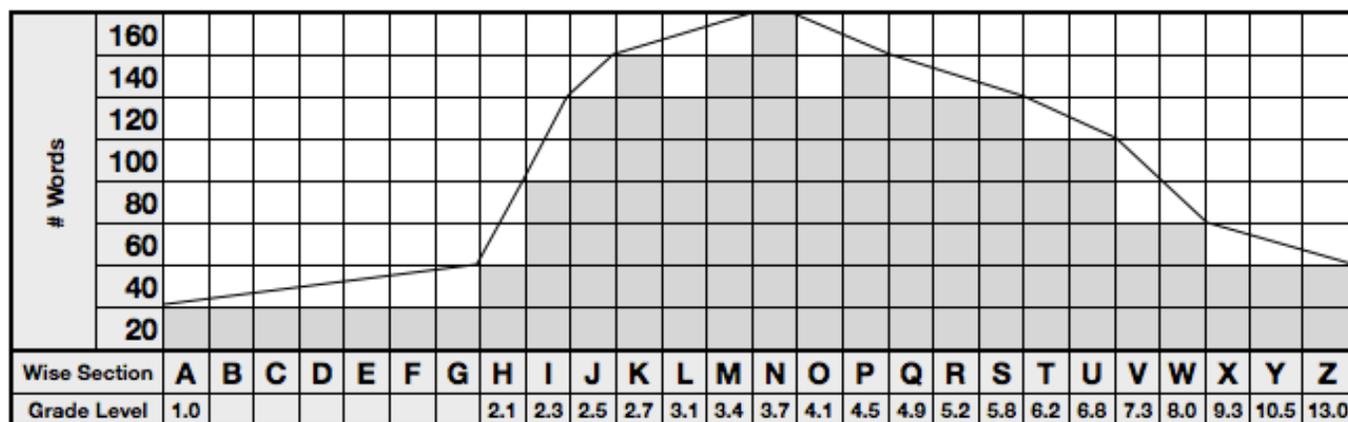


SWR Diagnostic Tests & Student Assessment

The purpose of the diagnostic test is to give an objective report on a student's progress in measurable terms. The test determines spelling mastery from 1.0 (beginning first grade) to 13.0 (freshman college level). The words directly correlate with the Wise List, and each of the eight tests are interchangeable. Results of the test at the beginning of the school year help us determine skill-level placement in the Wise List and give us a benchmark for measuring improvement throughout the year.

Based on the work of Leonard P. Ayres, the Wise List is comprised of twenty-six sections with varying numbers of words per section. As you can see from the chart below, the distribution of words per section resembles a bell curve. This means that a student has fewer words to learn at the beginning and at the end of the Wise List in order to demonstrate a jump in grade level. For example, if a student mastered Lists A-G (140 words), he would show 1.1 year's growth. If he mastered Lists X-Z (120 words), he would show 3.7 year's growth. On the other hand, the student must learn a greater number of words in the middle sections to demonstrate commensurate progress. For example, the student must master all the words in Lists O-Q (380 words) or R-S (240 words) to show 1.1 year's growth. This is because there are more mid-level words to cover than those at the beginning or end of the list. This is important to consider when a student is working diligently at the mid-level sections and is making good progress in his work, but the diagnostic tests aren't showing much difference in the numbers.



While each test is interchangeable, there is a measure of variability to be expected between each student's performance. For example, a student could take the same test on different days, at different times, or under different conditions and yield different results (removing the learning factor, of course). In addition, spelling tests give us "all or nothing" results for the words. If a word is spelled correctly except for one letter, it is wrong. The numbers cannot directly reveal when students are learning spelling patterns or starting to make more appropriate phonogram choices. They can only report the words as right or wrong as a whole.

Given these factors, the best way to assess a student's progress is (1) to compare the student's diagnostic tests scores over time, (2) to assess the kinds of errors a student is making on the tests, (3) to take into consideration where the student is working in the Wise List, and (4) to take note of the student's progress in his daily work.