A Lesson on Reading Fluency Learned From The Tortoise and the Hare- Reflection

With current RtI mandates and changes in SLD qualifying criteria, schools are relying heavily on progress monitoring to measure student success and to confirm that student are making adequate progress toward end of year benchmarks. Unfortunately, not all of the progress monitoring tools provide data that is actually appropriate to gauge success or drive instruction.

As in stated in this article, the current focus on relying solely on speed as an indicator of reading fluency can actually result in misleading data and can be counterproductive. When children are pushed to read as fast as possible in order to demonstrate reading speed, they are receiving the message that fast reading equates to good reading. This message is inaccurate, and it is not a message that educators should be sending to their students, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

Reading fluency is comprised of three required components: accuracy (reading words correctly, by sight, or by decoding), rate (reading speed), and prosody (reading smoothly, effortlessly, and with proper phrasing and expression.) An equal emphasis must be placed on all three components in order for a child to develop reading fluency. Teachers can assist students in developing true reading fluency by:

- modeling fluent reading in all content areas
- using teacher think-alouds
- providing a variety of authentic re-reading opportunities
- selecting texts for re-reading matched to individual students’ reading levels, just slightly below their instructional levels
- providing quality instruction in decoding and comprehension skills and strategies
- providing explicit reinforcement and corrective feedback, rather than prompting, telling, or “skipping it”. (p. 321)

Due to more and more federal demands of demonstrated student growth and teacher accountability, schools and districts are placing too much emphasis upon one-minute timed assessments and student scores. As is made clear in this article, reading fluency consists of much more than the number of words that a child can read in a one-minute time frame.