



Expanding Educational Horizons

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH

LITERACY MINIGUIDE

Topic: Reading Fluency

Date: August 2007

This project is a joint initiative between the Governments of Jamaica and the United States of America through their monitoring agencies the Ministry of Education and Youth and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
1. What is Reading Fluency?.....	4
2. Identifying the Fluent Reader.....	4
3. Reading Fluency Instruction	5
4. Promoting Reading Fluency.....	5
5. What is the Readers’ Theatre? (RT).....	5
6. Other strategies to promote Reading Fluency	12



Dear Teacher,

This unit is developed for teachers at Grades 1-4 in the Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH) schools. It is developed in response to teachers' request for support material in the development of literacy skills, particularly in the area of reading fluency. Fluency instruction needs to begin in Grade One or even before.

This unit focuses on strategies and suggestions that will promote fluency and as an extension, comprehension and writing. Two strategies, the Readers' Theatre and use of jingles, will be highlighted here. You will get the opportunity to share your experiences using the strategies and be able to observe the growth of your students in the areas mentioned.

Objectives:

By the end of the unit you should be able to:

- Identify a fluent reader
- Identify some aspects of fluent reading
- Use effectively some strategies, especially the Readers Theatre and jingles, to promote fluency, comprehension and writing
- Modify the activities and strategies to suit your classroom context

We hope that you will find this unit helpful for making the connection among fluency, comprehension and writing.

Yours truly,

Paulette Roberts (Mrs.) Literacy Specialists, EEH

Maureen Byfield (Mrs.) Literacy Specialist, EEH

1. What is Reading Fluency?

Fluency in reading is the ability to read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. It is a process; hence it develops over time, with practice. When readers have this ability, they recognize words effortlessly and read with expression and meaning. They do not have to concentrate on decoding, and thus, are able to focus on comprehension. When fluent readers read silently they group words quickly in ways that help them gain meaning from the text they read. Think for a while about the children you teach. Is there anyone in your class who does not need instruction in fluency?

Fluency has three components:

- *Accuracy* - the ability to read words in text automatically
- *Rate* - the speed at which the reader reads
- *Prosody* - the elements of oral language such as stress, intonation and phrasing.

Of course, not all children need instruction in all components nor is it necessary to use these terms with the children. You should, however, consider them as you plan instruction and as you model fluent reading.

It is important to remember that fluency is affected by the text that is read. If you have to read text on a highly technical subject with many unfamiliar words, titles and content, it is quite likely that the level of fluency with which you read will be affected. For example, young children might find it difficult to read a science text with unfamiliar words.

2. Identifying the Fluent Reader

Try to identify a fluent and also a non-fluent reader in your class. What are the characteristics of and the reading strategies used by the fluent reader? How do they compare with those of the non-fluent reader? Do you find any similarities and differences between the two readers? How did you identify a fluent reader?

You may have noted that the fluent reader:

- Spent less time decoding
- Read with meaning and expression
- Engaged the listener
- Monitored his reading by re-reading, using different cues and reading ahead to get meaning

Did you notice that some similar strategies are used by both readers? For example, both readers may re-read, omit words, hesitate to figure out new words, insert and substitute words.

- Why do you think the fluent reader hesitated?
- Why do you think the fluent reader substituted?
- Would you say the reasons are the same for both readers?

3. Reading Fluency Instruction

Fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. The fluent readers make connections not only with ideas in the text and between the texts but also with their prior knowledge. Because fluency is so important, deliberate instructions for reading fluency should be planned and delivered systematically and regularly. Instructions should have three components:

- A model of fluent reading. This can be presented by the teacher, a child or any other good reader and should be done on a regular basis. It should be structured, systematic, and represent different genres.
- Guided oral reading. This should be a purposeful activity which may require the teacher to work closely with the reader to teach new strategies, or to provide opportunities to use the strategies they learned.
- Opportunities to practice oral reading. This should be a scheduled activity (every day) where the children get the chance to interact with books reflecting a variety of genres, to extend their vocabulary and to read to an audience.

As the students gain experiences in reading fluently, opportunities should be provided for them to express themselves in writing. For example, students may rewrite a story read or write in response to a story, linking the story to their own experiences. They might write a character study or evaluate the story.

4. Promoting Reading Fluency

Some strategies that may promote reading fluency are choral reading, peer/paired reading, repeated reading, echo reading, buddy reading, tape assisted reading and the Readers' Theatre.

In the Jamaican Primary schools observation reveals that the strategies mentioned have been frequently used, except the Readers' Theatre. We recognize that this is a powerful strategy that actively engages students and provides opportunities for them to work cooperatively. As such, this unit will focus, to a large extent, on the Readers' Theatre and its ability to connect oral reading fluency, comprehension and writing.

What is the Readers' Theatre? (RT)

The Readers' Theatre is a dramatic enactment of a text. Each reader assumes the role of a character in the text and reads his or her part in the text. The emphasis is on the oral expression of the part. The reading should convey the readers' interpretation of the part.

Benefits

There are many literacy benefits to gain by engaging students through dramatic enactment of a text. Readers' Theatre:

- Is enjoyable for the children who enjoy drama which is fun and natural for them.
- Encourages emotional growth, motivation and engagement of children.
- Develops listening and speaking skills.
- Promotes fluency because students engage in repeated readings.
- Encourages cooperation and interaction with peers and makes reading exciting.
- Spurs interest in reading
- Gives students an opportunity to write as they are encouraged to compose their own scripts.
- Provides opportunities for students to empathize with book characters when they enter the world of the characters and act their parts.
- Promotes understanding of literature as children interpret their roles.
- Brings enjoyment to both the students and their audiences.

Sample Scripts

The best scripts for Readers' Theatre are those with not too many speaking voices. Dialogues, plays, skits, fictions, poems and jingles with a clear plot and setting etc. are good for Readers' Theatre.

Here are some titles that you might find useful.

1. The Three little Bears
2. The Very Hungry Caterpillar
3. The Ginger Bread Man
4. Jack and Jill Went up the Hill
5. Little Miss Muffet

Add any other titles you know of to the list and share them with your colleagues.

Have your students rewrite some of the scripts mentioned above, creating scripts that reflect their local contexts and experiences. Then get them to perform their scripts.

Sample Lesson

A Readers' Theatre project can last several days depending on the length of the script and the amount of daily class time allotted for reading. On average the time spent on one script may vary between 5 to 10 days. A suggested schedule for developing a Readers' Theatre project follows in Box 1.

Box 1. Sample Lesson and schedule – Readers’ Theatre

Day 1

- Give each student a copy of the script.
- Read along with students the title of the script and the name of the author.
- Have students make predictions re the story and characters.
- Read the script aloud to the students and have them follow.
- Help students to generate and write a list of key words from the script and place on word wall.
- Help students to pronounce these words daily so that they can call them fluently.

Day 2

- Have students read and re-read the scripts in pairs. Re-reading improves fluency
- While the students are reading, help them to correctly pronounce the words, read with feeling and emotion, and read at an appropriate pace and volume.
- Model appropriate fluent reading to students. Good readers can help you do this.

Days 3 and 4

- Have students read aloud in small groups. Model reading where the necessity arises
- Have students select roles of characters in the script.
- Have them read the part silently, then aloud to another student and finally to a small group.
- Have their classmates share ideas to improve the reading.

Days 5 and 6

- Let the students perform to members of their class.
- Get their classmates to respond to the performance with a view of improving it.
- Guide students to use their classmates’ responses to improve the performance.
- Assist students to perform to their schoolmates and parents.

We have given you ideas to last you for several days. The objective was to demonstrate how a script could be used over a week. Try the activities with your students and share your experiences with us and your colleagues. You might want to write your reflections in your personal portfolio or place them on the website: www.ehschoolnet.org

TASK 1: Now that you have some ideas for using fluency-building strategy have your class perform a Readers' Theatre. Make note of other benefits apart from those listed above which you see emerging.

Features of a Reading Lesson: Activities to Connect Readers' Theatre to Comprehension

A reading lesson usually has three parts: *Introduction or Before Reading Activities*, *Development or During Reading Activities* and *Culminating or After Reading Activities*. The introduction or Before Reading Activities should aim at arousing interest, and establishing, using and building prior knowledge. The During Reading Activities target comprehension development by helping children to make connections between text and their experiences, to generate questions that will focus their reading and to acquire strategies and develop skills that will help them to be proficient readers. In the After Reading Activities students reflect on what they have read. They also connect prior knowledge with new knowledge and use the information to make decisions or to create new information.

Before Reading Activities

Here are some examples of activities to engage children in, before they read the text.

- Discuss the title, author and illustrator of the story.
- Make predictions using pictures, cover page and title, on what the story will be about.
- Discuss the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases.
- Establish mood and setting using pictures, selected words and phrases from the story.

During Reading Activities

During Reading activities should:

- Engage students in reading the text individually, or in groups, for set purposes e.g. to determine character traits, to justify predictions, to locate main and supporting details, to discriminate between facts and opinion, fantasy and reality, to establish cause effect relationship
- Share responses to questions. Here students should be encouraged to ask questions of the teacher, their classmates and the text and to respond to questions.

After Reading Activities

In After Reading Activities students should show their understanding of the lesson. This can be through:

- Drama and art work
- Retelling the story orally or in written form
- Rewriting the story from another perspective, using different characters and settings
- Extending the story
- Answering the *who, what, why, when* questions
- Comparing/ contrasting the story to one within students’ experiences
- Revisiting predictions to see whether they were substantiated by the text.
- Writing in reaction to specific aspects of the story, e.g. a character, an event, the setting.

Task: 2

What benefits / possibilities from the Readers’ Theatre did you identify in the areas of fluency, comprehension and writing? Note your response in the table below.

Table 1: Instructional Benefits of Readers’ Theatre

Fluency	Comprehension	Writing

Here are some questions that will help you. Did you observe that students:

- Read more fluently when they were given the script beforehand?
- Felt more comfortable reading when they had the support of their colleagues?
- Read more fluently when they got the opportunity to re-read the text several times?

- Showed understanding of the text through ways such as facial expression, intonation, body language and their understanding of the mechanics of language?
- Evaluated characters in the script so that they could reflect them as they performed?
- Engaged in making predictions about the text?
- Could rewrite the text using a local setting and familiar characters?
- Could write their own texts with or without a story frame?
- Could write their reaction to the presentation, the text or evaluate the story or a character?

Task: 3

Now, add other ideas to the three phases of the reading comprehension activities. Post these on www.ehschoolnet.org or in your portfolio.

Promoting Reading Fluency Using Jingles

Earlier on a story was used to demonstrate the Readers' Theatre. Have you ever thought about using a Jingle as the script for Readers' Theatre? Look at this well known Jingle.

Little Miss Muffet

*Little Miss Muffet,
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey,
There came a spider
Sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away.*

TASK 4: Post on www.ehschoolnet.org or write in your portfolio how you would use this script with the concept of the Readers' Theatre to promote reading fluency at a particular grade level.

Applying the Features of a Reading Lesson to Develop Comprehension Skills- Using a Jingle

Below are suggestions for teaching Comprehension to Grade 2 students, using the jingle, *Little Miss Muffet*

Before Reading Activities

1. Introduce the topic of the jingle.
2. Students predict who is Miss Muffet.
3. Discuss meanings of unfamiliar words such as *tuffet*, *curds*, *whay* (use the words in context and have students identify the clues that help them with the meaning.
4. Have students discuss any frightening experiences with spider.
5. Teach songs about spiders e.g. *Little Miss Muffet*, *Hippsy Wippsy Spider*. Here the students will do a comparison study of spiders in both songs. For example:
 - (a) The activities that the spider in Miss Muffet was engaged in compared to Hippsy Wippsy Spider.
 - (b) The similarities and differences in characteristic of both spiders.
Where possible have the students use the pictures of spiders in both texts to help with the comparison study.

During Reading Activities

1. Distribute copies of the scripts
2. Talk about characters in the scripts-(Little Miss Muffet, the spider) their likely behaviours or characteristics e.g. how they would dress, special peculiarities, how they would speak
3. Make decisions about who would play the role of each character.
4. Read the script in pairs/groups/ whole class.
5. Discuss the meaning that the character would like to transmit and how he/she will transmit it.
6. Perform the part by reading the script. While reading, portray the physical and emotional characteristics/ attributes of the characters, through their voice and actions.

After Reading Activities

1. Have students rewrite the story.
2. Give different ending to story.
3. Do character study- use Semantic Map to record details.
4. Art work- Draw a scene or character.
5. Extend the story.

Task 5: Think of another jingle and write step by step, how you would use it to promote comprehension.

5. Other Strategies to Promote Reading Fluency

As mentioned earlier, there are additional strategies to promote reading fluency. These are listed and defined below. Try them with your students and share how your students benefit from these strategies.

Guided Oral Reading Instruction

Guided Oral Reading Instruction takes place when the teacher or a competent reader helps the learner to develop effective strategies for processing texts of increasing levels of difficulty. The aim is to help the student to become fluent readers who can apply strategies to help them in their independent reading. This may take the form of choral reading, peer/paired reading, tape-assisted reading, echo reading and buddy reading.

Choral Reading

- In **choral reading** all the students, led by the teacher, will read aloud together. This technique provides security for the struggling and shy reader. As the class reads together students hear how words are pronounced and used in context, how good reading sounds and they get an understanding of the pace of reading. If a passage with repetitive language and catchy rhythm is used, students soon become comfortable, chiming in and enjoying the passage as they move to the rhythm. Catchy jingles and stories with exciting plots are good for choral reading. It is important that students listen to each other so that they read at the same pace. For variation, the teacher could allow different groups or individuals to read specific sections of the text.

Peer/ Paired Reading?

- In **peer/paired** reading the students work as pairs. Each student reads the text silently at first then each takes turn reading the text orally to the other. The student who listens, functions as the teacher by giving feedback.

Tape Assisted Reading?

- In this strategy children listen and read along with the tape. Done this way the tape provides guided instructions. An alternative is that children listen to stories on tape as they follow along in a book. In this case the tape acts as a model of fluent reading.

Echo Reading

- As the name suggests, students say exactly what the teacher says. The teacher reads a sentence, paragraph or page aloud and then have students reread that segment. Repeated readings of the segment help students to become familiar with the text and helps with identification of words. Rapid identification of words increases reading fluency.

Buddy Reading

- With this strategy an able reader models fluent reading to another, maybe to a struggling reader, by reading aloud a passage or reading the passage together. The better reader helps the other reader with pronunciation, meanings of words and understanding of the story.

Teacher Read Aloud

- The teacher reads a story or poem aloud to the class every day for about fifteen minutes. It is important to have students help to select the story/poem and it would help to select books that reflect their culture and language. Read Aloud allows the teacher to model reading and also to engage the students as you ask them to make predictions using pictures in the text, titles and also their previous knowledge. Read Aloud enhances students' vocabulary, improves their listening and comprehension skills, and motivates children to read independently.

Task 6: Try the strategies suggested, for a month and then share your views about their effectiveness. Think of some other strategies to promote fluency and post them on line. You may also want to share them with your colleagues at your school or in your cluster

Tips for Choosing Scripts to Promote Fluency

Some materials are more suitable to promote reading fluency. Here are some guidelines for choosing suitable materials. Choose:

- Scripts with repetitive language.
- Scripts with predictive lines.
- Accumulative stories e.g. Ginger Bread Man, The Enormous Turnip, The Hungry Caterpillar.
- Familiar topics that make a link with the stories and children's experiences.
- Stories reflecting students' interests.



Task 7: Write five titles of stories and jingles that you would use to promote reading fluency.

What special characteristics do these stories have that make them especially valuable for promoting fluency? Using one of the stories you have listed, write a step by step account of how you would use one of the strategies listed above to teach reading fluency to a grade of your choice. Conduct the lesson with your students and write your reflections about the lesson. Post your reflection on the website or share it with your colleagues using other media.

Here are some websites that you might find useful

www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm

www.proteacher.com/070173.shtml

www.readwritethink.org/lesson/lessons

www.readerstheatre.ecsd.net

nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1fluency.htm

www.busyteacherscafe.com/units/fluency.htm