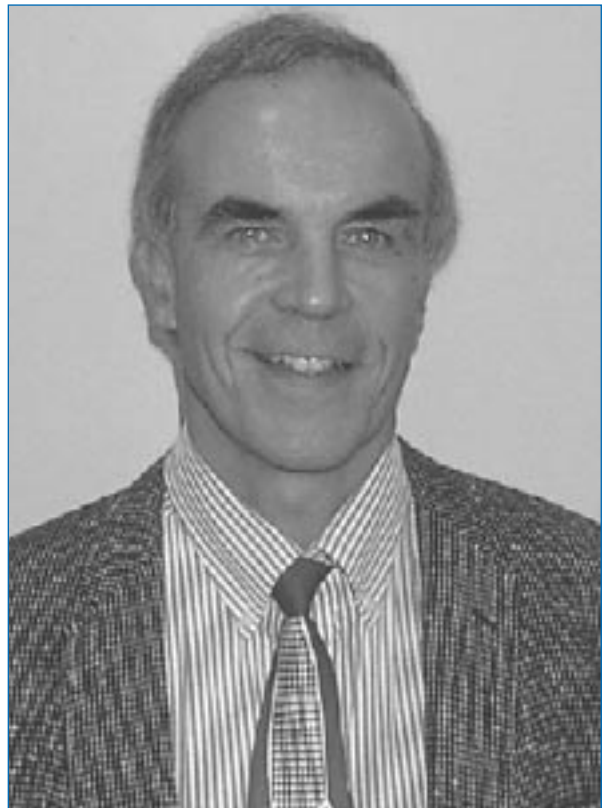


Fluency Assessment: Why and How

by Kevin Feldman

Reading fluency refers to the reader's ability to read text quickly, accurately, and with appropriate expression or prosody. It is important to remember that fluency is not simply raw speed or "race reading", rather it refers to the fact that skillful readers are fluid readers able to effortlessly and efficiently decode the text allowing full attention to the purpose of reading—constructing meaning. I often think of reading fluency as somewhat akin to learning the guitar; while it is critical to learn to play the chords accurately (decoding), the magic of a song (comprehension) does not emerge until one can put a few chords together rapidly enough to make a melody!



There are two fundamental reasons why the regular assessment of oral reading fluency is essential for all students in the elementary grades and quite useful as well with struggling secondary students. First of all, **oral reading fluency has repeatedly been shown to be one of the best overall indicators of general reading competence** (Fuchs *et al.*, 2001). In a couple of minutes, a skilled teacher can obtain a very reliable indicator of student progress by assessing a student's rate, accuracy, and prosody reading a grade level text. Secondly, the

regular assessment of oral reading fluency **assists teachers in quickly identifying students who may have a fluency problem that requires additional instructional focus.**

Now, many states and curriculum guidelines recognize oral reading fluency as one of the multiple measures required for a comprehensive literacy assessment system. This assessment, administered three times a year, is effective in monitoring student progress as well as evaluating curriculum changes.

Fluent readers are able to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Fluency is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension. Despite its importance as a component of skilled reading, fluency is often neglected in the classroom. This is unfortunate. If text is read in a laborious and inefficient manner, it will be difficult for the child to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her background knowledge. Recent research on the efficacy of certain approaches to teaching fluency has led to increased recognition of its importance in the classroom and to changes in instructional practices.

National Reading Panel Report, 2000



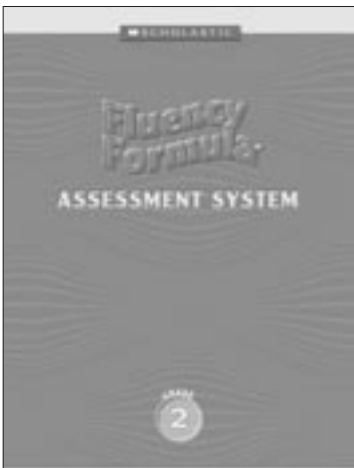
Benchmark Passage 2

11 Billy was sitting on the sidewalk curb holding his favorite old
 12 baseball glove.
 13 "Hey, Billy!" he heard. "Weren't you supposed to meet me
 14 half an hour ago at the park? Why are you sitting here instead of
 15 moving?"
 16 "I'm waiting," Billy replied.
 17 "Waiting for what?" I asked.
 18 "I'm waiting for Mr. Sanchez to leave for work. It shouldn't
 19 be much longer."
 20 "Billy, your Mom said it was all right for you to play ball with
 21 me at the park. I don't understand why you're waiting for Mr.
 22 Sanchez."
 23 Billy sighed as he explained. "Well, Mr. Sanchez's car is
 24 parked in the driveway, right across the street. See? And the
 25 park is across the street and down the block."
 26 I shook my head because I didn't understand what Billy
 27 was talking about. This morning he was excited about playing
 28 baseball with the guys. He was a pretty good shortstop, even
 29 though he wasn't quite five years old.
 30 "I know where the park is and so do you. So explain to me
 31 again why you are sitting here?"
 32 "I already told you. I'm waiting for Mr. Sanchez," replied
 33 Billy. I looked across the street. There was no sign of Mr.
 34 Sanchez coming out of his house.
 35 "Mom said I can't cross the street if I see any cars," Billy
 36 continued, "and I see Mr. Sanchez's car. It's right there in his
 37 driveway."
 38 "Oh, Billy!" I laughed. "I'm sure your mom meant you
 39 should not cross the street if you see any cars driving on the
 40 road! She just wants to make sure that a moving car doesn't hit
 41 you. She's not worried about the parked cars! Come on. You can
 42 walk with me to the park!"
 43 "Oh, Sam. You're so smart. Thanks for being my friend.
 44 Let's go play ball!"

Benchmark Passage



Timer



Handbook

STEP 3

Tailor Instruction

The Fluency Formula Assessment System includes general instructional recommendations based on your students' results. For in-depth fluency instruction, we reference the Fluency Formula Kits (available separately).

STEP 1

Give an Oral Fluency Assessment (OFA) to all students.

At the beginning, middle and end of each school year, listen to students read aloud three grade-level Benchmark Passages for one minute each. As students read, mark any words read incorrectly. At the end of one minute, mark the last word read aloud. Scholastic's Fluency Formula™ Assessment makes it easy to calculate the fluency score, measured in words read correctly per minute (WCPM). The WCPM score can be reported to meet state and local requirements.

STEP 2

Interpret students' OFA scores

Using a Norm Chart, you can tell parents and administrators exactly how each student's fluency measures against students in the same grade across the country.

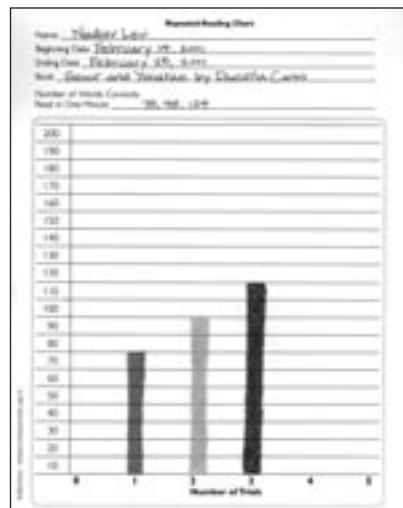
Reading Fluency Norm Chart

The Oral Reading Fluency Normative Performance Chart displays the norms for Oral Reading Fluency. The norms are updated at the beginning, middle, and end of each year. These norms are from an electronic aggregation of students in schools using AIMSweb Benchmark Reading Assessment Passages.

For further information and for updated norms for each assessment period in the school year, visit www.aimsweb.com

Grade	Title	Beginning WCPM	Middle WCPM	End WCPM
1	90	0	50	203
	75	0	27	77
	50	0	21	52
	25	0	12	33
	10	0	7	20
2	90	95	125	160
	75	71	100	117
	50	60	70	94
	25	27	33	50
	10	15	30	49
3	90	125	151	168
	75	96	125	139
	50	73	94	100
	25	54	72	81
	10	30	50	57
4	90	142	167	180
	75	118	140	152
	50	94	114	126
	25	71	80	99
	10	48	60	75
5	90	169	184	199
	75	145	158	169
	50	117	131	137
	25	89	108	118
	10	65	81	88
6	90	171	185	201
	75	149	160	172
	50	115	132	145
	25	91	106	117
	10	72	80	90
7	90	200	206	213
	75	175	183	193
	50	147	157	167
	25	126	134	146
	10	106	115	124
8	90	208	219	221
	75	183	195	208
	50	156	166	171
	25	126	144	145
	10	100	112	115

Norm Chart



Progress Chart

STEP 4

Monitor progress

For those students struggling with fluency, you have the option to monitor fluency progress on a weekly basis. The Fluency Formula Assessment includes 24 Progress Monitoring Passages per grade to use as indicators of student progress.



REFERENCE LIST

The California Reading Initiative & Special Education: Report of the CA Special Ed Reading Task Force, (1999)

Instructional Planning of Special & General Education Co-teachers to Students w/ Learning Disabilites in the General Ed classrooms (1998)

They Can All Read: Linking Research to Practice with Struggling Readers (1998)

Creating Thought- Full Classrooms; The PASS Instructional Model (1994) Handbook of Cooperative Learning Methods, Sharan (Ed.)

Push In- Pull Out: What Makes Sense for the RSP & Chapter Programs? (1993) RISE CSU Sacramento

Fluency Formula



About the Author

Kevin Feldman is the Director of Reading and Early Intervention at the Sonoma County Office of Education in California. A strong advocate of intervention products such as READ 180 and fluency

products such as Read Naturally, Kevin has endorsed the Fluency Formula's Assessment System as a key component in all district's assessment plans. Kevin received is Ed.D. degree from the University of San Francisco and is active in teaching training throughout the state. Kevin has written or co-authored several documents including *The California Reading Initiative and Special Education* task force report of 1999, *They Can ALL Read: Linking Research to Practice with Struggling Readers*, *Creating Thought-Full Classrooms*, and the *PRICE Parenting Program*.

