



## A Smooth Ride: Developing Reading Fluency



It can be quite a trip learning how to drive a stick shift. The constant stops, starts, and grinding of gears all make for a very shaky ride. After enough practice though, most drivers improve and the process eventually becomes so smooth and effortless, they don't even think about it anymore.

Learning to read can feel like that too, but with enough practice, good readers develop what's known as reading fluency. Fluency is generally defined as the ability to read accurately, with expression, and at a comfortable age-appropriate rate of speed. As students continue to practice accurate reading, they develop increased word recognition and like the driver of the stick shift, all the separate brain processes converge until the task becomes relatively effortless.

### **Why Fluency Is Important**

Underdeveloped reading fluency has major implications for students. Until a student reaches a point of fluency, it's difficult to concentrate on meaning.

A student struggling with fluency cannot enjoy reading; it's just too hard. So while he's avoiding it, fluent readers are busy practicing. They get faster, and gain even more

fluency because they've been exposed to many more words repeatedly. Perhaps even more important, fluent readers get far ahead in vocabulary and overall general content knowledge.

To put this in terms of our struggling stick shift driver, even though he may be moving down the road, over time the smooth, fluent drivers will gradually get miles and miles ahead, to the point where catching up may be impossible.

### **Predicting Potential Fluency Struggles**

Although we can work on fluency in later grades, it's best to avoid this potential practice deficit which can lead to poor fluency. Taking action early in the reading process is key.

One of the most reliable measures for predicting future fluency in an emerging reader is a type of processing speed called Rapid Automatic Naming, or RAN for short. The student mimics reading

<continued on page 3>



**LANGSFORD**

Learning Acceleration Centers

2520 Bardstown Road  
Louisville, KY 40205

211 Towne Park Circle  
Louisville, KY 40243

502.473.7000

9402 Towne Square Ave.  
Cincinnati, OH 45242

513.531.7400

[www.WeTeachReading.com](http://www.WeTeachReading.com)



# Izzy's Story

Dear Langsford Staff,

This past April, I sat with my daughter as she cried and called herself stupid. She was so frustrated with reading and couldn't understand why reading was so much easier for her classmates. She was aware that she couldn't read as well as they did; she couldn't read chapter books yet and still struggled with beginning reader books. She was embarrassed, frustrated, and losing confidence in herself.

I had noticed some of her frustration and difficulties over the past couple of months but wasn't terribly concerned until I heard her say how she really felt. She believed she was not as smart as the other students.

As her mother this broke my heart. As a high school English teacher this set off my alarms, for I have seen the damage that is caused in students through years of struggling with reading. I have had 16 year old students who would rather get kicked out of class than admit they have difficulty reading. They purposely act out and disrupt class to avoid letting anyone else know that they read well below grade level and blame themselves for their lack of ability.

With all of these thoughts running through my head, I met with Izzy's teacher and compared notes. She was also aware of Izzy's struggle and we both agreed she needed further testing to find out what was at the root of Izzy's reading difficulties.

That's when we came to Langsford. The testing results showed that Izzy is quite bright and knows all the different parts of reading; however, she did have difficulty processing it all. She needed intervention in order for her to learn how to put all the pieces together and read more fluently,

with less time and energy spent on decoding. This meant she would be able to read more smoothly, more quickly, and comprehend more of what she was reading! I signed her up for sessions right away.

Izzy was actually excited to learn she would be taking lessons to help with her reading. She sees me read a lot and though she enjoys being read to, she wants to be able to read by herself. She wants to be an independent reader and understood that it was the way her brain worked, not her intelligence, which caused her to struggle with reading.

After a little over 2 months of reading instruction at Langsford, I have watched Izzy go from reading simple first reader books to chapter books. She is much more confident, does not get nearly as frustrated as she used to, and enjoys reading to me and her brother.

Langsford's teachers were able to work with Izzy in such a way that she enjoyed going to her sessions and was excited by her own improvement. Now she reads everything... street signs, fliers that come in the mail, books, children's magazines, and labels on food boxes! Her writing has improved as have her computer skills; she is now able to play Webkins without my help!

So, to all the teachers and staff at Langsford who were able to help Izzy learn to read more fluently and gain her confidence back, I sincerely thank you. The change I see in her goes beyond just being able to read and I am so thankful that I did not wait to see if she would just grow out of it or overlook it as something that would be fixed in time. Izzy is now creating a list of books she wants to read. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I cannot say it enough.

➔ Lee Payne

*Would you like to see your Langsford story in the next Langsford Letter? Just send your letter and a picture of your former Langsford student to our nearest office.*



Don't be left out of the Langsford loop!

Keep up with events, programs and receive information about reading by joining our email list.

To sign up today, simply go to [www.WeTeachReading.com](http://www.WeTeachReading.com)

Read our blog for a peek inside Langsford: [www.langsfordblog.com](http://www.langsfordblog.com)

# Website Spotlight

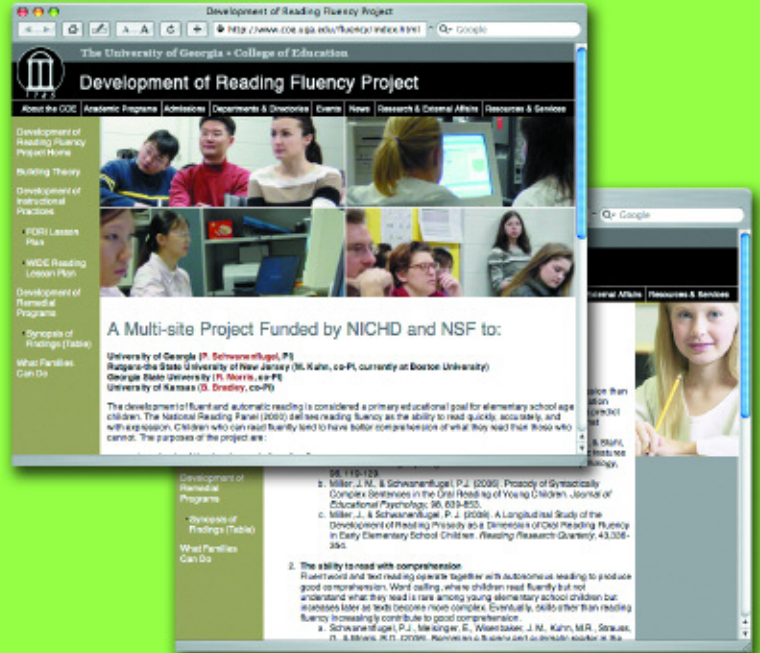
## Development Of Reading Fluency Project

<http://www.coe.uga.edu/fluency/index.html>

This website is hosted by the University of Georgia's College of Education. The project is devoted to helping educators and parents gain a better understanding of reading fluency and examines varied approaches for developing fluency in school and in the home.

The site includes detailed lesson plans for teachers to use in the classroom and also

offers activities for parents to work with their children. Research and analysis of current reading programs is also available on the site.



<continued from page 1>

by moving across a page and accurately naming objects, colors, letters or numbers while being timed. The inherent speed in which a student performs this naming task helps Langsford develop a customized plan, weaving in the exact type of support in fluency the student may require.

### Improvement Through Practice

Measuring processing speed early helps identify students who will likely need more practice than most. Knowing this will avoid fluency struggles that can lead to larger reading gaps in later grades. Once the student is 'on the page' and reading, it's usually a matter of consistent practice. Even for those students whose natural processing speed indicates they may always

struggle, fluency can still improve with early concentrated effort and practice.

Keep in mind that fluency will vary depending on the text read. Like the driver going up a steep hill or around a curve, complicated or unfamiliar passages will naturally slow down any reader. The important thing to remember is that we want students to develop the reading fluency needed to effortlessly take the words on the page for a nice smooth ride.

*Is your child's fluency where it needs to be? Contact Langsford for a free copy of a table which shows expected oral reading fluency levels for grades one through eight.*

We teach reading  
& learning for life!

LOUISVILLE  
2520 Bardstown Road  
Louisville, KY 40205

211 Townepark Circle  
Louisville, KY 40243

502.473.7000

CINCINNATI  
9402 Towne Square Ave.  
Cincinnati, OH 45242

513.531.7400

[info@WeTeachReading.com](mailto:info@WeTeachReading.com)

Want more  
reading news?

Subscribe to our periodic  
e-mail newsletter. Go to:  
[www.WeTeachReading.com](http://www.WeTeachReading.com)



Langsford Learning Acceleration Centers, with locations in Louisville, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio, has tutored children and adults since 1992. We have proven results teaching phonological (phonemic) awareness, phonics, reading, spelling, reading and listening comprehension, and handwriting using specialized, research-based approaches.

From enrichment to remediation, we have extensive experience training the foundations associated with independent learning, including helping individuals with learning disabilities, auditory processing disorder and dyslexia.

- Multisensory, one-to-one learning sessions
- A customized plan of action
- Diagnostic assessment
- Highly-trained, year-round staff

**We Make  
Learning  
Fun!**

LANGSFORD  
Learning Acceleration Centers  
2520 Bardstown Road  
Louisville, KY 40205  
502.473.7000

