Fluency

Fluency is defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. In order to understand what they read, children must be able to read fluently whether they are reading aloud or silently. When reading aloud, fluent readers read in phrases and their reading is smooth and has expression.

Children who have little fluency sound choppy and awkward. Those students may have difficulty with decoding skills or they may just need more practice with reading. Children who find reading difficult tend to not want to read! As readers head into upper elementary grades, fluency becomes increasingly important. The volume of reading required in the upper elementary years increases dramatically. Students whose reading is slow or labored will have trouble meeting the reading demands of their grade level.

What parents can do to help at home:

- Support and encourage your child.
- Encourage your child to use decoding strategies.
- Read aloud and have your child match his/her voice to yours.
- Have your child practice reading the same list of words, phrases, or short passages a second time.
- Remind your child to pause between sentences and phrases when reading.
- Give your child books with predictable vocabulary and clear rhythmic patterns so he can "hear" the sound of fluent reading as he or she reads the book aloud. Ex: Brown Bear, Brown Bear

Comprehension

Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what children read. To be able to accurately understand written material, children need to be able to make connections between what they read and what they already know; and think deeply about what they have read. Comprehension involves combining reading with thinking and reasoning.

What parents can do to help at home:

- Help your child make connections between what he/she reads and previous experiences in his/her own life or other stories he may have read. For example, say "I wonder why the little girl did that?" or "How do you think he felt? Why?" Help your child go back to the text to support his/her answers.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in the reading process, and contributes greatly to a reader's comprehension. Readers cannot understand a text without knowing what most of the words mean. Students learn the meanings of most words indirectly, through everyday experiences with oral and written language.

What parents can do to help at home:

- Engage your child in conversations every day. If possible, include new and interesting words in your conversation.
- Read to your child each day. When the book contains a new or interesting word, pause and define the word for your child. After reading, engage your child in a conversation about the book.
- Help build word knowledge by classifying and grouping objects or pictures while naming them.
- Help build your child's understanding of language by playing verbal games and telling jokes and stories.
- Encourage your child to read on his own. The more your child reads, the more words he encounters and learns.
- Discuss the meanings of unknown words, both those read and heard.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. An example of how beginning readers show us they have phonemic awareness is combining or blending the separate sounds of a word to say the word ("/cl/ /al/ /ld - cat."). We know that a student's skill in phonemic awareness is a good predictor of later reading success or difficulty.