

Our students' futures are all but determined by how well they learn to read. In a nation that offers few career opportunities to the illiterate, teaching children to read is the most important single task in public education.

Yet, we are not succeeding. Nearly **40 percent of fourth graders do not read even at a basic level**, while 68 percent do not read at a proficient level, the National Center for Learning Disabilities reports.

The problems begin in the earliest weeks of school. Sadly, a student who fails to learn to read adequately in the first grade has a **90 percent probability of remaining a poor reader by Grade 4** and a 75 percent probability of being a poor reader in high school.

This limits opportunities for success in school and



SRA Early Interventions in Reading

SRA Early Interventions in Reading has content critical to a quality early intervention.

Phonemic Awareness

- Phoneme discrimination
- Phoneme segmentation and blending
- Segmenting individual sounds
- Blending sounds back into words
- Spelling sounds in the order students hear them

Letter-Sound Correspondences Strand

- Letter-sound correspondences introduced every two or three lessons starting in the first lesson

• Auditory blending and blending (e.g., "c-a-t")

conjunction with that program to ensure all students' needs are addressed.

The comprehensive, integrated curriculum details how to deliver explicit phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, ensure application of this knowledge to words and text, and engage children in drawing meaning from what they have read.

Building on the principles of direct instruction, the program has 120 carefully integrated lessons that build student mastery skills through activities along five central content strands: phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, word recognition and spelling, fluency, and comprehension strategies.

Teachers follow a highly detailed daily lesson plan that fully explains each aspect of each activity. They teach small homogenous groups of three to five struggling readers who sit in a semi-circle around the instructor. Each lesson requires about 40 minutes. The small group instruction includes:

- Explicit instruction in phonics, with an emphasis on fluency
- A carefully constructed scope and sequence that prevents confusion
- Systematic cueing of appropriate strategies to help children learn to apply new skills
- Suitable levels of scaffolding to promote independence
- Ongoing progress monitoring so teachers can evaluate progress and make decisions about instruction needs

Results from federally funded research studies using the materials confirm that, after using *SRA Early Interventions in Reading* for one year, nearly all students at risk of reading failure at the start of the academic year were no longer at-risk. Struggling readers significantly improved in their abilities in word attack, word identification, passage comprehension, and oral reading fluency, closing the gap with average performers.

The following summaries provide an overview of the initial three studies. Additional studies that use the program are ongoing.

This two-year study involved students from five schools roughly representative of the Leon County Public Schools population that used an *Open Court* program as the core reading program for Grade 1. The study included the 18 percent of the 1,000 students screened who were most at risk for reading failure, based on their performance on screening tests of letter-sound knowledge and rapid naming ability. About 40 percent qualified for free or reduced lunches, and about 40 percent were minorities, mostly African-American.

Researchers randomly assigned each student to either an experienced reading teacher or a well-trained, carefully selected uncertified teacher who did not have previous experience teaching reading. They were taught in groups of either three or five students in 40-minute sessions every weekday from October through May, for a total of about 91 hours of intervention. All conditions produced dramatic growth in reading ability, with no differences across the four instructional conditions. On a measure of reading accuracy (the Word Identification Subtest from the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test – Revised), **the groups improved from the ninth percentile in the fall to the 64th percentile in May**, a standard score of 112. They also performed at average on both an individually administered (Passage Comprehension from the WRMT-R) and a group-administered (SAT/9) measure of reading comprehension.

By spring, the capability of the intervention groups grew from an average of about one correct word per minute on a measure of oral reading fluency to an average of about **55 words per minute on end of Grade 1 passages**. This placed them well within normal parameters for reading fluency.

Variable	Average Standard Score	Percentage of children who would remain below 25%tile
Word Attack	112	.4%
Word Identification	105	.1%
Passage Comprehension	99	2%
Oral Reading Fluency	55 words correct per minute	2%

Table 1: Average scores and percentage of children remaining below the 25th percentile after participating in SRA Early Interventions in Reading for one year.



Intervention groups of three to five students met for 50 minutes daily for a 40-minute *SRA Early Interventions in Reading* lesson and additional 10-minute Storybook Retell activity designed to promote oral language development.

The intervention and contrast group had no differences in either language on any measures at pretest, but had significant posttest differences in favor of the intervention group for these outcomes: phonological awareness, listening comprehension, word attack, word identification, and passage comprehension. The effect sizes also demonstrated a positive impact of the intervention as compared to children who received the standard educational program.

Measure	Effect size for end-of-year outcome
Phonological Awareness	.76
Letter-Sound Identification	.48
Non-Word Repetition	.37
Word Attack	.87
Dictation	.42
Passage Comprehension	.81

Table 3: SRA Early Interventions in Reading effect sizes with ELL students learning to read in English compared to the school's normal reading program on end-of-year outcomes.



While researchers continue to study reading disabilities, the current research gives educators and parents new hope. Well-implemented, quality intervention on a three-tier model can vastly reduce the struggles with learning to read. In fact, the NICHD states that the 20 million American children suffering from reading failure could be reduced by at least two-thirds.

This indicates a giant step in a positive direction: The necessity of labeling children as reading disabled can be largely ended through high quality instruction provided early in the child's education.

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