

Gameday Fluency
by Tara Lappa

As reading teachers, one of the biggest challenges we face is finding material that engages all learners and fulfills multiple facets of reading work. Through a unique mix of my non-teaching background, prior work experience, and a lack of a structured curriculum, I discovered and developed an effective strategy that engages reluctant readers and writers. In addition, the program further boosts and enhances the skills of high achievers.

Before teaching, I worked in Community Relations for The New York Football Giants and Media Affairs at The White House. At the New York Giants, I had a wide range of public relations and community outreach responsibilities with the team. During the week, the Public Relations department staff would go through the daily local and national newspapers to find articles on the NYG, the players, and the coaching staff. Those articles were photocopied and compiled into one large daily press packet distributed to players and coaches. These packets were called "The Clips". At the White House, I did something similar for the administration then. In both positions, I kept people informed of the current news from sources nationwide. It was important for all involved parties to be updated on what was in the news about their organization. They needed to discuss these topics with a high level of expertise. In these industries, no one wants to be caught off guard, but they also don't have the time to search for all the information.

These were terrific experiences, but my calling was teaching children. In 2002, there was a teaching shortage in Texas, so I got an emergency teacher certification. My first teaching job was a fourth-grade writing position in the Dallas Independent School District. Equipped with a business degree, no formal teaching experience nor training, one textbook, paper, and pencils, I thought, "What (and how) am I supposed to teach them?" I decided that I would just teach them what I knew.

So what did I know? I knew there was a treasure trove of excellent writing in daily newspapers nationwide. I also knew that sports columns drew mass readership because they were written to attract attention. The columnists have limited words allotted in their article to get their precise point across, while the "hook" is the essential aspect of newspaper writing. If you don't capture the reader's attention, they move on! Finally, I knew that I would have sports experts in the classroom. Maybe not everyone would know about football, but all the kids in my classrooms were, at a minimum, aware of the Dallas Cowboys. I used everything I knew to create reading and writing lessons with the weekly Dallas Morning News sports columns by recreating "The Clips" in my classroom.

I purchased The Dallas Morning News every day. Using the front and back cover and the sports section, I cut out the articles the students would find most exciting and based the week's literacy lessons on those articles. These articles became our text sets for the week. We could read, analyze, and study every part of each article to understand the writing process because it

was all there in front of us!! My students loved working on "the clips" and were engaged in their learning. Reading "the clips" through various lenses allowed them to connect real-world, authentic content to the literacy skills I was teaching in the classroom. I was definitely "on" to something. What I learned from my students that first year guided my work in creating an authentic and highly engaging curriculum that I've continued to develop for the past twenty years that my students love to this day.

I know that some of you think you may not know anything about sports, nor do you want to know anything about sports. I have great news for you, you don't need to know anything about sports! Your students watch, participate in, and converse about sports in so many areas of their lives. Many students, including reluctant readers, have tremendous background knowledge in sports. They watch sports, watch sports commentary programming, have conversations with their families, and discuss sports with their friends inside and outside school. The best part is that the students may have watched the game about the article they will read. They are making a critical real-world connection to the text to which they will be introduced. Again, it doesn't matter if you don't feel like you have the passion for this; they are more than capable of carrying the sports knowledge and passion for it if you facilitate the learning process and provide the resources.

Over the past two decades, I have learned so much about literacy. Besides all of the classroom experience, I have received two Master's Degrees in literacy to understand the academic aspects of teaching better. I also worked for the Wilton Public Schools, where Jennifer Serravallo was a staff development consultant at my school for several years. I was able to learn reading and writing strategies directly from her. As my clinical understanding of literacy developed, I continued to expand and change the strategy I used with "The Clips."

I attended a Professional Development workshop two years ago where Dr. Rasinski spoke about fluency. As he spoke, I realized that I was not using "The Clips" to explicitly teach fluency. I was successfully focusing on many other parts of literacy, but I was missing a huge opportunity to teach fluency to struggling readers.

Last year, I did a small case study with four students to add a fluency component to my program. Typically, each student receives multiple articles to read each week in "The Clips." For these four students, rather than assigning them multiple reading pieces, I assigned them the same reading piece each day as a fluency passage. I read the article with the four students at the beginning of the week, and we discussed the article. Each following day, they read the same article with a different lens. For example:

- Monday - I would read the article to the students aloud, and they would do the second read independently. Then, we would discuss the plays in the game that were highlighted in the article.
- Tuesday - The students would read the article once independently all the way through. In the second read, they would highlight the 5 W's (who, what, when, where, and why) in pink and make a chart in their reader's notebook with this information.

- Wednesday - The students would read the article independently all the way through. Then, they would highlight all of the facts in green and the opinions in yellow.
- Thursday - The students would read the article independently all the way through. Then, they would find the quotes the columnist used to support their position.
- Friday - The students would read the article independently all the way through. Then, they would note how the columnist used text features to support their article. In their reader's notebook, they summarize the article in their own words, referencing the charts they made.

The students would read the I continued this pattern with the four students for the year. I tracked their growth with running records that were given. As you can see from the data below, each student exceeded their growth projection on the NWEA MAP.

NWEA MAP Assessment 22-23

	Term Year	RIT Score*	Projected RIT Score growth for the year based on Fall 22 MAP assessment (Spring 23 RIT – Fall 22 RIT)	Actual RIT Score growth for the year (Spring 23 RIT – Fall 22 RIT)	Student RIT Percentile
Student 1	S23	217	9	19	90th
	WI23	204			76th
	FA22	198			77th
Student 2	SP23	203	12	29	66th
	WI23	196			59th
	FA22	174			25th
Student 3	SP23	229	7	17	98th
	WI23	220			96th
	FA22	212			94th

Student 4	SP23	202	11	16	64th
	WI23	196			59th
	FA22	186			51st

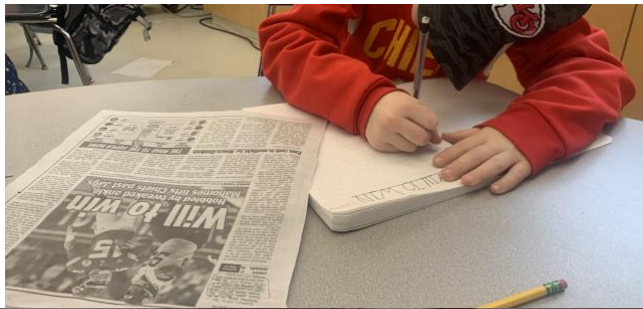
* Rasch UNIT scale measures a student's progress or achievement in a subject

I typically see high engagement using "The Clips," but I noticed an increased engagement with these four students. Three of the four students struggled with engagement at the beginning of the school year, and all four students showed a high interest and engagement in "The Clips." All four students read their articles daily. As you can see from the data, they all made significant growth, exceeding the projected growth expected on the NWEA Map assessment.

It's a joyful reward for a teacher to see a student connecting with literacy. Helping students make an authentic, real-world connection has brought lots of excitement and smiles, which is an exciting mood for any classroom. I have found This type of instruction that clicks with many different students. Many sports experts are waiting in many classrooms and would be ecstatic to have an opportunity to tackle some of their learning in this innovative way!

Please reach out with any questions!

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1st place	Cowboy
2nd place	giants
3rd place	eagles

Bill V.S patriots

first play in the game patriots kicked off. was that so good as they kicked it off. by the Buffalo Bills ran a hole field and got a touchdown and I bet the Bills had a fun time beating the patriots, however the patriots got some touchdown with the bill making the score 35-23 Bills

Eagle V.S Giants

The eagles got some luck against the Giants, in the first quarter took 7 eagles by the time the giants points got on the board it was 19-6! however the giant did get some good play but at the end the eagles won

It's time to be
the man! 1-4-23

Who: Daniel Jones

what: First time in four years
he's made it to the playoffs

when: 1-8-23

where: Philadelphia

why: play like Eli manning
because he did good in playoffs

how: had him rest. and be 100%

1-17-23

TEXT FEATURES

photograph of Sam Hubbard
Cincinnati bengals defensive End

the story of
the best play

The Raven's were at their touchdown zone inches away from getting a touchdown. that's when the ball was kicked! all the players to win, but that's when Tyler huntly went up in the air trying to score a touchdown when the Bengal's pushed it out of his hand and Bengals defensive End SAM HUBBARD caught the ball mid air and ran 98 yards from the raven's touchdown zone to the Bengal's touchdown zone! and touchdown Bengal's this was a great play making it 24-17 Bengal