

# Small Group Reading Interventions and Reading Fluency

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# Reading Interventions: What?

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- Small group intervention sessions to focus on the development and enrichment of student reading skills
- Mainly for students with reading problems
- Mini-lessons, activities, games, tasks geared towards reading improvement

# Reading Interventions: Who?

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## ○ Who?

- A small group of five students
- The most “at risk” readers per the DRA, DIBELS, and NWEA scores
- Not always the same group of students
  - Ask yourself:
    - Who needs the most help?
    - What do they need help with?
    - To what extent does this student or this group need help?
    - What are the levels of my students?
    - Who works well together?
- Group students based on skill development need, skill focus for that particular session, level

# Reading Interventions: When?

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- Two to four times per week, every week
- 40-minute sessions
- During specials time
- Sessions begin after the first round of assessment data has been gathered

# Reading Interventions: Why?

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- Give extra one-on-one and small group instruction time to students in need
- To increase our students' reading levels and reading skills

# Let's think about it...

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Our students truly need our help! How can we maximize the value of every minute we spend with them? What are some of the best ways to spend small group reading intervention time? Make the most of every second spent with students!

# Reading in General

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- What are the two components of reading?
  - Comprehension
  - Fluency
- Let's review the two...

# Comprehension

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- “The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning throughout interaction and involvement with written language (NCEE, 2010, p. 11 credited to Snow, 2002)
- “Strong reading comprehension skills are central to not only academic and professional success, but also a productive social and civic life” (NCEE, 2010, p. 11 credited to Snow, 2002)
- “Comprehension could be called the “bottom line” of reading” (McKenna and Stahl, 2009, p. 160).



# Fluency

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- “Fluency gives language its musical quality, its rhythm and flow, and makes reading sound effortless” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 334)
- “In order to be truly fluent, a reader must comprehend and interpret text (Thurlow & Van den Broek, 1997), and read with appropriate timing, expressiveness, stress, and intonation (Dowhower, 1994; National Reading Panel, 2000)” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 335)
- 3 Components: accuracy, automaticity (“ability to read words without conscious effort”), and prosody (inflection) (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p 148-149)
- Consider: expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, pace (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p. 150 credited to Zutell & Rasinski)

# Let's focus on fluency!

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- This presentation will focus mainly on fluency, building our students' fluency skills, and ways on how to spend small group intervention time to do so.

# Why focus on fluency?

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- “If children cannot read the text relatively accurately, their comprehension will suffer” (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p. 148) We read for comprehension, right?
- “If fluency was once the “neglected reading goal” (Allington, 1983), it is no longer. There has been an increased interest in developing fluency, as indicated by the findings of the National Reading Panel on the effectiveness of guided oral reading approaches to developing comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000) and be research (e.g., Kuhn & Stahl, 2003).” (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p. 148)
- “Fluency contributes to comprehension and enjoyment” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 334)
- “When students are able to interpret and read texts with expression, their comprehension improves.” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 337)
- We read for comprehension and meaning, and fluency skills will foster this!
- I think that the importance of fluency development and skills is oftentimes forgotten.

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ● Echo Reading

- Teacher reads a section of a text aloud, students are following along silently reading
- Students “echo” what was read back to the teacher
- Can be a sentence or a paragraph, depending on your students’ level
- Afterwards, revisit some difficult words and think-aloud using decoding strategies
- Great to use in a small group, make sure students in the group are at the same level for that session

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ● Repeated Readings

- Students read the same piece of text over and over again until they can read the passage fluently
- Choose a piece of text just above instructional level, but interesting to the student
- A procedure outlined by experts McKenna and Stahl:
  - Take a 100-word excerpt from your selected passage
  - Have the student read it aloud, mark miscues, time the reading, record the reading, figure out speed and error rate (that's why 100 words is easy!)
  - Point out the student's mistakes with him or her, let them listen to the recording and discuss it
  - Have the student continue rereading until zero or one miscue (if this takes more than seven times, try an easier passage)
  - If a student can fluently read a passage at that instructional level the first time through, increase the difficulty and begin again
  - Chart every attempt to see progress
  - (McKenna and Stahl, 2009, p. 155)
- Repeated readings following this procedure may take several sessions
- This is more of a one-on-one activity, perhaps the other students in the small group could be working on another independent activity at this time

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ● Repeated Readings

- Again, a student reads the same piece of text over and over again until they can read the passage fluently
- A different procedure outlined by McKenna and Stahl:
  - Have a student read a passage aloud for three minutes
  - After three minutes, stop them and ask them to mark the last word that they left off on
  - Discuss problem words
  - Have students reread the passage again for three minutes and mark the last word again
  - The student should see that they should have been able to get further in the passage the next time around, point out their progress and explain that they are improving their fluency of this passage, repeat if necessary
  - (McKenna and Stahl, 2009, p. 155)
- Again, this is more of a one-on-one activity, other students in the small group can be working on an independent task in the meantime

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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- ◉ Repeated reading, continued:
  - Seen as effective with attention to text comprehension (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 336)
  - Embed opportunities for quick comprehension activities during repeated reading activities

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ◉ Listen to reading

- A great independent activity, this allows you to have one-on-one time with other students
- Audiotaped books “encourage less able readers to use the meaning of the language to help them decode, increase fluency and comprehend” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 338 credited to Barr & Johnson, 1991)
- Have students listen to read alouds
  - Tapes, CDs, your recorded voice, or RAZ-kids.com
  - Make sure this does not stop at just listening... “unless students are responsible for reading what they have practiced to an adult, taped reading is a waste of time” (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p. 155)
  - The student must then read the passage to the teacher when they feel confident to do so



# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ○ Partner Reading

- Students are paired with another reader at their level
- Students read an entire story, but take turns, page by page, or let them choose how depending on the level of structure your students need
- As one partner reads, the other partner is monitoring and helping if necessary
- Make sure you have respectful behavior standards in place and you know students will follow them, as sometimes students can become disrespectful during activities like this
- Group partners carefully based on who works well together as well as same level so students do not become impatient or discouraged
- Choose a group of four students for this activity, take turns monitoring the two pairs during this session

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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- Small group problem-solving
  - Team effort, great for groups of three to five
  - Provide students with a difficult text
  - Students work together to decode the words and read the sentence fluently
  - Students decide on the meaning of the sentence or paragraph (depending on the students' level)
  - Students paraphrase the meaning of the text, they can choose to explain it to the teacher through speaking or writing (depending on the students' level)

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ○ Choral Reading

- Simultaneous reading of a piece of text
- Works well with small groups
- Try repeated reading with choral reading and the teacher can lower their reading voice with every repetition, called the “neurological impress method” (McKenna and Stahl, 2009, p. 156)

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ● Performances

- Plays, skits, speeches, stories, scripts, poetry readings, jokes, reader's theater (decide based on grade level, student level, difficulty, appropriateness, interest)
- Encourages students to read texts over and over again, improving fluency
- Tip: "It may be the weakest readers who benefit from this activity most. Give them substantial roles, and then make sure they have adequate practice prior to performance." (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p. 156)
- "Effective performances are built on positive social interactions focused on reading." (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 337)

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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- Oral Recitation Lesson (Hoffman, 1987)
  - Direct teaching:
    - Chose a regular length story, teacher reads it aloud to the small group
    - The story is discussed, use questions or make a story map to make sure students understand it
    - Teacher rereads the story, sentence by sentence of paragraph by paragraph (depends on the level), students follow along and echo back what was read, complete reading the story this way
    - Teacher divides the story into sections, each student assigned on section
    - Students practice their assigned section until they can read it fluently
    - Students perform their section of the book for the group
  - Mastery Phase:
    - Students continue to practice the stories used the in “direct teaching” phase until they can read them fluently, 99% or more accuracy and at least 85 words per minute is acceptable
    - Students complete this practice on their own, great to use as an independent activity if you are working with others one-on-one or you can send home copies of stories with students, continue to assess)
  - (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p. 157)
  - (A great way to build in comprehension with questions and story maps)

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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- Paired Reading (Topping, 1987)
  - A one-on-one activity, other students in the small group may be working on an individual activity
  - Teacher and student pick a book together
  - Tell the student you are going to be reading together until the student decides they want to read aloud alone, establish how they will let you know (a raised hand, a touch, a signal)
  - Read it with the student simultaneously until the student gives the signal to read alone
  - The student reads alone until they make a mistake
  - When the student makes a mistake, give them the correct word, and reread the entire sentence together, repeat the procedure

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ● Buddy Reading

- Let's discuss who can work together based on our school day schedule (older grades grouped with younger grades, Which grade levels have specials at the same time? How can we make this work?)
- Older children with reading problems work with younger readers
- "This practice encourages even the most reticent readers to read out loud, because young students are usually nonthreatening." (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 340)
- Older children can serve as tutors/teachers:
  - They choose a book appropriate for the younger child to read and they practice it until they can read it fluently
  - They make a lesson plan and choose words that they feel may be difficult and that may require pre-teaching,
  - They tutor the child
  - Lastly, they journal about the experience
  - Beforehand, prepare the student tutor and teach them how to respond to oral errors of the younger student
  - Both students benefit!
  - Builds the confidence of the older students with reading problems

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ○ Sharing favorites

- Students can share their favorite books, stories, and poems with the other group members
- Have students practice reading their choice aloud independently, or assist as necessary until they can read the text fluently
- “When struggling readers have a chance to choose the books, short stories, or poems they will share and to rehearse before they read aloud, they can feel like competent, valued members of their classroom literacy communities” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 340).



# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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## ● Watching television

- Yes, really!
- However... not just any kind of television...
  - “According to research, children’s word identification improves from watching closed-captioned television” (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p. 159 credited to Koskinen, Wilson, & Jensema, 1985)
- Allow students to watch an episode of television that has captions visible
- Use educational television programs, perhaps a great way to integrate content areas and show programs about what is being learned in science or social studies
- I would not suggest to use this activity often, maybe a reward once in a while for small groups

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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- Different ways to read a poem, chant, or short selection: (By Dr. Mary Bigler)
  - Teacher read aloud
  - Fill in the blanks
  - Tag-team reading
  - Choral reading
  - Turn the volume up or down
  - Speed it up or slow it down
  - Clap the beat
  - Reader's Theater
  - As a Round
  - Sing to a Favorite Tune

# Fluency: Suggested Activities

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- Students enjoy:
  - Riddle books
  - Joke books
  - Tongue Twister books
- Create games or challenges using high-interest materials and texts

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**Some other thoughts and ideas  
to consider...**

# Fluency: Tips

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- Read aloud to students and MODEL!
  - “Modeling and reading aloud helps students understand what fluency sounds like and is essential to its development.” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 337)
  - “Benefits of modeled reading include gains in rate, accuracy, phrasing, segmentation, and expression” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 337 credited to Chomsky, 1978; Schreiber, 1987)
- Be explicit about fluency, and your modeling and teaching related to it
  - “Students who feel more in control of their own learning, who know why fluency is important and what can help to improve it, are more likely to engage in the kinds of repeated practice that lead to improve fluency.” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 338)

# Assess Your Classroom Environment

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- Create an environment that fosters fluency development:
  - Make available a lot of interesting and well written texts on every topic in a variety of formats
  - Have readings materials of a wide range of difficulty and levels
  - Create many opportunities to read individually and also with others
- (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001)

# Small Group Work

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- When possible, choose activities and tasks for small groups to complete during intervention time that encourage collaboration and problem solving
- Benefits of Small-Group Work:
  - Small groups are lifelike, generate energy for challenging work, make engaged and interactive learning possible, allow for differentiation, prepare students for employment and the real world, enhance student achievement. (Harvey & Daniels, 2009, p. 10)

# Consider the Psychology of Children

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- Each child has a need for:
  - Connectedness- a sense of being known and valued
  - Competence- a sense of being capable
  - Contribution- a sense of being able to exert control in his/her environment
  - (Coppersmith, 1967)
- Related to positive feelings of:
  - Self-esteem
  - Trust
  - Accomplishment
- Think about your struggling readers and students. Is it possible that these three needs are not being met? Can you help meet these needs in a small group setting and give these students extra attention to benefit them?
- Why do we need to know this? If your students' basic psychological needs are not being met, their academic achievement is suffering.

(Jones & Jones, 2010, p. 33)



# Reflection

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- Write down at least three specific activities/strategies you picked up today and plan to implement in your classroom at your grade level
- Let's share!

# Closing Thoughts

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## ○ My hope:

- You learned something new about fluency, comprehension and how they are related
- You were reminded of the importance of fluency and building fluency skills
- You are walking away with several new ideas on ways to spend your small group intervention time with students that need extra help when it comes to fluency

# Remember...

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- “It takes a whole village to raise a child.”
- Every teacher in our building has something to contribute, together we hold the responsibility of educating each student in our school and improving their literacy skills
- Happy teaching!

# References

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