

Reading Fluency: A Bridge from Decoding to Comprehension

Chapter Four

- I. What Is Reading Fluency?
- II. Building Students' Reading Fluency

Listen in as three third-grade students read aloud to their teacher during one-on-one conferences. The first student opens a book from Mary Pope Osbourne's *The Magic Tree House* series and reads, "Jack sat up in bed. He started out... he stared out his window. The sky was dark gray. The sun would be rising soon." Changing the sound of her voice a bit, this student continues, "'It's almost time,' he whispered to himself." It takes her about fifteen seconds to read the first half of this page of the story.

Related Readings

Along with this chapter, please read the excerpt located in the Related Readings section at the end of this text:

- Put Reading First, pp. 27-37

The second student begins his chosen book, reading, "Corduroy... is ... a... bear... who one... lived... one lived... once lived...in the... toy de... depart... department... department... of a... big... store." It takes him about one full minute to read the first sentence of the story.

The third student opens Judy Blume's *Freckle Juice* and reads, "Andrew Marcus wanted freckles Nicky Lane had freckles he had about a million of them they covered his face his ears and the back of his neck." In approximately seven seconds, she has read the first four sentences of chapter one.

What separates these three readers from one another? The third grader who is beginning *The Magic Tree House* reads naturally, similar to how she talks. If she makes a mistake, she is able to correct it quickly so that the text makes sense. When reading dialogue, she modifies her voice to sound like the character, bringing the story to life with dramatic flourish. The second student reads word-by-word, in a monotone voice. Though he decodes all the words correctly, it's clear that he still has to spend a lot of energy figuring out those words; decoding has not become an automatic process for him. For as long as decoding remains so labor intensive, his ability to think about and understand what he's read will be severely hampered. Finally, though we often associate low reading fluency with choppy, plodding reading, the student who races through *Freckle Juice* with no attention to punctuation or phrasing will have a very difficult time grasping the meaning of the story as well.

In this chapter, we will take a closer look at reading fluency. First, we will consider the component skills of fluency. Then, we will examine four broad ways to build students' reading fluency and discuss a variety of effective instructional methods and techniques. In addition to recommendations from the National Reading Panel, many of these methods are recommended by fluency expert and reading researcher Timothy Rasinski in his book, *The Fluent Reader*.

Decoding				Comprehension		
Book and Print Awareness	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	Phonics and The Alphabetic Principle	Word and Structural Analysis	Fluency		
				Sight Words	Automaticity	Phrasing
				Background Knowledge	Vocabulary	Comprehension Strategies

Reading Fluency

I. What Is Reading Fluency?

As you will remember from Chapter One, reading fluency is the ability to read a text quickly, accurately, and with expression. The umbrella skill of **fluency** can be broken down into **automaticity** (rapid and automatic word recognition) and **prosody** (reading with phrasing and recognition of punctuation). One way some teachers help students understand the concept of fluency, and reflect on whether or not they are fluent readers, is to ask, “did you read it as naturally as you talk?”

Fluency is one of the key indicators of a proficient reader, as it is necessary for true comprehension of a text. As explained earlier, if a student spends time sounding out words or stringing syllables together, her slowed pace prevents her from being able to focus on the overall meaning of what she is reading. Research shows that “since the average individual can hold only seven to ten bits of information in short-term memory, the disfluent reader expends cognitive energy primarily on figuring out words and pronunciations. This leaves little memory capacity to focus on comprehending the information.”⁶⁷ When a reader’s decoding skills are automatic, her cognitive energy can be spent on making meaning of the text. Because they don’t have to focus on decoding words, they can use all of their energy to think critically about what a story means. Truly, fluency is the bridge that takes readers from simply decoding words to understanding and enjoying whole texts.

Fluent readers put several component skills into action while they read a text on their independent level (you may want to revisit the discussion of an independent reading level in chapter two). First, they instantly recognize the great majority of words and common phrases in the text, and they use their phonics skills to quickly decode the few unknown words that they encounter. Second, fluent readers are expressive! They group words together in meaningful units such as phrases and clauses and are able to pause at appropriate places within and at the end of sentences. Finally, fluent readers change the tone of their voice and vary the emphasis they place on words by paying attention to punctuation. Consider how a fluent reader raises his voice slightly when reading a question, while the less fluent reader reads each word with the same tone and emphasis, seeming to ignore the question mark at the end of a sentence.

It takes a great deal of time to develop reading fluency; students must practice again and again with texts that are on their independent level. We *expect* our earliest readers to read in a choppy, word-by-word manner, as they are just learning to decode and thus need to spend all of their energy connecting sounds to letters and blending those letter sounds together to form words. Even as their decoding skills improve, students’ fluency will change depending on their familiarity with the topic of a given text. A skilled adult reader may need to slow her reading rate significantly if she is reading an entirely unfamiliar text (perhaps an article from an aerospace engineering textbook). Though reading rates can vary according to texts, we have a good sense of how many words-per-minute our students should be able to read at each grade level. The chart on the next page outlines targeted reading rate norms for grades one through five in the fall, winter, and spring.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Block, Cathy Collins and Michael Pressley. *Comprehension Instruction: Research-Based Best Practices*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2002.

⁶⁸ Table adapted from *Assessing Reading Fluency* by Timothy V. Rasinski, www.prel.org/products/re_/assessing-fluency.htm, accessed 7/10/2010.

Grade	Fall (Words Correct Per Minute)	Winter (Words Correct Per Minute)	Spring (Words Correct Per Minute)
1		10-30	30-60
2	30-60	50-80	70-100
3	50-90	70-100	80-110
4	70-110	80-120	100-140
5	80-120	100-140	110-150

Source: Adapted from "AIMSweb: Charting the Path to Literacy," 2003, EdInformation, Inc. Available at www.aimsweb.com/norms/reading_fluency.htm. Data are also adapted from "Curriculum-Based Oral Reading Fluency Norms for Students in Grades 2 Through 5," by J. E. Hasbrouck and G. Tindal, 1992, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 24, pp. 41-44.

Our instructional goal is for **all of our students to read as naturally and expressively as they talk**. The rest of this chapter is devoted to showing you how to reach this goal with your students.

II. Building Students' Reading Fluency

Many struggling readers believe that what defines good readers is their ability to read all of the words on a page without making a mistake. To move students from this limited understanding of what good reading is to the ability to read with the fluency that is necessary for comprehension, teachers use four broad methods⁶⁹:

1. **Model good oral reading.**
2. **Teach students phrasing to develop fluency.**
3. **Offer many opportunities for students to practice with guidance and support.**
4. **Track students' fluency over time.**

Let's take a more in-depth look at each of these methods and how they are used in the classroom.

Model Good Oral Reading

As you've likely begun to understand, all effective direct instruction begins with a teacher modeling what he or she wants students to be able to do. Instruction in fluency is no different. The more that students hear a reader using appropriate phrasing, reading quickly and accurately, and using expression in his or her voice, the more quickly students will understand what fluent reading actually is. Teachers take their modeling a step further by providing both examples and non-examples of fluent reading. Fluency expert Timothy Rasinski notes:

When you draw attention to how you're reading, you help students see that meaning in reading is carried not only in the words, but also in the way the words are expressed. For example, you might contrast a fluent rendition of a passage with a disfluent, labored, and word-by-word reading of it, then ask the students which reading they preferred and why. Without a doubt, the students will pick the more fluent reading. This becomes an important lesson in how they should read orally when given the opportunity.⁷⁰

The daily Read Aloud is a perfect opportunity to model what fluent reading sounds like. When you use a special voice for a particular character, take a breath between phrases, or pause dramatically at the end of a suspenseful sentence, you are saying to students, "This is what it sounds like in my head when I read.

⁶⁹ Rasinski, Timothy V. *The Fluent Reader: Oral Reading Strategies for Building Word Recognition, Fluency and Comprehension*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 2003, pp. 26-33.

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 26-27.

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You are working to sound just like me when you read!” In addition to the Read Aloud, you can start your Shared Reading of a poem or story, for instance, by modeling how it should sound. In *Put Reading First*, the National Reading Panel explains:

By pointing to each word as you are reading, you can show students where and how you are pausing and how the text shows you when to raise and lower your voice. Occasionally, you can also explain to your students why you are reading in a certain way:

Teacher: Did you hear how my voice got louder and more excited right here? That's because the author put in this exclamation mark (pointing to it) to show that the speaker was excited or enthusiastic about what she was saying.

Then, have the students practice reading the same text.⁷¹

Modeling fluent reading aloud for your students is a method you'll use everyday to help build your students' fluency skills.

Teach Students Phrasing to Develop Fluency

Most students who struggle to read fluently are trapped in a pattern of reading everything... word... by... word. As we saw with our *Corduroy* reader, students who read word-by-word often miss the meaning of the text because it's most often found in its phrases, not in individual words.⁷² When we speak, others can hear our phrases because we pause and change the intonation or inflection of our voices. Rasinski provides the following example as an illustration:

Say the following sentence to yourself aloud in a way that means the principal, not the teacher, is the “best in the school district”:

The principal said the teacher is the best in the school district.

Notice how inflections and intonations in your voice helped mark how the text should be phrased. You probably stressed the word “principal,” and your voice's pitch lowered at the phrase “said the teacher.” Now try the same sentence in a way that declares the teacher as “the best” by the principal. Notice how your intonation changed to convey the different meaning.⁷³

When we read silently, punctuation provides the cues for correct phrasing, though readers sometimes have to rely on their understanding of speech patterns to make this determination. To help our students read with appropriate phrasing, we have to teach them to use punctuation cues when available and to make inferences when such cues are not present. We'll look at two ways to do this.

The first is through **repeated reading of high-frequency phrases**. Many teachers have their students repeatedly read high-frequency words, and there is value in doing a limited amount of this kind of practice. However, given that meaning is most often conveyed through groups of words, rather than individual words, it makes sense to provide students with brief, daily doses of practice in reading these high-frequency words in phrases.

⁷¹ *Put Reading First*. National Institute for Literacy, 2003.

⁷² Rasinski, Timothy V. *The Fluent Reader: Oral Reading Strategies for Building Word Recognition, Fluency and Comprehension*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 2003, p. 32.

⁷³ *Ibid* p. 33.

Incorporating Fry's 300 "instant words," which contain about two-thirds of all words that students will find in their reading, Rasinski created three lists of phrases and short sentences for repetitive reading

Guidelines for Repeated Reading of High-Frequency Phrases

1. Determine which list to use. Ideally, first graders should learn the phrases on the first list, second graders the phrases on the second, and so on. However, if many of your students have not mastered high-frequency words representative of earlier grades, start with an earlier list.
2. Each week, write five to ten phrases from the list on a chart.
3. Practice reading the phrases chorally with your students several times a day, perhaps incorporating them into your daily routines.
4. Continue daily repeated reading of the phrases throughout the year, returning to practice those introduced at the beginning of the year.⁷⁴

practice in the classroom. Some examples include, "So there you are," "Now and then," "Three years ago," and "In the beginning." Given that students learn around 100 high-frequency words a year, first through third grade teachers can provide systematic practice in all of the phrases on one list each year, ensuring that by the end of third grade, students are able to read these common words with correct phrasing. Depending on students' needs, fourth and fifth grade teachers may ask struggling readers to repeatedly practice these phrases in small groups or individually. For lists of phrases for repeated reading practice, see the **Elementary Literacy Toolkit** (pp. 36-38: "Phrases and Short Sentences for Repeated Reading Practice"); this Toolkit can be found online at the Resource Exchange on TFANet. ✕

Another method for teaching phrasing is **the Phrased Text Lesson (PTL)**, which takes place over the course of several instructional days and teaches students to use explicit and implicit cues to chunk the text into meaningful groups of words. (Our *Freckle Juice* reader would benefit from this kind of instruction.) Originally designed for use with individual students or small groups, it can be modified to use with a whole class of second through fifth graders. Rasinski describes the lesson as follows:

To prepare, select short reading passages and mark or "cue" phrase boundaries for the reader. I generally choose 100-word segments from texts students have recently read or will read in the near future. With a pencil, I mark phrase boundaries with slash marks—single slashes for within-sentence boundaries (indicating a short pause) and double slashes for sentence boundaries (indicating a longer pause)...

On the first day of using PTL, make a copy of the phrase-cued text for each student. Begin the lesson by passing out the text to students, discussing the importance of reading in phrasal units, and explaining the purpose of the marks on the text. From there, read the text to the students a few times, emphasizing and slightly exaggerating the phrases. Then read the text chorally with students a few times, in meaningful phrases. Finally, ask students to pair up for two to three rounds of repeated reading. End day one of the PTL by having students perform their text

Example of a Phrase-Cued Text

Today, / there is a park / in Hiroshima / where the bomb dropped. // Near the park / is a museum. // It opened in 1955 / and houses / some 6000 items / left after the explosion. //
Each year / 1,200,000 people / visit the museum. // They look / at the photos and exhibits. // And / they examine / the twisted roof tiles / and melted bottles. // They are / strange disturbing relics / of that terrible moment. //
Japan has built / a new wing / to the museum. // The new exhibit / includes Japan's role in World War II / and shows / how the city of Hiroshima / participated in the military effort. // For the first time, / the bombing is placed / in a historical context. //
From *Hiroshima* by Laurence Yep, 1995.

⁷⁴ Ibid pp. 99-100.

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for the (small) group. Students are often amazed at how fluent and meaningful their reading has become.

On the next day, repeat everything you did the day before, using the original text without phrase boundaries. This helps students transfer the knowledge they gained using phrase-cued text to conventionally formatted text. Over time, students develop their understanding of how texts are phrased and apply that understanding to new, never-before-seen passages.⁷⁵

By participating weekly in repeated readings of high-frequency phrases and in Phrased Text Lessons, your students will show marked improvement in their ability to use phrasing to increase their fluency and comprehension.

Offer Many Opportunities for Students to Read Orally with Guidance and Support

While teacher modeling and direct instruction in phrasing are first instructional steps, students must have many opportunities to practice reading aloud with support if they are going to become fluent readers. **Repeated reading** is one of the most effective ways to offer lots of practice to students; this instructional method has been proven to help students recall information from their reading, improve their comprehension, increase their reading rates, and change from word-by-word reading to reading with meaningful phrases. And this makes sense—the more time a student spends reading one text, the better his or her reading of that text will be. But there is a more compelling finding that leads us to advocate repeated reading as the practice method of choice. Researchers have found that when students repeatedly read a text, not only is their reading of that particular text improved, but their first readings of new, unseen passages are significantly improved as well. To ensure success, students must repeatedly read a text that is on their independent level (they can read it with 95% accuracy). Therefore, you must have a stock of leveled texts with which students can practice. To determine the difficulty of a text or passage, see the **Elementary Literacy Toolkit** (pp. 39-40: “How to Determine Passage Difficulty and Reading Rate”); this Toolkit can be found online at the Resource Exchange on TFANet. ✖

Simply asking students to read the same book multiple times without support will do little to improve their fluency, however. To make repeated reading an effective instructional activity, we must provide students with guidance and support and find ways to keep students engaged. We’ll consider four ways to provide varying levels of support to students during repeated readings - **choral reading, echo reading, buddy reading, and tape recorded reading**. Though you will certainly not use all of the examples that follow on any given day, you should integrate fluency-building activities during Shared Reading on a daily basis.

Choral Reading

As its name implies, choral reading involves all of the students in a class reading a common text aloud with the teacher. The voices of fluent readers—both the teacher and other classmates—guide students who are struggling. In one third-grade classroom, students chorally read a new poem, as well as familiar favorites, several times a day. Their teacher notes that her struggling readers “seem to get the cue from the other readers in the class. We’ll read a poem once, twice, three times a day or even more. And each time we read, their voices get stronger and more confident. Even the children who have the most difficult time in reading can read by the third time through. After listening to their classmates read and then reading (along with) their classmates, many struggling readers come up to me near the end of the day and read the poem out loud on their own.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ibid pp. 140-141.

⁷⁶ Ibid pp. 58-59.

There are many variations of choral reading that can keep your students interested and engaged as they build their fluency:

- **Refrain.** In refrain choral reading, one student or the teacher reads most of the text, and the whole group joins in to read key segments chorally. Write texts like these on chart paper and use a different colored marker to make the whole-class refrain stand out visually.
- **Dialogue.** Similar to reader's theater (discussed below), an individual student or groups of students read particular speaking parts. For example, you might assign half of your class to read the part of the narrator, and the other half to read the part of the cat in a choral reading of "Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat":
NARRATOR: Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?
CAT: I've been to London to see the Queen.
NARRATOR: Pussy cat, pussy cat, what did you do there?
CAT: I frightened a little mouse under the chair.
- **Antiphonal Reading.** Divide your class into groups and assign key segments of the text to each group. As the class reads the text, different groups of students chime in to read their assigned parts.
- **Call and Response.** In call and response, one student reads a line of the text, and the class responds by repeating that line or reading the next few lines. (This works particularly well with song lyrics!)
- **Choral Singing.** This type of choral reading is particularly useful to beginning readers. After students have memorized the lyrics, you can begin to examine individual lines, words, and sounds to build phonological awareness. With enough practice, early readers will be able to read the words of the song without the support of the melody.⁷⁷

Echo Reading

Echo reading offers slightly less support for students than choral reading. The teacher reads a line or a phrase aloud, and the students echo it back, mimicking the intonation, phrasing and expression of the teacher's voice while following along with their eyes or a finger in the text. It's important for you to circulate around the classroom during echo reading to ensure that all of your students are actually reading and not just repeating the line or phrase you've read aloud.

Buddy Reading

In addition to this opportunity to practice oral reading with the teacher, students benefit when they do repeated reading with a buddy. In buddy reading, students of a similar reading level choose a text with which they are familiar and take turns reading orally. Some buddies might read alternate pages, while others echo or choral read pages.⁷⁸ Students should take turns reading aloud the passage three times and giving feedback on their partner's reading. Much like any practice you ask students to do with minimal supervision, you will need to model buddy reading and have students practice it many times with your guidance before they will be ready to do it on their own. To help students' structure the feedback they give to their partner, see the **Elementary Literacy Toolkit** (p. 42: "Cooperative Repeated Reading Response Form") found online at the Resource Exchange on TFANet. ✖

⁷⁷ Adapted from Rasinski, Timothy V. *The Fluent Reader: Oral Reading Strategies for Building Word Recognition, Fluency and Comprehension*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 2003, pp. 60-62.

⁷⁸ Rasinski, Timothy V. *The Fluent Reader: Oral Reading Strategies for Building Word Recognition, Fluency and Comprehension*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 2003, pp. 68-69.

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Tape-Recorded Reading

Parents and teachers have long known the benefits of having students listen to books read aloud on tapes. To make this staple classroom activity even more powerful, teachers should be sure that the text is on the student's independent reading level, and that it is read aloud at a rate that will feel comfortable to the student as he or she attempts to read along. Model for your students how to listen and follow along with their fingers during the first reading, how to whisper read along with the tape the second and third time through, and how to try reading on their own, without the tape, for the final reading.

Though bookstores and libraries contain many books on tape, it's not necessary for the recording to be professional. In fact, the high reading rate and the background music or sound effects of professionally recorded books on tape can make it challenging for students to read along with. Using a tape recorder, you can easily record your own voice or the voice of other fluent readers reading aloud texts on a variety of levels. Perhaps you could ask members of your school and community to read a book on tape for your class. Imagine how excited your students would be to hear the principal or one of their parents reading a book on tape!

While repeated reading certainly has its instructional benefits, some students may find practicing the same text again and again less than exciting. One way to engage all of your students in repeated reading is by allowing students to read for an audience, a task that requires them to practice for a real performance. We'll look at two types of performance reading—**reader's theater** and **poetry readings**.

Reader's Theater

Reader's theater is a particularly effective way to engage students in repeated reading; it differs from plays or other dramatic productions because it does not require sets, costumes, or memorization of lines. For the audience to understand the meaning of the story, students must rely solely on their voices, which makes the repeated practice in anticipation of a performance all the more beneficial!

Many teachers divide their students into "repertory groups" of between six and nine students and allow the groups to have several days of "dress rehearsals" before they perform.⁸⁰ As they prepare for the performance, students may end up reading a script as many as twenty times. As evidence of how powerful reader's theater can be for students, consider the reflection of fourth grade teacher Jennifer Cecil (South Louisiana '03):

Iris has neurofibromatosis. She entered fourth grade reading on a beginning of first grade level and had missed a great deal of school because of treatments. She has a

Reader's Theater: A Quick Guide⁷⁹

Before the Week Begins:

1. Select or write a script to be performed. Make two copies for each member of the repertory group.

Monday:

2. Introduce or review the nature, purpose, and procedures for reader's theater with the class.
3. Assign parts to individual students by having them volunteer or audition. Parts can also be assigned by students within groups and can rotate from one performance to another.

Tuesday-Thursday:

4. Have students practice their parts on their own, in their group, under your guidance, and at home.

Friday:

5. Invite students to perform their scripts for an audience, usually their classmates, but others can be invited as well: schoolmates, parents, the principal. Try to make the performance a special event. Many teachers turn Friday afternoons into a "classroom reader's theater festival" at which many repertory groups perform their scripts.

⁷⁹ Ibid p.109.

⁸⁰ Ibid p. 106.

speech impediment and receives speech therapy. When we began using Reader's Theater in our class she was terrified. Another student made fun her speech at the beginning of the year, and it took her weeks to regain confidence in answering questions out loud. Now, I was asking her to read a part in a play in front of the whole class. Although her reading skills had improved hugely, she was worried that people wouldn't be able to understand her. So, at recess, I paired her up with a particularly tactful student to help her practice. At the first performance, she was clearly relieved that the audience had not laughed. At the second performance, her partner raised her hand during the audience comments section and said, "It was a lot easier to hear Iris this week. She did good." Last week was our sixth performance of reader's theater and Iris lobbied me for a bigger part. As the lead in "Keelboat Annie," Iris garnered many compliments about how she had used a "country accent" to play her part (and was still able to be understood). Students thought it was funny (on purpose) and said she really sounded angry when Annie should have been angry. She pushed herself at home practicing, I know, but the confidence that she has in herself now is tremendous. Her hard work in this one reading unit has doubtlessly increased her faith in herself and really ignited her interest in reading and performing.

Special education teachers who pull students out of their general education classes for small group instruction might consider cooperating with the classroom teacher to make reader's theater work. Ask the general educator for suggestions of books the class has read during Read Aloud or Guided Reading, and then use a section of those texts to write scripts for your students to perform. Have your students practice the scripts throughout the week and then perform them in their general education classrooms. Not only will reader's theater provide students with special reading needs the repeated reading practice necessary to increase their fluency, it will also increase their confidence, as they are able to perform as the "star" in front of their classmates. One special educator who used reader's theater with her students noted, "I have kids who read well come up to me and ask how they can get into my (pull-out) class!"⁸¹ For a list of ideas for reader's theater scripts, see the **Elementary Literacy Toolkit** (p. 43: "Reader's Theater Script Sources") found online at the Resource Exchange on TFANet. ✖

Poetry Readings

To encourage students to read poems repeatedly, consider holding regular poetry readings at which individuals or groups can read a poem that they have practiced. The event itself can be as creative as you choose—some teachers have a stage and microphone, invite guests, and serve refreshments. Others center their poetry readings around a content theme, so students who are studying the Harlem Renaissance in social studies might perform poetry by Langston Hughes while the music of Duke Ellington plays in the background. Regardless of how you structure a poetry reading, it's crucial to give students multiple opportunities to practice their poems and offer feedback on their reading. For a list of great poetry books, see "Can't-Miss Poetry Books" in the online **Elementary Literacy Toolkit** (p. 44). ✖

Assess and Track Students' Fluency Over Time

To assess your students' fluency skills, periodically conduct the Timed Reading Exercise explained in chapter two and track students' word-per-minute growth. (You may want to refer to the chart at the beginning of this chapter for a reminder of targeted reading rate norms for grades one through five.) As with any academic skill, show a student her progress in that area and she will be more motivated to continue to work hard and improve. Zoë Stemm (Houston '00) taught first and second grade and involved her students in tracking their reading growth on a weekly basis. She explains:

⁸¹ Ibid.

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I used the Neuhaus Fluency and Accuracy workshop materials (see www.neuhaus.org to order the packet) to find a paragraph of approximately 100 words for each of my students to use for their fluency practice for the week. On Monday during morning warm-up and independent reading, I had each student come back and read their new fluency passage to me for one minute and recorded the words per minute. Then every day that week during fluency practice my students would do one minute drills, reading aloud their passage and then counting up their words per minute to see if they had improved. After every drill students would record their WPM in their reading journal, and at the end of drills they would write down their WPM goal for the next day. Students also made flash cards for words that they had trouble with. Practicing for fluency with that passage was also part of my students' nightly homework. On Fridays during recess, I would listen to all of my students read their passage for one minute and record their WPM to see how they had improved over the course of the week. When we returned to the classroom, students would get out their "WPM graph" and graph their Friday WPM. If they had made improvement from the past Friday, they would turn in their graph and receive a new passage on Monday. If they didn't, they would keep working on the same passage the following week.

For guidance on how to determine a student's reading rate, see "How to Determine Passage Difficulty and Reading Rate" in the **Elementary Literacy Toolkit** (pp. 39-40), which can be found online at the Resource Exchange on TFANet. A sample "Chart for Tracking Students' Oral Reading Rate" is also included in the Toolkit (p. 41). ✕

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at developing students' reading fluency in four broad ways:

- First, we considered how to **model fluent oral reading** during Read Aloud and Shared Reading.
- Then, we examined how to develop fluency through **phrasing lessons**, including Phrased Text Lessons and the repeated reading of high-frequency phrases and short sentences.
- Next, we took a look at a variety of methods that offer **many opportunities to practice with support**. Some of these included choral reading (and its many variations), echo reading, buddy reading, and using tape-recorded books.
- Finally, we considered the importance of **tracking students' fluency over time**.

In the next chapter, we'll narrow in on some concrete ways to improve students' reading comprehension through vocabulary learning and language development activities.