

Effective Reading Programs for English Language Learners and Other Language-Minority Students Educator's Summary Last updated February 2, 2009

What reading programs have been proven to help English language learners succeed in reading? To find out, this review summarizes evidence on achievement effects of reading programs for English language learners and other language minority students in the elementary grades.

Key Findings

The research summarized in this article shows how much remains to be done on effective reading programs for ELLs and other language-minority students. Only a handful of studies met the minimal inclusion standards applied in this review, which principally required an experimental-control comparison of a reading program over at least 12 weeks, with evidence that the two groups were equivalent at pretest.

Among the 13 studies of interventions beginning in kindergarten or first grade that met the inclusion standards, the evidence supported structured, phonetic programs emphasizing language development, in both native language and English instruction.

Seven studies of reading in Grades 2–5 met the inclusion criteria. The evidence generally supported programs that make extensive use of cooperative learning, vocabulary instruction, and literature.

It is important to note that the programs with the strongest evidence of effectiveness in this review are all programs that have also been found to be effective with students in general. Typically, programs originally designed for use with English-proficient students are considerably adapted for use with ELLs, with more emphasis on vocabulary and oral language.

Program Ratings



Listed below are currently available programs, grouped by strength of effectiveness. Within each group, programs are listed alphabetically.

Program Ratings (Beginning Reading Programs)




Strong Evidence of Effectiveness

 **None**

Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness


Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	Small group tutoring using Direct Instruction-English	Tutoring for struggling students, grades K-3, using Direct Instruction materials.	E-mail: info@nifdi.org Website: www.nifdi.org
	Success for All: Bilingual and English	Comprehensive school reform model for grades K-8 emphasizing cooperative learning, phonics, frequent assessment, tutoring, and parent involvement. Versions available for English language development, transitional bilingual education, and two-way bilingual.	E-mail: nmadden@successforall.org Website: www.successforall.org

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness





Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	Direct Instruction - English	Structured, phonetic program in English for grades K-6.	E-mail: info@nifdi.org Website: www.nifdi.org
	Libros - Spanish	Home and school kindergarten reading intervention in Spanish, emphasizing books sent home to be read to children by parents.	E-mail: cgolden@csulb.edu
	Reading Recovery - Spanish	One-to-one tutoring program for struggling first graders, available in English or Spanish.	E-mail: jwolf@readingrecovery.org Website: www.readingrecovery.org

Program Ratings (Upper Elementary Reading Programs)

Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	Tutoring using Read Well-English	One-to-one tutoring in English for struggling students in grades 2-5 using a structured, phonetic program.	E-mail: customerservice@sopriswest.com Website: store.cambiumlearning.com/ProgramPage.aspx?parentID=019005451

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (BCIRC) – Spanish-English transition	Cooperative learning, oracy, reading, and writing program designed to help children in grades 2-5 transition from Spanish to English instruction.	E-mail: nmadden@successforall.org Website: www.successforall.org
	Opportunities Through Language Arts (OLA)	Program emphasizing literature study, writing, skill building, and independent reading to help children in grades 2-5 transition from Spanish to English instruction.	E-mail: Bill.Saunders@PearsonAchievement.com
	Success for All Transition	Adaptation of Success for All (see above) to help children in grades 2-5 transition from Spanish to English instruction.	E-mail: nmadden@successforall.org Website: www.successforall.org
	Vocabulary Intervention	Vocabulary teaching program to help Spanish-dominant children in grades 4-5 gain in English vocabulary.	E-mail: carlo@miami.edu





Review Methods

A search of published and unpublished articles focused on those that met the following criteria:

- The studies involved elementary (K-6) children identified as English language learners or language-minority (e.g., Hispanic) students
- Schools or classrooms using each program had to be compared to randomly assigned or well-matched control groups
- Study duration had to be at least 12 weeks
- The language of instruction was the same in experimental and control classes
- Outcome measures had to be reliable and valid assessments of the reading skills being taught in all classes
- The review placed particular emphasis on studies in which schools, teachers, or students were assigned at random to experimental or control groups

Program Ratings Basis

Programs were rated according to the overall strength of the evidence supporting their effects on reading achievement. Effect size (ES) is the proportion of a standard deviation by which a treatment group exceeds a control group. Large studies are those involving a total of at least 10 classes or 250 students. The categories are as follows:

-  **Strong Evidence of Effectiveness:** At least one large or two small randomized studies with median ES= +0.20 or more.
-  **Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness:** At least two large or four small studies (randomized and matched) with median ES= +0.20 or more.
-  **Limited Evidence of Effectiveness:** At least one qualifying study with median ES=+0.10 or more.
-  **No Impact:** Studies show no significant differences.

N No Qualifying Studies: No studies met inclusion standards.

Full Report

Cheung, A. & Slavin, R. E. (2005). Effective reading programs for english language learners and other language-minority students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29, 2, 241-267.
www.bestevidence.org/word/ell_read_2005_BRJ.pdf