

This document provides a summary of Recommendation 2 from the WWC practice guide *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades*. Full reference at the bottom of this page.



Provide intensive small-group reading interventions



English learners who are at risk for reading problems should receive focused and intensive small-group instruction. Placements in groups should be determined by reading assessment data. The primary focus should be explicit vocabulary and comprehension instruction. In addition, the five core reading elements of phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension should also be addressed. Teachers and specialists need extensive training and must work together to coordinate services for English learners.

How to carry out the recommendation

1. Use an intervention program with students who enter the first grade with weak reading and prereading skills, or with older elementary students with reading problems.
2. Ensure that the program is implemented daily for at least 30 minutes in small, homogeneous groups of three to six students.
3. Provide training and ongoing support for the teachers and interventionists (reading coaches, Title I personnel, or paraeducators) who provide the small-group instruction.
4. Training for teachers and other school personnel who provide the small-group interventions should also focus on how to deliver instruction effectively, independent of the particular program emphasized. It is important that this training include the use of the specific program materials the teachers will use during the school year. But the training should also explicitly emphasize that these instructional techniques can be used in other programs and across other subject areas.

Potential roadblocks

1. Teachers may be uncomfortable identifying students for additional reading instruction if their English language skills are low.
2. Students already are pulled out of class for other services (such as speech, English language development, or English as a second language). Pulling students out for additional reading instruction makes their instructional day too fragmented.
3. Students will miss valuable instructional time in other areas.
4. Arranging a building-level or grade-level schedule that allows for additional small-group instruction is a complex process. Individual teachers may feel that they do not have the time or resources to provide additional small-group instruction to these students.



Reference: Gersten, R., Baker, S. K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). *Effective literacy and English language instruction for English learners in the elementary grades* (NCEE 2007-4011). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/6>



How to carry out the recommendation

- 1. Use an intervention program with students who enter the first grade with weak reading and prereading skills, or with older elementary students with reading problems.**

Small-group intervention programs should provide students with multiple opportunities to respond to questions, practice reading with peers, and receive specific feedback. Use explicit instruction methods to teach overall comprehension and vocabulary. Additionally, instruction needs to cover the five core reading elements of phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

- 2. Ensure that the program is implemented daily for at least 30 minutes in small, homogeneous groups of three to six students.**

Form groups based on student reading skills; groups can include both English learners and non-English learners. Students should receive explicit instruction. Assess student progress frequently and regroup students based on their most recent data.

- 3. Provide training and ongoing support for the teachers and interventionists (reading coaches, Title I personnel, or paraeducators) who provide the small-group instruction.**

Educators with extensive training have shown to have a higher impact on reading achievement. Training is most beneficial when the entire English learner teacher team participates together. Effective instructional pacing is a key focus area for training.

- 4. Training for teachers and other school personnel who provide the small-group interventions should also focus on how to deliver instruction effectively, independent of the particular program emphasized. It is important that this training include the use of the specific program materials the teachers will use during the school year. But the training should also explicitly emphasize that these instructional techniques can be used in other programs and across other subject areas.**

Educators should participate in training and receive in-class coaching from “master” educators who have experience with small-group interventions specifically for English learners. Areas of focus should include pacing, feedback strategies, modeling practices, and wait time.

Provide intensive small-group reading interventions

Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>Teachers may be uncomfortable identifying students for additional reading instruction if their English language skills are low.</i>	English oral language proficiency is not a good indicator of need for reading support. Providing additional support for students in reading strategies will help develop the students' English proficiency.
<i>Students already are pulled out of class for other services (such as speech, English language development, or English as a second language). Pulling students out for additional reading instruction makes their instructional day too fragmented.</i>	Fragmented days are not good for students. Therefore, the effective coordination of interventions is vital for English learners. However, reading support is important and should not simply be overlooked.
<i>Students will miss valuable instructional time in other areas.</i>	English reading is critical to all learning demands. Time invested in reading development will support overall learning for students.
<i>Arranging a building-level or grade-level schedule that allows for additional small-group instruction is a complex process. Individual teachers may feel that they do not have the time or resources to provide additional small-group instruction to these students.</i>	The key to small-group reading interventions is training and collaboration among educators who teach English learners. Small groups are key to providing effective reading support.



For more information on the research evidence and references to support this recommendation, or for more detailed explanation from the What Works Clearinghouse committee who developed this recommendation, please refer to the practice guide cited at the bottom of the first page of this document.