

Activities for Developing Reading Fluency

Dear fellow tutors,

We have all been very excited during this course to learn various methods to teach our most challenged readers and to learn all about how dyslexia affects learning.

We know that dyslexic students need a highly structured and phonemic approach to learning to read. We have learned the comprehensive Hickey method with Fern, which provides this and more!

We have all been rather excited about the fluency method taught to us by Paula Barnard which, we have been told, if combined with a great structured and phonemic program, can do wonders for the child's reading fluency and, consequently, comprehension.

We have been taught that "fluency training" or "oral repeated reading" trains the learner's brain to have automaticity in reading. What does this mean and how does this help the reader?

We have learned with Paula that fluency training teaches the child to read a text with speed and prosody. The theory with fluency training is that, when a child is trained to read with speed and accuracy, he gains automaticity in reading, i.e. his reading becomes automatic. It follows, according to this theory, that the brain can then completely focus attention on understanding the meaning of the text, since the child's energies are no longer completely consumed with decoding.

Fluency is therefore important because it frees the reader to understand what he is reading.

As a result of extended practice in reading an important change takes place: students learn how to decode the printed words using significantly less attention. Because they require so little attention for word recognition they have enough left over for comprehension.

(Samuels, Scherner and Reinking, 1992, p. 132)

In "Great Leaps" a fluency program created by Kenneth Campbell (1995) students work one-on-one with an instructor for five to ten minutes a day. Students complete a one-minute timed reading in each of the three instructional areas (phonics, sight word phrases and graded reading passages) in each tutoring session.

The student's progress is plotted on a graph. A student will "leap" from one task to a progressively more difficult task, when he or she reads a page in either phonics, sight word phrases, or graded reading passages in one minute or less with two or fewer errors. (See *Welcome to Great Leaps Reading*, Kenneth Campbell, 1995)

Another fluency reading program is *Reading Rocks* (2010) based on the principles of Campbell's "Great Leaps." The *Reading Rocks* program, created by Paula Barnard and Gaila Cohen Morrison, was created especially for students learning English as a second language. (See *Reading Rocks Teachers Guide* for a comprehensive overview of the method and underlying teaching principles employed in this supplemental reading program for students of all ages!)

The Hickey method includes fluency training when we ask our students to read their yellow cards under timed conditions. I have added elements of the Great Leaps approach to my Hickey lessons, and my students are enjoying timed reading so much and have made such improvements that I decided to create some *Great Leaps*-style sheets for my Hickey lessons, to get the best of both worlds!

Hickey's gradual introduction of phonemes, word lists and stories lends itself beautifully to creating fluency sheets. In fact, Kenneth Campbell recommends, in his introduction to his 2008 version of "Great Leaps," that it is preferable for teachers and tutors to create their own fluency sheets to complement the specific reading program that they are using.

Please find after this document on the Hickey Website some model fluency sheets for Hickey lesson stories written by Fern. I created 1b and the rest were created by Esther Fisher. You can easily create your own sheets using the grids provided on the website, filling in material from your lesson text.

Thanks to Fern and Paula for introducing us to these tools!

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