

**FALL FLUENCY**  
***For Teachers***  
**By**  
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Fall marks the beginning of a new season and a new school year. It is a time when teachers and students seem ready and eager to try new ideas. About three years ago, the federal government organized a group called The National Reading Panel. The panel's purpose was to study existing research about literacy development in order to determine the most important elements in the teaching of reading. One of the elements identified was *fluency*. Fluency is defined as the ability to read automatically with accuracy. A fluent reader reads at an appropriate pace, with expression and good phrasing. Fluency demonstrates that a student can figure out words using phonics and other language study skills, as well as understand or comprehend what he or she reads. Activities to practice fluency are fun and easy to do. Here are some fluency activities to try throughout this new school year.

**Echo Reading** can be done with an entire class, in small groups, or with two individuals. To echo read, the teacher, or a more capable reader, reads one line of a poem or story; then the child, or less capable reader, reads the same line. As the child's reading improves, the number of lines read at one time can be gradually increased. To be sure the child is looking at the words, ask him or her to "finger" follow the print. Try to incorporate echo reading at least once a week.

**Choral Reading** involves reading a text together. Select a story that a child has read before or one that is easy for him or her to read. Determine a signal for beginning; for example, count to three and then start. The teacher should take the lead with expression and pacing. Try to choral read twice a week. A variation of choral reading is **antiphonal reading**. Here the group is divided in half or into thirds. Give the groups names, such as A, B, or C, so you can call on a specific group. Be sure everyone understands what to do, and then read together.

**Reader's Theater** is a read-aloud activity. Assign roles and have students read when it is their character's time to talk. This should be done with materials that are easy for the students to read. Fables are often good pieces of literature for reader's theater because they are short and have definitive characters.

**Partner Reading** involves two students. One person reads the first page in a book, then the other reads the next page, and so on. Start partner reading by having student pairs read just a sentence or perhaps half the page. As their reading improves, have them read entire pages. Try partner reading once a week.

Listening to **taped stories** can provide good samples of fluent reading. Children can follow along in their books as they read orally or silently. Have children tape their own stories and evaluate their reading for fluency. This is an easy way to determine whether a student's reading flows smoothly at a good pace or if he or she is reading

word by word, slowly with words missing, and/or not using enough expression to determine understanding. Being able to decode words properly and to read with expression demonstrates an understanding of what is read.

**Repeated Readings** is another activity to help build fluency. It involves having children read books or stories more than once during the same week. This year on Back-to-School Night, introduce your students' parents to fluency activities. Videotape your class participating in choral reading, partner reading, echo reading, reader's theater, and antiphonal reading. Be sure that every child in the class is featured in the video, even if only for a very short time. Then lead the families in the different types of fluency activities. Frankly, making fluency the emphasis for parent involvement for the year is a good idea. Prepare a monthly checklist for parents. List the weeks of the months on the side of the calendar, and list fluency training activities across the top. Have parents check the boxes showing the fluency training activities done at home each week. Invite parents regularly to your classroom to lead some whole-group fluency activities. Or, the activities can be carried out by parents working with small groups.