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Nationally Used Reading Intervention Significantly Increases Reading Comprehension

Portland, OR—A rigorous experimental study by researchers at Education Northwest found that low-achieving middle and high school students increased their reading comprehension after one semester of tutoring with Read Right, a nationally used intervention program that supplements regular English language arts instruction. The study looked at student achievement in reading and motivation to read for 424 students in four Omaha, Nebraska, secondary schools during the fall semester of 2009.

The evaluation found Read Right had a significant positive effect on reading comprehension. Also, after participating in Read Right, a significantly larger proportion of students reported they read for fun almost every day compared to students in a control group. Effects varied by school and student subgroup.

“Overall, this means that Read Right worked in these Omaha schools,” said Dr. Caitlin Scott, lead researcher on the project at Education Northwest. “After a semester of Read Right, students made about as much gain on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test as a typical 9th- or 10th-grade student makes from an entire year of instruction. This is good news for these struggling readers.”

Dr. Dee Tadlock, the developer of Read Right, said, “We were very pleased with the results ... a lot of administrators want to see research by third parties as an evaluation of effectiveness. It lends credibility to all of our data and that will help us in demonstrating that we get pretty amazing results.” Tadlock noted that this is the first study of Read Right to use an experimental design, which is considered to be the “gold standard” of research designs.

The Omaha-based Sherwood Foundation, which has invested more than \$1 million in implementing the program in nine Omaha public secondary schools, commissioned the evaluation for Omaha Public Schools (OPS). “Because OPS wants to make good decisions based on data, we offered to do an experimental design, randomized controlled trial for them so they could really find out how well or if this program was working at all,” said Katie Weitz White, a Sherwood Foundation officer. She added that the study findings will be used to make changes in training and to provide additional materials and tutors.

Read Right has been used in about 500 sites since 1991. Rather than stressing phonics and vocabulary like many traditional reading interventions, Read Right tutors focus on students’ comprehension, accuracy, pacing, and intonation. Typically, Read Right is a class during the school day with no more than five students per tutor.

Education Northwest, based in Portland, Oregon, is currently conducting a number of national literacy studies. For more than 40 years, the nonprofit organization has worked to improve learning by building capacity in schools, families, and communities through applied research and development. More information about Education Northwest is available at <http://educationnorthwest.org>

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Evaluation of Read Right in Omaha Middle and High Schools, 2009-2010, Education Northwest,
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Some Key Findings from this 103-Page Report

Experimental Study Overview:

450 students were pre tested using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test (Fall semester 2009)

216 randomly-selected students served as the treatment group and were tutored with Read Right during the semester.

208 randomly-selected students served as the control group and were not tutored with Read Right. Instead, they attended study hall or took an elective.

Both treatment and control group students also participated in their regular English language arts class.

Demographics of the control group and treatment group were nearly identical: 41% Latino/Hispanic, 36% black, 20% white, 2% Native American, 1% Asian. Seventy nine percent of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches.

424 of these students, those still in school at the end of the semester, were post tested using another form of the Gates MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test.

Student Achievement Outcomes:

“Overall Read Right had a significant positive effect on student comprehension. . . Students in Read Right classes out performed those in the control group.” (page i) $p = .000$; effect size = .23 (page 18)

“The main regression analysis showed a significant positive effect of Read Right on middle and high school students’ reading comprehension as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test. The mean for students in the treatment group was 5.49 scale scored points higher than for students in the control group.” (p17)

Student Motivation Outcomes:

“After participating in Read Right a significantly larger proportion of students reported they read for fun almost every day, compared to students in the control group. . . Many Read Right students. . . believed that Read Right increased their motivation to read. Most principals and tutors agreed, based on their perceptions from talking with or observing students.” [p.ii]. . . Almost three-fourths of students believed that Read Right increased student motivation to read.” (p30)

Students’ Views of Impact of Read Right:

“Ninety percent (of students) said that Read Right helped them become a better reader. As a result, they found that they were more confident reading aloud in other classes, were more fluent readers, learned ‘like a million words,’ and pronounced words and enunciated more correctly.” (p55)

Principals’ Views of Impact of Read Right:

“The future of Read Right at the participating schools looks positive; principals were almost unanimous in their desire to keep Read Right at their schools. They said, ‘It works.’ ‘Kids are becoming more confident.’ ‘It is successful for kids who need it the most’ ‘I’ve seen improvement’ ‘improvement is carrying over into other subjects as well as recreational reading.’” (p57)

As one principal summarized, “I can see the effect of Read Right in the classroom. I see literature circles. I see kids reading plays. When we have assemblies, kids feel good about getting up in front of their peers and reading a script. For our population that is huge, we have 85% free or reduced-price lunch. They have no printed material at home. They are getting that here, and I am proud of that.” (p31)

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