



The Reading-Writing Connection

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Reading Next (2004) and *Writing Next* (2007) have documented the importance of the reading-writing connection. Both reports affirm that students' reading and writing abilities are complementary and growth in one skill inevitably leads to growth in the other (i.e., students become better readers by strengthening their writing skills and vice-versa). This point is further emphasized by author Francine Prose, who noted in her book, "Reading Like a Writer" (2006), that long before there were creative-writing workshops and degrees, aspiring writers learned to write by reading the work of their predecessors and contemporaries. "What writers know is that, ultimately, we learn to write by practice, hard work, by repeated trial and error, success and failure, and from the books we admire," she wrote¹. Furthermore, MetaMetrics®, Inc.'s research indicates that the correlation coefficient between reading and writing is 80².

The *Reading Next* report identifies the following eight instructional elements in promoting effective adolescent literacy programs: direct, explicit comprehension instruction; effective instructional principals embedded in content; motivation and self-directed learning; strategic tutoring; diverse texts; intensive writing; a technology component; and ongoing formative assessment of students. The *Writing Next* report identifies 11 elements: writing strategies; summarization; collaborative writing; specific product goals; word processing; sentence-combining; prewriting; inquiry activities; process writing approach; study of models; and writing for content learning.

While both reports indicate a shared emphasis on reading and writing, in real-world practice, these disciplines often are not connected. In fact, reading and writing typically are taught in different classes by different teachers. In order to facilitate the connection between these two disciplines and promote literacy, MetaMetrics® has developed two educational tools—The Lexile® Framework for Reading and The Lexile

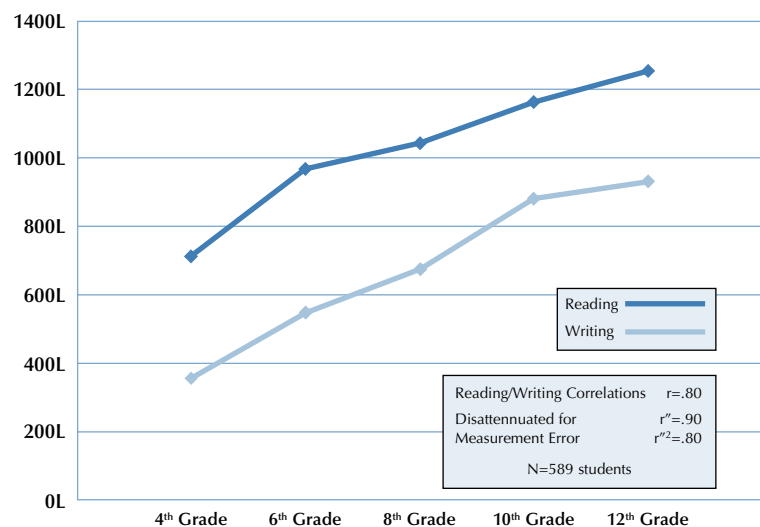
Framework for Writing—that support differentiated classroom instruction and enable educators to measure student growth in reading and writing across the curriculum.

The Lexile Framework for Reading

The Lexile Framework for Reading connects students with reading materials using a common measure called a Lexile. What makes the Lexile Framework unique, and what has led to its widespread adoption, is that it measures both reading ability and text difficulty on the same developmental scale. When used together, Lexile reader measures and Lexile text measures enable educators, parents and students to find books and other materials that meet and challenge a reader's unique ability and interests or school assignments. Currently, more than 115,000 fiction and nonfiction books, 80 million articles and 60,000 Web sites have Lexile measures, and the number of resources that have been measured continues to grow.

Recognized as the most widely adopted reading measure, Lexile measures are used at the school level in all 50 states. Each year, more than 28 million Lexile measures are reported from reading assessments and classroom programs, representing about half of students in the United States.

Figure 1: Cross-Sectional Reading and Writing Lexile Means



The Lexile Framework for Writing

The Lexile Framework for Writing expresses student writing ability on the same Lexile scale as reading ability. This approach provides educators with a consistent and straightforward method to measure and monitor student growth in both reading and writing and reinforces the importance of reading in the development of writing skills. A Lexile writer measure is an estimate of a student's ability to express language in writing, based on factors related to semantic complexity (the level of words used) and syntactic sophistication (how the words are written into sentences). Educators use these

measures of student writing achievement to differentiate instruction by providing students with targeted materials and activities that can help them to build the essential writing skills needed for success in school and in life.

Measuring Reading and Writing Ability on a Common Scale

By placing reading and writing on the same developmental Lexile scale, MetaMetrics has discovered that students typically write about 300L lower than they read. Figure 1 (on the previous page) shows this relationship across eight grade levels and illustrates that the productive task of writing is more difficult than the receptive task of reading.

In addition to this shared relationship, another advantage of placing reading and writing on the same Lexile scale is the ability to express growth on a developmental scale. While holistic scoring rubrics are useful for providing feedback related to critical areas of writing quality, The Lexile Framework for Writing supplements these rubrics by describing status and growth in writing ability. For example, in a study conducted with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, MetaMetrics documented the quantitative differences in achievement levels across grades. Figure 2 illustrates growth across grade levels and growth across grades within a level. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate writing instruction without such a vertical scale. In this way, The Lexile Frameworks for Reading and Writing work in concert to assist educators as they attempt to implement the suggestions from the *Reading Next* and *Writing Next* reports.

Figure 2: Illustration of the Developmental Progression of Mean Writing Ability Using Lexile Writer Measures, by Grade and Achievement Level

Achievement Level	4 th Grade	7 th Grade	10 th Grade
I	183W (sd=170W) (n=231)	406W (sd=194W) (n=234)	527W (sd=220W) (n=239)
II	383W (sd=194W) (n=235)	577W (sd=186W) (n=234)	727W (sd=192W) (n=238)
III	657W (sd=215W) (n=303)	823W (sd=229W) (n=313)	986W (sd=220W) (n=317)
IV	949W (sd=220W) (n=248)	1208W (sd=229W) (n=188)	1250W (sd=220W) (n=187)

¹Prose, F. (2006). *Reading Like A Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and for Those Who Want to Write Them*. New York: HarperCollins.

²Stenner, J. A., Swartz, C. W., Burdick, H., Burdick, D. S., & Hanlon, S. (2007). *The Lexile Framework for Writing*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Reading Association, Toronto, Calif.

MetaMetrics, an educational measurement and research organization, develops scientific measures of student achievement that link assessment with targeted instruction to improve learning. The organization's psychometric team developed the widely used Lexile Framework for Reading; El Sistema Lexile para Leer, the Spanish-language version of the reading framework; The Quantile[®] Framework for Mathematics; and The Lexile Framework for Writing. In addition to licensing Lexile and Quantile measures to state departments of education, testing and instructional companies, and publishers, MetaMetrics offers professional development, resource measurement and customized consulting services.