

What Works Clearinghouse



Corrective Reading

Program Description¹

Corrective Reading is designed to promote reading accuracy (decoding), fluency, and comprehension skills of students in grades 4–12 who are reading below their grade level. The program includes four sequential levels that address students' decoding skills and six sequential levels that address students' comprehension skills. The levels are designed to target students who need assistance with particular types of reading skills based on the results of *Corrective Reading* placement tests (see

the Teaching section for more details on the different levels). The decoding and comprehension components can be used separately as a supplemental reading intervention or combined for use as a reading intervention curriculum. All lessons in the program are sequenced and scripted. *Corrective Reading* can be implemented in small groups of four to five students or in a whole-class format. *Corrective Reading* is intended to be taught in 45-minute lessons four to five times a week.

Research²

One study of *Corrective Reading* that falls within the scope of the Adolescent Literacy review protocol meets What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards, and no studies meet WWC evidence standards with reservations. This study included 86 fifth-grade struggling readers from a school district just outside Pittsburgh, PA.³

Based on one study, the WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Corrective Reading* on adolescent learners to be small for alphabets, reading fluency, and comprehension. The one study that meets WWC evidence standards did not examine the effectiveness of *Corrective Reading* on adolescent learners in the general literacy achievement domain.

1. The descriptive information for this program was obtained from a publicly available source: the program's website (<http://www.sraonline.com/>, downloaded December 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 April 2009.
2. 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.
3. The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.

Effectiveness *Corrective Reading* was found to have no discernible effects on the alphabetics, reading fluency, and comprehension domains for adolescent learners.

	<i>Alphabetics</i>	<i>Reading fluency</i>	<i>Comprehension</i>	<i>General literacy achievement</i>
Rating of effectiveness	No discernible effects	No discernible effects	No discernible effects	na
Improvement index⁴	Average: +4 percentile points Range: +1 to +6 percentile points	+4 percentile points na	Average: +3 percentile points Range: +1 to +5 percentile points	na na

na = not applicable

Absence of conflict of interest

The study in this intervention report, Torgesen et al. (2006), was prepared, in part, by staff of Mathematica Policy Research. For this reason, the study was rated by, and this intervention report

was prepared by, researchers unaffiliated with Mathematica. The report was then reviewed by the principal investigator, a WWC Quality Assurance reviewer, and an external peer reviewer.

Additional program information

Developer and contact

Corrective Reading is distributed by SRA/McGraw-Hill. Address: 220 East Daniieldale Road, Desoto, TX 75115-2490. Web: <http://www.sraonline.com/>. Telephone: (888) 772-4543.

Scope of use

Corrective Reading has been implemented in the United States and England. No information is available on the number of students or schools using the program.

Teaching

The program’s 45-minute lessons are designed for groups of up to 20 students up to five times a week. The program’s two components—decoding and comprehension—have four and six sequential levels of difficulty, respectively. Students’ skill development is designed to progress as they move from lower to higher levels. For example, a student who needs assistance developing basic decoding skills would start at decoding level A and complete that level before moving on to the more advanced

skills covered in level B1, whereas a student who does not read fluently or who confuses similar words would start at decoding level B1 and complete that level before moving on to the more advanced skills covered in level C.

Each level spans half of an academic year (with the exception of level C, which spans an entire academic year, and Fast Cycle levels that span roughly a quarter of a year). Therefore, the number of levels a student covers in a single academic year can range from one to three. The program can be used to provide students with either two full periods of instruction per day—one period in decoding and one period in comprehension—or one period of instruction per day (by focusing on one of the two components [e.g., comprehension]).

Corrective Reading placement tests determine the level at which each student is placed; once placed at a particular level, the program calls for the student to complete all the lessons in that level before moving on to the next level. All levels contain ongoing mastery tests and assessments to help track individual student achievement.

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

Additional program information (continued)

The decoding levels include

- level A (65 lessons), which is designed for nonreaders. This level emphasizes basic decoding skills: rhyming, sounding out, sentence reading, and story reading;
- levels B1 and B2 (65 lessons in each), which are designed for struggling readers who do not read fluently or who confuse similar words. These levels teach students to become automatic decoders, able to read 90 words per minute by the end of B1 and 130 words per minute by the end of B2; and
- level C (125 lessons), which is designed for students who experience difficulty with vocabulary and complex sentence structures. This level bridges the gap between advanced word decoding skills and the ability to read informational text.

The comprehension levels include

- level A (65 lessons), which is designed for students who do not understand the concepts underlying much of the material being taught in classrooms;
- levels B1 and B2 (60 and 65 lessons, respectively), which target more advanced readers;⁵ and
- level C (140 lessons), which focuses on applying comprehension skills.

The development of skills in the comprehension component progresses from comprehending oral language to comprehending written material. Skills are first taught in structured exercises that are controlled by the teacher. Later, students are shown how to apply the skills independently to complex written materials.

The publisher also provides staff development training that focuses on how to deliver direct instruction and use the program materials. Follow-up observations and coaching are recommended as support for teachers implementing the program. A Teaching Tutor CD-ROM provides ongoing support for teachers using *Corrective Reading*.

Cost

Prices vary by level (A, B1, B2, C) and component (decoding, comprehension). The cost of student materials ranges from \$10 per student for level A programs to \$50 per student for level C materials. Teacher materials cost approximately \$200 per level.

For more detailed cost information by level and component, consult the distributor's website: <http://www.sraonline.com/>.

Research

A total of 129 studies reviewed by the WWC investigated the effects of *Corrective Reading* on adolescent learners. One study (Torgesen et al., 2006) is a randomized controlled trial that meets WWC evidence standards. The remaining 128 studies do not meet either WWC evidence standards or eligibility screens.

Meets evidence standards

Torgesen et al. (2006) conducted a randomized controlled trial that examined the effects of the decoding component of *Corrective Reading* on 86 fifth-grade students in Pennsylvania. The

study design was based on random assignment of 32 school units⁶ to one of four interventions: *Corrective Reading*, *Kaplan SpellRead*,⁷ *Failure Free Reading*, and *Wilson Reading*. Within each school, eligible students were randomly assigned to the treatment group that would receive the intervention assigned to its school or to the control group that would not receive any of the four interventions. Students were eligible for participation if their teacher identified them as a struggling reader and if they scored at or below the 30th percentile on a word-level reading test and at or above the 5th percentile on a vocabulary test. The

5. Comprehension levels A and B1 also offer Fast Cycle alternatives that contain 30 and 35 lessons, respectively.

6. A school unit consists of several schools partnering so that the cluster included two 3rd-grade and two 5th-grade instructional groups. Only the findings on 5th graders are included in this review as specified by the Adolescent Literacy review protocol.

7. The study's authors refer to the intervention as *SpellRead P.A.T.* In 2006, Kaplan K12 acquired *SpellRead*, the developer and distributor of *SpellRead Phonological Auditory Training*®.

Research (continued)

WWC based its effectiveness ratings on findings from comparisons of the 55 fifth-grade students who received *Corrective Reading* and the 31 fifth-grade control group students who received the standard district curriculum. The study reported student outcomes after six months of program implementation.⁸

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.⁹

The WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Corrective Reading* to be small for the alphabetics, reading fluency, and comprehension domains for adolescent learners. The one study that meets WWC evidence standards did not examine the effectiveness of *Corrective Reading* on adolescent learners in the general literacy achievement domain.

Effectiveness Findings

The WWC review of interventions for Adolescent Literacy addresses student outcomes in four domains: alphabetics, reading fluency, comprehension, and general literacy achievement. The study included in this report covers three domains: alphabetics, reading fluency, and comprehension. The findings below present the authors' estimates and WWC-calculated estimates of the size and the statistical significance of the effects of *Corrective Reading* on adolescent learners.¹⁰

Alphabetics. Torgesen et al. (2006) did not find statistically significant effects of *Corrective Reading* on 5th graders' scores on the Word Attack and Word Identification subtests of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test–Revised (WRMT-R) or the Phonemic Decoding Efficiency and Sight Word Efficiency subtests of the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE). The WWC-calculated average effect across these measures was not

large enough to be considered substantively important according to WWC criteria (i.e., an effect size of at least 0.25).

Reading fluency. Torgesen et al. (2006) did not find statistically significant effects of *Corrective Reading* on 5th graders' scores on the Oral Reading Fluency test. The WWC-calculated effect was not large enough to be considered substantively important according to WWC criteria.

Comprehension. Torgesen et al. (2006) examined two outcomes in this domain (the WRMT-R Passage Comprehension subtest and the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation [GRADE] Passage Comprehension subtest) and reported no statistically significant effects for 5th-grade students, although the comprehension component of *Corrective Reading* was not implemented in this study. The WWC-calculated average effect across these measures was not large enough to be considered substantively important according to WWC criteria.

8. For the purposes of this study, only the decoding component of *Corrective Reading* was implemented. By design (to facilitate the examination of two types of interventions), the comprehension component of *Corrective Reading* was not implemented. Additional findings reflecting students' outcomes one year after the intervention year can be found in Appendices A4.1–A4.3.
9. 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 *Corrective Reading* is in Appendix A6.
10. 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 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. In the case of Torgesen et al. (2006), the authors adjusted for clustering and no corrections for multiple comparisons were needed because there were no statistically significant findings.

Effectiveness *(continued)*

In summary, the study showed indeterminate effects in the alphabetics, reading fluency, and comprehension domains.

Rating of effectiveness

The WWC rates the effects of an intervention in a given outcome domain 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 and the comparison conditions, and the consistency in findings across studies (see the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Appendix E).

The WWC found *Corrective Reading* to have no discernible effects on alphabetics, reading fluency, or comprehension for adolescent 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.

The average improvement index for alphabetics is +4 percentile points, with a range of +1 to +6 percentile points across findings from one study. The improvement index for reading fluency is +4 percentile points for a single finding from one study. The average improvement index for comprehension is +3 percentile points, with a range of +1 to +5 percentile points across findings from one study.

Summary

The WWC reviewed 129 studies on *Corrective Reading* for adolescent learners. One of these studies meets WWC evidence standards; the remaining 128 studies do not meet either WWC evidence standards or eligibility screens. Based on one study, the WWC found no discernible effects on alphabetics, reading fluency, or comprehension for adolescent learners. The conclusions presented in this report may change as new research emerges.

References

Meets WWC evidence standards

Torgesen, J., Myers, D., Schirm, A., Stuart, E., Vartivarian, S., Mansfield, W., et al. (2006). *National assessment of Title I. Interim report. Volume II: Closing the reading gap: First year findings from a randomized trial of four reading interventions for striving readers*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

Additional source:

Torgesen, J., Schirm, A., Castner, L., Vartivarian, S., Mansfield, W., Myers, D., et al. (2007). *National assessment of Title I. Final report. Volume II: Closing the reading gap: Findings*

from a randomized trial of four reading interventions for striving readers (NCEE 2008-4013). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

Studies that fall outside the Adolescent Literacy review protocol or do not meet WWC evidence standards

Airhart, K. M. (2005). The effectiveness of Direct Instruction in reading compared to a state-mandated language arts curriculum for ninth and tenth graders with specific learning disabilities (Doctoral dissertation, Tennessee State University, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67(01A), 138-130.

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- Bergeson, T. (2004). *Grades 4–12 reading intervention materials review: Washington State evaluation report*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Education. The study is ineligible for review because it is not a primary analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.
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- Bradford, S., Alberto, P., Houchins, D. E., Shippen, M. E., & Flores, M. (2006). Using systematic instruction to teach decoding skills to middle school students with moderate intellectual disabilities. *Education & Training in Developmental Disabilities*, 41(4), 333–343. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group.
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