The LeafLIT

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FLOWERING WITH FLUENCY

by
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DEFINING FLUENCY

In the broadest sense of the term, **fluency means the ability to read phrases and words smoothly and quickly**. There are **three main components of reading fluency** that come into play: **accuracy, rate, and prosody**. **Accuracy** is the ability to decode words in text without error. The reader's ability to decode those words automatically is referred to as rate. **Rate** also includes "chunking" strategies and age-appropriate sight words. **Prosody**, then, is the use of phrasing and expression often used to convey meaning.

When discussing fluency, stressing reading rate alone can have disastrous results on reading comprehension. All three components of reading fluency must work together. When readers use appropriate volume, tone, phrasing, and other oral elements (or prosody), they are demonstrating evidence of constructing meaning. Reading rate develops as a function of efficient decoding skills, opportunities for successful practice, and learning to read with expression *(Rasinski, 2004)*.

ASSESSING FLUENCY

Successful fluency teaching depends largely on the teacher's ability to assess and determine the students' current fluency level of achievement and then monitor their progress. Fluency assessments should have the same criteria that most assessments contain.

First, it should be reliable and valid. The assessment should be consistent and should not vary due to imperfections in the assessment instrument. Since validity is an important factor, the assessment tool should also accurately measure the three key components: accuracy, rate, and prosody. Research has proven that fluency contributes to overall reading proficiency, so the assessments should correlate with other reading measures.

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ASSESSING FLUENCY
CONTINUED

Second, it should be easy for teachers to use. Assessments that are lengthy in nature take time away from instruction. Teachers may not use an assessment that takes a long time to administer. In addition, assessments that are difficult to use cause inaccurate results from varying administration of the same assessment. Thus, reliable, quick, and easy assessments allow for a correct gauge of fluency progress as well as maximum time for teaching.

The first two components of reading fluency are fairly quick and easy to assess. Curriculum-Based Measures of Oral Reading Fluency (CBM/ORF) offer a valid measure of oral reading rate. The reading assessments in DIBELS and AIMSWEB R-CBM are both examples of a Curriculum-Based Measure of Oral Reading Fluency.

In the CBM/ORF, students orally read a passage for one minute. Meanwhile, the teacher marks all uncorrected errors including mispronunciations and omissions. After the 60 second reading, the teacher calculates the total number of words read correctly. **The following specific steps may be used to measure the rate and accuracy of the reader.**

1. Find a passage(s) of approximately 250 words written at the student's grade placement.

2. Ask the student to read the passage for one minute. Emphasize that the text should be read aloud in a normal way, and not faster than normal.

3. Mark any uncorrected errors made by the student. Errors include mispronunciations, substitutions, reversals, omissions, or words pronounced by the examiner after a wait of 2-3 seconds without an attempt or response from the student. Mark the point in the text the student has come to after one minute of reading.

4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with two different passages (optional). If you choose to repeat the process, use the median or middle score for analysis.

5. Determine accuracy by dividing the number of words read correctly per minute (WCPM) by the total number of words read (WCPM + any uncorrected errors). This number will be a percentage. Target reading levels are listed in Table 1.

6. Determine the rate by calculating the total number of WCPM and comparing the student's performance against the performance level norms in Table 2.

ASSESSING FLUENCY
CONTINUED

Targeted Reading Levels

Table 1

Independent Level	95-100 %
Instructional Level	90- 94 %
Frustrational Level	< 90 %

- Rasinski, T. (2004)

Table 2

Grade	Fall (WCPM)	Winter (WCPM)	Spring (WCPM)
1		10-30	30-60
2	30-60	50-80	70-100
3	50-90	70-100	80-110
4	70-110	80-120	100-140
5	80-120	100-140	110-150

ASSESSING PROSODIC READING

    Assessing prosodic reading is a bit more difficult. Since prosody is more closely related to comprehension than accuracy or rate, it is an element of fluency that cannot be ignored. An expressive reading of text shows that the reader is trying to make meaning of the passage.

    Since expression or interpretation is difficult to quantify, the best way to assess prosody is through a rubric. Several rubrics have been developed to help the teacher determine a level of prosody. These rubrics are usually based on a scale where the range moves from well-phrased, expressive reading to monotone, word-for-word reading. Such a rubric is shown in Table 3.

ASSESSING PROSODIC READING RUBRIC

Table 3

Fluency Rubric: Evaluating Prosodic Reading

4 The reading rate sounds natural, as if the reader were speaking.
There is a natural rise and fall in pitch that indicates the reader is using punctuation, meaning, and language to interpret the story. There may be a few instances of problem-solving or reread-ing, but the reader returns quickly to rapid phrased-reading.

3 There is a mixture of longer phrased reading (3- 4 word phrases) and word-by–word reading.
The reader uses punctuation, language, and meaning with **some** variation in pitch. The reader slows down to word-by-word reading at points during the story and problem-solving and re-reading are evident.

2 Mostly word-by-word reading.
Attention to punctuation may be present, but this is not consistent. The reader rereads and slows down at problem-solving fairly often and does not consistently monitor for meaning. Pitch has **little** variation.

1 All word-by-word reading with pauses between words.
There is little evidence of "reading with punctuation". Problem-solving is very slow and little or no monitoring for meaning is present. The reader reads word-by-word with consistent, sus-tained pitch (**monotone**).

Adapted (2001) from materials from: Dominie Press, Fountas and Pinnell and NAEP
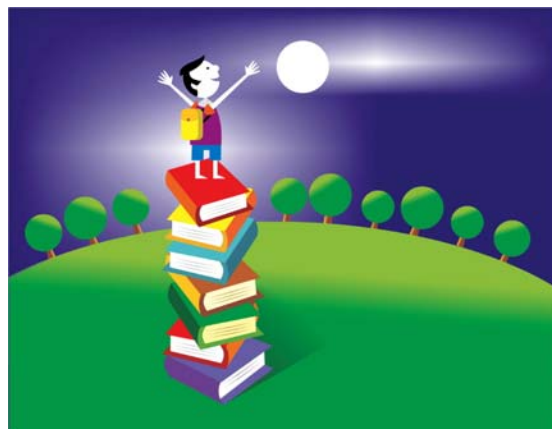
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EFFECTIVE FLUENCY INSTRUCTION

When it comes to teaching fluency, teachers just need to remember the MAP.

The acronym **MAP stands for model, assist, and practice**. *Modeling* fluent reading is best done by the teacher reading in meaningful and expressive ways. Children who are developing their reading fluency skills may be *assisted* by a more capable and fluent reader, often the teacher. Then the more reading the children do, the more automatic they become. This *practice* is done through repeated readings. So, essentially, teachers need to model fluent reading, assist students who are having difficulty and send them off to practice.

There are several strategies teachers use to teach and practice fluency. Some of the more popular include Reader's Theatre, Repeated Readings, and Phrased Reading. One that is not as popular but works well on the expressive component is Guess the Emotion.

Reader's Theatre

Reader's Theatre (RT) was originally developed as a way to effectively present literature in a dramatic form. In Reader's Theatre, there are no full sets, full costumes, or formal memorization. Students are encouraged to have their scripts on the "stage" so they may read directly from them. A Reader's Theatre performance creates images through character's reading and movements. It frees the performers from the limitations of a stage and lets their imaginations soar.

Two types of Reader's Theatre scripts can be used – previously made scripts or an adapted script possibly written by the students. Directions for adapting a script are listed below:

Reader's Theatre-How to Adapt a Script

1. Choose a story or section of a book that is between 3-5 minutes long and photocopy it.
2. Decide what characters and narrators are needed and assign a marker color to each.
3. Highlight all dialogue with the appropriate marker.
4. The text that is left is narration. Assign narration creatively by determining which character it pertains to and splitting it between the character and the character's narrator.
5. Add creative touches wherever possible.
6. You are now ready to assign parts and rehearse.

The Reader's Theatre format provides an opportunity for students to develop fluency through multiple readings of the text by using expressiveness, intonation, and inflection when rehearsing the text. This, in turn, will help the students comprehend what they are reading.

EFFECTIVE FLUENCY INSTRUCTION
CONTINUED

Phrased Reading

When delivering a short lesson, 10 to 15 minutes a day, on the phrased cued text strategy, remember to focus on either individual students or small groups who need assistance with comprehension and fluency. Content area teachers may also use this strategy to assist remedial students in need of fluency and comprehension assistance during classroom conferences or lab time.

The following steps are based on Tim Rasinski's work for Phrased Reading (Rasinski, 1994; Rasinski, 2003).

1. Make a copy of the text and prepare it with the phrase marks/slash marks and give each student a copy of the phrase-cued text.
2. Remind students of the importance of reading with prosody and phrasing, instead of reading word-by-word.
3. Explain the phrasing marks to students.
4. Read the text orally **to** the students.
5. Next, read the text orally **with** the students, emphasizing the phrases.
6. Have students read the text orally **with a partner**.
7. Discuss the students' reading of the text for the purpose of assessing their comprehension.
8. Discuss the content of the text.

On the following class session, provide students with a copy of the original text without the phrase marks and have students practice reading the text.

Language Arts or Social Studies Example

> **It all hit me at once: / my fears about Mother; / the fever; / Bush Hill; / watching Grandfather die; / being scared, / alone, / and hungry. // I cried. / I cried a river / and poor Eliza did her best to comfort me. / The kinder her words, / the harder I cried. //**
> **~Laurie Halse Anderson's *Fever 1793***

EFFECTIVE FLUENCY INSTRUCTION
CONTINUED

Repeated Reading

Repeated readings can be a motivational strategy that engages students in repeated readings of text. A Reading Progress Chart will help the students keep track of their growth in fluency. Engaging students in repeated readings of text "is particularly effective in fostering more fluent reading" for students "struggling to develop proficient reading strategies" (Allington, 2001).   For repeated readings, the following procedure may be used.

1. Select a brief passage or story of 50 to 200 words for the student to read out loud. This passage should be at an appropriate level of difficulty (90 – 94 %).
2. Ask the student to read the passage orally. Using a copy of the passage, note the student's miscues and keep track of the time it took the student to read the passage.
3. Ask the student to retell the passage or ask a question or two. Be sure that the student is not just word calling.
4. Record the time in seconds and the number of miscues. Note the Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM).
5. Encourage the student to practice rereading the passage independently for a day or two. The reading can be done both orally and silently. It can also be done at home.   The goal is to have the student practice the passage several times before you meet next.
6. Repeat the process of having the student read the passage to you. Remember to record the time in seconds and the number of miscues. A graph may be made that shows the growth the student has made. The number of miscues, words per minute or correct words per minute may be graphed.
7. Repeat the strategy with another passage.

To evaluate the student, look for a decrease in miscues or an increase in the speed or rate. A fluency rubric evaluating prosody may also be used in conjunction with the Repeated Reading.

EFFECTIVE FLUENCY INSTRUCTION
CONTINUED

Guess the Emotion

In Guess the Emotion, students are given short sentences to read. The students are required to read the sentence using a voice that conveys the feeling listed on their card. Their classmates then try to guess the emotion being expressed. It is a fun way for students to practice and develop aspects of prosody. The directions for the activity are listed below.

1. Make a set of sentence strips for each group of 5-7 students. These sentences may be popular sayings or dialogue from your latest novel. Some suggestions include: The queen said, "Let them eat cake." or "You are the nicest child in the whole world," said mother.
2. Make a set of emotion cards. "Confused", "surprised", "confident", and "bored" are just a few you may use.
3. Have students form small groups.
4. Place emotion cards and sentence strips face down in the middle of the groups.
5. One student from the group should draw a sentence strip and read it silently. S/he may then read it out loud for practice. Members of the group may help with any difficult words.
6. Next, the same student from the group draws an emotion card. This card is not shown to the rest of the group. The student rereads the sentence using the emotion listed on the card. (If the emotion does not fit the sentence, then the student may draw an additional card.)
7. Students in the group then guess which emotion the student is conveying.
8. When the emotion is guessed, then the next student in the group will continue by drawing a new sentence strip and emotion card.
9. A variation would be to have the students all read the same sentence strip but draw different emotion cards. This would allow the students to demonstrate how meaning might change when the emotion changes.

While all of these strategies are very effective for teaching fluency, we cannot forget the everyday things we can do in the classroom to promote fluent reading. Reading widely and often provides practice and promotes confidence in student reading. Opportunities to participate in meaningful oral reading activities allow students to model fluent reading. Listening to the teacher model effective, fluent reading not only increases students' vocabularies but also demonstrates the value of reading.

EFFECTIVE FLUENCY INSTRUCTION
RESOURCES

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