Natural Phonics Primer™
Oral Reading Speeds

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Rapid word processing speeds are an indicator of decoding automaticity. The faster a student can decode words while maintaining accurately, the higher the degree of automaticity. Good comprehension depends on decoding automaticity: higher automaticity makes possible higher comprehension.

In the rush for higher word processing speeds, it is very important not to skip any essential sub-skills. Whole-word readers sometimes appear to initially read faster than phonics-readers; but in the long run, their faulty word processing skills lead to lower automaticity and seriously compromised comprehension.

Processing skills (speed and accuracy) can be accurately measured by timing student's oral reading of Rudolf Flesch's *Exercises*. The times recommended by the *Victory Drill Book* reflect years of highly successful experience teaching the *Exercises* to children of every age. These speeds are an accurate measure of independent word processing skills, and they are an indication of developing automaticity, which in turn naturally promotes high level comprehension. They are one-minute timings.

Minimum Speed for Page Mastery

Grade	Speed
Pre-Kindergarten	20 words per minute
Kindergarten	30 words per minute
First Grade	40 words per minute
Second Grade	55 words per minute
Third Grade	70 words per minute
Fourth Grade	85 words per minute
Fifth Grade	100 words per minute
Sixth Grade	115 words per minute
Seventh Grade	130 words per minute
Eight Grade	130 words per minute

Once the students have mastered the *Exercises*, they should start every year with a review of all 72 *Exercises*. Each student's speed should be measured to assure that they are able to read the words at the calibrated speed for their grade level. This review is very valuable and will assure that no student will develop whole-word dyslexia through overexposure to debilitating sight-word books. Exclusive attention to sight-word readers (grade level readers) can seriously erode the student's decoding skills. Challenging vocabulary requiring intense attention to decoding enables students to maintain and improve their word processing skills and enhance their comprehension skills.

The Natural Phonics Primer™

Exercise Progress Chart

Oral Reading Speeds

Teacher: _____

Student: _____

1 **Step 1**	2	3 Review	4	5 Review	6	7 Review	8	9 Review
10	11	12 Review	13 **Step 2**	14	15	16 Review	17	18
19 Review	20	21	22 Review	23	24 **Step 3**	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33 Review	34	35	36
37	38 Review	39	40 **Step 4**	41	42	43 Review	44	45 Review
46	47 Review	48	49	50 Review	51	52	53	54 Review
55	56	57 Review	58	59 Review	60 **Step 5**	61	62	63 Review
64 Review	65	66	67	68 Review	69	70	71 Review	72

Information on Fluency
from
The Morningside Model of Generative Instruction

Mr. Bob Rose brought the Morningside Model of Instruction to my attention in his thought provoking book, *Forget the Bell Curve*. In June 2011, I got a copy of Ken Johnson and Elizabeth M. Street's book, *The Morningside Model of Generative Instruction: What It Means To Leave No Child Behind,* Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies, 2004.

I simply want to show insights that I gained from the book that relate to the nature of fluency as it relates word recognition via the decoding route. I have two main point: 1) to show that insufficient fluency does not support student advancement in the same way that higher levels of fluency do, and 2) to encourage teachers to help students achieve the necessary levels of fluency through well designed daily practice exercises. Psychologists often call this type of training for fluency, Over-learning.

In the following paragraphs I will present information from that book as a series of quotations with comments. My comments are in [brackets].

> The elegance of an instructional program depends on the programmer's ability to detect and teach some minimal response or generative set which can combine and recombine into the universal set of all possible relationships. One is looking, very simply, for the exponential value of key instructional events, in which behaviors that emerge are in a power relationship to the elements which are taught (28f). [Generative is also called "contingency adduction," in which the contingency "draws out" the additional (novel) behavior. Learning the alphabet to fluency is a "key instructional event" which has a "power relationship" (possessing exponential value) with learning to read and spell. The paragraph goes on to illustrate by comparing sight-word and phonics instruction. Sight-word instruction possesses no power-relationship (exponential value) to reading because it does not generalize to other words, phonics, on the other hand, "will reliably produce recombinative reading behavior, guaranteeing successful reading of thousands of words beyond those taught in the original instruction."]
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> The goal of fluency building is to build hardy academic behaviors – behaviors that weather periods of no practice, occur with short latencies, are impervious to distraction, an are easily accessible in new situations (30). [Each goal is important. Many students whose fluency is inadequate will experience a degradation of ability during times of little use, such as over the summer vacation. Students with high fluency are not easily distracted so they can read well even in distracting circumstances. The skills are accessible to new situations in that when the students read novels or technical work their decoding skills are so refined that they find the reading relative easy and enjoyable.]
>
> Precision Teaching was conceived by Dr. Ogden Lindsey at the University of Kansas in his quest for a mechanism that brought continuous measurement and rate data into educational practice. Lindsey was heavily influenced by Skinner's allegiance to rate as the primary datum for studying behavioral change, and he recognized that traditional educational measurement systems that depend on percent correct and letter grades placed artificial ceilings on performance and lead students and teachers to a false security about the strength of their performance. Both Skinner and Lindsey believed that high rate behavior not only looked different than low-rate behavior, it also had fundamentally different features (66). [Note that high rate behavior is fundamentally different. There is a quantum of difference.]

In Precision Teaching parlance, once a performance demonstrates retention, endurance, and application, it is *fluent*. As a metaphor, performance fluency is flowing, flexible, effortless, errorless, automatic, confident, second-nature and masterful. When performance is fluent, it becomes a highly probably activity. Fluent performance is fun, energetic, naturally reinforced behavior. Dr. Carl Binder (1993,1996) coined the term *fluency building* to refer to practice activities that are designed to achieve these goals. [The Natural Phonics Primer exercises are designed with this purpose in mind.] Currently at Morningside, we use five characteristics of performance to set fluency performance frequencies, changing the acronym to RESSA: Retention, Endurance, Stability, Application, and Adduction (67).

References on Fluency

1. Carl Binder's brief explanation of Precision Teaching: "Behavioral Fluency: A New Paradigm."

   http://binder-riha.com/behav_fluency_new_paradigm.pdf

2. Carl Binder & C. L. Watkins (1990) Precision Teaching and Direct Instruction: Measurably superior instructional technology in school.

   http://www.binder-riha.com/PT_DI.pdf

3. Fluency: Achieving True Masterly in the Learning Process (2002) by Carl Binder, Elizabeth Haughton & Barbara Bateman. (Note: Bateman wrote the special education edition of Open Court many years ago, before it was purchased by SRA/McGraw-Hill.). This is a very clear and helpful article. Note that the old edition of the *Victory Drill Book* is referenced in the article.

   http://special.edschool.virginia.edu/papers/Binder-et-al_Fluency.pdf

The Natural Phonics Primer can be accessed on the Flesch Audio Page of the www.donpotter.net website:

http://donpotter.net/education_pages/flesch_audio.html

Here is the Black Line Master for making transparencies of the Exercises:

http://donpotter.net/pdf/fleschphonicsexercises.pdf