How *PHONICS for Reading* Meets ESSA Level 4 Evidence

Curriculum Associates Research Brief | September 2020

Overview

This research brief describes Curriculum Associates' research evidence base for *PHONICS for Reading* as well as our commitment to research that meets the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) evidence standards. This brief is designed to meet the requirements of ESSA Level 4 – Demonstrates a Rationale – evidence standards.

PHONICS for Reading Key Claims

Authored by reading expert Dr. Anita Archer, *PHONICS for Reading* is a systematic, research-based intervention program that gives students in Grades 3–12 the confidence and decoding skills they need to become fluent and proficient readers. There are three levels of content that can be used to improve students' decoding skills – students may use one, two, or all three levels. Designed to appeal to older students, each level features consistent teaching routines, repeated practice, and immediate corrective feedback. *PHONICS for Reading* also supports students with dyslexia, as well as other students who are not showing typical progress in decoding. It can also support English learners who enter school at different ages and with varying experiences in their primary language as well as in English. By providing explicit instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, and high-frequency words, as well as support for fluency and comprehension, *PHONICS for Reading* accelerates the pace of instruction for all older students who lack foundational reading skills.

PHONICS for Reading is built on research-based best practices. The foundation of the program is based on the science of reading and includes key findings from *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Heibert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985), *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, Griffin, 1998), and *The National Reading Panel* report (2000). The approach in *PHONICS for Reading* is further confirmed by findings on beginning reading (e.g., Adams, 1990; Honig, Diamond & Gutlohn, 2008), on reading interventions for older, struggling readers (e.g., Archer, Gleason, and Vachon, 2003; Moats, 2005), and on explicit instruction (e.g., Archer & Hughes, 2011; Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes & Hodge, 1995). In an independent review, the Florida Center for Reading Research noted multiple strengths and no weaknesses in its report on *PHONICS for Reading*. Strengths cited include explicit and systematic instruction, easy-to-use materials, decoding strategies taught to develop automaticity, and immediate corrective feedback. To learn more about the research base for *PHONICS for Reading*, please see the Research Summary.

PHONICS for Reading has been used in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The activities, teacher-directed lessons, and assessment opportunities that comprise the program are based on considerable research and best practices in reading instruction. Curriculum Associates is partnering with Anita Archer to author an updated version of *PHONICS for Reading* that is scheduled to be released in 2021.

i-Ready PHONICS for Reading

PHONICS for Reading Logic Model

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes	Impacts
• *PHONICS for Reading* student and teacher books: First Level, Second Level, Third Level • *PHONICS for Reading* placement test (available in the back of the teacher books for each level) • *i-Ready Diagnostic** **i-Ready Diagnostic* is not required for *PHONICS for Reading* and serves as a supplemental resource.	• Students take *i-Ready Diagnostic** • Students take *PHONICS for Reading* placement test • Students receive lessons at their appropriate level through teacher-led, small-group, and individual work • Students receive systematic, explicit instruction, guided practice with gradual release of responsibility, and checking for understanding • Students practice oral blending and segmentation, decoding single syllable and multisyllabic words, and encoding (spelling) • Students are taught high-frequency words to improve sight word recognition • Students read decodable passages accurately and fluently, with an appropriate rate and prosody • Students answer oral and written questions in response to text, cite text-based evidence • Teachers monitor student performance, provide corrective feedback, and give students the opportunity to respond	• Students complete Work Checks at the end of each lesson, allowing for self-correction and independent practice • Students complete Checking Up activity at the end of every group of 3–4 lessons to assess whether they are ready to progress in the program • Teachers use the decodable passages in every lesson to assess fluency, starting at the Second Level. • *PHONICS for Reading* placement test is used as pre- and post-test to gauge student progress	• Students strengthen phonemic awareness, phonics knowledge, and word recognition skills as they advance through the *PHONICS for Reading* levels • Students work on phonemic awareness skills (blending and segmenting) • Students learn both regularly spelled and irregularly spelled high-frequency words • Students master encoding/decoding one-syllable words • Students master encoding/decoding multisyllabic words • Students increase the speed at which they accurately read and comprehend words, sentences, and connected text	• Increased percentage of students meeting national fluency norms for words correct per minute • Increased percentage of students reading on-grade level • Increased end-of-year state test scores • More students proficient in reading and comprehension	• More students on track for college and/or career success

Commitment to Future Research

Curriculum Associates intends to study the impact of *PHONICS for Reading* on students' reading growth and achievement with research that meets ESSA Level 3 – Promising evidence – requirements. In order to meet ESSA Level 3 requirements, Curriculum Associates plans to study the efficacy of *PHONICS for Reading* using a correlational study design while controlling for selection bias. In addition, Curriculum Associates is committed to supporting districts in evaluating the effectiveness of *PHONICS for Reading* using their own data and resources.

Conducting research that meets the requirements for ESSA Level 2 – Moderate evidence – with a well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental design can be challenging for districts; however, there are various study designs that districts can carry out on their own that would still meet ESSA evidence. One feasible study design is to examine whether students in Grades 3 – 12 who lack foundational reading skills and use *PHONICS for Reading* experience greater growth or achievement than students in Grades 3 – 12 who lack foundational reading skills and do not use *PHONICS for Reading*. To answer this question, a district can assign a "treatment group" of students who are using *PHONICS for Reading* in their classrooms to a "comparison group" of students who are not using *PHONICS for Reading* in their classrooms. A district can use their students' *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading data or data from an alternate benchmark assessment in order to conduct the analysis, and decide whether they are interested in student growth scores or achievement scores. The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) method can be used when random assignment to control for baseline differences between the treatment and comparison group is not possible. Using an ANCOVA approach, a district can examine whether students using *PHONICS for Reading* demonstrate greater growth or achievement compared with students not using *PHONICS for Reading*, while controlling for students' prior achievement. Using this approach, it is important to note that if a district is interested in measuring student growth, they should have assessment data from at least two academic years to be able to control for students' prior achievement. The results from such a study may provide promising evidence for the claim that students using *PHONICS for Reading* experience greater growth or achievement than students not using *PHONICS for Reading*.

We welcome opportunities to support states and districts on research studies. Please reach out to your Account Manager if you are interested in learning more.

i-Ready PHONICS for Reading

References

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