All Oral Reading Practice Is Not Equal or How Can I Integrate Fluency Into My Classroom?

Melanie Kuhn
Rutgers, Graduate School of Education

Paula Schwanenflugel
University of Georgia

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses fluency's role in reading development and suggests ways of incorporating fluency instruction into the literacy curriculum through a range of oral reading approaches. It concentrates on two distinct groups of learners: students who are making the shift to fluent reading (generally second and third graders) and those who have experienced difficulty making this transition (usually in fourth grade and beyond). As such, it presents approaches that can supplement a given literacy curriculum as well as approaches that can serve as the basis of a shared reading program. This range of instructional methods should assist both groups of learners in making the transition from purposeful decoding and monotonous reading to automatic word recognition and the expressive rendering of text.

Becoming a skilled reader is a multifaceted process. As part of this process, it is essential that students learn to develop their background knowledge, phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondences, build their vocabularies, construct meaning from text, and more (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development [NICHD] National Reading Panel Report, 2000; International Reading Association, 2002). Further, they must get to the point where they can do all of this simultaneously and automatically in what is called fluent reading. This article presents several effective approaches to oral reading instruction that will assist students in becoming fluent readers and will allow them to make the transition from purposeful decoding and monotonous reading to automatic word recognition and the expressive rendering of text.

Fluency incorporates both automaticity—the quick, accurate, and virtually instantaneous recognition of words—and prosody, or reading expressively with such features as appropriate pitch, stress, and phrasing (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2004). As such, fluency has been referred to as a bridge to comprehension (Pikulski & Chard, 2005), in part because both of these elements play an important role in skilled reading. Automaticity allows students to recognize words effortlessly, thereby freeing their working memory from the mentally draining, slow work of decoding and allowing them to attend to meaning. Next, prosody incorporates elements of expression and phrasing, helping to shape the meaning of a sentence in speech. The same is true in written language. Is the narrator being sarcastic? Who is voicing the words inside the quotation marks? Is the situation being described comical or sad? Prosody adds expression to written text, helping to engage learners in their reading and adding an important element to the overall process of understanding text.

According to a growing number of authors (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Samuels, 2004; Stanovich, 1980), the best way for students to become accurate, automatic, and expressive readers—and to ensure a timely transition from conscious decoding to fluency—is through extensive practice. However, such practice needs to involve the reading of connected text such as sentences, paragraphs, and whole stories, rather than simply providing increased practice in the decoding of words in isolation (Chomsky, 1976; Levy, Abello, & Lysynchuk, 1997; Spring, Blunden, & Gatheral, 1981). Further, while such practice can occur both through silent or oral reading, it is often the case that fluency approaches rely on oral reading. These approaches allow students to hear their own growth and provide teachers with a means to accountability. Given the emphasis on oral reading in the literature (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; NICHD, 2000), this article will focus on oral reading approaches to fluency development.

With the above understanding of fluency, it is important to consider what would be the best way to provide effective oral reading practice in the classroom. Unfortunately, one of the most commonly used approaches, *round robin reading*—also known as *popcorn, popsicle or combat*—does not offer

adequate support for literacy learning (Ash & Kuhn, 2006; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). Fortunately, there is a growing body of evidence indicating that there are a number of alternatives. As such, it is useful to review the difficulties with round robin reading (in all its guises) briefly, and then explore a sampling of practices that are effective for increasing reading fluency.

THE BAD NEWS: AN OFT-USED PRACTICE THAT DOESN'T WORK

Round robin reading is often implemented as a result of the mistaken belief that it will increase the amount of time students spend reading. Despite this well-intentioned goal, round robin reading is ineffective at meeting this objective. In fact, research shows that it is a procedure that does not serve any students particularly well and it is especially ineffective—or even harmful—for those students who are experiencing the most difficulty with their literacy development (Allington, 1983a; Ash & Kuhn, 2006; Opitz & Rasinski, 1998).

Unfortunately, round robin reading is also the approach that most people think of first when they first consider oral reading instruction. And while the Literacy Dictionary identifies round robin reading as "the outmoded practice of calling on students to read orally one after the other" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 222), a recent survey indicates that round robin reading remains an active practice in many classrooms, often under the guise of popcorn, popsicle, or combat reading (Ash & Kuhn, 2006). The survey asked 80 teachers who taught literacy in grades K–12 to discuss their oral reading practices. While all 80 of the teachers used some form of oral reading in their classroom instruction, 47 of them, or 58.7%, used either round robin reading or a variant of that approach. According to the survey, teachers make use of round robin reading for a number of reasons, including a belief that the approach is a way of making difficult texts accessible, a way to ensure each student is reading at least a portion of the text, a way of assessing students' oral reading development, and a way of developing students' fluency.

Despite these laudable goals, round robin reading not only fails to aid learners in their reading development; it can actually contribute to disfluent reading practices among students (Allington, 1983a, 1983b; Opitz & Rasinski, 1998). For example, round robin reading begins with a connected text and causes students to focus on disconnected parts, thereby working against comprehension of what is being read. Students can also become disengaged when it is not their turn, practicing their section of text prior to reading it aloud and tuning out once they are finished. Both of these behaviors distract from, rather than contribute to, developing an understanding of what is being read. Further, when disfluent readers are called upon to read a given passage aloud, they provide other learners with a poor example of what oral reading should sound like. This is especially problematic when students are grouped according to ability, and disfluent readers serve as the only or primary model of

oral reading. It is also publicly embarrassing for those students who are not skilled readers to perform in front of their peers. Finally, it prevents students from identifying unknown words themselves, since more skilled students often jump in to provide a word before the less skilled reader has time to figure it out.

THE GOOD NEWS: STRATEGIES THAT DO WORK

Assuming that developing readers need a great deal of practice to become fluent and that round robin reading fails to provide such support, then what should be done in the classroom to help students make this transition? There is much evidence that the answer involves providing readers with significant opportunities to practice reading connected text—but to make sure that the practice is heavily scaffolded; that is, it should furnish sufficient instructional support to allow for automatic, expressive reading (e.g., Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 2004). The provision of such support serves another purpose; it allows learners to use texts that would normally be considered a challenge to them. In fact, Stahl and Heubach (2005) suggest that learners can benefit from reading material that has an initial accuracy rate as low as 85% with appropriate support—well below the 95% accuracy rate considered to be at a child's frustration level according to Betts (1946) or even the 90% accuracy rate suggested by Leslie and Caldwell (2006). One way to provide such scaffolding (or heavily supported instruction and practice) is through effective oral reading instruction.

Well-designed oral reading instruction can take a number of forms (Rasinski, 2003). Among these are (a) echo and choral reading, (b) repeated reading, (c) paired repeated reading, (d) paired and partner reading, (e) reading-while-listening, (f) radio reading, (g) reader's theatre, (h) Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI), (i) wide reading, and even (j) the use of captioned television. Since there are so many strategies this article is, by necessity, limited to a few. As a result, it concentrates on repeated reading and reading-while-listening as supplemental approaches for individual struggling readers, or readers who are experiencing difficulty with their reading achievement (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2002); paired repeated reading as a supplemental approach for groups of learners; and FORI and Wide Reading as a whole class approach for shared reading instruction. Each of these approaches has been shown to be effective both in research and in clinical and classroom practice and each is relatively easy to implement.

In thinking about which approaches make sense for which students, keep in mind that there are two different populations that can benefit from oral reading instruction—and that the best approaches will vary for the two groups. First, fluency instruction aids students who are beginning to make the transition from reading that is word-by-word and monotonous to reading that is smooth and expressive. This transition usually occurs in second grade (although

it may carry over into third grade) and encompasses what Chall described as a period for "confirming the known" (1996, p. 18). Second, fluency instruction is appropriate for students beyond the primary grades who are struggling with their literacy development. These disfluent readers often have difficulty transferring decoding instruction to connected text and have not had sufficient opportunity to practice what they have learned about word recognition in their reading. The scaffolding and modeling that fluency instruction provides often assists these readers by affording them just such an opportunity.

Since there are two broad groups of learners who can benefit from fluency instruction, approaches have been designed that are both developmental and supplemental. Developmental approaches target learners who are making the transition to fluency; these approaches tend to be integrated into the general literacy curriculum and can be used as part of whole-class instruction. Supplemental approaches, on the other hand, are designed for students who have experienced difficulty making the transition to fluency and are used in concert with whatever other literacy instruction may be occurring in the classroom. By presenting both supplemental and developmental approaches— which may be designed for individual students, pairs of readers, flexible groups, and whole-class instruction—it is likely that at least one of the strategies presented here can either be incorporated into, or serve as the basis of, a literacy curriculum.

Repeated Readings

Probably the best-known and most widely researched approach to fluency instruction is that of repeated readings (Dowhower, 1994; Levy, Barnes, & Martin, 1993; Young, Bowers, & MacKinnon, 1996). The researchers who developed this approach (Dahl, 1979; Samuels, 1979) observed that classroom reading practice typically consisted of students reading new material each day in order to improve their automaticity. It struck them that students might have greater success in developing automatic word recognition if they practiced a given passage repeatedly, as opposed to reading a new text on a daily basis. They felt that this could lead to improvements not just with the practiced material, but that it might transfer to improved recognition of practiced words in previously unread material.

The approach

Repeated readings follow several steps. First, the student selects a text that is of interest (it can be of any sort—poem, essay, fiction, etc.) and that he can read with approximately 90% accuracy on the initial reading (Dowhower, 1989). Such text would traditionally be considered to be at a reader's frustration level; however, given the amount of support learners receive through their repetition of text, the material is actually a reasonable choice for the procedure.

Next, the student or teacher selects a short passage from the text (50–300 words) and the teacher makes two copies—one that the student reads from and one that the teacher uses to record miscues. The student then reads the text aloud as the teacher times the reading and records any miscues. The number of words read per minute (wpm) and the number of miscues are marked on a bar graph, and the miscues are reviewed with the student. The student then practices reading the passage independently several times. After practicing the material, he reads it aloud to the teacher again, and the teacher records the new rate and number of miscues. This procedure continues until the child is reading at a rate of approximately 100 wpm, with no more than two miscues per 100 words. While all of the rereadings can be completed in one session, it is more common for the process to occur over 2 or 3 days. Further, the students enjoy seeing their gains charted as their speed increases and their miscues decrease.

A few notes on the procedure

With repeated readings, it is important to emphasize automatic word recognition since it is critical that students move away from word-by-word reading (Rasinski, 2000). Further, it is often the case that students get "caught" on one or two miscues, misreading the same one or two words even through the seventh repetition; in these cases, continued rereading is unlikely to get the learner to 100% accuracy. Instead, it is important to remember that the student is trying to reach his independent level, so a 98–100% accuracy rate should be considered acceptable.

On the other hand, some students begin to view the procedure as a race—zooming through the text in order to reach as high a words per minute rating as possible—with little or no regard to what they sound like. In this case, it may be necessary to slow them down, refocusing them on appropriate pacing and the need to sound expressive. Allowing them to listen to themselves read with excessive speed on a tape or demonstrating what they sound like by modeling such reading can often serve to assist in refocusing the learner.

Next, in order to keep the students from concentrating too heavily on word recognition at the expense of comprehension, it is helpful to cue the readers to focus on meaning (O'Shea, Sindelar, & O'Shea, 1985, 1987). This can be accomplished simply by asking the students to think about the passage as they are reading it and then asking them to talk about it after the first or second repetition. Additionally, if the student hasn't achieved the correct words per minute (cwpm) goal by the seventh rereading, or if the child becomes frustrated reading the passage, then he should begin working with an easier passage—perhaps one with a 92-–95% initial accuracy score. On the other hand, once the learner has reached the point where he can read a selection at a given reading level with relative fluency on the initial reading, then he is ready to move on to more difficult text.

It is also important to think about fluent reading as having a range of reading rates, based on students' grade levels. The goal of 100 wpm should be seen as a minimum rate for older struggling readers. It is appropriate for younger readers to read at a slower rate. As learners become more fluent, this rate should increase according to grade-level norms. According to Rasinski (2004), who adapted his norms from Hasbrouck and Tindal (1992) and Edformation (2003), rates for students should be around 60 wpm at the end of first grade, 94 wpm at the end of second, 114 at the end of third, and increasing to 171 at the end of eighth. Harris and Sipay (1990) also showed the median, based on a series of standardized reading tests, to be 86 wpm for second graders, 116 wpm for third grade, 155 wpm for fourth graders, and 251 wpm in twelfth grade (see Table 1 for more detailed norms). Further, this rate will vary with the difficulty of the material; a fourth grader who is reading at 155 wpm with grade-level text will likely be reading at a much lower rate with a text that is appropriate for a sixth grader. Similarly, a struggling fifth grader may be reading at 116 wpm with a text that would be considered appropriate for a third grader.

Finally, repeated readings have been successfully modified to include a broader range of activities. For example, encouraging first graders to select and reread a range of books helped both second language learners and native English speakers develop their word recognition, comprehension, and comfort with text (Koskinen, et al., 1999). Similarly, Yopp and Yopp (2003) have developed a technique called "book bits" in which students are given short excerpts of a text that serve as the basis of students' story predictions as well as their oral reading practice. Another technique called "powerful passages" (Yopp & Yopp) asks students to choose a meaningful passage from a self-selected book that they then practice and share with their classmates. Each of these approaches takes the basic premise of repetition and adapts it for a range of classroom interactions.

Findings

Repeated readings is a highly effective approach for students who are considered to be slow, disfluent readers (Dowhower, 1994; Weinstein & Cooke, 1992). In a recent review of strategies designed to promote fluency development, Kuhn and Stahl (2003) found 33 studies that implemented a repeated readings strategy with struggling readers. Of these, 32 found that the learners became more fluent in terms of rate, accuracy, and where measured, prosody on repeated text as a result of the intervention. Perhaps more importantly, this growth transferred to previously unread text. While it is difficult to predict the gains students might make as a result of this procedure, in the past the gains have been substantial. While the majority of studies present their results in terms of statistical significance, Heckleman (1969) showed struggling elemen-

tary through high school students made an average gain of 1.9 years in terms of rate and accuracy on the Gray Oral Reading Test after 6 weeks (15 minutes per day for 5 days per week) of repeated readings intervention. In fact, personal experience at several reading clinics indicates that students can make gains of several reading levels in an 8- to 9-week period and that students demonstrate anywhere from 1-1/2 to 2 months' gain from 1 month's intervention (10–15 minutes per day, 5 days per week). Given that the students who participate in university reading clinics usually make less—sometimes significantly less—than a month's gain in a month's time, these numbers are quite impressive.

Reading-While-Listening

Reading-while-listening (Chomsky, 1976; Koskinen, et al., 1999; Hecker, Burns, Elkind, Elkind & Katz, 2002; Pluck, 1995) is another effective supplementary fluency-oriented strategy. It makes use of books-on-tape to expose learners to significant amounts of connected text in an accessible way, while simultaneously providing a model of expressive, automatic reading. It works best for readers who are able to decode individual words but who seem to be unable to establish automatic word recognition or proper phrasing. While it is designed for individual learners, several students can make use of different audio texts at the same time or over the course of a day, depending on the availability of tape players.

The approach

Students are expected to listen repeatedly to the tapes while reading along with the text until they are able to render the material fluently. The audiotapes provide important scaffolding that allows students to read challenging print rapidly and accurately. Further, they can be encouraged to set their own pace for their reading. Whether the students have established fluency with a given text can be easily determined by asking the students to read a portion of the material they have been practicing aloud, before allowing them to move on to a new selection. In order to assess the students, the teacher can take a running record or make a copy of the text and note miscues and rate, along with the use of expression and phrasing. If the students don't reach a predetermined standard, they should be asked to continue practicing with their current text.

While it may be difficult for learners to coordinate their eye movements with the voices on tape initially, as they become increasingly familiar with the process, they should find it easier to keep track of the story (Chomsky, 1976). Further, research indicates that it should take students less time to reach mastery on subsequent selections at a given reading level. As with the other approaches based on repetition, the text should be challenging for the students since the combination of repetition and modeling provides significant support.

A few notes on the procedure

One concern teachers have regarding read-along techniques is that there is no assurance that the learners are actively engaged in the reading of the text. If students are simply listening to the tapes without attending to the print—or worse, daydreaming with the headsets on—their fluency will not improve. But if students are held accountable for their reading in some way, it is more likely they will actively participate in the process. In other words, this procedure is not simply a modified listening center in which stories are used primarily for enjoyment, comprehension, or the development of emergent literacy skills such as concepts of print. Although these are valid purposes, they do not help students meet the goals of improved fluency. Instead, the teacher needs to listen to the students' reading as they begin to master the story and hold them accountable for the material if the strategy is to help them with their fluency development. It is also the case that providing a range of tape-recorded books for the students and allowing them to choose the selection they will be reading will help to engage the students in the procedure.

Findings

A series of studies looked at the use of audiotapes in conjunction with books as a means of exposing learners to significant amounts of connected text in an accessible format (Hasbrouck, Ihnot, & Rogers, 1999; Hecker et al., 2002). According to Rasinski and Hoffman (2003), "…in each of these studies and across a range of independent and dependent variables…" (p. 515), the reading-while-listening approaches led to significant improvements for the learners. While there is no research using new technologies such as CD-ROMs and DVDs in place of tape recordings, some versions of CD-ROMs such as Mattel's *Living Books* highlight the text in appropriate phrase units while simultaneously narrating it. It seems that this could serve as additional scaffolding by further assisting students in matching the oral rendition of a text to its written counterpart.

Paired Repeated Readings

The repeated reading approach is clearly a highly effective strategy for improving fluency. But when the teacher serves as the listener and the recorder of the students' rates and miscues, it can be very teacher-intensive. One alternative is paired repeated reading (Koskinen & Blum, 1986), which was devised to work with partners as opposed to individual students. It assists students in developing their reading fluency by working with one another in pairs—which can be either self- or teacher-selected. The pairs are taught to evaluate their own reading and to offer positive feedback, thereby allowing the students to serve as coaches for one another and ensuring that their comments contribute to improvements in each other's fluency.

The approach

The procedure involves having the students select an approximately 50-word passage from material they are currently reading in the classroom. The researchers also suggest the students in a given pair select different sections of the text in order to minimize any direct comparison of their skills as readers (Koskinen & Blum, 1986). Students initially read through their passages silently and decide between themselves who will read aloud first. Teachers may minimize disputes about who goes first by creating an alternating schedule or by identifying a random approach to selecting the first reader. The first reader then reads the passage aloud to her partner and assesses her own performance, recording how well her rendition went on a self-evaluation sheet. This process is repeated three times. The partner listens carefully to each of the readings and, after the second and third attempts, comments on the ways the performance has improved. He also records the noted improvements on a listening sheet. The final step involves the pair switching roles and completing the procedure with the second reader. Koskinen and Blum successfully used this procedure with third graders, although the approach could be used with older students as well as students in second grade (and possibly first grade) with the right support.

A few notes on the procedure

Since paired repeated reading can be used as part of whole-class instruction (e.g., shared reading) or with a reading group (e.g., an activity for guided reading groups to use as the teachers work with another group), it is easily integrated into the literacy curriculum either as part of a developmental program or as a supplemental procedure. This method also has many of the benefits of the original procedure since the repetition of a single passage has been shown to improve automaticity. Further, since the students stress the less measurable aspects of oral reading—such as the use of appropriate phrasing and expression—when they are discussing each other's reading, the practice should also help their use of prosody. Finally, since the approach takes about 10–15 minutes, it can easily be incorporated into the week's instruction. As with the original procedure, it is likely that the improvements in the practiced passages will transfer to previously unread material, thereby improving students' overall fluency rather than simply improving their reading of a given text.

Findings

The procedure was designed for third graders who were below-average readers. The authors developed the procedure in response to their understanding that struggling readers have limited opportunities to read connected text in a supported manner. As part of this approach, students took part in the procedure for 15 minutes, 3 times a week for 5 weeks. The study indicated that, com-

pared to their peers who took part in a studies-activities condition, the students in the paired repeated reading group made significant gains in terms of fluency (p<.05), and made significantly fewer semantically inappropriate miscues (p<.005) on the Diagnostic Reading Scales. Given these results, coupled with the understanding that the procedure it is based upon is highly effective, the approach appears likely to benefit a range of students.

Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction

As was noted earlier in this paper, many fluency-oriented strategies were designed for individual learners or dyads. However, one recent approach, Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) (Stahl & Heubach, 2005), involves restructuring the shared reading component of a classroom curriculum for whole-class instruction in the second grade. This program was developed in response to an apparently nonsensical district mandate: that all students, no matter what their reading levels, were required to read from grade-level material. Given that many students in this district were reading significantly below grade level, even in the second grade, the students needed significant amounts of support. Based on components of the Oral Recitation Lesson (Hoffman & Crone, 1985), FORI incorporates the repetition of a single text, be it a story from a basal, a literature anthology, or a trade book.

The approach

The weekly schedule involves introducing the class to the text using any of a range of prereading activities such as introducing key vocabulary terms and developing background knowledge. The teacher then reads the text aloud while the students follow along in their own copies. After listening to the selection, the class discusses it in order to emphasize the primary goal of text comprehension. On Tuesday, the teacher leads an echo reading of the text to provide guided practice. The teacher and students choral read the text on Wednesday, and the students partner read it on Thursday. The students also take the text home for additional reading practice, and if the students are fluent with the selection, they are asked to read alternative material. Finally, the week ends with extension activities such as written responses to the week's selection or a second discussion of the text.

Findings

This program was initially implemented with four second-grade classrooms in the first year and nine in the second year. Using the *Qualitative Reading Inventory-IV* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2006) as a pre- and post-test measure, the authors reported 1.88 years average growth in the first year and 1.77 years average growth in the second year (Stahl & Heubach, 2005). Further, a sub-

study of a current Interagency Educational Research Initiative (IERI) funded research project indicates that students make real gains in terms of their reading rate as part of the weekly lesson plan (Kuhn & Schwanenflugel, 2006). The cwpm rates of a sample of students were taken at the beginning and the end of a 5-day lesson. On Monday, the children were reading the passage at an average of 78 cwpm (or around the 37th percentile according to curriculum-based oral reading fluency norms; Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992). By Friday, their reading had improved to an average of 121 cwpm (or around the 74th percentile). This kind of improvement is noticeable to students, parents, and teachers and creates enthusiasm and motivation for reading. Taken together, the results indicate the structure of this program and its emphasis on fluency development is a highly effective approach to literacy instruction.

Wide Reading Instruction

As was noted above, one of the major goals of fluency instruction is automatic word recognition, and the repetition of text is viewed as a critical component in assisting in its development. However, in a recent review of fluency instruction, Kuhn & Stahl (2003) found that when studies compared the use of repetition to the scaffolded reading of equivalent amounts of connected text, the gains in fluency were equivalent. In other words, it is possible that it is the supported practice of text, rather than simply the repetition, that produces the gains in reading achievement. In fact, recent research by Kuhn (2004) and Mostow and Beck (2005) confirms this understanding. Further, current research which compares a wide reading program with both FORI and a control group (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, Woo, & Stahl, 2004), also indicates that the supported reading of a wide range of connected text and repeated reading leads to similar growth for learners.

The approach

As with FORI, the wide reading approach follows a week-long lesson plan. However, rather than reading a single text over the course of the week, three texts are covered. To begin with, the primary text—which again can be a selection from a literature anthology, basal reader, or trade book—is covered in 3 rather than 5 days. On Monday, the teacher conducts preteaching activities and also reads the story to the students while they follow along in their own texts. This is followed by a discussion of the text. On Tuesday, the teacher and the class echo read the selection and, if time permits, the students can partner read the text for a second time. The students then take the text home and read it aloud to a family member or friend. Extension activities are completed on Wednesday and students who need extra practice are asked to read the story at home again. On Thursday and Friday, the students echo read and discuss two

additional selections, usually involving trade books; however, previously used literature anthologies, material from the Internet (e.g., www.nationalgeographic.com/kids), or class sets of children's magazines may also be used. Again, if there is time, students can partner read these texts as well.

Findings

The initial results from the study indicate that the wide reading approach was equivalent to the FORI, replicating 6 months' growth beyond the control groups in comprehension and word recognition (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, Woo, & Stahl, 2004). Further, the wide reading group made greater gains in terms of cwpm than did the other two groups. Overall, these results suggest that for students who are at the point where they are making the transition to fluency, what matters is the amount of challenging text they encounter—rather than simply the repetition of texts per se—as long as this text is scaffolded. This scaffolding can be provided through the repetition of a single text or through the supported reading of a number of texts. As such, both the FORI and the wide reading approaches appear to be effective as a way to develop students' literacy through the shared reading component of the curriculum. While the FORI approach may be easier for many classrooms to implement, given the limited resources in most schools, it is important to note that the wide reading approach exposes children to a broader array of vocabulary and content. It is also worth noting that, in the early grades, there is a high degree of overlap in terms of vocabulary (Heibert, 2004). As a result, the repeated readings approach may be more effective for texts with a high degree of vocabulary differentiation, such as are used in the elementary grades and beyond.

WHAT IS THE IDEAL MIX?

Given these findings, it seems that incorporating oral reading instruction into the classroom can assist learners in developing their reading fluency. But how much of a focus should there be on these strategies and at what age is this focus appropriate? The answers, of course, depend upon the students. In first grade, when there is a strong emphasis on word recognition, it is likely that students will need to spend a significant amount of time determining what the text says. Once they have identified the words, however, it is useful for them to reread the text so they begin to sound fluent. In this way, young readers may be less likely to become "glued to print" (Chall, 1996, p. 46), or word-by-word readers who overemphasize decoding.

For students who are making the transition to fluent reading at a developmentally appropriate point, fluency should be a major focus of their reading instruction, as it is with FORI and the wide reading approaches. It is reasonable that these approaches be used with students over the course of the year.

However, this does not mean that students should not also be working on comprehension, decoding, and writing. All of these are essential if the literacy curriculum is to develop skilled, independent learners. However, a focus on fluency during this period will allow students to make their word recognition automatic, so that their reading becomes "fluid, flowing, and facile" (Dowhower, 1987, p. 390). While this period of "confirming the known" (Chall, 1996, p. 18) traditionally bridges second and third grade, second grade appears to be the period during which most fluency instruction currently occurs. If students are fluent readers by third grade there is no need to focus heavily on this aspect of reading development. However, if students are not fluent readers by this point, it is reasonable to make this a key component of the literacy curriculum.

For readers who are still disfluent by fourth grade (or higher), fluency instruction should be individualized and supplemental. For these students, using an approach like repeated readings or an accountable reading-while-listening program, such as those described above for 10–15 minutes a day, is an effective way to help students move past their word-by-word or monotonous reading. It is possible, however, that even in second and third grade many learners are already fluent or that large numbers of students in the elementary-grade classrooms or beyond are disfluent. In that case, it is possible to adapt the shared reading strategies to meet the needs of a particular set of learners. For example, wide reading or FORI can be modified to be part of a flexible grouping approach to literacy instruction for older students, or paired repeated readings could be used on a regular basis with a small group of younger students.

It may also be useful to make these and other supplemental activities, such as repeated reading, reading-while-listening, partner reading or mumble reading, optional activities for students during their sustained silent reading (SSR) period (e.g., Koskinen, et al., 1999). Yopp and Yopp (2003) report that the amount of reading students complete during SSR, even within the same classroom, varies significantly. It is possible that some of this disparity occurs as a result of the difficulties some struggling readers encounter with text, and that the provision of additional support provided by the above approaches may help to alleviate these differences to some degree. It may be that more skilled readers would find these activities to be enjoyable options, as well. By widening the range of opportunities offered to students during SSR, it may also be possible to increase the engagement of some students with text.

While bearing in mind the benefits of fluency instruction, it is important to stress that no matter what the students' ages, comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading and that a range of literacy activities need to be offered in order to support this goal. The end goal of all reading instruction is creating students who are able —and who want—to comprehend challenging material while

reading independently, both for pleasure and for specific purposes. It is important for teachers to determine which of their students need to be scaffolded in terms of their fluency instruction and for how long such instruction is appropriate. Teachers can best determine this by listening to their students' oral reading and evaluating their reading using both a fluency scale and a cwpm table (see sidebar). Once they have determined that fluency instruction is necessary, the appropriate instruction can then be provided. The above findings suggest that students' fluency development can be effectively scaffolded through various approaches to oral reading, provided that the type of oral reading instruction is carefully matched to the needs of the learners and that effective approaches take the place of ineffective ones such as round robin and popcorn reading. With appropriate scaffolds in place, it is possible to help learners who may otherwise have difficulty developing into fluent readers.

SIDEBAR

How Can Fluency Be Assessed?

In addition to identifying instructional approaches for fluency development, it is important to highlight ways in which fluent reading can be assessed. First, it is important to determine students' reading rates. This can be done reliably and validly using the norms presented in Table 1 (Rasinski, 2004) on the following page or through other norms such as those developed by Hasbrouck and Tindal (1992) or Harris and Sipay (1990). Next, several rating scales provide the means for a more global measure against which to gage students' fluency development. The Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Oral Reading Fluency Scale (NCES, 1995) (Table 2 on the following page), and the Allington and Brown Fluency Scale (Allington, 1983a) all can assist a listener in assessing a reader's fluency level. The Multidimensional Fluency Scale addresses three components of fluent reading—phrasing, smoothness, and pace separately—while the NAEP and the Allington and Brown scales provide a more generalized measure of expression and phrasing.

By comparing a student's oral reading to these measures, it is possible to determine whether fluency is an element of his reading that needs further development. Further, these are effective measures of students' growth when implemented at various points across the school year or over an intervention period.

Table 1. Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) Target Rate Norms

Grade	Fall WCPM	Winter WCPM	Spring WCPM
1		10–30	30–60
2	30–60	50–80	70–100
3	50–90	70–100	80–110
4	70–110	80–120	100–140
5	80–120	100–140	110–150
6	110–140	110–150	120–160
7	110–150	120–160	130–170
8	120–160	130–170	140–180

From *Assessing Reading Fluency* (Rasinski, 2004)

Table 2. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Oral Reading Fluency Scale

Level 4	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions and deviations from text may be present, those do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.
Level 3	Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups. Some smaller groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.
Level 2	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage.
Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasionally two-word or three-word phrases may occur, but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.

From *Listening to Children Read Aloud*
National Center for Education Statistics (1995)

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