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## NINE QUICK STEPS FOR DEVELOPING READING FLUENCY

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1. Log in.
2. Choose a starting place:
  - Level I—Fourth Grade Passages
  - Level II—Fifth Grade Passages
  - Level III—Sixth Grade Passages
3. Choose settings and options.
4. Print out Pre-test/Post-test Form.
5. Monitor student during the pre-test by marking and counting the number of errors or miscues.
6. Make sure students read and click on all the choices on the comprehension questions before choosing an answer.
7. Guide students to find the words that were challenging for them on the pre-test, and practice those words on the first strategy section of the lesson, Noticing Word Parts.
8. Count the number of miscues again on the post-test, and have the student enter that number. Subtract the number of post-test errors from the number of pre-test errors, and point out the difference to the student.
9. Look at the bar graph showing the student's results, and discuss those results with the student.

## ABOUT DEVELOPING READING FLUENCY

### What Is *Developing Reading Fluency (DRF)*?

*Developing Reading Fluency* is a program designed to systematically improve the reading fluency of students—ages 10 to adult—who struggle to read text written at the fourth-grade level and above whose reading level is at least six months below grade level. It has three components: this *Teacher's Manual*, the *Developing Reading Fluency* software, and *Passages to Reading*. The *Developing Reading Fluency* software provides personalized, targeted, and intense instruction for brief periods of time. The individualized assistance that might be provided by a specialist is built into the software. *Passages to Reading* is a book of the passages and comprehension questions contained in the software (see description on p. 17). It can be used to supplement the software lessons.

The *Developing Reading Fluency* program provides a sequence of 90 lessons; 30 lessons at each of three readability levels: Level I—fourth grade, Level II—fifth grade, and Level III—sixth grade. Lessons include passages written at fourth, fifth, or sixth grade readability, which increase in difficulty within the levels (i.e., 4.0 to 4.9; 5.0 to 5.9; and 6.0 to 6.9). The content of the passages is informational and based on social studies themes recommended by the National Council for the Social Studies (2010). In addition, the skills are aligned with the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2012). Alignment focuses on Reading: Informational Text (Grades 4–8); Reading: Foundational Skills (Grades 4–8); Language (Grades 4–8); and Literacy in History/Social Studies (Grades 6–8).

As mentioned, *Developing Reading Fluency* is designed to systematically improve the reading fluency skills of students who are struggling with material written at the fourth-grade level and above. These are students who often have difficulty decoding multisyllabic words that are in their texts and/or have difficulty reading lengthy sentences with embedded phrases. These are students who often become frustrated while reading because they lose the meaning of sentences before getting to the end of them. These are students who may avoid reading because they are not reading fluently, and therefore, not gaining meaning.

*Developing Reading Fluency* is unique in that it includes features not found in other reading fluency programs. The *Developing Reading Fluency* software:

- Embeds five distinct teaching methods supported by research:
  1. repeated reading
  2. focusing on word parts: syllables and inflectional morphology
  3. focusing on phrases
  4. self-monitoring of fluency and comprehension (with a focus on improved reading of challenging words)
  5. choral reading (reading along with the software’s narrator)
- Allows instructors and students to focus on all elements of fluency—accuracy, rate, and prosody.
- Provides for individualization of instruction—challenging words chosen for practice can be different for each student and are based on individual student need.
- Combines fluency instruction with comprehension monitoring—data collection, scoring, and comparison is automatic within the software.
- Provides passages with increasing difficulty—Lexile (MetaMetrics, 2013) and Flesch-Kincaid measurements (based on Microsoft Word) for each passage are provided, which allows educators to choose lessons that are easier or more difficult based on student performance.
- Addresses skills that align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (see Appendix A).
- Includes high-interest informational passages that provide additional practice for struggling readers in Grades 4 and above who may struggle with the shift from narrative to expository texts.
- Is flexible in that it can be used with individuals or small groups.
- Promotes independent learning since students can progress through lessons on their own. The teacher is only needed at the beginning of each lesson to count miscues in the pre-test and at the end of the lesson to count miscues again in the post-test.
- Includes systematic data collection, automatic progress monitoring, and graphing of progress, which is motivational to students and informs educators of a student’s next instructional need.

After learning the strategies in *Developing Reading Fluency*, struggling readers are better able to read fluently, and consequently, to access

and comprehend the kinds of texts that are required reading in upper elementary, middle, and high school.

## Strategies Taught

*Developing Reading Fluency* teaches specific strategies to help struggling readers with:

### Noticing Word Parts

Kenya

Students see and hear words they find challenging broken into syllables and/or morphological units.

### Mastering Challenging Words

small village in Kenya, in the

Students practice reading challenging words in context applying the strategy of noticing word parts just learned.

### Focusing on Phrases

Wilson lived in a small village in Kenya, in the Eastern part of Africa

Students see and hear lengthy sentences broken into phrases and have the opportunity to read with the narrator.

### Reading by Phrases

Wilson lived in a small village in Kenya, in the Eastern part of Africa

Students are provided the opportunity to reread the passage, this time without the support of a narrator but with phrases visually highlighted.

## Who Might Benefit?

This intensive, focused work on specific strategies for reading fluency can be used effectively as a supplement to a classroom reading program or as an intervention or remedial program for reading fluency. It is most effective when used with individuals or with small groups of students. It is designed to be prescriptive to focus on a student's individual needs.

A wide range of students who struggle with reading will benefit from learning the strategies in *Developing Reading Fluency*. Students who are in the fourth grade or above and who are still struggling with the reading process are good candidates for this program. Some of these students may have been observed by teachers and parents to struggle with reading or avoid reading. Others may have been evaluated and diagnosed with language disorders, learning disabilities, dyslexia, reading disabilities, developmental disabilities, auditory processing disorders, or autism spectrum disorders.

### Use *Developing Reading Fluency* with students who...

- are in 4th grade or above and reading 6 months or more behind grade level
- report that reading is "too hard" or "boring"
- have difficulty decoding multisyllabic words, despite having been taught phonics
- struggle with reading lengthy sentences and lose the meaning before getting to the end of them
- show difficulty with comprehension because their reading is not fluent
- avoid reading because it seems overwhelming

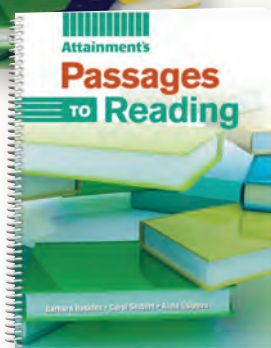
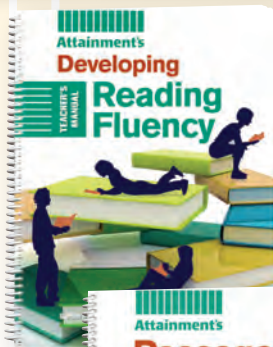
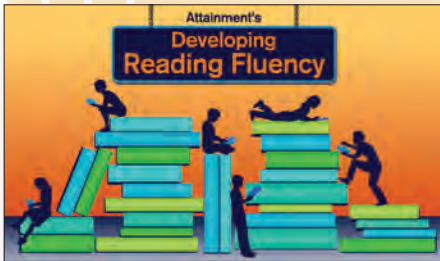
*Developing Reading Fluency* can be used by a variety of educators: classroom teachers, reading specialists, instructional assistants, learning disabilities teachers, speech-language pathologists, special education teachers, volunteers, and parents. It is a valuable resource across a wide range of settings:

- General education classrooms with differentiated instruction
- Multi-level intervention programs
- Response to intervention (RtI) programs
- Itinerant and/or remedial reading programs
- Special education resource programs
- Educational therapy programs
- Homes where parents want to provide reading support
- After-school enrichment or tutoring programs

## What You Received

You received all three components of the *DRF* program:

1. *Developing Reading Fluency* Win/Mac software program—licensed for use on one computer or by one individual. (Other licenses are available.)
2. *Teacher's Manual*—provides user information, including who the program is created for, how to use it, background information regarding its creation, research regarding reading fluency, and FAQs regarding student use. It also provides documentation regarding readability level for each passage and a document indicating how *Developing Reading Fluency* aligns to Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts. The *Teacher's Manual* includes a PDF of *Passages to Reading* on a Win/Mac CD, which gives a classroom license for educational use of printouts.
3. *Passages to Reading*—contains all of the passages and comprehension questions included in the software program. *Passages to Reading* can be used as a consumable book for individual student use.



# GUIDE TO USING THE *DRF* PROGRAM

## Levels, Lessons, and Passages

*Developing Reading Fluency* presents a sequence of 90 lessons using 90 passages. The lessons are presented in three levels; 30 lessons are provided at each level. The levels and readability ranges for the passages within the levels are indicated in the following chart.

Level I	Level II	Level III
Grade 4.0 to 4.9 Readability Level	Grade 5.0 to 5.9 Readability Level	Grade 6.0 to 6.9 Readability Level

The passages for each lesson are sequenced according to level of difficulty. The difficulty levels are based on the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula (per Microsoft Word) and estimated Lexile measures (using the Lexile Analyzer from MetaMetrics, 2013). A Lexile measure helps determine how difficult text will be to comprehend (for more information, visit [www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com)). Appendix B provides scores for both measures for each passage.

For students in the fourth grade and above, curricular materials usually consist of informational texts, such as those in science and social studies curriculums. For this reason, *Developing Reading Fluency* presents informational text (rather than literature) to allow students to read the types of materials they encounter in their content-area classes in Grade 4 and beyond. As mentioned earlier, all passages are based on themes described by the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies for Grades 4 to 8 (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010). In this way, students are reading informational texts that align with the classroom curriculum. Use of intervention materials that are aligned with curriculum standards is important for student success (Foorman, Kalinowski, & Sexton, 2007).

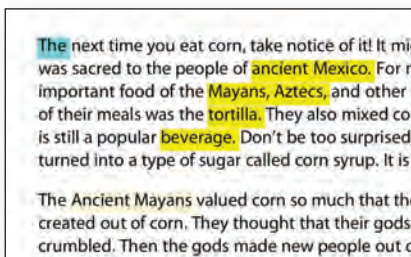
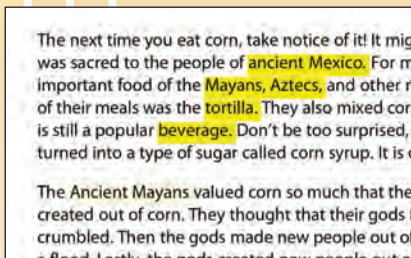
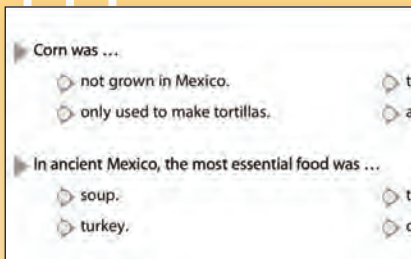
## Lesson Components

A lesson takes approximately 25–40 minutes to complete. In planning for lessons, note the following approximated time required for each lesson component.

### **Pre-test:** 5–10 minutes

At the beginning of each lesson, the program gathers pre-test data on fluency and comprehension. You (the teacher) must manually count the miscues (errors) the student makes while he or she reads the passage (see p. 15, for directions on counting miscues).





The program keeps track of the time it takes for the student to read the passage. Once the number of miscues (errors) is entered into the program, the program automatically calculates the student's fluency score (i.e., using the rate and accuracy numbers).

The pre-test also presents comprehension questions about the passage. As the student responds, the program calculates how many comprehension questions are answered correctly. Pre-test data are saved and then graphed and presented at the end of a lesson (alongside the data from the post-test) so a student can monitor his or her own progress.

### **Noticing Word Parts:** 5–10 minutes

The software teaches students to notice the word parts of challenging words. Any words the student struggled with while reading the passage during the pre-test can be considered his or her challenging words. At first, students may need your assistance in determining and then locating the challenging words. However, students can self-select words they consider challenging. Self-selection empowers the student to self-monitor and promotes independence.

In Noticing Word Parts, a student selects his or her specific challenging words and then practices reading them, first in parts and then as whole words. Upon choosing a word, the program highlights the word and visually divides the word into parts (by syllables and/or morphological units) while a narrator reads it in parts. The word is then repeated as a whole word. The student follows the narrator's model by reading the challenging word in parts and then as a whole word. Once chosen, the challenging word is highlighted wherever it occurs in the passage and also remains highlighted for the next strategy.

A personalized list of challenging words can be charted using the *Log of Challenging Words* form (found in *Passages to Reading*).

At least five challenging words must be chosen to advance to the next strategy; however, students should practice ALL of their challenging words.

### **Mastering Challenging Words:** 5–10 minutes

Once the student practices breaking challenging words into parts, he or she has the opportunity to master the challenging words while reading the passage in its entirety. The student reads the passage aloud. If a student needs help decoding a challenging word, he or she can choose it to see and hear it broken into parts and then hear it read as a whole word. The challenging words highlighted in the previous strategy are also highlighted on this screen.

### Focusing on Phrases: 5 minutes

Next, the student learns to focus on phrases to make it easier to read lengthy sentences. Upon choosing the Play arrow at the start of a paragraph, a narrator reads the sentences in the paragraph, while the phrases in each sentence are visually indicated with an underline. The student reads along with the narrator. This strategy models how to focus on phrases in lengthy sentences. Students can practice reading with the narrator multiple times if desired.

### Reading by Phrases: 5 minutes

The final strategy of the program gives the student an opportunity to read the passage aloud while focusing on phrases. The phrases underline as the student reads them, but this time the student reads without the support of a narrator.

### Post-test: 5 minutes

The post-test is an opportunity to measure the student's improvement. The student reads the passage one last time while you count the miscues. Once again, you mark the miscues (errors) while the program measures the student's rate. Once entering the number of miscues, the program automatically computes the student's fluency based on rate and accuracy. The comprehension questions are also presented again and the number of correct answers are reported by the program.

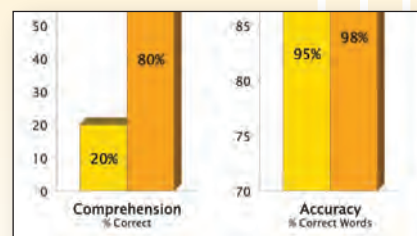
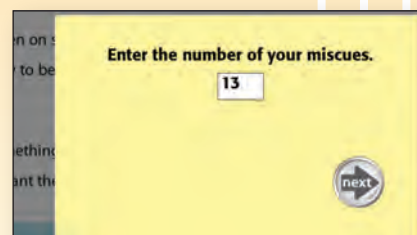
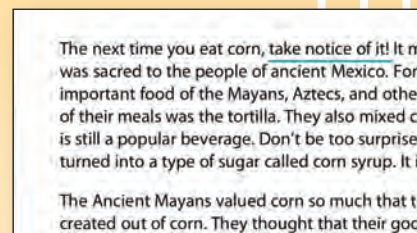
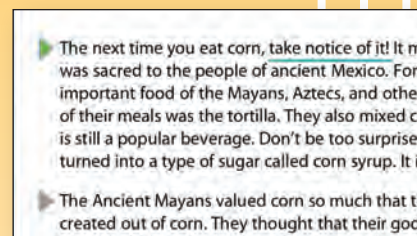
### Results: 3 minutes

Students immediately see their improvements from pre-test to post-test and find it motivating to discuss.

## Choosing a Starting Place

The lessons in this program have been developed for students in fourth grade or above whose reading fluency levels are at least six months below grade level. To choose a starting place, use these guidelines.

Approx. Reading Level at Entry	Start with Lesson
Reading at grade level 2.5 to 3.5 (in Grade 4 or above)	Level I-1 (Fourth Grade)
Reading at grade level 3.6 to 4.5 (in Grade 5 or above)	Level II-1 (Fifth Grade)
Reading at grade level 4.6 to 5.5 (in Grade 6 or above)	Level III-1 (Sixth Grade)



If you find that the passages at either Level II or Level III are too challenging (e.g., more than 15 miscues) for the student as a starting point, move back 10 lessons to an earlier level. If the texts are too easy, move up 10 lessons in the level.

## How Often to Use

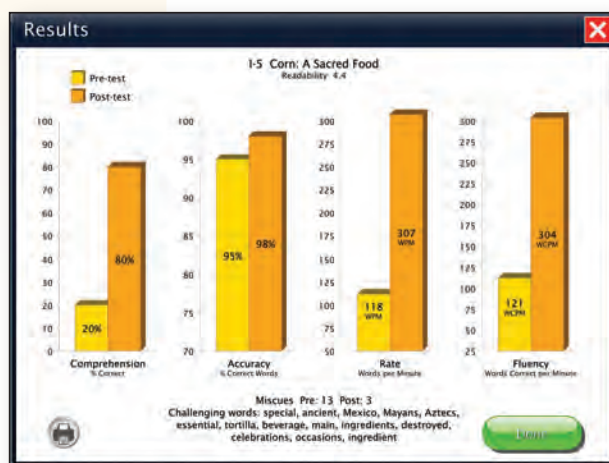
*Developing Reading Fluency* can be used once or twice a week as a supplemental program, or five days a week as an intensive intervention program (as may be needed for response to intervention [RtI] or multi-level intervention). The intensive intervention provided by daily sessions maximizes learning, according to various studies on brain plasticity (e.g., Noble, Tottenham, & Casey, 2005).

If you are not able to schedule daily sessions, schedule as many sessions as possible. After completing one level (30 lessons), the student can move to the next level to further develop his or her reading fluency.

**NOTE:** To ensure the most successful outcomes, students should complete an entire lesson (Pre-test, Noticing Word Parts, Mastering Challenging Words, Focusing on Phrases, Reading by Phrases, Post-test, and Results review) in a single class period or session.

## Monitoring Progress

At the end of each lesson, the student's number of miscues, rate, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension percentage correct are presented graphically. The student's reading fluency is automatically calculated once miscue data are entered.



The student's performance is presented in bar graphs that compare pre-test scores with post-test scores. Students can easily see their progress as they develop more effective reading skills and can print the graphs for future reference or for a portfolio. These results are stored in the program and can be accessed at any time in Options → Results → Date of Lesson.

**NOTE:** Because the difficulty of the *Developing Reading Fluency* passages increases gradually over the span of the 30 lessons, it is not unusual for a student's fluency rate to stay fairly consistent as he or she progresses from one lesson to the next. Far from indicating that the student is not making progress, this shows that he or she is maintaining skills while reading increasingly difficult texts. Over time, as students increase skills and gain confidence, fluency scores begin to improve even with the relative increase in readability level.

For more information concerning the readability levels of each *Developing Reading Fluency* passage, refer to Appendix B.

## Counting Miscues During Pre-/Post-tests

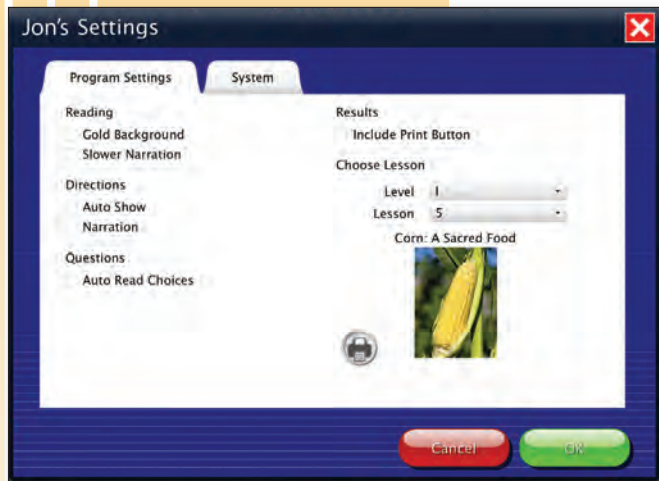
Before having students begin a pre-test or post-test, be certain you have a way to collect data on a student's accuracy while the student reads the passage. Print a copy of the Pre-test/Post-test Form using the software program. (One form can be used to collect pre-test and post-test data by using a different colored ink to mark miscues for each test.) You can also prepare ahead and print all passages from a level. Go to Options → Settings → Printer icon, and select All of Level.

Fill in the student identification information and indicate whether the test is a pre-test or a post-test. While the student is reading the passage, mark with a checkmark or circle the miscues (errors) the student makes. Use the following criteria:

1. Mark each word that is not read correctly (i.e., omitted, substituted, or distorted).
2. If a student skips a line, mark as a miscue. Direct the student to the correct line and indicate to continue reading.
3. If the student repeats a word, mark as a miscue.
4. Mark a miscue when a word or words are inserted. Use one mark even if several words are inserted.
5. If the student pauses for three seconds, mark as a miscue. Provide the word for the student; do not break it into syllables.
6. If the student attempts a word but is not accurate after three seconds, mark as a miscue. Provide the word; do not break it into syllables.
7. If the student struggles but self-corrects, mark as a miscue.
8. When a student makes consistent distortions or substitutions due to a speech-language disorder or a regional pronunciation pattern, do not mark as miscues.

After the student reads the passage, count the number of miscues (i.e., marks). Have the student enter this number in the program when asked.

You can also take note of the types of miscues a student makes. Simply use a miscue notation system you are familiar with (e.g., crossing out omissions, indicating insertions ^, circling distortions, etc.).



## Options for Individualizing

The *Developing Reading Fluency* software is flexible and prescriptive and designed to meet specific student needs. Several options are provided to allow you to individualize the program for a particular student's needs. Refer to the User Guide for instructions on setting these options.

**Background color:** The default background color for the passages in *Developing Reading Fluency* is white with black text. However, some students with visual perceptual problems struggle with reading high-contrast text, such as black text on a white

background. For example, students with scotopic sensitivity find that high-contrast text is unclear, seems to move, and may even disappear. By providing a lower-contrast background, this effect is reduced or eliminated for the reader. An option to set the background to gold can be activated to assist readers whose visual perception makes it difficult for them to read the passages.

**Slower narrations:** The default reading rate of the narrator is a typical reading rate of approximately 120 words per minute. Some students, however, may need the passages to be read more slowly. If that is true for a student, an option to slow the rate of narration rate is provided.

**Printing results:** At the end of each passage, a Results screen appears. Many students like to print their results to have a record of their improvements. You have the option to include a print button at the Results screen. However, if you do not have access to a printer, selecting the printer icon could freeze up the program while it searches for a printer. As such, the default is to not include the printer icon on this screen. Refer to Program Settings to choose to include a printer icon on the Results screen if you have access to a printer.

**Prescribing levels and passages:** After choosing a starting point for a student, the program advances upward automatically. However, in



program settings, you can individualize for a student by choosing a passage with greater difficulty or with less difficulty. This allows you to adjust and control instruction based on a student's performance.

## How Words Are Parsed for Noticing Word Parts

The parsing of words in the Noticing Word Parts strategy is done largely by word syllable structure. In many cases, the morphological units (e.g., prefixes) are aligned with syllable parts. In these cases, both syllabic and morphological units are the same. As an example, the word *rebuild* is parsed as *re build*. Where the syllable structure and morphological structure are not identical, the preference is given to morphological units. As an example, the word *constructing* is parsed by the prefix *con*, the root *struct*, and the suffix *ing*, thus parsing it as *con struct ing* (rather than *con struc ting*, which is how it would be parsed by syllables).

For words with double consonants, the parsing is between the two consonants (e.g., *Rus sian*).

Word-final morphological units were also segmented, thus plural *-s* is separated from the root word (e.g., *book s*), even though the word has only one syllable. Similarly, when final *y* becomes *-ies*, *ies* is segmented to highlight the change in spelling. These morphologically based divisions were made to emphasize the plural markers for students who tend to miss them without noticing these meaningful parts.

Finally, the users might notice some variation in segmenting of final *-ed* and *-d*. In words where the root contains a final *e* (e.g., *cure*, *desire*), *e* was parsed with the word root (*cure d*, *desire d*).

## Using *Passages to Reading* to Complement the Software

As mentioned earlier, *Developing Reading Fluency* is aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts for Reading: Informational Text (Grades 4–8); Reading: Foundational Skills (Grades 4–8); Language (Grades 4–8); and Literacy in History/Social Studies (Grades 6–8). In addition, *Developing Reading Fluency* provides opportunities for addressing other standards (e.g., related to language, speaking, listening, comprehension, vocabulary) not directly taught. Appendix A documents direct alignment to the Common Core State Standards, and it also shows indirect alignment to standards where, with additional teaching, alignment could be achieved.

Because of the potential for using *Developing Reading Fluency* to meet other curriculum standards (e.g., for reading comprehension, speaking, listening, writing, language), *Passages to Reading* is provided as a supplemental material. *Passages to Reading* includes the same passages and comprehension questions included in the software. It offers another form of media for teaching and practicing the strategies taught in the software. These passages can be used to complement the software lessons or can be used to extend a lesson into other related language arts activities or to extend literacy into social studies content. The *Developing Reading Fluency* program includes a PDF of the entire *Passages to Reading* book on Mac/Win CD so you can conveniently print passages and/or forms from your computer. As an alternative, *Passages to Reading* (Student Edition) can be purchased as a consumable book for individual students. *Passages to Reading* includes an Answer Key so students can be empowered to check their own work. (However, you also have the option to remove the Answer Key.)

If after using the *Developing Reading Fluency* software, students continue to have difficulty with reading comprehension, *Passages to Reading* can be used as a supplemental material. Students can be taught to use strategies to enhance silent reading comprehension.

The following are a few additional ideas for use of *Passages to Reading*:

**To improve reading comprehension, these strategies can be used:**

1. Have students read the comprehension questions before reading the passage.
2. Encourage them to make visual images while reading to themselves.
3. Have them underline information that will help answer the questions.

1. Use a passage with an individual student who needs more concentrated practice in noticing word parts, identifying phrases, and choral reading. This allows some students to work independently in the software while you assist an individual student.
2. Use a printed passage to mark miscues or challenging words for individual students.
3. Use a printed copy of the *Passages to Reading* Challenging Words Log to have students list words they find challenging. Students can check off words once they master them, which is one more way to motivate and empower them.
4. Use the *Passages to Reading* Progress Chart to have students chart their own progress. (Note that the software does this automatically, but there may be value in having a student chart his or her own progress).
5. Use a printed passage to focus on higher level comprehension. Ask additional comprehension questions that focus on levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy (e.g., knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation).

6. Using the PDF on the CD, project a passage onto a SMART Board® for viewing by a group of students. Use to demonstrate the strategies being taught.
7. After reading a passage to students for listening comprehension, use the PDF to project comprehension questions onto a SMART Board® for viewing by a group of students.
8. Read a passage to focus on listening comprehension. Read the passage while students listen. Ask comprehension questions.
9. Use the Think About It! question to give students opportunities for higher level thinking, speaking, or listening.
10. Use the Think About It! question to give students topics for writing.
11. The passage topic could be explored further; it could be used as the starting point for a research project.

## Instructional FAQs

- 1. The student is distracted by your marking of miscues during the pre-test and/or post-test.**  
It may be helpful to sit slightly out of the student's view (e.g., across from him or her, or at a nearby table) so as not to distract the student while you count or mark miscues.
- 2. The student chooses answers impulsively during the comprehension portion of the pre-test and post-test without thoughtfully reading all answers.**  
Guide the student to listen to or read each possible answer before choosing the best response.
- 3. The student has too many challenging words to master in a passage (e.g., more than 15).**  
This passage is too difficult. Move to a lesson that is less difficult. Move back 10 lessons or to an earlier level using the settings option. (Or refer to the readability levels in the next section or in Appendix B to choose an appropriate lesson.)
- 4. The student has too few challenging words to master in a passage (e.g., less than 5).**  
This passage is too easy. Move up 10 lessons or to the next level using the settings options. (Or refer to the readability levels in the next section or in Appendix B to choose an appropriate lesson.)
- 5. The student does not independently select challenging words in Noticing Word Parts.**  
Several techniques may help to support the student:



Help him or her find challenging words onscreen by saying to the student, "Let's find the words you had trouble with so you can practice to get better at reading them." Work together to find and choose the challenging words. Sometimes just indicating the line the challenging word is in helps: "In the third line, find the word *become*."

Provide a list of challenging words for the student to refer to. Use a copy of the Pre-test Form to circle the words that were challenging for the student or use the Challenging Words Log in the *Passages to Reading* book to indicate challenging words to practice.

**6. The student does not progress in accurately reading for challenging words.**

Encourage the student to spend more time breaking challenging words into parts and then reading as whole words in the Noticing Word Parts portion of the program.

Use *Passages to Reading* to demonstrate the strategy of breaking challenging words into word parts. Guide the student to notice the word parts.

Encourage the student to choose any words that are not automatic for him or her and to practice reading the words in parts and then as whole words.

The following section provides viewing of the passages and comprehension questions/answers as well as readability levels so you can easily plan for a student's levels and lessons.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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### Research Supporting *DRF*

*Developing Reading Fluency* teaches students the strategies they need to decode complex words and access complex texts. Students are taught to focus their attention on key elements of texts so that they can learn to read more effectively. They learn to notice word parts when faced with words they find to be challenging. In *Developing Reading Fluency*, word parts are defined as either syllables or morphological endings, such as *-ing*, *-s*, or *-ed*. Students also learn to focus on phrases so that they can make sense of lengthy or complex sentences.

The research base that forms the foundation for *Developing Reading Fluency* includes:

1. Having students learn to read connected texts, rather than only reading isolated words (Martin-Chang & Levy, 2005).
2. Engaging students in repeated, but assisted reading (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Sindelar, Monda, & O’Shea, 1990).
3. Using intervention materials that are aligned with curriculum standards (Foorman, Kalinowski, & Sexton, 2007).
4. Teaching students to attend to word parts (Bhattacharya, 2006; Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004; Knight-McKenna, 2008; Nunes, Bryant, & Barros, 2012).
5. Teaching students to focus on phrases (Hicks, 2009; O’Shea & Sindelar, 1983; Tressoldi, Vio, & Iozzino, 2007; Whalley & Hansen, 2006).
6. Providing feedback in terms of rate, accuracy, and comprehension to the student (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002).

### Reading Fluency Defined

When the National Reading Panel (NRP) reviewed a broad base of reading research in 2000, they identified reading fluency as being one of five critical components of effective reading, as well as being one major factor influencing reading comprehension. In the early elementary grades, children learn basic reading skills. These skills include sound-symbol correspondence, beginning decoding, and sight words. However, after completing first, second, and third grades, some students have difficulty going beyond the basic early reading skills to become fluent readers.

Reading fluency is defined as a combination of the rate, accuracy, and prosody with which a student reads connected text (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). Fluent readers use a combination of strategies to decode and gain meaning. These include whole word recognition, use of context, knowledge of sound-symbol correspondence, attention to word parts, and being able to focus on phrases to gain meaning from complex sentences (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2006; O'Connor, 2007).

The National Reading Panel (2000) specified the need for skill-specific, effective, and targeted instruction in reading fluency. According to the NRP, teaching upper elementary, middle school, and secondary school students the specific strategies they need to read fluently—so they can gain meaning from the material they are expected to read in school—is imperative.

## **Effective Reading Fluency Instruction**

Struggling readers may try to sound words out, but they often find it to be a laborious process. They recognize some words and often over-rely on context to make guesses about unfamiliar words. They may pay attention to initial letters when reading, but often do not attend to word parts or focus on phrases. Consequently, they make guesses that disrupt meaning. Their slow, ineffective reading requires a great deal of attention and effort and leads to poor performance on tests.

Archer, Gleason, and Vachon (2003) reported that one distinguishing characteristic of older struggling readers is their inability to read multisyllabic words. These students see multisyllabic words as “too hard” and say that reading is “boring” when they have to read lengthy sentences or the lengthy texts expected at the fourth-grade level and above. They lose focus when attempting to read complex words or complex sentences; therefore, they tend to avoid reading, which leads to a lack of engagement in academic tasks (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon).

Reading fluency intervention programs have traditionally consisted of repeated reading opportunities, reading practice, and choral reading. Students who are struggling with reading have often been told to read more, however, they may resist this process.

A thorough review of research found that having students read silently for a period of time each day does not teach them the strategies they need to be effective readers (National Reading Panel, 2000).

In fact, having them read on their own results in very limited growth, in comparison to practice that is assisted or managed (Connor, Morrison, & Petrella, 2004; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003).

Since the National Reading Panel Report was published in 2000, and in recognition of the importance of reading fluency, the research community began focusing on methods for effective instruction of reading fluency. The following summarizes key points of research on reading fluency instruction:

- Repeated reading has been known to increase reading fluency and comprehension when assistance is provided (Sindelar, Monda, & O’Shea, 1990). Struggling readers need direct support in attending to key elements of texts during the reading process. These elements of texts include word parts and phrases.
- Hicks (2009) found that it is not enough to have students learn to read more quickly (i.e., faster rate). Students need support in focusing on phrases and, thereby, making sense of what they are reading. Otherwise, students read through punctuation and lose track of what they are reading.
- Other studies have shown positive results when instruction included an emphasis on sublexical units, including syllables (Knight-McKenna, 2008; Tressoldi, Vio, & Iozzino, 2007) and morphological units (Nunes, Bryant, & Barros, 2012), and on helping students focus on phrases (Whalley & Hansen, 2006).
- In addition, a meta-analysis of reading interventions (Therrien, 2004) has shown that assisted reading and progress monitoring in the form of charting are key elements in reading intervention. This leads to increased motivation and transfer of improved skills.

*Developing Reading Fluency* was designed with consideration given to the research outcomes above. Specifically, the program embeds the evidence-based methods that teach students explicitly how to notice word parts when words are challenging to read, and how to focus on phrases in order to gain meaning from complex sentences. It also automatically monitors each student’s progress in accuracy, rate, fluency, and comprehension so that students, teachers, and parents can see the improvement.

## Alignment to Classroom Content and Standards

The ability to read a wide variety of materials fluently and with comprehension is at the heart of rigorous learning standards across the curriculum. Using materials that are aligned with curriculum standards and classroom content is important for student success (Foorman, Kalinowski, & Sexton, 2007).

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2012) place heavy emphasis on reading with comprehension across multiple genres for multiple purposes. *Developing Reading Fluency* is aligned across multiple grade levels and standards. (Detailed alignment information is provided in Appendix A.)

For students in the fourth grade and above, academic materials usually consist of informational texts, such as those found in the social studies curriculum. Texts written at the fourth-grade level and above are often difficult for students who do not know how to decode unfamiliar, multisyllabic words and lengthy sentences (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003). It is important to teach specific strategies that enable students to master these challenging words and to focus on phrases within lengthy sentences, but it is also critical to have students learn to use these strategies in connected texts (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005).

### Field Test of *Developing Reading Fluency*

*Developing Reading Fluency (DRF)* was developed over a six-year time span by professionals working with students who were reading significantly below grade level. Many students in the fourth grade and above were still struggling to decode multisyllabic words despite having had phonics instruction. These students also had difficulty understanding texts with lengthy or complex sentences, such as those common in classroom materials written at a fourth-grade level and above. The research-based strategies used in *Developing Reading Fluency* were used successfully in intervention with these students and then were incorporated into the *DRF* software program. A summary of this field-test data is included in Appendix C.