

Supporting Your Child's Fluency and Comprehension

Mini paper phonics books are starting to come home to you from our Wonders program. Keep all the mini books in a special reading place for your child to reread throughout the year. These books use a systematic method to assist your child as they learn to read using increasingly more difficult phonics levels while incorporating sight words too. As your child learns to read, their fluency increases.

Reading fluency is a child's ability to read a book or other text correctly, quickly, and with expression. A fluent reader doesn't have to stop and "decode" each word. Rather, most of the words can be read automatically. This means the reader can focus his attention on what the story or text means. Fluency is the bridge between decoding words and understanding what has been read.

How fluent is your child? How do you know?-Fluency develops over time and with lots of practice. The best way for parents to determine how fluently their child can read is to listen to him or her read out loud. When listening, think about:

Phrasing and smoothness-Does your child read word-by-word with frequent hesitation? Does your child read in short phrases, but ignore punctuation? Does your child read with good phrasing and rhythm?

Pace- Does your child read slowly, at a mixed rate, or at a conversational rate?

Expression and volume- Does your child read with a quiet voice, or with volume and expression? As your child develops fluency, you will notice that your child reads words in a meaningful way, guided by the text's punctuation. Her reading will be at a conversational pace throughout the reading. She will read with expression, and the volume will sound as though she is talking with a friend.

On the second page are ideas to help build your child's fluency. On the third page are ideas to help support your child with comprehension once they become a fluent reader.

Ways to Help Build Your Child's Fluency

Tracking- Reinforce having your child track the words with their finger as your child reads a passage aloud.

Paired or "buddy" reading-The easiest and best way to help your child develop fluency is to sit with your child and read! Read together every day, which is often called paired or buddy reading. To use paired reading, simply take turns reading aloud. You go first, as your reading provides a model of what good fluent reading sounds like. Then, ask your child to re-read the same page you just read. You'll notice that your child's reading will start to sound more and more like yours. Do this for several pages. Once your child is comfortable enough, and familiar enough with the book, take turns reading page for page.

Repetition- Ask your child to read the passage several times (at least four) until he is able to read it fluently. You can discuss with your child the analogy of athletes developing their skills by spending considerable time practicing the same basic movements until they develop speed and effortlessness.

Reread mini books and books your child can already read- Build a tall stack of books that your child can read quickly and easily. Encourage your child to reread favorite books and their stamped mini books, over and over again. With each reading, you may notice your child reading a bit easier, a bit faster, and with a bit more confidence and expression.

Make Reading Part of Everyday Life-Incorporate reading into your everyday life. Show your children and share with them what you read during the day. Also, use any opportunity for reading: an outing, learning about an illness, learning about an activity or pet, etc.

Use Positive Praise- Offer praise whenever your child reads. Do so in a realistic fashion and in a way that your child will appreciate it.

Keep Modeling- Continue to read aloud to your children. Even when they can read by themselves it is important for children to hear a more fluent reader read.

How to Build Your Child's Comprehension Skills

1. Point out clues in reading like things that are repeated, things in bold or italics, etc. Explain the difference between non-fiction and fiction, figurative language (poetic language) and literal language ("plain" English). Encourage your children to read a variety of things--non-fiction, fiction, short stories, poems, articles, etc. so that they understand about different genres.
2. Help to generate questions about what they have read. These questions should deal with the what, how and why of the things they have read. Children should know the purpose of the story or article, the main characters or whose point of view it is.
3. Assist in using clues from what they have read to predict what might happen next in a story or to make an inference about something an author hints at but doesn't say in an article. Teach your children about how authors make choices about what to include in what they write.
6. Discuss what was read with them. Don't simply focus on comprehension questions; in addition, ask their feelings about what they read, what stood out to them and why, what they liked and didn't like and why and if the text reminds them of something else.
7. Encourage your child to write in response to reading. They can write a response for their weekly homework writing or he/she can keep a journal of reading responses with thoughts about the reading including what they learned, what they liked or didn't like and what happened in what they read. They can also include any unanswered questions after reading.
8. Model good reading for your children. Share what you read with them or read what they are reading. Talk to them about the things you find important in what you read and why.