Features of the New Heights Stages

The student books are color-coded to indicate the different reading levels. The text becomes increasingly complex, in a variety of ways, as the stages progress. The themes and language of the books have been carefully selected to appeal to students at all grades and ages.

GET SET (Silver)	BLAST OFF (Red)	STAGE ONE (Dark Green)	STAGE TWO (Dark Blue)
• very early grade 1 reading difficulty level; • limited vocabulary changes; • repeated sentence patterns; • consistency in ways ideas are expressed; • punctuated dialogue; • simple sentences containing one idea; • repetition of high-frequency words; • content restricted to single plot or idea; • line breaks support fluency and understanding; • few characters; • careful placement of text on page; • a strong picture–text match.	• early grade 1 reading difficulty level; • limited vocabulary changes within repeated sentence structures; • restricted variation in the way the same idea is expressed; • punctuated dialogue; • few difficult names, with the audio support providing a model for pronunciation; • simple sentences containing one idea except where the story structure is that of a cumulative nature; • high-frequency words used in preference to more difficult vocabulary; • content restricted to a single plot, theme, or idea; • text breaks that keep phrases intact; • few characters; • a close picture–text match.	• grade 1 reading difficulty level; • limited vocabulary changes within repeated sentence structures; • some restricted variation in the way the same idea is expressed; • punctuated dialogue; • some difficult names, with the audio support providing a model for pronunciation; • simple sentences containing one idea except where the story structure is that of a cumulative nature; • high-frequency words used in preference to more difficult vocabulary; • content restricted to a single plot, theme, or idea; • text breaks that keep phrases intact; • few characters; • chapter headings, if appropriate; • tables of contents, if appropriate; • a close picture–text match.	• grade 2 reading difficulty level; • high-frequency words used in preference to more difficult vocabulary; • interest vocabulary repeated within varying structures in the text; • limited use of metaphors and similes, clearly presented; • repeated sentence structures at times; • more use of complex sentences; • more use of sentences with embedded phrases; • text breaks that keep phrases intact; • a greater variety of better-developed characters; • more complex concepts supported by added detail; • chapter headings, if appropriate; • tables of contents, if appropriate; • illustrations that support the text but do not show every aspect.

As the stories have been carefully selected with the needs and interests of older students in mind, the books can be used with those whose actual ages are higher than their reading ages. The books are entertaining, informative, and educational. The aim is to provide the students with an assortment of topics, styles, and genres from a variety of authors.

STAGE THREE (Yellow)	STAGE FOUR (Turquoise)	STAGE FIVE (Purple)	STAGE SIX (Pale Green)
• grade 3 reading difficulty level;	• grade 4 reading difficulty level;	• grade 5 reading difficulty level;	• grade 6 reading difficulty level;
• interest vocabulary that is increasingly specialized;	• compound sentences;	• specialized language that is explained;	• interest level of grade 7 and beyond;
• some repetitive sentence structures;	• descriptive language;	• in-depth explanations of complex subjects;	• increasingly difficult text structure;
• compound (two- to three-idea) sentences;	• characters that are more clearly drawn through dialogue and action;	• subject matter that is more sophisticated and even less familiar;	• specialized language that is not always explained;
• clear paragraphing;	• topics that are less familiar;	• text that requires increased use of inference;	• text that requires increased use of inference, analysis, and evaluation;
• concepts that are more sophisticated;	• more use of similes and metaphors;	• increasingly difficult and unfamiliar concepts, themes, and structures;	• subject matter, concepts, and themes that are increasingly sophisticated and complex;
• stories that require more use of inference;	• more use of inference;	• a rich and varied vocabulary with increasing use of specialized vocabulary;	• characters with multifaceted personalities and inferred motives;
• better-developed characters and settings;	• figurative language and wordplay;	• descriptive, colloquial, and formal language;	• descriptive, colloquial, and formal language;
• more complex plots with more characters;	• increasing numbers of multisyllabic and specialized words;	• more complex character development within narratives.	• rich and varied vocabulary including words with shades of meaning and varying connotations;
• illustrations that are designed to enhance interpretation but do not present new information;	• little support from repetition, sentence patterns, and illustrations;		• increased text density with clearly defined paragraphing.
• text breaks that no longer keep phrases intact;	• clearly defined paragraphing, chapter headings, tables of contents, and glossaries.		
• chapter headings, tables of contents, and glossaries, if appropriate.			

Assessment

It is recommended that while using the program you take Running Records for assessment. Running Records provide accurate, reliable information about students' reading skills and fluency. For older struggling readers, this information is vital. Running Records are an excellent way to monitor the reading development of older students who are still learning to use strategies independently.

The procedure for taking a Running Record is described in this chapter. For detailed information about Running Records, see Marie Clay's book *Running Records for Classroom Teachers* (Heinemann, 2000).

Alternatively, you can use the New Heights Running Records provided in the Assessment folder on the CD, make a simple count of uncorrected errors, or use the cloze activities. All these procedures are described in this chapter. The New Heights assessment sheets combine a record of oral reading with an observation of reading style and assessment of comprehension. A blank Assessment Template is provided for you to use with the supported titles if you decide to use one of these for assessment.

Students new to the program should read books at their instructional reading level. An instructional reading level in this program is the highest level that can be read, after a short orientation, with 90 to 94 percent accuracy.

Some students will be able to read New Heights titles that are at a slightly more difficult level than their instructional reading level (books that the student can read with slightly less than 90 percent accuracy) because of the audio support.

If a student suffers from poor self-esteem or a poor attitude or if their reading comprehension, self-correction rate, reading strategies, or fluency are of concern, then it makes good sense to start them on titles from the lower levels. Success experienced in the early stages provides a firm basis for later success and builds a positive attitude to the reading program. Starting at an easier level generally allows a student to make more rapid progress.

Running Records

Running Records are a way of carefully and systematically recording students' behaviors as they read text aloud. When taking Running Records, you use standard procedures with recognized conventions for recording exactly what a student does as he or she reads. You provide a supportive environment but do not teach or guide the reader in any way.

Running Records provide evidence that, when engaging with a text, a particular learner does (or does not):

- use their knowledge of the world gained through prior experiences;
- use their understanding of the meaning of the text (that is, of what makes sense);
- use their knowledge of language features such as sentence structure, the relationships between words, and the special features or patterns of stories or other genres (that is, their knowledge of how language works);
- apply their knowledge of particular visual aspects of print, including the way that specific letters (and letter clusters) relate to specific spoken sounds and the conventions of print, such as the direction of the words in a text or the letters in a word;
- cross-check some information to monitor their reading for meaning and accuracy;
- draw together all their sources of information and make a decision about how to read the text.

Taking and Scoring a Running Record

A Running Record is a "neutral observation." This means that there must be no intervention, teaching, or prompting by the person taking the Running Record (except when you say "You try it" or "Try that again" or tell the student the word in the specific circumstances described below). Running Records use standard conventions so that anyone trained in the process can interpret the student's behavior from the recorded observation. The Running Record procedure and its conventions are described below.

General Guidelines for Administering Running Records

Familiarize yourself with the text before you start.

Ensure that the student is relaxed and comfortable with you.

Say that you would like the student to read to you and that you will be writing some things down.

Seat yourself in a position to see the text that the student is reading from.

Conventions for Recording

1. Mark every word read correctly with a tick (or check).

✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

2. Record a wrong response with the text under it. [One error]

✔ ✔ **the** ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

3. If a student tries several times to read a word, record all their trials. [One error]

   If they succeed, it is not counted as an error or a self-correction.

✔ **d | dr** ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

4. If a student succeeds in correcting a previous error, this is recorded as a self-correction (written SC). [No error]

✔ ✔ **the|sc** ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

5. If no response is given to a word, it is recorded with a dash. Insertion of a word is recorded over the insertion point. [In each case, one error]

✔ ✔ ✔ — ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

✔ ✔ ✔ ✔**down** ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van ∧ to the store.

6. If the student baulks, unable to proceed because they are aware they have made an error and cannot correct it or because they cannot attempt the next word, they are told the word (written T). [One error]

✔ **T** ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

7. An appeal for help (A) from the student is turned back to the student for further effort before using T as in 6 above. Say "You try it." [One error]

✔ ✔ ✔ **A** ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

8. Repetition (R) is not counted as error behavior. Sometimes it is used to confirm a previous attempt. Often it results in self-correction. It is useful to record it as it often indicates how much sorting out the student is doing. "R," standing for repetition, is used to indicate repetition of a word. If a student goes back over a group of words or returns to the beginning of the line or sentence in their repetition, the point to which they return is shown by an arrow.

✔ **R** ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

✔ ✔ ✔ **R** ✔ ✔ ✔
She drives her van to the store.

Interpreting a Running Record

Interpret the errors and self-corrections in terms of the three main sources of information that the student could have been using on each occasion. Consider each of the student's errors and self-corrections in turn and ask yourself the following questions:

M – Was the student reading for meaning? Did the reading show understanding of the meaning of the text or the pictures?

S – Did the reading show that the student knew the structure (also known as syntax) of the sentence in English, up to the point where the error occurred?

V – Did the student use some of the features of the print? Was what the student read aloud related in any way to the visual information of the printed word?

If the answer to one of these questions appears to be yes, then for each error and self-correction, write the appropriate letter or letters – **M**, **S**, and/or **V**.

Individual teachers will always vary at least slightly in the decisions, or judgments, that they make when interpreting any student's behavior in a Running Record assessment.

Using New Heights Assessment

The New Heights assessment sheets combine well-known and widely used approaches for assessing students' comprehension and fluency. Summarize the student's reading behavior, including the accuracy percentage, self-correction rate, cues attended to, fluency, and instructional needs. All New Heights assessment sheets have the features shown on the page opposite.

Takeout Food   Record of Reading Behaviors

STAGE 2

Introduction: Different people use different transport to different stores to buy different takeout foods. Find out who gets to eat and who doesn't.

Read the title to the student.

Name: _____   Date: _____

Page	Text	Count		Analysis of errors and self-corrections	
				Information used	
		E	SC	Error MSV	SC MSV
2	The cowboy wants one six-foot-long sandwich. He rides his horse to the store. He buys the sandwich and takes it back to his ranch. He eats some and gives away the rest. Delicious!				
3	The nurse wants two tacos. He rides his motorcycle to the store. He buys the tacos and takes them back to the clinic. He eats some and gives away the rest. Delicious!				
4	The builder wants three cheeseburgers. He drives his pickup to the store. He buys the cheeseburgers and takes them back to the building site. He eats some and gives away the rest. Delicious!				
5	The florist wants four pizzas. 100 words				
	Total				

The teacher reads the rest of the book to the student.

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E = Errors
Add up the number of errors the student makes on each line.

Word count
The word count indicates the number of running words the student has read.

SC = Self-corrections
Add up the number of self-corrections the student makes on each line.

Errors MSV
M = Meaning
S = Syntax
V = Visual
Add up the number of instances on each line in which the student appeared to attend to each cue source when making an uncorrected error.

Self-correction MSV
M = Meaning
S = Syntax
V = Visual
Add up the number of instances on each line where the student appeared to attend to each cue source when self-correcting.

Record of reading behavior analysis sheet
Takeout Food

Name: _____   Date: _____

Information sources used

Errors – What did the student use?
☐ Meaning
☐ Structure
☐ Visual cues

Self-corrections –
What did the student use?
☐ Meaning
☐ Structure
☐ Visual cues

Accuracy chart

Errors	%	Level of difficulty
1	99	*Easy*
2	98	
3	97	
4	96	
5	95	*Instructional*
6	94	
7	93	
8	92	
9	91	
10	90	
11 +	89 or less	*Hard*

Self-correction ratio

$$\frac{E + SC}{SC} = 1 : \boxed{}$$

Fluency
☐ Reads smoothly at an appropriate rate
☐ Uses appropriate phrasing
☐ Reads expressively
☐ Attends to punctuation

Comprehension

After the student has finished reading, have them talk about the book. If appropriate, prompt them by using the questions below.

☐ What size sandwich does the cowboy buy?
Answer: A six-foot-long sandwich.
☐ Where does the florist take her pizzas back to?
Answer: To her stand.
☐ What does the doctor think of her chili-cheese hotdogs?
Answer: Delicious!
☐ Why do you think the people give some of their food away?
Answer: Answers will vary.
☐ When do you think the football coach will have his food?
Answer: Answers will vary.

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Check the boxes that apply:
· Information sources used
· Fluency

Accuracy chart:
This chart provides a percentage accuracy score according to the number of uncorrected errors the student makes. *Circle the student's accuracy score.*

Self-corrections ratio: Use SC ratio calculation:
E + SC/SC,
for example,
$$\frac{10+5}{5} = 1:3 \text{ ratio}$$
SC Ratio Calculation (the ratio of self-corrected words to errors made)

Comprehension
Check the boxes to record the student's answers.

Administering New Heights Assessment

Choose an assessment title that the student has not seen before.

Choose a quiet and comfortable place in which to do the assessment.

Sit alongside the student with the assessment sheet in front of you. (Please note: this is designed for teacher use only.)

Start by telling the student the title of the book and reading the short book summary at the top of the sheet.

The student should read from the corresponding book while you record their reading behaviors.

Note: A list of all assessment titles is on page 85.
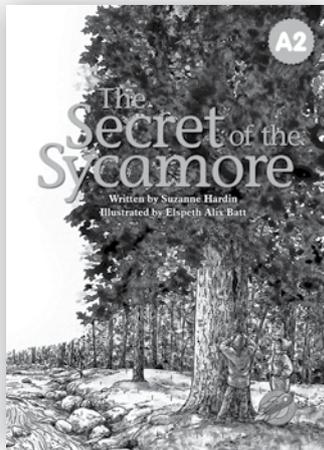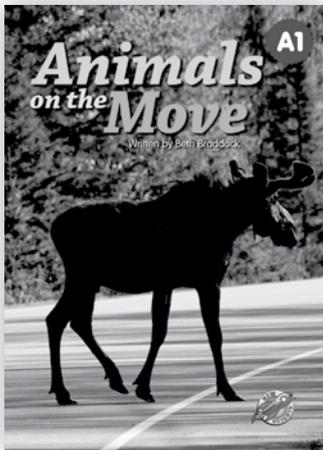
Scoring New Heights Assessment

After the assessment and comprehension conversations are over and the student is settled with other work, complete your summary and analysis of the information. Follow the steps below.

- Scan the assessment sheet and enter the errors and self-corrections in the columns on the right-hand side of the sheet.
- Count the errors and find the percentage accuracy of the student's reading using the accuracy rate.
- Calculate the self-correction rate by adding both errors and self-corrections and then dividing by the number of self-corrections.

New Heights Comprehension Check

After the student has read the text, check their understanding by asking the questions at the end of the assessment sheet. Record the student's answers.

The first three comprehension questions check the student's recall of the text. The next two are of an inferential nature and check for a deeper understanding. The questions are suggestions only. You may choose other questions to ask or use other methods to check comprehension, such as the retell method.

Interpreting the Student's Comprehension

Ideally, the way the student reads the text will reflect how accurately they have understood it. However, sometimes the student's accuracy and comprehension are at odds.

High Accuracy with Low Comprehension

Some students may be able to decode a text well but still have a limited understanding of the content and ideas expressed in the book. In these cases, you may also be aware that although their accuracy is high, the student is not reading fluently.

To find an appropriate instructional level for such a student, choose a book from a lower-level stage. English language learners in particular often have higher accuracy than comprehension rates. When this is the case, these students should read books from the lower levels.

Low Accuracy with High Comprehension

A student can have a low accuracy rate but still appear to have grasped many or most of the main ideas in the text. Ask the student to read another book in the same stage to confirm your observations. If the result is the same, you may decide to treat this initially as the student's instructional reading level but to look closely at the kinds of errors the student is making. Is the student simply reading too quickly? Are there specific strategies that need practice in a guided reading setting? Remember that the decision you make at this stage is your best estimate based on the student's performance at the time. If you feel unsure, try another book in the same stage and see how well the student does.

Determining the Student's Instructional Reading Level

Compare the student's accuracy score and comprehension with the benchmarks below to decide whether the book the student has read is at their instructional reading level.

Instructional Level

Accuracy of 90 to 94 percent and good comprehension

This book and others like it are suitable for this student. Such books will provide the balance of supports and challenges that the student needs to grow as a reader.

Frustration Level

Accuracy of less than 90 percent and/or poor comprehension

This book and others like it are unsuitable for this student. The student will find it hard or impossible to deal with the level of challenge and to grasp meaning.

Independent Level

Accuracy of 95 to 100 percent and good comprehension

The student will be able to deal with the challenges provided by this and similar texts.

If the student has read the text at the instructional level, write the level of the book (for example, Stage Three) and your notes on the student's instructional needs onto the assessment sheet.

If the student has read the text at the frustration level, assess them again using a book from a lower level. For example, if the student has read a book from Stage Four, assess them again using a book from Stage Three.

If the student has read the text at the independent level, reassess them using a text from a higher stage.

Examples

Assessment Results for Student A

He reads a Stage Three book with 95 percent accuracy, making five errors in 100 words.

He reads a Stage Four book with 90 percent accuracy, making 10 errors in 100 words.

Student A's instructional reading level is Stage Four (approximately grade 4 reading level).

Assessment Results for Student B

She reads a Stage Three book with 93 percent accuracy, making seven errors in 100 words.

She reads a Stage Four book with 87 percent accuracy, making 13 errors in 100 words.

Student B's instructional reading level is Stage Three (approximately grade 3 reading level).

A Completed Example

The completed assessment sheet depicted below shows that Nick read *Takeout Food* fluently and expressively with 93 percent accuracy, making 7 errors in 100 words. He successfully self-corrected one in three errors. When making errors, he appeared to attend to meaning cues 12 times, syntax cues 10 times, and visual cues five times. When self-correcting, he appeared to attend to meaning cues five times, syntax cues six times, and visual cues seven times.

His teacher has concluded that Nick needs to pay more attention to visual cues.

STAGE 2

Takeout Food Record of Reading Behaviors

Introduction: Different people use different transport to different stores to buy different takeout foods. Find out who gets to eat and who doesn't.

Read the title to the student.

Date: **3/7**

Name: **Nick**

Page	Text	Count		Analysis of errors and self-corrections	
				Information used	
		E	SC	Error MSV	SC MSV
2	The cowboy wants ~~wanted~~ one six-foot-long sandwich. He rides his horse to the store. He buys ~~gets|sc~~ the sandwich and takes it back to his ranch. He eats some and gives away the rest. Delicious!	1	1	Ⓜ Ⓢ V / Ⓜ Ⓢ V	M S Ⓥ

Record of reading behavior analysis sheet

Takeout Food

Name: **Nick**   Date: **3/7**

Information sources used

Errors – What did the student use?

- ☑ Meaning
- ☑ Structure
- ☐ Visual cues

Self-corrections – What did the student use?

- ☑ Meaning
- ☑ Structure
- ☑ Visual cues

Accuracy chart

Errors	%	Level of difficulty
1	99	*Easy*
2	98	
3	97	
4	96	
5	95	*(Instructional)*
6	94	
(7)	(93)	
8	92	
9	91	
10	90	
11 +	89 or less	*Hard*

Self-correction ratio

$$\frac{E + SC}{SC} = 1 : \boxed{3}$$

Fluency

- ☑ Reads smoothly at an appropriate rate
- ☑ Uses appropriate phrasing
- ☑ Reads expressively
- ☑ Attends to punctuation

Comprehension

After the student has finished reading, have them talk about the book. If appropriate, prompt them by using the questions below.

- ☑ What size sandwich does the cowboy buy?
  Answer: A six-foot-long sandwich.
- ☑ Where does the florist take her pizzas back to?
  Answer: To her stand.
- ☑ What does the doctor think of her chili-cheese hotdogs?
  Answer: Delicious!
- ☐ Why do you think the people give some of their food away?
  Answer: Answers will vary. **Because they got too much food.**
- ☐ When do you think the football coach will have his food?
  Answer: Answers will vary. **When he gets home.**

Assessment Using a Simple Count of Uncorrected Errors

- Choose a book that the student has not seen before at a level you expect them to be able to read with 90 to 94 percent accuracy, that is, a text that is at the instructional level for that student.
- Refer to the Overview Charts (pages 45 to 84) to find the word count for each supported title. (This information is given on the assessment sheets for the assessment titles.) Alternatively, if you don't want the student to read the entire book, find a point where you want the reading to stop and count the number of running words.
- Read the blurb on the back of the book to the student. This is reproduced on the assessment sheets for the assessment titles.
- The student reads the book aloud.
- While the student reads, discreetly count the number of uncorrected errors the student makes.
- If you have decided that the student will only read up to a certain point, ask them to stop reading at that point and then finish reading the book to the student.
- Calculate the student's accuracy score using the following formula.

$$100 - \left(\frac{\text{Errors}}{\text{Running Words}} \ \text{x} \ \frac{100}{1} \right)$$

- Note that this calculation is already worked out for you on the assessment sheets for the assessment titles.
- For determining the student's instructional reading level, the same percentages apply as are used on the New Heights assessment sheets.
- For advice on interpreting the student's comprehension, refer to page 28.

Assessment Using Cloze Activities

The cloze activities provided on the CD (Activities folder) relate to the supported titles. For assessment purposes, you should make sure that the book used is one the student has not seen before.

- Choose a text at a level that you expect the student to be able to read with 90 to 94 percent accuracy, that is, a text that is at the instructional level for that student.
- Read the introduction to the student.
- Provide a pencil and an eraser and instruct the student to fill in the gaps with the words they think the author would have used.
- Accept only the exact word that was deleted from the original. While synonyms may indicate a high degree of understanding by the student, the theoretical basis of this method assumes that the reader is more in tune with the author's intentions if they choose the exact word. The Smith and Elley (1994) criterion for readability also requires the exact word. Misspellings are not penalized.
- There is space on the cloze activities for recording and analyzing the student's work.
- Scoring is lenient to compensate for harsh marking. Use the accuracy chart to work out the student's score. (You can also multiply the number of correct responses by 4 to find a percentage.)

Scoring: Number correct multiplied by 4

Instructional	**40–44%**
Frustration..	**<40%**
Independent	**>45%**

A score of 40 to 44 percent indicates that the text is within the student's level of comprehension. This is an instructional level text.

If the score obtained is below 40 percent, the text is probably too difficult, and the student would need help to read it. In such a case, the student may benefit from completing a cloze activity on an easier text.

If the score obtained is 45 percent or better, the text is sufficiently comprehensible to the student to enable independent learning, and they could be given a more difficult text.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How many times should students practice with the audio support?

A. Students differ considerably in their needs, confidence, and levels of skill. Some will need a lot of support (maybe listening up to 10 times), especially when they've just started a new level. Others will feel confident enough to practice independently after listening just once or twice. With encouragement, and as they experience success, students will require less support, especially on books they feel confident reading. Students should be aware that the reading pens are an interim support, and the aim is to have them reading independently (without audio) as soon as possible.

Q. Is there a risk that students will memorize the text so that it's not a reading activity at all?

A. Familiarity with the text is precisely the aim: it builds confidence and encourages students to read easily, without conscious effort. It's unlikely a student would memorize over 100 words. However, if you believe a student is becoming so familiar with a book that their attention to the print is suffering, then it would be wise to limit the number of times the student is permitted to read the book or listen to the audio support.

Q. Is the New Heights program suited to all kinds of reading difficulties?

A. All students, regardless of their challenges, learn to read by reading. All will benefit from using the New Heights program as it provides interesting, supported reading practice at a suitable level of difficulty at which students gain satisfaction and success. Remember that this program is not intended to replace your regular classroom reading program but to work alongside it.

Q. What should I do if a student lacks or loses interest in the program?

A. Check:

- whether the student is reading at a level that's too hard or too easy for them;
- that the topics interest the student. Allow for more personal choice;

- that the student understands the texts;
- whether the student needs a change of approach or more variety;
- whether the student is missing a favorite activity because of their involvement with the New Heights program. If so, reschedule the activity or the time at which the student uses the program.

Q. What should I do if a student consistently needs more than 10 practices with audio support before conference reading is easy?

A. Check:

- that the level is appropriate;
- whether the student is reading along as well as listening;
- whether the student is lacking in confidence to initiate a conference. If so, set a limit on the number of practices allowed before conferencing;
- that conference feedback is positive and full of praise;
- whether the student understands the stories. Initiate discussions that explore the student's comprehension and make any necessary explanations.

Q. What should I do if a student has read every New Heights title available at the appropriate level but is not yet ready for the next level or for discontinuing the program?

A. Check:

- whether the student is reading along with the text while listening to the audio support;
- whether the student is getting plenty of other reading practice;
- whether the current New Heights stage is really appropriate or whether it's too difficult. Try:
  – asking the student to reread books in the current set without audio support or with reduced audio support;
  – promoting the student to the next stage, but expect them to need more practices.

Q. What should I do if a student has trouble following the text?

A. If you listen closely, it's usually possible to hear where the audio is up to, or you can ask the student to indicate where they're up to. Discourage the student from pointing to each word as this interferes with fluency. The student could use a finger of the left hand moving down the left margin of the text as an interim measure. Sliding strips beneath the text tend to inhibit the eyes from moving ahead of the voice, and they should be avoided. If a student is easily distracted, relocating them to a quieter place or using a polling-booth-style carrel is recommended.

Q. What should I do if a student isn't reading fluently?

A. Assess the student's reading fluency. (See pages 32 to 33.) If their fluency is poor, recommend that the student practices more with the audio support, perhaps reading aloud if accuracy is not a problem. When reading independently, the student should be advised to read "like the voice on the reading pen." The student should not be promoted to a new book until they can read the original book independently with good understanding and fluency.

Q. What should I do if there is little or no English spoken in the student's home?

A. Students should not be expected to read a book at home unaided unless you know they can read it easily. If no one at home is able to help the student, they can still take home a book that has been conferenced and well practiced. However, learning through audio-assisted reading is something people of all ages can do easily and well. When books and audio support are sent to homes where English is not the first language, they're put to very good use. Not only is the target student often able to read the borrowed book well the next day, but so are other members of the family!

Q. How does it work when students are working in a group and all have different books?

A. To achieve maximum acceleration, students need to be working at their own level at a speed that suits them as individuals – hence the recommendation that students all have different books. The group situation fosters independence in students and ensures economical use of teacher time. The initial assessment to gauge a student's optimal starting level is best carried out individually. After that, it's not often that more than one student at a time in a group will require assistance from you. When this does happen, you can simply suggest that students listen to each other reading, practice independently, or complete an activity while they're waiting.

Q. What if the student's starting level is lower than New Heights Get Set?

A. Because New Heights provides a higher degree of support than other approaches, a student can begin on Get Set books as long as their instructional reading level is not significantly lower than very early grade 1. They'll probably need more practice with the audio support and activities to bring them up to this level.

Q. I've noticed that my English language learners can sometimes be fluent with student titles with little comprehension. How can I deal with this? Do I promote them?

A. The main point of reading is to derive meaning and understanding, so these students are not really "reading" but decoding. They shouldn't be promoted when their comprehension is poor. To improve comprehension, more time will need to be spent orientating the students to books and using some of the suggestions under "Supporting English Language Learners" on the OCP that accompanies each title. Cloze exercises are good for fostering comprehension, as are text-sequencing activities, board games, and writing activities.

Q. Can students work on games and activities together?

A. The board game is ideal for students to work on together, but unless they are used to taking turns, it gives them maximum educational advantage to work on the other activities independently. Older students who have been taught peer-tutoring techniques can benefit tremendously from tutoring those who are reading at least two years below the tutor's level.

# The Research Base of Audio-facilitated Reading

The benefits of audio-facilitated reading have been documented over several decades by a number of researchers and teachers. They describe the advantages of providing audio support for struggling and reluctant readers, English language learners, and learning-disabled students.

Research on repeated reading and listening to text began in the early 1970s. Chomsky (1976) implemented an audiotaped reading system with five eight-year-old students who were all reading one or two years below their grade level. Over the course of 10 months, the students' fluency and reading comprehension improved. Chomsky also noted that "passivity about reading declined dramatically, confidence increased, and they began to pick up new books of their own choosing." (page 296)

Blum et al. (1995) explored the benefits of increasing first-grade ELL students' access to books and giving them the opportunity to practice reading with audiotapes at home. The study found that when second-language learners were given the opportunity to reread books with audiotapes at home, they showed a substantially improved ability to read increasingly difficult books both fluently and accurately. Teachers and parents also reported that these students read more and demonstrated an increased confidence and independence in literacy activities.

In a larger study with 162 first-grade ELL and non-ELL students, Koskinen et al. (2000) also found that ELL students benefited from having access to an audio model. The students reread books at home daily with audio support. Parents reported positive effects on their children's reading motivation and achievement and became more involved in literacy activities.

Carbo (1978) noticed substantial gains in word recognition and oral reading skills when using "talking books" with eight learning-disabled students. "With talking books, students can experience immediate success ... Not only have all the youngsters made excellent gains in reading compared to previous performance, but they have become more interested in reading, more willing to try, and more helpful toward one another." (page 273)
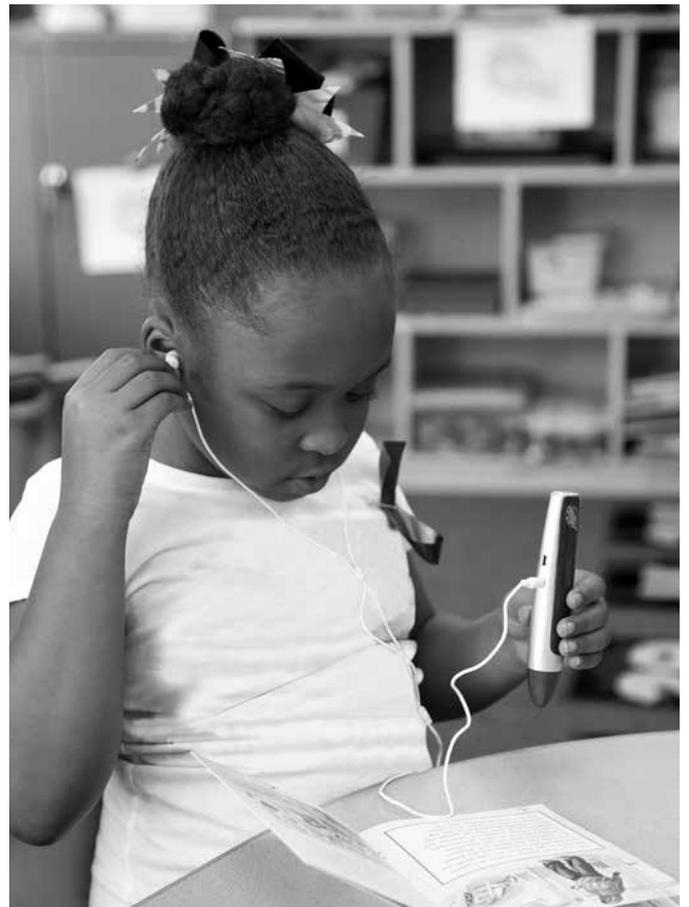
The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement analyzed a number of studies on the effectiveness of repeated reading and assisted reading in improving students' reading fluency (Kuhn and Stahl, 2000). Assisted readings involved the student's repeated reading of a text with a model of fluent reading, such as an audiotape, to provide support. The authors found clear improvements in oral reading and comprehension. They also found that both repeated and assisted readings "enable children to read more difficult material than they might otherwise be able to read, or may provide a manageable structure to enable increased amounts of reading." (page 24)

Put Reading First (2001) has also endorsed this approach. "Researchers have found several effective techniques related to repeated oral reading: students read and reread a text a certain number of times or until a certain level of fluency is reached ... and oral reading practice is increased through the use of audiotapes, tutors, peer guidance, or other means." (page 24)

The effectiveness of Rainbow Reading, the New Zealand program on which New Heights is closely based, has been demonstrated in several research studies. In both reading programs, the audio-facilitated reading experience is enhanced by including other well-known, successful procedures. Among these are orientation to the book, grading the reading material (which is short and of high interest), repeated readings, independent practice, and conferencing. Pluck (1995) found that 43 underachieving students, ranging in age from seven to 12 years, made average gains of 26 months in their reading level in seven months of half-hour daily lessons on the Rainbow Reading program.

In another study using the Rainbow Reading program, Langford (2001) reported that 15 students, ranging in age from 12 to 17 years, 13 of whom were from non-English-speaking backgrounds, made average gains of 14 months in their reading level during two months on the program.

Nalder and Elley (2002) researched the effectiveness of Rainbow Reading with 29 students ranging in age from seven to 12 years. Fourteen of the students were from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The authors found the students made, on average, gains in their reading level of 26 months in four and half months on the program. The struggling readers and ELL students made similar gains in reading level, but the ELL students progressed faster on the other literacy measures. The figures below illustrate the gains.
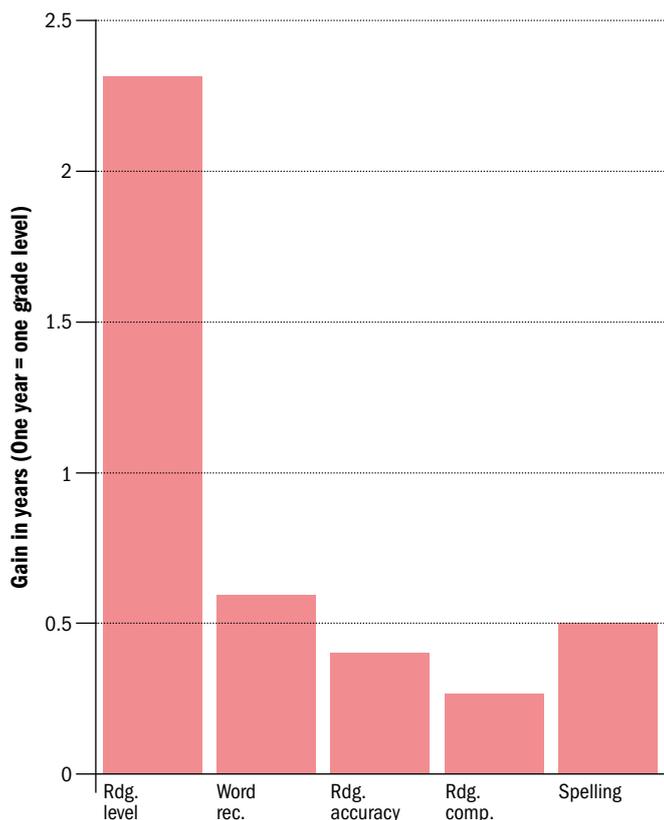
Figure 1: Progress made by struggling readers on five literacy measures over four and a half months
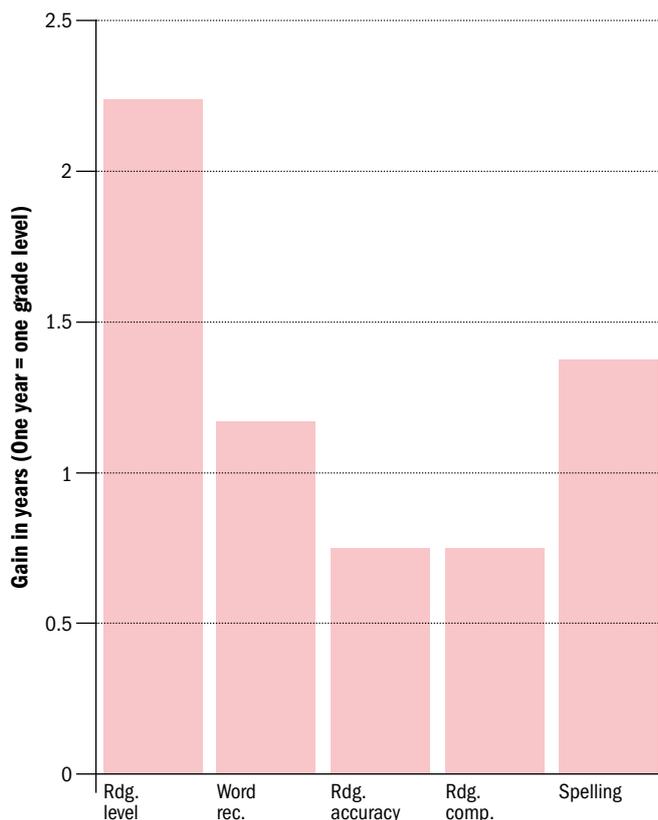
Figure 2: Progress made by ELL students on five literacy measures over four and a half months

The Research Base of the New Heights Program

Methodology/Delivery	Pedagogy/Research
Student is orientated to new book.	Orientation to the book is an extremely effective means of activating prior knowledge, fostering interest, helping students to predict what they may read about, and facilitating a better understanding of reading.[1]
Student listens to audio support and follows along.	Independent reading supports fluency. Audio support provides students with valuable self-controlled access to a good, fluent model, which when read at a suitable speed allows them to follow the text. For struggling readers, the use of audio support is very beneficial as it is supportive, private, and non-threatening.[2] Using models of fluent reading, such as a reading pen, to assist students with repeated reading of text has a positive effect on students' oral reading and comprehension.[3] Listening to an expert reader helps students who struggle with word identification or who are slow comprehenders to build vocabulary, fluency, and meaning.[4]
Student fills in Student Handbook.	Students who take responsibility for their own record keeping and learning are more likely to become active learners and better readers more quickly. Teachers who have ready access to information on how much practice students require before achieving competency can make informed decisions about what their students need to make maximum gains quickly.[5] Students with reading delay need to be meaningfully engaged at all times to ensure maximum acceleration in reading skills.
Student reads book independently and makes a decision …	Students who monitor their own skills, proficiency, and possible readiness for promotion are becoming active learners and are acquiring the skills needed to become competent readers.[6]
• Do I need more practice?	Repeated practice of the same text is important for the orchestration and consolidation of skills.[7] Repeated practice results in higher levels of accuracy, better fluency, and improved comprehension of reading.[8] Reading a book competently is proof to a student that success is achievable, and this sets a precedent for future successful reading.
• Should I do an activity?	The most effective reading activities are text-related, meaningful, integrated with writing, and involve reading.[9] They provide further practice in reading as well as variety and an opportunity for consolidation.
• Should I conference with my tutor? Student reads part of the book to the tutor, who listens, praises, pauses, prompts, checks fluency and comprehension, focuses on some teaching points, gives positive oral and written feedback, then recommends …	Regular, positive, appropriate feedback is essential to the acceleration of reading skills.[10]

The Research Base of the New Heights Program

Methodology/Delivery	Pedagogy/Research
more practice with the same book …	Repeated readings of sentences and passages are found to produce a marked improvement in students' word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. When readers are asked to undertake repeated readings in unison with an expressive model (such as someone reading on tape), marked improvements in their own phrasing are found.[11]
practice with a new book at the same level.	Repeated readings and assisted readings may enable students to read more difficult material than they might otherwise have been able to read, or they may provide a manageable structure to enable increased amounts of reading.[12]
Teacher assesses whether student is ready for the next level. If student reads unseen book at current level with <95% accuracy or at the next level with <88–90% accuracy, they stay at the current level and practice with a new book at the same level. If student reads unseen book at current level with >95% accuracy or at the next level with >88-90% accuracy, they are promoted to the next level and practice with a new book at the new level.	Students learn best with the correct degree and balance of support and challenge, that is, reading books at their individual instructional reading level.[13]
Student takes home book, audio support, and/or activity, as appropriate, with guidelines for parents.	Where there is consistency of practices between home and school, acceleration of reading progress is more likely to result.[14]

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