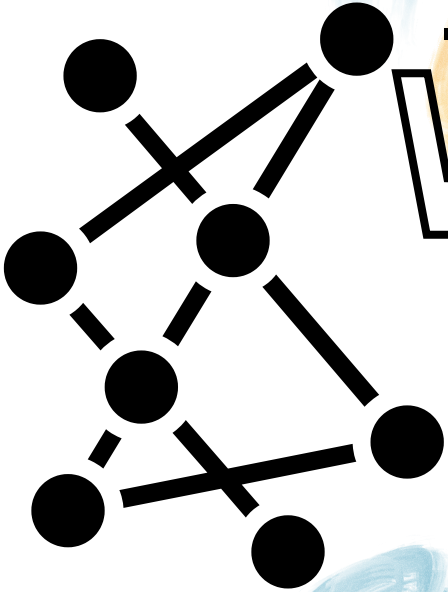SECOND EDITION

WORD CONNECTIONS

A Multisyllabic Word Reading Program

WORD CONNECTIONS

A Multisyllabic Word Reading Program

TEACHER MANUAL

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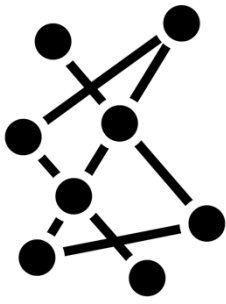
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INTRODUCTION

⭐ Introduction to Teacher Manual

Thank you for your interest in *Word Connections: A Multisyllabic Word Reading Program©*. This targeted reading intervention program was developed by me (Dr. Jessica Toste) and my colleagues at The University of Texas at Austin. We sought to create an intervention to support upper elementary students in development of multisyllabic word reading fluency. While decoding instruction tends to be reduced in the upper elementary grades, text is becoming more complex and the number of multisyllabic words that students encounter increase dramatically in third grade and beyond. Students who experience reading challenges often lack a systematic approach for decoding these words.

There is evidence that the 40-lesson *Word Connections* program improves reading outcomes for students in 3rd to 5th grades. Specifically, we have tested the program with students identified as with or at-risk for reading disability – performing below the 25th percentile on standardized tests of word reading efficiency. To date, our team has conducted three empirical studies reporting positive effects from this program (see references on p. 11). Students who participated in the intervention showed greater gains in word reading and decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, and accurate reading of both isolated affixes and multisyllabic words.

The Toste et al. (2019) study published in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* was reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) in December 2021. The study met WWC standards without reservations and the program was reported to show promising evidence of effectiveness. You can view the WWC review at https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/study/89568.

We have since named the program *Word Connections*, created this teacher manual, and redesigned the materials for ease of use. We are excited for you to use this intervention program and look forward to continued feedback from teachers and students!

For questions or additional information, please reach out via the coordinates below.

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Note: Two of our studies explored *Word Connections* with an integrated motivational beliefs training component. While we demonstrated promise in using this approach to enhance students' response to intervention, these materials require further development before sharing widely.

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CHANGES TO THE SECOND EDITION

If you previously accessed the October 2022 edition (1ˢᵗ ed.) of *Word Connections*, here is a quick overview of some of the changes you will find in the 2ⁿᵈ edition you have are now viewing.

The biggest change to this newest edition of *Word Connections* is that we have replaced our Text Reading passages. Our team has developed great passages for Lessons 21-40. Passages are all written in Q&A style, using questions collected from real students and teachers!

- Passage length ranges from 215 to 287 words (*M* = 243 words).
- Every affix taught in the program appears in at least three different passages.
- All of the 20 passages have Flesh-Kincaid scores within the Grade 4-5 band (4.51 to 7.73), and Lexile scores within the Grades 4-5 band (740 to 1010). We also calculated the Polysyllabic Word Score for each passage, which is the square root of the number of polysyllabic words per 30 sentences. Scores ranged from 19.29 and 7.41, and we used this information to determine the order of passages.
- We also provide new key words for each passage—the *Text Reading Key Words & Definitions* cheat sheet can be found in the Teacher Reference section of the manual.

Next, the program is now organized into two parts, each downloaded as a separate PDF: Teacher Manual and Student Materials. The 1ˢᵗ edition had a third PDF (Appendix), which has now been integrated into the *Supplemental Materials* section of the Teacher Manual.

Finally, we have made edits throughout to correct typos, incorrect word examples, and formatting issues. We appreciate the feedback received from educators around the world who have been implementing the *Word Connections* program with their students!

Overview of Word Connections

Word Connections is a supplemental, targeted reading intervention program. It includes 40 lessons, divided into 4 units of instruction. The program includes research-based instructional practices to support students' multisyllabic word reading development. This need not—and should not—be the sole focus of supplemental intervention, but it is critical that students receive explicit, targeted instruction and opportunities for practice.

This multisyllabic word reading program was developed for students in third grade and above who are experiencing challenges with word reading. The program is meant for students who are proficient decoders of most vowel patterns in monosyllabic words. If students are not proficient in monosyllabic word reading, their intervention should first focus on development of these foundational decoding skills in order to support instruction focused on reading more complex, multisyllabic words.

Word Connections is focused on promoting automaticity with reading "big words." This approach to multisyllabic word reading integrates multiple opportunities for students to manipulate and read words, rather than focus on rule-based instruction. Instruction moves from part to whole—introducing morphemes first in isolation, then reading in words, and finally in connected text.

Open Access Materials

The *Word Connections* program is freely available for download and use. If you share the materials with colleagues, we simply ask that you direct them to our collection on figshare where they can also download for free. This helps our team track metrics to better understand access and use of the program overtime.

Please do not repost these materials or distribute without written permission from the authors. If you use the *Word Connections* program, we ask that you cite as follows:

Toste, J. R., Capin, P., Williams, K. J., Kearns, D. M., & Vaughn, S. (2023). *Word Connections: A Multisyllabic Word Reading Program* (2nd ed.). figshare.
https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.c.6259368

Research on Word Connections Program
Toste, J. R., Capin, P., Vaughn, S., Roberts, G. G., & Kearns, D. M. (2017). Multisyllabic word reading instruction with and without motivational beliefs training for struggling readers in the upper elementary grades: A pilot investigation. *The Elementary School Journal, 117*(4), 593-615.
Toste, J. R., Williams, K. J., & Capin, P. (2017). Reading big words: Instructional practices to promote multisyllabic word reading fluency. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 52*(5), 270-278.
Toste, J. R., Capin, P., Williams, K. J., Cho, E., & Vaughn, S. (2019). Replication of an experimental study investigating the efficacy of a multisyllabic word reading intervention with and without motivational beliefs training for struggling readers. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 52*(1), 45-58.
Filderman, M. J., & Toste, J. R. (2022). Effects of varying levels of data use to intensify a multisyllabic word reading intervention for upper elementary students with or at-risk for reading disability. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 55*(5), 393-407.

WORD CONNECTIONS
A Multisyllabic Word Reading Program

Lesson	Warm-Up	Affix Bank	Spotlight Words	Word Play	Speedy Read	Text
1	Short Vowels	Prefixes: dis- / un- / sub-	honest, continue, able, merge, human	Build-A-Word	CVC / Digraphs	Sentence Reading
2	Long Vowels (VCe)	Suffixes: -s(es) / -ing / -ed	match, color, attach, tick, smell	Build-A-Word	Vowel teams [long a and i]	Sentence Reading
3	Long Vowels (Digraphs)	Suffixes: -s(es) / -ing / -ed	harvest, allow, chop, read, land	Build-A-Word	Vowel teams [long e and o]	Sentence Reading
4	Long Vowels (Digraphs)	Combined: dis- / un- / sub- -s(es) / -ing / -ed	play, taste, side, button, total	Build-A-Word	Vowel teams [long u]	Sentence Reading
5	R-Controlled	Prefixes: in- / de- / non-	active, sense, part, stop, direct	Build-A-Word	R-controlled [ar and or]	Sentence Reading
6	R-Controlled	Suffixes: -ly / -er / -y	mother, kind, cruel, jump, scoot	Word Train	R-controlled [er, ur, and ir]	Maze Sentences
7	Diphthongs	Combined: in- / de- / non- -ly / -er / -y	form, consistent, injure, stick, harsh	Word Train	Diphthongs	Maze Sentences
8	Diphthongs	Review Lessons 1-7	decide, swim, bug, valid, borrow	Word Train	Diphthongs	Maze Sentences
9	Flexing	Prefixes: pre- / re- / mis-	place, paid, write, arrange, count	Word Train	Open syllables	Maze Sentences
10	Flexing	Suffixes: -tion / -sion / -tive / -sive	act, pass, suggest, confess, intense	Word Train	Closed syllables	Maze Sentences

WORD CONNECTIONS
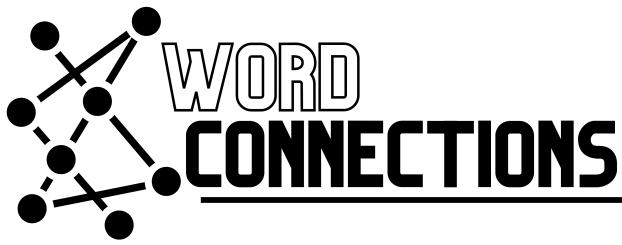
LESSON PACING
- The lesson should take no more than <u>40 minutes</u>.
- Throughout the script, there are time markers for each section. These times are approximate, but try not to exceed any given section beyond the allotted time by more than 1-2 minutes.

POSITIVE & CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK
- Although there are praise statements in the script, you are encouraged to provide specific positive reinforcement whenever it is appropriate. For example, **"Great work identifying the affix and then reading the word accurately!"**
- If a student is having difficulty with a task, provide concise corrective feedback. After providing specific feedback, check for understanding by having the student repeat an affix or word, provide additional examples, etc. For example, "Actually, this suffix says "-tion." Try the word again."
- Additional points can be given to your students for demonstrating excellent behavior, engagement, accomplishing a goal they have been working toward, etc.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS
- Before each session, remind students of the rules for our group: try hard, listen carefully, be respectful, and have fun. You can include your own specific rules, if necessary.

INTRODUCTION

After welcoming the students, **Let's review the rules of our reading group.** [*Go over 3-4 rules that you feel are most applicable to this group of students. For example:* **"I want you to try hard on every activity, work quietly, and listen while I'm talking."**]

WARM-UP [3 minutes]
Instructional routine:
- Introduce/Review vowel(s) and sound correspondences
- Read target sounds presented within isolated nonsense words

<u>Today's focus</u>: long vowels

<u>Materials</u>:
- ❑ Vowel cards—long vowels
- ❑ Nonsense word cards—set #3-4

Let's get warmed up and ready to read! Today we will read long vowel patterns that we reviewed yesterday. These are patterns with more than one letter, but they work together to say one sound. We call these vowel teams. *Hold up the first vowel team card.* **What sound does this pattern make?** *Students should identify the vowel team sound.* **Right! The letters (say letter names) make the (say letter sound). Let's look at the next card. What sound does this pattern say?** *All of the cards will be vowel teams with long vowel spelling patterns.* **Wow, there are lots of different ways we might see these long vowel sounds represented when we read and spell!**

Let's try reading some of our nonsense words. We are going to see these same spelling

patterns appear in these words. I'll hold up a word and I want you to read it. Here's the first one. *Go through nonsense word cards and have students read aloud. Alternate between individual students and choral reading. If students are struggling to read words due to vowel sounds have them identify vowel first using sound card as a prompt, then read word.* **Excellent warm-up reading!**

3-minute reminder: If timer hits the 3:00 mark before you finish the warm-up, finish up the nonsense word you are on and move to affix bank.

AFFIX BANK [3 minutes]
Instructional routine:
- Introduce or review affixes each lesson
- For each new affix introduced: read, provide sample word, writes affix in group Affix Bank, and students write on their own Affix Bank worksheets

Today's affixes: dis- / un- / sub- / -s(-es) / -ing / -ed

Materials:
- ❐ White board
- ❐ Dry-erase markers
- ❐ Group Affix Bank folder
- ❐ Affix Bank worksheet [student folders]
- ❐ Pencils

Let's look at our Affix Bank. *Students should take out worksheets.* **Today, we are going to refresh our memories. Let's look at some of the affixes we have learned over the past few days.** *Point to dis- on Affix Bank folder.* **What is this prefix? That's right, it's dis-. Who can tell me a word that begins with dis-?** *Continue sample procedure to review un-, sub-, -s(es), -ing, and -ed.*

Ok. Let's see if we can read these affixes quickly together. Start at the top and let's read them together. Ready, go. *Students read words.* **Let's reread the affixes, but this time let's start from the bottom and go up. Ready, begin.**

6-minute reminder: If timer hits the 6:00 mark before you finish Affix Bank, briefly introduce the new affixes and move directly to Word Play.

WORD PLAY [5 minutes]
Instructional routine:
- Introduce the lesson's Spotlight Words: teacher reads, followed by a choral read
- The goal of this activity is to read morphemes (word parts) for automaticity by playing a game focused on assembling words.
- Assembling game will rotate every five lessons (two per unit): reading affixes and spotlight words, putting them together and reading words fluently
- Stickers are earned each lesson, to work toward a prize

Today's assembling game: Build-A-Word

Materials:
- ❐ Spotlight Words #4 poster
- ❐ Spotlight Word #4 cards
- ❐ Affix cards
- ❐ White boards
- ❐ Dry-erase markers

INTRODUCE SPOTLIGHT WORDS
Let's look at our new "spotlight words" for today. *Hold up daily Spotlight Words poster for all students to see.* **I will read all the words first. Listen.** *Read words.* **Now let's read them together.** *Prompt students to read with you.* **Great reading!**

BUILD-A-WORD
Now we are going to play our "Build-A-Word" activity. *Teacher takes out white board, marker, and cards with spotlight words. Hold up the first spotlight card.* **This word is "play." What word?** *Students repeat the word.* **I am going to put this card on my white board.** *Put card on white board and hold up to show students.* **Match play "to participate in games or a sport." Can anyone use the word "play" in a sentence?** *Allow 1-2 students to provide a sentence. Correct as necessary*

Awesome! Let's make a new word. Let's look at our affix bank. We've learned six different affixes so far. I need to find one that would go before or after play. If I add an affix before "play" is it a prefix or suffix? *Students will respond, "prefix."* **If I add an affix after "play," is it a prefix or suffix?** *Students will respond, "suffix."* **I'm going to look at my affix bank and see if I can find an affix that goes with "play". I see a few different affixes that could go with "play." So I am going to choose –ed and write -ed after "play."** *Write -ed after the word play.* **Now we have two word parts, let's read them! "play... ed"** *Point to each word part as you say them.* **Now I am going to put both parts together and read the new word: "played"** *Track under the word with your finger as you read.* **You read the word.** *Students read the word while you track under the word with your finger.* **I want to find out what this new word means. We know that "-ed" makes "a verb become past tense", so "played" would mean that a game or sport took place in the past. For example, if I competed in a soccer game yesterday, I played in the game.**

Now let's try some together. I want each of you to write our next spotlight word, _____ on your whiteboard. *Distribute white board to the students and have them write the next spotlight word on their boards.* Teacher should have students continue adding suffixes and/or prefixes to the spotlight words. These should make real words.

Hold up new word card → Students write word on board → define and use in sentence → add prefix/suffix → define new word → use in sentence

- ❖ Play: To participate in games or a sport. For example, "My favorite game to play is football."
- ❖ *Taste*: To have flavor. For example, "We went to a Mexican restaurant and ate salsa with our chips. The salsa had a spicy taste."
- ❖ *Side:* Either the left or right half of something. For example, "My mom told me that I had spilled spaghetti sauce on the left side of my shirt."
- ❖ *Button:* To close or fasten with buttons. For example, "This morning, I forgot to button my jeans."
- ❖ *Total*: The whole amount. For example, "When Grandma went to checkout at the grocery store, they told her that the total she would have to pay was $65.00."

Error correction ⇨
If students are struggling to define a word, say the following, "Remember that (affix name) means (affix definition) and that (spotlight word name) means (spotlight word definition). When I combine these two parts, I also combine the definitions. (spotlight word + affix / affix + spotlight word) would probably mean (give plausible definition based on affix and spotlight word definitions).

11-minute reminder: If timer hits the 11:00 mark before you finish Word Play, complete the current word/task and move directly to Beat the Clock.

BEAT THE CLOCK [8 minutes]

Instructional routine:
- The goal of this activity is to read morphemes (word parts) for automaticity by playing a game focused on breaking words apart.
- Students will circle and read affixes, choral read affixes and word list, students take turns reading word list, and they attempt to read more quickly during their second read of the word list.
- Stickers are earned each lesson, to work toward a prize

Materials:
- ❒ Beat the Clock worksheet (copy for each student)
- ❒ Dry-erase markers
- ❒ Timer
- ❒ Galaxy Charts [student folders]

Now it's time for the "Beat the Clock" game. Here are your worksheets and markers. *Hand out worksheets with sheet protector and markers to students.* **Let's begin by circling the prefixes together. Who knows the prefix in our first word, "_____?"** *Student identifies the prefix, _____.* **Great, let's circle the prefix, _____.** *Continue through the list of words circling all of the prefixes.*

Error correction ⇨
"That's close. Actually the affix is '_____,' let's circle this on our worksheet."

Now, that we have circled all of our prefixes, let's read them quickly together. We will start at the top and read down. *Hold up worksheet for students to see and point to the first prefix.* **Let's begin.** *Teacher and students chorally read prefixes.* **Fantastic!**

This time we are going to read the entire words together. Then, it will be your turn. Let's start at the top. I want everyone to follow along by pointing to each word with your finger. Ready? Begin. *Teacher and students read whole words chorally while students follow along by pointing.* **Everyone did a great job reading those big words!**

Now, it's your turn. Let's start with _____ *(choose student).* **I will time you. Make sure you use your finger to point to the words as you read. After you finish, you will write down your time in the corner of the page where it says "first read." While _____ is reading, everyone else should follow along on the word list with their finger. Ready _____? Begin.** *When they finish, provide positive reinforcement (i.e. "great reading") and direct students to write down time on their sheet. Continue this procedure for each student.*

Error correction ⇨
If student pauses for more than 2 seconds while reading, point to the next word and say, "Go on." After the student is finished reading the list, teacher should quickly review any words skipped or pronounced incorrectly. "Let me repeat a few of these words. (Point.) This word is _____. What word?"

Y'all did a fantastic job on your first round. Let's see if you "beat the clock." _____, you can go first. *Choose one student to read at a time. Provide positive reinforcement and any error corrections (see procedure above). Each student will record his or her second time on the worksheet.* If students meet or beat their first time, they can choose a sticker to put on their Galaxy Chart. When the student reaches the "blast" on the Galaxy Chart (every fifth sticker), they earn a prize.

Excellent work everyone! I am thrilled with how quickly you have learned affixes.

19-minute reminder: If timer hits the 19:00 mark before you finish Beat the Clock, complete the current word/task and move directly to Write Word.

WRITE WORD [8 minutes]
Instructional routine:
▪ Students will practice encoding (writing) words
▪ Teacher will provide an affix and students will write words (including nonsense words) with 2-3 syllables
Materials:
❏ White boards
❏ Dry-erase markers

Let's begin with our "Write Word" activity. Today, we will practice writing big words, like two syllable words, with our affixes from our lesson.

MODEL
Every lesson should include modeling. **Today we are reviewing all of our affixes from the past three lessons. I'm going to write one of our prefixes, dis-, on my board.** *Write dis- and hold up to show students.* **Now I am going to add another syllable to make a two-syllable word. I can think of a real word with the prefix dis-. The word is "dismiss" so I am going to write "miss" on my whiteboard after dis-.** *Teacher adds "miss" to "dis-" on white board and holds up board.* **This word says "dismiss". This time, I was able to think of a real word with two syllables, "dismiss." Remember, during the Write Word activity, it is fine to write nonsense words when you can't think of a real two-syllable word. For instance, if I couldn't think of a real word, then I could make up a word like**—*erase "dismiss" from white board and replace it with "disbag"*—**"disbag." Is this a real world?** *Students answer no.* **Right, it is a nonsense word, but does it have two syllables?** *Students say yes.* **Right, I can check by saying "disbag" aloud and counting the syllables**. *Teacher counts syllables with fingers*—**dis…/…bag**. *Continue practice.*

PRACTICE WITH DIS-
Now it's your turn to write. *Distribute white boards and markers.* **Write the prefix dis- like I did.** *Teacher writes dis- and then holds up so all students can check their writing.* **Great! Now, write a two-syllable word with the prefix dis-. Remember it can be a real word or a nonsense word.** *Students write words.* **Wow, great job writing words with the prefix dis-. Let's read them. When it's your turn, hold up your board so everyone can see and read the word.** *Each student shares.*

PRACTICE WITH ADDITIONAL AFFIXES
Now it's your turn to write. Let's pick up our white board markers again. Let's choose a different affix this time. Someone pick a suffix for us to write. *Have student name a suffix from the Affix Bank aloud.* **Let's write _____ on your boards. I want each of you to write a two-syllable word that ends with ____.** *Students write words.* **Well done, let's read our words!** *Teacher shares his/her word and students share their words. Repeat procedures with additional affixes (prefixes and suffixes).*

Error correction ⇨
(A) If students use implausible spellings of words, direct them to think back to vowel patterns practiced previously. Have them correct their spellings on their boards according to these patterns.
(B) If students are having trouble thinking of words/word parts, teacher can provide them with a word (or a nonsense word) and ask the student to think of other words that rhyme. They can add the affixes to their spotlight words to make additional words. For example, "Let's think of the word 'lup.' Can you think of another silly word that rhymes? Try adding the affix to that word."

You should complete this activity with at least two affixes from the lesson. If time is running short, you may end after the second affix. **Great job everyone! Nice writing today.**

27-minute reminder: If timer hits the 27:00 mark before you finish Write Word, complete the current word/task and move directly to Speedy Read.

SPEEDY READ [5 minutes]

Instructional routine:
- Enhancing fluent reading of sight words
- Each student will read the daily word list and then they will be timed for 30 seconds (the number of words read is logged on Speedy Read chart)

Materials:
- ❒ Word List #4 (copy for each student)
- ❒ Teacher copy of Word List #4
- ❒ Speedy Read chart [student folders]
- ❒ Timer
- ❒ Pencils

It's time for our "Speedy Read." *Hold up Speedy Read word list.*

Distribute copies of today's word list to students. **First, let's do a choral read—where we read the words together.** *Wait until all students have word list in front of them on the table and have finger on the first word.* **As we read each word, I want you to follow along with your finger. Let's go!** *Read the words chorally as a group.* Note: You may also do an echo read here instead of choral or alternate between the two. In an echo read, the teacher reads a word and then the whole group repeats each word aloud. Follow this procedure for the whole list.

Now it's your turn. Alright, _____ is going to start. *Choose a student to go first.* **Is everyone pointing? Great. Ready? Go.** *Start the timer. As the student reads, indicate (X) next to each word they read incorrectly. Put the students' initials above the column where you marked the Xs. After 30 seconds has elapsed, say:* **OK, good work! On your Speedy Read chart, write how many words you read in 30 seconds. Who's next?**

Error correction ⇨
If student reads a word incorrectly or pauses for more than 2 seconds between words, provide the word. Student should repeat it and continue reading—or prompt "Wait, what word?" You can also correct words after the timed reading (if not corrected during) in the same manner.

32-minute reminder: If timer hits the 32:00 mark before you finish Speedy Read, transition out of the activity and directly into Sentence Reading.

SENTENCE READING [8 minutes]

Instructional routine:
- Complete repeated reading of connected text (sentences)
- Cue students to spotlight words and/or affixes in sentences

Materials:
- ❒ "Let's Read" sentences (copy for each student)

Let's read today's sentences! This helps us practice reading big words. *Distribute copies of "Let's Read" sentence page to students.*

First, we will do our echo read. I'll go first. *Read one sentence, pointing to words. Encourage students to follow along with their fingers on their text as you read.* **Your turn.** *Students repeat what you read. Finish the sentences as an echo read.*

Good reading! Go ahead and do your whisper read. Remember that I should be able to see your lips moving and your finger following along so I know that you're reading. Go ahead and start. *Students should read the sentences to themselves. Remind them to follow along with their fingers while reading.* **Now, we're each going to have a turn to read the sentences aloud.** *Teacher will pick a student to go first and prompt the student to begin reading one sentence aloud. Students take turns reading sentences until all 8 have been read.*

Error correction ⇨
If student pronounces a word incorrectly or pause for more than 2 seconds, say the word. Then ask the student to repeat the word, "What word?" Student should repeat the word and continue reading the sentence. If student continues reading before correction can occur, do this procedure after reading the sentence. (Point and say "This word is ____. What word?")

Everyone did a great job reading sentences today! I noticed that some of our spotlight words are in the sentences. Who can quickly scan the sentences and find one of our spotlight words? *Allow students a short time to find spotlight words and read them aloud.* **Awesome!**

CLOSURE
Instructional routine:
▪ Provide specific praise about each student's performance
▪ Assign points and/or distribute any prizes that were earned this lesson
<u>Materials</u>:
❑ Point sheets [student folders]
❑ Stickers

Thank you for working so hard today! <u>Provide specific praise about each student's performance</u>. For example, "Katie, I really like how you followed along during Speedy Read today and Josh you did an excellent job beating your time in Beat the Clock."

Let's add our points for today's lesson. Students get a point at the end of each lesson for good behavior and earn a prize when they reach 5 points. Points should not be withheld unless a student has been extremely disruptive or defiant during a session, in which case you should try to discuss this with them individually.