



The Six-Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program (Primary Level)

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**Grades K-2 • Intervention 1-3
Passage Reading Levels Grades 1-3**

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Introduction

In order to become proficient readers, primary students must possess a foundational knowledge of phonetic elements, an automatic sight-word vocabulary, and the ability to read text fluently. The *Six-Minute Solution Primary* will help students do just that. Our research-based, effective instructional procedures are designed to “open the door to literacy” to primary students while using only six minutes of the instructional day.

The program contains assessments, instructional formats, and fluency practice sheets for common phonetic elements; as well as automatic words lists and nonfiction reading passages that are designed for partner practice, but can also be implemented with small instructional groups or individual students. Teachers may choose to introduce the *Six-Minute Solution Primary* activities in one of two ways: (1) they may follow the general description of the activity; or (2) they may follow the scripted format for the activity, which provides exact wording to use when introducing the concepts.

Phonetic Elements

The explicit teaching of sounds (phonemes) and the letters used to represent them (graphemes) is known as *systematic phonics instruction*. According to a report of the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; NICHD, 2000), “Systematic phonics instruction produces gains in reading and spelling, not only in the early grades (K–2) but also in the later grades (2–6), and among children having difficulty learning to read.”

Phonetic Elements Fluency Building Sheets (see *Fluency Building Sheets*) are designed to build fluency at the individual letter, sound, and decodable word level. There are 113 skills sheets included in this section. *Decodable Short-Vowel and Long-Vowel Stories* (also found in *Fluency Building Sheets*), which focus on targeted phonetic elements, are provided for additional reinforcement. There are a total of 20 stories—ten focusing on short-vowel words, and ten focusing on long-vowel words—in this section.

Automatic Words

Automatic words are those that occur with high frequency in textbooks for grades 1–8. Since these words repeatedly appear—a mere 13 words account for more than 25% of the words in print (Johns & Lenski, 2001)—it is imperative that primary students be able to read these words automatically. The 25 *Automatic Words Fluency Building Sheets* (see *Fluency Building Sheets*) are designed to build fluency at the sight-word level by having students read and reread the same ten words on each list until they can read them at a rate of one word per second, or 60 correct words per minute (cwpm).

Practice Passages

The 75 *Practice Passages* (see *Fluency Building Sheets*) are based on social studies and science standards. The passages are broken down by grade level—1, 2, and 3—and each grade level has five different themed units, each containing five related passages with common vocabulary. The five passages in each themed unit are sequenced in successively higher reading levels within

that grade. As students practice fluency by reading the *Practice Passages*, they also enhance their background knowledge and content-area vocabulary.

Rereading to Build Fluency

As the saying goes, "Practice makes perfect," whether it's shooting basketballs, playing the piano, or processing text in a smooth, efficient, and accurate manner. The benefits of repeated readings of the same passage to build reading fluency have been well documented in many research studies (Levy, Nicholls, & Kroshen, 1993; Meyer & Felton, 1999; Samuels, 1979). The *Six-Minute Solution Primary* helps students succeed at reading fluency by using an instructional model that is based on repeated-reading research and partnering students whose instructional and fluency levels most closely match (see *Table I.1*). Research supports the fact that students' reading skills improve when they work with peers in structured reading activities (Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1989; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Famish, 1987).

Table I.1 THE SIX-MINUTE SOLUTION PRIMARY INSTRUCTIONAL FORMAT		
Time	Materials	Procedures
1 minute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two copies of the same <i>Fluency Building Sheet</i> or <i>Practice Passage</i> in plastic sleeves. One dry-erase marker and an erasing cloth in a zipper-lock plastic bag. Two <i>Fluency Record</i> sheets. A digital timer or stopwatch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher announces that fluency timings will begin. Teacher hands out materials to student partners. Students remove fluency materials from their partnership's portfolio. Partners record today's date on their respective <i>Fluency Record</i> sheets. Partner 1 will read first; Partner 2 will highlight Partner 1's errors and stopping point with the dry-erase marker on the transparent plastic sleeve. Teacher monitors to ensure students are ready to begin their timings.
1 minute		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher sets timer and says, "Begin." All Partner 1s read. All Partner 2s mark Partner 1 reading errors and stopping point on his/her copy of the <i>Fluency Building Sheet</i> or <i>Practice Passage</i>.
1 minute		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Partner 2s give feedback. Partner 2 tells Partner 1 how many elements/words he/she read, the number of errors he/she made, and does the error-correction procedure. Partner 1 records the numbers on his <i>Fluency Record</i> sheet. Partner 2 wipes off the dry-erase markings on his fluency builder and gives the dry-erase marker to Partner 1.
1 minute		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Partner 2s read. Teacher again sets timer and says, "Begin." Partner 2 reads the same <i>Fluency Building Sheet</i> or <i>Practice Passage</i> to Partner 1. Partner 1 marks Partner 2 errors and records the stopping point on his/her copy of the fluency builder.

1 minute		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All Partner 1s give feedback. ■ Partner 1 tells Partner 2 how many words he/she read, how many errors he/she made, and does the error-correction procedure. ■ Partner 2 records the numbers on his <i>Fluency Record</i> sheet. ■ Partner 1 wipes off the dry-erase markings on his fluency builder and returns the dry-erase marker and erasing cloth to the zipper-lock plastic bag.
1 minute		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Students put materials away. ■ Students return their <i>Fluency Building Sheet</i> or <i>Practice Passage</i>, <i>Fluency Record</i> sheets, and zipper-lock plastic bags with the dry-erase marker and erasing cloth to their portfolios.

Six-Minute Solution Primary Sample Schedule

Monday

- All partnerships have new fluency building sheets or passages. Partners preview the entire fluency sheet or passage for accuracy (i.e., whisper-read or silently read, underlining unknown words). Teacher monitors and identifies any unknown words to either partner.

Option 1: No timings on Mondays. Have partners use the allotted six minutes for previewing passages.

Option 2: Allow extra time (10–15 minutes) on Mondays. Have partners first preview their fluency building sheet or passage for accuracy. Then, conduct partner fluency practice during the allotted six minutes.

Tuesday through Thursday

- The *Six-Minute Solution Primary* procedure: Fluency practice.

Friday

- Partners turn in their fluency building sheet or passage and select new ones.

Option for Practice Passages: Extend the amount of time on Fridays to incorporate comprehension strategies or summary writing. Have students use the practiced passage before turning it in and selecting a new one. See *Chapter 8* for comprehension and writing strategies suggestions.

Partnering Students to Build Fluency

In the *Six-Minute Solution Primary*, students' current instructional reading levels are determined, and then students are placed in fluency partnerships. In these partnerships, one student reads the passage or fluency building sheet to his/her partner for one minute while the partner tracks the words read correctly as well as the reading errors. The partners then switch roles, with each partner charting his or her own progress. The entire procedure takes only six minutes.

Decoding & Fluency

Experts may disagree as to what exactly is the best approach to teach students how to read, but they are in agreement as to what good reading “sounds” like. According to Carnine, Silbert, and Kame’enui (1997), *fluency* is “reading smoothly, easily, and quickly.” In order to read fluently, the reader must be able to decode the vast majority of words automatically, with approximately 95% accuracy. However, although there is a clear link between fluency and decoding skills, fluency practice alone will not improve a student’s decoding skills. Any underlying decoding problems must also be addressed either prior to or in conjunction with fluency practice.

Comprehension & Fluency

Research also shows a high correlation between reading *comprehension* and reading *fluency* (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002; Foorman & Mehta, 2002; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). If a student is focusing his/her cognitive energies on word decoding and recognition, those energies are not available for comprehension. In the words of Farstrup and Samuels (2002), *fluency* consists of “optical, perceptual, syntactic, and semantic cycles, each melting into the next as readers try to get meaning as efficiently as possible using minimal time and energy.”

Independent Reading & Fluency

Fluent readers generally find reading to be a pleasurable activity; as a result, they read more. When the amount of time spent on independent reading increases, there are accompanying gains in reading-related skills. As students read more, they increase not only their comprehension but also their vocabulary, background knowledge, decoding, and fluency skills. The “Matthew effect”—a term coined by reading researcher Dr. Keith Stanovich—refers to the effect that in reading, as in other areas of life, “the rich get richer while the poor get poorer” (Stanovich, 1986).

Work Completion & Fluency

Fluent readers will be better able to complete both class assignments and homework. As an example, consider two students reading at the second-grade level. Student A—a fluent second-grade reader—is able to read an average of 80 cwpm. Student B—a struggling second-grade reader—has an average fluency rate of 20 cwpm. Both students are assigned the same amount of reading. Student A, with an appropriate fluency rate, is able to complete the reading assignment in 20 minutes. Student B, who reads four times slower than Student A, needs more than an hour to complete the same assignment.

Reading Achievement & Fluency Practice

Although the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Pinnell, Piluski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough, & Beatty, 1995) found that 44% of fourth graders were not fluent readers, research shows that educators have the knowledge and tools to positively affect this problem. After analyzing many fluency studies, the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) reported that fluency can be taught and that guided, repeated, oral-reading procedures are “appropriate and valuable avenues for increasing reading fluency and overall reading achievement.” Skilled readers read words quickly, correctly, and without hesi-

tation. Students who have not become fluent readers continue to plod slowly through each sentence without experiencing the joy of quick, automatic, fluent reading. By its very nature, fluency practice supports comprehension. It provides a skill-building activity that enables students to move quickly through text. As students build fluency through rereading, they amass a larger reading vocabulary. As they begin to read with automaticity, their cognitive attention can be focused on the text's meaning instead of on word identification. The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) found that repeated oral reading, accompanied by feedback and guidance, resulted in significant reading achievement.

The *Six-Minute Solution Primary* uses both of these research-validated components—repeated readings of the same passage and/or fluency building sheet as well as oral feedback from peers—to build reading fluency.

Keeping Fit

0 Exercise is good for you. There are many reasons why.
 10 The best kind of exercise makes you breathe deeply. This
 20 helps your lungs grow strong. It gets your heart pumping.
 30 This helps your heart grow strong. Swimming is good
 39 exercise. So is skating and bike riding. Walking is good for
 50 you. So is jumping rope.
 55 Some exercise can make you strong. Use your muscles
 64 for heavy work. This will make your muscles stronger.
 73 Doing push-ups makes you strong. So can bike riding and
 84 skating.
 85 Exercise makes you flexible. It helps you bend your
 94 body. It helps you stretch. Dancing is good. So is karate.
 105 Exercise helps stop weight gain. If you are active, you
 115 burn off calories. Then your body will not store them as
 126 fat.
 127 Best of all, keeping fit will make you feel good!
 137

Total Words Read _____

- Errors _____

= CWPM _____

Animals of the Rain Forest

0 Many animals live in rain forests. They live in all
10 layers of the rain forests. Birds live in the emergent layer.
21 They live in the giant trees. Birds also live in the canopy.
33 It is the upper part of the trees. The toucan is a rain forest
47 bird. Its beak is large and colorful.

54 Amphibians live in rain forests. They spend part of
63 their time in water. The rest of the time, they spend on
75 land. The red-eyed frog is a rain forest animal. It has bright
80 red eyes.

90 Both small and large mammals live in rain forests. The
100 jaguar is a rain forest mammal. It lives on the forest floor.
112 The sloth is a rain forest mammal. It does not live on the
125 forest floor. Sloths live in trees. They spend most of their
136 lives hanging upside down from tree branches.

143 There are many insects in a rain forest. They are
153 found in every layer. There are butterflies and beetles.
162 Worms and spiders live in rain forests. So do ants and
173 caterpillars.

174 Rain forests are home to millions of the earth's
183 animals and insects.

186

Total Words Read _____

- Errors _____

= CWPM _____

Reuse

0 Reuse means to use something more than once or
 9 to give it to someone who needs it. Reusing things is an
 21 important way to manage waste. There are many items we
 31 can reuse.

33 First, we can stop throwing away plastic. Plastic cups,
 42 forks, spoons, knives, plates, and bags should be saved.
 51 They can be washed and reused. We can save water
 61 bottles and soda cups. Many stores will let people refill
 71 their own cups. Not only will we be managing waste, we
 82 will be saving money at the same time.

90 Second, we can be careful about paper use. Cloth
 99 napkins are better to use than paper napkins. Not only
 109 are they larger and stronger, they can be washed and used
 120 for many years. Paper and cloth gift bags can be reused,
 131 too. When we get wrapped gifts, we can carefully unwrap
 141 them. Then, we can use the gift wrap paper again instead
 152 of throwing it away. We should remember to take cloth
 162 bags with us to the store. Then we won't have to choose
 174 between paper or plastic.

178 Finally, we can try to fix things that break. That is
 189 better than throwing them in the trash. Or, if we can't fix
 201 them, we can give them away. There are places that fix
 212 broken items and then give them away. If we decide to
 223 buy something new like a sofa or a bike, we should sell or
 236 give away the old one. That way, the items will end up in
 249 someone's home and not in a landfill. Reusing items will
 259 help protect our environment.
 263

Total Words Read _____

- Errors _____

= CWPM _____