

FOR-PD's Reading Strategy of the Month



(Developed by Glass, C. & Zygouris-Coe, V., 2005)

Rationale:

What is fluency? Fluency is the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Harris and Hodges (in Samuels, 2002) define fluency as freedom from word identification problems that might hinder comprehension. Ensuring that students become fluent readers is one of the major goals of reading instruction (Kuhn, 2004).

Based on these definitions, fluency has four components: reading rate or speed, accuracy, appropriate expression, and comprehension (Johns & Berglund, 2002). Reading rate is the speed at which reading takes place. Reading rate is usually determined in words per minute (WPM) or words correct per minute (WCPM). Fluency also involves the student's ability to recognize words automatically with little effort and attention. At the fluent state, decoding is fast and easy, and students recognize words with ease. Dowhower (1989) describes the element of prosody as the ability to read in expressive rhythmic and melodic patterns. It is the ability to read text orally using appropriate pitch, stress, and juncture, and to project the natural intonation and phrasing of the spoken word upon the written text. Students must use syntactic knowledge when reading. All three of these components have a profound impact on comprehension. Readers who are able to identify words instantly have enough attention to focus on the text's meaning (Samuels, 2002). To ensure adequate comprehension, automatic word recognition must be developed. Students must develop automatic word recognition through extensive reading of connected text rather than through recognizing words in isolation (Kuhn, 2004).

Why is fluency important for secondary struggling readers? It is well established that many disabled readers have difficulty with fluency. For secondary students, though, the reading demands are increased. Reading has shifted from learning to read, to reading to learn. Students are expected to read text and draw meaning and understanding. If the student does not recognize words with automaticity, they spend incredible amounts of time decoding rather than making meaning from the text. Because the reading demands are high, students with poor reading fluency usually fall behind. Once students fall behind, their motivation to read also wanes. Students with poor reading fluency read less in a given amount of time, reducing the amount of material read overall, which has an impact on vocabulary and content learning. The goal of fluency instruction for secondary students is to help them become more fluent readers so that more emphasis can be placed on comprehending content.

What are repeated readings? Repeated readings are a research-based instructional intervention, shown to be effective in developing fluency. The repeated reading method emerged from the theory of automatic information processing in reading (Samuels, 1997). According to this theory, a fluent reader decodes text automatically, without attention, thus leaving attention free to be used for comprehension. During repeated readings, students read sections of text aloud repeatedly until the desired fluency is achieved. Curriculum-based measurement methods are used to collect daily data on reading rates. According to Samuels (1997), the procedure proved to be facilitating for slow and halting readers, increasing fluency rapidly and with apparent ease. Successive stories required fewer listenings to reach fluency. The procedure also increased confidence and motivation in students. Within months, students were far more willing and able to undertake reading new material on their own.

Research has shown:

- Repeated readings improve both fluency and comprehension (Samuels, 1997).
- Repeated readings increase word recognition (Johns & Berglund, 2002) and lead to decrease in word recognition errors (Samules, 1997).
- Repeated readings lead to faster processing of text (Dowhower, 1989).
- Repeated readings increase factual retention (Dowhower, 1989).
- Repeated readings help comprehension and encouraged deeper questioning and insights (Dowhower, 1989).
- Repeated readings help struggling readers break out of word-by-word reading to read with more meaningful phrasing (Dowhower in Raskinski, 2003).
- As a study strategy, repeated reading is equal to if not better than other more complicated strategies (Dowhower, 1989).
- Students read new selections at a faster pace than the initial speed on the previous reading selection (Samuels, 1997).
- The number of rereadings required reaching criterion-reading speed decreases as students continue the technique (Samuels, 1997).

- Repeated readings are an excellent motivational device (Samuels, 1997).

How to Use the Strategy:

Repeated reading is a technique in which students read and reread a text many times to improve reading fluency on indicators such as word recognition accuracy, reading speed, and oral reading expression (Samuels, 2002).

In order to prepare for repeated readings, teachers should set aside 15 – 30 minutes per day for repeated reading instruction. Passages selected for repeated reading should be between 50 and 500 words. Passages can come from many sources- basal readers, textbooks, trade books, poetry, newspapers, or student writing. The difficulty level of each passage must be determined. Methods for determining the difficulty level of a passage include word processing programs, the Fry method, and lexile level. It is important to remember that these measures are only estimates. The passage should fit the individual reader. Think about developing and organizing a collection of passages at a variety of levels to use as your students' skills improve (Rasinski, 2003).

Below are the procedures Rasinski (2003) suggests for implementing repeated readings.

Preparation:

1. Set aside 15-30 minutes per day for repeated reading instruction.
2. Choose reading passages between 50 and 500 words. These passages can come from a variety of sources: basal readers, textbooks, trade books, poetry anthologies, newspapers, or magazines.
3. Determine the difficulty level of the passages. Remember, these are only estimates. See how the passage fits the student. If it is on the difficult side, provide oral reading support in the initial repeated readings. If it's on the easy side, expect the students to achieve the criterion level rather quickly.

Procedure:

1. Sit next to the student in a comfortable, quiet location.
2. Choose a passage; make sure it is on or near the students' instructional reading level. Upon the first reading of the passage, the student should exhibit 85 to 95 percent word recognition accuracy.
3. The student should orally practice an appropriate passage until he has achieved the criterion-reading rate on the passage.

Target Criterion

Grade Level	Target Number of CWPM
Second half First Grade	60 CWPM
Second Grade	90 CWPM
Third Grade	100 CWPM
Fourth Grade	110 CWPM
Fifth Grade	120 CWPM
Sixth Grade or higher	140 CWPM

4. Once students have achieved the target criterion level, assign a new passage that is as difficult as or slightly more difficult than the passage they just practiced.
5. Keep a log of the passages students are working on daily and the dates on which they master them.
6. Track student progress by administering an oral reading probe on passages the students have not previously read.

Variations:

Since the repeated reading method was first developed, a number of variations have been introduced. One shortcoming of the repeated reading method is that it listening to students read and charting errors can take a great deal of teacher time. Chomsky (Samuels, 2002) suggested making audiotape recordings of students reading the passages. This would free the teacher during repeated reading time and allow them to listen to the students at another time. This method still requires time on the teacher's part and recording equipment.

Samuels (2002) suggests another variation on repeated readings that doesn't require recording speed and charting accuracy. He suggests the following sequence for daily repeated reading sessions. First, the teacher familiarizes the students with the

words and concepts in the passage. Then the teacher reads the new passage to the class while the students read the passage silently. After the teacher has read the passage to the students, the students are paired, preferably a more fluent reader a less fluent reader. One member takes the role of the student while the other member takes the role of the teacher. The "student's" role is to read the passage and the "teacher's" role is to listen to the oral reading while looking at the words in the text. After the passage is read the first time, the students reverse roles. In research on this method of repeated reading, Samuels (2002) found that the first few sessions require teacher guidance and help, but after that students become familiar with the method and are able to work with minimal help from the teacher. Each passage is read only four times. Research by O'Shea, Sindelar, and O'Shea (in Samuels, 2002) concluded that four readings appear to be optimal.

Radio reading is another variation of repeated reading. Radio reading provides an opportunity for students to model fluent reading (Johns & Berglund, 2002). Students read fluently for the purpose of performing or sharing a selected portion of text. Just as radio announcers do, students must read with expression at a comprehensible rate so that the listener can focus on the meaning of the passage. Radio reading has four components: (1) getting started, (2) communicating the message, (3) checking for understanding, and (4) clarifying an unclear message (Johns & Berglund, 2002). For radio reading, materials at the student's instructional level should be chosen. Explain and model the procedure for students, emphasizing that it is the reader's responsibility to communicate a message, much like a radio announcer. Students should be assigned segments of text to prepare for the next day. Students must be given opportunities to practice their selection either with another student or with a parent. On the day the teacher uses radio reading, students should review the following procedures:

- The reader reads the assigned passage aloud with meaning and expression.
- If the reader miscalls a word, the reader is to correct it and keep on reading, keeping the flow of the reading, and thus the meaning intact.
- Often the reader hesitates and can't quickly say the word, the reader may ask the teacher for help. The teacher should immediately supply the word.
- If the reader has not communicated the message of the passage clearly, then the reader is asked to reread the text.
- Additional students take turns reading their text segments for the listeners.
- Students can develop questions to ask the listener at the conclusion of their reading.

Paired Reading is a form of supported reading that involves two readers, one more able than the other. The two readers sit side by side with a chosen text that is generally more difficult than the independent reading level of the less able reader. The more able reader provides support and helps with word recognition and plays a major role in comprehension of the text through questioning and discussion after reading.

The Fluency-Oriented Oral Reading (FOOR) strategy uses several elements that have proved successful in earlier fluency studies (Kuhn, 2004). Modeling, repetition, positive feedback from instructors or peers, and opportunity for oral practice are included. The intervention occurs over a three-day cycle. On day 1, the teacher introduces the text and echo reads the text with students. Echo reading involves the teacher fluently reading the text while students reread, or echo, the same text. Depending on the length of the text, students can also chorally read part or all of the text along with the teacher. On Day 2, the students work in pairs and reread the text. On day 3, the students have the opportunity to participate in a final choral reading and perform a section of the text before the group if they so wish. Teachers can include additional connected text and use echo or choral reading.

Ideas for Assessment:

Measuring students' level of achievement in fluency and monitoring their progress is key to successful fluency instruction. Teachers need to gauge the effectiveness of their instruction. In order to do this, teachers must assess student fluency validly and efficiently. Assessment should align with current views of reading fluency and consist of assessment of accuracy, automaticity, and prosody.

Assessing Accuracy and Automaticity

Accuracy is determined by the percentage of words a reader can read correctly, it has been shown to be a valid measure of reading proficiency (Rasinski, 2004). The levels of accuracy in reading reflect various levels of word decoding accuracy.

Figure 1 - Levels of Performance for Word Decoding Accuracy

Independent Level	97% - 100%
Instructional Level	90% - 96%
Frustration Level	< 90%

Readers who score in the independent level are able to read the assessment text or other text of similar difficulty without assistance. Readers who score within the instructional level are able to read the assessment text or other text of similar difficulty with some assistance provided by the teacher or parent. Those readers who score at the frustration level find the assessment text or other texts of similar difficulty too challenging to read, even with assistance.

Reading rate provides a way of determining students' level of automaticity. The Curriculum-Based Measurement of Oral Reading Fluency (Rasinki, 2004) requires the reader to read grade-level text orally. The CBM/ORF takes only 60 seconds. The person administering the test marks the reader's uncorrected errors and then counts the total number of words read correctly. This assessment is quick and can be repeated at one sitting on different passages. If multiple passages are used, comparing the median score against performance norms is recommended. The CBM/ORF fluency assessment has been validated through a number of studies (Rasinki, 2004). It has also been found to have strong correlations with student's performance on standardized tests of reading achievement for students in all grade levels (Rasinki, 2004).

Figure 2- Reading Rate Proficiency

Grade	Fall (CWPM)	Winter (CWPM)	Spring (CWPM)
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
6	100-140	110-150	120-160
7	110-150	120-160	130-170
8	120-160	130-170	140-180

By measuring accuracy and rate, teachers can determine more precisely the source of reading fluency difficulties (Rasinki, 2004). For example, a reader with high accuracy but low rate score may show comprehension difficulties similar to a reader with a high rate, but excessive decoding errors. Both readers have comprehension difficulties, the source of their comprehension difficulties is different - one reader lacks sufficient automaticity, while the other lacks sufficient decoding accuracy. The most effective instruction would be significantly different for each student (Rasinki, 2004). Using the CBM/ORF assessment of accuracy and rate allows teachers to diagnose students' fluency throughout the school year. It immediately identifies students who may not be making adequate progress and who may need additional, more intensive or targeted instruction. Finally, it also monitors the effectiveness of instruction. Multiple assessments over time thus afford teachers a degree of accountability and precision for their teaching (Rasinski, 2004).

Procedures for measuring accuracy and rate in CBM/ORF:

Rasinki (2004) has adapted the CBM/ORF to include measurements of reading accuracy as well as reading rate. The CBM/ORF

1. Find a passage of approximately 250 words written at the student's grade placement. Submit the passage to a text readability formula to estimate its grade appropriateness.
2. Ask the student to read the passage for one minute. 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 where the student ends the one-minute read.
3. 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.
4. Determine accuracy by dividing the number of words read correctly per minute (WCPM) by the total number of words read (WCPM + an uncorrected errors). This number will be a percentage. Compare the student's performance against the target norms (table 1).
5. Determine the rate by calculating the total number of WCPM and comparing the student's performance against the target norms (table 2).



Click here to see an example of CBM/ORF for elementary. [Elementary PDF](#) - Text used "Shark Attack" from *On the Edge: Against the Odds*, McGraw-Hill/Contemporary, 2003.



Click here to see an example of a CBM/ORF for secondary. [Secondary PDF](#)
 - Text used The Pendulum by O. Henry in Timed Readings in Literature,
 Jamesown Publishers, 1989.

Assessing Prosodic Reading

The third component of fluency is more directly related to comprehension. Fluent readers embed prosodic features of spoken language – stress, pitch, variations, intonation, rate, phrasing, and pausing in their voices as they read orally (Rasinki, 2004). These features show that the student is trying to make sense of and/or comprehend the text. Assessing students' oral reading is key to developing their expressive reading. This type of assessment is more subjective than accuracy and reading rates. Since expression is hard to quantify, researchers have turned to qualitative rubrics or rating scales to guide this assessment process.

The rubrics are quite simple to use. A student reads a grade-level passage and the rater listens. Research has shown that teachers are able to make reliable and valid measures in 60 seconds or less. At the end of the listening period, the rater consults the rubric and assigns a score that most closely aligns with the student's reading. Several fluency rubrics have been developed and work well in assessing fluency and overall reading proficiency.

The following rubrics assess prosodic reading:

NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale Multidimensional Fluency Scale

Assessing Fluency in the Content Area

A teacher-made content area reading inventory (CARI) can provide content area teachers relevant information to help plan instruction (Vacca & Vacca, 1999). There are two components of the CARI. The first component focuses on the student's ability to comprehend the text while the second part focuses on the rate of comprehension. To get an estimate of the students rate of comprehension follow these steps.

1. Select an appropriate reading selection from the textbook. The selection need not include an entire unit, but should be complete within itself in overall content. In most cases, two or three pages are sufficient.
2. Count the total number of words in the excerpt.
3. Have students note the time it takes to read the selection. The teacher should record on the board the elapsed time in five-second intervals.
4. As students complete the reading, they look up at the board to check the times recorded on the board.
5. Students or the teacher can figure out the students' rate of reading in words per minute by dividing the time into the number of words within the selection.

Teachers can also assess comprehension at the same time by developing 10 to 12 comprehension questions. The first part of the assessment should ask open-ended questions like, "What was the passage about?" Then develop three or more questions at each level of comprehension: literal (getting the facts), inferential (making some interpretations), and applied (going beyond the materials). While students are taking the CARI, the teacher is kid watching, making note of work habits and student behavior. Information obtained from the CARI will help teachers organize specific lessons and activities. Using information from the assessment, teachers can decide on the background preparation needed, the length of reading assignments, and the reading activities to include in the course.



Click here to see an example of CARI for secondary. [CARI PDF](#) - Text used
 Contemporary World Regional Geography: Global Connections, Local Voices
 from McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Resources

Focus on Fluency – This booklet summarizes research on fluency and fluency instruction and describes strategies for fluency instruction. http://www.prel.org/products/re_/fluency-1.pdf

Assessing Reading Fluency – This booklet, written by Timothy Raskinki, is intended to assist teachers in monitoring students' fluency development. http://www.prel.org/products/re_/assessing-fluency.pdf

A Handbook of Effective Instruction in Literacy- this resource offers information on fluency. It is to provide a brief overview of effective literacy instructional practices. <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/handbookTOC.html>

Fluency Research – From Partnership for Reading, a searchable database detailing research on fluency instruction. <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/explore/fluency.html>

Reading Resources for Parents: Fluency – online resources to for parents that address fluency. <http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/other/seirtec/parentpages/fluency.html>

Reading Framework for the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress - http://www.nagb.org/pubs/reading_framework/toc.html

Reading Fluency: Tasks, Texts, and Teaching– presentation by Dr. D. Ray Reutzel, Utah State University <http://www.coe.usu.edu/ecc/images/pdf/presentations/kentstatereadingfluencyII.pdf>

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