

## READING: FOUNDATIONS

## FLUENCY

described by Kathy Collins

## Demonstrate accuracy and fluency when reading

Fluency is viewed, often, as simply the ability to read smoothly and expressively at an acceptable reading rate. In other words, fluency is characterized as reading that sounds like talking, not too fast, and not too slow. While these characteristics are certainly aspects of fluent reading, reading with fluency involves so much more. Fluency is a vital skill to develop right from the start, as children begin to decode print and throughout their elementary school years as their reading voice transforms from oral and out loud to silent and internal, where their reading voice is *in their heads*. Fluency is linked to readers' overall proficiency (Valencia & Buly, 2004), and it's regarded as "a critical bridge between decoding and comprehension" (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). Fluent readers are also more motivated to read (Hasbrouck & Glaser, 2012).

RF.5, the fluency standard, begins in kindergarten and is stated the same way from Grade 1 to Grade 5. The challenge for teachers is to differentiate the standard so that children are learning fluency skills across the years that accommodate the increasing complexity of their books. It's important for teachers to do two things: (1) teach all children the range of skills and strategies of fluent reading, no matter their reading levels, while (2) matching fluency instruction and support with the sophistication and complexity of texts children are reading as they advance through the grades.

Fluency instruction and strategy support from Grades 2-5 can and does draw from the following categories:

- Reading with chunking (vs. word-by-word reading, also known as word-calling)
- Reading with appropriate reading rate (not too fast, not too slow, oral language cadence, decoding automaticity, increasing words correct per minute (WCPM))
- Reading with phrasing (able to fluently read sentences of different lengths and syntax demands)
- Reading that accounts for punctuation and text features (e.g. bold words, all-caps, underlines)
- Reading with expression (reading dialogue that sounds like the characters with regard to volume, tone, inflection; reading that matches the feeling of the text)
- Reading with prosody (expression that reflects the meaning of the text, that demonstrates reading comprehension)
- Reading with a fix-it disposition (rereading to make reading sound smooth, rereading to reflect meaning, rereading to self-correct, etc.)

To support fluency across the grades, teachers may want to implement (1) daily read aloud time in which the teacher models fluent reading using the categories listed above; (2) consistent shared reading sessions in which children close read and chorally read and reread texts of grade level or higher complexity across a week (3) Readers' Theater experiences in which children are using fluency skills in authentic, performative contexts; (4) Reading lessons featuring fluency strategies for the whole class, for small groups and for individual readers; (5) regular rereading opportunities; (6) authentic fluency experiences for students, such as recording 'audiobooks', recording themselves reading their favorite parts of books, reading aloud to younger children; and so on.

When differentiating RF.5 in order to support children to meet the standard across Grades 2 - 5, teachers will want to make sure that they have frequent opportunities to listen to children read aloud from their independent-level texts and that they consider the fluency demands embodied in the texts their children are reading. Teachers will not want to singularly prioritize reading rate at the expense of other fluency considerations as speed-oriented reading can work in opposition to meaningful reading (DiSalle & Rasinski, 2017).

## GRADE 2

### Orally read grade-level appropriate or higher texts smoothly and accurately, with expression that connotes comprehension at the independent reading level

#### Unpacking the Standard

In second grade many children begin to encounter books with longer dialogue passages featuring more characters. Their books may have settings with different time frames and take place in unfamiliar places. Second graders also encounter multi-syllabic words that they may not have ever seen or written before so fresh demands are made to learn decoding skills to read with automaticity. Across the year, fluency instruction might include; reading with automaticity; reading with expression; fix-it strategies to monitor for fluency; and reminders about the importance of making sure the voice in one's head is as fluent as the voice one has when reading out loud.

#### Considerations for Lessons and Assessment

In this video Kathy explains that to support second-grade children's fluency, teachers will want to continue to provide word-solving strategy instruction (RF.3 and RF.4 standards) so that children's automaticity continues to develop. Teachers will want to support children in acknowledging punctuation as they read, and changing voices to match characters in terms of tone and expression. Children may need extra support for finding their "not too slow and not too fast" reading rate (see scale in resource section). With regard to assessment, teachers will want to frequently monitor children's fluency by asking them to read aloud paragraphs and parts of their books during one-to-one conferences, to assess rate, expression, automaticity, and fix-it behaviors. Assessments should include rubrics, checklists, and oral reading rate measures.

## GRADE 3

### Orally read grade-level appropriate or higher texts smoothly and accurately, with expression that connotes comprehension at the independent reading level

#### Unpacking the Standard

In third grade students read books with everything they encounter in second grade and also multiple story lines, more character complexity and extended dialogue that moves the story along, and a growing variety of genre. Sentence length in these books is varied, and readers are likely to encounter sophisticated sentence structures with restrictive and nonrestrictive appositives. Words per minute expectations increase as well so that children are continuing to develop automaticity while making meaning, all while increasing their reading volume.

#### Considerations for Lessons and Assessment

In this video Kathy elaborates on how to attend to students' fluency in third-grade classrooms. Teachers will want to model and teach children about fluency across genres (3.RL.2.2). For example, an adventure filled sci-fi graphic novel with sound effects is read differently than a nonfiction text on penguins which is read differently than a rhyming poem about a sad experience. Specific lessons might include determining tone and matching one's voice to it; going back to reread when fluency breaks down; the importance of fluency to help a reader keep track of meaning. With regard to assessments, teachers will want to invite children to regularly read aloud to them while also assessing words per minute at a couple of different points in the year, and using a fluency rubric and checklists to measure multidimensional aspects of fluency.

## GRADE 4

## INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARD ELA RF 5

## Orally read grade-level appropriate or higher texts smoothly and accurately, with expression that connotes comprehension at the independent reading level

### Unpacking the Standard

In fourth grade everything that has been previously taught with respect to fluency is taught again at a higher level, in coordination with the complexity of the texts fourth-grade children encounter as they read independently.

### Considerations for Lessons and Assessment

Kathy describes the expectations for fourth-grade readers in this video, who are expected to retell their complex texts (4.RL.2) and can be taught to apply fluency skills to retell in more engaging, expressive ways. Fourth-grade readers will read plays and poetry (4.RL.3.1), so teaching fluency implications (line breaks, white space, stage directions, memorization of lines, etc.) within these genres will be necessary. Teachers will want to assess fourth-grade students' fluency across genres while accounting for the various aspects of fluency, from automaticity and reading rate to expression and prosody.

## GRADE 5

## Orally read grade-level appropriate or higher texts smoothly and accurately, with expression that connotes comprehension at the independent reading level

### Unpacking the Standard

In fifth grade everything that has been previously taught with respect to fluency is taught again at a higher level, in coordination with the complexity of the texts fifth-grade children encounter as they read independently. Children's reading levels begin to consistently match the levels of texts that teachers may be reading aloud, so the read aloud time is opportune for modeling how to be a conscientiously fluent reader. Comprehension demands increase as readers need to determine theme and make high-level inferences, and it's important they understand the role and importance of fluency in high level and deep comprehension of any text.

### Considerations for Lessons and Assessment

Kathy shows in this video how to support fifth-grade students. Since students read self-chosen independent texts, teachers will want to regularly listen as they read aloud passages and paragraphs and stanzas and scenes to ascertain what they demonstrate as fluent readers and what they need. Much of the fluency instruction in fifth grade will build upon all that has come before, while consistently being connected to meaning making. Teaching strategies for fixing fluency when it breaks down, rereading to 'hear' the text, monitoring the voice in one's head for fluency will be important skills. As always, teachers will want fluency assessments that assess all of the dimensions of fluency, from reading rate to prosody.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Fountas, I & Pinnell, G. (2009). Fountas & Pinnell recommended oral reading rates [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.usd450.net/files/OralReadingRates.pdf>
- Fountas, I. & Pinnell, G. (2010). Six dimensions fluency rubric [PDF file]. Retrieved from <http://www.dps.k12.oh.us/content/documents/Fluency-rubric.pdf>
- Hasbrouck, J., & Glaser, D.R. (2012). *Reading fluency: Understanding and teaching this complex skill*. Gibson Hasbrouck & Associates.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress Oral Reading Fluency Scale (2005) [Chart]. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/ors/scale.aspx>
- Pikulski, J. & Chard, D. (2005, March). Fluency: The bridge between decoding and reading comprehension. *The Reading Teacher* 58(6), 510-519.
- Rasinski, T., & DiSalle, K. (2017). Impact of short-term intense fluency instruction on students' reading achievement: A classroom-based, teacher-initiated research study. *Journal of Teacher Action Research*, Volume 3, Issue 2. Retrieved from [http://timrasinski.com/presentations/impact\\_of\\_short\\_term\\_intense\\_fluency\\_instruction.pdf](http://timrasinski.com/presentations/impact_of_short_term_intense_fluency_instruction.pdf)
- Reading Fluency Does Not Mean Reading Fast (2018). International Literacy Association [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/ila-reading-fluently-does-not-mean-reading-fast.pdf>
- Partnership for Inquiry Learning (n.d.). <http://partnershipforinquirylearning.org>.