
Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding research that has been conducted to determine if whole group reading instruction should be delivered on grade level? Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

Question: *Is there evidence that whole group reading instruction should be delivered on grade level?*

Key words and search strings used in the search: *whole group reading instruction; whole class literacy instruction; scaffolding; direct instruction; whole class; reading instruction reading instruction; differentiating instruction AND compare AND whole group instruction AND reading*

Search databases and websites:

1. ERIC: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
2. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>
3. Google Scholar: www.google.com/scholar
4. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
5. What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Citations Retrieved: (NOTE: Abstracts and executive summaries are copied directly from the reports when possible to ensure accuracy):

Amendum, S. J., Li, Y., Hall, L. A., Fitzgerald, J., Creamer, K. H., Head-Reeves, D. M., & Hollingsworth, H. L. (2009). Which reading lesson instruction characteristics matter for early reading achievement? *Reading Psychology*, 30(2), 119–147, <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ833190>

Abstract/Summary: Five reading lesson instruction characteristics were examined in relation to first and second graders' end-of-year instructional reading level: (a) teacher's preferred interaction style (indicated by extent of teacher telling and coaching); (b) teacher's preferred grouping (indicated by extent of whole class and small group instruction); (c) teacher's preferred focus of reading activity (indicated by extent of focus on words/letters and comprehension); (d) degree of

student active response; and (e) instruction material (indicated by extent of use of narrative text and worksheets). Sixteen first- and second-grade teachers and 166 of their students were observed during reading instruction three times across the school year. Analyses of covariance were conducted. Complex relationships heretofore not revealed appeared. Different patterns of relationships between instructional characteristics and instructional reading level emerged for higher achievers compared to lower achievers and for first compared to second grade. (Contains 6 tables and 4 figures.)

Gehsmann, K. M., & Templeton, S. (2012). Stages and standards in literacy: Teaching developmentally in the age of accountability. *Journal of Education*, 191(1), 5–16.
<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1054644>

Abstract/Summary: This article describes a model of literacy development as reflected in students' spelling. The model, based on research that identified five stages of word knowledge, explains the development of this knowledge in readers and writers, and provides a framework for elementary-grade instruction that is intended to: (1) address grade-level expectations in the "Common Core State Standards, English Language Arts"; and (2) describe a developmentally appropriate approach to instruction. The model also informs the assessment of word or orthographic knowledge to gain insight into the range of developmental levels in a class and to guide instruction in whole-class and small-group contexts. Examples focus on a third-grade classroom in which the range of levels includes beginning, transitional, and intermediate readers and writers, and suggest implications of developmentally grounded instruction for students' growth toward achieving grade-specific "CCSS/ELA."

Jones, R. E., Yssel, N., & Grant, C. (2012). Reading instruction in tier 1: Bridging the gaps by nesting evidence-based interventions within differentiated instruction. *Psychology in the Schools*. 49(3), 210–218. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ989952>

Abstract/Summary: Response to Intervention (RtI) has brought about many changes in the way educational services are being provided to students who are at risk of school failure. Schools are seeking strategies that will be beneficial to more and more students, including those students whose instruction is primarily in the core, or Tier 1. Nesting proven, evidence-based practices more widely in an RtI model is discussed as an efficient strategy for closing achievement gaps and research--practice gaps. To differentiate instruction relative to RtI and the core curriculum, the

application of strategies typically reserved for Tiers 2 and 3 is suggested. An example of embedding, or nesting, interventions at Tier 1 is given. Organizational tools are provided for Tier 1 whole-class, differentiated instruction in fluency training, including repeated readings. The roles of the school psychologist, teacher, and administrator in the model are considered, along with specific, targeted examples and approaches. (Contains 2 tables.)

Sharpiro, L. R., & Solity, J. (2008). Delivering phonological and phonics training within whole-class teaching. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78(4), 597–620.
<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ822271>

Abstract/Summary: Background: Early, intensive phonological awareness and phonics training is widely held to be beneficial for children with poor phonological awareness. However, most studies have delivered this training separately from children's normal whole-class reading lessons. Aims: We examined whether integrating this training into whole class, mixed-ability reading lessons could impact on children with poor phonological awareness, whilst also benefiting normally developing readers. Sample: Teachers delivered the training within a broad reading programme to whole classes of children from Reception to the end of Year 1 (N=251). A comparison group of children received standard teaching methods (N=213). Method: Children's literacy was assessed at the beginning of Reception, and then at the end of each year until 1 year post-intervention. Results: The strategy significantly impacted on reading performance for normally developing readers and those with poor phonological awareness, vastly reducing the incidence of reading difficulties from 20% in comparison schools to 5% in intervention schools. Conclusions: Phonological and phonics training is highly effective for children with poor phonological awareness, even when incorporated into whole-class teaching.

Stevens, R. J., Van Meter, P. N., Garner, J., Warcholak, N., Bochna, C., & Hall, T. (2008). Reading and integrated literacy strategies (RAILS): An integrated approach to early reading. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 13(4), 357–380.
<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ817159>

Abstract/Summary: The goal of this project was to develop and test the efficacy of a research-based early reading program that provided integrated reading instruction in kindergarten through 2nd grade. The Reading and Integrated Literacy Strategies (RAILS) program provided integrated instruction in word reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension to students in regular

and self-contained special education classes in 2 schools serving low-income populations. Teachers provided explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle, phonemic analysis, word reading, vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension. Classes were organized so students received 2 periods of reading instruction daily, a longer morning period of instruction and a shorter afternoon review of instruction. The students in the RAILS program had significantly higher performance on standardized reading and language achievement tests, as well as on individually administered tests of phonemic awareness and reading fluency. The implications for research-based instructional practice that integrates instruction in word reading, vocabulary, and comprehension are discussed. (Contains 5 tables.)

Wanzek, J. (2014). Building word knowledge: Opportunities for direct vocabulary instruction in general education for students with reading difficulties. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 30(2), 139–164. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1026848>

Abstract/Summary: Direct vocabulary instruction is 1 critical component of reading instruction. Although most students in the elementary grades need to continue building their vocabulary knowledge, students with reading difficulties are at the greatest risk of falling further behind each year in vocabulary and concept knowledge without effective instruction. This study examined the amount and type of direct vocabulary instruction available for students with reading difficulties during core classroom reading instruction and supplemental reading interventions. Fourteen 2nd-grade classroom and reading intervention teachers serving students with reading difficulties in 3 elementary schools in 3 states participated in the study. Results suggested that about 8% of core classroom reading instruction was devoted to direct vocabulary instruction with a focus on word definitions and providing examples of word meaning. Minimal amounts of direct vocabulary instruction occurred in supplemental reading interventions. Thus, students with reading difficulties had limited opportunities through core reading instruction and supplemental reading interventions to receive research-based, effective vocabulary instruction.

Referrals

Organizations:

- Florida Center for Reading Research: <http://www.fcrr.org>
- International Literacy Association: <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/>
- Reading is Fundamental: <http://www.rif.org>
- The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk: <http://www.meadowscenter.org>
- The IRIS Center: <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>
- Reading Rockets: <http://www.pbs.org/launchingreaders/>

Federally Funded Resources:

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES), public search engine available at: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

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