Foundational Facts Maze

Maze assesses a student's ability to construct meaning from text using word recognition skills, background information and prior knowledge, familiarity with linguistic properties such as syntax and morphology, and cause and effect reasoning skills. In Maze, students are presented with a reading passage. The first sentence of the passage is intact. In the remainder of the passage, words are deleted and replaced with blank lines and three word choices. Students are asked to identify words that might appropriately fit the blanks.

The statistical reliability and validity of the maze assessment has been established through decades of research. It provides teachers with a simple, accurate measurement tool that functions to identify students' reading ability levels. Online maze assessment simplifies and expedites this identification and progress monitoring and can be an effective tool in providing research-based instruction.

During Assessment

Assessing MAZE provides an indicator of comprehension, fluency, and reading level.

During Instruction

Instead of Maze, provide deliberate, sequenced instruction in fluency and comprehension skills to enhance student reading ability.

Good Idea

Occasional use of cloze or maze to reinforce content learning, vocabulary, or practice syntax.

Shanahan on Maze

"Cloze and maze tests provide predictions of reading comprehension, but they do this based on how well students interpret single sentences and not necessarily the whole passage."

Not So Great

Regular use of cloze or maze passages and encouraging students to "guess" the correct word.

Difference between Maze and Cloze

Maze gives three to four choices for every blank that is presented. Cloze does not give choices– the student is expected to write the correct word in the blank.

Instructional use of Maze and Cloze

Instructional use of Maze and Cloze activities should be **limited** . While there is occasional value in allowing students to fill in the blanks, (vocabulary, content, or syntax practice) these activities will eventually interfere with fluent reading when used too often. When completing a Maze or Cloze activity, the student has to stop reading to process the blank and choices that make sense- disrupting fluent reading. In addition, in considering Shanahan's quote above, when students complete a Cloze or Maze activity, they are processing a single sentence at a time– not a whole passage of connected text. Again, this may interfere with the overall goal of fluent reading and comprehension of connected text when used frequently. It is a much better use of instructional and practice time to focus on comprehension strategies and fluency building activities such as: partner reading and reporting, phrase reading, independent reading paired with writing, graphic organizers paired with text, genre structure– story maps, and sentence structures.

