

Florida Center for Reading Research

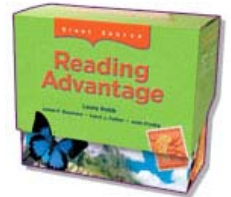
Reading Advantage

What is Reading Advantage?

Reading Advantage, first published in 2005, is a supplemental program designed for students in grades 6-12 who are reading two or more years below grade level. The goal of the program is to help students become successful readers through frequent and supported reading of engaging text, written at their instructional levels. Program materials, in magazine article format, are designed to be used under the direction of the teacher in whole class or small group, in regular or special education classrooms, and within a flexible schedule. Each *Reading Advantage* lesson lasts approximately 160 minutes and is recommended to be completed in three or four 40 minute class sessions.

Teacher's editions provide instructional support for each magazine article in explicit before-, during-, and after-reading activities. Depending on the needs of the student as identified by online student-teacher interaction, a teacher will choose from these activities to provide more or less support. Optional teacher Think-Aloud suggestions are embedded throughout each story, vocabulary and word study activities are included and additional skill instruction, writing suggestions, fluency practice suggestions, enrichment activities, and student self-reflection and self-evaluation accompany each story. Model lessons included at the beginning of each teacher's edition provide a rationale for the instructional approach and detailed examples of five reading strategies: critical reading, monitoring understanding, summarization, understanding text structure, and engaging with text.

Materials consist of seven kits (Foundations, and Levels A-F); each kit contains a teacher's edition, a student journal copymaster, a word study manual, assessment books, and a writing manual. Student materials in each kit include nonfiction, fiction, and poetry texts in readability levels from high first grade through eighth; each leveled kit includes six copies of four themed magazines, eZine CD-ROMs (magazine articles provided for student listening), and 12 paperback books for independent reading practice. Text difficulty gradually increases within a level; for example Level A contains both 2nd and 3rd grade leveled text. Lexile ranges are provided for student materials. All materials are well-organized and easy to use. Assessments include a Group Reading Inventory Placement Test, an Individual Reading Inventory Placement Test, and mid-magazine and end-of-magazine progress monitoring tests, as well as observation checklists and reading surveys. Students move through the Group Inventory Placement Tests (whole class administration) by scoring 80% or better. The Individual Reading Inventory Placement is scored similarly, but a teacher can gather more specific information through one-on-one testing.



How is Reading Advantage aligned with Current Research?

Reading Advantage integrates the following instructional components into its supplemental practice materials: word study, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing. It incorporates four of the five elements essential to reading in various levels of concentration. Instructional routines are established within a before, during and after reading framework. Typical of a program designed for older readers, phonological awareness is not addressed. Phonics instruction is not based on the traditional progression from easier word analysis activities to more difficult, but instead a phonics-based instructional activity (referred to as word study) in each lesson is specific to words

contained within that lesson. Each lesson of the word study section focuses on the study of word structures including letter-sound correspondences, affixes, roots, and multisyllabic words. At the upper levels the meanings of affixes are provided for additional vocabulary instruction during the word sort activities. Instruction in word study utilizes open and closed word sorts to provide additional student practice with spelling patterns (Zutell, 1998). The word study component of *Reading Advantage* is organized within the stage theory of spelling acquisition (Henderson, 1990) as students are categorized as word pattern spellers, syllable juncture spellers, etc. These spelling stages were developed to capture the spelling behavior of students during their acquisition of reading and writing skills. It is proposed by this theory that students move through the spelling stages sequentially.

Vocabulary development in each lesson begins with an instructional routine which introduces selected words. Correct pronunciation and meaning of the words is provided before reading the selection. Definitions, context clues, and teacher-led discussion with these words are provided throughout the lesson and the student practice book (Student Journal) provides a follow-up worksheet to extend the lesson. Teacher read-alouds and listening to the text on CD-ROM offer repeated exposure to topical vocabulary. Additional opportunities to read independently allow students to apply word learning strategies to text. Fluency is supported in *Reading Advantage* through the use of repeated reading, partner reading, and listening to models of fluent reading on the eZine CD-ROMs.

The National Reading Panel (2000) found seven categories of instruction that appear to have a firm scientific basis for improving comprehension: comprehension monitoring, cooperative learning, graphic organizers, question answering, question generating, story structure, and summarization. *Reading Advantage* addresses the following comprehension strategies: monitoring for understanding, summarizing, understanding text structure, engaging with text, and critical reading. These strategies are emphasized at various points throughout each level, but by looking at the scope and sequence it is difficult to tell how each strategy is first introduced and practiced within the level. The educator would need to closely examine the planner of each unit of instruction to determine the scope and sequence for the whole level.

Professional development is provided through initial and on-going in-service that is available to teachers, reading coaches, and administrators on site. These 1-3 hour sessions include such topics as fidelity of implementation, interpretation of assessments, classroom management, grouping, and differentiated instruction. On-going sessions are also available for new or returning teachers. Additional professional development, customized to a school or a district, is available at an extra cost.

Research Support for Reading Advantage

Reading Advantage was found to have potentially positive effects for student engagement and comprehension, but not for fluency. A number of studies have been conducted on *Reading Advantage*. However, only one of these studies with a quasi experimental design met the FCRR standards for research designed to examine program effectiveness (see http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/PDF/Research_Criteria.pdf). This study, summarized below, examined the effect of *Reading Advantage* on student engagement, comprehension, and fluency as measured by performance on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA; Harvell & Yang, 2005).

A study with sixth grade students in New Haven, CT was conducted to determine the effectiveness of *Reading Advantage* (Harvell & Yang, 2005). Twenty-four teachers in 14 schools with 250 students participated in this study. Twelve teachers and 148 students were in the *Reading Advantage* (RA) group and 12 teachers and 102 students were in the

control group. Students were matched on race, gender, socioeconomic status, performance on the state assessment, and educational status. However, the RA group had more African American students and fewer females than the control group. In addition, the RA group also had a significant group difference on teacher age with half of this group's teachers being over 40 years old. All students participating in this research were scheduled to attend an additional 45 minute reading period for intervention as they were determined to be below grade level in reading in the previous spring by the state assessment. It is unclear how often the additional 45 minute reading intervention group met weekly. The RA group received *Reading Advantage* with no other intervention and the comparison group received an unidentified intervention that was initiated within the previous school year. Data collection included student performance on reading skills, teacher survey, teacher logs, two classroom observations, and a teacher focus group. Fifty percent of the students from each of the 14 schools were randomly selected for pre-testing and post-testing with the DRA for grades 4-8. Results considering student and teacher level factors showed that the students in the *Reading Advantage* program tended to have higher mean scores than those in the control group in DRA-Engagement and Comprehension, but not for DRA-Fluency.

Conclusion

In sum, *Reading Advantage* is a highly engaging reading program for adolescents who struggle with reading that focuses on these key areas of instruction: word study, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension strategies. We conclude that there is an initial level of research on the use of *Reading Advantage* to increase student reading performance on measures of student engagement and comprehension. Additional well-designed studies, using random assignment, matched units for assignment and analysis, and equivalent scores on pretests between the experimental and control groups should be useful in determining the efficacy of this program.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Reading Advantage*:

- Text is predominantly nonfiction and high-interest.
- Teacher Editions provide multiple opportunities for student practice with new skills.

Weaknesses of *Reading Advantage*:

- Some struggling adolescents may require more intensive word study intervention with a specific scope and sequence according to level of skill difficulty.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement Reading Advantage?

Brevard	321-631-1911	Monroe	305-293-1400
Broward	754-321-2600	Okaloosa	850-833-3109
Charlotte	941-255-0808	Okeechobee	863-462-5000
Collier	239-377-0212	Orange	407-317-3202
Columbia	386-755-8003	Osceola	407-870-4008
Dade	305-995-1430	Palm Beach	561-434-8200
Duval	904-390-2115	Pinellas	727-588-6011
Hendry	863-674-4642	Polk	863-534-0521

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Highlands	863-471-5564	Sarasota	941-927-9000
Lee	239-337-8301	St. John's	904-819-7502
Manatee	941-708-8770	St. Lucie	772-429-3925
Martin	772-219-1200	Volusia	386-734-7190

For More Information

http://www.greatsource.com/store/ProductCatalogController?cmd=Browse&subcmd=LoadDetail&level1Code=34343&level2Code=324234342&level3Code=43534534&frontOrBack=F&sortProductsBy=SEQ_TITLE&division=G01

References

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Zutell, J. (1998). Sorting: A developmental spelling approach to word study for delayed readers. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 14(2), 219-238.

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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