Why is Retell a Required Part of Oral Reading Fluency in Acadience™ Reading?

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As we constructed Acadience Reading, we were guided in equal parts by science – empirical evidence and research – and theory – models of reading acquisition and educational considerations. Theory and science guided our decisions about which measures to include, how to structure and compute scores, and how to guide interpretations. We think including Retell as a required part of Acadience Reading Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) is an important advance supported by both a *research rationale* and an *educational rationale*.

Question: Why can't I just use ORF Words Correct? I have been using Acadience Reading a long time and ORF Words Correct works very, very well.
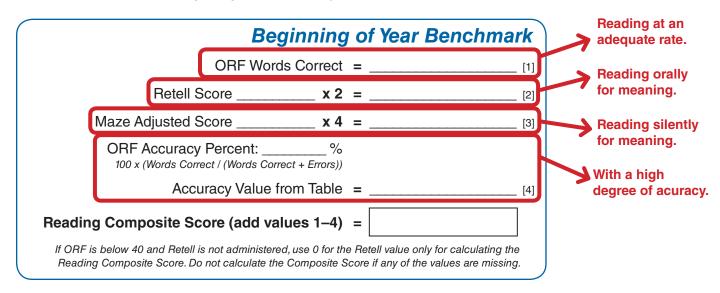
Research Rationale

ORF Retell is required to obtain the Reading Composite Score, which is new in Acadience Reading. The Reading Composite Score with Retell explains more variance in reading outcomes than does ORF Words Correct alone. Across first through sixth grade, the median additional variance explained is 9%, ranging from 3% to 17%, generally with greater *additional* variance explained in the upper grades. In other words, although ORF Words Correct alone is very good, the Reading Composite Score is even better in meaningful and important ways.

Grade and Time of Year	ORF Words Correct Predicting GRADE Total	Reading Composite Score Predicting GRADE Total	Additional Variance Explained by Reading Composite Score
Grade 1 Middle of Year	0.64	0.70	8%
Grade 1 End of Year	0.75	0.77	4%
Grade 2 Beginning of Year	0.69	0.75	8%
Grade 2 Middle of Year	0.76	0.80	5%
Grade 2 End of Year	0.73	0.75	3%
Grade 3 Beginning of Year	0.66	0.73	10%
Grade 3 Middle of Year	0.67	0.78	15%
Grade 3 End of Year	0.66	0.75	13%
Grade 4 Beginning of Year	0.76	0.80	5%
Grade 4 Middle of Year	0.76	0.80	6%
Grade 4 End of Year	0.75	0.80	8%
Grade 5 Beginning of Year	0.69	0.76	11%
Grade 5 Middle of Year	0.64	0.76	17%
Grade 5 End of Year	0.66	0.77	17%
Grade 6 Beginning of Year	0.64	0.71	9%
Grade 6 Middle of Year	0.59	0.68	12%
Grade 6 End of Year	0.61	0.73	16%

Note. GRADE Total refers to the Total Test raw score of the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation, administered at the end of the school year as an external criterion to assess the validity of the Acadience Reading measures. For more information, see the *Acadience Reading Technical Manual*.

Educational Rationale

Educationally, the Reading Composite Score represents a range of different reading behaviors required for overall reading proficiency. In the following figure, the four scores that are summed to obtain the Reading Composite Score in third through sixth grade include (a) ORF Words Correct, representing reading at an adequate rate, (b) ORF Accuracy, representing reading with a high degree of accuracy, (c) Retell, representing reading orally for meaning, and (d) Maze Adjusted Score, representing reading silently for meaning. Consequently, students who are *At or Above Benchmark* on the Reading Composite Score at the beginning of fourth grade are reading for meaning at an adequate rate and with a high degree of accuracy.

Beginning of Year Benchmark

ORF Words Correct = _____ [1] → **Reading at an adequate rate.**

Retell Score _____ **x 2** = _____ [2] → **Reading orally for meaning.**

Maze Adjusted Score _____ **x 4** = _____ [3] → **Reading silently for meaning.**

ORF Accuracy Percent: _____ %
100 x (Words Correct / (Words Correct + Errors))

Accuracy Value from Table = _____ [4] → **With a high degree of acuracy.**

Reading Composite Score (add values 1–4) = [_____]

If ORF is below 40 and Retell is not administered, use 0 for the Retell value only for calculating the Reading Composite Score. Do not calculate the Composite Score if any of the values are missing.

The broad and rich sample of behavior included in the Reading Composite Score, including Retell, is important, because what we choose to assess communicates to students what we want them to learn, communicates to teachers what we want them to teach, and communicates to administrators what we want them to prioritize. We think whenever a student is asked to read for fluency and accuracy, we should also ask them to engage what they have read for meaning.

Question: But I just don't think Retell is measuring reading comprehension. Is Retell really a reliable and valid measure of reading comprehension or reading for meaning?

Research Rationale

Users are sometimes concerned about the inter-rater reliability of Retell because they feel their counts may differ from others' counts by 2 or 3 points. However, there is strong empirical evidence that ORF Retell is measuring reading comprehension in a reliable and valid way. ORF Retell has high inter-rater reliabilities of .92 to .99 for the median of three passages (as in a benchmark assessment). ORF Retell has such high inter-rater reliability because the differences of 2 or 3 points between scorers are small relative to the substantial differences in Retell between students who are *At or Above Benchmark* and students who are *Well Below Benchmark.* Detailed information about the reliability of ORF Retell is available in the *Acadience Reading Technical Manual* (2011, https://acadiencelearning.org/).

Concurrent validity coefficients of ORF Retell with the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) Total Test raw score and the GRADE Comprehension Composite raw score are reported in the following table. As summarized in the table, ORF Retell has strong, robust, and stable correlations with the GRADE Reading Comprehension Composite in the .50s to .60s, which are almost as strong as the correlations between any two different, high-quality measures of reading comprehension.

Grade and Time of Year	Correlation of ORF Retell with	
	GRADE Total	GRADE Comprehension Composite
Grade 1 Middle of Year	0.55	0.57
Grade 1 End of Year	0.40	0.41
Grade 2 Beginning of Year	0.53	0.53
Grade 2 Middle of Year	0.54	0.54
Grade 2 End of Year	0.52	0.52
Grade 3 Beginning of Year	0.53	0.55
Grade 3 Middle of Year	0.57	0.60
Grade 3 End of Year	0.53	0.57
Grade 4 Beginning of Year	0.59	0.56
Grade 4 Middle of Year	0.62	0.60
Grade 4 End of Year	0.63	0.61
Grade 5 Beginning of Year	0.61	0.59
Grade 5 Middle of Year	0.63	0.60
Grade 5 End of Year	0.65	0.64
Grade 6 Beginning of Year	0.55	0.48
Grade 6 Middle of Year	0.59	0.56
Grade 6 End of Year	0.56	0.51

Note. GRADE refers to the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation, administered at the end of the school year as an external criterion to assess the validity of the Acadience Reading measures. For more information, see the *Acadience Reading Technical Manual*.

Educational Rationale

Retell is one comprehension skill. As indicated in the following figure from the generic curriculum maps available on the Big Ideas in Beginning Reading website (http://reading.uoregon.edu/), it is not the only comprehension skill, but it is a foundational skill. If students are not able to talk about what they have just read, they will have difficulty with more advanced reading comprehension skills including summarizing, identifying main ideas, and making connections. Retell also has the advantages that it is equally applicable to narrative text and expository text, and that the student cannot guess the correct answer based on high levels of background knowledge, vocabulary, or general verbal reasoning skills. An additional advantage of Retell as a comprehension measure is that it allows for the measurement of small amounts of change in student's skills, and therefore functions as a good progress monitoring tool as well as a good screener.

Instructional Priority: **Passage Understanding**	Months of School Year								
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
Focus 3: Comprehension Monitoring									
3a: Checks and adjusts for understanding while reading	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3b: Interacts with stories and text to clarify and extend comprehension	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus 4: Retelling, Summarizing, Synthesizing									
* 4a: Retells the main ideas of stories or informational text	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4b: Recalls the correct sequence of events in a story^S or informational passage^I	S	S	I	I	X	X	X	X	X
4c: Draws conclusions^C and generalizations^G	C	C	C	G	G	G			
4d: Identifies important themes from readings and examines from multiple points of view	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus 5: Making Connections									
5a: Connects events, characters, actions, and themes to life experiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5b: Uses prior knowledge to clarify understanding	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5c: Makes comparisons across reading selections	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

*. high-priority skill

From Big Ideas in Beginning Reading (http://reading.uoregon.edu/), University of Oregon, 2002-2004

Question: Why are students who provide a concise summary penalized in terms of scoring? Isn't it better to summarize than just tell everything in no particular order?

Providing a summary of a passage and identifying the main idea of a passage are different but related skills that are built on the ability to provide a retell. If a student is unable to tell about what happened in a passage, he or she is unlikely to be able to summarize or identify the main idea. Often students who provide an adequate summary of the passage provide enough words in their response to reach the benchmark goal. These are typically not students for whom we have a concern about their comprehension skills. For all students it is important to teach them to respond differently when asked for a retell, a summary, or the main idea of a passage.