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The Best Practices in Fluency Instruction in the Primary Classroom
Using a whole class approach and small group instruction

By

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Chapter I

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to research strategies that are proven effective in order to support struggling primary level readers (1st-3rd grade) improve their reading fluency. Reading fluency can be defined as “reasonably accurate reading, at an appropriate rate, with suitable expression, that leads to accurate and deep comprehension and motivation to read” (Hasbrouck & Glaser, 2012, p. 13).

As an experienced educator, I have witnessed students struggle with reading fluency, which in turn creates a spiral of issues. “Evidence suggests that students who exhibit severe reading difficulties in the primary grades are likely to continue to struggle with reading throughout school” (Austin et al., 2017 p. 191). Some of those struggles include anxiety about reading, lack of self-confidence in all academic areas, lack of motivation when it comes to school work, and a disconnect from the text resulting in very poor comprehension. This spiral effect can continue and significantly grow throughout many years or a student’s entire school experience if no one intervenes or if appropriate action isn’t taken. “In the area of reading fluency, a recent nationally representative study of 1,799 fourth-grade students suggests that 40% of US students are ‘nonfluent’ readers” (Begeny, et al., 2009, p. 212). That’s why it’s extremely important for educators to have the wisdom and knowledge to implement reading fluency strategies and best practice methods into their classroom or small group instruction.

“Much scientific evidence on learning to read has shown that students who have not learned foundational reading skills by the end of first grade are highly likely to experience chronic reading difficulties (Moats & Tolman, 2019, p. 4). Reading fluently is significantly

important, because it is the bridge between just simply recognizing words and the ultimate goal of reading comprehension (International Literacy Association, 2018). When students lack fluency, they often lack comprehension of the text, and the enjoyment of reading in general. “One of the primary advances in this process involves the shift from dealing with words on a word-by-word basis to a rapid, accurate and expressive rendering of text” (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003, p. 3).

Areas of Fluency

There are three significant areas of fluency that each need to be addressed or specifically taught in order for a student to be considered a fluent reader; accuracy, rate, and expression (International Literacy Association, 2018). Each is separate and important on its own, but all three are needed for fluency, which leads to reading comprehension and a motivation to read for enjoyment.

Accuracy

Accuracy is the skill of identifying individual words either by decoding or word recognition. Some words known as irregular words that can not be decoded must also be recognized accurately. Students need to identify common letter patterns and correct spelling in order for accurate reading to occur.

Rate

Rate has somewhat taken on a new role in the last five years in many school districts, with administration only focusing on speed in order to signify reading proficiency. As a classroom teacher I know that “faster is not better”. I’ve had students who can read quickly, but their comprehension regarding the text is lacking. “Speed alone does not facilitate

comprehension, and a fast reader is not necessarily a fluent reader” (International Literacy Association, 2018). “One-minute fluency measures do reliably identify students who are at risk for reading difficulty. However, they may not map onto current definitions of fluency” (Deeney, 2010, p. 440).

Expression

Expression is the voice of the reader that includes pitch, tone, volume, emphasis, and rhythm in oral reading (International Literacy Association, 2018). Phrasing is another aspect of expression that includes a reader's ability to “chunk” words together appropriately. Expression can also be referred to as prosody, the ability to read with expression and feeling, especially when orally reading text that has voices or characters portraying feelings.

This study will explore fluency methods in order to teach these three methods. “Fluency can be taught in ways that students find authentic, engaging, and well connected to the literacy curriculum, as well as to other subject areas taught in school. Also, research has demonstrated that authentic fluency instruction can indeed improve students’ reading fluency, comprehension, and attitude toward reading” (Rasinski, 2012, p. 521).

The Science of Reading

The Science of Reading (SOR) is scientifically based research that focuses on how children learn to read and the struggles associated with reading and writing (The Reading League, 2023). The SOR has been an intricate source of reference and learning for educators to fully understand the science behind how children learn to read and the best practices to implement the delicate job of teaching children how to read.

The Simple View of Reading (SVR) was developed in 1986 by Gough and Tunmer to simplify the essential areas of reading development in proficient readers. “The Simple View of Reading is widely used to explain the Science of Reading to classroom teachers and others involved in reading education and to guide instructional practice” (Duke & Cartwright, 2021, p. S25).

In Figure 1 (Moats & Tolman, 2019), each area is significant in reading development and comprehension. “The SVR states that reading comprehension is the product of printed word recognition and language comprehension” (Moats & Tolman, 2019, p. 16).

Figure 1

Simple View of Reading



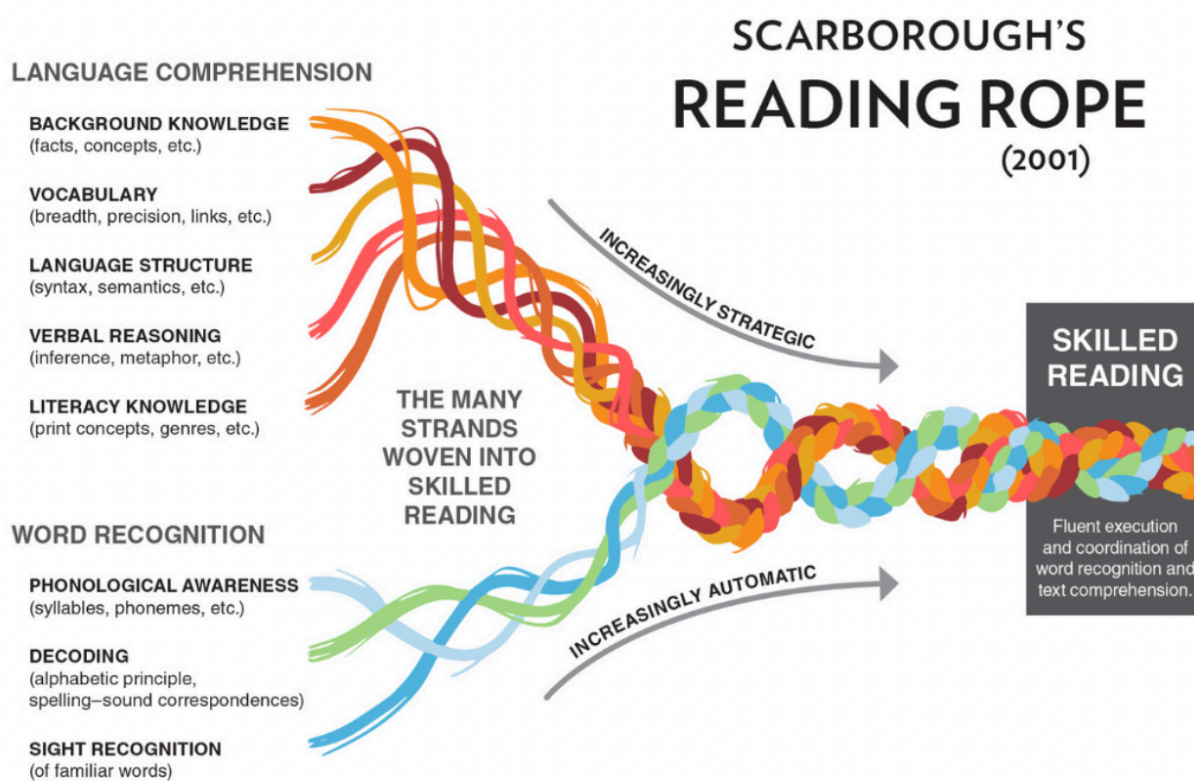
Note. Reprinted from *LETRS* (Vol. 1., p 16) by L. Moats & C. Tolman, 2019, Lexia. Copyright 2019 by Louisa C. Moats & Carol A. Tolman.

“Hollis Scarborough (2001), an eminent developmental psychologist and reading researcher, depicted the attainment of fluent reading as the progressive interweaving of strands or subskills in a rope” (Moats & Tolman, 2019 p. 36). In Figure 2 (Moats & Tolman, 2019), the rope is devised of two sectors that are both essential for reading development. The area of language comprehension encompasses several subareas or strands that increasing strategic to achieve fluent reading. The area of word recognition also encompasses strands of skills which

need to become increasingly automatic. The intertwining of all the strands from both sectors is necessary in order to create a skilled reading. Scarborough defines skilled reading as a “fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension” (Moats & Tulman, 2019, p. 35)

Figure 2

Scarborough's Reading Rope



Note. Reprinted from *LETRS* (Vol. 1., p 35) by L. Moats & C. Tolman, 2019, Lexia. Copyright 2019 by Louisa C. Moats & Carol A. Tolman.

As an experienced educator, I know the importance of beginning readers not falling behind grade level expectations. The expectations or state standards that are expected to be taught and mastered in a first through third grade classroom are much more rigorous today than many years ago. Table 3 outlines the Reading Benchmarks in foundational skills for first through third grade from the Minnesota Department of Education. The skills listed in Table 3 are considered fluency standards and benchmarks and would be assessed for mastery by the classroom teacher. These skills are essential for a strong fluent reader in order to become a skilled reader who can interpret, understand, and extract meaning from texts.

These standards incorporate a vertical alignment between grade levels to ensure students are building upon previous grade level skills in order to develop skilled and fluent readers by the end of third grade.

Table 3

Minnesota Department of Education Reading Standards

Minnesota State Reading Standards-First Grade

Fluency

1.3.0.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

- a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding to promote oral and silent reading fluency.
- b. Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- c. Use context and other cues (e.g., phonics, word recognition skills, prior knowledge) to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Minnesota State Reading Standards-Second Grade

Fluency

2.3.0.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

- a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding to promote oral and silent reading fluency.

- b. Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- c. Use context and other cues (e.g., phonics, word recognition skills, prior knowledge) to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Minnesota State Reading Standards-Third Grade

Fluency

3.3.0.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

- a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
- b. Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Note. Minnesota State Reading Standards. Adapted/Reprinted from Minnesota Department of Education, 2010.

This starred paper will explore the findings of effective practices in fluency instruction for classroom use and in small groups with those students struggling with fluency based on fluency assessments. It will also explore implementation strategies and techniques for educators that can be taught in classroom settings, small group or individual intervention applications.

Research Questions

Two research questions guide the development of this starred paper:

1. What are the best instructional practices to improve reading fluency of a struggling reader?
2. How can educators implement these practices into a classroom or small group setting?

Focus of Paper

The research studies reviewed in Chapter II were published in the United States between 1990 and 2023. Study participants included students in kindergarten through sixth grade who are struggling readers. Academic Search Premier and EBSCO were used as the primary database to find relevant journal articles. In addition, PsychINFO were used to search articles.

I critically reviewed research papers, located under the following keywords: *reading fluency, repeated reading, accuracy, rate, expression*. Chapter I includes the background on the study of fluency, previous research, theoretical factors, and definitions germane to this topic. Chapter II reviews current research literature to examine the effectiveness of fluency instruction of struggling readers. Chapter III discusses the conclusions, recommendations, and implications of research reviewed in chapter II.

Importance of the Topic

“The inability to read well is associated with lifelong consequences such as lower academic achievement, dropping out of school, diminished earning potential, higher risk of incarceration, and less access to resources that can help alleviate physical and mental health” (Moats & Tolman, p. 3).

After third grade, the focus of reading instruction almost entirely changes from phonics instruction and reading fluency to an intense focus on comprehension. Therefore, thoroughly developing the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition and reading fluency during the primary grades is extremely important.

For some students, fluency doesn't come easily making it difficult to comprehend and enjoy text. In many of these cases students need an intensive, explicit and structured reading

intervention with exposure to connected text and repeated readings or assisted reading in order to perform at grade level expectations. “By fourth grade, all but a small percentage of U.S. schoolchildren can recognize the words in a fourth-grade text with reasonable accuracy” (Hiebert & Fisher, 2005, p. 443).

According to Kuhn, Rasiniski, and Zimmerman (2014) for a majority of students reading fluency is the result of continued practice, however even despite having a firm reading instruction base some students will still struggle in their fluency development. These struggling readers will need an intensive and deliberate fluency instruction approach. “Although research-based approaches to intensive reading intervention exist, many teachers are not prepared to implement them” (McMaster, et al., 2020, p. 329).

What are those explicit practices that guide students to become fluent readers? How can educators implement reading instruction focused on fluency in the classroom? What does small group instruction look like for readers struggling with fluency? Let’s take a look at the research and answer those questions as we delve into reading fluency in the primary grades.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to examine the effectiveness of fluency instruction and practices on struggling readers. In Chapter I, the background information related to fluency instruction, included an overview of how children learn to read. Best practices in the Science of Reading were presented as well as the importance of fluency on reading development. This chapter is organized into two major sections: Effective Methods of Fluency Instruction and Alternative texts, which are used to answer the two research questions in the study.

Effective Methods of Fluency Instruction

Most of the research I found on fluency came back to the significance of assisted and repeated readings for those students struggling with reading fluency. According to Timothy Rasinski (whom many consider the guru of reading fluency), he says, “In my own instructional efforts to develop automaticity and prosodic reading, I use assisted readings and repeated readings, two methods that research has shown to improve reading fluency” (Rasinski, 2004, p. 48).

In the study done by Rasinski, 20 students were randomly selected from third grade classrooms and paired up with another reader of equal reading ability (1990). Of the students studied, the range of ability varied; some were high-ability readers, average, or low. The goal was to gather data on two methods of fluency instruction. One was repeated reading and the other was repeated listening-while-reading. The method of repeated listening-while-reading is similar to repeated reading in many aspects, but differs in that the students reads a text while also listening to the text being read concurrently by a fluent reader.

The passages chosen were at a fourth grade level, and contained 100 words. The procedure include two cycles each lasting four days. The first day each student orally read a passage while their oral reading fluency (ORF) was calculated (correct words per minute). Total number of words read-multiplied by 60-divided by number of seconds to read passage. The second and third days one student reread the text, while the other listened to a fluent reading of the text. The fourth day both students read the text and their ORF was calculated.

The results indicated that both were quite effective in improving reading fluency, and both methods are practical methods for implementation in a classroom or small group setting.

Another study by O'Connor, White & Swanson (2017) focused on examining repeated reading and continuous reading to see if one is more beneficial than the other with struggling readers. The study ultimately found that both groups of studies, those receiving a RR intervention, and those receiving a continuous reading intervention made gains with their oral reading fluency. A significant factor for both groups was the method of modeling and hearing fluent reading.

Young, Lagrone & McCauley (2020) used a "read like me" approach using read aloud to increase fluency with struggling readers. A second grade student (8 years old) was the participant in this study. The student was diagnosed with ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and dyslexia. The student displayed reading skills that were two years below grade level. The interventionist providing services had training and experience with reading interventions with struggling readers. The interventionist provided research-based methods, including read alouds, assisted reading, and repeated reading in hopes to improve the student's reading ability in word recognition automaticity (WCPM) expression, rate, decoding, word knowledge and

comprehension. The intervention will be provided three times per week for 30 minutes for a total of 12 weeks.

The study (Young et al., 2020), showed that the student made growth in all targeted areas of reading development. The student reacted well to the intervention along side regular instruction from the classroom teacher. The intervention included the student listening to the entirety of a story with accuracy and expression, then was assisted with the reading of the story by practicing alongside a proficient reader, then practicing on their own and receiving feedback, and finally re-reading on their own. The study also showed that the student was able to decode words more accurately, increase reading prosody, and increase their reading comprehension.

A journal article published by Education Science by Kuhn (2020) discusses four scientifically based approaches to fluency instruction. The first, Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) can be used in a classroom setting with a core reading program, literature anthologies, or with trade books. According to the report, the participants in the initial study. (second graders) had an average growth of 1.8 years in the first year of implementation.

FORI (Kuhn, 2020) is a five day lesson plan with easy implementation. Educators should plan on 20-30 minutes and pay attention to the fidelity of the lesson to ensure its effectiveness. Day 1-Text is introduced. The educators primary goal is to introduce the text that the students will be reading for the week by incorporating several different teaching strategies: a pre-reading activity that connects to the text, making predictions, highlighting critical vocabulary, and building background knowledge. The final step, is the teacher fluently reading the text as the students follow along using their own copies.

Day 2-Echo Reading. This technique involves the teacher reading a selection of text and having the students read it back. The teacher begins by reading a sentence or two and gradually adding longer sections of text as they develop their reading abilities. Text comprehension should be a focus on day 2.

Day 3-Choral Reading. The third day is a simultaneous or choral reading of the text. The focus should be on reading fluently, which includes accuracy, rate, and voice of the reader.

Day 4-Partner Reading. Students work with a partner to read for the final time. Partners should be chosen across ability levels, but with minimal discrepancy. One way to create these pairings is to rank your readers from highest achieving reader to the most struggling. The list will then be divided in half, pairing the first student on the second list with the first student on the first list, and so on. This makes certain that high and low readers are paired with average readers, keeping the ability levels somewhat equal for each partnership.

Day 5-Extension Activities. The fifth day is designed for exploring a deeper understanding of the text with extension activities. For example, these activities might include: student-led discussions, writing responses, constructing charts, etc.

The second approach, Wide Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (Wide FORI) differs from FORI only in terms of the number of texts that are read throughout the week (three instead of just one).

Both of these approaches involve reading connected text repeatedly and for an equal amount of time, allowing students to encounter new vocabulary, phrasing, and concepts, which in turn develops an increased level of fluency and comprehension.

The last two approaches known as Fluency-Oriented Oral Reading (FOOR) and Wide Fluency-Oriented Oral reading (Wide FOOR) are research based approaches that combine the concepts discussed above. The approaches are intended for small groups of students who need additional support. Both of these approaches would be appropriate for reading intervention or Tier II support. This research intervention was used with small groups of second graders, and they met three times a week for 20 minutes. All of the students involved were identified as struggling readers.

The FOOR group choral read just one text three times a week. The Wide FOOR group choral read three different texts three times a week. The third group listened to a fluent reading of the same three texts as the Wide FOOR group, and the fourth group did not receive small group instruction.

The results of the small group fluency instruction research (Kuhn, 2020) of second grade students indicated the importance of students reading connected text for 15-20 minutes per day in addition to the reading instruction from the classroom teacher. The text needs to be challenging yet not frustrating. Students should be reading text at an 85%-90% accuracy. The last takeaway is to evaluate students often to ensure they are receiving the most accurate instruction.

An article published in the International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, by Kuhn, Rasinski, & Zimmerman examined three research based approaches that support students who are struggling to read by developing automatic word recognition, accuracy, and voice, all while still attending to a text's meaning for comprehension (2014). This study was conducted by randomly choosing 18 students from five primary classrooms.

The approaches in this research provides readers with the following experiences in order to gain the biggest growth; the struggling readers are given many chances to read connected text. Modeling and feedback that focuses on suitable word recognition, phrasing and expression are highlighted, as well as scaffolding that allows differentiation. Lastly, the exposure to text will be repeated readings.

The researchers, (Kuhn, et al., 2014) also discussed the importance of choosing appropriate text, which should be challenging to students since the teacher will be right there to provide support and scaffolding. The text selected should generally be one grade level above their current grade.

The first approach is one we've discussed prior in this paper; Fluency Oriented Reading instruction (FORI). FORI is an intensive repeated reading of the same text over multiple days. The text is introduced, and pre-teaching of background knowledge, vocabulary, webbing, and a fluent reading of the text by the teacher. Day 2-5 consists of echo reading, choral reading, partner reading, and extension activities.

“In a study of 18 children, randomly selected from five classrooms, engaged in a FORI of one passage over the course of one week it was found that, on average, the students went from a reading rate of approximately 78 words correct per minute (wcpm) to nearly 120 wcpm. Using Hasbrouck and Tindal's (2006) fluency norms, these students went from the 25th to the 75th percentile in terms of their reading fluency improvement” (Kuhn et al., 2014. p. 75).

The next approach is one previously discussed; Wide Reading Fluency Oriented Reading instruction (Wide FORI). The same principles are incorporated, but instead of only one particular text all week, multiple texts are used.

Both approaches emphasize sending text home with students for re-reading and additional practice. These approaches are directly connected to the research surrounding best practices and methods in fluency instruction, as well as effective practices for implementation in a classroom or small group setting.

According to (Kuhn, et al., 2014) the article, both approaches are successful in increasing fluency and ultimately increasing a student's understanding of the text. Overwhelmingly, it states that evidence is quite clear that supported and guided repeated reading of connected text that incorporates new concepts and vocabulary is beneficial for reading development including increasing fluency with all readers, but especially those struggling readers.

The Fluency Development Lesson (FDL) is another approach (Kuhn, et al., 2014) discussed that also increases a student's fluency, and uses the same methods found in FORI and Wide FORI, but instead of spanning the approaches over a week's time, it's incorporated intensely in one day. This approach would be best incorporated in a reading intervention setting with students who are below grade level. The approach is meant to be accelerated in or to get the student "caught up" to their peers.

According to the researchers (Kuhn, et al., 2014), educators are seeing positive results with the implementation of the FDL approach. They are seeing students who seem to have previously plateaued in their reading development make generous growth. The FDL is an instructional approach that can be used in small group, individual or classroom settings and can be modified to meet the needs of students.

Alber-Morgan (2006) examined instructional practices to intensify the effectiveness of repeated reading and to give recommendations to educators for producing the most effective reading experience.

Below is the list of ten research based recommendations by (Alber-Morgan, 2006, p. 3).

1. *Use repeated readings daily*: The text should be repeated and practice daily or no less than three times per week.
2. *Use repeated readings as a supplement*: A structured reading program is foundational and needs to be the foundation for reading development. Repeated readings should be supplemental to a program already in place.
3. *Provide materials at the appropriate reading level*: A reading assessment should be used to find a students independent and instructional reading level. Repeated reading text should be provided at a students instructional level.
4. *Use systematic error correction*: The teacher should provide corrective feedback for a reading error and active responding.
5. *Provide performance feedback*: Allowing students to document their progress has been known to help increase performance.
6. *Reinforce student performance*: Positive feedback is crucial in reading growth and development.
7. *Monitor progress*: Progress monitor each students growth to determine if the intervention is successful.
8. *Assess reading comprehension*: Teachers should monitor and assess reading comprehension formally or informally to ensure understanding of the text.

9. *Include a brief comprehension strategy*: Incorporate comprehension strategies into practices to increase understanding of the text.

10. *Provide individual instruction*: Provide one-on-one instruction whenever possible. It's recommended to involve volunteers if needed to make this manageable.

Alternative Texts

Alternative texts are those reading selections that are not solely a fiction or nonfiction selection, but may include poetry, reader's theatre, and books with two voices.

Poetry

Poetry is a wonderful way to incorporate the method of RR and assisted reading in a short text with fun and many times rhyming words. In the study by Wilfong (2008), poetry was combined with RR, listening while reading, assisted reading, and modeling in the hopes to improve the fluency skills of six dis fluent readers based on curriculum-based measurement (CBM) of the third grade.

Intervention volunteers attended a 2-hour training session, and expected to work with a student one-on-one once a week for 5-10 minutes. The volunteer would introduce the selected poem based on the student's reading level, then would model reading the poem fluently. The next step was reading the poem simultaneously (listen-while-reading, or assisted reading), and finally the student would read the poem aloud independently. The session would end with discussion of the poem and any unknown or difficult words. The child would be encouraged to practice reading the poem aloud. The next session would begin with rereading the poem from last week to demonstrate mastery, and the cycle would repeat.

What began as a small study turned into a large study of third grade students: 36 dis-fluent readers (according to their CBM scores, which is words correct per minute, percentage of word recognition, and comprehension), and 50 fluent readers. The study once again began the process of “The Poetry Academy” with the 36 dis-fluent readers, while the 50 fluent readers became the control group.

Students in the Poetry Academy made greater gains than those in the control group based again on their CBM scores. The students in the Poetry group also made gains observed by their teachers, parents, and themselves. This study is a prime example of fluency instruction that supports and improves reading fluency in struggling readers, as well as implementation practices that can be easily tailored to a classroom or small group setting.

According to Rasinski, Rupley, & Nicholas (2008), using rhyming poetry to teach phonics and fluency is a key approach to teaching reading fluency. The approach is a three step process, first identifying a targeted word family, such as -ay, and collectively teacher and students sharing other words ending or rhyming in the same phonetic pattern (may, say, way, play). The next step is incorporating those words into a rhyming text or poem. With guided support the teacher and students read the poem in a variety of ways. For example, the teacher may read the text first to introduce the poem and for students to hear a fluent reading of the poem, then reread the poem several times in a various ways (e.g., whole-group choral reading, echo reading, partner reading, solo oral reading, and silent reading). The third and final step is activities for word mastery. Students will be asked to selecting interesting words from the text that the teacher can decide how best to reinforce mastery. For example, students to sort words by syllables, beginning sounds, by rhyme, etc.

“Phonics and fluency can blend together authentically and delightfully in the reading of rhyming poetry to help students develop mastery of each-two key goals of elementary reading program” (Rasinski, et al., 2008, p. 259).

Readers theater

“One strategy for improving fluency is Readers Theater, which incorporates repeated reading in an engaging manner” (Clementi, 2010, p.85). Readers Theater is a wonderful way to incorporate reading practice in a fun and often motivational way for all readers, especially struggling readers. Each student has a script, which can be tailored to various reading levels, and specific parts or lines to read, which needs to be practiced repeatedly. Students don’t need props or costumes, but rather oral expressions, prosody, and gestures are used to express their role (Clementi 2010).

Ideally students will practice their script over and over again, which includes silent reading, paired reading, small/large group reading. A significant part of Readers Theater is rereading in order to develop a students oral reading fluency. When a student continues to practice, they begin to increase their rate and accuracy, and eventually expression or tone. ‘A reading performance provides the authentic reason for repeated readings’ (Rasinski, 2012, p. 520).

Incorporating movement into fluency instruction is a successful method of motivation for struggling readers (Peebles, 2007). Readers Theater is one successful method as mentioned above, along with what Peebles calls “Rhythm Walks”. Rhythm walks specifically target natural phrasing and breaks of texts through a rhythm walk (Peebles, 2007). The rhythm walk is designed with the students and teacher as they design the walk based on the text, looking for

breaks or phrasing. The phrasing is then written out as a “chunk” of text on large card stock and placed on the floor to make a path. Students follow the path while fluently reading the text.

Books with Two Voices

“Trade books written as dialogue between two characters motivate beginning readers to engage in numerous, voluntary repeated reading to improve fluency”,
(Hye Son & Maggie Chase, 2018, p. 233).

The authors Hye Son & Chase (2018) engaged themselves in a 2nd grade classroom at the beginning of a school year to introduce strategies that would motivate students to develop fluency. They would be guests in the classroom one time per week over a four-week period.

The text that was selected had two main characters that create dialogue with each other throughout the story. It has font support, meaning sometimes large bold print, which indicates yelling, or excitement. The elements that made up the process are paired reading, modeling, comprehending the story, practicing (guided and independent), application to other books.

This article stressed the importance of repeated reading for smooth fluency, but not for speed. Many classrooms have been pushed to track students’ number of correct words, and it seems to be the only indicator for success. The way of thinking in this study pushes students to read for enjoyment and indicate their pace on a self-assessment rubric; not too fast, not too slow. The students focused on reading books they enjoy as well as focusing on comprehension and prosody.

Summary

For the my first research question looking at the best instructional practices to improve fluency, I found that repeated reading of age appropriate texts using echo reading, choral reading and parter reading was most effective.

My second research question determined that implementation in the classroom or a small group setting should be 20-30 minutes a day with familiar or connected text using a variety of texts. The texts chosen could be trade books, poetry, reader's theatre, core curriculum or basil. The findings of the most effective fluency instruction studies published between 1990 and 2023 result in positive outcomes of improved fluency, which in turn increases a student's ability to understand or comprehend text. In this study, ten studies were located to evaluate the effectiveness of reading based fluency practices. In chapter III, conclusions and summaries are discussed.

Chapter III

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this research paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of reading fluency practices and instruction in the primary grades (1st-3rd) with struggling readers. Chapter I provides background information on the topic, and Chapter II presents a review of the research literature. In Chapter III, I discuss findings, recommendations, and implications from research findings.

Conclusions

I reviewed ten studies that examined the best practices in fluency instruction and practices for primary students who are identified as struggling readers. The result of implementing these best practices in fluency instruction appeared to be generally positive outcomes. Most participants who received the fluency based interventions increased their fluency rates, which generally resulted in increased comprehension of text.

All studies demonstrated that fluency instruction that incorporated elements of repeated reading and assisted reading were most effective in improving the reading fluency of struggling readers in grades one through three. Guerin & Murphy (2015) demonstrated the effects of repeated reading in successfully increasing a student's individual growth, which included accuracy, rate, and prosody in a one minute timed assessment. The intervention also showed significant improvements in students comprehension ability on oral and silent readings, along with increased decoding skills and strategies while reading.

More research continues to support that fluency instruction helps struggling readers and should be implemented with an approach that incorporates repeated reading and assisted reading

as a model of instruction. The effective approaches highlighted included scientifically based approaches that could be used in a classroom or small group setting. These approaches incorporated connected text for 15-20 minutes per day in addition to the core reading instruction, students had ample opportunities to listen to fluent reading or modeling of the text, rereading of one or multiple texts throughout the week, focus on vocabulary and build comprehension strategies.

In one study mentioned in the research article by Kuhn et al., (2014), 18 children from different classrooms were randomly selected to engage in the FORI approach for one week, and the results found on average that students made significant increases on their reading fluency from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile.

Alber-Morgan (2006) pointed out that educators should be aware of several different ways to enhance the effectiveness of repeated readings. The research based recommendations are as follows: Use repeated readings daily, use repeated readings as a supplement, provide materials at the appropriate reading level, use systematic error correction, provide performance feedback, reinforce student performance, monitor progress, assess reading comprehension, include a brief comprehension strategy, and provide individual instruction. “Research has demonstrated the importance of fluency in the development of reading proficiency, and a variety of effective methods for the assessment and instruction of it have been developed” (Hudson, et al., 2005, p. 702).

The effectiveness of alternative texts offered students an engaging opportunity to apply the methods of repeated reading and assisted reading in a new and enjoyable way. Wilfong (2008) discussed the creative way the Poetry Academy came to life in a school environment with

third grade students who were identified as dis fluent readers. The Poetry Academy used methods of RR and assisted reading along with engaging and rhyming text to improve the fluency scores of those students participating.

The same holds true for alternative text like reader's theatre and books with two voices. "Trade books written as dialogue between two characters motivate beginning readers to engage in numerous, voluntary repeated reading to improve fluency", (Hye Son & Chase, 2018, p. 233).

Recommendations

In the reviewed studies, various interventionists delivered a repeated reading or assisted reading approach, such as interventionists, classroom teachers, and researchers. These approaches were research based and proven effective in a classroom or small group setting. I would recommend classroom teachers to implement these approaches of RR and assisted reading as a supplementary method of fluency focus, and reading practice. Classroom teachers should continue to use their core curriculum as a foundation to instruction.

The FORI and Wide FORI approaches have been proven effective in increasing students oral reading fluency scores. The approaches should be implemented with a connected text or multiple texts, which includes pre-teaching of the topic, developing background knowledge related to the text, building on new vocabulary, focusing on word accuracy, rate, and prosody, and incorporating comprehension strategies along the way.

Whenever possible, an educator should look to incorporate alternative text options to the approaches like poetry, readers theatre, or books with two voices as a way of encouraging student engagement, motivation, and enjoyment in reading.

In a small group opportunity or for those students struggling with fluency, I would recommend a Fluency Development Lesson or FDL approach. This is an intense method similar to FORI or Wide FORI that incorporates a weeks worth of methods and implementations into one day or session.

Lastly, I would recommend all educators implementing these strategies or methods to examine the effectiveness of their approaches by referencing Alber-Morgan's (2006) list of ten effective strategies to enhance repeated readings.

Implication

As a general education teacher, I witness first hand many students with poor reading fluency are struggling in school. Due to the lack of sufficient reading fluency, students have difficulties connecting to the text, developing critical thinking questions, understanding meaning, and lack an overall enjoyment of reading . These students tend to have a negative perspective towards school. Some students may become anxious when it comes to school work or reading in general, they may have a lack of motivation, and engagement when it comes to school in general. In severe cases, some students may begin to act out negatively at school. This can quickly spiral into a lifelong negative impact resulting in “lower academic achievement, dropping out of school, diminished earning potential, higher risk of incarceration, and less access to resources that can help alleviate physical and mental health” (Moats & Tolman, p. 13).

What are the best instructional practices to improve reading fluency of a struggling reader? That can simply be answered by using research based proven practices like repeated reading and assisted reading with connected text or alternative text to improve reading fluency,

which in turn keeps students motivated to read. “Reading fluency is a skill that teachers can help struggling readers develop in order for them to become better readers” (Zavala & Cuevas, 2019, p. 64).

How can educators implement these practices into a classroom or small group setting? Educators need to choose a research-based proven method or approach that is applicable in their classroom setting. It could be the FORI method which uses repeated reading of a singular text to improve fluency skills, or Wide FORI which again uses repeated reading but with multiple connected texts.

Reading struggles may have significant impacts on students present day as well as lasting implications, which could result in negative outcomes. As educators, interventionists, administrators, and policy-makers it is our responsibility to identify struggling readers early, implement best practices in fluency instruction, and support readers throughout their educational journey.

Summary

Fluency practices are a method of implementing instruction to increase overall reading abilities including the specific area of reading fluency in dis fluent readers. However, the practices of fluency instruction need to be research based practices proven to increase the fluency of readers. Research based practices are best implemented using repeated reading practices and assisted reading practices. These practices should be used with connected text, include comprehension techniques and strategies, and vocabulary instruction. The method of instruction should be a five day cycle using one particular text or implementing a Wide approach and

incorporating multiple connected texts. The teacher should progress monitor student achievement for effectiveness and allow students to graph or track assessment scores. Lastly, this approach can be done in a classroom setting, small group, or one-on-one basis.

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