

Oral Reading Fluency

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What is Oral Reading Fluency?

Oral reading fluency is the ability to read connected text quickly, accurately, and with expression. In doing so, there is no noticeable cognitive effort that is associated with decoding the words on the page. Oral reading fluency is one of several critical components required for successful reading comprehension. Students who read with automaticity and have appropriate speed, accuracy, and proper expression are more likely to comprehend material because they are able to focus on the meaning of the text.

Why is Oral Reading Fluency an Important Skill to Assess?

A student's level of verbal reading proficiency has a 30-year evidence base as one of the most common, reliable, and efficient indicators of student reading comprehension (Reschly, Busch, Betts, Deno, & Long, 2009; Wayman, Wallace, Wiley, Tichá, & Espin, 2007). When used as a predictor of higher stakes reading comprehension tasks, an assessment of oral reading fluency performs as well as or better than many other comprehensive tests of reading (see Baker et al., 2008). Because reading fluency tasks are designed to be brief, reliable, and repeatable, they serve well as tools for universal screening for early intervention across Grades 1 – 6 (Reschly et al., 2009). Reading fluency tasks are also used for monitoring the progress of individual students

who are at risk for later detrimental reading outcomes.

Curriculum-Based Measurement of oral reading (CBM-R) is a universal term that encompasses multiple types of oral reading fluency assessments (e.g., aimsweb.com; dibels.uoregon.edu; easyCBM.com; edcheckup.com; fastforteachers.org; isteep.com). Taken together, measures of CBM-R are some of the most widely used and researched tools in educational assessment for screening and progress monitoring (Graney & Shinn, 2005). Any CBM-R set is typically represented by a standardized set of passages designed to identify students who may require additional support (through universal screening) and to monitor progress toward instructional goals. A student's current level of performance is measured by the number of words read correctly in one minute and also typically includes the accuracy of the reading expressed as a percentage. When CBM-R is used as a screening tool, it is most commonly administered to students at three different time points during the school year.

What are the Key Features of Oral Fluency Instruction across Grade Levels?

To facilitate fluency with connected text, students should read text that is at their independent completion level (i.e., materials in which students can read *highly accurately*, 99% accuracy or better, when asked to read on their own). Even in very early grades, when students

are just learning to decode, it is important that they have sufficient opportunities for independent, deliberate practice reading connected text (Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, & Hoffman, 2006; Ericsson, Nandagopal, & Roring, 2009; Gunn, Smolkowski, & Vadasy, 2011). Independent reading practice is critical in the upper grades, too. Across the grade ranges, the goal of fluency practice is intended to focus on the strategic integration of decoding, fluency, *and* comprehension tasks. Targeted fluency intervention becomes increasingly rare in the upper grades, but still occurs when the data indicate very accurate, and also very slow, readers.

The following research-based instructional practices can be used to build oral reading fluency for struggling readers:

- a. Repeated Reading: students are asked to read short and meaningful passages until the desired level of fluency is achieved for that passage. Students should be timed and receive systematic, corrective feedback from their teacher during repeated reading.
- b. Peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS; L. S. Fuchs, Fuchs, Kazdan, & Allen, 1999; Mathes & Babyak, 2001): two students are paired together and asked to play the role of either the coach or the student. When the “student” reads, the “coach” listens and provides corrective feedback.
- c. Tape-assisted reading: students are asked to read a passage along with an audio-recording of the passage. Students may

perform this task with a teacher or independently.

- d. Slide and Glide: the teacher reads the first portion of a sentence and then the student finishes the sentence. This process is repeated throughout an entire passage.

Where Can I Find Information About Evidence-based Practices in Building Oral Fluency?

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews the research base for several programs and interventions, and uses the following eligibility criteria when identifying studies to review: (i) the study is published within the last 20 years; (ii) it includes a primary analysis of the effect of an intervention; and (iii) it is a randomized controlled trial, quasi-experimental, regression discontinuity, or single-subject design type. Studies that do not meet criteria are often excluded because they do not use a comparison group, the study was not conducted within the time frame specified in the protocol, or the study does not provide adequate information about the design.

To search for a review of fluency-based interventions completed by the WWC, use the following link:
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/findwhatworks.aspx>.

In Table 1, we display the results of a recent (summer 2013) search for peer-reviewed oral fluency interventions, including the level of evidence supporting the intervention.

Table 1

Oral Fluency interventions reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). Names in parentheses are the publishers for the listed intervention materials.

Program Name (Publisher/Date)	Grade Level(s)	Level of Evidence	Brief Description
Accelerated Reader (Renaissance Learning, Inc., 1985)	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Small	A guided reading intervention that utilizes reading practice and quizzes on the books students read.
Corrective Reading (McGraw-Hill, 2008)	3, 5	Small	Designed to promote decoding skills, fluency, and comprehension skills of students in Grade 3 or above.
Earobics (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Learning Technology, 1995)	K, 1, 2, 3	Small	Interactive software program that builds children's skills in phonemic awareness, auditory processing, phonics, and the cognitive and language skills needed for comprehension.
Failure Free Reading (Failure Free Reading, 1996)	3	Small	A curriculum designed to improve vocabulary, fluency, word recognition, and reading comprehension for low-performing students.
Fast ForWord (Scientific Learning Corporation, 1997)	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Small	A computer-based reading program developed to strengthen the cognitive skills necessary for reading. The program is intended to be used five days a week for 4 to 16 weeks.
Fluency Formula (Scholastic, 2003)	2	Small	A supplemental program that emphasizes automatic recognition of words, decoding accuracy, and oral expressiveness.
Ladders to Literacy (Brookes Publishing, 2005)	K	Small	A supplemental early literacy curriculum including activities on print awareness, phonological awareness skills, and oral language skills.

LANGUAGE! (Voyager Learning)	9, 10	Small	Language arts intervention program that integrates phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, spelling, vocabulary, morphology, grammar, usage, listening, comprehension, speaking, and writing.
Lexia Reading (Lexia Learning Systems, 2007)	K, 1	Small	Computer-based reading program that provides phonics instruction and offers independent practice in basic reading skills.
Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development, 2005)	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Small	A supplemental peer-tutoring program where student pairs participate in a structured set of activities.
Reading Mastery (McGraw-Hill, 2008)	4, 5	Small	Reading Mastery can be used as an intervention, supplemental, or core program. The most recent edition, Reading Mastery Signature Edition, is designed for students in Grades K-5.
Read Naturally (Read Naturally, 2008)	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	Small	Combines the use of books, audiotapes, and computer software to develop oral reading fluency through the following strategies: repeated reading, teacher modeling, and systematic progress monitoring.
Reading Recovery (RRCNA, 1984)	1	Small	A supplemental program intended to serve the lowest achieving first-grade students. Reading Recovery comprises one-on-one tutoring sessions.
Sound Partners (Sopris West, 2005)	K, 1	Medium to large	A phonics-based supplemental program designed specifically for use by tutors with minimal training and experience. Instruction focuses on letter-sound correspondence, phoneme blending, decoding, and irregular high frequency words.

SpellRead (PCI Education, 1994)	5, 6	Small	A small group program that integrates the auditory and visual aspects of reading.
Start Making a Reader Today (SMART)	1, 2	Small	A volunteer tutoring program for students in Grades K-2. The volunteer goes to the school and reads to children, reads with the children, re-reads with the children, and asks questions about what they just read.
SuccessMaker (Pearson Digital Learning, 2012)	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Small	Computer-based program intended to supplement classroom reading instruction for students in Grades K-8.
Wilson Reading System (Wilson Language Training, 1988)	3	Small	A supplemental reading and writing curriculum designed to increase reading accuracy and spelling skills.

Note. The level of evidence listed in this table refers to fluency effects only. These programs may have other levels of efficacy for other domains.

Additional Web Resources

Doing What Works: <http://dww.ed.gov>

IES Practice Guide for Literacy:
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=6>

National Center on Intensive Interventions:
<http://www.intensiveintervention.org/chart/instructional-intervention-tools?grade=all&subject=reading>

National Reading Panel:
<http://www.Nationalreadingpanel.org>

Promising Practices Network:
<http://www.promisingpractices.net>

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Note. The first edition of this InfoSheet was prepared by Diane Pedrotty Bryant, Judy Englehard, and Linda Reetz.

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