

Quick and Easy Ways to Spark Up Reading

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BCPTA Conference 2019

Tim Rasinski's lists the criteria for fluent reading as:

- Pace sounds like talking
- Expression matches the ideas
- Volume suits what is being read
- Reads phrases or sentences before breaking
- Smooth flow, solves problems and self corrects (Education Leadership 2005)
- "HOW" - Having the skills to "word solve" so that the piece can with accuracy and appropriate pace. "WHAT" - Understanding what is read so that the meaning of the selection is conveyed (phrasing, expression and volume).

Fluency is more than fast!
"Fluency is matching our reading
to the writer's words."
C. Politano

Reading Recharge

Many of our students had family members who enjoyed coming in the room in the morning and the checking in helped them to feel good about our program, however the adults often wanted to talk with us or with each other and they didn't always know when to leave and let us get on with our day. We also were concerned that many of our children were not read to at home. We solved both issues by beginning our day with Reading Recharge. When family members come in they grab a book, sit down and read aloud to their child and a group of children. Everyone gets the benefit of the modeling. When it is time to go I ask the students to thank their reader and tell what they like about the reading. I put on Happy Trails which I have downloaded from iTunes. The kids sing their folks out the door as they move to our Group Meeting.

Reading Train

Students sit side by side in two lines. One line becomes the listeners. The other line has the readers. We go over the criteria we have set for being partners.

I explain that the readers will read (or tell about) their book to their listener then the listener gives the reader a specific, positive comment on their reading. Once children get used to the routine we move to compliments and suggestion such as "Hurrah and a Hint." Since we spend a lot of time reviewing what good readers do, the children are well equipped to give useful hints.

The children sit shoulder-to-shoulder, books ready. I blow a train whistle (these are easy to find at most toy stores or train museums) saying,

"All aboard the reading train."

The children read their selections then I blow the whistle again saying, "Reading train in the station."

The listeners then give a hurrah and hint.

I call, "Conductor's Announcement!" asking the readers move one place forward while the listeners stay put. On my signal, "All aboard the reading train," the readers now start at the beginning and read their piece to their new partner followed by a hurrah and a hint from their new partner. We only move once. The power of this routine is specific feedback and practice is fun.

At this point we usually stop and ride the train another day, but sometimes the children are so keen that we have to give the listeners their turn to be readers and do the whole routine again.

*Early emergent readers can tell their listener about what is in their book.

We teach our students to make their suggestions as a question rather than say "you should" which can create touchy feelings.

We also do Writing Train when the children take turns read their own writing to each other and give each other feedback.

Four Corners Reading

I tell the children that when they read to others it is enjoyable and it is good for them to read to others because when we present we put extra effort into polishing their reading. I tell them that I have a way to make sure they get 4 x as many chances to read!

This strategy is also helpful for student who would be uncomfortable reading to the whole class but can handle a small group. I draw a rectangle on the white board or chart paper to represent our room. I use magnets or Xs to show my students how we will have 4 people reading at once and that each person will have 4 or more listeners.

I ask the children to sign up for a reading time, explaining that everyone will have a turn to read something they have practiced. I tell the students that if they are keen sign up right away, if they want to wait, sign up later. (I ask family members or our learning support teacher to give their students a little extra support so they will be successful.) I assign students to audience groups. We talk about the responsibilities of the audience and recall what good listening sounds like, looks like, and feels like.

The 4 corner readers children read to their group. Once the children have read the other children give them specific compliments, comments or make connections. If time allows we can do a second round of presentations. The readers stay where they are and the audience moves one group to the right.
Bonus: 4 Corner Show and Tell

The Reading Wave

One way to have a fun, build in accountability, and build interest in books is to do the Reading Wave.

Talk about doing the wave at a sports event. Practice with the class. Students can sit in a circle, at tables or desks, (we decide the path the wave will take) or line up in 2 lines. Line one does the wave while the others watch then they switch.

I explain that we are going to do a 'Reading Wave.' Each child picks a sentence or short sample from the piece they have been reading. They practice on their own and then with someone else sitting near them. I do a quick but unobtrusive check to make sure my less confident readers are ready. The goal is to read with fantastic fluency. Of course, we have had a quick reminder of what is important by checking our criteria chart. Our motto is, "Put the shine in each line!"

I say, "Let the Reading Wave begin!" Each child reads in turn. As soon as one has read, the next student comes in as quickly as possible keeping the wave going. Everyone reads from a different book so it is interesting. With small groups such as a reading group, resource room or Title 1 the Reading Wave can be a great way to finish a session. Every child picks a line or 2 from the selection the group has been reading and they do a wave to show off their reading. I call it the mini-bus!

As soon as everyone has had their turn the students do a book wave. Seeing the books prompts book exchanges and sharing. You can adapt this idea to be a Poetry Wave, Information Wave, Personal writing Wave or whatever your kids think of!

Remarkable Reader's Kit

Our kits are in zip lock freezer bag. (At the end of the year our students leave their reading phones but take the rest of the kit). Each kit contains:

Reading Phone: These can be purchased or made from 2 PVC elbows joined with a short length of PVC pipe. One clever participant calls them 'self phones.' The phones helps readers improve because they can hear themselves read. To buy phones try: www.whisperphone.com www.phonicsphones.org

Word Movers: I put a sticker like a car, walking feet, or an insect on one end of a craft stick. The child uses the craft stick to push the words as s/he is reading. The word mover helps move children beyond pointing, encouraging smoother tracking and speed.

Bookmarks: A clear, colored bookmark in the child's choice of color to help the child track as s/he reads. Office supply or \$ stores have colored acetate report covers which can be cut into bookmarks. This bookmark lets the child scan ahead, improving speed and expression. For more information on using colored acetates try www.mariecarbo.com

Reading Phones

Some students make dramatic gains in fluency when they can hear the way they sound when they are reading. A whole group of children can practice reading without disruption using fluency phones. You can buy these from educational supply stores and sites. You can find information at www.whisperphone.com. If you'd rather the ready-made pipe version try: www.phonicphones.org

If you want to make phones try this:

- Buy PCV pipe and elbows (2 per phone) from building supply store.
- Cut pipe into lengths. (4-5" or 10-12 cm)
- Put an elbow on each end of the length of pipe,
- Explain to students that the "phones" will help them hear themselves as they read.
- Make or go over a class made list of, 'What is important when we read aloud'?
- Ask students to each choose one thing they plan to work on.
- Give students time to read using the reading phones.
- Conclude by having students think about what they did well and what they want to work on next time.:

The Sound of Learning: Why Self-Amplification Matters

Word Movers

We know that finger pointing slows readers down so when we have students who have trouble tracking with their eyes, we say, "Slide your hand or fingers under the words. I encourage students to use the side of their hand or all their fingers to help them train their eyes to take in more words. Many students are able to read more quickly when they have a way to keep their eyes focused. While a *bookmark underneath the line masks the print coming ahead, slowing reading down, "word movers" help students gain speed.

Try this:

- Get tongue depressors, craft sticks or 'Popsicle' sticks.
- Lay sticks out in a horizontal position. Put stickers on the right end of the sticks. Some suggestions are "goggle" eyes, cars, bikes, fairies, or anything else that represents movement.
- Show students how to use the sticks by using the sticks to push the words as they read.
- One clever teacher put 'Packman' on the end of the mover then suggested that the 'Packman' could be a word gobbler.
- Ask the students to think of 'Packman' gobbling up the words like they were pudding. Focus on punctuation by suggesting the period and comma are like cookies while exclamation marks and question marks are like carrots. This helps some children when they use these images.
- See where your class can take this idea.

For K's using charts and big books I like to get the stir sticks from the paint store.

Bookmarks

The best bookmark ever is made from clear, colored acetate.

For some children the colors make the print look sharper. For more information on using specific colors to help students with reading check: nr.si.org go to 'Student Samples' to see how the clear colored bookmarks work.

Also check www.mariecarbo.com. and www.irlen.com

You can buy products online or go to Staples and buy clear, colored report dividers which can be cut into bookmarks or 1/2 sheets.

Incorporating Poetry to Build Fluency

If you introduce a poem on a chart one day, reading it with the children and asking, "What do you notice?" you can be rewarded with lots of information from comments about the content of the poem to observations about words and letters.

On the second day you can read the poem using lots of different voices. Our favorites are giant, elf, toothless, baby, Queen Elizabeth and of course, the King himself, Elvis.

On the third day it is fun to assign lines to different groups e.g. one side reads the first 2 lines, the other side the next and so on.

My favorite routine is to divide a poem in 4 parts and assign each part to a group. Group 1 reads the whole thing. Group 2 reads their part and right to the end of the poem. Group 3 reads their part and right to the end of the poem. Group 4 only reads the last part. My students like to make their voices rise, as one child said, "Like we are in a cathedral."

Day four is time for X-Ray Vision. Before the children arrive, use Post-It notes to mask off several words. I like to start with end rhymes if they are part of the poem. The children love to realize how they can figure out the hidden words.

On the last day it is time to give the children their own copy of the poem to go in their poetry folder (These are the poems we use to get going on Poetry Train and 4 Corners Poetry). I like to give out 2 copies so the children have one poem for home and one for school. Other teachers like to include the poem of the week with their weekly newsletter.

Tim Rasinski suggests students take their poems to "Lucky Listeners." Children ask, "Will you be my lucky listener?" then read the poem and have the "L.L." sign it. We have our students meet on Monday morning and tell their 'checkmate' about one of their listeners. We then draw names and 4 students share their stories with the whole group.

"Lucky Listeners" is very popular with our students who also make use of the telephone, Web cam and pets to find listeners.

Reading Club as an Alternative to Guided Reading

When you and your students are ready for a change of groups or to supplement other grouping organizations in your class, try Reading Club.

Explain to students that they will each get to be in a reading club.

We name each club for the day of the week when the group gets their turn.

I put the children into mixed ability groups to create a supportive, social, learning club.

When it is not their meeting day, the children work at literacy centers, on projects or read quietly on their own and in pairs or trios.

Everyone has the task of being ready for their 'club day' by:

- Choosing a "just right" book (picture books, non-fiction, poems, even personal writing...)
- Practicing their reading so they are ready to share a short book or section of their reading choice.

While other students are busy working independently, the club meets for 15-30 minutes depending on the age and abilities in the class.

The children take turns to:

- Tell about and read their selection
- I take notes on file cards or the computer.
- Give the reader specific, positive feedback*
- Choose the next reader
- Comment on how the club worked today

*Our shared reading sessions have proved to be an excellent way to involve all learners in learning about and extending their knowledge of how print.

Playing with Punctuation

One way to help students focus on punctuation without concern for content is to play with the alphabet, numerals and easily recognizable words. It is also a great way to get in some practice with high frequency words. I give students alphabet or word cards and punctuation cards so they can play with punctuation in small groups or partnerships.

1 2! 3 4 5? 6... 7! 89, 10!

Time! Time? Time, time, time, time...

Think? Think. Think, think, think, Think!

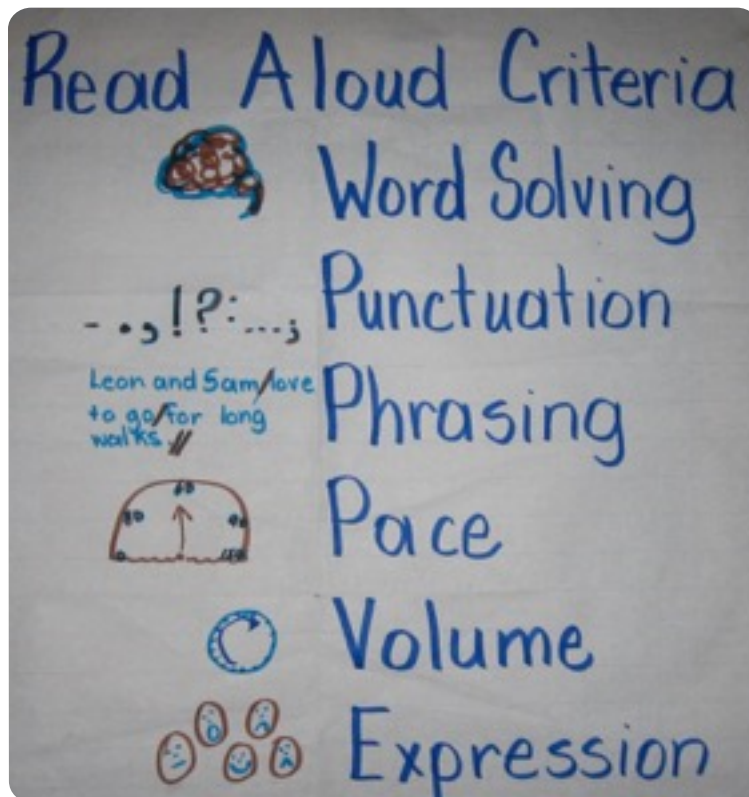
Criteria; Acting Out for Memory

Our brains used images before we had language so it is much easier to remember a picture. When ever it is possible we attach icons, drawings or photographs to reinforce the message.

We also do 'silent or action' criteria.

Before we begin an activity one of the students leads the group through the criteria.

This technique works just as well to help students remember other information such as stages of a life cycle, steps in a process or what ever works for your students.



A Dozen Ways to Build Read-Alouds into the Day

The enjoyment students' feel when we read aloud engages them in the process. This makes read aloud time an ideal teaching time. As we read our thinking aloud lets students in on the kinds of thinking we do to make us fluent readers. We take opportunities presented by text to tell students what we do to understand what we are reading and give the meaning of the writer's words. Our comments range from, "I scanned ahead and noticed Fern is very upset so I will raise my voice." Or "I see a word here in brackets. I always check to see what the writer may be telling me. This time it tells me how to pronounce a Spanish word. It is good I noticed or I would have said it the wrong way." I find it useful to use big books or put sections of stories or information books on a transparency so that I can involve the students by practicing the skills we have talked about. I pick 2 or 3 examples per reading so that I don't spoil the flow of the selection. A foundation of fluency is built when we share our thinking and read:

Examples of student's work

Poem of the day (great for echo reading)

Daily story time - novel or picture book

Reading recommendations and snippets

Piece of non-fiction

Excerpt from the daily paper (news, sports section)

Information from the Internet

Information about school events

Charts, criteria lists, directions

Student created news Jokes, riddles...

"You have to see it to be it.
We have to show it so they'll know it.
They have to hear it to get near it."
Colleen Politano

