



Triple R Teaching

Hello, Anna Geiger here from The Measured Mom, and today we're going to look at six ways to build fluency.

This is a big one because, as we know, fluency is the bridge from decoding to comprehension. If students can sound out words, but they can't read them automatically, or with fluency, in terms of expression and phrasing, then comprehension is not going to occur. So what can we do to improve students' reading fluency?

Let's start with something simple, echo reading and choral reading. We're going to count these as a pair. We want to consider using echo and choral reading to replace the traditional round robin reading, where students go around the room taking turns reading aloud. Round robin reading really does not give students enough practice to develop their fluency, but echo and choral reading are research-based instructional strategies that help students transition to fluent reading.

You don't want to use echo reading with easy texts because students don't need the support with easy texts. You want to save it for challenging material, and an important thing to remember with echo reading is that you want what you're reading to be long enough that students actually have to read it as they echo, not just recite what they heard. It's good practice to gradually increase the amount of text that students must echo so they're not relying on their memory. Your goal is for them to echo your reading of several paragraphs or even a page. Remember with this activity, and any fluency activity, the goal is always reading comprehension so make sure you explain vocabulary or other confusing sections of the text.

Choral reading is another type of assisted reading activity, but it's a little harder than echo reading because you and the students are reading it simultaneously. It provides less support, but it will give them practice developing automaticity and expression. Consider starting with echo reading and then following up with choral reading.

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Our second strategy for fluency building is partner reading. That is, of course, when students read in pairs to each other. In partner reading one student is the reader and the other is the listener or supporter. Students should alternate reading paragraphs or pages, and if they're reading a play, they should alternate roles. The reader's job is to read clearly and with expression, and the listener's job is to follow along, help with misread words, and offer encouragement.

You want to make sure before having your students do partner reading that you do a LOT of practice of appropriate behaviors so this doesn't become a difficult time for you. These may include using quiet voices while you read, talking only to your partner, talking only about your reading, sitting side by side using EEKK (elbow to elbow, knee to knee), holding the text so both of you can see it, waiting a few seconds before jumping into help, using kind words when correcting mispronunciations, and doing your best.

Partner reading is a great center idea when you're teaching small groups, but when possible you could have the whole class doing buddy reading so you can circulate and give support. As you move around the room, you can help partners monitor their volume, stay on task, resolve disputes, and support each other. It's probably actually a really good idea to do whole class partner reading before you introduce it at a center.

As for how you should form partnerships, people have different ideas about this. One recommended way is to rank your readers from highest to lowest, list them in that order, and split the list in half and then match the first person on each list with the first person on the other and so on. Of course, this would be a private list, you would not share it with your students. So in a class of twenty four children, the top reader would be matched with the reader who was ranked thirteen.

Now, personally, I think if you can get it to work, it's nice to match students who are similar in reading ability, unless they're both really, really low in which case they'd have a hard time supporting each other. But I think that can be useful, particularly with kids kind of in the middle. But there are certainly different things that you could try and you could certainly have flexible pairings.

Next, we have reader's theater. You're probably familiar with that. That's an authentic way to get students to reread a text and therefore build fluency. The fun thing about reader's theater is that it combines reading and performance. You provide a script for

your students, they practice it multiple times, and then they perform it, whether it's just for their classmates or for maybe parents who come to visit or school staff. Some teachers like to do a whole week of reader's theater. That might be what they do during their fluency building time, and then the next week they might do something different. That could be a good thing to make it something to look forward to and not something they get tired of.

As for where to find scripts, you can find free ones online - not too many, but there are some. You could also take a favorite book and type the lines into parts yourself, creating your own script. I have a set of these in my shop. Just today someone left a comment that she used it with children who were in an after school reading program for third grade and they really enjoyed it. These were kids who probably are struggling readers, and they thought they were really fun.

The next strategy for building fluency is often something that teachers do with the whole class, but from all the things I've read, it's really best for children who need a fluency intervention, and it's not particularly useful with everyone else. What this is is timed, repeated reading. So you have a child read for one minute and try to beat their rate and accuracy with successive one minute readings of the same text. It's less authentic than other repeated reading activities, but it is effective for children who need this extra help.

In their book, the Teaching Reading Sourcebook, which I highly recommend, Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn tell us that research has shown that timed repeated reading is best used as "an intervention strategy most appropriate for slow, but accurate readers who need intense practice to increase their automaticity in reading connected text". So, in other words, avoid doing this with your whole class all the time, but instead, save it for struggling readers who are accurate, but disfluent.

Again, you're going to have a passage, probably 100-250 words, and you're going to tell the student they're going to read the same passage over and over until they read it fluently at a certain rate. Let them know you're going to use a chart to graph their performance so they can see how they improve. You'll preview the passage together, set a timer for one minute, listen to them read, and keep track of their errors.

Now, this is important. After the first reading, you need to give positive feedback and then corrective feedback. You don't just have them read and then set the timer and read again. You want to talk about what they did well, and then look at those words they got wrong or that tripped them up, and help them with those words so that next time they have a better chance of reading them correctly. You might need to model expressive reading, and then you're going to calculate their oral reading fluency score plotted on a graph and set a goal. For instance, by Friday, we want to read this passage with this number of words correct per minute.

Let's move on to a strategy that you can use with the whole class. This is called FORI, and I cannot remember what those letters stand for! I'm assuming F stands for fluency. But FORI is something that you can do with students probably toward the end of first grade, second grade, and on.

It's a whole group approach for building fluency that was originally developed for a district that had mandated that all the kids had to be taught exclusively with grade level texts, which is a little scary for a teacher who knows their kids are at all different levels. So they had to use a lot of scaffolding, which is temporary support in their lessons, and their two year experiment with FORI was successful and their students reading levels went up.

You can use FORI with any reading program. There's good research evidence of effectiveness with early elementary kids, and it's been successfully used with English language learners. This is something I learned about from the CORE "Teaching Reading Sourcebook," which I mentioned just a few minutes ago.

It uses challenging material to expose students to a variety of concepts, vocabulary, and ideas that they would not get access to if they were only reading texts at their instructional level. The benefit of this approach is that it not only builds fluency, but it also builds comprehension and vocabulary by supporting students so they can access texts they could not access on their own.

The first day you introduce the text and read it to the class while they follow along. Then you lead a discussion to make sure the focus is on comprehension. At home, they do their own reading for twenty or thirty minutes.

The next day you echo read. You read a section, then they read a section, and remember with echo reading, it's not recitation, it's making the section long enough that they actually have to read it, not recite. Again, the teacher continues to include comprehension in the discussion. That night, students read the text to a family member, so it's not their choice anymore, it's this one.

On Wednesday, the third day, the teacher and the students choral read the selection. So echo reading was a little easier, and choral reading is harder because they don't have the teacher modeling first. Students who need extra practice read the same text at home, but others may choose their own text.

On Thursday, they do partner reading of the same passage, and, according to this model, they get to choose their partner, and they typically alternate pages. That night, students who need extra practice read the same text, but others may read a book of their choice.

On Friday, all the kids do extension activities that lead to greater comprehension of the text. That could include a discussion, some kind of written response, filling out a graphic organizer, you get the idea. That night everyone reads on their own, their choice of text.

Your goal is that everybody in the class will be able to read the grade level text independently by the end of the week. That's FORI.

If you head to the show notes after this episode, you can print the transcript of this episode and that way you can have all this written down so you don't forget the steps for each day.

Finally, I would like to talk to you about another whole class fluency builder, and that is a fluency development lesson.

In the 90s, Timothy Rasinski, who's big in fluency, he and his colleagues studied the effectiveness of the fluency development lesson (FDL), and they found that students who participated made significant gains in their reading rate compared to the kids in the control group. The FDL was developed to assist students experiencing difficulties in fluency and in learning to read. Unlike FORI, the fluency development lesson is appropriate for younger readers AND more experienced ones. It's also, I think, something any teacher could incorporate because it's much quicker than FORI because you're using a very short passage.

You choose a text that's just 50-150 words, it could be poems, it could even be predictable text. That's fine. Choose an engaging text that's ideal for performing orally. You're really working on prosody here, expression. You make sure that every child has their own copy of the text, so it's not just you reading a big book, they all need their own copy. You read it a few times to provide a model of fluent reading and students follow along. Then you take about two or three minutes to talk about the meaning of the text.

Have you noticed that consistently here, we want to make sure that we're focusing on MEANING and not just reading words off the page. During that little discussion the teacher could address any challenging concepts or vocabulary. Then the teacher leads the class in several choral readings. You might mix things up by reading in a silly voice different times. Since it's just a short passage, that shouldn't be a problem. Again, students read the text in pairs, then they come back as a group. Volunteers might read it out loud. They take it home to read to a family member, and now this is their text and they can put it in their reading bag for their independent work and practice it.

So you can see how the fluency development lesson is sort of a mini FORI, sort of. It's really, really short, but you do a lot of the same steps, so it's great for older and younger kids. The lessons are fast and it requires very little prep on your part which is awesome.

So, wow, I really hope that all the things I shared with you today have filled your toolbox and given you some exciting things to try when it comes to building fluency with your students.

Let's go ahead and do a quick review. First, we talked about echo and choral reading. So echo reading is when kids echo your reading, but again, it's long enough text that they're not reciting, they're actually reading. Choral is when they're reading together with you.

Then we talked about partner reading, where they read as buddies, in pairs.

We talked about reader's theater, which is similar to partner reading, but it's more of a small group and they're going to perform for a class or for visitors to the classroom.

We talked about timed repeated readings, which are really most appropriate for our students who are reading accurately, but at a slow rate. It's best as an intervention strategy and not something you do with everyone all the time.

FORI, F-O-R-I, is really good if you're trying to get everybody to have plenty of practice reading grade level text.

Finally, the fluency development lesson is good for kids of all ages and you only need a small reading passage, and it's kind of an intense attention on that text for a day.

Head to the show notes to download and print the transcript so you don't have to remember all of these. You can find the show notes at themeasuredmom.com/episode75. We'll talk to you again next week!