

This quasi-experimental study was conducted in the context of a research-practice partnership with a school district. The findings are not causal. The findings are intended to help our partners use research and evidence to make decisions about their schools.

EXAMINING STUDENT READING ACHIEVEMENT IN THE HEGGERTY PHONEMIC AWARENESS CURRICULUM

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PURPOSE

Phonological awareness is a necessary component of effective early reading instruction.¹ Student’s phonological awareness skills are related to their ability to read words. Students who have strong phonological awareness skills tend to be good readers. The Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum is an instructional program that is designed to target this skill.² However, at the time of this study, there was limited evidence about the program’s effectiveness in improving reading achievement. Some, but not all elementary schools in our partner school district were using the program during the 2021-2022 school year. These conditions allowed us to examine reading achievement for students in schools using the program. Using data on students and schools, we examined reading achievement for Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd graders in schools using Heggerty (8 schools) compared to matching schools using their typical reading instruction program (7 schools).

RESEARCH QUESTION

Do reading scores differ for students in schools using the Heggerty program compared students in schools using their typical reading instruction?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

First, we matched students and schools based on several characteristics before comparing reading scores between the groups. That way, it would be more likely that differences in reading could be related to the instruction students were receiving. Then, we compared student performance at each grade level on reading tests that were given to all students in the school district.

Analyses indicated there were no significant differences in end-of-year reading achievement for students who received instruction with the Heggerty program compared to students who received reading instruction in other programs. The graphs below show this pattern: they show the average phonics scores for students in each group at each grade level. On average, students performed similarly on tests of overall reading achievement, phonological awareness, and early reading skills. These results provide initial evidence that using the Heggerty program may not result in better reading achievement above and beyond programs already being used in these schools. This evidence may be particularly helpful for schools with limited resources to support supplemental instruction and intervention. We recommend weighing this evidence with additional evidence from research studies and data from classrooms and schools to make decisions about programs.

Sample and Methods



Quasi-experimental study with propensity score analysis



8 Treatment schools:
Heggerty Reading Program

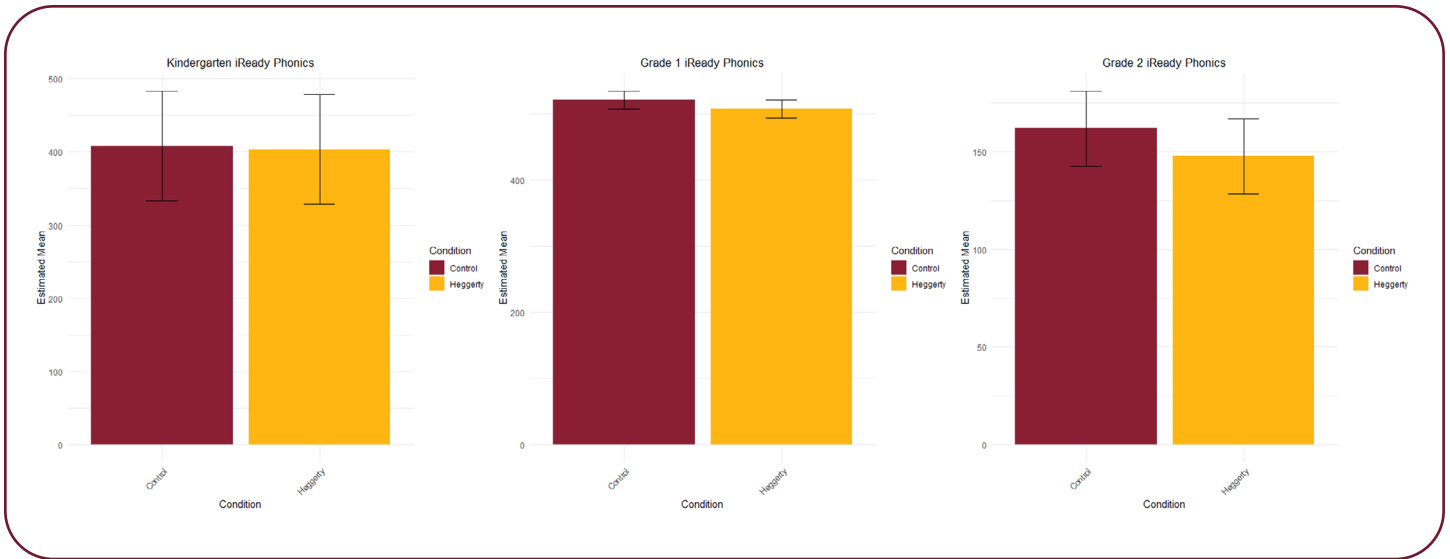
7 control schools:
Students are receiving instruction as usual



61 K Classrooms

71 1st Classrooms

78 2nd Classrooms



IMPLICATIONS

We worked with our school district partners to disseminate these results. Armed with this new information, school leaders were better equipped to make decisions programs being used in their classrooms.

References

1. Ehri, L. C. (2013). Learning to read and spell words. In *Learning to read* (pp. 57-73). Routledge.
2. Heggerty, M. (2020). *Phonemic awareness*. Literacy Resources, Inc.

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About FCRR

The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) is an interdisciplinary research center at Florida State University. Drawing from multiple disciplines, FCRR investigates all aspects of reading and reading-related skills across the lifespan. Through rigorous and robust research, innovation, and engagement, FCRR advances the science of reading to improve learning and achievement from birth through adulthood.