

# Unit 6 • Module 1:

## Building Fluency With Partner Reading

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### Section 1

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#### Slide 1—Title Slide

Welcome to the Fluency Routine unit, Building Fluency With Partner Reading.

#### Slide 2—Reading Intervention Components

This module addresses the instruction of students who were identified in diagnostic assessments as having poor fluency. Fluency, one of the five essential components of reading, is defined as the ability to read text with speed, accuracy, and expression.

The specific instructional routine we will learn, Partner Reading, can be used in both small groups and larger classes.

Other options for fluency practice are presented in *Effective Instruction for Middle School Students With Reading Difficulties: The Reading Teacher's Sourcebook*.

**Handout 1** contains an excerpt of the table of contents for this resource. You may review it at any time and note other chapters you would like to investigate.

#### Slide 3—Objectives

Now turn to **Handout 2: TEKS/ELPS Connections**, which explains how this fluency routine will assist students in meeting subject area expectations of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS).

The objectives of this module are to understand how reading fluency contributes to comprehension, select appropriate text for fluency instruction, and apply the three-step process for explicit instruction to help students improve their fluency through repeated reading with corrective feedback.

As we begin the module, you may hear or see some unfamiliar terms. These will be explained as we work through the slides.

## Slide 4—Improving Students’ Reading Fluency

Fluency is related to students’ ability to comprehend and learn from text. Improving students’ fluency enhances overall comprehension, or learning from text. However, it remains a difficult component of reading to affect.

Interventions with younger students that have effectively focused on and increased other critical reading components, such as phonological awareness, have not been as successful at improving students’ reading fluency.

## Slide 5—Persistent Difficulties With Fluency

Students experience difficulty reading text quickly and accurately throughout their schooling, but it is rare to find explicit instruction in fluency being provided to adolescents.

Helping students become fluent readers allows them to spend more energy comprehending text and helps prevent reading avoidance. This includes English language learners, or ELLs, whose slow and laborious reading may be due to their limited vocabularies and exposure to print in English. For others, fluency difficulties may reflect poor decoding skills. In either case, the amount of cognitive attention that must be devoted to recognizing words and producing letter-sound correspondences detracts from the attention that can be devoted to comprehending text.

## Slide 6—Effective Fluency Instruction

During repeated reading, students practice reading and listening to the same passage several times in order to meet a predetermined goal for oral reading fluency. Corrective feedback is provided if words are not decoded accurately.

In research with English language learners, repetitive encounters with a text have been successfully combined with oral discussion of vocabulary and comprehension.

Ideally, repeated reading interventions can have a similar effect for students in middle school who are still reading at a beginning level.

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## Section 2

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## Slide 7—Reading Levels of Text

Determining the appropriate difficulty level of text with which to match students is the first step in planning effective fluency instruction. Repeated reading can be beneficial to students

when the material used is at the instructional or independent level, but not if the material is at their frustration level.

Take a moment to review the information on the slide.

*The speaker pauses for 10 seconds.*

## Slide 8—Fluency and Accuracy Scores

In order to determine whether a text is at a student’s independent, instructional, or frustration reading level, use diagnostic or progress monitoring data. These assessments should provide you with students’ fluency and accuracy scores.

The fluency score is a calculation of the number of words correct per minute, or WCPM, that the student can read in a passage written on his or her grade level. The WCPM is determined by subtracting the number of errors from the total number of words read in 1 minute. For example, if a student read 65 total words in one minute and made 6 mistakes, his score would be 59 WCPM. A fluent adolescent reader would read about 150 words correct per minute, so the example student on the slide would be a good candidate for fluency instruction.

The accuracy score is calculated by dividing the fluency score, or WCPM, by the total number of words read in one minute. For our example, we would take the 59 WCPM and divide by the 65 words the student read. The result is .907, which we would round to .91. This is interpreted as 91% accuracy.

## Slide 9—Selecting Appropriate Text: Accuracy Guidelines

Please turn to **Handout 3: Accuracy and Rate Guidelines**.

Comparing a student’s accuracy score and reading rate to the guidelines on this figure can help determine whether grade-level text is at the student’s independent, instructional, or frustration level.

The student in our earlier example read 59 WCPM with 91% accuracy on grade-level text. Considering the guidelines, think about whether grade-level text would be appropriate for his fluency instruction.

*The speaker pauses for 5 seconds.*

91% accuracy falls within the 90%–94% range for instructional level in the figure. This would indicate that grade-level text is appropriate for fluency instruction; however, there is some concern about the student’s low WCPM in grade-level text. Most students reading

below 90 WCPM would still be frustrated with the text, even if they were reading the words with a high degree of accuracy. Therefore, the student would probably benefit from practicing fluency with easier material.

Some students with severe reading difficulties or dyslexia may never achieve high reading rates. When these students demonstrate a high level of accuracy (90% or higher) and read at least 70 WCPM, it is not beneficial to continue trying to increase their reading rates.

### **Slide 10—Finding Each Student’s Instructional Level**

If a student’s accuracy is below 90%, grade-level text will be too difficult to read and comprehend or too frustrating for use in fluency instruction. You would need to continue testing until you found a lower grade level of text at which the student’s accuracy score was in the 90%–94% range and his or her reading rate was 90–100 WCPM.

Remember to consider both the student’s reading rate and accuracy in determining the instructional level. Extremely slow reading can be just as frustrating and confusing as inaccurate reading.

### **Slide 11—Assign Partners**

In Partner Reading, students read and reread text with partners of slightly different ability levels. After determining each student’s fluency, or WCPM, score in grade-level text, the next step in preparing for fluency instruction is to assign partners. To do so, rank all students in the class, with the highest-performing reader at the top and the lowest-performing reader at the bottom. Next, divide the list in half. Then pair the highest-ranked student from each half. The highest-performing reader in the class will be partnered with the top student on the bottom half of the list. The next student on the top half will be partnered with the next student on the bottom half and so on.

### **Slide 12—Method of Assigning Partners**

Please review the information on this slide.

*The speaker pauses for 5 seconds.*

This is an example of how the six students in Mrs. Lopez’s class were ranked in order by their fluency scores and then partnered. Obviously, the reading rates of the students in your class may vary from those in this sample.

Should you need to make adjustments to the partnerships based upon personalities or other interpersonal factors, do not ignore the principle of partnering students of slightly different

ability levels. Partner students of both high and low ability levels with students of medium ability. Note: Students of medium ability can also be paired with other students of medium ability.

Remember that a designation of “high,” “low,” and “medium” is only relative to other students in the same intervention class. The reading levels of all students in this example are below average.

After partnering students, select fluency practice material based on the instructional reading level of the lower-ability student in each partnership.

### Slide 13—Partner Reading Routine

You will provide students with a folder containing **Handout 4: Partner Reading Routine**, **Handout 5: Error Correction Procedure**, and the appropriate passages for that day’s practice. We will use **Handouts 6** and **7** for our sample passages.

The fluency instructional routine Partner Reading is a form of repeated reading in which students hear a model of fluent reading and then alternate reading a passage aloud with a partner for a total of two times each.

In a class of students with reading difficulties, the teacher is the only expert model. Modeling and instructional feedback are the two key components of effective fluency instruction. Therefore, the teacher is the reader in the cold read.

After sufficient practice with the procedures, the entire routine will probably not take longer than 15 minutes to implement on a regular basis.

Look quickly over Handout 4. Notice that the teacher reads a passage aloud during the first, or what we refer to as a “cold,” read. This passage is at a difficulty level near the average for the class. This means the passage may be different from the one used by partners for their practice during the warm and hot reads.

All students follow along as the teacher reads the cold-read passage and underline any new, interesting, or difficult words in blue ink. It is not necessary to time this stage since the purpose is to provide an expert model of fluent reading.

When the teacher finishes reading the passage, students may ask the teacher to repeat any words they underlined. Students will say these words with the teacher.

Fluent reading is intended to contribute to comprehension. To emphasize this, the teacher concludes the cold read by asking students, “What was this passage mostly about?” The teacher then provides positive or corrective feedback as necessary.

## Slide 14—Partner Reading Routine (cont.)

During both the warm and hot reads, the higher-ability student, referred to as Partner One, always reads first. The lower-ability student, referred to as Partner Two, will always read second. This passage will be at Partner Two’s instructional level. Because it might not be the same passage as the one the teacher used to model fluent reading, having the higher-ability student read first provides some additional scaffolding to Partner Two.

Students always start reading from the beginning of the passage, regardless of where they left off on their previous turn.

While one partner reads aloud, the other follows along, underlining any errors or skips. When the 1-minute timer sounds, the student who was following along circles the last word read. Since this is done each of the two times the students read the same passage, it is important to use a different colored pen for the warm and hot reads. In the warm read, students will underline errors, circle the last word read, and calculate the WCPM using a black pen.

Students will use the underlined words to conduct the error-correction procedure with their partners. Handout 5 provides a script students can use to help each other identify and practice the words on which they made errors or would like additional review.

Finally, the circled word is used to count the total number of words read in 1 minute. The number of underlined words is then subtracted from that total to calculate the WCPM.

After Partner One has completed his or her warm read, Partner Two does the same.

## Slide 15—Partner Reading Routine (cont.)

During the final turn for each partner, referred to as the “hot” read, students follow the same steps as the warm read: One partner begins reading at the start of the passage while the other, using a red pen this time, underlines errors, circles the last word read, conducts the error-correction procedure, and calculates the WCPM. Once each partner has taken a turn, they will both then graph their final WCPM in red ink on tracking charts like the one illustrated on the slide.

## Slide 16—Partner Reading: Modeling Phase: *I Do*

Initially, modeling will include all aspects of Partner Reading, not just the cold read. Start by explaining the purpose of fluency instruction and emphasize that the skill is about improving comprehension, not about becoming speed-readers.

Explicitly state who will be Partner One and who will be Partner Two. Tell students you will be reassigning partners from time to time, but they may not switch roles or partners on their

own.

Students must be taught how to work with partners prior to beginning the routine. Model and explain the way in which you want students to sit together, read aloud during their turns, follow along in the text as you read, and follow along in the text as their partner reads. To make this routine successful, students will need to have the procedures modeled several times by you and their fellow classmates.

### **Slide 17—Partner Reading: Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)**

Although students should be sitting with their partners to facilitate transitions between the steps of the routine, they do not actually work with their partners in the first part of Partner Reading. During the cold read, all students listen to the teacher modeling fluent reading of a passage. Students should be taught to follow along by tracking with their fingers as the teacher reads the selected passage. Show students how it will look when they are tracking. Ask a student to demonstrate following along and tracking as you read. Ask a student to demonstrate what they should not be doing during the cold read and point out off-task behaviors that would reduce the effectiveness of this step.

Tell students that when you finish reading the passage, you'll ask them what words they would like to review, so they need to look for new, interesting, or difficult words as they follow along. They will then underline these words with a blue ink pen since this is our cold read. Also remind students that you will ask them to tell you what they think the passage was primarily about, so they'll need to concentrate on the meaning rather than just the sound of your voice.

After setting the expectations for the cold read, proceed with reading the passage.

The next video shows a teacher conducting the cold read with a group of three students in an intensive intervention class. Pay attention to how the teacher makes her modeling useful to the students.

**Video: Fluency Routine: Cold Read (2:44)**

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## **Section 3**

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### **Slide 18—Partner Reading: Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)**

This slide lists the steps of our routine. Take a moment to review them.

*The speaker pauses for 5 seconds.*

## Slide 19—Underlining Errors

Make sure that students know what constitutes an error by telling them something similar to the following:

“Mispronounced words are words your partner does not say correctly. Either your partner said a different word than the one that was written on the page, or your partner said the word in a way that was not quite right. For example, if the word *bat* was in the sentence but your partner said *bait*, then you would underline the word *bat*.

“Insertions are when your partner adds a word that was not written in the sentence. For example, if the sentence is: ‘I went to school,’ but your partner said: ‘I went to the school,’ you would draw a line under the space between the words *to* and *school* where your partner inserted the word *the*.

“Deletions are when your partner skips a word that was written in the sentence. For example, if the sentence is: ‘I took a difficult test,’ but your partner said: ‘I took a test,’ you would underline the word *difficult*, which your partner deleted.”

Students, particularly struggling readers, will not always know when their partner makes an error. That is one of the reasons why it is critical for you to conduct monitoring reads during fluency practice. The teacher’s records of student progress are considered the more accurate data, and they also provide information on student errors that informs subsequent instruction in syllable types, morphemes, and vocabulary.

Tell students to do the best job they can in recording errors. If they disagree on whether an error was made, count the word as an error.

## Slide 20—Partner Reading: Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

You will need to display the passage for students to model how to underline errors while following along. For the purposes of modeling, you might give a student a script to read in which errors are already written. That way, no student will be embarrassed by having his or her errors made public. Alternatively, you can use an audiotape of yourself reading a passage and making intentional errors. As the student reads the script or your audiotape plays, model marking errors on the transparency of the passage. Make sure all students have a copy of the passage as well, so they can follow along.

Let’s practice. Please turn to **Handout 7: Sample Passage for the Warm and Hot Reads**. As you listen to the audio, record the errors on your handout. Remember that each turn during the warm and hot reads is only 1 minute.

*Audio plays of the student reading “Penguins” for the warm read.*

Now, check your work with the slide.

In the first sentence, did you notice the error *interested in* for *interesting*? Here it is recorded as an error on the word *interesting* and an insertion, *in*, before the word *birds*.

The student reading on the audiotape deleted the word *very*, so it should be underlined. He originally mispronounced the word *huddle* as *hoodie*, but then reread the word correctly. Therefore, make sure you crossed off your underline to indicate the word should not be counted as an error.

The student deleted the *-est* off the word *warmest*. He also read *these* as *the*, so both those words are marked as errors. He read the word *keep* as *peek*, which counts as another error.

Finally, the student also mispronounced *waddle* and *waddling* with a long *a* sound, so both of those words are marked as errors.

When my timer sounded, he stopped on the word *birds*, so that should be circled.

## Slide 21—Conduct Error-correction Procedure

The error-correction procedure is conducted after each partner’s turn in both the warm and hot reads. Students will follow the script provided on Handout 5 and reprinted here. Take a moment to review the slide.

*The speaker pauses for 5 seconds.*

This procedure gives students an opportunity to receive some immediate corrective feedback on their reading. It also reinforces the need for students to monitor their reading and practice accuracy without relying entirely on the teacher. Closely monitor partners to ensure the procedures are being followed and that students are receiving the feedback they need to improve their reading. If the partners disagree on a word or they both do not know how to correctly pronounce a word, model it for them.

As with the other steps of the routine, it will be necessary to model and practice this procedure several times before students can perform it independently.

## Slide 22—Partner Reading: Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

Now, I’m going to model responding as though I were the student who marked the “Penguins” passage.

“Here are the words I underlined. Let’s read them together: *interesting birds, very, warmest, these, keep, waddle, waddling.*”

Then I ask: “Are there any other words you would like to review?”

To determine the total number of words read in 1 minute, I use the word counts in the left margin. The line with the word *birds* that I circled has the number 97 in the box in the left margin. That means there were 97 words in the passage before the start of this line. So I need to count over to *birds*: 98, 99, 100. The student on our audiotape read 100 words in 1 minute.

To determine the number of errors he made, we will count the underlining. Remember not to count the word *huddle*, which has a line drawn through it to remind us that he corrected his pronunciation, and remember that he made an insertion between *interesting* and *birds*, which does count as an error. So, he had: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 errors total.

### Slide 23—Calculate Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM)

You will notice the table at the bottom of the passage on Handout 7 has spaces for you to record the number of words read along with the number of errors. We just counted these from the student’s reading of “Penguins” and determined that he read 100 words and made 8 errors. Now, if we subtract the number of errors from the number of words he read, we get the words correct per minute, or WCPM. In this case, the student’s WCPM is 92.

Not all fluency passages will include a copy of this chart, so a blank template has been provided for you on **Handout 8**.

### Slide 24—Partner Reading: Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

Now that we have finished all the steps of the first turn of the warm read, it would be time to move to the second turn. Partner Two also has 60 seconds to read the same “Penguins” passage from the beginning. Using a black pen, Partner One would follow along, underlining errors and circling the last word read. Then, Partner One would help Partner Two review any of the words on which he or she made an error before calculating the WCPM.

In the following classroom video, a Tier II reading intervention class implements the Partner Reading routine. Look for ways in which the teacher scaffolds the students’ fluency practice.

### Video: Fluency Routine: Partner Reading (4:40)

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## Section 4

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### Slide 25—Partner Reading: Teacher-assisted Phase: *WE Do*

The hot read follows the same steps as the warm read, but adds the graphing of the WCPM on a fluency chart. A copy of the chart is on **Handout 9**.

Partner One begins reading for 1 minute, starting again at the beginning of the same passage. Partner Two follows along, underlining errors, circling the last word read when the timer sounds, conducting the error-correction procedure, and calculating the WCPM.

Because this is the second or third time a student will underline words in a passage, they will switch ink colors again, this time to red. Let's return to "Penguins" on Handout 7 to practice the hot read.

### Slide 26—Partner Reading: Teacher-assisted Phase: *WE Do* (cont.)

In a moment, we'll play another audiotape of our student reading the passage "Penguins" for the hot read. Underline errors in red and circle the last word read when the timer sounds. Then, calculate the WCPM.

Make sure you have a red pen and a copy of Handout 7.

*Audio plays of the student reading "Penguins" for the hot read.*

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## Section 5

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### Slide 27—Partner Reading: Teacher-assisted Phase: *WE Do* (cont.)

Please turn to **Handout 10: Sample Fluency Chart**, which contains the information on this slide.

The last step in the Partner Reading routine is to graph the WCPM derived from the hot read. Up to this point, students have been recording information on their partners. Therefore, they will need to exchange papers in order to have a copy of the passage with their own errors and WCPM scores from the warm and hot reads.

Using a displayed copy of the fluency chart, model how to transfer the information from the passage onto the chart.

Our sample chart shows this is the sixth day of fluency practice. Each date and title of the

passage read are recorded.

Students should fill in the bars of the graph to show their progress.

Notice that this student's scores do not always increase steadily. These results can reflect the influence of background knowledge and/or interest on a student's reading accuracy and comprehension. When you increase the passage difficulty, scores may take a larger dip. Explain to students that the passages were getting too easy and encourage the students to work toward raising their WCPM numbers to the previous levels. You can have students draw a vertical line down the length of the chart to mark when the passage difficulty level changed.

### **Slide 28—Basic Partner Reading Skills**

Before allowing students to complete the Partner Reading routine on their own, you will want to review some of the basic skills involved, which are listed on the slide.

Remember that the teacher prepares the folders for each day, monitors during the routine, and checks the folders at the end of the day. The folders should always contain the following handouts: Partner Reading Routine, Error-correction Procedure, Fluency Table (if not included with the passage), and the Fluency Chart.

In addition, you will provide a new passage each day that is at the instructional level for the lower-ability student, or Partner Two.

### **Slide 29—What to Do With an Odd Number of Students**

It is rare to have an even number of students in class at all times. Although it may be tempting to serve as the partner for the student without a partner, doing so would make you unavailable to monitor the other partners. You should be observing each student's reading fluency at least once every 3 weeks in order to inform your instructional decisions.

This slide and the next offer suggestions for how to handle absences or a consistently odd-numbered group of students.

Rotating the student without a partner among partners of similar ability levels will ensure that the student is not always the silent reader during Partner Reading.

Please familiarize yourself with the options on the slide.

*The speaker pauses for 30 seconds.*

## Slide 30—What to Do With an Odd Number of Students (cont.)

With a class that has a consistently odd number of students, assign one group of five students to work as a rotating fluency team: two partner groups and one silent reader. With five, you can rotate the students in such a way that no student spends too many practice turns being the silent reader. The rest of the class may be partnered as previously discussed.

The following classroom video returns to the intensive intervention class of three students. In this case, two of the students are at a similar, lower-ability level compared to the third. Therefore, two Partner Twos take turns reading with a single Partner One. Pay attention to how the students alternate being the silent reader and how the teacher monitors the fluency and comprehension of all students in the group.

As you watch, consider how the fluency routine was implemented with an odd number of students. What would you need to do to implement a similar adaptation in your reading intervention class?

**Video: Partner Reading Adaptation (4:33)**

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## Section 6

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### Slide 31—Partner Reading: Independent Phase: *YOU Do*

Implement all three stages of the Partner Reading routine for fluency instruction three to five times per week. Continue to provide teacher modeling of fluent reading during the cold read. Have students independently work with their partners to complete all steps of the warm and hot reads. Instruction should last no more than 15 minutes so that the majority of class time can be spent on other components of reading.

If students are consistently making specific errors, such as on the six syllable types, it is important to reteach those skills.

### Slide 32—Scaffolding

Please turn to **Handout 12: Scaffolding Fluency Instruction**, which lists the scaffolding steps presented on this slide and the caveats about fluency.

Careful monitoring of students will guide your decisions about fluency instruction. As students show sustained progress, you will need to increase the difficulty of the text. Move students up a level in text when the lower-ability reader has two consecutive days at 95 WCPM

or better.

This is a general guideline, but teacher judgment should always be used in combination with fluency scores.

For some older readers, rotating pairs frequently is often an effective way to keep students motivated. Use progress-monitoring data to reconfigure pairs appropriately.

The pairs should be considered flexible and change to reflect students' improvement and to offer different models for students who are not making adequate progress.

Implement the routine three to four times per week for 12 to 20 weeks. Then, take a break before returning to Partner Reading three to four times per week. It's not necessary to implement Partner Reading rigidly or indefinitely. Use teacher discretion to determine when students' motivation is waning. Give them a break from the routine and focus on other reading skills.

### Slide 33—Obtaining Passages

Please turn to **Handout 13: Obtaining Fluency Practice Passages**.

Sixty-six practice passages are available in the TMSFA materials. Do not use the passages that are a part of the Passage Reading Fluency subtest or the progress monitoring component. Use only the passages in the separate file entitled "Practice Fluency Passages." These passages are Lexiled and have word counts. However, there will not be enough passages at any one level to sustain fluency instruction for more than a few days. It is unlikely that students will be ready to progress to the next level of text by the time they have exhausted the available passages.

To obtain more passages, you can select portions of books that have been Lexiled. Simply search online through the database on [www.Lexile.com](http://www.Lexile.com) to find the Lexile of a particular title or author.

If you prefer not to use Lexile levels but would rather use material leveled by grade, you can calculate the level of any text by typing it into a Word document and running the readability statistics. The steps for this are outlined on Handout 13.

The disadvantage of using materials from the Lexile database or from your own readability calculation is that those documents will probably not have all the words counted and a running tally noted in the margins. In order for students to calculate their WCPM, you will need to provide the word counts for them on the passages used for fluency practice.

Several commercial sources of leveled passages have word counts already noted in the margins, but you should select passages from a source that you trust has calculated the level ap-

appropriately.

### **Slide 34—Caveats About Fluency**

Look back at Handout 12. Students who struggle with reading need fluency instruction as one component of their intervention. This must be combined with instruction in word identification, vocabulary, and comprehension. All of those elements are related, but targeting fluency alone will not cause increases in other reading skills.

Many of the fluency guidelines are based on research with children in grades 1–4. Less is known about fluency practices for older students. When interpreting fluency scores of adolescents, it may be necessary to make a judgment about when fluency instruction is no longer profitable. The ultimate goal is for students to be able to understand and learn from text. If students exhibit somewhat below-average fluency but are comprehending grade-level material, it may not be appropriate to spend considerable time on improving their rate of reading.

Similarly, although most descriptions of fluent adolescent readers indicate that they read at least 150 WCPM, students reading grade-level text at below that but with a high level of accuracy may benefit more from time spent on enhancing their background knowledge, vocabulary, and/or comprehension rather than on fluency instruction. Fluency gains are much more difficult beyond this “ceiling.”

### **Slide 35—Summary**

The objectives for this module were: to understand how reading fluency contributes to comprehension; to select appropriate text for fluency instruction; and to apply the three-step process for explicit instruction to help students improve their fluency through repeated reading with corrective feedback.