chapter 5

Developing Children’s Reading Fluency
Chapter Questions

1. According to evidence-based research, what is fluent reading?

2. What is the nature of the relationship between fluency and reading comprehension?

3. How do young children develop fluency in reading?

4. How is reading fluency assessed?

5. What are evidence-based fluency instructional practices or strategies for developing reading fluency?

“One Minute of Reading”

Michelle, a second grade student, settles in next to Mrs. Chang, who is waiting to take a one-minute reading sample. Mrs. Chang hands her the second grade passage and sets a one-minute timer. “Michelle, I am glad to spend some time today listening to you read. Are you ready?” queries Mrs. Chang.

“Yes, I think so,” answers Michelle.

“I want you to read the passage aloud as quickly as you can without making mistakes. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Mrs. Chang, I understand,” replies Michelle.

“Okay, then. When I say ‘Start,’ you may begin reading.”

Michelle nods and clears her throat.

“Start!” says Mrs. Chang.

Michelle begins reading. “My Friend. I have a new friend at school. She can’t walk so she uses a wheelchair to get around. She comes to school in a special van. . . .”

When Michelle finishes the reading, Mrs. Chang praises her: “Michelle, you are reading very fluently. You made only two errors, read quickly enough for a second grader, had expression in your voice, and read more than word at a time!”


“Can you tell me what you remember from the pages you read?”

“I think so,” responds Michelle.

When Michelle finishes retelling what she can remember, Mrs. Chang praises her again. “Would you like to add anything to what you remember from your reading?” she questions.

“Uh-huh.”

Mrs. Chang listens while Michelle adds one more detail she has remembered to her oral retelling.

“Michelle, I’m going to ask you a few questions about what you have just read. I would like for you answer the questions as best you can.”
“Okay,” responds Michelle. Mrs. Chang probes Michelle’s comprehension of the passage with a few well-chosen questions to see if she remembers more than she has retold. That afternoon, Mrs. Chang looks at the record she made of Michelle’s earlier oral reading. She read the text with 95 percent accuracy, so Mrs. Chang knows that decoding this text wasn’t a problem for Michelle. She had timed Michelle’s reading and calculated her reading rate in words read correctly per minute. She now compares Michelle’s words read correctly per minute (wcpm) to a chart showing expected oral reading rate ranges by grade level. Michelle scores near the 75th percentile for her grade level. Next, Mrs. Chang reviews the oral reading expression rating scale she had filled out right after listening to Michelle read. Michelle averaged three out of four points on expression, pacing, smoothness, and phrasing using this rating scale as a measure. Finally, Mrs. Chang carefully reviews what she wrote down while listening to Michelle’s oral retelling of the pages she had read aloud. Michelle remembered the major ideas and more than half of the details in the passage, evidencing her comprehension of the text.

All things considered, Michelle has performed well! There is no doubt in Mrs. Chang’s mind that Michelle is progressing well toward the goal of becoming a fluent reader!

For many years, fluency has been acknowledged as an important goal in becoming a proficient and strategic reader (Allington, 1983, 1984, 2001; Klenk & Kibby, 2000; Opitz & Rasinski, 1998; Rasinski, 2000; Rasinski & Padak, 1996; The Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000). As a result of the publication of the Report of the National Reading Panel in 2000, there has been a marked increase in attention given to teaching, practicing, and assessing reading fluency in the elementary school grades. To help children become fluent readers, teachers need to know the answer to four important questions. First, what is fluency? Second, how do children develop fluency in reading? Third, how is reading fluency assessed to determine which elements of fluent reading require instruction and practice? And finally, what are evidence-based strategies for fluency instruction and practice that will assist all children to develop fluent reading behaviors? This chapter develops teacher knowledge in the area of reading fluency, describes valid and reliable fluency assessment instruments and procedures, and explains evidence-based reading fluency instructional strategies.

What Is Reading Fluency?

Fluency is defined as (1) accuracy and ease of decoding (automaticity); (2) age- or grade-level-appropriate reading speed or rate; (3) appropriate use of volume, pitch, juncture, and stress (prosodic features) in one’s voice; and (4) appropriate text phrasing or “chunking.” There seems to be a high degree of agreement among researchers as to the skills one must develop to become a fluent reader (Allington, 2001; Juel, 1991; National Reading Panel, 2000; Richards, 2000; Samuels & Farstrup, 2006). These skills include the following:

- **Automaticity**—Translating letters to sounds to words effortlessly and accurately.
- **Expression**—Using proper intonation (i.e., prosodic features such as pitch, juncture, and stress) in one’s voice.
How Do Children Develop Reading Fluency?

Figure 5.1 A Model of Fluent Reading

- **Rate**—Attaining appropriate reading speed according to the reader’s purpose or the type of passage.
- **Phrasing**—Reading orally large chunks of text such as phrases or sentences smoothly without hesitating, stopping to decode, or rereading.

In summary, fluent readers can decode the words in text accurately and effortlessly, and read with correct volume, phrasing, appropriate intonation, and at a reasonably rapid rate so that their reading has become “automatic.” When fluent readers read aloud effortlessly with speed, accuracy, and proper expression, their mind is free to focus on comprehension of text. The top half of Figure 5.1 presents a model reflecting the automaticity of fluent readers.

On the other hand, less fluent readers struggle through text in a labored, word-by-word manner. They focus most of their attention on decoding or figuring out how to pronounce the words, so reading comprehension suffers. The bottom half of Figure 5.1 shows how comprehension can be virtually ignored when readers devote most of their mental energies to decoding. Thus, reading fluency is important because it provides a much-needed bridge between word recognition and reading comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski, 1989; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1993; Samuels & Farstrup, 2006).

The answer to this question has been the focus of many years of research and theory development (Jenkins, Fuchs, Van den Broek, Espin, & Deno, 2003; Kameenui & Simons, 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow et al., 1998; Stahl, 2004; Wolf &
Katzir-Cohen, 2001). Perhaps the most prominent theory devised to explain how readers become fluent is the LaBerge and Samuels (1974) theory of automatic information processing, or automaticity theory. This popular and well-researched explanation of how reading fluency develops hypothesizes that the human mind functions much like a computer, and that visual input (letters and words) is sequentially entered into the mind of the reader. Almost without exception, humans have the ability to perform more than one task at a time (computer specialists sometimes call this “multitasking”). Because each computer—and, by extension, the human mind—has a limited capacity for multitasking, attention must be shifted from one job to another. If one job requires a large portion of the available computer’s attention capacity, then capacity for another job is limited. The term automaticity implies that human minds of readers, like computers, have a limited amount of ability to shift attention between the processes of decoding (sounding out words) and comprehending (thinking about the meaning of the author’s message in the text). If readers are too bogged down in decoding the text, they will not be able to focus on the job of comprehending the author’s message. Particularly in the earliest stages of reading development, the relationship between fluency and comprehension is relatively high (Paris, Carpenter, Paris, & Hamilton, 2005).

An example of automaticity in action can be seen in the skill of riding a bike. Novice bike riders focus so intently on balancing, turning the handlebars, and pedaling that they sometimes fail to attend to other important tasks like direction and potential dangers. Similarly, a reader who is a poor decoder focuses so much of his attention on phonics and other sounding out strategies that he has little brainpower left for comprehending. When this happens the reading act, like an overloaded computer or a novice bike rider, “crashes.” In contrast, children who are accomplished bike riders can ride without hands, carry on a conversation with a friend, dodge a pothole in the road, and chew gum at the same time. Like the accomplished bike rider, fluent readers can rapidly shift attention and focus on the author’s message because decoding no longer demands the lion’s share of their attention capacity. LaBerge and Samuels’s theory of automaticity predicts that if reading can occur automatically without too much focus or effort devoted to the decoding process, then reading comprehension, while not guaranteed, is at least made possible (Samuels, 2006).

**Chall’s Stages of Reading Fluency**

Jeanne Chall (1983) proposed six stages of becoming a fluent, accomplished reader as shown in Figure 5.2. In the first stage, or Stage 0, children have not yet begun to pay much attention to the letters and words on the page. Rather, they ask for books to be read aloud repeatedly so that they can internalize both the language and structure of the stories. They also rely rather heavily on pictures for making their way through a text. During this prereading or nonreading stage, children often need someone to read to or with them in order to successfully navigate their way through text.

In Stage 0, children engage in a kind of pseudo-reading—the “reading” common among preschoolers who retell a familiar story with the aid of pictures, recognizing an occasional word to help them remember the events and language of the story.
How Do Children Develop Reading Fluency?

Figure 5.2 Stage Model of Reading Development

- **Stage 0:** Children love to hear books read aloud to them again and again, enjoying the language and repetition. They can pretend read by retelling the story with the aid of the pictures in the book.
- **Stage 1:** Children start to notice letters and sounds and how these connect. When this happens they may recognize that they cannot read the print and refuse to read aloud. They first try to guess words based on meanings. Next they pay so much attention to how words look that they may not care about meaning. Eventually they become concerned with how the words look and what they mean.
- **Stage 2:** Children love to read familiar books again and again to gain fluency and confidence.
- **Stage 3:** Children want to read books to learn new information about the world.
- **Stage 4:** Children learn to read books that present more than a single point of view.
- **Stage 5:** Children learn to selectivley sample print to get what they want for their own purposes. They also know what they don’t want to read. They become critical readers who use print to think and reason.

**Stage 1.** Once children understand that reading requires more than listening to a story read aloud repeatedly and following along with the pictures, they begin to focus their attention on the print on the page. As they do so, they come to understand that reading involves looking at and understanding how to process that print. At this point, children move into Stage 1 of reading development, which involves learning the ways in which letters and sounds connect to form words that may be spoken. Chall (1983) says that Stage 1 reading has been referred to pejoratively as a “guessing and memory game,” or as “grunting and groaning,” “mumbling and bumbling,” or “barking at print,” depending on whether the prevailing and currently popular methodology for teaching beginning reading is a sight word or a phonics approach.

As children focus intently on reading the print on the page, they will often say that they can’t read and refuse for a time to try to do so. They may even retreat to old habits of guessing the words using pictures. When children begin to attend to the print on the page, they often make errors while reading that are semantically or syntactically acceptable, such as substituting the word *home* for *house.* Later on, as they focus more intently on decoding the actual print on the page, their errors shift to saying words that “look” about the same but do not mean the same, such as *horse* rather than *hourse.* This shift in errors signals that children are now paying greater attention to how words appear rather than focusing on what they mean. As children’s reading development progresses and they can more quickly assign sounds to letters and blend these sounds together to form spoken words, they begin to return to a concern for not only how a word *looks* but also what it *means.* Chall indicates that children need to
temporarily unglue from meaning in language to focus their attention on the print in order to later process print well enough (accurately, quickly, effortlessly, and expressively) or fluently to unglue from the print and return again to meaning. Chall also indicates that all children seem to move through the learning-to-read process in the same way. Better readers progress through these stages faster, and poor readers continue to make the first type of reading error—substituting or guessing the word on the basis of meaning and syntax. Chall insists that it is only when the children appear to let go of “meaning” substitutions and work instead on what words look and sound like that they make substantial progress.

**Stage 2.** In Stage 2, children consolidate what they have learned about reading in Stage 1—the connections between letters and sounds—by reading easy books that are familiar or well-known to gain a sense of fluency. For children of low socio-economic status (SES), Chall notes that discrepancies between good and poor readers reported in Stages 0 and 1 seem to widen at Stage 2. Chall assumes the reasons for this widening of the fluency gap to be that the parents of children in poverty cannot afford to buy books, and that their patterns of recreation and work do not include borrowing books and magazines from a public library. As a result, children of poverty lose access to needed time for reading practice in appropriately challenging texts. They also are deprived of opportunities to develop their oral language and to enjoy emotionally confirming responses that reading books with caregivers can bring.

**Stages 3–5.** Once children can read fluently or with automaticity, Chall contends, reading development progresses on to Stage 3, during which children read for knowledge or for information, and then to Stage 4, during which children and adolescents read books that require dealing with more than one point of view. This means Stage 4 readers gradually become able to look beyond the literal meaning of text and consider content from more than a single point of view. In other words, they become critical readers, both learning from and questioning the text. In the final stage of development, Stage 5, readers are self-directed and have learned to read many genres of text. They know what not to read as well as what to read: they selectively use printed material in pursuit of areas of knowledge central to their own learning and responsibilities. They know how to skim and scan text to find information they want or need. They understand that various types of printed materials are organized differently, and they know how to make efficient use of search strategies in relation to this knowledge of text organization.

Thus, children develop reading fluency in a whole-to-parts-to-whole manner. They begin by using pictures to memorize texts that are repeated read aloud. This process encourages them to pay attention to the meaning of spoken language. Eventually, children understand that the story is not coming from the pictures on the page and begin to pay attention to the print. As they pay greater attention to the print, they continue to try to figure our the meaning of text using picture clues, a few known sight words, and their emerging understandings of letter, sound, and blending processes. They make meaning-related and grammatically acceptable errors as they read. As they progress, they understand that they need to learn letter names to connect these with sounds in spoken language.
The Stages of Reading in Action

In kindergarten and early first grade, children benefit from learning to decode easy words, for example, CVC or consonant-vowel-consonant words such as fat, sit, or run. Fluency in decoding and writing these simple CVC words in kindergarten leads to increased reading achievement and oral reading fluency at the end of first grade, helping children move successfully through Chall's (1983) Stage 1 reading development (Good, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 2001). In Stage 2, children need to read large amounts of text that are appropriately selected for challenge. This means that texts should support students’ abilities to continuously add new words to their reading vocabularies. Most scholars currently agree that children should practice their fluency in texts that are written at the instructional level—90–94% known words—with guidance or feedback from peers, teachers, or other caregivers (Stahl, 2004). Hiebert & Fisher (2006) caution teachers to consider how many unfamiliar words are found in texts children read and the balance between sight words and decodable words as they work their way into uncontrolled texts for fluency practice. We have found that Dr. Seuss books typically present young readers with an appropriate balance of sight words to decodable words for beginning reading fluency practice (Hiebert, 2006).

Fluency involves a developmental process that looks different over time. It begins with fluent letter and sight word recognition, then moves to fluent decoding or automaticity, and then to fluent access to vocabulary and comprehension strategies (Pikulski, 2006). Fluency develops differently across text difficulty levels and genres, and teachers must not take for granted that fluent reading at one level of text difficulty or within one type of text genre indicates that fluency is fully developed for other levels of text difficulty or genres (Pikulski, 2006, Reutzel, 2006).

Finally, teachers need to know what to expect from children as they develop reading fluency. The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children included in their report, titled Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young

Figure 5.3  Fluency Benchmark Standards*

| Kindergarten: “Reads” familiar texts emergently, i.e., not necessarily verbatim from the print alone. |
| Grade 1: Reads aloud with accuracy any text that is appropriately designed for the first half of grade 1. |
| Grade 2: Accurately decodes orthographically regular multisyllable words and nonsense words. Accurately reads many irregularly spelled words and such spelling patterns as diphthongs, special vowel spellings, and common word endings. |
| Grade 3: Reads aloud with fluency any text that is appropriately designed for grade level. |

Children (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), desired “benchmarks” for kindergarten through third grade in reading and writing. Figure 5.3 presents fluency benchmark standards from their report.

### What Does Research Say About Fluency and Reading?

The history of fluency instruction in reading is characterized by the swinging of the pendulum of fashion (Rasinski, 2006). Prior to and during the early part of the twentieth century, oral reading ability and performance were highly valued as a cultural asset (Rasinski, 2006; Smith, 2002). But modern research disclosed that reading silently seems to hold an advantage for readers in terms of reading rate and comprehension (Huie, 1908). Moreover, the utility and superiority of silent reading seemed apparent, since most adult readers engage almost exclusively in silent reading as opposed to oral reading (Rasinski, 2006). Allington (1983) indicated that fluency instruction was often neglected in reading programs. Results of this neglect were highlighted in a large-scale study of fluency achievement in U.S. education, in which the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that “44% of fourth grade students tested were disfluent even with grade-level stories that the student read under supportive testing conditions” (National Reading Panel, 2000, pp. 3–1; emphasis added). Due to the analyses and findings of the National Reading Panel (2000) about effective fluency practice, the importance of oral reading practice—at least in the earliest stages of fluency development—has been called to our collective attention once again.

The National Reading Panel’s (2000) meta-analysis of fluency studies showed that fluency practice is most effective when (1) the reading practice is oral; (2) when it involves repeated readings of a text (more than twice); and (3) when students receive guidance or feedback from teachers, parents, volunteers, and peers (pp. 3–11). The National Reading Panel was unable to locate sufficient evidence showing a significantly positive impact for silent reading practice on students’ reading fluency acquisition. Of the 14 studies that met the National Reading Panel’s selection criteria dealing with silent reading practice, only three showed any evidence of gains in reading achievement from more time spent in silent reading practice, and the size of the gains were so small as to be “of questionable educational value” (pp. 3–26). The Panel further noted that none of the 14 silent reading studies even attempted to measure the impact of increased amounts of silent reading on children’s development of reading fluency. From these findings, we have concluded that younger students will likely benefit far more from oral, repeated reading practice with feedback during the early stages of reading fluency acquisition, instruction, and practice than from silent reading.

More recently, Stahl (2004) reported an investigation of the effects of FORI (fluency-oriented reading instruction) using two variations of practice: monitored, wide silent reading practice compared with oral repeated readings with feedback. He also used a control group to determine whether one form of reading practice was superior to the other in terms of fluency acquisition of second grade readers.
Stahl found that repeated oral readings with feedback and wide silent readings with monitoring were both superior to the control group performance. On the other hand, the two variations—oral readings with feedback and wide silent readings with monitoring—were roughly equivalent to one another, suggesting that “the increased amount of reading and the support given during the reading are what underlie the success of the two approaches” (p. 205). This finding has been replicated by in a more recent study of struggling readers by M. Kuhn (2005b).

Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) provide a study of oral fluency reading rates that span grades 1–8. These reading rate norms adjust reading rate for accuracy using a metric called words correct per minute (wcpm). Their research suggests that children ought to be able to read about 53 wcpm by the end of first grade (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006). Rates for other grades and ages will be discussed later in this chapter as they relate to assessing oral reading fluency.

There is precious little research available about how expression and intonation affect fluency or comprehension (Dowhower, 1991; Reutzel, 2006). Most measures of expression in the reading literature make use of informal scales (Rasinski, 2003; Zutell and Rasinski, 1991) that ask teachers to make judgments about the prosodic features of oral reading rather than more exacting prosodic measures similar to those used by speech-language pathologists.

At present, research is unclear about which levels of text to use for fluency practice and instruction. In answer to this continuing concern, Kuhn and Stahl (2000) recommend the use of instructional-level text for fluency instruction and practice in their review of fluency developmental and remedial practices. Fluency, much like reading comprehension, also needs to be developed across text types. An ability to read narrative or poetry texts fluently does not necessarily imply an ability to read information or expository texts with similar facility. These findings suggest that fluency when reading different text genres and difficulty levels is not a perfectible process—at least not in the primary grades.

Even though most research indicates that fluency practice and instruction are an essential component of high-quality reading instruction in the elementary years (Stahl, 2004), too much of a good thing can be a bad thing! In one short-term study, Anderson, Wilkinson, and Mason (1991) reported that too much attention and time spent on developing fluency, especially when the emphasis is largely focused on accuracy and rate, may detract from students’ ability to comprehend text. The National Reading Panel (2000) found in its review of fluency instruction that fluency lessons ranging in length from 15 to 30 minutes showed positive effects on students’ fluency development.

Finally, research on fluency has generally shown there is a strong relationship between fluency development in the early grades and children’s later reading comprehension (Carpenter, Paris, & Hamilton, 2005). Recent studies show, however, that this relationship between fluency and comprehension is transitory, diminishing over time. Some educators believe that fluency is the key that unlocks the door to comprehension. But this is only partially true. Fluency may unlock the door, but it does not open the door to reading comprehension. Rather, it is best to think of fluency as necessary but insufficient for children to comprehend what they read. To comprehend, children must be more than fluent. They must learn to how to select and use a variety of cognitive strategies to help them understand text (Pressley, 2000; 2006).
How Is Reading Fluency Assessed?

Assessing fluency is the first step in understanding and planning effective fluency instruction. With a wide variety of fluent reading levels within classrooms and across grade levels, it is highly unlikely that a single approach to fluency instruction will address the diverse needs of all children. To begin fluency assessment, we focus on children’s ability to read high-frequency sight words.

Assessing Sight Word Fluency

We suggest beginning sight word fluency assessment with the Thorndike-Lorge Magazine Count list of 25 high-frequency words shown in Table 5.1. This tool is typically used with kindergarten children. Neatly print each of the 25 words onto individual cards using white card stock and black block printing or computer-produced print. Shuffle the deck of 25 sight word cards to randomize the order. Next, invite a student to be seated next to you. Explain that you would like to find out which words the child knows by sight. Begin by showing the child the first word from the list.

Table 5.1 The Thorndike-Lorge Magazine Count

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
<th>Cumulative % of Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>263,472</td>
<td>.0515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>and</td>
<td>138,672</td>
<td>.0817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>117,222</td>
<td>.1072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>115,358</td>
<td>.1323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>of</td>
<td>112,601</td>
<td>.1568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>89,489</td>
<td>.1763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>75,253</td>
<td>.1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>58,732</td>
<td>.2055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>that</td>
<td>55,667</td>
<td>.2176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>52,107</td>
<td>.2290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>49,268</td>
<td>.2397</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>42,581</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>39,363</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>had</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>33,404</td>
<td>.2723</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>with</td>
<td>32,903</td>
<td>.2795</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>31,824</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>23,364</td>
<td>.3345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sum = 1,535,783
Total Number of Words = 4,591,125
card in the deck and continue until all 25 randomly presented words from the list are shown to the child.

Progress monitoring of early readers' accurate and fast recognition of these 25 highly frequent words should occur at least monthly in the second half of kindergarten and early half of first grade. By the end of kindergarten or early first grade, children should be able to accurately and quickly recognize all 25 sight words.

To expand the assessment of early readers' sight words into the first and second grade levels, we suggest using the 107 High-Frequency Word List by Zeno, Ivens, Millard, and Duvvuri (1995), shown in Table 5.2.

Neatly print each of the 107 words onto individual cards using white card stock and black block printing or computer-produced print. Shuffle the deck of 107 sight word cards to randomize the order. Next, invite a student to be seated next to you. Explain that you would like to find out which words the child knows by sight. Begin by showing the child the first card in the deck and continue until 25 randomly presented words from the list of 107 are shown to the child.

Progress monitoring of early readers' accurate and fast recognition of these 107 highly frequent words should occur at least monthly in the second half of first grade and into second grade. By the end of second grade, children should be able to accurately and quickly recognize all 107 sight words.

If children have difficulty recognizing the sight words in the instruments we have presented here, they can be assisted in committing the words to memory through the use of instructional strategies presented later in this chapter.

**Assessing Oral Reading Fluency**

Assessing oral reading fluency has for many years focused somewhat exclusively on how quickly students could read a given text. This is known as **reading rate** or **reading speed**. Reading teachers have historically used words correct per minute (wcpm) to

**Table 5.2** The 107 Most Frequently Used Words in Written English (Zeno et al., 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the</th>
<th>at</th>
<th>we</th>
<th>many</th>
<th>first</th>
<th>know</th>
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<tr>
<td>of</td>
<td>or</td>
<td>what</td>
<td>these</td>
<td>new</td>
<td>little</td>
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<td>and</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>about</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>very</td>
<td>such</td>
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<td>to</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>up</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>also</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>much</td>
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<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>who</td>
<td>make</td>
<td>our</td>
<td>our</td>
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<tr>
<td>is</td>
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<td>like</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>much</td>
<td>our</td>
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<td>that</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>could</td>
<td>now</td>
<td>our</td>
<td>must</td>
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Chapter 5 Developing Children’s Reading Fluency

indicate reading rate. Although wcpm is one indicator of fluent oral reading, it is only one. To adequately assess fluency, teachers should consider at least four different components: (1) accurate decoding of text, (2) reading rate or speed, (3) use of volume, stress, pitch, and juncture (prosodic markers), and (4) mature phrasing or “chunking” of text.

Teachers have in recent years begun to discuss how they might more efficiently and authentically assess the ability to read fluently (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). Most teachers believe that paper and pencil assessment tools such as standardized reading tests are inadequate or at least incomplete measures of reading fluency. Another significant issue for many teachers today is accessing valid and reliable estimates of reading rates appropriate for children of differing ages and grades.

One of the simplest and most useful means of collecting fluency data is the one-minute reading sample (Rasinski, 2003). A one-minute reading sample is typical of that used in the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) test drawn from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) battery (Good & Kaminski, 2002).

To take a one-minute reading sample, teachers need a grade-level text of between 200 and 300 words, a one-minute cooking timer with an alarm sounding at zero or a stop watch, and a pencil for marking the text. Children are asked to read aloud a grade-level passage for one minute. Words omitted, substituted, or hesitations of more than three seconds are scored as errors. Words self-corrected within three seconds are scored as accurate. After one minute, the student stops reading. The teacher subtracts the total number of errors from the number of words read by the student to obtain a score of words correct per minute (wcpm). This number constitutes the student’s reading rate. Using more than one passage to assess fluency rates helps to control for any text-based or genre-type differences or variations. However, if standardized passages are used, such as those from published sources of CBM materials (e.g., DIBELS, Reading Fluency Monitor, AimsWEB), a score from a single passage is considered valid (Hintze & Christ, 2004). The final wcpm score can then be compared to the ORF norms (see Table 5.3) for making screening, diagnostic, or progress-monitoring decisions. By using words correct per minute (wcpm), reading rate is corrected for the accuracy of the reading. The new ORF norms align closely with those published in 1992, and also closely match the widely used DIBELS norms for fall, winter, and spring.

If you want to use the DIBELS oral reading fluency test to augment one-minute fluency samples you take during the year, the full directions for using the ORF measurement can be obtained by going to the DIBELS Web site at http://dibels.uoregon.edu/, registering as a user, and downloading grade-level passages and administration and scoring procedures.

Assessing Expressive Reading

As we mentioned earlier in this chapter, reading fluency is not just described or defined as accurate reading at an age-appropriate rate. It also includes reading that is appropriately expressive. To augment one-minute reading sample measurement of accuracy and rate, Rasinski (2003) provides a practical measurement of students’ oral reading fluency, the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (see Figure 5.4). This rating tool provides more extensive and reliable information about four components of fluent reading: (a) volume and expression, (b) phrasing, (c) smoothness, and (d) pace. Rasinski’s (2003) recent revision of the original Zutell and Rasinski’s
### Table 5.3 Grades 1–8 Oral Reading Fluency Norms*

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Count 5546 3496 5335

WCPM: Words correct per minute


Data available at: http://brt.uoregon.edu/TECHNICAL REPORTS

Table available at: www.jhasbrouck.com Q&A: Fluency
Chapter 5  Developing Children’s Reading Fluency

Figure 5.4  Multidimensional Fluency Scale*

Use the following scale to rate reader fluency on the five dimensions of accuracy, volume and expression, phrasing, smoothness, and pace.

A. Accuracy
1. Word recognition accuracy is poor, generally below 85%. Reader clearly struggles in decoding words. Makes multiple decoding attempts for many words, usually without success.
2. Word recognition accuracy is marginal: 86–90%. Reader struggles with many words. Many unsuccessful attempts at self-correction.
3. Word recognition accuracy is good: 91–95%. Reader self-corrects successfully.
4. Word recognition accuracy is excellent: 96%–100%. Self-corrections are few but successful, as nearly all words are read correctly on initial attempt.

B. Expression and Volume
1. Student reads with little expression or enthusiasm. Reads words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tends to read in a quiet voice.
2. Student reads with some expression. Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas of the text, but not others. Focus remains largely on saying the words. Still reads in a voice that is quiet.
3. Student’s reading sounds like natural language throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.
4. Student reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Sounds like natural language. Reader is able to vary expression and volume to match his/her interpretation of the passage.

C. Phrasing
1. Monotonic with little sense of phrase boundaries; frequent word-by-word reading.
2. Student uses frequent two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of choppy reading; improper stress and intonation that fails to mark ends of sentences and clauses.
3. Student reads in mixture of run-ons, with mid-sentence pauses for breath and possibly some choppiness; reasonable stress/intonation.
4. Reading is generally well-phrased, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.

D. Smoothness
1. Student reads with frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts.
2. Student experiences several “rough spots” in text, where extended pauses, hesitations, etc., are more frequent and disruptive.
3. Reader experiences occasional breaks in smoothness caused by difficulties with specific words and/or structures.
4. Generally smooth reading with some breaks, but word and structure difficulties are resolved quickly, usually through self-correction.

E. Pace (during sections of minimal disruption)
1. Slow and laborious.
2. Moderately slow.
3. Uneven mixture of fast and slow reading.
4. Consistently conversational.

*Rasinski, T. (2003). The Fluent Reader. Figure 8.8 and personal communication.

To use the *Multidimensional Fluency Scale*, teachers take a one-minute reading sample as previously described and fill in the required ratings using a paper copy of the MFS. The MFS can also be used to rate group performances such as plays, readers’ theater, and radio readings (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004).

**What Are the Characteristics of Effective Fluency Instruction?**

In this section we provide seven characteristics of effective fluency instruction and practice drawn from evidence-based research.

1. **Explicit Instruction.** Hoffman (2003) asserts that teachers should “Work to develop the meta-language of fluency with . . . students, which includes concepts of expression, word stress, and phrasing” (p. 6). Young readers need to know that fluency is an important goal of their reading instruction. They need to know what fluency is. They need to know the academic language or terms used by teachers and researchers to describe fluency, so that they, too, can think and talk specifically about fluency as a concept and skill with their peers and their teachers. They also need the language of fluency to be able examine and regulate their own reading fluency as an independent reader. Students must develop an awareness of the various elements of fluency in order to monitor them, fix them, and improve their fluency. Students must know how to use fluency fix-up strategies and understand the varying purposes of fluency in order to self-regulate and improve it. As classroom teachers, we must not only facilitate reading fluency practice but also cultivate a deeper appreciation among students of the importance of fluency as a personal goal of reading improvement. Equally important, we need to develop students’ understanding of what we mean when we say that reading is fluent so that they can go about fixing fluency up when it isn’t going along as it should (Rasinski, Blachowicz, & Lems, 2006; Reutzel, 2006; Worthy & Brodus, 2002).

2. **Modeling.** Exposure to rich and varied models of fluent oral reading helps some children. For other students, modeling of nonfluent oral reading seems to alert attention to the specific characteristics of fluent reading that are sometimes transparent or taken for granted when teachers only model fluent oral reading. In other words, some students need to know what fluency is and is not to achieve clarity on the concept of fluency and its attendant characteristics (Reutzel, 2006). In this case, parents, teachers, or siblings spend significant amounts of time reading aloud to children while modeling fluent oral reading. Through this process of modeling fluent (and sometimes nonfluent) oral reading, children learn the behaviors of fluent readers as well as the elements of fluent oral reading. Many researchers have documented the significant impact of modeling on the acquisition of fluency in reading (Rasinski, 2005; Rasinski, et al., 2006; Reutzel, 2006; Stahl, 2004).

**Getting to Know English Learners**

Modeling oral reading to ELs may be especially helpful if their parents do not yet read English. Assigning a capable reading buddy in the classroom may help alleviate this problem.
3. Reading Practice. Good readers are given more opportunities to read connected text for longer periods of time than are students having reading problems. This dilemma led Allington (1977) to ask, “If they don’t read much, how are they ever gonna get good?” The National Reading Panel (2000) has emphasized the need for children to experience regular, daily reading practice.

4. Access to Appropriately Challenging Reading Materials. Proficient readers spend more time reading appropriately challenging texts than students having reading problems (Gambrell et al., 1981). Reading appropriately challenging books with instruction and feedback may help proficient readers make the transition from word-by-word reading to fluent reading, whereas poorer readers often spend more time in reading materials that are relatively difficult. Doing so denies those students who are having reading problems access to reading materials that could help them develop fluent reading skills. For the most part, children need to be reading in instructional level texts with instruction, modeling, support, monitoring, and feedback (Bryan, Fawson, & Reutzel, 2003; Kuhn, 2005a; Kuhn & Schwanenflugel, 2006; Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2006; Stahl, 2004). Hiebert and Menon (2005) and Hiebert and Fisher (2006) found that texts for supporting early readers’ fluency development need to be controlled to contain fewer unfamiliar words than is typical in many beginning reading texts as well as a balance between high-frequency words and decodable words. When children read in such texts, they made weekly gains of over 3.4 words correct per minute! Carefully selected texts, in a very real way, are the scaffolding teachers use to support students’ reading fluency practice (Brown, 1999). Teachers need to increase the volume of students’ reading in appropriately designed, controlled reading texts in the early stages of fluency development (Hiebert & Fisher, 2006).

5. Use of Oral and Silent Reading. The Report of the National Reading Panel (2000) indicated there was ample scientific evidence to support reading practice for fluency that included the following elements: (a) oral reading, (b) repeated reading of the same text, and (c) feedback and guidance during and after reading of a text. On the other hand, silent reading of self-chosen books without monitoring or feedback did not have substantial scientific evidence to support its exclusive use for reading practice across elementary grades. Recent experimental research suggests that silent, wide reading (across genre or text types) with monitoring seems to produce equivalent or better fluency gains in second and third grade students as compared to oral repeated readings (Kuhn & Schwanenflugel, 2006; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Reutzel, Fawson, & Smith, 2006; Stahl, 2004). There is mounting evidence that the old practice of SSR where the teacher read as a model for children is giving way to a new model of silent reading practice that incorporates book selection instruction, student monitoring and accountability, and reading widely (Bryan, Fawson, & Reutzel, 2003; Kuhn, 2005b; Marzano, 2004; McKenna & Stahl, 2006; Reutzel, Smith, & Fawson, in preparation; Stahl, 2004).

6. Monitoring and Accountability. For many years, teachers believed that their sitting and reading a book silently provided modeling sufficient to promote students’ desires and abilities to read. This has never been proven to be the case. In recent years, Bryan, Fawson, and Reutzel (2003) have reported that monitoring disengaged readers with quick, stop-in visits to listen to oral reading and discuss a piece of literature during silent reading has a beneficial effect on their engagement during silent reading. Furthermore, having children account for their fluency practice time by reading onto a tape or for a teacher has a positive impact upon fluency engagement and growth (Reutzel, 2006; Reutzel, Smith, & Fawson, in preparation; Stahl, 2004).
7. Wide and Repeated Reading. There is considerable evidence that repeated readings of the same text leads to automaticity—fast, accurate, and effortless word recognition (Dowhower, 1991; NRP, 2000). However, once automaticity is achieved, reading widely seems to provide the necessary ingredient to move students’ fluency from automaticity to comprehension. Thus, it is important that when a student achieves grade-level automaticity, he or she be encouraged to read widely as well as repeatedly to develop connected text comprehension (Kuhn, 2005a; Kuhn & Schwanenflugel, 2006; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Reutzel, 2006; Stahl, 2004). From the currently available evidence, this occurs in second or third grade for some children while others may need to continue to read texts repeatedly until they achieve automaticity at grade level into the intermediate years.

An awareness of the seven characteristics of effective fluency instruction and practice can help you, the teacher, create optimal conditions for students to become fluent readers.

**Fluency Begins Early**

Even though an emphasis on reading fluency is recommended to begin midyear in the first grade, recognizing a few common words by sight is also an important part of early reading development (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). Young children should be taught to recognize several common, high-frequency words (known as **sight words**) instantaneously and without phonic analysis. Many years ago, Thorndike and Lorge (1944), researchers at Columbia University, reported a study in which they counted the frequency of words found in a 4.5 million-word sample drawn from popularly published U.S. magazines. At the conclusion of this study, these researchers found that a corpus of only 25 words accounted for 1.5 million of the total 4.5 million words in these magazines (see Table 5.1). In fact, three words in this list accounted for nearly 11 percent of frequency of words in the sample; these words were **a**, **and**, and **the**, with the word **the** accounting for nearly 5 percent of all words in the sample. Years later, Zeno, Ivens, Millard and Duvvuri (1995) found that a corpus of 107 words accounted for 50 percent of all words typically found in printed materials read by U.S. adults (see Table 5.2).

These studies show that with a relative few words known by sight—somewhere between 25 and 107—young children can fluently recognize approximately 33 to 50 percent of the words they will be likely to encounter in commonplace adult reading materials. Thus it seems reasonable for teachers to focus significant and early attention on helping young children acquire the ability to automatically identify a small corpus of common, high-frequency words by sight in the future service of reading fluency.

**What Are Effective Fluency Teaching Strategies?**

Careful planning is always crucial for successful teaching. In fluency instruction, as with most other reading skill areas, the teacher must choose a “balanced diet” of reading materials for practice exercises (i.e., stories, nonfiction materials, poetry), and provide explicit, teacher-led instruction, modeling, guided student practice, practice with peers, and independent practice. An effective model for organizing fluency instruction that includes these elements was developed for Title I reading teachers in Kansas.
Figure 5.5  The Fluency Formula

The Fluency Formula
A Blueprint for Improving Accuracy, Rate, Expression, and Phrasing

Planning for Instruction

A. Identify instructional standards (objectives).
B. List necessary supplies and check-off selection of passage.
C. Introduce passages for modeling and practice (fluency pyramid).
D. Develop explicit fluency instructional plans.

Step I: Explicit Fluency Instruction and Modeling

A. Explain the specific fluency instructional objective—targeted fluency skill.
   • Explain what is to be learned about fluency—accuracy, rate, expression, or phrasing.
   • Explain why learning this information is important.
   • Explain when and where this information will be useful.
B. Introduce the passage and concepts.
   • Teach high-frequency sight words.
   • Introduce vocabulary.
   • Introduce the fluency skill to be learned.
C. Model the targeted fluency skill.

Step II: Guided Oral Reading Practice

A. Guided oral reading strategies: teacher with students
   • Choral reading
B. Peer-supported practice: students helping students
   • Partner or “buddy” reading
   • Neurological impress method (NIM)

Step III: Independent Practice Reading

• Assisted repeated oral readings
• Modified sustained silent reading (MSSR)

Step IV: Performance Reading for Fluency Practice

• Readers’ theatre
• Radio reading
• Recitation

Step V: Goal Setting and Monitoring Student Progress

• Fluency assessment rubric
• Tracking fluency progress
• Goal setting
(R. Cooter & K. Cooter, 2002) called the Fluency Formula (summarized in Figure 5.5). A sample lesson plan for teaching children about phrasing in fluency is shown in Figure 5.6. In the description that follows, you will see that evidence-based elements of effective fluency instruction have been included.

**Implementing the Fluency Instructional Plan**

An effective teacher always maps out her lesson plan well before implementing it. Lesson planning always begins with the decision about an appropriate objective. Objectives for fluency instruction, as with anything else in any curriculum, should be drawn from three sources:

1. a careful review of grade-level expectations and state standards,
2. an assessment of each child’s needs and abilities relative to the standards, and
3. a collation of all students’ needs into a classroom profile to better understand more universal group needs.

**Identifying Standards for Fluency Instruction.** Standards for fluency have been developed by most states for each grade level, as well as by the U.S. Department of Education. In Chapter 9, “Assessment,” we discuss ways of developing both individual and group objectives from assessment data. Fluency standards almost invariably pertain to one of three principal areas: accuracy, rate, or expression. These three areas are described later in the description of Stage 1 of the Fluency Formula.

**Selecting Reading Materials: Varying Literary Genre.** Once you have selected a fluency objective, reading materials should be selected for (1) reading aloud (modeling), and (2) for instruction (guided oral reading). Your primary goal in the first part of fluency instruction should be to model fluent reading behavior. As the teacher, you are— theoretically—the best reader in the room and your young charges want to see and hear what fluent reading behavior is like. Because you will have a wide range of reading ability represented in your class, you will want to think about modeling for students in two venues: whole class and small groups based on reading level (i.e., guided reading groups).

For whole group modeling, remember the “balanced diet” idea mentioned earlier: model fluent reading using a variety of genres in children’s literature. Here’s what we mean: Think of the balanced reading diet at each grade level as you would the famous food pyramid. At the bottom of the fluency pyramid we place the ever-popular narrative selections or stories. Some of your oral reading to the class for fluency modeling and practice should come from high quality books children’s stories and books. At the center of the fluency pyramid are interesting nonfiction books that not only provide a medium for modeling and practicing fluency, but also help children develop an understanding of new concepts and vocabulary. Notice that nonfiction text examples are almost equal in proportion to narrative texts. At the top of the pyramid, less frequent in comparison to the first two types, is some extra spice for children’s fluency diet: songs, poetry, chants, and raps. Figure 5.7 shows a fluency pyramid scheme for passage selection in the elementary grades.

**Selecting Appropriately Challenging Reading Materials.** Passages only read aloud by the teacher during modeling can be at reading levels well above the abilities of the listeners. In these cases, the teacher is
Chapter 5 Developing Children’s Reading Fluency

Figure 5.6 Sample Lesson Plan: The Fluency Formula

**Instructional Standard or Objective:** Children will pay attention to punctuation to help them read expressively.

**Materials**
- Book—*In a Tree*, pp. 18–19
- Overhead transparency
- Overhead projector
- Fluency Phones
- Three colored overhead markers
- Text types: Narrative (), Information Books (), Poetry ()

**Explain**

**What**
Today, boys and girls, we are going to be learning about how to read expressively. Important parts of reading expressively are pausing, stopping, and raising or lowering our pitch as we read. Pitch is how high or low the sounds are that we make with our voices. (*Demonstrate high and low pitch.*) “Stopping” means we quit reading for a moment, like this. (*Demonstrate.*) “Pausing” means we take a breath and keep reading. Marks on the page called *punctuation marks (point)* help us to know when we need to pause, stop, or raise or lower our pitch.

**Why**
We need to read expressively with pauses or stops so that we can show that we understand what we are reading. Punctuation tells us what we need to know about how to express the words, phrases, and sentences with the right pauses, stops, and pitch.

**When/Where**
Whenever we read, we should pay attention to the punctuation so that we know where to pause, stop, and raise or lower our pitch.

**Teacher Modeling**

**Example**
I am going to begin by reading this page with good expression, paying attention to what the punctuation tells me to do, such as pause, stop, or raise or lower my pitch. Please look at the page on the overhead. Notice that I have colored each punctuation mark with a different color to help you see it more clearly. Follow what I read with your eyes. Listen very carefully to see if I stop, pause, or change my pitch where I should.

**Non-example**
Now I am going to read this page with poor expression, paying little or no attention to what the punctuation tells me to do. I won’t pause, stop, or raise or lower my pitch. Please look at the page on the overhead. Notice that I have colored each punctuation mark with a different color to help you see it more clearly. Follow what I read with your eyes. Listen very carefully to see where I should have changed my reading to stop, pause, or raise or lower my pitch.

**Guided Oral Reading Practice: Teacher and Students; Students with Students**

**Teacher and Students**

Now that I have shown you how and how not to read this page, let’s practice it together! We will begin reading this page all together. (*Point.*) Watch my pen so that we can all stay together.
simply demonstrating how a passage can be read with proper intonation and rate. When selected for children to read themselves, either with the teacher or with another student, passages should conform to the following guidelines.

- **Use selections within the decoding range of the learner—95 percent or better accuracy.** A good rule of thumb to remember is that the range of readers in a classroom
is usually equal to plus or minus the grade level designation. For example, in second grade classrooms there can be a range of readers from a pre-primer level to fourth grade. In a fourth grade classroom there can be struggling readers at emergent or first grade levels, as well as students reading at an eighth grade level.

- **Text type and your objective should be a good match.** The objective of your lesson, depending on the needs of your students, should fall within the domain of accuracy, rate, or expression. If your purpose is to practice accuracy of decoding, then you may want to choose what is called **decodable text.** Decodable texts are usually short books that use common spelling patterns, or **orthography.** If, on the other hand, your objective is to help readers adjust their reading speeds according to their purpose or type of text, then you may want to choose a variety of text samples for demonstration and practice sessions, such as stories, mathematics word problems, history readings, and poetry.

- **Limit the number of unfamiliar words.** Words that are new to students should appear in the passage rarely—about 1 in 150 words—for children to have a high probability of learning to read these words (Hiebert, 2006).

- **Target oral reading rates.** Identify these rates using grade level, time of year, and 50th percentile performance as desirable goals. (see Table 5.3.)

- **Practice with a variety of text genres.** A variety of literary genres should be used in balanced proportions. (see the Fluency Pyramid in Figure 5.7.)

**Developing an Explicit Lesson Plan.** Once you have completed the above tasks, begin lesson planning. Using the sample lesson plan in Figure 5.6 as a template, you will be able to map out in some detail the flow of explicit fluency instruction to offer. It is important that new teachers work through this process so that instruction is presented in a seamless and explicit way. Scaffold instruction to help students work through their individual zones of proximal development, and use verbal instructions and explanations to help them make sense of fluency concepts so that nothing important is omitted. Even veteran teachers
What Are Effective Fluency Teaching Strategies?

who are new to fluency instruction should fully complete the explicit fluency instruction lesson template, since they are very often “first-time” teachers in the reading skill area of fluency. Once you get your “sea legs” with this model, lesson planning can become less detailed in terms of language, but the steps given should always be followed to ensure comprehensive instructional coverage of fluency elements and practice.

Each of the remaining parts of the lesson plan is briefly described in the sections that follow.

Lesson Part I: Passage Introduction and Sight Word Instruction

The Fluency Formula (R. Cooter & K. Cooter, 2002) begins in earnest with your introducing the selection to be read, much as you might for a book talk. Start by showing the book jacket and telling about the author. Explain why you chose this selection. Children should feel excited about hearing the selection.

Teach High-Frequency Sight Words. Words can be fluently recognized in one of two ways (Sadoski & Pavio, 2004). First, words can be recognized as wholes without analysis of the parts—this is called logographic reading. Second, words can be recognized through recoding each letter into a sound, holding the sounds in sequence in short-term memory, and then blending the sequenced sounds together. This is referred to as phonological recoding. Regardless of the way words are initially recognized, for mature readers, most words have become sight words through repetitious exposure (practice) and attention to visual (logographic) and/or letter-sound (phonological recoding) details.

When young children begin to read, they often try to memorize words as wholes to avoid the difficult task of learning letter–sound relationships and using these relationships to analyze unknown words. This is often characterized as an immature and inefficient way for children to learn to read (Chall, 1983). There is, however, a group of words that occur so frequently in written language that it is better if children are helped to remember these words logographically, or as wholes, without resorting to repetitious letter–sound analysis. These words, called high-frequency words or sight words, are words that teachers should help children recognize instantaneously.

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) and Burns, Griffin, and Snow (1999) recommend that early reading instruction include the learning of sight words. How can teachers help young children learn a corpus of high-frequency words by sight? One of the most popular and pervasive practices in today’s elementary classrooms for teaching sight words is the use of a word wall.

A word wall is a large visual display, usually posted on a wall of the classroom, featuring high-frequency words. Many teachers struggle with deciding how many high-frequency words should be displayed. We recommend that kindergarten children fluently recognize a core of up to 25 of the most-frequently occurring sight words as featured in the Thorndike-Lorge high-frequency word list shown in Table 5.1. We further recommend that first and second grade students fluently recognize a core of 107 high-frequency words as shown in the Zeno et al. (1995) word list contained in Table 5.2.

Word walls are usually organized in alphabetical order. High-frequency words are typically displayed underneath an alphabet letter category in the order in which they were introduced or taught. Some word walls use colored ink to help children distinguish one sight word from another. Still other word walls make use of word shapes to help children remember high-frequency words. These three practices,
while intuitively appealing, often conflict with the goal of helping children learn high-frequency words by sight. Displaying words underneath a particular letter is not the problem; rather, leaving the words in fixed order for long periods of time may cause children to use order cues rather than careful examination of the word to remember it. For example, a child might remember the word *the* because it is the fourth word in the list under the letter T. We strongly recommend that the order of sight words within each alphabetical category be regularly altered so that a word’s position does not replace looking at it to identify it.

We also caution teachers against the use of color cues for displaying sight words on the word wall. Young children often learn colors long before they recognize words. Here again, a kindergarten child may remember the word *the* as the “green” word on the word wall, memorizing its color rather than the word itself.

Finally, we recommend that teachers not use word shapes or configuration when displaying sight words. Research has shown that configuration is one of the least reliable and least relied-upon cues for recognizing high-frequency words among those available to children (Harris & Sipay, 1990). Imagine, for a moment, that a kindergarten child is viewing a word wall that displays the words in the same order all year, using different colored ink and the configuration (shape) of words. It is highly probable that such a child might know the word *the* because it is the fourth word under the letter T, it is green, and it has one hump at the beginning of the word. Instead, we recommend that teachers use light or white card stock cut in standard rectangular size, standard black ink, and familiar print styles when making a word wall. Of course, a word wall should be in a location that can be clearly seen by teacher and children from all angles. Print size should also be large enough to meet the same test.

We have also found that the effectiveness of a word wall is not found in *having* it, but rather in *using* it in daily reading and writing instruction and practice. As young children learn to recognize basic sight words, they benefit from three interrelated processes in remembering these words: recognition, searching, and writing. Each of the three should be used in conjunction with the others.

Recognition involves visually distinguishing one sight word from others. This is accomplished by simple, game-like practices using word wall words, such as matching pairs. Make two copies of the 25 sight words (50 total cards) in kindergarten or 107 (214 total cards) in first and second grades. Shuffle the deck of sight word cards. Lay them out on a table top in five rows of five (or ten rows of eleven). The first player turns over two cards and reads each sight word exposed. If the two cards match, the player takes the cards and gets another turn. If they do not match, the player must put them back face down in exactly the same place, and the next player gets a turn. Play continues until all card pairs have been matched. Students can review the words after the game.

Searching for sight words is another process that may be used to aid retention. Look for sight words in easy books or other printed text like magazine or newspaper pages. Use highlighter tape or highlighter pens, or place a clear overhead transparency over the pages of the text selected. Give students one to three sight words to search for and a specific time frame (such as three minutes) to circle or cover with tape as many of those sight words as they can. Using a transparency and an overhead marker does not damage the book or text; the transparency can be cleaned repeatedly and used with other books or texts.

Writing sight words from teacher dictation leaves a more permanent “cognitive footprint” than do recognition or searching tasks. Children can be directed to quickly and accurately write the words dictated in a Beat-the-Clock format. This game requires that children have paper and pencil or, better yet, a gel board or white board.
What Are Effective Fluency Teaching Strategies?

and dry erase marker for writing. Set a timer for three minutes. Start by saying, “Go! Write the sight word *the.* Count ten seconds and say, “Write the sight word *me.*” Proceed until three minutes have elapsed. Then ask children to show you their sight word dictation. Make quick notes about each student’s performance on the dictation task. Then say, “Let’s see if we can beat the clock.” This time, only count to nine between each sight word dictated. This slightly faster pace challenges children to write their sight words as dictated more quickly, yet legibly and accurately. Using a simple graph for each child can also be used to help them beat their own best time.

Other questions related to the teaching of sight words relate to the pacing of sight word instruction and sight word review. We recommend teaching a new sight word each day in kindergarten and three sight words per day in first and second grade. Reviews of sight words already taught should occur using the “law of 10-20” recently researched by H. Pashler (2006). Sight word review cycles should take place between 10 and 20 percent of the time to be remembered. Hence six months is 183 days. The law of 10-20 suggests that a complete review of 25 kindergarten sight words should occur between every 18–36 days. Thus sight words, like other memory tasks, are best learned through distributed practice and review rather than from massed practice. Rather than teaching one to two sight words a week, these sight words should be taught quickly over time with spaced reviews. For example, the 25 sight words taught in kindergarten would take 5 weeks at one word per day, with seven review cycles occurring during the year. In first grade, the remaining 82 (of the 107) taught 3 per day would allow for seven review cycles during the school year in 1–2 grades.

Some children will struggle to remember specific sight words. If this is the case, we recommend using Cunningham’s (1980) “drastic strategy.” Although this strategy was intended to be used for teaching hard-to-remember “four-letter” function words, glue words, or structure words that do not have concrete meanings, the strategy is easily adapted for helping young children remember difficult-to-learn, high-frequency sight words.

You will need word cards, envelopes, markers, scissors, and classroom chalk or dry erase boards. Although the “drastic strategy” uses a six-step process, not all steps are always necessary. Carefully observe the progress of children to determine at which step the strategy has produced the desired memory for sight word learning. The six steps follow:

**Step 1:** Teacher Storytelling
Select a sight word and enlarge it on a card for each child in the class or group. Tell a story in which the displayed word—*the*—is used. Before you begin your story, tell students that they are to hold up their cards each time they hear the targeted word in your story. As you tell the story, pause briefly at those points where the word is used to “emphasize” it.

**Step 2:** Child Storytelling
Invite volunteers to tell a story in which the sight word displayed on the card is used. Tell students that both you and they will hold up the card containing the targeted sight word as it is used in the volunteer’s story. Be an active listener and model for your students during this step.

**Step 3:** Scramble, Sort, and Find
Cut the targeted sight word into letters and scramble these letters on the student’s table or desktop. The student’s task is to unscramble the letters to create the word. Repeat the process three times.
168 Chapter 5 Developing Children’s Reading Fluency

Step 4: Take a Picture and Write It
Write the targeted word on the board. Ask children to pretend their eyes are the lens and shutter of a camera. Direct them to carefully look at the word on the board and close their eyes to take a picture of it in their minds. After several seconds, have them open their eyes to see if they correctly imaged the item in their minds. This can be repeated three times if necessary. Erase the word and have children write it on a card at their seats. Write the word on the board again for checking.

Step 5: Fill in the Blank
In a pocket chart, display several sentence strips containing a blank in the place of the word under study. Use sentences from previously read text in a big book or other enlarged text from shared reading. As you read the sentence strips and come to the missing word, invite a child to come forward and write the missing word on a card or strip and place it in the sentence strip at the correct location.

Step 6: New Text Close Reading
Using a new piece of enlarged text during shared reading, tell children to be on the lookout for the word under study. When they detect the word in the new text, they should make a signal or sound that the group predetermines before engaging in the shared reading.

Introduce Important Vocabulary. Introduce any new vocabulary that may not be familiar to students. There are three levels of vocabulary knowledge (National Reading Panel, 2000): unknown words, acquainted words, and established words. **Unknown words** are completely unfamiliar to students. **Acquainted words** are those students have some familiarity with, but which will require some kind of review. **Established words** are known to students when they hear them spoken or see them in print. Unknown and acquainted words that are important in the selection you plan to model are the ones you will need to introduce before reading aloud. In Chapter 6 dealing with vocabulary instruction, we go much more into detail on this point.

Introduce the Targeted Fluency Skill. Before reading the text, draw students’ attention to the fluency skill you plan to emphasize. As noted earlier, the three main areas of fluency delineated in reading research are accuracy, rate, and expression. Name and describe the fluency skill you will be modeling, and then return to the skill after reading. Reread short portions of the selection, “thinking out loud” for students how you are using the fluency strategy. Thinking out loud (metacognition) is the essence of modeling and you should use many examples. Saturate students, if you will, with examples drawn from your reading.

One of the fluency skills you will want your students to develop is the ability to “chunk text”—read in meaningful phrases. **Scooping** (Hook & Jones, 2002) is a strategy useful in chunking phrases (see Figure 5.8).

Lesson Part II: Guided Oral Reading Practice
This part of the Fluency Formula provides students with repeated and monitored oral reading experiences. These **guided oral reading** sessions are at the heart of the Fluency Formula and are based on the very best reading research. The National Reading Panel (2000) noted:

> [Guided oral reading] encourages students to read passages orally with systematic and explicit guidance and feedback from the teacher. . . . Guided repeated
1. The teacher orally introduces the text after first having a discussion about the content and important vocabulary. She also sets up a listening center with a tape-recording of the modeled passage for students’ use for comparisons.

2. Students read selected phrases from the text while scooping under them with a finger or a pencil.

   In the tree on the lawn

3. Students read selected sentences from the text individually while scooping phrases (with spaces between phrases.)

   Meg told Jim her kite was stuck in a tree

4. Students read the text while scooping phrases within the passage (with spaces between the phrases.)

   Meg told Jim her kite was stuck in a tree. Jim ran on the lawn to get his bike. He rode his bike to find a ladder. Jim used the ladder to get the kite.

5. Students read the paragraph as a whole without scooping and without spaces.

6. This final reading is compared to the first reading in terms of fluency (accuracy, speed, and rhythm). In the beginning, timing a student as she reads connected text may not be as important as monitoring that she is applying prosodic features and chunking the text into syntactic units. Timing may be incorporated once rhythm has been clearly established.

oral reading procedures that included guidance from teachers, peers, or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels. These studies were conducted in a variety of classrooms in both regular and special education settings with teachers using widely available instructional materials. . . . These results . . . apply to all students—good readers as well as those experiencing reading difficulties. (p. 12)

Two kinds of guided oral reading are called for in Step II of the Fluency Formula. The first is done with the aid and guidance of the teacher. The second involves repeated readings with a peer. In each case, the student has ample practice rereading texts for fluency and for getting feedback from a more fluent reader.

**Guided Oral Reading with Teacher Feedback.** Guided reading is one means of providing oral reading practice that is guided by the teacher in small groups (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Mooney, 1990). Children are grouped by developmental levels that reflect a range of competencies, experiences, and interests. The strategy centers on developing the child's ability to successfully process text with limited teacher guidance and interaction.

Guided reading groups are composed of six to eight children who work together for a period of time under the direct guidance of the teacher. It is important to note that the membership in guided reading groups should change as children progress during the year. This is a crucial concern. Failure to modify groups as students progress can result in static ability groups much like the “Eagles, Bluebirds, and Buzzards” of earlier days. The static nature of ability groups in the past—particularly those comprised of struggling readers left in the “lower” developmental groups—caused children to suffer damage to their self-esteem and lowered academic expectations for them.

**Getting to Know English Learners**

Grouping for ELs must be modified during the year, too. Groups with same-language speakers who are more fluent readers are helpful, as our groups where English-speaking peers model read-alouds.

**Video Classroom**

Choral Readings Build Fluency.
Visit the Video Classroom on the Teacher Prep Website (www.prenhall.com/teacherprep) to View “The Second Rereading in a K–3 Multilingual Classroom”.

As you view this clip, relate the descriptions of fluency to the choral reading.

- Accuracy and ease of decoding (automaticity)
- An age or grade level appropriate reading speed or rate
- Appropriate use of volume, pitch, juncture, and stress (prosodic features) in one’s voice
- Appropriate text phrasing or “chunking”

**Differentiating Instruction**

How are choral readings multi-level?
What would be the benefits of this approach for struggling readers and second language learners?
What Are Effective Fluency Teaching Strategies?

Success in fluency instruction during guided reading hinges on children working with texts appropriate to their reading level. Thus, the notion of **leveled books**—books categorized according to their difficulty so that they can be matched to students reading at that level—is an important one for fluency instruction. Before a guided reading group is begun, the teacher must take great care to match the level of text to the identified needs of a group of children to ensure that the group can enjoy and control the story throughout the first reading. Texts chosen for each leveled group should present children with a reasonable challenge, but also with a high degree of potential success.

Here is a listing of criteria typically used for leveling books for guided reading instruction (see Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4**  General Explanation of Criteria for Determining the Reading Levels of Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels 1–20 (A–K)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levels 1–4 (A–D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language patterns are repeated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Illustrations match and explain most of the text. Actions are clearly presented without much in the way of extraneous detail that might confuse the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The text is likely to match the experiences and conceptual knowledge common to most beginning readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The language of the text developmentally matches the syntax and organization of most young children’s speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The sentences and books themselves are comparatively short (e.g., 10–60 words).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Print is carefully laid out so that it consistently appears on the same place on the page throughout each book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assumption at this level: When students encounter an unknown word in print, they can easily use context from known words and illustrations along with language pattern cues and early word analysis skills for successful decoding.

| Levels 5–8 (D–E) |
| • Reader often sees predictable, repetitive language patterns; however, the same pattern does not dominate the entire text. |
| • There is greater variation in language patterns, as opposed to one or two word changes. |
| • Words and phrases may express different meanings through varying sentence structures. |
| • By the end of these stages, the syntax is more typical of written or “book” language. |
| • Illustrations provide minimal support for readers’ determination of exact language. |

| Levels 9–12 (E–G) |
| • Variation in sentence patterns is now the norm. |
| • There are longer sentences with less predictable text. |
| • Written language styles and genre become more prominent, including the use of some verb forms not often used by young children in oral settings. |
| • The average sentence length in text increases (double that found in levels 5–8). |
| • Events in a story may continue over several pages. |
| • Illustrations provide only moderate support to the meaning of the stories. |

| Levels 13–15* (G–H) |
| (”Consider these characteristics as enhancements to the description for levels 9–12.”) |
| • There is a greater variety of words and the inclusion of more specialized vocabulary. |
| • Pictures provide some support for the overall meaning of the story, but cannot be used by the reader to interpret the precise message. |

| Levels 16–20 (I–K) |
| • Stories or sequences of events are longer. |
| • Story events are developed more fully than those in texts at lower levels. |
| • Vocabulary is progressively richer and more varied. |
| • Illustrations are used to help to create atmosphere and setting rather than to specifically depict content of the text. |
| • Full pages of print are now the norm. |
Table 5.5  Guided Reading Leveling Comparisons

Here is a handy guide to help you translate books from publishers using Guided Reading ratings to leveling systems common in one-to-one tutorial programs (i.e., Reading Recovery, Cooter & Cooter’s BLAST program, etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level (Basal)</th>
<th>Guided Reading Level (Founta-Pinnell)</th>
<th>One-to-One Tutoring Level</th>
<th>Stages of Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Primer</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>6–8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primer</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>J–K</td>
<td>18–20</td>
<td>Fluent Extending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L–M</td>
<td>24–28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O–P</td>
<td>34–38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade</td>
<td>Q–R</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 5.5 we include a useful reading level cross-referencing guide comparing grade levels to guided reading levels, and then to Reading Recovery levels (a popular remedial reading program for first grade students), and then the stages of reading.

Lesson Planning for Guided Reading. The basic lesson pattern employed in guided reading lessons consists of seven phases, which are listed and explained in Figure 5.9.

Teacher Feedback During Instruction. Understanding the nature, quantity, and quality of teacher feedback during guided oral reading, as well as in other “coaching” situations, is a crucial part of helping students become fluent readers. The following self-assessment questions for teachers are provided to assist in this process.

1. Am I more often telling the word than providing a clue?
2. What is the average self-correction rate of my students?
3. Do I assist poor readers with unknown words more often than good readers? If so, why?
What Are Effective Fluency Teaching Strategies?

4. Am I correcting miscues even when they do not alter the meaning of the text? If so, why?

5. Does one reading group tend to engage in more self-correction than other groups? If so, why?

6. Does one reading group have more miscues that go unaddressed than other groups?

7. What types of cues for oral reading errors do I provide and why?

8. What is my ultimate goal in reading instruction?

9. How do I handle interruptions from other students during oral reading? Do I practice what I preach?

10. How does my feedback influence the self-correction behavior of students?

11. Does my feedback differ across reader groups? If so, how and why?

12. Would students benefit more from a form of feedback different from that which I normally offer?

13. Am I allowing students time to self-correct (3–5 seconds)?

14. Am I further confusing students with my feedback?

15. Do I digress into “mini-lessons” mid-sentence when students make a mistake? If so, why?

16. Do I analyze miscues to gain information about the reading strategies students employ?

17. Does the feedback I offer aid students in becoming independent, self-monitoring readers? If so, how?

18. Do I encourage students to ask themselves, “Did that make sense?” when they are reading both orally and silently? If not, why not?

19. Do students need the kind of feedback I am offering them?


Choral Reading. Choral readings of text can be done in at least three ways. Wood (1983) recommends unison reading and echo reading. In unison reading, everyone reads together. During echo (sometimes called echoic) reading, the teacher or a student reads a passage aloud, and then everyone else “echoes” by repeating it. A third method we have found useful is antiphonal reading. Derived from ancient monastic traditions, antiphonal reading involves two groups. The first reading group reads a passage aloud (usually a sentence or two), and the second group echoes the reading.

Student-Assisted Fluency-Building Strategies. Partner or Paired Reading. Partner or paired reading (“buddy” reading) has a student reading aloud with a more fluent partner or one of equal fluency. The partner models fluent reading in place of the teacher, provides useful feedback, and helps with word recognition.

Usually partners take turns reading aloud an assigned passage to one another, with the more developed reader reading first, thus providing the model for fluent reading. The second reader then reads the passage in the same way as the first. The more fluent reader offers feedback on how his partner can read the passage more fluently, and the less fluent reader rereads the passage until he can do so independently.
Chapter 5  Developing Children's Reading Fluency

Figure 5.9  Guided Reading Lesson Overview

**Picture Talk** • Walk through a new book by looking at the pictures. Ask children, “What do you see?”

**First Reading** • Depending on the students’ developmental levels, the first reading is initially done by the teacher with children following the lead. Later, the teacher gradually releases responsibility for the first reading to the children by sharing the reading role and then fading into one who encourages children to try it on their own.

**Language Play** • In this phase of the guided reading lesson, the teacher carefully analyzes the text to find specific elements associated with written language to teach children how language works. For early emergent readers, this may mean letter identification, punctuation, or directionality. In the fluency stage, children might identify text genre or compound words.

**Rereading** • Children read the text again with the assistance of the teacher, a peer, or a mechanical device such as a computer or tape. Novice readers are encouraged to point to the text as they read, whereas fluent readers are encouraged to “read the text with your eyes” or silently.

**Retelling** • Children retell what they have read to their teacher or to their peers. Typically we say, “Can you tell me what you’ve read?” Sometimes we probe children’s retellings with other questions to prompt recall.

**Follow-up** • The most effective follow-up activity to a guided reading lesson is to invite children to take guided reading books home for demonstrating their ability to parents and siblings. This provides needed practice time and promotes increased confidence and self-esteem among young readers.

**Extensions** • Extending books through performances, murals, artwork, and even music helps children deepen their understandings and increase their interpretations of text.

1. Am I more often telling the word than providing a clue?
2. What is the average self-correction rate of my students?
3. Do I assist poor readers with unknown words more often than good readers? If so, why?
4. Am I correcting miscues even what they do not alter the meaning of the text? If so, why?
5. Does one reader group tend to engage in more self-correction than other groups?
6. Does one reading group have more miscues that go unaddressed than other groups?
7. What types of cues for oral reading errors do I provide, and why?
8. What is my ultimate goal in reading instruction?
9. How do I handle interruptions from other students during oral reading? Do I practice what I preach?
10. How does my feedback influence the self-correction behavior of students?
11. Does my feedback differ across reader groups? If so, how and why?
12. Would students benefit more from a form of feedback different from that which I normally offer?
13. Am I allowing students time to self-correct (3–5 seconds)?
14. Am I further confusing students with my feedback?
15. Do I digress into “mini-lessons” mid-sentence when students make a mistake? If so, why?
16. Do I analyze miscues to gain information about the reading strategies students employ?
17. Does the feedback I offer aid students in becoming independent self-monitoring readers? If so, how?
18. Do I encourage students to ask themselves, “Did that make sense?” when they are reading both orally and silently? If not, why not?
19. Do students need the kind of feedback I am offering them?

Readers of about the same ability are sometimes paired for this exercise. The difference is that both readers first hear the teacher reading the passage as the model, then the two “buddies” take turns reading to each other and offering feedback until they can each read the passage fluently.

The Neurological Impress Method. The neurological impress method (NIM) involves the student and a more fluent reader in reading the same text aloud simultaneously (Heckelman, 1966, 1969). Unlike partner reading examples described earlier, NIM has the student and more fluent model reading in unison at the same volume at first. The model’s voice gradually fades as the student becomes more confident.

The use of multiple sensory systems during NIM is thought to “impress” upon the student the fluent reading patterns of the teacher through direct modeling. It is assumed that exposing students to numerous examples of texts (read in a more sophisticated way than struggling readers could achieve on their own) will enable them to achieve automaticity in word recognition more naturally. This assumption stands to reason when viewed in light of more recent advances in learning theory, especially those espoused by Vygotsky (1978).

Each NIM session is aimed at reading as much material as possible in 10 minutes. Reading material selected for the first few sessions should be easy, predictable, and make sense for the reader. However, other more challenging materials that are on the student’s normal guided reading level can eventually be used.

To use NIM, the student sits slightly in front and to one side of his or her partner as they hold the text. The more fluent reader moves her finger beneath the words as both partners read in near-unison fashion. Both try to maintain a comfortably brisk and continuous rate of oral reading. The more fluent reader’s role is to keep the pace when the less-proficient student starts to slow down. Pausing for analyzing unknown words is not permitted. The more fluent reader’s voice is directed at her partner’s ear so that words are seen, heard, and spoken simultaneously.

Because many struggling readers have not read at an accelerated pace before, their first efforts often sound like mumbling. Most less-fluent readers typically take some time to adjust to NIM; however, within a few sessions they start to feel more at ease. Many struggling readers say they enjoy NIM because it allows them to read more challenging and interesting material like “good” readers.

At first, the more fluent reader’s voice will dominate oral reading, but in later sessions it should be reduced gradually. This will allow the less-fluent student to assume the vocal lead naturally. Usually three sessions per week are sufficient to obtain noticeable results. This routine should be followed for a minimum of 10 consecutive weeks (Henk, 1983).

NIM can also be adapted for group use (Hollingsworth, 1970, 1978). Here the teacher tape-recorders 10 minutes of his or her own oral reading in advance. Individual students can read along with the tape while following the text independently, or the tape can be used in a listening center to permit the teacher to spend individual time with each student as others read with the tape. Despite the convenience of the prerecorded tape format, teachers’ and more fluent peers’ one-to-one interactions with individual students result in a better instructional experience.
**Technology-Assisted Reading Strategies: Read-Along Audio Cassettes and CDs.** In technology-assisted reading, children read a book with the assistance of a fluently read model on an audiotape or a computer. Technology-assisted reading for fluency development is a solution to the problem teachers experience in arranging one-to-one learning activities for students.

During a first reading using an audiotape, children follow along in their own copy of the text. They are instructed to point to each word as the fluent reading model says it on the audiotape. Younger children reading short books then read aloud with the tape three to five times or until they can read the text fluently. Students who are reading longer texts listen to the entire piece once, and then select a passage (usually 150–300 words) for repeated practice. Once they have read the passage repeatedly (3–5 times), they read the passage to the teacher.

Teacher management of technology-assisted fluency centers is of great importance. For some students, listening to a tape presents an opportunity to engage in off-task behaviors—looking like readers but not engaging (Stahl, 2004).

In recent years, a number of computer-based programs such as *Read Naturally* (Ihnot & Ihnot, 1996) at [http://www.readnaturally.com/](http://www.readnaturally.com/) and *Insights: Reading Fluency* (Adams, 2005) at [http://www.charlesbridge-fluency.com/](http://www.charlesbridge-fluency.com/) have been developed to provide students with repeated reading practice. Generally speaking, most of these computer programs use speech recognition software and immediate feedback as students read text aloud as it is presented on the computer screen. Computer-assisted reading has been found to be effective in improving fluency across a range of grade levels (National Reading Panel, 2000).

**Lesson Part III: Independent Fluency Practice**

A teacher who develops fluent readers is like a coach who develops Olympic swimmers. Numerous skills must be taught until the learner reaches the point of automaticity. If the student, or swimmer, is to become proficient, he or she must put in many hours of practice. You might say, then, that guided and independent reading practice opportunities are intended to develop Olympic readers—strong, capable, and fluent.

Three of the more productive strategies for independent practice are repeated readings (Dowhower, 1991; Samuels, 1979), wide oral reading (Kuhn, 2005b; Kuhn & Schwanenflugel, 2006) and modified sustained silent reading (Reutzel & Smith, in preparation).

**Repeated Readings.** *Repeated readings* engage students in reading interesting passages orally over and over again to enhance their reading fluency (Dowhower, 1987; Samuels, 1979). Although it might seem that reading a text again and again leads to boredom, it can actually have just the opposite effect.

In the beginning, texts selected for repeated readings should be short, predictable, and easy. When students attain adequate speed and accuracy with easy selections, the length and difficulty of texts can gradually be increased.

Repeated readings help students by expanding the total number of words they can recognize instantaneously. They also help improve students’ comprehension and oral elocution (performance) with each succeeding attempt. Improved performance quickly leads students to improved confidence regarding reading aloud and positive attitudes toward the act of reading. Additionally, because high-frequency words (*e.g.*, *the*, *and*, *but*, *was*, etc.) occur in literally all reading situations, the increase in automatic sight word knowledge developed through repeated readings transfers far beyond the practiced texts.
Research indicates that repeated readings are most effective when students are supported during independent reading. Audiotapes, tutors, or peer feedback are supports shown to be most effective during repeated reading practice sessions (National Reading Panel, 2000). For example, try providing a tape-recorded version of the story or poem to be practiced. Students can read along with an audiocassette tape to develop fluency similar to the model’s. Also, students can tape record their oral reading for immediate feedback. If two audiocassette tape players are available, have the student listen and read along with the taped version of the text using headphones. At the same time, use the second recorder for recording the student’s oral reading. The student can then replay his version simultaneously with the teacher-recorded version to compare, or simply listen to his own rendition alone. Either way, feedback can be both instant and effective.

You may use taped recordings of repeated readings for further analysis of each reader’s improvement in fluency and comprehension. Also, using a tape recorder frees you to work with other students, thereby conserving precious instructional time and leaving behind an audit trail of student readings for later assessment and documentation. On occasion, listen to tapes with the reader present. During this time, you and your students can discuss effective ways of reducing word recognition errors and increasing reading rate.

Several excellent technology-based software packages are available to augment classroom fluency practice and assessment. These rely heavily on repeated oral readings. We recommend that teachers examine Insights Reading Fluency RFCL 3 Workstation License at www.charlesbridge.com and Read Naturally at www.readnaturally.com. Both of these software packages are research-based.

**Wide Oral Reading.** Wide oral reading involves students in reading different text types (narrative, expository, and poetic) across a range of genres (fantasy, fairy tales, myths, science fiction, historical fiction, series books, autobiographies, diaries, journals, logs, essays, encyclopedia entries, information books) rather than reading the same book or passage over and over again. To assure that students read widely, many teachers find a reading genre wheel useful. See Figure 5.10.

Children are required to read one of each type of genre represented on the wheel during a specified period of time determined by the teacher. Children usually color in each part of the genre wheel as they complete it. In wide oral reading, children read aloud and receive support, guidance, feedback, and monitoring from a peer, a tutor, or the teacher. Some teachers encourage children to read aloud quietly, using a PVC-pipe-constructed fluency phone (pictured earlier in this chapter).

Recent research studies conducted by Stahl, Bradley, Smith, Kuhn, & Schwanenflugel (2005) and Kuhn (2005a & 2005b) suggest wide readings of different texts rather than repeated readings of the same text may be as effective or more so for second grade readers. Stahl et al. (2003) found that a wide-reading group significantly outperformed a repeated-reading group. In a separate study of small-group fluency instruction focused on struggling second grade readers, Kuhn (2005a & 2005b) found that wide oral reading of different titles and genres compared with repeated oral reading resulted in equivalent gains in fluency using several measures that included number of words read in isolation, correct words per minute in context, and expressive reading measures. In addition, the wide oral reading group performed better on answering text-implicit and explicit questions to assess comprehension than did the oral repeated reading group.
Modified Sustained Silent Reading (MSSR). Silent sustained reading (SSR) or some related form of silent, independent reading practice such as DEAR time (Drop Everything and Read) is a very popular method of independent reading practice in our schools. However, educators have discovered that simply providing all students the time to self-select their own books and read silently does not guarantee that they will actually engage in silent reading practice. In fact, it is quite possible that such practices allow many children (and some teachers) time to take an “in-the-room field trip” using a book as a prop!

Advocates of SSR suggest that allowing students time for unfettered, self-selected silent reading practice will lead to increases in motivation and engagement as compared with other less-motivating reading practices such as round-robin oral reading and/or the writing of book reports. Despite these claims, there is growing recognition among classroom practitioners and in the reading research community that some students derive little benefit from, or fail to make good use of, independent silent reading time (Gambrell, 1978; Lee-Daniels & Murray, 2000; Moore et al., 1980; Robertson et al., 1996). In fact, some elementary and secondary schools have experienced so many challenges implementing SSR over the long term that they have decided to discontinue the program (Halpern, 1981; Moore et al., 1980). Another problem with SSR is that some children become bored with the routine (Gambrell, 1978; Lee-Daniels & Murray, 2000). Other children, particularly younger or struggling readers, find it difficult to conform to the requirement of staying quiet, prompting some early grade teachers to modify the SSR acronym from “silent sustained reading” to “self-selected reading” (Reutzel & Cooter, 2000). Often, these younger, not-yet-independent students are in need of more—not less—assistance,
What Are Effective Fluency Teaching Strategies?

guidance, and scaffolding to stay on task and to benefit from time allocated to reading practice (Robertson et al., 1996). Despite SSR’s acceptance among some teachers, students, and reading researchers, many other educators and researchers, including members of the National Reading Panel, steadfastly maintain that more research needs to be conducted into the value of SSR and at what levels of reading development it may or may not be effective (Efta, 1984; Manning & Manning, 1984; Moore et al., 1980; National Reading Panel, 2000; Robertson et al., 1996).

One well-known concern associated with the implementation of SSR as described in the literature and as implemented in many classrooms across the nation is the conspicuous absence of interaction around the reading of texts or any accountability for whether or not students actually read during this allocated time. It can be argued, and often has been argued, that teachers who themselves read silently during SSR time are, in fact, teaching by modeling the behaviors of a silent, engaged “reader.” But no research has ever established the effect of teachers serving as “silent reading models” on either the achievement or the engagement of elementary-aged students. Conversely, we argue that modeling silent reading behaviors without discussion, interaction, and teacher explanation is often so transparent for many young students that it is entirely overlooked. Along this same line of criticism, Stahl (2004) notes that, “Many SSR advocates do not allow teachers to check up on children or recommend that teachers read their own books during this time to be a model of a reader. . . . One failing of SSR is that teachers may not monitor their children’s reading . . . (p. 206). As a result, reading practice as found in the implementation of SSR may or may not be useful for children, but it is highly unlikely to be effective without the active monitoring, interaction, and guidance of a concerned teacher.

Recent research (Bryan, Fawson, & Reutzel, 2003) demonstrated that when classroom teachers randomly monitored their students during SSR through brief interactions and accountability conferences, even the most disengaged students in the class remained on task for up to three weeks without additional random monitoring visits. These findings seem to suggest that rather than reading silently to themselves, teachers ought to jettison the traditional SSR practice of modeling reading and instead engage in random monitoring of students’ reading during SSR. Furthermore, the National Reading Panel (2000) asserted from their review of forms of reading practice that one prominent feature of effective time spent in reading practice was receiving feedback about one’s reading. In this particular respect, the National Reading Panel (2000) also endorsed the need for teachers, and others, to monitor and interact with students around their reading. It is clear from these findings and criticisms that, without monitoring, teachers cannot be assured that children are in fact reading during traditional SSR time at all! As a result, we have designed and researched a modified silent sustained reading process that has been shown to equal the effects of the National Reading Panel’s (2000) recommended approach of oral repeated readings (guided oral reading) with feedback among third grade students.

The way modified silent sustained reading (MSSR) works is simple. Students are encouraged to read widely from across a variety of genres using a reading genre wheel like that shown in Figure 5.10. Students are asked to read one self-selected book from each slice of the reading genre wheel before selecting another book from that genre to read. This approach assures that students are reading widely. Next, students self-select an independent-level book of interest to them from a collection of leveled books displayed by genre in the classroom library. For
Figure 5.11  Rule-of-Thumb Strategy for Choosing “Just Right” Books

2. Open the book to any page that has lots of words on it.
3. Begin reading aloud or silently. When you come to a word you do not know, hold up your small finger.
4. If you come to another word you do not know, hold up your next finger. If you use up all of your fingers on one hand (and come to your thumb) on one page, then the book is too hard and you should put it back. Find another book you like just as well and repeat the ROT exercise to make sure it is just right for you.

example, students wanting to read a fairy tale will go to the fairy tale section of the classroom library and select a book at their level by looking at the back of the book for a colored dot that indicates a match with their independent reading level. Alternatively, children can make sure the book they select will not be too hard for them using a strategy known as “Rule-of-Thumb,” or ROT, that is taught to them by the teacher (see Figure 5.11). Many teachers like to use the chart below that shows the steps in (ROT).

Once students have chosen their books, they are ready to read. The goal is for students to read a total of 20 minutes per day in a self-selected book chosen from among various genres. Younger students may need to have two 10-minute periods of MSSR time. Teachers often set a timer for the amount of MSSR time they have allocated; the children read while the teacher circulates among them, randomly stopping and asking students to read aloud the book they have chosen. The teacher may ask the student some questions to measure comprehension, or talk with the student about her or his goal for reading in the next few days. The teacher also discusses with each student monitored a way that she or he can share with others what she or he has been reading, including posters, oral or written book reports, sharing a favorite part of the book through a read-aloud performance, or other form of expression. Teachers often give prompts like the following.

“I’d like you to draw me a picture of your favorite character when you finish reading this story.”

“Find five ____ (e.g., color, describing, number, etc.) words for me as you read.”

“I will want you to act out one of the characters when you finish and I’ll see if I can guess which one it is!”

After completing the reading of a book, students color in the appropriate genre in their reading genre wheel and tell the teacher they are ready to share their book. (In Chapter 11, we discuss several ways of sharing a book response with the group or the teacher). Stahl (2004) has indicated that for MSSR to be effective, student reading practice must be monitored by the teacher regularly!

Step IV: Performance Reading for Fluency Assessment

Performance reading has students reading aloud for the teacher and/or an audience so that the teacher can monitor fluency growth. Students prepare for the exercise,
regardless of format, by orally rereading the text to be performed until they can read it with maximum fluency. There are several ways this can be done that have found support in evidence-based research. Before we get to those, we will examine a very well-known approach that you should not use—round-robin reading.

Long ago, teachers commonly relied on round-robin reading as a means for listening to students read orally. Students would sit in a circle, and the teacher would call on a student to begin reading orally from a story in the basal reader while the other students would follow along. After the first student read a paragraph or two, the teacher would stop him or her and call on the next student to continue reading. This process was repeated until every child in the circle had a chance to read aloud.

Though the simplicity of round-robin is very appealing, research has revealed it to be far less effective than other available strategies for monitoring fluency development. The process can even have a negative impact on some children (Eldredge, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, 1996). Round-robin fails to give children adequate opportunities for repeated readings before performing, defeats comprehension (i.e., when a student realizes the paragraph he’ll be asked to read is three ahead of the current student in the “hot seat,” he’ll tend to look ahead and start silently reading his passage feverishly, hoping he won’t “mess up” when it’s his turn), and causes some students embarrassment when they are unable to read their paragraph fluently. Our advice? Do not use round-robin in your classroom; there are better alternatives that will help you monitor fluency development, improve comprehension, and protect fragile egos in the process. Following are several activities that can be used for performance reading found to be effective in classrooms.

Readers’ Theatre. Perhaps the most successful performance reading strategy, in terms of the research (Sloyer, 1982; National Reading Panel, 2000, Griffith & Rasinski, 2004) is readers’ theatre. Readers’ theatre involves rehearsing and performing before an audience a script that is rich with dialogue. The script itself may be one from a book or, in the upper elementary or middle school grades, could be developed by a group of students working in collaboration as part of a literature response activity (Cooter & Griffith, 1989).

Stayter and Allington (1991) tell about a readers’ theatre activity for which a group of heterogeneously grouped seventh graders spent five days reading, rehearsing, and performing short dramas. After a first reading, students began to negotiate about which role they would read. More hesitant students were permitted to opt for smaller parts, but everyone was required to participate. As time passed, students critiqued each others’ readings and made suggestions as to how they should sound (e.g., “You should sound like a snob”). The most common response in this experience was how repeated readings through drama helped them better understand the text. One student said,

“The first time I read to know what the words are. Then I read to know what the words say and later as I read I thought about how to say the words. . . . As I got to know the character better, I put more feeling in my voice. (Stayter & Allington, 1991, p. 145)

Texts selected for readers’ theatre are often drawn from oral traditions, poetry, or quality picture books designed to be read aloud by children. However, nonfiction
passages can also be adapted for presentation. Selections should, whenever possible, be packed with action, have an element of suspense, and comprise an entire, meaningful story or nonfiction text. Also, texts selected for use in readers’ theatre should contain sufficient dialogue to make reading and preparing the text a challenge as well as necessitate the involvement of several children as characters. Narrative texts we have seen used in readers’ theatre include Martin and Archambault’s Knots on a Counting Rope (1987), Viorst’s Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (1972), and Barbara Robinson’s The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (1972).

Here is an easy procedure to follow. If a story is selected for reading, students should be assigned to read characters’ parts. If poems are selected, students may read alternating lines or groups of lines. Readers’ theatre in-the-round, where readers stand around the perimeter of the room surrounding their audience, is a fun and interesting variation for both performers and audience.

Students will often benefit from a discussion prior to reading a readers’ theatre script for the first time. This discussion helps students make connections between their background experiences and the text to be read. Also, struggling readers usually benefit from listening to a previously recorded performance of the text as a model prior to their initial attempts at reading the script.

Hennings (1974) described a simplified procedure for preparing readers’ theatre scripts for classroom performance. First, the text to be performed is read silently by individual students. Second, the text is read again orally, sometimes using choral reading in a group. After the second reading, readers either choose their parts, or the teacher assigns parts to them. We suggest that students be allowed to select their three most desired parts, write these choices on a slip of paper, and submit it to the teacher. Teachers should do everything possible to assign one of these three choices. The third reading is also an oral reading with students reading their parts with scripts in hand. There may be several rehearsal readings as students prepare for the final reading or performance in front of the class or other audience.

Readers’ theatre offers students a unique opportunity to participate in reading along with other, perhaps more-skilled readers. Participating in the mainstream classroom with better readers helps students having reading problems feel a part of their peer group, provides them with ready models of good reading, and demonstrates how good readers, through practice, become even better readers. Working together with other readers fosters a sense of teamwork, support, and pride in personal and group accomplishment.

Radio Reading. Radio reading possesses all of the effective elements of practice in developing fluency we have just discussed. Radio reading (Greene, 1979; Optiz & Rasinski, 1998;
Rasinski, 2003; Searfoss, 1975) is a variation on repeated reading and reader’s theater. We have found radio reading to most effective with short selections from information texts threaded together into a single news broadcast performance script.

In radio reading, each student is given a script to read aloud. Selections can be drawn from any print media, such as newspapers, magazines, or any print source that can be converted into a news story, such as short selections from articles or sections in information books. One student acts as the news anchor, while other students act in the roles of various reporters presenting the weather, sports, breaking news, and so on. Only the radio readers and the teacher have copies of the scripts. Because other students have no script to follow, minor word recognition errors will go unnoticed if the text is well presented. Struggling students enjoy radio reading from Known Your World. This publication is well-suited for use in radio reading activities because the content and level of difficulty make it possible for older readers with fluency problems to read with ease and enjoyment. Short selections from information books on weather, volcanoes, spiders, sports figures, or any other topic can be presented as short reports by various reporters during the news broadcast. An example of a radio reading script is found in Figure 5.12 titled, “Mummies Made in Egypt.” A script for the anchor may need to be written by students with help from the teacher to thread the various news reports together in a cohesive fashion. Once students have the radio reading script prepared for rehearsal, they gather materials for sound effects (police whistles, doors opening or shutting, people screaming, and others).

Before performing a radio reading for an audience, students should rehearse their parts with a partner or the teacher until they gain confidence and can read the script with proper volume, accuracy, rate, phrasing, and expression. Emphasis is first placed on the meaning of the text segments so that the students can paraphrase any difficult portions of the text if needed during the presentation. Students are encouraged to keep ideas flowing in the same way a reporter or anchor person does. After thorough rehearsal of the script with sound effects, the radio play is taped on cassette recorder and played over the school’s public address system into other classrooms.

Step V: Goal Setting and Monitoring Student Progress

To conclude the Fluency Formula, students are taught to self-assess their fluency after reading using a simple assessment rubric containing the elements of oral reading fluency shown in Figure 5.13. Once students have self-assessed and identified areas of strength and weakness, they are taught to select an appropriate fluency “fix-up” strategy (see Figure 5.14) and apply this strategy in improving their fluency in future practice sessions.

Finally, children read aloud the passage or book they have been practicing for one minute for the teacher. After completing the one-minute sample, the teacher charts or graphs the words correct per minute (wcpm) for younger children. For children in grades 2–3 they chart or graph the of words read correct per minute. Students set reasonable goals, usually two to four more words read correctly per minute the next week, trying to better their own reading rate and cut down on errors with each successive assessment. Also, students are encouraged to improve their prosody or vocal inflections, as fluent reading is not strictly confined to reading rate and accuracy (Dowhower, 1987; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005; Rasinski, 2006; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1995). Figure 5.15 illustrates a tracking graph for charting a student’s progress across several one-minute reading samples. Some
Chapter 5  Developing Children's Reading Fluency

Figure 5.12  Mummies Made in Egypt by Aliki

Radio reading script by
Dr. John A. Smith
Department of Elementary Education
Utah State University
Performers: Radio Newsperson #1 and Radio Newsperson #2

Radio Newsperson #1  We are here to report some very important information about mummies.
Radio Newsperson #2  We have learned that ancient Egyptians believed that a person would start a new life after he died. They believed that the person's soul would travel back and forth to a new world.
Radio Newsperson #1  They believed that the person's soul needed his body to come back to. That is why Egyptians preserved dead bodies as mummies.
Radio Newsperson #2  A mummy is a dead body, or corpse, that has been dried out so it will not decay. The earliest mummies were dried out naturally in the hot, dry sands of Egypt's deserts.
Radio Newsperson #1  Later, the Egyptians wrapped the mummies in cloth and buried them in wooden coffins or put them in tombs made of brick and stone.
Radio Newsperson #2  It took 70 days to prepare a mummy. First they took out the dead persons's inner organs. They cut a hole in the mummy's side to remove the intestines. They pulled the dead person's brains out through the nose with metal hooks.
Radio Newsperson #1  The inner organs were kept in jars with a chemical called natron that dried out the body parts. After the inner organs were removed, embalmers also put natron inside the body to dry it out.
Radio Newsperson #2  After 40 days, the natron was removed from the body, and the body was cleaned with oils and spices.
Radio Newsperson #1  The body was packed with new chemicals to keep it dry. The mummy's eyes were closed, and the nose was stuffed with wax.
Radio Newsperson #2  The hole in the mummy's side was sewn up and the mummy was carefully wrapped with long strips of cloth.
Radio Newsperson #1  After the embalmers finished wrapping the mummy, they painted it to look like the person and then covered it with resin, a sticky substance that dried into a hard covering.
Radio Newsperson #2  When the mummy was finished, they made a coffin to put the mummy in for burial. The coffin was decorated with pictures of gods and magic spells to protect it. Jewels and other treasures were also put into the coffin.
Radio Newsperson #1  Finally, the mummy and its coffin were placed in a tomb made of brick and stone. The Egyptian pyramids are large tombs that are burial places for powerful Egyptian rulers.
Radio Newsperson #2  There would be an elaborate funeral parade. The mummy would be placed in the tomb, sometimes in a secret chamber. Then the tomb would be sealed shut for the mummy's eternal resting place.
Radio Newsperson #1  Thank you very much, and now back to our teacher.
What Are Effective Fluency Teaching Strategies?

**Figure 5.13** Assessment Rubric of the Elements of Oral Reading Fluency

**Accurate Reading**

1. Slow down your reading speed.
2. Look carefully at the words and the letters in the words you didn’t read correctly on the page.
3. Think about if you know this word or parts of this word. Try saying the word or word parts.
4. Make the sound of each letter from left to right and blend the sounds together quickly to say the word.
5. Listen carefully to see if the word you said makes sense.
6. Try rereading the word in the sentence again.
7. After saying the word, use pictures to help you make sure you have the right word.
8. If the word still doesn’t make sense, ask someone to help you.

**Rate**

1. Adjust your reading speed to go slower when the text is difficult or unfamiliar, or you need to read to get detailed information.
2. Adjust your reading speed to go faster when the text is easy or familiar, or you are reading to just enjoy the book.

**Expression**

1. Try to read three or more words together before pausing, stopping, or taking a breath.
2. Take a big breath and try to read to the comma or end punctuation without stopping for another breath.
3. Be sure to raise or lower your pitch when you see punctuation marks at the end of sentences.
teachers draw a blue line indicating the number of wcpm needed to maintain grade level reading rates and use red lines to indicate the student’s actual performances. As an illustration of the power of graphing progress, one second grade student recently remarked when he absorbed at the fact that his red line was above the blue line: “Oh, I better slow down; I’ve gone over the blue line!” All students, especially struggling readers, find it greatly reinforcing to see visible evidence of their reading fluency improvement.

How Can Reading Fluency Instruction Be Adapted to Meet Diverse Student Needs?

Fluency Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI), based on repeated reading research, is an integrated lesson framework for providing differentiated instruction and practice in fluency (Stahl, Heubach, & Cramond, 1997; Kuhn & Schwanenflugel, 2006; Stahl 2004). FORI consists of three interlocking instructional steps: (1) a redesigned basal or core reading program lesson; (2) a free-reading period at school; and (3) a home reading program. Recent research on the effects of FORI showed that children receiving FORI instruction significantly outperformed a control group.

What Can Families and Communities Do to Develop Children’s Fluency?

(Stahl, et al., 2003). To provide a FORI lesson, teachers need a core reading or basal reading program text, an adequately appointed classroom library for free reading at school and home, extension activities drawn from the core or basal reading program text, a teacher-prepared graphic organizer of the text in the core or basal program, and a teacher-prepared audiotape for tape-assisted reading practice.

On the first day of a FORI reading lesson, the teacher begins by reading the core reading program story or text aloud to the class. Following the reading by the teacher, the students and teacher interactively discuss the text to place reading comprehension upfront as an important goal to be achieved in reading any text. Following this discussion, the teacher teaches vocabulary words and uses graphic organizers and other comprehension activities focused around the story or text.

On the second day of a FORI reading lesson, teachers can choose to have students echo read the core reading program text with the teacher or have children read only a part of the story repeatedly for practice with a partner or with the teacher. Following this practice session on the second day, the core reading program story is sent home for the child to read with his/her parents, with older siblings, or with other caregivers.

On the third and fourth day of a FORI lesson, children receive additional practice as well as participate in vocabulary and comprehension exercises based on the story read in the core reading program. On these two days, children are also given decoding instruction on difficult words in the core reading story or text.

On the fifth and final day of the FORI lesson, children are asked to generate a written response to the story to cement their comprehension of the text.

In addition to the basal or core reading program instruction to develop fluency found in the FORI framework, the teachers provide additional in-school free reading practice with instructional level books that are read alone or with a partner for between 15 and 30 minutes per day. At the beginning of the year, the time allocated to this portion of a FORI lesson is closer to 15 minutes; as the year progresses, it increases to 30 minutes. As a part of their homework assignment in the FORI framework, children are expected to read at home 15 minutes a day at least four days per week. This outside reading is monitored through the use of weekly reading logs turned in to the teacher (Stahl, 2004).

One very effective way to connect fluency practice from the school to the home is to recommend to parents to use closed-caption television (Koskinen, Wilson, & Jensema, 1985; Neuman & Koskinen, 1992). Closed-caption TV has been found to be a particularly effective tool for motivating students who are learning English as a second language to improve reading fluency. Closed-caption television, which uses written subtitles, provides students with meaningful and motivating reading material. Parents should carefully select high-interest television programs. They may even want to record and preview programs before making final selections for captioned TV practice at home (Koskinen et al., 1985).
One advantage of captioned TV fluency practice is that it does not require busy parents to sit and read daily with their children at home. However, if parents want to increase their involvement in captioned TV fluency practice, they can engage in a couple of different activities. First, parents and children can watch a part of the captioned TV program together. Then parents can stop the program and ask the child to predict what will happen next. They continue viewing the program so that the child can check his/her predictions. Second, after watching a closed-caption TV program, children can practice reading aloud along with the captions. If necessary, both the auditory portion and the closed captioning can be played simultaneously to provide children with support. At some later point, children should be allowed to practice reading the captioning without the auditory portion of the program. Koskinen et al. (1985) does “not recommend that the sound be turned off if this, in effect, turns off the children. The major advantage for using captioned television as fluency practice is the multisensory stimulation of viewing the drama, hearing the sound, and seeing the captions” (p. 6).

Summary

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately, with appropriate intonation and phrasing, and at an age-appropriate speed. Fluency instruction, because it helps readers achieve automatic decoding, provides the opportunity for readers to turn more of their mental energies toward comprehending the message of text. Reading fluency can be developed through explicit teacher-led instruction, teacher modeling of fluency skills, and by having students participate in guided oral repeated reading sessions. Fluency is further strengthened by engaging children in generous amounts of daily reading/rereading practice. Struggling readers and, in fact, all others benefit most from practice reading that provides feedback and monitoring in appropriately challenging texts. Monitoring and assessing children’s development of oral reading fluency is important in effecting needed improvements. Careful tracking of students’ oral reading progress should lead to goal-setting, which in turn leads to incremental improvements in students’ oral reading fluency.

Classroom Applications

1. In groups of four, perform the following tasks regarding a selected grade level.
   a. Identify your state’s standards for fluency instruction for the selected grade level. These can usually be located on the state’s department of education Web site.
   b. For each element of reading fluency (accuracy, rate, expression, and phrasing), determine which are addressed in the state standards and which are not.
What Can Families and Communities Do to Develop Children’s Reading Fluency?

c. Outline the strategies named in this chapter that would be appropriate for improving reading fluency at this level, and match each to one of the state standards.
d. If you are using this book as part of a college course, present your findings to the whole class. Be sure to provide your classmates with a copy of your findings for future reference.
e. If you are a small group of teachers from a school working through this exercise, share your findings with another grade-level team and your principal. Determine together whether a renewed emphasis on reading fluency is warranted in your school based on current classroom practices.

Recommended Readings