

# Research Findings of Fluency, Methodology and Adult-Oriented Materials

## Fluency

“Fluency is the ability to read rapidly and accurately, with appropriate rhythm, intonation, and expression. Fluency includes the ability to decode rapidly, grouping words into meaningful units for interpretation. Fluency also includes pronunciation, determination of emphasis, and appropriate pauses to make sense of text. Fluency is a means readers use to comprehend.”  
(Equipped for the Future Reading Project – Draft Copy)

Data from Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction concludes that “the ability to figure out how to read individual words is not sufficient. Readers must also be able to rapidly recognize strings of words as they read phrases, sentences and longer text. Fluent reading is crucial to adequate comprehension.” (Kruidenier, 2002)

The Wisconsin Literacy Education and Reading Network Source (2003) reports that “reading fluency is necessary for good comprehension. When a reader is struggling to decode words, little mental energy is left for comprehension.” Poor readers use time and resources to decode words, which hinders comprehension. A fluent reader has automatic word recognition, is able to figure out unknown words quickly, and reads with appropriate phrasing and expression.

## Methodology

### A. Guided Repeated Oral Reading (repeated reading and guided reading)

“Emerging principles in the ABE research indicate that fluency can be taught to adults who qualify for ABE programs, that teaching fluency leads to increases in reading achievement, and that one specific technique can be used to help adults develop their reading fluency. This technique, repeated reading of a text, is also supported by a much larger body of research with children.”  
(Kruidenier, 2002, p. 8)

“To improve ABE readers’ fluency (as well as word recognition and reading comprehension achievement); use repeated guided oral reading procedures. “The NRP (National Reading Panel) review of research at the K-12 level found that “procedures that have students reading passages orally multiple times while receiving guidance or feedback from peers, parents, or teachers are effective in improving a variety of reading skills” (p. 3-20). These repeated reading procedures accompanied by guidance from others lead to increases in reading fluency as well as increased word recognition and reading comprehension achievement (p. 3-18).” (Kruidenier, 2002, p. 9)

## B. Motivation

### 1. Graphing

We will be designing a graph to be used as part of the curriculum that will allow students to track their own progress. They will graph the number of words read correctly in a one-minute timing prior to repeated reading practice, and then again after a substantial amount of repeated reading practice. This graphing tool will provide immediate, visual feedback to students showing how important and productive practice is.

### 2. Confidence

“When looking at the immediate effects of fluency instruction on students’ ability to read passages that were used during instruction, the NRP (National Reading Panel) review found that reading improves from the first passage read to the final passage read. Fluency instruction immediately improves the reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension of passages read (pp. 3-15 – 3-16). Assuming that transfer to other passages that are not a part of instruction will occur after fluency practice of some length of time, the immediate benefits to adults may be motivational. Adult readers should see improvement in their reading fairly quickly, at least over the passages that they are practicing.”

(Kruidenier, 2002, p. 10)

Based on my experience with the Read Naturally program, the immediate benefits are real and very motivational for adult students! Students’ increased levels of self-confidence are visibly apparent.

## C. Writing

“Combining reading and writing leads to higher levels of thinking than does addressing either skill independently”. (McGinley and Tierney, 1989 cited in “Important Research Findings of the Ohio Literacy Initiative”)

\*See “Materials” for more reference to writing.

## **Materials**

“An important trend from the (ABE) instruction research, supported by research with children, is that contexts that are more interesting or engaging, such as workplace or family contexts for adults, may be especially useful for vocabulary instruction.” (Kruidenier, 2002, p. 8)

“The ABE reading comprehension research found that use of adult-oriented content materials is an effective way to help improve comprehension.” (Kruidenier, 2002, p. 8)

According to “Q&A: Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Workplace ESL” from the Project in Adult Immigrant Education (PAIE) and the National Center for ESL Literacy (NCLE), the learner-centered strategies that are most effective in workplace ESL programs are:

- Using authentic language.
- Placing the learning in workplace and other adult contexts relevant to the lives of learners, their families and friends.
- Adopting a whole language orientation – integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing – to reflect natural language use.
- Choosing activities that help learners transfer what they learn in the classroom to the worlds in which they live.
- Integrating new cultural skills with new linguistic skills.

“Ohio’s Model Competency-Based Language Arts Curriculum” framework suggests that all students who are having reading difficulties need to:

- Write their reactions to the material they have read.
- Listen to accomplished readers as they read quality stories, articles, and other materials. Listening helps students internalize the rhythm, flow, structure, and vocabulary of the English language.
- Engage in discussions about what they are reading, hearing and writing.

“Students who participate in classes that include authentic, or learner-contextualized, materials and activities are more likely to say they had started new literacy practices or had increased the amount of time spent engaging in literacy activities outside of school. Bringing the lives, needs, and interests of the students into the classroom is an integral part of best practice.” Literacy Practices of Adult Learners Study (LPALS)

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After reviewing a number of research studies related to reading fluency and comprehension, it appears that little data is available that specifically focuses on adult learners and fluency. One of the most comprehensive reports I found was Kruidenier’s Research Based Principles for Adult Basic Education, published in September 2002. I highly recommend reading it at: [http://novel.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/html/adult\\_ed/adult\\_ed\\_6.html](http://novel.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/html/adult_ed/adult_ed_6.html). It provides strong support for the effectiveness of a fluency tool such as the one we are developing for adult learners.