

# 10

## Claims Proven by 2014 Measurement Incorporated Study of ARC's Independent Reading Level Assessment

*All of these things make it very easy to know exactly what skill level a student is, what they are working on, where the holes are in their learning and what the next steps are for that student. I have NEVER known my kids like I do now, and I have never been able to meet the individual needs of students like I am now able to do. I have found that their color levels coordinate exactly to assessments like the NWEA and the MCA results. Nothing has ever had this big of an impact on my reading instruction.*

—Survey respondent

### 1. **The IRLA can be used to find a valid and reliable baseline (independent) reading level, PreK–12.**

All MI reviewers agreed that the IRLA content was grade-level appropriate and that it posed no content or bias issues that would affect its validity as an assessment of student reading ability. An expert review by Dr. Kristin Conradi of North Carolina State University found that the IRLA could be used to find a valid and reliable baseline reading level. Analyses of student test score data from one K–5 school over two school years yield positive validity evidence and offer a degree of confidence with respect to the interpretation and use of IRLA test scores. IRLA scores were strongly correlated with NWEA scores—the correlations are .88, .88, .88, .88, and .90, respectively, across the five assessment intervals—reflecting student reading growth in reading proficiency over time.

### 2. **The IRLA provides diagnostic information on each student that is useful to students, parents, teachers and administrators.**

97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that using the IRLA helps students know how well they are doing in mastering reading skills; 97% that using the IRLA helps teachers communicate with parents about how well their students are doing; 94% that it helps identify students who need additional help in reading; 94% that it helps them communicate with other teachers about student progress. From Dr. Conradi, NCSU: “The intuitiveness and transparency of IRLA is probably the most beneficial aspect of the framework and will serve parents, teachers, and administrators well. Because both foundational levels and comprehension standards are unpacked in the assessments, teachers can immediately use information to then inform instruction and help their students make progress.”

### 3. **The IRLA helps teachers track student progress in real time.**

100% of users agreed or strongly agreed that using the IRLA helped them track student progress; 100% of administrator respondents strongly agreed that the IRLA helped track student progress school-wide. Comments include: “Since each student has their own tracking sheet I always know where each student is and what skill they are working on that week”; “They [other teachers] can open my students’ IRLA at any time and know what I have done...and where I left off”; “IRLA is one of our data points that provides us with ongoing, real-time information on student progress. It doesn't depend on a student doing well on a particular test day because the data collection is ongoing.”

### 4. **The IRLA is built on the Common Core Standards for Reading.**

All MI content specialists who reviewed the IRLA agreed that the IRLA was well aligned to the Common Core State Standards for Reading at each grade level. From Dr. Conradi, NCSU: “The IRLA is clearly grounded in the Common Core State Standards, with explicit connections made to specific standards throughout. This is a decided strength of the framework: teachers and school leaders will no doubt appreciate the explicitness of the connections. The use of informational texts for some of the cold reads further underscores the central importance the Common Core places on moving beyond narrative literature only.” And the results of a survey of teachers and reading specialists using an instrument based on the EQuIP rubric developed by ACHIEVE/CCSSO support the conclusion that the IRLA is well aligned to the CCSS. Respondents overwhelmingly rated the IRLA as aligned to the CCSS in both Depth of CCSS (how well the IRLA aligns with the letter and the spirit of the CCSS) – 92% and Assessment (how well the IRLA assesses whether students are developing standards-based skills) – 91%.

- 5. The IRLA helps teachers learn to teach reading.** 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that using the IRLA had helped them learn to teach reading; 97% that it had improved their teaching of reading. 84% of respondents also noted that the IRLA was useful for mentoring or training student teachers.
- 6. The IRLA helps teachers get to know their students.** Over 90% of respondents to the IRLA User Survey reported that the IRLA made it easier for teachers to conduct student reading conferences with students. 94% agreed or strongly agreed that using the IRLA had increased the time they spent in individual conferences with students, and 90% that using the IRLA had increased the time they spent working with students on their individual reading goals. From one teacher: “Suzy” is a student with a severe learning disability in reading comprehension and decoding. With the one-on-one conferencing and the use of the IRLA, we have come up with strategies that make reading enjoyable and worthwhile for her.”
- 7. The IRLA helps teachers get to know the Common Core.** 92% of respondents to the User Experience survey noted that using the IRLA had helped them get to know the Common Core. One teacher commented: “With the IRLA showing the scaffolding on the Common Core Standards it also drives my whole group teaching. I take the standards and break them up for the year in an order of progression that I feel makes sense. With the IRLA, I am then able to see what kids coming into 4th grade should be able to do and what kids going into 5th grade need to be able to do. Some of the standards I break apart and scaffold throughout the year just to accomplish the one standard in multiple parts...again the IRLA has great questions at each color level the break the skill down into smaller pieces that let me see if a student has truly mastered the skill.”
- 8. The IRLA helps teachers improve their instruction by moving them to the 3 Shifts in the Common Core.** Alignment survey respondents overwhelmingly rated the IRLA highly in Key Shifts in the CCSS—how well the IRLA supports teachers in making the instructional shifts required in moving from earlier standards to the CCSS—and Instructional Supports, how well the IRLA helps teachers respond to varied learning needs. The percentage of respondents rating the IRLA as “very well” or “well” aligned was 92% for Key Shifts in the CCSS and 93% for Instructional Supports.
- 9. The IRLA provides a low-stakes accountability system for schools or districts.** Administrators who responded to the User Experience survey identified the IRLA as useful in assessing teaching as well as student progress: 93% of administrators surveyed said using the IRLA had improved how effectively teachers were teaching reading in their schools. Several mentioned the ease of using the IRLA tools to track both student progress and progress in individual teachers’ classrooms as useful in providing transparency and accountability: “I can see very quickly the percentage of students on level and the percentage of practice (emailed to me every morning) along with the students who have reached reading practice milestones. Also, I can see progress as a grade, for individual teachers, and for each student. I have access to both proficiency and growth data and can quickly find historical information.”
- 10. The IRLA helps organize written materials, ensuring all students (at every reading level) have enough things they can read and understand on their own and therefore enough opportunity for sufficient independent reading practice.** 90% of respondents to the User Experience Survey agreed or strongly agreed that using the IRLA helped students select books for independent reading. Respondents commented that the IRLA allows students to select appropriate individual reading material. From Dr. Conradi, NCSU: “The IRLA provides a system that should certainly ensure that all students have enough materials they can read on their own. The correlation chart presents helpful comparisons of the IRLA levels to well-established other leveling systems. This should provide teachers, librarians, and parents with enough information to then find texts at the child’s appropriate independent reading level.”