What Works Clearinghouse

ies INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

Read Naturally[1]

Program description

Read Naturally is designed to improve reading fluency using a combination of books, audio-tapes, and computer software. This program includes three main strategies: repeated reading of English text for oral reading fluency development, teacher modeling of story reading, and systematic monitoring of student progress by teachers. Students work at a reading level appropriate for their achievement level, progress through the program at their own rate, and work, for the most part, on an independent basis. The *Read Naturally* strategy is designed to increase time spent reading by combining teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring. Although the program was not originally developed for English language learners (ELL), materials for these students are now available.

Research

One study of a modified version of *Read Naturally* met the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards with reservations. This study included 60 ELL elementary school students from five schools in central Texas and examined effects on students' reading achievement.[2]

The WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Read Naturally* to be small for reading achievement. No studies that met WWC standards with or without reservations addressed mathematics achievement or English language development.

Effectiveness

Read Naturally was found to have no discernible effects on elementary school ELL students' reading achievement.

	Reading achievement	*Mathematics achievement*	*English language development*
Rating of effectiveness	No discernible effects	na	na
Improvement index[3]	Average: 0 percentile points Range: –5 to +6 percentile points	na	na

na = not applicable

1. The study on which this report is based added several components to the *Read Naturally* program. The WWC-ELL Principal Investigator determined that the modified version is close enough to the original that this is a reasonable study of *Read Naturally*.
2. The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.
3. These numbers show the average and range of improvement indices for all findings across the study.

Additional program information

Developer and contact

Read Naturally was developed by Candyce Ihnot. *Read Naturally*, 750 S. Plaza Dr. #100, Saint Paul, MN 55120. Web: www.readnaturally.com. Email: info@readnaturally.com. Telephone: (651) 452-4058 or (800) 788-4085. Fax: (651) 452-9204.

Scope of use

The program was first published in 1991. According to the developer, it has been implemented with special education, Title I, and ELL students throughout the U.S.

Teaching

The *Read Naturally* materials come with a teacher's manual that includes the rationale for the program, descriptions of the materials needed to implement the program, instructions for implementing the program, and sample lesson plans for introducing the program to students. As part of the intervention, students practice reading expository passages until they are able to demonstrate improvement in oral language fluency and appropriate phrasing and expression. As discussed in footnote 1 above, the Denton et al. (2004) study made some modifications to the program. The study authors included pre-reading activities and post-reading questioning to facilitate comprehension. Tutors identified two vocabulary words for each *Read Naturally* passage. These words were subsequently introduced to students using sentences from the passages where they appeared; follow-up questions were asked to facilitate discussion about the meaning of a given word. These words were also placed on flashcards and reviewed. Tutors also asked students to identify words they did not know prior to using the repeated reading practice, and they then taught those words. In addition, group size varied from 1–4 students, and completed stories were sent home with students to be read with their parents.

Cost

Individual *Read Naturally* materials range in price from $5 to $299. The specific needs of the students served will determine the materials needed and the cost of implementation. There are eight levels of *Read Naturally* materials developed specifically for English language learners. The materials for each level cost $109.

Research

One study (Denton, Anthony, Parker, & Hasbrouck, 2004) reviewed by the WWC investigated the effects of a modified version of *Read Naturally* on an English language learner sample. Although there was random assignment to treatment groups, three students assigned to the control group were reassigned to the treatment group, and vice versa, one week after the study had begun (as requested by the participating schools). Therefore, this study was determined to be a quasi-experimental design that met the WWC evidence standards with reservations. Data from three students in the comparison group were eliminated from the analysis because of exposure to *Read Naturally* in their classroom, and no data were eliminated from analysis in the treatment group. Although this created differential attrition rates between the study groups (10% attrition in the comparison group and 0% attrition in the treatment group), the authors were able to demonstrate post-attrition equivalence between groups using the pretest.

Denton, Anthony, Parker, & Hasbrouck (2004). The study that examined *Read Naturally* included 60 participants. The *Read Naturally* intervention group received English language pull-out tutoring during the school day in addition to their regular English instruction. The control group received only their regular English language pull-out instruction.

Extent of evidence

The WWC categorizes the extent of evidence in each domain as small or moderate to large (see the What Works Clearinghouse Extent of Evidence Categorization Scheme). The extent of evidence takes into account the number of studies and the

Research *(continued)*

total sample size across the studies that met WWC evidence standards with or without reservations.[4]

The WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Read Naturally* to be small for reading achievement. No studies that met WWC standards with or without reservations addressed mathematics achievement or English language development.

Effectiveness

Findings[5]

The WWC review of interventions for English language learners addresses student outcomes in three domains: reading achievement, mathematics achievement, and English language development.

Reading achievement. Denton and colleagues (2004) reported, and the WWC confirmed, no statistically significant differences between the intervention and comparison groups on students' reading achievement. In addition, the average effect size was small and deemed not substantively important. Therefore, the one study reviewed showed no discernible effects.

Rating of effectiveness

The WWC rates interventions as positive, potentially positive, mixed, no discernible effects, potentially negative, or negative. The rating of effectiveness takes into account four factors: the quality of the research design, the statistical significance of the findings, the size of the difference between participants in the intervention condition and the comparison condition, and the consistency in findings across studies (see the WWC Intervention Rating Scheme).

The WWC found *Read Naturally* to have no discernible effects on reading achievement.

Improvement index

The WWC computes an improvement index for each individual finding. In addition, within each outcome domain the WWC computes an average improvement index for each study and an average improvement index across studies (see Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations). The improvement index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition versus the percentile rank of the average student in the comparison condition. Unlike the rating of effectiveness, the improvement index is entirely based on the size of the effect, regardless of the statistical significance of the effect, the study design, or the analysis. The improvement index can take on values between –50 and +50, with positive numbers denoting favorable results. The average improvement index for reading achievement is 0 percentile points, with a range of –5 to +6 percentile points across findings.

Summary

The WWC reviewed one study on *Read Naturally*. This study met WWC standards with reservations. This study found no discernible effects on reading achievement. The evidence presented in this report is limited and may change as new research emerges.

4. The Extent of Evidence categorization was developed to tell readers how much evidence was used to determine the intervention rating, focusing on the number and size of studies. Additional factors associated with a related concept, external validity, such as students' demographics and the types of settings in which studies took place, are not taken into account for the categorization.
5. The level of statistical significance was reported by the study authors or, where necessary, calculated by the WWC to correct for clustering within classrooms or schools and for multiple comparisons. For an explanation, see the WWC Tutorial on Mismatch. See the Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations for the formulas the WWC used to calculate the statistical significance. In the case of *Read Naturally*, no corrections for clustering or multiple comparisons were needed.

References

Met WWC evidence standards with reservations

Denton, C. A., Anthony, J. L., Parker, R., & Hasbrouck, J. E. (2004). Effects of two tutoring programs on the English reading development of Spanish-English bilingual students. *The Elementary School Journal*, *104*(4), 289–305.

Additional sources:

Denton, C. A. (2000). The efficacy of two English interventions in a bilingual education program. *Dissertation Abstracts International 61*(11), 4325A. (UMI No. 9994233)

Ihnot, C. (1992). *Read Naturally*. St. Paul, MN: Read Naturally.

For more information about specific studies and WWC calculations, please see the WWC *Read Naturally* Technical Appendices.