3. During seat time, call on individual students and listen to them read the section of text.
4. As they read, keep a tally mark on the IRI form every time they struggle with a word, skip a word, misread a word or replace a word.
5. After finishing, ask the student the questions you have developed and mark the number correct on the IRI form.
6. After you have assessed the class, look at the results.

Analyzing and Evaluating your data

1. Students with 5 or less miscues and can answer the questions can comfortably read the text. (Independent Level)
2. Students with 5-10 miscues and 3 of the 4 questions correct will need guidance from the teacher while reading the text.
3. Students with 10 or more miscues and/or 2 or less correct answers to the questions will have great difficulty reading the texts.

Interesting Correlations:

You may find that a student has a great number of miscues, yet answered all of the questions. Many students who struggle with text have developing wonderful coping strategies to glean meaning while reading. This should be noted and you may wish to speak to a reading specialist about this student.

You may find that a student has very few miscues, but was unable to answer the questions. This student may have comprehension issues. Try using another 100-word piece of text and have them read it silently. See if they can answer questions correctly. Some students have better comprehension when they read silently.

Informal Inventory Checklist Example				
Student Name	Text Selection	Miscues (Errors)	Questions Answered Correctly	Notes:
Anderson, Zach	Science Text p. 45	///	4	Independent
Brancaro, Sofia	Science Text p. 45	/// ///	3	Borderline Instructional: Watch
Kierkoff, Antoine	Science Text p. 45	///	1	May have comprehension issues
Zhang, Tia	Science Text p. 45	/// /// ///	4	Struggles, yet uses strategies. Ask which strategies she uses.

Informal Inventory Checklist Form				
Student Name	Text Selection	Miscues (Errors)	Questions Answered Correctly	Notes:

Results can be placed into four quadrants:

Proficient Readers and Comprehenders of the Text	Proficient Readers-Struggling Comprehenders of the Text
Students who can read the text and adequately answer the comprehension questions.	Students who can read the text BUT cannot adequately answer the comprehension questions.
Proficient Comprehenders of the Text	Struggling Readers of the Text
Students who cannot fluently read the text but can adequately answer the comprehension questions.	Students who cannot fluently read the text AND cannot adequately answer the comprehension questions.

Adapted by Bonnie D. Houck from various informal reading inventories. This is not a formal assessment tool. The purpose of this tool is to help a content teacher learn about the reading abilities of their students while reading their class texts. The information gained from creating an IRI can be shared with your building reading specialist or special education teachers to assist students that may need additional needs assessments.