Research on Effective Literacy Tutoring
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Research on Tutoring

Chandler (1986) reported that in a comparison of 1) tutoring by older students, adults or a combination of both 2) computer assisted instruction 3) smaller classes and 4) increasing instructional time that statistical evidence based on achievement in reading and math found that tutoring was the most effective of all strategies. The Stanford University research corroborated several earlier studies on adult tutoring, cross-age tutoring and peer tutoring. Along with Bloom (1981) literacy specialists have long accepted that one - to-one tutoring can be a highly effective form of instruction particularly when tutors are professionally trained and supervised.

Bader and Mcintyre (1986) trained and supervised college students to tutor elementary children having difficulty in reading. The children's average reading level gain after 32 hours of tutoring was 2.16. Their Rate of Learning was 3.6 compared to children in the regular program whose Rate of Learning was .56. In a British tutoring program elementary and junior high students who were tutored by trained parents and peers, for 8.6 weeks, reading comprehension improved 4.4 times the normal rate and word recognition improved 3.3 times the normal rate (Topping and Whitley, 1990).

Morris, Shaw and Pemey (1990) reported significant reading gains for second and third grade children tutored in an after school reading program twice a week for an hour by university students, retirees and parents who were recruited and trained by reading specialists.

In these and other reports of highly effective literacy tutoring programs, the common factor is professional training and supervision.

Characteristics of Highly Effective Tutoring Programs

1. Tutors are professionally trained and supervised and receive ongoing training and feedback.

Reisner, Petry and Armitage (1990) in a review of college-based tutoring programs that recruit college students to tutor younger children concluded that tutor training was the major factor in success of the programs. Tutors of learning disabled children were effective when they had professional supervision. (Azcoitia,1989)

2. The tutoring sessions are structured.

Cohen, Kulik and Kulik (1993) found that structured tutorial programs demonstrated higher achievement gains than unstructured programs in their meta-analysis. Tutoring sessions should include reading high interest books, word study (phonics,, spelling, vocabulary) and writing. Depending on the development of the reader, pre reading skills or specific comprehension skills should be included.

3. Tutoring needs to be intensive and consistent

Children should be tutored by the same tutor for at least one and half to two hours a week for a minimum of twelve weeks. Most programs reporting significant gains have regularly scheduled tutoring sessions. They are not drop in programs. Children, tutors and families need to be committed to regular attendance (Brailstord A., 1991).

4. Quality materials need to be available.

Children learn to read and to enjoy reading by reading high interest books that are not too difficult. Little books such as Rookie Readers or I Can Read are needed for beginning readers. Other trade books are needed on a variety of topics. Quality books should be read to children. Paper, crayons, markers are needed to facilitate the children's writing and other activities.

5. Instruction in reading must reflect research on developmental stages and affect, as well as research on basic concepts in how to teach reading.

Over thirty years of research in reading development and instruction provides us with sound guidance in literacy tutoring.

6. Tutoring should enhance classroom instruction.

Reading good quality, high interest books; learning words chosen by the child and writing about topics of interest to the child will enhance classroom instruction regardless of the curriculum since the goal of all programs is for children to engage in reading for information and pleasure and to effectively express ideas in writing.

7. Children should be assessed to determine progress and to place them at a comfortable level in materials.

Tutors can be trained to estimate and confirm reading levels and they should keep a record of skills and knowledge the child has acquired. The assessment program needs to be supervised by a reading / language arts specialist who should be readily available to the tutors regarding the progress of the children.

Research on Tutoring Program Comparisons

Because of research experts criticizing the research findings of the most heavily advertised and marketed tutoring programs, new directors of tutoring programs may be confused. In some studies the control groups were not well selected; the gains were misrepresented or children not doing well in the programs were removed and only the successes were reported. One has always had to read research carefully. Without the expertise and time to do so, what can one do?

We suggest you hold fast to the seven characteristics of highly effective tutoring programs listed in this report. While we cited some research, if you read the seven characteristics carefully, you will note that they just make sense. What does not make sense is to commit to a rigid program that does not allow for individual differences among children.

Illustration of Research Based Tutoring Components

Read to Succeed Literacy Tutoring Guide for K-1

Selected Components:	Illustrative Studies and Research Summaries
1 The Alphabet	Durrell.D.D. Letter-name values in reading and spelling. Reading Research Quarterly, 16,159-163
	Ball, E.W. and Blachman, B. Does phoneme awareness training in kindergarten make a difference in early word recognition and developmental spelling? Reading Research Quarterly, 26,49-66.
2 Word Awareness	Morris, D. Beginning reader's concept of word. E.H.Henderson and J.W. Beers, Eds. Developmental and cognitive aspects of learning to spell: A reflection of word knowledge, Newark, DEL International Reading Association, 1980.
3. Key Words	Blakey, J.M. An investigation of the relationships between children's key vocabulary responses and certain Piagetian concepts. Dissertation, University British Columbia, April, 1980.
4. Making a Sound Book	Liberman, A.M. The relationship of speech to reading and writing. Orthography, Phonology, Morphology and Meaning, R. Frost and I Katz, Eds. Amsterdam :Elsevier Science Publishers B.V., 1992.
5. Sound Symbol Association	Adams, M.J. Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print. Cambridge, MA:MIT Press, 1990.
6. Readinq Easy Books	Kameenui, E.J. Shakespeare and beginning reading: The readiness is all. Teaching Exceptional Children, 27,1996.
7. Language Experience: Speaking to Writing	Maehr.J. Encouraging young children's writing. Eric Digest, EDO-PS-91,1991.
8. Ways to Read Together	Samuels, J. The method of repeated readings. The Reading Teacher, 32, 403-408, 1979

Read to Succeed Literacy Tutoring Guide for 2-5

Selected Components:	Illustrative Studies, Research Summaries, References
1. Reading Material Selected by the Child:	Veatch.J. Teaching reading with children's books, Richard Owen Publishers, 1982. Vygotsky, LS. Thought and language. Cambridge: MIT Press, 9, 7, 1962.
Oral Reading:	Chomsky.C. After decoding: What? Language Arts, 53,288-286,314,1976
Silent Reading:	Hunt, J. & Joseph, D. Using prediction to improve reading comprehension of low-achieving readers. Journal of Clinical Reading, 3, 14-17, 1990 Stauffer, R.G. Directing the reading–thinking process, New York, Harper & Row, 1980.
2. Writing: Child's Interests and Ideas	Calkins, L M. Lessons from a child: On the teaching & learning of writing. Exeter, N.H.: Heinemann,1983.
3. Spelling / Phonics / Word Study	Fernald, G.M. Remedial techniques in basic school subjects. L. Idol (ED), Austin, TX: Pro:Ed, 1988 Gillet.J. W. Sorting: A word study alternative, Journal of Language Experience, 2, 2, 1980. Nagy.W.E. Teaching vocabulary to improve reading comprehension. Urbana , IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1988 Cunningham, P.M. Phonics they use: Words for reading and writing. New York: Harper Collins, 1991 Adams (op.cit., p.4)
4. Readinq in Content Areas	Nelson-Herber, J. Expanding and refining vocabulary in content areas. Journal of Reading, 29, 626-633,1986. Manzo, A.V. The ReQuest procedure (Reciprocal Reading) Journal of Reading 13, 2 (1969) Richardson.J & Morgan.