

What Works Clearinghouse



Read Well[®]

Program Description²

Read Well[®] is a reading curriculum for kindergarten and first-grade students whose goal is to increase students' literacy abilities. The program provides instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Students are given opportunities to discuss the vocabulary concepts that are presented in each story. The program is based on the tenets of scaffolded instruction, in which teachers begin by presenting models and

gradually decreasing their support by providing guided practice before students are asked to complete the skill or strategy independently. For example, the student and teacher read new text aloud with the teacher reading the difficult or irregular words. As student skills (and motivation) increase, the amount of teacher-read text decreases and the student is given greater independence. The program combines daily whole class activities with small group lessons.

Research³

One study of *Read Well*[®] that falls within the scope of the English Language Learners review protocol meets the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. This study, which included 34 first-grade English language learner students from one school in rural Colorado, examined program impacts on students' reading and English language development.⁴

Based on this one study, the WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Read Well*[®] on English language learners to be small for both reading achievement and English language development. No studies that meet WWC evidence standards with or without reservations examined the effectiveness of *Read Well*[®] on English language learners in mathematics achievement.

1. This report has been updated to include reviews of four studies that were not included in the earlier review of *Read Well*[®]. Of these studies, two are not within the scope of the protocol, one is within the scope of the protocol but does not meet evidence standards, and one meets standards. One study that meets standards with reservations in the earlier review (Denton, Parker, & Hasbrouck, 2004) no longer meets evidence standards because the intervention and comparison groups are not shown to be equivalent at baseline. (The protocol for the English Language Learners topic area was revised to specify that groups must be equivalent on the pretest for a quasi-experimental design.) A complete list and disposition of all studies reviewed is provided in the references.
2. The descriptive information for this program was obtained from a publicly available source: the program's website (<http://store.cambiumlearning.com/resource.aspx?page=ProgramOverview&site=sw&parentId=019005451>, downloaded May 2009). The WWC requests developers to review the program description sections for accuracy from their perspective. Further verification of the accuracy of the descriptive information for this program is beyond the scope of this review. The literature search reflects documents publicly available by February 2009.
3. The studies in this report were reviewed using WWC Evidence Standards, Version 2.0 (see the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Chapter III), as described in protocol Version 2.0.
4. The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.

Effectiveness *Read Well*[®] was found to have no discernible effects on reading achievement and potentially positive effects on English language development for elementary school English language learners.

	Reading achievement	English language development	Mathematics achievement
Rating of effectiveness	No discernible effects	Potentially positive effects	na
Improvement index⁵	Average: -1 percentile points Range: -2 to -1 percentile points	Average: +21 percentile points	na

na = not applicable

Additional program information

Developer and contact

Developed by Sopris West Educational Services, *Read Well*[®] is distributed by Cambium Learning, Inc. Address: Sopris West, 4185 Salazar Way, Frederick, CO 80504. Email: customerservice@sopriswest.com. Web: <http://store.cambiumlearning.com>. Telephone: (303) 651-2829 or (800) 547-6747.

Scope of use

Read Well[®] has been implemented in various regions of the country with kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade regular education students and English language learners.

Teaching

The *Read Well*[®] program involves explicit, systematic instruction in English language decoding, sustained practice of skills in decodable text, and frequent opportunities to discuss vocabulary and concepts presented in text. Reading and writing skills include story maps, story retells, and guided reports. A key feature of *Read Well*[®] is the use of scaffolded instruction, in which teachers begin by presenting models and gradually decreasing their support by providing guided practice before students are asked to complete the skill or strategy independently. For example, the student and teacher read new text aloud with the teacher reading the difficult or irregular words. As student

skills (and motivation) increase, the amount of teacher-read text decreases and the student is given greater independence.

The *Read Well*[®] instructor package includes all teacher materials and one set of student materials necessary for implementing the program in a classroom. A professional development program is available for teachers interested in using the curriculum.

Cost⁶

Read Well[®] can be purchased in whole class, small group, or student packages that are targeted to kindergarten, first-grade, or second-grade students. The whole class instructor package for kindergarten students costs \$1,253.95. It includes both whole class and small group instructional components. The cost for a stand-alone small group instructor package is \$511.95. The student package costs \$1,880.95 for 24 students and \$428.49 for six students.

The instructor package for first-grade students costs \$1,044.95. The student package costs \$1,985.95 for 24 students and \$574.95 for six students.

The instructor package for second-grade students costs \$1,097.49. The student package costs \$1,985.49 for 24 students and \$574.95 for six students.

Materials in the instructor and student packages are also available for individual purchase at prices ranging from \$19.95 to \$396.95.

5. These numbers show the average and range of student-level improvement indices for all findings across the study.

6. The cost of *Read Well*[®] was received from the developer, Cambium Learning, Inc. in May 2009.

Research Five studies reviewed by the WWC investigated the effects of *Read Well*® on English language learners. One study (Frasco, 2008) is a randomized controlled trial that meets WWC evidence standards.⁷ The study included 34 English language learner students in first grade. The intervention group included 17 students assigned to receive *Read Well*® as their core reading program. The control group included 17 students assigned to receive *Macmillan/McGraw-Hill 2003* as their core reading program.

The remaining four studies do not meet either WWC evidence standards or eligibility screens.

Extent of evidence

The WWC categorizes the extent of evidence in each domain as small or medium to large (see the WWC Procedures and

Standards Handbook, Appendix G). The extent of evidence takes into account the number of studies and the total sample size across the studies that meet WWC evidence standards with or without reservations.⁸

The WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Read Well*® to be small for both reading achievement and English language development for English language learners. No studies that meet WWC evidence standards with or without reservations examined the effectiveness of *Read Well*® in mathematics achievement for English language learners.

Effectiveness Findings

The WWC review of interventions for English language learners addresses student outcomes in three domains: reading achievement, English language development, and mathematics achievement. The studies included in this report cover only two domains: reading achievement and English language development. The findings that follow present WWC-calculated estimates of the size and the statistical significance of the effects of *Read Well*® on English language learners.⁹

Reading achievement. Frasco (2008) reported a not statistically significant difference in reading gains, as measured by the

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Nonsense Word Fluency subtest, and a not statistically significant difference in fluency and comprehension gains, as measured by the Gray's Oral Reading Test–Fourth Edition (GORT-4).¹⁰ The average effect size across these outcomes was not large enough to be considered substantively important according to WWC criteria.

English language development. Frasco (2008) reported a positive and statistically significant difference in vocabulary gains as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–Third Edition (PPVT-III). However, WWC calculates significance based on posttest standard deviations (as opposed to the study, which

7. In addition to the results discussed below, Frasco (2008) also reports results on the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) that are excluded from this report since the test measures phonemic awareness, which is not part of any English Language Learners domain.
8. 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 the students' demographics and the types of settings in which studies took place—are not taken into account for the categorization. Information about how the extent of evidence rating was determined for *Read Well*® is in Appendix A5.
9. The level of statistical significance was reported by the study authors or, when 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. For the formulas the WWC used to calculate the statistical significance, see WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Appendix C for clustering and WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Appendix D for multiple comparisons. For the *Read Well*® studies summarized here, no corrections for clustering or multiple comparisons were needed. However, the WWC calculates statistical significance based on posttest standard deviations and not on pretest to posttest gains; this adjustment was applied to the Frasco (2008) study.
10. The study also includes results on the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing. The English Language Learners area does not consider phonological awareness measures as part of the reading achievement or English language development domains. Therefore, these results are not included in this review.

Effectiveness *(continued)*

used standard deviations of pretest to posttest gains); after this adjustment, the WWC found that the difference in vocabulary gains was not statistically significant. The effect size is large enough to be considered substantively important according to WWC criteria.

Rating of effectiveness

The WWC rates the effects of an intervention in a given outcome domain as positive, potentially positive, mixed, no discernible

The WWC found *Read Well*[®] to have no discernible effects for reading achievement and potentially positive effects for English language development for English language learners

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 WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Appendix F). The improvement index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition and 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 for the intervention group.

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 and the comparison conditions, and the consistency in findings across studies (see the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Appendix E).

The average improvement index for reading achievement is -1.46 percentile points across the study, with a range of -2.30 to -0.61 percentile points across findings. The average improvement index for English language development is +21.06 percentile points across the study.

Summary

The WWC reviewed five studies on *Read Well*[®] for English language learners. One of these five studies meets WWC evidence standards; the remaining four studies do not meet either WWC evidence standards or eligibility screens. Based on the one study, the WWC found no discernible effects in the reading achievement domain and potentially positive effects in the English language development domain for English language learners. The conclusions presented in this report may change as new research emerges.

References

Meets WWC evidence standards

Frasco, R. D. (2008). Effectiveness of *Reading First* for English language learners: Comparison of two programs (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University, 2008). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69(03A), 141-879.

Studies that fall outside the English Language Learners review protocol or do not meet WWC evidence standards

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. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because it uses a quasi-experimental design in which the analytic intervention and comparison groups are not shown to be equivalent.

Additional source:

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

References (continued)

Kamps, D., Abbott, M., Greenwood, C., Arreaga-Mayer, C., Wills, H., Longstaff, J., et al. (2007). Use of evidence-based, small-group reading instruction for English language learners in elementary grades: Secondary-tier intervention. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 30*(3), 153–168. This study does not meet WWC evidence standards because the measures of effectiveness cannot be attributed solely to the intervention—the intervention was combined with another intervention.

Santoro, L. E., Jitendra, A. K., Starosta, K., & Sacks, G. (2006). Reading well with *Read Well*: Enhancing the reading

performance of English language learners. *Remedial & Special Education, 27*(2), 105–115. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group.

Sopris West Educational Services. (2007). *Read Well: Results with the Read Well curriculum, kindergarten and first grade, Huntsville, Alabama*. Frederick, CO: Author. The study is ineligible for review because it does not examine an intervention implemented in a way that falls within the scope of the review.