

# CT Reading Institute Newsletter

May 2011



Finally! Flowers are in full bloom and the winter is a distant memory. There was a time when we thought the warm weather would never come. As classes wind down we think of graduation and our students moving on. Whatever they do – reading will be a necessity for their success. There is a definite correlation between being able to read **fluently** and a high level of reading achievement. This issue of the newsletter looks at fluency, its importance and some ways to help your students become fluent readers.

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***"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."***

~ Anne Bradstreet

## **What is Fluency?**

Fluency is the ability to read with accuracy, rate and appropriate intonation. A fluent reader knows how to group words into phrases, where to pause, and what to emphasize. In other words, fluent reading should sound like speech. Comprehension suffers when poor readers must focus on "getting the words off the page" and therefore are unable to give much attention to the meaning of what they are

reading. Fluency is part of the process of comprehension because fluent reading involves interpretation: grouping words into phrases and using word knowledge and punctuation to determine pacing, pauses, intonation, and expression. In contrast, fluent readers are able to focus on meaning because for them, decoding is automatic and effortless.

## **Why Teach Fluency?**

Many teachers and tutors working with adult literacy learners are unaware of the importance of developing reading fluency. Many adult educators believe that asking learners to read aloud in a group setting is a bad idea—that adults with poor reading skills may be frightened away. However, recent research summaries indicate that improving fluency may make a significant difference in literacy development. The National Reading Panel (2000) identified fluency development as one of five major components of reading instruction, and the Reading Research Working Group reinforced this finding in their review of the adult education research (Kruidenier, 2002).

Fluency instruction is useful when students cannot recognize the words in the texts automatically. How can you tell when this is a problem? There is a strong indication that a student needs fluency instruction:

- 📖 if you ask the student to read orally from a text that he or she has not practiced and the student makes more than ten percent word recognition errors;
- 📖 if the student cannot read orally with expression; or
- 📖 if the student's comprehension of the text that she or he reads orally is poor.

## **What kind of fluency instruction is most effective?**

Research suggests that guided **repeated oral reading** may improve one or more aspects of fluency as well as comprehension (NICHD, 2000, p. 3-28).

These approaches call for the learner to read a passage several times, with guidance, until an acceptable level of fluency is reached, at which point she begins work on another passage at the same or a slightly higher level of difficulty. Guidance may involve any of the following

- 📖 modeling—teacher or audiotape-assisted,
- 📖 simultaneous reading,
- 📖 assistance and correction
- 📖 combinations of these options.

**Choral reading** is reading aloud in unison with a whole class or group of students. Choral reading helps build students' fluency, self-confidence, and motivation. Because students are reading aloud together, students who may ordinarily feel self-conscious or nervous about reading aloud have built-in support. Reading texts that have a precise rhythm, such as poetry, can be very effective in building fluency. The rhythm and rhyme of a poem requires the student to pronounce words correctly.

**Teach common sight words** to improve automaticity. Dr. Edward B. Fry's Instant Word List contains high frequency words that should be recognized instantly by readers. In his research he found that **25 words** make up approximately **1/3** of all items published; that **100 words** comprise approximately **1/2** of all the publications written; and **300 words** make up **65%** of all written material. (McShane, S. 2004)

***The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.***

~Mark Twain

## Websites

### Fry Sight words

<http://www.uniqueteachingresources.com/Fry-1000-Instant-Words.html>

### What Works in Fluency Instruction?

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/72>

## Fluency Development: Practice Means Progress

<http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/fileadmin/popups/fluency.html>

## Poetry in the Adult Literacy Classroom

<http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/0300-26.pdf>

## CT Reading Institute Update

Using Evidence-based Reading Research (EBRI) and the STAR model, (www.startoolkit.org), the CT Reading Institute offers a series of six workshops focusing on reading strategies. We will begin a new series of workshops in the fall. To see the schedule and register go to: <http://www.crec.org/cetes/atdn>

***Science has never drummed up quite as effective a tranquilizing agent as a sunny spring day.***

~ W. Earl Hall



... and sunny skies brings Summer Vacation. See you in the Fall!