Reading Hall of Fame Member

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THE MEGABOOK OF FLUENCY

Strategies and Texts to Engage All Readers

INTRODUCTION

"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."

—Frederick Douglass

It was one of those years. Beth Thomas, a very dedicated third-grade teacher, knew she had her work cut out for her. Of the 24 students in her class, over half struggled with reading. Although nearly all students were proficient at word decoding, thanks to a new approach to phonics instruction that seemed to be working well, most of the strugglers did it in a slow and monotone manner. They expressed little joy or confidence in their reading as they labored from one word to another. To make matters worse, these students also struggled in comprehending what they read. When asked to retell a passage just read, for example, few could offer more than a few facts from the passage.

From previous professional development presentations that she had attended and her own professional reading, Beth knew that a lack of reading fluency was likely the problem. Even some of her good readers seemed to exhibit difficulties in fluency. So she decided that fluency instruction was just what her students needed in the coming year.

At the same time, Beth was not comfortable with the "speed read" approaches to fluency instruction that were in vogue at the time. Timed readings that required students to practice a short passage repeatedly for the primary purpose of reaching a prescribed reading speed were less-than-authentic reading activities. Were there other more authentic ways to provide fluency instruction that her students would find engaging and effective?

Fortunately for Beth, she began to think about the true nature of fluent speech and fluent reading. It's not speaking or reading fast; rather, fluency is speaking and reading with expression that reflects and adds to the meaning of the oral or written message. Beth began looking for texts and activities that lent themselves to expressive oral reading. She found poetry, songs, scripts, famous speeches, and other such texts that beg for expressive reading. And, she found ways for her students to perform these texts in real ways—poetry coffee houses, Readers' Theater festivals, classroom sing-alongs, and so forth. Her students began to beg to do more and more fluency work. It was the one of the best parts of the school day. Moreover, the authentic reading practice scenarios that Beth created led to significant improvements in her students' fluency and overall reading achievement in a matter of weeks! Beth is a believer in the importance of fluency and authentic fluency instruction.

Teachers across the country face Beth's predicament all the time. Reading fluency is a critical goal for reading success. Yet, the approaches for teaching fluent reading are often divorced

from real reading. Teachers are looking for approaches that go beyond increasing students' speed. This book is aimed at providing you, a dedicated and knowledgeable teacher, with smart alternatives.

What Is Fluency? All EARS!

Fluency is the ability to read with Expression, Automatic word recognition, Rhythm and phrasing, and Smoothness (EARS). Fluency has traditionally been neglected in reading programs (Allington, 1983), and when it has been embraced, it is often misunderstood (Rasinski, 2006, 2012). So having a good grasp of reading fluency is certainly an appropriate place to start.

We often think of the act of reading as involving two major competencies: word decoding (phonics) and comprehension. Fluency is, in a sense, a critical link between those two competencies (Rasinski, 2010). Fluency itself is made up of two subcomponents: word recognition automaticity and prosody, or expressive reading.

Automatic and Smooth Word Recognition

Automaticity and smoothness in word recognition is critical because it minimizes the cognitive energy needed to recognize many words, thus enabling the reader to focus on the more important task of comprehending the text. While reading this paragraph, you are likely exhibiting word recognition automaticity. As you read, you can accurately decode the words. In fact, most of the words you are encountering you are recognizing instantly and holistically, without applying any phonic analyses. Most of the words we encounter as proficient adult readers are read this way—as sight words we recognize automatically.

Beth's struggling readers were able to decode words accurately, but not automatically. They had to use their phonics skills to analyze many of the words they encountered. This resulted in two outcomes. First, their reading was excessively slow because of the phonic analyses required of so many of the words they encountered. Second, because they had to invest so much cognitive energy into the decoding task, comprehension was impaired. Word recognition automaticity is critical for proficient reading. Research has demonstrated a robust correlation between word recognition automaticity and reading comprehension (Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011).

Expression and Rhythm

The second subcomponent of fluency, which is often overlooked, is prosody—or expressive reading with appropriate rhythm and phrasing that reflect the meaning of the text. Prosodic reading is fluency's link to comprehension. In order for readers to read a passage with good expression and rhythm, they have to be comprehending the meaning of the passage. And, conversely, reading with appropriate expression and rhythm enhances readers' comprehension of the passage's meaning (as well as the comprehension of anyone listening to the reading).

Because silent reading proficiency is often viewed as the gold standard for reading instruction over oral reading proficiency, or more precisely, expressive oral reading proficiency, it is sometimes overlooked by curriculum developers.

The Vocabulary of Fluency

Fluency: The ability to read with Expression, Automatic word recognition, Rhythm and phrasing, and Smoothness.

E **Expression**	**Prosody**	Expression used in reading that reflects and expands on the meaning of the text.
	Intonation	Fluctuation of voice in the strength of pitch and volume to match the meaning of the text.
	Tone	Reading to show an emotion or feeling.
	Monotone	Having single or unvaried tone in a way that expression doesn't match the meaning of the text.
	Stress	Emphasis on particular words or phrases as one would do in conversational speech.
A **Automatic Word Recognition**	**Automaticity**	The ability of a reader to recognize/decode words in text accurately and effortlessly or automatically.
	Pace/Rate	The pace or speed at which the reader can move through the text. Pacing is a good way to assess automaticity.
	WCPM	Words Correct Per Minute—the rate or pace at which a student reads.
R **Rhythm and Phrasing**	**Phrasing/ Chunking**	Reading in meaningful phrases or word chunks instead of word by word.
	Pausing	Using punctuation as a guide to when to pause while reading.
S **Smoothness**	**Accuracy**	The ability to accurately recognize or decode words regardless of rate.
	Self-correct	The ability of a reader to recognize an error in her/his reading and fix/repair it.

Why Is Fluency Important?

The research of the past two decades demonstrates quite clearly a robust correlation between expressive oral reading and silent reading comprehension (Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011). That is, students who read orally with good expression are more likely to comprehend deeply when reading silently.

So we see fluency as this critical bridge between word recognition and comprehension. If students are unable to develop that bridge, they will likely have difficulty in achieving necessary levels of comprehension when reading.
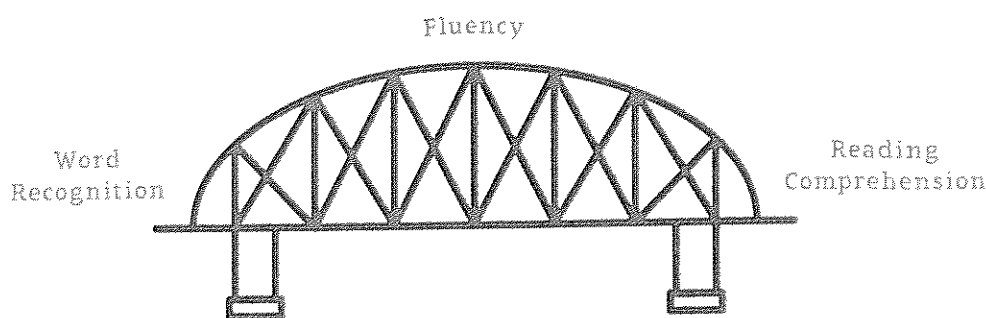
Furthermore, a number of studies have found strong connections between reading fluency and general measures of reading achievement, including comprehension (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski, 2010; Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011). Moreover, these and other studies have documented the power of reading fluency in primary, intermediate, middle school, and high school students (e.g., Rasinski, Padak, McKeon, Krug-Wilfong, Friedauer, & Heim, 2005; Rasinski, Rikli, & Johnston, 2009). Higher levels of fluency are associated with more proficient reading, while low levels of fluency point to lower levels of reading proficiency.

A growing number of studies have examined the effects of authentic fluency instruction. By "authentic," we mean real reading of real texts for real purposes, to communicate meaning. We contrast authentic fluency instruction with programs that tend to require readers to increase their reading speed. The studies of authentic fluency instruction confirm that the type of instruction we describe in this book not only leads to improved fluency, but also to higher levels of reading proficiency, including comprehension, and also greater levels of

interest and motivation for reading for all readers (Rasinski, 2010, 2012), especially those who are experiencing difficulty (Rasinski, 2017).

Despite the recognition of fluency's importance, many students struggle with it. A study of elementary students identified as experiencing difficulty in reading and recommended for intervention found that fluency was their greatest challenge (Rasinski & Padak, 1998). Another study of elementary students who performed poorly on a state-mandated reading proficiency test found that 75 to 90 percent of the students exhibited significant difficulties in one or more aspects of reading fluency (Duke, Pressley, & Hilden, 2004; Valencia & Buly, 2004). And, difficulties are not limited to younger students. If fluency concerns are not addressed early, during the foundational years, it is likely that those concerns will find their way into the middle school and high school grades. Indeed, several studies have found that fluency is associated with reading achievement beyond the elementary grades (Paige, Rasinski, & Magpuri-Lavell, 2012; Paige, Rasinski, Magpuri-Lavell, & Smith, 2014; Rasinski, Padak, McKeon, Krug-Wilfong, Friedauer, & Heim, 2005). Furthermore, because fluency is a foundational competency, difficulties in fluency can also lead to difficulties in content areas that rely heavily on reading.

Given the importance of fluency and the fact that fluency difficulties are widespread among students of all ages, effective fluency instruction and intervention are essential to improving the overall reading achievement of those students, as well as their achievement in the content areas. That is what this book is all about.

Is Fluency Foundational to Reading Proficiency? Yes, the Standards Say So!

Over the past several years, much attention has been focused on learning standards for reading success—the Common Core State Standards for the English Language Arts (National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016), as well as standards developed by individual states and local school districts. Most standards documents suggest that higher and more sophisticated levels of reading are built on a solid foundation of reading fluency. Without a solid foundation, a building cannot stand; without a solid foundation in reading fluency, other reading competencies, such as comprehension and close reading, cannot develop. It is critical, then, that we help all our students so they may move on to higher levels of reading achievement.

But it's not just the standards that tell us that reading fluency is important. A number of scientifically-based studies have demonstrated that fluency instruction leads to overall improvement in fluency and comprehension for students in the elementary, middle, and secondary grades (Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011), especially for students who struggle in reading (Stevens, Walter, & Vaughn, 2017).

What Are the Building Blocks of Reading Fluency?

If reading fluency is the foundation for reading success, what instructional building blocks can we use to lay that foundation? We identify several major approaches to building fluency that you can use to move students to more fluent reading. All the activities in this book incorporate one or more of these building blocks. (For a more complete discussion of these approaches, see *The Fluent Reader, Second Edition* [Rasinski, 2010]).

Modeled Fluent Reading

If we want students to move toward fluency in reading, we have to give them a sense of what fluency is. The best way to do that is for them to hear fluent reading often. We need to read to students regularly. Moreover, we should take time to discuss why our reading is fluent and how fluent reading makes it easier for listeners to understand and enjoy the reading.

Supportive or Assisted Reading

Simply listening to a fluent reader will not make a student a fluent reader. They need to engage in fluent reading themselves. However, not all students can read a text fluently on their own—some need support and assistance. Supportive or assisted reading simply means that a student reads a passage while listening to a reading of the same passage.

Supportive or assisted reading can take a variety of forms. Students may read chorally as part of a group. Or they may read with a more fluent partner such as a teacher, parent, classroom aide, older student, or even a classmate. Something special happens when a less fluent reader reads a text the best he or she can and simultaneously hears a more fluent reading of the same text: a movement toward more fluent and meaningful reading. Researcher Keith Topping found that regular assisted (paired) reading could accelerate a student's overall reading progress by a factor of three or more. That is, students who previously were making a half-month's progress in reading for every month of instruction could be expected to make one-and-a-half-months' progress when assisted reading was included in the curriculum (Topping, 1987a, 1987b, 1989).

The student does not always have to read with another person. He or she can read a text while simultaneously listening to a prerecorded version of the same text. We call this audio-assisted reading, and the recording can be an audio file (e.g., an MP3 file) stored on your

computer or other device. As with other forms of supportive or assisted reading, the research into audio-assisted reading points to improvements in students' fluency and overall reading proficiency (Rasinski, 2010; Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011).

Reading Practice: Wide Reading

Becoming fluent at anything, from walking to reading, requires practice. For most students (and adults), wide reading is the most common form of practice that leads to growth (Kuhn, et al., 2006). Wide reading simply means reading a text once, perhaps discussing it and/or doing some extension activity related to it, and then moving on to a new text—in other words, reading one text after another. This form of authentic reading practice is important because we want students to read as much as possible in order to develop critical competencies.

Reading Practice: Repeated Reading

For students who struggle to attain fluency, wide reading is not enough. These students need to read one text a few times until they are able to achieve fluency. In other words, they need repeated reading. A more common name often associated with repeated reading is rehearsal. Interestingly, the Common Core State Standards refer to repeated reading as close reading.

Research has demonstrated that each time students read a text, their reading improves on many fronts: word recognition, accuracy, automaticity, expression, and comprehension (Dowhower, 1994; Samuels, 1979). More importantly, when they move on to a brand-new text to read, their gains "stick." In other words, the benefit from practicing one passage repeatedly carries over to passages they've never before read.

The key to successful repeated reading is making it authentic (Rasinski, 2012). In many current programs for and approaches to developing fluency, students are asked to read a text repeatedly until they achieve a specified reading speed or rate (since reading rate is a way to measure one aspect of fluency). But this approach to repeated reading lacks authenticity. Who in real life repeatedly reads a passage for the purpose of reading it quickly?

We believe that authenticity starts with rehearsal. Any type of performance for an audience, whether it is giving a speech, reciting a poem, singing a song, or acting in a play, requires rehearsal. Rehearsal is not about reading quickly, but about communicating with meaning for the enjoyment of a listening audience. This is the type of repeated reading that students will find not only authentic, but also highly engaging and motivating.

Rhythm and Phrasing

If you think about it, a hallmark characteristic of a less fluent reader is reading in a word-by-word manner, without concern for meaning making. These readers may be able to read the words of a text correctly, but the staccato-like delivery minimizes the meaning that is communicated to the listener. Although we might think of the word as the basic unit of meaning in a text, it's really in the phrasing where meaning is lodged. What do words such as *the, of, to, and,* or *if* mean by themselves? Not much. But when they become part of a phrase, their meaning becomes clear. Fluent readers read in meaningful phrases; struggling readers very often read word-by-word. Helping our less fluent readers move away from word-by-word reading to more phrased and meaning-filled reading is an important goal for instruction and well worth the effort (Rasinski, Yildirim, & Nageldinger, 2011).

What Makes a Quality Fluency Activity?

While not all effective fluency activities are designed or structured the same, they do share common elements and characteristics (Rasinski, 2005). Here are a few:

Quality Texts

Try to find texts that have a good voice and phrasing and are meant to be read orally with expression. Texts such as poetry, scripts, and narratives work very well for developing fluency.

Oral Reading

The text must be read aloud. Fluency practice should be oral so students can hear what good reading sounds like. And keep in mind, authentic practice in oral reading will not only improve fluency but also silent reading skills.

Feedback

Students should receive feedback. Sometimes feedback comes from their own observations as they tap into their metacognitive skills and think about how they sound as they read. Sometimes feedback comes from you, the class, or a classmate. In either case, students should evaluate their oral readings. They can use the Student Fluency Evaluation forms at the back of this book (and available for download at Scholastic.com/FluencyResources) to get a sense of how they're progressing.

Repetition

For fluency to improve, repeated reading is strongly encouraged. Emphasis should be aimed primarily at providing practice reading the text with appropriate expression that reflects its meaning.

Motivation

Most fluency activities are naturally engaging and even fun. Songs, poems, chants, and other rhythmic texts are all motivational because there is an element of playfulness to them; they often beg to be read and performed aloud. And when students read them over and over, they become successful, which can be motivational in and of itself. But for the students to *want* to read the text repeatedly, the text should be engaging. It is a good idea to provide students with an audience of even just one person for their reading who can provide positive feedback.

Top Benefits of Fluency Instruction and Activities

- Improve not only oral reading fluency, but also silent reading fluency.

- Promote expressive reading.

- Highlight the richness of words in quality literature.

- Increase students' vocabulary.

- Help students express meaning through nuances in prosody.

- Improve classroom community and climate.

- Unify all types of learners in a community experience (English language learners, struggling students, etc.).

- Increase reading time at school.

- Boost student confidence.

- Increase comprehension (paying attention to punctuation, connotation of words through expression, etc.).

- Require rehearsal, an authentic form of repeated readings.

- Lead to improved word recognition accuracy and automaticity.

What Is the Best Way to Assess Fluency?
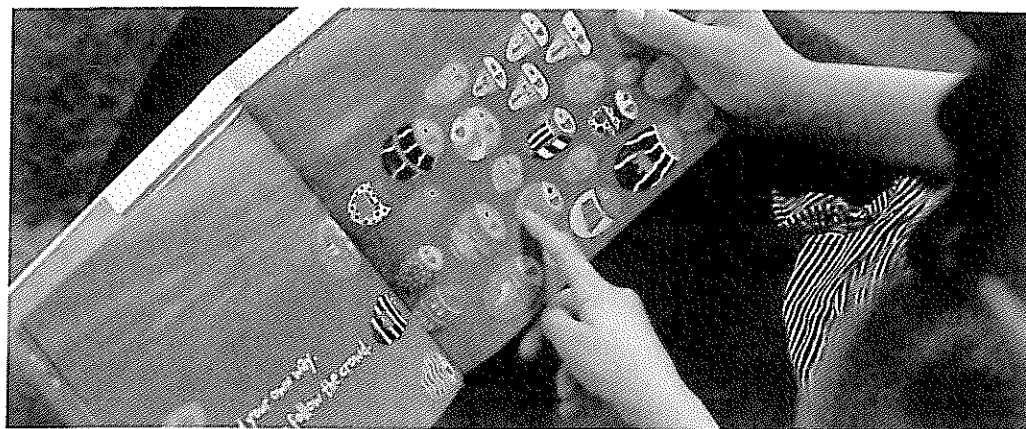
Using the Multidimensional Fluency Scale

Understanding reading fluency and understanding students who may require additional instruction in fluency require an understanding of how fluency can be measured. As we mentioned earlier, fluency is made up of two subcomponents: automaticity and prosody. Within these subcomponents, fluency can be broken down into four steps we call EARS (Expression, Automatic word recognition, Rhythm and phrasing, and Smoothness) and then measured using the Multidimensional Fluency Scale. Fluency is best measured both qualitatively and quantitatively, so all dimensions should be considered.

We know that fluency isn't all about speed, but it's a part of it, because slowing down to decode negatively impacts comprehension. Each section of EARS is measured by students reading one text, and then you choose the closest match to the choices in the Scale. For the "A" in EARS, Automatic Word Recognition, a simple protocol for assessing speed, or words per minute, can also be used. The basic steps are listening to a child read a text of 100 to 200 words at grade level for one minute. While the student reads, the teacher keeps track of errors and counts the words read in one minute minus errors. This number is the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) score and is reported in Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM). Specific details and texts

Multidimensional Fluency Scale

(See full-sized Fluency Scale on page 316. You can also download it at Scholastic.com/FluencyResources.)

for assessment can be found in *3-Minute Reading Assessments: Word Recognition, Fluency & Comprehension* (Rasinski & Padak, 2005).

Compare the score against the norms in the table below (Rasinski & Padak, 2005). Students who generally score within the ranges indicated in the table can be considered to be making adequate progress in fluency. Students near the lower end or below the ranges indicated in the table below should be considered for fluency intervention. Students scoring above the ranges in the table may be reading too quickly to comprehend the text adequately.

Target Fluency Ranges as Measured by Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM)			
Grade	Fall	Winter	Spring
1		20–50	30–90 wcpm
2	30–80	50–100	70–130
3	50–110	70–120	80–140
4	70–120	80–130	90–140
5	80–130	90–140	100–150
6	90–140	100–150	110–160
7	100–150	110–160	120–170
8	110–160	120–180	130–180

This assessment can be administered regularly (e.g., once per month) to determine if students are making good progress. You may choose to have students who are reading well below grade level read a passage that more closely matches their instructional reading level. However, because the norms in the table are based on students reading material at their assigned grade level, you will need to use your professional judgment to interpret the scores. This is a data-based approach for keeping track of reading progress in your classroom.

Scoring the Multidimensional Fluency Scale

In a matter of just a few minutes, using the Multidimensional Fluency Scale, you can get a good sense of how your students are doing in fluency. The scores will range from 4 to 16. Here are some score ranges to give you a sense of your students' performance:

Score of 4–6: Student is underperforming in fluency levels.
Score of 7–11: Student is approaching grade-level norms of fluency.
Score of 12–16: Student is on or above grade level in fluency.

This book is designed in a way that you can identify concerns based on the four dimensions of the Multidimensional Fluency Scale and identify areas where students need instructional support and intervention. You can then choose strategies that will help develop those skills individually, in small groups, or as a class. Many strategies and activities can also be copied and sent home for parents to help their child one-on-one.

Why Is Fluency Sometimes Viewed as "Not Hot"?
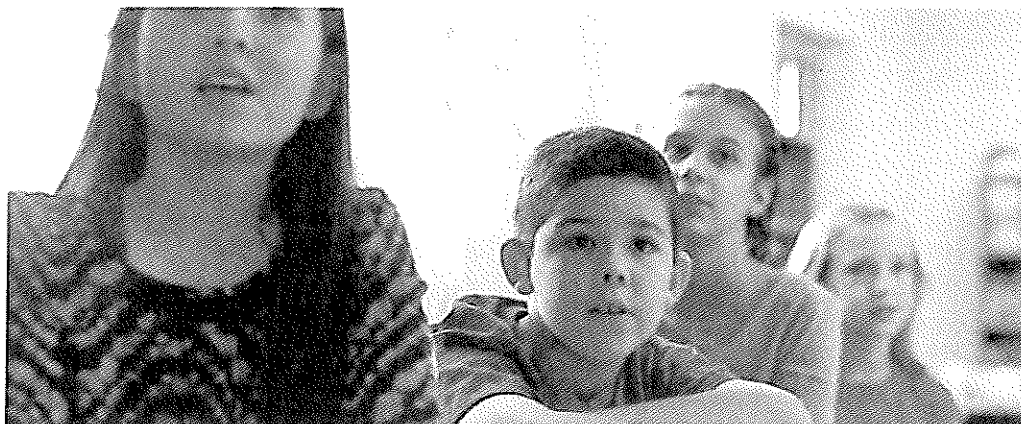
Despite a growing recognition of the importance of reading fluency in students' reading development, that message is often lost because of how it is typically understood and taught (Samuels, 2007; Rasinski, 2012). As mentioned earlier, word recognition automaticity is generally measured by reading speed. If readers are able to recognize words in text automatically, it follows that they will be able to read at a faster pace and read better than readers who can't. This connection between word recognition automaticity and reading achievement has led to instructional practices aimed primarily at increasing students' reading rate. As such, "fluency instruction" often looks like this:

- Student reads a passage as quickly as possible.

- Teacher times the student's reading—how many seconds it takes to read the passage.

- Student reads the passage a second time, trying to outdo his or her time on the first reading.

- Student continues reading the same passage repeatedly until a target reading rate is achieved.

- The process is repeated with new passages for the student to read.

While we acknowledge that word recognition automaticity is highly correlated to reading speed, we do not feel that reading speed improves word recognition automaticity. Rather, the opposite is often true; as students become more automatic in their word recognition, two things occur: first, reading speed increases, and second, reading achievement improves. Reading speed is the result of automaticity, not the cause. Because of the type of "fluency instruction" described earlier, you can easily see how students begin to view reading as a contest in which they try to read as quickly as possible, without regard for comprehending what they are reading.

Many teachers have become aware of this misconception and, as a result, have dropped fluency instruction from their reading curriculum. Although we applaud teachers who resist ill-conceived methods of instruction, fluency is too important to ignore.

Another problem with fluency is associated with prosody. Readers who read orally with good expression that captures the text's meaning tend also to be proficient silent readers. Prosodic reading is often missing from fluency instruction, as we see it, for three reasons. First, if fluency instruction is improving reading speed, little emphasis can be placed on prosody. Indeed, expressive reading suggests that there are places where a reader needs to slow down. And, of course, reading with expression requires reading at a conversational pace, not a fast pace.

Second, in most classrooms today, the goal of the reading curriculum is for students to become proficient in silent reading. Therefore, oral reading, by default, receives less attention, and it follows that prosody in oral reading receives little to no attention.

Third, prosody is difficult to measure objectively. Assessments are dependent on a teacher's or other listener's judgment of what makes reading expressive. Although we have found great consistency in how teachers assess prosody, the argument can be made that how one teacher assesses prosody in oral reading may be significantly different from the way other teachers do. If such assessments vary greatly, the reliability and value of the assessment (and any instruction that may follow) is questionable.

Why The Megabook of Fluency?

Richard Allington called fluency "the neglected goal of the reading program" (1983). In many ways, fluency continues to be not only neglected, but also deeply misunderstood or, at best, marginalized. We think that is a huge mistake. We do not advocate using the instructional methods described in the previous section, but rather effective, engaging, and authentic methods that build word recognition automaticity (not speed) and prosodic or expressive reading. In this book, you will find a wealth of motivating oral and silent reading strategies that we have found through our own work to be effective, engaging, and authentic in promoting reading fluency. Not only will these strategies promote fluency, they will also help you create students who use fluency for its intended purpose: to comprehend the texts they read (Rasinski, 2010).

The strategies will move your students to more meaningful reading. We hope you will adapt them to meet the specific needs of your students. We also hope you will be inspired to use them as templates or models for your own fluency activities.

Although we present the strategies for use in the classroom or clinic, they can easily be adapted to be used at home. Indeed, our experience has been that many parents find these strategies a great way to make reading a part of family life. As you peruse the book, our greatest hope is that the strategies are just a starting point for making fluency instruction an integral, enjoyable, and effective part of your overall reading curriculum.

A Close-Up Look at a Strategy Page

The strategy sections in each chapter begin with a page that spells out clearly everything you need to do to plan for, carry out, and extend instruction. Most of those strategy pages are immediately followed by student work pages that can be photocopied and/or downloaded at Scholastic.com/FluencyResources. All essential materials are provided!

CHAPTER 4

Pinpoints the "EARS" skills that students will practice and build.

Fluency Skills Practiced
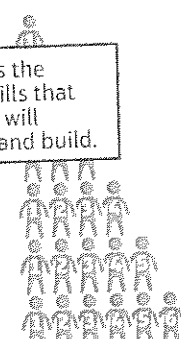
E

A

R

S

4.C Cumulative Choral Reading

Number of students reading increases as the text progresses.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
1. Twinkle, twinkle, little star
2. How I wonder what you are
3. Up above the world so high
4. Like a diamond in the sky
5. Twinkle, twinkle, little star
6. How I wonder what you are

Cumulative choral reading is similar to unison and refrain choral reading, but the class is divided into groups and each group only reads the lines assigned. The number of students reading increases as the text progresses. In other words, one group starts, then another joins in on the next line or passage, then another on the next line or passage, and so forth. With Reverse Cumulative Choral Reading, the opposite happens: the number of students reading decreases as the text progresses. Because cumulative choral reading students must pay attention not only to the whole text, but also to the lines they will read, it requires more focus than regular choral reading.

Explains what the strategy is and how to carry it out.

Materials Needed — Copy of a Cumulative Choral Reading page projected in class for all students to view and read (pp. 167–170)

Lists the materials to gather prior to instruction.

Grades — 2–8

Identifies the grades for which the strategy is intended. If necessary, adapt strategies and texts for your grade.

Length of Activity — 5–10 minutes depending on the length of text

Location — school or home

Specifies the amount of time it will likely take to carry out instruction. Strategies range from quick bursts of learning to rich, weeklong projects.

Extension Idea — Practice the text in class, then send a copy home so students can practice with an older sibling, partner, or guardian. Require students to read it a certain number of times, then have a parent/guardian sign and return it to class to check off that the homework was completed

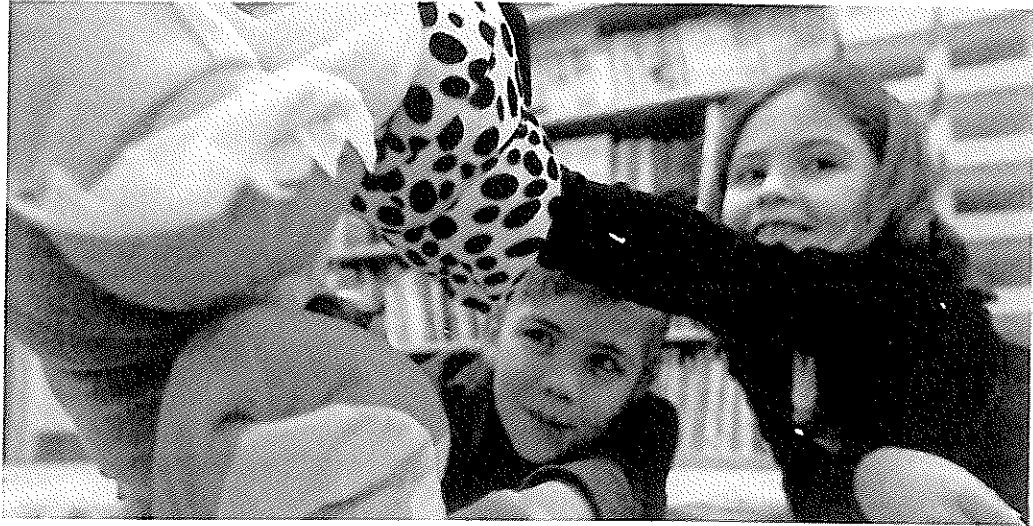**Suggests ways to enrich instruction—and build on it.**

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CHAPTER 1

Begin Early:
Reading Fluency in
the Primary Grades
(and Beyond)

Videos and
downloadables
are available at
Scholastic.com/
FluencyResources.

CHAPTER 1

Begin Early: Reading Fluency in the Primary Grades (and Beyond)

"A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom."

—Robert Frost

Children become fluent early in life. Babies express meaning in the ways they babble, coo, and cry. Parents can easily tell what their baby might want or need simply by the tone of his or her voice or the nature of the cry. Indeed, well before being able to speak conventionally, children can express themselves fluently to convey meaning. Oral language is, after all, the foundation of reading—children enter reading as potent language learners.

During kindergarten and first grade, we want their early understandings about fluency to move with them into conventional reading. As we stated in the introduction, words in print alone don't just convey meaning; the ways those words are expressed do, too. We can help young children develop reading fluency in a number of ways, especially by telling them stories and reading to them. When we do this, we use our voices naturally and expressively to enhance whatever story we're telling or text we're reading. Children listen to how we phrase words, use inflection in our voice, and read smoothly and rhythmically. All this is part of being a good reader. And when children are exposed to it in kindergarten and first grade, it can have a dramatic effect on how they apply those skills themselves when they begin to decode.

Additionally, when telling stories and reading to children, we should take time to talk with them about *how* we use our voice to help convey meaning to develop an awareness of

fluent expressive reading. After modeling fluency for students, we can have the children read songs, rhymes, poems, patterned texts, and other texts that are easy for them to read and have features that support fluent reading—texts that are not only effective and joyful introductions to fluency, but also to reading itself. The brevity, rhythm, rhyme, and in many cases the melody of song, rhymes, poems, and patterned texts are perfect for our emerging readers.

In kindergarten and first grade, we want to set the stage for reading fluency of all texts. This chapter provides you with easy-to-implement activities and texts for doing just that.

Strategies

Fluency Skills Practiced

E
Expression
☑

A
Automatic
Word Recognition
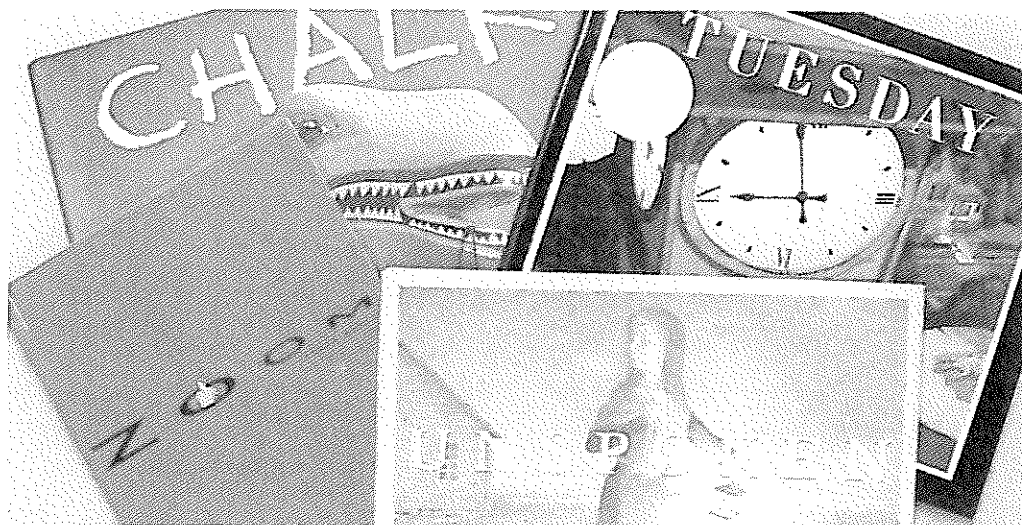☐

R
Rhythm
and Phrasing
☐

S
Smoothness
☐

1.A Wordless Picture Book "Readings"

"Read aloud" wordless picture books, demonstrating how to create the story with illustrations and your expressive voice. Discuss with students how you use your voice to add to the meaning of the story as well as to boost their enjoyment of it. Then, have students "read aloud" their own wordless picture books and create the story. Students may naturally "read" with expression. If they don't, read with them and model expressive reading. Tell them that such reading is important because it makes the text more meaningful and satisfying. Students can also create dialogue for the characters, using expression to match the intended meaning in the story.

Materials Needed	Wordless picture books, such as: *Chalk* by Bill Thomson, *Flotsam* by David Wiesner, *Fossil* by Bill Thomson, *Good Night, Gorilla* by Peggy Rathmann, *Pancakes for Breakfast* by Tomie dePaola, *Re-Zoom* by Istvan Banyai, *The Lion and the Mouse* by Jerry Pinkney, *The Red Book* by Barbara Lehman, *Thunderstorm* by Arthur Geisert, *Tuesday* by David Wiesner, *Zoom* by Istvan Banyai
Grades	K–5
Length of Activity	20 minutes
Location	school or home
Extension Ideas	• After reading/telling the story once, try reading it (or a portion of it) in a different mood and voice (e.g., as if excited, as if in a hurry, as if sad). Talk with students about how your mood affected how you read the text. • After reading certain lines to students, ask them to "read" those lines themselves, modeling their own expression after yours.

1.B Storytelling With Puppets

Provide puppets, or have students create puppets on their own or in groups, and use them to retell well-known stories. Then, students practice and perform a brief puppet show for the class as you work with groups to demonstrate and develop expressive dialogue. (For example, if they're performing "The Three Little Pigs," the student playing the wolf may say the line, "Little pig, little pig, let me in!" loudly with a growl, just as the wolf might.)

Materials Needed	Preprinted puppets, or materials to make puppets Common familiar stories, easily found on the Internet, such as: • "The Little Red Hen" • "Little Red Riding Hood" • "The Three Bears" • "The Three Little Pigs" • "The Ugly Duckling"
Grades	K–2
Length of Activity	30 minutes
Location	school or home

Fluency Skills Practiced

E
Expression
☑

A
Automatic
Word Recognition
☐

R
Rhythm
and Phrasing
☐

S
Smoothness
☐

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1.C Read Aloud With Emergent Readers

Read aloud picture books so students hear words read correctly and learn what good readers do. In the process, they become aware of the importance of phrasing, expression, and pacing of a reading. Picking books in which those skills can be showcased is key. See suggestions below.

Materials Needed	For strategies used with younger children, we have chosen books with repeated phrases so children can read along and predict what comes next. These include books such as: Frog and Toad series by Arnold Lobel: *Days With Frog and Toad, Frog and Toad All Year, Frog and Toad Are Friends, Frog and Toad Together* (Focus on how to read dialogue.) Diary of a... series by Doreen Cronin: *Diary of a Fly, Diary of a Worm, Diary of a Spider* (Focus on funny antics that show emotion and require expression.) David series by David Shannon: *No, David!, David Gets in Trouble, David Goes to School* (Focus on using punctuation to read with expression.) Alexander series by Judith Viorst: *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day; Alexander Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday; Alexander Who's Not (Do You Hear Me? I Mean It!) Going to Move* (Focus on practicing reading with a range of emotions.) Pigeon series by Mo Willems: *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!, Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late!, The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!, The Pigeon Has Feelings, Too!, The Pigeon Needs a Bath!, The Pigeon Wants a Puppy!* *Yo! Yes?* and *Ring! Yo?* by Chris Raschka
Grades	K–1
Length of Activity	10–30 minutes
Location	school or home
Extension Idea	• Echo-read the stories with students, asking them to match your voice as you read them together.

1.D Developing Fluency Through Song

Songs are perfect for developing early fluency in children because melody is a form of prosody, or expression. Furthermore, when children sing songs and, at the same time, have their eyes on the printed lyrics, they are well on their way to developing all aspects of fluency. Since the rhythm, rhyme, and melodies in songs make them easy to learn and remember, children will actually begin to recognize and decode lyrics.

Introduce students to a song or two every week. Project the lyrics so children can easily see them. Sing the song to the children until they grasp the melody and the words. (You can find instrumental versions of children's songs on YouTube.) Then, over the course of several days, sing the song with students in various ways (whole class, small group, individually, etc.). Be sure to draw children's attention to each word in the song by pointing to it. And enjoy!

Materials Needed	Copy of a childhood song to project for the class and distribute to each student (pp. 26–30): "London Bridge," "Polly Wolly Doodle," "Home on the Range," "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," "I've Been Working on the Railroad." (Complete lyrics can be found at www.kididdles.com/lyrics/allsongs.html)
Grades	K–3
Length of Activity	15 minutes
Location	school or home
Extension Idea	• Once students have mastered a song, work with them to select individual words from the song and put them on a word wall. Then, in addition to singing the song, have students read the words on the wall to develop word recognition automaticity. • Swap out words in a familiar song, or find parodies of it, to keep it fresh for students and to keep them on their toes when singing it. Author Alan Katz is an expert at creating parodies of children's songs. Here are few of his best-loved books: *I'm Still Here in the Bathtub, Take Me Out of the Bathtub, Where Did They Hide My Presents?*

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