



Characteristics of Effective Reading Programs: Promising and Not-so- Promising Approaches

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*A Summary of the
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Community*

Characteristics of Effective Reading Programs: Promising and Not-so-Promising Approaches

By John Wills Lloyd, Ph.D., University of Virginia

In the special education field, there is substantial evidence of effective practices; what is missing, however, is a way to get these practices systematically in place. This is commonly known as the research-to-practice gap.

We are familiar with the components of effective beginning reading programs. These were identified by the National Reading Panel, and they include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. However, children with disabilities or potential disabilities are different than early readers, because they have already been exposed to both reading instruction and the above components. The mistakes that students with disabilities or potential disabilities make are different than those of early readers, because children with disabilities do have some skills, but not all of the skills necessary to become fluent readers. Therefore, they need targeted and effective instruction to address their core weaknesses.

To understand what is effective, one must first understand what types of evidence count towards validating research. Lloyd noted that evidence is based upon objective data methods that logically eliminate alternative explanations. The best evidence comes from experimental studies or studies replicated repeatedly. He then explained how effective size is determined (the mean for experimental condition minus the mean for the control condition divided by the standard deviation) and how to interpret it. For example, an effect size of 0.75 means that the average child in group 1 had a score of three-fourths of a standard deviation higher than the average child in group 2. If the measure was IQ, an ES of .75 would translate into a difference of more than 11 points.

Lloyd clarified that he interprets effect size in the following way:

An effect size of .2 shows that the intervention is not very effective.

An effect size of .3 indicates that the intervention may warrant more researchers to conduct further study.

An effect size of .5 shows that the intervention is indeed effective and has real implications for teachers.

An effect size of .7 means that this practice is very effective and should definitely be utilized.

Lloyd then presented a synthesis of what the effect sizes are for various instructional reading strategies, as depicted in the following chart.

<i>Type of Instruction</i>	<i>Number of Studies</i>	<i>Overall Effect Size</i>
Teaching Reading Comprehension	48 studies	1.13
Correcting Perceptual Problems	180 studies	0.08 (academic effect size is 0.01)
Modality-based Instruction	39 studies	0.144
Direct Instruction	25 studies	0.82 (ES is greater for reading than math)
Mnemonic Instruction	24 studies	1.62 (ranges from 0.68 to 3.42)
Social Skills Training	53 studies	0.21
Reducing Class Size	77 studies	0.31
Hyperactivity Diet	23 studies	0.118
Using Peers as Tutors	19 studies	0.48
Progress Monitoring	21 studies	0.7
Early Intervention Programs	74 studies	0.68

It is important to let effectiveness be your guide, since instruction matters and some methods are more effective than others.



Professor John Lloyd, in his office at UVa

“In the special education field,” Dr. Lloyd explained, “there is substantial evidence of effective practices; what is missing, however, is a way to get these practices systematically in place. This is commonly known as the research-to-practice gap.”

Question and Answer

Q: “Are there materials or curriculum programs available that are based upon effective research?”

A. Dr. Lloyd said that although he is reluctant to endorse commercial products, he suggested that the participants take a look at the following: SRA, Read Well Program from SOPRIS West, and supplemental reading programs identified by states in Reading First Grants.

Additional Information and Resources Mentioned

- For more information about Progress Monitoring, please visit the Website of the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring at www.studentprogress.org.
- Additional questions for Dr. Lloyd can be emailed directly to him at Johnl@virginia.edu.
- Additional resources that address specific reading programs are:
 - The Oregon Reading First Panel (<http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/SIreport.php>)
 - The Florida Center for Reading Research (<http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/reportslist.htm>)
 - Reading Programs that Work: A Review of Programs for Pre-K to 4 (<http://www.mff.org/pubs/ME279.pdf>)
 - Washington State’s 4-12 Reading Intervention Materials Review (<http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/Reading/pubdocs/4-12ReadingIntervention.pdf>)
 - What Works Clearinghouse (<http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/>)

State Sharing: What is happening around the country related to access?

This past December, **California** brought together different stakeholder groups at its Special Education Summit. The Summit was held in collaboration with California Association School Administrators, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the Access Center.

Kentucky is in the process of examining the data from its high stakes testing to learn more about 15 schools that have shown significant improvements in their educational outcomes. The state will share this report when it is ready for public dissemination.

Louisiana is conducting a validated practices initiative. Through this initiative, the state is bringing together administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and higher education representatives to examine systemic issues as they relate to the state framework. Participants will also discuss ways to unify the various systems represented.

Ohio is continuing its efforts with the Treasure Chest product. The state is developing guides to help principals use the Treasure Chest as a tool for professional development.

The **Virginia Elementary Principals Association** has completed a series of state-wide conferences that provided principals and teachers with information about effective instruction for all students, how to meet AYP, and the legal responsibilities for access to the general education curriculum. The Association will be conducting follow-up meetings in March. Further information and presentations from the conferences can be obtained at www.vaesp.org.