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What does the current research say about effective strategies for teaching reading fluency?

by

Talia DeWitte

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the
University Honors Program

Department of Education
The University of South Dakota
May 2023

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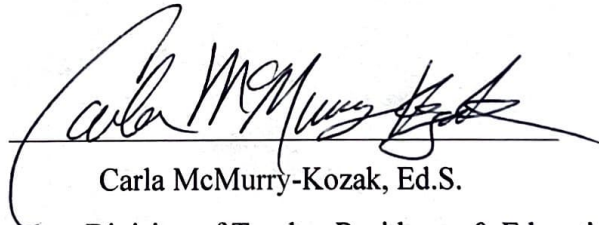
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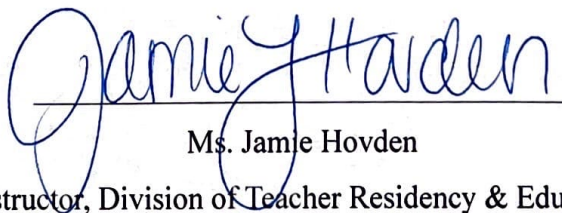
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Abstract

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Reading fluency, a person's ability to read with speed, accuracy, and prosody, is one of the five major dimensions of reading instruction. Effective reading fluency instruction is crucial to the success of developing readers. The ability to read fluently directly impacts the ability to engage in other reading skills, as instruction with reading fluency is often integrated with skills such as reading comprehension and phonics. There are a plethora of evidence-based strategies for teaching reading instruction. While these strategies vary the delivery of instruction or materials needed, they all share a foundation of thorough research and continued efficacy in the field of education. In order to maximize the potential for student success in reading fluency and reading ability overall, the employment of some of these evidence-based strategies is essential and noteworthy for educators. The following is a literature review detailing what the current research suggests for effective instruction in reading fluency.

Keywords: reading fluency, reading, instructional strategies, evidence-based

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Reading is one of the most foundational yet difficult skills that students must acquire. Reading instruction begins very early in a child's education; specifically, standards for all aspects of reading start at the kindergarten level (South Dakota Department of Education, 2018). The standards for kindergarten through 12th grade reading build upon each other, with every new grade introducing and fostering more and more complex skills. In order to teach reading, it must be considered and understood that reading instruction comprises five dimensions (National Reading Panel, 2000). These dimensions include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. According to the National Reading Panel, phonemic awareness refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words, phonics entails teaching students how to use letter-sound relations to read or spell words, and vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meaning. Fluency is a reader's ability to read with speed, accuracy, and prosody (proper expression), while comprehension is defined as the intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between the text and a reader (National Reading Panel, 2000). A child who reads on grade level or beyond exhibits proficiency in all of these dimensions, as they all work together simultaneously during the process of reading (Tompkins, 2017). As such, an integrated approach to reading instruction is essential to the success of every child learning to read. A deficit in effectively teaching one of these dimensions could impact a reader's ability to reach their full potential (Kim, 2017).

When it comes to reading fluency, numerous studies point to its vitality for developing readers and budding academics. Reading fluency has a tremendous impact on the development of

two other main facets of reading: comprehension and decoding. These three components must all be working together in order to make for effective and efficient reading (Kim, 2017). Fluency is described as the bridge that links decoding and comprehension together (Padeliadu, et al., 2021). This is due to what Harty and her team point out; the systematic instruction of lower order skills (i.e., decoding) is more effective in grades prior to sixth grade because there is not a strong relationship between decoding and comprehension past this point (Harty, et al., 2019). Logically, this makes sense for what the standards and state assessments demand of students at this age developmentally. The tasks expected of students in middle school and above are considered higher-order thinking skills, in which critical thinking, problem-solving, making inferences, and so on are expected. These skills lie much beyond the drilling of words that are repeated often in text (i.e., high frequency words) and of word families (e.g., words that rhyme or sound the same), which are characteristic of decoding and phonological awareness. With higher-order thinking skills, comprehension becomes of even higher importance. However, if there are deficits in fluency, a reader will struggle a lot with this reading bridge from decoding to comprehension. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) studied a lot about how the brain works in the context of reading and fluency (Egarr & Storey, 2021). They surmised that the brain's working memory, or the part of the brain that consciously is processing new information, progresses in terms of its focus. Skills having to do with decoding while reading takes up a lot of working memory in beginning readers. Fluency happens when automaticity takes over, and the working memory does not have to focus so much on skills such as letter recognition and phonemic blending. LaBerge and Samuels assert that a developed reader can shift focus to deriving meaning from text and comprehending what was read, with that shift occurring through the development of reading fluency (Egarr & Storey, 2021).

Generally speaking, the goal is for students to exhibit proficiency in reading fluency and comprehension by the time they enter third grade (Tompkins, 2017). Of course, reading fluency instruction does not halt at this age - a quick look at state standards for reading confirms this. That being said, third grade still marks a big milestone for young readers. In most states, including the state of South Dakota, students take their first major state standardized test. In this test, reading and math skills are assessed (South Dakota Department of Education, 2018). In addition, third grade marks the moment when time in the classroom shifts from learning to read to reading to learn. In other words, this automatic identification of text is when reading becomes a means of acquiring new knowledge rather than an intensely practiced basic decoding skill (Tompkins, 2017). As such, reading fluency proficiency is of paramount importance for every student. In order to ensure that students are set up for success in this skill set, educators employ the use of evidence-based strategies for teaching reading fluency (Benner, et al., 2022; Harty, et al., 2019; National Reading Panel, 2000; Tompkins, 2017).

Evidence-based strategies refer to teaching strategies thoroughly researched by experts in the field of education. Even though educators and researchers are continuing to learn about and add to their wealth of evidence-based strategies, there are some strategies that have continued proven efficacy (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; National Reading Panel, 2000). When it comes to effectively teaching reading fluency, there are many evidence-based approaches available for teachers to utilize. In fact, many teachers use some evidence-based strategies naturally and have them integrated into their curriculums (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016; National Reading Panel, 2000; Tompkins, 2017). Of course, some of these strategies require training, field practice, and years of experience to fully maximize in terms of effectiveness (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016). Nevertheless,

many of these effective strategies are used by educators all over the world and can be reasonably implemented in classroom settings.

Definition of Key Terms

Presented here are definitions of terms used in this study, including definitions as used by the researcher and those referenced from the supporting literature.

- (a) *Autism Spectrum Disorder*: “A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences (IDEIA, 2004; South Dakota Department of Education, 2018, p. 111a).”
- (b) *Deficit*: A delay or significant potential difference between what a child should and is currently achieving (IDEIA, 2004; South Dakota Department of Education, 2018).
- (c) *Evidence-based strategies*: “Strategies, activities, and programs that evaluation research has shown to be effective are based on evidence. Some of these activities help individuals develop the intentions and skills to act in a healthy manner. Others focus on creating safe and supportive learning environments” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools to the American Institutes for Research, 2023).
- (d) *Frustration reading level*: A level of passage difficulty at which an individual is unable to read with adequate word identification and comprehension. The individual reads less than 90% of the words correctly and answers less than 70% of comprehension questions correctly (Leslie & Cadwell, 2010).
- (e) *Independent reading level*: A level of passage difficulty at which an individual can read successfully without assistance. The individual reads 98% - 100% of the words in a

passage correctly and answers comprehension questions with 90% or greater accuracy (Leslie & Cadwell, 2010).

(f) *Instructional reading level*: A level of passage difficulty at which an individual can read with assistance from a teacher. The individual reads between 90% - 97% of the words in a passage correctly and answers comprehension questions with 70% - 90% accuracy (Leslie & Cadwell, 2010).

(g) *Integrated approach*: An approach to reading instruction in which strategies used help support development in all areas of reading, including decoding, fluency, and comprehension (Tompkins, 2017).

(h) *Learning disability (also specific learning disability)*: “A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not apply to students who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; cognitive disability; emotional disturbance; or environmental, cultural disadvantage” (IDEIA, 2004; South Dakota Department of Education, 2018, p. 111a).

(i) *Linear intervention*: “Change strategies that have a direct or linear relationship between the intervention and the behavior. The original targeted behavior is unaltered by the change strategy” (Kubina & Yurich, 2012).

(j) *Multisyllabic words*: Words with more than one syllable, with each syllable containing at least a vowel.

- (k) *Nonlinear intervention*: “Change strategies that do not follow a direct line, or have a nonlinear relationship, from intervention to behavior. The change strategy modifies the original pinpointed behavior” (Kubina & Yurich, 2012).
- (l) *Oral reading fluency*: “The ability to read connected text, rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading, such as decoding” (Meyer & Felton, 1999, p. 284).
- (m) *Pedagogy*: “The combination of teaching methods (what instructors do), learning activities (what instructors ask their students to do), and learning assessments (the assignments, projects, or tasks that measure student learning)” (University of Minnesota, Center for Educational Innovation, 2023).
- (n) *Phonemic awareness*: “The ability to manipulate the sounds in words orally” (Tompkins, 2017).
- (o) *Working memory*: “A newer understanding of short-term memory that involves conscious, active processing of incoming auditory and visual-spatial information, and of information retrieved from long-term memory” (Myers Psychology, 2018, p. 352).

Organization of Literature Review

This literature review is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 contains the introduction and some definitions of key terms. Chapter 2 unfolds and discusses several effective strategies for teaching reading fluency. Options for instructional delivery of certain strategies, such as repeated readings and literature-based classroom activities, are also further explained in this chapter. Chapter 3 provides a summary and conclusion of the reading fluency strategies reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Explicit Direct Instruction

Many school districts provide teachers with curriculums to utilize for reading instruction. Depending on who is asked, there may be variation in how much a teacher supplements a provided curriculum or follows its exact sequence. Regardless, curriculum-based direct instruction can be extremely helpful and effective in developing reading skills (Benner et al., 2022; Tompkins, 2017). Teachers use explicit direct instruction in order to teach skills in a planned and sequential order (Archer & Hughes, 2011). In explicit direct instruction, a teacher will present information in small steps and reinforce these new ideas with practice activities. Skills build upon each other, so this strategy dictates that students only move on to mastery of the new content (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Tompkins, 2017). In this strategy, students tend to work individually, not in small groups or with partners, because this instruction is very behaviorally-based and focuses on individual progress (Tompkins, 2017).

Both studies examined in this literature review actually examine the impact that explicit direct instruction has on older students struggling with reading fluency. To begin with, the first study looked at providing participants, which were struggling adolescent readers, with direct and explicit instruction in a variety of areas. These areas included word identification, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (Harty et al., 2019). Using this explicit direct instruction, researchers noted gains in fluency overall for the research participants. This study also supported gains in other areas of literacy, such as comprehension and decoding, as these tend to go hand-in-hand with fluency (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Harty, et al., 2019; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Providing direct explicit instruction for summarizing as well as using multiple modes of instructional delivery also improved reading comprehension. Although most intervention studies have focused on younger children with reading problems, the present study adds support to the idea that adolescents with reading problems may respond to an intervention that entails direct and explicit instruction (Harty et al., 2019).

Another study focused on the idea that previous research shows that explicit direct instruction can support struggling readers and those with reading disabilities and lead to improving lifelong literacy outcomes (Benner et al., 2021). One example of a curricular program that uses this strategy is Corrective Reading, a program for students in grades three and above who are reading below grade level. In previous studies, this program works for younger students and can be implemented with fidelity by both teachers and teaching assistants alike (Benner et al., 2021; Przychodzin-Havis et al, 2005). This study focused on struggling middle school readers. Findings indicated that explicit and systematic instruction in word reading strategies has significant benefits on decoding and reading fluency growth (Benner et al., 2021). The study also suggested that the teaching functions associated with explicit and systematic instruction made a significant difference in participant responsiveness to the direct instruction intervention being provided (Benner et al., 2021).

Word Study

As stated in Chapter 1, fluency acts as the bridge between decoding and comprehension (Padeliadu, et al., 2021). As such, mastery in decoding is crucial to reading fluency development. Important instructional components for older students include word study, motivation, fluency,

vocabulary, and comprehension; the latter three components overlap with components recommended to younger students (Benner et al., 2021; Boardman et al., 2008). Word study is a new component for students above the age of third grade. A tenet of explicit direct instruction is the word-phrase reading or study, which focuses primarily on building proficiency in decoding skills (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Denton, et al., 2014). Word study refers to the ability to decode multisyllabic words and recognize their meaningful parts, such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words (Benner et al., 2021; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Denton, et al., 2014). Because this is a skill that applies to all ages and reading levels, this instructional strategy holds validity throughout an entire reading education.

In one study, the impact of a direct instruction word study program designed for students in fourth grade and up who struggle with basic reading decoding, including difficulty with multisyllabic words found in content-specific texts, was examined. The data results produced suggested that explicit and systematic instruction in word reading strategies has significant additive benefits above instruction that focused on decoding alone (Benner et al., 2021). The specific program used also provided instruction and practice with decoding multisyllabic words, which is crucial for success in all content areas, especially with science and social studies. The study also indicated that when struggling middle school readers work with prefixes, suffixes, root words and their meanings, they are better able to comprehend what they read and expand their vocabulary (Benner et al., 2021).

Another study investigated the effects on reading fluency when using explicit reading and guided reading strategies for struggling readers in first grade (Denton, et al., 2014). The study specifically noted that the explicit and guided reading programs used include word study instruction. Results of the study demonstrated that these programs did lead to reading

improvements in these struggling readers. Moreover, the study noted that the word study aspects of these programs helped to foster growth in reading fluency, as well as reading comprehension (Denton, et al., 2014).

Repeated Reading

The reading fluency intervention that, for this researcher, is most numerous in research background is repeated readings. Repeated reading involves “rereading a short and meaningful passage until a satisfactory level of fluency is reached” (Kim et al., 2017; Musti-Rao, et al., 2009; Oskar-Groen, 2009; Samuels, 1979). Students are given a set amount of time to read, and they must demonstrate an educator-determined proficiency level with that text before moving on to a different text or beginning other instruction (Heath 2008; Kim et al., 2021; Kubina & Yurich, 2012). It is reading words, phrases, and the entire text in an interconnected manner several times, by employing one or more educational strategies that contribute in one way or another to support repeated reading (Heath 2008; Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; Lvey, 2012). Typically, repeated readings are done one-on-one with an educator or researcher and the student, in which the former aims to track correct and incorrect words read by the latter. The former may also engage in error correction procedures or modeling instruction in order to help aid in reading fluency improvement. For reading fluency improvement to occur, students must have multiple opportunities to read connected text or participate in repeated reading activities (Chard et al., 2002; Ketterlin-Geller, et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2017).

Over the last forty years, a substantial number of reviews and meta-analyses have been conducted on reading fluency, targeting the effectiveness of repeated reading, and revealing the

value of different strategies used within repeated reading interventions (Chard et al., 2002; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Padeliadu, et al., 2021; Therrien, 2004). In this section and in others to follow, it will be evident that repeated reading instruction has morphed procedurally with the introduction of technology, emphasis on student collaboration, and so on. There are many different approaches for repeated reading such as timed repeated reading, repeated reading with a model, repeated reading without a model, assisted reading, choral reading, paired reading, reading with audiotapes, or reading with computer programs (Hudson, et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2017). Not all studies that are reviewed as proof of repeated readings will follow the exact traditional procedures of repeated readings, but all will be similar in nature enough to compare them and aid the transition to other instructional methods that use repeated strategies.

To begin with, one study set out to determine how repeated reading can enhance and improve students' fluency while also reviewing the impact of repeated reading on students' reading achievement (Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; Kita, 2011). The study utilized direct modeling, in which a teacher models ideal reading fluency features while reading the provided text, and examined the effects of this type of repeated reading intervention. Results of the study revealed that the application of direct modeling and repeated practice helped to enhance the students' fluency level. In addition, they found that the repeated reading of unfamiliar texts helped many teachers and researchers to assess the accuracy of students' fluency and decoding abilities (Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; Kita, 2011).

In another study, a synthesis of research on reading fluency development was conducted, with an aim to examine the results presented by eight relevant meta-analyses (Padeliadu, et al., 2021). The synthesis presented ideas that are significant to discuss from a pedagogical standpoint. First, they concluded that the most effective reading fluency strategies combined with

repeated reading are goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reinforcement. Next, they found that model reading or guidance and text preview were also effective intervention components in reading fluency instruction. Also, they surmised that reading fluency instruction, including repeated readings, becomes more effective when specially designed texts for instruction are used. Lastly, their findings indicated that teaching irregular text words independently should be incorporated into repeated reading programs (Padeliadu, et al., 2021).

Another study investigated reading fluency impacts when students did repeated readings with a text by themselves using a voice amplification device in order to listen to themselves, as the device created a louder reading voice than when they read aloud normally (Dubé, et al., 2016). Besides amplifying the sound of their own voice, this strategy had the advantage of isolating the reader from other noises in the class. The repeated reading supervised by an educator had a significant impact not only on reading fluency, but also on identifying and understanding the words (Dubé, et al., 2016; National Reading Panel 2000). They found that students read faster, made fewer mistakes, and became more skillful in self-error correction. They, as a result, read more easily and comprehended the text better (Dubé, et al., 2016; Giasson 2003).

In 2017, another synthesis reviewed reading fluency instructional approaches (Kim, et al., 2017). Repeated reading approaches aimed at building oral reading fluency represented the majority of the interventions found across studies. Given that repeated reading has been consistently implemented, most studies yielded positive oral reading fluency outcomes (Chard et al., 2002; Kim, et al., 2017). In addition, findings from this synthesis suggested that there were no significant differences between repeated reading with or without a model when comparing participants' performance on oral reading fluency measure, which conflicts with previous ideas

from other repeated reading studies (Chard, et al., 2002; Kim, et al., 2017). Finally, this study also found that repeated reading of previously read passages appeared to be more effective for oral reading fluency gains than repeated readings of new passages, which was supported by other studies as well (Begeny, et al., 2006; Kim, et al., 2017; Tam, et al., 2006).

Assisted Reading

Assisted reading is a variation of repeated reading, but it utilizes a more active teaching role. This strategy capitalizes on the major tenets of repeated reading while remaining flexible and accounting for the differing needs and preferences of struggling readers or English Learners (Kodan & Akyol, 2022; Rasinski & Young, 2014; Taguchi & Kawaguchi, 2016). In assisted reading, various forms of scaffolding are provided to readers in order to maximize the reading being done. In essence, it is a slightly more monitored form of repeated readings (Kodan & Akyol, 2022; Taguchi & Kawaguchi, 2016). Scaffolding within this strategy can take on many forms. For instance, teachers can be an auditory model for reading speed and expression, a knowledgeable support for in-text vocabulary and grammar, and an aid for comprehension checks (Taguchi & Kawaguchi, 2016). In other contexts, assisted reading can be done at home, with the parent acting as a model for reading fluently and thinking critically about the text (Rasinski & Young, 2014). Furthermore, assisted reading plays a complementary role to facilitate extensive reading. Both of these strategies play on repeated practice, so the crossover with assisted repeated reading can correlate to extensive reading. A teacher can assist in extensive reading by providing powerful scaffolding by clarifying grammar and vocabulary and modeling good skills for independent reading comprehension (Taguchi & Kawaguchi, 2016). In short,

assisted reading can be a bridge between students reading in a disfluent, word-by-word manner to an expressive and meaningful manner (Rasinski & Young, 2014).

In another study done recently by Kodan and Akyol, the effects of choral, repeated and assisted reading strategies on fluent reading and reading comprehension skills of poor readers was investigated (Kodan & Akyol, 2022). In this specific study, the implementation of assisted reading paired a reader considered to be strong with a reader considered to be poor; essentially, the intention is to provide struggling students with an opportunity to have fluency modeled and monitored (Kodan & Akyol, 2022). While all three strategies were used, the effects of each strategy were broken down and analyzed in terms of their effectiveness. Results of the study indicated that all strategies, including assisted reading, led to increased reading fluency skills for all participants (Kodan & Akyol, 2022).

Video Modeling

Video technologies have emerged as an educational tool in the modern-day classroom. With the induction of the Common Core State Standards, skills associated with the proficient use of technologies have been made necessary for students currently completing their K12 education (Tompkins, 2017). In addition to students being able to effectively use technology in the classroom, literacy is now taught in what is to be considered a new age of instruction. In traditional approaches, literacy instruction consisted of teaching reading and writing elements in conjunction with each other, mainly using tangible print. While this balanced and integrated approach has not changed, the media form in which texts and other literacy tools are presented to students has shifted to include some digital options. This may not be surprising to the modern

reader, but this does impact the way we define some of the evidence-based strategies that have efficacy dating back before smart devices and handheld digital tablets.

Video technologies in the classroom increase the accessibility of videos used in the classroom, as they can be utilized on any number of mobile or desktop devices. In addition, these technologies can be used to motivate engagement in productive behavior and reduce problem behaviors in the classroom (Egarr & Storey, 2021; Mechling, 2005). Video modeling is a strategy used for reading fluency instruction that incorporates aspects of other common reading fluency strategies, such as repeated readings. Using video technologies ensure that modeling interventions requiring repetition are delivered consistently, which is a major pillar of some repeated reading strategies. Additionally, video modeling may promote efficiency in teaching reading fluency, as the video takes over the teaching (Egarr & Storey, 2021). How a basic video modeling strategy works is a reader, usually a teacher, models how to correctly and fluently read a given passage. After the practicing student utilizes the video modeling for instruction, the student engages in repeated reading. In some cases, the repeated reading is done individually using video technologies, in which the student records themselves reading and accuracy is checked later on, or the student reads with a teacher in a more traditional sense. Similar to repeated readings, the idea behind video modeling is for the student to have repeated exposure to a given passage through both pre-reading and the actual act of doing the repeated reading (Kim, et al., 2017).

In a study done by Egarr and Storey, gains in fluency were observed by using video modeling with struggling readers and students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD (Egarr & Storey, 2021). While every student participating in the study demonstrated variability in terms of how much their reading fluency improved and how it progressed throughout the study (e.g.,

linear versus nonlinear improvement), the video modeling strategies employed seemed to increase reading fluency skills. In the study, students alternated the traditional approach previously described and feedforward self video-modeling (i.e., they were the model in the video and anticipated correct reading). Depending on student preference for the video modeling type and other variables, the data suggests that both strategies can work for fluency instruction. The authors did note, however, that reading passage length, video length, level of student interest in the text, and the previous experience students may have with other interventions could impact the perceived effectiveness of this strategy in this study (Egarr & Storey, 2021).

Another study examined how video modeling conditional differences impacted readers' oral fluency. In 2014, Decker and Buggey confirmed the effect of video modeling by asking participants to watch a modeling video without reading instruction, which constituted a fairly standard repeated reading procedure. They compared the effects of self-modeling and peer-modeling videos to this standard procedure and found that all video conditions increased the speed of words read. However, their results indicated higher increases in self- and peer-modeling over the standard procedure (Decker & Buggey, 2014; Kim et al., 2017).

More research will likely continue to be done as video modeling and other general technologies become more prevalent in the classroom. Current studies like the one described above point to video modeling as being an effective strategy for teaching reading fluency. As such, this is another evidence-based tool educators can feel comfortable utilizing in order to maximize their success in delivering quality reading fluency instruction.

Choral Reading

One major component of an engaging classroom environment is classwide active participation. In other words, a classroom may seem much more lively and learning-oriented when students are actively part of the learning process. In choral reading, this very idea often comes to fruition. Choral reading takes place when students, in small groups or as a whole class, read a short text aloud in unison (Tompkins, 2017). Typically, the reading is at the classwide instructional level, which allows for more fluent classmates or the teacher to serve as models and set the reading speed (Tompkins, 2017). It should be emphasized that there is a relationship between repeated reading and choral reading. Choral reading itself includes repetition of the text several times to increase levels of enjoyment of the text, improve the rate of reading, and reduce the levels of reading errors (Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; McCaule, et al., 1992). In choral reading, tasks for pre-reading and post-reading may also be done to promote decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills (Dubé, et al., 2016). For example, before the actual act of choral reading, students may be encouraged to predict what the reading will be about based on the illustrations and pictures. After reading, checks for predictions and opportunities to discuss and summarize the text may occur. In addition, the students could have the option to try reading the text independently in order to practice reading with speed, accuracy, and prosody (Dubé, et al., 2016).

Several studies demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing choral reading as a strategy to aid in reading fluency improvement. To begin with, a study investigated the effect of choral reading using poetry selections on reading fluency and reading comprehension among third-grade students. Results of the study revealed higher gains in fluency and comprehension doing choral readings of poetry than traditional methods of reading poetry (Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; Newsome, 2014). Another study looked at the effect of choral reading for each

grade in developing oral reading fluency. This study revealed that choral reading for provided text repeatedly led to students being able to pronounce words and increase their reading fluency. The study also suggested that choral reading can help students not to feel embarrassed in reading aloud, especially students with reading difficulties, and exposure to good models can lead to additional improvement in their skills (Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; Paige, 2011). Finally, another study focused on the performance aspect of choral reading. Specifically, the role of the teacher-led choral readings using poetry was examined. Results of this study indicated that the students developed reading fluency proficiencies, word decoding skills, and poetry appreciation (Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; Trousdal, 2010).

Guided Reading

According to Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory, a child's learning ability and cognitive development are guided by their social interactions. This theory makes logical sense given the notion that humans are characteristically social creatures and engage in experiential learning with others. As such, it may come as no surprise that this evidence-based strategy, as well as a few more that will follow, has social components embedded within them. Guided reading is a form of repeated reading in which small groups, led by a teacher, come together to read (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Tompkins, 2017). Reading groups that use guided reading are composed of four to five students who read at the same level. In guided reading, the books selected are those that students can read at their instructional level, with approximately 90-94% accuracy. Students just learning to read all the way through adolescence can participate in guided reading groups. Beginning readers usually read small picture books in one sitting, but

older students who are reading longer chapter books take several days to a week or two to read their books (Allen, 2000; Tompkins, 2017). These groups typically only last about twenty to thirty minutes. Generally speaking, students do the reading silently first and then as a whole group, or everyone follows along while students take turns reading. Then, the group does enrichment activities to further develop word and comprehension skills (Young, 2019). Sometimes, with younger groups, the teacher may read aloud to get everyone started on the first page or two (Tompkins, 2017).

The goal of these groups is to support reading improvements and promote the use of reading strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Richardson, 2009; Tompkins, 2017). A benefit to using guided reading is the social nature of it; students can learn from and help each other think about the text in a different way, decode difficult words, and so on. The role of the teacher is to not only facilitate the groups and clarify misunderstandings or errors in reading, but to also observe the reading strategies being actively used by students (Tompkins, 2017). For instance, if the group is rereading a previously read book, the teacher may take anecdotal notes on reading fluency speed and accuracy. Likewise, if a new guided reading lesson and book are being implemented, the teacher may pay special attention to the strategies students are using to decode words or identify a main idea (Tompkins, 2017). Teachers observe students as they read during guided reading lessons. They spend a few minutes observing each reader, sitting either in front of or beside the student. They watch for evidence of strategy use and confirm the student's attempts to identify words and solve reading problems. Teachers take notes about their observations and use the information to choose mini lessons to teach and books for students to read (Denton, et al., 2014; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012).

This strategy is used in many classrooms and has found validity in practices such as the Daily 5, a literacy and non-curricular framework that helps support teachers in providing integrated instruction, as a means of supporting reading fluency growth (Bouchev & Moser, 2014; National Reading Panel, 2000). In addition, the National Reading Panel conducted a meta-analysis of guided oral reading procedures. This led them to the conclusion that guided reading consistently fosters growth in the areas of word recognition, fluency, and comprehension as measured by a variety of test instruments and at a range of grade levels (National Reading Panel, 2000).

One study that examined the effectiveness of guided reading strategies used in second grade classrooms over the duration of an entire year (Young, 2019). This study was conducted in an effort to corroborate claims that guided reading works to increase reading abilities, such as foster comprehension and fluency skills (Fawson, & Reutzel, 2011; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Gambrell, et al., 2019; Young, 2019). The study revealed that increased rigor, frequency, and duration of guided reading instruction can have a positive effect on second-grade students' independent reading levels. For example, some students increased from kindergarten reading levels to above grade level reading by the end of the year (Young, 2019). Increasing in reading ability and rising up in reading levels suggests increases in reading fluency overall.

Pair Reading

Similar to guided reading, there is a social-learning component to pair reading. Instead of reading in groups of four or five students, students simply read with a partner (Griffith & Rasinsk, 2004; Tompkins, 2017). The pair chooses a book that interests them and decides how

they will read it. Their options include reading aloud together in unison, taking turns reading aloud while the partner follows along, or reading silently individually with breaks to read together or discuss the book. Unless the teacher has explained these techniques and taught students how to work collaboratively, pair reading can deteriorate into the stronger of the two partners reading aloud to the other student, when that is not the intent of the technique (Tompkins, 2017). Unlike guided reading, reading pairs are not always assigned based on reading level. Students can read or reread a text with a classmate or an older student (Friedland & Truesdell, 2004; Tompkins, 2017). Pair reading book selections are typically those that neither student could read individually; by working together page after page, they can figure out unfamiliar words and discuss the meaning each is taking away from the text (Tompkins, 2017).

In Dubé's meta-analysis of a variety of reading fluency strategies, pair reading was examined. The participants included groups made up of sixth graders considered to be reading at grade level paired with third or fourth graders. The older students were meant to serve as models and demonstrate fluent reading skills (Dubé, et al., 2016). The results of the meta-analysis indicated that pair reading seemed to be effective in improving fluency in the younger readers of the pair groupings. According to the study, reading a selection several times helps a reader to read with fluency, and modeling good reading by an expert helps a reader to read with fluency and better understand a text. Pair reading meets both those needs while also providing chances for social learning and reading interest choices (Brown 2007; Dubé, et al., 2016).

Extensive Reading

Unlike most of the strategies discussed in this literature review so far, this next strategy is relatively hands-off for teachers. When students read silently by themselves for their own purposes and at their own pace, they are engaging in extensive reading (Tompkins, 2017). This strategy becomes a common classroom practice by second or third grade, which is when students have started to become fluent readers (Tompkins, 2017). Extensive reading is huge for fostering a student's efficacy in reading, as this is the strategy that will help students foster a love of reading and begin to think of themselves as readers (Iwata, 2020; Tompkins, 2017). A perk of this strategy is the amount of student choice involved. If a student's reading preferences change or develop, or if a student finds the current selection to be uninteresting, they can choose another to read (Day & Bamford, 1998; Taguchi & Kawaguchi, 2016).

Extensive reading, while seemingly a strategy that requires no planning at all, helps students to more authentically engage with books and practice fluency on their own. Teachers do, in fact, intentionally guide students when they begin self-selecting books. For example, books that are utilized in literature circles, introduced during read-aloud time, or provided in the classroom library can help to steer students toward books that may foster their interest and within their reading level (Tompkins, 2017). Still, the problem that quickly comes to light with extensive reading is the concern that students may not select books that are within their independent reading levels. It is of paramount importance that a book is at a student's appropriate level, as lack of comprehension or frustration and exhaustion with the fluency of the text could become an issue (Tompkins, 2017). If students are struggling with fluency, additional scaffolds and other reading fluency strategies should be utilized in order to support students in reaching an independent reading level (Tompkins, 2017).

Extensive reading has found lots of support in research studies. For students who are struggling with reading fluency or are learning English as a second language, extensive reading is the most natural way to read a great amount and be exposed to a variety of literature (Taguchi & Kawaguchi, 2016). In a study done with English Learners, providing appropriate book choices for their reading levels did result in improved fluency, increased vocabulary, and heightened comprehension. While comprehension gains seemed to be with the most variation among study participants, extensive reading led to enough improvements in fluency and vocabulary that they seemed to support growth in comprehension (Taguchi & Kawaguchi, 2016). The study also found that participants often encountered ambiguities in the text in terms of vocabulary and grammar when engaging in extensive reading. However, this led to them developing a sense of tolerance when encountering these ambiguities, which is huge in the learning process for reading (Taguchi & Kawaguchi, 2016).

Another study also examined how extensive reading can support gains in reading fluency, and more specifically reading speed. This is in part due to the amount of exposure that readers, especially struggling readers or English Learners, can have to unknown words and high-frequency words when extensively reading a variety of texts (Iwata, 2022). This repeated exposure to high-frequency words and other unknown words can create speed the more readers have the chance to decode them in-context (Iwata, 2022). A final note of the study discussed is that virtually no class without differences in learners' proficiency and interest, so an intentionally extensive reading program can support these differences in interest and ability (Iwata, 2022).

Literature-Based Activities

As emphasized repeatedly throughout this chapter, reading fluency instruction requires an integrated approach (Kim, 2017). This integrated approach not only refers to teaching fluency in conjunction with comprehension and decoding; this also refers to weaving fluency into other classroom activities and instruction. Many of these strategies discussed so far, while excellent in terms of their research base, are typically done during a specific reading instruction time.

Literature-based activities refer to activities that provide more natural instances of learning, in which learning is done in the context of the activity rather than being the focus of the activity. In other words, the focus of the activity is not on improving skills but rather engaging students in real-world learning and diving into enriching literature. Nevertheless, literature-based activities still practice reading fluency skills and can even result in fluency gains for the students.

Literature-based activities encompass a number of specific instructional strategies, which are discussed below. In this section, four major literature-based activities are examined: interactive read-aloud, book clubs and literature circles, readers' theater, and poetry-based activities.

Interactive Read-Aloud

An interactive read-aloud is defined as a planned reading of a developmentally appropriate book out loud by an educator (Fisher et al., 2004; Tompkins, 2017). What makes a read-aloud interactive is the intentional instruction of reading fluency, decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary done by the reader (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020). An interactive read-aloud includes dialogic reading, or the method of reading illustrated books to children by an adult; text talk strategy, a method that includes intentionally discussing vocabulary; and the print referencing strategy, which is when the teacher draws attention to the nonverbal and verbal cues of the story.

These instructional moments happen before, during, and after reading the selected text (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020). For pre-reading, the teacher leads students through anticipating challenging or important words, making predictions, inferring events or characters' feelings through illustrations, and previewing literary elements. During reading, the teacher will model proper reading fluency and engage in think-alouds for comprehension practice (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020; Hurst et al., 2011). When the teacher is done reading, they may lead the class in making connections, questioning understanding, identifying the main theme, summarizing events, and checking predictions through both class discussion and graphic organizer activities (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020). When interactive reading aloud is performed, students are given the opportunity to practice engaging in academic conversations, collaborating to gather relevant information, and examining explanations about the book read. In addition, students can enjoy actively listening to the book and perhaps stimulate reading interests and potential book choices for self-selected books (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020; Trelease, 2013).

Studies that used an interactive read-aloud suggested great gains in all facets of reading for developing readers. Well-planned and daily interactive read-aloud lessons led to noticeable improvements in comprehension levels and reading fluency on instructional-level text (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020; Spencer, 2011). Also, studies conducted by Ceyhan and Yildiz, as well as Trelease, found that reading fluency improves as students listen to teachers' readings repeatedly in the interactive read-aloud lessons, carried out by the repetitive readings of the same book (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020; Trelease, 2013).

When it comes to reading fluency, research suggests that instruction by which the student reads aloud themselves is not enough to maximize their development in this skill. Similar to how an integrated approach with reading comprehension and decoding is recommended for teaching

reading fluency, an integrated approach for reading fluency strategies are also recommended for instruction. (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020; Padeliadu, et al., 2021). In other words, the best practice for educators is to utilize reading fluency instructional strategies including both the student practicing good reading fluency while also having it modeled.

Book Clubs and Literature Circles

Many studies point to reader interest as a major factor in reading motivation and improvement. Many studies note passage or textual disinterest as a limitation of their research, especially in those using strategies that implement repetition (Ceyhan & Yildiz, 2020; Egarr & Storey, 2021). On the other hand, it was found that students prefer to read shared books and titles that they independently choose, based on the desire to discuss these shared texts of interest (Isozaki, 2022; Ramonda, 2020). An evidence-based instructional tool is the use of book clubs or literature circles. These terms are used interchangeably and refer to the general idea of small, student-led book discussion groups that meet regularly in the classroom (Daniels, 2001; Tompkins, 2017). The teacher of the classroom provides a small variety of high-quality and grade-level books for students to choose from, which determines their groupings, and these book options tend to vary in genre and topic. With teacher guidance, the book clubs will set up their reading schedule and their mode of reading (independent or as a group). While in class, students will discuss what they have read and practice the higher-order thinking strategies associated with comprehending a text (Tompkins, 2017).

While this instructional method clearly has a focus on reading comprehension skills, there are studies that support book clubs and literature circles as a strategy for helping students to

also improve their reading fluency. In a study done with English learners, survey responses indicated that 92% of the students felt positively about the inclusion of book clubs in their instruction, which may be partly attributable to teacher attitude and learners' high motivation (Isozaki, 2022). This idea relates back to research previously supporting the impact reader interest has on reading fluency and comprehension gains (Ramonda, 2020). Even when books used in literature circles may be potentially below or above a student's instructional or independent reading level, the social support of discussing the book as a group and potentially completing readings together may lead to improvements in reading fluency. In this setting, students are still able to hear models of other fluent readers and support each other in the learning process (Isozaki, 2022; Tompkins, 2017).

Readers' Theater

Real-world application of skills instruction in the classroom is a huge goal of education. A major real-world and literacy connection utilized in many classrooms is readers' theater. Reader's theater is a form of repeated reading (Rasinski 2003; Razgatlıoğlu & Ulusoy, 2022). The main goal is for students to get involved and perform a practiced reading. Readers' theater has been found to foster higher student interest in reading, as the nature of the activity promotes participation and allows for expression of individual reading interests and ideas (Tompkins, 2017). Readers theater is a dramatic performance of a script by a group of readers, in which all students assume parts, rehearse their lines, and perform for their classmates (Black & Stave, 2007; Tompkins, 2017). Students can read scripts in trade books and textbooks, or they can use teacher-created or student-created scripts. These plays require neither costumes nor scenery; in

fact, they just require a student's ability to deliver a message with fluency. They may stand or sit, but they must carry the whole communication of the plot, characterization, mood, and theme by using their voices, gestures, and facial expressions (Tompkins, 2017). It is important to note that, unlike regular theater, students are not memorizing their parts; rather, they simply have opportunities to read good literature. Through this activity, they engage with the text, interpret characters, and bring the text to life (Keehn, et al., 2005; Tompkins, 2017; Worthy & Prater, 2002).

A study including four readers' theater plays was chosen and presented to kindergarten and first graders. Repeated practice of the scripts was completed in a manner in which to ensure fluency during the performances. Results of the study found improvement in reading fluency for involved students when implemented alongside other pedagogical activities such as explicit teaching and rhythm walks (Razgatlıoğlu & Ulusoy, 2022). Another study done by Johnson in 2011 investigated the theatrical environment in the readers' theater and its impact on increasing reading fluency and prose reading. Similar to the previous study's findings, Johnson found that readers' theater is an important strategy in repeated reading. Moreover, readers' theater leads to the development of reading fluency and an increase in reading comprehension for students (Johnson, 2011). Lastly, English learners and other students who are not yet fluent readers gain valuable oral reading practice in a low-pressure setting. Additionally, they practice reading high-frequency words, work to increase their reading speed, learn how to phrase and chunk words in sentences, and are able to try to read with more expression (Tompkins, 2017).

Poetry-Based Activities

Poetry is a unique form of literature, in that it has so many real-world applications, such as song lyrics in a musical or popular music chart-topper. In fact, unlike fiction or informative texts, poems are the first literary genre and oral tradition that individuals hear from birth (Cramer, 2001; Razgathioğlu & Ulusoy, 2022). Poetry not only exposes children to language concepts and patterns, but also to the rhythm of language and how we can express it. In order to enable children to enjoy poetry, it is necessary to create a classroom environment that enables students to intentionally and engagingly access poetry. This starts with the classroom teacher having knowledge of poetry and how to read it. Poetry-based activities can take on many forms. The use of an interactive read-aloud marries well with poetry-based learning (Enochs, 2010; Nodelman, 1992; Razgathioğlu & Ulusoy, 2022). In addition, poetry can be used in repeated readings (Razgathioğlu & Ulusoy, 2022), book clubs and literature circles (Tompkins, 2017), and so on.

According to Rasinski, poetry and reading fluency are a perfect match. Poetry-based instruction in the classroom develops students' reading fluency and comprehension skills naturally. He additionally expressed that the use of poems can be useful in repeated readings, as well as support growth in word recognition skills, which relates to fluency (Rasinski, 2000; Razgathioğlu & Ulusoy, 2022). In a study done with a poetry-based literacy program, the reading fluency of the students involved improved. The students' ability to read with expression and decode word patterns quickly seemed to make significant gains when using poetry. In addition, their research suggested that poetic texts could be utilized more for reading fluency instruction and studies (Razgathioğlu & Ulusoy, 2022). Another study investigated the effectiveness of repeated reading of both poetry and prose in the development of reading fluency and reading comprehension among students. Student behavior was also examined. Results indicated that the

behavior of students was more positive from reading poetry than from reading narrative pieces (Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; Pierre, 2012). Finally, another study looked at the effect of repeated choral reading of poetry on reading fluency and reading comprehension. The results revealed statistically significant differences in students' gains in comprehension and fluency between the repeated choral reading of poetry and the repeated choral reading of traditional methods, in favor of the poetry group. (Khasawneh & Fallatah, 2022; Newsome, 2014).

Rhythm Walks

Prosody, or the ability to read expressively, was not always considered an aspect of reading fluency. In earlier definitions of reading fluency, only speed and accuracy were considered. Educators now hold the ability to read expressively in high esteem as necessary for reading fluency (Egarr & Storey, 2021; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; National Reading Panel, 2000). Prosody adds the requirement that reading sound in a manner similar to spoken language, as this allows for fluency to aid in comprehension (Egarr & Storey, 2021; Stahl & Kuhn, 2002). Prosody really takes priority given the understanding that developing readers may have difficulty reading words in isolation while also reading phrases properly (Dubé, et al., 2016; Therrien, 2004). When it comes to prosody as a skill, how it is practiced or instructed is limited. Besides modeling by a fluent reader and intentional repeated practice of prosody, strategies dedicated solely to prosody are few.

Rhythm walks incorporate walking into reading (Dubé, et al., 2016; Peebles, 2007). In a rhythm walk, students walk through the sentences and repeat them several times until they feel more confident and there is noticeable improvement in reading the sentence fluently. The rhythm

walk aims to help students draw attention to the natural breaks and phrasing of a text so that they chunk their reading into meaningful phrases (Dubé, et al., 2016). While this is a rather specific strategy, there is evidence supporting this as a tool for delivering reading fluency instruction. Rhythm walks prove to be of great importance and huge for prosody gains when done in conjunction with other strategies such as direct instruction, repeated readings, and pair reading (Dubé, et al., 2016; Peebles, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

Conclusion

As a future educator and curious student, this literature review came to fruition from a budding desire to continue to learn more about the field of education. More specifically, the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the instructional practices and strategies taught to me in undergraduate courses and presented to me in district-funded curricula prompted further interest in deciding on this project. As educators, many ideas for best practices are thrown at you with the basis of “it is what everyone does” or “it is what the district pays for.” However, there is a lot of value in examining what the literature actually says about evidence-based methods. First, readers can understand the “why” for these methods being used over the scope of many years, grade levels, and locations. Next, readers can draw connections between what the literature says about how reading instruction psychologically works and how methods developed from that. Lastly, readers can inform decisions on evidence-based methods when combining it with factors such as teaching styles, time available, and materials provided. In this chapter, overall takeaways from the literature will be discussed through the lens of these values in examining the literature.

The first major theme of this paper is the idea that reading fluency truly is the bridge between decoding and comprehension. This is evidenced by the idea that, when it comes to strategies for teaching fluency, many experts point out the value in using a variety of strategies. Each strategy discussed in this paper varies slightly in how it supports reading fluency development. Some strategies, such as repeated readings and guided reading, emphasize speed and accuracy (in essence, fluency) with decoding words. On the other hand, there are strategies, such as literature circles and extensive reading, that place emphasis on fluency development for

the sake of being able to comprehend the text. In addition, effective instruction for reading fluency acknowledges and encourages that more than just one evidence-based method is used. Many of these strategies discussed are often used, both in classrooms and in academic studies, in tandem with one another. In order to maximize the development of reading fluency skills, educators should continue to deliver instruction using a variety of the strategies discussed.

Another major highlight of this literature review is the idea that none of these methods, in the opinion of this researcher, outrank the other. In other words, all of these evidence-based instructional strategies discussed could be effectively incorporated into any classroom. Many studies supporting all of these strategies do, however, point to some important considerations for teachers wanting to employ them. First, in order for many of these strategies to be effective, they must be implemented in a somewhat standardized manner. For example, repeated readings stress that using previously encountered passages, error correction instruction, and a model in pre-reading results in more reading fluency improvements. If doing one or all of these things is not feasible in a given classroom, this strategy may not be as useful as other methods or variations of repeated readings, such as choral reading. Next, student interest and engagement factors in the success or flop of a method's ability to increase reading fluency skills. For example, if a reader has challenges with reading fluency and struggles to maintain interest in reading, a more scripted method of instruction, like repeated readings or word study programs, may not lead to as quick of improvements for the reader as methods that invite student choice or interaction, such as readers' theater or pair reading. Lastly, these methods of instruction are only as effective as the materials and time provided to use them. Simply put, not all schools are able to provide the same resources. In some places, budgets are tight, devices are outdated, internet sources are unreliable, learning time is limited, and/or staff is stretched thin. Some of these methods require resources,

like specific types of texts or the ability to work one-on-one with all students throughout the day, and these are not guaranteed everywhere. As a result, it is up to educators to decide what methods could be the best use of time for meeting reading fluency instruction needs. For example, if the school's library has limited access to quality, instructional-level poetry but mounds old readers' theater scripts, choosing readers' theater for in-context reading fluency practice may be the best use of time and materials available. As long as student needs are being met and there are still quality and multifaceted reading fluency strategies being used, the teacher is being effective in his or her practice.

A final takeaway from this literature review is that keeping current is key. While many of these evidence-based instructional strategies have demonstrated efficacy over the years, it is still vital that research continues to prove and reprove that they work. This is in part due to society as a whole, with education being no different, being ever-changing. Put simply, the world and its classrooms do not look the same as they did five years ago, fifty years ago, and so on. At the time of this literature review, the most recent global pandemic hit nearly three years ago, the immersion of Common Core State Standards was a little over ten years ago, and Microsoft was invented just a little less than fifty years ago. With the classroom changing so much, researchers of educational strategies have a due diligence to ensure that evidence-based strategies can adapt with the change. This literature review is, arguably, proof of that already. For instance, a section titled "Video Modeling" would not have been in this literature review twenty years ago; nonetheless, this strategy incorporates evidence-based procedures of other methods and has demonstrated efficacy, so its inclusion on this list was crucial. If educators want to provide all students with access to the best possible instruction and maximize the amount of gains in reading fluency skills, there is an incredible need for staying current on what the research says.

The purpose of this literature review was to help provide more understanding to readers on what the current research says about effective strategies for delivering reading fluency instruction. As a future educator, the pursuit of this project was simple. A deep dive into what the current literature says about reading fluency strategies helps to guide and clarify my teaching style and philosophy. However, like this research also implies, this will continue to change. As a field, more will be learned as more research is done; the same can be said for educators and how they teach, with experience and continued education supporting those changes. For education to serve its purpose, which is maximizing outcomes for students, we must continue to stay current as a field and continually evaluate the effectiveness of instruction provided.

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