



CASE STUDY UNIT

# Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

Created by

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\* For an Answer Key to this case study, please email your full name, title, and institutional affiliation to the IRIS Center at [iris@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:iris@vanderbilt.edu).

**Fluency and Word Identification:  
Grades 3–5**To Cite This  
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## Licensure and Content Standards

This IRIS Case Study aligns with the following licensure and program standards and topic areas.

### **Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)**

CAEP standards for the accreditation of educators are designed to improve the quality and effectiveness not only of new instructional practitioners but also the evidence-base used to assess those qualities in the classroom.

- Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

### **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)**

CEC standards encompass a wide range of ethics, standards, and practices created to help guide those who have taken on the crucial role of educating students with disabilities.

- Standard 5: Instructional Planning and Strategies

### **Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC)**

InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards are designed to help teachers of all grade levels and content areas to prepare their students either for college or for employment following graduation.

- Standard 8: Instructional Strategies

### **National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)**

NCATE standards are intended to serve as professional guidelines for educators. They also overview the “organizational structures, policies, and procedures” necessary to support them.

- Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

To be fluent is to read silently or orally with expression, but without effort. Fluency involves automatic word and punctuation recognition as well as pacing, inflection, and efficiency. Although it enhances reading comprehension, fluency is distinguished from comprehension in that it focuses on the reader's presentation of a reading passage rather than on its meaning.

As an example of both non-fluent and fluent reading, the same passage is typed twice below to mimic the reading in print. Imagine you are an upper elementary student reading aloud. First read the non-fluent passage from left to right, top to bottom. Then read the fluent passage.

Word Identification is the ability to accurately and automatically identify sight words and apply decoding strategies to read unfamiliar words. Word identification does not necessarily consider the meaning of designated words; however, knowledge of the meaning of word segments (e.g., prefixes, suffixes) assists upper elementary readers in identifying words.

### Non-fluent passage example:

The	au... tum... n	leaves	be... gan
chan	change.	Changing	colors to
vib...rant	redsyellowsand	or	vib vib
		orange.	

### Fluent passage example:

The autumn leaves began changing colors to vibrant reds, yellows, and oranges.

To provide a parallel example for word recognition, the example below attempts to test your automatic recognition and sound-decoding skills. Column A lists commonly known phrases disguised within other words. Without looking at Column B, try to immediately identify the phrase as written in Column A. If the phrase looks unfamiliar, then try to sound it out. Compare your "phrase identification" and "decoding skills" with the phrases as traditionally written in Column B.

### Column A

1. High pledge jelly gents
2. Comet tea offer hers
3. Welcome island mice ooze

### Column B

1. I pledge allegiance
2. Comedy of errors
3. Walk a mile in my shoes



### What a STAR Sheet is...

A STAR (STrategies And Resources) Sheet provides you with a description of a well-researched strategy that can help you solve the case studies in this unit.

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

### Peer Tutoring

### About the Strategy

**Peer Tutoring** is a strategy where children work together in a structured manner to practice teacher selected skills (Falk & Wehby, 2001; Hudson, Lignugaris-Kraft, & Miller, 1993). Peer tutoring formats include cross-age peer tutoring and class-wide peer tutoring.

### What the Research and Resources Say

- Peer tutoring can be an effective means of working with groups of students who have different instructional levels (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Mortweet, et al., 1999).
- Peer tutoring provides increased focused instructional time that is linked to improvements in reading skills (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001).
- Peer tutoring increases the opportunities to practice skills (Mathes & Babyak, 2001).
- Peer tutoring allows students to receive more feedback and encouragement from peers (Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000).
- Peer tutoring increases positive social contacts linked to improvements in social and behavioral skills for students with emotional or behavioral disorders (Falk & Wehby, 2001).
- Both tutors and tutees show gains in the academic area addressed during the peer tutoring session (Falk & Wehby, 2001).

### Strategies to Implement

The length of each peer tutoring session is up to the teacher and should be based on the students' needs and available time. Fifteen to 25 minutes is a rough approximation of session length. Peer tutoring can be done two or more times per week, again based on students' needs and available time. For a detailed description of one type of peer tutoring, PALS, go to: <https://frg.vkcsites.org/what-is-pals/>.

Research-validated models of peer tutoring include certain essential components. These components include:

- Carefully pairing students based on an instructional rationale
  - a. Cross-age peer tutoring:
    - The older student tutors the younger student.
    - Older students with reading deficits have shown increases in their own reading skills when they tutor younger students in reading.
    - Teachers need to train, supervise, and provide feedback to the tutor.
  - b. Classwide peer tutoring:
    - Fuchs & Fuchs (1998) described one method for pairing students. In the Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) model, teachers:
      - Rank students in the class according to their reading ability. This can be done using students' existing scores on standardized reading tests or through a standardized reading assessment available at your college or university library.

- Divide the class into two groups – high performers and low performers.
- Pair the students by matching the highest performer in the high group to the highest student in the low performance group. The second highest in the high group is matched to the second highest in the low group, and so forth until all students are matched.
- Rank and match students in this way to ensure that, although at different skill levels, student pairs are not dramatically different in terms of their instructional needs.
- When matching peer partners, keep in mind that the pair needs to work well together. Be flexible on the academic guidelines for pairing to avoid creating tandems that have difficulty working together.
- Creating the right environment. Effective peer tutoring does not occur naturally. A structured tutoring environment can be established by:
  - a. Designing a focused curriculum for student groups to follow that includes:
    - Rules for interacting
    - Structured tasks for the tutor to guide the tutee in completing
    - Specific procedures for pairs to follow
    - Methods for the tutor to provide corrective feedback for incorrect responses and positive reinforcement for correct responses
    - Methods for documenting instruction and learning
  - b. Directly teach and reinforce the tutoring procedures by:
    - Training students in the procedures
    - Spreading training over several sessions
    - Monitoring students as they implement the procedures
- Reinforcing the teaching/learning behaviors that occur during the session. Before beginning the peer-tutoring activity teachers should:
  - a. Develop a plan for encouraging and reinforcing desired behaviors
    - In class-wide peer-tutoring, dividing the pairs into teams and awarding points for following procedures, answering correctly, and interacting appropriately is one way to support desirable peer tutoring behavior.
  - b. Develop a plan for addressing off-task or disruptive behaviors.

## Types Of Activities To Implement

### • Sight Words

*Word Recognition:* Students work in pairs with flash cards or word sheets to practice new sight words and review previously taught words. Such practice can include individual words and phrases in isolation and in context.

### • Blending/Segmenting

*Decoding:* Students work in pairs with prefix/base word/suffix flash cards to build multi-syllable words or to segment new or previously taught multi-syllable words.

### • Partner Reading

*Fluency:* Students can read aloud to each other. Passages should be between 50 and 200 words and at the instructional level (90–100 percent word recognition) of the lowest student in the pair.

## Keep In Mind

- The purpose of peer tutoring should be to reinforce concepts or skills that have previously been taught.
- Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of reciprocal tutoring in which the stronger student acts as a tutor first and lower achieving student as the tutee. After correctly completing or responding, the lower achieving student then assumes the role of tutor.
- Tutors should be provided prompts of how to respond when the partner answers incorrectly (e.g., the tutor may be instructed to state the correct answer and then have the tutee restate the answer or the tutor may be provided a hint or a reminder statement to use when the tutee is having difficulty).
- One of the reasons peer tutoring is effective is the existence of a strong peer model, but research has shown that the most important element is the increased, focused instruction time that this one-on-one model fosters.
- Quality peer tutoring sessions are less dependent upon the high/low match than they are on the structure of what occurs during that tutoring session.

## Resources

- Falk, K. B., & Wehby, J. H. (2001). The effects of peer-assisted learning strategies on the beginning reading skills of young children with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders*, 26(4), 344–359.
- Foorman, B. R., & Torgesen, J. (2001). Critical elements of classroom and small-group instruction promote reading success in all children. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 16(4), 203–212.
- Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (1998). General educators' instructional adaptations for students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Quarterly*, 21, 23–33.
- Hudson, P., Lignugaris-Kraft, B., & Miller, T. (1993). Using content enhancements to improve the performance of adolescents with learning disabilities in content classes. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 8(4), 106–126.
- Mathes, P. G., & Babyak, A. E. (2001). The effects of peer-assisted literacy strategies for first-grade readers with and without additional mini-skills lessons. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 16 (1), 28–44.
- Mortweet, S. L., Utley, C. A., Walker, D., Dawson, H. L., Delqudri, J. C., Reddy, S. S., Greenwood, C. R., Hamilton, S., & Ledford, D. (1999). Classwide peer tutoring: Teaching students with mild mental retardation in inclusive classrooms. *Exceptional Children*, 65, 524–536.
- Vaughn, S., Gersten, R., & Chard, D. J. (2000). The underlying message in LD intervention research: Findings from research syntheses. *Exceptional Children*, 67(1), 99–114.



## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

### Independent Practice

### About the Strategy

**Independent practice** activities allow students to rehearse skills that have previously been taught. A variety of activities fall under this strategy including: independent reading, games, and self-correcting materials (Bos & Vaughn, 2002).

### What the Research and Resources Say

- Children learn to read by practicing reading skills (Taylor, Harris, Pearson, & Garcia, 1995).
- Games are motivational and provide opportunities for students to apply their reading skills to an enjoyable activity (Taylor, Harris, Pearson, & Garcia, 1995).
- Materials should be chosen at a level of difficulty such that students readily understand how to use them. Typically, one or two demonstrations should be sufficient for students to learn how to use the materials (Mercer & Mercer, 2001).
- In a traditional classroom, students spend about two thirds of their reading instruction time away from their teacher working on independent activities (Ford & Optiz, 2002).

### Types of Activities to Implement

- **Independent Reading**

*Fluency:* Students increase their reading skills by practicing reading. Independent reading is designed to encourage students to relate to books and practice previously taught reading skills. Some independent reading times scheduled for the entire class are given acronyms (e.g., DEAR for Drop Everything and Read).

- **Games**

*Word Identification:* Games offer students an enjoyable way to practice skills they have already been taught. Games can be developed, purchased (e.g., theme-based Bingo), or adapted from commercial games (e.g., Chutes and Ladders™) to help students to increase their sight words. At each turn, a player correctly reads a sight word before moving ahead. Though often played with a partner or small group, these games are considered independent practice because they do not require interaction with the teacher for the students to learn from the activity.

- **Self-correcting Materials**

*Word Identification:* Self-correcting materials allow student opportunities for independent practice and immediate feedback. These materials can take several forms, including answer keys, puzzles, and matching cards. When a student makes a mistake using self-correcting materials, he or she is immediately informed of the correct answer. Thus, the student is not “practicing incorrectly,” a common problem that occurs when a student incorrectly completes an entire worksheet of practice problems. Self-correcting materials also foster the kind of “game-like” environment that students enjoy.

Mercer and Mercer (2001) provide specific recommendations for using self-correcting materials:

- Materials should be at a level of difficulty that students can readily understand. Typically, one or two demonstrations should be sufficient for students to learn how to use the materials.
- Vary the self-correcting materials in order to sustain student interest. Content can be frequently changed or different materials used in order.
- Although some “cheating” may occur in the beginning, many students will begin to enjoy “guessing and checking” more than beating the system.

The following are examples of self-correcting materials:

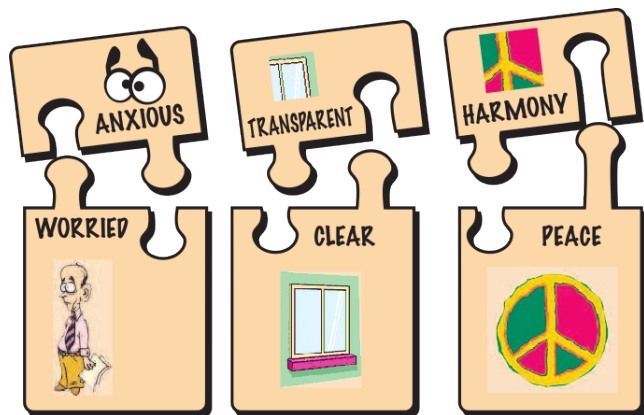
### Answer Check Holes

Write a paragraph that includes vocabulary words on the front of an ordinary paper folder, then cut those words out, leaving only empty spaces. Students can now be directed to insert a piece of blank paper into the folder and “fill in the blanks” by writing in the vocabulary words. Correct answers can be written inside the folder and above the holes, so that students can check their work simply by removing their pages, inverting the folder, and reinserting their answer sheets.



### Puzzles

Create flash cards in the shape of corresponding puzzle pieces. Use synonyms, antonyms, definitions, etc. as the information on the cards. Students can verify their answers by checking to see if the pieces match.



## Keep In Mind

- Planning is important. Before implementing independent practice activities, take time to develop the activities as well as a schedule, routines for movement, and a behavioral management system.
- Teachers need to instruct students in how to use each activity and provide easy-to-understand directions for each activity.
- Teachers can use independent practice time to monitor individual student progress on specific skills.
- Most parents are willing and want to help their child learn to read, but many do not know how to help. Provide parents with information and activities that they can do at home.
- Because self-correcting materials will be used repeatedly, they should be durable.

## Resources

- Bos, C. S., & Vaughn, S. (2002). *Strategies for teaching students with learning and behavior problems* (5th ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Ford, M. P., & Optiz, M. F. (2002). Using centers to engage children during guided reading time: Intensifying learning experiences away from the teacher. *The Reading Teacher*, 55(8), 710–717.
- Mercer, C. D., & Mercer, C. A. (2001). *Teaching students with learning problems* (6th ed). New Jersey: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Taylor, B., Harris, L. A., Pearson, P. D., & Garcia, G. (1995). *Reading difficulties: Instruction and assessment* (2nd ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

### Decoding

### About the Strategy

**Decoding** involves several strategies for identifying an unfamiliar word including using phonetic cues, context clues, and available resources.

### What The Research And Resources Say

- Students with structural analysis difficulties will struggle with reading materials at or above the 3rd grade level (Shanker & Ekwall, 1998).
- The use of structural analysis can assist students in lessening the number of mispronunciations, substitutions, and omissions (Lenz & Hughes, 1990).
- The inability to sound out unfamiliar words is a major contributor to the poor comprehension skills of students in upper elementary grades (Foorman, et al., 1998).
- Students will master structural analysis skills only when modeled by teachers (Gaskins et. al., 1996).
- Skill in decoding words help students to develop spelling skills (Wilde, 1997).

### Types Of Activities To Implement

- DISSECT is a mnemonic device used to assist students in decoding unfamiliar multi-syllable words:
  - **D**iscover the context: use context to determine the unfamiliar word.
  - **I**solate the prefix: determine if there is a prefix that can be separated from the entire word.
  - **S**eparate the suffix: determine if there is a suffix that can be separated from the entire word.
  - **S**ay the stem: if you can say the stem (root word) after isolating the prefix and separating the suffix, say the root word, prefix, and suffix together.
  - **E**xamine the stem: If you cannot say the stem, apply one of these rules:
    - ~ if the stem begins with a vowel, separate the first two letters and pronounce (e.g., al•ter•nate).
    - ~ if the stem begins with a consonant, separate the first three letters and pronounce (e.g., dis•cuss•ion).
    - ~ if these rules do not work, isolate the first letter of the stem and try to apply the above rules again (e.g., o•pen•ing).
  - **C**heck with someone: If the above steps do not help, ask someone.
  - **T**ry the dictionary: Look up the word and use the pronunciation key to pronounce.

- Syllabication is the process of decoding words by looking and recognizing chunks of words.
- Syllabication activities can be used in peer tutoring sessions, small group sessions, or independent practice sessions. The activities provide students with ample opportunities to practice their newly learned strategies. It is important that you check your students' work to ensure that they have completed the activities correctly. If corrective feedback is needed, it should be provided immediately.
  - The six syllable types include:
    - ~ Closed (CVC): ends in a least one consonant.
    - ~ Open (CV): ends in a long vowel sound.
    - ~ Vowel-Consonant-e (CVCe): ends in one consonant, one vowel, and a final "e." The vowel is long, the "e" is silent.
    - ~ Vowel Team (CVVC): sounds of vowel teams vary.
    - ~ R-controlled (CV+r): vowel is followed by /r/ and vowel pronunciation is affected by /r/.
    - ~ Consonant-le (-C+le): unaccented final syllable with a consonant plus /l/ and silent "e."
  - Word Sorts require students to sort words according to patterns. For example students may sort words in the following way:

#### CVC

shut

bed

#### CVCe

cute

lake

Students may also sort words by prefixes:

#### Pre-

predawn

prepay

#### Re-

redo

replace

By using words sorts, the students will see how many words have the same patterns. Once they see the pattern, they should easily be able to read new words with the same pattern.

## Keep In Mind

- It is not necessary for students to know the meanings of the word parts to decode the word.
- Students must master decoding skills such as sight words, phonics, and context clues prior to effectively applying structural analysis skills.
- Teachers must provide ample instruction in teaching students to decode multi-syllable words.
- When students are able to quickly decode words, they are able to focus their attention on comprehension, the major goal of reading.
- There are many exceptions to the rules of syllabication and pronunciation, and students must be taught those exceptions (see Wilde, 1997).

## Resources

- Foorman, B. R., Francis, D. J., Fletcher, J. M., Schatschneider, C., & Mehta, P. (1998). The role of instruction in learning to read: Preventing reading failure in at-risk children. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 90*, 37-55.
- Gaskins, I., Ehri, L., Cress, C., O'Hara, C., & Donnelly, K. (1996). Procedures for word learning: Making discoveries about words. *The Reading Teacher, 50*, 312–327.
- Lenz, B. K., & Hughes, C. A. (1990). A word identification strategy for adolescents with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 22*, 149–158, 163.
- Levy, S., Coleman, M., & Alsman, B. (2002). Reading instruction for elementary students with emotional/behavioral disorders: What's a teacher to do? *Beyond Behavior, 11*(3), 3–10.
- Shaker, J. L., & Ekwall, E. E. (1998). *Locating and correcting reading difficulties* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Wilde, S. (1997). *What's a schwa sound anyway?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

### Repeated Readings

### About the Strategy

**Repeated Readings** is a strategy that requires students to read and re-read short (50–200 words) passages until they reach an appropriate level of fluency.

### What The Research And Resources Say

- Students who are slow readers in the elementary years continue to have difficulty during adolescence (Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashote, 1994).
- Being a fluent reader allows students to focus on the meaning of reading (Samuels, 1997).
- Fluent readers practice reading (Levy, Coleman, & Alsman, 2002).
- The use of repeated readings increases fluency, accuracy, expression, and comprehension (Meyers & Felton, 1999).

### Strategies to Implement

- Use the following sequence when implementing the various types of repeated readings:
  - The teacher selects a passage of 50–200 words written at the students' independent reading or instructional level (90–100% word recognition) that is of interest to the students.
  - Passages should be read by the teacher first, with an emphasis on voice, tone, and expression.
  - If students need assistance with words or phrases, students should practice them in isolation prior to reading the passage.
  - Students read the passages 3–5 times.
  - Frequent sessions of 10–15 minutes are necessary.
  - Continue the process with new passage selections.

### Types Of Activities To Implement

- **Partner Reading:** Paired students take turns reading the selected passage to one another, assisting one another as needed.
- **Readers' Theater:** Students enjoy acting out the stories they read. Repeated readings can be implemented as students practice reading their parts with partners or in small groups. The students can then act out the story for the rest of the class or for their parents (Levy et al., 2002).
- **Choral Reading:** In this activity, the teacher divides the text into sections so that either the teacher and students alternate reading every other section or groups of students alternate reading every other section. Often alternating regular and boldfaced text identifies the sections of text.
- **Reading Performance:** For students at the upper elementary level, repeated readings with a purpose can be arranged by having the students read aloud to classes of younger students.

## Keep In Mind

- Students must practice at their instructional or independent reading levels.
- Hasbrouck & Tindal (1992) make the following suggestions for the number of words students should read per minute:
  - 2nd grade: 53–94
  - 3rd grade: 79–114
  - 4th grade: 99–118
  - 5th grade: 105–128

## Resources

- Hasbrouck, J. E., & Tindal, G. (1992). Curriculum-based oral reading fluency norms for students in grades 2 through 5. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 24(3), 41–44.
- Levy, S., Coleman, M., & Alsman, B. (2002). Reading instruction for elementary students with emotional/behavioral disorders: What's a teacher to do? *Beyond Behavior*, 11(3), 3–10.
- Meyer, M. S., & Felton, R. H. (1999). Repeated reading to enhance fluency: Old approaches and new directions. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 49, 283–306.
- Samuels, S. J. (1997). The method of repeated reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 50, 376–381.
- Shanker, J. L., & Ekwall, E. E. (1998). *Locating and correcting reading difficulties* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Torgesen, J. K., Wagner, R. K., & Rashotte, C. A. (1994). Longitudinal students of phonological processing and reading. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 19, 623–630.



## Background

Student: Andrea

Age: 8.6

Grade: 3rd

Focus: Sight Words

## Scenario

Andrea is a typical third-grade student who gets along well with other students and likes to please her teacher. While most students in the third grade are able to identify sight words easily and quickly, Andrea is only able to identify sight words from the pre-primer level. She has difficulty with most sight words at the primer level and higher. Her teacher, Ms. Ortega, states that Andrea is a hard worker and has the motivation to learn strategies to help her read better. Ms. Ortega talked about some helpful strategies with the special education teacher and is going to implement these to help Andrea achieve her goal, which is:

- Given sight words, Andrea will state the words automatically.

## Possible Strategies

- Peer Tutoring
- Independent Practice



## Assignment

1. Read the Peer Tutoring and Independent Practice STAR sheets.
2. Describe both strategies.
3. Explain how each strategy will help Andrea meet her goal.
4. Using the Internet or a reading reference guide, find a list of sight words. Group the words into groups of five and decide which words you would introduce first, second, and so forth. Create a new list that reflects your grouping. Be sure to identify your source (Website or reference book).

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

### Level A • Case 2

### Background

Student: Kevin

Age: 9.5

Grade: 4th

Focus: Decoding multi-syllable words

### Scenario

Kevin is a popular fourth grader who occasionally gets in trouble for cutting up in class. While most students in Kevin's fourth-grade class are able to decode unfamiliar, multi-syllable words, Kevin is struggling with this task. Although Kevin is able to quickly and accurately read sight words, he tries to sound out multi-syllabic words letter-by-letter, rather than using prefixes, suffixes, and root words. This difficulty affects Kevin's fluency and comprehension. During the first grading period, the Title I\* tutor, Kevin's teacher, and his parents had a meeting in which they discussed trying new strategies to assist him in reaching his goal, which is:

- Given multi-syllable words, Kevin will decode them accurately and with ease.

### Possible Strategies

- Independent Practice
- Decoding



### Assignment

1. Read the STAR sheets describing the two possible strategies.
2. Summarize the main components of each strategy. Be sure to include how each strategy will support Kevin.

\*Title I is a federal grant program targeted to high-poverty schools whose funds are used to provide educational services to students who are educationally disadvantaged or at risk of failing to meet state standards.

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

### Level A • Case 3

### Background

Student Emma  
Age: 10.3  
Grade: 5th  
Focus: Fluency

### Scenario

Emma is a shy fifth grader who is struggling in all academic subjects that require a lot of reading. Emma is able to read all sight words and decode most of the multi-syllable words she encounters. However, Emma's teacher, Mr. Haywood, has noticed that her fluency is not at the level of most fifth graders and feels this is because Emma has a low self-concept. Emma reads aloud very softly and slowly, often waiting to speak a word until she can pronounce it correctly. Because Mr. Haywood believes that Emma has the needed skills to improve her fluency he has decided to implement strategies that will help Emma reach her goal, which is:

- Given reading passages at the fifth-grade level, Emma will read fluently.

### Possible Strategies

- Peer Tutoring
- Repeated Readings



### Assignment

1. Read the Peer Tutoring and Repeated Readings STAR sheets.
2. Summarize the two strategies and explain how they will help Emma reach her goal.
3. Select a short passage from a fifth-grade basal series\* and explain how you would use it to help Emma improve her fluency.

\*A basal series is a set of highly organized, skill oriented materials for teaching reading in the elementary grades. They are available from most college or university libraries.

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

### Level B • Case 1

### Background

Student: Jeff

Age: 10.6

Grade: 5th

Focus: Sight words

### Scenario

Jeff is a fifth-grade student in an inner-city school. Jeff struggles with reading sight words accurately and quickly. Although he's able to read all of the pre-primer, primer, and first-grade sight words, he is not able to do so quickly. When Jeff encounters sight words at the second-grade level and higher, he has a great deal of difficulty. However, both Jeff's special education and classroom teachers have noticed that he is able to decode unfamiliar multi-syllable words. They also report that he is able to comprehend what he reads, but the lack of sight word recognition makes his reading choppy. Jeff is embarrassed by his inability to read fluently and has shown interest in wanting to improve his sight word recognition. His teacher and parents have agreed to work with him to reach his goal, which is:

- Given grade level sight words, Jeff will state the words automatically.

### Possible Strategies

- Peer Tutoring
- Independent Practice



### Assignment

1. Read the Peer Tutoring and Independent Practice STAR sheets.
2. Explain the rationale for using the strategies, including how Jeff would benefit from each and how you would implement them with him.
3. Describe an independent practice activity that Jeff's parents can use at home to support the pursuit of his goal.

**Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5**  
**Level B • Case 2****Background**

Student: Mary

Age: 9.3

Grade: 3rd

Focus: Decoding multi-syllable words

**Scenario**

Mary is a third grader at a small private school. It is the beginning of the second semester of the school year and Mary is still having difficulty decoding unfamiliar multi-syllable words. Mary's teacher, Mr. Bounds, recognizes that not only is Mary having difficulty with this task but also so are many of her classmates. Knowing that the students are struggling with an important reading skill that will be assessed at the end of the school year and will be important for success in the following years, Mr. Bounds has looked through the resources he picked up at a professional conference on special education. He has decided to implement strategies each day that will assist all of his students, Mary included, in reaching the following goal:

- Given multi-syllable words, students will decode them accurately and with ease.

**Possible Strategies**

- Independent Practice
- Decoding

**Assignment**

1. Read the STAR sheets on the two possible strategies.
2. Explain the rationale for using the strategies, including how Mary would benefit from each and how you would implement them with her.
3. Explain how you would involve Mary's parents, and develop an activity from one of the strategies that Mary's parents can use at home to support the pursuit of her goal.

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

Level B • Case 3

### Background

Student: Daniel

Age: 9.8

Grade: 4th

Focus: Fluency

### Scenario

Daniel is a quiet fourth grader who is naturally organized and thrives on structure. Daniel's mother reports that he tends to be focused on tasks, even in play. Daniel's teacher, Mrs. Clifton, has also noticed that he is diligent with academic tasks. When reading aloud in class, Daniel is able to read all sight words and decode most multi-syllable words he encounters. However, Daniel's fluency is not at the level of most fourth graders. Mrs. Clifton reports he is a word-by-word reader and doesn't read with proper tone or expression, but she feels he has the skills needed to become a fluent, expressive reader. She has decided to implement strategies that will help him reach his goal, which is:

- Given readings at the fourth-grade level, Daniel will read fluently.

### Possible Strategies

- Peer Tutoring
- Repeated Readings



### Assignment

1. Read the Peer Tutoring and Repeated Readings STAR sheets.
2. Explain how each of the strategies will help Daniel with his fluency.
3. Select a fourth-grade passage from a basal series and describe how you would have Daniel's parents use it at home.

## Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3–5

### Level C • Case 1

### Background

#### OVERVIEW OF 3–5 GRADE WORD IDENTIFICATION AND FLUENCY SKILLS

The following word identification and fluency skills should be developed during 3rd–5th grade:

- ✓ Reads 79–128 words at grade level per minute
- ✓ Reads all sight words
- ✓ Applies structural analysis skills to unfamiliar multi-syllable words

Student: Nathan

Age: 9.5

Grade: 4th

### Scenario

Nathan is an active fourth grader who enjoys school and who does well in the areas of science and social studies when materials are read aloud and hands-on activities are implemented. However, Nathan has a difficult time in reading class. His teacher, Ms. Chekov, reports that he has difficulty decoding unfamiliar words and is not able to read some sight words. As a result of these difficulties, Nathan reads approximately 55 words per minute. Ms. Chekov also states that Nathan's positive attitude is beginning to decrease as the reading material becomes more difficult. Nathan's parents are also seeing the decrease in his attitude and are willing to do whatever they can to assist Nathan. It is October and both Nathan's teacher and parents would like to try different strategies to assist Nathan before referring him for testing. Nathan's strengths are listed below.

### Areas Of Strength

- Accurately and quickly reads sight words through the 1st grade level
- Accurately and quickly decodes one-syllable words
- Listens and participates during reading class
- Positive attitude in reading
- Motivation to become a better reader



### Assignment

1. Develop 3 goals for Nathan.
2. Using the Overview of 3–5 Grade Word Identification and Fluency Skills (above) and the STAR Sheets, select one strategy for each goal and explain the benefit of using the strategy to address the corresponding goal.
3. Select one goal and describe one hands-on activity that will assist Nathan in achieving the goal.

**Fluency and Word Identification:  
Grades 3–5**

Information on assessing the assignments for each case study is organized by the case study number, for example Level A – Case 1.

**LEVEL A, CASE 1**

Responses to this case study should include the following:

- ☐ Descriptions of peer tutoring and independent practice strategies
- ☐ Rationale for using the strategy
  - ☐ Peer Tutoring

Example: *Description:* Peer tutoring is a strategy in which children work together in a structured manner to practice teacher selected skills.

*Rationale:* Peer tutoring will help Andrea by providing her with a peer model for reading sight words and one-to-one support for reading these words on her own.

**AND**

- ☐ Independent Practice

Example: *Description:* Independent practice activities allow students to rehearse skills that have previously been taught.

*Rationale:* Independent practice activities will help Andrea by allowing her to practice sight words in a variety of ways.

**AND**

- ☐ Provide a list of sight words divided into groups of five along with source (Web site, reference book)

Example: (a, the, where, you, had) (are, my, I, am, was)  
<http://www.theschoolbell.com/Links/Dolch/Dolch.html>

**LEVEL A, CASE 2**

Responses to this case study should include the following:

- ☐ Descriptions of decoding and independent practice strategies
- ☐ Rationale for using the strategy
  - ☐ Decoding

Example: *Description:* Decoding involves several strategies for identifying an



unfamiliar word including using phonetic cues, context clues, and available resources.

*Rationale:* Decoding will help Kevin by providing him with a strategy to decode unfamiliar words.

**AND**

☐ Independent Practice

Example: *Description:* Independent practice activities allow students to rehearse skills that have previously been taught.

*Rationale:* Independent practice will help Kevin by helping him to increase his rehearsal of reading skills.

### LEVEL A, CASE 3

Responses to this case study should include the following:

☐ Descriptions of repeated readings and peer tutoring strategies

☐ Rationale for using the strategy

☐ Repeated Readings

Example: *Description:* Repeated readings of familiar text increases reading fluency to give students access to greater comprehension.

*Rationale:* Repeated readings assist Emma by helping her to practice words within a familiar text.

**AND**

☐ Peer Tutoring

Example: *Description:* Peer tutoring is a strategy wherein children work together in a structured manner to practice teacher-selected skills.

*Rationale:* Peer tutoring will help Emma by asking her to read with a peer model and exposing her to familiar text.

**AND**

☐ Explain how you would use a short passage from a fifth-grade basal series to help Emma improve her fluency.

Example: I would use a fifth-grade reading passage to help Emma increase her fluency by selecting a story she's interested in and asking her to read it several times.

## LEVEL B, CASE 1

Responses to this case study should include the following:

- ☐ Rationale for using each strategy
- ☐ How the strategy will benefit Jeff
- ☐ How you would implement the strategy
  - ☐ Peer Tutoring

Example: *Rationale:* In peer tutoring, students practice positive examples of the desired skill with a peer who can successfully model them.

*Benefit:* Peer Tutoring will assist Jeff by practicing sight words with a peer model.

*Implementation:* I will implement peer tutoring with Jeff by pairing him with a peer who can successfully read the sight words and ask Jeff to practice the sight words with the peer tutor.

**AND**

- ☐ Independent Practice

Example: *Rationale:* Independent practice activities allow students to practice the desired skill on their own or with peers in a variety of ways.

*Benefit:* Independent Practice activities will assist Jeff by providing him with ample opportunities to practice the specific sight words.

*Implementation:* I will implement independent practice activities with Jeff by having him play a reading game with a peer.

**AND**

- ☐ An independent practice activity Jeff's parents could use at home is...

Example: play a game of Concentration.

## LEVEL B, CASE 2

Responses to this case study should include the following:

- ☐ Rationale for using each strategy
- ☐ How the strategy will benefit Mary
- ☐ How you would implement the strategy
  - ☐ Decoding

Example: *Rationale*: Decoding helps students identify unfamiliar words.

*Benefit*: Decoding will assist Mary by providing her with a tool to decipher unfamiliar multi-syllable words.

*Implementation*: I will implement Decoding with Mary by teaching her the mnemonic DISSECT through modeling and providing her with ample opportunities to practice using the strategy.

**AND**

☐ Independent Practice

Example: *Rationale*: Students who practice reading will ultimately have better comprehension.

*Benefit*: Independent practice will assist Mary by providing her with opportunities to rehearse the identification of multi-syllable words.

*Implementation*: I will implement independent practice with Mary by asking her to use self-correcting materials on prefixes and suffixes.

**AND**

☐ An activity I could develop for Mary's parents to use at home might involve...

Example: a set of cards with prefixes, root words, and suffixes written on them. Mary would be required to make new words and write them on a sheet of paper to be turned in to me.

## LEVEL B, CASE 3

Responses to this case study should include the following:

- ☐ Rationale for using each strategy
- ☐ How the strategy will benefit Daniel
- ☐ How you would implement the strategy
- ☐ Peer Tutoring

Example: *Rationale*: Peer tutoring has students practice positive examples of the desired skill with a peer who can successfully model them.

*Benefit*: Peer Tutoring will assist Daniel by allowing him to read and reread a familiar passage with a peer who can assist him with unfamiliar words.

*Implementation*: I will implement peer tutoring with Daniel by pairing him with a peer who can successfully read a passage at the fourth-grade level and assist Daniel, if needed, while he is reading.

## AND

- ☐ Repeated Readings

Example: *Rationale:* Repeated readings require students to practice the desired skills with material that is increasingly more familiar as it is repeated.

*Benefit:* Repeated Readings will assist Daniel by helping him to focus on reading with proper speed and expression with familiar text.

*Implementation:* I will implement repeated readings with Daniel by listening to Daniel read a 50–200-word passage several times.

## AND

- ☐ I will select a fourth-grade reading passage and ask Daniel's parents to use it at home by...

Example: having them listen to Daniel read the passage several times, assisting him with words if needed.

## LEVEL C, CASE 1

Responses to this case study should include the following components:

- ☐ Three goals written for Nathan
- ☐ Strategy selected to address each goal
- ☐ Benefit for each strategy listed
- ☐ Hands-on activity described to meet one of Nathan's goals