



Reading Fluency at Royston St John Baptist Primary

'Words Correct per Minute (WCPM) has been shown, in both theoretical and empirical research, to serve as an accurate and powerful indicator of overall reading competence, especially in its strong correlation with comprehension. The validity and reliability of these two measures have been well established in a body of research extending over the past 25 years (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001; Shinn, 1998).'

*'Children who struggle when reading aloud do not go on to become good readers if left to read silently; their dysfluency merely becomes inaudible. Reading aloud and comprehension are causally connected because they both make use of the phonology – semantics pathway'.
Robert Seidenberg.*

How do we move children from phonic screening to reading well?

To become a fluent reader, reading widely is not going to be enough. For the children to become fluent they need practice. They need to be repeatedly reading a text and learning what the words say. If the children are repeating a text and over learning it, then the children have more chance of the words sticking. If the words stick then they will transfer their reading to new reading material. In Daniel Willingham's 'The reading mind', he explains, *'the more frequently you encounter a word (or a clump of letters), the richer the visual representation. When you become familiar with letter clumps- working memory stress is reduced'*.

Getting children to read at a rate so that they didn't have to use up their working memory in order to work out what the words say. Some children will stutter and have long pauses between words and sentences. These children are the types who struggle with comprehension because they are having to decode slowly thus is taking up far too much of their working memory. *"When word recognition is laboured, cognitive load is occupied at the expense of understanding," Bashir and Hook 2009.*

Reading fluency is absolutely crucial if children are to have a chance of understanding a text that they are reading. Reading fluency is the bridge between a readers phonetic skills and their comprehension (Pikulski and Chard 2005).

Hasbrouk and Tidal researched fluency and have come up with targets that children should be aspiring to.

Hasbrouck & Tindal (2017)

From Hasbrouck, J. & Tindal, G. (2017). *An update to compiled ORF norms* (Technical Report No. 1702). Eugene, OR. Behavioral Research and Teaching, University of Oregon.

Grade	Percentile	Fall WCPM*	Winter WCPM*	Spring WCPM*
1	90		97	116
	75		59	91
	50		29	60
	25		16	34
	10		9	18
2	90	111	131	148
	75	84	109	124
	50	50	84	100
	25	36	59	72
	10	23	35	43
3	90	134	161	166
	75	104	137	139
	50	83	97	112
	25	59	79	91
	10	40	62	63
4	90	153	168	184
	75	125	143	160
	50	94	120	133
	25	75	95	105
	10	60	71	83
5	90	179	183	195
	75	153	160	169
	50	121	133	146
	25	87	109	119
	10	64	84	102
6	90	185	195	204
	75	159	166	173
	50	132	145	146
	25	112	116	122
	10	89	91	91

*WCPM = Words Correct Per Minute

What we record?

Weaker readers should be assessed more frequently.

As well as fluency, we are also looking at accuracy and will record what their score was out of. We have kept it simple. As the class teacher I want to know what mistakes the children are making. Is it expression that slows them down? Is particular word classes? Is it they are inserting words that aren't there? All these questions should be asked.

When fluency is under 80 WPM, comprehension becomes virtually impossible.

Children that are reading fluently and already reading the correct WPM only need to be assessed once a term. For those children who are reading below the 50th percentile, we will assess them more regularly.

What texts do we use?

We have worked hard to make sure the texts are challenging enough for each year group. We don't want to give a child a text that is too easy. One thing we ensure is that all texts used, have no pictures with the text. The reason for is we don't want the children to use the

picture clues to read the words. Each text has been matched with the appropriate Lexile level.

What do we do when children have reached the required fluency level?

Reading fluency is just one way of assessing our children read. Children that are fluent readers need to be moved on. During the assessment, the children will be pushed on their expression (stressing certain words, fluctuation in their voice, emotion and smoothness). We will also change the text to something unfamiliar. This will give us an indication that it was not just a one off.

How do we conduct the assessment?

The children have 60 seconds to read what they can. If they become stuck on a word, we move them along. At the end of the text, we talk about the word they got stuck on.

Rule 1. Word incorrect deduct 1 from their final score.

Rule 2. Word omitted deduct 2 from their final score.

Rule 3. Adding in a word = no deduction as they have slowed their reading down anyway.

Rule 4. Word replacement means you deduct 2.

Our goal with reading fluency is that we want the children to be able to enjoy reading and be able to absorb what it is they are reading. If reading is broken, this will prevent you from enjoying it.

Ideas for reading fluency

Most of the ideas for improving fluency a model needs to be provided for the children. These ideas fall nicely in line with Barak Rosenshine's principles for instruction that are widely used across our curriculum in school.

- The expert models
- Scaffolds are provided for the children before they are removed
- There is a high success rate
- Opportunities for independent practice
- There is a weekly or monthly review

One to one reading

The adult reads a passage to the child. The child reads the same passage to the adult (with that adult). The child repeats the same passage until it is fluent. What I will do is, when the children get stuck on a word, I model the word for them. They repeat the word until firm. The child then repeats the whole sentence again at least 3 times until I am satisfied that they can say it (obviously I would go through sounds etc).

Passage reading

The children are given a passage to read. What I've tended to do is give the children the text and a ruler. The children follow along whilst I read to the class. Before reading I do tell the children tricky words that they will come across. If it's non-fiction these may be tier 3 words (See Isabelle Beck for tiered words). The next time the children will read the passage with me. The final part is that the children read the text by themselves. During this reading I do not ask the children comprehension questions. I only ask questions after fluency has been achieved.

Choral reading

Choral reading is when you have a larger group of children. The teacher reads a text. This is critical, as it allows the children to listen to what fluency sounds like. The passage that a teacher chooses needs to be short but can be part of a longer text. The text that is chosen needs to be accessible to most of the pupils. After reading the text the children read with you. You, the teacher, begin to withdraw yourself from the reading the more you read it with them. Remember if the children are reading alongside you then comprehension will be very difficult. There are other forms of choral reading. If you have a poem/song then the poem may start off with one table then on the second line a second table of children join in and so on. Or you could do it in reverse so the number of children reading reduces after each line. You could call children to read a line at a time.

Partner reading

This may be the weakest idea out of all of them. You are relying on stronger readers to work with weaker readers. I allow the children time to read to a partner or the rest of the table. The other children listen out for mistakes and we talk about them. This sounds quite daunting but if handled sensitively the children really like it even the ones being listened to.

Singing songs and reading poetry

This is a personal favourite of mine. I know it sounds old fashioned but I love to hear children reading poetry and singing songs together. Anything that involves rhythm and rhyme is an excellent way of helping children to be fluent readers. Like the other methods the children listen to the adult first. The children follow along with their fingers so they know what the words are saying. The second stage is for the children to read along with the adult until it is firm. Once it is firm, the children can have a go at reading the text themselves. This can be incorporated in a one to one reading session or similar to a choral response with the class. Recently I did a lesson where the children were reading the poem 'Solomon Grundy'. Whilst reading the poem I noticed that children kept on inserting an extra word to lots of the sentences.

Solomon Grundy
Born on a Monday
Christened on **a** Tuesday

I noticed mistakes when I heard the children read the poem in small groups or as individuals. The children kept on inserting the word 'a' into all the sentences. As well lots of the children struggled to say words such as 'christened' and buried. Through discussion and rehearsal the children could say the words. The next stage is to leave that poem and come back to it at a later time.

Picture books

Lots of picture books fit into helping children reading fluently. If you take Julia Donaldson books for example, there is a simple scaffold that the children can follow. So like with all the other ideas the children rehearse the words until it is firm. I always begin with the expert modelling.

Syllable word reading

Show the children a longer word and explain that words can be broken down into smaller sections called syllables. Break the word into smaller parts and add 1 syllable each time.

un

un-der

un-der-stand

understand