Teaching for Fluency: Instruction That Works

Compiled by Candice Johnson, Grades 3-5 Literacy Coach, SDFA
Fluency Mentor Texts — Fountas and Pinnell
Mentor Text—Fountas and Pinnell

When Readers Struggle: Teaching That Works, © 2009, Heinemann

*This text provides information regarding the teaching of fluency to ground procedural knowledge in theory and best-practice.
Fluency in Reading and Writing Involves...

- Performing motor actions rapidly, easily, and without conscious attention.

- Using the conventions of print (left-to-right directionality, spaces between words, etc.) with automaticity.

- Navigating all levels of language - letter, word, sentence, paragraph, text.

- Using processing systems with automaticity.

- Achieving comprehension, expression and voice.
6 Dimensions of Fluency

- Pausing
- Phrasing
- Intonation [Rhythm]
- Stress
- Pace [Rate]
- Integration [Expression]

*Each of these dimensions should be explicitly taught in mini-lessons and small-group instruction.

Dimension 1—Pausing

- Pausing refers to the reader stopping at appropriate points in the text to reflect the punctuation.

- Punctuation provides visual information that cues the reader and adds to comprehension.
  - i.e. short breaths at commas
  - longs breaths at marks like dashes
  - full stops after a period or at parentheses

Dimension 2—Phrasing

- Phrasing refers to the placement and length of the reader’s pauses and intonation (tone of voice) to parse the language into meaningful units or phrases.
- Phrasing [breaks/pauses] are logically and well-paced so they sound natural, as in talking.
- Phrasing aids in reflecting meaning of text.

Dimension 3—Intonation [Rhythm]

- Intonation refers to the rising and falling tones of the voice and the way the reader varies the voice using tone, pitch, and volume to reflect the meaning of the text (sometimes referred to as expression).

- Readers employ a rhythmic quality that is not monotonous but captures the patterns of the language.

- The reader’s voice goes up and down, reflecting the punctuation and meaning of the text.

Dimension 4—Stress

- Stress refers to words emphasized while reading to reflect meaning of text.
- Variations in the reader’s voice (intonation or expression) emphasize stress.
- The reader stresses words by saying them slightly louder to indicate interpretation of the meaning of the text.
- At times, readers might correct word stress to be sure precise meaning is being conveyed.

Dimension 5—Pace [Rate]

- Pace refers to the rate or speed of reading.
- The reader reads at an appropriate pace for the purpose and genre of the reading, generally not too fast or not too slow.
- Inadequate pace can compromise comprehension.
- Oral reading pace is characteristically slower than silent reading pace.

Dimension 6—Integration [Expression]

- Integration is the orchestration of pausing, phrasing, intonation, stress, and pace, which in totality equals expression.
- Integration is paramount in helping readers think about the meaning of text.
- Proficient orchestration is evidence of the reader understanding and thinking beyond the meaning of the text.

Fluency Mini-Lessons

Lessons for Explicit Teaching of the 6 Dimensions of Fluency
Pausing: Mini-Lesson Guide

- **Introduce**

  Define pausing as the way the reader uses punctuation (conventions) to guide their voice for stopping or pausing points in the text. Introduce one convention and what you do to pause.  [Add more conventions to chart in subsequent pausing mini-lessons.] Create an anchor chart to record the learning.

- **Model**

  Select text with appropriate punctuation to provide a clear model of pausing. Make the text visible so punctuation can easily be seen.

  Before modeling pausing, use explicit language to **teach**, model, and guide students’ observation. i.e.  “Listen to me read this. Can you hear my voice go down at the period?” or “Listen to me read this. Can you hear my voice go up at the question mark?” or “Listen to me read this. Can you hear me take a little breath at the comma?”
Pausing: Mini-Lesson Guide

Discuss

Ask students to share their observations regarding your pausing.

Guided Practice

Select text with appropriate punctuation to aid in pausing. Make the text visible.

Prompt for pausing with explicit language to guide students’ reading. i.e. “Make your voice go down when you see a period.” or “Take a little (or short) pause when you see the comma (or dash).

Considering gradual release (as needed) for guided practice activities and/or independent practice...

1st Teaching: Whole-Group Shared Reading Experience

2nd Teaching: Small-Group Shared Reading (small-groups alternate orally reading text selection while rest of whole group listens)

3rd Teaching: Partner Reading, Reader’s Theater, Individual/Interpretive Reading
Pausing: Mini-Lesson Guide

Sharing

Ask students to share their observations and experience from guided practice.

Reinforce observed fluency behaviors by providing explicit feedback. i.e. “You made your voice go down when you saw the periods.” or “You made a full stop at the parentheses.” or “You took a little breath at the comma.”

![Diagram of 6 Dimensions of Fluency]

- **Pausing**
  - The reader using punctuation to stop or pause their voice.
  - Make a full stop at the period.
  - Take a breath or pause at a comma.
## Fluency -- Pausing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punctuation (Conventions)</th>
<th>What to do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>period</td>
<td>Make a full STOP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) parentheses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? question mark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>! exclamation mark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>, comma</td>
<td>Pause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— dash/hyphen</td>
<td>Take a little breath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>; semi-colon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phrasing: Mini-Lesson Guide

- **Introduce**

  Define phrasing as the way the reader groups words together to make meaning. Add learning to an anchor chart to record the learning.

- **Model**

  Select appropriate text to provide a clear model of phrasing. Make the text visible so it can easily be seen.

  Before modeling phrasing, use explicit language to teach, model, and guide students’ observation. i.e. “Listen to how I group my words together.” or “Listen to how I put my words together so they almost ‘touch’ each other.”
Phrasing: Mini-Lesson Guide

- **Discuss**

  Ask students to share their observations regarding your phrasing.

- **Guided Practice**

  Select appropriate text for phrasing. Make the text visible.

  **Prompt** for phrasing with explicit language to guide students’ reading. i.e. “*Read these words together.*” or “*Put/group your words together so it sounds like the way you talk.*”

  Considering gradual release (as needed) for guided practice activities and/or independent practice…

  1\textsuperscript{st} Teaching: Whole-Group Shared Reading Experience

  2\textsuperscript{nd} Teaching: Small-Group Shared Reading (small-groups alternate orally reading text selection while rest of whole group listens)

  3\textsuperscript{rd} Teaching: Partner Reading, Reader’s Theater, Individual/Interpretive Reading
Phrasing: Mini-Lesson Guide

Sharing

Ask students to share their observations and experience from guided practice.

Reinforce observed fluency behaviors by providing explicit feedback. i.e. “You put your words together. You made it sound like talking.” or “You made your words almost touch each other.”
Intonation: Mini-Lesson Guide

- **Introduce**

  Define intonation/rhythm as the way the reader varies their voice using tone, pitch, and volume to reflect the meaning of the text (sometimes referred to as expression). Add learning to an anchor chart to record the learning.

- **Model**

  Select appropriate text to provide a clear model of intonation. Make the text visible so it can easily be seen.

  Before modeling intonation, use explicit language to teach, model, and guide students’ observation. i.e. “Listen to me read this. Can you hear how excited my voice sounds?” or “Listen to me read this. Can you hear how I sound like the characters who are talking?”
Intonation: Mini-Lesson Guide

- Discuss

Ask students to share their observations regarding your intonation.

- Guided Practice

Select appropriate text for intonation. Make the text visible.

**Prompt** for intonation with explicit language to guide students’ reading. i.e. “Make your voice show what you think the author meant.”

Considering gradual release (as needed) for guided practice activities and/or independent practice...

1st Teaching: Whole-Group Shared Reading Experience

2nd Teaching: Small-Group Shared Reading (small-groups alternate orally reading text selection while rest of whole group listens)

3rd Teaching: Partner Reading, Reader’s Theater, Individual/Interpretive Reading
# Intonation: Mini-Lesson Guide

## Sharing

Ask students to share their observations and experience from guided practice.

**Reinforce** observed fluency behaviors by providing explicit feedback. i.e. “You made it sound like the character(s) was talking.” or “You made that part of the story sound interesting with your voice at that part.”

![Image of a chart showing the dimensions of fluency: pausing, phrasing, intonation, rhythm or expression, with examples and explanations for each.](image-url)
Stress: Mini-Lesson Guide

- **Introduce**

  Define stress as the way the reader emphasizes certain words in the text. Add learning to an anchor chart to record the learning.

- **Model**

  Select appropriate text to provide a clear model of stress. Make the text visible so it can easily be seen.

  Before modeling stress, use explicit language to teach, model, and guide students’ observation. i.e. “Listen to me read this. Can you hear how I made that bold word sound important? (louder)” or “Listen to how I make my voice sound scared (or happy, excited, etc.) when I read this word.”
Stress: Mini-Lesson Guide

- **Discuss**

Ask students to share their observations regarding your stress.

- **Guided Practice**

Select appropriate text for stress. Make the text visible.

**Prompt** for stress with explicit language to guide students’ reading. i.e. “Say this bold word louder when you read it.” or “Make this word sound important when you read it.”

**Considering gradual release (as needed) for guided practice activities and/or independent practice…**

1st Teaching: Whole-Group Shared Reading Experience

2nd Teaching: Small-Group Shared Reading (small-groups alternate orally reading text selection while rest of whole group listens)

3rd Teaching: Partner Reading, Reader’s Theater, Individual/Interpretive Reading
Stress: Mini-Lesson Guide

Sharing

Ask students to share their observations and experience from guided practice.

Reinforce observed fluency behaviors by providing explicit feedback. i.e. “You made that word sound important.” or “You read that bold word louder.”
Pace/Rate: Mini-Lesson Guide

■ Introduce

Define pace/rate as how fast or slow the reader reads the text. Add learning to an anchor chart to record the learning.

■ Model

Select appropriate text to provide a clear model of pace/rate. Make the text visible so it can easily be seen.

Before modeling pace/rate, use explicit language to teach, model, and guide students’ observation. i.e. “Listen to me read this. I am going to read this part faster.” or “Listen to how I read this part slower.”
Pace/Rate: Mini-Lesson Guide

- **Discuss**
  
  Ask students to share their observations regarding your pace/rate.

- **Guided Practice**
  
  Select appropriate text for pace/rate. Make the text visible.

  **Prompt** for pace/rate with explicit language to guide students’ reading. 
  i.e. “Read these words quickly.” or “Read this section slowly.”

  **Considering gradual release (as needed) for guided practice activities and/or independent practice...**

  1st Teaching: Whole-Group Shared Reading Experience

  2nd Teaching: Small-Group Shared Reading (small-groups alternate orally reading text selection while rest of whole group listens)

  3rd Teaching: Partner Reading, Reader’s Theater, Individual/Interpretive Reading
Pace/Rate: Mini-Lesson Guide

Sharing

Ask students to share their observations and experience from guided practice.

Reinforce observed fluency behaviors by providing explicit feedback. i.e. “You read those words quickly.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>What It Is...</th>
<th>How to do it as a Reader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>how the reader emphasizes words to highlight meaning</td>
<td>Stress words with excitement, happiness, or fright in your voice. Read important words loudly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pace or rate</td>
<td>how slow or fast the reader reads</td>
<td>Read this part quickly. Read this part slowly. Read these words together.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Integration: Mini-Lesson Guide

■ Introduce

Define integration as expression—putting pausing, phrasing, intonation, stress, and pace/rate altogether. Add learning to an anchor chart to record the learning. This in totality is often referred to as expression.

■ Model

Select appropriate text to provide a clear model of integration. Make the text visible so it can easily be seen.

Before modeling integration, use explicit language to teach, model, and guide students’ observation. i.e. “Listen to me read this. Can you read it the same way?” or “Make your reading sound smooth like this.”
Integration: Mini-Lesson Guide

- **Discuss**
  
  Ask students to share their observations regarding your integration.

- **Guided Practice**
  
  Select appropriate text for integration. Make the text visible.

  **Prompt** for integration with explicit language to guide students’ reading. i.e. “Read it fluently.” or “Tell the story with your voice.”

  **Considering gradual release (as needed) for guided practice activities and/or independent practice...**

  1st Teaching: Whole-Group Shared Reading Experience

  2nd Teaching: Small-Group Shared Reading (small-groups alternate orally reading text selection while rest of whole group listens)

  3rd Teaching: Partner Reading, Reader’s Theater, Individual/Interpretive Reading
Integration: Mini-Lesson Guide

- Sharing

Ask students to share their observations and experience from guided practice.

**Reinforce** observed fluency behaviors by providing explicit feedback. i.e. “You sound smooth and you are reading like you are telling a story.”
Resources for Finding Engaging Text for Instruction

- Can be used in interactive reading, shared-reading, mini-lessons, or small group instruction

Reader’s Theater Selections and Poetry

DVD/CD-ROM with audio/video clips of students’ oral reading to use as models for observing fluency behaviors and assessing fluency

Basals for Poetry, Prose, and Plays
Resources for Finding Engaging Text for Instruction

- Can be used in interactive reading, shared-reading, mini-lessons, or small group instruction

Poetry Anthologies from Poets—Shel Silverstein, Lester Laminack, Jack Prelutsky, etc.

Reader’s Theater Selections

Reader’s Theater Scripts—Benchmark Education
Resources for Finding Engaging Text for Instruction

- Can be used in interactive reading, shared-reading, mini-lessons, or small group instruction

- These are texts written for two to four voices. These can be used as purposeful, explicit texts for children to practice oral reading fluency together, perhaps during guided practice or Read-to-Someone time if you use the Daily 5.
Teaching, Prompting, and Reinforcing

Understanding the Differences Between Teaching, Prompting, and Reinforcing in Whole-Group and Small-Group Instruction to Facilitate Self-Regulation
Mentor Text—Fountas and Pinnell

Prompting Guide:
A Tool for Literacy Teachers, © 2009, Heinemann

*This prompting guide can be used to help you select consistent, explicit, laser-focused language for instruction when teaching/modeling, prompting, or reinforcing for fluent reading behaviors.
TEACHING for Problem-Solving Actions

- **Demonstrate or model** for the reader an explicit way to think about the text and/or tell the reader explicitly what to do.

- **TEACHING prompts** can be used during interactive/shared reading, mini-lessons or guided reading.

*Prompting Guide: A Tool for Literacy Teachers, ©2009, Fountas and Pinnell, Heinemann*
PROMPTING for Problem-Solving Actions

- Call for the reader to think or act in a particular way with your actions or your language.
- Prompts provide a range of teacher support from very explicit to very general and remind the reader to do what has been taught to do to problem-solve.
- PROMPTING prompts can be used during guided practice activities, guided reading, or 1-1 conferences (after explicit teaching).

*Prompting Guide: A Tool for Literacy Teachers, ©2009, Fountas and Pinnell, Heinemann*
REINFORCING Effective Problem-Solving Actions

- Reinforce only newly emerging behaviors so they will become consistent [self-regulated].
- Your language confirms and validates the reader’s independent use of problem-solving actions.

“Be sure to insist on phrased, fluent reading early in the text so the reader processes the whole text with a forward momentum, thinking about the meaning and the language structure while reading the text.”

*Prompting Guide: A Tool for Literacy Teachers, ©2009, Fountas and Pinnell, Heinemann*
## Sample Prompts: Pausing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACH</th>
<th>PROMPT</th>
<th>REINFORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to me read this. Can you hear me take a little breath at the comma?</td>
<td>Make a full stop at the period. Make your voice go down when you see the period.</td>
<td>You took a little breath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to me read this. Can you hear my voice go up at the question mark?</td>
<td>Make your voice go up when you see the question mark.</td>
<td>You made a full stop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to me read this. Can you hear my voice go down at the period?</td>
<td>Take a little pause when you see the comma or dash.</td>
<td>You made your voice go down when you saw the period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You made your voice go up when you saw the question mark.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategic Teaching Actions to Promote Phrased and Fluent Reading
Teaching for Fluency

- When teaching fluency, be persistent in teaching for, prompting for, and reinforcing fluency.
- Be purposeful and strategic when selecting text so it is appropriately leveled for the reader.
- Create whole-group and small-group teaching settings in which the reader is capable of fluency.

When Readers Struggle, Chapter 16, ©2010, Fountas and Pinnell, Heinemann, page 394
Teaching for Fluency—Strategies

1. Provide many models of fluent reading through interactive read-aloud and shared reading experiences.
2. Invite students to read with you so that you can support fluency.
3. Tell students what you and they are doing when they read fluently in shared reading.
4. Demonstrate and teach aspects of fluency before expecting students to use them as prompted.

Teaching for Fluency—Strategies

5. Give students books that are accessible, so that students have the potential for fluent reading.

6. Teach aspects of fluency using a text that students have demonstrated they can read with high accuracy.

7. Prompt for aspects of fluency when you know students can do it. If they are not able to follow your prompt, show them what you mean through teaching.

8. Reinforce students’ fluent reading as necessary (just after they have learned to do something).

10. Make short readers’ theater pieces from the texts that students read in small-group instruction.

10. For small-group instruction, select engaging texts that students will find interesting and want to read with expression.

11. Be careful about increasing text levels. Have students demonstrate fluent, phrased reading to your satisfaction before going on to the next higher level (with struggling readers).

12. Be very persistent in the pursuit of fluent reading.

*After fluency has been explicitly taught, students could be introduced to some of these resources and taught how to use them so they can self-assess fluency or assess other readers’ fluency.
“The fluency scale from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a useful measure for assessing change over time in fluent reading. The NAEP scale measures fluency in three language levels: (1) grouping or phrasing of words as revealed through intonation, stressing, and pausing; (2) using author’s syntax for representing the message; and (3) expressiveness. A student’s fluency is measured on a four-level scale.”

### NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author’s syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur, but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Excerpt from *Scale For Assessing Fluency*, Fountas & Pinnell, ©2006 - Student Resource

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost no evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.</td>
<td>Very little evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.</td>
<td>Some evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.</td>
<td>Almost all the reading evidences appropriate rate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency*, ©2006, Fountas & Pinnell, Heinemann, Printable Resources CD-ROM
SDFA Report Card Rubrics

- The NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale and the Fountas & Pinnell Scale for Assessing Fluency can be used as assessments to help you determine proficiency scores for your students using the district’s report card rubrics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Description</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reads aloud with fluency and expression</td>
<td>Demonstrates all proficient skills while reading advanced text independently</td>
<td>Attends to meaning</td>
<td>Inconsistently demonstrates proficient skills and/or requires some teacher help</td>
<td>Rarely demonstrates proficient skills and requires intensive teacher help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 3-5 Semesters 1 and 2 Rubrics, July 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Selecting Goals for Teaching Fluent Reading Processing Behaviors
**Mentor Text—Dorn & Soffos**

*Interventions That Work*, © 2012, Pearson

*This text can be used to find explicit, fluency teaching points/goals by bands of reading levels for students who need it in guided reading.*

Levels A-C, D-E, F-G, H-M, and N-T
Transitional Guided Reading Goals: Levels H-M

- Orchestrates multiple sources of information (meaning, structure, and visual clues); reads texts with greater accuracy and more efficient self-correction

- Takes apart multisyllabic words; uses knowledge of word parts/patterns to solve words quickly

- Uses word meanings to solve problems (prefixes, suffixes, compound parts)

- Expands reading vocabulary; shows interest in unknown words

- Reads complex high-frequency words with fluency and ease

- Uses more complex punctuation to regulate phrasing and fluency (prosody)

Mentor Text—Fountas and Pinnell


*This text can be used to find explicit, fluency teaching points/goals by level for students who need it in guided reading.

Levels L-Z
Guided Reading: Levels N and O
Selecting Goals for Maintaining Fluency

- Demonstrate phrased, fluent oral reading
- Read dialogue with phrasing and expression that reflects understanding of characters and events
- Demonstrate appropriate stress on words, pausing and phrasing, intonation, and use of punctuation
- Use multiple sources of information (language structure, meaning, fast word recognition) to support fluency and phrasing

Continuum for Literacy Learning, ©2011, Fountas and Pinnell, Heinemann, page 193
Finding Fluency Goals with DRA

- You may also find it helpful to select fluency teaching goals based off data you collect when assessing readers using the DRA (Development Reading Assessment).

- You will find explicit fluency goals on the DRA Focus for Instruction page in each levels’ protocol.
+ Other Sources for Fluency


Sources Cited

- Images courtesy of [www.heinemann.com](http://www.heinemann.com) and [www.google.com/images](http://www.google.com/images)


- *Fountas and Pinnell Resources Published by Heinemann*
  - *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency: Thinking, Talking, and Writing About Reading K-8*, ©2006
  - *When Readers Struggle: Teaching That Works*, ©2009