

What We Know about Fluency

Carl Binder

Fluency is Precision Teaching's definition of true mastery - accuracy plus speed, or quality plus pace. Most people understand the importance of fluency and have a common-sense appreciation of it. Research from a variety of fields beyond Precision Teaching has confirmed that fluency (what cognitive psychologists call "automaticity") is associated with retention and maintenance of skills and knowledge, endurance or resistance to distraction, and application or transfer of training. Examples from such "performance" fields as athletics, playing musical instruments, martial arts, dance, and language learning illustrate the importance of fluency. Most educators do not understand that fluency is also the definition of mastery in academic and professional skills and knowledge. What we know about fluency from common experience, as well as from human factors engineering, verbal learning studies, perceptual motor learning research, human information processing research, the study of reading, and other fields, can be useful in discussions with other teachers, students, parents, and the general public. Reviewing what we know and suggesting ways of using this knowledge when telling others about Precision Teaching is vital to our growth and influence. By discussing findings from fields outside PT, we add credibility to our field and to our efforts to promote fluency-based education.

Dr. Carl Binder is President of Precision Teaching and Management Systems, Inc. For further information, contact him at P. O. Box 95009, Nonantum, MA 02195.