Fluency

Program Research Base

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Fluency

Executive Summary

Readers who get a lot of meaning out of text also tend to be readers who read fluently. Fluent reading is defined as the ability to read with expression, as well as appropriate pacing, volume, and phrasing. Fluent readers are able to read aloud in such a way as to not only convey their own understanding, but in such a way as to help the listeners understand the text as well. While fluency is not the sole indicator of deep comprehension, it is certainly a strong indicator of comprehension.

Fluency is an indicator of comprehension because it demonstrates a link between decoding words and understanding text. Fluency is the bridge between the two. Proficient readers are able to decode words automatically so that their cognitive resources can be directed toward comprehending. Young readers who are still struggling to decode words, reading aloud in a halting manner, have few cognitive resources left to comprehend what they have read.

Fluency, which has been largely passed over in other programs, receives a thorough treatment in **Wright Group LEAD21**. The fluency strand consists of three elements: Accuracy—recognizing and decoding words correctly; Automaticity—instant and effortlessness word recognition; and Prosody—expressive interpretation of the words in the text. Students of **LEAD21** practice fluency every day. They work with a new selection each week, provided in the *Practice Companion*, and perform that selection at the end of the week.

The week's practice is built on the gradual release of responsibility model. Each day finds students practicing with teacher support on various levels: Explicit Instruction; Teacher Modeling/Thinking Aloud; Collaborative Practice; Guided Practice—From High Support to Low Support; and Independent Use for Authentic Purpose. The instructional plan allows for groups and individuals to practice each day, in the manner that they need, all in order to prepare for the week's final presentation.

Only texts with strong voice appear in the fluency strand. Students practice with poetry, letters, journal entries, short stories and many other genres to round out their experiences. A fluency rubric is provided for students to listen to each other and provide feedback. The **LEAD21** fluency strand is a strong instructional component, supporting comprehension and opening up an avenue for a lifetime of enjoyment.

Fluency

Understanding Reading Fluency

Reading fluency can be defined as the ability to read text accurately, effortlessly (automatically), and with meaningful expression (prosody). Although this definition identifies what fluency may look like when readers read, it does not adequately convey the important role that fluency plays in reading success. To understand this role, it is helpful to think of fluency as a bridge, one that connects two crucial tasks that successful readers must perform—decoding and comprehension. To understand how the bridge works, it is helpful to look at what fluent readers do as they read.

Studying Proficient Readers

As they read, proficient readers first process the text itself. They decode and recognize words accurately and automatically. They group or "chunk" words into meaningful phrases that help them to understand a sentence or passage. Fluent readers take cues from the text to read with expression, intonation, and appropriate speed—sometimes speeding up but also sometimes slowing down. Reading fluency is the tool that allows readers to control, or automatize, this text-level processing so that they are able to direct most of their attention—their cognitive resources—to constructing meaning from the text.

Because fluent readers can decode and recognize words accurately and automatically, they are able to focus most of their cognitive resources on reading comprehension. They connect ideas in the text and then use the text to make inferences and predictions, create mental images, prioritize information, ask and answer questions of the passage, and employ the various other comprehension strategies that help the reader gain access to meaning. (See the Reading Comprehension Program Research Base.) In other words, fluent readers can allot their limited cognitive resources in ways that allow them both to recognize words and comprehend at the same time.

> Research confirms that students who read with proficient fluency (appropriate pacing, accuracy, automaticity, and expression) are proficient comprehenders and high achievers in reading.

Readers who lack fluency, however, have difficulty decoding and comprehending at the same time. They must spend most of their time and effort on word decoding. These are developing students who read in slow and labored ways, read in a word-by-word fashion with little attention to phrasing, and who read orally in a monotone voice with little expression or enthusiasm. They may be able to decode the words accurately, but they expend so much cognitive effort in doing so that they are unable to devote sufficient attention to comprehension. Because these readers have difficulty processing the words of a text, comprehension does not happen or is severely limited.

Research confirms that students who read with proficient fluency (appropriate pacing, accuracy, automaticity, and expression) are proficient comprehenders and high achievers in reading (Chard, Vaughn, and Taylor, 2002; Kuhn and Stahl, 2003; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski and Hoffman, 2003). Readers who struggle with fluency tend to also struggle with comprehension and tend to have low levels of achievement in reading. Moreover, existing research also indicates that by fourth grade a significant percentage of students (40–45%) have not achieved sufficient levels of fluency in their reading (Daane, et al. 2005; Pinell, et al. 1995). Fortunately, a growing body of research has also demonstrated that instruction in reading fluency (especially for struggling readers) will not only lead to improvements in fluency, but also to increases in comprehension and overall reading achievement (e.g., Dowhower 1987, 1994; Griffith and Rasinski 2004; Koskinen and Blum 1986; Martinez, Roser, and Strecker 1999; *Rasinski*, et al. 1994; Rasinski and Stevenson 2005; Reutzel and Hollingsworth 1993; Samuels 1979; Stahl and Heubach 2005; Topping 1987a, 1987b; Wilfong 2008).

Fluent Readers Read Words Accurately

The foundation for fluency is accuracy in word recognition. Readers need to be able to accurately decode words. Issues of automaticity and expression cannot be addressed if readers are not successful at word decoding. Word recognition and phonics deals with word-level accuracy. The Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction Program Research Base provides more detailed information on this aspect of **Wright Group LEAD21**.

Fluent Readers Read Words Automatically

Human beings have a finite amount of attention, and we are limited in our ability to parcel that attention to multiple tasks. Recall a time you have been required to do two tasks at the same time, both of which required a significant part of your attention. It is very likely that one (or even both) tasks were not done to the level of proficiency that you may have been able to achieve if you could have given your full attention to only one task.

In reading, two critical tasks (very likely more) need to be accomplished simultaneously in order to read proficiently. First, readers need to decode the words. Second, readers need to comprehend—to understand what the author is communicating through the text. If the decoding tasks require an inordinate amount of cognitive attention, less attention can be given over to the comprehension task. As a result comprehension suffers.

The way to solve the problem of completing multiple tasks simultaneously is to complete one of the tasks with automaticity, or to make it one that requires minimal attention. Once this happens, the person can accomplish one task automatically (and proficiently), and devote his or her attention to the other one so that it too can be accomplished with a high level of proficiency.

In terms of reading, this means that word recognition needs to be developed to a point of automaticity—instant and effortless recognition of words. Once this is achieved, readers can then devote a maximum amount of their limited cognitive resources to comprehension.

Learning to drive a car is a good analogy for the concept of automaticity to which most people can relate. For most drivers driving is an automatic task. Drivers do not have to consciously think about how to insert the key into the ignition or which pedal on the floor will stop the car. In fact, most drivers function with such automaticity that they can multitask while operating a car. Evidence of this comes when we drive and listen to radio, or converse with a passenger.

Now think about when drivers first learn to drive a car—automaticity has not yet been achieved. Novice drivers have to turn off the radio and refrain from conversing about anything, focusing only on driving with their instructor. Their attention needs to be focused on driving and cannot be diverted easily to other tasks. The analogy to struggling readers should be clear: They are so focused on making it through the words, they have little attention left for the other task—paying attention to meaning.

Fluent Readers Read with Prosody

Accurate and automatic decoding, although crucial to reading success, does not by itself translate to fluent reading. Teachers are well aware that some students are clearly automatic in their reading: They read quickly and accurately, but they have no voice expression and give little evidence that they comprehend what they read. They give each word equal emphasis and intonation, and they often ignore punctuation cues, reading through periods and other markers that indicate pauses or changes in expression.

> Accurate and automatic decoding, although crucial to reading success, does not by itself translate to fluent reading.

Prosody refers to spoken language features such as stress or emphasis, volume, pitch, intonation, rate, phrasing, and pausing. Prosodic reading reflects an understanding of meaningful phrasing and syntax, or the ways that words are organized into meaningful units in sentences and passages, and of the reading cues provided by text features such as punctuation marks, headings, and the use of different sizes and kinds of type.

From research we know that fluent readers aid their comprehension as they read by interpreting text markers and monitoring the meaning of the passage to tell them when to speed up or slow down, pause, change the tone or pitch of their voices, or stress words or passages (Miller and Schwanenflugel 2006, 2008; Schreiber, 1980, 1987, 1991). That is, they engage in what linguists call prosodic reading. Prosodic reading gives evidence of active meaning construction and text interpretation. It shows that readers are putting their cognitive resources to work in comprehending the text.

In summary, reading fluency is more than the ability to decode and read words accurately and automatically, it is also the ability to read expressively and meaningfully. To be most effective in fluency (and comprehension) development, instruction must focus on accuracy, automaticity, and prosody.

Components of Fluency Instruction in Wright Group LEAD21

In **LEAD21**, reading fluency is conceptualized as consisting of three related components, all of which deal with readers' negotiation of the text:

- **Accuracy—**recognizing and decoding words correctly

- **Automaticity—**instant and effortlessness word recognition

- **Prosody—**expressive interpretation of the words in the text

In **LEAD21**, the first of these components, accuracy, is addressed in the phonics curriculum as a function of decoding. (See the Phonic Awareness and Phonics Instruction Program Research Base for a discussion of this part of the program.) Although phonics is an explicit strand of the curriculum, it is not taught in isolation. Beginning in the kindergarten program, students have opportunities to hear and read engaging literature, and so they see the purpose for all of their hard work in learning to decode text.

The remaining two components of fluent reading, automaticity and prosody, form the core of fluency instruction. To ensure that students make steady and significant progress in both of these areas, **LEAD21** fluency instruction is designed around several important, research-based instructional methods and strategies.

Fluency Methods and Strategies in Wright Group LEAD21

LEAD21 fluency instruction focuses on helping students read and practice reading, not to increase reading speed but to understand that a text holds vital clues that students can use to better understand—and enjoy—what they read. Fluency within **LEAD21** includes several unique instructional and research-based methods and strategies.

- *Instruction and coaching in fluency to develop automaticity.* In **LEAD21**, on the first day for each selection, the teacher introduces and models fluent reading.

- *Teacher modeling of automatic and expressive reading, including proper expression, pitch, intonation, and phrasing.* In **LEAD21**, the teacher is encouraged to demonstrate correct pacing for the material.

- *Voiced passages that lend themselves to expressive meaning interpretation of text.* Voice in writing is the corollary to prosody in reading—material written with voice is material that lends itself to reading with voice. Such materials include narrative, poetry, oratory, song lyrics, scripts, dialogues, and monologues.

- *Repeated readings of engaging text.* The **LEAD21** program provides multiple encounters with one fluency selection per week for students to practice reading throughout the week, with a focus on reading the passage with meaningful expression.

- *Regular and frequent opportunities for students to engage in assisted reading with fluent readers.* Assisted reading refers to reading while listening to another, more fluent reader reading the same text. **LEAD21** provides a selection for fluency practice in the *Practice Companion*, allowing the teacher to assign practice to pairs if desired.

- *Opportunities for independent student practice.* **LEAD21** provides ample opportunity for students to practice the fluency selection independently, which culminates in a performance reading each week.

The fluency strand in **LEAD21** is predicated on the research-based belief that all students can benefit from instruction in reading fluency. The ability to read with appropriate levels of automaticity and with meaningful expression is valuable to both strong readers and those readers who may be struggling. Thus, **LEAD21** provides instruction in fluency, to every student, regardless of his or her reading ability.

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The LEAD21 Model for Effective Instruction in Fluency

Fluency in **LEAD21** is guided by the following basic instructional principles summarized in the table and discussed below.

Weekly Fluency Routine				
Day 1	**Day 2**	**Day 3**	**Day 4**	**Day 5**
Introduce and Model	Shared Choral Reading	Paired Reading	Personal Rehearsal	Presentation

• Students work with both the Theme Reader and with a selection in the *Practice Companion* intended specially for fluency development. It is related thematically to the core selection in the Theme Reader, and lends itself well to oral reading and performance.

  • Students engage in daily fluency routine as they move toward higher levels of fluency. This predictable weekly routine allows students to know exactly what will be expected of them during fluency instruction. This means teachers spend less time helping students learn new activities, and students put their instructional time to best use by actively engaging in reading.

  • The gradual release of responsibility sequence that is apparent in other components of **LEAD21** is also incorporated into fluency. The *Teacher's Lesson Guide* recommends model reading, echo reading, then choral reading. Then the week's-end performance may be in a small group, in pairs, or individual.

Fluency instruction in **LEAD21** begins with the Theme Reader and permeates each lesson. In addition, the fluency routine involves steps as described below.

Step 1: Explicit Instruction. In this initial step, the conversation is teacher-directed, while students listen and respond. The teacher explains the fluency focus for the lesson (its name and definition) and explains its purpose and use. There is some form of students' accountability built in for their active listening and participation, such as think-pair-share or a white-board response, which takes place within the whole group.

Students and teacher work with a brief (50–200 words) theme-related fluency selection. For example, if in their unit work, fourth graders have read a biography of President Franklin Roosevelt, the selection for the fluency routine might be a portion of his first inaugural address, with the goal of having each student deliver a meaningful oral interpretation of the text after having rehearsed it. Other types of selections that contain a strong voice component include various types of poetry, song lyrics, scripts, monologues, dialogues, jokes, letters, and journal and diary entries.

Step 2: Teacher Modeling/Thinking Aloud. The teacher models reading the text. The teacher may read the passage to students several times. Students have a copy of the passage in the *Practice Companion* to read silently as the teacher models. After the one or more modeled readings, the teacher engages students in a coaching discussion on how the text was delivered in the model and what they should focus on in their own practice of the passage, such as emphasis of individual words, raising or lowering of voice, or reading rate.

Step 3: Collaborative Practice. The teacher invites students to contribute their own questions, comments, insights, and observations from the modeled reading. The teacher guides students carefully through their own questions and comments to consider fluency issues in their own practice of the passage.

Step 4: Guided Practice—From High Support to Low Support. The students rehearse the text through repeated readings, first with the teacher, and then on their own.

- First students may echo read with the teacher. She or he will read a line or two of the passage and then students read the same line or two.

- Next students may choral read with the teacher: Variations may include all boys reading or all girls, left side or right side or other possibilities.

- Then students gain independence by reading the passage alone or with a partner rather than with the teacher: Partners take turns reading the whole passage or parts of the passage.

Step 5: Independent Use for Authentic Purpose. When students feel that they have achieved mastery of the reading, they perform the text for the class, for the teacher, for other classes, for a parent, for the school principal, or in any number of other ways from a poetry slam, to a re-creation of a famous speech, to a song fest, to a performance of the script or dialogue.

This fluency routine format is constant across the grade levels, with opportunities for differentiation, that reflect students' reading development and interests. As the teacher and students continue through daily lessons, the nature of instruction and practice in particular lessons changes. The instructional periods become shorter, while student practice and performance takes greater primacy. Students practice on longer and more challenging texts. The following chart is a quick guide for thinking about how the gradual release of responsibility model works.

Gradual Release of Responsibility Model	
The Teacher	**The Students**
I do (Steps 1–2)	You watch and respond
I do (Step 3)	You help
I help (Step 4)	You do
I watch and respond (Step 5)	You do

What a LEAD21 Fluency Lesson Looks Like Across Grades

Kindergarten. Wright Group LEAD21 recognizes that reading fluency develops gradually over considerable time and through substantial guidance and practice. In **LEAD21**, fluency instruction begins in kindergarten. At this earliest stage of reading development, of course, young students are just learning to acquire the ability to distinguish the sounds of the language and then attach sounds to letters and to blend letter sounds into recognizable words. They are devoting much of their attention to learning to recognize words and attach meanings to those words. As they begin to read, they quite naturally read slowly and often fail to chunk words appropriately.

As they develop the all-important decoding foundation, however, they also see and hear, on a daily basis, models of fluent reading of a wide array of text genres, including engaging stories, poems, plays, and historical accounts. As a result, young students see a purpose for their decoding work and begin to understand that reading is more than just a school task—it is a source of enjoyment and a way to access a vast world of knowledge. So in kindergarten, teacher modeling (with students following along silently or orally) is the primary vehicle to fluency.

Grades 1–2. Students have a fluency selection each week to use in fluency instruction and practice. The selection is relatively short, 50–150 words in length. Age-appropriate poems, songs, and nursery rhymes are the primary texts used. The poems and rhymes feature repeated presentations of rimes (word families or phonograms) that are the focus of instruction in the phonics/word study component of **LEAD21**. The daily lesson routine (Steps 1–4) guides the teacher in the use of the selection for the day. Greater emphasis is placed on Steps 1, 2, and 3 where a high degree of teacher and classmate support is provided to students. At the end of each week, students have the opportunity to perform (Step 5) the week's selection.

Grades 3–5. Students have one extended fluency selection each week to use in fluency instruction and practice. The selection is relatively short when compared with other grade level selections, 100–400 words in length, but significantly longer than the selections used in Grades K–2. Age-appropriate readers-theater scripts, dialogues, monologues, journal entries, letters, speeches, as well as poems and songs make up the bulk of the passages. The daily lesson routine (Steps 1–4) guides the teacher in the use of the selection for the week. Greater emphasis is placed on Step 4 where students engage in text practice. At the end of each week, students have the opportunity to perform (Step 5) the week's selection.

Texts for Fluency in Wright Group LEAD21

The oral performance genre, which has largely been ignored or given secondary status in basal reading programs, is a distinguishing feature of **LEAD21**. In **LEAD21**, the texts for fluency practice invite expressive and meaningful reading and are intended for performance. They include a wide variety of genre, all designed to engage students in reading, and all selections reflecting a strong voice component.

Genres for Fluency Practice	
Poetry	Song lyrics
Letters	Speeches
Journal entries	Monologues
Dialogues and scripts for readers theater	Short stories
Newspaper articles	Advertisements
Jokes and riddles	

Because the fluency selections are intended to be practiced through repeated readings, they reflect a range of text difficulty. This range means that students can be given the opportunity (challenge) to learn to read material that is more difficult than they might normally read. Difficulty of material can be calibrated not only through measures of word and sentence difficulty, it can also be measured through the length of the selection that students are asked to master. Shorter texts are generally considered easier to learn to read than longer ones. Although traditional fluency instruction generally involves texts that reflect students' independent reading levels, research indicates that with modeling, practice, and assisted reading, students are able to handle material that is beyond their independent level. In fact, some research has shown that guided exposure to and practice with more difficult texts can lead to even greater progress in reading (Stahl and Heubach 2005).

> The oral performance genre, which has largely been ignored or given secondary status in basal reading programs, is a distinguishing feature of **LEAD21**.

Fluency Instruction in Study Stations

A central component of **Wright Group LEAD21** is the use of Study Stations for independent practice of various key reading competencies. At the Book Corner Study Station for example, students have the opportunity to practice or rehearse selections that are part of the daily fluency lesson or other selections of their choosing that will eventually be performed for the class. The Book Corner offers collections of selections that may be used for practice and performance and may also offer various aids for promoting practice and rehearsal—areas to facilitate individual oral practice, recorders, headphones, microphones, and recordings of various selections so that students can hear fluent renderings of selections. All of this can readily support the fluency instructional routine as established in **LEAD21**. (See page 7.)

On a regular basis, within the **LEAD21** instructional sequence, students will be assigned to the Book Corner. In the Book Corner, students will have specific opportunities for interaction and application, which will vary based on student need. Differentiated assignments always involve textual practice and may include the following types of activities:

- Practice reading the assigned selection five times orally and self-evaluate each reading using a fluency rubric.

- Read the selection three times to a partner who provides assistance and evaluation. Then reverse roles.

- Practice and record a selection appropriate for a lower grade level. The recording will be sent to the lower grade level teachers for inclusion in their own Book Corners.

- Rehearse a multiple-part script or other selection in anticipation of performance opportunities, which provide support, encouragement, and evaluation for students.

Assessing Reading Fluency

Given that reading fluency has two components—automaticity and prosody—both should be assessed. Automaticity is easily measured by reading rate and the use of the Curriculum Based Assessment model (Deno 1985; Deno, Mirkin, and Chiang 1982). This is a research-based approach to fluency assessment (determined by counting the number of words a student reads correctly in one minute on grade level material). Below are reading rate norms associated with normal reading development (50th percentile) by grade and time of year.

Grade	Fall	Winter	Spring
1		20–30 wcpm	40–60
2	40–60	50–80	70–100
3	60–90	70–100	90–120
4	90–100	110–120	120–130
5	105–115	120–130	135–145
6	125–135	135–145	145–155

Prosody, the expressive quality of reading, is best measured by listening to children read and judging the quality of their reading against some descriptive rubric. A multi-dimensional rubric is presented on the next page.

Multidimensional Fluency Rubric

Use the following rubric to rate reader fluency on the dimensions of expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. A summary chart is provided at the end of this section.

A. *Expression and Volume*
1. Reads with little expression or enthusiasm in voice. Reads words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tends to read in a quiet voice.
2. Some expression. Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas of the text, but not others. Focus remains largely on saying the words. Still reads in a voice that is quiet.
3. Sounds like natural language throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.
4. Reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Sounds like natural language. Reader is able to vary expression and volume to match his/her interpretation of the passage.

B. *Phrasing*
1. Monotonic with little sense of phrase boundaries, frequent word-by-word reading.
2. Frequent two- and three-word phrases giving the impression of choppy reading; improper stress and intonation that fails to mark ends of sentences and clauses.
3. Mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and possibly some choppiness; reasonable stress/intonation.
4. Generally well-phrased, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.

C. *Smoothness*
1. Frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, or multiple attempts.
2. Several "rough spots" in text where extended pauses and hesitations are more frequent and disruptive.
3. Occasional breaks in smoothness caused by difficulties with specific words or structures.
4. Generally smooth reading with some breaks, but word and structure difficulties are resolved quickly, usually through self-correction.

D. *Pace* (during sections of minimal disruption)
1. Slow and laborious.
2. Moderately slow.
3. Uneven mixture of fast and slow reading.
4. Consistently conversational.

Scores range from 4 to 16. Generally, scores below 8 indicate that fluency may be a concern. Scores of 8 or above indicate that the student is making good progress in fluency. (Adapted from Zutell and Rasinski 1991.)

To ensure adequate growth in reading fluency, students should be assessed regularly (3–4 times per year minimum) in these areas: word recognition accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Students who perform poorly or whose performance does not meet minimal standards should be provided with opportunities for more in-depth instruction in the areas in which their performance is lacking.

Fluency Rubric*			
Expression and Volume	Phrasing	Smoothness	Pace
1. Little expression or enthusiasm **2.** Some effort to make text sound like natural speech **3.** Some passages sound like natural language **4.** Reading sounds like natural language; volume is audible	**1.** Monotonic with little sense of phrase boundaries **2.** Improper word chunking; no attention to punctuation **3.** Mixture of mid-phrase pausing for breath; some reasonable stress and intonation **4.** Generally well-phrased; adequate attention to expression	**1.** Frequent long pauses or false starts **2.** Several hesitations which disrupt comprehension **3.** Occasional breaks in smoothness caused by specific words **4.** General smooth reading with self-correcting techniques in use	**1.** Slow **2.** Moderately slow **3.** Uneven pace; some passages fast, others slow **4.** Consistently paced

*Assign values from 1 to 4, for scores ranging from 4 to 16.

Conclusion

An impressive body of research demonstrates the importance of fluency development to successful reading. Research shows as well that students who fail to develop fluency may suffer life-long consequences to their reading ability and more. The need for instruction that helps students to achieve fluency is urgent. Yet too often what passes for fluency instruction is merely instruction in rapid word reading. Fluency, as we have seen in this White Paper, needs to be much more than this. To help students become successful readers, fluency instruction must be reconceptualized to fluency's true role in promoting deeper comprehension of text. **Wright Group LEAD21** has drawn from the best available research to develop fluency instruction based on this view of fluency.

LEAD21 Fluency Pedagogy

Research Says	LEAD21 Delivers
Students who read with proficient fluency are proficient comprehenders and high achievers in reading (Chard, Vaughn, and Taylor, 2002; Kuhn and Stahl, 2003; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski and Hoffman, 2003).	A complete fluency strand includes daily practice with pairs, whole-group, small-group, and independent work and culminates in weekly performances.
By fourth grade, a significant percentage of students (40–45%) have not achieved sufficient levels of fluency in their reading (Daane, et al. 2005; Pinell, et al. 1995).	A far-reaching fluency strand begins in Kindergarten and progresses with age-appropriate adjustments through Grade 5.
Instruction in reading fluency (especially for struggling readers) will not only lead to improvements in fluency, but also to increases in comprehension and overall reading achievement (e.g., Dowhower 1987, 1994; Griffith and Rasinski 2004; Koskinen and Blum 1986; Martinez, Roser, and Strecker 1999; Rasinski, et al. 1994; Rasinski and Stevenson 2005; Reutzel and Hollingsworth 1993; Samuels 1979; Stahl and Heubach 2005; Topping 1987a, 1987b; Wilfong 2008).	A well-constructed fluency strand provides practice in genres containing strong voice: poetry, letters, journal entries, song lyrics, speeches, monologues, short stories, dialogues and scripts for readers theater, newspaper articles, advertisements, jokes, and riddles.
Fluent readers aid their comprehension as they read by engaging in prosodic reading: that is, interpreting text markers and monitoring the meaning of the passage to tell them when to adjust pacing, change tone or pitch, stress words, and so on (Miller and Schwanenflugel 2006, 2008; Schreiber, 1980, 1987, 1991).	A fluency rubric appears in the *Practice Companion* for students to listen to each other and provide feedback, thus ensuring that students maintain accountability for their practice time and incorporating peers' suggestions.
Gradual Release of Responsibility model provides sound instruction for students of varying abilities (Pearson and Gallagher 1983).	A weekly fluency instructional pattern is based on the gradual release of responsibility model.
Guided exposure to and practice with more difficult texts can lead to even greater progress in reading (Stahl and Heubach 2005).	Fluency selections are written at Benchmark levels and above, and appear regularly in the *Practice Companion*.
Both automaticity and prosody should be assessed to determine appropriate fluency (Deno 1985; Deno, Mirkin, and Chiang, 1982).	Reading rate norms are provided for teacher assessment. Norms are associated with normal reading development (50th percentile) by grade and time of year.

Author Biography

Dr. Timothy Rasinski is a professor of literacy education at Kent State University. He has written over 200 articles and has authored, co-authored, or edited over fifty books or curriculum programs on reading education. He is author of the best selling book on reading fluency entitled *The Fluent Reader*, published by Scholastic, and co-author of the award-winning fluency program called *Fluency First*, published by the Wright Group. His scholarly interests include reading fluency and word study, reading in the elementary and middle grades, and readers who struggle. His research on reading has been cited by the National Reading Panel and has been published in journals such as *Reading Research Quarterly, The Reading Teacher, Reading Psychology,* and the *Journal of Educational Research*. Dr. Rasinski is currently writing the fluency chapter for Volume IV of the *Handbook of Reading Research*.

Dr. Rasinski recently served a three-year term on the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association, and from 1992 to 1999 he was co-editor of *The Reading Teacher*, the world's most widely read journal of literacy education. He has also served as co-editor of the *Journal of Literacy Research*. Dr. Rasinski is past-president of the College Reading Association, and he has won the A. B. Herr and Laureate Awards from the College Reading Association for his scholarly contributions to literacy education.

Prior to coming to Kent State, Dr. Rasinski taught literacy education at the University of Georgia. He taught for several years as an elementary and middle school classroom and Title I teacher in Nebraska.

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