

Best Practices in Reading Fluency  
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Abstract

This action research was designed to improve reading fluency in a small guided reading group comprised of fourth and fifth graders. Students received eighteen weeks of fluency instruction including oral expression, phrasing, rate and accuracy.

At the beginning and the end of the study, the researcher administered DRA2 assessments, and Student Reading Surveys. Analysis of data indicate that each student developed at a rate of at least one year's growth.



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## Action Research Proposal

## Chapter One-Introduction

Driving out to the research site, the mountain demands all of the attention. Willow pink and blue clouds obscure the sun, the dramatic white snow and craggy peak profoundly prod one into prayer; God's grace and power ride along as the beauty of the sight enters the researchers heart and mind. The rural countryside, bathed in lush green colors, is home to livestock stretching, near gently moving nursery stock and farm workers whistling, as they pull on their boots, coats and gloves ready to begin another day.

The small rural community once made its living from the logging trade. Now abandoned sawmills lie covered in blackberries and underbrush. The city is growing unhurriedly as some new homes climb over hills and dodge creeks. Light industrial manufacturing and service businesses, as well as the homeowners, bring needed tax revenue into the city. Berries and nursery stock cover acres within and outside of the city. The town is considered a gateway to recreation. Winter sports enthusiasts include snow boarders, skiers and snowshoers. Spring and summer activities include hiking, biking, fishing, horseback riding, berry picking, inner tubing, picnicking and enjoying the great outdoors. Fall includes many of the same activities in the surrounding areas. One of the largest cities in the state is a few miles to the west, with multicultural activities and national sports teams. Mountain ranges from the coast to a nearby state can be seen on a clear day.

The city has a population of 5,385 according to the 2000 census, with an estimate of 8,643 people for 2007. The racial makeup of the city was 93.9% white, 1.15% African American, 0.74% Native American, 0.26% Asian, 0.15% Pacific Islander, 1.65 from other races and 2.14% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 4.09% of the population. The

median income for a household in the city was \$42,115 and the median income for a family was \$52,543. The per capita income for the city was \$20,138. About 3.8% of the families and 8.1% of the population were below the poverty line, including 10.4% under the age of 18 and 5.2% of those 65 and older. Population is primarily in the surrounding unincorporated areas outside of city limits, but within the Zip code of the city, in 2006, 16,370 people reside (City Facts, 2009).

This community includes three schools within the city limits and seven schools in surrounding communities. The school district has six K-5 elementary schools, three 6-8 middle schools and one 9-12 high school. District-wide enrollment averages 4,055 students (District website, 2009). The district employs 195 teachers with an average of 11.4 years of experience. District-wide 41%, or 1,670 students receive free or reduced fee lunch. Average daily attendance for the district 2007-2008 was 92.2%. ELL population throughout the district is 6%, or 247 students, the majority of which are Hispanic. Within the district 16%, or 643 students attend the Special Education program. In the school district 78 children are homeless, or 2% of the total population, with 52 Migrant children, or one percent of the population. District-wide the school population has increased by 20 students during the 2008-2009 school year from the school year 2007-2008 (District website, 2009).

Five schools qualify for additional funding through Title 1. Title 1 funding is based on two factors. One is the school's poverty rate, determined by the percentage of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. The other factor is the decision of the district to target elementary schools, based on research showing that intervention for struggling students is most effective when begun as early as possible (District website, 2009). The schools qualify with the 35% or more poverty rate. To receive federal funding, schools in the district that qualify need to have looked at all of the data from tests and utilized a year long process of researching the best

way to raise all of the students achievement level (District website, 2009). Next, schools need to complete a schoolwide plan approved by the district and ODE. If a school has a poverty rate of 40% or more, has completed a year of research and test analysis and developed a schoolwide plan, they should be approved for the teaching model researched to be most effective with raising achievement levels. The teaching design used in Title I schools in this district is called flooding, which focuses on small group reading instruction, or guided reading. Using this method has assisted the qualifying schools to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Data on reading scores of elementary schools throughout the district meets the state requirement for AYP, (all elementary, but not all schools) however when student data from each individual school is separated from the whole, a different picture is revealed. The most current data from statewide testing in the district for 2007-2008 is included below.

Subject	Grade Level Tested	District % Meets or Exceeds	State % Meets or Exceeds
Reading	3,4,5,6,7,8,10	82%	83%
Mathematics	3,4,5,6,7,8,10	82%	79%
Writing	4,7,10	47%	44%
Science	5,8,10	76%	76%

School Report Card, 2007-2008

Looking at the overall reading scores one is aware of the difference in percentage of students meeting benchmark scores for grades 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12 and the downward trend in state percentages of meets or exceeds as students reach high school. The district is studying curriculum and instruction, aligning each subject to state standards and developing assessments and goals for all grades through high school. Reading is a focus throughout the district as it affects every subject and can determine outcomes in future jobs and college.

The population of the school at the research site was 122 in 2008-2009, with 67 students

receiving free lunch and nine were getting lunch at a reduced cost. The high poverty enables the school to qualify for Title 1 funds that pay for a part-time reading specialist and one Educational Assistant. The school site is located on multiple grassy acres with nursery stock and cattle fenced out of the play area behind the school. The building was built in the 1940's and added to in the 1950's. A second building was constructed in 1973 and contains the gym and classrooms used for district-wide services for facility operations, technology and special education. The buildings are wood-framed, apricot in color and landscaped by parents from the community club and children in after-school programs (District website, 2009).

Parental involvement is pivotal and families are welcomed to an open-house ice cream feed, two parent-teacher conferences, a Christmas program and monthly assemblies to honor attendance and safe, responsible, respectful citizens of the school. Parents are invited to two Title 1 and ESL programs throughout the year. The programs involve children and parents in activities to promote literacy in all forms of language including: writing, listening, speaking and reading. Dinner and child-care is provided at both events. For three and four-year-olds a program called Little Steps enables parents to bring their younger children to school for an evening of stories and activities focusing on the featured text. Books are given to the participants to expand their personal library and Little Steps occurs four times during the school year. Childcare, desserts and drinks are provided. Parents are encouraged to sign up to assist in the classrooms and help out during special events, parties, Dr. Seuss Day, Field Day and Bubble Day. Training is provided for parents and they are encouraged to join the Parent Teacher Club to become more familiar with the school. Site council includes parents, school staff and the principal in decisions affecting the schoolwide plan and goals of the school from one year to the

next. The plan is revised yearly during site council meetings, after reviewing the school benchmark report card.

The the research site had 129 students. The percentage of students involved in the ESL program is 14.6%. Testing participation was rated as exceptional, with 97.4% participating and 94.1% average daily attendance. 8.9 teachers worked at the school, with an average of 13.5 years of service, 83.3% met the federal definition of “highly qualified” and 16.7% did not. Two teachers were finishing classes to enable them to meet the “highly qualified” criteria. The percentage of white students that exceeded in English language arts in 2007-2008 were 13.2%, 57.9% met and 28.9% did not meet. Hispanic students meeting in English language arts were 60.0% with 40% not meeting. The Limited English Proficient meeting the state criteria in English language arts were 33.3%, with 66.7% not meeting. Students with Disabilities meeting in English language arts were 33.3% with 66.7% not meeting. Economically Disadvantaged students exceeded the state standards by 7.7%, 50.0% met and 42.3% did not meet. In the total school population males exceeded in English language arts standards by 20%, met 55.0% and did not meet 25%. The female population of the school exceeded by 6.7%, 60.0% met and 33.3% did not meet. In all of the student population 12% exceeded, 58% met and 30% did not meet. The academic achievement rated student performance as strong, but when one looks at the past data, one notices a drop in reading in the percentage of students meeting the standards. In the 2006-2007 school year the percentage of students meeting the standard were 92%. In 2007-2008, 73% met. Looking back on the history of the school, this is the largest drop in the past five years. Reading is included in the schoolwide plan, after PBS behavior and writing. Writing is the main focus of the school, but reading is the focus of the study as the researcher is the reading specialist at the school (School Report Card, 2006-2007; 2007-2008).

The research site contains six classrooms: two are Special Education (SPED) Academic and Behavioral classrooms for the district and four contain grades K-5 in varying configurations depending upon the class populations. Guided reading is provided for all of the children in the school. The reading program is called flooding, where children attend reading in small leveled guided reading groups, using teachers, aides and other staff to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the child. The researcher writes plans for Educational Assistants and she also meets with the classroom teachers on a monthly basis, to go over the reading levels of their students and make adjustments in guided reading groups based on data collected from running records and DRA2 assessments. Additionally she focuses group instruction on the classroom teacher's yearly plan to enhance the curriculum for the students. The researcher also shares the latest research on strategies for improving reading at staff meetings and site council.

With the combined scores for reading in grades three, four and five dropping from 92% in 2006-2007 to 73% 2007-2008, the researcher is concerned and looking at research to determine best practices and strategies for the teaching of reading, with a possible focus on fluency. The present program of guided reading assesses the students using age appropriate tests that include Concepts about Print, Letter Identification, Phonemic Awareness, word reading and the Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA2) for grades K-3 and DRA 2 for grades 4-5. The Book room contains multiple texts in various genres at reading levels 0-60 to allow the teaching to progress from where the child is in their reading development. Children are put into small groups of four to six in the lower reading levels and larger groups at the higher levels of expertise. With the lowered reading scores the researcher felt it was time for a change.

The researcher knows that to be effective one needs training in current best practices and their implementation. The researcher decided to examine the reading program looking at the

strategies currently being used, research best practices and implement change to make reading more effective for the students at the research site.

This is the 11<sup>th</sup> year of teaching for the researcher. Previously she was a substitute for one year and taught third grade in another district for five years. She has completed her fifth year in this district as the reading specialist for the research school site. The researcher participated on the board of Site Council for the past five years, headed the committee for two yearly Literacy Nights, participated in the reading adoption of the district, taught an extended day kindergarten program for three years and trains Educational Assistants in SPED and regular classrooms on reading strategies and assessments. Her first degree is a Bachelor's in Human Development, with endorsements in Reading, Early Childhood Education and ESOL and is completing her M.Ed. Program in Curriculum Instruction with a Reading Endorsement.

Through this action research, the researcher is investigating research based practices in fluency assessment and instruction to implement into guided reading groups.



## Action Research Proposal

## Chapter Two-The Problem or Issue

At the school site in 2006-2007, 92% of the researcher's students met the state standard for reading (School Report Card, 2006-2007), while in 2007-2008, 73% of the population met the state standard in reading (School Report Card, 2007-2008). After researching reading in general and fluency in particular, the researcher honed in on fluency as a major reason students are not increasing their reading scores. The assessment used to determine a student's reading level/score includes a timed fluency piece. Students were struggling with this piece in particular. This concern combined with The National Research Council's conclusion that, "Adequate progress in learning to read English (or any alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different texts" (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 223) led the researcher to develop the research question, "What are the best practices for teaching reading fluency in the researcher's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade guided reading group?"

*Literature Review*

Experts in the field have varying opinions on how to define reading fluency. Rasinski points out there has been some disagreement in the definition of fluency (Rasinski, 2006). There are at least three notions of *fluency* that are currently used:

- ❖ "Fluency is reading aloud with accuracy, appropriate speed, and expression." This is the oldest (Huey, 1908/1968, p. 140) and most common definition.
- ❖ Fluency is reading accurately while also comprehending what is read (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). This is also a historical definition tied to "automaticity theory."

- ❖ Fluency is reading aloud fast and accurately. This is a recent definition (Good & Kaminski, 2002), one at odds with both historical definitions because neither “expression” nor “comprehension” is typically evaluated in calculating a student’s fluency performance (Allington, 2009, p. 2).

The International Reading Association’s (IRA) *The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing* defines “fluency” as “freedom from word identification problems that might hinder comprehension” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 85). This disagreement on definitions has led to a lack of fluency instruction in the classroom (Allington, 1983).

The National Reading Panel (2000) included fluency as one of the five pillars of scientific reading instruction. Fluency involves reading aloud accurately and effortlessly with expression and comprehension (NRP, 2000; Rasinski, 2003). Reading fluency is important because it influences the students’ reading competency and comprehension (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Samuels (1997) believes a “fluent reader decodes text automatically-that is, without attention- thus leaving attention free to be used for comprehension” (p. 379). With beginning readers time dedicated to decoding text cannot be used for comprehension (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004) as the time decoding text takes away cognitive time available for making sense or comprehending text just read. LaBerge & Samuels (1974), developed a theory of automatic information processing where the reader is automatically able to decode text and thereby increase their speed and fluency. Reading fluency refers to efficient, effective word recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text. Fluency is manifested in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading and is applied during and makes possible, silent reading comprehension (Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

Kuhn and Rasinski (2007) discuss two parts of fluency essential to reading development; automaticity and prosody. Automaticity is defined as “fluent processing of information that requires little effort or attention, as sight-word recognition” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, Beers, 2003). “Reading automaticity refers to a reader’s ability to recognize words without conscious decoding. It means reader’s recognize words as whole units and they recognize the words quickly and accurately” (Beers, 2003, p. 204). “Automaticity—rapid and accurate word recognition—leads to fluency” (Beers, 2003, p. 205).

Prosody is defined as “the pitch, loudness, tempo, and rhythm patterns of spoken language (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Prosodic reading according to Kuhn and Rasinski (2007) involves “...those elements of language that, when taken together, constitute expressive reading. These include intonation, stress, tempo, and use of appropriate phrasing” (p. 206).

Automaticity and prosody comprise elements necessary to be a fluent word reader and add to a learner’s capacity to construct meaning from text. Proficient readers identify words correctly and recognize them immediately and effortlessly (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2007; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). Accuracy in word decoding is the third key element in reading fluency (Hudson, Lane & Pullen, 2005). Allington (2009) believes that all readers need texts at their current level of expertise in order to read fluently with high levels of accuracy and automaticity. When students read with accuracy and automaticity they are provided with opportunities to practice prosodic features (Mathson, Allington & Solic, 2006). Students need sufficient amounts of time to practice reading, both in and out of school (Allington, 1977, 1983). Reading fluency also depends on models of reading aloud that young children hear (Allington, 2009). When texts given to the readers are too difficult, fluent reading is impossible (Allington, 2009).

*The Relationship between Fluency and Comprehension*

The researcher is especially interested in the effects of fluency on comprehension since, in her experience, when a child's fluency is inhibited comprehension breaks down. Comprehension has been defined as the "essence of reading" (Durkin, 1978-1979) the ultimate goal of successful literacy (Pressley, 2006) and is essential to reading fluency. "... research has confirmed that comprehension processes are used at and beyond the word level. To comprehend even a single word requires much more mental processing than previously thought" (Block and Pressley, 2007, p. 223). Comprehension is identified as one of the five critical components of reading by the National Reading Panel (2000). With readers who are struggling, fluency and its correlation to comprehension are not always utilized as a focus for remedial instruction as teachers primarily maintain an emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics instruction (Chard, Pikulski & McDonagh, 2006). Oral reading is important to fluency because of its correlation to silent reading comprehension. The high correlation between fluency and comprehension (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp & Jenkins, 2001; Rasinski, 2003), with additional fluency practice, results in higher levels of reading comprehension (Samuels, 1997).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found a momentous and undeniable connection between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension (Pinnell, Pikulski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough, & Beatty, 1995). Strecker, Roser & Martinez (1998) believe that the fluency and comprehension relationship is complex in the way that one influences and is in turn influenced by the other. They state "Fluency has been shown to have a 'reciprocal relationship' with comprehension, with each fostering the other" (Strecker, Roser, & Martinez, 1998, p. 306). Chard, Pikulski & McDonagh (2006) discovered "...substantial correlational evidence shows a clear relationship between the amount students read, their reading

fluency and their reading comprehension” (p. 57). Research shows that repeated reading helps struggling readers improve their fluency (Chard, Pikulski & McDonagh, 2006). “Fluency is necessary for high levels of reading achievement because it depends on and typically reflects comprehension” (Chard, Pikulski & McDonagh, 2006, p. 57). Chard, Pikulski and McDonagh believe in a

“..deep construct view of fluency, which considers fluency broadly as part of a developmental process of building oral language and decoding skills that form a bridge to reading comprehension, resulting in a reciprocal, causal relationship with reading comprehension” (2006, p. 40).

This is because fluent reading incorporates accurate, automatic word recognition along with the expressive rendering of text and serves as a bridge between decoding instruction and comprehension (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). Over the past several years, fluency has gained an increasing amount of attention in classroom practice. This is because fluency can make a significant difference in a student’s success as a reader (Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Hudson, Lane & Pullen, 2005).

The researcher believes fluency and comprehension are intertwined and reciprocal and hopes to develop methods of incorporating both in her guided reading group. Research shows that fluency is one of the most important measures of reading ability. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), fluency plays a critical role in reading comprehension. As a reading specialist, the researcher has observed first-hand, that comprehension is the true measure of a child’s reading ability. The NRP noted that the large-scale national study of fluency and comprehension conducted by Pinnell and others (1995) had found a “close relationship” between

the two proficiencies. That is, in this study, the fourth-grade students who exhibited poor fluency also exhibited poor comprehension (Allington, 2009, p. 6).

### *Best Practices in Reading Fluency*

Best practice strategies in reading fluency are varied and diverse, depending upon the reading level of the child and their grade. Literature on the best practices for teaching reading fluency supports the importance of practicing reading with a focus on prosody, phrasing, and rate and word accuracy.

Peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS) is a form of partner reading developed by Fuchs, Fuchs & Burish (2000). In PALS, teachers choose partners to match higher and lower needs students. The partners take turns reading, rereading and retelling.

After first grade, PALS focuses on three activities to support fluency and comprehension:

- Partner reading
- Paragraph shrinking and
- Prediction relay

(Ash & Kuhn, 2006). Students work in their assigned pairs with each student taking a turn as Coach or Reader. The reader reads orally while the coach listens and gives positive feedback about the reading. Students work together asking questions as they read, summarizing and shrinking paragraphs and take turns making predictions using steps of predict, read, check and summarize.

The National Reading Panel (2000) made the conclusion that "...repeated reading and other related oral reading procedures have clear value for improving reading ability." Rereading the

same passage of text has been shown to increase reading rate and accuracy (Chomsky, 1976; & Samuels, 1997) and increase comprehension (Chard, Simmons & Kame'enui, 1998). With repeated reading the student's reading rate improves as their fluency improves and reading is usually not timed because it would focus students on amount of words per minute, or speed instead of comprehension (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2007).

Rasinski (2003) describes four basic principles to help educators and curriculum designers develop effective fluency instruction. These involve:

- Teacher or another fluent reader models fluent reading for students.
- Oral support is provided for students while they are reading.
- Repeated reading is practiced on text given to the student.
- Attention is focused on reading syntactically appropriate, meaningful phrases (Rasinski, 1990).

“These basic principles or fluency-building blocks can be used for instruction and can be combined to create synergistic instructional routines” (Gambrell, Morrow & Pressley, 2007, p.207). In the next paragraph the researcher will discuss various best practice strategies to promote fluency instruction.

Best practice to promote fluency include reading-while-listening, developed by Chomsky, uses audio tapes as a strategy to assist the student in the development of reading fluency and utilizes all the principals listed above. The student listens to a recording of the text while viewing the story and follows along, listening and reading repeatedly until they are able to fluently perform the story aloud. At the beginning of this strategy students may struggle with matching eye movements with the recordings, but eventually they will be able to follow along. With repeated listening and reading students become more fluent in their reading and when

independent reading of the section is achieved the teacher listens to a reading of the story. Once the teacher believes students have mastered the text, they receive the next selection. Over time this process becomes effortless and students require less time to become fluent on later listening and reading selections (Chomsky, 1976). Access to this strategy resulted in students beginning to read independently. The listening and reading strategy has been repeated with excellent results and is a successful way to develop fluency in students (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Pluck, 2006).

Another strategy is repeated reading, a successful design for expanding fluency for individual learners and initially developed for use by the teacher with one student at a time then adapted through paired repeated reading to the regular classroom (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2007). Samuels decided to try to increase word recognition by using repeated reading of a passage of text instead of assigning students to read something new everyday (Samuels, 1997). Repeated reading was developed for readers decoding text accurately but slowly and required the recording of miscues after each reading. This made repeated reading easiest to put into effect in a one-on-one ratio of teacher to child but not easy to practice with a larger group of children (Koskinen & Blum, 1986). Koskinen and Blum designed another way to implement repeated reading by using paired reading.

Paired repeated reading matches students with similar reading ability to practice text at a level just above students' instructional level of reading using guided or shared reading lessons that have been modeled by a fluent reader with proper prosody and expression (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2007; Topping, 1995). Students alternate oral reading of a 50-100 word passage, reading silently once and three times aloud, giving positive feedback to the reader and the reader evaluating their performance and recording it on a self-evaluation sheet. The listener records

their comments on the listening sheet, then they switch roles. Koskinen and Blum (1986) relate that students advance in accuracy and automatic word recognition with improvements on practiced pages transferring to new text, increasing overall fluency.

Authentic repeated reading is reading used for a performance (Rasinski, 2003). In this strategy students have a genuine reason to practice or rehearse a text or a script in order to demonstrate fluency through performance. Genres that lend themselves to performance include scripts as in Readers' Theatre, poetry, speeches, chants, songs, nursery rhymes or texts that reflect the depth of an author's voice (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2007). Using performance and texts that lend themselves to such provide students with motivation to practice while working on expression and meaning. The researcher worked with authentic repeated reading in guided reading groups in the past year and noted an increased motivation to practice rereading to make the performance sound 'right.' All of these methods could be used to increase fluency, comprehension, attitude toward reading and accuracy through authentic repeated reading (Chomsky, 1976; Samuels, 1997; Chard, Simmons & Kame'enui, 1998). Classroom research on authentic repeated reading with use of performance have demonstrated positive results (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Martinez, Roser & Strecker, 1999).

Kuhn and Stahl (2003) discovered that students who read a wide variety of texts just above their instructional level with support had similar gains as those who read one text repeatedly until fluent. Kuhn (2004-2005) compared two forms of small group fluency instruction, wide reading and repeated reading to determine which strategy was most effective. She used small groups of second graders who were struggling with reading. Kuhn met with both groups three times a week for 15-20 minutes. She also had a group that listened to all of the stories but did not read them and a control group. The first group used Fluency Oriented Oral Reading (FOOR)

which is a modified repeated reading technique consisting of echo or choral reading of the same book three times a week. The second group used a wide reading approach where a single or choral reading of three different texts is accomplished in the three times Kuhn met with them. The third group had the three texts read to them without having an opportunity to read them and the control group had no reading instruction beyond what was presented in the classroom. Kuhn found that both groups with the intervention did better than either the group who listened to the stories or the control group and the wide reading group made more growth on comprehension.

Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) (Stahl, Bradley, Smith, Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, Meisinger et al., 2003) was designed for reading and content area instruction in the primary grades. Students repeatedly read a text usually selected by the classroom teacher from basal readers or other resources multiple times over the course of a week. The teacher models fluent reading with proper expression and prosody, while the students read along using their copy of the text. Comprehension is discussed to direct attention to its importance. Students echo-, choral- and partner-read the text and take it home for additional practice. Extension activities usually occur after the readings (Ash & Kuhn, 2006).

Radio reading (Greene, 1979; Opitz & Rasinski, 1998; Searfoss, 1975) uses repeated reading by assigning each student a piece of the text to practice reading. Upon completion of reading the student composes questions from the section to check the comprehension of their peers. The next day the student reads their section orally as if they are radio announcers. Then their peers answer the questions. Sections may be reread to aid in comprehension of the text and assist in student responses to the questions.

The last program the researcher will be discussing is the Fluency Development Lesson (FDL) (Rasinski, Padak, Linek & Sturtevant, 1994) that incorporates some of Kuhn and

Rasinski's principals of effective fluency instruction (2003). Using a daily text, a section is read to students fluently by the teacher two or three times while they read along silently. After the teacher reads aloud, students read the passage chorally as a group supporting each other orally. Next students divide into pairs to begin paired repeated reading where each partner reads the passage two or three times and the other follows along silently and offers support and encouragement. When the practice is finished students are given an opportunity to preform the text for their class by themselves or with a small group. Last, the teacher and students select vocabulary from the reading to study. Students may take the selection home to practice another time with their family.

Gains in overall fluency and an improvement in reading achievement were accomplished with second grade students using FDL (Rasinski et al., 1994). A variation of FDL was developed by Padak and Rasinski (2005) for home use called Fast Start. Fast Start has a caregiver or parent work with the student on a rhyme or short text everyday. The adult reads the text to the child repeatedly two or three times while pointing at the words and the child follows along. Next the caregiver and child read the text together two or three times, still pointing at the words. Then the caregiver or parent listens to the child reads the passage to them a few times. Last, the adult and child choose one or more words to study from the text. An example would be is the word *wall* as in Humpty Dumpty was found in the passage the parent or caregiver could write and read words within the *all* family, such as *fall, tall, gall, hall* or others. Rasinski and Stevenson (2005) discovered that Fast Start students made double the gain in fluency than their counterparts who did not participate in the program.

Best practice strategies in fluency are articulated throughout these various studies and programs. The review of these practices gave the researcher insight into what has been

found to be effective in the development of fluency.

*What assessments demonstrate gains in reading fluency?*

Classroom assessments of fluency range from formal to informal. The National Reading Panel (2000) described possible informal assessments that could be used to indicate fluent reading. These informal assessments may include:

- Informal reading inventories (Johnson, Kress & Pikulski, 1987)
- Miscue analysis (Goodman & Burke, 1972)
- Pausing indices (Pinnell et al., 1995)
- Running records (Clay, 2000)
- Reading speed calculations (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992).

“All of these assessment procedures require oral reading of text and all can be used to provide an adequate index of fluency” (NRP, 2000, p.9). However, none of them give the entire assessment picture. Another informal assessment that requires oral reading for the timed part of the assessment, uses miscue analysis, includes a comprehension piece and a rubric that informs instruction is the Developmental Reading Assessment2 (DRA2) (Beaver & Carter, 2006). DRA was initially developed by Joetta Beaver in 1986 and was used with students in grades K-3 with leveled texts based on Reading Recovery levels A through 44. DRA2 was modified and updated in 2004-2005 developing alternative texts for all grades K-8, adding DRA Word Analysis and expanding assessment to grades 4-8, levels 40 through 80 and adding a written piece to the assessment. The goals of the DRA2 remain the same:

- To accurately and effectively assess students’ reading engagement, oral reading fluency and comprehension and

- To help identify students' strengths and weaknesses in order to inform future instruction. (Beaver & Carter, 2006).

Fluency may be assessed using different kinds of measurements as discussed by Kuhn & Rasinski (2007). One method uses Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) Target Rate Norms (Rasinski, 2004) "...an assessment designed to assess students' rate (correct words per minute) and word recognition accuracy" (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2007, p. 213) See Appendix A.

Another assessment is the "National Assessment of Educational Progress's (NAEP) Oral Reading Fluency Scale (1995) a measure that incorporates phrasing, smoothness, pace and expression and evaluates children's oral reading against a range of behaviors from reading that is primarily word-by-word and monotonous to reading that incorporates higher level attributes in a fluent rendering of text" (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2007, p. 214). See Appendix B. "Comprehensive assessment of fluency must include measures of oral reading accuracy, rate and quality" (Chard, Pikulski, & McDonagh, 2006, p.57). Chard, Pikulski, & McDonagh, (2006) also believe fluency must be assessed in the context of reading comprehension.

### *Summary*

In this chapter the researcher first presented the issue: Reading scores have dropped at the research site. She then identified the possible cause of the decrease in scores as lack of reading fluency. Next, the researcher presented a review of the literature with a definition of reading fluency and highlighted the critical role that fluency plays in the overall reading process. Then she discussed the relationship between fluency and comprehension and described best practices for instruction of reading fluency. Finally, the researcher discussed assessments that accurately

and effectively assess students' reading fluency in order to identify students' strengths and weaknesses with the ultimate goal of informing instruction.



## Action Research Proposal

## Chapter Three-The Goal of the Action Research Project

The goal of this action research project is to improve reading fluency by using best practice strategies with the researcher's fourth and fifth grade guided reading group. The researcher wants to discover specific strategies that will guide her instruction and adapt to all levels of fluency, even the emergent readers who are still working to attain the basic elements of reading. The literature review explained viewpoints toward various best practices in reading to inform fluency and comprehension. The researcher's goal is to try several researched based strategies to promote fluency and to determine the ones that are most effective. Additionally, the researcher wants to develop a Best Practices notebook in fluency for use by the staff at her school to enable others to share in her learning.

During this action research project the researcher will be using a variety of techniques to collect data. After meeting with her principal in August the researcher will determine a baseline of reading competence utilizing developmentally appropriate assessments, approved by her district. The participants in the action research study will include students in one of the researcher's guided reading groups. Because the researcher is the reading specialist for the school, she will be working with students from kindergarten through fifth grade with reading difficulties, who are usually from one to two or more years behind in their reading development. This study will focus on one group of six 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. All of the assessment results will be recorded on an assessment sheet and updated every trimester. Each classroom teacher will be given the assessment results to assist the reading specialist and the classroom teachers' collaboration on the formation of guided reading groups.

To collect the baseline data, the researcher will use surveys on reading attitudes, statewide

reading test scores if applicable, DRA2s from previous and current year, student interviews and discussions

In order to demonstrate the various best practices being used, the researcher will negotiate a separate time for fluency work, beyond the regular time for guided reading groups. She will develop a lesson plan with the objective of fluency and name the best practices being used, the students involved and a reflection after each lesson taught. The researcher will also document observations and use running records to monitor developing fluency throughout the guided reading lessons.

At the beginning of the school year, the researcher will be testing students using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2) to determine their level of reading proficiency based on oral reading fluency from the DRA2 assessment that includes; expression, phrasing, rate and accuracy. The researcher will give all of the students a DRA2 student reading survey (Appendix C).

With this survey the researcher hopes to better understand the reading attitudes of the students in the guided reading groups. The surveys will also demonstrate a baseline attitude toward reading self-assessment and goal setting. As the various best practices are modeled and implemented in the guided reading groups, the researcher will have a discussion about the practice and collect anecdotal records. Running records will be taken in the middle of the study to check for growth.

At the end of the study, the researcher will retest students for reading fluency growth using the DRA2. The researcher will compare and analyze the results to determine growth in fluency, attitudes and understandings about reading and implement adjustments as necessary to ensure

fluent, successful readers and positive attitudes toward reading. The researcher will share information about fluency with the staff.



Action Research Proposal

Chapter Four-Action Plan

The goal of this action research project is to determine strategies for best practice in reading fluency with the researcher's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade guided reading group. The researcher will determine best practice strategies for reading fluency and implement them.

The issue is significant because the research site had a 20 point drop in their State benchmark Reading scores in the 2007-2008 school year. An ability to read fluently with adequate prosody, automaticity and accuracy in word decoding are the key elements in reading fluency and ensure comprehension and understanding of what is read. What practices promote fluency in reading? Children of all grade levels may appear to be reading fluently, comprehension is not a given. Some students are literally "barking at words" (Goodman,1973) with no meaning or comprehension.

Using Rasinski's (2003) four basic principles of fluency instruction as the framework, the researcher will examine possible solutions to this issue and determine which one is best.

*Possible Solutions*

After reviewing programs to teach fluency based on best practices, the researcher chose four to study in depth.

The first reading program the researcher reviewed was Great Leaps (Campbell, 1998). On the web-site the Great Leaps program states that it "...uses proven instructional tactics with powerful motivators to remediate a variety of reading problems." The program was developed by K. U. Campbell in 1998 in Florida. Great Leaps was developed as an additional reading program to be used as a supplement to the curriculum implemented and is used with one student and one adult.

The primary focus is on reading fluency, assuming that comprehension will improve as the child becomes a more fluent reader. The materials an elementary reading program manual for grades 3-5 at \$99.00, or an elementary program package that includes the program manual and a student edition for \$159.00. Elementary stories, supplementary stories for young readers cost \$66.00 and are all authored by the same person at reading levels 3.1, third grade first month, 3.2, third grade, second month, etc. The program runs for three years, but may be shortened to fit in a smaller time frame, with less positive results. The researcher located some articles about Great Leaps research and positive results with the program. Training requires a three hour program and the fee was not on the page with the manuals and other materials.

The program consists of five to seven minute daily practice sessions. During those sessions minutes the student reads three timed readings, one under each of the following headings: phonics, sight phrases and stories. Each reading is timed for one minute and the goal is for the student to read each page with no more than two errors. Error correction is immediate and followed by modeling of the correct response. When mastery is attained on a page, the student progresses or “leaps,” to the next page of slightly more difficult material. The curriculum extends from grades K-12 and there is also adult material available.

The researcher rejects this program because it does not incorporate best practices, cost is prohibitive and it has limited book genres. All stories were written by one author. No non-fiction is included in the materials. There were no materials or manuals available for grades K-2. All the materials must be copied, which increases the initial cost in ink, time and paper. To implement a one to one program would be also too expensive at this time.

The second reading program the researcher studied was FORI, an approach based research by Stahl & Heubach (2005). Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction and involves scaffolded,

repeated reading of grade-level texts over the course of a week following a specific lesson plan.

The lesson plan contains components which include the following and the program is designed for whole class instruction:

- The approaches are designed for whole class instruction
- Each lesson should be comprehension oriented to include the normal discussion with the class regarding vocabulary, pre- and post- reading exercises, building background knowledge, etc.
- An entire story or expository text, rather than a poem or short passage must be used. Text length should be approximately 450-650 words.
- The texts can be from basal readers, literature anthologies, or trade books. The reading level of the texts should be at least second grade level (ranging from J-M in terms of guided reading levels). They should be challenging texts.
- There should be a *minimum* of four scaffolded (or supported) readings of each text along with *at least* one independent reading of the story completed at home.
- It is expected that at least 90 minutes of instruction time should be devoted to literacy.
- FORI should constitute 20-30 minutes of that time each day.
- FORI can be used in *conjunction* with guided reading, reading workshops, etc.

FORI integrates three strategies into the daily reading of one text throughout the week or lesson. With repeated reading, students are exposed to the text numerous times, which can increase a student's rate of reading, accuracy of decoding and text comprehension. Repeated reading in this program is designed to support students' text reading by gradually releasing responsibility of reading from the teacher to the individual students by repeatedly modeling

fluent reading of the text. The repeated reading of one weekly text using different formats allows students opportunities to listen to and silently read the text (teacher read-aloud) and to read the text aloud with the teacher (choral and echo reading) or a partner (partner reading), while gaining confidence as fluent readers.

FORI uses best practices in its design with many repeated reading formats, but the researcher rejects this program because it is based on whole classroom use, not small groups. The program has no additional cost, as the directions are explicit and it uses leveled books from the book room. Longer stories at grade level are used and this program would assist classroom teachers in their use of best practices. The drawbacks are that the reading room has about 8-10 copies of each text. The performance element is also lacking.

The next program is identical to FORI, except it is called Wide reading. Wide reading emphasizes the role of extensive scaffolded oral reading practice and the reading of a wide variety of texts. It follows all of the same scaffolded practices of the FORI lesson plan, except that instead of a single repeated text per week, there is less emphasis on repeated reading. Instead, children read three different texts per week. This program follows the same lesson plan except after repeating the story Monday through Wednesday, on Thursday a new story is introduced and another new story on Friday. All the other elements are the same.

The researcher also rejects this program because it is more suitable for classroom use. Again, the pieces being read would need to be copied if enough copies were not available. Variety in reading genres and chapter books as well as poetry would not fit into this plan adequately; or would Readers Theatre (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003).

The last reading program for review is The Fluency Development Lesson: Synergistic

Fluency Instruction developed by Rasinski, Padak, Linek & Sturtevant (1994). FDL is an effective approach to teaching reading fluency and includes modeling, assisted reading, repeated reading, performance reading, and word study and home and school involvement. The website stated that, "It was recognized by the US National Reading Panel as an effective approach to reading instruction." The FDL uses relatively short reading passages (poems, rhymes, songs, story segments or other texts) that students read and reread over a brief period of time. The lesson format follows the release of responsibility model, where the teacher takes responsibility for reading the daily passage and gradually shifts responsibility for the reading over to the students. The lesson plan is as follows:

- The teacher introduces a new short text to the class and reads it aloud two or three times, while the students follow along silently. The text can be a poem, segment for a basal passage or trade book.
- The teacher and students discuss the nature and content of the passage as well as the quality of the teacher's reading of the passage.
- The teacher and the students read the passage chorally several times. Antiphonal reading and other variations are used to create and maintain engagement.
- The teacher organizes students into pairs or trios. Each student practices the passage three times while his or her partner listens and provides support and encouragement.
- Individuals and groups of students perform their reading for the class or other audience (such as another class, a parent visitor, the school principal, or another teacher).
- The students and their teacher then choose four or five interesting words from the text to add to students' word banks or to their classroom word wall.
- Students engage in 5 to 10 minutes of word study activities (e.g., word sorts with word

bank words, word walls, flash card practice, defining words, word games, etc.).

- The students take a copy of the passage home to practice with parents and other family members.
- The following day students read the passage from the previous day to the teacher or a fellow student for accuracy and fluency. Words for the previous day are also read, reread, grouped and sorted by students and groups of students. The instructional routine then begins again with the first step, using a new passage.

This fluency lesson would adapt to the researcher's guided reading groups and would fit the best practices' framework. Research supports the program and it can be implemented with current books in the reading room. The researcher is also considering leveled Readers Theatre scripts because they lend themselves to repeated readings and performance. Students will set goals for accuracy and fluency and review their progress three times during the study. In guided reading groups strategies with print are taught, as well as fluency and determining word meaning in the context of the story. Comprehension is developed through discussions of author's voice, character motivation and plot development. This reading program with its best practices and design uses effective instructional strategies to promote fluency instruction. The researcher will use this format and report on its effectiveness in monthly staff meetings.

*Action Plan Time line:*

This action research plan will begin in August and continue until March. The time line is as follows:

- August- The researcher will obtain permission from the principal and district office to conduct this action research proposal.

- September- The researcher will have students complete a survey to help them think about themselves as a reader and an elementary reading survey. Students will complete a DRA2 for a fluency baseline. The researcher will meet with teachers to set up guided reading groups based on DRA2 data.
- October- The researcher will begin guided reading groups implementing best practices using the FDL lessons developed by Rasinski, Padak, Linek & Sturtevant (1994) and begin to collect anecdotal data including daily lessons and surveys.
- November- Continued FDL lessons. Begin additional time to meet with guided reading group- 20 minutes three times a week. Perform running records on group, record data. Update notebook.
- December- Continue meeting guided reading group additional time, continue FDL lesson plan. Update notebook.
- January- Continue meeting additional time using FDL lessons. Update action research notebook.
- February- Continue meeting additional time using FDL lessons. Update notebook.
- March- Administer DRA2. Administer survey to guided reading group again. Continue FDL lesson plans and additional meeting time. Update action research notebook. Analyze and interpret data collected for action research project. A final write-up will be completed by April.

### Action Research Report

#### Chapter Five-Results and Next Steps

Reading scores at the researchers school dropped precipitously from the 2006-2007 school year to the 2007-2008 school year. While instructing guided reading groups the researcher realized fluency was not being addressed. The researcher wants to find the best methods for teaching fluency to answer the question: “What are best practices for teaching fluency in reading for the researcher's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade guided reading group?” The purpose of this action research is to incorporate current best practice strategies for fluency into the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade guided reading group to enable the researcher's students to become confident, fluent readers.

The best practice model the researcher used was a modified version of the Fluency Development Lesson: Synergistic Fluency Instruction (FDL), developed by Rasinski, Padak, Linek & Sturtevant (1994).

FDL is an effective approach to teaching reading fluency that includes:

- modeling,
- assisted reading,
- repeated reading,
- performance reading,
- word study and
- home and school involvement.

FDL uses relatively short reading passages (poems, rhymes, songs, story segments or other texts) that students read and reread over a brief period of time. The lesson format follows the release of responsibility model, where the teacher initially reads the daily passage and gradually shifts responsibility for the reading over to the students.

To develop a baseline, Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA2) were administered in the fall of the year, with two running records recorded before grading periods and an ending DRA2 to demonstrate growth in fluency and comprehension. The researcher additionally used anecdotal notes and records taken during guided reading group; pre-and post- DRA2 student reading survey for grades 4-5; and results of the DRA2 fluency assessment from the beginning and end of the study to determine growth in fluency for the six students in her guided reading group. She also assessed at growth in reading level and comprehension.

Comprehension scores are below.

**DRA2 CONTINUUM**

**September-March Data**

Names	DRA2 Level		Comprehension
	September	March	
Cheryl 4 <sup>th</sup> grade	40	50	Cheryl scored at independent in comprehension at Level 40 and at Level 50
Julie 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	40	50	Julie scored at independent in comprehension at Level 40 and at Level 50
Jessie 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	40	50	Jessie scored at independent in comprehension at Level 40 and instructional at Level 50, missing independent by one point
Eduardo 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	40	50	Eduardo scored at independent in comprehension at Level 40 and instructional at Level 50, missing independent by one point
John 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	38	50	John scored at instructional in comprehension at Level 38, missing independent by one point and he scored independent at Level 50 in comprehension

Three students made a years growth or more in comprehension, while two were one point away from passing the Level 50, or fifth grade test in comprehension. The raw data from students scores is included in the appendix.

Oral reading fluency data from the DRA2 Continuum follows (see Appendix D). The table below shows students' oral reading fluency growth from September to March.

## DRA2 CONTINUUM

### Oral Reading Fluency September-December-March Data

Names	Expression and Phrasing			Rate (WPM)			Accuracy: Word Analysis		
	Sept.	Dec.	Mar.	Sept.	Dec.	Mar.	Sept.	Dec.	Mar.
Cheryl	Indep.	Indep.	Indep.	Instr. 84	Inter. 70	Indep. 131	Adv. 99%	Indep. 97%	Adv. 99%
Julie	Indep.	Indep.	Indep.	Instr. 96	Inter. 76	Indep. 111	Adv. 99%	Indep. 98%	Adv. 99%
Jessie	Inter.	Indep.	Indep.	Inter. 63	Inter. 80	Indep. 117	Inter. 95%	Indep. 98%	Adv. 99%
Eduardo	Indep.	Indep.	Indep.	Indep. 123	Indep. 123	Indep. 132	Indep. 98%	Indep. 98%	Adv. 99%
John	Indep.	Indep.	Indep.	Indep. 114	Indep. 114	Indep. 115	Adv. 99%	Adv. 99%	Adv. 99%

Inter.=Intervention Instr.=Instructional Indep.=Independent Adv.=Advanced

All students became independent in expression and phrasing in oral reading fluency by March. The largest gain in oral reading fluency was in rate, or words per minute. Every student increased their rate to an independent level. All students read with 99% accuracy in March.

In September Cheryl, a fourth grader, took a DRA2 Text Level 40 and did not pass because of her reading rate, or words per minute (wpm), where she scored at an instructional level. By March, Cheryl performed at DRA2 Text Level 50 and moved to independent in rate (wpm).

Julie, a fifth grade student, took a DRA2 Text Level 40 in September and her rate (wpm) was off by four seconds putting her at an instructional level in rate. By March, Julie performed at DRA2 Text Level 50 and was independent in rate (wpm).

Jessie, a fifth grader, took a DRA2 Text Level 50 in September and did not pass his expression and phrasing, rate (wpm), and accuracy. Jessie scored at an intervention level in expression and phrasing, rate and accuracy. By March, Jessie performed at a DRA2 Text Level 50 and moved to independent in expression and phrasing, rate (wpm) and advanced in accuracy.

Eduardo, a fifth grader, took a DRA2 Text Level 40 and passed all elements of oral reading fluency at an independent level. By March, Eduardo performed a DRA2 Text Level 50 passed reading fluency and rate at independent and advanced in accuracy.

John, a fifth grader, took a DRA2 Text Level 38 and passed at independent in most elements of oral reading fluency and advanced in accuracy. By March, John performed at a DRA2 Text Level 50, and passed at independent in most elements of oral reading fluency and advanced in accuracy. Raw data is included in the Appendix E.

Student reading survey data is below.

**September Student Reading Survey**

Names	Wide Reading		Self-Assessment/Goal Setting	
	September	March	September	March
Cheryl	Instructional	Advanced	Independent	Advanced
Julie	Instructional	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced
Jessie	Independent	Advanced	Independent	Advanced
Eduardo	Independent	Advanced	Independent	Advanced
John	Instructional	Independent	Independent	Independent

In wide reading, four students moved to advanced and one to independent by March, indicating more engagement in reading with multiple texts. Self-assessment and goal setting changed for three students, while two stayed the same. Actual surveys are included in Appendix C.

The study began with six students. Winter term another student moved into the school and joined the group. As the year progressed a student moved out of the study and a new student was added to the guided reading group. Incomplete data was available from the last two students. The researcher decided not to use the data from the new student because it was not complete. As five students began and ended the study as a mostly intact group, the researcher used their data to demonstrate the strategies that contribute to fluency growth.

The researcher began her study of fluency by determining how to incorporate the Fluency Development Lesson (FDL) with her study group of fourth and fifth grade students who were disfluent readers. At the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year the fourth and fifth graders in the study were approximately one year behind in reading fluency rate (wpm). Students' processing of text inhibited their ability to understand what they had read and part of the difficulty was unknown vocabulary. Some students focused on onset, and attached any word that began with the beginning chunk, whether it made sense or not, just to increase their speed. Many discussions followed and explicit teaching of looking for clues in the text of what might come next to determine possibilities for vocabulary. Vocabulary was previewed using five words the researcher thought might not be known to her students and other words were taught in the context of the text, with students sharing what they thought the words meant, then checking the meaning with the dictionaries. Sometimes comprehension was confused because of inadequate phrasing. All of these factors contributed to the researcher using the FDL lesson plan to move her students from slow non-fluent readers to reading with prosodic features and a better understanding of the elements of fluency. The lessons were developed by the researcher initially by adapting the text students were currently reading.

- The researcher introduced a new text passage by reading aloud a short portion a few times with the students following along silently with their copy.
- Next the researcher and her students discussed the nature and content of the passage and the quality of the reading.
- The passage was read chorally several times minding the punctuation and making the language come alive.
- Words were defined in the context of the story, with students predicting their meaning, then confirming with a dictionary.
- Students worked in pairs and trios to practice the passage, while the partners offered support and encouragement.
- Students preformed for their guided reading group.
- Students took their text home practice the passage and read the following chapter.
- Students reread the passage and as the year progressed began to choose a 'golden line' or passage they felt was pivotal to the story.

The researcher noted students engagement with making the story 'come alive' and having an opportunity to preform before their peers. She decided as the students finished the text to change the reading genre to poetry Anecdotal notes are included in Appendix F.

Poetry would introduce another way to practice reading fluently. New texts were introduced that lent themselves to multiple choral reading opportunities. Mary Ann Hoberman's various "You Read to Me, I'll Read to You" texts (2001, 2004, 2005 & 2007) divide the reading parts into two sections that may be read individually with a center section shared, or two groups may

read the sections and share the middle. The performance of the guided reading group was greeted with such enthusiasm by their peers, that the researcher shared additional copies of the texts and the entire classroom began practicing parts for later presentation. Below is the lesson plan the researcher used in her group.

- The researcher introduced a new passage of poetry by reading aloud the short poem several times with the students following along silently with their copy.
- Next the researcher and her students discussed the nature and content of the passage and the quality of the reading.
- The passage was read chorally several times minding the punctuation and making the language come alive with students reading their parts orally.
- Words were defined in the context of the story.
- Students worked in pairs and trios to practice the passage, while the partners offered support and encouragement.
- Students preformed for their classroom of peers.

At the end of the study the researcher determined through observation and assessment that the Fluency Development Lesson was successful in instilling enjoyment of repeated reading but could be incorporated with poetry more effectively than a novel and poetry lent itself more readily to performance. Opportunities to perform created additional motivation and even the most hesitant readers began to bloom, as they discovered their 'voice'.

During the study the researcher kept a reflection journal with anecdotal notes describing the fluency group lessons and results (found in Appendix F). The study began with the researcher explaining the oral reading fluency rubric to the group. She demonstrated what disfluent reading

sounds like, then fluent reading. Students noticed the choppy robot reading and lack of accuracy. The odd phrasing changed the meaning of the piece or made meaning difficult to ascertain. Students worked on making their reading sound like talking, adding expression, phrasing, rate and accuracy and over time.

The researcher discussed the importance of punctuation, demonstrated what it sounded like and students practiced their reading and including punctuation. Emotion and pausing for effect were accommodated. Accuracy was influenced by ability to predict what would happen next. Students focused on thinking about possible words that extended the story or poem. Reading through the whole word was emphasized. As students practiced there were some 'Aha' moments. One student, on the third reading of a section of text figured out the meaning of a word and understood what occurred in the story.

The researcher administered DRAs to check for increases in rate and asked questions to check for understanding. Rate slowly improved and comprehension seemed to keep pace. The researcher demonstrated a timed reading and students observed how fast and accurately she was reading. They caught every error, but mimicked the researcher's rate and prosody.

Fluency practice happened three times a week, occurring after lunch recess for twenty minutes. At first, students did not want to miss the read-aloud the home room teacher was presenting. Eventually, as the text, or poem became more exciting, they rushed in and were immediately ready to start. Once poetry reading was implemented they were more excited and wanted to perform. They willingly practiced, making voices interesting, pausing for effect, phrasing and pacing appropriately. Students switched parts to become familiar with all of the characters, then chose their favorite for the classroom demonstration. After their classroom presentation of Reader's Theatre poetry, the entire class wanted to be involved. Reluctant readers

teamed up with more fluent readers. The researcher has four different books in multiple sets of eight to ten, enough for every member of the class to participate. At this time, twelve books are still being used.

Elements of fluency became evident in both reading groups; fluency and guided reading as the group included prosody. Emotion in the reading increased as did the expression. One student who is high functioning autistic was able to channel his energies into his performance and displayed an exemplar reader. His performance held the class in awe. He usually is being told to quiet down and this time, he did not have to hold back. In the future Reader's Theatre will be included in all my reading groups in some form.

### *Conclusion*

Throughout this study on fluency development, the researcher used the FDL strategies to teach reading fluency and accuracy. Students' expression and phrasing improved, however none of them moved to advanced. Jessie went from the intervention level to independent and the other students remained at an independent level for expression and phrasing (see anecdotal notes in Appendix F). The FDL strategies were effective in increasing reading engagement and oral reading fluency. Students' rates improved from September's assessment to March. Cheryl's reading rate improved by 36%; Julie's reading rate improved by 14%; Jessie made a 46% improvement in reading rate; Eduardo increased his reading rate by 7%; and John increased by .9%. All of the students were advanced in accuracy by the end of the study. The researcher found her students to be more motivated by poetry than general text. The Hoberman books are still being used.

The researcher met her goals in fluency and was thrilled to find that her students were more motivated to read aloud in front of a group, after the strategies were implemented. As students' reading became more expressive, rates improved, as did accuracy. By the end of this study, most students increased their reading engagement and were reading multiple books from numerous genres. It was very powerful for the researcher to take an in-depth look at this component of reading. Poetry will be the genre of choice, as the poems are shorter and lend themselves to multiple readings and performance more readily than text. Throughout this study the researcher noticed as fluency and accuracy increased, the students' self-confidence appeared to rise. With more time to reflect and think about the reading, the study group made more and deeper connections which included connecting events in one text with texts previously read.

### *So What?*

The researcher discovered that too much of a text was worse than not enough. As the research progressed the researcher went from two or more pages of text to one page, then a favorite paragraph and a 'golden line,' one a student would want to include in their writing. With too much text, students were becoming bored and their enthusiasm was waning. The researcher settled on less because of lack of time and need to encompass more elements of the reading process. Students shared their thoughts about fluency and how they were reading. Some began the year believing they needed to slow down, but ended by realizing the text difficulty has a bearing on the speed of the reading. As students became more familiar with the text style and vocabulary, they adapted their speed to the difficulty and increased it, as the text became more familiar.

*Suggestions for further study*

The connection between comprehension and fluency is something to investigate further. The researcher will share the information from her study with staff in a notebook that will include the components of the FDL program, reader's theater scripts, and her references from her action research. Articles on fluency that were collected from this study will also be included. The researcher will share her findings at a staff meeting in the near future. The researcher will adapt fluency practice to her guided reading groups as one more piece of the reading process and will be incorporating these best practices immediately.

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**Appendix A: Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) Target Rate Norms:**

BEST PRACTICES IN READING FLUENCY 5

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	100-140	110-150	120-160
7	110-150	120-160	130-170
8	120-160	130-170	140-180

(Rasinski, 2004).



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**Appendix B: NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale**

<i>National Assessment of Educational Progress's Oral Reading Fluency Scale</i>	
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. (1995).

(NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale, 1995).



**Appendix C: Student Reading Survey**

**September Wide Reading Student Reading Survey Data**

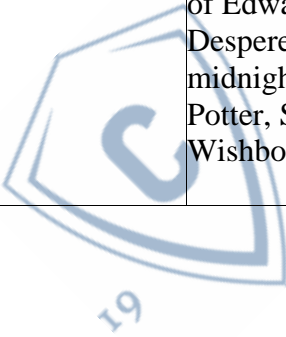
<b>Names</b>	<b>Titles of latest books you have been reading</b>	<b>What are you reading at school now?</b>	<b>What are you reading at home now?</b>	<b>Think about your favorite authors and books. What do you like to read? Tell why.</b>
Cheryl	Amber brown	The Amazing Panda Adventure	Bats	Mystery Animal
Julie	The Black Stallion.	Warriors	Nothing	Animal-I really like animals because I live on a farm with a lot of animals.
Jessie	Dragon rider, Mystery painting-Box car children, Wolf Brothers, Pursuit of happiness	Eragon, Anna Frank	Nothing	I like to read mystery books and I like my book is Eragon
Eduardo	The midnight fox, wildlife, All about sharks, Bud, not buddy	The midnight fox	Wildlife	I like to read non-fiction books. Why, because is about nature
John	Starwars	Starwars, The Deadly Hunter	Same book	J.R.Rolwing-Harry Potter, because I like Harry Potter

**March Wide Reading Student Reading Survey Raw**

Names	Titles of latest books you have been reading	What are you reading at school now?	What are you reading at home now?	Think about your favorite authors and books. What do you like to read? Tell why.
Cheryl	The Journey of Edward, Twilight, New Moon, Craft Books, Midnight Fix, Pets, Breaking Dawn, Dogs, American Girl, World Records, Wolf Brother, Scary Stories to tell in the dark. Eclipse, The Report Card	The Tail of Despereaux	Twilight	I like fiction books because you can picture how it is and it's like not real and you can picture it.
Julie	Hoof beats, The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane, The Best Craft book ever, Creating with paper, The ginger man, The midnight fox, The story of Abraham Lincoln, American girl, Don't let the pigeon drive the bus, The school story, Green eggs and ham, Obleck, many DR. Seuss books.	The Tail of Despereaux, Wolf brother, Hoof beats.	Hoof beats, Little house in the big woods.	I like nonfiction (Animals). Because you always learn something new, that you did not know.

BEST PRACTICES IN READING FLUENCY 5

Jessie	Diary of a wimpy kid, Wolf Brother, Swindal, Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane, Craft books, Midnight Fox, Eragon, Airplane, Animal books, Magic tree house, Box car children, Ripley's believe it, or not.	The Tail of Despereaux, Diary of a wimpy kid, wolf Brother, Swindal	The Tail of Despereaux, Diary of a wimpy kid, wolf Brother, Swindal	Avi, and I like fiction books.
Eduardo	The midnight fox, The miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane, Reptiles and how they produce, Wolf brother.	The Tail of Despereaux, Wolf Brother	Reptiles and how the produce, Ripley's believe it or not.	I like to read non-fiction books because it is not a made up book, and it tells you about the life.
John	Miraculous Journey of Edward, Tale of Despereaux, The midnight fox, Harry Potter, Starwars, Wishbone	Starwars. The life and times of Obi-wahnkenobi	Wishbone	JK Rowling, J.R. Tolkien.



**September Self-Assessment/Goal Setting Data**

Names	3 Things do well	3 Things could do better	What you plan to do
Cheryl	Chunk. Sound out words. Go back.	Whisper read. Go slow. Reading with expression.	Read over the summer more than I usually do.
Julie	Sound out words. Picture. Whisper read.	Go slow. Think about what you are reading. Go back.	Read slow and go back because I always read very fast and never go back.
Jessie	Context clues. Sound out words. Whisper read. Stretching words.	To become a better reader I need to work on things like back track and I need to work on not getting distracted.	I plan to become a better reader by reading more.
Eduardo	I know some words. I am happy that read. I want to make a book.	Read a little better. Have someone read to me. Know words better.	Stop on period. Know words better.
John	I sound out words. I think twice about what I am reading. I go back to where I started.	I need to whisper read. I need to go slow. I need to read with expression.	Read every night.

**March Self-Assessment/Goal Setting Data**

Names	<b>3 Things do well</b>	<b>3 Things could do better</b>	<b>What you plan to do</b>
Cheryl	I stop at the commas and the periods. I say it with character. I'm better at fluency. I'm better at using italics.	Read with expression. Read faster. I need to read more books.	Read thick books and more books.
Julie	Pauses at periods. I'm better at fluency and I'm better at using italics.	Reading faster. I think I need to read more books. I need to think about my reading.	I will go to the library with my grandma. I will pay attention to the book when I read.
Jessie	I'm better at fluency. I stop at commas and periods. I can tell what the characters do. Think about my reading.	Stopping at the end of the chapter. And stop at periods and commas. And stop at punctuation.	Read faster, and I need to read more. And do not read ahead.
Eduardo	I respected the periods. I am a good reader. I think a lot.	Read faster, not too fast though. Have louder voice. Make sentences make more sense.	Be a faster reader, have more expression.
John	I reread the chapter. I pause at the commas and I look for punctuation.	Read more slowly and pronounce words correctly, work on sentence fluency	Read with expression

**Appendix D: DRA2 CONTINUUM****Oral Reading Fluency Rubric for Fiction DRA Level 50 Cry Foul**

	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Instructional</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>Expression</b>	1 Monotone; very little expression	2 Some expression that conveys meaning	3 Expression emphasizing key phrases and words at times	4 Expression emphasizing key phrases and words effectively
<b>Phrasing</b>	1 Mostly word-by-word	2 Inappropriate pauses; shorter phrases most of the time	3 Generally appropriate pauses; heeds most punctuation; longer, meaningful phrases most of the time	4 Appropriate pauses; heeds all punctuation; consistently longer, meaningful phrases
<b>Rate</b>	1 84WPM or less	2 85-114 WPM	3 115-150 WPM	4 151 WPM or more
<b>Accuracy</b>	1 95% or less	2 96%	3 97%-98%	4 99%-100%
<b>Score</b>	4 5 6	7 8 9 10	11 12 13 14	15 16

**Appendix E**

**DRA2 CONTINUUM**

**Reading Engagement Rubric DRA2 Student Reading Survey Grades 4-5**

	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Instructional</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Wide Reading	1 Titles below grade level; limited reading experiences and book knowledge	2 2-3 titles slightly below grade level; some reading experiences	3 At least 4 titles from 2-3 genres or multiple books from 1 genre; generally on grade texts	4 Wide variety of titles across 3 or more genres; many on- and above-grade-level texts
Self-Assessment/ Goal Setting	1 No strengths and/or goals related to the reading process; no real plan	2 General strengths and goals (e.g., read more); general plan	3 At least 1-2 specific strengths and goals related to the reading process; relevant plan	3 specific strengths and goals related to the reading process; 2-3 step plan
Score	2 3	4 5	6 7	8 9



**Appendix F: Anecdotal Records**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Notes</b>
November	<p>Students began to understand the meaning of poetry. We worked on specific paragraphs, focusing on punctuation and prosody. Explained unknown words after trying to figure them out in context. Read chorally, and re-read specific poems to work on prosody. From a chapter book, reminded students to stop at periods and short pause at commas. We worked on questioning for comprehension and re-tell. Began focusing on similies in context of story, explained tier II words in the context of a story, and made a list of these words. Demonstrated emotion with voice. Read parts silently, orally, and took them home to practice.</p> <p>Jessie was adding many extra words that did not make sense, so we focused on accuracy. We worked on note-taking, reviewed words in the context of a story, pacing, and punctuation.</p>
December	<p>In a new chapter book, worked on prosody, phrasing, exact wordage, and unknown words were: “linen closet”, “frenzy”, “perilous”, and “pneumonia.” We used antonyms and synonyms for word substitutions, to help with understanding of vocabulary. We focused on adjectives to practice visualization with a story. We worked on prefixes and suffixes for word-work (uncertain, unusual, inconvenienced, indignities, uninvited, unfriendly). We worked on reading faster: read silently first, then read out loud, and picked up the pace. We worked on vocabulary, and “ordeal” and “pummeled” were a focus.</p>
January	<p>We found vocabulary words “daft” and “abiding,” “tremulous,” and “inclined” in the</p>

	<p>text, and we worked on activating the senses in ourselves as we read the story, so we could put expression into the story. We wrote descriptive words to describe the characters to explain why the characters did what they did. Savor, hard-pressed, descending, surmised, and irony were challenging vocabulary words. Prosody was a focus, practiced reading with expression, made a plot line, and recorded the changes in the characters. We figured out words in the context of the story. We re-read chapters, and compared characters. Students starting to use much more expressive language, and they are not afraid to get into character.</p>
<p>February</p>	<p>We previewed upcoming chapters, and determined what “honey-sweet sound” meant, and “captivating.” Vocabulary was learned in context, and some was taught or looked-up. Each reading became more fluent. We re-read, and practiced reading the chapters with characters' voices. We made predictions, summarized, and began choosing golden lines. One child's vocabulary needed expanded, and he did not always do the assignments, and this affected the group.</p>
<p>March</p>	<p>We discussed the chapters, and made predictions. Selected golden lines to work on, and to perfect. Students often chose golden-paragraphs, because it was hard for them to choose just one line. We all tried to make predictions, ask questions and expand upon them. We continued discussing and making our voices have all of the inflections of the characters, and we returned to poetry. This transferred from the poetry back to the chapter books, with the use of characters' voices and inflections. Students were using expressive language in both poetry and chapter books. Students spent a week performing in front of their classmates, and they are still performing in this and other classrooms.</p>