Comprehension-Based Silent Reading
Efficiency Norm Rates (words per minute)

The table displays word-per-minute silent reading rates for students in grades 2 - 12 who read grade level passages with 70%+ comprehension. The data were collected as part of a large national silent reading norm study that involved 2,203 students in 16 states, representing all regions of the United States.

	Reading Rate Quartiles (words per minute)			
	<25th	25th to 50th	50th to 75th	≥75th**
Grade 2	< 87	87 - 106	107 - 136	≥ 136
Grade 3	< 99	99 - 123	124 - 154	≥ 155
Grade 4	< 114	114 - 141	142 - 170	≥ 171
Grade 5	< 123	123 - 149	150 - 179	≥ 179
Grade 6	< 128	128 - 157	158 - 191	≥ 191
Grade 7	< 132	133 - 158	159 - 191	≥ 191
Grade 8	< 134	134 - 158	159 - 193	≥ 193
Grade 9	< 141	141- 168	169 - 202	≥ 202
Grade 10	< 149	149 - 172	173 - 208	≥ 208
Grade 11	< 150	150 - 173	174 - 217	≥ 217
Grade 12	< 151	151 - 175	176 - 225	≥ 225

Data Source: Spichtig, A. N., Hiebert, E. H., Vorstius, C., Pascoe, J. P., Pearson, P. D., & Radach, R. (2016). The Decline of Comprehension-Based Silent Reading Efficiency in the United States: A Comparison of Current Data with Performance in 1960. Reading Research Quarterly, 51(2), 239–259.

Very inefficient reading behavior - silent reading rate is well below typical conversational speaking rate in English*; very little reading efficiency improvement beyond the elementary school years.
--Students need to be checked for visual skill deficiency.

Inefficient reading - silent reading rate is well below conversational speaking rate in lower grades and never exceeds speaking rate in upper grades; little improvement beyond the elementary school years.
--Students need to be checked for visual skill deficiency.

Approaching efficient reading - Silent reading rates in the upper section of this quartile exceed conversational speaking rate in upper grades; modest reading efficiency improvement beyond the elementary school years.
--Students who read <175wpm should be checked for vocabulary knowledge and visual skill deficiency.

Efficient reading - Silent reading rates are within conversational speaking range by grade 3 and above speaking rate by grade 5; significant reading efficiency improvement well beyond elementary school years.
--Students who are getting tired from reading should be checked for visual skill deficiency.

* Typical conversational speaking rate in English (150–170 wpm); Yuan, J., Liberman, M., & Cieri, C. (2006). Towards an integrated understanding of speaking rate in conversation. In Proceedings of the ninth International Conference on Spoken Language Processing (INTERSPEECH 2006) (pp. 541–544).

** Only students who are able to take in an entire word per fixation (eye stop) are able to read at 250wpm and beyond. Readers who can read at 300+wpm are no longer internally sub-vocalizing; reading is efficient and can typically be done for extended periods of time.

Instructional Recommendations
for Silent Reading Efficiency Development

Refer to the reading rate for instructional areas in need of attention and recommended instruction.

Reading Rate	Performance Characteristics	Visual Skill Building	Foundational Skill Building	Reading Efficiency Training & Text Recommendation

<125	• Students have most likely not yet mastered foundational skills.
	• Students need to develop/strengthen a firm concept of words.
	• Students may be struggling with the physical process of reading.
	• Students have insufficient sight-word recognition.
	• Students may have insufficiently developed visual skills.
	• Students tire easily and typically avoid reading.
	• Older students typically call reading boring.
		Students will benefit from visual skill development
		• Visual attention (e.g., recognizing pattern, similarities, differences)
		• Visual memory (e.g., brief flashes of shapes, numbers, letters, words)
		• Tracking (e.g., follow a moving target: left, right, up, down...)
		• Navigation (e.g., navigate along a path, maze, line of letters, numbers, text)
		• Accommodation (e.g., focus on targets at different distances)
		
		Students will benefit from exercises that engage both hemispheres of the brain (e.g., Brain Gym®)
		
		• Daily practice
			• Review and apply phonics and decoding strategies through word study.
			• Develop/strengthen firm concept of words: use song lyrics, simple rhymes, dictation
			• Develop instant word recognition of simple, high frequency words: flash words (e.g., flash cards).
			• Develop word lists.
			• Daily practice
				• Text length:
				  ○ Rate: <80wpm: ~300-400 words
				  ○ Rate: 80-100wpm: 400-800 words
				  ○ Rate: 100-125wpm: 800-1400 words
				• Use simple and explicit texts with lots of repetition of high frequency words that students need to know and that are meaningful across curricula Lexile® range: <530L
				• Comprehension tasks: Focus on core skills such as Close Reading, Main Idea and Themes, Interaction of Ideas
				• Daily practice

125-150	• Reading is not dynamic yet. Students have not yet developed efficient reading habits or have developed bad habits. • Students may be stuck in the transitional stage of literacy development (decoding words -> taking in words as units). • Students may have limited sight-word vocabulary.		• Continue to develop instant word recognition of high frequency words: flash words (e.g., flash cards). • Develop word lists (word families; morphological derivations). • Daily practice	• Text length: 1400-1700 words • Use texts with a high degree of repetition of high frequency vocabulary that is useful across curricula Lexile® range: 420L to 650L • Comprehension tasks: Focus on core skills such as Close Reading, Main Idea and Themes, Interaction of Ideas • Daily practice
150-175	• The physical process of reading is more dynamic now. • Students can begin to focus on information processing rather than laboriously navigating text. • Reading is becoming more enjoyable and fluid (matches conversational speaking rate).			• Text length: 1700-2500 words • Use texts with a high degree of repetition of meaningful and relevant vocabulary and concepts. Lexile® range: 520L to 1010L • Comprehension tasks: Focus on core skills first! Secondary focus: Craft & Structure and Integration of Knowledge • Daily practice
175-200	• Students' silent reading rates begin to exceed typical conversational speaking rates. • Getting information from print is becoming faster (and more independent) than asking someone. • Reading is more likely to become a tool of choice for learning.		• Continue to develop instant word recognition of key vocabulary. • Develop/maintain word lists (word families; morphological derivations). • Practice: 1-5 days per week	• Text length: 2500-3000 words • Use texts with a high degree of repetition of meaningful and relevant vocabulary and concepts. Lexile® range: >830L to 1050L • Comprehension tasks: Focus on core skills first! Craft & Structure and Integration of Knowledge are secondary, • Practice: 3-4 days per week
200-250	• Reading is efficient and feels comfortable. • Students are typically independently motivated to read; reading is an efficient tool for learning.			• Text length: 3000+ words • Use texts with a high degree of meaningful and relevant vocabulary and concepts. Lexile® range: >1000L • Focus of comprehension tasks shifts toward integration of knowledge and Ideas such as reasoning and rhetoric, comparative reading • Practice: 1-3 days per week
250-300	Subvocalization threshold is typically met between 250-280wpm.			
300+	Very efficient and productive readers who can read easily for extended periods of time.			