Tutor Handout

Tips for Teaching Fluency

Developing Fluency

Readers who are fluent read words automatically. They read accurately with expression and at an appropriate number of words per minute. Reading fluently allows children to focus their attention on getting the meaning from the text. The following suggest ways to help readers become more fluent in their reading.

Repeated Reading

With this strategy, a child reads a short passage several times, keeping track of how many words she or he has read each time. The child can record her or his progress on a graph. When the goal of a specific number of words per minute is reached, the child can move on to a different passage, and the repeated reading is continued. After repeated reading of several different passages at a given level of difficulty and reading these passages at a standard reading rate, the child can move on to the next level of difficulty and read additional passages.

You can introduce the passage to the child and read it while he or she follows along. Make sure to use good intonation and rate as you read so you provide a model of fluent reading. Then have the child read the passage with you. Finally, have the child read the passage independently and time her or his reading and record the number of words read and errors made. Have the child reread the passage several times, each time recording the number of words read and errors. Keeping a graph of the child's progress is an excellent way to motivate the child.

Do not interrupt a child's reading during a timed reading of a passage. If the child pauses for three seconds before reading a word, tell her or him the word, and record it as an error.

Reading-tutors.com provides some simple question prompts to have the child retell the passage after reading. For many readers, comprehension may be poor on the first reading, as most of the child's attention is on decoding the words. Comprehension usually improves with subsequent readings.

Reader's Theater

This activity involves a group of children taking on the parts of the characters and narrator in a story. There is no acting involved with reader's theater, as the audience relies on the voice to help them visualize the story. This activity doesn't work with a one-on-one situation, but there are things you can borrow from the strategy as you work with a child in a tutoring situation. For example, select dialogue from a story and model reading it in the tone of voice the character might have used. Then ask the child to read it. Ask the child to reread the dialogue as if the character were angry, excited, anxious, sad, etc. You can role-play by taking turns reading the dialog of different characters in a story.

Select a conversation in the text between two characters. Take on the role of one character while the child takes the other character. Read the parts then swap roles. Allow the child to reread the part several times to make it sound better.

Part of fluency is reading with proper pauses, phrasing, and expression. Choose a sample selection from a book the child is reading and model reading it in different ways. For example, in a part of the story that is exciting, read the text slowly without expression, or in a part that is funny, read it as if it

were sad. Ask the child to comment on your reading. Then reread it using appropriate expression, and ask the child to comment. Finally, read the sections with the child, using appropriate expression.

Develop Reading Vocabulary

The more words a child can recognize by sight, the more fluent her or his reading will be. See the notes on high-frequency vocabulary activities to help the child increase her or his instant recognition of words.

Poetry

One way to develop fluent reading is to let the child hear what good reading sounds like. Read simple poems or rhymes to the child to model fluent reading behavior. Then have the child join in with the reading when she or he can. Practicing the reading of poems can help with the child's ability to read in expressive rhythmic patterns.