PROGRAM RESEARCH BASE

WRIGHT GROUP
EARLY READING
INTERVENTION

Proven • Efficient • Acceleration

Contents

Executive Summary

Learning to read is not an innate ability. Some students seem to effortlessly enter into the reading process. Other students struggle from the start. The gap between low-performing and proficient readers continues to widen as struggling readers fall further behind their more proficient-reading peers (Stanovich 1986). Only through systematic, strategic, and intensive intervention can these struggling readers begin to close that gap. The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program provides this needed intervention for students in kindergarten through grade 3.

The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program is proven, efficient, and accelerates student achievement. This report explains what the program is, how it works, and how it's different from the competition.

What Is *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention*?

> A systematic, strategic, and intensive system of support for students who are not keeping pace with grade-level reading

> A research-based program, validated by long-term usage and data

> A structure that accelerates reading achievement to grade level by providing an increased volume of reading through an efficient plan of instruction

> A program that integrates the five essential elements of reading instruction, with assessments for program entrance, progress monitoring, and program exit

Why Does *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* Work?

> It is a systematic and intensive routine based on a well-defined continuum of learning

> Strategic lessons include an increased volume of reading and integrate the five essential elements of reading instruction

> The program can be efficiently and cost-effectively implemented

> It includes flexible implementation via reading specialists and/or coaches, including paraprofessionals

How Is *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* Different from the Competition?

> It accelerates learning through the delivery of systematic and intensive instruction

> It integrates the five essential elements of reading within a comprehensive program

> It provides multiple opportunities for purposeful reading

> It delivers services that are both time- and cost-efficient

> It serves as a strong, viable Response to Intervention (RtI) model with a complete system of assessment, including progress monitoring

Stanovich, K. E. 1986. Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly* 21: 360–407.

Learning to read is not an innate ability. Some students seem to effortlessly enter into the reading process. Other students struggle from the start. Kindergarten students who lack understanding of the alphabetic principle are unprepared to become readers in grade 1 (Juel 1988). If these students do not catch up during grade 1, there is little likelihood of them becoming grade-level readers in grade 2 or beyond (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998). The gap between low-performing and proficient readers continues to widen as struggling readers fall further behind their more proficient-reading peers (Stanovich 1986).

Only through systematic, strategic, and intensive intervention can these struggling readers begin to close that gap. The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program provides this needed intervention for students in kindergarten through grade 3.

What Is *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention*?

The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program is a systematic, strategic, and intensive system of support that schools and districts can provide for students who are not meeting reading expectations in their classroom. *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* services can be used in addition to regular classroom reading instruction via intervention sessions. Instruction is focused on the essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program is research-based, built on the work of Dr. Darrell Morris. Dr. Morris is a professor of education and director of the Reading Clinic at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. For over 30 years, Dr. Morris has worked with interventions for at-risk readers. His work began with an after-school program in Illinois called the Howard Street Tutoring Program, and has continued with school districts in North Carolina, Illinois, Montana, and other states. Several school districts have implemented the program, and have attained impressive results.

The program has benefited from years of field research and use by several large school districts. One district with impressive results is the Naperville Community Unit School District 203 in Naperville, Illinois. Dr. Roberta Buhle, Reading Specialist in Naperville District 203, worked with Dr. Darrell Morris to develop a first grade tutorial intervention program in 1988. In 1996, the kindergarten tutorial program was created and developed by Naperville Reading Specialists and Intervention Program Coordinators, Dr. Roberta Buhle, Mary Ellen Sanders, and Joan Forman. District intervention tutorial services were further expanded into second grade in 2002 when Naperville Reading Specialist Elaine Schimkat again worked with Dr. Morris with the development of a second grade tutorial. The grades K–2 tutorial intervention programs remain in use today in Naperville District 203.

The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* kindergarten program is based upon the materials and instructional routines developed by Naperville Community Unit School District 203 in Naperville, Illinois.

Wright Group Early Reading Intervention produces results. This early intervention model is based on extensive research and is modeled on programs with impressive data showing the program's effectiveness in diverse and large school districts. The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* kindergarten program is based on the materials and instructional routines developed by Naperville District 203, called K-Leap. Fourteen schools participated in a two-year study at Naperville District 203. Historical data on kindergarten students chosen for intervention services showed that they were most likely to struggle with literacy development. For 70% of the students who received K-Leap, teachers reported that one-on-one K-Leap did more than teach literacy; it seemed to help students be better learners during the group instruction in their classrooms.

In addition, and most importantly, the kindergarten teachers began to notice positive changes in literacy achievement, attitudes toward school, and classroom behaviors from their students.

KINDERGARTEN SCORES
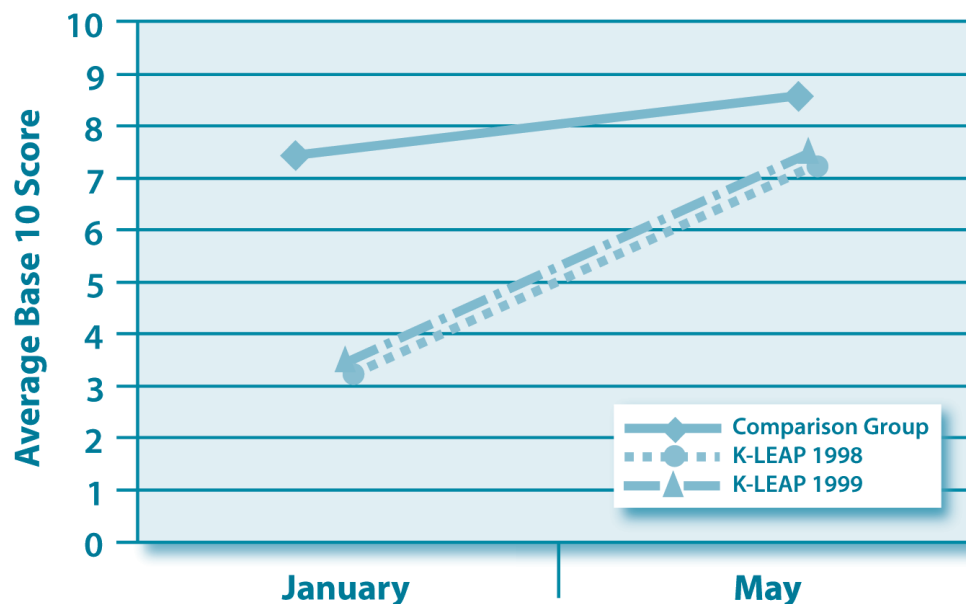
During the 2005–2006 school year, Cedar Rapids Community Schools began pilots of kindergarten and grade 1 intervention programs in nine of their Title I schools. The grade 1 program began in the October, and the kindergarten program began in January. The following year, 2006–2007, all 24 elementary schools implemented the intervention programs in kindergarten and grade 1.
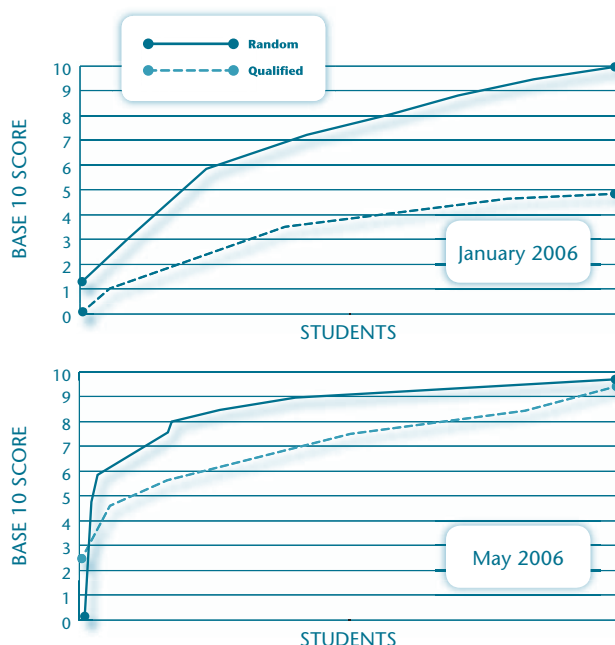
Kindergarten Intervention

In January 2006, the Cedar Rapids Community Schools kindergarten intervention pilot began in nine of the 24 elementary schools. All nine schools qualified for Title I services. An entrance assessment was administered to students who were referred for services by their kindergarten teacher. This same assessment was also administered to a random sample group of kindergarten students from these same schools. The assessment contains several subtests and provides an overall score of 0.0 to 10.0.
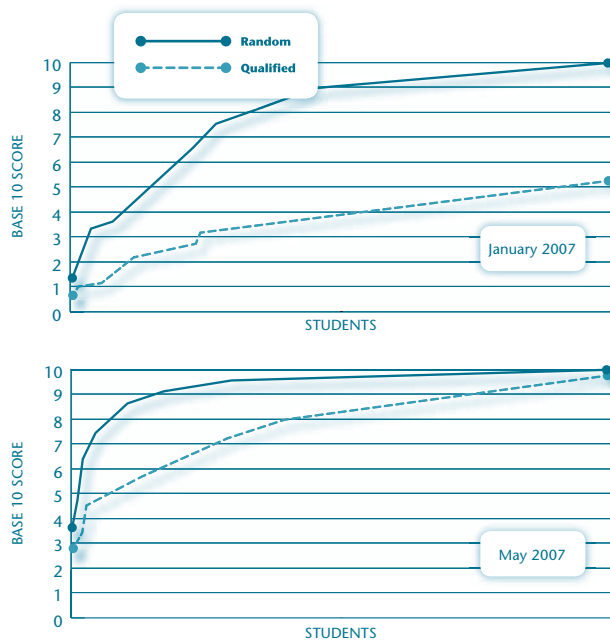
The average January score of the students in the random sample was 7.05. The average score of the students that qualified for the intervention program was 3.05, or a difference of 4 points. There were 81 qualified students who received one-on-one services by trained paraprofessionals from the end of January until May 2006.

In May the same random sample students, as well as the 81 qualified students, were posttested using the same assessment. In May, the average of the random sample was 8.85. There was an overall gain of 1.8 points. The average of the 81 qualified students was 7.35. This represents a gain of 4.3 points.

Of the 81 students who received services, 45, or 56%, met criteria to exit the program.

The charts at right present a visual representation of how the intervention program raised the average of students served, but more importantly, closed the gap between students served and the general student population.

BASE 10 SCORE

Random
Qualified

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

STUDENTS

January 2007

BASE 10 SCORE

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

STUDENTS

May 2007

The following year, all 24 elementary schools implemented the kindergarten intervention program. A total of 132 students from across the district were identified for services. As in the previous year, participation in the intervention program raised the average of students served and closed the gap between students served and the general student population. Additionally, in that second year, 63% of the students qualified to exit the program, an increase from the percentage of students who exited in the pilot year. The charts at left present these data.

Grade 1 Intervention

In October 2005, the grade 1 intervention pilot began in nine of the 24 elementary schools. All nine schools qualified for Title I services. An entrance assessment was administered to students who were referred for services by their grade 1 teacher. This same assessment was also administered to a random sample group of grade 1 students from these same schools. The assessment was different than the kindergarten assessment, but also contains several subtests and provides an overall score of 0.0 to 10.0.

The average October score of the students in the random sample was 7.45. The average score of the students that qualified for the program was 4.32, or a difference of 3.13 points. There were 112 qualified students who received one-on-one services by trained paraprofessionals from early October 2005 until May 2006.

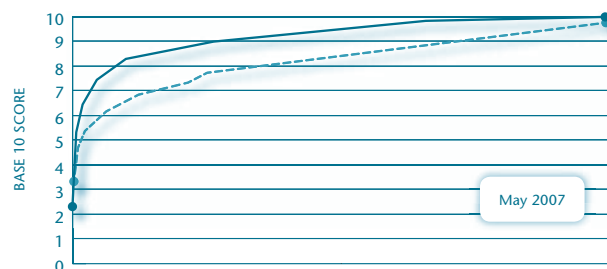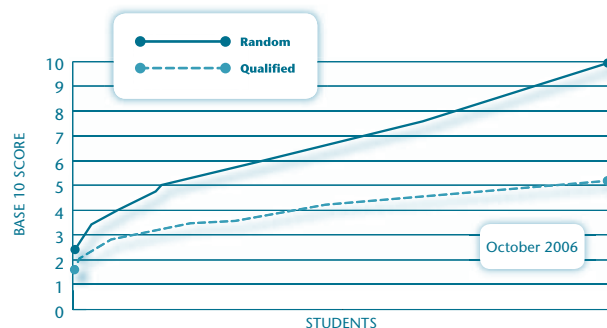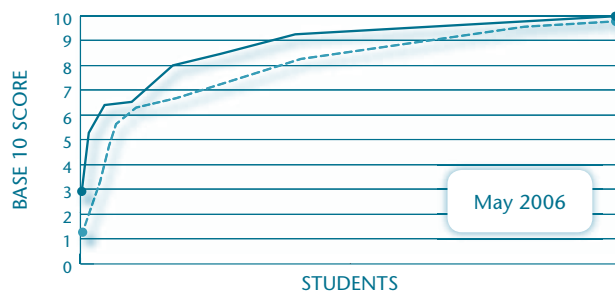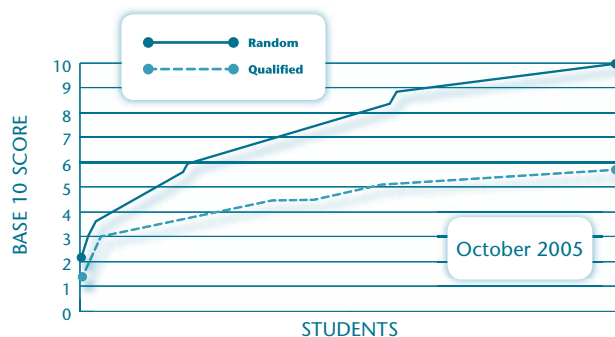In May, the same random sample students, as well as the 112 qualified students were posttested using the same assessment. In May, the average of the random sample was 9.56. There was an overall gain of 2.11 points. The average of the 112 qualified students was 8.42. This represents a gain of 4.1 points.

Of the 112 students who received services, 56 students, or 55%, met criteria to exit the program.

As with the kindergarten program, the charts at right present a visual representation of how the intervention program raised the average of students served, but more importantly, closed the gap between students served and the general student population.

The following year, all 24 elementary schools implemented the grade 1 intervention program. A total of 164 students from across the district were identified for services. As in the previous year, participation in the intervention program raised the average of students served and closed the gap between students served and the general student population. Additionally, in that second year, 44% of the students qualified to exit the program. The charts at right present these data.

Additional tests, including testing for grades 2 and 3 are ongoing. Results will be available early summer of 2008.

Random
Qualified

BASE 10 SCORE

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

October 2005

STUDENTS

BASE 10 SCORE

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

May 2006

STUDENTS

Random
Qualified

BASE 10 SCORE

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

October 2006

STUDENTS

BASE 10 SCORE

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

May 2007

The goal of the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program is to accelerate student achievement so students are reading at grade level. This diagram shows how the program works. Through a combination of a research-based program that is systematic, strategic, and intensive, a delivery model that is efficient and simple to implement, and a system of assessment that includes progress monitoring, students can accelerate to grade-level reading. The books students read on a daily basis gradually increase in difficulty so that students are reading at or near grade level by the end of the year. Students are assessed both individually and in a group setting each week. Results of these assessments are used to determine progress within and exit from the program.
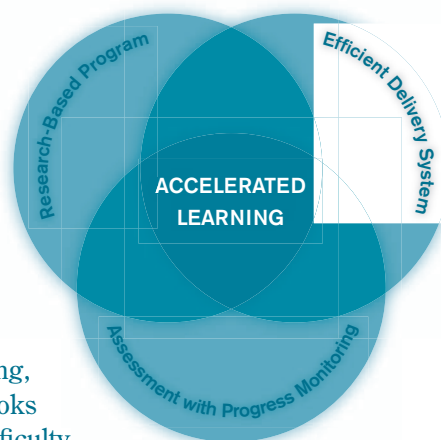
The lessons are systematic and intensive, and the program is built on the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson and Gallagher 1983). At each grade level, students are encouraged to become strategic, independent readers as they move through modeled, shared, guided, and finally independent work. When a new book is presented, the facilitator models a comprehension strategy. Then, the book is read during shared, guided, and independent reading activities. When students leave the program, they have a set of internalized, self-initiating strategies for reading.

Selecting Students

Schools in the United States are required to ensure that every student becomes a proficient reader. This requires analysis of the differences students bring to the task of reading and making changes to accommodate these differences. Morris and Slavin (2003) provide four categories of young readers.

- Natural readers: These students make up approximately 40–50 percent of the student population. They come to school prepared to learn to read. With effective instruction, these students are rarely in danger of failing to read.

- Teachable readers: This group makes up approximately 30–40 percent of the student population. These students may be motivated to learn, but require a well-organized system of instruction with embedded assessment to monitor progress. The best place for these students to receive instruction is from a highly qualified teacher in the classroom.

- Tutorable readers: This group makes up approximately 10–20 percent of the student population. Even with effective classroom instruction, these students need systematic, intensive intervention in order to achieve and maintain grade-level performance in reading. Intervention should be provided by either certified teachers or paraprofessionals. With highly effective classroom instruction and a systematic intervention program, these students can achieve grade-level performance in reading.

- True Dyslexics: This group makes up 1–2 percent of the student population. Effective classroom instruction along with expert tutoring will not ensure adequate progress in reading. These students require a more methodical, comprehensive system of support frequently with the services of a special education teacher.

Wright Group Early Reading Intervention is specifically designed to meet the needs of Tutorable Readers through a research-based program of effective intervention.

Why Does *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* Work?

Systematic, intensive interventions that are provided as early as kindergarten can help close the gap between less-proficient and more-proficient readers. In addition, effective interventions can reduce the number of special education referrals and the number of retentions in the primary grades.

Highly effective early intervention programs share some common characteristics including systematic procedures, intensive instruction, and strategic integration of instruction and assessments. Each of these characteristics is embedded within the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program.

1. Systematic

Effective intervention programs have a well-defined instructional procedure that is based on research and best practice (Pikulski 1994). The instructional procedure gives students access to appropriate texts that are presented in a sequence to accelerate learning. Since highly skilled readers spend significantly more time practicing (actually reading) than less-skilled readers (Guthrie 2004), a considerable portion of an effective intervention lesson is set aside for practicing reading.

Wright Group Early Reading Intervention provides a well-defined daily routine. Students are led through a routine that integrates the five essential components of reading instruction while providing a large volume of reading. The books that students read daily gradually increase in difficulty so that students are reading at or near grade level by the end of the year.

2. Intensive

Students within the intervention program receive instruction at a level of frequency (4–5 times per week) from 20 to 45 minutes each session. For some students, one semester of intensive service is sufficient. Other students may require one full year. Then, there are students who may need ongoing instructional support in order to maximize their opportunities to learn (Allington 2001).

The lessons in the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program are fast-paced. Students receive intensive instruction in kindergarten for 20 minutes a day for half the year and at grades 1 through 3 at 30 minutes a day for a full year. Although the program provides a full year of daily lessons for students in grades 1–3, students may exit early.

3. Strategic

The intent of the lessons is to bring students to grade level as quickly as possible. Effective intervention programs strategically integrate the five essential elements of reading instruction to ensure comprehensive instruction, maximize teaching time, and lead to higher levels of reading achievement.

The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program delivers the integration of these components using a systematic, strategic, and intensive program of intervention. Assessment is embedded into the lessons and results are used to regroup students or determine exit. The pages that follow provide more information on this integration.

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics in *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention*

Explicit and systematic instruction with letter-sound relationships is found in each grade level of the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program. Beginning with a focus on phonemic awareness activities targeting initial sounds in kindergarten, students progress through word families in grade 1, within word vowel patterns in grade 2, and finally through complex vowels, diagraphs, and blends in grade 3. Students sort, read, and write words on a daily basis in order to continually build their knowledge of words and word relationships.

Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Sort for initial sounds	Sort for word families	Sort for vowel patterns within words	Sort for abstract vowel patterns (diphthongs and irregular vowels), complex blends, diagraphs, and word endings
Write dictated sentences containing high-frequency words	Write dictated sentences containing high-frequency and word family words	Write dictated sentences containing high-frequency words and vowel pattern words	
Use sound boxes to focus on initial, medial, and ending sounds	Practice with high-frequency word cards		

Vocabulary in *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention*

Vocabulary instruction is delivered daily in all grade levels of the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program. Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through grade 3, students develop automaticity with high-frequency words. Recognizing the strong relationship between background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge, students in each level also work with concept and content vocabulary while reading connected text.

Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Identify words associated with letters in an alphabet book Focus on concept and content words in text	Focus on concept and content words in text	Focus on and discuss concept and content words in text	Receive explicit instruction on specific words related to text

Reading Fluency in *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention*

Reading fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Since reading practice is a primary contributor to reading fluency, structured oral reading is a major focus of fluency instruction in the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program. Students have multiple opportunities to practice reading connected text in order to gain fluency. Through echo, choral, partner, and independent reading on a daily basis, students read text at their instructional level while building oral fluency.

Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Echo, choral, paired, and independent reading of text	Echo, choral, paired, and independent reading of text Assessment with previously read text	Choral, paired, independent, and silent reading of text Assessment with previously read text	Paired and silent reading of text Paired repeated readings with text Assessment with previously read text

Comprehension in *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention*

Within the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program, skills and strategies gained through instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and fluency are learned in the ultimate service of comprehension. The purpose of reading is to understand, or make sense of, texts in a variety of situations. Beginning in kindergarten, students are taught and reminded to be strategic readers. Comprehension instruction is embedded in book-reading tasks. Comprehension instruction is included at each grade with more specific, systematic strategy instruction beginning in grade 2. Throughout all grade levels, instruction is focused on enabling students to develop a set of self-initiating behaviors for approaching new text in order to continually improve their comprehension abilities.

Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Meaning is conveyed by print	Connecting to background knowledge	Connecting to background knowledge	Connecting to background knowledge
Illustrations support print	Determining importance	Determining importance	Determining importance
Previewing and predicting	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring
		Asking questions	Asking questions
			Inferring
			Retelling

4. Facilitated Implementation and Efficient Delivery of Services

The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program is designed to provide highly effective instruction using a cost-effective model for delivery of services. The tight lesson routines offer a consistent structure and sequence of activities that allow trained intervention staff to maintain integrity and effectiveness.

Lesson Plans: Each Teaching Guide provides lesson plans for daily instruction. Lessons provide systematic, strategic, and intensive instruction in the format of a routine that can be easily followed. Lessons also state the amount of time intervention staff should be spending on each part. The lesson design promotes fidelity and integrity to the program.

Professional Development Guide and DVD: Schools can use the professional development materials for staff training. This training video includes footage of the program in use at the different grade levels.

Coaching Support

Trained intervention staff can effectively deliver services, but they also may require support and coaching. In addition to initial training, intervention staff members may be coached on a regular basis by a program supervisor. When tutors receive coaching support, they are more equipped to increase the opportunity for student acceleration. The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program encourages the use of coaches to provide feedback on program implementation. Coaches must have the following characteristics.

Knowledge of the program: Coaches have a thorough understanding of the program. Attending training sessions with tutors as well as separate sessions specific to coaching help ensure adequate training. Coaches are able to answer questions and provide support to the tutors. They can step in, if necessary, and model a lesson for the tutor.

Expertise in reading: Best qualified coaches are certified teachers, ideally with either a master's degree in reading or at the least a reading endorsement on their standard elementary certificate. They have experience working with struggling readers in small group and individual settings. They also have a diagnostic approach to observation and can offer appropriate suggestions to the tutors in order to improve program delivery.

Management skills: Coaches work to establish a level of trust, but at the same time realize that their role is to improve performance of the tutors. Therefore, recommendations are both realistic and considered important. Coaches are also mindful and respectful of the tutor's level of competence and thus avoid resistance to change in behaviors.

Joyce and Showers (1981) conducted research on the impact of training on knowledge mastery, acquirement of skill, and application of skill. Training that includes demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching produces the highest levels of mastery in each of these areas. Joyce and Showers (2002) completed additional research on instructional coaching. They reported the impact of coaching on transfer of training. Teachers who are coached are likely to practice what is learned in training more often and with more skill than teachers who are not coached. There is also a tendency for coached teachers to retain and increase this knowledge over time.

How Is *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* Different from the Competition?

The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program is easy to use and provides all the materials needed for delivery of services. The following traits show the differences between the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program and its competitors.

Wright Group Early Reading Intervention	Competition
Accelerates	Remediates
Integrates the 5 elements of reading	Delivers isolated skill instruction
Provides multiple reading opportunities	Limits text experiences
Time-efficient	Extensive instructional plan
Cost-efficient	Labor and resource intensive

Acceleration

A key feature of *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* is the focus on acceleration, rather than remediation. Intervention programs that remediate students with reading difficulties break the reading task into smaller chunks, or slow down the delivery of instruction. Interventions that focus on acceleration provide instruction that is systematic, strategic, and intensive with the sole purpose of moving students to grade-level reading. *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* delivers this type of instruction.

Acceleration within the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program is achieved through the use of intervention coaches and tutors, well-defined lesson formats, a large volume of reading, and daily assessments.

Intervention coaches and tutors—Intervention coaches and tutors maintain fidelity and integrity to the program by following the lesson routine. The lessons provide a step-by-step plan on how to implement the program. The program also encourages initial and ongoing coaching from a reading professional, at either the school or district level. A professional development DVD is provided for initial training.

Well-defined lesson format—The lesson format in each grade level enables the delivery of systematic, strategic, and intensive instruction. Lesson delivery is designed to accelerate student achievement to grade-level reading. The consistent lesson routine at each grade level follows the well-defined instructional program and ensures that intervention students are consistently working at the appropriate level, and receiving reinforcement and corrective feedback in a timely manner. Students are serviced daily for 20 minutes in kindergarten and 30 minutes in grades 1–3.

Volume of reading—Reading more pages in school and at home every day was associated with higher reading scores (Allington 2006). Therefore, each lesson is focused on reading practice of connected texts. The books that students read daily gradually increase in difficulty so that students are reading at or near grade-level by the end of the year. Lessons are fast-paced and provide students with the maximum amount of time to read connected text. The volume of reading is significant across the grade levels.

Assessment—Assessment is used to determine placement and exit. Entrance (diagnostic) assessments ensure that the right students are identified for intervention services. Exit (summative) assessments provide information on overall student progress and can help evaluators determine when it is appropriate for students to exit the program. Students are also assessed both individually and in a group setting each week. These formative assessments are essential for monitoring student progress and for determining whether students should be regrouped or given the exit assessment.

Response to Intervention

The program also differs from others by providing a strong model for Response to Intervention (RtI). The most recent authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) revised the identification of learning disabilities from an IQ-achievement discrepancy model to an alternative method, RtI. RtI provides school districts with opportunities for intervention with students as early as kindergarten. This is in contrast to the previous IQ-discrepancy model, which required districts to sometimes wait until grade 3 before formal identification of a student with a specific learning disability. In many cases, these students may have avoided placement in special education if provided with appropriate early interventions. The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program provides intervention for kindergarten students to help ensure students are receiving the instruction they need early on.

RtI is a multilevel approach that incorporates both prevention and intervention. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), does not endorse a specific model of RtI (2007). However, all RtI models must be designed to identify students' areas of need, monitor students' progress through use of data, and use these data to document that lack of progress is not due to lack of appropriate instruction. RtI requires the use of evidence-based support at varying levels of intensity and specificity, depending on the needs of the student. RtI also requires the use of data to guide decision making, from the selection process to progress monitoring and finally exit from the intervention. Three levels, or tiers, of instruction have been identified.

Tier 1 includes all students within a general education classroom setting. Services are provided by a highly qualified general education teacher. Classroom instruction includes 90 minutes or more per day with flexible grouping; assessment at the beginning, midpoint, and end of year; and progress monitoring with in-class support.

Tier 2 students have not responded to efforts within Tier 1. These students require 20–30 minutes of daily, small-group instruction within a specialized research-based intervention. Services occur in homogeneous groups under the instruction of a trained interventionist. Progress monitoring should occur at least twice each month.

Tier 3 students require a more intensive intervention. These students have not made adequate progress within Tier 1 or 2 interventions. Group size may be smaller than a Tier 2 group and the intervention services can last up to 50 minutes per day.

This chart shows the alignment of the *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program to RtI.

Response to Intervention	Alignment to *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention*
Tier 1	These students can maximize their potential for learning within a general education classroom under the supervision of a highly qualified teacher, using progress monitoring and in-class support.
Tier 2	These students are the ideal candidates for *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention*. All four grade-level programs include systematic, strategic, and intensive instruction. Data collection occurs, at a minimum, once each week. These data are used to monitor students and guide instruction. The time frame and group size for each grade level also meets RtI criteria. Kindergarten—20 minutes daily; services one student Grade 1—30 minutes daily; services up to 3 students Grades 2 and 3—30 minutes daily; services up to 5 students
Tier 3	These students have not responded to the intensive and strategic instruction within *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* over the course of one or more years. They may need a smaller group size, a longer period of daily intervention, or possible consideration for special education services.

Conclusion

The *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* program is proven, efficient, and accelerates student achievement. Systematic, strategic, and intensive routines that are time- and cost-efficient make it a strong intervention program. In addition, alignment to RtI, focus on acceleration rather than remediation, the integration of the five elements of reading, and the multiple reading opportunities make *Wright Group Early Reading Intervention* a leader in intervention programs.

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