

FLUENCY and COMPREHENSION

What is fluency?

How Does Fluency
Affect Comprehension?

Does Speed Matter?

How To Assess Fluency

How To Teach Fluency

Resources for
Teachers and Parents

References

A Literacy Project

by

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for
CRD 511
Expanding Reading
University of Alabama
Summer 2002
Dr. Joan Primeaux

The Survey

According to our survey, most respondents view fluency as important to very important; however, the definition of fluency was vague and the immediate connection between fluency and comprehension was not always evident.

We generated our Fluency Survey based on the professional articles we read concerning fluency and comprehension and offered the survey to the faculties of Central Elementary and Alberta Elementary Schools. There were 29 responses; roughly, 50% of our combined faculties replied, including representation from classroom teachers, Title 1, Reading Recovery and Drama teachers and Reading Specialists.

Fluency definitions included: words per minute, sounds like speech/conversations, smooth, continuous, automatic, using expression, good flow – no stumbling, emphasis in correct spots, noticing punctuation, and only three responded that fluency increases comprehension; however when asked directly how much they think fluency affects comprehension, they overwhelmingly agreed that it was important (10) to very important (18).

Teachers said that they monitor fluency progress frequently (daily/weekly – 25, monthly/quarterly – 4). They teach fluency in whole class (12) and small group settings (18) and some to strugglers only (10), using Running Records, Miscue Analyses and Informal Reading Inventories (QRI).

Respondents used many strategies to teach fluency, from modeling and rereading (highest) to making books on tape and Drama (lowest), with echo reading, choral reading, paired reading, phrasing, poetry and word play in between.

Speed in reading was not viewed by most as very important (2), but somewhat important (11) to important (15), however, few used timed reading samples (18- never, 5-sometimes, 1-frequently), and most were not aware (12) or only somewhat aware (15) of grade level fluency rates.

Finally, when asked what should be included in a plan for teaching fluency, responses indicated that all the areas mentioned were important to very important to such a plan, including: Staff development (25), Strategy resource lists, (25), Parent education, (26), Reading Resource Teacher, (26), Professional readings (teachers), (26), Increased amounts of student reading time, (26), Reading on (and below) independent level, (27), and Student performances, (23). In addition, individual comments recommended: small groups, parents taking responsibility at home, and school wide emphasis on poetry.

Fluency Survey Results

Name 27 participants Position Teachers, Title 1, Drama, Reading Recovery Grade Level Pre-K - 5

Thank you for taking a few moments to complete this survey. It is part a project for our graduate class (CRD 512 Extended Reading) for Dr. Joan Primeaux at the University of Alabama. All information will be confidential and used only for the purposes of constructing a Reading Fluency Plan – part of a class project. **You do not have to write your name.** You may write comments, if desired.

Thank you again. Cynthia Stepter, Andrea Minear, Lois Driggers and Amanda Roberts

What is fluency? (Please write a brief description.)

Words per minute	sounds like speech/conversations	smooth, continuous, automatic
Using expression	good flow – no stumbling	emphasis in correct spots
Noticing punctuation	increases comprehension (3)	

- How often do you **monitor** student **progress** in **fluency**?
 - Daily - **12**
 - Weekly - **13**
 - Monthly - **2**
 - Quarterly - **2**
 - Never - **0**
- How much do you think **fluency** affects **comprehension**?
 - Not important - **0**
 - Somewhat important - **1**
 - Important - **10**
 - Very important - **18**
- Does **speed** matter in reading?
 - Not important - **1**
 - Somewhat Important - **11**
 - Important - **15**
 - Very Important - **2**
- Do you **teach fluency**?
 - whole class - **12**
 - small group - **18**
 - strugglers only - **10**
 - not at all - **0**
- Do you **assess fluency** for strugglers?
 - Never - **3**
 - Sometimes - **13**
 - Always - **13**
- How do you **assess fluency** for your struggling readers? (Please circle the amount)
 - Timed reading samples **18** - never **5**- sometimes **1**- frequently
 - Running Records **9** - never **11** - sometimes **9** - frequently
 - Miscue analysis **10** - never **12** - sometimes **8** - frequently
 - Informal reading inventory (QRI) **11** - never **10** - sometimes **4** - frequently

8. What **strategies** do you use to **teach fluency**? (Please circle the amount)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| a. Reader's Theater | 10 - never | 13 - sometimes | 5 - frequently |
| b. Echo Reading | 6 - never | 13 - sometimes | 8 - frequently |
| c. Choral Reading | 1 - never | 18 - sometimes | 10 - frequently |
| d. Paired Reading | 4 - never | 12 - sometimes | 13 - frequently |
| e. Making Books on Tape | 9 - never | 15 - sometimes | 2 - frequently |
| f. Modeling | 1 - never | 3 - sometimes | 24 - frequently |
| g. Phrasing | 6 - never | 16 - sometimes | 5 - frequently |
| h. Poetry | 3 - never | 19 - sometimes | 6 - frequently |
| i. Rereading | 0 - never | 9 - sometimes | 21 - frequently |
| j. Word play | 3 - never | 16 - sometimes | 10 - frequently |

9. Are you **aware** of the grade level **fluency rates**?

- 12** - Not aware
- 15** - Somewhat aware
- 1** - Very aware

10. What should be **included** in a **plan** for **teaching fluency development** in order to increase comprehension?
(Please rank importance.)

-1-Not important -2- Somewhat Important -3- Important -4 - Very Important

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| a. Staff development | (1) 1 | (3) 2 | (10) 3 | (15) 4 |
| b. Strategy resource lists | | (1) 1 | (3) 2 | (8) 3 (17) 4 |
| c. Parent education | (1) 1 | (2) 2 | (9) 3 | (17) 4 |
| d. Reading Resource Teacher | (1) 1 | (2) 2 | (7) 3 | (19) 4 |
| e. Professional readings (teachers) | | (1) 1 | (1) 2 | (12) 3 (14) 4 |
| f. Increased amounts of reading time (student) | (1) 1 | (1) 2 | (4) 3 | (22) 4 |
| g. Reading on(and below) independent level | (1) 1 | (0) 2 | (10) 3 | (17) 4 |
| h. Student performances | | (1) 1 | (1) 2 | (9) 3 (14) 4 |
| i. Other (please note) | | | | |

Comments:

- **Small groups**
- **Parents must take responsibility at home**
- **School wide emphasis on poetry**

Name (Optional) _____ Position _____ Grade Level _____

Fluency Survey

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What is fluency? (Please write a brief description.)

3. How often do you **monitor** student **progress** in **fluency**?
 - a. daily
 - b. weekly
 - d. monthly
 - e. quarterly
 - f. never

4. How much do you think **fluency** affects **comprehension**?
 - a. Not important
 - b. Somewhat important
 - c. Important
 - d. Very important

6. Does **speed** matter in reading?
 - a. Not important
 - b. Somewhat Important
 - c. Important
 - d. Very Important

7. Do you **teach fluency**?
 - a. whole class
 - b. small group
 - c. strugglers only
 - d. not at all

6. Do you **assess fluency** for strugglers?
 - a. Never
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Always

7. How do you **assess fluency** for your struggling readers? (Please circle the amount)
 - a. Timed reading samples never sometimes frequently
 - b. Running Records never sometimes frequently
 - c. Miscue analysis never sometimes frequently
 - d. Informal reading inventory (QRI) never sometimes frequently

8. What **strategies** do you use to **teach fluency**? (Please circle the amount)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|-----------|------------|
| a. Reader's Theater | never | sometimes | frequently |
| b. Echo Reading | never | sometimes | frequently |
| c. Choral Reading | never | sometimes | frequently |
| d. Paired Reading | never | sometimes | frequently |
| e. Making Books on Tape | never | sometimes | frequently |
| f. Modeling | never | sometimes | frequently |
| g. Phrasing | never | sometimes | frequently |
| h. Poetry | never | sometimes | frequently |
| i. Rereading | never | sometimes | frequently |
| j. Word play | never | sometimes | frequently |

9. Are you **aware** of the grade level **fluency rates**?

- a. Not aware
- b. Somewhat aware
- c. Very aware

10. What should be **included** in a **plan** for **teaching fluency development** in order to increase comprehension? (Please rank importance.)

-1-Not important -2- Somewhat Important -3- Important -4 - Very Important

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| a. Staff development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| b. Strategy resource lists | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| c. Parent education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| d. Reading Resource Teacher | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| e. Professional readings (teachers) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| f. Increased amounts of reading time (student) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| g. Reading on(and below) independent level | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| h. Student performances | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| i. Other (please note) | | | | |

The Question

**What elements should be included
in a plan for teaching fluency development
in order to increase student comprehension
in reading?**

The Plan

Based on the results of our professional readings and the Fluency Survey, we believe that teachers need to explicitly be made aware of the relationship between fluency and comprehension. Teachers must recognize the significance of speed and accuracy to fluency in order to gain the necessary strategies to regularly teach and monitor success. This, ultimately, will improve student performance in reading.

We have developed this Fluency and Comprehension pamphlet to encourage teachers to begin to recognize these needs and pursue professional development in this area. In addition, a more in-depth Resource Booklet contains additional information, strategies, resources and articles for teachers to expand their understanding of fluency as it relates to comprehension and success for readers.

What is Fluency?

According to The American Heritage Dictionary...

flu-ent (fl > "...nt) *adj.* **1.a.** Able to express oneself readily and effortlessly. **b.** Flowing effortlessly; polished. **2.** Flowing or moving smoothly; graceful. **3.** Flowing or capable of flowing; fluid. **--flu^{en}-cy** *n.* **--flu^{ent}-ly** *adv.*

According to our survey...

definitions of fluency include the ability to read automatically, quickly, smoothly and at a natural rate with expression and comprehension.

According to Worthy and Broaddus...

We all know fluent reading when we hear it, but what exactly is it? Fluency is integral to comprehension and is a critical component of successful reading, but even reading researchers don't agree on a single definition (Strecker, Roser, & Martínez, 1998). In fact, fluency is not a simple concept (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Like music, it consists not only of rate, accuracy, and automaticity, but also of phrasing, smoothness, and expressiveness. Fluency gives language its musical quality, its rhythm and flow, and makes reading sound effortless.

According to Mather & Goldstein...

Reading fluency encompasses the speed or rate of reading, as well as the ability to read materials with expression. Meyer and Felton defined *fluency* as "the ability to read connected text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading, such as decoding" (1999, p. 284). Children are successful with decoding when the process used to identify words is fast and nearly effortless or automatic. As noted, the concept of automaticity refers to a student's ability to recognize words rapidly with little attention required to the word's appearance. The ability to read words by sight automatically is the key to skilled reading (Ehri, 1998). (2001).

How Does Fluency Affect Comprehension?

According to Worthy and Broaddus, "the goal of reading is constructing meaning and that fluency in oral reading helps to develop ease, rate, and understanding while reading."

The following Literature Review reflects a compilation of professional articles that relate connections between fluency and comprehension. In addition, it offers suggestions for strategies and activities to assess, teach and monitor fluency in an effort to increase comprehension in reading.

Fluency as it relates to comprehension
**A Literature Review by Lois Driggers, Cynthia Stepter,
Amanda Roberts, Andrea Minear**

What is fluency?

We could not find a single definition for fluency, but what we found that best describes it is the simile Worthy and Broadbuss in Volume 55, gave it. They suggested fluency is like music because of the rhythmic quality it has. Richards (2000) defines fluency as the ability to project natural pitch, stress, and juncture of spoken word or written text automatically and at a natural rate.

Necessary components of fluency include rate, accuracy, automaticity, phrasing, smoothness, and expressiveness. Each component can indeed become an explicitly taught lesson working towards the goal of helping the child become a fluent reader, which has been so sorely neglected. Researchers suggest fluency instruction was lost in the phonics vs. whole language debate of the last couple decades. The other reason is because basal readers don't foster fluency in a systematic manner according to Rasinski, (1994). Unfortunately basals are used largely throughout classrooms as the only instructional tool for reading in America today.

Based on research by Rasinski & Padak, 1996; Pinnell, 1995; Stahl and Kuhn, 2000, fluency is a determiner of reading comprehension success. The fluency stage generally comes after the emergent stage where children have depended on their memories to decode the words on the page to making the text sound like speech. If problems occur at this stage, then gaining meaning from text is difficult.

Literature Review of Fluency Studies

We reviewed current literature about fluency that shows the need for it to be developed from primary grades through upper grades. A major concentration of teaching should be done around second grade cites Stahl and Kuhn (2000) after children have become decoders. Research points out that explicit teaching of fluency directly enhances reading comprehension, particularly when scaffolding

the lessons to include various assisted reading approaches. Several current researchers have proposed that rereading brings the most success to fluency. Two different methods of the repeated reading included simultaneous reading with a skilled reader and reading along with a tape. Stahl and Kuhn (2000) state the most gains of fluency, speed, and accuracy occurred when explicit assisted reading took place.

In light of recent research made available, fluency has revealed a direct correlation between reading rates and proficiency. Similarly, studies have proven that poor comprehension is directly related to excessively slow rates of fluency.

Recent studies done on fluency suggest that low fluency rates equal low comprehension rates. Research conducted by Padak and Rasinski (1998) on Title I reading students in Akron, Ohio revealed that a poor reading rate was a major contributor for students reading comprehension being at frustration level and that speed truly did matter.

Also revealed was a 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress study that stated: “15% of all 4th graders read no faster than 74 words per minute, ... a pace at which it would be difficult to keep track of ideas as they are developing within the sentence and across the page” Pinnell, et.al. (1995). An even more recent study done by NAEP found 44% of all 4th graders were low in fluency and that there was a direct relationship between fluency and comprehension as reported in *Put Reading First*, (Sept. 2001).

Programs to increase fluency

Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) by Stahl, Heubach, and Crammond (1997) was developed for fluency using assisted reading and based on five principles:

- lessons should be comprehension based
- children should read as many texts at their comfort level as possible
- children should be supported in repetition of text
- children should read with partners
- children should increase amount of time they get at home.

At the end of the study that was done with second graders, results showed an average growth of two years over the course of their second grade year in fluency and comprehension. It was also noted the success may be in part due to reading connected text.

El Sierra Elementary School in Downers Grove, Illinois wanted their students to increase their fluency and took the route of increasing independent reading through repeated readings. Understanding that parents were their best partners in teaching reading, they set a goal of reading one million minutes for the year. Armed with the research conducted by Rasinski & Pradat (1996), Dr. Rasinski was brought in to teach the staff ways to build fluency and combine it with parent cooperation. According to the teacher researchers (1998), not only were they successful that year for reaching their goal, they planned to continue it the next year.

Strategies for building fluency

Authentic reading experiences to build fluency was decidedly better than disconnected text according to all literature reviewed. In all of the articles reviewed, they make reference to using meaningful text to promote fluency. To develop fluency, opportunities need to be provided for repeated reading of the same material (Bidwell, 1990, Weinstein & Cooke, 1992,) so what better way than to use some of these activities to incorporate in the classroom.

- Poetry (Denman, 1988; Perfect, 1999; Graves, 1992; Rasinski, 2000), is considered to be a very natural experience for children to read and perform orally, adding their personal interpretations to the text. Poetry is usually short, has a rhythm to it, and other than nonsense poetry, it has meaning.
- Reader's Theater:-Rasinski's article (2000) reveals significant gains in fluency were measured and reported by researchers after students participated in Reader's Theater (Martinez, Roser, Strecker, 1999) Any book or topic lesson can be turned in a Reader's Theater script with a little imagination on the part of the students.

- Drama- McMaster's (1998) states practicing parts, underlining words for emphasis, and discussing different interpretations in small groups is beneficial for fluency development, as researched by Wolfe (1993). According to Bidwell (1990), children don't mind re-reading drama parts over and over to practice since it is an authentic task. In two different studies, (Flennoy, 1992) who studied low-achieving first graders and (Hoyt, 1992) who studied Chapter I third graders; both found drama and Reader's Theater to be effective builders of more fluent reading due to the repeated readings of the scripts. The sequence of the drama activities leading up to the actual performance (Ivey, 1999; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999) is part of what makes the dramatic performances so successful.
- Buddy reading and shared readings with partners are other strategies used to promote fluent readers as suggested by Worthy and Broaddus (Dec. 2001/Jan. 2002). One authentic way to develop fluency would be to use nonfiction books in the content areas (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Lots of practice reading these non-fiction texts help achieve fluency in a variety of texts. Worthy (1996) refers to research that students benefit with shared reading experiences using materials that provide repetition (McCormick, 1994).
- Teacher read-alouds and guided reading groups allow for repeated readings to increase fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary which in turn helps with oral expression (Ivey, 1999) so states Worthy and Broaddus. It is through this modeled instruction that fluency begins to transfer into silent independent reading, relates the authors, and in turn allows the students to understand what fluency is.

Fluency Assessment

One of the easiest ways to assess reading fluency is by having students read and time them for one minute, then count the words read within one minute.

Assessments should include the components of reading with expression, staying within the grade level, rate, and comprehension of the material.

Based on a formula, rates have been determined by grade levels. Harris and Sipay (1990) devised a reading rate chart from data gathered from standardized reading rate measures which is currently used in recent research by Allington

(2001). By allowing children to keep a graph of their own fluency rates, they can take an active part in monitoring their own reading fluency.

Other assessments include keeping running records, miscue analysis, and Informal Reading Inventories, but they are more time consuming than the one minute read aloud assessment.

Conclusion

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer is an analogy we made when looking at our children's ability to read fluently and comprehend text. If a child is a fluent word caller than comprehension is bound to be higher in contrast to the disfluent reader. The disfluent reader takes twice as long reading the required classroom material because of additional time spent decoding. As a result, the struggler reads far less than his more fluent classmate, the successful reader. We have read research to support the fact that volume of reading directly relates to developing fluency (Allington, 2001).

It is through this study we hope to educate our faculties about the importance of fluency as it relates to comprehension by presenting the information we researched. We have devised a school wide plan and will implement it by teaching a series of explicit strategies teachers can use in their classrooms.

Does Speed Matter?

According to Timothy Rasinski “... for most children, slow reading is associated with poor comprehension and poor overall reading performance. Research dating back over 60 years suggests that faster readers tend to have better comprehension over what is read and tend to be, overall, more proficient readers (Carver, 1990, Pinnell et al., 1995).”

Reading Rates

Harris and Sipay (1990) present a summary of information on reading rates established on several standardized reading rate measures. The chart below was developed from those data.

General range of adequate reading rates by grade levels.

Grade	WPM	Grade	WPM
1	60 - 90	6	195 - 220
2	85 - 120	7	215 - 245
3	115 - 140	8	235 - 270
4	140 - 170	9	250 - 270
5	170 - 195	12	250 - 300

Reading rate guidelines must be applied with caution because a number of factors will influence rate. For instance, oral reading is slower than silent reading. The reading rates for younger children are typically established from oral reading rates, while the rates for older children are established from silent reading activity. But younger children may exhibit little difference in oral and silent reading rates, while for older students that gap should be substantial.

(Allington p.72)

Rubric for Fluency in Reading K-3

Fluency means more than a graceful oral reading performance. It's the gateway to comprehension, interpretation, and ultimately, independence as a reader and writer.

To assess fluency development in young readers, Mansfield uses a four-point rubric targeting specific elements of fluency.

RUBRIC FOR FLUENCY EVALUATION

- 4** • Reads **primarily** in larger meaningful phrases
 - Fluent, phrased reading with a few word-by-word slowdowns for problem solving
 - Expressive interpretation is evident at places throughout the reading
 - Attention to punctuation and syntax
 - Rereading for problem solving may be present but is generally fluent

- 3** • A **mixture** of word-by-word reading and fluent, phrased reading (expressive interpretation)
 - There is evidence of attention to punctuation and syntax
 - Reading for problem solving may be present

- 2** • **Mostly** word-by-word reading but with some two-word phrasing and even a couple of three-or-four-word phrases (expressive interpretation)
 - Evidence of syntactic awareness of syntax and punctuation, although not consistently so
 - Rereading for problem solving may be present

- 1** • Very little fluency
 - **All** word-by-word reading with some long pauses between words
 - Almost no recognition of syntax or phrasing (expressive interpretation)
 - Very little evidence of awareness of punctuation
 - Perhaps a couple of two-word phrases but generally disfluent
 - Some word groupings awkward

Comprehension

Comprehension Strategies for Narrative Text

1. Predicting

Setting a purpose
Book review

2. VCR in Your Head

(Movie, DVD) Visualize – rewind, fast forward, stop, etc.

3. Story Retell

4. Fall Into the Book/Out of the Book/Into Another Book

Walk around with the character in the book
Character walks around with you in your world
Character from Book A falls into Book B

5. Story Grammar

Structure
Problem → Attempts to solve Problem → Resolution

Reading Conference

Name _____ Date _____

Name of book _____ Accelerated reader /
Level _____

ORAL READING

1. Difficult words:
2. Self corrected miscues:
3. Reads with expression: yes no
4. Reads word by word yes no
5. Regards punctuation: yes no
6. Hesitates: yes no
7. Phonetic skills needed:

COMPREHENSION

Can the student....

1. Tell who or what the story is about? yes no
2. Sequence the story events? yes no
3. Tell the details about the story? yes no
4. Make a reasonable prediction about what will happen? yes
no
5. Draw conclusions about the story? yes no

EVALUATION

1. Do you like the story? Why or why not?
2. What was your favorite part? Why?
3. What literature response would you like to do with this book?
4. Teacher comments

How To Teach Fluency

Model Lesson Plan: Fluency Instruction

Step 1. Overview and Vocabulary Check for Chapter 1. (Approximately 5 minutes).

Students silently read the chapter and prepare a list of words they can not decode or understand. Students can do this individually, at their desks, or in a small-group setting. The teacher then discusses and explains these words in a small-group setting, typically three to six students with similar skill levels. Students can demonstrate understanding of difficult words by using the word in a sentence in another context. Building on the discussion of the vocabulary, the teacher asks a few questions to elicit the main idea or generate a summary of the actions, major characters, or concepts. This should be a brief overview. More detailed comprehension checks occur in later steps.

Step 2. Practice In Speed and Accuracy. (Approximately 10-15 minutes).

Guided practice. Modeling in small-group settings exemplifies highly effective practice procedures. The teacher, aide, or volunteer should model by reading at an appropriate pace, with expression. Students could follow along silently. At the beginning of every second or third paragraph, the instructor should “randomly” select a student to read the first sentence aloud. This will help ensure active participation by all students.

Independent practice. In independent practice, the student is assigned a unit of text. The student reviews the unit silently and then reads the text aloud at an appropriate rate and error level. Increase the text units from paragraphs to pages, as students demonstrate increasing competence and confidence.

Step 3. Oral Comprehension Check. (Approximately 5 minutes).

This is a discussion session with the instructor on aspects of the story that will check on comprehension. For example: What is the main idea? What was the motive, e.g., Why did Sarah want to do it? What was the sequence, e.g., What happened first; what happened next? Summarize the chapter. Students not participating or responding inaccurately should be tutored individually until they can respond accurately to three of four questions. This tutoring should serve as a gentle, yet firm, reminder that students are accountable for reading with understanding.

Step 4. Reading with Expression. (Approximately 5 minutes).

Students should practice reading with expression. This should be a fun experience. Students may practice using different voices for different characters, changing intonation to indicate a question, and reading with pauses to build interest and anticipation. Students should be given opportunities to read at least a paragraph or two of the chapter to peers or the instructor.

Step 5. Rate and Accuracy Assessment. (Approximately 5 minutes).

This assessment can be done in individual or small-group settings. If assessing in a small-group setting, use a different text sample for each student. A 60-word sample, read in 30 seconds or less with 2 errors or less, would be the minimum sample size. Provide the needed additional help to individuals who fall behind. If one or two students in the small group do not meet these standards, but the trends in their rate and accuracy data show steady improvement, then move the group to the next chapter.

Activities To Enhance Fluency

Rereading	Activities that involve reading and re-reading passages, practicing the text until it becomes familiar and sounds like natural speech, - whether alone or with partners - promote fluent reading. Providing authentic, real-life situations for children to practice (reread) and perform (read aloud) increases motivation to read, thereby increasing fluency.
Teacher Read Alouds	Sets a model for many reading skills, including: pace, tone, fluency, expression, pronunciation and enjoyment.
Choral Reading	Reading to music, with a group or alone sets a rhythmic pace for children to follow. They must keep up with the rest of the group, but do not have to stand out "alone".
Echo Reading	Allows children to repeat words, phrases, sentences or sections of text. Uses modeling techniques.
Phrasing	Strategy used to move readers on from "word by word" reading. The reader sees and thinks about words in groups, i.e., "around the --- "what? → "around the corner".
Reader's Theater Student Performances Plays, Newscasts	Readers Theatre is another very natural and authentic way to promote repeated readings. Readers Theatre does not rely on costumes, movement, props, or scenery to express meaning--just the performers and their voices as they face their audience with script in hand. For students to perform a Readers Theatre script in a meaningful and

engaging manner, they need to practice the script beforehand. Students love to perform for an audience when they are given sufficient opportunities to rehearse the script. (Rasinski)

Poetry

Poetry and reading fluency are an excellent match in nearly any classroom and for all students. Integrating poetry into the reading curriculum is a great way to promote fluent reading through repeated reading of readable and intriguing texts. However, despite the wonderful potential of poetry to explore language, it is one of the most often neglected components of the language arts curriculum (Denman, 1988; Perfect, 1999). Turning poetry into a performance, which it is meant to be (Graves, 1992; Perfect, 1999), and turning away from too much critical analysis, can give poetry its rightful place in the reading-language arts curriculum. Moreover, when poetry performance is fostered in the classroom, reading fluency is also nurtured as students attempt to make their oral interpretations just right--and this means repeated readings, but in a very natural and purposeful way. (Rasinski)

Paired Reading

(Example of a 2nd and 3rd grader)
When the partners read, first the third grader reads the passage to his partner, then they read it together once or twice, and then, if time allows, the second grader reads it while the partner follows along and provides support and encouragement. The practice is natural and the outcome is clear. Through repeated readings of somewhat easier texts the third grader makes significant strides in his reading fluency and overall reading. The second

grader, with the additional modeled and paired reading support, makes significant gains in her reading as well. (Rasinski)

Word Play

Any type of word play that increases vocabulary will increase fluency. The more words that can be read and understood automatically increase the fluency and comprehension of text.

Reading with Books on Tape

Reading along with Books on Tape allows the reader the experience of being read to (modeling) with the added features of keeping up with the pace of an experienced reader (as with choral reading). Children can also use this strategy to read books on their interest level which might not necessarily be on their reading level.

Making Books on Tape (Reading Rainbow)

An excellent activity for strugglers who might be embarrassed to read in front of their peers is having them make books on tape (audio and/or video). They can choose a favorite book and practice it until they can read it fluently, then tape it for other children, perhaps in a lower grade or younger siblings.

Authentic teaching activities involving children

Activities that give children a real purpose for practicing fluency can aid in the task of reading and re-reading materials, thereby developing fluency. Children have favorites that they like to read repeatedly. Student choice and areas of interest are important factors to reading practice.

Fluency Mini-Lessons

Repeated Reading

- Students practice reading texts until they achieve fluency.
- Students perform texts for interested audiences—peers, younger students, family members, and so on.

Paired Reading

- Student selects book.
- Student and parent (or other good reader) read book aloud together.
- Parent's reading slightly leads or follows, depending on student's need and desire.
- Student logs paired-reading activities.

Choral Reading

- Teacher or students select text and determine or assign parts (if it is antiphonal reading).
- Teacher reads text aloud; students listen and read along silently. Discussion may follow.
- Teacher and students read text together.
- Choral or antiphonal choral reading is performed.

Tape-Recorded Passages

- Teacher or other competent reader prepares audiotapes of texts.
- Individual students select books and tapes. They read and simultaneously listen to books several times.
- Individual students perform books or a portion of them for an audience.

Fluency Development Lesson

- Teacher selects short text and prepares copies for students.
- Teacher reads text; students listen and critique reading. Discussion may follow.
- Teacher and students read text together.
- Student pairs take turns reading the text to each other. Listeners provide assistance and positive feedback.
- Students perform the text for interested audiences.
- Students add words from text to their word banks.

- Students read text at home for parents.

Oral Recitation Lesson

- Teacher reads story to class.
- Story discussion is followed by the development of a story map.
- Students write story summary.
- Teacher models reading of story and discusses fluency.
- Students practice segments of story.
- Students read or perform texts for others.
- Students “soft-read” (practice) segments of story on their own for 10 minutes per day.

Shared Book Experience

- Teacher discusses and reads a big book to the class.
- Teacher and students reread book several times over several days.
- Teacher draws students’ attention to segments of text (words, word parts, letters).
- Students read smaller versions of the book on their own at school and home.

Support-Reading Strategy

- Teacher reads story; students predict upcoming events.
- Teacher and students echo-read story.
- Student pairs reread story, alternating pages once or twice.
- Students practice 100-word segments with partners.
- Students read assigned segments to the teacher, who checks reading accuracy.

Teacher/Parent Internet Resources

Read! Read! Read!

Reading Fluency

<http://www.wilearns.com/default.asp?WhichCategory=5&WhichSection=133>

Reading Online

<http://www.readingonline.org/>

International Reading Association

<http://www.reading.org/>

Scholastic.com

<http://www.scholastic.com/>

Grandpa Tucker's Rhymes and Tales

<http://www.night.net/tucker/>

Jan Brett's Page

<http://www.janbrett.com/>

FunBrain.com

<http://www.funbrain.com/>

Eric Carle Website

<http://www.eric-carle.com/>

BrainQuest.com

<http://brainquest.com/>

When Reading is Rough

<http://ad.doubleclick.net/646906/safe2.html>

Reader's Theater Editions

<http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html>

Reader's Theater Sites

<http://www.proteacher.com/070173.shtml>

<http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm>

Storytelling, Drama, Creative Dramatics, Puppetry & Readers Theater for Children

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/drama.htm>

Fiction Teachers.com

<http://www.fictionteachers.com/classroomtheater/theater.html>

Kids Click - Web Search for Kids by Librarians

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/KidsClick!>

Ask Jeeves for Kids

<http://www.ajkids.com/>

Alabama Virtual Library

(Get your access card at the Library)

<http://www.avl.lib.al.us/>

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Fluency beyond the primary grades: from group performance to silent, independent reading: reading fluency contributes to comprehension and enjoyment, but is not commonly taught beyond the primary grades. Here are several suggestions for incorporating fluency practice in any classroom.

Jo Worthy; Karen Broaddus.

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We all know fluent reading when we hear it, but what exactly is it? Fluency is integral to comprehension and is a critical component of successful reading, but even reading researchers don't agree on a single definition (Strecker, Roser, & Martinez, 1998). In fact, fluency is not a simple concept (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Like music, it consists not only of rate, accuracy, and automaticity, but also of phrasing, smoothness, and expressiveness. Fluency gives language its musical quality, its rhythm and flow, and makes reading sound effortless.

Even when classroom contexts and experiences are rich, many students do not develop oral reading fluency on their own (Pinnell et al., 1995) and need explicit instruction and experiences that specifically target fluency. Students also need to understand that the goal of reading is constructing meaning and that fluency in oral reading helps to develop ease, rate, and understanding while reading silently. Traditional methods of fluency practice, such as unrehearsed oral reading, may not focus on either comprehension or student engagement. In the literacy autobiographies of preservice teachers over the past 5 years, we have been struck by their enduring memories of this type of reading aloud in school. All names are pseudonyms.

Stacey: I felt that if I could read fast enough, the other kids wouldn't make fun of me. So while I was reading as fast as I could, I never focused on the meaning. I think this happens a lot because there's such a focus on reading the words right.

Lorraine: I don't remember anything about my first-grade reading experiences, but I do remember loving to read aloud in second grade. I also remember hating it when a few kids would read, because they were behind the rest of us and it took a long time.

Charles: Whenever it was my turn to read I would get cold sweats. I was so frustrated because I could only figure out maybe three words out of a sentence. So when I would try to read to the class everyone would laugh at me. I would always try to sound words out, waiting for the teacher to go ahead and tell me the word.

Although we have shared just a few voices, the message is overwhelming. Both experienced and less skilled readers have negative associations with oral reading in school. Where does that leave teachers who recognize that their students need explicit instruction in oral reading fluency? What strategies work and how much classroom time should be used to develop both oral fluency and silent independent reading? In this article, we begin by looking at what research has shown us about the importance of reading fluency in the elementary and middle grades. We also consider the limitations of some traditional methods of fluency instruction in classroom settings. This article will demonstrate how engaging, effective oral fluency practice can be part of daily reading instruction and how such instruction and practice can help to develop independence and understanding in silent reading. Our approach includes explicit teacher modeling and teacher-guided time for group and independent oral and silent reading practice in materials from all areas of the curriculum.

Revisiting what we know about reading fluency

Reading fluency has a number of core components. Just as musicians learn common chords and melodic sequences, fluent readers must have a vocabulary of high-frequency words, graphophonic skills, and strategies for accurately decoding new words. Frequent opportunities to practice identifying words through meaningful reading and writing experiences help the reader to achieve automatic word identification or automaticity, just as practicing scales and favorite pieces helps the musician to develop technical expertise. As the reader begins to group words together meaningfully, there is a gradual transition from word-by-word reading to reading in meaningful phrases (Bear, 1991; Clay & Imlach, 1971; Schreiber, 1987). As automaticity develops, the reader is able to read more quickly and focus more attention on meaning (Chall, 1979; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). However, it is possible to read with accuracy, speed, and appropriate phrasing but without fluency and understanding (Aaron, 1989; Worthy & Invernizzi, 1996), just as it is possible to play a musical piece with technical accuracy but limited interpretation. In order to be truly fluent, a reader must comprehend and interpret text

(Thurlow & van den Broek, 1997) and read with appropriate timing, expressiveness, stress, and intonation (Dowhower, 1994; National Reading Panel, 2000).

A classroom that fosters fluent reading development is full of interesting, well-written materials on every topic imaginable, in a variety of formats, and with a wide range of difficulty levels. Instructional activities and texts are purposeful and interesting, the atmosphere is positive and engaging, and there are many opportunities to read individually and with others. Just as in the early grades, teachers read aloud with expression, introduce students to interesting materials, and share their enthusiasm about reading.

Why is fluency important?

After the primary grades, students are expected to read independently. As the volume and complexity of reading expectations and materials expand, students who are not developing fluency have a hard time understanding and keeping up with schoolwork and often find themselves in increasing difficulty even if they have previously done well. Students with inadequate fluency are also likely to avoid reading because of fear of failure and negative attitudes. Students who don't read don't "get good" at reading (Allington, 1977; Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988); students who aren't good at reading don't read. Students who avoid reading have less exposure to ideas and vocabulary in books and may lose intellectual as well as academic ground (Stanovich, 1986). For these students, attention to fluency is critical.

What about traditional fluency instruction?

Dedicated fluency instruction is rarely found in classrooms or even in intervention programs (Allington, 1983; National Reading Panel, 2000; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Although shared reading is a feature of many primary classrooms, unrehearsed oral reading of textbooks and novels is often the only time when students read aloud.

Unrehearsed oral reading. This common practice in language arts and content area classes (sometimes called round-robin reading or "popcorn" reading), involves individual students who read an excerpt from a text while the rest of the class listens and follows along (Opitz & Rasinski, 1998). Most likely this activity descended from the late 19th-century practice of oral recitation of lessons. While it has been commonly used with basal readers, teacher's manuals do not recommend the practice because it focuses upon accurate word identification rather than constructing meaning. However, a look inside elementary and middle school classrooms (Worthy, 1996) affirms that round-robin reading still thrives. In the classrooms we've observed, teachers rarely provide feedback except to correct mistakes and tell students unknown words, making the instructional value of this procedure questionable (Stallings, 1980). Typically, each student reads only a small segment of text while others wait to read, wasting valuable instructional time (National Reading Panel, 2000). Skilled readers are often bored by the slow pace, and less skilled readers are often reading materials that are above their instructional level. Frustration level reading does not improve oral reading fluency and can lead to negative feelings about reading (Hoffman & Isaacs, 1991; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991).

Repeated reading. This is perhaps the most common form of instruction focused specifically on fluency for upper elementary and middle school students. In contrast to unrehearsed oral reading, repeated reading procedures are designed so that students practice rereading a familiar text with teacher guidance and feedback (National Reading Panel, 2000). The usual format for repeated reading is to choose a book or excerpt that is easy to understand and that provides an appropriate balance of success and challenge in word recognition. The teacher may initially read the text aloud, discuss it with students, and provide support until students can read it independently. Next, students reread the text, usually individually, until they reach an appropriate level of accuracy and speed. A variation on repeated reading often used with older students is timed repeated reading, in which the reading is timed and the rate charted on a graph (Samuels, 1979).

Repeated reading with attention to text comprehension has been shown to be effective in experimental studies, as determined by a meta-analysis conducted by the National Reading Panel (2000). In addition to improving speed and accuracy, guided repeated reading has been shown to improve word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a variety of grade levels and educational settings, with both skilled and challenged readers. How can educators take advantage of the benefits of repeated reading to provide fluency instruction that will be engaging and meaningful for students past the primary grades? In the next section, we describe an approach to fluency instruction using guided repeated reading.

Promoting reading fluency and independent reading through performance

Reading fluency develops over time through modeling and instruction, and guided and independent practice in a variety of texts. In our many years of teaching and working with teachers and students, a practice that we have found that addresses all of these areas is reading performance. This activity combines the proven benefits of repeated reading with inherently meaningful activities that appeal to students. In most classrooms, performance is limited to special occasions. Struggling

readers are rarely given speaking parts, a situation that reinforces their already low self-confidence. When reading performance becomes a regular part of the reading program, all students have an opportunity to practice and to successfully perform.

Students engage in repeated reading with a purpose as they rehearse a poem, joke, story, Readers Theatre script, speech, or other text until they can read it fluently and then perform it for an audience. Effective performances are built upon positive social interactions focused on reading. Teacher instruction and feedback are natural components of rehearsing. Reading performance encourages students to read at a rate appropriate to the particular text rather than to simply read fast. When students are able to interpret and read texts with expression, their comprehension improves. In the following sections, we first discuss the teacher's role in modeling and instructing students in oral reading fluency to build a foundation for successful performance. Next, we explore a variety of approaches to reading performance. Finally, we offer suggestions for providing materials and instruction to promote the transfer of fluency to silent independent reading. Texts suitable for modeling and performance are listed in the Sidebar.

Modeling fluent reading with explicit instruction

Modeling by reading aloud helps students understand what fluency sounds like and is essential to its development. Reading aloud exposes and supports students in reading and engaging with texts that they may not be able to handle independently, and it also enhances comprehension development. In more explicit modeling, students listen to an expert read, usually following the print, and either repeat the text (echo reading) or read along with the expert reader (choral reading). Benefits of modeled reading include gains in rate, accuracy, phrasing, segmentation, and expression (Chomsky, 1978; Schreiber, 1987). Holdaway's shared reading approach (1979) is an example of modeled reading that is excellent for beginning readers but is not typically used beyond the primary grades. Most older students will be moving toward independent reading even if they still have limited skills, and they may be impatient with the approach. However, even in upper elementary and middle school, shared reading can be used to help students learn how to "season" their oral reading with expression and change voices for different characters (Ivey, 1999). Most primary teachers use song and poetry charts that students learn to read and sing. This is also an excellent activity for elementary and even middle school. The teacher or students might choose a poem or song per week, write it on a chart, and start off each day or period with a choral reading. Suggested poetry collections, which contain humorous poems and poems from various cultures and countries, are included in the "Poetry" section of the Sidebar.

Some students may need more explicit instruction and modeling in fluency. Just as metacognitive strategy instruction helps students learn to monitor their reading, metacognitive instruction can help students develop and monitor their fluency. Students need to recognize that they are partners in the learning process and that the teacher is available as a coach or consultant rather than as the director or sole bearer of information. Students who feel in control of their own learning, who know why fluency is important and what can help to improve it, are more likely to engage in the kinds of repeated practice that lead to improved fluency. These experiences help students learn how to adapt their reading to different situations and texts. Thus, all fluency instruction should include demonstrations and discussions of the what, how, when, and why of the activity.

A minilesson format is helpful for teaching different aspects of fluency, but it is important that students start with a big picture before focusing on a specific component. A minilesson on reading with expression using the book *Tacky the Penguin* (Lester, 1988), for example, might begin with a read-aloud, with the teacher modeling fluent reading to students. The book is about an outgoing, boisterous penguin, who is very different from his reserved, well-mannered friends. The book is perfect for demonstrating how to read dialogue with appropriate voice and expression based on character interpretation. The process begins with modeling and discussion, with the teacher asking students to listen carefully to the voices of Tacky (loud, obnoxious, and off-key) and the other penguins (soft and harmonious). The teacher and students then talk about how and why the voices were read differently. The next step is guided practice, in which students practice reading the parts as a group while the teacher listens and provides feedback on interpretation and expression. For practice, students can work either independently or in groups, reading dialogue from Tacky or other books with lively characters and dialogue (e.g., Thaler's 1989 *The Teacher From the Black Lagoon*).

Modeled reading may be especially beneficial for struggling readers (Chomsky, 1978; Samuels, 1979). When teachers read high-interest books aloud to their class, they are familiarizing students with new texts that they can reread either during group practice or silent, independent reading. Using books on audiotope also allows students access to a wide range of texts for independent listening. Audiotaped books "encourage less able readers to use the meaning of the language to help them decode, increase fluency and comprehend," and give second language learners "an opportunity to hear the rhythm of the language" (Barr & Johnson, 1991, p. 403). It is important, however, that students understand their task and learn the procedures well enough to do them independently, and that teachers have a system for monitoring comprehension and progress, such as retelling the events of the text and then predicting what will happen next. When they have learned the procedures, students can listen to audiotapes during free-reading time, center or seatwork time, or at home. Reading

audiotaped books is a great combination approach for focusing simultaneously on fluency and comprehension improvement. Modeled reading and explicit fluency instruction are natural setups for reading performance.

Reading performance

Readers Theatre. In this activity, students perform a play (usually a book adapted in script form) by reading it aloud to an audience. Props are used sparingly, as the focus is on reading fluently to convey meaning. Because the difficulty level of parts within a script can vary widely, Readers Theatre is an excellent activity for grouping students by interest rather than reading level. It is critical, however, that students take parts in which they can be successful.

Poetry is also perfect for reading performance. After completing a unit on poetry, one fifth-grade class decided to perform their favorite humorous poems by Jack Prelutsky and Shel Silverstein. The teacher divided the 25 students into groups of 5, each responsible for presenting several poems. Students had 3 days (approximately 15 minutes each day) to prepare for the performance. Each group presented their poems to the laughter and applause of the rest of the class. This experience and the class's response was especially gratifying for the struggling readers, who were able to read smoothly because they had sufficient practice and teacher guidance. Average and high-achieving readers also benefit from fluency practice and the opportunity to make personal decisions about how a character might be portrayed or a poem interpreted. Some of the most confident and accurate readers in this class tended to read too quickly, with little expression or attention to punctuation. Practicing to perform gave these students a chance to refine their oral reading and emphasize the importance of phrasing and expression.

Preparing for performances. For successful performances, it is important that students consider the audience in choosing what text to perform and practice. Ample rehearsal time makes the difference for struggling readers in any kind of performance, as they can decide when they are ready to perform. Some struggling readers or reserved students may not want to perform in front of a group, but most lose their fear after having opportunities to practice a script with a teacher, tutor, or friends in a supportive atmosphere. Each success leads to increased self-confidence and to motivation to repeat the success. Teachers and others who have successfully used Readers Theatre and other performance approaches in both elementary and middle school stress the importance of having a regular sequence of activities leading to the performance (Ivey, 1999; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999). The sequence should include choosing texts (teacher and students jointly), practicing in small groups and at home, and teacher feedback and support during small group practice. The students can plan, practice, and perform new texts as often as every week.

It is also important to remember that students and teachers will need time to plan and establish routines and appropriate behavior. It may take several weeks of explaining, role modeling, and guided practice before such activities run smoothly. However, when students have regular opportunities to prepare and perform in small groups, managing Readers Theatre can work very smoothly. Students learn what is needed to prepare for a successful performance and are motivated to work and practice together productively. This focused activity frees the teacher to move around from group to group, listening and offering feedback as students practice.

Choosing and writing texts for performance. There are many books and Web sites devoted to Readers Theatre. Many teachers start with these resources; however, most soon find that they need to supplement what is available by writing their own scripts. Texts chosen for performance should not be above readers' instructional levels. They should have straightforward plots with characters talking through dilemmas (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker). It is also helpful to use books from a series or by the same author to capitalize on familiar plot structures, language, and characters. Many scripts practically write themselves. In picture-book versions of folk and fairy tales, for example, dialogue is turned into speaking parts and description becomes narration. Examples of books with simple forms of dialogue are Galdone's *The Little Red Hen* (1979) and Zemach's *The Judge* (1978). Various cultural versions of fairy tales can provide more challenging dialogue for scripts, such as *Smoky Mountain Rose: An Appalachian Cinderella* (Schroeder, 1997) or *Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella* (San Souci, 1998).

Speeches and poetry provide performance-ready formats in which to focus on fluency. Both lend themselves to rhythmic choral reading as well as to independent and group performance. Expose students to models of gifted speakers (e.g., Maya Angelou) through audiotope recordings, television, and movies. Ask students to discuss how a speaker conveys meaning and inspiration through carefully chosen words and prosodic language and how an effective speaker can influence emotions. Encourage students to exaggerate expression and emotion as they perform poetry or mock speeches for the class.

The booklist in the Sidebar includes a selection of resources that are performance ready as well as a books and poetry related to content area topics. These materials can be scripted for performance and are excellent for improving fluency and comprehension. As you gain more confidence in writing scripts, you may choose to adapt less straightforward books for performance, condensing the narration and inserting appropriate dialogue. With initial support from the teacher,

students can and should write their own scripts, song lyrics, raps, and poetry for performance. For example, favorite scenes from novels can be turned into scripts and performed as book advertisements. Documentary novels, such as *Regarding the Fountain* (Klise, 1998), contain mock phone conversations, dialogue, memos, letters, and newspaper articles, and can be adapted for Readers Theatre.

Buddy reading. This is another type of meaningful reading performance, in which students practice reading a book to a younger child. This practice encourages even the most reticent students to read out loud, because young students are usually nonthreatening. Reading to a younger child also opens up more possibilities for choice in literature, allowing older learners to read easy books designed for young children without losing face. This is an especially important time for struggling readers in the upper elementary grades, who have an opportunity to read a practiced text with a supportive audience and to experience the role of expert in helping a younger buddy. It is critical for students to choose books that they can easily read and that are appropriate and interesting for their younger buddies. It is also essential that the older students prepare carefully and that they are paired with students with significantly less advanced reading skills. Struggling readers can be embarrassed by not having enough preparation or by having a younger buddy correct their reading.

Sharing favorite books with peers is also appealing, especially to less successful or reluctant readers whose prior experiences with public reading may have consisted mainly of whole-class, unrehearsed oral reading of too difficult texts. When struggling readers have a chance to choose the books, short stories, or poems they will share and to rehearse before they read aloud, they can feel like competent, valued members of their classroom literacy communities. A related activity is to make a class library of books on audiotape by having students choose books, practice them, and then record them. To prepare a tape that is polished enough to be placed in the classroom library, students will naturally want to practice, edit, and reread until they have a "perfect" final copy.

Moving from reading fluency practice to silent, independent reading

The ease, speed, and understanding gained during meaningful, guided oral fluency instruction and practice helps to develop students' ability to read silently for meaning, a major aim of reading instruction. Teachers must make a commitment to provide regular classroom time for students to read independently. This is not just an add-on to the reading curriculum to promote interest in reading, but should be daily instructional time for students to practice reading with teacher coaching, modeling, and explicit instruction. It is also a time for teachers to assess students in all aspects of reading, modify instruction and texts accordingly, and keep records of students' progress.

Using free-choice reading time with feedback to provide independent reading practice. One common classroom practice that promotes independent reading is sustained, free-choice reading (Manning & Manning, 1984; Sadoski, 1984), in which students read texts of their choice for a given time. This practice is often called DEAR (drop everything and read) or SSR (sustained silent reading). While some educators recommend that teachers also read during this time, leaving students to read independently without guidance, we suggest that teachers use this time to assess and provide appropriate instruction, as they would during guided reading fluency practice (Manning & Manning, 1984; National Reading Panel, 2000). Other suggestions for an effective and engaging free-choice reading time include the following: (a) Provide a wide variety of reading materials based on students' interests and comfort levels, (b) give students informal time to share their books with peers, (c) introduce interesting books to students and share enthusiasm about books they are reading, (d) provide time every day for reading (20 to 45 minutes), and (e) give students choices of purposeful response activities rather than busywork (Palmer, Codling, & Gambrell, 1994).

Recently, we interviewed Susan, a third-grade teacher who uses free-choice reading in her classroom. She explained that her free-choice reading time did not happen overnight--"We began with a 10-minute reading time and gradually increased the time to 35 minutes." After assessing her students' reading levels and interests, the librarian helped her gather appropriate materials to add to her growing classroom library. While students are reading, Susan provides guidance and instructive feedback in a variety of forms, depending on the kinds of support students need. She explained,

I know how important it is for students to experience success, especially at the beginning of the year. In addition to interesting grade-level and more difficult texts, I gathered many fun, easy books that everyone could read, and also high-interest books in every genre possible, including old favorites that I knew my students had read in second grade. At first, I helped them to choose their books and then taught them how to choose manageable books themselves. Everyone is reading at their level and improving their skill and love of reading every day. At the end of each free-choice reading time, I give students a few minutes to share the books they are reading with their friends, and I make a point of gathering and introducing books that I think they will like. They often choose to read

the books that they have heard about from their friends or from me.

For the greatest benefits to fluency and independent reading development, students should read interesting and manageable texts every day, ideally at their independent or easy reading level. Students should be able to read at least 95% of the words correctly and be able to understand the text without difficulty. Although these criteria may sound simple, less skilled readers often do not have access to interesting reading materials that they can read with reasonable accuracy and understanding (Lipson & Lang, 1991). Thus, rather than improving their fluency, sustained reading can be a frustrating experience that can lead to anxiety and avoidance of reading.

Using series books to increase students' comfort level. For older students, reading books in a series or on the same theme or topic provides experiences and benefits that are similar to those of repeated reading of the same text. Series books give readers a sense of mastery over the conventions of reading. With characters, language, and content that grow more familiar with each book read, "even a reader inexperienced in an absolute sense has the opportunity to behave like an experienced reader" (Mackey, 1990, p. 484). Thus, series books have great potential for improving attitudes toward reading as well as for increasing voluntary reading, engagement, and fluency. Series books also are an excellent vehicle for helping students to move toward reading longer books for sustained periods. Some popular series for students just starting to read chapter books include Marshall's *Fox* and Rylant's *Henry and Mudge*. (See Sidebar for sample titles.) Slightly more complex series are Sachar's *Marvin Redpost* and Park's *Junie B. Jones*. For students who have made the transition to longer books, series such as Hest's books on the young writer *Katie Roberts*, Danziger's *Amber Brown*, Scieska's *Time Warp Trio*, and Applegate's science fiction *Animorphs* allow repeated practice in books with similar plot structures and the same characters.

With the recent proliferation of series books on a multitude of topics and difficulty levels, even reluctant readers can usually find a series that they would be willing and able to read (Worthy, 1996). Matt Christopher writes books about sports in a variety of genres, and there are several series about animals and other high-interest content topics available. Many series books have sophisticated plots, vocabulary, and characterization, and usually lead students to even more complex materials (Dorrell & Carroll, 1981). Further, many contemporary children's classics, such as Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1998), Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), and Voigt's *Homecoming* (1983), are each part of a series.

Using nonfiction and thematic reading to support fluency in the content areas. According to the National Research Council (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), "Adequate progress in learning to read English (or any alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency in different texts" (p. 233). Nonfiction trade books can be excellent sources for reading, particularly since illustrations add to both engagement and comprehension. Reading widely in thematic materials or a text set collection is a good strategy for improving both fluency and independent reading comprehension in the content areas. Providing books on diverse topics at varied reading levels offers many of the same benefits as series reading, and it also prepares students for reading content textbooks. For example, the *Eyewitness Junior* series, *Amazing Bats* (Greenaway, 1991) has fascinating facts about bats in short captions, each illustrated with a vivid photograph. On the same subject, the easy-to-read format of Earle's *Zippering, Zapping, Zooming Bats* (1995) includes different types of reading, such as instructions for how to make a bat house and the useful "bat facts" at the end. As with fiction, it is important to remember to have informational books available that are easy for all students to read.

Like series books, thematic materials provide repeated exposure to challenging vocabulary, sophisticated concepts, and important details related to the topic under study in a wide variety of formats. A text set on sports, for example, might include biographies of past and current sports figures, how-to-play books, jokes, novels, short stories, poetry, picture books, student-written stories and articles, and current news sources (e.g., the Web, magazines, newspapers, game schedules). Combining a text set with approaches such as Readers Theatre provides students with opportunities to examine critically and interpret various types of content material.

Making fluency a focus benefits everyone

Oral reading fluency is an essential aspect of mature reading. However, fluency instruction has not traditionally played a major role in classrooms. Students who developed fluency usually did so on their own. Struggling readers often suffered the burden of reading frustration-level materials out loud with little support. Fortunately, there are many approaches to guided fluency development that are meaningful and engaging. Teacher read-alouds provide models of fluent reading, and explicit instruction shows students how to develop their own fluency. Performance activities such as Readers Theatre and reading to other students provide real reasons for student rehearsal with a focus on accurate reading as well as understanding and interpretation of text. High-interest series books and other meaningful texts motivate students to practice reading on their own. When teachers make fluency a major classroom focus and when instruction and materials are engaging, students can accomplish the major goal of reading instruction--reading independently for learning and enjoyment.

Performance-ready and easy-to-script resources for Readers Theatre

Poetry

Adoff, Arnold. (1995). *Street music: City poems*. New York: HarperCollins.

Bruchac, Joseph, & London, Jonathan. (1992). *Thirteen moons on turtle's back: A Native American year of moons*. New York: Lawrence Hill.

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SPEED DOES MATTER IN READING

By Timothy V. Rasinski

Reading rate can be a tool for assessing students' performance. Authentic instructional activities can then be woven into the reading program.

As a director of a university diagnostic reading clinic, I see children of all ages who, for one reason or another, are making poor progress in learning to read. Our job in the reading clinic is to determine the nature and source of the child's reading problem and suggest (and implement) instructional interventions for helping the child improve. Often the children we see in our clinic demonstrate remarkable strengths. Many have excellent vocabularies; they know the meanings of many words. Others manage to read with few errors in word recognition. Still others often demonstrate high levels of comprehension, even when their oral reading of a passage is marked by a large number of uncorrected word recognition errors. One of the most common manifestations of reading problems in the children we see, however, is slow, disfluent, or what we have come to call inefficient reading. Even when these children have adequate comprehension of a passage, their reading is often characterized by slow, labored, inexpressive, and unenthusiastic rendering of a passage.

Wondering if this manifestation of slow reading among struggling readers is present in readers other than those seen in our reading clinic, my colleague Nancy Padak and I examined all the children in Grades 2 through 5 referred for Title I reading services by their teachers in the Akron, Ohio public schools--over 600 students (Rasinski & Padak, 1998). We asked these children to read a passage at their assigned grade level and one below their grade placement using standard informal reading inventory procedures. What we found surprised us.

The informal reading inventory criteria showed that students' comprehension and word recognition were, on average, at their frustration level--but they were near the threshold for instructional-level reading. In other words, comprehension and word recognition were poor, but it wouldn't take much improvement to move their performance to an instructional level. Reading rate, however, was a different story. When reading passages at their grade level, these students, who their teachers identified as struggling readers, read at a rate that was approximately 60% of their instructional level reading rate; for a passage below their grade level the rate was 50% (Rasinski, 1999). Clearly reading rate, or speed, was a significant factor in classroom teachers' perceptions of their students' proficiency or lack of proficiency in reading.

Excessively slow, disfluent reading leads to less overall reading

It is interesting and, to me, somewhat ironic that slow and labored reading rate may be a reason teachers see fit to recommend certain of their students for supplementary reading services such as Title I. Often when I speak with teachers about reading fluency I mention that reading rate may be an indicator of fluent or disfluent reading. This frequently results in concern expressed by some in the audience that reading rate or reading speed should not be considered a significant factor in reading. This concern is often expressed in a comment like

this: "As long as students understand what they read, as long as they are making meaning out of the text, reading rate should not matter." While I certainly and absolutely agree that understanding what is read is the end game for reading, reading rate, or speed, cannot be ignored either as an indicator of reading fluency or, more precisely, as evidence of excessively slow processing of text. The simple fact that slow reading requires readers to invest considerably greater amounts of time in the reading task than classmates who are reading at a rate appropriate for their grade level should be a major cause for concern for all teachers.

Most of us would agree that reading progress is determined to a large extent by the amount of reading one does (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Postlethwaite & Ross, 1992). Slow readers, however, by definition, read fewer words per given amount of time than readers who read at more normal rates. Thus, just to keep up with their classmates in the amount of reading done, these slower readers have to invest considerably more time and energy in their reading.

Indeed, data from the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Pinnell et al., 1995) demonstrate a relationship between reading rate and fluency and self-selected reading in and out of school. The most fluent readers tended to be self-motivated, while less fluent readers were less likely to read in class or out of school. While the causal nature of this relationship has not been empirically established, it seems reasonable to assume that fluency in reading leads to greater reading and greater reading leads to gains in fluency--fluency and reading volume are cause and consequence of one another. (See Stanovich, 1985, for a more complete description of this phenomenon he termed the Matthew effect.)

Excessively slow, disfluent reading is associated with poor comprehension

Moreover, for most children, slow reading is associated with poor comprehension and poor overall reading performance. Research dating back over 60 years suggests that faster readers tend to have better comprehension over what is read and tend to be, overall, more proficient readers (Carver, 1990, Pinnell et al., 1995). The 1992 NAEP study found that 15% of all fourth graders (one out of seven) read "no faster than 74 words per minute...a pace at which it would be difficult to keep track of ideas as they are developing within the sentence and across the page" (Pinnell et al., 1995, p. 42). Indeed, the same 1992 NAEP study found that holistic ratings of reading fluency as well as fourth graders' reading rates were associated with overall reading proficiency (Pinnell et al., 1995; White, 1995). Slow, disfluent reading, then, is linked with poor comprehension. This leads to students reading less, which in turn results in their making slower progress in reading than students who read at a more normal rate for their age or grade placement.

Excessively slow reading leads to reading frustration

Even at the classroom instruction level, slow reading has negative consequences. Imagine yourself as a fifth-grade student who is assigned to read a 12-page chapter in a social studies book in school. Imagine also that you are a disfluent or inefficient reader. You read at 58 words per minute (the average reading rate when reading grade level material of fifth graders referred for Title I support, Rasinski

& Padak, 1998), or about half the rate of your classmates. You begin reading as best you can. Like most students, you are well aware of what is happening around you. You are about halfway through the passage, and you notice that many of your classmates have finished reading--they are done and you still have six pages to read. What do you do? Do you pretend to have completed the assignment even though you haven't read or comprehended the entire passage? Or, do you continue reading knowing that by doing so you will be broadcasting your lack of reading proficiency and making your classmates wait on you? Neither solution is very palatable, yet the problem is all too common.

Even if an assignment were made for home reading, the 60-minute reading assignment for most students would become 2 hours of reading for you. Checking out of the reading club may be just around the corner. You may become a 9-year-old (one out of eight as reported by the NAEP) who claims never or hardly ever to read for fun. And if you don't read, chances are your progress in reading will continue to decelerate. Clearly, excessively slow and disfluent reading is an indicator of concern.

Helping slow readers

How do we help slow readers? Does slow inefficient reading require putting students into some sort of special regimen or treatment for increasing reading rate? Absolutely not. For most readers, a slow reading rate, one that lacks flow or fluency, suggests that the student is an inefficient reader. Although the student may have some success in decoding words, it is far from a smooth, automatic, and efficient process--the kind that requires little investment of attention or cognitive energy. The slow reader has to devote so much time and attention to decoding that overall reading pace is significantly reduced; moreover, cognitive resources that could have been used for comprehension must be reallocated to word recognition (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). As a result, comprehension suffers. Slow, disfluent reading may also be associated with a lack of sensitivity to meaningful phrasing and syntax (how words are ordered and organized in sentences within a passage) that also helps the reader construct the meaning of text (Schreiber, 1980).

Improving students' word recognition efficiency and helping readers develop greater sensitivity to the syntactic nature of the text will result in more efficient reading and improved reading rate or fluency. But again, this does not have to be achieved through isolated skills practice or boring drills. Reading rate, efficiency, or fluency can be developed through instructional activities such as repeated readings, especially authentic ways, such as practicing poetry or scripts for later performance, and supported reading when it is done in activities where the reader reads an authentic text but is supported by a more fluent partner.

One key to nurturing fluent reading is finding the appropriate text for the reader to read. Texts that are too difficult, overly dense with unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts, can make any otherwise fluent reader disfluent (if you don't believe this, try reading aloud an unfamiliar legal document or a selection from a textbook on nuclear physics). Thus, it is important that we find texts that are well within the reader's independent-instructional range in order to promote fluency. Short, highly predictable selections that are meant

to be read aloud and with expression, such as rhyming poetry, are ideal for reading fluency instruction.

Poetry and reading fluency are an excellent match in nearly any classroom and for all students. Integrating poetry into the reading curriculum is a great way to promote fluent reading through repeated reading of readable and intriguing texts. However, despite the wonderful potential of poetry to explore language, it is one of the most often neglected components of the language arts curriculum (Denman, 1988; Perfect, 1999). Turning poetry into a performance, which it is meant to be (Graves, 1992; Perfect, 1999), and turning away from too much critical analysis, can give poetry its rightful place in the reading-language arts curriculum. Moreover, when poetry performance is fostered in the classroom, reading fluency is also nurtured as students attempt to make their oral interpretations just right--and this means repeated readings, but in a very natural and purposeful way.

In some classrooms I have visited, teachers simply select a day for a poetry party. Several days prior to the event, students select a poem to learn from one of the poetry books and anthologies in the teacher's personal collection or from a library, or they compose their own poem. Over the next several days students practice reading their poems, usually from a variety of perspectives, in preparation for the poetry party.

When the poetry party day finally arrives, the overhead lights in the classroom are dimmed, a lamp on the teacher's desk is turned on, hot apple cider and popcorn are served, and students take turns performing their poems for their classmates and other visitors. Students' expressive and interpretive readings of their poems are responded to with warm applause (or, harkening back to a previous generation, with the snapping of fingers). I'll never forget the cold, snowy day in January when a fourth grader gave a heartfelt rendition of *The Cremation of Sam McGee* (Service, 1907/1986). I can still feel the shivers it sent down my spine.

Readers Theatre is another very natural and authentic way to promote repeated readings. Readers Theatre does not rely on costumes, movement, props, or scenery to express meaning--just the performers and their voices as they face their audience with script in hand. For students to perform a Readers Theatre script in a meaningful and engaging manner, they need to practice the script beforehand. Students love to perform for an audience when they are given sufficient opportunities to rehearse the script. In a 10-week implementation of Readers Theatre in which small groups of second-grade students were introduced to, practiced, and performed a new script each week, students made significant gains in reading rate and overall reading achievement as measured by an informal reading inventory (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999). Through the repeated readings inherent in preparation for Readers Theatre, students made an average rate gain of 17 words per minute, about the gain that could be expected in an entire year (Rasinski, 1999), while students engaged in more traditional reading activities made less than half the gain the Readers Theatre students experienced. In addition to its application in classroom settings, Rinehart (1999) found that Readers Theatre was a particularly effective and motivating approach for students experiencing reading difficulties.

Paired reading (Topping, 1987), echo reading, choral reading, and reading with talking books are ways to provide support for less fluent readers. Topping (1987), for example, found that paired reading could significantly accelerate students' reading fluency and overall proficiency. In our university reading clinic we ask parents of struggling readers to engage in a form of paired reading with their children for 10 to 15 minutes each evening. In our version of paired reading, parents read a brief poem or passage to their children. This is followed by the parent and child reading the text together several times. Finally, the child reads the text to the parent; the parent responds to the child's reading with enthusiastic and authentic praise for a job well done. We have found that children who engage in this form of paired reading make significant gains (in as little as 5 weeks) over children who receive clinical tutoring without the parental paired reading support (Rasinski, 1995). Similar types of paired and supported reading done in the classroom with less fluent readers have been found to result in improvements in reading rate and overall reading achievement (Rasinski, Padak, Linek, & Sturtevant, 1994).

Buddy reading is another excellent example of how teachers can create complex instructional scenarios that are engaging, authentic, and lead to gains in fluency. Let's look at a third grader who is having trouble reading. We know that repeated readings lead to fluency gains (Samuels, 1979). We also know that supported reading in the form of paired reading will also lead to gains in fluency, word recognition, and comprehension (Topping, 1987). This child's third-grade teacher, cognizant of his struggle with fluency, decides, with the child's permission, to pair this third grader with a second grader who is also having difficulty in reading. The third grader will meet with the second grader twice a week and read with her a passage from one of the second grader's textbooks for about 20 minutes. In anticipation of each meeting, the third grader needs to practice the assigned passage (which will be somewhat easier for the third grader to read because it is at a difficulty level appropriate for the second grader) so that he can read it with accuracy and expression with his partner. This may require two or three or more readings of the passage. Yet the third grader does so enthusiastically, for he has a real reason to practice.

When the partners read, first the third grader reads the passage to his partner, then they read it together once or twice, and then, if time allows, the second grader reads it while the partner follows along and provides support and encouragement. The practice is natural and the outcome is clear. Through repeated readings of somewhat easier texts the third grader makes significant strides in his reading fluency and overall reading. The second grader, with the additional modeled and paired reading support, makes significant gains in her reading as well.

The opportunities to create authentic and engaging reading instruction that meets the needs of all readers, but especially inefficient and disfluent readers, are enormous. Creative and informed teachers have been designing reading instruction that meets the needs of their students for years. We need to empower all teachers to do the same. Teachers need to be aware of children's needs and plan accordingly with instruction that meets those needs. Slow, disfluent reading is one indication of a problem for a significant number of young readers.

The goal in fluency instruction is not fast reading, although that

often happens to be a byproduct of the instruction, but fluent and meaning-filled reading. To this end I have found that reading to students is a wonderful way to model the connection between fluent reading and meaningful reading. Often I will read to students in as meaningful and expressive a voice as possible. Then, after I have read the selection and discussed its meaning with students, I will draw their attention to my reading of the passage. I will ask them to remember how I read the passage and how my expressiveness affected their understanding. "What did that long pause in my reading make you think? What happened when I read this part in a soft voice? How did my reading this section fast and loud affect how you understood this part of the story? And when I read these words very slow and deliberately, what did that do for you?" Sometimes I will read a poem or text from various points of view: as if I am angry, as if I am calm, or as if I am nervous. Then I will discuss with students how the expression I embedded in the words helped to communicate to the listener my own point of view. This sort of reading and discussion helps students develop a metacognitive understanding that the meaning of a passage is not carried only in the words, but also in the way the words are presented to the reader. It also provides a model for students' own meaningful, expressive, and contextualized reading, whether orally to an audience or silently with that inner voice that is heard only by the reader.

Reading to students and discussing the nature of the reading allows us to focus on the flexible attitude readers need to bring to the reading act. Fluent and understandable reading, not fast reading, is the goal of our instruction. Fluent reading is often quick paced, but not always. Sometimes, especially with difficult, technical, expository, or unfamiliar content texts, readers need to slow down and process texts more deliberately. Reading these more challenging passages to students and discussing their understanding helps students realize that a truly fluent reader is one who is able to adjust his or her reading rate according to the challenge posed by the text and the information the reader needs to get from the text.

Do not ignore reading rate

I do not wish to take anything away from comprehension as the desired and ultimate result of reading and reading instruction. Rather, the point I am hoping to make is that we need to take the notion of slow, inefficient, disfluent reading seriously. Even with adequate comprehension, slow and labored reading will turn any school or recreational reading assignment into a marathon of frustration for nearly any student.

A slow reading rate may be symptomatic of inefficient word recognition or lack of sensitivity to the phrase--the natural unit of meaning in reading. But these problems can be addressed through authentic and engaging instructional activities and routines that can be woven seamlessly into the regular reading curriculum and that are appropriate for all students, not just those identified as disfluent. As reading teachers, diagnosticians, and specialists, we need to be aware of the importance of reading rate as a diagnostic indicator and to use reading rate as one of many tools for assessing students' overall reading performance. To ignore reading rate when assessing children's reading and designing appropriate instruction may do a major disservice to many readers who struggle with reading.

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Extra letters
Letters in wrong order
Cover list word and rewrite correct spelling

Figure 8.7 Sample Spelling self-monitoring form

When Maria was in sixth grade, she still read very slowly. Although she pronounced most words correctly, she read with little expression. She complained that because she read so slowly, she could not understand what she was reading. She usually had to read materials several times in order to comprehend them. Students like Maria, Ryan, and Ben require more exposures and more practice to recognize individual

words easily and automatically. Even into middle school, these students often devote an inordinate amount of energy to word identification.

Determining a Student's Reading Rate

A student's reading rate may be calculated by dividing the number of words read correctly by the total amount of reading time. You may count out 100 words in a passage and then time the student as he or she reads the passage. Maria was given a passage to read with 100 words. She read 92 words correctly in 1.5 minutes, or 61 words per minute (wpm). Table 8. 1, adapted from information presented in Carver (1990), presents approximate reading rates for students in Grades 2-12. Analysis of this table reveals that Maria is reading at a slower rate than many of her peers.

Adjusting Reading Rate

Most people have a constant rate when reading. This rate is the fastest pace at which a person can understand complete thoughts in successive sentences of relatively easy material. As long as the material is relatively easy to read, a person's rate stays constant. For different types of tasks, however, readers often alter their rate. Students with slow reading rates are often not aware that good readers adjust their rate depending on the purpose of reading. Making these types of adjustments is particularly important for studying or completing assigned readings because a student with poor reading skills otherwise struggles to complete lengthy reading assignments.

**Table 8.1. Average rates for reading with understanding
for students in Grades 2-12**

**Grade equivalent
Standard words per minute**

2.5
3.5
4.5
5.5
6.5
7.5
8.5
9.5
10.5
11.5
12.5
121
135
149
163
177
191
205
219
233
247
261

Source: Carver (1990).

A standard word is six letter spaces including punctuation and spacing.

Carver (1990) used the analogy of adjusting reading speed to the shifting of gears in a car. First and second gears are the slowest, most powerful gears. First gear is used to memorize materials. Second gear is used to learn material. Third gear is the typical reading rate. The fourth gear, skimming, and the fifth gear, scanning, are the fastest but least powerful gears. These gears are useful when you are trying to locate a specific piece of information or trying to get the general sense of a passage without reading every word.

As an adult reader, consider the ways that you monitor your reading pace and shift gears depending on your goals. If you are trying to memorize material for a test, your pace is slow and reflective, characterized by stopping and reviewing as you progress. If you are reading a novel for pleasure, your pace is steady and fluent. If you are searching for information in a catalog, your pace is rapid. As a skilled reader, you know how to adjust the gears of your reading on the basis of your purpose.

Some children have not learned how to adjust their reading rates. They attempt to read information in an encyclopedia at the same pace that they read a novel. To help develop increased reading speed, encourage students to adjust their rate depending on the purpose of reading. Provide practice in skimming through a chapter to get a sense of the information and then how to study that chapter for the weekly test. Demonstrate to students how you change your rate for different types of reading materials.

Activities for Increasing Reading Rate

Students who would benefit from methods to increase reading speed are often described by their teachers as slow, laborious readers who read word-by-word with limited expression. These types of techniques are most useful with students who have acquired some proficiency in decoding skill but whose level of decoding skill is lower than their oral language abilities. Methods for increasing reading rate have several common features: 1) students listen to text as they follow along with the book, 2) students follow the print using their fingers as guides, and 3) reading materials are used that students would be unable to read independently. Chard and Osborn (1999a) suggested that a beginning reading program should provide opportunities for partner reading, practice reading difficult words prior to reading the text, timings for accuracy and rate, opportunities to hear books read, and opportunities to read to others. The following methods are easy to use.

Speed Drills For reading lists of words with a speed drill and a 1-minute timing, Fischer (1999) suggested using the following general guidelines: 30 correct wpm for first- and second-grade children; 40 correct wpm for third- grade children; 60 correct wpm for mid-third-grade; and 80 wpm for students in fourth grade and higher. To conduct a speed drill, have the student read a list of words for 1 minute as you record the number of errors. You may use a high-frequency word list or the sample speed drills provided in Fischer's program *Concept Phonics* (see Additional Resources). These drills are designed to develop automatic sight recognition of words.

Rapid Word Recognition Chart A way to improve speed of recognition for words with an irregular element is the use of a rapid word recognition chart (Carreker, 1999). The chart is similar to a rapid serial-naming task. It is a matrix that contains five rows of six exception words (e.g., *who* and *said*), with each row containing the same six words in a different order. After a brief review of the words, students are timed for 1 minute as they read the words in the squares aloud. Students can then count and record the number of words read correctly. This type of procedure can help students like Ben who struggle to memorize words with irregular orthographic patterns.

Great Leaps Reading Program [Great Leaps Reading Program](#) (Campbell, 1996) was designed to help students to build reading speed. One-minute timings employ three stimuli: phonics, sight phrases, and reading short stories. Before beginning this program, teachers assess the students' present reading level. Instruction begins at the level within the program at which reading speed is slow and the student makes several errors. After the recording, the teacher reviews the errors with the student and discusses strategies that they can use to improve performance. Performance is charted on graphs so that both students and teachers can keep track of progress. The program takes approximately 10 minutes per day. A K-2 version of this program provides a phonological awareness instruction component (Mercer &

Campbell, 1998). Results from one study indicate that daily application of this program with middle school students with LID contributes to growth in reading and an improvement in reading rate, (Mercer, Campbell, Miller, Mercer, & Lane, 2000).

Choral Reading or Neurological Impress Method The neurological impress method (Heckelman, 1969, 1986) is a method for choral or concert reading. In this method, you read aloud together with a student for 10- 15 minutes daily. To begin, select a high-interest book or a content-area textbook from the classroom. Sit next to the student and read aloud as you point to the words with your index finger. Read at a slightly faster pace than the student and encourage him or her to try and keep up with you. When necessary, remind the student to keep his or her eyes on the words. Successful decoding requires the reader to connect the flow of spoken language with the flow of text (Carreker, 1999). Reading aloud with students can help them to practice phrasing and intonation.

Repeated Readings The repeated readings technique is designed for children who read slowly despite adequate word recognition (Samuels, 1979). For this procedure, the child reads the same passage over and over again. To begin, select a passage that is 50-100 words long from a book that is slightly above the student's independent reading level. Have the student read the selection orally while you time the reading and count the number of words that are pronounced incorrectly. Record the reading time and the number of words pronounced incorrectly. If desired, set a realistic goal for speed and number of errors. Figure 8.8 presents a sample recording form to use for repeated readings. You may use two different color pencils for recording time and errors, or you may use a circle to indicate points on the line for time and an X or a square to indicate points on the line for errors.

Between timings, you may ask the student to look over the selection, reread it, and practice words that caused difficulty in the initial reading. When the student is ready, have him or her reread the same passage. Once again, time the reading, and record the time and number of errors. Have the student repeatedly practice reading the selection as you chart progress after each trial until a predetermined goal is reached or until the student is able to read the passage fluently with few mistakes. Research on repeated reading suggests that fluency can be improved as long as students are provided with specific instructions and procedures are used to monitor their progress (Mastropieri et al., 1999). An easy way to monitor student performance using this chart is to keep a log of the dated charts. To control for a similar readability level, select the passages to read from the same book. As performance improves, the time to perform the initial reading should decrease.

Repeated reading has also been used as a component of classwide peer tutoring (Mathes & Fuchs, 1993). In a study of this intervention, pairs of students in one group read continuously over a 10-minute period, whereas pairs of students in the other group read a passage together three times before going on to the next passage. Although both experimental conditions produced higher results than the typical reading instruction, no difference existed between the procedures, suggesting that the main benefit of the intervention is the student reading involvement and the increased time spent in reading (Mastropieri et al., 1999).

Repeated Readings	
Name	_____
Spelling self-analysis score	_____
Pretest score	_____
Posttest score	_____

Number of
seconds

100

90

80

70

60

50

40

30

20

10

10

Number of
errors in word recognition

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1



1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Figure 8.8. Sample repeated readings graph.

In a review of the effectiveness of repeated reading, Meyer and Felton (1999) concluded that the method of repeated readings improves reading speed for a wide variety of readers. They make the following recommendations for helping students to improve fluency: 1) have students engage in multiple readings (three to four times); 2) use instructional level text; 3) use decodable text with struggling readers; 4) provide short, frequent periods of fluency practice; and 5) provide concrete measures of progress. Base the amount of teacher guidance on each individual's characteristics. With students with poor reading skills, modeling and practicing of words between readings improve student performance and reduce frustration.

Previewing Previewing is a technique similar to repeated reading, involving preexposure to materials before they are formally read (Rose, 1984). For this type of procedure, a student can preview the material silently, or you may read the passage aloud as the student follows along, or the student may first listen to the recorded passage on tape. Rose and Sherry (1984) found that both silent previewing and teacher-directed previewing were more effective than no previewing. Maria found that, by hearing the passage before she was asked to read it, she made fewer errors and was more successful reading the text.

Taped Books Another way to help students practice reading is to use taped books. Have the student listen to the reading while he or she follows along with an unabridged copy of the book. Most public libraries provide a wide selection of recorded books for loan. When Maria was in fifth grade, she was interested in horses. Her mother would take her to the library, and they would check out books and the corresponding book tapes. Each evening, she would listen to classic stories about horses as she followed along with the text.

If a student has been identified as having LD or dyslexia, taped books are available from [Recordings for the Blind & Dyslexic \(RFB&D\)](#). This national, nonprofit organization provides textbooks for individuals who are unable to read standard print because of visual, physical, or perceptual disabilities. The extensive tape library has educational books that range from upper-elementary to postgraduate level. If a book is

unavailable, an individual may request that it be recorded, and, if it fits within the scope of the collection, the book will be recorded.

Unabridged audio books are also available for rent from either Books on Tape or Recorded Books. Selections include bestsellers, classics, history, biographies, and science fiction. Books may be rented for 1 month and then returned by mail. Prices vary according to the length of the books. Sources for obtaining books on tape are listed in Additional Resources.

Some commercial recordings, such as those obtained at the public library; go too fast for individuals with reading disabilities. In addition, because younger and struggling readers lose their place quite frequently, it is important to have a procedure for relocating the place at the top of each page. Many teachers prefer to make their own recordings of books so that they can select materials that are of high interest to students and control the rate of delivery.

[Carbo Method](#) Carbo (1989) developed procedures for recording books to achieve maximum gains in fluency. A brief description of how to record books using this method is described:

1. Decide which pages you will record on each cassette side.
2. Because every tape cassette has about 5-8 seconds of lead time, let the tape run for that amount of time before starting to record.
3. Speak into the microphone from a distance of approximately 6-8 inches.
4. Convey your interest in the book through your voice.
5. Begin by reading the story title, providing a brief introduction, pausing, and then telling the student which page to turn to. Pause long enough so that the reader has enough time to turn pages and look at pictures.
6. Tell the student when to turn the page. In order not to distract from the content, soften your voice slightly when stating a page number.
7. Read the story in logical phrases, slowly enough so that most students can follow along but not so slowly that they become bored.
8. End each tape with, "Please rewind the tape for the next listener. That ends this recording." This prevents students from continuing to listen to the blank tape.

As general guidelines, record 5-15 minutes at a typical pace for instructional level material and have the student listen to the tape once. For difficult material, record no more than 2 minutes at a slow pace with good expression and have the student listen to the passage two or three times. After listening, have the student read the passage aloud.

[Read Naturally](#) Another program designed to build fluency in students from mid-first through sixth grade is called *Read Naturally* (see Additional Resources). Instruction is individualized and involves three main steps: 1) reading along with an audiotape of a story that provides a model of fluent reading; 2) intensive, repeated practice to build speed and accuracy; and 3) monitoring and evaluating performance through graphing. To use the program, students are placed into an appropriate level on the basis of their oral reading fluency. The sequenced reading levels range from beginning reading to sixth-grade level with 24 stories available for each level. In addition, the lower level materials have been translated into Spanish.

Fluency methods are designed to increase rate and automaticity. They are particularly beneficial for students like Maria and Ben who have strong conceptual abilities but poor automaticity because of weaknesses within phonological or orthographic abilities. These repeated readings provide repeated exposures that facilitate word mastery and automaticity. They help a student move from Ehri's (1998) full alphabetic stage to the consolidated alphabetic stage, in which word learning is accomplished more easily.

