

RESEARCH &
VALIDATION

FOUNDATION
PAPER

MARCH 2024

Scholastic Ready4Reading

A Literature Review on Foundational
Research (Executive Summary)

CONTACT

For more information about this Foundation Paper, please contact Scholastic Research & Validation at ScholasticRV@scholastic.com or visit scholastic.com/research.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Scholastic Research & Validation. (2024). Scholastic Ready4Reading Foundation Paper. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

TM, ® & © 2024 Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved.

**RESEARCH &
VALIDATION**

**FOUNDATION
PAPER**

MARCH 2024

Scholastic Ready4Reading

**A Literature Review on Foundational
Research (Executive Summary)**

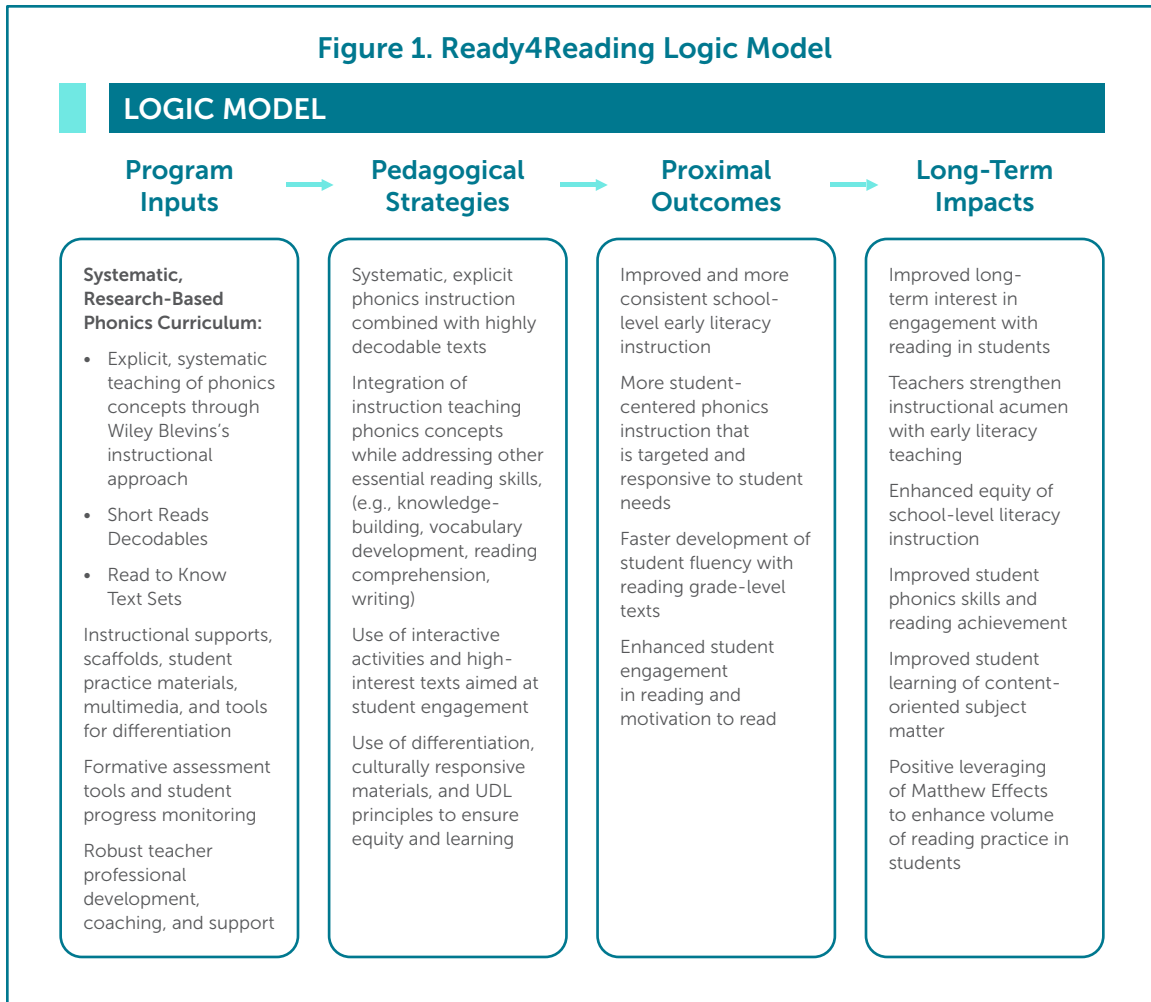
OVERVIEW AND LOGIC MODEL

A new report from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research and Reform in Education (JHU CRRE) documents how Ready4Reading (R4R), a supplemental phonics program, is well aligned with contemporary research on the science of reading and has a strong potential to positively impact early literacy outcomes for students in the primary grades.

The document includes a Logic Model that outlines how the program may function to improve early literacy skills (see Figure 1). It outlines the program inputs (e.g., explicit, systematic teaching of phonics concepts through Wiley Blevins Teaching Phonics, Short Reads Decodables, Read to Know Text Sets, interactive activities and videos, formative assessment, professional development, technology, and headphones) needed to launch R4R successfully and documents the targeted activities and pedagogical strategies (e.g., 60 minutes a week of explicit phonics instruction combined with highly decodable texts; integration of phonics concepts with other essential literacy skills, such as knowledge building, vocabulary development, writing, and reading comprehension; use of interactive activities with high-interest text aimed at high engagement; and use of differentiation, culturally responsive materials, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure equity and learning) needed to generate the outputs (e.g., data on student progress, engagement, and achievement) that lead to short-term (proximal) outcomes (e.g., students receiving more consistent school-level literacy instruction, more responsive and student-centered phonics instruction, increased reading motivation, and development of faster fluency with grade-level texts) and long-term impacts.

As teachers learn practical strategies to carry out evidence-based phonics instruction and receive data on students' individual strengths and weaknesses, educators can provide more targeted support aligned with individual student needs. Students then develop faster fluency with grade-level texts. As students read more texts that feature characters, communities, and experiences relevant to their lives and to the lives of others, they gain a sense of belonging, become more engaged, and want to read even more. Consequently, they demonstrate improved phonics skills and reading achievement on standardized assessments.

Figure 1. Ready4Reading Logic Model



The report also highlights five areas where R4R is uniquely suited to generate success due to its close alignment between the science of reading and learning and the program:

1) Provide systematic, explicit instruction

Because beginning readers who are taught systematic and explicit phonics are better able to decode, spell, and comprehend text compared to students who receive implicit instruction (Blevins, 2017; Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 2022; Foorman et al., 2016; Lindsey, 2022; NICHD, 2000), R4R intentionally follows a clearly defined, systematic scope and sequence that progresses from simple letter-sound relationships to blending and applying more complex aggregated (chunked) sound spellings to allow students to practice and apply their decoding skills.

Research shows that effective phonics instruction should explicitly and systematically address the following (Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 2021; Ehri, 2022; Foorman et al., 2016; Hudson et al., 2012; NICHD, 2000):

- **Phonological Awareness:** Since research shows that the ability to identify and manipulate different sounds within words (i.e., syllables, onsets/rimes, and phonemes) is predictive of word recognition, reading, and spelling performance (Mues et al., 2021), R4R teaches students that syllables can be divided into onsets and rimes.
- **Phonemic Awareness:** Because orthographic mapping is impossible without the ability to discriminate and manipulate phonemes (Lindsey, 2022), students practice hearing, identifying, blending, segmenting, manipulating, and distinguishing sounds in words in R4R.
- **Alphabet Knowledge:** During explicit alphabet instruction, R4R teaches students letter names and sounds simultaneously. This approach has been shown to be highly impactful for letter-sound learning (Piasta et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2018).
- **Phonics Knowledge:** Since research shows that effective sound-spelling knowledge should “teach the highest utility sound-spelling correspondences, from the alphabet to the most common single-syllable CVC words, to more sophisticated common patterns, covering all 44 phonemes” (Lindsey, 2022, p. 103), R4R explicitly teaches the sound-spelling patterns of consonants and short vowels, consonant blends, and digraphs. The program then progresses to long vowels and complex vowels. Word study is integrated throughout, beginning just as students blend CVC words, starting with simple inflectional endings and going through the scope and sequence to inflectional endings with base changes, syllabication, and morphemes.
- **Spelling:** R4R explicitly teaches spelling, since research suggests it reinforces orthographic mapping (Ouelette et al., 2017).
- **Decoding:** Since experts agree that students must learn explicit strategies to decode words (Mesmer & Kambach, 2022), R4R teaches students to pronounce phonemes corresponding to letters with no pauses rather than pausing between phonemes before blending.
- **Morphology/Word Study Knowledge:** Because knowledge of morphemes enables individuals to more efficiently decode and better understand the meanings of words (Apel et al., 2021), R4R teaches students how to identify compound words, syllable types, root words, and affixes and to apply their understanding of each word part to their understanding of the entire word.
- **High-Frequency Words:** Since the What Works Clearinghouse recommends teaching high-frequency words with regular and irregular sound spellings so that students can recognize them efficiently (Foorman et al., 2016), R4R explicitly teaches high-frequency words selected from the Dolch and Fry sight word lists.

- **Reading Practice With Decodable Texts:** Since controlled or decodable texts allow beginning readers to rely more on decoding (Adams, 1994); apply phonics skills; and improve their alphabetic knowledge, word identification, phonemic awareness, spelling proficiency, comprehension, and reading fluency (Cheatham & Allor, 2012), R4R uses decodable texts to practice readings.
- **Vocabulary:** R4R applies evidence-based vocabulary instructional strategies, such as prioritizing academic words with high utility across subject domains (Beck et al., 2013), teaching words in context (Beck et al., 2002), educating students to use morphology (roots, prefixes, suffixes), engaging students in activities where they focus on the critical attributes of new words (Archer & Hughes, 2011) and providing multiple exposure to words (McKeown, 1985).
- **Comprehension:** R4R deliberately engages students in repeated reading practice and provides opportunities and scaffolds that allow them to make predictions, summarize themes and main ideas, make inferences, generate questions, and use context clues to decipher unknown words to help with literacy development (Slavin, 2009).
- **Text-Based Discussion and Writing:** Because writing about texts improves students' word reading, reading comprehension, and reading fluency skills (Graham & Hebert, 2011), R4R integrates writing opportunities throughout each phonics and decodable text lesson. Students encode each letter-sound relationship while practicing letter formation. Dictation offers students an engaging way to build critical writing and spelling skills with teacher guidance and corrective feedback. Students are also asked to write their retelling of a text after they finish reading a decodable passage.

2) Integrate phonics instruction with essential literacy skills, such as vocabulary, comprehension, and writing

R4R program components and instructional strategies are aimed explicitly at fostering student interest in and engagement with reading, which are critical for early literacy success (Brandt et al., 2021), including interactive activities and the incorporation of decodable texts and text sets aimed explicitly at student interests (Guthrie et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

3) Focus on engagement with reading

The incorporation of resources aimed at providing differentiated instruction, including the program's multimedia components, interactive features, and student-centered practice materials, are evidence-based strategies proven to enhance student engagement (Tomlinson et al., 2003; Rappolt-Schlichtmann et al., 2012).

4) Capitalize on formative assessment to facilitate responsive, data-driven instruction

R4R incorporates continuous assessments that provide educators with targeted data and actionable insights to optimize literacy instruction. Formative assessment—the ongoing assessment process to inform instruction—can positively impact student reading achievement (Kingston & Nash, 2011; Xuan et al., 2022).

5) Offer equity-focused instruction

The R4R program approaches equity in three ways: 1) by promoting inclusion and culturally responsive pedagogy (Hollie, 2018; Hammond, 2014); 2) by incorporating components of the Universal Design for Learning framework (Rappolt-Schlichtmann et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2005); and 3) by providing opportunities for formative assessment and feedback to promote a highly personalized learning experience for students.

In the context of this research base, there is significant evidence that R4R is well-positioned to positively influence early literacy instruction in the primary grades and to potentially enhance reading outcomes for students. The breadth of foundational research supporting the program’s overarching approach and methods aligns closely with research-based best practices in literacy science and meets the qualifications for the ESSA Tier 4 evidence category for schools seeking a comprehensive phonics solution.

For more details, please see the full report at this [link](#).

REFERENCES

- Adams, M. J. (1994). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print* (Reprint ed.). MIT Press.
- Apel, K., Petscher, Y., & Henbest, V. S. (2021). *Morphological Awareness Test for Reading and Spelling (MATRS): Technical Report* [Technical Report]. OSF. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/ty2pe>
- Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life. Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Beck, I. L., & Beck, M. E. (2013). *Making sense of phonics: The hows and whys* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Blevins, W. (2017). *A fresh look at phonics: Common causes of failure and 7 ingredients for success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Brandt, L., Sharp, A. C., & Gardner, D. S. (2021). Examination of teacher practices on student motivation for reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 74(6), 723–731. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1999>
- Cabell, S. Q., & Hwang, H. J. (2020). Building content knowledge to boost comprehension in the primary grades. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(1), 99–107.
- Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K. (2018). Ending the reading wars: Reading acquisition from novice to expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 19(1), 5–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100618772271>
- Cheatham, J. P., & Allor, J. H. (2012). The influence of decodability in early reading text on reading achievement: A review of the evidence. *Reading and Writing*, 25(9), 2223–2246. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-011-9355-2>
- Ehri, L. C. (2021, April 18). Dr. Linnea Ehri's list of instructional guidelines for enhancing orthographic mapping and word learning [Blog]. *Understanding the Science of Reading*. <https://understandingreading.home.blog/2021/04/18/dr-linnea-ehris-list-of-instructional-guidelines-for-enhancing-orthographic-mapping-and-word-learning>
- Ehri, L. C. (2022). What teachers need to know and do to teach letter-sounds, phonemic awareness, word reading, and phonics. *The Reading Teacher*, 76(1), 53–61. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2095>
- Foorman, B., Beyler, N., Borradaile, K., Coyne, M., Denton, C. A., Dimino, J., ... & Wissel, S. (2016). Foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Educator's practice guide. NCEE 2016-4008. *What Works Clearinghouse*. Retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566956>
- Graham, S., & Hebert, M. (2011). Writing to read: A meta-analysis of the impact of writing and writing instruction on reading. *Harvard Educational Review*, 81(4), 710–744. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.81.4.t2k0m13756113566>
- Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & You, W. (2012). Instructional contexts for engagement and achievement in reading. In: Christenson, S., Reschly, A., & Wylie, C. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement*. Boston, MA: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_29
- Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hollie, S. (2018). *Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Shell Education.
- Hudson, R. F., Torgesen, J. K., Lane, H. B., & Turner, S. J. (2012). Relations among reading skills and sub-skills and text-level reading proficiency in developing readers. *Reading and Writing*, 25, 483–507.
- Kingston, N., & Nash, B. (2011). Formative assessment: A meta-analysis and a call for research. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 30(4), 28–37. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-3992.2011.00220.x>
- Lindsey, J. (2022). *Reading above the fray: Reliable, research-based routines for developing decoding skills*. Scholastic Professional.
- McKeown, M. G. (1985). The acquisition of word meaning from the context by children of high and low ability. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20(4), 482–496. <https://doi.org/10.2307/747855>

- Mesmer, H. A., & Kambach, A. (2022). Beyond labels and agendas: Research teachers need to know about phonics and phonological awareness. *The Reading Teacher*, 76(1), 62–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2102>
- Mues, M., Zuk, J., Norton, E., Gabrieli, J., Hogan, T. P., & Gaab, N. (2021). Clarifying the relationship between early speech-sound production abilities and subsequent reading outcomes. *Mapp. Intimacies* [Preprint]. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/zx2k3>
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups* (NIH Publication No. 00-4754). U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Ouellette, G., Martin-Chang, S., & Rossi, M. (2017). Learning from our mistakes: Improvements in spelling lead to gains in reading speed. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 21(4), 350–357.
- Piasta, S. B., Purpura, D. J., & Wagner, R. K. (2010). Fostering alphabet knowledge development: A comparison of two instructional approaches. *Reading and Writing*, 23, 607–626.
- Rappolt-Schlichtmann, G., Daley, S. G., & Rose, L. T. (2012). *A research reader in universal design for learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Recht, D. R., & Leslie, L. (1988). Effect of prior knowledge on good and poor readers' memory of text. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(1), 16–20. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.80.1.16>
- Roberts, T. A., Vadasy, P. F., & Sanders, E. A. (2018). Preschoolers' alphabet learning: Letter name and sound instruction, cognitive processes, and English proficiency. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 44, 257–274.
- Rose, D. H., Meyer, A., & Hitchcock, C. (Eds). (2005). *The universally designed classroom: Accessible curriculum and digital technologies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.
- Slavin, R. E. (2009). *Educational psychology: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson.
- Stahl, K. A. (2011). Applying new visions of reading development in today's classrooms. *The Reading Teacher*, 65(1), 52–56. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.65.1.7>
- Stembridge, A. (2020). *Culturally responsive education in the classroom: An equity framework for pedagogy*. Routledge, Taylor, & Francis Group.
- Tomlinson, C. A., Brighton, C., Hertberg, H., Callahan, C. M., Moon, T. R., Brimijoin, K., ... & Reynolds, T. (2003). Differentiating instruction in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profile in academically diverse classrooms: A review of literature. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 27(2-3), 119–145.
- Xuan, Q., Cheung, A., & Sun, D. (2022). The effectiveness of formative assessment for enhancing reading achievement in K–12 classrooms: A meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.990196>

