

## **ORAL READING FLUENCY**

### **WHAT IS ORAL READING FLUENCY?**

Fluency is defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. In order to understand what they read, children must be able to *read fluently* whether they are reading aloud or silently. When reading aloud, fluent readers read in phrases and add expression appropriately. Their reading is smooth.

### **WHY IS ORAL READING FLUENCY IMPORTANT?**

Children who do not read with fluency sound choppy and awkward. Those children may have difficulty sounding out words or they may just need more practice with speed and smoothness in reading. Fluency is also important for motivation; children who find reading difficult tend not to want read! As readers head into upper elementary grades, fluency becomes increasingly important. The volume of reading required in the upper elementary years escalates dramatically. Students whose reading is slow or labored will have trouble meeting the reading demands of their grade level.

### **ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP ORAL READING FLUENCY**

Support and encourage your child when he is reading. Realize that he is likely frustrated by reading. Check with your child's teachers to find out about your child's word decoding (sounding out) skills. If your child has difficulty sounding out words or recognizing high-frequency words, you may wish to try phonics or high-frequency word activities instead of those for oral reading fluency. But if your child can decode words well, help him or her build fluency, speed, and accuracy by doing some of these activities:

**Echo Reading** Echo reading allows children to practice proper phrasing and expression while building oral reading fluency. In echo reading, the parent reads one sentence or paragraph (length can vary) at a time while the child follows along in the text with their finger. Once the adult pauses, the child echoes back the same sentence or paragraph following along with their finger so that you can be sure the child is actually reading and not simply copying you. The guided practice and support of the echo reading structure instills confidence in children, aiming to develop greater reading proficiencies.

To start, select a good book with short sentences – usually one sentence per page. Read a phrase and then ask the child to repeat what was read. Echo reading can also be used with older children to help them learn a book quickly and gain confidence in their ability to eventually read the story alone.

**Choral Reading** Choral reading involves a child (or children) and an adult reading the same text aloud in unison, together. Choral reading is great because it maximizes the amount of reading done by the child. Try chorally reading your child's favorite book or a poem several times, having your child read along with you. Try pushing the pace slightly each time you read, going just a bit faster than your child is able to read alone. Each time you read the text, your child's confidence will grow.

**Paired Reading** Paired Reading is a combination of choral reading and independent reading by the child. Here are the steps for paired reading:

1. Using books your child's teacher has suggested, sit next to your child and hold the book between you so you both can see it easily.
2. Say, "Let's read aloud together for a little while. Whenever you want to read alone, just tap the back of my hand like this (demonstrate for your child) and I will stop reading. If you come to a word you don't know, I will tell you the word and begin reading with you again."
3. You may want to establish a starting signal, like saying, "Ready, Set, Go," with your child so you start together. Read along with the child, pushing the pace just slightly faster than your child can read by himself in order to encourage a fluent pace. Read with good expression to provide a good reading model for your child.
4. When your child taps the back of your hand, stop reading aloud and instead follow along as the student continues with oral reading. Be sure to occasionally praise your child's reading (e.g., "That was a hard word. You did a nice job sounding it out.")
5. If, while reading alone, the child either makes a reading error or stops for longer than 3 seconds, point to the error-word and say it. Then tell your child to say the word. When he/she says the word correctly, begin reading aloud again together with your child. (Alternative instruction: When your child makes an error, say the word. Have your child say the word, and then have him or her go back to the beginning of the sentence where the error was made. Have your child read the entire sentence that had the error. Then continue reading along with him or her.)
6. Read along with your child until he or she taps the back of your hand to signal that he or she wants to read alone.

Every 2 – 3 minutes, stop reading and ask your child to retell what he has read, or ask a couple of comprehension questions related to the reading. It is very important that your child can still understand what is read. Please consult your child's teacher if comprehension seems to be a problem.

**Repeated Reading** Repeated Reading is a strategy where the child reads the same passage over and over until it becomes smooth and effortless. Sometimes, children are asked to read as much as they can in one minute for 3-4 trials. You will often see the child go further and further with each one-minute timing. To watch a teacher use Repeated Reading with a child, view the video on the following website:  
<http://www.readingresource.net/readingfluency.html>