Improving Reading Fluency: Using Readers' Theatre and the Fluency Development Workshop

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Improving Reading Fluency:
Using Readers' Theatre and the Fluency Development Workshop

by

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A thesis submitted to the
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Improving Reading Fluency:

Using Readers' Theatre and the Fluency Development Workshop

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Chapter I

Introduction

Reading fluency is needed for all students to be successful readers and to find meaning in words. Until recently, schools tended to overlook the importance of and the need for explicit fluency instruction, while focusing classroom reading lessons on decoding and reading comprehension. As a result, many children are not fluent readers.

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), fluency has been referred to as a “neglected” aspect of reading. Why fluency has been unsuccessful in receiving greater importance in terms of reading instruction has been a topic of discussion within the last five to seven years. There has been a belief by many educators for quite some time that increased amounts of instruction in decoding would inevitably lead to improved reading fluency. Also teachers have had a strong dependence on round-robin reading as one of the principal methods for oral reading instruction (Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000).

Currently, fluency is receiving substantial attention from researchers, due in part to the National Reading Panel Report identifying fluency as one of only five critical components of reading. Among the other four components were: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension (2000). A national concern has emerged as a result of this report.

After reviewing the available research, the National Reading Panel (2000)
concluded that children could become more fluent readers through repeated reading of texts with monitoring or feedback by a teacher or tutor. The panel stated that fluency practice could continue to aid most students in becoming more fluent through the end of fourth grade and through high school for students with severe reading problems (Hiebert, 2003).

Reading fluently has been a quality associated with good readers, while just the opposite is true for poor, struggling readers who lack the ability to read fluently. A lack of reading fluency tends to be a predictor of other reading problems that emerge later, such as problems with reading comprehension. When poor, struggling readers fail to read fluently, they do so because they read in such a slow, labored manner, exhibiting disconnections between decoding the text and actually comprehending what they are reading (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005).

Samuels observed through his research that most students within a classroom keep up with the pace of instruction just fine. Just the opposite, he found, was true for those students with below-average intelligence or reading disabilities. Every day of school for these special education students, as stated by Samuels, was "...another day of frustration and failure, because they were being pushed through the curriculum too fast and failed to master their work" (2006, p.15).

Kuhn (2004) observed that fluent readers are able to recognize words both automatically and accurately, instead of having to intentionally make an effort to decode most of the words they find in a text. Fluent readers, she found, are able to read texts with expression or prosody. Prosody means reading with appropriate
expression. By combining automaticity, accuracy, and expression, oral reading is able to sound like spoken language. It has become evident that fluency plays a major role in that it influences a reader’s ability to create meaning from text, which, as we know, should be the definitive goal of reading instruction.

Fluency plays an important role in some reading models. Interactive models of reading (Stanovich, 2000) give a greater role to prior knowledge (including the knowledge of text features) in word recognition and also hypothesize that comprehension can occur from either "top down" or "bottom up," without necessarily resolving word identification before meaning can be sampled (Fuchs, 2001). Features of syntax, such as chunking, and features of pragmatics, such as prosody, would necessarily be included in a definition of reading fluency since this model allows the use of prior knowledge in constructing meaning at the same stage that word identification is retrieved (Rasinski, Blanchowicz, & Lems, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Students in elementary classrooms across the United States are non-fluent readers for a variety of reasons. Skilled, fluent readers can read words in context three times faster and read words in lists two times faster than struggling, non-fluent readers can. With this distribution of fluency in a classroom, whole class instruction and atypical methods, such as round-robin reading, will not be likely to meet the needs of all children (Jenkins, Fuchs, Van den Broek, Espin, & Deno, 2003). Forty-four percent of American fourth graders cannot read fluently, even when they read grade-level stories aloud under supportive testing conditions. By fourth grade, most
children are fairly accurate, but also very slow readers (Pinnell, Pikulski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough, & Beatty, 1995). I have attempted to design a fluency intervention using Readers’ Theatre scripts and the Fluency Development Workshop (FDW) that will focus on providing students with an authentic reason to engage in repeated readings while providing a model of fluent reading on a daily basis.

**Significance of the problem**

The topic of reading development, more specifically fluency instruction, along with the implications that it has on students’ futures, has always been an important issue to me. I have been a special education teacher for the past seven years and have seen the impact that not being able to read fluently and comprehend text has had on my students, both those identified as having special needs and those at-risk for reading difficulties. Not only do I sympathize with how difficult it is for students to develop skills for decoding, reading fluently, and comprehending text, but I also understand the implications it has for their continuing educational journey, as well as their lives beyond school. I recognize how all teachers struggle with finding appropriate amounts of time in the ever-busy school day to explicitly teach the fluency instruction that benefits all students.

As a result of the significant role fluency instruction has on our students, I facilitated a group of five fourth grade students, both those identified as having special needs and those at-risk for reading difficulties, that focused on using Readers’ Theatre and the Fluency Development Workshop to increase reading fluency. In doing this, I hoped to assist students in improving their oral reading fluency and
comprehension so that they read more fluently and have a more positive attitude toward reading. I wanted to ensure that students who were struggling with reading had the skills to read fluently and comprehend text independently, inside and outside of the classroom setting.

Rationale

This national concern is strongly felt in school districts across the country. Since No Child Left Behind was enacted in 2001, all states that receive federal funding are required to test students in Grades 3 through 8, including students with disabilities, in English language arts and mathematics in order to measure yearly progress. The English Language Arts assessment requires students to read both literary and informational passages and then answer questions that test their understanding of what they read. Significant research in fluency has found a direct link between the ability to decode and to comprehend the text at the same time.

Schools throughout New York State are scrambling for ways to improve students’ reading fluency and comprehension. For example, the Rochester City School District in New York offers workshops for professional development in the area of reading fluency. New in 2006, the Rochester City School District was awarded Reading First grants. The purpose of Reading First is to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade. Reading First is founded on scientifically based reading research which has identified the five essential components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies. A
key belief of the Reading First Program is that explicit and systematic instruction
must be provided in each of the five components to ensure that children learn to
read well.

Improving students’ reading comprehension and fluency has been a
significant part of my life over the past five years, since I primarily began working
with special education students with learning disabilities. According to Gersten
and Baker (2001), successful reading comprehension is correlated with oral reading
fluency and vocabulary knowledge. Students with learning disabilities often fail to
realize that they must pay attention to how well they understand a text as they read
so that they can go back and reread as necessary. I am intrigued by the numerous
instructional resources available that are designed to improve students’ reading
fluency and comprehension. As a learner, I have had the opportunity to experience
firsthand how beneficial being able to read fluently has been. I regularly read large
volumes of material on a daily basis that I need to be able to comprehend in a short
amount of time. I have come to realize how important reading fluently has been,
and remains, in my educational development.

I believe it is possible for reading fluency to aid students in comprehending
any type of material they read and boost their self-esteem and performance in the
classroom. In this study I designed a fluency intervention using Readers’ Theatre
scripts and the Fluency Development Workshop design (FDW) that focused on
providing students with an authentic reason to engage in repeated readings while
providing a model of fluent reading on a daily basis. The following chapter analyzes the current research on reading fluency. In the literature review I discuss several definitions of fluency, argue why reading fluency has been overlooked, and analyze reading fluency theories. I also compare and contrast characteristics of fluent and non-fluent readers, analyze repeated reading theories, and explore the benefits of repeated readings. Furthermore, I look at the benefits of Readers’ Theatre and delve into the components of the Fluency Development Workshop.

**Definitions of key terms**

- **Accuracy:** reading with minimal or no errors.
- **Automaticity theory:** reading accurately at an efficient rate “frees” the learner to focus on one thing at a time.
- **Comprehension:** the construction of the meaning of text.
- **Decoding:** word identification.
- **DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills):** a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development that are designed to be short fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills.
- **Fluency:** the ability to decode and comprehend text at the same time.
- **FDW (Fluency Development Workshop):** an instructional framework created to help children develop fluency and metafluency across a wide span of leveled texts that is comprised of three time periods, resulting in no more than 25-30 minutes per day.
• Metafluency: fluency monitoring.

• Prosody: reading with appropriate expression.

• Reading rate: the number of words read correctly in one minute (wpm).

• Readers' Theatre: an activity that has students rehearse a poem, joke, story, script, or speech until they can read it with fluency and expression.

• Repeated readings: reading a text (passage, poem, story, script, speech) at a student’s independent reading level at least three times to increase fluency
Chapter II

Literature Review

A definition of fluency

Hudson, Mercer, and Lane (2000) reported that fluent reading was made up of three main elements, "...accurate reading of connected text at a conversational rate with appropriate prosody or expression" (p.702). However, more extensive research showed that there did not seem to be one agreed upon definition of fluency. According to Rasinski (2003), "Reading fluently is the ability to read accurately, quickly, effortlessly, and with appropriate expression and meaning" (p. 126). Hollenbeck (2006) indicates that fluency is the mark of a proficient reader, which, in her opinion, is what allows readers to read for meaning and to understand.

It seems as if all of these diverse definitions were melded together, they still separate into three key areas that are clearly associated with the idea and definition of fluency as best expressed in the report of the National Reading Panel: “Fluent readers can read text with 1) speed, 2) accuracy, and 3) proper expression” (p. 11).

A person might ask how there could be so many different definitions of reading fluency. A possible reason is how fluency had been described by many educators for years until recently. As indicated by Rasinski, Blachowicz, & Lems, (2006), it had been a general belief among educators for many years that fluency was simply nothing more than reading fast or with good expression; neither of which seemed at all connected to the ultimate goal of reading, which is comprehension.
Why reading fluency has been overlooked

Reading fluency is needed for all students to be successful readers and to find meaning in words. Until recently, schools tended to overlook the importance of and the need for explicit fluency instruction, while focusing classroom reading lessons on decoding and reading comprehension (Therrien & Kubina, 2006). As a result, many children are not fluent readers.

Fluency has been often referred to as a “neglected” aspect of reading. Although fluency has been recognized as a crucial ingredient in successful reading programs, for some reason it is often not part of them. Rasinski, who has done extensive research on fluency, has received comments from study participants that might lend insight as to why fluency has been neglected. Participants have shared that fluency is not something that was taught in their teacher preparation programs. Teachers have commented that fluency is not part of their reading programs because they point out a lack of familiarity with the concept of fluency and struggle how to best teach it (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004).

Other theories exist as to why fluency failed to become an essential part of the reading curriculum. One possibility is that more importance was placed upon other reading-related problems, like comprehension, during behaviorism, from the 1900s until the late 1950s. When the paradigm shift from behaviorism to cognitive psychology took place during the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was a rush to study the long-neglected topic of comprehension, fluency, by some of the best minds in psychology (Rasinski et al. 2006).
Fluency was recognized by the National Reading Panel in its report (2000) as “...one of the several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension” (p. 11). The report recognized that while fluency has importance as a component of skilled reading, it is unfortunately often neglected in the classroom.

The panel found that if text is read in an unproductive and arduous manner, it would be increasingly difficult for a child to remember what has been read. Furthermore, the panel observed that it would also be complicated for a child to relay the ideas expressed in the text to his or her own background knowledge. Recent research on the effectiveness of certain methods to teaching fluency has led to increased acknowledgment of its significance in the classroom and to changes in instructional practices (Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000).

Things began to transform when researchers began to show that reading fluency was an essential prerequisite for good comprehension (Rasinski et al. 2006). As of late, the meta-analysis performed by the National Reading Panel (2000) argued that reading fluency was indeed a significant part of the reading process and that it was imperative that it be taught to emerging readers. As a result, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, reading fluency has taken its place with phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and word decoding, as critical components of successful reading instruction (Rasinski et al. 2006).

Even with the importance given to reading fluency by the National Reading Panel, most teachers in the United States do not have a clear idea of what fluency is or how it can best be taught (Rasinski et al. 2006).
Rasinski et al. (2006) have asserted that fluency has not been an observable part of teacher preparation programs. They argue that, until recently, teachers have not been exposed to fluency instruction as part of their reading education programs in college.

Dr. Ray Reutzel (2006), a Utah State University professor who has developed and implemented approaches to improve reading instruction, especially in rural and under-served schools in Utah, has concluded that teachers and students must give increased and sustained attention to the development of fluency in young readers. He asserts that this is necessary if students are going to be able to read on grade level. The need for the explicit fluency instruction is essential if students are going to attempt to close the gap between decoding and comprehension.

**Reading fluency theories**

In order to understand what reading fluency is and how to help children become fluent readers, it is necessary to first understand the theories behind reading fluency. LaBerge and Samuels' model (1974) of the reading process brought the concept of 'automaticity' in word recognition. According to this theory, reading automatically (for example, reading accurately at an efficient rate) "frees" the learner to focus on one thing at a time; such as on the meaning of the text. LaBerge and Samuels also observed that students with slower reading rates may process less text, recall less information, and make a great effort to incorporate prior knowledge (Al Otaiba & Rivera, 2006).
A large amount of research effort has been devoted to determining how proficient readers recognize words as well as they do. Share and Stanovich (1995) found that good readers develop automaticity, or the ability to read words as wholes, with little conscious effort, and thus have the mental attention and thinking capacity to focus on comprehension.

The Report of the National Reading Panel (2000) raised the level of attention given to fluency. This report indicated that “fluency develops from reading practice” (p. 11). As a result, they devoted much of their review to analyzing the supporting research that exists for two major approaches to providing student with reading practice: “…first, procedures that emphasize repeated oral reading practice or guided repeated oral reading practice; and second, all formal efforts to increase the amounts of independent or recreational reading that students engage in…” (p. 12).

Armbruster (2001) found through his investigation that reading must become automatic for students because accuracy alone does not lead to strong comprehension skills. Through their research into fluency, both Armbruster and Osborne (2002) concluded that fluency develops gradually over considerable time through substantial practice.

Characteristics of fluent and non-fluent readers

Reading fluently has been a quality associated with good readers, while just the opposite is true for poor, struggling readers who lack the ability to read fluently. A lack of reading fluently tends to be a predictor of other reading problems that emerge later, such as problems with reading comprehension. When struggling
readers fail to read fluently, they do so because they read in such a slow, labored manner, exhibiting disconnections between decoding the text and comprehending what they are reading (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005).

 Readers, who spend a great amount of cognitive effort to decode words, even if they are successful, may compromise their comprehension because they are not able to devote a considerable amount of their attention to making sense of the text (Griffith and Rasinski, 2004). Thus, the reader has a greater tendency to become non-fluent.

 Fluent readers who read with good phrasing and expression are able to communicate meaning into the text through their oral interpretation of the reading passage. This means that as students learn to read in an expressive and significant way, they are also learning to create meaning or understand the text (Griffith and Rasinski, 2004). Fluent readers can read accurately at a conversational rate with appropriate expression, can hold on to the skill after long periods of time and no practice, and can take a broad view across text. Without accurate word reading, the reader will have no way to comprehend the author’s intended meaning, and incorrect word reading can lead to misunderstandings of the text. A fluent reader is also not easily distracted and reads in an unforced, flowing style (Hudson et al. 2005).

 Fluent readers are confident in their reading ability and the skills set they possess. Hollenbeck (2006) asserted that, “...fluent readers are most comfortable when reading what they have seen before or know most about. When venturing beyond these areas, they must rely on word attack skills, prior knowledge, and the
host of tools that have helped them advance to this point” (p. 5). Fluent readers are able to adjust their reading accordingly.

According to Rasinski et al. (2006), the most important characteristic of a fluent reader is the ability to decode and to comprehend the text at the same time. Other indicators of fluency do exist, such as: accuracy of word recognition, speed of reading, and the ability to read orally with expression.

The National Institute for Literacy (2001) clearly demonstrated the difference between fluent and non-fluent readers, “Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking. Readers who have not yet developed fluency (non-fluent) read slowly, word for word. Their oral reading is choppy and plodding” (p. 5).

Repeated reading theories

In the Report of the National Reading Panel (2000), the panel assumed that there was significant evidence to encourage the use of repeated reading procedures. The method of repeated reading became a widely-used method of instruction, especially for those students who were having trouble learning to read. Repeated readings consist of having the student read and reread a passage (at their level) aloud several times until achieving desired criteria (Mercer, Campbell, Miller, Mercer, & Lane, 2000). Researchers have recommended that students practice three to five times per week for about ten minutes (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002).
Repeated reading is not recommended for students who read below a first-grade level because they have not yet acquired foundational reading skills (e.g., letter-sound correspondences, blending words) (Thierrien & Kubina, 2006).

S. Jay Samuels is the foremost “pioneer” in the field of repeated reading theory. He first mentioned the technique of repeated reading in 1979. Samuels is often credited as the first person to conduct research on the validity of repeated readings to facilitate reading fluency. This approach to reading has many different methods that vary in levels of support and importance on building speed, such as “unassisted” repeated reading. Samuels asserted, with his automaticity theory (1979), that through repeated reading of the text, the reader decodes words quickly and accurately, while focusing attention on bringing meaning to the text.

There was a significant problem with the method of repeated reading as it was first introduced; although it was effective in helping students become more fluent in reading. Upon first introduction, repeated reading was labor intensive, requiring an aide or teacher to hear each student read orally to determine if the word-per-minute goal was reached. A research discovery was made in 1985 by O’Shea, Sindelar, and O’Shea (as found in Rasinski et al. 2006). They found four rereadings to be the most efficient number of times to read the passage. In their study, the story was read a total of four times. Students were paired up and each read the story two times each. O’Shea et al. (1985) found that compared to students in the control group, students in the Paired-Repeated Reading Group made statistically significant higher gains in reading rate, accuracy, and word recognition. Their findings were that when students
are encouraged to attend to meaning instead of speed as they practice, comprehension increases even more (Samuels & Farstrup, 2006). In four readings, the benefits of the rereading are recognized (Rasinski et al. 2006).

Repeated readings call attention to practice as a way of working on all aspects of fluency—prosody, accuracy, and rate. Students, through this strategy, practice rereading a text on their level four times. Repeated readings are one of the most-studied methods for improving fluency (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; Meyer & Felton, 1999; NICHD, 2000).

*Benefits of repeated readings*

Research has shown that repeated reading is an effective way for students to develop reading fluency. When reading the same passage over and over, the number of word recognition errors decreases, reading speed increases, and oral reading expression improves (Samuels, 2002). Therrien (2004) found that repeated readings can be used effectively with nondisabled students and students with learning disabilities to increase reading fluency and comprehension on a particular passage and as an intervention to increase overall fluency and comprehension ability.

There are many reasons why the repeated reading of text is a successful technique to enhance fluency. Kuhn (2005) found that repeated readings are often effective because, “...rather than encountering new text, readers have the opportunity to repeatedly read a given text until they have mastered it and can read it fluently.” The implications for repeated readings are numerous, including boosting students’
self-esteem as they read the text until they have mastered it, gaining confidence in their ability as a reader.

A program of repeated reading has been found to improve reading rate and accuracy (Samuels, 2002). In this technique, the teacher describes that rereading a text is like practicing a musical instrument or practicing a football play. The rereading helps develop fluency. In this process, a student reads aloud, while the teacher notes miscues and measures rate. Both miscues and reading rate are charted on a graph to show growth for each reading. The student practices reading the text silently, in between the oral readings with the teacher. This is often called “unassisted” repeated reading, because the teacher does not directly display fluent reading. Samuels recommends that the selection be reread orally no more than three or four times.

Dahl and Samuels (2002) reported that repeated readings do improve reading rate and decrease miscues. Students with varying learning disabilities become more fluent readers through the repeated reading of the text. Dahl and Samuels came up with these findings based on previous research studies.

Paired repeated reading is the shared reading of a text between two people. Both students read the text silently each about three times to become familiar with the passage. The partner comments on the improvement the student has shown in word recognition, expression, and phrasing. When both students have read their passages, the students assess their own performance using a self-evaluation sheet.
**Readers’ Theatre Theories**

Readers’ Theatre is a highly motivational reading approach that provides a framework for meaningful reading. Readers’ Theatre integrates oral reading, literature, and the performing arts. It is interactive, meaning that students are actively involved in responding to and interpreting literature. Also, Readers’ Theatre provides an opportunity for students to work together in a cooperative learning environment. It provides an authentic reason to engage in repeated readings while providing a model of fluent reading.

By rehearsing, reading, and performing scripts at their independent levels, readers learn to find their way and use the written word in exciting, purposeful, and entertaining ways. Readers’ Theater encourages students to experiment with language, tone, pacing, and working with expression, meaning, and interpretation (Hollenbeck, 2006).

Readers’ Theatre has been used as a reading strategy in classrooms for over thirty years. Corcoran and Davis (2005) found it helpful for the students, in their research study, to create four rules for Readers’ Theater time, which really helped to maximize the quality of the repeated readings and minimize interruptions. The rules are as follows:

1. *Refrain from interrupting or talking while another student is reading aloud.*

2. *Always be sure to follow along even if your part is completed.*

3. *Sit up straight as it helps project one’s voice.*
4. *Always try your best.* (p. 108)

Support for Readers’ Theatre to promote fluency and comprehension can be found in repeated reading of the text and dramatically interacting with the text. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (1985) proposes that verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, visual-spatial, and/or bodily kinesthetic intelligences allow for multiple ways of understanding (as found in Rasinski et al. 2006). Additional studies, such as Carrick’s research study in 2000, show positive effects of Readers’ Theatre on fluency, attitude toward reading, comprehension, and appreciation of literature when used in whole-class and/or small-group instruction.

**Benefits of Readers’ Theater**

Readers’ Theater is an interactive activity in which students are actively involved in replying to, interacting with, and interpreting a text. The foundation of this approach shows the social aspect of reading and provides a cooperative learning environment, where students of differing abilities can work together as a team. Readers’ Theater brings energy and excitement to the classroom and familiarizes students with the element of drama, while incorporating literacy and content area learning (Carrick, 2001).

Readers’ Theater is one of the ways to encourage fluency because it is an oral performance of a script. Meaning is communicated through expression and intonation in the exercise. The focus consequently becomes interpreting the script rather than memorizing it (Blau, 2006).
In a study by Carrick (2000), even the most hesitant readers become excited about reading and experience assurance in reading and speaking before a group. Students of varied reading abilities pointed out that they read more fluently, identify and pronounce more words, and read using the punctuation markers. In addition, they look forward to Readers’ Theater and wish it would “last forever.”

Readers’ Theater creates an opportunity for students to increase better speech habits, study literature, and take part in self-expressive activities before an audience. According to Harris and Sipay (as found in Rasinski et al. 2006), “script reading is one of the most interesting oral reading activities and encourages children to read using natural expression.” Rhinehart (1999) found that students’ attitudes, confidence, sight word recognition, and oral fluency improve when repeated readings and Readers’ Theater are used with low-achieving students (Corcoran & Davis, 2005).

Rehearsing and performing the play for peers creates a real reason for rereading the text many times. Readers’ Theater can aid students in developing rate, prosody, and accuracy (Hudson et al. 2005).

Lorraine Griffith (2004), a fourth grade teacher in North Carolina, used Readers’ Theater in her classroom over a ten week period. She found that her fourth graders demonstrated a deepened interest in reading. She also witnessed firsthand expression appear from the children’s oral reading during guided reading. She reported that she was seeing a renewed interest in reading by her students (as found in Griffith & Rasinski 2004).
Components of the fluency development workshop (FDW)

D. Ray Reutzel and his colleagues (2006) developed an instructional framework to help children develop fluency and metafluency across a wide span of texts and levels of text called the Fluency Development Workshop (FDW). This instructional framework was a result of Reutzel and his colleagues' work with an elementary school on a Native American reservation in the southwestern United States.

Over a three-year period, this particular school had received an extensive amount of professional development as part of their involvement with a Federal Reading Excellence Act grant competitively awarded to high-poverty, low-performing schools. After many years of learning, applying, and refining, the teachers felt most comfortable with their ability to deliver explicit and effective phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction. When it came to delivering systematic and effective fluency instruction, many teachers expressed frustration and concern. The teachers at the school tried incorporating daily fluency work into their classroom lessons and routines, but had not been able to do so to a point where they felt accomplished and satisfied with it.

D. Ray Reutzel, a Utah State University literacy professor, was asked by a school to observe two individual teachers' fluency instruction. Along with him came a team of other literacy professionals: another literacy professor, a school-based reading coach, and the district literacy coordinator. After the observations of fluency lessons in both a third and fourth grade classroom, the team of literacy professionals
met with these two teachers, as well as other teachers in the building. The teachers were complimented on the strong points of their lessons, such as modeling and explicitly teaching the elements of fluency.

Next, Reutzel and his colleagues expressed their nagging concern that even with the many elements of effective instruction in place to one degree or another, the fluency instruction that was observed was unlikely to develop children’s ability and disposition to monitor and adjust their own reading fluency. Reutzel’s team came up with a consensus that the ultimate goal of reading instruction was to lead children to independence in fluency, which they defined as “the ability to self-monitor their fluent reading of texts and to know what they needed to do to fix up their fluency across a range of text difficulty levels and text types,” (p. 70-71 as found in Rasinski et al. 2006).

This very team concluded that the children in the school needed a daily routine in which they were given systematic practice and explicit instruction for developing fluency and metafluency ability. Metafluency simply means fluency monitoring. They also suggested that fluency instruction needed to be happening on a daily basis for fifteen to thirty minutes as an integral part of the daily reading instructional routine or schedule, using the guidelines from the National Reading Panel (2000). In order to achieve this, they embarked on an in-depth study of research and professional literature on fluency in weekly and afterschool and monthly Saturday study group meetings. The information that this team gathered from their reading and study formed the foundation of what would later become known as the
Fluency Development Workshop.

The Fluency Development Workshop design is made up of three time periods, each of which encompasses different elements. The first time period includes teacher explanation, demonstrations, modeling, description, and definition of the elements of fluent oral reading. The second time period involves the teacher providing the students with guided group and individual oral reading practice, using various practice formats and approaches. The last time period is for monitoring and assessing students’ oral reading fluency. The total maximum daily scheduled time for all three time periods should only be between twenty-five to thirty minutes.

A typical daily routine for the Fluency Development Workshop might be as follows:

- *Teacher explanation and modeling of the elements and nature of fluent oral reading (5-7 minutes)*
- *Guided group or individual repeated oral reading practice (10-15 minutes)*
- *Group and/or individual assessment and progress monitoring (5-7 minutes)*
- **Total Maximum Daily Scheduled Time: 25-30 minutes**

(Rasinski et al. 2006, p. 72).

Fluent reading is very important because when students make gains in reading fluency, they are able to put their energies into comprehension and are able to analyze, interpret, draw conclusions, and infer meaning from texts. Combining
Readers’ Theater with the Fluency Development Workshop design is the most effective way to ensure that explicit fluency instruction and practice will be successfully integrated into the classroom, benefitting all students.
Chapter III

Applications and Evaluation

Introduction

The members of the target group of this action research project were five fourth-grade students (both male and female) in the Rochester, New York city school district. This project had two major objectives. The main purpose of this action research study was to assist students in improving their oral reading fluency and comprehension so that they read more fluently. This study was designed to determine if an interactive fluency-based intervention would improve overall reading fluency and comprehension. Another goal of this study was to help students have a more positive attitude toward reading.

Participants

This study included a total of five fourth-grade male and female students from one classroom and one fourth grade special education teacher. There were about 540 students in the school, which is one of thirty-nine elementary schools in the city. The poverty rate in the school, demonstrated by the number of free and reduced lunches, was about ninety percent. The classroom population closely reflected this percentage. My classroom was comprised of twenty-one students. There were twelve girls and nine boys. About ninety-five percent of the students were racial minorities. The classroom was an integrated special class setting, which was very similar to an
inclusion setting. Ten out of the twenty-one students had individualized education plans (IEPs). There was a full-time general education and a full-time special education teacher in the classroom all day. In this study, the five students were referred to as Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, Student 4, and Student 5.

Procedures

A group of five fourth-grade urban students (both male and female) was selected for this study. Oral permission was given by the parents of the students to participate in the fluency intervention via teacher conferences.

Initially, the DIBELS was given to eleven students in order to establish an oral-reading fluency baseline. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills, including oral reading fluency.

Five students were selected because their DIBELS scores showed they needed an intense fluency intervention. This group of five students is referred to as the control group. Of the five students selected, three students had DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency scores of less than 83, which means that they are at risk for being a non-fluent reader. Two of the five students selected received a DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency score of more than 83, but less than 105, which means they are at
some risk for being a non-fluent reader. These preliminary estimates are based on
criteria established by Fuchs et al. (1993) and Hasbrouck & Tindal (1992).

Outcomes of the fluency intervention were measured through tables and
graphs generated as a result of the original administration of the DIBELS and the bi-
weekly administration of the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency assessment. The
Multidimensional Fluency Scale, developed by Zutell and Rasinski (1991) was
administered at the beginning and conclusion of the four to five week intervention so
that students’ progress on reading with expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness,
and pace could be measured. Students also completed a Checklist for Self-
Assessment entitled “How Carefully Do I Read?” at the beginning and end of the
fluency intervention. It focused on how they have tracked their own progress with
reading fluency throughout the four to five week time period.

All of the students within the Rochester City School District are given
Developmental Reading Assessments three times a year, from kindergarten to sixth
grade. Students are given the DRA because it helps teachers identify students’
strengths and the DRA results drive effective instruction. During the administration
of the DRA, students are asked to read text (either fiction or non-fiction) at their
independent reading level. Students are assessed based on their ability to decode
accurately, read fluently, and correctly answer comprehension questions as part of
this assessment.
The fluency scores on the DRA of the students in the control group were reviewed prior to developing this intervention. The data showed that participants in the control group were reading at a slow rate, which included long pauses and repetition of words. Their comprehension scores on the DRA ranged from deficient to adequate, which means that something was impeding their comprehension of the text. To improve overall reading fluency and comprehension, the students were instructed using an interactive, fluency-based reading intervention.

The control group met for one and a half hours each day five times a week, for four to five weeks, to engage in explicit fluency instruction using Readers’ Theatre scripts and techniques following the Fluency Development Workshop (FDW) design (see Appendix A). Sessions focused on engaging in repeated readings from Readers’ Theatre scripts while providing a model of fluent reading. The culminating activity was when students in the control group performed two different Readers’ Theatre plays for a kindergarten and a fourth grade class. Each class evaluated the performance and their comments were shared with members of the control group.

The sessions were divided into three time periods, all components of the Fluency Development Workshop design, which encompass different elements. The first time period included teacher explanation, demonstrations, modeling, description, and definition of the elements of fluent oral reading. A sample classroom poster of the essential elements of fluent oral reading can be seen in Appendix B. The second time period involved the teacher providing the students with guided group and
individual oral reading practice, using various practice formats and approaches. The last time period was for monitoring and assessment.

The DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF) was administered to the control group bi-weekly during the research study to monitor their weekly progress of oral reading fluency, resulting in a four to five week time span. This assessment measured students' individual oral reading fluency.

By analyzing research on Readers' Theatre and the Fluency Development Workshop design, I created an interactive, fluency-based intervention that lasted four to five weeks. The fluency-based intervention included several activities that required the elements of fluent reading, such as: explicit instruction and discussion of the elements of fluent reading, teacher and student modeling of fluent reading and repeated readings (including peer repeated reading) of Readers' Theater scripts.

Other elements of the intervention included: verbal cuing when reading Readers' Theater scripts, and reflection on the Readers' Theater process. Additional components of the fluency-based intervention were: student self-reflections of their own reading, observation of specific aspects of fluent reading, and use of the Multi-Dimensional Fluency Scale so that the participants in the control group's reading with expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace could be measured. Students in the control group were part of the fluency-based intervention four to five days a week from thirty to forty-five minutes per session. The entire intervention took four to five weeks to complete.
Instruments of study

At the beginning of the study, each student was given the DIBELS at a third and fourth grade level. After the second and fourth week of the fluency-based intervention, students were given the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency assessment to monitor progress of improved fluency. I administered the assessments and scored all of the assessments. Results of these assessments were entered into Microsoft Excel to calculate the descriptive statistics and a graph was created to show the students’ progress. Students’ oral reading fluency was also assessed at the beginning of the fluency intervention using the Multi-Dimensional Fluency Scale (see Appendix C), which indicates whether the student is making good progress in fluency or if additional instruction in fluency is needed. The results were entered into a table in Microsoft Word for analysis.

The five students were also assessed through the use of a checklist for self-Assessment entitled “How Carefully Do I Read?” (see Appendix D), which asked students to rate themselves on six different questions, at the beginning and end of the fluency intervention. The self-assessment focused on how they have tracked and reflected on their own progress with reading fluency throughout the four to five week time period. Students had to rate how they felt about different statements about their own reading using a rubric.

A follow-up letter to parents (see Appendix E) was sent home after the conclusion of the fluency-based intervention. This letter reviewed significant
components of the intervention and offered suggestions about how parents could encourage and practice fluent reading at home.
Chapter IV
Results

Student achievement

At the beginning of the fluency-based intervention, two weeks after the intervention began, and at the completion of the intervention, Students 1-5 in the control group were assessed using the same DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Assessment. The results of the assessments are reported in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Comparison of Student DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beginning of Intervention</th>
<th>After Two Weeks of Intervention</th>
<th>At Completion of Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The five students who took the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Assessment at the beginning of the intervention obtained an average score of 81.2, which was achieved by three of the five students. The lowest score on the assessment at the beginning of the intervention was 65, obtained by Student 4. The highest score was 96, attained by Student 2.
The five students who took the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Assessment after two weeks of the intervention obtained an average score of 86.6, an increase of 5.4 points, which was achieved by three of the five students. The highest score on the assessment after two weeks of the intervention was 98.5, obtained by Student 5. The lowest score was 71.5, attained by Student 3.

The five students who took the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Assessment at the completion of the intervention obtained an average score of 89.7, an increase of 8.7 points from the first two weeks, which was achieved by three of the five students. The highest score on the assessment at the completion of the intervention was 91.5, which was attained by Student 2 and Student 5. The lowest score was 82, obtained by Student 3.

The scores from the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency assessment also show that at the beginning of the intervention, Students 3 and 4 had scores below or very close to 70. Students may need intensive instructional support if they score below 70 in spring of third grade. Since the DIBELS was initially given in the spring of fourth grade, Students 3 and 4 may need intensive instructional support.

After two weeks of the intervention, all of the assessment scores, except those of Student 2, had improved. Students 1, 2, and 4 had assessment scores of 90 or above, which is the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency benchmark by spring of second grade. At the completion of the fluency intervention, three of the students' (Student 1, 3, and 4) assessment scores had improved since the assessment was given at the
end of two weeks. The assessment scores of Students 2 and 5 declined since the assessment was given at the end of two weeks.

**Student attitude toward reading**

At the beginning and at the completion of the fluency-based intervention, Students 1-5 were given a five-statement self-assessment to determine their attitudes toward reading. All of the self-assessment questions were written to express positive attitudes toward reading. The self-assessment used a three-point scale with 1 = Hardly Ever; 2 = Sometimes; and 3 = Most of the Time. A response of ‘1’ indicated students hardly ever agreed with the statement, ‘2’ meant they sometimes agreed with the statement, and ‘3’ showed they agreed with the statement most of the time. The average scores of the positive self-assessment statements are reported in Table 2 on the next page.
Table 2

Student Attitude Self-Assessment Results- Positive Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Beginning of Intervention Average</th>
<th>Completion of Intervention Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I say a word again if it does not sound right.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I pay attention to punctuation at the end of a sentence.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I try to read without stopping after every word.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I read with expression.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am ready to speak when it is my turn.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The self-assessment results show that all statements, except for one, both at the beginning and at the completion of the intervention, achieved a mean score over two points. The statements, “I say a word again if it does not sound right” and “I pay attention to punctuation at the end of a sentence” received the highest positive rating of 2.6. The statement, “I am ready to speak when it is my turn” received the highest positive rating of 2.75. At the beginning of the intervention the students’ mean score was 2.36. At the completion of the intervention the students’ mean score was 2.5.

The five students in the control group were asked in an interview to respond to the following two questions at the completion of the fluency-based intervention:

1) How do you feel about your reading since we have been doing Readers’ Theater everyday as part of reading group, and why? and 2) What are two things you do well
when reading during Readers’ Theater? The results from the student responses indicated that the students, overall, recognized improvements in different aspects of their own reading abilities, and that the fluency-based intervention was fun and interactive.

Several students described the fluency-based intervention as “fun and awesome.” The comments also showed that students felt their reading improved using Readers’ Theater than traditional approaches toward reading. One student said, “I do fantastic at (reading with) expression and (paying) attention.” Another student reported, “I did better because when I first did a part I didn’t sound right. Now when I get up there I did good (at reading my part).”

A few students thought different aspects of their reading had improved throughout the course of the fluency-based intervention. One student commented on using Readers’ Theater as part of the fluency-based intervention by saying, “It is fun and awesome because I like reading with a partner.” Another student stated, “I have been kind of shy because you got to talk in front of a lot of people, but I spoke louder when we did the play.” Overall, the students expressed very positive attitudes toward the fluency-based intervention and using Readers’ Theater as part of it.
Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this thesis was to create a fluency-based intervention for students at-risk for reading difficulties and those with special needs. Readers' Theater and the Fluency Development Workshop were used as part of this intervention to increase reading fluency. In doing this, I hoped to assist students in improving their oral reading fluency and comprehension so that they read more fluently and had a more positive attitude toward reading. I wanted to ensure that students who were struggling with reading had the skills to read fluently and comprehend text independently, inside and outside of the classroom setting. By analyzing the results of the student assessments, checklists, and student responses I have drawn some conclusions about the effectiveness of the fluency-based intervention.

When observing the data, it was clear that students' fluency improved greatly from the beginning of the fluency-based intervention to its completion. Interestingly, the oral reading fluency assessment scores of three of the five students in the control group improved an average of fifteen and a half points overall. This suggests that the fluency-based intervention was successful in improving students' oral reading fluency. This finding aligns well with the current research on the explicit teaching of fluency instruction in the classroom. Previous studies had shown that in classrooms
where fluency instruction is explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced on a daily basis, students became more fluent, expressive readers, and were able to better comprehend what they were reading.

It was evident when looking at the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Assessment scores that the scores of Students 1, 3, and 4 significantly increased at the completion of the intervention. This could be because the fluency intervention really worked for these three students and that they made large gains in the aspects of fluent reading. On the other hand, scores for Students 2 and 5 decreased at the completion of the intervention. This could be because components of the fluency intervention did not target the specific needs of Students 2 and 5. Also, perhaps Students 2 and 5 made the most progress in fluency they were going to make after two weeks of the intervention.

By participating in Readers' Theater and explicitly and consistently modeling the elements of fluent readers, students were able to become more expressive readers.

Several interesting conclusions can be drawn by analyzing the self-assessment results. It is evident that students felt more positive about their own reading ability throughout the fluency-based intervention. Statements like, “I read with expression,” and, “I am ready to speak when it is my turn,” were scored somewhat higher at the completion of the intervention than at the beginning. This correlates well with the current research findings that in classrooms where students carefully practice their oral reading fluency, confidence levels increase and they are more motivated to read,
naturally leading to the potential to increase comprehension of texts read. The students reported that they need to read more books so that they can practice reading with expression and projecting their voice.

The results from the students' responses indicated they really enjoyed the fluency-based intervention, and specific features of it, such as engaging in Readers' Theater on a daily basis. Most of the students responded that the intervention was more fun than traditional approaches used to improve different aspects of reading. Many students also commented that the intervention was awesome and interactive, but they still needed to practice specific elements of fluency, such as projecting their voice and paying attention when reading a Readers' Theater script. Overall, the students' attitudes toward the fluency-based intervention were very positive. This reinforces the research findings that in classrooms where fluency is explicitly taught in a variety of ways, such as using Readers' Theater, a renewed interest in reading is found and students' confidence levels about their own reading ability increase.

I believe that more research needs to be done in the future on the impact of how students view their own fluency. Although many studies have been completed on the topic of reading fluency, too few have directly investigated teaching students to attend to their own fluency. Unfortunately, many of the studies that have been completed involve only the teacher (or the adult conducting the research study) assessing the student's oral reading fluency. Self-assessment checklists, such as the
one entitled, "How Carefully Do I Read?" (adapted by Kathleen Hollenbeck, 2006) could be used with students to monitor their own progress.

More research needs to be done to discover the effects of fluency instruction over longer periods of time, with diverse text types, and altering the tasks attached to showing one's fluency. Educators cannot affect any significant change in students' fluency if they cannot teach students how to attend to and monitor their own progress.

Throughout my teaching career, I have often wondered if my ability to decode and comprehend simultaneously was beneficial to my students. I use this ability daily in my life and understand its value in society, but I wanted to discover if reading fluently was beneficial in helping my students comprehend within the classroom setting. I found that there were many benefits for students to become fluent readers within the classroom setting.

I learned that in my classroom, where fluency was taught and modeled explicitly, students were able to become more expressive readers, naturally leading to increased comprehension of varying types of texts read. Students had a higher level of renewed interest in reading, were more actively engaged in reading, and had increased levels of confidence about their own ability to read.

After teaching the fluency-based intervention to my students, I assessed their academic achievement and attitudes toward reading and learning and compared my findings at the beginning of the intervention to those results at the completion of the intervention. I found that students who were taught using the fluency-based
intervention, overall, achieved improved scores on the assessment and had more positive attitudes toward reading in general and in their own ability to read. These findings reinforce what most fluency research has shown about integrating the explicit teaching and modeling of fluency in the classroom. In the future more research needs to be done to package the multiple aspects of effective fluency instruction to attain the best possible benefit for all children. Future research studies should include teachers using the testing results of such assessments as the DIBELS and the Developmental Reading Assessment in a formative nature, noting progress of the students' reading proficiency throughout the year. Consequently, teachers would hopefully modify instruction to best meet the needs of the students. Also it might be beneficial for future research to investigate whether multiple administrations of reading assessments might predict better reading proficiency, as opposed to a single administration.

The benefits of conducting this research study were two-fold. The students in the control group achieved improved scores on the assessment and had more positive attitudes toward their own ability to read. In this sense, I felt that the fluency-based intervention was successful. I consider myself successful when my students are successful. The second, surprising benefit of this research study was the realization that reading fluency can be incorporated into every aspect of your teaching and can reach across curriculum areas. It does not have to be an isolated skill that is taught only in guided reading groups. By incorporating elements of reading fluency
throughout the curriculum and the school day, students' reading ability and self-confidence will grow together.
References


http://www.pearsoned.com/RESRPTS_FOR_POSTING/LANGUAGE_ARTS/LA1.%20rsp_QR_RoleofTextinFluency.pdf


Appendices
### Appendix A: The Fluency Development Workshop (FDW) Daily Routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.</th>
<th>Teacher explanation and modeling of the elements and nature of fluent oral reading</th>
<th>5 - 7 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Guided group or individual repeated oral reading practice</td>
<td>10 - 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Group and/or individual assessment and progress monitoring</td>
<td>5 - 7 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Maximum Daily Scheduled Time: 25 - 30 Minutes**

Appendix B: Sample Classroom Poster on Essential Elements of Fluent Oral Reading

Becoming a fluent reader is an important part of becoming a good reader. In order to become a fluent reader, you need to

- Read accurately, or without mistakes, what is on the page.
- Vary the speed of reading according to your purpose(s) and how difficult the text is for you.
- Read with appropriate volume, expression, phrasing, and smoothness.
- Remember the important ideas from your reading.
Appendix C: Multidimensional Fluency Scale

Use the following scales to rate reader fluency on the dimensions of expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. Scores range from 4 to 16. Generally, scores below 10 indicate that the student needs additional instruction in fluency. Scores of 10 or above indicate that the student is making good progress in fluency.

Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression and Volume</strong></td>
<td>Reads in a quiet voice as if to get words out. The reading does not sound natural like talking to a friend.</td>
<td>Reads in a quiet voice. The reading sounds natural in part of the text, but the reader does not always sound like they are talking to a friend.</td>
<td>Reads with volume and with expression. However, sometimes the reader slips into expressionless reading and does not sound like they are talking to a friend.</td>
<td>Read with varied volume and expression. The reader sounds like they are talking to a friend with their voice matching the interpretation of the passage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrasing</strong></td>
<td>Reads word-by-word in a monotone voice.</td>
<td>Reads in two- or three-word phrases, not adhering to punctuation, stress and intonation.</td>
<td>Reads with a mixture of run-ons, mid sentence pauses for breath, and some choppiness. There is reasonable stress and intonation.</td>
<td>Reads with good phrasing, adhering to punctuation, stress, and intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smoothness</strong></td>
<td>Frequently hesitates while reading, sounds out words, and repeats words or phrases. The reader makes multiple attempts to read the same passage.</td>
<td>Reads with extended pauses or hesitations. The reader has many “rough spots.”</td>
<td>Reads with occasional breaks in rhythm. The reader has difficulty with specific words and/or sentence structures.</td>
<td>Reads smoothly with some breaks, but self-corrects with difficult words and/or sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pace</strong></td>
<td>Reads slow and laboriously.</td>
<td>Reads moderately slow.</td>
<td>Reads fast and slow throughout reading.</td>
<td>Reads at a conversational pace throughout reading.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Score**

Appendix D: Student Checklist for Self Assessment

How Carefully Do I Read?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I say a word again if it does not sound right.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I pay attention to punctuation at the end of a sentence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I try to read without stopping after every word.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I read with expression.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I am ready to speak when it is my turn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What I Need to Work On:

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Adapted from 35 Rubrics & Checklists to Assess Reading and Writing by Adele Fiderer. Permission to reuse granted by the author. Fluency Practice Read-Aloud Plays: Grades 3-4. Scholastic Teaching Resources.
Appendix E: Follow-up Letter to Parents after Fluency-Based Intervention

April 30, 2007

Dear Parent or Guardian of ___________________________,

Hello! I am sending this letter home to you to let you know that your son or daughter was part of a special project I designed as part of our Guided Reading group to improve his or her reading fluency. If you remember, we discussed this at the parent/teacher conference we had earlier in the year.

The special project has concluded as of April 16, 2007. Reading fluency is the ability to read aloud expressively and with understanding. As students' reading fluency improves, so does their understanding of what they are reading. We practiced improving our fluency in a variety of ways, such as: learning about the specific elements of fluency, such as volume, phrasing, and expression, reading and performing Readers' Theater plays, having the students analyze their own feelings about their reading ability, and assessing the students' improvement in reading fluency through different diagnostic tools.

The students' individual reading fluency improved greatly. Some ways you can continue to encourage students' reading fluency at home is to ask them to read anything to you (a book, magazine, newspaper article, recipe, etc.) in a variety of ways:

- in a mad voice
- in a sad voice
- in a happy voice
- in an excited voice
- in a sick voice
- in a scared voice
- with an attitude or special kind of accent (southern, British, Spanish, etc.)

Thank you for your continued support and all that you are doing at home to encourage your child to read. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at _________.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Cassano