

# TARGETING FLUENCY

## Forum Speakers Stress Need for Oral Reading and Feedback

Photo: Lucy van Broekhuizen



▷ Dr. Elfrieda Hiebert and Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams presented research findings at PREL's Focus on Fluency Forum.

**T**he target is clear: all children must read on grade level by 3rd grade. What, then, needs to happen for children to read with speed, accuracy, and expression, and to understand what they read? What kind of fluency instruction will lead to improved comprehension?

Throughout the Focus on Fluency Forum, regional teams listened to researchers present their findings and then met in small groups to discuss and take action on fluency issues. What did they learn?

- Fluency is more than word recognition. Factors affecting fluency include the reader's skill in processing the graphological, orthographic, semantic, and syntactic features of text; the speed with which this processing occurs; and the ability to retrieve information while focusing on comprehension and not decoding (Foorman, Shanahan).

- Strategies known to help students develop fluency are repeated reading,

guided reading, assisted reading, and paired reading. These strategies involve repeated oral reading with practice until students achieve a criterion level of expression, accuracy, and speed. For success, however, feedback is essential.

- As Foorman pointed out, "Repeated reading, by itself, is insufficient to address the rapid processing of the multiple systems comprising fluency." Feedback is critical, and can be provided by peers, tutors, parents, and teachers (Shanahan). Students need increased feedback in the beginning stages of reading.

- Studies do not consistently show that silent reading works, primarily because there is no way of knowing what the student is reading. Teachers need to hear students reading aloud so that they can assess speed, accuracy, and expression. This does not mean that schools should abandon silent reading. It means that schools should not expect these programs to automatically increase reading fluency.

- Text matters in fluency development. Core vocabulary, or words that students are expected to know by the end of the year in a grade level, is critical for comprehension. According to Hiebert, "When primary and challenged readers have exposure to texts with higher repetitions of core vocabulary

and fewer rare words, their fluency improves."

- For older children with reading disabilities, fluency is limited primarily by sight vocabulary. As Torgesen explained, "Once children become able to read text accurately, the major challenge in working with older disabled readers is how to engineer and focus reading instruction and practice so that the development of 'sight word vocabulary' is accelerated at a rate sufficient to 'close the gap' in reading fluency."

Forum proceedings will be compiled in a summary document, which will be available through the REL at PREL. Forum PowerPoint presentations will be available at the REL website at [www.prel.org](http://www.prel.org). ★

<b>WHAT:</b>	Focus on Fluency Forum
<b>WHEN:</b>	November 6-7, 2002
<b>WHO:</b>	Over 120 participants from the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), Comprehensive Assistance Centers (CCs), state and county departments of education, schools, institutes of higher education (IHEs), and researchers in the area of reading fluency.

<b>WHY:</b>	To look at implications and applications of reading fluency research and to determine next steps for increasing student fluency and reading achievement.
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The following researchers shared their current work at the Focus on Fluency Forum: Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams, Harvard University; Dr. Barbara Foorman, University of Texas - Houston; Dr. Elfrieda Hiebert, University of Michigan - Ann Arbor; Dr. Michael Kamil, Stanford University; Dr. Timothy Shanahan, University of Illinois - Chicago; Dr. Steven Stahl, University of Illinois - Champaign Urbana; and Dr. Joseph Torgesen, Florida State University.