

# Florida Center for Reading Research

## SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1

### What is SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1?

*SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1* is an intervention program that is designed to be used in addition to a classroom's core reading program. Based on recent research with struggling readers, the program is designed to bring struggling first or second grade readers to grade level in one year with lessons that include daily activities for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. SRA has recently published *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 2* which continues with all the components found in Level 1 and adds morphophonemic knowledge, vocabulary learning, additional comprehension, and a focus on content webbing of expository text. Students' fluency target by the end of Level 2 is 100 words per minute. The focus of this report is Level 1.

The lessons are implemented in small groups of three to five students by a classroom teacher, resource teacher, or paraprofessional trained in *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1*. There are 120 lessons to be delivered in forty-minute sessions, five days a week. The content of a daily lesson is formatted to offer a minimum amount of new information, consistent review and practice of previously taught skills, and on-going progress monitoring. The lesson dialogue provides clear directions for instructional delivery and keeps extraneous "teacher talk" to a minimum. Three critical instructional techniques are woven through and across each lesson in *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1*: appropriate pacing- a rapid interchange between teacher and students, keeping student engagement high; immediate error correction- which includes scaffolding, leading the student to use what he already knows to arrive at the correct answer; and teaching each skill to 100% independent mastery. All skills are explicitly and sequentially taught, advanced skills are broken down into smaller, more manageable amounts of information and students receive immediate positive feedback to their responses. Appropriate scaffolding techniques are built into the program.

Located in the appendix of each Teacher's Guide is a scope and sequence chart that indicates when and where the skills for each strand (i.e., phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences, word recognition and spelling, fluency, and comprehension strategies) are introduced and how the multiple strands of instruction are incorporated into all of the lessons. The Activity Track, located behind the scope and sequence, is another chart that shows where specific skills are taught in each lesson.

Teacher materials include three Teacher's Editions and Activity Books, Letter-Sound Cards, Tricky Word Cards, Story-Time Readers/ Blackline Masters, Challenge Stories, Placement and Assessment Guide, Staff Development Guide and Teaching Tutor CD-ROM, Maxwell the puppet, and an Answer Key. Student materials include Three Activity Books, Story-Time Readers, and Challenge Stories. The materials were found to be teacher friendly and error free.

SRA suggests that all students participate in reliable and valid screening assessments at the beginning of the school year to identify struggling readers; however, in cases where this is not possible a screening test is provided in the Placement and Assessment Guide. Also included is a placement assessment that utilizes short activities, similar to the content in the program at different levels, to ensure proper placement of students in the program.

## How is SRA Early Interventions Level 1 in Reading aligned with Reading First?

*SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1* offers daily instruction and practice that follow the hierarchy of all critical skills in the following important components of reading: phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences, word recognition and spelling, fluency and comprehension strategies. Vocabulary is excluded purposefully.

The skills within these components are not taught in isolation, rather they are taught in unison on a daily basis so that each strand is interrelated with the next. For instance, phonemic awareness activities include working with specific phonemes before those phonemes are introduced during letter sound activities. Then, those same letter sounds are first applied to reading short decodable words before they are applied to reading controlled text, allowing students success in applying their newly learned skills. Likewise, fluency skills are introduced early in the program through activities with letter sounds, progressing gradually to short decodable words, then words in context. The focus of fluency instruction is accuracy and speed. Fluency goals are provided in the lesson dialogues beginning with lesson thirty-three. The fluency goals are intended to provide teachers with an on-going measure to verify that students are building toward the fluency target of 60 words per minute by the end of first grade. Comprehension skills are developed, for the most part, with oral activities that stimulate students' receptive and expressive vocabulary. Students are taught strategies to process text, organize concepts, and monitor their own understanding. Focus on Story Grammar is intended to support students' deep understanding as they make connections between the story elements: characters, setting, problem, main events, and story outcome.

Instruction in each component is explicitly and systematically taught to one hundred percent mastery for every child in the group. Detailed explanations and instructional procedures are provided for the teacher and scaffolding is built in to the program so students have the opportunity to continually improve their skills at an appropriate pace. Within each lesson, reading skills are introduced, applied, and reviewed in a constant cycle with the intent to ensure reading success. Students are assessed daily for 100% individual mastery which the teacher records on the provided Lesson Mastery Sheet. Additional individual assessments are given every sixth or eighth lesson for mastery of letter-sound correspondences, word reading, and fluency when reading connected text.

Professional development is provided by SRA consultants. Before school begins, teachers receive one day of on-site training. After school begins, three site visits are provided. An additional one day of training is offered for teachers hired after the initial training day. The Teaching Tutor CD-ROM and the Staff Development Guide allow teachers the convenience of easily referencing specific aspects of instructional delivery.

## Research Support for SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1

Over the course of two consecutive school years *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1*, previously named *Proactive Beginning Reading*, was involved in a study to determine the effectiveness of the combination of enhanced classroom instruction and two high intensity interventions, *Proactive* and *Responsive Reading*, for struggling readers in first grade (Mathes, Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, Francis, & Schatschneider, 2005). Although *Proactive and Responsive Reading* are derived from diverse theoretical foundations, both programs provide explicit phonics instruction and application of phonics to words, text, and reading comprehension.

Both interventions were taught to small groups with 3:1 student-teacher ratio and took place in 6 schools with 6 different teachers. Most students were screened at the end of Kindergarten and new incoming students were screened at the beginning of first grade. All at-risk students were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: enhanced classroom + *Proactive Reading*, enhanced classroom + *Responsive Reading*, or enhanced classroom only. A sample of students who showed no risk of reading difficulty provided a benchmark for normal reading development within the same schools. Six teachers were hired to implement the interventions, three for *Proactive* and three for *Responsive Reading*. Each of the teachers taught at two different schools each day to prevent confounding.

In order to increase the sample size the study took place over two years. After the effects of attrition 78 *Proactive Reading* students, 83 *Responsive Reading* students, and 91 enhanced classroom only students were assessed at post-test. Analyses confirmed the general equivalence of the three groups at pre-test. The results will be presented first for five measures that were assessed multiple times throughout the year. For Phonological Awareness the *Proactive* and *Responsive Reading* Groups had significantly higher scores than the enhanced classroom group and *Proactive* had higher scores than *Responsive*. In Word Reading Accuracy both the *Proactive* and *Responsive* intervention groups demonstrated significantly higher post-test scores than did the enhanced classroom. However, *Proactive* and *Responsive Reading* were equivalent at the end of the year testing. For Word Reading Fluency both *Proactive* and *Responsive Reading* achieved higher post-test scores than enhanced classroom; *Proactive* and *Responsive Reading* were again equivalent at post-test. Despite some differences in rate of growth, the three experimental groups had equivalent post-test scores on Non-Word Reading Fluency and Passage Reading Fluency in year one. However for year two there were significant group differences on Passage Reading Fluency at post-test such that children in the *Responsive Reading* group scored significantly higher than the enhanced classroom group of children.

Analyses of achievement measures given only at the end of the year indicate numerous group differences. Children who received *Proactive* scored greater than the enhanced classroom for the Woodcock Johnson Word Attack, Word I.D., and Spelling. The children in the *Responsive Reading* group scored higher than the enhanced classroom group for Word I.D. and Spelling. The *Proactive* group scored higher than the *Responsive Reading* group on Word Attack. No significant group differences were found for the Woodcock Johnson Passage Comprehension or Reading Fluency.

On virtually all measures, all three at-risk groups continued to have lower scores than the comparison group of 94 typically achieving students. However, on several measures the *Proactive* and *Responsive Reading* groups had a faster rate of growth than the typically achieving comparison group, therefore closing the gap to some degree.

A study was conducted to determine the similarities and differences between experienced teachers and highly trained paraprofessionals in the implementation of *Proactive Reading* (Grek, Mathes, Torgesen, 2003). The study took place over the course of two years, in a southeastern, medium-sized school district with two groups of first-grade students identified at risk for experiencing difficulty with learning to read. The students represented a wide range of socioeconomic levels and ethnicities. The intervention was delivered to 184 students, representing 5 schools, in small group settings for 40-minute sessions 5 days per week from October to May. Observations were conducted at regular intervals with an observation instrument, developed by the researchers, which allowed them to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The

teachers and the paraprofessionals participated in the professional development together. The professional development consisted of two phases, initial training, and follow up training. The initial training included two full day and two half-day workshops where the underlying principles and implementation procedures of *Proactive Reading* were modeled, practiced, and discussed by the participants. The second phase of the professional development included ongoing monthly meetings with videotaped lessons of one of the instructors used as the impetus for discussions, concerns, and more instructional training. In addition, written and verbal feedback was given to all of the participants immediately after they were observed teaching a lesson.

Although the results indicated differences in the quality of lesson delivery between the teachers and the paraprofessionals with teachers rated significantly higher, the student test score results showed both the teachers and the paraprofessionals were equally effective in stimulating reading growth in students. For example, standard scores on a measure of phonemic decoding (Word Attack from the WRMT-R) increased from 86-113 for teachers and from 86-111 for the paraprofessionals. Standard scores on the Word Identification subtest increased from 80 to 105 for both teachers and paraprofessionals, and scores on the Passage Comprehension subtest from the WRMT-R test were 99 for both groups. Further end of the year testing by the school (Stanford Achievement Test 9) was at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for students taught by the teachers and 53rd percentile for students taught by the paraprofessionals. End of the year, average words per minute read accurately on First-grade level passages for children taught by the teachers was 57, and for children taught by the paraprofessionals, the average words per minute was 54.

In another study, *Early Interventions in Reading Level 1*, previously named *Proactive Beginning Reading*, was examined for effectiveness with first grade ELL students (Spanish/English) at-risk for reading problems in English (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, Mathes, Duradola, & Cárdenas-Hagan, in press). Because the students' core reading instruction was provided in English the intervention was also delivered in English. Students from 14 first-grade classrooms across 4 schools were screened in both English and Spanish. In all, forty-eight students were identified and randomly assigned in equal numbers to the intervention and control groups.

Six bilingual intervention teachers provided fifty minutes of instruction (in English) to small groups of 3 to 5 students, five days a week, from October thru May. The control groups received the reading intervention that was already in place in the schools. Extensive professional development was provided for intervention teachers before implementation, after the first 6 weeks of implementation, and during staff development sessions. The professional development consisted of feedback about their instruction based on observations, videotaped lessons, question and answer sessions and planning instruction for their students.

After the seven-month study forty-one students remained, twenty-two in the intervention, and nineteen in the control group. Analyses indicated no difference between groups at pretest. The results at posttest were significant for the intervention students on multiple measures of English skills and reading achievement (i.e., Rapid Letter Naming from the CTOPP, Phonemic Awareness composite score from the CTOPP, Letter Sound Identification from the CTOPP, Word Attack from the WLPB-R and Passage Comprehension and Dictation.) There were no significant differences on oral language measures or on DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency. This may be due to the low power from the relatively small sample size. The differences were less clear on Spanish measures of the same skills, though in the areas of phonological awareness and related reading skills, the intervention students were favored (i.e., significant

differences on Phonemic Awareness composite, Word Attack, and Passage Comprehension). As with the English language measures there were no significant differences on DIBELS or Oral Language. For English Letter Naming and Letter Naming Fluency the intervention and the contrast students did not differ.

*SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1* (formerly known as Proactive) is currently being used in a study focusing on how to take scientifically proven interventions to scale within public schools. At the time of this report, this scale up research had completed the first year of data collection in 27 schools in the Dallas, Fort Worth, and Austin areas of Texas (Mathes, Denton, Ware, 2005). Within each of these schools, the most-at-risk first grade students were randomly assigned to receive *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1* or to receive whatever the school typically offered for these students. Students assigned to receive *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1* were supposed to meet in groups of three to five each day with a trained teacher for 40 minute sessions, although how faithful various schools were to this model varied widely. Schools that had an identified intervention teacher whose primary teaching responsibility was to deliver reading intervention had higher levels of success in delivering interventions instruction daily, compared to schools in which core reading teachers were also expected to deliver intervention to lowest performing readers.

Results from the first year of the scale up study with first grade students indicated no differences at pretest between the experimental and the control groups. Results at posttest were significant for the intervention students on multiple measures of reading achievement (i.e., Phonemic Awareness: Blending Words, Blending Non- Words, and Segmenting Words from the CTOPP; Foorman Word List, Word Recognition; TOWRE Word Efficiency; and Letter Word Identification, Word Attack, Passage Comprehension, Spelling from the Woodcock Johnson III). There were no significant differences on the TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency (non-word).

The research base to support the use of *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1* is very strong. The studies that have evaluated its use in first grade classrooms have employed random assignment to instructional and control groups, and standardized measures of reading have been used to evaluate outcomes.

## Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1*:

- The teacher models new skills before students are asked to perform the skill. A group response is elicited prior to individual responses offering students multiple opportunities to practice and master skills.
- Objectives are clearly stated for each activity within a lesson.

Weaknesses of *SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1*:

- The Screening Test may not be stringent enough to identify struggling readers at the second grade level.
- The success of *Early Interventions in Reading Level 1*, cited in the research, included four days of professional development for teachers and/or para professionals. Scaling down the professional development to one day of training may diminish the effectiveness of *Early Interventions in Reading*. However, additional professional development and coaching services, beyond that provided by SRA, are available from the program's primary author and a cadre of program experts author Institute for Reading Research at Southern Methodist University ([http://www.smu.edu/teacher\\_education/irr/index.asp](http://www.smu.edu/teacher_education/irr/index.asp))\_

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## Which Florida districts have schools that implement SRA Early Interventions in Reading Level 1?

Leon County 850-487-7147

### For More Information

<http://www.sraonline.com/index.php/home/curriculumsolutions/reading/eirshortcopy/eirslongcopy/1554>

### References

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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.

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