

Reading Researcher Finds Fluency Can Unlock Phonics for Struggling Readers

New observations suggest some children learn to read in reverse — gaining phonics skills only after fluency develops

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“

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Matthew Glavach, Ph.D.

observations from Matthew Glavach, Ph.D., founder of StrugglingReaders.com, suggest that some [struggling readers](#)—including many with [dyslexia](#)—may learn to read in reverse. Instead of mastering [phonics](#) first, these children appear to unlock phonics only after developing fluency with connected text.

Phonics can support reading, but isolating speech sounds is difficult for many struggling readers, often leading to

frustration and stalled progress. Glavach shifted instruction to repeated oral reading using enjoyable books and phrase-cued fluency techniques. As fluency increased, students began recognizing words automatically and approaching new words with confidence.

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This approach does not replace phonics—it prepares children to succeed with phonics.

Schools and families report rapid gains, including over 1.5 years of growth in six months for students previously scoring below the 35th percentile.

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