

## **Beyond the Basics: Effective Reading Programs for the Upper Elementary Grades**

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What reading programs have been proven to help students in grades 2-5 to succeed? To find out, this review summarizes evidence on three types of programs designed to improve the reading achievement of students in grades 2-5:

- **Reading Curricula (Curr)**, such as *Open Court*, *Harcourt*, *Reading Street* and other standard and alternative textbooks
- **Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI)**, such as *Jostens/Compass Learning* and *Accelerated Reader*.
- **Instructional Process Programs (IP)**, such as cooperative learning and classroom management and motivation approaches, and cross-age tutoring.

### **General Findings**

Overall, 80 experimental-control comparisons met the inclusion criteria, of which 25 used random assignment to treatments. Effect sizes (proportion of a standard deviation) were averaged across studies, weighting by sample size.

**Reading Curricula (Curr)**. Studies of reading curricula found minimal effects of using particular textbooks. Overall weighted mean effect size across 16 studies: +0.06.

**Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI)**. Studies of CAI also found minimal effects. Mean weighted effect size across 31 studies: +0.06.

**Instructional Process Programs (IP)**. Studies of programs that provide extensive professional development to help teachers use well-specified teaching methods had relatively positive effects overall. Mean weighted effect size across 33 studies: +0.21. Particularly positive effects were found for cooperative learning (ES=+0.21 in 10 studies).




## Program Ratings

Listed below are currently available programs, grouped by strength of effectiveness. Within each group, programs are listed alphabetically. The type for each program corresponds to the categories above (e.g., IP = Instructional Process Strategies).


### Strong Evidence of Effectiveness

None

### Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness




Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC)	IP	A cooperative learning program designed to help students develop metacognitive strategies for comprehending narrative and expository text. CIRC is now disseminated as Reading Wings.	Email: <a href="mailto:sfainfo@successforall.org">sfainfo@successforall.org</a> Website: <a href="http://www.successforall.org">www.successforall.org</a>
	Cross Age Peer Tutoring + Strategy Instruction	IP	Belgian Program in which children receive effective one-to-one tutoring from older students as well as instruction in metacognitive strategies.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be">Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be</a>
	Same-Age Peer Tutoring + Strategy Instruction	IP	A Belgian program in which children participate in reciprocal peer tutoring activities and also receive metacognitive strategy instruction.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be">Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be</a>

**Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Strong Evidence of Modest Effects**

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Open Court Reading	Curr*	Basal textbook that uses scripted phonics lessons.	E-mail: mhls_ecommerce_custserv@mcgraw-hill.com Website: www.sraonline.com/oc_home.html

\*With additional time and training




**Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Weak Evidence with Notable Effects**

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Carbo Reading Styles	IP	An approach for adapting reading strategies to students' diverse learning styles.	E-mail: readingstyle@nr.si.com Website: www.nr.si.com/our_research_carbo_reading.html
	Exemplary Center for Reading and Instruction (ECRI)	IP	A professional development program that emphasizes individualized instruction, positive reinforcement, and constant assessment of children's mastery levels.	E-mail: ereid@xmission.com Website: www.ecri.cc
	Fast ForWord	CAI	Computerized program designed to strengthen memory, attention, and mental processing.	Website: http://www.scilearn.com/

**Best Evidence  
Encyclopedia (BEE)**

*Empowering Educators with Evidence on Proven Programs*





[www.bcatevidence.org](http://www.bcatevidence.org)

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Lightspan	CAI	A technology application that provides parents with Sony Playstations and digital video multi-players linked to their televisions, and then uses linked instructional software in both home and school.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:ar@plato.com">ar@plato.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.plato.com/Elementary-Solutions.aspx">www.plato.com/Elementary-Solutions.aspx</a>
	Literature-Based Program	IP	A reading approach that supplements traditional basal textbooks with extensive literature in many genres, independent reading and writing periods, directed reading/listening thinking activities, read-aloud sessions, and classroom literacy centers.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:lmorro@rutgers.edu">lmorro@rutgers.edu</a>
	My Reading Coach	CAI	Reading software that focuses on phonics, word structure, vocabulary, and comprehension.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:mail@mindplay.com">mail@mindplay.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.myreadingcoach.com">www.myreadingcoach.com</a>

**Best Evidence  
Encyclopedia (BEE)**

*Empowering Educators with Evidence on Proven Programs*




[www.bcatevidence.org](http://www.bcatevidence.org)


Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	OpenBook to Literacy	CAI	A software program that uses a combination of voice, text, pictures, video, and graphics to teach reading in a self-paced individualized format, as a supplement to classroom instruction.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:Sales@openbooksoftware.com">Sales@openbooksoftware.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.openbooklearning.com">www.openbooklearning.com</a>
	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 retelling.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:pals@vanderbilt.edu">pals@vanderbilt.edu</a> Website: <a href="http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals">kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals</a>
	QuickReads	Curr	A supplementary program designed to increase fluency, build vocabulary and background knowledge, and improve comprehension.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:quickreads@textproject.org">quickreads@textproject.org</a> Website: <a href="http://www.quickreads.org">www.quickreads.org</a>
	Reader's Theater	IP	A cooperative learning method designed to enhance students' reading by having them read the scripts of plays.	Complete contact form at: <a href="http://scholastic.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/scholastic.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php">http://scholastic.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/scholastic.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php</a> Website: <a href="http://www.teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/readers theater.htm">www.teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/readers theater.htm</a>

**Best Evidence  
Encyclopedia (BEE)**

*Empowering Educators with Evidence on Proven Programs*

[www.becatevidence.org](http://www.becatevidence.org)

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Reciprocal Teaching	IP	An instructional strategy in which students work in small groups to help one another generate their own questions about a text they are reading, summarize parts of the text, clarify word meanings and confusing text passages, and predict what might come next.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:annemari@umich.edu">annemari@umich.edu</a>
	Strategy Instruction (Belgian Model)	IP	Belgian strategy instruction program that focuses cognitive and metacognitive skills such as summarization, graphic organizers, and prediction to help students comprehend text.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be">Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be</a>
	Student Success Skills	IP	A small group counseling intervention in which counselors use a structured approach emphasizing achievement in academic, social, and self-management skills.	E-mail: <a href="mailto:sssaec@aol.com">sssaec@aol.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.studentsuccessskills.com/">www.studentsuccessskills.com/</a>

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Thinking Maps	IP	A program that teaches students to use graphic organizers to help them understand concepts.	E-mail: office@thinkingmaps.com Website: www.thinkingmaps.com



**Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness**

Accelerated Reader  
 CCC  
 Classworks  
 Compass Reading  
 Conceptually-Based Strategy Instruction  
 Consistency Management Cooperative Discipline (CMCD)  
 Elements of Reading: Comprehension  
 Elements of Reading: Fluency  
 Elements of Reading: Vocabulary  
 Failure Free Reading  
 Fluency Formula  
 Foundations and Frameworks  
 Harcourt  
 Houghton Mifflin  
 Jacob's Ladder  
 Jostens/Compass Learning  
 Spell Read  
 Read Naturally  
 Reading Together  
 Responsive Classroom  
 Rigby  
 Reading Street  
 Spell Read  
 Success in Reading and Writing  
 WICAT  
 Wilson Reading

## **N No Qualifying Studies**

100 Book Challenge  
ABD's of Reading  
Academy of Reading  
Accelerated Literacy Learning  
Achieve 3000  
AfterSchool KidzLit  
Alphabetic Phonics  
Barton Reading & Spelling System  
Be a Better Reader  
Breakthrough to Literacy  
Caught Reading  
Charlesbridge Reading Fluency  
Comprehension Plus  
Comprehension Upgrade  
Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI)  
CRISS / Project CRISS  
Cross-Aged Literacy Program  
Direct Instruction  
Destination Reading  
Disciplinary Literacy  
Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself  
Dolch® Reading Program  
Early Success  
Earobics  
Edmark Reading Program  
Electronic Bookshelf  
Essential Learning Systems™  
Fast Track Reading  
First Steps  
Fluency First  
Fluent Reader  
FOCUS Reading and Language Program  
Foundations  
Funnix Reading Programs  
Glass-Analysis method  
Great Leaps  
Headsprout Early Reading  
Hooked on Phonics®



Horizons  
HOSTS  
The Imagination Station  
Imagine It!  
IndiVisual Reading  
Intensive Reading Strategies Instruction (IRSI) Model  
Intensive Supplemental Reading  
Invitations to Literacy  
Irlen Method  
Junior Great Books  
Kaleidoscope  
KidBiz3000 and TeenBiz 3000  
Knowledge Box  
K-W-L strategy  
LANGUAGE!  
Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling  
Language First!  
Language for Thinking  
LeapTrack Assessment & Instruction System  
Learning to Read  
Learning Experience Approach  
Learning Upgrade  
Lexia  
Like to Read  
Lindamood-Bell  
LiPS  
LitART  
The Literacy Center  
Literacy Seminar  
Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Treasures  
Making Connections  
McGraw-Hill Reading  
McRAT  
Merit Software  
Open Book Anywhere  
Open Book Anywhere  
Orchard  
Orton-Gillingham Approach  
Pathways™  
Phonetics First-Focus on Sounds

Phonics First Foundations  
Phonics and Friends  
Phonics for Reading  
Phono-Graphix  
PLATO  
Project Read  
Putting Reading First in Your Classroom  
Questioning the Author  
Quicktionary Reading Pen II  
Rave-O  
REACH  
READ 180  
ReadAbout  
Read Now  
READ RIGHT  
Read, Write & Type!  
Reading Apprenticeship  
Reading in the Content Areas  
Reading Horizons  
Reading to Learn  
Reading Mastery  
Reading Plus  
Reading Success  
Reading Triumphs  
Reading Upgrade  
REWARDS  
Rosetta Stone Literacy  
Saxon Phonics  
Scaffolded Reading Experience  
Seeing Stars  
SIM-Strategic Instruction Model  
Six Minute Solution  
Slingerland  
Smart Way Reading and Spelling  
Soar to Success  
Soliloquy Reading Assistant  
Sound Sheets  
Spalding Method  
S.P.I.R.E. and Sounds Sensible  
SRA Reading

START-IN

STEPS (Sequential Teaching of Explicit Phonics and Spelling)

Strategic Literacy Initiative

SuccessMaker

Sunshine

TeachFirst

Teaching Reading Essentials

Text Mapping Strategy

Text Talk

Thinking Works

Transactional Strategies Instruction

Tune in to Reading

Visualizing and Verbalizing

Vocabulary Improvement Program

Voices Reading

Voyager TimeWarp Plus

Voyager Passport

Waterford Early Reading System

Wisconsin Design for Reading Skills Development (WDRSD)

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 classroom using each program 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 assessment of the reading content being taught in all classes. Almost all are standardized 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.

### *Program Ratings Basis*

Programs were rated according to the overall strength of the evidence support in their effects on reading achievement. “Effect size” (ES) is the proportion of a standard deviation by which a treatment exceeds a control group. The categories are as follows:

-  **Strong Evidence of Effectiveness:** At least two prospective studies (i.e., not post hoc), one of which is a large (n=250) 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 at least 500 students. To qualify for this category, effect sizes from the randomized studies must have a weighted mean effect size of at least +0.20.
  
-  **Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness:** At least two randomized or matched prospective studies, with a collective sample size of 500 students, 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 Effect:** A weighted mean effect size of at least +0.20 based on one or more qualifying studies of any qualifying design insufficient in number or sample size to meet the criteria for “Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness.”
  
-  **Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness**  
One or more qualifying studies not meeting the criteria for “Limited Evidence of Effectiveness.”
  
- N No Qualifying studies:** No studies met inclusion standards.

### **Full Report**

Slavin, R.E., Lake, C., Cheung, A., & Davis, S. (2009, June). Beyond the basics: Effective reading programs for the upper elementary grades. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education.

[http://www.bestevidence.org/reading/upper\\_elem/upper\\_elem\\_read.htm](http://www.bestevidence.org/reading/upper_elem/upper_elem_read.htm)