

DCDD Hot Topics

The DCDD Board prepares briefs for DCDD members about topics of interest for professionals who serve children and youth with communication disorders and their families. This brief focuses on the challenges of assessing oral reading fluency in children who stutter. We appreciate your continued membership with DCDD. Please share this message with your colleagues and urge those colleagues to become a member of the DCDD community of learners.

Oral Reading Fluency in School-Age Children Who Stutter

**Prepared by Diane Paul, Constituent Chair, DCDD Committee on Speech and Language Learning Disabilities in Children
On behalf of the ASHA Ad Hoc Committee on Reading Fluency for School-Age Children Who Stutter**

Oral reading measures may not be accurate for children who stutter. Fluency breakdowns will slow down reading rate. Reading slowly may be perceived as a reading problem, even though the underlying cause is disfluency. Reading fluency measures used for children who stutter actually may be testing speech fluency rather than reading fluency. Reading aloud can be stigmatizing for children who stutter and these children may be at a disadvantage with oral fluency standards in the Common Core State Standards.

Students need accurate reading fluency assessments and useful accommodations. Yet, the validity of reading assessment tools for children who stutter is questionable. There are multiple consequences of invalid assessments: placement in the wrong reading group, issues with self-esteem, incorrect classroom placement.

Survey of Assessment Measures and Accommodations

In response to these concerns, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) established a committee to survey speech-language pathologists about measures of reading fluency and accommodations. The survey data can help raise awareness of needed accommodations for students who stutter with reading fluency problems. Such information may prevent the unnecessary placement of these children in remedial reading groups.

The survey addressed various reading fluency evaluation instruments, school district policies, school district accommodations for children who stutter, and how administrators use the oral reading fluency scores of children who stutter. The survey also asked respondents to report alternative measures for assessing reading.

Survey Results

Specific challenges reported included district expectations that all students are tested, lack of accommodations allowed by the instruments/tests, administrators who do not allow accommodations, and poor communication between the parties involved.

Responses from the survey indicated the DIBELS was the most frequent type of standardized oral reading fluency instrument. Other instruments reported included the "aimsweb" Reading CBM R-CBM; the Developmental Reading Assessment; and the DRA-2 Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA).

A total of 37.9% of respondents reported that students who stutter qualify for accommodations when taking oral reading fluency tests, however 43.2% noted that no accommodations were allowed. A total of 18.9% did not know if accommodations were allowed.

A number of alternative measures or accommodations were reported as options for assessing children who stutter, including additional time, modifying the procedures, and using a taped recorded sample and calculating the reading time minus the moments of disfluency. Other comments indicated the use of running records that included comprehension and accuracy measurements without using timed samples.

Respondents indicated that more education is needed on how to provide accommodations for students who stutter in addition to training on how to educate other school personnel. There also was concern about the clarity of roles in the reading fluency testing process, and several comments that this issue needs to be addressed in schools.

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