Building Fluency: A Guide to Grades K-2 ELA Standards

UnboundEd

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Introduction

Welcome to the UnboundEd ELA Guide series! These guides are designed to explain what the new, high standards for ELA say about what students should learn in each grade, what they mean for curriculum and instruction, and how we can implement teaching practices that support them. This guide, which focuses on fluency in Grades K-2, demonstrates how fluency practice can be integrated into ELA and instruction across content areas. It includes four parts. The first part defines reading fluency and why it is important for overall reading proficiency. The second part provides insight into how fluency develops within a thoughtfully structured ELA block. The third part provides proven and practical activities, framed by the expectations of the standards, that can be integrated into the ELA block. And the fourth part provides guidance on how many of these activities can be used to support fluency beyond the ELA Block.

Fluency seems the right place to start in our content guide series given the state of reading proficiency in the U.S.: Nearly two-thirds of U.S. students in Grades 2, 4 and 8 can't read proficiently. This isn't a new problem, either: Only a small increase in the percentage of proficient readers has occurred in the last 25 years.[1] The stakes have never been higher, though, as it's increasingly difficult to meet the demands of college coursework and a range of careers without sophisticated reading and writing skills. The specificity and rigor of the standards provide us with an opportunity to turn this tide, though—improving reading proficiency and life prospects for all students.

 [1] http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#reading

Part 1: Understanding Fluency

What is fluency?

Fluency refers to how smoothly a child reads and is defined by these three characteristics:

1. Accurate decoding and word recognition.
2. Reading at a conversational pace.
3. Reading with appropriate prosody, or expression.

In Kindergarten we begin with a focus on helping our students to develop accurate decoding and word recognition. By the end of Grade 1, we add attention to pace and expression, and in Grade 2 we focus on fluency as a whole to ensure that students are able to "read grade-level texts with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension," as expected by the standards.

Why is fluency important?

Fluency serves as an important link between decoding and comprehension. Without fluency, comprehension is hindered by the need to sound out most words. Our goal by the end of Grade 2 is to move students from sounding out words to increased automaticity and word recognition. As texts increase in complexity, automaticity will allow students to focus their attention on making meaning from the text, rather than sounding out words.

The good news is that fluency is an element of reading that can be improved relatively quickly with some attention and practice. And, fluency practice can be conducted during existing classroom activities and routines, with little in the way of additional resources.

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Part 2: How The K-2 ELA block supports fluency

Before we explore how to build fluency, let's consider elements of fluency in a bit more detail. As fluent readers ourselves, we have developed automatic and accurate recognition of a great many words, and the ability to quickly sound out those that we don't automatically recognize. This automaticity allows us to maintain a conversational pace as we read. As fluent readers, we also understand intrinsically how to use intonation, pauses, stops, phrasing and inflection so our reading sounds as though we are speaking naturally to a friend. Our foundation of vocabulary and background knowledge provides support to help us make meaning of the text. These components that we rarely think about when reading are the foundations on which students' reading fluency rests. To grow and improve students' reading fluency, our goals must include:

- Building students' **decoding skills** and **automatic word recognition**.
- Building students' **understanding of how pace and expression** are **cued by syntax and text structure**.
- Building students' **vocabulary** and **background knowledge**.

We can integrate these goals into our ELA instruction by using activities and teaching practices that target fluency within the context of a thoughtfully structured ELA block. Regardless of how we structure our ELA block, to ensure that our students are prepared to tackle the complex texts that they encounter at the secondary level, it's critical that we include regular and routine time to allow for:

Explicit instruction that focuses on decoding and word recognition in K-2.

Hearing, reading and discussing content-rich, complex texts.

Student engagement in a volume of reading beyond instruction.

In planning your instruction, make time daily for each of these types of reading. Each provides different but nonetheless essential exposure to text. The more exposure students have to text, the greater their development of the word recognition, knowledge and vocabulary that contributes to fluent reading.

Part 3: Building fluency during the K-2 ELA block

Let's begin by looking at the fluency expectations. Then we'll look at some activities that we can use in the ELA block to support them. We'll provide examples of where these activities can be included in a variety of lessons from open educational resources (OER). Appendix A includes steps for how to conduct each activity or practice.

Through a range of reading and interaction with sufficiently complex, grade-level texts, our goal is to ensure that students can "read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently." (**ELA.RA.R.10**) For children who have had many experiences with books, words and language before they reach school, learning to read primarily through a volume of "on-level" reading may be efficient and effective. But when children don't have these experiences, we need to create a balance, in the earliest grades, between the explicit phonics instruction that supports learning to read and the act of reading itself. Without this solid grounding in foundational skills, many children will continue to struggle with reading—preventing access to the volume and variety of reading that lead to proficiency.

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Standards expectations

Kindergarten

Fluency in Kindergarten is primarily about rate and accuracy of decoding. We can model and encourage expressive reading, but our focus in Kindergarten is on building automatic and reliable decoding and building students' vocabulary. By the end of the year, we want our kindergarteners to be able to fluently read "emergent-reader" texts with purpose and understanding. (**ELA.RF.K.4**) "Emergent reader" texts include very short words made up of just a few letters. Usually, each letter in these words corresponds to one specific sound. There may also be some high-frequency words that may not follow a one-to-one correspondence of sounds—common words like "the," "you," "she," "he" and "my." (**ELA.RF.K.3**) Young children will be familiar with the meaning of most of these words, so an ELA program that provides plenty of exposure to these words increases the likelihood that children will be able to read them with automaticity.

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Grade 1

By the end of Grade 1, we want children to be able to read grade-level texts with purpose and understanding. If they received solid phonics instruction in Kindergarten, their decoding repertoire will begin to extend beyond one-to-one letter-sound correspondences to include digraphs (multi-letter spelling of sounds), words and syllables that use basic spelling patterns, and grade-appropriate, irregularly spelled words. (**ELA.RF.1.3**) First-graders should also start to recognize frequently encountered words, so that they can be read without sounding them out.

To help first graders develop fluency, we will continue to primarily strive toward decoding that is accurate, automatic and reliable. We also begin to include attention to the other elements of fluency—appropriate rate and expressions. And we model for students how to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding as they read.

To help first-graders develop fluency and understanding while reading grade-level texts, we will continue to primarily strive toward decoding that is accurate, automatic and reliable. We also begin to include attention to the other elements of fluency—appropriate rate and expressions. And we model for students how to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding as they read. (**ELA.RF.1.4**)

Grade 2

By the end of Grade 2, standards expectations are that students are reading grade-level texts, and are gaining repeated exposure to a great many new and known words, which will foster word recognition and fluency. Our students will progress beyond mostly sound-by-sound reading to single-word and contextual reading. Students completing Grade 2 should be able to decode and read a variety of words including those with common prefixes and suffixes, inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences, and grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words. (**ELA.RF.2.3**)

Grade 2 is a time to practice reading that targets all three aspects of fluency. Regular engagement in repeated oral reading is important. Students who are still reading mostly sound-by-sound need plenty of practice with decoding in addition to reading grade-level texts to support automaticity.

In Grade 2, we will expect, by the end of the year, that our students read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. By providing them with plenty of reading practice that targets all three aspects of fluency, we can help students begin to move beyond sound-by-sound decoding to word recognition. This is when regular oral reading becomes crucial; the more oral practice readers have, the more fluent their reading becomes. Students who are still reading mostly sound-by-sound need plenty of continued practice with decoding to support automaticity, in addition to supported reading of grade-level texts. We can provide scaffolding and discussion during reading of grade-level texts to ensure comprehension and model strategies that will help them build understanding and self-correct during their independent reading. (**ELA.RF.2.4**)

Instruction focused explicitly on decoding and word recognition

As you can see from the standards expectations, it is difficult to consider reading fluency in Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 without also considering the *Phonics and Word Recognition* standards (**ELA.RF.K.3**) (**ELA.RF.1.3**) (**ELA.RF.2.3**). Our goal during this instructional time is to foster students' automatic recognition of many words, and the ability to quickly sound out those that aren't automatically recognized. The best way to accomplish this is with a systematic scope and sequence of phonics and word study instruction so we thoroughly cover all the sounds and spellings of the English language. According to the National Reading Panel (2000):

> The hallmark of systematic phonics programs is that they delineate a planned, sequential set of phonic elements and they teach these elements explicitly and systematically. The goal in all phonics programs is to enable learners to acquire sufficient knowledge and use of the alphabetic code so that they can make normal progress in learning to read and comprehend written language.

It takes a great deal of reading to build the familiarity with sounds and spellings students need to achieve automaticity and word recognition. By providing a solid, early underpinning in foundational skills—including explicitly teaching spelling-sound correspondences—and scheduling plenty of practice time, we can bolster the accuracy and automaticity of decoding skills for our youngest readers.

Practice beyond mastery

To support fluency and attain our ultimate goal, which is for students to reach automaticity, we need to ensure that they continue practicing beyond mastery, and that we provide corrective feedback. Children need to continue to practice the spelling-sound correspondences they've already learned, while learning new spelling-sound correspondences to develop decoding that is automatic and reliable. Provide students opportunities to practice segmenting, blending, reading and spelling until automaticity is achieved.

When to encourage practicing beyond mastery:

- Provide students with texts that allow them to specifically practice taught letter-sound correspondences.
- During small groups, make available center-time activities that require identifying, counting, blending or segmenting sounds (e.g., games that require matching letters and sounds; fingerplays and songs that include rhyme or alliteration).

Texts to use:

- Choose emergent-reader texts (Kindergarten) and books that include many instances of the taught letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences, while limiting those that have not yet been learned.

Example

By the time students reach this lesson, they have learned the following sound-spellings:

/i/ as in skim	/k/ as in cot and kid	/p/ as in tip
/e/ as in bed	/g/ as in log	/b/ as in bus
/a/ as in tap	/n/ as in pen	/l/ as in lamp
/u/ as in up	/h/ as in ham	/r/ as in rip
/o/ as in flop	/s/ as in sit	/w/ as in wet
/m/ as in rim	/f/ as in fat	/j/ as in jog
/t/ as in got	/v/ as in vet	/y/ as in yes
/d/ as in dip	/z/ as in zip and hums	/x/ as in box

New spellings taught with this reader include:
/ch/ as in chips, /sh/ as in shop, /th/ as in thin, /th/ as in this, /qu/ as in quilt, /ng/ as in sing

Notice the text contains spellings that have been explicitly taught (see above), with newly learned spellings printed in bold text. This allows students to practice both new and previously learned sound-spellings to develop automaticity.

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Seth's Dad

This is Ted.
Ted is Se**th**'s dad.
Ted is stro**ng**.

Source: Core Knowledge Language Arts Kindergarten Skills Strand, Unit 7, Lesson 11
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Modeling fluent reading

Another fluency building strategy we can use when focusing on decoding skills is to model fluent reading for children. Our students are sometimes unsure of word pronunciation. By reading aloud to them, we can both model pronunciation and emphasize expression and pace. Hearing fluent reading will help children imagine what their own reading is supposed to sound like.

When to model fluent reading:

- Early in the school year, model reading of student texts prior to having students read the texts independently.
- As new genres are introduced, conduct a model reading so students can hear how expression changes with genre. If appropriate, point out grammar, syntax, vocabulary and context that influence the expression with which you read.
- Use nursery rhymes and short poems to introduce young children to rhythm as a component of pace and expression while reinforcing phonological awareness. It's tempting to have children read nursery rhymes, like those that are included in the Core Knowledge Language Arts Kindergarten Nursery Rhymes domain. Although we can read these aloud to students to model expression and pace, many of the words in the nursery rhymes are not yet decodable based on our instruction. It's important that we recognize the difference between reading the nursery rhymes and reciting them. It's certainly reasonable to expect that children learn to recite these rhymes to learn and reinforce phonological awareness, but using short rhymes that are decodable will provide better decoding and word recognition practice for the earliest readers.

Texts to use:

- Emergent-reader texts (Kindergarten) and books that include many instances of the taught letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences, while limiting those that have not yet been learned
- Short nursery rhymes and poems
- Passages from new genres as they are introduced

Example

Read aloud from student texts to emphasize for young children the appropriate pace and expression of reading while reinforcing decoding and word recognition skills. Do this when introducing new student texts or unfamiliar genres, or in small groups for those who need the support of a model. This example is from a newly introduced nonfiction text for students. After reviewing the parts of the text, including the table of contents and glossary, the teacher models reading aloud fluently for students.

Read page 12 aloud to students as they follow along, asking them to listen for the answer to the question: "What did Madison have to do?"

After reading aloud the page, restate the question and ask students to answer. (Madison had to decide what to do: ask the U.S. Congress to declare war, or try to keep the peace.) Record the answer on the board or chart paper, pointing out to students that you are making notes as each set of pages is read to help you remember the important information in the chapter.

James Madison was the fourth president of the United States.

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Chapter 1
Trouble with the British

In 1812, James Madison had a hard choice to make. Many Americans were angry with the **British**. Some of them were saying the United States should declare war on Great Britain. But others disagreed. They said the United States should not go to war.

Madison was president of the United States. He had to decide what to do. Should he ask the **U.S. Congress** to **declare war**? Or should he try to keep the peace?

Source: Core Knowledge Language Arts Skills Strand, Grade 2, Unit 6, Lesson 5
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Partner reading

Finally, during phonics instruction, partner reading is a strategy that allows your students to provide support to one another. You can pair students to practice reading orally to one another, alternating sentences, paragraphs or pages. It's good to provide guidance to them regarding how and when to correct one another. In doing so, more proficient readers will model for their peers important elements of fluent reading including pace, expression and self-correction. In turn, the more proficient readers will gain reading exposure that continues to strengthen and grow their own fluency.

When to use partner reading:

- Allow students to read to one another from their texts while you are rotating among them to monitor progress
- Have students partner read while you are working with another small group.

Texts to use:

- Choose emergent-reader texts (Kindergarten) and books that include many instances of the taught letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences, while limiting those that have not yet been learned.

Repeated oral reading

The practice of repeated oral reading is valuable in that it supports the development of word recognition for frequently encountered words, and improves the reader's pace and expression on subsequent readings. A selected passage is read aloud by students repeatedly during the week. The more the text is repeated, the more of the words children will recognize, allowing them to maintain a good pace without having to decode each word.

For Grade 2 and beyond, our students can take some ownership for improving their own fluency. Short, repeated passages can be incorporated into timed practices to challenge the reader toward the attainment of pacing commensurate with conversational speech. When using timed practice, be sure to pay attention to students' accuracy and expression in addition to rate. Some children may still not really know what fluency means or how the cues in the text guide fluency. It is important for students to know that this practice is not about speed, but about appropriate pronunciation, rate and expression.

As we mentioned earlier, for Grade 2 oral reading is an important way to support fluency. So in planning your instruction, make sure to include a passage that can be read orally throughout the week. Also, note that not all oral reading will be timed, but incorporating some timed readings will provide both you and your students with a means of monitoring progress.

When to use oral reading:

- Assign a passage from the text as homework to be read aloud nightly, at home

Texts to use:

- Choose new or previously read grade-level texts or passages that have a multitude of previously taught sound spellings
- For Grade 2, fluency packets for this repeated and timed practice are available from:
- Student Achievement Partners: Achieve the Core fluency packets for the 2-3 Grade Band
- The Core Knowledge Foundation: Core Knowledge Grade 2 Fluency Packet

Example

Throughout this unit, students have multiple opportunities to reread stories that they have already read. These stories can also be made available when students are engaging in independent reading.

Many lessons also include materials for students to take home and complete with a family member. These materials often consist of a take-home story from the student reader. The worksheets are meant to provide extra practice and reinforcement of skills that have already been taught in class. Orally rereading the take-home stories at home will provide additional opportunities to develop fluency.

Name _____   **8.3**

Dear Family Member,

This is a story from the Reader *Kate's Book*. Encourage your child to read the story to you and then talk about it together. The tricky parts in Tricky Words are underlined in gray. Please note that multi-syllable words are divided between syllables with a dot. This dot serves as a cue to assist students in chunking syllables and will be omitted in later units.

Repeated reading is an important way to improve reading. It can be fun for your child to repeatedly read this story to a friend, relative, or even a pet.

The Coin Shop

Nan drove us to the coin shop.

The man in the coin shop was a pal of hers. His name was Jack.

"Jack," Nan said, "this is Kate Skipp·er. I'm Kate's nan. She's out here for the summ·er. We went for a hike, and Kate found a coin in a cave."

"Well, Miss Skipp·er," Jack said, "let's have a look at it!"

I hand·ed him the coin.

Jack set it un·der a look·ing glass and swi**tch**ed on a lamp. "Let's see," he said. "It's got some scra**tch**·es on it. But I can tell that it's a Span·ish coin. It's made of sil·ver, too."

"When was it made?" asked Nan.

"There's n**o** date on the coin," said Jack. "But I'll bet it dates back to the six·teen hun·dreds. The Span·ish mint·ed a big ba**tch** of coins like this one back then."

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"Good·ness!" said Nan.

"Is that a long time back in the past?" I asked.

"Yes," said Jack. "Let me run and fe**tch** my book on Span·ish coins."

When Jack came back, he said, "There's just one thing I need you to tell me, Miss Skipp·er."

"What's that?" I asked.

"Are there a lot of coins like this one in that cave?"

"N**o**," I said, "we found just this one."

"That's a shame," Jack said.

"**W**hy?" I asked.

"If there w**e**re a lot of coins, you and y**o**ur Nan would be rich!" said Jack. "I **c**ould sell a coin like this for three hun·dred bucks!"

"Three hun·dred bucks?" said Nan.

Jack nodd·ed.

"Yipp·ee!" I shout·ed. "I'm rich!"

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Putting it all together

Each of these strategies should be used often, either alone or in conjunction with one another. During well-designed lessons, it will be possible for you to seamlessly include multiple strategies that support fluency development while building decoding and word recognition skills.

Example

The lesson below demonstrates multiple supports for fluency. The lesson begins with an assessment not shown here. Then, we spend 15 minutes **modeling fluency** through demonstrating the reading of the day's story.

We will be using a story that has **many occurrences of the spelling-sound correspondences we've recently taught**, as well other sounds that we previously taught.

(1) **Demonstration Story: "Seth's Dad"**
Note: In this story, uppercase letter 'D' is used. Uppercase 'D' does not look like lowercase 'd'. Tell students 'D' is another way of writing the letter 'd', i.e., it is the uppercase version of 'd'.

Previewing the Spellings
(2) Referring to the chart you prepared in advance read the words aloud as a class, circling the digraphs in each word.

'ch'(/ch/)	'sh'(/sh/)	'th(/th/)	'th'(/th/)	'ng'(/ng/)
chop	crush	Seth's	this	strong
		with		

Challenging Vocabulary
- Before reading today's story, preview the following vocabulary. Write the word on the board for students to blend and read and explain the meaning of the word. Use the word in a sentence.
  1. stump—the base of a tree that has been cut down

Purpose for Reading
- Tell students they will read a story about Seth's dad. Ask students to pay special attention to the story so they can tell you the name of Seth's dad.

Reading the Story
- Display the story "Seth's Dad" using the Seth Big Book or Media Disk and distribute the Readers.
- Have students turn to the Table of Contents in the Reader and locate the page on which the story "Seth's Dad" begins (page 18).
- Have students read the title of the story.
- Read the story "Seth's Dad" once without interruption, running a finger beneath the words as you read them. Have students follow along in their own Readers.
- Read the story a second time, pausing to point out words with digraphs.
(3) - If you have time, read the story again.

Wrap-Up
- Discuss the following questions as a class. Students should respond in complete sentences, incorporating the question stem in the answer...

(1) In this part of the lesson, the teacher models a fluent reading of the story.

2 The story contains a preponderance of recently taught spellings.

3 Rereading provides opportunities for children to hear appropriate pronunciation, pace and expression.

During the lesson's small group component, some students will **partner read** while we work with those students who need the most support. They will follow along as we provide more **modeling** and opportunities for them to read.

Small Group Reading Time

1 **Group 2:** Have students take out the Readers, sit with their partners, and take turns reading "Seth's Dad" aloud. Upon completion, students may reread the stories "Seth's Mom" and "Seth." They should not read ahead.

2 **Group 1:** Have students follow along in the Readers as you use the Seth Big Book to read aloud "Seth's Dad" without interruption. Read the story a second time. If you have time, read "Seth's Mom" and "Seth" as well.

- Tell students you are going to ask them to reread "Seth's Dad." Use group reading strategies that are best for students. Remind all students to run their finger under each word as they read aloud. Remind students they should sound a word letter by letter if they do not immediately recognize it.
- Remind students that as they practice reading these stories, they may start to recognize words they have read before. Write the word Seth's on the board, explaining, for example, they will see this word several times in this story; if they know the word, they can say it all at once, without sounding out each letter.
- Ask all students to point to the title on page 18 and read it aloud. Ask students the name of the punctuation mark in the word Seth's (an apostrophe) and what it means (it shows possession, e.g., whose dad we are talking about).
- Be sure to point out the uppercase "D" in the word Dad, explaining it is another way to write the letter 'd', i.e., it is the uppercase version of this letter.

3
- Use an oral reading method of your choice as you have students read the story aloud.
- Explain to students they should run their finger under each word as they read the story aloud. If they do not immediately recognize a word, they should sound it out letter by letter.

4 **Take-Home Story: "Seth"**
- Have students give Worksheet 11.4 [a copy of the story] to a family member.

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1 Group 2 provides an option for students who can read the story independently or with little support. Rereading previously read stories provides additional decoding and word recognition practice.

2 Group 1 provides an option for students who need more support. You can model another fluent reading of the story as they follow along in their own copy, before they read the story independently.

3 Using oral reading will allow you to monitor students' decoding and fluency progress as they read.

4 Finally, the Take-Home Story provides an opportunity for students to continue to practice through **repeated oral reading** at home.

Source: Core Knowledge Language Arts Kindergarten Skills Strand Unit 7, Lesson 11
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Hearing, reading and discussing content-rich, complex texts

In addition to the time we spend fostering students' decoding and word recognition, we will also need to provide time to do the valuable work that takes place when we allow children to hear, read and discuss content-rich, complex, grade-level texts.

Working within grade-level texts, even if we cover fewer pages, provides an important immersion in productive struggle—and will mean that we need to teach with guidance and support—but will ensure that students are exposed to grade-level vocabulary and knowledge that support comprehension. When sharing these texts with students, it is important that we plan our instruction and construct our questioning to tease out what students do and don't get. Our goal is to foster students' ability to elaborate on or elicit meaning from the text, rather than reverting to easier texts or revealing meaning to them. When we allow children to engage in reading activities beyond their "instructional level," we are often surprised by their capabilities and progress.

> *When sharing these texts with students, it is important that we plan our instruction and construct our questioning to tease out what students do and don't get. Our goal is to foster students' ability to elaborate on or elicit meaning from the text, rather than reverting to easier texts or revealing meaning to them.*

While hearing, reading and discussing such texts, we support the development of language, vocabulary and knowledge. When we fluently read aloud to children from these texts, we provide them with an important model of what the appropriate pace and expression of reading sound like. When we reread passages and discuss them, we provide students insight into how text structure, syntax and vocabulary contribute to meaning and influence the pace and expression of fluent reading.

In Kindergarten, interaction with content-rich, complex texts will primarily come through read-alouds. For Grade 1 and Grade 2, read-alouds are also an important approach to working with complex, grade-level texts, but we will also begin to have students read and discuss grade-level complex texts with scaffolding and support.

Let's look at how we can support fluency when sharing complex, grade-level texts. We'll indicate which strategies work with read-alouds, and which are meant for shared and independent reading of texts.

Modeling fluent reading

As we have previously discussed, when reading aloud to children we can both model pronunciation and emphasize expression and pace. Because fluency can change with text content, genre or complexity we can use read-alouds to draw students' attention to changes in the way a text is read. We can also model difficult passages during shared and independent reading. This modeling will help children imagine what their own reading of these new texts is supposed to sound like.

When to model fluent reading:

- Conduct daily read-alouds in the early grades to model fluency and build knowledge and vocabulary.

Texts to use:

- Choose complex texts two to three levels above grade level

Sets of texts on related topics

Reading sets of texts on a related topic across subsequent days supports fluency by reinforcing vocabulary and content. Two or more authors writing about the same topic will use many of the same words, and this repeated exposure builds vocabulary and content knowledge, which supports the development of fluency and comprehension.

It's important that we make the distinction between topically related and theme-based texts. Although themes, like struggle, friendship and heroism, can connect texts, these texts won't likely include much overlap in vocabulary. The theme itself may have some vocabulary associated with it (e.g., hero, villain, courage), but the texts likely will be about different situations or characters representing the theme. Topics, or *domains of knowledge,* on the other hand, bring with them the vocabulary of the topic (e.g., the topic plants has a common vocabulary of root, leaf, stem, photosynthesis, nutrient, etc).

Reading aloud from sets of related texts will support children's development of language, vocabulary and content. This repetition supports word recognition for shared and independent reading. These text sets provide benefits similar to repeated reading—increased exposure to and repetition of a set of common words, but also offer the benefit of allowing students to read a different text rather than rereading the same text.

When to use related texts:

- Read and discuss related texts to build knowledge and vocabulary during daily read-alouds.
- Conduct shared and scaffolded reading of sets of texts on a related topic to address grade-level reading and writing standards.

Texts to use:

- Content-rich fiction and nonfiction about a related topic (e.g., sets of books about plants or Native Americans or insects).
- Exemplars of sets of related texts include:
    - *The Core Knowledge Language Arts Listening and Learning Strand*
    - *Achieve the Core Expert Packs*

Discussions around complex sentences

Text-based discussions that focus on complex sentences, text structure and new vocabulary support children's understanding and how these features influence the pace and expression of reading.

When to discuss complex sentences and passages:

- When reading contains complex sentences that are central to the meaning of the text, parse the sentences into their component parts, having students describe the meaning of each part in their own words. Be sure to bring closure to the conversation by allowing students to put the component parts back together, discussing meaning based on their new understanding of the component parts of the sentence.

Texts to use:

- Complex texts two to three levels above grade level for read-alouds.
- Complex grade-level texts for shared/supported reading

To learn more about facilitating these types of discussions and sentence deconstruction, see *What Does Text Complexity Mean For English Learners And Language Minority Students?* by Lily Wong Fillmore & Charles J. Fillmore.

Oral reading to build fluency

We previously mentioned importance of oral reading for the development of reading fluency in Grade 2 and beyond. Although these strategies can be used, on occasion in Kindergarten and Grade 1, our focus in these earlier grades should be on automatic and accurate decoding and word recognition.

Passages created specifically for oral fluency practice are available from the Core Knowledge Foundation and Student Achievement Partners. These packets can be used with any of the oral strategies described below.

- Core Knowledge Grade 2 Fluency Packet

- Achieve the Core Fluency Packet for the 2-3 Grade Band

Repeated oral reading

Repeated reading of previously read grade-level texts helps children recognize words and spellings. The repetition from rereading provides great practice and new learning. It is also an excellent strategy for helping students to comprehend increasingly complex grade-level texts.

When to use repeated oral reading:

- Assign a passage from the text as homework to be read aloud nightly, at home.
- Have students orally reread complex sentences and passages as part of text-based discussions aimed at eliciting meaning from the text.

Text to use:

- Choose passages from grade-level texts being read in class.
- Choose new passages (grade-level or slightly above) about the same topic as texts being read in class.

The take-home copy of the lesson's story is designed to provide extra practice and repeated oral reading at home.

Source: Core Knowledge Language Arts Grade 2, Skills Strand, Unit 6, Lesson 6
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Choral reading

We can model pronunciation, pace and expression while reading a passage to the class or group, then reading the same passage in unison, with the students. Choral reading provides students with a model of fluent reading and a gradual release from group reading to independent reading of the passage.

When to use choral reading:

- Use this activity to introduce new grade-level texts.
- Use this activity to introduce an excerpt from a text about a new topic (for topically related text sets).
- Assign the choral reading passage as homework to be read chorally with an adult, but tread carefully in situations in which an adult is not present or able to provide this support.

Texts to use:

- Choose texts that are two to three minutes (150-300 words) in length. These can be:
  - Complex grade-level texts for shared/supported reading.
  - Grade-level texts that include repetition.
  - New or previously read grade-level texts or passages that have a multitude of previously taught sound spellings for choral reading and partner reading.

Reader's theater

For reader's theater, students rehearse reading of a text that contains parts for multiple readers in preparation for oral presentation.

When to use reader's theater:

- Use this as an occasional activity to practice the expression elements of fluency—allowing rehearsal time in class. Have all students prepare for presentation, and present in groups if time doesn't permit individual presentations. Be sure that presentations are expressive oral readings and not memorizations of the text.

Texts to use:

- Choose grade-level texts that provide an authentic purpose for presentation, such as poems, plays, personal letters, speeches and narrative texts that include dialog.

During Student Engagement in a Volume of Reading

Beyond the texts included in your lessons, it's always a good idea to encourage students to choose their own books and read them. Exposure to a wide range of texts, genres and topics means exposure to new vocabulary as well as repetition of high-frequency words. By making time for this additional reading, we support "practice beyond mastery" and also deepen the reader's knowledge of the world, which increases their comprehension.

During explicit instruction that focuses on decoding and word recognition, we aim to limit texts that include spelling-sound correspondences that haven't yet been taught. However, outside of this instructional time, students should have some opportunity to read texts of their own choosing. With interest in a topic, motivation or existing background knowledge about the topic, students may be able to read texts that are more difficult than they might otherwise read. We can leverage students' interest and motivation fueled by self-selection of books, to provide "miles on the page"—the volume of reading that builds word recognition, vocabulary, and knowledge.

During this additional reading time, we can provide opportunities for independent reading and also provide additional support to those who need it most, through small groups, literacy-related centers and guided reading groups. We can use any of the fluency building activities we've discussed as we provide additional support to readers who need it. Independent readers build fluency during this time with partner reading or by practicing oral reading selections.

Part 4: Supporting fluency beyond the ELA block

The standards call for an increasing balance of fiction and nonfiction, not just during the ELA block, but also other parts of the school day. So some of the nonfiction reading can take place in the social studies and science blocks. We can use reading of content area texts as opportunities to include additional lessons and activities to build students' reading fluency. Many of the same activities and practices can be used to support fluency in the content areas, with minimal shifts and nuance.

Modeling fluent reading of text

Use read-alouds of content area texts to emphasize expression and pace while reading aloud during social studies and science. Through read-alouds you can introduce new topics and model pronunciation of related content area vocabulary before students have to read these words on their own. This gives students a solid footing for their independent and scaffolded reading about the content.

Sets of text on related topics

Use a variety of books, articles, digital sources, etc. about content area topics of study to provide exposure that reinforces common vocabulary and concepts through different texts. Reading across texts about the same topic will support development or word recognition along with content knowledge.

Text-based discussions

Engage students in discussions about complex sentences, text structure and new vocabulary found in content area texts. Parse complex sentences into their component parts, having students describe the meaning in of each part in their own words. Be sure to bring closure to the conversation by allowing students to put the component parts back together, discussing meaning based on their new understanding of the component parts of the sentence. Also have students reread complex sentences and passages as part of text-based discussions aimed at eliciting meaning from the text.

Repeated oral reading

Assign a passage from the text as homework to be read aloud nightly, at home–or provide such text, related to subject area content, to ELA teachers for their use.

Choral reading

Use choral reading to introduce an introductory excerpt from the first text about a new topic (for topically related text sets). This passage can also be assigned as homework (repeated oral reading) after choral reading takes place.

Reader's theater

Use reader's theater for content area texts, like speeches, plays and poetry, allowing rehearsal time in class or at home. Have all students prepare for the presentation, even if time doesn't permit individual presentations. Different students can present each time this activity is used.

As we said at the outset of this guide, fluency is an element of reading proficiency that can be improved relatively quickly with little in the way of additional time and resources. A few last things before you embark on targeting reading fluency in K-2:

- In Kindergarten and Grade 1 our primary focus is on developing automatic and accurate decoding and word recognition, giving more attention to these elements of fluency. In Grade 2, we'll continue to support this focus on automatic and accurate decoding for struggling readers, but will also give attention to the pace and expressive elements of fluency.
- Fluency changes with text complexity, context or genre—that is, students who read one text fluently may not read another type of text with the same level of fluency. Remember that supporting fluency is an ongoing endeavor, rather than a goal that is achieved.
- Frequency is important—embed these activities into lessons within and beyond the ELA block as often as you can.

Appendix: Fluency Strategy Directions

Repeated oral reading

Repeated oral reading is an activity in which a selected passage is read aloud, repeatedly during the week. Repetition builds accurate word recognition, expression, pace—the elements of fluency. Rereading provides great practice and new learning. It is also an excellent strategy for helping students to comprehend increasingly complex grade-level texts:

1. A fluent reader (teacher, coach or more fluent peer) reads the passage to student.
2. Student reads the passage focusing on reading at an appropriate pace, accurately pronouncing words, and reading with appropriate expression.
3. The fluent reader provides the students with feedback regarding pace, pronunciation and expression.
4. The student continues to practice orally reading the text over the course of the week.
5. The teacher monitors oral reading throughout the week and assesses oral reading at the end of the week.

Choral reading

Choral reading is an activity in which teacher and students (whole class or group) read together, in unison. Choral reading provides students with a model of what fluent reading sounds like, including pronunciation, expression and pace. This activity also provides gradual release of students from group practice to independent reading of the passage.

1. The teacher models pronunciation, pace and expression while reading a passage to the class or group.
2. Teacher and children then read the passage together, as the teacher rotates to monitor individual children's reading. Note: Initially, students may need practice reading in unison, but with a little practice starting and stopping together, students will acquire the routine.

A note about purposeful text selection: Students benefit most when excerpts and texts for choral reading are of grade-level complexity and do not take more than three minutes to read aloud. Matching the topics in choral reading to the topic being studied benefits students by building content knowledge and vocabulary.

Partner reading

Partner reading can be done in two ways.

A. Students can read aloud to one another, taking turns by sentence, paragraph or page, with the peer reader providing feedback on pronunciation, pace and expression. Partner reading supports self-correction through modeling and word recognition.

1. Select a turn-taking cue (sentence, paragraph, page) and model for students how turn-taking will take place. Also, model for students how they are to provide feedback to their partner.
2. One student reads until his or her turn is complete, while the partner student follows along in the text.
3. The partner student provides feedback and correction as needed during the reading.
4. The process is repeated as each turn is taken.
5. The teacher monitors pairs to ensure progress and attention to the task.

B. Partner reading can also take the form of "whisper" reading, where students read chorally in pairs or groups in a whisper, allowing for less distracting background noise. As a teacher circulates through groups or partnerships, students can raise their voices to an oral reading level for teachers to get a better feeling for their fluency.

For students who need more support, variations on partner reading that provide modeling can be employed, with the understanding that a strong classroom culture is necessary for the following to take place successfully without student humiliation.

In the listening while reading variation, partners read the same portion of the passage, with the more fluent partner reading aloud first and thus, modeling for his or her partner, who follows along silently. The less fluent partner then reads aloud while the more fluent partner provides corrective feedback and support as needed. The pair then moves to the next sentence, paragraph, or page, using the same process.

In the tandem reading variation, the pair read aloud in tandem with the more accomplished reader providing a model for his or her partner, until the less fluent reader signals that he or she is ready to continue on his or her own. When the student makes a reading error, tandem reading begins again, until the less fluent reader again signals that he or she is ready to continue solo.

Reader's theater

Reader's theater is an activity in which a text is divided into parts for each reader and read aloud. The text is practiced throughout the week (repeatedly read) for presentation at the end of the week. Reader's theater provides purposeful practice of pace and expression, and through rehearsal provides repetition that builds word recognition. It is important to note that during presentation, students are reading the text with expression, rather than performing the text from memory.

1. Teacher chooses a text suitable for performance (poems, speeches, scenes from plays, and text with dialog are particularly suitable)
2. The teacher performs a model reading of the text, then assigns parts to students.
3. Throughout the week, time is dedicated to oral practice, with some practice time spent mid-week specifically focused on expressive reading of the selection.
4. At the end of the week, the text is present to the audience.

Practice beyond mastery

It is important to ensuring students have opportunity to practice beyond simply mastering the spelling-sound correspondences. The goal is for students to reach automaticity. This will require ongoing practice accompanied by corrective feedback. Even the world's best home run hitters still go to batting practice. That is, they practice, even though they have already mastered the home-run hit. This is similar with fluency: to foster automatic decoding, we need to provide practice (beyond mastery) of letter-sound correspondences we've already taught, even as we move on to teaching new letter-sounds correspondences.

Practice beyond mastery also plays a role in developing automatic word recognition. The more students read, the more individual words they recognize automatically. With explicit instruction and plenty of time reading, many high-frequency words (words that appear repeatedly in a variety of texts) become recognized. Over time, words that students have repeatedly decoded also become recognized, so they no longer need to be sounded out.

Providing topically related sets of texts

We support the development of vocabulary and content knowledge when we provide topically related reading. Several authors writing about the same topic are likely to use many of the same words. Repeated exposure to vocabulary in context builds vocabulary and content knowledge, which supports the development of fluency and comprehension.

Why topically related and not theme-based texts? While themes, like struggle, friendship, and heroism can connect texts, these texts will likely not include much overlap in vocabulary. The theme itself may have some vocabulary associated with it (e.g., hero, villain, courage), but the texts will likely be about different situations or characters representing the theme. Topics, on the other hand, bring with them the vocabulary of the topic (e.g., the topic plants has a common vocabulary of root, leaf, stem, photosynthesis, nutrient, etc), allowing for students to build their fluency in reading around that topic.

Modeling and discussion

Some children may not really know how elements of the text cue fluency, and this is one of the reasons why reading aloud to explicitly model (and discuss) what fluent reading sounds like is helpful. As we read, we can also draw students' attention to and discuss the relationship between text structures, word choice, syntax and meaning. This allows us to foster a habit of attention to language and not just the individual words in the text. To get the most success using modeling and discussion planning prior to class is a critical component. To facilitate meaningful discussion, we need to assess which parts of the text will challenge our students:

1. Choose several sentences or short passages from a current text that are complex and convey important elements of meaning.
2. Parse the sentence or passage so that we can clearly identify elements of main and subordinate clauses, including the subject, verb, topic and action.
3. Translate each part of the passage to its meaning ahead of time.
4. Identify elements of text structure and meaning-making word choice included in the text.

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