



Building Fluency: A Guide to Grades 3-5 ELA Standards

UnboundEd

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Part 1: Understanding Fluency	4
WHAT IS FLUENCY?	4
WHY IS FLUENCY IMPORTANT?	4
Part 2: How The Elementary ELA Block Supports Fluency	5
Part 3: Building Fluency During the ELA Block	6
STANDARDS EXPECTATIONS	6
HEARING, READING AND DISCUSSING CONTENT-RICH, COMPLEX TEXTS	7
DURING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN A VOLUME OF READING	16
Part 4: Supporting Fluency Beyond the ELA block	17
MODELING FLUENT READING OF TEXT	17
SETS OF TEXT ON RELATED TOPICS	17
TEXT-BASED DISCUSSIONS	17
REPEATED ORAL READING	17
CHORAL READING	17
READER'S THEATER	17
Appendix: Fluency Strategy Directions	19
REPEATED ORAL READING	19
CHORAL READING	19
PARTNER READING	19
READER'S THEATER	20
PRACTICE BEYOND MASTERY	20
PROVIDING TOPICALLY RELATED SETS OF TEXTS	21
MODELING AND DISCUSSION	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22

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 3-5, 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.

Why do we focus on fluency? Nearly two-thirds of U.S. students in grades 4, 8 and 12 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 new 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 the three characteristics:

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

In Grade 3 through Grade 5, our continued inclusion of fluency practice helps 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 many words. As texts increase in complexity, automaticity will allow students to focus their attention on making meaning from the text, rather than sounding out words. By Grade 3, students should have progressed from sounding out words to increased automaticity and word recognition.

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 Elementary 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, 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, vocabulary 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:



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



Student engagement in a volume of reading beyond instruction.

Each of these types of reading 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 contribute to fluent reading. The work we do within complex, grade-level texts is imperative and much of our instruction will be conducted within the context of these texts. We will also provide opportunities for students to engage in a volume of additional reading within and beyond the ELA block. In planning our instruction, we must make time daily for each of these types of reading.

It's also important to understand that if our students are not yet decoding with automaticity, we need to carve out time to provide the instruction, practice or remediation they need to achieve this. If students have mastered the sound-spelling correspondence but not automaticity, their reading will still sound slow and labored, that is, not yet fluent. We will need to provide ongoing decoding practice accompanied by corrective feedback. Often, we will have to provide this support in addition to the instruction that takes place during the ELA block.

Even when students are reading behind grade level, they need many opportunities to engage in a volume of reading. It's precisely this reading that will build the automaticity, word recognition, vocabulary and content knowledge that support fluency and reading comprehension. Unfortunately, struggling students—as a result of their poor reading—often lack the motivation to engage in the *amount* of reading that will in turn *improve* their reading. It's incumbent upon us—across all content areas—to find ways to support and encourage reading throughout the day. Intervention and support for struggling readers must include opportunities to read and shouldn't come at the expense of hearing, reading and discussing grade-level texts, or at the expense of knowledge- and vocabulary-building content.

Part 3: Building Fluency During the ELA Block

Let's begin by looking at the fluency expectations of the new, high standards. 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.

Standards Expectations

With appropriate focus on phonics and word recognition in the earlier grades, our goal is that by the time our students reach Grade 3, they will have progressed beyond mostly sound-by-sound reading to single-word and contextual reading. They should be able to decode and read a variety of words including those with common prefixes and suffixes and common but irregular spellings.. **(ELA.RF.2.3)**

Our work, then, by the end of Grade 3 is to ensure that our students can not only identify, but know the meaning of common prefixes, derivational suffixes and Latin suffixes, and that they can decode grade-appropriate, irregularly spelled words and words with multiple syllables. **(ELA.RF.3.3)**

By Grade 4 and beyond, students should be able to use this combined knowledge of sounds, spellings and words—phonics, syllabication and morphology (word roots and affixes)—to read familiar words, including those with multiple syllables. **(ELA.RF.4.3 &) (ELA.RF.5.3)**

Our students should be able to read grade-level prose—informational and narrative—and poetry with appropriate speed, accuracy and expression comprehending the purpose and meaning of each. **(ELA.RF.3.4,) (ELA.RF.4.4 & ELA.RF.5.4)**

The more oral reading practice students have, the more fluent their reading becomes. Thus, repeated oral reading, choral reading and partner reading are an important part of the Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 5 fluency-building repertoire.

Because our students' level of reading fluency can change with text complexity, context or genre, we need to continue to include fluency practice in our instruction throughout elementary school and beyond. The more oral reading practice students have, the more fluent their reading becomes. Thus, repeated oral reading, choral reading and partner reading are an important part of the Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 5 fluency-building repertoire. In these grades we also support fluency using grade-level texts and passages by continuing to build word recognition and including some time for discussion to support meaning-making and monitor comprehension.



Hearing, Reading and discussing Content-Rich, Complex Texts

In Grade 3 through Grade 5, a great deal of valuable work 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's 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.

While hearing, reading and discussing such texts, we support the development of language, vocabulary and knowledge. We can often integrate our instruction around spelling, vocabulary and grammar within the context of our work with these texts. 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 Grade 3 through Grade 5, we will continue to include regular opportunities for students to read orally. We can do this with any of the fluency activities that require oral reading. An important support for fluency development is to select a weekly passage for students to practice (at school or at home) for delivery at the end of each week.

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 and 4-5 Grade Bands](#)

Let's look at how we can support fluency when sharing complex, grade-level texts.

When sharing these texts with students, it's 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.

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. Repeating the choral reading over several days helps increase students' fluent reading. Over this time, we can gradually release responsibility to transfer reading from us to the class.

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 2-3 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.

Repeated Oral Reading

Rereading passages and repeated oral reading from previously read grade-level texts helps students to recognize words and spellings. As exposure to the words are repeated, the ability to recognize the words increases. Repeated reading provides the reader with increasing familiarity with the text—its words and its literary and syntactical features.

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.
- Introduce new texts through read-alouds and oral reading, then give students time to practice reading the text repeatedly throughout the week.

Text to use:

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

Reader's Theater

For reader's theater, students rehearse reading of a text that contains parts for multiple readers in preparation for oral presentation. Be sure that presentations are expressive oral readings and not memorizations of the text. It can be tempting to have students memorize scripts and poems, but for the purposes of fluency practice, it is the reading that's important.

When to use:

- 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.

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.

Reader's Theater about the Rainforest

In this lesson excerpt, students perform a Reader's Theater of the poem I Want to be a Rainforest Scientist.

I Want to Be a Rainforest Scientist

I want to be a rainforest scientist.
Descending the columns, from canopy to floor
Floating high above pavilion crowns
And sweeping through the air
Spying into the depths of foliage
To see what is there.

I want to be a rainforest scientist.
Within the branches of the canopy
Dangling from coiled rafts' ropes
Tracing the lace where lines entwine
To discover the connections
To this mysterious vine.

I want to be a rainforest scientist.
Spying on looping spider monkeys,
As macaws flash brilliantly through the air
To forage in the nearby kapok tree.
As I stare in amazement
At the teeming life before me.

I want to be a rainforest scientist.
Digging deep into the earth,
Sifting through the shrubbery,
And capturing insects in my net
To study these strange inhabitants
I haven't counted yet.

I want to be a rainforest scientist.
Peeking into the petals of orchids,
And fiery red bromeliad leaves
To see what lurks inside
And catch rare glimpses of the creatures
Who only want to hide!

I want to be a rainforest scientist.
Exploring the unknown
And balancing my curiosity
With what I know is best.
To help preserve the world I study
Will be my greatest test.

A. Reviewing Homework and Engaging the Reader (10 minutes)

- Ask students to take out their journals. Invite students to share with a new partner their thoughts on Meg Lowman's sons' first ascent to the canopy. Remind them to also share one new added vocabulary word from pages 28–31 in glossaries.
- Say to students: "Now you are going to read a poem aloud with a partner. This poem will help you think more about what Meg Lowman's life as a rainforest scientist is like. It also allows you the opportunity to practice reading aloud with a partner, as you will do with interview questions you create later in the lesson."
- Place students in pairs. Display the "I Want to Be a Rainforest Scientist" poem and distribute one per student.
- Explain the directions to students:
 - *Partners assign alternating stanzas.
 - * Each partner reads his/her stanzas silently, to become familiar with the text.
 - * As a pair, read the poem aloud, alternating stanzas.

1

- * Pay attention to how you read with fluency.
- Briefly review the learning target: "I can read my speaker's lines with fluency."
- Remind students of all the great work they did fluently reading their Reader's Theater scripts for Esperanza Rising. Ask a few students to share out elements of reading with fluency (tone, facial expression, pace, etc.).
- Give students 2 minutes to read their stanzas silently.
- Then ask students to begin.
- After students read the poem aloud once, ask them to talk with their partners about one way they could improve their fluency. Ask several students to share out to the whole group. Listen for statements such as: "Read more slowly," "pronounce all words clearly," "add expression to my voice," "increase or decrease the volume of my voice," etc.

2

- Invite students to read the poem aloud in pairs for a second time, focusing on fluency.

1

Draw students' attention to their reading fluency. It may also be helpful here to review for students the elements of reading fluency—accurate word recognition and pronunciation, at a conversational pace, and appropriate expression.

2

Repeated oral reading also supports fluency.

Expeditionary Learning Grade 5, Module 2A, Unit 2, Lesson 11

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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 use modeling fluent reading:

- Conduct daily read-alouds in the early grades to model fluency and build knowledge and vocabulary.
- Read aloud difficult passages from student texts.

Texts to use:

- Choose complex texts 2-3 levels above grade level.

Sets of Texts on Related Topics

Reading sets of texts on a related topic across subsequent days supports fluency by efficiently building content knowledge and vocabulary. Two or more authors writing about the same topic will use many of the same words. As the vocabulary of the topic becomes familiar to the reader, they will be able to read unfamiliar texts about the topic—containing the repeated vocabulary—with increased fluency.

It's important for us to make the distinction between topically related and theme-based texts. Although themes, like struggle, friendship and heroism can connect texts, these texts will likely not include much overlap in vocabulary. The theme itself may have a limited set of vocabulary associated with it (e.g., hero, villain, courage), but the texts will likely be about different situations or characters represented by distinctly different vocabulary. Topics, or *domains of knowledge*, on the other hand, bring with them the vocabulary of the topic (e.g., the topic of 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 sets of texts on related topics:

- 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:

- Choose content-rich fiction and nonfiction about a related topic (e.g., plants, Native Americans, 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 “juicy” complex sentences, text structure and new vocabulary support children's understanding and how these features influence the pace and expression of reading.

When to have discussions around complex sentences:

- 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. Ask them to put the component parts back together, discussing meaning based on their new understanding of the component parts of the sentence. Be sure to bring closure to the conversation by having students reread the passage—with expression and a new understanding!

Texts to use:

- Choose complex texts 2-3 levels above grade level for read-alouds.
- Choose 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.

A Juicy Sentence from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

There are many “juicy” sentences and passages in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. When reading this text with our students, we can use passages like the one below to discuss elements of vocabulary, syntax and text structure that will impact the pace and expression with which it is read.

A passage like this is worthy of several rereadings to help students tease out the meaning.

Down, down, down. Would the fall *never* come to an end? “I wonder how many miles I’ve fallen by this time?” She said aloud. “I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down I think—” (for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a *very* good opportunity for her showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) “—yes, that’s about the right distance—but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I’ve got to?”

On the first reading, we’ll have a class discussion about the *gist* of the passage. On the second and third readings, we’ll define *vocabulary* and discuss *punctuation* and what it means for how the passage is read (stops, pauses, intonation). On the fourth reading, we’ll discuss the pronouns and their **[referents]**. Beginning with “I” and its relation to “Alice,” who is telling the story. It is especially important for us to discuss pronouns because our students are often tripped up by not understanding to whom or what a pronoun refers. This confusion hinders fluency and comprehension. It is helpful for us, while planning our instruction, to annotate these things in our text.

From, Chapter 1, “Down the Rabbit-Hole”

Down, down, down. Would the fall *never* come to an end? “I wonder how many miles I’ve fallen by this time?” She **[Alice]** said aloud. “I must be getting somewhere near the *centre* of the earth. Let me **[Alice]** see; that **[the center of the earth]** would be four thousand miles down I think—” (for, you **[the reader]** see, Alice had *learnt* several things of this **[distance to center of earth]** sort in her **[Alice’s]** lessons in the schoolroom, and though this **[while falling down the rabbit hole]** was not a *very* good *opportunity* for her **[Alice’s]** showing off her **[Alice’s]** knowledge, as there **[in the rabbit hole]** was no one to listen to her **[Alice]**, still it **[knowing the distance]** was good practice to say it **[the distance]** over) “—yes, that’s **[four thousand miles]** about the right distance—but then I wonder what *Latitude* or *Longitude* I’ve got to?”

During the next reading, we’ll have students use their new understanding of punctuation to break the fourth sentence into its component parts. Then, we’ll discuss the meaning of each part with students’ new understanding of vocabulary and pronouns.

"I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth.

Alice must be getting somewhere near the center of the earth.

Let me see:

Let *Alice* see:

that would be four thousand miles down I think—"

The center of the earth would be four thousand miles down *Alice* thinks—"

(for, you see,

For, the reader should see (understand)

Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom

Alice had learned several things like distance to the center of the earth in her lessons in the schoolroom,

this was not a very good opportunity for her showing off her knowledge,

While falling down a rabbit hole was not a very good time

as there was no one to listen to her,

because there was no one to listen to her.

still it was good practice to say it over

Knowing the distance was still good practice to say it over

"—yes,

"—yes,

that's about the right distance—

Four thousand miles is about the right distance—

but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to

but then I wonder how *far I have gone—what latitude and longitude I have reached?*"

Now we've fully prepared our students to reread the passage (one more time) with understanding and expression.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, New York: MacMillan. (1865)

Putting it all together

Each of these strategies should be used often 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 and the comprehension that comes with fluency.

Focus on Fluency

In these excerpts, we explore a lesson designed specifically to introduce the concept of reading fluency to students so that they can identify the skills of a fluent reader and practice reading an excerpt from an independent reading book with fluency.

Although the lesson focus on fluency is a great way to introduce the concept, in subsequent lessons we should use and model the fluency activities and practices within the context of our focus on the central text and topic of our instruction.

In these lesson excerpts, we will **model and discuss what fluent reading sounds like**.

Opening

A. Engaging the Reader: Audio Recording or Read-aloud (10 minutes)

- 1 • Play an audio recording (or do a choral reading) of a short poem. (Options might include a poem from *I Am the Book*, compiled by Lee Bennett Hopkins, or use any poem with which students are familiar.) Invite students to clap and/or chant along as appropriate.

- 1 • Fluent adult readers can model for students what fluency sounds like. Professional audio recordings are also a viable option if they are readings and not recitations or dramatic presentations.

Work Time

A. Whole Group Listen to Read-aloud (15 minutes)

- 1 • Invite students into this fluency study: “We have discovered that one way readers build their reading power is by reading aloud to yourself and others. You have been practicing this as homework with some of the stories we have read. In a few days, each of you will read aloud a short text to demonstrate your reading superpowers. It is important that our reading is fluent so that the audience can understand the meaning. Fluency is another skill we will add to our reading powers. This will be fun and important work for us as readers.”
- Remind them that they have been building their fluency in several ways in this module: by reading along during teacher read-alouds, by rereading, and by reading aloud to others or themselves (for homework).
- 1 • Say: “As you are listening, please pay careful attention to what makes a fluent reader good. I am going to ask you at the end of the reading to identify what a fluent reader sounds like.” Check for student understanding of the task at hand.
- Read the text excerpt aloud. Pause to re-engage students with their purpose. Then ask: “What does a fluent reader sound like?” Students either may write down what they hear or simply listen.

- 1 • Cue students to listen for what fluent reading sounds like.

During this lesson, we will also **discuss how punctuation cues changes in expression**, emphasizing how our expression changes and is cued by different punctuation.

We will also provide students an opportunity to practice their own fluent reading through **partner reading**.

Work Time (continued)

C. Whole Group Practice and Check-in against Criteria (10 minutes)

- Display another excerpt from *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, so all students can see it. Invite students to turn and talk about what they remember about the story. What was the main message or lesson? What did Trisha “want”

and how did she overcome her challenges? Listen for students to comment on how Trisha worked hard to read.

- 1 • Point out to students that Trisha had to learn several skills before she was really a reader. One was just to learn how to make sense of the words on the page (decoding). Another skill was the ability to read out loud so the words flowed. That's fluency: what students will be practicing today.
- 2 • Focus on examples of dialogue and varied punctuation. Read the passage aloud once to the class. Point out the words in the text as students listen in. Invite them to notice how conventions of writing (e.g., quotation marks, exclamation points, question marks) are fluency clues for readers.
- 3 • As a whole class, reread the text as a choral read.
• Ask students to think about how well the class did with the choral read. Identify a star (area of strength) and step (area of growth) as a whole group based on the criteria. Use sentence frames to support feedback such as: "I like how we _____," and "I think we would be more fluent if we _____."

4 D. Partner Practice with Check-in against Criteria (10 minutes)

- 1 Discuss what fluent reading sounds like.
- 2 Discuss how features of the text cure fluency. More specifically, talk about how pace and expression change with commas, exclamation points, question marks, etc.
- 3 Choral Reading
- 4 Students are provided with an opportunity to partner read.

We will provide an **opportunity for students to think about and take ownership** of developing their own fluency.

Closing and Assessment

A. Debrief (5 minutes)

- 1 Invite students to silently reflect on how it went to read as partners. What is one star (area of strength) you showed as a fluent reader? What is one step (area of growth) to improve your fluency? Students Pair-Share their reflection using sentence frames: "I like how I _____" and "I would be more fluent as a reader if I _____." Students can add their fluent reader goal to their other reading power goals.

- 1 Students are asked to reflect on their fluency.

Finally, repeated oral reading is assigned as homework.

Homework

- 1 • Practice reading a book or book excerpt aloud to someone. First **[orally]** read it five to eight times to yourself, focusing on fluency. Then share it with a listener. The listener can then give you a star and a step on the fluency feedback form.

- 1 Repeated Oral Reading

Expeditionary Learning Grade 3, Module 1, Unit 2, Lesson 8

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During Student Engagement in a Volume of Reading

By allowing children to read a wide range of texts—a variety of genre and topics—we provide them with exposure to new vocabulary and repetition of high-frequency words. A volume of reading beyond our core instruction is important for developing word recognition because it takes repeated exposure to a large amount of text to acquire a deep inventory of words that are instantly recognized. By making time for this additional reading, we support “practice beyond mastery” that leads to automaticity and also deepen the reader’s knowledge of the world, which increases their comprehension.

During this time, students should have some opportunity to engage in reading 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 we can provide additional support to those who need it most using 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, and not just in the ELA block, but other parts of the school day as well. 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 of 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 Grade 3 through Grade 5:

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 Grade 3 through Grade 5:

- As we provide attention to developing the pace and expression elements of fluency we'll also need to continue to support automatic and accurate decoding for struggling readers.
- 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.
- Fluency is important for its contribution to comprehension, and can be improved for most readers with practice. 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 presented to the audience.

Practice beyond mastery

It's important to ensure students have the 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 of 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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