ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EFAL)

FOUNDATIONAL PHASE READING BENCHMARKS:

LEARNING BRIEF
November 2022

Introduction

In South Africa, about 90% of learners are instructed in English from Grade 4 onwards. Therefore, learners must develop oral reading fluency and comprehension in English First Additional Language (EFAL), while also learning to read for meaning in African Home Languages. **Foundational reading benchmarks can guide teachers, officials, and parents to track and assess learners' reading development in EFAL in the Foundation Phase and into the Intermediate Phase.** If a learner does not achieve the benchmarks, appropriate remediation can be provided.

South African EFAL Benchmarks

Reading benchmarks already exist for English home language speakers, and there are schemas appropriate for second language reading in the United States. However, **English reading in South Africa develops in a multilingual**

> **The relationship between reading in EFAL and African home language**
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> Reaching contextually relevant minimum EFAL fluency benchmarks should not be viewed in isolation of reaching home language reading benchmarks. The development of decoding skills in African home language reading provides an important foundation for learning to read in English as both African languages and English are alphabetic languages. The CAPS EFAL curriculum develops from the assumption that when children begin to read and write in their additional language, they already know how to decode in their home language. It assumes that they have grasped concepts of print and have prior knowledge of sound-spelling relationships. (SA Department of Basic Education, 2011).

context. It is expected that features specific to South African languages may influence how English reading skills develop, and therefore South African EFAL benchmarks are essential.
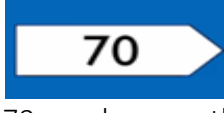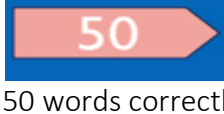
How did we create these benchmarks?

Drawing on five different studies, data was compiled with multiple assessment points for over 20,000 unique learners from Grades 2 to 7, across 6 of 9 provinces. These data are almost exclusively drawn from no-fee schools. This implies that these reading benchmarks are contextually relevant to millions of South African learners in no-fee (or, using the DBE system to rank schools based on community levels of income, literacy and unemployment, Quintiles 1-3)[1] schools.

EGRS I / RSP
NW
Setswana

Story Powered Schools (SPS)
KZN, EC
isiZulu & isiXhosa

EGRS II
MP
isiZulu & Siswati

Leadership for Literacy (LFL)
KZN, GP, LP
isiZulu, Sepedi, Xitsonga

Funda Wande LP (FW LP)
LP
Sepedi

About 23,000 unique learners
900 schools (almost all no-fee)
6 provinces

How accurately and fluently must ALL LEARNERS in no-fee schools be able to "read and comprehend" in English as a First Additional Language?

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Benchmark	Description
100 Minimum of 100 words correctly per minute	End of Grade 6
90 Minimum of 90 words correctly per minute	End of Grade 5 This is the fluency level that learners require to reach higher levels of comprehension.
70 Minimum of 70 words correctly per minute	End of Grade 4 It is a predictor of whether a learner will be able to read for meaning in Grade 5.
50 Minimum of 50 words correctly per minute	End of Grade 3 At this minimum level, learners start to understand what they are reading. It is a predictor of whether a learner will be able to read for meaning in Grade 5.
30 Minimum of 30 words correctly per minute	End of Grade 2 30 cwpm is too low to support comprehension but, this fluency level is a predictor of whether learners will learn to read with meaning in Grade 5.

Note, these are minimum fluency levels to be attained by all learners in no-fee schools by the end of each grade. Learners who meet the benchmarks at the end of each grade, would achieve a minimum competence rating of 4 on the CAPS assessment scale. Learners typically improve with 20 cwpm per year and each benchmark by grade is a predictor of whether a learner will be able to read for meaning in Grade 5.

How can we use the benchmarks?

- Teachers can use the benchmarks to **assess their learners and identify** those who need support, thereby minimising the chances of literacy cracks and learning challenges later.

- **Teacher training** providers (both pre-service and in-service) should integrate these benchmarks into their programmes

- At the national and provincial level, benchmark achievement (or lack of achievement) provides essential data to inform language and literacy policy, and mobilise resources

- **Programme developers** in a multi-donor context can integrate benchmarks into the design of Early Grade Reading interventions.

- **District Curriculum Teams** can identify realistic targets against which to assess appropriate achievement for each grade and school

- **For evaluators**, benchmarks provide an explicit standardised criterion against which programmes can be valued to determine their effectiveness and impact