

Using Fluency Components to Help Struggling Readers Achieve in School  
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### Abstract

It is said that “teachers are the world’s miracles”, this is true because they improve the most struggling of students even those students who dislike reading. This research paper discusses factors that contribute to student’s success in reading. These factors include; fluency, phonics, strategies, literacy studies, interventions, and many more. Students, cooperating teachers, and children’s parents depend on teachers because they have a way of making others feel attainable, and they can solve problems and fix issues. Teachers in schools are imperative, because they support the learning needs of children. In order for a teacher to live up to this standard of helping struggling readers, they must start with fluency. Fluency is often contributed to the fear of reading for children, which can be obtained through support, strategies, and goals.

It is said that “teachers are the world’s miracles” this is true because they improve the most struggling of students even those students who dislike reading. School does not always come easy to children, and teachers are constantly present to be their support system. A young girl in second grade struggles with reading, and she knows that according to the clock it is that time of the morning; reading time. The teacher tells the class to turn to page 61, and they take turns reading paragraphs. She starts in the back of the room, and slowly makes her way to the young girl. Anxiously, the girl counts how many people must read before it is her time to read. She quickly glances at the corresponding number of paragraphs, and spends the filling minute reading her paragraph over and over, to make sure that she does not mess up when her time comes to read. Her turn finally comes, and she reads perfectly. Whew, she lets out a big breath of air, and she continues with her day, not understanding she missed the context her peers just read before her. Each time she gets extremely nervous with butterflies fluttering in her stomach; when her teacher makes her read out-loud in front of the class. The educator uses different techniques to help the struggling reader to strive to improve fluency and in turn become a stronger reader. Students, cooperating teachers, and children’s parents depend on teachers because they have a way of making others feel attainable, and they can solve problems and fix issues. Teachers in schools are imperative, because they support the learning needs of children. In order for a teacher to live up to this standard of helping struggling readers, they must start with fluency. Fluency is often contributed to the fear of reading for children. The components of reading include; fluency, phonics, strategies, literacy studies, interventions, and more are essential to keep in mind when working with struggling readers, so they can achieve to their highest potential.

All children need to read fluently in order to succeed in school which means they can

read efficiently, a crucial component for children to assess comprehension (Tompkins, 2010, p.206). “Fluent readers better comprehend what they read because they automatically recognize most words and can apply word-identification strategies when they come across unfamiliar words (Tompkins, 2010, p.206). Fluency involves three components: accuracy, speed, and prosody (Tompkins, 2010, p.209). Accuracy is the ability to recognize familiar words automatically, without any conscious thought, and to identify unfamiliar words almost as quickly. Stopping every couple of words or sentences to decode text is not fluency, an indication that the selection is too difficult. “Reading speed is just as important; it refers to the rate at which students read; to read fluently, students need to orally read at least 100 words per minute“ Tompkins says proudly. Most students reach this point by third grade. Prosody, the third component consists of the ability to orally read sentences expressively, with appropriate phrasing and intonation. Prosody is imperative to teach from the beginning so children can practice right away, with inflection in their voice. From Tompkins (2010), techniques to show fluent reading include “model reading-have students repeat after teacher, discuss how to read fluently, reading aloud in groups, echo reading, books on tape, reader’s theater, paired repeated reading, daily practice, and reading to animals“(p.208). “These are just a few, the more practice children get with reading aloud fluently, the better their comprehension skills will be” declares Compton-Lilly. Teachers need to give student every chance that they can to pick up and open a book. This in turn will help them read fluently, and they can hold their head high with confidence.

To help with fluency techniques mentioned earlier many teachers use minilessons, and word walls. Minilessons contain short lessons that are taught for concepts that children do not grasp. Often students need further help reiterating a point. Word walls in the classroom are popular, and commonly used. Children can look at the wall, know the word, and soon they write

these words without looking, because we use them every day in vocabulary. Other commonly used words comprise of low and high frequency words. Knowing common words help with building fluency. “Low frequency words are word wall words that children know like the back of their hand. High frequency words are words that they do not recognize or can phonetically sound out, but they will know in their later vocabulary“(Tompkins, 2010, p.209). Words encompass great meaning behind them and important to recognize them for reading purposes to assist with fluency.

Many aspects of why children do not read fluently by grade level include; “reading disabilities, phonics, lack of exposure, lack of practice, frustration, miss the “why of reading”, and not enough praise for what children do well” (Tompkins, 2010, p.211). A reading disability simply means that their brain does not function at the proper rate; many times children are diagnosed and need extra help and support. First step to teaching a child to read is phonics. Tompkins proclaims, “Phonics is blending sounds with letters to make words“. Lack of exposure and practice go hand in hand, which in return involve parents/teachers responsibility to make sure children get an adequate amount of reading per day. When they do not get to read often, subsequently they do not practice, which turns into frustration because it is not done accurately. Children should be reading books all of the time, whether it be in school or as pleasure. If you are not reading fluently, then you will not remember what you read, therefore you have to go back and reread. A positive gesture that should be heard in the classroom is praise. Walking into a classroom, often you hear great job from the teacher. Students that get the most praise are the students who strive. Educators need to remember to give praise to children that succeed in their problem areas as well. Getting praise is as meaningful as getting something accomplished.

There are many new literary studies offered, to help struggling readers overcome the barrier of fluency. “Literacy studies refer to how literacy practices are linked to people’s lives, identities, and social affiliations” (Compton-Lilly, 2009). Larson, who was on the National Reading Panel, described a first-grade teacher who engaged her students in modeled writing lessons. As cited in Compton-Lilly (2009) Larson states, “First, the children and the teacher chose a writing topic. The children observe the teacher as she models the writing process. She shares her mistakes and revises her writing. The teacher did not simply model writing as a discrete technique or set of skills but modeled authorship as a meaningful writing practice and did so in authentic contexts”. This is important for fluency, because when children see the steps taking place, they will then understand how fluency works for reading and writing. Students need to be able to visually see what the teacher expects of them. Modeling a skill, and teaching a lesson prepares students to learn properly. Technology has a huge impact on children’s lives today. If teachers can provide technology in their classroom with lessons, students would be more willing to learn, which would improve fluency. As cited in (Compton-Lilly, 2009) Pickering and Painter (2005), new literacy scholars recognize, “the significance of children’s interactions with technological texts and view these interactions as meaningful and purposeful”. When a young child struggles as a reader, it is important to think about their interests and needs. “Respecting differences in children is nuanced, subtle, and personal process of getting to know individual children, monitoring our interactions, and crafting those interactions in ways that allow children to build upon their strengths and be themselves. It means being willing to change our ways of teaching“(Compton-Lilly, 2009, p.89). Using technology is a way of helping children read fluently. Because they are more likely to read with books on tape, or they may chose to get on to the computer and read from that. Classroom teachers are often faced with

several students who bring challenges to literacy learning. Focusing on the needs of individual students requires knowing students well-as readers and as people. “Teachers cannot teach only phonetics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehensions skills-we must teach students” (Compton-Lilly, 2009, p.90).

A reader, who struggles with fluency, gives five recommendations to help put in perspective and succeed in school. Derek, always struggled with reading since he was in Kindergarten, and received therapy for a speech delay. After many tutoring sessions, and determination Derek completed grades up to fifth grade, and is currently in sixth grade. “Derek yawns at the mere thought of completing language arts homework and describes reading as boring “(Jenkins, 2009, p.160). Making and keeping connections with classroom teachers is beneficial to the struggling student. This is important to discuss strengths and weaknesses, share routines, and build upon past successes. It is imperative to make sure the tutor and the teachers are on the same page with ideas of positive reinforcement, so Derek can make a leap in improvement with fluency in reading. Since, Derek finds reading “boring”, he has a wide range of interests and experiences that teachers can use when selecting books and subsequent school literacy activities. Finding books with Derek’s interests will in the end help him become fluent, because he will want to read. “This can be accomplished by using Derek’s interest (computers and technology), passions (art), extracurricular activities (bowling), home life, and many others“(Jenkins, 2009, p. 161). Allowing Derek to help pick out books that interest him will make him more willing to read. Jenkins (2009) supports Derek by saying, “By providing him with regular opportunities to choose the books he is required to read and the activities he has to complete, Derek can begin to develop the sense of ownership of his literacy learning needed for reading success and strengthen the level of trust between student and teacher.” Furthermore,

Derek's experiences remind us that struggling readers need teachers who are committed to reaching out to parents, adapting their instruction, partnering with colleagues, and using innovative instructional approaches to decrease failure for struggling readers, and increase their fluency. In conclusion, effective educators of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must begin to truly listen to the voices of the students we serve.

“Early intervention and quality instruction are the keys to assisting struggling readers” (Woodward & Talbert-Johnson, 2009, p. 190) Implementing the correct instruction for struggling readers needs to happen from the day that we find out that a child is having a problem with fluency. Reading specialists are designed to spend extra time with students that need the help. Many schools obtain reading specialists, but they are in high demand. The International Reading Association expects reading specialists to be highly qualified literacy professionals who have prior experience as classroom teachers. Teachers know how to support their students, with materials to help them overcome fluency barriers. Woodward and Talbert-Johnson (2009) states, “Schools have to report that their students in the school learn and improve from year to year. If children get behind on their reading skills, then they do not get adequate attention to pass the grade level. Schools do not want to be hindered from keeping their doors opened, so they try to do their best on giving students the help that they need. An implementation of No Child Left Behind mandates students to take a test, and with the tests results it shows the state how schools rank”. Fluency is one of the main reasons why children do not pass grade level, because they are not reading on the same level as their peers. Students need all of the support and praises that they can receive, from teachers and parents, to feel good about themselves for striving in school. Reading is a hard subject, but with lots of practice and help from others, children can overcome their fear of reading fluently and do their best.



Readers that struggle with fluency dislike reading. The components of reading include; fluency, phonics, strategies, literacy studies, interventions, and more are essential to keep in mind when working with struggling readers, so they can achieve to their highest potential. Educators must be a child's support system, from the beginning to the end of achievement. Reading is part of our everyday lives. Fluency can be obtained through support, strategies, and goals. Through research and observations, techniques are used to guide students, so by the end of time they are reading like professionals. With much support, children will get the best learning experience as possible. Teachers are imperative in schools and if every teacher gives it her all, she can change the lives of children daily. In order for students to get the most out of their school experience, educators need to fight for achievement. Children get the right to accomplish to the best of their ability, so teachers must begin with teaching fluency, so readers do not struggle any longer. As a teacher will YOU help with fluency?

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