



Results of the *Lesferill* reading fluency tests

May 2019

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Lesferill reading fluency tests

This report summarizes the results of the *Lesferill* reading fluency tests administered in May 2019.

The reading fluency tests are administered at three points during the school year: in September, January and May. The 2018 to 2019 school year was the third one in which the tests were administered and saw a noticeable improvement in participation rates. The number of participants has stabilised at a level where over 90 per cent of students in grades 1 to 8 sit the tests. Only grades 9 and 10 do not follow this pattern, although participation was nearly 90 per cent in Grade 9 and nearly 80 per cent in Grade 10.

The reading fluency test is part of the Directorate of Education's *Lesferill* programme, which was set up to evaluate students' achievement in reading fluency in order to facilitate follow-up and any necessary remedial action. Schools can now access their students' results through a graphic interface made available in *Skólagátt*, a data portal operated by the Directorate of Education.

Reading fluency is a compound skill involving reading accuracy, reading speed, and the prosody of the language, all of which are critical factors for reading comprehension. Accuracy refers to reading words correctly; speed refers to the automaticity of reading; and prosody refers to emphatic and rhythmic elements. The reading fluency tests assess the first two of these factors—reading accuracy and reading speed—but an assessment scale for the third factor is also provided. When assessing students' reading skills, teachers are encouraged to also consider prosodic aspects (as explained in the notes on the assessment of prosodic aspects on the test registration sheet), although that assessment does not directly influence the student's reading fluency score. By contrast, an assessment of reading accuracy factors directly into the student's reading fluency score that appears in the *Skólagátt* portal.

Reading fluency benchmarks for each year group, stated as a target for the number of correctly read words per minute by spring of the relevant school year, are listed in Table 1. The benchmarks indicate, respectively, the number of words that at least 90 per cent of all students should be able to read at the end of the school year; the score that one-half of the students should achieve; and finally the score that should be achieved by the top-performing one-fourth of the age group.

Table 1. 'May' benchmarks for the *Lesferill* reading fluency tests— number of correctly read words per minute.

Year group	Benchmark 1	Benchmark 2	Benchmark 3
	90%	50%	25%
Grade 1	20	55	75
Grade 2	40	85	100
Grade 3	55	100	120
Grade 4	80	120	145
Grade 5	90	140	160
Grade 6	105	155	175
Grade 7	120	165	190
Grade 8	130	180	210
Grade 9	140	180	210
Grade 10	145	180	210

Results of reading fluency tests

The results of the reading fluency tests administered in May 2019 are shown in the figures and tables below (Figure 1 and Table 2) giving the average numbers of correctly read words in each year group. Benchmark scores are shown with grey lines, while the blue line indicates the average number of correctly read words in the different year groups. The goal is for each year group's average to approximate Benchmark 2 by the end of the school year (spring). This time around, each year group's average exceeds the minimum set by Benchmark 1 by a comfortable margin, and many year groups are very close to Benchmark 2. All of the youngest year groups are 10 words or less from achieving Benchmark 2, and Grade 4 only falls three words short. At the intermediate level, the different year groups are between 21 and 28 words from meeting Benchmark 2, and at the lower secondary level, the shortfall is between 12 and 25 words.

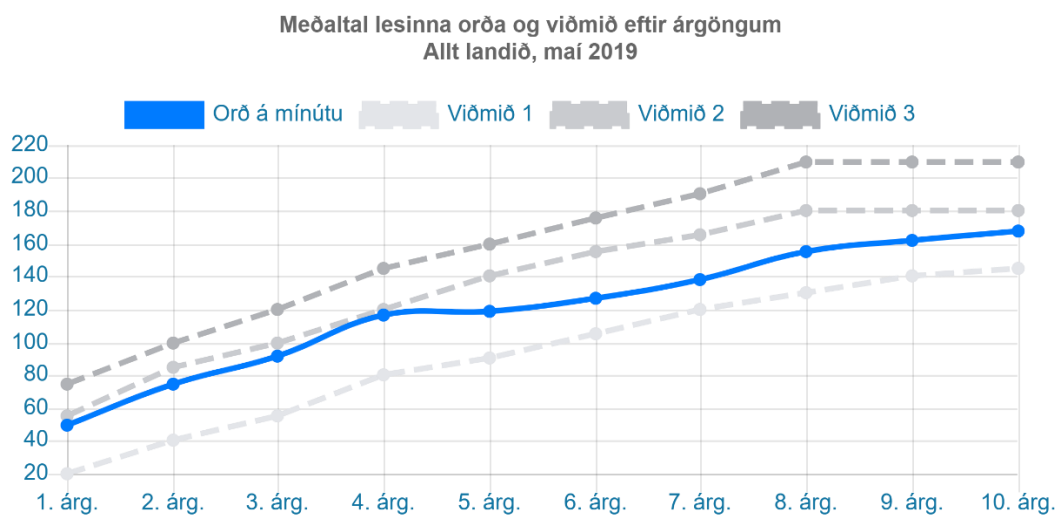


Figure 1. Average number of correct words per minute (blue line) and benchmarks 1, 2 and 3 (grey lines) by year group.

Each year's cohort is divided into four groups according to performance against the benchmarks in May 2019. Figure 2 shows the percentage of students in each year group who met Benchmarks 1 (yellow), 2 (green) and 3 (blue), as well as the percentage of the same group who did not meet the lowest benchmarks (red) in May 2019. The first bar illustrates the target for the benchmark to be reached at the spring session. In almost all year groups, the percentage of students who fail to meet Benchmark 1 is higher than the target set by the Directorate of Education, and there is a need to consider special intervention for this group. On the other hand, the percentage of students achieving at least Benchmark 2 ranges from 25 per cent (Grade 8) to 48 per cent (Grade 4). Moreover, in all year groups a certain number of students achieved Benchmark 3 (blue) in May, including 26 per cent of students in Grade 4 and around 23 per cent of students in Grades 2 and 3.

Hlutföll nemenda eftir frammistöðu samkvæmt viðmiðum
Allt landið, maí 2019

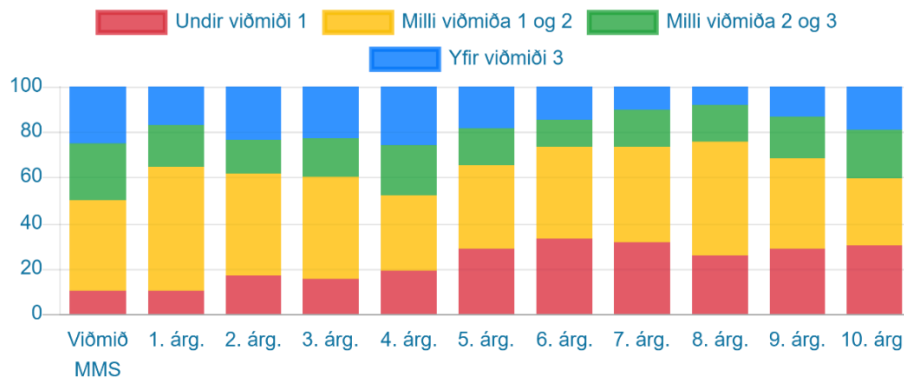


Figure 2. The percentage of students whose results fell, respectively, below Benchmark 1; between Benchmarks 1 and 2; between Benchmarks 2 and 3; and above Benchmark 3. The first bar shows the Directorate's percentage distribution benchmark.

Comparison between years

Participation in the May 2019 reading fluency tests was excellent (see Table 2) and ranged from 76 per cent (Grade 10) to 96 per cent (Grade 1). The participation rate has remained stable or improved in all year groups except Grade 10. A comparison between the May 2019 and the May 2018 results reveals that the average number of correctly read words increases in four year groups, is unchanged in another four, and declines in two year groups. The largest improvement is seen in Grade 10, where the average rises by three words. The average number of correctly read words falls by a single word in Grade 4, and by two words in Grade 6.

Table 2. Total number of students sitting the tests, participation rates, and average numbers of correct words per minute for each year group in May 2019 and May 2018.

Year group	Number, May 2018	Number, May 2019	Participation rate, May 2018	Participation rate, May 2019	Average number of correctly read words, May 2018	Average number of correctly read words, May 2019	Number of correctly read words, change from May 2018 to May 2019
1.	4333	4299	93%	96%	49	50	1
2.	4351	4565	92%	95%	76	76	0
3.	4672	4670	93%	95%	91	93	2
4.	4733	4505	93%	95%	118	117	-1
5.	4552	4370	94%	94%	119	119	0
6.	4372	4330	94%	95%	129	127	-2
7.	4341	4165	94%	94%	139	139	0
8.	4074	3982	89%	92%	154	155	1
9.	3915	3615	83%	87%	162	162	0
10.	3300	3284	79%	76%	165	168	3

Action taken in response to the results

The Directorate of Education—in co-operation with local authorities, schools, parents' and teachers' associations, authors, media outlets, and others—has initiated a large number of projects aimed at strengthening reading literacy. This includes a campaign to increase general awareness of the importance of reading; advisory services to local authorities and schools in relation to the preparation and implementation of reading policies; and the development of indicators to assess progress in reading literacy.

The Directorate of Education has placed high priority on providing schools with accessible and practical working material following the completion of the tests, including an overview of the results for each year group and class within the school, as well as those of each individual student. This provides teachers and school administrators with a way to monitor their students' achievement and progress at three different points of the school year. Administrators, teachers and schools can use the detailed information provided about the achievement of individual year groups and students to set priorities in the teaching of reading and improve the ways in which they meet their students' needs.

Many local authorities and schools have already adopted reading policies with clearly articulated objectives based on the National Curriculum Guide, and followed them up with actions to improve reading skills. It is important to take a long-term view of improvement in education and reading proficiency, and lay the necessary groundwork for this. In that context, the results of the reading fluency tests can be a useful tool for schools and local authorities to evaluate the effectiveness of their policies and actions. Consequently, it is important for all schools to make a habit of carefully examining the results of their students in order to develop actions that are conducive to the continued strengthening of their reading literacy.

Participation in the reading fluency tests administered by the Directorate of Education over the past three years has been exceedingly high, and this has created a situation where it is possible, for the first time, to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the achievement and progress of Icelandic compulsory school students as regards reading fluency. This type of information is very important for the school system and for the education provided in Iceland, considering that strong reading fluency is the very foundation of good reading literacy, and good reading literacy is in turn a prerequisite for success in school and play. It is therefore imperative for this information to be used for the benefit of the education system, to determine where successes have been achieved and where improvement is needed in the field of reading literacy.