



Effective Beginning Reading Programmes

Educator's Summary

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During Key Stage 1 most children go through an extraordinary transformation as readers. If all goes well, by the end of Key Stage 1 they should know the sounds of all letters and be able to form them into words, know the most common sight words, and read and comprehend simple texts – all the basic skills of turning print into meaning.

Success at this stage can be crucial to success in later years. As such there has been substantial research in the area, some of which has been highly influential. Recently, there has been a shift in policy and practice towards phonics and phonemic awareness in beginning reading instruction backed by high-profile reports, such as the Rose Review in the UK (2006) and a report by the US National Reading Panel (2000).

This review summarises research on beginning (non-remedial) reading programmes. We looked at *all* available evidence on programmes designed to improve beginning reading achievement, in order to establish what we know works for primary pupils aged 5-7. We examined all studies of beginning reading programmes from all countries, as long as a report was available in English.* (NB Most studies took place in the US). We were then able to assess and compare the effectiveness of these programmes. Descriptions and ratings for all the programmes are listed further down this summary.

The results of the review show that the most successful programmes focus on changing daily teaching practices, such as the use of co-operative learning methods, and that programmes that combine a focus on phonics with innovative teaching practices work best of all. However, although the review highlighted the importance of using phonics, simply using books with more phonics or doing workshops on phonics is not enough to bring about widespread improvement in children's reading.

The full report (which this review summarises) is available at www.bestevidence.org

Instructional Process Programmes (IP)

(Changing the way the teacher teaches, eg co-operative learning)

Studies of programmes that provide extensive professional development to help teachers use well-specified teaching methods showed relatively positive effects overall.

The 'mean weighted effect size' across 17 studies was +0.37, which means the difference between the achievement of children who were taught with these methods compared to children who were taught as usual. Particularly positive effects were found for co-operative learning (ES+0.46), phonics-focused professional development (ES=+0.43), and teaching of phonological awareness to 5 and 6 year-olds (ES=+0.22 by the age of 7 or 8).

Instructional Technology (IT)

(Where technology is used to support beginning reading)

Studies of Instructional Technology found minimal effect sizes. Mean weighted effect size across 13 studies: +0.09.

Reading Curricula (Curr)

(Textbooks)



Studies of reading curricula also found minimal effects of using particular textbooks. Mean weighted effect size across 7 studies: +0.12.

Combined Curriculum and Instructional Process Programmes (Curr + IP)






(Programmes that both change how the teacher teaches, and include innovative curricula, eg Success for All and Direct Instruction)

Our review found that programmes that combine innovative phonetic materials with extensive professional development for teachers found positive effects overall. In particular, positive effects were found for Success for All (ES=0.29 in 23 studies).

*Overall, 63 experimental-control comparisons met the inclusion criteria, of which 19 used random assignment to treatments. Effect sizes (experimental-control differences as a proportion of a standard deviation) were averaged across studies, weighting by sample size. Effect sizes of more than +0.20 are considered educationally significant.




Programme Ratings

Listed below are currently available programmes, grouped by strength of effectiveness. Within each group programmes available in the UK are listed first, and then the remainder in alphabetical order. The type for each programme corresponds to the categories above (eg IP = Instructional Process Strategies).

Key to Programme Ratings	
	Strong Evidence of Effectiveness: At least two studies, one of which is a large randomized or randomized quasi-experimental study, or multiple smaller studies, with a sample size-weighted effect size of at least +0.20, and a collective sample size across all studies of 500 students or 20 classes.
	Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness: At least one randomized or two matched studies of any qualifying design, with a collective sample size of 250 students or 10 classes, and a weighted mean effect size of at least +0.20.
	Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Strong Evidence of Modest Effects: Studies meet the criteria for "Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness" except that the weighted mean effect size is +0.10 to +0.19.
	Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Weak Evidence with Notable Effects: Studies have a weighted mean effect size of at least +0.20, but do not qualify for 'moderate evidence of effectiveness' due to insufficient numbers of studies or small sample sizes.
	Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness: One or more qualifying studies did not meet the criteria for "Limited Evidence of Effectiveness".
N	No Qualifying Studies: No studies met inclusion standards



Strong Evidence of Effectiveness




Rating	Programme	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Success for All	Curr + IP	Provides schools with a reading curriculum for pupils aged 5-11 that focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary development, beginning with phonetically-controlled mini-books from the age of 5-7. Co-operative learning is extensively used with all ages. Tutoring is provided to struggling readers, and parent involvement is encouraged.	www.successforall.org.uk (Product training provided)
	Reading Reels	IP	A form of multimedia used within the Success for All programme (see above), in which video content is embedded within teachers' lessons. Brief animation, puppet sketches, and live-action segments, about five minutes daily in total, model beginning reading strategies for children and teachers.	www.successforall.org.uk (Product training provided)
	Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)	IP	A technique in which children work in pairs, taking turns as teacher and learner, to learn a structured sequence of literacy skills, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, sound blending, passage reading, and story re-telling.	US website: www.kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals/

Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness

None







Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Strong Evidence of Modest Effects






Rating	Programme	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Open Court Reading	Curr	A basal text book series that uses phonetic readers in early years, a focus on direct instruction of specific skills throughout the programme, scripted teachers' manuals, teacher training, and follow-up.	US website: www.sraonline.com/oc_home.html
	Scholastic Phonics Readers with Literacy Place	Curr	A supplementary phonics instructional programme designed as an optional addition to Literacy Place, Scholastic's basal reading text, which incorporates phonetic texts to provide intensive phonics practice in the context of engaging stories.	US website: www.teacher.scholastic.com/literacyplace/
	Direct Instruction	Curr + IP	An approach to beginning reading instruction that emphasises a step-by-step approach to phonics, decodable texts that make use of a unique initial teaching alphabet, and structured, scripted manuals for teachers.	US website: www.nifdi.org/ Contact: kengel@nifdi.org



Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Weak Evidence with Notable Effects

Rating	Programme	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Early Reading Research	IP	A whole-class reading programme in which children are taught as a whole class, rather than in small reading groups. Teachers are given professional development in structured, systematic methods of teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and oral reading.	E-mail: j.e.solity@warwick.ac.uk
	Four Blocks	IP	A professional development approach in which teachers of pupils aged 6-9 use non-ability grouped, multi-level instruction.	Available in the UK through www.teachingoffthewall.co.uk/ US programme website: www.four-blocks.com
	Phonics-Based Reading ('Foundation Reading' has replaced this product – the content is the same, but the software is updated)	IT	Computer software designed to help beginning readers learn word-attack skills. Pupils work independently at computer stations through an individualised, structured series of activities that progress from words in isolation to sentences and paragraphs.	www.lexiauk.co.uk/ (Product training available, in person or on-line) Contact: info@lexiauk.co.uk
	Classwide Peer Tutoring	IP	A co-operative learning approach in which pupils regularly work in pairs, engage in structured tutoring activities, and frequently reverse roles.	US contact: Charles Greenwood, University of Kansas, greenwood@ku.edu
	Ladders to Literacy	IP	A professional development programme for Year 1 that focuses on phonics and phonemic awareness, rhyming, and letter sounds. Teachers receive extensive training and follow-up.	E-mail: anotari@wri-edu.org Website: www.wri-edu.org/ladders/about.htm
	Open Court Phonics Kit	Curr	Provides teachers with extensive training and materials to teach phonics skills.	US website: www.sraonline.com/oc_home.html



Rating	Programme	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Orton-Gillingham approach	IP	A structured, phonetic reading approach that uses multisensory teaching, emphasizing visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile teaching strategies.	E-mail: ortonacademy@verizon.net Website: www.ortonacademy.org
	Reading and Integrated Literacy Strategies (RAILS)	IP	Provides pupils aged 5-8 with a second reading period each day to supplement normal reading provision, and provides teachers with extensive professional development focusing on explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary.	E-mail: RJS15@PSU.EDU
	Sing, Spell, Read, and Write	IP	A phonetic approach to beginning reading and writing instruction that uses songs, phonetic storybooks, and systematic, step-by-step development of word attack skills.	E-mail: k12cs@custhelp.com Website: www.pearsonschool.com

Other Ratings

Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness

Destination Reading
 Headsprout
 Plato Focus
 Reading Machine
 Reading Street
 Waterford
 The Literacy Center
 Writing to Read

N No Qualifying Studies

UK programmes lacking qualifying studies:

Big Cat Phonics, Collins www.collinseducation.com/Primary
 Can Do Cubes, Can Do Education www.candocubes.com/synthetic-phonics.php
 Code Breakers, Hamilton Trust www.hamiltoneducation.org.uk
 Dandelion Readers, Phonic Books www.phonicbooks.co.uk
 Debbie Hepplewhite's Online Synthetic Phonics Programme , Phonics International
www.phonicsinternational.com
 Destination Literacy www.riverdeep-learning.co.uk



Easyread, Oxford Learning www.easyreadsystem.com
EasyTech www.learnpath.com
Fast Track Phonics, Success for All www.successforall.org.uk
Fun with Phonics, BBC Active www.bbcactivefunwithphonics.com
Rigby Star, Heinemann www.rigbystar.co.uk
Jelly and Bean www.jellyandbean.co.uk
Jolly Phonics, Jolly Learning www.jollylearning.co.uk
Kar2ouche www.kar2ouche.com
KnowledgeBox <http://uk.knowledgebox.com/standard.html>
Letterland, Letterland International www.letterland.com
Letters and Sounds: Principles and practice of high quality phonics, National Literacy Strategy
www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/clld
Lexia Early, Foundation and Quick Reading Test, Lexia www.readingsoftware.com
Literacy World , Heinemann www.heinemann.co.uk/Primary/Primary.aspx
Nessy Learning Programme, Net Educational Systems
www.nessy.com/nessylearningprogramme
Oxford University Press, Reading Tree www.oup.co.uk
Phonics: A complete synthetic programme, Scholastic www.teachershop.scholastic.co.uk
POPAT: Programme of Phoneme Awareness Training www.popat.co.uk
Reading Tree, OUP www.oxfordprimary.co.uk
Read Write Inc, OUP www.oxfordprimary.co.uk
Sound Discovery, Ridgehill www.syntheticphonics.net/sound-discovery.php
Sounds-Write, www.sounds-write.co.uk
Step by Step, Galore Park www.galorepark.co.uk/product/parents/112/step-by-step-reading
THRASS: Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills, Thrass UK www.thrass.co.uk
Wordshark Letters and Sounds, White Space www.numbershark.co.uk
Work with Words www.workwithwords.org.uk

If you use programmes which are not listed here, please let us know

Non-UK:

100 Book Challenge
ABD's of Reading
Academy of Reading
Accelerated Literacy Learning
Accelerated Reader
AfterSchool KidzLit
Alphabetic Phonics
Barton Reading & Spelling System
Be a Better Reader
Breakthrough to Literacy
Carbo Reading Styles
Caught Reading
CCC
Charlesbridge Reading Fluency
Classworks
Compass Reading
Comprehension Plus
Comprehension Upgrade
Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI)
Conceptually-Based Strategy Instruction
Consistency Management Cooperative Discipline (CMCD)



Cross-Aged Literacy Program
Disciplinary Literacy
Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself
Dolch Reading Program
Early Reading Intervention (ERI)
Early Success
Earobics
Edmark Reading Program
Electronic Bookshelf
Elements of Reading: Comprehension
Elements of Reading: Fluency
Elements of Reading: Vocabulary
Essential Learning System
Failure Free Reading
Fast Track Reading
First Steps
Fluency First
Fluency Formula
Fluent Reader
FOCUS Reading and Language Program
Foundations and Frameworks
Fountas Pinnell Units of Study (Heineman)
Foundations
Funnix Reading Programs
Glass-Analysis method
Great Books
Great Leaps
Harcourt Collections
Harcourt Signatures
Harcourt Trophies
Houghton Mifflin Nation's Choice
Houghton Mifflin Reading
Headsprout Early Reading
Hooked on Phonics®
Horizons
HOSTS
Houghton Mifflin Horizons
Houghton Mifflin Invitations to Literacy
Houghton Mifflin Legacy of Literacy
Imagine It!
IndiVisual Reading
Intensive Reading Strategies Instruction (IRSI) Model
Intensive Supplemental Reading
Invitations to Literacy
Irlen Method
Jacob's Ladder
Jostens/Compass Learning
Kaleidoscope
Kindergarten Works
K-W-L strategy
Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling
Language First!
Language for Thinking



LANGUAGE!
LeapTrack Assessment & Instruction System
Learning Experience Approach
Learning to Read
Learning Upgrade
Lexia
Lightspan
Like to Read
Lindamood-Bell
LiPS
LitART
Literacy by Design
Literacy Seminar
Little Books
Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Treasures
Making Connections
McGraw-Hill Reading
McGraw-Hill Spotlight on Literacy
McGraw-Hill Treasures/Triumphs
McRAT
Merit Software
My Reading Coach
Open Book Anywhere
OpenBook to Literacy
Pathways
Phonetics First-Focus on Sounds
Phonics and Friends
Phonics First Foundations
Phonics for Reading
Phono-Graphix
PLATO
Project Read
Putting Reading First in Your Classroom
Questioning the Author
Quicktionary Reading Pen II
Read Naturally
Read Now
READ RIGHT
Read, Write & Type!
ReadAbout
Reading Apprenticeship
Reading Horizons
Reading in the Content Areas
Reading Plus
Reading Success
Reading to Learn
Reading Triumphs
Reading Upgrade
Read Well
Responsive Classroom
Rigby Reading
Rosetta Stone Literacy
S.P.I.R.E. and Sounds Sensible



Saxon Phonics
Scaffolded Reading Experience
Schoolwide Enrichment Reading Model (SEM-R)
Seeing Stars
SIM-Strategic Instruction Model
Six Minute Solution
Slingerland
Smart Way Reading and Spelling
Sound Sheets
Spalding Method
Spell Read
SRA Reading
START-IN
STEPS (Sequential Teaching of Explicit Phonics and Spelling)
Strategic Literacy Initiative
Success in Reading and Writing
SuccessMaker
Sunshine
TeachFirst
Teaching Reading Essentials
Text Mapping Strategy
Text Talk
The Imagination Station
Thinking Works
Transactional Strategies Instruction
Tune in to Reading
Visualizing and Verbalizing
Vocabulary Improvement Program
Voices Reading
Voyager Passport
Voyager TimeWarp Plus
Voyager Universal Literacy
Wilson Reading
Wright Group Literacy
WriteToLearn

Review Methods

An exhaustive search considered more than 2000 published and unpublished articles. It included those that met the following criteria:

- Schools or classrooms using each programme had to be compared to randomly assigned or well-matched control groups.
- Study duration had to be at least 12 weeks
- Outcome measures had to be assessments of the reading content being taught in all classes. Almost all are standardised tests or state assessments.
- The review placed particular emphasis on studies in which schools, teachers, or students were assigned at random to experimental or control groups.

The Full Report



- The full report, which this review summarises, is Slavin, R.E., Lake, C., Chambers, B., Cheung, A., & Davis, S. *Effective beginning reading programs: A best evidence synthesis*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education. The full report is available at www.bestevidence.org.uk/.

