

English Language Learners and Intervention Using READ 180



Background

There is no greater challenge facing the American education system than that of literacy for all students. The recent No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB Act), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with sweeping changes, includes a particular focus on reading. In announcing the Act, President George W. Bush asserted that “The most basic educational skill is reading. The most basic obligation of any school is to teach reading.” There are two key components of the NCLB Act that are designed to ensure literacy for all, and specifically for groups that have been underserved in the past.

First, it significantly raises the standards of accountability that states and local districts have to meet for student achievement in reading. The NCLB Act requires more frequent reading exams (which must be annual for grades 3 through 8 by 2005-06), and it requires every school to “disaggregate”, or break out, test results for specific groups of students, including students with limited English proficiency. It further requires that these disaggregated scores be used to assess each state’s progress in closing the “achievement gap” between these previously underserved populations and higher-achieving groups. In addition, starting in 2002-03, the Act requires that the English proficiency of English language learners be assessed annually.

Second, the NCLB Act promotes the use of reading instructional materials that are “based on scientific research” documenting effective reading instruction. As background for the NCLB Act, The National Reading Panel (2000) outlined the components of effective reading instruction in their report *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*. This review of existing scientific research concluded that there are five essential components of effective reading instruction:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

In addition, the report emphasized the importance of inservice professional development for teachers on student achievement in reading.

READ 180: A research-based instructional program

READ 180 is an intensive reading program developed by Scholastic, Inc., based on more than 10 years of research by reading experts at Vanderbilt University (e.g., Hasselbring et al, 1997; Blasewitz et al, 1999). The program, which combines research-based instructional strategies with quality professional development for teachers, is specifically designed to improve the reading of students who are reading below grade level. **READ 180** teaches phonics-based decoding skills, supports vocabulary development, and provides practice in rapid word discrimination and repeated reading of connected text to build fluency and comprehension: all of the essential components of reading instruction as outlined by the research reviewed in the National Reading Panel's report.

READ 180 for ELL Students

The instructional strategies in the **READ 180** program are specifically tailored to the needs of students who are English Language Learners (ELL), based on research documenting effective techniques with this population, as follows:

- **Comprehension** is facilitated by the provision of **background knowledge** through video in the content area of the reading instruction to enable students to build mental models and visual images. Translations of the video content are provided for children whose primary language is Spanish.
- **Phonemic awareness/phonics** instruction is provided through decoding tips with modeled practice in segmentation, blending, structural analysis, and correct pronunciation.
- **Fluency** is addressed by provision of practice in rapid word discrimination and repeated reading of connected text, along with text-captioning to allow students to read along with modeled examples of fluent reading.
- **Vocabulary** development is supported through systematic introduction of context-relevant vocabulary in the videos, along with definitions, explanations, and demonstrations that are provided throughout the program.

- **Motivation and interest in materials** are encouraged by providing age-appropriate, motivating reading passages that reflect cultural diversity.

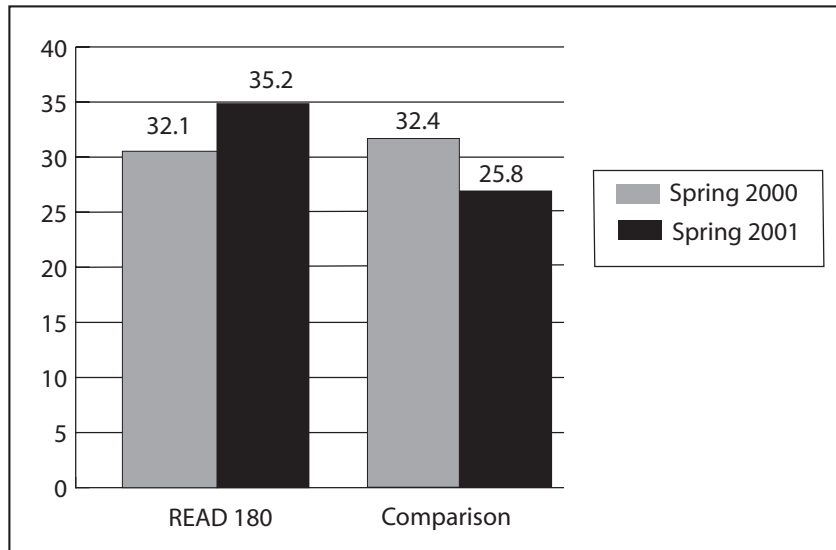
In addition, the intensive in-service plan for implementing **READ 180** provides a variety of instructional strategies for teachers. This kind of focused professional development for teachers is particularly critical for teaching ELL students, as documented by the research of Papalewis and Fortune (2002). They found that a key component of high-achieving schools with large percentages of Hispanic students was the implementation of a professional development plan to help equip teachers to better serve the English language learner. Many of the strategies taught in the **READ 180** in-service program are particularly useful in helping teachers effectively meet the needs of ELL students, including:

- Forming groups for differentiated instruction
- Classroom and instructional management
- Instructional uses of ongoing diagnostic strategies that guide teaching and assessment
- Explicit teaching skills that promote fluent reading, writing, and language use
- Use of technology for practice and reinforcement

Effectiveness of READ 180 with ELL students

Recent research results indicate that the **READ 180** program is particularly effective with ELL students. An independent evaluation of the **READ 180** program (Papalewis, 2002a & b), conducted in the Los Angeles Unified School District, studied 537 eighth-grade students. Most of these students were repeating eighth grade due to having received grades of D or F in English, low scores on the SAT-9, or failing to pass the district's writing performance test. A large portion (78%) of these students were Hispanic, with 42% classified as limited English proficiency (LEP) and another 27% who had just recently been reclassified out of LEP. The students were divided into two groups, matched on pretest SAT-9 means, gender, ethnicity, and language proficiency. One group used the **READ 180** program for the full school year and the other (comparison) group had no specific reading intervention. Table 1 shows the results of this study. Note that the scores are expressed in Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE's). Positive NCE gains represent improvement compared with the national norming sample, a gain of zero represents keeping pace with the norming sample, and negative NCE gains represent losses compared to the norming sample.

Table 1
Los Angeles Unified School District
SAT-9 NCE scores for **READ 180** and non-**READ 180** comparison students



The **READ 180** group experienced clear gains, greater than three Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE's), on the SAT-9 over the course of the school year. With no intervention, on the other hand, the comparison group actually experienced a loss of almost 7 NCE's during the same time period. Clearly, using the **READ 180** program helped this group of primarily ELL students make significant progress in reading over the course of one school year.

In addition, the **READ 180** program is being implemented with students in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in Fairfax County, VA. During the 2001-2002 school year, Read 180 was used with ESOL students in two middle schools. Based on preliminary data collected in January 2002, 9 out of 13 ESOL students in one of the schools using the program have shown substantial gains in reading scores after using the **READ 180** program for just the fall semester. These results are displayed in Table 2, with grade equivalents for the scores displayed in Table 3.

Table 2
Fairfax County, VA, middle school
SRI Lexile Scores for 9 ESOL students after one semester of instruction with **READ 180**

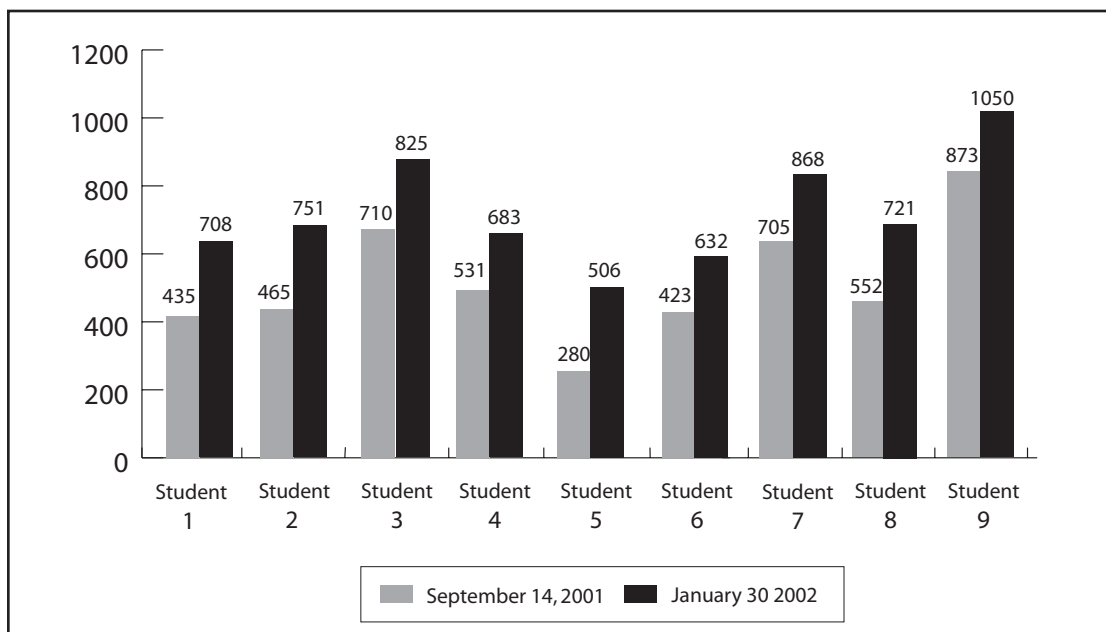


Table 3
Approximate Grade Equivalents for Readability Lexile Ranges

Grade Equivalent	Lexile Range
1st	200–400
2nd	400–500
3rd	450–650
4th	650–800
5th	800–900
6th	900–1000
7th-8th	1000–1150
9th-10th	1100–1250

As can be seen in these Tables, the initial results are very promising for these middle school students. All nine of these students have increased their reading level by at least one grade level, and three of them (students #1, 5, and 9) have increased two grade levels. It should be noted that in this implementation, the **READ 180** program was only used *every other day*, instead of every day as the program was designed to be used. Even greater gains could be expected if the program were used every day.

Looking forward

Scholastic's **READ 180** intensive program has been developed based on scientific research regarding effective reading instructional strategies, as recommended by the NCLB Act of 2001. There is growing evidence that students who use **READ 180** can significantly improve their reading performance. In particular, recent research has shown that English language learners, who have been singled out by the NCLB Act as an underserved group in the past, can make dramatic gains using **READ 180**. Based on the very promising results achieved so far, it is anticipated that as the program is implemented more completely and on a broader scale with ELL students there will be much more good news to report.

References

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