Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System and Leveled Literacy Intervention

Description: The Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI) is a small-group, supplementary intervention program designed for young children who struggle with reading and writing. The Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) is included in each kit. The BAS is a formative reading assessment comprised of 58 high-quality, original titles, or “little books” divided evenly between fiction and nonfiction.

Publisher: Heinemann

Grade levels: K-8

Skills/standards Assessed: The BAS measures student’s phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

Report format/Results Type: The Fountas and Pinnell BAS uses specially created Benchmark Books to place students on Fountas and Pinnell’s A–Z gradient. It creates a quantifiable assessment of reading comprehension, links assessment to instruction to meet students’ specific needs and comes with recording forms, checklists, and data-management resources. Additionally, the BAS and LLI offer a Professional Development DVD for support.

Research Based:
There is convincing evidence for the research base of the LLI system. The developers utilized an iterative process to field test, assess and adjust the measure. Further information stated on the developer’s website (Heinemann, 2010) states:

After the construction of the Benchmark Assessment System an outside evaluation team conducted an independent study of the system’s reliability and validity as a way of measuring reading progress against grade level criteria. An independent agency reviewed the data. The first stage of the study provided valuable information for adjusting the difficulty of texts in detailed ways. The second stage provided data to assure that the texts provide a true gradient—that is, that each level is more difficult than the previous level and is easier than the next level. The study also provided information on internal consistency—that the fiction and nonfiction selections at each level are equivalent. The assessment was also correlated with the existing Reading Recovery leveled assessment and a close fit was discovered.

The Benchmark Assessment System is new but the gradient of text difficulty on which it is based has been developed over the last twenty years and used with high reliability to establish grade level expectations. The gradient of text that was published in the 1990s has been refined and developed over the years.
The assessment is based on empirical research on language development, vocabulary expansion, reading acquisition, and reading difficulties. In particular, the F&P Benchmark Assessment System assesses the five elements of reading that are described by the National Reading Panel—phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In addition, it addresses issues of student motivation and interest in reading. (Heinemann, 2010)

**Reliable and Valid:**
There is partially convincing evidence for the reliability and validity of this assessment tool. There is considerable internal evidence for the reliability and validity of the measure, however there are currently no outside or external reviews published concerning the technical qualities of this assessment tool. The publisher’s website provides the following information:

After two and a half years of editorial development, field testing, and independent data analysis, the *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* texts were demonstrated to be both reliable and valid measures for assessing students’ reading levels.

The final report was compiled by an outside team of three independent researchers who analyzed the data gathered from the formative evaluation of the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Systems 1 and 2. Two research team members were former school literacy coaches and Reading Recovery educators. All data analysts had backgrounds in literacy research studies using quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis. (Heinemann, 2010)

**Multiple data points:**
The LLI system can be used both as a benchmark as well as a progress monitoring tool to continually assess student’s developing skills in reading.

**Aligned with Reading Standards:**
There is convincing evidence that the BAS is aligned with state and national reading standards. This measure was designed to assess the five reading components as described by the National Reading Panel (2000): phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Additionally, the assessment tool has differing levels of text difficulty to assess incremental levels of development. Therefore, the tool is consistent with two major themes depicted in the Common Core State Standards: (1) Addresses major areas of reading including vocabulary, comprehension, phonemic awareness, and phonics; and (2) Sensitive to text complexity (i.e., do they assess student’s ability to read increasingly complex text).

**Sensitive and appropriate for differing cultures and needs:**
There is no evidence to support this domain for the BAS assessment tool. There is currently no information available concerning this standard. The developers and outside researchers have yet to address this standard in the development of their items and determining if the items used are appropriate for individuals of differing cultures or
needs. Additionally, the assessment tool does not provide norms that are disaggregated by individuals of differing cultures or needs.

References

