Multi-sensory Magic

To make memory work, give your brain a break! Let as many senses as possible join in the experience of learning so that each sense can cross-file what you want to know! Every sense literally backs up and reinforces the learning of every other sense. Think about this with writing letters and saying their sounds simultaneously.

- Hear each sound as you make it.
- Feel the vibrations in your throat as you speak.
- See it take shape on the page.
- Notice the pressure in your muscles as you form each letter.

For the hardest letters and sounds, stand up for some whole body sensing! To see what I mean, try this experiment. Draw a huge letter in the air. Let your largest muscles and joints feel the shape of forming this monster-sized letter. Don't forget to repeat its sound as you go! Neurologists assure us motor memory is extremely powerful. Let it work for you and your students!

Games involve activities that deepen the sensory input for memory by engaging the whole child who may even be vibrating with excitement. Players can also be helped with some "time out" for seeing, hearing, and feeling sounds with simultaneous writing and saying.

This same multiple-sense support to learning can be applied to all sorts of memory tasks. If spelling words need to be learned, make sure the letters are spoken at the same moment they are written. If the alphabet is hard to remember, try practicing it by jumping along a series of page-sized letters laid out around a room or down a hall. Every muscle and joint will help that alphabet weld itself into the brain. Once you have the idea, you can think of countless applications for multi-sensory practice to apply to whatever is needed.

From this perspective of multi-sensory learning, the **power of games** in learning becomes clear. The motivation and excitement in playing learning games contributes to multi-sensory activity, thus stimulating growth in the brain's communication pathways and, in turn, expanding networks for thinking, understanding, and creativity in any area of pursuit. These developing pathways will strengthen the lightning-speed responses that are necessary for fluid reading (as well as mental math). Nerve impulses are constantly circulating communication back and forth and around between sounds, letters, and meanings. You see a letter or a word; you think how it is sounded; you register a meaning. If the meaning doesn't make sense, you reconsider your pronunciation or you reconsider the letters. Did you perhaps misread, or could the print have been in error? Back and forth and around you go as you clarify meaning behind the print. All this can easily be overwhelming if not for the power of multi-sensory learning and the fun of playing a game.