Florida Center for Reading Research

Earobics Literacy Launch

What is Earobics Literacy Launch?

Earobics Literacy Launch was designed as a supplement to enhance and complement a school's existing reading curriculum. *Earobics Literacy Launch* provides students help in developing the foundational skills to become successful readers. The primary goals of *Earobics Literacy Launch* is to give teachers effective strategies for teaching reading and to give students practice in developing key skills not found in the core curriculum through the combined use of software, teacher-directed activities, manipulatives and books. This program consists of two major parts: Step 1 for first and second grade students, and Step 2 for second and third graders and older students who are struggling with fluency. The *Earobics Literacy Launch* program involves students working individually on developing phonemic awareness and phonics skills with *Earobics* software games that are highly engaging and automatically tailored to the skill level of each child. In small or large groups, teachers provide explicit instruction in language enrichment, phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences, decoding, and early reading and writing through activities from the Teacher's Resource: Classroom Connections. *Earobics Literacy Launch* recommends that each student engage in a minimum of three 20-minute sessions weekly with the software and 25-30-minute sessions daily with teacher directed activities. All *Earobics Literacy Launch* games and activities can be woven into the Language Arts block of time by lesson plans that have been carefully customized to fit with the school's core reading curriculum.

Is Earobics Literacy Launch aligned with Reading First?

Earobics Literacy Launch includes the five critical components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The transition from speech to print is effectively developed through many creative activities that focus on alphabetic knowledge, spelling and decoding by the use of decodable texts, letter-sound cards, and alphabet mats. In terms of phonics, activities are explicit and systematic. A specific letter is put into practice by developing words to decode and spell. Lists of words with the target letter are decoded and spelled, and finally students are given the opportunity to read connected text with the target letter. Fluency instruction is promoted through the use of oral reading including repeated reading in groups, pairs and individually using big books and little books, stories on audio-cassettes and talking CDs. Language enrichment activities focus on developing vocabulary and language concepts through such strategies as context clues, background knowledge and repeated exposure to words in a variety of contexts. Effective comprehension strategies include predicting, developing background knowledge, retelling, and questioning.

An important feature of *Earobics Literacy Launch* software is its ability to automatically adjust to the skill level of each student. The student is led through structured, systematic activities in phonemic awareness based on a developmental hierarchy. The software allows the student to proceed at his own rate by either progressing in difficulty or dropping back to the appropriate level, thus ensuring mastery of a skill before moving to the next level. The teacher is able to customize the software to further match the skill level of a student, whether it is a struggling reader

or a student with more advanced reading ability. The teacher can effectively plan instruction and form flexible groups based on the student progress summary or the group progress summary the software generates for the six games. Professional development, which is specifically customized to meet the school's needs, consists of two days of training and a third day for in-class coaching. Additional training is available and encouraged for schools choosing to implement this program.

Research Support for Earobics Literacy Launch

Over the past two years, independent researchers in school districts have gathered and reported a significant amount of research data measuring the effectiveness of *Earobics Literacy Launch*. The research is very supportive of the effectiveness of the *Earobics* program improving various early literacy skills.

In the Polk County School District in Florida, the Stanford Achievement Test Series (9th edition) was used to measure reading comprehension gains of first-graders in 41 Title I elementary schools, 5 of which used the *Earobics Literacy Launch* as a supplement to their primary literacy basal. Control classrooms used the same basal without using *Earobics* as a supplement. The Stanford Achievement Test was given to the students in March of the school year. Students using *Earobics* gained 10 points on the mean scale score on reading comprehension; whereas students not using *Earobics* had mean scale scores that dropped more than 5 points. The difference in scores was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.02$). The independent researchers concluded that the use of *Earobics* significantly improved students' reading comprehension.

A similar design was employed in seven elementary schools in the District of Columbia Public Schools of Washington, D.C. in 2002. The Test of Phonological Awareness-Early Elementary (Bryant & Torgesen, 1994) was administered as a pre- and posttest for students in first, second and third grade. Students who received instruction using the core reading curriculum plus *Earobics* were compared to those students who only received instruction from the core reading program. The results showed that, at all three grade levels, students in the *Earobics* classrooms scored significantly higher on the TOPA-EE than did those students who were in the non-Earobics classrooms.

Forty-four kindergarten classes in Newport News, Virginia were involved in a study measuring students' phonemic awareness. The study used an experimental/control group pre-/post-test design, with the Phonemic Awareness Test (Robertson & Salter, 1997) (Parts A & B) as the assessment instrument. Teachers in the *Earobics* group received training materials and two sessions of customized training. Students used the *Earobics* software for three 20-minute sessions per week, and received additional instruction using correlated activities, literature, and multi-media materials. The control group received phonemic awareness instruction without using the *Earobics* software or materials. Pre-test scores of the two groups on the Phonemic Awareness Test were not significantly different. Control and experimental group scores on the test after phonemic awareness training indicated a significant difference in performance between the two groups, with the *Earobics* group scores being significantly higher ($p = 0.004$). The study also showed that students who used *Earobics* more frequently made greater gains in phonemic awareness than students in the *Earobics* group who used the program less frequently.

Twenty-one fourth and fifth grade students with reading or language-based learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorder were involved in a study at Northwestern University in Illinois. The study did not use a control group. Two tests,

the Phonological Awareness Test (PAT) and the Test of Auditory Perceptual Skills (TAPS), were given to the students at the beginning and the end of the 10-week *Earobics* intervention program. The tests measure phonemic awareness, degrees of real word and nonword reading efficiency, and auditory sequential memory for digits and words. Results showed that the students made significant gains on both the PAT ($p < 0.001$) and the TAPS ($p < 0.002$). It is important to note that these gains were reported in standard scores. An increase in standard scores indicate that *Earobics* was helpful to the children in the study in "closing the gap" with average children for auditory and phonological awareness skills.

Earobics reports numerous other studies, including one from Brevard County in Florida, employing a pre-/post-test design, yet not using a control/experimental group format. Although these other studies document impressive positive results for the *Earobics Literacy Launch* program on a full range of early literacy skills, the lack of a control group in these studies does not allow one to positively conclude that the results are due to the *Earobics* intervention alone.

In sum, the instructional content and design of *Earobics Literacy Launch* is consistent with recent research in reading. In addition, the research base supporting the use of *Earobics Literacy Launch* is strong. Independently gathered research studies evaluating its use with kindergarten through third grade students have employed control groups and standardized measures of reading. The findings of these studies support the use of *Earobics* to significantly improve a broad range of literacy skills from phonological awareness to comprehension.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Earobics Literacy Launch*:

- The program includes motivating and engaging activities that are explicit and based on the five components of reading.
- Software activities in phonological awareness follow a developmental hierarchy.
- Data collection during software activities allows the teacher to view student and group progress, and provides the ability to adapt instruction based on performance.
- Strong professional development that is customized for each school is provided.
- Research that employs the use of control groups has been conducted and reported.
- Teachers learn useful strategies that can be applied to any core reading curriculum.
- Learning objectives are clearly stated for every activity.
- Research for this program show outcomes for a variety of students in urban as well as rural districts, at-risk students, students in general and special education, and ESOL students.

Weaknesses of *Earobics Literacy Launch*:

- None were noted.

Which Florida counties have schools that implement Earobics Literacy Launch?

Alachua County	386-734-7190
Bay County	850-872-7700
Bradford County	904-966-6800
Brevard County	321-631-1911
Broward County	954-765-6271
Collier County	239-254-4100
Duval County	904-390-2115
Escambia County	386-437-7526
Hillsborough County	813-272-4050
Lake County	352-343-3531
Lee County	941-337-8301
Manatee County	941-708-8770
Marion County	352-671-7702
Okaloosa County	850-870- 4008
Orange County	407-317-3202
Osceola County	407-870-4008
Palm Beach County	561-434-8200
Pinellas County	727-588-6011
Polk County	863-534-0500
Seminole County	407-320-0000
St. Lucie County	772-468-5021
Volusia County	386-734-7190
Walton County	850-892-8331

For More Information

http://www.earobics.com/

References

Bryant, B. & Torgesen, J. (1994). *The Test of Phonological Awareness*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED, Inc.

Robertson, C., & Salter, W. (1997). *Phonological Awareness Test*. East Moline, IL.: LinguiSystems.

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

For more information about FCRR go to: www.fcrr.org

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