Making Sense of Foundational Skills Data

Solutions Lab Participant Handout

Opening Inquiry:

Foundational skills assessment data improves instruction when we read the **error patterns behind the scores**, not just the scores themselves.

Research Snapshot

Fuchs et al. (1990)

Teachers given skills analysis, which shows the pattern of errors behind a score, made more specific instructional changes. Their students gained more.

School Psychology Review

Ehri (2014)

Children learn to read and spell by connecting letters to sounds, so a student's errors show which connections are not yet in place.

Scientific Studies of Reading

Toste et al. (2025)

Examining the errors students make, and the features of the words where they occur, shows what to adjust in instruction.

Intervention in School and Clinic

Investigation 1: Ms. Reyes' Class

Grade 1, **Unit** 2
Week 3: Foundational Skills -ch, -ng, -tch
Session 15: Weekly Assessment

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS • WEEK 3 ASSESSMENT

Ending Digraphs: *-ch, -ng*; Trigraph: *-tch,*

1. Administer the **Whole-Class Assessment** to track progress on written tasks. Have children record responses on the student pages available on digital teacher resources.
2. Then, in small groups or individually, administer the **Individual Assessment** to track progress on oral and listening tasks. Have children read from Teacher's Guide p. 324 for Part 5.
3. Use the **Assessment Tracker** available on digital teacher resources to record results. Then review **Instructional Next Steps** on digital teacher resources.

Whole-Class Assessment

Tell children they are going to practice some of the sounds and words they learned this week.

PART 1: Encode Target Sound-Spellings

Say each sound. Have children write the letter(s) that stand for the sound. *Words for teacher reference only.

1. /ch/
2. /ng/
3. /sh/
4. /k/
5. /ĕ/ (pet)*
6. /ŏ/ (top)*

PART 2: Encode Target Words

Read each word. Provide a context sentence when necessary. Have children write the word. **Note:** *Hitch* is a low-frequency word. Children should not be expected to know it.

1. hung
2. cash
3. such
4. math
5. hitch
6. back

PART 3: Spell High-Frequency Words

Read each word. Provide a context sentence when necessary. Have children write the word.

1. have
2. look
3. or
4. from

PART 4: Write Connected Text

This is intended to be optional. Teachers should use their discretion when choosing whether to administer this portion of the Whole-Class Assessment.

Read each sentence. Have children write the sentences. Remind them to use correct spelling and punctuation.

1. The *rings* look like they *match*.
2. *Mitch* or Tess pack the *lunches*.

ITEM SCORING

4 *Target Sound-Spellings*, 2 High-Frequency Words, 2 **Word Analysis**

Individual Assessment

PART 5: Read Connected Text

Display p. 324. Have each child read one pair of sentences. Choose a different pair for each child if working in small groups.

1a. We have a fun *gang* of pals!
1b. Will Bev look for the *latches*?

2a. That looks like *such* a big dog!
2b. Peg and Rob have tacks to *hang*.

3a. Look at the *patches* on that bag!
3b. *Rich* and Kim have a lot of shells.

ITEM SCORING

2 *Target Sound-Spellings*, 2 High-Frequency Words, 2 **Word Analysis**

CONNECTED TEXT KEY • *Target Sound-Spellings* • High-Frequency Words • **Word Analysis**

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Week 3 Assessment Tracker • Session 15 Grade 1

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS **Ending Digraphs: *-ch, -tch, -ng***

KEY PH = Phonics HFW = High-Frequency Words WA = Word Analysis PA = Phonological Awareness

DATE:	WHOLE-CLASS ASSESSMENT						INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT						TOTALS BY CATEGORY			
	PART 1 Target Sound-Spellings	**PART 2** Target Words	**PART 3** High-Frequency Words	**OPTIONAL PART 4** Write Connected Text (do not count points in total)			**PART 5** Read Connected Text			**PART 6** Phonological Awareness			**Calculate Score**			
	PH	**PH**	**HFW**	**PH**	**HFW**	**WA**	**PH**	**HFW**	**WA**	**a**	**b**	**c**	**PH**	**HFW**	**WA**	**PA**
STUDENT:	# / 6	# / 6	# / 4	# / 4	# / 2	# / 2	# / 2	# / 2	# / 2	# / 1 or 2	# / 1 or 2	# / 1 or 2	# / 14	# / 6	# / 2	# / 6
1 Ava	6	6	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	**14**	**6**	**2**	**6**
Notes	All parts secure. Candidate for extension.															
2 Ben	6	5	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	**13**	**6**	**2**	**6**
Notes	Only miss: hitch. The -tch trigraph is not yet secure.															
3 Carmen	5	4	4	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	**10**	**6**	**2**	**6**
Notes	/k/ written as c (cat-style) in Parts 1, 2, 4: back as bac. Misread tacks as tags.															
4 Devon	5	4	4	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	**10**	**6**	**1**	**4**
Notes	/ng/ written as n in Parts 1, 2, 4: hung as hun. Read gang as gan. Wrote hich for hitch in Part 2, dropping the t from -tch. Could not isolate final sound in Part 6b.															
5 Elena	6	4	2	3	0	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	**12**	**3**	**2**	**6**
Notes	Phonetically correct HFW spellings: hav, frum. Spelled such as sutch, hitch as hich (also a -tch miss).															
6 Farid	6	6	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	**14**	**6**	**2**	**5**
Notes	Secure on Parts 1–5. Needed a prompt on Part 6c.															
7 Grace	3	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	**5**	**3**	**1**	**4**
Notes	Errors across Parts 1–6 with no single pattern. Weak on final-sound isolation.															
8 Hector	6	5	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	**13**	**6**	**2**	**6**
Notes	Only miss: hitch. The -tch trigraph is not yet secure.															
9 Isla	5	4	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	**11**	**6**	**2**	**6**
Notes	/k/ written as c in Parts 1, 2, and 4: back as bac, pack as pac. Reads target words accurately.															
10 Jonah	5	4	3	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	**10**	**5**	**2**	**4**
Notes	/ng/ written as n in Parts 1 and 2: hung as hun. Read hang as han. Weak on 6b and 6c.															

Sample data for a fictional class. Scores are points earned. Part 4 is optional and was given to the whole class; it is not counted in totals.

PART 6: Blend, Identify, Substitute Phonemes

PART 6a: BLEND

Have each child blend one word using the directions in Part 6a. Choose a different word for each child if working in small groups.

DIRECTIONS	PROMPT	ANSWER KEY
I will say the sounds in a word. Then you will say the word. Listen as I do it first: /d/ /ĭ/ /ng/. The word is ding.	**/d/ /ĭ/ /ng/**	**ding**
	/p/ /ĭ/ /n/ /ch/	pinch
	/m/ /ŭ/ /ch/	much
	/th/ /ĭ/ /ng/	thing
	/b/ /ŭ/ /n/ /ch/	bunch

If the child makes an error, move to **Blending Onset and Rime.**

If not, continue to **Part 6b.**

DIRECTIONS	PROMPT	ANSWER KEY
I will say the first sound in a word and then the rest of the word. You will say the whole word. I will do it first: /d/ /ĭng/. The word is ding.	**/d/ /ĭng/**	**ding**
	/p/ /ĭnch/	pinch
	/m/ /ŭch/	much
	/th/ /ĭng/	thing
	/b/ /ŭnch/	bunch

PART 6b: IDENTIFY

Have each child identify the final sound in one set of three words using the directions in Part 6b. Choose a different set of words for each child if working in small groups.

DIRECTIONS	PROMPT	ANSWER KEY
I will say three words. You will say the sound that is the same at the end of all three words. Listen: catch, which, such. I hear /ch/ at the end of catch, which, such.	**catch, which, such**	**/ch/**
	fang, ring, song	/ng/
	ditch, hatch, bench	/ch/
	wing, hang, long	/ng/
	wrench, branch, switch	/ch/

If the child makes an error, move to **Phoneme Isolation.**

If not, continue to **Part 6c.**

DIRECTIONS	PROMPT	ANSWER KEY
I will say a word. You will say its last sound. Listen: catch. The last sound is /ch/.	**catch**	**/ch/**
	fang	/ng/
	ditch	/ch/
	wing	/ng/
	wrench	/ch/

PART 6c: SUBSTITUTE

Have each child substitute the final sound in one set of three words using the directions in Part 6c. Choose a different set of words for each child if working in small groups.

DIRECTIONS	PROMPT	ANSWER KEY
I will say a word and ask you to change a sound in it. You will say the new word. Listen: The word is switch. If you change /ch/ to /m/, what is the new word? swim	**switch, /ch/ to /m/**	**swim**
	thick, /k/ to /ng/	thing
	stiff, /f/ to /ch/	stitch
	sang, /ng/ to /p/	sap
	bath, /th/ to /ch/	batch

If the child makes an error, move to **Phoneme Isolation.**

If not, end the assessment.

DIRECTIONS	PROMPT	ANSWER KEY
I will say a word. You will say its final sound. Listen: switch. The final sound is /ch/.	**switch**	**/ch/**
	thick	/k/
	stiff	/f/
	sang	/ng/
	bath	/th/

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Investigation 2: Mr. Kramer and Priya

Grade 4: i-Ready Inform shows a Phonics placement at Grade 2

Handout: Mock i-Ready Inform Report (Priya)

Sample report. All student data is fictional.

i-Ready Inform Results | Priya Raman | Grade 4

Subject: Reading (English) | i-Ready Inform Assessment: i-Ready Inform 1 (09/08/26) | i-Ready Inform 2: Not Started

Overall Reading	🔴 Grade 2 (489) Standard Error +/- 12

Domain	**Placement**
Phonological Awareness*	○ Not Assessed
Phonics*	🔴 Grade 2 (484)
High-Frequency Words*	🔴 Grade 2 (488)
Vocabulary	🟡 Grade 3 (502)
Comprehension: Literature	🟡 Grade 3 (499)
Comprehension: Informational Text	🟡 Grade 3 (497)

* Foundational Domains

Placement by Domain

Results indicate that Priya's Phonics placement is below grade level, which suggests that gaps in decoding multisyllabic words may be limiting her access to grade-level text. Vocabulary and Comprehension are closer to grade level, at Grade 3, but still below it. Instruction in decoding patterns will support Priya's growth in overall Comprehension.

Handout: Priya's Pseudoword Decoding—Fluency Teacher Form (Benchmark Form 1)

Sample form marked up with fictional data. Marks and responses are shown as a teacher would write them above each pseudoword: ✓ = correct, ✗ = incorrect with the student's response. The line under each pseudoword is its guide word (sounds similar to). Articulation guides are on the original form.

Student Name: Priya Homeroom Teacher: Mr. Kramer Task Administrator: Mr. Kramer

Administration Date: _____ Total Correct in 60 Seconds: 27

(5)	✓ **ag** bag	✓ **ut** nut	✓ **jod** rod	✓ **zet** pet	✓ **hup** cup
(10)	✓ **fim** him	✓ **hab** cab	✓ **sen** hen	✓ **pid** lid	✓ **sog** dog
(15)	✓ **vam** jam	✓ **fud** mud	✓ **yan** fan	✓ **zob** job	✓ **bix** mix
(20)	✓ **clem** them	✓ **stug** bug	✓ **brip** lip	✓ **flad** had	✓ **swox** box
(25)	✓ **cret** pet	✓ **hask** mask	✓ **chot** dot	✓ **kelf** self	✓ **mish** wish
(30) STOP (60 sec)	✗ dack **dake** make	✓ **kuns** suns	✗ dib **dibe** tribe	✓ **vits** sits	✗ wut **wute** flute
(35)	**feep** keep	**zool** pool	**joat** goat	**hawn** lawn	**fain** rain
(40)	**var** car	**lorn** born	**jir** stir	**kneb** web	**wrup** cup
(45)	**gair** hair	**fonnet** bonnet	**zure** lure	**pibbon** ribbon	**hetlup** setup
(50)	**yented** tented	**ganding** landing	**zeptil** pencil	**vottest** hottest	**jelting** melting

Time expired after item 30, so items 31–50 were not reached. Total correct in 60 seconds: 25 (items 1–25) + 2 (kuns, vits) = 27. Scoring: Grade 3 Spring row, 25 or more is On Level.

Handout: Priya's Pseudoword Decoding—Multisyllabic Teacher Form and Response Pattern Checklist (Benchmark Form 1)

Sample form marked up with fictional data. ✓ = correct, ✗ = incorrect, with the student's response where noted. The line under each pseudoword is its guide word (sounds similar to). Articulation guides are on the original form.

Student Name: Priya Homeroom Teacher: Mr. Kramer Task Administrator: Mr. Kramer

Administration Date: _____ Total Correct: 25

(5)	✓ **haps** naps	✓ **relding** welding	✓ **fonnet** bonnet	✓ **danted** panted	✓ **munfet** sunset
(10)	✓ **clier** plier	✓ **lumrop** gumdrop	✓ **pamest** tamest	✓ **fathmub** bathtub	✓ **jodblon** woodblock
(15)	✓ **dandclat** handclap	✓ **vimble** nimble	✓ **magstrab** abstract	✓ **yoggle** goggle	✓ **indake** intake
(20)	✗ **sleevap** kneecap	✓ **impame** impale	✗ semjil **semjile** reptile	✗ **claizin** raisin	✓ **wrindle** wrinkle
(25)	✓ **zeddict** addict	✗ tupskad **tupskade** upgrade	✓ **interskine** intertwine	✗ **yavor** favor	✓ **betreem** between
(30)	✗ **spervaps** perhaps	✓ **glokely** lonely	✗ **nauzet** faucet	✓ **biodast** biomass	✗ **habnoid** tabloid
(35)	✗ **jomlare** compare	✓ **gruo** duo	✓ **tremsure** ensure	✗ **shion** lion	✓ **glixture** mixture

Ten items were incorrect (16, 18, 19, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 31, 34). No four items in a row were missed, so the task ran to item 35. Score: 35 − 10 = 25. Scoring: Grade 3 Spring row, 26 or fewer is Below Level.

Response Pattern Checklist (student decodes . . .)

Skill	Items	Marked incorrect
words with the inflectional ending s affixed to a CVC base	1	—
words with other inflectional endings affixed without any spelling change to the base	2, 4	—
multisyllabic words with a closed syllable formed by a medial consonant doublet	3	—
multisyllabic words with simple closed syllables	5, 7	—
words with inflectional endings affixed after a spelling change is applied to the base	6, 8	—
multisyllabic words that include a syllable with a final consonant cluster	9	—
multisyllabic words that include a syllable with an initial consonant cluster	10	—
multisyllabic words with a complex closed-syllable pattern	11, 13	—
multisyllabic words with a final stable syllable formed by a consonant preceding -le	12, 14	—
multisyllabic words with highly frequent morphemes with regular sound spellings	15, 17	—
multisyllabic words with a long vowel sound spelled with a vowel team syllable	16, 19	X 16, 19
multisyllabic words with a long vowel sound spelled with a silent e	18, 22	X 18, 22
multisyllabic words that include a syllable with a frequent silent letter consonant digraph	20	—
multisyllabic words with highly frequent morphemes with complex sound spellings	21, 23	—
multisyllabic words with the r-controlled syllables /ar/, /or/, and /ər/	24, 26	X 24, 26
multisyllabic words with highly frequent morphemes with irregular sound spellings	25, 27, 29	—
multisyllabic words with a variant vowel sound spelled with a vowel team syllable	28, 30	X 28, 30
syllables with r-controlled long and variant vowel sounds including /air/, /ear/, /oor/, and /yoor/	31	X 31
multisyllabic words with a long vowel sound spelled with a complex open-syllable pattern	32, 34	X 34
multisyllabic words with a final stable syllable formed by a consonant preceding -ure	33, 35	—

35 total items - 10 incorrect = 25 (score)

Priya's Spelling: 4 of 10

Misses: or, ore, oar, our words and the ea vowel team

Correct	Misspelled
territory	roaring as roring
predators	courage as curage
depopulate	journey as jurney
usefulness	carnivore as carnivor
	restore as restor
	readiness as rediness

Lab to Classroom

Revisit our Opening Inquiry:
Foundational skills assessment data improves instruction when we read the error patterns behind the scores, not just the scores themselves.

Reflect on our investigations:
What did you notice about how error patterns pointed to next steps in Grade 1 & Grade 4?

Think about your own classroom:

- How has this challenged your thinking about reading the error patterns behind the scores?
- What is something you heard today that you are curious to explore?

Final Findings

1. A score shows how close a student is; the type of error shows what to teach next.
2. When the same error shows up across parts or across reading and spelling, it is a pattern, not a slip.



Choose one student's assessment, look for the same error across parts, and match it to a next step.