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Fluency Instruction: It's About More than Rate and Not for Everyone

Presented to:
Leadership for Literacy Access

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Objectives

1. To provide participants with:
   - An exercise to feel or observe dysfluency.
   - A way to determine which students will benefit from fluency instruction.
   - A tool for measuring fluency that includes more than simply recording rate.
2. For participants to consider:
   - Fluency is more than rate.
   - Accuracy is an important component of fluency and should be measured.
   - Fluency results when other components of reading are in place.
   - Fluency instruction will not teach students to decode.
     - Students are ready for fluency only when they demonstrate the ability to decode familiar and unfamiliar words out of context.

Topics

1. What Is Fluency?
2. What Effects Do the Underlying Skills Have on Fluency?
3. What Does Dysfluency Feel Like?
4. Who Needs Fluency Instruction?
5. How Can Growth in Fluency Skills be Tracked?
6. What Does Effective Fluency Instruction Look Like?

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What Is Fluency?

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Fluency Is One of Many Focuses for Reading Instruction

SKILLS

- Phonological
- Phonics
- Sight Words
- Fluency

KNOWLEDGE

- Background Knowledge
- Vocabulary
- Language Comprehension
- Verbal Reasoning
  - Literal understanding
  - Higher order thinking

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Definitions of ***Reading Fluency***

- "rate and accuracy in oral reading"
  (Hasbrouck and Tindal; Davidson and Towner, 2001)
- "accurate reading at a minimal rate with appropriate prosodic features (expression) and deep understanding"
  (Hudson, Mercer, and Lane, 2000)
- "ability to read quickly, effortlessly, and efficiently with good, meaningful expression"
  (Rasinski, 2003)
- "read[ing] orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression"
  (NRP Report, 2000)

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Fluency is More Than Speed…

- Fluent readers make their message understood to themselves and others through prosody.
- Fluent readers:
  - have appropriate phrasing
  - respect the intonation patterns in syntax
  - communicate with the listener.
- Speed must be adequate (minimal).
- More important indicators of fluency than speed are:
  - processing the meaning during reading
  - phrasing the text.

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Fluent Readers Have Underlying Skills

- We know fluent readers read with:
  - ***Accuracy*:** They make minimal or no mistakes.
  - ***Rate*:** They read with a conversational rate.
  - ***Prosody:*** They read with expression that demonstrates knowledge of the material being read.
- Fluent readers also have:
  - ***Stamina*:** They can read for long periods of time without tiring.
  - ***Focus*:** They can maintain focus on content while reading.
  - ***Flexibility*:** They can read different types of text fluently.

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What Effects Do the Underlying Skills Have on Fluency?

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Accuracy

- Accuracy may be as important or more important than rate as a predictor of reading abilities.

  (Davidson and Farrell, 2008)
- Students should be reading with 97% or higher accuracy before they focus on increasing fluency.
- Measure accuracy percentage, in addition to rate, as an indicator of reading competency.

Rate

- Generally determined by looking at how many words a student reads correctly in a certain amount of time.
  - Most fluency programs measure rate.
- Often referred to as Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM).
- Must be fast enough to allow the reader to comprehend the text.
  - Established benchmarks provide guidance about adequate WCPM at a given grade level.

Common Fluency Assessment

- One-minute oral reading of a grade-level passage is the most common screener.
- DIBELS and AIMSWeb are two of the most popular oral reading screeners.
  - DIBELS has screening assessments for grades K-6
    - dibels.uoregon.edu
  - AIMSWeb has screening assessments for grades K-8
    - aimsweb.com

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Research-Based ORF Norms

(based on reading grade-level material)

Hasbrouck & Tindal Fluency Norms 50th percentile (words correct per minute)			
GRADE	Fall	Winter	Spring
1	--	23	53
2	51	72	89
3	71	92	107
4	94	112	123
5	110	127	139
6	127	140	150
7	128	136	150
8	133	146	151

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Weakness of Using Only WCPM

- Using WCPM alone doesn't identify students who meet the benchmark by reading quickly but inaccurately, hindering comprehension.
- Consider two 6th graders in September when the WCPM benchmark is 120 WCPM:

Billy is below the benchmark.

Billy's accuracy is strong.

Student	Total Words Read	Errors	WCPM	Accuracy
Billy	112	2	110	98%
Sally	141	13	128	91%

Sally exceeds benchmark.

Sally's accuracy is weak.

- Sally's WCPM score is higher, but Billy is more accurate.
- Billy is more likely to comprehend what he reads.

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Practical Implication of Accuracy and Comprehension

- Even the smallest inaccuracy in reading can make a difference in comprehension.

The horse got a cold.

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Prosody

- Also referred to as "expression"
- Prosody means reading with pacing, inflection, tone, attention to punctuation, etc. appropriate to the text.
- The opposite of prosody would be "flat" or "stilted" reading.
  - This would include reading fast without expression.
- Reading without prosody could also mean reading slowly, with many hesitations, or going back and repeating words already read.

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Prosodic Reading…

- is a combination of spoken and written language features.
- reflects an ability to read (decode) words accurately.
- is based on knowledge of the word meanings and the subject matter.
- reflects an understanding of oral language:
  - word meanings
  - appropriate phrasing
  - syntax.

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More Underlying Skills of Fluent Readers

- **Automaticity**: reading words quickly and accurately in word lists and in context
- **Background Knowledge**: knowing something about the subject matter in the text that is being read
- **Vocabulary**: understanding virtually all the words that are being read

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Automaticity

- The ability to perform a task without having to consciously think about it
- Often associated with lower level reading skills:
  - Letter names
  - Letter sounds
  - High frequency words
  - Words out of context
  - Nonsense words and unfamiliar words with common spelling patterns

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Background Knowledge

- Background knowledge increases fluency and comprehension
  - The reader is more likely to be familiar with words in the text, thereby not needing to sound the words out, which makes reading faster.
  - The reader can process new information by connecting it with what they already know.
- Lack of background knowledge decreases fluency and comprehension.
  - The reader may read more slowly because of the necessity to decode unfamiliar words.
  - The reader has no current knowledge to connect with the information presented in the text.

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Vocabulary

- Understanding meanings of words in the text can increase fluency.
  - The reader does not have to decode the familiar words because they are in the reader's sight word vocabulary.
  - Decoding words already in one's vocabulary is faster than decoding a word that has never been encountered before.
- Unknown words can take more time to decode because the reader must also process the meaning of the word in order to allow for comprehension of the text.

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What Does Dysfluency Feel Like?

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Who Needs Fluency Instruction?

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How Many Dysfluent Students?

- The 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) analyzed oral reading samples of 4th graders:
  - 55% were fluent
  - 44% were dysfluent, to varying degrees
    - Awkward
    - Uneasy, fragmented reading
    - Limited comprehension, even though they had read the passage two times silently to prepare to read orally.

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Not All Dysfluent Readers Need Fluency Instruction

- Look at underlying skills to determine what is causing the student to be dysfluent.
- Some students need further instruction in underlying skills before working on fluency.
- Remember, the goal of reading is comprehension.
  - If a student is reading with 97% or higher accuracy and understands the passage, fluency instruction may not be the best use of instructional time.

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Fluency Instruction? Yes

- Students can benefit from fluency instruction if they:
  - Read slowly

    AND
  - Can read text used for fluency practice with at least 95% accuracy

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Fluency Instruction? No

- Some students do not need fluency instruction and/or practice.
- Students do not need fluency instruction if they read aloud:
  - with 97% or higher accuracy
  - at benchmark rate*
  - with expression

* Some students with slow oral language may not be able to achieve benchmark rate and yet will still have strong comprehension.

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Fluency Instruction? . . . Not Yet

- Students who are reading text with less than 95% accuracy or extremely slowly most likely need instruction in underlying skills before fluency is their only intervention. They may need:
  - Phonics or decoding instruction and practice
  - Practice reading high frequency words
  - Vocabulary instruction
  - Oral language instruction (ELL; low oral language comprehension skills)
- Once students have received the appropriate instruction in underlying skills, they may or may not need fluency instruction.

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How Can Growth in Fluency Skills be Tracked?

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Setting Fluency Goals

- Both students and teachers need to know the **specific** goals of fluency practice.
- Major Goals:
  - Accuracy
  - Rate
  - Expression
- Additional Goals:
  - Stamina
  - Focus
  - Flexibility

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Charting Progress

- Chart both Accuracy Percentage and WCPM (words correct per minute).
- Some students may benefit from also charting prosody (expression).
- When students chart their progress, they do better than when they don't.

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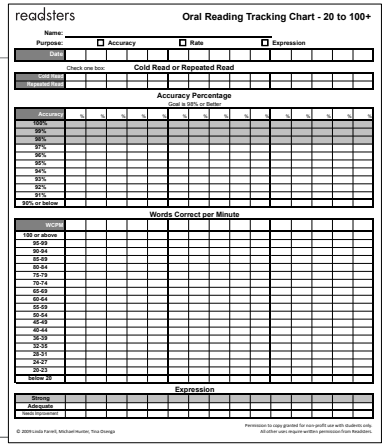
ORF Tracking Chart

Three versions:

0 - 50+ WCPM

20 - 100+ WCPM

65 - 150+ WCPM



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Oral Reading Tracking Chart - 20 to 100+

Name:

Purpose: ☐ Accuracy ☐ Rate ☐ Expression

Date

Check one box: Cold Read or Repeated Read

Cold Read

Repeated Read

Accuracy Percentage

Goal is 98% or Better

Accuracy: 100%, 99%, 98%, 97%, 96%, 95%, 94%, 93%, 92%, 91%, 90% or below

Words Correct per Minute

WCPM: 100 or above, 95-99, 90-94, 85-89, 80-84, 75-79, 70-74, 65-69, 60-64, 55-59, 50-54, 45-49, 40-44, 36-39, 32-35, 28-31, 24-27, 20-23, below 20

Expression

Strong

Adequate

Needs Improvement

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Know the Student's Goal: Accuracy, Rate, or Prosody?

readsters **Oral Reading Tracking Chart - 20 to 100+**

Name: _____

Purpose: ☐ Accuracy ☐ Rate ☐ Expression

Date															

Check one box: **Cold Read or Repeated Read**

Cold Read															
Repeated Read															

Communicate the Goal to the Student

Accuracy	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
100%															
99%															
98%															
97%															
96%															
95%															
94%															
93%															
92%															
91%															
90% or below															

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Completing the Chart (Top Portion)

readsters **Oral Reading Tracking Chart - 20 to 100+**

Name: _____

Purpose: ☐ Accuracy ☐ Rate ☐ Expression

Date															

Check one box: **Cold Read or Repeated Read**

Cold Read															
Repeated Read															

Accuracy Percentage
Goal is 98% or Better

Accuracy	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
100%															
99%															
98%															
97%															
96%															
95%															
94%															
93%															
92%															
91%															
90% or below															

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Completing the Chart (Top Portion)

readsters **Oral Reading Tracking Chart - 20 to 100+**

Name: _____

Purpose: ☐ Accuracy ☐ Rate ☐ Expression

Date															

Check one box: **Cold Read or Repeated Read**

Cold Read															
Repeated Read															

Accuracy Percentage
Goal is 98% or Better

Accuracy	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
100%															
99%															
98%															
97%															
96%															
95%															
94%															
93%															
92%															
91%															
90% or below															

If the student's goal is ***accuracy***, this is the only part of the chart that matters.

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Completing the Chart (Bottom Portion)

Rate → **Words Correct per Minute**

WCPM															
100 or above															
95-99															
90-94															
85-89															
80-84															
75-79															
70-74															
65-69															
60-64															
55-59															
50-54															
45-49															
40-44															
36-39															
32-35															
28-31															
24-27															
20-23															
below 20															

If the student's goal is ***rate***, both *accuracy* and *rate* matter.

Expression

Strong															
Adequate															
Needs Improvement															

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Completing the Chart (Bottom Portion)

Rate → Words Correct per Minute

WCPM															
100 or above															
95-99															
90-94															
85-89															
80-84															
75-79															
70-74															
65-69															
60-64															
55-59															
50-54															
45-49															
40-44															
36-39															
32-35															
28-31															
24-27															
20-23															
below 20															

Expression matters only if the student reads with *accuracy* at a sufficient *rate*.

Expression

Strong															
Adequate															
Needs Improvement															

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Advantages of Charting Progress

- Students see even small gains and are motivated to continue.
- Students see steady growth over time.
- Teacher can observe results, and change instruction if steady growth is not occurring quickly enough.

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Monitoring Additional Goals

- **Stamina:** Have the student read aloud for 1 minute, 2 minutes, and 3 minutes, then follow up with comprehension questions.
- **Focus:** Ask the student comprehension questions, to summarize, or to retell, to verify that the student is maintaining focus on content.
- **Flexibility:** Have the student read various types of text then follow up with comprehension questions.

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Who May Remain Slow?

- "...it is fundamentally more difficult to "normalize" reading rate in older children [who read slowly] than it is to bring their reading accuracy and comprehension into the normal range."
  (Torgesen et al., 2001)
- "Those in the lowest 5% of overall reading proficiency."
  (Fuchs et al., 2001)
- "Those with a double deficit."
  (Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001)

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What Does Effective Fluency Instruction Look Like?

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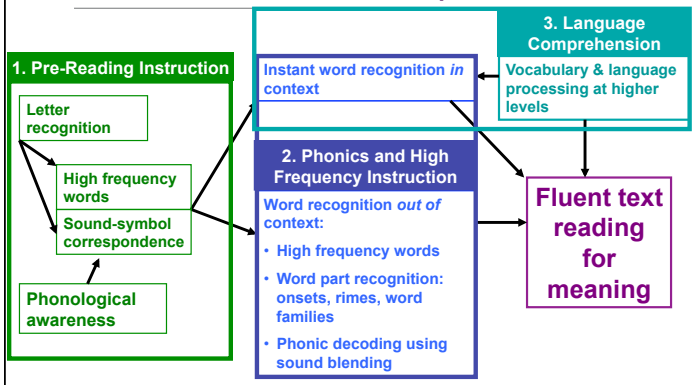
Three Types of Instruction May Be Needed Before Fluency Practice



Fix These Possible Causes First

- Decoding Skills
  - Too few words recognized quickly
  - Slow recognition of known words
  - Slow decoding of unfamiliar words
- Language Abilities
  - Does not know word meanings
  - Unable to infer meaning
  - Unable to use context to determine word pronunciation or meaning
    - Example: "Why isn't Steve *content* with his breakfast." Is the word *content* read as ***con**-tent* or *cən-**tent***?

Teaching Fluency *Is*…

- Working with students to improve accuracy, speed, prosody, or any combination of those when reading orally.
- Working with students to improve stamina, focus, and flexibility
- Charting student's performance and progress.

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Teaching Fluency is *NOT*…

- Comprehension instruction.
  - Asking comprehension questions to determine if students understand what they read is reasonable; however it is **not** part of *teaching* fluency.
  - Students who have appropriate rate, accuracy, and intonation, but consistently answer questions incorrectly, need comprehension instruction instead of fluency.
- Vocabulary instruction.
  - Introducing unfamiliar words prior to reading is necessary; however, teaching vocabulary is never the primary focus of *teaching* fluency.

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Selecting Text

- Provide opportunities for wide reading by selecting various types of text:
  - Expository
  - Narrative
  - Technical
  - Persuasive
- Use text that is at the student's instructional or independent reading level.
  - Student is able to read independently reading with at least 95% accuracy
- Fluency instruction does not have to be with text at the student's grade level.

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Three Effective Methods of Fluency Instruction

- All require immediate supportive feedback about accuracy and prosody:

1. Alternate oral reading
2. Simultaneous oral reading
3. Repeated oral reading.

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Alternate Oral Reading

- A fluent reader (teacher, student partner) is paired with a weaker reader.

1. The fluent reader models reading of the text.
2. The fluent reader reads a sentence, paragraph or page while the weaker reader follows along, pointing to words as they are read.
3. The weaker reader reads the same text, or the next block of text.
4. The fluent reader provides supportive feedback to the weaker reader.

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Simultaneous Oral Reading

- Student reads the text aloud along with a fluent partner or with a recording.
- Student practicing fluency hears and mimics the phrasing and expression of the fluent reader or recording.
- This technique is also known as the "neurological impress" technique.

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Repeated Readings

- Give student one goal:
  - Accuracy
  - Rate
  - Expression
- Use a passage at the student's instructional level for a timed reading.
- Student reads and rereads the passage 2-4 times on successive days.
- Student receives feedback from the person who listens to him/her read:
- After each reading, student charts results to track progress toward the established goal.

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Repeated Readings of Words and Phrases

- Many students improve with repeated readings of words and phrases as well as practice reading continuous text.
- Programs that provide word, phrase, and text practice:
  - *The Six-Minute Solution*
  - *Great Leaps*
  - *Concept Phonics*
  - *Language!*

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Preparing for Fluency Practice

- During instruction, practice words before reading connected text.
  - If a student misreads a word, have him/her reread that word in isolation before reading the passage a second time.
- If necessary, preview the content of the reading by discussing background knowledge, to help put new words into context.
- Ask student to scan text and read it to himself before reading aloud.
  - Encourage student to ask for help with unfamiliar or difficult words.

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Modeling Fluency

- Fluency should be modeled throughout the school day, not just during instructional time for fluency.
- Not all students need fluency modeled.
  - Some students need only a few unfamiliar words or phrases modeled (for correct pronunciation), and this generally also requires some vocabulary instruction.
- Students who have poor oral language skills are generally the ones who need modeling.
  - These students may also need instruction in oral language, as well as reading.

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Practicing Prosody

- Punctuation exercises can help develop prosody.
- Read these letters, with expression indicated by the punctuation:
  - A B C.
  - D E F?
  - H I J!
- Read these phrases with appropriate expression:
  - I want to go home.
  - I want to go home?
  - I want to go home!

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Common, *but Less Effective*, Methods of Instruction

- Students and teachers may enjoy these practices, but research has not yet proven that they are as effective for improving fluency.
  - Reader's Theater
  - Choral Reading
  - Round Robin

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Common, *But Ineffective*, Fluency Practice

- Silent reading is not an effective way to improve fluency for students who need fluency instruction.
  - Some dysfluent students will *pretend* to read.
  - Dysfluent students who *do read* will simply practice bad habits.
- Common silent reading models include:
  - Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)
  - Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)
- Consider using SSR and DEAR time to practice and chart oral reading with dysfluent students.

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Selected Fluency Programs

- The Six-Minute Solution
  - Grades K-12
  - Print materials only
  - Published by Sopris West
  - http://store.cambiumlearning.com
- Read Naturally
  - Grade levels not posted on website
  - Full array of computer-based materials
  - Published by Read Naturally
  - www.readnaturally.com
- QuickReads
  - Grades 2-6 in print
  - Computer-based for grades 2-12
  - Published by Pearson Learning
  - http://www.pearsonschool.com

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