

Research Based Reading Programs

The IDEA 2004 and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Acts speak of using research-based, or peer-reviewed methods. There are no guidelines or standards for peer reviewed research. The comments to 34 CFR 300.320(a)(4) of IDEA say: “States, school districts, and school personnel must, therefore, select and use methods that research has shown to be effective, to the extent that methods based on peer-reviewed research are available. This does not mean that the service with the greatest body of research is the service necessarily required for a child to receive FAPE. Likewise, there is nothing in the Act to suggest that the failure of a public agency to provide services based on peer-reviewed research would automatically result in a denial of FAPE.”

Also the Response to Intervention (RTI) model now included in the IDEA regulations says that when determining the existence of a learning disability that the school should use a “process based on the child’s response to scientific, research-based intervention”. The school must also provide “appropriate instruction in regular education settings” and “Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals”.

Sue Whitney in an article *No Reading Progress? Criteria for Remedial Reading Programs* (www.wrightslaw.com/nltr/08/nl.1014.htm) states that some statistics indicate that only 32% of children are proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade. Many believe that this is because schools do not use research based reading programs. Reading programs will not teach a student to read proficiently if:

1. staff are not properly trained;
2. the program is not appropriate for the student;
3. too many students are in the class;
4. the required hours per day and week are not followed; and
5. the pace of the instruction is too rapid for students to achieve mastery of skills.

Six Qualities of Effective Reading Programs

1. Effective programs are driven by reading research, not ideology.
2. Effective programs emphasize direct, systematic, intensive, and sustained reading.
3. Effective programs require school-wide buy-in before they are adopted.
4. Effective programs are supported by initial professional development and extended follow-up training throughout the school year.
5. When implementing an effective program, the school needs to be committed to the integrity of the program's instructional approach and materials.
6. Effective programs make effective use of instructional time, provide multiple reading opportunities, and employ a variety of reading assessments.

Source: *Considerations When Selecting a Reading Program from The Access Center*; www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/read_programs.asp

Frequently parents and educators are frustrated with the reading progress of students with mild to moderate disabilities. Research has shown that phonetic based reading programs can be effective with many of these students. The key is research and staff training. As mentioned here and in other Reading Series fact sheets staff must be aware of effective programs. If a program is not working then another program should be tried.

It is important for parents to be aware of state rules and programs designed to help all students become proficient readers. Parents can then discuss with the school how these rules and programs are being implemented for their child. The resources listed can assist parents in researching programs that the schools are using. Some parents

may want to discuss specific reading programs with the school, although the ARD/IEP committee makes the final decision on what methodology/program will be used. However, if the child is not making adequate progress, another program should be tried.

More associations and groups are providing parents and schools with research-based information about instructional methods including reading. Some of the currently available sources are:

- Florida Center for Reading Research; www.fcrr.org. Their mission is to conduct basic research on reading, and to disseminate information about research-based practices related to literacy instruction and assessment for children in pre-school through 12th grade. While their emphasis is on educators, there is a section for parents.
- Doing What Works; www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/read/rb/edlite-index.html. Videos, slideshows, and tools for using proven teaching practices. Based on findings from the What Works Clearinghouse.
- What Works Clearinghouse; <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>. Reports on the effectiveness of educational programs, products, practices, and policies.
- Doing What Works Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence; a user friendly guide to help educators distinguish practices supported by rigorous evidence from those that are not; www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigorous/vid/index.html
- Reading Interventions in Grades K-3: From research to Practice. This report summarizes high-quality research studies and synthesizes their findings on the effects of extensive reading interventions and related implications for practice for students with reading problems or learning disabilities in an RTI setting; www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Extensive%20Reading%20Interventions.pdf
- The Best Evidence Encyclopedia that answers the question: Which reading program has been shown to help students in grades K-1 succeed? www.bestevidence.org/reading/begin_read/begin_read.htm
- Reading Resources for Parents Resources designed to help parents support children's early reading development; www.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml
- Reading Resources for Teachers; research and practical information aimed to help teachers help every student learn to read; www.ed.gov/teachers/how/read/edpicks.jhtml
- The Effect of High-Quality Instruction on Reading outcomes; www.ascd.org/publications/researchbrief/v3n03/toc.aspx
- Technical Assistance Alliance at: www.taalliance.org/centers/index.html
- The Access Center; www.k8accesscenter.org; has a primary goal to “increase awareness of research-based programs, practices, and tools”.
- Texas Reading First Higher Education Collaborative; www.texasreading.org/utcrcla/pd/hec.asp; assists teacher educators and educational administration faculty in the alignment of preservice course curricula with scientifically based reading research.
- A great deal of information on research based programs and reading can be found at: www.wrightslaw.com/nclb/rbi.htm



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