




Striving Readers and The Six-Minutes Solution: A Reading Fluency Program Alignment

Striving Readers Grant Overview:

Striving Readers is a discretionary grant program designed to fund new reading initiatives, or the expansion of existing initiatives that will help our nation build a strong scientific research base identifying essential components of effective adolescent literacy models, and replicable school- and classroom-level strategies that raise the reading achievement of struggling middle and high school students. The *Striving Readers* grant is akin to *Early Reading First* for early childhood and *Reading First* for K-3 elementary students. Title I eligible schools, particularly those at risk of failing to meet AYP requirements under *NCLB*, are eligible to apply for the *Striving Readers* grant. The full grant application can be obtained at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/applicant.html>.

It is expected that the desired outcomes of the *Striving Readers* grant will be achieved by addressing three overarching grant goals:

<i>Striving Readers Grant Desired Outcomes</i>		<i>Expected to Be Achieved Through</i>	
Goal 1	<i>Enhance the overall level of reading achievement</i> in middle and high schools through improvements to the quality of literacy instruction across the curriculum.		<i>School level strategies designed to increase reading achievement for students.</i> These strategies must include, at a minimum, needs assessment, professional development, and a process for monitoring student performance.
Goal 2	<i>Improve literacy skills</i> of struggling adolescent readers.		<i>Intensive, targeted intervention for struggling readers</i> (i.e., students who read at least two years below grade level, including limited English proficient students and students with disabilities).
Goal 3	Help <i>build a strong, scientific research base</i> around specific strategies that improve adolescent literacy skills.		A project evaluation that includes <i>a rigorous experimental research evaluation of the intensive, targeted intervention for struggling readers.</i> The evaluation of the intensive, targeted intervention must include a randomized control trial. There must also be <i>a rigorous evaluation of the school-level strategies designed to increase reading achievement for students</i> by integrating enhanced literacy instruction throughout the curriculum and the school. The evaluation of the school-level strategies may, but need not, include a randomized control trial.

How *The Six-Minute Solution* Aligns With and Supports *Striving Readers*:

The *Striving Readers* grant application includes nine key components (Page 2) that have been derived from recent publications by literacy experts and practitioners regarding recommended elements that should be included in efforts to help middle and high school students master reading skills and comprehension. The chart on the following pages outlines the manner in which *The Six-Minute Solution* addresses each of the nine bulleted elements.

Brief Overview of *The Six-Minute Solution*

The Six-Minute Solution is a research-based and highly successful supplemental reading fluency program designed for students in grades 3-8. It can be used with students at a variety of ability levels and in a variety of instructional setting settings, including general education, special education, Title I, summer school, and after-school programs. Using *The Six-Minute Solution*, students are matched with peer partners whose oral fluency rate and instructional reading level are closely aligned. Since not all students' instructional reading level is the same as their grade placement, *The Six-Minute Solution* contains passages for grades 1-8 plus automatic word lists.

Two research-based and validated techniques are the foundation of *The Six-Minute Solution*; repeated reading and peer assisted learning. Rereading the same written text over and over again with oral feedback is a recognized and valuable procedure for building reading fluency. In addition, the use of paired partners is an effective and engaging way of implementing daily fluency practice for all students. Partner pairs take turns reading the same high interest expository passage to one another, provide each other with constructive feedback, and chart individual graphs to document progress.

While fluency has long been a neglected reading skill (Allington 1983), it is one of the easiest skills to remediate since it is quickly accomplished with practice. Most students see immediate improvement after the second repeated reading. Instant progress creates a sense of hope, which in turn, captures the heart of reluctant readers, motivating them to read more. As their reading fluency increases, reading becomes more enjoyable and students are inclined to select reading as an independent activity. Fluent readers are better able to complete both class work and homework assignments, which positively impacts their school performance and academic achievement.

In addition, working with peers is highly motivating to students and as a result, struggling readers in particular are more on task. Reading with a partner whose instructional level is similar allows students to apply their decoding, fluency and comprehension skills comfortably, enabling them to accelerate their reading achievement.

Reading fluency is one of the five components identified by the National Reading Panel (NRP) as essential elements of effective reading programs. The correlation between oral reading fluency and comprehension is well documented in many research studies. Only when students are able to read smoothly, easily and quickly are they then able to fully comprehend what they are reading. The use of repeated reading routines to build fluency is effective for all students but is especially beneficial for both special education and English language learners. In *The Six Minute Solution* field tests, these two groups of students demonstrated significant progress. Their success was most likely due to the fact that they were placed appropriately at their instructional level rather than their chronological grade level and had the opportunity to fully master a passage through the use of the repeated reading routine.

Striving Readers Element	The Six-Minute Solution Alignment
Extended learning time for literacy	<i>The Six-Minute Solution</i> was designed to build reading fluency skills in only six minutes a day. The program may be accessed at any time during the school day as well as during before and after school remediation and intervention programs. The <i>Six-Minute Solution</i> fluency passages may also be used effectively as part of a home study program.
Direct, explicit instruction in comprehension	<i>The Six-Minute Solution</i> contains effective strategies for building comprehension while increasing fluency. Specific comprehension strategies are taught and modeled in the program with students using partners for practice of these important comprehension skills. These comprehension strategies include: summarization, paraphrasing, retelling, describing, and learning expository text structures. In addition, research has shown a high correlation between building fluency and resulting increases in comprehension.
Modeling of reading and thinking strategies for comprehension	Being a fluent reader means to read quickly, accurately, and with expression. Using <i>The Six-Minute Solution</i> , fluent reading is repeatedly modeled for students and then practiced by them during an intensive training period. Additionally, comprehension strategies are modeled by the teacher and then practiced by the students using the fluency passages as the reading material. Writing frames are also modeled and included in the program as another important use of the fluency passages.
Cooperative learning and discussion of texts among students	The NRP identified rereading, and instant peer feedback as important research-based practices in building fluency. <i>The Six-Minute Solution</i> has these two best practices as its foundation. Students reread leveled passages in matched peer partnerships and give one another feedback immediately after reading their passages. Comprehension strategies may be included as a part of this feedback.
Self-selected reading at students' ability levels to build motivation	Student partners select the leveled fluency passages they wish to practice each week. The program is highly motivating since students actually chart and see their reading progress on a daily basis. They give one another instant feedback and share comprehension strategies using their self-selected fluency passages. Small group models are also contained in the program to provide additional fluency and comprehension support using the passages as the discussion starting points.
On-going progress monitoring	Students chart their daily fluency practice on graphs to help them see their progress while the teacher monitors that same progress towards the research-based oral reading goals contained in the program. Recommendations for teachers to follow for on-going assessment of fluency growth and comprehension are also an important part of the program.
Intensive writing	Writing frames and strategies are contained in the program using the fluency passages as foundations to learning to write paragraphs and longer pieces of writing.

<i>Striving Readers</i> Element	<i>The Six-Minute Solution</i> Alignment
Age appropriate and diverse reading materials	The reading materials contained in the fluency passages cover a very wide range of subjects and genres including social studies, science, biography, geography, history, and current events.
Interdisciplinary, classroom-based efforts to focus on literacy	The passages contain a wide range of reading materials that will enhance fluency building and comprehension skills across the many disciplines found at the middle school and high school levels. Additionally, students may use research devices such as the Internet and online encyclopedias to further enhance the subject matter covered in the fluency passages.

What's Next?

For more information on this product, including the research basis of the product and evidence of program effectiveness, or about our ability to partner with your district for a successful *Striving Readers* grant application, please contact your Regional Sopris West Sales Director:

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