

Introduction to the fast and accurate series

This handbook is one of a series designed to help learners become fluent readers. Fluency is seen as composed of the ability to automatically recognize high frequency words that are often phonically irregular (sight words) AND the ability to decode phonically regular words (sound out and blend) quickly and accurately. Accordingly, the handbooks in the series address both the fluent recognition of sight words and fluent decoding. The titles of the handbooks are:

Handbook for fluency training: Fast and accurate sight words

Handbook for fluency training: Fast and accurate decoding Level 1

(Acquisition of initial consonants and short vowels)

Handbook for fluency training: Fast and accurate decoding Level 2

(Short vowels, double letters, consonant blends and consonant digraphs)

Handbook for fluency training: Fast and accurate decoding Level 3

(Long vowels, vowel teams and modified vowels)

Handbook for fluency training: Fast and accurate decoding Level 4

(Harder consonants, silent letters, compound words, prefixes and suffixes).

The handbooks are separated into sight words and decoding as a matter of convenience. It is to be understood that learners must master both approaches to making sense of the printed word and that this is usually best undertaken concurrently rather than simultaneously. This series is intended to complement, not replace, a sound instructional program in reading.

The approach to the development of fluency in this series is based on Precision Teaching, which is a form of mastery learning. In Precision Teaching, students are presented with small, carefully sequenced 'chunks' to learn and are brought up to mastery. In the Precision Teaching model, mastery is defined as the Criterion of Acceptable Performance or CAP. The Criterion of Acceptable Performance (CAP) is defined based on an empirical determination of the level required for competent or functional performance of the skill or task. The CAP in Precision Teaching frequently differs from the typical standard of 80% in Bloom's model of Mastery Learning. The CAP always includes a time element and usually refers to a small unit such as words read per minute or digits written in one minute. Precision Teaching focuses on the acquisition of basic academic skills where less than 100% accuracy does not make much sense. For example, if children read sight words with only 80% accuracy or decode phonically regular words with 80% accuracy, can they be seen as having 'mastered' reading? Clearly, the answer is 'No'. Eighty

percent accuracy is not functional in reading as it does not permit comprehension of the material read, which after all is the ultimate goal of reading instruction. Accordingly, the CAP for sight words and for decoding is 100 words per minute with zero errors. All of this is explained further in each handbook. However, these handbooks are not intended to provide indepth information on either Precision Teaching or Mastery learning but to provide teachers and others with the information needed to understand how to implement the program outlined in each handbook.