

# Reading Benchmarks in African Languages

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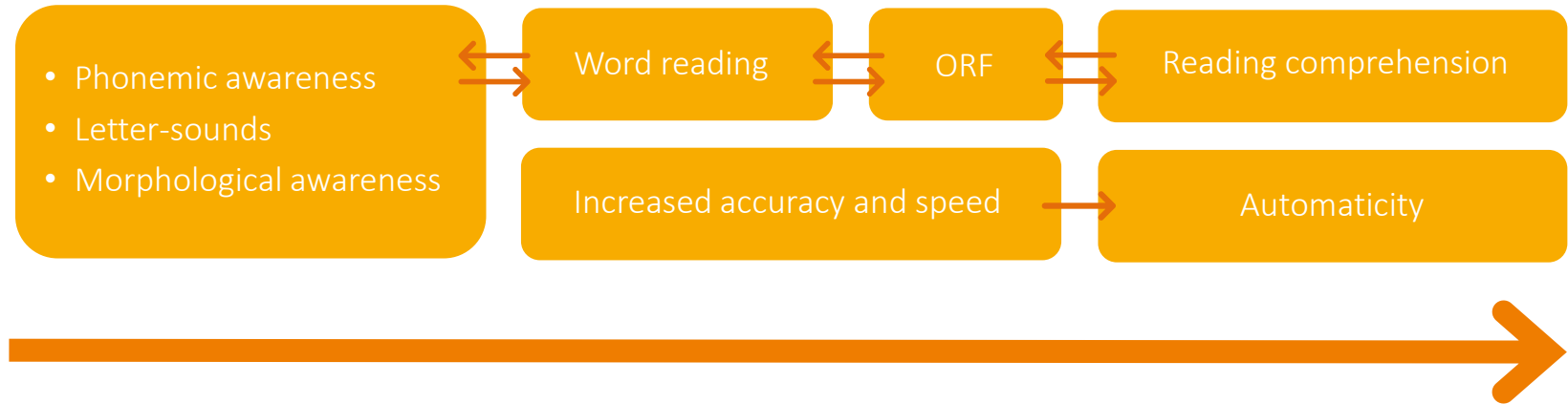


# Why do we need reading benchmarks for early grades in South Africa ?



# Why do we need early skills benchmarks?

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# So what do we need?

## Goal

is a long-term aspiration, maybe without a numerical value (for example, all 10 year old children reading for meaning)

## Metric

is a valid, reliable unit of measurement (for example, correct words per minute (cwpm) reading connected text)

## Benchmark

is a numerical representation of the goal, using the metric, or a milestone on the way to achieve the goal (for example, 45 cwpm reading a passage of grade-level text)

## Target

is the proportion or number of learners targeted to reach the benchmark in a given time (for example, 50 per cent of learners to meet the benchmark in two years).



# So what do we need?

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Language	Text						
Sepedi	Go be go na le mosepedi yo a bego a na le tlala. O fihlile motseng wo mongwe a kgopela dijo. Go be go se na yo a bego a na le dijo						
Xitsonga	A ku ri ni mufambi loyi a ri na ndlala. U fikile emugangeni a kombela swakudya. A ku nga ri na loyi a ri na swakudya.						
isiZulu	Kunesihambi esasilambile kakhulu. Safika emizini omunye sacela ukudla. Abantu babengenakho ukudla.						
English	There was a stranger who was very hungry. He came to a village and asked for food. Nobody had any food.						
	Words in sentence 1	Words in sentence 2	Words in sentence 3	Total words	Words per sentence	Letters per word	Total single syllable words: V/ CV
Sepedi	13	8	12	33	11	2.9	23
Xitsonga	10	6	10	26	8.7	3.4	17
isiZulu	3	5	3	11	3.7	7.7	0



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# How can we use reading benchmarks?

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National and Provincial Administration	School	Classroom
Establishes definition of reading proficiency	Standards and targets that school leaders can aim towards	Standard against which to measure learner skills
Clearly communicates standards and targets	Standardises assessment practices across and within schools	Identify early on learners at risk of not being able to read
Monitor progress	Identify the extent of remedial support required	Adapt instructional focus to meet learners' needs



# How does the curriculum address this?

- Foundation Phase curriculum: 5 essential components in the teaching of reading;
  - **Phonemic awareness, word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency**
- Fluency: defined as reflecting a combination of **accuracy, speed, and prosody**
  - Independent reading level: 95% Accuracy
  - Instructional reading level: 90% Accuracy
- Activities such as Group Guided Reading and Paired Reading identified for practice
- Explicit mention of fluency less clarity on how to assess it – initially 7-9 assessment requirements with details but reduced to 1 per term with less detail
- **Conclude:** lack of assessment details enabled lack of awareness of slow and low reading



# What has international practice been?

- Governments, large international organisations and academics have been raising alarm bells on ‘learning poverty’ in developing nations
  1. Lack of international measurement contributes to this in 2 ways:
    - Small number of developing countries participate in international assessments
      - ❖ SA is one of 3 African countries in PIRLS
      - ❖ Less than 10 developing countries participate in PIRLS overall
  2. Floor effects in low literacy contexts – “comprehension iceberg” with no measure of early skills
- Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRAs) developed in response in 2006
  - Assess letters, **phonemic awareness, word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and writing**
- Low-cost and language-adaptable early grade assessments for use in various countries
- Easy and quick administration by teachers or fieldworkers without specialized knowledge





# What has international practice been?

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- By 2016 more than 70 countries in 120 languages used EGRA including SA
- Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Liberia, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia, leveraged their EGRA data to create early grade reading benchmarks
  - Only 5% of learners reach the benchmarks – same floor effect issues
- Main critique:
  - Inappropriateness of English as the reference language
  - Absence of language-specific skills, e.g complex consonant sequences
  - lack of language-specific interpretation of the reading scores



# Benchmarks plans per language

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Progress	Public Release/Availability
<b>1. Nguni language</b>	
Consolidated, adopted by the DBE and released publicly	October 2020
<b>2. English First additional language</b>	
Reports finalised	November 2022
<b>3. Sesotho-Setswana language group</b>	
Setswana report finalised, Sepedi report being finalised, Sotho report being compiled - Joint language finalised	November 2022
<b>4. Afrikaans language report</b>	
Report finalised	November 2022
<b>5. English Home Language</b>	
Fund raising underway	2023
<b>6. Xitsonga language report</b>	
Main data collection planned for October 2022	January 2023
<b>7. Tshivenda language report</b>	
Fundraising underway, data collection is planned for August 2023	January 2024



# Thank you

Reports are available here:

<https://www.education.gov.za/Research,MonitoringEvaluationReports.aspx>



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