

Why is Retell a Required Part of DORF in DIBELS® Next?

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As we constructed DIBELS Next, 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 DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency is an important advance supported by both a *research rationale* and an *educational rationale*.

Question: Why can't I just use DORF Words Correct? I have been using DIBELS a long time and DORF Words Correct works very, very well.

Research Rationale

DORF Retell is required to obtain the DIBELS Composite Score, which is new in DIBELS Next. The DIBELS Composite Score with Retell explains more variance in reading outcomes than does DORF 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 DORF Words Correct alone is very good, the DIBELS Composite Score is even better in meaningful and important ways.

Grade and Time of Year	DORF Words Correct Predicting GRADE Total	DIBELS Composite Score Predicting GRADE Total	Additional Variance Explained by DIBELS 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 DIBELS Next measures. For more information, see the *DIBELS Next Technical Manual*.

Educational Rationale

Educationally, the DIBELS 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 DIBELS Composite Score in third through sixth grade include (a) DORF Words Correct, representing reading at an adequate rate, (b) DORF Accuracy, representing reading with a high degree of accuracy, (c) Retell, representing reading orally for meaning, and (d) Daze Adjusted Score, representing reading silently for meaning. Consequently, students who are *At or Above Benchmark* on the DIBELS 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

DORF Words Correct = _____ [1]	→ Reading at an adequate rate.
Retell Score _____ x 2 = _____ [2]	→ Reading orally for meaning.
Daze Adjusted Score _____ x 4 = _____ [3]	→ Reading silently for meaning.
DORF Accuracy Percent: _____ % <small>100 x (Words Correct / (Words Correct + Errors))</small> Accuracy Value from Table = _____ [4]	→ With a high degree of accuracy.

DIBELS Composite Score (add values 1–4) =

If DORF is below 40 and Retell is not administered, use 0 for the Retell value only for calculating the DIBELS 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 DIBELS 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 DORF Retell is measuring reading comprehension in a reliable and valid way. DORF Retell has high inter-rater reliabilities of .92 to .99 for the median of three passages (as in a benchmark assessment). DORF 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 DORF Retell is available in the *DIBELS Next Technical Manual* (2011, <http://dibels.org/>).

Concurrent validity coefficients of DORF 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, DORF 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 DORF 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 DIBELS Next measures. For more information, see the *DIBELS Next 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.