

# What Works Clearinghouse



## Reading Mastery<sup>1</sup>/SRA/McGraw-Hill

**Program description** *Reading Mastery* is a direct instruction program designed to provide explicit, systematic instruction in English language reading. *Reading Mastery* is available in two versions, *Reading Mastery Classic* levels I and II (for use in grades K–3) and *Reading Mastery Plus*, an integrated reading-language program for grades K–6. The program begins by teaching phonemic awareness and sound-letter correspondence and moves into word and passage reading, vocabulary development, comprehension, and building oral reading fluency. Later lessons

continue to emphasize accurate and fluent decoding while teaching students the skills necessary to read and comprehend and to learn from expository text. Lessons are designed to be fast-paced and interactive. Students are grouped by similar reading level, based on program placement tests. The program includes placement assessments and a continuous monitoring system. Although not designed exclusively for English language learners, *Reading Mastery* can be used with this group of students.

**Research** One study of *Reading Mastery* met the WWC evidence standards.<sup>2</sup> This study included both English language learners and English speaking students in grades K–4 in Oregon. The investigators used the *Reading Mastery* program as a supplement to

normal reading instruction for Spanish speaking students who were markedly behind expected reading achievement. The WWC reports only the outcomes pertaining to the English language learner subsample.

**Effectiveness** *Reading Mastery* was found to have potentially positive effects on the reading achievement of English language learners.

	Reading achievement	Mathematics achievement	English language development
<b>Rating of effectiveness</b>	Potentially positive effects	Not reported	Not reported
<b>Improvement index<sup>3</sup></b>	Average: +28 percentile points <sup>4</sup> Range: +21 to +35 percentile points	Not reported	Not reported

1. This program is sometimes known as *Direct Instruction* using the *Reading Mastery* texts or *SRA Direct Instruction—Reading Mastery*.

2. The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.

## Additional program information

### Developer and contact

Developed by Dr. Siegfried Engelmann under the title *Distar*® *Reading* for use in Project Follow Through as part of the Direct Instruction teaching model. Distributed by SRA/McGraw Hill. 220 East Daniieldale Road, DeSoto, TX 75115-2490. Web: [www.sraonline.com](http://www.sraonline.com). Email: [SRA\\_CustomerService@mcgraw-hill.com](mailto:SRA_CustomerService@mcgraw-hill.com). Telephone: (201) 512-0909

### Scope of use

Early versions of *Reading Mastery* were developed during the 1960s and 1970s, and have since been widely used. The *Reading Mastery* program has been updated throughout the years and now exists in two forms: *Reading Mastery Classic* (K–3) and *Reading Mastery Plus* (K–6). More than 1 million students in one-third of the nation’s schools use a direct instruction program.

### Teaching

*Reading Mastery* uses 30- to 45-minute lessons designed to facilitate teacher-student interactions and active student participation. A typical lesson includes seven to nine short activities that encompass multiple strands of content, such as phonemic

awareness, letter-sound correspondence, sounding out words, word recognition, vocabulary, oral reading fluency, and comprehension. The overarching teaching routine repeated throughout the curriculum is composed of the following steps: modeling new content, providing guided practice, and implementing individual practice and application. Lesson scripts act as a guide for teachers. Signals and group responses are used to keep students involved and on task—and to control lesson pacing.

### Cost

Student materials include nonconsumable storybooks or textbooks and workbooks. The cost per student ranges from \$100 to \$150 for the first year of implementation. Replacement workbooks cost between \$15 and \$25 a student in subsequent years. A full set of teaching materials—a one time purchase—costs between \$600 and \$900 for each grade level. Additional components include literature collections (\$80–\$140), Independent Readers (approximately \$400 a grade level), and seatwork blackline masters (\$57). A videotape series of 12 tapes (\$145) supplements consultant-led professional development (\$1,500 a day).

## Research

One study (Gunn, Biglan, Smolkowski, & Ary, 2000) reviewed by the WWC investigated the effects of supplemental reading instruction using *Reading Mastery* on English language learners. It is part of a larger study that includes both English language learners and English speaking students. The English language learner subsample is the focus of this WWC report. The study was a randomized controlled trial that met WWC evidence standards.<sup>5</sup> The intervention group received their usual reading instruction supplemented by *Reading Mastery* if they were beginning readers in grades 1 or 2. Students below grade level in grades 3 or 4 were put into an appropriate level of *SRA Corrective Reading*.<sup>6</sup> Both programs include components that facilitate

the development of beginning reading skills, but the programs differ in instructional methodology. *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading* both entail explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, sound-letter correspondence, and blending. New sounds were introduced to students assigned to the *Corrective Reading* group at a faster pace than to students in the *Reading Mastery* group, and stories used for the *Corrective Reading* group were selected based on their appeal to older students.

Gunn and colleagues (2000) was a two-year study that included a one-year follow-up. This WWC report focuses on a subsample of the larger study, addressing students classified as English language learners (17 of 122 K–3 students).

3. These numbers show the average and range of improvement indices for all findings across the study.

4. Due to a very small sample size, these results should be interpreted with caution. See the WWC *Reading Mastery Technical Appendices* for further details.

5. The study also investigated the impact of *Corrective Reading*, which is also a direct instruction program intended for struggling readers in grade 3 to adulthood. The findings from this program did not apply to the current report because the English language learner subsample received instruction with *Reading Mastery* only. This was determined after corresponding with the first author of the study.

6. Students were in kindergarten, first, and second grades during Time 1 screening, prior to intervention implementation, so they were in first, second, and third grades at the start of the intervention year.

## Effectiveness Findings

The WWC review of English language learner interventions addresses student outcomes in three domains: reading achievement, mathematics achievement, and English language development.<sup>7</sup>

*Reading achievement.* Gunn et al. (2000) found that the intervention had statistically significant effects on reading achievement. According to WWC criteria, *Read Mastery* had substantively important effects for four of the five measures immediately after implementation of the program (oral reading fluency, letter/word identification, word attack, and reading vocabulary but not passage comprehension). After one year, three of the five outcome measures showed substantively important effects (word attack, reading

vocabulary, and passage comprehension but not oral reading fluency or letter/word identification). This one study, which used a strong design, met WWC criteria for potentially positive effects.

### Rating of effectiveness

The WWC rates interventions 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 (as calculated by the WWC), the size of the difference between participants in the intervention condition and the comparison condition, and the consistency in findings across studies (see the [WWC Intervention Rating Scheme](#)).

## The WWC found *Reading Mastery* to have potentially positive effects on English language learners' reading achievement

### Improvement index

For each outcome domain, the WWC computed an improvement index based on the effect size (see the [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#)). The improvement index represents the difference between the percentile rank of the average student in the intervention condition versus the percentile rank of the average student in the comparison condition. Unlike the rating of effectiveness, the improvement index is based entirely 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. The average improvement index for reading achievement is +27 percentile points, with a range of +21 to +35 percentile points across findings.

### Summary

The one study on *Reading Mastery* reviewed by the WWC met WWC evidence standards. This study found potentially positive effects in the reading achievement domain. The evidence presented in this report is limited and may change as new research emerges.

## References Met WWC evidence standards

Gunn, B., Biglan, A., Smolkowski, K., & Ary, D. (2000). The efficacy of supplemental instruction in decoding skills for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in early elementary school. *The Journal of Special Education, 34*, 90–103.

### Additional source:

Gunn, B., Smolkowski, K., Biglan, A., & Black, C. (2002). Supplemental instruction in decoding skills for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in early elementary school: A follow-up. *The Journal of Special Education, 36*, 69–79.

**For more information about specific studies and WWC calculations, please see the [WWC Reading Mastery Technical Appendices](#).**

7. The level of statistical significance was reported by the study authors or, where necessary, calculated by the WWC to correct for clustering within classrooms or schools and for multiple comparisons. For an explanation, see the [WWC Tutorial on Mismatch](#). See the [Technical Details of WWC-Conducted Computations](#) for the formulas the WWC used to calculate the statistical significance.