

This document provides a summary of Recommendation 2 from the WWC practice guide *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9*. Full reference is on the last page.

CONTENT: **Reading**
GRADE LEVEL(S): **4–9**
LEVEL OF EVIDENCE: **Strong**

Recommendation

Provide purposeful fluency-building activities to help students read effortlessly.

Fluent reading can be developed using a variety of activities. Timed readings are often used to build fluent reading or as a measure of students' progress toward becoming fluent readers. Timed readings, however, should be used with caution. Timed readings can be overused and can be a detriment to student engagement and motivation, especially when used solely to increase reading speed. Fluency-building activities can also focus on other important elements of fluent reading, such as reading effortlessly, also referred to as reading with automaticity, and reading with expression or prosody. Other fluency-building activities can provide extensive practice while also engaging students and building their confidence in reading.

How to carry out the recommendation

1. Provide a purpose for each repeated reading.

Instructional strategies from the examples

- Have students re-read passages 3-4 times, each time for a different purpose.
- Have student scan passages for words that are difficult to read or understand. Guide students in reading words and understanding them.
- Ask questions that provide a purpose for reading and provide feedback on student responses.

South Carolina standards alignment

ELA: 3-5.RL.P.2, 3-5.RL.P.3, 3-5.RI.P.2, 3-5.RI.P.3, 6-8.RL.P.2, 6-8.RL.P.3, 6-8.RI.P.2, 6-8.RI.P.3, 9-12.RL.P.2, 9-12.RL.P.3, 9-12.RI.P.2, 9-12.RI.P.3

TEACHER: INST.PIC.2, INST.PIC.3, INST.TCK.1, INST.TCK.2

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Rather than merely asking students to re-read the same passage orally several times to increase their speed, provide students with a purpose for each reading of the same passage. Although the primary goal is to build effortless reading, re-reading a piece of text with a purpose will often lead to increased understanding.

Have students re-read the same passage a total of 3–4 times, each time with a different purpose. Purposes for re-reading can focus students' attention on reading at an appropriate pace and with expression, answering questions, identifying words they do not know, or reflecting on what students learned from the text or why they think the group is reading the passage.

Before students read the passage, ask them to quickly scan the passage to find words that are difficult to read or understand. Guide students as they attempt to read the unknown words in isolation and provide brief meanings of words they do not understand before they read the passage.

After each reading, ask students questions to establish a purpose and briefly discuss student responses to the questions. This will hold students accountable for re-reading the passage. Provide feedback that affirms what they did right and clarifies any misconceptions students shared or anything they need to correct.

Questions that provide students with a purpose for reading a passage

Examples of questions for which answers are evident:

What happened in the passage you just read?

What did you learn about _____?

What were the first two things that happened in this section?

Interventionist asking a small group of students to read a paragraph on issues related to poverty and feeding a family

Teacher: *Scan the paragraph and underline any words you can't read or don't understand.*

The teacher briefly reviews any words in the passage that the students identified, as well as any that the teacher deemed difficult, including proper nouns. The teacher pronounces each word, asks students to repeat the pronunciation, and provides a short, clear definition or explanation.

Teacher: *Now I want you to read this passage silently and explain what the passage is about to your partner.*

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The students read the passage and turn to their reading partner to explain what the passage is about.

Teacher: *For this reading, the purpose will be to answer questions about the text that are listed on the board. I would like the first reader to read the paragraph aloud. If you are the second reader, read along silently and help your partner when they get stuck on a word by saying the word and asking them to repeat the word before they continue reading the rest of the paragraph.*

When the first reader is done, answer questions 1 and 2. Then it is time for the second reader to read the passage while first reader assists. After the second reader is done, answer questions 3 and 4.

The following questions are on the board:

Who is going to the market in this story?

How did the main character get to the market?

How long did it take to get there?

How was the main character able to feed their family?

The teacher and students briefly discuss the students' answers to the questions after questions 1 and 2 and after questions 3 and 4. The teacher asks students to read the sentences that helped them answer the questions. The teacher clarifies any misconceptions.

Source: Toste et al. (2019); Vaughn et al. (2016).

2. Focus some instructional time on reading with prosody.

Instructional strategies from the examples

- Demonstrate the importance of reading with prosody by reading a passage without attention to punctuation.
- Provide activities that allow the student to practice reading with prosody.
- Show students where to pause when reading a sentence.
- Record student reading and have them listen to earlier attempts to demonstrate growth.

South Carolina standards alignment

ELA: 3-5.RL.P.4, 6-8.RL.P.4, 9-12.RL.P.4, 3-5.RI.P.4, 6-8.RI.P.4, 9-12.RI.P.4

TEACHER: INST.TCK.1, INST.TCK.2

Prosody refers to reading with expression, appropriate pitch and tempo, and pauses at the right places. Pauses, tempo, and emphasis placed on different words can help

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readers understand what they are reading. Draw students' attention to what prosody entails by dramatizing why prosody is important.

Read a short paragraph aloud twice. The first time, read it quickly without expression and without stopping at punctuation marks. Then read the passage again, this time at a conversational pace and with prosody. After reading, discuss which rendition of the passage was easier to understand. Teach students to pause at commas, stop at periods, raise or lower their voice when encountering a question mark, and show emotion when encountering an exclamation point.

Include activities that offer students opportunities to practice reading with prosody. For example, students can listen to an audio recording of a TV announcer reading fluently and with prosody, and then practice reading like a TV announcer. Another prosody activity would be the teacher first reading a sentence or two with prosody and then asking students to read the same sentences with the same prosody. Students can also read with prosody in unison with the teacher before trying to read the passage independently.

It can be helpful to show students where to pause when they are reading. Present a passage on the board and mark where the sentences and phrases end with slashes. For example, this sentence includes slashes where students should pause briefly while reading: A colorfully dressed dancer / in South Korea / reflects certain customs / that are important to her. //

Read the passage aloud as a group. Provide students the same brief passage with slashes and allow them to practice in pairs or individually by audio-recording their reading to listen to later. If students are audio-recording themselves reading, they can compare recent to previous recordings to hear their progress. Circulate around as students practice reading the text and provide feedback when necessary. Remember to provide feedback on what students have done well and how they could improve, for example, their expression or tempo. After practicing with the slashed copy, give students an unmarked version of the passage to read.

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Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<p><i>Partner work doesn't seem productive. When I pair students for fluency-building activities, the student who is struggling does not know when the better reader makes a mistake.</i></p>	<p>Working on re-reading with partners can be particularly motivating for adolescents, who are much more oriented toward their peers than toward adults. Pairing students for fluency work should be done with student skill level in mind. To create appropriate partners, rank order the students from most able to least able reader and split the ranked list in half. Pair the first student in the first half with the first student in the second half. For example, if there are eight students in the group, pair student 1 with student 5: student 2 with student 6, etc. If there is an odd number of students, the teacher or a volunteer can be paired with a student.</p> <p>Although none of these students will be strong readers, a student who reads one year below grade level will be able to detect many of the decoding errors of a student reading several years below. Similarly, the lower-performing student will benefit from hearing a model of the passage read relatively fluently that they can try to recreate when it is their turn to read. Both students will read silently and orally with a purpose and will benefit from the partner time, even if neither is able to detect every decoding error.</p> <p>Teach students how to read with a partner to help students work productively with their partner. This can include identifying the roles and responsibilities of the first and second reader and modeling and practicing procedures for correcting errors. Once students begin to work in pairs, monitor and assist them throughout the activity. Scan the pairs to make sure students are actively participating. Focus on one group for a few minutes to assist them with any difficulties they may be having. Praise students for what they are doing well and help students who are not recognizing errors and correcting their partners. Move on to other groups as time permits.</p>

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Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<p><i>Students don't like timed readings, and they often focus on reading so fast they don't understand what they're reading.</i></p>	<p>Students may have previously encountered many frustrating experiences with timed repeated readings with only one “purpose”: speed. Experiences reading only for the purpose of increasing speed may have made some students averse to any type of repeated reading or timed reading. Students like to be told why they are doing something. Remind students that they now will only read with a purpose and that re-reading the passage is not meant to make them faster readers. The goal is to help them read with ease and gain confidence in their reading and understanding of the text. Tell them to read just like they talk—not too quickly and not too slowly—rather than saying, “Read as fast as you can.” Explain that when they read too fast, they will have trouble understanding what they are reading. Remind students that they are now reading with a purpose. Remember to use timed readings sparingly as an instructional activity. When timed readings are done sparingly and mixed with other fluency activities that require students to re-read for a different purpose, students may enjoy seeing the progress they make in understanding the text and in their rate and accuracy.</p>
<p><i>When I give my students a purpose for re-reading, they spend so much time trying to find the answer that they don't have time to read the passage again.</i></p>	<p>The goal is for students to read the passage multiple times, with a clear purpose for each re-reading. Therefore, during fluency-building activities, the students should not spend a lot of time digging into the passage to determine the answer to a complex question. Start with questions that can be answered with information evident in the text. As students demonstrate confidence with those questions, consider asking more difficult questions that require students to draw conclusions.</p>
<p><i>Sometimes students avoid finding words they do not know because they feel embarrassed or have concerns that the teacher will ask them to do more work.</i></p>	<p>In these cases, teachers can address these concerns through remarks such as: “There are at least two words that I think are very difficult. See if you have the same two words as me.” Another option is to motivate students by having them work in pairs to choose difficult words. This may make them feel more comfortable and ease their concerns about appearing less able to respond to the task.</p>

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Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>It is hard to find materials that include the words or patterns the students are learning, relate to subject-area topics, are age-appropriate, and increase in difficulty.</i>	Often published programs contain word lists and passages for fluency instruction. If a published program is not available, choose words and passages from a variety of sources, including subject-area textbooks, novels, newspapers, or electronic resources, that emphasize the sound patterns, words, or content of the lesson. Schedule time during grade-level or department meetings to collect and develop materials to address the skills you are teaching. Over time you will have materials that span a wide range of topics and vary in difficulty.

Reference: Vaughn, S., Gersten, R., Dimino, J., Taylor, M. J., Newman-Gonchar, R., Krowka, S., Kieffer, M. J., McKeown, M., Reed, D., Sanchez, M., St. Martin, K., Wexler, J., Morgan, S., Yañez, A., & Jayanthi, M. (2022). *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9* (WWC 2022007). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://whatworks.ed.gov/>.