

Effective Teaching of Reading: From Phonics to Fluency

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The Bridge from Phonics to Comprehension: Three Components of Fluency

1. Accuracy in word recognition (word decoding).

Approximately 95% word recognition accuracy is considered adequate for instructional level reading.

2. Automaticity in word recognition.

Readers not only are accurate in word recognition, they are effortless or automatic in recognizing the words they encounter. The significance of achieving automaticity is that readers can devote their limited cognitive resources to the important task of comprehending the text.

Automaticity is most often assessed by determining a reader's reading rate on a grade level passage in words correct per minute. Since rate increases as readers mature, no one rate is considered appropriate. You will need to check students' rate against the table of grade level norms.

3. Interpretive and meaningful reading.

Readers use their new-found cognitive "energy" to interpret the passage they are reading. In oral reading this is done through an expressive and appropriately phrased rendering of a written passage at an appropriately fluent speed. It is assumed that this type of interpretive reading is also reflected in silent reading.

Interpretive and meaningful reading is best measured through a qualitative rubric in which the teacher listens to a reader read grade level material and rates the reading according to descriptions provided in the rubric. Readers who fall in the lower half of most are normally considered less than minimally adequate or proficient in fluency.