

Activities to Boost Fluency

The Technology Connection: Low Tech and High Tech

Over the course of the school year, primary and intermediate students alike may enjoy using different types of technology to build fluency. Teachers can tape children's oral reading at several points in the school year to serve as a formative assessment and demonstrate fluency growth.

- An inexpensive tape recorder complete with microphone can be a great motivator for some readers. Classroom teachers can invite children to practice a short text or poem several times and then audiotape their readings. Readers can provide their names, the text title and author, and the date of each recording in the taped introduction so that they can track their progress. Recording, listening, and reflecting on their reading can help students to evaluate their own fluency. Paraprofessionals and/or classroom volunteers could easily monitor this type of fluency practice.
- iPads with microphones allow students to record their oral reading as well. The school computer teacher or technology department is a good resource for investigating different apps and podcasting opportunities for student fluency practice.
- If students do not have access to iPads, they can use other types of technology to practice oral reading. Using PowerPoint, teachers can show students how to create presentations with voice over narrations. Children can save their presentations to a jump drive to be shared with parents at a school Literacy Night; or teachers can email them to parents at the end of the school year.
- The teacher or a classroom volunteer can film students as they read aloud to create video student portfolios. (Note: Most schools require that parents sign a permission form to have their students videotaped).

Mindful Markers

For readers who need a little extra help with fluency, teachers can show them how to mark a good fit text with reminders for reading aloud. Teachers can start small by introducing the reader to one marking notation at a time. Some possible marking reminders might include:

- grouping words together in a box for phrasing
- marking periods with red to signal full stops
- highlighting commas in yellow to indicate pauses
- tracing over words that should be emphasized to imitate boldface
- inserting upward or downward arrows to indicate when the reader's voice rises or falls
- inserting hyphens between letters or words that the reader should stretch out for emphasis, and more.

Star Quality!

There's not a child or adult who doesn't love Reader's Theater, and with good reason. Reader's Theater offers a fun way to practice fluency in a group setting. Adding a simple chorus for readers who are shy or dysfluent can boost their self-esteem and confidence. To help struggling students who need high interest, low readability materials, the teacher can modify existing Reader's Theater scripts.

Another option is for the teacher to use popular classroom read-alouds as the basis for new, easy reading scripts. In small writing groups, older students might enjoy creating scripts from literary and informational texts that the class has read. Selecting an informational text as the foundation for a Reader's Theater script is a wise way to reinforce background knowledge and include academic vocabulary.

Read-aloud Rubric

Creating a read-aloud rubric and teaching students to use it can increase their awareness of their oral reading. They can self-assess their fluency by listening to a recording of their reading and gauging their performance against the rubric. Below is a sample rubric that can be customized to meet students' needs.

| Read-aloud Rubric | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Student Name: | | Name of Text: | | Date: |
| Characteristic | How I read | All of the time | Most of the time | Never when I read |
| Good Fit | I read a good fit text that I understand. | | | |
| Rate | I read at the right rate (not too fast and not too slow). | | | |
| Feeling | I used my voice to show the characters' feelings. | | | |
| Punctuation Cues | I made my voice go up at the end of a question. | | | |
| | I made my voice go down at the end of a sentence. | | | |
| | I made my voice sound excited when I read a sentence that ended with an exclamation mark. | | | |
| One Thing I Can Do to Improve Next Time: | | | | |

Speakers' Showcase

Many schools feature morning announcements, which are a perfect opportunity for students' fluency practice. Preselected guest readers can share the Pledge of Allegiance, an agenda of upcoming events, the Word of the Day, or even a seasonal poem, brief story, joke, or riddle. Schools might even consider professional or student rendered read-alouds delivered over the public address system on inclement weather days with indoor recess/lunch.

Practice Partners

Classmates who share the CAFE goal of fluency may benefit from a practice partnership. They can be trained to listen for a partner's volume, reading rate, phrasing, and use of punctuation. Of course, the teacher should stress that a good partner's job is to encourage the other student and help him to do his very best. These important responsibilities can be shared in a minilesson.

The classroom teacher can also design a Read-aloud Rubric for Practice Partners similar to the one described above. Students can listen for ways that their partners use punctuation cues, rate, and expression to good effect as they follow the rubric.

The teacher can assist the partners in marking their good fit texts with reading aloud reminders (see above). These markings can help them to work together as they practice reading aloud.

Books on Tape

Books on tape offer 24/7 opportunities to listen to a fluent reader. Hearing the same book over and over provides students with a valuable example of fluent reading. Teachers can stock classroom listening centers with a variety of high quality read-aloud kits from the bookroom or library. Classroom parents or volunteers might also be willing to narrate and create some books on tape. In addition, there are many online sources that provide children with opportunities to listen to reading, thereby increasing their exposure to models of fluency.

Following Famous Speakers

Students can learn a lot about fluent reading by observing and listening to famous or professional speakers. In a brief minilesson, a teacher can generate discussion of the components of effective speaking and capture students' thinking on an anchor chart. Next, she can share a brief video clip of a famous speech or professional newscast with the group and add students' new noticings to the chart. Students can then practice reading their own good fit texts and incorporate what they have learned from listening to the speaker. Finally, students can share their fluent renditions with partners.

Acrostic Anchor Chart

Acrostics are always fun and provide a challenge, too. In a mini-lesson, teachers can encourage students to think about the meaning of the word *fluent*. Along with their students, they can generate ideas for a chart like the one below with their students.

Younger learners can be provided with the words in column two and invited to explain how the words apply to "voracious reading" for fluency. For example, the teacher can ask, "*How can you show how characters **feel** when you read out loud? Why is it important to **listen** to other good readers? Why do you have to **understand** the text that you are reading out loud? How can you use your voice to show that you **enjoy** what you are reading? Why do you **need** time to practice reading out loud? and What will happen when you **try** to practice your reading as much as you can?"*

Older students can brainstorm words to describe each letter of the word "F-L-U-E-N-T" and provide their own reminders of how to be fluent.

| Letter | Word | Fluency Reminders |
|----------|-------------------|--|
| F | Feel | Show readers how the characters <u>FEEL</u> when you read their words. |
| L | Listen | <u>LISTEN</u> to good readers and learn from them. |
| U | Understand | Pick good fit books that you <u>UNDERSTAND</u> to read aloud. |
| E | Enjoy | Use your voice to show that you <u>ENJOY</u> what you are reading out loud. |
| N | Need | Remember that all good readers <u>NEED</u> time to practice reading out loud. |
| T | Try | Each time you <u>TRY</u> , you will sound more fluent! |

These activities can help students to rehearse, rewind, and reflect and become more fluent in the process!