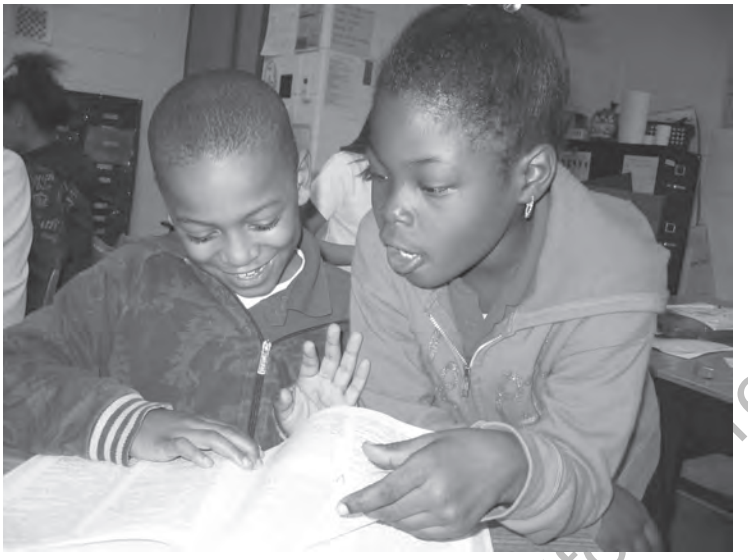
CHAPTER 6

Fluency

A group of second graders sit on a rug in their classroom facing their teacher, Nancy, as she holds up the book *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop* (Raschka, 1992). As she slowly displays the book's pictures to one side of the group and then the other, the song "Billie's Bounce" by Charlie Parker and Miles Davis plays in the background. After the song has played, Nancy begins to read the book aloud with a lyrical cadence, almost singing the lines. "Be bop. Fisk, fisk." She continues reading, and at the repetitive line "Charlie Parker plays . . ., " she puts her hand to her ear and the students say, "Be bop!" with the same expression their teacher demonstrated in the previous lines. Nancy is using the book to demonstrate and practice fluency with her students. In future lessons students will have the opportunity to read the lines with a partner and on their own, listening for the rate, accuracy, and expression in one another's renditions. Since this is a story written as poetry, it is introduced during the time of year when the students are working on poetry. Later in the day, during writing workshop, students will practice writing poetry with onomatopoeia, or sound words.

Nancy knows the importance of helping students develop fluency alongside their phonological and comprehension skills. She recognizes that books with rhyme and rhythm are excellent tools for developing fluency, and that choral reading and rereading are safe and productive strategies. Together the selected text, the research-based reading strategy of rereading, and the culturally responsive instructional strategies of choral reading and paired reading, all make this an excellent lesson for helping children develop fluency in reading.

What is fluency? Fluency is reading accurately, with appropriate speed and expression, while also comprehending what is read (Allington, 2009; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Samuels, 2002). Fluent readers accurately apply punctuation in sentences (e.g., pausing with commas, stopping briefly at periods), and when they read aloud, others can under-



stand. Fluent reading is highly related to word recognition. Fluent readers recognize words so quickly, they are often unaware that they are reading (Samuels, 2002).

Some children read so slowly and laboriously it is almost painful to listen to them. Often by the time they get to the end of a sentence accurately read, they cannot remember the first part of the sentence. Some children read slowly *and* make multiple mistakes in decoding words. Nonfluent reading greatly affects children's comprehension, and those who struggle may begin to view reading as a word attack exercise rather than an enjoyable, meaning-making activity. When children read painfully slowly, it is no fun, and unless they become more fluent, they will likely not choose to read as a leisure activity.

Of course, we know that all beginning readers read slowly. But some students are noticeably slower than others and need help acquiring fluency. As we know from previous chapters, the context of any reading situation affects the reading performance and plays an important part in assessing students' reading fluency. One critical aspect of the instructional context is the *text* (e.g., book, article, poem, Internet site). The fact that the text the child is reading has much to do with whether or not the child sounds fluent is addressed in this chapter. First, it is important to review what the research says about how children develop fluency.

RESEARCH ON FLUENCY

Strategies that promote better fluency in readers are grounded in studies that examined what children do in their minds as they read. Research illustrates a developmental sequence in how readers process chunks of print. For example, older, more experienced readers read larger chunks of texts (words and phrases) at a time, whereas younger, less

experienced readers read in smaller chunks (letters and syllables). One study showed that second graders rely more on letter-by-letter processing while reading, whereas older students read entire words at a time (Samuels, LaBerge, & Bremer, 1978). These researchers found that beginning readers cannot simultaneously decode and comprehend. This finding has huge implications for the reading strategies teachers choose and the particular books selected for instruction. The latter is addressed below in the section on "Matching Readers with Books."

Younger, less fluent readers must practice to learn to read in larger chunks. It makes intuitive sense; practice of any skill will improve the skill. Theories on reading achievement of elementary school students emphasize the critical need for more reading practice for young children, especially children who struggle with reading. In particular, Stanovich's theory (1986) on individual differences in reading suggests that reading experiences and reading achievement have a reciprocal relationship; that is, experiences cause higher achievement. But also, higher achievement (better reading) causes children to have more experiences with text. Why not? Children choose to read because they are good at it. Although some claim that positive self-esteem, time spent reading, and good attitudes toward books increase reading achievement, Stanovich suggests that it works the other way: Better reading skill causes children to have positive self-esteem, good attitudes, and to do a lot of reading. It may be an interaction among these variables that is at work (Stanovich, 1986). In any case, those who are good readers usually become better readers, and those who begin school with few reading skills remain behind unless teachers intervene.

To become fluent readers, children need to practice reading and rereading whole texts, not isolated words. Yet in schools, the children who often need the most practice get the least. In one study, Allington (1984) found that first graders who were good readers read over 1,000 words in a week, compared to the poor readers in the same class who read as few as 16 words. He asked the now famous question, "If they don't read much, how are they ever gonna get good?" Indeed, the National Reading Panel (NRP) report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) indicates that the best readers read the most, and the poorest readers read the least. However, despite Stanovich's theory, the authors of the report caution that these studies do not imply causation; that is, more time spent reading in school has not been shown to necessarily *cause* better reading.

With the publication the NRP report, the relative value of independent reading time (also called SSR for sustained silent reading or DEAR for drop everything and read) as an instructional practice has come into question. These practices failed to produce a positive relationship between encouraging reading and either the amount of reading students did or their reading achievement. As stated earlier, though, the NRP report included only experimental studies, and the report neither recommends nor condemns SSR practices. Below we share studies that might provide some insight into why the NRP report cautions educators about classroom SSR practice.

One teacher research study (not included in the NRP) illustrates the conundrum of including SSR in the curriculum (Marshall, 2002). This sixth-grade teacher began with

the question, "Are my students really reading during SSR?" She was frustrated by SSR because she perceived it as a waste of valuable time for some of her students because they were not actually reading during that time. She began to make changes in what students read, her accountability system, the schedule, and the time spent talking about the books to make the SSR period more productive. In this study, backed by the teacher's assessment, it appears that SSR is beneficial *if students are highly engaged*. One cannot assume that this is the case in all classrooms. Recall from Chapter 1, Ellen's visit to the whole-language teacher's classroom, in which some children soaked up the books while others only pretended to read.

Some studies of SSR show positive results. Cline and Kretke (1980) studied students who had been exposed to SSR practices through junior high school and compared these students to similar students who did not experience SSR. They found that the students who experienced SSR held positive attitudes toward reading, but did not achieve differently than students who did not participate in SSR. Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama (1990) had students in grades 5 and 6 record their time spent reading silently during their reading class and at home, keeping track of both assigned reading and reading for pleasure. Students averaged 15.8 minutes of reading during the 50-minute class and 15.0 minutes at home. Time spent reading during reading class contributed significantly to students' reading achievement. However, in these studies, the teacher did some kind of monitoring of reading; even the documentation of the amount of time spent reading affected the actual reading that was done. Thus, when reading was *mediated* by a teacher, improvement was shown—an idea to which we return. Importantly, teachers should find ways for children to practice reading during school hours that promote achievement.

Some studies have clear findings on effects of reading fluency. In one study by Samuels, Miller, and Eisenberg (1979, as cited in Samuels, 2002) college students attempted to read familiar mirror-image words (backward) to simulate what happens when beginning readers encounter words repeatedly. The results illustrated that when the words were first shown, the student read them letter by letter, similar to what beginning readers do. But when the words were familiar through repeated exposure, the students read them more holistically, at least in chunks. Thus, repeated exposure to the same words is important.

Indeed, a key strategy shown to help readers develop fluency is *repeated reading*. In one study, researchers wanted to see if using repeated readings with struggling sixth-grade readers would help them transfer reading skills to new texts. They found that the strategy worked when teachers kept at it over a 7-week period (Homan, Klesius, & Hite, 1993). Repeated readings have also been shown to increase fluency for third-grade students with learning disabilities (Sindelar, Monda, & O'Shea, 1990), to increase the general reading performance of second graders (Dowhower, 1987), and to improve third-graders' speed and word recognition (Rasinski, 1990; Taylor, Wade, & Yekovich, 1985). Why does repeated reading work? Schreiber (1980) suggests that the practice of repeated readings helps students discover the appropriate syntactic phrasing, or "parsing strategies," which are required for sense making when reading. In Vygotskian theory, this is an example of the construction of new understandings through a cognitive tool.

Further, repeated reading helps build sight word vocabulary. Building a sight word vocabulary is more difficult for ELLs than native speakers because ELLs are less familiar with the vocabulary and phonology of English (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003). Therefore, it is helpful for ELLs to learn or to be exposed to the oral and written version of words in English at the same time (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003). Allington (2009) warns, however, that too much repeated reading can begin to limit exposure to new words. Teachers must attend to particular students to see who needs more exposure to the same texts and who is ready for new texts. Shanahan and Beck (2006) lament the few well-designed studies of fluency instruction to promote the reading achievement of ELLs. However, the few studies they did analyze showed that fluency interventions help ELLs as much as they do native speakers.

Reitsma (2002) studied three different ways to improve the reading of first graders; (1) guided reading, which was "round robin" reading, in this case (when one student takes a turn to real orally while the other children are expected to follow along); (2) reading while listening to a tape-recorded story; and (3) independent reading with feedback. Guided reading and independent reading were significantly more effective than reading while listening or the control group, indicating that *reading* improves reading, more so than listening. In a similar study, two kinds of reading practice—repeated readings and independent practice—were studied. Both were found to significantly improve reading performance of second graders (Dowhower, 1987).

The above studies have a common theme: The reading was *mediated* by the teacher in some way, which according to Vygotskian theory, would be necessary for children just acquiring reading concepts and skills. It makes sense to take children's developmental levels into account when making instructional choices regarding the amount and type of opportunities offered for reading connected text. Thus, assessment of fluency, as with all components of reading, is important.

PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING FLUENCY

Figure 6.1 outlines general principles for teaching fluency.

ASSESSING FLUENCY

Teachers usually have an ear for fluency and can spot a child who is reading too slowly for comprehension. Yet, to be sure that you are assessing fluency and not just whether a book is too difficult for a child, it is appropriate to make more formal assessments of children's fluency from time to time. It is also important to be discerning about assessments. After the NRP report was published, many materials and assessments focused on fluency, a reading component previously neglected. Not surprisingly, certain assessments and instructional practices became popular even though there was little research to support the product. We encourage teachers to refrain from blindly adopting prac-

- Assess children's fluency regularly.
- Demonstrate how to read fluently. Point out to children what is meant by fluency.
- Use repeated reading as a strategy for developing fluency.
- Have students practice a lot. Practice is the key to developing fluency.
- Choose texts that match children's independent reading levels for practice with fluency.
- Use a variety of texts to practice fluency.
- Be attentive to when students want to stop reading a given text.
- Use drama as a tool for fluency.
- For ELLs, provide many opportunities for joint or choral reading.
- Plan carefully for SSR. Teachers should be sure that children are *reading* during SSR time.
- Get kids hooked on favorite book series or topics. Lots of reading is the goal!

FIGURE 6.1. Principles for teaching fluency.

tices or tools because they are "hot" but instead to look at them carefully for appropriateness for their students. (See Allington, 2009, for more on problematic assessments of fluency.)

Running Records

A Running Record (Clay, 1985, 1991) is a time-honored, research-based assessment of reading that teachers can conduct with few materials. There are detailed descriptions of how to do running records, and many teachers learn to conduct them efficiently and effectively, gaining much information about their students as they do so. We encourage all teachers to spend time getting this worthy training. To summarize the process here, we use Allington's (2009) description of Running Records. The teacher selects a short text (1–3 minutes of reading) the child has not read but one that seems to be developmentally appropriate. The teacher invites the child to read the whole text, from start to finish, while the teacher notes the start and stopping time (to assess rate). The teacher has a copy of the text in front of him or her and records when the student makes an error or *miscue* (Goodman et al., 1987). If the reader correctly says the word, the teacher marks a check over the word. If the child misreads the words, the teacher marks a line over the word. If a reader omits a word, the teacher inserts an *o* over the word. If the reader inserts a word, the teacher indicates it with an insertion symbol. The page might look like this:

✓ ✓ ✓ – ✓✓✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ – ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
A long time ago, in a far off land, two chimpanzees met for the first time.

✓ – – ✓ o ✓ ✓ ✓
The chimpanzees spotted one another early one morning.

After the assessment, the teacher figures the accuracy rate by dividing the total number of words read correctly by the total number of words in the text. For example, in the text above, the student had a 21% error rate, or 79% accuracy level. But the word *chimpanzee* was stumbled over twice, which inflates this error rate a bit. (Most guides to Running Records suggest that teachers count a miscue only once, which would make this reader's accuracy level 83%.) To calculate reading rate (i.e., how many words per minute) divide the total time spent reading by the total number of words read to figure.

It is also critically important to consider the student when conducting Running Records. Just as teachers adapt instruction for certain students (certainly ELLs), they must adapt and accommodate assessments for some children. For example, pronunciation differences should not be considered "miscues." Also, there may be many instances when a child "reads" a word but does not understand its meaning. This is especially likely with ELLs, and teachers should be especially careful to listen for this when inviting the student to retell the story content. Also, some children will not identify a word because they have never encountered it before. For example, suppose a child comes upon the word *catastrophe*. A native speaker might not recognize it and might struggle with decoding it; this would be a miscue. But if you told the child what the word was, more than likely the native speaker would know what it means. But if an ELL came to a halt at that same word, it might be useful for the teacher to later tell the child the word and ask, "Do you know what that word means? Have you ever heard it?" It could be more a vocabulary need than a reading fluency problem.

It is important to keep accurate and regular records to track students' progress in fluency. Teachers should use both formal assessments, such as the Running Record, and informal assessments, such as observing and closely listening to a child read during instruction or independent practice time. Further, teachers should note whether the assessment was with "cold" material or with previously read material (Allington, 2009) because it makes a big difference. Although repeated reading is one of the most important instructional practices (see below), it may not be the best strategy for assessing readers. Keeping track of both cold and "warm" reading is important.

MATCHING TEXTS TO READERS

One of the biggest jobs teachers have is to select the texts for their students to read during instruction, independent reading time at school, and home leisure reading. Text selection is essential because books and other materials are the primary motivators of reading. Students read because they want to know what is inside that book, what the magazine can offer them, what information they can obtain from that website, and so on. Students read for both independent and social reasons, and so providing fun, funny, or fascinating texts that students can read successfully and *want* to read is a huge task.

Our reading model encourages teachers to select books for reading instruction that are culturally appropriate for the readers. This may mean that the book reflects the

students—their language, interests, and culture. It may also mean that the book communicates an important message or historic event that reflects the diversity in classrooms today. It may mean that the text was written by people like the students. It is also important that students read about people who are different from themselves to learn valuable lessons about differences and similarities. This book provides titles of many books of this sort for reading instruction, read-alouds, and for classroom libraries.

As we stated earlier in this book, we do not mean to communicate that teachers should use *only* the culturally specific or justice-themed texts for the teaching of reading. While we would never promote or even condone the use of culturally insensitive books for reading (and there are still many out there), we also recognize that some books that seem culture-neutral can be excellent for reading instruction. For example, Denise Fleming's wonderful picture book *In the Tall, Tall Grass* (1995) is an excellent source for lessons on onset–rimes as well as fluency. It could be viewed as culture-neutral, although some may argue that Fleming's books are pro-environment, since they seem to celebrate nature. In any case, we advocate a wide variety of rich literature for reading instruction. Sometimes books will simply be *funny*. Texts that make children laugh could be your best tool for inviting readers to reread.

The other consideration for text selection is *text difficulty*. To assess whether certain texts are appropriately easy or challenging for their students, teachers need to think about multiple text features and whether a book is intended for instruction, practice, or independent reading. If the text is for practice, it should be familiar in topic and genre and easy for the child to read. Consider Figure 6.2. Of course, teachers can conduct lessons on the topic of the book to cultivate interest. They can read aloud varied genre to familiarize the child with how texts are structured. It is essential that teachers read aloud to students from a variety of genres to create interest and familiarity in both the topic and structure of the text. Consider a situation in which students have had little exposure to poetry; perhaps their previous teachers did not read poetry aloud to them. These students might read the poem as if it were prose and sound quite *dys*fluent in the process.

Sentence complexity and word difficulty are the two primary features of texts that determine how readable it is. Sentences that are longer and have more independent and dependent clauses are more complex than short, declarative sentences, making fluency

Topic: Is it interesting? Will it motivate?

Genre: Is the student familiar with reading this type of text?

Length: Will the length be tackled enthusiastically by the reader?

Sentence difficulty: Are the sentences simple enough for easy reading by this child?

Word difficulty: Will the reader be able decode easily so as not to interrupt fluency?

FIGURE 6.2. Assessing text difficulty.

and comprehension harder to achieve. Words that are new to the reader, are multisyllabic, or have unusual spelling patterns are more difficult to decode and thus harder to recognize. These are key features to attend to when choosing books for readers. There are some excellent sources on tools for determining the best match between readers and books (Brown, 1999; Mesmer, 2008). Most educators who write about text difficulty and reading instruction suggest the following: For independent reading time, children should practice with texts they find *easy*; these are books in which they can recognize 95%, or more, of the words. For reading instruction, children should be taught with texts in their ZPD, as described in Chapter 2; that is, the texts are those the students can read with assistance from the teacher. When choosing texts for reading instruction, the teacher must think about the backgrounds and interests of the readers, how much assistance he or she will provide, and the complexity of the books.

Many publishing companies now have "leveled" books that help teachers determine text difficulty. Their levels all differ, but if you find a company's system that suits your own, use it. Of course, these companies do not know your students, and so their systems should not be used without your input. Only teachers can determine the best practice books for their students because they know (1) the interests of their students, (2) the experiences their students have had with particular genres, (3) the word attack skills and reading strategies their students have been taught, and (4) the motivations and dispositions their students have toward reading. All of these factors matter in choosing texts.

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING FLUENCY

It is widely accepted that fluency has been one of the most neglected parts of reading instruction, although it has gained increased attention since the publication of the NRP report and related reports. Since then, many educators have recommended the following strategies, which have their research base in the studies mentioned above.

Modeling Fluent Reading

Teachers must be good models of fluent reading. Some books may require a teacher to rehearse the reading before sharing it with children, to achieve the cadence and prosody intended. This is not a skill that comes naturally; it is a skill teachers acquire after multiple read-alouds. Take, for instance, this text by Pat Mora (1998): "Old Snake knows. Sometimes you feel you just can't breathe in your own tight skin. Old Vibora says, 'Leave those doubts and hurts buzzing like flies in your ears. When you feel your frowns, like me wriggle free from I can't, I can't. Leave those gray words to dry in the sand and dare to show your brave self, your bright true colors'" (p. 5).

Read as prose, the text is still beautiful. But read as a poem, as intended, the text is much more meaningful. Good readers of poetry know how to read the text aloud to make it meaningful, emphasizing essential words and slowing down the pace.

*"Old Snake" (Mora, 1998)**

Old Snake knows.
Sometimes you feel
you just can't breathe
in your own tight skin.
Old Vibora says, "Leave
those doubts and hurts
buzzing like flies in your ears.
When you feel your frowns,
like me wriggle free
from *I can't, I can't.*
Leave those gray words
to dry in the sand
and dare to show
your brave self,
your bright, true colors."

Teachers can learn to read the poem (or any text) with expression that communicates just what it feels like to have doubts by slowing down the line "you just can't breathe" and expressing some pain in "I can't, I can't." Children will recall what it feels like to have doubts. When you boldly read, "Your brave self, your bright true colors" children will *feel* different, know they can be brave. You might see them lean in closer to listen and ask to hear it again. The picture book from which this poem comes, *This Big Sky* (Mora, 1998), features a giant, gorgeous red snake. The picture helps make this poem meaningful, too!

Running Starts

Sometimes students face a book and want to read it but think it is too hard. Or, they read the first page and put it away, not realizing just how good it is. Teachers can invite more children into more books if they give them a running start to the reading of these books. When teachers read the first page or chapter or just a little more (depending on the readers) and stop when the story is getting really good, chances are many children will pick it up. Because they have the context of the story in their heads, the readers can use prior knowledge to predict story events and even the words in each sentence. This helps them develop the necessary fluency to keep reading.

Choral Reading

Choral reading can be an excellent tool for older readers who are not confident but who want to read the good stuff. Children track print as they read, so it can also be a good tool for emergent and beginning readers. Thus, they can "read" material they cannot read on their own. Choral reading whets their appetite for more reading. It encourages

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risk taking and builds confidence. It helps build vocabulary as well as fluency. It also builds classroom community in the same way that singing does. It is excellent for older readers, too. Consider the first two stanzas of a Jack Prelutsky (1983) poem:

> *"The Bogeyman"**
>
> In the desolate depths of a perilous place
> The bogeyman lurks, with a snarl on his face.
> Never dare, never dare to approach his dark lair
> For he's waiting . . . just waiting . . . to get you.
> He skulks in the shadows, relentless and wild
> In search for a tender, delectable child.
> With his steeling sharp claws and his slavering jaws
> Oh he's waiting . . . just waiting . . . to get you. (p. 6)

Of course, this poem is not for young children. But the year Ellen taught sixth grade (with all students at seventh- or eighth-grade age because they had all been retained at least once), the students in her class loved it! In fact, Ellen believes today that her Jack Prelutsky and Roald Dahl books did more to improve students' reading than anything she did. The students read and reread those books. They are packed with high-level vocabulary the students craved. When they read chorally, all students were successful.

Repeated Reading

As the studies in the NRP report have shown, when students are repeatedly exposed to the same words in print, they develop word recognition and fluency. When teachers and researchers had children participate in repeated reading activities, they developed word recognition, speed, and comprehension, and this was true for average as well as struggling readers (Samuels, 2002). While there are several techniques for repeated reading, below are steps for a simplified method for beginning readers (Samuels, 2002).

1. The teacher selects a text.
2. The children work in pairs; one takes the role of student, the other as teacher.
3. The "student" reads and the "teacher" listens while looking at the words in the text. (Both students get practice this way.)
4. The students reverse roles, and each passage is read four times.
5. The children comment on their performances.

Buddy Reading

Teachers who encourage children to read in pairs often see more reading. It is fun to sit next to a friend and share a book. It can also help the readers as they assist one another

* Copyright 1983 by Jack Prelutsky. Reprinted with permission from HarperCollins.

with words and meaning. Some children love to read aloud to others and can be paired with ELLs who may not know enough English yet to be reading. Of course, we do not recommend that teachers always have proficient readers paired with struggling readers or ELLs. Good readers often want to read on their own silently and should be afforded many opportunities in the classroom to do this. But inviting and encouraging buddy reading can assist many students in different ways.

Guided Oral Reading

In guided oral reading the student reads aloud a text at his or her instructional reading level, and the teacher provides fluency, word identification, and vocabulary coaching during the reading. It is not round robin reading, the old practice in which children in a group all take a turn to read aloud a section of a text until the story is read. That practice does little to help children acquire reading skill of any sort. Guided oral reading is a one-on-one teaching time when the teacher works with the child on particular skills.

Readers' Theatre

Readers' Theatre is a staged reading of a play or dramatic piece of work designed to entertain, inform, or influence (Kerry-Moran, 2006). A script, play, or story is chosen that children want to read aloud. Children are assigned parts and practice their performances. The difference between Readers' Theatre and a play is that children do not have to memorize the script. They *read it* aloud with expression. This practice has wide acceptance as an excellent tool for developing fluency and comprehension.

There are many Readers' Theatre scripts available on the Internet, and several books have been written consisting of such scripts. Nancy observed a fourth-grade classroom in which students had been discussing perspectives and different points of view. The teacher had chosen to use a Readers' Theatre script based on *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Sciezska, 1996), in which the wolf is depicted as the "good guy." Students were assigned roles, practiced at their seats and with partners, and then read the lines aloud together. In this case students did not actually act out the script, but they did focus on reading the lines aloud with expression. The reading and discussion of this book led students to examine the different viewpoints in the original and alternative versions of the story while developing their fluency.

Beginners or ELLs (if appropriate) can use texts with which they are familiar, due to prior reading. These should be short with several characters and simple story structures (Rieg & Paquette, 2009). Some children can write their own scripts (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008). Some tips for implementing Readers' Theatre include the following:

1. Choose developmentally appropriate texts.
2. Use visual and aural aids.
3. Determine the dramatic experience level of children.
4. Model expressive reading.

5. Make practice a priority.
6. Involve families.
7. Perform for an audience.
8. Do it often (Kerry-Moran, 2006, pp. 320–322).

Some teachers choose to make Readers' Theatre a regular part of the reading routine, whereas other teachers use Readers' Theatre from time to time. Young and Rasinski (2009) describe the integration of Readers' Theatre throughout the reading curriculum. The key to using this activity in your classroom successfully is to introduce the script and process thoroughly and to allow time for students to practice before performing.

More Drama

Students can also take part in poetry enactments. Teachers should choose poems that express strong emotions or attitudes (Tomlinson, 1986). Teachers use the cadence of poetry to promote more attention to rate and expression. Rieg and Paquette (2009) provide the following steps for helping children to enact poetry successfully:

1. The teacher first reads the poem aloud, paying special attention to the modeling of pronunciation and intonation.
2. The teacher discusses the challenging words with students.
3. The students read the poem chorally.
4. The students prepare plays or other sorts of dramatic interpretations to the class in pairs or in small groups.

Repetitive texts are especially good for ELLs because many children who are still learning English need to hear the same words repeated even more than native English speakers.

Name Game

Teachers can use the poem "Name Game," adapted from Jean Roberts (2009), a teacher who posted the poem on *thevirtualvine.com*, to celebrate children and develop fluency by writing the poem on a chart for all to see. At the beginning of each school year, Nancy has students read this poem together during the morning meeting. First, she introduces the poem to the students by reading it aloud to them. Then, she tells them that the poem consists of instructions for what to do with your name. She next reads the poem and says her name after each line. Each day of the first week of school the poem is read during morning meeting (or class meeting). First, the students have the support of their peers by reading the poem chorally and taking turns with different students' names. As the days go on, individual students ask to read the poem by themselves, until even the struggling readers have heard the poem enough that they feel confident reading it by themselves in front of their peers. Many students *love* to have an opportunity to read the poem themselves. It makes even the least proficient reader feel successful early in the year.

Growl your name. (JAVON!)
Howl your name. (JAVON!)
Stretch it 'til it's long. (JJJAAAVVVOOONNN!!!)
Chant your name. (Javon! Javon! Javon!)
Pant your name. (Ja Ja Ja Von Von Von!)
Sing it like a song. (Javon!)
Clap your name. (Clap the syllables of Javon.)
Snap your name. (Snap the syllables of Javon.)
Announce it loud and clear. (Say Javon loudly.)
Spell your name. (J-A-V-O-N!)
Yell your name. (JAVON!)
Tell the world you're here. (I'm here world!)

Practice, Practice, Practice: Mediated SSR

The studies summarized in the NRP report on fluency development show that (1) those who read a lot are better readers, and (2) good readers happen to read a lot. Yet, no studies show that the common practice of SSR *causes* improved reading skill. Instead, there is a correlation between reading a lot and being very good at it. So, why does this correlation exist? Stanovich (1986) has shown that the role of vocabulary might have something to do with it. The more a person reads, the more new vocabulary he or she learns. The more vocabulary learned, the easier reading becomes. If reading is easy, people read more. He also suggests, as do many other educators, that studies indicate that under specific conditions, practice at reading likely *does* cause reading improvement. But that practice must be *mediated* by appropriate texts and contexts.

Therefore, the practice of silent reading should not be stopped in schools! Teachers should create situations in which they know that their students are getting practice with accurate reading. The tips in Figure 6.3 may help you improve your students' practice of SSR.

Series Reading

A primary goal in reading instruction is to get children hooked on reading. One way to do that is to get them hooked on a favorite author or series. In our day, reading and rereading the Nancy Drew books, Encyclopedia Brown books, the Chronicles of Narnia, Babysitter's Club, and Archie Comic books got us addicted to reading. Today, the Captain Underpants series, Harry Potter books, the Twilight series, Bluford series, Cam Jansen, Magic School Bus series the American Girl series, and many more delight children and have them begging for more. Some children get hooked on topics and will read because of their fascination with a particular subject. If we can find the series or topics that our students crave, we will create readers.

- Have different kinds of SSR for different times of the day. For instance, during the morning SSR, designate a time and space for reading with teacher-selected books only. Some teachers put baskets of leveled or "matched" books on each child's desk and ask students to choose from those books only.
- During a shorter afternoon SSR, allow students to read anything they choose, even books too hard for them—to inspire motivation. Have favorites readily available. Children will return to favorites again and again, making repeated reading a strategy they can self-direct.
- Observe the readers carefully during SSR. If a child is not reading the print, intervene! Help the child find another book or avoid distractions. You may want to read with some children to get them started. Keep the tone and atmosphere fun and light, but also quiet. SSR time should be silent, except perhaps for the expected murmur of beginning readers voicing words.
- Keep the reading periods short for beginners. Some teachers have multiple short SSR periods rather than one longer one.

FIGURE 6.3. SSR revisited.

FLUENCY INSTRUCTION AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Fluency instruction lends itself easily to implementing culturally responsive instruction. First, there are many terrific books with themes related to culture, history, justice, ethnicity, and many other topics that are great choices for the fluency strategies described above. The choral repeated reading strategies will be familiar to some children who participate in religious or traditional celebrations that include readings. The lessons can be rigorous (think of the vocabulary in the Jack Prelutsky poem) while being developmentally appropriate and psychologically safe (mistakes go unnoticed). Children just learning to read and speak English can participate without feeling foolish for making mistakes. The strategies in this chapter also work well with the strategies that assist children with comprehension, which is the subject of the next chapter.