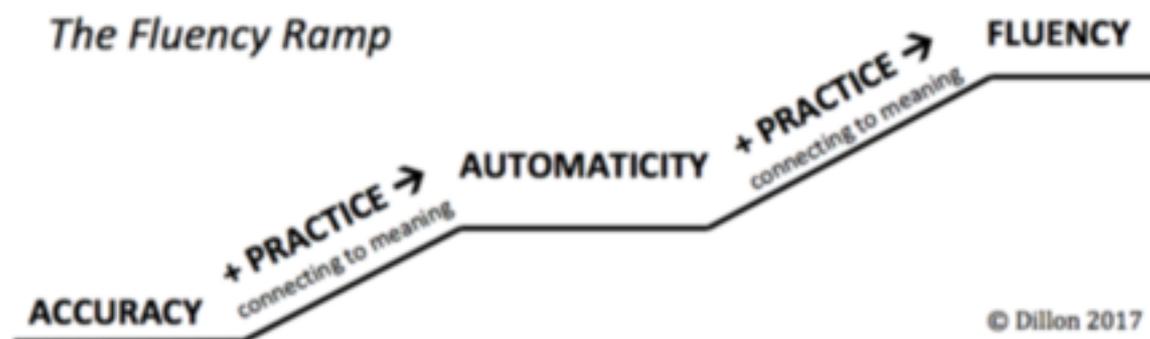


Building Fluent Readers



Help students ramp up their fluency through practice. Bear in mind that reading with accuracy and expression is as important as speed.

Fluency is About More than Speed

The [Literacy How Reading Wheel](#) does not include fluency as a separate component; instead, the automaticity dimension of fluency is regarded as a critical ingredient for *each* reading component. As stated by Norton and Wolf (2012), "It is advantageous to conceptualize fluent reading as a complex ability that depends on automaticity across all levels of cognitive and linguistic processing that are involved in reading, allowing time and thought to be devoted to comprehension."

Accurate and automatic recognition of words is necessary in order to devote working memory to comprehension, rather than to decoding, that is figuring out the words. While speed (rate) is important, reading groups of words with prosody or expression (i.e., as the reader would speak the words) is equally important.

Updated Oral Reading Fluency Norms

Fluent reading is an essential step in developing reading proficiency. One aspect of fluent reading has to do with rate, usually referred to as words correct per minute (WCPM). Evidence suggests that achieving targeted fluency rates contributes to reading

comprehension. Decades of research support the use of WCPM (e.g. DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency) as a "robust indicator of overall reading development throughout the primary grades" (Hasbrouk & Tindal 2017). Hasbrouk and Tindal (2017) updated these norms for Grades 1-6, most of which have increased.

Beat the Clock!

Automaticity helps overcome a key obstacle to learning—the limited capacity of working memory. A main goal of phonics is for students to blend the sounds represented by graphemes accurately and automatically into words. Guidelines for targeted correct words per minute make it possible to gauge that students are on a trajectory for fluent reading. The activity Beat the Clock was designed to help students read words and phrases fluently, and to graph the results of their fluency practice.

Using Decodable Text to Build Fluency

Reading code-emphasis text (i.e., decodable text) also contributes to developing accuracy and automaticity because it facilitates readers' ability to attend to and use their code knowledge. The controlled nature and decodability of this type of text ensures that the reader's efforts will be successful. The development of sight word recognition, that is the ability to recognize a word without going through the process of sounding out, is another dimension of automaticity that ultimately contributes greater attention to text comprehension.

Reading with Prosody

Fluent reading also has to do with prosody (i.e., inflection and intonation of word and phrase pronunciation). Reading in grammatical phrases suggests that the reader has incorporated a layer of understanding of the words, phrases, and sentences, which also contribute to comprehension. Try this activity to develop prosody.

* Excerpted from Literacy How Professional Learning Series. Phonics: Knowledge to Practice.



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