



# Literacy Links

August, 2008  
Volume 5, Number 1

Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

## Spotlight on... Fluency Assessment

The May-June 2008 edition spotlighted reading fluency in relation to the other four essential elements of reading and research based practice. A copy of this edition can be obtained at:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/newsletters/0508newsletter.htm>.

In this issue, we will revisit fluency and look deeper into the components of fluency, particularly what is essential for accurate fluency assessment. Administration and interpretation of fluency assessments and how they inform instruction will be explored.

### What are the components of oral reading fluency?

Pilkulski and Chard (2005) offer a comprehensive definition of fluency, "Reading fluency refers to efficient, effective word recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of a text. Fluency is manifested in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading and is applied during, and makes possible, silent reading comprehension."

Raskinski (2004) outlines three basic components of fluency that are defined here:

- **Accuracy:** The ability of readers to decode words accurately in text.
- **Automaticity:** The ability to translate letters-to-sounds-to-words fluently and effortlessly. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) described the fluent reader as "one whose decoding processes are automatic, requiring no conscious attention".
- **Prosody:** The ability of readers to appropriately use phrasing (intonation and pauses), expression, volume and tone with attention to syntax (word order). Prosody is commonly known as 'reading with feeling'.

For developing readers and writers, fluency acquisition occurs at all levels: letters to sounds; words; phrases; sentences; and passages in extended texts.

### How is fluency assessed?

Rasinski's "Assessing Reading Fluency" (2004) provides teachers with a comprehensive approach to fluency assessment. This document can be obtained at [www.prel.org](http://www.prel.org). Rasinski suggests that selection of fluency assessments should be guided by two important criteria; first, they must have some measurable degree of reliability and validity, and second, they must be efficient in administration, scoring and interpretation.

### ***Assessing Accuracy and Automaticity:***

The first two components of fluency, **accuracy and automaticity**, are



### Upcoming Maine Reading First Events

**In 2008-2009, the Maine Reading First Literacy Leaders' Network (LLN) will be increasing the number of locations for the LLN across the State. For details of these professional development opportunities visit:**

**<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/materials.html> or contact: [Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov)**



***"When you can make a child's day connected, he learns more."***

--Diller (2007)



***"I have never let my schooling interfere with my education."***

- Mark Twain

reflected in readers' *level of accuracy in decoding words* and their speed of reading automatically, as measured by *reading rate*.

The importance of *accuracy* has long been an accepted practice, and informal reading inventories (IRIs) have been used for decades to measure this component. Accuracy is determined by the percentage of words a reader can read correctly; it has been shown to be a valid measure of reading proficiency. Results of IRIs indicate a student's independent, instructional and frustration reading levels; however administration of a complete IRI can take one to two hours. More recent use of running records (Clay, 1993) and oral reading checks have helped to simplify and integrate assessing reader's accuracy during instructional times.

*Reading rate* provides a way to determine students' level of automaticity. Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments, a form of curriculum-based measurements (Deno, 1985), are becoming widely used to simplify the process of measuring accuracy and automaticity. The procedures for administering the CBM/ORF approach to assessing fluency are described in the *Instructional Ideas* section of this newsletter. This procedure is part of several currently used fluency assessments, including the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

#### ***Assessing Prosody:***

The third component of fluency, prosodic reading, is more directly related to comprehension. Prosodic reading happens once a degree of automaticity is established, and use of expression is one way a reader constructs meaning.

Assessing students' oral interpretive reading is key to developing their prosodic reading competencies. Assessing a student's interpretation of text is more complex because it is more subjective than accuracy levels and reading rates. Researchers have developed qualitative rubrics (rating scales) to guide the assessment process and assign a grade or level. Although fluency rubrics may not be as precise as assessments of decoding accuracy and reading rate, they do provide valid measurement of prosodic reading if used in a consistent manner by knowledgeable assessors. Two examples of fluency rubrics are provided in additional sections of this newsletter.

#### **What else do oral reading fluency assessments tell us?**

Benchmarks for fluency have been established for several commonly used fluency measures (see NAEP fluency benchmarks and researcher developed rubrics later in this issue). When a student does not meet benchmarks in oral reading fluency, instructional practices, like those described in the May-June 2008 *Literacy Links*, are warranted. Rasinski (2004) cautions, "There are limitations to fluency assessments, and although reading rate appears to be a good measure of decoding automaticity, it does not mean that students should receive overt and intensive instruction in becoming fast readers."

*What happens when progress monitoring shows that a student is making little progress with oral reading fluency?* When this is the case, further assessments should be given to determine the cause. Assessments for fluency in phonics and phonemic awareness at the word, sound, and letter levels will help determine where the breakdown occurs when reading connected text.

A few examples of assessment options available for teachers to determine further fluency needs are listed here:

- ✓ Administering curriculum-based measures like Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) and Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) from the DIBELS to evaluate item knowledge.
- ✓ Evaluating item knowledge from records of oral reading, IRIs, or

**Save the dates:**

**FALL 2008**



**September 25-26, 2008~**  
60<sup>th</sup> Annual New England Reading Association (NERA) Conference, "Striving Readers and Writers: Literacy for all TODAY and TOMORROW", will be held at the Marriot, Springfield, MA; National and Regional Presenters and Authors! Topical Panels and Teacher Roundtable Sessions. More information available at <http://www.nereading.org>

Clay's Observation Survey (1993).

- ✓ Administering phonics screening assessments and developmental spelling assessments to determine gaps in item knowledge.
- ✓ Checking automaticity with letters and sounds using classroom based assessments that correlate with core reading programs.

Students who struggle with fluency may need **more than repeated reading** in connected text—they may benefit from **small group targeted instruction at the letter, word, or phrase level**. Remembering that fluency is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension, a student's lack of fluency development may be an indication that more work is needed with phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and/or comprehension. Additionally, some students may have acquired foundational skills but struggle with fluency due to the rate they can process written language. These students may be identified as early as Kindergarten using rapid automatic naming (RAN) assessments.

**How can instruction be matched to learners' fluency needs?**

Differentiated small group lessons should provide explicit reading and writing strategies for teaching students to transition from accuracy to fluency at all levels: letter, word, phrase, and continuous text. This instruction does not need to be in isolation, but may be provided through appropriately selected and sequenced texts.

We all recognize the students Diller (2007) describes as needing small group fluency instruction: kids who struggle with decoding, word by word readers, monotone voice readers, and speed readers. She illustrates one model of how to meet the fluency needs of students by choosing a focus for each fluency-oriented small-group lesson. Possible foci for fluency lessons that Diller suggests include:

- Decoding words effortlessly and automatically.
- High-frequency word work.
- Reading the punctuation.
- Reading in phrases.
- Reading with intonation and expression
- Reading dialogue.
- Regulating the speed of reading.

Diller (2007) goes on to provide examples of explicit integrated lessons for each learning need and details material selection. Additional researchers (Dorn, et al, in print, 2007; Tyner and Greene, 2005) are turning to classroom based skills-focused small group instruction models that will support the needs of all students and coordinate with Response to Intervention (RTI) tiers of instruction. For more details on a variety of differentiated literacy instruction see the recommendations in the *Professional Text* section of this issue of *Literacy Links*.

**In Summary:**

Not all students will require intense direct instruction in fluency. Many students will develop fluency with repeated reading activities, provided during whole group, small group, or independent practice opportunities. Obviously, **the purpose of systematic assessment of all students is to target and provide prescriptive teaching for those who need more intense fluency instruction**. Students struggling with fluency may benefit from more intense instruction at the item levels.

September  
27, 2008 ~  
2<sup>nd</sup> Annual  
Nonfiction  
Institute,  
Featuring Susan  
Kirch, science  
education scholar  
and associate  
professor at NYU.  
Sponsored by the  
University of  
Maine College of  
Education and  
Human  
Development—  
Literacy Unit;  
Contact Amy  
Cates at 581-2438  
for registration  
information



## Description of Instructional Ideas...

### Fluency Rubric: Evaluating Prosodic Reading

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | <b>The reading rate sounds natural, as if the reader were speaking.</b> There is a natural rise and fall in pitch that indicates the reader is using punctuation, meaning, and language to interpret the story. There may be a few instances of problem solving or rereading, but the reader returns quickly to rapid phrased reading. |
| <b>3</b> | <b>There is a mixture of longer phrased reading (3 and 4 word phrases) and word-by –word reading.</b> The reader uses punctuation language, and meaning with <b>some</b> variation in pitch. The reader slows down to word-by-word reading at points during the story and problem solving and rereading are evident.                   |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Mostly word-by word reading.</b> Attention to punctuation may be present, but this is not consistent. The reader rereads and slows down at problem solving fairly often and does not consistently monitor for meaning. Pitch has <b>little</b> variation.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>All word-by-word reading with pauses between words.</b> There is little evidence of “reading with punctuation”. Problem solving at difficulty is very slow and little or no monitoring for meaning is present. The reader reads word-by word with consistent, sustained pitch ( <b>monotone</b> ).                                  |

Adapted (2001) from materials from: Dominic Press, Fountas and Pinnell and NAEP by: Becky Cummings, SAD#17; Beth Spinney, Portland School Department; Christine Skinner, SAD#45; Joan Bouchard, School Union#113; Valerie LaFave, SAD#38 and Patrick O’Shea, MDOE.

### Procedures for Measuring Accuracy and Rate in CBM/ORF

From Assessing Reading Fluency (Rasinski, 2004) available at [www.prel.org](http://www.prel.org)

#### Procedures for the CBM/ORF approach to assessing fluency are:

1. Find a passage(s) of approximately 250 words written at the student’s grade placement. Submit the passage to a text readability formula to estimate its grade appropriateness.
2. Ask the student to read the passage for one minute and tape-record the reading. Emphasize that the text should be read aloud in a normal way, not faster than normal.
3. Mark any uncorrected errors made by the student. Errors include mispronunciations, substitutions, reversals, omissions, or words pronounced by the examiner after a wait of 2-3 seconds without an attempt or response from the student. Mark the point in the text the student has come to after one minute of reading.
4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with two different passages (optional). If you choose to repeat the process, use the median or middle score for analysis.
5. Determine accuracy by dividing the number of words read correctly per minute (WCPM) by the total number of words read (WCPM + any uncorrected errors). This number will be a percentage. Compare the student’s performance against the target percentages in the table for Word Decoding Accuracy (below).



October 14-15,  
2008  
Mid-Maine  
Conference:  
Analyzing  
Literacy and  
Math Data to  
Improve Student  
Performance at  
Sunday River  
Resort in Bethel,  
Maine.  
Information can  
be obtained by  
emailing: [tsteinbeiser@lewistonpublicschools.org](mailto:tsteinbeiser@lewistonpublicschools.org) .

### Levels of Performance of Word Decoding Accuracy

Independent Level:	97-100%
Instructional Level:	90-96%
Frustration Level:	<90%

6. Determine the fluency rate by calculating the total number of WCPM and comparing the student's performance against the Words Correct per Minute Norms (see below).

### Words Correct per Minute Norms

Grade	Percentile	Fall WCPM*	Winter WCPM*	Spring WCPM*	Grade	Percentile	Fall WCPM*	Winter WCPM*	Spring WCPM*
1	90		81	111	5	90	166	182	194
	75		47	82		75	139	156	168
	50		23	53		50	110	127	139
	25		12	28		25	85	99	109
	10		6	15		10	61	74	83
2	90	106	125	142	6	90	177	195	204
	75	79	100	117		75	153	167	177
	50	51	72	89		50	127	140	150
	25	25	42	61		25	98	111	122
	10	11	18	31		10	68	82	93
3	90	128	146	162	7	90	180	192	202
	75	99	120	137		75	156	165	177
	50	71	92	107		50	128	136	150
	25	44	62	78		25	102	109	123
	10	21	36	48		10	79	88	98
4	90	145	166	180	8	90	185	199	199
	75	119	139	152		75	161	173	177
	50	94	112	123		50	133	146	151
	25	68	87	98		25	106	115	124
	10	45	61	72		10	77	84	97

\*WCPM = Words Correct Per Minute

Developed and reported by: Hasbrouck, J., & Tindal, G. (2006) ORF norms: A valuable assessment tool for reading teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(7), 636-644.  
Hasbrouck, J., & Tindal, G. (2005) Oral Reading Fluency Norms <http://brt.uoregon.edu/>  
TECHNICAL REPORTS.

### Summary of Professional Literacy Texts...

The following text set includes how-to books dealing with teaching focused small-group differentiated literacy instruction.

**Making the Most of Small Groups: Differentiation for All** (2007) by Debbie Diller is available from Stenhouse and the ISBN-13 is 978-1-57110-431-1.

**Small Group Reading Instruction: A Differentiated Teaching Model for Beginning**

When children  
“know”  
a word, they not  
only know the word’s  
definition and its  
logical relationship  
with other words,  
they also know how  
the  
word functions  
in different contexts.

--Stahl & Kapinus, 2001



**We use words to think;  
the more words  
we know, the finer  
our understanding is  
about the world.**

--Stahl, 1991

[and Struggling Readers](#) (2004) by Beverly Tyner is available from IRA and the ISBN-13 is 978-0-87207-007-3.

[Small Group Reading Instruction: A Differentiated Teaching Model for Intermediate Readers, Grades 3-8](#) (2005) by Sharon E. Green and Beverly Tyner is available from IRA and the ISBN-13 is 978-0-87207-574-0.

[Differentiated Reading Instruction: Strategies for the Primary Grades](#) (2007) by Sharon Walpole and Michael McKenna is available from Stenhouse and the ISBN-13 is 978-1-59385-412-6.

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## Children's Literature Titles...

### Text Set of Children's Poetry Books

[Mary Engelbreit's Mother Goose Favorites](#) (2008) by Mary Engelbreit (illustrator) is available from Harper Collins and the ISBN-13 is 978-0061575440. This text has all your favorite Mother Goose rhymes! *Hey, diddle diddle! The Cat and the Fiddle, Humpty Dumpty, Little Miss Muffet*, and other popular Mother Goose rhymes are featured in this enchanting collection. It's the perfect introduction to classic rhymes that every child should know by heart. Mary Engelbreit's engaging, detailed pictures give children a gateway into the world of reading—and the wonderful world of Mother Goose.

[A Child's Garden of Verses](#) (August 2008) By Robert Louis Stevenson (author) and Barbara McClintock (illustrator) is available from Harper Collins and the ISBN-13 is 978-0060282288.

[The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children](#) (2008 Kindle Edition) by Kenneth Grahame is available from Celtic Giraffe Books and the ASIN is B001BCU9NY.

[The Book of Shadow Boxes: A Story of the ABC's](#) (1994) written and illustrated by Laura L. Seeley is available from Peachtree Publishers and the ISBN-13: 978-1561450725.

If you like J. Patrick Lewis' style, watch for [The Underwear Salesman: And Other Jobs for Better or Verse](#) by J. Patrick Lewis (author), Serge Bloch (illustrator) available in March 2009 from GineeSeo Books. The ISBN-13 is 978-0689853258.

Teachers should also think about adding poetry books that relate to specific content area topics connected to their grade levels. A multitude of these texts are currently available in almost every topic and can be found by searching the web for children's poetry. Refined searches narrow the choices by age levels as well as topics.

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## News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Reading First is pleased to announce the **2008-09 Literacy Leaders' Network** series. This year's series will take the form of professional learning communities located regionally across Maine. The foci of this year's series will be exploring Response to Intervention (RTI) and using protocols to explore teaching challenges. All literacy leaders and/or teachers interested in literacy in Maine elementary schools are encouraged to participate. More details about this



**SNEAK PREVIEW:**

**Coming soon**

2008-2009  
Literacy Links—

- *Response to Intervention*
- *Deeper Comprehension*
- *Purposeful Text Selection*

exciting opportunity to network with colleagues from across Maine and registration information can be obtained at:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/materials.html> .

If you would like more information about this opportunity please contact:

[Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov).

**Check it out...**

[www.jhasbrouck.com](http://www.jhasbrouck.com)

This website introduces you to Dr. Jan Hasbrouck, Ph D. and her work on reading fluency. She shares information on frequently asked questions about fluency and provides a link to the handout for one of her most recent presentations which includes a chart of words correct/minutes, developed with Gerald Tindal, in publications of technical research at the University of Oregon's Behavioral Research and Teaching Project at: <http://brt.uoregon.org> . Fluency rating norms at this site can be used in conjunction with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Fluency Scale to assess students' growth in fluency.

[www.prel.org](http://www.prel.org)

The Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) is an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is "Building Capacity Through Education". This organization aims to bridge the gap between research and practice. Numerous publications are available for download on the PREL website. PREL has developed a "Research-Based Practices in Early Reading Series" which includes the following documents:

- **A Focus on Fluency**
- **Assessing Reading Fluency**

This document by Rasinski provides teachers with the following:

**Multidimensional Fluency Scale**

Use the following scales to rate reader fluency on the dimensions of expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. Scores range from 4 to 16. Generally, scores below 8 indicate that fluency may be a concern. Scores of 8 or above indicate that the student is making good progress in fluency.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A. Expression and Volume</b>	Reads with little expression or enthusiasm in voice. Reads words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language.	Some expression. Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas of the text, but not others. Focus remains largely on saying the	Sounds like natural language throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally	Reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Sounds like natural language. The reader is able to vary expression and volume to match his/her



"The important thing is never to stop questioning."  
- Albert Einstein



	Tends to read in a quiet voice.	words. Still reads in a quiet voice.	appropriate throughout the text.	interpretation of the passage.
<b>B. Phrasing</b>	Monotonic with little sense of phrase boundaries, frequent word-by-word reading.	Frequent two- and three-word phrases giving the impression of choppy reading; improper stress and intonation that fail to mark ends of sentences and clauses.	Mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and possibly some choppiness; reasonable stress/intonation.	Generally well phrased, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.
<b>C. Smoothness</b>	Frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts.	Several "rough spots" in text where extended pauses, hesitations, etc., are more frequent and disruptive.	Occasional breaks in smoothness caused by difficulties with specific words and/or structures.	Generally smooth reading with some breaks, but word and structure difficulties are resolved quickly, usually through self-correction.
<b>D. Pace (during sections of minimal disruption)</b>	Slow and laborious.	Moderately slow.	Uneven mixture of fast and slow reading.	Consistently conversational.

Source: Adapted from "Training Teachers to Attend to Their Students' Oral Reading Fluency," by J. Zutell and T. V. Rasinski, 1991, *Theory Into Practice*, 30, pp. 211-217.

See: [http://www.prel.org/products/re\\_/assessing-fluency.pdf](http://www.prel.org/products/re_/assessing-fluency.pdf) to access their complete list of products, visit the main website <http://www.prel.org> and then click products, topic, and reading/language.

## Newsletter Archives

There are several earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available on the Maine Reading First website at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

Edition	Spotlight Topic
March, 2005	Maine Reading First
April, 2005	Maine Reading First Course
May, 2005	Reading Fluency
June, 2005	Vocabulary



**"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn."**

- William Shakespeare



September, 2005	Phonemic Awareness
October, 2005	Phonics
November, 2005	Comprehension
December, 2005/January, 2006	DIBELS
February, 2006	Literacy Centers
March, 2006	Interactive Read Aloud
April, 2006	Nonfiction
May, 2006	Word Walls
June, 2006	Classroom Design
September, 2006	Shared Reading
October, 2006	Automaticity
November, 2006	Using Assessment to Guide Instruction
December, 2006	Deepening Comprehension
January, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 1)
February, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 2)
March, 2007	Making Instruction Explicit
April, 2007	Motivation and Engagement
May-June 2007	Grouping for Instruction
September 2007	Making Instruction Systematic
October, 2007	Pacing Instruction
November, 2007	Managed Independent Practice
December, 2007	A Deeper Look at Phonemic Awareness
January, 2008	Phonics at the K-2 Grade Span
February, 2008	Phonics and Word Work Grades 3-5
March, 2008	Vocabulary Revisited
April, 2008	A Deeper Look at Vocabulary Instruction
May-June 2008	Fluency Revisited

For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email [Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov)

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website  
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

The professional development opportunities and materials are listed in *Literacy Links* for informational purposes only and are not necessarily endorsed by the Maine Department of Education's Maine Reading First Initiative.