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# Literacyhow

*Empower teaching excellence.*

## February Newsletter

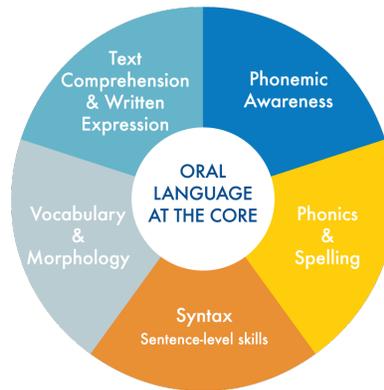


At Literacy How we believe that literacy is the key to opportunity and that **every** child has the right to read. We also believe that teachers, not programs or products, teach students to read, write and spell, and we are committed to supporting teachers as they learn to translate the science of reading in their classrooms.

Our monthly newsletters provide an opportunity to share some of the research and tools we believe will be helpful to teachers in their classrooms throughout the school year. Last month's newsletter focused on Spelling and this month we will dive into **Fluency**.

Most of you are familiar with the National Reading Panel's 5 Big Ideas (PA, Phonics, **Fluency**, Vocabulary,

and Comprehension) and some of you will remember our original reading wheel that included all of those components (and a few more additions including spelling in the phonics section, written expression in the comprehension section, and oral language at the core).



A number of years ago we revised the reading wheel and replaced fluency with syntax as you see [here](#). What drove that decision? The most important role of reading fluency is to support comprehension; however, in our visits to teachers' classroom we observed many teachers hyper-focused on increasing their students' reading rate to improve their fluency scores. As a result, many students were sacrificing meaning for speed.

We view fluency as essential to **all aspects** of literacy development. Fluent (i.e., automatic) performances in both discrete and complex literacy tasks are the mark of proficient readers and writers. This view was reinforced when I watched Dr. Jan Hasbrouck's recent webinar, [Reading Fluency: Essential for Reading Comprehension](#). She referenced work by Wolf and Katzir (2001) that describes reading fluency as developing in progressions – first as young children learn letters and letter patterns accurately and automatically, then at the word level involving semantic processing and finally at the phrase level involving syntactic processing.

Dr. Hasbrouck's webinar was especially informative as she described several common confusions related to oral reading fluency (ORF) assessment, including the misconception that ORF measures reading fluency. She explained how the ORF is constructed to serve as a reliable and valid indicator of a student's comprehension.

As I've learned from Jan, my fluency guru:

- Fluent readers are better able to comprehend because their focus is on the text's propositions rather than the individual words.
  - The relationship between fluency and comprehension is attributed to proficient word recognition. Automatic word reading (that includes both reasonable accuracy and appropriate rate) supports one's ability to pay attention to what the text means.
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# Videos

## Spelling with -tion

In this video, grade 3 students spell multi-syllabic words ending with the suffix -tion. The Literacy How Mentor scaffolds students' spelling by reviewing the syllable types.



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## Tips and ideas for Instruction

### Reading Fluency

Dr. Hasbrouck also referenced another important article, [The Complex Nature of Reading Fluency: A Multidimensional View](#), written by Hudson, Pullen, Lane, and Torgesen in 2009. The article concludes with an important reminder about fluency instruction:

*“In short, the growth of reading fluency, in all its multifaceted glory, is an outcome of many different kinds of instruction and practice—it is the natural result of explicit, systematic, and comprehensive instruction coupled with large amounts of carefully orchestrated reading practice.”*

### Teacher Tip: Take a Phrase Walk

**Take a word or phrase walk in lieu of a picture walk** if a teaching objective includes reading text fluently (i.e., accurately and automatically with proper phrasing). Instead of looking at pictures to make a prediction, students read words and phrases from the text to activate prior knowledge about the topic.

This technique gives students an opportunity to practice reading words that are integral to comprehension. It also focuses students' attention on some words and phrases that may be difficult to decode or understand.

## Teacher Tip: Graph it, Chart it

**Practice daily and keep a graphic record of progress**, which is very motivating for students! Practice fluency with a fluency chart like the one shown [here](#) or create one using this [template](#).

## Principal Tip: Observation

Notice some of the following as evidence that the teacher is stimulating fluency behaviors:

- Incorporates fluency-building activities (e.g., letter naming/identification, practice with punctuation marks, reading phrases with proper intonation) into instruction.
- Utilizes techniques that build reading fluency throughout the day, including modeled fluent reading, choral reading, repeated readings, paired reading, independent reading.
- Charts students' fluency progress for purposes of motivating students as well as to document progress and to adjust instruction.

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## Something to read

### Read more to learn more!

Bashir, A. & Hook, P. (2009). [Fluency: A key link between word identification and comprehension](#). *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools* 40 (2), 196-200.

Hasbrouck, J. (2006). [Drop everything and read—But how?: For students who are not yet fluent, silent reading is not the best use of classroom time](#). *American Educator* 30(2), Summer 2006.

Hudson, R.F., et al. (2009). [The complex nature of reading fluency: A multidimensional view](#). *Reading & Writing Quarterly* 25: 4-32.

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## Resources

For further research and activities, you can purchase our **Phonemic Awareness & Phonics** professional series book. Phonemic awareness and phonics—the two domains of literacy development essential for automatic word reading—are covered in *Phonemic Awareness and Phonics: Knowledge to Practice*. Related, but different, both domains are required for children to successfully learn to decode. Phonemic awareness, the realization that spoken words are made up of individual speech sounds (phonemes), provides the foundation for students to learn phonics. Phonics, the knowledge that these speech sounds are represented by letters (graphemes), provides the content and skill to access 85% of the words they need to read and spell. Empowered with this content and skills, beginning readers can acquire the code-breaking ability they need to unlock the printed word to become skilled readers.

**Purchase Phonemic Awareness & Phonics on Amazon**

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