The Sistema de evaluación de la lectura (Sistema) is a formative Spanish reading assessment comprised of 28 high-quality original titles, or books, divided evenly between fiction and nonfiction. The Sistema measures Spanish decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in kindergarten through mid-third grade. The set of books, recording forms, and other materials is an assessment tool for teachers, literacy specialists, and clinicians to use in determining students’ developmental Spanish reading levels for the purpose of informing instruction and documenting reading progress. The Sistema is the Spanish counterpart to the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System in English, published in 2007 (revised in 2010) to critical acclaim. However, the Spanish-speaking student sample selected for the Sistema evaluation is a completely separate sample from the English-speaking sample selected for the Benchmark Assessment System. The Sistema books and their corresponding grade levels are depicted in Figure 1.

EDITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

Drs. Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell worked as co-creators with a team of bilingual educators and researchers to design original texts that would reflect the language and culture of young Spanish readers. Team members were chosen for their experience in teaching with Fountas and Pinnell leveled books, as well as their experience teaching Spanish reading. The Sistema is aligned with the A–N book levels of the F&P Text Level Gradient™, and assesses basic reading competencies that are developed between kindergarten and mid-third grade. Attention was paid to ensure the texts united relevant characteristics of the designated levels outlined in Leveled Books K–8: Matching Texts to Readers for Effective Teaching (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006) with attributes of well-written texts in Spanish. At every level, the Sistema books are distinguished by their culturally-relevant topics, humor, language and illustrations. Each of the levels A–N books, written and illustrated by Latino authors and artists, is 16 pages in length, and the challenges presented at each level increase incrementally.
Field Study of Reliability and Validity  
Sistema de evaluación de la lectura, Grados K–2, Niveles A–N

FIELD TESTING  
A formative evaluation of the Sistema was conducted to ensure that (1) the leveling of the texts is reliable, and (2) the reading scores are valid and accurately identify each student’s reading level.

Field testing was conducted with 284 students enrolled in a socioeconomically, ethnically, and linguistically diverse group of seven schools from five geographic regions across the U.S. Determinations of each school’s socioeconomic status were made using federal guidelines for categorizing low-, middle-, and high-SES schools. Students thus represented a cross-section of the major regions of the U.S., diverse socioeconomic levels and language backgrounds, and participated in programs for Spanish literacy instruction (see Figure 3).

RESULTS OF FIELD TESTING  
In this study, the Sistema was shown to be a measure of increased readability, producing similar reliability and validity outcomes as those of the Benchmark Assessment System.

According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), three benchmarks exist for measuring the reliability of whether an assessment is stable, consistent, and dependable. A reliability coefficient value of .70 is sufficient for the early stages of research such as a pilot study. Basic research, such as the Sistema field study, should require test scores to have a reliability coefficient of .80 or higher. However, when important decisions are to be made based on test scores, such as assessing a student’s reading level, Nunnally and Bernstein claim that a reliability coefficient of .90 is the minimum, with .95 or higher a desirable standard.

As the test-retest reliability results depicted in Figure 12 demonstrate, both Sistema and Benchmark Assessment System meet the most stringent reliability criteria. Both are stable, consistent, and dependable assessments for determining a student’s reading level.

RESULTS OF THE TEXTS SEQUENTIAL ORDERING  
Results from the field testing indicated that the fiction and nonfiction books in the Sistema progressed in difficulty as the levels increased from levels A–N, as depicted in Figures 8 and 9, respectively. At every level of fiction and nonfiction, the percentage of students who read the books in sequential order was near 80% and above.

RESULTS OF HORIZONTAL CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN FICTION AND NONFICTION TEXTS  
The field testing also confirmed that students’ developmental reading levels are similar for fiction and nonfiction texts at each level on the F&P Text Level Gradient for levels A–N. Figure 11 illustrates that 47.7% of the students read the Spanish fiction and nonfiction books at the exact level, and another 40.7% read the books at a similar level (text within one level). For the Sistema, 88.4% of the students read at either the same or similar instructional levels on both fiction and nonfiction texts.

CONVERGENT VALIDITY  
The validity of the test is the degree to which the assessment measures what it purports to measure. Validity is a check on how well an assessment fulfills its stated function. Convergent validity examines the relationship between test scores among assessments that measure similar variables. Therefore, the assessment outcomes from the Sistema texts should be related with similar tests that assess Spanish reading.

Figure 13 shows a strong relationship between the reading accuracy rates on Sistema fiction (correlation of .88) and nonfiction (correlation of .87), and reading accuracy rates on the Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial, the reconstruction of the Observation Survey in Spanish. In other words, a student’s performance on the Sistema texts is strongly indicative of performance on the Instrumento text reading assessment.

The results in Figure 13 also indicate that performance on the Sistema fiction (correlation of .91) and nonfiction (correlation of .89) texts is strongly indicative of performance on EDL2–Evaluación del desarrollo de la lectura (Spanish version of the DRA2–Developmental Reading Assessment). Since the EDL 2 is a developmental reading assessment, this strongly indicates that the Sistema is also a valid measure of progressive reading skills.

The Sistema fiction and nonfiction books were moderately related with performance on the Lectura section of the LAS Links Español (correlations of .45 and .50 respectively). These results therefore show that the Sistema is moderately indicative of performance on the Lectura subtest of LAS Links Español. This lower correlation is not surprising in light of the fact that the concepts tested on the Lectura subtest of the LAS Links Español differ substantially from those tested on Instrumento, EDL2 and Sistema. LAS Links focuses on isolated words and sounds whereas Sistema, EDL2, and Instrumento measure reading of continuous text.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Fountas & Pinnell Sistema de evaluación de la lectura, Grados K–2, Niveles A–N has been demonstrated to be both a reliable and valid measure for assessing student’s Spanish reading levels, showing high convergent validity with two other measures of Spanish reading and moderate convergent validity with a third measure. Moreover, the test-retest reliability results demonstrate that the Sistema meets the most stringent reliability criteria. Data from field testing document that the books become progressively more difficult as students ascend the gradient of text difficulty. Finally, results confirm that fiction and nonfiction texts at each level are similar to each other in difficulty.

The Sistema is therefore a stable, consistent, and dependable assessment for determining a student’s Spanish reading level. With its original books by Spanish-speaking authors and illustrators, its calculation of comprehension in the determination of reading levels, ease of use, and accompanying materials, it will provide accurate and useful information to teachers of students learning to read in Spanish.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sistema de evaluación de la lectura, Grados K–2, Niveles A–N

Fountas & Pinnell

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