



**Read  
Naturally<sup>®</sup>  
Strategy** Rationale  
& Research **Brief**

# Rationale for the Read Naturally Strategy

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This brief describes the evidence-based instructional strategies and relevant reading research that form the powerful Read Naturally Strategy.

## Fluency and the Striving Reader

*Fluent readers are able to read orally with appropriate speed, accuracy, and proper expression.*<sup>1</sup>

Forty years of research studies indicate that fluency is one of the critical building blocks of reading. Many researchers have found that fluency:

- Highly correlates with reading comprehension.<sup>2</sup>
- Strongly predicts later reading achievement.<sup>3</sup>
- Causally contributes to improved comprehension.<sup>4</sup>

When a student reads fluently, that student is likely to comprehend what he or she is reading. Consequently, teachers need to find ways to intentionally develop their students' fluency. While some students learn to read fluently without explicit fluency instruction, many students need more support than provided in the course of normal classroom instruction.

Students become fluent by reading. However, research analyzed by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NICHD, 2000) found that just encouraging students to read independently is not the most effective way to improve reading fluency. In fact, during independent reading time, many at-risk students do not read at all, will not or cannot independently read the books in classroom libraries, pretend to read, or just look at the pictures.

As a result, poor fluency is a self-perpetuating problem. Striving readers read so few words during their instructional and independent reading time that the gap between the number of words they read compared to their peers continually widens. These readers need targeted and intensive instruction in order to achieve fluency. Read Naturally intervention programs are developed to help teachers meet this need.

## Evidence-Based Strategies

Research provides evidence that teacher modeling,<sup>5</sup> repeated reading,<sup>6</sup> and progress monitoring<sup>7</sup> are effective instructional strategies to involve striving readers in the act of reading and improve their fluency. These methods also enhance understanding and accelerate reading achievement.

### Teacher Modeling

In this strategy, a striving reader reads along as a proficient reader models correct pronunciation, rate, and expression. Teacher modeling helps students learn unknown words, practice difficult words, and use proper pronunciation and expression.

### Repeated Reading

In this strategy, a student reads a short story or passage many times until able to read it fluently. Repeated reading helps the student learn to recognize some words, master others, and increase fluency. The student then transfers knowledge of the words learned and mastered to subsequent texts.

## Progress Monitoring

In this strategy, a teacher works with a student to set goals and expectations, provide feedback, and track progress over time by graphing data. Progress monitoring has been shown to increase student involvement in the learning process, improve student performance, develop higher student self-efficacy (the student's belief he or she will have success on similar future tasks), reward student effort, and increase student motivation to keep reading. It also promotes teacher awareness of each student's progress.

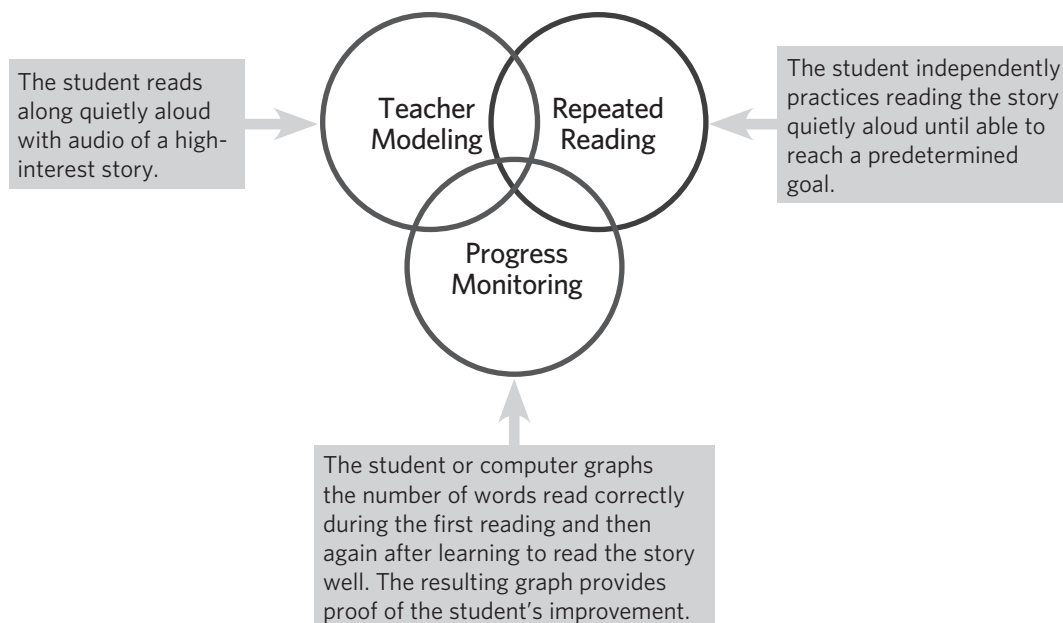
The Read Naturally Strategy combines these three powerful, evidence-based strategies—teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring—to improve reading proficiency.

## The Read Naturally Strategy

By combining the three evidenced-based strategies above into one easily learned, highly structured process, the Read Naturally Strategy lays the groundwork for individualizing instruction and providing motivating opportunities to read. It provides the support, structure, and motivation that striving readers need in order to become proficient readers.

The process begins when the student selects and reads an unfamiliar, high-interest, nonfiction story. The student or computer graphs the number of words read correctly per minute—the first step in progress monitoring. Then, the student benefits from the support of teacher modeling by reading the story quietly aloud along with a carefully paced recording. Next, the student reads the story repeatedly and unassisted until able to read it accurately and with expression at a goal rate. Finally, the student or computer completes the progress monitoring by graphing the number of words read correctly per minute on the final reading. The resulting graph provides concrete proof to the student of improved performance and serves to motivate the student to begin the process again.

### The Read Naturally Strategy



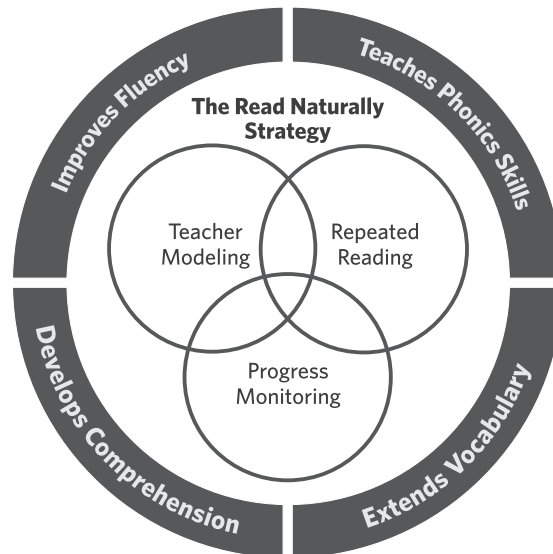
# Read Naturally Strategy Programs

The Read Naturally Strategy is the core of Read Naturally intervention programs. The structure and content of Read Naturally programs broaden the scope of this powerful strategy by integrating comprehension, vocabulary, and phonics with fluency instruction. Programs not only address these essential components of reading instruction but also improve students' attitude and motivation. The result is effective and efficient reading programs for striving readers.

## The Strategy Plus the Components of Reading

In 2000, the National Reading Panel identified five essential components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, phonics, and fluency. Read Naturally intervention programs present opportunities for each student to acquire vocabulary, develop comprehension, and learn phonics skills while improving fluency.

### Read Naturally Intervention Programs



Students working in Read Naturally's fluency-based interventions—Read Naturally Live (cloud-based software) and Encore II (print with audio CDs)—benefit from these evidence-based practices. The following describes the student experience within these programs.

### Vocabulary

In Read Naturally Live and Encore II, a student acquires vocabulary through:

- Reading and listening to definitions of key words.
- Using key words to write predictions.
- Encountering more targeted vocabulary words in the context of the story.
- Utilizing a student-friendly glossary.
- Considering and using targeted words when answering comprehension questions.

## **Comprehension**

In Read Naturally Live and Encore II, a student develops comprehension through:

- Writing predictions.
- Summarizing stories.
- Deepening understanding as a result of repeated readings.
- Answering a variety of question types.
- Graphing the number and types of questions answered correctly.
- Analyzing strengths and weaknesses with teacher support.

## **Phonics**

In the Read Naturally Live and Encore II Phonics series, a student reviews and masters phonics skills through:

- Completing a lesson provided with each story about the featured letter pattern(s).
- Reading the story and word list along with audio to learn the words with the featured patterns.
- Repeatedly reading the story and word list independently until able to read them well.
- Writing dictated words from the word list.

## **Fluency**

In Read Naturally Live and Encore II, a student becomes more fluent using the Read Naturally Strategy (teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring) through:

- Reading an unpracticed story and graphing the number of words read correctly per minute.
- Reading the story along with an appropriately paced audio.
- Repeatedly reading the interesting, nonfiction story independently until able to read it well.
- Reading the story for the teacher and graphing the results.

## **Additional Benefits of Read Naturally Live and Encore II**

In addition to significant improvement in their students' reading, teachers have noted several other benefits of Read Naturally Live and Encore II. Students often:

- Experience increased confidence and self-esteem.
- Take responsibility for their successes.
- Verbalize that immediate and frequent feedback motivates them to keep reading.
- Express pride in their reading achievements and hope for their academic futures.

These programs also help to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners by assigning each student to the series and level of material that will maximize the student's progress in reading. This individualization makes it possible for students working in different series and levels of material to participate in the program at the same time.

In addition, making an adaptation based on the age and first language of each student is an easy way to accommodate the diverse needs of students. Analyzing student data on each student's story and graph pages offers a concrete way to monitor student performance in order to refine the student's level or goal. Making recommended adjustments is another way to differentiate instruction in order to meet the changing needs of the student.

Once students have been taught how to follow the steps, their time on task is very high, and they spend most of the instructional time engaged in the act of reading. Moreover, the intervention's structure allows students to work independently most of the time. Teachers can thus give more individualized time to students.

And finally, students using the Read Naturally Strategy get excited about reading. They often show an increased interest in coming to reading class. They enjoy selecting and reading the high-interest stories, learning to read with ease, and tracking their progress on the graphs. Because students get immediate feedback that encourages them to "beat their scores," they get hooked on the program, much as they might get hooked on a video game. When students are interested and engaged, they are less likely to become disruptive. Many students also report reading books at home, and parents comment on improvements both in the amount of time their children spend reading at home and in their attitudes about reading.

## End Notes

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- <sup>1</sup>These indicators, as articulated by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000), continue to be widely accepted as important markers of fluent reading. For a full review of historical and current theories and definitions of fluency and its components, see Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010.
- <sup>2</sup>Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, and Jenkins (2001) summarize research that found oral reading fluency correlates (.91) to comprehension even more highly than more direct comprehension measures (i.e., question answering, .82; recall, .70; cloze, .72). See also Daane, Campbell, Grigg, Goodman, & Oranje, 2005; Klauda & Guthrie, 2008; Schwanenflugel, Meisinger, Wisenbaker, Kuhn, Strauss, & Morris, 2006; Wayman, Wallace, Tichá, & Espin, 2007.
- <sup>3</sup>Reschly, Busch, Betts, Deno, and Long's meta-analysis (2009) of correlational evidence from 41 studies found significant, strong overall correlation (.67) among measures of fluency and prediction on state-specific and national tests. These findings were consistent across grades 1–5 and when tests were individually or group-administered. See also Kim, Petscher, Schatschneider, & Foorman, 2010; Klauda & Guthrie, 2008.
- <sup>4</sup>Price, Meisinger, Louwerse, and D'Mello (2015) found text reading fluency (oral and silent) to account for 47% of variance in 4th grade students' comprehension. Jenkins, Fuchs, van den Broek, Espin, and Deno (2003) found text reading fluency to uniquely account for 42% of variance on 4th grade students' comprehension scores. Klauda and Guthrie (2008) found that word reading speed explained 43% of the variance in comprehension for 5th grade students, and the additional fluency components of phrasing (10%) and passage-level processing (4%) accounted for additional variance. See also Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1993.
- <sup>5</sup>Since the development of the first assisted reading strategies of neurological impress (Heckelman, 1969; Hollingsworth, 1978) and reading while listening (Chomsky, 1976), there have been a variety of additional repeated reading methods developed which provide students with a proficient model of the reading: paired or partner reading, shared reading, technology-assisted reading practice. Lee and Yoon Yoon's meta-analysis (2015) of 34 repeated reading studies from 1990 to 2014 found that repeated reading with a model (1.95) yields a statistically greater positive impact than interventions without a listening passage preview (0.94). See also Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Dowhower, 1987; Eldredge & Quinn, 1988; Morgan & Sideridis, 2006; Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011; Therrien, 2004.
- <sup>6</sup>Since the development of the repeated reading strategy (Dahl, 1979; Samuels, 1979/1997) and its assisted variant reading while listening (Chomsky, 1978; Carbo, 1978), meta-analyses (Lee & Yoon Yoon, 2015; Morgan & Sideridis, 2006; Morgan, Sideridis, & Hua, 2011; NICHD, 2000; Therrien, 2004; Yang, 2006) have found both unassisted and assisted repeated reading to have significant effect sizes on fluency and comprehension for children and adolescents with or without learning disabilities who are still mastering fluency (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Padeliadu & Giazitidou, 2018). Stevens, Walker, and Vaughn (2017) wrote in their recent updated synthesis of research on reading fluency interventions: "Findings suggest that [repeated reading] remains the most effective intervention for improving reading fluency for students with [learning disabilities]" (576).
- <sup>7</sup>Morgan, Sideridis, and Hua's meta-analysis (2011) of 44 studies identified that students participating in interventions with goal-setting and feedback had higher levels of fluency (measured in words correct per minute) than students receiving any of the other six interventions analyzed. For more on the effects of progress monitoring on students with or at-risk of learning disabilities, see also Morgan & Sideridis, 2006; Therrien, 2004. For more on the effects of progress monitoring on student achievement, see also Althoff, Linde, Mason, Nagel, & O'Reilly, 2007; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, & Germann, 1993; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, & Whinnery, 1991.



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