

**Empirical Evaluation of the READY! for Kindergarten Program on
Kindergarten Reading Readiness Scores**

REPORT ON OTHELLO (WA) SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA 2007-2009

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SUMMARY

“The results of this study are consistent with the idea that READY! exposure is related to improved pre-reading scores for preschoolers entering Kindergarten” (p10). This conclusion derives from the fact that students of families exposed to READY! had “statistically significant higher scores on a pre-reading letter naming test than did those whose families were not exposed to READY! (average scores were 16.35 and 9.40, respectively) during that same year” (p4). The study utilized data collected over a two-year period in an attempt to overcome the most common confounds, which are cohort effects and self-selection effects.

This is the most rigorous examination of the READY! for Kindergarten program (READY!) by implementing a two-year quasi-experimental study in Othello School District in Washington State. The district is well-suited for examining the effectiveness of a reading intervention for children at high risk for school failure because 77% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch, 81% are of Hispanic descent, and more than 50% of students attend a transitional bilingual program or a migrant program.ⁱ

These results validate READY! as an effective intervention for improving kindergarten reading readiness.ⁱⁱ The program’s promise is even greater than the results suggest because the intervention is designed to be implemented across multiple years for children between the ages of birth to five, while Strand’s results are for a one-year intervention period only.

Strand compared DIBELSⁱⁱⁱ Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) and Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) scores, assessed at the beginning of kindergarten, for two groups of Othello preschoolers.^{iv} Statistical analyses compared the mean LNF and ISF scores of the two groups. Significant differences were observed for LNF scores. The mean LNF score for the active-treatment intervention group (16.56) was higher than for the

inert-treatment control group (9.68; $F = 5.68$, $p < .02$). Effect size estimation revealed a near-medium effect size for the intervention ($\eta^2 = .036$). The possibility that cohort effects or selection effects could explain the findings was ruled out based on additional mean comparisons between the two treatment groups and two no-treatment control groups obtained during each year of the two-year study. The differences observed for ISF scores were not significant ($F(1,568) = 0.85$, ns).

“In sum, READY! provides parents *information* regarding educationally relevant child development milestones, *skills* for teaching children developmentally-appropriate pre-academic skills, and *educational materials and activities* that ensure a rich early learning environment at home” (p8).

“The present results are positive with respect to the effectiveness of READY! as a district-wide intervention strategy for improving school readiness for multi-ethnic, multi-lingual preschoolers in public school systems.” (p11)

Entire study available August 2010, following peer review:

www.readyforkindergarten.org/research.

ⁱ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington State (2010). Washington State Report Card: Othello School District.

ⁱⁱ Emphasis on pre-reading corresponds with the importance of reading as the biggest determinant of overall school success, as illustrated by empirical literature on early childhood education (Chall, Jacobs, Baldwin, 1990; Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001).

ⁱⁱⁱ DIBELS Letter Naming Fluency and Initial Sounds Fluency tests are nationally standardized and normed tests. DIBELS has been thoroughly researched and each measure demonstrated to be a reliable and valid indicator of early literacy development. <http://dibles.uoregon.edu>

^{iv} The first group constituted an inert-treatment control group because the families of these children participated in READY! but did not receive the early literacy component of the READY! program. The second group consisted of an active-treatment intervention group exposed to READY! one year later. Unlike the inert-treatment control group, the active-treatment group received a complete intervention, including the fall literacy curriculum, conducted by experienced instructors.