

Developing Reading Fluency Using Florida Works General Information

Background:

Reading fluency refers to the student's ability to read accurately at an acceptable rate and with appropriate expression. The USDOE sponsored Partnership for Reading says that reading fluency "refers to the speed and ease with which we read." Fluency requires rapid decoding of the material along with attention to punctuation to smooth out the delivery. We all have heard readers who when reading aloud hesitate, re-read, mispronounce words and the like. Such reading is described as 'choppy' and is a chore to listen to. The oral reading of many ABE/ESOL students can be described as lacking fluency. How are we to help these adult students improve their reading fluency within the individualized learning culture typical of the ABE class or ESOL students in a multi-level environment?

Instructional Techniques:

ABE and ESOL students need intensive practice if they are to become fluent readers. Studies, by the National Reading Panel, suggest that there is a strong relationship between fluency and overall effectiveness in reading including comprehension. These studies also indicate that fluency can be taught and suggest several approaches for instruction. Suggested guided oral reading fluency interventions include: Assisted Reading Practice, Repeated Reading, Paired Reading, Shared Reading, Collaborative Oral Reading and Assisted Reading. The interventions listed are variations of what has been called Neurological Impress. These techniques feature students reading and re-reading text until they reach a specific level of proficiency along with a model of how the reading ought to sound. ABE/ESOL instructors with "one room schoolhouses" designed to deliver multi-level reading and English language instruction often struggle with the logistics of providing much more than workbook-based silent reading instruction for their students. How can the techniques described above be introduced into the largely individualized ABE or multi-level ESOL classroom?

Florida Works Passages and Reading Fluency

To implement this pilot, we have selected six passages from the acclaimed Florida Works employability series. The rationale is that ABE and ESOL students are often looking to improve both their academic skills and employment possibilities. These selections will do "double duty" for the ABE or ESOL student. Since reading practice must involve some content, employment related material will allow students to absorb work-related information while practicing reading. Since Florida Works materials readability is focused on the 4th through 6th grade level it is perfect for the mid-level ABE student who is often overlooked in the one-room schoolhouse and the ESOL student in High Beginning or Low Intermediate levels. ABE students at the lower levels often receive tutoring or other special attention and those from 6.0 – 8.9 are on a fast track for the GED and are able to articulate their needs. Upper level ESOL students are also focused and goal oriented.

We have known for some time that proficient readers need minimal orthographic information to decide on a word. Struggling readers need much more print information to identify a word with their limited experience with print. We also know that many of the words that make up a reading passage are the articles and connectors which are so difficult to identify accurately. (Hippopotamus is easy as compared to: of & for; though & through etc.) Intensive practice with engaging print material is an answer to the development of automatic word recognition skills. How can one give struggling adult readers in an ABE/ESOL classroom sufficient practice to become fluent?

Model

The model proposed is a combination of the key features of the guided oral reading interventions suggested by the National Reading Panel for the development of reading fluency. The passages selected range in length from 152 to 340 words. The optimum rate for this level will be 150+ words per minute with no more than three (3) miscues (errors) per one hundred words. Each selection has a listed a target time on the Florida Works Student Record Sheet along with the maximum number of errors allowed.

Target audience:

ABE students reading at 4.0 – 6.0 grade level and ESOL students at High Beginning/Low Intermediate levels.

Materials Needed:

- Florida Works Reading Selections # 1 through #6
- Florida Works Student Record Sheets # 1 through #6
- Florida Works CD with narration of Reading Selections # 1 through # 6
- CD Player with headset
- Timer or similar

Steps:

1. The student chooses one Florida Works Student Reading Selection usually # 1 (Hard Copy Numbers 1- 6). The Class should be instructed NOT to write on the Student Reading Selection. Notes to answer the “Think About It!” questions should be made on a separate sheet of paper.
2. Initial Reading: For each selection the student is timed and checked for reading accuracy using the Florida Works Student Record Sheet to record time and errors. The result is compared to the target time and errors permitted as noted on the FW Student Record Sheet. Should the student meet the target time with acceptable accuracy a new reading selection is made. The Florida Works Student Record Sheet is used to record the results of each reading and may be completed by a volunteer, peer or the instructor.
3. Next, the student reads the selection over and over (Repeated Reading) using the recorded CD narration to assist in developing fluency. The recorded narration is used to improve word recognition to be automatic and as a model for expression, pronunciation and intonation
4. The student re-reads the selection without the narration until feeling comfortable with the result. (Optional step is for the student to record a reading and self-check errors or read with a peer prior to final reading with the instructor)

5. Finally, the student reads the selection to the instructor, volunteer or possibly a peer who uses another copy of the selection (Florida Works Student Record Sheet) to mark errors made to see if the selection is read within the Target Time within the Target Maximum Errors permitted. (If targets are not met the student returns to step #3)
6. Student, instructor, volunteer or peer discuss the key question (Think About It!) provided with the selection. (When steps #1 – 6 are complete the student selects another reading and begins the process again.)

Each step is followed until all six selections are read accurately within the prescribed time.

Note: When several students have completed the same Florida Works Reading Selection the instructor or volunteer may initiate a group discussion of the “Think About It”! Question.

Guidelines for Marking Reading Errors

The following guidelines will assist with the determination of errors in oral reading:

- Instructor supplied word when reader hesitates. (Wait 3 -4 seconds before helping and this can seem like a long time)
- Skipped words – omissions
- Substitutions
- Count as error each time the same error is made
- Mispronunciations (Except when consistent with dialect or second language learner accent)
- Do not count self corrections or repetitions as errors.

Patterns of errors may be noted and instructional strategies employed that will aid student learning. While students who read above the third grade level usually have mastered many word recognition strategies the instructor may note a pattern of a particular student’s errors in oral reading and can then provide appropriate intervention.

Characterization of Poor Readers

Poor readers show a choppy, halting pattern when reading orally. Comprehension will be an issue for such readers until reading becomes automatic and lots of practice is the key to developing that level of skill and accuracy. As long as a person’s reading is slow, laborious, without proper expression and sounds like word calling then comprehension will suffer.

The Florida Works passages selected for this pilot offer the adult student a chance to practice repeated reading of the selection with the narrator as a help in the development of fluency. The design of this project will allow students in the individualized ABE or multi-level ESOL classroom the opportunity to develop automatic reading skills on the selected passages. The main instructional intervention is only at the final reading to determine if the student is ready for another selection.