

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the video overview of the Fluency Bridge. I am Kristi Santi, Professor of Special Populations at the University of Houston. I am a team member of the UH AIIPaT Model Demonstration Project and want to take a moment to give a shout-out to the other team members. The goal is to highlight the role of fluency in developing a skilled reader.

## **Concept: The Fluency Bridge**

The "Fluency Bridge" graphic visually represents the key components necessary for reading fluency and comprehension. The bridge symbolizes the connection between foundational skills and advanced reading comprehension, emphasizing the importance of each element in supporting students' reading development.

## **Key Elements:**

### **1: Alphabetic Principle**

The alphabetic principle is a cornerstone of early reading instruction. It refers to the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. This principle is foundational in enabling students to connect letters with sounds, a critical skill for learning to read and write.

The alphabetic principle is essential for the following reasons:

1. **Letter-Sound Correspondence:** It helps students understand that letters and combinations of letters represent specific sounds in spoken language. This understanding is crucial for decoding words.
2. **Predictability:** It provides a systematic and predictable framework that students can rely on as they learn to read. Knowing that certain letters and letter combinations consistently produce certain sounds gives learners a dependable way to approach reading.

## **Phonemic Awareness**

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. It is a subcategory of phonological awareness, which involves recognizing and working with sounds in spoken language more broadly (including rhymes, syllables, etc.).

The connection between the alphabetic principle and phonemic awareness is critical:

1. **Association of Sounds with Symbols:** As students learn the alphabetic principle, they begin to associate spoken sounds with written symbols. For example, understanding that the letter "b" represents the /b/ sound.
2. **Phoneme Manipulation:** Phonemic awareness activities, such as blending and segmenting sounds, are enhanced by the alphabetic principle. When students know the letter-sound correspondences, they can better manipulate phonemes in words.

### **Decoding**

Decoding is the process of translating written words into their spoken equivalents by applying knowledge of letter-sound relationships. It is a critical skill for reading unfamiliar words.

1. **Application of Letter-Sound Knowledge:** Decoding relies on students' understanding of the alphabetic principle and their phonemic awareness. They use their knowledge of how letters correspond to sounds to read new words.
2. **Word Recognition:** As students practice decoding, they become more proficient at recognizing words quickly and accurately. This leads to improved reading fluency.

### **Fluency: The Bridge to Comprehension**

Reading fluency is the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. It serves as a bridge between the alphabetic principle and comprehension by enabling readers to focus on the meaning of the text rather than the mechanics of reading.

1. **Automaticity:** Fluency involves the automatic recognition of words. When decoding becomes automatic, readers can direct their cognitive resources toward comprehension.
2. **Prosody:** Fluency includes appropriate expression, intonation, and phrasing, which help convey meaning and enhance understanding.

3. **Speed and Accuracy:** Fluent readers can read quickly and accurately, allowing them to maintain the flow of the text and better understand its content.

## 2. Comprehension

Comprehension involves understanding and interpreting the meaning of text. It requires the integration of multiple cognitive processes, including:

1. **Decoding:** Translating written words into spoken language.
2. **Vocabulary Knowledge:** Understanding the meaning of words.
3. **Background Knowledge:** Using prior knowledge and experiences to make sense of new information.
4. **Inference Making:** Reading between the lines to understand implied meanings.
5. **Monitoring and Repairing Understanding:** Recognizing when comprehension breaks down and taking steps to fix it.

### Language and Reading Skills Supporting Comprehension

Several language and reading skills build on the alphabetic principle and contribute to reading comprehension:

1. **Morphological Awareness:** Understanding the structure of words and the meaning of word parts (prefixes, suffixes, root words) helps in deciphering complex words and enhances vocabulary.
2. **Syntactic Awareness:** Recognizing the rules for sentence structure aids in parsing and understanding sentences, leading to better comprehension.
3. **Pragmatic Awareness:** Understanding the social and cultural context of language use helps readers interpret the intended meaning and purpose of texts.
4. **Metacognitive Skills:** Strategies for thinking about and regulating one's own learning process, such as summarizing, questioning, and predicting, improve comprehension.

### Implications for Teachers in Practice

Understanding the foundational role of the alphabetic principle and its progression to reading comprehension has significant implications for teaching practices. Research highlights the

importance of systematic and explicit instruction in developing these skills. Here are the key implications for teachers:

### **1. Systematic Phonics Instruction**

**Implication:** Provide explicit and systematic phonics instruction to establish a strong foundation in the alphabetic principle.

**Practice:**

- **Teach Letter-Sound Correspondence:** Begin with simple letter-sound relationships and gradually introduce more complex patterns.
- **Use Multi-Sensory Approaches:** Incorporate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities to reinforce letter-sound connections (e.g., tracing letters, using letter tiles, singing phonics songs).
- **Provide Ample Practice:** Use decodable texts that align with the phonics patterns being taught, allowing students to apply their knowledge in context.

### **2. Developing Phonemic Awareness**

**Implication:** Foster phonemic awareness through targeted activities that help students hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in words.

**Practice:**

- **Engage in Phonemic Awareness Activities:** Implement activities such as rhyming, segmenting, blending, and phoneme substitution.
- **Integrate Phonemic Awareness with Phonics:** Connect phonemic awareness activities with phonics instruction to reinforce the relationship between sounds and letters.

### **3. Building Decoding Skills**

**Implication:** Help students develop strong decoding skills to facilitate word recognition and reading fluency.

**Practice:**

- **Teach Word Attack Strategies:** Instruct students on how to break down unfamiliar words into manageable parts (e.g., syllables, prefixes, suffixes).

- **Provide Repeated Reading Opportunities:** Use repeated reading of texts to build decoding fluency and accuracy.

#### 4. Enhancing Reading Fluency

**Implication:** Develop students' reading fluency to bridge the gap between decoding and comprehension.

**Practice:**

- **Implement Guided Oral Reading:** Use techniques such as choral reading, partner reading, and teacher-led guided reading to provide models of fluent reading.
- **Monitor and Support Progress:** Assess students' reading fluency regularly and provide targeted support to those who need it.

#### 5. Expanding Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

**Implication:** Support vocabulary development and build background knowledge to enhance reading comprehension.

**Practice:**

- **Direct Vocabulary Instruction:** Teach high-frequency and content-specific vocabulary explicitly.
- **Read Aloud and Discuss Texts:** Engage students in interactive read-alouds and discussions to expose them to rich language and varied content.
- **Use Diverse Texts:** Provide a variety of texts that cover different genres, topics, and cultures to broaden students' knowledge base.

#### 6. Developing Metacognitive Strategies

**Implication:** Teach metacognitive strategies to help students monitor and regulate their comprehension.

**Practice:**

- **Teach Comprehension Strategies:** Instruct students on strategies such as summarizing, predicting, questioning, and clarifying.
- **Model Think-Alouds:** Demonstrate how to use metacognitive strategies through think-alouds during reading.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of discussing fluency and its relationship with other reading skills is to inform and improve reading instruction practices. By understanding the role of fluency, teachers can implement effective, research-based strategies that support their students' reading development, leading to improved comprehension and overall academic success. This comprehensive understanding also supports the use of evidence-based practices and fosters a collaborative approach to reading education.

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