Using Bookshare to Support Student Reading Phonemic Awareness, Phonics and Fluency

This tutorial addresses how Bookshare can support reading instruction across the tiers of response to intervention RTI framework or multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) with a focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. For the purpose of this tutorial we use RTI and MTSS interchangeably.

Bookshare features can be used to support the core curriculum, or be embedded within tier 2 or 3 interventions as a part of the RTI framework.

Within the core curriculum of tier 1, Bookshare can be used to ensure eligible students have access to the core curriculum in a timely manner.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires all students with disabilities who need accessible instructional materials should be provided with those materials in appropriate formats at the time they are needed.

In addition some students served under chapter 15 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 may also qualify as persons with print disabilities that need accessible instructional materials.

Specialized formats enable students with print disabilities to gain access to curricular content, master IEP goals, and achieve academic success.

Bookshare books are an example of accessible instructional materials (AIM) that can assist schools and students by providing access to materials they need for instruction.

To read accessible books from the Bookshare library, you will need access to a hardware device and software program such as Read OutLoud.

You can now also read accessible books online in your web browser through Bookshare’s new web reader.

Go to the Bookshare website at [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org) to learn more about the different ways to read Bookshare books. This video features examples from a sample of compatible tools but is in no way exhaustive. The tools featured in this video include the Bookshare Web Reader, [new slide] the Bookshare edition of Don Johnson’s Read: OutLoud, this slide shows the Read: OutLoud interface with the content and words being highlighted and read out loud, [new slide]Read2Go, which is an iOS application compatible with iPod touches, iPhones, and iPads, on this slide we show the text highlighted as it’s being read out loud. All tools are available through the Bookshare website at no cost to individuals with Bookshare memberships.

In 2000, the National Reading Panel published a report defining five essential components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These components are recognized as building blocks of literacy.

Students who lack these foundational skills will struggle in school across areas including mathematics, English language arts, science, and history, as they will lack skills needed to gain new content knowledge.

This video focuses on how Bookshare can be used to support instruction and phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, and can be used to support access to the core curriculum and support supplemental interventions at tiers 2 and 3. A companion video available on the Bookshare website provides in-depth examples of supports for vocabulary and comprehension.

The first two components of effective reading instruction, phonemic awareness, and phonics are closely linked.

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. For example, the word box is made up of four phonemes or four sounds: /b/ /o/ /k/ /s/.

At the most basic level, phonemic awareness is knowledge that words are made up of individual sounds or phonemes.

Phonemic awareness also encompasses the ability to manipulate those sounds by blending them into words and taking them apart again.

Phonics is the relationship between a specific letter and the sound in a written word.

Phonetic principals are applied when a student attempts to read an unfamiliar word by focusing on the specific sounds of each written letter or combination of written letters. When the sounds of the written letters are combined to create a word, the reader has successfully applied phonetic principals to decode a word.

Phonetic principals can also be applied to encode words or write them down by breaking a word into its component sounds and writing the letters or combinations of letters that correspond to those sounds.

Within the Bookshare reading tools, students can select individual words or portions of text to be read aloud. Words within these software programs are highlighted and tracked as they are read. This can allow students to focus on the phonemes that make up specific words as they are spoken aloud.

In the Read2Go application, students can select both words and sentences to be highlighted. To do this, go to the setting button which appears as a wagon wheel at the bottom or side of the screen. Under settings select visual settings and highlight coloring. Students can select the highlighted colors and choose to highlight text one word at a time.

Tracking highlighted words and selecting specific words to be read aloud is also available in the Bookshare Web Reader. Bookshare Web Reader automatically highlights sentences in light gray and words in blue.

Read: OutLoud Bookshare Edition allows the reader to highlight individual words. Students and teachers have the option to select a passage to have read out loud, and then can press the speaker button to play the selected area. This will limit the spoken section to the area selected by the reader.

Throughout all speech to text options, users can slow down the rate of speech by going to the settings section. This may help students identify specific phonemes or segments of words as they are read out loud. More information on changing the audio settings is discussed shortly.

Fluency is the ability to read text accurately and smoothly.

Fluent readers are able to read aloud with the same expression, intonation, and pacing of everyday speech.

Fluency develops with reading practice which is the reason young readers may initially struggle to read unfamiliar challenging text with ease. Fluency is a critical component of reading instruction because it helps readers move from decoding words to sight reading. This means less energy is spent on decoding each word and more energy is spent comprehending what is read.

The Read: OutLoud function on Bookshare offers a model of fluent reading for students.

As seen in the Read2Go application, Web Reader, and Read: OutLoud, students can adjust the pacing of the read out loud feature based on their needs.

Using high quality read out loud voices, such as the voices of Ryan and Heather may be helpful to assist students because they sound less computer animated than those embedded in computers. These voices are already installed and offered in Read2Go.

Under the audio settings, students can adjust the speed along the continuum until it matches the pace that is most helpful to them.

With the web reader users can select settings similar to Read2Go. Under the setting features, readers can move the cursor along the continuum from slower to faster to identify the speed that meets their individual needs. In Read OutLoud, readers can select speech from the tool bar and then select voice settings. The student can speed up or slow down the speech on a continuum from -10 to 10. Note, in all three of these programs, slight adjustments to the speed can have a big impact on how realistic the reading voice sounds.

It is important to remember that young readers do not develop skills in the five components of reading in a strictly linear fashion.

While early elementary reading instruction focuses heavily on developing phonemic awareness and phonics skills, young readers are also simultaneously developing fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. Having solid foundational skills makes it easier for readers to develop vocabulary and comprehension skills. But it is possible for readers to develop skills at different rates across the five components.

Bookshare can support interventions within the RTI framework by capitalizing on the interrelatedness of reading components and individual strengths to move students into their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The Zone of Proximal Development also known as ZPD, is the difference between what a learner can do without help, and what he or she can do with help. The goal of instruction is to move learners from the ‘what I can’t do category’ to the ‘what I can do category.’

The intermediate stage between non-mastery and independent mastery is the ZPD. In this stage students are working toward independent mastery with guidance and support. When students are first learning a new skill or concept they may require significant support. As the learner gains independence supports are gradually taken away until they can demonstrate independent mastery.

Bookshare is a tool that can move students with print disabilities into their ZPD by removing barriers of access of text.

To learn more about how Bookshare can support the other two components of reading instruction, vocabulary development and comprehension, please watch the companion video How Do I Use Bookshare to Support Student Reading: Vocabulary and Comprehension, and learn more about other Bookshare topics at our website, [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org), and at our YouTube Channel [www.youtube.com/user/BookshareTeam](http://www.youtube.com/user/BookshareTeam). Additional resources on RTI are available at The National RTI Center, [www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org), and The National Center on Intensive Intervention www.intensiveintervention.org.

This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (Cooperative Agreement #H327D120002). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the U.S. Department of Education.