Beyond the Basics: Effective Reading Programs for the Upper Elementary Grades
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What reading programs have been proven to help students in grades 2-5 to succeed? To find out, this review summarizes evidence on three types of programs designed to improve the reading achievement of students in grades 2-5:

- **Reading Curricula (Curr),** such as *Open Court, Harcourt*, *Reading Street* and other standard and alternative textbooks

- **Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI),** such as *Jostens/Compass Learning* and *Accelerated Reader.*

- **Instructional Process Programs (IP),** such as cooperative learning and classroom management and motivation approaches, and cross-age tutoring.

General Findings

Overall, 80 experimental-control comparisons met the inclusion criteria, of which 25 used random assignment to treatments. Effect sizes (proportion of a standard deviation) were averaged across studies, weighting by sample size.

Reading Curricula (Curr). Studies of reading curricula found minimal effects of using particular textbooks. Overall weighted mean effect size across 16 studies: +0.06.

Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI). Studies of CAI also found minimal effects. Mean weighted effect size across 31 studies: +0.06.

Instructional Process Programs (IP). Studies of programs that provide extensive professional development to help teachers use well-specified teaching methods had relatively positive effects overall. Mean weighted effect size across 33 studies: +0.21. Particularly positive effects were found for cooperative learning (ES=+0.21 in 10 studies).

Program Ratings

Listed below are currently available programs, grouped by strength of effectiveness. Within each group, programs are listed alphabetically. The type for each program corresponds to the categories above (e.g., IP = Instructional Process Strategies).

Strong Evidence of Effectiveness

None

Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
⬡	Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC)	IP	A cooperative learning program designed to help students develop metacognitive strategies for comprehending narrative and expository text. CIRC is now disseminated as Reading Wings.	Email: sfainfo@successforall.org Website: www.successforall.org
⬡	Cross Age Peer Tutoring + Strategy Instruction	IP	Belgian Program in which children receive effective one-to-one tutoring from older students as well as instruction in metacognitive strategies.	E-mail: Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be
⬡	Same-Age Peer Tutoring + Strategy Instruction	IP	A Belgian program in which children participate in reciprocal peer tutoring activities and also receive metacognitive strategy instruction.	E-mail: Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Strong Evidence of Modest Effects

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
⬡	Open Court Reading	Curr*	Basal textbook that uses scripted phonics lessons.	E-mail: mhls_ecommerce_custserv@mcgraw-hill.com Website: www.sraonline.com/oc_home.html

*With additional time and training

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Weak Evidence with Notable Effects

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
⬡	Carbo Reading Styles	IP	An approach for adapting reading strategies to students' diverse learning styles.	E-mail: readingstyle@nrsi.com Website: www.nrsi.com/our_research_carbo_reading.html
⬡	Exemplary Center for Reading and Instruction (ECRI)	IP	A professional development program that emphasizes individualized instruction, positive reinforcement, and constant assessment of children's mastery levels.	E-mail: ereid@xmission.com Website: www.ecri.cc
⬡	Fast ForWord	CAI	Computerized program designed to strengthen memory, attention, and mental processing.	Website: http://www.scilearn.com/

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Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
⬡	Lightspan	CAI	A technology application that provides parents with Sony Playstations and digital video multi-players linked to their televisions, and then uses linked instructional software in both home and school.	E-mail: ar@plato.com Website: www.plato.com/Elementary-Solutions.aspx
⬡	Literature-Based Program	IP	A reading approach that supplements traditional basal textbooks with extensive literature in many genres, independent reading and writing periods, directed reading/listening thinking activities, read-aloud sessions, and classroom literacy centers.	E-mail: lmorro@rutgers.edu
⬡	My Reading Coach	CAI	Reading software that focuses on phonics, word structure, vocabulary, and comprehension.	E-mail: mail@mindplay.com Website: www.myreadingcoach.com

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
⬡	OpenBook to Literacy	CAI	A software program that uses a combination of voice, text, pictures, video, and graphics to teach reading in a self-paced individualized format, as a supplement to classroom instruction.	E-mail: Sales@openbooksoftware.com Website: www.openbooklearning.com
⬡	PALS	IP	A technique in which children work in pairs, taking turns as teacher and learner, to learn a structured sequence of literacy skills, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, sound blending, passage reading, and story retelling.	E-mail: pals@vanderbilt.edu Website: kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals
⬡	QuickReads	Curr	A supplementary program designed to increase fluency, build vocabulary and background knowledge, and improve comprehension.	E-mail: quickreads@textproject.org Website: www.quickreads.org
⬡	Reader's Theater	IP	A cooperative learning method designed to enhance students' reading by having them read the scripts of plays.	Complete contact form at: http://scholastic.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/scholastic.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php Website: www.teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/readerstheater.htm

Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
⬡	Reciprocal Teaching	IP	An instructional strategy in which students work in small groups to help one another generate their own questions about a text they are reading, summarize parts of the text, clarify word meanings and confusing text passages, and predict what might come next.	E-mail: annemari@umich.edu
⬡	Strategy Instruction (Belgian Model)	IP	Belgian strategy instruction program that focuses cognitive and metacognitive skills such as summarization, graphic organizers, and prediction to help students comprehend text.	E-mail: Hilde.Vankeer@ugent.be
⬡	Student Success Skills	IP	A small group counseling intervention in which counselors use a structured approach emphasizing achievement in academic, social, and self-management skills.	E-mail: sssaec@aol.com Website: www.studentsuccessskills.com/

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Rating	Program	Type	Description	Contact / Website
⬡	Thinking Maps	IP	A program that teaches students to use graphic organizers to help them understand concepts.	E-mail: office@thinkingmaps.com Website: www.thinkingmaps.com

⬡ **Insufficient Evidence of Effectivennes**

Accelerated Reader
CCC
Classworks
Compass Reading
Conceptually-Based Strategy Instruction
Consistency Management Cooperative Discipline (CMCD)
Elements of Reading: Comprehension
Elements of Reading: Fluency
Elements of Reading: Vocabulary
Failure Free Reading
Fluency Formula
Foundations and Frameworks
Harcourt
Houghton Mifflin
Jacob's Ladder
Jostens/Compass Learning
Spell Read
Reading Together
Responsive Classroom
Rigby
Reading Street
Spell Read
Success in Reading and Writing
WICAT
Wilson Reading

N No Qualifying Studies

100 Book Challenge
ABD's of Reading
Academy of Reading
Accelerated Literacy Learning
Achieve 3000
AfterSchool KidzLit
Alphabetic Phonics
Barton Reading & Spelling System
Be a Better Reader
Breakthrough to Literacy
Caught Reading
Charlesbridge Reading Fluency
Comprehension Plus
Comprehension Upgrade
Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI)
CRISS / Project CRISS
Cross-Aged Literacy Program
Direct Instruction
Destination Reading
Disciplinary Literacy
Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself
Dolch® Reading Program
Early Success
Earobics
Edmark Reading Program
Electronic Bookshelf
Essential Learning Systems™
Fast Track Reading
First Steps
Fluency First
Fluent Reader
FOCUS Reading and Language Program
Fundations
Funnix Reading Programs
Glass-Analysis method
Great Leaps
Headsprout Early Reading
Hooked on Phonics®

Horizons
HOSTS
The Imagination Station
Imagine It!
IndiVisual Reading
Intensive Reading Strategies Instruction (IRSI) Model
Intensive Supplemental Reading
Invitations to Literacy
Irlen Method
Junior Great Books
Kaleidoscope
KidBiz3000 and TeenBiz 3000
Knowledge Box
K-W-L strategy
LANGUAGE!
Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling
Language First!
Language for Thinking
LeapTrack Assessment & Instruction System
Learning to Read
Learning Experience Approach
Learning Upgrade
Lexia
Like to Read
Lindamood-Bell
LiPS
LitART
The Literacy Center
Literacy Seminar
Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Treasures
Making Connections
McGraw-Hill Reading
McRAT
Merit Software
Open Book Anywhere
Open Book Anywhere
Orchard
Orton-Gillingham Approach
Pathways™
Phonetics First-Focus on Sounds

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Phonics First Foundations
Phonics and Friends
Phonics for Reading
Phono-Graphix
PLATO
Project Read
Putting Reading First in Your Classroom
Questioning the Author
Quicktionary Reading Pen II
Rave-O
REACH
READ 180
ReadAbout
Read Naturally
Read Now
READ RIGHT
Read, Write & Type!
Reading Apprenticeship
Reading in the Content Areas
Reading Horizons
Reading to Learn
Reading Mastery
Reading Plus
Reading Success
Reading Triumphs
Reading Upgrade
REWARDS
Rosetta Stone Literacy
Saxon Phonics
Scaffolded Reading Experience
Seeing Stars
SIM-Stategic Instruction Model
Six Minute Solution
Slingerland
Smart Way Reading and Spelling
Soar to Success
Soliloquy Reading Assistant
Sound Sheets
Spalding Method
S.P.I.R.E. and Sounds Sensible

SRA Reading
START-IN
STEPS (Sequential Teaching of Explicit Phonics and Spelling)
Strategic Literacy Initiative
SuccessMaker
Sunshine
TeachFirst
Teaching Reading Essentials
Text Mapping Strategy
Text Talk
Thinking Works
Transactional Strategies Instruction
Tune in to Reading
Visualizing and Verbalizing
Vocabulary Improvement Program
Voices Reading
Voyager TimeWarp Plus
Voyager Passport
Waterford Early Reading System
Wisconsin Design for Reading Skills Development (WDRSD)
Wright Group Literacy
WriteToLearn

Review Methods

An exhaustive search considered more than 2000 published and unpublished articles. It included those that met the following criteria.

- Schools or classroom using each program had to be compared to randomly assigned or well-matched control groups.

- Study duration had to be at least 12 weeks.

- Outcome measures had to be assessment of the reading content being taught in all classes. Almost all are standardized tests or state assessments.

- The review placed particular emphasis on studies in which schools, teachers, or students were assigned at random to experimental or control groups.

Program Ratings Basis

Programs were rated according to the overall strength of the evidence support in their effects on reading achievement. "Effect size" (ES) is the proportion of a standard deviation by which a treatment exceeds a control group. The categories are as follows:

Strong Evidence of Effectiveness: At least two prospective studies (i.e., not post hoc), one of which is a large (n=250) randomized or randomized quasi-experimental study, or multiple smaller studies, with a sample size-weighted effect size of at least +0.20, and a collective sample size across all studies of at least 500 students. To qualify for this category, effect sizes from the randomized studies must have a weighted mean effect size of at least +0.20.

Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness: At least two randomized or matched prospective studies, with a collective sample size of 500 students, and a weighted mean effect size of at least +0.20.

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Strong Evidence of Modest Effects: Studies meet the criteria for "Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness" except that the weighted mean effect size is +0.10 to +0.19.

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness: Weak Evidence with Notable Effect: A weighted mean effect size of at least +0.20 based on one or more qualifying studies of any qualifying design insufficient in number or sample size to meet the criteria for "Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness."

Insufficient Evidence of Effectiveness
One or more qualifying studies not meeting the criteria for "Limited Evidence of Effectiveness."

N No Qualifying studies: No studies met inclusion standards.

Full Report

Slavin, R.E., Lake, C., Cheung, A., & Davis, S. (2009, June). Beyond the basics: Effective reading programs for the upper elementary grades. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education.
http://www.bestevidence.org/reading/upper_elem/upper_elem_read.htm