

# Case Studies Based on Common Score Patterns

The following case studies illustrate using assessment data to target instruction. We provide multiple studies under each essential skill area—phonemic awareness, basic decoding, and advanced text reading—to show you how different data patterns lead to different types of instruction. The cases illustrate the use of Acadience Reading assessments and benchmark goals.

## Linking Phonemic Awareness Assessment and Instruction

### Case Study 1: Ollie

Ollie is a kindergarten student in Ms. Garcia’s class. He scored well below benchmark on PSF on the middle-of-year screening. Ms. Garcia knows Ollie blends phonemes in spoken words when they work on it in class. She reviewed the PSF scoring form and saw that he correctly segmented the beginning sound of every word but didn’t segment the vowel from the final sound.

Step	Question	Example
1	What is the gap?	Ollie should be able to segment phonemes at a rate of at least 20 per minute, but his score is 7.
2	Why is the gap happening?	Ollie can blend phonemes and identify initial phonemes but can’t segment all sounds in words.
3	What is the plan?	Teach segmenting phonemes, letter name, letter-sound, blending, and how to write the letters explicitly and systematically. In eight weeks, Ollie will score at least 40 on PSF.
4	Is the plan working?	

### Case Study 2: John

John is another student in Ms. Garcia’s kindergarten class. He reached the benchmark goal on PSF by segmenting all phonemes in the words. He has solid phonemic awareness and is ready to learn phonics and spelling.

Step	Question	Example
1	What is the gap?	John should be able to segment phonemes at a rate of at least 20 per minute and he scored 32. However, he should be able to match sounds to letters at a rate of at least 17 per minute and he scored 10.
2	Why is the gap happening?	The PSF scoring form shows that John can segment all sounds in three-, four-, and five-phoneme words. Although he has demonstrated phonemic awareness, he is not matching phonemes to graphemes accurately and automatically.
3	What is the plan?	Teach letter name, letter-sound, blending, and how to write the letters explicitly and systematically. At the end of year screening, John will score at least 40 on PSF and at least 28 on NWF-CLS.
4	Is the plan working?	

By thinking through the problem-solving steps, Ms. Garcia can see that Ollie and John have different instructional needs. John has adequate phonemic awareness, but Ollie needs direct, explicit support in segmenting phonemes during phonics instruction.

Ms. Garcia knows that phonemic awareness develops alongside phonics, and students should be introduced to graphemes (letters) beginning in kindergarten, as well as phonemes. They don't have to master oral phonemic awareness before learning letters, and in fact the two skills will support each other. However, brief periods of oral-only tasks (e.g., blending and segmenting warmups) or short interventions for students who do not yet know letters (e.g., a first-sound picture sort) may have their place.

Ms. Garcia also knows that working with larger chunks of sound, such as syllables, onset/rime, and rhyming patterns, is not necessary for students to master before beginning phoneme-level work, so she isn't going to wait until Ollie can clap syllables or produce rhymes before working on individual sounds. She makes a plan to combine phonemic awareness instruction with instruction in letter names, sounds, and forms to help her students read basic words.

## Linking Basic Decoding Assessment to Instruction

### Case Study 3: Lucy

Lucy is a student in Mr. Weir's first-grade class. At the middle-of-year screening, she scored at benchmark on NWF-CLS, but well below benchmark on NWF-WWR. She met the benchmark goal on PSF by fully segmenting all the sounds in words, indicating that she has adequate phonemic awareness.

Step	Question	Example
1	What is the gap?	Lucy should be able to match sounds to letters at a rate of at least 43 per minute and read at least eight non-words without having to sound them out first. Lucy produced 56 correct letter sounds per minute but didn't automatically read any whole words.
2	Why is the gap happening?	Lucy knows all letter sounds but is not blending letter sounds together to read VC and CVC words. She is able to segment all phonemes in three-, four-, and five-sound words.
3.	What is the plan?	Teach blending to read real words with VC and CVC patterns. In eight weeks, Lucy will score at least 58 on NWF-CLS and 13 on NWF-WWR.
4	Is the plan working?	

## Case Study 4: Stella

Stella is another student in Mr. Weir’s first-grade class. At the middle-of-year screening, she scored below benchmark on NWF-CLS and well below benchmark on NWF-WWR. She met the benchmark goal on PSF by fully segmenting all the sounds in words, indicating that she has adequate phonemic awareness.

Step	Question	Example
1	What is the gap?	Stella should be able to match sounds to letters at a rate of at least 43 per minute and read at least eight non-words without having to sound them out first. She produced 35 correct letter sounds per minute but didn’t automatically read any whole words.
2	Why is the gap happening?	Although Stella has adequate phonemic awareness, she is not matching phonemes to letters and is not blending letter-sounds together to read words.
3.	What is the plan?	Teach letter-sound correspondence and blending to read real words with VC and CVC patterns. At the end of the year, Stella will score at least 58 on NWF-CLS and 13 on NWF-WWR.
4	Is the plan working?	

Mr. Weir will not provide Lucy and Stella with the same phonics instruction because they have different needs. Lucy knows letter-sound correspondences, so Mr. Weir doesn’t have to teach them to her. On the other hand, Stella needs direct, explicit instruction in letter-sound relationships. Both students must learn to blend letter-sounds automatically to read words.

Mr. Weir knows that instruction in letter-sound correspondences works best with continuant sounds you can sing, such as the sounds that the letters S, M, N, V, L, and F represent, and all of the short vowels. He knows it is best to start instruction with words that have the vowel-consonant pattern, such as “on”. He will support students by having them put a finger under each letter while they sing the sound by stretching it out, then have them swipe their finger under the letters while saying the word, and gradually fade the sound-by-sound reading and eventually read the word. Mr. Weir plans to integrate instruction in letter names, sounds, and forms in a purposeful sequence that allows his students to read and spell basic VC and CVC words (using real words for instruction, and nonsense words for progress monitoring).

## Linking Advanced Text Reading Assessment to Instruction

### Case Study 5: Steven

Steven is a student in Mrs. Lesh's second-grade class. He scored well below benchmark at the beginning of year on ORF Accuracy, Words Correct, and Retell. He scored at benchmark on NWF-CLS and NWF-WWR. Mrs. Lesh gave Steven a decoding diagnostic to find out which patterns beyond CVC he could read.

Step	Question	Example
1	What is the gap?	Steven should score at least 90% on ORF Accuracy, 52 on Words Correct and 16 on Retell but he scored 85% on Accuracy, 42 on Words Correct and 10 on Retell.
2	Why is the gap happening?	Steven made too many errors while reading text. He scored above benchmark on NWF, indicating that he could read VC and CVC words. On the phonics diagnostic he was able to read CVCe words, CCVC and CVCC words, but he made errors on <i>r</i> -controlled and vowel teams.
3	What is the plan?	Teach to read and spell one- and two-syllable words with <i>r</i> -controlled vowels and vowel teams. In eight weeks, Steven will score at least 90% on ORF Accuracy.
4	Is the plan working?	

### Case Study 6: Rose

Rose is a third-grade student who scored at benchmark on ORF Accuracy, but below benchmark on ORF Words Correct and Retell. She is not having difficulty with decoding. However, she is not reading text fluently enough to understand what she reads.

Step	Question	Example
1	What is the gap?	Rose should score at least 95% on ORF Accuracy, 70 Words Correct and 20 on Retell. Although she scored 99% on ORF Accuracy, she scored only 60 Words Correct and only 15 on Retell.
2	Why is the gap happening?	Rose is accurate but slow. Her lack of fluency is making it difficult to comprehend.
3	What is the plan?	Use repeated reading to build text reading fluency. In eight weeks, Rose will score at least 86 words correct on ORF.
4	Is the plan working?	

## Case Study 7: Cassidy

Cassidy is a student in Ms. Cutler's fifth-grade class. She reads grade-level text accurately and fluently but can't retell what she read. Because strong ORF Accuracy and Words Correct scores indicate adequate word recognition skills, Ms. Cutler decides to investigate Cassidy's language comprehension skills by giving a language comprehension diagnostic assessment.

Step	Question	Example
1	What is the gap?	Cassidy should score at least 98% on ORF Accuracy, 111 Words Correct, and 33 on Retell. She met the goals for Accuracy and Words Correct, but only said 12 words in the retell that were about what she read.
2	Why is the gap happening?	Cassidy is accurate and fluent when she reads, but doesn't understand what she reads. The Acadience Diagnostic CFOL indicated Cassidy has strong listening comprehension, morphology, and knowledge of syntax, but she has difficulty with vocabulary.
3	What is the plan?	Directly teach vocabulary. By the middle of year, Cassidy will score at least 36 on ORF Retell.
4	Is the plan working?	

Steven, Rose, and Cassidy all have issues with reading comprehension, but for different reasons. By using the steps of the problem-solving model, their teachers can see the patterns in their assessment data and what they indicate for instruction. Rose, who is reading accurately but slowly, will benefit from instruction to build grade-level reading fluency. Steven, on the other hand, should not be given that instruction because he is not yet an accurate reader. He needs instruction in decoding at the word level first. Unlike Rose and Steven, Cassidy's lack of reading comprehension is not caused by word recognition difficulties. She needs support in language comprehension.