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Fluency
Overview Guide

Waterford Early Learning's
Six Instructional Strands for Literacy

Phonological Awareness

Phonics

Communication

Language Concepts

Comprehension & Vocabulary

Fluency

Research-Based Principles

Hasbrouck and Glaser (2012) define reading fluency as "reasonably accurate reading at an appropriate rate with suitable prosody (expression) that leads to accurate and deep comprehension and motivation to read."

Fluent readers can perceive words in 1/20th of a second and can read at a rate of 150–250 words per minute (Kilpatrick, 2015). This level of reading fluency is possible only when students have developed a large bank of "sight words" (defined here as words that a reader can recognize automatically, without the need to decode).

Words are added to a student's sight-word bank through the brain's orthographic-mapping process, which draws upon a student's phonological awareness, phonics, and oral language skills to permanently bond the spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of a word and make it instantly accessible for the reader when that word is encountered again. With a growing number of sight words anchored in the brain's reading network, the cognitive load that was previously dedicated to decoding is decreased. This allows the student to use that cognitive space to focus on meaning as they read, which supports reading comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

A *word-mapping* approach to classroom instruction aligns well with the brain's orthographic-mapping process and supports the growth of students' sight-word banks.
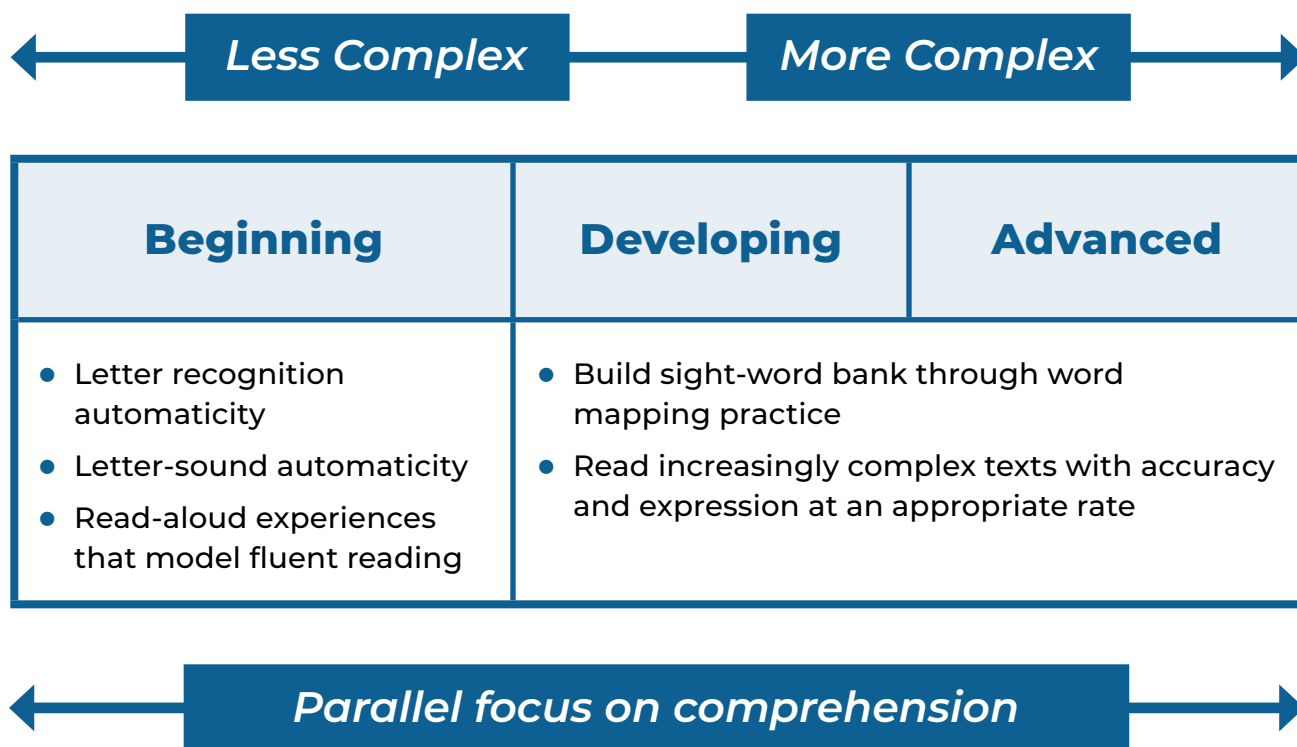
A growing body of research (see Share, 1999; Share, 2004; Kilpatrick, 2015) shows that when typically developing readers become reasonably proficient with the word-mapping process, they begin to self-teach as they read. Through repeated exposure to a given word, mapping occurs naturally. Orthographic knowledge related to that word is then available for future encounters with the word and similar words, decreasing the student's reliance on decoding (Castles et al., 2018).

Because multiple exposures to words build fluency, engaging students in repeated reading of appropriately challenging texts is an effective way to support the brain's orthographic-mapping process and foster the development of a large bank of sight words.

Word mapping is an effective instructional approach for both regularly and irregularly spelled words. With repeated exposure, new words are added to a student's sight-word bank. For irregularly spelled words, a greater number of exposures may be needed for the brain to make mapping "adjustments" to account for irregularities in letter-sound correspondences.

Fluency Skills Development

	Less Complex →	More Complex →
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advanced**
• Letter recognition automaticity • Letter-sound automaticity • Read-aloud experiences that model fluent reading	• Build sight-word bank through word mapping practice • Read increasingly complex texts with accuracy and expression at an appropriate rate	

Parallel focus on comprehension

Waterford Early Learning Instruction

→ **Fluency Skills Taught and Scope & Sequence**

View example fluency activities from Waterford Early Learning's adaptive learning path → here.

Explicit, systematic instruction within Waterford Early Learning's adaptive learning path supports the development of the phonological awareness, letter recognition, and letter-sound correspondence skills that are foundational building blocks for reading fluency. With these skills in place, students begin to build word-level fluency through extensive word mapping and word-building practice.

1	2	3
Students hear the sounds (phonemes) and then connect the phonemes to the letters (graphemes) to map CVC words.	Students map words by connecting sounds/phonemes—/s/ /a/ /k/— to letters/graphemes—*s-a-ck*.	Students use the *oa-t* pattern to map similar words such as *goat*, *throat*, *coat*, and *float*.

Waterford Early Learning's adaptive learning path includes hundreds of experiences with connected text. Decodable texts (Readable books) as well narrative and informational read-along books provide fluency practice at all stages of reading development. The book experiences included embedded support for decoding and comprehension. Many also include narration as a *model* for fluency.
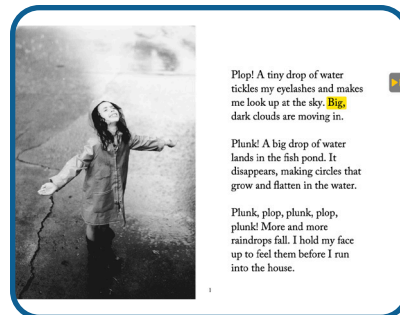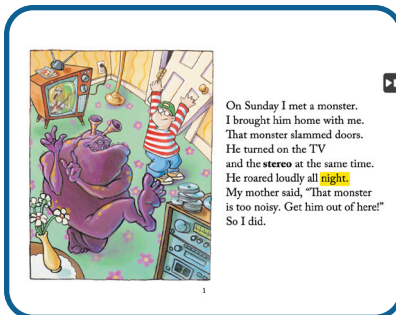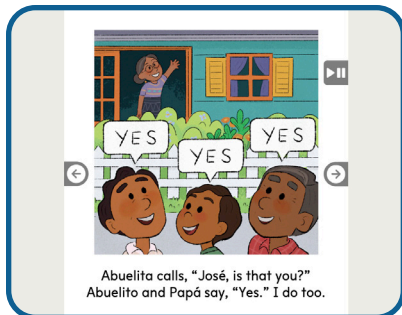
Short passages from Waterford Early Learning's Readable books are featured in fluency activities. These activities provide opportunities to practive repeated reading of familiar text that is aligned with the phonics instruction students have received. And because comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, many fluency activities in the digitial learning path are followed by a check for understanding.
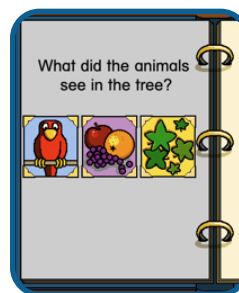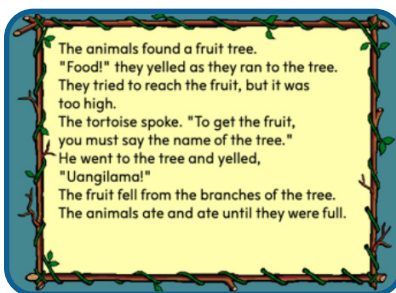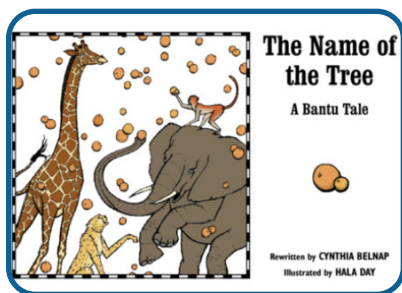
Reading with expression contributes to reading comprehension. To read with appropriate expression, students must think about the events of the story and attend to punctuation. Waterford Early Learning's explicit instruction for fluency draws upon text from the Readable books series and builds students' ability to read at an appropriate rate, with accuracy and expression.
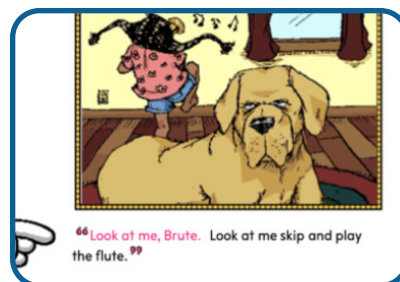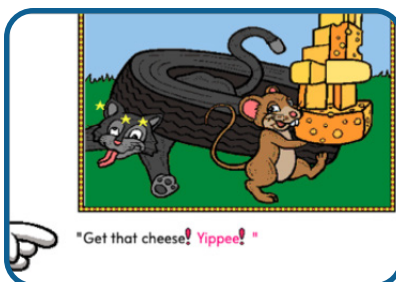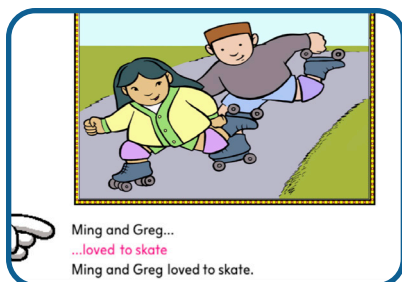
Resources

Resources to support fluency skills development in the classroom and at home include the following:

Letter Recognition and Letter-Sound Automaticity

→ In **Resources & Activities**,

- SEARCH "**letter cards.**"
- FILTER for **Subject & Strand>Literacy>Phonics**, and SEARCH "**letter recognition.**"

→ **Letter-Sound Songs**

→ **Letter-Sounds Connections 1: Video**

→ **Letter-Sounds Connections 2: Video**

→ **Letter-Sounds Connections 3: Video**

Word-Level Fluency

→ **Word Mapping**

→ **Word Mapping Student Template**

→ **Six Syllable Types**

→ In **Resources & Activities,**

- FILTER for **Resource Type>WEL Activity** and SEARCH "**fluency.**"

Modeled Fluency

→ **Traditional Tales: Narrated in English and Spanish**

→ In **Resources & Activities**, go to

- **Collections>Books: Traditional Tales**
- **Collections>Books: Read-Along**
- **Collections>Books: Informational Texts**
- **Collections>Books: Biographies**

Repeated Reading

→ **Beginning Readers and Decodable Books**

→ In **Resources & Activities**, go to
  - **Collections>Books: Readables.**

→ In **Resources & Activities**,
  - FILTER for **Resource Type>WEL Activity** and **Subject & Strand>Fluency.**

Fluency Observation

→ **Fluency Check Sheets**

Parallel Focus on Comprehension

→ In **Resources & Activities**, go to
  - **Collections>Reading Extension Activities** to find classroom comprehension resources related to Waterford Early Learning and popular trade books.

Playlists

→ In **Resources & Activities**,
  - FILTER for **View>All Playlists** and **Subject & Strand>Literacy>Fluency.**

Family Resources

→ **Family Fact Sheet: Fluency**
→ **Hoja de datos familiars—Fluidez**

→ **Family Video: Fluency**
→ **Video de elemento de instrucción de la fluidez**

Instructional Routines

The following instructional routines can serve as frameworks for whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction. These routines leverage the elements of effective instruction that are built into the adaptive learning path for Waterford Early Learning.

Modeled Fluency

Use this routine to model fluent reading for students during read-aloud experiences with narrative and informational text.

1. Choose a book that is related to topics and/or other texts in your classroom curriculum. This will help support the added objective of building students' vocabulary and background knowledge to support reading comprehension.

2. **Before Reading**, set a purpose that relates to comprehension. For example, before reading *The Gingerbread Man*, ask students to think about the pattern in the story as you read. Let students know that you will be modeling what fluent reading sounds like and reminding them that reading fluently does not equal reading fast.

3. **During Reading**

   - Demonstrate how punctuation—including end punctuation, commas, and quotation marks—can guide the expression you use.

   - Model how to read longer sentences with expressive phrasing.

   - Use facial expressions, slower/faster pacing, and louder/softer tones to reflect the characters' feelings and convey the events of the story.

   - Invite students to join in at key moments in the story so that they can practice the use of appropriate expression.

   - Keep comprehension at the center of the experience by pausing to ask questions and lead discussion that focuses on meaning.

4. After Reading

- Maintain a focus on meaning through follow-up discussion and activities. → **These classroom activities** relate to *The Gingerbread Man*. Activities for learning at home can also be shared in **English** and **Spanish**.

- Draw attention to word patterns in the book that align with phonics concepts students are learning. For example, after reading The Gingerbread Man, you might talk about the pattern in the words man, ran, and can. Follow up with word mapping practice to foster the development of students' sight word banks.

Note: Fluency can be modeled in any language! For example, you can share *El hombre de jengibre* with students and families as appropriate.

Repeated Reading

Use this routine to provide students with structured reading experiences that foster the development of fluency.

1. Choose a decodable book that aligns with the phonics instruction students have received to ensure that they have the necessary skills to successfully navigate the text.

2. Before Reading

- Review the word patterns and Power Words students will encounter in the book, with a clear focus on the letter-sound correspondences within words. As needed, use the instructional routine for word mapping outlined → **here**.

- Model fluent reading of part of the text, reminding students that reading fluently means reading smoothly, accurately, and with expression. Reading fluently does *not* equal reading fast but at an appropriate steady rate. As you model, slow down to use a rate that approximates the rate at which students will likely read the text.

- Set a purpose that relates to comprehension. For example, before students read *Dev and His New Pet*, ask students to think about what kind of pet Dev will have and what he will do with his pet.

3. During Reading

- Provide guidance and support as needed, centering the focus on the letter-sound correspondences within words and drawing upon the instructional routine for decoding outlined → **here**.

- Direct students to reread as necessary to read phrases and sentences with fluency and to maintain their understanding of the text.

4. After Reading

- Review the text to reinforce fluency practice. For example, write a list of words from the text that include the short e sound.

- Maintain a focus on meaning by facilitating a discussion about the story. What kind of pet does Dev have? What do Dev and his pet do together? What problem happens in the story?

5. Engage students in multiple readings of the text to support the development of reading fluency.

Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback has been shown to be a particularly powerful form of feedback (Hattie & Jaeger, 1998). It has a substantial effect size, meaning it can significantly improve learning outcomes. Within Waterford Early Learning's adaptive learning path, corrective feedback helps students build new understandings through productive struggle.

As you engage students in the instructional routines outlined above, provide corrective feedback that

- is immediate and timely;

- is targeted and specific;

- is asset-based and encouraging;

- provides additional information, as applicable (e.g., how the letter sounds align with or differ from a student's home language);

- approaches the task in a new way, as applicable (e.g., presenting an additive blending approach as a follow-up to a whole-word blending approach);

- is shared through multiple modalities (e.g., visual and auditory); and

- does not simply provide the correct answer, but instead guides students to confirm or self-correct their thinking to arrive at the correct answer.

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→ **A full list of references is included in the** *Educator Overview Guide for Waterford Early Learning: Reading Curriculum*.