

## Importance of fluency

Being able to read fluently, defined as accurately and with an appropriate speed and phrasing, is a well-recognized mark of a competent reader. However, fluency is of greater importance than just providing a polished oral reading performance. Accuracy and speed of sight word recognition are important because of the link to comprehension. Children who read disfluently, reading slowly and hesitating at words, have to work hard at word recognition. They are so busy trying to recall or 'sound out' words that they have little chance to process the meaning of what they are reading. On the other hand, children who read fluently no longer need to devote scarce attentional resources to figuring out words. Rather, the word recognition part of the task is on automatic pilot, so to speak, which allows greater attention to discerning the meaning of the text. Fluent readers are not just fast and accurate; their phrasing also reveals that they are making sense of the text as they read. Assisting children to recognize high frequency words automatically will pay off in improved comprehension.

## Developing fast and accurate recognition

To build a foundation for fluent reading children must learn to recognize sight words quickly and accurately. They are helped in this learning task if the words are taught to them in small 'chunks'. The Key Words list is eminently suitable in this regard. The first twelve words make up 25% of everything we read, an additional twenty words account for 40% of what we read and the remaining 68 words (100 in total) represent over 50% of both juvenile and adult literature. It seems reasonable to suggest that helping children master these 100 Key Words is time well spent.

## Organization of this program

The first 100 Key Words make up 50% of everything we read. An additional 150 words account for approximately two thirds of everything we read. In this program, the 250 Key Words are introduced to children in a structured and organized way. The program ensures that they are given a limited number of words to learn at any one time and are brought to mastery level before they move on to the next group of words.